



Lake Lillian lights up for Fun Days parade. **A3.**

**Raymond earns state berth. B1.**

WILLMAR, MINN.

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## Renville County to roll out truancy strategy

By Tom Cherveney  
West Central Tribune

OLIVIA — A more aggressive approach to truancy in Renville County schools will be rolled out to school staff members in meetings scheduled Aug. 11 and Aug. 18.



Kingstrom

The success of the program will depend greatly on whether schools in the county support it. "It's going to take a huge amount of school buy-in," Renville County Attorney Kelsey Kingstrom told the Renville County Board of Commissioners on Aug. 2.

Kingstrom, who was appointed county attorney earlier this year, proposed the new truancy strategy as a counter to the county's current policy, which did not put a truant student before a judge until he or she had missed 22 or more days of school.

"That's a disservice," said Kingstrom. By that point, a student has already missed too much school to advance to the next grade and will have to repeat the grade, she said.

Under the new policy, a student will be standing in front of a judge after seven missed days of school.

The new approach will ask schools to report students missing as soon as they record two days of unexcused absences.

Importantly, the program also asks that school staff be part of meetings involving students, their parents or guardians, and county

**STRATEGY:** Page A2

## CELEBRATING LIFE

Photos by Macy Moore / West Central Tribune

Native American dancers move to the sounds of drums and singing Friday during the Upper Sioux Community's traditional wacipi.

## Traditional Wacipi held in Granite Falls

By Macy Moore  
West Central Tribune

Upper Sioux Community

The sounds of rhythmic drum beats and singing voices echoed off the trees at the Upper Sioux Community's Wacipi grounds as three days of traditional powwow gatherings kicked off southeast of Granite Falls Friday evening.

The event, which brings Native Americans together to sing, dance and celebrate life with their community, began with a Grand Entry, followed by a men's traditional special in which Tim Blue was honored.

The powwow continued Saturday, when Rhonda Hoepfer was honored in remembrance during the women's traditional special. Festivities continued through the afternoon Saturday and into midday Sunday.



**LEFT:** Paige Matthiae, right, adjusts the regalia of daughter Nia Shinsky, 9, on Friday as they prepare to participate in the Upper Sioux Community's traditional wacipi. **RIGHT:** Richard Hill, of Sisseton, South Dakota, exhales smoke Friday while waiting for the Upper Sioux Community's traditional wacipi to begin.



## Racial disparities in Minn. 'alarming'

Study reveals higher rates of death among Black, Indigenous mothers

By Paul John Scott  
West Central Tribune

ROCHESTER, Minn. — High disparities exist for death following pregnancy among Black and Indigenous people in Minnesota, a new report shows.

Among people who die following pregnancy in Minnesota, at 23%, the portion who are Black is almost twice their representation within the overall population, which is just 13%. For Indigenous people who give birth, their proportion of Minnesotans who die following childbirth is 8%, or four times their portion of the general population.

The Minnesota Department of Health study is the first-ever in Minnesota. Overall, the state is well below the national average in maternal mortality.

"The health of our mothers is a key indicator of the health of our state," Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm said in a state-

"In one of the healthiest states in the country, Black and Indigenous moms are dying at a rate that far outstrips their share of the population. This is not a coincidence. It is a reflection of the historical legacy of structural racism that has shaped current inequities in maternal mortality."



DR. RACHEL HARDEMAN

ment. "Each maternal death is tragic, and the racial disparities we see in the data are alarming. We mourn those Minnesotans who died and the impact of the losses on families and communities. This report is a critical first step to finding ways to prevent these deaths both inside and outside health care settings."

"In one of the healthiest states in the country, Black and Indigenous moms are dying at a rate that far outstrips their share of the population," Dr. Rachel Hardeман said in a statement. Hardeман is director of the Center for Antiracism Research for Health Equity at the University of Minnesota and co-

chair of the Maternal Mortality Review Committee.

"This is not a coincidence. It is a reflection of the historical legacy of structural racism that has shaped current inequities in maternal mortality," she said. "These deaths are 100% preventable, and Minnesota has the opportunity to lead the way in implementing change within our communities to alter this trajectory. Structural racism is a fixable problem, and we all have a role to play in the solutions."

The report looked at people who died within one year of giving birth between 2017 and 2018, of which there were 48. It separated these mortality events between those related to pregnancy, and those

that were not, with the former, which made up 25% of the deaths, determined to be "100% preventable."

The state saw 12 deaths related to pregnancy, which corresponded to 8.8 deaths per 100,000 live births. This is just over half the national incidence in 2017 of 17.3 pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 births.

The report found that the leading cause of overall maternal mortality in Minnesota during the year studied was vehicular accidents, followed by overdose, suicide/homicide, cancer and infection.

The deaths were slightly over-represented in parts of rural Minnesota, including the Northeast and Central regions, with the greatest disparity a doubling and tripling of rate in South-Central and Northwest Minnesota.

Overall maternal mortality was slightly under-represented in the metro region. Most of the 2017 deaths related to pregnancy (7 out of 12)

were recorded in the metro, however. Causes ranged from infection to cardiomyopathy, cardiovascular conditions, embolism, blood and hypertensive disorders, injury and other ailments, but the absolute numbers were too small to be depicted as percentages.

"Our work identifies a significant need for focused services after pregnancy delivery, during what is now being called the fourth trimester," Dr. Cresta Jones, associate professor at the U of M Medical School and co-chair of the Maternal Mortality Review Committee, said in a statement.

"Typically, individuals are not seen after delivery for 6-12 weeks, but earlier and more frequent post-delivery follow up will help identify patients most at risk, include those with substance use or a substance use disorder and those with other conditions placing them at higher risk of death by suicide."

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