

Illinois Home Visiting Innovations

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Illinois has created learning laboratories for testing pilots and demonstration projects, in addition to providing valuable trainings, tools and approaches that can be applied to strengthen the state's home visiting system as a whole.

This document highlights current home visiting pilots, innovations, and demonstration projects in Illinois supported by funding or technical assistance from the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Early Childhood (IDHS-DEC). Some of these projects receive state funds, some receive federal Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funds, and others are not directly funded by IDHS-DEC but receive technical assistance or other advisory support from IDHS-DEC.

Serving Priority Populations

Home Visiting for Homeless Families (HVHF)*

Through high-quality home visiting services, the HVHF project seeks to improve the developmental trajectories of children who are unhoused. This includes improvements in developmental screenings, well-child visits, and economic self-sufficiency of the family. The goals of the project are to remove barriers to home visiting for families experiencing homelessness, ensure home visiting is more responsive to the needs of these families, inform practice and policy change, and increase integration and alignment across service systems for housing and home visiting. The project uses three different approaches to deliver home visiting services to unhoused families: (1) home visiting programs train all of their home visitors and assign a few families experiencing homelessness to each home visitor; (2) home visiting programs hire a home visitor whose caseload only includes families experiencing homelessness; and (3) homeless service providers hire a home visitor to deliver home visiting services to families in shelters.

Start Early provides oversight of the project and has engaged several local home visiting programs and homeless service providers predominantly in the City of Chicago. The programs involved in HVHF communicate regularly to coordinate referrals and services. In addition, there is an advisory group that meets quarterly to discuss systems issues and new ideas.

Illinois Pregnant and Parenting Youth in Care Home Visiting (I-PPYC-HV)*

I-PPYC-HV provides pregnant and parenting youth in child welfare care with access to voluntary home visiting services that are provided by programs throughout the state. The project's goals are to: promote nurturing parent-child relationships and healthy child development; enhance family functioning by reducing the risk of abuse and building protective factors; break the intergenerational cycle of abuse, neglect and trauma; increase coordination between the child welfare and home visiting systems; and create a model that can be replicated throughout Illinois. Brightpoint facilitates enrollment in home visiting once eligible children are identified by the Teen Parent Service Network. Chapin Hall conducted an [evaluation of the pilot](#) including both an implementation study and an outcome study.

Intact Families and Home Visiting Initiative***

Based on lessons learned from the I-PPYC-HV project, the Erikson Institute - Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Early Childhood Project is connecting DCFS Intact Families with voluntary home visiting services. Erikson has a team of HV Specialists who work with DCFS case workers to refer families to home visiting, who are involved with Intact services who are pregnant or parenting young children ages 0-3.

Cook County Jail Initiative**

Start Early, the Cook County Sheriff's Office, and six community-based organizations have partnered to bring doula and home visiting services to pregnant and parenting mothers who are involved with the justice system. By beginning these services while women are incarcerated and continuing to provide long-term support when they are back in the community, the project aims to strengthen the parent-child relationship to improve the developmental trajectories of children and support maternal well-being. The project is currently exploring expansion to the Decatur and Logan Correctional Centers.

Moving Beyond Depression**

Moving Beyond Depression (MBD) is an in-home Cognitive Behavioral Treatment (CBT) model that uses trained therapists to implement a manualized treatment approach with women who have been diagnosed with depression. The MBD approach consists of 16 weekly sessions that are delivered in participants' homes (or virtually, in some circumstances). MBD is being implemented in selected home visiting programs with oversight and training by Start Early, and with technical assistance as needed from the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, which developed the MBD model.

Universal Newborn Supports

Family Connects Illinois (FC IL)*

Based upon the principle that all families need some degree of support, a Universal Newborn Support System (UNSS) has been established in the City of Chicago and in Peoria* and Stephenson Counties*, using the Family Connects model. (The City of Chicago is operating Family Connects with non-MIECHV funds.)

Guiding principles include the following:

- A universal strategy reduces stigma.
- Conducting an assessment in the home increases the likelihood that families will be appropriately referred and will accept such assistance.
- There is no one strategy for supporting parents of young children, and every agency and program has a role to play in building the system.

Through birthing hospitals, parents are offered a nurse home visit to assess the health of both the birthing parent and the newborn to enhance maternal and child health and wellbeing. Based on each family's level of resources and needs, assistance can include information on newborn care, assistance with breastfeeding, assistance finding childcare, referrals to parent support groups, and referrals to high-intensity services such as home visiting. For more information, visit [Family Connects Illinois](#).

Collaboration and Coordination

Coordinated Intake*

Coordinated Intake (CI) is a collaborative process that provides pregnant and parenting families with a simplified point of entry to home visiting programs within a community. In selected communities, trained Coordinated Intake workers serve as a hub for home visiting, assessing families' needs, referring them to home visiting programs, and tracking referral outcomes. In FY25, IDHS-funded Coordinated Intake collaboratives received 2,777 referrals, with 91% (2,514 referrals) successfully routed to home visiting programs, resulting in 870 enrollments in home visiting. For more information, please visit [Home Visiting Coordinated Intake – iGrow](#).

