The Public Health Department Maternal Child & Adolescent Health (MCAH) Dept is in the process of conducting the Santa Barbara County MCAH Needs Assessment – Five Year Plan. This entails a thorough analysis of 27 health indicators that have been determined for all states by Title V. We will also analyze the county’s capacity to coordinate essential services for the health and benefit of our maternal, child, and adolescent population.

In reviewing these indicators, notable data highlights locally were Percent of Childhood Overweight (ages 5-19) and Low Birth Weight.

**Childhood Overweight**

Local percent of overweight children (ages 5-19) was the only Title V indicator that was higher than California, Healthy People 2010 and higher over time.

In the last five years, childhood obesity has emerged as a leading public health threat, rivaling smoking in its potential long term impact on the American population and its toll on childhood, adolescent and adult morbidity and mortality. The impact of childhood obesity is being felt across all sectors of child health and welfare.

- Obesity is associated with increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, certain cancers, arthritis, asthma, sleep problems, hormonal changes and gall bladder & liver disease.
- 30% of boys and 40% of girls born in the US in 2000 have a lifetime risk of Type 2 diabetes.
- About half of overweight children will remain overweight in adulthood, and 70% of overweight adolescents will remain overweight as adults.
- Obesity-associated hospital costs for children and youth more than tripled in the last 20 years.
- Lower self-esteem and increased depression due to social stigma are associated with obesity.

**Prevention:** Eat more fruits and vegetables daily, limit high fat and high sugar foods, serve and eat smaller portions, get physical activity everyday, advocate for increased availability of healthy food choices and safe activity areas.

**Low Birth Weight**

Low Birth Weight was worse than the Healthy People 2010 objective and continues to move away from the goal.

Low birth weight babies are at a greater risk for health problems, including lung infections, learning difficulties and death. In 2006 the percentage of low birth weight infants was about the same for local Latinos and whites, despite lower rates of first trimester prenatal care among Latinos.

Two main reasons why a baby may be born with low birth weight is premature births and small for gestational age/growth restricted births. Factors that contribute to low birth weight babies are premature births include: birth defects, chronic health problems in the mother (high blood pressure, diabetes), smoking, maternal infections, fetal infections, alcohol and illicit drugs, placental problems, inadequate weight gain and socioeconomic factors (low-income and lack of education are associated with increased risk of having a low birth weight baby, although the underlying reasons for this are not well understood.

**Prevention:** Preconception check-up, stop smoking before becoming pregnant, regular prenatal care, daily multivitamin containing 400 mcg of folic acid, early education and intervention if there are signs of suspected labor.

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1 Report to the Second National Childhood Obesity Congress, Miami, Florida, 2008
2 Santa Barbara County Public Health Dept.
3 Obesity Facts, 10/2008
"In the last five years, childhood obesity has emerged as a leading public health threat."