



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Recognizing Kansas hospitals' achievements through the 39-plus Weeks Banner Program

TOPEKA – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) Bureau of Family Health, the March of Dimes and the Kansas Healthcare Collaborative (KHC) have joined together to encourage continued progress towards eliminating early elective deliveries (EED) in Kansas. Together, the organizations support Kansas birthing hospitals in adopting the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) guidelines that highlight the importance of allowing babies to reach 39 weeks gestation through the elimination of elective labor inductions and cesarean sections.

More than 30 years ago, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) published guidelines on the importance of allowing babies to reach 39 weeks gestation to optimize brain and organ development and improve neonatal outcomes. Unfortunately, even as recently as 2012, some providers still were inducing labor or performing cesarean sections prior to 39 weeks gestation without medical necessity. Kansas hospitals and providers have taken the lead in reversing that trend.

In recent years, Kansas hospitals have moved to adopt best practices in line with the ACOG guidelines. The collaborative efforts and hard work of hospitals have resulted in a rapid and significant reduction in the statewide EED rate from eight percent in 2013 to two percent in 2015.

The March of Dimes' national Hospital Banner Recognition Program is designed to recognize hospitals that have achieved EED rates below five percent, and Kansas hospitals are invited to participate. Hospitals that complete a simple checklist and meet the criteria will receive a customized banner that commends the hospital for commitment to improving the quality of care for moms and babies. Each hospital also will receive a press kit from the March of Dimes so that patients, families, community leaders and donors are aware of the hospital's commitment to the health of the community.

"This laudable achievement deserves recognition, and KDHE is proud to supply banners at no cost to qualifying hospitals," said Susan Mosier, KDHE Secretary and State Health Officer.

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About Early Elective Delivery (EED)

Babies born preterm, before 37 completed weeks of gestation, are at increased risk of immediate life-threatening health problems, as well as long-term complications and developmental delays. Among preterm infants, complications that can occur during the newborn period include respiratory distress, jaundice, anemia and infection, while long-term complications can include learning and behavioral problems, cerebral palsy, lung problems and vision and hearing loss. As a result of these risks, preterm birth is a leading cause of infant death and childhood disability. Although the risk of complications is greatest among those babies who are born the earliest, even those babies born "late preterm" (34 to 36 weeks' gestation) and "early term" (37 and 38 weeks' gestation) are more likely than full-term babies to

experience morbidity and mortality. In 2015, 66 Kansas births per week were preterm (8.8 percent of all births), and 179 were early elective deliveries.

About the March of Dimes

The March of Dimes is the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. For more than 75 years, moms and babies have benefited from March of Dimes research, education, vaccines and breakthroughs. To participate in our annual signature fundraising event, visit marchforbabies.org. For the latest resources and health information, visit our websites marchofdimes.org and nacersano.org. You can also find us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram and Twitter.

About the Kansas Healthcare Collaborative

KHC is a nonprofit organization with a mission dedicated to transforming health care through patient-centered initiatives that improve quality, safety and value. KHC was formed in 2008 by the Kansas Hospital Association and the Kansas Medical Society as a resource to enhance health care provided to Kansans. With the support of the Kansas Medical Society and the Kansas Hospital Association, KHC is seen as the lead organization in Kansas for health care quality improvement education, evaluation and measurement. The KHC mission is to engage and align providers in delivering quality health care and outcomes.

About the Kansas Department of Health & Environment, Bureau of Family Health

The KDHE Bureau of Family Health is responsible for administering the Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services Block Grant for the State of Kansas. The Title V MCH program plays a key role in the provision of maternal and child health services in Kansas and targets activities to improve the health of all women and infants. Find more information at kansasmch.org or kdheks.gov/bfh. You can also find us on Facebook (Kansas Maternal & Child Health).