

# Wisconsin Partnership Program: Announces new awards to support community-led efforts to improve Black maternal and infant health

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Partnership Program (WPP) at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) has announced eight new awards totaling \$1.2 million to support community organizations working to improve maternal and infant health outcomes for Wisconsin’s Black mothers and babies.

The new grants, awarded through the Partnership Program’s [Strengthening Community Solutions to Improve Black Maternal and Infant Health](#) funding opportunity will help community-based organizations strengthen and expand their capacity and community models of care to help improve the health of Wisconsin’s Black mothers and infants. Projects aim to expand doula services and community outreach, support mothers recently released from incarceration, promote the health of fathers, and build collaborations between organizations.

“The Wisconsin Partnership Program is committed to supporting efforts to reduce health inequities and improve Black maternal and infant health outcomes,” said Dr. Amy Kind, professor of medicine at SMPH and chair of the Partnership’s Oversight and Advisory Committee. “We look forward to working with these community partners and supporting the exciting array of approaches they have proposed.”

Eight new grants were awarded for a maximum of \$150,000 each for up to two years to the following organizations:

- **African American Breastfeeding Network Inc.: *WeRISE Community***

### ***Doula Program***

African American Breastfeeding Network, a Milwaukee-based organization that addresses breastfeeding disparities, has received a grant to expand its successful pilot project *WeRISE: Black Birth Workers Response to COVID-19* to a sustainable community-based model of care for Black families. Through this model, community-based doulas will provide culturally responsive pregnancy and childbirth education, connection to health care and social services, labor coaching and breastfeeding education and counseling.

- ***The Foundation for Black Women's Wellness: Bridging Community Supports to Achieve Healthy Births for Black Mothers***

The Foundation for Black Women's Wellness will partner with Reach Dane to provide comprehensive, culturally appropriate, coordinated support to Black Women in Reach Dane's Early Childhood Program who are at risk of experiencing poor maternal and infant health outcomes. They will collaborate to aid Black women in Dane county in overcoming economic stressors; improving access to information, education and supports; and accessing critical social, healthcare and community supports to address needs that impact perinatal health.

- ***Today Not Tomorrow, Inc.: Today Not Tomorrow Family Resource Center Community Based Doulas and Family Support Programming***

Today Not Tomorrow, Inc. will use its grant to support the training of a diverse workforce of community health workers, midwives and community-based doulas across the state. This project aims to continue providing access to low or no cost doula services, provide breastfeeding support and family support services for BIPOC birthing people and their families, and implement Harambee Birth and Family Center services to provide autonomy to Black families through a range of care and birth options.

- ***EXPO (Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing): Addressing the Maternal and Infant Health Needs of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Black Women and Their Families in Dane County, Milwaukee County, and across Wisconsin***

EXPO (Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing) has received an award for the FREE campaign that focuses on supporting Black women recently released from incarceration seeking to reunite with their children and supporting women before a possible pregnancy. The organization and its partners will offer access to low/no cost doula services, breastfeeding support, family support through a two-generation lens to ensure a supported community transition.

- ***Rock County Health Department: Strengthening Community Supports***

### ***for Black Families in Rock County***

Rock County Public Health Department (RCPHD) is partnering with Rock & Walworth County Comprehensive Family Services, Inc. Early HeadStart, Harambee Village Doulas, and Dean Health Plan/SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital of Janesville to strengthen community support for pregnant Black women and Black families. With this initiative, RCPHD will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, expand doula services through building an apprenticeship pipeline and execute an educational campaign to increase awareness about the impact of racism and its chronic stress on Black mothers and the value of doula support.

- **Fathers Making Progress: *Strong Fathers Strong Families Project***  
Fathers Making Progress will support Black maternal and infant health by promoting the positive development of fathers and men in Milwaukee. The project includes an innovative neighborhood-based father mobilization project, ongoing wellness groups facilitated by trained fathers from the community, one-on-one success coaching facilitated by trained peers, and intergenerational men's wellness groups that build upon support for BIPOC fathers by BIPOC fathers.
- **Next Door Foundation: *Supporting Healthy Babies Through Strengthening Families***  
Next Door Foundation, in collaboration with Penfield Children's Center, has received a grant for a project that will provide enhanced support to Black families with children under the age of one in Milwaukee. This project aims to strengthen access to post-partum maternal care and address infant needs through community-based activities, and increase knowledge of the social determinants of health, and the risk factors associated with premature births and infant mortality.
- **City of Milwaukee: *Birth Outcomes Made Better Doula Program***  
The City of Milwaukee Health Department has received a grant for the *Birth Outcomes Made Better* Doula program that will transform this pilot program into a longstanding, free, accessible, in-home, data driven and culturally responsive service to decrease the gaps in Black women's healthcare in Milwaukee. This project will focus on making doulas more accessible to the public, providing consistent and client-centered health education and guidance, increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration, supporting pathways to socioeconomic stability and providing employment opportunities for doulas in Milwaukee.

“Making progress on solving the persistent challenge of maternal and infant health disparities will take the commitment of many stakeholders across the state, including participation from health systems, government, businesses and community organizations. We believe that investing in diverse, promising, community-led solutions is an important step in the pathway towards improved health,” said Kind.

*The [Wisconsin Partnership Program](#) is a permanent endowment at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, committed to improving health and advancing health equity through investments in community partnerships, education and research. It was established in 2004 through an unprecedented gift as part of the conversion of Blue Cross and Blue Shield United of Wisconsin to a stock insurance corporation. To date, the Wisconsin Partnership Program has awarded more than 560 grants for \$265 million to advance biomedical and population health research, promote healthcare and public health workforce development, and support community partnerships to improve health and advance health equity.*