1. National Health Observances

April – National Minority Health Awareness Month:
The Office of Minority Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is highlighting the importance of preconception health using the month of April to launch a campaign that extends through September’s National Infant Mortality Awareness Month. The campaign is titled *Ordinary Couples Don’t Plan Their Pregnancies. Be Extraordinary!* The website has excellent resources to become a part of the campaign. Resources include articles, fact sheets, media kits, data, and video clips. The Office has also launched the Preconception Peer Educators Program for college age students. Visit this [website](#) for more information.

Increasing understanding of preconception and interconception care is a new recommendation from the MCFHC’s Fetal and Infant Mortality Review program. As a result, this will be a key priority in the MCFHC’s strategic plan for 2009 – 2013. Please let us know if you would like to be part of efforts to improve the health of women before, during and after pregnancy.

May – National Mental Health Month: The theme for this year’s focus on mental health is *Live Your Life Well.* With the economic insecurity, stress in individual and families’ lives is on the increase. The [Mental Health America](#) website provides a variety of resources for knowing symptoms of stress and depression as well as tips for staying healthy if confronting mental illness. It also has information on a variety of mental illnesses as well as a crisis line.

For those who are pregnant or postpartum, stress and depression are common factors. When recognized and acknowledged, help is available. St. Louis Healthy Start screens program participants and provides resources to help participants get relief. We are happy to share our screening tool and protocols. Locally, Behavioral Health Response has a crisis line to help those in crisis situations.

Missouri Crisis Hotlines: 314-469-6644 (local)
800-811-4760 (toll free)

2. MCH Leadership Professional Skills

*Introducing New Sections of the E-Newsletter:* The Board of Directors of the Maternal, Child and Family Health Coalition adopted key competencies intended to expand, enhance and where needed, create a cadre of professionals for leadership in MCFH for the St. Louis region. Those competencies included professional skills, maternal, child and family health (MCFH) background, specific maternal, child and family health topics and knowledge about conditions that impact infants and children. While many of our educational offerings address specific MCFH issues, addressing the professional skills and background is challenging.

We have decided to launch two new sections to the newsletter. The
Professional Skills (Competency Areas)
Organizational change Performance management
Advanced negotiation skills Understanding and using data
Community development Best practice
Professionalism Advocacy
Evaluation Leadership (how to develop leaders)
Diversity/cultural proficiencies Communication
Systems thinking (collaboration included)

3. MCH History, Philosophy & Ethics
Precursors to Maternal Child Health: Maternal child health traces its history back to the precursors of public health starting with the establishment of the Marine Hospital Service. This federally owned hospital service was started to provide medical care to merchant seaman in 1792. It also offered advice and support for epidemics and periods when quarantine was required. With the development of the smallpox vaccine in 1796, the first legislation to make vaccinations compulsory in the United States was passed in 1855. Also in 1855, the first children's hospital was established in Philadelphia soon to be followed by Boston. By the mid-1890's most major cities had a children's hospital including St. Louis which established its first children’s hospital in 1879.

Between 1847 and 1888, the American Medical Association, the American Pediatric Society, children’s clinics, the U.S. Department of Education, the first Board of Health (MA) and the American Public Health Association were all established. These organizations and efforts worked together to address the health and public health needs of the day. Increasingly, organizations were formed to address the needs of children that in time would lead to focusing on maternal influence on children’s health.

References

"Women and Childsaving: St. Louis Children's Hospital, 1879-1979” by Marion Hunt, http://beckerexhibits.wustl.edu/mowihsp/articles/SLCH.htm

4. MCFH Coalition 10th Anniversary News
The Maternal, Child and Family Health Coalition celebrates its 10th year of service! The Coalition was started in 1999 when volunteers recognized the need for a coalition as well as opportunities missed by not having one. With leadership from volunteers and staff of the March of Dimes and the St. Louis Children’s Agenda of Vision for
Children at Risk, the Coalition was launched. Ten years later, the Coalition is humbled to have increased its membership and activities to serve the community to insure that all women and children in the St. Louis community are healthy.

Watch this section for 10th Anniversary News!

5. MCFH Coalition Update
The Coalition has many educational opportunities available to you in April and May. See details below.

April 28 – Drug Exposed Infants: The Aftermath of Perinatal Substance Abuse. This is a free Community Education Forum sponsored by the St. Louis FIMR (Fetal Infant Mortality Review) Program. The program is Tuesday, April 28, 2009 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. It will be held at North Central Health Center, 4000 Jennings Station Road, St. Louis, MO 63121. For more information contact Rochelle Dean at 314-289-5683.

April 30 – Developing Logic Models for Local Settings – This is the first of the Coalition’s next education series. Nancy Weaver will teach participants how to plan programs using logic models. She will share with participants how to incorporate evidence-based practices and promising practices into MCH programs. The program is Thursday, April 30 from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. It will be held at Vision for Children at Risk, 2433 N. Grand Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63106. To register, email Jill Thompson at jthompson@stl-mcfhc.org There is a minimal cost for the session and series. For details go to the Coalition website.

May 21 – Solutions for a Healthier Community – The Coalition will host its second annual conference Thursday, May 21 at Saint Louis University’s Il Monastero Conference Center, 3010 Olive Street, St. Louis, MO, 63103. The conference begins with registration and continental breakfast at 8:00 a.m. For more details and conference registration, visit the Coalition website.

6. Web Resources