

Supporting evidence for developing a pipeline for recruitment and career advancement

Recommendation #4. Develop a pipeline for recruitment and career advancement

a. Engage in community-based outreach/recruitment to ensure that home visitors are from the same communities as participating families and are diverse in socioeconomic backgrounds, education, work experiences, and racial or cultural identity.

b. Develop pathways for career advancement based on competencies. The pathways should recognize work and life experiences in addition to education and training, provide multiple opportunities for career advancement, and be connected to adequate increases in compensation and benefits.

The evidence presented here suggests that there is a strong need to **develop a pipeline for recruitment and career advancement**. California's home visiting workforce is diverse in terms of educational background and lived experiences, and families and home visitors alike value both aspects of diversity. Building a pipeline will require incorporating education and lived experiences throughout all processes, including staff recruitment. Engaging in community-based outreach or recruitment will allow programs to maintain a diverse workforce and increase the number of staff who live in and represent the communities of participating families.

Developing pathways for career advancement based on competencies will shift some current practices away from education requirements only, allow programs to use competencies as a way to gauge skills and development, and encourage programs to provide opportunities for advancement based on skill. Broadly speaking, pathways refer to a framework or map that outlines paths for professional development or career advancement, typically based on requirements for education or training, and can also outline appropriate pay scales. These types of pathways have been used in many states in the field of Early Care and Education.

Shared communities

As part of building the workforce pipeline, programs should seek to hire staff that are from the same communities as participating families. In California, about two-thirds of home visitors reported that they were members of the same communities as at least some of their participating families (Table 1).

Table 1. Percent of home visitors who consider themselves a member of the same communities as the families their program serves (n = 398)

	HOME VISITORS
With most families	42%
With some families	25%
With a few families	18%
With no families	15%

Source: Home visiting workforce follow-up survey, 2021

Home visitors' socioeconomic backgrounds, work experiences, and race or cultural backgrounds

Home visitor's socioeconomic background, education, work experiences, and race or cultural identities are also important considerations for hiring staff. Broadly speaking, these types of backgrounds and experiences may contribute to how staff relate to participating families (i.e., shared cultural backgrounds)

and how staff deliver services (i.e., experience in early care and education settings). In California, the majority of home visitors are under 40 years old, are of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin, and speak English and Spanish (Table 2). These demographics mirror those of participating families; the majority of families served by home visiting programs in California also identify as Hispanic or Latinx, and Spanish is their second most commonly spoken language after English.¹ These demographics also mirror the demographics of families with children ages 0-3 in California who could possibly benefit from early childhood home visiting; for example, about half of families with children ages 0-3 in the state identified as being Hispanic or Latino according to U.S. Census and [California home visiting mapping tool data](#).² In addition, the majority of home visitors reported that they shared racial, ethnic, and/or cultural traits with at least some participating families (Figure 1).

Table 2. California home visiting workforce demographics

AGE (N = 775)	HOME VISITORS
20-29	24%
30-39	33%
40-49	23%
50-59	14%
60 or older	6%
RACE/ETHNICITY (N = 775)	HOME VISITORS
Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish origin	67%
Non-Hispanic White	15%
Non-Hispanic Black or African American	8%
Non-Hispanic Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	5%
Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native	<1%
Non-Hispanic Race not listed	<1%
Two or more races	2%
Prefer not to answer	2%
LANGUAGE FLUENCY (N = 754)	HOME VISITORS
English	97%
Spanish	63%
Cantonese	<1%
Tagalog	<1%
Vietnamese	<1%
Hmong	<1%

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.

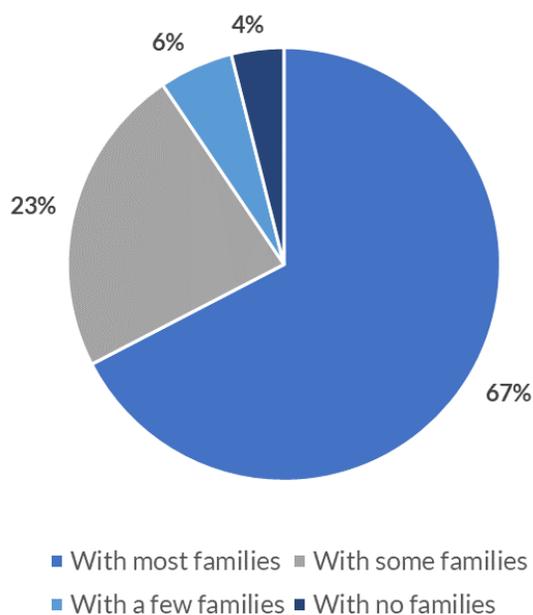
² U.S. Census Bureau (2019). SEX BY AGE (HISPANIC OR LATINO). Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/advanced>.

