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Shapiro Administration Kicks Off Strategic Planning Process to Improve Maternal Health Care and Address Maternal Mortality, Seeks Community Input This Fall

Maternal health strategic plan builds on the momentum of Governor Shapiro securing a \$2.6 million increase in the 2024-25 bipartisan budget to prevent maternal mortality

Harrisburg, PA –Today, leadership from the Pennsylvania **Departments of Human Services (DHS)**, **Health (DOH)**, **Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP)**, and the Pennsylvania **Insurance Department (PID)** met with health care providers and doulas to kick off development of the Commonwealth’s maternal health strategic plan, which will address high rates of maternal mortality, especially among Black women, and ensure pregnant women in Pennsylvania get the prenatal and postpartum care they need to live healthy lives for both themselves and their children.

Since taking office, **Governor Josh Shapiro** has prioritized addressing maternal health disparities in access to quality health care and secured a \$2.6 million increase in the 2024-25 budget for maternal mortality prevention, managed through the Department of Health.

Earlier this year, DHS [expanded access to doulas for Medicaid recipients](#). Doula services have been found to ease the pregnancy and labor process and improve birth outcomes for both mother and child. This change allows certified doulas to enroll as Medicaid providers and enables Medicaid managed care organizations to enter into network agreements with them, allowing them to bill directly for services offered through pregnancy and postpartum.

“Pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum periods are exciting but often stressful times for a new parent. Unfortunately, for too many women – and Black women especially– having a child can be potentially life-threatening when they do not receive high-quality, accessible, and equitable care,” said **Human Services Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh**. “We must do more to address the maternal mortality crisis in Pennsylvania, and I am excited to work with my agency colleagues and our community partners on this maternal health strategic plan. The Commonwealth’s plan will outline some of the most urgent issues facing pregnant women and will provide tangible steps that we can achieve to help moms, parents, and their families thrive.”

Today’s meeting convened subject matter experts from the Shapiro Administration’s health agencies, representatives from the Governor’s Affinity Commissions, and

leadership from other state agencies such as the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. The goal of this diverse group was to represent their audiences' unique needs with respect to maternal health and to develop collaborative, actionable strategies for the plan.

“We are working together to ensure that pregnancy and postpartum are as safe and healthy as possible for all women and their families,” said **Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen**. “We will continue to listen to and learn from Pennsylvanians involved in every facet of maternal health. We are identifying opportunities to act to improve childbirth outcomes so families can thrive.”

The maternal health strategic plan will include priorities centering on equity and diversity, with a focus on increasing access to high-quality care, expanding and diversifying the maternal health care workforce, and addressing behavioral health and substance use disorder services and supports.

“The Shapiro Administration understands that substance use disorder is a family illness. Developing a much-needed maternal health strategic plan will help to ensure that when mother and baby are impacted by a substance use disorder, they are getting the care they need,” said **DDAP Deputy Secretary Kelly Primus**. “DDAP is proud to partner with our sister agencies in a shared commitment to reducing maternal mortality, improving care for pregnant and postpartum women, and stopping the stigma attached to reaching out for help.”

DHS, DOH, DDAP, and PID will launch an online survey and host community events throughout Pennsylvania in September and October to help gather input from Pennsylvanians with lived experience in maternal health. The survey and events will help the departments inform and expand the planned strategies to improve maternal health outcomes across the state.

“We are monitoring coverage for services such as doula care, surrogacy benefits and human breast milk storage, and see opportunities to expand coverage for these services in our regulated insurance markets,” said **Pennsylvania Insurance Commissioner Michael Humphreys**. “Now is the time to have these conversations and partner with insurers to determine how to bring these important services to all Pennsylvanians.”

More information on maternal-child health programs available across Pennsylvania is available on [DHS' website](#).

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Election Day
Nov. 5, 2024



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