

Evidentiary Foundations of Nurse-Family Partnership

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is a program of prenatal and infancy home visiting for low-income, first-time mothers and their children. Nurses begin visiting families as early as possible during pregnancy and continue visiting until the child's second birthday.

NFP Nurse Home Visitors have three major goals:

- Improve pregnancy outcomes by helping women engage in good preventive health practices, including obtaining thorough prenatal care from their healthcare providers, improving their diet, and reducing their use of cigarettes, alcohol and illegal substances;
- Improve child health and development by helping parents provide responsible and competent care for their children; and
- Improve the economic self-sufficiency of the family by helping parents develop a vision for their own future, plan future pregnancies, continue their education and find work.

Leadership of Nurse-Family Partnership chose to offer the program for public investment only after they had:

- replicated evidence of program impact from at least two randomized controlled trials;
- evidence that the program improved outcomes of public health importance;
- evidence of enduring program impact;
- evidence of cost-savings;
- confidence that the essential elements of the program could be reliably reproduced; and
- a web-based information system that could help ensure quality program implementation, accountability, and continuous program improvement.²

These kinds of evidentiary and replication standards are advocated by the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy,³ Blueprints for Violence Prevention,⁴ and the Society for Prevention Research.⁵ They also are consistent with those required by the Food and Drug Administration before pharmaceutical companies are allowed to market new drugs.⁶ They are founded on the conviction that scarce public dollars ought to be invested in programs that work and that have the infrastructure to ensure high quality implementation and on-going monitoring of performance.

Nurse-Family Partnership has consistent evidence, based upon replicated randomized controlled trials with different populations living in different contexts, that it:

- improves prenatal health⁷⁻⁹
- reduces childhood injuries^{7,10,11}
- reduces the rates of subsequent pregnancies and births^{7,9,12-14}
- increases the intervals between first and second pregnancies and births^{7,9,12-14}
- increases maternal employment^{7,9,14}
- reduces women's use of welfare^{12-14,25}
- reduces children's mental health problems^{15,16,24}
- increases children's school readiness and academic achievement^{9,16,17}
- reduces costs to government and society^{18,19,25}
- is most effective for those most susceptible to the problems examined¹

Relative to Nurse-Family Partnership's program goals, the following outcomes have been observed among program participants compared to their counterparts assigned to the control group in at least one randomized trial:

Improved pregnancy outcomes

- 35% fewer cases of pregnancy-induced hypertension⁷
- 79% reduction in preterm delivery among women who smoke cigarettes⁸
- 31% reduction in very closely spaced (<6 months) subsequent pregnancies¹²

Improved child health and development

- 39% fewer healthcare encounters for injuries or ingestions in the first two years of life among children born to mothers with low psychological resources²²
- 56% reduction in emergency room visits for accidents and poisonings in the second year of the child's life¹¹
- 48% reduction in state-verified reports of child abuse and neglect by child age 15²⁰
- 50% reduction in language delays by child age 21 months⁹
- 5 point increase in language scores on a test with a mean of 100 and standard deviation of 15 among 4-year-old children born to mothers with low psychological resources¹⁷
- 67% reduction in behavioral and emotional problems at child age 6¹⁶
- 9 percentile increase in math and reading achievement test scores in grades 1-3 among children born to mothers with low psychological resources²³
- 67% reduction in 12-year-old children's use of cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana²⁴
- 28% reduction in 12-year olds' mental health problems (depression and anxiety)²⁴
- 3 point increase in 12-year-old children's reading and math achievement test scores on a test with a mean of 100 and standard deviation of 15 among those born to mothers with low psychological resources²⁴
- 6 percentile increase in group-based reading and math achievement test scores in grades 1-6 among children born to mothers with low psychological resources²⁴
- 59% reduction in arrests by child age 15²¹
- 90% reduction in adjudication as PINS (person in need of supervision) for incorrigible behavior²¹
- 33% fewer arrests among female children at age 19²⁶
- 80% fewer convictions among female children at age 19²⁶
- 73% increase in age at 1st arrest among female children at age 19²⁶
- 82% fewer current arrests among female children at age 19²⁶
- 89% fewer current convictions among female children at age 19²⁶

Increased self-sufficiency of the family

- 1 month increase in labor force participation during second year of child's life⁹
- 46% increase in father presence in household by child age 4¹²
- 30-month reduction in use of AFDC-TANF among mothers who were poor and unmarried at registration¹³
- 7 month (or 82%) increase in labor force participation 4 years after delivery of first child among low-income unmarried mothers¹⁴
- 1.75 month reduction in use of AFDC-TANF between child age 5 and age 6¹⁶
- 1.83 month reduction in use of Food Stamps between child age 5 and 6¹⁶

- 61% fewer arrests of mothers by child age 15 ²⁰
- 72% fewer convictions of mothers by child age 15 ²⁰
- \$12,300 discounted savings (2006 dollars) in Food Stamps, Medicaid, and AFDC-TANF from child age 0-12 compared to program cost of \$11,511 (2006 dollars) ²⁵
- 13% increase in duration of mothers' relationships with current partners by child age 12 ²⁵

The Nurse-Family Partnership National Service Office is responsible for helping agencies implement the program in their community. Learn more at: www.nursefamilypartnership.org.

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