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Maternal and Child Health: A Smart Investment
Importance of a healthy start recognized during National Women's Health Week

Madison – In recognition of National Women's Health Week, the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) issues a reminder that access to maternal and child health care is the best chance for a healthy start.

Every year, nearly one million American women deliver babies without receiving adequate medical attention. Babies born to mothers who receive no prenatal care are three times more likely to be born at low birth weight, and five times more likely to die than those whose mothers received prenatal care.

The United States has one of the highest rates of unintended pregnancy in the industrialized world. Half of the six million pregnancies that occur among American women each year are unintended. Often with unintended pregnancies, women are less likely to seek adequate medical care and prenatal care treatment.

Among unintended pregnancies in Wisconsin, many of them are to teen mothers and unfortunately children of teenage mothers have lower birth weights, are more likely to perform poorly in school, and are at greater risk of abuse and neglect.

"We need to invest in the health of our communities on the front end rather than band-aid preventable problems," said WAWH Director Sara Finger. "It's vital to ensure women have access early on to comprehensive health care information and services."

The Wisconsin Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Hotline provides information and linkages to services and resources for women before, during, and after pregnancy and for children including children with special health care needs. Information is available in the following program areas: WIC, Healthy Start, BadgerCare, HealthCheck, Prenatal Care Coordination, Presumptive Eligibility, Children and Youth With Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN), Family Planning, and the Wisconsin Well Woman Program.

Wisconsin ranks 18th worst in the nation in rates of smoking during pregnancy. Smoking during pregnancy affects 9,503 births each year in Wisconsin. First Breath is a program that helps pregnant women in Wisconsin quit smoking.

"To support Wisconsin families, it's important to help women plan and space their pregnancies and to connect pregnant women to the health care services and information they and their families need," said Finger.

To learn more about maternal and child health programs in Wisconsin, visit www.supportwomenshealth.org.

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The mission of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) is to advance women's health by creating an environment in which the public and elected officials confidently support women's health policy.

To learn more about WAWH, visit our website: www.supportwomenshealth.org