



HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

Ivory's Story: Home Visitor Provides Support During Risky Pregnancy and Preterm Birth of Twins

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of articles featuring one family's experience with home visiting. In this story, the youngest sister Ivory talks about her preterm birth and the important role of her home visiting nurse, Raychelle, who previously served as the home visitor for Ivory's two sisters. The first installment is mom [Ebony's story](#), sharing how her daughters benefitted from having "Nurse Raychelle" as their home visitor. Watch for upcoming episodes about Ebony's eldest daughters: Shenise and Essence.

At age 21, Ivory had been through a miscarriage and wasn't sure she could ever carry a baby to full term. She had an ovarian cyst condition that put pregnancy at high risk, so when another pregnancy followed, it came as a surprise that, at 15 weeks along, Ivory learned she was carrying twins.

"The first thing I thought was I'm going to need more information," Ivory says, adding that she turned to Raychelle, a public health nurse in Riverside County who had been the home visitor for Ivory's two older sisters. With Raychelle's guidance, Ivory would learn what she needed to know about her health, carrying twins and taking care of two babies at once.

African-American women are **52 percent** more likely to have a preterm birth (before 37 weeks) than other women. Already



Ivory, left, relied on the support and information she received from her home visiting nurse, Raychelle. Although her twins, Andre and Ania, were born preterm, she credits Nurse Raychelle for helping her prevent an even earlier delivery.

What is Home Visiting?

Home visiting is a voluntary program that pairs pregnant and newly parenting women with a nurse or trained professional who makes regular visits in the participant's home to provide guidance, coaching and access to prenatal care and other health and social services. Home visiting is preventive intervention focused on promoting positive parenting and child development, with the ultimate goal of strengthening families and communities.

with a high-risk pregnancy, Ivory also had preterm birth risk factors, including carrying multiples and being underweight. At each home visit throughout the pregnancy, Raychelle checked Ivory's weight, blood pressure and other health indicators, and also encouraged her to eat plenty of nutritious foods, drink lots of water, rest as needed and continue to seek prenatal care, even if she was feeling fine.



"[Raychelle] was with me every step of the way, and I know for a fact, if I was not in the home visiting program, I would be a different mom." — Ivory

When Ivory was about 24 weeks along, she went to the emergency room with back pain, headache and a feeling that something was just "not right." She was experiencing contractions and active labor, and the hospital staff administered medication to help stave off premature delivery. They also recommended avoiding stress and slowing down, which proved difficult for Ivory. She was working 10-hour days on her feet with no accommodations for resting, and she was attending college, carrying 20 units.



water broke. Born 10 weeks early, baby girl Ania weighed 2 pounds, 13 ounces and her twin brother, Andre, tipped the scales at 3 pounds 14 ounces. The babies spent their first three weeks in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, but made it home in time for their baby shower.

"If it wasn't for Raychelle telling me that early and heavy contractions aren't normal, there could have been a possibility that I would have delivered my babies at my job. I'm grateful to Raychelle for

"I asked my OB if I could be placed on a maternity leave, but he and his nurse denied my request, stating that he felt there were always going to be complications when women have multiples," Ivory says. "I kept expressing that something was not right."

Raychelle listened to Ivory and vigilantly monitored the health of mom and her babies. She encouraged Ivory to follow after-care recommendations from the emergency room and rest as much as possible. Ivory worked a few more weeks, but then quit her job despite lost wages. Three weeks later, her

telling me to follow up; she kept reminding me to follow up, stay off my feet and make sure I was getting enough nutrition," Ivory says.

"I'm so thankful for Raychelle and for her being here. She was there with me every step of the way, and I know for a fact, if I was not in the home visiting program, I would be a different mom," she continues. "On a scale of 1 to 10, this program is an 11."

What you can do to **REDUCE YOUR RISK** for preterm birth

- Go to the doctor as soon as you think you are pregnant.
- Let your partner, friends and family know you need help. Having a baby can be tough!
- Maintain a healthy weight, and exercise before, during and after your pregnancy.
- Wait 18 months after the birth of your baby to get pregnant again.

For more information, download the [Preterm Birth Tip Sheet](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/pretermbirth) (www.cdph.ca.gov/pretermbirth).



Mom Ebony, left, encouraged each of her three daughters to enroll in the home visiting program. For almost 10 years, the family has been served by Nurse Raychelle.

