

PUBLIC HEALTH CONNECTION



Maternal Mortality and Doula Care

Maternal Mortality

Maternal mortality is on the rise and many factors like race and socioeconomic status lead to unequal, and sometimes severe birth outcomes.

Maternal mortality rates increased by nearly 40% since 2020. Black women are 3 times more likely to experience a pregnancy-related death. Black and Indigenous women are 2-3 times more likely to experience a maternal mental health condition, but less likely to receive care. Prevalence of hypertension is high in women of color.

Doulas are one way to help improve maternal health outcomes. They can provide continuous support to the birthing person and advocate for them to have a safe and equitable birthing experience.

What is a Doula?

SCHD's Healthy Pregnancy program makes referrals for doula services to help address maternal mortality concerns. A doula is a non-medical professional that provides physical and emotional support before, during, and sometimes after pregnancy. Doulas have been trained to also provide evidenced-based information to educate their clients. They do not provide any medical help or deliver babies.

Why are Doulas Important?

Doulas provide continuous support and encouragement during labor and delivery and can help women have a better birthing experience. They provide physical support, such as positions for comfort measures and breathing techniques. Doulas provide emotional support, such as helping families feel supported and empowered. Birth is very emotional so a doula can help create a safe and warm atmosphere for the birthing person to be calm and have a positive birth experience. Doulas can also provide partner support and help the partner or friends/family member be an integral part of the birthing experience. Education can help the partner be calm and it teaches the partner how to support the birthing person. Doulas can provide evidence-based information and advocacy. There are times where a doula may speak up for the client; however doulas empower the client to speak up for themselves and support them when they do. They serve as a bridge of communication between staff and providers.

Maternal mortality has impacted so many birthing families, but doula involvement has been shown to positively impact birthing outcomes. For help connecting with support during pregnancy, contact SCHD Healthy Pregnancy Staff at 563-328-4114.



OUR MISSION:

The Scott County Health Department promotes, protects, and preserves health through leadership, services, education, and partnerships.

OUR VISION:

Scott County—
A safe and healthy
community.



SPECIAL EVENTS

- *Scott County Board of Health Meeting, Scott County Administrative Center, 1st Floor Boardroom, 12:00 PM, Thursday, May 16, 2024.*
- *SCHD will be closed Monday, May 27, 2024 in observation of Memorial Day.*

Links

- **Benefits of a Doula:** <https://www.dona.org/>
- **Local Supports:** <https://www.iowablackdoulas.com/>
- **Every Child Doulas:** <https://www.foreverychild.org/doula-services>
- **Best Practices:** [best-practices-for-equitable-maternal-care.pdf \(aha.org\)](https://www.aha.org/maternal-care.pdf)
- **Mental Health America 2024 Outreach Toolkit:** <https://www.mhanational.org/mental-health-month>
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** <https://988lifeline.org/>
- **Your Life Iowa (help with alcohol, drugs, gambling, suicidal thoughts, or mental health):** <https://www.yourlifeiowa.org>

National Mental Health Month

A Month Long Celebration to Increase Mental Health Awareness

May is National Mental Health Month, an awareness celebration that was created by Mental Health America and dates back to 1949. This year's theme is "Where to Start: Mental Health in a Changing World." The world we live in is always changing. Dealing with change and other life stressors can have a negative impact on mental well-being, sometimes more than is realized. According to Mental Health America, some ways to proactively care for mental health include: finding a support system, setting technology boundaries, getting involved in advocacy, and learning healthy coping skills. The [Mental Health America 2024 Outreach Toolkit](#) provides information on helping to raise awareness; available mental health supports; how modern life affects mental health and what can be done to lessen the impact; building a coping toolbox; and more.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, help is available. Call or text 988, or chat at 988.lifeline.org. The Crisis Text Line can also be reached by texting HELLO to 741741.



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