# Introduction

Afro Baby Centered (A.B.C.) Birthing is a healthcare organization that works in economically marginalized communities to lower maternal mortality and morbidity. Our mission is to offer high quality healthcare to the most vulnerable populations amongst us. Our services include: perinatal care,culturally literate staff and various classes.

With an emphasis on the emotional and mental health of expectant mothers, we offer counseling services, direction, encouragement, and instruction to lessen pressures and guarantee prompt access to medical care. To fill the void in transportation resources, we also provide transportation support.

By working with diagnostic labs to expedite test findings, Afro Baby Centered Birthing can reduce delays in prenatal and postpartum care. We take a culturally competent approach, appreciating the distinctive traditions and values of every group. This strategy lowers the risks connected with delayed diagnosis by fostering trust and constructive health-seeking behaviors.

We aim to provide our clients with culturally competent professionals, transportation support, and counseling with the goal of lowering rates of maternal mortality and morbidity in communities that are economically and socially marginalized.

# Organization Information

Afro Baby Centered Birthing is a Houston-based healthcare organization that aims to reduce maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity rates in the most statistically vulnerable populations. We offer quality ethical, medical, social and emotional interventions that align with the community we are serving. Our staff are experienced and trained to provide maternity care services and resources that directly impacts the wellbeing of women.

We provide counseling services with an emphasis on stress reduction and emotional well-being to assist expectant moms. To remove these obstacles and advance fair access to healthcare, A.B.C.also addresses non-emergency transportation-related issues. Guaranteeing access to prenatal care and doctor’s appointments.

We aim to provide our clients with culturally competent professionals, transportation support, and counseling with the goal of lowering rates of maternal mortality and morbidity in communities that are economically and socially marginalized.

We work with dedicated and certified experts. Our clinical director is an on board certified OB GYN. We have a certified nurse midwife that will be in charge of attending births, collecting samples for labs, providing holistic med care, counseling services and delegating tasks to nonmedical personnel also called doulas. Doulas will be providing comfort during prenatal and postnatal phases, they have death skills if pregnancy is terminated prematurely, sanitizing spaced,etc.

Our vision is to create a union between holistic and traditional healthcare. Using the midwives and doulas to provide support for the midwives guaranteeing comprehensive care to the women. We believe this type of collaboration will inspire both to create practices that will better assist women no matter their demography.

# Needs Assessment

Severe maternal morbidity (S.M.M.) and maternal mortality are still major concerns in the U.S., especially in groups that are marginalized socially and economically. Due to the extreme severity of these issues in the state of Texas, immediate action is required to address the causes of high rates of maternal mortality and severe morbidity. To address these discrepancies, we are partnering with the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (M.M.M.R.C.) to launch a ground-breaking program that will enhance maternal health outcomes in Houston, Texas.

Information about the severity of the S.M.M. and maternal mortality crisis can be found in Texas's maternal health indicators. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (C.D.C.) reports that Texas consistently has one of the highest rates of maternal death nationwide. Texas had an increase in the overall number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births from about 10 in 1999 to about 22 in 2019. The state had one of the highest increases in fatalities among Black individuals during that period, the study shows. This disparity highlights how urgently focused interventions are needed to address the underlying causes of maternal mortality in the state.

A variety of intricate and multidimensional factors in Texas cause maternal mortality and severe morbidity. The M.M.M.R.C. has identified numerous significant factors as contributing to these unfavorable results. Among these are:

**Restricted access to prenatal care:** The availability and accessibility of high-quality prenatal care services are frequently restricted in populations that are socially and economically marginalized. Due to this lack of access, any pregnancy problems cannot be identified and managed in a timely manner, which could have negative consequences.

**Health disparities:** In Texas, S.M.M. and maternal mortality disproportionately affect racial and ethnic minorities. For these populations, disparities in healthcare quality, access, and culturally sensitive care are major causes of inferior health outcomes.

**Chronic illnesses:** Maternal mortality and sudden maternal death (S.M.M.) are considerably increased in cases where pre-existing chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity, are present. The issue is made worse in Texas because the state has a high rate of these illnesses in the country.

**Maternal behavioral health:** Other factors that affect maternal mortality and S.M.M. include intimate partner violence, substance misuse, and mental health issues among mothers. Effectively treating these behavioral health disorders presents challenges for Texas, with unfavorable consequences for moms and infants.

Addressing disparities requires an understanding of the physical and demographic differences in S.D.O.H. and maternal health markers. They are:

1. Regional disparities: Different neighborhoods or regions in Houston exhibit varying maternal health outcomes, with some having greater rates of S.M.M. or maternal death than others.
2. Disparities in maternal health outcomes by race and ethnicity: Some racial and ethnic groups may have higher rates of unfavorable outcomes than others; this emphasizes the significance of tackling systematic racism and ensuring equitable access to high-quality care.
3. Socioeconomic disparities: Depending on socioeconomic variables such as income, education, housing quality, and employment position, maternal health indices may differ. It may be more difficult for people with lower socioeconomic positions to get quality care.
4. Social determinants of health (S.D.O.H.): A number of variables can have a big impact on the health of expectant mothers, including social support networks, secure housing, access to wholesome food, and transportation. It is essential to recognize and treat this S.D.O.H. in order to enhance maternal health in general.

