



“Before CHIP, I was lost”

Pregnancy can be a worrisome time for any mother. But when Vanessa became pregnant in early 2004, the prospect was terrifying. An earlier pregnancy had ended in stillbirth. Three other babies had been born prematurely. One, three months premature, had weighed just three pounds at birth.

Vanessa faced other challenges. She had no car, making it difficult to get to appointments. Homeless and jobless, she sank into a deep depression as her first trimester ended.

That was when Vanessa’s Medicaid managed care provider, Sentara Healthcare’s Optima Health Plan, referred her to CHIP of Portsmouth. Sentara works with CHIP, a nonprofit children’s health organization, to make sure pregnant women receive the range of services they need to deliver healthy babies.

“The first order of business was making sure Vanessa kept her appointments,” says CHIP nurse Kya Towe. “And during our home visits with her, she needed a lot of explana-

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tion about pregnancy milestones. After a month or so, she was calling us with questions all the time, especially after talking to her doctor.”

“I called her almost every day,” Vanessa laughs. “I learned new things about my pregnancy and about my baby. Before CHIP, I was lost.”

In addition to coaching Vanessa through her pregnancy, CHIP helped

her find housing, and worked with her to make sure she ate right. And by providing transportation to appointments with her obstetrician and her mental health counselor, CHIP helped assure that Vanessa stayed healthy.

Thirty-seven weeks after she got pregnant, Vanessa delivered a healthy, full-term baby girl. Khazieya weighed nearly seven pounds at birth and is now a thriving one year-old, up to date on all her shots and her well-child visits.

“Aside from my grandmother, I never had much family help,” Vanessa says. “CHIP really made a difference.”

But Vanessa’s CHIP outreach worker, Denise Purdy, credits Vanessa herself. “I think she really turned her situation around,” she says. “I’m really proud of her.”





Investing in Children's Futures

Running the Optima Health Plan, Virginia's largest Medicaid managed care program, Sentara Healthcare sees a lot of what experts call "high-risk pregnancies." According to the March of Dimes, the risk factors for preterm delivery include previous preterm delivery, stress, smoking, poverty, and maternal age extremes (under 17 or over 35). The results of these risks can be catastrophic for newborn children and their families. They also carry a heavy cost for the health care system.

Driven by concerns about the impact on families and society, as well as the costs of high-risk pregnancies it was seeing, Sentara decided to work with local organizations to

make sure mothers facing high-risk pregnancies got all the support they needed. In eleven cities and counties, Sentara teamed up with CHIP of Virginia to combine managed care with CHIP's health-focused home visiting and family support services.

The results, according to Dave Levin, M.D., Senior Medical Director at Sentara Health Plans, have been "wonderful," showing that it makes economic as well as moral sense to invest in preventing premature births. Sentara data suggest that its Partners in Pregnancy project cut the number of days newborns spend in neonatal intensive care and resulted in a net savings of \$1.5 million over two years.



FACTS ABOUT CHIP

THE CHIP-SENTARA PARTNERSHIP: Over 200 babies have been born after their mothers received CHIP-Sentara Partners in Pregnancy Services

Profile of Mothers Served:

- Average age 21.9 years old
- 35.7% are high school graduates
- 32.1% have a chronic medical condition
- 14.3% are employed
- 25.6% are receiving TANF benefits



In an Average Week in Virginia:

- 1,903 babies are born
- 222 babies are born prematurely
- 185 babies are born to teen mothers
- 181 babies are born to mothers who received inadequate prenatal care
- 151 babies are born low birthweight (under 5.5 pounds)
- 13 babies die before their first birthday

Newborn Hospital Costs

- Average hospital cost for newborn without complications: \$1,500
- Average hospital cost for premature newborn: \$79,000
- In 2002, U.S. hospital charges for all infants totaled \$33.8 billion.
- Nearly half of that—\$15.5 billion—was for babies with any diagnosis of prematurity. That means that nearly 50 percent of the total charges for infant hospital stays in 2002 were for babies who were born too soon or too small.

(source: March of Dimes)

