

Tulane partners with local MCH Coalition to reduce high maternal mortality rates

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On Thursday, Nov. 7, the New Orleans Maternal Child Health Coalition will ask the New Orleans City Council to put its support behind postpartum home visits for all birthing people in New Orleans, the training and hiring of black and queer health workers and finding ethical ways to reimburse doula care via Medicaid and other insurance plans. (Photo via Shutterstock)

The New Orleans Maternal Child Health (MCH) Coalition, made up of over 80 individuals and member organizations, including representatives from the Birthmark Doula Collective, Women with a Vision, Bloom Maternal Health Clinic, NOLA Baby Café, Newcomb Institute, and the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, is working to find solutions to reduce the high rates of maternal mortality in New Orleans.

The United States has the highest infant and maternal mortality rates among developed nations. According to the [Louisiana Maternal Mortality Review Board](#), the maternal mortality rate in Louisiana is increasing faster than the national rate, while Region 1, which includes New Orleans, has the 4th highest maternal mortality rate in the state. Survival rates for African American women are even more dismal; black women in Louisiana are four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than non-Hispanic white women.

Many of these deaths are preventable. As a [2017 report](#) from the [Mary Amelia Center](#) explains, structural racism is a driving cause. Solutions lie both inside and outside of the healthcare system, but the MCH Coalition is currently focusing its

efforts on reforms that will increase access to prenatal and postpartum care by culturally competent health workers.

"The research is clear. The Louisiana maternal mortality review report determined that 45% of identified deaths were preventable," said Anna Mitchell Mahoney, PhD, administrative assistant professor of Women's Political Leadership at Newcomb Institute. "The Mary Amelia report on racial disparities on birth outcomes in Louisiana identified the many ways structural racism drives this health inequity."

That is why the MCH Coalition is asking the city for support, Mahoney says.

On Thursday, Nov. 7, at Councilmember Krisitn Palmer's invitation, MCH will ask the New Orleans City Council to put its support behind postpartum home visits for all birthing people in New Orleans, the training and hiring of black and queer health workers and finding ethical ways to reimburse doula care via Medicaid and other insurance plans.

"Louisiana has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the nation, at 45 cases per 100,000 births in 2018. Depending on age, black women are between 40% and 400% more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related conditions, regardless of any socio-economic factors," Emily Harville, PhD, associate professor in the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, said. "Many of these deaths could be prevented with better care during and after pregnancy, which is why we are asking for community support to prioritize funding to solve this very alarming issue."

The MCH Coalition is asking community members to show their support by filling the City Hall chambers on Thursday at 10:30 a.m. – MCH members encourage supporters to wear black t-shirts, including [**Black Birth Matters T-Shirts**](#) and [**Listen to Black Mothers T-Shirts**](#).

For more information, click [here](#) and [here](#).