Home Visitor Guide
to Using this Curriculum

What Is a Home Visit?

For programs working with expectant and parenting families, 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 the goals of the program.
- requires planning before the visit and follow-up after the visit.

What Is the Goal of Home Visits?

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

- **Consultant**  
  Helping families find answers to their questions about their pregnancy, their child, their relationships, and their parenting role

- **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**  
  Motivating 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 Head Start Training & Technical Assistance Services, Western Kentucky University
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, including grandparents. 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. Many times 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 what topics will be covered, discuss those topics during the visit, and complete follow-up activities.

**Before the Home Visit:**
- **Review** the record from your previous visit with this family. 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 Purposes you chose for the visit.
- **Decide** what Parent Handout(s) or other materials you will need to share. Go over the content on the handout(s) so you are ready to share with the family.
- **Complete** your Home Visitor Planning form (see www.cpeip.fsu.edu for sample form).
- **Collect** other items you need—props for demonstrating and practicing, or toys to occupy siblings.
- **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, or moving to a quieter location.
- **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.
- **Propose** topics that might be planned for the next visit and agree about what needs to occur between now and then.
- **Confirm** the date and time of your next visit. Write it in your planner.
- **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. A form for recording topics discussed, the Home Visit Record, is available on the FSU Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy website (www.cpeip.fsu.edu).
- **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 Mom to contact her 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 this Curriculum to Fidelity?

The research-based FSU *Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum has been 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 researchers say 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.

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**
2. **Detailed Information Page**
3. **Parent Handout**

**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 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 Pages

Each tabbed section begins with an outline that lists the specific Purposes for your visits that month. No attempt is made to break 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.

The four Categories in Before Baby Arrives, Family Development, Maternal & Family Health, Preparing for Baby, and Baby’s Development, are listed on the left side of the Purpose Page. On the right side of the page is a list of Topics related to that curriculum Category.

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.

Categories & Topics for Before Baby Arrives

**Family Development**
- Empowerment
- Relationships & Support
- Fatherhood
- Career Development & Finances

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

**Preparing for Baby**
- Nutrition & Feeding
- Health & Safety
- Daily Care Routines

**Baby’s Development**
- Fetal Development
2. Detailed Information About Each Purpose

The pages that follow each Purpose Page provide detailed information about how to address each Purpose. The information is presented in two different colors.

The words in black print (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. As you know, 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 brief 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 prompts or the handout 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 checking the labels. Make sure you know the parameters your program sets for conducting visits at places in your community other than in the home. Also 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.
3. Parent Handouts

The Parent Handouts summarize critical points on each topic and in some cases help visitors discuss issues that may otherwise be awkward to broach. Visitors should study the handouts and home visitor instructions on the Detailed Information Page carefully prior to visits so they can talk in their own words, rather than reading word-for-word.

The purpose of the handouts is to help families:

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

We recommend that:

- Programs purchase a set of Parent Handouts for each family.
- Home visitors offer each Parent Handout to the family at an appropriate time and review it with them, allowing them to keep it for future reference.
- Families use a three-ring notebook for their handouts. They may want to add family photographs and create additional scrapbook pages for baby’s keepsakes.

Please note that the Parent Handouts are protected by copyright and may not be reproduced.
Planning Form

Some programs have developed a planning form for home visitors to use. On our website, www.cpeip.fsu.edu, we've included a sample planning form. Whatever planning tool you use, let it be your guide. Don’t read to the family from it or the curriculum.

Home Visit Record

You will be visiting numerous families concurrently and customizing the topics you discuss with them according to the age of their child and their specific circumstances, so you will need to have a way to keep track of which topics you cover with each family. The Home Visit Record will help you do this.

Each time you conduct a visit, record the topics you have discussed on a copy of the Home Visit Record. The Purpose Page, and the Detailed Information Pages that follow, indicate what topic to record. You will need to record all topics you covered during your visit—the topics you planned to discuss as well as additional topics discussed spontaneously in response to the family's interests.

The Home Visit Record is not intended to replace your narrative progress notes or other detailed records that are part of your program’s visit documentation system. Such notes and observations about the visit still need to be recorded on the form(s) approved by your program.

Periodically, the topics you record on the Home Visit Record should be summarized in order to produce a cumulative record of topics covered for each family. When tracked and analyzed, this data can link program effort to family and program outcomes. See www.cpeip.fsu.edu for full-size, reproducible copies of this form in both black and white and full-color.

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### Home Visit Planning Form

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<th>Issue/Visits</th>
<th>Purpose of Visit</th>
<th>Details to be Learned</th>
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### Home Visit Record

For Visits with Families

Name of Participant: ______________________ Date of Visit: ______________________

#### Family Development
- Empowerment
- Relationships & Support
- Fatherhood
- Career Development & Finances

#### Preparing/Caring for Baby/Toddler
- 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 Skills **
- Language & Literacy *
- Social Emotional Development *
- Play, Learning, & Cognition *

Home Visitor: ______________________ Date of Entry: ______________________

* Only in Baby's 1st Year, Baby's 2nd Year, and Toddler's 2nd Year
** Only in Before Baby Arrives

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Home Visitor Training & Supervision

This 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. The recommended visitor-supervisor ratio is no more than 6:1, with a lower ratio for visitors whose work sites are geographically dispersed. 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. Training is available from the FSU Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy. The interactive training will ensure 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 will 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: www.cpeip.fsu.edu or call 850-922-1300.
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. Practice in front of the mirror. 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 find you have more to give the families you serve if you also take care of yourself.