

**CBS News**  
**August 6, 2007**

## **A Partnership For A Brighter Future**

(CBS) Candice Hamilton's baby girl was due July 7, 2007.

"All sevens," she laughed.

Even though the baby, Cambry, arrived 11 days early, she's still lucky — because her single, teenage mom is less fearful about parenting. That's thanks to regular visits by a registered nurse named Brooke Fesperman, who teaches everything from bathing to burping — and so much more.

"You kind of have to change their thinking to 'I can do this,'" Fesperman says.

Call it Motherhood 101, courtesy of the Nurse-Family Partnership, a program in which registered nurses visit first-time mothers in high-risk, low-income households, CBS Evening News anchor Katie Couric reports.

"We needed to do a better job of helping parents, especially those living in impoverished, disadvantaged circumstances," said David Olds.

Olds knows what he's talking about. His family fell apart when he was 11, but his mother's love and support made him appreciate good parenting. Although he grew up poor, he left a full scholarship to Johns Hopkins on the table to work at an inner-city day care center in Baltimore, where he learned that by the time a child is 3 or 4 years old, it's often too late.

"Some of the children had been exposed to alcohol and drugs during pregnancy. Other children had been abused or were being abused. So I realized that we needed to start much earlier, and we needed to work with parents," Olds says.

That's why, 30 years ago, Olds created a program that starts when a new mom is pregnant and continues until the baby turns 2.

Today, more than 800 nurses are serving more than 20,000 moms in 22 states — through funding by private charities and local governments.

Studies show the program is a resounding success — improved prenatal health, fewer cases of child abuse and neglect, and babies who do better when they grow up. Children who were part of the program have 59 percent fewer arrests by age 15.

The real stars of this program are nurses like Joanne O'Brien from Brooklyn — once a teenage mother herself.

Has this been fulfilling for O'Brien?

"It's wonderful," O'Brien says. "One of the best things that's ever happened to me — for me to give back."

O'Brien helps out Kamesha, 22, a new mom who told Couric that she feels as if she can call O'Brien at any hour.

"I call Joanne — ask her how many times I call her! Five times a day," Kamesha says.

O'Brien's visits have given Kamesha the confidence to go back to school.

Many of these nurses become much more than just medical advisers — they're life coaches.

"They are exactly that," responds Olds. "This isn't a job for every nurse. But for nurses who are passionate about helping the disadvantaged, this is a wonderful opportunity. Some nurses will say this is the hardest job I've ever loved."

It's fulfilling work for nurses, important lessons for new moms — and a brighter future for countless children.

---