

Access to Healthcare

Access to healthcare remains a significant challenge for women and children in Central Florida, with barriers such as workforce shortages, cultural and language differences, and financial constraints limiting their ability to receive timely and effective care. Florida ranks among the lowest states in clinical care for women (44th) and children (47th) (America's Health Rankings, [2023 Health of Women and Children Report](#), 2023), emphasizing the urgent need for improved access to preventive services, primary care, and healthcare coverage. Addressing these disparities is essential to fostering better health outcomes and ensuring that all individuals receive equitable and comprehensive healthcare.

Key Factors Impacting Access to Healthcare in Central Florida:

- **Coverage and Insurance Gaps**

- Uninsured women and children face higher rates of unmet care needs and poorer health outcomes. People without health insurance are less likely to have a regular health care provider and are more inclined to skip routine health care, putting them at an increased risk for serious health problems. (Healthy People 2030, [Increase the proportion of people with health insurance-AHS-01](#).)
- Medicaid expansion in other states has improved access, yet Florida remains one of 10 states that have not expanded the program. (KFF, [Status of State Medicaid Expansion Decisions](#), February 12, 2025).
- Although there are recent positive developments related to coverage: on December 2, 2024, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services approved Florida's request to increase the eligibility threshold for its subsidized KidCare program to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. This expansion allows more children to access healthcare coverage. (The Florida Health Justice Project, [Kidcare Expansion Status / December 2024: Federal Government Approves Expansion in Florida](#), December 2024.)
- As of 2023, 12-14% of women and 5-7% of children in the Orlando metro area were uninsured. (Florida Health Charts, [Females with Health Insurance \(Aged 19-64\)\(Census ACS\)](#), and [Children Without Health Insurance \(Aged 0-18 Years\)\(Census ACS\)](#), data for Lake, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties, 2023).

- **Availability of Timely Services**

- A reliable source of care and the ability to receive care when the need is recognized is associated with successful health outcomes, including recommended preventive and screening services and improvements in managing chronic conditions. (America's Health Rankings, [2023 Health of Women and Children Report](#), 2023.)
- In 2022, nearly 1 in 5 women in Florida did not have a personal doctor or a medical checkup in the past year. (Florida Health Charts, [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Dashboard](#), 2023).

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- **Healthcare Workforce Shortages**

- One of the ongoing challenges impacting access to healthcare is the statewide workforce shortage. Florida is projected to face a shortage of 59,000 nurses by 2035. (Florida Hospital Association, [2024 Nursing Vacancy and Turnover Rate](#), 2024.)
- Recruiting and retaining a diverse, culturally congruent healthcare workforce is essential for improving engagement and trust. One in four local survey respondents indicated needing medical care but not receiving it and gave the reason for this as their inability to find a healthcare provider who knows or understands “my culture, identity, beliefs, or language.” (Central Florida Collaborative, [2025 Community Health Needs Assessment by the Central Florida Collaborative](#), January 20, 2024.)

- **Gender Bias in Healthcare**

- Women’s symptoms are often dismissed, leading to delayed diagnoses, particularly for conditions like autoimmune diseases and endometriosis. Women of color face additional barriers due to systemic racism and discrimination in healthcare settings. (Medical News Today; [Gender Bias in Healthcare](#), 2021).

- **Increasing Access and System Capacity**

- Expanded dental care for children, low-cost healthcare services, and culturally congruent providers who reflect the community demographics are critical needs for the local area. (The Central Florida Collaborative, [2022 Tri-County Community Health Needs Assessment](#), 2022.)

Addressing these issues requires a coordinated effort to expand healthcare coverage, improve system capacity, and create a more inclusive and responsive healthcare system that meets the needs of Central Florida’s diverse population. Improving access to healthcare is also not just about providing medical services—it is a critical step toward reducing maternal health disparities and addressing mental health challenges, as untreated conditions and systemic barriers create a cycle of poor health outcomes that disproportionately affect women and children in Central Florida.