

Partners for a Healthy Baby

Home Visiting Curriculum User's Guide



What Is Home Visiting?

Early childhood home visiting is a two-generation approach intended to provide support to expectant parents and parents of young children. Home visiting provides a holistic approach to family and child development by addressing child health and well-being; child development and school readiness; positive parent-child relationships; parent health and well-being; family economic self-sufficiency, and family functioning.

A Home Visit...

- is a face-to-face interaction between the home visitor and a family or parent.
- is scheduled in advance – not a chance meeting.
- is planned for a certain period of time – usually between 60 and 90 minutes.
- usually takes place in the family's home but may take place at a mutually convenient location such as a work place, library, or neighborhood site.
- offers social support and discussion of topics that are important to families.
- involves planned activities and topics based on both the family's needs and goals of the program.
- requires planning before the visit and follow-up after the visit.



What is the Goal of a Home Visit?



The primary goal of programs providing home visits to expectant families and families with children birth to age three varies depending on the program model. Typical program goals include promoting healthy birth and child development outcomes; preventing incidences of abuse and neglect; ensuring optimal child and family health; and ensuring the enhanced economic self-sufficiency of families. The content of your visits should be guided by the stated goals of your particular program and your families' specific needs.

What is My Role as a Home Visitor?

Home visitors offer families support and information to assist them in achieving healthy outcomes through a multitude of roles including:

- ★ **Advocate** Bridging barriers to receiving necessary services
- ★ **Coach** Actively listening to what families need and want, and supporting their efforts to obtain it
- ★ **Collaborator** Working with the numerous support and resource services available to secure appropriate services for expectant families and families with young children
- ★ **Facilitator** Empowering families to acquire what they need to accomplish their goals and dreams; helping them follow through on their health care provider's advice and instructions
- ★ **Mediator** Helping families work through problems and find solutions
- ★ **Mobilizer** Observing evidence of unhealthy behaviors and motivating families to take appropriate action
- ★ **Motivator** Encouraging families to make lifestyle changes and engage in healthy behaviors
- ★ **Partner** Working with families to increase their parental confidence; to strengthen the parent/child relationship; and promote the healthy development of parents and their young children
- ★ **Record-keeper** Establishing and maintaining accurate records
- ★ **Supporter** Promoting parents as their child's first teacher by offering suggestions and strategies for providing their young children with learning opportunities through daily care routines

To fulfill your role, you must first be able to establish warm, supportive, and empowering relationships with families whose culture, beliefs, values, and priorities may not be the same as your own. Establishing a good relationship with each family is key to your effectiveness.

— Adapted from Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, Home Visitor's Online Handbook (2019)

How Can I Be An Effective Home Visitor?

Home visiting is not an easy job. It requires patience, diplomacy, a sense of humor, and the belief that things can change.

Home Visitor Skills & Knowledge

- Interpersonal skills that foster trust including sensitivity, empathy, flexibility, accessibility, patience, resourcefulness, enthusiasm, and the ability to be non-judgmental
- Communication skills including effective listening, cultural sensitivity, and good verbal and written skills
- Willingness to support and respect the competence, cultural values, and privacy of the family
- Knowledge of enabling and empowering principles that support and promote self-sufficiency
- Problem-solving and solution-seeking skills
- Ability to motivate change
- Knowledge of research-based content related to having and raising a healthy baby
- Ability to identify developmental concerns during pregnancy and through the first three years
- Knowledge of program philosophy, goals, and objectives
- Commitment to supporting parents in their role as their child's first teacher
- Ability to translate program goals into practice
- Effective time management, documentation, organizational, and teamwork skills
- Knowledge of and access to community resources



How Do I Build A Trusting Relationship?

During your first few visits with each family, you will explain your role as their home visitor. Then you will begin the process of developing a trusting relationship. This happens when you arrive at the time you say you will, do what you say you will do, keep their confidences, respect their culture and values, and listen earnestly without judgement.

The trusting relationship you build with each family is the key to your effectiveness as a home visitor.



Who Should Participate in the Visits?

