

Voices|Voces:

Moving forward to address pregnancy and birth inequities

Voices|Voces: Moving Forward through Women's Voices to Address Pregnancy and Birth Inequities is a research-based theatrical performance built on interviews with women using Medicaid for pregnancy and birthing-related care. The Institute for Families in Society (IFS) at the University of SC (USC) funded the development of this theatrical performance to ensure broad dissemination and utilization of the results of this study.

The resulting performance captures the **Voices|Voces** of Black women and Latinx immigrant women during a crucial time in their pregnancies, a time of uncertainty regarding the best ways to access health care services and obtain safe outcomes for themselves and their babies.



Aim:

In 2020, the Voices|Voces Initiative aimed to bring the voices of women using Medicaid directly into discussions and decision-making about priorities and strategies. Elevating women's voices to better understand their lived experiences is critical to improving services, programs, and training.

Focus Populations:

Voices|Voces centered on Black women and Latinx immigrant women, two populations whose experiences with Medicaid and other health care highlight the challenges and disparities in our health care system that were only exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. National and South Carolina data show that Black women experience significantly higher rates of pregnancy-related complications, illness, and death compared to white women and higher rates of Black women's babies are born preterm and/or low birthweight. Latinx immigrant women face specific language and systemic barriers that prevent them from accessing vital care during pregnancy, which can impact their own health and that of their newborns.

Addressing Health Inequities:

Health inequities—*systematic differences in health that are unnecessary, unfair, and unjust and can be reduced with effective education, policies, and programs*—are a major focus of Voices|Voces, in unison with other health-related initiatives at IFS. Finding ways to make policies and programs more responsive to the needs of people using services is a core priority of Voices|Voces.

Using Theater as a Mechanism for Change:

Theater offers a powerful method for disseminating complex information to diverse audiences—a tool for translating research into practice and meaningful messages to affect change. A USC-based playwright crafted a performance in which five actors represent women who participated in the interviews. They speak the actual words shared through interviews conducted from 2020-2021. IFS took key messages from performances and talk-back sessions with the audience and packaged them into a series of video and print learning tools available for use through the Voices|Voces website.

Focus Audiences:

We envision these materials being used by health care providers and health care services students (physicians, nurses, midwives, doulas, social workers, mental health professionals); health care administrators; legislators and policy makers, community leaders, Community Health Workers, and anyone providing pregnancy-related care.

Voices|Voces Call to Action: Listen to Us!

These materials were designed to generate deep discussions about core issues through the lenses of equity and justice with the larger goal that those discussions will be followed by **action** in both policy and practice. These women's main call is **"Listen to us."** To do so requires changes at multiple levels, including medical training, practice, and policies as well as heightened collaboration with trusted, community-based organizations.

Please visit the **Voices|Voces website**. It provides the research technical report and the complete series of videos and related learning materials, which can be used in a variety of ways—from classroom sessions and grand rounds to community forums.

Find us & learn more:
schealthviz.sc.edu/voices-voces-initiative

