



Press Release:

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New Chicago-based Community Initiative Aims to Improve Maternal Health Outcomes

CHICAGO - The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), AllianceChicago, EverThrive Illinois, the Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative and other community partners have joined forces to combat the maternal mortality crisis in Chicago. The newly formed Chicago Collaborative for Maternal Health (CCMH) is one of nine innovative, evidence-based community solutions in cities throughout the U.S. to receive funding through the Safer Childbirth Cities* initiative with a goal of improving maternal health outcomes.

“It is a privilege to bring together organizations and stakeholders across Chicago to collectively invest their time and effort towards a unified maternal health effort,” said Dr. Lisa Masinter, Director of Research at AllianceChicago and practicing obstetrician/gynecologist. “So many of us are working on this issue in our own way and we believe this collaboration will prove essential to both improve our understanding of the complexities underlying maternal mortality and our ability to address them.”

The CCMH will facilitate improved quality of care in the outpatient setting and coordination of care across multiple sectors, as well as increase community awareness to improve maternal health outcomes throughout Chicago. The Collaborative will prioritize those most affected by maternal health disparities, low income and non-Hispanic Black women, and ensure that women in the community have an opportunity to contribute and inform the work. Once complete, the CCMH will support other efforts in communities across Illinois through dissemination of the knowledge gained through the project. The CCMH will focus on three main activities over the next three years:

- 1) a quality improvement collaborative to improve health care quality for women receiving care in the outpatient clinics;
- 2) a community engagement campaign to improve awareness and empower women and families; and
- 3) a policy agenda informed by the findings of the initiative.

“Maternal health is a touchstone for the health of any community. The rising rates of maternal mortality and the unacceptable racial disparities require a comprehensive response by the greater public health system,” said CDPH Acting Commissioner Allison Arwady, MD, MPH. “CDPH is proud to join the Safer Childbirth Cities initiative which will focus on improving maternal outcomes through quality health care, community education and policy.”

According to the [2018 Illinois Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Report](#), Chicago has the highest rate of pregnancy-related mortality compared to other jurisdictions. Also, consistent with national trends, non-

Hispanic Black women in Illinois are six times more likely to die from a pregnancy or childbirth complication than non-Hispanic White women. The overwhelming majority of maternal deaths are preventable, with gaps noted in the clinical setting and post-partum, limited awareness of available support services in the community, and lack of coordination across organizations and sectors.

“There is no person or organization with more expertise in the experience of pregnancy and childbirth in Chicago than women in our communities,” said EverThrive Illinois Executive Director Chi Chi Okwu. “In convening a community advisory board for the CCMH, we look forward to learning from and partnering with women and families who have experienced maternal mortality or severe morbidity to ensure that the programs and policies we champion meet their expectations.”

“Local coalitions play a pivotal role in helping women have safe pregnancies and deliveries. These organizations know the health and social factors facing their communities, including what the maternal health gaps are and what solutions can work,” notes Dr. Mary-Ann Etiebet, Lead and Executive Director of *Merck for Mothers*. “Through Safer Childbirth Cities, I’m excited to see the impact the Chicago Collaborative for Maternal Health can have, both in Chicago and through the insights they will be able to share nationally.”

For more information, please visit the Safer Childbirth Cities website:

www.merckformothers.com/SaferChildbirthCities/.

*The Safer Childbirth Cities initiative is part of *Merck for Mothers*, Merck’s \$500 million initiative to help create a world where no woman has to die giving life. *Merck for Mothers* is known as *MSD for Mothers* outside the United States and Canada.

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