

March 24, 2009

baby steps campaign launches in central Alberta

RED DEER – Alberta Health Services and the Tobacco Reduction in Childbearing Years (TRICY) committee today announced the launch of **baby steps** – a campaign encouraging pregnant women in central Alberta to quit smoking.

“Reducing smoking rates among pregnant women is vital to meeting the Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy (ATRS) goals for 2012,” said Ken Hughes, Alberta Health Services Board Chair. “By reaching out to pregnant smokers, we have the opportunity to improve the health of two or more people. The **baby steps** campaign is about motivating women to take the small steps necessary to become smoke-free.”

Through the course of the five-week campaign, the experiences of five women from central Alberta will be highlighted. While everyone has their own reason to quit smoking, the goal is that the personal stories of these five women will resonate with other pregnant smokers and ultimately help to decrease the smoking rate among pregnant women. The women from the communities of Red Deer, Lacombe, Wetaskiwin, and Hobbema were selected from a group of over 20 pregnant women and new moms who auditioned to appear as the faces of the campaign.

“The struggle to quit smoking is a difficult one, especially when the added stigma of being a pregnant smoker prevents people from seeking help,” said Marino Francispillai, Tobacco Control Program Leader with Alberta Health Services. “It is important that women know they are not alone and that there are resources available to them, such as the Smokers’ Help Line, which will provide them with confidential support throughout the quitting process.”

The **baby steps** campaign will run from March 24 through April 30 in central Alberta. Pregnant women who want to quit smoking are encouraged to call 1-866-332-2322 for free, confidential support.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.5 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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