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Contact: Office of Communications
(850) 245-4111

DOH RECOGNIZES APRIL AS MINORITY HEALTH MONTH
~Joins Minority Health Advocates Statewide to Raise Awareness ~

TALLAHASSEE - The Florida Department of Health (DOH) recognizes April as National Minority Health Month in an effort to bring awareness to the health factors that influence minorities in the state. This year's theme, *Advance Health Equity Now: Uniting Our Communities to Improve Health Outcomes*, is a call to action and unity for the state and local offices of minority health, DOH county health offices, and organizations and partners involved and invested in reducing health disparities.

"The goal of better health extends to every Floridian," stated State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. "We are committed to reducing the health disparities faced by many in our minority communities through more effective partnerships and community-based solutions."

The Florida Office of Minority Health, in collaboration with DOH programs and county health offices, has planned a month long series of activities that will focus on the advancement of Health Equity.

"We at DOH embrace this observance as a platform for highlighting the importance of achieving health equity in our state," said Mike Mason, Director of DOH's Office of Minority Health. "Through a statewide Kick-Off webinar, a presentation on 'Ethnic Diversity and Cultural Competency in Cancer Care,' co-sponsored by the Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention Cancer Prevention and Control Program, and a Health Equity Summit hosted by the Volusia County Health Department, we strive to educate Floridians about health disparities in our state and the ways we can attempt to eliminate them."

In an effort to reduce health disparities and improve the health status of minority populations, the 107th Congress agreed in October 2002 to establish a National Minority Health and Health Disparities Month, which is now recognized every year in April.

The Office of Minority Health's primary responsibility is to improve health and healthcare outcomes for racial and ethnic minority communities by developing or advancing policies, programs, and practices that address health, social, economic, environmental, and other factors which impact health. The Office supports minority groups and educates the public through various initiatives. For example, the "Closing the Gap" program stimulates broad-based participation, public-private partnerships, and ties between local governments, community groups and private sector health care organizations to address the health needs of local communities. Other initiatives include Black History Month, Minority Health Month, Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month, American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month, Take a Loved One to the Doctor Day, and the Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The Department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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