

Free Home Visits for New Moms in Lake County

By Haley Searls

When John Overly graduated college in 2020 with his RN license, he knew he wanted to help people. In October of 2020, Overly registered as a Public Health Nurse (PHN), and he moved to the Cities and began working at the Ramsey County Jail, providing health care to both adult and juvenile inmates. After a short stint working in Ramsey County, Overly moved “up north” to work in Lake County's jail and with the community. He explains his enjoyment in working in multiple areas as experiencing the “holistic sense of it [health care]”.

Overly enjoys most being able to work with multiple aspects of nursing, from caring for the overlooked in the jails to working with people in the community, “helping people get better.” One such community outreach program Overly works with helps expectant and new moms in Lake County.

Lake County has always had such a program, but it took a back burner during COVID-19. Now it is up and running again with a new format, called Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home-visiting, or MESCH (pronounced 'mesh'). MESCH's goal is “engaging families and promoting a positive parenting experience”. It is a free home visiting program for families with children who are preborn up until two years old.

Through MESCH, new parents can visit with a public health nurse such as Overly for support and medical questions, be connected with parenting resources, and learn about early childhood health and development, including infant feeding. Families also can get connected with health services, family support services, and parenting groups. Meetings with Overly can take place either at the client's home or at the Lake County office. Overly comments on how home visits can be a good resource for

rural families who may not want to haul their children into town for a checkup.

Another available resource provided by Lake County is the Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program (WIC), designed for women who are pregnant or have a child under five years old. WIC provides “healthy food, nutritional information, and much more”. The program also holds monthly clinics in both Two Harbors and Silver Bay for recipients of WIC. Nutrition work is done with registered dietician Laura von Goertz. If you're wondering if you're eligible for WIC, call or text 218-830-2472.

If you'd like to contact John Overly, you can email him at john.overly@co.lake.mn.us, call him at 218-834-8535, or text him at 218-269-1407.

A final note to moms who utilize these services - congratulations on your new baby!

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