

EVERY
MOTHER
COUNTS

Advocacy Toolkit



Every Mother Counts works to achieve quality, respectful, and equitable maternity care for every mother, everywhere.

We advocate for and support evidence-based maternity care grounded in respect, dignity, and human rights. We work to identify priority maternal health issues and implement effective strategies for change by listening to and putting mothers and birthing people at the center.

There is already significant momentum, and exciting and effective policy efforts at the federal, state, and local levels. To help push these efforts forward, we need your voice to help make change so that everyone is able to have the pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum experiences they desire.



About This Toolkit

This toolkit is an introduction to advocacy and the tools you can use to push for change in your communities to advance maternal health and health equity.

This guide provides you with background information on the U.S. maternal health crisis, effective solutions, and tools to help you make change and reach your local policymakers.

Change takes time, but you can make progress possible. The movement for maternal health and birth justice needs your voice.

Table of Contents

04 **The Issue**

07 **Advocacy 101**

10 **Who: The Players**

12 **What: The Change**

14 **Where: The Target**

16 **When: The Window of Opportunity**

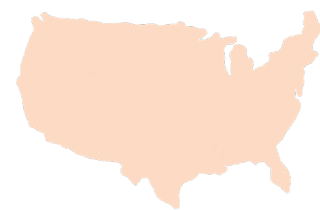
17 **Why: The Motivation**

19 **How: The Plan**

22 **Additional Resources**

The Issue

Maternal Health in the United States



The United States is facing a maternal health crisis.

- Approximately 700 women die of complications of pregnancy and childbirth every year.
- The rate of maternal deaths has doubled over the past 20 years. Today, a woman is twice as likely to die from pregnancy-related complications as her mother was a generation ago.
- Over 50,000 women each year suffer life-threatening complications, a “near miss.” That’s one person every 10 minutes.
- Black and Indigenous women are 2 to 3 times more likely to die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth than white women.



Over 60% of maternal deaths in the U.S. are preventable.

[Learn more on our website.](#)



Why do we need change?

This issue affects everyone.

- Birthing people and newborns together account for nearly 1 of every 4 hospital discharges.
- 84% of women will give birth at least once in their lifetime.
- We are all affected by maternity care at birth!

Disparities reflect systemic injustices.

- Structural and interpersonal racism is leading to maternal health inequities for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).
- Racial disparities in maternal health outcomes persist at all income and education levels and haven’t improved over the last 60 years.

The U.S. is lagging behind.

- The U.S. has the highest rate of maternal deaths of any high-resource country, ranking 55th in the world.
- The U.S. is 1 of only 2 countries where the rate of maternal deaths has been actually increasing.

Poor value of care.

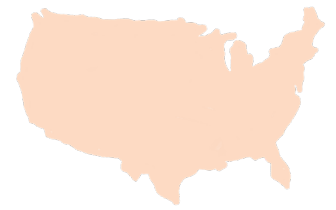
- The U.S. spends more on childbirth than any other country, yet we have the worst health outcomes of any high-resource nation.
- Childbirth-related care is the largest category of hospital spending for Medicaid and most insurance plans.

[Learn more in the “Urgent Matters” Fact Sheet.](#)



It’s clear that something needs to be done for our nation’s mothers and birthing people. So, what are the solutions?

Every Mother Counts' Policy Priorities



At EMC, we've identified priority areas for policy change to make quality, respectful, and equitable maternity care accessible for all. We support ongoing legislative efforts that reflect our priorities and evidence-based solutions, but the movement needs your voice to ensure proposed legislation is passed and change is enacted.

Priorities	Solutions	Proposed Fed. Legislation
Continuous insurance coverage of comprehensive care for pregnant, childbearing, and postpartum people	Extend Medicaid coverage to a full year postpartum permanently and for all 50 states, with an increase in federal matching funds	MOMMIES Act MOMMA's Act COVID-19 Safe Birthing Act
Equitable access to high-value models of maternity care	Expand access to the midwifery model of care, community-based doula support, and community birth options	Midwives for MOMS Act Perinatal Workforce Act BABIES Act
Accountability for respectful, quality, and equitable maternity care	Ensure hospitals prioritize respectful, person-centered care and establish systems to address reports of mistreatment and discrimination	Black Maternal Health Momnibus <i>including the:</i> Kira Johnson Act Data to Save Moms Act

Advocacy 101

What is Advocacy?



Advocacy means taking action to advance causes, experiences, recommendations, or policies that you believe in and working to influence decision-making.

Advocacy includes:



Having your voice heard on issues that are important to you



Defending and safeguarding your rights



Having your views genuinely considered when decisions are being made about your life



Your Advocacy Plan



Guide yourself through the following prompts to create your advocacy plan and ensure it's effective, successful, and inclusive!



Who: The Players

Page 10



What: The Change

Page 12



Where: The Target

Page 14



When: The Window of Opportunity

Page 16



Why: The Motivation

Page 17



How: The Plan

Page 19



Who: The Players



- Who are you? What are your strengths? Why are you well-positioned to make change?
- Who else needs to be at the table to work effectively and equitably?
- Who else is doing this work that you can collaborate with?
- Who are the internal champions who you could work with?
- Who has the power to make the change you want to see?

