

**Memo**

DATE: January 19, 2010

TO: All North Carolina community health centers and safety net clinics

FROM: Amy Mullenix, March of Dimes

SUBJECT:     **\*\*FUNDING REINSTATED\*\***  
              **FREE Multivitamins to Prevent Birth Defects**  
              **Must reply by February 5, 2010**

*We have just learned that state funds for the purchase and distribution of multivitamins to low income women are now available. This memorandum serves as an update to the email you received about the program's cancellation in November of 2009.*

The North Carolina (NC) General Assembly has provided funding for the statewide distribution of multivitamins with folic acid\* to low income non-pregnant women of childbearing potential to help prevent birth defects. The NC Division of Public Health and the NC Chapter of the March of Dimes Foundation have formed a partnership to provide the multivitamins through health departments, community health centers, and other safety net providers. The program will include the purchase and distribution of multivitamins, training for local health department and community health center staff, and technical assistance for participating agencies as they set up this program.

**Program Details:**

- Any low income non-pregnant woman of childbearing potential is eligible to receive a one year supply (4 bottles) of multivitamins with folic acid from a participating health agency at no cost.
- Patients do not have to be registered with the agency to receive the multivitamins.
- Agencies may distribute multivitamins via any appropriate setting (for example: WIC, family planning clinics, home visiting programs, front desk, etc.).
- Agencies must be trained before distributing multivitamins. Trained staff must provide brief (30 second) face-to-face patient education along with the multivitamins. Training will be provided in person at your site OR is also available online at **<http://www.getfolic.com/healthcare-providers/>**.
- Agencies must document the number of multivitamin bottles distributed and the number of women who receive the multivitamins. A sample issuance log will be provided for this purpose.

**To Participate or Opt Out:**

Click on the Zoomerang link below by **February 5, 2010** to indicate your interest to participate or opt out of the program. *(Previous faxed orders will not be honored. Multivitamins can be ordered only by completing the Zoomerang survey).*

**<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22A5BRH36K4>**

If you choose to participate, multivitamins will be shipped directly to you at no cost. Quantities will be based the number of non-pregnant women of childbearing age that your facility sees annually (you will enter this number on your zoomerang survey).

1. Contact your local Folic Acid Regional Coordinator (see attached map) to arrange for on-site staff training OR staff can participate in a 15-20 minute online training at <http://www.getfolic.com/healthcare-providers/>.
2. Complete the training, begin distributing multivitamins, and maintain an issuance log.

**Training:**

Training will include basic folic acid education (benefits, proper dose & timing, use of multivitamin supplements vs. folic acid, etc.), program protocol and a sample multivitamin issuance log. Questions can be directed to Regional Coordinators.

**A multivitamin distribution pilot program in Western NC showed folic acid education provided to those distributing multivitamins and those receiving multivitamins essential to program success.**

*"I believe the vitamins have made a large impact in Ashe County. It is very satisfying to have people come back in for a refill after they have heard a presentation or (been advised by) one of the nurses or WIC personnel have explained the importance of folic acid. I surely hope we continue to receive free vitamins."*  
- Patsy Stewart

*"Jackson County Health Dept. loves the vitamin program. We have so many gals that keep coming back for their vitamins and sometimes bring a friend. Moms are always asking about the vitamins for their daughters. It is a great program!!"*  
- Debbie Hage, RN

Thank you for your assistance in the distribution of multivitamins to low income non-pregnant women of childbearing potential in your community. The success of this initiative depends on your participation and we thank you for your efforts.

*\*Neural tube birth defects (NTDs) are serious birth defects of the brain and spine. Spina bifida is the most common of these birth defects and almost 600 infants were born with the condition between 1995 and 2005 in our state. Most children born with other forms of NTDs do not survive, and approximately half of all NTD-affected pregnancies do not end in a live birth. Fortunately, there is a way to prevent many of these birth defects. The best scientific evidence supports the fact that multivitamins containing folic acid can prevent up to 70% of NTDs if consumed by women prior to and in the early months of pregnancy.*