

Why Birth Networks?

Giving birth is one of the most powerful life-changing events any family can experience. Birth is designed to unfold in a way that ensures the healthiest outcome for both the mother and her baby. Unfortunately, interference in the normal process of birth is very common in the United States, despite the fact that research supports less interference. In today's environment of managed care, parents must take responsibility for the safety and satisfaction of their births, but too many people are not aware of their options and rights.

In response, many concerned, passionate women and men have begun organizing independent grassroots advocacy organizations. These birth networks promote normal, mother/baby-friendly birth within individual communities. Informed consumers are becoming the change agents for birth practices compelling health care providers to practice evidence-based maternity care.

Birth Networks Provide Resources – Support

Each Birth Networks is as unique as the community it serves. Most Birth Networks provide:

- community outreach through informational meetings, health fairs, web sites, publications and other educational resources
- referrals to care providers who endorse the Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative and support normal birth (See back panel.)
- professional education opportunities

By linking with a local Birth Network — or starting a new Birth Network when none exists in a community — expectant parents are able to:

- explore current information about options and alternatives in birth
- network with like-minded individuals in their communities
- connect with care providers who support evidence-based maternity care
- inform and influence the local birth culture

Birth Networks and the Lamaze Institute for Normal Birth

The Lamaze Institute for Normal Birth supports independent Birth Networks by providing:

- mini-grants to new and existing Birth Networks
- a state-by-state list of all known Birth Networks
- tools to help build effective and creative Birth Networks

Six Care Practices that Promote Normal Birth

Lamaze International believes that the following care practices, adapted from the World Health Organization (WHO), promote, support, and protect normal birth:

1. Labor begins on its own
2. Freedom of movement throughout labor
3. Continuous labor support
4. No routine interventions
5. Non-supine (e.g., upright or side-lying) positions for birth
6. No separation of mother and baby after birth with unlimited opportunity for breastfeeding

For more information about Birth Networks, to find a Birth Network near you, or to download a grant application, visit:

www.normalbirth.lamaze.org
or call Lamaze International at
800-368-4404

The Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative

A mother-friendly hospital, birth center or home birth service:

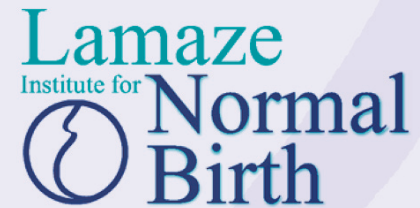
- Offers the woman unrestricted access to the birth companions of her choice, continuous support, and midwifery care
- Provides accurate information to the public about interventions and outcomes
- Provides culturally competent care
- Provides the birthing woman with freedom of movement
- Has clearly defined policies for coordination of healthcare
- Avoids routine procedures and limits interventions
- Educates staff in non-drug methods of pain relief
- Encourages all mothers and families to nurture and bond with their infants
- Discourages non-religious circumcision of the newborn
- Promote successful breastfeeding

Coalition for Improving Maternity Services
888-282-CIMS
www.motherfriendly.org
info@motherfriendly.org

Birth Networks Promoting Normal Birth

- **Birth Care Network of Louisville, KY**, hosts “Birth in the Bluegrass,” an annual event that brings consumers together with childbirth professionals.
- The **Albuquerque Birth Network** sponsors a successful birth and parenting book club at a local independent book store.
- **birthNETWORK of South Oakland, MI**, publishes “Birth & Beyond,” a Mother-Friendly Resource Guide for local consumers.
- **Birth Network of Florida** hosted a breastfeeding inservice for staff of a local obstetrician’s office in honor of World Breastfeeding Week.
- Members of the **Waco Birth Network** give a yearly talk about normal birth to a class of over 100 students at a nearby university.

For more information,
visit www.normalbirth.lamaze.org
and click on “Birth Network Stories” or contact
your local Birth Network.



Supporting Independent Birth Networks

*Community-based networks
promoting evidence-based
maternity care to improve
birth outcomes.*

www.normalbirth.lamaze.org