

From the Desk of Sue
Susan Atwell, HFNY Unit Manager, Office of Children and Family Services

Dear Healthy Families New York,

So, this is it, the last "From the Desk of Sue." As I look forward to my retirement at the end of September, never in a million years did I anticipate that we would not see each other again (or only see each other virtually). I was really looking forward to my last Statewide Leadership Meeting, to talk, reminisce, and give lots and lots of hugs. Instead, I am sending you all virtual hugs!

I have been with Healthy Families New York for the last five and a half years and so much has changed since then. Together, we went from exceptionally large paper files and handwritten notes to an almost paperless system with home visits and supervisions being entered completely on the computer. We have developed site visit tools that measure model fidelity and help programs become familiar with the ever-changing Healthy Families America Best Practice Standards. We have developed policies, and more policies, and even more policies to help guide our practice!

In addition, we have expanded the program throughout the state into Jefferson, Wayne, Monroe, Cortland, Oswego, Orleans, Yates, Chenango and Rockland Counties and have also expanded to serve additional families in Herkimer, Otsego, Broome, Suffolk, Steuben, Redhook and Corona Queens. We have begun to "right size" programs and have developed a more appropriate cost per family so that staff could get the pay raises that they deserve! We had another Training Institute, a fatherhood conference, began the Combined Enrollment Research, and concluded the 15-year Random Control Trial data collection. During our accreditation process, each program manager, program and branch of Central Administration contributed unique strengths, skills and perspectives. This collaboration resulted in us receiving our five-year accreditation from Healthy Families America.

All this happened in five short years! We should all be proud of the work we have done together and how we have worked as a team every step of the way. I know that I am very proud of our accomplishments.

I leave you with these two hopes. First, please remember to care for each other. Second, try to have at least one really great belly laugh at every Regional, Central Administration, Statewide Leadership and committee meeting, and when you do, think of me.

It has truly been an honor to work with all of you. Thank you for making me a part of your Healthy Families family!

Best wishes to you all,

Sue



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On March 15, 2020, schools closed in New York, employees who could work from home started to do so, non-essential stores closed in late March, and people outside were advised to stay six feet apart. Children have a hard time understanding why they can only see grandparents and other extended family and friends on a screen or through a window. But we kept hope alive.

We offer a poem....to reflect on this period of time:

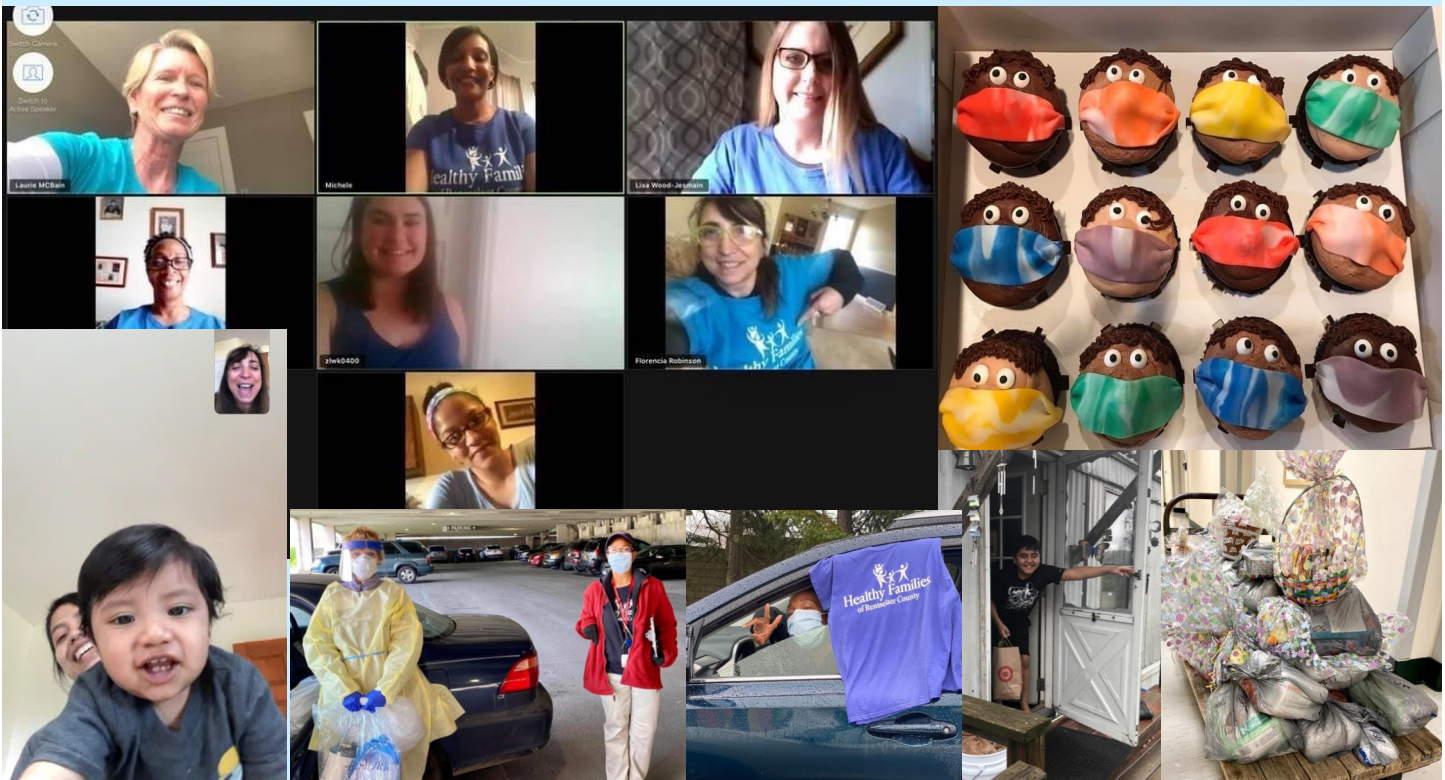
“And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently. And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal. And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.”

