



SAFER CHILDBIRTH CITIES INITIATIVE

Background

Merck for Mothers is Merck's \$500 million initiative to help create a world where no woman has to die giving life. Applying Merck's business and scientific resources, we work with collaborators to improve the health and well-being of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period in more than 45 countries around the world, including the United States. Our strategy is to collaborate with partners to design innovative models to improve maternal health outcomes, test their effectiveness and, if successful, advocate for them to be adopted everywhere.

The U.S. is the only high-income country where maternal mortality is on the rise. Racial disparities are stark and persistent, with Black women in particular at increased risk for complications or worse. Since 2011, *Merck for Mothers* has been [catalyzing efforts to improve maternal health](#) and reduce disparities in the U.S. by addressing the leading contributors to maternal mortality: poor data on why women are dying; inconsistent obstetric care; the rise in chronic conditions; and limited awareness of the problem. We are taking a comprehensive approach at the policy, health system and community levels to improve access to quality maternity care and support women's health and wellbeing.

According to the CDC,
a Black woman is

3 to 4

times more likely to
die from pregnancy
or childbirth
complications than a
White woman.



Community-Led Solutions

[Safer Childbirth Cities Initiative](#) aims to foster and advance local solutions that help cities become safer — and more equitable — places to give birth. Through this effort, *Merck for Mothers* will support community-based organizations in cities across the U.S. with high burdens of maternal mortality and morbidity to implement evidence-based interventions and innovative approaches to reverse the country's trend of rising maternal health disparities.

For the inaugural class, announced in September 2019, Safer Childbirth Cities will fund ten community-based organizations that will work in coalition with city-wide partners to improve the maternal health outcomes that matter most in their cities. Efforts will be co-funded in partnership with the Burke Foundation, The Nicholson Foundation, the Community Health Acceleration Partnership, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Rhia Ventures, and others.

Safer Childbirth Cities grantees will work to address the social determinants of health, such as access to care, health literacy, and transportation. They will bridge gaps in disparities by promoting health equity. They will work with doulas and perinatal support workers to bolster the care support system around women during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum.



City-based Projects

ATLANTA, GA

Black Mamas Matter Alliance and its partners are creating a social safety-net model to link women, particularly Black women, to care and critical services that could be scaled to other communities where access to health care is limited.



BALTIMORE, MD

Baltimore Healthy Start and its partners are enhancing the State of Maryland's Maternal Mortality Review process with Severe Maternal Morbidity reviews, elevating patient experiences to improve quality care, and encouraging postpartum care services alongside pediatric visits.



CAMDEN, NJ

Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers and its partners are strengthening citywide data infrastructures to improve connection to services and care coordination for pregnant and postpartum women.



CHICAGO, IL

AllianceChicago and its partners are improving the quality and coordination of care to serve women at highest risk, and empowering families and social service providers through community outreach.



COLUMBUS, OH

ROOTT and its partners are creating a model of community-based full-spectrum perinatal support doula care, with focus for Black women who have limited or no access to insurance, to ensure that they receive relevant, consistent, safe and equitable care.



JACKSON, MS

Mississippi Public Health Institute and its partners are reducing unnecessary caesarean sections, providing community-based support to pregnant and post-partum women, and decreasing adverse maternal health outcomes through specially trained doulas.



NEWARK, NJ

Greater Newark Healthcare Coalition and its partners are educating health care providers on the best practices for maternity care, developing a public education campaign to increase women's awareness of serious complications associated with pregnancy and the post-natal period, and disseminating recommendations to local stakeholders.



NEW ORLEANS, LA

The Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies and its partners are identifying and linking birthing people who have unmet health needs and are disconnected from support to quality care and policy solutions.



PHILADELPHIA, PA

Health Federation of Philadelphia and its partners will strengthen surveillance and reporting, improve clinical care, integrate community voices in developing solutions, address racial disparities in maternal health outcomes, and increase community-based support for childbearing women through development of a community action team.



PITTSBURGH, PA

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation and its partners are improving coordination and quality of care among local service providers, training midwives and other health professionals, and building a local maternal health movement.



A key component of the initiative is to build a “community of practice” to enable these organizations to learn from one another. This group will come together throughout the project period to share best practices in providing support for pregnant people and new mothers, and in building healthier, more equitable communities.

To learn more about the Safer Childbirth Cities Initiative, please visit saferchildbirthcities.com

Safer
Childbirth
Cities



Collaborative Grantmaking

In 2019, grants awarded through Safer Childbirth Cities represent the collaborative grantmaking of several philanthropic partners, collectively powering progress for maternal health.



These programs are funded by Merck for Mothers, Merck's \$500 million initiative to help create a world where no woman has to die giving life. Merck for Mothers, is an initiative of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, NJ, USA.