

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 1

Gaps in Community Clinical Care Integration for Birthing People Across the US

Phoebe Wescott, Inas Madhi, Nia Mitchell, Aja Clark

This panel will include an overview of the Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health Community Care Initiative (AIM/CCI) and National Healthy Start Association's (NHSA) partnership with Reproductive Health Impact (RH Impact) to conduct a community voice focus groups study with six pilot sites across the U.S. The focus groups assessed participants' experience with community-clinical support throughout the pregnancy continuum, particularly the postpartum period. The panelists will discuss the methodology behind the study and specific themes and recommendations that emerged from the focus groups to support ongoing action planning towards improved care and supportive community linkages for birth equity.

Piloting an Innovative Philanthropic Approach to Distribute Rapid Response Funds B/RJ Orgs

Rachel Young, Inas Madhi, Jeanette Kowalik

This lecture/seminar will include an overview of the Birth Justice Rapid Response Fund initiative focused on reducing barriers to funding opportunities encountered by organizations in the birth justice field. The authors of the abstract will discuss methodology, results, lessons learned, and strategies employed in participatory grantmaking to advance birth and reproductive justice and increase continued access to funding for organizations.

Expanding the table: MMRCs and PQC's Partnering with CBOs to Promote Equity

Tonni Oberly, Nia Mitchell

Black communities continue to experience inequities in maternal mortality and morbidity. Reproductive Health (RH) Impact conducted an assessment to determine how collaboration between maternal mortality review committees (MMRCs), perinatal quality collaboratives (PQCs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) can be strengthened to address inequities in maternal mortality and morbidity. Methods used included key informant interviews with MMRC and PQC representatives, focus groups with community-based organization representatives, and a PQC survey. Thematic analysis was conducted for the qualitative data collected and descriptive statistics were calculated for the quantitative data collected. Based on the findings, RH Impact developed recommendations and a roadmap for MMRCs and PQCs to partner with CBOs to promote equity.

SESSION 2

Grow Birth Centers: Reclaiming Midwifery-led Care in Black Communities

Yvoneed K. Francois, Kimberly Durdin, Gianna Fay

Midwifery care in birth centers is an integral solution to the problem of Black maternal mortality. The best part? It is not new to our communities—it was started by us and is being reclaimed for us. Birth centers are part of a larger movement in beloved economies, using capital in ways to boost health and wellbeing. Our panel will bring together experts in the birth equity community, including Kimberly Durdin, co-founder of Kindered Space LA; Leseliey Welch, co-founder of Birth Center Equity; a Black parent who will share their birth story and experience in birth centers; and a public health professional. Together, these panelists will discuss how midwifery led care in birth centers provides transformative care that impacts whole communities.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 2

"It's a Vibe" - Supporting the Emotional and Mental Health Needs of the Birthworker

Dr. Heather Marie Rice , Krista Lumpkins-Howard, Tammie Sheila Jones

Birthing Beautiful Communities (BBC), a Black women-founded organization in Northeast Ohio, has achieved notable success, serving over 1,500 African American families to date. With a 92% rate of mothers reaching a full-term pregnancy, 99.2% infant survival rate, and zero incidence of maternal mortality. The purpose of this session is to explore how the dual nature of birth work for Black women- can be both therapeutic and potentially triggering. The presentation will describe innovative solutions, such as grief recovery method support groups, to address these challenges. Additionally, the session outlines BBC's proactive approach to staff well-being, including mental health days, bereavement time, flexible paid time off, team building retreats, and access to a network of Black therapists for individual therapy services.

Calling in Spirit: Exploring & Reclaiming the Foundations of African American Traditional & Spiritual Midwifery

Okunsola Amadou

The Calling in Spirit: Exploring & Reclaiming the Foundations of African American Traditional & Spiritual Midwifery presentation will include an evidence-based analysis with Black-led research on the origins, benefits, and practices of African American Midwifery through the practices of Hoodoo, Spiritual work, ancestral veneration and herbal healing, with a comparison of states and countries with exemptions and recognition for the practice of Traditional and Religious Midwifery, such as TBA's recognized by WHO. Black women deserve to have a Traditional Midwifery education route, and their presentation examines this. An overview of the legislation that criminalized the practicing of traditional midwifery will be discussed followed by a process in reclaiming African American Traditional Midwifery practices for a stronger Black Midwifery workforce today.

SESSION 3

Reproductive Injustice in the Name of God and White Privilege: A Case Study of the Alabama Supreme Court Ruling

Rose Archer, Iris Reddick

Religious rhetoric and structural racism have extensively played a role in perpetuating reproductive injustice, but rarely are they studied simultaneously. By examining the recent Alabama Supreme Court case ruling that suggested IVF embryos had the same rights as children, this study reveals the intersecting relationships of religious discourse, race/ism, and classism that collectively promoted the reproductive health of others while simultaneously denying the rights of persons of color. By engaging a Womanist lens, this qualitative study leverages content analysis of court case documents, social media discourse, and news media coverage to reveal how tools of reproductive justice have been refashioned as forms of social capital for the whitewashing of reproductive health (in)equity.

Our Stories, Our Spiritualities Still Belong to Us: Spiritual Practices for All

Angela Tyler-Williams

Everyone has a reproductive story, and everyone has a faith story. For too long, the dominant culture has demanded we separate those pieces of ourselves. SACReD, the Spiritual Alliance of Communities for Reproductive Dignity, works with communities of faith to weave together faith and reproductive stories free from shame, judgment, and stigma, creating a healing to organizing pipeline. Learn about spiritual practices rooted in liberation that can support your individual healing, as well as your work accompanying and caring for birthing people and other communities. Join us as we explore our own stories, engage spiritual practices, and reclaim ancestral and liberated spiritualities to shift all of us in this movement from surviving to thriving.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 4

Healthy Beginnings with Title V: Shifting Dynamics in Relationship Building with Black MCH Thought Leaders in Community-Rooted Organizations and State Agencies

Salomé Araya, Demia Tyler, Stephanie Spencer, Consuelo Staton

Designed to address racism, imbalances in power dynamics, and inequitable funding structures, Healthy Beginnings with Title V: Advancing Anti-Racism in Preterm Birth Prevention project sought to advance anti-racist practice in state governmental maternal and child health programs. This presentation will outline how Healthy Beginnings mitigated challenges associated with relationship building between community-rooted organizations and Title V, through the lens of Black maternal and child health experts and Black thought leaders from Urban Baby Beginnings (Virginia), Healthy Start Inc. Pittsburgh, Virginia Department of Health, and Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs. By sharing this project, we hope to shift the culture of state-community dynamics and operationalize the values of Black Maternal Health at the state-level.

Tracking Implementation of the New York State Medicaid Doula Services Benefit: Lessons Learned from Community-Based Doulas

Vina Smith-Ramakrishnan

New York State is currently implementing Medicaid reimbursement for doula services statewide for the first time. The Century Foundation (TCF) and Ancient Song Doula Services are examining how this rollout is being experienced by community-based doulas and their patients, including challenges, barriers, and successes. This presentation will give an overview of the importance of Medicaid reimbursement of doula services and the current nationwide landscape, and then delve into the experience in New York State, including interim findings from surveys and listening sessions with doulas and patients. The presentation will provide policy recommendations for how states can implement Medicaid reimbursement for doula care in ways that center the needs and experiences of community-based doulas and their patients.

The Danger of Medicaid Reimbursement and the Regulation of the Perinatal Support Workforce

Bryttani Debro, Dasha Tate

The unintended, or intend, depending upon one's understanding of the Structural Determinants of Health, consequence is state entities, such as Departments of Health and Medicaid, seeking ways to regulate, license, and determine rates of reimbursement to those who qualify. This task has been assigned to the Ohio Board of Nursing. The profession of Nursing has been complicit historically and currently, in the co-opting of Black Birth work and its ingenuity beginning with the regulation of Black Midwives in the early 20th century. With this regulatory process, doulas are in jeopardy of incurring the same fate by having the scope of practice defined by a profession that does not comprehend the full scope of work as a Black Perinatal Support Doula.

SESSION 5

Nuts and Bolts of Advocacy

Nichole Wardlaw

This presentation will cover key concepts such as understanding advocacy and its importance in society, identifying and defining issues, crafting compelling messages, building strategic partnerships, engaging with stakeholders, and utilizing various advocacy tactics and channels for maximum impact.

Participants will develop a deeper understanding of advocacy strategies and techniques tailored to their specific goals and contexts. When advocating for reproductive justice and black maternal health, this presentation will empower participants to amplify their voices and drive positive change in their communities and beyond.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 5

Mobile Midwife Clinic: A Birth Justice Model of Care

Jamarah Amani

Southern Birth Justice Network's mission is to expand Birth Justice by using storytelling, popular education, and community organizing to improve access to midwifery and doula care. SBJN is also the incubator for National Black Midwives Alliance, the only professional association specifically for Black Midwives in the United States. The vision is to make midwifery and doula care services accessible to all people, especially Black, Brown, youth, immigrant, indigenous, LGBTQIA+, low-income and other communities that may experience challenges.

