

2022 Advocacy Tool Kit



**Advocating for
Families with Young
Children & Family
Home Visiting**



Minnesota Coalition
FOR FAMILY HOME VISITING



Our Work



The Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting (the Coalition) is focused on advancing the availability, quality, and impact of family home visiting in Minnesota through practice, policy, and training. By leveraging the Coalition's collective power, the Coalition works toward their common goal of accessible and quality family home visiting services in Minnesota for any family voluntarily

seeking support. The Coalition advocates for additional resources at the local, state, and federal level to provide quality family home visiting services and policies that support families receiving family home visiting services.

Through its education and advocacy efforts the Coalition works to ensure expectant families, parents, and caregivers can successfully access quality home visiting services and programs to best care for their babies and young children up to the age of five.

The Coalition successfully advocated for additional state resources for family home visiting in the past and believes in the importance of a personal or professional relationship between you, your home visiting program, and your local legislative officials and influencers. Elected officials are interested in knowing the challenges and opportunities within their community – and rely on experts like you to inform their voting decisions.

In alignment with the U.S. Census taken every ten years, the state of Minnesota redraws its congressional district map to account for population changes and growth. This year's midterm elections are the first to be impacted by the new congressional map and your voting location, congressional district, and local legislators may have changed! The entire Minnesota Senate, House of Representative, and Governor's office are up for reelection this year— it is critically important to contact these candidates running for office to uplift the importance of investing in Minnesota family home visiting services. Visit the MN Secretary of State website to view the new legislative map!



Our Vision

All Minnesota families of children age prenatal to five who are at risk for poor mental health, physical health, social, and educational outcomes will have access to intensive, family home visiting services to help them succeed in school and in life. Services will be voluntary, high-quality, outcome focused, and tailored to the resources in each community.

Be an Advocate for Family Home Visiting



Advocacy is the act of educating your community about an issue or challenge by sharing knowledge and context about issues to earn public support around a policy recommendation, or to bring attention to a community concern. The Coalition believes in the impact of using real examples and stories to bring awareness to the issues facing your community and to demonstrate the benefits of investing in family home visiting programs. Educating the families you serve of the importance of advocacy may strengthen their community connections, promote civic engagement, and empower families to identify challenges and advocate for solutions.

For more information and legislative updates, visit the

Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting [website!](#)

Educating elected officials and decision-makers is completely legal and very common. Those working for nonprofit organizations, government agencies or tribal nations can provide education about issues and challenges facing their communities and may advocate for the appropriate resources to address these concerns. Individuals working in government agencies may have the misconception they cannot advocate for the programs or the families they serve—which is not true! When speaking to elected officials or decision-makers, it is important to inform them you are speaking as a constituent or someone who works in their district, not on behalf of your employer or in your official professional capacity. Leaders of and within government agencies may also engage in advocacy but must receive clearance from their own leadership or government relations before representing their agency.

Elected officials and decision-makers rely on community experts, such as yourself, to learn about the political, social, and economic challenges affecting their community. It is only when elected officials become aware of community issues and are informed about solutions that they can draft legislation and address these concerns.



Overview

This advocacy tool kit was designed for you, a community member with knowledge on family home visiting, and provides the following information:

- A guide on how to contact your elected officials, page 3.
- Conversation tips to advocate for family home visiting, page 4.
- Informational fact sheets to help you talk about family home visiting with elected officials, pages 5 – 6.
- About the Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting, page 7, to be shared and distributed to elected officials, candidates, and/or community leaders.

Who is Running to Represent Me?



Find your Elected Officials

You can find who your current elected officials are and discover who is running for office before you reach the polls. Visit the MN Secretary of State's website and use your Zip Code or County to see what your ballot will look like on Election Day. You will find your congressional (or federal) candidates, statewide candidates (e.g. State Representative and State Senator), as well as local candidates (e.g. county commissioners or city council representatives). You can also use this link to find your voting location and learn more about voting options.

Ways to Contact your Elected Officials

1. Visit your candidates' website or public social media page to find upcoming town halls and local events to introduce yourself directly to your candidate or representative, ask questions, and share why you believe family home visiting benefits your community.
2. Schedule an in-person meeting at your candidate or elected official's office, or in the community! Reach out to your candidate online or discover your elected official's public phone number and email using the Minnesota Legislature's Directory (<https://www.leg.mn.gov/leg/legdir>). Consider inviting leading members of your home visiting program and the community you serve to join this meeting and speak about how home visiting has impacted their lives. This provides your candidate or legislator with an opportunity to learn more about the community, the benefits of home visiting services, and the needs of the families you serve.
3. Invite your elected officials on a home visit or site visit! These visits may require additional preparation but provide the clearest understanding of family home visiting and are a great way for candidates and legislators to have real-life context for the policies and legislation they attend to.

After the Meeting

Send your candidate or legislator an email thanking them again for their time and provide your contact information. This way, they remember who to reach out to next time they have a question about family home visiting!

Conversation Tips

Advocate for Family Home Visiting in your Community

1. Describe a Challenge in your Community

- Share stories of how families in their district are negatively impacted by financial insecurity, inaccessible healthcare, a lack of transportation, etc. While data and statistics are important and persuasive, stories are more likely to appeal to somebody's emotions and elicit further conversation.
- In addition to presenting a problem or community challenge, provide context to your stories to explain how this situation or challenge developed. This may include explaining how historic, geographic, or economic factors have persisting impacts on families today, or sharing why you chose to advocate on behalf of your community!

