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## **MDHHS partners with U-M Youth Policy Lab to evaluate Michigan's Maternal Infant Health Program**

*Insights will improve health outcomes for more than 20,000 families annually*

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the University of Michigan Youth Policy Lab have been awarded a grant by Arnold Ventures to conduct a rigorous impact evaluation of [Michigan's Maternal Infant Health Program, the state's largest evidence-based home visiting program.](#)

The study will support Michigan's efforts to improve maternal and infant health, and help reduce disparities in health outcomes.

"Effective home visiting programs help kids grow up healthier," said Robert Gordon, MDHHS director. "Careful program evaluation can help us to make our home visiting programs more effective. We are honored to partner with Arnold Ventures and the Youth Policy Lab, great leaders in the movement for evidence-based policy, to help us learn what works in Michigan."

Michigan's infant and maternal mortality rates are higher than the national average, with significant racial disparities in key maternal and infant health indicators. These outcomes stem from systemic racism and poverty that have created disparities in access to care, quality of care, and social determinants of health.

"The health and well-being of Michigan mothers, infants and families is of utmost importance to MDHHS," said Robert Gordon, MDHHS director. "We are committed to assuring that families have access to home visiting programs of the highest quality. The partnership with the University of Michigan and Arnold Ventures will propel this important work further."

Home visiting programs that operate nationwide have demonstrated positive impacts on maternal and infant health, child development, and parenting practices. In the unique, homegrown Michigan Maternal Infant Health Program, families voluntarily partner with a team of registered nurses, licensed social workers, registered dietitians, lactation consultants and infant mental health specialists to improve outcomes for moms, babies and their families. The program serves more than 15,000 Medicaid-eligible pregnant women and 20,000 infants annually.

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With support from Arnold Ventures, MDHHS and the Youth Policy Lab aim to understand the program's impact on maternal health, birth outcomes and health care use to identify effective strategies to increase participation, and to advance effective practices to improve maternal and infant health. Additionally, nearly \$350,000 will go directly to local Maternal Infant Health Program agencies to hire community health workers conduct intensive outreach to pregnant and/or parenting families of newborns.

"We are very excited to continue our partnership with MDHHS and for the opportunity to lead this important evaluation," said Dr. Robin Jacob, faculty co-director of the Youth Policy Lab. "We believe the study will provide vital information to the state to help them in their efforts to reduce the rates of infant and maternal mortality, and improve the lives of all families in Michigan."

The project begins this month and continues through 2025.

The University of Michigan Youth Policy Lab helps community and government agencies make better decisions by measuring what really works.

Arnold Ventures is a Houston-based philanthropy with a core mission of investing in evidence-based solutions that maximize opportunity and minimize injustice.

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