

“ Safety 1st”

I had the pleasure of working with a family expecting a baby in the near future who did not have a car seat due to financial constraints. The family is new to the country, and English is not their first language. I work in rural Maine, but the family lives in a more urban area. I had been contacted by another healthcare agency that was aware of our car seat program and inquired about partnering to support this family. Upon receiving the referral, I was aware of language, financial, and transportation barriers.

Given the specific barriers and circumstances the family faced, I felt it was essential to work with the referring agency to collaborate to provide the best possible experience for the family. I feel it's important that families with multiple barriers have the option to meet in a familiar setting, so I arranged for this, personally accompanied the family to their appointment, and scheduled a phone interpreter so that I could be fully engaged with the family in car seat education. I believe this allowed me to build trust with the family quickly.

During the appointment, I was asked numerous questions about why Maine's laws are the way they are. The family is from a country where car seats are not the norm, and there are no child passenger safety laws. The mom was able to practice installing the car seat on her own and was successful after my coaching. I was also able to give her suggestions for after the baby is born. While I did the best I could in educating her on proper car seat use, there are still some aspects of a safety inspection or installation that cannot be done when the child is not present. I explained to the family what they can expect upon discharge from the birthing center, including the car seat tolerance test, where they will need to bring the car seat into the hospital and reinstall it afterward.

As a CHW/CHE who has a background in social work, my greatest passion is finding ways to help people meet their needs. I'm passionate about car seat safety and am a strong advocate for proper use in accordance with Maine State laws. By collaborating with other healthcare systems, I was able to ensure their newborn was safe in the vehicle and help the family navigate the complex healthcare system. I'm honored to work with other professionals to ensure that Maine children are safely transported and that this service is accessible to everyone.

Brittney's Story