

North Carolina Neonatal Bed Locator Service

Historical focus: implementation 1970s – 2009; part of the initial response to NICU bed shortages

Contracted with Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center

Contract amount: approximately \$120,000 annually

Purpose of the Neonatal Bed Locator Service:

- Efficiently and quickly matches a newborn in need with an available neonatal intensive care (NICU) bed
- Preserves NICU staff time for direct patient care and expedites NICU care for each newborn in need

Specific activities:

- Designed, operated and maintained an effective system for expediting the referral of newborns to available NICU beds. Included communication of relevant clinical information to appropriate health care providers.
- Provided consultation, technical assistance, policy and program guidance to physicians, hospitals, local health departments and other clinical providers of maternity and newborn care to Medicaid recipients on the location and availability of NICU beds.
- Determined NICU bed availability for each NICU twice each day
- Referring physicians unable to place an infant at their usual NICU were referred by the NICU to the Neonatal Bed Locator Program using the Physician's Access Line (PAL) at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center. Operators at PAL, call Expeditors, gathered initial data from the physician and asked him or her if there were any nearby NICU's which should be contacted first.
- If the patient was accepted, the Expeditor ended contact. If the patient was refused, the Expeditor maintained contact with the referring physician to plan the next call.
- Calls continued to be made until an NICU was located. During the process of searching, the referring physician could request at any point that additional calls stop and that the original NICU be called to discuss the situation.
- The receiving NICU was responsible for arranging transport for the infant. If that NICU was unable to provide transportation, the PAL Expeditor could assist the receiving neonatologist by making telephone calls to centers which could provide transport.