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401 South Clinton Street • Chicago, Illinois 60607

Dear Governor Quinn and Members of the General Assembly:

It is my pleasure to present *The Reduction of Infant Mortality in Illinois: The Family Case Management Program and WIC Program Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2011*. These programs have contributed to a steady reduction in the state's infant mortality rate, which reached 7.2 per 1,000 live births in 2008.

Illinois is unique in its effort to integrate the delivery of these two major programs for low-income women and children. The Department has been able to blend the delivery, financing, monitoring and evaluation of these programs through innovation and performance management. The comprehensive integration of maternal and child health programming is providing the foundation for future expansion and enhancement through the integration of additional service for this vulnerable population.

The Department has achieved uncommon results through this effort. Rates of prenatal weight gain, immunizations, breastfeeding, well child care and developmental screening have been steadily improving. Crude rates of premature birth and infant mortality among Medicaid-eligible pregnant women who participate in these programs are substantially better than those observed among similar women who did not participate in either program.

While we continue to make progress, there is a persistent racial disparity in infant mortality that must be eliminated. An African American infant born in Illinois is still more than two and a half times as likely as a Caucasian infant to die before reaching one year of age. Our current efforts are commendable, but they are not enough.

This tragic loss of life must not continue and its disparate impact on Illinois' minority communities must be addressed. I look forward to working with each of you to improve the health of all Illinoisans.

Sincerely,

Michelle R.B. Saddler
Secretary