



For Immediate Release  
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## Perinatal Care During Covid-19: Recommendations Issued to Guide Pregnant Individuals and Caregivers

### Quality Institute, Supported by State and Foundations, Convenes Work Group and Drafts Recommendations

PRINCETON – May 6, 2020 – A Work Group comprised of maternal and child health experts in New Jersey today issued far-reaching recommendations to guide pregnant individuals and their providers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The comprehensive, 28-page document provides specific and clear guidance aimed at ensuring that all pregnant individuals obtain safe and equitable care despite the social distancing and infection controls necessary to reduce the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute, at the request of the State and several Foundations supporting perinatal care in New Jersey, led the Work Group and brought together neonatologists, obstetricians, doulas, midwives, labor and delivery nurses, social workers and others to create: Recommendations of the New Jersey Perinatal Care During COVID-19 Work Group. The Quality Institute, which drafted the recommendations, is now urging its members, pregnant individuals, and providers to download, share, and use the document as a guide through the unprecedented times ahead.

The document is available [here](#) and is attached.

About 100,000 babies are born each year in New Jersey and childbirth is the most common diagnosis for a hospital stay. With the pandemic causing a shortage of hospital beds and creating other challenges, the Work Group created goals and procedures to enable patients and their

families to have the best outcomes – as well as a birth experience that best aligns with their preferences and values.

The recommendations will help all pregnant patients understand how childbirth protocols have changed during the prenatal and postpartum period as well as during labor and delivery. The recommendations also were created to align with the work of [Nurture NJ](#), which seeks to reduce maternal mortality in New Jersey by 50 percent and to eliminate racial disparities in birth outcomes.

“We’ve been working hard in New Jersey to reduce maternal mortality and racial disparities. We can’t let that work slow down, or allow the need for social distancing to inhibit care for those who need it most,” said Linda Schwimmer, President and CEO of the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute. “We created these recommendations because we cannot let this virus further the divide in maternal child outcomes.”

Schwimmer said the Work Group members developed creative and innovative solutions to support pregnant individuals while also keeping them and their health care providers safe. The recommendations focus on safety and accommodations to support pregnant individuals in areas such as:

- Safety and accommodations during prenatal visits
- Advance communications to patients on changes in protocols for arriving at the hospital to deliver
- Protocols for COVID-19 testing of pregnant individuals
- Ways to support patients through labor and delivery when there are limitations on the number of support persons that can be with them in person
- Protocols for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients
- Lactation advice for COVID-19 positive patients
- Consideration of resources and supports needed postpartum when hospital discharges may occur more quickly and access to supplies and food can be more challenging due to the statewide health emergency

The document recognizes that vulnerable pregnant populations, such as individuals of color, those with low-incomes, or individuals with a disability, mental health illness, limited health care access, or underlying medical condition, faced an increased risk of maternal mortality and other pregnancy-related complications even before COVID-19. The recommendations outline the need for additional resources and individualized care to support patients and infants under these circumstances.



The document will be updated as new data and guidance on COVID-19 becomes available. Schwimmer said she wants the recommendations to reduce anxiety and uncertainty for parents-to-be.

“Pregnancy and childbirth can bring joy, of course, but also some apprehension, even in normal times,” Schwimmer said. “The pandemic adds a new level of uncertainty. This document is intended to let people understand what their care will look like and to understand what will happen during each step of pregnancy and childbirth. We hope that having that understanding will keep people safe, ease anxiety, and improve the birth experience.”

The creation of the Work Group and the recommendations report was generously supported by The Nicholson Foundation.

#### About the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute

At the Quality Institute, we believe that collaboration is essential to improving our health care system. That’s why we bring providers, payers, patients and decision makers together to advance health care safety, quality and affordability. We’re the only independent, nonpartisan advocate working in New Jersey to promote accountability and transparency. We have more than 100 unique member organizations— all committed to improving health care for everyone in New Jersey.

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