

# Connecticut Healthy Start: An Evidence Based Program That Improves Birth Outcomes and Saves More Money Than It Costs!

Healthy Start: A unique point of entry into critically needed service systems, and a hub of comprehensive care coordination and service delivery for vulnerable families.

## Healthy Start:

- ♦ is a statewide public health program that serves thousands of low-income women and children each year in 15 locations
- ♦ provides essential outreach, case management, health education and support services to low-income Connecticut residents at critical stages in their life cycle - pregnant and post partum women, infants and young children.
- ♦ plays a major role in linking at-risk pregnant women and infants to health insurance and health services - most Healthy Start sites are qualified entities for presumptive eligibility
- ♦ is funded by the CT Department of Social Services (\$1.49 million), and captures 50% federal match on DSS dollars spent for case management and the CT Department of Public Health (\$200,000) –using federal Maternal and Child Health Block Grant funds; total Healthy Start funding - \$1.69 million

## Healthy Start: Effective and Cost-Saving

The results of an independent evaluation of the statewide Healthy Start Program, released in November, 2008, found the following:

- ♦ The program reaches its intended target population, which is disproportionately young and minority, and at-risk of poor birth outcome.
- ♦ Given their demographics, women who participate in the program give birth to infants with high birth weights. This finding suggests that the program's most proximate impact-- improving the health of newborns-- is being accomplished.
- ♦ Women in the program have a decreased propensity to give birth to pre-term infants. The data show that 7.8% of all Healthy Start births are considered "pre-term" - occurred before 37 weeks of gestation. This compares favorably with figures for Connecticut where 10.1% of all births are pre-term. (National Center for Health Statistics 2006).
- ♦ The Healthy Start Program saves Connecticut money.
  - ♦ A National Academies of Sciences panel estimates that premature births cost on average \$51,600 each in the short-term, due to increased costs of health and other supportive services that those born pre-term often require.
  - ♦ In the period considered, based on this societal cost of pre-term births, it is estimated that *the program saves society between \$2 and \$5.4 million, net of program costs, due to averted pre-term births. This estimate includes only short-term cost of pre-term births, not the cost of long term health, developmental and educational supports often associated with preterm births.*
  - ♦ The \$1.49 million spent on Healthy Start captures hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal matching funds that contribute to the state's general fund.

## Healthy Start: Unmet Need

According to the evaluation report:

- ♦ A number of areas in Connecticut seem to have unmet need for the program.
- ♦ The program lacks the capacity to conduct the outreach needed to identify and recruit into the program many high-risk women who need the program and are participating in it.
- ♦ The program needs increased data system capacity to facilitate on-going evaluation.