

# Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC)

Friday, September 27, 2024

8:30am

**FINAL APPROVED**

Virtual: Teams Meeting Platform

In Person Meeting Site: Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)

Robert Bernstein Building

Room K-100, First Floor

1100 West 49<sup>th</sup> Street

Austin, Texas 78756

## Agenda Item 1: Call to order, roll call, and welcoming remarks

Dr. Carla Ortique, Chair, called the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

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 that the work of the committee honors 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 noted that Agenda Item Number 4 will be tabled. Dr. Ortique asks for prayers for family, friends, and colleagues effected by extreme weather events on the East Coast of the United States.

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 stated the meeting was being conducted in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and conducted the roll call. Ms. Arevalo announced that with members present, quorum was met.

## Table 1: Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) member attendance at the Friday, September 27, 2024 meeting.

Member Name	In Attendance
Dr. Meenakshi Awasthi	No
Dr. Kelly Fegan-Bohm	Yes

Member Name	In Attendance
Dr. Meitra Doty	Yes
Dr. Carey Eppes	Yes
Dr. Morna Gonsoulin	Yes
Dr. Angeline Opina Gonzalez	Yes
Dr. Manda Hall	Yes
Dr. Sarah Hartman	Yes
Dr. James Hill	No
Dr. Christina Murphy	Yes
Dr. Sherri Onyiego	Yes
Dr. Barbara Orlando	Yes
Dr. Carla Ortique	Yes
Dr. Diaa Osman	No
Dr. Robin Page	Yes
Dr. Lavannya Pandit	No
Ms. Nancy Puig	No
Dr. Amy Raines-Milenkov	Yes
Dr. Patrick Ramsey	Yes
Dr. Nila Ricks	No
Dr. Avi Ruderman	Yes
Dr. Ingrid Skop	Yes
Dr. Lindsey Vasquez	Yes

Dr. Ortique reminded DSHS staff, presenters, and members to state name and turn camera on each time they speak.

**Agenda Item 2: Consideration of June 18, 2024, draft meeting minutes**

Dr. Ortique asked members if there were any edits or changes needed in the draft. Dr. Kelly Fegan-Bohm requested to correct the minutes to correct a spelling error in Dr. Jennifer Shuford’s name. Dr. Patrick Ramsey requested to correct Alice Gong’s position to Vice Chair of Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies (TCHMB).

**Motion:**

Dr. Ingrid Skop motioned to approve the corrected minutes. Dr. Kelly Fegan-Bohm seconded. Dr. Ortique turned the floor over to Ms. Arevalo to proceed with a roll call vote, and the motion passed with thirteen approve (Fegan-Bohm, Doty, Gonsoulin, Hartman, Murphey, Onyiego, Orlando, Ortique, Page, Ramsey, Ruderman, Skop, Vasquez), no disapprove, no abstain.

### **Agenda Item 3: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) Committee Chair and Subcommittee Updates**

#### **Dr. Carla Ortique – Chair Update**

Dr. Ortique provided the following:

- Dr. Ortique elaborated on the opportunity that the State of Texas possesses for innovation and change. Dr. Ortique thanked committee members and DSHS team for the work they do to contribute to improving maternal health in Texas.
- Dr. Ortique shared recent developments that are working to improve processes within the Texas MMMRC.
- Dr. Ortique shared that the committee will complete the 2021 case cohort review before skipping ahead to the 2024 case cohort review. This will allow the committee to be more contemporary, and the years that are skipped over will be reviewed by the DSHS team and data will be compiled to identify maternal mortality and morbidity trends.
- Dr. Ortique encouraged advocacy for 2 positions to be added to the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee. These positions should be representatives from the public that can represent the voice of the public.
- Voiced the importance of continuing to participate in the national MMRIA system.

