

Facilitators and Barriers to Engagement and Retention: The Florida Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program

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Background

- The Florida Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (FL MIECHV) program aims to improve indices of maternal and child health by providing support and referrals to families in need.
- Consistent participation and engagement in home visiting leads to increased effectiveness, however achieving and sustaining engagement remains challenging.
- In 2016, FL MIECHV home visitors completed average of 1.2 out of two required monthly visits per family and maintained an 89% participant retention rate.
- Engagement and retention of enrolled families is important for success in home visiting program so that information, support, and referrals are received; thus it is essential to understand factors that can impact affect these indicators of participation.



Objective

- This study explored program staff's perceptions of participants' engagement and retention.

Methods

- Six focus groups with 23 home visitors, supervisors, and administrators were conducted in three MIECHV home visiting sites (Parents as Teachers, Nurse-Family Partnership, and Healthy Families).
- A semi-structured discussion guide and flip charts were used to facilitate conversations on views and experiences related to participant engagement and retention.
- Discussions were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and thematic analysis was conducted.

Results

Staff demographics

- Age: Majority (n=14) of participating staff were between 26-45 years Range (18-75)..
- Gender: Female (n=22); Male (n=1)
- Race: White (n=15); Black (n=4); Asian (n=1); Other (n=3)
- Ethnicity: Hispanic (n=5); non-Hispanic (n=18)
- Education :BA degree (n=13); MA or higher (n=5); AA degree (n=3)

Staff definitions of engagement & retention

Engagement: Staff defined engagement as the connectedness between home visitor and client, active participation of clients, and clients meeting set expectations of the home visiting model.

Retention: Clients stay actively involved in the program for as long as they are eligible or until graduation from the program (typically 2 years)

Facilitators

Participant Engagement

- Positive outcomes
- Use of teaching props
- Individualized approach

- Commitment
- Positive communication
- Active participation
- Time of enrollment

Participant Retention

- Staff retention
- Incentives
- Positive supportive relationships
- Client's educational level

Barriers

Participant Engagement

- Issues with mental health, substance abuse, intimate partner violence
- Crisis situations

- Staffing issues
- Conflicting priorities
- Change in client's relationship status
- Loss of contact
- Housing instability

Participant Retention

- Low level of connectedness
- Static knowledge
- Paperwork demands

“So, like your facial expression, the tone of your voice...really be interested in what they're interested in...”

“We can definitely go into mental health, substance abuse, intimate partner violence... mom relapses and she pulls away.”

Strategies to address barriers

- Providing resources and referrals tailored to the participant's needs
- Conducting unscheduled visits when the participant is hard to reach
- Offering flexible scheduling and location for visits
- Giving participant's personal time when needed

Conclusion

- Home visitors employ several strategies to support continuous and sustained participation, and to identify and test solutions for unaddressed barriers to engagement
- There is a need to enhance facilitators such as relationship-building skills and tailoring programs to participants' interests and needs, as well as reduce barriers, such as staff turnover, family crises, and competing demands, to increase the overall effectiveness of the program.

