



*For Release on August 28, 2023*

## **CHEER Receives \$6,000,000 Cooperative Agreement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

Boston, MA, August 2023: The Center for Health Equity, Education, and Research (CHEER) at Boston Medical Center has received a \$6,000,000 cooperative agreement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The funds will support a Hospital-based Quality Improvement Collaborative to Improve Maternity Care Practices Supportive of Breastfeeding, with a goal of decreasing racial inequities in hospital breastfeeding rates, especially among African Americans.

In collaboration with the CDC, CHEER will expand its CHAMPS (Communities and Hospitals Advancing Maternity Practices) model to enroll 100 hospitals nationwide. CHAMPS will bring together experienced partners specializing in racial equity, including ROSE (Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere), a nationally acclaimed organization promoting breastfeeding among African American families. The program will activate a diverse team of interdisciplinary US experts to increase safe, equitable hospital practices, consistent with the WHO/UNICEF's *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding* (Ten Steps) in a 3-year initiative beginning on September 30th, 2023.

"This is a great chance for CHAMPS to expand our work nationally, building on our successful projects in Mississippi, and with American Indian/Alaska Native populations," said Anne Merewood, PhD, MPH, Director of CHEER and CHAMPS, and an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine at Boston University. "We're honored to be entrusted with the work and to be able to collaborate with many of our fabulous colleagues in the field of racial equity."

CHAMPS National will enroll, train, and support 100 US and territorial hospitals to safely implement and sustain the Ten Steps, using strategies designed to address institutional racism and quality improvement.

US breastfeeding rates are lowest among Black infants due, in part, to institutional racism and lack of quality, evidence-based prenatal and postpartum care. Breastfeeding-supportive, evidence-based maternity practices equitably applied increase hospital breastfeeding rates, especially in populations at the highest risk of not breastfeeding.

CHEER's CHAMPS model has a track record of improving breastfeeding rates and significantly decreasing racial inequities in hospital breastfeeding rates in communities of need. This cooperative agreement with the CDC will allow CHAMPS to make a national mark not only on increasing breastfeeding rates and decreasing racial disparities but in shaping the course of Ten Steps implementation in the United States for decades to come.

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### **About CHEER**

The Center for Health Equity, Education, and Research (CHEER) at Boston Medical Center and the Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine is a world-class center for maternal-child health advocacy, training, and research. CHEER is dedicated to advancing health equity through collaboration with community-based partners and providing technical assistance, training, evaluation, and inspiration. <https://cheerequity.org/>



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**About CDC**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) works to protect America's health, safety, and security. The CDC uses grants and cooperative agreements to fund research and non-research public health programs that advance the agency's public health mission domestically and abroad to keep Americans safe and healthy where they work, live, and play. <https://www.cdc.gov/>

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