

July 15, 2011

Mary K. Wakefield
Administrator,
Health Resources and Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

George Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Washington, DC 20447

Dear Administrator Wakefield and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

We are national philanthropic organizations committed to improving the health and well-being of children and families by building and promoting evidence of effective programs and strategies that transform our society for the better. We have devoted significant resources into developing home visiting models as effective evidence-based interventions to help at-risk children and families overcome significant health, educational and economic barriers. Our investment in evidence-based home visiting models helped pave the way for the enactment of the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHVP). We therefore have a strong interest in its quality implementation and evaluation.

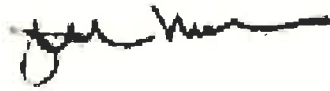
We write to urge you to incorporate model-specific assessments into the request for proposals for the design of the national evaluation, which we understand will be released shortly. This modification is critically important. We will only determine the effectiveness of scaled-up home visiting models by evaluating whether specific models produced the outcomes they were originally found to impact. A model-neutral evaluation simply cannot tell us how and to what extent the models performed. A model-neutral evaluation without the benefit of model-specific assessments is likely to lead to biased assessments. For example, if some of the evidence-based models perform well and others do not, a model-neutral evaluation could be biased toward findings of no or little impact when assessing the MIECHVP as a whole. This will undermine the credibility of the MIECHVP and jeopardize its future sustainability, simply as a result of the limitations of the evaluation design. We therefore urge you to incorporate model-specific assessments in the design of the national evaluation.

We also urge you to place reasonable limits on the amount of resources that States may spend on data collection and evaluation functions to ensure that a significant portion of funding is devoted to home visiting services that will directly help children and families. While we believe that a strong infrastructure is needed to support this initiative, we do not want to lose sight of the goal of the MIECHVP to provide direct home visiting services to help the most vulnerable children and families.

July 15, 2011

We appreciate your work on behalf of children and families. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide additional information or assist in modifying the design of the national evaluation.

Sincerely,

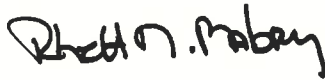


Jill Nishi
Deputy Director
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



Woody McCutchen
Vice President
Edna McConnell Clark
Foundation

Jim Marks
Sr. Vice President & Director
Health Group
Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation



Rhett Mabry
Vice President Child Care
The Duke Endowment



Jocelyn Sargent
Program Director
WK Kellogg
Foundation



Barbara Picower
Philanthropist

Cc: Mayra Alvarez, Director of Public Health Policy, HHS Office of Health Reform

Martha Coven, Associate Director for Education, Income Maintenance, and Labor,
Office of Management and Budget

Sherry Glied, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, HHS

Naomi Goldstein, Director, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation,
Administration for Children and Families

Joan Lombardi, Deputy Assistant Secretary & Inter-Department Liaison for Early
Childhood Development, Administration for Children and Families

Bryan Samuels, Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth and Families,
Administration for Children and Families

Audrey Yowell, National Program Director for Maternal Infant & Early Childhood
Home Visiting Program, Health Resources and Services Administration