FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 11, 2009

INDIANA TAKES A STAND FOR ADOLESCENT HEALTH

INDIANAPOLIS—The Indiana Coalition to Improve Adolescent Health (ICIAH) has released the state’s first adolescent health plan, Picturing a Healthier Future: A State Strategic Plan for Indiana’s Adolescents. The plan details 10 health issues affecting the well-being of Hoosier adolescents (ages 10-24).

“I applaud the work of the ICIAH, which has positioned Indiana to be a leader in adolescent health, as only a few states have developed such a plan,” said State Health Commissioner Judy Monroe, M.D. “I urge anyone concerned about the health and welfare of our youth to take the time to review this health plan and find a part you can act upon. The more we all work together, the better the outcome will be.”

“The leading causes of death, disability, and disease among adolescents in Indiana are related to behaviors that are preventable,” said Dr. Monroe. “As a collaborative partner with the ICIAH, the Indiana State Department of Health is committed to using this plan as a framework for helping adolescents make healthy choices and adopt healthy behaviors early in life.”

John Brandon, President of the Marion County Commission on Youth and Steering Committee Member for the ICIAH, says the coalition recognizes young people must acquire certain strengths, skills, and competencies—academic, emotional, social, and/or physical—in order to achieve a happy, healthy, and productive adulthood.

“Young people will develop in positive ways when their communities and relationships provide the resources for them to gain these abilities,” said Brandon.

Donald P. Orr, M.D., Professor, Emeritus, Section of Adolescent Medicine, Indiana University School of Medicine, and Steering Committee Member for ICIAH, agrees with Brandon and said that adolescents acknowledge the need for such relationships. In fact, Orr said that one teen who worked with the coalition expressed that in order for young people to be healthy in the future, they will need to have somebody to rely on in case something goes wrong.

A unique feature of the plan is the introduction to three adolescents—Michelle, Nathan and Carmen—all of whom face multiple challenges and make decisions which affect their health. Their stories are woven throughout the plan, reinforcing (and even reminding us of) the complexity and pressures experienced during this time of life.

Adolescents comprise a significant segment of our state’s population that needs an informed and healthy roadmap for a successful future. It is essential to focus time and resources on adolescents.

The Indiana Coalition to Improve Adolescent Health comprises individuals and representatives from youth-serving agencies and organizations who share the common goal of improving the health of adolescents. The mission of the ICIAH is to promote optimal health and well-being for all Hoosier adolescents with an emphasis on prevention and access to quality, comprehensive health care. To learn more about the Coalition and view a copy of the adolescent health plan, visit www.INAdolescenthealth.org.

Media Contacts:
Melissa Dexter, ISDH, mdexter@isdh.in.gov, 317-234-6578
John Brandon, Marion County Commission on Youth, john.brandon@mccoyouth.org, 317-921-1288
Donald P. Orr, MD, Professor, Emeritus, Section of Adolescent Medicine, Indiana University School of Medicine; dporr@iuupei.edu, 317-274-8812

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