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Supports for Parents Can Help Kids Enter School Healthy and Ready to Learn

By Wes Rivers

More District kids could start school healthy and ready to learn if the Mayor and DC Council expanded home-based child-rearing instruction for parents of young children to all eight wards. The Districts' Maternal and Child Health Home Visiting program is an effective way to help hundreds of at-risk families, but it only operates in parts of the city due to limited funding.

DCFPI's [home visiting transition brief](#) details the benefits of the program and how further investments can ensure its success. The home visiting program is effective because it brings services to families in their most natural environment, the home. The District's program uses three [research-backed](#) models which:

- Target expecting parents and families with children under age five.
- Identify signs that children may be at risk for unhealthy development, such as a lack of prenatal care or a family history of substance abuse.
- Teach parents ways to overcome barriers to success, like activities to help their child be ready for school and how to access community resources, health screenings and immunizations.
- Improve cognitive development and learning.

Home Visiting Could Have Huge Cost Savings for DC



Source: Data from RAND Corporation

Expanding this program will ensure that all at-risk children enter school healthy and ready to learn. We recommend the Mayor make a \$10 million investment in the fiscal year 2016 budget to:

- Provide services to 3,500 more children and cover all eight wards.
- Improve training and certification of home visitors to increase the effectiveness and quality of programs.
- Implement a common screening tool that all home visiting providers and the Department of Health can use to identify families in need and refer them to appropriate services.

- Allow for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of home visiting practices and implementation of new practices that are proven to work.

To read a full copy of this transition brief, [click here](#).