BCBSNC Supports the Perinatal Quality Collaborative of North Carolina (PQCNC) Phase Two Initiatives

November 29, 2011

- BCBSNC funds $500,000 sponsorship of PQCNC with a direct match from the Office of Rural Health and Community Care (ORHCC) in support of perinatal quality initiatives.
- Initiatives help enhance the quality of perinatal care and reduce costs.
- 55 of the 91 hospitals in North Carolina that deliver babies participate in PQCNC initiatives, with 13,500 BCBSNC babies and 31,000 Medicaid babies born at the participating hospitals in 2010.

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. – Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) today announced a $500,000 sponsorship of the Perinatal Quality Collaborative of North Carolina (PQCNC) in support of three perinatal quality improvement projects. The sponsorship also makes possible a $500,000 match from the Office of Rural Health and Community Care (ORHCC) as the objectives align with the Division of Medical Assistance’s Medicaid Pregnancy Home Initiative.

Currently, North Carolina ranks in the bottom 20 percent of states for all key perinatal indicators, with the March of Dimes giving North Carolina a perinatal grade D in 2010. BCBSNC’s, ORHCC’s and PQCNC’s goal is to make North Carolina the best place to be born by enhancing the quality of perinatal care and reducing costs at participating hospitals through support of PQCNC’s phase two projects, including:

- Reduction of elective cesarean deliveries in first time mothers
- Increasing the use of exclusive human milk in nurseries
- Increasing the use of exclusive human milk in Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs)

“BCBSNC’s support begins the private-public partnership to transform perinatal health care delivery in North Carolina,” said Dr. Martin McCaffrey, PQCNC director. “Through this partnership, BCBSNC and the ORHCC are supporting a unique approach to perinatal care that will benefit not only BCBSNC and Medicaid mothers and infants, but mothers, babies and families across the state.”

PQCNC establishes teams of physicians, payers, hospital administrators, interested family members and state leaders to work with maternity and pediatric health care providers to adopt evidence-based best practices, educate expectant mothers and their families, and monitor key process measures to ensure new mothers are supported during their hospital stay. Some examples of key processes that are monitored include: use of an induction protocol, documenting that mothers are informed about skilled breastfeeding support pre-delivery, number of infants skin to skin with mother for first hour of life, and use of standardized NICU feeding guidelines.

“PQCNC is a unique organization with an impressive track record of success in its statewide quality projects,” said Dr. Don Bradley, BCBSNC chief medical officer. “Through financial support for these initiatives, BCBSNC is encouraging better outcomes for babies and mothers, better experiences for families when babies are born sick or prematurely and better value for each health care dollar.”

Phase one of these initiatives saw positive results with a 43 percent reduction in elective deliveries less than 39 weeks in participating hospitals. Successful completion of phase two initiatives could result in:
• 25 percent reduction in elective cesarean sections in first-time mothers:
  o Reduction of 6,444 hospital days
  o Reduction in $16.1 million in costs
• 50 percent increase in exclusive human milk NICUs:
  o Reduction of 1,760 NICU days
  o Reduction of $5.2 million in acute hospitalization costs

BCBSNC provided the funds through ORHCC, which was able to match the sponsorship. The funding from BCBSNC and ORHCC/DMA allows PQCNC to continue to develop statewide initiatives, recruit additional hospitals, hire staff and continue their mission to make North Carolina the best place to be born.

“In 2009 Medicaid was responsible for 51 percent of North Carolina deliveries,” said John Price, director of the Office of Rural Health and Community Care. “Through this collaboration, we are helping to improve the health care system in North Carolina’s communities, and support delivery of quality perinatal outcomes for vulnerable residents.”

In support of these quality initiatives, PQCNC is developing a statewide, replicable learning network focused on perinatal quality improvement and adoption of best practices. The network works to influence the practice of all hospital-based providers and potentially affect the outcome of all deliveries in North Carolina.

For more information about PQCNC and their initiatives please visit: http://pqcnc.org/

About BCBSNC:
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is a leader in delivering innovative health care products, services and information to more than 3.7 million members, including approximately 900,000 served on behalf of other Blue Plans. For 77 years, the company has served its customers by offering health insurance at a competitive price and has served the people of North Carolina through support of community organizations, programs and events that promote good health. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Access BCBSNC online at http://bcbsnc.com.

About PQCNC:
PQCNC is a statewide organization based in the Department of Pediatrics at UNC Chapel Hill that is working to make North Carolina the best state to be born in through focused, time limited quality initiatives targeting key elements in perinatal care.

About ORHCC:

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