



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TalkReadPlay Home Visiting 2025 Mid-Year Report

Our nursing staff work with families utilizing the Parents as Teachers curriculum to help families set goals, check in on family well-being, health, safety, and connect families to resources in the community. The visits focus on development-centered parenting and encourage parent-child interaction by participating in an activity each visit. Home visitors provide books to the family to encourage reading to their child. Staff also conduct Ages and Stages screenings with families and make referrals as needed. Families in the program have been referred to medical providers, Mary's Room for baby items, car seat dispense program, playgroups in the community, Watertown Family Connections, Watertown Public Library, Head Start, Birth-3, and are encouraged to utilize the Breadbasket food pantry. Clients are invited to come to the food pantry once a month during set times for families referred by the Health Department. This allows the families to see a familiar face and get comfortable with utilizing the resource when needed.

From January through June 2025, 23 families continued in the program and 4 additional families were enrolled. Nursing staff continued to work with families in our Prenatal Care Coordination (PNCC) program to enroll them in TalkReadPlay after they delivered to provide families education on their child's development, make referrals, and connect them with resources. A TalkReadPlay brochure is utilized for families in English and Spanish to provide more information about the program and enrollment.

Newborn outreach

From January through June 2025, the Health Department reached out to 24 families with newborns not currently in our PNCC program to provide information about the TalkReadPlay program. This outreach was used to make families aware of the services provided by the health department, connect families to resources, and encourage families to call with questions. Staff provide families with information on the TalkReadPlay program and inform families of the benefits of enrolling in the voluntary program.

Nursing staff conducted 4 newborn visits with clients enrolled in the Prenatal Care Coordination program. Three of these clients transitioned into the TalkReadPlay program after their newborn visit. Staff have multiple families that will deliver in the upcoming months that will transition into the TalkReadPlay program.

Food Pantry

The Health Department food pantry is a private event for families referred by the Health Department. These events are held the first Friday of each month at the Bread Basket Food Pantry location. Families are able to get food, baby formula, personal essential items, diapers, clothing, houseware, and get connected to resources in the community. From January through June 2025, there have been 7 Health Department food pantry events held serving 140 families, a total of 558 individuals.



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Staff working with families continued to see families struggling with transportation issues keeping them from utilizing the food pantry. From January through June 2025, staff packed and delivered 72 food boxes to families who suffer from food insecurity.

Community Education

Staff developed a performance management goal around providing education to community members about programs and services offered by Watertown Department of Public Health. Staff members' goal is to participate in 25 community events by December 31, 2025. From January through June, staff participated in 12 community events to provide education to families and community members about programs, services, eligibility and criteria, referrals, and resources.

Social Connections Events

Staff continued to work on support strategies and social connections for families in our community while looking at how isolation, high stress levels, and lack of a support system was negatively affecting mental health of families in our programs.

In May, our department partnered with Watertown Family Connections to host a Community Baby Shower. Staff from Watertown Department of Public Health, Watertown Family Connections, Safe Babies/Healthy Families, and Jefferson County Health Department invited 20 families to learn about community resources, socialize, and receive needed baby items.

In June, our department held a social connections event for Spanish and English-speaking families. Staff partnered with Watertown Family Connections to bring families in our programs to their Playgroups in the Park. Families were able to join in the playgroup activities and learn about other programs offered through Watertown Family Connections while socializing with other families in attendance. The Watertown Fire Department was able to join us at the end of the event to show families their gear and truck and talk about what they do. Families were even given the chance to spray the firehose which was a hit! Families were given a survey before the event started that asked them about how familiar they were with the services provided by Watertown Family Connections and how they would rate their mental health before starting the event. After the event, families were given a post survey asking how likely they would be to utilize the resources they learned about, how likely they would be to attend another event, and if the event helped to improve their mental health. Results showed that families would be more likely to utilize the resources, would be interested in attending another event, and felt the event helped to improve their mental health.

Staff will be planning more social connections events in 2025 with the goal of holding a total of 5 events including events held after 4:30pm and on weekends to allow for families unable to attend events due to their work schedules.



