



Kern County Black Infant and Maternal Health Initiative  
1800 Mt Vernon Ave, Bakersfield, CA 93306

## Black Infant and Maternal Health Initiative Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Background: Kern County is home to more than 900,000 residents representing diverse backgrounds, life experiences, and cultures. Spanning over 8,000 square miles, the county includes urban, rural, and geographically isolated communities that experience varying levels of access to health services and resources. These geographic and social factors contribute to disparities in health outcomes, particularly among Black/African American mothers, infants, and families.

In February 2021, the Kern County Public Health Department and First 5 Kern, established the Black Infant Maternal Health Initiative (BIMHI) to address disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes experienced by Black/African American families in Kern County. BIMHI is a collaborative initiative comprised of local government agencies, healthcare providers, community-based organizations, nonprofit partners, and community members. Key partners include *Adventist Health, Kern Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Kern County Department of Human Services, Kern Health Systems, Kaiser Permanente, Bakersfield American Indian Health Project, Bakersfield Pregnancy Center, Raven's Nest Healing Birth and Bodywork Services*, and other community organizations committed to improving maternal and infant health outcomes.

In July of 2024, BIMHI initiated a strategic planning process to identify priority areas for action and collaboration. Over the course of a six-month planning series, more than 32 community members and representatives from over a dozen partner organizations participated in facilitated discussions to assess existing challenges, identify service gaps, and develop coordinated strategies to better support Black/African American families throughout Kern County. The process concluded in April 2025 with the adoption of the initiative's goals and objectives for the 2025-2028 strategic plan.

The planning process utilized the SMARTIE framework to ensure that goals and objectives are Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Relevant, Time-Bound, Inclusive, and Equitable. Participants reviewed existing community organizations and services, categorized them into focus areas, and identified systemic barriers impacting access to care and supportive services.

Through this process, three primary strategic domains were identified:

- **Mental and Behavioral Health:** Strengthening support systems for Black/African American families through fatherhood engagement, grief loss and support, postpartum and prenatal mental health support, addressing burnout and self-care, and incorporating faith-based and culturally responsive approaches to care.
- **Public Education:** Expanding health literacy and education efforts by increasing prenatal health education, strengthening frontline staff training, and improving culturally responsive health education for families and providers.
- **Community Resource Awareness and Access:** Increasing awareness and availability of community resources, including basic needs support, access to healthcare providers, and the role of doulas in improving maternal and infant health outcomes.



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Achieving these goals will require sustained collaboration, shared accountability, and systemic change among public health agencies, healthcare providers, community organizations, and community members. This strategic plan serves as a framework to guide coordinated action, strengthen partnerships, and advance equitable maternal and infant health outcomes.

## **Goals and Objectives:**

### **Mental and Behavioral Health**

#### Goal 1:

By June 30, 2028, address mental and behavioral health through fatherhood engagement and grief, loss, and postpartum support.

#### Objective 1: Fatherhood Circles

By January 31, 2026, monthly Fatherhood Circles/Guys Nights will be held to engage men who raise Black/African American children to discuss mental and behavioral health topics impacting their lives.

#### Objective 2: Remembrance Day

By December 31, 2026, BIMHI will host an annual Remembrance Day to give support to families of deceased Black/African American mothers and/or children dealing with grief and loss.

#### Objective 3: Motherhood Circles

By June 30, 2027, monthly Mother Circles will be held to provide strategies and support for mothers of Black/African American children that are no more than 2 years postpartum.

### **Public Education**

#### Goal 2:

By June 20, 2028, increase public education through health literacy, front line staff education and prenatal education.

#### Objective 1: Health Literacy

By June 30, 2027, quarterly Health Literacy Workshops will be provided to educate caregivers of Black/African American children.

#### Objective 2: Educational Certification Program

By June 30, 2028, BIMHI will create a Certification Program to provide an opportunity for organizations to receive recognition for completing an educational course that addresses Black/African American culture as it pertains to maternal and infant health.

#### Objective 3: Prenatal Education

By January 31, 2028, BIMHI will partner with at least 10 OB/GYN offices throughout the County to provide prenatal education to their staff and clients.



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## **Community Resource Awareness and Access**

### Goal 3:

By June 30, 2028, increase awareness and availability of doulas and healthcare providers and increase availability of community resources to meet basic needs.

#### Objective 1: Social Media

By May 1, 2026, BIMHI will create a monthly social media outreach to discuss doulas, prenatal and postpartum care.

#### Objective 2: Gap Analysis

By June 30, 2028, BIMHI will work with partner agencies to create a report on resources available to help meet basic needs in Kern County in collaboration with community partners.

#### Objective 3: Educational Materials

By June 30, 2027, BIMHI will partner with healthcare providers to educate pregnant mothers on high-risk maternal health conditions and complexities by creating user-friendly materials to disseminate throughout the county.