



# Improving Maternal Health Outcomes

To Reduce Maternal Mortality and Severe Maternal Morbidity



## STRATEGIC PLANNING SUMMARY

### ITCA Maternal Health Innovation (MHI) Program

In 2020, the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), through a Maternal Health Innovation (MHI) grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), contracted with the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona to develop a tribal maternal health strategic plan.

The strategic plan was developed by maternal health professionals from Tribal communities in Arizona and outlines seven priority areas to mitigate and prevent severe maternal morbidity and mortality in Tribal communities in Arizona. This document provides a summary of the key information in the strategic plan. Tribal leaders, health care professionals, health care facilities, and community members are encouraged to refer to this action plan and roadmap to identify priority actions based on the specific needs of their community. The full strategic plan can be found at: <https://bit.ly/ITCAMHIStrategicPlan>

October 2022

# FEASIBILITY OF ACTIONS

LEGEND: ■ High Feasibility ■ Medium Feasibility ■ Low Feasibility

PRIORITY AREAS	YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		YEAR 4		YEAR 5		
	0-6 Months	7-12 Months	13-18 Months	19-24 Months	25-30 Months	31-36 Months	37-42 Months	43-48 Months	49-54 Months	55-60 Months	
<b>Improve Access to Care</b>	Promote and support accessible pregnancy and postpartum care				.....➔						
			Increase access and use of local non-emergency medical transportation services		.....➔						
				Advocate for child care services at health care facilities				.....➔			
						Improve communication between patients and providers					
<b>Increase Education and Awareness in Tribal Communities</b>	Provide education and resources to Tribal community members, providers, and the pregnant family about local community maternal health topics				.....➔						
			Develop and implement community PSAs and social media health campaigns about maternal health		.....➔						
				Educate service providers, and regional committees on ACEs			.....➔				
						Support and encourage education for Tribal community members interested in pursuing their career in the maternal health field					
						Establish and support Tribally-led Maternal Mortality Review Committees (MMRC)					
<b>Support and Diversify the Workforce</b>	Increase the number and capabilities of Indigenous community health care workers with a maternal health focus										
			Support providers to reduce turnover rate		.....➔						
			Support doulas and traditional practitioners		.....➔						
	Initiate recruitment to train, educate, and increase the number of behavioral health providers										
				Increase diversity of maternal health workforce through recruitment and partnerships							
<b>Improve Mental and Behavioral Health Services</b>			Conduct training with Tribal programs and hospitals that work with Tribal community members to increase awareness of mental and behavioral health topics		.....➔						
			Conduct proper screening techniques and care coordination between Tribal behavioral centers, hospital, and clinics		.....➔						
						Improve access to care and coordination					
<b>Incorporate Traditional Practices and Cultural Values</b>			Strengthen and incorporate traditional practices and cultural values that support wellness into the health care system		.....➔						
			Develop and implement culturally appropriate orientation models when hiring health professionals		.....➔						
<b>Improve Data Collection</b>			Collect and analyze data sources to identify contributing factors of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity among American Indian women in Arizona		.....➔						
				Improve data sovereignty and data sharing							
<b>Support Collaboration among Tribes</b>				Support relationship and partnership building across Tribal Communities			.....➔				
			Engage Tribal health stakeholders to work together on sharing information on their program foundations and frameworks						.....➔		

## PRIORITY 1: IMPROVE ACCESS TO CARE

Action Items	Action Steps
<b>Improve communication between patients and providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Tribes in conducting assessments to identify ways to improve health care services provided, including more effective communication between patients and providers</li> <li>• Promote and provide awareness about patient rights to Tribal community members</li> <li>• Collaborate with telecommunication providers to improve access for patients</li> </ul>
<b>Increase access and use of local non-emergency medical transportation services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) non-emergency medical transportation services and other available transportation services with health care professionals, patients, and community members</li> <li>• Explore state and/or Tribally-funded options for transportation services</li> <li>• Advocate for expansion of the non-emergency medical transportation network</li> </ul>
<b>Advocate for child care services at health care facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and develop a model on providing child care services at health care facilities</li> <li>• Support funding and programs that provide child care services</li> <li>• Advocate for funding to support onsite child care services in hospitals and clinics</li> </ul>
<b>Promote and support accessible pregnancy and postpartum care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key programs that come into contact with prenatal and postpartum clients and families</li> <li>• Conduct virtual or in-person maternal health education to promote positive maternal health outcomes</li> <li>• Improve referrals and follow up on referrals</li> <li>• Provide flexible appointment times</li> <li>• Provide certifications and trainings related to pregnancy and postpartum care to providers</li> <li>• Advocate to expand maternal health, midwifery services, and family medicine within health care facilities, including local and Tribal hospitals</li> </ul>