Although some home visiting programs consider the pregnant woman or the baby to be their “client,” it is important to also work closely with the partner and other family members who will be involved with raising the baby. How often you should make an effort to include other family members or significant others depends on the goals of your program, the mother’s preferences, her relationship with other family members, and the likelihood they’ll be available for the visit.

Many programs have special outreach to include fathers. However, the mother’s current partner may not be the baby’s father and the mother may have reasons related to violence, abuse, or drugs that make it important for her to stay away from the baby’s father. If safety is not an issue, it is usually a good idea to help her see the advantages of encouraging the father-child relationship. If there are other children in the home, the health and development of these children should also be considered paramount.

Even if the mother is the only member of the family you visit, you still need to ask yourself, “How can I make sure the mother is supported in her efforts to raise her baby?” and “Would it be helpful to include other family members or significant others in this discussion?”



How Do I Conduct a Home Visit?

Every visit requires you to plan topics to be covered, discuss those topics during the visit, and complete follow-up activities.

Before the Home Visit:

- **Review** the record from your previous visit. Gather any information you need and take any actions you promised.
- **Plan** what you will accomplish at the visit by going over the Purpose Page(s) for the stage of pregnancy or age of the child to identify topics to be discussed.
- **Read** through the Detailed Information Page(s) for the Purpose(s) you chose for the visit.
- **Decide** what Parent Handout(s) or other materials you will bring to the visit. Go over the content on the handout(s) so you are ready to share with the family.
- **Complete** your program’s planning form.
- **Collect** other items you need—props for demonstrating and practicing, or something to occupy siblings such as books or toys. Only bring these if you can leave them with the family.
- **Call** the day before or the morning of the visit to confirm your visit time.

During the Home Visit:

- **Greet** each person present.
- **Ask** to reduce or remove any distractions, such as turning the TV off or down, moving to a quieter location, or agreeing to put cell phones on silent.
- **Inquire** about any immediate needs or concerns.
- **Report** on what has been accomplished since your last visit.
- **Review** the purpose for the visit with the family.
- **Discuss** topics planned for the visit.
- **Share** the Parent Handout(s) selected for the visit.
- **Observe** and make a mental note of any concerns or dangers that require further discussion or action.
- **Summarize** what has been discussed or accomplished at the visit.
- **Plan** with the family what topic(s) they would like to address on the next visit and agree about what needs to occur between now and then.
- **Confirm** the date and time of your next visit.
- **Close** the visit by saying good-bye to each person present.

After the Home Visit:

- **Record** what was accomplished and what happened at the visit using your program's format for this purpose.
- **Note** any referrals to be made or tasks to be completed before the next visit.
- **Note** any issues you need to discuss or report to your supervisor.
- **Reflect** on the visit by asking yourself:

Did I attend to what the family was telling me with their words and nonverbal cues?

Am I sure that important points were understood?

Were there any signs of problems that I should look into further?

Did I encourage parent(s) to contact their provider about any health concerns?

Did I notice how the other children were behaving?

Did I feel confident that Mom and her children are in a safe place?

How did our visit further this family's goals?

What else might I do to empower this family?

How Do I Use the *Partners Curriculum* to Fidelity?

The research-based FSU *Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum is widely used by many home visiting programs to achieve positive outcomes. In order to meet your program goals and help families reach their goals, you have to use your program's chosen curriculum to fidelity, which means using the curriculum as it was designed to be used. When you use the *Partners* curriculum to fidelity, you become more knowledgeable about the topics that impact expectant and parenting families, and can plan and conduct more effective home visits. The *Partners for a Healthy Baby* Fidelity Checklist and the *Partners for a Healthy Baby* Fidelity Tool for Supervisors/Coaches can be found in the Help section of the digital curriculum.

To use the *Partners* curriculum to fidelity when planning your visits, follow this 3-step process. First, find the appropriate **Purpose Page** for the stage of pregnancy or age of the child and choose the Purpose(s) for your visit. Next, find, and carefully review, the **Detailed Information Page** for the Purposes you choose. Finally, review the **Parent Handout** that goes with the chosen Purpose and Detailed Information Page.

