

Study focuses on premature babies in the south

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A new center at Duke University will study why more babies are born premature or underweight in the south than elsewhere in the nation.

The center is the first of its kind. A 7.7 million dollar grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will fund the five-year project. The study will focus on what role genes, environment and socioeconomic status play in premature or underweight births. The grant represents the largest EPA grant ever awarded for a children's research center. The project is a subsidiary of Duke's Children's Environmental Health Initiative and will include a review of 15 years' worth of data on live births in North Carolina. The data will be analyzed, keeping in mind social and environmental variables.