



# The Impact of Community Based Doula Care In Improving Black Maternal Health Outcomes

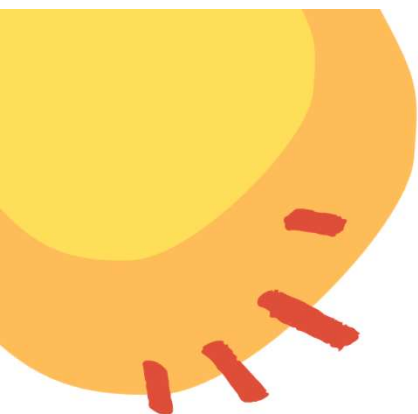
**Doreen Bonnet**

Executive Director  
Birth Sisters of Charlottesville

2022 UVA Health Disparities Conference  
February 8, 2022



Birth Sisters  
OF CHARLOTTESVILLE






## What is a Doula?

A Birth Sister (doula) is a **trained professional** who provides continuous physical, emotional and informational support to a mother before, during and shortly after childbirth to help her achieve the healthiest, most satisfying experience possible.

## What is a Community Based Doula?



A “community-based doula” often has **shared lived experiences** and is trained to provide extended, **culturally congruent support** to families throughout pregnancy to include antepartum, intrapartum, during labor and birth, and **up to one year postpartum**. Community-based doulas provide an **expanded set of services** and play a crucial role in improving outcomes and experiences for **communities most affected by discrimination and disparities in health outcomes**.







## Doulas Improve Outcomes

Expectant mothers matched with a doula had better birth outcomes.

Doula-assisted mothers were

- 4 times less likely to have a low birth weight (LBW) baby,
- 2 times less likely to experience a birth complication involving themselves or their baby, and
- significantly more likely to initiate breastfeeding.

Communication with and encouragement from a doula throughout the pregnancy may have increased the mother's self-efficacy regarding her ability to impact her own pregnancy outcomes.



"Impact of Doulas on Healthy Birth Outcomes," *The Journal of Perinatal Education*, 2013 Winter; 22(1): 49–58.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3647727/>



