



March
of Dimes
Saving babies, together

Public Affairs Issues and Year 2008 Advocacy Priorities

The March of Dimes Public Affairs agenda focuses on public policies and programs that relate to the Foundation's mission -- improving the health of infants and children by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality -- and on issues that pertain to tax-exempt organizations. Public Affairs initiatives are designed to support the March of Dimes priority that racial and ethnic health disparities be reduced or eliminated wherever possible. Issues are organized into the four general categories listed below and specific examples are cited for each category. A star in the left margin indicates that the issue is a Foundation-wide advocacy priority for the year 2008. Federal advocacy on any issues listed may also require participation by Chapters.

I. ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR WOMEN OF CHILDBEARING AGE, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN

- ★ Federal and state initiatives to expand newborn screening as well as treatment.
- ★ Federal and state policies regarding health coverage including Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), other publicly supported coverage, as well as private insurance to protect and improve access to and quality of health care.
- Standards of care for mothers and children enrolled in health plans.
- Standards to protect patient privacy and prohibit genetic discrimination.
- Federal and state initiatives to improve maternal and child health care.
- Initiatives to improve the health of preterm and low birthweight infants and children living with birth defects.

II. RESEARCH TO PREVENT PREMATURITY, BIRTH DEFECTS AND INFANT MORTALITY

- ★ Birth defects surveillance, research, prevention and treatment programs at the state, federal, and international level.
- Research funded by the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other Federal agencies to increase knowledge relating to the prevention of birth defects, prematurity and infant mortality.

III. PREVENTION AND TREATMENT PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE MATERNAL, INFANT, AND CHILD HEALTH

- ★ Smoking, alcohol and substance abuse prevention and cessation initiatives affecting women of childbearing age and children.
- Programs to improve prematurity risk detection and prevent preterm births.
- Food and nutrition education programs such as WIC - Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children.
- Programs to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in health care.
- Programs to immunize infants and children, research to develop new vaccines, and efforts to eradicate polio worldwide.
- Programs to collect data on and reduce exposure to environmental and reproductive hazards associated with birth defects.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS FOR TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS

- ★ Federal and state laws and regulations related to tax-exempt organizations.
- Postal reform and rate changes.
- Tax treatment of charitable contributions.