

Understanding the Sources and Effects of Staff Stress and Burnout in the Florida Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program

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Background

- The Florida Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program delivers evidence-based home visiting services to over 1,400 families in 14 communities across the state.
- Home visitors are integral to providing resources for high-needs families to learn about pregnancy, child development, and to become self-sufficient.
- Many families perceive their home visitor as a primary source of support in the face of challenging social and economic conditions.
- Balancing paperwork, data entry, and family support leads home visitors to experiencing work-related stress that impacts their well-being and client engagement.

Methods

- Florida MIECHV program evaluators conducted separate, simultaneous focus groups in Fall 2015 with 47 home visitors across 10 sites.
- Causes and effects of work-related stress and burnout were gauged through questions and a pile sorting activity.
- Preliminary qualitative analysis was used to identify emergent themes among the work-related stressors discussed.

Participant Characteristics

- Over half (54%) of home visitors interviewed had been in their current role between 1 to 5 years.
- About 28% had been in their current position under 1 year.
- More than half (57%) finished an Associate's and/or Bachelor's degree, while 32% held a graduate college degree.

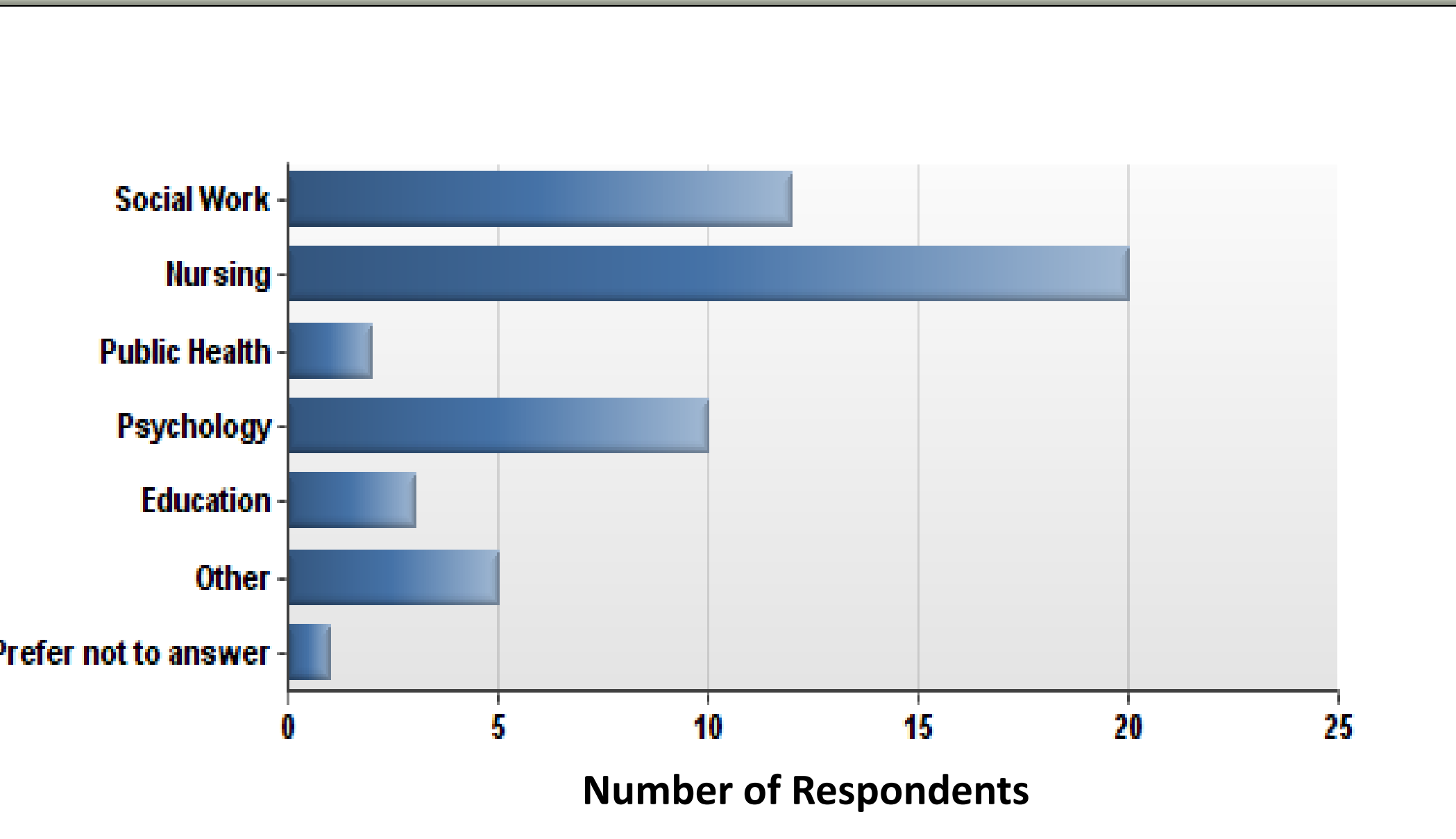


Figure 2: Educational Background of MIECHV Home Visitors

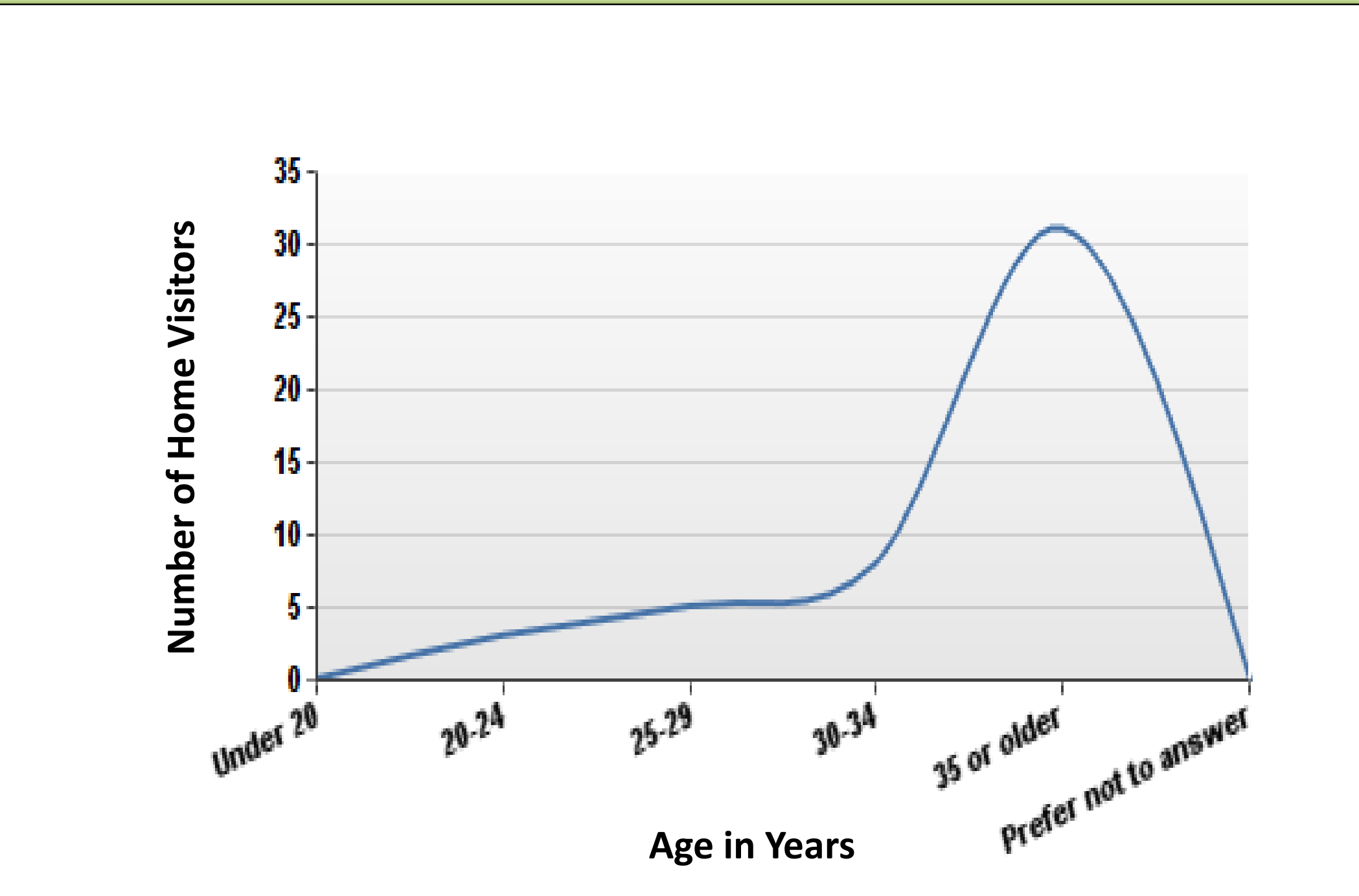


Figure 3: MIECHV Home Visitor Age Distribution



Figure 1: Florida MIECHV Sites

Theme #2: Cancellations and Rescheduling

- In 7 out of 9 sites, home visitors expressed dismay at the frequent cancellations and last minute rescheduling requested by their families.
- Cancellations challenge home visitors' time management and client engagement. This reflects in data that the home visitor is not satisfying their requirements.
- Home visitors also sometimes feel that cancellations reflect a lack of participant engagement.

"Unfortunately the funders are not there to see, 'Hey, you have a pregnant mom with twins who's afraid to go out and you manage to get this lady to get a job to get her child into daycare.' That's our relationship. The funders are not seeing that."

