



ASSOCIATION OF MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMS

AMCHP Lauds ASTHO Healthy Babies President's Challenge

Oct. 24, 2011 (Washington, DC) – Today the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) applauded Dr. David Lakey, incoming President of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) for his Healthy Babies President's Challenge. Dr. Lakey announced the call for all state health departments to accelerate efforts to improve birth outcomes over the coming year last Friday in the closing session of the ASTHO Annual Meeting.

“Addressing infant mortality and reducing prematurity is not only the right humanitarian thing to do, it is important to states’ economies and reducing healthcare costs overall,” Dr. Lakey said. Dr. Lakey, who is Commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services, challenged all state health officials to leverage available resources to address this issue and to work with national, state and local partners to “implement strategies based on successful efforts, tailoring best and promising practices for maximum impact throughout the country.” Additional background on the ASTHO Healthy Babies President's Challenge is available [here](#).

AMCHP Board President Stephanie Birch RNC, MPH, MS, FNP, Section Chief for Women's, Children's and Family Health at the Alaska Department of Health and Human Services praised the effort, saying, “Dr. Lakey’s focus on improving birth outcomes is tremendously welcome news to AMCHP and its members. This is exactly the leadership we need to build upon the success of state and local programs and policies and prevent the tragic emotional and fiscal toll of poor birth outcomes and related disparities in America.”

Dr. Michael Fraser, AMCHP Chief Executive Officer, participated in the ASTHO Annual Meeting at which the President’s Challenge was formally announced. Dr. Fraser offered the following statement on behalf of AMCHP:

“AMCHP – in partnership with leaders at the Health Resources and Services Administration and its Maternal and Child Health Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other partners – is committed to supporting these efforts to replicate successes and spur new action.

We also redouble our commitment leading the charge to sustain the essential resources states need to support this work through the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant and other critical public health programs. Despite the challenges states face, this announcement provides us with a vision: imagine a country where all children have the opportunity to be born healthy and grow strong. We thank ASTHO and Dr. Lakey for that inspiration and look forward to supporting this work.”

AMCHP is serving on the initiative's steering committee and will continue to work closely with ASTHO and its partners in the implementation and dissemination of the Healthy Babies President's Challenge. In the coming weeks we will share additional information on how state Title V MCH programs can support implementation of the President's Challenge, as we continue to support national efforts to improve birth outcomes, address premature birth, and prevent infant mortality.

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AMCHP's mission is to support state maternal and child health programs and provide national leadership on issues affecting women and children. For more information, please contact Brent Ewig, Director of Policy, at bewig@amchp.org or call (202) 226.3041.