



COMMUNITY PARTNER QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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FALL 2022



FIRSTSTEPSCENTRALMN.ORG

763-276-0441

First Steps Central MN is a team of Registered Nurses who offer support, advice and information to have a healthy pregnancy, a healthy baby, and be a great parent by providing free, voluntary in-home family home visiting services utilizing evidence-based programming to eligible families.

UPDATES

As our Evidence-Based Home Visiting Expansion Grant Award comes to an end in December, we have some good news to share! Each of our First Steps Central MN counties were awarded MDH's Strong Foundations Grant, to begin January 1, 2023. These grant funds will provide support to sustain each of our county's evidence based family home visiting programs for the next five year grant cycle, as well as maintain the current structure of our collaborative work across the region with support from our Regional Family Home Visiting Program Manager and Data & Analytics Manager. Benton, Sherburne, Stearns & Wright Counties look forward to continuing our collaborative work together and partnering with additional community resources to best support Central MN families. More to come in future newsletters!

This quarter, we partnered with Xidig_TV for an educational video about First Steps Central MN family home visiting in Somali. Check out the video (with English subtitles) here: <https://youtu.be/hyTd15iOMk4>



Thank you for your continued collaboration and referral to our centralized intake. As you have heard, our goal is to connect all pregnant and newly postpartum parents with the information and resources they want to support their pregnancy, postpartum, and parenting journey. Resource coordination and home visits from a Personal Nurse is voluntary and provided at no cost to families.

COMING SOON!

You asked and we listened! Coming soon, we will have a NEW First Steps Central MN Referral Form that can be submitted electronically right on our website! It is in its final stages before going live. We know this will make referring families to First Steps one step easier!

As always, since our programming is voluntary, please obtain family permission to have a Personal Nurse contact them. If they agree, complete the referral form and hit submit directly on our website to make a referral. If you have supplemental information you would like to include with the referral, it can be faxed to 763-765-4250 or sent via secure email to referrals@firststepscentralmn.org. We hope you enjoy this new feature coming in the next couple of weeks!

Family home visiting program outcomes include improved maternal and child health, increased family economic self-sufficiency, promotion of optimal child development, and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting, or MECOSH (pronounced 'mesh'), is our primary evidence-based home visiting program. Additional MECOSH-specific trial outcomes:

- New mothers, who experienced a normal, unassisted vaginal birth, felt significantly more enabled and confident to:
 - care for themselves and their baby
 - had significantly better self-rated health
 - could name two or more measures to reduce SIDS/SUIDs
- Children had:
 - better health
 - lower rates of respiratory infections
 - were breastfed longer
 - had improved cognitive development
 - were more engaged with their mother
- Mothers of infants and toddlers had:
 - a better experience being a mother
 - provided an organized home environment supportive of their child's development with improved verbal and emotional responsiveness
 - provided developmentally appropriate play materials
 - had greater parental involvement

WHAT FAMILIES CAN EXPECT:



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FAMILY STORY SPOTLIGHT

When I first became a mother, I had the option to work with a Public Health Nurse, so I decided to sign up without knowing what the program offered. I didn't know how much of a lifeline this program and Karmen would be while learning to be a mother. When I first met with Karmen, she explained what the program offered and how it could help. At the time, I was under the impression that I would have the help of my child's father, and my closest family and friends. However, as my belly got bigger, life took some unexpected turns. No matter who wasn't there to help me, Karmen was.

Karmen and I started our sessions via Zoom in the middle of the COVID Pandemic. During that time, I started to experience the true nature of my child's father. Many times I didn't know who I should be getting involved in the situations whether that's the police, the hospital, Child Protective Services, or Wright County. At our meetings, Karmen would walk me through the next stages of my pregnancy, but also, the next steps to keep my child and I safe. The environment of our meetings allowed me to bring any and all questions about pregnancy, motherhood, and life as a mother. Every question was answered without judgment and to the best of Karmen's ability which created a safe space for me. Eventually, the chaos of change died down, and our next goal was to welcome Octavia into this world and get her to latch.

Before Octavia was born, Karmen and I went over breastfeeding umpteen times. We discussed methods, products to use, what to expect, and how to prevent the unwanted. Our discussions gave me the confidence to move forward with my goal of breastfeeding even though there was much left to learn and none of my closest family and friends had ever experienced it. Once Octavia was born, for the next six months and remainder of my breastfeeding journey, Karmen was there whenever I needed her to help troubleshoot the situation. I had an amazing experience breastfeeding and will do the same with my future children. The encouragement I received to push through breastfeeding obstacles gave me the confidence to continue to push through any and all obstacles that would get in the way of me being a good mother.

