

Community-Based Doula's Make a Difference in Indiana

By: Sherry Matemachani and Joanne Martin

The Indiana Perinatal Network is collaborating with the Healthy Families Indiana MOM Project to implement the **Community-Based Doula** program in Indianapolis, Indiana. This community-based model was developed by the Chicago Health Connection to establish a culturally sensitive approach to pregnancy, childbirth, infant development and family support. Our doula's are specially trained lay women who come from the community in which they serve, enabling them to gain the trust of the women and children in their care. The Community-Based Doula training program takes place over a four month period with up to 80 hours of instruction. This model is unique in that our doula's are trained to provide education and support before and after the baby's birth, in addition to support during labor and delivery. Healthy Families home visiting starts during pregnancy and continues until the child is 3-5 years old, but does not include support during childbirth. Enhancing the role of the Healthy Families home visitor by adding the Doula function has proved to be a natural fit. This combined program is being evaluated by the Institute for Action Research in Community Health at Indiana University School of Nursing. So far, the combination of Community-Based Doulas with the Healthy Families home visiting program has lead to more positive outcomes such as satisfaction with the birth experience and increased breastfeeding. It also is proving to be financially feasible.

The doulas are committed to positively impacting the lives of the families they serve, and the *Beginnings Guides* have helped make this possible. The *Guides* are well designed to complement the counseling and support that CBDs provide during home visits. The mothers served in the MOM Project Community-Based Doula program are young, with the majority being teenagers, thus creating even greater challenges in providing a service that appropriately meets their needs. The *Beginnings Guides* promotion of reflective



"I really like taking out the Beginnings curriculum because it allows mother to play an active role in learning about their baby. The reflective questions encourage mothers to observe and learn from their infant's non-verbal cues. My clients really enjoy the reflective coloring sheets. In many cases the fathers have taken over this activity. In the past, when I am facing a lack of communication from clients I used the coloring sheets because the relaxation and expression in their artwork sets up a framework for future communication. I have had mothers scribble black lines all over a picture of a pregnant mother and later state that they felt ugly and messy."

Lalakesha Holmes-Allen
Healthy Families MOM Project
Doula



Beginnings Guides
It matters what a mother knows



Doula Julie Daman with Alexis and Marquez



*"I like the fact that the **Beginnings** curriculum offers information on medical concerns as well as **WARNING** signs with most months of development. The information is often repeated on the back page, making it easy to access and use. The **Beginnings** curriculum also offers more detailed information on discipline techniques and emotional development, which I think are issues **MOST** parents struggle with. I think the families do like the book format, as it is something they can keep handy, more easily than individual sheets of paper."*

Julie Daman
Healthy Families
MOM Project
Doula



Warning signs of preterm labor
Call your doctor right away if:

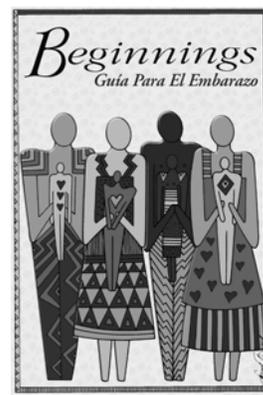
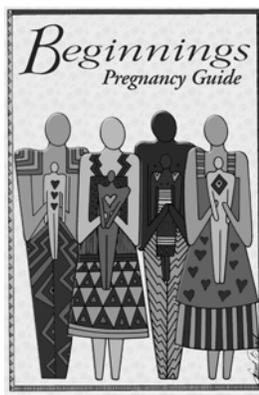
- Blood or fluid leaks from your vagina
- You feel cramps like your period is starting
- You have low dull backache
- You have 4 or more contractions in 1 hour
- You have diarrhea with any of these signs
- You feel something is wrong

Phone numbers ➡

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functioning and life skill development has been essential in fostering the ability of these moms to think critically and respond appropriately. In addition to using the *Beginnings Guides*, the MOM Project has implemented the Life Skill Progression tool to plan interventions and monitor progress.

One doula shared that the *Beginnings Guides* are the foundation to the work that she does with most of her moms because it is easy to use, promotes independent learning and gives them the opportunity to express their feelings about their pregnancy. Another shared that moms she visits often do not express themselves or their opinions very often, but the activities that are done along with the *Beginnings Guides* help open them up. The doulas have also expressed that they like the diversity and pictures that are used; believe the curriculum addresses parent concerns; and find the guides, along with the corresponding *Home Visitors Handbooks*, easy to use. The Healthy Families Indiana MOM Project CBD program looks forward to continued use of the *Beginnings Guides* to facilitate learning, promote positive parenting and help moms develop the life skills they need for themselves and their children.



For more information please visit these links:

IARCH: <http://nursing.iupui.edu/international/iarch>

Healthy Families America: <http://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org/home/index>

Indiana Perinatal Network and the Indiana Doula Project:

<http://www.indianaperinatal.org>

Chicago Health Connection Community-Based Doula model:

<http://www.chicagohealthconnection.org>

Beginnings Guides: <http://www.beginningsguides.net>

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