



Birth Defects Appropriations Fact Sheet

Program	FY07	FY08 Suggested	Increase
Birth Defects Research & Surveillance	\$14,600,000	\$24,600,000	\$10,000,000
Folic Acid Education Campaign	\$2,265,000	\$4,265,000	\$2,000,000

Increased funding is needed for the Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities to expand birth defects research, surveillance and prevention activities.

Birth Defects Basic Facts

- In the United States, about 3% of all babies are born with a major birth defect. Birth defects are the leading cause of infant mortality accounting for more than 20% of all infant deaths.
- Children with birth defects who survive may experience lifelong physical and mental disabilities, and are at increased risk for developing other health problems.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the lifetime economic cost of caring for infants born each year with 1 of the 18 most common birth defects exceeds \$8 billion.

Research and Surveillance

The National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) is funding the largest case-control study of birth defects ever conducted -- the National Birth Defects Prevention Study. Nine regional centers participating in the Study identify infants with major birth defects; interview mothers about medical history, environmental exposures, and lifestyle before and during pregnancy; and collect DNA samples to study gene-environment interactions. With nearly 10 years worth of data and samples collected this study is a rich source of information on possible causes of birth defects.

The NCBDDD also provides funding to assist states with community-based birth defects surveillance systems, programs to prevent birth defects, and activities to improve access to health services for children with birth defects. Surveillance forms the backbone of a vital, functional and responsive public health network.

- **The March of Dimes recommends \$24.6 million or a \$10 million increase over FY07** for a comprehensive birth defects program that includes surveillance, research and prevention activities. Additional resources are needed to fund all the states seeking CDC assistance and increase the assistance to states already receiving funds. Also, increased funding will prevent the reduction of sites participating in the National Birth Defects Prevention Study.

Prevention

CDC estimates that up to 70% of neural tube defects (NTDs), serious birth defects of the brain and spinal cord including anencephaly and spina bifida, could be prevented if all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily, beginning before pregnancy. Since fortification of U.S. enriched grain products with folic acid, the rate of NTDs in the United States has decreased by 26%. NCBDDD is conducting a national public and health professions education campaign designed to increase the number of women taking folic acid. Unfortunately, according to a recent analysis conducted by CDC folate concentrations among non-pregnant women of child bearing age decreased by 16% from 1999-2000 through 2003-2004.

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- **The March of Dimes recommends \$4 million or a \$2 million increase over FY07** for folic acid education and neural tube defects prevention activities. The March of Dimes is concerned that women are not receiving an adequate level of folic acid to prevent neural tube defects, and the recent study findings make even more urgent the need for Congress to increase resources for CDC to intensify its campaign efforts to educate every woman of childbearing age and their health care providers about the importance of folic acid.

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