

**From the
March of
Dimes Data
Book for Policy
Makers...**

What percentage of women receive inadequate prenatal care? How different is that percentage for black, white, and Hispanic women?

This fact—and more—is found in the 2001 Data Book.

Continued from Page 3

dents under age 18. For the March of Dimes analysis, the information is provided on all citizens under age 19, regardless of dependence status because this is the definition of children used by Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

How to Use New Data

It is important to note that these new data supercede the information used previously by the March of Dimes. This includes information on the uninsured from the *Data Book for Policy Makers, 2001*; *Perinatal Profiles*; the new Peristats tool on the March of Dimes website; and materials for last year's "Make a Difference Day."

The *Advocacy Update* delivers legislative news about March of Dimes issues on a monthly basis.

Editor:
Christina F. Manero

If you have questions or comments about the *Advocacy Update*, contact:

**March of Dimes
Birth Defects Foundation
Office of Government Affairs
1146 19th Street, N.W.
6th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20036
Telephone: (202) 659-1800
Fax: (202) 296-2964**

copyright © March of Dimes
October 2001



Office of Government Affairs
1146 19th Street, N.W., 6th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20036



President Bush, Secretary Thompson Highlight March of Dimes Conferences

President George W. Bush addressed the 2001 March of Dimes Volunteer Leadership Conference (VLC) which was held in conjunction with the Public Affairs Conference during the week of Oct. 8 in Washington. The President praised the Foundation and its leaders for an extraordinary history of service to America and the world.

"[F]or more than six decades, the volunteers and supporters of the March of Dimes have given help and hope to those in need, and I'm here to say thanks on behalf of the American people," President Bush said. "Your resolve in combating

disease has changed the world in which we live."

"I want to thank Gary (Forsee) and Jennifer (Howse) for their leadership and thank ... the

trustees who are here," he said. "And I particularly want to thank the volunteers from all across America who have come today."

He expressed strong support for March of Dimes advocacy and research: "[Y]ou're advocating better access to prenatal care,

expanded health care coverage, and a greater awareness of proper nutrition and immunization. You're supporting genetic testing, screening and research.

These efforts are saving the lives of women and children and advancing the frontiers of medicine."

"Such important goals for our country, such an admirable cause, and I'm here to thank you for it," he said. "Advancing these frontiers

"[F]or more than six decades, the volunteers and supporters of the March of Dimes have given help and hope to those in need, and I'm here to say thanks on behalf of the American people..."

Continued on Page 2



Inside

- North Carolina Achieves Double Success (page 3)
- '02 Issues and Priorities (page 3)
- News You Can Use (page 3)
- Special Insert: Public Affairs Issues and 2002 Advocacy Priorities & Table of Uninsured Women and Children (1999-2000)

Continued from Page 1

is also a priority of my administration...”

The President used the occasion to take a page out of the March of Dimes history book. “I’m asking every child in America to give not a dime, but a dollar to a specific cause: a relief effort for the children of Afghanistan,” he said. The March of Dimes is “an appropriate place to announce this initiative of compassion.”

President Bush did not have to wait long to accept the first contribution. At the suggestion of March of Dimes Trustee Jim Sproull, Justin Washington, 2001 March of Dimes National Ambassador, gave the President America’s first dollar donation to help Afghan children.



The President thanked Justin for his donation, and joked: “I know Justin pretty well. I got to see him in the Oval Office, and he made it clear, his boots were better than mine,” a reference to Justin’s boots that were made by the President’s boot maker and emblazoned with the March of Dimes logo in place of the presidential seal.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Sec. Tommy Thompson introduced the President and recognized the exceptional work of the Foundation.

“I thank you for what you stand for, what you accomplish in your communities, your states and for this wonderful, great country of ours,” Sec. Thompson told volunteers and staff. He described President Bush as someone who understands that caring for mothers and children promotes healthier and happier lives.