Your role in advocacy is based on your strengths, passions, and lived experience.



Mobilizer
 You are a community builder. You can bring together a group of public voices and a collective base.

Connector
 You are familiar with the ins and outs of health systems and government agencies. You like connecting to leaders and decision-makers.

Storyteller
 You feel comfortable in front of a crowd or on camera. You like sharing stories and experiences to support change.

Investigator
 You like working behind the scenes and doing research and writing to inform policy and advocacy.

Mediator
 You are skilled at interpersonal communication. You can acknowledge different perspectives and barriers.

Anyone can advocate for maternal health!

○ Who ——— ○ What ——— ○ Where ——— ○ When ——— ○ Why ——— ○ How



Who: The Players

Building Your Advocacy Community

In your advocacy, it's important to figure out who you need to talk to and include, as well as who's already doing this work, so that you can build power through collective efforts and avoid duplicating or re-inventing the wheel.

Connect with and join other maternal health advocates in your community:

- Advocacy groups
- Community-based organizations
- Doula groups
- State perinatal quality collaboratives
- Community organizers
- Birth justice organizations
- Professional associations (for midwives, nurses, physicians, and birth centers)
- Patient advocacy coalitions like 2020 Mom, MoMMA's Voices, March for Moms, and Mom Congress
- Parents and families with similar experiences
- Medical, nursing, and other students
- Student groups at high school, college, and graduate school
- Your own personal network!

Centering Equity in Your Advocacy

When building your advocacy community, a critical first step is to consider your own power, privilege, and identity, especially when determining the make-up and diversity of your allies, who is in leadership and public-facing positions, and how decisions are made.

To ensure your advocacy is equitable and inclusive, be sure to include, center, and uplift community members, especially those who have lived experience, historically been marginalized, or left out of decision-making.

Centering equity and inclusion in your advocacy will help ensure that your efforts continue to move the needle forward!

○ Who ——— ○ What ——— ○ Where ——— ○ When ——— ○ Why ——— ○ How



What: The Change



- What change are you working towards?
- What are your specific goals?
- In what area do you add most value?
- What is already going on in your community?

Moving Towards Human Rights, Equity, and Birth Justice

What future do you envision? Advocacy is strongest when rooted in a collective vision that shapes the specific goals you are working towards. **We advocate for change grounded in:**



Human Rights

Under the right to health, all birthing people are entitled to maternity care that is available, accessible, acceptable, and of good quality. Governments must respect, protect, and fulfill this right to ensure no one experiences a preventable maternal death or disrespectful maternity care.

EMC collaborates with and mobilizes decision-makers, thought leaders, practitioners, and community members to realize the right of every birthing person to receive high quality, respectful care, free from discrimination.



Equity

To achieve equity in maternal health, we must reallocate resources and remove barriers so that birthing people from marginalized communities have the support and opportunities they need to not only survive but thrive. Disparities in maternal health reflect intersecting systems of oppression within and beyond the health-care system.

EMC supports community-driven solutions that work towards systems change and are designed to address the comprehensive needs of the communities in which they are situated.



Birth Justice

All people have the right to make informed, independent decisions regarding their birthing experiences and reproductive futures, throughout the life course. Governments and health systems must be held accountable for ensuring access to a range of respectful, culturally concordant, and anti-racist maternity care options, and for providing remedies and redress in cases of mistreatment, obstetric violence, discrimination, and other human rights violations.

EMC is committed to improving the accessibility and integration of person-centered models of maternity care that are grounded in dignity and bodily autonomy, so that all birthing people are able to decide when, where, how, and with whom to give birth.

○ Who ——— ○ What ——— ○ Where ——— ○ When ——— ○ Why ——— ○ How



What: The Change

Identifying a shared vision can help you pinpoint the best way for you to make change.



Raising Awareness

- ✓ Change attitudes and beliefs through education
- ✓ Share resources and information to build understanding
- ✓ Increase political will and motivation for change



Influencing Providers and Facilities

- ✓ Work with health care professionals to change behaviors and practices
- ✓ Hold hospitals and health systems accountable for quality and respectful care
- ✓ Collaborate with educational institutions to change training and requirements



Changing Policy

- ✓ Work with decision-makers to pass legislation and shape policy
- ✓ Influence hospital policies to shift clinical practices
- ✓ Bring community voices into regulatory and payment reform



Building Community

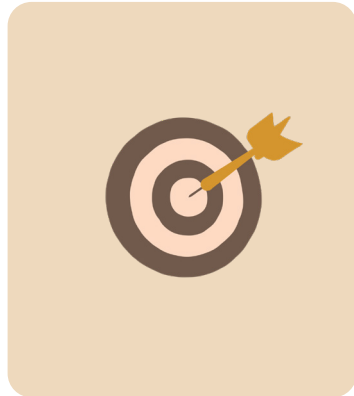
- ✓ Bring together people with similar experiences or interests
- ✓ Build and harness collective power through community
- ✓ Share experiences, resources, and actions

These are **some of the pathways** to make change that move toward your vision of improving care for birthing people.

And there are so many more!

