

Parent Child Assistance Program (PCAP)

New Brunswick Social Pediatrics



Parent-Child Assistance Program

The Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP) is a pilot initiative led by the New Brunswick Social Pediatrics (NBSP) Research Program under Horizon Health Network, in collaboration with the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation. Funded by the Social Innovation Fund, PCAP aims to break the cycle of generational poverty in Saint John by supporting pregnant and parenting women who use substances. The program addresses key challenges associated with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) by providing sustained, relational support and connecting families to critical services.

Since its inception in 2018, PCAP has recruited 71 families, successfully graduating 19 as of 2022. The program, modeled after the successful Washington State PCAP from the 1990s, offers intensive three-year case management to birthing people who have used substances during pregnancy. The PCAP model emphasizes safe housing, addiction recovery, mental health support, parenting education, and socio-economic stability. Case managers, known as advocates, work closely with families through home visits and individualized goal-setting to enhance self-efficacy and long-term resilience.

Key Outcomes:

- Successfully established a sustainable program model despite initial recruitment challenges and community hesitancy.
- Developed robust community partnerships to enhance client support, including collaboration with healthcare providers, social services, housing programs, and harm reduction centers.
- Achieved positive client outcomes in housing stability, addiction recovery, family planning, mental health, and community integration.
- Introduced trauma-informed practices and adapted service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain client engagement.



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Challenges:

- High rates of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) among clients, with 75% reporting substance use before age 14 and significant histories of trauma and family instability.
- Barriers to client engagement and communication, compounded by socio-economic hardships and mental health struggles.
- Service gaps related to housing, healthcare access, and continuity of care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Looking Ahead: The next phase of PCAP (PCAP 2.0) will expand service eligibility, extending postpartum support to five years and including non-birthing family members when needed. Enhanced data management, strengthened community collaborations, and continued trauma-informed practices will support sustainable growth. Ongoing funding efforts aim to secure long-term program viability and potential expansion to other regions.

PCAP's impact extends beyond individual families by advocating for systemic change to address the root causes of generational poverty and addiction. Through evidence-based interventions and client-centered advocacy, PCAP is fostering healthier futures for vulnerable families in Saint John.

