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Black Maternal Health Week 2022: Issues and potential solutions

Week of April 10 - April 16, 2022

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<https://www.chartis.com/insights/black-maternal-health-week-2022-issues-and-potential-solutions>

Health Equity

The Buzz This Week:

This week is the fifth annual Black Maternal Health Week, intended to increase awareness around black maternal health issues and disparities, encourage activism, and support community building.

This year's theme is "Building for Liberation: Centering Black Mamas, Black Families, and Black Systems of Care." Per the founding organization, the Black Mamas Matter Alliance, this theme is centered around "Black women's scholarship, maternity care work, and advocacy across the full-spectrum of sexual, maternal, and reproductive health care, services, programs, and initiatives."

Per the National Center for Health Statistics, non-Hispanic Black women are 2.9 times more likely to die from maternal causes than white women (2020 data). The March of Dimes reports that infant mortality is highest for non-Hispanic Black women—at more than twice the rate for white women (2018 data). Most disturbingly, the maternal mortality rate for non-Hispanic Black women increased between 2019 and 2020 by 26% (statistically significant with $p < 0.05$). During the same period, the maternal mortality rate for white women increased by 7% (not statistically significant).

Why It Matters:

The health disparities that Black mothers experience has been documented for decades, yet the trends for equity appear to be moving in the wrong direction.

There are likely many factors contributing to the health disparities for Black mothers. Some of which will be difficult to address, but others can be ameliorated. For example:

- Ensuring that Black women have adequate insurance and covered access to care—both before and during their pregnancies—has shown to improve outcomes, per the March of Dimes.
- Expanding access to doulas and midwives has also been cited as a way to reduce maternal mortality and improve outcomes. As of a 2021 report, 14 states have supported legislation to support reimbursement for doula care, expanding access.
- Establishing maternal mortality review committees, which investigate every maternal death in a state/community and make recommendations, can prevent future tragedies. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has established funding to directly support these review committees and has awarded 31 programs (since November 2021).

Many other actions can be taken through legislation, community support, education, and awareness. While this week brings attention to Black maternal health, the issue should be a priority year-round until these disparities have been eliminated.

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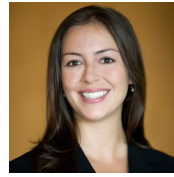
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