

Strong Start & Beyond Fact Sheet

In California, over 80% of maternal deaths are preventable. Strong Start & Beyond is a bold movement and innovative approach to addressing the maternal health crisis by focusing on fostering awareness, encouraging active participation in health, and building access to resources. By December 2026, California aims to reduce maternal mortality 50% through collaboration, communication, and community engagement.

There is momentum across California and at the national level, with the White House's U.S. Maternal Health Blueprint, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)'s designation of this year as the "Year of the Mother", and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s Million Hearts campaign all aligning to support these efforts. There is also synergy between ongoing California programs, such as the California Department of Public Health, the California Department of Health Care Services, and other external partners—all of which complement efforts at the federal level. With national and state priorities on maternal and women's health initiatives aligning, California is poised to continue leading in maternal health over the next two years.

KEY OBJECTIVES

1 Reduce Maternal Mortality 50% by 2026:

The primary goal is to halve maternal deaths in California, with a special focus on addressing chronic conditions such as heart disease and behavioral health disorders, which are some of the leading causes of pregnancy-related deaths.

2 Educate and Empower Reproductive-Age Individuals:

California is developing resources, including an at-home pregnancy medical risk questionnaire, to help individuals understand their potential pregnancy-related risks and make informed health decisions.

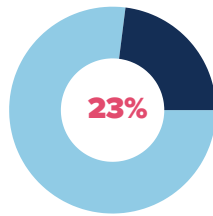


THE MATERNAL HEALTH CRISIS IN CALIFORNIA

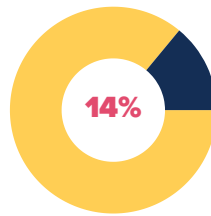
The maternal health crisis in California highlights significant disparities, with Black women being three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than White women. Rising maternal mortality rates are also seen among Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander communities. Given the significant disparities in maternal mortality rates, an equity lens will be at the forefront of the movement. With the lowest maternal mortality rates in the U.S., California will continue to lead the way to reduce disparities and prevent maternal deaths.

Your mental and physical health impact your pregnancy journey

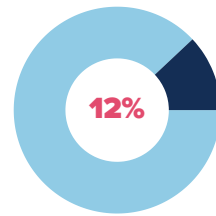
Pregnancy -Related Causes of Death in California.



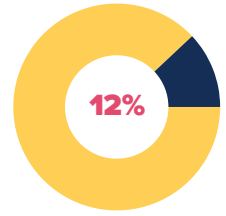
Heart Disease



Bleeding



Behavioral Health



Infection



With the lowest maternal mortality rates in the U.S., California is leading the way to reduce disparities and prevent maternal deaths.

STRONG START & BEYOND GOALS

Educate and Empower:

- Launch an open-source, at-home pregnancy medical risk questionnaire to assess pregnancy risks based on an individual's current health.
- Focus on community outreach, engagement, and the use of technology to normalize conversations around preconception care and healthcare decision-making.

Reduce California's Maternal Mortality 50% by December 2026:

- Heart disease is the leading cause of pregnancy-related deaths across all ethnicities in California.
- Prioritize early detection of pregnancy risks, particularly heart disease, which is the leading cause of maternal deaths.
- Focus on building trust in healthcare, especially among historically marginalized communities, such as Black, American Indian, and Hispanic populations.
- Develop culturally appropriate resources and build strong partnerships between healthcare systems, community organizations, and government.

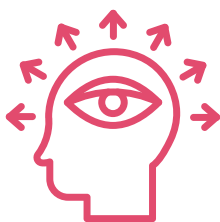


KEY ACTIONS



At-home Pregnancy Medical Risk Questionnaire:

This tool, to be validated in English and Spanish, will provide individuals with information on their medical risk of pregnancy complications. Based on results, recommendations for next steps will be provided.



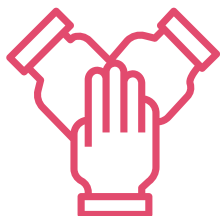
Improve Resource Awareness:

Existing resources and programs will be collated to enhance their identification and accessibility for ALL Californians.



Support Behavioral Health

Behavioral health is a contributing factor for roughly 10 – 15% of pregnancy-related deaths from other medical causes. The Blueprint aims to elevate support for behavioral health resources throughout the reproductive life course.



Partnerships and Collaboration

This movement will unite ongoing healthcare efforts with the needs identified from community voices.

