



NEWS RELEASE

# Merck Announces First Nine “Safer Childbirth Cities” Committed to Reducing Maternal Deaths and Narrowing Disparities in the US

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Co-Funders Join Merck for Mothers to Support Newly Formed City-Based Coalitions

KENILWORTH, N.J.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Merck (NYSE: MRK), known as MSD outside the United States and Canada, announced today its funding support of projects in nine cities across the country to help end preventable maternal deaths. Each project will be tailored to the needs of pregnant women in their respective city, focusing on reducing barriers to prenatal and postpartum care and addressing both the health and social factors that affect a healthy pregnancy and childbirth.

The vision for the Safer Childbirth Cities Initiative is to foster local solutions that help cities become safer – and more equitable – places to give birth. It is part of **Merck for Mothers**, Merck’s global initiative to help end preventable deaths of women from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. For the inaugural class, Safer Childbirth Cities will also be co-funded with the Burke Foundation, The Nicholson Foundation, the Community Health Acceleration Partnership, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Rhia Ventures, and others.

“Safer Childbirth Cities builds on the insights gained and work implemented through Merck for Mothers over the past seven years,” said Dr. Julie L. Gerberding, chief patient officer at Merck. “Together with our current and future collaborators, we aim to foster community engagement and reverse the deeply troubling trends in U.S. maternal health.”

The U.S. is the only high-income country where maternal mortality is on the rise. Additionally, racial disparities are



stark and persistent – a Black woman is three to four times more likely to die from a pregnancy or childbirth complication than a White woman, according to the **CDC**.

“Each of the selected coalitions is pursuing solutions that are most impactful for their communities,” noted Dr. Mary-Ann Etiebet, lead and executive director of Merck for Mothers. “In addition to the local outcomes, I’m excited to see what learnings the coalitions can incorporate from each other – and how we can take these findings to greater scale and impact.”

“We envision a world where all Black Mamas have access to the respectful care they need,” said Angela D. Aina, interim director, Black Mamas Matter Alliance. “We’re thrilled to be a part of the Safer Childbirth Cities Initiative, through which we plan to create a model for women in Atlanta, GA to get the care they need during pregnancy and beyond with specially trained para-professionals and other social support resources.”

“At the Kellogg Foundation, our goal is that every child thrives. That starts with a healthy pregnancy and birth,” said Rhea Williams-Bishop, director of Mississippi and New Orleans programs for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. “We are excited to partner with Merck for Mothers and join the growing number of natural birth advocates and doulas in the community to better support Black women and low-income women in Mississippi, ensuring every child has a healthy start in life.”

“New Jersey’s infant and maternal mortality rates are startling, and for women and babies of color the statistics are even more dire,” said Tammy Murphy, First Lady of New Jersey. “Through our statewide Nurture NJ campaign, we are simultaneously working to combat implicit bias in our health care systems and on the economic and social factors that contribute to the disparities. Our goal is to make New Jersey the safest place in the United States to give birth and I applaud the Safer Childbirth Cities Initiative and organizations like the Greater Newark Healthcare Coalition and Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers who are working with us to make that a reality.”

### City-Based Projects Include:

- Atlanta, GA: Black Mamas Matter Alliance and its partners are creating a social safety-net model to link women, particularly Black women, to care and critical services that could be scaled to other communities where access to health care is limited.

LEAD ORGANIZATION: Black Mamas Matter Alliance

- Baltimore, MD: Baltimore Healthy Start and its partners are enhancing the State of Maryland’s Maternal Mortality Review process with Severe Maternal Morbidity reviews, elevating patient experiences to improve quality care, and encouraging postpartum care services to be provided alongside pediatric visits.

LEAD ORGANIZATION: Baltimore Healthy Start

- Camden, NJ: Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers and its partners are strengthening citywide data infrastructures to improve connection to services and care coordination for pregnant and postpartum women.

LEAD ORGANIZATION: Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers

- Chicago, IL: AllianceChicago and its partners are improving the quality and coordination of care to serve women at highest risk, and empowering families and social service providers through community outreach.

LEAD ORGANIZATION: AllianceChicago

- Columbus, OH: ROOTT and its partners are creating a model of community-based full-spectrum perinatal support doula care, with focus for Black women who have limited or no access to insurance, to ensure that they receive relevant, consistent, safe and equitable care.

LEAD ORGANIZATION: ROOTT

- Jackson, MS: Mississippi Public Health Institute and its partners are reducing unnecessary caesarean sections, providing community-based support to pregnant and post-partum women, and decreasing adverse maternal health outcomes through specially trained doulas.

LEAD ORGANIZATION: Mississippi Public Health Institute

- Newark, NJ: Greater Newark Healthcare Coalition and its partners are educating health care providers on the best practices for maternity care, developing a public education campaign to increase women's awareness of serious complications associated with pregnancy and the post-natal period, and disseminating recommendations to local stakeholders.

LEAD ORGANIZATION: Greater Newark Healthcare Coalition

- New Orleans, LA: The Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies and its partners are identifying and linking birthing people who have unmet health needs and are disconnected from support to quality care and policy solutions.

LEAD ORGANIZATION: The Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies

- Philadelphia, PA: Health Federation of Philadelphia and its partners will strengthen surveillance and reporting, improve clinical care, integrate community voices in developing solutions, address racial disparities in

maternal health outcomes, and increase community-based support for childbearing women through development of a community action team.

LEAD ORGANIZATION: Health Federation of Philadelphia

To learn more about the selected organizations, or how to get involved in the future, please visit

**[MerckforMothers.com/SaferChildbirthCities](https://www.merckformothers.com/SaferChildbirthCities)**

## About Merck

For more than a century, Merck, a leading global biopharmaceutical company known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada, has been inventing for life, bringing forward medicines and vaccines for many of the world's most challenging diseases. Through our prescription medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies and animal health products, we work with customers and operate in more than 140 countries to deliver innovative health solutions. We also demonstrate our commitment to increasing access to health care through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. Today, Merck continues to be at the forefront of research to advance the prevention and treatment of diseases that threaten people and communities around the world - including cancer, cardio-metabolic diseases, emerging animal diseases, Alzheimer's disease and infectious diseases including HIV and Ebola. For more information, visit **[www.merck.com](http://www.merck.com)** and connect with us on **Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube** and **LinkedIn**.

## About Merck for Mothers

Merck for Mothers is our company's \$500 million initiative to create a world where no woman has to die giving life. Applying Merck's business and scientific resources, we collaborate with partners to improve the health and well-being of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. For more information, visit **[www.merckformothers.com](http://www.merckformothers.com)**.

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