



ABOUT MAYA

OUR MISSION

In April 2023, MAYA adopted a new mission, emphasizing our investment in racial justice and our commitment to systems change:

MAYA's mission is to empower BIPOC and marginalized birthing people and birthworkers, and to create positive change in the systems that impact them.

A few of the ways we express our mission:

- Ensuring that all our services are free and accessible
- Delivering care to our Spanish-speaking immigrant clients in Spanish
- Following the JJ way,[®] a model proven to improve outcomes and reduce racial disparities
- Hiring staff from our client-base and their communities
- Training those members internally, through our Perinatal Mentor Training, and covering costs for them to train as doulas and educators
- Partnering with like-minded individuals and organizations to work for systems change
- Delivering trainings in areas such as obstetric racism

ABOUT MAYA

MAYA is a small nonprofit based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We work to empower birthing people and incarcerated individuals through our perinatal and mental health services. Part of our purpose is to respond to the racial discrepancies in maternal and infant health outcomes by providing culturally sensitive care to our majority Black and Latina clientele while also collaborating with individuals, communities, and organizations working to improve birth experiences and outcomes for Black birthing people locally and nationally. Our staff is made up of mentors, doulas, and counselors, who provide perinatal classes, free doula care, and counseling to our participants.

A BRIEF HISTORY

MAYA Organization was launched in 2009 as a volunteer-run agency serving adoptive and birth-parents. Over the years our programming evolved, incorporating a counseling program that included services for incarcerated women separated from their children in Allegheny County jail in 2014. In 2016 we began offering prenatal classes and also opened our pantry of free infant- and parent-care items. By the 2020s our perinatal services developed to their current state, which includes mentorship, education, doula care, and counseling. At the same

time, we continued to provide mental health care to incarcerated women and women and men detained in the jail diversion program at Passages to recovery.

OUR SERVICES

Today, MAYA offers two programs: our perinatal support services and “HIP”: Hope for Incarcerated People. In 2023 we served 532 perinatal clients with mentorship, online birth and parenting classes, doula care, and counseling. Mentorship includes a range of activities, including one-on-one emotional support, assistance filling out personal paperwork, companionship during a doctor’s visit, and more. Our HIP program reached 257 incarcerated and detained individuals during 2023 with group psychoeducation and individual counseling, both delivered from a trauma-informed perspective that takes into account the needs of incarcerated people.

FAQ

Who does MAYA serve?

Approximately 39% of our perinatal clients are Black/African American, 33% are immigrants from Latin America, and the remainder white and other races. Our program for incarcerated individuals serves approximately 40% Black, 40% white, and 20% other races. In both programs, we serve a large number of low income and/or single parents and individuals with present or past struggles with addiction.

How many people does MAYA serve?

Our perinatal program serves over 600 individuals every year. Of those, 75+ request that a MAYA doula attend their births. We also serve over 250 incarcerated people (both men and women) every year.

How can I find out more about MAYA?

You can visit our [website](#) and sign up for our electronic newsletter using the form at our [contact page](#). We send quarterly newsletters, donation solicitations, event invitations, and occasional updates.

Can I volunteer at MAYA?

Unfortunately MAYA is not currently using volunteers, although for those who would like to get more involved we are looking for additional board members. If you have approximately three hours to share monthly, an interest in the wellbeing of perinatal and incarcerated individuals, an investment in equity for birthing people, and professional skills to share, you could be a good candidate for board membership. Just email your interest and resume to our [executive director](#).

What are MAYA's perinatal classes about?

MAYA offers birth and parenting classes online in English and Spanish. Grouped by trimester (including the fourth trimester+), class participants learn about matters most relevant to the stage of pregnancy or parenting that they are at. Grouping by trimester also creates cohorts of birthing people who build relationships with one another that are sometimes enduring and always nurturing. Class topics range from "Being Pregnant" to "Birth Overview," "Postpartum Mental Health," "Sleeping and Crying," and many more. Teachers are mentors and doulas employed (and sometimes trained) by MAYA, most of whom live in the same communities as their clients.

How does MAYA make its programs accessible to immigrants from Latin America?

MAYA offers perinatal services in English and Spanish, and our Spanish services are delivered by staff who are also immigrants. In addition to birth support, these staff members assist participants with matters related to documentation and accessing resources. Additionally, we do not require any documentation and because our services are free to all, we do not need to access health insurance or consider the status of clients.

What does MAYA's "Hope for Incarcerated People" (HIP) program involve?

HIP serves women who are incarcerated in Allegheny County Jail and women and men who are confined at Passages to Recovery, which is a jail diversion program for individuals on drug-related sentences. It includes group psychoeducation and individual counseling, both of which focus on making sense of trauma and the role it has played in individuals' lives and convictions. MAYA has also recently started providing prenatal support and doula services for pregnant incarcerated women. This is a critical service, as the jail offers no specific programming and only limited medical care for pregnant inmates.

What will my donation be used for?

Individual donations are generally directed wherever we have a need in our budget or used for general operating expenses. Unfortunately nonprofits have a lot of expenses, and many of them are not directly program-related, but are still just as necessary. If you would like your donation to go towards a specific expense, please contact our development director, Kate, at katy@mayaorganization.org or (412) 628-2938.

What work does MAYA do for birth equity/in response to the racial discrepancies in birth care and outcomes?

MAYA is involved in several collaborations working to improve birth experiences and outcomes for Black and marginalized birthing people. These include:

- Our Director of Civic Engagement (DCE), Amber Edmunds, is an advisor on the structural racism committee of First Steps & Beyond, an initiative of the Allegheny Health Network and other partners working on solutions to racial discrepancies in the realm of birth.
- We design curricula and teach providers, students, and community members on obstetric racism and related topics.
- Our DCE builds and steward relationships with important figures in the landscape of Black birth in Pittsburgh, e.g. leaders of other birth orgs, PA Doula Commission, Allegheny County Health Department, etc.
- She also travels nationally to discuss birth and build connections with other organizations doing similar work.
- Recently, we have been involved in representing the needs of birthing people and birthworkers to congress and senate.
- Our DCE is a Leader on UPMC's Community Doula Advisory Board
- We provide perinatal programming in Allegheny County Jail, and work to build relationships with jail personnel and defend the rights of our incarcerated clients.
- We mentor and support birthworkers from sister organizations who are in the process of completing practicums for doula or just need guidance.

In our own practices, we:

- Use a model called the JJ Way that has been proven to produce equitable outcomes.
- Because all of our services are free, they are accessible to people at all income levels. This is especially important in the realm of doula care, which can be expensive and exclusionary.
- We make it possible for our latina immigrant clients to receive care by providing perinatal education, doula care, and counseling in Spanish, usually delivered by staff who are also immigrants from Latin America.
- We ensure that the demographic breakdown of our staff matches that of our clients as closely as possible, so that we can provide culturally congruent care.

What is a birthworker?

Anyone who works directly with birthing people, including labor and delivery nurses, midwives, doulas, and obstetricians.

Does MAYA support abortion?

Absolutely. Birthing people are the owners and authors of their bodies, and have the right to decide whether to continue, terminate, or prevent pregnancies. MAYA's staff listen non-judgmentally, uphold participants' choices, and are available to accompany them for medical appointments and procedures.