Theme #1: Paperwork

- Home visitors at all 9 sites reported their number one stressor as the overwhelming amount of paperwork required before, during, and after each visit.
- In 6 of 9 sites, home visitors voiced concern regarding how this top-rated stressor affected their relationship with families.

"Something like the situation where I fear I am right now is, 'it doesn't matter how you do your job as long as the paperwork is right'. Like everything is about the numbers. Everything is about the studies."

Theme #3: Family Needs and Resource Availability

- Home visitors in 7 out of 9 sites discussed how difficult it was to find families housing, childcare, and transportation services among other resources in their respective communities.

"As mental health is concerned... [my client was] referred to the MOMS programs. She was on the waiting list, nobody called her."

Coping Methods and Forms of Support

- When asked what supports were in place to help manage work-related stressors, home visitors in 8 of 9 (89%) sites stated that they relied on each other as their primary source of support.
- In 6 out of 9 (67%) sites, home visitors identified their supervisors as either their primary form of support, or a form of support in addition to each other.
- Several coping methods to help alleviate work-related stressors were mentioned, including dancing, yoga, going out to lunch or movies to get away from the office, and participating in staff retreats offered by the agency.

"We have our nurse meetings, we discuss our caseloads and we all have like the similar situations and at least we feel encouraged because someone is going through the same thing and supported."

Conclusions and Next Steps

- In response to preliminary findings, Florida MIECHV increased resources to support home visitor compensation and reduce case loads.
- Additionally, a competitive award from HRSA was obtained to implement mindfulness-based stress reduction for home visitors statewide.

"People are – they're beautiful. They're quirky. They're sometimes inconsistent. They're fantastic. I guess my point is that I'm very much a data person. However, I understand that not everybody fits in that little box or lives in that house with a white picket fence and has 2.5 kids and a dog. Just remember not everybody fits in a box, and that's okay. There are going to be variances."