



# Illinois Maternal Health Strategic Plan

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**2020-2024**  
**Version 4 - November 2023**



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# Executive Summary

Innovations to ImPROve Maternal OuTcomEs in Illinois (I PROMOTE-IL), led by the University of Illinois at Chicago, is a maternal health project in one of the nine initial states awarded a five-year *State Maternal Health Innovation Program*, by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in 2019 [1]. In response to the requirements of the *State Maternal Health Innovation Program*, I PROMOTE-IL convened the Illinois Maternal Health Task Force in March 2020 to establish the strategic priority areas, objectives, strategies, and action steps for the Illinois Maternal Health Strategic Plan, first published in February 2021. The third iteration was published in January 2023 to reflect progress made by the Illinois Maternal Health Task Force during the first three years of planning and implementation (2020, 2021, 2022).

Task Force Committees are responsible for implementing the strategies and action steps outlined in the Illinois Maternal Health Strategic Plan. In this iteration, we outline the 11 strategies associated with the Strategic Plan Objectives for each Task Force Committee that are being addressed in 2023 and 2024, the final year of the I PROMOTE-IL project.

## Illinois Maternal Health Task Force Committees and Corresponding Strategic Plan Objectives





# Introduction

# Introduction

The Illinois Maternal Health Strategic Plan, hereinafter referred to as the Strategic Plan, was developed by the statewide Illinois Maternal Health Task Force and serves as a call to action to address the stark inequities in maternal, infant, and family health outcomes in Illinois. This Strategic Plan builds on multiple prior efforts to understand and explicate the causes of these inequities. It is the work of diverse entities, from the members of the state's Maternal Mortality Review Committees to the many Maternal and Child Health (MCH) stakeholders working in coalitions and advocacy/professional organizations to those participating as individuals. In each iteration of the Strategic Plan, careful attention has been placed on aligning the work of the Task Force with existing maternal child health initiatives across the state to ensure that efforts are being leveraged rather than duplicated. Together, we are striving to address the multi-factorial structural and systems issues that explain why Black women in Illinois are three times as likely to die due to a pregnancy-related condition [2] and Black infants in Illinois are three times as likely to die in the first year of life than White women and infants [3].

The Strategic Plan is intended to guide, support, and/or strengthen the efforts of multiple organizations, groups, and individuals to reverse these inequities. The Strategic Plan is not static but rather a living document that will transform as strategies are adopted, enacted, tested, and evaluated. It is hoped that the multiple strategies and action steps outlined below will eliminate inequities and improve the health and well-being of all pregnant persons and their families as Illinois forges a better way forward together. This version of the Strategic Plan details the planned next steps through December 2023.

**It is important to note that not all individuals on the Task Force are involved in every initiative. Members may recuse themselves from involvement with certain activities to comply with their organization's rules, especially regarding advocacy or supporting legislation under consideration by the Illinois General Assembly.**



# The Illinois Maternal Health Task Force

# The Illinois Maternal Health Task Force

The Illinois Maternal Health Task Force (Task Force) was established in March 2020.

The formation of a state-focused Task Force to develop a strategic plan was a requirement of a Maternal Health Innovation grant received by the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), the **Innovations to Improve Maternal Outcomes in Illinois (I PROMOTE-IL)** grant funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in October 2019. I PROMOTE-IL provides staff support and shepherds the development and maintenance of the Strategic Plan. Detailed information about the formation of the Task Force was included in the first version of the Strategic Plan available at <https://ipromoteil.org/strategic-plan/>.

The Task Force is comprised of over ninety stakeholders from across the state and includes representatives from governmental agencies, non-governmental agencies, community organizations, academia, the state legislature, the state's maternal mortality review committees, health care entities, and other professional organizations focused on MCH. The vision, mission, values, strategic priority areas, and objectives of the Task Force are below.

# The Illinois Maternal Health Task Force

## VISION

Health equity for women, pregnant persons, and families in Illinois, across race, ethnicity, class, geography, immigration status, and ability, where all have what they need to be healthy and reach their full potential.

## MISSION

To provide leadership in developing statewide strategies to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality and to achieve maternal health equity by eliminating disparities and improving the overall health of women, pregnant persons, and families in Illinois.

## VALUES

The values of the Task Force describe how we strive to work both as a group and in collaboration with stakeholders, communities, and other partners, as the Strategic Plan is designed and implemented.



### Equity

We acknowledge that racial, ethnic, social, geographic, economic, ability, and gender disparities cause inequities in maternal and infant health outcomes in Illinois. We commit to applying an equity lens to all our decisions and actions.



### Collaboration

We respect and engage with our partners and incorporate the contributions of diverse stakeholders in an authentic and sincere manner with a focus on inclusion.



### Quality

We commit to using the best available scientific evidence to guide our priorities, decision-making, and actions.



### Science/Evidence

We promote the highest quality maternal and family health care, practice, and policies at all levels of our work.



