



Volunteer home visiting services are available to parents of newborn babies and toddlers.



Volunteer home visiting services are coordinated groups of community-minded citizens who give up their time during the week to help families find ways to cope with the demands and stresses of a growing child.

As at March 2004 there were 29 volunteer home visiting services in NSW.

WHAT VOLUNTEER HOME VISITORS DO

Volunteer home visitors support parents in practical ways, give parenting advice, provide emotional support and help families link-up with community services and support networks.

Specifically they:

- provide information, practical support and advice about caring for babies and young children
- link families up with community and health services, and
- help families to develop support networks.

Volunteers do not provide therapeutic support for people with complex needs. However, the service is able to provide referrals if needed.

BENEFITS FOR FAMILIES

UK research has shown that volunteer programs can improve family functioning. Closer to home, a study in South Western Sydney, found that families receiving visits from volunteers recorded increased levels of family functioning, higher immunisation levels and accessed a greater number of other services.

Benefits include:

- improved family functioning
- improved parent-child interaction
- increased parental knowledge of child development
- better access to, and knowledge of, community services and support networks
- increased parental self esteem and satisfaction with the parenting role, and
- reduced stress.

WHO CAN ACCESS THE SERVICE?

Volunteer home visiting services are available to parents of newborn babies and toddlers. Parents can access further information about the service from their local DoCS Community Service Centre. These are listed in all White Pages telephone directories under "Community Services Department of."

THE FAMILIES FIRST INITIATIVE

Volunteer home visiting services are coordinated by community-based organisations, funded by the Department of Community Services (DoCS). *Families First* services are based on common principles but customised and delivered in ways which suit local needs.

The NSW Government has allocated \$117.5 million over four years (2002-2006) to *Families First*. DoCS is taking a lead role with \$87.5 million to allocate to new services. Other participating organisations include the Departments of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Education and Training, Health and Housing as well as Area Health Services.

This fact sheet should be read in conjunction with fact sheet "Families First: An Overview."