

# Dial-a-Doula Town Hall: BLM and Racial Equity in Birth Work



# Agenda

- **Racial Equity and Birth Work**
- **BLM Solidarity Statement**
- **Racial Equity Survey Results**
- **Short- and Long-Term Goals**
- **Q & A and Feedback**

# Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of Dial-a-Doula to ensure equal volunteer and client opportunity without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, ability status, age, marital status, family/parental status, or income. Dial-a-Doula prohibits any such discrimination against or harassment of doulas and clients.

At the disclosure of doulas and clients, sociodemographic information is collected to track the effectiveness of Dial-a-Doula's equity and recruiting efforts. This data is used to ensure we consider the needs of all our clients.

# Fundamentals

## Reproductive Justice

- Human right to...
  - maintain personal bodily autonomy,
  - have children,
  - not have children,
  - & parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities.
- Invented in 1994 by a group of Black women
- Access not choice
- More than abortion
- Intersectionality**



## Dimensions of Social Identities include:



### Multiple

We all have multiple identities that shape us, our group memberships, and the way we experience the world. No person has just one social identity.



### Connected

Our multiple identities are connected in ways that uniquely shape our experience. Different people who share one social identity may have varying experiences based on other social identities they hold.



### In/Visibility

Certain identities might be particularly apparent, using senses like sight or hearing, while others may be harder to perceive.



### Change

Identities may change over time, like age. The implications of these identities may also change based on social context.



### Choice

Some of these identities are chosen, while others might be assigned at birth or passed down through our families.



### Salience

Particular identities that we hold might feel more important at certain moments in our lives and in specific social settings. These identities might be at the forefront in your mind at certain moments.

**Privileges** are unearned advantages that individuals may have in some settings, based on the socio-cultural makeup of the environment.

# Fundamentals

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## Birth Justice



- Human right to choose whether or not to carry a pregnancy, to choose when, where, how, and with whom to birth, including access to traditional and indigenous healers.
- All peoples can birth and be parents.
- History of trauma and oppression around marginalized groups' decisions to have and not have babies. Dismantle inequalities.
- Access to health care is across the pregnancy spectrum including abortion, miscarriage, prenatal, birth, and postpartum care.
- Challenges abuses by medical personnel and overuse of medical interventions.

# Birth Justice Bill of Rights

As a Black pre-conception, pregnant, birthing or postpartum person,  
I have the right to:

1. STAND AGAINST RACISM.
2. KNOW MY HISTORY AND RESIST INSTITUTIONAL RACISM.
3. HONOR MY VALUES.
4. EXPRESS MY CULTURE.
5. DEVELOP A NETWORK OF SAFETY AND SUPPORT.
6. REPRESENT MY BLACKNESS.
7. CARE FOR ALL MY IDENTITIES.
8. PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE.
9. UNDERSTAND MY HEALTH.
10. RESPECT MY FAMILY STRUCTURE.
11. COMPREHENSIVE CARE AFTER I GIVE BIRTH.
12. SUPPORT FROM MY DOULA.
13. ACCESS TO EVERYTHING I NEED TO BE HEALTHY.
14. SUPPORT IN REDUCING STRESS.
15. INCLUSION IN THE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT ME.
16. ENSURE ACCESS TO ALL BIRTH CARE OPTIONS.
17. HONOR THE NATURAL BIRTH PROCESS.
18. SUPPORT MY BABY'S RIGHT TO HUMAN MILK.
19. GET A SECOND OPINION.
20. ADVOCATE FOR MY RIGHTS.
21. TIME TO HEAL AND BOND.
22. RECOGNIZE THAT MY BODY IS ALWAYS MINE.






# BLACK MAMAS MATTER

All women have the  
right to safe and respectful  
maternal health care  
that supports healthy  
pregnancies and births.

