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DEFINING HEALTH CARE'S ROLE IN ACHIEVING HEALTHIER LIVES

New collaborative project develops principles and guidance for health care to achieve optimal well-being for all people

To help health care clarify and transform its role in improving the health of communities and addressing equity, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has launched *Raising the Bar: Health Care's Transforming Role*, a program led by experts from the National Alliance to Impact the Social Determinants of Health (NASDOH) and the National Partnership for Women & Families.

The project provides practical guidance on how the health care sector can take action to improve health for all people and communities. *Raising the Bar* will provide health care leaders and institutions with valuable tools for improving health and health equity by developing principles and strategies and applying them to create a usable case example.

"We know there are countless social factors and systemic inequities inside and outside clinical walls that critically affect overall health," said Emmy Ganos, PhD, senior program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "To create actionable change, we're bringing key players to the table to collaboratively define health care's role in improving the health of individuals and communities."

Based on discussion among advocates and leaders in and outside of health care, NASDOH will develop principles and best practices that ensure people, communities, and their priorities are at the core of the work of health care. The National Partnership will apply these principles to create an actionable case study for use in maternal and newborn health.

Maternal health is the first test example because in the United States, overall maternal morbidity and mortality are higher than in similar nations, reflect racial inequities, and are largely preventable. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black women in the United States have a maternal mortality rate 2.5 times higher than white women.

"We have an important opportunity to help advance the transformation of health care, and to embrace steps health care can take to better serve people and communities" said Governor Mike Leavitt, Co-convenor of NASDOH. "This starts with a serious discussion of the roles of health care in addressing the needs of individuals, families, and communities, and to rethink what is and isn't health care's responsibility."

Community-based organizations, patients, and their advocates will collaborate as equal partners alongside NASDOH and the National Partnership to inform the development and practical use of the principles. Project leaders said the voices of individuals, families and communities will be critical to ensuring this project keeps patients' needs at the center of the work.

"Maternal morbidity and mortality are unacceptably high among Black, Indigenous and other women of color and this is largely preventable, just one of the many racial inequities within our health system," said Debra L. Ness, President at the National Partnership. "Maternal health is an area where

health care can immediately improve. The guidance being developed will demonstrate how health care can better respond to people’s life circumstances and social and emotional needs, as well as address bias and discrimination and improve the overall quality of clinical services.”

For more information about *Raising the Bar*, or to sign up for project updates, visit www.RTBhealthcare.org.

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About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are striving to build a national Culture of Health that will enable all to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at www.rwjf.org/facebook.

About the National Alliance to impact the Social Determinants of Health

The National Alliance to impact the Social Determinants of Health seeks to make a material improvement in the health of individuals and communities and, through multi-sector partnerships within the national system of health, advance holistic, value-based, person-centered health care that can successfully impact the social determinants of health. For more information, visit www.nasdo.org.

About the National Partnership for Women & Families

The National Partnership for Women & Families is dedicated to achieving equity for all women. We work to create the conditions that will improve the lives of women and their families by focusing on achieving workplace and economic equity, and advancing health justice by ensuring access to high-quality, affordable, and equitable care. For more information, visit www.nationalpartnership.org.