

# Maternal Mortality in Illinois

## What is Maternal Mortality?

- Death of a woman while pregnant or within one year of pregnancy from any cause.
- **Pregnancy-Related Death** -- Death of a woman while pregnant to within one year of pregnancy from a cause related to pregnancy.

## Illinois Maternal Mortality Review Committees

- Identify cause of death and if the death was pregnancy-related and preventable.
- Determine factors and create recommendations to prevent future deaths.

An average of **88 women** die each year while pregnant or within one year of pregnancy.

About **half** were related to pregnancy and **91%** were preventable.



**Black women have the highest risk of pregnancy-related death.**

**2X**

Black women are about **two times** as likely to die from a pregnancy-related condition as White women.

Pregnancy-related deaths **increased by 40%** from 2015-2017 to 2018-2020.

Black women were more likely to die from pregnancy-related **medical** conditions.



**Substance use disorder** was the leading cause of pregnancy-related deaths.



About 1 in 3 pregnancy-related deaths occurred more than **two months after pregnancy**.



The majority of deaths had a hospital emergency department visit, with the highest percentage in **rural counties**.



**Discrimination** was present in 2 of 5 deaths and more likely to be a contributing factor to deaths among Black women.



High **poverty** counties had higher rates of pregnancy-related deaths than low poverty counties.



For more information, contact: [DPH.MCH@illinois.gov](mailto:DPH.MCH@illinois.gov)

# Improving Maternal Health in Illinois

## Examples of Key Maternal Mortality Reviews Committee Recommendations

- Providers should know and follow best practices for high-quality maternal health care.
- Hospitals should create protocols and practices to identify and to address social determinants of health.
- Hospitals should develop standardized protocols and policies to assure the delivery and implementation of high-quality maternal mental health and substance use care.
- Community-based organizations should partner with clinical systems to ensure providers know about available local social services and case management programs for pregnant and postpartum people.
- State agencies should implement plans of safe care for infants exposed to substances during pregnancy.
- Insurance plans should educate providers and the public about case management and support services.

## Key State Initiatives to Improve Maternal Health

- Illinois was the first state to extend full Medicaid benefits through 12 months postpartum.
- Medicaid reimburses for two postpartum visits – one within 0-3 weeks postpartum and one within 4-12 weeks postpartum.
- Medicaid established a new eligibility category to cover comprehensive family planning services for people not otherwise eligible for full Medicaid benefits.
- Medicaid is in the process of developing policies that will add doulas, evidence-based home visiting programs, and certified professional midwives as new provider types and covered services.
- The Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative launched a statewide birth equity initiative in June 2021 that aims to support birth hospital capacity to facilitate systems and to change culture to achieve birth equity.
- Illinois maintains a perinatal depression hotline through NorthShore University Health System (866-364-6667).
- Illinois maintains a 24/7 Illinois Helpline for assisting the public with finding substance use treatment and recovery services (833-234-6343), and the hotline launched the **MARNow** program to provide medication directly to residents seeking opioid use disorder treatment.

## More Information and Resources

*Illinois Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Report*

[dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/life-stages-populations/maternal-child-family-health-services/maternal-health/mmmr](https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/life-stages-populations/maternal-child-family-health-services/maternal-health/mmmr)

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Resource lists for women and their families are available in Appendix A of the report.

Resource lists for health care providers are available in Appendix B of the report.

## Data Sources and Methodology

Using a variety of data sources, the Illinois Department of Public Health identifies all deaths of women while pregnant or within one year of pregnancy (pregnancy-associated deaths). The two Maternal Mortality Review Committees reviewed 263 maternal deaths that occurred during 2018-2020 to develop the recommendations in the Illinois Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Report.



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