As Octavia got older, life continued to throw curveballs and overnight I became a true single mother. Everything Karmen and I had discussed about motherhood now became vital to our success. At the time it felt as if my world was melting, and the only thing that was left at the end of the day was my daughter and I. We stood strong because of the support of Karmen provided from pregnancy to two years old. She taught me how to care for my child, and how to trust myself as a mother. At the time I began this program, I didn't know that all I would be learning would be essential while transitioning into a full-time single mother.



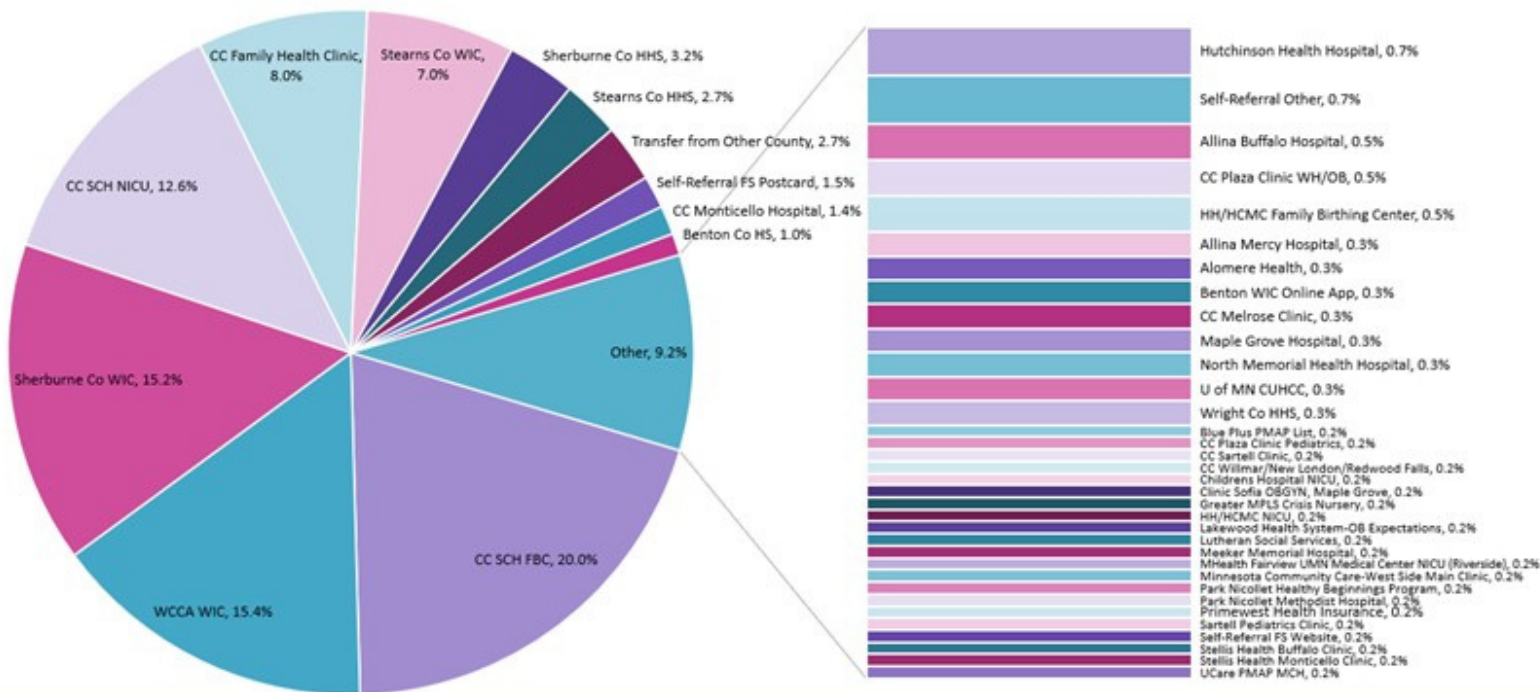
MOM DESIREE (PICTURED HERE WITH DAUGHTER OCTAVIA) SHARES HOW HER NURSE HOME VISITOR, KARMEN, AND OUR HOME VISITING PROGRAM HAS IMPACTED HER LIFE. SHE ALSO RECENTLY SHARED HER STORY WITH OUR JOINT POWERS BOARD.

