



Community Leadership Pathways and Advocacy: Moving towards Equitable Breastfeeding Care and Support

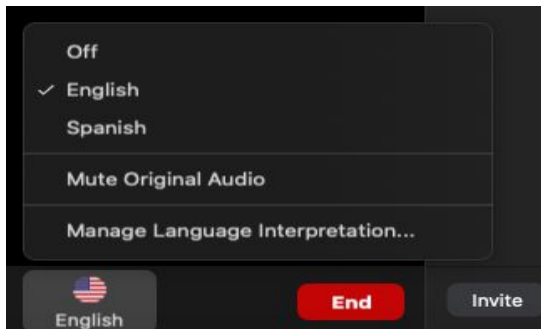
September 12, 2024

*2024 NOW Webinar Series, Imperative of NOW:
Community Power and Healing-Centered Advocacy*

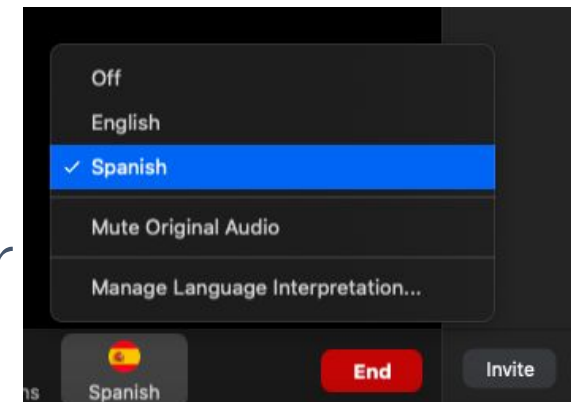


Language Justice: *Zoom Webinar Interpretación/ Interpretation*

1. In your meeting/webinar controls, click Interpretation. 
2. Click the language that you would like to hear.
3. (Optional) To only hear the interpreted language, click Mute Original Audio.



1. En los controles de la reunión o el seminario web, hacer clic en Interpretación.
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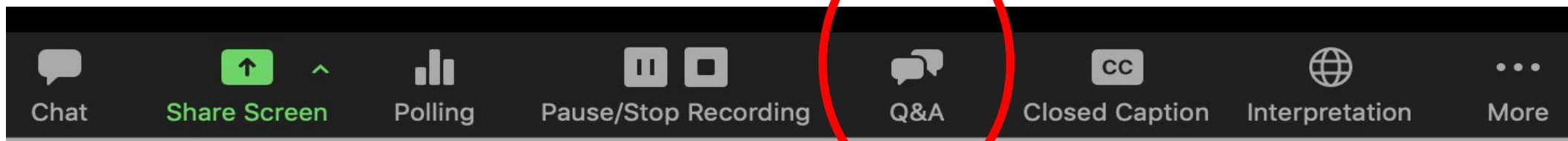


Housekeeping

- Spanish Language Access
 - Community Language Cooperative (CLC) based in Denver, CO
- Slides and recording will be posted on the NOW Forum (<https://www.networksofopportunity.org/Webinar>)
- Submit questions on dashboard
- Use the chat box for comments

Q&A

- Submit your questions by clicking on the Q&A icon at the bottom of your screen





Session Outline

- Welcome & Overview
- About Vital Village Networks and NOW
- *Community Leadership Pathways and Advocacy: Moving towards Equitable Breastfeeding Care and Support*
- Panel Discussion and Audience Q&A
- Closing

About Vital Village Networks

Vital Village Networks is a national collective of diverse change-makers and organizations committed to pioneering sustainable approaches to transforming child, family, and community wellbeing

Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing (NOW) is a national initiative powered by Vital Village Networks

NOW exists to achieve social transformation and racial justice by partnering with individuals, organizations, institutions, and coalitions across the country to build their capacity to equitably share power with communities that have faced ongoing racial oppression and marginalization.



Guiding Principles

BELONG - Centered in dignity and equity



LEARN - Those closest to the challenge are closest to the solution



ENGAGE - Design with, not for, users



TRANSFORM - Identify and frame challenges to address collectively

NOW Innovation Forum – Sign up to engage with a network of community leaders

EN ▾



Member Sign In

HOMEWhy NOW?Community StoriesBuilding Local CapacityConnect to NOWMore





Building community capacity to promote child wellbeing and achieve equity.

