

Improving Home Visitor Professional Well-Being

A Resource for State and Tribal Home Visiting Programs, Model Representatives, and Local Programs

OPRE Report 2022-139

Many home visiting programs aim to strengthen their workforce, but do not know how or where to start. A recent project funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation focuses on home visitor professional well-being, including the need for a common definition and framework. This resource builds on those efforts to offer concrete ways for programs, models, and local agencies to measure and strengthen professional well-being. Specifically, this resource draws on a newly developed conceptual model of professional well-being, together with principles of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) to provide guidance on using data for improving home visitor professional well-being.

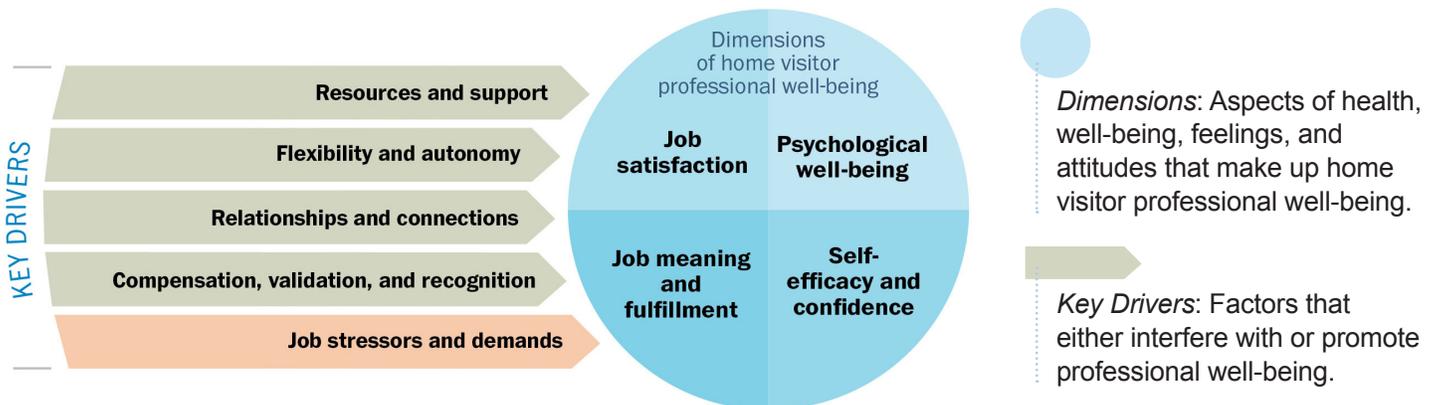
The Supporting and Strengthening the Home Visiting Workforce (SAS-HV) project seeks to understand professional well-being in the home visiting context: how it should be defined, measured, and bolstered to improve program and family outcomes.

Overview of the Conceptual Model of Home Visitor Professional Well-Being

The conceptual model views home visitor professional well-being within a complex, multilevel system. It depicts how *five key drivers** can influence *four positively framed dimensions* (see exhibit 1).

Those dimensions, in turn, affect outcomes for home visitors, programs, children, and families. See the [executive summary](#) for more details about the conceptual model.

Exhibit 1. Dimensions and Key Drivers of Home Visitor Professional Well-Being



*This resource focuses on the drivers in the conceptual model that *promote* professional well-being and mitigate against the negative impact of job stressors and demands; as a result, it does not focus on the fifth key driver, “Job Stressors and Demands.”

Organization of this Resource

This resource outlines three steps to improve home visitor professional well-being:

1

Identify a driver for improvement.

Gather data to assess the intended outcome, or dimension of home visitor professional well-being, and identify key drivers to target for improvement.

2

Select a strategy to address the identified driver.

After identifying a driver, select a strategy that addresses the identified driver and area for improvement.

3

Develop a plan to implement the strategy and track improvement.

Outline a plan for how the selected strategy will be implemented. Consider how implementation of the strategy and improvements in the targeted driver of professional well-being will be monitored over time.

It also provides tools, via existing measures and examples of evidence-informed strategies, to support the first two steps.

1

Identify a Driver for Improvement

First, you will need to gather information on the status of home visitor's professional well-being and drivers for improvement. This can be done by talking with program staff to understand where they may be struggling and what additional resources or support would be helpful. Program data can also be used to identify a driver to target for improvement. For example, you may have program data on home visitor job satisfaction or rates of staff turnover. When program data are not available, you can use existing measures to assess home visitor professional well-being in terms of the key drivers and dimensions depicted in the conceptual model. Existing measures can be used to identify a driver *and* track improvements over time. Considerations when selecting a measure include:

- ▶ Does the measure include content related to the topics staff discussed as important or in need of additional resources or support?
- ▶ Is the measure easily accessible?
- ▶ How long does it take to administer the measure? Is it quick to administer?
- ▶ Does the measure provide useful information? Can findings be interpreted easily and help inform ongoing program improvement efforts?

