



PROPUBLICA



# Lost Mothers Event Toolkit

**YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO  
SPARKING COMMUNITY CONVERSATION  
AND CHANGE ON MATERNAL HEALTH**

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# Introduction

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## About the Series

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The investigative series [\*Lost Mothers\*](#), led by ProPublica reporters Nina Martin and Adriana Gallardo, along with NPR special correspondent Renee Montagne, takes an in-depth look at why the U.S. has the highest maternal death rate in the affluent world. Every year, 700 to 900 American women die from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes (with up to 60 percent of these deaths being preventable), and more than 50,000 women suffer life-threatening complications.

Reporting on factors that contribute to the problem—confusion over how to recognize and treat obstetric emergencies, disparities in care that put African-American women at significantly greater risk than white women, and a birthing culture that focuses on babies but often ignores their mothers—the series illuminates how the health care system can be improved, as well as the important role that families can serve in sharing their stories.

## Using This Toolkit

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This toolkit is designed to help you host an event that will foster local conversation and connection around the U.S. maternal mortality crisis. Exploring these issues in your own community is a powerful tool for raising awareness and sparking opportunities for change. The resources here provide everything you need to plan and prepare your event: videos, printable articles, discussion questions, customizable invitations and more.

If you're interested in hosting an event, first register by filling out this brief form to tell us about what you're planning: <http://propub.li/2AhTyiP>

**Our team is here to answer any questions along the way:**  
**[events@propublica.org](mailto:events@propublica.org)**

# Guidelines

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Through our *Lost Mothers* series, ProPublica seeks to catalyze a national dialogue on maternal mortality and morbidity in the U.S., and ways to improve maternal health. Part of achieving this goal involves fostering spaces where health professionals, impacted families and other stakeholders can connect with one another, share their stories and spur change. To ensure your event is aligned with ProPublica's mission and values, here are some guidelines.



## **We hope you'll abide by the following:**

- **Registration:** Before you host a ProPublica conversation in your local community, you should first register by filling out this brief form with information on the date, time and description of your proposed event: <http://propub.li/2AhTyiP>
- **Impartiality:** ProPublica produces its work in an independent, nonpartisan, manner. If your event involves advocacy, or support for a political/legislative agenda, you must distinguish our reporting as being independent from this activity. ProPublica branded materials are for education purposes only.
- **Branding & Positioning:** All print materials, invitations and web listings must include this phrase: "This is an independently organized event inspired by reporting from ProPublica, an award-winning nonprofit newsroom."
- **Funds:** You should not make money from the event, nor use your event to raise money for organizations other than ProPublica. However, you are not required to raise money through this event.
- **Payment:** Event organizers should not pay speakers, nor should anyone pay to speak at the event.
- **Sponsorship:** We welcome partnership with organizations in your community to cover costs or support the outcomes of your conversations. However, we prohibit financial sponsorship of ProPublica-branded events by any participant in the sector being covered at the event. If you wish to use the branded materials provided in this kit, therefore, organizations such as hospitals, midwifery practices, or pharmaceutical companies would be ineligible to provide financial support for your event. If you have any questions about a potential sponsor, feel free to contact us at [events@propublica.org](mailto:events@propublica.org).

# Getting Started

We're excited that you've decided to host an event around ProPublica's *Lost Mothers* series. This will be a unique way to raise awareness and create opportunities for reform, as well as to help members of your community take action in their own lives.

**1** Don't forget to [register here first!](#)

**2** Decide what type of event you want to host.

Whether you are interested in hosting a small, less structured event—a discussion group at home, for example—or a large public forum, feel free to use our materials in whichever way best suits you. While this kit is mostly tailored toward the community forum format, our guidelines will still help your event be a success.

## ProPublica/NPR/ Brooklyn Public Library Event Model

When ProPublica, in partnership with NPR and the Brooklyn Public Library, hosted an event based on our maternal health reporting, we adopted a **community forum model**.

We brought together a diverse group of experts—including doctors, doulas, midwives, expectant mothers, women who nearly died of childbirth, and family members who lost a loved one—to share advice and ask questions.

Structured as a panel, followed by audience-led discussion where others in attendance offered their perspectives, everyone in the room was invited to share their knowledge and connect with one another.

[Learn more about this event, and watch video here.](#)

Gregg Richards/ BPL Presents



## Setting Goals

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What do you want to accomplish with your event? Articulate which aspects of maternal health, and which target audiences, are most important to you.

