



Kentucky can...

Continue Investments in the HANDS Home Visiting Program

Parenting is tough, and the lack of knowledge of how to handle typical child behaviors can make it more stressful. When parents enter evidence-informed home visitation programs, like the Health Access Nurturing Development Services (HANDS) program, early in the pregnancy, the effects are dramatic – from birth and maternal health outcomes to lowered incidences of child abuse.

HANDS provides free, voluntary in-home services for any expectant or new parent seeking support and education throughout pregnancy and the first two years of the baby's life.

The home-visiting program is proven to support parents in giving their child a strong start in life by promoting safe environments for optimal care and information on healthy development for children from birth to age three:

- **Adequate prenatal care.** Families who participate in HANDS experience adequate prenatal care, which is important to the health of both the mother and the baby. Prenatal care performs a variety of critical functions, such as monitoring the fetus' development, screening and treatment for medical conditions, and patient education on behaviors that jeopardize the health of the baby.
- **Fewer low birthweight babies.** Evidence shows that families who participate in HANDS have fewer low birthweight babies (less than 5.5 pounds). Serious health problems for low birthweight babies can include developmental and intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, and vision and hearing loss. Low birthweight babies are 5 times more likely than those born at average weight to die within their first year.
- **Fewer complications during pregnancy and delivery.** Families who participate in HANDS have shown to have healthier, safer pregnancies and deliveries.
- **Connections to community resources.** Participation in HANDS can help to better connect families to resources in their community to help ensure they have what they need to be successful. Families able to meet their basic needs are able to prioritize health and safety.
- **Increased parenting skills.** HANDS mentors teach parents how to care for, bond with, and provide enriching learning experiences, along with how to create a safe and healthy home. The program teaches discipline techniques, anger management skills, and how to deal with the stress of being a new parent.

The HANDS program has enrolled Latinx families at the highest rate, though enrollment for all families should be improved.

Rate of enrollment per 100 births:

- Latinx: 18
- Black: 12
- White: 14



All health care providers, but especially obstetricians, as well as faith communities and other caring adults play an important role in connecting new parents to HANDS.

Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Solution:

Protect funding for the HANDS in-home visiting program to ensure this critical service is available to, and utilized by, new parents across Kentucky.