

Gov. Evers: Announces “Healthy Women, Healthy Babies” initiatives in state budget

Posted on Thursday, Feb 21, 2019

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact: GovPress@wisconsin.gov or 608-219-7443

MADISON – Governor Tony Evers today announced that his upcoming budget proposal will include a nearly \$28 million investment in “Healthy Women, Healthy Babies” initiatives aimed at improving women’s access to preventative care such as cancer screenings, health exams, and STI testing, supporting healthier pregnancies and births, and addressing racial disparities in maternal and child health.

Every woman in Wisconsin deserves access to quality health care, no matter where they live. However, data from the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), indicates that Wisconsin is facing a shortage of obstetrician-gynecologists, or OB-GYN, particularly in small and rural communities around the state. [Source: <https://waow.com/news/2019/02/18/ob-gyn-shortage-impacting--women-throughout-wisconsin/>]

The governor’s proposal will expand the Well Woman Program and bring Planned Parenthood back into the fold as a trusted provider of healthcare services through an increase to the Women’s Health Block Grant and changes to Title V and X eligibility.

“We can’t have healthy communities without healthy women and babies,” said Gov. Evers. “That is why my budget will connect the dots and increase access and coverage, as well as create innovative programs to ensure quality health care for women, and healthy beginnings for our children.”

In 2016, (the most recent data available) there were 415 infant deaths in Wisconsin, or 6.2 deaths per 1,000 live births. These numbers alone are concerning, but when comparing the infant death rates of white infants to children of color, the disparities are startling.

Between 2014 and 2016, the infant mortality rate for white infants was 4.8 per 1,000 live births, while for Black infants the rate was 14.2 deaths per 1,000 live births.

To reduce the number of infant deaths in Wisconsin, and to support women during and after their pregnancies, the governor's budget will strengthen the state public health infrastructure to support local efforts to address infant mortality by creating an Infant Mortality Prevention Program at the Department of Health Services. This program will assist families to remove barriers to healthy pregnancies like unstable housing, lack of nutritional and family supports, and unemployment.

The "Healthy Women, Healthy Babies" initiatives also include additional funding for the Family Foundations Home Visiting Program, a home visiting program managed by the Department of Children and Families targeting mothers at a high risk for a poor birth outcome, increased funding to address racial disparities in maternal and child services through the minority health grant, as well as grant funding for doula training and Medicaid coverage for doula services. A doula is a woman who is employed to provide guidance and support to a pregnant woman during labor and provides guidance and support to the mother of a newborn baby.

The governor will also seek a waiver in the CHIP program to increase post-partum coverage for women up to a year. Currently, Medicaid covers pregnant women for 60 days after the birth of their child. Having a longer period of uninterrupted health coverage contributes to the health of both the mother and child and provides adequate time to find private insurance that meets their needs and budget.