

Altarum's Critical Competencies in Maternal and Child Health



Altarum has a long history of work in Maternal and Child Health (MCH). Our multi-disciplinary teams conduct assessments, inform development of performance measures, provide tailored interdisciplinary training and technical assistance, offer continuing education credits, create national research agendas, and conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis. In addition to maternal and child health, we bring expertise in family planning and reproductive health.

Our work is grounded in the socio-ecological model, which helps us pinpoint and address the key factors that contribute to poor health outcomes, health disparities, and inequities. Our research goes beyond describing a problem—we develop and implement systems-based solutions using a health equity lens to strengthen services for MCH populations, especially for those most marginalized in our society.

Altarum's insights are designed for practical application and achieving measurable results. We have over 40 years of experience working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, including agencies and offices of the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), Office of Population Affairs, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, as well as with various state agencies, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and public foundations. Our critical competencies are listed in the box to the right. We have selected one project example to demonstrate each competency.

Critical Competencies

1. Thought Leadership and Innovation
2. Applied Research and Analytics
3. Innovative Virtual Assessment and Support
4. Health Communications and Messaging
5. Digital Strategy, Design, and Online Learning
6. Training, Workforce Development, and Technical Assistance
7. Accredited Continuing Medical Education Provider
8. Coalition and Partnership-Building
9. Monitoring and Evaluation

1. Thought Leadership and Innovation

MCH Workforce Development

For more than 20 years, Altarum has served as a thought leader and advising partner to HRSA's Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) on systems development, program improvement strategies, workforce development, and performance measures. In this role, we have helped the Bureau by facilitating collaborative planning processes, conducting quantitative and qualitative analysis, and providing training and technical assistance. We bring both the substantive and technical skills to support the mission and vision of MCHB.





2. Applied Research and Analytics

Maternity Care Measure

With a commitment to understanding the health and well-being of marginalized populations, Altarum examines health care delivery through careful analysis of high- and low-value clinical services. Altarum has developed a claims-based Maternity Care Measure that examines how often a mother gets an appropriate amount of high-value care. By reviewing claims data, we can see how often low and high-value procedures were used and how that impacted cost. This information is combined with qualitative research to provide a fuller picture of impact on health outcomes for mother and child.

3. Innovative Virtual Assessment and Support

Addressing Opioid Use Disorder in Pregnant Women and New Moms

As a phase one winner of this MCHB Grand Challenge, Altarum incorporated telehealth support services for opioid use disorder into the existing Pacify breastfeeding mobile application for pregnant women and new mothers. Focus group discussions revealed the stigma these women face when seeking help and the lack of resources available in rural areas. Altarum and Pacify adapted this innovative technology incorporating self-assessment questions and educational resources to help provide a pathway for support and recovery, to normalize the struggle to overcome addiction, to empathize with women in search for help, and to create community to fight isolation and shame.

4. Health Communications and Messaging

National Media Campaign to Promote Sexual Health Guide for Consumers

To increase the uptake of preventive sexual health services, Altarum launched two national media

campaigns – one aimed at a broad audience, and another for African American audiences and media outlets. The campaigns featured a call-to-action from the National Coalition for Sexual Health, a compelling media hook, highly credible spokespeople, and personalized outreach to key reporters.

5. Digital Strategy, Design, and Online Learning

Minnesota Women Infants and Children (WIC) Online Participant-Centered Skills Training

Altarum developed a series of accredited e-learning courses and webinars for Minnesota WIC's nutrition education staff focusing on Participant-Centered Skills. In collaboration with Minnesota WIC, Altarum developed the content and created five interactive e-learning courses featuring simple animations, human voice narration, video clips, and closed captioning. Learners were able to choose their own path through the course, moving to and from different scenarios, while advancing to a final learning check at the end.

6. Training, Workforce Development, and Technical Assistance

Focus on the Fourth

Altarum improved postpartum care and outcomes for low-income women in Texas by building the capacity of providers at Community Health Centers (CHCs) and WIC clinics to screen clients struggling with opioid use and provide education and referrals to treatment and recovery support services. We provided customized training and technical support to these WIC clinics and CHCs building upon their existing systems, infrastructure, and capacity to strengthen education, screening, counseling, and linkages to behavioral health services for postpartum women.



7. Accredited Continuing Medical Education Provider

Family Planning/Behavioral Health Provider Cross-Training

Reaching a growing number of people with both family planning needs and substance use disorders requires an interdisciplinary approach. Altarum is delivering interactive, virtual, and in-person training and technical assistance so that both sets of providers can engage more effectively with their clients. Our team is able to offer numerous continuing medical credits including improving professional practice and quality improvement (Part IV) Maintenance of Certification credits designed to help providers assess and improve the quality of care and processes that lead to improved health.

8. Coalition and Partnership-Building

National Coalition for Sexual Health

By nearly every measure, sexual health in the U.S. is poor, and traditional approaches to sexual health are often disease-focused, negative, and narrow in scope. With funding from the CDC, Altarum coordinates and leads a coalition to promote sexual health and wellness across the lifespan using a comprehensive, positive approach. The National Coalition of Sexual Health (NCSH) is comprised of over 150 national organizations, medical professional groups, government agencies, community health organizations, and advocacy groups, committed to advancing sexual health and improving the overall health of our nation.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Using Data to Advance Obstetric Care in the Military Health System

Altarum partnered with the Military Health System to examine the quality of their obstetric care. Our team examined the qualitative comments of patients who received obstetric care at military hospitals on topics such as hospital experience, staff care and communication, facilities, and hospital administration. We triangulated these data with information from quantitative satisfaction results and other published literature to develop recommendations for enhancements. We provided data-rich visualizations to help leadership better understand the data and use it to inform decision making. Military hospital leaders used our findings to enact improvements related to provider communication and facility amenities that would make patient visits more comfortable and convenient.

Learn more about our work and our people at Altarum.org and follow our latest work and insights on Twitter [@Altarum](https://twitter.com/Altarum)

For further information, please contact Altarum's Center for Women's Health:

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