



# Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)

## *Selected Findings* *from the* **MIECHV Oregon Retention Evaluation Study (MORE)**

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### Disclaimer

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In partnership with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), Portland State University (PSU) conducted a study funded as part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Competitive MIECHV grant awarded to the State of Oregon. The study was limited to those programs receiving MIECHV funding: Early Head Start, Nurse-Family Partnership, and the Healthy Families Oregon programs.



Research has shown that nearly half of those families who enroll in home visiting exit these services prior to program completion. In a collaborative approach with local home visiting stakeholders, PSU designed two complementary studies to shed light on the factors that influence family retention and the dynamic nature of mothers' experiences related to participation and engagement in home visiting.

Key informants from local programs, as well as national content experts, contributed to the design of the study and the data collection tools. A home visiting advisory group provided ongoing feedback and recommendations about study recruitment, data collection, protocols, and interpretation of results. *This report highlights results from both studies.*

## The Qualitative Interview Study

**What mothers have to say about home visiting...**

### *Of Interest to Home Visitors*

- Families talked a lot about what they liked about home visiting, including:
  - Having input about what to work on during their visits.
  - Home visitors' supportive responses to crises or events as they came up.
  - Fun activities, information, ideas, resources, and supports.
- Mothers especially appreciated when there was time for just chatting or venting with their home visitor at visits.
- Mothers valued home visitors who:
  - Took time to understand their unique values, beliefs, traditions, and culture.
  - Expressed the mindset that parents want to do what's best for their children.

"She is not just some professional that comes to my house. We are friends. She understands, she gets it."

## Details on the Interview Study

- We learned about retention by talking to mothers, home visitors, and supervisors. Mother and home visitor interviews occurred at program enrollment, and at 6 and 12 months later. Supervisors were interviewed 12 months after enrollment.
- If mothers exited early, we tried to interview them, their home visitor, and the supervisor within 30 days.
- Mothers were recruited by home visitors. Slightly more than half (n=18) of the mothers were white, 3 were African American, 6 were Latina, and 2 were bi-racial. There were 5 interview staff, 1 of whom was Spanish speaking.
- We interviewed a total of 30 mothers, 28 home visitors, and 25 supervisors.



“It would have helped if the old and new home visitors had overlapped...without any kind of overlap or transition, it’s hard on the baby too...”

**For Program Directors**

- Mothers value their relationships with their home visitors. Reducing turnover among home visitors means mothers don’t have to ‘start over’ and can avoid telling their stories multiple times.
- Sometimes mothers and home visitors don’t fit and it helps if it’s comfortable for families to request a different visitor.
- When families relocate, strong bridges between home visiting programs in different communities can support a smooth transition to new providers or services.

“Just by knowing that I have her there as part of a support system makes it easier.”

**Advice to Model Developers**

- Evening and weekend visits can make it easier for busy families to participate in visits.
- Families who struggle to keep visits often still want services - keep reaching out, use creative methods of communication, and make it easy for families to get back on track.
- Families have different needs and crises happen; they appreciate when home visitors can be flexible and responsive when the need arises.

“If they could just keep reaching out to us... because we have so much on our hands, just by being a mom, a new mom. Keep reaching out and not giving up, wanting to help us. I would want to see her [*home visitor*] again, because she was here from the beginning.”  
–teen mother in program





## The Quantitative Study

What we learned from surveys with home visitors and analysis of data on families and program retention...

### Enrollment Over Time in MIECHV Home Visiting

- Consistent with other U.S. studies, results showed 25% of families exited services within the first 90 days, and half (49%) by 12 months.



Table a. Percentage of families still enrolled or exited home visiting program by time interval

Families...	Time Interval from Enrollment to Exit			
	3 months (n=926)	6 months (n=843)	12 months (n=671)	18 months (n=468)
<b>% Still Enrolled</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>% Exited</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>56%</b>

### Mothers Were More Likely to Stay in Services for at Least 90 Days if:

- They were older, not teenaged mothers.
- Their home visitor had more years of experience in the home visiting field.
- Their home visitor reported using more ‘early engagement’ activities *at intake or around the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> visits*.
  - This included: providing tangible resources, doing most of the program paperwork, offering to do the visit in a comfortable location for the mother, doing a fun activity.



### More about the Quantitative Study

- We collected surveys from 59 home visitors about their work history, and their approach to working with and engaging families.
- We then matched these home visitors to 1,096 caregivers whose home visit data were recorded in OHA’s MIECHV database.
- We analyzed data to look at multi-level characteristics that were related to the likelihood of families remaining in or exiting home visiting services at various time points.

Characteristics included:

- Caregiver demographics and risk factors
  - Home visitor demographics
  - Home visitor approaches and practices
  - Organizational supports
- Analyses controlled for demographic and other factors where appropriate.

*Note: These methods provide evidence for associations, not causality.*



### ***Mothers Were More Likely to Stay in Services for at Least 12 Months if:***

- They were married or had more than one child.
- They did not have a past or current substance abuse problem.
- They did have a history of personal child welfare involvement or child abuse or neglect.

### ***If they worked with home visitors who:***

- Had more years of experience in the home visiting field.
- Reported greater levels of organizational support (e.g., felt their organization appreciated them and cared about their well-being).
- Used more 'early engagement' activities at the first few visits.

### ***Considerations to Improve Family Retention in Home Visiting Programs***

- Support professional development to build skill in 'early engagement' strategies, and talk to mothers about their experiences for input about what's most helpful to keep them connected (at their initial visits and beyond).
- Design and test innovations that include strategies for addressing the unique experiences of families, particularly teenaged mothers, single mothers, and those with past or current substance abuse problems.
- Promote efforts that target improving home visitor job support - an important factor in keeping families engaged in program services.
- Build cultures of organizational and supervisory support for staff.

"Home visiting has helped me become and shape myself into the parent that I am now. I am really proud of that person that I am, and I'm glad that I've gotten the support and the help to realize that."

### **Study Limitations & Caveats**

Future inquiry in these areas would be beneficial to replicate and add to these findings.

#### Qualitative interviews

- Findings should be generalized to other home visiting populations with caution; a different group of participants might surface other benefits/concerns with regard to home visiting.
- While the research team worked diligently to establish rapport with mothers, it is possible they chose not to share some of the factors that influenced their decisions to remain in or to exit services.

#### Quantitative data analyses

- It is difficult to operationalize/define the construct of retention when combining multiple programs (e.g., different enrollment and eligibility criteria).
- Data are correlational in nature and do not provide causal understanding of service exit.
- Effects of potentially key variables could not be examined (small group sizes for participant racial/ethnicity characteristics, home visitor transition/turnover data not available in the database).
- There were reduced sample sizes from missing data for some analyses –likely due to changes over time in required administrative data collection (e.g. program entry date, screening measure timing, child date of birth/prematurity status).

*Please refer to the full report for details on study methodology, results, implications and limitations.*



**FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THIS WORK**



**¡Gracias!**

**Selected study findings are provided in this publication.**

*The full report is available upon request:*

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