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Unplanned Pregnancy an Important Women's Health Concern
Prevention That Includes Access to Health Care and Information Key

Madison – In recognition of National Women's Health Week, the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) issues a reminder that the negative consequences of unplanned pregnancy can be avoided by investing in access to family planning and comprehensive sex education.

Even though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1999 declared family planning to be one of the 10 most significant U.S. public health achievements of the 20th century, half of all pregnancies in the United States are still unintended. And the consequences of unintended pregnancy can be serious, even life-altering, particularly for women who are young or unmarried, have just recently given birth or already have the number of children they want.

"An unintended pregnancy can interfere with a young woman's education, limiting her employment possibilities and her ability to support herself and her family," said WAWH Director Sara Finger. "Women are already facing many challenges in today's economy. We need to acknowledge that access to family planning and education are key steps to their financial security."

A [survey](#) of 2,282 unmarried women and men ages 18 to 29 highlighted in this month's *Self* magazine found that "single women are less savvy about birth control than they think". Half of respondents said they did not seek out information on pregnancy prevention because "they know enough already." However, when tested on prevention knowledge, "women scored six out of 11 on average and men a dismal 4.7".

"Increasing access to family planning services and education is critical to reducing the rates of unplanned pregnancies," notes Finger. "We know that family planning is cost effective. Each dollar spent on family planning services saves an estimated \$3.00 that would otherwise be spent in Medicaid costs for pregnancy-related care and newborn medical care."

A 1995 study in the American Journal of Public Health measured the cost of contraceptive methods compared to the costs of unintended pregnancies when no contraception was used and found the total savings to the health care system to fall between \$9,000 and \$14,000 per women over five years of contraceptive use.

"To reduce the rates of unintended pregnancy, we need to support such policies as funding for family planning for low income women, greater access to emergency contraception and comprehensive sex education in our schools," said Finger. "We can no longer afford to leave women in the dark when it comes to their health and well-being."

To learn more about the consequences of unplanned pregnancy, visit www.thenationalcampaign.org.

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The mission of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) is to advance women's health by creating an environment in which the public and elected officials confidently support women's health policy.
To learn more about WAWH, visit our website: www.supportwomenshealth.org