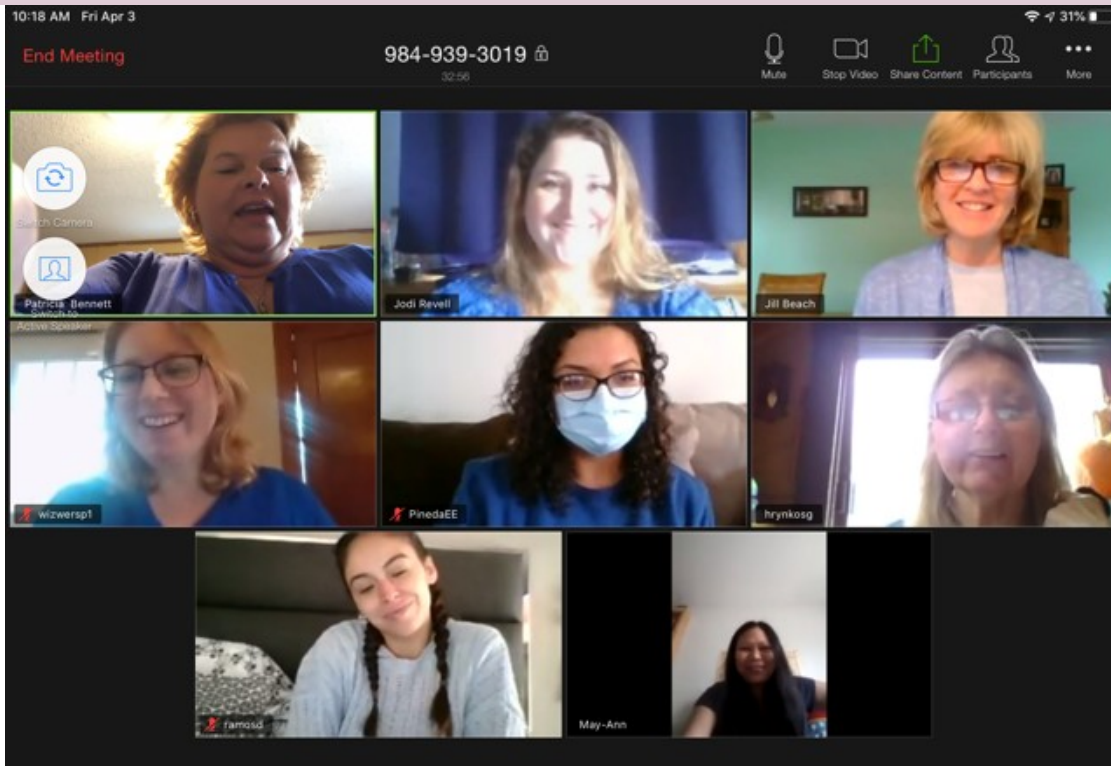
~Kitty O’Meara

However, while the people stayed home, home visiting staff in Healthy Families NY programs throughout the state continued to serve families in their communities: most moved to completely virtual visits while still providing contactless deliveries of essential items to families. In this issue, we proudly offer you a snapshot of what that looks like throughout Healthy Families New York.

Healthy Families of Rensselaer County Laurie McBain, program manager

We have been doing weekly diaper deliveries, which also include wipes, activity supplies for parents, bus passes and other resources. Easter baskets were donated by the Samaritan School of Nursing, and we gave those to our families residing in shelters. Some of the items that meant a great deal have gone to our families living in rural Rensselaer County, who work on a farm and are Spanish-speaking. We delivered a soccer ball that brought a huge smile. See photos from our Zoom staff meetings, deliveries, staff doing virtual visits and cupcakes I made for my team to thank them for the great work they have been doing.





Zoom team meeting on Wear Blue day for the prevention of child abuse.
Left to right, top: Pat Bennett, program manager;
Jodi Revell, FSS; Jill Beach, FSS.
Second row: Stacey Wizwer, program supervisor; Ericka Pineda FSS; Susan Hrynko, FSS

Ready, Set, GO!

