

## Improving Maternal Health to Lessen Potential Risk

### Question

Every 2 minutes a woman dies from complications of childbirth in the United States; further, black women in the United States are three to four times more likely to experience these complications than white women.<sup>1</sup> What steps can healthcare organizations take to improve maternal health for all women?

### Answer

Maternal morbidity and mortality are serious concerns in the United States. To better address maternal health, healthcare organizations and providers can implement the following strategies:

- **Build connections between birthing professionals and healthcare organizations.** All parties in the birthing process should be encouraged to communicate. Open communication helps everyone feel respected and part of the team. The goal is to create the best birthing experience possible, and collaborating as a team will foster this goal.
- **Actively participate in the collection of meaningful morbidity and mortality data (including “near misses”) and the development of evidence-based solutions.** Participation in maternal mortality review committees (MMRCs) supports the collection of valuable data to promote maternal health. Read more about MMRCs in the *Health Affairs* article, [Beyond the Preventing Maternal Deaths Act: Implementation and Further Policy Change](#).
- **Use a health equity framework.** Develop measures to support health equity work, including collecting race, ethnicity, and language (REAL) data. To develop and maintain a health equity framework, consult the instructions in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s white paper on [Achieving Health Equity: A Guide for Health Care Organizations](#).

- **Have a system in place to identify families in need of additional resources and support.** Collect and trend data to identify patients/families who may need help due to homelessness, lack of nutritional food, and other factors affecting their health and well-being. Collecting data can help support the case to strengthen the public health infrastructure.

## Resources

- Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health Program (Council on Patient Safety in Women's Health Care)
- Better Maternal Outcomes Rapid Improvement Network (Institute for Healthcare Improvement)
- National Birth Equity Collaborative
- Obstetric Care Consensus: Levels of Maternal Care (The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine)
- WIHI: Black Women and Maternal Care: Redesigning for Safety, Dignity, and Respect (Institute for Healthcare Improvement)

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<sup>1</sup> Tomer, H. (2019, September 12). Redesigning maternal care for safety, dignity, and respect. Institute for Healthcare Improvement. Retrieved from [www.ihl.org/communities/blogs/redesigning-maternal-care-for-safety-dignity-and-respect](http://www.ihl.org/communities/blogs/redesigning-maternal-care-for-safety-dignity-and-respect)

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