OUR WORK IS DISTINGUISHED BY 3 FACTORS

1. Lean Core Structure
   Our lean core structure leaves us nimble, allowing us to employ a Train-the-Trainer replication model that results in more sustainable programs for high-stakes populations.

2. Begin-Before-Birth Care
   Our commitment to peer-to-peer, begin-before-birth care places dedicated community health workers where they can do enormous good: in living rooms, delivery rooms, and around kitchen tables.

3. Our Diverse Team
   Our diverse team affords us the opportunity to work with many different groups and agencies across the country, building trust and collaboration along the way.

SUPPORT

HealthConnect One is the national leader in advancing respectful, community-based, peer-to-peer support for pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding and early parenting.

Our vision is to see every baby, mother, and family thrive in a healthy community.

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HealthConnect One invests in our nation’s most challenged communities because we know that when we work together to build strong neighborhoods that employ community health workers (community-based doulas and breastfeeding peer counselors), families thrive and new babies are born stronger and healthier! This strategy has been the core of our work for over 27 years. We used to meet around kitchen tables, developing strategies for breastfeeding promotion in low-income communities of Chicago. Since then, we’ve grown beyond breastfeeding, and well beyond the boundaries of Chicago. HealthConnect One is now the national leader in advancing respectful, community-based, peer-to-peer support for pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding and early parenting.  

With every home visit, every training, every birth, and every conversation on Capitol Hill, HealthConnect One invests in our communities to make room for babies and families in danger of being swept aside.  

**Healthy Babies Photo Credit - Baby Bella Photography**  

Making Room
in our Communities

Making room does not always come easily. In Wisconsin, making room for baby meant creating the space for communities to overcome conflict.

There was historical animosity and mistrust that had developed over the years between two Ojibwe tribal bands in Wisconsin as a result of colonization. Program coordinators at both tribes decided to jointly train doulas in order to bring strong, healthy women together on common ground. “If we didn’t have this opportunity to come together through HRSA (federal agency) and HC One, we would still be stuck,” explains Jennifer Bouley, Home Visiting Program Coordinator and Community-Based Doula with the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior, with the Chippewa Community-based Doula Project. “The Community-Based Doula program offered an opportunity to unearth some of the effects of colonization, look at them together, and as strong Ojibwe women, begin to discuss colonization, look at them together, and implement culturally appropriate solutions.”

“The 20 weeks of [doula] training was a journey that truly mimicked birth,” Bouley reports. “Training started – everyone was excited and happy about the work – then it got harder. People began to resist a little bit, challenges came, barriers were there. This group, curriculum, and the circle we created really afforded the opportunity to all work toward the same goal – the new moms in the foster care system enrolled in our community-based doula training program. She couldn’t drive and didn’t own a car – but these were requirements for the job. She waxed. Should she even try? She had the raw talent to become a really good doula. The young women coming up behind her – the new moms in the foster care system who were scared or angry or unsupported, the young women whose histories mirrored her own – they needed her, because she understood them. They needed someone they could trust, someone to model what nurturing looks like. So she learned to drive and she applied to be a community-based doula full-time – to be a role model, to become what she was meant to be – and get paid for it! This is the part of our work you don’t see in the charts and graphs. This is how we make room for babies, moms, and growing families in our lives.

Community-based doulas are trusted women from the neighborhoods they serve. Their goal is to help families prepare for the many changes surrounding a birth, to quite literally make room for baby before – and when – baby arrives. We know doulas make an impact, but how does becoming a doula change a woman’s life? Here’s one story: A young woman raised in Chicago’s foster care system enrolled in our community-based doula training program. She couldn’t drive and didn’t own a car – but these were requirements for the job. She waxed. Should she even try? She had the raw talent to become a really good doula. The young women coming up behind her – the new moms in the foster care system who were scared or angry or unsupported, the young women whose histories mirrored her own – they needed her, because she understood them. They needed someone they could trust, someone to model what nurturing looks like. So she learned to drive and she applied to be a community-based doula full-time – to be a role model, to become what she was meant to be – and get paid for it! This is the part of our work you don’t see in the charts and graphs. This is how we make room for babies, moms, and growing families in our lives.

We make room for all babies as if they were our own. Join us.

“The 20 weeks of [doula] training was a journey that truly mimicked birth”

HealthConnect One was founded in 1986 because...  

...the United States has the highest rate of infant mortality among the world’s wealthiest nations.

...half of all babies born in the US are born on Medicaid and living in low-income families.

...so many vulnerable women lack the supports that they need to sustain them through pregnancy, birth and parenting.

HealthConnect One knows that moms need support to be successful in breastfeeding. Since our first breastfeeding training in 1986, we have understood that breastfeeding peer counselors and community-based doulas provide necessary support in the early days, weeks and months of breastfeeding a child. Peer counselors and doulas are there 24/7 to provide comfort, reassurance and accurate information that transitions a struggling breastfeeding mother to a successful and confident breastfeeding mother!

“The peer counselor came and visited me in the hospital after I gave birth to double check on me and my baby... it is really comforting to know there is someone there to talk to when I have a question,” says one mom. “She helped me have so much confidence breastfeeding,” says another.  

Our doula pilot project from 1996-2000 showcased tremendous breastfeeding results – over 80% of teen mothers in Chicago were breastfeeding their newborns when working with a community-based doula. Today, our programs consistently show that over 85% of new moms breastfeed when working with a community-based doula and/or breastfeeding peer counselor. “They do a phenomenal job!” exclaims Patricia Tomlinson, Lactation Services Manager at Northwest Community Hospital. “One person can’t do anything by themselves,” continues Tomlinson. “It takes a team – the staff, the community – all working together.”

“It takes a team – the staff, the community – all working together.”