

Supporting evidence for increasing awareness of home visiting as a profession among institutes of higher education

Recommendation #3. Increase awareness of home visiting as a profession among institutes of higher education

a. Create avenues for individuals to learn about home visiting as a career path. Provide information to department leads, practicum/internship courses, and instructors in relevant areas.

b. Embed home visitor competencies that are related to child development, early literacy, and family stress and mental health in higher education courses, including community college programs; and in fields related to home visiting (e.g., early childhood, human development and family studies, social work, public health).

The evidence presented here suggests that there is a strong need to **increase the awareness of the home visiting profession**. The vast majority of home visitors do not learn about the profession while enrolled in college, and higher education institutions offer very few courses specifically focused on home visiting. However, many home visitors have completed college coursework that is highly relevant for their jobs. This is particularly important given the ongoing expansion of home visiting across California and the need to identify and recruit future home visitors.

Creating avenues in higher education to learn about home visiting as a career path will promote home visiting as an option (much like how being a teacher or social worker are promoted), build opportunities to reach students across disciplines, and expand the pool of potential staff. Embedding home visitor competencies that are related to child development, early literacy, and family stress and mental health in higher education courses will 1) strengthen the connection between the skills needed for home visiting and the courses available within a university, college, or community college setting, 2) identify areas that are not supported through higher education

courses, and 3) may provide opportunities for colleges to develop courses to address these gaps.

Awareness of home visiting field

As discussed, a fundamental way to increase awareness of the home visiting field is to provide opportunities for individuals to learn about home visiting as a career option as part of their higher education. For the most part, home visitors do not currently learn about the home visiting field via higher education or professional opportunities (Table 1). Instead, they learn about it through professional networks or by having already worked for the home visiting program or agency.

Table 1. Ways workforce learned of home visiting

HIGHEST DEGREE (N = 790)	HOME VISITORS
I already worked for the agency in a different capacity	29%
I heard about the position through my professional network	26%
I heard about the position through an instructor or program at my college	6%
I heard about the position through apprenticeship with the program	2%

Source: Home visiting workforce landscape survey, 2020

Home visiting staff educational backgrounds

As described in Home Visiting Workforce Pipeline and Preparation, Recommendation #2, California home visiting staff represent a wide range of educational backgrounds, including degrees in child development,

early childhood education, psychology, social work/social welfare, and nursing. This suggests that there are many areas of study where home visitor competencies might be embedded.

However, in interviews with stakeholders in California’s institutions of higher education and entities that train home visitors, we heard that very few faculty members are aware of home visiting as a possible profession for students interested in supporting families with young children. Furthermore, there are few specific home visiting courses offered at four-year colleges and community colleges across California (Table 2). One possible way to increase awareness would be to make faculty members aware of home visiting; for instance, information could be provided to department leads, instructors over practicum/internships, and instructors of related courses. Some evidence and anecdotes from the study’s Core Advisory Group members indicate additional courses may be in development and/or may include more emphasis on home visiting in the future. For example, one home visitor said:

- “I’m currently working on my bachelors’ program. I’m starting to see the term “home visitation” on a lot of things. What I’m learning about [in class] meshes so well with what I do at work. I see home visitation being brought up more often.”

Table 2. Examples of home visiting-related college courses across California

COLLEGE	COURSE TITLE	COURSE DESCRIPTION
Includes Home Visiting as Course Topic		
Santa Barbara City College (Located in Santa Barbara, CA)	ECE 109: Family-Teacher-Child Relationships	Establishing and sustaining effective relationships between teacher, families, and child. Common problems handled between families and teachers; ways of distinguishing special problems requiring other professional attention; and supportive ways of helping families enjoy and appreciate their children. Includes interviewing, home visiting, parent education and family engagement strategies.
Specific Focus on Home Visiting		
Stanislaus State (Located in Turlock & Stockton, CA)	CDEV 4950: Home-Visiting in Early Intervention: Working with Families of Infants & Toddlers	An overview of home-visiting in early childhood programs. Topics to be covered include the purpose and rationale for home visitation services, home visit curriculum development, infant toddler development and developmental risk, strategies for successful home visits, and experience conducting home visits.
Required via Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS) Home Visitor Apprenticeship		
Antelope Valley College (Located in Lancaster & Palmdale, CA)	CFE 101: Introduction to Early Childhood Education	
	CFE 102: The Developing Child	
	CFE 103: The Child in Family and Community Relationships	
	CFE 105: Discovery-Based Education for Children	
	SOC 101: Introduction to Sociology	
	SOC 110: Ethnic Relationships	

Relevance of college coursework

While there are few courses specific to home visiting in California, there is some evidence that competencies could be embedded into college coursework with relative ease. For example, home visitors

reported receiving training in college coursework that is highly relevant for home visiting and related to expected competencies, including 56 percent of home visitors who reported that they had received training in child development as part of their formal college coursework (Table 3).

One faculty member who teaches a home visiting class at a four-year institution reported that local home visiting programs often reach out to her for staff referrals and that her students are successful in finding positions in those programs, which highly value the pre-service training she provides.

