

Breaking the Cycle

HOW HOME VISITING CAN REDUCE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
AND PREVENT CRIME IN NEW YORK STATE



Acknowledgements

Breaking the Cycle **How Home Visiting Can Reduce Child Abuse** **And Neglect And Prevent Crime in New York State**

A Report by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *NEW YORK*

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Executive Summary



Abuse and neglect increases crime. Nothing can fully prepare a law enforcement officer to walk into a home where child abuse has taken place. The terrible experience of

removing children from their homes is one reason why the law enforcement leaders of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS NEW YORK are so committed to preventing abuse or neglect *before* children are hurt. *Over 77,000 New York children were victims of abuse or neglect in 2010, over 200 children every day, and at least 114 New York children died from that abuse or neglect.* The true numbers are likely much higher because many cases of abuse and neglect are not reported. In addition to protecting children, law enforcement leaders want to prevent abuse and neglect because maltreatment contributes to future crime. While most survivors of childhood abuse and neglect never become violent criminals, research shows that an estimated *3,000 victims of abuse and neglect in New York in 2010 will later become violent criminals* who otherwise would have avoided such crimes if not for the abuse and neglect they endured as children.

Home visiting for families with infants and young children can cut abuse and neglect and reduce future crime. One evidence-based program, the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), cut abuse and neglect and arrests in half. These large reductions in abuse and neglect and crime mean that home visiting can save far more than it costs. However, only proven, evidence-based programs can realize substantial outcomes for children and families and resulting fiscal savings for states and communities. We need to ensure that public investments are directed to those services proven to work. Promising programs that lack a strong evidence base should be rigorously evaluated

to confirm they deliver results. New York is currently using federal resources to expand two evidence-based home visiting programs that can reduce child abuse and neglect, the Nurse-Family Partnership and Healthy Families New York.

Stopping child abuse is a critical crime prevention strategy. As law enforcement leaders, we urge state lawmakers to direct federal and state funding to maintain, improve and expand existing home visiting programs even in these tough financial times. In order to leverage federal funding for home visiting, New York State *must* preserve existing state efforts to fund evidence-based home visiting. In addition, we urge the New York congressional delegation to protect federal funding of voluntary, evidence-based home visitation services as a proven child abuse and neglect prevention strategy that will reduce future crime and save taxpayer money.

Breaking the Cycle

HOW HOME VISITING CAN REDUCE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND PREVENT CRIME IN NEW YORK STATE

The Toll of Abuse and Neglect - More Violence, Suicides and Abuse in the Future

Most New Yorkers hear about severe cases of abuse on the evening news. Few, however, know how widespread the problem is. According to figures reported to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, over 77,000 New York State children were confirmed victims of abuse or neglect in 2010; over 200 per day.¹ The true numbers are almost certainly much higher due primarily to underreporting. Research indicates that the actual number of children exposed to abuse or neglect is well over three times as high, meaning there may be more than 230,000 New York victims per year.² This is 20,000 more children than the entire population of Rochester. The youngest children are the most vulnerable. Nationally, one third of all abuse victims are younger than 4 years of age and almost half of maltreatment fatalities are among children under the age of 1.³

The long-term consequences of this abuse and neglect include more costly incidences of violence, suicide and other poor

Being abused or neglected almost doubles the odds that a child will commit a crime as a juvenile.

Cathy S. Widom, Adjunct Professor of Psychology,
University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey,(2000)

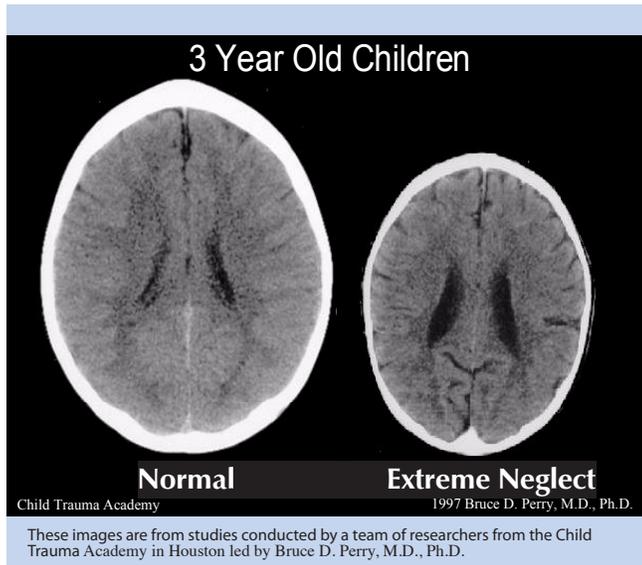


Over 77,000 children are abused or neglected every year in New York – enough to fill Madison Square Garden more than three times.

