

MARCH 2021 EDITION

NEWSLINK

EXCLUSIVE
STORY!

Meagan
Gets the
Help She
Needs

PUBLIC POLICY
PRIORITIES

The Child First
DIFFERENCE

CELEBRATING
Our Parent
Ambassadors

THE NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICE FOR



Nurse-Family
Partnership

Helping First-Time Parents Succeed®

child
first 

PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES



OUR COMMITMENT TO HEALTH EQUITY

We are very concerned about the high rate of maternal mortality and morbidity in the U.S. and are committed to doing our part to address this issue. That's why we support the Black Maternal Health Momnibus, a bipartisan legislative package made up of twelve bills, that will fill gaps in existing policy to comprehensively address every dimension of the Black maternal health crisis in America. Your support makes it possible for us to work with the lead sponsors of the Momnibus and other Members of Congress to improve maternal health outcomes, particularly in communities of color.

Since the election, we have been working with the Biden-Harris transition team to reimagine public health through prevention and encourage investment in programs that work. The administration is committed to evidence-based practices, strengthening the country's public health infrastructure and public health workforce. President Biden supports home visiting and Vice President Harris has been a maternal health champion in the Senate (one of the Momnibus sponsors). We look forward to working with the new administration to expand access to home visiting, advance policies that improve care coordination and health disparities and provide ongoing support for families.

The National Service Office for Nurse-Family Partnership and Child First has finalized the **2021 Public Policy Priorities**. These priorities guide our federal and state government affairs strategies and provide a roadmap for our year-long advocacy plan and goals.

2020, by all accounts, was a year that posed unprecedented challenges, from the COVID-19 pandemic to nationwide protests against racial inequity and injustice. In 2021, the NSO is stepping up in support of bold and innovative priorities that meet this transformational moment in our history.

The NSO Public Policy Priorities guide our federal and state government affairs strategies and provide a roadmap for our year-long advocacy plan and goals.

Our federal and state teams will be prioritizing the following:

- **Strategies to mitigate challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic**, like providing telehealth services and supplying families in “digital deserts” with technology to stay connected to important community resources
- **Legislation that addresses racial disparities** in the delivery of maternal health care, health and economic equity, including safe and affordable housing, nutrition assistance and mental and behavioral health supports
- **Public funding that is critical to families’ well-being**, including the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and more
- **Establishing, improving and increasing Medicaid coverage** for Nurse-Family Partnership’s nursing services and Child First’s mental health services to provide help to families in need

To accomplish these bold goals, we need the support of all members of our community. That’s why the NSO Advocacy Department unveiled the **Grassroots Gazette**, a monthly newsletter outlining important federal and state policy developments, monthly advocacy goals and how you can help.

As a member of the Nurse-Family Partnership and Child first community, your support is critical to ensuring that the NSO’s policy agenda is prioritized by federal and state legislators. **Sign up now** to receive the Grassroots Gazette in your inbox.



THE CHILD FIRST DIFFERENCE



CRUCIAL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns about mental health have grown. Families struggling to cope with multiple challenges, including poverty, food insecurity, lack of health care and unstable housing have been hit especially hard.

When young children grow up in environments where there is violence, neglect, mental illness or substance abuse, the stress can be toxic to their developing brains. Our partners at Child First fully engage in their mission to support young children and families impacted by trauma and adversity so that all families and communities can thrive

At Nurse-Family Partnership we understand the power of connection and the importance of early intervention. This is one of many reasons we are honored to unite with Child First.

Rigorous research shows that Child First families become stronger and healthier. As children and their parents develop strong, loving relationships, their lives change. Children feel safe and secure, which enables them to play and learn. Parents feel more able to manage and support their families. Overall, abuse and neglect dramatically decrease, breaking the cycle of trauma, and allowing families to get back on track to a course bound for health and well-being.

SHONEICE SCONYERS HAS A GIFT FOR CONNECTION

That's what drew her to the role of Family Resource Partner nearly 6 years ago, when the Child First program began at Power of U in North Carolina. A self-proclaimed "connector," Shoneice has found the work to be a perfect fit.

