7. POLICY POSITION

STATE COMMISSIONS TO ADDRESS INFANT MORTALITY AND
MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH ISSUES IN THE SOUTH

BACKGROUND

In October, 1990, the Southern Regional Project on Infant Mortality
hosted an historic meeting, the Southern Legislative Summit on Healthy
Infants and Families. State legislators, governors’ staff, health providers
and maternal and child health advocates from every state in the South came
together to develop a plan to address the region’s high incidence of infant
mortality.

The South’s Agenda for Healthy Infants and Families was adopted by
the participants and represents the combined efforts of the participants as
well as reflecting a consensus of both the legislative and executive arms of
the government and the private sector.

The goal of the Summit is for the Southern states to achieve the goals
set forth by the U. S. Surgeon General for the year 2000 of reducing the
overall infant mortality rate to no more than seven deaths per 1000 lives
birth, and reducing the incidence of low birthweight infants to five percent
or less and the very low birthweight rate to one percent. To achieve this
goal, the Summit participants adopted the fundamental strategy for each
Southern state to establish a commission to address infant mortality and
maternal and child health issues.

RECOMMENDATION

The Southern Legislative Conference endorses the recommendations
developed at the 1990 Southern Legislative Summit on Healthy Infants and
Families as reflected in The South’s Agenda for Healthy Infants and
Families. The Southern Legislative Conference is committed to working with
other key leaders in the South to ensure that the maternal and child health
goals set for the year 2000 by the U. S. Surgeon General are attained and
encourages each state to set up a commission or task force to address this
issue.

Further, these commissions, as noted in The South’s Agenda, should
have wide representation, should make recommendations to the state
legislature and the governor and should be staffed and funded.

Furthermore, the Southern Regional Project on Infant Mortality is
directed to take a leadership role to assist this effort in the region and
to establish an advisory body with legislative and gubernatorial
representation from each of the states in the region to guide the South’s
response to the devastating problem of infant mortality.


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