Arabic	<1%
Other	4%

Source: Home visiting workforce landscape survey, 2020

Figure 1. Percent of home visitors who feel that they share racial, ethnic, and/or cultural traits with the families their program serves (n = 739)

Home visitors who reported sharing traits with participating families



Source: Home visiting workforce landscape survey, 2020

While approximately 40 percent of staff are generally new to home visiting, many home visitors have years of experience in other settings working with families and children, particularly in early childhood settings like child care or pre-kindergarten (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Staff experience in home visiting

YEARS WORKING WITH PARENTS AND FAMILIES OF CHILDREN AGES 0-5 (N = 790)	HOME VISITORS
Less than one year	8%
1-2 years	17%
3-5 years	22%
6-10 years	17%
More than 10 years	36%

Source: Home visiting workforce landscape survey, 2020

Table 4. Staff experience in related settings (n = 361)

	HOME VISITORS
Early childhood education (child care or Pre-Kindergarten)	58%
School (K-12)	31%
Social work	21%
Hospital	19%
Child welfare/child protective services	7%

Source: Home visiting workforce follow-up survey, 2021

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 because HVs were able to select multiple options.

Lastly, as described in Home Visiting Workforce Pipeline and Preparation, Recommendation #2, the majority of California home visiting staff have a bachelor's degree and represent a wide range of educational backgrounds, including degrees in child development, early childhood education, psychology, social work/social welfare, and nursing. However, in this study, home visitors with a bachelor's degree were less likely to indicate they intended to stay in their position compared to those without a degree. This finding provides more support for the development of a pathway for career advancement as a mechanism for retaining staff.

Family perspectives on home visitor characteristics

Families value particular home visitor characteristics and experiences as well. In their interviews, families identified the types of characteristics or actions they valued in a home visitor, such as being patient, respectful, kind, and helpful. All families described having a positive relationship with their home visitor and all respondents indicated their home visitors understood their experience; more than half of families indicated their home visitor understood both their experience and culture. All families reported that their home visitor provides services in a way that meets their family's unique circumstances, strengths, and needs. Example quotes from families included:

- "Someone that is able to listen and have respect for others. Someone who is culturally competent, and that means not just understanding one's own culture, understanding other people's individual differences. Just somebody who is respectful overall." - Participating Family, 2021
- "The real value came when I started seeing her trying to understand our family dynamic and what worked best for us." - Participating Family, 2021

Home visitor perspectives on their backgrounds

Similarly, home visitors recognize the importance in how their experiences contribute to engagement and work with participating families. In their interviews, home visitors shared that their experiences helped them better understand and empathize with families on matters including being a parent, experiencing challenges and trauma in their own lives, or sharing similar culture or background as families. Home visitors reported these experiences have helped them empathize with and support families, as well as building trust and rapport. Example quotes from home visitors included:

- "I would say a few different things. One, my culture and my background really, really play a huge aspect. If I were to like name just a few different things that I feel like are really important to me, my experience in the child welfare system really played a huge part, me coming from a really large family... My education, the community in which I grew up, which I came back to work in really played a large part, and then I guess, I would say, I felt like yeah, like, just all the different traits and my

upbringing has really played such a large part in like how I do my work as a home visitor.” - Home Visitor, 2021 Spring/Summer Interview

- “So lived experiences are huge. Again, I work with pregnant and parenting African-American women. Myself am African-American and I have children. And so I think it really helps me build that relationship with the people that I work with because I think I see myself in them and I think they see themselves in me, which is why I really [like] home visiting because I feel often if you bring the family into the office, it sets this unequal balance between the relationship... But I feel like when I go into your home, that we're on equal ground. I'm in your place, you call the shots here, if you want me to take off my shoes, I'm doing whatever you say. And it really helps to kind of equal that and build that relationship.” - Home Visitor, 2021 Spring/Summer Interview

Some home visitors expressed that these lived experiences, particularly work experiences, are reflected in how they understand home visitor competencies as well. An example quote included:

- "Before joining this home visiting program, I worked in the foster care profession. Looking at [the home visitor competencies] – these are a lot of the domains and dimensions as a social worker, they aligned. I thought that was very interesting. Even if I moved profession, if I went into social work – it aligns with that, as well. I've also worked in the day care/school system. It also aligns with that, as well. It flows into other professions that work with families.” – Home Visitor, 2021 Case Study

