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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**PERINATAL MOOD DISORDERS TO BE THE SUBJECT OF A  
MULTI-COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION DAY**

The Westchester County Department of Health, in conjunction with the Lower Hudson Valley Perinatal Network, will be holding the first of what will become an annual Community Health Education Day to promote awareness of perinatal health issues on Thursday, **May 17<sup>th</sup>**. This year's topic is Perinatal Mood Disorders and the theme of the Community Health Education Day is: **"It Takes a Village...To Manage the Ups and Downs of Parenthood."**

"Between 15 and 20 percent of all women experience some form of pregnancy-related depression or anxiety," said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. "In some cases, the depression or anxiety can be very severe. All pregnant women and new mothers need to be aware of the potential for such mood changes to occur and speak with a health care provider if they do occur."

Westchester County Health Department is a member of the Steering Committee for the Lower Hudson Valley Perinatal Network, which provides health promotion information aimed at improving birth outcomes in Westchester, Rockland, Dutchess, and Putnam counties.

Information regarding perinatal mood disorders will be distributed on May 17<sup>th</sup> and throughout the week by participating organizations. In Westchester, the Health Department will be channeling promotional efforts through a number of its programs that serve pregnant women and new mothers. These include the Immunization Action Program, the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) sites in Yonkers, White Plains, and Port Chester; the Early Intervention program; and the Health Department District Offices in Yonkers, White Plains, and New Rochelle.

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Informational videos and posters will be on display at some locations, and literature and incentives, such as bookmarks and stress balls, will be handed out to program clients. In addition, literature and incentives will be given to program clients during home visits by staff of the Home Health Program and the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, as well as by staff of the Healthy Beginnings Program during community outreach activities. Over 500 clients are expected to be reached through this informational campaign.

Perinatal Mood Disorders include a range of illnesses including prenatal depression (during pregnancy), postpartum depression (after the birth) and postpartum psychosis. Prenatal depression affects between 10 and 20 percent of women during pregnancy. Symptoms of prenatal depression may include fatigue, loss of appetite, sleep problems, crying and anxiety.

After the baby is born most mothers suffer the “baby blues.” Symptoms are similar to prenatal depression but are usually mild and go away after about two weeks after delivery. However, if the feelings continue longer or are more intense, this could be considered postpartum depression. Between 10 and 20 percent of women suffer postpartum depression, which may result in persistent sadness, frequent crying, lack of interest or extreme concern for the baby, and feelings of inadequacy or guilt. Postpartum psychosis is rare and may cause the mother to experience hallucinations or delusions.

The most common forms of treatment for depression are psychotherapy and medication. The type of treatment will depend on the severity of the depression. Treatment has an 80 to 90 percent success rate in patients.

For more information, please call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit the Health Department website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).