

The Pew Home Visiting Campaign

Helping States Improve Quality, Evaluation, and Accountability

JOHN SCHLITT

Pew Home Visiting Campaign



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Investments in families during the critical developmental period of prenatal-to-pre-kindergarten are the best way to ensure that children succeed.

At no time in the history of home visiting have states played such a critical role in strengthening the quality of home visiting programs and improving access for new and expectant families. Consider this: in a matter of months, the United States Department of Health and Human Services will disburse to states \$100 million for evidence-based home visiting services—a new funding source that is one of the lesser-known components of the national health care legislation passed by Congress in

March. With annual increases over 5 years, the total allotment to states will reach \$1.5 billion by 2014 (P.L. 111-148). Estimates of total annual state allotments to home visiting range from \$250–460 million, so the imminent federal infusion represents a substantial new source of dollars to states (Clothier & Poppe, 2009; Johnson, 2001, 2009). Some states may find themselves with a 100% increase in their current funding; a handful of states will be initiating programs for the first time.

Sizable funding levels notwithstanding, the federal initiative is significant in that it reinforces states as a dominant stakeholder in home visiting. Hardly newcomers to the field, most states have a history of providing leadership, funding, and research for home visiting programs. Assessments of state-level policies over the last 10 years (including one to be released later this year by the Pew Home Visiting Campaign) reveal broad and wide-ranging investments in home-based services to meet distinct but related goals: maternal health, positive infant and child development, prevention of child abuse and neglect, and promotion of early learning. State public health, child welfare, and education sectors share this common approach based on a fundamental truth: effective human capital investments in families during the critical developmental period of prenatal-to-pre-kindergarten are the best way to ensure that children succeed in school and life.

States are only now assessing the reverberations of this health care reform component. In the coming months, and with guidance from the federal government, states will prepare the requisite needs assessments and funding applications to demonstrate their ability to administer evidence-based home visiting initiatives. But the newly enacted law triggers a sea change that, for some states, will require new ways of doing business. A clear standard of evidence required for federal funding will compel states to evaluate the science behind existing home

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visiting investments and the outcomes they generate. Not all programs currently being funded are expected to make the cut; some will need to improve the quality of programs and strengthen evaluations to demonstrate outcomes required by the legislation. And with new federal dollars comes a heightened need for states to ensure evidence-based programs are coordinated across multiple state agencies, implemented with fidelity, and monitored for performance.

The good news is that a new resource is available to help states leverage these federal dollars to generate the greatest impact across all state-supported home visiting programming. The Pew Home Visiting Campaign was launched last year by the Pew Center on the States to guide state policymakers toward smart investments in quality, voluntary home-based programs for new and expectant families. In light of the federal development and pressing needs of states, the campaign will assist states in several ways, including:

- **Policy Campaigns:** This year, Pew is providing financial support and technical assistance to public education and advocacy campaigns in four states where key leaders are determined to increase access to and improve the quality of voluntary home visiting programs (see box *Pew Home Visiting Campaign States*). Additional campaigns are being planned this fall to advance state policy agendas for improving quality, evaluation, and accountability.
- **Inventory of State Home Visiting Policies:** The Campaign's study of all 50 states' home visiting policies, programs, and funding is nearing completion this summer. Our exhaustive research will document the current state of play and allow states to benchmark their progress in adapting and implementing evidence-based programs.
- **Technical Assistance and Networking:** Through national meetings, individual consultations and Web-based dissemination, the Campaign will facilitate sharing of information and technical support around core state governance topics: standard

Louisiana

The Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families, a statewide coalition of organizations drawn from the children's advocacy, health, and business communities, has a 5-year plan to increase statewide access to the Nurse-Family Partnership. This year, the partnership's policy goals include increasing public investment in the Nurse-Family Partnership by \$2.5 million (for a total of \$14.8 million) and serving an additional 813 families.

North Carolina

The Alliance for Evidence-Based Family Strengthening Programs is a public-private collaboration committed to securing public investment in high-quality programs like the Nurse-Family Partnership. In addition, the Alliance seeks to influence improvements in the quality of implementation and evaluation of other research-based programs.

setting, coordination, financing, quality assurance, data collection, and performance evaluation.

- **Research:** As this issue of *Zero to Three* highlights, when well-designed and implemented, home visiting programs can have a marked impact; however, only a few models have carried out long-term, experimental design studies, and not all of those tested have shown equal results. To help fill this gap, the campaign's research will begin to answer policy-relevant home visitation questions such as which program ingredients generate the most positive results, how programs can be most effectively adapted to serve diverse families, what impact home visiting has on school readiness, and how best to engage fathers. These answers will ensure states are able to confidently invest scarce public dollars in proven programs.

It is not known what the future holds for home visiting, but it is clear who holds its future: state governments. Pew is betting

Ohio

The Ohio campaign brings together a coalition of state early childhood advocates and policy leaders dedicated to increasing investment in Ohio's Help Me Grow home visiting system. The campaign will work to ensure that all home visiting programs within the 88-county system adhere to high-quality, evidence-based standards.

Washington

The Children's Alliance is leading an intensive policymaker education and advocacy campaign with a long-term goal to expand home visiting services to all eligible families in Washington. The alliance seeks to protect and grow state and private funding for proven home visiting programs and to work with Washington state's congressional delegation to encourage continued federal support of state home visiting programs.

Learn more at pewcenteronthestates.org/HomeVisiting

on states to succeed in investing in the most cost-effective programs and in holding local program providers accountable for delivering results. §

JOHN SCHLITT, MSW, is director of the *Pew Home Visiting Campaign*. Mr. Schlitt is a maternal, child, and adolescent health policy expert and advocate. As the first executive director of the National Assembly on School-Based Health Care, John led the national movement to improve medical and mental health access through our nation's schools. In addition, he has been the deputy director of *Making the Grade: State and Local Partnerships to Establish School-Based Health Centers*, a national grant program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. He also served as policy analyst with the Southern Governors' Association's *Infant Mortality Prevention Initiative*. Mr. Schlitt has worked as a clinical social worker with children in psychiatric and community mental health settings and has authored several articles on school-based health care and teen pregnancy prevention.

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