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## **Mayor Barrett Announces Drop in Teen Births, Third Year in a Row** *Marketing, education funding seen as key to success in meeting 2015 goal*

For the third year in a row Milwaukee has seen a decrease in the teen birth rate, which remains at a historically low level, Mayor Tom Barrett and health officials announced Thursday. Health Department data show that there were 44.4 births per 1,000 females aged 15-17 years old in 2009. For that age group, the birth rate has decreased from 46.7 in 2008, 47.1 in 2007, and 52.0 in 2006.

The downward trend is seen across all racial and ethnic groups, although significant disparities persist; Hispanic girls and non-Hispanic black girls are still far more likely than non-Hispanic white girls to give birth as teens.

Officials say the current trend indicates that Milwaukee should be on track to reach its goal of 30 births per 1,000 by 2015, a goal which was announced by United Way of Greater Milwaukee, the Center for Urban Population Health, and the Milwaukee Health Department three years ago.

“This reduction is a further step in the right direction and will have significant impact on the number of children living in poverty in Milwaukee,” said Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett. “Reducing the number of girls giving birth will have a positive impact on graduation rates, open up more employment opportunities and create a better quality of life in our city.”

The decline is attributed to the unprecedented, all hands-on-deck approach adopted by the Milwaukee community over the past three years since the goal of 30 per 1,000 by 2015 was set. Local businesses, media outlets, healthcare providers, Milwaukee Public Schools, the State of Wisconsin, and community-based and faith-based organizations have all joined the effort. Serve Marketing led the charge on a bold awareness campaign to keep the issue on people’s minds and meet teens where they are with messages that show how getting pregnant as teens negatively affects them. The campaigns have also brought attention to the problems of sexual violence and victimization.



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Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker added, "What we are doing is working. But we have to remain committed. Our partners are to be commended for their efforts thus far, and I encourage continued attention on this critical issue facing our young people and our communities."

Community-based organizations have expanded use of evidence-based education and prevention campaigns - - including programs that target boys and parents of adolescents. The City of Milwaukee Health Department has continued and strengthened its "No Condom, No Way" campaign, which emphasizes abstinence, makes condoms available to teens who do not abstain, and educates young people on responsible sexual decision-making. In 2009, approximately 400,000 condoms and accompanying educational materials were distributed to Milwaukee youth.

The Health Department also has seen continued success with its Plain Talk program, a community-based initiative aimed at preventing teen pregnancies by helping parents and other "ask-able adults" develop the skills and tools they need to communicate effectively with their children about abstinence, healthy relationships and sexuality.

"The successful reduction of teen births in Milwaukee for the third consecutive year is an example of what we can accomplish as a community when we work together and stay focused on measurable change," said Mary Lou Young, president and CEO of United Way of Greater Milwaukee. "United Way has invested over \$3.6 million in evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs over six years and we remain committed to this fight. However, lasting results are not possible without partners like the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Schools and so many others."

Last year, United Way funded the development of a comprehensive human growth and development curriculum for Milwaukee Public Schools. This new age-appropriate and medically-accurate curriculum is taught in all kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade classrooms in the district.

Commissioner Baker also cited the State's expanded Family Planning Waiver program as another essential tool in helping to make family planning services available to teens, as well as adults, who might otherwise not have access to such services.

The 2015 goal of 30 births per 1,000 represents a 46% drop as compared to the 2006 figure of 55.4, a calculation which included 46 births to girls under age 15. While the rates reported above are more specific and include only births to 15-17 year olds (and not those under age 15), the Health Department also reported today that total births to girls under age 15 had dropped by nearly one-third from 2006 levels to only 31 total births in that youngest age range in 2009.