"I had the pleasure of working with Desiree for the past 2 ½ years. She welcomed me into her life and allowed me to be part of her journey. Desiree was always willing to listen, learn and was never afraid to ask questions. There were several road blocks along the way, but Desiree knew she always had my support and she was always willing to consider new ideas and new ways of doing things. Desiree has wonderful qualities, she is kind, caring, confident, committed, and self-motivated. She is a wonderful mother to her daughter. She is working a full time job now and is in the process of purchasing her first home. I am very proud of Desiree and all that she has accomplished during our time together."
-Karmen Christenson, Desiree's PHN

"Karmen's strengths as a home visitor include working along side family's to achieve their goals. Karmen is soft-spoken, caring and utilizes her 20 years of expertise in home visiting with each client. Her knowledge base is a fantastic asset, however it's her gentle nature and non-judgmental approach that helps her succeed in helping families!"
-Casey Henre, Karmen's Supervisor

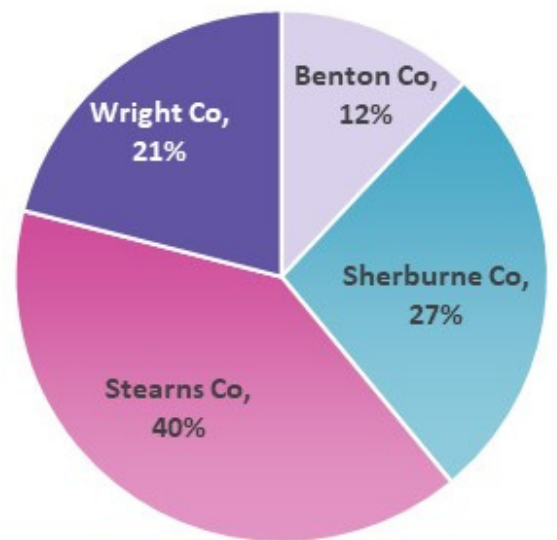
Thank you, Community Partners, for supporting families across the four-county region with referrals to First Step Central MN home visiting program. Since implementing our centralized intake, we have received over 2,000 referrals from over 80 partners.

FS CENTRALIZED INTAKE REFERRAL SOURCES, 2022 YTD



First Steps Personal Nurses reach out to all referrals to offer family home visiting and connect them to resources. In addition, they are available to answer immediate questions or provide referrals to other services, as needed.

FS % REFERRALS BY COUNTY OF RESIDENCE, 2022 YTD



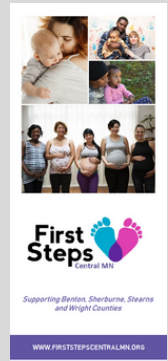
LOCAL RESOURCES

First Steps Central MN Brochures and Self Referral Postcards are available in English, Somali & Spanish at this time.

Wright County Community Dental Clinic

"Wright Smiles for Central MN", Buffalo

- Phone: 763-270-6900
- <https://www.co.wright.mn.us/894/Dental-Health>
- Hours: Monday-Thursday 7:30a-4:30p, Friday 7:30a-2:00p
- Accepts: MA, MN Care, Private Insurance, Self Pay, Sliding Fee Scale, Care Credit
- Video: <https://vimeo.com/694980857>



Center for Victims of Torture (CVT), St. Cloud

- 320-217-5052
- <https://www.cvt.org/where-we-work/stcloud>
- To help individuals and families recover from physical and psychological trauma caused by torture and war trauma.
- Community Educators offer parenting classes to help parents learn about parenting in America, including positive discipline, knowing your rights, community resources, tools for bringing your family together, establishing life in a new community, and planning for the future.

Let us know if you would like copies of our new tear-off flyers that can be posted on bulletin boards, in meeting spaces, or exam rooms. Available in English & Spanish at this time.



Billboards

Nearly 106,000 vehicles drive past our First Steps billboards across Central MN every single day. They are located in Sauk Rapids off Benton Drive, SE St. Cloud off Hwy 10, Sauk Centre off of I-94, and Clearwater off of I-94.



We would love to hear from you each time you see the billboards! Take our quick survey here: https://sherburnehhs.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_emV3Bik6pRvzoua



Home Visits

Home visits with a personal nurse are provided at no cost to families and are always voluntary. Our visits continue primarily in-person, but do have both phone and telehealth options available as well. Because ALL families have needs, we encourage our community partners to connect ALL pregnant and newly postpartum families they serve to us.



In the past quarter, we welcomed new home visiting staff at Benton and Stearns Counties. Welcome Mallory, Danielle, Sarah, and Gifty!

