

Advancing maternal health equity for women of color

America continues to face long-standing and persistent maternal health disparities driven by numerous contributing factors. And for some racial and ethnic populations—especially Black women—these gaps are widening.

Take a deeper look at how maternal health disparities are affecting your workforce, what's being done and how we can all work together to change the tide, today.

Birth is especially dangerous for women of color. When compared to White mothers, Black mothers experience:

3X higher maternal mortality.¹



Maternal health disparities are a complex result of lack of access, provider bias and inequality of care, chronic conditions, stressors and more. To learn more, read our full suite of materials on this crisis.

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ACTIONS IN MOTION

Addressing this difficult issue will take all of us. Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies are leading the charge through our National Health Equity Strategy, which addresses maternal health disparities in every community. Learn more about some of these critical efforts below.



BCBS companies and March of Dimes join forces to address implicit bias

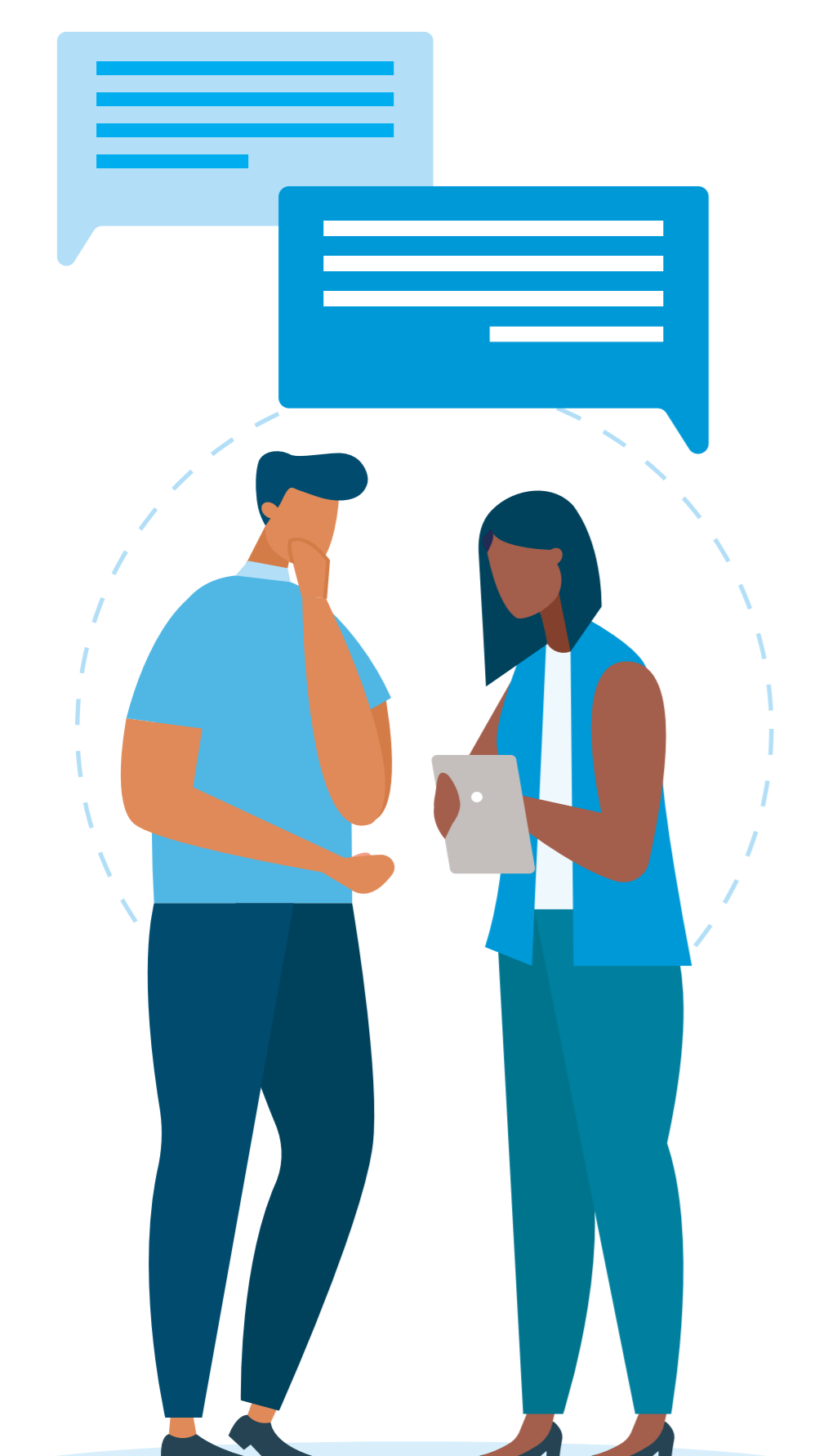
In an effort to address maternal health bias and inequality of care, BCBS partnered with March of Dimes to expand access to its implicit bias training program across the communities we serve. The unique learning experience helps healthcare professionals caring for women before, during and after pregnancy recognize how stereotypes can unconsciously impact decisions, a patient's healthcare experience and overall quality of care.