¡Ya está en marcha una versión en español de nuestro sitio web! Estamos muy emocionados de practicar la justicia del idioma, mientras tanto, le agradecemos su paciencia. ¡Gracias!

<https://www.networksofopportunity.org/>



2024 Webinar Series

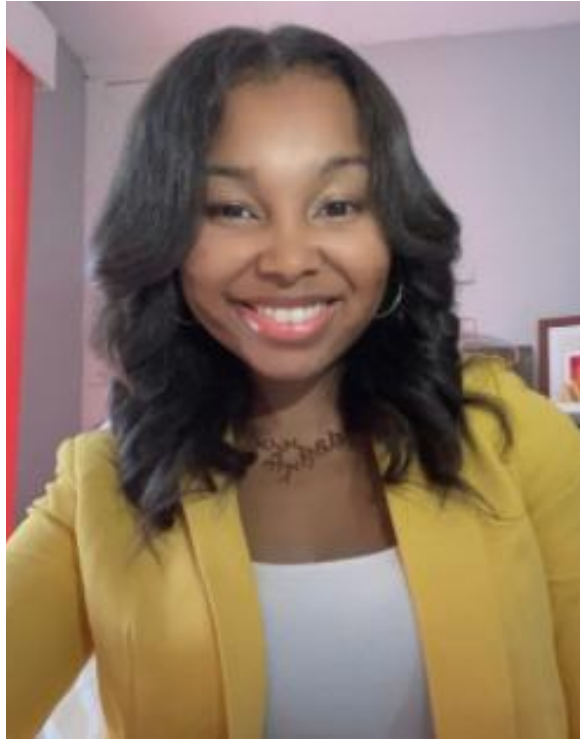
Imperative of NOW: Community Power and Healing-Centered Advocacy

- What does it look like to harness, activate and build community power?
- What can we learn from resident-led advocacy movements -- from voter education, birth equity, food systems, and early childhood education -- and their strategies towards self-advocacy, collective action, and legislative change?

Today's Webinar:

Community Leadership Pathways and Advocacy: Moving towards Equitable Breastfeeding Care and Support

