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Will Florida Be Next?

Mississippi Infant Death Health Emergency

By Tracey Rippon

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On August 21, 2025, Mississippi declared a public health emergency for infant deaths with a rate more than double the national average. Maternal health and infant health are closely linked since healthier pregnancies lead to healthier infants. Research has also shown that restrictive abortion laws increase both maternal and infant death rates. Pregnancies complicated by maternal medical conditions or fetal genetic conditions with anomalies that would have qualified for abortion care will be forced to go to term. In addition, Florida's 6-week abortion ban (enacted in 2024) is more restrictive than the 15-week ban in Mississippi (enacted in 2022) so it is likely that Florida's rate will worsen significantly.

Florida is already worse than the national average on both maternal and infant deaths. In the U.S., the number of maternal deaths rose from 11 (per 100,000 live births) in 1985 to 17 in 2023. Florida had 22 maternal deaths per 100,000 births and ranked 48th in the nation with infant deaths that occur at the time of birth. During the same timeframe, global rates improved by 40%. With these poor statistics for U.S. mothers, the U.S. is currently tied with Iran, while all other high-income nations are under 10 deaths per 100,000 births.

Raising awareness about the deaths of mothers and babies in the U.S. and Florida has never been more important. Texas has already seen an increase in infant deaths after the restrictive abortion law that went into place. Highlighting racial disparities, deaths are 2-3 times more likely in Black mothers and infants. At what point do the lives of mothers and babies become one of the most important things we talk about?

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