



Center for Health Equity, Education, & Research

Boston Medical Center • 88 East Newton St., Vose 3 • Boston, MA 02118

P: 1(617) 414.6466 • F: 1(617) 414.2662

CHEERequity@gmail.com • www.CHEERequity.org

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New CHAMPS Grant from the Bower Foundation!

CHEER has received a new, 3-year grant from the Bower Foundation to continue work with Baby-Friendly designated Mississippi hospitals.

CHEER (the Center for Health Equity, Education, and Research at Boston University School of Medicine) has run Mississippi CHAMPS since 2014, working with communities and hospitals to support, promote, and increase breastfeeding. The program also helps hospitals to gain the coveted WHO Baby-Friendly Hospital title. Since 2014, 8 Mississippi hospitals have been designated Baby-Friendly, and breastfeeding rates across CHAMPS-enrolled hospitals in Mississippi have risen from 49% to 67%. Rates have particularly increased among African American women, from 33% to 56%.



(Merit Health Wesley, Hattiesburg MS.)



(Baptist Memorial Hospital-North Mississippi, Oxford MS)

“This new grant will help us to work directly with Baby-Friendly designated hospitals in Mississippi, to help them ingrain the new policies and practices, and to support them with ongoing training and data collection,” said Anne Merewood PhD MPH, an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at BUSM, and Director of CHEER and CHAMPS. “Also, it will help us to work across Mississippi to engage statewide support.”

Already, CHAMPS has a working relationship with WIC, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Mississippi, and MSPQC (the Mississippi Perinatal Quality Collaborative). Community level support is provided by ROSE (Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere), a national organization supporting breastfeeding among women of color. Many other breastfeeding initiatives have also gotten off the ground in Mississippi since 2014, including a milk bank, and the opening of many Baby Cafes™ where women in the community can get support.

“This work is really supporting a more humane and evidence-based approach to maternal child health at the hospital level – it’s about much more than breastfeeding,” says Dr Merewood. “But sometimes it takes time for new policies and practices to become accepted and routine. This new grant will help Mississippi hospitals to establish Baby-Friendly practices as the norm.”

