

# It Takes a Village: The significance of the community in the perinatal period

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## Key Findings

- Together, community, primary and perinatal care, and hospitals, provide a complete package for parenting people.
- A formalized structure of community and health care organizations is needed to ensure all parenting people continue to receive perinatal care and support for health-related social needs.
- To support continued work and coordination, funding is needed for both the health care and community organizations.



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## Introduction

Colorado, like the country at large, is facing high rates of maternal mortality that “disproportionately affect people of color, individuals of color, individuals living in poverty, those with less than a high school education, those over the age of 40, and those residing in frontier areas.”<sup>1</sup> The leading pregnancy-related causes of deaths are suicide, unintentional overdose, and obstetric complications.

In Colorado, the Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC), estimates that some 90% of the 174 pregnancy associated deaths from 2016-2020 were deemed preventable and might have been averted with interventions at levels targeting patient, provider, facility, systems, or community levels.<sup>1\*</sup> These numbers, while alarming, do not even capture the complete picture of morbidity related to depression, anxiety, substance use, and overdoses that do not lead to death.

There are multiple programs in the state to help address these challenges. Most support interventions in health care settings such as practices or hospitals. The IMprove Perinatal Access, Coordination, and Treatment for Behavioral Health Program ([IMPACT BH](#)) is unique in that the intervention includes community-based engagement with a focus on helping to strengthen a continuum of care across community organizations and health systems for pregnant and postpartum people and their families.

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<sup>1\*</sup> Pregnancy-associated deaths include all deaths that occur during pregnancy or within one year of the end of pregnancy, regardless of the cause of death. Pregnancy can end by live birth, stillbirth, fetal death, miscarriage, or abortion.

The program is being piloted in Eagle, Garfield, and Summit counties. Two of these rural counties are home to resort communities and popular ski areas: Eagle (Vail and Beaver Creek); and Summit (Arapahoe Basin, Breckenridge, Copper, and Keystone). Garfield County does not have a major ski area, but it is adjacent to Pitkin County (the four mountains of Aspen) which is the most expensive real estate market in the state.<sup>2</sup> Like other mountain communities across the state and country, these three counties are experiencing astronomically high-housing costs, driven by relocation of higher-income remote workers and short-term rental investors.<sup>3</sup> Challenges finding housing are consistently cited as a key issue by IMPACT BH partners. Figure 1 below describes these partners and their roles.

**Figure 1: IMPACT BH Partners**



**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

**Great Expectations**

Home visiting agency, Garfield County

- Home Visiting Programs
- Patient navigation to connect families to community social service supports
- Support to increase access to telehealth mental/behavioral health services
- Facilitate parenting groups
- Garfield County Perinatal Continuum of Care Group Member

**Valley Settlement**

Social justice organization, Garfield County

- Promotoras de Salud community health worker to support Spanish Speaking families
- Offers early childhood programming and family resources
- The Alma program, a peer support program for moms experiencing Postpartum Depression
- Garfield County Perinatal Continuum of Care Group Member

**Building Hope**

Community-wide initiative for Summit County residents

- Scholarships for mental and behavioral health for Summit County residents and workers
- Mental health navigation
- Therapist and Peer-Led Support Groups
- Trainings and professional development for providers



**OUTPATIENT CLINICS**

**Women's Health**

Valley View OB/GYN

- Integrated medical and behavioral health services
- Initiated Perinatal Continuum of Care Group – structured collaborative support for perinatal population

**Pediatric Partners**

Valley View Pediatric Clinic, Garfield County

- Coordination with OB clinic to support newborns
- Garfield County Perinatal Continuum of Care Group member

**Mountain Family**

FQHC Eagle County

- Integrated OB and BH services
- Eagle County Perinatal Continuum of Care Group member

**High Country Healthcare**

Common Spirit OB/GYN Summit County

- Coordination of care with hospital and clinic
- Train staff in PSI Perinatal Mental Health

**Summit Community Care Clinic**

FQHC Summit County

- Integrated OB and BH services

*continued* →

**Text of Figure 1 is available at the end of this document.**

Figure 1: IMPACT BH Partners continued



## INPATIENT FACILITIES

### **Valley View Hospital**

#### Labor & delivery

- Developing BH advocates
- Quality Improvement initiatives for perinatal population with substance and mental health challenges



## TECHNICAL SUPPORT

### **CPCQC**

#### Backbone organization

- Strategic vision & accountability for program implementation & evaluation
- Implements other perinatal hospital QI programs: CO: AIM SUD / MOMs+

### **Practice Innovation Program (PIP) at University of Colorado**

- Practice facilitation for outpatient clinics
- Project support

### **Quality Health Network (QHN)**

- Coordinate community and medical organizations
- Supports local perinatal continuum of care groups

### **Stader Opioid Consultants**

- Collaboration with The Naloxone Project and MOMs+ Initiative
- Take home naloxone training
- MOUD training

### **Steadman Group**

- Sustainability planning for participants

### **Parent and Family Wellness Center**

- Tele-mental health services to support parents and families

Text of Figure 1 is available at the end of this document.

