2025-2030

Breastfeeding Equity

SOUTH CAROLINA

RESEARCH AGENDA

OUR MISSION

We strive to empower Black breastfeeding mothers, birthing people, and their families by fostering culturally responsive resources, education, and community support.

OUR VISION

We envision a society that centers breastfeeding as a multi-generational norm for Black families.

AKNOWELDGEMENTS

The initial draft of this research agenda emerged from the input of Breastfeeding Equity South Carolina's council and network members during the first annual meeting on April 7, 2025, followed by an open Request for Community Input from June 5 – 19, 2025. We are grateful to the parents, lactation consultants, doulas, community health workers, maternal and child health advocates, researchers, public health professionals, and other stakeholders who contributed their time and expertise to this research agenda.

This research agenda is a "living document" organized by broad themes. We hope this agenda will also help other stakeholders, who are committed to maternal and infant health, make real progress toward breastfeeding equity.

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For more information, visit us at **breastfeedingequitysc.org**

Disclaimer: Claude.ai 4.0 was used to assist with language editing and organization.

Patient/Community-Centered Breastfeeding Equity Research Agenda

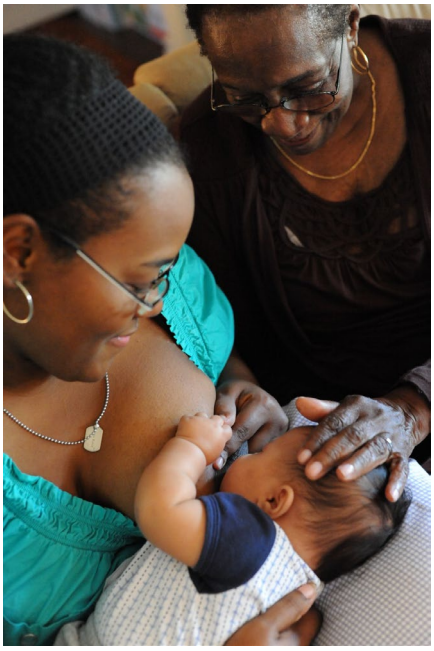
A. STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO BREASTFEEDING

- What are the structural and systemic barriers that Black families face in initiating and continuing breastfeeding (e.g., racism, provider bias, returning to work)?
- How do limited appointment times and a lack of culturally appropriate lactation support impact breastfeeding outcomes?
- How do fears of being reported to child welfare services influence breastfeeding decisions among Black families?
- What is the role of earlier delivery (before 40 weeks) in shaping breastfeeding initiation and support needs?
- How does access to material resources (e.g., pumps, flange sizes, transportation) affect equity in breastfeeding?
- How do state paid family leave laws affect breastfeeding rates among Black families compared to states without these laws?
- What are the best ways to help Black families find and use paid leave benefits and workplace breastfeeding support?
- How does workplace breastfeeding support (paid pumping breaks, private pumping rooms, on-site childcare), compared to basic accommodations, help mothers continue breastfeeding and balance work and family life?



B. Trust, Cultural Relevance, and Community-Led Care

- How do healthcare providers build and sustain trust with Black families around infant feeding?
- What role does cultural humility and community representation (e.g., Black doulas, peer supporters, social workers) play in breastfeeding support?
- How can trusted community settings such as churches, salons, local businesses, and barbershops be engaged to promote breastfeeding?
- What strategies can enhance community organization and family involvement in breastfeeding education and support?
- How does the composition and relatability of warmline or hotline staff affect family trust and usage?
- Who are influential role models or champions in Black maternal and breastfeeding health, and how can they be leveraged?



Source: U.S. Breastfeeding Committee.

C. Education, Messaging, and Digital Influence

- What basic breastfeeding information and skills (e.g., when to start pumping, how long to feed, pumping schedules, storage, mixed feeding) are most needed among new parents?
- What scripts or guidance can be developed for healthcare professionals to support combination feeding (breast and formula)?
- How does early and family-inclusive education on breastfeeding affect knowledge, confidence, and initiation rates?
- What are the persistent myths and misconceptions among providers and families, and how do they influence breastfeeding decisions?
- How can early interventions (e.g., in high school or community programs) promote positive attitudes toward breastfeeding?
- How can health care provider training and integration of breastfeeding topics into standardized education improve clinical support for families?
- How can pregnant and new parents effectively track and communicate their questions and concerns with providers?
- What maternal health benefits of breastfeeding are most important to Black mothers, and how can providers better communicate these benefits alongside infant benefits to support informed decision-making?

D. Support Systems and Models of Care

- What models of care (e.g., nurse navigator, home visiting, mobile lactation units) are most effective in improving breastfeeding outcomes?
- How can peer-to-peer and culturally matched support (e.g., Black IBCLCs, doulas, midwives) enhance breastfeeding duration and satisfaction?
- What are the perceived benefits and barriers of warmline/hotline use among Black breastfeeding families?
- How do community health workers compare to other types of support (e.g., IBCLCs, doulas, midwives, peer support) in helping Black mothers initiate and continue breastfeeding, and what specific approaches make them most effective?
- How does team-based care and interprofessional collaboration contribute to lactation support?
- What approaches can better integrate lactation professionals into routine maternity and pediatric care?
- How do grandmothers' attitudes and experiences influence Black families' breastfeeding decisions, and how can we better support grandmothers in encouraging breastfeeding?
- How can families be better supported in the transition from NICU to home-based breastfeeding?

E. Mental Health, Birth Experience, and Trauma



Photo by Diana Simumpande on Unsplash.com

- How do postpartum depression, anxiety, and birth trauma influence breastfeeding initiation and continuation?
- What supports are needed for mothers experiencing perinatal loss or grief while navigating lactation?
- How do birth settings and medical mistreatment (e.g., hospital vs. home/birth center) shape initial breastfeeding experiences?
- What is the impact of over-pumping, performative social media trends, and constant feeding schedules on maternal mental health?
- What is the role of digital tools (e.g., apps, social media platforms) in influencing breastfeeding behaviors, expectations, and mental health?
- What are the effects of unrealistic expectations set by social media on breastfeeding behavior and mental health?

F. Decision-Making, Family Dynamics, and Community Norms



- What personal, cultural, and intergenerational factors influence Black families' decisions around breastfeeding?
- How can families be supported in inclusive breastfeeding education, especially partners, grandparents, and other caregivers?
- How do gender roles, body image, and sexual identity intersect with breastfeeding attitudes and experiences?
- How do community norms and exposure to other breastfeeding families influence decision-making and self-efficacy?





Source: Freepix.com