

Background

Home visiting research has shown that families stay enrolled in home visiting longer when there is strong alignment between parents and home visitors on the goals to be addressed, which suggests that high quality goal planning can strengthen family engagement. The New Jersey (NJ) and Maryland (MD) Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Programs chose to engage in a collaborative project to design, implement and evaluate the Goal Plan Strategy (GPS). The GPS is a stakeholder-driven, evidence-informed approach to strengthening: 1) home visitors' knowledge and attitudes about family goal planning, 2) home visitors' skill in communicating with families about goal plans, 3) the quality of the goal plans they developed with families, and 4) family satisfaction with, and engagement in, home visiting.

This project aimed to demonstrate improvement in the following priority area(s):

- Priority #1: Recruitment, engagement, and retention of eligible families to MIECHV-funded home visiting programs.
- Priority #2: Development and retention of a trained, highly skilled MIECHV-funded home visiting workforce.
- Priority #3: Coordination of MIECHV-funded home visiting programs with community resources and supports.
- Priority #4: Implementation of continuous quality improvement processes in MIECHV-funded home visiting programs.

Resources

[MD MIECHV Program](#)
[NJ MIECHV Program](#)
[MIECHV Innovation Awards](#)

Project Activities and Highlights

The NJ and MD MIECHV GPS project provided training for home visitors and supervisors to build communication skills around family goal planning, in addition to training mentors on how to coach home visitors and further strengthen home visitors' communication skills.

Project Activities

- Disseminated five online modules and four in-person training sessions related to family goal planning and coaching.
- Supervisors held five monthly coaching sessions focused on a visit audio-recording provided by the home visitor.

Lessons Learned

- Involve fiscal staff from each partner organization as early as possible in the planning to support efficient implementation and collaboration between states.
- Explicitly ask local programs for input in the earliest stages of developing a plan to ensure buy-in across states.

Evaluation Summary

Evaluation Findings

- Most participants agreed that the provided training was useful; nearly all home visitors found GPS skills helpful in working with families around goal planning.
- Home visitors' confidence in using goal plan strategies increased over time after working with their coaches.

Sustainability

- As of 2019, NJ and MD are working to submit abstracts for inclusion in various professional and scientific meetings.

Recommendations for the Home Visiting Field

- State leaders and other stakeholders can partner to integrate effective staff development into program operations.
- Evaluative research is a critical component for testing and advancing theory as it relates to building the evidence base of educational interventions.