

# ***Black Fathers, Equal Partners in Advancing Maternal and Infant Health***

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AFRICAN AMERICAN  
BREASTFEEDING  
NETWORK



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## Background

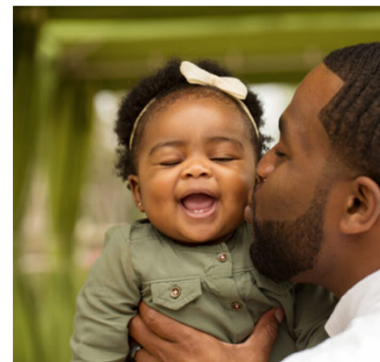
- Racial and ethnic disparities in maternal child health outcomes are particularly pronounced for Black mothers and babies -- nowhere is this more evident than Wisconsin (Tomlin et al., 2020)
- Partner support during pregnancy is associated with positive maternal child health outcomes (Plantin, Olukoya, & Ny, 2011)
- Fathers play a central role in children's health and development beginning in the prenatal period and extending across the lifecourse (Yogman & Garfield, 2016)
- Paternal perinatal mental health impacts parenting, couple and family functioning, and children's health (Walsh, Davis, & Garfield, 2020)

## Research Aims

Aim 1. Increase our understanding of the nature of support needs among Black expectant fathers.

Aim 2. Explore pregnant women's perceptions of what supports would benefit fathers and strengthen their wellbeing and capacity as partners and co-parents.

Aim 3. Identify new, father-inclusive strategies to improve outcomes for Black mothers, babies, fathers and families in Wisconsin.



## Approach

- Partnership with the African American Breast Feeding Network (AABN) in Milwaukee, guided by Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) principles
- Participants: Black fathers and mothers of infants or currently expecting a baby
- Survey of 75 mothers and 75 fathers that assesses parenting experiences and support needs, partner relationships and coparenting, psychosocial wellbeing, service awareness and utilization
- Focus groups with 24 mothers and fathers to further explore experiences of the transition to fatherhood among Black fathers; partner relationships and co-parenting; engagement in perinatal health and family services; strategies to expand support for Black fathers and expand father support for maternal and child health

## Progress to Date

- Close collaboration between the research team and community partner AABN at every stage of the project
- Surveys completed by 75 mothers and 64 fathers



## Progress to Date



First round of focus groups complete; preliminary findings:

- Navigating differences (relationship desires; stress levels; communication style; conflicts; values around father participation; beliefs about vaccination)
- Understanding of pregnancy, infancy, early parenting, maternal and paternal experiences, including a cultural lens
- Black mothers need advocates
- Black fathers matter and this needs to be affirmed, including by mothers and providers

## Next steps



- Complete survey data collection and second round of focus groups
- Data analysis
- Learn what fathers want ...& offer it!
- Collaborate with AABN to develop and strengthen father-inclusive and father-specific services
- Share lessons learned with the community, Black father and family serving organizations, professional and academic communities
- Pilot and evaluate new approaches for increasing support for fathers and improving father wellbeing, and improving the distal outcomes of maternal and child wellbeing