

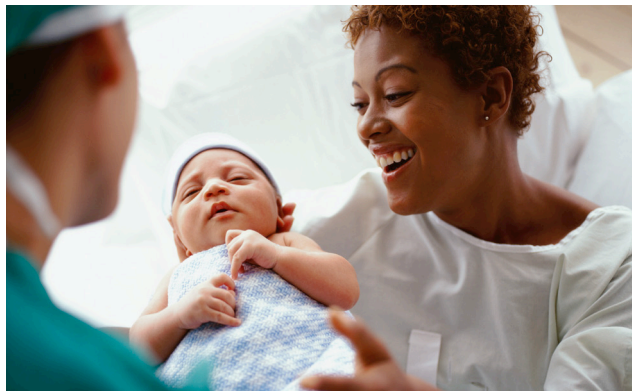
How can California reduce disparities in maternal and infant health?

CDPH implements three key efforts to address the alarming rates of maternal and infant morbidity and mortality, and preterm birth in the Black community.

Background

The birth of a baby should be a joyous occasion but unfortunately, not all births have equal outcomes.

Modern technology and improved health care have helped to decrease maternal and infant mortality, but the rates of decline are not the same across the population. Economic factors, physical and social environments, and policy decisions lead to poverty, poor nutrition and lack of access to health care. These conditions negatively impact the health of Black women and their children, and are significant contributors to the racial disparity that exists in birth outcomes for Black mothers.



Racism also plays a key role in these disparities, as racism and the perception of racism have been demonstrated as sources of psychological and physical stress, often compromising the overall health and well-being of Black women. Nearly two-thirds of Black women experienced chronic

worry about racial discrimination for themselves or a loved one¹. Also, patients' experiences with racial discrimination and negative biases from health care providers have been shown to shape Black patients' interactions with their doctors. These stereotypes and implicit biases interfere with care.

4x 

Black mothers are nearly 4 times more likely than White mothers **to die from pregnancy-related causes.**²

1.7x 

Black women are at a 1.7 times higher **risk of having a preterm birth** when compared to White women.³

2x 

Black babies are 2 times more likely than White babies **to die before their first birthday.**⁴

¹State of California, Dept. of Public Health, Maternal and Infant Health Assessment

²State of California, Dept. of Public Health, California Birth and Death Statistical Master Files, 2013

³State of California, Dept. of Public Health, California Birth Statistical Master File 2017 and California Comprehensive Master Death File 2017

⁴State of California, Dept. of Public Health, California Birth Statistical Master File, 2017

California is taking the lead in advancing perinatal health equity

In recognition of persistent racial inequities in infant mortality, the California State Legislature established the Black Infant Health (BIH) Program in 1989 to identify and implement strategies to improve birth outcomes for Black mothers and babies. BIH was then supplemented by the Perinatal Equity Initiative in 2018 to further expand on these strategies. In addition, through collaboration between CDPH, Los Angeles County and March of Dimes, the Community Birth Plan (2017) was established as a pilot program in Los Angeles focused on bringing together hospitals and communities to develop a system of support for Black mothers and their babies.

While MCAH implements these specific programs and initiatives with the goal of eliminating racial inequities in perinatal outcomes, all MCAH programs work to support Black families and their right to live and thrive. The California Department of Public Health recognizes that there is no single solution to address disparities in Black maternal and infant health, and will continue to devote available resources to achieve health equity.

Growing Beyond Racial Disparities to Achieve Perinatal Health Equity

Dismantling systemic racism and strengthening the roots of economic, physical, social and political opportunity will enable Black families to grow and thrive.



Perinatal Equity Initiative (PEI) is a set of community implemented interventions that can include group prenatal care, preconception and interconception intervention, fatherhood or partnership initiatives, home visitation programs and other innovative strategies.
Established 2018

Black Infant Health (BIH) is a direct service intervention that combines group sessions with client-centered life planning and life skills development activities.
Established 1989

Community Birth Plan (CBP) unites the Black community, hospitals, perinatal healthcare providers, public health and statewide organizations to decrease the preterm birth rate in six Los Angeles County hospitals.
Established 2017