

Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC)
FINAL APPROVED Meeting Minutes
Friday, December 08, 2023
9:00 a.m.

Virtual: Teams Meeting Platform
Location: Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)
Robert Bernstein Building
Room K-100, First Floor
1100 West 49th Street
Austin, Texas 78756

Agenda Item 1: Call to order, welcome, roll call, and introductions

Dr. Carla Ortique, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Dr. Ortique announced this was the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) meeting.

Dr. Ortique, Chair, welcomed all committee members, staff, team members, and the public attending. She acknowledged the work done by the committee is a critical part in the efforts to address maternal deaths and disparities. Dr. Ortique stressed the works honor the lives that have been lost of Texas women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the year after and requested a moment of silence in honor of the women as well as their families and communities that have been touched by the loss of a mother.

Dr. Ortique introduced Ms. Jessica Arevalo, HHSC, Advisory Committee Coordination Office (ACCO) to read logistical announcements and call roll and determined if a quorum was reached.

Ms. Arevalo then proceeded with the meeting logistics and roll call. Ms. Arevalo announced that with thirteen (13) members present, quorum was met.

Table 1: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee attendance Friday, December 8, 2023, meeting.

MEMBER NAME	IN ATTENDANCE
Dr. Meitra Doty	Yes
Dr. Catherine Eppes	Yes
Dr. Kelly Fegan-Bohm	Yes
Dr. Manda Hall	Yes
Dr. James Hill	Yes
Dr. Sherri Onyiego	Yes
Dr. Carla Ortique, Chair	Yes
Dr. Lavannya Pandit	Yes
Ms. Nancy Puig	No
Dr. Amy Raines-Milenkov	Yes
Dr. Christina Murphey	Yes
Dr. Patrick Ramsey, Vice Chair	Yes
Dr. Robin Page	Yes
Ms. Nakeenya Wilson	Yes
VACANT	-
VACANT	-

Yes: Indicates attended the meeting

No: Indicates did not attend the meeting

Dr. Ortique announced that the posted agenda item number 7 would be next to accommodate the schedule of the presenter and proceeded to agenda item #4. Provided reminder to staff to state name and turn camera on each time they speak.

Agenda Item 2: Consideration of September 7, 2023, draft meeting minutes

Dr. Ortique turned the floor over to Ms. Arevalo to proceed with the consideration of the September 7, draft minutes. Ms. Arevalo asked members if there was any edits or changes needed in either draft, hearing none she requested a motion to approve the September 7, minutes as presented.

MOTION:

Dr. Patrick Ramsey motioned to approve both sets of minutes as presented, Dr. Carey Eppes seconded. Ms. Arevalo conducted a roll call vote, and the motion passed with thirteen (13) approve (Doty, Eppes, Fegan-Bohm, Hall, Hill, Onyiego, Ortique, Page, Pandit, Raines-Milenkov, Ramsey, Murphey, Wilson), no disapprove, no abstain. Ms. Arevalo turned the floor back to Dr. Ortique to move to agenda item number three.

Agenda Item 3: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee Subcommittees updates

Dr. Carla Ortique – Chair Update

Dr. Carla Ortique provided the following:

- A Texas MMMRC Historical Perspective from the last 10 years.
- Goals of the committee is review to action.
- A review of recommendations from the 2022 MMMRC-DSHS Legislative Report.
- Limitations of reviewing timely cases as it relates to redaction.
- Details around development of the MMMRC-DSHS 2024 Legislative Report .
- Update on the 2020-cohort cases - 137 cases or 67% of the 2020 case cohort have been reviewed as of December 7, 2023.
- The pregnancy-related mortality ratio from the first complete cohort review in 2013 (18.1 per 100,000) and the pregnancy-related mortality ratio from 2019 (16.7 per 100,000).