"I love building a rapport with the families and helping bridge the gap for them. When you're able to connect them and allow them to be able to get that psychoeducation, or to understand and know that the resources in the community are designed FOR them, they light up, and that lights you up on the inside."

When the pandemic hit, the landscape of available community services and supports seemed to shift overnight. As a Family Resource Partner, Shoneice immediately recognized the importance of staying on top of the changes and worked hard to figure out what was available to families amidst the landscape of the pandemic.

"Here at the office, they often call me the 'squeaky wheel' because I really advocate, and I like going in for my families because knowledge is power."

That knowledge and preparation came in handy in late summer 2020, when Shoneice and her teammate, Clinician Julie Smith, began working with two different families who were experiencing homelessness. One family was living out of their car while the mother searched for work. The other had a young child who had just finished a round of chemotherapy and a mother who was struggling with depression.

Because of the prep work Shoneice had done, within a matter of weeks, the families were connected to housing and resources. But the work didn't stop there. Now Shoneice and Julie focused on maintaining each family's stability and healing the trauma associated with their experiences.

Home-visiting with homeless families is challenging under any condition but doing so via telehealth amid a pandemic adds a whole other dimension of complexity. Shoneice stresses that it's important to meet families where they are – regardless of circumstance.

"We understand that we're in a pandemic but when those needs fly at you and you have a lack of support, we want you to know that we are there to support you, as safely as possible."



COVID IMMUNIZATION – NFP NURSES ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Accurate, current and reliable information about COVID-19 immunizations is available on the CDC and FDA websites. With three COVID-19 vaccines, Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine, having received emergency use authorization (EUA) by the FDA, we can confidently begin developing plans for a safe return to in-person NFP nurse home visitation.

Although vaccines are not 100% effective in preventing all COVID-19 illness, the exciting news is that they do protect individuals from serious COVID-19 illness, hospitalizations and death.

As a public health nursing workforce, NFP nurses have a crucial role in increasing the public's confidence in COVID-19 vaccines and providing factual information about the vaccines to their clients. Experts across the country are working together to create a production and distribution plan that will ensure every person who wants to be immunized against COVID-19 will have access to the vaccine. While supplies and distribution are ramping up, NFP nurses must ensure that currently eligible clients are strongly encouraged to receive the vaccine and assist them in locating an available vaccination site.

The percentage of individuals who are hesitant to receive the vaccine is decreasing as more people are vaccinated. This is an excellent opportunity

for nurses, as the #1 trusted profession in the country for 18 years running, to support wellness through infection prevention and mitigation of serious illness.

We also have a chance to be strong role models for our clients and communities. When we are vaccinated, our clients' confidence will increase and the risks to our clients, our communities and ourselves decrease.

Immunization is ranked by experts as one of the top 10 greatest accomplishments of public health in the 20th and 21st centuries contributing to greater life expectancy and quality of life. The COVID-19 vaccines take their place in this national and global accomplishment for their effectiveness and safety as well as the speed they were made available to protect the public, save lives and stabilize our communities.

Together, we are building a brighter future for all families to thrive!

With Gratitude,
Kate Siegrist, Chief Nursing Officer



Families boldly and bravely reach out
for our support each day.

Help us raise \$100,000 by May 1st
to respond to their urgent needs.
Your gift transforms lives!



DONATE NOW!

“ ”

MY FAMILY TOOK MY PREGNANCY REALLY HARD, BUT NURSE RACHAEL WAS THERE EVERY STEP OF THE WAY. SHE WAS JUST ALWAYS THERE.

NFP MOM MEAGAN

Exclusive
NewsLink
Story!

TENACIOUS SUPPORT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Meagan was the new girl. She moved to Macon, Georgia, to live with her father halfway through her junior year in 2019. She had to learn a new routine, make friends and navigate a new school's unwritten social rules. The adjustment was made more difficult when she became pregnant, finding out on the first day of her senior year.

