

Paraprofessional home visiting increases grant uptake: Results from a longitudinal study in South Africa

Cash transfers for low-income families are an effective investment in children's health and well-being. Identifying ways to increase social grant uptake among orphans and vulnerable children and their families in South Africa is therefore a priority. Home visitors may be particularly well-positioned to connect families with the highest grants for which they are eligible.

Intervention

- The National Association of Child Care Workers, Heartbeat, Tswelopele, and Children in Distress Network implement programs offering home visiting to HIV-affected children and their families in South Africa.
- In addition to helping access social grants, services provided may include educational support, nutrition assistance, psychosocial care, HIV counselling & testing, medical referrals and more.

Study design

- Longitudinal survey examining home visiting, health and well-being over a two-year period among 1487 children ages 10-17 and 918 of their primary caregivers registered at program sites in KwaZulu Natal province.
- Programs were categorized as either paraprofessional or volunteer-driven, based on the level of compensation and intensity of training and organizational support available to home visitors.
- Grant receipt, household food security, and children's access to basic educational and material needs were compared across the two program types over time.

Findings

- Programs staffed with paraprofessionals were significantly more effective at linking families to social grants for children. These programs increased families' access to the highest grant for which they were eligible **three times** over volunteer-driven programs.
- Children with grants were more than **twice as likely** to have basic educational and material resources.
- Gaps remain even for households served by paraprofessionals: one in five was not receiving a grant, and one in five was eligible for a grant with a higher monetary value than the one currently received.

Policy and program recommendations

- Investment in training and other organizational support for home visitors has clear potential to promote access to and uptake of grants among HIV-affected households, and should be encouraged.
- Suggested strategies include: normalizing annual eligibility assessments for beneficiaries, offering continuing education for home visitors on changes in the grant system, creating program linkages with grant administrators, and training home visitors to follow-up on applications that are pending approval.

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