



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama communities urged to act now to promote health equity

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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April marks the one-year anniversary of the launching of the Health and Human Services Action Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities by Achieving Health Equity. **Health Equity Can't Wait. ACT NOW in your Community** is the theme for the 2012 National Minority Health Month observance.

The Alabama Department of Public Health Office of Minority Health supports the efforts of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and community partners to address health disparities.

Health disparities are health differences linked with social, economic and environmental obstacles to health and a clean environment. These obstacles are based on individuals' racial or ethnic group, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, mental health, cognitive, sensory or physical disability, sexual orientation, geographic location, or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.

"Underlying issues such as lifestyle behaviors, delayed care, trust between patient and provider, plus other factors such as education and physician shortages can mean shorter life expectancy, decreased quality of life, and loss of economic opportunities," said Elana Parker Merriweather of the Office of Minority Health.

Multicultural groups in Alabama that are and have been impacted by health disparities include Hispanic/Latino, African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Asian/Pacific Islander.

Goals are to reduce or eliminate the health disparities with regard to the following adverse health outcomes:

- Cancer
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Diabetes
- Mental health
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Infant mortality

“We want to challenge all individuals to adopt lifestyles that encourage physical activity, promote weight loss for those who are obese/overweight, and reduce smoking,” Ms. Merriweather said. “We urge communities to get involved in this effort to reduce health disparities.”

The State Office of Minority Health is sponsoring minority health month events, including a professional development workshop and ongoing training addressing minority health issues. The office will present a satellite conference and webcast titled “Bullying and Mental Health in Children and Adolescents” for professionals and others on April 27 from 9-10:30 a.m. central time. Among the discussion topics will be the impact of bullying on minority youth.

Have you thought about what you can do in your community? For more information on health disparities, visit adph.org/minorityhealth. To register for the satellite conference and webcast, go to www.adph.org/alphntn.

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MISSION STATEMENT: *The mission of the State Office of Minority Health, established in the Alabama Department of Public Health in 1991, is to improve the health status of minority populations, improve access to quality health care services, promote minority presence and participation in health planning and policy formation, and promote public awareness of the health care needs in minority communities.*