

WestEd CHVP External Evaluation Issue Brief #4: Elements of an Ideal Home Visiting Program

Principal Investigator: Karen Moran Finello, PhD

The WestEd external evaluation team for the California Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) conducted ten site visits in eight counties in California during Fall 2014. Twelve family focus groups with 64 family members were conducted. In addition, 175 families returned an Exit Survey to our program office upon completion of the program or early termination between Fall 2014 and Spring 2016. The family participants were asked to describe ideal elements of a home visiting program.

Family Focus Group Question:

-If you could design your own home visiting program, what would you include?

Family Exit Survey Question:

-Is there anything else you would like to share with us about being in the program?

Family Quotes:

"I would allow the participants to have ongoing communication and friendship with their home visitors after the program ends, because it provides a model for building positive relationships and you have someone to look up to."

"I would have at least one visit per month in which all the families would be able to join in and actively participate."

"Have group [members] be able to bring a friend (without a child) so that they can see what new parents are going through."

"[I would include] ways for moms to fundraise or help other moms. My family sent me a big box of clothes [from] Missouri. My son didn't need all of [the clothes], so I took the box to my home visitor and told her to give the rest of it to the families that really needed the help."

"Adding support for the actual parents; it is not always about the baby. It is also about [the] mothers. They might lose confidence once they have the baby [and need] something to regain that and know they can support themselves and not just think, 'It's over and I'm a stay-at-home mom.'"

"Do they have a [Home Visitor] Appreciation Day? The [home visitors] have been there since the baby was born and... [They should get] treated like a family member."

"[I think] that the home [visitor] should be a mother [herself]..."

"Having bilingual staff would be nice, so my mother or mother-in-law can get involved."

Elements of an Ideal Home Visiting Program According to Families

Family Events and Activities

- Monthly gatherings with icebreakers
- Fundraising for other families in need
- Incorporate fun and enjoyable activities
- Social gatherings for moms and babies
- Home Visitor Appreciation Days

Child Health and Development Trainings

- Information on infant and baby care
- Hands-on [individualized] learning (e.g., changing diapers, bathing)
- Information about feeding the baby solids
- Hands-on [individualized] support after the baby's birth

Classes and Support Groups

- Hands-on group classes
- Classes for babies
- Mother and baby support groups to discuss concerns and lifestyle issues
- Birthing coaches

Increased Father Involvement

- Accommodate home visits to fit the father's work schedule
- Include father-baby time
- Offer specialized support sessions for fathers

Use of Videos

- Provide instructional videos about cooking and other (daily living) skills
- Provide videos about child birth
- Show videos about infant/toddler development and behavior

Access to Resources

- Provide clients with emergency responders' phone numbers
- Have a program resource specialist for legal issues (e.g., abuse, child custody)
- Connect families to childcare

Enhanced Home Visitor-Family Relationships

- Add strategies for long-term communication with families
- Allow home visitor to attend events throughout child's lifespan (e.g., child's birth, high school graduation)
- Keep the same home visitor for the entire duration of the program

Greater Program Flexibility

- Have bilingual home visitors available
- Allow flexibility with visit locations
- Allow family to provide questions ahead of home visits and provide extra time to answer them
- Provide services for a longer period of time
- Increase capacity of the program to include more families