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Birth Equity Community Council launches Doula Dads initiative

Public Health Educator William Moore has become one of the first men in Minnesota to be certified as a Birth Attendant and Lactation Consultant as part of Public Health's Doula Dads initiative.

"Any time people find out that I'm certified to do that, they always get this perplexed look, or their eyes widen," Moore said. "They're like, 'Excuse me?'"

The Doula Dads Initiative came from the Ramsey County Birth Equity Community Council (BECC), which works to combat infant mortality rates in the African American community. Public health has formed a Birth Equity Community Council in collaboration with residents and community partners through CityMatCH's national Birth Equity Institute. The Council is co-facilitated by Tamiko Ralston, PHN Clinician/Supervisor, and Abiola Abu-Bakr, PHN, Family Health Division.



William
Moore

According to Moore, the mortality rate for babies of color is four times as high as their white counterparts. Moore said it's widely known that having two active and involved parents give children the best chance at survival and development.

"Since there are many available resources for women to access, the idea is to create a resource for men, ultimately strengthening the other half of the parent equation," Moore said. "The goal is to positively impact the infant mortality rate throughout Ramsey County by equipping men with skills to play a more vital role during the birthing process and to foster attachment and healthy early childhood development.

Ralston came up with the idea for the Doula Dads initiative after hearing in BECC dialogues that community members wanted more parenting support options for fathers. The training was funded by Integrated Care for High Risk Pregnancies, one of the BECC partners.

"As we tried to name what's available in the community for parenting support for fathers, we came up with maybe one to two," Ralston said. "We really want additional options and for men to be trained to go in and be an advocate for parents, for fathers, for families."

Ralston said many fathers in BECC and Club Dad meetings have expressed feeling left out and excluded during a pregnancy, and Doula Dads is a way to support men to get involved. "We really want fathers to feel like (they) have a role to play in the health of their baby," Ralston said.

Currently, Moore and Adrian Mack, a North Campus Site Coordinator for Minneapolis Adult Education, are the only men who have become Doula Dads.

"The end game and the goal is to not only pass this information on, but to recruit and train other men so everybody can be a support system for everybody else," Moore said.

Moore hopes more men will be willing to go through training to become Doula Dads themselves.

"How many times have we all heard that it takes a village to raise a child?" Moore said. "Well, if we only provide resources to half that village, how successful are we really going to be?"