



Having Her Say **Black Mothers** **Narrative Overview**





CA Black Women's Collective Empowerment Institute initiated *Having Her Say: Black Motherhood Narratives* – a research initiative, sponsored by First 5 LA, aimed at collecting qualitative data to better understand the experiences of Black Mothers with children aged five and under in Los Angeles County.

Our objective was to capture the stories of Black Mothers and document them in a print and digital tool to showcase the experiences of Black Mothers with children ages five and under as they navigate through the health and social systems that they need.

The Key to our project was our innovative research design. We are committed to engaging Black Mothers in meaningful ways. We did this primarily by going to the spaces where we naturally gather. This included visiting churches, community health fairs, service organization meetings and child dance practices. Our engagement with Black Mothers also included conducting one-on-one interviews, both in-person and virtually, in community groups, homes and other familiar settings.

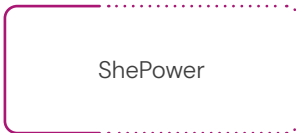
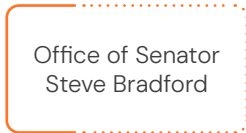
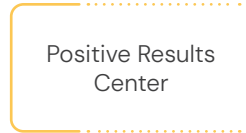
In addition to sharing their stories in public shared spaces, mothers also utilized Facebook messenger and text messages to share their opinions, experiences and motherhood photos.

What We learned



Policy, System Change or Collaborative Strategy	Key activities conducted to move the needle toward success.	What has success looked like so far? Share the outcome(s) of these efforts – e.g., 50 community advocates were trained, focus group data was analyzed and shared with key partners, etc.)
Policy & Systems Change	Provider Listening Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted (3) listening sessions with (14) healthcare providers, legislators, and service organization leaders leading in Black maternal health, early childhood development, Women's safety and advocacy Gathered vital resources information for Black mothers and children
Collaborative Strategy	Community-based Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted (3) focus groups with Black moms in LA and LBC Hosted (3) community Story sharing opportunities in Long Beach, CA (Blk Women's Expo, Feminist Uprising & Black Girl Joy-LA) Hosted an online Facebook program
Systems Change	1:1 Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted (7) 1:1 interviews with mothers Disseminated surveys to Black Mothers who participated in the program or we had engaged.
Collaborative Strategy	Community Partnered – Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminated state & county specific (SPA 6 &8) resource materials to 30+ Black moms

