

# 2-Year Outcomes from the Healthy Families Oregon Randomized Study



## 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 had 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 other outcomes obtainable from state administrative data sources; and
3. To develop an interactive web-based tool to support cost analysis of home visiting programs in Oregon and nationally. This tool is now available at: <http://homevisitcosts.com>

The study included participants from HFO programs in the following Oregon counties:

- ◆ Clackamas
- ◆ Deschutes
- ◆ Douglas
- ◆ Jackson
- ◆ Lane
- ◆ Marion
- ◆ Polk

This briefing paper includes results from the study through children's 2-year birthdays. **For the full final report, please visit:** <http://npcresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/ACF-Final-Report-2-1-2016.pdf>

*For more information, contact Jerod Tarte, [tarte@npcresearch.com](mailto:tarte@npcresearch.com), or Beth Green, [beth.green@pdx.edu](mailto:beth.green@pdx.edu). This study was supported by grant #90CA1782 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*

## What Did We Do?

- ✓ 2,667 eligible high-risk families with newborn infants were randomly assigned to either:
  - ◆ Participate in the HFO program; **or**
  - ◆ Receive basic information and referral resources (control group)
- ✓ 1 year after random assignment, parent interviews were conducted with 803 HFO and control parents.
- ✓ 2 years after random assignment, the following outcomes were obtained from a variety of state administrative data sources to examine outcomes including:
  - ◆ Child abuse and neglect reports
  - ◆ Foster care placements
  - ◆ Health insurance coverage and preventive health services utilization
  - ◆ Self sufficiency and nutritional assistance program service utilization
  - ◆ Use of substance abuse treatment services

## What Did We Learn?

**Key Finding 1: HFO families provided more early support for school readiness for their children.**

- ✓ HFO parents were 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.



- ✓ 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.

### 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 on the Parenting Stress Index (PSI), compared to control group mother. The PSI is a validated measure of parent stress, which has been linked to risk of child abuse and neglect.

### Key Finding 3: There were no differences in the number of founded reports for HFO vs. control children.

- ✓ However, overall, HFO children had somewhat **more unfounded** reports, compared to controls.
- ✓ Home visitors in high-risk homes who are mandated reports may need to make child welfare reports that would otherwise go unnoticed, sometimes known as a “surveillance effect.”
- ✓ While few of the **founded** reports for HFO children occurred while the family was enrolled in the program (14% of founded reports), half of all **unfounded** reports (49.5%) occurred while families were receiving home visiting.

### Key Finding 4: Parents in HFO were more likely to have enrolled in TANF for the first time, and received more Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program services compared to controls.

- ✓ 45.2% of HFO mothers, compared to only 39% of control mothers, enrolled in TANF for the first time after their child’s birth.
- ✓ HFO mothers received almost a full month more days of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, compared to controls.

### Key Finding 5: More mothers in the HFO group received substance abuse treatment, compared to controls.

- ✓ One out of every 20 mothers in HFO (5%) was successfully referred for substance abuse treatment services, compared to only 3.2% of controls.

### Key Finding 6: Duration of HFO services made a difference.

- ✓ Within the HFO program, mothers or children who remained in the program longer and received more home visits had:
  - ◆ Fewer gaps in health insurance coverage
  - ◆ More days of OHP enrollment
  - ◆ More immunization services
  - ◆ More well-baby services
- ✓ Families who remained in services longer tended to be:
  - ◆ Older (non-teenaged) mothers
  - ◆ Have reported relationship problems at program entry
  - ◆ Have been screened by HFO prenatally

### Implications & Next Steps

- ✓ Results from this 2-year follow-up study are consistent with other studies of the Healthy Families America Model conducted in New York and Massachusetts. Specifically findings from all of these studies suggest:
  - ◆ Positive, if modest early outcomes related to improved parenting and well being
  - ◆ Increased early support and services to families
  - ◆ Evidence of “surveillance” effects for child welfare reports in the early years
- ✓ Longer term follow-up to examine other key long-term outcomes is needed.
- ✓ Many early prevention programs find stronger results with potential cost-savings when children enter school and become teenagers.