



Universal Newborn Home Visiting Program

The Challenge

The birth of a child presents a unique opportunity to ensure a healthy start for the baby and the family. The weeks right after delivery are ideal for reaching out, connecting with and engaging new parents. Newborn infants are susceptible to many preventable health and environmental risks, but parents often lack the information and support they need to reduce risks and promote the healthy development of their babies.

Many mothers are discharged from hospitals with little or no parenting information and often find themselves homebound and isolated for weeks after their child is born. A 2005 study documents that 17% of mothers discharged from hospitals after childbirth lacked basic information regarding health insurance, breastfeeding and pediatric care.¹

The Solution

New York City's Newborn Home Visiting Program ensures that newborns get a healthy start by providing parents with guidance, information and support directly in their homes. A trained health worker comes to the home and offers information on infant health and development, child safety and household risks, answers questions about nutrition and breastfeeding, and links families to primary care and community services. The program is now available to new parents in 11 communities in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan.²

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The Newborn Home Visiting Program:

- Offers information on infant health and child safety
- Conducts an environmental assessment (for lead paint, window guards and baby-proofing)
- Responds to parents' questions about nutrition, breastfeeding and cognitive and social/emotional development
- Raises awareness about available community resources
- Arranges pediatric care where developmental screenings and early detection of problems can take place
- Provides information on tax credits and community programs

The Cost & Benefits

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene currently budgets \$3.2 million for the Newborn Home Visiting Program to serve 9,500 families in 11 targeted New York City communities. By investing just \$11.8 million more, the Newborn Home Visiting Program could be made available to newborns in all of New York City's 59 community districts.³

¹ Bernstein, Helen et al. Unreadiness for Postpartum Discharge of Mothers and Their Healthy Infants: Multivariate Results of the Life Around Newborn Discharge (LAND) Study. University of Vermont, Burlington, VT and Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, MA. May 16, 2005.

² Brooklyn: Bushwick, Bedford Stuyvesant, Brownsville. Bronx: Concourse/Highbridge, East Tremont, Hunts Point, Morrisiana, Mott Haven, University Heights. Manhattan: East Harlem, Central Harlem.

³ A universal program would cover all newborns living in community districts that have 50% or more Medicaid births. Parents in the remaining community districts would receive a home visit for their firstborn child only. The number of newborns to be served annually is estimated to be 67,000 (assuming a 70% take-up rate).

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