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.

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 health 7,9
- 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 examined 1
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 hypertension \(^7\)
- 79% reduction in preterm delivery among women who smoke cigarettes \(^8\)
- 31% reduction in very closely spaced (<6 months) subsequent pregnancies \(^12\)

**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 resources \(^22\)
- 56% reduction in emergency room visits for accidents and poisonings in the second year of the child’s life \(^11\)
- 48% reduction in state-verified reports of child abuse and neglect by child age 15 \(^20\)
- 50% reduction in language delays by child age 21 months \(^9\)
- 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 resources \(^17\)
- 3.95 point increase in receptive language (when averaged across age 2, 4, and 6) among children born to mothers with low psychological resources \(^27\)
- 1.03 point increase in sustained attention when averaged across age 4, 6, and 9 among children born to mothers with low psychological resources \(^27\)
- 67% reduction in behavioral and emotional problems at child age 6 \(^16\)
- 9 percentile increase in math and reading achievement test scores in grades 1-3 among children born to mothers with low psychological resources \(^23\)
- 67% reduction in 12-year-old children’s use of cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana \(^24\)
- 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 resources \(^24\)
- 6 percentile increase in group-based reading and math achievement test scores in grades 1-6 among children born to mothers with low psychological resources \(^24\)
- 59% reduction in arrests by child age 15 \(^21\)
- 90% reduction in adjudication as PINS (person in need of supervision) for incorrigible behavior \(^21\)
- 33% fewer arrests among female children at age 19 \(^26\)
- 80% fewer convictions among female children at age 19 \(^26\)
- 73% increase in age at 1st arrest among female children at age 19 \(^26\)
- 82% fewer current arrests (in the past year) among female children at age 19 \(^26\)
- 89% fewer current convictions (in the past year) among female children at age 19 \(^26\)
- Reduced childhood mortality from preventable causes at age 20 \(^27\)

**Increased self-sufficiency of the family**
- 1 month increase in labor force participation during second year of child’s life \(^9\)
- 46% increase in father presence in household by child age 4 \(^12\)
The Nurse-Family Partnership National Service Office is responsible for helping agencies implement the program in their community. Learn more at: www.nursefamilypartnership.org.

Reference List


22. Reanalysis of Kitzman et al. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 1997 Aug 27;278(8):644-52; See also Memphis Year 9 results, citation #23, finding that nurse-visited children as a trend were less likely to die from birth through age 9, an effect accounted for by deaths due to potentially preventable causes, such as preterm delivery, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, and injuries.