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

Dr. Onyiego thanked Dr. Ortique and acknowledges the leadership team at DSHS for their continued support. Dr. Onyiego provided the following:

- Shared the main focuses of the Maternal Health Disparities Subcommittee, which include:
  - Data analysis and identification of trends related to maternal morbidity and mortality. The subcommittee looks forward to receiving compiled data from the 2024 MMMRC DSHS Joint Biennial Report regarding health disparities that impact women across the state.
  - The discrimination assessment and social determinants of health tool that can be used when reviewing cases. Members of the subcommittee have been working to refine the discrimination assessment tool and are working with DSHS leadership to be able to bring those recommendations to the committee for approval.
  - Homicide tool development that can be used when reviewing homicide cases. Thanked Dr. Fegan Bohm and Marissa Gough for their contributions to the development of this tool and shared that a formal report on analysis and determinations that have been conducted to date will be presented at the December 2024 MMMRC Meeting.

Dr. Onyiego turned the floor back over to Dr. Carla Ortique.

Dr. Ortique thanked Dr. Onyiego. Dr. Ortique announced that Dr. Angeline Opina-Gonzalez has joined the meeting and turned the floor over to Dr. Opina-Gonzalez to introduce herself.

Dr. Opina-Gonzalez introduced herself as the cardiology representative of the Texas MMMRC.

Dr. Opina Gonzalez turned the floor back over to Dr. Carla Ortique. Dr. Ortique thanks Dr. Opina-Gonzalez and turned the floor over to Dr. Robin Page to discuss the Research and Publication Subcommittee.

Dr. Robin Page thanked Dr. Ortique. Dr. Robin Page shared the following:

- Shared that she is the chair of the new subcommittee on Research and Publications.
- The purpose of the subcommittee is to develop processes to identify opportunities for scholarly research and publications on behalf of the Texas MMMRC to facilitate dissemination of knowledge to the larger community of MMMRC's and the scientific community as a whole.
- The goals of the subcommittee are to identify existing processes or tools used by the MMMRC that may represent opportunities for knowledge of dissemination. Secondly, to develop processes and pathways to validate processes or tools used by the MMMRC and develop pathways to publication of related work. Third, to create processes and pathways to share unique knowledge derived from MMMRC case reviews as allowable by state statute to result in dissemination and publication of related work.
- Asked members to reach out to DSHS team if interested in joining subcommittee.

Dr. Robin Page turned the floor back over to Dr. Ortique.

Dr. Ortique thanked Dr. Page.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) Team Updates**

Agenda Item 4 was tabled.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Texas Maternal Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) Operational and Maternal Health Safety Initiatives Updates**

Dr. Ortique turned the floor over to Dr. Shruthi Arismendez, Director of the Maternal and Child Health Unit at DSHS.

Dr. Arismendez covered the following updates:

- Introduced new DSHS staff members Nancy Villarreal (Program Specialist V) and Georgia Green (Program Specialist III).
- Announced that the 2024 MMMRC DSHS Joint Biennial Legislative Report was published on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The report contains 2020 case cohort findings and corresponding recommendations. The report can be found on the DSHS website.

- DSHS is building the Maternal Mortality Review System, a Texas centric data system to support identification and review of maternal death cases. The system will allow for more efficient and timely case identification, and streamline other processes involved in the case review process. The new system has a projected launch date of April 2025.
- Texas AIM is planning for continuing success around severe hypertension in as well as opioid and other substance use disorder in pregnancy. DSHS will be holding the 4<sup>th</sup> Biennial Texas AIM Summit in December of 2024. Colleagues from across the state will provide updates on maternal health and safety priorities in Texas. The next Texas AIM bundle to be rolled out will be the Sepsis bundle.
- A new phase of the Hear Her Texas campaign has launched to continue to promote awareness about urgent maternal warning signs for pregnant and post-partum women, as well as their support networks.

Dr. Arismendez turned the floor over to Dr. Manda Hall, Deputy Commissioner for the Community Health Improvement Division at DSHS, for further operational updates.

Dr. Manda Hall shared a letter from Dr. Shuford that is addressed to the Texas MMMRC Chairs regarding the requests from the MMMRC. The letter contains the following:

- Emphasizes the importance of the work that the MMMRC does to contribute to maternal health in Texas.
- Expresses support of committee plans to review more recent cases and to adjust the review methodology.
- Emphasizes that in order to ensure relevance of the MMMRC's recommendations to policymakers, the MMMRC should begin to review the 2024 case cohort this year. In addition to this, there should be a long-term methodology to ensure that valid conclusions can be drawn from reviews in a shorter time period, which will involve representative sampling.

