

# BirthWell Partners

Community Doula Project



**2022-2023 Annual Report**

## Mission

BirthWell Partners is a non-profit that makes doula training and doula services more equitable and accessible, in order to improve the health of families and communities in Alabama.

## Vision:

Our vision is for every birthing person to feel respected, empowered, and supported through the experiences of pregnancy, labor, birth, and the early weeks of parenting.



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## This Year BirthWell Doulas Supported 74 Clients During Labor



It was a record year for client births: 76 babies were born to 74 clients, representing a 65% increase in clients served over the previous fiscal year. Since May 2011, BirthWell Doulas have supported 608 clients as they gave birth, and an additional 500+ more with prenatal and/or postpartum support services.

### Outcomes for 74 Clients with 76 Babies (2 sets of twins)

	Alabama	BWP All Birth FY 2022-23	BWP Singleton Birth FY 2022-23
C-Sections	35.1 <sup>1</sup> (2021 data)	30.7	29.6
Preterm Birth Rate	13.11 <sup>2</sup> (2021 data)	10.5	8.3
Low Birth Weight Rate	10.43 <sup>2</sup> (2021 data)	15.5	10.4
Epidural Rate	87.3% <sup>3</sup> (2016 data)	65.3%	64.3%
Skin to Skin w/ in 1st 24 Hours	not available	92.9%	92.4%
Breastfeeding Initiation Rate	71.1% <sup>4</sup> (2019 data)	90.5%	91.7%

Sources:

- [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/cesarean\\_births/cesareans.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/cesarean_births/cesareans.htm)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/alabama/al.htm>
- <https://www.cesareanrates.org/epidural-anesthesia-utilization-by-state>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm>

Program outcomes for each *calendar* year, can be found on our website:  
<https://www.birthwellpartners.org/outcomes-and-reports>

## Doula Services Provided to Residents of 11 Alabama Counties

County	# of Clients
Autauga	2
Blount	1
Calhoun	3
Clay	1
Jefferson	56
Madison	1
Montgomery	1
Perry	2
Pickens	1
Talladega	2
Tuscaloosa	4

*"She was always emotionally available for me no matter the day or time."*

*"She made sure I was able to provide informed consent!"*

*"[She] went above and beyond for me during my labor and birth! She is extremely dedicated! She did hip squeezes during contractions, gave me back massages, hand massages, leg massages, she did hot compressions on my back during contractions, she had a bag full of tricks and goodies and she used everything she had to help me be as comfortable as possible!"*

*--Quotes from BWP Clients*

BirthWell is driving change for individuals, families and our community. BirthWell doulas provide one-on-one perinatal support for low-income, underserved pregnant people. They encourage their clients to advocate for themselves, and partner with clients to amplify their voices in medical spaces where they may have previously been ignored. The resulting empowered birth experiences, with improved maternal/infant health outcomes, can have long-lasting impact on a family's physical, emotional, and financial well-being.

All BirthWell clients are insured by Medicaid, are underinsured, or not insured. Alabama Medicaid does not currently cover doula services for Alabama families, although strong evidence supports the clinical benefits of community doulas and their impacts on health inequities. An increasing number of states are covering doula services, and the White House Blueprint for Addressing the Maternal Health Crisis includes a recommendation to expand and diversify the perinatal workforce, including increasing the number of community doulas and encouraging insurance/Medicaid coverage of services (<https://tinyurl.com/2p99mkte>). BirthWell is engaged in advocacy for Medicaid coverage of doula services, but in the meantime, all BirthWell doula services are made possible through the generosity of grants and donations.

## Childbirth Classes for 33 Individuals with Substance Use Disorder



The Alabama Department of Mental Health funded childbirth classes again this year at Aletheia House and Olivia's House. Program participants interested in doula services were also matched with BirthWell Doulas for additional support.

Participants learned about nutrition while they ate healthy snacks, practiced movement & stretches for healthy pregnancy, discussed birth options and medical decision-making, and practiced self-advocacy skills. Other highlights from classes included making baby carriers from inexpensive materials (see picture), receiving diapers & wipes donated by [Bundles of Hope](#), and increasing knowledge about breastfeeding.

*"I learned I have the right to be included in any decision-making."*

*- Quotes from class participants*

# Doula Training: 37 New Doulas Trained

BirthWell's key strategy for reducing inequities has been to increase access to doulas by training a wide diversity of doulas and by engaging those doulas to work one-on-one with clients in underserved communities.

37 people from 14 Alabama counties (and 1 FL resident) attended workshops held at East Lake United Methodist Church.

14 of the doulas participated in a needs-based work-study program. Each work-study doula received classroom training, mentoring, and hands-on experience serving 3 families in need.

*"BirthWell showed me how to be the kind of doula I wish I had during my deliveries."*

*"Dalia gave me so much information to put in my doula toolbox, as well as, provided data in such a beautifully unbiased way. She encouraged statistics and reaching a conclusion for ourself based on the information. [She] exemplif[ied] exactly what it is to be a doula. She didn't just speak it. It surrounded every second of training."*

*-- Quotes from Doula Training Participants*

County	# of Doulas
Clay	2
Colbert	1
Crenshaw	1
Elmore	2
Escambia	1
Hale	1
Jefferson	18
Macon	2
Madison	3
St. Clair	1
Shelby	2
Talladega	1
Tuscaloosa	1
Walker	1
Escambia (FL)	1

Thanks to funding from the City of Birmingham and the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, we have trained more new doulas, added more contract doulas, and increased doula services within and around Birmingham. Funding from Alabama Department of Mental Health and from the Alabama Perinatal Quality Collaborative is helping us to expand geographically by training doulas in rural counties, and by cross-training Certified Recovery Support Specialists (CRSS's) as doulas in both rural and urban areas. Next year, we look forward to serving more clients from these populations!

Information about upcoming doula trainings and work-study applications can be found here: <https://www.birthwellpartners.org/doula-trainings>

BirthWell is working diligently to both grow and sustain a doula workforce able to competently and compassionately serve a variety of families. In 2022-23, we started offering free "refresher classes" open to any doula who has attended a BirthWell doula training workshop, monthly book club meetings to discuss required reading for certification, and supplemental trainings on specific topics to better prepare doulas working with clients who may be HIV+ or in recovery from substance use disorder.



April 2023 Doula Workshop Participants

# Many Thanks to the Individuals, Foundations and Corporations Who Generously Supported Our Work Last Year!

Agape Missionary Baptist Church

Alabama Department of Mental Health

Alabama Power Foundation

The City of Birmingham

Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham

Crescent Cultural Community Center

East Lake United Methodist Church

EBSCO Industries, Inc.

Faith & William Pautler Family Foundation

Independent Presbyterian Church

HRSA (sub-awardee funding through UAB and the Alabama Perinatal Quality Collaborative)



*Your donation can help us increase the number  
of families we serve this year!*

