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Kansas Newborn Screening Program Launches
First Annual Facility Recognition Awards

TOPEKA – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), in partnership with the Kansas Hospital Association and the Kansas Midwives Alliance, has created a recognition program for hospitals, facilities and midwives who provide newborn screening services. The first-ever awards were released on July 31 by KDHE’s Kansas Newborn Screening Program (KS-NBS), honoring 131 birthing facilities and midwives for their dedication to higher newborn screening standards in 2019.

Top recognitions went to Kearny County Hospital and Newton Medical Center who were awarded recognition as the “All Around Best of the Best.” Ten additional facilities earned a “Best of the Best” designation for either point-of-care screenings (hearing and critical congenital heart defects) or metabolic and genetic screenings. Birthing facilities and newborn providers could earn recognition in up to five individual categories by exceeding state goals or performing better than state average.

The recognition program was launched as a result of improvements in practices and protocols that facilities, midwives and providers were making in order to meet higher newborn screening standards. In 2018, the KS-NBS Advisory Committee recommended that four new conditions be added to the Kansas’ newborn screening panel. One condition (Spinal Muscular Atrophy or SMA) was added in February 2020 to the newborn screening panel and three others are in the planning phase.

“We’re very pleased with the effort that facilities across the state have put forth to improve the quality and timeliness of our Newborn Screening program,” Dr. Lee Norman, KDHE Secretary, said. “This awards program is an opportunity to honor their dedication and encourage them to keep up the great work.”

The recognition publication is available on the program’s website, www.kdheks.gov/newborn_screening.

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About the Kansas Newborn Screening Program

The Kansas Newborn Screening Program has screened babies for rare and serious conditions at no charge to families since 1965, starting with screening newborns for phenylketonuria (PKU). Most babies are born healthy. However, some are born with serious medical conditions that may not be visible at birth. Left untreated, these conditions can cause permanent disability or death. Over the years the program has added
31 additional disorders to its panel including hearing loss, critical congenital heart defects, and 29 additional genetic and metabolic disorders. Over 36,700 babies received this essential service in 2019, saving 20 lives and preventing serious illness or disability for more than 200 Kansas children.