



Office of Children and Family Services

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

SHEILA J. POOLE
Acting Commissioner

March 23, 2018

Darlene Ward
Welfare Research Inc.
14 Columbia Circle
Suite 104
Albany, NY 12203

Dear Ms.  Ward,

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has long recognized the tremendous impact that Home Visiting programs can have on strengthening families and preventing child abuse and has made significant investments in the Healthy Families NY (HFNY) program since the program's inception in 1995. At that time, there were ten home visiting programs in the following counties: Bronx, Manhattan, Kings, Ulster, Rensselaer, Steuben, Chemung, Erie, Albany and Madison. In 2000, HFNY experienced tremendous growth when OCFS added 18 new programs and in 2007, HFNY grew again by another 10 programs. OCFS also receives federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funding through an Memorandum of Understanding with the New York State Department of Health (DOH). OCFS worked jointly with DOH to expand evidence based home visiting programs in New York using MIECHV funds and currently supports expansions of eight existing Healthy Families programs and three new programs. As noted in the panel's report, HFNY is now the most prevalent home visiting program in the state.

While HFNY is located throughout the state, it is not currently available in every county that has need. Recognizing that many families can benefit by the support and education the program provides, OCFS has utilized various funding streams to support this program in recent years. In 2016, approximately \$1.0 million was reallocated from savings in Title IV-E adoption assistance delinking funds to support HFNY home visiting programs. OCFS issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) and expanded four programs to unserved areas of the state, including the severely underserved counties of northern New York. In addition to these expansions, a new program started in late 2016 and began operation in 2017.

In 2017, OCFS supported the continued expansion of HFNY programs and establishment of new programs through additional adoption delinking funds and reallocation of MIECHV funds. This resulted in the expansion of one program and four new HFNY programs. In 2018, OCFS will continue to increase the number of families served through HFNY by using available Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds. This will allow for the expansion of six high performing programs in addition to one new program. These recent expansions will increase HFNY's ability to serve up to an additional 760 families and will result in a total of 44 HFNY programs operating statewide.

In addition to increasing the number of home visiting programs, OCFS has also invested significant resources in evaluating the quality, performance and effectiveness of HFNY. OCFS is also participating in various quality improvement efforts related to MIECHV funding. OCFS currently uses two mechanisms to look at quality and effectiveness of the program; a comprehensive, ongoing assessment of program quality and service delivery and a longitudinal randomized control trial (RCT). OCFS, in collaboration with the Center for Human Research, initiated a longitudinal RCT of HFNY in 2000. Women who met the assessment criteria for HFNY were randomly assigned to either an intervention group that was offered HFNY services or a control group that was given information and referrals to appropriate services. Baseline and follow-up data were collected for the 1,173

women in the HFNY program and control groups at the time of the child's birth, and first, second, third, and seventh birthdays (with various levels of retention) from in-depth interviews with mothers, child welfare and public assistance administrative records, the HFNY data management system, and videotaped observations of parent-child interactions. The target children were also interviewed for the first time when they were approximately seven years old and their first-grade school records were requested directly from their schools.

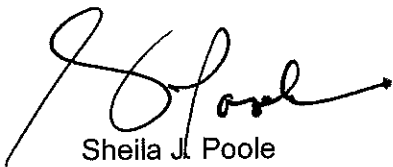
To date, the RCT has demonstrated that HFNY is effective in improving birth outcomes, reducing child abuse and neglect, supporting positive parenting, and improving children's educational outcomes. HFNY strives to enroll families in the program prior to any involvement in the child welfare system, however, some participant families have subsequent children and enroll after they have been known to child welfare. For these families, HFNY shows a 50 percent reduction in subsequent confirmed child protective reports after seven years for mothers as compared to those families who did not receive the service. Detailed findings from the HFNY RCT can be found at <http://www.healthyfamiliesnewyork.org/Research/publications.htm>

OCFS is also funding a 15-year follow-up study which is currently underway. In-depth interviews with mothers and their now adolescent children will assess outcomes such as maternal life course, child abuse and neglect, parenting practices, family conflict, educational experiences, youth behaviors, delinquent/criminal activity, and health and access to health care. Administrative database searches will be conducted to obtain child maltreatment reports; foster care services use; food stamps and public assistance benefits; birth records; juvenile justice experiences; school records and criminal justice involvement. Data collection and preliminary analyses are expected to be completed in 2019. As with prior results, OCFS uses information gained in the RCT to make improvements or provide enhancements to the model to better support families and improve service delivery.

HFNY is guided by the system's Central Administration partners that include OCFS, which provides funding, oversight and evaluation; Prevent Child Abuse New York, which provides training and staff development; and the Center for Human Services Research, which helps with evaluation and management information system management. HFNY is a Healthy Families of America (HFA) accredited multi-site system which allows all HFNY programs and the Central Administration team to achieve accreditation status. Several members of the Central Administration team sit on national committees providing technical assistance to the national system on matters of evaluation, accreditation, policy development and system enhancement.

HFNY has been recognized by the national governing body as a leader in the HFA movement. HFNY has also received several national distinctions, including a designation from the RAND Corporation's Promising Practice Network as a "Proven Program" indicating that the program has demonstrated effectiveness using extremely rigorous scientific standards. OCFS fully supports the Panel's recommendation and will continue to look for funding opportunities to expand HFNY, given its track record of success for preventing child abuse and neglect.

Sincerely,



Sheila J. Poole
Acting Commissioner