Dr. Manda Hall turned the floor over to Dr. Ortique.

**Agenda Item 6: 2024 Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) and Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Joint Biennial Report of the 2020 Case Cohort Findings and Recommendations**

Dr. Carla Ortique turned the floor over to Dr. Savannah Larimore, Senior Epidemiologist in Maternal Child Health Branch.

Dr. Larimore presented the findings from the 2024 MMMRC DSHS Joint Biennial Report. The presentation covered the following material:

- Review of Pregnancy-Related Death Case Review Findings:
  - Elaborated on preventability of pregnancy-related deaths, underlying causes of pregnancy-related deaths, and key circumstances surrounding pregnancy-related deaths such as violence, obesity, mental disorders, substance use disorders, and barriers to care.
  - Review of pregnancy-related mortality statistics based on ethnicity, age, and education levels.

- Discussion of complex interactions of factors and characteristics that contribute to preventable pregnancy-related death.

Dr. Larimore turned the floor over to Dr. Carla Ortique and Dr. Patrick Ramsey to present the 2024 MMMRC DSHS Joint Biennial Recommendations.

Dr. Carla Ortique began the presentation by discussing recommendations #1 through #6 from the DSHS MMMRC 2024 Joint Biennial Report and briefly elaborated on each recommendation.

Dr. Carla Ortique turned the floor to Dr. Patrick Ramsey to continue the presentation.

Dr. Patrick Ramsey discussed recommendations #7 through #12 from the DSHS MMMRC 2024 Joint Biennial Report and briefly elaborated on each recommendation.

Dr. Ramsey turned the floor back to Dr. Ortique.

Dr. Ortique thanked Dr. Ramsey and Dr. Larimore and provided remarks to conclude the review of the DSHS MMMRC 2024 Joint Biennial Report.

### **Agenda Item 7: Texas Health Data Maternal and Child Health Dashboards Update**

Dr. Ortique introduced Dr. Savannah Larimore, Senior Epidemiologist in Maternal Child Health Branch.

Dr. Savannah Larimore presented recent findings on severe maternal morbidity in Texas that can be found on the Texas Health Data Maternal and Child Health Dashboard. The presentation covered the following material:

- On August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology Unit (MCHE) at DSHS published updated statewide data trends for Severe Maternal Mortality (SMM).
- Presented SSM indicators findings and subsequently demonstrated how to access this data and how to interact with dashboard.
- Presented SMM findings regarding hemorrhage data, severe hypertensive disorders of pregnancy data, and sepsis data from 2021 and 2022.
- Conducted a live web demonstration to illustrate where the previously presented data can be found.

Dr. Larimore turned the floor back over to Dr. Carla Ortique. Dr. Ortique asked if the public has access to the data to use and reference. Dr. Larimore stated that the data is available to the public and can be downloaded in various formats.

Dr. Patrick Ramsey thanked Dr. Larimore and asks for clarification on the 'time lag' present between the data being submitted by hospitals and the data being made available. Dr. Larimore stated that DSHS is working to decrease that 'time lag' and has been successful in decreasing the time that it takes DSHS to receive the data from 12 months to 6 months. This has helped to make the process more efficient. Dr. Manda Hall added that speeding up this process has been an ongoing project and will continue to develop and improve.

