

BLACK Wellness & Prosperity Center Joins Transforming Maternal Health Initiative to Advance Birth Equity in California

FRESNO, CA, UNITED STATES, January 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [BLACK Wellness & Prosperity Center \(BWPC\)](#) has partnered with the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to implement the [Transforming Maternal Health \(TMaH\) Model](#), a groundbreaking 10-year Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) [initiative](#) developed by the

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The TMaH Model aims to improve maternal health outcomes and reduce health care costs through a whole-person approach to pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care.



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Improving Maternal and Infant Health in California

The TMaH Model focuses on Medi-Cal members, who experience significantly higher rates of maternal mortality compared to individuals with commercial insurance. Poor

maternal and infant health outcomes disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), particularly in underserved regions like California's Central Valley.

Focus on Central Valley Counties

To address these disparities, DHCS will implement the TMaH Model in five high-need counties: Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, and Tulare. These counties report some of the highest pregnancy-related mortality rates in California, compounded by higher rates of C-sections, prenatal and postpartum depression, and a shortage of maternity care providers and health-related social services.

Innovative Value-Based Payment Approach

The TMaH Model incorporates evidence-based interventions within a value-based payment (VBP) framework, shifting reimbursement from service volume to care quality and patient outcomes. Core goals include reducing low-risk cesareans, decreasing severe maternal morbidity, and increasing access to maternal care providers such as midwives, doulas, and birth centers.

"This is an important step forward in our ongoing efforts to address maternal health disparities in California," said Palav Babaria, Chief Quality and Medical Officer and Deputy Director of DHCS' Quality and Population Health Management. "By testing new models of care, California is leading the way in advancing health equity, particularly for communities that have been historically underserved or disadvantaged in accessing timely, effective maternal care."

BWPC's Leadership in Advancing Maternal Equity

BWPC will play a critical role in TMaH's implementation by leveraging its Black Doula Network (BDN), which trains culturally competent doulas to provide comprehensive prenatal, pregnancy, and postpartum care, primarily to Medi-Cal members. As Fresno's first community-based organization to partner with DHCS as an Enhanced Care Management (ECM) provider, BWPC will enhance care coordination, prioritize holistic support, and improve health outcomes for the region's most vulnerable populations.

Looking forward, BWPC plans to establish a birthing center offering comprehensive maternal services, including midwifery and doula care, to address critical maternity care gaps in the Central Valley.

"TMaH offers a meaningful opportunity to reduce maternal health disparities by increasing access to doulas and midwives in our communities," said Shantay R. Davies-Balch, President and Chief Executive Officer of BLACK Wellness & Prosperity Center. "These professionals are vital advocates for families, providing personalized care and a holistic approach to both prenatal and postpartum support."

Funding and Implementation Timeline

CMS has awarded \$17 million to DHCS for the TMaH Model's implementation over 10 years. The funding is divided into two phases: an \$8 million pre-implementation period from 2025 to 2027, followed by a \$9 million implementation phase from 2028 to 2035. These funds will support technical assistance, infrastructure development, and the rollout of the VBP model in collaboration with organizations like BWPC.

Addressing Social Drivers of Health

The TMaH Model also prioritizes addressing social drivers of health—such as housing, food security, and transportation—integrating these factors into maternal care strategies to provide comprehensive, whole-person support for mothers and infants.

A Vision for Lasting Change

The TMaH Model reflects California's commitment to reducing racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health. By fostering innovative care models and partnering with organizations like

BWPC, the initiative is poised to create lasting, equitable improvements in maternal and infant care across the Central Valley and beyond.

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