Southern Birth Justice Network, originally named Mobile Midwife Clinic is based on the legacy of Midwife Ada "Becky" Sprouse, whose goal was bringing midwifery care back into the community. Beginning in 2023, SBJN converted an ambulance into the Mobile Midwife Clinic which travels around Miami giving communities free access to midwifery and doula care. It entails a group of midwives, doulas, and perinatal health professionals working together to provide accessible and culturally matched wraparound reproductive and maternal health services to marginalized communities. SBJN is advancing the Mobile Midwife Clinic as a community-based solution to address the disparities and barriers to care that are prevalent in the healthcare field and hospital settings, especially pertaining to black and brown birthing people.

Black Midwives for Black Mothers: Ameliorating Racial Disparities in the Quality of Maternal Healthcare

Dr. Kimberly Navarro

This research addresses a knowledge gap in the literature regarding the quality of maternal healthcare from the perspective of Black women who had a home birth with a Black certified nurse midwife. This study supports policies that aim to increase research on Black maternal healthcare as well as promote midwifery care, and diversity in the midwifery workforce. Black midwives offer a viable solution to ameliorating racial disparities in the quality of maternal care.

SESSION 6

Nuts and Bolts of Advocacy

Nichole Wardlaw

Breastfeeding Equity for Black Women: A Georgia Case Study of Baby-Friendly Hospitals

Kim Gadsden-Knowles

The ways in which Baby-Friendly hospitals use an equity approach to increase breastfeeding for Black women are not well understood. During this session, attendees will obtain knowledge about equity-oriented approaches and practices at Baby-Friendly hospitals; barriers and facilitators to breastfeeding equity related to historical factors, social and cultural norms, racism, and antiracism; and recommendations for Baby-Friendly hospitals to increase their focus on equity.

Transforming hospital practices for Black birthing people and families: Reimagining the proposed United States Birthing-Friendly hospital designation

Dr. Meredith Shockley-Smith, Dr. Lindsey Yates

The new US Birthing Friendly hospital designation is the first ever effort from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to indicate high-quality maternity care in a hospital setting, however, this measure could go further to harness its full potential to bring about the radical changes urgently needed to make hospital birthing practices safer and more equitable for Black birthing people and families. This session will explore current gaps and potential policy solutions and mechanisms that center the experiences of Black birthing people through patient-reported measures, data transparency and hospital accountability. Presenters will put forward strategies that engage Black-women and Black women-led entities to develop systems of hospital birthing care that are nonharmful, anti-racist, and uplifting for all people.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 6

Centering Black Women in Systems Change: Co-creating Mama Certified - a Maternal Equity Certification for Birthing Hospitals

Josselyn Okorodudu, Lauren Everett

Mama Certified, an equity certification for birthing hospitals, is a collective impact approach to maternal and infant health equity. Co-created by Black birthing people and hospital systems, this initiative collects information on hospital maternal and infant health efforts and shares it on a public platform. During this session, the presenters will share the process for developing Mama Certified. The seminar will highlight best practices for authentic community engagement, strategies for engaging healthcare systems in data sharing, and ways to effectively co-create a complex program with multiple stakeholders involved while centering the voices of Black birthing people. The presenters will also share lessons learned throughout the development process and ways in which this model can be expanded in the future.

SESSION 7

Elevating the Power of Community in Maternal Mental Health Support

Toshira Maldonado

Explore the power of building community to shift the focus away from the growing Black Maternal Mortality Crisis to a strong focus on family, community building, and enhancing the first 1000 days beyond birth. This lecture will examine ways to establish networks and cohorts of mothers, parents, and families across the intergenerational span and building community connections as a resource to new parents and those needing mental health support.

Community don't come easy: teaching clients to build radical communities

Khye (Tyson) Blue

Though we know that humans thrive in community, most of us don't actually know how to go about building one. Because social skills, commonly referred to as "soft skills," have been actively devalued in society, many of us are unfamiliar with survival skills such as how to make friends, build community, or resolve conflict. During this session, attendees will queer their ideas of community, learn simple ways to build community for themselves, and guide clients through building a strong postpartum community in order to heal more fully during the first year of a baby's life.

Redefining Family: Accurately capturing Black stories

Khye (Tyson) Blue

As birth professionals working with Black, brown, and Indigenous communities, we are often called to categorize and quantify clients' or patients' experiences in order to prove the efficacy of our work. Because of the limited ways white supremacy defines "family," large swaths of Black families' experiences are being erased and pathologized. What if we rethink the ways we collect our clients' or patients' stories? What if we made space for the variety of ways Black folx build their support systems? In this workshop, attendees will reframe family structures, the system of gender, and data collection through a decolonized Black feminist lens in order to capture more robust and accurate stories of Black birthing people, families, and communities.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 8

A Multi-Site Study on How Enhanced Perinatal Support Programs Impact Incarcerated Black Women

Alexus Roane

This presentation will offer an analysis of Black women's perinatal care experiences while incarcerated using data from a multi-site study of seven state prisons. Using a reproductive justice and social determinants of health framework, I aim to outline the social policy context that shapes the implementation of enhanced perinatal support programs for Black women experiencing incarceration. Building on lessons learned, I will also offer practical policy and programming recommendations for working to increase the availability of more comprehensive perinatal support programs in supporting the needs of incarcerated Black women.

Supporting the Advancement of Black Maternal Health Programs in the Wake of Judicial Attacks

Adria Bonillas

Racial health equity programs address the reality that Black communities continue to experience worse health outcomes as a result of systemic racism and bias in our healthcare system. Recent legal challenges seek to expand the Supreme Court's holding in *Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) v. UNC and Harvard*, which significantly pared back the circumstances in which race can be used in higher education admissions, to other sectors of society, including healthcare. Nonprofits engaged in addressing Black maternal health disparities are uncertain as to the legal implications of these recent challenges to their programs. The Lawyers' Committee aims to support organizations in the Black maternal health movement by providing an understanding of the current legal landscape and knowledge of their rights.

SESSION 9

Exploring the "Mother Wound": The Epigenomic Impact of Maternal PTSD on Intergenerational Cardiovascular Health Risks within Black Families

Celeste Richmond

The "mother wound" speaks to trauma that is passed down through generations of mothers and their children. Do we, as women, have power over something as monumental as how our DNA is expressed? Can intergenerational trauma be measured as a potential root cause of heart disease? As PTSD goes largely untreated in Black mothers, how can research bridge the gap between this psychosocial phenomenon and maternal healthcare? Investigating epigenetic inheritance between Black mothers and their children may be one solution to helping physicians provide individualized, holistic care for Black mothers to stabilize their bodies, change their DNA expression, and help them reclaim their genetic inheritance to health and wellness while simultaneously improving their families' overall cardiovascular health.

Black Women and Non-Binary Persons' Perspectives on Interventions and Research on Black Cardio-Reproductive Health

Kyras Brown

During this session, we will present qualitative results from a pilot project focused on examining the social and structural determinants of preconception cardiovascular health among Black women and non-binary persons. We will share the major findings from the study's qualitative component and describe how community partners were engaged to identify strategies for action.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 10

The Community Heals Itself: How HealthConnect One Facilitates Community Healing

Ashauna Mathews

The HealthConnect One peer-to-peer support programming model has improved the outcomes of pregnancy, birth, and early parenting by reducing birth interventions, increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration, increasing positive birth experiences, and promoting family planning. In this session, attendees will learn about HealthConnect One's 5 Essential Components, the use of the popular education technique, the impact of peer-to-peer support, and how both have centered reproductive justice.

Reimagining Postpartum Care for Black Birthing People

Ebony Marcelle , Bayyinah Muhammad

Black birthing people deserve a reimagined and expanded model of postpartum care that promotes connection, support and joy. Our work is guided by the 5D cycle for health equity, a quality improvement framework grounded in appreciative inquiry and Black feminism (define, discover, dream, design, deliver). We began with focus groups with Black birthing people to listen to their definitions and discover their priorities for postpartum care. We then used those findings to dream a model of postpartum care that would address those needs. We centered the experiences of Black birth parents in the design and delivery of the intervention, ensuring we considered client physical, social, emotional, community and health system factors to create trustworthy care.

"We never get a break": A Qualitative Study on Black women's postpartum experiences

Noelene Jeffers , Ebony Marcelle, Lauren Arrington

Using Black Feminist Thought and Obstetric Racism as analytic frameworks, this qualitative study aims to explore postpartum experiences for Black women in the US, including how racism impacts the experience of health and wellness, and how Black birthing people resist racist structures to experience individual and collective joy.



BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 11

Factors Influencing Black Diasporic Women's Choice of Healthcare Settings and Providers during the pre/post-natal periods

Favorite Iradukunda , Emefa Adawudu

In this session, we will discuss the factors influencing Black diasporic women's choice of healthcare settings and providers during the pre/postnatal periods. We begin the session by examining the unique needs of Black immigrant women stemming from a lack of familiarity with the healthcare system, navigating two or multiple cultures, lack of support from family and community, and unpreparedness to navigate racial, language, and cultural bias. We will then present findings from a qualitative study focusing on factors influencing Black immigrant women's choice of healthcare settings and providers and barriers to finding preferred settings/providers. We will wrap up the session by discussing the pressing need for culturally congruent information and tools to navigate the healthcare system during the pre/postnatal periods.

