



State of Louisiana

Department of Health and Hospitals

Office of the Secretary

Dear Chief Executive Officer,

Statewide, non-medically indicated inductions prior to 39 weeks have been reduced by more than 80 percent, a success that could not have been achieved without the commitment to end this practice from **your hospital leadership and staff**. Your participation in the 39-weeks effort ensured that more of Louisiana's babies go home healthy with their parents instead of being cared for in a neonatal intensive care unit.

In partnership with the March of Dimes; the Louisiana Hospital Association; and the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN), the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals is once again calling on you, this time to improve the health of mothers by reducing the number of cesarean sections (C-sections) for first-time, low-risk mothers across the state of Louisiana.

Louisiana consistently has the highest or second highest cesarean section rate in the nation.

Approximately 40 percent of births in Louisiana are done by C-section, a 60-percent increase since the mid-1990s. The rapid increase in non-medically necessary cesarean birth rates raises the significant concern that cesarean delivery is overused without any significant improvement in maternal or newborn outcomes. While C-sections can be life-saving in some situations, they also increase the likelihood of complications for the mother and are thought to contribute to a recent rise in U.S. maternal mortality.

Nationwide, the medical community has increasingly focused on reducing unnecessary C-sections. On Feb. 19, 2014, the American College of Obstetricians and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine together released new guidelines to reduce cesarean deliveries in first-time mothers. These guidelines suggest several potential approaches to reduce the risk of having an unnecessary C-section and decrease the national cesarean rate, including allowing women with low-risk pregnancies to spend more time in labor. On April 10, 2015, the World Health Organization stressed that C-sections should only be performed when they are indeed medically necessary.

Due to the urgency of the problem, hospitals all over Louisiana have pledged to implement policies to reduce unnecessary cesarean section use by committing to pursue the following three goals:

- reduce harm in the nulliparous population by reducing non-medically indicated inductions prior to 40 weeks without a favorable cervix **in first-time mothers**,
- **increase patient and family engagement** regarding non-medically indicated inductions and
- **maintain the standard** of no non-medically indicated elective deliveries prior to 39 weeks.

We are calling on you now to affirm that your hospital is willing to commit to these goals. We are asking for you as the chief executive officer as well as an obstetrical physician champion within your hospital to sign below and commit to joining the effort with us. By taking these goals to your medical staff and implementing a change in your policy on inductions for first-time mothers, you can help decrease the rate of unnecessary C-sections in our state and keep mothers healthy.

Examples of changes you can make include requiring a favorable Bishop score prior to scheduling an

induction or not utilizing cervical ripening agents with first-time mothers before 40 weeks unless medically necessary. These kinds of changes can be difficult, but they will result in a significant decrease in unnecessary C-sections and have already been accomplished at several hospitals in Louisiana, including:

- Lafayette General Medical Center
- Lake Charles Memorial Hospital
- Lane Regional Medical Center
- Natchitoches Regional Medical Center
- North Oaks Medical Center
- Ochsner Health System
- St. Francis Medical Center
- St. Tammany Parish Hospital
- Terrebonne General Medical Center
- Thibodaux Regional Medical Center
- Woman's Hospital

We are here to help you, and we know that change is not easy. **Please feel free to email Medicaid Medical Director Dr. Rebekah Gee with any questions you have about the initiative. Please also let us know if an in-person visit to your hospital to speak with your leadership and medical staff would be helpful. We will be happy to accommodate you.**

Please sign and email a scanned copy of the pledge to Chelsea Ardoin at chelsea.ardoin@la.gov by May 1, 2015. You may also fax your signed copy to 225-342-5568.

Thank you so very much for your continuing commitment to quality and your drive to improve the health of women and babies in Louisiana.

Sincerely,



Kathy Kliebert Secretary
Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals

40-Week Pledge

Hospital:

Chief Executive Officer

Name:

Signature:

Physician Champion (OB-GYN)

Name:

Email address:

Signature: