

Wisconsin Report:



ORANGE IS NOT YOUR COLOR

Law Enforcement Leaders Need Home Visiting
Programs to Empower Women and Prevent Crime





Nine members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is a national, bipartisan, nonprofit anti-crime organization of nearly 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, attorneys general and other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors. It operates under the umbrella of the nonprofit Council for a Strong America.

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SUMMARY

While male criminals grab the lion's share of headlines about our nation's crime problem, there are now **more than 200,000 women behind bars in America**, up 600 percent over the past three decades, and nearly twice the rate of increase experienced by men over the same period. There are **almost a million on probation or parole**. **Here in Wisconsin, just over 1,300 women are currently incarcerated and over 12,200 are on probation or parole**. Almost two-thirds of women in U.S. state prisons are mothers.

We are nearly 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors across the nation and we have an important message for Congress: professional home visitors are our essential partners in empowering women to set goals to achieve healthier outcomes for their families, break the cycle of poverty, and help communities prevent crime.

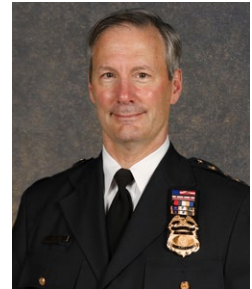
Young, pregnant, at-risk women often need help to gain their footing, avoid troubled lives and find a path to success. Nurses and other professional home visitors can provide effective coaching to help these young mothers succeed while also helping them to better understand their children's emotional and health needs, make their homes safer for their children and respond effectively to common parenting challenges.

The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is one of these high-quality programs. It serves pregnant mothers until their child is age two. According to a randomized control trial of NFP in Elmira, New York, the high-risk mothers who did *not* receive home visits had more than three times as many crime convictions 15 years after the program began. They also spent far more days in jail than the mothers who participated. In addition, by the time their daughters were age 19, the daughters who had *not* been in the program had nine times more convictions than the young women who participated in NFP as infants and toddlers. The results are not just limited to crime: NFP and other proven home visiting programs produce many other positive outcomes as well.

Because of NFP's strong impact on improved children's health, reduced abuse and neglect, increased readiness for school and reduced future crime, a respected, independent analysis showed that the program produced average net savings of \$17,000 per family served.

Congress soon has to decide whether to renew federal support for the 16 home visiting models that have been carefully vetted and have solid evidence that they are effective, including the five models used in Wisconsin. From a crime prevention perspective alone, **our Senators and Representatives should move quickly to continue America's support for effective home visiting programs.**

"I've seen the cycle of moms and their daughters entering the criminal justice system. I'd much rather see these young women get the support they need as infants, rather than see them in orange jumpsuits 19 years later."



Edward A. Flynn, Chief of Police
Milwaukee, WI

Our Perspective

As the almost 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors who are members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, we have seen our share of women who were caught up in troubled lives and then brought their children along with them. We are encouraged by the strong research findings on home visiting. That research shows that high-quality voluntary coaching for at-risk, young pregnant women and their families can help them acquire the skills and confidence they need to chart a more successful life, both for themselves and their children.

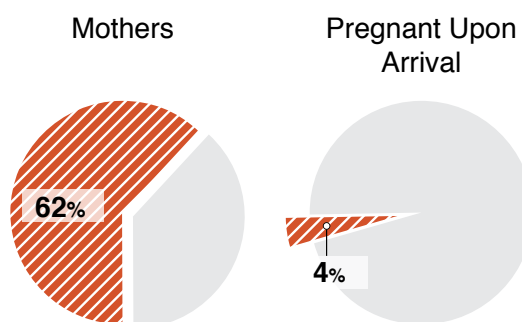


Source: Wisconsin Department of Corrections

In Wisconsin, just over 1,300 women are incarcerated and over 12,200 are on probation or parole.

More than 200,000 women are now serving time in local jails and state or federal prisons, up 600 percent from 1983 to 2013, and nearly twice the rate of increase experienced by men over the same period.¹ Nearly another million are either on parole or probation.² In Wisconsin, just over 1,300 women are currently incarcerated and over 12,200 are on probation or parole.³ Almost two-thirds of women in state prisons are mothers, and four percent of the women in state prisons were pregnant when they arrived to serve their time.⁴

Women in state prisons



SOURCE: Bureau of Justice Statistics

We make no apologies for arresting and prosecuting women for crimes they commit in our communities. But offering voluntary home visits to poor, pregnant young women can help them overcome challenges and avoid behaviors that will bring them and their daughters into contact with law enforcement.

What is Home Visiting?

