



Commission on Maternal and Infant Health

September 19, 2025 2:00pm-3:30pm Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Present: Champa Woodham, Marlo Vernon, Keisha Callins, Shae Evans, Shannon Mayfield, Monica Newton, Rep. Carmen Rice, Rep. Karen Bennett, Kimberly Ross

1. Welcome

- Dr. Woodham opened the meeting and welcomed participants.

2. Understanding and Addressing Drivers of Infant Mortality (presentation attached)

Presenter: Ravi Patel, MD, Emory University School of Medicine

Discussion Highlights:

- AAP guidelines are voluntary; lack of mandate may be a barrier.
- Differences exist between state classification and AAP's Levels 3 & 4 NICUs.
- Need for clarity: do current certified NICUs meet capacity needs, especially for Level 4?
- Younger, more acutely ill babies surviving → need longer-term, resource-intensive interventions.
- Preterm birth: prior preterm birth and inadequate pregnancy spacing are strong predictors.
- Respiratory diseases rank #9 as a cause of infant mortality.
- Owlet socks: not yet proven effective in preventing SIDS; insurance coverage uncertain.
- Regional disparities: Atlanta has many NICUs; other areas lack access to higher levels of care
- Transport challenges: insurance often doesn't cover back-transport to lower-level NICUs.

Recommendations

- Support adoption of AAP Levels of Care and alignment with state classifications.
- Monitor and expand NICU capacity, especially Level 4, as population needs grow.
- Strengthen transport systems and ensure insurance covers both transfer and back-transfer.
- Continue investment in GaPQC and Regional Perinatal Centers (RPCs) for outreach and local hospital support.

3. Understanding Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) in Georgia (presentation attached)

Presenter: Terri Miller, Georgia Department of Public Health

Discussion Highlights:

- Georgia ranks 11th in SUID deaths.
- Data requested by perinatal region and census tract.
- High-risk: Medicaid-enrolled families have 4x higher SUID risk.
- Contributing factors: unsafe sleep environments (surface sharing, blankets, suffocation in older infants).
- Hospital initiative (ended in 2018) previously provided training, portable cribs, and education; improved outcomes while funded.

- Current safe sleep efforts limited by funding; cribs and bassinet distribution difficult to sustain.
- Opportunities: quick video education, multilingual messaging, partnerships with community health workers, doulas, childbirth educators.

Recommendations

- Reinstate or expand hospital safe sleep programs (crib/bassinet distribution, staff training, policy development).
- Expand safe sleep education using quick videos, multilingual content, and integration into maternal health resources.
- Establish sustainable crib/bassinet funding source beyond grants.
- Engage community health workers, doulas, and childbirth educators in consistent safe sleep messaging.

4. Mom’s Heart Matters (presentation attached)

Presenters: Keisha Reneé Callins, MD, MPH & Heather Daniels, RN/BSN

Discussion Highlights:

- Program not statewide; expansion depends on coordination and distribution.
- RPCs could be a vehicle for wider adoption.
- Insurance coverage for blood pressure cuffs remains a barrier; Medicaid recently made improvements.
- American Heart Association interested in supporting clinics with cuffs.

Recommendations

- Scale program statewide through RPCs and coordinated partnerships.
- Improve access to blood pressure cuffs via insurance coverage and partnerships (e.g., American Heart Association).
- Promote awareness of referral process for women and providers to access program resources.

5. Future Meetings / Next Steps

- Additional possible topics (list of covered topics and future topics attached):
 - Pregnancy resource center funding
 - Substance use disorders and maternal peer specialist program (Georgia Council on Recovery)
- Doodle poll will be sent to schedule next meeting.