Black Immigrant Women's Healthcare Experiences During Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Postpartum in the United States: A Descriptive Qualitative study

Emefa Adawudu , Favorite Iradukunda

Despite evidence suggesting that Black immigrant mothers are relatively disadvantaged compared to non-Black immigrants when navigating the U.S. healthcare system, few studies have been focused on the unique challenges and experiences of Black immigrant women. This current study seeks to understand Black immigrant women's experiences seeking and receiving maternal health services using a descriptive qualitative study. The preliminary analysis revealed the following themes: fear of medication and obstetrical intervention, disruption of social support, lack of congruent cultural care, fear of being ill-treated, and relied on advocates/self-advocacy for quality care. This study will provide insights to clinicians on how to enhance high-quality maternity care services tailored to the unique needs of this group.

The SEED Exchange: Maternal Health in Accra, Ghana

Rose Aka James, Alexis Amankwanor

Globally, women and birthing people of African-descent suffer from high rates of poor maternal health outcomes. REPR Health seeks to be a conduit of change by facilitating connection across the African diaspora between maternal health change-makers via the SEED Exchange journey to Accra, Ghana happening in July, 2024. Through documentary style video, photos, and participant narratives, this session will showcase the power of Sankofa , and the transformative symbiotic learning exchange between Black maternal professionals with knowledge on clinical innovation, social justice frameworks, and research; in collaboration with their Ghanaian counterparts who provide insights into community dynamics and cultural strategies essential to long-term maternal wellbeing.

SESSION 12

Converge's Get Personal© and Reproductive Health Kits: Applying Reproductive Justice to Close the Gap for Black Birthing People's Contraceptive Needs

Jazamine Hoskins , Jitoria Hunter, Ellie Smith

This panel offers participants an in-depth exploration of how telehealth and remote contraceptive services can support closing the health gap for Black mamas and birthing people. The panelists will provide a discussion to support participants in applying the reproductive justice framework to telehealth and remote contraceptive services. Panelists will share key strategies for telehealth and remote contraceptive services that address health inequities. By examining two examples (Converge's Get Personal© and Reproductive Health Kits) of community-engaged program development and user experience evaluations, attendees will develop a nuanced understanding of the impact of these services in the Black community in Mississippi.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 12

Landscape Analysis of Birth Justice: defining, mapping and strategizing

Pia Long

While we know that birth justice groups and initiatives are emerging all over the US, little attention has been given to how these groups define themselves, what strategies they employ, what barriers they face and how they might strengthen their connections to advance birth justice together. We will explore the results of a mixed methods landscape analysis conducted in 2023. The panel will focus on presenting the results of three areas: Conditions that are hostile to the movement, pathways to liberation, and recommendations to funders. We will explore the cornucopia of strategies and tactics that we as birth justice activists are mobilizing to build a robust web that is necessary for the strength and success of our movement.

SESSION 13

The California Coalition for Black Birth Justice: Unifying the Vision for Systemic Change Workshop

Dana Sherrod, Candice Charles

This session will focus on introducing the California Coalition for Black Birth Justice, a statewide connector and convener of birth equity experts and the Coalition's California Black Birth Justice Agenda, a tool that seeks to amplify and uplift coordinated, strategic actions to advance birth justice for Black families. In this session participants will have the opportunity to learn about the origin story of The Coalition and hear about the agenda's call to action through reviewing its three defined action areas and recommended remedies. Participants will engage in a discussion centering their positionality and work to identify collaborative synergies through the completion of a national birth equity progress SWOT analysis. Learn more at cablackbirthjustice.com.

Lessons Learned from the Centering Black Mothers in California Project: Community- Academic-State Partnership is Essential to Address Black Birth Inequities

Mashariki Kudumu, Kimberly Robinson, Kristen Marchi

The Centering Black Mothers in California (CBM) Project is a collaboration between the California Department of Public Health, academia, and an Advisory Group of over 20 Black women leaders. Black community leaders and academics called attention to the Black maternal and infant mortality crisis in California and identified community need for access to timely public health data; clear connections between structural racism and Black health inequities; leadership from Black women in developing cross-sector responses; and cross-sector collaboration to implement policy and systems changes to reduce inequities. This session will discuss the development process for the Centering Black Mothers Project, production of an epidemiologic report, highlight key findings including implications for practice and policy advocacy, and share lessons learned.



BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 14

Liberation NOW: Making Visible Black Womxn's Experiences of (Dis)Respectful Care Through Theory, Narrative, and Measurement

Nicole Harris, Jasmine Garland McKinney

This panel will explore the unique standpoints, theories, and measurements that can be used to understand (dis)respectful care experiences, their impact on the health and well-being of Black womxn and the care they receive, and the reparative possibilities of a Reproductive Justice-informed care paradigm.

SESSION 15

Informed Consent: How it can interrupt the impact of Family Regulation on Black Maternal Health

Erin Cloud, Jasmine Sankofa

This presentation explores the broad impacts of the family policing system commonly known as the so-called “child welfare system,” on Black maternal health. Unpacking crucial historical context, it will discuss how the family policing system became ground zero for the War on Drugs. It will examine how the medical system’s extension into the family policing system’s surveillance, control, and punishment undermines prenatal, postpartum, and early pediatric healthcare, resulting in a failure to support Black mamas and birthing peoples’ health, rights, dignity, and bodily autonomy. It explores the insidious “test and report” practice, whereby medical providers secretly and nonconsensually drug test Black mamas and birthing people and report positive drug test results to the family policing system, thereby putting Black families

ROSE Black Maternal and Child Health Risk Index: Utilizing Data to Strengthen Maternal Health Services Provided to Black Birthing People

Kimberley Broomfield-Massey, Andrea Serano

Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere (ROSE) developed the Black Maternal and Child Health Risk Index to rank states on the likelihood of negative health outcomes for Black birthing people and their infants. We have used this index to guide the nationwide implementation of our breastfeeding and supportive programs and strategies and we believe it can be leveraged by the maternal and child health field. To maximize this tool’s utility ROSE will conduct an interactive session in which the index will be presented, and audience members will be engaged in a guided conversation about how this index can be useful to Black practitioners working primarily with Black birthing people.

The Power + Impact of Representative Education for Black Parents in a Broken System

Cheyenne Varner

This session will explore the historical and current lack of representation in childbirth education, with a focus on Black midwifery and its impact on perinatal health disparities. The speaker will share insights from influential figures and personal experiences, highlighting the evolution of art-driven educational materials. Emphasizing clear, inclusive, and accessible content, the session will outline key principles—Reflection, Education, Access, and Decisions—to support parents in a flawed system. Attendees will receive actionable steps to integrate these strategies into practice, enhancing representation and improving childbirth education outcomes.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 17

Paternal Inclusion: A Solution to Maternal Health Outcomes

Joel Austin

In this illuminating presentation, Joel Austin explores the holistic approach to maternal and paternal health with a special focus on the inclusion of fathers in the journey of parenthood. Delve into the historical backdrop of maternal health, challenge traditional gender norms, and discover the transformative power of father involvement. Through compelling insights and statistics, we'll highlight the changing landscape of maternity care and the growing role of fathers. Joel will emphasize the importance of comprehending the value fathers bring to maternal and paternal health, advocating for inclusion, and fostering comprehensive solutions for healthier families and communities. Join us on this enlightening journey to reshape the foundations of care and embrace a more inclusive vision of black parenthood.

Evolution of Fathers in Black Maternal and Infant Health - Cultivating the Narrative Shift through Inclusion and Empowerment

Gwendolynne Cole, Davion Mauldin, Ashley Skiffer-Thompson

The purpose of this panel will be to discuss the Evolution of Fathers in Black Maternal and Health to change them from being viewed as ancillary or silent partners, to educated and involved advocates for their Wives/Partners/Family Members and Infants. We will introduce Public Health and Social Service Leaders, Advocates and Fathers who will share the work being done in LA County through the AAIMM Prevention Initiative Fatherhood Engagement Program, that has cultivated space where Black fathers can not only express themselves but learn how to be informed advocates and protectors of Black pregnancy and birth equity for the Women/Birthing Persons, Infants and Children in their communities, by making room for them in Black Maternal and Infant Health.

SESSION 18

Multi-level Partnerships to Optimize Systems of Care in Addressing Maternal Morbidity and Mortality

Oyegbemisola Oworu

This session will draw from "Activating Life Course Theory through a Whole System Prevention Framework to Address the Wicked Problem of Maternal and Infant Morbidity and Mortality," to describe the value of multi-level partnerships to address growing disparities in Black maternal morbidity and mortality. The session will highlight an example of a multi-level partnership between the Office on Women's Health (OWH) and the Office of Population Affairs (OPA). The Title X Family Planning program serves over 2.6 million individual clients per year, and is an important entry point for individuals. This partnership at the macrosystem level supports the grantees, at the mesosystem level supports providers, and at the microsystem level serves to ensure the delivery of person-centered care.

Resources for Title X clinics on combating congenital syphilis

Tracy Georges, Shenena Armstrong

Title X clinics have been a trusted source of sexual and reproductive health services for over 50 years. By sharing information on disease prevention and treatment, these clinics play an important role in reducing the incidence of congenital syphilis.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 18

This is Your Body and Your Birth: Addressing Maternal Vulnerability Through Doula Work in Oklahoma

Eliza Washington, Ashlee Wilson

Join Metriarch, an Oklahoma Women's Public Health Think Tank, to discuss the role of doulas in improving birthing experiences for Black birthing people. Our session will highlight Oklahoma's unique opportunity to serve as a model for how comprehensive doula support, backed by Medicaid, can address barriers to equitable perinatal care. Participants will gain insight into the transformative potential of doula care to create spaces where Black birthing people are supported in making informed decisions and taking ownership of their birthing experiences. The session will explore how doula support reduces vulnerability among Black birthing people, combatting intersectional and systemic challenges of racial and economic disparities that contribute to adverse maternal outcomes.

