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Health District's Nurse/Family Partnership program earns good marks

LAS VEGAS – The Southern Nevada Health District's Nurse/Family Partnership (NFP) an evidence-based community health program that assists women who are pregnant with their first child, has completed its first full year and received a report card from the program's national office assessing the effectiveness of the program. Based on the first report card, success of the program is evident: 98 percent of the 76 babies born to date were full-term and were born at a healthy birth weight. More than 90 percent of mothers participating in the program initiated breast feeding.

The health district's program currently has 108 clients. Women are paired with a community health nurse as they work together throughout the pregnancy until the baby's second birthday.

"Our clients range in age from 13 to 35 years old. These are women who are at risk of giving birth prematurely or delivering lower birth weight babies. These are often the result of a lack of prenatal care, which is something of vital importance to ensure babies are born healthy and later become healthy children and adults," said Gwen Osburn, community nurse health manager. "Independent studies by the RAND Corporation and the Brookings Foundation have found that young women who participate in this public health program are more likely to graduate from high school and have lower enrollment in social assistance programs. The program is an investment in the future." It is estimated that every dollar invested in the NFP can yield as much as a five dollar return.

Locally, most women are referred to the NFP after they visit a Southern Nevada Health District public health center where they seek pregnancy testing. In addition, health care providers also refer patients to the program.

"The goals of the NFP are ambitious but simple and start with the idea that a healthy pregnancy leads to healthy children. The program is family focused and helps ensure women get the prenatal care they need, that they are provided with information about changes they can make to improve their health during and after pregnancy, and to teach them skills to be good parents. All of these skills help them to become an economically self-sufficient family," said Dr. Lawrence Sands, chief health officer.

The Southern Nevada health District's program began with its focus on North Las Vegas, an area with a larger percentage of young, single low-income women who have limited or no access to prenatal care.

NFP has been recognized by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, the RAND Corporation, The Brookings Institute, Partnership for America's Economic Success, Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency, and the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy.

Updated information about the Southern Nevada Health District can be found on Facebook www.facebook.com/SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict, on YouTube www.youtube.com/SNHHealthDistrict or Twitter : www.twitter.com/SNHInfo.