1. Purpose Page

The screenshot shows a digital interface for selecting a purpose for a visit. At the top, there are navigation buttons for Search, Scope & Sequence, Index, and Handouts. Below these are filters for 'Baby's 1st Year', 'Month 1', 'All Categories', and 'All Topics'. A search bar is present with a 'Search' button. The main content area is titled 'search result(s) 53' and lists several purposes for visit under the heading 'Purpose for Visit'. Each entry includes a 'Book Section' and 'Category'.

Book Section	Category	Purpose for Visit
Baby's 1st Year Month 1 Family Development Relationships & Support	Relationships & Support	Ensure Mom has adequate support during the postpartum period.
Baby's 1st Year Month 1 Family Development Relationships & Support	Relationships & Support	Ask about Mom's relationship with baby's father and talk about the importance of his involvement with baby.
Baby's 1st Year Month 1 Family Development Father/Partner Engagement	Father/Partner Engagement	Help Dad/partner feel competent in his ability to care for his baby.
Baby's 1st Year Month 1 Family Development Father/Partner Engagement	Father/Partner Engagement	Make sure Dad/partner has a plan for when he feels frustrated with his baby.
Baby's 1st Year Month 1 Family Development Father/Partner Engagement	Father/Partner Engagement	Help Dad/partner understand why breastfeeding is important and how he can be supportive.
Baby's 1st Year Month 1 Family Development Father/Partner Engagement	Father/Partner Engagement	Help Dad/partner understand the difference between the baby blues and postpartum depression, and how to help.
Baby's 1st Year Month 1 Family Development Father/Partner Engagement	Father/Partner Engagement	Ask Dad/partner about strategies he uses for calming his crying baby.

2. Detailed Information Page

The screenshot shows the detailed information page for the purpose 'Ensure Mom has adequate support during the postpartum period.' The page is titled 'Baby's 1st Year - Month 1' and 'FAMILY DEVELOPMENT - Relationships & Support'. It includes a 'Detailed Information Page' header and a 'Parent Handout' icon. The main text discusses the importance of support for new mothers, mentioning physical and emotional needs, and the role of family and friends. It also provides prompts for discussion, such as 'What kinds of things do you need help with?' and 'What would help you feel more supported?'. The page is numbered 'Page 46' and is part of the 'Partners for a Healthy Baby Home Visiting Curriculum'.

3. Parent Handout

The screenshot shows a parent handout titled 'Circle of Support for My Baby & Me'. The handout features a decorative border with stars and a central illustration of a family (mother, father, and child) holding hands in a circle. The text encourages parents to think of family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, faith-based community, and others who can help out when needed. It lists several prompts for discussion, such as '...you need a ride to your doctor's appointment?' and '...you need someone to talk to?'. The handout is numbered 'Page 47' and is part of the 'Partners for a Healthy Baby Home Visiting Curriculum'.

This curriculum is designed to help you:

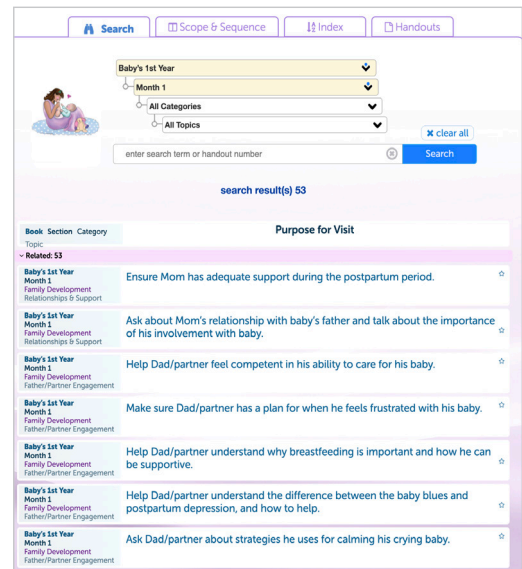
- Plan the purpose of your visit so that critical topics are covered in a timely manner.
- Know important facts about each Purpose and how to find additional information and resources.
- Communicate effectively by using questions and other prompts that are provided.
- Record and keep track of the topics covered with each family.
- Know how to support the family during pregnancy to ensure a healthy birth outcome.
- Know what to look for in order to detect early signs of health or developmental problems, and discuss your concerns with the family and/or a health care provider.
- Promote and encourage parenting skills that support bonding, attachment, and child development.
- Provide parents with activities that support all aspects of their child's development.
- Recognize what should be reported to your supervisor or when to seek further guidance.