Flickr Creative Commons, 2012

life outcomes. Physical abuse can cause post-traumatic stress disorders leaving children quicker to switch into a “fight or flight” mode.⁴ The impact of severe neglect can be equally harmful. Dr. Bruce Perry, a neurobiologist and authority on brain development and children in crisis has written, “The systems in the human brain that allow us to form and maintain emotional relationships develop during infancy and the first years of life ... With severe emotional neglect in early childhood, the impact can be devastating.” Perry explains that severely neglected children frequently respond to mild provocation with aggression and cruelty that “is often accompanied by a detached, cold lack of empathy.”⁵ Perry further warns: “The most dangerous children [and adults] are created by a malignant combination of experiences. Developmental neglect and traumatic stress during childhood create violent, remorseless children.”⁶

Although surveys report varying numbers, one review of the literature on prior abuse and neglect concluded that approximately half of the youths arrested for delinquency had



been abused and/or neglected earlier in their lives.⁷ Research by Dr. Cathy Spatz Widom found that even after isolating other risk factors for crime, like growing up in poverty or with high-crime peers, child abuse and neglect is a significant driver of crime rates. Compared to youth from similar backgrounds and neighborhoods, being abused or neglected almost *doubles the odds* that a child will commit a crime by age 19.⁸

As for violent crime, Widom found that 18 percent of abused or neglected youngsters went on to be arrested for a violent crime as juveniles or as adults, compared to 14 percent of similar individuals who shared the same other advantages and disadvantages as these children but who had not been abused or neglected as children – a difference of four percentage points.⁹

Applying Widom's four percentage point figure to New York's 77,000 cases of abuse and neglect in 2010 produces a figure of over 3,000 additional New Yorkers who will be arrested for at least one violent crime beyond the number of those who would have been arrested had the abuse or neglect never occurred.¹⁰

Perhaps most disturbing, researchers who conducted extensive interviews with extremely violent offenders are convinced that severe abuse or neglect was a defining influence in almost all of these violent offenders' lives.¹¹ Dorothy Lewis and Jonathan Pincus interviewed 14 of the 37 juveniles facing death sentences in 1986 and 1987. They found that only one of those interviewed had not suffered childhood family violence and severe physical abuse.¹² John Douglas, one of the experts who

helped the FBI develop violent criminal profiles, reached similar conclusions from his studies.¹³

Widom's research shows that an increased risk of criminality is not the only negative outcome abused or neglected children face. She found that children without exposure to abuse or neglect were 40 percent more likely to be employed and 50 percent more likely to have stable marriages than individuals who were abused or neglected. Victims of abuse or neglect were also more than twice as likely to attempt suicide.¹⁴

Further, abuse victims are more likely than non-victims to become abusers themselves, continuing the cycle of family violence. Study results vary, but one study comparing extreme cases found that poor mothers who had been severely physically abused as children were 13 times more likely to abuse their own children than mothers who had emotionally supportive parents.¹⁵ More generally, evidence suggests that an estimated one third of adults with a history of abuse may maltreat their own children.¹⁶

Many abused or neglected children grow up to lead productive lives, and these children can often be helped with proper care and services. Unfortunately, however, many injuries cannot be undone. New research emerging from neurobiology, endocrinology, immunology and genetics reveals serious lifelong physical and mental health consequences that have never before been connected to early abuse and neglect. These include increased risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, depression and addiction.¹⁷ For states like New York, the best and most cost effective way to reduce the short- and long-term costs, both financial and emotional, of abuse and neglect is to invest in services with a proven record of preventing maltreatment and improving child and family wellbeing. One such program is quality, voluntary home visiting for families with infants and young children.

What is Home Visiting?

High-quality, voluntary home visiting teams parents with trained professionals who provide information and support during pregnancy and throughout the child's first years of life. Quality home visiting is proven to improve short- and long-term outcomes for participating children and families.

By reaching expectant mothers early, home visitation helps them adopt healthier behaviors at a critical time that can impact child development. After the baby's birth, home visitors

help parents understand and support healthy infant development; provide responsive, nurturing care; and ensure a safe, stimulating environment. In addition, home visitors promote the parent's own personal growth and development by working with them to improve their own education, find employment and build stronger, more stable relationships with the people in their lives. All of these changes can lead to less maltreatment and better outcomes for children.

