



Kentucky can...



Reduce inequities in maternal mortality and expand access to safe and healthy prenatal and birth options

Ensuring that Kentucky kids have the best chance to thrive begins before they are born. Maternal health throughout pregnancy and delivery impacts both birth outcomes for babies and mother's health postpartum. Mothers need access to prenatal and delivery settings that offer equitable care and prioritize both their health and birth preferences.

Maternal Health Outcomes in Kentucky:

- Kentucky has among the most births resulting in C-sections in the nation at 34.7%, which significantly increases risk for maternal mortality.
- Kentucky's maternal mortality rate of 40.8 per 100,000 live births is significantly higher than the national rate of 17.4, and the rate among Black women in Kentucky is three times the rate of White women.
- More than 90% of maternal mortality cases in Kentucky are considered preventable.

Freestanding birth centers are health care facilities designed for childbirth, using a midwifery and wellness model. Birth centers offer a home-like environment, suitable for low-risk pregnancies and supported by qualified health professionals.

Benefits of Freestanding Birth Centers:

- Women that give birth in birth centers have fewer medical interventions and lower cesarean rates than those in hospital settings.
- Women who give birth in birth centers are more likely to initiate breastfeeding after birth.
- There are significant cost savings for mothers utilizing birth centers for delivery, particularly among Medicaid participants.

Although there are now more than 400 freestanding birth centers in 40 states and DC, Kentucky does not have any freestanding birth centers. Due to the lack of access to birth centers, women in Kentucky choose to cross state lines into Indiana and Tennessee to receive this care.

By removing the certificate-of-need requirement for freestanding birth centers, Kentucky can expand access to an alternative to hospital delivery in a safe environment.

Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Policy Solution:

Exempt freestanding birth centers from certificate-of-need requirements to expand access to safe, equitable prenatal and delivery care.