### Community Empowerment

We value individuals and communities as a vital part of improving maternal health in Illinois and we commit to respect, listen, and respond to the needs and goals of multiple diverse communities.



## 2024 Illinois Maternal Health Task Force Strategic Priority Areas and Associated Objectives



### Maternal Health Data for Action

Increase awareness, access, and use of maternal health data, data systems, and resources to inform efforts to reduce severe maternal morbidity and maternal mortality



### Care Coordination and Case Management

Expand coordination of maternal and early childhood systems of care.



### Root/Structural Causes of Health Inequity

Address social and systemic issues that alter pregnant and postpartum persons' ability to be healthy across the reproductive continuum

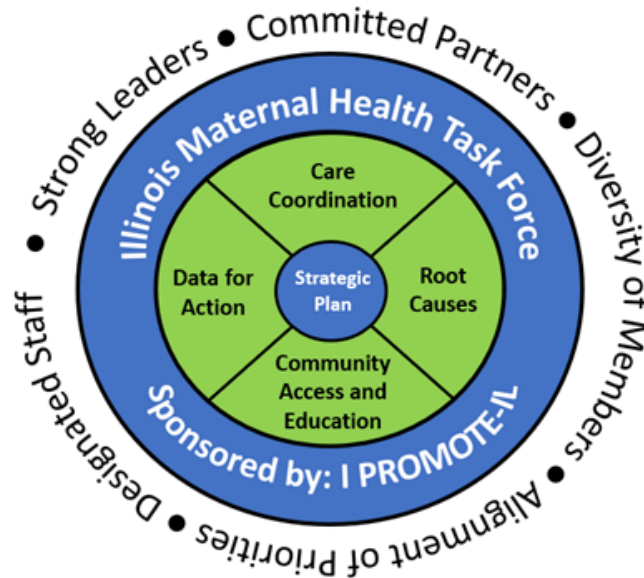


### C.A.S.E Community Access, Systems Equity, and Education

Ensure all pregnant and postpartum persons have equitable access to quality care and disseminate information on resources, healthcare services, and patients' rights to pregnant persons, families, and communities.

# The Illinois Maternal Health Task Force

Figure 1. Illinois Maternal Health Task Force and Strategic Plan



**Figure 1** above represents the Task Force and Strategic Plan. Each strategic priority area (shown in green) is associated with a corresponding Committee responsible for implementing the developed strategies and activities. Each Committee includes one of the Task Force co-chairs or I PROMOTE-IL principal investigators, an I PROMOTE-IL staff member, Task Force members, and a volunteer chair or co-chairs. Each of the four committees is unique with regards to structure and meeting periodicity, but they all work concurrently to implement the Strategic Plan.

Careful attention is placed on aligning the work of the Task Force with existing MCH initiatives across the state to ensure that efforts are being leveraged rather than duplicated. Implementation of the Strategic Plan is intended to be a multi-pronged effort of various stakeholders with support as needed from I PROMOTE-IL. The key drivers of success for the Task Force encircle **Figure 1** and include strong leaders, committed partners, diversity of members, alignment of priorities, and designated staff from I PROMOTE-IL. Below we outline the strategies and activities for 2023-2024 associated with each of the four Illinois Maternal Health Task Force Committees.



# **The Illinois Maternal Health Strategic Plan: *2024 Strategies and Activities***

# Strategic Priority Area #1

## Priority Area #1: Care Coordination & Case Management

#1

### Strategy #1: Create a shared understanding of the framework of the universal newborn support system (UNSS).

#### 2024 Activities:

- Gain an understanding of the current landscape with respect to universal newborn supports.
- Gather information to determine how individuals feel about the home visiting and other supports they are receiving.
- Gain an understanding of the measures that are important to the community to inform the development of a UNSS Framework model.
- Determine essential elements of the UNSS Framework.

### Strategy #2: Increase understanding of the available workforce to implement UNSS services, and review strategies for recruitment and retention to ensure a diverse, sufficiently supported, and quality workforce.

#### 2024 Activities:

- Learn from the landscape analysis, *2023 UNSS Workforce Availability and Scaling Report*, conducted by Respark Leadership Consulting, to better understand the available workforce.
- Support a professional development framework for service providers that is diversity-informed, trauma-informed, and supports the wellness of the UNSS workforce.

### Strategy #3: Establish funding options for sustainability of the essential elements (including infrastructure and community alignment) of the UNSS.

#### 2024 Activities:

- Solidify Medicaid expansion funding and explore private insurance funding.
- Review policy, rule and contract requirements of public sector funding to ensure the UNSS Framework meets the requirements of current funding sources.

