



# Nurses as Advocates for Reproductive Justice

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The rates of maternal and infant mortality in the United States are extremely high. In a Commonwealth Fund report, the maternal mortality rate for in the United States is higher than any of the fourteen high income countries. In 2021, with more than 1200 deaths in women due to maternal causes, the US had a maternal mortality rate of 32.9 deaths per 100,000 women. This was three times higher than most other high-income countries.

How does Florida rank on the state health system scorecard? In 2021, our state rank was 26th in the nation with a maternal death rate of 29.9% per 1000. In 2020, our infant mortality rate was 31st nationally with a rate of 5.8%.

In terms of morbidity rates per 10,000 in-hospital deliveries the rate worsened from 73.5% in 2018 to 94.3% in 2020 in Florida. In addition, Florida ranked 50th in the nation with a “no prenatal care percentage” of 29%. (Commonwaealthfund.org).

How can we as nurses advocate for maternal and infant health issues so as to improve these scores? By becoming more informed, we can educate our families, friends, organizational leadership in our hospitals and institutions and our legislators about the necessity for improving reproductive services in our state.

Thanks to the American Nurses Association, we have a valuable resource. The September, 2024 issue of OJIN, the “Online Journal of Issues in Nurses”, provides six new articles on “Reproductive Justice.” These articles discuss important and relevant topics from the history of reproductive justice to current issues such as abortion laws, mental health concerns and where we are today. ANA members can access the journal at [ojin.nursingworld.org](http://ojin.nursingworld.org).

By staying informed, we can promote reproductive justice in our workplaces and our state. With this knowledge we can serve as an important resource for educating those who are in a position to influence change. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Debbie Hogan is a retired Public Health Nurse who has devoted her career to promoting community health issues and preventive healthcare. She has presented numerous programs to Florida Nurses Association members on public health issues and written many articles for The Florida Nurse on preventive health issues, the importance of vaccines and the critical role of public health professionals.

References online: [myamericannurse.com/?p=415504](http://myamericannurse.com/?p=415504)

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