



## For Immediate Release

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### **New Report Finds Maternal and Infant Health Has Worsened in Idaho**

*Health advocates sound the alarm in latest report and call on Idaho policymakers to improve health care access for moms and children.*

**Boise, ID:** Infant mortality in Idaho rose 18% and maternal mortality rose a staggering 121.5% from 2019 to 2021 [finds a new report](#) released today by Idaho Kids Covered. The report, Idaho Maternal and Infant Health Report 2023, paints an alarming portrait of Idaho's maternal and infant health landscape, which has worsened since the organization began tracking health trends in the state, and outlines policy recommendations to ensure Idaho moms and babies have access to the lifesaving care they need when they need it.

"Idaho's maternal and infant health indicators were already alarming when we originally published our 2022 Maternal and Infant Health report. A year has passed and almost every single health data metric included in our last report has gotten worse," stated Ivy Smith, health policy specialist at Idaho Kids Covered. "This is a crisis that cannot be put off any longer. We call on Idaho lawmakers to take action to ensure more Idaho moms and babies get a healthy start in life."

The report found that Idaho has continued to move in the wrong direction across key health indicators, including maternal and infant mortality, postpartum depression, preterm and low birth weight babies, and access to prenatal care. According to the report, 56% of pregnancy-related deaths in 2021 occurred between 43 and 365 after birth; and 25% of Idaho mothers experienced moderate to severe postpartum depression in the three months following pregnancy—nearly double the national average. Idaho's Medicaid income eligibility criteria for pregnant and postpartum women is ranked last in the nation and hasn't been updated since 1990. By increasing income eligibility levels for pregnant and postpartum women and extending Medicaid postpartum coverage from 60 days to a full year, we can ensure Idaho moms, both during pregnancy and in the critical months after labor and delivery, have consistent access to life-saving care they need when they need it.

The outlook for children's health and access to care was equally alarming. Idaho's rankings as second to last in the nation in providing affordable health insurance for kids has only exacerbated infant health trends in the state. The report found that 85% of Idaho children missed doctor-recommended developmental screenings in 2021. What's more, Idaho's CHIP income eligibility criteria for children has not been updated since 2004, and with 28,400 uninsured kids in Idaho, most of whom are just outside of the income limits, it is time for change.

"Almost half of Idaho's infants and toddlers are living in households with low incomes. Idaho families are struggling financially with the rising costs of gas, groceries, child care, and other day-to-day expenses," Smith explained. "Idaho moms need access to timely and consistent health care before, during, and after birth. Medicaid can help ensure new and expectant mothers have health insurance they can count on to stay healthy

and care for their babies—but more can be done to strengthen this important program. Raising Medicaid and CHIP income eligibility limits so more Idaho moms and children can access care and extending Medicaid postpartum care to a full year can help us turn the tide on the trends we are seeing,” Smith concluded.

As policymakers confront Idaho’s growing maternal and infant health needs, advancing policy solutions that prioritize consistent health coverage and reliable access to care will be vital for the health and well-being of Idaho families. Idaho Kids Covered, the leading child health policy advocacy network in the state, calls upon lawmakers to respond during this upcoming legislative session and implement policies that meaningfully address the healthcare needs of mothers and their babies. The time is now to act and reverse Idaho's troubling trends in maternal and infant health.

The full report can be read here: <https://idahokidscovered.org/idaho-maternal-and-infant-healthcare-report-2023/>

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#### **About Idaho Kids Covered**

Idaho Kids Covered is a statewide network of healthcare 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](http://idahokidscovered.org) to learn more.