COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA OHIO

FACTSHEET

Strengthening Investments in Voluntary Home Visiting Can Help Improve Public Safety and Build the Future Workforce in Ohio, 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. The Ohio Department of Health receives funds from the federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program to implement home visiting services.[1] Ohio's MIECHV-funded models include: Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), Parents as Teachers (PAT), and Healthy Families America (HFA).[2] In fiscal year (FY) 2021, the state received $7.7 million in MIECHV funding.[3]

Of the approximately 635,000 Ohio families with young children, there are over 146,000 highest-priority families who could benefit from home visiting.[4] However, due to limited federal funds, only 2,100 Ohio families (equivalent to about two percent of the highest priority families) received services from the MIECHV program in FY 2020.[5] Instability in the home visiting workforce—due to poor compensation—is another substantial barrier that can limit reach in Ohio.[6]

The Economic Case for Home Visiting

Children develop foundational skills needed for the workforce in the first five years of life.[7] Children living in poverty, including 21 percent of young children in Ohio,[8] are more susceptible to poor later life outcomes. Early education can make a difference. For example, participation in the HFA program resulted in improved cognitive development at one and two years. These early impacts led to increased enrollment in gifted programs and decreased the need for special education services.[9] In addition, some programs have a positive return on investment. For example, NFP yields net economic benefits (benefits minus costs) of $4,556 per family served.[10]

> **"Only 2,100 Ohio families (equivalent to about two percent of the highest priority families) received services from the MIECHV program in FY 2020."**

The Public Safety Case for Home Visiting

In 2021, there were over 17,800 substantiated child abuse cases in Ohio.[11] The association between child abuse and crime is significant.[12] Home visiting programs provide a solution to help combat child maltreatment.[13] An evaluation of the NFP program showed that participation resulted in fewer child abuse and neglect cases among participants compared to non-participants.[14]

The National Security Case for Home Visiting

In Ohio, 34 percent of children are either obese or overweight.[15] More than two-thirds (71 percent) of Ohio youth are ineligible for military service,[16] and obesity is a major disqualifier. Preventing these health disparities in the early years is paramount for national security,[17] and home visiting can play a role: PAT participants improved consumption of fruits and vegetables, and parents improved food preparation, compared to non-participants.[18]



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