

An Early Look at Families and Local Programs in the Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation-Strong Start Third Annual Report

The Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation-Strong Start (MIHOPE-Strong Start) is the largest random assignment study to date to examine the effectiveness of home visiting services on improving birth outcomes and infant and maternal health care use for expectant mothers. The study includes local home visiting programs that use one of two national evidence-based models that have been effective at improving birth outcomes: Healthy Families America (HFA) and Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP). Sponsors of the study are the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS); the

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF); and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). MDRC is conducting the study in partnership with James Bell Associates, Johns Hopkins University, Mathematica Policy Research, and New York University.

This report presents an early examination of the baseline characteristics of families and local home visiting programs in the study. Specifically, the report presents descriptive information on 1,221 families for whom data are availa-

ble, representing about 40 percent of the final sample, and discusses select characteristics of the local programs participating in the study. To provide context for understanding the types of families and local programs described, the report also details the process by which the study team recruited local programs for participation.

- **A total of 67 local home visiting programs across 17 states are contributing to this analysis and will be included in the final report.**

The MIHOPE-Strong Start program recruitment team employed a structured process over two years to recruit 20 programs into the study. An additional 47 HFA and NFP programs in a companion study called the Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation (MIHOPE) are also included in the analysis.

- **Families enrolled in the study tend to face a number of challenges, especially as expectant parents.** The average participant, at the time of study entry, was young (half were under age 21), and one in two reported experiencing food insecurity in the past year. About 40 percent reported symptoms of depression or anxie-

ty. Only 8 percent of the sample reported smoking during pregnancy, although 20 percent reported that smoking occurred in the home, which indicates potential fetal exposure to secondhand smoke.

- **The local programs serving these families are putting a high priority on outcomes that are relevant for improving infant and maternal health,** and they have the implementation system supports in place to carry out their service plans. Notable areas where local programs differed include intended caseload sizes; policies on screening for mental health, substance use, and intimate partner violence; and policies for providing education and support when problems are detected. These differences may affect actual services delivered, which is an issue that will be explored in the final report.

This report lays the groundwork for the final report, which will examine how local program implementation processes predict actual service delivery, describe impacts of home visiting on family outcomes, and include results from cost analyses when possible.

**OPRE Report 2016-37
April 2016**

Authors: Helen Lee,
Sarah Crowne,
Kristen Faucetta,
and Rebecca Hughes

**Nancy Geyelin Margie,
Project Officer, and
Laura Nerenberg**
Office of Planning,
Research and Evaluation,
Administration for
Children and Families,
U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services

Contract Number:
HHSP23320095644WC

**Virginia Knox and
Charles Michalopoulos,
Project Directors**
MDRC

This report is in the public domain. Permission to reproduce is not necessary.

Suggested citation:
Lee, Helen, Sarah Crowne,
Kristen Faucetta, Rebecca
Hughes (2016). *An Early
Look at Families and Local
Programs in the Mother and
Infant Home Visiting Pro-
gram Evaluation-Strong
Start: Third Annual Report.*
OPRE Report 2016-37.
Washington, DC: Office of
Planning, Research and
Evaluation, Administration
for Children and Families,
U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services.

Disclaimer: The views expressed
in this publication do not neces-
sarily reflect the views or policies
of the Office of Planning, Re-
search and Evaluation, the Ad-
ministration for Children and
Families, or the U.S. Department
of Health and Human Services.

This report and other reports
sponsored by the Office of
Planning, Research and Evalua-
tion are available at [http://
www.acf.hhs.gov/opre](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre)

MDRC
16 East 34th Street
New York, NY 10016

