

Collective Pennsylvania Perinatal Health Plan Released on Maternal Health Awareness Day

In recognition of Maternal Health Awareness Day, Philadelphia Health Partnership contributed to a statewide collective plan to improve maternal and perinatal health and reduce racial/ethnic disparities in Pennsylvania. In the Commonwealth, pregnancy-associated mortality rates are two times greater for non-Hispanic Blacks than non-Hispanic whites. The plan includes recommendations that the State Administration could achieve in a 12-month period and describes how stakeholders can support the priorities.

In November 2023, over 25 maternal health organizations and groups across Pennsylvania worked together to develop a prioritized list of recommendations for private and public stakeholders to advance in 2024. Over the past two months, these organizations met several times and completed surveys to understand and uplift each other's existing work and maternal and perinatal health policy ideas.

The resulting collective plan focuses on the following recommendations from group members:

- Establish a Perinatal Behavioral Health Access Program to provide consultation and expertise to providers on how to identify and care for women and other birthing people with mental health or substance use-related needs.
- Reimburse Doulas who provide emotional, physical, and informational support to women and other birthing people.
- Reimburse Community Health Workers who serve the communities in which they reside or communities with whom they share ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, or life experiences to improve health outcomes.
- Build a diverse, culturally appropriate perinatal health workforce.
- Increase enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) that provides nutrition services, breastfeeding support, health care and social service referrals, and healthy foods.
- Support educational campaigns with trusted community partners about maternal health and the available services and supports in the community.

The collective plan builds on past and recent achievements in Pennsylvania, including the Pennsylvania Maternal Mortality Review Committee, the Pennsylvania Perinatal Quality Collaborative, home visiting requirements and a value-based payment model for maternity care in the Medicaid managed care program, surveillance of severe maternal morbidity, a Maternal and Child Health Fund initiative, increases in WIC enrollment, and new policies for Doulas and Community Health Workers.

“Collaboration between government, health and social service providers, community-based advocates, and philanthropy is essential to advancing equity in maternal and perinatal health,” says Philadelphia Health Partnership Executive Director Ann Marie Healy. “We look forward to working with our partners and the Shapiro Administration to advance this collective plan to promote positive birth outcomes and set children and families on the pathway to thrive.”

Read the collective plan: <https://shorturl.at/ftCGL>