

MVPMS Makes History, Brings 1st Black Doula Training to Utica, NY



BLACK WOMEN Reclaiming ChildBirth

Mohawk Valley Prenatal & Maternity Support (MVPMS) founded by Ashley Engram, (3rd from the right in photo) kicks off their new project "Sister Circle: Black Birth & Breastfeeding Initiative (SC3BI)" with a 3-day doula training taught by DONA Int'l Certified Doula Trainers based in Rochester, NY. This is an historic event as there has never been a black doula training held in the Greater Utica-Rome Metro Area.

These women were individually selected through a rigorous application process over the course of several months. The SC3BI program will provide free doula support & breastfeeding (BFing) counseling to expectant women of color, eliminating social barriers to health equity in hopes of reducing local black maternal-child morbidity rates and improve overall birth outcomes & BFing rates.

Pictured from L-R (back row) Tracy J., Shiesha M., LaYonda S., Sparkle A., Leena K., (front row) Debbie P., Monica J., Tiffany B. & dtr, Desrey K., Ashley E., Stephanie A., Alyce S.

Black women are disproportionately impacted by lack of doula access, causing significantly higher morbidity/mortality rates



Black women are dying due to pregnancy-related complications at a rate 3–4 times that of white women in the U.S.. 80% of these deaths are preventable, according to the CDC. Doula support significantly decreases these risks.

For more information about the 'Sister Circle' doula program, if you'd like to refer an expectant mother or volunteer within the program, visit www.MVPMS.org

The Sister Circle: Black Birth & Breastfeeding Initiative is funded in part by an Health Equity & Innovation Award Grant from Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield of Upstate New York. Funds were awarded to programs that specifically target the root causes of health inequities, with a focus of addressing structural racism. MVPMS was 1 of 20 organizations awarded funding through the BCBS HEIA Grant.