



Being a parent to a newborn child is understandably overwhelming – there is a lot of change to adjust to, and parents are often uncertain where to turn. Parents may feel overloaded, fatigued and alone, while driven by a desire to provide the absolute best life to their children. During the first few hours, days and weeks after a child is born, parents are creating their own sense of parenthood. Thus, meeting and connecting with families during this time is critical for addressing parent worries.

## The Current State

The first weeks of new parenting is also a critical time for identifying health risks and vulnerabilities for both the newborn and parents. In fact, nearly 96 percent of all new families indicate a need for education about the newborn or mother's health, as well as an interest for supportive services, including medical care, household needs, early childhood education, emotional supports and WIC programs.

**Unfortunately, in the state of Illinois, there is currently no comprehensive, standardized or universal service for these types of supports that reach all families with newborns in the state.**

## The Solution

**Family Connects Illinois (FC IL)** uses an evidence-based universal approach for supporting newborns and their families. FC IL ensures that there is an entry point to essential support services for all families in a community – not just those at risk – to receive customized services and support from which they could benefit.

Families are identified and engaged in a way that is different from many evidence-based models, which identify and engage only those families who meet certain pre-defined risk criteria. A universal approach, however, is open to all families of newborn children. In addition, FC IL is not duplicative of other programs, but complements, builds on and utilizes existing networks of services. The FC IL program consists of a nurse visit(s) to families in their homes at around three weeks following childbirth, where the nurse takes a physical assessment of the newborn and mom, along with psychosocial assessments of the entire family. Shortly thereafter, the nurse reconnects with the family and provides referrals to community services. These assessments bring the potential for identifying undetected medical concerns for either the newborn or mother, and result in referrals for clinical diagnosis and medical intervention if needed.

***“The home visit gave me reassurance that I was doing all the right things for my newborn son. The nurse took time to listen to me and help in every way possible. Because of my home visit, I was able to get the help and assistance I needed.”***

**– New Mother (Illinois)**

***“My Family Connects nurse was patient and listened to me when it seemed no one else would. I am not sure why I agreed to the visit, but I am so glad I did.”***

**– New Mother (Illinois)**

The goals of FC IL are to enhance maternal and child health and well-being and to reduce rates of child abuse and neglect by connecting all families with community services and resources based on an evidence-based assessment in concert with the families' self-identified interests and needs. FC IL maximizes parental readiness through education, support and resources – partnering with parents to become the parents they dream of being. By serving all families in a community, FC IL reduces the stigma associated with targeting high-risk populations, generates larger-scale outcomes, and supports community-level change by connecting every family to their community.

## The Model



**Nurse connects with family at hospital and in 1-3 home visits**



**Nurse connects family to community resources**



**Parent(s) connects with infant**

### Examples of Community Resources

Health Care Providers

Lacation Support

Household Needs and Material Supports

Community-based Home Visiting

Child Care and Early Childhood Education

Early Intervention Programs

Shelters and Emergency Housing Resources

Behavioral and Mental Health Services

Mother Support Groups

Resources for Siblings

WIC and Family Case Management

## Proven Program Benefits

### Greater community connections

Families report greater connections to community resources.

### Better utilization of higher quality child care

When using center-based care, families utilize higher quality care.

### Higher-quality parenting behaviors

Mothers report significantly more positive parenting behaviors with their infant, such as hugging and reading; and provide higher-quality parenting, such as sensitivity to and acceptance of the infant.

### Enhanced home environments

Families have higher quality home environments (i.e. safety, books, toys and learning materials).

### Improved mother mental health

Mothers less likely to report possible clinical anxiety.

### Reduced emergency medical care for infants

Less infant emergency medical care. Research shows that decrease is sustained through age 2.

*The Family Connects model is part of Family Connects International at Duke University's Center for Child and Family Policy, one of the most promising universal home visiting models. Family Connects International is being actively replicated in over 15 locations across the country, including in Illinois. Family Connects is approved at the federal level by the Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness (HomVEE) as an evidence-based model.*

For more information, visit [FamilyConnectsIL.org](http://FamilyConnectsIL.org) or email [info@FamilyConnectsIL.org](mailto:info@FamilyConnectsIL.org).