

Home is Where the Start Is

SCAA convened a group of home visiting program and state agency representatives in 2005 to discuss the current system of services and supports to pregnant women and new families. The group found that New York State does not currently have a comprehensive system, but instead, a number of home visiting programs that provide quality services. Also, there is no coordinated system that connects them, nor that connects them with other essential health, social support and education services. While each program has a similar purpose, eligibility requirements differ so that many families in need of home visiting services may be rejected by one program when they could be served by another. With this in mind, the group began discussing what a comprehensive system might look like. In October 2007, the group, now working on what became known as the Home is Where the Start Is initiative, published a white paper entitled *Universal Prenatal/Postpartum Care and Home Visitation: The Plan for an Ideal System in New York State*. The paper outlined a plan of tiered services and supports—universal general supports, targeted services to at-risk families, and evidence-based interventions for high-risk families.

There are now two groups—the original, which continues to plan-- and an advocacy group (not including state agency representation) that meets with policymakers about funding and implementing the proposal.

During this year's special summer session, the *Healthy Families NY* program, the only home visiting program completely funded by the state, was cut by 6%. This will result in an estimated 200 families not receiving needed services. The advocacy arm of the Home is Where the Start Is initiative will work during the upcoming session to see that no further cuts are made, and to restore funding if possible.