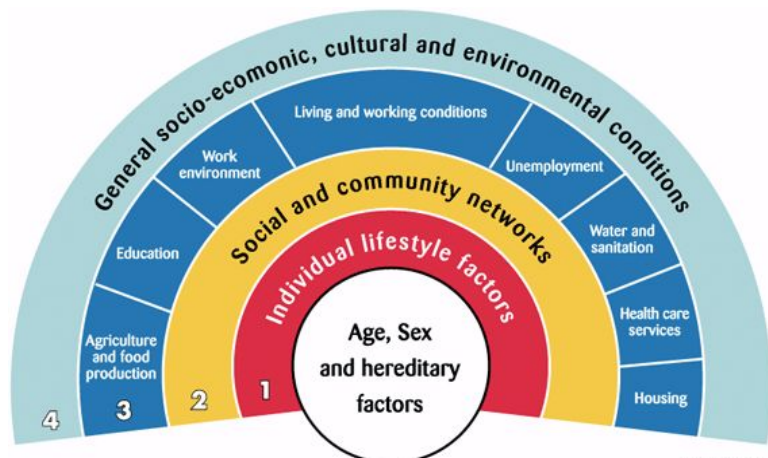
CENTER  
FOR  
REPRODUCTIVE  
RIGHTS



The **violence** and **abuse** inflicted upon **Black bodies** in research and medicine, historically and in the present day, lead to **health inequities** in maternal and child health. Thus, **our work as doulas is inherently connected to racialized violence** and, therefore, we must recommit to racial and health equity.



# Contextualizing Black People's Birth Experiences



Meet Te-Ana Souffrant (1 min - 3:45 min)

# Maternal Health Disparity

**Pregnancy-related death** is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 1 year of the end of a pregnancy from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes.

Race	Pregnancy-related death rate (deaths per 100,000 live births)
Black, non-Hispanic	42.4
American Indian/Alaskan Native	30.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	14.1
White, non-Hispanic	13.0
Hispanic	11.3

# Infant Health Disparity

**Infant mortality** is the death of an infant before their first birthday.

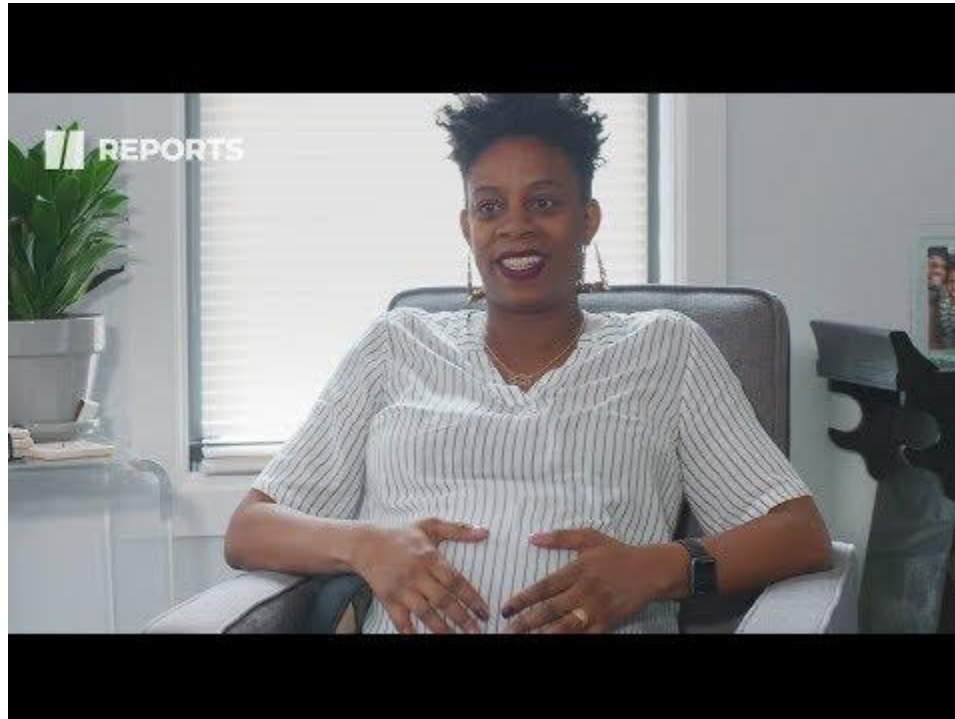
Race	Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)
Black, non-Hispanic	11.4
American Indian/Alaskan Native	9.4
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	7.4
Hispanic	5.0
White, non-Hispanic	4.9
Asian	3.6

# Maternal Health Disparity

Race	Ever Breastfed
Black, non-Hispanic	74.0%
Hispanic	82.9%
White, non-Hispanic	86.6%

