

Certified/Trained Birth Doula Impact for Successful Breastfeeding Rates for Women of Color In North Carolina

African American women have the lowest breastfeeding initiation rate (85.9%) of all ethnicities. Additionally, African American mothers are less likely to continue with breastfeeding beyond initiation. Reasons for low breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in African American mothers include societal stigma, culture, misconceptions, time and support. The lack of African American babies being breastfed is a public health concern for both mother-baby dyad. Coupled with the infant mortality rate for African American babies 12.5 per 1,000 is more than double that for Caucasian babies 5.7 per 1,000. Breastfeeding has been proved to decrease the incidence of several health concerns (i.e., asthma, diabetes, obesity and hypertension).

A Birth Doula is a woman who serves another woman during labor, birth and in the postpartum period. Doulas are a low-tech solution that can help to reduce the current maternal mortality rate, and increase the infant mortality rate, particularly for families of color. The efforts of Birth Doulas may help bring more breastfeeding women of color to increased initiation, continuation and duration of breastfeeding rates, by addressing diverse cultural support and emphasis with their clientele's special needs.

Two surveys will be sent to learn about the impact of Birth Doulas on breastfeeding initiation and duration, particularly for their clients of color. The first survey will be sent to Birth Doulas aim to identify factors that promote breastfeeding initiation, continuation, and duration of their clients. The second survey will be sent to the clients to determine the sufficiency of breastfeeding education and support. We want to know if Doulas are affecting breastfeeding rates by both educating and referring clients to breastfeeding resources in the community.

Currently, 35 doulas have been identified to complete the survey. The total number of subjects is expected to be higher as the 35 doulas send the surveys to their clients. Additional doulas and their clients will be recruited by locating several different Birth Doula Groups online, in social media platforms, birth Doula social media business pages, professional affiliation groups that may contain doulas as members (such as North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition), and finally through personal connections.