



# Commission for the Accreditation of Birth Centers

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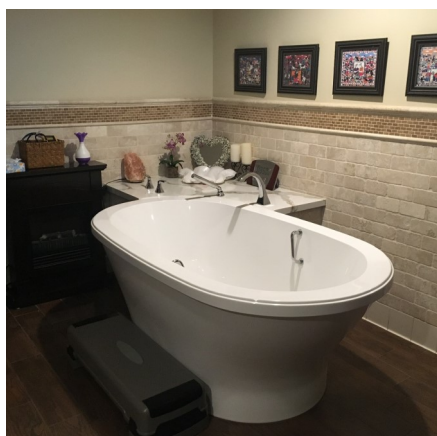
*“Noteworthy: A Conversation with a CABC-Accredited Birth Center”*

CABC Commissioner Jamie Haeuser interviews Shari Sone-Ulrich, CNM, Clinical Director Best Start Birth Center

*This is the next installment in a new series, “Noteworthy: A Conversation with a CABC-Accredited Birth Center”*

Best Start Birth Center is located in San Diego. It was the first state-licensed birth center in California. Opened in 1989, this birth center has been CABC-accredited since 1994.

Resilience is a characteristic shared by most birth centers, and Best Start Birth Center, located in an industrial neighborhood just blocks away from the Pacific Ocean, has demonstrated that characteristic time and time again. What started as a partnership among four midwives in an office with a tiny bathroom has evolved into a spacious, home-like setting with commodious tubs – and, more important — a sustained commitment to care for *all* women.



Best Start opened in 1989 in the aforementioned office setting. “We sometimes had a bed in the waiting room, surrounded by screens,” laughed Roberta Frank, CNM, CEO. “The ambulance companies weren’t daunted at all when we had to call them for a transfer.”

At the present site, an entrance courtyard with a fountain provides a peaceful transition into the birth center. Décor ranges from black and white birth photos to Pre-Columbian style figures of a birth attended by women. Comfortable touches are everywhere: exposed beams

in a multi-use room with seating and yoga mats; a well-stocked kitchen; and birthing tubs in well-appointed rooms.



Best Start is one of the only birth centers that accepts both Medi-Cal and Tricare, the latter being critical in an area with so many military families. This is based on the center’s longstanding commitment to provide care for all women. Its current payor mix is about 50% Medi-Cal, 20% Tricare and 30% commercial insurance, including all PPOs in the area.





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Best Start took an active role in pursuing state licensure.

Best Start was the first state-licensed birth center in California in 1993, and achieved CABC accreditation in 1994. “We did it to advance the movement,” commented Stone-Ulrich. “Birth centers, we believe, should be licensed and accredited. These bring more credibility to the industry and with it, more economic power.”

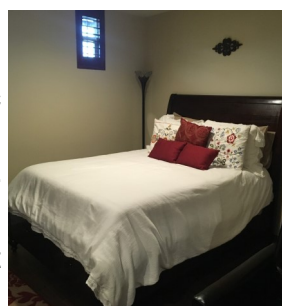


The client experience at Best Start includes a free pregnancy test, a 7-week educational series (free for Medi-Cal and Tri-care clients) and comfort measures like nitrous oxide. Partners are welcomed as members of the care team.



Best Start also sees international clients, mostly from China and Mexico. “Our clients include a number of older women, and all of our clients tell us that they will never go back to a hospital birth,” said Stone-Ulrich. “They know that we will respect their choices and have the options they want.”

Stone-Ulrich grins when asked about her favorite day at the birth center. “When there’s a birth,” she said. “I like clinic just fine, but birth-days are the best days.”



*Have an idea for a future newsletter topic? Let us know!*



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