Tina Tison, PCANY

FUN WINDOW CLINGS: Here's a fun craft you can try with kids, even very young ones. Kids seem to love the window clings that you can stick to any window and then move to another window if you want. This is a fun way to make them yourself, using just a few things that you might already have at home.

1. Either draw a picture or cut out a simple shape or picture from a coloring book.
2. Put your picture inside the plastic bag, and lay it flat on your work surface.
3. Mix the 2 tablespoons of glue, desired amount of food coloring and 2 drops of dish detergent in a small bowl (if you want to use different colors just mix up several bowls).
4. Paint on the plastic bag to make your picture (paint thickly so it will be sturdy when you peel it off). * If you're using more than one color for your picture make sure the colors touch each other so that your window cling will dry into one solid piece.
5. Let it dry for at least 24 hours and then check it to be sure it's dry.
6. Peel it off the plastic bag carefully, and stick it to a window. (peel off and re-stick it to any other glass surface as much as you want).

What you'll need:

- Plastic baggies
- White glue (like Elmer's)
- Liquid food coloring
- Liquid dish detergent
- Small paint brush



South Bronx Healthy Families Hiring during COVID-19 Sofia Nivar, program manager

To continue serving our community during these trying times, South Bronx Healthy Families (SBHF) developed a hiring and interviewing process to find great candidates. We had our candidate shadow a virtual home visit with a toddler, who happened to be the child of family support specialist Rosmaira Garcia. The candidate had the opportunity to watch, on video, as Maribel Valenzuela, program supervisor, conducted a virtual Growing Great Kids curriculum lesson. We then asked the candidate to facilitate an activity with the family, which allowed us to observe her curriculum and activity delivery skills.

A few days after this virtual home visit, we conducted an actual supervision session with the candidate. Our goal was to assess her reflective capacity and the way that she handled feedback. The opportunity was so valuable for us. Since we had recorded both the home visit and the supervision, we were able to go over these as a team to discuss how she would fit into our model and program.

We all agreed that we loved the candidate's enthusiasm and her willingness to participate in this approach to hiring. I don't think after this we can ever go back to our traditional way of interviewing. With so much going on in the world, this was something that connected us to our work and brought us joy.

The interview process was amazing and I want to give a "shout out" to our supervisors Maribel Valenzuela and Jasmaylyn Jimenez, and to Rosmaira and her family for helping me bring this process to life. I have an amazing team here at SBHF!



Jasmaylyn Jimenez, program supervisor
South Bronx Healthy Families at Bronx
Care Health System

Steuben Healthy Families Team

Our program staff have done an amazing job staying connected with families. Our program capacity has held at around 89%! Part of our success is connected to our longstanding presence in our community. One thing we've done to help with this is to stay connected with referral sources and provide parent surveys virtually, enrolling new participants in the program. Outreach in the community has been difficult due to everyone staying at home, but we continue to share program information with potential referral sources remotely and promote the program through our host agency's social media platforms.

At first, a few families were not open to the idea of virtual visits, but now most are participating in them. They seem to really appreciate that we are a connection to the outside world. Staff had to adjust their styles to fit the virtual world, but now many say the visits are going much better than they'd expected.

We've been conducting visits by phone, Zoom, Messenger video, Facetime and Skype. The learning curve for these new platforms has been a hurdle for families, and there have been challenges with some families not having minutes on their phones or good service in the rural communities we serve. Still, since many have had to learn to use these platforms for homeschooling their children, that has helped them feel more comfortable doing home visits with us virtually. One home visitor even said she "feels like a pro" at virtual work!



"I turned part of our spare room into my office, made myself a desk space similar to the office and even added in a dog bed for the furry coworkers."

~ Allie Whaley, FRS

Some families have been more consistently engaged with the program since we went virtual; this again may be their need for connection during this time of isolation. Home visitors have talked to families about self-care and encouraged families to go for walks, exercise and reach out to family and friends. They work hard to help families find ways to bring peace into their homes during this time. And as we always acknowledge the impact of the parallel process, supervisors have paid attention to staff wellness and remind them to be doing the same for themselves and their own families.

Our staff have come up with lots of ways to stay connected: we've sent Mother's Day cards and story videos and shared videos of staff with families. We have heard that families really enjoyed receiving these. We hear families talking about the impact that this time of social isolation has had on their mental health and general way of life. Some have been laid off temporarily, some have lost their jobs altogether, and others are in a waiting period to hear which fate will befall them. Given these things, they seem to appreciate even more the safe connection they have with our program and the trusting relationship they have with their home visitor.

Watch our video in recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ULeuWEtwrl>

In many ways, being able to "see" into the home through video chat has allowed for a seamless transition and has resulted in no loss of communication or documentation of parent-child interactions! We have found ways to share curriculum and family activities using screen shots and emailing materials. We've continued to support this important goal of Healthy Families NY and provide this crucial service to our community!

