

A REAL CONVERSATION ABOUT MEN AND PREGNANCY MINI PROJECT

FINAL REPORT

The goal of the Community Co-Learning Mini Project “A Real Conversation about Men and Pregnancy” is to increase the community’s access to information on maternal and child health, with specific emphasis on the role of men. This co-learning cohort taps into two main strengths: the participant’s standing in the community as a respected leader, fatherhood practitioner, and host of the long-running radio show Community Health Dialogue; and, community radio, a medium that has played an important role in African American culture, most notably in the history of the civil rights movement.

Under the leadership of Clarence Jones, in October 2019 the mini project hosted a series of shows entitled “A Real Conversation about Men and Pregnancy” on community radio station KMOJ. KMOJ has an estimated listening base of 140,000 per week. The shows aired on four dates and tackled various topics: October 4 (Pregnancy Desirability), October 7 (Father’s Role in Preconception Health Part 1), October 14 (Father’s Role in Preconception Health Part 2), October 21 (Stress & Mental Health), and October 28 (Social Support for Men). The conversations continued during a luncheon held June 12, 2020 at Phelps Park in Minneapolis. The event was a way for fatherhood practitioners to come together after the suspension of group activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to celebrate the work done and that will be done around the role of men in reducing African American infant mortality. COVID precautions taken during this event included serving of pre-packaged meals, social distancing, and wearing of face masks (except when eating). At this event, several members agreed to work together to hold a Father’s Day March from the Sabathani Community Center to the corner of 38th and Chicago Avenue, the site of the George Floyd memorial service. More than 200 people joined the walk.



Participants learned three important lessons this mini project. One, there is plenty of room for improvement in so far as engaging men in their partner’s pregnancy and in the baby’s life because either they are routinely excluded or many of them do not know how to be engaged. Two, oftentimes society does not offer them the opportunities that would allow them to be fully engaged in their lives. Third, black radio continues to play an important role in contemporary society and can serve as conduit of health information. To move the needle on African American infant mortality disparities, the cohort recommends that program policies or clinic protocols include the following:

- Expand the role of fathers in pre- and post-natal care.
- Disseminate more health information, including the role of men, using cultural media such as African American radio

- Provide support groups for fathers or whole families (radio can play a role in supplementing the information they receive in these groups).
- Provide equitable opportunities for parents and their children that would enable them to achieve optimal health, including living wage jobs with paid sick and family leave and affordable quality housing.

About Clarence Jones:

Robert “Clarence “Jones, M. Ed., CPH, CHW, CPE is a Community Engagement Strategist. He has tremendous passion for health issues involving men of color. He is a founding member of Hue-MAN, a community collaboration of organizations that promotes “Healthy Men, Healthy Families, and Healthy Communities to address the health care crises among young and middle-aged men, primarily men of color. He convened an advisory group with the Council for Minnesotans of African heritage with fatherhood practitioners to introduce House bill HF3301 calling for the creation of a Fatherhood Commission in Minnesota to strengthen the positive role and engagement of fathers in the lives of their families. He participated in the African Heritage Day on the Hill at the Minnesota Capitol and spoke with legislators. He helped organize the annual conference of the Minnesota Fathers and Families Network (MFFN) in February 2020, with a focus on infant mortality and children's health. He presented on the status of fatherhood policies in Minnesota with the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network led by Dr. Jessica Pearson and Dr. Jay Fagin of the Center for Policy Research at Temple University.

His life work also includes the following:

- *Member of the Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) Executive Leadership team and the Public Health Disparities Research Board (PHDR) at the University of Minnesota.*
- *Past board member of the Minnesota Urban Area Health Education Center (AHEC), the Mayor’s Representative and co-chair for the Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) for the City of Minneapolis, and National Community Representative for the National Children’s Study (NCS).*
- *Created the Clippers and Curls Project, a collaborative partnership that utilized doctors, nurses, and Community Health Workers to provide services aboard a 37-foot medical mobile unit. The project also provided health screening and heart health information to barbers, beauticians, and community members within barbershops and salons.*
- *Served as Director of Community Engagement at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Minneapolis, and as Adjunct Professor at University of Saint Catherine’s School of Public Health.*