



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 6, 2002

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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SECRETARY STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF
WEARING A HELMET WHEN BICYCLING, SKATEBOARDING OR SKATING**

-- National SAFE KIDS Week is May 4-11--

Tallahassee -- While many bike crashes and other wheel-related incidents (skateboards and in-line skates) result in relatively minor injuries such as broken bones, scrapes and bruises, thousands of kids are seriously injured or die simply because they weren't wearing a helmet. To help kids stay safe on their bikes, skateboards and in-line skates, the 14 local SAFE KIDS coalitions and state chapters throughout Florida will be hosting interactive, free safety fairs throughout various parts of the state during National SAFE KIDS Week 2002 (May 4-11).

"As a parent and a pediatrician, nothing is more heart-wrenching than the serious injury or death of a child," said Florida Department of Health (DOH) Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A. "By simply sitting down with their children and discussing the long-term consequences and risks associated with not wearing a helmet, parents can empower their children to wear a helmet on every ride."

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is the leading killer and disabler of children. Each year, 3,000 children are killed and approximately 29,000 are hospitalized due to traumatic brain injury. For those who survive and recover physically, the psychological consequences can last a lifetime. It is estimated that 75 percent of bicycle-related fatalities among children could be prevented with a helmet.

SAFE KIDS has developed new, informative educational materials geared towards kids, tweens (children aged 8-12) and adults featuring lifesaving steps on protecting themselves from wheel-related injury. For more information about wheel-related safety, visit the National SAFE Kids website at www.safekids.org.

The Florida SAFE Kids Coalition is part of the National SAFE KIDS Campaign, the first and only national non-profit organization dedicated solely to the prevention of unintentional childhood injury – the number one killer of children ages 14 and under. More than 300 state and local SAFE KIDS Coalitions in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico comprise the Campaign. Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, M.D., ScD, is chairman of the Campaign. Johnson & Johnson is the Campaign's founding sponsor.

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