

Board finds most deaths related to pregnancy are preventable

The Pregnancy Associated Mortality Review Board, with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), reviewed all maternal deaths from 2018 to 2022. The board reviewed 350 deaths during pregnancy and up to one year postpartum. They determined 114 pregnancy-related deaths occurred, or deaths directly because of being pregnant. Eighty percent of these deaths were determined to be preventable. We all have a role to play in preventing maternal death. Begin by learning about the problem and about what our partner organizations and DHSS are doing to change the story of moms in MO.

An average of 70 women die per year while pregnant or within 1 year postpartum.

The staff at the Office on Women's Health summarized the data from the case reviews to prepare an example of these moms' stories. The story below has been changed to protect the identities of the women portrayed.

Story of mom

When Olivia found out she was pregnant, she was thrilled. Being a mom was her dream. At her first prenatal appointment, she told her doctor about her diagnosis and medications. She had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder years earlier and worked hard to manage it. Her doctor advised her to stop the medication she was taking and connect with a psychiatrist for other options. The only psychiatrist nearby had a six-month waitlist. She made the appointment.

After her daughter was born, Olivia noticed shifts in her mood. Despite reporting feeling tired and overwhelmed at her postpartum visit, she was told it was normal for new mothers. Olivia had felt worse before and thought things might improve. She planned to start her medication again after she finished breastfeeding. She planned to talk about it at her psychiatrist appointment in two months. As her daughter's 4-month sleep regression began, Olivia felt increasingly tired, and her mood got worse. Two weeks later, she died by suicide. She died before she could hear her daughter say "mama," before she could celebrate a first birthday or see her daughter take her first steps. Olivia did everything she could. She disclosed her diagnosis and sought help, but the system failed her. Stories like Olivia's drive Missouri's efforts to address the leading causes of pregnancy-related death.

Timing of Death



18%
died while pregnant



39%
died 0-42 days postpartum



43%
died 43-365 days postpartum

Leading Causes



1
Mental Health Conditions
including Substance Use Disorder



2
Cardiovascular Disease



3
Infection



4
Amniotic Fluid Embolism

Data Findings

32.6% - Deaths determined to be pregnancy-related

100% - Preventability of deaths due to mental health conditions

81.3% - Pregnancy-related deaths covered by Medicaid

Contributing Factors

34% - Mental health conditions contributed to their death

34% - Substance Use Disorder contributed to their death

18% - Discrimination contributed to their death

Social Stressors

45% - History of substance use

38% - History of unemployment

18% - History of domestic violence

Progress in Prevention

89% - Birthing hospitals participating in the PQC

94% - Births at a hospital participating in the PQC

40% - Moms supported by Medicaid

Recommendations

- Ask me 5: <https://mopqc.org/ask-me-5>
- Perinatal Quality Collaborative: <https://mopqc.org>
- The Maternal Health Access Project: <https://mochildwellbeing.org/mhap>

Read the full report: Health.Mo.Gov/pamr



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH &
SENIOR SERVICES**
Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review