

THE SURGEON GENERAL'S CALL TO ACTION TO IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Approximately 700 women die from pregnancy-related causes each year with 50,000 women experiencing severe complications of pregnancy that may have long-term health impacts.

WHY IS THIS THE RIGHT TIME FOR A CALL TO ACTION?

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the number of people, including women of reproductive age, who have hypertension, diabetes, unhealthy body weight, and other chronic conditions. These conditions not only increase risks during pregnancy but also may increase the severity of COVID-19. Now more than ever, we must address medical comorbidities and social determinants of health impacting the lives and livelihoods of women, and in turn, our nation's future.

As part of a national effort to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity, the *Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve Maternal Health (Call to Action)* seeks to engage and equip people from a wide range of sectors with actions to improve women's health prior to, during, and following pregnancy. **Everyone** – from women and families, healthcare professionals, hospitals, and birthing facilities to states, tribes, and local communities with support from payers, employers, and researchers – **can and must help to improve maternal health in the United States.**

The *Call to Action* challenges us all to play an active role in health across the lifespan, address social determinants of health, and reduce disparities in maternal health.

Three distinct sections comprise the published *Call to Action*:

BACKGROUND

An overview of the current state of maternal mortality and morbidity in the U.S., with a focus on disparities based on race and ethnicity, education, geography, and age.

RISKS TO MATERNAL HEALTH

Summary of several health conditions and other factors that can increase the risk of adverse outcomes for mother and baby in order to raise awareness and ensure successful pregnancies and long-term health.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

More than 50 recommended actions outlined to empower individuals and organizations to improve maternal health in the United States. Many of these actions address preconception health to improve pregnancy- and postpartum-health outcomes.

Improving maternal health and reversing the rates of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity in the United States will require each of us to play a critical role. **Now is the time to answer that call.**