



NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION

July 3, 2013

Dear Dr. Duggan,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit comments on the Home Visiting Research Network's Research Agenda. It presents a strong vision for diverse and meaningful research on home visiting.

The National Head Start Association is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that believes that every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to succeed in life if given the opportunity that Head Start offers to children and their families. It is the national voice of more than a million children in Head Start and Early Head Start programs in the United States.

NHSA strongly supports research that poses questions about how to improve services to the at-risk children served by Early Head Start and Head Start programs across the country. Last year alone, Early Head Start and Head Start served nearly 67,000 families with the home based model, and identifying, quantifying, and improving impacts for future families is a priority for all programs. As your network prepares to drive this research agenda forward, NHSA offers comments on several priorities that represent important directions for strengthening home visiting nationally.

Priorities 1 & 7

We strongly support your focus on working toward better individualization of services for families and engagement of families in the home visiting process. Early Head Start programs serve diverse families across the country and have significant license to innovate and design services to meet families' needs. There is much to be learned from variation in programs' design and ultimately their impact. We also encourage you to direct researchers to take a broad focus in examining family outcomes, including parents' employment status, housing stability, and access to medical and other services.

Priority 2

As you note, home visiting models vary in the families they target and the impacts they pursue; in many cases, these decisions reflect varied missions. When examining core elements of home visiting through priority two, we urge you to consider how an organization's mission drives its focus and ultimately its impacts on child and family outcomes.

Priority 6

Research on the home visiting workforce also raises a critical issue of mission and addresses an important need throughout the field of home visiting. While Early Head Start home visitors hold a wide range of credentials, their cultural competency and long-term relationships with families are keys to success.

Priority 8

Head Start and Early Head Start programs support families in accessing a wide range of education, housing, nutrition, medical, mental health, and other resources in their communities. Both home based and center based programs engage parents in setting goals and increasing family stability. The success of the strongest Early Head Start programs in this area should be considered as a model for evaluation and replication.

It is our hope that you will pursue these research endeavors with the goals of Head Start in mind: improving the early environment and educational opportunities of children in poverty. All research should offer the field ways to be ever more thoughtful and effective in their work. We very much look forward to seeing this agenda realized.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Yamin Visci".

Executive Director
National Head Start Association