

West Sub and obstetric care

Resilience Healthcare announced family medicine physicians and certified nurse midwives will no longer be able to deliver babies at West Suburban Medical Center (<https://www.wbez.org/health-medicine/2024/11/21/west-suburban-hospital-abruptly-cuts-ties-with-midwives-and-family-medicine-doctors>). Unequal access to obstetric care is a critical public health concern in Illinois, and this act will lead to hundreds of patients losing a safe and trusted birthing option on the West Side of Chicago, a community historically disenfranchised by the health-care system.

Family medicine physicians who deliver babies provide seamless, connected care for parents and infants before, during, and after delivery. Now this loss of access jeopardizes continuity of care in the “fourth” trimester, after the baby is born.

Family physicians provide prenatal and obstetric care across the country, in Chicago, and in the suburbs. Unequivocally, the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians (IAFP) and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) support family physicians providing pregnancy, delivery, and newborn care.

A cooperative and collaborative relationship among obstetricians, family physicians and nurse midwives is essential to deliver consistent, high-quality care to pregnant women. The IAFP and AAFP advocate that pregnancy, perinatal, and newborn care privileges should be based on the individual physician's training, experience, and demonstrated current competence, and not by specialty alone.

As a result of Resilience Healthcare's decision, at least 34 family medicine physicians will lose obstetrical privileges at West Suburban Medical Center. Approximately 500 patients are engaged in prenatal care with the affected family physicians and certified nurse midwives. Forty-three percent of those patients identify as Hispanic/Latino and 44% identify as Black. The majority live in the Hermosa and Austin neighborhoods, both designated as Medically Underserved Areas.

This decision will worsen disparities in safe birthing options in Chicago. In every community where safe and equitable delivery care is at risk, we will aggressively assist trained, experienced family physicians in securing and keeping their clinical credentials in pregnancy, perinatal, and newborn care.

Kate Rowland MD, FAAFP
Illinois Academy of Family Physicians