

Arkansas Chapter Folic Acid Plan

Problem Statement

Birth defects are the leading cause of infant mortality, accounting for more than one in five infant deaths in the United States.

- Neural tube defects affect approximately 2,500 babies born in the United States each year, and in Arkansas 12.4 of every 10,000 live births are affected.
- Birth defects can result in morbidity and lifelong disability.

In 1996, 54 pregnancies were affected by anencephaly and spina bifida in Arkansas. From 1993-1996, there were 13.7 per 10,000 live births for Caucasians and 6.71 per 10,000 live births for African-Americans. These findings give our state one of the highest rates of these defects in the country.

Daily intake of 400 micrograms of the B-vitamin folic acid can help to reduce the incidence of neural tube defects by 50 to 70 percent.

- Only 18% of non-pregnant women ages 18-24, 30% of non pregnant women ages 25-35 and 33% of non-pregnant women 35-45 report taking a vitamin containing folic acid daily.

According to the 1998 Gallup survey, women note that they generally do not hear about folic acid from their health care providers. Research conducted by the National Council on Folic Acid concluded that approximately two-thirds of women in the United States report that they would take a vitamin containing folic acid if their health care provider recommended it.

Target Population

The Arkansas Chapter will target women who are contemplating pregnancy, including women who are sexually active, who may or may not be using contraception, but are either thinking about the possibility of becoming pregnant or are trying to conceive. Educational messages will be distributed in both English and Spanish in order to reach as many women as possible.

Activity 2

Develop a one-page division/community council worksheet based on chapter Folic Acid Plan, to use in determining division/community council Folic Acid 1999 activities by September 1999.

Objective 1:3

(Arkansas Folic Acid Council Activities)

Develop new program activities targeted at increasing daily multivitamin use among women contemplating pregnancy. This will be on-going throughout 1999.

Activity 1

Involve the 7 Arkansas Rural Health Clinics by distributing Folic Acid Campaign materials to the AHEC offices to approximately 100 residents and physicians and 30,000 patients at the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences by May, 1999.

Activity 2

Approach the Retail Grocers Association to meet with their representatives to formulate and implement a plan to place advertising displays, flyers and promotions with the Folic Acid message to 30 sites by June, 1999.

Activity 3

Approach the Arkansas Pharmacy Association/Arkansas Board of Pharmacy to meet with their representatives to formulate and implement a plan to place advertising displays, flyers and promotions with the Folic Acid message to 100 pharmacies and to have inserts put in all prescriptions filled by October, 1999.

Activity 4

Upon agreement with the Arkansas Folic Acid Council, obtain a Proclamation from the Governor for having a Folic Acid Awareness Month by May, 1999.

Activity 5

Provide 1500 inserts with floral deliveries on Mother's Day with the Folic Acid message by May, 1999.

Activity 6

Provide a March of Dimes presence in 5 other non-profit events to promoting folic acid intake (ex: American Heart Association Walk). This will be on-going in 1999.

Activity 7

Distribute Centrum Vitamin samples to at least 1000 women through health fairs, neighborhood fairs, conferences, and health or fitness clubs. This will be on-going throughout 1999.

Activity 4

Educate Professional Education subcommittee of the PSC Committee to implement nursing modules on the importance of periconceptual folic acid intake and the need for patient education by December, 1999.

Objective 2.2

Expand existing partnerships with perinatal professionals and societies to promote the recommended folic acid intake in women of childbearing age by December 31, 1999.

Activity 1

Identify and contact at least 4 local affiliates of the National Council on Folic Acid by May 31, 1999.

Activity 2

Meet with current agency contacts, such as Health Departments, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Campaign for Healthier Babies, Arkansas Perinatal Association etc. to determine if folic acid education can become part of ongoing collaborative projects by July 1999.

C: Mass Media Objectives

(March of Dimes and Arkansas Folic Acid Council Activities)

Mass Media is the appropriate vehicle to reach the broadest possible audience with the folic acid message, particularly the message about behavioral change.

Objective 3:1

Develop a local committee (task force) of a minimum of 4 volunteers who can generate publicity, place public service announcements, and act as spokespeople for the campaign by August 1999.

Activity 1

Identify members of the community in a communications capacity to lend expertise. Recruit these representatives from media outlets, public relations and advertising firms and corporate communications to form task force by May 1999.

Activity 2

Utilize and expand developing Chapter Communications committee. This will be on-going throughout 1999.

Objective 3:2

Develop and implement a publicity plan to generate news stories around folic acid throughout the year with special emphasis during month of January, WalkAmerica and month of October. Contact a minimum of 3 television stations, 5 radio stations and 2 print outlets by October 31, 1999.

Activity 2

Assemble a list of volunteers who might be most appropriate to set up “pitch meetings” with these companies and then schedule sessions by August 1999.