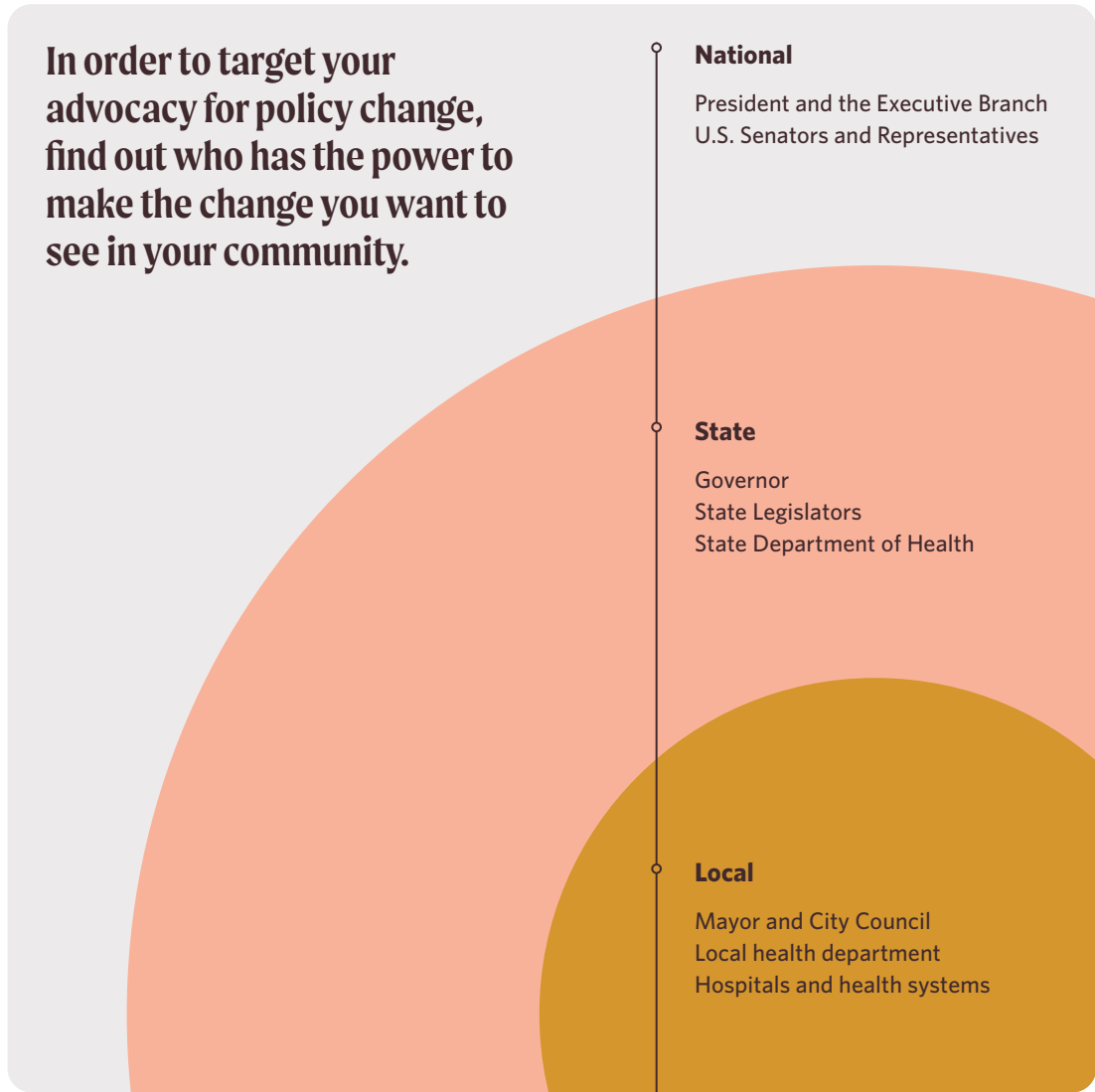


Where: The Target



- Where are you working for change (ex. national, state, local)?
- Where will you need to direct your efforts (ex. government, community members, hospital)?
- Where are relevant decisions made (ex. Department of Health, state legislature)?
- Where are you most likely to be successful at making change?

Identify Key Decision-Makers for Your Issue



- Other decision-makers:**
- Media and journalists
 - Professional associations (ACOG, AWOHNN, ACNM, etc.)
 - Advocacy organizations (NOW, NARAL, ACLU, etc.)
 - Private insurance companies
 - Academic institutions, medical schools, and education systems
 - Labor unions
 - Perinatal professionals and birth workers (doulas, childbirth educators, etc.)
 - Your personal network and community

