



Rural Maternal Health Initiative

Why Rural Maternal Health Matters

According to the CDC, more than 80% of pregnancy-related deaths in the United States are preventable.¹ Recent studies indicate that the leading causes of pregnancy-associated maternal deaths are unintentional drug overdose, violence (defined as homicide or suicide by any means, including domestic violence homicides), followed by cardiovascular causes.²

More than 60 million Americans—about one-fifth of the U.S. population—live in rural areas,³ facing higher rates of poverty, hospital closures, and limited access to healthcare and consistent maternity care and support. Rural families are more likely to face long travel distances for care, provider shortages, limited mental health services, financial instability, and a lack of critical support for issues like intimate partner violence (IPV).

FUTURES is committed to raising awareness about maternal health outcomes in rural areas while supporting the community-based maternal health workforce who serve families: doulas, community health workers, home visitors and peer support specialists.

FUTURES on the Frontlines of Maternal Health

For almost 40 years, FUTURES has worked to build healthier and safer communities by partnering with tens of thousands of health care providers nationwide to improve responses to and prevent intimate partner violence and childhood adversity. This work reflects the organization's core conviction: lasting change requires equipping the people and institutions closest to a community with the tools and resources needed to make change.

FUTURES' Rural Maternal Health Initiative extends that same approach, building a workforce equipped to support families through the full complexity of their perinatal needs. Community health workers, doulas, peer support specialists, and home visitors are on the frontline of maternal health. FUTURES has worked with these providers across the country to implement and adapt evidence-based interventions to engage new parents and caregivers in conversations about wellness, safety, parenting and resilience-building strategies.⁴

1. CDC Maternal Mortality Prevention. "Preventing Pregnancy-Related Deaths," <https://www.cdc.gov/maternal-mortality/preventing-pregnancy-related-deaths/index.html>

2. New England Journal of Medicine. Overdose, Homicide, and Suicide as Causes of Maternal Death in the United States, 2026. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2512078>

3. United States Government Accountability Office. Why Health Care is Harder to Access in Rural America, <https://www.gao.gov/blog/why-health-care-harder-access-rural-america>

4. Futures Without Violence. Health Partners on IPV & Exploitation CUES Infographic. <https://healthpartnersipve.org/resources/addressing-ipv-and-exploitation-in-health-centers-cues-infographic/>

At the state level, particularly in California, FUTURES has helped shape care pathways that improve access to prenatal and postpartum support and has worked with managed care plans, and health systems to improve sustainable responses to trauma and intimate partner violence, and to promote wellness. And at the national level, FUTURES' National Health Initiative on Violence and Abuse has led efforts to integrate IPV assessment and counseling in women's preventive services without copay or deductible to the patient.

FUTURES' Rural Maternal Health Agenda

Rural hospital closures and long travel times for health care make increasing community-based access to maternal health care paramount to solving the maternal health crisis. Fortunately, a trusted and deeply knowledgeable maternal health workforce exists to support perinatal families across rural communities through connection and with care. However, their work is chronically under-resourced. FUTURES' newly launched Rural Maternal Health Initiative supports the workforce that supports families during pregnancy, postpartum and early childhood, building programs and promoting policies that will improve access to compassionate, coordinated care in rural communities.

FUTURES values local, community-led expertise and incorporates community-driven strategies throughout the initiative so that respectful, culturally-centered care is prioritized and that the overall work is sustainable and enhances safety for rural families for the long haul.

With national, state and local partners, the initiative:

- **Elevates critical maternal health solutions** by raising awareness about trauma, mental wellness, and intimate partner violence as core components of the maternal health crisis.
- **Promotes sustainable financing models** such as Medicaid reimbursement pathways for community health workers and doulas.
- **Supports rural families close to home** by supporting the doulas, community health workers, and home visitors addressing the most pressing social health needs facing rural families.
- **Equips the maternal health workforce to address the complex needs of families** by adapting time-tested, evidence-based interventions that help support maternal health workers navigate the complex, real-world challenges rural families are facing, such as IPV, trauma, and wellness.
- **Facilitates opportunities for maternal health advocates to connect** and share strategies with each other through technology-enabled, peer-led cohorts that connect rural care providers, providing opportunity for engagement, emotional support and shared learning.
- **Advocates for proven policies** that expand insurance coverage for rural Americans, increase sustainable reimbursement for the maternal health workforce, protect funding for community health centers, expand telehealth and other technology solutions to expand access to care, and support paid family leave, childcare and other needs of young families.

For more information on the FUTURES Rural Maternal Health Initiative, visit:
<https://futureswithoutviolence.org/initiative/rural-maternal-infant-health>