

## **AMAR Community Doulas: Celebrating and Reflecting on Two Years**

On October 29th, we celebrated our second anniversary as a functioning community doula organization. Two years ago, we were chosen as a subcontracting partner to HealthConnect One and have implemented their Community Doula framework, which emphasizes community-based and peer-to-peer support for pregnant and parenting women. The past two years have passed by faster than otherwise imaginable. We have received 134 referrals, served 88 families, and supported the births and entrance into the world of 79 beautiful, healthy new babies. Each year, we provide community doula training for eight to twelve local community women. On December 10th, we graduated our second class of community doulas.

Through our work, our doulas provide, on average, 6.1 prenatal home visits and 7.9 postpartum visits, and continuous labor support. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, many of these visits occurred online. In June 2020, Governor Murphy issued an executive order which allowed doulas to serve in the birthing room as a support person during labor and delivery. This allowed our doulas to support many births in person. As a result, preterm births of those served have dropped 69.7%, and the rate of c-sections has fallen 60.1%. Only 2.7% of Amar babies were born preterm, 3.3% are born at a low birth weight (defined as less than five pounds, eight ounces), 6.7% are admitted to NICU, and 10.1% are low-risk c-sections performed. 100% of AMAR mothers are screened for postpartum depression at three months. AMAR mothers also breastfeed for more extended periods, with 66.7% of mothers exclusively breastfeeding at six weeks and 65.1% exclusively breastfeeding at three months postpartum.

Because of the immediate impact that we have provided over the last two years, we have been recognized by the Fund for Women and Girls of the Princeton Area Community Foundation and the Center for Hispanic Policy Research and Development in the State of New Jersey (CHRPD). We were among 10 grantees awarded out of the 28 applicants by the Fund for Women and Girls of the Princeton Area Community Foundation. Last year, we were the first group to be funded by the CHRPD initiative focusing on the social determinants of health last year. This year we were refunded at a higher amount.

Moving forward, we aim to continue the work that we do in centering our community's wants, needs, and health while fostering and supporting other organizations that do so in their communities. With this newly added aim to our mission of improving maternal and infant birth outcomes, we are currently providing technical assistance to an organization in the Paterson-Passaic County area that aims to create a community doula organization.