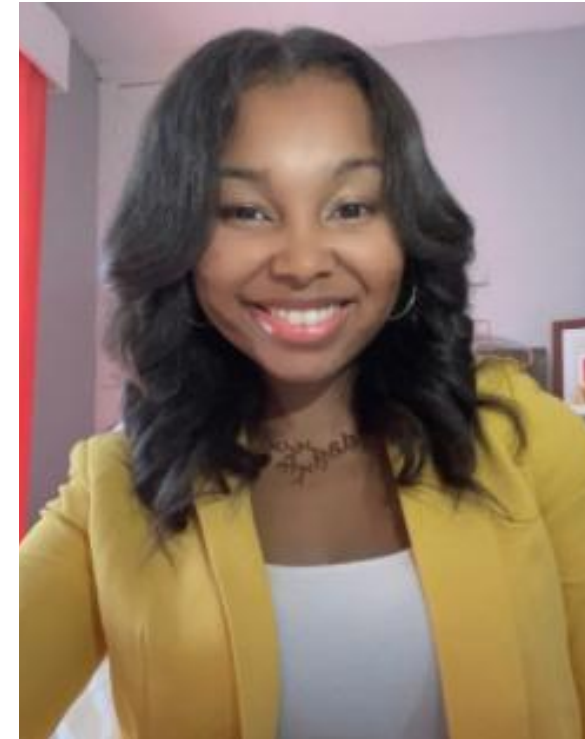
Featured Speakers



Shenell Ford
*Founder, Heart2Heartbeat
Lactation & Wellness*



Melody Cunningham
*Doula and Certified
Lactation Counselor, The
Melo Mama*



Shenell Ford
*Founder, Heart2Heartbeat
Lactation & Wellness*

HEART2HEARTBEAT

LACTATION & WELLNESS

A Labor of Love



SHENELL R. FORD

IBCLC, CPE, CBE APPRENTICE

SPRINGFIELD, MA



JOURNEY TO IBCLC & BEYOND



Breastfeeding
Momma

Certified
Lactation
Counselor

H2HBeat
Lactation &
Wellness

Childbirth
Educator/
Sankofa
Childbirth
loading💕💕💕

WIC
Breastfeeding
Peer Counselor

International
Board
Certified
Lactation
Consultant

Certified
Perinatal
Educator

PURPOSE & VISION

Heart2Heartbeat Lactation & Wellness was birthed in August 2020 from a love of lactation and a commitment to community. Services range from culturally informed clinical breastfeeding management, equity in lactation training facilitation, & community-centered perinatal activism, education and support. Intentional with our efforts to center the voices of the families we serve and expand the landscape of lactation in Springfield.





“We don’t *heal* in isolation but in *community*.”



THANK YOU!!



heart2heartbeatlw@gmail.com



Melody Cunningham
*Doula and Certified
Lactation Counselor, The
Melo Mama*

My Journey into Lactation Counseling

Melody Cunningham, Certified Lactation
Counselor and Mother of Five

The R.O.S.E. Training

- Eight years ago, a Facebook post introduced me to the R.O.S.E. training (Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere). As a mother of five who bumbled my way through breastfeeding my children, this training opened my eyes to breastfeeding education and mentorship through a culturally competent curriculum.

Support from Vital Village

- Vital Village provided essential support throughout my CLC journey. From study sessions to books, they never left me alone. Even after not passing the first time, their unwavering support kept me going.

Personal Challenges and Success

- Though I didn't pass the CLC exam on my first try, I was determined. Vital Village's support gave me the confidence to pass the second time, and once I received my CLC certificate, I hit the ground running, eager to help mothers like me.

Helping Mothers and Families

Since becoming a Certified Lactation Counselor, I've worked with mothers, especially those in marginalized communities. My goal is to empower them with confidence in breastfeeding, offering support they didn't know they needed.



The Ripple Effect



This work has not only helped mothers but has brought me immense emotional fulfillment. The unintended benefits of this work include traveling internationally and learning from mothers around the world.

My Role in the Boston Breastfeeding Coalition

- As part of the Boston Breastfeeding Coalition (BBC) through the Vital Village Network, I work to improve access to breastfeeding support across Massachusetts. We advocate for pathways to lactation counseling, professional development, and building cross-sector connections.

