

Giving Austin Labor Support

Strategic Plan

2020-2023



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WHO WE ARE

"(Our GALS Doula) is kind, compassionate, genuine- there aren't enough praises to due her justice. She was always open and willing to guide us through every concern, doubt, or question through pregnancy, labor, and postpartum. Not only is she an incredible doula, but an amazing person all around. (She) moved our hearts and led me to find an inner strength I never knew I had. I truly believe she is the reason I had an empowering birth experience. It was an honor to have (her) attend our birth and we are forever grateful. "

-Mom's evaluation of her GALS doula



OUR MISSION

GALS is dedicated to improving birth outcomes and empowering under-supported families. We provide education and support to birthing people and health care workers from pregnancy through postpartum.

OUR VISION

Through strong support during the childbirth experience, birthing people and health care professionals will have an increased belief and trust in birth and the parent's innate ability to parent, and it will be enough to change the culture of the community and create an infinite impact on the families of tomorrow.

WHO WE SERVE

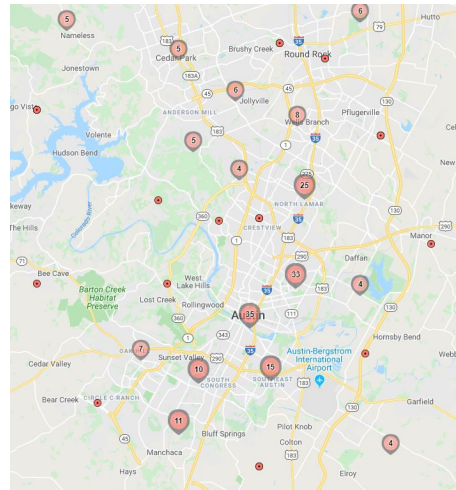
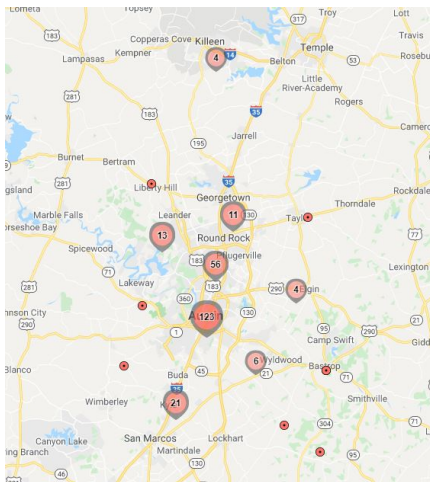
Our main constituents are families in Central Texas who are alone or under supported in their birth experience- they are immigrants, Austin transplants, incarcerated, people of color, and/or facing financial hardship.

We provide guidance, mentorship and training for new and experienced birth workers/doulas.

We support birth professionals and health care providers in Central Texas who are providing care to our clientele.

WHERE WE OPERATE

We currently serve Central Texas- as far north as Killeen and as far south as San Marcos. We are creating a foundation and a framework that can be expanded throughout Texas.



OUR VALUES

"Doulas repeatedly show a reduction in cesarean rates and adverse maternal health outcomes. GALS puts these principles into direct practice by offering hands on, loving labor and delivery support to all Austin women. For me, being a part of the birth experience, working with each woman, and her family if the case may be, to hold her hand, breathe together, sway together or just simply being present as a companion- is such an enriching experience and a privilege that I cherish. I believe that GALS offers a unique support system for Austin women, from prenatal to postpartum support, with a dynamic group of volunteers who are passionate, caring and loving, a group I am honored to be a part of."

-Molly Linder, GALS volunteer



OUR CORE VALUES

COMPASSION

We interact with kindness, non-judgment and heart.

SUPPORT

We provide practical, accessible support & nurturing care.

EMPOWERMENT

We champion others in their power and choice

RESPECT

We believe in the inherent dignity of every person.

COMMUNITY

We know we are stronger together.