○ Who ——— ○ What ——— ○ Where ——— ○ When ——— ○ Why ——— ○ How

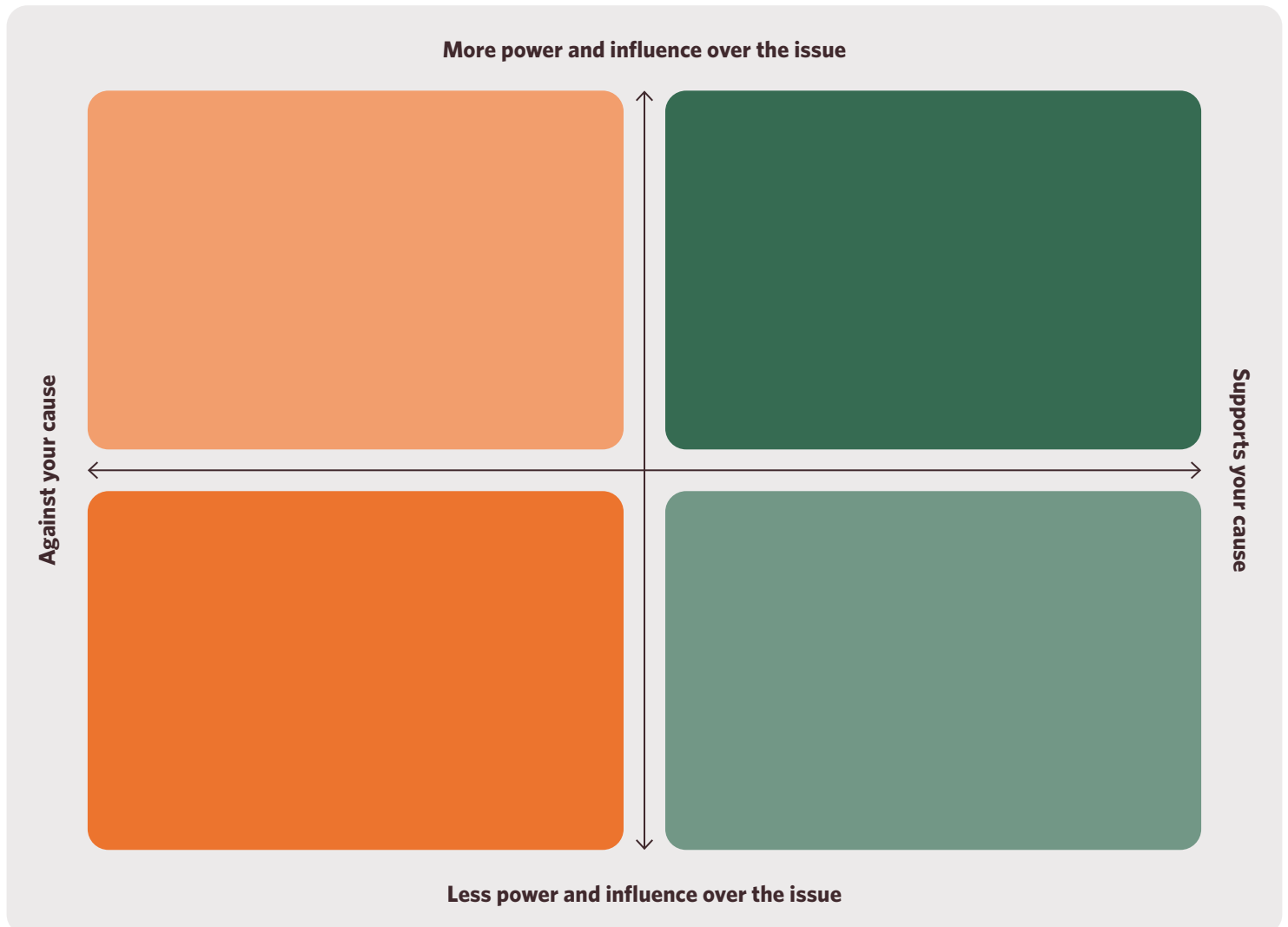


Where: The Target

Mapping Decision-Makers

In order to target your advocacy for policy change, find out who has the power to make the change you want to see in your community.

- Map out decision-makers who are related to the issue that you are advocating for based on their power and influence over your issue, their support for your cause, and your group's relationships with any decision-makers.
- You can then strategically focus your energy on those decision-makers who will help you be most successful at making progress.



○ Who ——— ○ What ——— ○ Where ——— ○ **When** ——— ○ Why ——— ○ How



When: The Window of Opportunity



- When are there opportunities that will facilitate progress?
- When can your action have the biggest impact?
- When are relevant decisions made?

Finding the Right Moment for Your Advocacy

A strategic moment for action can make your advocacy more powerful and bring attention to the issue. More attention can help raise awareness, build pressure for action, and get more people involved!

Practically, it's also important to plan your actions so that they are accessible for as many supporters and community members as possible.

For parents, try to plan actions for weekends and offer childcare if possible! Recognizing that our communities are made up of individuals with different abilities, make sure you share the accessibility of your events beforehand, such as wheelchair accessibility, bathroom options, transportation options, and languages available.

Possible Windows of Opportunity

A related holiday, like Mother's Day

A rally or march

An important or related vote

An upcoming election

Actions hosted by other groups with aligned goals

A new legislative session

Conventions, convenings, or important meetings

A moment of media attention, like the release of a report

○ Who ——— ○ What ——— ○ Where ——— ○ When ——— ○ Why ——— ○ How



Why: The Motivation



- Why is change needed?
- Why is this issue important?
- Why might your target audience be motivated to make the change you're advocating for?
- Why will your proposed solution succeed?

Prepare Your Elevator Pitch

When talking to any decision-makers, it's helpful to prepare an outline of what you want to say. Planning talking points ahead of time can help you in the moment, especially if your time is limited! Here's a guide to help you build your elevator pitch:

1.

