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Immediate Release

August Recognized As Breastfeeding Awareness Month in Michigan

Kingsford, Michigan – August 14, 2007. In an effort to promote greater awareness on the benefits of breastfeeding, Governor Granholm and the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) are recognizing August as Breastfeeding Awareness Month in Michigan. Nationally, World Breastfeeding Week was recognized during August 1-7.

In 2005, 67.4 percent of Michigan infants were breastfed, and only 33 percent of six-month-olds were receiving human milk. Healthy People 2010, a program managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, have set a goal of having 75 percent of mothers breastfeeding in the early postpartum period and for 50 percent of mothers to continue breastfeeding for at least six months.

The benefits of breastfeeding to both mother and baby are widely acknowledged by MDCH, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and various health organizations worldwide.

A recent report from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) confirms that breastfeeding is associated with fewer episodes of diarrhea during infancy, decreased incidence of childhood leukemia, and fewer cases of sudden infant death syndrome. The findings also conclude there is good evidence that breastfeeding reduces infants' risk of ear infections by up to 50 percent and serious lower respiratory tract infections by 72 percent. Children with a family history of asthma who have been breastfed were 40 percent less likely to have asthma. The risk of developing both Type I and Type II Diabetes is also reduced by breastfeeding. Furthermore, evidence suggests that women who do not breastfeed their infants have an increased risk of developing Type II Diabetes, Ovarian Cancer, and Breast Cancer.

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Michigan's Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program, which helps pregnant moms, babies, and children less than age five receive nutritious foods, will help heighten awareness through their 2007 Breastfeeding Awareness Month theme of "Michigan Families...Breastfeed With Pride." The awareness effort will encourage families to embrace the optimal health benefits of breastfeeding and will strive to increase public support and acceptance of breastfeeding as a cultural norm and a fundamental cornerstone of promoting wellness in Michigan.

For further information on the Healthy People 2010 program with regard to breastfeeding, please visit <http://www.healthypeople.gov/data/midcourse/html/focusareas/FA16Objectives.htm>. To access the April 2007 AHR report on the benefits of breastfeeding, please go to <http://www.ahrq.gov/downloads/pub/evidenc/pdf/brfout/brfout.pdf>.

For further information on Michigan's WIC Program, please go to www.michigan.gov/wic or call the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department at (906)779-7212 or (906) 265-4173.

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