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Gov't Study: Community-Based Doulas Increase Breastfeeding Rates in Low-Income Communities

Breastfeeding is Baby's First Step Out of Poverty

[YOUR CITY] – A new study by the federal government finds that community-based doulas – such as those employed by [YOUR AGENCY/PROGRAM], here in [YOUR CITY/STATE] – dramatically increase breastfeeding rates in underserved communities, where a baby's exposure to breast milk can help mitigate the impacts of poverty.

[QUOTE FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OR SENIOR PROGRAM STAFF – E.G., RE: LIFE-CHANGING EFFECTS OF BREASTFEEDING AND ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED DOULAS]

U.S. breastfeeding rates are particularly low in disadvantaged communities, where babies are more likely to face health problems. The World Health Statistics in 2010 revealed that 40 countries had better neonatal mortality rates than the United States and 32 had higher rates of exclusive breastfeeding at six months. Furthermore, according to the CDC¹, Non-Hispanic Black babies were almost twice as likely as Non-Hispanic white babies to be born at low birth weight, and Black babies were twice as likely as white babies to die before their first birthday.

“This study shows that community-based doulas can change the way our country cares for our most vulnerable moms and babies, and it can save taxpayer dollars,” says Rachel Abramson, Executive Director of HealthConnect One, the national agency that started the Community-Based Doula Program, now implemented in 18 states with an approach that consistently results in high breastfeeding rates and low c-section rates.

A community-based doula is a woman of and from the same community who provides emotional and physical support to a woman during pregnancy, birth and the first months of parenting, through home visits and center-based activities. The effectiveness of the program emerges out of the trusting relationship between a community-based doula and her participant, the duration of their relationship, and the continuous presence of the doula during labor and birth.

The study, supported jointly by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), looked at 8 community-based doula sites around the country assisted by HealthConnect One, and found that 87% of community-based doula clients were breastfeeding at 6 weeks, as compared to 61% of a similar sample.² Even at 3 months, 72% of community-based doula clients were still breastfeeding, as compared to 48% of the broader sample.

[YOUR PROGRAM OUTCOMES]

[LEGISLATOR QUOTE]

Part of the widespread support for community-based doulas comes from the tremendous savings that result from this low-cost way to improve health outcomes. The Institute of Medicine concluded that poor birth outcomes cost \$26 billion annually. Suboptimal breastfeeding is estimated to cost \$13 billion per year in pediatric costs and \$18 billion in maternal costs. This study shows that community-based doulas are helping to lower those costs. And starting a community-based doula program also brings new jobs to underserved communities.

[CLOSING QUOTE FROM STAFF OR PARTICIPANT IN YOUR PROGRAM]

To read HealthConnect One's White Paper, "The Perinatal Revolution," regarding the study initiated by HRSA and the CDC, please click here -

http://www.healthconnectone.org/pages/white_paper_the_perinatal_revolution/362.php

[YOUR AGENCY AND MISSION]

HealthConnect One (HC One) is the national leader in advancing respectful, community-based, peer-to-peer support for pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding and early parenting.

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¹ Martin, JA, et al. (2010). *Births: Final Data for 2010*. National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 161, Number 1, August 28, 2012, CDC, National Center for Health Statistics.

² Using 2008-2010 data from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) as a benchmark, and focusing on Black, Hispanic, and American Indian WIC-eligible women in states where community-based doula sites were located

[YOUR AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION]