

Public Affairs Issues and Year 2009 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. Where appropriate, Public Affairs initiatives are designed to support the March of Dimes priority that racial and ethnic health disparities be reduced or eliminated. Issues are organized into the four general categories listed below with specific examples cited for each category. A star in the left margin indicates that the issue is a Foundation-wide advocacy priority for the year 2009. 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 policies pertaining to health coverage including Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), other publicly supported programs, as well as private insurance to improve access to health services.
- ★ Development and use of perinatal and pediatric quality measures.
- Federal and state initiatives to improve newborn screening as well as follow up and treatment of infants who test positive for disorders identified through screening.
- 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 including public funding for priority programs.

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

- ★ Birth defects surveillance, research, prevention and treatment programs at the state, federal, and international levels.

- Data collection and 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 TO IMPROVE MATERNAL, INFANT, AND CHILD HEALTH

- ★ Smoking, alcohol and substance abuse prevention and cessation initiatives affecting women of childbearing age and children.
- Initiatives to improve prematurity risk detection and pregnancy management to prevent preterm births.
- Food and nutrition research, education and services, such as the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).
- Initiatives to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in health care.
- Programs to immunize infants and children, efforts to eradicate polio worldwide, and research to develop new vaccines.
- Programs to 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.