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SCDHHS Director Honored for Commitment to Children

Columbia, S.C. – Tony Keck, Director of the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS), received the 2014 Early Childhood Champion award from the Institute for Child Success (ICS), a research and policy organization working across South Carolina to create a culture that facilitates and fosters the success of young children.

This annual award recognizes one organization and two individuals for their commitment to fostering the success of young children in South Carolina. Keck accepted the award today during the ICS 2014 Celebration and Awards Luncheon held at the Hyatt Regency in Greenville.

“The progress being made in South Carolina as a direct result of Director Keck’s commitment to improving health outcomes for women and children through strategic partnerships, such as the nationally-recognized Birth Outcomes Initiative (BOI), is impressive,” said Dr. William Schmidt, Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics and Medical Director for the Children’s Hospital at Greenville Health System. “ I look forward to seeing what future successes arise from this and other programs as SCDHHS continues to launch innovative strategies to improve the health of the youngest South Carolinians, including use of the state’s first Pay-for-Success (PFS) project to fund the expansion of the Nurse Family Partnership’s home visiting services to families in the state’s Medicaid population.”

SCDHHS through BOI has successfully introduced other initiatives to improve the health and health care for pregnant women and infants in South Carolina since its launch in July 2011. Between October 2011 and October 2012, early elective inductions and deliveries prior to 39 weeks gestation were reduced by 50 percent, thanks to a BOI-sponsored pledge signed by all 43 birthing hospitals. In 2012, the agency implemented a program incentivizing doctors to screen pregnant women for risk factors such as substance abuse, domestic violence and depression called Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT). In addition, SCDHHS rewarded South Carolina birthing hospitals that achieved the Baby-Friendly USA certification by promoting breast milk as the standard for infant feeding. The four South Carolina birthing hospitals that attained this certification by September 30, 2013 received \$200,000 as part of the “Race to the Date” program.

In the newest initiative to improve health outcomes for moms and babies, SCDHHS is currently developing the South Carolina’s first Pay-for-Success (PFS) project to expand the Nurse-Family Partnership’s home visiting services to young, low-income, first-time Medicaid mothers in South Carolina. PFS is a promising new approach to government contracting that combines private investment, performance-based payments and market discipline. This project is the state’s first PFS contract and is expected to be the first time PFS is used to fund health care.

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With more than 25 years of experience in health care, Keck serves on the Executive Committee for the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP), Board of the National Association of Medicaid Directors and the Institute of Medicine's Committee on Governance and Financing of Graduate Medical Education. Prior to his appointment in South Carolina, he served three years in the administration of Louisiana Governor, Bobby Jindal, as health and social services policy advisor to the governor, and chief of staff and deputy secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals. In the private sector, Keck managed and consulted for organizations such as Johnson & Johnson, where he was Director of Operations for Latin American Consulting and Services, as Director of Management Engineering at Ochsner Clinic New Orleans and as Administrator of St. Thomas Health Services, a community clinic also in New Orleans. He holds both a Bachelor of Industrial and Operations Engineering and Master of Public Health from the University of Michigan, and is ABD in health systems management at the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides health care benefits to more than 1.1 million South Carolinians. Its mission is to purchase the most health for our citizens in need at the least possible cost to the taxpayer. For more information on SCDHHS, please visit www.scdhhs.gov and follow @SCMedicaid on twitter.

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