Project Partners



Policy Change and Practice Transformation Recommendations

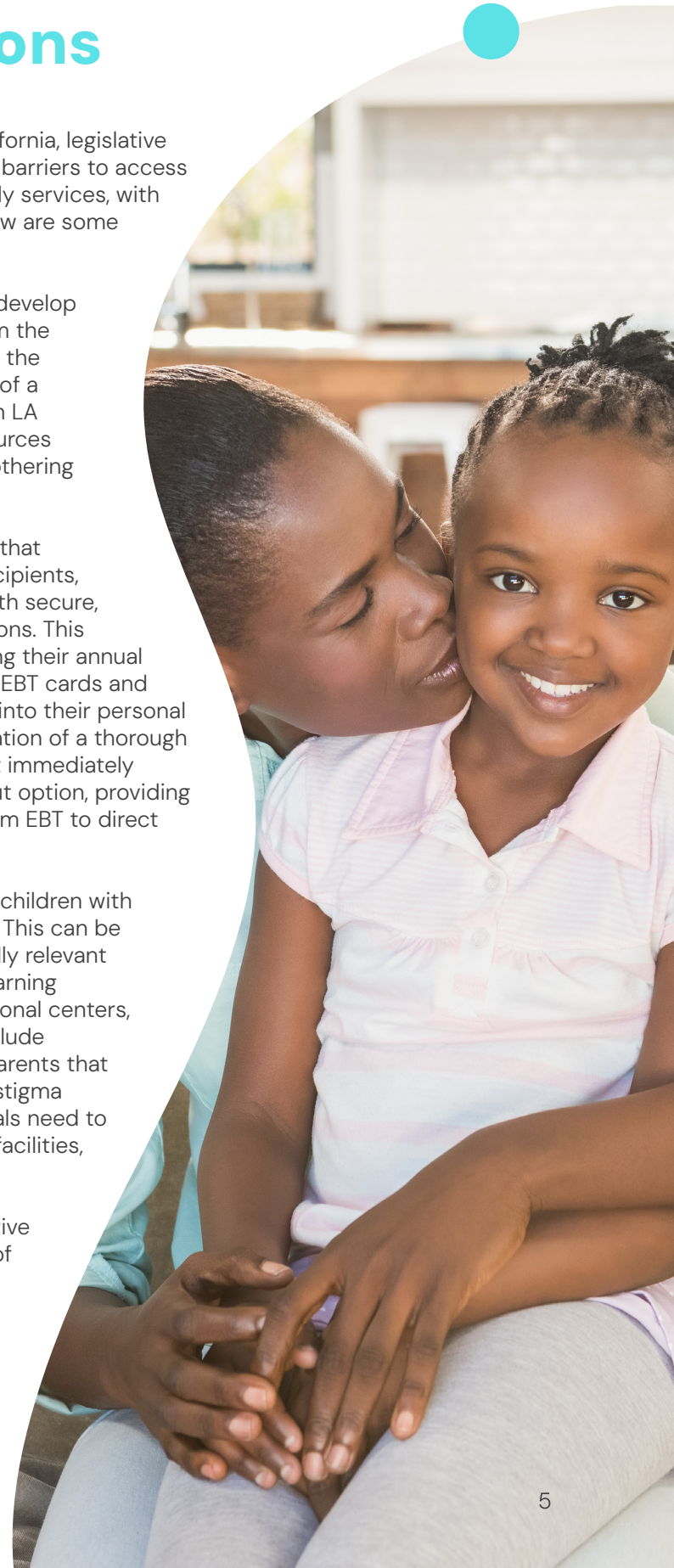
To support Black mothers of children ages 0–5 in California, legislative policy recommendations should focus on addressing barriers to access for healthcare, economic support, childcare, and family services, with an emphasis on cultural competency and equity. Below are some targeted policy recommendations:

Time and resources should be given to research and develop culturally specific online tools for Black Mothers. From the widespread use of the PEANUT app by Black Moms in the Having Her Say study, we can infer that the feasibility of a tool specifically designed to connect Black Mothers in LA County to accessible parenting and educational resources and information, along with opportunities to share mothering narratives, would be useful and acceptable.

A finding based on the interviews with Black Mothers that stood out to us was the need to provide CalWorks recipients, particularly vulnerable Black Mothers in LA County, with secure, flexible and transparent choice for their cash aid options. This includes allowing CalWorks recipients to opt out during their annual redetermination period of receiving their cash aid via EBT cards and choosing alternative methods such as direct deposit into their personal or savings accounts. This will need to include the creation of a thorough notification and transparent education campaign that immediately informs all current and future recipients of the opt-out option, providing clear and accessible information on how to switch from EBT to direct deposit.

Another concern raised was by Black Mothers raising children with autism and the lack of culturally appropriate support. This can be addressed by ensuring the implementation of culturally relevant training and support systems in every support and learning environment including but not limited to daycare, regional centers, clinics and educational institutions. This must also include developing educational materials and resources for parents that take into account the cultural nuances and potential stigma related to autism in Black communities. These materials need to be available at social service spaces, clinics, daycare facilities, educational environments, community centers, etc.

By addressing these barriers through targeted legislative actions, California can better support Black mothers of children aged 0–5. However, a more holistic approach is needed which should include expanding healthcare access, improving childcare affordability, enhancing economic stability, and providing culturally competent services will empower Black mothers and ensure that their children thrive during these crucial early years.



A Comprehensive and Equitable Approach

01

Expand Access to Affordable Childcare

- **Universal Childcare Access:** Pass legislation to provide subsidized or free high-quality childcare for low-income families, particularly prioritizing Black mothers. Expanding access to affordable early childhood education programs like Head Start can support working mothers.
- **Increase Subsidy Funding:** Increase the funding and availability of state childcare subsidies and vouchers for low-income families, ensuring eligibility for mothers working part-time or attending school.
- **Expand Family Childcare Options:** Provide grants to help create more licensed family childcare providers in communities with highest percentage of single parents, making it easier for them to access culturally relevant and convenient care.

