

The role of a state health department in addressing stillbirth:

Key findings on provider support and hospital experience from the Utah SOARS survey



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What is SOARS?

Study of Associated Risks of Stillbirth



- Modeled after the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) survey.
 - Established in 2016, survey has been distributed since 2018.
 - Sent to every Utah resident older than 15 years who experiences a stillbirth.
 - Mailings begin 2-4 months after the stillbirth occurs.
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About SOARS

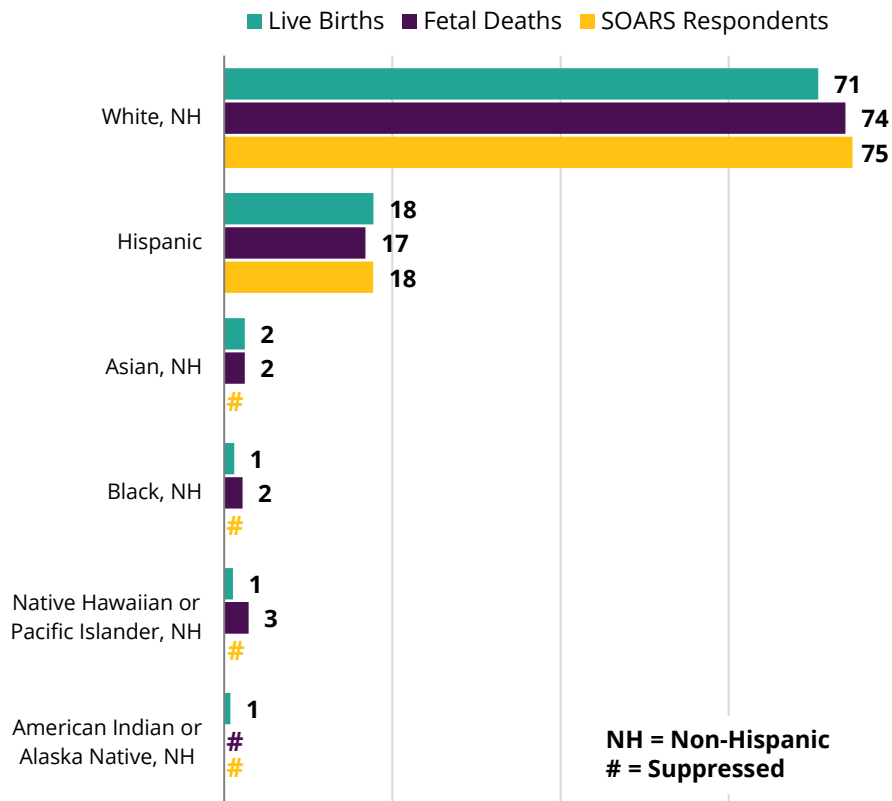
- All moms receive a necklace designed by a local Utah artist, even if they choose not to participate.
- Topics include:
 - Health prior to pregnancy.
 - Prenatal care and insurance status.
 - Infections, complications, smoking, alcohol use, and intimate partner violence.
 - Services offered during hospital stay, level of support, and fetal/maternal testing.



Provider Support & SOARS

- The purpose of this analysis was to:
 - Determine the level of provider support felt by SOARS participants following a stillbirth.
 - Identify hospital services that are offered to families, and how these services may influence feelings of provider support.
 - Identify maternal outcomes that may be influenced by adequate provider support.

% of Utah births, fetal deaths, and SOARS sample by maternal race and ethnicity, 2018-2021



Race and ethnicity

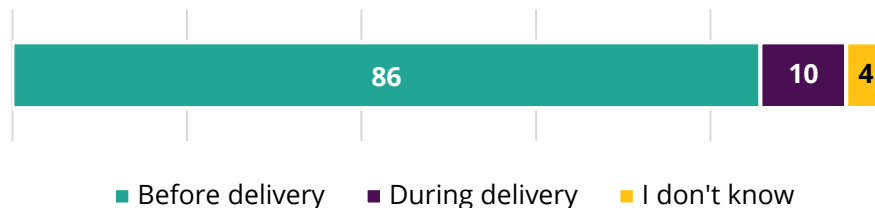
- 71% of live births were among White non-Hispanic mothers.
- 74% of fetal deaths were among White non-Hispanic mothers.
- Hispanic mothers of any race comprise 17-18% of live births and fetal deaths.
- Research on certain demographics is difficult due to low sample size.

