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## News & Media

### Disparities in Infant Mortality: A Call to Action

**Fort Pierce** – The Healthy Start Coalition of St. Lucie County will present a Disparities in Infant Mortality Summit November 18 in a day-long call to action that organizers hope will help reduce the number of African American babies who die at birth.

Registration for the event begins at 7:30 a.m. at the Indian River State College Public Safety Training Complex. Continuing Education Units and Continuing Medical Education units will be available.

The goal of the summit is to educate the community about local infant mortality rates, particularly among its highest risk population, said Lisa von Seelen, executive director for the Healthy Start Coalition of St. Lucie County.

“Our black infants are dying at a rate that is nine times higher than our white infants,” she said.

Von Seelen added that the St. Lucie County community has successfully reduced infant mortality in recent years to just over 4 deaths per 1,000 births, or about two deaths per 1,000 births less than the state average.

However, black infants in the county continue to die at a rate that far exceeds that – or about 18 per 1,000 births, Von Seelen said.

“That’s not OK, and we need to do something about it,” she said. “That’s what the summit it all about – it’s a start.”

Tonya Lewis-Lee, television producer and national motivational speaker, will deliver the event’s keynote address. A panel discussion and two break-out workshops, including a presentation about infant mental health, will follow.

Early bird registration is \$50, and \$75 after October 28. Registration closes November 4. For more information, or to register, call (772) 467-2016 or visit [www.kidsconnectedbydesign.org](http://www.kidsconnectedbydesign.org).

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**Contact:** Christina Kaiser  
(772) 528-0362



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