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Wisconsin receives \$11 million to support pregnant women, children and families

(MADISON) — The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has awarded Wisconsin an \$11 million grant to continue and expand the Family Foundations Comprehensive home Visiting (FFHV) program in Wisconsin. The FFHV program is a joint effort by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Health Services (DHS) aimed at improving outcomes for children born into at-risk communities and reducing the instances of child abuse and neglect in Wisconsin.

The FFHV program uses proven approaches to improving child well-being and supporting healthy families. The FFHV program identifies at-risk communities through a comprehensive needs assessment process in order to make services available to families in an effort to prevent child abuse or neglect before it occurs. Other primary goals for the home visiting program are to improve maternal and child health, and ensure children have a healthy foundation that will allow them to learn when they enter school.

“The home visiting program turns the child welfare status quo on its head,” said DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson. “Instead of reacting to child abuse after it has already occurred, FFHV uses available data to identify families that are at risk for child maltreatment because of the stressors they face and offer them the support and services needed to learn how to handle those stressors.”

The Wisconsin Family Foundations Home Visiting Program currently consists of 14 evidence-based home visiting programs that operate in 15 counties and 4 tribal communities. Home visiting programs are voluntary, and the goal is to offer women supportive services as early as possible during pregnancy.

“We know that early interventions produce positive outcomes, and the time we invest in helping children and families at the start will eliminate the need from more costly interventions once the child becomes an adult,” said DHS Secretary Kitty Rhoades.

Coupled with the GPR funding that Governor Walker protected in his 2015-17 biennial budget, the additional federal funding will allow the current program to continue providing evidence-based home visiting services to at-risk pregnant women, children from ages zero to five, and their families, and to further develop a data driven evaluation and training infrastructure.

These funds will also allow the departments to expand services in some of the existing programs, and expand the program's reach to add services to new areas identified as at risk for poor birth and child outcomes according to an updated needs assessment. Through the expansion of existing programs and entry into new communities, it is anticipated that an additional 150 households can be registered, for an estimated total of 1300 families served.

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