

## SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is capitalizing on newly announced statewide initiatives to significantly impact maternal and infant outcomes in the Commonwealth. On June 5, 2019 Governor Ralph Northam announced the goal to eliminate racial disparity in Virginia's maternal mortality rate by 2025, and as direct result, on July 1, 2019 the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) announced the Health Birthday Virginia initiative to end maternal and infant mortality through a health equity lens and to ensure all mothers and their infants celebrated the child's first birthday together. The VDH shares these visions and the future will highly focus on leveraging existing activities to increase collaboration, form new partnerships, plan and implement cross-cutting and innovative measures to achieve the goals set forth.

## ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

By December 2025 VDH aims to decrease the disparity in black-white infant mortality disparity ratio from 2.2 (2017) to 1.24 (2025). VDH already travels many avenues addressing maternal and infant mortality, internally and externally, with sister agencies and community stakeholders to evaluate and address indicators along the reproductive life course. Efforts center on continuing engagement with the Virginia Neonatal Perinatal Collaborative (VNPC), a public-private partnership recognized by the CDC & NICHQ as a State Perinatal Quality Collaborative, and whose work has focused on the implementation and promotion of hospital based quality improvement activities. These include several levels of intervention, from surveillance to clinical practice improvements across the state and are focused on Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), Maternal Opioid Use Disorder (OUD), Obstetric Hemorrhage and severe hypertension in pregnancy. These activities are occurring in almost 100% of Virginia's birth hospitals.

Also, increased engagement with sister agencies and community based organizations (CBOs) will assist in innovative public health policy initiatives. VDH is participating in DMAS's Policy Innovations Program (PIP) to gain insight as to how public and private agencies and systems can coordinate primary and secondary preventative approaches to improve monitoring and tracking of service delivery and outcomes of pregnant women with substance use disorder. VDH will continue to utilize its federal funding in many of its core programming as well. Focused efforts in safe sleep, unintended pregnancy, substance use and access to care are ongoing in all of its thirty five health districts and Home Visiting partnerships will aid in current agency and state strategic planning to ensure improving maternal and infant outcomes, including reducing preterm birth.

Infant mortality is a sentinel measure of population health that reflects the underlying well-being of mothers and families, as well as the broader community and social environment that cultivate health and access to health promoting resources. VDH welcomes the Governor's initiatives to further statewide collaborations and to highlight the agency's commitment to ensuring health equity among the Commonwealth's moms and babies.