



# Maternal Mortality in Illinois

## What is Maternal Mortality?

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

An average of **75 women** die each year while pregnant or within one year of pregnancy.

That is  
**1 death**  
every 5 days

| calendar |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| SUN      | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
| X        |     |     |     |     | X   |     |
|          | X   |     | X   |     |     | X   |
|          |     |     |     | X   |     |     |
|          |     | X   |     |     |     |     |

## The Illinois Department of Public Health supports two Maternal Mortality Review Committees, which:

- Identify cause of death
- Determine if the death was pregnancy-related
- Determine if the death was preventable
- Develop recommendations to prevent deaths

More than **4 out of 5** pregnancy-related deaths were preventable.



About **1 in 3** pregnancy-associated deaths were pregnancy-related.



## Black women are most likely to die from pregnancy-related causes.

**3X**

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

**Mental health conditions**, including substance use disorder, were the leading cause of pregnancy-related deaths.



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



## Timing among pregnancy-related deaths



1 in 3 women died **while pregnant**



1 in 3 women died during the **first 2 months postpartum**



1 in 3 women died **2 or more months postpartum**



White women were more likely to die from pregnancy-related **mental health** conditions.

# Improving Maternal Health in Illinois

## Examples of Key Maternal Mortality Reviews Committee Recommendations

- Health insurance plans should reimburse for telehealth.
- The state should expand home visiting programs.
- Hospitals should provide training and resources to staff on racism, implicit bias, and stigma.
- Hospitals should establish policies to ensure appropriate treatment of women with substance use disorders and support opioid overdose prevention.
- Providers should ensure all women are discharged from the hospital with an early postpartum visit within three weeks of pregnancy.
- Providers should ensure women are connected to mental health services.
- Community-based organizations should educate women on the importance of getting prenatal care.
- All women should have an annual well-woman visit.

## Ongoing Efforts to Improve Maternal Health

### *Current initiatives to improve maternal health in Illinois*

- Illinois was the first state to extend continuous eligibility for full Medicaid benefits from 60 days to 12 months postpartum.
- The Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative is planning a Birth Equity Initiative for birthing hospitals to address bias, racism, and social factors influencing maternal health.
- IDPH is funding local organizations to increase the number of women receiving well-woman exams.
- IDPH is expanding funding and increasing awareness of the state perinatal depression MOMS hotline.
- The Illinois Department of Human Services is piloting the Illinois Families in Recovery program for pregnant and postpartum women with substance use disorders in central Illinois.
- IDPH will continue to support the Maternal Mortality Review Committees and will use new data tools to look at social and community factors influencing maternal health.

## More Information and Resources

*Illinois Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Report* is available here:

[www.dph.illinois.gov/mmmr](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/mmmr)



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 129 maternal deaths that occurred during 2016-2017 to develop the recommendations in the report.

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

