

# NURTURE NJ

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**Currently, New Jersey is ranked 47th in the nation for maternal deaths and has one of the widest racial disparities for both maternal and infant mortality. These unacceptable statistics represent the real families who inspire our work. As we continue our effort, we must treat this crisis as if every mother we lose is our mother, and every baby we lose is our baby.**

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## HOW WE GOT HERE

### Methodology

Following First Lady Tammy Murphy's announcement of Nurture NJ in January of 2019, her office initiated a multi-pronged, multi-agency approach to improve maternal and infant health among New Jersey women and infants. This multi-sector formative stage laid the foundation for subsequent collaboration and is an important part of the methodology of the Strategic Plan's development. High-profile events – including the Black Maternal and Infant Health Leadership Summit; the First Lady's Family Festivals; quarterly interdepartmental maternal and infant health meetings; and one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders and experts by the First Lady – raised consciousness about the challenges the State faces in maternal

and infant health disparities, and generated commitment and productive action on the part of various stakeholders and communities.

In November 2019, a team of multidisciplinary experts was assembled to guide the development of a science-based, comprehensive, and actionable plan focused on equity and improved outcomes for all women and infants. The initial timeline was nine months from start to implementation of the Plan but was extended an additional six months to accommodate disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategic planning team attempted to model equity, community engagement, power-building and multisector partnership throughout the development process, as these are integral components of the Plan. The equity approach is informed by critical race theory, which includes identifying and addressing the effects of historical racism that are currently embedded in our institutions and affect life experiences.

## The Strategic Planning process entailed:

1. An initial formative stage to develop interest, partnerships, and common language
2. Review of the scientific evidence on state-of-the-art methods for addressing inequities in maternal and infant health
3. Development of an “Ecosystem Map” as a reference for stakeholders to understand the structural conditions necessary to achieve Nurture NJ’s goals for healthy communities, healthy behaviors, respectful and effective clinical practice, and equitable outcomes
4. Integration of pre-existing work focused on developing a clinical blueprint for improved maternal health using quality improvement method
5. A statewide scan of existing state agencies, organizations and stakeholders that directly or indirectly impact maternal and infant health
6. Interviews with officials in eighteen state agencies; seventy-five leading health providers, advocates, academic researchers, professional organizations, specialty task forces, funders; and a range of community-based and community-serving organizations
7. Four in-person dialogue groups with resident women in South New Jersey and the coast (n=40), and four virtual dialogues with women in northern New Jersey (n= 30)
8. Development of action areas for improving maternal and infant health and eliminating disparities, aligned with identified state needs based on interviews/ dialogues
9. Wide distribution of multiple strategic plan drafts to stakeholders across the state, with feedback provided verbally and in writing

## A Note on Language

The Nurture NJ Strategic Plan uses language conventions that are intended to be universal and inclusive. In this plan, we use the phrase “maternal and infant health” to refer to the health of pregnant individuals, which can include cisgender females, non-binary individuals, and transgender men, and their biological infants. We do not assume that all individuals that give birth to a child will care for that child, so we refer to caregivers, partners and spouses, and the plan intends to address their wellbeing as well.



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