



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Coalition Aims to Improve South Carolina Maternal and Child Health through Free, Innovative Text Messaging Service

COLUMBIA, SC (August 5, 2013) – South Carolina leaders announced today a coalition of local and state text4baby partners formed to connect pregnant and new moms to text messages that will help improve health outcomes for them and their babies.

The coalition aims to enroll South Carolina moms in text4baby, the nation’s largest and only free SMS information service that delivers three text messages per week through pregnancy and baby’s first year, personalized to their due date and the developmental stage of the child. Since its launch in 2010, more than 583,000 participants have enrolled in text4baby nationally and more than 11,708 of these moms are from South Carolina. Thanks to the generosity of participating wireless carriers, text4baby is available for free to moms nationwide.

“Mobile communications is a powerful platform for innovation, especially in health care,” said Mignon Clyburn, chairwoman, Federal Communications Commission (FCC). “Thanks to public-private partnerships like text4baby, mobile technology is helping mothers better manage their health and the health of their children by connecting them to information and resources they need to give their babies a healthy start.”

The U.S. has one of the highest rates of infant mortality in the industrialized world, and South Carolina has the 11th highest rate of infant mortality among all states. 58,342 babies were born in South Carolina in 2010 but 14.2% of these births were pre-term, 9.9% were born at a low birth weight, and 7.4 babies per 1,000 died before their first birthday.

“To compete educationally and economically, we need to make sure that children in South Carolina are given a healthy start,” said Mayor Steve Benjamin of Columbia. “Text4baby’s free, easy-to-use health and safety messages connect moms to critical care and national and local resources. I’m proud to support such an innovative service.”



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The South Carolina text4baby coalition is promoting the service to women through media outreach, clinic and physician engagement, and key decision makers at the state and local level. The coalition is maximizing these efforts to compete in a nationwide Text4baby State Enrollment Contest to connect the most women to text4baby's free health and safety messages.

One such effort, Columbia Kid's Day, featured coalition members South Carolina Children's First, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and Low County Healthy Start promoting the service at the event's health fair. The 2,500 Columbia residents learned about text4baby through materials, remarks and prizes for families. Additionally, the Riley Institute and South Carolina First Steps have supported text4baby through direct promotion of the service to the Diversity Leaders Program and to elected officials throughout the state. These initiatives will support South Carolina's efforts to win the Enrollment Contest.

"Text4baby messages are extremely helpful and valuable to me and my family plus they're completely free," said Crystal Dowd, Orangeburg resident and text4baby mom. "The text messages have helped me make healthy decisions throughout my pregnancy and after my baby was born, from nutrition advice to safe sleep tips for my baby. I recommend all pregnant women and new moms sign up."

Women can sign up for text4baby by texting BABY (or BEBE for Spanish) to 511411 and entering their due date or baby's birthdate. For more information, please visit text4baby.org.

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About text4baby

Text4baby is the nation's only free mobile information service designed to promote maternal and child health through text messaging. A free program of the nonprofit National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB), the Founding Sponsor is Johnson & Johnson. Founding partners include Voxiva, The Wireless Foundation, and Grey Healthcare Group (a WPP company). A special thanks goes to the carriers who support text4baby so the service can be free to the end users: Alltel, Assurance Wireless, AT&T, Bluegrass Cellular, Boost Mobile, Cellcom, Cincinnati Bell, Cricket, MetroPCS, n-Telos, Nex-Tech Wireless, Sprint Nextel, T-Mobile, TracFone, U.S. Cellular, Verizon Wireless and Virgin Mobile U.S.A. Text4baby's public-private partnership also includes over 1000 national, state and local organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Women who text "BABY" (or "BEBE" for Spanish) to 511411 receive three free text messages a week, timed to their due date or their baby's birth date, through pregnancy and up until the baby's first birthday. The messages address topics such as immunization, nutrition, birth defect prevention, and safe sleep. Text4baby is the largest national mobile health initiative reaching over 580,000 moms since launch in 2010. To learn more, please visit text4baby.org.