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HANDS LIFTING HEARTS INITIATIVES SOCIETY

MOM'S HANDBOOK

Sponsored by

CALGARY FOUNDATION
FOR COMMUNITY, FOREVER

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WELCOME
Message

Dear Mom,

Welcome to the second edition of our Mom's Handbook. Whether you are expecting your first baby or growing your family, we made this handbook so you can find trusted information and caring support in one place. Pregnancy and early motherhood in a new country can feel overwhelming, but you are not alone. Our community is here to walk with you, honour your culture, and lift you up at every step of your journey.

With love,

Clare Jagunna

Founder, Executive Director.

Introduction to the handbook

The Mom's Handbook is a resource for African, Black and Caribbean (ABC) pregnant and new moms in Alberta. Hands Lifting Hearts Initiatives Society is dedicated to supporting these women through their journey, providing essential resources, information, and community support. The handbook is more than just a guide; it reflects our commitment to nurturing and supporting ABC families. It includes information on pregnancy, childbirth, and early stages of motherhood, honouring cultural heritage. The handbook aims to connect mothers with trusted medical advice and community support, contributing to the health and well-being of the family and the broader ABC community in Alberta.

The purpose of the handbook

Our Mom's Handbook does not reinvent the wheel or provide health advice. Instead, it is created to ensure accessibility to comprehensive and culturally sensitive resources for African, Black, and Caribbean pregnant and new moms in Alberta. **Our primary purpose is to empower you with the knowledge and connections you need to confidently navigate the journey of motherhood in a new environment while still honouring your cultural identity.**

Key Objectives of the Handbook

- **Provide Culturally Relevant and Accessible information**
  a. Offer clear, easy-to-understand information about pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood specific to Alberta's healthcare and support systems.
- **Connect to Culturally Relevant Resources:**
  a. Connect you with resources that understand and respect the cultural practices and needs of African, Black and Caribbean families, including doulas, midwives, and breastfeeding support.
- **Support Informed Decision-Making:**
  a. Help you make informed decisions by providing links to verified sources of medical advice and options for care available to you in Alberta.
- **Facilitate Community Connection:**
  a. Encourage a sense of belonging by providing information about local African stores, cultural organizations, and support groups
  that can offer comfort and assistance during your motherhood journey.

About the Target Audience

The journey of pregnancy and new motherhood is a transformative experience filled with both challenges and joys. For African, Black and Caribbean moms (ABC), this journey can also involve navigating unique cultural, social, and healthcare landscapes, especially in a diverse environment like Alberta.

Cultural Heritage and Identity

African, Black and Caribbean pregnant mothers often bring cultural heritage and family traditions into their parenting journey. Balancing cultural identity while adapting to Alberta healthcare and societal norms can be challenging. This handbook emphasizes preserving cultural practices.

Health Disparities and Challenges

- Studies have shown that ABC women face higher risks during pregnancy and childbirth, and access to culturally competent healthcare is essential for addressing these challenges.

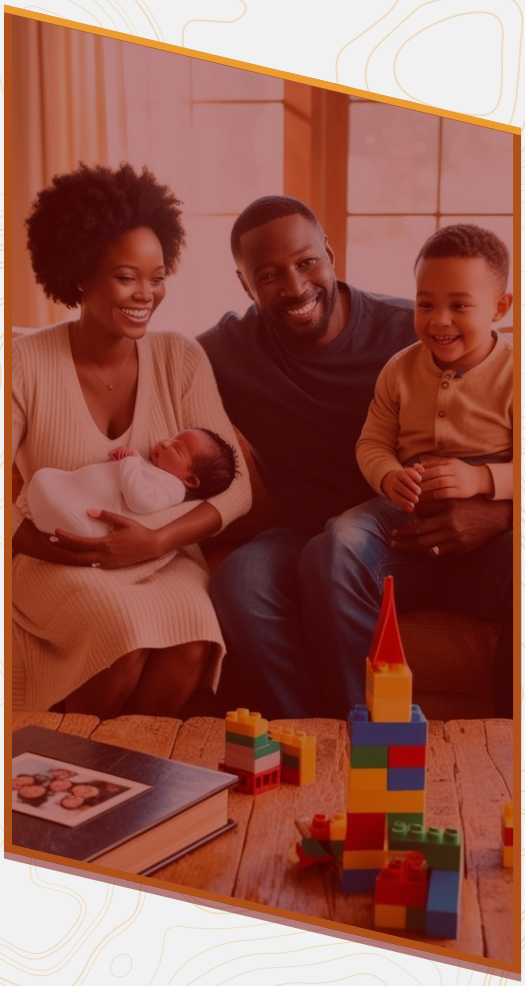
- Additionally, navigating a healthcare system that may not always fully understand or accommodate cultural needs can add stress during pregnancy and postpartum. This handbook seeks to bridge that gap by connecting you with resources and professionals who understand your unique experiences.