02

Enhance Maternal Health and Postpartum Services

- **Extend Postpartum Med-Cal Coverage:** Extend Med-Cal postpartum coverage to at least 24 months to ensure that Black mothers continue to receive necessary healthcare, including mental health and family planning services. Currently, California's Provisional Postpartum Care Extension (PPCE) extended Medicaid eligibility through 1 year postpartum for women enrolled in Medi-Cal with annual household incomes of 138%–322% of the federal poverty level and maternal mental health diagnoses.
- **Maternal Mental Health Services:** Mandate that all health providers screen for postpartum depression and other mental health conditions in Black mothers and provide culturally appropriate mental health services and resources.

03

Increase Access to Paid Family Leave and Economic Support

- **Paid Family Leave Expansion:** Expand California's Paid Family Leave program to ensure that low-income Black mothers can take adequate paid time off without jeopardizing their financial security. Consider increasing wage replacement rates for low-income families.
- **Cash Assistance Programs:** Expand eligibility for programs like CalWORKs to provide direct cash assistance and emergency funds to Black mothers in need, especially those transitioning out of pregnancy or caring for infants and young children.
- **Workplace Flexibility:** Encourage policies that promote flexible work schedules and remote work options for Black mothers, particularly in industries where this has been less accessible.

04

Increase Access to Housing for Black Mothers

- **Affordable Housing Prioritization:** Create housing assistance programs specifically targeting Black mothers, including prioritization for Section 8 vouchers, rent subsidies, and access to low-income housing developments.
- **Tenant Protections:** Strengthen tenant protection laws, such as eviction moratoriums and rent control, to ensure that Black mothers with young children have stable housing.

05

Culturally Competent Healthcare and Supportive Services

- **Culturally Competent Care:** Pass legislation that requires healthcare and early childhood services to provide training in cultural competency, implicit bias, and anti-racism for service providers, ensuring Black mothers receive equitable treatment and care.
- **Community Health Workers:** Fund programs that employ community health workers and navigators who can assist Black mothers in navigating health and social services, providing culturally relevant guidance on maternal care, nutrition, and child development.
- **Expand Home Visiting Programs:** Invest in and expand home visiting programs, like the California Home Visiting Program, specifically targeting Black mothers. Home visitors can provide parenting education, health check-ups, and early childhood intervention services.



06

Access to Early Childhood Education and Developmental Services

- **Developmental Screening and Early Intervention:** Pass legislation to ensure all Black children are regularly screened for developmental delays or disabilities and have access to early intervention services. Remove barriers to getting these services, particularly for low-income families.
- **Expand Preschool Access:** Increase funding for universal preschool programs that offer free or low-cost, high-quality preschool education, making it easier for Black mothers to enroll their children in early childhood education.

07

Food Security and Nutrition Programs

- **Expand WIC Program:** Ensure that all eligible Black mothers have access to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Streamline the application process and ensure more retailers accept WIC benefits.
- **Increase Access to Healthy Foods:** Invest in food programs that expand access to affordable, fresh produce in Black communities. Support local farmers markets, urban agriculture initiatives, and grocery stores in food deserts to combat nutrition disparities that affect mothers and young children.

08

Improve Accessibility and Streamlining of Services

- **Create "One-Stop" Service Centers:** Establish comprehensive service centers for Black mothers, offering healthcare, childcare assistance, financial aid, and early childhood programs under one roof to reduce the complexity of navigating the system.
- **Online Portals and Mobile Clinics:** Provide easily accessible online portals and mobile clinics to sign up for services like Medicaid, SNAP, and early intervention programs, reducing the transportation barriers often faced by Black mothers.

09

Support for Black Mothers with Special Needs Children

- **Special Education Resources:** Ensure Black mothers of children with disabilities or developmental delays have access to special education resources, including early childhood special education and therapies.
- **Respite Care Services:** Provide respite care programs that give Black mothers of children with special needs temporary relief from caregiving responsibilities, allowing them time to rest and access other supportive services.

