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# DHH Highlights First Daytime Health Care Facility in the State to Support Families with Special Needs Children

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**BATON ROUGE**—Today, Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Secretary Bruce D. Greenstein visited the state's first daytime health care facility, which offers a new health care option to Louisiana's medically fragile children and their families.

In 2009, DHH convened a workgroup of Pediatric Day Health Care Providers from other states, pediatric physicians, hospitals, home health agencies and staff from the Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Education to begin forming the rules and licensing requirements for this type of provider. In December 2009, the final licensing rules were published. Pediatric Health Choice is the first provider to be licensed and begin providing these services.

"DHH led this innovative initiative to give families the peace of mind of knowing their children are in safe and caring environments while providing a more cost-effective option for these services," said DHH Secretary Bruce D. Greenstein. "I want to thank Pediatric Health Choice for stepping up to the plate and becoming the first center to be licensed in Louisiana."

Pediatric Day Health Care Facilities provide parents of medically-fragile children and young adults under the age of 21 with an integrated setting in which to treat, and even educate, their children. Due to a variety of factors, medically-fragile children are in stable condition but require assistance, such as help with medications, treatment, or medical equipment, for daily living. Having the authority to license these facilities enables the State to offer children the opportunity to receive their nursing care and therapy, socialize with other children and further their education all under one roof.

"Medically fragile children are challenges to manage from a provider perspective at all levels. They also are large consumers of emergent, unscheduled and long-term medical care," said David Thomas MD, PhD, Medical Director for Pediatric Health Choice. "Medically fragile children, those with chronic conditions or temporarily medically challenged, consume nearly 80% of all costs to provide medical care to children. Pediatric Day Health Centers like Pediatric Health Choice provide a multidisciplinary approach to care designed to achieve measurable quality outcomes while being excellent stewards of the dollars provided for their care. These centers, like PHC, are the latest addition to the initiatives to improve access and quality for children with medical challenges."

The Department-led initiative not only offers a much more cost-effective option to providing services, it affords families more flexibility. Before Pediatric Day Health Care Facilities, many families with special needs children had to maintain complicated, sometimes impossible, schedules to ensure their children receive the various types of therapy they need in their individual homes. This new facility provides an all-inclusive opportunity for day health services in a medically sound environment.

"Every child deserves the opportunity to maximize their health, knowledge, and sense of purpose," said Dr. Steve Spedale, head of Neonatology at Woman's Hospital. "For children with complex medical needs, their opportunity in obtaining these goals has grown immensely with the opening of Pediatric Health Center. It provides our most needy children with expert medical and developmental care. As important, it allows for socialization with other children and provides parents with an opportunity to return to work while their child is receiving needed services."

The facilities differ from standard day care in that they are staffed with be a registered nurse, a Director of Nursing and a Medical Director at all times, as well as direct care staff such as nursing assistants, certified nursing assistants, patient care technicians, medical assistants, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), on-site therapists, and individuals with training and experience in education, social services or child care related fields to assure individuals get the best available care.