

**For Immediate Release**  
August 1, 2011

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**Women's Health Win: Contraception is Prevention**  
*WAWH Applauds Federal Preventive Services Recommendations for Women*

**Madison** – The Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) commends the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for recognizing the unique preventive health care needs of women, and the benefit of offering these services with no additional cost to insured women. In concert with Affordable Care Act (ACA) reforms, [regulations](#) released today by HHS require new health plans to cover well-woman visits, breastfeeding support, domestic violence screening, screening for gestational diabetes, HPV DNA testing, HIV screening and counseling, sexually-transmitted infection counseling, and the full range of FDA-approved contraception without a co-pay, making prevention cost-effective for women and the medical system.

With these new guidelines, HHS built on the insurance market reforms from last summer, which required all new health plans to cover evidence-based preventive services, like mammograms, colonoscopies, and blood pressure checks. The additional guidelines for women's preventive services were developed by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), a panel of independent medical experts, by request of Congress in the ACA. New health plans will need to comply with these regulations for policies with plan years beginning on or after August 1, 2012.

"We applaud the Department of Health and Human Services for recognizing what women have known for years, that contraception is a critical element of cost-effective, preventative care," said WAWH Executive Director Sara Finger.

The IOM recommendations, released two weeks ago, notes that a comprehensive approach to contraceptive care is recommended "so that women can better avoid unwanted pregnancies and space their pregnancies to promote optimal birth outcomes." Recent [polling](#) shows that the overwhelming majority of Americans agree - 84% view family planning, including contraception as important to basic preventative health care services.

"The addition of these preventive services will be good for women's health and good for women's pocketbooks. For many families in Wisconsin, especially those young families who are struggling in these economic times, this decision will have a direct and positive impact on their family budget," Finger added.

The HHS regulation included an amendment which allows religious institutions offering insurance the choice of covering contraception services. WAWH will be responding to HHS' request for comment on that policy because, "we believe all women should be entitled to full coverage of preventive women's health services, regardless of what their employer may believe," said Finger.

While applauding this regulation as a win for women, WAWH will continue to advocate for full implementation of the ACA in Wisconsin, so that women's unique health care needs continue to be addressed in health care reform.

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The mission of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) is to advance comprehensive women's health in Wisconsin by engaging, educating, empowering and mobilizing individuals and organizations.

To learn more about WAWH, visit our website: [www.supportwomenshealth.org](http://www.supportwomenshealth.org)