

ABOUT HOME VISITING

WHAT IS "HOME VISITING"?

Home visiting is a research-based strategy used by a variety of programs that are focused on improving birth outcomes, family self-sufficiency, and maximizing children's early potential, so that they start school healthy and ready to learn. When families experience a life course changing event- a new baby, a health or mental health challenge or stress in their environment, they may be asked to volunteer to partner with a home visitor to help manage these life changes.

WHY IN THE HOME?

This is a family's natural environment where families feel most comfortable and willing to open up. Whether it is an overcrowded trailer, a public housing project, or an isolated country road, home visitors can use the context of the environment to teach families how to build on their strengths and overcome challenges.

WHAT IS A HOME VISITOR?

The individuals that we call "home visitors" act as a counselor. They could be a parent educator, a family support worker or even a nurse. They are not required to hold certain qualifications but could be trained in social work and public health.

WHO NEEDS HOME VISITING?

The hardest to serve families, those who can't be successful with a patchwork of supports such as WIC nutrition assistance or child care assistance. A family voluntarily participates in home visiting when the mother is facing her first pregnancy, a high-risk pregnancy, or a family is experiencing other stresses, such as unemployment and language barriers, that limit their ability to connect to resources.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A HOME VISIT?

The main topic of a home visit is meeting the goals that families set for themselves. All parents, regardless of their income, culture, or ethnic background, want their children to have a better life than they've had. Home visitors help parents break down these goals into manageable steps. Home visitors offer a different form of accountability, one that is based on trust, high expectations, and a willingness to be there with the family, and walk with them in their journey to make life changes.

The foundation for any home visit is for the family to be healthy and to have a healthy child.

Instead a home visitor is a cheerleader, a life coach, and an expert. Here are some of the things they say to parents.

"It's helpful to know when you are doing things right."

"I want you to be the best parent you can be."

"It's not just us talking, we will do activities that are relevant to helping your baby grow."

Not all parents need the on-going encouragement of a home visitor in their lives, but there are many reasons why parents do...



At least 25% of women in home visiting programs report being depressed. Maternal depression often goes undiagnosed and can have a serious, long-term impact on the child as well as the mother.



A parent is their child's first teacher, and children are most eager and open to learning in their earliest years. But when an infant or toddler can't communicate, hold a pencil, or read, it seems silly to "teach" them. Not all parents are comfortable with making silly voices and talking to infants like you expect them to talk back. Home visitors help to encourage these interactions.



Anyone who is just starting out, new to a city, new to the role of parent, new to the country, will need guidance to understand how to access resources and supports. Home visitors are provided the skills and knowledge to help parents be the best parent they can be from the beginning of their child's life. This knowledge will impact a family over a lifetime.

ALTHOUGH THE PROGRAM NAMES ARE DIFFERENT, THE FOCUS IS ON HEALTHY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Virginia has several different programs and names for home visiting, but no matter what the program is named, they share the same fundamental goals and approaches- to help a family obtain the knowledge and resources to ensure their child's health and welfare.

CHIP (COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH INVESTMENT PROJECT) is a model home visiting developed in Virginia that partners parent educators with nurses to focus on the health of children and parents. Families enrolled in CHIP are low-income and can enroll in home visiting at any time prenatally through age 6. They can maintain enrollment until they meet their goals.

EARLY HEAD START* is a national model that requires local Early Head Start grantees to incorporate a series of parenting focused home visits and parenting classes, in addition to quality child care for families. Home visits are only available in some Early Head Start programs.

HEALTHY FAMILIES* is a national model targeted to families at-risk for adverse experiences. Any family with a child under 3 months may be screened for risks. Those who are determined to be facing more challenges are offered a Family Support Worker with whom to work on their families' goals and positive parenting practices.

PARENTS AS TEACHERS* (PAT) is a national model with a set of planned lessons for each home visit, based on the child's age. In Virginia, some programs such as CHIP and Healthy Families, use the curriculum for lessons. Some programs are a PAT model that includes home visits and small groups to discuss parenting. PAT is targeted to pregnant women and families with children under 5.

PROJECT LINK is a Virginia-grown model that targets substance abusing mothers or mothers at-risk of substance abuse. The primary focus of these services is focused on treating the substance abuse problems as they may interfere with the family and child's health and well being.

NURSE FAMILY PARTNERSHIP* is a national model that targets first time pregnant women and pairs them with nurses as home visitors. The Nurse Family Partnership model is rigorously evaluated and replicated. It has been recently introduced to Virginia.

RESOURCE MOTHERS is a Virginia-grown model that focuses on teen moms. Resource Mothers programs are sometimes linked to local health departments and primarily focus on the pregnant teen and infant's health.

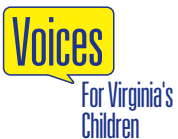
**Programs offered in Virginia designated as evidence-based models by the US Department of Health and Human Services*

Why all of the different names? Because like many early childhood programs funding for home visiting is fractured and complicated. Some funding comes directly from the federal level to local programs. State funding is split between Health, Social Services and DBHDS. With a comprehensive, tried and true approach, multiple agencies see home visiting as a means to improving lives for families in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Many families would not see the difference in these programs, but for administrators and policymakers, the names add to the complexity.

To link these programs together, Virginia has developed a Home Visiting Consortium. The Consortium provides a venue for these programs to collaborate and share resources such as professional development and evaluation. The Home Visiting Consortium also helps to shed light on the research and evaluation conducted through Virginia's federal MIECHV grant funding to expand home visiting services to areas of need and promote continuous quality improvement for services offered through home visiting.

"Virginia's home visiting programs work together in a coordinated way to carry out initiatives that strengthen outcomes for families. Through efforts of the Home Visiting Consortium, programs collect data used both to improve quality and to study program success-critical steps to drive positive results for participating children and families."

Karen Kavanaugh, Program Director, Pew Home Visiting Campaign



We champion public policies to improve the lives of Virginia's children.

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