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Final Evaluation Report: Healthy Families New York Home Visiting Program: Pre- and Postnatal Discussions Foster Breastfeeding Initiation and Continuation

Center for Human Research Services, University at Albany

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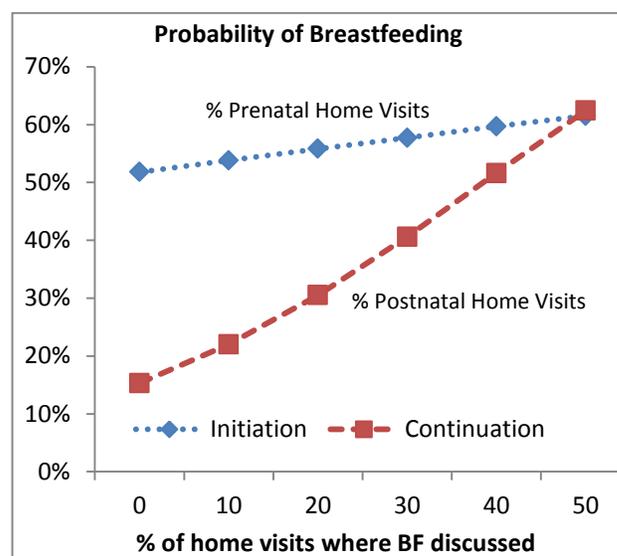
Healthy Families New York Home Visiting Program: Pre- and Postnatal Discussions Foster Breastfeeding Initiation and Continuation

Promoting optimal maternal and child health are primary goals of Healthy Families New York (HFNY). Breastfeeding is associated with many positive outcomes for infants and mothers, including protection against obesity, diabetes, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), asthma, eczema, and colitis for infants, and faster post-pregnancy weight loss and reduced risk of some reproductive cancers for mothers. Longer duration of breastfeeding is associated with greater benefits. The goal of the following analysis was to gain a better understanding of HFNY's impact on the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding.

The study sample consisted of 1,490 families receiving services through HFNY who had their first prenatal home visit in 2010 or 2011, and who had 6-month follow-up data. These cases were examined for initiation of breastfeeding at the child's birth. The 1,033 cases (69.3%ⁱ) where breastfeeding was initiated were further examined to assess whether breastfeeding continued (exclusively or with other feeding) for at least the first 6 months of the child's life. A total of 439 mothers (29%) breastfed at least 6 months.

Analyses were conducted to examine the factors associated with breastfeeding initiation and continuation for at least six months.

Aspects of the HFNY program were found to be significantly associated with both the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding. This effect was independent of other factors that are known to influence breastfeeding, such as age, education, and race/ethnicity and for mother's assessment stress score. Breastfeeding initiation increases when a higher proportion of prenatal home visits include breastfeeding discussions. Similarly, the likelihood of breastfeeding continuation increases with each additional home visit following the baby's birth and with the proportion of postnatal home visits that included a discussion of breastfeeding.



These findings suggest that frequent discussions about breastfeeding, both pre- and postnatally, are very important for encouraging breastfeeding initiation and continuation. Home visitors should expand their efforts to keep families engaged in home visits and provide

breastfeeding education and support as often as possible during visits. When working with families, home visitors should also consider the various factors that affect women's decisions to breastfeed (e.g. age, race, stress score, education).

Healthy Families New York

Healthy Families New York is a home visiting program targeted to meet the needs of highly stressed families with multiple risk factors. HFNY works to support positive parent-child bonding; promote optimal child and family health, development, and safety; enhance parental self-sufficiency; and prevent child abuse and neglect. During the prenatal period, home visitors

provide bi-weekly visits to ensure mothers achieve the optimal pregnancy experience. Based on its rigorous research, the RAND Corporation has designated HFNY as a “proven” practice (www.promisingpractices.net). For more information on HFNY, please visit www.healthyfamiliesnewyork.org

ⁱ Breastfeeding initiation for HFNY participants varied by maternal ethnicity, age, and education. Hispanic mothers had high rates of initiation (84%), while those under 18 and those without a high school diploma had low rates (61% and 66%, respectively). The HFNY subgroup initiation rates were higher than or similar to rates for the same groups reported nationally for children born 2004-2008 (CDC, 2010).

The Center for Human Services Research (CHSR) has been contracted by the New York State Office of Child and Family Services to evaluate the effectiveness of the HFNY program. CHSR is located within the School of Social Welfare at the University at Albany. CHSR has over 20 years of experience conducting evaluation research, designing information systems, and informing policy and program development for a broad spectrum of agencies that serve vulnerable populations. CHSR areas of inquiry cover a wide range of topics including children and family services, children's mental health, education and early childhood development, health behavior and services, youth development and juvenile justice. Characteristic of all CHSR studies is a focus on rigorous methods, strong stakeholder involvement, and the dissemination of timely, accurate and non-partisan information to guide best practices in service delivery. For more information, visit www.albany.edu/chsr