



Pennsylvania: Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program

By the Center for Law and Social Policy
and the Center for American Progress

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The federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting, or MIECHV, program provides the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania the opportunity to offer evidence-based home visiting services to additional at-risk children and families. The funding also allows the commonwealth to build the infrastructure to support a unified home visiting system, which included hiring additional staff and improving its data system. Finally, Pennsylvania uses MIECHV funds to deliver a robust professional development program to promote the advancement of the commonwealth home visiting workforce.

Success and innovation

Professional development

Commonwealth administrators used MIECHV funds to support the home visiting workforce by developing a professional development system. The commonwealth hosted a Home Visiting Summit in 2014, which had more than 600 participants and was the first time the home visiting field was targeted for a professional conference in Pennsylvania. Both MIECHV and non-MIECHV funded home visitors were invited to the summit in order to further the commonwealth's goal of creating a cohesive home visiting workforce. Administrators also developed core competencies for home visitors and are working to embed them within the workforce registry and trainings.



Pennsylvania MIECHV at a glance

Total federal MIECHV funding:

\$3.2 million in formula grant funding annually and \$8.7 million in competitive grant funding total

Lead agency:

Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning, or OCDEL

Number of communities served:

42 counties

MIECHV-funded home visiting models:

Early Head Start-Home Visiting, or EHS-HV; Healthy Families America, or HFA; Nurse Family Partnership, or NFP; and Parents as Teachers, or PAT

Enrollment accountability system

To ensure that programs are effectively and efficiently utilizing resources to provide direct services to vulnerable families, state administrators created and implemented a strategy to monitor enrollment rates and maintain fiscal accountability. Program sites are required to maintain 95 percent or higher enrollment based on their identified capacity. If programs are unable to meet the enrollment threshold, the state works with program managers to develop a plan to increase their enrollment or reduce the program's number of slots. This strategy helped Pennsylvania both increase referrals to programs and promote home visiting services, while ensuring that funds are used to directly support at-risk communities.

Challenges

Pennsylvania administrators found it challenging to become familiar with Early Head Start-Home Visiting, or EHS-HV, and Healthy Families America, or HFA, the two new evidence-based home visiting models introduced in the commonwealth after MIECHV and under a quick implementation timeline. Further, Pennsylvania worked to align MIECHV-funded programs with existing home visiting services but found that without clearly defined action steps it was challenging to create a coordinated system. Finally, administrators stated it was difficult to ramp up services and hire additional staff while also keeping pace with the tight timelines for identifying and reporting on the quantitative benchmarks.

Looking ahead

Connecting families to other early learning programs

Pennsylvania administrators are working to create a continuum of services within the commonwealth. By allowing communities to select a wide range of models, programs can match families with the most appropriate home visiting model to meet their unique needs and make connections between home visiting programs and other child care and early childhood programs such as preschool or Head Start.

Inclusion of home visiting in Pennsylvania's "Reach and Risk Assessment"

Pennsylvania produces an annual "Reach and Risk" report on how well the commonwealth's early childhood programs provide access to at-risk children and families. Now that home visiting has been elevated within the early childhood system, Pennsylvania plans to include variables in the report that will measure the impact of home visiting, providing administrators with information on where to offer additional resources.

Pennsylvania MIECHV at a glance

Families served:

Funding provides services for 2,351 families—741 from formula funds and 1,610 from competitive funds as of October 2014

Additional funding for home visiting:

state general funds provided to the Pennsylvania Children's Trust Fund; state general funds for NFP and family centers; federal EHS grant funds for the home-based option; Medicaid funding

Identified risks targeted by MIECHV:

maternal and child health; poverty; crime; domestic violence; maternal high school dropouts; substance abuse; unemployment; and child maltreatment

Additional information

Pennsylvania's MIECHV program on the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services OCDEL website: <http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/dhsorganization/officeofchilddevelopmentandearlylearning/index.htm>

Pennsylvania's MIECHV Needs Assessment and State Plan on the OCDEL Research website: <http://www.ocdelresearch.org/Reports/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FReports%2FHome%20Visiting&FolderCTID=0x01200092EA27E29EEE3E4AAE2D4C5508AC9E5A&View={5EEC6855-F8A8-486E-B6E0-FE6B9FDEBE2E}>

Source: Interview with Michelle Hill, educational research associate, Office of Child Development and Early Learning, October 2014; Theresa Campisi, family support program manager, Office of Child Development and Early Learning, October 2014; and Tracy Campanini, director, Bureau of Early Learning Services, October 2014.

"[MIECHV] caused a greater focus on home visiting in Pennsylvania."
– Pennsylvania state administrator

This profile was written as part of a larger study to identify how states are using Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting, or MIECHV, funds to advance state home visiting systems. For a summary report and additional profiles about home visiting, visit clasp.org or americanprogress.org.