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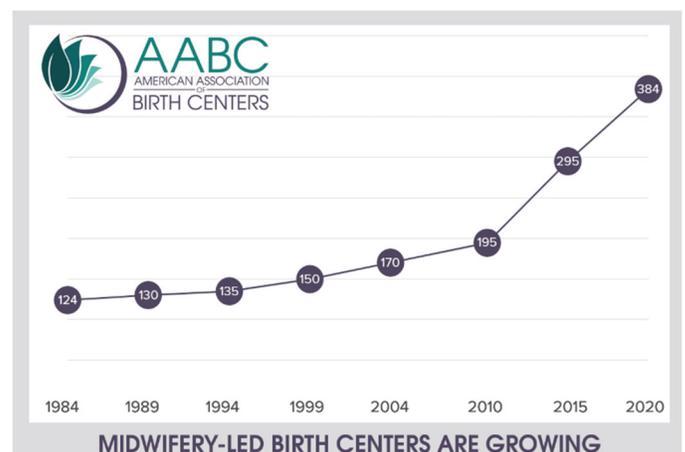
What is a Birth Center?

- The birth center is an innovation in the delivery of care to healthy, childbearing women and families. It is a health care facility for childbirth where care is provided in the midwifery and wellness model. The birth center is freestanding and not a hospital.
- Birth centers are an integrated part of the health care system and are guided by principles of prevention, sensitivity, safety, appropriate medical intervention and cost-effectiveness. While the practice of midwifery and the support of physiologic birth and newborn transition may occur in other settings, this is the exclusive model of care in a birth center.
- The birth center respects and facilitates a woman's right to make informed choices about her health care and her baby's health care based on her values and beliefs. The woman's family, as she defines it, is welcome to participate in the pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period.
- Birth centers include a team of highly qualified professionals from midwifery, nursing, obstetrics, family medicine, pediatrics, nutrition, social work, physical fitness, childbirth, and parenting education.
- Birth center midwifery providers include Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs) and Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs).
- Freestanding birth centers achieve better outcomes than hospitals on quality measures such as cesarean rate for low risk women, elective delivery prior to 39 weeks, and breastfeeding. Birth centers are a safe option for women experiencing a low risk pregnancy. Birth centers use fewer medical interventions; this saves health dollars and reduces the risk of complications.^{1,2}

Birth Centers are Growing

There are currently 384 freestanding birth centers in 40 states and DC. The birth center industry experienced an 97% increase since 2010, and it continues to grow.

Additionally, data from the CDC National Center for Vital Statistics shows a steady increase in the number of birth center births. From 2008-2018, the annual number of birth center births grew by 60%. This while the annual number of U.S. births decreased by 12% during the same period.³



Birth Centers: Part of a National Solution

Expansion of the freestanding birth center model of care should be part of a cost-effective plan to improve access to community maternity care. Birth centers improve health of mothers and babies by improving the quality of care, reducing caesareans and other poor outcomes, and saving health care dollars.^{4,5,6}

Birth centers can be located in low resource areas to provide local access to high quality care. Studies demonstrate significantly reduced caesarean sections in birth centers.^{4,6} Birth centers are licensed facilities and have been developed to be a point of entry into a continuum of care based on medical, psychological, social needs of women and their families.

The Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns Initiative demonstrated that when freestanding birth centers provide maternity services for women and infants who are Medicaid or CHIP beneficiaries:

- ✓ Preterm and low birth weight births were reduced by half
- ✓ Breastfeeding initiation and duration increased
- ✓ Caesareans were reduced by more than half
- ✓ Women and infants received safe, quality care that costs less and uses fewer resources^{4,7}

Cost Savings

Strong Start and other studies of birth center care demonstrate cost savings from lower caesarean rates and fewer medical interventions, and from reductions in preterm, low birthweight births when births occur in the birth center.^{4,5,6,7}

- ✓ Estimated Medicaid savings caesareans prevented **per 10,000 births \$4.35 million**^{5,6}
- ✓ Estimated savings reduction in preterm births **per 10,000 births \$24.25 million**^{5,6}
- ✓ Strong Start participant costs were \$2010 less per mother-baby pair for 1st year of life⁷

About the American Association of Birth Centers

The American Association of Birth Centers (AABC) is a multidisciplinary membership organization comprised of birth centers, individuals and organizations that support the birth center model. Members include certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), certified professional midwives (CPMs), physicians, nurses, women and their families. Founded in 1983, AABC is dedicated to developing quality holistic services for childbearing families that promote self-reliance and confidence in birth and parenting in the wellness model of care.

¹ American Association of Birth Centers, Birth Center Outcome Data from AABC Perinatal Data Registry, Perkiomenville, PA. Unpublished data. Retrieved February, 2016.

² Hill, Ian et al. (2016). Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns II Second Annual Evaluation Report. Retrieved April 5, 2016, from https://downloads.cms.gov/files/cmimi/strongstartenhancedprenatalcare_evalrptyr2v2.pdf

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics Information. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/births.htm>

⁴ Alliman, J., Stapleton, S.R., Wright, J., Bauer, K., Slider, K., Jolles, D. (2019). Strong Start in birth centers: Sociodemographic characteristics, care processes, and outcomes for mothers and newborns. *Birth*. 46: 234-243. doi: 10.1111/birt.12433. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/birt.12433>

⁵ Washington State Healthcare Authority (2016). Reimbursement of births performed at birth centers. Clinical Quality Transformation. Olympia, WA. <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/program/2eshb-2376-birth-centers.pdf>

⁶ Stapleton SR, Osborne C, and Illuzzi J. Outcomes of Care in Birth Centers: Demonstration of a Durable Model. *JMWH*. 58, (1), pages 3–14, Jan/Feb 2013. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jmwh.12003/full>

⁷ Hill I, Dubay L, Courtot B et al. (2018) Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns Evaluation: Year 5 Project Synthesis, Vol 1. <https://downloads.cms.gov/files/cmimi/strongstart-prenatal-finalvalrpt-v1.pdf>.