



# THE NETWORK NEWSLETTER



Society for  
Maternal-Fetal  
Medicine

SMFM's E-Newsletter  
for State Liaison Network Members  
*September 2021*

As we come to the unofficial end of summer, SMFM's Public Affairs Team sends our best wishes for a successful back to school, our hope that the fourth wave of COVID-19 quickly ebbs, and our thoughts for those continuing to provide obstetric care despite recent and ongoing natural disasters.

We thank you for your ongoing participation in the State Liaison Network (SLN), and we hope this month's newsletter helps inform your important work. Please send any feedback or items for distribution directly to Becky Abbott, Director of Government Relations ([rabbott@smfm.org](mailto:rabbott@smfm.org)).



## HIGHLIGHTS

- **SMFM Updates:** SMFM is accepting applications for Committee membership
- **SLN in Action:** Texas SLN members oppose bill restricting medication abortions
- **Reproductive Health Happenings:** SMFM responds to Supreme Court allowing Texas' 6-week abortion ban to go into effect
- **COVID Update:** CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccine for pregnant people
- **DC Developments:** SMFM advocates to include maternal health provisions in reconciliation package
- **News from the States:** Biden administration rejects Medicaid work requirements
- **Public Health & Quality Corner:** CMS will require reporting on a new maternal mortality quality measure, and AIM has a new bundle
- **What We Are Reading:** Articles and updates that caught the eye of SMFM's Public Affairs Team
- **Federal Funding & Comment Opportunities:** Many new comment opportunities from federal agencies

## SMFM UPDATES

### JOIN A COMMITTEE

Ready to step up your involvement from SLN member to SMFM committee member? Now is the time to apply! The Society is accepting applications for committee service via the [SMFM website](#). **The deadline to apply is September 15, 2021**. If you have questions or difficulties applying, please contact SMFM's Director of Member Services and Strategic Partnerships, [Tim Heinle](#).

## SLN IN ACTION

A Texas-based SLN Member alerted SMFM about a harmful anti-abortion bill quickly moving in the Texas legislature's special session. The bill, SB4, places further restrictions on medication abortion and imposes impossible reporting requirements, with criminal consequences, on clinicians. SMFM sent a letter signed by SMFM's President and 10 Texas-based members to leaders in the Texas House of Representatives opposing SB4. [While the bill ultimately passed](#), it was critical to express the Society's opposition, which was noted by Representatives during floor debate on the bill.

Thank you to our Texas SLN members for your leadership and for highlighting this advocacy opportunity. **We encourage other SLN members to contact Becky Abbott ([rabbott@smfm.org](mailto:rabbott@smfm.org)) if we can support your local advocacy and public health work.**

## REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH HAPPENINGS

In other news from the Lone Star State, on September 1, Texas' 6-week abortion ban (SB8) took effect. The law allows private citizens to enforce the law by suing anyone who "aids and abets" in abortion care, including those who refer patients. The following day, the [Supreme Court failed to block enforcement of the law](#), thus allowing the state to impose the strictest restrictions on abortion since *Roe v. Wade* was decided in 1973.

In response, SMFM issued a [public-facing statement](#) expressing strong opposition to the Supreme Court's decision and calling on Congress to intervene. We are also creating a new section on the [Reproductive Health Project for Maternal-Fetal Medicine website](#) that will serve as a resource hub for members in Texas and elsewhere.

SMFM will continue to closely monitor implementation of SB8. In the meantime, please [use SMFM's template letter](#) to ask your members of Congress to protect comprehensive reproductive health care services by passing the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA) and the Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance (EACH) Act.

## COVID UPDATE

### CDC RECOMMENDS COVID-19 VACCINE FOR PREGNANT PEOPLE

August brought a steady stream (river?) of updates and announcements related to COVID-19. Most importantly, the CDC updated its guidance to recommend that pregnant people be vaccinated against COVID-19. Thanks to the dedicated physician advocates who kept the pressure on CDC to make this change to protect the health of pregnant people and their infants. ( [CDC Press Release](#) | [CDC Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines](#) | [COVID-19 Vaccination During Pregnancy Data Tracker](#) )

Following CDC's change in guidance, SMFM quickly [released a public-facing statement](#) calling for the inclusion of pregnant and lactating people in COVID-19 vaccine mandates from employers, universities, and other entities.

### WHAT ELSE HAPPENED?

Here's a sampling of other COVID-19 related news you might have missed.

- August 12: [The US Supreme Court allowed Indiana University](#) to maintain its COVID-19 vaccine requirement.
- August 12: FDA [updated emergency use authorizations](#) (EUAs) for both the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to allow for the use of an additional dose in certain immunocompromised individuals; the CDC's vaccine advisory panel, ACIP, [updated its related recommendations](#) the next day.
- August 16: Pfizer-BioNTech [submitted early data](#) to the FDA on the effectiveness of a third dose of its COVID-19 vaccine.
- August 18: The Biden administration [announced a plan](#) to offer an additional dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine to eligible Americans beginning the week of September 20 and starting 8 months after an individual's second dose, pending reviews by FDA and CDC. The current booster plan [does not include individuals that received the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine](#).
  - To justify the decision, administration officials point to [new studies](#) suggesting fully vaccinated Americans' immunity is waning as the Delta variant spreads, though protection against severe disease and hospitalization remains high.
- August 23: [FDA granted full approval to the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for people 16 and older](#); ACIP [voted to recommend the Pfizer-BioNTech shots](#) to the same population on August 30. The third dose for certain immunocompromised individuals and the 2-dose regimen for individuals ages 12 to 15 remain available under EUA.
  - The announcement [led to a wave of new vaccine mandates from employers](#), including a requirement for service members issued by the Department of Defense.
- September 1: Moderna submitted its data on booster shots to the FDA, but there are [some remaining issues that need to be resolved](#).

