

BIRTHWELL PARTNERS

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

BIRTHWELLPARTNERS.ORG

About Us

BirthWell Partners is a non-profit organization based in Birmingham, Alabama. We **train community doulas** and **provide free and reduced cost doula support** to under-resourced pregnant individuals in Alabama.

Our Team



Susan Petrus

Executive Director



Kendra Burrell

Doula Coordinator



Renee' Hood

Program Empowerment
Specialist



Rebecca Lewis

Program Strategist

This year was one of transition and growth! **Co-founder and former Program Director, Dalia Abrams**, whose leadership and vision have shaped BirthWell Partners from the very beginning, **stepped down from her role**. She remains active on our Board of Directors and as our Birth Doula Trainer. In Summer 2024, **we welcomed two new staff members, Renee' Hood and Rebecca Lewis**, whose skills, energy, and passion are helping carry our mission forward.

Board of Directors

Holly Horan

LaTanya Dawson

Matt Harris

Jen Havard

Dalia Abrams

Anjanette Robinson

Crystal Spivey

Beverly VonDer Pool

Beth Johns

Anne Markham Bailey

Ezra Lee

Our Mission

Our Vision

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.

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.



What We Do

Doula Support

1

We provide free and reduced cost doula support to under-resourced pregnant individuals in Alabama.

Doula Training

2

We are dedicated to expanding the doula workforce in Alabama. We train community birth doulas to support Alabama families.

Education

3

We provide free classes for parents to boost their confidence and knowledge about labor and birth. We host monthly continuing education events for doulas to enhance their skills.

Community Outreach

4

We table health fairs and events to raise awareness about birth doulas and the availability of doula services and training.

Doula Support

BirthWell Doulas Supported 124 Clients

Since 2011, BirthWell Partners has provided free and low-cost doula services to families across Alabama. Research shows that doula support can reduce rates of preterm birth and low birthweight, while also improving birth experiences and increasing breastfeeding initiation. Our doulas help clients learn how to advocate for themselves, understand their options, and navigate pregnancy, birth, and postpartum with greater confidence and support.

This year, BirthWell Partners provided prenatal, labor, or postpartum support to 124 families across Alabama. Of these, doulas provided labor and birth support to 89 clients. A doula is a trained, non-medical professional who offers physical, emotional, and informational support throughout pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period.

Outcomes for 89 Clients

	Alabama	BirthWell Partners
C-Section	34.2 ¹ (2023 Data)	31.7
Preterm Birth	12.9 ¹ (2023 Data)	7.87
Low Birthweight	10.4 ¹ (2023 Data)	3.45
Epidural Rate	87.3 ³ (2016 Data)	73.86
Skin to Skin w/in 1st 24 Hrs	Not Available	97.59
Breastfeeding Initiation Rate	71.1 ² (2019 Data)	81.82

Sources:

1. [Births: Final Data for 2023, National Vital Statistics Report](#)
2. [CDC Breastfeeding Report Card United States, 2022](#)
3. [Epidural Use By State](#)



"The **whole experience exceeded my expectations**, and I couldn't have asked for a better team to help bring my baby into the world. I wholeheartedly **recommend BirthWell Partners to anyone seeking compassionate, expert care during their birth journey.**"

BirthWell Client

BirthWell Served Clients in 13 Alabama Counties

This year marked an important transition as BirthWell Partners adopted a new client management system, Doulado. This tool is helping us better connect with families, track their needs, and stay in touch throughout their journey, while also streamlining intakes, communication, and data collection. Throughout this transition, as always, our doulas provided compassionate, individualized care, supporting healthier births and stronger families across Alabama.

Since doula care is not covered by most private insurance or Medicaid in Alabama, BirthWell's work is made possible through the generosity of individual donors, private foundations, and grants. Their support allows us not only to sustain services, but also to expand access so more families across the state can receive this vital care. Medicaid reimbursement is critical to the long-term sustainability of doula services, and BirthWell is actively engaged in this effort as part of the Institute for Medicaid Innovation's Doula Learning and Action Collaborative.

County	# of Clients
Bibb	1
Calhoun	1
Chilton	1
Colbert	3
Franklin	1
Hale	2
Jefferson	72
Lauderdale	4
Lee	1
Limestone	1
Montgomery	1
Shelby	4
St. Clair	3
Talledega	1
Tuscaloosa	26
Walker	3

Hear From Our Clients

"She provided such unwavering support and care throughout my entire pregnancy, labor, and postpartum. Her knowledge and calm presence, made me feel empowered and confident every step of the way."

"I honestly couldn't have done this without Helen. Even when I didn't feel like it, she pushed me to keep going. She encouraged me when I felt discouraged and was my support when I felt there was none. Thank you so much, BirthWell Partners!"



