



New program focuses on helping young families succeed and thrive

Young families in Greater Bridgeport have a new option for holistic and culturally informed support services, thanks to an expanded program offered by The Child & Family Guidance Center (CFGC) and funded through Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood (OEC).

The Greater Bridgeport Home Visiting Partnership (GBHVP) — funded through a grant from OEC — builds upon existing home visiting services for the Greater Bridgeport area, specifically focused on at-risk parents of children 5 and under, parents under age 20, parents in the prenatal stage, and women at risk for poor birth outcomes.

CFGC is leading the program, in collaboration with a partner team at Bridgeport Hospital. GBHVP's teams utilize two evidence-based models in working with families: Healthy Families America and Parents as Teachers.

"So many families get tired of knocking on doors and hearing 'no, we can't give you those services here,'" said Virginia Lopez, LCSW and Unit Director of CFGC's Family Support Services. "GBHVP is unique in that we provide easy, centralized access and have over a dozen collaborations in the community. If we can't help in a certain area, we can refer families to services they need to be successful."

In addition to offering **weekly home visits to families, case management and monthly parent groups, GBHVP includes the addition of a fatherhood home visitor and offers prenatal and postpartum mothers the option of working with a doula** through Connecticut Community Doulas. Doulas are trained in providing emotional, informational, and physical support during pregnancy, birth and the immediate postpartum period — giving new or inexperienced mothers with limited resources both guidance and an extra set of hands.

Teneika Brown, MSW, is the Director of GBHVP and explains that the program's ultimate goal is helping parents to create a stable, healthy environment for their children. For some families, that can mean overcoming challenges entirely unrelated to child development.



“If someone is facing eviction or their electricity has been shut off, they don’t want to talk about child development and play,” Brown said. “In GBHVP, we have ways to help families through those kinds of challenges and then we can focus on building upon the existing strengths and culture unique to every family.”

Michael Patota, President & CEO of CFGC thanked the State of Connecticut’s OEC for funding an expansion of services desperately needed in the Greater Bridgeport community.

“A program like this leads to healthier communities, overall,” Patota said. “Virginia Lopez, Teneika Brown, and the entire home visiting team bring years of experience to the table and a true passion for holistic, family-centered care. We’re grateful to have them leading GBHVP.”

Parents in the communities of Bridgeport, Stratford, Trumbull, Easton, Fairfield and Monroe can access GBHVP by calling 211 Child Development at 1-800-505-7000. GBHVP is available to all families in the Greater Bridgeport area, at no cost.

To contact GBHVP directly, call Teneika Brown at 203-394-6529 Ext. 3047 or email tbrown@cfguidance.org.