Table 3. Training received by home visitors and where they received them

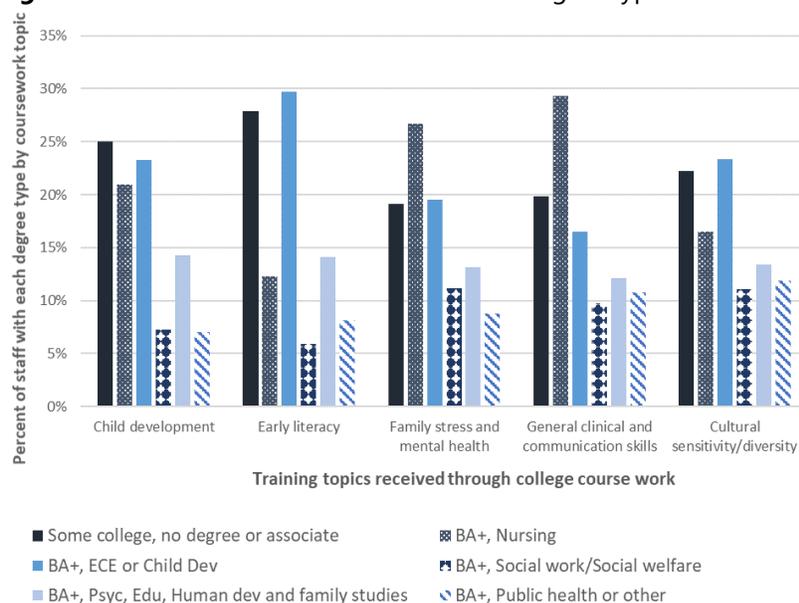
TRAINING TOPICS (N = 696)	HOME VISITORS WHO RECEIVED TRAINING THROUGH FORMAL COLLEGE COURSEWORK
Child Development	56%
Early literacy	38%
Family stress and mental health	36%
General clinical and communication skills	43%
Cultural sensitivity/diversity	37%

Source: Home visiting workforce landscape survey, 2020

Note: Denominators are the HVs who responded to the questions about whether they received each training. HVs were able to select multiple ways they received each training, including through college coursework.

Furthermore, the content of home visitors' training through formal college coursework varied based on their field of study (Figure 1). For example, home visitors with a degree in nursing were somewhat more likely to have had coursework related to family stress and mental health, and general clinical and communication skills. However, home visitors with nursing degrees were less likely to have had coursework related to early literacy compared to home visitors with most other degrees. This finding highlights areas of opportunities for further embedding home visitor competencies in higher education in fields related to home visiting.

Figure 1. Percent of home visitors with each degree type within coursework topic (n = 711)



Source: Home visiting workforce landscape survey, 2020

Home visiting staff's perspective on workforce preparation

Home visitors already recognize how their varied educational backgrounds have prepared them for home visiting work. Many shared how the types of courses they took in college prepared them for their positions. Quotes from home visiting staff who participated in interviews and case studies included:

- “So I have my bachelor's in social work and my focus has always been children. And even in college, I took a lot of child development courses, because at that time I wanted a minor in child development. I ended up just getting my bachelor's in social work, but with all that I had learned and with child development, after I graduated, I saw this position. ... And I feel like my background or my education has helped in the child development portion, but as well with social work and case management and stuff, because we still come across all of these things while working with families and being in the home and seeing some of the needs outside of the child development portion.”
- “I have my bachelor's degree in child development. I think that has really helped set the foundation for this role because I have a good, solid background in the field that I work in, and it has really helped pave that understanding and how to work with different types of families and really share how important the first years of life are and really put it in a sense of parents getting to understand that and how it will benefit their children.”
- “I got my degree in psychology with a minor in family studies. The psychology aspect only helped me a little bit in this job but the family studies really came through when I learned about child development and a lot of different issues and things and challenges that families undergo....”
- “And so it was in school that I did an internship with a program that was doing adolescent health work. And through that, I just became connected to working with people, advocating for people, doing, I was introduced to very light case management. But I immediately knew this is it. And I was just interning, right? But I knew that this is it. And so then from that point on in school, I really began to focus on courses and classes that would support the field that I wanted to go into and not just the degree requirement. And so I think that was useful in the work that I do now.”

Summary

Over the past 18 months, stakeholders shared that there is a need for the promotion of the home visiting profession. Stakeholders in California and across the country confirmed that home visiting is not embedded in the higher education system, but highlighted its potential to become so. Stakeholders shared that they would like to see higher education develop more opportunities for internships and fieldwork in home visiting. Expanding California's home visiting workforce will require resolving the existing disconnection between individuals who are not aware of home visiting as a career path but who are completing some of the very coursework that will prepare them to become a home visitor. Institutes of higher education are well-positioned to promote home visiting as a profession and develop a course of study that could address home visitor competencies. This recommendation supports the state's goal of developing a coordinated workforce infrastructure by addressing current gaps in the field's foundational areas of workforce development through leveraging the existing structures and institutions that can support building and promoting home visiting.