



# COMMUNITY PARTNER QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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WINTER 2021

[FIRSTSTEPSCENTRALMN.ORG](http://FIRSTSTEPSCENTRALMN.ORG)

763-276-0441

Welcome to 2021! While we are happy to see 2020 behind us, 2021 continues to bring its own set of challenges and needs. Public Health Nurses and staff have been increasingly pulled into the COVID-19 response with the addition of the COVID-19 vaccination clinics across the region.

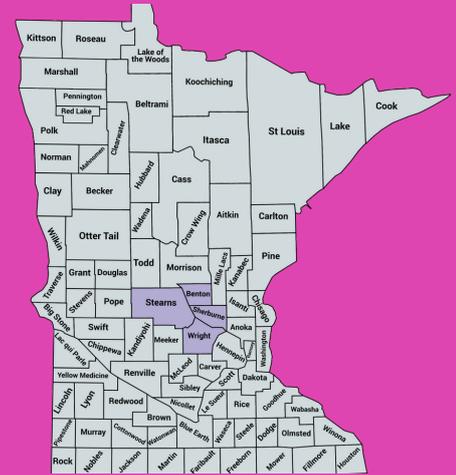
Nurse time and capacity in family home visiting varies across sites and programs due to COVID-19 priorities. Sites continue to monitor recommendations from MDH, our evidence based models, and individual county administrative teams to provide family home visiting (FHV) services, as possible.

All families referred to family home visiting continue to be contacted through the First Steps Central MN centralized intake process by a PHN within 3 business days of receipt. If an eligible family expresses interest in ongoing support from one of our nurses in one of our family home visiting programs, the referral is forwarded and assigned to an ongoing PHN who will then contact the family for enrollment.

Wright County's Healthy Families America (HFA) program made the decision to stop enrolling new families at this time to manage the demands of the COVID-19 priorities and existing client needs. New referrals to this program are followed up by a PHN to answer any initial questions, provided resources, and then families are placed on a waiting list. While this is the first program in our collaborative to make this decision, all of the programs are feeling the time and capacity restraints of COVID-19 duties. We increasingly are looking to our community partners and local resources to provide additional supports to families.

Home visits are done via phone or telehealth options but may be available less frequent at this time. Staff also fit in calls, texts and/or emails to families they are working with to maintain the relationships they've worked so hard to build. There is some flexibility for some of our sites to do door drop-offs of supplies at a family's home, or accommodate a socially distant doorstep weight checks for infants on a very limited case-by-case basis.

The nurses have continued to show great creativity and commitment to the families in our communities. We also appreciate our support staff who assist the work of the nurses and supervisors in a variety of ways. Our family newsletters have remained as a monthly publication. You can access them on our [First Steps Central MN website](http://First Steps Central MN website).



## FIRST STEPS CENTRAL MN

is a team of registered nurses from Benton, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright County Public Health who offer free 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. The evidence-based programs we offer are Nurse Family Partnership and Healthy Families America.

Our nurses help promote healthy birth outcomes and positive parent-infant relationships, encourage healthy growth and development for infants and young children, prevent complications of illness and chronic disease conditions, promote healthy and safe environments, and encourage family self-sufficiency and linkage to community resources.

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QUARTERLY  
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FIRST STEPS  
CENTRAL MN

# Family Impact Stories

"I have a family that I visit with weekly in which mom is deeply concerned about the Covid-19 vaccine. She educates herself on the topic well and speaks in scientific terms when describing what she has learned. After discussing her twins during our phone visits, she uses the last part to discuss her feelings regarding this new vaccine. Often I have to "do my homework" for these conversations and enlist the help of my coworkers who are more up-to-date on the subject. After many weeks of doing this, at the end of one visit, she stated, "Thanks so much for listening to me talk about my fears of the vaccine." I felt at that moment the real story was told. She just wanted to talk about her fears with someone that wasn't going to judge her or make her change her mind. I was able to acknowledge these feelings in her with restating how it does feel good to have someone that listens to you. We were able to then relate how children feel when they are listened to unconditionally."

-HFA nurse Val



"I began working with a 22 year old mom in early 2020. Mom was living with her two moms, 2-year-old daughter and was 9 months pregnant with her second child. Mom had several adverse childhood experiences (ACES) as a child, was bounced between foster families until adopted by her moms. Mom has a history of substances abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect as a child.

Mom also initially lost custody of her daughter, completed many court-ordered requirements, and her daughter was returned back to her custody. Despite her challenging history, she has grown into a fabulous mother! She has stayed clean for over two years, completed her driver's education permit, and, in early summer 2020, moved into her own apartment with her children. The EBHV expansion grant allowed me to continue to work with mom despite a move across county lines. This allowed for stability for her and the continuation of our working relationship. Last fall, mom enrolled full time in a four-year university and finished her first semester of college with all A's & B's. Her goal is to graduate with a degree in social work to help others who have had similar situations to her. Mom has continued to remain open to telephone and video visits. She often asks when I can return to in-person visits and feels great value in our time together. I have provided supportive interventions, including child proofing mom's new residence, supporting mom to set and reach goals, and assisting her to locate resources to meet her own and children's needs."