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Every Child Thrives

Staff continued to participate in the Every Child Thrives team through the Welcome Baby coalition. The coalition is continuing their work to integrate or develop a comprehensive referral system that closes the loop for our community organizations when referring families, assuring families are getting the services they need to thrive. This team was put together by the Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation and includes representatives from the Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation, Watertown Department of Public Health, Watertown Regional Medical Center, Center for Women's Health, Moreland OB, Jefferson County Health Department, Jefferson County Human Services, Dodge County Human Services and Health Department, Watertown Family Connections, and Easter Seals.

In 2025, the group chose to further focus on closing the loop on referrals. A pilot group was started with Watertown Department of Public Health, Watertown Regional Medical Center, and Center for Women's Health. Procedures for each organization for sending, receiving and following up on referrals were reviewed and the group worked to break down barriers for families getting the services they need. Watertown Regional Medical Center and Center for Women's Health were able to bring Watertown Department of Public Health onto their TigerConnect system which allows for confidential texting between the departments. When a referral is enrolled into the PNCC program, nurses from Watertown Department of Public Health are able to close the loop with Center for Women's Health that they are receiving the services they were referred for. Future goals will be to bring in more departments to close the loop on referrals they are being sent as well as draft a form for patients at Center for Women's Health to sign off on allowing Watertown Department of Public Health to text them before an initial visit has taken place in the hopes of having more referrals get the services they need.

Car Seats

At the beginning of 2024, Watertown Department of Public Health was down to one certified car seat technician. This technician continued to provide free car seat checks to community members to ensure children are as safe as possible when riding in vehicles. In March 2025, our department was able to have one of our Bilingual Communication Specialist certified as a technician. From January through June 2025 certified technicians have checked a total of 24 car seats for community members. Car seats are checked for correct fit for child (height & weight), expiration, recall, and correct installation in the vehicle. Education is provided on how to fix errors and allows parents, grandparents, and/or caregivers the opportunity to practice harnessing and installing their car seat correctly.

With grant funding from 2021/2022 our department previously purchased 136 car seats with expiration dates at least 6 years out. Our car seat dispense program allows technicians to dispense one car seat per child per lifetime to those that live inside the City limits and identify a financial hardship to provide a safe car seat for their child. From January through June 2025, out of the 24 car seats checked, 10 car seats were dispensed to community members who met



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eligibility criteria. Technicians educate parents on how to properly use and install the seat being dispensed and then observe them to ensure they are able to do it correctly on their own.

Pack 'N Plays

In 2022, nursing staff collaborated with Watertown Family Connections to obtain Pack 'N Plays. Staff developed forms and education requirements for a Pack 'N Play dispense program to be able to provide Pack 'N Plays to families in the community who are in need and meet eligibility criteria.

With the Pack 'N Play inventory running low in 2023 due to the needs of the community, staff wrote for a Walmart grant for funding to purchase Pack 'N Plays. The grant was awarded in October, and the department received \$2,000 to purchase 28 Pack 'N Plays. The department also received a donation for Pack 'N Play sheets to be provided with each Pack 'N Play.

January through June 2025, staff worked with multiple families in the PNCC and TalkReadPlay programs to educate on safe sleep for their children. Staff worked with two families who identified they would not have a safe place for their baby to sleep to secure a safe sleep environment for their baby through other resources due to already receiving a car seat through the dispense or having already received a pack n play and their child outgrew it.

Breastfeeding

At the end of 2024, one of our nurses was able to complete the Certified Lactation Specialist (CLS) course and became certified to work with families with breastfeeding questions, concerns, or issues. Our nurses regularly work with families in our PNCC and TalkReadPlay programs to provide education and information about breastfeeding. Families that need additional help with breastfeeding are referred to our CLS who is able to meet one on one with them to work through their questions and concerns and provide education. Outside referrals for families not enrolled in our programs are also seen by our CLS. Our goal is to help families meet their breastfeeding goals.