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Milwaukee--A new program called START SMART for Your Baby (SM) has been created to help reduce the incidence of low birth weight in Wisconsin, Managed Health Services President and Chief Executive Officer Kathleen R. Crampton announced Wednesday.

The announcement of the new program was made at a luncheon held at Hillside Terrace Resource Center and attended by community and state leaders, physicians and other providers.

Ms. Crampton said, "Low birth weight—the leading cause of infant death—may be preventable, and we at Managed Health Services are implementing START SMART for Your Baby to help prevent low birth weight among our pregnant Members. Low birth weight often is a contributing factor to poor health for the rest of a child's life.

"MHS's new program will support both pregnant Members and their physicians to help improve birth outcomes," Ms. Crampton said. "We will link our moms-to-be with early, risk appropriate prenatal care, prenatal care coordination, and education."

Pregnant Members, who participate in the START SMART for Your Baby program, will be able to select a free gift for their babies, according to Ms. Crampton.

"If the mom-to-be attends all of her required doctor visits, she is eligible to select a nice gift for her baby from Stork's Nest," Ms. Crampton said.

MHS formed a partnership with Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., and the March of Dimes, who sponsor the national Stork's Nest program.

"Our Members will be able to select gifts for their babies at a Stork's Nest site or through a catalog," she said.

Participating START SMART for Your Baby physicians and their staff will also receive a gift certificate for informing MHS that one its Members is pregnant, according to Ms. Crampton.

"We are inviting physicians, the State of Wisconsin, and community outreach and prenatal organizations to join with us to help prevent low birth weight," she said. Supporting MHS's new initiative, Phyllis J. Dubé, Secretary of the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS), said, "Early prenatal care helps improve the chances that pregnancies will be healthy and the babies born at full-term. The Department encourages our contracted HMOs to set up prenatal programs for their members."

The DHFS oversees the care of more than 260,000 Medicaid HMO enrollees throughout the State of Wisconsin.

MHS is a managed care organization serving the Medicaid population in 19 counties in Wisconsin. Started in 1984, the health plan is based in Milwaukee. MHS currently has 81,825 Members and contracts with Network Health Plan to provide Medicaid HMO services to another 21,022 persons.

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