

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release.

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## **Healthy Families America Nebraska Panhandle Accredited for Quality Service by Prevent Child Abuse America** ***Leading National Child Abuse Prevention Organization Accredits Healthy Families America site in the Nebraska Panhandle to Serve Families***

**Nebraska Panhandle** – Prevent Child Abuse America announced this week that Healthy Families America Nebraska Panhandle has been accredited as a provider of high quality home visiting services to families who want to improve their child’s health, nutrition and developmental outcomes. Healthy Families America Nebraska Panhandle is a department of Panhandle Public Health District and provides home visits in Box Butte, Morrill and Scotts Bluff Counties.

HFA is a signature program of PCA America that has been providing home visiting services for more than 20 years. Expectant and new parents have common questions about their child’s development. HFA connects with families through community partners like hospitals, pediatricians, and WIC providers to find the answers to their questions, meeting within the familiarity and convenience of the family’s own home. HFA is an accessible, voluntary and well received service.

“We all want to be good parents; and as parents we all have had many questions when it comes to raising a child,” said Betsy Walton, Program Coordinator. “HFA’s well-trained home visitors are trusted sources in their own communities. They help provide answers to those questions, individualized support when it is needed most, and linkages to other community services. As we celebrate this accomplishment on our third year anniversary we also recognize the state and regional leadership that has contributed to success in the Panhandle.”

The accreditation process is based upon a stringent set of 12 critical elements grounded in more than 30 years of research. The process involves an in-depth examination of the site’s operation, as well as, the quality of the visits made by HFA home visitors.

“We commend the Healthy Families America Nebraska Panhandle for opening itself up to such an intensive review process,” said Cydney Wessel, National Director of HFA. “We believe that all families and all communities deserve access to quality home visiting services.”

Home visitors receive extensive training in a wide range of areas that can cause stress and worry to just about every new parent: caring for a new baby, ensuring the baby is receiving the nutrition needed, promoting healthy child development and coping with a myriad of other potential stresses, such as financial, housing, partner relationship, etc., that may become heightened with an addition to the family.

“When parental stress can be managed effectively, children enjoy safer, healthier and more loving experiences, regardless of the parent’s income or standing,” says Walton.

HFA is the sole topic featured in an issue of The Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community (Volume 34, Numbers 1/2 2007). The title of the issue is “The Healthy Families America Initiative: Integrating Research, Theory, and Practice,” and was edited by researcher Dr. Joe Galano. There are 11 distinct articles about various aspects of HFA and authors include a number of PCA America national office staff including Senior Director of Research, Kathryn Harding.

PCA America was established in 1972 with the belief that child abuse and neglect is preventable. The not-for-profit, volunteer-based organization is committed to preventing child abuse in all forms through education, research, public awareness, and public policy development. Today, PCA America has 50 statewide chapters.

PCA America implemented the Healthy Families America (HFA) initiative in 1992 in partnership with Ronald McDonald House Charities, building on two decades of research in the field of home visiting. HFA serves families of all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, meeting the needs of close to 600 communities in 40 states, DC, the U.S. Territories and Canada.

Healthy Families America is an effective and proven evidence-based home visiting program according the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. PCA America is proud to support HFA and to be part of a national coalition of organizations dedicated to improving the home visiting field.

For additional information visit [www.pphd.org](http://www.pphd.org) or call PPHD at 308-633-2866 or toll free at 877-218-2490. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.