

දුරකථන ) 011 2669192 , 011 2675011  
njhiyNgrp ) 011 2698507 , 011 2694033  
Telephone ) 011 2675449 , 011 2675280

ෆැක්ස් ) 011 2693866  
ngfj; ) 011 2693869  
Fax ) 011 2692913

විද්‍යුත් තැපෑල ) postmaster@health.gov.lk  
kpd;dQ;ry; Kfthp )  
e-mail )

වෙබ් අඩවිය ) www.health.gov.lk  
,izaj;jsk; )  
website )



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All Provincial Directors of Health Services  
All Regional Directors of Health Services  
All Directors / Medical Superintendents of hospitals (Government and Private Sector)

### **Implementation of the National Birth Defects Surveillance System**

Sri Lanka reports a lower level of infant mortality. Further reduction of infant mortality necessitates cause-specific approach. Birth defects contributes significantly to infant morbidity and mortality. Availability of quality data is crucial in the prevention & control of birth defects.

Surveillance of birth defects involves the ongoing, systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data related to birth defects, essential to the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health practice, closely integrated with the dissemination of these data to those who need to know and linked to prevention and control of such deaths. Ministry of Health has introduced a birth defects surveillance mechanism, with Family Health Bureau (FHB), as the national nodal point.

The objectives of the surveillance is to make available quality birth defects data, to utilize such data effectively at different levels (field, hospital, district and national levels) and to translate lessons learnt in to practice by dissemination to all stakeholders of birth defects prevention and control.

A pilot implementation of the birth defects surveillance was conducted in the Southern Province successfully and with the experience gained, the mechanisms was modified. Professional colleges were involved in the formulation of the guidelines and the data collection formats.

The implementation of the national birth defects surveillance will commence only in the hospital sector (base hospitals and above and private hospitals) from **1<sup>st</sup> June 2017**.

Heads of all levels of hospitals (both in the government & private sector) should make arrangements to execute the birth defects surveillance mechanism as specified in the National Guidelines on Birth defects Surveillance (Annexure I).

You are instructed to ensure establishing the information flow with the help of relevant staff involved. Please also make sure the availability of all data formats at each level.

I trust that all officers concerned would comply with the guidelines and make every effort to successfully implement the national Birth Defects Surveillance System in the country.

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Dr. JMW Jayasundara Bandara  
**Director General of Health Services**

Cc: Secretary Health – Ministry of Health  
Additional Secretary – Medical Services  
DDG – Medical Services I & II

DDG – PHS I & II  
Directors (MCH / TCS / MS / Private Sector Health/ Epid  
Unit)

