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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Monique McDaniels  
(803) 898-1134  
(803) 309-6398 (cell)  
Monique.mcdaniels@scdhhs.gov

#### **Four Hospitals in South Carolina Achieve Baby-Friendly Certification**

*SCDHHS rewards successful hospitals \$800,000 for improved practices to support breastfeeding.*

**Columbia, SC** – During the Birth Outcomes Initiative (BOI) Symposium today, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) recognized four South Carolina hospitals – Georgetown Memorial Hospital in Georgetown, Waccamaw Community Hospital in Murrells Inlet, Roper St. Francis Mount Pleasant Hospital in Mount Pleasant and the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston - who earned the designation of Baby-Friendly during the Race to the Date program.

As a part of BOI, SCDHHS' Race to the Date program incentivized South Carolina hospitals to attain the Baby-Friendly USA certification by promoting breast milk as the standard for infant feeding. Each of the four hospitals will receive \$200,000 from SCDHHS for successfully earning the certification by September 30.

"We are proud to recognize these hospitals for their achievement of the Baby-Friendly designation," said Tony Keck, Director of SCDHHS. "We appreciate these hospitals' efforts to promote maternal and infant health as part of South Carolina's ongoing commitment to reduce infant mortality."

Baby Friendly recognizes and awards birthing facilities who successfully implement the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, allowing them to give all mothers the information, confidence and skills necessary to successfully initiate and continue breastfeeding their babies. It is the highest designation afforded to hospitals by an accrediting body that promotes best practices for maternity care and is awarded after a rigorous on-site survey examining a hospital's policies, practices and procedures is complete.

Only seven percent of U.S. babies are born in Baby-Friendly hospitals. Hospitals that are recognized as Baby-Friendly have demonstrated best practices in the care of mothers and newborns and have improved breastfeeding rates. In addition, Baby-Friendly hospitals support mother-baby bonding by keeping mothers and babies together, putting babies in skin-to-skin contact right after birth, educating all families on best infant feeding practices and educating hospital staff on procedures to better support new families.

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“Scientific studies show lower risks for certain diseases and improved health outcomes for both mothers and babies who breastfeed. Thus encouraging breastfeeding at the hospital – where life begins - provides the best start in life for our children,” said Dr. Amy Picklesimer, an obstetrician with the Greenville Health System and the Clinical Lead of BOI. “Creating Baby-Friendly hospitals provides real solutions to improve the health of moms and babies in South Carolina.”

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative is a global program launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to encourage and recognize birthing facilities that offer an optimal level of care for infant feeding and mother/baby bonding.

Baby-Friendly USA, Inc. is the accrediting body for the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative in the United States. Go to <http://www.babyfriendlyusa.org/get-started/the-guidelines-evaluation-criteria> for more information on guidelines and evaluation criteria.

For more information on South Carolina’s Birth Outcomes Initiative, visit [www.scdhhs.gov/organizations/boi](http://www.scdhhs.gov/organizations/boi).

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

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