Steuben Healthy Families
Marlene Shiloh, program supervisor

“Through this all, staff continue to work on building quality relationships with each family, whether it’s a new family or a family that has been in the program for a long time. Staff want the families to feel secure and less anxious during this time and to teach them how to sustain healthy relationships through this pandemic. Staff know and work with each of their families to make this situation less stressful, offering referrals to a wide range of agencies for support. They truly love being a support to families in this time of uncertainty and continue to also reach out to each other through emails, team chats and sending cards.”

Watch a video we made and sent to our families. It let them know we were thinking about them and brightened their day.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= ynD4jludug>

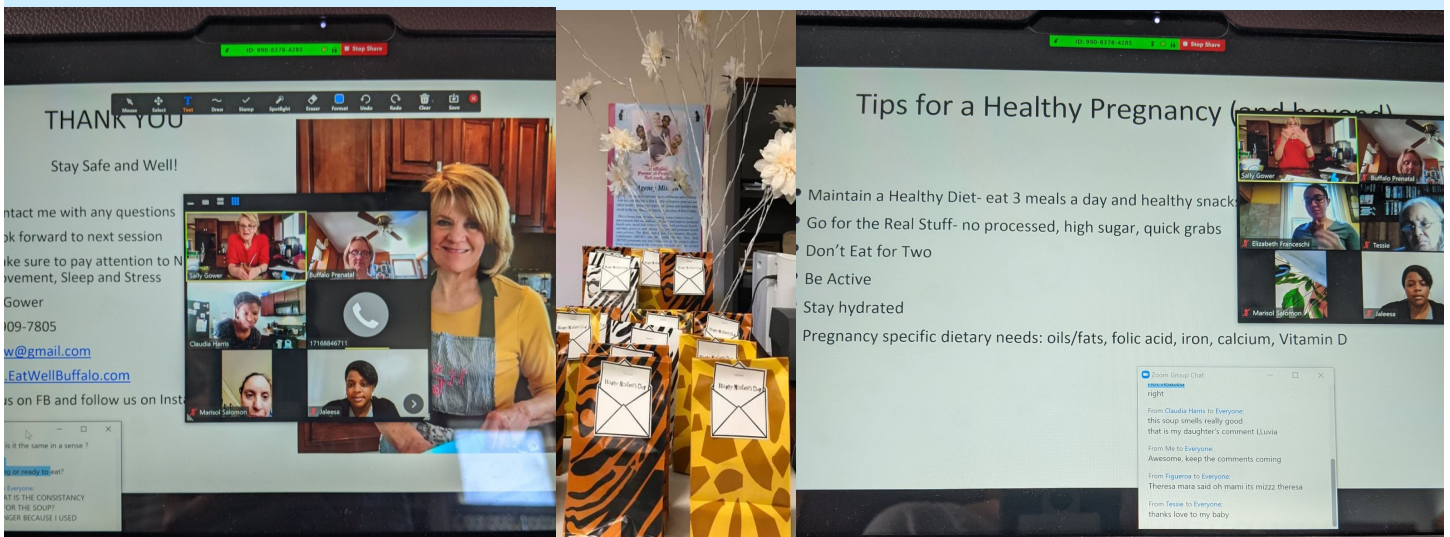


Ann Marie Correa, program manager
Healthy Families Buffalo Home Visiting Program

During this time, we have operated our own food pantry supplying food, formula and diapers to families who could not get out to the store or who were low on funds. We also delivered Easter bags to our families, which included filling 1,800 Easter eggs for our target children and their families. Our participants took videos of at-home creative activities to share with other families in the program, and we encouraged literacy by sharing videos of our staff reading stories. The team has been “putting out a lot of fires” with participant families, so we mailed out small gifts and cards to encourage staff, thank them and let them know how much we appreciate their hard work. We have hosted some other activities including online cooking classes, meditation sessions and Zumba classes.



Our mission when the pandemic hit was to try to create some normalcy for our staff and participant families and to give as much support as possible to them both. We have been able to continue conducting parent surveys virtually, and our home visitors have been conducting virtual home visits to families at the same level as in-home visits. Lastly, we have found that trying to keep as “normal” of a schedule as possible has helped staff and families feel more comfortable.



Cortland County Healthy Families Deanna Pace, program manager

Cortland County Healthy Families is a relatively new program serving a rural county in Central NY. As part of our push to reach capacity, we have goals for the number of screens, parent surveys and enrollments to be completed each month. Despite COVID-19 challenges, our staff have been working hard to continue meeting these goals. With their continued dedication to our program and families, staff we were able to achieve 67% of our parent survey goal and 75% of our enrollment goal. As a result, our capacity has increased by 5% since our office shut down in mid-March.

Outreach and Engagement

Our family resource specialist began adapting her initial contact attempts to allow time to complete the parent survey if the family is able to do so at that time. She continues to maintain active connections with current referral sources and to engage new referral sources. She reminds them that we are still enrolling new families and provides them with any materials they may need.



