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ICYMI: Family Connects NJ Celebrates Program's Expansion to Six More Counties Across New Jersey

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The Universal Nurse Home Visitation Program is Now Available in All of South Jersey, Most of Central and North Jersey

TRENTON – The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (NJ DCF) announced that the Family Connects NJ program (FCNJ) – the state's Universal Nurse Home Visiting program – has been expanded to support more families welcoming home a newborn in six new counties. The service is now available in all of South Jersey, and most of Central and North Jersey, with program rollout on track to reach statewide implementation next year.

Families in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Monmouth and Salem counties can [now schedule](#) a free home visit from a specially trained registered nurse to perform health screenings, answer questions, refer community resources, and ensure the family has a healthy and safe start. Family Connects NJ nurses have already performed nearly 9,000 visits since the program's launch in January 2024, and it is already available in Bergen, Cumberland, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, and Sussex Counties.

"Ensuring that our families, particularly our mothers, receive the medical care they need is a top priority for my Administration. We know that the early days are critical for both moms and newborns, and having access to timely medical care can have a significant positive impact on their long-term health and well-being. The Department of Children and Families has done an excellent job expanding access to these essential services, both building upon the progress made in reducing Black infant mortality and keeping New Jersey the top place to raise a family," **said Governor Mikie Sherrill.**

"It's exciting to see how this successful program continues to grow and support even more parents and families with newborns during such a critical time in the post-pregnancy and parenting journey," **said NJ DCF Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer.** "The most recent [evaluation data](#) gathered in partnership with Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health showed that, time and time again, participants reported high satisfaction with the nurse providers, that the participants felt seen and heard, and that their nurse provider made the family's health and concerns a priority."

FCNJ is a voluntary program that offers a free nurse home visit by a specially trained registered nurse or advanced practice nurse to all families within two weeks of the arrival of a newborn. The service, now available in 17 counties, is open to all families with newborns, whether through birth, adoption, resource placement, or kinship placement. The program also assists families recovering from the tragedy of stillbirth or neonatal loss.

According to the recently updated [Maternal Health Hospital Report Card](#) which is produced by the Department of Health's [New Jersey Maternal Data Center](#), data showed that while substantive progress has been made around maternal and infant health, there is still much to do.

One of the key data points showed that 86.7% of pregnancy-related deaths were determined to be preventable. It also showed that the pregnancy-related mortality rate for Black, non-Hispanic women was 7.6 times higher than for white, non-Hispanic women, while the pregnancy-related mortality rate for Hispanic women was 2.7 times higher than for white, non-Hispanic women.

"Family Connects NJ is really becoming one of New Jersey's most effective strategies to help move the needle on preventable maternal health outcomes and to ensure New Jersey is the safest place in the nation to deliver and care for a newborn," **said NJ DCF Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Family and Community Partnerships Sanford Starr.** "The program's effectiveness is centered in the fact that we meet families where they are – in their own homes – and at a time when health complications can unexpectedly arise for both the parent and the newborn."

Family Connects NJ visits are typically scheduled within two weeks of delivery or welcoming a newborn home. During the nurse home visits, customized care and assessment is provided to the birthing parent and newborn. Nurses conduct health checkups for mom and baby and provide professional advice on breastfeeding, sleep training, and caring for a newborn, as well as referrals to community supports, if needed.

"The [first-year evaluation data](#) showcases just how incredible and lifesaving the FCNJ program has been since the very beginning," **said Brandie Wooding, Program Director for FCNJ.** "In 14% of the families that were visited during the first year, a nurse identified a serious postpartum



health concern that could not wait for the next scheduled medical appointment. This percentage has significantly increased since year one, with our 2025 data showing the percentage of families referred for medical attention at 18%. This includes issues like caregiver elevated blood pressure, signs of caregiver or infant infection, challenges with infant weight gain, and postpartum mental health.”

The Family Connects NJ program’s success is further underscored by testimonials that nursing providers and DCF program staff receive on an ongoing basis, including the below submitted by a FCNJ Program Administrator recently:

“Two FCNJ nurse home visitors arrived at a home visit that had been rescheduled. Upon arrival, they found the newborn to be dusky in color and exhibiting some abnormal breathing. They immediately assessed the newborn and identified chest retracting (irregular chest movement related to respiratory distress), a heart murmur, and a heart rate in the 80s (low for a newborn). The nurses immediately identified the newborn’s pediatrician, let the physician know what was happening, and he recommended immediate transport to the Emergency Room.

The nurses supported the family while the parents waited for a grandparent to arrive to care for their other child who was toddler age. The nurses let their supervisor know what happened and were able to make a call to the local hospital to give them the heads up that FCNJ was sending in a newborn in distress. The newborn and their parents were greeted and immediately assessed. Both the pediatric physician and nurse leader for the pediatric department expressed gratitude to the FCNJ team for catching this emergent condition and let the teams know that the baby was in great hands. The mom of the newborn called the program to express her gratitude and noted that they could not have imagined what would have happened if they didn’t have this visit.

“This is just one of many testimonials we’ve received from families highlighting the importance and the benefits of scheduling a home nurse visit during those first two weeks right after coming home with a newborn,” **said Commissioner Beyer.** “FCNJ continues to be a key part of the postpartum continuum of care, ensuring that both mom and baby are doing well, and when that’s not the case, they can connect the family immediately to appropriate medical follow-up.”



To learn more about Family Connects NJ, visit
<https://www.familyconnectsnj.org/>

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