


Strengthening Investments in Voluntary Home Visiting Can Help Improve Public Safety and Build the Future Workforce in Texas, and Bolster National Security

Voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs provide vital support for vulnerable families, in-person and virtually. Implemented by trained professionals, these programs offer education and support and coordinate services from pregnancy into the early years of a child's life. These early investments can reduce costly future problems. The Texas Home Visiting program receives funds from the federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program to implement home visiting services. Texas' MIECHV-funded models include: Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), Parents as Teachers (PAT), Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), and Healthy Families America (HFA).¹ In fiscal year (FY) 2021, the state received over \$19 million in MIECHV funding.²

There are approximately 1.7 million Texas families with young children. Although nearly 350,000 of these are "highest-priority" families that could benefit from home visiting³, a mere 3,300 families in Texas received services from the MIECHV program in FY 2020 due to limited federal funding.⁴ Instability in the home visiting workforce—due to poor compensation—is another substantial barrier that can limit reach in Texas.⁵

The Economic Case for Home Visiting

Children develop foundational skills needed for the workforce in the first five years of life.⁶ Children living in poverty, including 21 percent of young children in Texas,⁷ are more susceptible to poor later life outcomes. Improving school readiness can help disrupt this cycle. An evaluation of the Texas HIPPY program found that family program participation resulted in math and reading achievement scores greater than national and district averages.⁸ In addition, research finds a strong return on investment for some home visiting programs. For example, NFP yields net economic benefits (benefits minus costs) of \$4,556 per family served.⁹

 **Only 3,300 Texas families received services from the MIECHV program in FY 2020."**

The Public Safety Case for Home Visiting

Texas has one of the highest incarceration rates in the United States.¹⁰ Experiencing child abuse can increase the likelihood of future crime.¹¹ Home visiting programs provide a solution to help combat child maltreatment.¹² An evaluation of the NFP program showed that participation resulted in fewer child abuse and neglect cases among participants compared to non-participants.¹³

The National Security Case for Home Visiting

In Texas, 34 percent of children are either obese or overweight.¹⁴ Nearly three-fourths of Texas youth are ineligible for military service,¹⁵ and obesity is a major disqualifier. Preventing these health disparities in the early years is paramount for national security,¹⁶ and home visiting can play a role: Minding the Baby participants had lower levels of obesity and excess weight at age 2 compared to non-participants.¹⁷



In sum, voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs can play a significant role in improving outcomes for Texas parents and children—building the future workforce, preventing crime, and bolstering national security. Texas members of Congress must prioritize and strengthen MIECHV. Without a renewed commitment that includes increased funding, virtual delivery, and improvements in workforce compensation, we run the risk of reversing gains and suspending future advancement, to the detriment of vulnerable Texas families and the nation.

Council for a Strong America is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites membership organizations, including law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, and business executives, that promote solutions ensuring that our next generation of Americans will be successful, productive members of society.

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Endnotes

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