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Family planning effort gets big push in Iowa

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A new Iowa program designed to decrease unplanned pregnancies has Omaha roots.

The Iowa Initiative to Reduce Unintended Pregnancies was begun and funded by the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, named for the late wife of Omaha investor Warren Buffett.

Former Iowa first lady Christie Vilsack, who announced the venture Thursday in Des Moines, will run the program.

Vilsack spoke of what she called "startling numbers" when making the announcement.

Almost half of all Iowa pregnancies are unplanned; among women ages 18 and 19, that figure jumps to 72 percent.

It all adds up to one thing:

"We are not doing enough for women," Vilsack said.

The program is still in the planning stages, but Vilsack aims to educate young women on their contraception options and raise awareness of the dearth of family planning clinics.

More than half of Iowa's 99 counties do not have family planning centers.

"We really hope that we can reduce the rate of unintended pregnancies," Vilsack said.

"We want to do that by educating young women and making sure they have all the information they need and also that they have access to contraception and a lot of different alternatives of contraception."

The program will have a budget of \$1.5 million in its first year.

Vilsack does not plan to sit down with young women and teach them about contraception. The project also will not provide contraception or open new clinics in underserved areas.