



The Texas Home Visitation Consortium

Keeping families safe, healthy and together

Visiting Your Legislator!

Below is a step-by-step guide to help you through scheduling an appointment with your legislator to advocate for home visiting programs:

1. Identify your state representative or senator (and other Texas elected officials) by going to <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/Home.aspx>. Enter your address and then hit "Submit." Then, under the "State Elected Officials" section, you should see the name of one Senator and one Representative. These are your legislators who you should contact.
2. Call the offices of your Representative and Senator, and identify yourself as a constituent. Ask to speak to the scheduler. Ask if the Legislator or a staff member (meeting with staff is okay!) has 15 minutes for a meeting (if you would like to meet in person), or if a staff member has 5 minutes to speak to you over the phone about home visiting programs in their district. **Also, you may ask them if they are interested in doing a "ride-along" with a home visitor on an actual home visit! Many legislators have done this and it is a great way to get them to see your work first hand.**
3. Let them know that you support Family Support Home Visiting. You may use the following talking points:
 - **Define Home Visiting:** Home visiting programs are family support, voluntary, two-generational programs that work most oftentimes with at-risk families with young children (typically 0-5) in their home environment. When families are provided with access to resources and education in their homes from health care providers, social workers and other professionals, they receive the help they need to become more resilient, better able to handle stress, and more confident raising their children. As a result, children are able to live safer and healthier lives, which sets them up on a trajectory where they are on track to grow and learn.
 - **Describe your home visiting program and its impact in your community:**
 - Let your legislator know numbers of families, children and parents that you reach in your community
 - Inspirational and touching stories that have happened because of your program
 - Briefly touch on some of the great **outcomes** your program has demonstrated directly in your community. Pull these outcomes ahead of time and be able to provide numbers and statistics in case your legislator requests more detailed information.
 - **If making a legislative funding request let them know of the specific request – the Texas Home Visiting Consortium can provide further details on funding amounts if you are reaching out to legislators specifically to support a funding request on behalf of the HVC. Please contact Sophie Phillips at sophie@texprotects.org or 214-442-1672 for more details.**
 - Current home visiting funding is insufficient

- The state of Texas has the capacity to serve only 10% (21,000+) of the 205,000+ families in highest need. These are families with children under 6 living in extreme poverty – making less than \$11,525 for a family of four.
 - The Texas Home Visiting Consortium is requesting \$_____ additional dollars from the State to invest in evidence-based and promising programs, such as _____ (mention your program), which is a part of the Texas Home Visiting Program currently under the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (but being moved to the Department of Family and Protective Services Prevention and Early Intervention division as a result of HHSC consolidation in the 2015/84th Legislative Session).
 - **Ask for their support.**
 - The additional funding request could serve an estimated _____ more families with home visiting services.
- **More talking points can be found below!**
4. **Follow-up** your conversation with an email or more preferably a hand-written note, thanking them for their time and support of your program in their district! **It is also a great idea to include pictures or other tangible items from your program. Also, when you follow up, please be sure to let them know you are there as a resource to them. Be willing to provide them with additional information that they request or that you think they would find beneficial.**
 5. Again, you may ask them if they are interested in doing a “ride-along” with a home visitor. This is a great way to have them remember your program and see your work directly with families.

Additional Talking Points on Home Visiting

WHAT IS HOME VISITING?

- Evidence-based voluntary, home-based parent mentoring programs, also known as home visiting, match parents with trained professionals to provide information and support during pregnancy and throughout their child’s early years. There are several different home visiting programs operating in Texas (13), each with a unique set of defined goals and families that they serve. A continuum of home visiting programs is necessary to prevent the myriad of lifelong negative outcomes associated with trauma and adverse experiences in early childhood.
- Some home visiting program models partner with expectant moms to encourage behaviors that dramatically decrease their chances of having a premature, low birth-weight or substance-exposed baby. Other programs work with children before they enter kindergarten to increase their school readiness. There are a number of programs in Texas to meet the individual and unique needs of all families (Can talk about the referral system).
- Texas has established the Texas Home Visiting Program (currently run by the Health and Human Services Commission but which is now transferring over to the Department of Family and Protective Services as the result of Senate Bill 200 from the 84th Regular Legislative Session, otherwise known as HHSC Consolidation).

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Parents are the most important people in their children’s lives. They are the first and best teachers. Programs like home visiting equip oftentimes young mothers and families with the tools and skills they need to do that job as effectively as possible.
- Early experiences, including prenatal, establish either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for the learning, health and behavior that follow. They influence whether children see the world as

responsive, reliable and trustworthy – or frightening, unreliable, dangerous. These form the basis for children’s ability to learn, build relationships and function as productive adults.ⁱ

- Even the most loving parents, faced with major challenges and difficult circumstances, may need knowledge and help to provide the best start for their child.
- Many children grow up in a “toxic” environment which is detrimental to their health and well-being as adults. Research has shown that children who experience child abuse and neglect or other adverse childhood experiences or trauma are more likely to suffer from a range of negative health outcomes as adults including, including arthritis, asthma and high blood pressure, just to name a few.ⁱⁱ

OUTCOMES

- Talk about outcomes from **YOUR program in your community!**
- Evidence-based and promising home visiting programs have been shown to reduce short and long-term healthcare costs by reducing incidences of low-birth weight babies, child abuse and neglect, and emergency room visits.
- Evidenced-based programs educate parents on the importance of being their child’s first teacher. Parents are more likely to read to their children and engage in activities that are stimulating for the child, improving their overall cognitive development and making them more ready to learn when they begin school.
- Evidence-based, voluntary home visiting improves the lives of (at least) two generations. Parents finish school, go to work, and children have better immediate and long-term health, education outcomes.
- Home visiting programs can decrease health risks by ensuring expectant mothers have access to high-quality prenatal care, are educated about healthy habits and understand their babies’ developmental progress.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Return on Investment:**
The highest-quality home visiting programs over time have demonstrated significant cost-benefit ratios ranging from \$1.18-\$14.65 per dollar invested.^{iv} These savings are realized across multiple systems including lower mental health and criminal justice costs, decreased dependence on welfare and increased employment, as well as savings for the medical and health community from lower premature/low birth-weight deliveries and emergency room visits.^v **If possible, know your programs ROI! It lets them know they are saving taxpayer dollars.**

[Please click here if you would like to see the messaging strategies developed by the Pew Charitable Trusts Home Visiting Campaign.](http://www.pewcharitabletrusts.org/home-visiting-campaign)

http://texprotects.org/media/uploads/messaging_webinar_october_2015.pdf

**For additional information: Sophie Phillips (TexProtects)
sophie@texprotects.org or 214-442-1672.**

ⁱ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, “The Science of Early Childhood Development.”

http://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Science_Early_Childhood_Development.pdf (Accessed August 5, 2011).

ⁱⁱ Child Welfare Information Gateway, “Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect,” (2008). (accessed February 4, 2011).

http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long_term_consequences.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, “The Foundations of Lifelong Health Are Built in Early Childhood” (accessed August 18, 2010). http://developingchild.harvard.edu/library/reports_and_working_papers/foundations-of-lifelong-health/.

^{iv} Wilson, A., McClure, M., & Phillips, S. (2013). Home Visiting in Texas: Current and Future Directions. Appendix D. Cost and Investment Return for Home Visiting Programs in Texas.

^v L. A. Karoly, M. R. Kilburn, and J. S. Cannon, “Early Childhood Interventions: Proven Results, Future Promise” (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 2005).