SOARS results

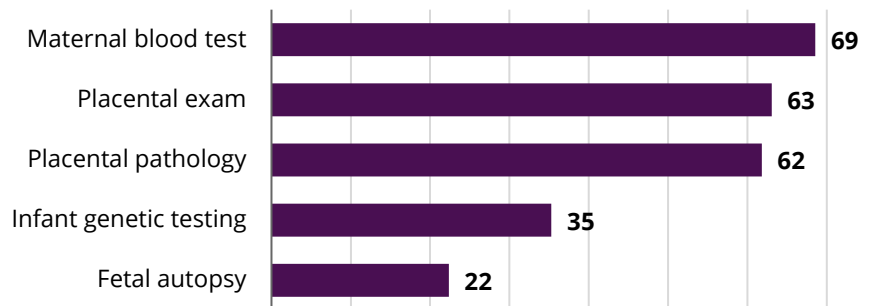
Utah SOARS respondents, 2018-2021

- We received 520 responses, with a weighted response rate of 54%.
- The majority of fetal deaths (86%) occurred prior to delivery.
- Maternal blood testing was the most commonly performed test (69%) and a fetal autopsy was the least common test (22%).

Q44. When did your baby die? (%)



Q52. Were any of the following tests performed on you and/or your baby? (%)

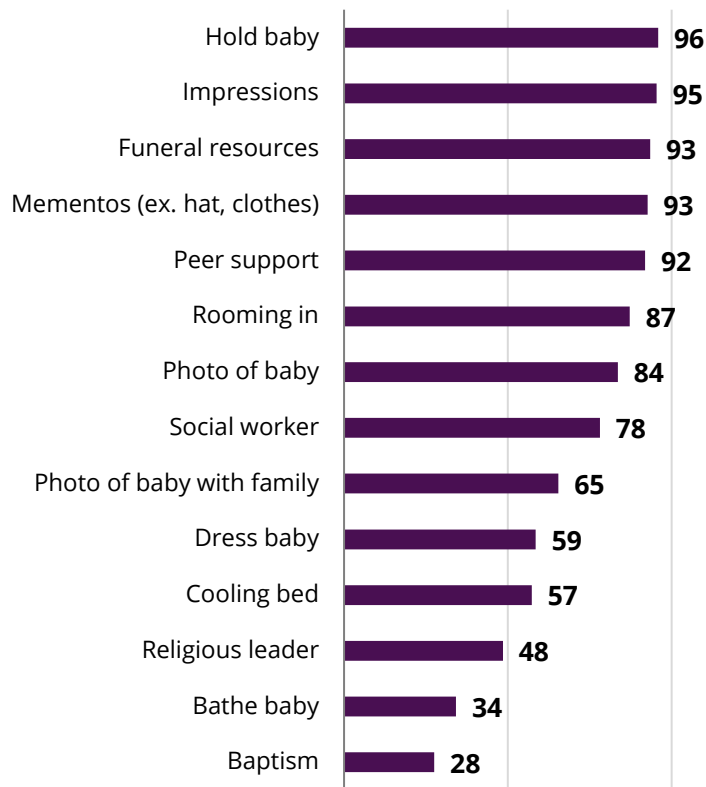


Services offered

Utah SOARS respondents, 2018-2021

- Having the chance to hold their baby, impressions, funeral resources, mementos, and peer support resources were offered to at least 90% of moms.
- Visits with a religious leader, bathing their baby, and baptisms were offered to less than half of moms.

Services offered following stillbirth (%)