Childbirth Classes

68 Educational Classes Offered

Thanks to the ongoing support of the Alabama Department of Mental Health and other funders, BirthWell Partners was able to provide childbirth preparation classes for both residents of substance-use recovery facilities and our community. For residents in recovery, classes focused on topics such as maintaining a healthy pregnancy, preparing for labor and birth, navigating hospital settings, understanding variations in labor, bonding with baby, and breastfeeding. These sessions not only provided vital knowledge, but also helped participants build practical skills such as informed decision-making, self-advocacy in medical settings, and confidence in caring for themselves and their newborns.

For the wider community, we developed a series of two repeating classes: *Easy Breezy Labor* and *What's on the Menu?*

What's on the Menu? focuses on informed decision-making, helping families understand their birth options so they feel empowered and confident in choosing what works best for them and what will be on their birth “menu.”

Easy Breezy Labor teaches practical comfort measures like breathing techniques, positioning, and relaxation methods to help manage stress and pain during labor, whether unmedicated or with medication. Together, these classes strengthen knowledge, self-advocacy, and confidence, giving families the tools for healthier, more positive birth experiences.

38 Childbirth & Parenting Classes for People in Substance-Use Recovery:

16 Childbirth Classes at Aletheia House
16 Childbirth Classes at Olivia House
6 Childbirth Classes at LoveLady Center

30 Classes & Groups for the Community

8 Childbirth Education
4 ACTT Workshops
6 Prenatal Support Groups
6 Postpartum Support Groups

“I learned that there are choices and different possibilities to make the birth better for myself and my partner. Having more agency and power over the process feels great.”

Class Participant



Doula Training

22 Doulas Trained

In 2024-2025, we held doula trainings in November 2024 and March 2025, with twenty new doulas trained. Six of these doulas were work study participants, which is a need-based initiative that provides free or reduced-cost classroom training, mentoring, and hands-on experience serving 2-3



BirthWell clients. BirthWell is committed to growing the doula workforce and helping reduce disparities in maternal and infant health. By offering training, mentorship, and hands-on experience, we equip new doulas with the skills and confidence to serve families in their communities. This investment not only strengthens the perinatal workforce, but also ensures that more families have access to the culturally responsive support they deserve.

Continuing Education for Doulas

BirthWell Partners is committed to building and sustaining a strong doula workforce in Alabama. To support this goal, we host monthly continuing education sessions for the doulas we train and those who work alongside us. These sessions help doulas deepen their expertise and stay current on best practices, covering topics such as: supporting perinatal mental health, guiding breastfeeding in the early weeks, serving neurodivergent clients and adolescent clients, and refreshers on providing prenatal and labor support. In 2024-2025, we held a total of 10 continuing education events for doulas. This year, we hosted our 8th Annual Doula Retreat in March.

These retreats are an opportunity for doulas from across Alabama to come together, offering space to recharge, share experiences and strengthen their professional community.



"My doula training with BirthWell Partners was not only informational, but fun, insightful, and further strengthened my desire to do this work."

Training Participant

Participants from our March 2025 Doula Training

Networking Events & Doula Coaching

Mix & Mingles

This year, we began hosting quarterly Mix & Mingles, which brings BirthWell doulas together in a fun, informal setting to network, share experiences, and connect with staff and board members. This year, we successfully hosted three of these events. We also organized a group visit to the Mothers of Gynecology monument in Montgomery, AL, which was a very inspiring and moving experience.



Doula Coaching & Mentoring

This year, our Program Empowerment Specialist, Renee' Hood began providing personalized coaching and mentoring to BirthWell doulas. Each of the 10 mentees received individualized guidance and support to help them strengthen their skills, confidence, and prepare for their unique journey as doula. These sessions focused on both the professional and personal aspects of the doula role, with discussions and assignments designed to encourage them through reflection and growth. Renee' recognizes that each doulas' path is different, and there is not a one size fit all approach for this work. Mentees gained clarity, confidence, and practical skills, demonstrating the value of mentorship in supporting new doulas through the early stages of their work.

Key Topics Covered:

- Work-Life Balance & Self-Care
- Obstacles & Challenges
- Professional Resources
- Communication & Active Listening Skills
- How to Approach Prenatal Visits



Winter Mix & Mingle



Mothers of Gynecology Trip



2025 Doula Retreat

Thank You to the Organizations and Individuals Who Helped Make Our Work Possible Last Year:

Alabama Department of Mental Health

Alabama Power Foundation

Caryn & Steven Corenblum Fund of the Birmingham Jewish Foundation

The City of Birmingham

The Caring Foundation of Blue Cross and Blue Shield

Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham

Crescent Cultural Community Center

The Daniel Foundation

East Lake Initiative

East Lake United Methodist Church

EBSCO Industries, Inc.

Faith & William Pautler Family Foundation

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

Red Oak Foundation

The Women's Foundation of Alabama

Walker Area Community Foundation

W.K. Kellogg Foundation



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

