



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

By the Center for Law and Social Policy
and the Center for American Progress February 9, 2015

The federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting, or MIECHV, program supports the expansion of evidence-based home visiting services in Texas' most at-risk communities and creates local infrastructure to support the state's home visiting system. Multiple home visiting models are being used in each at-risk community and serve clients through a coordinated referral system, which allows programs to provide a continuum of services targeted to the unique needs of each family. The state's locally driven approach to implementing the MIECHV program provides communities with the ability to make decisions based on their needs, compile the appropriate home visiting and family support services, and integrate services to improve outcomes for children and families.

Success and innovation

Community coalitions

Each community administers its own local early childhood coalition, which focuses on integrating home visiting and family support services within the community as well as on implementing system-level strategies to improve outcomes for all young children and families. This helps ensure families with young children have coordinated access to an array of available services while simultaneously addressing community-level issues that negatively affect families. Texas targeted MIECHV funds towards the most high-risk communities. The state also asked the coalitions within these areas to select multiple home visiting models that addressed the specific needs of the area's population, as well as to collect and analyze local data. Coalitions also developed strategic plans to address broader system issues. These coalitions also created infrastructure by hiring staff, defining operating processes and service coordination, making policy changes when necessary, and garnering community support to form what administrators describe as a unique partnerships with the state. The communities have a vested interest in the success of the home visiting programs, and this accountability structure ensures that services more effectively reach the most vulnerable populations.



Texas MIECHV at a glance

Total federal MIECHV funding:
\$10.4 million in formula grant funds annually and \$6.7 million total in competitive grant funds

Lead agency:
Texas Health and Human Services Commission, or HHSC

Number of communities served:
9 communities and a total of 19 counties

MIECHV-funded home visiting models:
Early Head Start-Home Visiting, or EHS-HV; Home-Instruction for Preschool Youngsters, or HIPPY; Nurse Family Partnership, or NFP; and Parents as Teachers, or PAT

Community-based centralized intake system

To manage services effectively among different home visiting programs, each community coalition created a local, centralized intake system. This coordinated referral process streamlined access to home visiting services and provided families with referrals to the program that would best meet their needs. Furthermore, other services available within the community—such as mental health treatment, public schools, substance abuse treatment, and recreation centers—were integrated into the intake system in order to create a cross-layer support system and build capacity within each community.

Data system

The HHSC contracted with an information technology firm to build a new data collection system. The system is designed to communicate with the existing databases utilized by evidence-based models so that data can be extrapolated without duplicative data entry. This data collection system aggregates and centralizes data from all home visiting sites and tracks performance for the MIECHV benchmark areas. This centralization allows state administrators to review data at the state, community, and site levels, while supervisors at the various sites can access information specific to each home visitor.

Fatherhood initiative

Home visiting models often focus solely on the mother and the child. However, Texas administrators worked with the National Fatherhood Initiative, the Office of the Inspector General, and Strong Fathers Strong Families to create trainings to support father engagement within home visiting services. Local implementing agencies created father-friendly assessment tools and developed templates for father-engagement plans. The state has partnered with the University of Texas to conduct an evaluation of its fatherhood initiative, specifically to determine whether more father engagement leads to higher retention rates within home visiting programs and other positive outcomes for children and families.

Challenges

State administrators cited the lack of time available to plan and prepare for the expansion of home visiting through the MIECHV grant as a challenge. The comprehensive contracting processes resulted in time delays for getting money to the communities. Once received, communities were required to quickly form coalitions, select multiple models, recruit families, and start providing services. The hiring of additional staff to support the expanding home visiting system while the home visiting infrastructure was still being constructed made the quick timeline particularly challenging. Administrators also noted that it was difficult to build the internal infrastructure while simultaneously administering services.

Texas MIECHV at a glance

Families served:

Funding provides services for 2,978 families

Additional funding for home visiting:

State general funds administered through HHSC; state general funds administered through the state's child welfare agency, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services; private funding; and one state agency receives 1115 waiver funds

Identified risks

targeted by MIECHV:

Maternal and child health; teen pregnancy; school readiness; poverty; access to health insurance; child abuse and maltreatment

Looking ahead

Creating community-level change

During the next phase of implementation, the state is focusing on sustainable growth and increased impact. Texas is specifically investigating how many home visiting slots should be available in each community based on the needs of the area's population and the voluntary nature of the home visiting programs. Administrators hope to determine the ideal level of participation necessary to achieve improved outcomes at the community level. Additionally, Texas is creating sustainability plans at the local and state levels to increase investments for programs affecting young children and their families. The goal is to expand access to more children and families, expand community control, and diversify funding streams.

Expanding the data system

Currently, the data system is only tailored to collect information from MIECHV-funded home visiting programs throughout the state. Administrators are planning system improvements that will integrate data from non MIECHV-funded home visiting programs, which will help administrators better understand the scope and impact of all home visiting services within each community and throughout Texas.

Additional information

Texas' MIECHV program on the Health and Human Services website: http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/hhsc_projects/hccs/texashomevisiting.shtml and www.texashomevisiting.org.

Texas' MIECHV Needs Assessment: <http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/si/oecc/cm1.pdf>

Texas' MIECHV State Plan: For more information, please contact Donna Wood at Donna.Wood@hhsc.state.tx.us.

Source: Interview with Donna Wood, Texas home visiting program manager, Texas Health and Human Services Commission, October 2014.

"[Texas] is building communities that are supportive of vulnerable children and families."
– Texas home visiting program manager

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.