

 CASE STUDY

Expanding Access to CenteringPregnancy Group Care Through Telehealth

BACKGROUND

Poor birth outcomes, especially for communities of color, are a persistent health issue for our country. While there is no “cure” for preterm birth, the leading contributor to poor birth outcomes, group prenatal care is an evidence-based practice to reduce pre-term birth, especially for urban African American communities.

Group prenatal care provides a host of other benefits including improved breastfeeding rates, enhanced parental knowledge, and better pregnancy spacing. In addition, decreasing preterm birth provides tremendous cost savings.

The Centering Health Institute (CHI) has developed a successful model of group prenatal care called CenteringPregnancy™. CenteringPregnancy empowers patients, strengthens patient-provider relationships, and builds communities through three main components of health assessment, community building, and interactive learning delivered as a series of group visits with pregnant individuals at similar gestational age.

While more prenatal providers are offering Centering as a model of care, not every pregnant individual has access to this model. Maternity care in rural America is facing a crisis in **access**, and the COVID-19 pandemic required organizations to shift to care delivered through telehealth.

THE APPROACH

CHI engaged HMA to assist in responding to acute operational concerns for practices forced to abruptly implement telehealth during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Dr. Margaret Kirkegaard**, a family physician who provides prenatal care in clinical practice and is experienced in telehealth implementation projects, helped the CHI team respond to the needs of communities and families by expanding access to CenteringPregnancy group prenatal care through telehealth.

Based on that experience, CHI and HMA worked to develop a virtual model for CenteringPregnancy group prenatal care based on the existing evidence for telehealth prenatal care and the experience of current Centering providers.

THE RESULTS

The team developed a CenteringPregnancy Virtual **Playbook** with multiple provider and patient tools that help Centering sites establish a clinically appropriate cadence of telehealth and in-person visits, perform self-assessment via telehealth (e.g. home blood pressure monitoring), and manage group interactions through a telehealth platform. This work has the power to support families and providers and expand access to this critically necessary model of care.



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