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## For more information, contact

## Washington State Department of Health

works with others to protect and improve the health of all people in Washington State.

# **Maternal Mortality Review Panel**

# **Washington State Department of Health**

# The Washington State Legislature recently created the Maternal Mortality Review Panel to reduce preventable maternal deaths and improve health care for women.



DOH 350-010 August 2016

## What does the law say?

[RCW 70.54.450](http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70.54.450) directs the Maternal Mortality Review Panel “to conduct comprehensive, multidisciplinary reviews of maternal deaths in Washington to identify factors associated with the deaths and make recommendations for system changes to improve health care services for women in this state.”

The Secretary of Health appoints the members of the panel. Panel members do not get paid. Panel members *may* include:

* An obstetrician
* A physician specializing in maternal fetal medicine
* A neonatologist
* A midwife licensed in Washington
* A representative from the Department of Health who works in maternal and child health
* A Department of Health epidemiologist with experience analyzing perinatal data
* A pathologist
* A representative of community mental health centers

By July 1, 2017, and then every two years, the panel must submit a report to the Secretary of Health and the Legislature about maternal deaths in the previous two years. The report will include statistics and causes of death, as well as proposed health system changes and legislation to reduce preventable maternal deaths.

The panel’s report will be public. However, documents and data collected for the panel are confidential, and the panel cannot release any information that could identify individuals.

To help determine whether a maternal death from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management and whether it was preventable, the Department of Health can request medical records, autopsy reports, social service records, and other data related to maternal deaths. Health care providers, clinics, laboratories, medical examiners, and other health care facilities and professionals are required to provide these records.

The law expires in 2020 unless the Legislature extends it.

## What happens next?

The Department of Health’s immediate task is to form the new panel and create a foundation for it to be successful.

Our progress so far:

* Hired and oriented staff to support the panel
* Developed infrastructure needed to collect data and analyze it for the panel review
* Communicated with health care professionals and facilities that will submit data
* Launched an informative website along with an application portal for member recruitment
* Developed panel review processes and scheduled panel meetings
* Recruited over fifty panel applicants

Our work continues**:**

* Determine whether the department needs to update its Washington Administrative Codes to support this work, and if so, complete those updates
* Appoint panel members
* Continue to develop processes the panel will use in their review
* Begin panel proceedings

We estimate we will complete these tasks by December 2016 and the first formal review will take place in early 2017.

## How can you be involved?

The Department of Health welcomes your input on how the Maternal Mortality Review Panel can best meet the goals established by the legislature. There will not be a formal public hearing process (except if it is necessary to update the Washington Administrative Codes), but we encourage interested parties to share their ideas with Department of Health staff. Also, please let us know if you would like to receive periodic updates by email.

For more information, visit our website at:

[www.doh.wa.gov/maternalmortality](http://www.doh.wa.gov/maternalmortality)

## To ask questions, share ideas, or receive email updates, please contact:

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