

# Home Visiting in New York: A Critical Crime Prevention Strategy

## Summary

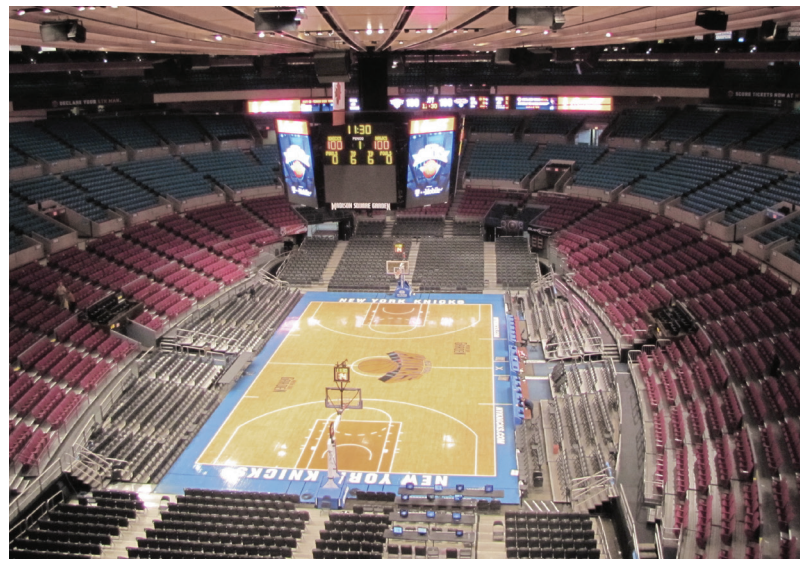
Every year, more than 65,000 children in New York experience abuse or neglect, most often by a parent or guardian. These traumatic experiences have immediate repercussions for children, as well as long-term impacts on New York's criminal justice system.

The good news is that families, community leaders and policymakers have banded together around a solution that's proven to make a difference: an evidence-based service called voluntary home visiting. State leaders have an outstanding opportunity to ensure that this effort continues, which would be a huge step toward reducing child abuse and neglect, not to mention overall crime in the years to come.

## Child abuse and neglect affects more than 65,000 in New York

More than 65,000 children in New York were abused or neglected in 2014. That's enough children to fill Madison Square Garden more than three times. The actual numbers are likely much higher due to underreporting.

Young children are most at-risk: nationally, one-third of child abuse and neglect



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## Acknowledgments

**Fight Crime: Invest in Kids New York** is a bi-partisan anti-crime organization of nearly 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, state attorneys general, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors nationwide. Our members believe that the best way to prevent crime is to help parents and our communities give kids the right start in life.

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victims are under age four, and they are far more likely to be abused or neglected by a parent or guardian than any other person in their lives.<sup>1</sup>

## What is voluntary home visiting?

Many child abuse and neglect cases are preventable. Guidance and support provided by trusted advisors to parents during pregnancy through the first few years of a child's life can help prevent child abuse and neglect.

Parenting is the biggest challenge many people will face. For single and poor teen parents, this challenge is amplified. Voluntary home visiting programs give young, at-risk parents (often single mothers) counseling, coaching, and support on a range of crucial parenting skills from utero to age two or three.

During a home visit, a nurse or trained educator helps parents learn about the early physical and emotional development of the child. They also provide families with tools to manage stress and anxiety, resources for ensuring the child's safety, and techniques to effectively guide a toddler away from problem behaviors.

## Voluntary home visiting can cut abuse and neglect in half and reduce crime

In a long-term randomized controlled trial conducted over nearly two decades, the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), a voluntary home visiting program, cut child abuse and neglect by 48 percent among participating families.<sup>7</sup>

Research also showed that by age 15, children in families not in the program had twice as many arrests, and by age 19, they had more than twice as many convictions.



## Child abuse or neglect increases the risk of future crime

Research has shown that approximately half of adolescents arrested for delinquency have experienced abuse or neglect earlier in their lives.<sup>2</sup> One study compared abused and/or neglected children to children with no record of abuse or neglect and found that those who were abused and/or neglected were twice as likely to have committed a crime by age 19 (1.4 percent vs. 2.8 percent).<sup>3</sup> That equates to nearly 1,000 children a year in New York State who grow up to become criminals as a result of child abuse and neglect.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, abuse can also pass from one generation to the next. One study found that roughly a third of children with a history of abuse maltreat their own children.<sup>5</sup> In addition, children who were abused and/or neglected are also at greater risk of unemployment, divorce, suicide and a range of health problems from heart disease to depression.<sup>6</sup>

# 2x

Children who were abused and/or neglected are twice as likely to have committed a crime by age 19.<sup>3</sup>

# 1,000

Children per year in New York State who were abused and/or neglected are likely to have committed a crime by age 19.<sup>4</sup>

These results were concentrated among young women in the program. Those not receiving NFP services averaged nine times more convictions than the young women who received NFP.<sup>8</sup>

The Nurse Family Partnership program also achieved:

- improved prenatal health,
- reduced childhood injuries, and
- increased school readiness.