*“IMPACT has improved the practices’ ability to find resources for patients and staff to learn best practices and be creative with ideas and support to better serve our maternal population. I am so happy to be a part of IMPACT!”*

– RESPONDENT TO 2023 PRACTICE SURVEY

## Barriers

### 1 Personnel:

- Hiring patient navigators can be challenging and they are essential to the program.
- Organizational changes and staff turnover at the leadership and clinic level present challenges in both implementing and sustaining the efforts.
- Recruiting and hiring is difficult, particularly for bilingual staff and advocates and for patient navigators.

### 2 Data:

- The collection and reporting of relevant data sources have been slow processes due to Data Use Agreement delays.
- Collecting, sharing and reporting data within systems can make it impossible to share information with other partners.

### 3 Trust and mobilization:

- It takes time to build trust in communities and become recognized as a contributor.
- It takes considerable time to mobilize a community to fully engage and support a new project. It is important to be respectful and humble and work to partner, elevate, and enhance local efforts already underway.
- Identifying, documenting, and maintaining information on available community resources is a challenge.

## Recommendations

- Peers have been shown to be effective at helping to build trust and engage parenting people. Community organizations may need to pursue grant funding to support peer services but there are other potential opportunities for sustainable funding such as aligning with a Recovery Support Services Organization, which is able to bill Medicaid.
- There are funding sources which can support the clinical side – for example, [Prenatal Plus \(PN+\)](#), a Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid program) program can provide sustainable resources for practices.
- Integrating behavioral health into primary care can help destigmatize disordered substance use during the perinatal period and may promote long-term positive health outcomes. Clinics often need support for internal policy and processes.

## References

- 1 Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Maternal Mortality in Colorado 2016-2020. September 2023. Available at: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L8YyFzO7MUKJuG17p2qa1O8mwTz\\_PR4T/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L8YyFzO7MUKJuG17p2qa1O8mwTz_PR4T/view)
- 2 Svaldi A. Colorado's median single-family home price hits \$600,000 in April. *The Denver Post*. May 12, 2002. Available at: [Colorado's median single-family home price hits \\$600,000 in April \(denverpost.com\)](#)
- 3 Pettypiece S. A 'cowboy ski town' where high earners can't afford a home faces a housing battle. NBC News. March 3, 2024. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/economics/cowboy-ski-town-high-earners-cant-afford-home-faces-housing-battle-rcna140429>

## **Figure 1 identifies the IMPACT BH Partners and the work they do for the project.**

### **The following Community Organizations are listed:**

- Great Expectations, a home visiting agency in Garfield County, provides: home visiting programs; patient navigation to connect families to community social service supports; supports to increase access to telehealth mental/behavioral health services; parenting group facilitation. They are a member of the Eagle County Perinatal Continuum of Care group.
- Valley Settlement, a social justice organization in Garfield County, provides: Promotoras de Salud, community health workers to support Spanish speaking families; a peer support program to support people with postpartum depression known as the Alma program; childhood programming and family resources. They are a member of the Eagle County Perinatal Continuum of Care group.
- Building Hope, a community-wide initiative for Summit County residents provides: scholarships for mental and behavioral health provided to Summit County residents and workers; mental health navigation; therapist and peer-led support groups; training and professional development for providers.

### **The following outpatient clinics are listed partners:**

- Women's Health, Valley View OB/GYN in Garfield County provides integrated medical and behavioral health services and initiated the Perinatal Continuum of Care Group that provides structured collaborative support for the perinatal population.
- Pediatric Partners, a Valley View Pediatric Clinic in Garfield County coordinates with the OB clinic to support newborns and is a member of the Garfield County Perinatal Continuum of Care Group.
- Mountain Family, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Eagle County provides integrated OB and behavioral health services and is a member of the Eagle County Perinatal Continuum of Care Group.
- High Country Health Care, a Common Spirit OB/GYN located in Summit County, provides coordination of care with the hospital and clinic and trains staff in perinatal mental health.
- Summit Community Care Clinic, an FQHC in Summit County, provides integrated OB and behavioral health services.

The inpatient facility partner is Valley View Hospital, which provides labor and delivery and also develops behavioral health advocates and conducts quality improvement initiatives for the perinatal population with substance and mental health challenges.

Technical support is provided by:

- CPCQCC, the backbone organization of the project, provides: strategic vision and accountability for program implementation and evaluations; and also implements other perinatal hospital quality improvement programs such as Colorado AIM SUD and MOMs+.
- The Practice Innovation Program (PIP) at the University of Colorado provides practice facilitation for outpatient clinics and other project support.
- Quality Health Network (QHN) coordinates community and medical organizations and supports the Perinatal Continuum of Care groups.
- Stader Opioid Consultants provides: collaboration with the Naloxone Project and the MOMS+ Initiative; take home naloxone training; and MOUD training.
- Steadman Group provides sustainability planning for participants.
- The Parent and Family Wellness Center provides tele-mental health services to support parents and families.

There are 2 quotes from respondents to the 2023 practices survey:

- "We are thrilled to have a newcomers group and continued support for these vulnerable communities. Thank you!"
- "IMPACT has improved the practices' ability to find resources for patients and staff to learn best practices and be creative with ideas and support to better serve our maternal population. I am so happy to be a part of IMPACT!"