



# Women's Wellbeing

Though they make up half of the Somerville population, due to persistent gender inequality, women and girls still face unique social and health concerns. Women are more likely to be caregivers to others, including parents, partners, and children, and are less likely to have their needs met by health care providers and employers.

- ▶ How can we promote positive physical and mental health among young women and girls?
- ▶ How can Somerville better support pregnant women and mothers?
- ▶ How can we best engage and serve Somerville's culturally diverse population of girls and women across the lifespan?

## Food Security

- From 2010-2015, there was a 44.6% increase in the number of female-headed families with children accessing SNAP, representing 658 households. (p.62)
- Yet, as of 2016, 61% of those eligible for SNAP in Somerville were not enrolled. (p.62)

## Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

MA legislation that requires "reasonable accommodations" for pregnant women, time off after childbirth, and accommodations to support breastfeeding.

## Employment

- In 2015, 14% of U.S. mothers age 25-34 took time off from careers to raise a family. Compared to 43% in 1975. (p.104)
- Nationally, 25% of women who took parental leave in the past 2 years reported a negative impact on their careers. (p.104)

## Age 5-18

- Female high school students have double the rate of self-harm compared to males. (p.49)
- Girls reported dating violence (3.8%) at over twice the rate that boys did (1.4%). (p.68)

## Age 18-24

In 2016, 59 women in this age group residing in Somerville gave birth, a decrease from 2012, when there were 79 births in this cohort. (p.78)

## Age 25-39

The vast majority of births to Somerville residents occur in the young adult age span of 25-40 years. (p.25)

## Age 40-64

- Some residents are giving birth in their 40s.
- Breast cancer was the leading cause of cancer deaths in Somerville from 2010-2012. (p.121)

## Age 65+

- The rate for females visiting emergency departments for mental disorders has been rising consistently. (p.135)
- Women are more likely to be assessed as being frail and at risk for injury. (p.137)

## WIC

- In Somerville, 1,834 residents utilized WIC benefits in 2017. (p.38)
- Statewide, 33.8% of pregnant women received WIC support during their pregnancy. (p.38)

## Challenges

- **Poverty:** 43.2% of families with a female householder and no husband present had incomes below the poverty level, a 2.6% increase since 2010 and consistently higher than the state rate. (p.19)
- **Domestic Violence:** In 2016, there were 198 Domestic Assaults recorded in Somerville for all ages. (p.88)
- **Homelessness:** The Point in Time count from January 2017 reported 34 people sheltered in Somerville, 30 of whom were female, 13 with a serious mental illness, 8 with substance use disorder, and 20 victims of domestic violence. (p.82)

## Recommendations

- Create a task force to explore student self-reported mental health issues.
- Create workplace environments conducive to breastfeeding.
- Improve access to quality, affordable child care for all.
- Engage single mothers and their children in exploring social networks to promote family health and wellbeing.
- Expand outreach to first-time older mothers to improve birth outcomes.
- Support self-care for caregivers, emphasizing periodic health screenings for prevention such as breast cancer and diabetes.

## Community Engagement and Support

*Emerge Massachusetts* works to build local political leadership by training women to participate in the democratic process. (p.128)  
*SomervilleMoms* listserv includes nearly 5,000 members, and provides a forum for sharing parenting topics with a Somerville focus. (p.41)

# Resources

## **CHA Sexual & Reproductive Health Services**

The Cambridge Health Alliance offers sexual and reproductive health services at various locations including Somerville. Services include birth control, emergency contraception, family planning, HIV and STI testing, and pregnancy testing. Counseling services do not require clients to be CHA patients. Some visits and services are free, depending on eligibility. All visits are confidential.

## **CHA Teen Connection**

A health care option for Somerville students age 12 and up. Provides a range of clinical services for students at Somerville High's school-based clinic, including free and confidential sexual and reproductive care.

[challiance.org/location/somerville-teen-health-center](http://challiance.org/location/somerville-teen-health-center)

## **MotherWoman**

A nonprofit with local branches working to support moms, build community safety nets, and promote related public policy. Learn more at [motherwoman.org](http://motherwoman.org)

## **CASPAR's New Day Program and Parenting Journey's Sober Parenting Program**

Local programs that address parent's substance use disorder help promote childhood and family wellbeing. Learn more at [casparinc.org/new-day.html](http://casparinc.org/new-day.html) and [parentingjourney.org/parents/sober-parenting-journey](http://parentingjourney.org/parents/sober-parenting-journey)

## **SNAP**

Find out more about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and who is eligible at [gettingsnap.org](http://gettingsnap.org)  
Learn more about Food Security in Somerville at [somervillefoodsecurity.org](http://somervillefoodsecurity.org)

## **WIC**

“WIC is a free nutrition program that helps families with children under five get healthy food and learn how to eat well. It also supports pregnant women, infants and new moms.”

Learn more at [www.challiance.org/community/women-infants-children-program](http://www.challiance.org/community/women-infants-children-program)

## **Domestic Violence Support**

“RESPOND partners with individuals, families and communities to end the serious public health issue of domestic violence. RESPOND strives to achieve its mission through prevention, intervention and education services that promote safe, healthy relationships.” Learn more at [respondinc.org](http://respondinc.org)

## **Somerville Commission for Women**

The Commission focuses on advocacy, education, and outreach in regards and on behalf of women. The Commission has a special focus on anti-violence, financial literacy, empowerment, coalition building, and monitoring and supporting legislation. Learn more and find out how to get involved at [somervillema.gov/departments/office-somerville-commissions/somerville-commission-for-women](http://somervillema.gov/departments/office-somerville-commissions/somerville-commission-for-women)