

National Coalition for Infant Health: The 2024 Steering Committee Meeting: A Collaborative Path Forward for Infant Health

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The National Coalition for Infant Health is a collaborative of more than 200 professional, clinical, community health, and family support organizations focused on improving the lives of premature infants through age two and their families. NCfIH's mission is to promote lifelong clinical, health, education, and supportive services needed by premature infants and their families. NCfIH prioritizes safety of this vulnerable population and access to approved therapies.

The morning of May 3rd began with a warm welcome from Dr. Mitchell Goldstein, the National Coalition for Infant Health Medical Director. His introduction set the stage for a day of significant discourse and planning. The first major agenda item, presented by Susan Hepworth, Executive Director of the National Coalition for Infant Health, focused on the coalition's education and advocacy priorities for 2024. Susan's insights underscored the importance of a unified approach in addressing the complex challenges facing infant health today. She highlighted key focus areas, such as improving access to neonatal care, advancing research on infant health issues, and promoting policies supporting families and healthcare providers. Her presentation set a tone of urgency and determination, reminding us that our collective efforts can make a

tangible difference in the lives of infants and their families.

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A Forum for Member Voices

One of the most valuable aspects of our meeting was the opportunity for steering committee members to share updates from their respective organizations. Representatives from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, and Expecting Health, among others, provided brief but impactful updates. This exchange of information highlighted both the progress being made and the areas requiring increased attention and collaboration. For instance, the American Academy of Pediatrics discussed their recent initiatives to standardize neonatal care protocols nationwide, while the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses emphasized the need for better training and support for neonatal nurses. Expecting Health shared their latest research findings on prenatal health education and its impact on birth outcomes. Each update served as a reminder of the diverse and multifaceted nature of infant health advocacy.

Steering Committee

The National Coalition for Infant Health is supported by a volunteer steering committee, all of whom contribute significantly to lives of premature infants through work and parenting. Steering committee members represent national nonprofits, academic institutions, and parent organizations, and they provide leadership as well as help to mobilize partners in the field of prematurity.



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Understanding the Policy Landscape

Gavin Clingham, Senior Vice President at Woodberry Associates, provided a comprehensive overview of the current infant health

policy landscape. His analysis was sobering and motivating, illustrating the critical need for continued advocacy and policy development to support our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. Gavin highlighted the significant policy gaps, such as insufficient funding for neonatal research and the lack of standardized guidelines for infant care nationally. He also discussed recent legislative efforts to address these issues and encouraged the coalition to engage with policymakers actively. His presentation underscored the importance of staying informed and proactive in our advocacy efforts, reminding us that policy change is crucial to improving infant health outcomes.

Engaging with Industry Partners

Our meeting also included valuable contributions from our industry partners. Lindsay Hermany from Merck, Cristal Grogan from Prolacta Bioscience, and Chris Rizzo from Sanofi shared their companies’ latest advancements and initiatives in infant health. These updates informed our discussions and reinforced the importance of industry collaboration in achieving our goals. Lindsay Hermany highlighted Merck’s recent efforts to develop new vaccines for infants, while Cristal Grogan discussed Prolacta Bioscience’s innovative approaches to enhancing neonatal nutrition through human milk-based products. Chris Rizzo provided an



overview of Sanofi's research on preventing and treating common neonatal infections. Their presentations demonstrated the critical role that industry partners play in advancing medical research and improving healthcare outcomes for infants.

“The subsequent sessions allowed for further updates from steering committee members, including representatives from PremieWorld, NICU Parent Network, National Perinatal Association, Hand to Hold, GLO Premies, National Association of Neonatal Nurses, National Black Nurses Association, and the National Association of Neonatal Therapists.”

Continuing the Dialogue

The subsequent sessions allowed for further updates from steering committee members, including representatives from PremieWorld, NICU Parent Network, National Perinatal Association, Hand to Hold, GLO Premies, National Association of Neonatal Nurses, National Black Nurses Association, and the National Association of Neonatal Therapists. Each update was a reminder of the diverse and dedicated efforts being made across the board to improve infant health outcomes. For example, PremieWorld discussed their ongoing advocacy for preterm infants and their families, while the NICU Parent Network shared stories of parental support and empowerment in neonatal intensive care units. The National Perinatal Association highlighted its initiatives to improve perinatal care standards, and Hand to Hold emphasized the importance of emotional support for families during and after a NICU stay. GLO Premies, the National Association of Neonatal Nurses, the National Black Nurses Association, and the National Association of Neonatal Therapists each presented their unique contributions to the field, ranging from community outreach programs to specialized training for neonatal healthcare professionals.

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A Call to Action

As we concluded with lunch and adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m., it was clear that our work was far from over. The discussions and decisions during this meeting will serve as a blueprint for our

efforts in the coming year. Our collective dedication to advancing infant health is unwavering, and we are committed to working together to overcome the challenges ahead. The meeting reinforced the need for ongoing collaboration, continuous education, and relentless advocacy. It also highlighted the importance of listening to the voices of all stakeholders, including healthcare providers, researchers, industry partners, and, most importantly, the families and infants we serve.

“As we move forward, we must remain steadfast in our mission to ensure that every infant has the opportunity to thrive. Our future depends on the health and well-being of our youngest generation, and it is a responsibility we all share. The road ahead may be challenging, but our combined efforts and unwavering commitment can create a brighter and healthier future for all infants.”

The 2024 Steering Committee Meeting was a testament to the power of collaboration. It reinforced the need for continued dialogue, shared knowledge, and joint action. As we move forward, we must remain steadfast in our mission to ensure that every infant has the opportunity to thrive. Our future depends on the health and well-being of our youngest generation, and it is a responsibility we all share. The road ahead may be challenging, but our combined efforts and unwavering commitment can create a brighter and healthier future for all infants.

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National Coalition for Infant Health Values (SANE)

Safety. Premature infants are born vulnerable. Products, treatments and related public policies should prioritize these fragile infants' safety.

Access. Budget-driven health care policies should not preclude premature infants' access to preventative or necessary therapies.

Nutrition. Proper nutrition and full access to health care keep premature infants healthy after discharge from the NICU.

Equality. Prematurity and related vulnerabilities disproportionately impact minority and economically disadvantaged families. Restrictions on care and treatment should not worsen inherent disparities.