

Home Visiting and Housing

Extending the Reach of Home Visiting

Series on Home Visiting's Connections to Larger Systems of Support

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All families need access to safe and stable housing. Babies and young children need places to safely play and sleep, and parents need places where they can build the routines that are foundational for children's early development. But for many, there is a growing gap between income and housing costs which economists suggest should not exceed 30% of family income. While housing assistance programs exist, the demand far exceeds available resources, leaving many families without the support they need.

During the 2022-2023 program year, an estimated 446,996 infants and toddlers experienced homelessness across the United States. Housing instability in the earliest years is linked to development delays and future health challenges, such as asthma and more frequent visits to emergency rooms. Children experiencing homelessness score lower on language and communication skills. New mothers experiencing homelessness are less likely to receive appropriate health care.

Home visiting cannot solve the housing crisis, but it can help ensure that families experiencing housing instability are not navigating it alone – and that young children continue to receive the relationships, developmental support, and connections they need. When these two systems work together, home visiting can help families find housing, access resources, and nurture their child's development and housing can provide the stability families need as the foundation for well-being and a sense of security. Together, they create a more connected continuum of support for families.

Promising Examples

The National Home Visiting Network set out to uncover examples of collaboration between housing and home visiting. The following examples illustrate what is possible when the systems work together.

Massachusetts Follow-Up, Outreach, Referrals Families Program

In the home visiting capacity survey administered for the 2020 Massachusetts MIECHV Needs Assessment, 73% of respondents identified housing as the most pressing challenge facing home visiting participants. Housing instability became even more of a challenge in the spring of 2023 when the emergency assistance shelter system experienced an influx of people needing shelter.

The F.O.R. (Follow-up, Outreach, Referrals) Families Program, is a Massachusetts Department of Public Health program that provides home visiting services to families in Emergency Assistance (EA) shelters. In one Massachusetts community, EA shelter staff recognized that children were not having a typical childhood experience and they needed to do something to address the trauma being

experienced by the children and families. Staff reached out to the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program in their community for support. PAT provided parent groups three times a week with hands-on activities, books in multiple languages through Raising a Reader, developmental screenings, and referrals to Early Intervention when needed. The partnership created a safe, supportive space for families in the EA shelter and helped build connections they could continue to rely on as they prepared to transition to permanent housing.

Essential Lesson:

This partnership illustrates how home visiting can adapt its approach to meet families where they are—literally and figuratively—while providing children with opportunities for learning, connection, and normalcy during a period of profound instability.

Boulder Housing Partners

Boulder Housing Partners (BHP) recognizes the interconnections between housing, health, and early child development. Through a two-generation approach, BHP supports adults and young children together by building trust, connecting families to resources, and helping parents work toward economic stability while preparing their children for school success.

In 2016, BHP launched Bringing School Home at five project-based housing sites, creating a housing preference for families with children under age six and offering wraparound supports such as Parents as Teachers and Nurse Family Partnership. In 2025, with support from Parent Possible and funding from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood, BHP became a designated HIPPY site, expanding access to home-based school readiness activities and parent leadership opportunities. Together these efforts help families build connection, strengthen protective factors, and create community and hope.

Essential Lesson:

“What we are seeing at BHP with HIPPY is the beauty of possibility, families leaning in, children thriving, and a community growing stronger, one home visit at a time. These moments are the seeds of something greater, and I am confident that they will continue to grow, preparing children for school, for life, and for all that lies ahead,” Jackie Cordova, HIPPY State Program Director at Parent Possible.

Collaboration Tips: Home Visiting and Housing

Home visiting programs can collaborate with public housing by:

- Listening carefully to the needs of families to understand the magnitude of housing challenges in each community and state.
- Helping families find housing including completing housing applications and connecting with shelters, housing authorities, and other supports.
- Offering home visiting in non-traditional locations, including shelters, and maintaining connections as families transition into stable housing.
- Ensuring the home visitor is paired with other service providers (e.g., mental health specialists) to support families and help minimize the effect of trauma caused by housing instability.
- Partnering with housing authorities to coordinate resources and services and advocate for strong public investments in housing.

Helpful Resources

BUILD Initiative - Housing is Our Lane: The Role that Early Childhood Sector Should Play to Improve Access to Quality, Affordable Housing (January 2023) - <https://buildinitiative.org/resource-library/housing-is-our-lane-the-role-that-early-childhood-sector-should-play-to-improve-access-to-quality-affordable-housing/>

Campaign for Grade Level Reading – The Power of Place: Embedding Two-Generation Approaches in Housing Developments - <https://leo.gradelevelreading.net/event/the-power-of-place-embedding-two-generation-approaches-in-housing-developments/>

Head Start - Resources for Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness - <https://headstart.gov/family-support-well-being/article/children-families-experiencing-homelessness>

National Home Visiting Resource Center - Home visiting as part of a holistic approach to supporting unhoused families - <https://nhvrc.org/brief/home-visiting-unhoused-families> and accompanying video - Building on Strengths: Reaching Unhoused Families with Home Visiting Parent Support Programs - <https://nhvrc.org/building-on-strengths-reaching-unhoused-families-with-a-home-visiting-parent-support-program/>

Chapin Hall – Home Visiting for Homeless Families project: Final evaluation report. <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/HVHF-Evaluation-Final-Report.pdf>

School House Connection – Early Childhood <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/program/early-childhood>