1. Purpose Page

Each stage of pregnancy or age of child begins with a list of specific Purposes that you might consider covering during your visits that month. No attempt is made to break the Purposes into weekly segments—you can do that if you visit weekly.


Tailor your choice of Purposes to the needs of each family while using the curriculum as a guide to ensure critical information is covered. We recommend that you begin with Purposes that are of particular concern or interest for the family and address your program goals. Omit only those Purposes that you know do not apply to a specific family.

The purposes on the Purpose Page are organized by Category and Topic. When you pull up the Purpose Page you will see the Category and Topic on the left side of the screen and the Purposes are listed in the right-hand column.




Partners for a Healthy Baby Home Visiting Curriculum

Categories and Topics




Family Development

- Empowerment
- Relationships & Support
- Father/Partner Engagement
- Career Development & Finances




Preparing/Caring for Baby

- Nutrition & Feeding
- Health & Safety
- Daily Care Routines
- Parenting & Guidance



Maternal & Family Health

- Alcohol, Drugs, & Tobacco
- Sex, STIs, & Family Planning
- Family Health Care & Safety
- Nutrition & Exercise
- Pregnancy & Interconception Care
- Emotional Health



Baby's/Toddler's Development

- Fetal Development/ Developmental Skills
- Language & Literacy
- Social Emotional Development
- Play, Learning, & Cognition

2. Detailed Information Page

There is a Detailed Information Page for each Purpose. When you are on the Purpose Page, simply click on the Purpose you want to use and it will take you to the corresponding Detailed Information Page. The Detailed Information Page provides information about how to address each Purpose and is presented in two different colors.

The **words in black** (prompts) are intended to remind you of important points you need to make, and help you come up with words and phrases to introduce and discuss them. As needed, reword the text to fit the family's circumstances, but be sure to convey the basic information that is outlined.

These prompts are for you to study as you plan your visit. You should not take the Detailed Information Pages with you into a visit because you may be tempted to read them. Reading information or shuffling around papers is a sure way to lose the attention of the person you are visiting.

The **words in blue** offer additional instructions, call your attention to things you need to be aware of or look for, and suggest follow-up actions you may need to take.

Review these Detailed Information Pages before your visit and make notes on whatever planning form you use regarding the main points you plan to cover. Talk about the main points in your own words during the visit. If you can't discuss the material without reading the prompts word-for-word, you need more training and study of the issue before you conduct a visit.

Make your visits interesting by avoiding abstract conversations whenever possible. Most of us learn best by seeing and, better yet, by doing. Show the family what you are talking about by demonstrating it and have them do it too. For example, if the purpose of your visit is to discuss shopping for nutritious foods, go to the grocery store together and have fun reading the labels to make sure the food is healthy. Know the parameters your program sets for conducting visits at places in your community other than in the home. Find out if you can transport a parent and child, or if necessary, give vouchers for public transportation.

If you are going to make a difference in the lives of the families you visit, it is crucial that you help them see the relevance of these topics to their own lives and circumstances, to the issues they face every day, and to the goals they set for themselves and their children. No curriculum can help them make this connection—but *YOU* can.

Purpose

Prompts

Additional Instructions

Category

Topic

Baby's 1st Year - Month 1
Detailed Information Page

FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
Relationships & Support

Ensure Mom has adequate support during the postpartum period.

