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COUNTY

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### NEWS RELEASE

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## Multnomah County joins national public-private partnership to address rising U.S. infant mortality rate

*Free mobile health service [Text4baby](#) provides health tips to pregnant women, new moms*

Multnomah County announced today that they have become an outreach partner with [text4baby](#)—a free mobile information service providing timely health information to pregnant women and new moms from pregnancy through a baby’s first year. As an outreach partner, Multnomah County will share information about the service with clients in programs such as the Early Childhood Services and Women Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program.

[Text4baby](#) is a free mobile information service designed to promote maternal and child health. An educational program of the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB), [text4baby](#) provides pregnant women and new moms with information to help them care for their health and give their babies the best possible start in life. Women who sign up for the service by texting BABY to 511411 (or BEBE in Spanish) will receive free SMS text messages each week, timed to their due date or baby’s date of birth.

The program is meant to pass along critical health information via a commonly utilized technology. Each year in the U.S., more than 500,000 babies are born prematurely and an estimated 28,000 children die before their first birthday. The infant mortality rate in the U.S. is one of the highest in the industrialized world. Locally, approximately 6.4 percent of babies are born with a low birth weight, a risk factor for infant mortality. These rates are disproportionately higher for African Americans than for other racial/ethnic groups. The Pew Research Center has found that while 90 percent of Americans have a mobile phone, fewer have access to the internet, and texting is more prevalent among women of childbearing age.

[Text4baby](#) messages focus on a variety of topics critical to maternal and child health, including birth defects prevention, immunization, nutrition, seasonal flu, mental health, oral health and safe sleep and connect women to prenatal and infant care services and other resources. These pregnancy and infant messages were developed by the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB) in collaboration with federal partners, physicians and nurses and national medical organizations.

“Multnomah County is proud to be a part of [text4baby](#),” said Lillian Shirley, director of Multnomah County Health Department. “We are always looking for innovative ways to reach out to our clients with important health information and we believe that this program can have a significant impact on maternal and child health in our county.”

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