

EARLY YEARS Streams of Service

A Guide for Public Health Staff and Partners

The Public Health Early Years team provides free, voluntary services and support for people who are pregnant and families with young children. The Early Years program is reinforced by strong relationships with community and health system partners, and a methodology that helps find what services best suit the needs of individual families. This collaborative and evidence-based model sets the stage for a program that celebrates clients' differences, while understanding that all families can benefit from a little help during this period of change and growth.

Early Years is dedicated to enhancing health outcomes and reducing health inequities for families in Nova Scotia. By upholding the values of equity and social justice, the team strives to ensure that every person, regardless of their background or circumstances, has access to the essential resources, support and care required to achieve optimal health.

This approach involves recognizing and addressing the social determinants of health, with emphasis on the prenatal, postpartum and early childhood populations. Early Years team members are committed to providing inclusive care that empowers individuals and families, fosters strength-based health behaviours, promotes well-being and advocates for systemic changes that advance a more just and equitable healthcare system.

The following foundational priorities underpin all of our Early Years services, with a focus on **proportionate universalism**, which takes into consideration the unique circumstances of every client and tailors services to meet their needs.

- Strengths-based and client-led approach
- Optimal healthy child development
- Parent-child attachment relationship
- Support for the parenting role
- Trauma and Violence Informed Care
- Health equity and anti-racism
- Infant, client and family mental health
- Connection to community supports and referrals
- Partnership
- Staff participation in reflective practice
- Standardized training for all staff
- Fidelity to evidence-based practice

Healthy Beginnings

Healthy Beginnings is often a family's first touchpoint with Early Years. Public Health Nurses who support this program meet with each family to determine which Early Years service would best suit their needs.

Public Health Nurses in Healthy Beginnings can offer support and guidance on issues like infant feeding, sleep, mental health, growth and development, immunizations, nutrition, parent-child relationships, social supports and more.

Distinguishing elements of Healthy Beginnings:

- Healthy Beginnings connects with everyone who is pregnant or has a baby, with the exception of clients entered directly into the Nurse-Family Partnership.
- Service includes at least one prenatal contact, at least three postnatal contacts, and determines eligibility for other streams of service.
- Service is delivered by Public Health Nurses in collaboration with multidisciplinary members of the Healthy Beginnings team, and supported by Nova Scotia's Prenatal and Postnatal Pathways.
- Scope of support requires ongoing nursing assessments and interventions.

Enhanced Home Visiting

Supported by Community Home Visitors, Enhanced Home Visiting is a long-standing, family-centred home visiting program. Community Home Visitors are trained professionals who follow an evidenced-based curriculum to help support parenting skills and child development, help clients identify and meet goals, and explore and build upon their strengths.

Support from Community Home Visitors can continue for up to three years after a baby is born, and includes guidance on topics related to parenting, child growth and development, parent-child relationships and more.

Distinguishing elements of Enhanced Home Visiting:

- Eligibility is based on a Healthy Beginnings nurse assessment. Service can be offered prenatally or postnatally, ideally by the time the infant reaches four months of age.
- Not limited to the first-time parenting experience.
- Guided by core elements and curriculum within Growing Great Kids Inc., through the support of the Enhanced Home Visiting Coordinator.
- The scope of support is related to child development and parenting.
- Delivered by Community Home Visitors as part of the care plan developed by the Healthy Beginnings nurse, in collaboration with the multidisciplinary team members of the Healthy Beginnings program.
- Home visiting can begin prenatally and continue to child's third birthday. Support may stop and start based on client needs.

Nurse-Family Partnership

Nurse-Family Partnership is an evidence-based, family-centered, responsive home visiting program that improves the health and well-being of first-time parents and their children. The partnership starts early in the pregnancy and continues until the child's second birthday. The nurse provides long-term support, guidance and information to help the family succeed.

Distinguishing elements of Nurse-Family Partnership:

- Clients must be enrolled as early as possible in pregnancy, but no later than 28 weeks' gestation.
- Regular home visits must begin prenatally.
- Focus is on the first-time parenting experience.
- Guided by 14 core model elements and the Partners in Parenting Education (PIPE) program.
- Scope of support requires ongoing nursing assessments and interventions.
- Nurses may collaborate with multidisciplinary members of the Healthy Beginnings team.

Working Together

Early Years services work together in a collaborative system, while each offering a unique service to clients. With our foundation of proportionate universalism and support for all types of families, we provide a critical role in healthcare for pregnant people and families with young children.