SESSION 19

Reimagining Reproductive Justice for Black Girls and their Bodies

Ashley Garrin, Clementé Love

This session will outline the connection between Black girls and reproductive justice by examining sex education in the U.S. We will discuss how Black girls are often undereducated and underrepresented in reproductive health due to them being perceived as oversexed in U.S. society. Strategies for exchanging ideas around reproductive education will be shared to increase Black maternal health awareness.

State Strategies to Improve Access to Maternal & Reproductive Health Care via Telehealth

Natalie Birnbaum, Kenda Sutton-EL, Erin Maye Quade, Roula AbiSamra

Telehealth is a safe and effective way for diverse patient populations to receive maternal and reproductive health care, including prenatal and postpartum services, doula care, and abortion. Research shows that telehealth can even increase health care access for historically underserved communities. Despite its widespread acceptability and popularity, states vary in how they legislate telehealth availability – especially for abortion care – and insurance coverage, impacting patient agency. This panel brings together advocates from three states – Georgia, Minnesota, and Virginia – to discuss how their organizations are working to strengthen policies for telehealth access, including removing Medicaid coverage barriers for telehealth abortion care; tracking telehealth legislation for collective action; and developing recommendations on telehealth access for doula care.

Gendered Racism and Black Maternal Mental Health: Understanding the Role of Superwoman Schema

Tamara Nelson

Unique stressors linked to the intersection of racism and sexism (i.e., gendered racism) are associated with increased anxiety and depression among Black women. In response, some Black women may adhere to the Strong Black Woman or Superwoman Schema. In this study, we examined the role of gendered racism, gendered racialized stress, Superwoman Schema, and mental health outcomes among a community sample of Black mothers. We discuss the findings from this study and explore the clinical and research implications for people invested in Black maternal mental health.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 20

Responding to the Unique Needs of Pregnant and Postpartum Women in MS during Natural Disasters and Community Crises

Asia Rush

This session will focus on the impact of natural disasters in Mississippi on the health and well-being of pregnant and postpartum women, specifically Black/African American women. This session will also aim to show how statewide and local policies create the need for comprehensive emergency preparedness solutions that focus on pregnant and postpartum families in Mississippi. As a result of inequitable policies, inadequate coordination of response, and Mississippi's geographical landscape, pregnant and postpartum women's unique needs are not often considered during the distribution and allocation of resources. Therefore, Six Dimensions has designed an emergency preparedness toolkit to support community- and faith-based organizations; local agencies and institutions; and families in adequately preparing to respond to the needs of pregnant and postpartum women.

EnviroNatal Equity Week: Shifting the Culture toward Black Maternal Health and Climate Action

Aver Yakubu

This session will explain the effectiveness of cross-sector, national collaborations through the summary of the planning, implementation, and impact results of the inaugural EnviroNatal Equity Week. Climate change, driven by environmental degradation and unsustainable practices, poses severe risks to perinatal health, particularly among Black communities due to long lasting systemic factors. EnviroNatal Equity Week was held between the end of Black Maternal Mental Health Week and Earth Day to represent a bridge between these two traditionally siloed topic areas: environmental and reproductive justice. Attendees will leave the session with applicable tools and action items for how to address environmental inequities amongst perinatal populations.

Impact of Climate Change on Black Maternal and Infant Health

Stephanie Reese, Almeta Cooper

A panel that focuses on the health impacts of climate change, on maternal and infant health and well-being, emphasizing Black pregnant individuals. The panel will also examine how the connection between the social determinants of health contributes to healthcare inequities related to climate disruption and discuss solutions through policy, advocacy, and community involvement. Moderated by the Health Equity Manager at Moms Clean Air Force, the panel speakers will include a Moms Clean Air Force team member and mother; a healthcare professional; and a doula.

SESSION 21

Minding the Gap: Utilizing Nutrition and Lifestyle Interventions to Reduce Maternal Mortality

Alicia Celeste Simpson

Gaps in health policy, health management and individual healthcare have created the maternal mortality crisis that we see in the United States today. In this talk, Alicia Simpson MS, RD, IBCLC, LD, will delve into the most current research and data on the preventable causes of maternal mortality and innovative modalities being used to attack the root causes of mortality including the Diabetes in Pregnancy Program (DiPP) while discussing the systemic gaps in our current health care system and how individuals and organizations can work to close these gaps to create true health equity in the United States.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 21

Nourishing Equity: Bridging Gaps in Maternal Health for Black Women through Nutrition Intervention, Technology, and Culturally Congruent Care

Chacha Miller, Emily Sylvester

Black women in the U.S. face higher rates of nutrition-related conditions during pregnancy like gestational diabetes, iron deficiency anemia or preeclampsia exacerbating disparities in morbidity and mortality. This session explores the profound connection between food, nutrition and maternal health. Approximately one-third of U.S. women lack essential nutrients crucial for a healthy pregnancy in their diets. Our submission advocates a groundbreaking approach to achieving reproductive justice for Black mothers: integrating nutrition intervention and technology with culturally congruent care. A nutrient-rich pattern of eating, coupled with technology-driven information and culturally tailored one on one care from a Registered Dietitian, could be transformative. This strategy strives to proactively address maternal challenges, reduce disparities, and foster equity through a holistic, patient-centered approach.

Balancetopia – preventing depression via gut-brain health.

Najjuwah Walden

This seminar introduces the gut-brain connection in postpartum depression and discusses food and nutrition essential for helping the body prevent and reverse PPD.

SESSION 22

Perinatal Loss & Grief

Keisha Reaves

Perinatal grief is the experience of parents that starts soon after the losing an infant through death by miscarriage, neonatal loss, stillbirth, or elective termination for fetal anomalies. Participants will learn how to help clients coping with grief, navigate moving forward, and how to help clients process the trauma of loss.

Black Wom(b)anhood: Applying the Bioecological Model of Reproductive Loss with African American Women

Jerica Wesley

The prevalence of infertility, stillbirth, pregnancy loss, and abortion necessitate a multilayered system to inform the continuum and quality of care for African American women. This session will share research on African American women's experience with reproductive loss, history with the medical community, and strategies to inform care.

Are you listening to me? Healing through Storytelling

Erica Freeman

Black women often suffer in isolation, shame, and silence after experiencing a miscarriage or pregnancy loss. We need to normalize sharing our stories as a powerful part of grieving and healing in community. This session will share stories from the Sisters in Loss podcast as a listening session for professionals to understand how to treat patients through birth trauma and pregnancy loss

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 23

The Journey to Lactation Liberation: An Innovation Response to a Community Need

Jennifer Roberson

Jennifer Roberson will delve into the transformative realm of offering culturally congruent lactation support to Black families in South Los Angeles through the Lactation Liberation Lounge and Titties N' Tea Baby Café. Through illuminating discussion, Jennifer will unveil the intricate dynamics of the community she serves and the unparalleled ways in which she offers culturally centered and relevant lactation support. By delving into the nuances of these models, attendees will gain valuable insights into effective strategies for fostering inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and targeted assistance within lactation support frameworks. The session aims to empower attendees with practical knowledge and innovative ideas, inspiring them to embrace adaptable and community-specific approaches in their pursuit of promoting optimal family well-being through comprehensive lactation support.

SESSION 24

Finding HOPE in Maternal Wraparound Care

Rachel Hanson

Research through the HOPE National Resource Center has led to the creation of a mind shift change on how positive childhood experiences (PCEs) can work to mitigate adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in order to create healthy outcomes and development. Through HOPE 101, participants will review the building blocks of HOPE that lead to stronger relationships, engagement with the communities, emotional growth as well as safe, equitable, stable environments. The workshop will discuss current implementation at Healthy Start TN. This workshop will be interactive through group discussion looking at how you are implementing and could implement the building blocks into everyday practice with not only the families you serve but the environments and staff at work.

Cultivating the Black Mama Care Dream Team: A Transformative Approach to Improving Outcomes and Childbirth Experience through Nurse, Perinatal Support Worker and Doula Collaboration

Kimberley Broomfield-Massey

For two decades, the Center for Black Women's Wellness has implemented the Atlanta Healthy Start Initiative to improve maternal and infant health outcomes. The initiative employs perinatal support workers to provide home visitation services to pregnant people through 18 months postpartum, facilitating linkages to care, addressing social determinants of health, and providing education on pregnancy and infant care. In 2022, the program piloted a clinician-led perinatal education series and a doula project to integrate and expand the care team for Black mamas. This session will share how these supplemental services improved patient-clinician communications, increased postpartum visit rates, expanded the number of Black birthing persons linked to doula services, and the value of integrating doula services into our existing care team.

Triple Crown: Babies Win. Families Thrive. Communities Transformed!