CORE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO DATE

- ✚ On call, non-medical, birth and postpartum support to anyone who is already in labor and requests GALS.
- ✚ Prenatal Doula Program provides education, emotional and physical support to individuals and families who are experiencing low income.
- ✚ Jail Support Program provides regular support groups and on call birth and postpartum support to those who are pregnant while incarcerated at Travis County Correctional Complex.
- ✚ Volunteer training and community building through onboarding and education to new and experienced doulas, monthly meetings and specialized, advanced training opportunities.

OUR HISTORY

In 2008, Giving Austin Labor Support was born as a grassroots organization when a nurse and several birth workers in Austin recognized that many families were in need of additional support at the hospital. The organization grew, became a certified 501©3, and developed a volunteer base of new and experienced doulas giving back to the Austin Community. GALS continues to grow through additional programming and increased birth workers and doulas, and in turn is able to support more families in Central Texas each year.

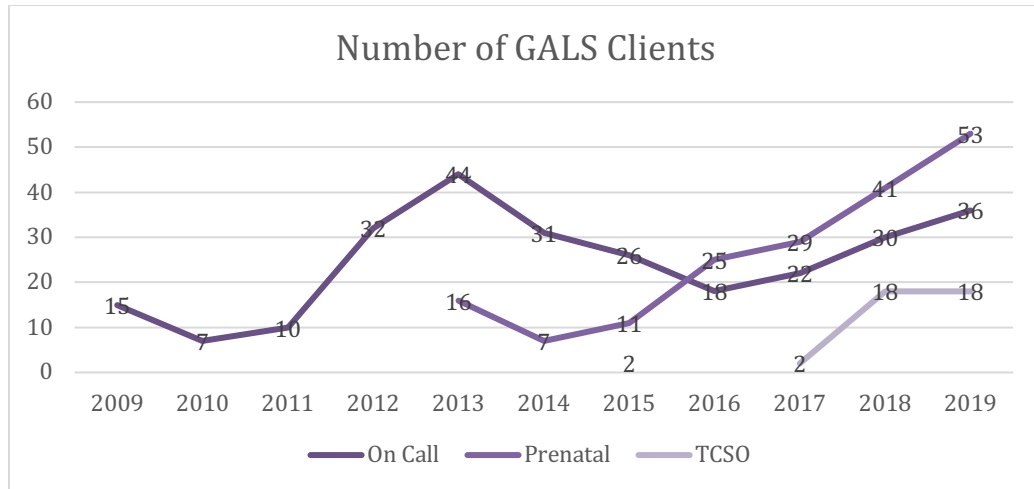
SOLUTIONS AND IMPACT TO DATE

"I LOVED having (GALS) here! She listened to the patient, and helped her so much. They danced down the hall, and the patient's birth experience was certainly better since she was here. "

-Post birth evaluation from L&D Nurse



Today, GALS is known in the community as a dependable resource for birthing individuals who may be alone or under supported. Since 2008, GALS has assisted more than 500 birthing individuals and their babies, trained 242 birth workers, and worked in over 20 different facilities.



With the current systems and partnerships in place, we are able to remain relatively steady in the amount of births we attend each year. However, the need is growing as prenatal requests go unanswered and there are days without a volunteer on call. In order to expand our services to more families, we believe creating full and part time positions would better utilize the time and talents of our team and dramatically expand services to more families each year.

Coordinators and volunteers donated over 1518 hours in 2019

GALS prioritizes data collection and has actively collected birth data since 2009. By looking at our work overtime, we know that the volunteers make an impact at the births they attend. One indicator of improved outcomes is a lower the cesarean rate when a GALS volunteer is present. Cesarean births are common in the United States- about 1 in 3 births will result in this surgery. Cesarean births lead to increased pain medication postpartum, increased duration of hospital stay, and can leave some parents feeling unsatisfied with their birth experience. The government set out to reduce the national cesarean rate with a target of 24.7 percent by 2020.

Cesarean rate with a GALS present: 15.3 % of births since 2012

Improving maternal health outcomes is a complex challenge, but we know that the way forward is through community and collaboration. GALS creates community amongst new and experienced birth workers who rally around improving birth for all. Volunteers partner with the nurses, midwives and doctors

to provide the best care to the all families we serve- those who are incarcerated, birthing at the hospital, birth center, or at home.

