

Home Visiting Programs



ACTION

- Cosponsor and pass the Education Begins at Home Act, S. 503 in the United States Senate, and H.R. 3628 in the United States House of Representatives.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Home visitation programs refer to a number of different model programs that provide in-home visits to targeted vulnerable or new families. Four hundred thousand children between ages 0 to 5 received home visitation programs as either a stand-alone program or as part of a center-based program. Eligible families may receive services as early as the pre-natal stage. The early years of a child's life are the most critical for optimal development and provide the foundation for success in school and life. Nurses, professionals, or other trained members of the community conduct the visits on a weekly, bimonthly, or monthly basis. Program goals include an increase in positive parenting practices, an improvement in the health of the entire family, an increase in the family's ability to be self-sufficient, and enhanced school readiness for the children in the family.

Quality early childhood home visitation programs lead to positive outcomes for children and families, including a reduction in child maltreatment. Annual data indicates that 40% of the nearly 900,000 children who have been found to be abused and neglected never receive follow-up services. In some instances, home visitation could help to address this need.

Home visitation services have been proven to be effective in stabilizing at-risk families, and may potentially reduce the disproportionality or overrepresentation of children and families of color while improving outcomes for these families. Home visitation programs significantly affect factors directly linked to future abuse and neglect.

Research shows that families who receive at least 15 home visits have less perceived stress and maternal depression, while also expressing higher levels of paternal competence.

Senator Christopher Bond (R-MO), the sponsor of S. 503, first began promoting home visiting when, as Governor of Missouri, he signed the Early Childhood Education Act of 1984. This legislation helped expand the Parents as Teachers (PAT) programs in all state school districts. As the PAT model spread, it was later included in the reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

PAT joins several other model programs used by states across the country. States have decided to follow these different models, depending on local needs and preferences. Other home visitation programs include the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), Healthy Families America, Early Head Start, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI), and the Parent-Child Home Program.

2006 LEGISLATION

Senator Bond introduced legislation in the 108th Congress (2003-2004), and again in the current 109th Congress as S. 503. Representative Danny Davis (D-IL) later introduced a companion bill, H.R. 3628, in the House of Representatives. Both bills have bipartisan support. Under the legislation, the Department of Health and Human Services would collaborate with the Department of Education to make grants available to all 50 states over a three-year period, authorizing \$400 million for states to implement home visiting programs. An additional \$50 million would be authorized over a three-year period for local partnerships that create or implement home visiting programs targeted to English-language learning families. Finally, an additional \$50 million would be targeted to

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reach military families through the Department of Defense. The legislation also seeks to strengthen the home visitation components of the Early Head Start program.

Under the legislation, each governor would designate a lead state agency to oversee and implement the state program. The states can use their grants to supplement—but not replace—current state funding. The legislation does not dictate which, or how many, home visiting models may be used. If a state currently lacks a home visitation program, the funds can be used to develop a program. A state's grant funding award would be based on the number of children 5 and younger living in the state, with no state receiving more than \$20 million a year. Applying states would submit a plan outlining their efforts to collaborate and coordinate among existing and new programs.

KEY FACTS

- In 2004, an estimated 3 million cases of child abuse and neglect were reported and referred for investigation to state and local child protective service agencies because family members, professionals, or other citizens were concerned about their safety and well-being. After follow-up assessments, officials were able to substantiate 872,000 of these cases.
- Of the 870,000 children determined to be abused or neglected, 59.4% received follow-up services. In other words, 40% of child victims did not receive follow up services. Of the children who were reported abused or neglected, but their cases were not substantiated, 27.3% received follow-up services.
- Of the estimated 1,490 child deaths in 2004, 81% of child victims were younger than age 4. Another 11.5% were between the ages of 4 and 7.
- 78.5% of the perpetrators of child maltreatment were parents.
- A study of the Missouri-based PAT home visiting program examined the children enrolled in the program and found that by the age of 3, they were significantly more advanced in language, problem-solving, and intellectual and social abilities than children in comparable groups.
- A study of the Nurse-Family Partnership showed that there was a 79% reduction in child maltreatment among at-risk families compared to other families in a control group. That same study also indicated a number of other benefits in the areas of health, employment, and behavior.
- Healthy Families America exists in more than 450 communities; Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is in 167 sites in 26

states; the Parent-Child Home Program is located in 137 sites nationally and 10 sites internationally; Early Head Start serves more than 62,000 children in 7,000 sites; and Parents as Teachers (PAT) is located in all 50 states and serves more than 400,000 children.

- Research shows that participating children show improved rates of early literacy, language development, problem solving, and social awareness. These children also demonstrate higher rates of school attendance and scores on achievement and standardized tests.
- Studies have shown that families who receive home visiting are more likely to have health insurance, to seek prenatal and wellness care, and their children are also more likely to be immunized.
- Home visitation programs have been shown to reduce juvenile delinquency by reducing abuse and neglect. Studies have documented that this saves taxpayers nearly \$53 billion annually.

Sources for statistical information are provided in the online version of this fact sheet. See www.cwla.org/advocacy/2006legagenda.htm.

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