Isha Johnson

In a pursuit to acknowledge and honor Black motherhood, the voices and lived experiences of Black mothers are the foundation of The Triple Crown! Designed with the vitality of Detroit in mind, Triple Crown: Babies Win. Families Thrive. Communities Transformed! is a multi-pronged project that will directly confront racial inequities in healthcare by supporting infrastructural change within policy, expanding access to community-based maternal support services and cultivating an integrative approach that connects Detroit's healthcare systems with holistic birth resources for Black families. Henry Ford Health jointly with Black Mothers Breastfeeding Association champion improved Black maternal health outcomes as part of the Healthy Families Community-based Perinatal Health Initiative. The project is led by Co-Principal Investigators, Kiddada Green and Dr. Kimberlydawn Wisdom.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 25

EMBRACE Race Concordant Perinatal Care for Black Families: Reclaiming Health and Wellness for Black Births

Jacqueline Odiase

Our evaluation examines the accessibility, acceptability, and person-centeredness of EMBRACE, a race-concordant perinatal care program designed by Black women for Black families. Data was collected from semi-structured interviews with six Black-identifying postpartum people who received care from EMBRACE. Results showed that most participants' expectations were exceeded by the program's inclusiveness. They felt EMBRACE was accessible, with providers going above and beyond to meet their needs. However, some participants reported barriers to care, such as unawareness of the full range of services available. EMBRACE provided highly person-centered care, with providers being responsive, effective communicators, and compassionate supporters. The findings suggest that EMBRACE is highly acceptable, accessible, and person-centered, with great potential to improve perinatal outcomes for black birthing people.

Igniting Change: Doulas as Catalysts for Advancing Black Maternal and Infant Health Equity in Iowa

Ebonie Bailey

This session will provide a comprehensive overview of the potential of doula care in advancing health equity and suggest actionable strategies for integrating doula services into maternal and infant health programs. Attendees will gain valuable insights into how doulas can be an essential component of efforts to reduce health disparities and enhance care experiences for marginalized communities in Iowa.

SESSION 26

The Power of We - Community Health Workers Impact

Jenelle Hoseus , Tanikka Price

With the ongoing disparities in infant mortality and maternal mortality, Ohio has led efforts to support Community Health Workers (CHWs) with the hopes of seeing increased healthy birth outcomes for mom and baby. In this presentation from Health Impact Ohio, participants will hear of HIO's efforts to emphasize the voice of the CHW, the community and the clients - creating a statewide CHW Certification program, CHW statewide learning efforts, and supporting a statewide association of care coordination entities. Through the care coordination at HIO, in 2022 96% of babies born to minority moms were born at a healthy birthweight - hear how it was done.

Diversifying the Perinatal Workforce Leads To Improved Maternal Health Outcomes In Birthing People Of Color

Dr. Sharee Livingston , Dr. Cherise Hamblin

Models of interventions to address disparities in outcomes for parturients of color frequently focus on a patient centered approach, positioning patients as the drivers of poor outcomes. This project positions the care team as an important driver of disparate outcomes. Doula care is associated with decreased preterm birth and cesarean section rates. Our team hypothesizes that diversifying the perinatal workforce, in this case with Doulas, is the critical step currently lacking from proposed solutions to the Black maternal health crisis.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 27

How Black led organizations Sustain and grow

Amber Pendergraph-Leak

This proposal examines the endurance and development of community-based doula ventures spearheaded by Black leaders, delving into the distinct strategies and hurdles encountered within these groups. Emphasizing effective methods, including community involvement and sustainable practices, the objective is to offer valuable insights to bolster the lasting strength and expansion of Black-led doula organizations. Additionally, we will address various successes and challenges, such as "trauma pimping," ancestral work, and leveraging one's identity to their advantage.

Pathways to Birth Equity: Leveraging a Field-Driven Approach to Strategic Maternal Health and Birth Equity Funding

Nicole Clark , Jamae Morris

Philanthropy can play a pivotal role in leveraging strategic investments that reduce systemic inequities in pregnancy and birthing outcomes. To better inform future decisions and to support efforts to reimagine funding and resource allocation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation engaged maternal health and Reproductive Justice experts to build a field-driven Birth Equity Investments Theory of Change (ToC) that supports philanthropic prioritization of field-driven solutions. In this session, the presenters will provide an overview of the Birth Equity Investments Theory of Change; 2) discuss lessons learned in engaging both external experts and internal staff in developing an externally-driven ToC processes and solutions; and 3) provide recommendations for operationalizing grantee-funder field-driven grantmaking.

Giving Austin Labor Support: Providing Perinatal Support and Advancing Reproductive Justice in Central Texas

Dominique Adeniyi

Giving Austin Labor Support (GALS) is a 501c3 doula organization founded in 2008 and based in Central Texas. GALS provides no-cost prenatal, birth, postpartum and childcare support, and became the first Medicaid reimbursed community doula organization in Texas. Learn about how partnerships grew this organization from volunteer run and operated to having five full time paid staff and 50 contracted birthworkers, and how you can engage in meaningful collaboration and partnerships in your area to expand your impact and strengthen sustainability.

SESSION 28

Using Story Telling as a Tool for Organizing

India Blunt

In this session participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their own reproduction stories and identify ways systemic elements such as dominant culture narratives, institutions like the education system, healthcare systems, and the state impacted these stories. Participants will then be introduced to Marshall Ganz Public Narrative Framework, using this framework the facilitator will demonstrate how participants can utilize their stories to develop compelling narratives to organize for change.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 28

Using Collective Action to Move a County Towards Disrupting Longstanding Infant Mortality Disparities

Breanna Grant, Jada Rogers

Every Baby Guilford launched a collective action movement in 2021, projecting a community-based health and outreach program for individuals of reproductive age that engages community members who are passionate about serving people and increasing access to perinatal health services through shared reproductive health messaging. The objective is to provide opportunities for individuals to have agency and authority over their care, to build social support, adopt well-being life skills, become knowledgeable of resources, and increase motivation to adopt health improving behaviors.

Join this engaging discussion on how one community in North Carolina is utilizing social media to activate a movement among Black communities with a collective action framework to improve the disparity rates in infant deaths.

Mamas 4 Life: Empowering Black Maternal Health Through Cultural Advocacy and Holistic Care

Jovonni Spinner

Join us to learn about the persistent maternal health disparities experienced by Black mothers. Our multimedia campaign, Mamas 4 Life, takes center stage, raising awareness about maternal inequities and spotlighting the transformative roles of doulas and midwives. We emphasize recognizing their critical contributions and amplifying the voices of mothers who've benefited. This culturally tailored health education initiative utilizes community engagement, storytelling, and various media to explore historical and contemporary roles, emphasizing unique contributions to personalized care for Black mothers. Designed for diverse audiences, Mamas 4 Life seeks to inspire conversations, empower communities, and instigate actionable change, leaving attendees with heightened awareness and a commitment to advancing health equity. This campaign advocates for comprehensive, culturally sensitive care that places Black mothers

SESSION 29

Birthlooms: A Culturally Affirming Creative Wellness Approach to Liberating Perinatal Photography + Visual Storytelling For Those Black + Brown + Birthing

Stefanie Belnavis

This creative lecture aims to empower BLACK + BROWN + BIRTHING persons and birth workers/perinatal practitioners through introducing/engaging in culturally affirming and liberatory creative wellness practices to better support the birthing communities they co-journey with through the practice of liberating visual narratives and storytelling. Additionally, this creative wellness learning community will showcase the impact of BIRTHLOOMS in empowering Black + Brown + Birthing persons through inclusive and liberating perinatal photography and the practice of storytelling whilst inspiring attendees to advocate for greater diversity, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity in perinatal care and representation within their own communities and practices.

Chocolate Milk: using storytelling to shift culture around Black birth and breastfeeding

Elizabeth Bayne

In this session, attendees will use the social impact campaign "Chocolate Milk" as a case study to learn to identify the key elements necessary to craft a public health campaign with meaningful and measurable impact through story and visual media. An emphasis will be placed on community-based storytelling as a means of authentic community engagement within the reproductive justice movement by encouraging the collection, curation and activation of local stories and experiences in order to shift cultural norms and practices.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 29

When We See Us: Black Motherhood, Media & Maternal Health

Crystal Tennille Irby

In the realm of Black maternal health, pervasive narratives bombard us with conflicting messages: strength juxtaposed with vulnerability, empowerment intertwined with mortality. The media often champions Black birth workers as potential saviors of the world. This presentation scrutinizes the origins and impact of these narratives, questioning whom they truly serve and the harm they may unwittingly perpetuate. Delving into the intricate web of perceptions surrounding Black maternal health, we seek to discern if these narratives truly benefit the community. Furthermore, we explore the transformative potential of media as a tool for steering Black maternal health narratives toward the liberation and empowerment of Black bodies, fostering a more nuanced and supportive discourse.

SESSION 30

Mental Health & Infertility for Black Birthing Parents

Keisha Reaves

This presentation examines how black birthing parents experience infertility twice as much as their white counterparts in addition to being 1 in 3 to suffer from a perinatal mood and anxiety disorder. We explain common myths about black people's fertility being labeled as "hyper fertile" through centuries which further creates shame, miseducation, and the desire to not seek-out treatment. We also examine how infertility affects our black LGBTQIA+ birthing parents and the obstacles taken to get adequate support from providers. We've also found that cultural sensitivity, cross cultural psychology, cognitive behavior therapy, humanistic theoretical approaches in counseling have proven to be helpful in assisting clients in therapy. Through education, awareness, and cultural representation, we can decrease the stigma and shame

Deconstructing Egg Freezing as an Insurance Policy: Black Women's Social Egg Freezing Experiences

Isabel Morgan, Kelly Davis, Keisha Goode

Despite experiencing a greater prevalence of infertility relative to other racialized groups, Black women face significant challenges in accessing fertility care and medically assisted infertility treatments, including oocyte cryopreservation (e.g., social egg freezing) services. Informed by Black feminism and reproductive justice, this session 1) situating egg freezing within the core tenets of the reproductive justice framework and 2) explores the ways in which the interlocking nature of colonialism, racism, capitalism, and sexism impact Black women's social egg freezing experiences through the autoethnographies of three Black women.

