Executive Summary



In 2010, RSA 132:30 and the accompanying rule He-P 3013 established a New Hampshire Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC). The function of the MMRC is to conduct comprehensive and multidisciplinary reviews of maternal deaths, identify contributing factors associated with these deaths, and make actionable recommendations to improve outcomes for New Hampshire women.

The World Health Organization defines maternal death as "the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of the end of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and the site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes."[1] The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that in 2023, 669 women died of maternal causes in the United States compared with 817 in 2022 and 1,205 in 2021. The maternal mortality rate for 2023 decreased to 18.6 deaths per 100,000 live births, compared with a rate of 22.3 in 2022 and 32.9 in 2021.[2] Data from 38 Maternal Mortality Review Committees across the US indicate that out of 525 reviewed cases in 2020, mental health conditions, including overdose deaths due to substance use disorder, was the main underlying cause of death, accounting for 22.0% of pregnancy-related deaths, followed by cardiovascular causes (16.6%).[3]

In New Hampshire, there were five pregnancy-associated deaths in 2023 (deaths that occurred while pregnant or up to one year after the end of the pregnancy, regardless of cause). Two women died from cardiovascular conditions. There was one woman who died from homicide; that case has not yet been reviewed pending legal proceedings. Two women died from drug overdose in 2023 compared to five in 2022. Analysis of aggregated data indicates similar trends in the causes of maternal deaths over the last five years. Most of the deaths occurred among pregnant and postpartum women who were between 25 and 34 years old and about half of the women had acquired a high school diploma or less. Between 2019-2023, 50% of pregnancy-related deaths in New Hampshire were due to drug overdose. Among overdose deaths during this five-year period, 73% were Medicaid recipients. Among all pregnancy-related deaths, the MMRC determined that mental health conditions were the primary underlying cause of death for 58.3% of women. Among the pregnancy-related deaths that occurred between 2019-2023, the committee determined that 79.1% were preventable.

In 2023, MMRC recommendations focused on enhancing and sustaining projects designed to reduce morbidity and mortality from perinatal substance use disorder and mental health conditions, including the implementation of the Alliance for Innovation in Maternal Health (AIM) Patient Safety Bundles clinical quality improvement projects, building support to begin a statewide perinatal recovery coach program, and conducting clinical education sessions. Several recommendations also focused on enhancing MMRC membership, case reviews, and raising awareness about maternal mortality in New Hampshire.

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1 World Health Organization. International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems, 10th revision (ICD–10). 2008 ed. 2009.

2 Hoyert, Donna L. (2025). Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2023. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2023/maternal-mortality-rates-2023.htm

3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Pregnancy-Related Deaths: Data From Maternal Mortality Review Committees in 38 U.S. States, 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/maternal-mortality/php/data-research/index.html