

Strengthening Investments in Voluntary Home Visiting Can Help Improve Public Safety and Build the Future Workforce in Louisiana, 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. Louisiana receives funds from the federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program to implement home visiting services. Louisiana's MIECHV-funded models include: Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) and Parents as Teachers (PAT).¹ In fiscal year (FY) 2021, the state received over \$10 million in MIECHV funding.²

There are approximately 355,000 Louisiana families with young children, and nearly 71,500 of these are "highest-priority" families that could benefit from home visiting.³ Due to limited funding, only 2,200 Louisiana families received MIECHV services.⁴ This is equivalent to only about three percent of the highest-priority families. Instability in the home visiting workforce—due to poor compensation—is another substantial barrier that can limit reach in Louisiana.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 28 percent of young children in Louisiana,⁷ are more likely to reside in homes lacking cognitive stimulation and attend poorly-funded schools. These conditions can prevent children from flourishing. Home visiting can make a difference. A PAT study, following children from impoverished homes, found that participants' school readiness scores were equivalent to children from affluent homes. 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.⁸

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The Public Safety Case for Home Visiting

Louisiana has one of the highest incarceration rates in the United States.⁹ Experiencing child abuse can increase the likelihood of future crime.¹⁰ Home visiting programs provide a solution to help combat child maltreatment.¹¹ An evaluation of NFP showed that participation resulted in fewer child abuse and neglect cases among participants, compared to non-participants.¹²

The National Security Case for Home Visiting

In Louisiana, 51 percent of children do not exercise regularly,¹³ and 35 percent are overweight or obese.¹⁴ Nearly three-fourths of Louisiana youth are ineligible for military service¹⁵ 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: PAT participants improved consumption of fruits and vegetables, and parents improved food preparation, compared to non-participants.¹⁷



In sum, voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs can play a significant role in improving outcomes for Louisiana parents and children—building the future workforce, preventing crime, and bolstering national security. Louisiana 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 Louisiana 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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