## Strategic Priority Area #2

### Strategic Priority Area #2: Community Access, Systems Equity, and Education (CASE)

#2

**Strategy #1: Increase awareness of the multiple changes that have occurred in the birthing landscape in Illinois over the last several years as well as increase awareness by partners, stakeholders, and consumers of relevant information to improve the health of women, birthing persons, infants, and families.**

#### 2024 Activities:

- Create a public education materials for pregnant/birthing persons, families, and communities on key pregnancy and postpartum issues: choosing prenatal care and birthing providers, including Certified Professional Midwives; what to expect in a prenatal visit and understanding links between prenatal and delivery care; awareness of the Illinois Medicaid Postpartum Extensions and what to expect in postpartum preventative care; and information on the Illinois Family Planning SPA. Consider developing parallel materials for providers.
- Disseminate all public education materials through distribution of business card and [Linktree](#) to Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), Birthing Hospitals, other community partners, and at selected community events.
- Disseminate EverThrive Illinois's *Healthy Choices Healthy Futures (HCHF)* Toolkit and links to *The Gathering Campaign*.

**Strategy #2: Develop approaches to address the Substance Use Disorder crisis for pregnant and postpartum patients.**

#### 2024 Activities:

- Support legislation for the decriminalization of substance use disorders during pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum, and ensure that this effort prioritizes family preservation and includes infant safety planning. If decriminalization becomes a reality, support the timely implementation of Medicaid reimbursement for Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT).
- Support Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative (ILPQC)'s effort to expand routine SDOH screening in birthing hospitals and consider how the Task Force can support/advocate for SDOH screening by community-based partners.

## Strategic Priority Area #2

**Strategy #3: Continue to explore strategies to address access to the full continuum of reproductive\* and perinatal health care. (\*Reproductive health care includes contraception, abortion, and maternity care [prenatal, delivery, and postpartum]).**

**2024 Activities:**

- Continue to advocate for access to the full continuum of reproductive health care as well as address the issues of underserved in Illinois.
- Continue to support the Illinois Birth Center Task Force in the expansion of birth centers across the state.
- Continue to support the expansion of the perinatal workforce (e.g., doulas, lactation consultants, breast feeding peer counselors, etc.) consistent with accepted standards of clinical practice, the evidence base, and in the manner that least restricts a person's autonomous decision-making.
- Develop approaches including educational materials to address the continuity of care between prenatal care, delivery, and postpartum care with community-based prenatal care providers.
- Develop communication and other resource materials to support the maximum effectiveness of the Postpartum Medicaid extension in Illinois.

## Strategic Priority Area #3: Root/Structural Causes of Health Inequity

#3

**Strategy #1. Standardize training on implicit bias and related topics (e.g., racism) for health care providers and raise awareness on the intersection between lack of diversity among physicians and adverse mental health outcomes.**

**2024 Activities:**

- Update the [implicit bias training inventory](#).
- Explore and support utilization of the Birth App (Birth without Bias) in Illinois.
- Support the implementation/dissemination of HB2450: Continuing education on cultural competency for health care providers.

**Strategy #2. Address the social determinants of health by expanding and strengthening existing programs to provide more options for pregnant and postpartum persons and young families.**

**2024 Activities:**

- Update the stock presentation on the intersection of maternal health and housing insecurity.
- Host/provide presentations on the intersection of maternal health and housing insecurity.
- Support the Illinois Interagency Council on Homelessness.
- Partner with the Illinois Chapter - American Academy of Pediatrics' Collaborative on Child Homelessness (ICAAP COCHI) to align and support tandem efforts.
- Provide support to the Pritzker Housing Project (UIC Center for Research on Women and Gender), including participation on its Advisory Council.

## Strategic Priority Area #3

### Strategy #3. Expand and establish economic support and security for Illinois Families.

#### 2024 Activities:

- Support Heartland Alliance's *Financial Inclusion for All Illinois* Coalition.
- Support Women Employed's *Illinois Time to Care* Coalition.
- Support efforts to implement and expand the Illinois Children's Savings Account Program.

## Strategic Priority Area #4: Maternal Health Data for Action

#4

### Strategy #1: Increase the number of MCH stakeholders and partners using data for action by leveraging existing state-level data resources (e.g. query tools and reports).

#### 2024 Activities:

- Host "Demystifying Maternal Health Data" webinar.
- Host "County Level Data Sources for Maternal Health" webinar.
- Create a one-pager on commonly used sources of maternal health data.

### Strategy #2: Adapt or create tools and resources to support MCH stakeholders and partners in using data to address inequities in maternal mortality (MM) and severe maternal morbidity (SMM).

#### 2024 Activities:

- Update the [Illinois Maternal Health County Level Profiles](#).
- Disseminate/raise awareness about the updated Illinois Maternal Health County Level Profiles.

# References

- [1] Innovations to Improve Maternal Outcomes in Illinois. (n.d.) <https://ipromoteil.org/>
- [2] Illinois Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Report, 2018-2020, Illinois Department of Public Health. (October 2023). Retrieved from: <https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/life-stages-populations/maternal-child-family-health-services/maternal-health/mmmr.html>
- [3] Illinois Infant Mortality Data Report. Illinois Department of Public Health Office of Women's Health and Family Services. (December 2020). Retrieved from <https://dph.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/idph/files/publications/illinois-infant-mortality-data-report-2020-december-0.pdf>