

# STAFF STRESS AND BURNOUT IN THE FLORIDA MATERNAL, INFANT, AND EARLY CHILDHOOD HOME VISITING (MIECHV) PROGRAM

Alitz, P., MPH<sup>1</sup>, Birriel, P., MPH, CHES<sup>2</sup>, Ramakrishnan, R., MPH<sup>2</sup>, Robinson, C., BS<sup>2</sup>, & Marshall, J., PhD, CPH<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of South Florida, College of Public Health, Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics

<sup>2</sup>University of South Florida, College of Public Health, Department of Community & Family Health

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Florida Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program is an evidence-based home visiting program that serves high-need, expecting and new mothers until their child is up to five years of age in 14 communities across the state. Three evidence-based program models are implemented, including Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, and Healthy Families Florida. As part of an independent, ongoing evaluation of Florida MIECHV, the University of South Florida (USF) evaluation team conducted...

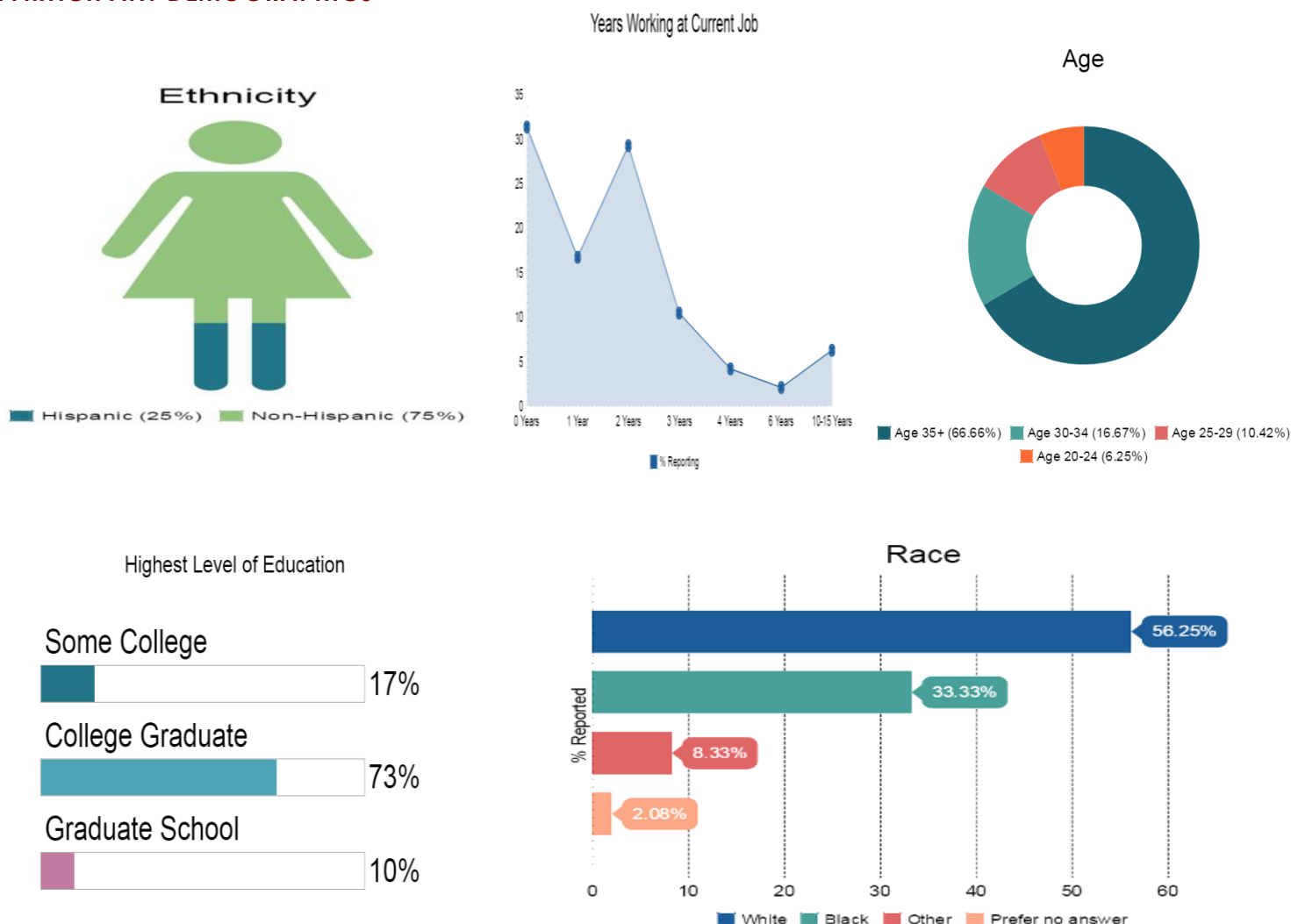
## METHODS

Ten separate focus group interviews with 47 home visitors, 11 supervisors, 13 administrators/directors, which included discussions focusing on staff stressors. During the focus group interviews, the USF evaluation team conducted a pile sorting activity. The experience of these professionals in home visiting ranged from less than one year to two decades, with the majority being within their first five years in their position.



The majority of home visitors were White, non-Hispanic women above the age of 35 years old, who had earned a 4-year college degree. Additionally, most home visitors had between 0-2 years of experience in their current position.

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS



## RESULTS



### Required Paperwork

- Home visitors at every MIECHV site named completing required paperwork as their number one job-related stressor. Not only did they cite the amount of time that it takes to complete paperwork, but the program's emphasis on completing paperwork over having genuine relationships with the families.
  - *...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. But here's the thing, paperwork is not everything because the numbers could be there but your relationship is what's going to affect the outcomes in the long run."*

### Caseload Management

- In 9 of 10 focus groups, home visitors voiced concern regarding their caseloads. Each home visitor is required to see between 20-25 families on a weekly basis, which can be cumbersome with juggling the required paperwork and engaging with mothers who are often facing dire circumstances that require extra time.
