

Racial Disparities in Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Conference

May 11th 2021

Schedule of Events

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Welcome and Introductory Remarks from March of Dimes Ambassador Family Karissa McLaurin-Watkins

10:15 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.

Session One: When the Country Fails: Maternal Weathering, a Public Health Crisis

Shontreal Cooper, MD, MPH, MSC



Shontreal Cooper, MD, MPH, serves as a Captain in the United States Army Reserve and has specialty training in Maternal Fetal Medicine. Additionally, Dr. Cooper is co-chair for the Obstetrics and Gynecology Quality and Safety Committee, a member of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Sepsis Committee, UCONN Health COVID-19 Task Force Committee, and the Win with Black Women Health Equity Advisory Committee. She has a passion for patient advocacy and has developed a self-advocacy toolkit on maternal health advocacy. Dr. Cooper published a documentary on maternal weathering in collaboration with Dr. Arline Geronimus from the University of Michigan and Dr. Gregg Alleyne from the Drexel College of Medicine.

10:50 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.

Session Two: Reducing Implicit Bias in Maternity Care: A Framework for Action

Courtney Townsel, MD, MSC



Dr. Townsel is an Assistant Professor and physician-scientist in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Michigan. She has specialty training in Maternal Fetal Medicine (high risk pregnancies) and a Master of Science in Clinical and Translational Research. Dr. Townsel's overarching career goal is to eliminate disparities in maternal and neonatal health outcomes, particularly racial disparities. In line with this goal, both her clinical and research endeavors focus on marginalized populations and eliminating the structural and clinical care inequities that produce health outcome disparities. In Dr. Townsel's clinical role she provides care for a high risk obstetrics population in both inpatient and outpatient settings.

She serves as Co-Lead of the University of Michigan's Birth Center Diversity, Equity & Inclusion workgroup and Co-Lead for our Trauma-Informed Care workgroup.

Additionally, she is the Lead Physician of a multidisciplinary clinic focused on the care of pregnant women with substance use disorders at the University of Michigan. In addition to these clinical roles, she conducts research on perinatal placental biology in substance exposed pregnancies. She is also at the University of Michigan PI for a statewide collaborative to understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on maternal-infant health in Michigan. A primary focus of this collaborative is to understand the underpinnings of increased adverse outcomes amongst women of color compared to other racial groups. She is focused on understanding how structural racism and disparities in maternal-child outcomes by race can be improved and mitigated through promoting birth equity and improving the experience of care for marginalized populations.

11:25 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

Session Three: Disparities in Breastfeeding Outcomes: What are the risks, why should we care, what can be done

Amy D. Gagliardi, MA, IBCLC, RLC



Amy Gagliardi has been leading in the field of human lactation for over 30 years. Ms. Gagliardi established the first breastfeeding peer counselor program in Connecticut in the early 90s and has worked as a certified breastfeeding peer counselor administrator, a lay breastfeeding counselor and as an international Board Certified and registered Lactation consultant. Ms. Gagliardi has been actively involved in research related to risk factors associated with breastfeeding and has presented on this topic and others at venues which include the CDC MCH Epidemiology Conference. As an Instructor of Medical Sciences at the Quinnipiac University,

Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine, Ms. Gagliardi has trained medical students as their capstone advisor in research. Additionally, she is an Associate Investigator at the Weitzman Institute and her journal participation include being an ongoing ad hoc reviewer for the Maternal and Child Health Journal. Areas of expertise include human lactation, perinatal depression, birth outcomes, health disparity, underserved maternal infant populations and maternal child health policy. Ms. Gagliardi has a legislative appointment to the Connecticut Medical Assistance Program Oversight Council and serves as co-chair of their Women and Children's Health Committee. Ms. Gagliardi has been employed by Community Health Center, Inc. a federally qualified health center for the past 27 years.