Connect Home Visiting Chicago*

Connect Home Visiting Chicago (formerly ConnecTeen) is a coordinated intake and referral hub housed at Lurie Children's Hospital that connects pregnant people and families with young children, including pregnant and parenting students at Chicago Public Schools, to a network of home visiting providers across Chicagoland. The initiative strengthens access to early childhood and prenatal health supports through system coordination, cross-sector partnerships, and direct engagement with schools and community-based organizations. In addition to referral services, Connect Home Visiting Chicago offers voluntary weekly support groups for parents of children ages 0–3, promoting parent well-being and early relational health.

Rush Home Visiting Initiative***

The Rush Home Visiting Initiative continues to navigate families to home visiting and doula services on Chicago's West Side, and has evolved under BRIDGES, a Rush partnership with Community Organizing on Family Issues (COFI) to enhance the system of care for pregnant and parenting families impacted by trauma on Chicago's West Side. Funded by the IL Children's Healthcare Foundation, BRIDGES convenes COFI parent leaders and local agencies supporting parent-infant and early childhood mental health to build relationships, share services and resources, and innovate from a lens that is family-centered and trauma-informed.

Building the Capacity of Home Visiting Programs

Relational Violence/Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)*

Start Early's training "Addressing IPV – Using the Relationship Assessment Tool and Universal Education in Home Visiting", formerly known as "Futures Without Violence", addresses domestic, dating, and sexual violence. These are costly and pervasive problems in the U.S., causing victims, as well as witnesses and bystanders, in every community to suffer incalculable pain and loss. This course is geared towards preparing early childhood professionals to use their role with individuals and families to acknowledge and support them in developing strategies to stay safe. The course includes how to use the Relationship Assessment Tool and universal education approaches to support conversations and understanding of healthy relationships.

Maternal Depression (Mothers and Babies)*

Led by researchers at Northwestern University, [Mothers and Babies](#) is a program that promotes healthy mood management by teaching pregnant individuals and new parents how to effectively respond to stress in their lives through increasing the frequency of thoughts and behaviors that lead to positive mood states. Designed as a perinatal depression prevention, Mothers and Babies attempt to modify specific risk factors associated with perinatal depression—limited social support, lack of pleasant activities, and harmful thought patterns. Mothers

and Babies can be delivered as a group intervention or as a one-on-one intervention. To date, approximately 50 HV programs in Illinois are using Mothers and Babies.

Mental Health (Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation--IECMHC)*

IECMHC is a nationally recognized practice for home visiting programs. In 2021, the funders of Illinois home visiting released a [joint statement](#) in support of IECMHC as a critical proactive support for home visiting and other early childhood programs in Illinois.

The goal of the Illinois Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation model is to strengthen the home visiting workforce by building the capacity of program staff to promote healthy social-emotional development within the families and communities in which children live and thrive. This programmatic consultation model is based on Infant Mental Health principles, focusing on relationship-based, culturally responsive, reflective practice. Successful consultation relies on the collaboration between the Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, Program Supervisor(s), and Program Staff. It maintains a systemic approach with an aim for a program-wide impact through a focus on multiple issues that affect the overall quality and equity of the program. For more information about IECMHC in Illinois, please visit [this webpage](#).

Community Readiness and Capacity-Building*

IDHS is funding Illinois Action for Children to provide capacity-building assistance to two communities around potential future expansion or coordination of services: South Suburban Cook County and Cass-Morgan Counties.

Home Visiting Program Quality

Home Visiting Program Quality Rating Tool—(HVPQRT) and Home Visiting Rating Scales (HOVRS-3)*

With State and MIECHV funding, Chapin Hall uses the HVPQRT, a cross-model tool, to assess the quality of all home visiting programs directly funded by IDHS. The HVPQRT assesses quality across multiple dimensions, including home visiting staff, service delivery, program characteristics, program management, and progress monitoring. Chapin Hall uses the HOVRS-3 to assess how home visitors engage with families during home visits, how they facilitate positive parent-child interactions, and how caregivers and the children respond to the visit.

For more information on IDHS-DEC home visiting, contact DHS.HomeVisiting@illinois.gov or visit www.igrowillinois.org.

**An asterisk denotes innovations and projects that are funded in part or in full by the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV).*

***A double asterisk denotes innovations and projects that are funded in part or in full by IDHS-DEC state funds.*

****A triple asterisk denotes innovations and projects that IDHS-DEC supports with technical assistance, advisory support, and/or other ways that do not involve direct funding.*

MIECHV is a federal home visiting funding stream that has enabled Illinois to expand and improve home visiting services to families, as well as to support a variety of innovative projects through funding and/or partnerships. Established in 2010, the goal of MIECHV is to improve outcomes for pregnant women and families, particularly those in communities that are considered at-risk. The MIECHV funding provided to Illinois has been a vital catalyst in the state's home visiting and early childhood systems.

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