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## **March of Dimes Awards Grant to Oklahoma Hospital Association to Improve the Health of Mothers and Babies in Oklahoma**

(Oklahoma City, OK) – The Oklahoma Chapter of the March of Dimes has awarded a grant to the Oklahoma Hospital Association to support a collaborative of hospitals in working together to decrease infant mortality and prematurity in Oklahoma. This program, called “Every Week Counts,” will assist hospitals in implementing policies and processes to eliminate medically unnecessary inductions of labor in women who have not completed 39 weeks of their pregnancy. Early elective inductions and scheduled cesarean births are known to contribute to premature birth and low birth weight.

Some conditions in the mother or the baby may require an early delivery. Yet the practice of inducing labor or scheduling a cesarean birth before 39 weeks is common and has been increasing. In fact, in 2008, 68 percent of births in Oklahoma occurred before the full 40 weeks of a pregnancy were completed. The OHA will work with partners and hospitals to help ensure elective deliveries are not being scheduled unless a medical reason exists.

This grant is one of many that the March of Dimes awards in pursuit of its mission to prevent birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality.

“We will use the March of Dimes grant to meet our objective of supporting Oklahoma hospitals in providing safe care to mothers and babies,” said LaWanna Halstead, vice president of quality and clinical initiatives, Oklahoma Hospital Association. “We are grateful to those volunteers who support the March of Dimes by participation in events like March for Babies and who donate in other ways. That participation and those donations make this grant possible,” she said.

(ALL)

*The Oklahoma Hospital Association represents more than 130 hospitals and health care entities across the state of Oklahoma. OHA’s primary objective is to promote the welfare of the public by leading and assisting its members in the provision of better health care and services for all people. For more information, go to [www.okoha.com](http://www.okoha.com).*

*The March of Dimes is the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. With chapters nationwide and its premier event, March for Babies, the March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies. For the latest resources and information, visit [marchofdimes.com](http://marchofdimes.com) or [nacersano.org](http://nacersano.org).*