What legacy are we leaving for our children?

Annual Report 2018
Why the first 1,000 days?

The first 1,000 days, from pregnancy through the first three years of every child’s life, presents a unique window of time and an opportunity to create the foundations for optimum health and development. Pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding and early parenting in the first 1,000 days affects how young children’s brains develop, their response to stress, and how they form trusting relationships.

Future Legacy

Under the leadership of new Executive Director Brenda Blasingame and with your support, we will build on HealthConnect One’s legacy to see every baby, mother and family thrive in a healthy community.

With a focus on equity, we will strengthen and expand our work to support the first 1,000 days of life by:

- **Engaging communities** that experience marginalization because of race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, culture and/or language.

- **Training individuals and organizations** so parents have support during pregnancy, so families bond with their newborn, get support for breastfeeding and healthy food options, and seek pathways to high-quality childcare, and so children and caregivers have support for their mental health and well-being, understand early learning and the developing brain, and work to reduce stress in the home as much as possible.

- **Changing the conversation around pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding** in this country to focus on the root causes of health inequities.

“We know that systemic and institutional racism combined with implicit bias results in inferior health care for women of color. Though African American women can go through a life cycle of this type of medical care it is clearly pronounced during the childbearing years where we see high rates of maternal and infant mortality occurring. There are actions we can take today that will make a difference. These actions must occur at the systemic as well as the individual level if we are to change the current statistics and have success in our efforts to achieve birth equity.”

“We must...treat every baby as our own baby, if we want issues of birth inequities to be dismantled.”

- Brenda Blasingame, HealthConnect One Executive Director, in her statement to Illinois’ House Health Care Access and Affordability Committee during their hearing on maternal and infant mortality in 2018

**Why the first 1,000 days?**

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Leadership Legacy

One of the best parts of HealthConnect One is the generational leadership we witness in such a short timeframe. Clients who receive birth support often become community-based doulas or breastfeeding peer counselors themselves. Just like the concentric circles in our logo, every person HC One impacts has the capacity to impact at least 10 more – every leader we train goes back to their community and trains 10 more; every mom our work touches impacts 10 more moms in that community. The leadership spirals and the legacy continues into the next generation.

Every gift you give can amplify in the same way.

National Leadership

The legacy of HealthConnect One – our focus on equity in the first 1,000 days, and our commitment to community-led change – is embedded in the national movements we see today.

For example, the approach to infant feeding in WIC clinics all over the country grew—in part—out of HealthConnect One’s engagement with them decades ago as content consultants for their new breastfeeding peer counselor program.

In active partnership with allied organizations, we speak out on infant feeding during disasters, long-acting reversible contraception, funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV), family separation, and other topics which impact our families and communities.

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Since 1986, we have trained thousands of parents, community health workers and direct service providers to promote breastfeeding, provide pregnancy and birthing support, and prevent infant mortality. This past year, we provided training in both English and Spanish.

“Cuando nació mi bebe, nadie me hablo en mi idioma así que no supe que hacer sobre alimentar a mi bebe.” / “When my baby was born, no one spoke to me in my language so I did not know what to do about feeding my baby.”
- Enlace Chicago Training Participant

HealthConnect One is a respected leader on national strategy, as exemplified by these and other roles held by our staff:

- United States Breastfeeding Committee - Board Member
- National Association of CHWs - Founding Co-Chair
- National Association of Professional and Peer Lactation Supporters of Color - Founding Member
- Health Equity Task Force for Families USA - Founding Member
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation - Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Healing Practitioner
Congratulations to our 2018 Durbin CHW of the Year: Loretha Weisinger

“Loretha is part advocate, coach, mentor, hand-holder. She’s a doula, what the ancient Greeks used to call ‘a wise woman of birth’. Loretha was once a teenage mom, herself. Today, she’s a wife, she’s a mom, a grandmother, great-grandmother, and 21-year employee of Marillac St. Vincent Family Services...Thanks, Loretha, and all of you on the front lines helping countless young women, protecting the health of moms and babies here in Illinois and across the country.” –U.S. Senator Richard Durbin

“Loretha was my Doula for my second baby. I was nervous and scared about how this pregnancy and birth would go and I was under so much stress...Loretha really helped me stay focused and to stay calm...with her by my side, I was able to stay focused and have a healthy birth to my daughter.” --Participant in Marillac St. Vincent Family Services’ community-based doula program, Project Hope

Can you imagine a generation of babies growing up and thriving in their first 1,000 days? Supported by families, in communities where health, resilience and well-being are built one day at a time? Join us in making this our legacy.

Community Leadership
HealthConnect One’s newest initiative, our Birth Equity Leadership Academy (BELA)™ brings together a cohort of 125 trailblazers—parents and professors, young adults and elders with and without disabilities who are transgendered, queer, non-binary, cisgender, bilingual, multilingual, and monolingual—working locally and collectively to achieve equitable support for birthing families.

This summer, for example, 43 BELA™ participants submitted grant applications for projects they designed with and for their own communities. Many had never before developed a grant application, but they emerged from the grantmaking process with materials they are now using to apply for other sources of funding. Nine were selected to receive W.K. Kellogg funding as part of BELA™. This is how we develop leadership to support lasting community change. (For more information, see bit.ly/HCOneBELA)
Founding Legacy

HealthConnect One was founded on the premise that working with mothers and families during the time of pregnancy, birth and the early days of life was the best promise for change in communities facing tremendous challenges, and we recognized that working in this sacred space required the right messengers.

Since 1986, HealthConnect One has worked with community clinics, Federally Qualified Health Centers, tribal organizations, and numerous other community groups. Rooted in the belief that communities know what they need but often require support to get it, we work with communities to co-create programs, initiatives and services that support moms, babies and families. Always collaborative, our work continues to raise breastfeeding rates, lower c-section rates, and increase parent-child bonding.

We are best known for our community-based doula and breastfeeding peer counselor training and program models, which have been replicated in more than 20 states.

“HealthConnect One was founded on this principle—on the power of peer support, and the community health worker model, to care for families during pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, and early parenting. The easy, close connection that is possible with someone who looks like you, shares your experience, and understands your assumptions, is a powerful force for health and change.

I have had the great fortune to know and partner with so many community health workers during my thirty years of work with HC One. They are some of the smartest, most courageous, most talented, and most committed people I’ve ever met.”

~ Rachel Abramson to the online magazine Voyage Chicago, shortly before she retired as HealthConnect One’s Executive Director
Expenses
Foundation Grants $1,286,752
Individual and Corporate Giving $83,229
Donated Services $15,000
Fee-For Service $54,195
Special Events $22,417
Other Income $1,084
Total $1,462,677

Revenue
88%
6%
4%
2%
1%

End-of-year net assets = ($12,951)