Community and Support Systems

Building a strong support network is vital for ABC moms in Alberta. It helps them connect with other community members, find culturally sensitive healthcare providers, and access services that understand their specific needs. This handbook provides links to community groups and cultural organizations.

The Importance of Advocacy

As ABC moms, advocating for yourself and your child within the healthcare system for your health and well-being is emphasized in this handbook. **Giving people access to tools and motivating them to learn about their options, seek support, and comprehend their rights gives them the power to make wise decisions.**



NAVIGATING MOTHERHOOD IN ALBERTA

Motherhood is a journey that comes with its own set of challenges and rewards, and in Alberta, you're not alone in navigating this path. The province offers a wide range of maternity and child care services designed to support you as an ABC mom from pregnancy to your child’s early years.

Maternity Care in Alberta

- **Alberta Health Services (AHS)**: Alberta provides a comprehensive healthcare system through Alberta Health Services (AHS), which offers comprehensive maternity care for expectant mothers. This includes prenatal care, hospital births, postnatal care, and access to specialized services if needed.

- **Prenatal Care:** Throughout your pregnancy, you can access prenatal care through family doctors, obstetricians, or midwives. Regular prenatal visits are essential for monitoring your and your baby's health, offering advice on nutrition, exercise, and preparing for birth.

- **Hospital Births:** Most births in Alberta occur in hospitals where you can expect to receive high-quality care from experienced healthcare professionals. Hospitals are equipped with the necessary facilities to handle both routine and high-risk pregnancies.

- **Midwifery Services:** Midwives offer an alternative to traditional hospital births, providing care that can be more personalized and culturally sensitive.

> MIDWIFERY CARE IS FULLY COVERED BY ALBERTA HEALTH, AND MIDWIVES CAN ASSIST WITH BOTH HOME BIRTHS AND HOSPITAL BIRTHS.

Postnatal and Child Care Services

- **Postnatal Care:** After your baby is born, postnatal care is provided to ensure the well-being of both you and your newborn. This care may include follow-up appointments with your healthcare provider, support with breastfeeding, and monitoring your baby's growth and development.

- **Public Health Clinics:** Alberta's public health clinics offer services such as immunizations, newborn screening, and parental education. These clinics are a valuable resource for new mothers, providing information and support during the early stages of motherhood.

- **Parenting Programs and Resources:** The province offers various parenting programs to support new mothers and families. These programs provide education on child development, parenting strategies, and connecting with other families in your community.

Check out some of these programs here:

- Parents | Alberta Health Services
- Calgary Parenting Classes and Programs

- **Child Care Options:** As your child grows, Alberta provides several childcare options, including daycares, family day homes, and early learning programs. These services are regulated to ensure quality and safety, giving you peace of mind as you balance work and family life.

Find out more here:

- https://www.alberta.ca/about-child-care-in-alberta

  Child care fees: licensed care is now a flat $326.25/month full-time ($230 part-time), up to kindergarten age.
  - Childcare fees | Alberta.ca

Access to Culturally Sensitive Care: Hands Lifting Hearts Initiatives Society

Recognizing the diversity of Alberta's population, initiatives are in place to provide culturally sensitive care that respects and honours heritage. Whether you choose a family doctor, obstetrician, or midwife, it is important to seek out healthcare providers who understand and respect your cultural needs and preferences.

