
NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

Stacey Harris (Saving Mothers)

917-697-7746 // stacey@harrishealth1.com

Genevieve Friedman (Public Health Solutions)

212-784-5709 // gfriedman@groupgordon.com

Nonprofit Launches Program to Address Elevated Maternal Death Rate in High-Risk NYC Communities

Saving Mothers, in Partnership with Public Health Solutions, will apply a Global Health Model to Improve Care for Women in the U.S.

NEW YORK, NY – July 9, 2019 – Saving Mothers, a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing maternal deaths and birth-related complications worldwide, is partnering with Public Health Solutions' (PHS) Queens Healthy Start to launch the first New York City-based pregnancy health literacy program focusing on training community health workers and empowering the women they serve, called mPOWHER.

New York State has one of the highest maternal death rates in the nation and the racial disparities are stark. In 2018, the mortality rate for Black and non-Hispanic women was four times greater than that of White women. In New York City, the disparities are even more profound: Black women are approximately eight times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related complication than White women. The top causes of maternal death in NYC are pulmonary embolism, hypertension, preeclampsia, and other underlying maternal conditions. Risks factors are obesity, economic and cultural barriers, and implicit bias in healthcare centers.

Community health workers serve as health advocates who visit women in their homes and have a unique opportunity to engage, educate, advocate, and empower the underserved pregnant and post-partum populations. Currently, there is no standardized national curriculum that educates and provides skills assessment and maintenance for community health workers.

The Saving Mothers mPOWHER program will create a culturally sensitive training curriculum for community health workers that will focus on building trust and identifying high-risk complications and comorbidities for pregnant women. The program will be piloted with PHS in Queens, expanded to the five boroughs, and ultimately, to all of New York State. To start, five community health workers from the Jamaica community will be trained to work with 300 pregnant women per year.

The program will also promote comprehensive health literacy education for pregnant women through maternal health kits, which provide information about healthy pregnancy, complications, labor, and post-partum. The kit will also discuss risk factors – including obesity,

hypertension, and diabetes – that contribute to deadly complications, such as pulmonary embolism and preeclampsia.

“For 10 years, I have been teaching and training providers, and delivering clinical services for women in underserved communities around the world but never expected that there would be such a dire need in the United States,” said Taraneh Shirazian, MD, president and founder of Saving Mothers. “People don’t think of pregnancy as a high-risk condition but for many women it is. Every provider of health and every woman should feel empowered to feel healthy and minimize her risks in pregnancy. Our curriculum for community health workers and mPOWHER kits for expectant mothers will do just that. No woman should die giving life. Our goal is to make sure no woman does, whether it is around the world or in our own backyard.”

“It’s unacceptable that women of color face such stark differences in pregnancy outcomes. No woman’s life should be at risk when they deliver their baby,” said Lisa David, president and CEO at Public Health Solutions. “Our Healthy Start community health workers support women living in vulnerable communities and foster improved health. Through the mPOWHER program, our community health workers will be better equipped to empower women to advocate for themselves and their families.”

###

About Saving Mothers

Saving Mothers is a nonprofit organization dedicated to eradicating preventable maternal deaths and birth-related complications in the developing world by designing medical innovations and programmatic solutions for improving maternal health outcomes around the globe.

Founded in 2009 and run by volunteer medical professionals, Saving Mothers educates and trains local healthcare providers to ensure that women in low-resource areas can have lasting access to the quality of care they deserve. The organization has provided medical care to more than 7,000 vulnerable women globally and performed more than 2,000 gynecological procedures free of charge. <https://savingmothers.org>

About Public Health Solutions

Health disparities among New Yorkers are large, persistent and increasing. Public Health Solutions exists to change that trajectory, and support vulnerable New Yorkers in achieving optimal health and building pathways to reach their potential. We improve health outcomes and help communities thrive by providing services directly to vulnerable low-income families, and supporting 200 community-based organizations through our long-standing public-private partnerships. We focus on a wide range of public health issues including food and nutrition, health insurance, maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health, tobacco control, and HIV/AIDS. Public Health Solutions’ Queens Healthy Start is part of the National Healthy Start Initiative, a federally funded program intended to reduce infant mortality in our highest risk communities. It serves 1,500 pregnant women annually in New York City. Visit www.healthsolutions.org to learn more.
