



**Commonwealth of Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Newborn Screening Critical for Kentucky's Babies

52 Weeks of Public Health Spotlight: Newborn Screening Awareness Month

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Sep. 15, 2017) - As part of the 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), is celebrating Newborn Screening Awareness Month by promoting awareness about the importance of early screening for Kentucky babies.

“Early intervention with the new mother and baby is critical to provide care and support for the best outcome,” said CHFS Secretary Vickie Yates Brown Glisson. “The Cabinet is working hard across disciplines to develop these systems.”

The Newborn Screening Program is a population-based service, provided by DPH that provides testing for developmental, genetic and metabolic disorders in newborn babies, allowing steps to be taken before symptoms develop.

“The importance of these metabolic screenings for newborns in Kentucky cannot be overstated,” said Connie Gayle White, M.D., senior deputy commissioner at DPH. “For

many children, early screening can literally mean the difference between a full, healthy life and one spent battling a debilitating condition. It can even mean the difference between life and death in some cases.”

Newborn screening detects conditions not visible at birth and ensures life-saving treatment can begin as soon as possible. Most of these illnesses are very rare, but can be treated if caught early. The types of newborn screening tests done vary from state to state, but all 50 states have reported screening for at least 26 disorders on an expanded and standardized uniform panel.

In Kentucky, newborn screening is required by law. A blood specimen is obtained by heel stick from the newborn at the birthing facility between 24-48 hours after birth. The specimen is sent to the Kentucky Division of Laboratory Services for processing and abnormal findings are reported to the Newborn Screening Program.

Kentucky’s Newborn Screening Program uses a metabolic panel screening for 53 disorders which includes: congenital, hypothyroidism, cystic fibrosis, abnormalities in hemoglobin i.e. sickle cell, and disorders in the metabolism of carbohydrates, amino acid, organic acids, fatty acids, and lysosomes. When a diagnosis is confirmed, treatment is initiated through the administration of drugs, hormones or dietary adjustments.

Even if a baby is not born in a hospital, it is critical that they be tested within the first 24-48 hours after birth. Over 50,000 newborn screenings are conducted annually in the state of Kentucky. In 2016, 141 newborns tested were positively diagnosed as a result of the initial newborn screening. In addition to blood tests, screening for hearing loss and critical congenital heart disease (CCHD) are highly recommended for all Kentucky babies.

To learn more about the benefits of the Kentucky Newborn Screening Program, please visit the [Kentucky Department for Public Health](#) or the [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention](#) website.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.