



Public Health Administration

Summary of the Maryland Department of Health's Action Plan to Improve Women's Health

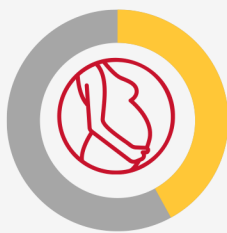
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OVERALL VISION

As part of the Department's broader effort to improve health in Maryland, MDH is announcing its vision to improve women's health—ensuring all women achieve and maintain their highest level of physical, mental, and emotional well-being, and have the agency to make choices regarding their bodies and reproductive and sexual health. The MDH Women's Health Action Plan prioritizes and advances health equity in policies and practice across the lifespan, and builds upon existing MDH work from the **Statewide Integrated Health Improvement Strategy**, **Maryland Cancer Control Plan**, and **Maternal Health Improvement Program Task Force Maternal Health Strategic Plan**.

MAJOR CONCERNS



42% pregnancies in Maryland are unintended. *Healthy People 2030* targets a decrease to 36.5%.



Over **80%** of all HPV-related cancers can be prevented by vaccinating all pre-teens and teens.



70 women died from pregnancy

or its complications in Maryland, 2014-2018. Nearly **83%** of cases were preventable.

The Black non-Hispanic maternal mortality rate was

4X

the White non-Hispanic maternal mortality rate, 2014-2018



4,700+

women in Maryland live in a county **without a single obstetric provider**.



Breast cancer is the 2nd leading cause of death for Maryland women.

4,211







women died from breast cancer, 2014-2018.

FRAMEWORK


MDH has six goals designed to achieve the overall vision, using an adapted socio-ecological framework with a reproductive lens. Reproductive justice, as defined by the **Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective**, is based on a human dignity framework to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities. It is the belief in access not only to contraception but also to broader services, including family planning and safe housing. This plan tackles the myriad factors contributing to maternal health inequities, including systemic biases and structural racism; geographic barriers; social determinants of health; workforce; immigration status; community-based access; and behavioral health. Each goal has corresponding actions to achieve the goal. Action items for each goal are highlighted below.

Data sources: PRAMS 2020 data. 2014-2018 MMR. CRISP dashboard of HSCRC data accessed June 2023. Maryland Cancer Registry. CDC WONDER, NCHS Underlying Cause of Death, U.S. SEER, March of Dimes Peristats 2019 Data for Maryland, Cancer Statistics Review for 2015 to 2019.

KEY GOALS

- 1** Protect reproductive rights and expand access to reproductive health services, including abortion care. 
- 2** Advance birth equity, with a focus on Black maternal and infant health, through the perinatal continuum. 
- 3** Improve access to high-quality behavioral health services through the life course. 
- 4** Improve access to comprehensive high-quality somatic services through the life course. 
- 5** Increase place-based and community-centered approaches to promote health and prevent diseases. 
- 6** Expand, support and diversify the perinatal workforce. 

KEY ACTIONS

- 1** Protect reproductive rights and expand access to reproductive health services, including abortion care. 

MDH Actions

- Expand access to contraception and client-centered contraceptive counseling at **Maryland Family Planning** sites, primary care settings, colleges, and universities.
- Expand comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly services through needs-driven funding and partnerships with schools, clinics, and youth advisory councils.
- Advance emergency regulations, establish the Protected Health Care Commission and work with the **Maryland Health Care Commission** to protect abortion care and mifepristone data.

Data sources: PRAMS 2020 data. 2014-2018 MMR. CRISP dashboard of HSCRC data accessed June 2023. Maryland Cancer Registry. CDC WONDER, NCHS Underlying Cause of Death, U.S. SEER, Cancer Statistics Review for 2015 to 2019.

KEY ACTIONS

2

Advance birth equity, with a focus on Black maternal and infant health, through the perinatal continuum.



