



Healthy Families America Receives Formal HFA National Accreditation Status

Prevent Child Abuse America (PCA America) recently announced that the **Healthy Families America (HFA)** program at MGH Chelsea HealthCare Center has been nationally accredited as a provider of high

quality home visiting services to families who want to receive support to improve their child's health, nutrition and developmental outcomes.

The Healthy Families America team, led by Maria Yolanda Wigozki, works with parents and infants from birth through three years. Pregnant moms and families that can benefit from the program (due to poverty, lack of social support, low educational attainment, history of trauma) are first identified through a screening process. Team members try to meet with the parents one-on-one and work toward building trusting relationships from the start. A comprehensive approach to health is taken—including the physical, emotional and social well being of the families.

Much like the community it serves, the Healthy Families America team is multi-cultural and multi-lingual with Spanish being the predominant language. Wigozki says that from the outset, the team encourages parents to set goals. She notes, "When moms and dads have been victims of trauma themselves, creating attainable goals can help them to feel empowered." Goals may include finding secure housing, arranging for daycare, getting a job, going to school or just identifying fun activities to enjoy with their children. Moms may also need some extra assistance with breast feeding or help with nurturing discipline. "We can share tools parents can use to make the changes they want for their lives," says Wigozki.

The Healthy Families America accreditation process is rigorous and designed to identify sites who have achieved the highest standards for performance and a commitment to quality. PCA America implemented the HFA initiative in 1992 in partnership with the Ronald McDonald House Charities, building upon twenty years of research in the field of home visiting. HFA serves families of all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, meeting the needs of close to 600 communities in 40 states, DC, the US Territories and Canada.

Sarah Oo, Director of Community Health Improvement for MGH Chelsea said, "Healthy Families America is such a wonderful program and so central to our mission of supporting high risk families and building their resilience. We are thrilled to become a formally accredited site." She added, "We look forward to many years of continuing this most important work through this nationally recognized, evidence-based program, and we are honored to become a formal part of their network."