

Helping Florida Moms and Babies Thrive: Waiving Medicaid's Five-Year Waiting Period for Lawfully Residing Pregnant Women



We must change Medicaid rules to help new moms in Florida get important care during pregnancy and after birth. **Here's why it can't wait:**

Too many Florida moms and babies are dying from preventable deaths.

- 263 Florida women died of pregnancy-related causes between 2018-2022, the second highest of any state. Most of these deaths were preventable.¹
- Florida ranks 31st among states in infant mortality.²
- Florida ranks 48th in health coverage, access, and affordability for women.²

Medicaid plays a critical role in keeping Florida moms and babies healthy.³

- Because of the serious physical and mental health risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends regular checkups during pregnancy and in the following year.⁴
- Seventy-five percent of pregnant women with Medicaid complete the recommended nine prenatal care visits. (compared with 66% of uninsured women).^{5, 6}
- Newborns whose moms have access to care are more likely to receive regular well-child visits, early screenings, and other support that helps them grow and thrive.⁷

Florida has the option to extend much-needed health coverage to more pregnant women.

- The Legal Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA) gives states the option to waive a five-year waiting period for lawfully residing children and pregnant women to become eligible for Medicaid.⁸

- Florida passed a bipartisan bill in 2016 to extend health coverage to more children through ICHIA. Now it's time to do the same for pregnant women.⁹
- 31 states – including Georgia, South Carolina, and Arkansas – have already adopted the ICHIA option for pregnant women.¹⁰

Waiving the Medicaid waiting period is a smart investment for Florida families and our state budget.

- Families with health insurance are more likely to get preventive care and address small issues before they become expensive problems. That means Florida taxpayers won't have to foot the bill for uncompensated care like emergency room visits.⁷
- The federal government shares the cost of Medicaid pregnancy coverage with Florida, saving the state money.^{8, 11}
- Removing the five-year bar for pregnant immigrant women would provide coverage for about 2,000 more women annually, at a cost of roughly \$3,000 per year each.¹²

Prioritize Florida families. Take up the ICHIA option to waive the Medicaid waiting period for pregnant immigrant women residing here lawfully. We all win when moms and babies get the care they need.

For sources, visit:
<https://floridahealthjustice.org/publications/5ybsources/>