Dr. Carla Ortique turned the floor over to Dr. Sherri Onyiego, MMMRC Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities Chair, MD, Member

Dr. Sherri Onyiego - Maternal Health Disparities

Dr. Onyiego provided the following:

- The Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities met on October 20, 2023.
- The Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities is tasked with continuing work on the analyses and trends related to Maternal Mortality and Morbidity.
- The subcommittee is working on the following:
 - A decision tree as it relates to homicide and pregnancy-relatedness.
 - Archiving the timeline for the public health emergency unwinding and make available to the committee to examine impact of access to care for women who have potentially lost access.
 - Refining specific elements within the Discrimination Assessment and Social Determinants of Health (DASH) Facilitated Discussion Tool to enable the MMMRC to identify root causes of disparate outcomes based on race, socioeconomic status, education, geography (including the identification of maternal care deserts), and insurance coverage.

Dr. Onyiego turned the floor to Dr. Amy Raines-Milenkov to provide an update on the DASH tool refinement.

Dr. Carla Ortique introduced Dr. Catherine Eppes, MD, Member, Subcommittee on COVID-19 Chair to provide members with an update.

Dr. Catherine Eppes – Subcommittee on COVID-19 Update

- There has been rapid progress through cases affected by COVID-19 or the pandemic.
- The Subcommittee’s goals are to work on a standardized process in reviewing cases affected by COVID-19 or the pandemic, to train non-subcommittee members on the process, and create a framework for the review and lessons learned to impact to future public health emergencies.
- Dr. Eppes discussed ways to make the review process more agile including changes to the redaction process.
- The subcommittee is starting to see themes and patterns emerge and looking forward to sharing the thoughts in the report.

Dr. Ortique thanked Dr. Eppes.

Dr. Ortique then discussed forming a new subcommittee related to Research and Publication and seeking MMMRC members to be in this subcommittee.

Dr. Ortique proceeded to posted Agenda Item 7.

Agenda Item 7: HHSC Medicaid and CHIP Services: Women’s Health Overview

Dr. Ortique introduced Emily Zalkovsky, State Medicaid Director.

Ms. Zalkovsky provided an overview of Medicaid and CHIP: Women’s Health Programs and Services.

Dr. Ortique opened the floor for questions and comments.

Emily Zalkovsky answers questions posed by MMMRC members.

Dr. Ortique thanked Ms. Zalkovsky and proceeded to agenda item 5.

Agenda Item 5: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee Team updates

- Dr. Carla Ortique gave an opportunity to any of the team members to report to the members on information they might want to present including the successes and challenges in their team meetings.
- Dr. Manda Hall, MMMRC Team 4, discussed:
 - Explained how the use of the consent agenda and having robust conversations at the review team level helps to move through the review quickly.
 - How important it is to utilize the smaller team meetings most effectively so that they have the conversations and ask the critical questions before going into the larger meeting.

- Dr. Patrick Ramsey, MMMRC Team 3:
 - Echoed small team discussions are impactful and help with expedited reviews.
 - Explained the challenge related to identifying discriminative language through a black and white chart. The DASH tool has been helpful in being more systematic and uniform when looking for discrimination and racism.
 - He is working on a dictionary to help understand medical jargon for non-medical people on the committee.

- Ms. Nakeenya Wilson, MMMRC Team 2:
 - Explained that the committee would see a benefit to eliminating redaction as part of the review process.
 - Discussed having narratives of the deceased and informant reviews would help her as the community advocate to provide a holistic view of the cases.

- Dr. Sherri Onyiego, MMMRC Team 1:
 - provided insight on the importance of key informant interviews.
 - The team is trying to see if there is a trend in pregnancy-relatedness when a death is related to intimate partner violence or suicide.
 - Acknowledged that determining pregnancy relatedness is challenging.

Dr. Ortique opened the floor for further discussion/input/questions.

- Dr. Ramsey explained how committee members are volunteers and spend countless hours reviewing cases. He thanked the committee and the team of volunteers who dedicate their time to this work.

Dr. Ortique thanked the team members for their updates and proceeded to agenda item 5.

Agenda Item 5: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee Operational and Maternal Health and Safety Initiative Updates

Dr. Carla Ortique introduce Dr. Shruthi Arismendez, Maternal and Child Health Section Director

- Dr. Ortique acknowledged Julie Stagg on the hypertension bundle as a direct outgrowth of the work of the committee.

