

**Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute**

**African American Women and Breastfeeding**

## **The Courage to Love: Infant Mortality Commission Implications for Care, Research, and Public Policy to Reduce Infant Mortality Rates**

**2007**

Solutions to the problem of higher infant death rates among black families have eluded medical, health policy, and research communities for decades. African American women continue to face a disproportionately higher risk for delivering premature and low birthweight babies, many of whom die within their first year of life.

This background paper examines the critical relationship between breastfeeding and infant mortality among African Americans, the racial/ ethnic group with the lowest rate of breastfeeding. The authors explore the benefits of breastfeeding and the issues associated with racial/ethnic disparities in breastfeeding, concluding with an action plan for closing the gap through promotion of breastfeeding based on education, training, awareness, support, and research. This analysis complements and reinforces the recommendations of other Courage to Love: Infant Mortality Commission background and framing papers on infant mortality and maternal nutrition; infant mortality and resilience; the historical framework of policies and practices to reduce infant mortality; the authentic voices of those affected by infant mortality; and infant mortality in a global context.

Link to Study: <http://www.jointcenter.org/hpi/sites/all/files/IM-Breastfeeding.pdf>