

Birth Equity Accountability through Measurement (BEAM) Initiative

BACKGROUND

Despite advances in health care quality innovation, systemic racism and inequitable health care access and delivery continue to drive health disparities for marginalized communities in the United States. Specifically, **Black and Indigenous birthing people have the highest rate of maternal health complications and deaths in the United States, much of which is largely preventable.**^{1,2} One way to improve these outcomes is to use quality measures to detect when health care systems are delivering poor or inequitable care. We seek to improve birthing outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and marginalized people by developing new quality measures that reward health plans, providers, clinicians, and states for improved care delivery.



OUR APPROACH

In a joint effort, the National Committee for Quality Assurance ([NCQA](#)) and [The Praxis Project](#) (formerly Reproductive Health Impact) have partnered to develop the [Birth Equity Accountability through Measurement \(BEAM\) initiative](#). **Our goal is to develop, validate, and implement an actionable set of quality measures that align the health care system toward birth equity.** Specifically, the measures will be used in [HEDIS®](#) and other programs to incentivize high-quality, equitable care for birthing people through public reporting to support value-based care. This project presents a unique opportunity to standardize reporting and build transparency and accountability within maternal health care.



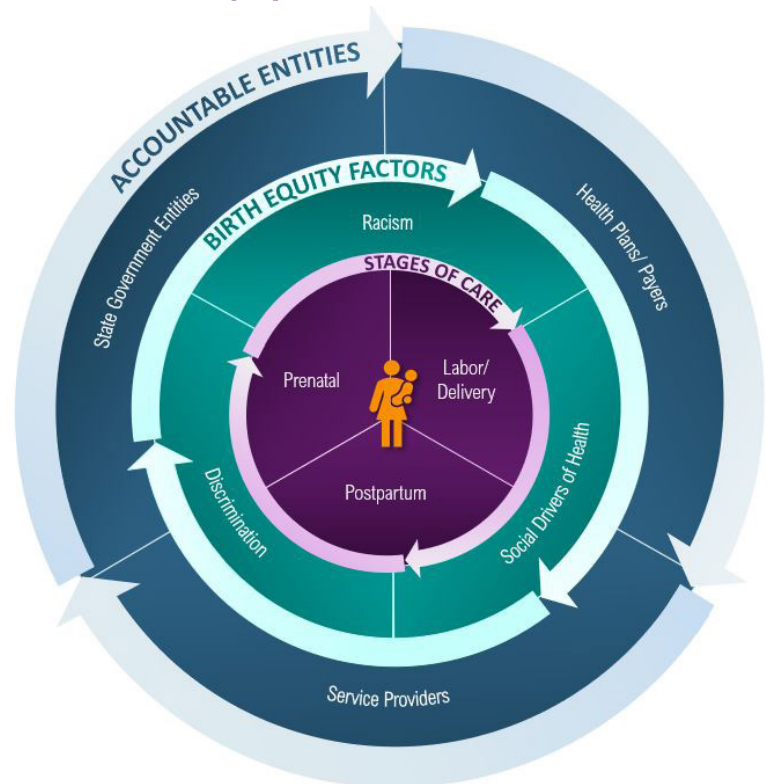
REACH & IMPACT

The BEAM Initiative builds upon ongoing efforts across NCQA and The Praxis Project, drawing upon each organization's expertise, networks and infrastructure to achieve national buy-in through a systems-based approach and by engaging diverse stakeholders. For example, NCQA recently released its [Health Equity Accreditation programs](#) to recognize organizations for applying standards to reduce health disparities. NCQA has also developed HEDIS® measures to allow comparison of health plan performance for [perinatal care](#) in which these measures drive accountability and payment for health care services received by birthing people. The Praxis Project is a national leader in creating tools and solutions by engaging birth equity stakeholders to create actionable outcomes that address institutional racism and discriminatory care. Together, this work aims to inform and impact national accountability programs to address the urgent public health crisis of maternal mortality and morbidity for Black and Indigenous birthing people.

WORK TO DATE (2022-2023)

The team established a strategy for measuring birth equity, promoting alignment and accountability across the health care ecosystem. An [environmental scan](#) was conducted to identify persisting disparities, promising strategies to advance equity and gaps in the quality measurement landscape. **A total of 44 stakeholder interviews were conducted and a convening with an advisory panel to validate environmental scan findings and prioritize new measure concepts.** The team developed the [Birth Equity Measurement Framework](#), identifying needs to be addressed for equitable birthing care and who should be accountable for quality of care in the maternal health care system.