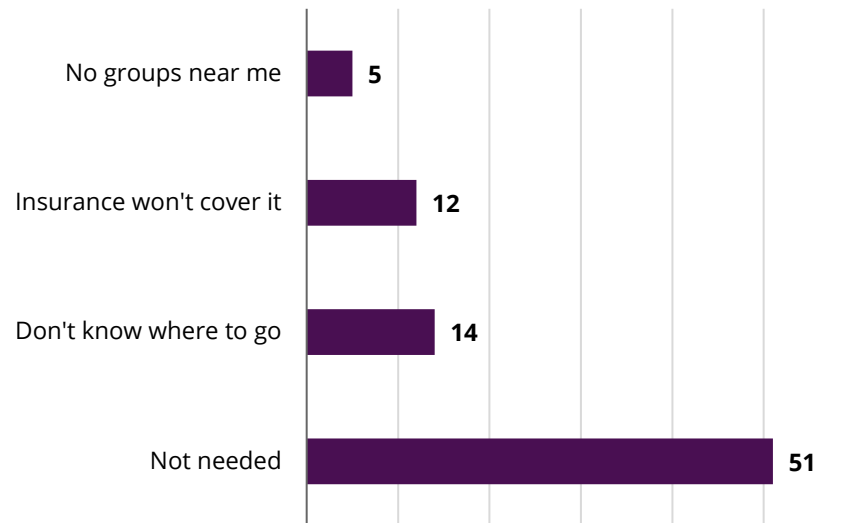


Grief counseling

Utah SOARS respondents, 2018-2021

- 46% percent of moms reported attending grief counseling since their baby died.
- Among moms who did not attend grief counseling, 51% said they did not feel that they needed it.
- The least common reasons for not attending were not knowing where to go, insurance not covering it, and not being near support groups.

Reasons for not seeking grief counseling (%)

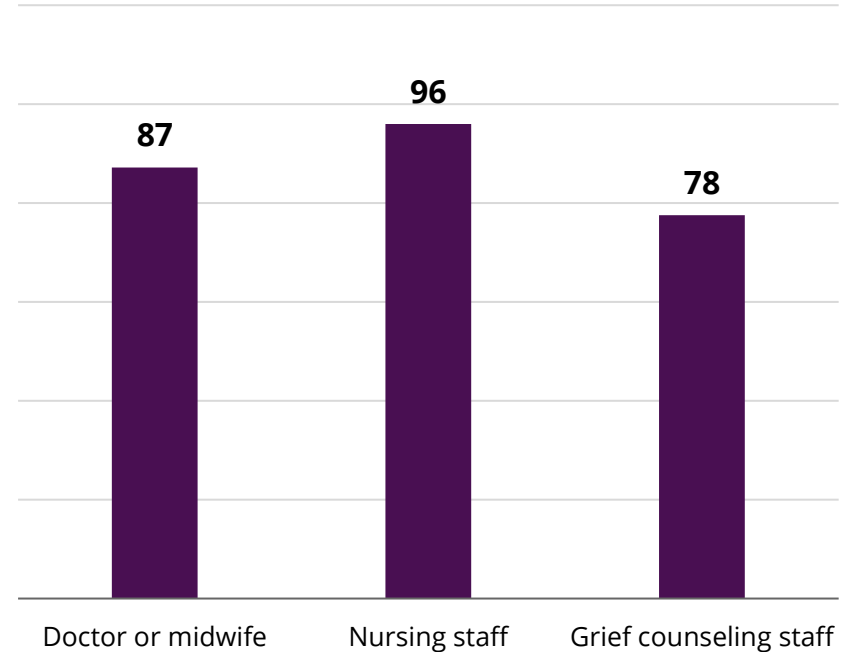


Provider support

- Eighty-seven percent of moms reported feeling adequately supported by their doctor or midwife.
- Ninety-six percent felt supported by nursing staff, and 78% felt supported by grief counseling staff.

Adequate support received following stillbirth by hospital staff (%)

