REVIEW to ACTION
WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT MATERNAL MORTALITY

State Name:

Illinois

SUCCESS STORY

LEVEL OF SUCCESS

- ☐ PROVIDER
- ☐ FACILITY
- ☒ SYSTEM
- ☐ COMMUNITY
- ☐ DATA

SUCCESS STORY OVERVIEW

In April 2021, Illinois became the first state in the United States to extend full Medicaid coverage to people who just gave birth from 60 days to one year postpartum. This policy implementation was based on a key recommendation made by the Illinois Maternal Mortality Review Committees in the 2018 Illinois Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Report. The report showed that one third of pregnancy-related deaths occur later than 43 days postpartum and access to care throughout one year postpartum is vital to preventing maternal deaths.

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THE CHALLENGE

Women in Illinois with Medicaid during pregnancy lost healthcare coverage at 60 days postpartum. The statewide review of 2015 maternal deaths showed a pattern of women being unable to access necessary care for chronic disease conditions and other necessary treatment during the late postpartum period. This lack of access to healthcare coverage affected a new mother's ability to consistently receive quality care during the period of increasing vulnerability one year postpartum. The inability to access healthcare coverage through one year postpartum was a critical factor which directly led to the opportunity for change in the extension of Medicaid coverage.

THE SOLUTION

The 2018 Illinois Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Report recommended that "Illinois should expand Medicaid eligibility for the postpartum period from 60 days to one year after delivery and health insurance plans should cover case management and outreach for postpartum high-risk women for up to one year after delivery." This recommendation was based on reviewed deaths from 2015 and prioritized as the top recommendation for this report. The recommendation was based on data showing that over one third of pregnancy- related deaths and over one half of pregnancy- associated deaths were 43-364 days postpartum. The MMRC's found that access to care and need for care coordination during the full year postpartum were critical factors in being able to prevent future maternal deaths.

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THE RESULTS

In April 2021, Health and Human Services allowed Illinois as the first-in-the-nation a waiver to extend its Medicaid program to low-income people up to one year after they give birth. Women in Illinois with incomes up to 208% of the federal poverty level will have continuous Medicaid coverage eligibility through one year postpartum. This extension of Medicaid benefits will likely help new mothers manage chronic conditions and provide necessary health services to potentially prevent maternal morbidity and mortality. This benefit also addresses the alarming disparities in these poor health outcomes for Black women and all women with Medicaid coverage across Illinois. Women can now access necessary care throughout the year and not delay seeking care in fear of the financial risk. The continuation of coverage throughout the first year will provide new mothers with steady and consistent care that includes appropriate and timely screenings and increased postpartum check-ups. These changes will hopefully prevent future maternal deaths and specifically decrease the disparity in Illinois maternal deaths.

METHODS OF SUSTAINABILITY

The Medicaid extension for postpartum people has been signed and approved by the Governor's office. We hope for this to be the first step in helping Illinois women have access to consistent and quality healthcare coverage to reduce maternal deaths.