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FACTSHEET

Strengthening Investments in Voluntary Home Visiting Can Help Improve Public Safety and Build the Future Workforce in Oregon, 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 Oregon Department of Human Services receives funds from the federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program to implement home visiting services. Oregon's MIECHV-funded models include: Early Head Start (EHS), Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), and Healthy Families America (HFA).[1] In fiscal year (FY) 2021, the state received over $8.2 million in MIECHV funding.[2]

There are approximately 210,000 Oregon families with young children, and over 36,000 of these are "highest-priority" families that could benefit from home visiting.[3] Due to limited funding, only 1,100 Oregon families received MIECHV services.[4] This is equivalent to only about three percent of the highest-priority families. When including state and local funding, still only approximately 4,000 Oregon families received home visiting services.[5] Instability in the home visiting workforce—due to poor compensation—is another substantial barrier that can limit reach in Oregon.[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 13 percent of young children in Oregon,[8] are more susceptible to poor later life outcomes. Improving school readiness can help disrupt this cycle. An EHS study found that at age 3, participants' standardized cognitive tests were higher, and they were more likely to attend a formal preschool.[9] 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 per family served.[10]

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The Public Safety Case for Home Visiting

In 2020, there were 11,423 substantiated cases of child abuse in Oregon.[11] Experiencing child abuse can increase the likelihood of future crime.[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 Oregon, 32 percent of children are either obese or overweight.[15] More than two-thirds (71 percent) of Oregon 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: Minding the Baby participants had lower levels of obesity and excess weight at age 2 compared to non-participants.[18]



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