DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Home Visiting Evaluation

Workforce Retention from the Home Visitor Perspective

BACKGROUND

Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Programs
- Nationwide expansion of home visiting; funded by USDHHS Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
- Prevention programs designed to improve outcomes for children by working with parents
- Services are voluntary and delivered in families' homes
- States select from evidence-based models, based on needs and goals

MIECHV Goals
- Improve maternal and child health
- Prevent child abuse/neglect
- Encourage positive parenting
- Promote child development and school readiness

DC-MIECHV Programs

Program	Organization	Dates of Operation
Program A	1	July 2014 – Present
Program B	1	July 2012 – Present
Program C	2	July 2012 – September 2016

Home Visitor Turnover/Retention
- Home visiting relies on relationships between home visitors and families
- Families may be at increased risk of dropping out of voluntary programs prematurely when their home visitor leaves

Previous Research
- Very few studies of staff retention in home visiting
- Turnover rates peak during times of program transition[2]
- "Stayers" much more satisfied with supervision and job salary/benefits than, and more likely to feel proud than "leavers"[1]
- Home visitor job satisfaction can decline over time[3]
- Predictors of job withdrawal included: burnout, low satisfaction with benefits, home visitors' perceptions of their employers commitment to safety[5]
- Home visitors with a relationship avoidance attachment style were more likely to report intention to leave within 24 months[4]

References
[1] Buchbinder, S. B., Duggan, A. K., Young, E., Fuddy, L., & Sia, C. (1998). Home visitor job satisfaction and turnover. In: Chapter 6, "Prevention and Early Intervention Projects," of Proceedings of the Annual Research Conference, A System of Care for Children's Mental Health: Expanding the Research Base (10th, Tampa, FL, February 23-26, 1997).

[2] Lori, B., McFarlane, E., Tandon, O., Fuddy, L., Duggan, A., & Leaf, P. (2009). Home visitor relationship security: Association with perceptions of work, satisfaction, and turnover. Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 19(5), 592-610, DOI: 10.1080/10911350902929005

[3] Gill, S., & Greenberg, M. T. (2007). Home visitor competence, burnout, support, and client engagement. Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 15(1), 23-44. DOI: 10.1300/J137v15n01_02

[4] Gill, S., Greenberg, M. T., & Vazquez, A. (2002). Changes in the service delivery model and home visits' job satisfaction and turnover in an early head start program. Infant Mental Health Journal, 23(1-2), 182–196.

[5] West, A. L., et al. (2018). Occupational stress and well-being among Early Head Start home visitors: A mixed methods study. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.11.003

METHODS

Purpose of the Study
To better understand influences on home visitor retention by:
- understanding challenges home visitors face on the job, and
- exploring what personal and professional supports enhance home visitors' work and job satisfaction.

Home Visitor Retention in DC-MIECHV Programs
All three programs experienced home visitor turnover every year. All three programs also experienced changes in supervisors during the evaluation period.

66% Average Annual Retention Rate
July 2014 - June 2016

Average Length of Employment
Leavers: 13.7 months
Stayers: 20.2 months

Study Sample

	HFA (N=10)	PAT (n=4)	HIPPY (n=8)	ALL (n=22)
Race/Ethnicity				
Hispanic/Latina	40%	25%	40%	37%
White	30%	0%	0%	14%
Black	10%	75%	20%	27%
Multiracial	10%	0%	40%	18%
Other	10%	0%	0%	5%
Language Fluency				
English	100%	100%	100%	100%
Spanish	50%	25%	75%	50%
Age Group				
20-29	60%	50%	25%	45%
30-39	30%	25%	38%	32%
40-49	10%	0%	25%	14%
50-59	0%	25%	13%	9%
Education				
High school		0%	50%	18%
Vocational	10%	0%	0%	5%
Some college	10%	50%	38%	27%
Associates degree	10%	25%	0%	9%
Bachelors degree	50%	25%	13%	32%
Masters degree	20%	0%	0%	9%
Female	80%	100%	100%	91%
Parent	40%	50%	100%	64%
Tenure				
0-6 months	50%	25%	25%	36%
7-12 months	20%	25%	38%	27%
13-24 months	20%	25%	0%	14%
24+ months	10%	25%	38%	23%

