Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Exploring Prenatal Care Quality and Access During the COVID-19 Pandemic Among Pregnant Immigrants in Philadelphia Through the Lens of Community-based Organizations

Visit Article

The peak of the COVID-19 pandemic led to decreased maternal and child health care engagement, especially among marginalized populations. Existing disparities in prenatal care access and quality faced by pregnant immigrant people are likely to be amplified by the pandemic. We conducted a study with direct service providers (DSPs) at community-based organizations (CBOs) serving pregnant immigrant families in the Philadelphia region. Semistructured interviews addressed barriers and facilitators to prenatal health care access and engagement among immigrant families both before and then after the onset of the pandemic in March 2020. Additional questions elicited context about the demographics of service populations, organizational connectedness to health care providers, and pandemic-related operational changes. Between June and November 2021, 10 interviews were conducted in English and Spanish with DSPs at 5 CBOs. Primary themes included diminished access and quality of care received due to decreased language accessibility, increased restrictions around support persons, shifts to telemedicine, and changes to appointment scheduling. Additional themes included heightened hesitancy engaging with services due to documentation status, confusion around legal rights, financial strain, and health insurance status. Interviewees provided suggestions for improving service access during and postpandemic for immigrant pregnant people, including implementation of culturally responsive group prenatal care, institutional policies to improve understanding of legal rights, and increased financial supports. Understanding emergent and exacerbated barriers to prenatal care access and quality during the COVID-19 pandemic provides context for how to improve health equity for immigrant pregnant people through public health and health care policies as the pandemic continues, and once it has subsided.

Journal:

Women's Health Reports
Authors: Marshall D, Perez M, Wang X, Matone M, Montoya-Williams D