Ganesh Shankar, the National Public Affairs Committee’s Youth Council representative, opened the Public Affairs Conference

Oct. 10. Attendees also heard from Anna Roosevelt, National Public Affairs Committee Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees; Dr. Jennifer L. Howse, March of Dimes President; and Dr. José Cordero, acting director of the new National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In her introduction of Dr. Cordero, Dr. Howse reminded the audience of the Foundation’s role in leading the charge to enact the Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1998 and the Children’s Health Act of 2000.

The Children’s Health Act

contains the provision that created the new center at the CDC. “Our National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities is



the seventh of a group of centers that make up the CDC. The new center officially opened for business on April 16, 2001,” she said. “Your advocacy made a difference.”

Dr. Cordero thanked March of Dimes volunteers and staff for their work in creating the Center. He then spoke of the Center’s mission, which is to improve the health of children and adults by preventing birth defects and developmental disabilities; to promote optimal child development; and to ensure health and wellness among children and adults living with disabilities.

Public Affairs Conference attendees accompanied by Volunteer Leadership Conference participants visited congressional offices to urge House members and Senators to cosponsor legislation expand SCHIP to cover pregnant women, and to increase funding for birth defects research and prevention. Following the visits, 33 new commitments to cosponsor the SCHIP expansion legislation have been made.

New Census Data

National Findings

While the rate of insurance coverage improved for children between 1999 and 2000, more women of childbearing age (15-44) in 2000 lacked coverage. These trends were revealed in new U.S. Census Bureau analysis commissioned by the March of Dimes.

The proportion of children under age 19 in the United States who were uninsured dropped from 12.9 percent in 1999 to 12.0 percent in 2000, resulting in 652,000 fewer uninsured children. This is encouraging news and especially gratifying because improving coverage rates is a

Foundation-wide priority under the Strategic Plan for 2005.

In a disappointing trend, however, the percentage of women of childbearing age (15-44) went up from 17.8 percent in 1999 to 18.0 percent in 2000. This increase means that an additional 109,000 women were uninsured in 2000 than the year before. In fact, almost 30% of the 38 million uninsured Americans are women of childbearing age. This is particularly troubling given that the softening economy, exacerbated by the events of September 11, is expected to result in the loss of jobs and health coverage for women who

depend on employer-based insurance.

What’s Different

First, the Census Bureau made improvements in the survey they use to estimate the number of uninsured Americans. This new methodology is the reason that information displayed for many states has changed.

Second, in using these data you should be aware that the data for children provided to the March of Dimes is different than that released in late September by the Census Bureau. The reason for the difference is that the Census Bureau defines children as depen-

Continued on Page 4

’02 Issues and Priorities Set

The *March of Dimes Public Affairs Issues and Priorities for 2002* appears on the insert. As in past years, the policy issues and advocacy priorities were developed under the guidance of the National Public Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees.

Chapters, states and the Office of Government Affairs use this document to help set advocacy objectives and, for Chapters, to qualify for the Public Affairs component of the President’s Team Award. The identification of Foundation-wide advocacy priorities helps ensure the March of Dimes speaks with one voice about the Foundation’s 2002 legislative and regulatory agenda.

North Carolina Achieves Double Success

North Carolina’s multi-year effort to secure funding for the Birth Defects Monitoring Program (NCBDMP) and the Folic Acid Campaign (NCFAC) paid off this year.

Volunteers and staff used their advocacy day to obtain support for NCBDMP and NCFAC legislation. But an unanticipated budget crisis brought bill progress to an abrupt halt. The Chapter intensified its effort using a media-based strategy that kept the issue in the forefront of the public and legislators minds.

At the end of the longest legislative session in state history, legislators approved a budget that

included \$325,000—recurring through 2004—for the NCBDMP and \$400,000 to cover the NCFAC July 2001-June 2002 activities. The NCFAC will be supported with non-recurring funds, but the Chapter is working on several fronts—Women’s Caucus, Attorney General’s office, and Governor’s office—to secure long-term funding for the campaign.

Be sure to visit the new-look March of Dimes website at: www.modimes.org.