



## Campaign to End Shackling of People in Labor, Delivery and Postpartum Recovery

Right now in North Carolina, people from correctional institutions who are laboring are being restrained – actually shackled to the table. This is not just cruel and inhumane, it is unsafe. At least two people in recent weeks were restrained throughout their laboring process at a local facility. This was in spite of the concerns of medical staff and the fact that it was in violation of the North Carolina Department of Public Safety's written policies, which prohibits the use of shackling during delivery.

### SHACKLING - HARMFUL AND INHUMANE

- Restraints can interfere with the birthing process where it is important for people to be able to move to help labor progress and alleviate pain.
- Shackling makes it more difficult to treat people with a serious complication who may need emergency treatment.
- There are also negative health consequences of using restraints postpartum. It inhibits bonding and impedes the ability to nurse, which provides critical nutrients and antibodies and helps with postpartum healing.

Shackling is defined as "using any physical restraint of mechanical device to control the movement of a prisoner's body or limbs, including handcuffs, leg shackles, and belly chains". It is dangerous and inhumane.

The North Carolina state policy on shackling needs to be brought in line with the best practices and recommendations of health professionals and training should be provided to ensure that it is implemented consistently.

### MAKING THE CASE FOR CHANGE

- ✓ Shackling is harmful. It is cruel and it is not justified for the interest of the general public and certainly not for the patient or their child.
- ✓ The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) stated that shackling interferes with the ability of physicians to safely practice medicine and is "demeaning and unnecessary" and the American Public Health Association recommends that "[w]omen must never be shackled."
- ✓ The courts, the Constitution and both domestic and international law affirm that shackling an individual during labor should not be allowed. Several federal courts have expressly condemned this practice.
- ✓ Human rights advocates consider the routine use of shackles and other restraints on pregnant people who are incarcerated when not medically advisable, a cruel, inhuman and degrading form of treatment in violation of both the UN Convention against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which the USA has ratified.

Shackling a person during labor, delivery and postpartum healing serves no public benefit. It does risk harmful impacts on women and their children. It is wrong and it is just plain bad health policy.

**Together, we can work to change North Carolina's shackling policy as a first step towards ensuring the health and dignity of people who are incarcerated and reforming a system that causes harm.**

Ignoring the concerns of medical staff and the basic humanity of women who are incarcerated is literally putting women's lives at risk. More than 20 states have passed laws that prohibit the shackling of women in childbirth and hospitals and prisons throughout the country have made it clear that this practice should be halted.

Shackling interferes with the ability to properly treat and care for people and to respond to crisis situations. With women of color overrepresented in the prison system, this issue falls hardest on women who already struggle with health disparities and higher rates of pregnancy complications and material mortality.



Make your voice heard in support of changing this cruel policy – sign the #endshacklingNC petition:  
<http://bitly.com/endshacklingNCpetition>.

## **#EndShacklingNC – Coalition**

### **Partners:**

- ✓ ACLU NC
- ✓ NARAL Pro-Choice NC
- ✓ NC Black Women's Roundtable
- ✓ El Pueblo
- ✓ All of Us None NC
- ✓ SpiritHouse
- ✓ YWCA Greensboro
- ✓ Ignite NC
- ✓ Carolina Abortion Fund
- ✓ MomsRising
- ✓ Charlotte Uprising
- ✓ Forward Justice
- ✓ Be Connected Durham
- ✓ Action NC
- ✓ Jasmine Getrow-Moore
- ✓ Southern Documentary Fund

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