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*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ***

Health Officials Urge Breast Cancer Screening for Wyoming Women

CHEYENNE - This year, the American Cancer Society estimates that approximately 260 Wyoming women will be diagnosed with breast cancer, and 50 will die from the disease.

One of the reasons may be that when it comes to breast cancer screening, Wyoming lags behind the national median, said Andrea Coryell, with the Wyoming Department of Health's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program.

The Wyoming Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance data from 2004 reported that only 68.2 percent of Wyoming women over the age of 40 have had a mammogram within the past two years, compared to a national median of 74.6 percent. The goal for each state is 70 percent.

"As our BRFSS numbers show, Wyoming has some catching up to do," said Coryell. "It's very important that all women know their risks and get screened."

The lowest screening rates were among Hispanic women, women with less than a high school diploma, and the uninsured. The highest screening rates were found among women between the ages of 50 and 59, and with household incomes of \$75,000 and above.

Women in southwestern Wyoming were the least likely to have mammograms when compared to other regions across the state.

Coryell said that some of the largest barriers to mammograms for Wyoming women include lack of health insurance and access to screening services. BRFSS data shows that women over 50 who have never had a mammogram are more likely to live in sparsely populated areas. Although mobile mammography units exist in Sublette, Crook, Weston, and Niobrara counties, women must wait for these units to visit their area or find another mammogram provider in another county.

Mammograms are key in early detection of breast cancer and the American Cancer Society recommends annual mammograms for women over 40 years of age. Although all women are at risk for developing breast cancer, risk increases with age.

The Wyoming Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program pays for mammograms, clinical breast exams, pap tests, and pelvic exams. A woman who is 50-64 years of age, without health insurance and low-income may be eligible. For example, a woman who lives alone can earn up to \$1,995 per month. It is a program of the Wyoming Department of Health.

To find out if you may be eligible, call 1-800-264-1296.

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For more information, please contact:

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