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NEVADA STATE HEALTH DIVISION

NEWS RELEASE

The Nevada State Health Division Releases New Report on Perinatal HIV/AIDS

Another public health milestone!

Carson City – The Nevada State Health Division recently released the “Special Report on Children Born to HIV-Positive Women in Nevada: 2000-2009,” which is available at http://health.nv.gov/HCQC/2009-03-19_Perinatal_Report.pdf. The report describes the accomplishments that have been made in preventing newborn HIV infection in Nevada since the passage of Senate Bill 266 (SB266) during the 2007 Legislative Session.

Senator Horsford and Assemblyman Parks cosponsored SB 266, which implemented the new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) guidelines for prevention of newborn HIV infection and the passage of SB 266 in 2007 made Nevada one of the first states to put these guidelines into statute.

Since the passage of SB266, Nevada has had no cases of newborn HIV infections. The number of mothers who learned their HIV status during labor doubled from 2006 to 2008. The number of HIV tests administered in family planning services in Clark and Washoe Counties have more than doubled and more children born to HIV infected mothers were detected as a result of the increase in statewide HIV testing.

“This is a great example of how legislators show their leadership in passing laws that are effective and strengthen public health,” said Dr. Guinan, State Health Officer. “It is through their hard work, determination and dedication that the health of our residents continues to improve. All of the Senate and most of the Assembly members voted yes on SB266, showing bipartisan support. And thanks are due to all health care and public health workers who worked to pass SB 266 and then implemented the guidelines immediately into their practice. Public health improvements are achieved when everyone works together.”

From 2006 to 2008, Nevada has experienced an increase early prenatal care among HIV positive pregnant women, with over half receiving their care during the first trimester. Additionally, preventive strategies aimed at reducing the transmission of HIV from mother-to-child, such as

(MORE)



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preventive medication and alternate delivery methods (C-section), have increased during this time. There has also been a decrease in HIV-exposed children born of low birth weight due to the increase in preventative care.

“It is vitally important that everyone know their HIV/AIDS status, but especially crucial for women of childbearing age, especially those who are pregnant,” said Dr. Guinan. “Once a woman knows that she is positive for HIV, care and treatment can be given to her to help reduce the risk that her newborn will be affected by this devastating disease.”

The report identifies younger, minority women who reside in Clark County to be the population most at risk for perinatal HIV infection. By identifying the population at highest risk, prevention programs can focus on these groups in order to reduce prenatal HIV exposure and transmission.

Anyone interested in knowing their HIV/AIDS status can ask their health care provider or local health department for testing.

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