

About the Information from Maternal Mortality Review Committees

Maternal Mortality Review Committees (MMRCs) identify specific factors contributing to pregnancy-related deaths and determine if the deaths were preventable. MMRCs look at pregnancy-related deaths at the local and state level.¹ There are two main systems of information on maternal mortality at the national level: the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) and the Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System (PMSS).

We cannot directly compare NVSS, PMSS, and MMRC information. While they are all trusted resources, they use different information to create their data, and they serve different purposes.^{2, 3}

NVSS and PMSS do not uncover the whole story of each death like MMRCs. NVSS solely uses information from death records to identify medical causes of death, which do not include enough detail to understand the circumstances of each death. PMSS uses death records, with additional detail from any birth or fetal death records that link to a death record, to identify medical factors linked to these deaths. PMSS does not provide enough detail to fully understand the circumstances of each death. MMRCs use medical and nonmedical sources to understand the range of factors that contributed to a death. From this information, MMRCs recommend actions that can make a difference.²

Because of the depth and breadth of the MMRC process, MMRCs are the gold standard for identifying and describing pregnancy-related deaths.

Maternal Mortality Information Systems at a Glance²

| | NVSS | PMSS | MMRCs |
|--|------|------|-------|
| Identifies causes of death during pregnancy and up to 42 days after | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Identifies causes of death during pregnancy and up to one year after | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Uses death records | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Uses fetal death and birth records | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Uses sources such as medical records, social service records, autopsies, and informant interviews | | | ✓ |
| Determines if a death was preventable | | | ✓ |
| Provides information on maternal mortality at the national level | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Provides data back to each state individually | | ✓ | |
| Provides information on national maternal mortality disparities | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Provides information at the state and local level | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Identifies nonmedical contributing factors | | | ✓ |
| Provides specific recommendations for prevention | | | ✓ |

Comparison of Information Systems

| Information System | Based on | Purpose |
|---|--|---|
| National Vital Statistics System (NVSS)^{4, 5} | <p>▶ Death records</p> <p>Processes death records to assign International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes, which identify maternal deaths among deaths that occurred during pregnancy and up to 42 days after</p> | <p>Provides information about national trends and characteristics of maternal deaths, including maternal mortality rates</p> <p>Provides cause of death coding that aligns with the standard international definition of a maternal death</p> |
| Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System (PMSS)⁶ | <p>▶ Death records</p> <p>▶ Any linked birth records or fetal death records</p> <p>Reviews vital records to determine pregnancy relatedness among deaths during pregnancy and up to one year after</p> | <p>Provides information about national trends and characteristics of pregnancy-related deaths, including pregnancy-related mortality ratios</p> <p>Provides data back to each state individually</p> |
| State and local Maternal Mortality Review Committees (MMRCs)¹ | <p>▶ Death records</p> <p>▶ Any linked birth records or fetal death records</p> <p>▶ Medical records</p> <p>▶ Social service records</p> <p>▶ Autopsies</p> <p>▶ Informant interviews</p> <p>Reviews deaths to determine pregnancy relatedness, and identify prevention recommendations within the state and local context among deaths during pregnancy and up to one year after</p> <p>Includes injury deaths</p> | <p>Provides information about pregnancy-related deaths at the state or local level, and can be combined across jurisdictions</p> <p>Pinpoints specific factors contributing to deaths</p> <p>Determines if deaths are preventable</p> <p>Provides tangible prevention recommendations</p> |

References

- ¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Enhancing Reviews and Surveillance to Eliminate Maternal Mortality (ERASE MM). Accessed April 30, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/erase-mm/index.html>
- ² St Pierre A, Zaharatos J, Goodman D, Callaghan WM. Challenges and opportunities in identifying, reviewing, and preventing maternal deaths. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2018;131(1):138-142.
- ³ Trost SL, Beauregard J, Petersen EE, Cox S, Chandra G, St Pierre A, Rodriguez M, Goodman D. Identifying Deaths During and After Pregnancy: New Approaches to a Perennial Challenge. *Public Health Rep*. 2023 Jul-Aug;138(4):567-572. Epub 2022 Jul 23. PMID: 35872654; PMCID: PMC10291162.
- ⁴ National Center for Health Statistics. Maternal Mortality. Accessed April 30, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/maternal-mortality/index.htm>
- ⁵ Hoyert DL. Maternal mortality and related concepts. *Vital Health Stat* 3. 2007 Feb;(33):1-13. PMID: 17460868.
- ⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System. Accessed April 30, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/pregnancy-mortality-surveillance-system.htm>

For more information on CDC's Enhancing Reviews and Surveillance to Eliminate Maternal Mortality (ERASE MM) initiative and MMRCs, visit cdc.gov/ERASEMM.