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**REPORT: Law Enforcement Leaders call for early childhood programs  
that will reduce child abuse and neglect**  
***Illinois Police Chiefs, Sheriffs, and State's Attorneys release report  
on role of home visiting programs in crime prevention***

*Chicago, Illinois* — Evidence-based prevention programs that provide "coaching" assistance to expectant and new parents can help address the rising rates of child abuse and neglect in Illinois, according to a new report released by a statewide organization of law enforcement leaders.

"As this new report says," said Maywood Police Chief Valdimir Talley, in an online news conference today, "high-quality, voluntary home visiting programs for families facing adverse conditions can have multiple beneficial outcomes."

Talley was joined by Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart; Kane County State's Attorney Joe McMahon; Rosy Barrera, a Family Support Specialist for Teen Parent Connection (DuPage County); Maria Medina, a participant in the Healthy Families Illinois home visiting program; and Tim Carpenter, Illinois State Director for Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. *(Full video of news conference available upon request.)*

The report is titled "[Reducing Child Abuse and Neglect Through Evidence-Based Home Visiting: Parent-coaching programs in Illinois improve academic and health outcomes](#)." It finds that quality home visiting programs — voluntary parent-coaching for expectant and new parents in disadvantaged circumstances — can help to reduce child maltreatment, curb parental involvement in crime, boost academic achievement among children, and even reduce the likelihood that a child will engage in opioid drug abuse later in life.

"Any strategy to snap the multi-generational cycle of violence needs to start with getting parents the support they need, and preventing child abuse and neglect," said Kane County State's Attorney Joe McMahon.

Home visiting programs involve a nurse, social worker, or other trained professional providing mentorship, guidance, and resources for parents during pregnancy and/or during the first years of a child's life. Illinois utilizes multiple, evidence-based home visiting models, including the Nurse-Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, Parents as Teachers, and Early Head Start.

As detailed at the news conference and in the report, home visiting professionals have continued their work during the COVID pandemic through virtual visits, and have served as an essential lifeline for parents of very young children forced to isolate at home.

“Parenting is probably one of the hardest jobs, and with young parents who may have additional risk factors, it can make parenting even harder,” said Rosy Barrera, a Family Support Therapist from DuPage County’s Teen Parent Connection. “Having a home visitor check in weekly to listen, support, and provide resources goes a long way.”

Funding for these programs has remained stagnant for several years. Illinois law enforcement leaders have a long history of advocating for increased public support for these programs, federally through Early Head Start and the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV), and in the state through both the Illinois Department of Human Services as well as the State Board of Education’s Prevention Initiative.

Members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids support two efforts that could result in additional Illinois families being served by quality home visiting. The bipartisan Illinois Early Childhood Funding Commission, appointed by Governor J.B. Pritzker in December 2019, is readying recommendations to create a more equitably and adequately funded system of care and education for young children; this includes home visiting services. Furthermore, among other policy suggestions, the Illinois Prenatal to Three Initiative (PN3) — a group of more than 100 expert stakeholders — has urged expansion of home visiting services to reach an additional 15,000 children and families over the next five years, among other recommendations to strengthen birth-to-three services in Illinois.

Law enforcement leaders see such an expansion as essential to the long-term health and security of our state. Members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids find that the best route to reducing crime in Illinois communities is by providing children in need with proven supports during the first years of life.

“We live or die, succeed or fail, based on the success of the next generation,” said Cook County Sheriff Thomas Dart.

**FULL VIDEO OF NEWS CONFERENCE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.**

*Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is a bipartisan, nonprofit anti-crime organization of over 5,000 law enforcement leaders nationwide, including 350 police chiefs, sheriffs, state’s attorneys, and leaders of law enforcement organizations in Illinois.*

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(See next page for a summary of the report. Full report at <https://bit.ly/Reduce-Abuse>)

**Summary of key data from**  
**Reducing Child Abuse and Neglect Through Evidence-Based Home Visiting:  
Parent-coaching programs in Illinois improve academic and health outcomes**

- **More than 31,500 Illinois children were substantiated victims of maltreatment** in 2018, a 10% increase over the preceding year.
- A study of the Nurse-Family Partnership program (NFP) found that, by age 15, children in NFP had **half as many verified incidents of child abuse and neglect** as children who did not participate, and that participating mothers had **one-third as many criminal convictions** as non-participants in the 15 years after the program.
- Participation in Healthy Families America (HFA), another study found, led to a **36% reduction in child welfare referrals for maltreatment** among mothers with a history of abuse and neglect.
- A 2019 evaluation of federally-funded home visiting programs found, after just 15 months of participation, a statistically **significant reduction in the frequency of parents' psychological aggression** toward children.
- A study of HFA found that participating children showed **improved cognitive development and fewer problem behaviors** at 2 years of age.
- Parents as Teachers participants read more frequently to their children and were also more likely to enroll their children in preschool, leading to **increased school readiness**.
- National evaluations have found that Early Head Start leads to **increased performance on cognitive, language, and social-emotional development measures**.
- Children born to mothers with low psychological resources who received visits from NFP nurses **scored higher on tests of receptive language and math achievement** at age 18, compared with children who did not receive these visits.
- A study showed that children who experienced more than four Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) were three times more likely to abuse prescription pain relievers, and five times more likely to engage in injection drug use in adulthood, than their counterparts who did not experience any traumas. By reducing exposure to ACEs, home visiting can **reduce the likelihood of opioid abuse later in life**.
- Mothers whose children participated in Early Head Start home visiting **saw their annual earnings increase by an average of \$3,600**.
- An evaluation of an NFP program found that the program accounted for **\$20,000 savings in welfare costs** per mother over an 18-year period.
- **17 Illinois counties have no home visiting services at all.** These unserved counties see more than 1,500 births each year from families with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

*See report for specific research citations.*