



Alliance for the Advancement of  
**Infant Mental Health**

## **When Parents Need More than a Helpful Hand**

Have you ever thought about the skills needed to change lives? A highly specialized workforce is a term usually reserved for engineers and innovators, for those who've mastered a science critical to building a better world. But what about the expert skills needed to build a better world for babies, young children and their families? When the same scientific rigor is applied to the enhancement of infant and family well being through the application of standards for a well qualified, highly skilled, and diverse workforce it creates a historic partnership that will improve the standard of care for more than 85,000 babies across the country.

In February 2018, Healthy Families America (HFA) and the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health (Alliance) joined together in working to promote better outcomes for babies and their families by building a competent workforce.

Healthy Families America is an evidence-based home visiting model which has proven to decrease child abuse and increase school readiness. According to Pew Center on the States (2011), high quality home visiting models, like HFA, have a \$5.70, a six fold return for every one taxpayer dollar invested. This successful track record explains why funding for home visiting programs has quadrupled since 2012. The Alliance is a global organization whose mission is to promote the social, emotional and relational health of our infants and young children through the provision of workforce standards and training. Through workforce initiatives the Alliance has helped build, strengthen and support the infant, early childhood-family labor force across 29 U.S. states, Ireland and Australia.

“We want to ensure that our home visitors and supervisors have the knowledge and best practice skills to support families in providing optimal care for their children,”

says Cydney Wessel, National Director of Healthy Families America, of their decision to ensure the HFA curriculum and all training offerings aligned with the Alliance's Competency Guidelines®. Margaret Holmberg, President of the Board of Directors for the Alliance, further says:

“Using this set of standards as a framework for competency better assures that HFA home visiting staff will be prepared to provide what very young children and parents need to thrive.”

This unique partnership offers a new platform for organizational collaboration on behalf of quality services provided to babies and their families.

As reports abound about highly stressed families, abuse and neglect of children, domestic and community violence, and substance abuse, home visits serve as more than a helping

hand. They are an essential service provided by professionals including nurses, mental health practitioners, early care educators, and child development specialists, who need to be specially trained to help distressed parents care well for the very youngest in their families.

Just last month House Representatives approved a five-year reauthorization at \$400 million annually for home visiting programs, like HFA, which will serve 160,000 more babies. As funding continues to grow for these services, it is critical that all home visitors meet national standards that guarantee quality service and evidence based practice by a specialized infant, early childhood-family workforce.

**Will all of those babies be guaranteed a specialized workforce?**

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