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This year, BCBSA implemented new evaluation criteria for Blue Distinction Centers for Maternity Care. The enhanced measures evaluate each facility based on quality and its commitment to health equity, including how the facility collects and analyzes race and ethnicity data to reduce healthcare disparities.⁷ Trauma-informed protocols and implicit bias training are additional evaluation components for every center to help address healthcare professionals' unconscious biases and stigmas.

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Create a workplace that embraces cultural humility as a gateway to overall cultural competency. Encourage open communication to drive awareness of maternal health disparities.

“Significant racial disparities exist in maternal health, with Black women being 3X more likely to experience pregnancy-related death than White women. At March of Dimes, we’re fighting to close this unacceptable health equity gap. Employers can help by empowering their employees with education and access to resources to help every mom, family and baby get the best possible start.”

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SMM rates are consistently higher among Black, Latina and Asian women compared to White women, regardless of age or type of insurance. This is partly because these populations are more likely to have preexisting chronic conditions (such as asthma, diabetes and hypertension), which strongly correlate with higher SMM and worse pregnancy outcomes. Recent studies are shedding light on the influence of systemic racism on health disparities such as these.⁸

Ask your health plan partner about tailored programs for women at high risk for SMM. This approach is especially urgent for Black women over the age of 35 with chronic conditions.

