

**Presentation to Wisconsin Legislative Council  
Special Committee on Strengthening WI Families  
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**Presented By:**

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**Talking Points**

**What is the Early Years Home Visitation Outcomes Project?**

- The Early Years Home Visitation Outcomes Project is an initiative to measure common outcomes across various home visitation program curricula and model types in Wisconsin.
- The Outcomes Project is sponsored by: Children's Hospital and Health System's Child Abuse Prevention Fund, Parents Plus of Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Division of Public Health.
- Eight home visiting programs located in urban and rural communities are piloting the established outcome measurement framework. The program models using this framework include Healthy Families, Parents as Teachers and a variety of hybrid models that use multiple sources for content. These eight sites are working with over 1400 families and have voluntarily agreed to measure the selected outcomes for a five year period.

**Why is this project important?**

- The Outcomes Project brings together leaders from various disciplines to establish quality standards and evaluate the measurable impacts of home visiting in Wisconsin.
- Prior to the Outcomes Project, Family Foundations and the research based work of the University Extension, home visiting programs were working in isolation.
  - Home visiting programs implemented varied and often limited evaluation methods.
  - Difficult to effectively evaluate the field of home visitation in Wisconsin state due to varied models.
  - No prior forum for programs to collaboratively develop best practice and evaluation standards.
  - Funding entities began to require programs to demonstrate their impact, often requesting outcome measurement.

**What does the Outcomes Project measure?**

- Outcomes selected for measurement are:
  - Parents interact with their children in ways that enhance children's development and early learning.  
This outcome focuses on measuring the parent child relationship and the quality and quantity of stimulation that is essential to promoting optimal growth.

- Children are healthy.  
This outcome measures the aspects of health reasonably impacted by the home visitor: access to health care, nutrition education and support, up to date immunizations, well child exams: All of which are important ways to keep a child healthy.
- Children live in a safe environment.  
This outcome aims to prevent unintentional injury in the home assessing home safety, tracking corrective action through education and follow-up to identified safety concerns.
- Families access formal and informal support networks.  
This outcome flows from the body of research that indicates when there are adequate social supports, parents interact with their babies in positive ways.
- Children achieve optimal milestones in development and early learning.  
Periodic first level screening is essential to early identification and intervention of potential developmental delays. With this outcome, we conduct screenings at key developmental timeframes in the child's life to identify potential developmental delays and link families to early intervention providers for further assessment and intervention.
- Children with developmental delays receive appropriate intervention services.  
This outcome measures the timely and appropriate linking of families to other community resources and supports. One example is referral and follow-up to such programs as Birth to Three.

### **How did the Outcomes Project select these outcomes?**

The outcomes developed were deemed reasonable for home visitors to impact through the course of their work and met the following criteria:

- Common across multiple home visiting programs
- Critical to healthy families (research demonstrated their impact on families)
- Reasonable to measure
- Useable for decision making and program improvement
- Consistent with "best practice."

### **How has the field of home visitation responded to the work of the Outcomes Project?**

- Participating pilot sites indicate:
  - They have come to accept and value quality data collection for program improvement.
  - They are now collaborating with other home visiting programs and using standardized and validated evaluation tools.
  - They now have consistent training on use of assessment tools and can track their progress over time.
  - They are challenged to provide the best programming based on research.
  - They have outcomes results that have provided for increased funding and a reputation for quality.
  - They have been able to establish collaborative relationships within their community.

- The work of the Outcomes Project has received state-wide and national attention.
  - The Harvard Family Research Project has cited our work as an important evaluation to watch.
  - The National Home Visit Forum, comprised of representatives from the six national home visiting models established in 1999 to explore possible areas of mutual need and interest and establish cross model cooperation; invited members of the Outcomes Project to present our work. We have been able to accomplish in our state what the national forum had been striving for: Specifically, to strengthen the capacity to assess and improve home visitation services by developing the strategic multi-model approach that links research to practice, training and model development.
  - The Outcomes Project has been awarded a three year \$397,000 grant from the Wisconsin Partnership Fund for a Healthy Future by the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health to automate our current manual data collection process.