-HFA nurse Michelle

Referring partners don't have to decide which program or county they are making a referral to. Just refer and our staff will connect families with a program that will best fit their needs. To make a referral, first talk to families and get their permission. Then either [download our referral form online](#) to fax in to 763-765-4250 or give us a call at 763-276-0441.

If your agency is interested in learning more about First Steps Central MN, would like an in-service or presentation, or are running low on brochures or outreach cards to hand out, please contact us at 763-276-0441.

## FOCUS POPULATIONS

- **Pregnant or within 3 months postpartum**
- **Low income (WIC or MA eligible)**
- **Live in Benton, Sherburne, Stearns or Wright County**

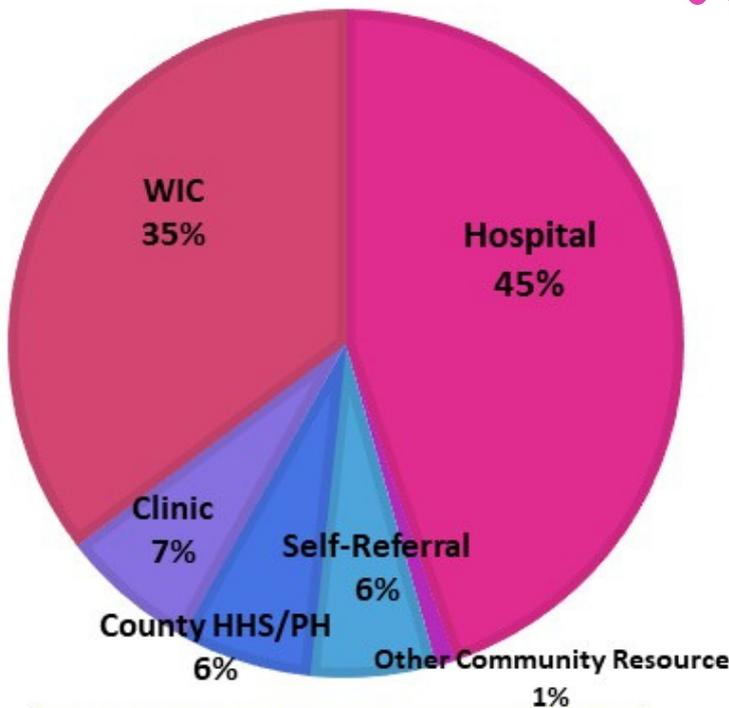
Identified areas of concerns for families may include (but are not limited to):

- financial or housing insecurities
- infant feeding support
- limited support system,
- limited parenting skills
- late prenatal care or poor compliance
- history of or current abuse, safety concerns, violence, mental health concerns, chemical or tobacco use or abuse

- ❖ After a full year of implementing our centralized intake process across the 4-county region, First Steps Central MN received over 645 referrals from 53 community partners.
- ❖ While COVID-19 continues to impact family home visiting outreach & service delivery, referral numbers increased by 65% from Q3 to Q4.



## FIRST STEPS CENTRAL MN 2020 REFERRALS BY SOURCE TYPES



Hospital Referral Sources	Referral #
Allina Buffalo Hospital	3
Cambridge Medical Center	1
CentraCare Monticello	20
CentraCare Paynesville Hospital	3
CentraCare SCH FBC	170
CentraCare SCH NICU	45
CHI St. Gabriel's Health	1
Fairview Northland-The Birth Place	4
Glencoe Regional Health Services	1
Glenwood Medical Center	2
HCMC NICU	2
HCMC Women's Health	4
Hutchinson Hospital	13
Maple Grove Hospital	2
Meeker Memorial Hospital	1
Mercy Hospital	1
Methodist Hospital	1
North Memorial Health Hospital	6
Northland Family Center (Remer, MN)	1
Ridgeview Medical Center	9

Clinic Referral Sources	Referral #
Allina Health Buffalo Crossroads Clinic	1
Allina Health Specialty OB	2
Allina Mother-Baby Group	1
CentraCare Melrose	1
CentraCare OB/Women's Health	13
CentraCare SC Medical Grp South	3
CentraCare SC Medical North	1
CentraCare SCH Pediatric	6
Fairview / Fairview Home Care	2
Family Medicine Clinic Little Falls	1
HealthPartners Healthy Pregnancy	1
Lakewood Health System-OB Expectations	1
Park Nicollet Homecare	1
Stellis Health Monticello	9