 **100 percent of birthing families say the birth was better because of the GALS volunteer.**

 **100 percent of medical staff say they would recommend GALS to another patient.**

OUR IMPACT

GALS On Call Program is the bread and butter of the organization- it is the first program GALS offered to families, and we are the only program in Central Texas who provides this type of birth support. Our volunteers designate two, 24-hour periods a month to be "on call" for birthing individuals. When a patient is identified (through self-referral or a health care professional), GALS sends the volunteer to be with them throughout the entirety of labor, birth, immediate postpartum, and beginning in 2019, a follow up postpartum visit in their home or at the hospital. Over 285 families have been supported through the On Call Program.

GALS Prenatal Doula Program began after social services agencies in Central Texas learned of the on call support we provide, and desired the ability for their clients to meet the doula beforehand. In partnership with one specific organization, GALS began offering services on a case by case basis. The Prenatal Program expanded rapidly as more and more members of the community began asking for this support. In addition to serving those who need it most- those experiencing homelessness, the immigrant community, those with low incomes, or other extenuating life circumstance- this program also allows both newly trained and seasoned doulas to learn about the health care system from another perspective than the "traditional" paying clientele and become better advocates for change and improved birth outcomes for all. Our Doulas have supporter over 185 families through the Prenatal Doula Program.

After supporting a birthing person who was incarcerated through the On Call Program, GALS began exploring a partnership with the Travis County Sheriff's Office to form what now is called the Jail Support Program. Pregnant people who are incarcerated do not have any family or friends allowed with them- only the guard and medical professionals are allowed in the room. Through this GALS program, these families are now supported in birth- and provided twice monthly

support groups with fresh fruits and vegetables. Nearly 40 families have received services through the Jail Support Program.

Birth workers & Volunteers make our mission come to life. Coming from a grassroots organization, GALS has grown as a nonprofit to serve the greater birth community. By providing training and resources to new and experienced birth workers and advocates, GALS provides opportunities for doulas to learn and grow in community with each other and the families we serve.



THE NEED FOR GALS IN IMPROVING MATERNAL HEALTH IN CENTRAL TEXAS

"In my experience with GALS, our volunteers go above and beyond to provide support and empower women to achieve the birth they want as well as improve birth outcomes. As of 2012, only 6% of women giving birth in the US used a doula. My hope is that we start to see a dramatic increase in these numbers by giving ALL women an opportunity to have the labor support they deserve during this monumental time in their lives!"

-Lindsey Vandergriff



CURRENT MATERNAL HEALTH CLIMATE

Central Texans face many obstacles en route to parenthood. According to a report from Texans Care for Children dated June 2019, Central Texas has significant maternal health challenges including the fourth highest maternal death rate in the state, and the state's worst maternal death rate among Black women. The racial inequity of health outcomes for black and brown families can be attributed to the effects of racism, from implicit bias in the health care system to structural inequities found in the foundation of American policies. A lack of access to health insurance for 25 percent of Texas women of childbearing age and poor access to adequate postpartum care keep many families from achieving a healthy transition to parenthood.

"The Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force recommends increasing maternal health programming to address disparities and target high risk populations. The strategies recommended include: support for community health workers and other programs to bridge gaps in care and provide family-centered support and referrals, as well as reimbursement for continuous labor support, such as doulas and birth attendants. Implementation of these strategies would support maternal health in Central Texas."

Increasing access to birth support is forefront in the minds of our community, encouraging social services to provide support before the birth event. According to a 2017 Austin Public Health report, over one-third of all Hispanic infants in Travis County were born to women with late or no prenatal care and infant mortality rates are higher for blacks than whites and Hispanics. These disparities are even more pronounced among women with low income. This report states that "Statistics show pregnancy outcomes improve with prenatal access and support navigating the system." In 2013, GALS expanded programs to include pregnancy and postpartum support- providing services to low income, immigrant, or incarcerated families, especially those who identify as people of color.

