



Information Sheet (2024)

The Smooth Transitions™ Quality Improvement Program was originally conceived under the auspices of the Washington State Perinatal Collaborative as an initiative to **enhance the safety of hospital transfers from planned community-based births**. In 2009, the MD/LM Workgroup, a subcommittee of the WA State Department of Health Perinatal Advisory Committee, introduced the program to assist hospitals providing obstetrical services, and their local community midwives, in developing clear protocols to facilitate seamless transfers of care for gestational parents or newborns from the home or birth center setting when they need to access hospital services.

Since January 2018, Smooth Transitions has been under the umbrella of the Foundation for Health Care Quality (FHCQ), a neutral 501(c)3 organization in Seattle that houses several other quality improvement programs, including the Obstetrical Care Outcome Assessment Program (OB COAP). This move to the FHCQ re-energized and re-focused the program. Smooth Transitions now has more administrative support, a prominent web presence, CQIP status (which will allow for inter-professional protected case review), and a sophisticated level of data collection and analysis. Smooth Transitions is led by an enthusiastic, multidisciplinary Leadership Team that meets quarterly.

The **goals of the program** are to:

- **Improve *whole person safety** and efficiency of the transfer process through the establishment of system-wide protocols (*whole person safety* implies emotional, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual, and physical processes and outcomes)**
- **Collect and analyze transfer outcome data for the purpose of quality improvement**
- **Build greater collaboration between community midwives, EMS, and the hospital care team**
- **Enhance the patient experience of care when transfers occur**

Program Support and Engagement

Smooth Transitions has received financial and in-kind support from a number of stakeholder groups, including the Washington State Hospital Association, the Washington State Obstetric Association, the state affiliate of the American College of Nurse-Midwives, the Midwives' Association of Washington State, the Washington Alliance for Responsible Midwifery, and the OB Hospitalist Group. Smooth Transitions has also received grants from the American Institute for Research (AIR), The Skyline Foundation, The George Kaiser Family Foundation, and the Washington State Department of Health.

Nearly half of the obstetric hospitals throughout Washington state are actively participating in the program and more are being on-boarded every year. Additionally, representatives from Smooth Transitions have presented the model to various groups in over 25 other states.

How To Get Started

Groups interested in learning more about the Smooth Transitions™ QI Program should contact the Program Coordinator at smoothtransitions@qualityhealth.org to set up an informational meeting to answer questions, learn about the transfer landscape, and gauge interest and capacity for initiating the program. The Program Steps are described below and the Program Coordinator is available to provide ongoing consultation and support throughout the process. Please note, there is a fee structure for work and services that extends beyond initial consultation. Participants are evaluated annually to assess the program's efficacy and provide future direction. Participation grants the ability to engage in several multidisciplinary protected case review processes under the Department of Health's Coordinated Quality Improvement Program (CQIP).

Program Steps

1. Host a Smooth Transitions Presentation

The Smooth Transitions Program Coordinator sets up a presentation at your hospital. Beforehand, the Program Coordinator talks with hospital staff and community midwives about the current situation and issues.

2. Identify Clinician Champions

It is important to find a clinician champion for both the hospital and midwifery community. They will help organize meetings and communicate between the groups.

3. Develop Transfer Protocols and Tools

Work in small groups (facilitated by Smooth Transitions Program Coordinator and balanced between the hospital providers/nursing and community midwives) to co-create transfer protocols (gestational parent and neonatal-if applicable) and transfer tools. Drafts go out to the larger hospital and midwifery community for feedback before going live.

4. Hold Perinatal Transfer Committee (PTC) Meetings

Gather a group of obstetrical and pediatric providers, nursing staff, EMS personnel, doulas, and local community midwives, and form a perinatal transfer committee.

5. Meet Regularly/Interaction

The Perinatal Transfer Committee meets quarterly to provide updates, discuss any issues or concerns regarding transfers, and strategies about how to improve efficiency, safety, and patient experience. This can also be an opportunity to share CME, trainings, simulations, and develop needed resources based on what topics come up in the meetings.

6. Collect Data and Publish Research

Participating hospital providers and staff, community midwives, EMS, doulas, and transfer patients, will submit survey data to evaluate transfers and the efficacy of the program. Quantitative and qualitative analysis can be done for small scale improvement at the hospital level or statewide for research purposes and publication.