FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 19, 2007

CONTACT: Ken Severson
(317) 233-7104

INDIANA COALITION TARGETS IMPROVING ADOLESCENT HEALTH

INDIANAPOLIS—As the adolescent population grows larger, the need for more resources and attention aimed at helping them will be needed. In response to these changes, the Indiana Coalition to Improve Adolescent Health is working to better address the needs of Indiana’s young people.

Founded in 2006, the Indiana Coalition to Improve Adolescent Health is a collaborative effort of organizations and agencies throughout Indiana serving youth in a variety of capacities who share the common goal of improving the health of adolescents in the state. The Coalition currently comprises 25 organizations and agencies, including the Indiana State Department of Health, and state health officials say it continues to grow.

“The Coalition is grateful to have the time and expertise of so many individuals across the state who are truly interested and dedicated to making a difference in the lives of adolescents in Indiana,” said Judy Monroe, M.D. State Health Commissioner.

The Coalition seeks to increase awareness that adolescents are among Indiana’s most valuable asset, to advance awareness of the health issues affecting adolescents, and to ensure Indiana is a healthy place for adolescents to grow and develop.

“Adolescence is not only a time of opportunities and risks, it also encompasses the time in life when pivotal changes occur biologically, cognitively, emotionally and socially,” said Monroe. “During this time, significant choices about health and health practices take shape that will continue into adulthood.”

Twenty-one percent of Indiana’s total population is adolescents (ages 10-19) and emerging adults (ages 20-24). It is estimated they will comprise 13 percent of the United States’ population by the year 2020.

The Coalition has begun authoring Indiana’s first state adolescent health plan. Indiana will join only five other states that have published a similar document. The plan will focus on the priority health issues facing adolescents and emerging adults in Indiana and provide recommendations for various sectors of communities to address these issues, including policymakers and parents.

“Negative messages can adversely affect a teen’s judgment and keep him or her from choosing healthy behaviors like eating nutritiously, being physically active, avoiding tobacco or alcohol products, and abstaining from sexual activity,” said Stephanie Woodcox, state adolescent health coordinator.

According to the 2005 Indiana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), following are key issues facing adolescents in the state:

- 14.8% planned a suicide and 9.6% attempted it one or more times during the past year
- 41% drank alcohol during the past year
- 25% rode with a drinking driver during the past month
- 44% engaged in sexual intercourse
- 57% tried smoking
- 84% consumed fruits and vegetables less than five times a day during the past week
- 14% at risk of becoming overweight

--MORE--
“The publication of the state adolescent health plan will put Indiana on the map as a leader in adolescent health,” said Monroe.

Adolescence is defined as the age group ranging from 10 to 24. Adolescence can be further defined into the following three categories: young adolescents between the ages of 10 and 14; older adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19; and emerging adults between the ages of 20 and 24. This definition of adolescence is used by Healthy People 2010.

###