SESSION 31

Did you know your relationship can affect your health?: The doula's role in preventing and responding to domestic violence

Virginia Duplessis

In recent years there has been increased attention on the poor health outcomes and inequities for Black birthing people. At the same time, Black birthing people have been impacted domestic violence at disproportionate rates, which contributes to poor health outcomes. But how can doulas help address this crisis? This session will help doulas define the unique and important roles they can play in promoting healthy relationships, and supporting Black pregnant survivors.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 31

How Biased Systems Impact The Safety and Mental Health of Black Survivors of Violence and Their Children

Justice Gatson, Be'Yond Gatson

Black survivors of domestic, intimate partner, sexual and state violence are oftentimes revictimized by the very systems that they are told would help them. From degrading police encounters, culturally deficient shelters, biased courts and beyond, the process can be emotionally and mentally taxing. This session will explore the intersections of intimate partner violence, incarceration, mental health and how we can effectively advocate for Black survivors using the reproductive justice framework. Participants will view the documentary, "Bails & Bonds", along with a learning module that shares practical knowledge for those seeking to support Black survivors.

SESSION 32

Transforming Care and Disrupting Inequitable Systems Through Centering Groups

Disha Patel, Shante Walker, LaTina Green, Chiquita Brake

In this session, we will provide a detailed overview of the evidence-based, patient-centered Centering group model of care and its core components. Objectives of this overview include recognizing the benefits and improved health outcomes of group prenatal care, especially for Black birthing people and understanding the impact of value-based payment through alternative payment models to tackle social determinants of health. The Centering group model of care improved the experience of care for patients and providers, and contributes to community building. This patient-centered model achieves better care, better health, and lower costs.

Centering Community, Culture, and Personal Authenticity in the Perinatal Mental Health Space

Lakisa Quinette Muhammad

In this session, learn to make an impact in the perinatal mental healthcare space while centering community, culture, and connection. Strengthen your skills to navigate coalition building with Title V and White-led organizations to maximize resources while amplifying proximity experts in order to influence Black maternal healthcare outcomes positively.

SESSION 33

Decolonizing Research to Build Narrative Power in Reproductive Justice Advocacy

Zainab Sulaiman

This interactive session empowers reproductive justice advocates to harness decolonized data collection and narrative-building techniques to amplify their impact and drive systemic change.

Interrupting False Narratives: Applying a Racial Equity Lens to Perinatal Data

Lauren Arrington

In this session, the presenters will review how default presentations of perinatal inequities data reinforce racism. Recommended strategies to present racial inequities data with a racial equity lens will be shared. These strategies include stating root causes, choosing reference points equitably, presenting the most specific level of aggregation, collecting data on strengths rather than deficits, measuring racism instead of race, and collaborating with community partners. Participants will be asked to apply the recommended strategies to their own data.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 34

Stewarding Stories: Reflections from the Black Women's Dept. of Labor Project & Podcast

Taja Lindley

Taja Lindley explores "The Black Women's Dept. of Labor," a project and podcast that delves into race, gender, and the dual meaning of labor—both work and childbirth. This session will showcase Lindley's creative storytelling techniques and artworks designed to support Black maternal health. Highlights include a screening of "Pump & Feed," a performance ritual about breastfeeding and returning to work, and a presentation of conceptual invoices that address the under- and uncompensated labor of Black women, featuring "Invoice #001," which examines the labor of lactating enslaved Black women.

SESSION 35

The Birth Story Love Letter

Laurel Gourrier

We are channeling the work of our virtual community to in-person opportunities to educate and inform families as they enter parenthood. Our series of events - The Full Belly Supper focus on preparing for postpartum life. These events center the needs of new and expectant parents as they prepare and adjust to expanding their families.

Our presentation provides an opportunity to experience the Birth Story Love Letter. As participants, you will be provided a nutrient-rich offering. We will discuss the history of oral tradition, its role in birth oral history and its power within postpartum care. We will then walk through a birth story reflection, examining it as a means of qualitative analysis and a catalyst for continuity of care.

Reclaiming Our Birthright: Lessons from 25 Joyful Black Birthing Stories on the Birthright Podcast

Kimberly Seals Allers, Natasha Aldridge, Lauriel Porter

Birthright, a podcast about joy and healing in Black birth, frames joy as an act of resistance and works from a central premise that by seeking out and exploring joyful Black birth experiences we can find ideas, solutions, and blind spots in our quest for birth equity. In this interactive, multimedia workshop, the transcripts of 23 podcast episodes, which included 55 people overall representing birthing people, partners, doctors, doulas and others, were analyzed by qualitative researchers to develop key lessons, practice behaviors and policy implications to reclaim joy as our birthright.

SESSION 36

Empowering Birth Workers to Navigate the Modern Reproductive Health Legal Landscape: Strategies for Patient Support

Yamicia Connor

The reversal of Roe vs. Wade has reshaped reproductive health laws, posing challenges and highlighting disparities, especially for Black women. These legal shifts affect various reproductive aspects, raising issues like consent in labor, drug testing, custody, and the risk of pregnancy criminalization. Birth workers, as patient advocates, face hurdles in keeping up with laws, sharing information, and providing crisis support.

Dr. Yamicia Connor, an expert in women's health and maternal outcomes for Black women, offers insights for birth workers. She suggests ongoing legal education, innovative ways to inform patients, and creating immediate support resources. The presentation will cover legal updates, patient education via technology, and crisis support resources, equipping attendees to improve patient support and advocacy.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 36

Doula READI: Transformative Strategies for Equitable Maternal Care

Rebecca Lesperance

The presentation will explore lessons learned in initiating a new initiative while ensuring the doula voice remains at the forefront in building systems to serve them and their clients. It will delve into how NJDLC empowered advocates to deliver high-quality doula care and created systemic change through community engagement, credentialing support, mentorship, and advocacy efforts.

Beyond Filling Gaps: Training interdisciplinary abortion care providers for Black communities

Latona Giwa , DeShawn Taylor, Lina Buffington

Many are aware of how legal restrictions reduce access to sexual and reproductive (SRH) health care, yet few recognize the gaps in provider training as a key factor. Lack of comprehensive training has prevented community providers from offering abortion care and SRH care for decades, but the need grows tremendously post-Dobbs, with many education programs located in states with abortion bans. Black providers, and community health workers, such as doulas, midwives, nurses, and family MDs, have long been excluded from this training. 3 training leaders will discuss how SRH provider training is an important strategy to increase the availability of skilled, comprehensive SRH providers, to uplift Black reproductive health outcomes, and to enact reproductive justice in community health care.

SESSION 37

"Black MotherBoard": A Lived Experience Advisory Collaborative for Maternal Health Equity and Justice

Diamond Lee , TaVia Wooley

Join us for an insightful session on the Black MotherBoard and discover how this formal lived experience advisory body becomes a driving force in tailoring county interventions, programs, and policies to combat health inequities. Explore the mutually beneficial aspects, empowering MotherBoard members with professional development and networking, while providing crucial community expert input to the county. This presentation delves into key areas of impact, offering insights for future infrastructure, showcasing community inclusion in strategic planning, and illustrating how the initiative integrates community-based expertise for comprehensive maternal and infant health policy initiatives. Learn how this intervention promotes community engagement, evaluates shared decision-making and policymaking, and contributes to addressing health disparities in maternal and infant health programs at a county-wide level.

Birthing Communities and the Role of Religious Involvement

Rose Archer, Iris Reddick Manburg

Many are aware of how legal restrictions reduce access to sexual and reproductive (SRH) health care, yet few recognize the gaps in provider training as a key factor. Lack of comprehensive training has prevented community providers from offering abortion care and SRH care for decades, but the need grows tremendously post-Dobbs, with many education programs located in states with abortion bans. Black providers, and community health workers, such as doulas, midwives, nurses, and family MDs, have long been excluded from this training. 3 training leaders will discuss how SRH provider training is an important strategy to increase the availability of skilled, comprehensive SRH providers, to uplift Black reproductive health outcomes, and to enact reproductive justice in community health care.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 38

Understanding Co-Sleeping & Bedsharing Among Black Mothers through a CBPR Methodological Approach

Francoise Knox-Kazimierczuk

Delve into the foundational principles of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and its application in investigating maternal health, focusing on co-sleeping and bedsharing practices among Black mothers. Explore the intricate interplay of cultural and socio-economic factors shaping perceptions and prevalence rates within the Black community. Uncover insights derived from CBPR findings to develop tailored strategies and interventions aimed at bolstering postpartum support systems to aid Black mothers seeing their children thrive. Our session aims to continue an important conversation, which was started with our community about the taboos and realities of co-sleeping and bedsharing.