Utah SOARS respondents, 2018-2021

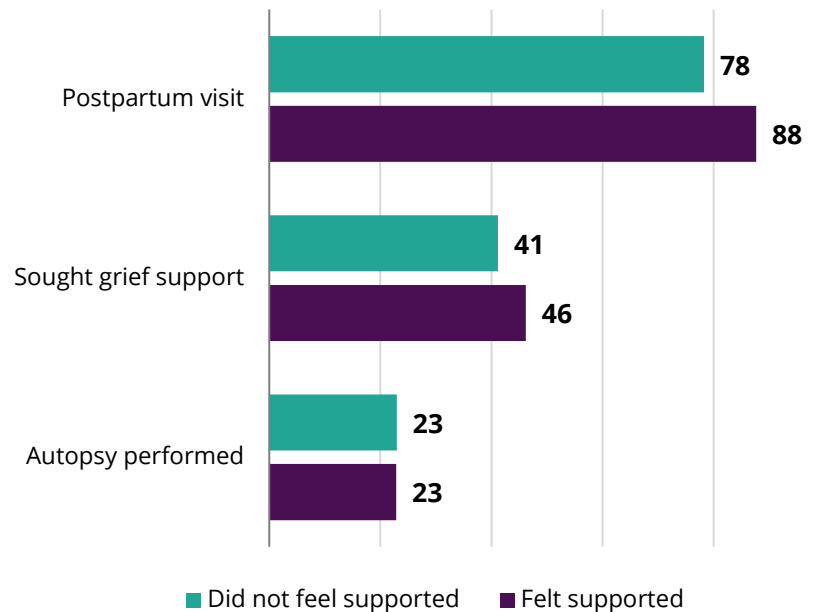


Maternal outcomes and doctor/midwife support

- Postpartum health visits and seeking grief support were more common for moms who reported adequate doctor or midwife support.
- The rate of fetal autopsies was the same for both groups.

Select maternal outcomes, by reported adequate doctor or midwife support (%)

Utah SOARS respondents, 2018-2021

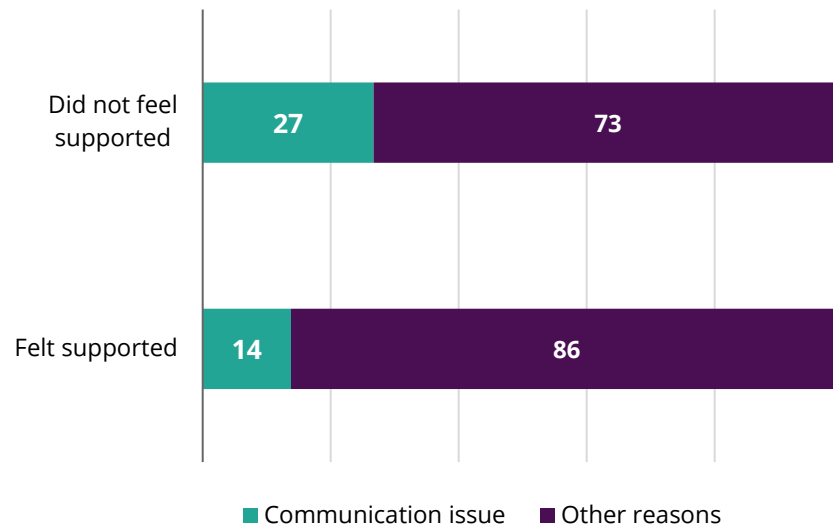


Maternal outcomes and doctor/midwife support

- Reasons for an autopsy refusal:
 - **Communication issue:** mom wasn't asked, didn't have enough information, or did not feel information was communicated properly.
 - **Other reasons:** financial concerns, personal or religious reasons, or did not think it was needed.

Reason for no autopsy performed, by reported adequate doctor or midwife support (%)

Utah SOARS respondents, 2018-2021

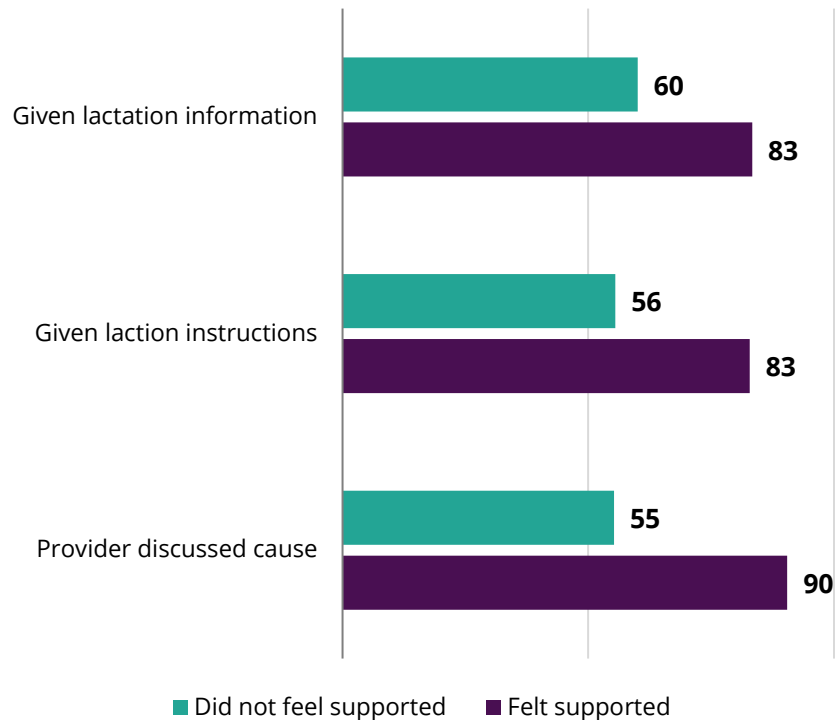


Hospital experiences and doctor/midwife support

- Moms reported being given lactation information and instruction at higher rates than those who did not feel supported.
- Ninety percent of moms who felt supported said their provider discussed what may have happened to their baby with them, compared to 55% of moms who did not feel supported.

