



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Local Hospitals Work Together to Stop Practice of Scheduling Early Deliveries**

As part of the community-wide effort to reduce infant mortality, Franklin County hospitals are working together to educate expecting parents and local obstetricians on a new, agreed-to community standard that prohibits the practice of scheduling deliveries before 39 weeks without a medical reason.

The “Community Standards for Early Elective Deliveries (EED)” were approved by the leadership of the four local hospital systems in April, and call for the eight birthing hospitals in Franklin County to develop policies that are designed to reduce the practice of scheduling early deliveries, without medical indication, before 39 weeks completed gestation. The standards also will require hospitals to:

- Routinely communicate their EED policies to all healthcare staff who are involved in the care provided to pregnant women, physicians credentialed to deliver at the hospital and to hospital staff who are involved in the scheduling of patient procedures;
- Educate pregnant women seen in the hospital’s prenatal clinic on the importance of waiting until 39 weeks completed gestation to deliver a baby, without medical indication;
- Submit to the COHC quarterly data on early elective deliveries by hospital site. Hospital OB directors will meet quarterly to review the data and share best practices for reducing EED rates.

“Our hospitals are responding to the evidence that babies are born healthier and have a better start in life when pregnancy is completed naturally at least 39 completed weeks gestation,” said Jeff Klingler, president and CEO of the Central Ohio Hospital Council, which worked with the hospital systems to develop and implement the standard. “The hospitals will be reaching out to patients and the physician community to educate them on this initiative, which is directly tied to the community-wide effort to reduce infant mortality.”

The hospitals’ initiative is in support of CelebrateOne, Columbus’ collective impact initiative to improve the health of babies. The initiative is guided by the work of the Greater Columbus Infant Mortality Task Force which included the recommendation to reduce the number of early elective deliveries.

"Reducing infant mortality requires a community-wide effort, and I thank the Hospital Council for this important announcement that will help give babies the best possible start in life," said Columbus City Council President Andrew Ginther, who convened the task force in November 2013. "This change in policy reflects a commitment to do whatever is necessary to improve the health of every baby born in Columbus."

National studies have shown that babies born before 39 weeks are more likely to have feeding and breathing problems and infections that can result in admissions to neonatal intensive care units than those who are born later. Elective deliveries can also cause developmental problems that show up years after birth.

In the Franklin County standards, hospital leaders set a community-wide goal of 3 percent or less for the number of infants electively delivered, which is more stringent than guidelines issued by national quality organizations. Local hospitals will develop internal policies that meet the community standard for early elective deliveries. The hospital-specific policies will take effect this summer.

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*The Central Ohio Hospital Council serves as the forum for community hospitals to come together to address issues that impact the delivery of health care to central Ohioans. Through the COHC, Mount Carmel Health System, Nationwide Children's Hospital, The OSU Wexner Medical Center and OhioHealth collaborate with each other and with other community stakeholders to improve the quality, value and accessibility of health care in the central Ohio region. For an updated list of the ongoing initiatives the council is dedicated to please visit the [issues/advocacy](#) page.*

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