



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Scott Walker, Governor
Kitty Rhoades, Secretary

August 10, 2015

The Honorable Joe Sanfelippo
Chair, Committee on Health
Wisconsin Assembly
Room 306 North, State Capitol
P. O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708


Dear Representative Sanfelippo:

The Department of Health Services is pleased to submit to you, as required by s. 253.115 of the Wisconsin Statutes, the annual report on the status of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) in Wisconsin. In 2014, 100% of the hospitals with birthing facilities had an implemented hearing screening program and the majority of licensed homebirth providers also had implemented universal hearing screening in their practices. Of the 66,431 babies born in Wisconsin in 2014, 65,812 babies (99%) were screened for hearing loss and 407 (0.6%) refused screening (based on statewide WE-TRAC data report generated 06/16/15). The statewide rate of infants who did not pass the final newborn hearing screen in 2014 was 0.8%, which falls within the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation of less than 4%.

Hearing loss is the most common congenital birth defect, affecting an estimated 150 babies annually in Wisconsin. If hearing loss is left undetected, it will impede speech, language, cognitive and social development. The Wisconsin Sound Beginnings (WSB) Program continues to make progress toward meeting its goal of ensuring that screening is available to 100% of babies born in Wisconsin and to ensure that appropriate services are provided to children who do not pass their hearing screens.

The WSB Program is improving all areas of early hearing detection and intervention through a variety of activities and working with its partners in other agencies to promote a sound beginning for Wisconsin's children.

Sincerely,


Kitty Rhoades
Secretary