

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## CHAMPS wins final phase of the HHS Office on Women’s Health Reducing Disparities in Breastfeeding Innovation Challenge

Boston, MA, February 2024 – Mississippi CHAMPS, a program of the Center for Health Equity, Education, and Research (CHEER) at Boston Medical Center, has won a third consecutive national award for reducing racial disparities in breastfeeding. MS CHAMPS (Communities and Hospitals Advancing Maternity Practices) is one of only five US programs to receive the Reducing Disparities in Breastfeeding Innovation Challenge Phase 3 award, created by the Office on Women’s Health to reward programs that increase breastfeeding rates, decrease disparities, and successfully expand in the United States. After winning a Phase 1 award in 2021 and a Phase 2 award in 2023, CHAMPS has now received all three prizes in the challenge, totaling \$100,000.



*MS CHAMPS hospital training  
(August 2023)*

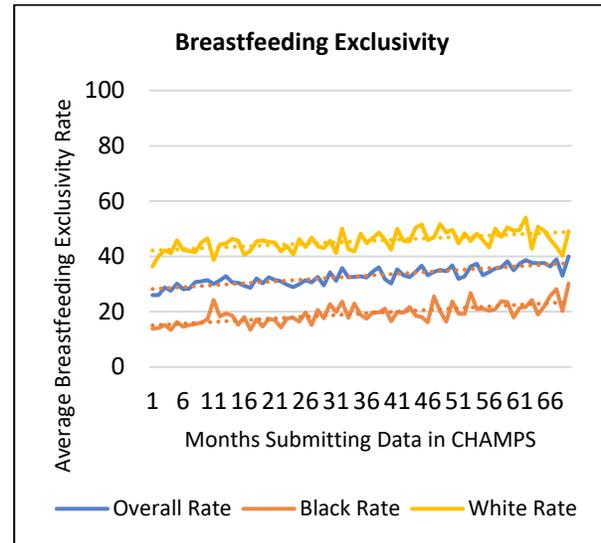
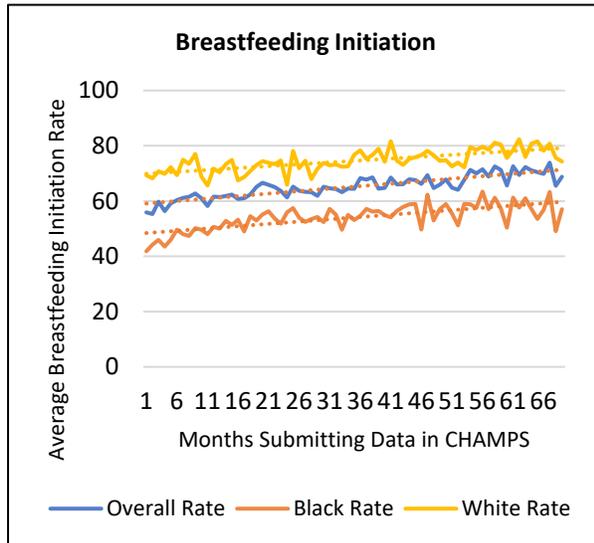
MS CHAMPS seeks to improve maternal and child health outcomes and combat racial disparities through the promotion of breastfeeding and Baby-Friendly practices across Mississippi. The program works with Mississippi birthing hospitals to help them meet the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and achieve and sustain Baby-Friendly designation. Additionally, MS CHAMPS supports partners in improving maternal-child health within historically underserved and vulnerable communities.

“We’re really proud of this achievement, and most of all, of what it means for the mothers and babies of Mississippi,” says Anne Merewood, PhD, MPH, Director of the CHAMPS program.

In September 2023, CHAMPS’ work was also recognized by a \$6,000,000 cooperative agreement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to expand the program and enroll 100 hospitals across the nation.

Since MS CHAMPS launched, the average rate of breastfeeding initiation at enrolled hospitals increased from 56% in 2015 (when data collection began) to 69% in 2023, and the average rate of exclusive breastfeeding increased from 26% to 40%. The rate of breastfeeding initiation for Black mother-infant dyads increased 15 percentage points, from 42% in 2015 to 57% in 2023, and the rate of breastfeeding exclusivity for Black mother-infant dyads increased 16 percentage points, from 14% to 30%. Critically, the gap in breastfeeding initiation between Black and White mother-infant dyads narrowed by 0.05 percentage points each month.

### Breastfeeding rates over time among MS CHAMPS hospitals



*ROSE Community Transformers training*

Expanding steadily, CHAMPS has worked with American Indian/Alaska Native populations, states in the South, and especially Mississippi, where the number of Baby-Friendly designated hospitals increased from 0 to 29, with over 75% of the state’s births now in Baby-Friendly hospitals.

Mississippi partners include Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere (ROSE), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Mississippi, Every Mother, the Mississippi Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative, and the Mississippi Women, Infants and Children’s Nutrition Program (WIC). MS CHAMPS has also received funding from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Bower Foundation.

#### About the Office on Women’s Health

The Office on Women’s Health was established in 1991 within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). OWH coordinates women’s health efforts across HHS and addresses critical women’s health issues by informing and advancing policies, educating healthcare professionals and consumers, and supporting innovative programs. Learn more at <https://www.womenshealth.gov>.

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