

Suggested Activities

Birth Defects Prevention Month - January 2006

Listed below are activities that may be used to promote Birth Defects Prevention Month. In addition to providing pamphlets and other educational resources to local health departments and community-based organizations, states can:

- Partner with state health departments, March of Dimes and health care advocacy and support groups, to mobilize efforts aimed at legislators and other policy makers.
- Team up with health care advocacy and support groups, March of Dimes, and state health departments to conduct community education activities.
- Seek out health educators and school nurses at middle and high schools to provide comprehensive health materials to distribute to staff members, students and students' families.
- Contact the Communications lead for your own agency and ask about having Birth Defects Prevention Month and the availability of the packet materials announced by the head of your agency in your monthly newsletter, in an "ALL" email, or as a stuffer in payroll envelopes.
- Contact community and local colleges and universities to provide materials for their health center waiting rooms; contact chapters of sororities on local campus to provide materials or to make presentations.
- Enlist the support of the March of Dimes, Genetic Associations, American Medical Associations (AMA), Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies, or Planned Parenthood to mobilize their constituents to distribute materials and send letters to legislators.
- Seek support from statewide or local businesses. Encourage companies to:
 - Add information about preconceptional health to their corporate or wellness newsletters;
 - Sponsor events such as baby fairs and donate door prizes such as baskets filled with folic acid enriched items, as well as other healthy living items;
 - Sponsor company health fairs which include screening for diabetes, hypertension, smoking cessation classes; nutrition and exercise.
- Provide pamphlets or fact sheets to managed care plans to educate their patients and providers.
- Distribute materials to the state's Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS) Program; Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Programs; Reproductive Health and Family Planning Program; Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program and Medicaid.

- Collaborate with hospitals or clinics on community outreach projects to promote preconceptional health. Topics may include: genetic screening and counseling, medical assessment, healthy lifestyles and teratogen exposures.
- Distribute educational materials to reproductive genetics clinics that offer genetic counseling services to women prior to conception and in early pregnancy.
- Share prevention materials with pediatric and family medicine practices, as well as OB/GYN providers.
- Connect with partners in the media who are committed to preconceptional health issues. Prepare PSA scripts and write educational articles that may be used and adapted by local media. Recruit a birth defects prevention 'champion' such as a doctor, nurse, a parent of a child with birth defects or a local celebrity for media interviews.
- Promote preconceptional health by volunteering to make a presentation to groups, such as pharmacy groups, nursing groups, genetic counselors, community health care workers and advocacy groups, who may benefit from hearing the message.