

**INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE:
Cost Savings of the Prenatal Plus Program
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment**

Infants Born Low Birth Weight Are a Problem in Colorado

- Colorado has one of the highest low birth weight rates in the nation. In 2001, the state's low birth weight rate was 8.6 percent, well above the national average of 7.7 percent, with 5,765 babies born with a low birth weight. A low birth weight baby weighs 5 pounds 8 ounces or less.
- Low birth weight contributes to infant death and also to multiple long-term health problems such as diabetes, stroke, learning problems and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. In addition to health and behavioral risks for children born at low birth weight, there are costs to society in the form of increased medical care, increased educational needs, and decreased lifetime job achievement.



The Prenatal Plus Program Reduces Medicaid Costs in Colorado

- *For every \$1 spent on Prenatal Plus services, \$2.48 is saved in Medicaid costs annually.*
- The Prenatal Plus Program provides nutrition services, smoking cessation education, mental health counseling, and case management to high-risk pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid. These services effectively address the two most critical contributors to low birth weight in Colorado, inadequate maternal weight gain and smoking during pregnancy.
- Expenditures by Medicaid for Prenatal Plus participants and their infants for 1998-2000 totaled \$21.4 million over three years. Expenditures for a comparable high-risk group that did not receive Prenatal Plus services are estimated to have totaled \$27.3 million, nearly \$6 million more.
- Medicaid costs for Prenatal Plus participants and their infants were an average of \$1,138 lower, or \$4,088 versus \$5,226, than the costs of serving a similar group of women and their infants who did not receive services.

We Can Reduce Medicaid Costs Even Further and Improve the Health of Colorado's Children

- Fewer than one in four eligible high-risk pregnant women received Prenatal Plus services in 2001, with 11,000 women remaining unserved. Expanding the Prenatal Plus Program to serve all eligible pregnant women in Colorado can result in additional cost savings to Medicaid.
- Medicaid is spending an additional \$12.5 million per year for those eligible women who are not receiving Prenatal Plus services. Barriers such as low provider participation must be overcome in order to serve more high-risk women, resulting in greater total savings to the Medicaid program.

The Prenatal Plus Program is administered by the Women's Health Section, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Call 303-692-2480 or visit the web address <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/womens/womhom.asp>

Information excerpted from *The Effects of the Prenatal Plus Program on Infant Birth Weight and Medicaid Costs*, Judith E. Glazner, M.S., Brenda L. Beaty, M.S.P.H., University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, December, 2002