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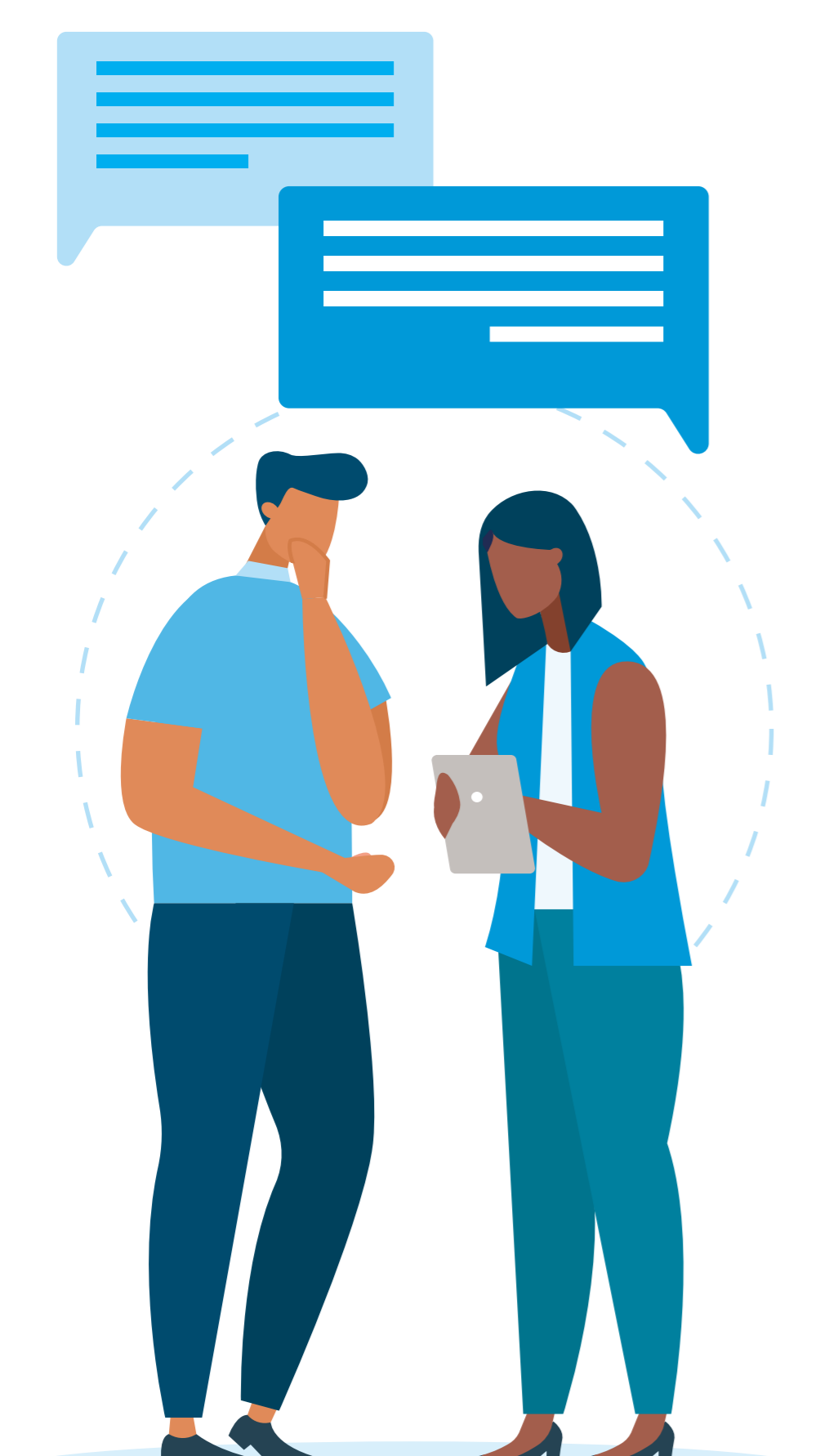
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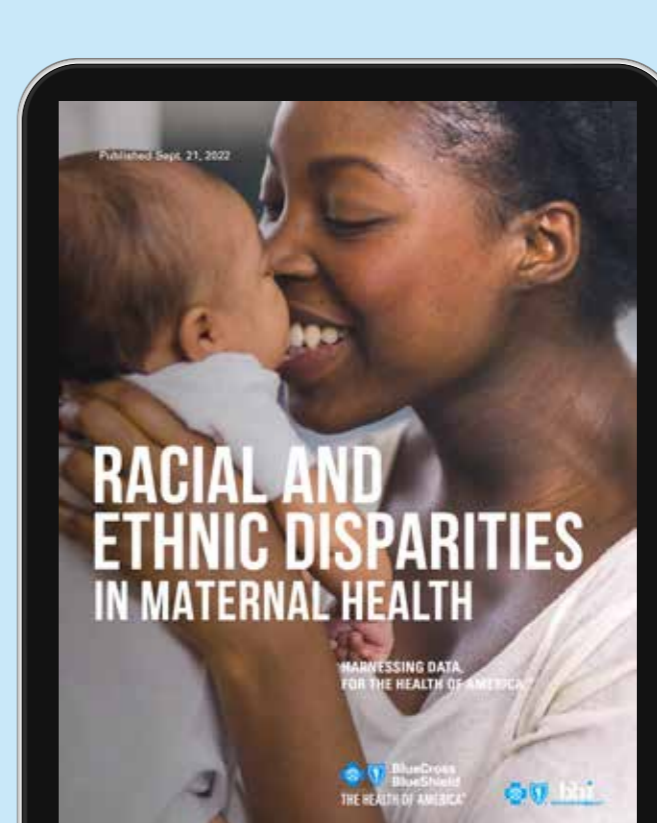
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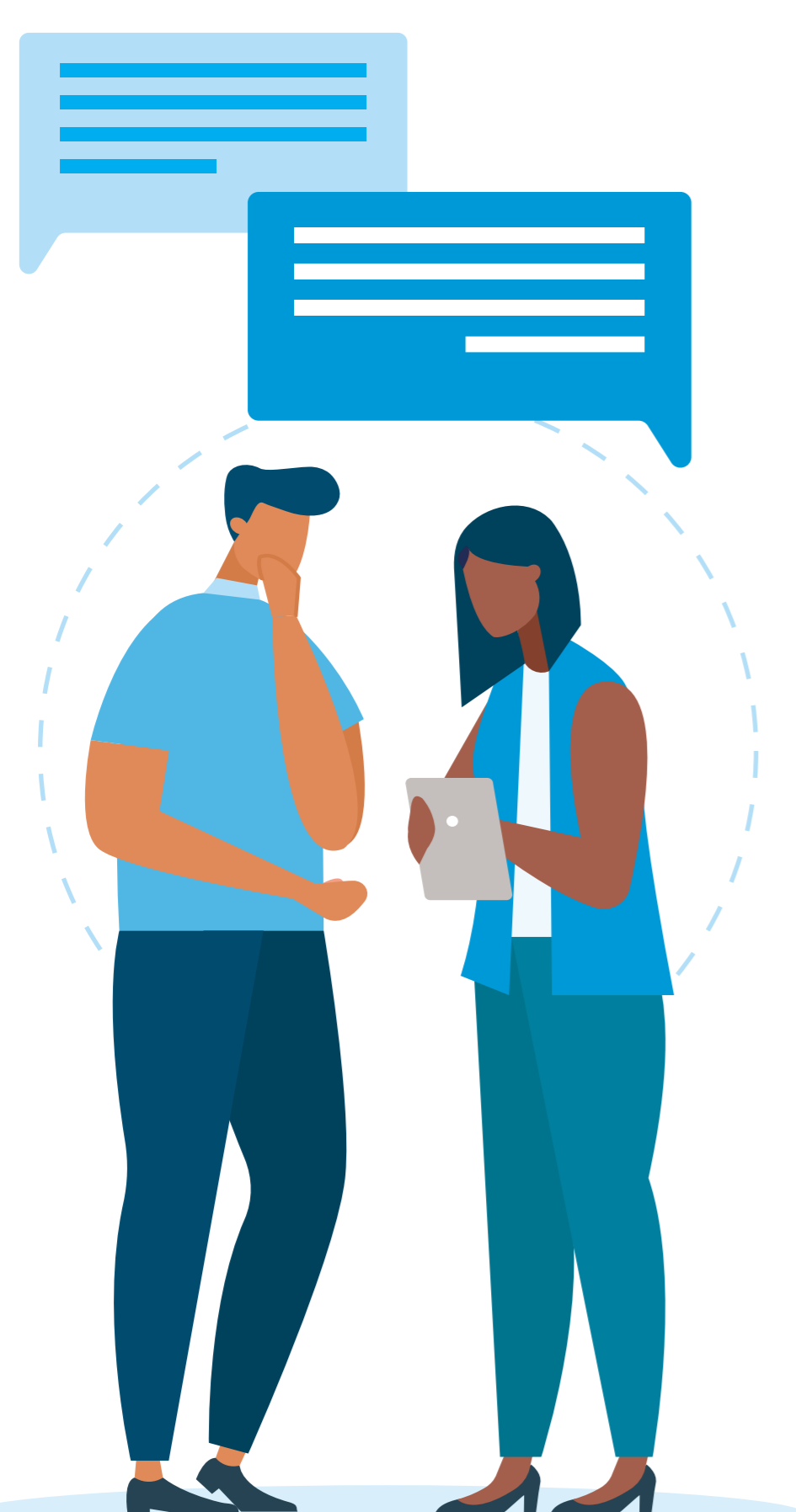
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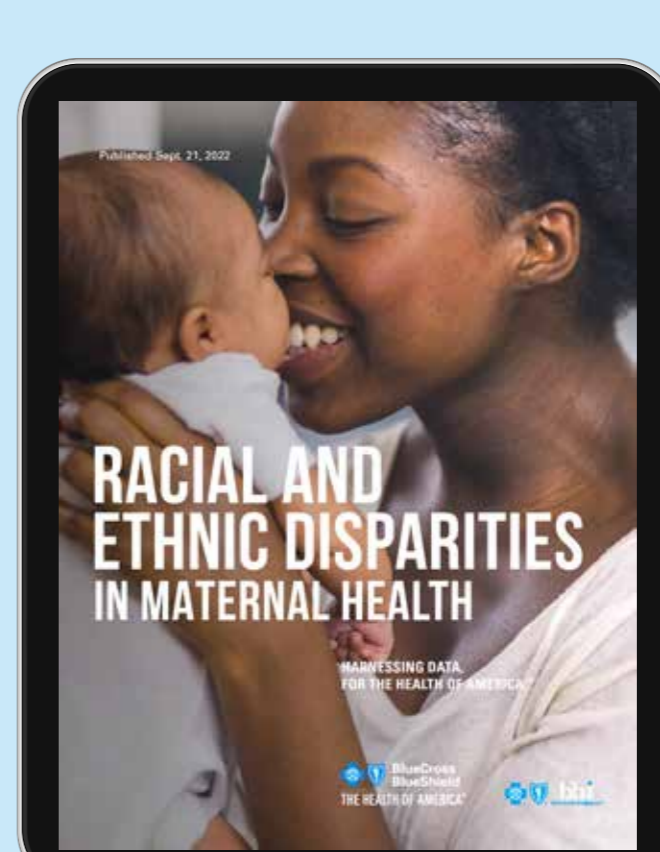
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40% experience maternal mental health symptoms at nearly twice the rate of all women.⁵



