

Agency for Health Care Administration Reaffirms Commitment to Florida Mothers and Babies with From the Start Initiative

Jacksonville, Fla. — Today, the Agency for Health Care Administration announced a statewide maternal health initiative *From the Start*, led by the Agency in partnership with Medicaid managed care health plans.

From the Start has been developed to align efforts to elevate maternal health throughout the state for pregnant women on Florida Medicaid. Objectives include improving maternal outcomes, strengthening care coordination, and reducing care gaps. The initiative highlights Florida's commitment to ensuring that every mother has access to the care, support, and resources needed from pregnancy through the first year postpartum.

"Florida continues to focus on families, and the *From the Start* initiative highlights the meaningful role we have in helping mothers and babies thrive," said Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Shevaun Harris. "Florida Medicaid covers nearly half of births statewide, so this initiative is truly an opportunity to align efforts across health plans to ensure every mother has access to quality care to ensure a bright start and healthy future."

Under the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care (SMMC) program, health plans offer a wide array of services for their members, but no single health plan's offerings look alike. *From the Start* aligns efforts across all health plans participating in the SMMC to offer the same enhanced evidenced based services geared towards improving pre and postnatal outcomes. Highlights include:

- Aligned member and provider incentives tied to ensuring early notification of pregnancies, maintaining timely prenatal appointments, and postpartum follow-up
- Coverage of unlimited doula services
- Coverage of remote patient monitoring linked to a nurse care manager for high-risk and rising risk pregnant women
- Reimbursing for obstetric mobile care services – ensuring greater access to care in underserved areas
- Providing enhanced assistance for pregnant members going through the Medicaid redetermination process, in partnership with the Department of Children and Families and other community organizations like Healthy Start
- Reducing transportation barriers to appointments

- Providing home delivered meals for high-risk pregnant women with special dietary needs

These resources and benefits, along with many others will be universally covered by all health plans to ensure optimal birth outcomes. *From the Start* reflects Florida's commitment to innovative, family centered initiatives that produce real results.

"Sunshine Health deeply appreciates Secretary Shevaun Harris' leadership and her continued emphasis on improving care for women before, during, and after pregnancy. Supporting mothers and babies requires sustained focus, meaningful collaboration, and a willingness to invest real resources where they make the greatest difference," said Charlene Zein, President and CEO of Sunshine Health. "Together with AHCA, providers, and community partners, we remain committed to doing the work necessary to make meaningful improvements in birth outcomes across Florida."

"Florida Community Care is committed to coordinating care for Florida's most vulnerable populations. I applaud Secretary Harris on aligning the focus of all Medicaid health plans to streamline access to the continuum of care for pregnant women and babies in the Medicaid Program. The 'From the Start' campaign will increase awareness on the importance of perinatal care and remove administrative barriers for our members and provider partners," said Abby Riddle, President of the Florida Community Care Plan.

"Maternal health is critically important, and every family deserves access to exceptional care, especially when a pregnancy becomes more complex than expected," said Nicole B. Thomas, FACHE, President of Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville. "Access to prenatal care is vital to identifying risks early, supporting healthy pregnancies and connecting mothers and babies to the right level of care at the right time. We are encouraged by the State's continued focus and grateful to Secretary Harris for prioritizing access and strengthening the maternal health care delivery system across our state."

"Under Governor DeSantis' leadership, Florida has taken a coordinated, prevention-focused approach to support mothers and families," said Department of Children and Families Assistant Secretary Amanda VanLaningham. "*From the Start* builds on that foundation by aligning health care and community-based supports to ensure mothers are connected not only to care, but to the resources that promote health, stability, and well-being."

"We are encouraged and stand shoulder to shoulder with Secretary Harris to implement the From the Start Initiative in every corner of Florida," shared Faye Johnson, Chief Executive Officer of the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition. "Here at the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition, we know all too well that early risk identification, removing barriers, and an ecosystem of holistic support matter deeply for improving maternal and infant health success for vulnerable populations. Together, we can ensure every mother, child and family gets what they need to thrive."

The Agency for Health Care Administration is Florida's chief health policy and planning entity with a mission of ensuring all Floridians have access to high-quality, sustainable health care. The Agency is responsible for administering the Florida Medicaid program, licensing and regulating nearly 50,000 health care facilities statewide, and empowering consumers through health care transparency initiatives.

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