

BirthWell Partners

Community Doula Project



Annual Report

2023-2024



Mission

BirthWell Partners is a non-profit that makes doula training and doula services more equitable and accessible, in order to improve the health of families and communities in Alabama.

Vision:

Our vision is for every birthing person to feel respected, empowered, and supported through the experiences of pregnancy, labor, birth, and the early weeks of parenting.

www.BirthWellPartners.org

Board of Directors

LaTanya Dawson
Matt Harris
Jen Havard
Holly Horan
Beth Johns
Anjanette Robinson
Crystal Spivey
Adriana Valenzuela
Beverly VonDer Pool

Staff

Susan Petrus
Executive Director
Dalia Abrams
Program Director
Kendra Burrell
Doula Coordinator
Emily Thayer
Outreach Assistant

BirthWell Doulas Supported 119 Clients During Labor



“She was my non judgmental support throughout the single most vulnerable time period in my life.”

“When I was ready to give up and have a c- section she was there holding my hand letting me know I can do it. I love everything about my experience”

--Quotes from BirthWell Clients



County	# of Clients
Autauga	1
Blount	1
Bullock	2
Calhoun	3
Chilton	1
Colbert	3
Cullman	1
Elmore	2
Fayette	1
Franklin	1
Hale	2
Jefferson	59
Lamar	1
Lauderdale	4
Lawrence	1
Lee	1
Macon	1
Montgomery	5
Pickens	1
Shelby	8
Tallapoosa	2
Talladega	2
Tuscaloosa	13
Walker	3

For the second year in a row, BirthWell doulas served nearly 65% more clients than in the previous fiscal year. In part, this increase was due to funding that enabled us to support more clients outside of the Greater Birmingham Area, including clients in moderately and highly rural counties. In 2023-24, doulas served clients in 24 of Alabama’s 67 counties, up from 11 counties in 2022-23.

Outcomes for 119 Clients with 121 Babies (2 sets of twins)

	Alabama	BWP All Births FY 2023-24	BWP Singleton Births FY 2023-24
C-Sections	34.5 ¹ (2022 data)	24.8	23.9
Preterm Birth Rate	12.84 ¹ (2022 data)	5.8	4.3
Low Birth Weight Rate	10.4 ¹ (2022 data)	10.08	8.7
Epidural Rate	87.3% ² (2016 data)	74.8%	75%
Skin to Skin w/ in 1st 24 Hours	not available	94.1%	99.1%
Breastfeeding Initiation Rate	71.1% ³ (2019 data)	94.1%	99.1%

Sources:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/alabama/al.htm>
- <https://www.cesareanrates.org/epidural-anesthesia-utilization-by-state>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm>

Program outcomes for each *calendar* year, can be found on our website:
<https://www.birthwellpartners.org/outcomes-and-reports>

“Your foundation is doing life changing work amidst a mother’s life changing event. I cannot thank you all enough.”

- Birthwell Client

BirthWell is making a significant impact by offering one-on-one perinatal support to low-income, underserved pregnant individuals, focusing on empowering them to advocate for themselves in medical settings. This support has been shown to lead to improved maternal and infant health outcomes, which can positively affect not only a family’s overall well-being, but the well-being of entire communities.

Doula services are not covered by private or Medicaid insurance in Alabama. BirthWell is grateful to the generosity of many individuals, private foundations and grants from government agencies that have enabled us to not only continue to provide this service, but to increase the number of families across Alabama who have access to this critical support.

Classes and Support Groups:

Thanks to ongoing support from the Alabama Department of Mental Health and new funding from the City of Birmingham, BirthWell has successfully facilitated a record number of classes for both residents of substance-use recovery facilities and the general public. These classes covered a wide range of topics crucial for expectant parents, including nutrition, movement and stretches for a healthy pregnancy, birth options, medical decision-making, and self-advocacy skills.

Participants not only gained valuable knowledge but also engaged in practical activities like making baby carriers from inexpensive materials, receiving diapers and wipes donated by Bundles of Hope, and increasing their understanding of breastfeeding. Those interested in further support were matched with BirthWell Doulas, ensuring they had continued access to personalized care and guidance throughout their pregnancy journey.

This expanded reach and the comprehensive nature of the classes underscore BirthWell’s commitment to empowering pregnant individuals and improving maternal and infant health outcomes in the community.



“Very helpful class! Safe space for questions.”

- Quote from class participant

46 Childbirth & Parenting Classes for People in Substance-Use Recovery:

24 Childbirth Classes at Aletheia House
16 Childbirth Classes at Olivia’s House
6 Parenting Classes at Lovelady Center

24 Free Classes and Support Groups for the General Public:

3 Childbirth Classes
3 Grandparent Classes
5 Monthly Prenatal Groups
10 Monthly Postpartum Groups
3 ACTT Health Advocacy Workshops

Doula Training: 43 New Doulas Trained

41 doulas from 14 Alabama counties, plus 2 out-of-state residents, attended birth doula training workshops held at East Lake Initiative. Of these, 28 from 10 Alabama counties participated through a need-based work-study program that provides free or reduced-cost classroom training, mentoring, and hands-on experience serving 2-3 families in need.

Notably, 6 of these 28 work-study doulas are Certified Recovery Support Specialists, which enables them to offer more comprehensive support to pregnant individuals with substance use disorder.

BirthWell helps to reduce health inequities by increasing access to a diverse group of doulas prepared to support clients in underserved communities. This approach not only helps to address disparities in maternal and infant health but also builds a perinatal workforce that is reflective of the communities they serve, ensuring that more families have access to culturally competent and comprehensive care.



November 2023 Doula Workshop Participants

Information about upcoming doula trainings and work-study applications can be found here: <https://www.birthwellpartners.org/doula-trainings>

County	State	#
Barbour	AL	1
Colbert	AL	1
Crenshaw	AL	1
Escambia	AL	2
Jefferson	AL	21
Lauderdale	AL	1
Lawrence	AL	1
Macon	AL	2
Madison	AL	1
Mobile	AL	1
Morgan	AL	1
Shelby	AL	3
Tuscaloosa	AL	4
Walker	AL	1
Marion	IN	1
Shelby	TN	1

"I feel empowered to create a safe, strong, and serene space for those I serve."

"The BirthWell Partners workshop taught me so much about gestation, birth, and postpartum. I feel confident in my abilities as a doula."

"Birthwell has the care of all birthgivers in mind."

-- Quotes from Doula Training Participants

Professional Development for Doulas

BirthWell takes an active role in the professional development of doulas trained by us, and/or working with BirthWell clients. We have increased the number of free continuing education offerings. Monthly online discussion groups and quarterly "refresher classes" help newer doulas solidify basic information and skills. Periodic trainings held throughout the year on special topics, including HIV, substance use disorder, domestic violence, mental health crisis, and adolescent clients, were targeted at preparing doulas to work with special populations and situations they may encounter.

BirthWell is also invested in the larger, statewide doula community. In October, we were able to hold our first doula retreat since before the COVID pandemic.



Many Thanks to the Individuals, Foundations and Corporations Who Generously Supported Our Work Last Year!

Alabama Department of Mental Health
Alabama Power Foundation
The City of Birmingham
Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham
Crescent Cultural Community Center
The Daniel Foundation
East Lake Initiative
East Lake United Methodist Church
EBSCO Industries, Inc.
Faith & William Pautler Family Foundation
HRSA (sub-awardee funding through UAB and the Alabama Perinatal Quality Collaborative)
The Women's Foundation of Alabama

Your donation can help us increase the number of families we serve this year!

