

In My Opinion – published March 4, 2011 in the *Plattsburgh Press Republican*

(http://pressrepublican.com/0204_in_my_opinion/x642917050/IN-MY-OPINION-Maintain-Healthy-Families-New-York#)

A devastating cut is proposed in the Executive Budget that poses immediate harm to our children and families causing both immediate and long term human and financial pain. This proposal would dismantle one of New York's **most** cost-effective and cost-saving programs that has a research-documented record of preventing child abuse, improving lives and saving taxpayer dollars.

HFNY has a proven record, based on a rigorous seven-year randomized research study, of better outcomes for children as they work with at-risk expectant and new mothers in 38 of New York's highest need communities including Clinton County:

- Delivery of healthier babies (less low birth weight babies)
- Improved preventive care and superior child development outcomes
- Reductions in physical abuse and neglect with fewer founded cases of child abuse reported and reduced use of child welfare services
- Fewer early intervention and special education services (fewer children repeat a grade)
- Increase in parents' use of non-violent discipline

For families who had prior histories of child abuse or neglect, HFNY generated a return of more than \$3 for every dollar spent due to reduced involvement in the child welfare and other tax supported programs.

Data shows low birth weight deliveries are reduced by 50% with estimated savings to Medicaid and state-sponsored health insurance plans of \$2.4 million in one year. Immunization, lead screening and needed medical care are increased while home-visited parents' depression, alcohol, cigarette and drug use decreased.

HFNY improves education outcomes with children more likely to participate in a gifted program and less likely to receive special education services. These children of young teen mothers are less likely to score below average on standardized tests and to repeat a grade.

However, the human and financial costs and savings don't stop there.

The "Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study", conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Kaiser Health Plan's Department of Preventive Medicine, demonstrates the direct and unequivocal relationship between child abuse, neglect and trauma with social and emotional dysfunction, physical illness and cognitive impairments later in life. ACE Scores are shown to have a direct relationship to:

- adolescent health
- teen pregnancy
- smoking, alcohol and drug abuse
- risky sexual behavior, HIV and STD's
- mental illness
- heart and liver disease
- chronic lung disease
- suicide
- risk of revictimization
- stability of relationships
- workforce performance

The well being of our state depends on the well being of our children, our citizens and workforce of tomorrow. This cut clearly would increase the risk for a life trajectory of personal and community suffering

and tax payer burden now and for years to come.

I urge you, at a minimum, to maintain funding for the HFNY Home Visiting program at the present level of \$23,288,200 in the Office of Child and Family Services budget which would maintain the State's eligibility for federal home visiting grants. Reduced spending would make New York ineligible for millions of dollars in federal healthcare funding.

In these difficult fiscal times, please make our most vulnerable citizens, our children, a priority and support HFNY.

Sincerely,
Harry S. Cook, LMSW
BHSN President and Chief Executive Officer