## PRIORITY 2: INCREASE EDUCATION AND AWARENESS IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Action Items	Action Steps
<b>Support and encourage education for Tribal community members interested in pursuing their career in the maternal health field</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform community members of mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities</li> <li>• Identify and expand areas where mentorship and apprenticeship programs are needed</li> <li>• Conduct summer internship programs for teens and college-aged students; and provide scholarship opportunities</li> <li>• Coordinate with off-reservation entities around summer internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships</li> <li>• Conduct Career Day or Job Fairs for Tribal schools that include a variety of educational and professional pathways, such as trades, vocational schools, college, and different types of occupations</li> </ul>
<b>Establish and support Tribally-led Maternal Mortality Review Committees (MMRC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage assistance from ADHS MMRC</li> <li>• Identify an organization to lead a Tribal MMRC</li> <li>• Develop guidelines and framework for Tribally-led MMRCs</li> <li>• Identify committee members for Tribally-led MMRC from Tribal communities</li> <li>• Conduct training for MMRC members</li> <li>• Hold and facilitate meetings to review and provide recommendations on maternal mortality cases</li> </ul>
<b>Educate service providers, and regional committees on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and support Tribal behavioral health departments to provide training to service providers within each Tribe</li> <li>• Develop on-demand trainings for service providers about the effects of ACEs and historical trauma on maternal health</li> </ul>
<b>Provide education and resources to Tribal community members, providers, and the pregnant family about community maternal health topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key community organizations, programs, health clinics, and public health departments that provide maternal health care services</li> <li>• Research and identify culturally-appropriate, evidence-based, and inclusive curricula for providing virtual or in-person workshops or classes around maternal health; and establish a website to gather and share information and resources, including in Native languages</li> <li>• Conduct community education workshops that address key issues and share successful programs and frameworks within Tribal communities</li> <li>• Provide webinars that focus on data related to maternal morbidity and mortality</li> <li>• Promote the importance of prenatal and postpartum care through education and resources</li> <li>• Conduct evaluation surveys to measure effectiveness of shared information and knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Develop and implement community Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and social media health campaigns about maternal health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a survey to gather input about health related topics that community members would benefit from and learning more about</li> <li>• Develop PSA videos and radio announcements that can be shared on social media and with local broadcasting stations</li> <li>• Create and disseminate infographics and pamphlets, specific to Tribal communities that can be shared virtually on social media posts as well as hardcopies via community bulletin boards, newspapers, Tribal offices, informational booths, mailers, etc.</li> <li>• Coordinate community engagement activities that can foster relationships with local health care providers</li> </ul>

### PRIORITY 3: SUPPORT AND DIVERSIFY THE WORKFORCE

Action Items	Action Steps
<b>Increase diversity of maternal health workforce through recruitment and partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit and provide support to middle and high school students, including by providing GED support, college funding, scholarships, and grants</li> <li>Enhance partnership between the Tribe, health care facilities, and schools to help share possible career opportunities and offer mentorship to pursue a career in health care</li> <li>Recruit at hospitals or in the community</li> <li>Increase and support diversity in doulas, breastfeeding consultants, behavioral health providers, and traditional practitioners in the workforce</li> </ul>
<b>Increase the number and capabilities of Indigenous community health care workers with a maternal health focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employ Tribal recruiters to strengthen recruitment efforts</li> <li>Implement an "exchange program" that allows staff to rotate in higher delivery areas to increase competence and comfort in deliveries</li> <li>Provide sponsorship and mentoring programs for Indigenous health care workers</li> <li>Provide education for workers through Tribally-funded certificate courses and college classes</li> </ul>
<b>Support providers to reduce turnover rate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support providers with attaining a livable wage with benefits, such as through referrals to affordable housing</li> <li>Provide recognition and appreciation programs</li> <li>Seek adequate staffing in order to provide breaks for providers</li> <li>Conduct cultural trainings</li> <li>Provide incentives for recruiting and retaining staff (such as nurses, providers, techs) to work in clinic and delivery spaces</li> <li>Provide trainings, conferences, and webinar opportunities to providers</li> </ul>
<b>Support doulas and traditional practitioners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for reimbursement under Medicaid and Indian Health Service</li> <li>Provide and encourage doula and traditional practitioner trainings</li> <li>Support advocacy for doula licensure</li> </ul>
<b>Initiate recruitment to train, educate, and increase the number of behavioral health providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support recruitment efforts for behavioral health providers and staff</li> <li>Provide education opportunities like scholarships, loan repayment plans, and wother job-related incentives</li> </ul>

