



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health

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Marissa J. Levine, MD, MPH, FAAFP
State Health Commissioner

Dear Colleague,

For more than 25 years, early childhood home visiting programs have been serving families throughout the Commonwealth. Regarding the care provided, a recent participant recounted,

"I have learned how to be a better person all around. Even more on how to be a mother and a companion. It seemed like the information I received was right on target with the steps my child and I were on. I have received information on nutrition, breastfeeding, parenting, and just someone to talk to. You took the time to get to know my son and I on a personal level. That was an important aspect to not feel like a case but a mother."

Recent advances in the science around early brain development and the negative impact of childhood trauma and toxic stress on lifelong health have increased our understanding of the important role that early childhood home visiting programs can play in supporting the healthiest outcomes for young children. Home visiting is a proven prevention strategy for building resiliency and enhancing the overall health and well-being of young children and their parents. Working together with health care providers, these community based programs are an essential partner in supporting population health.

Home visiting programs are voluntary and offer individualized long-term, intensive services for families. Local programs begin working with vulnerable families from the earliest possible point, often during pregnancy, to support healthy birth outcomes, early detection of developmental delays and access to preventive health care for all family members. Currently, Virginia invests more than \$13M in home visiting programs each year. Last year, more than 9,000 'at-risk' Virginia families received home visiting through one of seven different community-based models, including:

- CHIP of Virginia
- Early Head Start
- Healthy Families
- Healthy Start/Loving Steps
- Nurse Family Partnership
- Parents as Teachers
- Resource Mothers

I urge you to take advantage of our investment by partnering with your local programs to refer families for services.

Home visitors, many of whom are nurses, social workers, and community health workers, receive extensive competency based training to support the complex array of knowledge and skills necessary for effective service delivery. Foundational training in topics such as child development, nutrition, prenatal

and reproductive health care is coupled with skill building training designed to support effective behavioral health risk screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment. These family support professionals are a vital part of our effort to support population health and to improve the quality of life for Virginia families.

To make it easier for you to connect with your local service providers, Early Impact Virginia, the statewide alliance for family support programs, has developed a resource tool for you on their website at www.earlyimpactva.org. An interactive map will make it easy for you to find a program in your area and give your patient a “prescription” for home visiting.

Thank you for your support of home visiting programs in Virginia!

Marissa J. Levine, MD, MPH, FAAFP
State Health Commissioner