The Need for Change

Why is change needed in your community?

- Statistics about maternal health
- What are the major barriers to high quality, respectful, and equitable maternity care?

2.

Make it Personal

Why is maternal health important to you?

- Your story about your own lived experience
- Your expertise as a constituent and community member

3.

The Ask

What concrete change is needed?

- What policy solutions and change are you asking for?
- What does this policymaker need to do?

Sharing Your Story

Your voice and lived experience can be the most compelling way to generate interest in the issues facing birthing people in your community. Personal stories can help bring policy and its impact to life.

Telling your story:

- Why are you passionate about maternal health?
- What experiences have you or people you know had that can shed light on the situation?
- What change would you like to see?
- What concrete solutions can you link to your own story?

Advocacy is most powerful when it centers the voices of birthing people.



Why: The Motivation

Targeting Your Message

Framing your argument to reflect the interests and role of your specific decision-makers can make your advocacy more effective.

By identifying what motivates your audience, you can meet your decision-maker where they are and tailor your argument to be as compelling as possible.

- Tailor your argument by asking yourself these questions:
- What goals do you share?
 - What motivates the person you're speaking to?
 - What incentivizes them to achieve shared goals?
 - What mode of communication is most effective?

- Messages that might resonate with your audience:**
- Health outcomes
 - Satisfied "consumers"
 - Cost savings
 - Easier for providers
 - Helps achieve existing quality measures or goals
 - Health equity
 - Human rights
 - Gender equity
 - Social justice

Framing Your Argument Example: Doula Support to Reduce Medically Unnecessary Cesareans

<p>Nearly 1 in 3 babies in the U.S. is born by cesarean, which is 2 to 3 times higher than the rate the World Health Organization believes is optimal. Medically unnecessary cesareans can lead to increased rates of childbirth-related complications.</p> <p>Doula care is an evidence-based strategy that has been found to reduce first and repeat cesareans. You can use this fact to help you advocate for increased access to doulas with your policymakers.</p> <p>Do some research on your decision-maker's interests, motivations, and previous actions to figure out what argument would be most effective.</p>	<p>Your Audience</p> <hr/> <p>Health insurance and Medicaid</p>	<p>Their Interests</p> <hr/> <p>Cost savings for health insurance payers, including Medicaid</p>	<p>Your Argument</p> <hr/> <p>Doula care is cost-effective, by reducing unnecessary medical procedures, like cesareans that cost 50% more than vaginal births.</p>
	<p>Your Audience</p> <hr/> <p>Providers, hospitals, professional associations</p>	<p>Their Interests</p> <hr/> <p>Meeting quality improvement benchmarks</p>	<p>Your Argument</p> <hr/> <p>Addressing high rates of cesarean births is a key quality goal for many hospitals. Doula care can help quality improvement efforts by reducing the rate of medically unnecessary cesareans.</p>
	<p>Your Audience</p> <hr/> <p>Policymakers, community organizers, and community-based groups</p>	<p>Their Interests</p> <hr/> <p>Addressing health equity and reducing disparities</p>	<p>Your Argument</p> <hr/> <p>Doulas can provide extra support to those most impacted by health disparities. Maternal health benefits from doula support can be most important for those who are from underserved communities.</p>
	<p>Your Audience</p> <hr/> <p>Policymakers, government, and hospitals</p>	<p>Their Interests</p> <hr/> <p>Improving health outcomes</p>	<p>Your Argument</p> <hr/> <p>By reducing rates of cesarean birth, doulas can help birthing people avoid surgery for quicker recovery.</p>

○ Who ——— ○ What ——— ○ Where ——— ○ When ——— ○ Why ——— ○ How



How: The Plan



- How are you going to achieve your goals?
- How will you share responsibilities?
- How will you carry out your action plan?
- How will you maintain momentum?

How to Take Action



Raising Awareness

- Participate in and lead community activities to raise awareness, like hosting or attending a watch party for a maternal health-related film
- Run in local races that support maternal health, like EMC's Race for Birth Justice
- Write an op-ed, letter to the editor, or blog post about maternal health issues in your community
- Use social media to share information, resources, and advocacy actions



Influencing Providers

- Work with hospitals to create or strengthen community-led committees or boards to ensure community participation in decision-making
- Engage hospital and health system leadership in discussion with community members
- Review and share your experiences with providers and hospitals on platforms like Irth, Yelp, ZocDoc, and others
- Work with health care provider educational institutions and continuing provider education to ensure providers learn about and from community members' experiences



Changing Policy

- Contact and meet with your federal, state, and local policymakers about specific policy issues and the importance of maternal health
- Share your experiences and expertise by participating in maternal health task forces, perinatal quality collaboratives, and other advisory committees
- Provide public comment or testimony, and attend town halls
- Meet with payors and regulatory agencies to bring community voices to payment, data collection, and regulatory reform



Building Community

- Start a Facebook page or group for local families to share information about experiences, resources, and advocacy opportunities
- Plan a local town hall or listening session to share childbirth experiences with peers and strategize on local issues
- Create a local story bank to collect and share the pregnancy and childbirth experiences of people in your community
- Lead a participatory research study on community needs and resulting action steps

Guide: How to Advocate Directly with Policymakers in Government



Meet with policymakers to directly communicate your concerns, your motivation, and your solutions.

