



Newark. Boarder babies are medically cleared infants under 12 months who must remain in the hospital for one of three reasons: (1) their parents are unwilling to provide for them, (2) their parents are incapable of providing for them, or (3) their parents are under investigation for suspected abuse or neglect. Boarder babies remain in the hospital until it is determined that they can safely return home or they are placed in foster care. The Jersey City Medical Center Care Management Unit reports that the hospital serves approximately 250 boarder babies every year. The earlier children with special needs receive stimulation and nurturing, the better their chances of overcoming some if not all of the barriers they confront. Foster Grandparents deal with the lack of nurturing and stimulation that are the root cause of many boarder babies' failure to thrive.

Hospital staff trained 10 Foster Grandparents in HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, and age-appropriate activities prior to each assignment. The volunteers were assigned 40 boarder babies. Each infant had exhibited a lack of responsiveness to touch and voice, poor cognitive development, and little weight gain. Several infants had been exposed to drugs, HIV, and/or abandoned by their parents. The Foster Grandparents provided nurturing, feeding, and a human touch. They provided cognitive development through talking, singing, reading, and playing games. Fine and gross motor skills were developed through manual stimulation of muscles – pulling legs and arms. The nurses and social worker staff found that 25 percent of the assigned infants experienced improved cognitive improvement. The infants responded to sound, voices, and laughter by looking towards the source or making noises of their own.