

# Care for the **Common Good**

## Addressing Disparities in Maternal Health Outcomes



Trinity Health is one of the largest multi-institutional Catholic health care delivery systems in the nation, serving diverse communities that include more than 30 million people across 22 states. We advocate for public policies that promote care for the common good including expanding health care coverage and care, investing in public health, paying for high-value care, and improving the health of communities.

### Commitment to Equity Must Address Maternal Health Disparities

As Trinity Health works to improve the health of patients and communities, improving maternal health outcomes is essential. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that two thirds of pregnancy-related deaths could be prevented. Disparities exist due to lack of access to comprehensive care and systemic racism in the health care system. Trinity Health is committed to be an anti-racist organization. Our Mission and Core Values compel us to advocate for health equity including addressing disparities in maternal health outcomes.

### What Can Policymakers Do?

#### *Increase Coverage and Access*

Opportunities to enroll in affordable health coverage and access perinatal care can help reduce rates of maternal death through policies that:

- Permanently expand marketplace subsidies and increase the Medicaid Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP).
- Permanently extend postpartum coverage for women enrolled in Medicaid for 12 months.
- Expand coverage of telehealth, including tele-behavioral health and virtual prenatal, by requiring state Medicaid programs to cover telehealth for maternal care.
- Support investments in accessible technology like applications that support remote monitoring.
- Institute presumptive eligibility to allow qualified entities to screen pregnant women for Medicaid eligibility.
- Expand coverage of doula services in Medicaid and through private payers, and establish training requirements for doulas to be eligible for reimbursement.

#### *Expand Workforce Opportunities*

Policies to grow and diversify the perinatal care workforce should ensure access to culturally congruent care and support:

- Provide funding for educational loan pay-downs for nurses and other maternal health providers.
- Establish grants for cultural and linguistic competency training in medical residency and nursing programs and in-service training for health care professionals including training on implicit bias and anti-racism.
- Develop incentives for maternal health providers to practice in collaborative, team-based environments that include social workers, patient navigators and community health workers (CHWs).
- Provide reimbursement for CHW training and maternal home visits.
- Expand Medicaid coverage for education and outreach to address social and health needs, and support community partners in maternal health activities.

#### *Address Whole Person Needs*

Maternal health disparities can be reduced by addressing the drivers of those outcomes in the system and providing social supports to encourage continuity of care before, during and after pregnancy including policies to:

### By the Numbers<sup>1</sup>

- In 2020, there were more than 50,000 births across Trinity Health hospitals.
- In the United States, 50,000 women experience serious complications during delivery and 700 women die due to pregnancy or related complications annually.
- In 2019, the maternal mortality rate was 20.1 per 100,000 live births, the highest among developed countries.
- Racial and ethnic disparities exist between non-Hispanic Black (44 deaths per 100,000 live births), non-Hispanic white (17.9), and Hispanic (12.6) women.
- Fewer than 50% of rural women have access to perinatal services within a 30-mile drive from their home.

<sup>1</sup>Sources: MACPAC. "Report to Congress on Medicaid and CHIP." June 2020; Hoyert, D. "Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2019." NCHS Health E-Stats. 2021; Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. "Improving Access to Maternal Health Care in Rural Communities."

# Trinity Health: Maternal Health

- Expand investments in social influencers of health (SIOH) and maximize social service referrals including transportation, child care, affordable housing and healthy and affordable food.
- Design population-based payment models that support care management and enable providers to identify and address behavioral health and social needs.
- Expand access to affordable broadband to all Americans with priority to those in medically underserved communities, including rural and tribal communities.
- Increase funding for maternal health programs including the Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant (MCHBG).
- Reauthorize and increase funding for the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program.
- Develop incentives to support group prenatal care, such as the CenteringPregnancy model.
- Expand coverage for behavioral health services to postpartum women through coverage expansion, Section 1115 waivers, or CMMI demonstrations.

## *Ensure High-Quality Care*

Policies to improve maternal health outcomes should support safety and quality improvement strategies including:

- Require standardized, accurate and robust data collection and reporting that includes race and ethnicity.
- Provide funding for the Alliance for Innovation on Maternal health (AIM) program and state-based perinatal quality collaboratives.
- Provide incentives for states to establish or expand the scope of maternal mortality review committees (MMRCs).
- Institute state initiatives to educate pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid and providers about maternal health issues.

## Trinity Health Maternal Health Best Practices

### Mount Carmel Health System: Welcome Home Program

The Welcome Home Program provides a home visit for mothers and babies who are discharged at one of the three Mount Carmel Health System (MCHS) birthing hospitals and who live within Franklin County and contiguous counties. The target audience for visits is first time moms, single moms, teen moms, moms with concerns identified by a hospital social worker and moms who request a visit. MCHS has the only hospital-based nurse home visit program offered in Franklin County. The Welcome Home visits provide a link from the hospital to the home and monitors physical, psychological and social issues that can interfere with the health and welfare of the mother or child. The nurses offer education and support regarding breastfeeding, safe sleep, maternal and newborn health related questions and concerns and referrals as needed. Since 1998, the Welcome Home Program has offered in-home visits to over 20,000 moms and babies.

### Holy Cross Health: Maternity Partnership Program

In 1999, Holy Cross Health formed a collaborative partnership with the Montgomery County Department of Health to provide prenatal and post-delivery education and care to women, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. Holy Cross staff are bilingual and trained to provide culturally competent care. Through the Maternity Partnership Program, Holy Cross Health has served more than 23,000 women at its two hospital clinic sites, including patients with diabetes, hypertension and a history of pre-term labor. The Maternity Partnership Program not only facilitates care for pregnancy, delivery and postpartum, but can serve as the start of a continuum of care for underserved communities, thus moving away from episodic care (Emergency Department) to annual well checkups, preventive care and screening procedures. This is crucial for high-risk patients with chronic health issues, such as diabetes, hypertension, etc.

### Trinity Health Of New England: Breastfeeding Heritage & Pride Program

The Breastfeeding Heritage & Pride (BHP) program supports the peer counseling program across Trinity Health Of New England (THOfNE). The BHP peer counselors are trained Community Health Workers who provide prenatal breastfeeding education; in-hospital, immediate hands-on support postpartum; continued breastfeeding education and hands-on support through home visits and phone calls for 12 months postpartum. The BHP program also supports World Breastfeeding Week which is highlighted every year at THOfNE. THOfNE is one of the only regional health systems that offers a system-wide breastfeeding peer counseling support program.

## Mission

We, Trinity Health, serve together in the spirit of the Gospel as a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities.

## Core Values

Reverence • Commitment to Those Who Are Poor • Safety • Justice • Stewardship • Integrity