



Pennsylvania
Department of Health



Pennsylvania
Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs



Pennsylvania
Department of Human Services

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Getting Public Health Done: Shapiro Administration Invests \$3.6 Million to Develop Regional Maternal Health Coalitions, Improve Care for Mothers and Babies

Hershey, PA – Shapiro Administration officials from the **Departments of Health (DOH), Human Services (DHS), and Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP)** visited Penn State Health Children's Hospital in Hershey this afternoon to highlight efforts to improve care for pregnant women and babies through local maternal health coalitions.

Penn State Health Children's Hospital was one of four coalitions that received funding. With this new investment, coalitions will collect and analyze data in their areas to determine what local factors are contributing to maternal mortality and morbidity, and to ultimately improve healthcare services for women and babies in their respective regions.

"One of the best ways to improve the health of mothers and babies is to lean into local organizations who know their community and are doing the 'boots on the ground' work every day," said **Health Secretary Dr. Debra Bogen**. "Providing financial resources to these maternal health coalitions supports their work to develop locally responsive and effective strategies to help Pennsylvania's mothers, babies, and families thrive."

The Shapiro Administration [funded the creation of four regional maternal health coalitions](#) to support local organizations that will implement recommendations from the [2024 Pennsylvania Maternal Mortality Review Committee \(MMRC\) report](#) to improve health outcomes for mothers and babies.

Four regional maternal health coalitions received funding:

- Penn State University (South Central Pennsylvania),
- Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania, Inc. (Central Pennsylvania),
- Maternal and Family Health Services, Inc. (Northeast Pennsylvania), and
- Maternity Care Coalition (Southeast Pennsylvania).

Each coalition will receive \$300,000 annually through June 2027, with the possibility of an additional two-year renewal.

“The Shapiro Administration understands that substance use disorder is a family illness,” said **DDAP Secretary Dr. Latika Davis-Jones**. “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.”

“The United States has the highest maternal mortality rate compared to other nations with large economies, and rates of maternal mortality among individual racial and ethnic groups in this country exceed those of entire nations – with the vast majority of deaths being preventable,” said **DHS Special Advisor Sara Goulet**. “We must do better for mothers and children. The Shapiro Administration is committed to improving systems of care and support in Pennsylvania to shift this trend, and investments that allow partners doing this work every day to expand their reach will help us get mothers and children the care they need.”

“Our coalition is committed to being a driving force for positive change in maternal health,” said **Assistant Professor of Public Health Sciences at Penn State College of Medicine Dr. Kristin Sznajder**. “By connecting academic research, clinical care and community-based solutions, we are creating a model for improving maternal health equity here in Central Pennsylvania”

Since taking office, **Governor Josh Shapiro** has charged his Administration with finding ways to improve the health of the Commonwealth’s mothers and babies. The [Governor’s 2024-2025 bipartisan budget](#) secured a \$2.6 million increase for work to address and prevent maternal mortality, especially among Black mothers who are disproportionately affected.

The Administration has prioritized using data and recommendations from the MMRC, feedback from a statewide survey, and regional listening sessions to develop a multi-agency [Maternal Health Strategic Plan](#). The Administration has also championed the [expanded use of doulas in the Medicaid program](#), as doulas have been found to ease the pregnancy and labor process and improve birth outcomes for both mother and child.

Maternal mortality is a concern nationally, with the rate of pregnancy-associated deaths on the rise in recent years. [In Pennsylvania in 2020, there were 83 pregnancy-associated deaths per 100,000 live births](#); 107 Pennsylvanians lost their lives during pregnancy, delivery, or within one year postpartum.

The Shapiro Administration also established a Division of Maternal Health Services within DOH to support the administration of the MMRC, regional maternal health coalitions announced last year and other efforts to improve the health of mothers and babies.

Editor's Note: Video downloads and photos from the news conference are available on [PAcast](#).

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