Essential Documents and Services you need in your maternal journey

- Alberta Health Care coverage (Health card) for pregnancy and childbirth
  https://www.alberta.ca/ahcip-how-to-apply
- How to register your child's birth in Alberta
  https://www.alberta.ca/register-birth
- How to get a birth certificate
  https://www.alberta.ca/order-birth-certificate
- How to register for child benefits (provincial and federal)
  https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-child-and-family-benefit
  and https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/canada-child-benefit-overview.html#nt
- How to get social insurance number
  Social Insurance Number – Apply - Canada.ca
- Pay during maternity and parental leave: EI maternity and parental benefits
- Dental coverage for your family: Canadian Dental Care Plan

Community and Cultural Context

Understanding Cultural Differences in Motherhood Practices

Motherhood is a deeply personal journey, and for African, Black and Caribbean moms, it often involves integrating rich cultural traditions and practices into the experience. These traditions shape how we view pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing, and they provide a strong sense of identity and continuity within our families and communities.

Cultural Practices in Motherhood

Pregnancy Rituals: In many African cultures, pregnancy is accompanied by specific rituals and practices intended to protect the mother and child, promote healthy pregnancies, and ensure safe deliveries. These might include special diets, herbal remedies, or community blessings.

Postpartum Traditions: The postpartum period is also marked by various traditions, such as the confinement period, where the new mother is cared for by family members to promote healing and bonding with the newborn. Practices like belly binding or special postpartum meals may be integral to recovery.

Child Rearing and Family Involvement: Child-rearing in ABC communities often involves the extended family, where grandparents, aunts, uncles, and even community members play significant roles in a child's upbringing. This collective approach is rooted in the belief that "it takes a village to raise a child."

Living in Canada may present challenges when it comes to maintaining these cultural traditions, especially when they differ from local practices or when interacting with the healthcare system. However, it is possible to honour your heritage while adapting to your new environment.

Integrating Cultural Practices into Modern Healthcare

- **Communicating with Healthcare Providers:** It is important to discuss your cultural practices with your healthcare providers. Many doctors, midwives, and doulas in Alberta are open to learning about and accommodating cultural preferences as long as they do not conflict with medical safety guidelines. This can include preferences for labour and delivery, dietary practices, or postpartum care.
- **Finding Culturally Competent Care:** Seek healthcare providers who understand or are willing to understand your cultural background. Many midwives and doulas in Alberta, for example, offer culturally sensitive care that respects and incorporates your traditions. Contact Hands Lifting Hearts Initiatives Society or other community support organizations to find culturally competent care.

Balancing Tradition and Local Norms

- **Adaptation and Flexibility:** Sometimes, cultural practices may need to be adapted to fit within the local context. For example, certain rituals may need to be modified to comply with healthcare regulations or to be practical in your current environment. It is important to always check that rituals comply.

- **Community Support:** Connect with local community groups or cultural organizations that can help you maintain your traditions. These groups often provide a space where you can share experiences, celebrate cultural milestones, and seek advice from other moms who are navigating similar experiences. Contact Hands Lifting Hearts Initiatives Society or other Community Support Organizations. There are a wide variety of WhatsApp groups for localized support. Check with your local support leaders to find one suitable for you.

Maintaining Cultural Identity

- **Passing on Traditions:** Even as you adapt to life in Alberta, it is essential to pass on cultural traditions to your children. This can be done through storytelling, participating in cultural events, and teaching them the significance of certain practices.

- **Celebrating Diversity:** Embrace the diversity within Alberta's ABC communities, where different traditions can be celebrated and shared. This not only helps preserve one's own cultural identity but also enriches the broader community.

SOME KEY PREGNANCY INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- **Prenatal Care**

Resources to prenatal care options in Alberta

- Mainsprings | Everyone has value and deserves support
- Prenatal and Parenting Classes (Perinatal) Education | Alberta Health Services
- Birth & Babies

- **Choosing a Birth Plan**

Resources to birth plan options (hospital birth, home birth, birthing centers)

- https://auroramidwifery.ca/
- Arbour Birth Center
- https://lucinamidwives.ca/birth-centre/
- https://www.westcountrymidwives.com/birth-suite
  https://www.rinitabirthcentre.ca/

- Links to detailed resources on birth planning Making a Birth Plan

- **Postpartum Care**
- What to expect postpartum Postpartum: First 6 Weeks After Childbirth
- Links to postpartum support resources
- MyHealth.Alberta.Ca Managing Postpartum Depression
- Postpartum Support International PSI Canada
- Alberta Health Services Postpartum Depression | Alberta Health Services

