

Testimony Regarding Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan

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My name is Marcia Hughes and I am from the Center for Social Research at the University of Hartford. I am the Lead Researcher on the Nurturing Families Network Depression Improvement Study. This is a state-funded, randomized control study designed to test the effectiveness of in-home cognitive behavior therapy for first-time mothers who participate in Connecticut's NFN home visitation program and who meet criteria for major depression. Approximately one-third of the mothers who are participating in the Depression Improvement study are from the NFN program sites located in Hartford and New Haven that are slated to be eliminated by the Governor's proposal. These participating first-time mothers are struggling with major depression; specifically, they report that they feel depressed, tired and fatigued all day long, can't stay focused or concentrate and have difficulty making decisions about simple routine, day-to-day activities, and have even lost interest in things typically pleasurable. Among these mothers there is a high prevalence of trauma histories, often unresolved, and relatedly, these mothers are often socially and emotionally isolated and have little to no sense of worth.

This study is a replication of an evidence-based treatment model (cognitive behavior therapy) that has shown to be effective for treating depressed mothers receiving home visitation (Ammerman, Putnam, Holleb, Novak, & Van Ginkel, 2005). Given the importance of the issues - high-risk, depressed mothers and impact on child outcomes - and the program emphasis on prevention, there has been considerable and ongoing planning, time, effort, and funds put into this study. Training began in May 2009 and participant recruitment began in September 2009. The study is now in its second year and has been extended for a third year through June 2012.

Eliminating the program sites and ultimately obstructing this research hardly seems possible. Needless to say, it will interfere with the integrity of the study. But more importantly, the extreme duress and potential harm that this will cause for many of the mothers currently receiving treatment makes it unethical.

I am asking you to say 'no' to the Governor's proposal to eliminate the NFN program sites in New Haven and Hartford.

Thank you.