

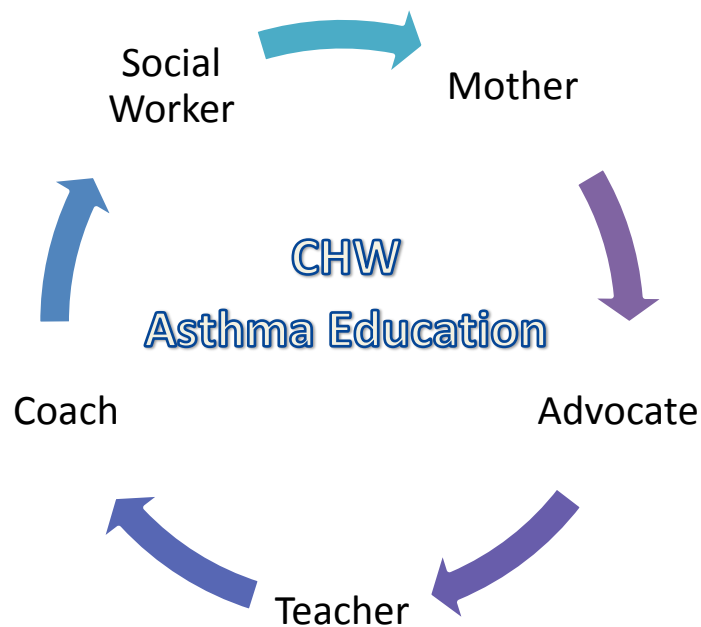
## **Empowering Participants to Take Control of Their Asthma by Shifting the Paradigm to a more Holistic Approach: A CHW’s Experience as a Change Agent**

By Rhonda Lay

Though asthma is what brings us to their doorstep, it is often times not the first, second or third thing we can discuss when we get in the home. In order to effectively educate our patients, we have to address the competing priorities that they face every day.

Barriers that we face may include: lack of trust, mental health issues, additional physical health concerns, joblessness/searching for employment, food insecurity, pests, mold, dust mites, household chemicals, strong odors, insufficient heat, retaliation, and/or foreclosure.

*The holistic approach is critical because each person’s family dynamic is different, yet when in the hospital or clinic the care is often the same for everyone. Being in the patient’s home allows us the time and freedom to provide such an approach. The holistic approach in this instance means that we as CHWs sometimes have to be more than an educator to the patient. We are able to impact their lives by being all of the following:*



Ultimately, we are working towards increasing the patient’s asthma-related quality of life by helping them to:

- Control their asthma through medication and regular doctor visits;
- Decrease triggers in their environment through remediation or cleaning skills; and
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of their asthma and act according to the flare-up before their symptoms worsen.