

**Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC)
Meeting Minutes
Friday, June 02, 2023
9:00 a.m.**

**Virtual: Teams Meeting Platform
Location: Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)
Robert Bernstein Building
Room K-100, First Floor
1100 West 49th Street
Austin, Texas 78756**

Agenda Item 1: Call to order, welcome, roll call, and introductions

Dr. Carla Ortique, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Dr. Ortique announced this was the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) meeting. Dr. Ortique, Chair, welcomed all committee members present in person as well as virtually. Dr. Ortique thanked the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and Health and Human Services (HHSC) team members with supporting the meeting, and those in the public who were in attendance. She acknowledged the work done by the committee is important in informing legislature, helps guide the state led initiatives that pertain to maternal health honors and critically important because of the lives that have been lost, and requested a moment of silence in honor of the women as well as their families and communities that have been forever impacted by the loss of a mother.

Dr. Ortique introduced and turned the floor over to Ms. Tessa Buck-Ragland, HHSC, Advisory Committee Coordination Office. Ms. Buck-Ragland read logistical announcements, called roll, and asked the members to provide a brief introduction. It was determined that there were seven voting members present, therefore, a quorum was not reached.

Table 1: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee attendance Friday, June 02, 2023, meeting.

MEMBER NAME	IN ATTENDANCE
Dr. Eumenia Castro	No
Dr. Meitra Doty	No
Dr. Catherine Eppes	No
Dr. Kelly Fegan-Bohm	Yes
Dr. Manda Hall	No
Dr. James Hill	No
Dr. Sherri Onyiego	No
Dr. Carla Ortique, Chair	Yes
Dr. Lavannya Pandit	Yes
Ms. Nancy Puig	No
Dr. Amy Raines-Milenkov	Yes
Dr. Christina Murphey	Yes
Dr. Patrick Ramsey, Vice Chair	Yes
Dr. Robin Page	Yes
Ms. Nakeenya Wilson	No
VACANT	

Yes: Indicates attended the meeting

No: Indicates did not attend the meeting

Dr. Ortique offered remarks regarding the importance of the member’s attendance and participation, not only in review but also in the public deliberations. Dr. Ortique proceeded with agenda item two.

Agenda Item 2: Consideration of March 3, 2023, draft meeting minutes

Dr. Ortique restated that by not meeting quorum no action could take place on agenda items but asked members if there were any changes or edits that they might have and turned the floor over to Ms. Buck-Ragland. Hearing none, Ms. Buck-Ragland turned the floor back to Dr. Ortique to move to agenda item number three.

Agenda Item 3: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee Subcommittees updates

Dr. Carla Ortique introduced Dr. Kelly Fegan-Bohm, MD, Member and Dr. Patrick Ramsey, MD, Vice Chair to provide members with an update on the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) Subcommittees.

Dr. Kelly Fegan-Bohm – Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities Update

(Presenting on behalf of Dr. Sherri Onyiego, Chair of the Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities)

The subcommittee has met three times since the last MMMRC meeting:

- March 31
- April 21
- May 26

The Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities seeks a deeper understanding of specific disparities disproportionately impacting the morbidity and mortality of women across the state and to provide resources to the MMMRC on how to recognize those disparities.

Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities initiatives include:

- The DASH pilot project:
 - Developed to help MMMRC members better recognize signs of discrimination and/or when social determinants of health impact a mother's healthcare.
 - Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Epidemiology plans to conduct a study looking at pre- and post- data for jurisdictions using the DASH tool.
 - Data analysis is to begin soon, with publication of findings a future goal.
 - MCH Epidemiology seeks to conduct specific data analyses to examine race and socioeconomic status of patients with the top five causes of morbidity and mortality across the state.
 - The subcommittee is currently working with Epidemiology to determine the feasibility of this data analysis request.
- Other Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities initiatives include:
 - Updating the DASH tool for MMMRC specific use – expanding definitions and updating the technical guide for the tool.
 - Developing a tool to assist the MMMRC in considering mothers who die by homicide, and determining pregnancy relatedness in these cases, and
 - Developing a better understanding of the impact of key informant interviews.

Dr. Patrick Ramsey – Subcommittee on COVID-19 Update

(Presenting on behalf of Dr. Carey Eppes, Chair of the Subcommittee on COVID-19)

The Subcommittee on COVID-19 has held four meetings:

- Two meetings in September
- Two meetings in May.

The Subcommittee on COVID-19 began its work by examining documents from the CDC that advised on items to consider when identifying contributing factors to pregnancy related deaths during the COVID-19 epidemic.

The Subcommittee on COVID-19 then developed a timeline of the epidemic, documenting its evolution both national and Texas-wide.