MDH Actions

- Expand **Evidence-Based Home Visiting programs** that provide services to mothers and families of color, and those living in rural communities.
- Increase access and availability of group-based prenatal care, including the evidence-based **CenteringPregnancy** model.
- Increase the completion rate of referrals to perinatal care coordination and home visiting, through the **Medicaid Prenatal Risk Assessment** and **Postpartum and Infant Referral Form**.
- Decrease complications due to hemorrhage through the Maryland Perinatal Neonatal Quality Collaborative.
- Ensure Maryland Birthing Hospitals comply with the **Maryland Perinatal System Standards** and Emergency Medical Services Systems certifications.
- Increase comprehensive care coverage for undocumented pregnant people during the postpartum period.
- Advance infant health by supporting breastfeeding initiation services and providing infant safe sleep spaces and education.
- Include individuals with birthing experience as decision-makers in accountable systems of care.
- Use data to identify regional variations in maternal health to focus investments and program design and development.
- Align MDH with **Maryland Title V Program** efforts to support grantee Morgan State University in their focus on maternal health disparities, as well as statewide initiatives, such as **MDMOM**, the Maryland Maternal Health Innovation Program.

3

Improve access to high-quality behavioral health services through the life course.



MDH Actions

- Increase access and awareness of behavioral health services for adolescents.
- Increase referral and access to behavioral health services for postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety, and substance use.
- Support parenting women in recovery from substance-use or opioid-use disorders successfully transition to community life.

4

Improve access to comprehensive high-quality somatic services through the life course.



MDH Actions

- Expand access to preventive and primary care through the **Maryland School-Based Health Centers Program**.
- Provide specialty care for undocumented children, youth, and adolescents through the **Children's Medical Services Program**.
- Prevent infection and cases of HPV-related cancers by increasing the number of HPV vaccinations administered.
- Screen, diagnose early, and link to treatment for cancer by increasing enrollment in the Department's **cancer screening programs**.
- Increase awareness of physical activity and nutrition recommendations, and enrollment in interventions promoting healthy weight in women of childbearing age.
- Increase screening for prediabetes and diabetes in women through a communications campaign.

5

Increase place-based and community-centered approaches to promote health and prevent diseases.



MDH Actions

- Develop a public-private partnership to implement a place-based, community-partnered change model to improve women's health.
- Increase **Maryland WIC Program** participation for food benefits and breastfeeding support access.
- Increase intimate-partner-violence screening and follow-up referrals for those with positive screenings to the **Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program**.
- Address social and behavioral factors, such as transportation access, food insecurity, unstable housing, and behavioral health needs, through home visiting and care coordination services.
- Prevent and mitigate childhood lead poisoning and reduce asthma-related emergency department visits through the **Environmental Case Management and Asthma Home Visiting Services**.
- Conduct comprehensive communication campaigns to increase knowledge of available services for infectious diseases, including HIV, STIs and viral Hepatitis.

6

Expand, support and diversify the perinatal workforce.



MDH Actions

- Promote **implicit bias training** for healthcare professionals in the perinatal health continuum.
- Grow the number of **Medicaid-reimbursed** community doulas, birth workers and home visitors.
- Develop a Maternal and Child Health Community Health Worker specialized curriculum for accredited **CHW Certification Training Programs**.
- Increase the number of providers in the **Perinatal Mental Health Certification Program**.
- Train additional qualified health professionals to provide abortion clinical services through the **Abortion Care Access Act (HB 937)** and use data to target areas of greatest need.
- Partner with **Morehouse College** to provide technical assistance and training to behavioral health systems and intervention, treatment, and recovery support practices.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION

There are additional future areas of exploration that the Maryland Department of Health plans to review in the next few years.

Future Areas of Exploration

- Explore ways to increase the number of midwives who provide prenatal and obstetrical care in Maryland.
- Explore the feasibility of a perinatal community health worker designation under the Maryland Community Health Worker Initiative as a statewide community birth worker/doula designation.
- Centralize and standardize perinatal care coordination statewide to direct pregnant people to relevant services and resources.
- Refer pregnant people who would benefit from support from the Emergency Department to perinatal care coordination and case management.
- Increase the number of providers who offer PrEP to pregnant and postpartum people at risk for HIV.
- Explore ways to increase access to birthing care in rural areas, such as additional birthing centers and/or use of telemedicine.
- Explore ways and partnership to develop affordable and accessible drop-in child care for pregnant and postpartum individuals.



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