



Family
Visiting

Helpful tips for making a family visiting referral

The Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) offers family visiting services to expecting parents and those with children under age three. We try to enroll families as early in pregnancy as possible — because the earlier we connect with them, the more support and services they can receive.

If you know a family who might benefit from family visiting, refer! Call our Resource and Referral Specialist at **401-222-4609**. We'll help families choose the program that's right for them.

Who can benefit from family visiting?

Our programs are particularly helpful to:

- expecting parents and parents with children under age three
- young parents with low income and low education levels
- parents and parents-to-be who have multiple challenges and stressors (single parenthood, substance abuse, homelessness, etc.)

Your referral matters.

Research shows that at-risk families are more likely to accept a family visit if it is suggested by a doctor or another trusted professional.

What are the benefits of family visiting?

Our evidence-based programs demonstrate improvements in important maternal and child health outcomes:

- **lower rates** of child maltreatment, preterm birth, substance use, unintentional injuries, and emergency room usage
- **higher rates** of breastfeeding, maternal depression screening, prenatal and well-baby care, infant immunization, school readiness and achievement, and economic self-sufficiency

Family visitors provide culturally-competent, family-centered support that helps families succeed. They offer:

- assistance that can make a difference in a child's health, development, and ability to learn
- help for parents who are trying to manage raising a family
- health education and guidance on preventive health practices
- maternal depression, domestic violence, and child wellness screenings
- connections to healthcare services and support for families to keep appointments



What are the family visiting programs called?

A variety of evidence-based programs are available to address each family's needs and wants:

- **Healthy Families America** – helps build strong parent-child connections
- **Nurse-Family Partnership** – helps improve pregnancy outcomes and infant care
- **Parents as Teachers** – helps improve early childhood development
- **First Connections** – short-term, non-evidence-based support for immediate needs

A family may enroll in a short-term or long-term program (until their children reach age three).

Who are family visitors? Where do visits take place?

Family visitors are trained nurses, social workers, community health workers, and other professionals. They are trained to connect with families in culturally sensitive ways, and to help families identify and achieve their goals.

Visits take place wherever the family feels most comfortable: their home, a community center, at a WIC or agency office, etc.

How to talk about family visiting and make a referral.

The way you present the idea of family visiting is crucial to a family's interest in participating. Talk about family visiting as something a family might find helpful, not as something they "should" do.

- **Explain why you recommend family visiting, and share some of the benefits.** "This is a busy time for you. You have a lot going on. I'd like to mention a free program that provides mothers and families with extra support and resources. Thousands of families in Rhode Island take advantage of this service. May I tell you more?"
- **Emphasize that services are free and the location is flexible... at home, in the neighborhood, at the provider's office, etc.** "The program is called Family Visiting. It is free. A trained professional meets with you and your baby, wherever it is convenient for you — at home or in your community, anywhere you like. You can get together regularly, and they can help you with your busy life. They support you in helping your baby grow and develop into a healthy, happy person."
- **Offer examples of how family visiting can help address specific concerns voiced by the family.** "I know you're worried about keeping your baby safe while she's sleeping. There's a free program called Family Visiting that can help with this and answer any questions you may have. They provide lots of other services you may find helpful, too."
- **Ask questions that will evoke the parent's understanding and motivation. Affirm and summarize the parent's responses.** "How do you think this may help you and your baby? Can you think of some ways that this might help?"
- **Explain that your referral will set the process in motion, and that a family visitor will contact them to schedule a meeting. Ask for the parent's preferred method for follow-up contact.**

To refer a family, call our Resource and Referral Specialist at **401-222-4609**. We will follow up with you to let you know if your client enrolls in a program.

To learn more about Family Visiting, see **FamilyVisitingRI.org**