However, a number of obstacles must be removed to enhance maternal health outcomes in Houston, Texas. Some of these obstacles are:

* Pregnant patients may not be able to receive prompt, all-encompassing care if they have limited access to healthcare providers, especially in underprivileged areas.
* Shortages of obstetricians, nurses, and other maternal health practitioners can lead to insufficient staffing, which in turn can result in subpar care delivery.
* People living in underprivileged communities may have less access to high-quality maternity healthcare due to differences in the distribution of healthcare facilities and resources, which are concentrated in urban areas.
* Disjointed care delivery might result in inadequate coordination and follow-up, raising the possibility of unfavorable consequences.
* Timely intervention and proper care-seeking behaviors may be hampered by inadequate information and education about maternal health risks, S.M.M. symptoms, and accessible resources.

Examining the distribution and kinds of healthcare facilities, providers, and payers that are involved in maternal healthcare is necessary to comprehend the maternal health service delivery environment in Houston. They are:

**Facility distribution:** Evaluating the availability, accessibility, and location of clinics, hospitals, birth centers, and other medical institutions offering services related to maternal health. It is imperative to identify "maternal care deserts," or places where there is insufficient access to care, in order to solve geographic disparities.

**Provider types:** Determining the variety of medical professionals, such as obstetricians, midwives, nurses, doulas, and other associated specialists, that are engaged in providing care to expectant mothers.

**Payer landscape:** Examining various payers, including Medicaid, private insurance, and other government initiatives, in order to comprehend their financial workings and potential obstacles to obtaining maternal health care.

In order to enhance the ability to gather, compile, and evaluate information regarding maternal health in Texas, these tactics must be taken into consideration:

* Improve data infrastructure: To guarantee prompt, accurate, and thorough data collection, make investments in enhancing data collecting systems, such as electronic health records (E.H.R.), and interoperability across various systems.
* Standardize data collection: To guarantee consistency and comparability in data across different providers and facilities, encourage the adoption of standardized data gathering tools, forms, and protocols. Implementing current national data standards, like the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) questionnaire, is one way to do this.
* Increase data collecting efforts: Take into account increasing data collection efforts to include more variables or factors, such as socioeconomic determinants of health and particular risk factors, that may have an impact on maternal health outcomes.
* Strengthen data governance: To guarantee the proper management, security, and exchange of maternal health data, clearly define data governance structures and procedures. Creating data access methods, privacy policies, and agreements for data sharing may be necessary to achieve this.
* Invest in data analysis capacity: Provide funds to organizations and agencies that are pertinent to maternal health in order to enhance their analytical capabilities. Programs for training in data analysis, statistical procedures, and data visualization approaches can fall under this category.
* Promote partnerships and teamwork: To maximize knowledge and resources in data gathering, reporting, analysis, and interpretation, promote teamwork among public health authorities, medical professionals, researchers, and community organizations.

Texas can improve maternal health equality and outcomes by concentrating on these tactics, which will strengthen the state's ability to gather, report, and analyze timely, high-quality data on maternal health outcomes.

Texas has launched a number of maternal health initiatives in an effort to address these issues. The state reviewed the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee in 2019 to address the rising incidence of S.M.M. and maternal death comprehensively. The 17-member M.M.M.R.C. is dedicated to creating and putting into practice evidence-based plans that advance fair access to first-rate maternity healthcare services, build the capacity of the healthcare workforce, and strengthen mechanisms for data collection and reporting.

Our project fits perfectly with the current push for improvement in maternal health in Texas. By partnering with the M.M.M.R.C., we are able to take advantage of its resources and experience to create a novel care model that is tailored to the needs of Houston's economically and socially marginalized populations. The project seeks to address the major causes of S.M.M. and maternal mortality in line with the objectives of the M.M.M.R.C.

A.B.C. Birthing aims to lessen the gaps experienced by marginalized communities and enhance maternal health outcomes in Houston by utilizing a range of services, including thorough counseling, rapid diagnostic laboratory intervention, transportation resources, and a culturally competent team.

# APPROACH

To address maternal morbidity and mortality in Houston, Texas, ABC Birthing will adopt a comprehensive and collaborative approach that utilizes the strengths of both holistic and traditional healthcare. The approach will focus on several key components:

1. Interdisciplinary Care Model: We will establish an interdisciplinary care model that brings together certified nurse midwives (CNM), doulas, and traditional healthcare providers, such as physicians and specialists. This model promotes collaboration and ensures that women receive holistic and comprehensive care throughout their pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum period.