### **What impact has the Outcomes Project had in Wisconsin?**

- Created a solid foundation for a collaborative infrastructure to support home visitation by building on existing programs. This infrastructure of collaborative relationships provides:
  - Training and technical assistance to programs based on best practice – The Outcomes Project designed a comprehensive training program for the administration of research based screening and assessment tools for the field of home visitation. Through a partnership with the University of Wisconsin Extension – Family Living Programs, over 350 home visitors have been trained to date. The training programs are not limited to the Outcomes Project pilot sites. Each session is available to all Wisconsin home visiting programs.
  - Provides support to home visiting programs to effectively evaluate their programs and make program improvements based on quality data.
- Collaboratively designed a system for evaluation of home visiting in Wisconsin without additional state funding, by promoting a model-free outcome measurement system that allows programs to use the model/curriculum that best meets their community needs.
- Aligned existing home visiting program outcomes and their measures across home visiting funding streams.
  - Key benchmarks for the Family Foundations and Empowering Families of Milwaukee home visiting programs are based on the research and outcomes work of the Outcomes Project.
  - Through the work of this collaborative initiative, these evaluation measures are being consistently applied to the field of home visitation regardless of their varied funding streams.
  - The Outcomes Measurement framework being implemented by the Outcomes Project is also proving to meet the needs of many local United Ways, private foundations and federal grant evaluation requirements.
- Developed a partnership with the Wisconsin Division of Public Health allowing pilot sites to collect and analyze their outcome data and provide a "data home" for the Outcomes Project level data at no cost to the approved programs/agencies. The use of SPHERE (Secure Public Health Electronic Records Environment) provides a secure information system to protect the privacy and rights of clients while building on a promising data collection and analysis infrastructure for Wisconsin's home visiting programs.

### **Does the Outcomes Project have plans to expand beyond the current pilot sites?**

- After completion of the pilot phase - 2010, the Outcomes Project plans for state-wide expansion as funding permits.

### **What recommendations does the Outcomes Project have for policy makers?**

- It is possible to build on the Wisconsin's long history of local control and effectively evaluate home visiting programs based on their results. The direction for future growth of home visitation will not be found by simply mandating a single model, but rather by building on what we already know is a promising infrastructure to strengthen Wisconsin families.
- When supported within the context of larger systems founded in best practice and quality improvement, home visitation can take the face of many models and still be deemed effective. State leaders need to continue to support data collection and careful planning. Home visitation providers need to commit to quality improvement by modifying their implementation as findings of their impacts emerge.
- Wisconsin can be well positioned for new federal dollars such as Education Begins At Home Act by supporting initiatives that build upon and promote collaboration among existing quality home visitation programs, identify gaps in services, provide training and technical assistance for quality staff, implement outcome measurement and provide for open communication between the various home visitation and early childhood programs.

### **Key Resources and References:**

Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago: Home Visitation: Assessing Progress, Managing Expectations. 2006, Deb Daro. [http://www.chapinhall.org/article\\_abstract.aspx?ar=1438](http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1438)

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

United Way of America: Outcome Measurement Resource Network. <http://www.unitedway.org/outcomes/>

Harvard Family Research Project, Evaluation Exchange, Volume X, No. 4 Winter 2004/2005 Evaluations to Watch: Promoting Quality Outcomes Measurement: A Home Visitation Case. <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue28/eval3.html>

The Early Years Home Visitation Outcomes Project of Wisconsin. <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/homevisit/evaluation/index.cfm>

Information on the Education Begins at Home Act can be found at:  
<http://thomas.loc.gov/>  
<http://www.parentsasteachers.org/site/pp.asp?c=ekIRLcMZJxE&b=504387>

### **Presenter Contact Information:**

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## The Early Years Home Visitation Outcomes Project of Wisconsin Pilot Sites Directory – 2007

Organization	Program	Target Population	Curriculum Used	Steering Committee Member
1. Children's Service Society of Wisconsin	Start Right*	Universal – all families with a newborn in Marathon Co.	Growing Great Kids	Sandy Ellis 715-848-1457
2. Exchange Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Inc	Welcome Baby	First time parents: prenatal to two	Parents As Teachers	Kathleen Nolan 608-241-3434
3. Family Resource Centers of Sheboygan County	Parents as Teachers	Universal – targeted to first time parents	Parents as Teachers	Mary Jo Tittl 920-892-6706
4. Family Services of Northeast WI – Brown County	Healthy Families* Early Head Start Prenatal Care Coordination	Income and/or at risk eligibility requirements, Pregnant teens	San Angelo Curriculum, Partners for a Healthy Baby, Growing Birth to Three, Baby Basics	Polly Snodgrass 920-436-4416 ext 101
5. Family Services of Northeast WI – Door County	Healthy Families* Early Head Start	Income and/or at risk eligibility requirements	San Angelo Curriculum, Partners for a Healthy Baby, Growing Birth to Three	Polly Snodgrass 920-436-4416 ext 101
6. Healthy Families of Waukesha Co.	Healthy Families	First time parents who are at risk for child abuse and neglect – families are referred to program and seen birth to five	Healthy Families	Barbara Vaughn Peterson 414-430-9888
7. UW-Extension	Healthy Beginnings Portage Co*	Universal to first time parents	Multiple (PAT, Healthy Families America, PIPE – Partners in Parenting Education, WI Nutrition Education Program)	Jan Piltz 715-346-1664
8. Lakeshore CAP/Family Resources	a) Family Support Program*  b) Family Visiting Program	Income and/or at risk eligibility requirements and 1 <sup>st</sup> time parents in Manitowoc Co (birth to 5)  Universal Access in Manitowoc Co (birth to 5)	Growing Birth to Three	Colleen Homb 920-686-8731

\*Denotes Family Foundations site