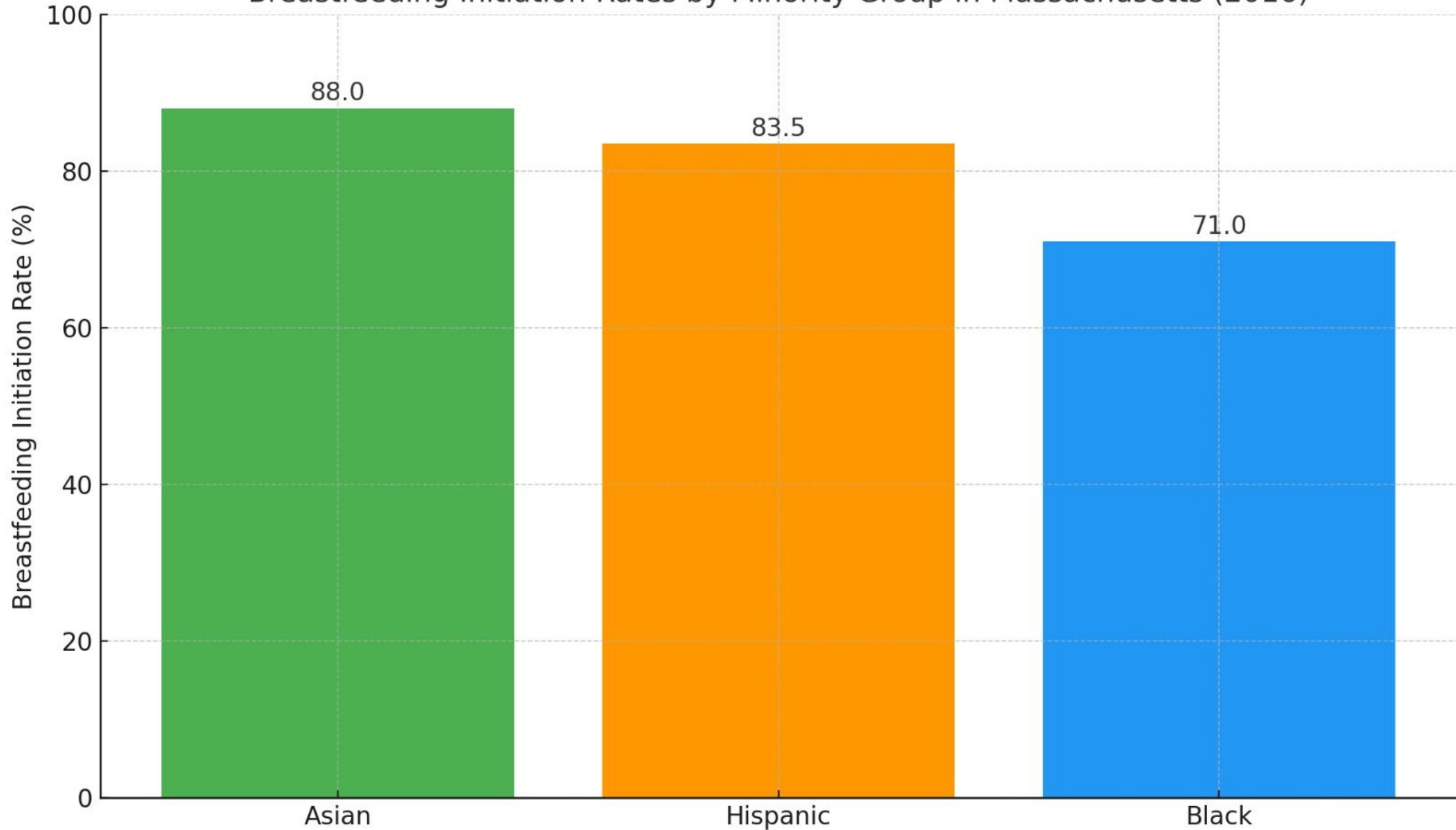
BBC's Mission for Equity

- Founded in 2016, the BBC is committed to promoting connections among individuals and organizations that advocate for breastfeeding support, especially in communities of color. The coalition addresses disparities and creates economic pathways for women to become Certified Lactation Counselors (CLCs) and IBCLCs.