Hospital experiences, by reported adequate doctor or midwife support (%)

Utah SOARS respondents, 2018-2021

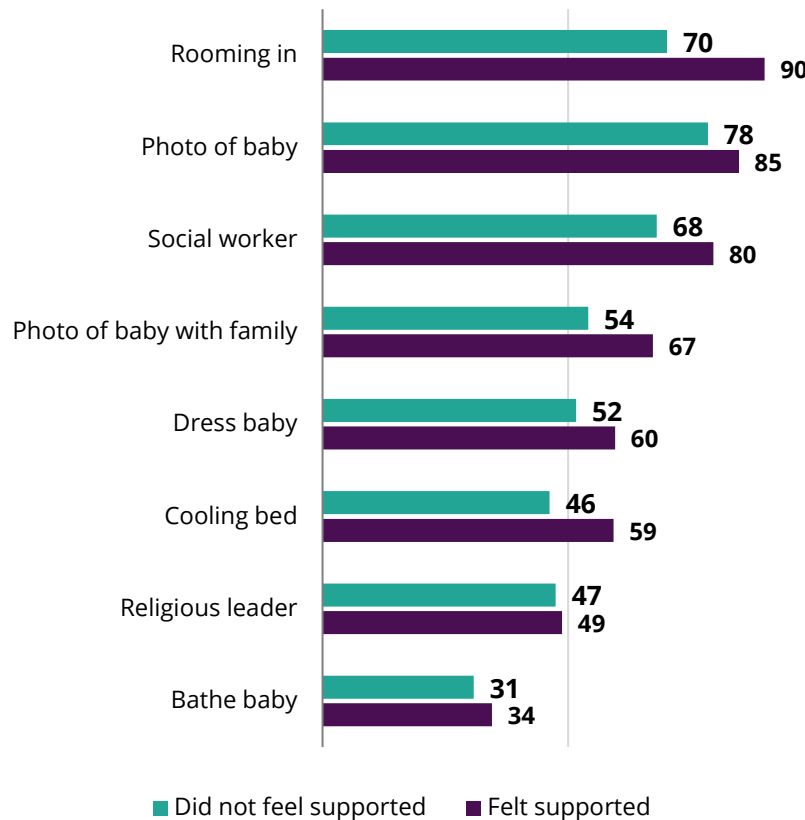


Services offered and doctor/midwife support

- Ninety percent of moms who reported adequate support were offered the opportunity to have their baby stay with them, compared to 70% of moms who did not feel supported.
- Offers of cooling beds, social worker visits, and family photos were also much more common for moms who felt supported compared to those who did not.

Services offered, by reported adequate doctor or midwife support (%)

Utah SOARS Respondents, 2018-2021



Written comments from SOARS participants

"My hospital ([hospital name]) had AMAZING nurses that made all the difference, except for one. When she was there it made things worse. She wouldn't touch the baby & you could see she wasn't comfortable - making it worse. The hospital also has called to ask how breastfeeding is going which is hurtful to see it was just another patient that they didn't take notes or care for."

"I was treated with the highest amount of respect and care during my experience. I was provided a pro bono photographer, and about 10 hours to spend time with my baby. We dressed her, took footprints, and took as much time as we needed with her. They had held my baby after we left until the funeral home came to collect her body."

Discussion and next steps

- Adequate provider support following a stillbirth may lead to positive maternal outcomes, including seeking postpartum care and grief support.
- Moms who reported adequate provider support also reported higher rates of lactation education, being offered certain services such as a cooling bed or rooming with their baby, and discussing with their provider what may have happened to their baby.
- We plan to conduct a more thorough analysis once 2022 and 2023 data is received.
- 2018-2021 data is currently available for analysis by others.

To find out more about data requests:

duribe@utah.gov

**To find out more about SOARS and to
view the full SOARS survey, visit:**

<https://mihp.utah.gov/study-of-associated-risk-of-stillbirth>

