

First Candle/SIDS Alliance Media Alert – November 8, 2004

Unfortunately, in regard to the following article on a rise in infant mortality rates, the Centers For Disease and Prevention Control (CDC) has also reported a slight rise in SIDS rates for 2002. First Candle/SIDS Alliance will be utilizing these statistics to develop a media campaign that will reinforce the importance of providing a "safe sleep" and "smoke-free" environment for all babies in an effort to continue to impact the overall infant mortality rate in coming years.

Despite recent success in reducing SIDS rates, SIDS remains the leading cause of death for infants one month to one year of age and third behind congenital malformations and complications of premature birth in the death of all infants from birth to one year of age.

U.S. Health Improvements Slowing Due in Part to High Infant Mortality Rates and Obesity

Public Health and Education, November 8, 2004

U.S. progress in improving public health has slowed, partly because of high rates of infant mortality and obesity, according to an annual report released Monday by United Health Foundation (UHF), the American Public Health Association and Partnership for Prevention, USA Today reports. The report, titled "America's Health: State Health Rankings -- 2004 Edition," is a state-by-state analysis showing that the nation's progress in improving overall health is "slowing dramatically," and the increases in obesity and infant mortality rates are causes for concern (Davis, *USA Today*, 11/7).

From 1990 to 2004, the infant mortality rate decreased 31%. However, last year, the rate increased for the first time in 40 years, from 6.9 to seven deaths in the first year of life for every 1,000 live births, the Washington Post reports. "Given the meaning of infant mortality as the definer of quality of a civilization, this statistic is worrisome," Reed Tuckson, a UHF official, said (Brown, *Washington Post*, 11/8). Low infant mortality is linked to pregnant women having adequate access to prenatal and pediatric care, *USA Today* reports. In addition, other maternal risk factors -- such as age, obesity, smoking, infection and stress -- are associated with increased infant mortality, according to *USA Today*.

More than 75 infants die in the United States each day, according to CDC data (*USA Today*, 11/7). The United States now ranks 28th in the world in infant mortality, the *Post* reports (*Washington Post*, 11/8). "When we compare our infant mortality rate against other nations, it lets us know that we have much more distance to travel," Tuckson said (*USA Today*, 11/7).

In an accompanying commentary, March of Dimes President Jennifer Howse and Michael Caldwell, commissioner of health in Dutchess County, N.Y., write that the United States' infant mortality rate "is moving in the wrong direction -- away from the Healthy People 2010 objective of 4.5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births." They write, "Clearly, we still have more work to do for our communities, our families and our children" (Howse/Caldwell, "The State of Infant Health: Is There Trouble Ahead?" November 2004).