6,960

Total Medicaid covered births in 2015 in Central Texas

504

Total births to adolescent parents

8,478

Total births to unmarried individuals

*TexasCampaign.org

Targeting Central Texans who are at higher risk for poor birth outcomes has benefits to the larger Austin population of birthing people. For example, the Leapfrog Group found that over 60% of reporting hospitals had excessive rates of C-sections. But since GALS started using Leapfrog Group to track Central Texas hospitals in 2015, cesarean births have decreased overall.

Hospital group	Location	2015	2019
Seton	Main- W 38 th Street	31.5%	31.5%
	Hays	31.3%	21.5%
	Williamson	22%	32.5%
	Northwest	28.2%	32.2%
St. David's	Main-32 nd Street	30.5%	26.9%
	North Austin	34.3%	29.2%
	Round Rock	27.6%	22.6%
	South Austin	39.3%	28.5%

While GALS alone cannot be attributed to the decrease in cesareans, we know that the impact of birth support does decrease interventions across the board- including cesarean sections. Since we started collecting data in 2012, the cesarean rate for GALS clients is 15.3%, well below the Healthy People 2020 target of 23.9% of births.

The strength of GALS comes from being an organization that works closely with staff working in the hospitals above. We view ourselves (and are viewed) as important members of the team. In 2018 and 2019, 100% of health care professions present at a GALS birth said they would recommend GALS volunteers to more of their patients. GALS makes the nurses', midwives', and



doctors' jobs easier, and they support us as we support families. Because of this uniquely GALS relationship, we have been invited into the space of many families with various physical health and mental health situations- from the family who is planning for an unmedicated birth, to the parent that just learned their baby isn't going to survive, to the birthing person with an extensive trauma history. Volunteers are trained to support any birth preferences and outcomes they may face. Additionally, newer birth companions have the support

of the other volunteers through groups messaging and post-birth follow up digitally and in person at monthly meetings. This community of support is interwoven into GALS programs.

While we work towards better health outcomes and strengthened families, GALS also prioritizes building the community of birth workers to support each other in growth, and to prevent burn out. This is an area that GALS hopes to expand even further in the next 3 years. While focus on networking and connection has been key to the success of GALS as an integrated part in the Central Texas doula community, continuing to provide resources, training, support and connection is important to ensure our volunteer base maintains a high level of experienced doulas and mentorship for newer doulas. In the same vein, GALS seeks to increase the supports provided to health care professionals. Evidence-based training, support and community will increase the capacity of all birth workers and lead to improved health outcomes for all.



KEY STRENGTHS OF GALS

Giving Austin Labor Support is best poised to meet the needs of Central Texas birthing people.

- The GALS brand is well known in the community and relied on by health care professionals with patients in need of support.
- The network of GALS doulas and supporters stretches beyond the Austin Area, allowing us to serve many families through support and continue sustainable fundraising.
- GALS longevity in service of Central Texans shows the power in our mission to withstand the ebbs and flows in the medical community. Our existing know-how of community based doula programs and the materials developed add to our value and foundation as a nonprofit.
- The vetting, training, and preparing of new volunteers has evolved to best meet the needs of birthing individuals and birth workers. We remain nimble and are able to quickly adapt to the needs of individuals and families.

THE NEXT THREE YEARS

GALS is committed to ensuring no one births alone. With this commitment at the forefront, we are dedicated to strengthening our organizational capacity and outreach to continue to meet the needs of those birthing in Central Texas. Through programmatic expansion, a targeted focus on health care professionals, additional training and support for current and future volunteers, and solidification of the nonprofit's foundations, GALS will move with the growth of the city and improve birth outcomes for those most vulnerable.



We see that there is significant need for quality, gentle, respectful care for families birthing in Austin and beyond. We remain committed to our three core programs and the clientele we support through them as we look forward to the growth of GALS.

OUR PRIORITIES

1 Program expansion for birthing individuals in under-resourced communities.

- Increase awareness of GALS in community and in labor and delivery units so that all birthing-alone and under-supported individuals are offered access to GALS support.
- Expand programming to increase on-call program utilization, expand jail program, add postpartum support program in the hospital setting, and, through partnerships, bolster educational access and support of clients perinatally.
- Create targeted plan to raise funding to support current services and expansion.

