

# IMPACT OF THE BRIGHTER FUTURES' FAMILY CENTERS ON THE PREVENTION OF CHILD-ABUSE

JANUARY, 2013

BRIEF #5

For over twenty years, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving has supported the Brighter Futures Initiative. The Brighter Futures Initiative is designed to prepare young children to enter school ready to learn and succeed during the early grades. It is built on the premise that young children who are healthy, have high quality early childhood experiences and have families who are supported in their childrearing will experience that success. A large part of the effort is through six Family Centers that are strategically placed throughout Hartford. Each center provides programs to develop parent-child interaction, parent education, quality care and education, adult education, and parent leadership development among other activities.

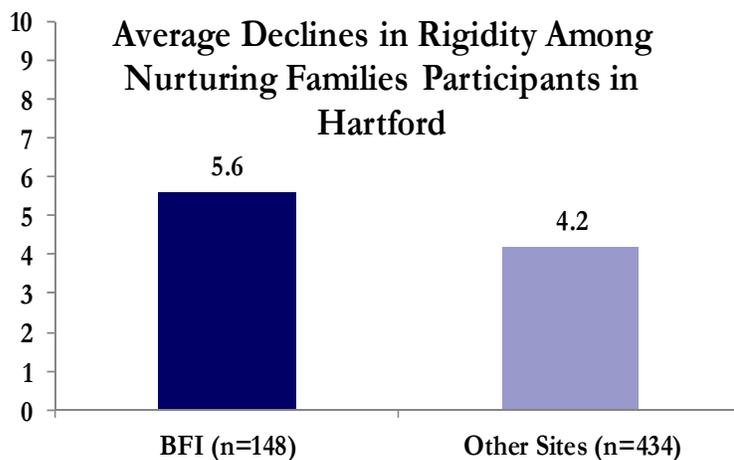
*“The Brighter Futures Initiative is built on the premise that young children who are healthy, have high quality early childhood experiences and have families who are supported in their childrearing will experience success.”*

In 2005 the Brighter Futures Initiative partnered with the Children’s Trust Fund to offer the Nurturing Families program through the Family Centers. The program targets first-time mothers who are at risk of abusing or neglecting their new born children. Through home visitation and parenting groups at the Family Centers, the young mothers are taught how to care for their infants and cope with the demands of parenting.

Evaluation of the Nurturing Families Program is conducted by the Center for Social Research at the University of Hartford and includes completion of the Child Abuse Potential Inventory Rigidity Scale. The Rigidity Scale consists of fourteen items to gauge the rigidity of the parent’s beliefs about the child’s appearance, behavior, and upbringing, including the belief that children need strict rules. It has been shown to be a good predictor of future abuse. The scale is completed at enrollment followed by six-month intervals during the time the parent participates in the program.



Data were provided by the Center for Social Research comparing parents who participated in Nurturing Families through the Brighter Futures Family Centers with parents who participated in Nurturing Families through other sites in Hartford.



After participating in Nurturing Families for a year, average rigidity scores declined among all participants in Hartford, but rigidity scores declined more among parents participating through Family Centers. The declines in rigidity were 33% greater among Family Center participants. Consequently, providing Nurturing Families through Brighter Futures Family Centers has a greater impact on preventing child abuse than providing the program in other settings.