2. Explain how Family Home Visiting Addresses that Challenge

- Dwelling on the negative impacts of society's shortfalls may inhibit planning for a better future. Spread your enthusiasm about the benefits of family home visiting and share how families are uplifted through home visiting services.
- Ask your candidate or legislator what they know about family home visiting. Use this opportunity to educate your candidate on the home visiting programs and services in MN!
- Investing in family home visiting programs means investing in MN families. By providing the opportunity for all families to have a strong start—regardless of background, family home visitors can support healthy parent and child relationships and build a strong foundation for future development and learning.

3. Call for Action & Ask Questions

- Stress the importance of immediate action. Children only have one chance at a healthy start in life and it is imperative our government acts to support all children, regardless of their zip code, race, or their family's economic status.
- Ask your candidate how they will commit to supporting family home visiting and what they will do to address the challenge presented.

Questions to ask Elected Officials & Candidates Running for Office

1. Are you familiar with family home visiting and the benefits to families who voluntarily participate?
2. What are you willing to do to ensure that quality home visiting, as well as early care and education programs, are available in your community?
3. What are you willing to do to address families with high needs, in particular women of color and families with young children, who face disparate maternal and child health outcomes?
4. How would you prioritize investments in families with young children to ensure they receive home visiting services and other critical family supports to stabilize them and position them for long-term independence?

Families and Home Visiting



The Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting recognizes the importance of family home visiting as a successful strategy to reduce risks and improve outcomes for families and their young children. Only 11% of eligible families receive home visiting services in Minnesota.

- **Nearly 1 in 3 infants and toddlers live in poverty in Minnesota.** There are 81,000 children ages 0-3 living in poverty, based on federal poverty guidelines (185%). Additionally, there are an estimated 10,000 births to parents on Medicaid each year in Minnesota. Research shows financially

stressed families are more likely to have strain and instability that pressures their relationships between parents and between the parent and child.

- **Mental health and mental illness can impede parent-child bonding.** Many families across Minnesota are struggling with mental health challenges alone and home visitors can help parents access resources to address their own mental and physical health needs to better position parents and caregivers to support their infants and children.

- **Alcohol and drug abuse interferes with a parent's ability to develop a stable, trusting relationship with their child or to provide stable income or housing for the family.** Families across Minnesota struggle with addiction. Home visitors can help families find resources to address addictions and ensure children are safe while at home or while parents are managing their addictions.

- **Black babies are more than twice as likely to die in their first year.** Infant mortality rates remain stubbornly high for American Indian and African American women in Minnesota, regardless of income. Home visiting to pregnant women by trained paraprofessionals and professionals can connect women to health care and community resources that can improve birth outcomes.

Early Brain Development

Wire the Brain Early with the Connections Needed for Life

During the first three years of life, a positive, healthy relationship with a parent or caregiver is one of the most important factors for successful development. These relationships not only provide a safe and healthy environment for physical growth but also positive interactions that support healthy emotional and social development, and learning.

High quality home visiting programs are proven to be one of the best ways to support strong early development because they promote long-term self-sufficiency by strengthening or restoring the critical family and social structure for parents and children. Everyone benefits when all families stay on track, and high-quality family home visiting programs are proven to deliver those results.

Did You Know?

- 85% of brain development happens by age 3
- Early connections and experiences form lifelong brain architecture creating the foundation of learning
- Underdeveloped brain connections can cause lifelong issues and are harder to correct





Minnesota Coalition FOR FAMILY HOME VISITING



Photo is courtesy of Indigenous Visioning

What is Family Home Visiting?

Family home visiting provides voluntary stabilizing support for families experiencing high risk factors where they are most comfortable, at home and in their community. Home visiting is a proven strategy to giving families the best start and positioning them for long-term sustainability.

Families receiving family home visiting have:

1. Access to health care services to improve pregnancy and birth outcomes of the parent and baby,
2. Opportunities and support to develop secure attachment with their children,
3. Support to attend to their child's physical, social and mental health development,
4. Support to address employment and housing needs, and/or
5. Connections to community resources.

During the first three years of life, a positive, healthy relationship with a parent or caregiver and a safe, stable environment to grow and develop are the most important factors for successful child development. Healthy relationships and safe environments positively impact the physical and emotional growth of children, impacting their experiences with learning.

Benefits of Family Home Visiting

Home visiting provides benefits to children and families.

1. Improved child health and development
 - Increased parent-child attachment
 - 18% higher kindergarten readiness
2. Improved maternal health outcomes
 - Significant decrease in maternal depression among high risk mothers
 - 37% increase in maternal employment
 - Reduce alcohol and drug use and/or addiction
3. Decreases in child abuse and maltreatment
 - Decrease in child maltreatment and abuse



The Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting works together to support our shared vision: **All Minnesota families of children age prenatal to three who are at risk** for poor mental health, physical health, social, and educational outcomes will **have access to voluntary, targeted home visiting services to help them build a strong, stable foundation and prepare children for kindergarten.** Services will be voluntary, high-quality, responsive to family needs, and tailored to the resources in each community.

Coalition Partners

Coalition partners include providers from non-profit organizations, local public health departments, tribal health departments, health care as well as philanthropy, universities and associations serving children, youth and families.