



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 6, 2024

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Shapiro Administration Visits Delaware County Birth Center to Highlight Expanded Action to Improve Maternal Health

Governor Josh Shapiro's 2024-25 budget proposal invests an additional \$2.6 million to address and prevent maternal mortality – especially among Black mothers.

Bryn Mawr, PA – Today, **Acting Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen** and **Secretary of Human Services Dr. Val Arkoosh** toured Lifecycle WomanCare in Bryn Mawr to meet with representatives from all five of Pennsylvania's stand-alone birthing centers and to highlight the Shapiro Administration's work to improve maternal health and care for mothers and children, especially among people of color.

Maternal health is a national concern, with the rate of pregnancy-associated deaths and serious medical conditions during delivery on the rise in recent years. In 2020, [83 pregnancy-associated deaths per 100,000](#) live births occurred in Pennsylvania. Complications during labor and delivery are also a concern in Pennsylvania, with [89 hospitalizations per 10,000 deliveries taking place between 2016-2022](#). Black women are nearly two times more likely to die or experience unexpected complications during pregnancy or in the first year after pregnancy, or have a serious health condition during delivery.

Mental health conditions, which include drug-related overdose deaths, were the leading cause of pregnancy-related deaths in 2020, demonstrating the need for more behavioral health care services for pregnant and postpartum women.

"As a practicing pediatrician, I saw the interconnectedness of maternal, child, and family health and wellness every day. Every death of a new mother impacts their entire community and this continues to disproportionately impact Black mothers in Pennsylvania and across the country," said **Acting Secretary of Health Dr. Bogen**. "We must do everything we can to ensure that pregnancy and postpartum are as safe and healthy as possible for all women and their families; that's why the Shapiro-Davis Administration is committed to tackling maternal health issues and investing in solutions to help women across the Commonwealth."

To improve maternal health in Pennsylvania, the Department of Health (DOH) uses current funding to support organizations and local coalitions to implement [Maternal Mortality Review Committee \(MMRC\) recommendations](#), focusing on better coordination of physical and behavioral health care and social services. The DOH aims to support programs that specifically address Black maternal health so that investments are made to eliminate the unacceptable disparities in maternal health outcomes.

In the 2023-2024 budget, Governor Josh Shapiro secured **\$2.3 million** to implement recommendations for preventing maternal mortality. The [2024-25 proposed budget](#) doubles down on that work by investing an additional **\$2.6 million** to address and prevent maternal mortality, especially among Black mothers.

In April, the DOH [began accepting applications for \\$1.8 million](#) in grants for community-based organizations to develop and lead regional coalitions to select and implement recommendations from the [2024 Pennsylvania Maternal Mortality Review Committee report](#) to improve maternal health locally. Applications were accepted through April 30, 2024.

“As an obstetric anesthesiologist, I’ve seen first-hand the necessity of holistic care and support networks that help mothers and their newborns through this consequential time. The Shapiro-Davis Administration is committed to working with maternal health providers, advocates, and people with lived experience to help ease barriers to care so all Pennsylvanians can get the care they need,” said **Secretary of Human Services Dr. Val Arkoosh**. “This is how we shift the unacceptable trends in maternal morbidity and mortality to save lives and give mothers and their newborns the support and optimistic future they deserve.”

Additional maternal health achievements include launching the new Pennsylvania Department of Health’s Division of Maternal Health, which supports the administration of the [Maternal Mortality Review Committee](#).

In October 2023, Governor Shapiro [signed](#) Senator Judy Schwank’s Senate Bill 262 into law to ensure improved access to timely data on maternal health and maternal mortality in Pennsylvania, allowing researchers, doctors, and policymakers to make more informed decisions about medical care for moms and families. SB 262 amended the [Maternal Mortality Review Act](#) to require the Department of Health to annually publish severe maternal morbidity data using hospital discharge data obtained from the [PA Health Care Cost Containment Council \(PHC4\)](#) to protect women’s health and deliver more transparency into the causes of maternal mortality, especially among Black mothers who often have the highest mortality rates.

Since 1978, Lifecycle WomanCare has provided empowering midwifery-based gynecological and birth-oriented health care. It was the first licensed birth center in Pennsylvania and is one of the oldest continually operating birth centers in the United States.

Four other stand-alone birthing centers are located in Pittsburgh (Midwife Center for Birth and Women’s Health), Reading (Midwife Center for Women’s Wellness), Lancaster County (Birth Care and Family Health Services), and Berks County (Lebanon Valley Birth Center).

Editor’s Note: Video downloads and photos from the news conference are available on PAcast.

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