COUNCIL FOR A
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SOUTH CAROLINA

FACTSHEET

Strengthening Investments in Voluntary Home Visiting Can Help Improve Public Safety and Build the Future Workforce in South Carolina, 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 Children's Trust of South Carolina receives funds from the federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program to implement home visiting services.[1] South Carolina's MIECHV-funded models include: Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), Parents as Teachers (PAT), and Healthy Families America (HFA). In fiscal year (FY) 2021, the state received over $8.1 million in MIECHV funding.[2]

There are approximately 260,000 South Carolina families with young children, and nearly 61,000 of these are "highest-priority" families that could benefit from home visiting.[3] Due to limited funding, only 1,300 South Carolina families received MIECHV services.[4] This is equivalent to only about two percent of the highest-priority families. Instability in the home visiting workforce—due to poor compensation—is another substantial barrier that can limit reach in South Carolina.[5]

The Economic Case for Home Visiting

Children develop foundational skills needed for the workforce in the first five years of life.[6] Children living in poverty, including 22 percent of young children in South Carolina,[7] are more likely to reside in homes lacking cognitive stimulation and attend poorly-funded schools. An evaluation of HFA found that participants were significantly less likely to drop out of high school, as compared with children not in the program.[8] In addition, research finds a strong return on investment for some home visiting programs. For example, NFP yields net economic benefits (benefits minus costs) of $4,556.

"Due to limited funding, only 1,300 South Carolina families received MIECHV services. This is equivalent to only about three percent of the highest-priority families."

The Public Safety Case for Home Visiting

In 2020, there were over 14,000 substantiated child abuse cases in South Carolina.[9] Experiencing child abuse can increase the likelihood of future crime.[10] Voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs have been shown to prevent child abuse. An evaluation of the NFP program showed that participation resulted in fewer child abuse and neglect cases among participants compared to non-participants.[11]

The National Security Case for Home Visiting

In South Carolina, 36 percent of children are either obese or overweight.[12] Nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of South Carolina youth are ineligible for military service,[13] and obesity is a major disqualifier. Preventing these health disparities in the early years is paramount for national security,[14] and home visiting can play a role: PAT participants improved consumption of fruits and vegetables, and parents improved food preparation, compared to non-participants.[15]



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

1025 Connecticut Avenue NW / Suite 1100 / Washington, DC 20036 / 202.464.7005

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Endnotes

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