Masks sewn by program manager

Home Visiting

On the home visiting front, staff have become creative in their efforts to continue to engage families. We have achieved a very high virtual home visit rate for the month of April, with most families continuing to be “seen” at their pre-virtual rate! Overall, staff report that some families are more likely to complete virtual home visits than in-person visits. Family support specialists (FSS) are using phone calls and video technology for home visiting, based on family preferences. In addition to our agency’s Facebook page, staff have set up “work” Facebook accounts that they use during office hours. Families can choose to “friend” staff if they prefer, which provides another avenue of support outside of text messages and phone calls. Many families have increased their engagement and connections with their FSS through Facebook. Only one family has left the program since we have switched to virtual visits.

Any curriculum or other materials families may need are either sent via text message or regular mail, or dropped off in person using appropriate safety protocols. Staff noted that fathers are more engaged right now in visits because they have been home due to workplace shutdowns; we will be strategizing how to continue to keep them involved as we slowly re-open. In April staff focused on teaching and using the SEEDS model (Social Connectivity, Exercise, Education, Diet, and Sleep) and on incorporating protective factors into discussions with families during home visits. This became an important piece of home visiting as families became more stressed and needed additional coping skills and other supports following a community-wide increase in intimate partner violence and Child Protective Services calls

Staff have been very busy making referrals for needed services and have made 87 referrals over the past two months.

Additional support

At the beginning of the pandemic when it became clear everyone would need to have a face covering, the program manager began sewing cloth masks and was able to provide every family with at least one mask for each family member in the household over the age of two. This totaled about 70 masks. The masks became part of our COVID-19 Prevention and Education kits that we delivered in April. At the first visit immediately following delivery, staff went over basic prevention, health and safety information from the CDC and NYS Department of Health. The kits also included laundry soap, dish soap, hand soap, multi-purpose cleaner, paper towels, toilet paper, paper napkins and plates, and tissues.

Words from two of our participants

Two families wished to share stories with us about how much the support they have received from staff during this crisis has meant to them.



Prevention and Education kits

“If I had to tell you what I like most is she (Amanda), is always there when I just need a little more encouragement, and she gives me all the help she can, as well as helps me learn new things. I was having a hard time with my baby only looking one way and would not turn his head. She helped encourage me to just put my hand up to his eyes so he would turn his head.” - Nicole

“Being a single mother is hard when you are stuck inside with two kids. Hearing her (Michelle’s) voice helps calm me down because I know that there is someone there to help. She gives me coping and stress reducing tips, and reminds me that what I am feeling is normal. I felt like I was lost and doing everything wrong with my older son’s schoolwork; she gives me ideas to help him. She just helps me feel better and less depressed and like I am a good mom.” - April

**Healthy Families Corona
Supporting Families and Staff Virtually
Marlene Sierra, program manager/supervisor**

Healthy Families Corona (HFC) has been successfully engaging families through virtual visits. The families have expressed that they appreciate having us in their homes virtually, helping them learn how to connect with the resources in the community in this difficult time. We continue to strengthen ties of trust by asking the families to share what is going well in their homes and how we can support them when things are not functioning the way they planned. It is amazing how families are responding and how comfortable they feel contacting us in moments of need.

We continue working hard to keep the families involved with their children even through the stress of COVID-19. We keep promoting PCI by encouraging families to have playtime and story time, and providing activities to do with their children.

Our families in Corona know we're here for them, and not even social distancing has stopped HFC from serving them, whether it's through video, phone calls, text or emails. They know they can count on us!



Maria Guadron and her beautiful newborn Karina Melendez, having a skin-to-skin moment.



Working from home could be difficult, but when we talk about PCI, it starts at home!



HFC receiving support from Isabel daSilva, PCANY.

"Having Central Administration always available to give us support has been crucial for HFC to perform at our best. Central Administration always answers the call when we need their guidance."



COVID-19 cannot stop Healthy Families Corona from having fun moments with the staff and celebrating their birthdays.

Celebrating FRS Maria Torres and FSS Mercy Tantaquispe.



How Central Administration Moved to Virtually Supporting our State System

Ellen Butowsky, Prevent Child Abuse New York

As the force of the pandemic hit New York State, and Healthy Families New York (HFNY) needed to switch to virtual visits, Central Administration (CA) had to swiftly identify ways to continue supporting its programs all across the state. CA is comprised of three different organizations (Office of Children and Family Services, Center for Human Services Research and Prevent Child Abuse New York) that all strive to work as seamlessly as possible to bring the unique focus and skills of each entity to supporting programs. With the pandemic ravaging our state, we knew we had to draw on this strength and continue to work in this fashion as we rapidly responded to an ever-shifting landscape of state and community needs and crises. And, just like all the HFNY programs, we had to figure out how to do this all remotely.

We'd never been in this situation before, but as we know in our work with families, it's all about the relationship! Our years of collaboration with each other created avenues for us to use each other as sounding boards and to share among us a great deal of work -- work that all needed to happen immediately.

One of the most important approaches we tried to bring to this effort was that of continually asking questions of programs, listening to their experiences and using what we learned in our decision-making. We continue to work at being responsive and tuned-in to the widely varying situations and realities in our different HFNY communities.

Here are some of the ways our CA has supported the vital work of our home visiting programs during these unparalleled times.

