

## NEW CMS “BIRTHING FRIENDLY” DESIGNATION FOR HOSPITALS

### Key Takeaways

- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) finalized a new designation for hospitals, based on quality measures reported to CMS, and beginning in Fall 2023 will publicly report whether a hospital is “birthing friendly.”
- The new designation reflects a federal policy effort to use Medicare quality reporting programs to address the maternal health crisis in the United States.

### Background

Since December 2005 CMS has publicly reported hospital performance on quality measures included in its quality reporting and performance programs for hospitals. These programs include the Inpatient Quality Reporting (IQR) Program, the Outpatient Quality Reporting Program, the Hospital-Acquired Condition Reduction Program, Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program, and the Hospital Value-Based Purchasing Program. Measures for these programs are updated annually through the formal notice and comment rulemaking process.

CMS established a new “birthing friendly” designation for hospitals that meet reporting requirements for the Maternal Morbidity structural measure previously adopted in the IQR Program in the FY 2023 Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS) final rule. That measure requires every hospital to attest whether it (or its health system) participates in a Statewide and/or National Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative Program **and** whether it has implemented patient safety practices or bundles related to maternal morbidity.

### New Designation

Hospitals that attest “Yes” to both parts of the Maternal Morbidity measure will be designated as “birth-friendly” hospitals on the *Medicare Care Compare* website beginning in Fall 2023 based on hospital reporting in Spring 2023, and annually thereafter. CMS first publicly reported hospitals responses to the underlying Maternal Morbidity measure in Fall 2022, based on reporting in Spring 2022. This designation is separate and distinct from Medicare’s Overall Hospital Quality Star Rating and Patient Experience Rating.

### Future of the Designation

CMS signaled that it intends to incorporate additional maternal health quality metrics into the designation over time. In addition to creating the designation, CMS adopted two new electronic clinical quality measures (eCQMs) specific to maternal health that hospitals must begin to report in 2025 as part of the FY2026 IQR requirements. Those two measures are: (1) PC-01 Cesarean Births and (2) PC-07 Severe Obstetric Complications. The AAMC anticipates that CMS will add additional maternal health measures to the IQR in the coming years, as valid and reliable metrics are developed to address maternal health outcomes.

## Implications

Patients may ask providers for more information about the designation so that they can understand what it means for their care. Additionally, because the designation, as currently designed, is based on annual reporting, hospitals should review reporting to ensure they retain the designation, and if not, determine why and create a plan to address it in advance of the next reporting cycle. Additionally, hospitals should be mindful of both patient and payer perception of the designation alike regarding patient choice of hospital, community engagement with the hospital, and future payer contract negotiations.

## Resources

CMS Press Release, [New CMS Rule Increases Payments for Acute Care Hospitals and Advances Health Equity, Maternal Health](#) (August 1, 2022).

CMS Cross-Cutting Initiative, [CMS Maternity Care Action Plan](#) (December 1, 2022)

Quality Measure Specifications: [Maternal Morbidity Structural Measure](#), [PC-02 Cesarean Birth eCQM](#), and [PC-07 Severe Obstetric Complications eCQM](#)

CMS [Medicare Care Compare](#) Website (previously known as *Hospital Compare*)

## AAMC Contact

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