

BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH IN DELAWARE

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Maternal and infant mortality rates are consistently higher for Black women and infants compared to White populations. Nationally, “Black women are three to four times more likely to experience a pregnancy related death than White women”.[1] In Delaware, “more than twice as many Black infants in Delaware die before their first birthday than White infants.”[2] For the City of Wilmington, the Black infant mortality rate is three times that of White infants throughout the state.[3] Between the years of 2011 and 2018, one out of every four women who gave birth in Delaware were Black women, however “they made up 50 percent of the mothers who died.”[4]

WHAT IS MATERNAL MORTALITY?

According to the state of Delaware’s Child Death Review Commission, maternal mortality is the number of maternal deaths while pregnant or within one year of the end of pregnancy per 100,000 live births.[5] In Delaware, the maternal mortality rate for Black women is more than twice the rate for white women but 53% of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable.[6] Research also shows that nationally, Black women suffer from life-threatening pregnancy complications twice as often as white women.[7]

WHAT IS INFANT MORTALITY?

Infant mortality is defined as the number of infant deaths before reaching 1 year of age per 1,000 live births.[8] Infant mortality causes include birth defects, preterm delivery, low birth weight, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), and maternal pregnancy complications. The state of Delaware recognizes that “access to health insurance is a critical component of assuring healthy birth outcomes for women and children. A lack of health insurance often means late or no entry into prenatal care for women, which can lead to a host of pregnancy complications and delayed diagnosis of treatable conditions.”[9] Low-income Black women face a greater risk of being uninsured and in Delaware 11% of Black women of child-bearing age do not have health insurance.[10] Additionally, 20% of Black women in Delaware live in a state of poverty, compared to 9% of White women.[11] According to the Center for Reproductive Rights, “Higher poverty rates are associated with higher rates of maternal mortality for all women.”[12] This creates a gap in health coverage which places Black women at a great risk of experiencing a pregnancy-related death or infant mortality.[13] The National Partnership for Women and Families shares that, “the chronic stress of poverty and racism has been shown to have a deleterious effect on health outcomes and is linked to persistent maternal health disparities.”[14]

The data on infant mortality rates in Delaware comparing Medicaid insurance to private insurance indicates that White infant mortality is almost cut in half when a mother obtains private insurance. However, Black infant mortality increases when mothers obtain private insurance. The Center for American Progress emphasizes that “even with health insurance, accessing timely, culturally appropriate, quality care can be difficult.”[15] Although the data shows an improvement in White infant mortality, this is an indicator for Black mothers’ maternal care needs are underserved in the medical field.

MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE DELAWARE

BLACK	36.3
WHITE	14.8
HISPANIC	11.8

Data source: America's Health Rankings

PRE, DURING, & POST PREGNANCY WELLNESS

- 59% of Pregnant Black women had one or more chronic conditions
- 24% of Pregnant Black women had preterm labor
- 17% of Pregnant Black women experienced postpartum depression

Data source: DE Health & Social Services PRAMS Survey

INFANT MORTALITY RATE IN DELAWARE

BLACK	12.6
WHITE	4.8
HISPANIC	6.3

Data source: America's Health Rankings

INFANT MORTALITY RATE IN DELAWARE BY SOURCE OF INSURANCE

MEDICAID	BLACK 11.2	WHITE 6.8
PRIVATE	BLACK 13.0	WHITE 3.8

Data source: KIDS COUNT in Delaware

PROMISING PRACTICES

There are a number of actions that can help to combat Black maternal health and infant mortality disparities. At the federal level, The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2020 includes provisions such as investing in social determinants of health, such as access to housing, transportation, and nutrition as well as investing in community-based organizations and culturally aligned health care for Black women.[16] This list of provisions goes on to recommend improvements on data collection, diversifying perinatal health staff, discovering innovative payment plans, extending care to incarcerated mothers, and investing in maternal veterans.[17]

Promising examples from nearby states include New Jersey's Healthy Women, Healthy Families initiative which was recently awarded \$4.7 million in grant funding to be used across six agencies to improve Black infant and maternal mortality.[18] This funding also targeted \$450,000 to implement a doula pilot program in municipalities with high black infant mortality rates.[19]

