



March of Dimes Foundation

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March of Dimes Supports Smoking Cessation for Pregnant Women

The mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of women of childbearing age, infants, and children by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality. In accordance with this mission, we seek to protect pregnant women, infants, and young children from the dangers of secondhand smoke exposure. To that end, the Vermont Chapter of the March of Dimes supports funding relating to tobacco cessation for pregnant women.

Approximately 20% of Vermont women of childbearing age smoke, and among pregnant women 18% are smokers. Women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely than nonsmokers to have a low birthweight or preterm baby. Prematurity is the leading cause of death in the first month of life, and has significant impact on the developmental, respiratory, and overall health of babies exposed to tobacco during pregnancy.

Smoking cessation services for pregnant women are among a small number of effective, evidence-based, and cost-effective interventions for improving birth outcomes. Research indicates that effective smoking cessation interventions during pregnancy can reduce costs for care of babies born too soon or too small as a result of tobacco.

Pregnant women with low incomes, including those covered by Medicaid, are more likely than other pregnant women to smoke. Joint estimates by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, have found that smoking-attributable neonatal health care costs for Medicaid total almost \$228 million, or about \$738 per pregnant smoker.

The Affordable Care Act requires Medicaid financing for smoking cessation during pregnancy. The required Medicaid smoking cessation services for pregnant women must be comprehensive and include diagnostic, therapy and counseling services, as well as pharmacotherapy for cessation of tobacco use (e.g., gum or patches). The law allows States flexibility with respect to how this new mandatory service is provided. Vermont submitted its state Medicaid plan for smoking cessation during pregnancy in 2011.

The March of Dimes asks that the House Appropriations Committee add funding for tobacco cessation programs for adults, pregnant women, and youth. Specifically, we feel that you should add:

- Funding for specific tobacco cessation programs targeted towards adults, pregnant women, and youth;
- Add a representative to the Vermont Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board that has specific experience with pregnant women;
- Evaluate outcomes specifically related to pregnant women when allocating funds; and
- Incorporate outcomes related to pregnant women in the annual report.