



July 23, 2020

Governor Brad Little
Office of the Governor, Idaho State Capitol
PO Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720

Director Dave Jeppesen
Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
450 W State Street
Boise, ID 83702

RE: Medicaid Coverage of Home Visiting Will Extend Reach and Impact of Essential Family Supports During Public Health Crisis

Dear Governor Little and Director Jeppesen,

Home visiting provides a critical link of support for Idaho families facing a variety of challenges during these unprecedented times. We applaud the significant achievements in home visiting made this past legislative session. Thanks to your support and leadership, Idaho is able to meet the needs of a growing number of pregnant women, infants and toddlers, and new parents across the state during the pandemic and recession.

We are writing to express our mutual support of two pressing priorities: (1) ongoing state investments in essential home visiting services and (2) an inclusive Medicaid benefit that ensures adequate access to home visiting services for eligible families.

The two Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) federally-funded home visiting providers in Idaho, Nurse-Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers, have pivoted to accommodate new ways of reaching families during the COVID-19 public health crisis, including expanding telehealth and virtual home visits. Together, these providers offer early intervention on a variety of issues impacting families, such as health care issues, financial instability, homelessness, and risk factors for neglect and abuse.

We encourage the state to continue its financial support of home visiting in the coming year. Ongoing and consistent state funding for home visiting will allow providers to adequately meet the needs of their local service areas. This includes the ability to retain professional home visitors and to offer parent-support activities and coaching, such as helping parents develop skills around stress management, nutrition, child discipline, and nurturing interactions.

Soon, Idaho will be joining the many other states that cover home visiting services through Medicaid for eligible families. Like Idaho, these states have a limited number of providers offering important prenatal, postpartum, and infant health screening and educational services in the home setting. With Idaho's generous Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) rate and the documented return on investments for home visiting, Medicaid remains a cost-effective tool to accomplishing Idaho's goal of promoting access to these services to improve maternal and infant health outcomes, prevent child abuse and neglect, and promote child development and school readiness.

Given the barriers to care that many of the families served by home visiting face, including the most recent ones presented by COVID-19, we urge Idaho to implement the Medicaid benefit as quickly as possible and in a way that improves access. We support Medicaid coverage of home visiting services for all provider models that are evidence-based and in alignment of existing MIECHV home visiting program infrastructure. We encourage the state to create a Medicaid billing structure that the administration can implement quickly and with limited burden (i.e. utilizing the same reimbursement rate for all provider models and organizations) and that allows local programs to select home visiting provider models that meet the unique needs of their communities and families.

As Idaho moves forward with obtaining federal approval of Medicaid coverage for home visiting services, our organizations want to express our commitment as strong partners and facilitators. We are available to provide any support, technical assistance, or input needed to secure ongoing state funding and Medicaid reimbursement for home visiting services.

Sincerely,



Christine Tiddens, Director, Idaho Voices for Children



Constance Gully, President and CEO, Parents as Teachers National Center



Frank Daidone, President and CEO, Nurse-Family Partnership



Idaho Voices for Children champions policies that help kids and families thrive. We utilize research, data, and community partners to identify strategies that best support kids, and we mobilize allies to advocate for smart policy solutions. Through all of our work, we pay close attention to the impact of race, ethnicity, geography, and socioeconomic status as we seek to remove barriers to opportunity for every Idaho child.

Parents as Teachers targets families with children, from pregnancy to kindergarten entry, typically families facing multiple stressors such as poverty or trauma. Home visits provided by trained professionals seek to promote improved parenting capacity, improved family health functioning, early detection of delays and health issues, increased healthy pregnancies and birth outcomes. The cohesive set of services includes personal visits, group connections, health and developmental screenings for children, and a resource network for families.



Parents as Teachers®



Nurse-Family Partnership targets first-time, low-income mothers and their children. Mothers must be enrolled in services by the 28th week of pregnancy, and services conclude when the child turns two years of age. Home visits provided by nurses seek to promote maternal and child health, children's development, and parental economic self-sufficiency.