POSITION STATEMENT

VBAC – Labor & Birth after Cesarean

WHEREAS, it is AABC’s position that:

• Birth is a life changing experience for families, with consequences that can last throughout the lifetime of the parent and child.

• Pregnant and childbearing families have the right to make safe choices for birth.

• In the case of a person who has had a previous cesarean section (cesarean birth/c-section), the options for childbirth include vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC) or a repeat cesarean birth.

• AABC joins numerous other health care organizations in supporting safe access to VBAC.

• VBAC benefits include:
  o For the pregnant person: lower mortality rate (less chance of dying from the procedure); lower rates of severe complications such as thromboembolism (blood clot), amniotic fluid embolism, and placenta percreta (in which the placenta grows through the uterine wall).
  o For the infant: lower rates of respiratory distress
  o For society: lower cost to the health care system.

• Cesarean section is major surgery.

• VBAC risks to the parent and infant include:
  o For the pregnant person: hemorrhage (dangerous and excessive bleeding), uterine rupture.
  o For the infant: fetal death (for example, due to uterine rupture).

• The right of childbearing people with a history of cesarean birth to make safe birth choices should be the same as the right of childbearing people without a history of cesarean birth to make safe choices for subsequent births.

• Lack of access to VBAC in a supportive hospital environment is an ongoing concern in many areas of the U.S. This is one factor that leads some families to choose a birth center for their VBAC.
  o Lack of access covers many factors and includes state regulations, hospitals with institutional guidelines precluding VBAC, or hospitals with restrictive non-evidence based guidelines for VBAC. VBAC bans are also present in many hospitals.
  o Fifteen states specifically forbid out-of-hospital VBAC and other locations may place restrictions on place of birth or type of provider.

• AABC supports the rights of birth centers to choose to offer VBAC to appropriate candidates.
THEREFORE, it is AABC’s position that:

- Informed decision-making (attaining a full understanding of harms and benefits involved in VBAC and in repeat c-section) is crucial for families considering VBAC.

- For those considering VBAC in a birth center, it is important to understand that while absolute risks are low, risks in a birth center setting are higher for people with previous cesareans than for people without previous cesareans, and also are higher than for those with prior cesareans laboring in hospitals.

- Pregnant people and their families must have access to information in a format they can understand, and must be able to discuss this information with their care provider(s).

- AABC strongly supports VBAC in a supportive environment. Ongoing data collection and research are essential in the effort to weigh benefits and harms of vaginal birth after cesarean in community settings (i.e., in a birth center or at home).

Approved by AABC Board of Directors: 5.10.2019