

TASK FORCE ON MATERNAL HEALTH
MEETING SUMMARY
July 16, 2020
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Virtual Meeting Conducted Over Zoom

Overview of Fourth Trimester Project

Sarah Verbiest, DrPH, MSW, MPH, Executive Director, Principal Investigator and Kimberly D. Harper, MSN, RN, MHA, Perinatal Neonatal Outreach Coordinator, Center for Maternal and Infant Health, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine

Dr. Verbiest reviewed the key challenges women face in the postpartum period, including accessing timely, relevant, and credible information; accessing care; and experiencing cultural stigmas and biased care. There is a lack of care coordination between postpartum care and support and pediatric care and infant records. The NC Maternal Health Innovation and the 4th Trimester Project is a partnership to improve postpartum care through developing a North Carolina focused toolkit; collaborating with clinics and community groups to improve care; listening to the postpartum needs of women of color; and building patient-provider-community engagement. Ms. Harper provided an overview of newmomhealth.com and the resources currently available and the webpages that will be available in the fall. She reviewed the current and future listening projects that they are facilitating to better understand the postpartum experience of women in North Carolina.

Experiences of Women Who Have Given Birth During The COVID-19 Pandemic

Kristin Tully, PhD Research Associate and Co-Investigator, Center for Maternal and Infant Health, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine

Dr. Tully shared some of the labor and postpartum experiences of women who have given birth in the COVID pandemic. Through shadowing, interviews, surveys, and filming, they have heard that women have felt they are not understood by moms who haven't given birth during the pandemic and feel isolated and alone. Some women shared that they were discharged from the hospital earlier than they were comfortable with. Women also shared the heightened sense of anxiety around sanitization and the difficulty communicating with providers in masks. During the COVID pandemic, online resources have become even more important for women seeking information and support.

Overview of the Child Fatality Task Force Perinatal Health Committee

Kella Hatcher, JD, Executive Director, North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force

Ms. Hatcher reviewed the structure of the Child Fatality Task Force Perinatal Health Committee. Infant deaths comprise 2/3 of all child deaths in North Carolina; between 1997 – 2017 infant death rates decreased by 22%. The leading causes of infant death are prematurity/low birthweight and birth defects. Some of the current efforts include endorsing workplace supports, strengthening the Child Fatality Prevention System, increasing funding support for Infant Safe Sleep, and increasing the funding support for Quitline NC.

Overview of the State Early Childhood Action Plan

Rebecca Planchard, MPP, Senior Early Childhood Policy Advisor, Office of the Secretary North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Ms. Planchard provided context to the importance of investing in early childhood, which is defined by the state as birth through age 8 (around 3rd grade). Historically, North Carolina has been an innovator in early childhood investment and programs, but there are challenges with disparities in infant mortality, food insecurity, disparities in reading proficiency, and the length of time that children spend in foster care. There is a [data dashboard](#) through the DHHS website, including county level data reports. Ms. Planchard reviewed the 10 goals of the Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP) which are broadly focused on alleviating inequity across the state. She also discussed support for some of the ECAP goals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Small Tele-Group Discussion

Facilitated by members of the Maternal Health Task Force steering committee and NCIOM staff

Groups discussed the relevance, feasibility, measurability, and potential impact of North Carolina's Perinatal Health Strategic Plan (PHSP) in order to determine which strategies should be considered for further study and deliberation to incorporate into the Task Force's work.