NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Burgum Proclaims January *Birth Defects Prevention Month* in North Dakota

Bismarck, N.D. – This January, the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is increasing awareness of the role infection prevention before and during pregnancy can play in protecting babies from birth defects. The theme for 2017 is ***"Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby's Protection."***

The NDDoH encourages the general public, as well as healthcare professionals, educators, and social service professionals to support this awareness effort. Every 4½ minutes, a baby is born with a birth defect in the United States. North Dakota had about 300 cases in 2014. Not only can birth defects lead to lifelong challenges and disabilities, but they are also the most common cause of death in the first year of life and the second most common cause of death in children aged one to four years in the United States.

Not all birth defects can be prevented, but women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by preventing infections before and during pregnancy. This year we are encouraging all women to **Prevent to Protect** by taking the following steps:

- Properly prepare food.
- Talk to your healthcare provider.
- Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.
- Maintain good hygiene.

"Steps like up-to-date vaccinations, avoiding infections, visiting a health care provider well before pregnancy, controlling your weight through healthy diet and activity, and taking a multivitamin every day, can go a long way in assuring a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby," says Devaiah Muccatira, with NDDoH Children's Special Health Services.

Children's Special Health Services is a division within the North Dakota Department of Health that offers services for many children with birth defects. For more information about services available and *Birth Defects Prevention Month*, contact Devaiah Muccatira at 701.328.4963 or dmuccatira@nd.gov.

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State of
North Dakota
Office of the Governor

Doug Burgum
Governor

PROCLAMATION
BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH
JANUARY 2017

WHEREAS, birth defects can occur in any family, regardless of the parents' age, gender, race, health history, economic status or education; and

WHEREAS, every four and one-half minutes a baby is born in the United States with a birth defect. Birth defects cause one in every five infant deaths and lead to $2.6 billion per year in hospital costs alone in the United States. In 2014, birth defects accounted for 51 infant deaths in North Dakota; and

WHEREAS, about half of all pregnancies are unplanned, contributing to late entry into prenatal care and presenting a barrier to optimal pregnancy management, particularly during the crucial early weeks of embryonic development; and

WHEREAS, early identification of a child with a birth defect and early intervention services typically improve the child's quality of life and may even save his or her life; and

WHEREAS, taking steps to avoid infections during pregnancy can reduce the chance that a child is born with a birth defect. The North Dakota Department of Health encourages parents-to-be to lessen the risk of developing an infection during pregnancy by observing the following guidelines:

- Properly prepare food
- Talk to your healthcare provider
- Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.
- Maintain good hygiene; and

WHEREAS, the good health and well-being of the people of North Dakota are enhanced by the support of a national effort to educate about and prevent birth defects.

NOW, THEREFORE, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim January 2017, **BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH** in the state of North Dakota.

Doug Burgum
Governor

ATTEST:

Alvin A. Jaeger
Secretary of State

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