### WHAT'S AHEAD?

The FDA's [vaccine advisory committee will meet on September 17](#) to discuss data on a booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. The meeting comes just three days before the Biden administration promised to make booster shots available to Americans. However, media reports are speculating that FDA and CDC vaccine advisory committees [might not yet have the data to recommend boosters for all Americans](#).

## DC DEVELOPMENTS

### SMFM CALLS FOR MATERNAL HEALTH PROVISIONS IN RECONCILIATION PACKAGE

Summer break is over for Congress. Last week, House Committees began marking up legislation that will be included in a [partisan \\$3.5 trillion reconciliation package that has the potential to reform Medicare, strengthen the social safety net, expand paid leave, and so much more](#). SMFM is focused on ensuring key provisions to improve maternal health are included in the final reconciliation package, including an extension of year-long postpartum Medicaid coverage. On August 17, [SMFM joined more than 200 organizations](#) in writing to Congressional leaders urging them to include postpartum Medicaid extension and provisions of the Black Maternal Health Momnibus in the final reconciliation package.

## 📢 CALL TO ACTION 📢

Help SMFM and our partners build momentum for including maternal health provisions in the reconciliation package by joining the *Invest in Maternal Health Tweetstorm* on Thursday, September 9, from 2 pm - 3pm ET (11 am - 12 pm PT). Additional details and a digital toolkit with sample social media messaging [can be found here](#). This activity is being led by the Black Maternal Health Federal Policy Collective, the Black Mamas Matter Alliance, and Community Catalyst.

## NEWS FROM THE STATES

The Biden Administration took steps in mid-August to [revoke Medicaid work requirements in three additional states - Ohio, South Carolina, and Utah](#). With the actions, the Administration is closer to eliminating work requirements in the 12 states that received approval for those requirements during the Trump Administration. The Administration also [opened a comment period on Tennessee's divisive Medicaid reform plan](#).

## PUBLIC HEALTH & QUALITY CORNER

### NEW MATERNAL MORTALITY MEASURES FROM CMS

In a [final rule issued August 2, 2021](#), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) adopted a new required "structural measure" intended to reduce maternal morbidity. The metric requires hospitals participating in the Inpatient Quality Reporting program to certify that 1) they are participating in a statewide or national Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative and 2) they have implemented patient safety practices or bundles related to maternal morbidity to address complications, including, but not limited to, hemorrhage, severe hypertension/preeclampsia, or sepsis. The first report will be due in FY 2023 covering activities during October through December 2021. Details on the measure are at [this link](#).

### AIM LAUNCHES NEWEST BUNDLE

In August, the Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health (AIM) launched its newest bundle - [Cardiac Conditions in Obstetrical Care](#). SMFM will keep you informed as additional information about this new bundle is made available.

## WHAT WE'RE READING

- [67 abortions in 17 hours: Inside a Texas clinic's race to beat new six-week abortion ban](#) (The 19th)
- [Long Drives, Air Travel, Exhausting Waits: What Abortion Requires in the South](#) (Kaiser Health News)
- [In Covid ICUs, doctors see a surge in critically ill pregnant women](#) (NBC News)
- [Getting pregnant people vaccinated is one of the nation's biggest health challenges](#) (The 19th)
- [Missourians who need expanded Medicaid coverage still have to wait far too long](#) (The Kansas City Star)
- [Innovation At The Centers For Medicare And Medicaid Services: A Vision For The Next 10 Years](#) (Health Affairs)
- [Addressing The Maternal Health Crisis Through Improved Data Infrastructure: Guiding Principles For Progress](#) (Health Affairs)
- [Most private insurers are no longer waiving cost-sharing for COVID-19 treatment](#) (Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker)

## FEDERAL FUNDING & COMMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Comment Opportunity: [NIH Seeks Public Comments to Help Identify Gaps in Women's Health Research](#) (due September 15)
- Comment Opportunity: [Updated HRSA-Supported Women's Preventive Services Guidelines: Well-Women Preventive Visits, Counseling for Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Breastfeeding Services and Supplies](#) (due September 20)
- Comment Opportunity: [Request for supplemental evidence to inform AHRQ's review on Schedule of Visits and Use of Telemedicine for Routine Antenatal Care](#) (due September 23)
- Funding Opportunity: [NICHD's Decoding Maternal Morbidity Data Challenge](#) (due October 15)
- Comment Opportunity: [Updating CDC's Contraception Guidance Documents - US Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use and US Selected Practice Recommendations for Contraceptive Use](#) (due October 18)

Please share any feedback or items for future newsletters directly with Becky Abbott, SMFM's Director of Government Relations ([rabbott@smfm.org](mailto:rabbott@smfm.org)).

You are receiving this newsletter because you are a member of SMFM's State Liaison Network. If you'd no longer like to receive these communications, please unsubscribe below. If you'd prefer to no longer be a member of the Network, please email Anna Hall, SMFM's Advocacy and Communications Coordinator ([ahall@smfm.org](mailto:ahall@smfm.org)).

STAY CONNECTED

