

AN INVESTMENT LETTER FOR MINNESOTA PHILANTHROPISTS

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Family & Children's Service is a leading public policy advocate for a broad range of initiatives that help families become self sufficient. This issue highlights two highly successful programs (TARGETED HOME VISITING & QUANTUM OPPORTUNITIES) supported by Family & Children's Service.

In each case the taxpayer receives a return over time of nearly four times the initial investment.

F&CS has been a leader in providing direct service to disadvantaged families and has distinguished itself by advocating and implementing a range of programs that not only improve the health of family life but also provide significant savings to the taxpayer. F&CS led the efforts to secure Minnesota's first funding for Head Start, secured state funding for crisis nurseries and is the leader in securing state funding for public health nurse home visiting programs.

TARGETED HOME VISITING PROGRAMS

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM

- The national Institute of Justice has found that children who are abused or neglected are 53% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 38% more likely to be arrested as an adult (77% more likely if female) and 38% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.
- In Hennepin County a year 2000 study showed that over 14,000 calls were received about suspected child maltreatment, 5,550 calls were investigated by a case worker and in over 2,600 cases abuse or neglect was substantiated.
- In Minnesota 11,113 children were determined to be abused or neglected in a 1999 study. Physical abuse totaled 2,727 cases, sexual abuse 802, neglect 8,021 and mental injury 109.

HOW DOES TARGETED HOME VISITATION WORK?

Trained public health nurses visit with families for several hours each month to observe current behaviors, recommend in home helpful practices and where appropriate connect the family with other resources. Minnesota's Department of Health targeted home visiting programs are specifically designed to prevent the neglect and abuse of children. These services are offered before and after birth on a voluntary basis to families who meet established risk criteria. Families are connected with primary health care providers and community based services by public health nurses who make direct calls on the targeted home. The objective is to promote positive parenting skills and eliminate practices harmful to the development healthy children.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF TARGETED HOME VISITATION?

- A pilot program in Minnesota's Faribault and Martin Counties showed that only 3% of children in the target population experienced substantial maltreatment versus an estimated 20% maltreatment rate for kids not in the target group.
- Indiana's "Healthy Families Initiative" had a success rate of 99% with only 10 out of 1,026 families found to confirm abuse or neglect at 15 sites statewide.
- In Hawaii's "Healthy Start" program 99.9% of families were free of abuse or neglect at 12 sites statewide.
- Arizona's "Healthy Families" project experienced a 97% success rate.

WHAT'S THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The child protection system has been crisis-driven with little opportunity to implement preventive techniques. Most serious offenders evidence anti-social behavior as early as pre-school. Preventing anti social behavior has a direct correlation with the prevention of juvenile crime. Home visiting through public health nurses costs between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per family annually. The estimated average cost of hospitalization for an abused child for one week is \$9,000. Juvenile detention centers cost over \$50,000 for one year of treatment. Adolescents whose families received services at least ten years in the past are 55% less likely to be arrested, 80% less likely to be convicted of a crime and 60% less likely to run away.

- Statistical analysis concludes that government costs are fully recovered by the time the first child in a family reaches age 4 according to the RAND Corporation.
- The RAND Corporation study also concludes that by the time these children reach age 15, the cost savings are four times the original investment!

"For the first time there exists solid, scientifically validated evidence that prenatal and early childhood nurse home visitation services prevent crime and delinquency."

U.S. Department of Justice Juvenile Justice Bulletin

THE QUANTUM OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

- In Minnesota about 74% of the adult prison inmate population did not complete high-school according to the Department of Corrections.
- There is a higher correlation between dropping out of school and ending up in prison than there is between smoking and lung cancer.
- In Minnesota high-school dropouts earn at a maximum 66% less than those who graduate.

HOW DOES THE “QUANTUM OPPORTUNITY” GRADUATION INCENTIVE PROGRAM WORK?

“Quantum Opportunity” is a four year after-school, weekend, and/or summer program for ninth through twelfth graders in high crime and high poverty neighborhoods. It is comprised of small groups of up to 25 students with a youth leader. Students spend up to 750 hours each year beyond normal class time in basic educational programs, personal skill development and community service. There is a funded scholarship “Opportunity Account” for either post-secondary education or training. The cost of \$2,500 per student per year includes the program expense and the scholarship account.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE “QUANTUM OPPORTUNITIES” PROGRAM?

- Where boys and girls participated in the program juvenile crime was reduced by 52% and adult crime by 50%. Boys not in the program were found to be six more times likely to be convicted of a crime.
- Boys and girls who did not participate in the program were 50% more likely to have children during the high-school years. Youth who did not participate in the program were twice as likely to dropout of school.
- Youth who participated in the program were two and one half times more likely to go on to further education or training after high-school.

WHAT IS THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT?

- The RAND Corporation found that \$1.00 spent on the program saved the taxpayer \$3.86.
- Per dollar spent QOP was over five times more effective at preventing serious crime than the Three Strikes Law in California. Each \$1.00 spent prevents over 250 serious crimes.

KEY PUBLIC POLICY QUESTIONS

- What percent of the need for Targeted Home Visitation is being met in Minnesota? What would it cost to meet 100% of that need? What is the estimated financial benefit of meeting that need?
- To what extent are we meeting the need in Minnesota for after school boost up programs like Quantum? What would it cost to insure that all Minnesota students have the ability to graduate from high-school and be prepared for collage and/or the world of work?

WHAT OTHER PROGRAMS WORK TO SUPPORT FAMILIES?

Child Care Subsidies both free and sliding scale help families escape poverty and become more self-sufficient by permitting one or more parents to work.

Education and Training for low wage workers and especially those transitioning from welfare to work.

EITC & Minnesota Family Tax Credit.....The Earned Income Tax Credit is a refundable tax credit established to strengthen work incentives by increasing the rewards from paid work. The Minnesota Working Family Credit helps offset the regressivity of the sales tax for very low income families.

Head Start is a nationwide child and family development program for families living below the poverty line, primarily 3 and 4 year old children and their families.

Medical Assistance & Minnesota Care are free and sliding scale health insurance plans covering physical and mental health care.

MFIP-Minnesota Family Investment Program was Minnesota's original welfare to work program. The current MFIP-S program uses a "work first" methodology with limited opportunities for education and training.

Pell Grants are federal grants to low-income students to assist with higher education costs. Minnesota also has a grants program.

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