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DIVERSITY SCIENCE
An Evidence-Based Approach to Inclusion

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Project launch for free capacity-building resources addressing inequities in perinatal health care

Rachel Hardeman, Ph.D., and Diversity Science awarded grant to create free resources for health care providers on implicit bias in pregnancy and birth

(April 30, 2020) -- PORTLAND, Ore. -- Diversity Science, a public-benefit company that brings the latest research and evidence-based approaches to creating diverse and inclusive organizations has received a grant from the California Healthcare Foundation to develop free educational e-learning modules and resources on implicit bias and reproductive justice to eliminate inequities in perinatal health outcomes.

The project, led by Rachel Hardeman, Ph.D., will create interactive e-learning modules for perinatal providers focused on implicit bias and reproductive justice in accordance with the training requirements outlined in the California Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act (Senate Bill 464) which went into effect in January 2020. All of the e-learning modules and resources developed for this project will be available free of charge. This project was funded by the California Healthcare Foundation in response to strong evidence of racial inequalities in perinatal care and outcomes.

The e-learning modules are meant to serve as foundational capacity-building tools and support for organizations in the vital work of changing practices and policies in order to eliminate inequities in perinatal and reproductive health outcomes for Black women and birthing people. Resources will also be offered to support organizations in implementing these e-learning modules with staff and in developing more comprehensive strategies for improving care environments.

The California Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act, authored by Sen. Holly Mitchell, aims to reduce pregnancy-related preventable deaths, severe illnesses and associated health disparities by addressing implicit bias among perinatal health providers. The bill requires all

health care providers involved in perinatal services at hospitals and alternative birth centers to undergo evidence-based implicit bias training. This training program will task medical professionals to identify and correct any previously or current unconscious or conscious biases and misinformation. The program must also address personal, interpersonal, institutional, structural and cultural barriers to access to health care.

Speaking about the intended impact of this bill, Sen. Holly Mitchell says, "Black women deserve better. Bias, implicit or explicit, should no longer impact a woman's ability to deliver a full-term baby or to survive childbirth." As it stands, the U.S. leads the developed world in the number of pregnancy-related deaths. Black women comprise a large portion of those casualties, presenting a risk of mortality that is three to four times that of White women. It's the reason Mitchell is challenging Black women to ask their prospective obstetricians a very important question before making a selection: "Have you gone through implicit bias training?" She believes the question could save lives.

Bias in care has been directly linked to high Black maternal mortality and Black infant mortality rates. This will be the first set of free of charge resources that directly address health disparities linked to bias in perinatal health and is fully responsive to scientific evidence on interrupting bias. This project will provide resources and tools that increase provider capacity to understand and interrupt bias in care and to empower healthcare organizations to improve equity and quality of care.

Project leader Rachel Hardeman, Ph.D., and Diversity Science will leverage considerable expertise in health equity research to develop interventions that address both individual and structural factors that influence bias and inequities in care. The experts behind this project have conducted numerous studies on the way racism and other biases affect health care quality and are advancing evidence-based and provider-focused organizational interventions to eliminate inequities in care and outcomes.

While a training alone is insufficient to overcome systemic racial inequalities, these e-learning modules are a starting point from which deeper organizational and systems change can build. Content will reflect the latest scientific evidence as well as concrete examples of the lived experiences of perinatal providers, mothers and birthing people. All products will be developed using a collaborative and iterative approach that includes expert and stakeholder review. The tools and educational resources provided through this project will be available to perinatal providers and healthcare organizations beginning in late summer 2020.

The grant from the California Healthcare Foundation will support the development of e-learning modules and resources for perinatal providers and hospital staff. Diversity Science will be hosting webinars to engage stakeholders and provide updates as the project progresses and new resources are made available. Hundreds of stakeholders joined the project kickoff webinar and are a part of ongoing engagement with this work. Learn more at www.diversityscience.org/equal-perinatal-care.

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For more information or interviews with project team/subject matter experts, contact Emily Ruff at equalcare@diversityscience.org or 612 524 5841.