



MALE PERSPECTIVE ON BIRTH AND BREASTFEEDING

"This is going to help us be stronger fathers, husbands and community members. There are people coming up under us and if we can be the change that lets them know what it's really about, we are not only doing our generation a service but future generations to come."

- Fatherhood Expert Participant

ABOUT:

Mi Milk Collective (MMC) centers Black birth and Black breastfeeding to combat infant and maternal mortality and addresses a slate of structural inequities and indicators that lead to breastfeeding disparities. MMC leveraged MIBFN's Community Conversations model to center the perspective of Black fathers, males, and partners in Michigan throughout the birthing and breastfeeding experience. The virtual event was held on Zoom, facilitated by Black male mental health professionals, and transcribed by community participants. Expert families were provided a gratitude stipend and meal delivery gift card to nourish their families.

FAST FACTS:



9 EXPERT FAMILIES



3 FACILITATORS



2 TRANSCRIBERS



2 BREAKOUT ROOMS



"[It was] a **learning curve and challenge** - It was tough trying to figure out how to support her in general, and it was a whole different thing supporting her as a mother."

ADJUSTING TO FATHERHOOD IS A SIGNIFICANT LIFE CHANGE
that is not adequately acknowledged or supported.

In the health care and public health systems,
FATHERS ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE ENTIRE BIRTH AND BREASTFEEDING PROCESS
through lack of support and resources centered on their experiences.

"The **only support I had was a session for men in the birthing class.** It was pretty basic but they were not telling the men much."

BARRIERS

RACISM AND BIAS IN HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS ARE ESPECIALLY DISRUPTIVE FOR BLACK FATHERS
who must navigate their own safety while trying to advocate alongside their partners.

"With my first child I was at the mercy of those taking care of us. **I kind of felt invisible.**"

GENERATIONAL TRAUMA IS PERVASIVE
and care through a trauma-informed lens is crucial for breaking these cycles.

"I grew up in and out of foster care...Now when I look at my wife and child, **it's about being a better parent than mine were for me.** I work hard to constantly make sure that I can support myself better."

SYSTEMS DO NOT SUPPORT FAMILIES,
like workplaces, child cares, and many others.
THERE IS A COMPLETE DISREGARD FATHERS AND OTHER SUPPORT PEOPLE.

"If I had **more time off to be there with the baby,** that would be amazing."



OPPORTUNITIES:

- On the whole, **Black fathers are very present, invested, and engaged** in birth and breastfeeding.
- **Doulas, especially Black doulas, are an important resource** in reclamation of birth and breastfeeding experiences through their support of Black fathers and families.
- **Black fathers champion their partners** through being in tune with their partners' needs and health conditions to navigate the healthcare system and the health issues that disproportionately impact Black families, like perinatal mood disorders, gestational diabetes, and hypertension.
- When partners are open to it, **relationships become much deeper and more authentic** through the experience and challenges of birth and breastfeeding.

"When your wife is going through something, you are also going through something. The wife goes through all of the trauma of carrying and birth and complications, but we went through it too. We need to seek help and talk about it because it takes a toll."

- Fatherhood Expert Participant

