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Creating an Equitable Path Forward: Maternal Health Insights from an AHA x ADV Collaboration

The [American Hospital Association](#) and [Advancement League](#) joined forces to ignite meaningful dialogue on health equity. Emerging thought leaders from across the health care field virtually discussed the root causes behind maternal health disparities and solutions that would create a more equitable path forward for mothers.

Over the years, we have seen conditions worsen for mothers across the country, bringing forth the structural biases many experience:

- Annually, [50,000 women](#) suffer a severe maternal complication and 700 die from giving birth;
- Pregnancy-related deaths are [two to three times](#) more common in Black and American Indian/Alaska Native women, regardless of education level; and
- Many [women of color](#) live in rural areas that lack access to obstetrics services.

In order to overcome these realities, we must foster collaboration between clinical and community stakeholders. Together, we can do many things to make an impact, including:

1. **Create a safe space.** Listen and encourage mothers to voice concerns and be a part of the conversation. Empower them to advocate for themselves.
2. **Dig deep into data.** Understand the disparities women are facing in your community. Assess data on race, ethnicity, zip codes, etc., and don't be afraid of what you may find. Data will be key in making a difference in the way we deliver care.
3. **Adopt a health equity lens.** Offer implicit bias and cultural competency training to educate all team members. Identify the policies and structures you have in place that are not equitable, and work collaboratively to address them.
4. **Shift mindset from maternal health to women's health.** Focus on addressing health disparities and improving women's health through the lifespan. Value women's entire journey to improve maternal health.
5. **Build connections.** Find ways to partner and build trust with community stakeholders. This may include establishing doula and community health worker programs to support women, investing in technology to better connect patients with their providers or engaging diverse voices of mothers and their families along the way.
6. **Advocate for policy change.** Educate yourself about current policy efforts to improve maternal health, and support local efforts. Lend your voice to efforts to expand Medicaid coverage to one year postpartum and address the societal factors influencing the health of mothers.

Change cannot happen overnight, or alone. It takes time and persistence. We hope these steps will amplify our efforts and bring us closer to charting an equitable path forward.