

Children's Advocates React to Proposed Budget Cuts to Home Visiting

Children's advocates strongly objected to Governor Paterson's proposal to cut the Healthy Families New York home visiting program by 25% and eliminate funding for home visiting through child welfare preventive spending.

Home visiting programs work with families in their homes by providing direct services or assessing need, connecting families with appropriate services, and monitoring ongoing well-being. Investments in these programs have been shown to reduce incidents of child abuse, as well as costs associated with foster care placements, hospitalizations and emergency room visits, and other costly interventions.

An elimination or reduction of home visiting programs means children will be at greater risk of abuse and even death. Parents will not receive education to strengthen parenting skills, support to help them raise healthy children, or referrals to other social service programs.

Home visiting programs decrease child abuse and neglect, which generally increase in stressful times such as economic downturns. Over four decades of research by the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program show that its home visiting services cut child abuse nearly in half. The elimination of child welfare preventive spending dollars that partially fund NFP means that programs in New York City and in Monroe and Onondaga Counties could cease serving an estimated 1,200 families.

Following the 8% budget cut of Healthy Families New York in August, about 500 families lost services. A 25% cut will decimate programs and devastate families.

Several organizations oppose the cuts, including the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, Prevent Child Abuse New York, Nurse-Family Partnership Replication—Public/Private Ventures, Winning Beginning NY, and the New York Children's Action Network (CAN) 0-5 Subcommittee.

Consider this: New York spends more than \$2.5 billion per year dealing with the consequences of child abuse. Yet it currently spends only about \$28 million on a combination of HFNY funding and child welfare funding for NFP—programs that are proven to prevent child abuse and neglect. If the state decreases funding and incidents of abuse increase, New York will end up spending significantly more dealing with the consequences.