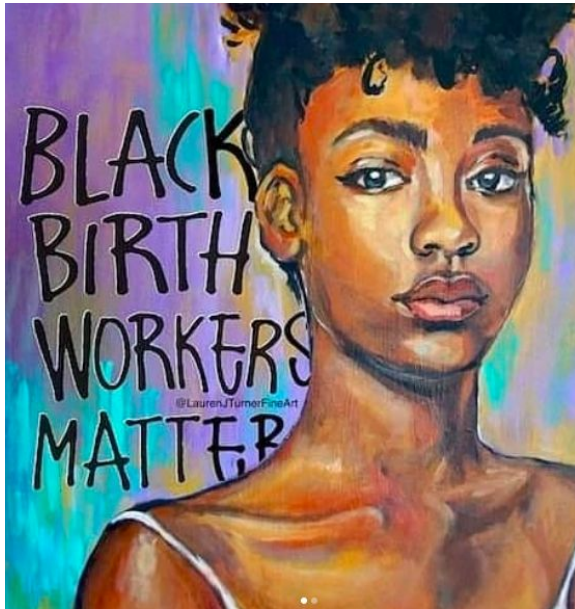


# Black Doulas Fill in Gaps in the Lack of Culturally Competent Care to Address Maternal and Infant Health Disparities



0 min - 1:16 min and 3:15 min - 4:36 min

# Impact of BIPOC, LGBTQ Community Doulas



- Doulas reduce disparities in maternal health outcomes and improve experiences of Black and Indigenous birthing people.
- Despite assumptions that doulas are a luxury for white, wealthier people, doulas of color and those who are LGBTQ, as well as many from low-income communities, are leading the work to provide access to culturally competent prenatal, birth, and postpartum care and support for their communities.
- **Perspectives from BIPOC doulas:**
  - 1) Recentering of community and humanity in pregnancy-related care
  - 2) Guidelines for health care system integration and the role of government
  - 3) Creation of a progressive vision for pregnancy-related care in the United States



# BLM Solidarity Statement





In response to the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Sandra Bland, Sean Reed, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and countless others murdered by police and racialized violence, Dial-a-Doula is actively examining and addressing its own role in perpetuating racial implicit bias. Furthermore, the violence and abuse inflicted upon Black bodies in research and medicine lead to health inequities in maternal and child health. Thus, our work as doulas is inherently connected to racialized violence and, therefore, we must recommit to racial and health equity.

As we plan for the reopening of the Dial-a-Doula Program, we are committing to racial equity by addressing a series of action items through new strategic planning.

We recognize our unwavering responsibility to foster an environment that protects the lives of Black people. Thus, we are committed to achieving these goals to advance racial equity in our work and will continue to explore other avenues for change. We also continue our ongoing commitment to increase access to doulas for all childbearing families who desire them, regardless of socioeconomic status.



