



## Shepherding the Next Generation

# TENNESSEE'S VOLUNTARY HOME VISITING PROGRAMS: STRENGTHENING FAMILIES, PROTECTING CHILDREN

### - WHO WE ARE -

Shepherding the Next Generation is a nationwide movement of Shepherd Advocates: evangelical pastors and ministry leaders who are committed to speaking out on behalf of children at risk so that each child will have the opportunity to grow up in a strong, stable and healthy family.

*“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.”  
Proverbs 31:8a (NIV)*

## Summary

As pastors and ministry leaders, we support effective services to protect at-risk children. Almost 9,000 children in Tennessee were victims of abuse or neglect in 2010, and 38 children died as a result. One of the most effective ways to prevent child abuse and neglect is by providing voluntary home visiting to young at-risk mothers. Research on high-quality, evidence-based home visiting demonstrates that it can cut child abuse and neglect nearly in half. Continued state and federal funding for effective home visiting is essential to help Tennessee's vulnerable children.

The Bible teaches us that God created the family to be the primary place for educating a child on how he or she is to live. It is within the context of the family where values are taught and nurtured (Dt. 6:4-9; Ps. 78:5-8; Pro. 1; Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 1:5). However, some parents, including many young, at-risk mothers, have a more difficult experience in child rearing than others, often lacking the knowledge, resources, or the support of a spouse to raise their children towards lives of health, opportunity and values.

On behalf of children at risk of abuse and neglect in Tennessee, we call on our local, state and federal policymakers to support voluntary home visiting for at-risk families. We need increased support to help ensure children at risk in Tennessee are protected and families are strengthened.

## Parenting Support for Poor Mothers

*“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)*

We want all parents to be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to raise a healthy, vibrant child -

especially those parents and children most at risk. When a young woman is facing pregnancy and raising a new baby, she may be more open to support and advice from a trusted source. Offering the mother-to-be voluntary, high-quality home visiting before her child is born and continuing after birth is proven to not only to help the mother reach her goals, but also to help her become a more successful and caring mother to her child.

Reducing child abuse and neglect is critical to protecting children in Tennessee. The almost 9,000 Tennessee children who were victims of abuse or neglect in 2010 is roughly equivalent to a child suffering abuse or neglect every hour of every day, on average, in the state.<sup>1</sup> The actual numbers are almost certainly higher, primarily due to underreporting. Research indicates that the number of children in the state exposed to abuse or neglect is well over three times as high, meaning there may be over 26,000 victims a year.<sup>2</sup> At least 38 Tennessee children died from abuse or neglect in 2010.<sup>3</sup>

## Voluntary Home Visiting Can Strengthen Tennessee Families

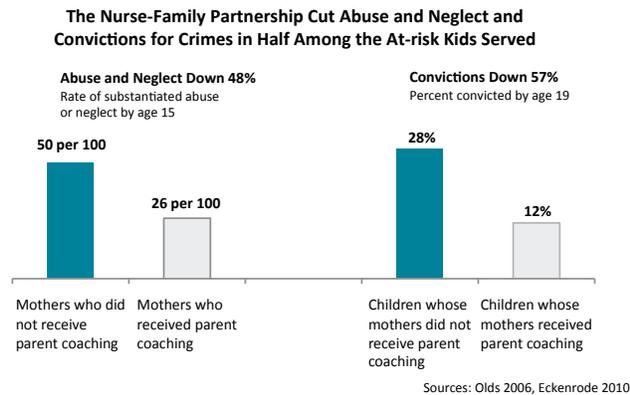
Tennessee currently offers four main home visiting programs. These programs target families based upon their risk factors and employ different service models, including well-known, evidence-based curricula — the Nurse-Family Partnership and Healthy Families America — as well as state-developed initiatives — Help Us Grow Successfully (HUGS) and the Child Health and Development Projects (CHAD).<sup>4</sup> These models focus on improving aspects of family and child wellbeing, such as prenatal, infant, and maternal health, prevention of abuse and neglect, children's school readiness, and family living standards, among others. Together, these home visiting programs served approximately 8,600 Tennessee families in FY 2010.<sup>5</sup>

## Quality Home Visiting Cuts Abuse and Neglect

Research has shown that home visiting can reduce child abuse and neglect, give kids the right start in life and reduce crime. Of the models currently used in Tennessee, two have been shown to reduce abuse and neglect. The state's own models, Child Health and Development Program (CHAD) and Help Us Grow Successfully (HUGS), also appear promising, but rigorous evaluations are needed to confirm the results.

- **The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)** is offered to at-risk mothers-to-be, new mothers and babies. Rigorous evaluations of the program using randomized control trials have found that:
  - Abuse and neglect was cut nearly in half;
  - The children's involvement in later crime was cut by more than half;
  - The fathers were more involved in their families; and
  - The mothers were up to a third less likely to be dependent on welfare.<sup>6</sup>

NFP serves Tennessee families through two implementing agencies in Memphis and East Tennessee, Le Bonheur Community Outreach and Child & Family Tennessee.<sup>7</sup>



- **Healthy Families (also sometimes called Healthy Start)** offers services prenatally or right after a baby's birth and serves families for 3 to 5 years. Data from one randomized controlled trial of the program showed that participating mothers reported engaging in physical abuse of their children less frequently than mothers not receiving the program's services, though these differences were not found in official records of abuse.<sup>8</sup> Healthy Families Tennessee serves families through 10 sites.<sup>9</sup>
- **Child Health and Development Program (CHAD)** served 1,133 children in 741 Tennessee families in FY 2010. This state-developed home visiting model is promising and should be evaluated.<sup>10</sup>

