

# American Association of Birth Centers

America's Birth Center Resource



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## AABC PRESS KIT

### What is a Birth Center?

- The Birth Center, like nurse-midwifery, is an innovation in the delivery of care to healthy, childbearing women and families. It is a homelike facility, existing within a healthcare system with a program of care designed in the wellness model of pregnancy and birth.
- Birth Centers are guided by principles of prevention, sensitivity, safety, appropriate medical intervention, and cost effectiveness.
- Birth Centers provide family-centered care for healthy women before, during and after normal pregnancy, labor and birth.

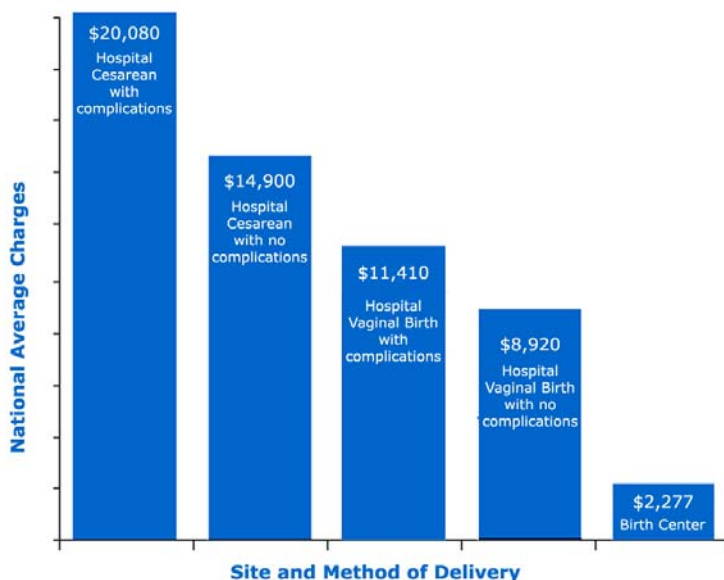
### Birth Centers are Growing

There are currently of 215 Birth Centers in the United States with approximately 40 more in development. Birth centers have grown more than 20% in the last five years.



### Birth Savings

For the past 30 years, Birth Centers have consistently shown dramatic savings when compared with hospital birth. Birth Centers provide quality midwifery care that is both safe and cost-effective.



If even 10 percent (400,000) of the 4 million women who give birth in the U.S. each year delivered their babies in Birth Centers, the savings in facility fee payments alone would be at least \$2.6 billion.

#### NOTES

- Data for Birth Centers is from 2010. Data for hospitals is from 2008.
- Chart shows facility charges only. Provider fees additional.
- Charges for hospital births do not include newborn care.

#### Sources:

American Association of Birth Centers. Uniform Data Set. 2010 Data  
U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, HCUPnet, Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project. 2008 Data

## What is the Birth Center Experience?

- The quality of care in Birth Centers reported in the “The National Birth Center Study” reflects the low overall intrapartum and neonatal mortality rate of 1.3/1000 births; 0.7/1000 if lethal anomalies are excluded. These rates are comparable to studies of low risk, in-hospital births.<sup>1</sup>
- The cesarean section rate for women receiving care in Birth Centers averages 4.4%, approximately one half that in studies of low risk, in-hospital births.<sup>1</sup>
- Birth centers nationally have consistently displayed charges for care for normal birth that average up to 50% less than regular hospital stays and 30% less than short stays - including practitioner fees.<sup>2,3</sup>
- More than half of Birth Centers include routine laboratory exams, childbirth education, home visits, extra office visits, and initial newborn examinations in their charges.
- Most major health insurers contract with Birth Centers for reimbursement. Because charges reflect cost and since the Birth Center is a single service unit, there is no opportunity for cost shifting or operating the Birth Center as a “loss leader” to other services.
- 98.8 percent of women using the Birth Center would recommend it to friends and/or return to the center for a subsequent birth.<sup>1</sup>

## What are the potential benefits to families?

- The Birth Center approaches pregnancy and birth as a normal family event until proven otherwise. The program encourages family involvement and provides a safe environment for families to experience the social, emotional, and spiritual renewal inherent in bringing forth new life -- while attending to the possibility that a problem may arise that will require medical intervention or care in the acute care setting of the hospital. This is in opposition to the view that pregnancy is an illness and birth a medical/surgical event that needs to be cured.
- The Birth Center program of education encourages parents to become informed and self-reliant; to assume responsibility for their own health and the health of the family.
- The Birth Center brings generations together to celebrate new life by encouraging grandparents and children to participate in the Birth Center program.
- Birth centers have demonstrated that they are a viable alternative to unattended home birth and to costly hospital acute care for almost 30 years. It is now time to mainstream these services.

## What are the benefits to business and industry?

- Birth centers offer business and industry direct savings in the cost of health benefits.<sup>2,3</sup>
- The Birth Center program provides a starting base for the wellness and prevention programs being established in industry.
- The family is the hinge pin of the employee. Industry’s support of a program that encourages family unity, self-determination and responsible health can only improve employee performance.
- Birth Center care encourages childbearing women (who may also be employees) to be confident in the design of their bodies. Such confidence, in turn, builds self-esteem and starts the young family off thinking of pregnancy, birth and family health as wellness, not disease.
- The investment of a nine-month intensive focus on improving family health by promotion of lifestyle changes in pregnancy can have a significant ripple effect in the long-term improvement of family health.