## Who We Are

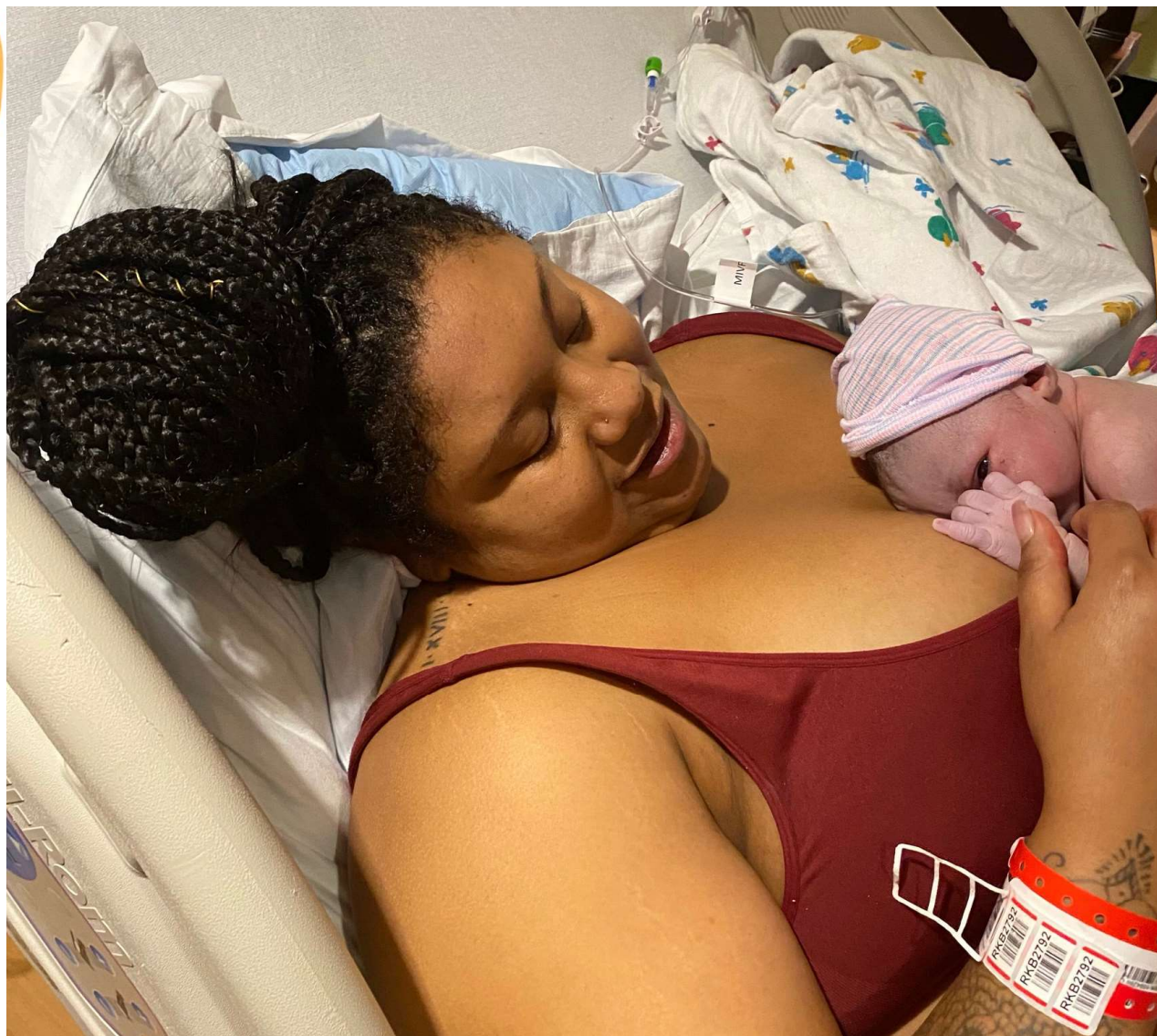
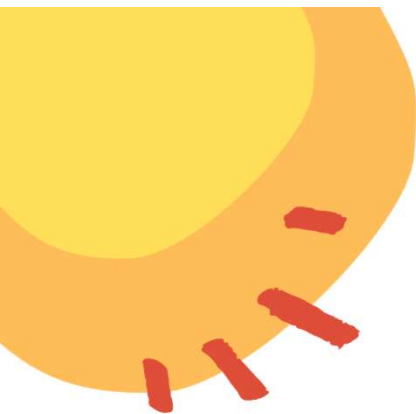
**Birth Sisters of Charlottesville** is a doula collective of women of color supporting women of color through their birth journey and into motherhood.

Our aim is to amplify the **resiliency** of Black, Indigenous, Women of Color by drawing on **life experiences, shared values, training, and sacred legacies** to provide **culturally rooted, trauma informed perinatal services and advocacy.**

We serve Charlottesville and the surrounding areas.










## **Our Mission**

To dismantle root causes of systemic racial maternal health disparities for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) while denying race as a risk factor.









# Why We Were Formed


"Studies show that **significant racial disparities** (differences) in birth outcomes continue to exist even after accounting for factors like the pregnant person's income, education, marital status, tobacco/ alcohol use, and insurance coverage. **Researchers have proposed that African Americans are subjected to individual, institutional, and other forms of racism** throughout their lives; these experiences build on each other and are **uniquely stressful; and the increased stress can negatively impact pregnancy outcomes** (Giscombé and Lobel, 2005). "

--Evidence Based Birth Signature Article





## Local Disparities

- Black women are **more than twice as likely to die** from a pregnancy-related cause than white women in Virginia.
  - In the Blue Ridge Health District, the average **infant mortality rate for black babies was 9.5** (per 1000 live births) compared to 4.5 for white women from 2015 to 2019.
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## **Our Services**

- Prenatal Support
  - Postpartum Support
  - Labor Support
  - Comfort and Care
  - Education and Advocacy
  - Resources
- 



BROWN



BABY

LACTATION NATION



Brown Baby Bump  
**Love**  
Bath

Every Tuesday at 9pm via Zoom

Only 15 minutes!


