

Increasing Access to Doula Care



The Problem: Maternal and infant mortality are major concerns across the United States, including in Missouri. This issue disproportionately impacts Black families. In Missouri, Black birthing people experience more than 3-4x the rate of pregnancy-associated deaths and 2.3x the rate of severe maternal morbidity compared to white birthing people.

What does our community think? Multiple public listening forums (2018-2020) allowed resident leaders, stakeholders, and neighborhood organizers to make specific recommendations for the health and vitality of Black moms and babies. These partners identified a need for holistic, culturally congruent prenatal care for Black birthing people. Residents also requested culturally-congruent care located in their neighborhoods with convenient access to local caregivers and peer-to-peer support.

The Solution: Increase access to doula services for Black families in St. Louis. Doulas are non-clinical professionals that provide support to birthing people before, during, and after childbirth. Doulas can facilitate positive communication between the birthing person and their care providers by helping them articulate their questions, preferences, and values. Doulas provide continuous support during labor and delivery, working in partnership with nurses and physicians to ensure that the birthing person's needs are met and that potential complications are identified quickly. Doulas can also provide post-partum support, including helping new parents with breastfeeding, referrals to additional services, and coping with the new addition to their family.

Community-based doulas are often members of the community they serve, sharing the same background, culture, and/or language with their clients. Therefore, community-based doulas have a particularly important role to play in combating exploitation, exclusion, discrimination, and loss of autonomy that communities of color routinely experience in the medicalized birth system.



Generate Health mobilizes and inspires the St. Louis region to advance racial equity in pregnancy outcomes, family well-being, and community health.

Quick Stats

44th Missouri ranks **44th in the nation** for maternal mortality

80% of pregnancy-associated deaths in MO **are preventable**

3-4x Black maternal and infant mortality rates are **3-4x higher** than for their white counterparts



Birthing people with doula support are **half as likely** to experience birth complications and **four times less likely** to have a low birth-weight baby



Access to doula care can **improve breastfeeding initiation** & **decrease the likelihood** of post-partum depression

The Bottom Line



Community-based doula care is **vital to addressing health disparities** by building trust with folks who share common cultural values and lived experiences