

FEDERAL NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED



According to the report, the U.S. last year achieved:

- an historic low infant mortality rate;
- continued increase in the number of women obtaining early pre-natal care;
- the first decline in the birth rate for unmarried women in almost 20 years;
- continued decline in the teen birth rate;
- a dramatic decline in homicide rates;
- a leveling in the HIV/AIDS death rate, for the first time since the epidemic took hold;
- continued increase in life expectancy.

The report, "Births and Deaths for 1995," prepared by the National Center for Health Statistics, part of HHS' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, contains the latest preliminary U.S. natality and mortality statistics.

The report is available from the National Center for Health Statistics, 6525 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md. 20782 or by e-mail at paoquery@nch10a.em.cdc.gov.

—US DEPT. OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
10/07/96

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT WON'T CHALLENGE HEALTH CARE NETWORKS

■(GIT) A group of Cincinnati orthopedic surgeons will form a contract network with health benefit plans to provide plan members with orthopedic services, the Justice Department announced last week.

Cincinnati Regional Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Associates will be a non-exclusive physician network joint venture that negotiates and contracts directly with managed care plans and other third party payers.

The network will be comprised of 56 of the 158 orthopedic surgeons in the greater Cincinnati metropolitan area, including 28 counties in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. This 35 percent market share is slightly more than the antitrust safety zone of 30 percent for non-exclusive networks established in Statement 8 of the 1996 Statements of Antitrust Enforcement Policy in Health Care, issued recently by the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission. However, Assistant Attorney General Anne K. Bingaman of the Antitrust Division said that the Department will not challenge the network's plans because they do not raise substantial antitrust concerns.

In a related decision, the Justice Department's Antitrust Division also announced it will allow three health care providers in Mississippi to form a nonexclusive network to contract with managed care plans to provide statewide home health care coverage. The group, to be called Home Care Alliance, Inc., will contract using a messenger model, a method of contracting which is designed to avoid price agreements among competitors.

Although the three proposed members of the network are not competitors, the messenger to be employed by the network will not share a member-provider's contract information with the other member-providers.

According to Bingaman, the three initial members nor the addition of more members in the future should harm competition, since the Alliance will contract through a messenger. Networks using properly designed and implemented messenger arrangements rarely present substantial antitrust concerns.

—DUSTIN PYEATT
10/09/96

REDUCTION IN SIDS DEATHS HELPS BRING LOW INFANT MORTALITY

■(WASHINGTON) Saying that more than 50 percent of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) mortality may be preventable if babies are placed to sleep on their sides or backs, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala on Wednesday announced that deaths due to SIDS fell 30 percent between 1992 and 1995. She said the reduction in SIDS deaths has contributed significantly to an historic low infant mortality rate in the United States.

Secretary Shalala credited the public-private 'Back to Sleep' campaign with bringing about the improvement in SIDS mortality, and she said all parents need to hear the message: "Babies should be placed to sleep on their sides or on their backs, but not on their stomachs."

Shalala announced that SIDS deaths declined from 4,891 in 1992 to 3,279 in 1995, according to preliminary HHS data. This includes a 12 percent drop in 1994 and an 18.5

percent drop in 1995, the largest annual declines ever observed in the U.S. and the only large declines observed in two consecutive years. Further, SIDS has dropped from 2nd to 3rd leading cause of infant mortality, behind both low birth weight and congenital anomalies.

—US DEPT. OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
10/10/96

MILITARY & VETERANS

\$182 MILLION APPROPRIATED FOR VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE

■(WASHINGTON) Veterans reentering the civilian labor force will continue to receive job search, counseling, training, and placement services with programs and services funded through the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS).

Congress appropriated \$182 million for VETS in fiscal year 1997, an increase of almost \$12 million over last fiscal year, to carry out its programs of helping veterans into good jobs in the civilian economy.

Funding for two programs that pay for veterans' service representatives in the state employment service systems — the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) program — totaled just over \$157 million. This will provide job search, counseling, skill assessment, placement, and follow-up services for 340,000 veterans.

Funding under the Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA) equals last year's appropriation of \$7.3 million. This money, primarily awarded to states and non-profit organizations on the basis of competitive grants, will provide training to targeted groups of veterans and help more than 2,300 of them into unsubsidized jobs in the private sector.

VETS will be able to fund all of its authorized staff positions and continue to support the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP provides three-day workshops which will help separating service members and their spouses quickly reintegrate into the civilian economy with a minimum of time lost to unemployment.

In addition, the National Veterans' Training Institute is funded for \$2 million which

Continued on next page

"Hungry men have no respect for law, authority or human life."

Marcus Moziah Garvey
'Philosophy and Opinions'
1923