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UINTAH BASIN HEALTHCARE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## PRESS RELEASE

### UBMC Leading the Way with New Diagnostic Audiology Evaluations

*New tele-audiology program improves follow-up for newborns who do not pass initial screening*

**April 1, 2015:** Uintah Basin Medical Center is no stranger to providing excellence in newborn hearing screening. As the 2011 recipient of the Utah EHDI (Early Hearing Detection & Intervention) Director's Trophy, they continue to be recognized for exceeding minimal standards as set by the Utah Advisory Committee on Newborn Hearing Screening, and are considered among the best in Utah for newborn hearing screening.

Babies who do not pass newborn hearing screenings require immediate diagnosis and intervention, but that can be a challenge for families living in a rural area, where a lack of pediatric hearing specialists require parents to travel to the Wasatch Front for further testing.

UBMC is proud to announce their new tele-audiology program, improving follow-up for newborns who do not pass the initial hearing screening. A Pediatric Audiologist assists over a telecom system with equipment on site at UBMC provided by the Hearing, Speech and Vision portion of the Utah State Health Department. Testing is live with viewing of results on site, as UBMC staff facilitates the testing and coordination process.

"Testing these babies is imperative to optimize their development, especially the speech development critical to acquiring language and learning. Making that three hour trip with a newborn is not easy. We are thrilled to be implementing this innovative approach to more quickly identify infants with hearing loss in the Uintah Basin," said Christy Thacker, UBMC OB Department Manager.

Loss of hearing at birth commonly goes undetected until delays in language development appear. The average age of identification in the U.S. has been 2-1/2 years, with milder losses frequently not recognized until a child enters school. However, language acquisition actually begins at birth and progresses very rapidly during the first three years of life. The implementation of the tele-audiology program at UBMC takes hearing testing to the next level, ensuring that all infants with hearing loss are identified as early as possible, providing timely and appropriate audiological and medical intervention.

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Uintah Basin Healthcare is a community not-for-profit healthcare system, serving the Uintah Basin since 1944. Today, Uintah Basin Healthcare is the largest and most comprehensive rural-based healthcare system in the state of Utah.

