

Ebonie's Story:

Referrals and Resources Help Single Mother of Three

Empowering. Family-oriented. Honesty. Those are three words Ebonie uses to describe Black Infant Health (BIH), a program aimed at reducing health disparities and helping Black women have healthy babies. Ebonie, a single mother of three, joined BIH when she had her second child, and returned when she was pregnant with her youngest, Ivorie, now 2 years old.



Ebonie and daughter, Ivorie

“I regret not having Black Infant Health for my first son, and I really needed it,” Ebonie says. “I had a very rough emotional pregnancy, and I would have loved to have had that support.” Like many women, she endured postpartum depression. In Ebonie’s case, she suffered for more than a year.

“Being surrounded by strong Black women, you can’t really beat that.”

—Ebonie

With her second and third babies, Ebonie again had postpartum depression, but much less severe. To manage it, she turned to women she met in the program’s group sessions, relied on her one-on-one case manager meetings and benefited from the many resources she received from BIH. San Diego County’s BIH program is subcontracted to Neighborhood House Association, which connects participants to other community resources.

Ebonie says, “If you needed a Black therapist to a Black psychiatrist, to a Black doctor, they were able to provide all these different resources.” Her case manager also helped her find her own apartment.

“It definitely felt like a family. Some of the women share their own personal struggles and stories, and they’re really transparent, which is what we all need,” Ebonie says. “Black Infant Health made me feel strong. Sometimes, as a single mother,

you want to give up, and then you’re around other moms, and it empowers you because we’re all going through this and we can all get through this.”

Ebonie also valued the information she learned about being Black and pregnant, citing statistics related to a higher incidence of miscarriage, preterm birth and other serious conditions like preeclampsia. “We learned so much, and there was so much empowerment,” she says, adding that each session started with meditation and motivation. “It was therapeutic as well, because we were able to vent about our different situations at home. It was really good. Being surrounded by strong Black women, you can’t really beat that.”



Meet the Black Infant Health Program

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

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

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

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

Counties

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

Cities

- ▶ Long Beach
- ▶ Pasadena

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

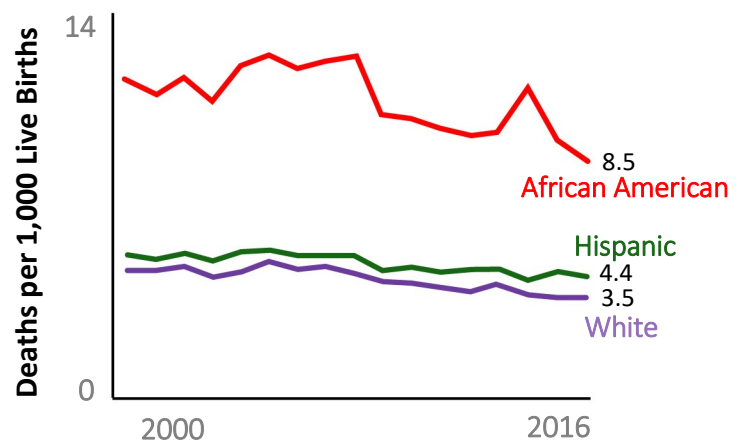
We Serve: African-American women who are 18 years or older and up to 30 weeks pregnant at the time of enrollment regardless of income.

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

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

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

Infant Mortality by Race/Ethnicity 2000-2016



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