Scared, uncertain and nervous about what her family would say, Meagan wasn't sure what to do. "I had no clue what I was doing," explains Meagan. "I needed all the help I could get."

She first visited her primary care physician, who connected her with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). It was at the local WIC office that a representative referred her to what she would later call her "beacon of hope," Nurse-Family Partnership at the Houston County Health Department.

Shortly after, Meagan was paired with Rachael, an NFP nurse with a passion for women's health and helping people. Rachael knew from the moment they met that Meagan

needed a strong support system and vowed to be that for her.

"High school kids are very opinionated, and I was still the new girl," Meagan says. "My family took my pregnancy really hard, but nurse Rachael was there every single step of the way. She was just always there."

THE PREGNANCY

The next few months would prove tough for Meagan. With only her father in town, who was not completely supportive, Meagan felt ostracized and alone. She was also due to give birth at the beginning of the pandemic, something that she and those around her knew little to nothing about. And to top it off, Meagan battled health challenges during her pregnancy.

"Meagan's pregnancy was difficult," says Rachael. "She was sick at the very beginning with symptoms that never let up."

Meagan was diagnosed with hyperemesis gravidarum, a severe form of morning

sickness that left her with persistent nausea, dehydration and vomiting throughout her pregnancy.

She was hospitalized nearly 30 times for IV rehydration, and five of those hospitalizations lasted more than a week.

Rachael worked closely with Meagan to help her through her illness. She provided guidance on when to visit the ER and helped Meagan understand the notes that doctors gave her.

Meagan also experienced preterm labor issues. Midway through her pregnancy, Rachael discussed breastfeeding with Meagan to prepare her for her baby's potential early debut.

Thankfully, that preparation was for naught. Preslee was born full-term at 42 weeks on April 2, 2020 – but Meagan and her daughter weren't out of the woods yet.

THE NICU

The birth was not easy for Meagan, who experienced a long labor. When Preslee was born, it was clear to everyone in the room, including Meagan, that something was wrong.

"Preslee wasn't breathing. It took them about 10 minutes to get her to make any kind of noise," Meagan recalls.

Preslee was rushed to the neonatal intensive care unit

(NICU), where doctors found her oxygen level and white blood cell count low and her fever high. To make matters more difficult, COVID-19 infections were spreading, and the hospital limited all

visitors as a precaution. Meagan could visit Preslee for only a few hours each day.

"Everything was on lockdown. I could visit between noon and 3:00 in the afternoon every day, but that was it. I would bring Preslee milk every night, but I couldn't go inside to see her outside of visiting hours. It was awful," says Meagan.

Through it all, Rachael supported Meagan and helped her through this harrowing time. "I would help her understand the reports given to her," Rachael says. "I helped her ask the right questions and interpret what the doctors and nurses told her."

After one of the longest weeks of Meagan's life, Preslee's white blood cell count and oxygen level improved and her fever broke. She was finally discharged after 10 days in the NICU.

GROWING STRONGER

Preslee settled in after her scary start and is now a healthy 11-month-old whose favorite activities are blowing kisses and waving to people. Meagan is incredibly grateful for the support NFP gave her.

Besides Preslee's giggle, one other constant in Meagan's life is Rachael. "Rachael was always there when I needed her, and that's what helped the most – having that one person there without judgement," Meagan says.

"I'm her biggest cheerleader," Rachael says. "Meagan's been so motivated. She never stops trying."

While Meagan's sickness made it difficult for her to continue going to school in-person while pregnant, Rachael encouraged her to transition to virtual learning. Now, Meagan is a proud high school graduate ready to take on the world. In fact, Meagan currently works as a temporary employee at the local health department assisting the department's COVID-19 response right alongside Rachael. She's also taking classes at a local college.

Her major? Nursing.

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EVERYTHING WAS ON LOCKDOWN. I COULD VISIT BETWEEN NOON AND 3:00 IN THE AFTERNOON EVERY DAY, BUT THAT WAS IT.

