



## A Community Partnership to Support Childbearing Families

**Who:** HealthPartners and Everyday Miracles

**Where:** Minneapolis, MN

**What:** A healthcare system partnered with a community-based maternal health organization to expand access to culturally centered doula services

**WHY:** Even though Minnesota was one of the earliest states to cover doula services through Medicaid, disparities persist for birthing families of color, who experience higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity.

Ensuring that birthing parents of color feel seen and heard during one of the most important moments in their lives is a critical first step to improve maternal health outcomes for all. Doulas who are Black, Indigenous, or other people of color (BIPOC) often bring a unique understanding of how a patient's cultural context and lived experiences may affect their health needs, communication patterns and beliefs, and therefore help mitigate health inequities.

**GOAL:** HealthPartners and Everyday Miracles sought to recruit, train, and help to certify more BIPOC doulas to better serve birthing families.

**HOW:** HealthPartners – a 65-year-old healthcare system owned by its members – has strategically located its hospitals in neighborhoods with the greatest need for healthcare access across Minnesota and Western Wisconsin, while also providing affordable health insurance.

Founded in 2003, Everyday Miracles provides a broad range of services to birthing families, including evidence-based education and wellness classes, compassionate and culturally informed support, and a nonjudgmental, caring community. Everyday Miracles clients have lower cesarean rates, higher breastfeeding initiation rates, and higher breastfeeding rates at six months postpartum than the national average.

When Minnesota passed doula legislation aimed at improving maternal healthcare equity in 2014, HealthPartners was already partnering with Everyday Miracles for non-doula supports, so it was a seamless transition to add doula services with the goal of increasing access to evidence-based prenatal supports regardless of age, race or socioeconomic status.

Beginning in 2015, HealthPartners and Everyday Miracles offered doula services during pregnancy and childbirth to any HealthPartners member with Medicaid or MinnesotaCare, a subsidized insurance program for Minnesotans with low-incomes. Covered services include six visits for childbirth education and support services, plus an additional birth support visit. An Everyday Miracles coordinator helps to match birthing people with a doula. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, HealthPartners approved payment for virtual visits to preserve members' access to needed support.

The partnership identified the need for a more effective payment system and equitable compensation for doulas. To this end, HealthPartners:

- Accelerated the timeline for paying claims.
- Increased the contracted payment rate for birth doulas beyond the state minimum.
- Made it easier for Everyday Miracles doulas to access information and support from HealthPartners by providing a dedicated point of contact.

These changes enhanced Everyday Miracles' ability to recruit and retain doulas. To achieve the clear health equity and outcomes benefits of doula support, more doulas were needed – especially those from BIPOC communities. Through the support of a grant from HealthPartners, Everyday Miracles worked to increase the supply of doulas.

**RESULTS:** In just two years, Everyday Miracles increased their number of certified BIPOC doulas from 40 percent of their roster at the start of 2020 to 70 percent in 2022.

### The Takeaway

Intentional partnerships with community-based organizations must be based on a clear recognition of the needs of both partners – including the resources required. HealthPartners and Everyday Miracles demonstrate that healthcare providers, payers, and other organizations that want to effectively address maternal healthcare equity can do so by collaborating with local organizations and leaders who are closer to the needs and solutions required for all birthing people.