

Supporting evidence for addressing working conditions and program climate

Recommendation #4. Address working conditions and program climate

- a. Expand program-level trainings on structural racism, social justice, and equity to reduce experiences of discrimination in the workplace.
- b. Create opportunities for home visitors to feel empowered in programmatic decisions by developing ways for staff to contribute to decisions. These opportunities might include the ability to provide anonymous feedback, attend listening sessions, choose trainings to attend, have direct communication with decision makers, and join staff councils or committees.
- c. Create opportunities for home visitors to engage with each other in team-building activities.
- d. Provide salaries that reflect a local wage rate that allows staff to meet their own and their families' needs.

The evidence presented here suggests a strong need to **address working conditions and program climate**. Retaining trained home visitors is essential for the success of the network of home visiting programs in California. Many factors contribute to retention, including salary, program climate, involvement in program decisions, effective and supportive supervision, and the availability of high-quality and culturally appropriate trainings. Conversely, we learned that experiencing discrimination in the workplace and having a bachelor's degree make it less likely that a home visitor will remain in their position. It is likely that the attrition of home visitors with a bachelor's degree is due to the low salaries they earn. Developing and strengthening the program-level practices included in this recommendation will lead to a positive work environment and climate that will ultimately promote retention.

Key Factors for retention

Given the importance of staff retention for both programs and families, this study explicitly looked at predictors of home visitor retention. In 2020, home visitors indicated how likely they were to stay in their position for the next 12 months, to which about 80 percent indicated they intended to stay. Given the timeframe of this study (beginning in March 2020), it is unclear how the pandemic influenced home visitors' intention to stay in their position. Similarly, the rapid expansion of home visiting across the state in recent years might also influence

home visitor retention. The study team tested both bivariate and multivariate statistical models to identify the strongest predictors of remaining in one's position (see Appendix A for more information). Table 1 outlines the predictors that were indicative of a home visitor's intent to stay and indicates with a "+" the variables that were positively associated with the likelihood a home visitor intends to remain in their position in the next year, or a "-" indicating the variables that were negatively associated with the likelihood a home visitor intends to remain in their position in the next year. All indicated variables showed statistically significant differences at the $p < .10$ level. This policy recommendation is directly tied to several of the key predictors including pay, programmatic decision-making, and experiences of discrimination.

Table 1. Summary of factors that predicted likelihood of remaining in current position

FACTORS THOUGHT TO INFLUENCE LIKELIHOOD OF REMAINING IN POSITION	PREDICTED LIKELIHOOD OF REMAINING IN POSITION (BIVARIATE)	PREDICTED LIKELIHOOD OF REMAINING IN POSITION (MULTIVARIATE)
Community level		
County-level rate of population living in rural area		
Programmatic supports		

FACTORS THOUGHT TO INFLUENCE LIKELIHOOD OF REMAINING IN POSITION	PREDICTED LIKELIHOOD OF REMAINING IN POSITION (BIVARIATE)	PREDICTED LIKELIHOOD OF REMAINING IN POSITION (MULTIVARIATE)
Supervision frequency		
Supervisor joins virtual visits		
Helpfulness of supervisor feedback	+	
Has a say in program decisions	+	+
Received training on implementing virtual home visiting	+	+
Received training on family stress and mental health	+	
Received training on community services for families	+	
Home visitor characteristics		
Race/Ethnicity		
3 or more years of experience in home visiting	+	+
Bachelor's degree or higher		-
Depressive symptoms	-	
Experienced discrimination in the workplace		-
Caseload size		
Caseload has families experiencing unemployment		
Caseload has families experiencing prenatal or postpartum depression and/or mental illness		
Caseload has families involved in child welfare system		
Satisfied with the amount of on-the-job stress	+	+
Full-time staff salary	+	+

Source: Home visiting workforce landscape survey, 2020

Note (1): + indicates this variable is positively associated with the likelihood that a home visitor intends to remain in their position in the next year; - indicates this variable is negatively associated with the likelihood that a home visitor intends to remain in their position in the next year

Note (2): The multivariate model was first run without salary included in the model due to a large amount of missing salary responses. The multivariate model remained very similar when salary was added to the model with the smaller sample (n = 429, compared to the n = 551 in the model without salary).