Utility of Self-Advocacy within the Maternal Health Space

BettyJ. Braxter

The United State (US) has the highest rate of maternal mortality compared to other industrialized countries driven by the disproportionate number of deaths among Black birthing persons compared to White and Latinx counterparts (i.e., 3-4 times higher). This presentation describes the ongoing development of a Self-Advocacy Pregnancy Scale (PSAS). The PSAS is a 20-item tool with a 6-point Likert Scale. Descriptive statistics were employed. With a sample of 32 Black birthing persons, most participants were 30-33 years of age, unmarried, employed, and had completed some college/university courses. Mean total score was 83.84, S.D.+ 1.2. Cronbach alpha= 0.70, 95% CI: 0.56, suggests acceptable reliability for initial research. Tool development continues to ensure utility of the scale.

"But Sis, What if You Die?": Leveraging Relational Agency to Navigate Birth-Related Risk

Eliza Washington

This research is an exploration of the strategies employed by Black birthing individuals and doulas in the United States to navigate the complexities of perinatal care and obstetric racism. Data collected from interviews with doulas and Black birthing individuals reveal a concerted effort to gain control over childbirth experiences in order to mitigate risk and achieve safer, more fulfilling birthing experiences. By emphasizing the importance of relational agency, this work offers an anthropological perspective on how strategic relationships and informed decision-making are leveraged to navigate birthing risks and improve the birthing journey for Black individuals.

SESSION 39

Enrich Health-A Transformative Solution

Monique Rainford, Aliah Fonteh-Makullah

Black pregnant Mothers suffer the worst health disparities in multiple metrics compared to any other race/ethnicity in the United States. The reasons for these disparities are multi-factorial, and include implicit bias, epigenetics, weathering, adverse child experiences, and social inequities. Fortunately, solutions exist. This presentation will outline evidence-based solutions to improve maternal care and describe a Connecticut start-up working to effect change.

Self managed and clinic based abortion care: All Roads Lead to Abortion Justice

Dr. April Lockley, Dr. Jamila Perritt, Dr. Michelle Drew

Reproductive health decision making does not occur in a vacuum. In order to support people in the fulfillment of their reproductive freedom, abortion care, in all its forms, must be included in the discussion. In this session you'll hear from reproductive health experts who provide full spectrum reproductive health care that includes abortion care and supports people who self manage their abortion. You will learn about innovative models of training and support for this care that prioritizes individual safety, security and reproductive autonomy.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 40

Birthing Change: The Inception & Impact of the Pennsylvania Black Maternal Health Caucus in the PA General Assembly *PA State Representatives La'Tasha Mayes, Gina Curry, and Morgan Cephas*

This panel delves into the transformative journey of establishing the Pennsylvania Black Maternal Health Caucus, a groundbreaking initiative launched on October 17, 2023 by Pennsylvania State Representatives Morgan B. Cephas of Philadelphia County, Gina H. Curry of Delaware County and La'Tasha D. Mayes of Allegheny County. Our panel and presentation will showcase the collaborative efforts and strategic vision behind the Caucus' formation highlighting the commitment to addressing critical issues affecting Black maternal health in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Through this session, we aim to inspire dialogue, collaboration, and collective action towards advancing Black maternal health, as we share insights and lessons learned from the establishment of the Pennsylvania Black Maternal Health Caucus.

SESSION 41

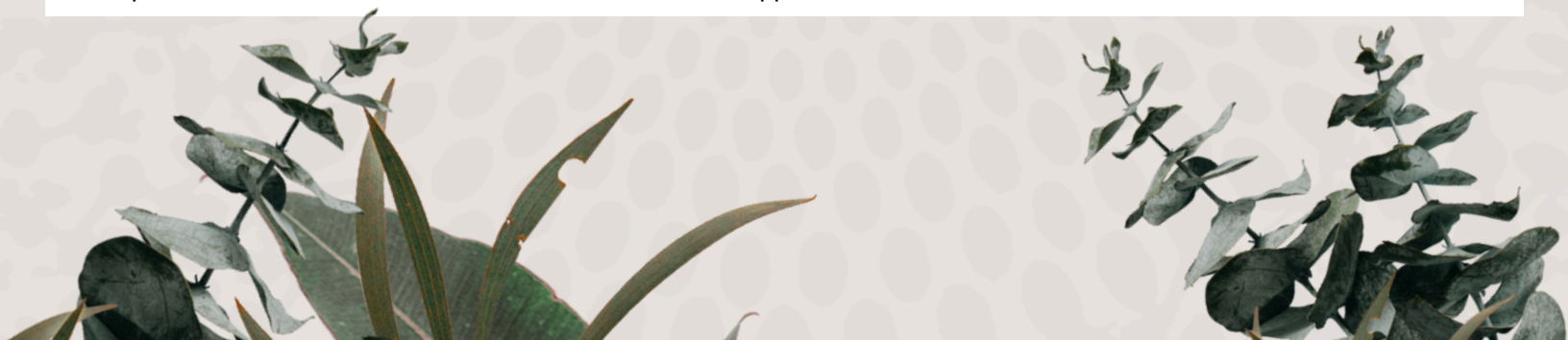
Power, Perceptions, and Presence of Black Mamas in Maternal Health *Jacqueline Douge, Dr. Sherita Henry*

The session offers an exploratory lens of community grass roots organizing efforts surrounding local maternal child health (MCH) initiatives. Coalition building and ongoing capacity building of local residents serve as the framework to fuel this work. The significance of Black mamas' perceptions is offered to highlight some of the key social determinants of health as it relates to birthing outcomes. The community presence of Black women fosters a village effect, which channels power and persistence in navigating health systems. Some of the key takeaways are the precursors of public policies to support health equity in MCH outcomes. Participants can apply skills and resources offered in this session to generate local action in support of MCH community engagement.

SESSION 42

Cultivating Resilience: A Framework for Culturally Competent Maternal Mental Support *Chandra Lewis- Hassell, Tracey Russell*

A groundbreaking community-driven initiative that underscores the urgent need for culturally sensitive support during the perinatal and postpartum periods for Black pregnant individuals. Central to our approach is the delivery of comprehensive mental health first aid training to community-based birth workers. Developed in collaboration with mental health professionals, this curriculum integrates cultural competency, trauma-informed care, and evidence-based practices. Emphasizing partnership as a core element, we collaborate with holistic community-based organizations to create a robust, multidimensional support system. Learn how community involvement and co-creation ensure alignment with specific needs, values, and cultural contexts. Learn how to be a part of empowering Black birth workers and establishing a culturally responsive network for inclusive maternal mental health support.



BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 44

Pleasure Mapping For Black Birthing Folx

Andrea Richardson

Pleasure mapping is an intentional act of 'mapping' where parts of the body love very specific pleasure through touch/sensations. It's a skill that can help birthing folks explore pleasure before, during and after their pregnancy journey. Let's calm and accept our pregnant bodies while we prioritize pleasure.

Revitalizing the Soul: Blaq Birth Circle's Programing as an Anti-Burnout Oasis for Black Birth Workers

Jamaica R Gilliam, Meredith Strayhorn

This talk unveils the Blaq Birth Circle's pioneering strategies as a transformative solution to combat burnout among Black birth workers. Exploring key programs such as "Brain Bites," workshops, and "Unpack Blaq," the discussion emphasizes their collective role in addressing mental health, financial stability, and personal capacity challenges. The talk also delves into the supportive aspects of "The Doula's Doula: A Warmline" and the culturally competent "Blaq Birth Circle Doula Training." With a focus on fostering community and growth, "Project Kick Blaq" becomes a central theme, showcasing events like "Sweet Tea Sundays" and "Birthworkers Breaking Bread." Attendees will gain insights into sustaining and empowering Black birth workers, contributing to improved maternal and infant health outcomes in the Black community.

The Five Pillars of Holistic Care: Advancing a Decolonizing Mindset of Self-Care in Black Birthworkers

Krista Lumpkins-Howard, Shaconna Haley

We must foster a decolonizing mindset to elevate a more holistic approach to self-care in our birthwork practices. Let's dive deep into our past, understand how we got here, and appreciate the foundation that has been laid for us. Then we will create, a happier, healthier, YOU by reclaiming our "whole" bodies from a holistic perspective.

SESSION 45 (Lightening Talk)

A Culturally Tailored Framework for Improving Patient Activation with Digital Solutions: Supporting Black Pregnant Women with Hypertensive Disorders

Morgan Foreman

The process for developing and validating a culturally tailored digital health development framework, focused on the instantiation of self-management for Black Birthing people with hypertensive disorders, will be described in a way that can be replicable for tailoring to other conditions and answering other research questions.

Using a mobile application to address maternal mental health among Black mothers and birthing people

Carson Peters

Addressing maternal mental health disparities among Black mothers and birthing people who are pregnant or parenting (BM-BP) through the coordination of mental health screening can reduce maternal health disparities among BM-BP in the United States. A health education question and answer chatbot built with and for mothers of color has the potential to intervene, alleviating symptoms of maternal mental health (MMH) disorders. To address this gap, the study seeks to assess the usability of a mobile application in intervening in MMH disparities among BM-BP involved in maternal health clinical research. Lessons learned include 1.) identifying keywords that activate automatic information sharing of resources facilitated through the application with appropriate monitoring, and 2.) integrating transformative technology in centering community voice.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 45 (Lightening Talk)

The Color of Joy: Rejuvenation, Reconnection, and Reimagination thru the Arts

Kimberly Harper

Black Narratives are often etched in pain and struggle; and while these stories are important to the fabric of our collective histories, it can be easy to forget the daily instances of joy that accompany us on our life's journey. The one of the most important journeys of life is the maternal journey. The Color of Joy celebrates the beauty of Black maternal health and shares the stories of those with lived experience.

