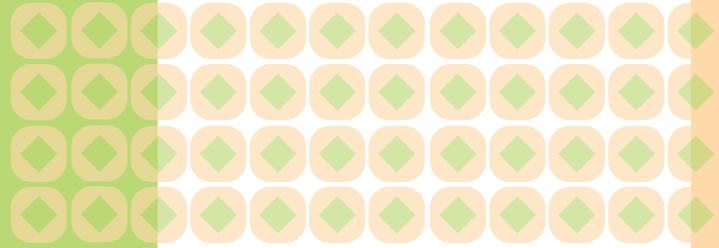




# Join Us in the fight to help protect PREEMIES



They're tiny, vulnerable and are at risk for serious health problems and a lifetime of developmental delays. These premature infants are dependent on us and need our help.

There currently is no health policy in place that addresses the special needs of these babies who, through no fault of their own, were born before their time. But by bringing together community and health organizations, physicians, parents, clergy and public health leaders to form a state premature infant health network, we can work to increase quality health care access for premature infants.

## PREEMIES HAVE SPECIALIZED HEALTH NEEDS

As a network, with one unified voice, we would put a spotlight on the unique health issues premature babies face, including increased risk of developmental problems, nutrition challenges, infection risk, vision and hearing impairment and chronic respiratory disease.

We would help mobilize policy action, by addressing issues we as a group determine to be the most pressing for premature infants. The network, an informally knit group, also would work with local communities and existing groups around the state to help educate families on how to care for babies born prematurely, as well as on ways to help reduce the risk factors for premature births.

EACH PREEMIE,  
REGARDLESS OF  
HIS OR HER  
CIRCUMSTANCES,  
MUST HAVE  
EQUAL ACCESS TO  
PREVENTIVE CARE



# Did You Know?



## PREMATURITY IS A SERIOUS FINANCIAL AND EMOTIONAL BURDEN

- In 2005, the annual societal economic cost (medical, educational and lost productivity) associated with preterm birth in the United States was at least \$26.2 billion.<sup>1</sup>
- Families of preemies face stressful decisions and are challenged by factors such as traveling to the closest perinatal center. Because the baby is often hooked up to monitors and life support equipment, physical contact may be limited and bonding is difficult.<sup>2</sup>

## EQUAL ACCESS TO PREVENTIVE CARE IS VITAL

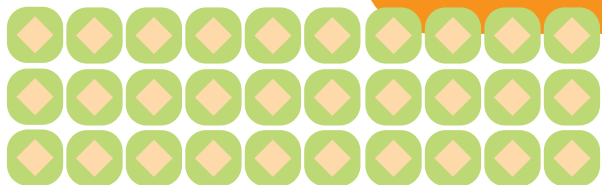
- Specialized care includes screening tests, immunizations and preventive treatments that can help protect and reduce the incidence of serious infections.
- A preemie's access to preventive care should not depend on factors such as a family's income, a preemie's age at birth, or residency. Instead an appropriate course of treatment should be based on a doctor's experience, discretion and clinical data.

## PREVENTIVE CARE HAS CONSIDERABLE VALUE

- Preventive care for all preemies can help protect them from complex, severe health problems and gives them the chance to fight off infections, resulting in lower hospitalization rates and costs.
- Premature infants have longer hospital stays. Two days for newborns without complications; 13.6 days for infants with a diagnosis of prematurity or low birthweight; 24.2 days for infants with a principal diagnosis of prematurity or low birthweight.<sup>3</sup>

## INVESTMENT NOW CAN HELP SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE LONG-TERM

- Preventive care for all preemies can reduce the risk of lifelong medical and developmental complications. Early preventive care is a small investment that can help avoid substantial future costs to insurers, governments, families and communities.



<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine, 2006. *Preterm Birth: Causes, Consequences, and Prevention*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C. Published and unpublished analyses.

<sup>2</sup> Nelson, Florence. *From Science to Public Policy: Premature Infants*. Zero to Three Policy Center. October 30, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> March of Dimes accessed June 2007 [http://www.marchofdimes.com/printableArticles/2198\\_10734.asp](http://www.marchofdimes.com/printableArticles/2198_10734.asp)