

Black Infant Health Program

SisterStory

Jocelyn's Story:

Former Aerospace Engineer Finds 'Community' in BIH

When Jocelyn became pregnant, she craved support and community with other Black women. She discovered her local Black Infant Health (BIH), a program that serves pregnant and parenting Black women from all socioeconomic and educational backgrounds.

"This is my first pregnancy and I was very excited," she says, describing a years-long struggle with fertility before finally becoming pregnant. "My mother is a medical doctor, so you would think any questions I have I could just ask her, but I don't live anywhere near her or any of my family."

Jocelyn herself is an accomplished career woman, having spent more than a decade in the aerospace industry working alongside rocket scientists.

"When I learned of a program that specifically caters to Black women, I thought this is definitely for me." —Jocelyn

BIH serves all Black women, regardless of income. The program intervenes to reduce the social, economic and racial stress that experts believe play an important role in Black women's poor birth and maternal outcomes.

Within a culturally affirming environment and honoring the unique history of Black women, the Black Infant Health program aims to help women



Jocelyn and Ellis

have healthy babies. In prenatal and postnatal weekly group sessions and one-on-one meetings with a trained Family Health Advocate, participants learn proven strategies to reduce stress and develop life skills.

For women like Jocelyn, BIH reinforces cultural identity. "I'm in an interracial marriage, and although I have a really great new family here in California, I

don't have a lot of community around where we live," she says. "When I learned of a program that specifically caters to Black women, I thought this is definitely for me."

Jocelyn stays busy volunteering and relishing in her role as mom to son, Ellis. She and her husband, Matthew (pictured below holding son, Ellis), look forward to growing their family—and are in the process of adopting a baby girl.



Meet the Black Infant Health Program

Racism and social and economic stressors play an important role in poor birth outcomes—babies born too early and too small—for Black women.

Black Infant Health (BIH) recognizes the impact of historical racism and how long-term exposure to stress can negatively influence maternal and infant health outcomes, regardless of socioeconomic status. Within a culturally supportive environment, and honoring the unique history of African-American women, BIH aims to help women have healthy babies.

BIH implements an evidence-informed intervention that uses a group-based approach, where participants get to meet, interact and build a sisterhood with other Black women. Group sessions are complemented with participant-centered life planning, goal setting and referrals to services for participants and their families. This powerful combination serves to help women enhance life skills, learn proven strategies to reduce stress and build social support. Ultimately, this two-pronged approach impacts not only participants themselves, but future generations of Black women, infants and families.

Where We Are: Services are provided in communities where approximately 90% of African-American births occur:

Counties

- ▶ Alameda
- ▶ Contra Costa
- ▶ Fresno
- ▶ Kern
- ▶ Los Angeles
- ▶ Riverside
- ▶ Sacramento
- ▶ San Bernardino
- ▶ San Diego
- ▶ San Francisco
- ▶ San Joaquin
- ▶ Santa Clara

Cities

- ▶ Long Beach
- ▶ Pasadena

Our Goal: To improve African-American infant and maternal health, as well as decrease Black-White health inequities and social inequities for women and infants.

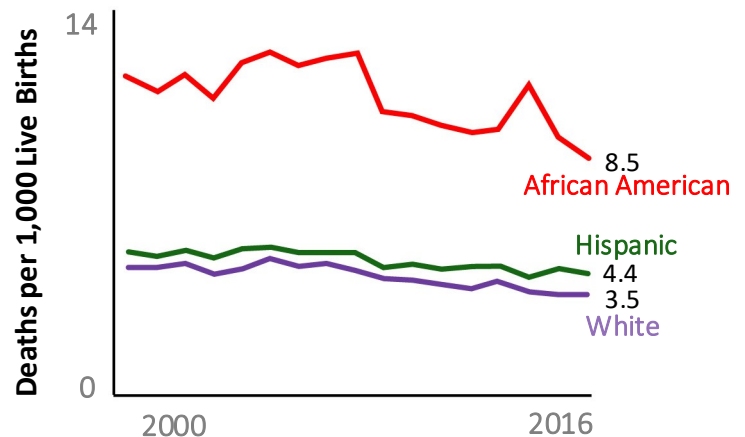
We Serve: African-American women who are 18 years or older and up to 30 weeks pregnant at the time of enrollment regardless of income.

Service Delivery: Services are free and provided by Family Health Advocates, Group Facilitators, Public Health Nurses and Social Workers.

Outcomes: Current science supports an empowerment-focused, group-based intervention as a promising strategy for improving African-American women's birth outcomes. BIH participants report:

- ▶ Stronger positive connections to their heritage and the African-American women in their community
- ▶ Increased empowerment to make behavior changes that lead to living a healthier life
- ▶ Better understanding of effective strategies to manage and reduce stress

Infant Mortality by Race/Ethnicity 2000-2016



Graphic chart above is a representation of surveillance data. Contact MCAHDataHelp@cdph.ca.gov for actual data.