Pay

Salary was a significant predictor of home visitors' intention to stay in their current position. Overall, full-time home visitors earn a median income of \$41,600, which is much lower than full-time home visitors with a bachelor's degree or higher in nursing (median income \$99,879) or supervisors (median income \$58,240) (Table 2). There is some variability in pay by region; for example, home visitors in the Bay Area had a median salary nearly \$20,000 higher than those in the Inland Empire and more than \$15,000 higher than those in the Northern region. Pay also varied by length of time in the field; more experienced home visitors (i.e., those with 3 or more years in their current position or in the field) reported a median salary nearly \$6,000

higher than those with less experience.¹ When reporting on the reasons home visitors leave their positions, 41 percent of supervisors reported low salary as a major reason. Furthermore, only 60 percent of home visitors reported being satisfied with the amount of money earned. Previous research suggests that the early childhood workforce is not well paid due to the fact that many home visitors and early educators are low income based on eligibility criteria for supports such as SNAP and Head Start.²⁰ In this study, few home visitors reported receiving a public assistance benefit such as WIC or Medi-Cal (Table 3).

Table 2. Annual salary by level of employment

ANNUAL SALARY BY LEVEL OF EMPLOYMENT	OVERALL	OVERALL RANGE	HOME VISITOR	HOME VISITOR RANGE	SUPERVISOR	SUPERVISOR RANGE
	Median		Median		Median	
Full-time staff (N = 631)	\$43,680	\$13,000 - \$183,040	\$41,600	\$13,000 - \$183,040	\$58,240	\$27,913 - \$149,760
Full-time staff who have a bachelor's or higher degree in nursing (N = 84)	\$103,082	\$33,600 - \$183,040	\$99,879	\$33,600 - \$183,040	\$118,240	\$41,600 - \$149,760
Full-time staff without a bachelor's or higher degree in nursing (N = 378)	\$43,680	\$13,000 - \$124,800	\$41,600	\$13,000 - \$108,672	\$56,243	\$27,913 - \$124,800

Source: Home visiting workforce landscape survey, 2020

Table 3. Staff receipt of public assistance benefits (N = 690)

	HOME VISITOR
Medi-Cal	14%
WIC	10%
CalFresh	5%
CalWORKs	2%
None	80%

Source: Home visiting workforce landscape survey, 2020

In interviews, home visitors expressed frustration in issues with pay and how it has a strong impact on their decision to stay or leave their positions. Example quotes included:

- “It's just funny because when I really do look at the difference in agencies with a degree, there's a huge difference in pay. I know sometimes I feel like because I don't have that paper, I don't get that money, but I still do the same amount of work. I'll be honest. Even in my department of 11 people, I don't have a bachelor's degree but I carry the highest caseload, but I know that I don't make the most amount of money.” - Home Visitor, Spring/Summer 2021 Interview
- “The change will be that I'll be hopefully transitioning on because I would love to stay if they're going to pay me. But if not, I've got to do what's best. I am a creature of habit. I was at the last job for

¹ Crowne, S., Hegseth, D., Ekyalongo, Y., Chazan Cohen, R., Bultinck, E., Haas, M., Anderson, S., and Carter, M. (2021). *Findings from the First 5 California home visiting workforce study*. Bethesda, MD: Child Trends.