- As of mid-March, all program sites and CA members had moved to working remotely. CA began to meet weekly to address pressing program and community needs. After several weeks, these meetings were moved to every other week.
- Guidelines were created for programs to address the shift to virtual home visits, and recommendations were made for level changes to support virtual work. Programs were given guidance on how to track and communicate with CA about families and staff who tested positive for COVID-19. A weekly email with updates and relevant resources was sent out to avoid overwhelming programs with multiple communications from different CA members.
- Virtual meetings were scheduled between NYCDOH, NYSDOH, NYSWIC and not-for-profit agencies in New York City to develop a plan to address the increasing needs of the families. Information was shared with programs on where they could access information on WIC vendors and their WIC supply. Contracts were developed with vendors to purchase infant supplies and make them available at food pantries. Personal protective equipment (PPE) was sent to programs where staff were expected to continue to go into their offices and to programs that had families or staff that had tested positive for the virus.
- The HFNY website was updated with a COVID-19 tab so staff would have important resources and guidelines in one place. This included a HFNY Financial Resource spreadsheet that listed links and instructions on how to access funds.
- Virtual Parent Survey and Virtual Home Visit guidelines were created and disseminated.
- Six listening forums were organized so we could hear from program managers and offer support.

- Frequently asked questions (FAQ) were gathered at the listening forums and responses were crafted during CA meetings. This FAQ document on the HFNY website is updated as questions arise from programs. It contains links to relevant information such as: supporting PCI and CHEERS virtually, texting curriculum to families, home visit documentation guidelines, etc.
- To relieve the mounting stress felt by programs, performance indicators were suspended during this time. (Programs could still receive them if they requested them.) The MIS was adapted to facilitate documentation of virtual visits.
- A Distance Learning Prenatal Training and a Distance Learning Enhanced Stop Gap for family support specialists were developed and offered to sites. Topic-specific forums are being developed and offered. The first in this series was on Community Outreach and Initial Family Engagement and three sessions were provided.
- Regional and statewide leadership meetings and CA committee meetings continued and were done virtually.
- Annual site visit tools were developed and adapted so that site visits for programs to measure model fidelity and provide program-specific technical assistance continued.
- Quality assurance and technical assistance has been provided virtually to programs. CA has been consistently reaching out to individual programs to provide support as needed on a variety of topics. CA members have been attending various webinars to learn from home visiting models across the country and organizing information to share with programs.

Data from the MIS is being used to demonstrate the extraordinary amount of work being done by home visitors. There are more than 35,000 case notes entered into the MIS between March 15th and June 1st ! We are very proud of all the work that has continued; our CA efforts have helped HFNY keep providing our crucial services as their value is more apparent than ever!



Ulster County Healthy Families **Erin Castiglione, associate director**

Since COVID-19 has hit our communities, there has been much fear, uncertainty, loss and change. In the midst of the darkness caused by the pandemic, our team has found opportunities to embody hope, kindness and inspiration. As we continue working remotely, we continue to find new ways to support our participants and stay connected as a team.

Ulster County Healthy Families (UCHF) has successfully connected participants to a variety of community resources, such as addressing needs like food and housing insecurity, social isolation, connecting with medical and mental health providers, and more. In the first two months of working remotely, we made roughly 265 referrals to various community resources and successfully facilitated approximately 60 connections for participants sharing information and making arrangements.

Outreach and Engagement

As a team, we took the time to reach out to recently closed participants to see if they needed any resources or support. In addition to contacting recently closed families, UCHF had more than a dozen former participants who graduated the program as far back as six years ago reach out to their former family support specialist to check in and seek support. This really highlighted how supported families felt by their home visitor and the program.

Despite COVID challenges, UCHF continues to conduct assessments and enroll new participants while working virtually. Together, our team truly prioritized building trust with families, starting with the first encounter. Staff have increased their utilization of pre-assessment and pre-intake contact with families to build rapport and trust before offering the parent survey or enrollment in home visiting services. For example, doing even more pre-engagement contact through activities like phone conversations and creative text messages/emails, such as friendly check-ins, links to child development videos and information, sharing curriculum and more.

Staying Connected as a Team

While working remotely, we have engaged in a variety of activities to stay connected as a team. We host virtual coffee/tea time, coming together every Wednesday before our weekly virtual check-in meeting. We utilize this time together to catch up, talking about work and non-work-related topics. Outside of our weekly check-ins and bi-weekly team meetings, we stay connected through weekly email games such as “Self-Care Bingo,” “Whose Office is it Any Way?,” “GIF Battle,” “Recipe Roundup,” “Blast from the Past” and more. We continue to come together and celebrate important staff milestones, such as surprise virtual baby and bridal showers. We put together a gift basket and delivered it to the home of the staff we were celebrating. Once on the Zoom call, we had them go to their front door to find their gift. We continued the celebration with various virtual baby shower and bridal shower games.

