

Breaking Barriers to Continuum of Care

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Introduction

Maternal mortality, a key indicator of overall population health, has worsened in many parts of the U.S over the past two decades^{8,9}. In regions where **maternal health outcomes** have historically **declined and remained stagnant**^{2,6}, it is imperative to adopt more innovative models of care, as existing traditional frameworks are insufficient in tackling this critical issue⁷. These disparities are driven by a myriad of factors, including socioeconomic barriers and a **healthcare system** that fails to meet the needs of the communities it serves^{3,7}. However, **community-based solutions**, such as clinics with diverse providers including physician assistants and midwives, have shown promise in addressing these issues^{4,5}. This case study explores how The Community of Hope Family Health and Birth Center (COH), a Federally Qualified Health Center in Washington, D.C., emerges as an **adaptive approach** to address maternal healthcare delivery in underserved communities.

Objectives

This study aims to explore alternative care models that integrate a broader **range of providers and services** to meet the unique needs of communities.

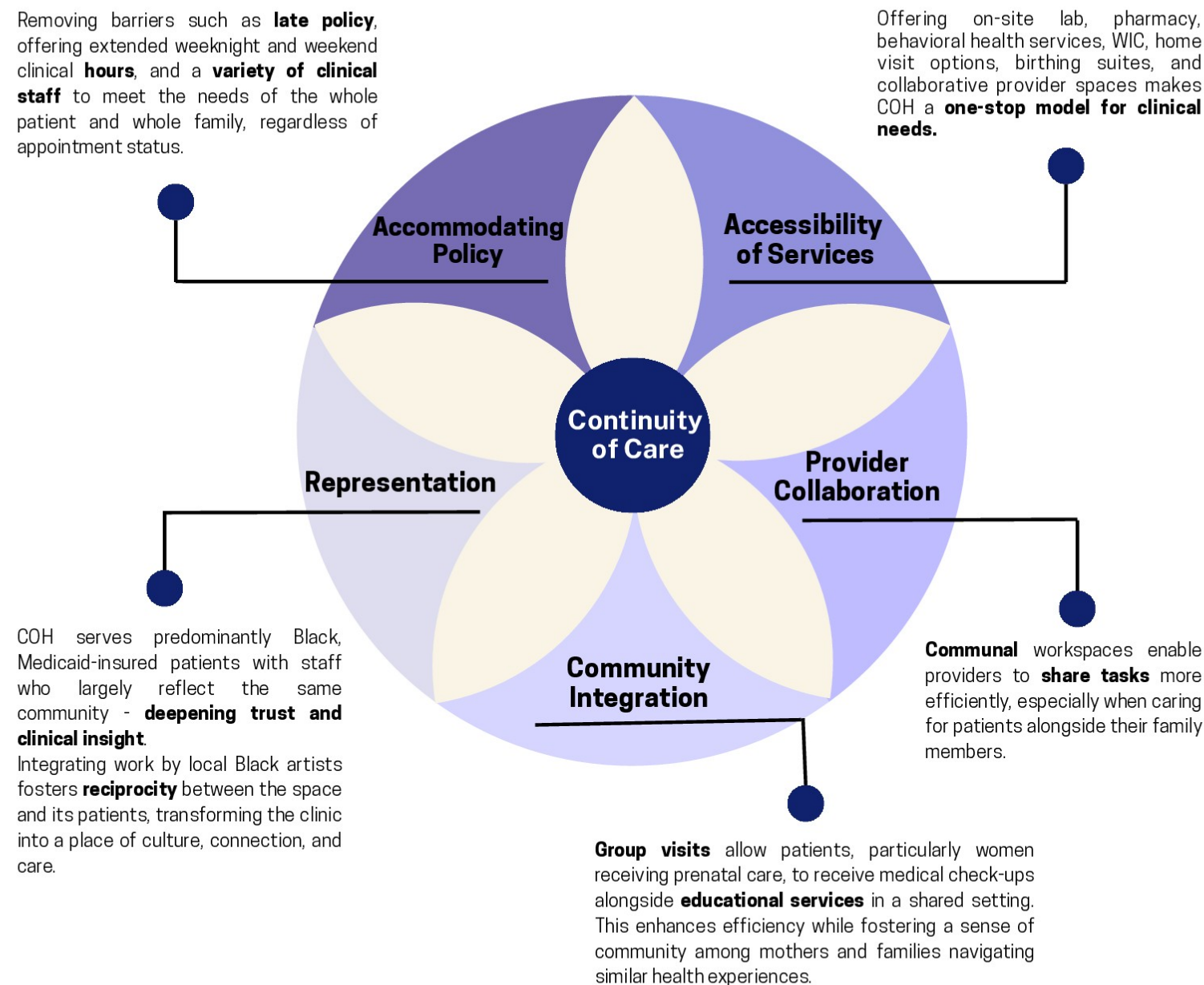
Physician Assistants (PAs) are uniquely positioned to address healthcare inequalities by integrating into care models that **bridge the gap between medicine and community-centered care**.

Methodology

Researchers conducted semi-structured **interviews** with leadership and clinical staff at the COH. Interviews were conducted in person or via Zoom, recorded with verbal consent, transcribed, and **thematically analyzed**. Purposive sampling was used to select participants, and all identifying information was anonymized. Thematic findings inform conclusions about **organizational practices and their impact on community-centered care**.

Results

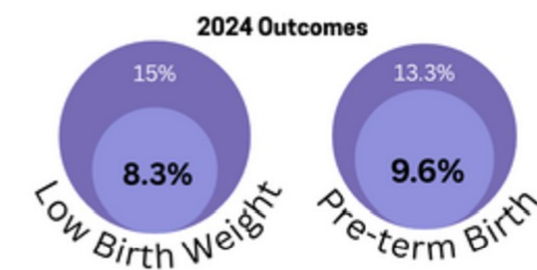
Thematic analysis identified **5 major themes of unique approaches** Community of Hope takes to addressing barriers to providing responsive health care, including:



Discussion

Creating a clinical space that provides **comprehensive care** to marginalized populations is strengthened by **centering the patient**. Using a **life-course approach**, Community of Hope challenges the limitations of more typical clinical settings by utilizing a range of providers to meet the unique needs of the community.

According to COH's 2024 Outcome Report, mothers who utilize COH's birthing services have infants with **lower rates of low birth weight** compared to mothers who do not access COH care, and **lower rates of preterm births** compared to the national average for Black birthing people.



This study highlights the need for investment in community-based care models and **policies that prioritize health equity** to address these longstanding disparities. Such models can be further integrated into **Federally Qualified Health Centers** to deliver better care and health outcomes in a variety of settings.

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