

## SUMMARY STATEMENT

Through collaboration and partnerships, The California Department of Public Health, Maternal Child and Adolescent Health Division (CDPH/MCAH) has been working to turn the curve on the State's prematurity rate by tackling disparities in preterm births. In 2017, the Black preterm birth rate was 1.7 times more than the White preterm birth rate. Multiple focused initiatives launched in counties with the highest number of Black preterm births have been sparked to address inequity in birth outcomes.

## ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

In collaboration with 14 Local Health Jurisdictions (which represent over 90 percent of all Black births in the State,) CDPH/MCAH leads and funds the implementation of the Black Infant Health Program (BIH) to improve Black birth outcomes. BIH focuses its implementation strategy on the key contributing factors of disparities, namely the toxic stress of chronic racism. Participants learn proven strategies to reduce stress and develop life skills through a group-based approach with complementary case management. MCAH has observed improvements in the Black preterm birth rate between 2007 and 2017 in eight counties currently implementing BIH. In addition, through a legislative proposal brought to fruition in 2018 by March of Dimes and other California stakeholders, CDPH/MCAH has established the Perinatal Equity Initiative (PEI) with \$8 million State General Funds to complement the BIH program. In partnership with the March of Dimes, CDPH/MCAH continues to lead the Community Birth Plan initiative that unites hospitals in Los Angeles with high Black prematurity rates and the Black communities delivering at these hospitals. The goal is to unite the community and hospitals around the problem and evidence-based interventions that can reduce prematurity.

The Maternal and Infant Health Assessment (MIHA) survey, implemented by the MCAH Division provides insights on the relationship between maternal experiences and birth outcomes to help guide programs. MIHA data reveal a sharp increase in chronic worry about racial discrimination among Black women. In 2017, nearly two-thirds of Black women worried often about experiencing racial discrimination for themselves or a loved one, and seven in 10 Black women experienced incidents of racial discrimination. Worry about racial discrimination has been linked to preterm birth, maternal hypertension and symptoms of maternal depression.

The 2018-20 California Preconception CoIIN, led by CDPH/MCAH, March of Dimes, and other state preconception health experts, aims to improve the preconception health status of women of reproductive age, particularly low-income women and women of color.