There is not enough gratitude that I can show towards the staff of UCHF for the levels of success they continue to achieve. Staff have worked so hard adjusting to the changes while ensuring they are engaging current participants and reaching out to the new families we have gained since the pandemic. They have discovered creative methods for remote work with families. Each member of UCHF has shown great levels of devotion and passion for our community and the families we serve. The transition to a newer form of outreach has pushed us to find new possibilities for our families and ourselves. I truly believe that through all of this, we have grown stronger together.



Building Healthy Families Otsego **Heather Vancleef, program supervisor**



The following is a text message conversation between team leader, Heather, and a family enrolled in our program on level four. Mom, the participant, is an essential worker at a grocery store.

M: “I do think (my store) is doing a great job. But it’s scary.”

TL: “It is scary. Thank you for doing your part to keep our community going.”

M: “You’re very welcome and thank you for checking in on us. Some parents need that kind of support right now.”

Healthy Families Oswego County
Kristy Buskey, family resource specialist/family support specialist



Ella,
Baby in the HFOC program

With the current Coronavirus pandemic, we as a community agency have been overcoming many challenges with this recent, sudden change in programming. Many in our agency are currently working on COVID-19 related tasks, and our staffing has been limited. We are attempting to complete home visits currently over the phone, awaiting IT to help us set up virtual visits via Zoom or whichever application is convenient for the family. We are currently enrolling new families and are getting close to our capacity of 20 families. We are still receiving referrals occasionally, but outreach has slowed with our limited staffing. We are finding that it can be more difficult to establish a rapport with those who mistrust formal systems by not meeting face to face.

HF Oswego has provided both crisis response and delivered supplies, including baby wipes, toys, clothing, a stroller, diapers and formula. We have also mailed suggestions for stress management, information on local resources available and activities to keep the children busy, along with links for virtual field trips. I am finding most families are able to find necessities. It is those without transportation and in more rural areas who are having trouble with supplies as stores within walking distance are limited.



Kristy Buskey, FSS



Healthy Families of Clinton and Franklin Counties
Esther Piper, program manager

We didn't let the need to social distance get in the way of holding our annual spring celebration for families -- we held it virtually! Garden kits were delivered and this video link was sent, which features a short and silly tutorial along with a little message from the entire team!

Watch here:
<https://youtu.be/5wdkY5S7v1I>

Healthy Families Rockland County Terri-Ann Anfang, program manager

Healthy Families Rockland County (HFRC) began implementing the HFA/HFNY home visiting program on September 20, 2019, with our first enrolled family on October 17, 2019. Our team of six has been actively learning how to manage all aspects of the HF program and had ended our first official quarter of providing in-person home visits when we shifted gears to virtual visits and working remotely.

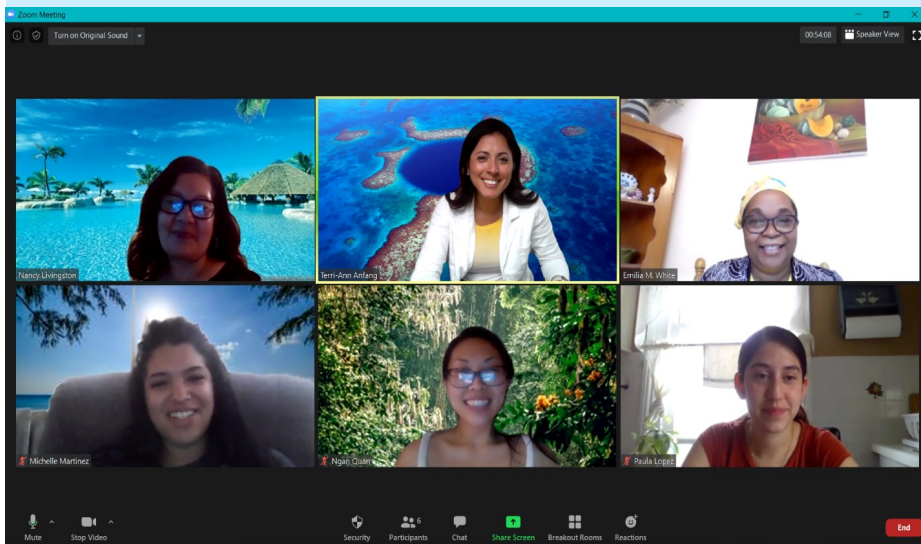
Our target community of Spring Valley (SV) was significantly impacted by COVID-19. As of May 29, 2020, there have been 2,859 cases, which represents 4.43% of the SV area (64,535 population), and 124 COVID-19 related deaths.

With support from our host agency the Lower Hudson Valley Perinatal Network and from HFNY, the team took on a new challenge to ensure we continued to serve our 20 enrolled families. We maintained contact with the Martin Luther King Center, Proyecto Farro, Salvation Army, East Ramapo school district and local churches to provide up-to-date information on the ever-changing nature of food distribution dates, times and procedures. Similarly, we increased contact with our two main referral sources, WIC and the Nyack Prenatal Center, to share updates on accessing these services for families. We also continued participating in the monthly Spring Valley Collaborative meetings via Zoom. Participation has increased, with more than 53 people from local agencies on the last call, whereas we averaged about 30 when meetings were in person. We continue to share program information updates via weekly email blasts and provide referral information electronically to our partners. During this time, the team increased its Instagram and Facebook followings of local organizations to stay abreast of current trends, especially related to testing and medical care, and to offer referrals. The home visiting team has been working tirelessly to support families during this period of uncertainty and continues to build trust and maintain relationships with families currently enrolled.

