

## **Reducing rates of infant death & illness: A successful culturally sensitive service model**

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The Perinatal Council successfully administers the Black Infant Health (BIH) program that provides case management for African American pregnant women or mothers, aged 18 and over, who are likely to have complications of pregnancy and childbirth. Family Advocates help participants find pregnancy care, healthcare for their children, and other necessary social services that will reduce the rates of infant death and illness; they are skilled at bringing high-risk women into the program, coordinating client services, and linking clients to other community agencies for additional assistance. Because of the relationship that grows between clients and Family Advocates, BIH participants view the healthcare system more positively. Participants better understand the importance of their children's health and are more motivated to seek care and health education. The result last fiscal year (July 1, 2001- June 30,2002) was healthier babies and mothers. There were 79 live births and no neonatal deaths, fetal deaths, or spontaneous abortions; only 1 child had a major birth defect; 91% (72) were born at 37 weeks or greater and most (68%) deliveries were vaginal with no complications. Most (86%) babies were of normal birth weight ( $\geq 2500$  grams), and both mothers and newborns (87%) remained in the hospital for 1-4 days. To protect the health and well-being of children, The Perinatal Council continues to administer the BIH program--surrounding the extended family with a compassionate circle of care, making sure families have access to the most appropriate services that results in the births of healthy African American babies. See [www.theperinatalcouncil.org](http://www.theperinatalcouncil.org)