

To: M. Norman Oliver, MD, MA; State Health Commissioner

From: Melody Armstrong, MPA, Chair, Advisory Council on Health Disparity & Health Equity (ACHDHE), Virginia Department of Health (VDH)

Date: January 14, 2020

Subject: ACHDHE Recommendation for Program Enhancement:

In response to the October 8, 2019 presentation on “Virginia’s Maternal Child Health Program,” presented to the ACHDHE by Carla Hegwood, Shannon Pursell, and Owshola Ogunleye, we respectfully present the following recommendations in two categories, community engagement and programing strategies:

Community Engagement Strategies:

- The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) develops more gubernatorial and/or cabinet level inter-agency engagement efforts with internal and external stakeholder engagement to directly and collaboratively address the social determinants of health associated with maternal child health outcomes.
- The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) continue to strategically implement Virginia’s Plan for Well-Being to address barriers around maternal mortality and institute strong and effective coalitions that include community leaders across additional public, private, and the nonprofit (faith-based) sectors in Virginia.
- The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) at a future meeting shares with the ACHDHE other innovative ways state legislators can be engaged to address maternal mortality and as well be informed of the need to conduct research to assist a robust leadership decision for improved maternal health outcomes.

VDH Programing Strategies:

- The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) makes available community outreach and awareness data sources that outline the root causes of maternal mortality such as safe and decent housing, income inequality, and family leave policies. Other elements of data sources may include underlying/preexisting health conditions, affordable access to healthy foods, and transportation to healthcare. These elements could be included in the program plans and also housed within the Health Opportunity Index as part of the growing **ALICE** (Asset, Limited, Income, Constrained, Employed) community.
- The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) includes in its maternal mortality program, measurable metrics on parents with higher Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) scores or disabilities given that “extra action of chronic disease” could present additional risk factors.
- That the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) supports the co-location of services and early health interventions for infants and toddlers (where possible).
- The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) provide to the ACHDHE a follow-up presentation on Title V initiatives including updated data specific to people with special needs in Virginia.
- The Virginia Department of Health, Office of Health Equity adopts the October 8, 2019 meeting format that included an engaged post presentation detailed discussion session.

Signed: *Melody Armstrong*

Melody Armstrong, MPA, & Chair, ACHDHE