

VNS Health Celebrates 20 Years of Nurse Family Partnership



Expanded Eligibility Builds on Decades of Partnership with NYC Health Department to Support Parents and Growing Families

Special graduation honors 127 Bronx families and kicks off a third decade of helping new parents give their children a healthy start in life and a stronger foundation for the future.

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[VNS Health](#) is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its [Bronx Nurse-Family Partnership® \(NFP\)](#) program, which serves low-income families in the Bronx as part of the [NYC Nurse-Family Partnership](#) with the New York City Health Department. The milestone comes as the program enters a new chapter following [an investment from the city](#) to expand eligibility and broaden access for families across the five boroughs. A special graduation ceremony and celebration will take place on Wednesday, September 30, 2026, honoring the 127 Bronx families completing the program this year.

Originally designed for first-time mothers, NFP required participants to enroll 28 weeks before pregnancy. In March of this year, the Health Department expanded program eligibility to parents who have previously had children and participants enrolling later in pregnancy. The expansion will bring NFP's in-home nursing support to more Bronx families during pregnancy and through their child's second birthday.

"Nurse-Family Partnership is personal to me: my mother was an NFP nurse and I saw firsthand the positive impact home visiting can make on a family's life," said Dr. Alister F. Martin, Commissioner of the New York City Health Department. "We are proud to have expanded NFP to allow more New York City families to benefit from free, individualized support that builds a strong foundation for their future."

Since launching in 2006, VNS Health's Bronx NFP program has served more than 8,000 families, including more than 640 this year. [Nurse-Family Partnership](#), a program of the national nonprofit [Changent](#), is an evidence-based nurse home-visiting model with more than 40 years of experience. NFP pairs families with specially

trained registered nurses who provide support during pregnancy and through a child's second birthday. During regular visits, nurses offer health and parenting guidance, connect families with community resources, and support parents in working toward education, career and other life goals.

For NFP graduate Ayanna Blyden, that relationship began 17 years ago, when she was a 22-year-old, first-time mother living in the Soundview section of the Bronx. Her VNS Health NFP nurse checked on both Blyden and her newborn son, offered practical guidance on caring for him, and provided reassurance when Blyden had little family nearby.

"I was 22 and a first-time mom, and parenting doesn't come with a manual," Blyden said. "My NFP nurse was very nurturing. She checked on both of us, showed me things I didn't know as a new mom and was there to tell me everything was going to be OK. Seventeen years later, I still carry what I learned with me — they're your village, too."

Blyden's oldest son, now 17, recently graduated from high school and is preparing to start college. When she later had a second son, she drew on what she learned through the VNS Health Nurse-Family Partnership. Blyden earned her bachelor's degree in 2024 and today works as a care manager serving people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

"A healthy start for a child begins with making sure their mom has support, too," said Paula Reynolds Chambers, VNS Health Nurse-Family Partnership Director. "Our nurses look at the whole picture, including physical and mental health, housing, work and the everyday challenges of raising a family. You cannot separate a child's well-being from a parent's well-being."

The expansion comes as Bronx families continue to face significant disparities in maternal health and access to care. [NYC Department of Health Department data](#) shows that women of color in the city are up to five [times](#) more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women. State data also show that only 27.8% of pregnant women in the Bronx [report](#) ever talking with a health care provider about ways to prepare for a healthy pregnancy.

Nurse Family Partnership is free and available to families regardless of age, immigration status, or gender identity. The New York City Nurse-Family Partnership serves all five boroughs. VNS Health also operates the Nassau County Nurse-Family Partnership on Long Island.

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