

WestEd CHVP External Evaluation Issue Brief #3: Family Challenges and Recommendations

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Between Fall 2014 and Spring 2016 of the home visiting program competitive external evaluation, the WestEd External Evaluation team received 175 surveys from families exiting home visiting services either upon completion of the program or upon early termination. Families shared the challenges they overcame while in the home visiting program and provided recommendations to support other families experiencing similar challenges in response to the following questions:

Family Exit Survey Questions:

- Have you experienced any crises while in the home visiting program?
- How did home visiting services help you through the crisis?
- Would you recommend anything specific to mothers experiencing crises?

Family Experiences with Crises

Type of Crisis	Examples	
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-partum depression • Attempted suicide • Isolation • Emotional instability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of helplessness • Anxiety over adjusting to new role as a parent
Medical (Mother, Infant, and Family)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypertension • Preeclampsia • Premature birth • High blood pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fainting spells • Diagnosis of baby's syndrome during pregnancy • Infant crisis (choking)
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of money to pay rent for a new apartment • Financial instability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of money for transportation
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood damage inside the home • Unexpected moves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness
Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic violence • Legal issues • Separation and divorce from partner • Communication issues with partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support from child's father • Unwelcome by family in home • Loss in the family

Home visiting services helped families face challenges in the following ways:

- Referred families to services (e.g., domestic violence services, social workers, counseling services)
- Monitored mother and infant health
- Provided breastfeeding support
- Offered a positive outlook on challenges
- Linked family to childcare as needed
- Reinforced client follow-up on appointments
- Provided family with bus passes for appointments
- Provided financial advice and housing resources
- Reinforced good diet and exercise
- Provided support and an understanding of legal issues and court terminology
- Provided information on how to help the child cope with family challenges
- Pointed the family in a better direction

Families shared the following recommendations about how to support other mothers experiencing similar crises based on their own experience in the home visiting programs:

- Take domestic violence classes
- Call help lines
- Seek therapy
- Seek medical advice (e.g., breastfeeding support)
- Seek help from family
- Reach out for community and peer support
- Utilize resources offered in the community (e.g., Regional Centers)
- Go to the Salvation Army's office or have a yard sale for financial support
- Talk about feelings and stay open-minded
- Educate yourself on child development before the baby's birth
- Communicate a desire for home visits and be consistent with the visits
- Use positive affirmations and mantras
- Use skills and suggestions learned from home visits (e.g., walk away and count one through ten during an argument and return to situations in a calm manner)

For more information on the WestEd MIECHV External Evaluation, contact Karen Moran Finello (Principal Investigator) at kfinell@wested.org.