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Falling Behind: New Report Shows Idaho's Maternal and Infant Health Trends Worsening
Health Advocates Call on Lawmakers to Improve Supports for Pregnant Women and Babies

Boise, ID: A [new report](#) released today by Idaho Kids Covered shows that Idaho is falling behind in key maternal and infant health indicators, including maternal and infant mortality, postpartum depression, access to pre-natal care and infant well-child doctor visits. As Idaho's maternal and infant health needs continue to grow, the group recommends a series of policy recommendations be implemented to reverse the troubling trends.

"Idaho's current health trends for moms and babies are quite alarming. Our state is falling behind the nation in key areas," stated Hillarie Hagen, health policy associate and lead coordinator at Idaho Kids Covered. "Our new report shows that Idaho's maternal and infant mortality rates are increasing and many women are suffering from untreated postpartum depression. Despite the growing needs, Idaho's insurance coverage rates for pregnant and postpartum women rank last in the nation for families with low-incomes."

Providing women with comprehensive health coverage before, during and after pregnancy leads to improved preventive care, reductions in maternal mortality¹ rates and improvements in birth outcomes. However, **100% of Idaho maternal deaths in 2018 and 2019 were found to be preventable**. Lack of access to care and lack of continuity of care are the top contributing factors to maternal mortality in Idaho. Between 2019 and 2020, **Idaho's maternal mortality rate more than doubled, increasing by 104%**. In addition, 22% of Idaho mothers experienced postpartum depression compared to 15% nationally and over half of new mothers screened for depression never received treatment.

As policymakers confront Idaho's growing needs and actively explore opportunities to increase maternal and infant health supports, it is essential that they consider recent health data. "Idaho is made stronger when we safeguard the health and well-being of our families. It is not too late to reverse Idaho's troubling trends for maternal and infant health," Hagen explained. "Idaho's economy is strong, and after another year of record budget surpluses, our state has the economic power to make significant improvements in health outcomes for moms and babies."

¹ *Maternal death* is defined as the death of the mother during pregnancy or within one year following pregnancy.

Families struggling financially are more likely to suffer negative maternal and infant health outcomes. Two-thirds of Idaho infants and toddlers live in households with low-incomes. With Idaho families experiencing the rising costs of gas, groceries, child care and other day-to-day expenses, the needs of pregnant and postpartum women and their newborns will grow. The time to take action to protect Idaho mothers and babies is now.

Ensuring consistent health coverage and reliable access to care is essential in meeting Idaho's growing maternal and infant health needs. Idaho Kids Covered, the largest health policy advocacy network in the state, calls upon lawmakers to respond immediately and implement policies that meaningfully support the health of mothers and their babies. In a series of policy recommendations to improve maternal and infant health in Idaho, the group identifies an easy first step lawmakers can take: **Extend postpartum health coverage for women with low-incomes to a full year after birth.** Current coverage options for most women with low-incomes end at just two months postpartum.

“Extending postpartum health coverage will allow more women to access timely care during this especially vulnerable time in life,” Hagen concluded. “We are excited to work with the incoming Idaho Legislature in January on what we know is a top priority for all Idahoans – healthy moms and strong babies.”

The full report can be read here: <https://idahokidscovered.org/idaho-maternal-and-infant-healthcare-report/>

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About Idaho Kids Covered

Idaho Kids Covered is a statewide network of health care advocates and stakeholders working to support affordable access to health coverage and care for all children in Idaho. Idaho Kids Covered is a project of Idaho Voices for Children, visit idahokidscovered.org to learn more.