



NEW JERSEY

Family Connects NJ

Year 1 Evaluation Brief

Evaluation of January 2024 – January 2025



JOHNS HOPKINS

BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH



FAMILY **NJ**
CONNECTS



YEAR 1 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Family Connects NJ is changing the way postpartum care is delivered to families across the state, and every family caring for a newborn, or recovering from a birth can benefit from a nurse visit at home.

In its first year of implementation, Family Connects NJ (FCNJ):

Served a diverse group of families:

From January 2024 to January 2025, FCNJ provided home visits to over 2,500 families across 5 counties with a variety of education levels and sources of insurance.

Connected families to a wide range of community resources:

Half (51%) of families who completed an FCNJ home visit received at least one referral to community resources.

Identified significant health concerns:

14% received referrals for serious postpartum health concerns that required addressing prior to the next scheduled medical appointment, including concerns for infant health as well as caregiver physical and mental health.

Successfully connected nearly two thirds of families to resources:

Among families who completed a post-visit call, 60% were successfully connected with the community resources to which FCNJ referred them.

Delivered excellent services:

Caregivers reported strong satisfaction with FCNJ services. Nearly all (98%) of caregivers would “definitely recommend” FCNJ to a friend, while 100% of caregivers felt listened to by their nurses and 100% felt their questions and needs were always treated as priority.



WHY UNIVERSAL HOME VISITING?

Among all high-income countries, the U.S. has the highest maternal and infant mortality rates¹. From 2018-2022 NJ maternal mortality rates (26 per 100,000 live births) were higher than the national average (23.2 per 100,000 live births)². Reports show that Black non-Hispanic mothers were nearly **7 times more likely** than White mothers to die from maternity-related complications, while Black infants were over **three times more likely** to die before their first birthday than White infants. Additionally, Hispanic mothers and infants also experienced higher mortality rates³.

To improve maternal and infant health outcomes for the state, New Jersey decided to implement a universal, evidenced-based home visiting program to supplement its existing home visitation programs that serve a more limited population.

New Jersey became the **second state in the nation** to legislate universal newborn home visiting. Based on the requirements in the enabling legislation, the Department of Children and Families selected the evidence-based Family Connects International model for implementation. For families that participated in Family Connects, research found **positive effects of Family Connects on maternal and infant outcomes⁴⁻⁶ and increased connections to community services^{5,6}**.

Family Connects NJ (FCNJ) implementation began in 2023, when the community alignment component of the model launched statewide. In 2024, nurse home visits launched in 5 counties: Cumberland, Essex, Gloucester, Mercer, and Middlesex. Nurse home visits are free and voluntary, and available to all families welcoming a newborn in participating counties, including families welcoming a newborn via birth, adoption, as a kinship/resource parent, or those who have experienced a stillbirth or neonatal loss.



*“I am truly thankful for this program...this allowed us to check in with a professional about our baby’s home set up and care, as well as our own. I am extremely appreciative for [our nurse’s] diligence ... **She likely stopped a serious condition from becoming life threatening**, and I am grateful! Overall, we are incredibly impressed by what **Family Connects NJ** provides for new families completely for free and in the comfort of their homes. We highly recommend this program to other families!”*
– Kat, Parent



WHAT IS FAMILY CONNECTS NJ?

Family Connects NJ (FCNJ) offers a nurse visit at home within the first few weeks after birth to ensure families have the support they need during the critical, early postpartum period. During the home visit, FCNJ clinical nurses assess the physical health of both the caregivers and infants, along with the caregivers' emotional well-being, and other needs of the family. Nurses provide guidance on infant care and connect families to community programs and services based on the family's needs. FCNJ nurse visits are delivered by local community providers.

To stay linked with existing community resources, the FCNJ Community Alignment team builds and maintains relationships with community organizations that can provide needed services to families accessing the program. The Community Alignment team also facilitates regular community advisory board meetings and conducts outreach and engagement to families eligible for FCNJ services. The Community Alignment portion of the model is implemented in partnership with each county's Connecting NJ hub, an established resource for pregnant and parenting families that also screens and/or refers families for early childhood services, including nutritional supports, material supports, cash assistance and the state's longer term home visiting programs.



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EVALUATING FCNJ

To better understand early FCNJ accomplishments and inform on-going implementation of FCNJ, Johns Hopkins University (JHU) and the New Jersey Department of Children and Families conducted an evaluation analyzing the program's reach, referrals provided, and the quality of service delivery.

In addition to analysis of FCNJ program data, JHU interviewed FCNJ and Connecting NJ staff to examine what factors helped or hindered the FCNJ implementation, and to understand how well the program integrated with the existing New Jersey early childhood system.

