

Inland Empire (IE) Perinatal Equity Initiative (PEI) *Rallying Around Sisters: Redefining & Strengthening The Village Through Enhanced Services Complementing The Black Infant Health (BIH) Program*

Overview – The Riverside University Health System-Public Health (RUHS-PH) Maternal Child and Adolescent Health’s (MCAH) PEI program addresses the causes of persistent inequality and identifies best practices to eliminate disparities in infant mortality within the African American population in Riverside County.

Challenge – Riverside County data reveals that African American infants living in Riverside county are 1.3 times more likely to be born premature, 1.5 times more likely to be born with a low birth weight, nearly two times more likely to die during their first year of life, and that African American women are 4 times more likely to have complications during pregnancy. In 2018, the California State legislature realized the need for additional services to complement the Black Infant Health program and launched PEI in 11 health jurisdictions across the state.

Solution –In December 2018, RUHS-PH PEI hosted a *PEI Stakeholder Engagement Meeting* with over 50 community stakeholders to gather feedback on the perinatal priorities for our region. In June 2019, RUHS-PH MCAH launched our PEI and established a community advisory board (CAB) with over 25 agencies who expressed an interest in seeing the perinatal outcomes for African American families in Riverside county improved. The CAB is comprised of hospital staff, community residents, community-based organizations, public health, and faith-based organizations, who provide crucial insight on specific needs for our region and offer guidance for PEI programming. After a SWOT analysis and guidance from our CAB, two interventions were chosen for our county: 1. Provision of free direct doula services to pregnant African American women in Riverside county; 2. Implementation of a Fatherhood Initiative Program for fathers in a relationship with a pregnant or parenting African American woman in Riverside county, utilizing the 24/7 Dads, evidence-based curriculum. Each selected because they are both shown to positively improve birth outcomes. We also launched “Rallying Around Sisters: Redefining & Strengthening the Village”, a media campaign collaboration between Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, a collaboration not done in the past. The goal of this media campaign is to amplify the importance of creating a village of supporters that will positively impact the perinatal outcomes of African American families in the Riverside County and the entire Inland Empire region, by including non-traditional partners like doulas, midwives, and medical providers. We also hosted a focus group with pregnant/parenting African American women to share their experiences with the health care system, and hosted listening sessions with medical providers to better understand the perinatal disparities they are seeing and how they are combatting them in their settings. Lastly, in an effort to take a regional approach, we merged our

two respective PEI CABs and now host an Inland Empire (IE) PEI CAB to ensure community partners across counties are informed, can lend their voices and to support partnership and collaboration in addressing this persistent health disparity.

Innovation – This project is innovative in its' collaborative efforts across counties and in the selection of its programming. We launched a social media campaign which included a toolkit, PSA, text alerts, daily posts, fact sheet, and Instagram Live videos. This approach of collaborating with San Bernardino County, came about because we recognized our populations were transient, and moved between both counties often, thus we understood the power of launching a social media campaign that reflects a consistent message across both counties. We have also combined our CAB meetings to further support the idea of cross county collaboration to further address and support programming that addresses the disparity of African American infant mortality. The Community Doula Program and The Fatherhood Initiatives are both programs that were selected by the CAB to address the high rates of African American infant mortality and are programs not previously offered to the African American perinatal population in Riverside County. Lastly, we hosted focus groups that embraced birthing families and medical providers from both counties in order to secure their crucial perspectives.

Results –We have garnered the collaboration of more than 25 committed partners through our PEI CAB, who have met at least 4 times per year since 2019, and over 50 partners when we meet as the IE PEI CAB. Additionally, across all social media platforms, we have over 750 followers. Our last quarter RUHS-PH PEI data shows we had over 1,400 social media posts engagements and reactions, and 138 posts/reshares during April-June 2021.

Replicability –If counties or community-based organizations were to replicate, ensuring the needs of the population are being assessed and identifying the interventions based upon that information will be most critical. With that said, our targeted media campaign, and programs such as the Fatherhood & Doula programs can be replicated and incorporated into any community-based programming that is targeting the African American community focusing on eliminating and addressing perinatal health disparities.

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Additional Materials – Inland Empire PEI PSA, Media Toolkit and Fact Sheet: [Inland Empire PEI RUHS-PH PSA](#); [PEI Campaign Media Toolkit Riverside.pdf \(rivcophn.org\)](#); [PEI Campaign Fact Sheet RUHS \(rivcophn.org\)](#)