Cost of neonatal care for a low birthweight baby: $10,000
Cost of one year in foster care: $16,000
Cost of consequences of child abuse and neglect: $2.5 billion
Advice and support from trained professionals: Priceless

Home visiting programs, staffed by nurses or other trained professionals, provide priceless advice and support to parents who struggle to provide the nurturing and care their children need. Research shows these programs yield better outcomes for children whose parents are teenagers, survivors of childhood abuse, struggling with poverty and unemployment, or dealing with problems such as mental illness, substance use, and homelessness.

What is Home Visiting?

Home visitors are nurses or other trained professionals who provide regular home visits to educate expectant and new parents about prenatal care, infant care, child development and parenting skills. Home visiting dates back to Elizabethan England, but was endorsed in the United States by Florence Nightingale in the 19th century. Early on, home visiting was lauded for decreasing infant mortality rates. Today, voluntary public health programs not only improve birth outcomes, but help ensure that parents provide quality care and learning experiences during the critical early years of a child’s life.

Why Home Visiting?

Early intervention in the form of home visiting has been proven to provide families with the tools they need to positively impact their children’s well-being and ensure a successful start in life. Since 85% of a child’s brain development takes place before age 5, it is vital that families receive the skills, services, and supports they need during their children’s earliest years.

- Mothers enrolled in the Healthy Families New York program have fewer low birthweight babies and are significantly less likely to abuse or neglect their children.\(^1\)
- During the first two years of the child’s life, nurse-visited children in the Nurse-Family Partnership Program have 48% fewer verified cases of abuse and neglect than a control group.\(^2\)
- The Parent-Child Home Program graduates begin kindergarten with better literacy skills than similarly-situated non-Program children have when they finish kindergarten. The non-Program children do not catch up, even after being in the same kindergarten program.\(^3\)
- Children served by the Parents as Teachers program show better school readiness at the start of kindergarten, higher reading and math readiness at the end of kindergarten, higher kindergarten grades, and fewer remedial education placements in first grade.\(^4\)
What is the Need for Home Visiting in New York State?

- There were 17,000 babies born in New York State to teen mothers, age 15 – 19, in 2006. 10% of pregnant women in that age range receive late or no prenatal care. A lack of prenatal care can result in negative health outcomes, such as low-birthweight babies.
- More than $2.5 billion is spent annually to deal with the consequences of child abuse and neglect, including $450 million for foster care, $110 million for special education services for abused children, $85 million for juvenile delinquency programs, and $23 million for hospitalization for child injuries.

What are the Outcomes of Home Visiting Programs?

Home visiting:

- improves children’s and parents’ health, development, and overall well-being;
- builds positive parenting skills and parent-child interactions, thereby preventing child abuse and neglect;
- reduces costs associated with foster care placements, unintended pregnancies, hospitalizations and emergency room visits;
- assists with the identification of domestic violence, substance abuse, and other problems within the family. Home visitors are often the frontline reporting and referral system in those cases; and
- increases school readiness and school success.

What Programs Exist in New York State?

There is a fragmented “system” of home visiting programs in New York State. They include evidence-based programs and promising practices. These programs serve different populations and have various funding streams. There is currently no safety net to catch families who are ineligible for these programs but could benefit from participation.

The following programs have been identified as evidence-based or promising practices: Healthy Families New York, the Nurse-Family Partnership Program, The Parent-Child Home Program, Early Head Start and Parents as Teachers.

- **Healthy Families New York (HFNY)**, based on the national Healthy Families America (HFA) model, is a community-based prevention program that targets expectant parents and parents with an infant less than three months of age who are considered to be at high-risk for child abuse and neglect. Specially trained family support workers, who typically share the same language and cultural background as participating families, may deliver home visitation services until the child reaches five or is enrolled in Head Start or kindergarten.
Ebony & Rodney
One mother’s story:

“My name is Ebony. I have been a client with the Nurse-Family Partnership since January, 2008. I joined the Nurse-Family Partnership when I found out I was pregnant, just as I was preparing to leave foster care.

I met my nurse, Kathleen, when I was 22 weeks pregnant. She helped me understand how important good nutrition and good prenatal care was to my baby. Best of all, I learned so much, I felt much less scared. When my baby, Rodney Jr., was born I felt like I knew what to expect, and, if something happened, my nurse was there for me. She taught me how to bathe him (he was slippery!) and how to play with him. She taught me what his baby cues meant: when he was hungry, when he was tired, and when he wanted to play.

I don’t know what I would have done if I didn’t have a nurse from the Nurse-Family Partnership. I’m afraid we both would have been lost to the streets.”

Ebony is a Nurse-Family Partnership client at Public Health Solutions, Inc., one of the implementing agencies within the NYC NFP citywide initiative that is overseen by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

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The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is a national program targeted to low-income, first-time mothers in designated high-risk communities. Specially trained registered nurses, who carry a caseload of no more than 25 families, conduct frequent home visits during pregnancy and until the child’s second birthday.

The Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) is a school-readiness program that increases language and literacy skills, enhances social-emotional development, and strengthens the parent-child relationship. PCHP provides intensive home visiting to families with two- and three-year-olds who face multiple obstacles to educational and economic success, including living in poverty, low parental education level, being a single or teenage parent, experiencing illiteracy, being homeless, and having language barriers.

Early Head Start (EHS) is a federally-funded, evidence-based grant program that provides low-income pregnant women and families with children from birth to age three with family-centered services that facilitate child development, support parental roles, and promote self-sufficiency. EHS programs look different depending on the grantee’s plan; however, all Head Start programs include a home visiting component.

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a universal access model focused on families with children from before birth to kindergarten entry. The model includes personal home visits by certified parent educators, group meetings, developmental and health screenings for children, and linkages to community resources.

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1 Healthy Families New York Program data.
2 Nurse-Family Partnership Program data.
3 Parent-Child Home Program data.
4 Parents as Teachers data.
5 Prevent Child Abuse New York data.
Resources:

Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
www.scaany.org

Healthy Families New York
www.healthyfamiliesnewyork.org

Nurse-Family Partnership
www.nursefamilypartnership.org

The Parent-Child Home Program
www.parent-child.org

Parents As Teachers
www.parentsasteachers.org

Rand Promising Practices
www.promisingpractices.net

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Model Programs Guide
http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/mpg_index.htm

Winning Beginning

an early care and education coalition

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