NFP MOM MEAGAN

SIGN UP FOR NEWSLINK



RAISING STRONG

A Community of Tenacious Families



RAISING STRONG: THE NEXT STEP IN THE NFP JOURNEY

We have received significant feedback from Nurse-Family Partnership families that they want to stay connected with the program after they graduate.

Raising Strong is a community of support created to connect Nurse-Family Partnership families, share resources and real stories and join forces to advocate for families nationwide.

Raising Strong lets families share wisdom, solve challenges and pay it forward to other first-time families starting their own parenting journey.

Members will have access to vetted resources, virtual networks and eventually live events, all connecting families to grow and thrive together long into the parenting journey.

Families will also have the opportunity to lend their voices and time to Nurse-Family Partnership, advocating for the supports and policies that made a difference for them, to be available to every family who needs them in the future.

“Raising Strong is the village we all need to raise our children to be happy, independent and confident individuals – and also a promise of NFP (and its graduates) to continue to be there for each other beyond the two initial years of the program,” shares Faryal Najeeb.

Learn more at RaisingStrongFamilies.org





CELEBRATING THE HEART OF NFP, OUR PARENT AMBASSADORS

In 2019, six Nurse-Family Partnership graduates continued their NFP journey in the newly formed Parent Ambassador Program. These women dedicated the last two years of their lives as advocates for Nurse-Family Partnership families. Through their work they have helped increase visibility, accessibility and sustainability of the NFP program nationwide.

These phenomenal young women devoted over 830 hours participating in advocacy events, sharing their stories with policymakers, providing their perspectives on committees, panels and at conferences.

We hosted a virtual celebration to honor their contributions as the 2019 Parent Ambassador Cohort. Friends, family and staff laughed, cheered and cried while they shared their personal experiences.

This group has created a bond that surely will be a lifetime of friendship and sisterhood. Amber Hill mused, "I can't imagine my life without these women in it and without this program in it."

We could not ask for a better group of women to help us launch this program.

Now the torch has passed to the 2020 Parent Ambassador Cohort. They are ready thanks to the mentorship they received. Kathy Ward shared, "The first cohort of Parent Ambassadors helped me find my voice! They showed me I was more than just a mom! I am a woman and I am stronger than I will ever know!"

We will recruit our 2021 Cohort of Parent Ambassadors this summer. [Learn more about the PA Program](#)

“ ”

I AM NOT JUST A BLACK MOM,
I'M A BLACK MOM WHO WAS ABLE
TO GROW UP AND REALLY MAKE
SOMETHING OF HERSELF.

I DIDN'T STAY A SINGLE MOM,
AN UNEMPLOYED MOM OR AN
UNEDUCATED MOM. I GRADUATED
FROM COLLEGE, STARTED MY
OWN NONPROFIT AND HELPED
OTHER MOMS JUST THE WAY NFP
HAS HELPED ME.

ASIA COLLINS-MUHAMMAD

NFP STORE SPRING SALE

SHOP NOW!

20% OFF & FREE SHIPPING
W/ PURCHASE OF \$40+
MARCH 14-27

USE CODE SPRING21 TO RECEIVE 20% OFF OF YOUR MERCHANDISE TOTAL
AND
USE CODE SHIP21 TO RECEIVE FREE STANDARD SHIPPING

PHONES FOR FAMILIES FACILITATES 32,000 TELEHEALTH VISITS

To ensure that no mom lost access to her NFP nurse during the pandemic, last April we launched the Phones for Families Program. With our corporate partners, Verizon and Action Technologies Group, 3,800 iPhones were gifted to NFP moms – when they needed support more than ever.

Originally the program was set to run through August but in response to overwhelming need, we extended the program twice. The Phones for Families Program provided phone/data service from April 2020 through January 2021.

We are proud to report that the program facilitated more than 32,000 nurse visits with moms who had received an iPhone. “This program filled the technology gap during in the early days days of the pandemic and helped nurses and clients stay connected at a critical time,” said Chief Nursing Officer Kate Siegrist.