Dr. Arismendez provided the following updates:

- Recent staffing developments including the hire of Dr. Kobi Ajayi as the new Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Operations Branch Manager. Dr. Ajayi was present at the meeting and was acknowledged.

- The filling of vacated, expired, and new committee member positions.

- The MMMRC applicant selection panel have made their recommendation and the DSHS team is seeking executive approval for the following six (6) expired and vacant positions
 - Physician specializing in Obstetrics;
 - Physician specializing in Maternal and Fetal Medicine;
 - Physician specializing in Psychiatry;
 - Social Worker;
 - Medical Examiner; and
 - Physician specializing in Pathology.

- The solicitation for the five (5) of the new member positions closes on November 30, 2023 for the following positions:
 - Physician specializing in Emergency Care;
 - Physician specializing in Anesthesiology;
 - Two (2) community members with relevant experience in health care and data analysis:
 - one representing urban Texas;
 - one representing rural Texas, and
 - One managed care organization representative.
 - DSHS received a limited number of applications for the Physician specializing in Cardiology and Physician specializing in Oncology. The solicitation for these two positions has been extended to December 14, 2023.
 - New members should be joining the committee by Summer 2024.

Dr. Ortique opened the floor for questions and comments.

- Dr. Ramsey asked for a review of the selection process. Letters are sent out to people who are appointed to the Texas MMMRC and those who are not selected.
- Ms. Wilson requested updates on the community member positions and how urban, rural, and relevant health care fields are being defined. The DSHS legal team provided guidance to use the census definition of urban and rural.
- Dr. Ortique described the outline and the process of the legislative report, that recommendations are driven by the case reviews, and requested a timeline of the report to meet the legislative mandate.

Agenda Item 6: Trauma Informed Care Presentation

Dr. Ortique introduced Ms. Holly Fullmer, DSHS Trauma Informed Policy and Training Specialist.

Ms. Fullmer presented on the science and impact of adverse childhood experiences and stress, the principles of trauma-informed care, and provider well-being and self-care strategies.

Dr. Ortique opened the floor for questions and comments.

Ms. Fullmer answered questions posed by MMMRC members.

Dr. Ortique thanked Ms. Fullmer and proceeded to agenda item 8.

Agenda Item 8: Future Agenda Items

Dr. Ortique opened discussion for new business and potential agenda items for the next meeting scheduled for Friday, March 22, 2024.

- The next meeting of the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee will be on March 21 and 22, 2024.
- The next open meeting of the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee will be on March 22, 2024.
- Dr. Ortique requested a presentation from DSHS legal team on the processes and procedures for media training.
- Ms. Wilson shared that the next meeting is ahead of black maternal health week in April. Ms. Wilson suggested to have a presentation by the National Partnership for Women and Families around black maternal health.

Dr. Ortique proceeded to agenda item 9.

Agenda Item 9: Public Comment

Ms. Arevalo shared that there were no pre-registrations and no written public comment. One individual appeared in person to give oral comment. Oral comments were received from Erin Bolt, Registered Nurse.

Agenda Item 10: Executive Session: to review cases under Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 34. Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee, Section 34.007. Selection and Review of Cases as authorized by Section 34.004.

Dr. Ortique read the legislation allowing the Review Committee to move into a closed executive session.

She announced the committee will go into closed session at 12:15pm.

The committee will return later in afternoon to reopen the meeting from closed to open session before adjourning for the day, as statutorily required. There will be a break to allow for room turnover and the committee will resume their meeting, in closed session.

Ms. Arevalo announced to members of the public that this concluded the open meeting for the morning and the public was informed that the review committee would return later in the afternoon to open the closed session and then adjourn.

Agenda Item 11: Adjournment

Dr. Ortique reopened the meeting at 1:34 p.m., and stated with no further business or discussion she would adjourn the meeting at 1:34 p.m.

Below is the link to the archived video of the December 07, 2023, Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) that will be available for viewing approximately two years from date meeting was posted on website and based on the DSHS records retention schedule.

[Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee \(MMMRC\) Dec. 7, 2023](#)