WIC continues to be another top referring partner – across the four WIC offices in our region, we received 229 referrals in 2020

# RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

- Connect to Facebook pages by local public health:

- [Benton County Public Health](#)
- [Sherburne County Public Health](#)
- [Wright County Public Health](#)



- For questions related to COVID-19, please call the following phone numbers:

- **Benton County:** 541-766-6120
- **Sherburne County:** 763-765-4156
- **Stearns County:** 320-656-6625
- **Wright County:** 763-682-7607

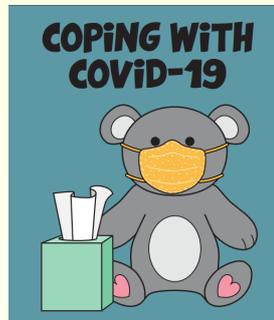
- **Buffalo Strong:** A community hub where you can find ways to help; donate, volunteer, or join in community solidarity after the tragic events of February 9

<https://www.buffalostrong.care/> #BuffaloStrong

- **MDH Wellness Guide:** a simple checklist for families and individuals to promote their mental health: [tinyurl.com/48haueex](http://tinyurl.com/48haueex)

- **Coping with COVID-19:** This activity book is intended to provide information to young children and families about how to prevent and cope with COVID-19. This resource may be useful for children and young people of all ages.

- English: <https://tinyurl.com/y5ramawq>
- Spanish: <https://tinyurl.com/y6smlb75>



- **Quit Partner** offers a specialized program with extra support for pregnant and post-partum women to quit nicotine. They have specific programs for people living with mental illnesses, substance use disorders, American Indian communities, and youth ages 13-17. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or visit [www.QuitPartnerMN.com](http://www.QuitPartnerMN.com).

- **CDC Toolkit for Pregnant People and New Parents:**

Resources and tools to help pregnant, breastfeeding and new parents caring for infants to protect their health and help people who serve these communities communicate with them: <https://tinyurl.com/yccqcf26>

## OUTREACH MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH, SOMALI & SPANISH

### Self-Referral Cards



### Brochures



Supporting Benton, Sherburne, Stearns and Wright Counties

[WWW.FIRSTSTEPSCENTRALMN.ORG](http://WWW.FIRSTSTEPSCENTRALMN.ORG)

# STAFF CONNECTION

LEARN MORE ABOUT WHY WRIGHT & SHERBURNE COUNTIES CHOSE HFA AND NFP AS TWO OF THEIR EVIDENCE BASED MODELS, JOINED THE FIRST STEPS CENTRAL MN COLLABORATIVE, AND MORE!

## Wright County

**Please share 2-3 reasons why your agency chose to begin HFA and/or NFP home visiting:** Staff had spoken with other agencies providing the model and requested we offer. Also, the state was offering grants for program implementation.

**Date of HFA Accreditation:** 2019; **Date of beginning NFP services to clients:** July 2010

**Why did your agency want to be a part of the First Steps collaborative work?** Benefit to County residents and to expand the NFP and HFA programs

**What are misconceptions you think the public has about FHV? And what would be your message to them about those misconceptions?**

- That we are trying to watch and report to Child Protection. Our message is that we want you and your children to have the best possible outcomes for your family's future,
- That we know what's best for your family. Our message we want them to know is that the parent knows best and we are just there to help the parent reach their goals and help them be the parent they want to be.

**What do you like most about your job as HFA/NFP supervisor?** Teams, working together to help families in Wright County be the parent they want to be.

**Please list one positive result of the work you do as HFA/NFP supervisor that changed due to COVID?** Telehealth can make it easier to connect with clients. I love to see the creativity staff have used to connect with clients, engage clients and re-engage clients.

## Sherburne County

**Please share 2-3 reasons why your agency chose to begin HFA home visiting.** HFA services encompass not only prenatal families, but also those with young children in the home.

Additionally, support was available through MDH in terms of funding and technical startup assistance.

**Date of HFA accreditation:** July 7, 2020

**Why did your agency want to be a part of the First Steps collaborative work?** One of several reasons relates to the ease of the referrals process for partners with one central location for all referrals to be sent. A second rationale has been sharing of expertise with collaborative members in terms of standards of practice, documentation, and tools utilized.

**What are misconceptions you think the public has about FHV? And what would be your message to them about those misconceptions.**

- That only families with lower incomes qualify for FHV services. Not true!
- Another misconception exist around the definition of family - we are happy to work with all sorts of families - Dads and children, grandparents who are parenting, and foster providers who are caregivers of young children.

**As a Public Health Leader, what are components of HFA that drives you to advocate for FHV at your agency?** Evidence based program/curriculum; Relationship based program; Supporting families to be successful with parenting.

Some of our 2020 support supplies given to enrolled families

