

## Text4baby

Each year in the U.S., more than 500,000 babies are born prematurely and an estimated 28,000 children die before their first birthday national public health crisis.

Unison Health Plan of Ohio would like to inform you about an exciting new mobile information service called text4baby. An educational program of the national Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB), text4baby provides pregnant women and new moms with information to help them care for their health and give their babies the best possible start in life. Text4baby is a free mobile information service designed to promote healthy birth outcomes and to reduce infant mortality among underserved populations.

With over one trillion SMS text messages sent in the U.S. last year and texting use disproportionately higher among women of childbearing age and minority populations; text messaging represents an enormous and as yet untapped channel for delivering this vital health information to those who need it most. The goal of text4baby is to address a critical national health priority through the use of mobile health technology and demonstrate a new model for reaching and engaging underserved populations and promoting healthy behavior.

The text4baby service was initially launched in Virginia in November 2009 and nationally in January 2010. More recently, Center for Medicaid and State Operations (CMSO), Director, Cindy Mann released an endorsement bulletin to all the States' Health Department Directors supporting this initiative.

Women can sign up for the service by texting BABY to 511411 (or BEBE for Spanish) to receive free SMS text messages each week, timed to their due date or baby's date of birth. These messages focus on a variety of topics critical to maternal and child health: birth defects prevention, immunization, nutrition, seasonal flu, mental health, oral health, and safe sleep, among others. Text4baby messages also connect women to early prenatal care as well as a variety of existing resources available to them. Of particular significance, CTIA-The Wireless Foundation has reached out to all the major U.S. mobile operators to ensure their commitment to make text4baby a free service for all subscribers. Because of this generous commitment, text4baby is the first ever free mobile health information service in the U.S. and has great potential to reach an enormous audience.

### **As of April 2010, Unison Health Plan of Ohio is text4baby's newest partner.**

Unison Health Plan of Ohio is very excited to share that we recently signed an agreement with Voxiva and HMHB Coalition to join in the partnership. Our outreach efforts will be spearheaded by our Healthy First Steps™ (HFS) Program, and we will be sending all newly identified pregnant women a text4baby flier in both English and Spanish in their welcome packets. After the member signs up, she will be asked for a participant code. Our code is HFS. Participants will also have the opportunity to opt out of the program at any time by simply texting "STOP" to cancel the messaging. HFS Case Managers will be available to answer any questions member may have about participating in the text4baby program. We are currently in the implementation phase of full execution and are awaiting approval from all states. Once the states have approved the execution of the program, we will be sending out posters to display in your office. We will keep you posted as to the official start date.

We appreciate your help in spreading the word about text4baby and encourage you to explain and promote this program to your patients so that they may participate in this innovative way of health messaging.