## **How will it affect the hospital acute care service?**

- Birth Centers have had a major impact on humanizing the acute care maternity services provided by hospitals. Note the rise in hospital birthing rooms, in privileges for nurse-midwives, in childbirth education programs, and in more liberal attitudes about family participation.
- Birth Centers are showing that the majority of women can safely proceed through pregnancy and birth using acute care services only as needed. In a wellness orientation system for pregnancy and birth, Birth Centers would be the managed care gatekeepers for the acute care obstetric newborn services.
- Birth Centers eventually will help to reduce the number of costly hospital beds and expand primary care services.
- Birth Centers will help to reduce the dependency fostered by institutional confinement and strengthen the family's ability to share responsibility for maternity care and family health.
- Birth Centers will help to develop a system of care based first, on the needs of the family and second, on the needs of medical education or product promotion.

## **How will it affect the obstetricians?**

- Birth centers provide an opportunity for obstetricians, who are primarily trained as surgeons, and family physicians who are trained to prevent and treat disease, to learn and appreciate the benefits of time and education intensive, "with woman" midwifery care.
- Birth centers provide an opportunity for obstetricians to invest in a service in which they can expand their patient base for their specialty.
- Birth centers offer obstetricians an opportunity to develop teams of professional care providers that will improve primary care services to families and better use their specialist skills.

## **How is the quality of care assured in Birth Centers?**

- Through the promotion of state regulations for licensure (41 states currently license Birth Centers).
- Through established National Standards (adopted 1985).
- Through a Continuous Quality Improvement Program for Birth Centers (model program available).
- Through accreditation by the Commission for the Accreditation of Birth Centers.

## **How do Birth Centers contain costs?**

- By retaining autonomy (control) over Birth Center operations and program regardless of ownership (some hospitals own freestanding Birth Centers).
- By providing "high touch" rather than "high tech" care, Birth Centers minimize the overuse of technology.
- By providing a program of primary care that emphasizes education, wellness, prevention, self-help and self-reliance in family health maintenance.
- By using staff efficiently; staff are only in-house when a mother is in-house. Since Birth Centers do not compete with emergency services or hospital acute care, levels of staff are used efficiently and appropriately.
- By sharing responsibility with the childbearing family for health and prevention of illness.

- By using existing community services when available (instead of creating costly duplications) for transport services, social services, medical consultation, laboratories, etc.
- By using established policies and procedures for screening and transfer of women with problems to acute care services.
- By using cost-effective construction that meets safety codes.

## **About AABC**

The American Association of Birth Centers is a multi-disciplinary membership organization comprised of individuals and organizations who support the birth center concept. As the nation's most comprehensive resource on birth centers, AABC works on multiple levels to:

- Provide a national forum for birth center issues
- Conduct ongoing research on normal birth and care in birth centers
- Promote and maintain the nationally recognized Standards for Birth Centers
- Advocate for reimbursement of facility and professional fees to birth centers
- Develop and distribute marketing resources and materials
- Offer networking opportunities for birth center professionals and support staff
- Endorse national birth center accreditation through the Commission for the Accreditation of Birth Centers
- Provide continuing education credit opportunities at AABC conferences
- Promote quality assurance systems and services for birth centers
- Develop sources of affordable liability insurance
- Present education sessions on clinical and business topics specific to birth center operation

## AABC's Mission

The American Association of Birth Centers promotes and supports birth centers as a means to uphold the rights of healthy women and their families, in all communities, to birth their children in an environment which is safe, sensitive and cost effective with minimal intervention.

The mission shall be accomplished by:

- Fostering excellence in birth centers through development and evaluation of evidence-based standards of care
- Supporting the development of birth centers that subscribe to the AABC birth center model of care
- Encouraging all member centers to attain birth center accreditation
- Serving as an information resource on birth centers
- Encouraging the participation of professionals, institutions, and families who support the AABC mission
- Working actively with associations that are interested in the provision of wellness oriented maternity services
- Influencing policy issues at the national, regional and local levels

## Who are AABC's Members?

Membership is available to birth centers, individuals, consumers, associations or corporations who agree to the basic principles of the Association regarding standards of care and safety, non-intervention in the process of natural childbirth, a personalized approach to the care of families, elimination of unnecessary cost and the participation of qualified midwives and physicians.

### REFERENCES

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2. Health Insurance Association of America, *Source Book of Health Insurance Data - 1996*, 1996, Washington, DC.
3. National Association of Childbearing Centers, *NACC 1996 Annual Survey Report of Birth Center Experience*, 1997, Perkiomenville, PA.
4. Rooks, J., et al., "The National Birth Center Study: Part I - Methodology and Prenatal Care and Referrals", *Journal of Nurse-Midwifery*, Vol. 37, No. 4: 222-253, July/August, 1992
5. Rooks, J., et al., "The National Birth Center Study: Part II - Intrapartum and Immediate Postpartum Neonatal Care", *Journal of Nurse-Midwifery*, Vol. 37, No. 5: 301-340, September/October, 1992
6. Rooks, J., et al., "The National Birth Center Study: Part III - Intrapartum and Immediate Postpartum Neonatal Complications and Transfers, Postpartum and Neonatal Care, Outcomes and Client Satisfaction", *Journal of Nurse-Midwifery*, Vol. 37, No. 6: 361-397, November/December, 1992