The evaluation aimed to answer the following questions:

- 1. Who participates in FCNJ?**
- 2. To what extent and how does FCNJ meet the specific needs of each family?**
- 3. To what extent and how does FCNJ refer families to other New Jersey programs?**
- 4. What is the experience of FCNJ participants?**
- 5. To what extent and how does FCNJ integrate with Connecting NJ?**



LESSONS LEARNED: FAMILIES SERVED

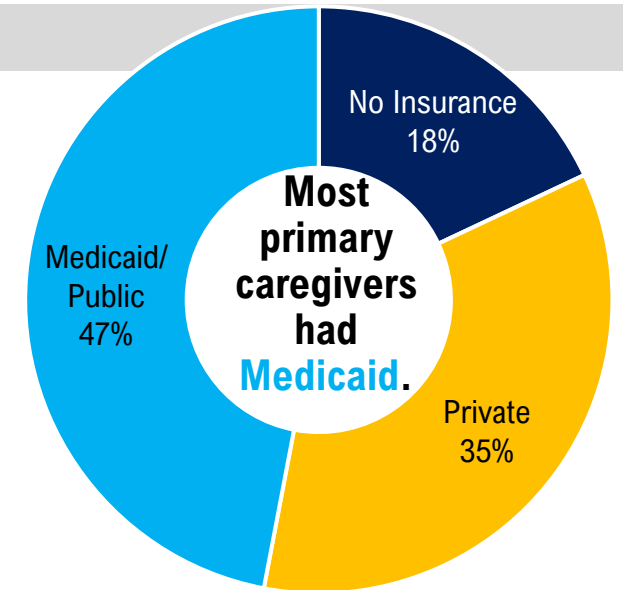
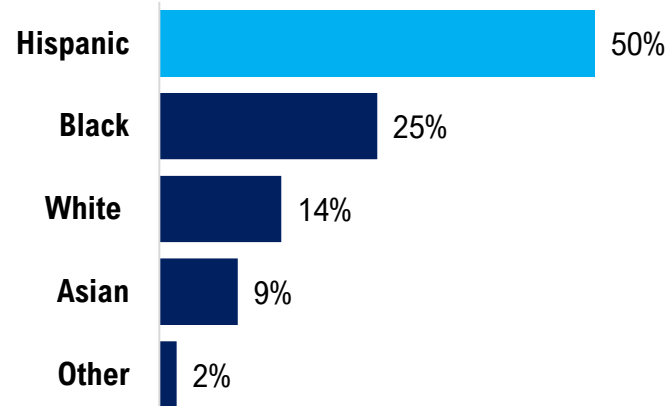
The evaluation found that FCNJ served over 2,500 eligible families with births in its first year of implementation. In Year 1, FCNJ reached 10% of eligible families with program reach increasing over the course of the year.

As a universal program, FCNJ engaged a wide range of primary caregivers. The families who received FCNJ home visits reflected the scope of New Jersey's eligible population.

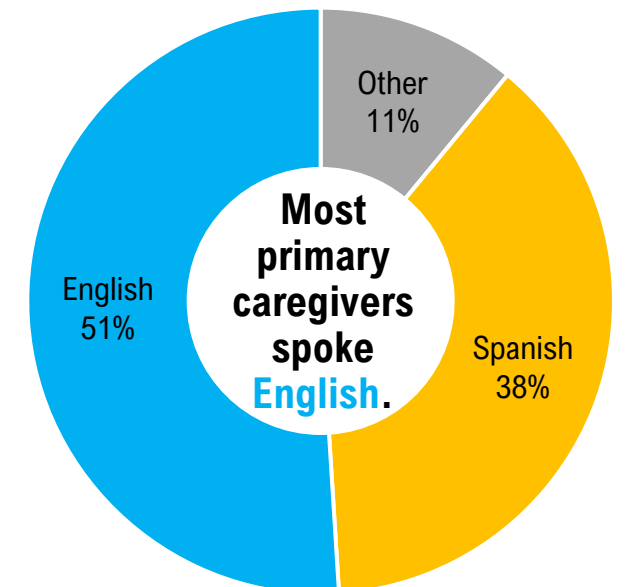
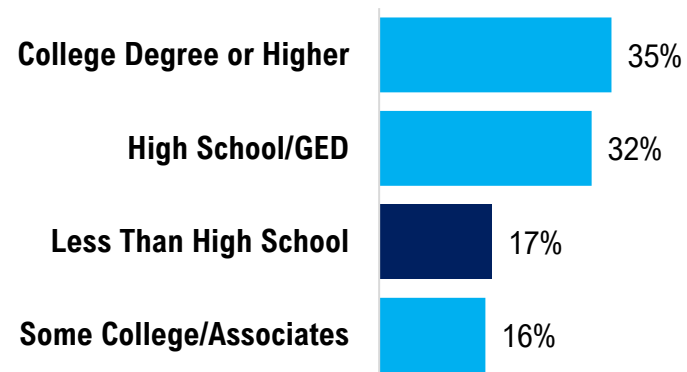


About the primary caregivers...