COVID-19 complicating factors were considered including:

- PPE shortages
- Therapeutic successes/failures
- Availability of therapy
- Indications for use in pregnancy
- Evolving variants

Today, the Subcommittee on COVID-19 understands that Covid presented a significant risk to morbidity and mortality and ICU admissions.

The Subcommittee on COVID-19 developed a Covid-related data element abstraction tool to be used by the abstraction team. COVID-19 related factors to be considered include healthcare staffing shortages.

The Subcommittee on COVID-19 created a listing of pregnancy related criteria for COVID-19, including:

- Pregnancy complications that prevented therapy for COVID-19
- Postpartum complications that prevented therapy for COVID-19
- Chain(s) of events, initiated by pregnancy, which created contraindication(s) for COVID-19 therapy
- Aggravation of COVID-19 infection by other comorbid factors directly related to pregnancy

The Subcommittee on COVID-19 has created a recommendation repository for COVID-19 factors that have been identified, including:

- How to assess for delays in care that may not be overtly obvious, including:
 - Barriers to accessing care
 - Biases
 - Staffing shortages

Dr. Ortique opened the floor to Q&A.
Seeing none, she proceeded to agenda item 4.

Agenda Item 4: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee Operational and Maternal Health and Safety Initiative Updates

Dr. Carla Ortique introduce Ms. Audrey Young, MPH, Patrick Ramsey, MD, Vice Chair, and Dr. Savannah Larimore, to provide members with updates:

Dr. Patrick Ramsey – MMRIA (Maternal Mortality Review Information Application) User Meeting

Dr. Ramsey attended the MMRIA User Meeting on April 19-20, 2023, in Atlanta. He partook of networking activities, brainstorming sessions, and opportunities for addressing key elements in maternal mortality and morbidity case reviews.

Other presentations included:

- How to evaluate cases for racism and discrimination.
- Training for chairs, vice chairs and committee members in facilitation; and

- Discussion related to communicating data to the public in a meaningful manner.

Dr. Ramsey made mention of the Community Vital Signs Project, a CDC equivalent to the Texas Socio-Spatial Dashboard, which could take the place of some of the elements on the Texas' Socio-Spatial Dashboard.

Dr. Savannah Larimore also attended the MMRIA User Meeting.

Sessions she found particularly useful to Epidemiologist include:

- Building a resilient workforce through self-care
- Analyst networking sessions
- Data dissemination and presentation of reports to the public

Dr. Ortique stated that Dr. Sherri Onyiego also attended the MMRIA User Meeting.

Audrey Young – Director, Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Unit

MMMRC Operational Update - Member Vacancies

MCH is in the process of soliciting a social worker and medical examiner for the MMMRC. The application period starts June 5 and will close June 30.

MCH is also soliciting applications for the MMMRC appointments that expired in February, including:

- A physician specializing in obstetrics
- A physician specializing in obstetrics, with an emphasis in maternal and fetal medicine
- A physician specializing in pathology
- A physician specializing in psychiatry

The application period starts June 5 and will close June 30.

Further information is to be posted on the MMMRC website.

Audrey requested that committee members distribute the information in the hopes that MCH will have a large, well-rounded applicant pool to choose from.

DSHS plans to notify applicants by October 1st if they have been selected.

The new committee members' first meeting will be in December.

MCH is waiting to see if additional positions will be added, per legislative mandate.

If so, the application solicitation process for those positions will begin September 1st.

Dr. Ramsey question – Will committee members in expired positions stay at their post until a new person is appointed?

Audrey Young answer – Yes

Dr. Ortique asked if there were any other questions regarding committee member vacancies.

Seeing none, Audrey proceeded to discussion of the committee's current cohort caseload.

Audrey gave thanks to MMMRC members, all of whom serve on a volunteer basis, and thanks to the University of North Texas Health Science Center (UNTHSC) – part of the redaction/abstraction team.

MMMRC Operational Update – 2019 and 2020 Cohorts

Yesterday, the MMMRC reviewed three 2019 cases and 19 2020 cases. Today, they will review one 2019 case, (completing the 2019 case cohort – 147 cases total) and seven 2020 cases.

An addendum to the 2022 legislative report which provided a partial 2019 case cohort is yet to come. An update on the addendum is to be provided at the September committee meeting.

Update on Maternal Health and Safety Initiatives

TexasAIM is currently working with hypertension and opioid substance use patient safety bundles.

- Hypertension action is currently in learning collaborative period one.
 - TexasAIM is also planning to feature the Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies, which focuses on emergency rooms/emergency departments.
 - Learning collaborative two is to take place in the fall, during September, October, and November, in each of five cohorts.
- TexasAIM is staging an Opioid Summit, to take place in Houston – Wednesday, August 2nd.
 - The first Opioid learning collaborative is tied to the summit and will take place August 2nd and 3rd.

