



**THRIVE
INFANT MORTALITY
COLLABORATIVE**



Give Hope through Outreach

CERTIFIED COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS: HELPING MOMS THRIVE

Brenda Johnson is one of two Certified Community Health Workers (CCHWs) serving Alliance. The THRIVE initiative, through six partner agencies, employs nine CCHWs throughout Stark County; they serve at-risk pregnant women and moms with children under a year old. The goal is to reduce infant mortality and disparity rates by giving women the support and resources they need to deliver and raise healthy babies. Brenda has been a CCHW for a year, but she's done community-level work all her adult life. She was formerly a public school teacher and now serves as a pastor, counselor, and community youth director, in addition to her CCHW work.

CCHWs are certified through the Ohio Board of Nursing. They know infant CPR and first aid, and they have a good understanding of pregnancy issues, women's health concerns, and common chronic health issues.

Why is there a need for CCHWs? Well, as Brenda puts it, "stressed moms give birth to stressed babies." Many low-income and poor women face a slew of life stressors that prevent them from getting prenatal care.

This means pregnancy issues that could have been detected early may not be detected at all or may be detected late. This puts moms at greater risk of pre-term labor. Being born early places babies at higher risk of death or ongoing medical or developmental issues.

Brenda helps her clients navigate a complex social services web that can seem intimidating and bewildering. She sometimes makes phone calls on behalf of the moms, and she teaches them ways to make life manageable, like setting up phone reminders for medical appointments. She connects them with community resources that can help and equips them with tools they'll need to face life issues effectively. She's an encyclopedia of available resources, and she's always learning: she attends lots of seminars and meetings to keep updated and make community connections.

The CCHWs also rely on each other as resources. They regularly meet for peer support and to discuss community concerns. They receive ongoing training on relevant issues such as breastfeeding and postpartum depression. In addition, each CCHW meets with a mentor twice a month.

Brenda would love unlimited financial resources to meet all the needs she sees in her community. While that may never be possible, she strongly feels that we all can help improve our own neighborhoods, by babysitting so a mom can visit the doctor or by driving a senior citizen to the supermarket. The way Brenda sees it, when everyone connects, everyone thrives.

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