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NEW JERSEY HEALTH CARE
QUALITY INSTITUTE

The Work Ahead

It's hard to believe that we're half-way through 2026 and have so much to do before the year ends. In this blog, I am introducing two new Quality Institute team members: Sarah Wolf and Jamie Agunsday, both nurses who bring their clinical experience to our policy and quality work. I also preview our work for the balance of the year and how it aligns with the FY 2027 budget priorities and fiscal challenges facing the State. Please keep reading and thank you for partnership and support.

Read Full Story

Take Five with the Quality Institute

Sarah Wolf, MAS, RN, BSN, CCM, Senior Program Officer - Policy, New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute, and **Jamie Agunsday, MA, MSN, RNC-OB, FAWHONN**, Program Officer - Quality, New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute.

Interview Sneak Peek: *What excites you most about joining the Quality Institute?*

Wolf: I'm excited to work alongside people focused on meaningful change and to support initiatives that improve quality of care and outcomes. What really appeals to me is translating suggestions into real-world implementation and seeing those initiatives through.

Agunsday: I've relied on the Quality Institute for years to understand the landscape of health care in New Jersey. It's easy to feel confined to your institution and limit your focus to what's happening in the clinical environment. It takes effort to understand all the impacts on people's health—not just what happens inside the clinical environment, but where people come from and where they go when discharged.

To improve maternal health, we need to understand the complex interplay between large systems and how they impact health in our communities. The Quality Institute creates an accessible place where anyone invested in improving health care in NJ can learn—from patients and families to policy makers to health care practitioners. The Quality Institute has built good relationships across the state and can convene experts to help us understand how health care policy and quality efforts can be advanced. It's exciting to join such a well-respected organization to do work in my home state that is so meaningful to me...

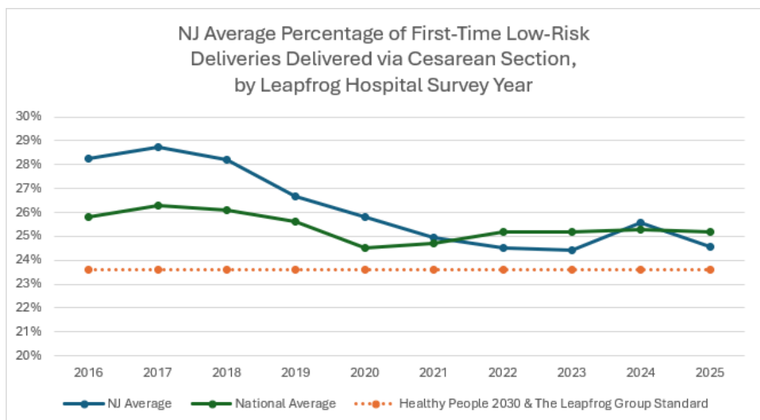
Read Full Interview

Data Spotlight: New Jersey Makes Progress Reducing Low-Risk First-Time Cesarean Births

Over the past decade, New Jersey has made meaningful progress on an important maternal health metric - Cesarean rates among low-risk, first-time mothers with a single baby in a head-down position (referred to as "NTSV"). The NTSV rate in NJ has declined from 28.25% in 2016 to 24.58% in 2025. This improvement was likely driven by many factors, including focused public attention on reducing C-section rates, statewide quality improvement work, collaboration with hospitals and clinicians, payment change programs, and the adoption of several evidence-based maternity care practices.

This progress is noteworthy because while Cesarean delivery is lifesaving when medically indicated, avoiding unnecessary first-time Cesareans is important for the health of both mothers and babies. Compared with vaginal birth, Cesarean delivery is associated with increased risks of infection, bleeding, longer recovery, and the need for repeat Cesarean deliveries. Reducing avoidable Cesareans can improve maternal health, support healthier future pregnancies, and reduce health care costs.

While NTSV rates have declined, there is still more work to do. New Jersey still sits above the national Healthy People 2030 and Leapfrog benchmark of 23.6%. Moreover, New Jersey rates vary by race and ethnicity, and we must work to lower rates for everyone. Together, we can build on this progress by continuing to use data, share best practices, and advance evidence-based maternity care across New Jersey.



Celebrating 20 Years of the Mayors Wellness Campaign

The Mayors Wellness Campaign (MWC) is celebrating 20 years of helping New Jersey communities advance health and wellness through local leadership and collaboration. As we mark this milestone, we invite organizations to support the 2026–2027 Campaign and help expand initiatives that promote healthier communities statewide.

We also thank our early sponsors for their commitment to this work: Novo Nordisk, Trinitas Regional Medical Center, Vytalize Health, Planned Parenthood of Northern, Central and Southern New Jersey, Integrity House, CHEMED Health Center, The Cooperative, and Hackensack Meridian Health.

Interested in becoming a sponsor? Contact **Virginia Tesser,** Senior Engagement Manager, at **vtesser@njhcqi.org** to learn more about sponsorship opportunities.

View the Brochure

For information on how to join, please contact Virginia Tesser at vtesser@njhcqi.org.

To learn more about our current initiatives, please visit our website at www.njhcqi.org.

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