Policymakers, like your elected officials and other key decision-makers, have influence over legislation and policies that may affect and inform the change you are trying to make. Even so, these decision-makers are often people who want to help make your community a better place, just like you!

Meeting with these decision-makers can help put a face and a community behind the issue to make them aware of what you're advocating for and to hold them accountable to the communities they serve.

Find Your Decision-Makers

Your U.S. Representatives and Senators [via GovTrack](#)



Your State Legislators [via Open States](#)



Your State, City, and Tribal Health Departments [via CDC](#)



Ways to Reach Your Decision-Makers

As a constituent and community member, you can contact your representatives to express your opinion, share information, and ask for policy change.

Different touchpoints during your advocacy efforts can have an impact on decision-makers in your community. Each of these touchpoints helps you to raise awareness and build relationships with the people with the power to make the decisions that impact your issue. Every bit of advocacy matters! When we work together, every single one of our actions builds into collective change.

High Touch

- Organize an advocacy day or town hall
- Host an educational event
- Provide testimony at a hearing

Medium Touch

- Meet with your representatives
- Call your policymakers to express your concerns
- Share information over email with your policymakers

Low Touch

- Share information and actions on social media
- Distribute educational materials on your issue
- Attend a rally or hearing

Meeting with a Decision-Maker

One-on-one meetings (in-person or virtual) are one of the most effective ways to communicate and build relationships with decision-makers.

- ✓ Schedule a meeting with your policymaker or a member of their staff.
- ✓ Have your "elevator pitch" ready.
- ✓ Frame your argument to speak to the policymaker's interests and past positions, acknowledging helpful steps they've taken in the past.
- ✓ Make a concrete ask: Do you want this policymaker to co-sponsor a bill? Send a letter? Hold a hearing or town hall?
- ✓ Provide follow-up materials with more information, like [this fact sheet](#).
- ✓ Send a thank you note afterwards and keep in touch!

Staying Motivated



Making change through advocacy can be a long, arduous road. Changing and transforming individuals is challenging, systems are even more so. Mothers, birthing people, and families need you for the long haul. Here are some tips to stay motivated:



1.

Build community and find support

2.

Celebrate wins,
no matter how small



3.

Take care of your well-
being and rest when
you need to



4.

Infuse your advocacy with fun—
by incorporating food, dance, song, art,
whatever brings you joy!

Additional Resources

What's Happening in Your State



Knowing the state of maternal health in your community can help inform your advocacy efforts. Check out these resources that break down statistics and policies, state-by-state.

1. Maternal Health Statistics



This interactive map shows specific indicators of maternal health in each state in the United States, including maternal health ranking, access to maternity care, and maternal mortality ratios.

Online via
Every Mother Counts



2. State Policies to Improve Maternal Health Outcomes



This map shows what maternal health policy actions your state has taken, including coverage for maternity care, improving the delivery of maternity care, and collecting data on maternal health.

Online via
the Commonwealth Fund



3. Medicaid State Facts



These fact sheets include information about Medicaid coverage in your state, as well as how your state Medicaid program is able to meet the needs of its enrollees, including for pregnancy care and children's health.

Online via the Institute
for Medicaid Innovation



Your Toolbox



Need help getting started? We want you to have everything you need to turn your passion into action!

Advocacy Worksheet

Building Your Advocacy Plan

Page 25



Advocacy Worksheet

Writing Your Elevator Pitch

Page 29



Advocacy Worksheet

Sharing Your Story

Page 31



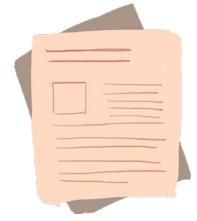
Advocacy Worksheet

Maternal Health in Your Community

Page 33



Building Your Advocacy Plan



This guide will help you start to develop your advocacy plan by helping you think through your resources and strengths, the change you want to make, how you can make that change, and your next steps for moving forward. These questions will help make your advocacy efforts even more effective, successful, and equitable!

Who: The Players Understanding yourself is essential to understanding how you can best advocate for the change you want to see. Before jumping in, figure out who else you need to talk to and include or who’s already doing this work, so that you can avoid duplicating or re-inventing the wheel! Identify potential allies inside the systems you want to change to develop internal champions. Be sure to include and center community members, especially those who have lived experience or have historically been marginalized or left out of decision-making, to make sure your advocacy is equitable and inclusive.

Who are you and what are your strengths?	
Who else needs to be at the table?	
Who else is doing this work that you can collaborate with?	
Who are the internal champions who you could work with?	
Who has the power to make the change you want to see?	

What: The Change Having a clear idea of what change you’d like to see in your community will help direct and shape your advocacy plan. An important element of this work is pushing for a specific, measurable policy change or action that you are demanding from a decision-maker. Before starting, make sure this change matches the priorities of those most directly affected in your community.

What are the most important maternal health issues, problems, or needs in your community?	
---	--

<p>What change are you working towards?</p>	
<p>What are your specific goals?</p>	
<p>In what area would advocacy add most value?</p>	
<p>What efforts are already underway in your community?</p>	

Where: The Target

In order to make your advocacy efforts effective, you must identify the key decision-makers with the power to make the change you are pushing for. Use these questions to figure out where you should target your efforts and how to appeal to their interests. Remember, individuals are much easier to influence than institutions, so find the key decision-makers and champions within the systems that you are trying to change.

