

# OTIS AWARDED \$6M IN FEDERAL FUNDING TO HELP PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS



## ***OTIS' MotherToBaby Network Connects the General Public with Birth Defects Experts***

BRENTWOOD, TN –“Funding this type of service ultimately means mothers will be better informed and babies will have stronger starts in life,” said Kenneth Lyons Jones, MD, a world-renowned UC San Diego pediatrician, upon receiving notice that the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) will support the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists’ (OTIS) MotherToBaby network for five more years with a \$6 million cooperative agreement.

The funding announcement comes just as OTIS’ first two-year cooperative agreement and one-year extension was about to expire later this month and will allow the group to strengthen collaborations with other HRSA grantees, such as Title V Maternal Child Health, Community Health Centers, Poison Control Systems, Healthy Start and Nurse-Family Partnership programs throughout the country to make a collective impact on healthy pregnancy outcomes.

Dr. Jones, who serves as the project’s principal investigator, said OTIS has come a long way since the 1980s, during which his involvement with forming the group was solidified shortly after he and David W. Smith, MD first identified Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in 1973. “We knew exposures like alcohol during pregnancy had dire consequences, but there wasn’t a direct way to educate the public and answer their questions about it at the time,” he explained. “Today, we have MotherToBaby.”

MotherToBaby consists of 14 affiliate OTIS sites housed at universities, health departments and hospitals across the country and connects world-renowned experts in the field of teratology (exposures that cause birth defects) to the general public and health care providers via **app, text, live chat, email**, phone and in-person. Through the various modes of contact, the public can ask questions about the known risks of medications, chemicals, herbal products, illicit drugs, diseases and much more during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

“MotherToBaby is a blessing and I cannot express that enough,” stated R.M., a mother from Georgia who recently contributed to MotherToBaby’s testimonial webpage expressing her appreciation for the service. “Knowing the true facts about how I can best provide for my health and my baby’s health, I feel at ease knowing that I can not only stay on my medicine to keep me well, but also it is the best choice for my baby,” she wrote.

“That comment is why we do what we do,” said Stephen Braddock, MD, in reference to the testimonial. Dr. Braddock, the current OTIS president, points out how a recent 32% increase in MotherToBaby staff coupled with the launch of digital initiatives, such as the MotherToBaby app and text service, has contributed to a 150% increase in the number of women the group has been able to serve over the last year alone. “Because of this new cooperative agreement, more women, particularly those in traditionally underserved communities, will have access to the tools they need in order to make educated decisions about their health and the health of their babies.”

## **More about MotherToBaby, a service of OTIS**

MotherToBaby is a suggested resource by many federal agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Office of Women’s Health, and HRSA, and provides the most up-to-date information. More than 100,000 women and their health care providers seek information about birth defects prevention from MotherToBaby every year. Additionally, MotherToBaby conducts observational research studies in order to contribute more information to the published literature about a variety of exposures. To be

connected with a MotherToBaby expert, please call (866) 626-6847, text questions to (855) 999-3525 (standard messaging rates might apply, check with your carrier) or visit [www.MotherToBaby.org](http://www.MotherToBaby.org).

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**Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](http://MotherToBaby.org).**

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