



For Immediate Release - March 1, 2024

The Abundance Project, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Boulder County, Colorado is proud to be one of nine nationwide finalists chosen to participate in the final phase of the Implementing a Maternal health and PRegnancy Outcomes Vision for Everyone (IMPROVE) Initiative - a \$3 million prize competition from The National Institutes of Health's Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to incentivize non-profit organizations to develop the capabilities, infrastructure, and experience to conduct research projects that seek to improve maternal health outcomes in their communities. In partnership with their sister organization, Sanctuary Doulas + Family Care, The Abundance Project will study the impact of postpartum doula care on reducing hypertension and symptoms of anxiety and depression in postpartum mothers who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC).

The research study's eligibility criteria is recently expanded to include more people including Black, Indigenous, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Latina and/or Hispanic mothers and birthing people who live in the Denver/Boulder metro area and are experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety or high blood pressure, often known as gestational or postpartum hypertension, preeclampsia or HELLP syndrome and are currently pregnant and are due between now and March 29, 2024 or have had a baby between June 2023 and now (less than 10 months postpartum).

Enrollment is open with both English and Spanish eligibility forms can be found at www.the-abundance-project.org/research and www.sanctuarydoulas.com/research. BIPOC mothers may be eligible to receive postpartum doula visits in their homes from English and Spanish-speaking postpartum doulas at no cost and receive up to \$100 in Visa gift cards for participation.

High blood pressure, anxiety, and depression are all too common contributing factors to maternal health problems (morbidity) and deaths due to pregnancy or childbirth (mortality) in the United States. The research study will explore the impact that postpartum doula support in a mother's home environment has on these factors in hopes that we can improve health disparities, especially amongst BIPOC mothers. The purpose of this research study is to test the preliminary efficacy and acceptability of postpartum doula care in reducing BIPOC mothers' blood pressures and examine the impact on symptoms of depression and/or anxiety. The study includes 30-35 participants. Sanctuary Doulas + Family Care's team of postpartum doulas are professionally trained, non-medical care providers who have advanced training in diversity, equity and inclusion in preparation for providing postpartum doula care day home visits. Learn more about what is included in postpartum doula care day home visits at www.sanctuarydoulas.com/postpartum-doula.

Maternal health service agencies and providers who serve BIPOC mothers in the Denver/Boulder metro area can participate in any or all of four ways by email to the.abundance.project.nihgrant@gmail.com:

- 1) referring BIPOC mothers to the research study's online English and Spanish Eligibility Forms at www.the-abundance-project.org/research and www.sanctuarydoulas.com/research
- 2) posting English and Spanish fliers with Eligibility Form QR codes and easy pull tabs in their patient waiting areas and treatment rooms and available at www.the-abundance-project.org/research and www.sanctuarydoulas.com/research or requesting printed fliers delivery.
- 3) permitting on site study recruitment in their facilities' common areas for patients by research study staff to provide information, assist with completing online English and Spanish Eligibility Forms, and answer questions about the study.
- 4) accepting a 15-minute looping informational research study presentation with complimentary lunch served on site for up to 15 staff courtesy of The Abundance Project.

The Abundance Project's research project is titled "Postpartum Doula Care Reduces BIPOC Mothers' Hypertension, Depression, and Anxiety" IRB Approved Research Study #46213. Research study co-principal investigators include The Abundance Project Founder and Director Michele Holland CD/CPD(DONA), Sanctuary Doulas + Family Care owners Jess Hanlin, LCSW and Ali Batwin, CLC, Dr. Elizabeth Greenwell, ScD, Director of Maternal and Child Health and Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Community and Behavioral Health at the Colorado School of Public Health, and Laurel Hicks, PhD, Research Associate with the University of Colorado - Boulder's Renee Crown Wellness Institute.

Rates of maternity-related complications and deaths in the United States are high, and the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in these maternal health outcomes are even more stark. Community engagement in research is essential to developing effective strategies to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality and to ensure that the specific priorities of diverse and disproportionately affected populations are addressed.

During this final challenge phase of the Implementing a Maternal health and PRegnancy Outcomes Vision for Everyone (IMPROVE) Initiative), The Abundance Project and Sanctuary Doulas + Family Care will conduct the research and report our research study results in June 2024. NIH's IMPROVE Initiative will announce final winners in September 2024 for further prize funding.

For more information about this research project and how to participate, please call 303.336.1389 or visit www.the-abundance-project.org/research and www.sanctuarydoulas.com/research or email to the.abundance.project.nihgrant@gmail.com. The NIH's full press release "NIH Selects Next Round of Winners at the Connecting the Community for Maternal Health Challenge" is available [here](#).