<p>Where are you working for change (ex. national, state, local)?</p>	
<p>Where will you need to direct your efforts (ex. government, community members, hospital)?</p>	
<p>Where are relevant decisions made (ex. Department of Health, legislature)?</p>	
<p>Where are you most likely to be successful at making change?</p>	

When: The Window of Opportunity

Being strategic about the moment that you take action can make your advocacy that much more powerful. These questions will help you think through when your advocacy actions will have the greatest impact. Is there an important moment or holiday coming up like Mother’s Day, a rally, or a new legislative session?

<p>When are there opportunities that will facilitate progress?</p>	
--	--

When can you have the biggest impact?	
When are relevant decisions made?	
<p>Why: The Motivation Thinking through your “why” will help connect the action with the issue and your motivation! Think of arguments that can make your proposed solution appeal to your audience. Develop a few key messages and motivations for your campaign that you can have ready to use in different situations for different audiences.</p>	
Why is change needed?	
Why is this issue important?	
Why are you the ones to make change?	
Why is your target the one to fix the problem?	
Why will your proposed solution succeed?	
<p>How: The Plan Now, it’s time to put these strategies into action – how are you going to get this done? Map out the resources you have, can engage, or need to identify. Even though advocacy can feel overwhelming, writing out your ideas around your action plan can help you know how to move forward and celebrate your own power!</p>	
How are you going to achieve your goals?	
How will you share responsibilities?	

How will you carry out your action plan?	
How will you maintain momentum?	

We hope you're as excited and motivated as we are to take action to make pregnancy and childbirth safe, respectful, and equitable for all. We need your voice! Join our movement at www.everymothercounts.org.



Writing Your Elevator Pitch

When talking to decision-makers, it’s helpful to prepare a clear and brief outline of what you want to say—your elevator pitch. Planning talking points ahead of time can help you in the moment, especially if your time is limited! Fill out this guide to draft your elevator pitch.

Remember:

- Be prepared for anything! Decision-makers are often very busy and plans can change at the last minute, so be ready to stay flexible.
- Identify and start with your key points—the things you must say—just in case your time gets cut short.
- Tailor your message to your audience—try to connect your argument to what your target decision-maker cares about.
- If you can go with a team, share responsibilities and parts of your elevator pitch—there’s strength in numbers!
- Your policymakers and their staff are regular people who care about your community, just like you! Speak from your heart—you’re the expert in your own experience.

1. The Need for Change Different target audiences will respond to different messages depending on their perspective. Try developing a few key messages that you can have ready to use based on your specific audience!

Why is change needed in your community?	
Key statistics about maternal health in the target area (see “Maternal Health In Your Community” advocacy worksheet on page 42)	
What are the major barriers to high quality, respectful, equitable maternity care where you live?	

2. Make It Personal Sharing your story and your personal motivation can help people understand your vision and your demands, while appealing to the values that you share with your target decision-maker.

Why is maternal health important to you?	
--	--

Your story about your own lived experience (see “Sharing Your Story” advocacy worksheet on page 40)	
Your expertise as a constituent and community member	
<p>3. The Ask End your elevator pitch with a concrete ask that your target can take action on. Policymakers are incredibly busy, so get right to the point with what you want them to do.</p>	
What concrete change is needed? (e.g. Birthing people enrolled in Medicaid need coverage through the full year postpartum)	
What policy solutions and change are you asking for? (e.g. Pass the MOMMIES Act in Congress)	
What does this policymaker need to do? (e.g. As a Member of Congress, sign on as a cosponsor to the MOMMIES Act)	

We hope you're as excited and motivated as we are to take action to make pregnancy and childbirth safe, respectful, and equitable for all. We need your voice! Join our movement at www.everymothercounts.org.

Sharing Your Story



Advocacy is most powerful when it centers the voices of those affected by the issue. Your voice and lived experience can shed light on what birthing people face in your community and help bring to life the impact of policy change. Sharing your own story is an effective way to help others understand the issue on a deeper, more personal level than with evidence or statistics alone.

- A heartfelt and relatable story can help inspire others by sharing how your experience reflects the bigger picture and the need for change.
- Sharing your story is brave, and it can take time for you to craft the way you want to talk about your experience and how it connects to broader issues in maternal health. Of course, you don't have to share all or even part of your story if it feels uncomfortable. It's okay to save some details for you.
- Follow these prompts to map out your story. Answer these questions in whatever way feels best—journaling, a voice note, a conversation with a friend. Take time with your story, take care of yourself, and come back to it when you can!

Prompt

Why are you passionate about maternal health?

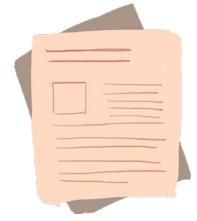
What experiences have you or people you know had that can shed light on the situation?

What change would you like to see?

What concrete solutions can you link to your own story?

We hope you're as excited and motivated as we are to take action to make pregnancy and childbirth safe, respectful, and equitable for all. We need your voice! Join our movement at www.everymothercounts.org.

