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Immediate Release

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## January is Cervical Health Awareness Month

**CHICAGO** – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is encouraging women ages 21 and older to speak with their physician or health care provider about cervical cancer screening and prevention this month – “Cervical Health Awareness Month.”

Cervical cancer forms in the tissues of the cervix (the lower, narrow end of the uterus or womb that connects the vagina or birth canal to the upper part of the uterus). Cervical cancer is almost always caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) infection. Fortunately, with regular screenings and follow-up, this form of cancer is easily preventable and highly treatable when detected in its early stage.

“We recommend women have their first routine cervical screening at age 21,” said IDPH Director Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck. “I also encourage women, along with young girls (ages 11 to 13) and their parents, to ask their health care provider about HPV vaccines, which are highly effective at preventing certain forms of HPV.”

Each year approximately 12,000 women in the U.S. are diagnosed with cervical cancer. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that half of the cervical cancers occurred among women who are *rarely* or *never* screened for cervical cancer. There are often no noticeable symptoms of cervical cancer in its early stage, which is why it is important for women to be screened regularly. Symptoms usually develop when the cancer has become invasive and attacks nearby tissue. The most common symptom is abnormal vaginal bleeding. Although cervical cancer usually grows slowly, it can be detected with regular Pap tests (a procedure in which cells are scraped from the cervix and looked at under a microscope).

The Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP) provides free cervical cancer screenings to uninsured and under insured Illinois women between the ages of 35 and 64, regardless of income. Call the health line at 1-888-522-1282 for more information.

To learn more about cervical cancer, visit: National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society, Center for Diseases Control and Prevention and the Illinois Department of Public Health.

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**Can you please add the following to this press release:**

The Iroquois County Public Health Department is now enrolling women in the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program. If you are an uninsured woman between the ages of 35 and 64, please call Jane Newell at 815-432-2483 to enroll and receive free cervical cancer screenings. Iroquois County Public Health Department also has HPV vaccines available for girls ages 11-18. Being vaccinated against HPV makes it much less likely a woman will develop cervical cancer. Please call 815-432-2483 for more information or to schedule an appointment.