

Healthy Start Nurse-Family Partnership Program

1. What is the Nurse-Family Partnership program?

The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is one component of Healthy Start, an initiative of the Healthy Families BC prevention strategy. The Healthy Start initiative supports all women in B.C. to receive the care that they need for the optimal health of themselves and their families. The NFP is an evidenced based structured, intensive and sustained nurse home visitation program. The program improves the health, wellbeing and self sufficiency of young, low-income, pregnant women who will be first time mothers and their children.

The program includes regular home visits by a public health nurse from the prenatal period until the child's second birthday. Program delivery is based on consistent guidelines, education and resources. The program will be introduced in British Columbia in 2012.

2. Who will be eligible for the Nurse-Family Partnership program?

The NFP program will be offered to low-income, pregnant women who are under 25 years of age and who will be mothers for the first time. Program enrolment is voluntary and needs to occur as early as possible. Participating women must receive their first NFP visit by week 28 of their pregnancy. Evidence from other countries that have implemented the NFP supports this highly targeted, early engagement approach. The NFP has demonstrated significant improvements in pregnancy outcomes, health status, school achievement, parental employment and family stability within this population group.

3. How does the Nurse-Family Partnership fit within Healthy Start and the continuum of services for pregnant and parenting women?

The NFP is one component of Healthy Start and the broad continuum of care for pregnant and parenting women. The NFP program benefits young, low-income, first time mothers. Healthy Start ensures that all pregnant and parenting women receive the care that they and their families need.

The NFP program is not designed to operate in isolation. Women and families enrolled in NFP are actively linked with and encouraged to participate in other community programs and services. These linkages support ongoing community connectedness following graduation from the NFP program, and contribute to long-term physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

4. What universal public health services are available to all perinatal women?

As part of the Healthy Start initiative, the Ministry of Health, Perinatal Services BC, and public health leaders across all health authorities are working together to review the delivery of all public health perinatal-child health services. This work will establish a consistent core set of public health perinatal and child health service elements for B.C. to ensure that every mother in B.C. has similar access to support services.

All postpartum mothers and their infants in B.C. will receive a public health nursing assessment (by phone or in-person) approximately 1-2 days after discharge from hospital. A public health nurse visit and further assessment will be offered based on the nursing assessment or client-identified need. Priority areas for public health nursing service provision include the wellbeing of mothers and babies, breastfeeding, mental health and perinatal depression, and safety.

5. Will women who don't receive services through the Nurse-Family Partnership program be able to access public health services?

Yes. All women in B.C., including those participating in the NFP program, will have access to other public health, perinatal and child health services and programs.

6. Will the Nurse-Family Partnership program be evaluated for effectiveness?

The NFP in B.C. will be scientifically evaluated to ensure it is appropriately adapted for our health care system and achieves the best outcomes for these vulnerable first-time mothers and their infants. The evaluation will compare and consider outcomes for participants within the NFP program with those of their peers who receive existing perinatal and child health programs within the community.

7. Where will the Nurse-Family Partnership program be offered?

All health authorities will be providing NFP services. Initial NFP program delivery sites have been determined and have been selected based on the number of eligible births within a geographical catchment area.



8. What are the timelines for introduction of the program?

Public health nurse and supervisor education began February 2012. Health Authorities are actively working with community partners to discuss plans regarding client recruitment, promotion of the program, and establishing formal structures to support the implementation of the NFP in their communities. The scientific evaluation is expected to begin in September 2012. Phased implementation to other areas within the province will follow the scientific evaluation.

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