

# Mother's Milk Bank of SOUTH CAROLINA

April 30, 2015  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **South Carolina Launches First Mother's Milk Bank in State** *North Charleston Facility to Provide Breast Milk to Sickest Babies in South Carolina*

**NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C.** - The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), the South Carolina Birth Outcomes Initiative (SCBOI), the South Carolina Neonatology Consortium and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) have teamed up to open South Carolina's first Mother's Milk Bank to improve the health of the state's most vulnerable infants. This milk bank will provide breast milk to very low birth-weight (VLBW) babies – infants weighing less than 3.3 pounds - in neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) in South Carolina.

When babies are born prematurely, many of their organs are not fully developed. This puts them at risk for a number of diseases within the first weeks of life. In particular, these infants are predisposed to a deadly condition called necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC), an inflammation of the gut.

Two-thirds of babies who contract NEC die or develop debilitating conditions. However, this disorder can be prevented by the antibodies and nutrients found in human milk. Often, though, mothers who deliver prematurely have trouble breastfeeding their own babies because they can't produce enough milk. In VLBW babies, breast milk is essential – increasing the survival rate and improving the development of these infants. Without a local milk bank, South Carolina hospitals have to rely on other states for their breast milk supply, which can lead to shortages.

"MUSC and other hospitals in our state treat babies every day who, for different reasons, can't have their mother's own milk," said Dr. Sarah Taylor, a neonatologist at MUSC and the new director of the Mother's Milk Bank of South Carolina (MMBSC). "As a Baby-Friendly USA certified hospital that advocates breastfeeding, we are overjoyed to be able to help launch the state's first milk bank and empower women to provide life-saving breast milk to sick babies in South Carolina."

Physically located in North Charleston, the milk bank, accredited by the Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA) as a developing milk bank, will be operated by MUSC. South Carolina mothers will be able to donate breast milk already at 10 satellite milk bank depots around the state with seven more milk depots to open in the next few months. The average baby in the NICU needs 8 ounces of milk per day. MMBSC expects to process and distribute more than 5,000 ounces of milk each month.

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“When members of the health community team up with health officials across state government to improve the health of our people, particularly our children, and save lives, we truly have a reason to celebrate,” said Governor Nikki Haley.

“MMBSC is a key component in continuing our efforts to advocate the importance of breast milk in the health of babies in South Carolina,” said BZ (Melanie) Giese, director of BOI for the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. “SCBOI is supporting efforts of birthing hospitals in South Carolina to become Baby Friendly-certified and encouraging providers to educate their patients on the importance of breastfeeding – the milk bank is an extension of this philosophy.”

“We applaud Dr. Sarah Taylor, MUSC, and all of those who helped to make today possible,” said Beth De Santis, DHEC’s Maternal and Child Health Bureau Director. “Building on the state’s Obesity Action Plan, the breast milk provided by MMBSC and its supporting milk depots will ensure that South Carolina’s youngest and most vulnerable members have access to the nutrition and support they deserve. We look forward to working with MMBSC on this key initiative by offering equipment, staff, and outreach support at five of our local health departments across the state. “

The milk will be shared among infants at five regional hospitals that have a NICU: Greenville Health System, McLeod Health Hospital (Florence), MUSC (Charleston), Palmetto Health Richland (Columbia) and Spartanburg Regional Hospital. It will also be available to level II hospitals in our state when caring for very preterm infants born before 34 weeks gestational age.

Costs to set up the milk bank are approximately \$200,000 and about \$230,000 a year to run. Funding from sponsors including Tideland Hospital System nurses, SCDHHS, Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina Foundation, the South Carolina Perinatal Association and other stakeholders have supported the initial costs of the state’s first milk bank and MUSC is providing facility and staff support.

SCBOI, which is spearheaded by SCDHHS but involves stakeholders statewide, was established in 2011, and develops strategies to improve the health of moms and babies in South Carolina. In three years, the group successfully reduced the number of non-medically necessary, early elective deliveries in South Carolina by 70 percent. In addition, as a result of the Baby-Friendly initiative, 24 percent of babies in our state are born in a Baby-Friendly hospital.

For more information about the Mother's Milk Bank of South Carolina and how you can help, visit [www.scmilkbank.org](http://www.scmilkbank.org).

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