  - *"It's the caseload...I have six families to see so if I have to see you at 2:00 and I've got another I need to see at 2:15, I can only give you this amount of time...something may come up where she needs more time, and even though we want to be there and spend time with their family, we're thinking about our home visit rate."*

### Cancellations and Rescheduling

- The stress of managing a high caseload is compounded by frequent, last minute cancellations and rescheduling by the family.
  - *"This is time that you can give to another person. It is time that you can utilize working in the office. It's a waste of time. You have too many things to do, too many visits to accomplish...you already drive 30 minutes, 10 minutes to get there. Knock on the door, she's not there. One hour you waste that you can use on something else."*



### Lack of Resources for Families

- In 8 of 10 focus groups, home visitors reflected on the stress of their families not having enough resources available in their communities. Housing, child care, transportation, and mental health services were merely a few resources discussed that were lacking for families.
  - *"As mental health care is concerned, I have my clients who – while referred to the MOMS [Mothers Overcoming Maternal Stress] program she was on the waiting list, and nobody called her."*

### Client Engagement

- Due to the job-related stressors such as paperwork completion, case management, and lack of resources for families, client engagement is hindered.
  - *"The reality is when we're overwhelmed by these various stressors, it affects the quality of home visits. That, in turn, will ultimately affect your relationships with your clients...The moment you push their needs off, especially if they're having a crisis, you deteriorate that relationship..."*

### Coping Mechanisms

- Yoga, dance, and mindfulness practices were used by many home visitors as coping strategies. Other stress-reduction activities included job retreats with supervisors, and spending time with their families.
  - *"I take the babies out. My sister has – her two grandchildren live with us and that's the greatest thing in the world for me. I love to – we go to Chuckie Cheese. We go to the pool. We go swimming. We go bike riding. I love to do things with them."*

## DISCUSSION

The current study examined job-related stressors in the MIECHV program. Because the Florida initiative was less than 3 years old, the majority of home visitors who participated in the focus group interviews were newer; thus, our findings may not be representative of the diverse experiences of home visiting professionals. In response to these findings, Florida MIECHV increased resources to support home visitor compensation, reduce caseloads, and hire data entry staff. Additionally, a competitive award from HRSA was obtained to implement a mindfulness-based stress reduction program for home visitors statewide in 2017.