## **Agenda Item 8: Vital Statistics and Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology Death Certificate Data Quality Project**

Dr. Carla Ortique turned the floor over to Dr. Tara Daas, Vital Statistics State Registrar and Director at DSHS. Dr. Daas presented on Death Certificates and Maternal Mortality. Her presentation covered the following:

- Presented the main functions of DSHS Vital Statistics section, which include the registration of all vital events in Texas, management of records, and quality and reliability monitoring of vital statistics data.
- Presented vital statistics organization chart within DSHS, which displays the 3 branches within Vital Statistics, such as the Reporting and Registration branch, the Amendments and Issuance branch, and the Administration branch.
- Presented what the Texas Death Certificate includes, such as Facts of Death and the Cause of Death (COD).
- Described the process behind the creation of death certificates in Texas and elaborates on why accurate death certificates are important.
- Reviewed the 'Cause of Death' section of a death certificate and explained how this section is intended to be filled out.
- Discussed data quality concerns in the cause of death section, followed by a more in-depth description of data quality concerns regarding pregnancy. Pregnancy is often over-reported on death certificates in female decedents.
- Discussed the TxEVER program; a system launched in 2019 to strengthen security and protection of the statewide system of vital events.
- Highlighted the collaboration with CDC Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Grant Activities that are modernizing and improving vital statistics in order to streamline data collection processes.

Dr. Daas turned the floor over to Dr. Savannah Larimore to continue the presentation by describing how the DSHS Epidemiology team identifies pregnancy-associated deaths in Texas. Dr. Larimore covered the following:

- Presented background on the process followed by the DSHS Epidemiology team regarding the data collection process of pregnancy-associated deaths.
- Summarized the Texas Enhanced Method, a 4-step method used by DSHS to confirm pregnancy-associated deaths. Dr. Larimore then elaborated on how this method works to improve data quality.

Dr. Ortique opened the floor for questions.

Dr. Patrick Ramsey asked if there have been any efforts by DSHS to provide feedback regarding data quality to those responsible for filling out death certificates in Texas (i.e. specific types of providers, hospitals, etc.).

Dr. Manda Hall stated that the Vital Statistics section of DSHS has the ability to reach out to an individual who filled out a death certificate and ask them to correct it. Dr. Hall stated that this is a recent development that has allowed for greater data efficiency. Dr. Hall also stated that DSHS is working to engage medical professionals in understanding the importance of the death certificate.

Dr. Carla Ortique asked if there has been consideration of including death certificate information in graduate medical education curriculum. Dr. Ortique also emphasized that the TxEVER program has had technical issues that affects the systems usability.

Dr. Tara Daas emphasized that any technical issues are not controlled by DSHS, rather are often controlled by the State of Texas Information Security department. Dr. Daas suggested that the more important conversations are to make sure that physicians understand the important role that death certificates play in public health statistics.

Dr. Ingrid Skop asked for clarification on how it is decided who will fill out a death certificate (i.e. doctor, medical examiner, justice of the peace). In addition to this, Dr. Skop asked if there are deaths where autopsies are automatically required.

Dr. Morna Gonsoulin, Deputy Medical Examiner at Fort Bend County, stated that autopsies are typically required in cases involving trauma, or when the cause of death is not clear from medical records. If hospital records clearly indicate a cause of death, including in maternal death, an autopsy is not necessarily required.

Dr. Ortique announced that the committee will now take a 5-minute break and reconvene at 11:10am.

### **Agenda Item 9: Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) Case Cohort Sampling Methodology**

Ms. Jessica Arevalo called the meeting back to order at 11:11am. Ms. Arevalo then conducted the roll call. Ms. Arevalo announced that quorum was met.

Dr. Savannah Larimore's presentation covered the following:

- Provided a concise overview of the new sampling method that will be used to expedite the case review process for the 2022 and 2023 cases.
- Dr. Larimore reviewed:
  - Motivations and Methods
  - Sampling Options
  - Sampling Method Testing
  - Sampling Plan
- Provided an outlined plan for the MMMRC to become current with case review.

Dr. Carla Ortique thanked Dr. Larimore and the rest of the DSHS team.

### **Agenda Item 10: Advisory Committee Member Training Refresher**

Dr. Carla Ortique introduced the various training refreshers that will be covered. Dr. Ortique turned the floor over to Ms. Jessica Arevalo.

