



**November 3, 2014**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Colleen Mullis  
(803) 898-2452  
(803) 605-4848 (cell)  
Colleen.Mullis@scdhhs.gov

### **Statewide Birth Outcomes Initiative Conference Being Held in Columbia on November 6**

**Columbia, SC** - In support of our efforts to improve the health of moms and babies in our state, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) and the South Carolina Hospital Association (SCHA) are hosting the third annual South Carolina Birth Outcomes Initiative (SCBOI) Symposium on Thursday, November 6 from 8:30 a.m. – 4:15 p.m. at the Columbia Marriott.

Featuring the theme, “Building on Success: Collaborating to Improve the Health of South Carolina Moms and Babies,” speaker Dr. Dale Reisner, Medical Director for OB Quality and Patient Safety at the Swedish Medical Center Hospital System in Seattle will address attendees and lead discussions on successful strategies to reduce C-sections and support vaginal birth. In addition, Dr. Sarah Taylor, Director of the South Carolina Donor Human Milk Bank, will talk about the launch of South Carolina’s first human milk bank to improve the health of low-birth weight babies.

“All children deserve the same opportunity for a healthy birth, one that reduces health disparities and medical complications for both the mother and child,” said Tony Keck, Director of SCDHHS. “We are excited to host this conference as an opportunity to highlight and educate our state’s health care providers on best practices to support infant and maternal health and share innovative strategies to continue our mission to improve the health of moms and babies in South Carolina.”

The goal of this symposium is to emphasize current areas of collaborative perinatal quality improvement, raise awareness of evidence-based, best practices in infant and maternal health and share resources with health care providers. This event will also highlight successes for mothers and babies during the first three years of the SC Birth Outcomes Initiative and outline further strategies to improve birth outcomes in 2015. The conference will feature keynote speakers and workshop sessions on several SCBOI efforts including health and financial performance of hospitals who have completed Baby-Friendly certification, care models to address disparities and promote family-centered care, expanded access to contraceptives through long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) reimbursement policy changes and a model of group prenatal care that has shown a decrease in preterm birth rates.

"The Birth Outcomes Initiative is a wonderful example of the many health care leaders in South Carolina working together to combat premature birth," said Dr. Amy Picklesimer, an obstetrician for the Greenville Health System and the SCDHHS BOI clinical lead. "Using these strategies allows us to make great strides in improving the health of moms and babies in South Carolina, ultimately driving down infant mortality and saving lives."

- More -

With the mindset that infant mortality and low birth weight babies are two of the state's most pressing health problems, SCDHHS, SCHA and the South Carolina Chapter of the March of Dimes joined with other community partners to create the now nationally recognized SCBOI. Since its inception in 2011, SCBOI has expanded efforts to reduce the number of low birth weight babies and ensure the healthiest possible start in life for all infants. SCBOI has worked with over 50% of the states in the nation to share South Carolina's experiences and successes.

According to a South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) report released in October, the 2013 state infant mortality rate is 6.9 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, a 9.2 percent decrease from the previous year's rate of 7.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

"Premature birth is a leading cause of death for newborns. As part of Birth Outcomes Initiative, we are working toward stronger, healthier babies in our state by eliminating non-medically necessary inductions prior to 39 weeks gestation. The collaborative effort of the BOI has helped make this possible by reaching a 70 percent reduction in these deliveries," said Keck. "Since August 2011, there has been a 70% reduction in the number of non-medically necessary inductions prior to 39 weeks."

SCDHHS through SCBOI is also working on other initiatives to improve the health and health care for pregnant women and infants in South Carolina. In 2012, the agency began incentivizing doctors to screen pregnant women for risk factors such as substance abuse, domestic violence and depression. In 2013, SCDHHS implemented CenteringPregnancy, a group model of prenatal care shown to decrease pre-term birth, and "Race to the Date," a program providing financial incentive payments to hospitals who achieved the certification of "Baby Friendly" by September 2013. This year, SCDHHS is working with SCBOI stakeholders to reduce the number of C-sections performed on first-time, low risk moms in South Carolina through a signed commitment from all birthing hospitals in the state, simulation education training, webinars and provider education materials.

For more information on South Carolina's Birth Outcomes Initiative or the upcoming symposium, visit [www.scdhhs.gov/boi](http://www.scdhhs.gov/boi) or contact Monty Robertson at 803-898-3866.

**About the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

*The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides health care benefits to more than one million South Carolinians. Its mission is to purchase the most health for our citizens in need at the least possible cost to the taxpayer.*

Follow @SCMedicaid on Twitter!

###