

## **Access to Minnesota (Border State) Birth Data for Public Health Nursing**

*The citizens of Northwest Wisconsin request:*

- **Timely and full birth data on all Wisconsin infants born in Minnesota hospitals.**

Since the advent of the HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) in 1996, access to birth data for public health nursing purposes has been significantly decreased. Public Health Nurses, by statute (HFS 140) are required to maintain a maternal and child health program and to link people to needed health services. Lack of birth data interferes with the provision of this essential service. This problem is further complicated when an infant is born in a State other than Wisconsin. This issue was brought as a Superior Day's issue to State leadership in 2008.

Less than 1% of infants who live in Douglas County are born in Douglas County. These few births are either "home births" or births in other Wisconsin hospitals. The remaining births take place in Minnesota hospitals, mainly in the Duluth, MN community.

The HIPPA law has prevented direct access by the public health department to hospital birth data. Unless the mother of the infant consents to have information given to the public health nurse, the public health nurse is unaware of new births. The Minnesota Health Department provides Wisconsin birth certificate data to the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, only twice a year. This frequency does not provide the public health nurse, timely notification.

The WIR (Wisconsin Immunization Registry) started tracking birth data in 2008-09 and was to contain data on MN births of infants living in Wisconsin. The WIR is not reporting accurate and timely birth data for infants born in MN.

At this time the Douglas County Public Health Service continues to only know of relevant births if the parent agrees for a referral to the Public Health Service. Approximately 25% of annual births result in referrals to the Public Health Service.

Lack of access or untimely receipt of birth data prevents early-on parent/infant education, health assessments, counseling and referral. In addition, public health nurses are not able to assess compliance with and to provide necessary childhood vaccinations. In 2010 Douglas County Department of Health and Human Services, through its Public Health Nursing Service is to ensure that 90% of infants at 24 months of age will have their required series of childhood vaccinations. Not knowing who the children are makes this expectation less than realistic.

For more information contact:

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