# Racial Equity Improvement Survey

Data and Analysis



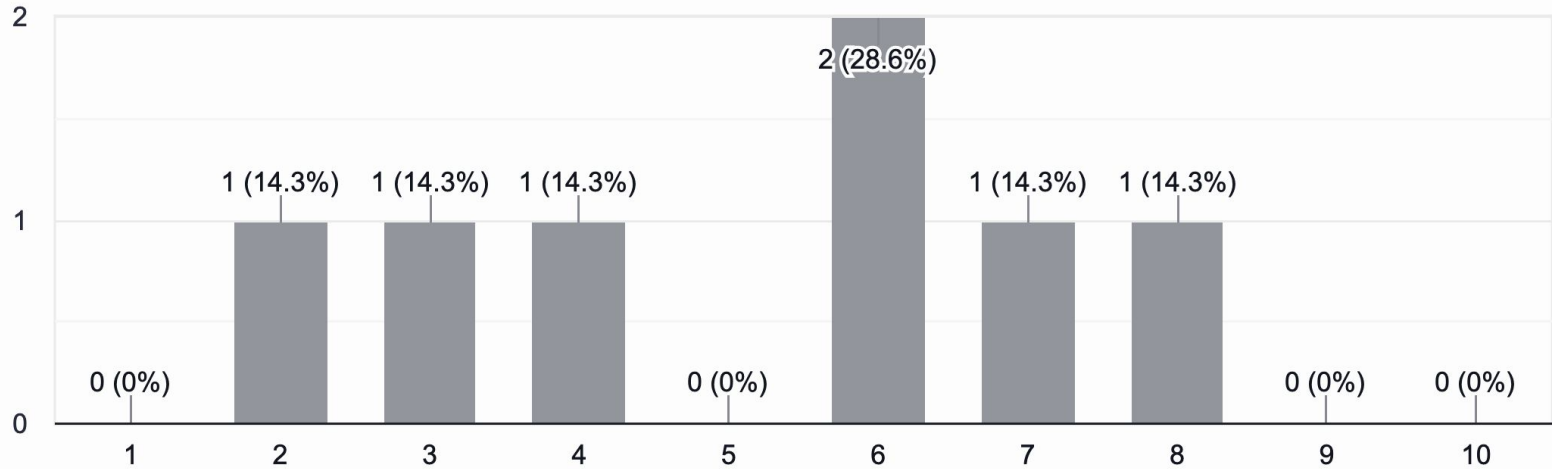
# About the Survey

- 7 Doulas filled it out who have all been a part of the program for greater than 1 year
- 100% identified as white



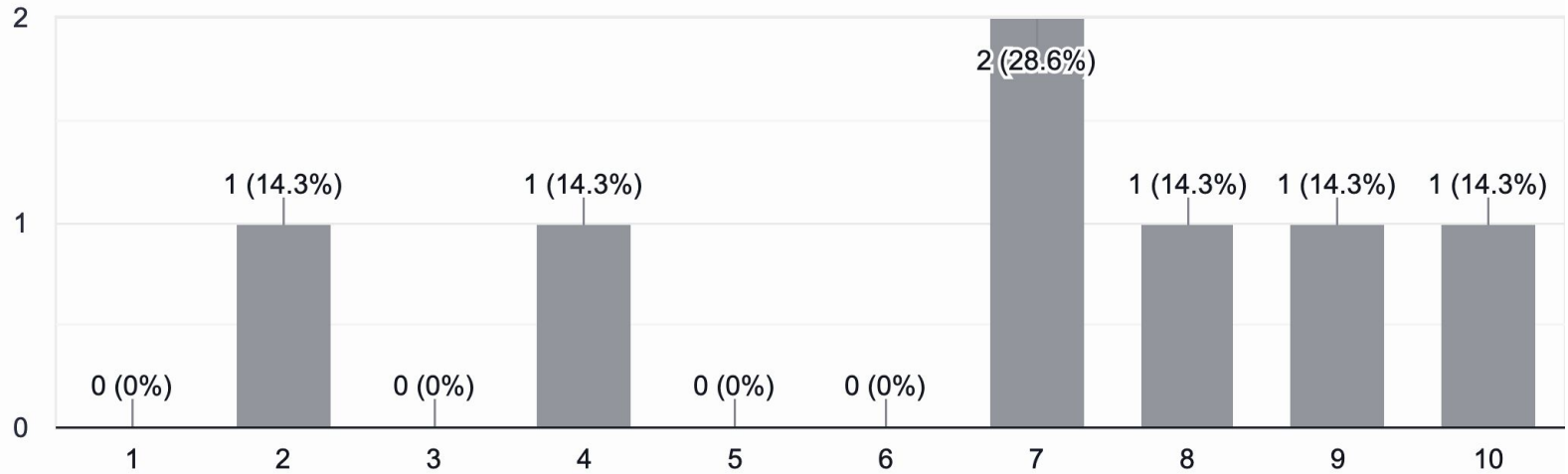
## How diverse do you believe the Dial-a-Doula community is?