Ms. Jessica Arevalo presented the 'Advisory Committee Coordination Office New Member Orientation'. Ms. Arevalo's presentation covered the following:

- ACCO Background and Purpose
- ACCO Staff Structure
  - Facilitator Role



- Committee Liaison Role
  - Presiding Officers Role
- ACCO Policy
  - C-022 Purpose
  - Quorum Definition
  - Posted or Public Agenda
- Webcast/Teams Meeting Events
- Committee Bylaws
  - Statement by Members
  - Advisory Committee Member Code of Conduct
- Webpage Requirements
- Advisory Committee Letters and Reports
- Subcommittee Operations and Quorum
- Motions
  - Process of Making a Motion
  - Amending/Withdrawing a Motion

Ms. Jessica Arevalo turned the floor back over to Dr. Ortique.

Dr. Ortique turned the floor over to Ms. Morgan Constantino, HHSC Attorney. Ms. Constantino presented the 'Open Meetings Act Training'. The presentation covered the following:

- Background of the Open Meetings Act
- Open Meetings Act in the MMMRC
- Quorums, Notices, and Recordkeeping
- Open Meeting; Closed Meeting
- Penalties for Failure to Comply

Ms. Constantino opened the floor to questions.

Dr. Carla Ortique asked if the committee is allowed to gather if MMMRC business is not being discussed. Ms. Constantino stated that social gathers are permitted if there is not any discussion of public business.

Dr. Carla Ortique turned the floor over to Mr. David Reisman, HHS Chief Ethics Officer, to present an "Advisory Committee Ethics Overview". Mr. Reisman's presentation covered the following:

- Official Representation of HHSC
- Disclosure
  - Personal or Private Interests
  - Financial Interests
- Honoraria Prohibition
- Conflicts of Interest
- Bribery
- Open Meeting Act and Public Information Act
- Confidential Information
  - HIPAA
- Misuse of Government Property
- Prohibition on Lobbying
- Public Servants and the State Penal Code

Mr. Reisman turned the floor back over to Dr. Carla Ortique.

Dr. Ortique thanked Mr. Reisman and turned the floor over to Ms. Natalie Adelaja, DSHS Attorney, to present on the 'Roles and Responsibilities of MMMRC Members'. Ms. Adelaja's presentation covered the following:

- Background on the MMMRC
- Scope and Activities of the MMMRC
- Bylaws
- Confidentiality and Relevant Laws
- Expectations of Committee Members

Dr. Carla Ortique thanked Ms. Adelaja and all presenters.

### **Agenda Item 11: Future Agenda Items**

Dr. Ortique opened discussion for new business and potential agenda items for the next meeting scheduled for Thursday, December 5, 2024.

- Dr. Carla Ortique, Committee Chair, proposed that a presentation from the Perinatal Advisory Council (PAC) be added to the future agenda. Dr. Ortique also proposed a presentation from the CDC that covers current national MMMRC data.
- Dr. Patrick Ramsey, Co-Chair, proposed that a presentation from the Maternal Rural Health Assembly (MRHA) be added to the future agenda.

### **Agenda Item 12: Public Comment**

Ms. Arevalo, ACCO Facilitator, reads the public comment announcement and coordinated with the ACCO production team requests from stakeholders who registered or were on-site to provide public comment.

#### **Oral public comment –**

- **Ms. Morgan Miles, appearing on behalf of Ms. Nakeenya Wilson.**
  - Advocated for removal of the redaction process, standardization of informant interviews, and the inclusion of community voices in the MMMRC.
  - Concerns for increased rate of maternal deaths for black women in Texas.
- **Ms. Morgan Miles.**
  - Advocated for the midwifery model of care.
- **Ms. Dinah Waranch, Representative of the Consortium of Texas Nurse Midwives and the Coalition of Texas Birth Centers.**
  - Reviewed recommendations made on the DSHS MMMRC 2024 Joint Biennial Report and suggested alternate solutions.
  - Advocates for midwifery model of care.

### **Agenda Item 13: 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 announces the committee will go into closed session at 1:00pm.

The committee will return later in the 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 announces 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 14: Adjournment and Thank You**

Dr. Ortique reopened the meeting at 3:08 pm, and stated with no further business or discussion she would adjourn the meeting at 3:09 pm.

Below is the link to the archived video of the September 27, 2024, 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 \(MMMRC\) September 27, 2024.](#)