

Appendix 2: Adapting Toolkit for Local Partners

Materials for LHD

This appendix contains some of the materials from the 2021 National Birth Defects Prevention Month packet that have been adapted for use in raising birth defects awareness with local public health agencies. These materials supplement a more comprehensive packet that includes a sample news release, proclamation, provider letters, resources on the internet, and parent resources.

Local public health resource toolkit includes examples of:

- LPH1: Local public health announcement
- LPH2: Traditional letter to local public health agency administrators
- LPH3: Electronic letter to local public health agency staff
- LPH4: Brief awareness article
- LPH5: Awareness article for public health clinic newsletters
- LPH6: Announcement for electronic newsletters or listservs

LPH1: Sample local public health announcement

Plan ahead for January 2021 – National Birth Defects Prevention Month!

The theme for 2021 is “**Best for You. Best for Baby.**” We encourage you to begin thinking about activities you can do in your agency or community to raise public awareness. Not all birth defects can be prevented. But you can increase your chances of having a healthy baby by doing what you can to be your healthiest self both before and during pregnancy. What is best for you is also best for your baby.

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) has developed a valuable packet of information to raise awareness about birth defects. These include communication tools and resources.

Some ideas for use of the packet to raise awareness include:

- Put posters up in your agency waiting rooms, even restrooms!
- Provide fact sheets and posters on the importance of using folic acid to prevent certain types of serious birth defects.
- Volunteer to present information on birth defects and birth defects prevention at a virtual “lunch and learn” or webinar with your Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and Home Visiting Nurses and other staff.
- Supply pamphlets or fact sheets for patients and professionals in doctors’ offices and clinics in the community.

Electronic materials will be sent as soon as they are ready. Please contact [**Insert contact name**] if you would like more information.

LPH2: Sample traditional letter to local public health agency administrators

January 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Administrators, County Health Departments

District Nurse Managers [Insert Other Recipients]

FROM: [Name]

[Title]

About 120,000 babies are affected by birth defects each year in the United States. In [State], approximately [###] babies are born with a birth defect each year. Not only can birth defects lead to lifelong challenges and disability, they are also the most common cause of death in infants and the second most common cause of death in children aged one to four years. I have included a state wide Birth Defects Profile for [State] (as well as a [Region] Birth Defects Profile) for your reference.

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month. The theme for 2021 is “**Best for You. Best for Baby.**” We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. But you can increase your chances of having a healthy baby by doing what you can to be your healthiest self both before and during pregnancy. What is best for you is also best for your baby.

5 Tips for Preventing Birth Defects

Tip ①: Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.

Tip ②: Book a visit with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medicine.

Tip ③: Become up-to-date with all vaccines, including the flu shot.

Tip ④: Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight.

Tip ⑤: Boost your health by avoiding harmful substances during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

You can make a difference in the lives of [State] families. Please review the materials in the attached packet and use them to raise public awareness of birth defects. We invite you to share these resources with coworkers, colleagues, staff, and others who might benefit from this information.

Thank you for your support. If you have any questions or would like additional materials, please contact me or [Contact] by phone at [XXX-XXX-XXXX] or by email [Email].

LPH3: Sample electronic letter to local public health agency staff

Dear [public health nurses/practitioners/clinic staff/etc.],

The [name of state health department – hyperlinked to website] is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. The theme for 2021 is “**Best for You. Best for Baby.**”

We hope that you will join us in promoting National Birth Defects Prevention Month and raising awareness of birth defects as a public health issue in your communities. Governor [name of Governor] has also proclaimed the month of January 2021 as Birth Defects Prevention Month [hyperlink to state proclamation]. I invite you to share the attached resources with coworkers, colleagues, local public health staff, and others who might benefit from this information.

Birth defects affect 1 in every 33 babies born in the United States and are a leading cause of infant mortality. Babies who survive and live with birth defects are at an increased risk for developing many lifelong physical, cognitive, and social challenges. Medical care and support services only scrape the surface of the financial and emotional impact of living with birth defects. We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. But, we also know that women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by managing health conditions and adopting healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant.

