



## Families and Communities

# Strong Families Need Strong Foundations

What happens in early childhood matters. By age 5, the architecture of the human brain is 90% developed, and early experiences have literally shaped how the brain is built. Adverse experiences—poverty, abuse, neglect—interfere with children’s healthy development, potentially setting them back months, even years from their peers. The period of early childhood (before birth to age 5) dramatically affects the future health, wellbeing, and success of a child. These formative years impact a person’s entire life.

Early childhood affects not only individuals, but all of Alabama. From low education and poor health outcomes to high crime and addiction, the biggest challenges we face in our state connect back to early childhood.

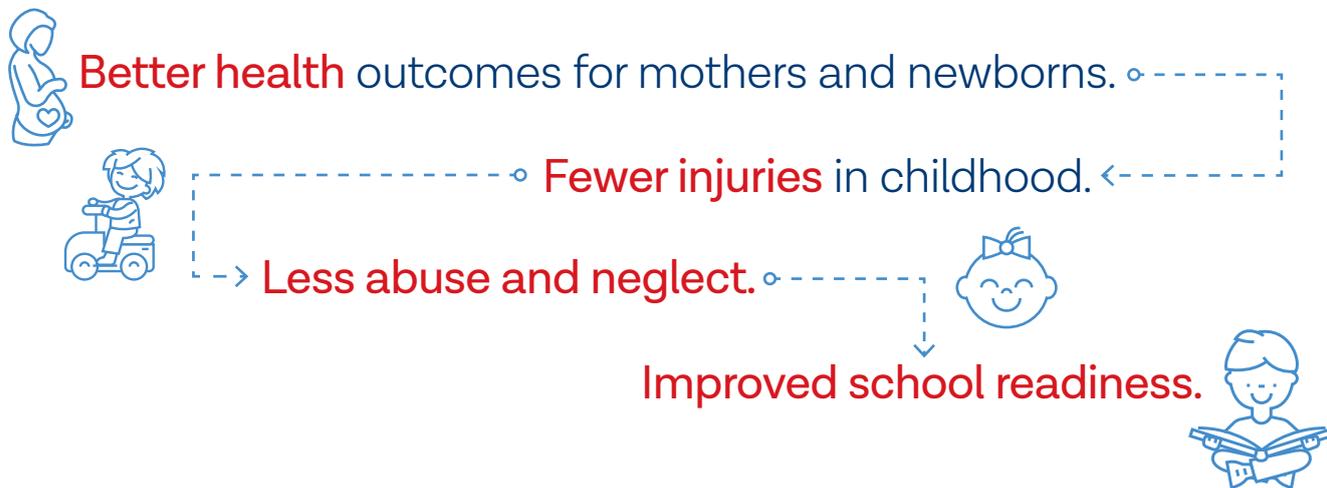
**Family** The  of Alabama

In Alabama, the family is our center.  
 We instinctively know that strong families  
 raise productive and responsible citizens.  
 That strong families build strong communities.  
 That families are valuable and worth supporting.

### HOME VISITING PROGRAMS: HELPING PARENTS DO THEIR BEST

Home visiting in Alabama is a series of free, voluntary courses parents take at home with a specialized educator to learn how to be more engaged in their child’s life. These programs are locally selected and evidence-based.

Programs such as *HIPPY*, *Nurse-Family Partnership*, and *Parents as Teachers* help parents raise healthy children and improve their chances for success later in life. Families who take advantage of home visiting programs have:



**2%** of eligible parents in Alabama who want the support of a **HOME VISITING PROGRAM** can get it.  
We must expand grant opportunities for communities to participate.

## PARENTS ARE THEIR CHILDREN'S FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT TEACHERS



It is a family's responsibility to raise their children to be successful, healthy adults. However, some parents simply do not know what they can do to help their children succeed. Personal responsibility plays a key role in health and wellness, but the choices we make depend on the options we have available to us. Some neighborhoods have more liquor stores than grocery stores, lack safe and affordable housing, or have poor-quality schools. Some parents lack positive examples from their own childhood. Home visiting can provide those examples and help break the cycle of poverty and dependency in Alabama.

Using the Strengthening Families™ framework, Alabama is shifting policy, funding, and training to help programs working with children and families build Protective Factors with families. These factors include parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children. When these Protective Factors are well established in a family, the likelihood of abuse and neglect diminishes and children and families thrive.

## WE HAVE A PLAN FOR OUR CHILDREN, A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

Home visiting programs incorporating a Strengthening Families™ framework are part of a comprehensive plan for strong families, school readiness, and prosperity in Alabama. The Alabama Partnership for Children and nearly 30 organizations have come together as the Alabama Young Child Wellness Council to adopt a common approach to supporting early childhood. Through programs such as First Class Pre-K, *Parents as Teachers*, and *Help Me Grow*, we are working together with policymakers, businesses, and service providers to make the biggest difference for Alabama.



Supporting our youngest children and families is a smart investment in our future.

Alabama voters agree.

Learn more about **Alabama's Blueprint for Strong Families, School Readiness, and Prosperity** and find out how you can support early childhood programs in Alabama at [www.smartstartalabama.org](http://www.smartstartalabama.org)



*Every Alabama Child Will Have the Opportunity to Succeed in Life*