Exhibit 2 outlines existing measures that assess the dimensions and drivers of home visitor professional well-being included in the conceptual model. Exhibit 3 describes each measure. While none of the measures were developed specifically for home visiting, they can be used to assess dimensions and drivers of home visitor professional well-being. For example, the NIOSH worker well-being questionnaire is a comprehensive measure applicable to many workplace contexts. Additionally, the Measure of Workplace Environment is a strengths-based, quick (nine items) measure that has been used with home visitors.

Exhibit 2. Existing Measures of Dimensions and Drivers of Home Visitor Professional Well-Being

Measure	Dimensions Assessed				Drivers Assessed			
	Job satisfaction	Psychological well-being	Self-efficacy and confidence	Job meaning and fulfillment	Resources and support	Flexibility and autonomy	Relationships and connections	Compensation, validation, and recognition
NIOSH Worker Well-Being Questionnaire	●	●		●		●	●	●
Measure of Workplace Environment							●	●
Early Childhood Professional Well-Being Questionnaire			●	●		●	●	
Early Childhood Work Environment Survey					●	●	●	●
Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey	●							
Compassion Satisfaction Subscale of the Professional Quality of Life				●				

Exhibit 3. Description of Existing Measures

Measure name: NIOSH Worker Well-Being Questionnaire

Description: Measures worker well-being as a holistic construct. Includes five domains: work evaluation and experience, workplace policies and culture, workplace physical environment and safety climate, health status, and home, community, and society.

For more information: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2021-110/pdf/2021-110revised052021.pdf?id=10.26616/NIOSH PUB2021110revised52021>

Measure name: Measure of Workplace Environment

Description: Assesses aspects of work environment for applied human services research. Includes three domains: group cohesion, supportive leadership, and organizational justice.

For more information: Janczewski CE, Mersky JP, Lee CP. A brief measure of work environment for human service organizations. *Hum Serv Organ Manag Leadersh Gov.* 2021;45(5):479-492. doi:10.1080/23303131.2021.1915438 Email: janczew2@uwm.edu

Measure name: Early Childhood Professional Well-Being Questionnaire

Description: Assesses underlying factors related to individual early childhood professionals' well-being. Includes nine "senses" of well-being: comfort, communication, self-respect, affinity, agency, efficacy, engagement, contribution, and security.

For more information: McMullen MB, Lee MSC, McCormick KI, et al. Early childhood professional well-being as a predictor of the risk of turnover in childcare: A matter of quality. *J Res Child Educ.* 2020;34(3). doi:10.1080/0568543.2019.1705446 Email: mmcmulle@indiana.edu or kate.mccormick@cortland.edu

Measure name: Early Childhood Work Environment Survey

Description: Assesses organizational climate of early childhood programs. Includes 10 domains: collegiality, opportunities for professional growth, supervisor support, clarity, reward system, decision making influence, goal consensus, task orientation, physical environment, and innovativeness.

For more information: <https://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Early-Childhood-Work-Environment-Survey.pdf>

Measure name: Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey

Description: Helps staff reflect on aspects of their work that contribute most to job fulfillment. Measures five subscales: coworker relations, supervisor relations, nature of the work, pay and opportunities for promotion, and general working conditions.

For more information: <https://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/library/early-childhood-job-satisfaction-survey-ecjss/>

Measure name: Compassion Satisfaction Subscale of the Professional Quality of Life

Description: Measures positive effect of working with people who have experienced stressful events.

For more information: Stamm BH. The Concise ProQOL Manual, 2nd Edition. Published online 2010. ProQOL.org. Accessed March 14, 2022.

2

Select a Strategy to Address the Identified Driver

Once you know which key drivers need strengthening, you can craft specific goals related to the driver you want to address and select strategies to achieve them. Considerations include—

- ▶ How will the strategy help achieve the goal?
- ▶ Do you have the capacity and ability to implement the strategy?

- ▶ How will you monitor if the strategy improved the identified driver? What measures could be used to assess the impact of the strategy on the selected driver?

The following tables provide sample strategies organized by key driver. The accompanying text includes examples of proposed strategies in action.

Key Driver: Resources and Supports

Area of focus	Strategies
Clarity of job roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have clear job descriptions outlining roles and responsibilities • Provide testimonials from home visitors about the nature of home visiting work • Show videos of real home visits to help job candidates better understand job expectations • Have job candidates participate in mock home visits • Develop clear guidelines for how home visitors allocate time during home visits
Training, professional development, and coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have new home visitors shadow experienced home visitors • Provide initial and ongoing training in key content areas • Offer technical assistance to promote home visitor skills and competencies • Create individualized professional development plans and goals for home visitors • Offer interventions and trainings to promote home visitor awareness of stress management techniques
Tangible supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate program materials • Ensure access to reliable transportation and roadside assistance • Develop policies requiring designated paid breaks • Reimburse home visitors for use of personal devices (e.g., cellphones, tablets) • Provide support to ease burden of data collection • Ensure equitable distribution of caseloads • Raise awareness of the importance of professional well-being and the impact of well-being on work with families • Develop policies and guidelines to ensure home visitor physical safety

