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HHS announces \$224 million to support evidence-based home visiting programs to help parents and children

WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today announced \$224 million to help at-risk families voluntarily receive home visits from nurses and social workers to improve maternal and child health, child development, school readiness, economic self-sufficiency, and child abuse prevention. As part of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program, these grants are funded by the Affordable Care Act and are awarded to state agencies that applied for the grants in 49 states across the country.

“Home visiting programs play a critical role in the nation’s efforts to help children get off to a strong start. Parenting is a tough job, and helping parents succeed pays big dividends in a child’s well-being and healthy development,” said HHS Secretary Sebelius.

Both the formula and competitive grants awarded today will be used by state agencies to support home visiting programs that bring nurses, social workers, or other health care professionals to meet with at-risk families that agree to meet with them in their homes. They work with families to evaluate their circumstances, help parents gain the skills they need to succeed in promoting healthy development in their children, and connect families to the kinds of help that can make a real difference in a child’s health, development, and ability to learn.

Research has shown that home visiting programs can improve outcomes for children and families, including improving maternal and child health, reducing child maltreatment, increasing parental employment, and improving the rate at which children reach developmental milestones. HHS undertook an exhaustive review of the research evidence on different home visiting programs to identify the models that have been shown to work.

“These investments will go a long way toward keeping our kids healthy and building robust early childhood systems across the country,” said Mary Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N., Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration.

Under the MIECHV program, states must use at least three-quarters of the funding provided to implement one or more of these evidence-based programs. The program also supports continued innovation by allowing up to 25 percent of funding to carry out and evaluate promising new approaches. Formula grant awards totaling \$124 million were awarded to 55 eligible agencies including 49 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and America Samoa.

A total of \$100 million in competitive funding was awarded to those states that have sufficiently demonstrated the interest and capacity to expand and/or to enhance the development of their home visiting efforts.

• **Expansion Grants:** Approximately \$66 million was awarded to nine states and jurisdictions that have already made significant progress towards implementing a high-quality home visiting program as part of a comprehensive, early childhood system. These states will serve as models to the rest of the nation of how to build a robust home visiting program integrated into other efforts designed to ensure that children get off to a good start.

• **Development Grants:** Approximately \$34 million was awarded to 13 states and jurisdictions that currently have modest home visiting programs and want to build on existing efforts. States that successfully complete development grants can compete for future expansion grants.

Reflecting the multi-faceted nature of successful home visiting programs, HHS' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) collaborates with HRSA on the implementation of the MIECHV program. Taken together, the two agencies bring expertise in early learning and development, the prevention and identification of child maltreatment, the improvement of maternal and child health outcomes, and family engagement.

“Helping children and families thrive requires a multi-faceted approach and home visiting is a critical component that can strengthen families and put children on solid footing,” said George Sheldon, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Administration for Children and Families.

The program is part of the Obama Administration's strong commitment to invest in what works, including evidence-based approaches to improve outcomes for American's most vulnerable children and families.

Lists of grant awardees are available at: <http://www.hrsa.gov/about/news/2011tables/110922homevisiting.html>

For more information on HRSA's MIECHV program, please visit mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting/.

To learn more about the Affordable Care Act, visit www.HealthCare.gov.

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), part of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the primary Federal agency for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated, or medically vulnerable. For more information about HRSA and its programs, visit www.hrsa.gov.

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