

Restore Funding for Home Visiting Messaging Toolkit Virginia General Assembly 2021

About: This toolkit was created to support local home visiting programs as they educate and inform elected officials in Virginia. The 2021 General Assembly session began January 13 and will end in late February 2021. Our goal is to ensure that budget amendments in the House (**Item 313 #33h**) and Senate (**Item 313 #2s**) are passed, which will provide nearly \$8M in Medicaid funding to expand home visiting in Virginia.

We all have a role to play to ensure families have access to home visiting services. Below you will find instructions, draft emails, phone scripts, and sample messages to use on social media platforms. We put all these things in one place to make it easier for your program to encourage staff, partners, board members, and families to support home visiting.

Campaign goal: Virginia General Assembly will restore Medicaid funding to expand home visiting so pregnant and parenting families can continue to receive vital supports they need in the face of the pandemic. Home visiting supports healthy pregnancies, births and development. Home visiting helps families build the skills they need to be resilient. In short, #HomeVisitingIsEssential for Virginia's families to thrive.

Campaign tagline: Restore Funding for Home Visiting!

Who to involve: Supervisors, executive directors, communications staff, development team, advisory committee members, families, home visitors, and community partners.

Timeline: January 19 – February 11, 2021

Main campaign hashtag: #HomeVisitingIsEssential

Supplemental hashtags: #HomeVisitingWorks, #HomeVisiting, #VAHomeVisitorsRock, and #VALeg (for Virginia Legislature)

Campaign toolkit web page: www.familiesforwardva.org/advocacy

Message targets: Delegates and State Senators in the Virginia General Assembly.

Find Your Legislators

For the 2021 Virginia General Assembly session, visit [Who's My Legislator](#) and type in your home address to find your Delegate and State Senator.

If you happen to live in a different area than where your program is located, you can also type in your program's physical address and contact those legislators, as well.

This toolkit was developed by Early Impact Virginia and Families Forward Virginia. We'd also like to credit the Parents As Teachers National Center for their Home Visiting Is Essential Campaign Toolkit (July 2020) for sample posts and scripts modified for inclusion in this document.

1. EMAIL

[Click here](#) to complete a simple form with your name and address. An email will be sent directly to the Delegate and State Senator for where you live. Don't forget to forward this email action alert to your board, advisory council, and funders, with a request for them to take action.

BONUS POINTS: You can also contact your legislators directly via email. [Click here](#) to download a list of all the Delegates' and State Senators' contact information. *(A picture is worth a thousand words: If you have photos of 1) a family you've served, 2) a local distribution or holiday event, 3) program activity, or 4) children's artwork, be sure to attach it!)* Be sure to attach the [Home Visiting in Virginia Issue Brief](#) in your email, too.

Below is a sample email message:

Dear Sen. or Del. _____,

My name is _____ and I work for _____ which provides home visiting services in _____, _____ and _____ *(List the locality or localities you serve. Be specific!).*

Please restore Medicaid funding for early childhood home visiting funding (Item 313 #33h and Item 313 #2s). The original budget passed by the legislature in 2020 included funding to add home visiting as a Medicaid-funded service. This was un-allotted due to the pandemic. Please support restoring this item in the budget to expand these critical services to families in OUR community!

Home visiting is PROVEN:

- Improves maternal and infant health
- Promotes equity and reduces health disparities
- Increase school readiness and social-emotional development
- Builds healthy, nurturing relationships
- Reduces health disparities
- Cost effective – proven to save up to \$5.70 for every dollar invested

Please support Item 313 #33h and Item 313 #2s so that Medicaid funding for home visiting can be restored. Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Name

Home address *(use personal address if you're a constituent, use agency address if you're not)*

Email

Phone *(where people can reach you if trying to quickly schedule a meeting)*

2. PHONE

You can also call your elected officials using the General Assembly Hotline at 1-833-617-1821 Monday – Thursday, from 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM, and Fridays, from 8:30 AM – 2:00 PM.

Below is a sample call script:

Hello! My name is _____ and I'm a constituent who lives at _____ (*Your home address*). I work for _____ (*Program Name*) which provides home visiting services in _____, _____, and _____ (*List locality or localities your program serves*).

