



NEWS RELEASE . FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 12, 2021

Community invited to learn more about Black women's maternal health

Infant Mortality Alliance hosting virtual event on Thursday

The Infant Mortality Alliance (IMA) in Oklahoma County is bringing awareness to Black women's maternal health as part of national Black Maternal Health Week.

Black Maternal Health Week started Sunday and runs through Saturday, April 17, with local virtual activities planned throughout the week. The activities are coordinated in partnership with the Georgia-based Black Mamas Matter Alliance.

Oklahoma has one of the worst maternal death rates in the U.S., ranking at No. 4, according to the CDC. Since 2006, Oklahoma's maternal death rate has increased 54.9%.

Black women are 2.5 times more likely than White women to lose their lives after suffering pregnancy-related complications with 54.9 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births, as of the 2016–2018 time frame. By comparison, Hispanic women had the lowest rate at 4.4 maternal deaths in the same two-year span.

From 2004 to 2018, Oklahoma County has the most maternal deaths in the state, with 32 women losing their lives while pregnant or within 42 days of the pregnancy's termination, according to data collected by the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

For every maternal death in Oklahoma there are approximately 70 near misses. The disparity continues for Black women as they are more likely to suffer from perinatal mood and anxiety disorders like postpartum depression.

The awareness events started on Sunday, when IMA asked local churches to host a viewing of "Kira's Story," by Charles Johnson, whose wife Kira died shortly after delivering the couple's second son. Following the presentation, area churches hosted discussions on faith and fatherhood.

On Monday, the Oklahoma Legislative Black Caucus presented the IMA with a Citation of Recognition for Black Maternal Health Week 2021. In addition, Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt signed a proclamation declaring it Black Maternal Health Week in the city. Councilwoman Nikki Nice advocated for the proclamation.

On Wednesday, stories from local residents who experienced maternal and infant deaths will be shared at InfantMortalityAlliance.org.

On Thursday, people are invited at 10 a.m. to virtually join IMA and other organizations to watch the Ted Talk, “How the U.S. Medical Community Fails Black Mothers.” Following the presentation, former State Sen. Anastasia Pittman will lead a conversation with OB/Gyn Dr. LaToya Smith, Women and Newborn Education Nurse Camille Davis, Certified Lactation Specialist and Doula Farah Mayberry and Oklahoma State Department of Health Perinatal & Reproductive Health Director Jill Noble-Botkins.

On Friday and Saturday, IMA is participating in a Black Mamas Matter Alliance virtual conference, with registration still available at BlackMamasMatter.org/bmhc-2021/.

People are invited to share their stories this week on social media by using the hashtag #BlackMaternalHealthWeek or #BMHW21.

The Infant Mortality Alliance is a community collaborative working to reduce infant mortality in the African American community in Oklahoma County. The Oklahoma City-County Health Department’s Maternal Child Health Outreach program serves as the backbone organization. For more information go to www.infantmortalityalliance.org