



# The Black Infant Health Program (BIH)

## Program Goals

*Reduce deaths of African American infants, including deaths due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).*

*Increase first trimester prenatal care by pregnant African American women.*

*Foster continuity of health care services during the perinatal period for African American women and their infants, and other children.*

## Program Activities

*Identify at-risk pregnant and parenting African-American women (18 years and older) and provide them assistance in using appropriate medical care and other family support services.*

*Provide case coordination services to assure the provision of appropriate pediatric care through the first year of the infants' life.*

*Educate pregnant and parenting African American women and the entire community on the causes of infant mortality and the relationship between low birth weight and infant survival.*

*Conduct a culturally specific public awareness campaign to inform and to educate the community about the importance of early access into and the maintenance of prenatal care (First Trimester Enrollment Campaign).*

*Encourage "Back to Sleep" awareness to prevent SIDS.*



## Background

Due to the alarming and disparate morbidity and mortality rates in the African-American community, the California State Department of Health Services expanded its commitment toward assuring that **all babies are born healthy with an intense emphasis on African-American infants.**

In 1989, the State Department of Health Services with support from the California Legislature established a **Black Infant Health (BIH) Program** strategically placed in the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Branch. In 1989 the infant mortality rate for African Americans in California was 19.2 deaths for every 1,000 live births.

## History

The Black Infant Health Program (BIH) was created at the State level as a result of California Senate Bill 165 of the Budget Act of 1989. The bill was enacted to address the high rate of infant mortality for African American families. BIH services are available within 15 local health jurisdictions where 93% of African-American live births and deaths occur. The 15 jurisdictions are: Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco,

San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, the City of Berkeley, Cities of Long Beach and Pasadena. Health department personnel in conjunction with local community advisory boards and community/faith-based organizations provide services. Since funding is not available to provide BIH services for all African American pregnant and parenting women, specific zip codes are targeted. Services are for American-born African American women, age 18 and older.

## Program Description: PCO and SSE

Using a street-based outreach strategy, in **Prenatal Care Outreach (PCO)** Community Health Outreach Workers (*CHOWs*) identify pregnant and parenting African American women and promote BIH as a unique program designed to address African American infant mortality and to improve the health status of African American families. Throughout enrollment in the program clients receive positive support, continuous encouragement, home visits, referrals to family supportive services, health education, and several invitations to attend activities that celebrate good health in a cultural context.

Along with the outreach intervention, some clients will also enroll in **Social Support and Empowerment (SSE)**. In this classroom-style intervention, clients attend eight class sessions that are designed to increase self-awareness and self-esteem via facilitated group discussions, peer support, and personal skills building. The Social Support and Empowerment model was developed to take into account the fact that lack of information alone is not the major reason for poor pregnancy outcomes. SSE works because it addresses social factors, provides a framework to teach specific skills, and the classes are likely to increase a clients' support network.



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## General Program Eligibility

18 years and older

Pregnant African American women

African American women parenting a biological child less than one year of age

The woman must live in the designated service area

## Los Angeles County BIH Office

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## State BIH Program Office

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## LOS ANGELES COUNTY CONTRACTORS

Los Angeles County was among the first health jurisdictions to receive funding from the State to implement a culturally specific perinatal program. Currently, Los Angeles County's Department of Public Health has five contractors implementing BIH perinatal interventions, Prenatal Care Outreach and Social Support and Empowerment.

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