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Contact:
CDC Division of Media Relations
(404) 639-3286

People with Disabilities Are Less Healthy than those without Disabilities
New Report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on
Health of People with Disabilities

For the first time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has published a report of state-level data on the number of people with disabilities, and the wide range of health differences that exist between people with disabilities and those without. The new report, *The Disability and Health State Chartbook, 2006 – Profiles of Health for Adults with Disabilities*, will be unveiled at CDC's National Health Promotion Conference scheduled at the Hilton Atlanta Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia from September 12-14, 2006.

Disability prevalence ranges substantially among the states -- from a low of 11.4 percent to a high of 25.8 percent among people with disabilities. People with disabilities make up about 20 percent of the U.S. adult, non-institutionalized population.

"The findings in the *Chartbook* will allow states to measure their progress and will highlight the need to include people with disabilities in health promotion activities to reduce smoking, obesity, and to increase physical activity," said Dr. José Cordero, assistant surgeon general and director of the CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.

The Chartbook, examines five health factors, including smoking, obesity, physical activity, immunizations, and access to health care for adults age 18 years and over in 50 U.S. states, District of Columbia, and three territories.

Generally, people with disabilities are much more likely to report fair or poor health. The median percentage was 37.3 percent of people with disabilities reporting fair or poor health compared to 8.2 percent without disabilities. In addition, the findings in the *Chartbook* show that people with disabilities are also more likely to smoke, to be obese, and not be physically active. However, these are health conditions and behaviors that can be improved.

“Good health is a goal for all, but people with disabilities have some unique challenges to achieving optimum health,” said CDC Director Dr. Julie L. Gerberding. “These challenges include their physical access to health care facilities and the lack of easy to read health information materials. The Chartbook shows us where opportunities exist to implement health promotion activities to improve the overall health and quality of life of people with disabilities. Having these state-level data is an important first step in this process.”

Highlights of the report include –

- States with the highest percentages of disability among adults include West Virginia (25.8 percent), Kentucky (24.7 percent), and Oregon (23.7 percent).
- States with the lowest percentages of disability include Hawaii (11.4 percent), North Dakota (15.9 percent), and Illinois (15.9 percent).
- The Southeast region reports the poorest health for people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities report the highest prevalence of smoking in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Louisiana, which is much higher among people with disabilities than those without:

	Adults with Disabilities	Adults without Disabilities
Kentucky	39.9 percent	29.1 percent
Tennessee	38.3 percent	22.4 percent
Louisiana	36.9 percent	23.9 percent

- The highest prevalence of obesity is reported in Mississippi, Indiana, and North Carolina. As with smoking, the prevalence of obesity is much higher among people with disabilities:

	Adults with Disabilities	Adults without Disabilities
Mississippi	36.8 percent	24.4 percent
Indiana	36.1 percent	22.3 percent
North Carolina	35.9 percent	20.7 percent

“Disability itself should not be equated with sickness,” said Dr. Cordero. “However, our findings show that people with disabilities often report poorer health than those without.”

The data were collected from the 2001 and 2003 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), a state-based system that obtains health information through telephone health surveys, with technical assistance provided by CDC. BRFSS is the largest telephone health survey system in the world; there were more than 200,000 interviews in each of these years.

The Chartbook is composed of over 100 pages of maps and charts. The resource section has phone numbers for state health offices and national organizations that promote healthy lives for people with disabilities. The brief narrative is presented in large 14- and 16-point print with high color contrast, so it is accessible for people with vision loss. People who use a screen reader can download accessible versions from the web. Additional print copies may be ordered or downloaded from www.cdc.gov/ncbddd.

Disability is a functional limitation, i.e., loss of or decrease in mobility, cognition, hearing, vision, activities of daily living, related to a health condition that exists within the context of a person's environment.

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Department of Health and Human Services