Having a baby can be one of the most joyous times of your life and one of the most exhausting. All new mothers need support, especially in the first few weeks. Your job is to rest, heal, and take care of yourself and your baby. Others need to help take care of the house, prepare meals, get the laundry done, and, if necessary, take care of your other children.

What kinds of things do you need help with? Who is helping you? Has your partner/baby's father been supportive? Often people want to help but don't know what to do. Even if it's hard to ask for help, it's best to let your family and friends know the specific things you need help with.

While grandma and grandpa might like to come by and hold the baby, you need to be connecting with your baby right now. Let them know the best way they can be helpful is to fix dinner while you cuddle with your new baby. Sometimes family members just aren't able to offer the kind of help we need. How about your family? Do you have good friends you can call on for help?

What would help you feel more supported? How do you let your family and friends know what you need? Let's use the handout to help you figure out what you need and who might help.

Your role is to help Mom surround herself with the help she needs after the baby arrives—especially during the exhausting postpartum period. The demands of being a new parent can be stressful both physically and emotionally. New moms are recuperating physically at the same time their newborns are trying to regulate their sleep and feeding cycles. Use the handout to help Mom determine what kind of help she needs and who can be most supportive. Help her identify family, friends, and neighbors who can responsibly watch the baby or help with errands, meals, or house cleaning.

Strong social support networks are key to reducing maternal stress and are especially important for successful single parenting and first time mothers. Hopefully, throughout the pregnancy you encouraged Mom to create a circle of support that can help now that the baby is here. If not, encourage her to identify family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, church members, or community groups that might help her through the postpartum period. Some communities have doulas or home health aides.

If there are other children in the home, make sure they are adequately cared for, that there is food in the house, arrangements for child care have been made, and they are being provided with appropriate supervision.

If the baby was delivered prematurely or for any reason had to stay in the hospital after Mom was discharged, discuss how she can get to the hospital and, if necessary, have someone take care of the other children. Encourage Mom to do what she can to take care of herself. Not only is it important for her own recovery, but it is important for her baby. If she is exhausted physically and mentally she is less available to her baby. Know the resources in your community that provide support to families whose babies are born prematurely, or are born with disabilities or developmental delays.

Page 6 Baby's 1st Year
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3. Parent Handouts

There is a Parent Handout for each Purpose and corresponding Detailed Information Page. There are two ways to access the Parent Handouts. When you are on the Purpose Page, simply click on the Purpose you want to use and it will take you to the corresponding Detailed Information Page and Parent Handout. You can also click on the Handouts tab on the main search page of the digital curriculum. That allows you to choose a particular book (e.g., *Before Baby Arrives*) and see a list of all numbered Parent Handouts for that book. When you click on a Handout name in that list it takes you to the Parent Handout and its corresponding Detailed Information Page.

The Parent Handouts summarize critical points on each topic and in some cases help visitors discuss issues that may otherwise be awkward to broach. It's important to study the handout that you plan to share with the family prior to your visit so you can talk about it in your own words, rather than reading it word-for-word. Parent Handouts can be printed to share with families. They can also be texted and/or emailed to families.

The purpose of the handouts is to help families:

- Learn how to have a healthy pregnancy and support their baby's growth and development.
- Make changes toward healthier lifestyles.
- Think about their life goals and dreams and how to reach them.
- Recognize early warning signs of pregnancy-related concerns and other health and developmental problems.
- Be physically, emotionally, and financially prepared to have and care for a baby.
- Manage the stress that pregnancy and caring for a new baby can bring.
- Improve their self-esteem.



Please note that the Parent Handouts are protected by copyright and can only be printed out by the digital subscriber to give their families. The Parent Handouts cannot be photocopied.

Home Visit Planning Form

Some programs have developed a planning form for their home visitors to use. A sample Home Visit Planning Form can be found in the Help section of the digital curriculum.

