



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

January 29, 2025

**CONTACT:**

[Michael.Claffey@illinois.gov](mailto:Michael.Claffey@illinois.gov)

[James.Leach@illinois.gov](mailto:James.Leach@illinois.gov)

### **IDPH Awards \$4.5 Million in Grants to Support Governor Pritzker’s Birth Equity Efforts Across Illinois**

*State Announces Grants to 12 Groups that Provide Innovative, Equity-Focused Maternal Care for Pregnant Illinoisans*

**CHICAGO** – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced it has awarded \$4.5 million to 12 groups across the state funded through Governor JB Pritzker’s 2024 Birth Equity Initiative. The grants, ranging from \$100,000 to \$700,000, were awarded through a competitive process and are designed to support innovative, community-based efforts that have the potential to reduce inequities in populations historically at higher risk for adverse birth outcomes.

“Illinois has one of the most robust birth equity initiatives in the entire nation and today’s announcement brings us closer to a state where every mother – no matter her race, economic status, or ZIP code – is afforded the right to a safe and healthy pregnancy,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “We’re grateful to our community-based grantees who are assisting pregnant women and families to drive healthier births, improve long-term health outcomes and create more culturally responsive care infrastructure.”

**Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton said:** “By investing in culturally competent care, addressing systemic inequities, and centering the voices of those most affected, we’re creating a future where every mother, regardless of race or ZIP code, can bring life into this world without fear.”

“Public health thrives when it focuses on community-led, community-built solutions,” **said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra**. “IDPH is proud to partner with these 12 outstanding community-based organizations to implement Governor Pritzker’s Birth Equity Initiative. Addressing disparities in birth outcomes is a public health priority, and we look forward to working with our grantees to deliver comprehensive approaches to enhancing birth equity across Illinois.”

IDPH operates two state Maternal Mortality Review Committees that issue reports designed to shed light on trends in maternal health and guide policy makers. The [most recent report issued in 2023](#) found that Black women continue to die at disparately higher rates, specifically due to

Find us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/IDPH.Illinois](https://www.facebook.com/IDPH.Illinois) or follow us on Twitter @IDPH

Nationally Accredited by PHAB



medical causes, including cardiovascular disease and pre-existing chronic medical conditions. It also found that 91% of pregnancy-related deaths were potentially preventable due to clinical, system, social, community, or patient factors. Moreover, access to care emerged as a critical factor, and several grants specifically target improvements in rural areas.

The Birth Equity grants, aimed at eliminating racial disparities and avoiding preventable deaths, were awarded by IDPH's Office of Women's Health & Family Services. Following are program summaries and grant amounts for the 12 recipients:

- **Aurora African American Health Fair Committee:** The Aurora based group will receive \$300,000 to carry out the BIRTH Project which aims to reduce maternal and infant health disparities among Black women and families by training community health workers and doulas to promote culturally competent care.
- **Blessing Hospital:** The hospital in Quincy will receive \$400,000 for a project designed to reduce health inequities in Black and Brown women by increasing engagement and participation in their healthcare. The project will focus on expanding connections to doulas, enhancing care coordination, education and support.
- **Boone County Health Department:** The county will receive \$100,000 for the Engage, Elevate, and Empower (E3) program that will embed a bilingual peer navigator into an existing, successful mobile unit program to provide culturally appropriate pregnancy and reproductive health education at convenient locations and times.
- **CHOICES:** The Carbondale-based agency will receive \$400,000 to address birth inequities for BIPOC (Black people, Indigenous people, and other People of Color) pregnant people in Southern Illinois by building critical infrastructure for birth workers.
- **The Doula Lab:** The Belleville-based, BIPOC-led, non-profit organization will receive \$400,000 for improving maternal and reproductive health outcomes for communities in the Metro East area. The project focuses on addressing systemic disparities in maternal health by expanding the doula workforce.
- **Family Christian Health Center:** Based in South Suburban Cook County, the federally qualified health center will receive \$300,000 to develop a scalable model to advance and integrate care coordination, and quality and outcome standards for high-risk pregnant and postpartum patients in a newly built maternal child health and wellness center.
- **Family Focus:** The Chicago-based group will receive \$700,000 to serve areas with significant maternal and infant health disparities. The program will address disparities by developing a "Dream Builders Hub," a training program for community-based teams of maternal support services, such as home visitors and doulas. They will also implement educational sessions for fathers through the "Strong Fathers, Strong Families" Program.
- **The Haymarket Center:** The Chicago-based Federally Qualified Look Alike Health Center will receive \$250,000 to mitigate health disparities among pregnant and postpartum Illinoisans struggling with mental health and substance use disorder, and their children, by increasing access to screening instruments, educational groups, care supplies, and clinical providers in a one-stop-shop fashion.

## NEWS RELEASE

- **Midwest Asian Health Association:** The Chicago-based group will receive \$700,000 to enhance perinatal outcomes for limited English proficient Asian women by integrating culturally tailored doula care, health education and impact evaluations to close gaps and ensure equitable access.
- **SGA Youth & Family Services:** The Chicago-based group will receive \$450,000 to address maternal health inequities in South Side communities and suburban Cook County through a community-focused, equity-driven approach. The program is designed to achieve meaningful outcomes through culturally responsive community outreach, including education and care support, specifically addressing gaps highlighted in IDPH's recent reports on maternal morbidity and mortality.
- **UIC at Chicago-Miles Square:** Based in Chicago, the Community Maternal Health Care (CMHC) project will receive \$200,000 to explore the impact of an innovative community-based model of comprehensive midwife-led prenatal care in a Federally Qualified Health Center (with behavioral health, oral health, doulas, case management, and social needs screening) delivered to Black women in their own communities.
- **Winnebago County Health Department:** The county will receive \$300,000 to launch "Winning Start Winnebago, Welcoming Babies and Connecting Families." The program will integrate a universal newborn system of support, a doula development program, and CredibleMinds, a mental health platform to address behavioral health and substance use.

In his 2024 State Budget Address, Governor Pritzker announced a \$23 million Birth Equity Initiative that was designed to focus on improving maternal health outcomes and reducing disparities through investments in community-based providers, expansion of the home visiting program, a child tax credit, and a free diaper pilot program.

The Governor's initiative, which he [signed into law in July 2024](#), included \$4 million for IDPH to distribute Birth Equity Seed Grants to support the needs of community-based reproductive healthcare providers. IDPH supplemented the investment with additional \$500,000 to reach more communities after an overwhelming response to the funding announcement.

The Birth Equity Seed Grants represents the next step in Illinois' commitment to prioritizing maternal health. It was the first state to expand Medicaid to 12 months postpartum, as well as one of the earliest states to implement a robust maternal mortality review committee process to inform evidence-based action at reducing maternal morbidity and mortality.

###

Find us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/IDPH.Illinois](https://www.facebook.com/IDPH.Illinois) or follow us on Twitter @IDPH