Based on conversations with two of our major referral sites, WIC and the Nyack Prenatal Center, we realized the reduction of in-person visits to their sites and increased telehealth would negatively impact our referrals. We reformatted our referral forms to editable PDFs so providers would be able to complete them electronically during telehealth appointments. Signed consents proved to be another obstacle, as noted in the 80% decrease in referrals March-May 2020.

With other agencies also working remotely, our new supervisor, Nancy Livingston, proposed hosting virtual open houses along with members of the coordinated referral team from the Maternal Infant and Child Health Collaborative (MICHC). These open houses began in April, and we were able to establish a partnership with Literacy Solutions, NY, and three potential partners, Early Head Start Child Care Partnership, Nyack Basics and Department of Health/Early Intervention. We will continue to expand on this venture and anticipate strengthening these partnerships and increase referrals in our next quarter.

Since we began working remotely, the team has maintained contact via a group text at the start of the workday with a motivational quote. The group text also provides an outlet to ask questions during the day, and any team member can respond. We began our first month of quarantine work with daily Zoom calls to provide support, discuss the impact of COVID-19 on remote work, engaging families, sharing curriculum, documenting CHEERS, accessing files and other work-related items. Most



What has been the most helpful during this time has been the dedication and support from the HFRC team, pictured above. Top row: L-R Nancy Livingston, Terri-Ann Anfang, Emilia White. Bottom Row: L-R Michelle Martinez, Ngan Quan, & Paula Lopez.

importantly, we continue group calls three times a week for half an hour to see everyone's face and share updates on our own personal life and our work with families. We also supported four team members who were impacted by COVID-19 and provided a virtual community of care during quarantine and recovery. We have enjoyed celebrating four team members' birthdays in April and May via Zoom, and we all missed having Dominican cake from Vilma's bakery and Haitian pate from La Baquette d'or Bakery. Nevertheless, we all laughed and had a good time keeping the team spirit going during quarantine. We continue to strive to maintain a sense of togetherness even though we can't all be together in the office at this time. We continue to navigate both the professional and personal impact COVID-19 has had on us all and the role each of us plays as we continue to support the mission of the program.

Q and A Rockland

Relationships and connection to current or new referral sources:

*"Through virtual open house Zoom meetings, we have successfully established new partnerships within the community."
Nancy Livingston, supervisor*

What home visiting has meant to families and how helpful this has been at this time:

"I believe virtual home visits are so important. During these uncertain times it is so important to check in on people just to see how they are doing. I know the families we work with are so grateful for the virtual home visits and that we are constantly checking in with them. One of the mothers I work with told me, 'I appreciate all the support you give me and my family.'" Michelle Martinez, FSS

Families and what you are seeing or hearing from them:

"Families are very worried about the future. They are questioning the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents are afraid to take their children outside of their homes in fear of exposing them to the coronavirus." Emilia White, FSS

"One family has not received the unemployment benefits that they filed for last month. The family is scared (about finances) because the only jobholder in the family is now unemployed." Emilia White, FSS

How are parent surveys going and how are you engaging families:

"I just completed a parent survey discussion with a mom I have been trying to engage with for quite some time...Completing the parent survey was difficult since Mom was focused on obtaining TANF. I struggled to get Mom to open-up. I will use supervision to reflect on my past approach and strategies for a follow-up call to complete the parent survey." Ngan Quan, FRS/FSS

WARM WELCOME

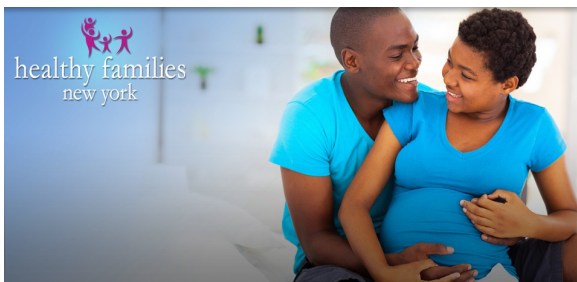
Aimee French, program contract manager, Office of Children and Family Services



I'm so excited to become part of the Healthy Families New York team at the Office of Children and Family Services as a Program Contract Manager. For the last 5 years I have worked at OCFS while pursuing my Bachelor's Degree from Cazenovia College majoring in Human Services. I have worked with the Healthy Families staff for the last two years assisting with contracts, claiming and technical assistance.

While starting in this position during the pandemic has certainly been challenging, I'm very eager to learn and to meet more Healthy Family staff at the state and local levels. It's evident that all of the staff are very passionate about the work that they do, and stand committed during these tough times to continue to make an impact on the children and families we serve.

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