- **Where to Find Reliable Medical Information**
- Go to Alberta Health Services pages Alberta Health Services
- Websites for verified medical advice on pregnancy and postpartum care
  Your Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy - Canada.ca
- Pregnancy
- Postpartum: Care Instructions
- Postpartum Depression : Alberta : eMentalHealth.ca

- **Emergency Contacts**
- Call 911 in case of an emergency
- Learn about when to call your doctor or midwife during pregnancy after 20 weeks
- 24/7 hotlines and helplines for new moms - **Dial 811** (Health Link)
  - Mental Health Help Line (24/7) - **1-877-303-2642**
  - Suicide Crisis Helpline - call or text **988** Community help - dial **211**

African Businesses & Support Organizations

Connecting with the Black/African Community

Maintaining connections within the ABC communities fosters cultural identity, belonging, and access to knowledge, promoting a robust network and enabling you to enjoy culture and deal with issues within the community. Access Hands Lifting Hearts Initiatives Society Cultural sensitive resource list here.

DOULA AND MIDWIFE SERVICES

- **Understanding Doulas and Midwives resources:**

Find out the roles and benefits of doulas and midwives in childbirth here:

- Roles
- Doulas and Support During Childbirth

- **How to Find a Doula or Midwife:** Organizations and directories for doulas and midwives in Alberta:

- Midwife Directory — Alberta Association of Midwives
- Calgary Doula Association

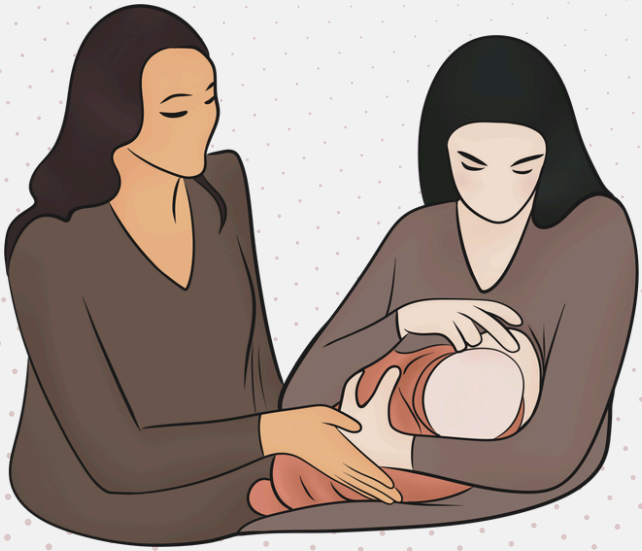
- **Culturally Matched Support:**
- The Gentle Nest (Calgary)
  Black postpartum doula; English and Yoruba
- Multicultural Health Brokers
  Perinatal program, Edmonton: 780-423-1973
- DoulaMatch: Black doulas in Alberta
  Directory to find a doula near you

BREASTFEEDING RESOURCES

- **Why Breastfeeding is Important Resource Links**

Benefits of breastfeeding for mother and baby

- https://www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca/im-a-parent/feeding-your-baby/breastfeeding-basics/
- https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/Pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=hw91687



- **Accessing Breastfeeding Support:** Breastfeeding clinics and lactation consultants in Alberta
- Breastfeeding clinics | Covenant Health
- Breastfeeding Clinic
- https://wellfedclinic.com/

CIRCUMCISION RESOURCES

- **Understanding Circumcision links resources**

  - Cultural and medical perspectives on circumcision
  - https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=hw142449

- **Informed Decision-Making links**

  - Resources to help make an informed decision about circumcision
  - Circumcision: Making The Decision by Dr. Zwiers • Avivo Health Alliance (myavivohealth.ca)

- **Accessing Circumcision Services resources links**

  - Links to clinics and professionals offering circumcision in Alberta
  - Edmonton Circumcision Clinic for Babies, Boys & Adult Men
  - Circumcision Clinic and Doctor in Calgary, Alberta - Intramed

