



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

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DC's Home Visiting Program Gets Under Way

By Wes Rivers

House calls are making a comeback in the District—at least for vulnerable families with very young children—and if the results are similar to programs around the country, we'll be a lot healthier as a community for it. The startup for this innovative health care strategy has been a bit slower than expected, and DC will need to make sure that proper funding is in place to make sure it is as successful as it has been elsewhere.

A new \$2.25 million federal grant is now available to support local providers who deliver care and additional support services by making visits to families' homes. These providers have the potential to reach thousands of vulnerable District households and children with unmet health and developmental needs. DC currently serves about 500 families in this way, but an additional 3,500 young children could benefit from this new grant.

Community groups, health providers, and the District government have been eagerly planning how to use the grant to implement [home visiting strategies](#) that improve health and developmental outcomes for young children. These groups have identified three early childhood program methods which have proven effective in other parts of the country. These evidence-based models focus on maternal and child health, early physical and cognitive development, parenting practices, school-readiness and access to community resources and immunizations.

Unfortunately, the program was bogged down in procurement roadblocks until last week. The District could only serve about one in seven of the families that could benefit from these programs because of delays in accessing federal grant dollars. These federal funds will help expand home visiting to all eight wards and allow the District to better develop a comprehensive home visiting network.

DC's Home Visiting programs offer a unique opportunity to ensure that all District children enter school healthy and ready to learn. While the release of the federal funding will help expand these efforts, District leaders must stay vigilant to develop a strategy to sustain these programs when the federal grant runs out so that future generations of children can benefit.

You can learn more about DC home visiting at <http://www.dchomevisiting.org> or with this [brochure](#). Also, keep updated through DCFPI's advocacy efforts with the larger HV Council by signing up [here](#).