



Impact Report

FY 2021

open arms
perinatal services

Our Story So Far

OUR MISSION

Since 1997, Open Arms has provided community-based support during pregnancy, birth, and early parenting to nurture strong foundations to last a lifetime.

Through doula care, childbirth education, lactation counseling, and new parent support, we support birthing families achieve important milestones, strengthen parent-baby bonding, and boost long-term parenting skills.

OUR VALUES

Respect: Holding complexity for people and cultures

Family: Relationships are at the heart of what we do

Justice: Boldly disrupting oppression

OUR VISION

Thriving children. Healthy families. Powerful communities.

OUR PURPOSE

Birthing people in the United States, especially Black and people of color, are at greater risk for negative health outcomes, including preterm birth, low birth weight, and mortality. Open Arms' clients come from communities that face disproportionate levels of trauma, structural racism, and gaps to quality health care. Culturally-matched perinatal support reduces medical interventions, adverse health outcomes, and improve long-term child development outcomes.



"If Markia and Elizabeth didn't hand me all their knowledge, I don't know if I would've continued breastfeeding. I can't say enough how much I appreciate them!" - Simone, Lactation Support Program Client

Letter from the Executive Director

Stretch Marks: On 25 Years of Community-centered Birth Support

Stretch marks; all human bodies have them, whether young or old. As a brown-skinned person, my stretch marks were always visible, even as a young child. To me, stretch marks are signs of resilience, adaptation, and growth. Those of us in the world of pregnancy, birth, and early childhood know them well. Open Arms has 25 years of stretch marks that show the paths our families' lives have taken. We have the honor of walking with them for a precious time and supporting them as they begin one of life's greatest journeys.

One of those families is Simone's. After giving birth to her daughter, Penny, in April of this year, first-time mom Simone was adamant about wanting to breast/chestfeed but was having difficulty latching. After voicing her concerns at a checkup, Simone's midwife recommended that she connect with Open Arms for help, and Simone attended an Open Arms lactation lounge the very next day. From there, she was connected with Elizabeth, Lactation Consultant, and Markia, Lactation Support Peer Counselor, for one-on-one home visits.

These visits were transformative for Simone and Penny's lactation journey. Simone explains, "In the first one or two visits Penny and I learned how to latch. After a month or two we were professionals! You would've never thought there was a time when we didn't know what to do." Simone continues to stay connected to the Open Arms community, having recently attended our Black Breast/Chestfeeding Week Celebration with Surge Reproductive Justice.

Simone's experience is just one example of how our services are trusted by providers and community-centered in support.

While Open Arms has grown from five people who could fit cozily into one office to over 60 staff, contractors, volunteers, and 30 doulas working alongside us, our work has intentionally become deeper and more integrated as we have learned and grown.

We have added new services and support for our families almost every year for the past seven years; a family who comes to Open Arms today can receive support from a community-matched doula, as well as culturally responsive, carefully designed childbirth education classes, referrals to dozens of partner agencies, support with feeding their babies, and community-led early parenting support groups. Yet even as we've continued to grow and stretch our program offerings, the demand for our services continues to outpace our capacity. And the COVID-19 pandemic has only made our services more essential.

Open Arms is now out of young adulthood and our stretch marks are signs of our perfect imperfection. And after 25 years, we are still learning and growing. Thank you for continuing to support us as we continue to evolve, grow, and dream about what the next 25 years will bring.



Dila K Perera MSW MPH
Executive Director

36

Client Languages
Spoken

66

Client Countries
of Origin

536

Families Served
in 2021

87.9%

BIPOC Families

Over 5,200

Families Served
Since 1997

Our Growing Impact

After Open Arms established itself as a leader in community-based doula services, we responded to our families' needs beyond birth support by launching our Lactation Support Program and Family Support Services in 2020.

In 2021, Open Arms reached more families than ever before; 536 families received services from one or more of our programs: Doula Services, Lactation Support, Family Support Services, and Childbirth Education with community perinatal services partners. 87.9 percent of families served identified as Black, Indigenous, or other identities of color.

Our Lactation Support Program continued to grow and support more parents, as well as increase access to education opportunities for birthworkers. Our Lactation team held 21 educational engagements for families and 37 professional development workshops in 2021.

Now, we are proud to offer Childbirth Education classes for Black, Multiracial/BIPOC, and Spanish-speaking families! Our classes are led by experienced Childbirth Educators and holistically prepare birthing people and their families for childbirth and beyond.

95%

Babies born
full term

King County Overall: 91%

95%

Babies born at
healthy weight

WA State Overall: 93%

96%

Bodyfeeding
at birth

King County Overall: 97%

93%

Bodyfeeding at
six months

King County Overall: 36%

Our Doula Services continues to provide birthing people with comprehensive, culturally-aligned support during pregnancy, labor, and the postpartum period. Families needing extra support can rely on their Community-based Outreach Doula for guidance through the first two years of their child's life.

Whether enrolled in Birth Doula or Community-based Doula Services, our families achieve some of the best maternal health outcomes in the country.

3,500

Deliveries of essential baby items and fresh produce

35,000

Diapers provided in partnership with WestSide Baby

237

Hours of one-on-one lactation support

141

Virtual Lactation Lounges with community midwife partners

Although 2021 brought its challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic, our Lactation Support Team provided lactation education and bodyfeeding counseling with virtual Lactation Lounges, reaching 249 participants. One-on-one support also increased by 216 percent, with a total of 235 home visits in 2021.

Our Family Support Services' team of resource navigators and family connectors provides our families with deliveries of fresh produce in partnership with Tilth Alliance, free baby supplies through our Baby Boutique, and referrals to dozens of community organizations for holistic support that is available to everyone enrolled in our programs.



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