

Nurse-Family Partnership Testimony for the Louisiana Senate Select Committee on Women and Children Hearing on Poverty

November 14th, 2011

Nurse-Family Partnership is an evidence-based community health intervention that improves the lives of first time, low-income mothers and their families. Nurses meet with mothers in their homes from as early in pregnancy as possible until their babies are two years old to help mothers improve their pregnancy health outcomes, their children's health and development, and their families' economic self-sufficiency.

Nationally, we have over 22,000 families enrolled in the program in 34 states. There is currently \$1.5 billion over five years available through the Health Resources Services Administration for the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program for NFP and other home visiting programs that is at risk due to the deficit as mentioned in earlier testimony.

The effectiveness of the Nurse-Family Partnership program has been demonstrated through more than 30 years of randomized, controlled trials. A randomized, controlled trial is the most rigorous research method for measuring the effectiveness of an intervention. This type of trial is required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for new drugs or medical devices to determine their effectiveness and safety before they are made available to the public.

Through these randomized, controlled trials, clients showed an

- 83% increase in labor force participation by the child's 4th birthday
- 20% reduction in welfare use; and
- 30 fewer months on welfare.

NFP is part of the solution to poverty in Louisiana. Since 1999, nurses across the state have worked through the Office of Public Health and other public and private entities, including most recently Ochsner and Willis Knighton health systems, to visit with first-time, Medicaid-eligible mothers in their homes. Many of our clients are young mothers who have not yet reached their educational or work goals. Some come into the program without much hope for the future. Nurses develop relationships with the mothers and encourage the moms to set goals that are meaningful to them. The nurses encourage the moms to build on the success of each small goal to reach bigger goals like finishing high school, getting a GED, going to college and finding work.

Within Louisiana:

- 60% of mothers who completed the program were enrolled in the workforce;
- Of mothers who completed the program and who did not have a diploma/GED at intake:
 - 37% earned their diploma/GED;
 - 22% continue to work toward obtaining a diploma/GED; and
 - 14% were pursuing education beyond high school.

This is significant because mothers who earn their GED earn on average \$5000 more per year, contributing an extra \$1048 in tax revenues.

Since nearly 80% of a child's brain development happens in the first 60 months of life, investing in children as early as possible during pregnancy helps lay the foundation for future success. The children whose mothers receive home visits through Nurse-Family Partnership are healthier and better prepared for school.

Our randomized, control-trials have shown a:

- 50% reduction in language delays at child age 21 months;
- 67% reduction in behavioral/intellectual problems at child age 6;
- Improvements in cognitive development at child age 6; and
- Improvements in language development at child age 4 and age 6.

Nurse-Family Partnership is a smart investment of limited tax dollars. For every dollar invested in NFP, up to \$5.70 can be saved in government spending within just four years. We have so many challenges in our state that keep us ranked at the bottom – coming in at 49th or 50th on national rankings for child and family well-being. Investing in programs, like Nurse-Family Partnership that have proven outcomes, is fiscally-smart, public policy to help our citizens live to their full potential.