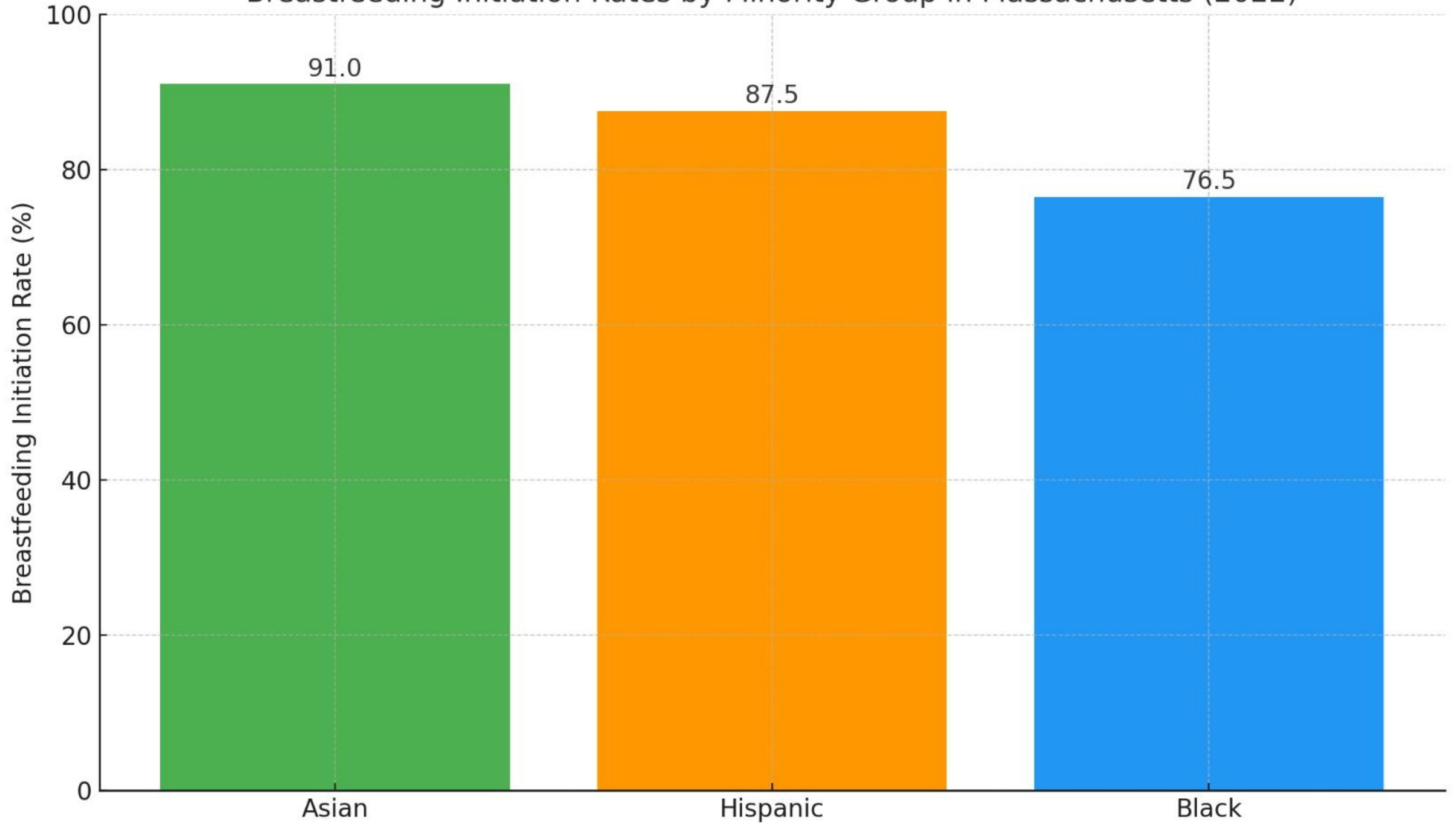
Growth in Marginalized Communities

- Breastfeeding rates have increased in marginalized communities. While we still need to work on duration rates, the progress we have made is remarkable, and I am proud to be part of this change.

Breastfeeding Initiation Rates by Minority Group in Massachusetts (2016)



Breastfeeding Initiation Rates by Minority Group in Massachusetts (2022)



Cross-Sector Advocacy and Peer Support

- Our work in the BBC also involves cross-sector convenings, creating spaces for peer support, and advocating for equitable care. We host Baby Cafes and breastfeeding support groups in Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and beyond.

Leadership Pathways and Professional Development

- Through service-learning scholarships, the BBC has enabled community members to become lactation counselors, especially women of color. Over 80% of the coalition's peer scholars are women of color, reflecting our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

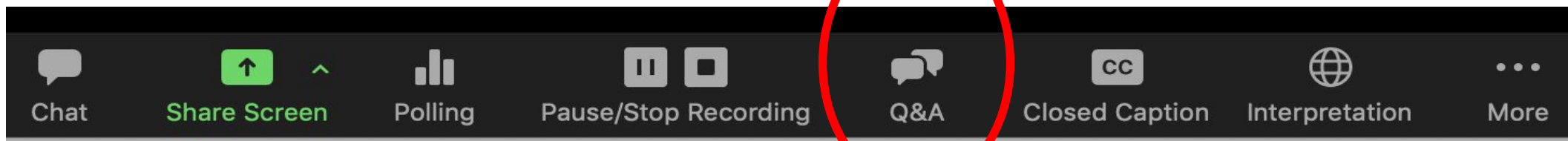
Continuing the Fight

- Together with the BBC and Vital Village Network, we are creating lasting changes in breastfeeding advocacy and support. From hospitals to city halls, we are pushing for equitable care for all parents and caregivers in Greater Boston and beyond.

