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Maryland Hospitals Lead the Nation in Improving Care for Opioid-Exposed Infants and Families

*State achieves first State of Excellence in Education and Training award
for neonatal abstinence syndrome*

Elkridge, Md. and Burlington, Vt. – Vermont Oxford Network (VON) has awarded a “State of Excellence in Education and Training for Infants and Families Affected by Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome” designation to the state of Maryland and the Maryland Patient Safety Center.

The award recognizes that at least 85 percent of multidisciplinary care teams participating in the Maryland Patient Safety Center’s “Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Collaborative: Improving Care to Improve Outcomes” completed universal training for care of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS).

Neonatal abstinence syndrome is drug withdrawal syndrome experienced by infants exposed to opioids while in utero. Infants born with NAS are more likely to have respiratory complications, feeding difficulty, low birthweights, and extended hospital stays.

Maryland Patient Safety Center partnered with VON to provide 32 hospitals universal training designed to standardize care policies. The collaborative approach to universal training included rapid-cycle distribution of current evidence-based practices to the entire interdisciplinary workforce engaged in caring for substance-exposed infants and families. This approach has been proven to reduce length of hospital stay and length of pharmacologic treatment while increasing family satisfaction.

“The collective dedication of entire teams – including physicians, bedside nurses, social workers, and other healthcare professionals – make improvement possible,” said Bonnie DiPietro, Director of Operations for the Maryland Patient Safety Center. “We are already seeing fewer transports of infants, which means families get to stay closer to their local support system, and we expect to see outcomes improve even more over time.”

Over the collaborative’s two years, participating Maryland hospitals decreased the average length of stay of infants with NAS treated pharmacologically by three days, and decreased transfers out of the birth hospital by 51.6 percent. Additionally, the number of infants with NAS treated pharmacologically discharged home increased by 20.8 percent and the number of infants receiving mother’s own milk in the twenty-four hours preceding discharge increased by 18.3 percent.

“Congratulations to all the care teams across the state of Maryland who have shown how dedicated the state is to caring for the most vulnerable population affected by the national opioid epidemic,” said Jeffrey Horbar, Chief Executive and Scientific Officer of VON.

As a global leader in data-driven quality improvement for newborn care, VON leads multi-center quality improvement collaboratives and provides resources to help interdisciplinary teams improve on the most critical and complex challenges facing newborn caregivers. While more than 250 centers nationwide have completed VON’s universal training for NAS, Maryland is the first statewide collaborative to achieve the Excellence in Education and Training distinction.

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About Vermont Oxford Network

Vermont Oxford Network (VON) is a worldwide community of health care professionals dedicated to improving the quality, safety, and value of care for newborn infants and their families through a coordinated program of data-driven quality improvement, education, and research. Members use confidential information from the world's largest and most comprehensive databases of infant data to benchmark their practices and outcomes and identify areas for improvement. Teams from around the world address critical and complex challenges of newborn care with evidence-based quality improvement methods guided by VON expert faculty and resources. www.vtoxford.org.

About Maryland Patient Safety Center

The Maryland Patient Safety Center brings together hospitals and providers to improve patient safety and healthcare quality for all Marylanders. The goal of the Center is to make healthcare in Maryland the safest in the nation by focusing on the systems of care, reducing the occurrence of adverse events and improving the culture of patient safety at Maryland healthcare facilities. For more information, visit www.marylandpatientsafetycenter.org.

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