

Home visitation to prevent childhood abuse and neglect

Each year, an estimated 2.7 million children in America are abused or neglected. Since 2000, child maltreatment has increased nearly 26%.

- In 2008 there were 52,141 indicated reports of child abuse and neglect across New York State involving nearly 80,000 children.
- While the number of reports has declined slightly over the years, 2008 claimed 1,471 substantiated reports of abuse or neglect affecting over 2300 Monroe County children.

Home visiting programs provide a range of support to at-risk mothers before their child is born and through the earliest years. Nurses or other trained professionals help new parents manage stress, understand newborn health and nutrition needs, identify early warning signs, and teach practical steps to avoid hurting their kids resulting in:

- Reductions in child maltreatment
- Improved child health and development
- Improved parenting practices
- Improved children's readiness for school

Nurse Family Partnership, a tenured evidence-based home visiting program has not only reduced the incidence of child abuse and neglect almost in half, but it is also accredited with:

- a 56% reduction in emergency-room visits due to accidents and poisonings
- a 59% reduction in arrests at child age 15
- a 67% reduction in behavioral and intellectual problems at child age six
- a 72% fewer convictions of mothers at child age 15

Home visitation programs like Nurse Family Partnership[®] and Building Healthy Children effectively stem the tide of a host of health care, social service, criminal justice, special education and child welfare costs in the future. Yet, due to underfunding, only a fraction of the estimated 500,000 at-risk families are being helped.

Our Community is committed to reducing the incidence of multigenerational child abuse and neglect among families at greatest risk. We have invested more than \$3 million to develop and sustain effective programs locally. With only 11% of at risk children currently being served, reducing our commitment to home visiting programs will have a detrimental effect on the most vulnerable children and families they serve.

We are asking New York State to maintain funding for home visiting programs. A proposed \$8.5 billion in the Federal FY2010 budget would allocate funding to states for evidence-based home visitation. Eligibility for funding (between \$100-150 million) could require a New York State match; this makes state-level support even more critical.

We support the Federal Governments declared support for home visitation and are asking their support for Education Begins at Home Act (S.244/HR2205). Over 3 years this bill will:

- provide \$400 million to states to expand quality early childhood visitation programs,
- \$50 million to fund innovations and partnerships at local level to expand these services to English language learners,
- provide \$50 million to provide these services to Armed Forces families living on military bases, and
- strengthen the early childhood home visitation components of Early Head Start.