Cost: Free or Donation

hosted by





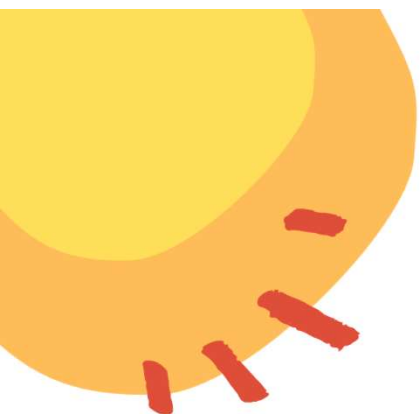
## Our Numbers

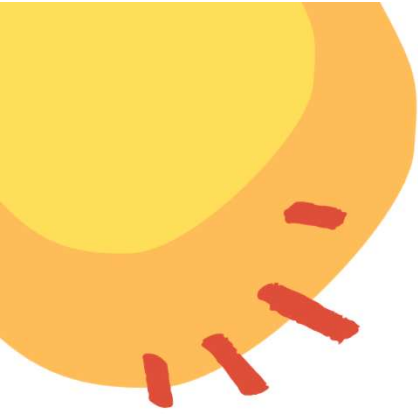
- Over 65 BIPOC women and families served since 2020
  - 75% of clients are Medicaid Eligible
  - 0% Maternal Mortality
  - 0% Infant Mortality
  - 2 Infants w/Low Birth Weight
  - 2 Preterm Births
- 



"I owe a lot to ... my doula team at Birth Sisters of Charlottesville, Doreen Bonnet and Tikara Cannon who have helped me **cultivate wisdom I didn't know I had.**"







"My Birth Sister Selena was very helpful, not just with prenatal stuff but also with dealing with **my mental health**. She went above and beyond in that way."

"My doula was really good, she went above and beyond. She kept me well educated on the procedures, attended my appointments, helped w/ stress & anxiety. She supported me during labor, as I had family that came from out of town, **but she was there the whole time.**"



"Doreen and Lisa helped me when I needed them the most. **They helped and encouraged me during my miscarriage.** They were there for me."





Michaela reached out before she was pregnant, allowing us to join her family on all the wonderful moments of this beautiful birth journey. She committed to accessing services that would benefit her and her baby! From reaching out to her doula for information to attending almost every Brown Baby Bump Love Bath... beginning to end, Michaela was determined to create the birth experience she wanted, and we are truly grateful to have been a part of helping that come to realization!

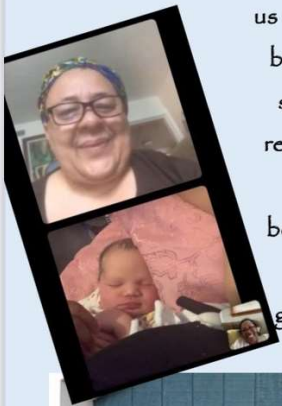


Photo: EightEighteen Photography LLC.



Photo: Benita Mayo Photography

Thank you,  
Michaela for allowing  
us to share in this  
manifestation of your  
vision and ours!




Photo: Benita Mayo Photography





# Advocacy

- State Doula Taskforce
  - Medicaid Benefit for Doula Services
  - Learning Collaborative with BRHD and State Title V Director addressing racism in maternal health.
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# Birth Doula Training





## Looking Ahead to 2022

- A Physical BSC Location
  - Integrating the Medicaid Reimbursement for Doula Services
  - Addressing Racism in Maternal Health
  - More Community Based Doula Training
  - Additional Programming, including Support Groups
  - Additional Administrative Staff
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## Lactation Training





**Thank You!**

**[www.birthsisterscville.org](http://www.birthsisterscville.org)**

Professional photography: Benita Mayo Photography, Eight Eighteen Photography LLC, and Marley Nichelle