Maternal Health in Your Community



Highlighting a few key maternal health statistics can help your audience understand the bigger picture behind what you're advocating for. Taking stock of the maternal health landscape in your community can help you identify the change that needs to happen, what's already working, and what's missing.

Here are some statistics that you can gather to discuss the maternal health landscape where you live. These categories are just a beginning—as you start looking, you might find even more. Check out the sources on page 42 to see how much of this table you're able to fill out and uncover!

Statistic	Description	Your Community
Maternal mortality rate	Number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births	
Maternal mortality ratios, disaggregated by race	The different maternal mortality ratios for Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, Asian, and White populations	
Preterm birth rate	Percent of babies born before 37 weeks each year	
Infant mortality rate	Number of deaths of children under one year of age per 1,000 live births	
Cesarean section rate	Percent of deliveries that are born by cesarean section	
Rate of Vaginal Birth After Cesarean	Number of vaginal deliveries per 100 previous cesarean deliveries	
% of births attended by midwives	Percent of births attended by midwives	

Distribution of OB/GYNs and midwives	The number of maternity care providers, OB/GYNs, and midwives per 10,000 people	
Areas with limited or absent maternity care access	County level maternity care access, determined by number of providers, facilities, and insurance	
% of births financed by Medicaid	Percent of births to people with Medicaid insurance coverage	

Possible sources:

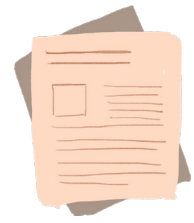
- ✓ Every Mother Counts' [Maternal Health Map](#)
- ✓ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- ✓ Your state's [Department of Health](#)
- ✓ Your state's [perinatal quality collaborative](#)
- ✓ Your state's [maternal mortality review committee](#)
- ✓ Kaiser Family Foundation [State Health Facts](#)
- ✓ March of Dimes [Maternity Care Deserts](#) and [Report Card](#)

Helpful Note

Talking about too many statistics at once, however, can be hard for people to remember and repeat, and can make the issue feel impersonal and abstract. Complementing personal experiences and stories with a few key statistics can make your advocacy both memorable and powerful.

We hope you're as excited and motivated as we are to take action to make pregnancy and childbirth safe, respectful, and equitable for all. We need your voice! Join our movement at www.everymothercounts.org.

Sources



Page 05

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Racial and Ethnic Disparities Continue in Pregnancy-Related Deaths. 2019. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/p0905-racial-ethnic-disparities-pregnancy-deaths.html>.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Severe Maternal Morbidity in the United States*. 2017. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/severematernalmorbidity.html>.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC Wonder. Available at: <https://wonder.cdc.gov/>.

Hoyert, D.L. and Miniño, A.M. *Maternal Mortality in the United States: Changes in Coding, Publication, and Data Release, 2018*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics Reports, 2020.

International Federation of Health Plans. *2017 Comparative Price Report: Variation in Medical and Hospital Prices by Country*. Washington, DC: Author. Available at: https://healthcostinstitute.org/images/pdfs/iFHP_Report_2017_191212.pdf.

McDermott, K. W., Elixhauser, A, Sun, R. *Trends in Hospital Inpatient Stays in the United States, 2005–2014*. 2017. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project Website: <https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb225-Inpatient-US-Stays-Trends.pdf>.

Petersen, E.E., et al. *Vital Signs: Pregnancy-Related Deaths, United States, 2011–2015, and Strategies for Prevention, 13 States, 2013–2017*. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 2019. 68(18): 423–429. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6818e1>.

Podulka, J., Stranges, E., Steiner, C. *Hospitalizations Related to Childbirth, 2008*. H-CUP Statistical Brief, 2011. Available at: <https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb110.jsp>.

Singh, G.K. et al. *Maternal Mortality in the United States, 1935–2007: Substantial Racial/Ethnic, Socioeconomic, and Geographic Disparities Persist*. 2010. Available at: <http://www.hrsa.gov/ourstories/mchb75th/mchb75maternalmortality.pdf>.

United States Census Bureau. *Fertility of Women in the United States: 2016. Children Ever Born and Percent Childless by Age and Marital Status. Table 3*. Available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/demo/fertility/women-fertility.html>.

WHO et al. *Trends in Maternal Mortality: 2000 to 2017*. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2019. Available at: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/maternal-mortality-2000-2017/en/>.

Page 18

CDC. *Births – Method of Delivery*. 2021. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/delivery.htm>.

WHO. *WHO Statement on Cesarean Rates*. 2015. Available at: https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/maternal_perinatal_health/cs-statement/en/.

We hope this toolkit provides you with the resources and strategies to strengthen your advocacy for maternal health.

Together, we can turn our voices and passion into action, and make pregnancy and childbirth safe, respectful, and equitable for every mother, everywhere.

Here's how:

Keep up-to-date with Every Mother Counts' policy and advocacy efforts to advance high quality, respectful, and equitable maternity care.



Follow us on Facebook.



Follow us on Instagram.



Follow us on Twitter.



Check out the [Take Action Page on our website.](#)



Sign up for [Action Alerts.](#)



EVERY MOTHER COUNTS

Questions, ideas, or want to get involved?
Email yuki@everymothercounts.org