

## 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 live births, 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.

Adopted by the Southern Legislative Conference, July 23, 1991.