These may include:

- Raising awareness in communities of color about racial disparities in your town's maternal mortality rate, and exploring the factors behind them.
- Convening different kinds of health providers (nurses, midwives, doulas, OB-GYNs, etc.) to discuss systemic problems and solutions from their unique vantage points.
- Educating expectant families on symptoms to look out for and ways to advocate for themselves with their providers.

Your goals are what drive your planning decisions. Everything you do should be designed to help you attain them.

## Collaborating with Community Partners

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There are groups and advocates in your community who also care about this issue to potentially work with, including:

- Maternal health organizations
- Hospital staff
- Parenting support groups
- Community centers
- Women's networking groups
- Doula and midwife collectives
- Reproductive justice community organizers
- Local health department officials

Make a list of local leaders and organizations you could potentially join forces with. Partnering with them will strengthen your efforts, from securing speakers and booking a venue, to promoting your event.



# Event Resources and Tools

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## Resources from the Lost Mothers Series

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Use any of these materials to create handouts for your attendees, or use them to help craft presentations.

## Articles

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[The Last Person You'd Expect to Die in Childbirth](#) (May 12, 2017)

[‘If You Hemorrhage, Don’t Clean Up’: Advice From Mothers Who Almost Died](#) (Aug. 3, 2017)

[Why Giving Birth is Safer in Britain Than in the U.S.](#) (Aug. 31, 2017)

[How Many American Women Die From Causes Related to Pregnancy or Childbirth? No One Knows](#) (Oct. 23, 2017)

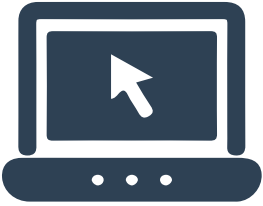
[Nothing Protects Black Women From Dying in Pregnancy and Childbirth](#) (Dec. 7, 2017)

[Black Women Disproportionately Suffer Complications of Pregnancy and Childbirth. Let’s Talk About It.](#) (Dec. 8, 2017)

[Severe Complications for Women During Childbirth Are Skyrocketing--and Could Often Be Prevented](#) (Dec. 22, 2017)

[How Hospitals Are Failing Black Mothers](#) (Dec. 27, 2017)





## Videos

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### **Lauren Bloomstein's story & Overview of Issue**

<https://www.facebook.com/propublica/videos/10155393693814445/>



### **The U.S. Medical System is Still Haunted by Slavery**

<https://youtu.be/IfYRzxeMdGs>



## Discussion Questions

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We encourage you to communicate what's most important to you around the issues, and feel free to use these discussion questions as a starting point for your community.



### **For Survivors and Impacted Families**

- **What was the hardest moment for you?**
- **What was the happiest moment for you?**
- **How do you manage the long-term effects of your experience?**
- **Do you think race affected your medical experience giving birth?**
- **What would you like doctors, nurses and regulators to know?**
- **What do you wish you had known then that you know now?**





## **For Health Professionals and Advocates**

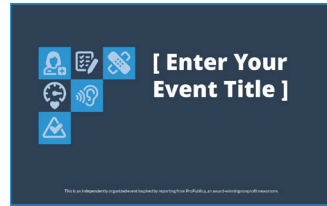
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- **How are you addressing the issues of maternal mortality and severe morbidity in your work?**
- **In a recent CDC report, 60 percent of the maternal deaths it analyzed were preventable. How did obstetric care come to lose sight of maternal health and ensuring basic measures to keep mothers safe?**
- **Nationally, African-American women are three to four times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy- or childbirth-related causes. What do you think is going on in hospitals and clinics?**
- **What factors contribute to the vast racial disparities in maternal mortality and severe morbidity? What can we do to eliminate them?**
- **What do you encourage women to look for when choosing a provider? What questions should they ask to ensure the best care?**
- **We know that self-advocacy is critically important. When people fear that something is going wrong during childbirth – and after childbirth – how can they get their providers to listen to them?**
- **What kinds of symptoms should women be paying attention to?**





