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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 3, 2016

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Milwaukee Health Department Awarded Funding From the State of Wisconsin To Implement “Smoke Free Homes for Healthy Babies”

(Milwaukee, WI) – The City of Milwaukee Health Department was awarded \$10,000 from the Wisconsin Division of Public Health to improve environmental public health in Milwaukee by implementing a smoking cessation initiative called Smoke Free Homes for Healthy Babies.

According to the 2015 Milwaukee County Environmental Health Profile, 10.1% of babies born in Milwaukee County between 2011 and 2013 were born low birth weight (<2500 g) and 12.3% were born premature (<37 weeks gestation). These rates are higher than rates for Wisconsin as a whole (7.3% LBW and 10.3% Preterm birth).

“While there are many factors that affect birth outcomes, secondhand smoke exposure is one of the most modifiable,” Milwaukee Health Department Commissioner Bevan K. Baker said.

This project aims to reduce the number of pregnant women and children with secondhand smoke exposure in their homes by implementing an evidence-based smoking cessation program for men who live with pregnant women, infants, and young children. In tandem, the project aims to raise awareness about the link between secondhand smoke, low birth weight, preterm birth and infant mortality and to increase readiness to quit smoking through a marketing campaign. This new project will nicely complement many of the City of Milwaukee Health Department’s other initiatives aimed at reducing infant mortality in the city, such as home visiting for new moms and dads and safe sleep clinics.

Secondhand smoke is associated with many negative health outcomes, including poor birth outcomes and infant mortality; tobacco use and secondhand smoke are also associated with asthma, lung cancer and heart disease.

“There are numerous potential health benefits related to smoking cessation, including those for smokers themselves, as well for their children,” stated Jessica Gathirimu, Director of the Family and Community Health Division of the City of Milwaukee Health Department. Rates of asthma and lung cancer are also higher in Milwaukee County when compared to rates for the State.

The project in Milwaukee is one of seven environmental public health projects being funded throughout the state through the Taking Action with Data funding opportunity from the Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program, which is housed at the Wisconsin Division of Public Health.

For more information about the City of Milwaukee Health Department, visit <http://city.milwaukee.gov/Health/>.

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