Most primary caregivers were **Hispanic**.



Most primary caregivers had their **High School Degrees or Higher Education**.





LESSONS LEARNED: SERVICE DELIVERY

Most families (74%) learned about FCNJ at their birthing facility, either through bedside recruitment or other hospital channels, and some (7%) heard about the program through social media.

FCNJ connected families to a range of community resources:

- **About half** of families (51%) who received a visit were referred to one or more programs or services.
- **Nearly four in ten** families (37%) were referred for household safety or material supports such as *food, formula, diapers, and safe sleep equipment*.
- **Two in ten** families (20%) were referred for *health care access* such as arranging insurance or establishing primary care.
- For **one in seven** families (14%) FCNJ nurses identified a **serious postpartum health concern** that could not wait for the next scheduled medical appointment such as *caregiver elevated blood pressure, signs of caregiver or infant infection, challenges with infant weight gain, and postpartum mental health*.

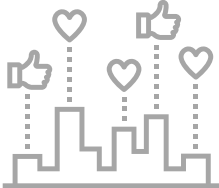


About half of families served received a referral to a community resource. For the remainder, the nurse was able to address any concerns in the visit itself.



LESSONS LEARNED: PROGRAM SATISFACTION

Most caregivers felt *very satisfied* with FCNJ services.



98% of caregivers would recommend FCNJ to a friend.



100% of caregivers felt listened to by their nurses.



100% of caregivers felt their questions and needs were always treated as priority.

100% of caregivers felt their questions and needs were always treated as priority by their FCNJ nurse.





LESSONS LEARNED: IMPLEMENTATION & COLLABORATION

FCNJ continued to evolve its approaches to connecting with families and coordinating how staff collaborate.

FCNJ identified strategies to strengthen implementation across the state.

- To support consistent, coordinated implementation across teams, leadership introduced an integrated outreach planning process.
- FCNJ staff found the most efficient and effective way to engage with primary caregivers was face-to-face at their bedside, in the birthing facility. FCNJ staff established and strengthened relationships with hospitals to facilitate this bedside recruitment.

FCNJ created new pathways into Connecting NJ. It built upon and deepened NJ's existing, robust early childhood system by establishing communication expectations and referral workflows to promote collaboration and service coordination across the two entities.

Recommendations:

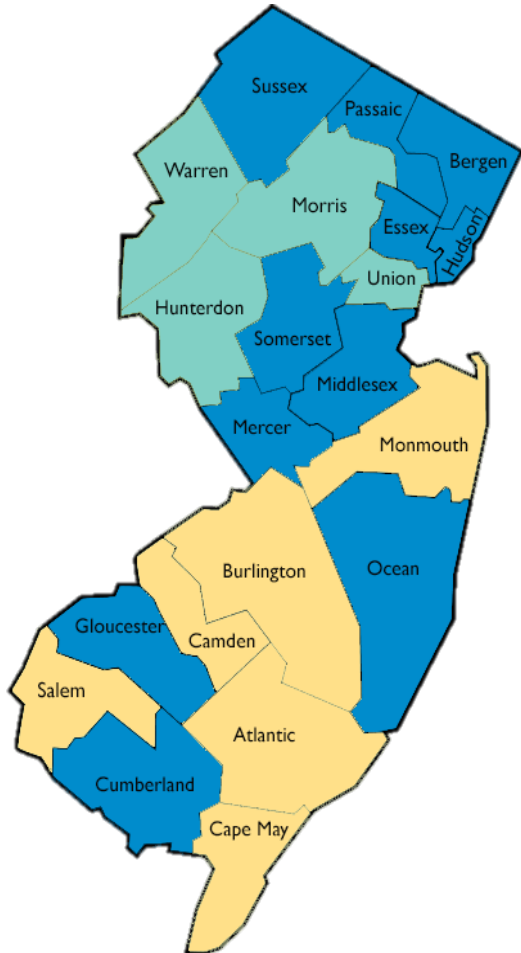
- FCNJ should maintain and potentially increase the resources and staff time committed to **bedside recruitment**, with an emphasis on fostering hospital partnerships and ensuring adequate staffing to conduct bedside recruitment in more hospitals.
- As universal home visiting expands to more counties, FCNJ should increase **cross-county opportunities** to problem solve and share best practices, e.g., through a community of practice for FCNJ nurse teams.
- FCNJ should continue to leverage existing program data, case conferences, and community advisory boards to **systematically identify and track gaps** between families' needs and available community resources.