7 responses



## How inclusive do you feel the Dial-a-Doula community is to different identities?

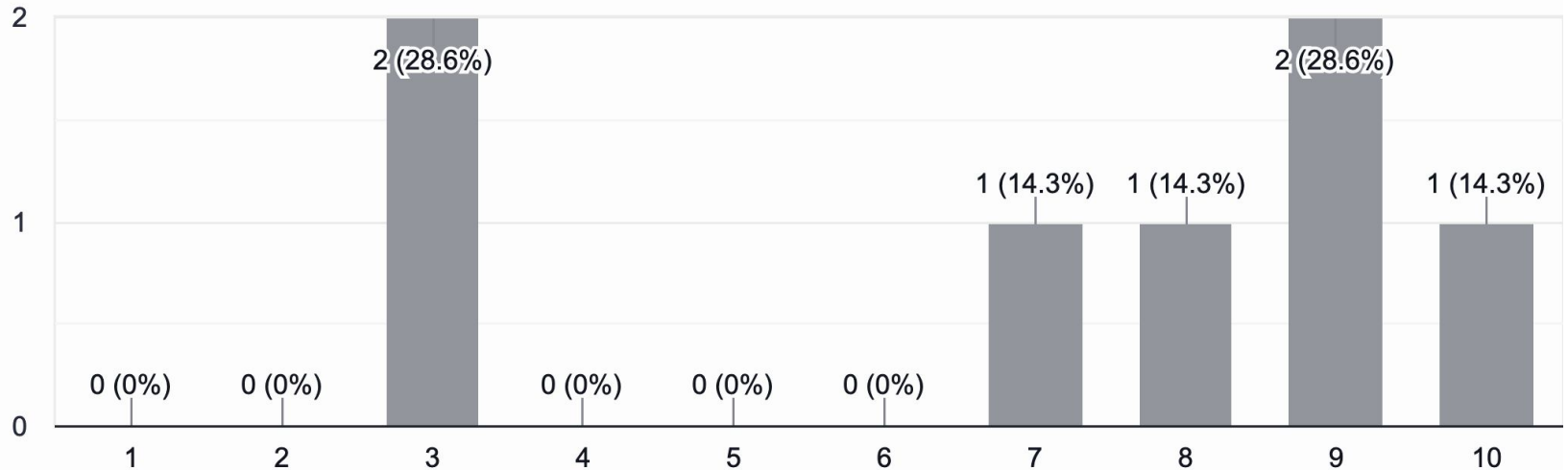
7 responses





## How committed do you feel Dial-a-Doula is to racial equity in birth work?

7 responses



## In what ways do you think Dial-a-Doula advances racial equity?

- We are a safety-net program that offers free services
  - We are able to reach a more racially and socioeconomically diverse population

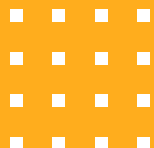


## In what ways do you think Dial-a-Doula perpetuates racism in birth work?

- Advertisement of services
  - Potential provider bias
  - Opt-in program
- Michigan Medicine population may be predominantly white and of high SES
- Dial-a-Doula has not clearly promoted anti-racism and anti-oppression frameworks
- No education on health inequities and ways to actively address them in interpersonal relationships as doulas
  - Intersectionality and doula work
- Lack of diversity of volunteer doulas



It hasn't been obvious to me that anti-racism and anti-oppression frameworks are explicitly emphasized in Dial-a-Doula™





# What changes would you like to see Dial-a-Doula make to advance racial equity and actively combat racism in the maternal and child health field?

- Improve marketing of services to the community
- Share Circles:
  - Improve content of share circles with a book club
  - Off-campus locations for meetings for community members
- Occasional special workshops
- Mandatory training for all doulas focused on racial disparities, birth plans, cultural differences, SES/social determinants of health *from BIPOC*





**Mandatory training for all Dial-A-Doula individuals prior to work with the organization focused on racial disparities, birth plans, cultural differences, SES/social determinants of health (plus what that ACTUALLY means in our individual work)."**





# What changes would you like to see Dial-a-Doula make to advance racial equity and actively combat racism in the maternal and child health field?



- More prenatal and postpartum care opportunities
- Greater connections and resource sharing with other local doula organizations (i.e. Prison Doula initiative, Southeast Michigan Doula Collective, plus various independent black doulas)
- Consult with experienced pillars of the birth work community in Washtenaw County
- Recruit community member volunteers





“

**I don't think Dial-a-Doula has a strong sense of community, which is why I struggle to say that this org uplifts anti-racism and marginalized people - there isn't a way for me to know when there isn't social media and we don't connect with one another often”**



## Do you have specific recommendations (programs, resources, etc) that would help Dial-a-Doula to implement your ideas in the previous question?

- Refer potential clients to more diverse doula options
- Better advertising of services
- More educational materials for clients
- Building greater community within the volunteers to create a space to uplift our values
- Different doula programs and links to independent Black doulas



# We'd Still Love Feedback!

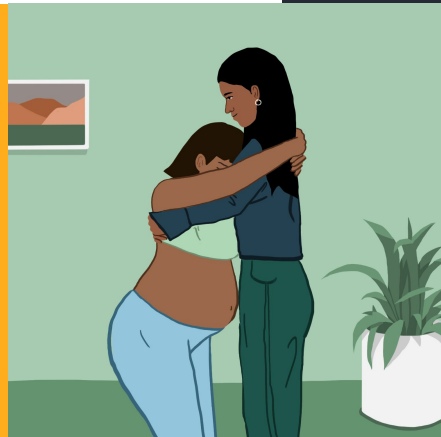
Racial Equity Improvement  
Survey Link:

<https://forms.gle/AKewXtGFpj8TsEh16>



# Short-Term Goals

Advancing Racial Equity





# July



## **Construct New Volunteer Application**

Better assess doulas' understanding of health equity and commitment to reproductive justice, racial equity, and the centering of marginalized identities.



