



Home-Based Programs Supporting Families after Childbirth

An International Review

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Background

The first years of a child's life, and particularly the period after childbirth, are a critical stage for infant development and family wellbeing. During this period, parents cope with emotional, social, and functional changes, alongside the need to adapt to new roles. Recent years have seen growing recognition of the importance of early supportive services for families. This review examines how home visiting and family support programs help parents and children during the first years of life.

Method

The review was conducted from January-June 2026. It examined professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer-based home visiting programs in international research and professional literature, including academic articles, research and evaluation reports, policy documents, and program websites. It was also informed by an interview with the director of the Lauren & Mark Rubin Visiting Moms® program in Boston.

Key Messages



Maternal well-being affects child development

The mother's emotional and functional state after childbirth is linked to the quality of the bond between her and the infant and to the child's emotional, social, and cognitive development. Supporting the mother also means supporting the child's development.

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Secure attachment begins in everyday interaction

Consistent, sensitive, and available parental responses to the infant's needs contribute to the development of secure attachment and to a positive developmental pathway.

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Social support strengthens parenting

Supportive relationships and social networks help reduce loneliness and postpartum depression symptoms, while strengthening parental self-efficacy.



Home visiting benefits families in multiple ways

Home visiting programs are associated with improvements in parental sensitivity and well-being, parent-child interaction, and optimal child development.



There is no single model that fits all families

Some programs are delivered by professionals, while others are volunteer based. Although they differ in their characteristics, they all emphasize continuous personal relationships, training, and professional guidance.



Implementation quality is central to program success

Training, ongoing supervision, a clear operating model, and quality assurance mechanisms are recurring features of the successful programs reviewed.



High-quality support for families after childbirth through ongoing personal relationship starting early after childbirth can strengthen parental well-being and create optimal conditions for child development.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- 1** As part of a preventive welfare approach, programs that provide social support to young parents should be adopted by government ministries and not remain solely civil society initiatives.
- 2** Strengthen home-based services in the postnatal period.
- 3** Adapt the intervention model to community and family characteristics.
- 4** Invest in training and ongoing supervision for both volunteers and professionals.
- 5** Develop quality assurance and systematic measurement mechanisms to support continuous learning and improvement.