The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, N.J. embarked on the initiative to reduce elective deliveries prior to 39 weeks gestation early in 2009 when a number of opportunities presented themselves:

- NJHA Perinatal Collaborative: Began March 2009
- ACOG Survey: Provided a voluntary survey in June 2009
- Patient Safety Culture Survey: Conducted July 2009
- Leapfrog Survey: Questions regarding elective deliveries under 39 weeks gestation

The collective results from the involvement with these initiatives lead the department to develop these goals:

- The need to overcome communication barriers identified between the nurses in Labor and Delivery and the obstetricians.
- Improve communication and utilize data more effectively to drive practice change by developing a multi-disciplinary workgroup.
- Develop a common language to express escalating concerns.
- Reduce elective deliveries under 39 week gestation.

The methods employed to accomplish the department goals included:

- Review Course, Reading a Fetal Monitoring Strip. Physicians and RNs learning together.
- Build a common language and format for escalation of concerns:
  - Category 1: Reassurance. Category 2: Possible Concern/Plan Ahead. Category 3: Deliver now!
- Develop a Perinatal Committee with membership consisting of: RN, OB, Neonatology, Anesthesia, Maternal-Fetal Medicine, Quality Assurance.

The early work of the Perinatal Committee focused on reducing elective deliveries by:

- Labor & Delivery schedulers go through the department guidelines with the OB office.
- If the guidelines are not met, the scheduled delivery is challenged.
- Chain of command provides support.
- Director of OB is the ultimate decision maker.

The result was a drop in elective deliveries less than 39 weeks from 31.2% to 8% through 2009 and 2010. In 2011 the percentage of elective deliveries began to climb and OB department’s investigation revealed:

- Lack of OB commitment to the 39 week guideline allowed drift.
- Known challenges in the accuracy of the due date.
- Questioned the difference in outcome if delivery was 1-2 days short of 39 weeks.

In the third quarter of 2011 the Perinatal Committee made the commitment to hold to the full 39 week gestation cut off. The results over time are a depiction of this work.