



ASSOCIATION OF MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMS

AMCHP RESPONDS TO CDC REPORT ON INCREASED PREVALENCE OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) IN CHILDREN

Mar. 28, 2014 (Washington, DC) – The Association of Maternal & Child Health Association (AMCHP) commended the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for continuing to improve the information available on children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

“The data released by CDC help provide further insight into the prevalence and identification of autism spectrum disorder,” said AMCHP CEO Lori Freeman. “Together, we recognize the need for more information and understanding of why some children are identified with autism before others, as well as the importance of early screening and diagnosis for ASD and other developmental disabilities.”

According to the new report from the CDC National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, the prevalence of ASD in children is one in 68, or 14.7 per 1,000 eight year olds. This represents an approximate 30 percent increase between 2008 and 2010. While the cause of the increase is unknown, it is likely that better awareness, screening and diagnosis efforts play a significant role.

“Early identification and diagnosis is one of the most powerful tools we currently have to make a difference in the lives of children with autism,” Freeman continued. “State Title V maternal and child health and children and youth with special health care needs programs – through implementation of the HRSA Combating Autism Act Initiative and CDC *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* campaign – have played key roles in leading efforts to build comprehensive systems of care for children to ensure early identification, diagnosis, and connection to needed services and family supports.”

The report, *Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder among Children Aged 8 Years – Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, 11 Sites, United States, 2010*, is available at cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6302a1.htm. Similar to prior trends, the 2010 data showed boys were more likely than girls to be identified with ASD and white children were more likely to be identified than black or Hispanic children. The report indicates most children identified with ASD were not diagnosed until after age four, even though children can be diagnosed as early as age two.

“These data are an important call to action. In addition to providing leadership on comprehensive system efforts, Title V programs also often provide infrastructure to monitor and analyze autism prevalence in their states and communities. It’s critical we continue efforts to develop a better

understanding of the disorder, address disparities and partner with families to ensure effective screening, interventions and systems of care,” Freeman said.

The release of this report coincides with the launch of the *Birth to Five: Watch Me Thrive!* Initiative, which is a coordinated federal effort to encourage developmental and behavioral screening and support for children, families, and the providers who care for them. For more information, visit hhs.gov/WatchMeThrive.

AMCHP supports reauthorization of the Combating Autism Act as well as increased appropriations for the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant to provide states and communities the tools and resources to address autism and other leading MCH issues.

For more information about AMCHP work to support systems of care for children and youth with autism spectrum disorder through its State Public Health Autism Resource Center (SPHARC) and work with the CDC *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* campaign, please visit www.amchp.org/SPHARC.

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The AMCHP mission is to support state maternal and child health programs and provide national leadership on issues affecting women and children. For more information, please contact Brent Ewig, director of policy, at bewig@amchp.org or call (202) 226.3041.