9.4%

**9.4% OF NURSE TELEHEALTH
VISITS HAVE TAKEN PLACE ON
A PHONE PROVIDED BY
PHONES FOR FAMILIES**

15%

**15% MORE TELEHEALTH
VISITS FOR NFP MOMS
WHO RECEIVED A PHONE**

FAMILY INDEPENDENCE INITIATIVE



CASH ASSISTANCE PROVIDES FAST RELIEF TO FAMILIES FACING FINANCIAL CRISES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In Spring 2020, we launched an exciting partnership with Family Independence Initiative to provide \$2.2 million in direct cash assistance to 4,400 NFP families. Through their trusted relationships with new moms, NFP nurses have been able to quickly identify families most impacted by the pandemic to receive \$500 in cash assistance. Communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and because of this over 68% of the dollars from the current round of awards have been given directly to Black, Hispanic or Latinx families in NFP communities in six states. Direct cash assistance supports new parents' own decision making – many are using the awards to cover utilities, housing, food and other basic needs to keep their families safe from COVID-19.

Nelsa Swann (pictured above with her son) enrolled in Nurse-Family Partnership in South Carolina at the start of her pregnancy. Swann, a cosmetologist, received cash assistance in the spring as part of the initial pilot program. When salons and other personal care businesses closed at the beginning of the pandemic, Swann was out of work and caring for her 1-year-old son. The cash assistance helped her get through until she was able to work again.

“”

MY NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP NURSE, DENITA, CALLED TO TELL ME SHE HAD NOMINATED ME FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. THE NIGHT BEFORE I HAD BEEN CRYING, ‘WHERE IS THIS MONEY GOING TO COME FROM?’ IT WAS SO HARD, AND DENITA WAS LIKE AN ANGEL WITH THAT CALL. THAT MONEY GOT ME THROUGH UNTIL WE COULD WORK AGAIN.

NFP MOM NELSA SWANN

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



Nurse-Family Partnership®
@NFP_nursefamily



We are thrilled to see that the [#AmericanRescuePlan](#) has passed. This [#COVIDrelief](#) package will provide families a lot of help over the next year as our country heals from insecurity brought on by the pandemic. Follow this thread for some key provisions for families and nurses:

THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

- ✓ \$1,400 DIRECT RELIEF PAYMENTS TO ELIGIBLE AMERICANS, INCLUDING ADULT DEPENDENTS
- ✓ TEMPORARY INCREASE TO THE CHILD TAX CREDIT TO BE PAID MONTHLY
- ✓ UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE AND NUTRITION ASSISTANCE
- ✓ \$39 BILLION FOR CHILD CARE
- ✓ \$150 MILLION IN MIECHV FUNDING

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HOPE ON THE HORIZON

Dear friends,

It's hard to believe that almost exactly one year ago, society as we knew it came to a halt. As I wrote in December in the blog, despite the challenges of the past year, I still see hope on the horizon.

With three authorized vaccines now being distributed to Americans, we can finally envision the day when we can safely return to a sense of normal. And with the passage of the American Rescue Plan last week, families and communities will receive some much-needed relief from the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The final bill contained critical provisions that support public health and the wellbeing of children and families, especially those who have felt the worst effects of the pandemic over the past year. These include direct relief payments, expanded nutrition assistance through WIC and SNAP, an increase to the Child Tax Credit, the option for states to expand Medicaid coverage for women up to 1 year postpartum, as well as \$150 million in emergency funding for evidence-based home visiting programs like ours. Provisions like these, and many others in the legislation, will go a long way towards supporting families and communities as we continue to recover from the health and economic challenges of the past year.

However, even when many have returned to a new normal – when vaccines have reached a critical mass of Americans, when schools have fully reopened, when those of us who have been fortunate enough to work from home return to our offices – we know that so many will still be struggling. At the National Service Office, we are acutely aware of the long-term impacts this will have for our country's most marginalized families and communities.

As you have read in this issue of Newslink, our work – and the dedication of our nurses, clinicians and partners across the country – hasn't slowed down. As we begin to see a light at the end of this tunnel, we know that the work of Child First and Nurse-Family Partnership is more important than ever.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Daidone".



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