



Healthy start for moms and babies

The Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics supports extending Medicaid coverage to 12 months postpartum to ensure mothers access to care during a baby's crucial first year of life.

Issue

In Washington, Medicaid pays for pregnancy, delivery and 60 days postpartum care for pregnant individuals up to 198% of the federal poverty rate. An estimated 5000 people lose their Medicaid coverage after two months post-partum because they no longer qualify for coverage under current law. This leaves new moms at risk when they need access to care to recover from complications, receive timely identification and support for behavioral health problems, and form strong bonds with babies.

- Risk of pregnancy-related mortality doesn't end at 60 days postpartum. In Washington, 30% of pregnancy-related maternal deaths occur 43-365 days after delivery.¹
- Parent-baby attachment is essential for healthy child development and supports breastfeeding, sleeping and infant/parent behavioral health.
- Post-partum mood disorders inhibit strong parent-baby attachment. One in 5 moms experience post-partum mood disorders (PPMD), and 40-60% of women experiencing PPMD live at low incomes. Having a low-income or few social supports are significant predictors of PPMD.
- Untreated or undiagnosed behavioral health conditions were the leading cause of Washington's pregnancy-related deaths from 2014-2016.²
- A child whose mother receives treatment and support for post-partum mood disorders is more likely to be ready for school, with improved behavioral health.
- Maternal mortality is a critical health inequity: rates of maternal mortality are higher for American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Hispanics than for non-Hispanic whites. Maternal mortality is lowest for individuals with private health insurance.
- Washington State can join other state leaders to promote maternal well-being: Missouri, Illinois and South Carolina are seeking waivers to extend Medicaid coverage one year post-partum. There is bipartisan federal legislation (HR 4996) to extend Medicaid coverage to one year post-partum.
- Lack of coverage and access to care results in significant societal costs when children are unable to develop to their full potential due to poor attachment and untreated PPMD. We can avoid these costs by ensuring every new family in our state has a full year to establish healthy bonds.

Legislative Ask

Ensure every family in Washington has an opportunity to build strong attachments and a foundation for lifetime health by extending Medicaid coverage to 12 months postpartum.

¹ Report to the Legislature. Washington State Maternal Mortality Review Panel: Maternal Deaths 2014-2016. October 2019.
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/141-010-MMRPMaternalDeathReport2014-2016.pdf>

² Ibid.