Please encourage all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to:

- Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.
- Book a visit with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medicine.
- Become up-to-date with all vaccines, including the flu shot.
- Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight.
- Boost your health by avoiding harmful substances during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

The [name of state birth defects program – hyperlink to birth defects program website] website contains information, resources, and links to free educational materials from [name of state health department], the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN). We encourage you to use these materials to raise awareness of the ways birth defects can be prevented among health professionals and the general public in your community.

You have the power to make a difference. We urge you to join us as an active participant in National Birth Defects Prevention Month - 2021 and to continue your efforts throughout the year.

LPH4: Sample awareness article (brief)

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month!

Best for You. Best for Baby. 5 Tips for Preventing Birth Defects.

The [name of state/local] Department of Health is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) and the [State] March of Dimes to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. Join us in promoting National Birth Defects Prevention Month!

Birth defects affect 1 in every 33 babies born in the United States and are a leading cause of infant mortality. Babies who survive and live with birth defects are at an increased risk for developing many lifelong physical, cognitive, and social challenges.

Although not all birth defects can be prevented, all women who could become pregnant or are pregnant can lower their risk of having babies with birth defects by following some basic health guidelines throughout their reproductive years. These include:

- Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.
- Book a visit with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medicine.
- Become up-to-date with all vaccines, including the flu shot.
- Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight.
- Boost your health by avoiding harmful substances during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

January is a perfect time to call additional attention to the importance of folic acid in preventing certain birth defects. The United States Public Health Service recommends that all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms (400mcg or .4mg) of folic acid daily to prevent up to 50 - 70% of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida and anencephaly.

The [**name of State Birth Defects Program**] has resource materials available on their website to assist you in raising awareness of birth defects as a public health issue in your clinic and communities. Materials include the NBDPN resource packet that can be tailored to meet your specific needs, sample partner and provider letters, a proclamation of the month, as well as links to resources for parents and other interested in learning more about birth defects.

For more information, contact [**insert name and email**]

LPH5: Sample awareness article for public health clinic newsletters

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month!

The [State] Department of Health is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that can reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications.

This year's theme is "**Best for You. Best for Baby.**" Although not all birth defects can be prevented, the healthcare community can help all women who could become pregnant or are pregnant to lower their risk of having babies with birth defects. This includes encouraging them to follow some basic health guidelines throughout their reproductive years:

- Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.
- Book a visit with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medicine.
- Become up-to-date with all vaccines, including the flu shot.
- Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight.
- Boost your health by avoiding harmful substances during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

January is a perfect time to call additional attention to the importance of folic acid in preventing certain birth defects. The United States Public Health Service recommends that all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms (400mcg or .4mg) of folic acid daily to prevent up to 50 - 70% of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida and anencephaly.

You can make a difference in the lives of [State] families. Additional resources can be found on the NBDPN website. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact [name and email].

LPH6: Sample announcement for electronic newsletters or listservs

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month

The [name of state health department – hyperlinked to website] is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. We hope that you will join us in promoting National Birth Defects Prevention Month!

This year's theme is "**Best for You. Best for Baby.**" We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. However, we encourage all women to make healthy choices and adopt healthy habits to help lower their risk of having a baby born with a birth defect. Please encourage all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to follow the recommended guidelines to reduce their chance of developing an infection before or during their pregnancy.

The [name of state birth defects program - hyperlink to birth defects program website] has resource materials available on their website to assist you in raising awareness of birth defects as a public health issue in your clinic and communities. Materials include the NBDPN resource packet and [State] resource packet that can be tailored to meet your specific needs. These materials contain sample partner and provider letters, a proclamation of the month, as well as links to resources for parents and other interested in learning more about birth defects and infections during pregnancy.

Now is a perfect time to draw attention to the importance of taking folic acid to prevent certain birth defects. The United States Public Health Service recommends that all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms (400mcg or .4mg) of folic acid daily to prevent up to 50 - 70% of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida and anencephaly.