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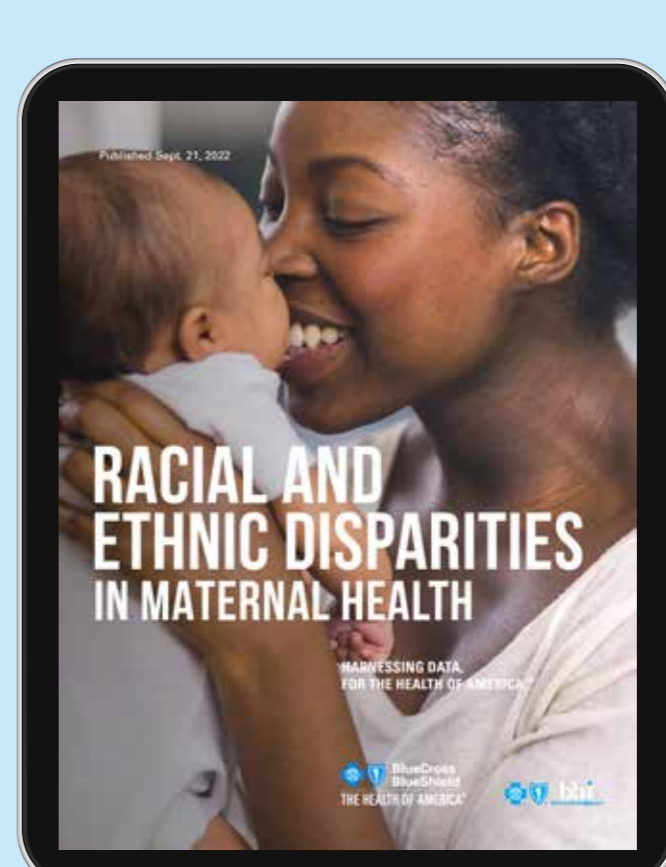
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UP TO 1/2 who have maternal mental health symptoms don't receive support or treatment.⁶



