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South Carolina Birth Outcomes Initiative Wins National Award for Innovative Strategies to Improve Health of Moms and Babies

Columbia, S.C. – The South Carolina section of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) won the national organization’s Council of District Chairs Service Award for their ongoing efforts and dedication to improve the health of moms and babies in the state as part of the South Carolina Birth Outcomes Initiative (SCBOI). Launched in 2004 by the ACOG, the specialty’s national professional membership organization dedicated to the improvement of women’s health, this prestigious award recognizes an outstanding activity or program that positively impacts the health of moms or babies in an ACOG district or section.

Dr. Scott Sullivan, maternal-fetal medicine specialist at the Medical University of South Carolina; Dr. Judy Burgis, chair and professor of Clinical OB/GYN at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine and Dr. Tom Hepfer, ACOG District IV Chair, accepted the award on behalf of the state and presented on SCBOI’s initiatives on May 16 at the Council of District Chairs award meeting during the annual Clinical and Scientific Meeting in Washington D.C.

“Through the collaborative efforts of the South Carolina Birth Outcomes Initiative, our state has been able to successfully move ideas into action,” said Sullivan. “These actions have enabled us to make meaningful changes through policy and education that have had a true impact on improving the health of moms and babies in our state.”

In addition to the plaque and recognition during the meeting, a \$5,000 award will also be provided the South Carolina section of ACOG to continue efforts to improve maternal-child health.

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 percent of the states in the nation to share South Carolina’s experiences and successes.

Led by the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS), the South Carolina Hospital Association (SCHA) and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), the South Carolina Birth Outcomes Initiative (SCBOI) is a multi-stakeholder collaborative aimed at improving birth outcomes. From 2011, the state has successfully reduced non-medically necessary early-elective inductions at 37 to 38 weeks gestation by 73 percent and the infant mortality rate in the state is at a record low, 6.5 out of every 1,000 births as of 2014.

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“The Birth Outcomes Initiative is a wonderful example of leaders in the health community pulling their resources together and working as a team to make statewide change,” said BZ (Melanie) Giese, the director of SCBOI for SCDHHS. “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.”

SCDHHS through SCBOI is supporting numerous 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. In 2014, SCDHHS started 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 through the SimCOACH™, webinars and provider education materials.

For more information on South Carolina’s Birth Outcomes Initiative, visit www.scdhhs.gov/boi.

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