



March 26, 2021

Re: ILPQC Birth Equity Quality Improvement Initiative

Dear Hospital Administrator:

In May 2021, the Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative (ILPQC) will launch the statewide obstetric quality improvement initiative, Birth Equity (BE). This is an important statewide quality improvement initiative selected by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Statewide Quality Council (SQC) and Perinatal Advisory Committee to engage hospital teams to implement strategies to address maternal health disparities and promote birth equity. Birth equity is the assurance of the conditions of optimal births for all people with a willingness to address racial and social inequities in a sustained effort. ILPQC will work alongside hospital teams to achieve this goal through: addressing social determinants of health during prenatal, delivery, and postpartum care; utilizing race/ethnicity medical record and quality data; engaging patients, support partners, and communities with a focus on patient-centered care; and engaging and educating providers, nurses, and staff to improve birth equity.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Significant racial disparities in health outcomes exist for pregnant and postpartum patients in Illinois.ⁱ Non-Hispanic Black women are 3 times more likely than non-Hispanic white women to die during or within one year of pregnancy from a pregnancy-related complications. Non-Hispanic Black women in Illinois are 2 times more likely than non-Hispanic white women to experience unexpected, severe complications during the perinatal/ postpartum periods. Together we can work to address these disparities and improve birth equity.

The goal of the Birth Equity Initiative is to help hospitals facilitate systems and culture change to support conditions of optimal births for all people to address maternal disparities and promote birth equity through the implementation of the following key strategies:

1. Implement universal social determinants of health screening prenatally and during delivery admission with linkage to appropriate resources and services
2. Review maternal health quality data stratified by race, ethnicity and Medicaid status to identify disparities and address opportunities for improvement
3. Take steps to engage patients and/or community members to provide input on quality improvement efforts
4. Implement a strategy for sharing expectations for patient-centered respectful care practices during delivery admission with patients, labor support persons and obstetric staff; and survey patients before discharge on their care experience (using the PREM tool) to provide feedback
5. Standardize a system to provide patient education prior to hospital discharge on postpartum safety including urgent maternal warning signs and tools to improve communication with providers

6. Implement education for providers and staff on the importance of listening to patients, providing respectful care and addressing implicit bias and provide opportunities for discussion and feedback education for nurses, providers, and staff

The Birth Equity Initiative is a foundational initiative that will lay the groundwork for ongoing equity work in all statewide quality improvement initiatives to address maternal disparities and promote birth equity. ILPQC will support all birthing hospitals serving Illinois patients with opportunities for collaborative learning, access to a data system to identify opportunities for improvement and evaluate progress over time and in comparison to other hospitals, and individualized quality improvement support to help hospitals achieve their improvement goals. Hospital teams will receive a quality improvement toolkit with resources to support implementation of key strategies to improve birth equity.

NEXT STEPS

The Birth Equity Initiative will kick off at the Virtual ILPQC Face-to-Face on May 26th, 2021. We will hold our first statewide monthly BE webinar in June 2021. Please submit your hospital's Birth Equity team roster by May 3, 2021 to participate in this initiative. Your Birth Equity quality improvement team must include: a nurse champion and a physician champion with a Team Lead identified. Other recommended key team members include a: Prenatal/Outpatient Representative; Patient/Family Advisor or Community Liaison; HIT Representative; Equity Officer; Quality Improvement Professional; Medical Informatics; Midwife/Doula; and/or a Social Worker.

As with any of our initiatives, we know that we cannot achieve lasting results without your active partnership. We hope that you will join us in these efforts. We know that if we work together we will continue to bring about improvement in quality outcomes for both moms and babies across Illinois and make Illinois the best place to give birth and be born.

Should you have any questions on this initiative, or on anything related to perinatal quality outcomes, please feel free to reach out to either of us. We look forward to your partnership.

Very truly yours,



Ngozi Ezike, MD
Director
Illinois Department of Public Health



Ann Borders, MD, MSc, MPH
Executive Director
Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative

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Next Steps for Hospital Teams

1. Develop your Birth Equity Quality Improvement team and submit the [Birth Equity Roster Form](#) by **5/24/2021** for initiative participation.
2. Once your roster is submitted, you will receive a Birth Equity Readiness Survey due by **6/7/2021**.
3. Attend the 2021 OB Virtual ILPQC Face-to-Face on **May 26**. Hear from perinatal leaders from around the country and participate in the BE Initiative Kick-Off. Registration will be free and available at ilpqc.org from **4/1-5/21/2021**.

