

# The State of American Childbirth

Pregnancy and childbirth are normal, healthy processes for the majority of women and babies

## Scope And Scale Of Maternity Care -- Each Year In The United States

- Over 4 million births annually
- 99% of births in hospitals
- Second most common reason for hospitalization
- Most common reason for the hospitalization of women
- Care for mothers and babies combined rank fourth 4<sup>th</sup> in hospital expenses
- 90% of births attended by surgeons
- Over 6 million obstetric procedures performed; most common category of surgical procedures
- Four of the eight most common surgical procedures performed in the United States are obstetric

Nearly all women giving birth in hospitals are subjected to some level of technological or medical intervention

## The Most Common Interventions Are:

- Over 30% of births are cesarean via major abdominal surgery - *Highest ever*
- Over 35% of labors medically induced
- Over 50% of labors artificially stimulated
- Over 65% of women denied drink
- Over 70% of women restrained in bed
- Over 85% of women denied food
- 80% of mothers given drugs for pain relief
- Nearly 90% of women attached to Electronic Fetal Monitor
- Vaginal Birth after Cesarean (VBAC) rate has fallen 55% since 1996 ~ access disappearing

What do we have to show for all this intervention?

## Outcomes In The United States:

- High infant mortality rate - Rose in 2002 for the first time since 1958; 27<sup>th</sup> in the world, twice that of most other developed countries
- Maternal mortality rate that has not improved in 20 years; 15<sup>th</sup> in the world
- Over 7% of infants have low birth weight; highest in 30 years
- Maternal morbidity rate of over 40%
- 12% of births preterm; highest in 20 years
- 30% of women with some symptoms of post-traumatic stress
- High rates of postpartum depression

Midwives are specialists in normal birth

Countries with better outcomes for mothers and babies and lower healthcare costs rely on midwives to attend most births; many support out-of-hospital births. When it comes to the best birth outcomes, the United States ranks 29<sup>th</sup> in the world. The Midwives Model of Care and Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative promote wellness, education, and individualized, woman-centered care.

Midwives are key to effective, affordable Mother-Friendly Care