Early Findings from Healthy Families Oregon’s

Study Background
In 2009, NPC Research received a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau, to conduct a randomized study of the Healthy Families Oregon (HFO) program. The study has three major goals:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of HFO in promoting positive parenting and child wellbeing;
2. To examine the impact of HFO on documented child maltreatment reports; and
3. To conduct a cost-benefit analysis of HFO and to develop a web-based tool to support cost analysis of home visiting programs in Oregon and nationally.

This will be the first research study to use a randomized design, considered the “gold standard” for research, to evaluate HFO.

The study includes participants from HFO programs in the following Oregon counties:
- Clackamas
- Deschutes
- Douglas
- Jackson
- Lane
- Marion
- Polk

This briefing includes short-term (1 year) program outcomes on a subsample of study participants. The study will be completed in spring 2015.

Randomized Study

What Did We Do?
- We conducted telephone interviews with 803 first-time mothers who had been enrolled in the study and assigned by lottery to either:
  1. Participate in the HFO program; or
  2. Receive basic information and referral resources (control group)
- Interviews happened about a year after enrollment in the study at the time of the baby’s one-year birthday.

What Did We Learn?

Key Finding 1: HFO families provided more early support for school readiness for their children.
- HFO parents were much more likely to read to their babies on a daily basis, compared to parents in the control group.
- HFO parents provided more frequent developmentally supportive activities for their babies, compared to parents in the control group.

Key Finding 2: HFO mothers were less stressed than mothers in the control group, an important factor in reducing risk for maltreatment.
- HFO mothers scored significantly lower, compared to control mothers, on the Parenting Stress Index, a
validated measure of parent stress, which has been linked to risk of child abuse and neglect.

Key Finding 3: Children in HFO were more likely to receive developmental screenings, and less likely to show early signs of being “off track” developmentally.

- 94% of babies in the HFO group had received developmental screening in their first year of life, compared to only 86% in the control group.
- Only 5% of HFO infants had early signs of atypical development, compared to 9% of infants in the control group.
- Providing developmental screenings for young children is a key goal of Oregon’s Coordinated Care Organizations.

Key Finding 4: There was little evidence of duplication of home visiting services.

- Only 13% of HFO families reported receiving home visits from another agency in addition to HFO; most of this overlay was through planned co-enrollment to address specific family needs. Other agencies that commonly provided additional home visits were public health and child welfare.
- Other studies have shown much higher duplication across home visiting services, as high as 75% with dual program enrollment.
- Only 21% of families in the control group were connected with home visiting services provided by other agencies in the community.

For more information about this study, contact Jerod Tarte, tarte@npcresearch.com, or Beth Green, beth.green@pdx.edu. This study is supported by grant #90CA1782 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.