



Loudoun County, April 2010

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We All Can Play a Part in Strengthening Families

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

This month and throughout the year, INMED's MotherNet/Healthy Families Loudoun program encourages all individuals and organizations to play a role in making Loudoun County a better place for families. By ensuring that parents have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children, we can help prevent child abuse and neglect by strengthening families and communities.

Research shows that five important factors are present in healthy families. Promoting these factors is among the most effective ways to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect. They are:

- Nurturing and attachment
- Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Concrete supports for parents

Did you know?

Inadequate child supervision can be considered neglect. Know and share the [Loudoun County Child Supervision Guidelines](#).

"April is a time to celebrate the important role that communities play in protecting children," says María Elena Vásquez-Alvarez, INMED's director of Loudoun County programs, including MotherNet/Healthy Families Loudoun. "Everyone's participation is critical. Focusing on ways to promote the five protective factors, in every interaction with families, is the best thing our community can do to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect."

The MotherNet/Healthy Families Loudoun program focuses on preventing child abuse and neglect before it happens even once—beginning before children are born. Expectant parents learn the importance of bonding and attachment, gain an understanding of babies' and children's temperaments and developmental milestones, and learn real-world, practical solutions to handle their children's most challenging behaviors and apply positive discipline.

"A nurturing parent and a stable and safe home is what children need and deserve," Vásquez-Alvarez says. "We know that parents want to give their children the best possible start in life and to be the best parents they can be, and we are here to help them achieve that goal."

In support of efforts like these, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, its Child Welfare Information Gateway, and the FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention have created *Strengthening Families and Communities: 2010 Resource Guide*. The guide, designed for service providers who work throughout the community to strengthen families, is available [online](#).

For more information about the MotherNet/Healthy Families Loudoun program's child abuse prevention activities during the month of April and throughout the year, or to support our efforts with a donation or volunteer time, contact Ms. Vásquez-Alvarez at mvasquez@inmed.org.

Folic Acid Consumption Campaign Promotes Healthy Pregnancies

Thanks to a generous grant from the March of Dimes, INMED's MotherNet Loudoun program has launched a folic acid consumption campaign. We are providing each perinatal home visiting participant with a bottle of 100 folic acid caplets (each containing 400 micrograms of folic acid) and educating them about the importance of folic acid consumption. Through home visits and participation at educational groups, participants are learning that:

- Folic acid is a B vitamin that can help prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal cord
- Women of childbearing age and pregnant women who consume adequate quantities of folic acid cut their risk of having a premature baby by half
- All women who of a childbearing age should take 400 micrograms of folic acid every day starting before pregnancy, as part of a healthy diet
- Folic acid is important for everyone in maintaining health
- Grains, liver, eggs, beans, asparagus, leafy green vegetables, oranges, strawberries and cantaloupes are good sources of folic acid



Participants in the MotherNet Loudoun program's perinatal health education classes learn the importance of folic acid in preventing birth defects and promoting healthy pregnancies.

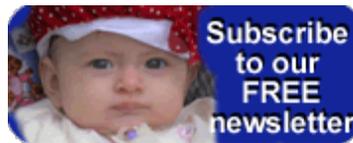
Join INMED as We March for Babies

Every day, thousands of babies are born too soon, too small and often very sick. INMED's Loudoun Programs team is joining the March for Babies to support March of Dimes research and programs that help moms have full-term pregnancies and babies begin healthy lives, and to bring comfort and information to families with a baby in newborn intensive care.

Please support their walk by pledging your [donation](#).



Find out more about [March for Babies](#).



About INMED Partnerships for Children

INMED Partnerships for Children is an international humanitarian development organization. Since 1986, INMED has built alliances with public- and private-sector partners in more than 100 countries to rescue children from the immediate and irreversible harm of disease, hunger, abuse, neglect or violence, and to prepare them to shape a brighter future for themselves and the next generation.

Together with our partners, INMED is transforming the future for hundreds of thousands of children and their family and community members in the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean, and southern Africa by:

- Securing children's health, development and safety
- Developing skills, knowledge and opportunities for children and youth
- Building family and community capacity to support and sustain positive change

For more information or to submit questions and comments, please contact Maria Vásquez-Alvarez, Director of Loudoun County Programs, at MVasquez@inmed.org.

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20110 Ashbrook Place, Suite 260 Ashburn, Virginia 20147
Phone: 703-729-4951 Fax: 703-858-7253 E-mail: contact@inmed.org
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