



# NEWS RELEASE

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## Best Baby Zone Collaborative Aims to Reduce Infant Deaths in Raleigh

African-American babies born in Wake County are twice as likely to die in infancy than any baby born in Wake County overall. In Southeast Raleigh, where 70% of the population is African-American, three of the 240 babies born each year won't survive their first year of life.

Wake County is working to close the gap. A Best Baby Zone is now in place for Southeast Raleigh, bringing national expertise to this part of the capital city to address the environmental factors, also called social determinants of health, and to help babies thrive. Wake County is the first Best Baby Zone location in the Southeast.

"A person's zip code should not determine how long they will live," said Wake County Board of Commissioners Chair Jessica Holmes. "By implementing the Best Baby Zone approach, we're creating health equity in one of our most vulnerable communities, which will help ensure more babies born there will grow into strong, healthy adults."

About 18,000 residents live in the selected Southeast Raleigh zone, which is inside the beltline and to the east of downtown.

Of those, about a quarter don't have medical insurance and 70% have incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty level. Single parent families are twice as prevalent here than in other parts of the county.

A consortium of health care and community leaders within the zone, families who have experienced loss and other advocates will engage with the community and study factors such as access to healthcare, affordable housing and education while drawing from Best Baby Zone programs in other cities to develop an action plan to reduce the infant mortality gap.

The Best Baby Zone study will complement Wake County Human Services' ongoing work through its countywide Infant and Maternal Health programs. In 2018, WCHS cared for more than 7,200 pregnant mothers and 3,200 infants under one year through its health clinics and pregnancy outreach programs.

In the fall, the county will kickoff an infant mortality working group to address the same issues identified in the Best Baby Zone study on a county-wide level.

Best Baby Zone is a program administered through [CityMatCH](#), a national organization of urban maternal and child health leaders that works toward strengthening organizations to promote equity and improve the health of urban women, children, and communities.

[Learn more about Wake County's child and maternal health programs.](#)

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