

Infant Mortality in Detroit Rivals Many Third World Countries

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Although the crime rate in Detroit is high, it's not the #1 killer of children in the city. Kids in the city are more likely to die from infant mortality than violence, according to The Detroit News.

Children born premature face sometimes fatal challenges of “collapsing lungs” and “failing organs”, and more premature babies are born in Detroit than any other U.S. city.

This helps explain why the infant mortality rate, a term which accounts for kids who die before age one, is so high in Detroit. The infant mortality rate is so high that it actually rivals that of many third world countries.

“It’s infuriating, because we know we can change the trajectory of these numbers,” said Kristen McDonald, vice president of program and policy for the Detroit-based Skillman Foundation, according to The Detroit News.

One of the factors contributing to the high infant mortality rate is that many of the women having babies are young and single, less likely to have the resources needed to plan for a child. Detroit’s become one of this nation’s poorest cities and the mothers are also usually poor women without health care and financial resources.

But there is hope on the horizon with an annual investment of \$25 million by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and new programs which hope to treat physical issues early on in a pregnancy. Still, the numbers aren’t encouraging: 2,300 Detroit babies died before their first birthday between 2000 and 2011.

There is a lack of prenatal care as well as knowledge of how to care for a child among young mothers in the city.

“Infants have the most fragile health of any age of child (and) the families that have children are for a variety of reasons under a lot of economic stress,” said Dr. Matt Davis, professor of pediatrics at the University of Michigan.

“The reason that making progress on infant deaths is so challenging is that it is a powerful combination of fragile health and vulnerable economic situations. And so a successful strategy in public health and health care, to reduce infant mortality, needs to have strong medical approaches and strong social approaches.”

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