



Description of the Welcome Baby Study

Purpose of the Welcome Baby Study

The purpose of the Welcome Baby Study is to understand the implementation and outcomes of the Welcome Baby program's virtual home visits. The primary goals of the evaluation are to:

- (1) Understand how virtual home visits are being implemented and what makes virtual home visiting successful;
- (2) Identify the maternal, child and family outcomes of the Welcome Baby program and how they compare with outcomes for similar families in the community;
- (3) Understand how and to what extent level of participation in the Welcome Baby program is correlated with outcomes; and
- (4) Understand how maternal and child outcomes for Welcome Baby participants vary by maternal characteristics, including maternal risk level, demographic characteristics, and prenatal participation in Welcome Baby.

Sustainability of a program such as Welcome Baby hinges on evidence of program effectiveness. This study can add to our understanding of the benefits of Welcome Baby, which is needed to convince other potential funders to help support the program.

In addition, Welcome Baby can potentially serve as a national model for a universal, light-touch home visiting program and encourage other cities and localities to implement a similar program.

Family Participation in the Welcome Baby Study

Study participants will be mothers who give birth in one of 13 Welcome Baby hospitals in Los Angeles County. All participants will engage in the following study activities:

1. Three virtual or in-person interviews: Around 3 months after returning home, mothers will receive a call from the study team to confirm their participation and contact information and schedule the first interview. Three interviews in total will be conducted:

- Virtual interview at 3-4 months postpartum (35 minutes)
- Virtual interview at 10 months postpartum (75 minutes)
- Virtual or in-person interview and observation at 18 months postpartum (90 minutes)

The last data collection visit may be *virtual or in person* as circumstances and family preferences allow. During these interviews, mothers will answer questions about their health and their child's health, development, and well-being. In addition, at the 18-month interview only, the team member will engage the target child in a very simple assessment task and will observe the mother and baby engaging together. To thank them for their participation, mothers will receive a small gift at enrollment, a \$50 gift card after the first interview, and a \$100 gift card after each subsequent interview.

2. Access to administrative data: The study team will collect and analyze administrative records for participating mothers and children. These records include information collected by Welcome Baby program staff during the in-hospital visit, as well as during subsequent home visits. The study team also may use information from health coverage providers (e.g., Medi-Cal, LA Care, or Health Net) or other agencies. Examples of the types of information the study may collect include records on: number of home visits

received; topics covered during the home visits; immunization records; wellness visits; public assistance; and other services participants may have received from non-profit service providers or government entities.

Hospital Participation in the Welcome Baby Study

Welcome Baby program staff will be asked to engage in the following activities:

- Program Managers will be asked to support the study team's efforts to obtain approval from the hospital's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The amount of support needed will vary by hospital IRB requirements.
- Hospital Liaisons will be asked to recruit study participants.
- Welcome Baby staff (e.g., Parent Coaches, Clinical Supervisors) may be asked to participate in focus groups or telephone interviews to provide additional information on the program and provide context used in reporting. For example, focus group data often provide insight into specific program characteristics that are related to successful outcomes.

Welcome Baby staff conducting home visits will not be asked to conduct data collection for this study.

Confidentiality and Consent

The Welcome Baby Study will adhere to both AIR's and hospitals' IRB procedures to ensure protection of study participants' rights and confidentiality of collected information.

Data provided to the study team will be kept strictly confidential and will not be made available to anyone outside the study team, except in situations when there is a threat to the safety of the participant or others. Reports prepared for the study will summarize findings across the sample and will not associate responses with a specific Welcome Baby program or hospital. When reporting study findings, neither the name of parents nor their children will be used or linked to any personally identifying information. Findings and de-identified data from the study will be given to First 5 LA to inform decisions about Welcome Baby.

Benefits of Participation

The Welcome Baby Study provides an exciting opportunity for Welcome Baby program staff, mothers, children, and other stakeholders to share their experiences and contribute to research that will enhance our understanding of the effects of Welcome Baby on families. Findings from this study may provide evidence about the benefits and need to continue to fund Welcome Baby and other similar programs.

How COVID-19 Influenced this Study

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it became impossible to implement the Welcome Baby program in person, so the program shifted to virtual implementation. The study team shifted focus too, changing the study design from a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to an implementation and outcomes study. The main differences are that there is no longer a need to randomly assign a group of mothers to a community comparison group, mothers may choose not to participate in the Welcome Baby Study and still receive the Welcome Baby program, the study is recruiting fewer participants (~560 versus 840), and there is a new implementation study that will inform ongoing program refinement and will include interviews with Welcome Baby staff, as well as focus groups and case studies with mothers who are participating in Welcome Baby.

For Additional Information

The American Institutes for Research (AIR), Georgetown University, and Juárez & Associates are conducting the Welcome Baby Study on behalf of First 5 LA. The study is led by two co-Principal Investigators, Dr. Heather Quick and Dr. Deborah Perry. For more information about the study, please contact the Project Director, Lori Downing at ldowning@air.org.