Maternal and Child Health

The United States has the highest national spending on health care yet ranks low among its peers for maternal and infant mortality, two indicators of the health of a country. Thirty-one percent of women who will become pregnant and give birth in the U.S. will face pregnancy complications. ¹

Approximately 25% of women in the U.S. do not receive the appropriate number of prenatal appointments with a health provider, but the percentage is even higher among black women (32%) and American Indian/Alaska Native women (41%).²

In Vermont, 24 percent of women smoked cigarettes in the three months prior to pregnancy; 68 percent of women drank alcohol during the three months before pregnancy; 20 percent reported having depression at some point during pregnancy; and 42 percent of women returning to work did not have paid leave.³

The Vermont Public Health Association believes that all women should have access to a system of reproductive health services that is accessible, affordable, comprehensive, and of high quality. Full access to these services should not be jeopardized by the public political, moral, and religious-based debates on the availability and affordability of quality reproductive health services for women.⁴

Encourage policymakers to pass laws that address access to prenatal and perinatal care for mothers and babies, enabling the use of medical services that assist with pregnancy care and also healthy habits. Eliminate the work and income requirements that are barriers to prenatal care and improved nutrition. Expand Medicaid for pregnant women and children. Advocate for programs that support breastfeeding.

Advocate for policies that address maternal health gaps and create programs and funding sources to address gaps in care, education, access and resources. Provide technical assistance and funding for states to allow them to create their own review boards for mortality related to pregnancy.⁵


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¹ HealthyPeople.gov
² Maternal Health Task Force at the Harvard Chan School
³ Vermont Department of Health
⁴ Vermont Public Health Association
⁵ California Maternity Quality Care Collaborative