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.

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.

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.
Collaborative Grantmaking

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

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