



February 27, 2025

Chair Senator Lisa Reynolds and Vice-Chair Senator Dick Anderson
Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
900 Court Street NE, Room 453, HR E
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members Committee:

My name is Beth Dasher and I am a Sr. Program Coordinator overseeing the Healthy Families and Help Me Grow programs at Washington County Public Health Division. I am testifying in support of SB 420.

I'd like to share a scenario:

Imagine you are a new mom. You're struggling with your milk supply, and your two year old just discovered the joy of the word "NO!". You aren't getting enough sleep and your ability to manage your daily frustration is waning. **BUT there is a ray of hope.** Tomorrow is your scheduled visit from your Healthy Families home visitor. You know when they show up, you will have a chance to vent your frustrations, get support with breastfeeding suggestions, sleep strategies and ideas on how to help your toddlers communicate with you.

Now imagine that new mom again. You know there is a service out there to support you, and you qualify based on the program standards, but there are not enough slots in your area to get you assigned to a home visitor. Your body is in pain, you are exhausted and both kids keep crying (making you cry too). What outcomes are you imaging here?

The Healthy Families model is anchored in relational health, partnering with parents to enhance skills and confidence, and improve family functioning. Overall, HFO strengthens communities by promoting healthier thriving families, reducing disparities and enhancing the well-being of Oregon's children. This program is nationally accredited through Healthy Families America, an evidence-based model with a very rigorous Continuous Quality Improvement accreditation process. HFO staff receive model-specific training and continuing education to ensure practices will result in desired outcomes. The Healthy Families model is the signature home visiting program for Prevent Child Abuse America, the nation's oldest and largest organization dedicated to prevention of child abuse and has extensive independent reviews that show effectiveness.

Healthy Families Oregon is shown to:

- **Prevent child abuse and neglect:** Reduces the incidence of child abuse by 77% and neglect by 33% by promoting nurturing parenting practices.
- **Improve Behavioral Health:** HFO screens for substance use, depression, and stress. HFO families have improved mental health, are better able to cope with stress with less need to turn to alcohol or drugs as coping mechanisms. Screeners and home visitors refer parents to treatment and mental health services if appropriate, and encourage adherence to treatment and accessing supportive community.
- **Increase Housing Stability:** 27% fewer families experienced homelessness.
- **Avoid foster care placements:** Healthy Families America is the only program to be rated as effective across all racial and ethnic groups by federal Family First Prevention Services Act. Families are more likely to parent in ways that promote healthy child development, interact more positively with their children, and use less physical punishment and yelling.
- **Increase Economic Self-Sufficiency:** Staff help families access family support services, and supporting as parents pursue education and employment. Parents are 5 times more likely to enroll and participate in school and training programs.
- **Improve school readiness and academic performance:** Participating children show enhanced cognitive development, 26% fewer children receive special education services, more parents read with children, and more excel academically and receive gifted services.
- **Improve Physical Health:** Improves family health through increased access to primary medical care services, families are more likely to attend well-child visits (94% v. 61%), improving immunization rates, participation in our program shows 48% reduction in low infant birth weight, and our participants are more likely to breast feed.

Oregon has many early childhood program options to support families, which can be confusing, but it is one of the beautiful things we have to offer young families. It's helpful to remember that not all models are available in every region, and if they are, each model has different strengths. Healthy Families offers a state-wide, flexible model to support families before or after the baby is born. This model can offer flexibility on visit frequency, and the eligibility requirements are less rigid than other programs. To reduce program confusion for families, many local regions also have some form of centralized or coordinated intake models for early childhood home visiting programs. (Oregon is working to support that concept state-wide through the [CCOHVS](#) program.)

I encourage the committee to support SB 420, **allowing local programs to increase the number of families they can offer that ray of hope and support through Healthy Families home visiting.**

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important topic.

With sincere appreciation,

Beth Dasher, Washington County

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