

2020-2022 Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review Report Guide

Overview

Maternal mortality continues to be a complex public health issue in the United States, where the maternal mortality rate is the highest among high-income countries. To effectively address and reduce maternal mortality, we must first understand why these deaths are happening. The Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review Committee is critical in identifying the causes of maternal deaths and identifying areas of prevention through comprehensive and multidisciplinary case review. The Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review is Louisiana's leading source of data and information to catalyze policy and systems change to prevent maternal deaths. The Committee:

- Reviews all pregnancy-associated deaths, defined as the death of a woman while pregnant or within one year of pregnancy, regardless of cause.
- Works to understand the drivers of maternal mortality, complications of pregnancy, and disparities.
- Determines interventions at the level of individuals, families, providers, birthing facilities, health systems and communities that can lead to prevention.

Understanding the Report

The 2020-2022 Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Review Report is a summary of the data and recommendations identified through the Committee's review of all pregnancy-associated deaths occurring among Louisiana residents from 2020 to 2022. The multidisciplinary review committee uses multiple data sources and review tools, including informant interviews, to answer five key questions:

- Was the death a "**pregnancy-related**" death? This is any death from a pregnancy complication, a chain of events initiated by pregnancy, or the aggravation of an unrelated condition by the physiologic effects of pregnancy.
- What was the **underlying cause of death**?
- Was the death **preventable**? Was there a chance to alter the outcome?
- What were the **factors that contributed** to the death?
- If the death was preventable, what were the **specific and feasible actions** that might have changed the course of events?

Types of Pregnancy-Associated Deaths

Pregnancy-Associated Death: A death that occurs during or within one year of pregnancy, regardless of the cause.

Pregnancy-Related Death: A death during pregnancy or within one year of the end of pregnancy from a pregnancy complication, a chain of events initiated by the pregnancy, or the aggravation of an unrelated condition by the physiologic effects of pregnancy.

Pregnancy-Associated, but Not Related, Death: A death during pregnancy or within one year of the end of pregnancy from a cause that is not related to pregnancy.

Pregnancy-Associated, but Unable to Determine Relatedness, Death: A pregnancy-associated death where the cause of death is unable to be determined as pregnancy-related or pregnancy-associated, but not related.

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Key Findings

- There were **222** pregnancy-associated deaths identified between 2020 and 2022. The majority (69%) of deaths were pregnancy-associated, but not related to the pregnancy.
- **Drug overdose was the leading cause of pregnancy-associated deaths.** Twenty-six percent (58 deaths) of all pregnancy-associated deaths were due to drug overdose.
 - The top causes of pregnancy-related deaths were COVID-19, cardiomyopathy, and other cardiovascular conditions.
 - The top causes of pregnancy-associated, but not related, deaths were drug overdose, homicide, and motor vehicle collision.
- Racial disparities exist. **Black women in Louisiana were more than twice as likely as white women to die from pregnancy-associated causes, and they accounted for 71% of all pregnancy-related deaths in the state.**
- **Most (77%) pregnancy-associated deaths occurred after delivery up to one year after pregnancy.**
- **The majority (84%) of pregnancy-associated deaths were preventable.** The Committee determined that 88% of pregnancy-related deaths and 85% of pregnancy-associated, but not related, deaths were preventable.

Summary of Recommendations

For all pregnancy-associated deaths that were deemed to be preventable, the Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review Committee developed recommendations for prevention. These recommendations not only address the specific circumstances identified through the review process, but also offer a guide to systemic change that will improve outcomes for pregnant women and families in Louisiana. Recommendations are organized based on who can implement them: healthcare professionals; healthcare systems, including hospitals and birthing facilities; social and local community organizations; policy makers; insurance payors; and government and public health agencies. By looking at the contributing factors and recommendations for prevention, the following five overarching themes were identified and highlight key areas of opportunity for preventing maternal deaths and addressing the drivers of pregnancy-associated mortality:



Reduce the number of pregnancy-associated deaths from drug overdose and suicide by improving screening for substance use disorders and perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, implementing evidence-based treatments, and expanding access to overdose prevention strategies.



Improve screening for and address social determinants of health, including community and social well-being, and design solutions that improve care coordination and access to care, especially in the fourth trimester.



Implement strategies and programs to reduce harm by decreasing interpersonal and community-level violence and improving vehicular safety.



Implement strategies to ensure patient-centered care for all women who are pregnant and/or giving birth.



Improve clinical quality of care by increasing provider knowledge on the leading conditions impacting maternal morbidity and mortality.

A comprehensive review of deaths has a parallel need for comprehensive prevention. Recommendations alone do not save lives – they require committed, coordinated action. While professionals at every level of prevention can use these recommendations to help inform and guide their efforts to improve maternal health outcomes, eliminating maternal deaths takes all of us, and everyone has a role to play in eliminating preventable maternal deaths.