12:10 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Session Four: Understanding the Racist Birth of Obstetrics and Gynecology – A Physician's Quest to Close the Maternal Health Disparity Gap

Veronica Maria Pimentel, MD, MS, FACOG



Dr. Veronica Maria Pimentel is a board-certified Maternal-Fetal Medicine Specialist, Director of Research for the Obstetrics and Gynecology Residency Program at Trinity Health Of New England / Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. She is also an assistant professor of OBGYN at the University Of Connecticut School Of Medicine and the Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine. Dr. Pimentel is a strong advocate for maternal and child health. She serves in the Connecticut Maternal-Child Health Subcommittee. Throughout the years, she has collaborated with professional organizations, such as ACOG and the Society of Maternal Fetal Medicine (SMFM) as well as national, state and community stakeholders, including the March of Dimes. Notably, as the creator of Anarcha, Lucy and Betsey Recognition Days, she has been working closely with ACOG to recognize the contributions of enslaved Black

women to the field of OBGYN.

12:45 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Lunch

1:15pm – 1:20pm

Video: Hear Her Campaign

1:20 p.m. – 1:35 p.m.

Connecticut Department of Public Health Acting Commissioner Deidre Gifford Keynote Remarks



Dr. Deidre S. Gifford currently serves as Acting Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Public Health and Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Social Services.

Dr. Gifford was appointed by Governor Ned Lamont to lead the Department of Social Services in June 2019, after executive service with the federal Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services, and experience in medical practice, non-profit advocacy and government health service in Rhode Island

In May 2020, Governor Lamont appointed Dr. Gifford to also serve as interim head of the Department of Public Health. In this role, she is a leading member of the Governor's team in planning and implementing the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to beginning service in Connecticut, Commissioner Gifford was Deputy Director for the Center for Medicaid and CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) Services at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) since 2016. Before joining CMS, she served as the Director of State Policy and Programs at the National Association of Medicaid Directors, where she led that organization's efforts with states to support and advance value-based purchasing in Medicaid.

From 2012 to 2015, Commissioner Gifford served as Medicaid Director in the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, having previously served as the agency's medical director. During her tenure, she advanced changes in the payment and delivery system to improve the quality of care and enhance the value of Medicaid services, including the development of numerous initiatives in care coordination, information technology, and provider payment innovations.

Commissioner Gifford was co-founder and Project Director of Rhode Island's multi-payer Medical Home demonstration, one of the nation's first and most enduring multi-payer payment reform initiatives. She was also the Director of Healthcare Policy and Programs for Rhode Island's Medicare Quality Improvement Organization.

A graduate of the University of California at Los Angeles, Commissioner Gifford received her medical degree from Cornell University Medical College in New York. She specialized in obstetrics and gynecology, and received a master of public health degree in epidemiology from UCLA.

1:35 p.m. – 2:25 p.m

Session Five: Connecticut Title V and Maternal Mortality Review Committee Report

Donna Maselli, RN, MPH and Iva Kosutic, PhD



Donna Maselli is a Registered Nurse with 41 years' experience and holds a Master of Public Health degree from the University of Connecticut. She serves as a Public Health Services Manager of the Women's Health & Prevention Unit at the Department of Public Health and has over 26 years' experience. In 2011, she was appointed to the position of the Office of Women's Health, Region 1, State Women's Health Coordinator for Connecticut.

Her work at the Department includes the development and implementation of various statewide programs including the statewide Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Program, Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, Personal Responsibility Education Program, and others. Donna is co-chair of the Maternal Mortality Review Committee and manager of the Maternal Mortality and other MCH programs.

Dr. Iva Kosutic obtained her doctorate in 2010 from the University of Connecticut and is currently an evaluation researcher at Partners in Social Research. Iva has conducted a number of program evaluations including Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting, and most recently for the Connecticut Department of Public Health Office of Oral Health and Genomics Office. Additionally, she has served over the past 10 years as an evaluator for sexuality education programs funded through HRSA's Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) grant to the Connecticut Department of Public Health. Iva currently serves as an evaluator for the Connecticut Maternal Mortality Review Program. She taught undergraduate courses at the University of Connecticut, Human Development and Family Sciences Department for 10 years, and graduate courses at Lewis & Clark College, Marriage, Couples, and Family Therapy Program for 6 years. Her peer-reviewed publications pertain to youth development, evaluation of sex ed and youth development programs, juvenile justice, gambling treatment, and marriage and family therapy.

