

## **BROADCAST-OSF OnCall plugs pregnancy and postpartum care gaps for Medicaid patients**

Pregnant women with Medicaid Insurance in parts of Illinois can get 24-7 digital support through a new program under the state's Medicaid transformation initiative. Peoria, Illinois-based OSF HealthCare and its [Medicaid Innovation Collaborative](#) recently helped Samantha, a 25-year-old woman who had her second baby not too long ago. She was enrolled in the new program through [OSF OnCall Connect](#).

The program likely saved her life. Eight days after she delivered a healthy baby girl, Samantha reached out to OnCall Connect and was told to go directly to the Emergency Department. She had postpartum pre-eclampsia, which can lead to brain damage, stroke and death if left untreated. But, Samantha *was* treated and she's expected to make a full recovery. Samantha is Black and in the United States, Black women are three times more likely than white women to die as a result of pregnancy.

[A new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) found 80% of maternal deaths between 2017 and 2019 were due to preventable causes, and many of the deaths occurred within the first year after giving birth. Kate Johnson, clinical supervisor for Digital Care at OSF, says more than 100 women signed up within the first two weeks the program was offered in August. She believes pregnant women want additional support, and they're eager to have the 24/7 connection.

**"It provides check-in questions, routine questions, like 'Are they having any signs of infection, UTI symptoms? Are they struggling with breastfeeding; having any depression symptoms?' And if they answer in any kind of an alarming way, that lets our nurses know right away ... sends them an alert, and we're able to contact those patients via telephone and triage if we need to." (:26)**

Women on Medicaid in parts of Illinois can self-enroll in the free program starting eight weeks into their pregnancy by going [online to register](#). A welcome kit will be delivered and includes instructions for downloading the easy-to-use app and a blood pressure cuff for taking regular readings. Women can also enroll in the postpartum program without having participated in the pregnancy support.

Johnson says women will get new education messages each week throughout their pregnancy and postpartum.

**"I think the education that we provide those moms during their pregnancy is awesome because it's getting them ready to deliver their baby. So, helping them think about things like how they want to feed their baby, birth plan, pain management for their delivery, things of that nature." (:16)**

The CDC study found mental health issues were among the preventable, pregnancy-related conditions that lead to higher mortality rates. Johnson says that's why the program offers depression screening at regular intervals before and after pregnancy.

**"So, we will be screening her right upon enrollment into the postpartum loop. And then we'll do a two or three-week check-in to make sure emotions are doing okay. There is such a huge change in emotions postpartum with the changes in your hormones and bringing a baby home plus the sleep deprivation. So, we want to be there to support them in that initial six weeks before they see their provider." (:25)**

The OSF OnCall Connect initiative also screens for social determinants of health – all those factors outside of a medical office, such as food insecurity, financial struggles, housing and transportation.

**"I think what we're seeing mostly is patients who are struggling with transportation to get to their actual OB provider appointments, so we are able to align transportation for them in most cases. Just this past weekend, we had a patient that had no car but needed a prescription. So, we aligned her with a pharmacy that delivered those medications directly to her door." (:19)**

Johnson shares one woman admitted she had no supplies at her home, either for herself or her newborn, and she was connected immediately so she could have what she needed going home from the hospital. Women in the program also have the option of being connected with a digitally-enabled community health worker who can help them navigate ongoing support from community-based organizations.