²⁰ Roberts, A. M., Gallagher, K. C., Daro, A. M., Iruka, I. U., & Sarver, S. L. (2019). Workforce well-being: Personal and workplace contributions to early educators' depression across settings. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 61*, 4-12.; Whitebook, M., McLean, C., & Austin, L. J. E. (2016). *Early childhood workforce index-2016*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

16 years. This is my second job of my entire life. So, I like staying places, but I know my value and I know my work ethic is very strong. But if they'll pay me, absolutely. But if not, I know that I need to make sure that I'm a priority." - Home Visitor, Spring/Summer 2021 Interview

Programmatic decision-making

Involvement in programmatic decision-making was a strong predictor of home visitor's intent to stay in their position as well. About half of the home visitors reported that employees have a say in decisions made for their program. In interviews, staff shared experiences of being involved in program-level decision-making. An example quote included:

- "They make it a safe space to express what we'd like. I've noticed in other places, management does not hear out their staff, [program] does, they're very big on that. At one point staff felt very overwhelmed with everything so we requested a meeting with management and they were so open to that and they created a monthly meeting so we could check-in with them." - Home Visitor, 2021 Spring/Summer Interview

Experiences of discrimination

Experiencing discrimination was negatively associated with a home visitors' intent to leave their position. In other words, home visitors who had experienced discrimination were less likely than home visitors who had not experienced discrimination to indicate they intended to stay in their position. Slightly more than 20 percent of home visiting staff in California report experiencing discrimination in the workplace or from the families they work with (Table 4). Among those who had experienced discrimination, about half reported they had reported this experience to their program.

Table 4. Home visitor experiences of discrimination

	HOME VISITOR
Experienced any discrimination in the workplace related to race, ethnicity, religion, and/or gender identification (N = 405)	17%
Experienced any discrimination from the families you work with related to race, ethnicity, religion, and/or gender identification (N = 405)	11%
Experienced either form of discrimination (N = 404)	22%
Notified supervisor, program manager, or anyone in program management team after experiencing discrimination in the workplace or from families you work with (N = 89)	48%
Felt program took appropriate action in response to reported incidents of discrimination (N = 43)	58%

Source: Home visiting workforce follow-up survey, 2021

When asked about discrimination in interviews, some staff shared experiences from their work with families. An example quote included:

- "But I have I experienced racism and discrimination when it comes to families that I'm trying to support? Absolutely. There are times where I'm just turned away at the door trying to start an intake and things like that, where I'm turned away because of my race, or they don't want my particular brand of home visiting and things like that. That has happened actually quite often unfortunately..." - Home Visitor, Spring/Summer 2021 Interview

Training related to diversity, equity, and inclusion

Both CDPH and CDSS are putting resources towards trainings on structural racism, social justice, and equity to reduce experiences of discrimination in the workplace. In this study, home visitors reported wanting more training focused on topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as those that address the multiple contexts of families and communities as described in Workforce Pipeline and Preparation, Recommendation #5. Specifically, more than two-thirds of home visitors indicated they wanted more training in racial justice/equity, implicit bias and internalizing racism, and cultural sensitivity/diversity—regardless of whether they received similar training in the past.

Opportunities to engage in team-building activities

A final potential way to support staff at the program level is to provide more informal opportunities for staff engagement. Staff repeatedly referenced the benefits of meeting with their peers and engaging in team building activities. In the 2020 survey, only 45 percent home visitors reported having the opportunity to participate in an event celebrating or recognizing their efforts in the past year. In response to open-ended survey questions about supports for staff, example responses included:

- “Twice a month we had a team building activity. Most of the [home visitors] took turns and facilitated an activity over Zoom. This helped us to connect more with one another. A lot of the activities that we provided emphasized mental well-being.”
- “I believe our program could create and allow space specifically for the [home visitors] only, allowing it to be peer-led.”

Summary

Over the past 18 months, stakeholders have shared their concerns about home visitor turnover, particularly how it can disrupt services to families, reduce morale among remaining staff who often must increase their caseloads as a result, and place cost and other burdens on programs. Strengthening supports that have been shown to reduce turnover are critical for developing a stable workforce in California. Stakeholders shared many of the program-level practices and strategies they are using or contemplating using, such as increasing pay across the spectrum of home visiting programs, conducting regular surveys to collect home visitor perspectives, and establishing decision-making roles for home visitors (a steering committee or policy committee with representation from program staff and families, for instance). Going forward, establishing these types of practices across the state will allow for a more cohesive workforce, may reduce pay inequities, and may ultimately promote home visitor retention.