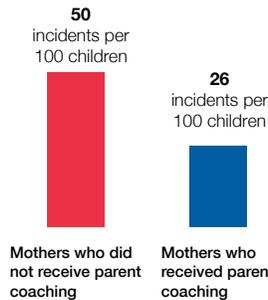
Quality Home Visiting Cuts Abuse and Neglect, Prevents Crime

Research has shown that home visiting can prevent child abuse and neglect, optimize early development to give kids the right start in life and reduce crime. Of the main models used in New York, several have been shown to reduce abuse and neglect, and one has recorded a decrease in criminal behavior among the children served.

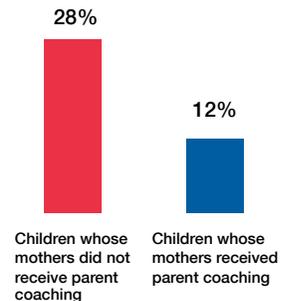
- **The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)** has three programs in New York State, in Monroe County, Onondaga County and New York City (including all five boroughs). They serve a total of 2,600 families annually.¹⁸ NFP pairs nurses with young, poor women who are experiencing their first pregnancy. The visits, which are voluntary for families, start before the birth of a child and last until the child is two. Researchers conducted a long-term study of their Elmira, New York program, tracking abuse and neglect and crime results. The randomized controlled trial showed that children of participating mothers had 48 percent fewer substantiated reports of abuse or neglect than the children of mothers in the control group, indicating that home visiting can cut abuse and neglect nearly in half among at-risk children.¹⁹ The children left out of the program also had more than twice as many arrests by age 15, and they were twice as likely to be convicted by age 19.²⁰
- **Healthy Families America (HFA)** is implemented as **Healthy Families New York** through 36 HFA-accredited sites across the state that serve 6,000 families annually.²¹ Healthy Families offers weekly home visits from trained paraprofessionals to families at-risk of child maltreatment. Visits begin before birth or within the first three months after birth and last through the first three to five years

Children not served by the Nurse-Family Partnership were abused and neglected twice as often by age 15 and were twice as likely to be convicted of a crime by age 19

Abuse and Neglect Down 48 percent
Incidents of substantiated abuse or neglect per 100 children by age 15



More than Twice as Likely to be Convicted
Percent convicted by age 19



Sources: Olds, 2006; Eckenrode, 2010

of life. Data from a randomized controlled trial in New York State show that participating mothers self-reported engaging in physical abuse of their children less frequently than mothers not receiving the program's services.²²

- Several other programs in New York State – **Parents as Teachers (PAT), Early Head Start, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPIY)** and the **Parent-Child Home Program** - have promising results in a variety of domains, but need further evaluation showing reductions in abuse and neglect.

Federal Funding

Thanks to the solid research on evidence-based home visiting, the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) provides \$1.5 billion over five years to fund the expansion of such programs nationally. New York was awarded \$5.6 million in formula funding from MIECHV in Fiscal Year 2011.²³ Among the models used in New York, five are already approved as eligible for evidence-based home visiting funding by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA): NFP, Healthy Families America, HIPPIY, Early Head Start and Parents as Teachers. Other New York home visiting models not currently designated by HRSA as evidence-based, such as the Parent-Child Home Program, the Community Health Worker Program and Healthy Mom-Healthy Baby, may qualify for funding as "promising programs" if they agree to conduct additional rigorous evaluations.²⁴

Based on a needs assessment, New York is using MIECHV funds to expand and enhance services in three high-risk

Home Visiting can Reduce Hospitalizations

Hospitalizations of children up to age 2 for which injuries or ingestions were detected in the Memphis, TN Nurse-Family Partnership Trial

| Measure | Children of mothers who received parent coaching (n=228) | Children of mothers who did not receive parent coaching (n=515) |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Hospital Admissions Per 100 Children | 1 per 100 | 3 per 100 |
| Days in Hospital Per 100 Children | 3 per 100 | 17 per 100 |
| Type of Injuries | burns; coin ingestion; and ingestion of iron medication. | head trauma; fractured fibula/congenital syphilis; strangulated hernia w/ delay in seeking care for burn; bilateral subdural hematoma; fractured skull; coin ingestion; child abuse/neglect suspected; fractured tibia; burns to face and neck; burns to bilateral leg; gastroenteritis/head trauma; burns (splinting/grafting) 2nd hospitalization; and finger injury/osteomyelitis. |

Source: Olds, 1997

communities – Erie and Monroe Counties upstate and Bronx County in New York City. They will use two evidence-based programs already operating in these areas. Erie County will expand its Healthy Families New York program, Monroe County will expand its Nurse-Family Partnership program and the Bronx will expand both Healthy Families and Nurse-Family Partnership services. Enhanced services will include a focus on mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence. New York has identified 11 additional high-risk counties to receive enhanced and expanded services when more state or federal funding allows.²⁵

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that NFP produced a net savings of almost \$21,000 for each family served.