Please restore Medicaid funding for early childhood home visiting funding (Item 313 #33h and Item 313 #2s). The original budget passed by the legislature in 2020 included funding to add home visiting as a Medicaid-funded service. This was un-allotted due to the pandemic. Please support restoring this item in the budget to expand these critical services to families in OUR community!

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- Cost effective – proven to save up to \$5.70 for every dollar invested

Early childhood home visiting is proven to show short and long term budget savings and restoring Medicaid funding for home visiting will leverage significant federal matching funds.

I hope you will support Item 313 #33h and Item 313 #2s and vote to restore Medicaid funding for home visiting

Thank you for your time!

Other information and stories you can share on your call include:

- When we stopped visiting families in person due to COVID-19, we pivoted immediately to providing video and telehealth virtual visits to serve families without interruption. Our parent educators/nurses/home visitors are still at work doing visits, groups, and screenings.

- Our program is rising to the occasion and engaging our community by providing virtual home visiting, putting together “drop-off” family kits with diapers and activities for families—with appropriate social distancing. If anything, our home visitors are working harder than ever!
- Now, more than ever, home visiting is an essential service to the families we serve. During COVID-19, local home visiting providers have continued to provide essential health, social and behavioral health supports to nearly 10,000 Virginia families and their young children. A critical support for families, home visiting has been a lifeline for thousands of Virginia families facing uncertainty, hardship and crisis.

3. Social Media

Post messages on your program and personal social media accounts. This includes Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram, just to name a few. You can access the [Early Impact Virginia Social Media Toolkit](#) here for a comprehensive how-to just for home visiting programs. Below, we have added sample posts for you to use during General Assembly 2021.

Sample posts for Facebook

- We urge our General Assembly members (@Mark Sickles @Adam Ebbin @Dave Marsden @Janet Howell) to fund Medicaid for early childhood home visiting services because home visiting consistently demonstrates positive outcomes for Virginia’s young families. Home visiting means fewer maternal and infant deaths, increased parental employment and family self-sufficiency, and reduced incidences of child abuse and neglect. #HomeVisitingWorks #HomeVisitingIsEssential
- Home visiting has made a huge difference to families like Michelle, and her son David. *(Include a photo)*. Michelle became a mother at a young age. Her home visitors coached her through her pregnancy, got her connected to the right services, and supported her as she planned out her goals. Read more here *(link to your program website)*. #HomeVisitingIsEssential

Social Media Tips & Tricks

Be sure to tag your decision makers and include a photo or graphic with EVERY post.

Due to physical distancing, consider creative ways you can highlight the work of home visiting through photos and video posts.

Look up your state legislators’ Facebook and Twitter handles on this spreadsheet (Not every state legislator has social media).

The advocacy window is only a few weeks. Post daily on Facebook and Twitter, and 2-3 times a week on LinkedIn, Instagram or other social media channels.

Don’t forget to tag (using @) Early Impact Virginia and Families Forward Virginia. You can also tag your national model, if you have space.

Use the hashtags #HomeVisitingIsEssential, #HomeVisitingWorks, #VAHomeVisiting, and #VAleg in your posts.

- Now more than ever, the families enrolled in our program are experiencing the devastating impacts of income loss, balancing work without childcare, or difficulty finding food and other necessities – and simply trying to survive the months to come. For many, like Ramon, Angelica, and Aracelly, (*post photo of family at distribution event*), we are that trusted support. #HomeVisitingIsEssential

Sample posts for Twitter

- #VALeg should restore Medicaid funding for home visiting because it improves maternal&infant health and leverages significant federal matching funds! @SenLouiseLucas @CliffHayesJr
- The #VALeg should fund Medicaid for early childhood home visiting because it’s a lifeline for under-resourced & overburdened families. It reduces health disparities & shows short & long term budget savings @DelegateTorian @GeorgeLBarker
- Through #HomeVisiting, [@ your program/host agency] plays a powerful role in supporting parents through crisis. We’re reaching families through technology to meet family needs during social-distancing. Please restore Medicaid funding because #HomeVisitingIsEssential [Tag your legislator]
- We are doing our part to prevent the spread of #coronavirus by supporting families through virtual home visits. #HomeVisitingIsEssential [Tag your legislator]
- #HomeVisiting is among the nation’s most trusted family support programs helping families navigating the #COVID19 crisis. #HomeVisitingIsEssential [Tag your legislator]

Twitter Pro Tips:

Since Twitter has character limits, you can tag @FamiliesForwardVA, @EarlyImpactVA, and legislators in “replies” to your first post.