Hear Her Texas campaign

- MCH is developing slides for MMMRC Maternal Health Disparities subcommittee use
- MCH seeking non-traditional providers i.e., Social Workers, with whom Hear Her can be shared

Dr. Ortique inquired about the possible number of 2020 cohort cases that would need to be reviewed.

Audrey Young response: MCH is not prepared to release that figure yet, as abstraction is ongoing. The case cohort will be larger than that of 2019 (147 cases in 2019 cohort). The goal is to have the committee review 30 cases per meeting right now. During the summer MCH will review whether there is any way to process more cases more quickly.

MCH is also looking at their contract w/ UNT and current operations to find ways to improve future operations.

Dr. Ortique reminded the committee members that there is no quorum today. She also commented that committee roles have changed as have the number of meetings. She stated that the amount of work to be done and cohort sizes are all changing and that there is a need to make sure that committee members acknowledge the importance of the commitment they are taking on when they join the MMMRC.

Dr. Ortique asked if there were any other questions. Seeing none, she moved to agenda item #5.

Agenda Item 5: 88th Legislative Regular Session updates

Dr. Carla Ortique introduced Alison Hern, Government Relations Specialist, Government Affairs and Jeremy Triplett, Deputy Associate Commissioner, DSHS to provide a status update to members on relevant legislation as well as the state budget from the eighty-

eighth regular session.

Ms. Alison Hern

Alison Hern provided committee members with the caveat that information presented today is subject to change, as the bills being discussed have not yet been signed into law.

Regarding the budget:

- An exceptional item request for \$2.6 million and the addition of 14 full-time equivalents (FTEs) was submitted.
 - \$800,000 was received, along with six FTEs for the biennium.

A Rider in the budget for \$10.8 million is to be used for data systems. Details to come later.

House Bill (HB) 852 adds six members to the MMMRC:

- One physician specializing in emergency medicine.
- One physician specializing in cardiology.
- One physician specializing in anesthesiology.
- One physician specializing in oncology.
- One representative from a managed care organization.
- It changes the community advocate position to two community members with relevant experience in health care:
 - One community member must represent an urban area of the state.
 - One community member must represent a rural area of the state.

HB 852 also changes the staggering of committee appointments from four to five members to one-third of members.

HB 852 went to the governor for signature on May 26.

HB 12 expands Medicaid post-partum coverage from six months to 12 months.

HB 12 went to the governor for signature on May 30.

Discussion: Mr. Jeremy Triplett

Over the next few months, bills that are eventually signed and additional funding and resources that the legislature provides will be considered. Implementation plans will be developed as the legislature provides more direction regarding how they would like the agency to implement the bills. An update will be provided at the September meeting.

Jeremy reminded committee members that there is a veto period.

He also reminded the committee that, if there are more members, it will create more work and MCH will have to solicit for the new positions.

Agenda Item 6: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee Bylaws

Dr. Carla Ortique introduced Natalie Adelaja, HHSC Legal to review the Committee Bylaws proposed amendments.

Dr. Ortique reminded the committee that no vote can take place on bylaws today, as quorum was not reached.

Natalie Adelaja summarized recent changes made to the MMMRC bylaws.

She classified most changes as minor, and all changes are highlighted in red font throughout the document.

Changes made include:

- Definition section
 - Adding definitions, grammar changes.
- Sections 4 and 5
 - changes made to the review committee composition.
 - a change in terminology regarding non-voting members.
 - clarification of member terms.
- Section 6 – Resignation and Vacancy section
 - new language added.
 - ex officio resignation clarification.
- Section 7
 - language and grammar changes regarding voting.
- Section 9
 - changes regarding member responsibilities, attendance, and member expectations, and
- Sections 10 – 19
 - minor grammar changes.

An opportunity was provided to ask questions.

Dr. Ortique reminded the committee that – since no vote can take place at today’s meeting - the committee may have to schedule a call meeting to vote on bylaws or defer the vote to the September meeting.

She sought input on how this delay would impact the committee going forward.

Dr. Ortique stated that any changes in the number of committee positions would take effect September 1 and that would change the quorum requirements which would require further changes to the bylaws.

Natalie Adelaja confirmed that any changes made due to legislation, would require an update to the bylaws. She further stated that the current bylaws will remain in force until adoption of any changes.

Patrick Ramsey question – If bylaws are to change in September should we have an approval in process before then? Should the committee approve the currently reformed bylaws prior to September?

