



## Merit Health Central Receives Prestigious Baby-Friendly Designation

Jackson MS - September 26, 2023 - Merit Health Central is proud to announce that it has achieved the highly prestigious international Baby-Friendly designation after a rigorous review process conducted by Baby-Friendly USA, the organization responsible for bestowing this certification in the United States.

This distinguished honor demonstrates that Merit Health Central is adhering to the highest standards of care for breastfeeding mothers and their babies. These standards are built on the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, a set of evidence-based practices recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for optimal infant feeding support in the precious first days of a newborn's life.

The positive health effects of breastfeeding are well documented and widely recognized by health authorities throughout the world. For example, the Surgeon General's 2011 Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding stated that "Breast milk is uniquely suited to the human infant's nutritional needs and is a live substance with unparalleled immunological and anti-inflammatory properties that protect against a host of illnesses and diseases for both mothers and children."

Merit Health Central joins Merit Health River Oaks and Merit Health Woman's Hospital on the growing list of more than 604 Baby-Friendly hospitals and birth centers in the United States. These facilities provide an environment that supports breastfeeding while respecting every woman's right to make the best decision for herself and her family.

"We are extremely proud to be recognized for the hard work of our team members throughout the Baby-Friendly process," said Elizabeth Gillenwater, Director of Women's Services. "Merit Health Central is committed to providing the support, education and resources moms need to successfully initiate breastfeeding and continue breastfeeding when they leave our care."



### About Merit Health

Merit Health serves the healthcare needs of residents of Mississippi through its 9 affiliated hospitals. The healthcare system offers a wide array of services including orthopedics, cardiology, women's health, emergency departments and broad diagnostic medical and surgical services. The network has more than 1,800 licensed beds, more than 2,500 physicians on the combined active medical staffs, more than 3,000 employees, and more than 40,000 admissions and more than 250,000 emergency department visits each year.

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