



Louisiana: 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 helps Louisiana implement a new evidence-based home visiting model and expand services to vulnerable families. Additionally, the federal funding allows the state to direct significant resources to enhance its existing infrastructure, build a more robust data structure, and streamline business processes. Moreover, the MIECHV program gives Louisiana the opportunity to examine its program and create a continuous quality improvement plan in order to better meet the needs of the state's at-risk children and families.

Success and innovation

Decision making and implementing the new home visiting model

Prior to receiving the MIECHV grant, Louisiana supported the Nurse Family Partnership, or NFP, through state and federal funding. The state was interested in expanding home visiting beyond first-time mothers in order to reach a broader group of vulnerable young children and their families. The Bureau of Family Health, or BFH, collaborated with the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council members to determine gaps in program services and assess the feasibility of implementing a new model to complement NFP. Once Parents as Teachers, or PAT, was selected, the state's MIECHV leadership worked to prepare Louisiana's established implementation and quality-assurance infrastructure to support a pilot of the complementary model. Implementation of PAT began in October 2013 in at-risk parishes in northern Louisiana.



Louisiana MIECHV at a glance

Total federal MIECHV funding:

\$1.9 million in formula grant funding and \$7.98 million in competitive grant funding for fiscal year 2014

Lead agency:

Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, or DHH; Office of Public Health, or OPH; and the Bureau of Family Health, or BFH

Number of communities served:

34 parishes

MIECHV-funded home visiting models:

Nurse Family Partnership, or NFP, and Parents as Teachers, or PAT

Building data capacity and quality

Louisiana has built a more robust data collection and reporting system and developed the capacity to analyze the data. MIECHV leadership also created a new analyst position that is dedicated to administering the state's home visiting data system and providing support in order to monitor progress and quality. The data analyst is co-leading Louisiana's MIECHV continuous quality improvement, or CQI, process, which involves working with the state's nurse consultant and the state MIECHV staff on quality improvement activities. Louisiana's MIECHV program manager noted that these resources and the structure they provide have allowed them to use their data to support program planning, reporting, assessment, evaluation, and improvement. A highlight of the state's MIECHV CQI implementation was the creation and continued use of a CQI online platform, which facilitates virtual communication and planning across the state.

Challenges

The rapid timeline for program expansion was a challenge for the state. It was difficult to conduct program planning activities, execute contracts, and train staff to reach capacity in the specified grant period. Staff vacancies, particularly with NFP, also made it a challenge for the program to retain families. However, Louisiana is focused on future opportunities to improve capacity by working with all relevant entities, including state and federal agencies, national home visiting models, implementing agencies, and community partners on efforts related to enrollment and retention.

Looking ahead

Community engagement

Louisiana's MIECHV program seeks to improve community engagement by strengthening the existing MIECHV-funded local outreach resources. Local outreach specialists will continue to work within communities to build bridges across programs and to facilitate buy-in and participation from a broad group of individuals and organizations, including parents of young children and expectant parents. The specialists will also work to ensure that the major perinatal and early childhood system partners are aware of MIECHV services and that they have structured reciprocal referral pathways in place. Louisiana's MIECHV program will incorporate a state-level Early Childhood Systems, or ECS, integration specialist into the Louisiana MIECHV leadership team. The state's ECS integration specialist will lead the local outreach specialists in developing marketing, outreach, and early childhood system coordination and collaboration strategies to help ensure that outreach and engagement approaches are robust across the state. Strategies will focus on recruitment and enrollment of MIECHV-eligible clients, as well as on ways to better integrate and improve MIECHV clients' access to physical health, mental health, development, and early learning services at the state and local levels. The local outreach specialists, under the strategic direction of the statewide ECS integration specialist, will help Louisiana ensure that best practice engagement strategies are adopted statewide.

Louisiana MIECHV at a glance

Families served:

funding provides services for a maximum capacity of 1,712 families at any given point in time; cumulatively, home visitors funded with these grants have served over 2,100 families through August 2014

Additional funding for home visiting:

state general funds; the federal Maternal and Child Health Block Grant; and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF

Identified risks targeted by MIECHV:

pregnancy outcomes; poor child health and development; and economic self-sufficiency

Professional development

Louisiana's MIECHV leadership continues to improve the state's professional development system. BFH has partnered with the Louisiana Parent Education Network, or LAPEN, an organization that promotes best practices in parenting education, as well as continuing education and professional development opportunities for parent educators. Louisiana's MIECHV program is also working to coordinate and align the home visiting professional development and workforce system with other early childhood systems throughout the state.

Technology

In the future, BFH plans to focus on how different technological advances could improve the way the state provides its home visiting services to families. BFH has already begun to build data collection and analysis capacity with the possible long-term goal of addressing common measurements and benchmarks among maternal and early childhood service agencies and systems. Other technological improvements that leadership plans to research and develop are an electronic health record and practice management system, field data entry, virtual meeting rooms, and an electronic training and tracking portal.

Additional information

Louisiana's MIECHV program on the Bureau of Family Health's website:

<http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/546>

Louisiana's MIECHV program on the Partners for Healthy Babies' website:

<http://www.1800251baby.org/provider/bureau-of-family-health#home-visiting-programs>

For questions regarding Louisiana's Needs Assessment or State Plan, please contact Cynthia Suire at Cynthia.Suire@la.gov.

Source: Cynthia Suire, supportive services and MIECHV manager, Office of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health, November 2014.

"[MIECHV] has brought to the surface the importance of home visiting within the broader early childhood context."
– Louisiana 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.