What is Home Visitation?

Supporting children and families through home visiting programs across Alberta
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In Alberta, community home visitation programs are offered to parents and parents-to-be as a support in raising children to be healthy, safe and secure.

Home visitation focuses on strengthening and supporting families by:

- building relationships
- teaching problem-solving skills
- encouraging positive parent-child relationships
- supporting early child growth and development

Early childhood development literature clearly demonstrates the years between zero to six are foundational years. Early developmental experiences set lifelong patterns related to communication, physical development and learning. In the early years the issues of bonding and environmental stimulation are particularly important. Home visitation aims to focus on these areas of development.

“It’s rewarding to have families let us into their lives, to see the trust develop and then evolve so that the family can then participate fully in their community, giving back, as well as receiving services.”

– A family home visitor
What does home visitation look like?
Home visitors meet with families regularly, often weekly, in the parent’s home to enhance parenting knowledge and skills, to provide support and listen to issues affecting their family. They provide information on child development and child health as well as activities that promote parent/child bonding and attachment. Home visitors also help families access other community supports.

Why does Home Visitation work?
- Home visitation provides an opportunity to work in the family environment, to learn first hand about the conditions of life for the parent and child and to tailor services to best meet their needs
- Home visitation reaches isolated families that are unable to participate in other services
“The biggest challenges our clients face in accessing services are transportation, geographic distance and child care. Home visitation addresses all these barriers. We reach the families that other programs miss.”

– Executive Director of a home visitation program
AHVNA supports the following key elements in home visitation programs:

**Key Factors for Success**

**Service Content**

- **Start early** – initiate services prenatally or as soon as possible after birth
- **Voluntary participation** – parents volunteer to participate in the program
- **Use of a Standardized Assessment tool** – to identify families who are most in need of services

**Program Content**

- **Consistency** – offer intensive services (at least once a week, initially) with flexibility for increasing or decreasing frequency of home visits over the long term depending on the family’s needs
- **Cultural considerations** – acknowledge and respect cultural, linguistic, geographic, racial and ethnic diversity of the population served
- **Parental support** – focus on enhancing parents’ strengths, parent-child interaction, fostering healthy childhood development and developing goals
- **Medical links** – encourage families to connect to a medical provider to ensure optimal health and development for the family
- **Community resources** – staff provide referrals and connections to programs in the community that further enhance the opportunities for healthy growth and development of the baby and the family as a whole
Selection and Training of Home Visitors

- **Home visitors** – are selected because of their personal characteristics (non-judgmental, compassionate, humour), their education, experience and skill sets

- **Basic training** – Home Visitors receive a framework for working with families who may be facing multiple challenges. Training includes cultural competence, child development, positive family support and parenting skill development

- **Intensive Training** – Home visitors receive intensive training to understand the essential components of family assessment, home visitation and additional strategies for working with high risk families

- **Supervision** – all home visitors receive ongoing “reflective” supervision to avoid stress-related burnout and to offer support for staff

- **Manageable caseloads** – limit staff case loads to ensure that home visitors have adequate time to spend with each family
“Home visitation provides a consistent, ongoing anchor for families struggling to stay centred in the job of raising children.”

– Home Visitor
Where can you find a Home Visitation Program?

Home Visitation programs are located throughout Alberta in both urban and rural communities. They may be their own program or part of a larger community based organization. Home visitors work with families in their homes and may access community resources within the community. Referrals to programs are made through regional health authorities, child and family service authorities or self-referral.

For further information check the AHVNA website www.ahvna.org.
“Home visiting is an opportunity to share resources and watch families grow through the variety of connections that they make within their community. There is no doubt that home visitation makes a huge difference for many families.”

– Home Visitor
About the The Alberta Home Visitation Network Association (AHVNA)

AHVNA is a provincial non-profit society aimed at promoting and supporting quality home visitation programs.

For more information about AHVNA and how you can participate, either as a member organization or as an individual, please contact:

Alberta Home Visitation Network Association
9321 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5H 3T7

Phone: (780) 429-4787
Fax: (780) 429-4784
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To locate a home visitation program in your community, visit our website at: www.ahvna.org

Alberta Children and Youth Services, grants, memberships, registration fees and donations provide funding for AHVNA.

AHVNA is a registered charity. We welcome your support through donations. Charitable Number: BN 88799-5918RR001

To make a donation to AHVNA: All cheques payable to Alberta Home Visitation Network Association

Please mail cheque to:
AHVNA
9321 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5H 3T7