

**Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC)**

**Friday, April 17, 2026 9:00 AM-4:00 PM**

**Oklahoma State Department of Health**

**123 Robert S. Kerr, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 1**

**Oklahoma City, OK 73102**

**Open Meeting Act:** Announcement of the meeting was filed with the Office of the Secretary of State on Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 5:04 PM for the in-person meeting. The final agenda was shared via email April 10, 2026 at 4:37 PM and posted at the OSDH Central Office at 8:38 AM on April 14, 2026.

**Call to Order, Roll Call, and Determination of Quorum:** Dr. Chad Smith, Chair, called the meeting of the Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC) to order at 9:11 AM.

A quorum was determined with the presence of:

| Name               | Entity Representation  | Name               | Entity Representation  |
|--------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| Barbara O'Brien    | Director, Office of Perinatal Quality Improvement                                  | Dr. William Po     | Oklahoma State Medical Association   |
| Dr. Angela Hawkins | Chair, Oklahoma Chapter of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists | Lori Essary        | Director, Family Support and Prevention Services, Oklahoma State Department of Health                  |
| Dr. Chad Smith     | Medical Director, Oklahoma Perinatal and Quality Improvement Collaborative         | Jill Nobles-Botkin | Administrative Program Manager, Perinatal and Reproductive Health, Oklahoma State Department of Health |
| Dr. David Gahn     | Southern Plains Tribal Health  | Regina Kizer       | President, OK Chapter of the American College of Nurse Midwives  |
| Kristy Wente       | Oklahoma Chapter, Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses    |                    |  |

**Committee Members/Designees Absent:** Dr. John Stanley and Omare Jimmerson

**Guests Present:** Three members of the CDC attended the meeting; Julie Zaharatos, Deborah Burch and LeJune Johnson.

**OSDH Staff Present:** Six case abstractors: Tony Fleshman, Nikki Garrod, Hilary Miller, Leah Eckman, Amy Foster and Shelly Green. Jenna Bellantoni, Epidemiologist, Assessment, Family Support and Prevention Service, Binitha Kunnel, Program Manager, Family Support and Prevention Service, Alexis Lund, Family Support and Prevention Service, Michelle Barr, Director, Nursing Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health and Dawn Butler, administrative support, Family Support and Prevention Service.

**Public Comment:** None

**Vote to accept the October 25, 2025 meeting minutes as presented:** Barbara O'Brien made a motion to accept the October 25, 2025 meeting minutes as presented with Lorri Essary seconding the motion. Members voted accordingly.

| Name            | Yes | No | Abstain | Name               | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------|-----|----|---------|--------------------|-----|----|---------|
| Barbara O'Brien | ✓   |    |         | Chad Smith         | ✓   |    |         |
| Lorri Essary    | ✓   |    |         | Regina Kizer       | ✓   |    |         |
| William Po      | ✓   |    |         | Jill Nobles-Botkin | ✓   |    |         |
| Dave Gahn       | ✓   |    |         | Angela Hawkins     | ✓   |    |         |

|              |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Kristy Wente | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Motion Passed

**Old Business: None**

**Discussion and follow-up on previous recommendations:** No follow up was discussed

**Legislative Updates-** Dr. Smith stated that the committee is still in a period of uncertainty regarding changes occurring legislatively in health care coverage both at the federal and state levels. He stated that with the financial changes, the likelihood of rural hospitals struggling seems to increase based on the information given.

**Moment of silence:** Dr. Smith asked the members to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of the women who lost their lives, and the families left behind.

**Enter into Executive Session:** Kristy Wente made a motion to enter into Executive Session with Dr. Gahn seconding. Members voted accordingly.

| Name            | Yes | No | Abstain | Name               | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------|-----|----|---------|--------------------|-----|----|---------|
| Barbara O'Brien | ✓   |    |         | Kristy Wente       | ✓   |    |         |
| Lorri Essary    | ✓   |    |         | Regina Kizer       | ✓   |    |         |
| William Po      | ✓   |    |         | Jill Nobles-Botkin | ✓   |    |         |
| Dave Gahn       | ✓   |    |         | Chad Smith         | ✓   |    |         |
| Angela Hawkins  | ✓   |    |         |                    |     |    |         |
|                 |     |    |         |                    |     |    |         |

Motion Passed

**Enter into Open Session:** Dr. David Gahn made a motion to enter into open session with Dr. William Po seconding the motion. Members voted accordingly.

| Name            | Yes | No | Abstain | Name               | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------|-----|----|---------|--------------------|-----|----|---------|
| Barbara O'Brien | ✓   |    |         | Kristy Wente       | ✓   |    |         |
| Lorri Essary    | ✓   |    |         | Regina Kizer       | ✓   |    |         |
| William Po      | ✓   |    |         | Jill Nobles-Botkin | ✓   |    |         |
| Dave Gahn       | ✓   |    |         | Chad Smith         | ✓   |    |         |
| Angela Hawkins  | ✓   |    |         |                    |     |    |         |

Motion Passed

**Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Matters Discussed in Executive Session:** During the executive session the following recommendations were identified.

1. For pregnant patients with mental health conditions, providers should encourage and refer to a perinatal psychiatrist and support funding for providers to become certified through postpartum support international.
2. Providers should educate patients and family on risk and severity of mental health conditions, post-birth warning signs, and resources at discharge.
3. Professional licensing boards, educational institutions, and professional organizations should develop educational resources and work with current and soon-to-be providers on identifying and referring pregnant and postpartum patients with mental health conditions.
4. MMRC partners should launch a statewide campaign on perinatal mental health conditions and resources for seeking help.
5. Substance use disorder providers and methadone treatment centers should assure access to family planning resources and information.
6. Providers should screen every pregnant patient for mental health conditions and substance use disorders, document screenings, and refer to resources that serve pregnant patients accordingly in the perinatal period, in accordance with professional recommendations.
7. MMRC partners and organizations invested in maternal health should advocate for the decriminalization of substance use in pregnancy.
8. Hospitals should promote awareness of post-birth warning signs and assess circumstances that may pose barriers to accessing resources.
9. Oklahoma state legislature should invest in social support and resources during pregnancy and the postpartum period.
10. The MMRC will communicate with the ME office emphasizing the requirement of referring pregnancy-associated cases for autopsies.
11. The MMRC will communicate with the ME office emphasizing the importance of accurate completion of the pregnancy checkbox.
12. OPQIC should advocate to increase women's healthcare providers (e.g., midwives, doulas, obstetric providers) and other support providers throughout the state, particularly in rural areas.

**Adjourn:** Christy Wenthe made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:46 PM.

Next Meeting:  
July 24, 2026  
123 Robert S. Kerr  
Oklahoma City, OK 73102