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A New Era for Childbirth in New Hampshire Begins with Better Communication

By Kris Hering, Vice President of Quality Improvement, Foundation for Healthy Communities

Every parent remembers the day their child was born. It is a moment filled with anticipation, excitement, uncertainty and countless decisions. During one of life's most important experiences, families deserve to feel heard, respected and empowered.

That is why New Hampshire is taking a significant step forward in maternity care through the implementation of TeamBirth. Developed by Ariadne Labs, TeamBirth is an innovative, evidence-based model designed to strengthen communication and shared decision-making between patients, their support people and clinical care teams.

The success of TeamBirth in New Hampshire is the result of extraordinary collaboration among hospitals, the N.H. Perinatal Quality Collaborative, Unravel Healthcare (a 2024 spinout of Ariadne Labs founded to implement TeamBirth for quality improvement across the country) and the Foundation for Healthy Communities.

We recently reached an important milestone in this effort. Six hospitals across NH have officially launched TeamBirth in their maternity units in the first cohort - Androscoggin Valley Hospital, Concord Hospital, MaineHealth Memorial Hospital, Portsmouth Regional Hospital, Southern New Hampshire Medical Center and Wentworth-Douglass Hospital - joining three hospitals (Cheshire Medical Center, Dartmouth Health and Exeter Hospital) that had already implemented the model. As a result, more than half of the state's birthing hospitals are now using TeamBirth to enhance the childbirth experience for patients and families.

This achievement reflects a statewide commitment to ensuring that every person giving birth has a voice in their care and a clear understanding of what is happening throughout labor, delivery and postpartum recovery. Through regular team "huddles," patients, their chosen support people,

nurses, physicians, midwives, doulas and other care team members come together to discuss preferences, review care plans, answer questions and establish next steps. A shared planning tool displayed on patient room whiteboards helps ensure everyone remains informed and aligned throughout the process.

The concept is simple, but its impact can be profound. When patients understand their options and participate in decisions about their care, they are more likely to feel respected and supported. When clinicians have a clear framework for communication, they can better address concerns, clarify expectations and build trust. Stronger communication contributes to safer care and a more positive birth experience.

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The work is far from over. Over the coming months, participating hospitals will continue gathering feedback from patients and staff, sharing best practices and refining their approaches. A second cohort of NH hospitals – Catholic Medical Center, Elliot Hospital, Littleton Regional Healthcare, Monadnock Community Hospital, Speare Memorial Hospital and St. Joseph Hospital - is preparing to begin implementation this fall. Once that work is complete, New Hampshire is on track to become only the fourth state in the nation to achieve full statewide TeamBirth implementation.

Every patient deserves to feel like an active member of their care team. Every family deserves clear communication and compassionate support. Through TeamBirth, New Hampshire hospitals are helping make that vision a reality - one birth, one conversation and one family at a time.

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