

## Why get involved?

Only 2 % of the population in Oregon is African American, yet the African American infant mortality rate is disproportionately higher than those of other races. And, although Oregon has one of the highest breastfeeding rates in the nation, African American women breastfeed at much lower levels. In addition African American women suffer higher rates of prenatal depression

Communities deserve the expertise of doulas to improve birth outcomes in vulnerable populations. Insurance reimbursement for this valuable service enhances the path toward self-sufficiency in the African American community and helps improve birth outcomes with this population .

## OCIBO supports Doula Reimbursement

OCIBO Community Birth Companions



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# OCIBO

**Oregon Coalition to Improve  
Birth Outcomes**

**Start improving  
birth outcomes  
in Oregon  
today**

## OCIBO

Working collaboratively to help address the social determinants of health -- physical structures, race, ethnicity, social, economic and policy development --that impact birth outcomes in vulnerable populations

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# Healthy Babies are Everyone's Business

# OCIBO

## What is OCIBO?

The Oregon Coalition to Improve Birth Outcomes (OCIBO) is a new initiative through the International Center for Traditional Childbearing (ICTC) formed to reduce infant mortality and morbidity. OCIBO's key strategy is to create a viable doula maternal and child health program in Oregon. This includes policy recommendations to provide reimbursement for doula care. In addition OCIBO is committed to increasing access of doulas of color as well as positioning doulas as an employable profession.

### **Goals – 2010-2011**

- Support health insurance legislation for 3<sup>rd</sup> party reimbursement of prenatal doula care and postpartum doula care for year one.
- Complete 300 birth surveys that reflect the perinatal experience of a diverse population of women in order to make recommendations for improved service regarding cultural competency

### **Accomplishments/History**

- May 26<sup>th</sup> six organizations came together to find a way to collaborate around reducing health disparities and health inequities. An action plan to improve birth outcomes was launched
- Provided scholarships for 11 women to be trained as Community Birth Companions (doulas)
- Developed and launched a culturally sensitive doula training curriculum .

## What is A Doula?

The word "Doula" is Greek and means woman servant.

As time has changed and education has become more accessible doulas are now known as trained professionals who provide emotional, physical, and non-clinical support, including comfort measures, relaxation techniques and childbirth education during pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period.

Doulas have been incorporated as an integral part of the technical birth team since the year 2000 and are an essential link to providing advocacy and referrals to families during and after pregnancy to reduce premature and low birth weight babies.

Doulas offer ongoing postpartum support for families through:

- The breast feeding experience, establishing successful breastfeeding and newborn family bonding.
- Acting as strong advocates for women and families. They offer resources and guidance throughout this important period in the baby and mother's life, when education and resource awareness is most important. Many new mothers in communities of color do not know what available to them is and what information to seek in order to have a healthy pregnancy and overall healthy baby. Doulas are knowledgeable support persons that provide the best options for women and to see that their means are met during these periods.

### **Who can afford a doula?**

- Currently, low income women cannot afford to pay for doula services and are therefore denied access.

## The Problem

There is a clear health disparity between vulnerable populations and mainstream infants. For the last several years, the infant mortality rate for African Americans has hovered just under 1.4%, while the national average has been just under .6%. For decades, African American babies have been twice (in some cases, even three times) as likely to die as white babies. Currently, the national infant mortality rate for Black babies is 14 per 1,000, compared to a rate of 5 per 100 for white babies, 3 per 1000 for Asian babies, and 6 to 9 per 1000 Hispanic babies. These disparities cannot be eliminated without the support of community health workers.

### **The solution**

OCIBO's goal is to link workforce development, sustainability and public health efforts that support community health workers to ensure that every woman who seeks a doula can have one. Low income women may also have an opportunity to rise out of poverty as a certified doula and be compensated for helping reduce poor birth outcome in their communities.

OCIBO Steering Committee consists of Healthy Birth Initiative, International Center for Traditional Childbearing, Oregon Islamic Chaplain Organization, Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield, Youth Employment Institute

### **General Members**

Oregon Action  
Fathers Initiative  
Caribbean Midwifery  
Lolita Allen, Community Birth Companion