



Key Facts About Maternal Health in Arkansas



The maternal health landscape in Arkansas reflects the urgent need for better care and support for mothers and families.

Maternal health in Arkansas at-a-glance

- By some measures, Arkansas is the most dangerous state in which to give birth. Between 2018 and 2020, Arkansas had the highest maternal mortality rate of any state, nearly twice the national rate.
- 91% of maternal deaths in Arkansas in 2018–2019 were found to be preventable.
- 68% of births in Arkansas are covered by Medicaid.
- Despite the fact that more than half of maternal deaths occur in the postpartum period (1–365 days after birth), many families in Arkansas lose Medicaid coverage just 2 months after giving birth.

Maternal mental health

- Maternal mental health conditions are the most common complication of pregnancy and childbirth in the United States.
- Nearly 20% of mothers in Arkansas report experiencing frequent postpartum depression symptoms.
- Despite this, Arkansas is experiencing a critical shortage of providers. Just 34% of the need for mental health care providers is met by Arkansas' current workforce.

Racial & geographic disparities

- In Arkansas, Black women are more than twice as likely to die from pregnancy-related causes as white women.
- 60% of counties in Arkansas have very limited or no access to maternity care services at all, and nearly 125,000 women between the ages of 15 and 44 years old in the state live in maternity care deserts.

How Arkansas ranks

50th
in maternal mortality

49th
in teen births

44th
in preterm births

50th
in percentage of births attended by Certified Nurse-Midwives

42nd
in low weight births

Important state-based resources

Arkansas Maternal Mortality Review Committee

This interdisciplinary committee reviews every maternal death in Arkansas and provides recommendations on policy changes to the state legislature. The AMMRC collects reports, resources, and evidence on their website.

Visit the [AMMRC website](#)

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

AACF is a nonprofit advocacy organization that advances policy change for the well-being of Arkansas' children and families. Improving maternal health is a key policy priority of AACF, and they've released key reports on the topic.

View report: [The Critical State of Black Women's Health](#)

View report: [Postpartum Care in Arkansas: A Crisis of Coverage](#)

Solutions exist. Learn more on the next page

Mothers and families in Arkansas deserve better.

To improve the state of maternal health in Arkansas, we need collaboration, community-led change, and better care and support for mothers and families, particularly among communities of color and other underserved communities.

Key policy solutions

These four key policy priorities could make a significant difference for mothers and families in Arkansas and across the United States:

Extending Postpartum Medicaid Coverage

Despite more than half of maternal deaths occurring in the postpartum period, pregnancy-related Medicaid coverage in Arkansas ends just 60 days after giving birth, leaving many newly postpartum mothers without insurance. Extending access to pregnancy-related Medicaid for a full year after childbirth would make a significant impact on maternal health outcomes and well-being.



Supporting and Encouraging Respectful Maternity Care

Evidence shows that disrespectful care and mistreatment in maternity care settings negatively affects maternal health outcomes. Policies like hospital programs and standardized practices to address racism and mistreatment and publicly reported hospital data are urgently needed to promote positive experiences of care for mothers.



Strengthening the Maternity Care Workforce

A strong and diverse maternity care workforce will help ensure that every Arkansan mother can receive compassionate, quality care from providers who represent their identities, communities, and backgrounds, which can meaningfully enhance experiences of care and health outcomes.



Increasing Access to Mental Health Support

Despite the impact of maternal mental health conditions, many families in Arkansas do not have access to the care and support they need. Policies are needed at the state level to better integrate mental and behavioral health care, address social barriers like stigma and lack of awareness, and fund the training of a representative maternal mental health workforce.



Watch *Giving Birth in America: Arkansas* and get involved

Every Mother Counts' *Giving Birth in America: Arkansas* follows three women from diverse backgrounds who recently gave birth in Arkansas, each with unique needs for postpartum support. We invite you to watch the film to learn more about issues facing mothers and families in Arkansas from advocates and experts.

Inspired to do more? Check out the *Giving Birth in America: Arkansas* Screening and Advocacy Toolkit for more information about policy solutions, sources and citations, and ways to take action to make pregnancy and childbirth safe, respectful, and equitable for every mother, everywhere.