Home Visitor Training & Supervision

The *Partners* curriculum is not a substitute for home visitor training. It is designed to be as comprehensive as possible, while remaining manageable for daily use. Some details and background information have been omitted for the sake of brevity and clarity. It is important, therefore, that home visitors using this curriculum

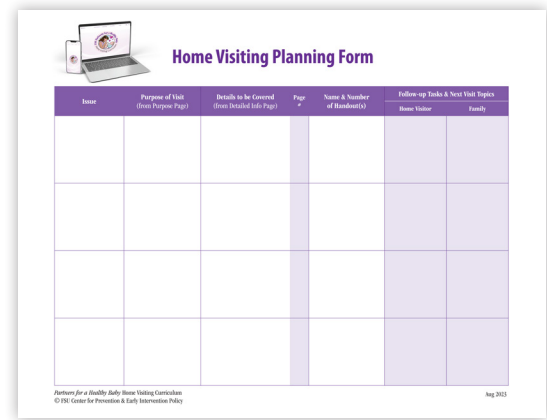
receive extensive pre-service and ongoing training on the broad range of content topics, as well as on home visiting practices. Training should clarify any programmatic and legal limitations on the visitor's role.

Effective use of this curriculum requires ongoing supervision and professional guidance. Reflective supervision is critical because of the isolated nature of home visiting and the challenges of working with families with complex needs. Regular opportunities for reflection provide support for the home visitors and help them develop problem-solving skills. Home visitors should also receive professional guidance from a multidisciplinary team having expertise in the fields of nursing/medicine, social work, nutrition, mental health, and early childhood development.

Training on using the FSU *Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum to fidelity is not required, but is highly recommended. Virtual and on-site training is available from the FSU Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy. The interactive training ensures that home visitors are able to effectively use the *Partners* curriculum to fidelity. In addition to learning how to use the *Partners* curriculum to fidelity, home visitors learn how the content in the curriculum can help them:

- plan effective home visits
- promote healthy birth outcomes
- partner with parents to increase their parenting confidence in order to support optimal bonding, attachment, and responsive caregiving
- support parents' efforts to promote their child's development
- detect early signs of health or developmental problems
- more easily address topics that may be difficult to discuss

Attend training to learn how to support your families and achieve program goals using the research-based, practice-informed FSU *Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum to fidelity. For more information about training, visit our website: <http://www.cpeip.fsu.edu>.



Keys to Using the *Partners Curriculum* for Effective Home Visits

- ★ **Foster relationships.** Your relationship with the family is an essential component of effective home visits. Spend time building and nurturing this relationship. This curriculum will be less effective without it.
- ★ **Empower the family.** You may not be the expert but you can be the coach and mentor for the family. Find every opportunity to acknowledge their progress in achieving their personal goals.
- ★ **Prepare.** Plan your visits. Review the Purposes before you visit. Choose those that are most appropriate. Study the related Detailed Information Pages. Read the Parent Handouts ahead of time. Practice using them and then talk about the information in your own words on your home visit.
- ★ **Address the family's concerns first.** Effective home visitors balance family concerns with program goals. Families will be more engaged if you first help them with what they need and then introduce the information from the curriculum in the context of their situation.
- ★ **Be observant.** Notice the non-verbal cues as well as what the family is saying. Observe the relationship between parent(s) and child. Observe the child's physical and emotional development. Pay attention to your intuition when you feel something's not right and act accordingly.
- ★ **Make learning fun.** We all learn best by doing. If you're reviewing how to take a child's temperature, take a thermometer and let the family practice using it. If you're talking about nutrition, use real food labels to learn about nutritional content.
- ★ **Ask when you don't know.** You don't have to know all the answers, but you need to know how to find them. Ask your supervisor or your program's nurse, mental health professional, child development specialist, or disability coordinator when you need advice, consultation, or support.
- ★ **Take advantage of training.** Seek opportunities for new knowledge. The more you know, the better you can help your families.
- ★ **Practice, practice, practice.** The more times you practice talking about the topics in this curriculum, the better prepared you will be. Don't be afraid to ask your peers or your supervisor to practice with you. You will be better able to effectively use and deliver the information.
- ★ **Nurture yourself.** Nurturing yourself nourishes your body, mind, and soul. You will have more to give the families you serve if you also take care of yourself.