



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

LORETTA J. FUDDY, DIRECTOR
Phone: (808) 586-4410
Fax: (808) 586-4444

For Immediate Release: September 7, 2012

12-047

**STATE WARNS AGAINST DANGERS OF DRINKING ALCOHOL
DURING ANY STAGE OF PREGNANCY**

HONOLULU -- In conjunction with International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Awareness Day, Governor Neil Abercrombie has proclaimed September 9, 2012, "Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day" in Hawai'i to help increase awareness of the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy.

This day was chosen for the international observance so that, on the ninth day of the ninth month of the year, the world will remember that during the nine months of pregnancy a woman should abstain from alcohol.

According to the Institute of Medicine (1996), "Of all the substances of abuse (including cocaine, heroin and marijuana), alcohol produces by far the most serious neurobehavioral effects in the fetus."

Alcohol exposed pregnancies are 100 percent preventable; however, they continue to be a leading cause of fetal miscarriage and stillbirth, birth defects and a range of lifelong disorders to children. FASD includes a range of alcohol-related birth defects that may include a combination of growth deficiencies, facial abnormalities, central nervous system impairment, behavior disorders, and impaired intellectual development.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges pregnant women not to drink alcohol any time during pregnancy. According to the CDC, "There is no known safe amount of

(more)

alcohol to drink while pregnant. There is no safe time during pregnancy to drink alcohol. There is no safe type of alcohol to drink while pregnant.”

“Many women may not realize they are pregnant and unintentionally expose their unborn child to the dangers of alcohol,” said Danette Wong Tomiyasu, Chief of the Family Health Services Division. “Almost half or 46.5 percent of all live births in Hawai‘i in 2009 and 2010 were the result of unplanned pregnancies, and research has determined that binge drinking during the first month of fetal development is especially harmful to the fetus.”

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), more than 1 in 5 pregnant women report alcohol use in their first trimester. This would mean that in Hawai‘i more than 3,800 babies born each year have been exposed to alcohol. CDC estimates that the lifetime healthcare cost for one individual with FASD is at least two million dollars. It is important to educate all women of childbearing age on the dangers of alcohol use to the unborn baby and the importance of seeking prenatal care early.

Additional resources for information on FASD:

- National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome factsheets and the Hawai‘i FASD resource list are available at <http://www.nofas.org>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/alcohol-use.html>
- SAMHSA, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Center for Excellence: <http://fasdcenter.samhsa.gov>
- March of Dimes, Hawai‘i Chapter (addresses prenatal issues and focuses on preventing preterm births that contribute to low-birth weight and other compromising neonatal health issues including alcohol use during pregnancy): www.marchofdimes.com.

###