Birth By Us: Improving Perinatal Outcomes and Experiences for Black Women through Technology

Ijeoma Uche

Birth By Us is an app that empowers Black women to shape their birthing experience – while giving providers and hospital systems the necessary insights to support their pregnancy, birth, and postpartum journey and reduce preventable maternal deaths and complications. The app utilizes a comprehensive strategy, incorporating patient education, daily health tracking, an online birthing community, and culturally specific resources.

Birth By Us assists Black patients in monitoring daily symptoms, facilitating timely care seeking, and providing valuable resources for continuous patient education and appointment preparation. With personalized daily check-ins from conception to one year postpartum, the platform employs quality questionnaires and validated health screeners commonly used in clinical practice.

The Albany Birth Justice Storytelling Project

Chloe Blaise

The Albany Birth Justice Storytelling (ABJS) project is an example of capacity building among Black leaders in maternal health using feminist pedagogy integrated into research design to shape impactful programs, policies, and advocate for evidence-based change. It further builds a community of stakeholders by sharing best practices and stories, creating space where the voices of Black birthing people are centralized and respected as they shared with others their experiences receiving obstetric and gynecological care in the Capital Region of New York.

Social Innovation to Return Home

U-Leea Santos

Join us for a dynamic exploration of how podcasting can serve as a powerful tool for cultural shift and education in the realm of Black maternal health. Through engaging discussions and real-life stories, we'll delve into the significance of amplifying Black maternal voices and advancing reproductive justice. Discover the creative process behind our podcast initiative, including guest selection, scripting, and community engagement strategies. Gain insights into the impact of storytelling on raising awareness, fostering empathy, and mobilizing action towards achieving equitable maternal health outcomes. This session offers a unique opportunity to learn from our experiences and explore innovative approaches to addressing disparities in Black maternal health.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 45 (Lightening Talk)

Capturing a Revolution: Leveraging Photography and Social Media to Redefine Black Women's Breastfeeding Norms to Cultivate Positive Change

Stephanie Amekuedi

Black women have nourished the nation, yet they have consistently had the lowest breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates. They also account for less than 10% of IBCLC's. This presentation explores Nourish & Thrives' approach to cultural change in the Black community surrounding lactation. Working on a documentary to tell our stories while utilizing social media to highlight beautiful imagery of Black women/people nursing their children through different stages; and creating a digital magazine to highlight Black families unique breastfeeding stories are all tools used to expose Black people to what is often a hidden experience and normalize breast and human milk feeding in the Black community. Making sure to incorporate our culture to make it our own.

SESSION 46 (Lightening Talk)

Centering Trust: Towards Perinatal Practice that Achieves Testimonial Justice

Rochelle Maurice

Black birthing people are at least three times more likely to experience death or severe illness in the perinatal period. Many analyses of the racial disparities in maternal health focus on social determinants of health and structural racism to understand outcomes among Black birthing people. However, the role of trust in healthcare relationships is less frequently explored. Further, little attention given to the lack of trust healthcare providers have in their Black patients' reports of concern, pain, or harm. This presentation will identify how trust becomes diminished as a result of the credibility deficits that are rooted in racism, as well as propose interpersonal, institutional, and systemic solutions to achieve testimonial justice for Black birthing people.

Breaking Barriers: Holistic Care and Clinical Innovation for Supporting Black Women in Navigating Healthcare Systems

Shawana Moore

In this session, we will explore the critical topic of breaking barriers for the support of Black women in navigating healthcare systems. We will discuss the unique challenges and systemic barriers they face, and focus on the significance of holistic care and clinical innovation in addressing these issues. This session aims to equip attendees with practical strategies and actionable steps to foster an inclusive and respectful healthcare environment for Black women, promoting their overall wellness and equitable access to care.

San Joaquin Pathways Community HUB: Community Care Coordination for Black Birth Equity

Christina Bastida-Gonzalez, Eva Cobb

The San Joaquin Pathways Community HUB (HUB), a community-based care coordination model, will discuss its approach to improving Black birth outcomes and the opportunity to establish a streamlined approach between healthcare payers and community-based organizations leading Black Reproductive Justice and Black Birth Equity efforts. Preliminary results from implementation highlight the need to center Black voices and birthing experiences to better understand and provide equitable and dignified care to the Black birthing population. Serving as an intermediary enables the HUB to serve as a vehicle that drives improvements in Black birth equity and improved birth outcomes in San Joaquin County.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 46 (Lightening Talk)

Catalyst for Reproductive Policy Change: Ohio Women's Alliance and Action Fund's Impact on Securing Healthcare Access for Black Women

Jordyn Close

Last November, Ohioans overwhelmingly voted to enshrine reproductive freedom, including abortion, into the State Constitution, which will keep politicians out of Ohioans' healthcare decisions. Ohio Women's Alliance and Ohio Women's Alliance Action Fund proved that outreach to communities of color, youth, and gender-nonconforming folks is critical. Moreover, through our abortion stigma-busting campaigns, OWA showed how crucial culture change is to policy change. This success is the first step in ensuring culturally competent and high-quality healthcare is accessible to all—especially Black women. Come learn about OWA and OWAAF's crucial role in the coalition that worked to pass the amendment, the year-round campaign work that set us up for success, and what steps are being taken to support implementation and direct service.

SESSION 47

The Family & Pregnancy Pop-Up Village: A one-stop-shop of services to reduce pregnancy care-related inequities for Black families

Jacqueline Odiase

The Family & Pregnancy Pop-Up Village (PV) is a community-based one-stop shop for clinical, city, and wraparound services that support the needs of Black birthing people and their families. We conducted a community-engaged, mixed-methods study to evaluate PV's accessibility, acceptability, trustworthiness, person-centeredness, and impact on experiences of racism and discrimination. PV was widely accepted, with 70% of participants reporting it to be more accessible than their usual sources of care. Participants had significantly higher perceptions of person-centered care, trustworthiness, and reduced levels of racism and discrimination at PV compared to their usual sources of care. PV is accessible, acceptable, person-centered, trustworthy, and decreases racism and discrimination, making it a promising model for improving the pregnancy experience for Black families.

Breaking Barriers: MAMMA's Mission to Support Black Breastfeeding Mothers

Kiana Ayers

Black mothers face significant disparities in accessing breastfeeding support. Ready, Set, Push (non-profit Black maternal health organization) has partnered with local community members and lactation experts to establish MAMMA (Metro Atlanta Mother's Milk Alliance) and address these challenges. MAMMA provides a solution for short-term breastfeeding crises, offering a safe platform for informal human milk sharing while operating on the four principles of safe milk sharing: informed choice, donor screening, safe handling, and home pasteurization. Our team collaborates to vet donors and oversee milk transport and storage. Having aided 30 families across Georgia, MAMMA aims to expand its reach. MAMMA exemplifies how Black-led organizations can combat maternal and infant health disparities effectively.

Empowering Black Mamas: The power of Black-led pregnancy education and support in transforming Black maternal health

Sydni Williams

This session explores Ready, Set, Push (RSP), a Black-led nonprofit providing tailored pre- and post-partum education and support to low-income Black women, showcasing its positive impacts on maternal health outcomes and highlighting the crucial role of culturally appropriate care in addressing disparities amidst the U.S.'s maternal health crisis.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Descriptions

SESSION 48

Effectiveness of Online vs. Face to Face Doula Training in a Community Based Doula Program

Dr. Kendall Albert

This research will present the effectiveness of transitioning from in-person vocational doula training to online training within community-based doula organizations in New York. The purpose of this study was to assess whether there are any significant differences in student performance between face-to-face and online doula training which occurred during COVID-19, as well as to understand student perceptions of the effectiveness of the course offerings from a community-based doula services training program. To best understand the student performance in face-to-face and the online doula trainings, the students' grades, pass rates and students' perceptions were analyzed. Findings concluded that though there were no significant differences in grades and pass rates, the students have more confidence in their skills from face-to-face trainings.

Building a Black Doula Collective in CT

Marian Evans, Brittany Needham, Shannon Knox

The presenter will share the groundwork research, and review of literature on the community-based models, and frameworks that exist to improve maternal health and health equity throughout our nation. Various community-based models have demonstrated that building successful collaborations, and collective impact work is resulting in creating change and shifting paradigms. In 2023, Connecticut passed a law (PA23-147) that enhances maternal health and birthing services for women. It is yet to be seen if this law will improve the Black maternal health crisis as experienced in CT. We will explore the work of the collective through the lens of influential community champions working to build a black doula collective and the collective impact model's three pre-conditions as described in the literature.



Thank You To Our

BMHC24

PROUD SPONSORS



30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE
MOVEMENT



California
Health Care
Foundation



♥ **CVS**
Health®



Safer
Childbirth
Cities



MOREHOUSE
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Center for
Maternal Health Equity

OUR JOINT AGENCY FOR CE/CEUS ARE PAC-LAC



WWW.BLACKMATERNALHEALTHCONFERENCE.COM

THANK YOU!



@blkmamasmatter



@BMHConference



@BMHconference



*BMHC24 centers Black people, clinicians, professionals, practitioners, and advocates; and welcomes **ALL** maternal, perinatal, and reproductive health equity stakeholders who are seeking to develop professionally, learn, and network.*



BMMA
BLACK MAMAS MATTER ALLIANCE



WWW.BLACKMATERNALHEALTHCONFERENCE.COM