2. Risk Assessment and Early Intervention: We will also implement a standardized and evidence-based risk assessment protocol to identify high-risk pregnancies and address potential complications early. This will involve conducting comprehensive health screenings, identifying social determinants of health, and evaluating individual risk factors. Early intervention and appropriate referrals can help prevent or manage complications, reducing maternal morbidity and mortality.

3. Prenatal Care and Education: Our aim is to prioritize access to prenatal care and ensure that all women, regardless of their socioeconomic status, have access to quality care. We will do this by offering affordable or sliding-scale payment options, establishing partnerships with community clinics and organizations, and leveraging telehealth services. We will provide comprehensive prenatal education programs, covering topics such as nutrition, exercise, and self-care, to empower women to make informed decisions about their health.

4. Continuous Support Throughout Pregnancy and Delivery: We will ensure continuous support throughout the entire pregnancy and delivery process. Certified nurse midwives and doulas will play a significant role in providing emotional and physical support, promoting integrated pain management techniques, facilitating informed decision-making, and advocating for women's preferences in childbirth.

5. Postpartum Support and Follow-up: ABC Birthing will prioritize postpartum care to address the needs of both the mother and baby. This involves conducting systematic postpartum checks, providing lactation support, assessing mental health, facilitating contraceptive counseling, and promoting healthy parenting practices. Support groups and educational resources will be offered to help women transition into motherhood and manage the challenges that may arise.

6. Collaboration and Networking: We will collaborate and network with other healthcare providers especially the (M.M.M.R.C.), hospitals, community organizations, and public health agencies in Houston. This collaboration will facilitate the sharing of best practices, establish robust referral systems, and promote a collective approach towards addressing maternal morbidity and mortality.

7. Data Collection and Analysis: ABC Birthing will implement a robust data collection, analysis, and review system to monitor maternal health outcomes and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Regular data sharing with local health departments, agencies, and research institutions can contribute to evidence-based decision-making and policy advocacy.

1. Identify data sources: ABC birthing needs to identify the various data sources available for collecting maternal health information. This may include vital records data (birth and death certificates), hospital discharge databases, electronic health records, and surveillance systems. Additionally, ABC birthing can collaborate with healthcare providers, clinics, birthing centers, and community organizations to gather additional data, such as prenatal care utilization, risk factors, and social determinants of health.

2. Standardize data collection: ABC birthing should establish standardized data collection tools and protocols to ensure consistency and comparability across different sources. This can include using standardized questionnaires, coding systems, and definitions for variables and outcomes. Adhering to national data standards, such as the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) questionnaire, can facilitate data comparability with other states and jurisdictions.

3. Implement data collection mechanisms: ABC birthing can design and implement data collection mechanisms that align with the identified sources. This may involve developing online data collection forms, training data collectors, and establishing data submission or upload systems. Ensuring regular and timely data collection is essential for accurate and up-to-date information.

4. Ensure data quality: ABC birthing should implement data quality assurance processes to maintain high-quality data. This involves conducting regular audits to identify and correct errors, inconsistencies, and missing data. Data validation checks can also be implemented to verify the accuracy and completeness of collected data.

5. Analyze and interpret data: Once data is collected, ABC birthing should perform data analysis to derive meaningful insights and identify patterns and trends related to maternal health outcomes. This can involve using statistical software to analyze the data, calculating rates, percentages, and conducting comparisons across different demographic groups or geographical locations. Advanced analytical techniques, such as regression analysis or time series analysis, can also be employed to identify risk factors or predictors of maternal health outcomes.

6. Review findings: ABC birthing should conduct reviews of the analyzed data findings. This involves reviewing the results and interpreting them in the context of the state's maternal health priorities and existing programs. Stakeholders, including healthcare providers, policymakers, researchers, and community representatives, should be engaged in the review process to ensure diverse perspectives are considered.

7. Identify areas for improvement: Based on the data analysis and review, ABC birthing should identify areas for improvement in maternal health. This may include identifying disparities in outcomes, recognizing high-risk populations, and understanding the contributing factors to maternal mortality and morbidity. These findings can guide the development of targeted interventions and programs to address the identified challenges.

8. Inform policy and program development: The data analysis findings and review outcomes should inform policy and program development efforts. ABC birthing can use the data to advocate for evidence-based policies aimed at improving maternal health outcomes. Additionally, the findings can guide the design of targeted interventions and initiatives to address the specific needs of different populations and geographic areas across the state.

9. Monitor and evaluate interventions: After implementing interventions, ABC birthing should establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impact on maternal health outcomes. This involves collecting follow-up data, analyzing the changes, and reviewing the effectiveness and sustainability of the interventions. The monitoring and evaluation process should be iterative, allowing for adjustments and refinements based on the outcomes and feedback received.

By following this comprehensive data collection, analysis, and review process, ABC birthing can obtain accurate, timely, and actionable data on maternal health across the state. This data-driven approach enables evidence-based decision-making, targeted interventions, and continuous monitoring to improve maternal health outcomes.