



Helping Vulnerable Families Gets Harder for Healthy Families NY

Increase funding for Healthy Families New York 15% to \$26.8 million.

In fiscal year 2007-08, New York State's budget included \$25.2 million for Healthy Families New York (HFNY) Home Visiting. In 2008-09, the financial crisis led to an 8% cut for HFNY to \$23.3 million. Funding has been held at \$23.3 million for six years. Adjusting for inflation, "flat funding" means funds have effectively been reduced by 15% since FY 2007-2008.

In July 2013, HFNY sites were asked to complete an online survey regarding the impact of funding reductions on their services. The results of that survey provided the information below.

LOSS OF CRITICAL SERVICES (79% of respondents) — As a result of funding changes, some programs have reduced the areas where they provide services. In addition, many programs can no longer:

- ▶ Provide outreach to ensure fathers' involvement.
- ▶ Engage families through community outreach.
- ▶ Conduct family support groups that augment home visits.
- ▶ Provide support—such as training—to expand staff skills.
- ▶ Organize group activities that create personal supports.

DECREASE IN LENGTH OF STAY IN PROGRAM (58% of respondents) — Families are involved for shorter lengths of time. Positive outcomes are directly related to length and level of participation.

CUTBACKS IN SUPPLIES FOR FAMILIES (60% of respondents) — Families go without critical supplies crucial to maintaining healthy, safe environments. Many programs no longer provide:

- ▶ Infant care kits (including essential supplies such as thermometers, nail clippers).
- ▶ Transportation vouchers.
- ▶ Diapers, clothing, cribs, safety kits, toothbrushes.
- ▶ Books and educational toys.

NEGATIVE IMPACT ON STAFF (95% of respondents) — Cutbacks have led to reductions in staff resulting in turnover of remaining staff because of increased stress level (due to caseload size) and reduced wages. This means less consistency for families. Staff retention directly impacts family retention. In addition, fewer training opportunities now exist which compromises quality.

Survey conducted by Prevent Child Abuse New York, July 2013. Just over half of all HFNY sites, and two-thirds of those that were fully operational in 2007, responded.

“We no longer are able to provide HFNY services to the entire county.”

“We used to have fathering support groups and met with fathers about their special needs.”

“We struggle to continue activities that we know are important to keep our families engaged.”

“Our families have missed out on socialization opportunities we used to provide to assist them with being less isolated.”

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Prevent Child Abuse
New York

2014 Legislative Issue

RECOMMEND \$26.8 million for Healthy Families New York Home Visiting - \$3.5 million above the executive budget - to restore the service level in high-need communities across the state.

Babies don't come with instructions. HFNY nurtures strong, positive parent-child relationships - the foundation for health and well-being across the entire lifespan.

Infants' health at birth and the care they receive during the first three years has a profound impact that lasts throughout their lives. Regular visits by trained professionals during this time can shift the trajectory of families' lives and children's future. By reaching at-risk children and families at the earliest possible time, home visiting prevents problems that require expensive intervention and remediation.

Research proves Healthy Families New York (HFNY) works for a diverse array of families, from first-time teen parents to those who have had experience with the child welfare system.

- Improves birth outcomes, reducing low birth weight deliveries.
- Prevents child abuse and neglect, and increases positive, non-violent parenting.
- Promotes success in school, with higher scores and less need for special education.

HFNY services have been reduced since 2008 because of the effective 15% cut in funds with six years of flat funding.

- Programs have had to limit father involvement services, the communities and neighborhoods they serve, and outreach to vulnerable families.
- Reductions in staff due to layoffs, increased stress and lower wages directly impacts both the number of families served and how long families stay with the program.
- Families are involved for shorter lengths of time, but infants' and families' successful outcomes are directly related to length and level of participation.

We strongly urge restoring Healthy Families New York Home Visiting services to the level that had been achieved in 2008 by allocating \$26.8 million for the program.