Like the members of law enforcement, professional home visitors often have to work in more violent neighborhoods and with families that may be facing many challenges. But while police officers come armed and in uniform, home visitors are typically equipped with a determined personality and skills and knowledge in coaching pregnant women on their health and their child's development.

This proves to be an invaluable resource for young, at-risk mothers-to-be, who are usually screened at a hospital, doctor's office or clinic and asked if they want help from a home visiting program. Their home visitor becomes a trusted mentor up until their child is age two or longer, depending on the program. The home visitors teach young mothers how to be healthy during pregnancy (such as by quitting smoking) and how to effectively care for their child (such as by using safe discipline practices). They also help them improve their own lives by encouraging them to stay in school and assisting them in finding a job.

While it requires courage for a woman to open the door and invite a stranger into her home, home visitors are experienced in building trust so they can help young women and men improve their lives while developing the critical parenting skills they'll need with a new child.

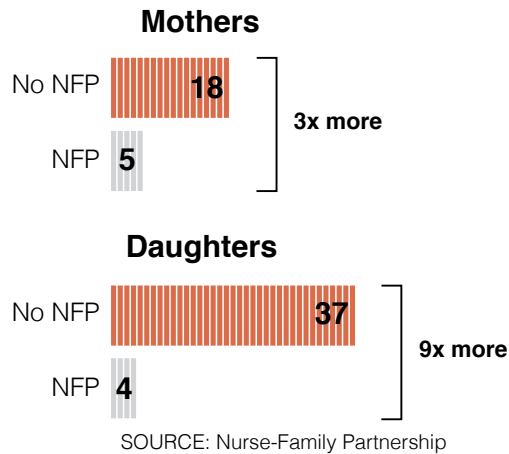
Home Visiting Works

Research on high-quality home visiting programs shows that they can deliver strong results for mothers and their daughters. For example, 15 years after the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program in Elmira began, pregnant women who did not receive the home visits had more than three times as many convictions as women who participated in NFP. There were also differences in time spent in jail: the differences in rates found by the study would mean that, for every 100 women not offered NFP, they would spend over 100 days in jail, compared to just two days for the 100 women who received NFP.⁵

The program also had a huge impact on their daughters. By the time they were age 19, the daughters not served were nine times more likely to have been convicted

Mothers and daughters who participated in the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program in Elmira, New York

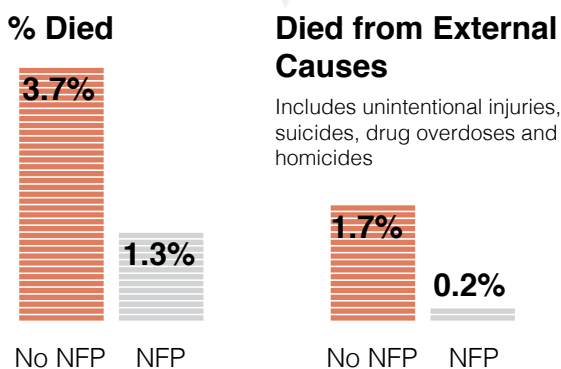
Convictions per 100 mothers or daughters



than the girls provided NFP services as babies and toddlers in Elmira.⁶

The impact of coaching by home visitors may manifest itself differently among different populations and genders.⁷ For example, the Memphis trial of NFP found other important outcomes. For example, 21 years after the program began, mothers who did not participate were three times more likely to have died of any cause than the mothers who participated in

Deaths of mothers 21 years after NFP began in Memphis.



NFP (3.7 percent vs. 1.3 percent) and eight times more likely to have died from “external causes – including unintentional injuries, suicide, drug overdose and homicide” (1.7 percent vs. 0.2 percent).⁸

NFP is the only home visiting program with research studies demonstrating long-term outcomes and the impact on crime prevention, though a number of home visiting programs along with NFP have been proven to deliver other important results, particularly in fostering a culture of health:

- Data collected in Cincinnati, for example, showed that the mortality rate for infants receiving either Healthy Families America (HFA) or NFP was 60 percent lower than for the comparison group.⁹
- In randomized trials, NFP cut child abuse in half among families in Elmira, New York, and families who participated in the Child FIRST home visiting program were one-third less likely to be involved with child protective services after three years than families who did not participate.¹⁰
- In Memphis, by the age of 20, 1.6 percent of the children who did not receive NFP died of preventable causes (such as unintentional injury or homicide) while none of the NFP children died from these causes.¹¹
- A study of HFA in Alaska found that the program significantly cut the number of children with behavior problems and increased those who were achieving normal cognitive development, while another HFA program in New York showed a 27 percent reduction in the number of children who needed special education by age seven.¹²
- Home visiting can also make families more independent economically. For example, an Early Head Start program with a strong home visiting component showed that it improved the education and training of the mothers and also increased their incomes by \$300 per month on average.¹³