In Delaware, one initiative of the Delaware Healthy Mother and Infant Consortium (DHMIC), is to bring "increased awareness of the disparity gap for African American women and their infants by developing community-informed solutions for closing the disparity gap." [20] The DHMIC works in tandem with the Delaware Perinatal Quality Collaborative, which serves as the medical arm to the DHMIC, to focus on quality improvement initiatives, best practices for standards of care for moms and babies, and also education and training for providers on implicit bias and its subsequent impact on care rendered and health disparities. In January 2021, the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) and the DHMIC implemented Healthy Women Healthy Babies 2.0, a performance based model to provide preconception and interconception care to high risk women of reproductive age to focus on improved health outcomes for women and babies. In addition, the DHMIC awarded Healthy Women Healthy Babies mini-grants totaling more than \$145,500 to four local organizations to test small-scale innovative strategies to address the social determinants tied to maternal and child health outcomes serving identified high risk zip codes to address housing insecurity, access to doulas for support before, during and after labor and birth, community health workers, breastfeeding supports, healthy relationships for adolescents, academic and life skills supports and job training education to women, pregnancy and postpartum support groups and stress relief for pregnant moms and women with new babies across Delaware. Healthy Women Healthy Babies mini grantees were awarded to the Parent Information Center, Rose Hill Community Center, Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, and Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware to help reduce disparate birth outcomes and save infant and maternal lives.[21] Working with these local organizations, the DHMIC and the Delaware Division of Public Health are hoping to: "narrow the wide variance in poor birth outcomes between Black women and White women; build state and local capacity and test small-scale innovative strategies; and improve public and professional awareness of the issues related to improving maternal health outcomes before, during and after pregnancies, especially for women of color." [22] Other local Delaware organizations working to close these gaps include Black Mothers in Power which created Delaware's first community-based doula training program in addition to raising awareness through community events and grassroots organizing.[23] Delaware should continue to work toward ending health disparities for both Black women and infants and increase support for initiatives that are so vital for Delaware's Black women and children.



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ENDNOTES

- [1] <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/health/reports/black-womens-maternal-health.html>
- [2] https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/pressreleases/2019/minigrnts_12102019.html
- [3] Ibid.
- [4] <https://why.org/articles/can-delaware-close-the-gap-on-black-infant-and-maternal-mortality/>
- [5] <https://courts.delaware.gov/forms/download.aspx?id=89618>
- [6] https://dethrives.com/wpcontent/uploads/2019/07/DDPHIM29285_BlackMaternalHealth_infographic_04087.pdf
- [7] Ibid.
- [8] <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/infantmortality.htm>
- [9] <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/files/infantmortalityreport.pdf>
- [10] <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=002%20-%20White%20alone%3A004%20-%20Black%20or%20African%20American%20alone%3AAge%20and%20Sex%3AHealth%20Insurance&g=0400000US10&tid=ACSDT5YSPT2015.B27001&hidePreview=false>
- [11] Poverty Status ACS 5 Year (B17001, H, I, B)-<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=Age%20and%20Sex%3AIncome%20and%20Poverty&g=0400000US10&d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Detailed%20Tables&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B17001&hidePreview=false>
- [12] https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/USPA_MH_TO_ResearchBrief_Final_5.16.pdf
- [13] <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/health/reports/black-womens-maternal-health.html>
- [14] Ibid.
- [15] <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2018/05/10/450577/health-care-system-racial-disparities-maternal-mortality/>
- [16] <https://sewell.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/black-maternal-health-caucus-introduces-legislative-package-fight>
- [17] Ibid.
- [18] <https://nj.gov/health/news/2018/approved/20180711a.shtml>
- [19] Ibid.
- [20] <https://dethrives.com/dhmic/strategic-initiatives/black-maternal-health-awareness>
- [21] <https://news.delaware.gov/2021/01/26/four-delaware-organizations-receive-mini-grants-to-reduce-infant-and-maternal-mortality-among-black-population/>
- [22] Ibid.
- [23] https://www.blackmothersinpower.org/fbclid=IwAR31DaA5rGUQ_VMQ2dD_RhPnmMjUT2T83CIAh_RvFpIeCwpbhPJSODXDtX8

DATA RESOURCES

America's Health Rankings

https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/maternal_mortality_b/population/maternal_mortality_b_black/state/DE

https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/maternal_mortality_b/population/maternal_mortality_b_white/state/DE

https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/maternal_mortality_b/population/maternal_mortality_b_Hisp/state/DE

Delaware Health and Social Services-PRAMS Survey 2012-2015

<https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/chca/files/pramsconsolidatedreport2012-2015.pdf>

America's Health Rankings

https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/IMR_MCH/population/IMR-Black_MCH/state/DE

https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/IMR_MCH/population/IMR-White_MCH/state/DE

https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/IMR_MCH/population/IMR-Hispanic_MCH/state/DE

KIDS COUNT in Delaware

[https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/4237-infant-mortality-by-source-of-payment-and-race?](https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/4237-infant-mortality-by-source-of-payment-and-race?loc=9&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/1691/293,294|2,1/9259)

[loc=9&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/1691/293,294|2,1/9259](https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/4237-infant-mortality-by-source-of-payment-and-race?loc=9&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/1691/293,294|2,1/9259)