

Montana Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative

Quarterly Meeting Summary – July 30, 2026

Welcome & Collaborative Overview

The meeting opened with a brief overview of the Montana Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative (MPMHC), including its mission to improve perinatal mental health outcomes through coordinated policy, systems, and practice change. Members were reminded that the Collaborative is open to anyone interested in advancing perinatal mental health in Montana and encouraged to participate in quarterly meetings, workgroups, and information sharing.

Statewide Systems Updates

Medicaid Doula Reimbursement

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies provided an update on implementation of Montana's Medicaid doula benefit.

The statewide Doula Reimbursement Workgroup developed [recommendations](#) for the proposed State Plan Amendment (SPA), which was open for public comment through July 30.

Recommendations focus on:

- Expanding eligibility to all Medicaid members during pregnancy and through 12 months postpartum following the end of a pregnancy.
- Recognizing the full scope of doula care, including physical, emotional, informational, and advocacy support.
- Preserving flexibility by allowing services in any setting, including telehealth, without unnecessary visit limits.
- Creating multiple billing pathways for doulas.
- Establishing sustainable reimbursement rates that support workforce growth, particularly in rural and frontier communities.

Participants were encouraged to submit comments to dphhscomments@mt.gov by the deadline of July 30 and continue supporting implementation efforts.

If you have questions, reach out to Mary Collins at mary@hmhb-mt.org.

PCORI Research Capacity Grant

Representatives from Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, Berry Medicine, the University of Montana, and PSI-MT shared an overview of their newly awarded Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) grant.

The project will build Montana's capacity to engage in patient-centered comparative effectiveness research focused on perinatal mental health by:

- Identifying barriers and supports needed for meaningful participation in research.
- Establishing a statewide Research Learning Collaborative.
- Building research knowledge and capacity among community members and providers.
- Creating a sustainable Community Advisory Board to guide future research.

The project intentionally centers lived experience and prioritizes engagement with rural and Indigenous communities. Initial training opportunities will begin this fall.

If you have questions, reach out to Stephanie Morton at stephanie@hmhb-mt.org or Dr. Jessica Liddell at jessica.liddell@mso.umt.edu.

PSI-MT Training Opportunities

Stephanie Fitch, Board Chair of PSI Montana, highlighted upcoming workforce development opportunities, including:

- **August 31:** Perinatal Substance Use Disorders Training in Kalispell.
- **September 1:** Growing Our Own workshop focused on community program development, implementation planning, and grant readiness.

Scholarships and lodging assistance are available for eligible participants.

If you have questions, reach out to Stephanie Fitch at sfitch@billingsclinic.org.

Care Coordination & Sustainable Financing

Tressie White and Michele Stanton of the Montana Healthcare Foundation shared updates on two complementary statewide efforts designed to strengthen perinatal care coordination.

Meadowlark Sustainability Project

The Montana Healthcare Foundation has contracted Manatt Health to evaluate Medicaid reimbursement models that could sustainably support integrated perinatal care coordination.

Current work includes statewide stakeholder interviews with hospitals, clinics, FQHCs, and Rural Health Clinics to better understand existing payment structures and future opportunities, particularly as obstetric payment models evolve.

Care Coordination Workgroup

The Montana Maternal Health Alliance Care Coordination Workgroup recently convened its first meeting.

Current priorities include:

- Developing a shared definition of care coordination.
- Aligning recommendations across statewide initiatives.
- Connecting Maternal Mortality Review Committee recommendations to implementation efforts.
- Coordinating closely with existing Collaborative work to minimize duplication.

Participants emphasized that many organizations are working toward similar goals and that stronger alignment will maximize impact.

If you have questions, reach out to Michele Stanton at michele.stanton@mthf.org.

Priority Area Spotlight

Engaging Medical Professionals & Support Staff

Carly Holman presented on the Montana Perinatal Quality Collaborative's (MPQC-AIM) statewide implementation of the AIM Patient Safety Bundles focused on perinatal mental health and substance use disorders.

Key updates included:

- Twenty of Montana's twenty-four birthing facilities are currently participating, representing approximately 75% of births statewide.
- The initiative follows the AIM "5 R" framework:
 - Readiness
 - Recognition
 - Response
 - Reporting & Systems Learning
 - Respectful Care
- Current implementation activities include:
 - Universal screening
 - Referral pathway development
 - Mental health and substance use treatment integration
 - Crisis response protocols
 - Naloxone education and distribution
 - Multidisciplinary care coordination
 - Patient-centered, trauma-informed care

Carly emphasized that hospitals are only one component of the broader perinatal mental health system and that successful implementation depends on strong partnerships with community organizations and behavioral health providers.

Member Discussion

Participants then discussed how the Collaborative can best engage medical professionals and program staff in perinatal mental health initiatives while complementing existing statewide efforts.

Three discussion questions guided the breakout conversations:

1. What important work is already happening in Montana?
2. Where can the Collaborative add the most value?
3. What should the Collaborative accomplish before the October meeting?

Themes Across Breakout Groups

Strengthen statewide coordination

Participants consistently noted that many organizations are advancing similar work but often lack visibility into one another's efforts.

There was broad interest in creating a clearer mechanism for sharing updates, resources, and opportunities for collaboration. Several participants described the need for a shared "North Star" that helps partners understand who is doing what and where they can contribute.

Build on existing work

Rather than launching new initiatives, participants encouraged the Collaborative to elevate and connect successful efforts already underway across Montana.

Examples included:

- Perinatal loss support initiatives
- The Montana Perinatal Substance Use Toolkit
- Community-based workforce initiatives
- Existing care coordination efforts
- Hospital quality improvement work through MPQC

The Collaborative was encouraged to serve as a connector rather than a duplicator.

Strengthen community-based workforce integration

Participants repeatedly identified opportunities to strengthen collaboration between healthcare providers and community-based supports.

Ideas included:

- Increasing engagement with the Montana Doula Collaborative.
- Developing shared messaging about the role of doulas in perinatal behavioral health.
- Creating provider education materials highlighting evidence and best practices.
- Identifying physician champions to strengthen collaboration with doulas.
- Exploring apprenticeship and workforce development opportunities.
- Continuing to elevate Community Health Workers as key partners in care coordination.

Expand provider education

Participants also identified opportunities for additional education and training, including simulation-based learning around obstetric and postpartum substance use emergencies and continued professional development for providers across disciplines.

Next Steps

Before the next quarterly meeting, several actions were identified:

- Coordinator:
 - Share information about first PCORI Research Learning Collaborative training when available and begin Community Advisory Board recruitment.
 - Follow up on opportunities to expand statewide perinatal loss support efforts.

- Continue developing a more centralized approach to communication and information sharing across the Collaborative.
- Members:
 - Complete the feedback form for the meeting:
<https://forms.gle/o4qkWq8L9PLwoG1q7>
 - Share updates with the Collaborative using the MPMHC Update Form:
<https://forms.gle/PQWbQrCrETy1AS9z5>

The next Montana Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative quarterly meeting is anticipated for **October 2026**.