

Between October 2003 and October 2004,



delivered services to more than
18,000 Georgia families.

Healthy Families Georgia (HFG) is a research-based approach to preventing child abuse by providing support and information to families starting at the birth of their child. HFG is based on the premise that it is best to reach out to families early rather than wait until they have a problem and then try to repair the damage.

HFG is a collaborative effort of Prevent Child Abuse Georgia, the Georgia Children's Trust Fund Commission and communities throughout Georgia.

The service components of HFG include:

- **First Steps**, providing all parents of newborns with support, education and referrals to community resources. Trained service providers deliver these services for a minimum of three months after the birth of the child.
- **Voluntary risk assessment** followed by **home visitation**, which is offered to at-risk families wanting more intensive long-term support. HFG staff continues to visit these families for up to five years.

What does this support mean to these families and their communities?

- Families that are healthy and linked to a primary care medical provider
- Higher rates of immunization
- Reduced teen pregnancy rates
- Early identification of childhood developmental issues
- Early and extensive linkage (more than 100,000 referrals) to community resources and services
- Parents who have more appropriate expectations and higher levels of empathy for their children
- Increased education and employment potential for parents

All newborns and their families deserve this chance and this care. With the state's commitment and the help of business and community leaders, HFG can work to reach every newborn in Georgia.



The First Steps program is notable as a cost-effective model for reaching a large number of families. By visiting parents at birth or prenatally and providing sustained follow-up, First Steps intervenes when vulnerability is high and when parents are most approachable. This approach is able to address a wide range of factors before maltreatment occurs.

By collaborating with the Healthy Families program, this model provides a continuum of services that allows for the level of intensity of support to be increased based on needs of the families.

Emerging Practices in the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Office of Child Abuse and Neglect, Department of Health and Human Services, 2003



**Prevent Child Abuse
Georgia**

1-800-CHILDREN
www.preventchildabusega.org



Currently, **Healthy Families Georgia** reaches **13** percent of the total births in this state.



Why reach the families of every newborn in the state?

- Research shows that parents are most receptive to information at the time of their child's birth and in the early months of parenting.
- Keeping families healthy is a cost-effective approach, versus treating the long-term effects of early childhood damage or neglect.
- Supporting parents to be successful helps build resiliency in children, empathy and social skills in teenagers and eventually, healthier and more productive adults.
- Strengthening families will ease the burden on state systems that must take responsibility for Georgia's abused and neglected children.

Healthy Families Georgia Is A Cost-Effective Approach To Child Well-Being

There is a strong graded relationship between the breadth of exposure to abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death in adults.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, Felitti, Anda et al, American Journal of Preventive Medicine 1998;14(4)