



Testimony Re: H-7127, RI Department of Health
FY27 Budget – Family Home Visiting
House Finance Committee
March 24, 2026
Leanne Barrett, Director of Early Childhood Policy & Strategy



Rhode Island KIDS COUNT coordinates the Right from the Start Campaign, a state policy coalition led by eight organizations to advance state policies and budget priorities that help babies and young children get off to the right start.

Both Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the Right from the Start Campaign **oppose the lack of state general revenue in the RI Department of Health FY27 budget proposal to meet the FFY2026 federal match requirement to access all available federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECVH) funding.**

Since 2021, **the number of Rhode Island families participating in these proven programs**, which improve long-term outcomes for both mothers and babies, **dropped by 32% due to staffing and financing challenges.** In 2024-2025, the staff turnover rate for home visiting programs in Rhode Island was 28%, significantly higher than the national rate of 10%.

Federal reauthorization of MIECHV funds in December 2022 provides level funding for 5 years. Newly authorized funds to sustain and strengthen the program require a 25% state match to draw down funds. The match is being phased in to give states time to adjust. **Rhode Island is one of only a handful of states that has not been able to make the full state match for the first two years and thus has been unable to draw down all federal funds** to support these proven programs.

Estimated Rhode Island MIECVH Match Funding Needed

Federal Fiscal Year	RI State Match Challenge Target	Total State Match Secured	Total Federal Funds Forfeited
2024	\$242,000	\$200,000	\$126,000
2025	\$356,000	\$56,000	\$900,000
2026	\$535,000	\$0	Up to \$1.6 million
2027	\$787,000	TBD	Up to \$2.3 million

Currently Rhode Island is level funded at \$8.5 million/year in federal MIECHV grant funds to implement two evidence-based models: Healthy Families America and Parents as Teachers. These programs follow rigorous research models to deliver services that produce lasting improved outcomes for children and families including:

- Significant reductions in child maltreatment, language delays, and emergency room visits for accidents.

- Significant improvements in school readiness, maternal mental health, parental education, and parental employment.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. **We urge the General Assembly to allocate sufficient funds in the FY27 budget and beyond to allow the state to draw down the full MIECVH federal funding available** so we can sustain the existing programs and restore access to these proven, relationship-based, comprehensive, multi-generational services.

Fund Family Home Visiting 2026
H-7127 FY27 DOH & EOHHS Budgets
[H-7794](#) (Giraldo) & [S-2845](#) (Valverde)



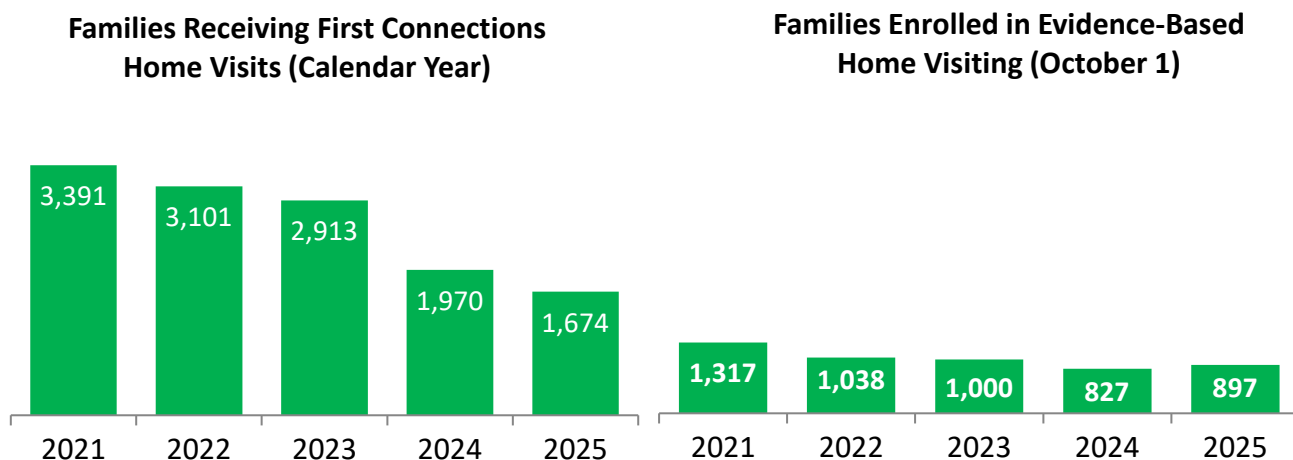
Right from the Start

Rhode Island's Evidence-Based Family Home Visiting programs -- Healthy Families America and Parents as Teachers

-- **are multi-year, relationship-based interventions** designed to help pregnant and parenting families with high needs navigate the challenges of raising babies and young children. These programs follow rigorous research models and produce improved outcomes for children and families including significant reductions in child maltreatment and language delays; and improvements in maternal mental health, parental education/employment, and school readiness.

First Connections is Rhode Island's frontline, rapid-response home visiting service for families with newborns statewide. It is designed to identify babies' and families' needs as early as possible and connect them with services, including maternal mental health services, WIC, Early Intervention, and comprehensive evidence-based family home visiting programs.

Financing & Staffing Problems Mean Fewer Rhode Island Babies & Families Get Help



Since 2021, the number of families served by **First Connections** has **dropped by 51%** and the number of families enrolled in a multi-year, evidence-based program has **dropped by 32%** due to **inadequate staffing and financing**.

In 2026, Rhode Island Policymakers Should Invest in Family Home Visiting:

1. **Increase the Medicaid rates to OHIC recommendations** for First Connections, Healthy Families America, and Parents as Teachers family home visiting programs to ensure staffing and financing challenges do not get worse.
2. **Fund the minimum state home visiting match @\$535,000 to bring in \$1.6 million in new federal Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funds** to improve access to family home visiting. Rhode Island is one of only a handful of states that has forfeited federal funds.
3. **Pass Rep. Giraldo's and Senator Valverde's bill** to establish First Connections in statute, implement Medicaid rate increases, meet the minimum state match, and update state reporting requirements.

City/Town	# Received First Connections Visit in 2025	# Enrolled in Evidence-Based Home Visiting on October 1, 2024
Barrington	9	7
Bristol	15	3
Burrillville	6	0
Central Falls	88	83
Charlestown	4	7
Coventry	27	24
Cranston	110	81
Cumberland	24	6
East Greenwich	3	2
East Providence	38	12
Exeter	4	1
Foster	4	1
Glocester	6	1
Hopkinton	5	9
Jamestown	2	1
Johnston	32	11
Lincoln	17	2
Little Compton	1	1
Middletown	15	10
Narragansett	5	1
New Shoreham	2	1
Newport	39	8
North Kingstown	22	7
North Providence	41	15
North Smithfield	10	1
Pawtucket	171	94
Portsmouth	21	3
Providence	591	352
Richmond	12	3
Scituate	7	0
Smithfield	16	1
South Kingstown	18	12
Tiverton	15	8
Warren	16	3
Warwick	89	34
West Greenwich	3	1
West Warwick	62	27
Westerly	22	35
Woonsocket	89	25
<i>Missing Residence</i>	13	4
<i>Rhode Island</i>	1,674	897