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- 90 percent of people seeking the support of GALS are matched with a volunteer.
- Number of requests for GALS increases by 50 percent.
- 75 percent of GALS families served receive postpartum follow up within the first 4 weeks.
- 95 percent of incarcerated pregnant people at TCSO receive GALS services.
- Jail support group offered at 2 additional facilities.
- Collect baseline data around how many GALS Prenatal Doula Program families are offered free childbirth prep and new baby care in the community.

2 Volunteers and birth workers become highly trained, are retained in the organization, and offered increased support.

- Prioritize community engagement for recruitment of volunteers
- Build an educated doula community by investing in ongoing training for GALS
- Enhance work/life balance and encourage volunteer retention by ensuring birth workers are appropriately compensated for their time.
- Encourage volunteers and birth workers to create community within GALS and ATX
- Provide non birth volunteers with a role in volunteer appreciation and support

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- 75 percent of GALS volunteers and birth workers receive advanced training each year.
- 60 percent of birth workers are retained for 1.5 years after initial orientation.

3 Health care professionals offered increased training and support.

- Conduct focus groups/needs assessment of how medical professionals would like GALS support.
- Partner with hospitals and professional organizations to sponsor frequent training opportunities provided for healthcare professionals
- Engage with health care community to assess further needs
- Advocate within hospital settings to ensure protocol and policy that positively impacts both provider and patient.

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- Supported nurses, midwives and doctors
- Increased communication between medical staff and birth community
- Birth outcomes improve with stronger partnerships and evidence-based care

4 Further investment in operational improvements to further organizational impact.

- Create pathway for stakeholders to become community advocates.
- Implement a CRM platform
- Board pipeline encourages Directors to pursue colleagues and social network to aid in GALS mission
- Increased data collection and synthesis to provide stakeholders with accurate information regarding GALS impact
- Grant, in-kind, and revenue building strategies
- Google drive, trademarks of logo/ orientation material, board manuals all streamlined

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- Collect donor retention baseline data.
- Financial systems updated and evaluated.
- Board systems updated and evaluated.
- Marketing system created and implemented.



PROGRAM EXPANSION OVERVIEW

Impact	Program/Service	Description	Timeline
Double the number of families served	On Call Pilot	Volunteers check in at nurses station at beginning of shift	Pilot program during World Doula Month- May 2020
Keep families together postpartum	Hospital Postpartum	PP support for readmitted families	Program begins by 2021
Incarcerated families are supported throughout Central Texas	Jail Program Expansion	Increased group offerings (location and frequency)	Frequency expands by Q2 2020, expansion by 2021
Health care providers adopt practices that improve outcomes	Advanced Training Program- Health care staff	Trainings are offered to Health care professionals	Exploration and baseline in 2020, implement Q3 2022
Enhanced care for clients and retention of volunteers	Advanced Training Program- Doulas	Volunteers are required to attend advanced training	Roll out of trainings begins Q1 2020, expands yearly.
Enhanced care for clients and retention of volunteers	Mentorship Program	Building competency and community through mentorship	Investment in 2021, begins 2022

Expansion of programming and services requires an increased financial investment into the mission of GALS. By retaining our current donors and increasing private and corporate donors, we will expand leadership positions and increase capacity of the organization.

PAST YEARS:

- ✚ 2018, GALS created the first paid position- contracting the Executive Director.
- ✚ 2019, expanded per diems to volunteers attending births and began a contracted Volunteer Director position.

FUTURE GALS:

- ✚ 2020, GALS will contract all coordinator positions- expanding to include the Prenatal Doula Program, Jail Support Program, and Data Coordinator.
- ✚ 2021, GALS will expand volunteer positions to include a limited number of contracted birth workers.
- ✚ 2022, GALS will transition contracted staff to full- and part-time employees

With the Central Texas community behind us, GALS Staff, Board, and Volunteers are improving birth for all by improving birth for the marginalized. Join us in ensuring no one gives birth alone.