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Planned Parenthood says Plan B availability increased

August 26, 2007

Cleveland -- On the one-year anniversary of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval of over-the-counter status for Plan B emergency contraception, the product is much more widely available than it was in 2005, according to Planned Parenthood of Northeast Ohio.

Of 100 Cleveland-area pharmacies surveyed, the organization states 79 percent carry Plan B, compared with 45 percent in 2005.

The organization says rural area women are much more likely to face barriers to access, especially in areas where there are no family planning providers.

"Over-the-counter access for women 18 and older was a big step forward for public health and for preventing unintended pregnancy, but in a state that ranks 48th in access to family planning, there's more work to do," said Tara Broderick, CEO of PPNEO. "Planned Parenthood is working in Ohio to ensure that women have timely access to this important backup birth control option."

The organization urges passage of the Ohio Prevention First Act, under consideration by the state legislature, which would require Ohio pharmacists to dispense all legal prescriptions presented to them regardless of their personal beliefs.

Women under the age of 18 still face barriers to emergency contraception, according to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Under the FDA decision allowing over-the-counter sale of Plan B, teenagers must obtain a prescription from a physician to obtain emergency contraception. Research shows that over-the-counter access to emergency contraception does not encourage or increase sexual activity among teens, according to PPFA.

"The bottom line is that teen pregnancy is an epidemic in our country," Broderick said. "More than 750,000 teens will get pregnant this year. We encourage parents, politicians, educators and health care providers to link arms with Planned Parenthood to help our teens by supporting access to proven prevention measures like medically accurate sex education and access to birth control, including emergency contraception."

Planned Parenthood of Northeast Ohio provides emergency contraception on a walk-in basis at 18 health centers in Northeast Ohio.

Planned Parenthood health centers have provided more than 1.2 million women with emergency contraception, according to the organization.

For more information about emergency contraception, visit www.plannedparenthood.org.

To locate a Planned Parenthood health center in Northeast Ohio, visit www.plannedparenthood.org/ppneo/