- **Help Us Grow Successfully (HUGS)** served 5,996 Tennessee children in FY 2010. This state-developed home visiting program model is also promising and should be evaluated.<sup>11</sup>

## Saving Money

Supporting mothers in their parenting through voluntary home visiting strengthens families, helps kids, and also produces substantial savings for taxpayers by cutting welfare, incarceration and other costs. For example, when the Washington State Institute for Public Policy looked at the costs and savings from a range of rigorous studies of NFP programs in the U.S., they found that the program produced a net savings of almost \$21,000 for each family served.<sup>12</sup>

If Tennessee can keep its state funding from being cut, it will remain eligible for new federal funds for home visiting.

## Our Call

Pastors and ministry leaders are already working to strengthen families and help children at risk in their own communities. Therefore, they are well-positioned to educate policymakers about the value of voluntary home visiting in reducing child abuse and neglect. Maintaining and increasing state and federal investments in proven programs is necessary to help these at-risk children live with dignity, safety, and health; make positive contributions to society; and someday, raise strong, healthy families themselves.

## Endnotes

- 1 Unique victim count. 8,760 children were abused or neglected. Children's Bureau. (2011). *Child Maltreatment 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved on December 22, 2011 from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm10>
- 2 Sedlak, A.J., Mettenberg, J., Basena, M., Peta, I., McPherson, K., Greene, A., et al. (2010). *Fourth national incidence study of child abuse and neglect (NIS-4)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved December 8, 2011 from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/abuse\\_neglect/natl\\_incid](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/abuse_neglect/natl_incid)
- 3 Children's Bureau. (2011). *Child Maltreatment 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved on December 22, 2011 from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm10>
- 4 Tennessee Department of Health. (2011). *Tennessee home visiting programs annual report* (July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010). Nashville, TN: Author. Retrieved on June 15, 2011 from [http://health.state.tn.us/statistics/PdfFiles/Home\\_Visiting\\_Programs\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2010.pdf](http://health.state.tn.us/statistics/PdfFiles/Home_Visiting_Programs_Annual_Report_2010.pdf); Tennessee Department of Health. (2010). *Tennessee home visiting programs annual report* (July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009). Nashville, TN: Author. Retrieved on June 15, 2011 from <http://health.state.tn.us/Downloads/Home%20Visiting%20Report%20FY%202009.FINAL.pdf>
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- 6 Crime results at age 19 are concentrated among girls. Long-term effects of nurse home visitation on children's criminal and anti-social behavior: 15-year follow-up of a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 280(14), 1238-1244; Olds, D. L. (1997). Long-term effects of nurse home visitation on maternal life course and child abuse and neglect. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278(8), 637-643; Kitzman, H. (1997). Effect of prenatal and infancy home visitation by nurses on pregnancy outcomes, childhood injuries, and repeated childbearing. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278(8), 6644-652; Nurse-Family Partnership. (2012). *Proven Results*. Denver, CO: Author. Retrieved February 16, 2012 from <http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/proven-results>
- 7 Nurse-Family Partnership. (2011). State profile 2011. Denver, CO: Author. Retrieved on December 23, 2011 from [http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/assets/PDF/Communities/State-profiles/TN\\_State\\_Profile.aspx](http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/assets/PDF/Communities/State-profiles/TN_State_Profile.aspx)
- 8 Official administrative records of abuse did show a marginally significant difference in rates of abuse and neglect for a subset of women with a history of child abuse. Administrative records showed that Healthy Families New York participation for women with a history of abuse resulted in fewer confirmed reports for abuse or neglect, fewer confirmed results for physical abuse, and lower service initiation compared to women with a history of abuse who were in the control group, but these findings were based on too small a sample of women to be confident in them. DuMont, K., Kirkland, K., Mitchell-Herzfeld, S., Ehrhard-Dietzel, S., Rodriguez, M. L., Lee, E., Layne, C. & Greene, R. (2010). *A randomized trial of Healthy Families New York (HFNY): Does home visiting prevent child maltreatment?* [Final Report]. Albany, NY: New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Retrieved on July 14, 2011 from <http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/reports/NJ%20Report/FINAL%20REPORT%2011-23-2010.pdf>
- 9 Healthy Families America. (n.d.) State system primary contacts: Tennessee. Retrieved on December 23, 2011 from [http://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org/state\\_system\\_locator/statecontact.cfm?stateabbrev=tn](http://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org/state_system_locator/statecontact.cfm?stateabbrev=tn)
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- 11 Tennessee Department of Health. (2011). *Tennessee home visiting programs annual report* (July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010). Nashville, TN: Author. Retrieved on June 15, 2011 from [http://health.state.tn.us/statistics/PdfFiles/Home\\_Visiting\\_Programs\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2010.pdf](http://health.state.tn.us/statistics/PdfFiles/Home_Visiting_Programs_Annual_Report_2010.pdf); Tennessee Department of Health. (2010). *Tennessee home visiting programs annual report* (July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009). Nashville, TN: Author. Retrieved on June 15, 2011 from <http://health.state.tn.us/Downloads/Home%20Visiting%20Report%20FY%202009.FINAL.pdf>
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