Other programs show similar outcomes. For example, children who participated in Healthy Families New York (HFNY) were less likely than their peers to have a diagnosed developmental delay or receive special education services.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, studies of The Parent-Child Home Program, Inc. (PCHP) and Parents as Teachers (PAT) programs found promising impacts on parenting practices and school readiness.<sup>10</sup>

The savings add up. A cost-benefit analysis shows that NFP achieves average savings of almost \$17,000 for each family served.<sup>11</sup>

**Voluntary home visiting can even save lives**

One study found that infants who received either NFP or Healthy Families America services had 60 percent lower mortality rates than the comparison group. Meanwhile, a randomized trial of NFP found that by the age of 20, 1.6 percent of children in the control group had died of preventable causes (such as unintentional injury or homicide) while none of the NFP children died from these causes.

**Home Visiting Programs in New York**

Program	Families Participating
Healthy Families New York (HFNY)	5,800
Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)	2,600
Parents as Teachers (PAT)	1,000
The Parent-Child Home Program, Inc. (PCHP)	1,100

Source: New York Statewide Needs Assessment, 2010

Similarly, two decades 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 NFP and eight times more likely to have died from “external causes—including unintentional injuries, suicide, drug overdose and homicide”.<sup>12</sup>

**New York policymakers should support voluntary home visiting as a crime prevention strategy**

Our nation cannot turn a blind eye to the fiscal, public safety and human costs of child abuse and neglect. Most cases of abuse and neglect are preventable if we take a proactive approach that utilizes proven, evidence-based practices. State and federal policymakers must act decisively to support the continuum of these proven voluntary home visiting programs. Doing so will dramatically reduce the number of children who are abused and/or neglected in our state, and ultimately prevent involvement in the criminal justice system.



## Endnotes

- 1 Children's Bureau. (2016). *Child Maltreatment 2014*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2014>
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- 4 Currie, J., & Tekin, E. (2012). Understanding the cycle childhood maltreatment and future crime. *Journal of Human Resources*, 47(2), 509-549 2.8 percent of the abused or neglected youngsters went on to be arrested for a violent crime as juveniles or as adults, compared to 1.4 percent of similar individuals who shared the same other advantages and disadvantages as these children but who had not been abused or neglected as children. Applying the two percentage point increase in criminality to the confirmed New York cases of abuse and neglect in 2014 produces a figure of 918 additional individuals who will be arrested for at least one crime beyond the number of those who would have been arrested had the abuse or neglect never occurred.
- 5 Kaufman, J., & Zigler, E. (1987). Do abused children become abusive parents. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 57, 186-192. There is disagreement about the accuracy of retrospective studies of intergenerational transmission due to methodological issues, but this is a frequently cited figure.
- 6 Karr-Morse, R., & Wiley, M.S. (2012). *Scared sick: The role of childhood trauma in adult disease*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
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- 9 Caldera, D., et al. (2007). Impact of a statewide home visiting program on parenting and on child health and development. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 31(8), 829-852; DuMont, K., et al. (2010). "A randomized trial of Healthy Families New York (HFNY): Does home visiting prevent child maltreatment?" Rensselaer, NY.
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- 12 3.7 percent vs. 1.3 percent and 1.7 percent vs. 0.2 percent respectively. Olds, D.L., Kitzman, H., Knudtson, M.D., Anson, E., Smith, J.A., & Cole, R. (2014) Effect of home visiting by nurses on maternal and child mortality: results of a two-decade follow-up of a randomized, clinical trial. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 168, 800-806; Nurse-Family Partnership (2014, July). Nurse-Family Partnership is the First Early Intervention to Find Reductions in Maternal and Child Mortality. Retrieved on October 16, 2014 from <http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/assets/PDF/Fact-sheets/Memphis-factsheet.aspx>; Donovan, E.F., Ammerman, R.T., Besl, J., Atherton, H., Khoury, J.C., Altate, M., et al. (2007). Intensive home visiting associated with decreased risk of infant death. *Pediatrics*, 119, 1145-1151; Nurse-Family Partnership. (2012). *Proven results*. Denver, CO: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/proven-results>







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