



News Release

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Hospital helps new parents adjust with free outreach program

For Immediate Release

(COLUMBUS, Neb.) – A Columbus program helps families meet and overcome parenting challenges. Healthy Families Nebraska, a free outreach service through Columbus Community Hospital, creates happier and healthier families through positive parenting strategies.

"Our program targets the most vulnerable young women and their families by offering them intense, in-home education, support and resources," said Jill Janssen, program manager.

Janssen has worked with Healthy Families since it began in Columbus in 2002. Because every family has different issues and dynamics, staff members create individualized plans for them.

"Healthy Families uses a strength-based approach to promote self-improvement," she said.

"We also enhance self-esteem and independence so our young parents can make better decisions and break out of destructive cycles."

Families using the program can face daily challenges, such as having a child with developmental delays. They also may struggle to pay bills or experience a lack of transportation or a positive support system.

Karla Rosendahl is a home visitor with the program, helping provide families with the resources and tools they need to succeed. She can begin making weekly home visits before a baby is born and continue visiting until the child is 3 years old.

"We do the best we can to guide families to the correct resources without doing the legwork for them," she said. "We don't want to enable, but rather provide resources and support to our families so they can achieve their own goals themselves."

In addition to providing resources, Rosendahl uses a "Growing Great Kids" curriculum to help families support their children's development.

The program is not income-based and is open to anyone in Platte, Boone, Colfax and Nance counties. Health care providers, social workers and other entities can refer families to the



program. Usually, it serves 22-30 families at a time, intending to keep each family in the program until the child turns 3.

"That is the time that brain development is the most impactful in a person's life," Janssen said. "If there is trauma in those years or if there isn't a solid caretaker, it has a huge effect on kids."

Rosendahl said it is gratifying to provide resources for families and then watch them reach their goals.

"The most rewarding part of my job is to see the kiddos grow and develop the best they can with the support of their caregivers who want to be good parents," she said. "It's a wonderful feeling to see our parents succeed as parents and as contributing adults in our community."

For more information about the Healthy Families Nebraska program, call 402-562-4813 or visit columbushosp.org.