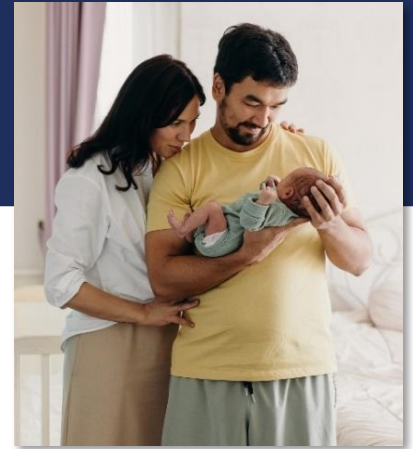


Maternal Health Innovation Collaborative Strategic Plan

CY 2023–2029

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

September 25, 2025



Introduction

The South Carolina Department of Public Health (DPH) was awarded a five-year State Maternal Health Innovation (MHI) grant (2023–2028) from the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) to reduce maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity (SMM). Building on statewide initiatives such as the South Carolina Birth Outcomes Initiative (SCBOI) and South Carolina Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Review Committee (SCMMMRC), this effort expands access to high-quality care, strengthens maternal health data and surveillance, and implements innovative strategies to improve outcomes for populations most impacted.

The South Carolina Maternal Health Innovation Collaborative (SCMHIC) will bring together partners and community voices to address key drivers of poor maternal health outcomes, including workforce shortages, service gaps, limited data, and a lack of awareness of maternal warning signs. Together, these efforts aim to transform maternal health by fostering collaboration, innovation, and long-term improvements across the state.

Mission:

Innovate, Collaborate, and Elevate: Transforming Maternal Health Together

This mission seeks to inspire action and foster collaboration that addresses critical gaps in perinatal and postpartum care, data systems, policies, and practices by directing resources to solutions that address the root causes of maternal mortality and morbidity.

Vision:

Our vision is a South Carolina where every mother thrives within a unified, forward-thinking, and inclusive maternal health environment. We aspire to lead in transforming maternal health outcomes through collaborative efforts, ensuring that all South Carolinians have access to care that enables them to flourish.

Snapshot: Maternal Health in South Carolina

This snapshot highlights key maternal health indicators in South Carolina, providing context for the current conditions shaping maternal health across the state and reveal challenges in access, quality, and outcomes. The data underscore persistent gaps but also guide action--helping the SCMHC direct resources to areas of greatest need, measure progress over time, and maximize impact to support healthier mothers, babies, and their families statewide.

Deliveries in SC

- In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2024, there were **49,755** deliveries.
- The median age of women giving birth in South Carolina was between **25 and 29** years.
- The cesarean rate was **33%** and about **1 in 9** deliveries in South Carolina were preterm (11%).

Maternal Mortality

- In 2021, South Carolina's pregnancy-related mortality ratio was **47.2 deaths per 100,000** live births.
- **Half** of these deaths occurred 7 days to 1 year after delivery.
- Across all pregnancy-related deaths, **89%** were deemed preventable.

Insurance Coverage

- In FFY 2024, nearly **60%** of deliveries were covered by Medicaid, rising to **72%** in rural areas.
- Rates of preterm birth, low birthweight, and SMM are **higher** among women whose deliveries were covered by Medicaid.

Access to Care

- **Thirteen** labor and delivery units have closed since 2011.
- **Over half** of SC counties represent medically underserved areas.
- **Many** women experience co-occurring physical and behavioral health conditions, further complicating access to appropriate care.

SCMHIC Proposed Goals and Strategies

The grant provides a clear framework to address maternal health issues in South Carolina by establishing specific, targeted objectives across four interrelated goals: service delivery, data analysis, workforce development, and empowerment and health literacy. Together, these goals create a unified and comprehensive effort to improve health outcomes. SCMHIC builds on existing statewide and community-based initiatives, including the Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health (AIM) and the Williamsburg AIM Coalition. Thirty-eight birthing hospitals implement patient safety bundles. These AIM projects strengthen the proposed SCMHIC strategies. By focusing on these key areas, the work of SCMHIC aims to optimize resources, track progress, and promote lasting improvements in maternal and infant health. A detailed evaluation framework, provided at the end of this report, will assist in measuring the implementation and success of the strategy.



Maternal Health Service Delivery

Goal: Improve maternal health service delivery statewide by enhancing care coordination, expanding access to services, and fostering innovation and community collaboration to build a more robust and effective healthcare system.

Proposed Strategies: To achieve this goal, the initiative will strengthen maternal health care through targeted training, expand access via telehealth and mobile technologies, improve care coordination with culturally responsive support, and implement the Postpartum Alert Bracelet with provider education on emergency response.



Maternal Health Data Collection, Analysis, and Distribution

Goal: Enhance maternal health data accessibility, coordination, and utilization across South Carolina through collaboration, capacity building, and public engagement.

Proposed Strategies: Strategies focus on strengthening maternal health data efforts by supporting SCMMRC data collection and analysis, assisting community-based initiatives with reporting, disseminating maternal health information at multiple geographic levels, and mapping existing and needed data within the data workgroup.



Maternal Health Workforce Development

Goal: Strengthening the maternal health workforce through cross-sector collaboration, capacity building, and enhanced training opportunities for healthcare providers and birth workers.

Proposed Strategies: Strategies include supporting provider education and evidence-based care, expanding simulation and low-fidelity training, scholarships to undergraduate, graduate, and health profession students to attend conferences or advance professional growth, internship, and practicum opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, and a technical college student-lunch-and-learn series and explore health profession opportunities through a virtual workforce development platform.



Maternal Health Empowerment and Literacy

Goal: Equip healthcare providers, organizations, and community members with resources that promote maternal and perinatal health literacy, empowering individuals to make informed decisions and recognize early warning signs of potential complications.

Proposed Strategies: Strategies focus on developing an online Maternal Health Resource Hub with AI support, creating a perinatal advisory council, and strengthening community partnerships to expand education, peer support, and access to local resources. Efforts also include increasing awareness of maternal health warning signs, promoting the postpartum period as critical, leveraging digital and Spanish-language tools, and expanding the use of educational materials statewide.



Institute for Families
in Society



SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

Contact: Kristen Shealy, Deputy Director
Maternal and Child Health Bureau
| shealykh@dph.sc.gov