



Abortion Service Quality Initiative

Abortion metrics matter

Millions of women worldwide need access to safe, high-quality abortion care. Recent estimates indicate that more than 73 million abortions are performed each year, with 97% of those performed in developing countries. Despite progress in many aspects of safe abortion provision, significant disparities remain in access to and quality of abortion services around the world. Abortions are safe with extremely low risk of death in settings where abortion is legal and clinical care is consistently high quality. However, in settings where abortion is restricted or care is limited, the risk of serious complications increases. Evidence indicates that 1 in 3 abortions are carried out in unsafe conditions, with most of these occurring in developing countries.

Womens' rights to access safe, effective abortion cannot be fully realized without addressing quality of care, particularly the ability of providers, policy makers, and regulators to document and assess quality according to a common, reliable, and evidence-based measure. While good practice documentation exists to guide clinical practice in abortion, currently, no consistent, valid, reliable method exists for routine assessment of quality in abortion care. This impedes both learning and improvement. Because women's overall experience of care impacts critical aspects of the process and outcomes such as adherence, follow-up decisions, and behavior change, a measure for quality of care must go beyond technical and safety indicators. Factors such as wait times, pain management and experience of pain, and treatment by staff and providers affect abortion clients' satisfaction and safety.

THE ABORTION SERVICE QUALITY INITIATIVE IS DEVELOPING A SET OF **STANDARDIZED, ACTIONABLE, SIMPLE, TIMELY, AND VALID METRICS TO MEASURE** AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF ABORTION SERVICE PROVISION USING A HUMAN RIGHTS AND CLIENT-CENTERED LENS.

These concerns have sparked a growing desire for a common suite of measures, that fully encompass the needs, preferences, and experiences of people seeking abortion, to evaluate the quality of abortion care. The increasing importance of pharmacy-provided, self-managed abortion in many countries adds urgency to the global need for a common way to measure quality.

TOWARD EFFECTIVE ABORTION SERVICE QUALITY ASSESSMENT

To address this need, Metrics for Management, Ibis Reproductive Health, and Ipas created the Abortion Service Quality (ASQ) Initiative, focused on developing, validating, and championing the widespread adoption of a common measure of abortion service quality which can be used to assess service provision within facilities as well as at out-of-facility locations. The ASQ Initiative results will enable governments, policy makers, and health providers to strengthen healthcare quality, and assist in assessing and supporting evidence-based interventions in abortion care.

Final ASQ Initiative results will be complete in July 2022.

ASQ Initiative progress updates are available at [ASQ-initiative.org](https://www.asq-initiative.org).

Contact M4M for additional information on abortion service quality metrics at communications@m4mgmt.org.

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3 Darney, B., Powell, B., Andersen, K., Baum, S., Blanchard, K., Gerds, C., et al. (May 7, 2018). Quality of care and abortion: beyond safety. *BMJ sexual & reproductive health*, 44(3), 159–160. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjshr-2018-200060>

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5 Darney, B., Powell, B., Andersen, K., Baum, S., Blanchard, K., Gerds, C., et al. (May 7, 2018). Quality of care and abortion: beyond safety. *BMJ sexual & reproductive health*, 44(3), 159–160. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjshr-2018-200060>

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