The reply function in Twitter allows you to create a “thread” of messages where you can add more information such as links to stories of families served, your program website, and links for people to email their legislators.

- Virtual home visiting is a lifeline for families during #COVID19. Please restore Medicaid funding for #HomeVisiting so we can continue reaching families during the crisis. #HomeVisitingIsEssential [Tag your legislator]

Graphics and Social Media Go Together Like Peanut Butter and Jelly

Get creative! We’ll be sharing graphics and photos on our social media accounts that your program can share and retweet. You can also create your own to fit the needs of your community, and even use popular GIFs if they are relevant and correspond with your post. We also encourage you to collaborate with your agency leadership and communication teams to

develop and share real photos and stories, or to overlay your own agency logo. For a sample photo release, or more information on sharing photos via social media, don't forget to download the [Early Impact Virginia Social Media Toolkit](#).

Post Those Published Articles, Too!

You can also share articles via social media, or reference them in your posts. Any articles about your program or events your team attended are perfect content to share (and re-share on #ThrowbackThursday or #FlashbackFriday).

If you haven't already, be sure to send these articles to your communications/development team.

- [Center for American Progress Home Visiting is a Lifeline During COVID19](#)
- [Young Children in Deep Poverty: Racial/Ethnic Disparities and Child Well-Being Compared to Other Income Groups](#)
- [Child Abuse Risk Remains Concern Amid Continued COVID Financial and Social Strain](#)
- [The Pandemic's Invisible Toll: Experts See Surge of mental health need for Black and Latino kids in Richmond](#)

4. Schedule a Meeting/Attend an Event

One more incredibly important activity that you can do to engage and inform your elected officials is meeting with and getting to know them. You can do that by scheduling a meeting with your Delegates and State Senator, and/or signing up to participate in one of the six regional "Virtual Visits with Parents" hosted by Families Forward Virginia.

The "Virtual Visits with Parents" are expressly designed for parents to share their thoughts and experiences directly with legislators from across their region—and all from their own hometown! This will let legislators hear about family needs directly from families. Parents can share the important role that home visiting has played in their lives, while also advocating for funding to expand services in their community. Register for a "Virtual Visit with Parents" [here](#).

If a virtual visit is not scheduled in your area, reach out directly to [your Delegate and State Senator](#) to set up your own virtual visit.

You can use the email template below to schedule an appointment:

Say Cheese!

Don't forget to take a pic (or screenshot) of your meeting. You can post it to social media after your visit, and tag your legislator to thank them!



Dear Sen. or Del. _____,

My name is _____ and I'm a constituent who lives at _____ (*Your home address*). I work for _____ (*Program Name*) which provides home visiting services in _____, _____, and _____ (*List locality or localities your program serves*).

Some of our program staff/families would like to meet with you virtually during the 2021 session to talk about their experiences with the pandemic, how home visiting helped them, and what supports parents need to succeed.

Thanks for your time, and I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Name

Home address (*use personal address if you're a constituent, use agency address if you're not*)

Email

Phone (*where people can reach you if trying to quickly schedule a meeting*)

Be sure to share the [Home Visiting in Virginia Issue Brief](#) during your visit.

Want help scheduling an appointment? Contact [Ali Faruk](#), Policy Director at Families Forward Virginia or [Jacque Hale](#), Collective Impact Manager at Early Impact Virginia.

5. Tell Us What You Did

We will be keeping an eye on social media and participating in virtual events alongside you. To capture ALL the great ways you are using your voice to educate and inform legislators, please complete this [brief survey](#) when you schedule a meeting or appointment with your legislators.

For more information, or if you have any questions about the this toolkit, please contact [Ali Faruk](#), Policy Director, Families Forward Virginia
[Jacque Hale](#), Collective Impact Manager, Early Impact Virginia