

February 10, 2007

Senator Maryann Handley
Representative Peggy Sayers
Public Health committee

Dear Representative Sayers and Senator Handley,

We have recently become aware of the Department of Public Health's plan to significantly change its approach to fetal and infant mortality in Connecticut. It is my understanding that as of June 30, 2006, DPH will discontinue its support of community-based programs and instead pursue a statewide surveillance process. As a member of the Windham Fetal and Infant Mortality (FIMR) Case Review Team or Community Action Team, I am very concerned about the impact this loss will have on the community.

I support the need for a statewide approach to address fetal and infant mortality, but the intrinsic **value** of a successful program that functions with minimal funding cannot be overstated.

Since 1999, when Windham FIMR began, Our Case Review and Community Action Teams have made many significant strides. A suspension of this project will no doubt have a negative affect our community and all we have accomplished.

Windham is a community with significant health and economic challenges. Our rates of pre-term birth, teen pregnancy and low birth weight babies rank among the highest in the state. These problems need to be addressed at both the community and state levels. As a result of the FIMR program, DPH has allowed us to successfully plan and implement interventions at the community level.

These are some of our successful program outcomes that have been implemented;

- Addressed issues and system protocols regarding system protocols regarding maternal substance abuse, hepatitis, mental health issues, statutory rape, teens and the law, teen pregnancy, DCF referral process, Chorioamnionitis, and provided community trainings at Windham Hospital for providers.
- Coordinated and developed a system to ensure VNA postpartum referrals from hospital to VNA
- Developed universal pregnancy screening tool to be utilized by all community services to ensure referral to prenatal care
- Addressed lack of Spanish speaking outreach workers in the community.
- Coordinated and developed system to address lack of maternal 6-week follow-up postpartum visits.
- Distributed STD information to providers and addressed issues of partner testing.
- Addressed and reviewed York Correctional Institute protocols for follow-up upon the release of pregnant women to the community
- Developed and distributed list of bereavement resources for grieving parents, and/or a faith-based list for parents.
- Secured 2 years of funding from the March of Dimes for implementation of Outreach in the Windham area. Further funding was secured to continue this successful program.

Sincerely,

Beth Murana, Center Coordinator, Planned Parenthood