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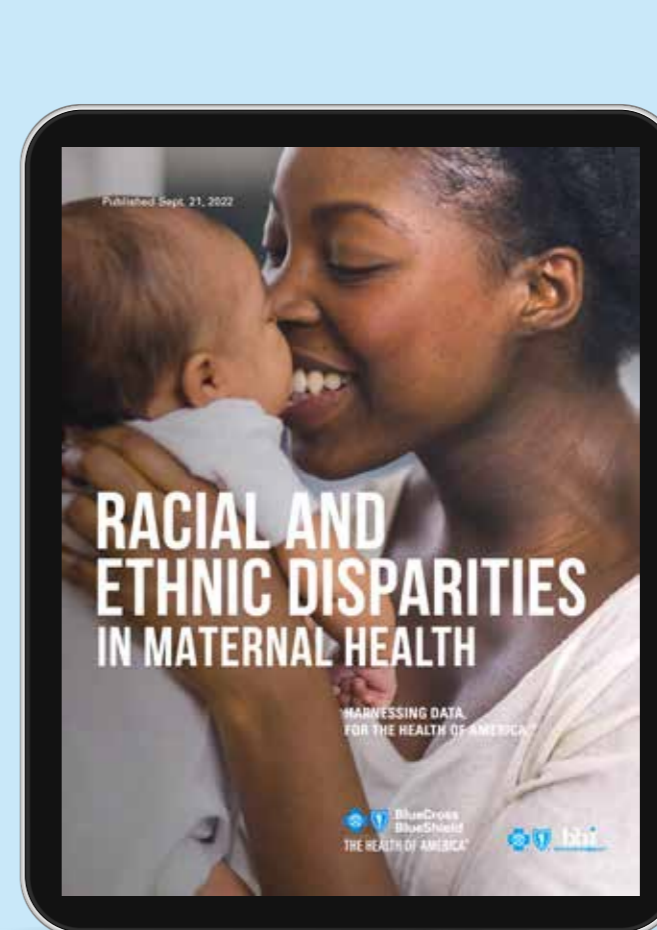
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