

April 22, 2021

Greetings to the Ways & Means Committee,

Let me introduce myself. My name is Kathy Pecchioni Graham and I have worked for Healthy Families for almost 20 years. About 15 years of those were spent as a home visitor. I would like to share with you some of my experiences I had as a home visitor:

I encouraged some young mothers to finish high school or get their GED putting them on the road to being more able to support themselves and their child. One mom, I had on my caseload, had an IQ of 75. She had SSI but was denied disability. I helped her gather the correct information and paperwork and got her an assessment with the County Developmental Disabilities agency. She finally qualified. Another mom I visited had a history of substance abuse and was still dealing w/ alcoholism. By using Motivational Interviewing, I was able to support the mom to call a therapist in order to seek help. One summer day (it was over 90 degrees), I walked into an un-airconditioned apartment. For some reason, the family had their infant very over-dressed and in a bassinette. The infant had a dazed look on her face. The family and I undressed the infant, gave her a sponge bath & the infant became more aware. Then we gave her a bottle of formula. The infant was now acting like herself. I don't want to think what might have occurred if I didn't happen to be visiting that day. Every child in Healthy Families is assessed on their development, including social/emotional areas. I have lost count as to how many children with developmental issues were discovered with these assessments and were able to get into Early Intervention services. I am sure you all know that the sooner these issues are caught the better the outcome.

I was not some sort of a super home visitor. There are many home visitors throughout Oregon who are doing these same things and more! We go through intensive training learning professional skills but are not paid as a professional. We are required to have so many hours of training each year much like a professional but do not get raises like a professional.

The only reasons I worked so long as a home visitor was the joy of seeing parents learn nurturing parenting skills and interacting with their children in ways that create attachment which is the building block for infant mental health. All of this creates a more adjusted adult and a more active citizen willing to help the community he/she lives in. Another more practical reason was that I had a husband who was earning an income also. We would not be able to live on just my income.

Healthy Families is a preventative program for child maltreatment, and I think we have discovered by now how much more effective prevention works than intervention later.

Thank you for your attention

Kathy Pecchioni Graham

Healthy Families of Linn & Benton County

Supervisor

