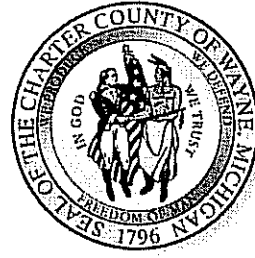




**Detroit-Wayne County
Community Mental Health Agency**

Always here... whenever you need us.



NEWS RELEASE

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Mental Health Agency recognizes National Birth Defect Prevention Month – January 2008

The month of January has been designated as National Birth Defects Prevention Month. A birth defect is an abnormality of structure function or body metabolism that are present at birth and that lead to a physical or developmental disability and or possibly death. There are more than 4,000 (known) birth defects ranging from minor to serious in nature and about 120,000 babies (1 in 33) in the U.S. are born with a birth defect. Although many defects can be treated or cured, birth defects still remain the leading cause of death of infants in the first year of life. The causes of many birth defects are unknown, but expert agree there are a few steps a woman can take to reduce her risk of having a baby with birth defects. Pre-pregnancy planning is encouraged to ensure that mothers prepare themselves by checking on family history, medical history, and other factors to discuss the potential of genetic testing and or gene therapy either before and or during the pregnancy. Also in recent years health providers have encouraged preconception health including the use of multivitamins, including vitamin B and folic acid, managing other chronic conditions of the mother, encouraging pre-natal exams and observations, and to avoid the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other illicit drugs .

Acting Executive Director, of the Detroit-Wayne County Mental Health Agency (DWCCMHA), Ms Veda Sharp comments about Birth Defects, “ Pre-conception health is no longer a notion, it is formulary of care that is essential to good health, if prenatal care is good,

ultrasound, amniocentesis, and other tests can be done to identify risks, and the general good health of both the baby and the mom is increased. That is why we urge persons to understand and practice birth defect prevention month advice, it is recommendations like this that saves lives.”

For more information about birth defects contact the March of Dimes or visit the SAMSHA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) website at www.SAMSHA.gov.

The Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency serves over 55,000 consumers more than 6,500 of those persons have a developmental disability. The Agency also provides crisis intervention mental health services, and other assistance through a 24 Hour Help Line at 1-800-241-4949 for TTY services for the deaf, 1-866-870-2599.