Q & A Question and Answer

Q&A

- Submit your questions by clicking on the Q&A icon at the bottom of your screen



Stay Connected

Webinar Reflective Action Guide



NOW 2024 Webinar Series

INSTRUCTIONS: Please download this document and take a few minutes to write some initial responses to the following questions

What resonated with you most from today's webinar?	
Which lever of change are you feeling compelled to focus attention on in your work?	
How are you thinking about children, families, and communities in your work differently?	
What 2-3 action steps might you take over the next two months to better uplift and honor the dignity of children, families, and community?	

2024 National Community Leadership Summit

Registration closing today!



<https://www.vitalvillagesummit.org/register>

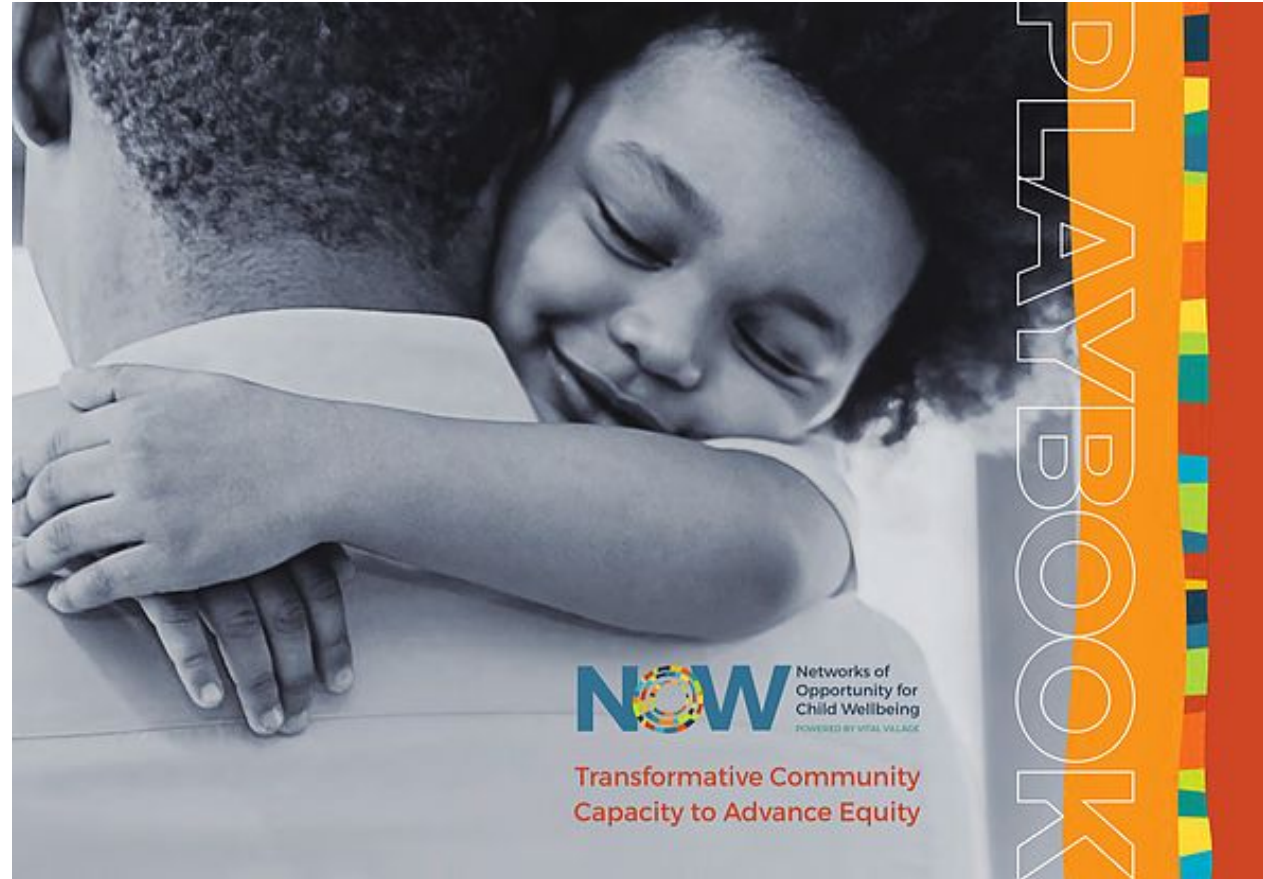
NOW Podcast:
In the Arena with NOW

Season 3 launching
October 2024. Subscribe
and catch-up on past
episodes



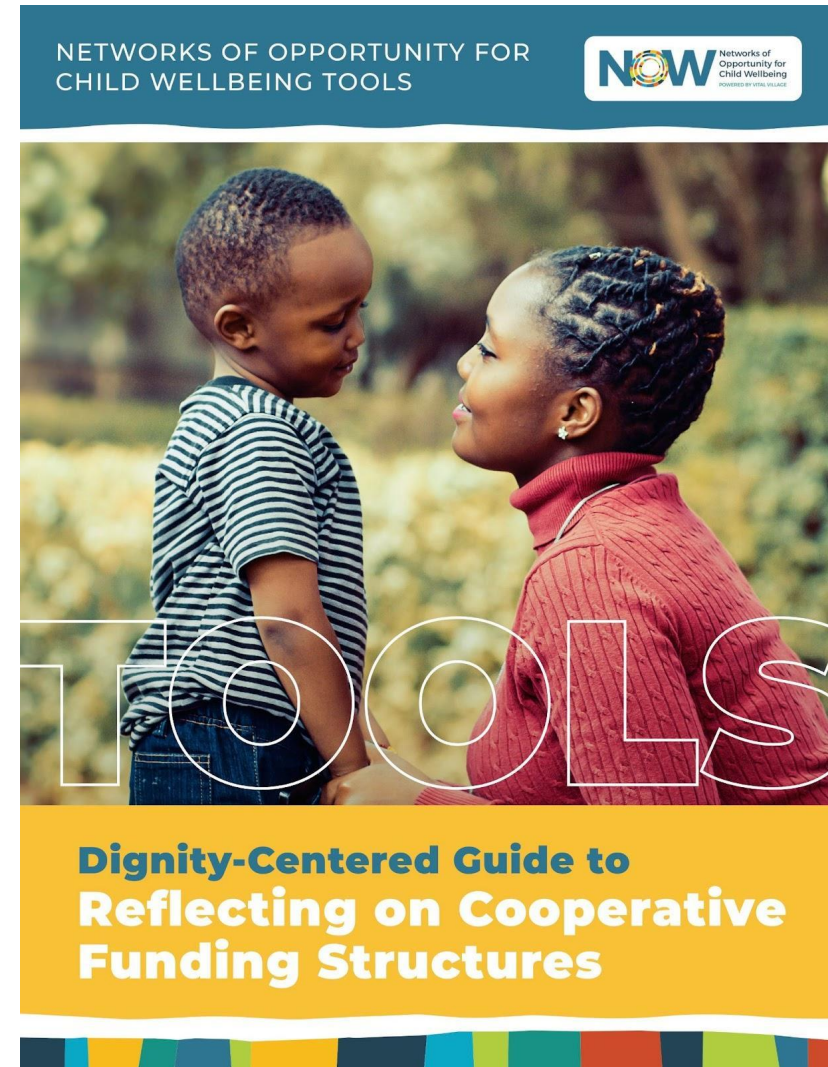
<https://www.networksofopportunity.org/podcast>

NOW Playbook: Transformative Community Capacity to Advance Equity



<https://www.networksofopportunity.org/now-playbook>

A Dignity-Centered Guide to Reflecting on Cooperative Funding Structures



<https://www.networksofopportunity.org/coop-reflection-guide>



Thank You!

<https://www.networksofopportunity.org/>

projecthope.csc@gmail.com

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