

# State of California HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY



DIANA S. DOOLEY  
SECRETARY

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SECRETARY DIANA S. DOOLEY ANNOUNCES HOSPITAL HONOR ROLL FOR REDUCING C-SECTIONS**

#### *Award recognizes hospitals meeting national goal for low-risk, first-birth C-sections*

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SACRAMENTO — California Health and Human Services Secretary Diana Dooley today recognized [104 hospitals](#) that have met or surpassed a federal goal aimed at reducing Cesarean births (C-sections) for first-time moms with low-risk pregnancies. Secretary Dooley announced achievement awards to the hospitals on behalf of Smart Care California, a coalition of public and private health care purchasers that collectively cover more than 16 million people statewide — or 40 percent of all Californians.

“One of the most important things we can do to make California’s health care system smarter is to help hospitals, physicians and nurses ensure that C-sections are only performed when medically necessary,” Dooley said. “Today’s award recipients represent an honor roll of California hospitals and their clinicians who are leading the way toward safer births and healthier babies and mothers.”

Between 1997 and 2015, California's overall C-section rates increased sharply, from 1 in 5 births (21%) to nearly 1 in 3 (32.2%). During that same period, low-risk, first-birth C-sections increased from 19 percent to 25.6 percent. While potentially life-saving in certain circumstances, unnecessary C-sections can pose serious health risks for babies and mothers. C-sections also cost on average 50 percent more than vaginal deliveries, burdening patients and the health care system as a whole with unnecessary costs.

Evidence suggests that a woman’s chance of having a C-section depends in large part on where she delivers and the practice pattern of her physician. Even for low-risk, first-birth pregnancies, there is huge variation in California hospital C-section rates, which range from less than 15 percent to more than 60 percent.

To respond to the rapid rise in unnecessary C-sections, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services set a [Healthy People 2020](#) goal of reducing nationwide C-section rates for low-risk, first-births to 23.9 percent. Today’s awards, which will be given annually, acknowledge California hospitals that have achieved — and in many cases gone beyond — that goal.

“We are extremely proud of the hospitals that have earned this award,” said Julie Morath, President and CEO of the Hospital Quality Institute. “Reducing C-section rates requires hospitals, physicians, and nurses to think differently and to change their policies and practice patterns. The patient care team must also ensure that they inform expectant mothers of the risks and rewards of their child birth options. Hospitals throughout California are committed to meeting this goal.”

Hospitals now have more incentive and more support than ever to bring down their C-section rates. Last spring, with funding from the California Health Care Foundation, the California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative (CMQCC) produced a [toolkit](#) to help hospital care teams to better support vaginal delivery. Over the next year, more than 90 California hospitals are expected to receive formal training and mentoring to implement the toolkit. In addition,

Covered California — also a member of Smart Care California — recently announced that under its new contract, insurers on its exchange would require that contracted providers meet standards on a number of quality measures, including C-section rates.

"These award winners include different types of hospitals serving a diverse population of patients from all over the state, and each is dedicated to providing the best care possible," said Dr. Lance Lang, Chief Medical Officer for Covered California and a Co-Chair of Smart Care California. "Collectively, we expect that all 244 maternity hospitals in the state will achieve the same goal of 23.9 percent or lower thus improving quality, safety, and value of health care across California."

"Achieving this C-section goal of 23.9 percent is the right thing to do for patient safety and health," added David Lansky, President and CEO of the Pacific Business Group on Health. "It's also where the market is heading."

[Learn more about C-sections.](#)

[View the full list of hospitals receiving this award.](#)

[View the latest quality data for all California hospitals at www.CalHospitalCompare.org.](http://www.CalHospitalCompare.org)

### **About Smart Care California**

Smart Care California is a public-private partnership working to promote safe, affordable health care in California. The group is currently focused on three issues: Cesarean sections, opioid prescriptions, and low back pain. Collectively, Smart Care California participants purchase or manage care for more than 16 million Californians — or 40 percent of the state. Smart Care California is co-chaired by the state's leading health care purchasers: California Department of Health Care Services, Covered California, and CalPERS. The Integrated Healthcare Association convenes and coordinates the partnership with funding from the California Health Care Foundation. [Learn more](#) about Smart Care California.

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