Qualitative Interviews
- Semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with all DC-MIECHV home visitors employed in the Spring of 2016 (n=22)
- Interviews conducted in person in the home visitors' preferred language (LR conducted English interviews, FZ conducted Spanish interviews)
- Interviews were audio-recorded and professionally transcribed by CastingWords

Thematic Analysis
- LR and SK developed an initial codebook using sensitizing concepts derived from previous theory
- LR coded all transcripts using constant comparative method, and added new codes as needed to capture emerging themes
- LR selected illustrative quotes and examples to use in written materials

RESULTS

CHALLENGES

Family Crises and Emergent Needs
Families crises and special needs (e.g., housing instability, domestic violence) meant:
- Changing scheduled visits
- Re-prioritizing planned activities
- Worrying about families

"Everything is very personal. It's hard to keep a balance sometimes and not feel for the families for what they're going through."

Keeping Up with Administrative Requirements
Completing paperwork after work hours

Feeling frustration or disappointment about not being able to keep up with demands

"Admin stuff really sucks. The amount of papers...I'm so tired of trying to score stuff and figure all these other things out."

Threats to Personal Safety
Some home visitors felt unsafe:
- in the neighborhoods,
- in family homes, especially when families were experiencing domestic violence

"Anything can happen out there. A couple of home visitors have gotten into really bad car accidents. My car window got broken and they went through all of my things."

Feeling Isolated in the Field
Feelings of isolation, particularly during challenging situations with families

More frequent among home visitors who did not have organizational supports like a physical work space, positive work environment, or sufficient supervision

Organization 2: Home visitors felt unappreciated by their organization and did not describe feelings of being part of a team

SUPPORTS

Time Management, Stress Management, Self-care
Self-care is important to cope with stress

Time management skills developing over time

"I know how to compartmentalize, I know how to set boundaries and I know how to do self-care. That took a lot of training; a lot of me giving my all and being mentally burned out and physically stressed a lot of times to really begin to understand how not to internalize everything."

Supervision
Supervision is a major source of support

More frequently noted in models with frequent, individual, reflective supervision requirements

"I couldn't ask for a better supervisor, honestly. She's amazing. From day one, I was like, 'I'm struggling with this. What can I do?' Every step of the way, we've been talking about it and it's been a conversation."

Peers/Positive Climate
Organization 1: Positive work environment and relationships with other home visitors provided personal and professional support

"The thing about [my organization] is, everybody is there for everybody. The level of support we offer each other in this program, I've never seen that before. That's why I've been here close to three years."

Commitment to Working with Families
Pleasure seeing families make progress

Appreciate relationships with families, and admire families' dedication to overcome challenges

"Watching parents grow. It's fantastic. They get so happy. I think that there's so much joy in parenting. When you have so many barriers to enjoying your life you can't get there. It feels like another task. When they can get to the joy, it doesn't feel like you're doing work."

IMPLICATIONS

Culture of Health and Wellness
Local implementing agencies have the opportunity to **create a culture of health and wellness** to support home visiting staff, including program managers and supervisors. This would include:
- Caseload balancing
- Professional development opportunities
- Reflective supervision beyond administrative supervision for home visitors, reflective supervision for supervisors as well
- Provide time and space for peer connection
- Provide physical space for paperwork and technology to facilitate paperwork completion

Hiring Practices
Hiring practices present an ideal opportunity to optimize successful workforce selection:
- Include current home visitors in the hiring process
- Balance experience with passion for the work
- Learn about what an individual wants to get out of the job

On Boarding and Orientation
On boarding and orientation is an important time to ensure home visitors are prepared:
- Shadowing with experienced home visitors
- Training before getting into the field on MIECHV and the model
- Warm hand offs for transitions from other home visitors

Re-framing Home Visitor Retention
Re-framing home visitor retention—home visitors are often early career professionals using home visiting as an opportunity to gain experience:
- Use a team-based approach for caseloads, so families are connected with a team
- Have opportunities for growth within an organization—senior home visitors, trainers, etc.
- Offer part-time options for those wanting to go to college/ graduate school

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