2:25 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Break

2:45 p.m. – 3:20 p.m.

Session Six: The Doula's Role in Navigating Structural Racism to Eliminate Disparities and Improve Birth Outcomes in Connecticut

SciHonor Devotion, eCID, CLC, MA and Cynthia Hayes, BS, eCID, CLC: Earths Natural Touch, Birthcare and Beyond



Cynthia Hayes, has been a doula for 17 years. She specializes in postpartum care, which includes a role as a bereavement doula. Currently, she is co-administrator of a community doula program in Bridgeport. She is a member of the Doulas 4 Connecticut, Postpartum Support International (Connecticut Chapter), and a staunch advocate for providing doula access to Black families and other disadvantaged groups in Connecticut.



SciHonor Devotion trained as a Birth Doula in 2001 as certified with DONA International (Doulas of North America). In 2002, she trained with CAPPA (Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Organization) and certified as a Postpartum Doula and Childbirth Educator. She is a Maternal Child Health Specialist (JJ Way) and Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC). She has been a homebirth midwife assistant for over 15 years and is currently in midwifery school. She is the owner of Earth's Natural Touch: Birth Care & Beyond, which is the largest Black owned Doula Training Organization and Collective in New England and has trained Interdisciplinary Doulas across the country

since 2016.

3:20 p.m. – 3:55 p.m.

Session Seven: CHNCT/HUSKY Healthy Beginnings



Daileann Hemmings, MSN, BSN, RN, CLC, CCM

Daileann Hemmings currently supervises nurses in the medical Administrative Service Organization for HUSKY Health, a program servicing low-income individuals. Responsibilities include creating tools designed to serve as primary interventions to improve education for staff and members as well as advocating for underserved populations. Daileann's clinical expertise is a vital component of her participation in maternal/child health state initiatives focused on addressing health disparities, implicit biases, and maternal mortality and morbidity among people of color.

Daileann's commitment to health improvement extends internationally including working with the American Friends of Jamaica (AFJ). In 2019, a health symposium in Kingston, JA provided education for over 600 adolescent perinatal mothers on proactive parenting. The program in Jamaica was inspired by the success of the educational community baby shower she spearheaded in 2018, in Bloomfield, Connecticut. As chairperson of the community shower, working efficiently with a state Senator and Mayor was essential to provide support and education to mothers during their perinatal phase. Daileann's interest in the health of vulnerable populations globally was evident during her graduate level study abroad experience in Australia. Locally, her commitment to addressing those impacted by poverty is seen with the work done with the underserved population during her civil duties and was essential to the work done during her professorship. Daileann's personal mission is encapsulated as "engaging in culturally sensitive work to support the human right for all to live a healthy life with the absence of modifiable disparities."

3:55 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Session Eight: National and Local Legislative Landscape and Advocacy Opportunities

Erin Jones, JD, MS, LPC, LADC



Erin Jones earned her Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Saint Joseph's College, her Master's degree of science in Clinical and Counseling Psychology at Central Connecticut State University and Juris Doctorate at Yale University School of Law. She is a licensed practicing counselor (LPC), licensed alcohol and drug counselor (LADC) and attorney. With more than 25 years of experience in health care, behavioral health, advocacy, and public policy.

Currently, been with March of Dimes for the past 15 years working to improve maternal and infant birth outcomes through policy and legislative opportunities at both the federal and state level. Erin has held positions as Interim Director of Behavioral Health at

Eastern CT Health Network, Medicaid Outreach and Advocacy Director for MAXIMUS and the State of Connecticut, Counselor and Case Manager at Easter Seals of Connecticut.

4:30pm

Closing Remarks