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Data to Action

The Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health acts as the hub for the Department's efforts to review and collaborate on implementing recommendations to prevent maternal deaths. The recommendations generated by the Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review Committee inform initiatives to improve maternal outcomes in Louisiana. The following initiatives reflect efforts from the Bureau and the Department that are moving the data from Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review to action:

- **Monitoring Maternal Outcomes**
 - **Louisiana Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System** is an ongoing, population-based surveillance system designed to describe maternal behaviors and experiences that occur before, during, and immediately following pregnancy. For more information, visit partnersforfamilyhealth.org/prams.
 - **The Violence and Injury Prevention Program** works to prevent injuries and violence, which are the leading causes of death for Louisianans ages one to 44 years. For more information, visit partnersforfamilyhealth.org/injury.
 - **The Louisiana Domestic Abuse Fatality Review** identifies the causes of domestic abuse fatalities and methods for prevention. For more information, visit partnersforfamilyhealth.org/dafr.
- **Supporting Clinical and Systems Change**
 - **The Louisiana Perinatal Quality Collaborative** is a network of perinatal care providers, public health professionals, and patient and community advocates who use quality improvement methods to advance patient-centered care, improve outcomes, and change the culture of care in Louisiana so that every family experiences a safe, patient-centered, and dignified birth. For more information, visit lapqc.org.
 - **Louisiana's Provider-to-Provider Consultation Line** is a statewide mental health consultation and training system designed to help frontline perinatal and pediatric healthcare providers to recognize and respond to the mental and behavioral needs of their patients and clients. For more information, visit ldh.la.gov/page/ppcl.
 - **The Transforming Maternal Health Grant** was awarded to 15 states, including Louisiana, from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to improve maternal and infant health outcomes, reduce disparities, and increase access to high-quality, coordinated care through environmental scans, data infrastructure enhancement, home monitoring expansion, increased mental health and substance use disorder support, and support for midwifery and birth centers. For more information, visit ldh.la.gov/office-on-womens-health-and-community-health/tmah.
 - **The Maternal Health Innovation Grant** was awarded to the Bureau of Family Health from the Health Resources and Services Administration to enhance maternal health outcomes in Louisiana, focusing on the systemic issues leading to much higher maternal mortality rates compared to the national average. Funds from the grant will be used to implement a comprehensive strategic plan aimed at improving maternal health outcomes by establishing a state-focused maternal health task force, guiding policy recommendations, and supporting innovations to access quality maternal care.
 - **Project Maternal Opioid Mortality (MOM)** is a program within the Louisiana Department of Health aimed at reducing pregnancy-associated opioid overdose deaths by 80% within three years and protecting infants from loss or foster care placement by scaling best practices and pilot programs across Louisiana. For more information, visit ldh.la.gov/page/project-mom.

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- **Supportive Services for Families**
 - **Louisiana Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting** implements two evidence-based home visiting models, Nurse Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers, to provide voluntary support to pregnant women and families throughout pregnancy and the postpartum period. For more information, visit partnersforfamilyhealth.org/miechv.
 - **The Reproductive Health Program** is the state's sole grantee of the Title X Family Planning Services Grant (Title X). Title X is the only federal program dedicated to providing access to high-quality contraceptive services, supplies, and information to anyone who needs or wants them. For more information, visit HealthyChoicesLA.org.
- **Policies that Enable or Support a Strong System of Care**
 - **Act 122 of the 2024 Legislative Session** requires all hospitals and birthing centers that provide labor and delivery services, prior to discharge following birth, to provide the mother and her family members with information about post-birth warning signs, including symptoms, and available resources.
 - **House Concurrent Resolution 113 of the 2024 Legislative Session** creates a task force to study the implementation and impact of the Family Connects model of postpartum newborn nurse home visiting in Louisiana and other states, to develop policy and funding recommendations to implement the Family Connects model in this state, to provide for the composition and duties of the task force, and to report findings to the Louisiana Legislature.
 - **Act 77 of the 2025 Legislative Session** removes exceptions for certain hospitals to the requirement of maintaining in-house obstetric anesthesia personnel on a twenty-four hour basis.
 - **Act 437 of the 2025 Legislative Session** requires healthcare providers issuing routine prenatal care to screen for substance use disorder during the first prenatal visit using a validated verbal screening tool.
 - **Act 190 of the 2025 Legislative Session** requires health coverage plans delivered or issues for delivery in Louisiana that provides benefits for maternity services shall include coverage for voluntary home visiting services provided through a home visiting program.

For more information on the Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review, visit PartnersForFamilyHealth.org/MaternalMortality.