

# Maximizing the Impact of Reproductive Nurture Kits for Expectant Birthers and Families

Chelsea Liu and Dr. Amutah-Onukagha, Ndidiamaka, MOTHER Lab  
Tufts University and the Laidlaw Foundation



## Impact

Maternal health disparities are a pressing issue in the United States and globally. The National Institute of Health reports that 50,000 women in the United States suffer from pregnancy complications annually, and Black women are at least three times more likely to die due to pregnancy-related complications when compared to white women. One in three US families cannot afford diapers and the price of baby formula and other items continues to increase. These kinds of price increases disproportionately impact low-income BIPOC families, making it critical that we target this problem.

## Abstract

This MOTHER Lab project aims to create and strengthen relationships with community partners and tackle the social structures that are currently failing Black birthing people. The CEAP committee of the MOTHER lab is currently working on creating Nurture kits, which are a postpartum resource that provides necessary supplies to low-income families who may not otherwise be able to afford them. The purpose of the Mother Lab "Nurture Kits" program is to raise money for low-income expecting mothers and guardians while raising awareness about access to essential postpartum resources. These Nurture Kits aim to provide 40 prep packs for expectant families and families with newborns that need these resources. In collaboration with SomerBaby, the MOTHER Lab team designed a survey to ask recipients about their experience with the nurture kits. The qualitative survey asked recipients about their postpartum needs, and worries, as well as their knowledge about available resources. Moving forward with the project, we plan to compile the results of these surveys for a quantitative analysis through Stata, which will allow us to adjust our resource allocation, marketing, education outreach, and kits accordingly.

## Methodology

A critical element of supplying these Nurture Kits included funding and assembly. To accomplish this goal, the Mother Lab aimed to establish a mutual aid format to solicit donations. The MOTHER Lab also made a partnership with SomerBaby. A community-based organization that has been providing resources to support low-income families since 2016. Funding for this project supported a one-year partnership (July 2023-June 2024).

Figure 1. Essentials Provided in the Nurture Kits

Item	Cost
Diapers	\$27.22
Postpartum Recovery Essentials Kit - 1) Labor and Delivery Gown with practical snaps on the back and the front 2) Collapsible Peri Bottle 3) Witch Hazel Healing Foam 4) Non-Slips Socks 5) 4 Instant Ice Maxi Pads 6) 4 Disposable Underwear 7) Cooling Pad Liners 8) Caddy bag	\$49.99
Aquaphor diaper cream	\$17.97
Wipes	\$24.99
Pacifier	\$8.29
Haakaa hand pump and medela milk storage bags	\$28.99
Silicon Breast Pump	\$29.99
Baby Monitor	\$49.99
Baby Nasal Aspirator	\$16.00
Portable Diaper Changing Pad	\$24.99
Baby Healthcare and Grooming Kit-- The baby grooming kit includes a hair brush, hair comb, medicine dropper, spoon, nail files, nail clipper, scissors, tweezers, finger toothbrush, case, etc.	\$9.99
Baby Bathtime Set-- 3 essential baby skin care products including baby shampoo, lotion, and body wash, for a calming bath time, plus 1 reusable caddy with handle	\$12.99
Diaper Backpack	\$46.99
Infographic with Resources for New Mothers	--

The three aims of the qualitative survey:

1. What barriers and challenges are Somerville parents, especially those from non-English speaking and immigrant backgrounds, experiencing when trying to access local family support services provided by SomerBaby (i.e., free home visits by doulas, parent workshops, free diapers, etc.)?
2. What types of support systems and resources do new parents in Somerville report needing the most?
3. How can SomerBaby, a local community program, sustain lasting relationships with community members as well as partnerships with Tufts students, researchers, and academics in the future?

Figure 2. Survey Question Example

When you were **pregnant** with your baby, did any of these things happen to you? (Check-all that apply)

- Not having a way to get to your healthcare appointments.
- Worrying about having a home or place to sleep.
- Worrying about keeping your job.
- Worrying about finding a job.
- Being afraid of facing racism or discrimination from healthcare providers.
- Being afraid of facing racism or discrimination from employers.
- Being afraid of the COVID-19 virus affecting you or your family.
- Feeling stressed about having a new baby.
- Having medical problems during pregnancy (like high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, etc.).
- Having trouble getting health insurance.
- Other

The Mother Lab also collaborated with SomerBaby to organize the SomerBaby Family Day, which was postponed. The Somerville Family Day will provide a space for new families and parents/guardians in Somerville to build community. It will also provide opportunities to give out Nurture Kits, ask for survey responses, and get the community connected with Somerville's resources.

Figure 3. SomerBaby Family Day Handout



## Conclusions

This research project emphasized the importance of addressing the holistic needs of new families, especially in the postpartum period. Unfortunately, various challenges interfered with the original timeline of this project. The SomerBaby Family Day was postponed to the beginning of November. Additionally, while enough surveys were completed by community members, several of these were physical copies and had to be inputted into the Qualtrics system. As a result of these challenges, the quantitative analysis portion of this study has just begun, and there are no conclusions to this study thus far. Nonetheless, project INSPIRE has coordinated plans to quantify the results of the survey and use the platform, *Stata*, to perform the analysis. This analysis will be the next step of this project.

From the survey responses, I discovered that new parents face challenges not only in the physical recovery of birth, but also in mental health, social support, and access to essential reproductive resources. During the survey period and the process of garnering the results of the survey, I made several reflections on the state of maternal health resources; it made me realize the significant gap in resources for new mothers. Various elements make the postpartum period incredibly challenging and go far beyond the physical strains. Furthermore, mothers pointed out that household chores were incredibly challenging. Mothers/guardians pointed out that they often felt like they had a larger burden for caretaking. They also mentioned feelings of being underappreciated and sadness during postpartum. Moving forward, it will be interesting to incorporate items that aid with mental health support and provide an access point to childcare services to alleviate these burdens.

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