

## **Global Perinatal Services**

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### **Organization Mission:**

Global Perinatal Services (GPS) is a Black-, woman-, and refugee-led birth equity organization based in King and Pierce Counties whose mission is to provide community-based doula services that will educate, respect, and empower Black, refugee, and immigrant women and their families during pregnancy, birth, and into early parenting.

### **What are the compelling reasons for Impact 100 to partner with this organization?**

Currently, there are no BIPOC-led doula certifying agencies in the entire nation. This is a major need as doulas have been cited in countless medical studies as having the potential to mitigate risk for morbidity and mortality. This number is exponentially higher when accounting for minority women. As a result of this evidence, many municipalities and states are implementing doula programs to assist with reducing the maternal mortality racial disparity.

GPS is responding to a need specifically for doulas serving marginalized populations. Their doula training includes a breadth of focuses such as community-awareness, more extensive lactation and postpartum training, childbirth courses, and father-to-father preparation realizing that the women they serve will unlikely be able to afford multiple types of birth support. GPS needs funding to staff this doula certification program as well as be able to offer discounted course fees to applicants when needed.

### **What does the organization do?**

GPS is a Black, female, and refugee-led organization that offers direct services, support groups, advocacy, and education to eliminate racist practices adversely impacting expecting and new parents.

### **Who does the organization serve?**

GPS serves BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee communities, African-American (descendants of those impacted by chattel slavery) clients, parents of all genders. Their doulas speak Somali, Amharic, Tigrinya, Arabic, Oromo, Mandinka, Wolof, Shona, Maay Maay, Hindi, Susu, Nek, Bambara, French and English with 18 doulas from various backgrounds, including African-American. Most of their clients are enrolled in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or are under 200% of the poverty line.

### **How does the organization reflect, maintain proximity to and stay accountable to the community it serves?**

Their Executive Director is a Black, refugee woman who has worked as a community doula and midwife for many years. Their Board of Directors also represent the communities and the field that they work in. Their doulas are community-based, living in the same neighborhoods,

speaking the same languages, and sharing similar histories as the communities that they work with.

### **How is the organization addressing the root causes of social issues?**

GPS is addressing the root causes of racial disparities within perinatal care by positioning itself to become the first BIPOC-led doula certifying body in the nation. This is significant because the certifying bodies are the gatekeepers of *who* can become doulas and *how* they are trained. Historically and currently, these certifying bodies have been composed mostly of white people who have not centered the experience of Black, Indigenous Mothers of Color. As the first BIPOC led certifying body, GPS will infuse high-standard, community-based practices to provide doula support during the critical times of pregnancy, birth, and postpartum/early parenting. GPS intends to first become a state certifying program and then become a national certifying board. This initially will be led by Faisa Farole, the Executive Director, who has served on previous certifying boards and has over 17 years practicing as a doula.

Additionally, GPS participates in and leads advocacy at a local and state level, independently and through the Doulas 4 All coalition. GPS partnered with state elected officials to support the passing of a state bill that allows Medicaid funding to be allocated for doulas and will continue to participate in the coalition to advocate for best practices as the bill moves into the implementation phase. They are also advocating for systems change so doulas can be recognized as medical professionals and therefore be able to attend appointments and advocate for their clients when restrictions (such as COVID protocol) are in place.

### **How is the organization collaborating with other community-based organizations?**

GPS demonstrates the philosophy of “by the community for the community.” They started partnering with the Afghan refugee community by gathering and donating supplies which then opened doors to programs such as Birthing in America, a four day workshop that educates the community about what it’s like to give birth in America.

GPS also collaborates with medical professionals in the hospital system by training and educating them on birth equity, anti-racism, cultural competency, language barriers, and more. Doulas presence in the hospitals at birth allows them to build relationships with resident doctors and nurses who are allies. One resident doctor collaborated with GPS, witnessing racism in the workplace. They collaborated to file a report and suggest a new position, similar to an ombudsman, who would monitor compliance with anti-discrimination laws, as well as perform outreach and mediation services for underserved communities.

### **What is the vision for the organization in 5 years?**

GPS envisions creating the first BIPOC-run doula certifying body in the state of Washington and then expanding to be a national model. GPS will be a catalyst for building a doula profession that is inclusive, professional, diverse and community-centered. This ensures that more Black, refugee and immigrant families are empowered during pregnancy, birth and early parenting. They will also continue to train and hire BIPOC doulas and pay them high livable wages.

**What is the organization's area of greatest need?**

GPS needs funding for growth, specifically for their new doula-certification program. They also need funds so that they can offer discounted program fees for those applicants that qualify.

**Highlight a story of impact.**

It is hard to capture all the patient advocacy work GPS does in one story. Below are just a few of the many situations in which they interject on a mother's behalf to advocate for healthy deliveries:

- In a hospital birth setting, medical interpreters are not readily available, and birthing mothers who don't speak English are often overlooked and their needs are not addressed. (GPS has trained doulas in more than 23 languages.)
- GPS clients are sometimes told that there are no beds for them, only to find a Black nurse on staff who manages to advocate for them and find them space when they were initially denied. (GPS doulas advocate on a mother's behalf so she doesn't have to.)
- GPS doulas speak of clients who are treated disrespectfully by hospital staff if they are known to be experiencing homelessness including a client who was accidentally given two doses of fentanyl and almost died, and another who was turned away from a hospital while close to birth and almost gave birth in an Uber, only to be dropped off at another hospital's emergency room. (GPS doulas are able to address bias and take steps towards ensuring a healthy birth experience.)

These are the real life stories of Black people who are 3-4 times more likely to die during pregnancy, birth, or postpartum than non-Hispanic white women. This disparity has many causes, but the implicit bias and sometimes explicit racism of medical providers is a hugely significant reason.