



City and County of San Francisco
Daniel L. Lurie
Mayor

Strong Starts: Improving Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes

San Francisco's future starts with its families. Through Mayor Lurie's Family Opportunity Agenda, we are building a city where every child and family can thrive. The commitment to San Francisco's kids begins at birth—the first milestone in the cradle-to-career journey. Healthy mothers and infants are the cornerstones of strong families and vibrant communities. And when we lose even one life or accept preventable complications, we fall short of that promise. Our work must reflect that urgency.

Supporting pregnant and postpartum women and infants is not just a health priority; it is a moral, social, and economic imperative. A child's experiences in the first formative year shapes physical, emotional, and cognitive development for the next generation of San Franciscans, influencing outcomes across the life course. Under our administration, San Francisco will concentrate energy, resources, and attention on this critical developmental window—when the right start can change the course of a child's future.

Strong Starts will bring our City departments together in a new format to better respond to community needs and improve maternal and infant health outcomes, including reducing preterm birth rates and lowering infant and maternal morbidity. Our efforts will strive to improve outcomes in the communities facing the greatest disparities, including Black/African American and American Indian, and Pacific Islander families. When we invest early, we invest in a lifetime of success, for families and for the entire city.

Under the direction of the Chief for Health and Human Services, Strong Starts will advance a cross-departmental effort to improve outcomes for mothers and infants that includes the following actions:

- Establish the **Strong Starts Working Group**, led by the Mayor's Office and co-chaired by the Department of Public Health (DPH), Agency for Human Rights (AHR) (inclusive of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) and the Department on the Status of Women (DOSW)), and the Department of Early Childhood (DEC).
- Identify **senior-level leads** to join the SF Strong Starts Working Group from relevant city departments, including, but not limited to: the Human Services Agency (HSA), the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD), the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH), the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD), and the Mayor's Office for Victims' Rights.



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- Align on **key outcomes** and **leading indicators** to track progress towards the goals of the initiative, ensuring alignment with community priorities.
- Coordinate a **holistic strategy** to drive progress on agreed upon metrics across departments, led by the co-chairs.
- Align **programs across departments and the community** to advance the strategy and improve outcomes.
- Fully **staff and utilize state and federal funding** for initiatives that prioritize services for pregnant and postpartum women and infants.
- Regularly convene the Strong Starts Working Group to review **program performance**.
- Regularly convene the **Equity Advisory Committee** through the Human Rights Commission to provide a venue for the community to share their lived experiences, help identify systems gaps, and bring their solutions for consideration by the SF Strong Starts Working Group.
- Provide an **annual update** to the Board of Supervisors on progress towards goals.

The Strong Starts Working Group will explore strategies that will help us achieve our vision in the following areas:

- *Improve early connections to clinical care*
 - Deliver proactive **family planning** counseling and pre-conception screenings.
 - Enhance **early identification** of high-risk pregnancies through targeted health screenings and seamless connections to care that meet families where they are.
- *Expand access to culturally responsive prenatal and postpartum care*
 - Launch **doula and midwifery training programs** in partnership with City College and community organizations to build a pipeline of culturally responsive care providers.
 - Strengthen **clinical protocols** including for postpartum visits, blood pressure monitoring, maternal mental health screenings, and preventive dental care.
 - Increase **culturally concordant lactation support** through hospital partnerships, community training and workforce development, and expanded access for Medi-Cal families.



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- Deliver **trainings** for providers to ensure respectful care that reduces bias, improves outcomes, and strengthens trust between health care systems and families.
- Expand culturally responsive, community-informed **perinatal care into neighborhood spaces** via one-stop-shop models (e.g., the SF Pregnancy Family Village).
- *Strengthen supports for family caregiving*
 - Invest in our **childcare system**, building capacity for infant childcare, prioritizing providers serving vulnerable communities, and offering personalized referrals for Medi-Cal families.
 - Support **early intervention** through integrated primary care models like HealthySteps, care coordination at hospital NICUs, and specialized referral pathways into higher-intensity case management.
 - Strengthen **caregiving environments** by offering parenting classes and fatherhood and partner engagement programs.
- *Provide wraparound supports to address social determinants of health*
 - Explore **income support programs** for high-risk pregnant women.
 - Strengthen **food security** by improving WIC referrals, targeting grocery voucher programs, and continuing investments like the D10 Community Market to ensure access to nutritious food.
 - Ensure appropriate **behavioral health supports** for high-risk pregnant women.
 - Prioritize pregnant women in **supportive housing and shelter placements**.
- *Improve data, accountability, and coordination*
 - Prioritize meaningful **community engagement** and two-way communication through advisory boards, listening sessions, and annual conferences.
 - Establish **maternal morbidity and preterm birth review committees** to better understand and design strategies to address root causes.
 - Convene **cross-sector collaboratives** to align hospitals, health plans, and community-based organizations around shared goals.