

Policy Position: Reproductive Health and Healthcare

eliminating racism
empowering women

ywca

west central michigan

What We Believe

Quality, affordable, culturally competent health care is critical to everyone. Many of the survivors and members of the community we serve who have experienced violence in any form often have life-long negative mental, emotional, and physical health outcomes. Against this backdrop, the onset and prolonged duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, interruptions in schooling, and the significant financial stress that many families face have exacerbated the health struggles of many individuals and families. For many - including women, children, people of color, and trauma survivors - getting the medical care and insurance coverage they need is a struggle. Moreover, unequal access to health care is a driving factor in racial disparities in health outcomes for women of color across the U.S. and in Michigan.

At the YWCA West Central Michigan, we aim to eliminate racial disparities in health and empower others through the expansion of equitable and comprehensive reproductive health and healthcare access for all persons. Quality maternal health, contraception and abortion access, pregnancy care, and Medicaid expansions are just a few of the essential elements of accomplishing this goal. Therefore, we seek to advocate for legislation and policies that contribute to the expansion of reproductive rights and justice – especially to marginalized identities such as people of color, those whose identities intersect with LGBTQIA+, indigenous, immigrant, and low-income communities. We support efforts that address the underlying systemic and institutional structures that perpetuate racist and disparate outcomes in reproductive health and healthcare.

What We Know

- Disruptions in insurance coverage disproportionately affect racial and ethnically marginalized women before, during, and after pregnancy [1].
- In Michigan, "women ages 26 to 34, Latinx women, single mothers, women with incomes at or below 138% FPL, women with income between 139% and 250% FPL, women living in nonmetropolitan areas, women who are unemployed and not in the labor force had higher insurance rates than the state average of all women of reproductive age in 2017" [2].
- Nearly 10% of Michiganders who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender remain uninsured [3].
- In Michigan today, basic menstrual products such as tampons and sanitary napkins are not provided in a fully accessible way to menstruators in schools and other public institutions.

- There are no laws in Michigan that regulate the standards of care that pregnant persons receive in prison. In their absence, the Michigan Department of Corrections works under its own set of internal policies when interacting with pregnant inmates [4].
- In Michigan, Black, non-Hispanic women were three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white, non-Hispanic women [5].
- Women of color have long experienced stark health disparities in areas like cervical and breast cancer, unintended pregnancy, and pregnancy-related complications.

What We Support

At the federal, state, and local levels, the YWCA West Central Michigan seeks to educate, advocate, and urges policymakers to

- Work to create equitable legislation that expands reproductive rights and access to comprehensive reproductive health services.
- Address period poverty through the expansion of access to menstrual hygiene products, sanitary products, and facilities, reducing costs burdens for low-income communities.
- Eliminate barriers to contraceptive access in schools and school-based health centers.
- Protect and expand medical coverage for reproductive and other health services for marginalized communities.
- Address racism as a public health crisis and invest in resources to promote health and well-being in communities of color.

*Adopted by YWCA West Central Michigan Board of Directors
in February 2021*

[1] Daw, J. R., Kolenic, G. E., Dalton, V. K., Zivin, K., Winkelman, T., Kozhimannil, K. B., & Admon, L. K. (2020). "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Perinatal Insurance Coverage." *Obstetrics and gynecology*, 135(4), 917–924. <https://doi.org/10.1097/AOG.0000000000003728>

[2] McMorrow, S., Johnston, E., and Thomas, T., (July 2019) *Insurance Coverage among Women of Reproductive Age in Michigan*. Urban Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2019/07/24/factsheet-uninsured-women-mi.pdf>

[3]. Brown, T., Freeman, S., Mallory, C., & Sears, B. (April 2019). *The Impact of Stigma and Discrimination against LGBT People in Michigan*. The Williams Institute. Retrieved from williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Impact-LGBT-Discrimination-MI-Apr-2019.pdf

[4] Miller, E.M. (2020, June 3). "Proposed Legislation Could Offer New Protections for Pregnant Prisoners in Michigan." *Detroit Metro Times*.

[5] Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Division for Vital Records and Health Statistics, 2010-2017.