FCNJ ROLL OUT SCHEDULE

The anticipated schedule for expansion is as follows:



Implementing Counties:

Launched 2024

- Essex
- Middlesex
- Mercer
- Cumberland
- Gloucester

Launched 2025

- Sussex
- Passaic
- Bergen
- Hudson
- Somerset
- Ocean

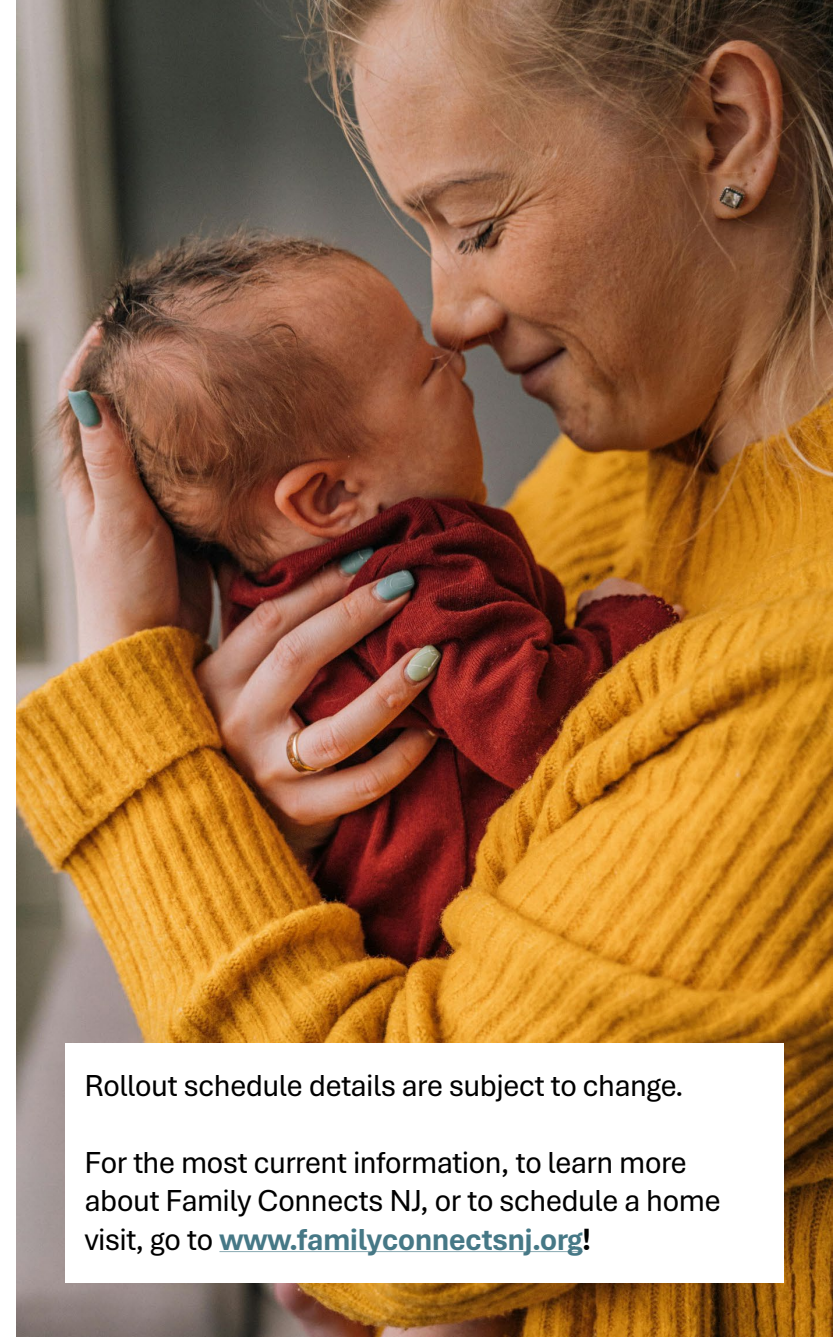
Upcoming Counties:

Launching January 2026

- Monmouth
- Camden
- Salem
- Burlington
- Atlantic
- Cape May

Launching January 2027

- Warren
- Morris
- Hunterdon
- Union



Rollout schedule details are subject to change.

For the most current information, to learn more about Family Connects NJ, or to schedule a home visit, go to www.familyconnectsnj.org!



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DATA FROM:

Johns Hopkins University and New Jersey Department of Children and Families. (2025). Family Connects New Jersey Evaluation Report.

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