



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**  
Ashwin Vasani, MD, PhD  
*Commissioner*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Wednesday, April 13, 2022**

**FAMILY WELLNESS SUITES REOPEN AND WELCOME THE COMMUNITY BACK  
AT NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH ACTION CENTERS**

*Family Wellness Suites provide a welcoming space for parents and babies and offer programs including birthing classes, breastfeeding support, and other resources*

*To recognize Black Maternal Health Week and the reopening of the Family Wellness Suites, the Health Department is hosting community events at the Neighborhood Health Action Centers*

**April 13, 2022** – The Health Department today announced the reopening of the Family Wellness Suites at its Neighborhood Health Action Centers. The Family Wellness Suites provide birthing people and their families a safe, welcoming, and supportive space where families can participate in a range of parenting and birthing classes, connect to community resources and receive critical supplies like car seats and pack n’ plays.

The reopening takes place during Black Maternal Health Week and to mark the occasion, the Health Department is hosting a series of community events at the Neighborhood Health Action Centers in Brownsville, East Harlem, and East Tremont. The activities include Meet the Doula, Respectful Care at Birth; Breastfeeding 101; Mommy & Me Yoga; Childbirth Education; and Read Aloud with the Public Library. To find out the location of the Neighborhood Health Action Centers and how to register, click [here](#).

“When families do well, our city does better,” said **New York City Mayor Eric Adams**. “That’s why our administration is committed to ensuring that all new parents have the tools and support they need to take care of themselves and our youngest New Yorkers. Family Wellness Suites give parents-to-be the skills they need to thrive on their journey and I’m thrilled that we are reopening these suites to serve families across the city.”

“Every child, regardless of where they were born in our city, their parents’ language or culture of origin, the color of their skin, or their parent’s socioeconomic status, deserves a healthy start in life,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasani**. “The Family Wellness Suites are necessary spaces in the fight to reduce maternal health disparities and create healthier families in New York City.”

The Family Wellness Suites at the Neighborhood Health Action Centers offer a range of services, including:

- Childbirth education
- Newborn care classes

- Parenting classes
- Infant Massage
- Reproductive health workshops
- Referrals to social services

In March 2020, in response to the COVID19 pandemic, the Family Wellness Suites paused the on-site programs, transitioned to virtual workshops, and expanded services to include emergency diaper distribution.

The Family Wellness Suites are part of the City’s plan to reduce maternal and infant health inequities. In New York City, from 2001-2018, Black birthing people were on average 9.4 times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related death compared to White birthing people. In 2019, Black birthing people also experienced a rate of infant mortality 3.3 times higher than their White counterparts.

These disparities are rooted in racism and structural inequity. Contributing factors include decreased access to care; residential segregation and lower educational attainment; and the stressors stemming from racism. Even when controlling for socioeconomic and educational status, Black birthing people are still more likely to suffer from severe morbidity and mortality than those of other races and ethnicities.

“By resuming in-person services, the Family Wellness Suites are providing a range of resources that are vital to empowering families to provide the strongest start for their babies before and after their birth.” said **Dr. Michelle Morse, Health Department Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Commissioner for the Center for Health Equity and Community Wellness**. “These services are necessary to meet the needs and ensure healthy conditions and environments for families who live in communities that have been marginalized and disinvested.”

Last month, Mayor Eric Adams [announced](#) the expansion of programs and resources to address disparities in maternal and infant health. The Citywide Doula Initiative provides free access to doulas for birthing families and focus on 33 neighborhoods with the greatest social needs. The Midwifery Initiative includes all 38 public and private birthing facilities citywide and will allow the Health Department, for the first time, to gather data on births and care with midwives; create partnerships with midwife organizations, private practices, and community members; and develop a report on midwives in New York City. Finally, the Maternity Hospital Quality Improvement Network (MHQIN) will be expanded across all 38 birthing facilities across the city in an effort to improve maternal care at local hospitals and birthing centers.

The Health Department also offers the following programs and resources to promote healthy pregnancy outcomes and reproductive health:

- **Citywide Doula Initiative**  
Citywide Doula Initiative (CDI) provides doula support both at home and in the clinical setting, with three prenatal home visits, support during labor and delivery, and four postpartum visits. Clients who give birth at home will receive the same number of visits. The program will include screening and referrals for family needs and stressors, such as

food insecurity. The model of care will be consistent across the city, and uniform data will be collected for a rigorous evaluation of the doula services provided through this initiative. The Citywide Doula Initiative will aim to train 50 doulas and reach 500 families by the end of June.

- **New Family Home Visits**

New Family Home Visits (NFHV) offers a range of evidence-based home-visiting services via trained health care workers—from breastfeeding support and creating a safe home, to mental health screenings, to connections to social services. The program is open to first-time families in the TRIE neighborhoods, who live in NYCHA in the TRIE neighborhoods, or who are engaged with child welfare. Mayor Adams announced \$30 million in funding for FY23 for New Family Home Visits to expand access to care and create a system for intake and referrals and enhanced capacity for community partners. To sign up, families can call 311 or (718) 637-5235.

- **The Nurse-Family Partnership**

The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is an evidence-based home visiting program that connects first-time expectant parents with trained nurses to promote healthy pregnancy outcomes, child development, and economic self-sufficiency and independence. Pregnant people are eligible if they have never parented before and if they qualify for WIC or Medicaid. NFP serves families in all five boroughs, regardless of age, immigration status or gender identity. Pregnant persons are enrolled before the 29<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy and can remain in the program until the child turns two. Under the New Family Home Visits Program, NFP is expected to offer services to an additional 500 birthing families by June 2022.

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