THE IMPACT ON HOME VISITING:
Budget impasse harming cost-effective supports for new parents and their babies

Illinois has been investing in home visiting services for at-risk expecting and new families for nearly two decades, and boasts a state network that is nationally recognized for its quality and well-coordinated systems. However, because of the Illinois budget impasse, a network of more than 40 community-based organizations and county health departments who provide these services funded by the Department of Human Services have received NO state funds since July 1, 2015. These agencies serve 5,000 families and their children, with 900 additional families receiving services as a result of federal funds.

Even when fully-funded, state and federal home visiting funding allows us to reach only 10% of the families who could benefit from it. Instead of growing this cost-effective, proven child development and family strengthening strategy to reach more families, the budget impasse is instead harming our ability to serve these families. And we are putting at risk more than $40 million in federal home visiting funds received over the past several years and our state's eligibility to receive future federal funds.

"If we shut down, we leave very vulnerable families. We will work to find them other services—but we won’t be able to find them for every family. If we’re lucky enough to return after a temporary shutdown, we have to rebuild those relationships. We have to rebuild caseloads—which will take years."- Jesslyn Jobe, Shawnee Healthy Families Coordinator

Of the more than 40 home visiting programs around the state recently surveyed, nearly 60% reported significant changes including:

- Reductions in the number of families served, ranging from 25% - 75%.
- Staff layoffs and salary reductions. A number of programs have implemented 4-day or less work weeks.
- At least 5 agencies have either suspended or are providing only minimal services. Areas impacted include East St. Louis, Will County, Sangamon County, Chicago and Aurora.
- Several other programs are in the process of making similar decisions regarding layoffs and closure as they exhaust lines of credit and reserves and see little evidence that a budget agreement is near.
- Some agencies have implemented travel restrictions, impacting home visitors’ ability to regularly see some of the most isolated families in very rural areas, to support families in obtaining needed medical or other services, and to attend trainings.

Limited federal funds have allowed some services to continue, but statewide, the numbers of families served and programs providing services are dropping dramatically. As the budget stalemate continues, the Illinois home visiting infrastructure is at risk of total collapse.

"Without a budget, we are failing the most vulnerable and needy among us," - Roy Harley, executive director, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois

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