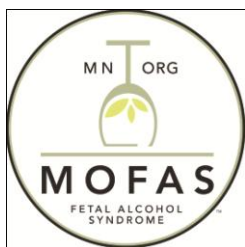


## PRESS RELEASE



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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ten Minnesota County Public Health Departments and large healthcare providers are joining together to prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). The Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (MOFAS) recently awarded grants to Catholic Charities- Seton Prenatal Clinic, Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital, Face to Face Health & Counseling Service, Sanford Clinic- Bemidji, Duluth Family Practice Clinic, Open Cities Health Center, Meeker County Public Health, Carlton County Public Health, McLeod County Public Health and Todd County Public Health to implement an innovative screening program designed to create more open dialogue between providers and patients about their alcohol use during pregnancy. Providers are encouraged to give women the U.S. Surgeon General's clear, consistent message that there is no safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy, and discuss resources or recommend appropriate services if necessary, at each visit. Ultimately, the goal is to prevent prenatal alcohol exposure.

"We, as health care providers play a critical role in advising our pregnant patients not to drink alcohol during their pregnancy. Often times, we are the first touch-point, and can be a big influence on moms-to-be", says Dr. Lydia Caros, Director of the Native American Health Clinic and co-creator of the screening program protocol. Sara Messelt, MOFAS Executive Director agrees that the new screening process is a significant opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of primary prevention. "By opening the lines of communication, we increase the likelihood that a woman will disclose any alcohol usage, and then give providers the chance to link her to services and resources to help her have an alcohol-free pregnancy." As many as 8,500 Minnesotan babies are born every year with prenatal alcohol exposure (CDC, 2006). The lifetime cost for an individual with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is estimated at \$2.9 million.

MOFAS is providing a total of ten grants across the state to consistently screen for alcohol use during pregnancy and to implement an action plan when risk is identified. This program is made possible by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Health. MOFAS was founded in 1998 by former First Lady, Susan Carlson, and is the only statewide source for trainings, information, resources and support on FASD. The mission of MOFAS is to eliminate disability caused by alcohol consumption during pregnancy and to improve the life for those living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders throughout Minnesota. For more information contact MOFAS at 651-917-2370 or toll-free 1-866-90-MOFAS (66327); 1885 University Avenue, Suite 395, St. Paul, MN 55104; [www.mofas.org](http://www.mofas.org).