

01-25 Policy Matters

Subject: Improving Maternal Health by Closing Care Gaps

Preheader: Here, Policy Matters. Learn the latest from UPMC's Government Affairs team.



Officially Noted\*



*(L-R) Annmarie Lyons, Patti Jackson-Gehris, Secretary of Health Debra L. Bogen, MD, and Robert Edwards, MD.*

UPMC is proud to support the official launch of a new Maternal Child Health Program in Clinton County, in partnership with Pennsylvania's Department of Health (DOH). This program will expand and ensure access to high-quality maternal health care in Clinton County by providing a front door for pregnancy testing and prenatal education provided by the Lock Haven State Health Center and connecting patients with needed care at UPMC Lock Haven and UPMC Williamsport.

"Our goal is simple: to develop a local network that provides easier access to basic pregnancy and post-partum care services that support mothers, babies and families. This pilot project is the latest effort in the [Shapiro] Administration's ongoing work with health care and community leaders, to find commonsense solutions to support and sustain our rural health care system," said Debra Bogen, MD, Pennsylvania Secretary of Health.

The partnership was marked on Jan. 28 by a Community Baby Shower to celebrate the program's launch. The event provided car seat safety checks, educational materials, and other giveaways for community members.

"I am hopeful that [the] event will showcase an innovative model of care and inspire others to adopt similar approaches across the state," said Patti Jackson-Gehris, UPMC in North Central Pennsylvania President. "We are grateful to be able to partner with the state in support of this pilot program. [It] is just the beginning of a larger, ongoing dialogue aimed at developing sustainable solutions to ensure every woman has access to the care she deserves."

We wish to send a special thank you to Dr. Bogen, Secretary of Health, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, for joining this community event and partnering to close gaps in maternal health care.

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**UPMC HEALTHBEAT**

## **The Importance of Addressing Maternity Care Deserts**

Maternity care deserts are areas that lack vital pregnancy and childbirth care. The number of them in the United States is growing. Women who cannot access prenatal care face a higher risk of complications, such as preterm birth, low birth weight, or even mother or child death. Click to read more about the critical need to bridge these gaps and how UPMC is partnering to enable care.

**[Learn more](#)**

## CMS Birthing-Friendly Designations at UPMC

More than 10 UPMC hospitals hold the birthing-friendly designation, which the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) created in 2023 to identify hospitals and health systems that participate in a statewide or national perinatal quality improvement collaborative program and implement evidence-based care to improve maternal health.



### Highlights from UPMC Health Plan

UPMC Health Plan focuses on improving the health of our members. Keep up to date with news focused on community impact.

- Since 2011, the [UPMC Center for High-Value Health Care](#) has utilized patient-centered outcomes research, comparative effectiveness studies, program evaluations, implementation science, and patient and community engagement activities to understand how new health care delivery and payment models affect health and cost outcomes within UPMC and beyond. Learn more about the [UPMC Center for High-Value Health Care in their annual newsletter](#).
- Chester Ho, MD, is now the new chief medical officer for UPMC Health Plan. Several media outlets covered Dr. Ho's appointment, including [Becker's Payer Issues](#) and the [Pittsburgh Business Times](#).
- Brendan Harris, president, UPMC *for You* and State Programs, sat with Meg Murray, CEO, Association for Community Affiliated Plans (ACAP), for the latest episode of the *ACAP Coffee Break* podcast. Brendan shares how mentors have helped shape his career journey and influence his work. A recording can be found [here](#).
- [City & State PA](#) named Mary Beth Jenkins, president and CEO, UPMC Health Plan, to its 2024 "Power of Diversity: Women 100" listing.

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