

# THE BIRTH EQUITY INITIATIVE

*Working together to reduce maternal disparities, promote equity, and help all mothers and babies thrive*



## The Problem

Significant racial disparities in health outcomes exist for pregnant and postpartum patients in Illinois.<sup>1</sup>

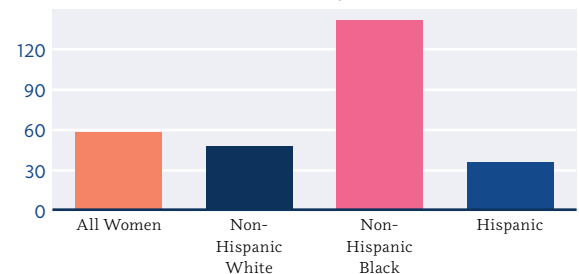
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Non-Hispanic Black women are about **3 times** more likely than non-Hispanic white women to die during or within a year of pregnancy from a related complication.

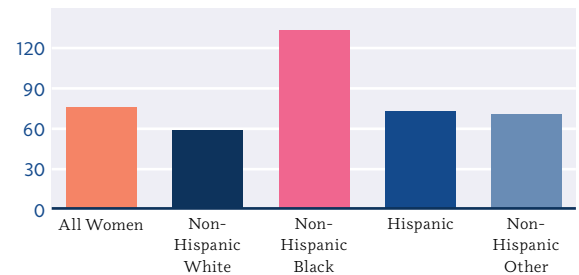


Compared to non-Hispanic white women, all other racial and ethnic groups have **higher rates of severe complications** during pregnancy and in the year postpartum.

**Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Ratio (PAMR),**  
By Demographics, Illinois, 2016-2017<sup>1</sup>  
NUMBER OF DEATHS PER 100,000 LIVE BIRTHS



**Severe Maternal Morbidity Rates among Illinois Delivery Hospitalizations, by Demographics, Illinois, 2016-2017<sup>1</sup>**  
RATE PER 10,000 DELIVERY HOSPITALIZATIONS



## Patient-Centered Approach Improves Obstetric Care for Women of Color

To reduce inequities in reproductive health care for Black women and other women of color and ensure that all mothers and babies thrive, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) has published guidance for clinicians to:

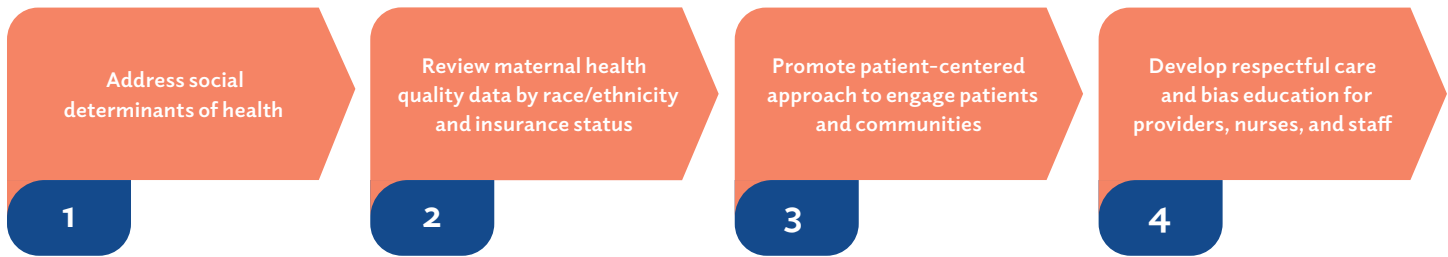
- ▶ Support patients by identifying social and structural determinants of health during pregnancy and postpartum that may influence a patient's health and link patients to needed resources, such as access to food, stable housing, utilities, safety in the home and community, and immigration or employment support.
- ▶ Recognize that cultural stereotyping, implicit bias, and racism can significantly influence pregnancy health outcomes.
- ▶ Ensure that the needs and preferences of all women are valued through respectful, patient-centered obstetric care.

## Making Change Happen

The Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative (ILPQC) is working with patients, physicians, midwives, nurses, hospitals, stakeholders, and community groups to develop a Birth Equity Initiative focused on actionable strategies to address disparities in birth outcomes for Black women and women of color in Illinois. The goal of the initiative is to help Illinois birthing hospitals work together to reduce maternal disparities and promote birth equity by ensuring all women receive respectful care.

The initiative has the support of the Illinois Department of Public Health Perinatal Advisory Committee and Statewide Quality Council, with funding from I PROMOTE-IL, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and the Illinois Department of Human Services. ILPQC will work with all birthing hospitals across the state to promote opportunities for collaborative learning, develop a rapid response data system to evaluate progress within and across hospitals, and provide quality improvement support to optimize birth equity improvement goals.

## Key Drivers to Promote Birth Equity



## Birth Equity Initiative AIM

By December 2023, more than 75% of Illinois birthing hospitals will be participating in the Birth Equity Initiative and more than 75% of participating hospitals will have all key strategies in place.

## Birth Equity Key Strategies

1. Implement universal social determinants of health screening prenatally and during delivery admission and connect patients to needed resources and services.
2. Review hospital-level maternal health quality data by race, ethnicity, and Medicaid status to identify disparities and opportunities for improvement.
3. Engage patients and community members to provide input on quality improvement efforts.
4. Implement a strategy for sharing expected respectful care practices during delivery admission with patients, labor support persons, and obstetric staff; and survey patients before discharge on their care experience to obtain feedback.
5. Standardize postpartum patient safety education prior to hospital discharge on urgent warning signs, including tips for communicating with health care providers and early follow-up.
6. Implement patient-centered staff and provider training to promote respectful care and active listening to patients and address implicit bias.

## Want to Get Involved?

Visit [ILPQC.org](http://ILPQC.org) or email us at [info@ilpqc.org](mailto:info@ilpqc.org) to learn more about the collaborative and identify opportunities to get involved.

1. <http://dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/maternalmorbiditymortalityreportto421.pdf>  
Illinois Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Report, 2016-2017, Illinois Department of Public Health. (April 2021)

The terms mothers and women are used here to represent birthing people with an awareness that not all persons who give birth identify as a mother or woman.



## Early Success

As of February 2021, 16 hospitals are participating in Birth Equity Wave 1 to test and provide feedback on key measures and data collection strategies. Patient focus groups and community stakeholders are also providing input on key strategies and initiative resources. The Birth Equity Initiative launches for all Illinois birthing hospitals in summer 2021.

The Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative (ILPQC) is a statewide network of perinatal clinicians, nurses, hospitals, patients, community stakeholders, public health leaders, and policymakers that aims to improve outcomes for mothers and babies across Illinois.

Thank you to our sponsors: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois Department of Human Services, I PROMOTE-IL, Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health.