Why Starting Early is Important

It is essential that home visiting starts early because the period from birth to age five is a time of rapid brain development when hundreds of new connections in the brain form every second.¹⁴ The “wiring” that takes place then becomes the brain’s foundation on which all later learning is built. For example, by six months, babies’

HOW HOME VISITORS GET RESULTS

“One nurse, Stacy, worked with a pregnant 17-year-old named Bonnie, who lived in a dirt-floor basement apartment. Bonnie smoked, drank, got into fistfights and regularly collided with the law. When Stacy suggested that Bonnie stop smoking, Bonnie threatened to slap her. ‘This baby’s taken everything else away from me,’ Bonnie raged. ‘It’s not going to take away my cigarettes.’ It turned out that Bonnie had been abused as a child and had, as a babysitter, abused others as well. During one of Stacy’s visits, she broke down and confessed her fear of abusing her own child — ‘especially if it’s a crier.’ Stacy suggested some coping mechanisms and wrote down the name of an older woman living nearby whom Bonnie could call for help. Stacy taped the paper to the wall, ready for a crisis. Bonnie did call the older woman, who helped out, and against all odds Bonnie ended up taking quite good care of her baby — which may be why that child ended up graduating from high school many years later. These nurse visits continue until the child turns 2, with the nurse encouraging the mom to speak to the child constantly, to read to the child, to show affection...”



An excerpt from: *The Way to Beat Poverty*, by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *New York Times*, Sunday Review, September 12, 2014

brains are ready to begin to understand the link between words and their meanings.

Because of differences in how often and how parents and others talk and read to their children, by age three the children of professional parents have, on average, over 1,000 words acquired and wired into their brains so they are ready for retrieval and use in their vocabulary. Meanwhile, the children of working class parents average about 750 words, and the children of parents on welfare have just over 500 words in their vocabulary.¹⁵

It is crucial to give children an enriching environment early on, but home visiting for at-risk children should not be seen as a one-time solution. It should be followed up by effective early education programs to realize the full potential of these children.¹⁶

The average net savings after subtracting costs are \$17,000 per family served by the Nurse-Family Partnership program.

Home Visiting Programs in Wisconsin Receiving Federal Funding	Locations (Counties)
Early Head Start	Bayfield, Beloit, Dodgeville, Green Bay, Hayward, Kenosha, Keshena, Lac Du Flambeau, Madison, Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Portage, Rhinelander, Stevens Point, Superior, Turtle Lake, Waukesha, Wisconsin Rapids
Healthy Families America	Bad River Band/Lake Superior, Green Bay, Hayward, Janesville, Milwaukee, Racine, Rhinelander, Siren, Sokaogon Chippewa Community, St. Croix Chippewa Indians WI, Waukesha
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPOY)	Milwaukee
Nurse-Family Partnership	Adams, Juneau, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Sauk
Parents as Teachers	Baldwin, Bayfield, Chippewa Falls, Eau Clair, Fond Du Lac, Franklin, Grafton, Green Bay, Hayward, Kenosha, La Crosse, Manitowoc, Menasha, Milwaukee, Oneida, Plymouth, Stevens Point, Waukesha



Savings

Many at-risk new families can struggle and make it on their own. But the ones who do not succeed don't just disappear: their repeated challenges surface in ways that can be very costly to society. For example, the economist Steve Aos and his team at the independent Washington State Institute for Public Policy ran the numbers on NFP's costs and known savings. They found that the home visiting program produced savings in improved children's health, reduced abuse and neglect, increased readiness for school and reduced future crime that added up to average net savings (after subtracting costs) of \$17,000 per family served.¹⁷

Congress Should Act

Congress soon has to decide whether to renew federal support for the 16 home visiting models that have been carefully studied, reviewed and shown to have solid evidence that they are effective. Those programs receive 75 percent of the federal funding, while the rest of the funding, which is given to states, can go to support promising programs that conduct rigorous studies showing they can also deliver significant results. This bipartisan approach is even seen as a model for how other federal funding should be done.¹⁸

Conclusion

As law enforcement leaders, we need effective home visitors to help reduce the number of women in prison in Wisconsin. For their courage, skill and perseverance, home visitors are definitely crime prevention heroes. If we are serious about helping communities in Wisconsin and throughout America prevent crime, we should invest in what works.

Endnotes

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