Dr. Ortique response – We have committee members serving now, whose terms have expired. Should the committee have a virtual public meeting to vote on the current amendments to the bylaws, then another scheduled meeting, to vote on amendments related to the composition of the committee?

Natalie Adelaja response – if there is a legislative change, then another meeting could be scheduled to vote on further changes.

Robin Page questioned the change in verbiage from non-voting to ex officio. Would ex officio still be considered non-voting and how would it affect quorum?

Audrey Young response - ex officio members are DSHS representatives Dr. Kelly Fegan-Bohm and Dr. Manda Hall. Both have voting privileges and are counted toward the quorum. They can also delegate others to vote for them, as they are agency representatives.

Dr. Ortique question – If the committee has a special meeting, will Legal need to be present again?

Natalie Adelaja response – yes – Legal will need to be present to answer questions and provide guidance.

Agenda Item 7: Future Agenda Items

Dr. Ortique opened discussion for new business and potential agenda items for the next meeting scheduled for September 7, 2023.

Seeing no discussion, she reminded the committee that September 7 and 8 are the dates of the next MMMRC meeting.

She also stated that there may be a need for a virtual, interim open meeting between now and then. Public notice will be posted if that is necessary.

The morning of September 7 will be dedicated to the Open portion of the meeting. This will be followed by 1.5 days of closed executive session.

Going forward, based on cohort size, the committee is unlikely to return to a one-day executive session/one-day public session format.

Dr. Ramsey comment – There has been discussion on the PQC side of CDC NMPQC of aligning or integrating activities between PQCs and MMMRCs.

- He wonders if the MMMRC might make a recommendation to receive an annual Standing Report from the Perinatal Advisory Council and PQC.
- He also expressed a desire to foster a more interactive relationship between the MMMRC and Perinatal Advisory Council and PQC.

Dr. Ortique – Dr. Eppes forwarded a future agenda item after the last MMMRC meeting. Details to come.

At this time, Dr. Ortique turned the floor over to Ms. Buck Ragland

Agenda Item 8: Public Comment

The committee received one written comment, the letter was sent to members prior to the meeting and the commenter appeared in person to give oral comment. Oral comments were received from Ms. Lena Ellis who spoke on behalf of the Suburban Houston-Fort Bend Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, located in Missouri City, Texas.

Every year, during Delta Days, Delta Sigma Theta sorority members travel to Washington to meet with legislators to discuss federal legislative priorities.

This year, Delta Sigma Theta's federal legislative priorities include:

- advocating for improvement in access to equitable, culturally sensitive, responsive maternal and mental health care for African American and Black birthing individuals, and
- proactively addressing racial health disparities and social determinants of health.

Delta Sigma Theta would like to provide chapter support on several pieces of legislation that will ensure that health policy and MMMRC recommendations include a health equity lens as part of its creation evaluation:

- Specific bills include HB 465, 663, 852, 1162, 1165, 1958, relating to expansion of Medicare coverage of doula services, composition of the MMMRC, medical and continuing education in cultural competency and implicit bias, and Medicaid eligibility and coverage for certain services provided to pregnant women.

Dr. Ortique thanked Ms. Ellis for her comments.

Lena Ellis added that Delta Sigma Theta is in support of efforts to refine the DASH tool. She feels that Delta Sigma Theta can actively engage the community and wants to make sure that there is equal representation among entities involved in DASH tool refinement.

Dr. Ortique turned the floor back over to Ms. Buck-Ragland.

Ms. Buck-Ragland stated that there were no other parties registered to provide public comment and turned the floor back over to Dr. Ortique.

Dr. Ortique remembered that Dr. Eppes' request for new business at the next meeting was to bring in a presentation demonstrating the work of the Opioid Issues team.

Agenda Item 9: Executive Session: to review cases under Health and Safety Code, Section 34.007 as authorized by Section 34.004.

Dr. Ortique read the legislation allowing the Review Committee to move into a closed executive session.

She announced that it is 10:31 a.m. and the committee is now going into closed session.

The committee will return later in afternoon to reopen the meeting from closed to open session before adjourning for the day, as statutorily required. There will be a break to allow for room turnover and the committee will resume their meeting, in closed session, at 11:00 a.m.

Ms. Buck-Ragland stated the time 10:31 a.m. and announced to members of the public that this concluded the open meeting for the morning and the public was informed that the review committee would return later in the afternoon to open the closed session and then adjourn.

Agenda Item 9: Adjournment

Dr. Ortique reopened the meeting at 3:27 p.m., thanked members and the public and adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

Below is the link to the archived video of the June 02, 2023, Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) that will be available for viewing approximately two years from date meeting was posted on website and based on the DSHS records retention schedule.

[Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee \(MMMRC\)](#)