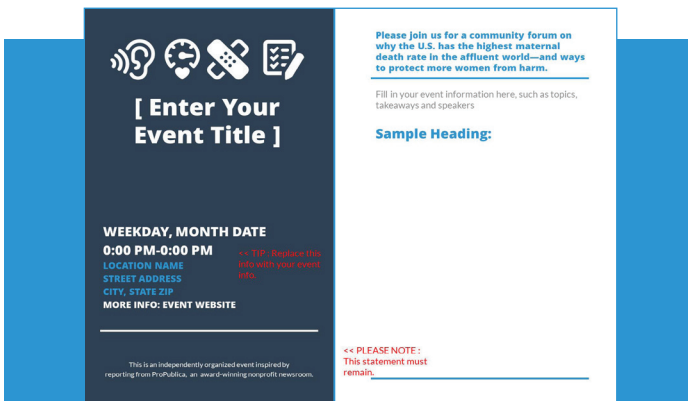
## Presentation Slides



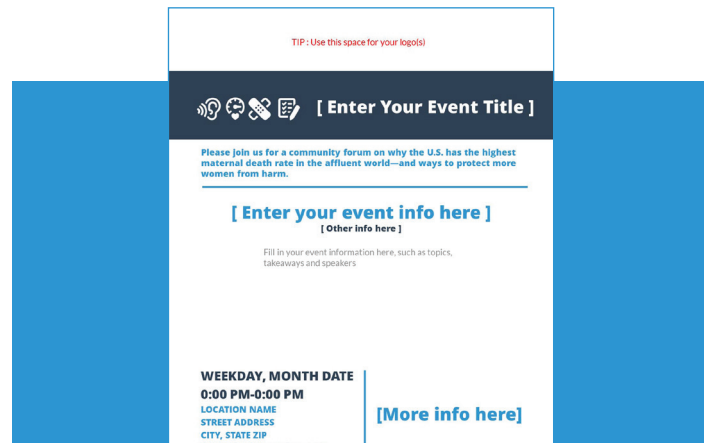
For a customizable backdrop, graphs and key bullet points, [click here](#).

## Promotional Tools

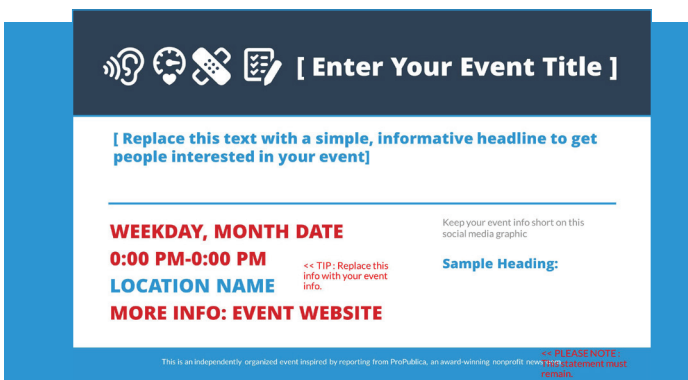
Use these customizable documents to spread the word about your event. These templates were created in PowerPoint, where you can add in your details. When you're ready to share or print, convert to PDF by going to File > Export, and clicking on "Create Adobe PDF."



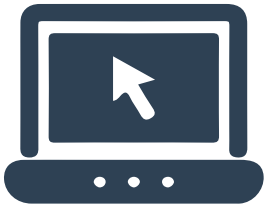
Customizable Email Invitation



Customizable Flyer



Customizable Social Media Graphic



## Sample Facebook Posts

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What can the health care system do to prevent more women from dying and nearly dying in pregnancy and childbirth?  
Join us on [DATE] at [TIME]. RSVP here: [LINK]

What underlying causes contribute to racial disparities in maternal mortality? What can we do to protect more black mothers from harm?  
Learn more on [DATE] at [LOCATION]. RSVP: [LINK]

Join us on [DATE] at [TIME] for insights on finding the best provider, strategies for self-advocacy, preparing for an emergency and more.  
RSVP: [LINK]

Inspired by @ProPublica's reporting on maternal mortality in the US, we've convened doctors, nurses, doulas, midwives and others for insights on protecting more women from harm. Join us on [DATE] at [TIME]:  
[LINK]



## Sample Twitter Posts

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We're convening the experts to give advice on maternal health & protecting more women from harm. Join us on [DATE]: [LINK]

What should expectant families look for in their care providers? Join us on [DATE] to learn this and more: [LINK]

Join us on [DATE] for a talk on racial disparities in maternal mortality, and how to protect more black mothers. RSVP here: [LINK]

Inspired by @ProPublica's reporting on US maternal mortality, we're continuing the convo w/ doctors, doulas & more. RSVP: [LINK]

# Tips for Event Planners

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## Finding a Location

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Finding a low-cost, or free, venue may be easier than you think. Here are some questions to consider when selecting a location.

- Will this place naturally draw an audience?
- Where is a convenient, community-friendly space where people congregate?
- When are your guests most likely to be available to attend, based on their schedules? What venues have available space for those times?
- What is the seating capacity? How many people do you estimate will attend?
- Can the venue accommodate your A/V, sound or other technical needs?
- Is the venue accessible by public transportation? Is parking easily available?
- Is there a fee to use this space?