Washington State Institute
for Public Policy (2011)

New York also has a federal Evidence-Based Home Visiting site in Rochester called Building Healthy Children (BHC). This site was funded as a federal pilot project that preceded the current MIECHV program. BHC targets approximately 200 low-income, pregnant women under age 21 to improve children's health and development and reduce risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect. Evidence-based interventions used by BHC include the Nurse-Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers.²⁶

The federal legislation requires that federal dollars supplement existing state home visiting spending, not replace it. New York must maintain the same level of state spending to remain eligible for federal funding. This requirement makes it even more crucial that New York, at a minimum, maintain existing funding for its state programs.

Cost Savings

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently concluded that, "the total lifetime economic burden resulting from new cases of fatal and nonfatal child maltreatment in the United States in 2008 is approximately \$124 billion."²⁷ In New York alone, total FY 2006, federal, state, and local child welfare spending on services like foster care totaled almost \$2 billion.²⁸ When the Washington State Institute for Public Policy applied a cost-benefit analysis to the findings from a range of

THE COST OF WAITING

As time goes by, the cost and intensity of treatment efforts to reverse the problems go up, while....

AGE 0

AGE 18



Robin Karr-Morse, 2003

rigorous studies of NFP programs in the U.S., they found that the program produced a net savings of almost \$21,000 for each family served.²⁹

Conclusion

The more than 300 law enforcement and crime survivor members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *NEW YORK* and the over 5,000 members nationally know that the most powerful weapons we have against crime, violence and abuse are the proven programs that help kids get a good start in life. High-quality home visiting for families with infants and young children can deliver strong crime-fighting results, in part by cutting abuse and neglect, so it is essential that New York continue to support and expand home visiting funding and fully utilize new federal funding for home visiting. If New York invests wisely in what works, fewer of our officers and deputies will find themselves carrying children away from abusive or neglectful homes, and fewer New York residents will become victims of violence in the future.

Maintaining state funding, while expanding services using new federal and private-sector resources, will require a firm commitment on the part of the governor and legislature in these tough fiscal times. It will also require the New York congressional delegation to protect federal funding for voluntary, evidence-based home visitation services. Supporting home visiting will prevent suffering from abuse and neglect now, reduce future crime and save taxpayers millions of dollars.³⁰ Breaking the cycle of child abuse and neglect is one of the wisest investments New York and our nation can make for our children and our future.

Appendix: New York Home Visiting Programs

Early Head Start is a federally funded community-based program for low-income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers designed to promote healthy prenatal outcomes and enhance the development of very young children.

Early Head Start National Resource Center
Phone: 202.638.1144

Healthy Families New York offers weekly home visits from trained paraprofessionals to families at-risk of child maltreatment. Visits begin before birth or within the first three months after birth and last through the first three to five years of life and benefits children and families through positive child health and development, enhanced parenting and reduced child abuse and neglect.

Healthy Families New York
Offices of Children and Families
Development & Prevention Services
Phone: 518.474.9486

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is a home-based, family focused program that helps parents of 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds provide educational enrichment for their child to prepare them for school.

HIPPY USA
Phone: 501.537.7726

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is an evidence-based community health program that helps to transform the lives of vulnerable mothers who are pregnant with their first child. Each mother served is partnered with a registered nurse early in her pregnancy and receives ongoing visits that continue through her child's second birthday.

Nurse-Family Partnership National Service Office
Phone: 866.864.5226

Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) is an early childhood literacy, parenting and school readiness program. It uses trained paraprofessionals to work with families who have not had access to educational and economic opportunities. It prepares children for academic success and strengthening families through intensive home visiting.

Parent-Child Home Program
Phone: 516.883.7480

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a parent education and family support program serving families beginning in pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten. PAT-certified parent educators are trained to translate scientific information on early brain development into specific *when, what, how* and *why* advice for families.

Parents as Teachers National Center
Phone: 314.432.4330

Endnotes

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