### PRIORITY 4: IMPROVE MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Action Items	Action Steps
<b>Conduct training with Tribal programs and hospitals that work with Tribal community members to increase awareness of mental and behavioral health topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage training for new employees and ongoing training of all providers on behavioral health topics such as adverse childhood experiences, historical trauma, cognitive behavioral therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, and updated guidelines on prescribing for the treatment of anxiety and depression</li> <li>Provide and promote trainings on behavioral health topics for community members</li> </ul>
<b>Conduct proper screening techniques and care coordination between Tribal behavioral centers, hospitals, and clinics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate staff on the use of standardized mental and behavioral health screening tools</li> <li>Develop and implement protocols for the use of screening tools to identify early signs of mental and behavioral health issues</li> <li>Conduct continuous postpartum depression screening and follow-up</li> <li>Establish partnerships and routine meetings among Tribal health facilities to share best practices</li> <li>Draft care guidelines that support coordination and integration of care at health care centers and Native traditional practices</li> </ul>
<b>Improve access to care and coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase resource sharing and partnership among local, mental and behavioral health care facilities and schools</li> <li>Advocate for and support mental and behavioral health care facilities</li> <li>Initiate social media campaigns to reduce stigma about mental and behavioral health care</li> <li>Increase culturally appropriate mental and behavioral health trainings</li> <li>Increase inpatient and outpatient services that are culturally relevant, including around substance use</li> <li>Streamline referrals to increase access to services and programs</li> <li>Increase telehealth, in-home services, and follow-ups</li> <li>Develop and share education materials, such as flyers and pamphlets on mental and behavioral health</li> <li>Increase awareness around behavioral health assistance and support services</li> <li>Support cultural practices within mental health services</li> </ul>

## PRIORITY 5: INCORPORATE TRADITIONAL PRACTICES AND CULTURAL VALUES

Action Items	Action Steps
<b>Develop and implement culturally appropriate orientation models when hiring health professionals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapt or develop culturally appropriate, new employee orientation models at local health organizations or facilities</li> <li>Incorporate cultural awareness training for new and existing health care providers, including periodic refreshers</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthen and incorporate traditional practices and cultural values that support wellness into the health care system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage and advocate for health care providers, including contracted health care facilities, to incorporate traditional and cultural practices</li> <li>Conduct cultural training focused on prenatal and postnatal care; and include an overview of local traditional and cultural beliefs</li> <li>Support community members to educate and train health care providers and staff on traditional practices and cultural values</li> <li>Identify Tribal organizations and conduct meetings to share best practices and framework for incorporating traditional and cultural practices into health care</li> </ul>

## PRIORITY 6: IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION

Action Items	Action Steps
<b>Collect and analyze data sources to identify contributing factors of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity among American Indian women in Arizona</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with Tribal Epidemiology Centers, Indian Health Service, and the state to standardize data collection and the analysis process</li> <li>Identify key determinants of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity to focus on within Tribes in Arizona</li> <li>Host meetings to share State data and MMRC recommendations with Tribal leaders, health care workers, and community members</li> </ul>
<b>Improve data sovereignty and data sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve data infrastructure</li> <li>Hire or increase staffing of epidemiologists within each Tribe or healthcare system to review and interpret data sets</li> <li>Improve data sharing of existing data and reports</li> <li>Support data sharing agreements with or among Indian Health Service, Arizona Department of Health Services, and Tribal Epidemiology Centers</li> <li>Support training of technical staff to enhance effectiveness of the data analysis processes</li> <li>Conduct trainings, meetings, and webinars on Tribal data sovereignty</li> <li>Support efforts to update technology to improve efficiency and allow for more effective data collection and analysis</li> <li>Conduct trainings for Tribal health care employees, health boards, and community members on causes of maternal morbidity and mortality, health literacy, epidemiology, and statistics</li> <li>Encourage the use of electronic health records (EHR) and Resource and Patient Management System (RPMS) to document care visits</li> <li>Improve the documentation and extraction capabilities of maternal mortality and morbidity review measures into IHS EHR</li> </ul>

## PRIORITY 7: SUPPORT COLLABORATION AMONG TRIBES

Action Items	Action Steps
<b>Engage Tribal health stakeholders to work together on sharing information on their program foundations and frameworks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Tribal maternal health working groups with representation from the 21 ITCA member Tribes, including community members, Tribal Council, Tribal health board members, and hospital staff</li> <li>Identify an entity in each Tribal community to participate in the working group</li> <li>Conduct an annual conference on maternal health</li> <li>Identify and share information about existing, successful programs at other Tribes including the structure, framework, and best practices</li> </ul>
<b>Support relationship and partnership building across Tribal Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure participation and representation at maternal health task force meetings, review committees, and trainings</li> <li>Conduct meetings to share and highlight information between the state and Tribes on current programs and services</li> <li>Establish a Tribal maternal health website to share information and resources</li> </ul>

*“Every Tribe has different traditional knowledge, cultural norms, and practices. We incorporate that into how we disseminate our information. When we just try and westernize everything it really is very sterile. Having cultural training for those that are not from that Tribe in the medical profession is very important... for providers to have an understanding of how we communicate as part of our Indigenous practices.”*

— Steering Committee Member —



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*“Knowledge is protective in the sense that our traditional health care systems and teachers/ healers/ practitioners and our ceremonies have been working forever towards a balanced lifestyle.*

— Steering Committee Member —