Home visitor skills looked for during recruitment

Programs may need to adjust their recruitment and hiring practices to hire home visitors with diverse backgrounds. In their interviews, some supervisors reported conducting targeted hiring to ensure their home visitors reflect the populations they serve in areas such as language, race and ethnicity, and life experiences. Example quotes from supervisors included:

- "We want to be able to have a balanced home visiting staff that's representative of the communities that we service. Most of our clients are from the Latinx community so our home visitors reflect that. However, we do have African-American families that we service as well, and we want that to be reflected in our home visiting staff. So we definitely are mindful of targeted recruitment, and cultural consideration is a part of our hiring practice." – Supervisor, 2021 Spring/Summer Interview

To continue to build and strengthen a diverse workforce that shares traits with participating families, home visiting programs may need to expand their recruitment strategies, such as where they are posting job announcements (Table 5).

Table 5. Supervisor report of recruitment strategies and success of strategies

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES (N = 109)	USED STRATEGY	STRATEGY WAS SUCCESSFUL
Advertise position on agency website	79%	56%
Encourage your staff to share through word of mouth	61%	58%
Advertise internally at agency to promote or reclassify existing staff	43%	57%
Email job announcement to colleagues in your professional network	39%	42%
Advertise position on free job search websites (e.g., Indeed)	38%	61%
Advertise position on job search websites that require a fee for employers (e.g., LinkedIn, CareerBuilder)	36%	49%

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES (N = 109)	USED STRATEGY	STRATEGY WAS SUCCESSFUL
Share with current/former home visiting participants, encourage them to apply	26%	39%
Post on social media pages (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)	25%	42%
Recruit through local colleges and universities	21%	35%

Source: Home visiting workforce landscape survey, 2020

In their interviews, supervisors noted that home visitors' life experiences were also viewed as important for developing relationships with their staff. These shared experiences were similar to those between staff and families, including being a parent, sharing cultural or ethnic backgrounds, and having been a former client of home visiting programs themselves. One supervisor noted:

- "It's a little bit more complicated than just saying they maybe share some of the life experiences that the clients have. Because the other thing that you're looking for is people who've been able to be resilient and overcome those kinds of barriers but still maintain empathy and humility around it." – Supervisor, 2021 Spring/Summer Interview

Pay and opportunities for promotion

As part of establishing pathways for career advancement, identifying clear ways to increase opportunities for home visitors to be promoted and to be paid appropriately will be fundamental pieces to develop. The data from this study also support the importance of these factors for the workforce. For example, home visitors are generally satisfied with most parts of their job—except in two key areas—pay and opportunities for promotion (Table 6). Pay, in particular, is associated with a home visitors' intention to remain in their current position.³

Table 6. Home visitors' reported job satisfaction

HOME VISITOR JOB SATISFACTION (N = 683)	CURRENTLY COMPLETELY OR SOMEWHAT SATISFIED
How rewarding the work with families is	96%
Relationships with coworkers	94%
Job security	93%
Work-life balance	86%
The amount of time required to complete daily responsibilities	78%
Chances for promotion	60%
The amount of money earned	60%

Source: Home visiting workforce landscape survey, 2020

³ 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.

Summary

Over the past 18 months, stakeholders have suggested that the development of pathways for career advancement should build on learnings from similar efforts in Early Care and Education. For home visiting, this includes being flexible and inclusive of education, credentials, and experience, and not creating barriers or inequity in staff's ability to advance. For instance, it may not be feasible to require a specific degree for home visitors, nor particular trainings, without ensuring all staff have equal access to the training (as described in Home Visiting Workforce Pipeline and Preparation, Recommendation #5). Careful consideration will be needed in developing an equitable approach to the pathways for career advancement; this also includes home visitors' experiences, which are important in developing relationships with families. Although pathways for career advancement are new to the field of home visiting, researchers outside of California have also recommended developing these pathways as an approach to strengthening the home visiting workforce.⁴ This recommendation supports the state's goal of achieving a coordinated workforce infrastructure by addressing current gaps in the field's foundational areas of workforce development, specifically by developing pathways for career advancement that will support a pipeline for recruitment and career growth.

⁴ Sandstrom, H., Benatar, S., Peters, R., Genua, D., Coffey, A., Lou, C., ... & Greenberg, E. (2020). *Home visiting career trajectories: Final report*. OPRE Report #2020-11, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101641/home_visiting_career_trajectories_0.pdf