

Assembly Bill 992: CalWORKs Baby Wellness and Family Support Home Visiting Program

Assemblymember Dr. Joaquin Arambula
As Introduced February 16, 2017

SUMMARY

AB 992 would create the CalWORKs Baby Wellness and Family Support Home Visiting Program to provide CalWORKs recipients who are pregnant or parenting a child under age 2 with voluntary home visiting services from trained professionals. The program would strengthen health outcomes for pregnant women and infants, improve educational and economic opportunities, and increase the opportunities for families to move out of poverty.

BACKGROUND

Poverty, especially during early childhood, has a devastating impact on child health and well-being and undermines future educational and economic success. The universal challenges of new parenthood are compounded by deep poverty, and poor families need additional supports and tools to help them foster their child's development.

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program provides modest basic needs assistance to help more than half a million low-income families with children, while helping parents overcome barriers to employment.

Voluntary home visiting programs are a proven strategy for promoting child health, strengthening parenting, and building family self-sufficiency. Through regular, planned visits, trained professionals provide pregnant mothers and new parents with a range of supports to meet the family's needs: promoting preventive health and prenatal practices, coaching parents on how best to care for their babies and support their early learning, and connecting families to available services.

Participation in these programs is voluntary and families may choose to opt out whenever they want.

Research shows high-quality home visiting programs produce significant benefits for both the child and parents including better maternal and child

health outcomes, reduced child abuse and neglect, and improved quality of parent-child interactions. In the long term, children are healthier and more successful in school and less likely to have behavior problems or be arrested as they get older. The programs also improve family economic self-sufficiency by increasing parental education attainment, employment and incomes. Ultimately, high-quality voluntary home visiting can produce a substantive return on investment, yielding returns of up to \$5.70 for each dollar invested.

THIS BILL

AB 992 would strengthen families, help break the cycle of poverty, and improve the effectiveness of the CalWORKs program by creating the Baby Wellness and Family Support Home Visiting Program to provide voluntary home visiting services to CalWORKs recipients who are pregnant or parenting a child under age 2. Home visiting services would be evidence-based under the criteria of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program and provided by trained nurses or social workers. Counties would have the flexibility to meet local needs by implementing the program or partnering with approved home visiting programs that are working in local communities. Participation in the program would be entirely voluntary for eligible families.

AB 992 would clarify that home visiting services shall only be those intended to achieve the goals of improving child health and family wellbeing and that home visiting services shall only be provided by a certified nurse, certified nurse practitioner, or a certified social worker." Further, AB 992 declares that home visiting "shall not include mandatory, random, unannounced visits or visits by any personnel that do not meet these qualifications."

SUPPORT

Western Center on Law and Poverty (Sponsor)
Children's Defense Fund – California (Sponsor)
Black Women for Wellness (Sponsor)

OPPOSITION

None Listed

RESEARCH ABOUT EARLY HOME VISITING

For more information about the benefits of Early Home Visiting programs, please see:
Paper by ACF on better serving 2 parent families.
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/assisting-two-parent-families-through-tanf>

CLASP Two gen paper:
<http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/Two-Gen-Brief-FINAL.pdf>

CLASP / CBPP Home visiting:
<http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/CLASP-CBPP-Joint-Brief-FINAL.pdf>

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