

April 6, 2016**For Immediate Release****Contact:** JoAnn Cavanaugh, Director Public Relations**Office:** (716) 706-2061 | **Cell:** (716) 228-4886 | **Email:** kic4281@chsbuffalo.org

Sisters Hospital to Expand Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

As Buffalo's first hospital, founded in 1848 by the Daughters of Charity, Sisters of Charity Hospital has welcomed hundreds of thousands of babies into the world. Generation after generation, Sisters Hospital has become known for the high quality, compassionate care its doctors, nurses and Women's Services staff provide to mothers and babies throughout the region.

Today, Sisters Hospital delivers more than 3,400 babies each year – the most of any hospital in upstate New York west of Syracuse. For those born prematurely or with special needs, the hospital houses a highly specialized Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) to care for its tiniest patients. In 2015, Sisters' NICU cared for nearly 700 babies.

To meet this growing need, Sisters Hospital has received approval from the New York State Department of Health for a major renovation and expansion project to increase the size of its NICU from 20 to 40 bassinets. Babies can stay in the unit a few days to a few months, depending on their birth weight or condition. As a Level III NICU, the unit has specially trained staff and equipment to provide high level care to infants born as young as 23 weeks.

"We are seeing a growing number of premature and low birth weight babies, multiple births, and babies with neonatal abstinence syndrome," said Thomas Riley, MD, Chair of Neonatology for Catholic Health. "There are many contributing factors, including advanced maternal age, fertility treatments and maternal health issues, such as obesity, gestational diabetes and drug dependency."

The \$8.8 million expansion and renovation project will relocate the new NICU adjacent to Sisters Hospital's existing maternity unit and newborn nursery, creating one centralized location for mother-baby care. To help fund the project, Sisters Hospital Foundation has embarked on a \$2 million capital campaign. In addition to a variety of comfort and safety features, the 21,000 square foot unit will feature:

- Private and semi-private rooms designed to enhance individualized care and family privacy
- Large, central space for staff and unit operations
- Dedicated "parents-only" space and overnight accommodations for families
- Reduced light and sound features, creating a more soothing environment to help preemies grow.

"Sisters' NICU is filled beyond capacity most of the time and this expansion project will help us better serve families who chose to deliver at Sisters Hospital," said Aimee Gomlak, Vice President of Women's Services for Catholic Health. "Sisters Hospital has a long history of exceptional maternity care and we want to continue providing the highest quality neonatal services, in the most appropriate, quality-driven setting we can, for our babies who need this specialized care."

Construction of the new NICU is expected to begin later this year. In addition to Sisters Hospital, Catholic Health has maternity services at Mercy Hospital of Buffalo, including a Level II NICU, and Mount St. Mary's Hospital in Lewiston.