Birth Equity Measurement Framework



UPCOMING WORK (2024-2029)

The BEAM Initiative will use the Birth Equity Measurement Framework as a guide to identify, develop and implement measures in delivery systems across several states to establish their feasibility, validity, and reliability as indicators of birth equity. **The BEAM Initiative plans to develop up to 8 measures to test and pilot through a Learning Network** of accountable health care entities. The Birth Equity Measurement Advisory Panel will also help prioritize and vet measure concepts.

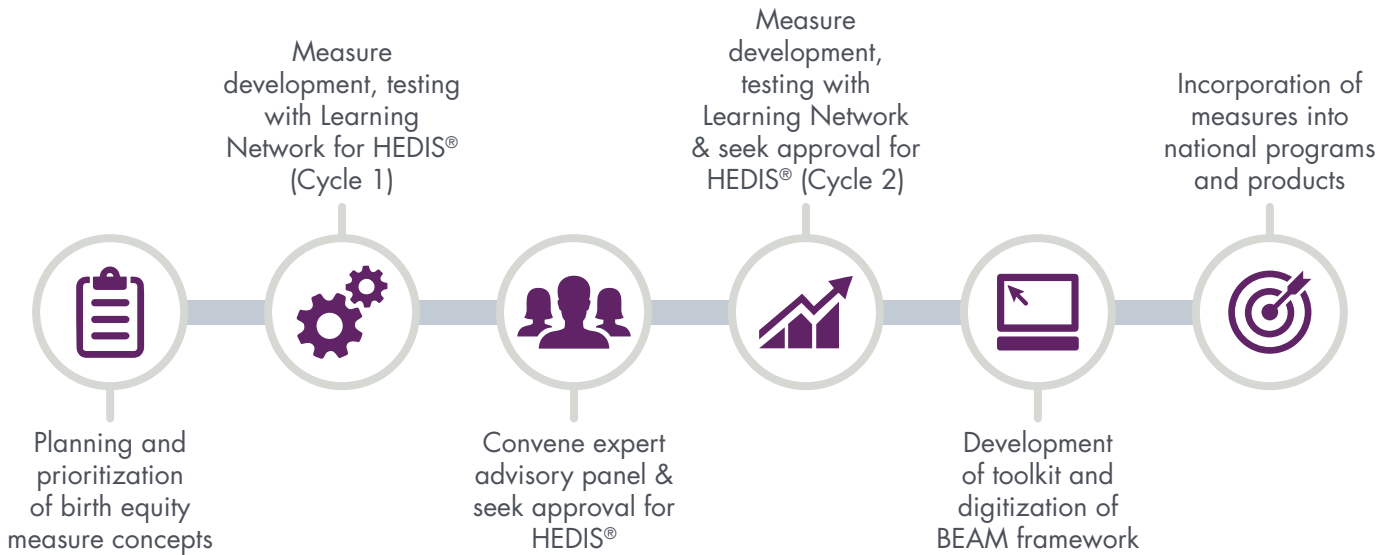
THE LEARNING NETWORK

The Learning Network aims to define, test, and adapt measures for real-world implementation through a coordinated effort with several external entities. NCQA and The Praxis Project will convene a Learning Network comprised of a consortium of health plans/payors, provider groups, hospitals and health systems, community-based organization and clinicians who provide direct services to birthing people (e.g., doulas, licensed clinical social workers, lactation consultants, nurses, etc.) across several states. The Learning Network will hone and refine measurement strategies to ensure they are reportable and accurate. This consortium will provide feedback and insights on the suite of birth equity measures to promote best practices for improved quality of care, inform policy and payment models to enhance value-based care.



UPCOMING WORK (Continued)

The BEAM Initiative aims to advance birth equity through health care quality measurement by utilizing national evaluation programs as a mechanism for accountability to improve payment models, products, and policy. This work will ensure implementation of measures into HEDIS® and other NCQA programs for public reporting. Additionally, the BEAM initiative will disseminate a toolkit for health care systems and payors describing best practices for equity-centered quality improvement to advance birth equity.



INFORMATION FOR FURTHER COLLABORATION

For further information regarding the Birth Equity Accountability through Measurement (BEAM) Initiative and Learning Network, please contact us at ncqa.org/contact-beam

REFERENCES

- 1 Hoyert DL. Maternal mortality rates in the United States, 2021. NCHS Health E-Stats. 2023. DOI: <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/124678>
- 2 Petersen EE. Vital Signs: Pregnancy-Related Deaths, United States, 2011–2015, and Strategies for Prevention, 13 States, 2013–2017. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2019;68. doi:10.15585/mmwr.mm6818e1

