# State Home Visiting Programs

Children and Families Program

National Conference of State Legislatures

# What is Home Visiting?

- Visitors going to the families' homes to help expecting and new parents

- Participation is voluntary

- Visitors may be trained as nurses, social workers or child development specialists

- Visits teach parents about health, child development and learning activities that foster their child's development.

- Screening to help parents identify possible health and developmental issues.

# Why should legislators think about home visiting programs?

- Home visiting is already going on in every state

- Questions about the most effective approaches and coordination between programs

- Federal home visiting funding gives state officials an opportunity to fund new home visiting services and strengthen existing programs
  - Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program
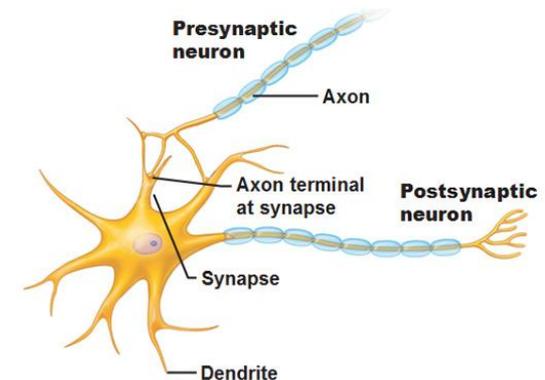  - $1.5 billion over five years (FY2010 - FY2014)

# Brain Development and Home Visiting

- Early experiences shape brain development in the first two years as children's brain architecture develops
- Cognitive skills, emotional and social competence, and physical and mental health
- Key child and adult outcomes
  - School readiness
  - Academic achievement
  - Juvenile justice and crime
  - Employment

Synapse – Where Two Neurons Communicate in One Direction

Presynaptic neuron

Axon

Axon terminal at synapse

Postsynaptic neuron

Synapse

Dendrite

(a) Two neurons connected by synapses

# Return on Investment

- Effects of quality home visiting
  - cut the number of low-birth-weight babies by 50 percent
  - reduce the rate of child abuse and neglect by nearly one-half
  - increase reading and math test scores in grades 1-3 by 25 percent
  - increase children's high school graduation rates by 60 percent
- Cost-benefit studies demonstrate returns on investment from $1.75 to $5.70 for every dollar spent
  - child welfare
  - K-12 special education and grade retention
  - criminal justice expenses

# What Makes Home Visiting Effective?

- Evidence-based models
  - Nurse Family Partnership
  - Healthy Families America
  - Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)
  - Parents as Teachers
- Locally developed approaches

# Research-based Standards

- Targeted
  - First-time parents
  - Single parents
  - Teen parents
  - Substance abuse and/or maternal depression
- Intensive
  - Early
  - Frequent
  - First 2-3 years of child's life
- Specialized training
  - Nurses, social workers, early education specialists
  - Model specific training and curriculum

# Key Questions for State Legislators



- Priority goals
  - improving maternal and child health,
  - increasing school readiness
  - reducing child abuse and neglect
- Funding programs that demonstrate high-quality services and measureable results
- Shifting funding to programs with stronger evidence of effectiveness
- Sustainable home visiting programs
  - Future changes in federal funding
  - Focus investments on programs that produce clear improvement in outcomes

# Home Visiting

- Early childhood investment to support parents and improve the outcomes for young children and families

- Research shows that it produces returns on investment in better outcomes and reduced government spending in health, schools, child abuse and criminal justice

- Further information or questions:
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