

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 3, 2025

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KEY POINTS FOR MEDIA:

- September is Newborn Screening Awareness Month
- Since starting in 1965 with a test for one condition, Illinois's program now checks for more than 50 conditions
- Screening allows for early detection and intervention for conditions that otherwise might have gone undiagnosed

IDPH Marks 60 Years of Newborn Screening Efforts in Illinois

Program now offers early diagnosis and intervention for more than 50 conditions, reaching over 100,000 Illinois newborns annually

SPRINGFIELD – With Newborn Screening Awareness Month underway in September, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is celebrating 60 years of the program in Illinois. Beginning in 1965 with testing for a single condition, Illinois's newborn screening program now checks for more than 50 conditions, offering the hope of early diagnosis and intervention when needed. More than 100,000 newborns are tested annually in the state.

“IDPH is proud to be a leader in supporting families with our newborn screening program,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “For the past 60 years in Illinois, newborn screens have detected potentially life-threatening conditions in healthy babies before they show symptoms. Each year, more than 500 babies in our state are diagnosed through this vital public health service. Early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of these conditions can prevent serious health outcomes, enabling Illinois's children to reach their full potential.”

Illinois's newborn screening program began in 1965 with required testing for a single disorder, phenylketonuria (PKU). PKU is a genetic disorder that is usually asymptomatic at birth, but can lead to serious health and developmental problems if left untreated. Since then, the program has expanded to cover more than 50 separate conditions, including congenital heart disease; metabolic, genetic, and blood disorders; hearing loss; and more.

Testing via blood draw is usually done within the first 24 to 48 hours of life; a separate screening test is used within the same time frame to check for hearing loss.

In 2024, nearly 123,000 newborn babies were screened for these conditions statewide. For conditions detected through lab testing, just over 0.2 percent resulted in a diagnosis requiring medical intervention. Similarly, tests for hearing loss resulted in a diagnosis requiring treatment for just over 0.2 percent of those tested. In total, around 500 infants last year received early treatment for conditions that would have otherwise gone undetected without newborn screening.

For more information on Illinois's newborn screening efforts, go to [Newborn Screening](#).