## Ideas for Low-Cost or Free Event Spaces

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- » **Community college auditorium or lecture hall**
- » **School auditorium**
- » **Library**
- » **Donated space in an office building**
- » **Neighborhood recreation center**
- » **Community health center**
- » **Church, synagogue, temple or mosque**





## Selecting Speakers

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Here are some guiding principles to follow in your search for speakers:

- Choose people who are familiar with the issues and can create an environment for open discussion. You will probably want two to four speakers on a panel representing different types of expertise and perspectives. These voices may include:
  - Medical professionals (doctor, nurse, midwife, etc.)
  - Doulas and other care providers
  - Community organizers
  - Public officials
  - Impacted women or family members
- Be mindful of assembling panelists who reflect your community's diversity.
- When reaching out to survivors, or their families, make sure to keep the sensitive nature of the topic in mind. Know that some people will not be comfortable speaking publicly about their experience.
- Inform each panelist about the other speakers you've invited.
- Once you have gotten commitments from speakers, help them prepare by providing a draft of the agenda, your desired outcomes and other relevant information.

Gregg Richards/ BPL Presents





Gregg Richards/ BPL Presents

## Promoting Your Event

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It's essential to promote the event within your community. Here are ways to boost turnout.

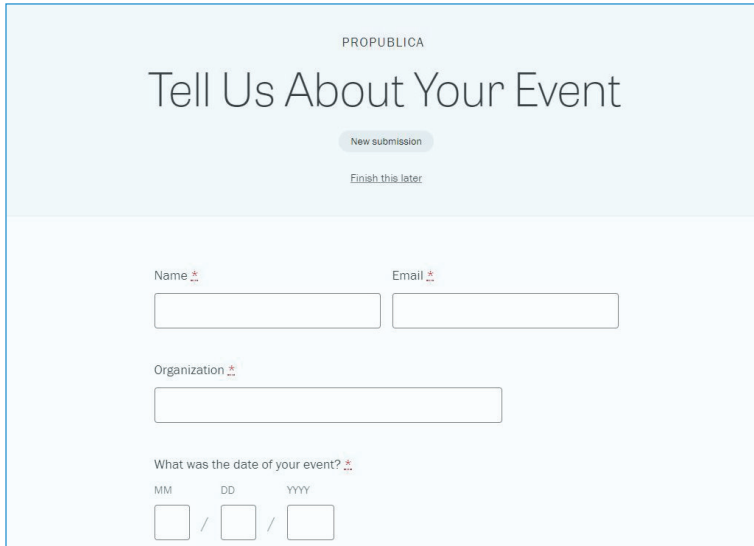
- **One of your best strategies will be to personally invite people.** Make an invitation list of local organizations, businesses and individuals that would have an affinity for the subject matter, and send them direct emails. For customizable email invitations, see page 9.
- **Place flyers on bulletin boards at community centers, coffee shops, grocery stores and other businesses.** Also consider handing out flyers at community events. For a customizable flyer, see page 9.
- **Submit announcements to your local media's community and events calendars.** Many media sites, especially hyperlocal news sites, let you post events. Find these by searching for "event calendars" in your city.
- **Reach out to press.** Contact writers who cover local events at newspapers, alt-weeklies, online magazines and blogs -- you can find them by searching for coverage of similar community events -- and send them an invite or offer of a relevant article (i.e., an interview with one of the speakers).
- **Create an event on Facebook** and promote it on your organization's page. Find a customizable event graphic to share on Facebook and Twitter on page 9.
- **Since tweets can be missed as they flow through your audience's Twitter feeds, you should tweet about your event multiple times.** Encourage your partners and speakers to tweet too, and make it easy for them by sending pre-written tweets. See examples on page 10.



# After Your Event

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Share your event recap with us by completing this form. We want to hear how it went, and which materials in the toolkit were most helpful.



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## Tell Us About Your Event

New submission

Finish this later

Name \*

Email \*

Organization \*

What was the date of your event? \*

MM / DD / YYYY

**Tell Us About Your Event:**

<http://propub.li/2krbuAH>

## Stay Connected

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### Thank you for using this toolkit!

Here are a few ways you can stay in touch with ProPublica and our work.

### CONTACT US

If you have additional questions or comments, email [events@propublica.org](mailto:events@propublica.org).

### FOLLOW PROPUBLICA



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