Self-Care and Black/African Mental Health Resources

- **Balancing Motherhood and Self-Identity come before self-support**
  - Strategies for finding time for yourself amidst the demands of motherhood https://thegentlecounsellor.com/
  - https://www.junecare.co/

- **Accessing Mental Health Support resources links**
  - Links to mental health services in Alberta, specifically for moms
  - Help in Tough Times | Alberta Health Services

- **Black Mental Health Supports**
  - Free short-term therapy for Black Calgarians:
  - UCalgary Psychology Clinic - Services for Black Calgarians
  - Find a Black therapist: Black Mental Health Canada
  - Mental health and addiction services: Recovery Alberta

Hands Lifting Hearts Initiatives Society (HLHIS) Resources

You can access the following resources at HLHIS:

- Prenatal, labour and post-natal support
- Mom and baby essentials
- Mental health resources
- Culturally relevant support
- Access our Resources List here

Coming Up at HLH

Five years in, our weekly programs are going strong and new ones are on the way.
Here is how to stay connected:

Weekly Motherhood Circle

Every Thursday | 5:00 p.m.

Mothers at every stage gather on Zoom for honest conversation, practical wisdom and support

Scan the QR code to join.

HLH Book Club

Every other Friday | 5:00 p.m. MST

Join us as we read and review books on building healthy, violence-free homees and bring the reading culture back into our families.

Scan the QR code to join.

Bloom & Become Teens Circle

Every Monday | 6-7:00 p.m. MST

An online circle where teenage girls build confidence, friendships and a sense of purpose.

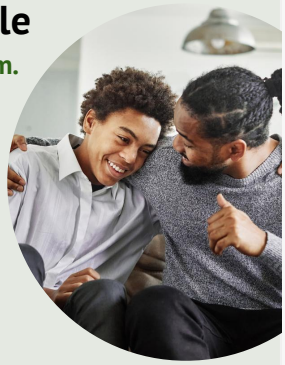
Scan the QR code to join.

Fatherhood Circle

Every Tuesday | 7:00 p.m.

Our Fatherhood Circle continues to meet on zoom, and we plan to host two Fatherhood Summits in 2027.

Scan the QR code to join.

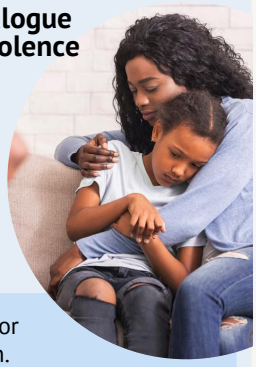


Community Leaders' Dialogue on Preventing Family Violence

January 2027

A working session for faith leaders, healthcare professionals, social workers, childcare providers & community organizations

Contact the HLH Office to register for our newsletter for more information.



Monthly Antenatal & Zumba Fitness Classes

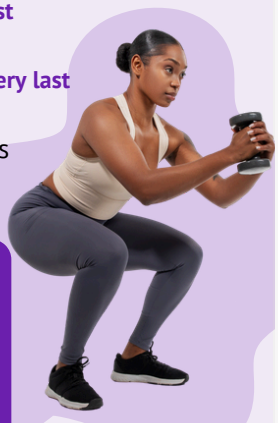
For Zumba: Every 2nd & last Saturday | 8-9:00 a.m.

For Antenatal: Monthly, Every last Tuesday | 6-8pm on Zoom

Culturally grounded antenatal classes and Zumba Fitness sessions with Ayus continue.

Scan the QR code to register Zumba Fitness Classes

Scan the QR code to attend the Antenatal Classes



Volunteer Training

Training for new volunteers runs throughout this year

Scan the QR code to register

Coming Soon to Lethbridge & Red Deer

Watch our website & social media for updates.

Final Thought

Encouragement and support for the journey of motherhood

Being a mother is an amazing and life-changing experience full of blessings, difficulties, and learning opportunities. As you navigate the motherhood journey in Canada, remember there is no perfect way to be a mother. Trust your instincts, look to your community for support, and remember to treat yourself with kindness. You never have to travel this path alone; you are stronger and more competent than you think, no matter your challenges.

Access our Motherhood Magazine and Resource List here:
https://handsliftinghearts.ca/our-resources/

Donate to support our cause. E-transfers can be sent to donate@handsliftinghearts.ca

Contact Us

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