

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Home Visitation

Standards of Practice

Home visitation programs deliver education, information and support to families where they are - in their homes. Through stand-alone programs or in partnership with center-based services, voluntary home visitation programs educate families and bring them up-to-date information about health, child development and school readiness, and connect them to critical services. Home visitation is a bridge that links the resources of the community with the safety of the home environment, empowering even hard-to reach parents to build a better future for themselves and their children.

A variety of home visitation program models exist and differ in many technical aspects, such as the target population, the experience and credentials of the home visitor, the duration and intensity of the visits, and the end goal or focus of the intervention. Yet, the common ground that unites home visitation program models is the importance placed on infant and child development. Parents play a pivotal role in shaping their children's lives, and often the best way to reach families with young children is by bringing services to their front door.

While each First Things First funded home visitation program may be uniquely designed, they all have a valuable role to play in meeting the complex needs of families and communities across the State of Arizona. First Things First focuses on programs and services that provide children with the best opportunities for school and life success. Funding decisions are based upon a robust process of review to ensure programs are supported by research, value the family, use approaches considered to be best practice and are responsive to the specific needs identified in each region. First Things First funded programs shall supplement, not supplant, other state expenditures on, and federal monies received for early childhood development and health programs.

As stated in the Scope of Work, it is expected that home visitation programs funded by First Things First will be comprehensive for the families they serve. These programs will:

- Engage the family to assess their status using research supported tools to identify strengths and needs. Programs will identify the tools currently used in practice or use the Life Skills Profile
- Help families develop and implement a family service plan based upon assessment findings and goals and objectives identified with the family
- Conduct regular developmental screenings using a standardized or criterion-referenced tool at 9, 18 and 24 months of age for all of the following developmental domains: cognitive, language, social-emotional and motor skills
- Provide resource & referral Information-Identify services available to families and the subsidies to which they may be entitled; help them to fill out the forms to gain those services, and help the families to follow-through to ensure service delivery as needed
- Provide service Coordination with other community resources to make an effort to minimize duplication and to ensure that families receive comprehensive services as needed

Each family must receive information and support in each of the core areas: child development, parenting skills, health, resource and referral and service coordination. Information and support should be tailored to the needs of the family, as identified in the family service plan.

- All domains of child development (physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language, sensory)
- Appropriate child-adult interactions and development of parenting skills (i.e. physical touch, positive discipline, early reading experiences and verbal and visual communications)
- Health (e.g. nutrition; obesity; breastfeeding; physical activity; immunizations; oral health; insurance enrollment; participation in consistent medical/dental homes; participation in prenatal care; safety; developmental health; vision and hearing screening)

Programs may also help families:

- Identify their natural supports such as peer support
- Access opportunities to participate in family literacy activities
- Address issues of substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, and children with developmental delays or disabilities

When implementing the Scope of Work, programs will:

- #1: Provide services to families that are based upon a culture of trust and respect
 - A. Create a family-centered environment
 - Home visitors are from the community and have extensive knowledge of community resources
 - Structure activities compatible with the family's availability and accessibility.
 - Demonstrate genuine interest in and concern for families
 - B. Clearly define program objectives with the families upon enrollment; understanding what the program will accomplish helps families become fully engaged in program services
 - C. Create opportunities for formal and informal feedback regarding services delivered and act upon it; ensure that input shapes decision-making
 - D. Encourage open, honest communication
 - E. Maintain confidentiality, being respectful of family members and protective of their legal rights
- #2: Support the growth and development of all family members; encourage families to be resources for themselves and others
 - A. Encourage family members to build upon their strengths
 - B. Publicity/outreach, literature and staff training reflect the commitment to effectively serve fathers
 - C. Help families identify & acknowledge informal networks of support and community resources
 - D. Create opportunities to enhance parent-child and peer relationships

- #3: Affirm, strengthen & promote families' cultural, racial and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society
- A. Create opportunities for families of different backgrounds to identify areas of common ground and to accept and value differences between them
 - B. Strengthen parent and staff skills to advocate for themselves within institutions and agencies
 - C. Hire staff who reflect the cultural and ethnic experiences and language of the families with whom they work and integrate their expertise into the entire program
 - D. Provide ongoing staff development on diversity issues
- #4: While ensuring model fidelity, programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues
- A. Be accessible for families. Offer extended service hours including weekend/evening hours.
 - B. To ensure quality services caseload size for each staff person is based upon:
 - How many hours per week the home visitor works
 - Family need and intensity of services provided (for example, for families with high risk or multiple risk factors, frequency and intensity of programming can increase to allow for more time to build relationships, modify maladaptive behaviors or attitudes or practice newly learned parenting skills)
 - Where each family lives

For example; 20 is the maximum caseload for a home visitor working entirely in homes with families assessed as high risk or with multiple risk factors at one time per week.
 - C. Engage families as partners to ensure that the program is beneficial. Families have regular input and feedback in programmatic planning to meet their needs.
 - D. Develop a collaborative, coordinated response to community needs
- #5: Home visitors receive ongoing staff development/training to ensure program quality and give staff an opportunity to develop professionally
- A. Assess home visitors' skills and abilities. Home visitors must be able to engage families while keeping a professional rapport.
 - B. Prior to serving families, staff must have professional training or have participated in development opportunities to ensure a level of competency in service delivery.

- C. Staff will receive training and information regarding mandatory reporting. Arizona law requires home visitation staff who suspect that a child has received non-accidental injury or has been neglected, to report their concerns to Child Protective Services or local law enforcement (ARS §13-3620.A).
- D. Provide ongoing staff development/training
- E. Supervisors should work with home visitation program staff to prepare professional development plans

#6: All Standards of Practice are modeled in all activities including planning, governance, and administration

- A. Wages and benefits are adequate for supporting high quality staff
- B. The length of employment and experience/education are reflective of high quality staff. Home visitors are required to have a minimum of a Bachelors degree in early childhood development, education, family studies or a closely related field; or staff is extensively trained and can demonstrate competency in service provision (Programs must provide complete documentation). If programs experience hardship in recruitment efforts, they must notify and consult with First Things First.
- C. Establish an effective, consistent supervisory system that provides support for all staff members and ensures accountability to participants, funders, and the community
- D. Establish supervision as a collaborative process with mechanisms that support staff in difficult situations and provides regular discussion to reflect and debrief. Supervision will also include observation. It is important that supervisors spend time with home visitors in the field to have a sense of how the service is being delivered. This will help supervisors and staff to identify coaching and mentoring opportunities.
- E. All staff work as a team, modeling respectful relationships of equality
- F. Build a team of staff who is consistent with program goals and whose top priority is the well-being of families and children
- G. Structure governing bodies so that they reflect the diverse constituencies of the community and are knowledgeable about community needs
- H. Evaluation and monitoring is a collaborative, ongoing process that includes input from staff, families, program administrators, and community members
 1. Activities, as identified by First Things First, include pre and post testing, self-assessment and opportunities for feedback.
 2. Identify outreach, engagement and retention practices
 3. Must demonstrate program effectiveness mechanism. Programs must participate in data collection and reporting of performance measures.

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