## **Add Socio-Demographic Questions to Volunteer Application**

Diversify our doula volunteers to better reflect the population in which we serve and to better contextualize the experiences our doulas bring to their birth work.



## **Accept Non-DONA Doula Trainings on a Case-by-Case Basis**

Accept more doula training options that focus on social justice and health equity. Changed language to "DONA training preferred" NOT required.



## **Revise Dial-a-Doula's Mission Statement and Core Values**

Re-align Dial-a-Doula's work with its mission statement and core values.



## **Host Town Hall**

Inform doulas on Dial-a-Doula's commitment to racial equity and present action steps to advance an intersectional and anti-oppression framework to our work.

# Construct New Volunteer Application

Old (~100 words):

1. What life experiences have led you to want to become a doula?
2. Why do you want to join Dial-a-Doula?
3. What do you hope to gain from this experience?



New (300 words max):

1. What personal experiences have led you to want to become a doula? What makes you fit to be an effective and supportive doula?
2. What does "birth justice" mean to you and why is it important?
3. How will your identity impact your doula work?
4. Can you describe a time in which you engaged in collaboration with someone or a group of people with different identities from yourself? What did you learn from this experience?



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# Add Socio-Demographic Questions to Volunteer App

*Dial-a-Doula does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race, ethnicity, or national origin. In order to track the effectiveness of our equity and recruiting efforts and ensure we consider the needs of all our clients, we are now asking the following questions...*

- Pronouns
- Gender Identity and Expression
- Sexual Orientation
- Race and Ethnicity
- Community Member Status





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# Re-Align Mission, Vision and Core Values

## **\*DRAFT\***

### Mission

- To promote healthy families through volunteer doula support that provides emotional, physical, and informational support to pregnant people and families during labor and birth at the Von Voigtlander Women's Hospital.

### Vision

- Achieve health equity so all people have access to a doula that practices cultural humility and provides continuous support needed for pregnant people and families to make healthy decisions for themselves.

### Core Values

- Birth Justice
- Racial Justice
- Self-Sovereignty
- Health Equity
- Advocacy
- Education
- Healthy Birth Outcomes
- Community Resources
- Emotional, Physical, and Informational Support
- Evidence-Based Practices



# Aug- Sept



## **Incorporate Curriculum on Racial Equity, Intersectionality, and Anti-Oppression into Share Circles**

Provide a space for continued education and open dialogue on birth justice, racial equity, and the experiences of Black pregnant people.

## **Create Mandatory Training for Current and New Doulas on Racial Equity in Birth Work**

Provide continued education on birth justice, racial equity, and the experiences of Black pregnant people during volunteer information sessions.

## **Organize a Database of POC Private Doulas**

Connect prospective clients to full-scope doula services that match their social identities, cultural background, and linguistic needs, if desired.

# Long-Term Goals

Advancing Racial Equity





# One Year



## **Improve the Diversity of Doula Volunteers**

Provide Scholarships for Doulas of Color  
Provide Subsidized Training for Community Members

## **Improve Marketing to Better Target our Community of Interest**

Increase community awareness of what a doula is and connect pregnant people to doulas before labor through outreach programs and improving connections to other community doula programs

## **Improve Advertising of Dial-a-Doula Service in the Community and Hospital**

Update flyer and ensure they are present in all birthing suits and throughout outpatient clinics and attend more community outreach events

# Five Years

## **Change Dial-a-Doula into an Opt-out Program as Opposed to an Opt-in**

Understanding that provider bias may affect who is receiving information about the Dial-a-Doula program, changing Dial-a-Doula to an Opt-out program would prevent this.

## **The Creation of an Advisory Board to Receive More Leadership from Black Leaders in the Community**

Improve connections and resource sharing between other local Doula organizations, potentially through a meeting with the birth work community twice a year

# Q & A

