

Media Alert

For more information, contact
Rebecca Schimke, Communications Specialist
United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County
RSchimke@UnitedWayGMWC.org
414.263.8125 (O), 414.704.8879 (C)

Sarah DeRoo, Communications Officer
City of Milwaukee Health Department
sderoo@milwaukee.gov
414.286.3548 (O), 414.708.4060 (C)

Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative Releases Prematurity Prevention Priorities, Names New Program Director

[01/23/17]Milwaukee – The Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families (LIHF) today announced its top priorities to address the leading cause of infant deaths in Milwaukee: premature births. The United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County also named a new director to coordinate Milwaukee LIHF, a community-wide collaborative dedicated to reducing racial disparities in birth outcomes.

“Infant mortality is one of the most complex health issues in our community, but the most important factor is premature birth” said Mayor Tom Barrett, co-chair of the Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families (LIHF). “To drive down the unacceptable racial disparity in infant deaths and support the health of all babies, we are focusing our work on the key drivers of premature births.”

Premature births account for 3 out of 5 infant deaths in Milwaukee annually, and also account for 1 out of 9 total births in the city, or about 1,000 pre-term births each year. While far too many infants die as a result of prematurity, the vast majority survive, but being born too soon can also have significant adverse risks, including very high medical costs and significant life-long health and developmental challenges.

To prevent prematurity, Milwaukee LIHF will align its work around three main priorities:

- Increase awareness around the importance of pregnancy intendedness and birth spacing, because close-interval pregnancies are a key driver of pre-term births
- Support mental and physical preparedness for pregnancy, because unmanaged chronic conditions are also key drivers of pre-term births
- Improve social and economic conditions for communities at highest risk, because the chronic stress of economic insecurity, housing instability and other social factors adversely affect pregnant women’s health, and increase the risk of pre-term births



United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County has named Natalie Harlan as the new director for the Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families.



To coordinate the work of Milwaukee LIHF, United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County has named Natalie Harlan as the new director for the effort.

“Natalie brings a breadth of leadership experience and personal and professional dedication to serving Milwaukee families,” said Nicole Angresano, vice president of community impact for United Way. “She is uniquely positioned and qualified to lead the next stages of our infant mortality prevention work, in this community-facing role.”

Harlan comes to United Way from MWH Law Group where she served as the Director of Operations. She brings experience in advancement as well as years of experience in the health care industry.

Harlan also serves on a number of boards including the Milwaukee Montessori School, The Board of Visitors at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, and The Cinderella Project.

“I’m excited about the opportunity to work with Natalie,” said Wanda J. Montgomery, LIHF co-chair and director of community partnerships at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. “I believe she brings a wealth of knowledge and ability to help expand the reach of LIHF through new partnerships and engagement of the Milwaukee community.”

“I feel as if all of my previous experience has led me to this position. I believe in the goal of decreasing infant mortality and premature births, while also supporting families.” said Harlan. “The fact that Milwaukee's African-American infant death rate is more than three times that of Milwaukee's white infant death rate shows, somewhere, there is a missing factor. I consider it an honor to be able to work towards the goal of closing that gap.”

In 2014, the Wisconsin Partnership Program (WPP) selected United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County to serve as the convening agency for the Milwaukee LIHF Collaborative and awarded the organization a five-year \$1.5 million grant to lead efforts to reduce infant mortality in Milwaukee. The collaborative adopted the goal set by Mayor Tom Barrett and the City of Milwaukee Health Department in 2011 to reduce the infant mortality rate by 10% overall and the African American rate by 15% by 2017. The MHD is a key partner in Milwaukee LIHF, along with representatives of area health systems, social service agencies, and community members.

#

About Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families: *The Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families (LIHF) is a community-wide collaborative, led by United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County, working to eliminate racial disparities in birth outcomes and ensure more babies reach their first birthdays. It is funded through the UW School of Medicine and Public Health from the Wisconsin Partnership Program.*