Potential Strategy in Action (Resources and Supports): To reduce secondary traumatic stress and improve staff mindfulness and caring self-efficacy, offer a 2-day, mindfulness-based stress reduction course. The compressed course, developed by Trowbridge and colleagues, includes direct teaching methods, individual sharing time, and time for meditation practice.¹

¹ Trowbridge K, Mische Lawson L, Andrews S, et al. Preliminary investigation of workplace-provided compressed mindfulness-based stress reduction with pediatric medical social workers. *Health Soc Work.* 2017;42(4):207-214. doi:10.1093/hsw/hlx038

Key Driver: Flexibility and Autonomy

Area of focus	Strategies
Adaptability in carrying out job roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine if model fidelity expectations interfere with home visitors' ability to use their practice expertise and knowledge to adjust program content as necessary• Provide ongoing coaching to home visitors on how to adapt and individualize services• Ensure home visitors have a balance of time spent on desirable and less desirable job functions• Identify opportunities for staff to confidentially report issues related to their supervision (e.g., feeling micromanaged)
Scheduling flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and implement policies that allow home visitors to adjust and change the timing, location, and number of hours worked as necessary• Provide protected time for data entry• Provide protected time to practice self-care and take mental health days
Participation in decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involve home visitors in programmatic decision making• Include home visitors in making decisions about quality improvement efforts• Engage home visitors in identifying organizational issues contributing to burnout and designing solutions to address burnout

*Potential Strategy for Action (Flexibility and Autonomy):
To improve job satisfaction and decrease burnout, consider forming Design Teams for staff to participate in decision making. Design Teams are groups of employees who work together to address organizational issues leading to intent to leave and turnover in their organization.²*

2 Strolin-Goltzman J, Lawrence C, Auerbach C, et al. Design teams: A promising organizational intervention for improving turnover rates in the child welfare workforce. Child Welfare. 2010;88(5):149-168. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.06.007

Key Driver: Relationships and Connections

Area of focus	Strategies
Peer collaboration and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create peer networks for home visitors to celebrate successes and identify lessons learned• Offer a peer mentorship for new home visitors• Implement group-based programs to promote staff well-being• Offer a buddy system for home visitors to ensure physical safety• Provide staff retreats and team building activities
Supervisor support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide protected time for on-going reflective supervision• Provide tip sheets and resources for supervisors to recognize and address signs of secondary trauma or burnout• Provide coaching and resources for supervisors in use of techniques to help home visitors reflect on sources of job meaning and fulfillment• Identify opportunities for staff to confidentially report on the quality of the supervisory relationship• Measure the quality and content of supervision• Ensure staff can confidentially report incidents of discrimination or microaggressions
Positive organizational climates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement training on leadership skills and competencies• Develop strategic plans to support diversity, equity, and inclusion• Infuse trauma informed or reflective practices at the organizational level• Offer individualized support or affinity groups for home visitors of color to discuss racial trauma triggered by workplace contexts• Ensure leaders have the skills and competencies to motivate staff• Provide ongoing opportunities for staff to learn new information and skills for ongoing cognitive engagement• Create opportunities for staff to anonymously report concerns related to their physical or psychological safety

*Potential Strategy for Action (Relationships and Connections):
To help supervisors develop the skills necessary to support staff experiencing secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout, consider a free, online, self-paced training offered by the Institute for the Advancement of Support Professionals. The training also helps supervisors build communication skills to promote team cohesion and foster a network of peer relationships among staff.³*

³ Source: Maximizing Team and Peer Networks to Improve Family Outcomes. [Institute for the Advance of Family Support Professionals](https://institutefsp.org/modules/maximizing-team-and-peer-networks-to-improve-family-outcomes). Accessed February 11, 2022. <https://institutefsp.org/modules/maximizing-team-and-peer-networks-to-improve-family-outcomes>

Key Driver: Compensation, Validation, and Recognition

Area of focus

Strategies

Salary and benefits

- Examine equity in pay and promotion practices
- Offer competitive healthcare, sick, vacation, and retirement benefits
- Offer paid time off for holidays and mental health days
- Develop policies to reimburse staff for accessing emergency childcare
- Provide stipends for gym memberships

Recognition strategies

- Provide avenues for funders and leadership to learn from home visitors and share successes and accomplishments
- Clearly communicate standards and expectations for receiving incentives and rewards for job performance
- Create a physical or virtual board for home visitors to post successes and accomplishments
- Invite home visitors to share their work with other community service providers and representatives
- Complete annual individualized performance reviews

Career ladders and opportunities for advancement

- Form relationships with colleges and universities to promote home visiting as an early childhood career pathway
- Develop career ladders for home visitors, including rungs like lead home visitor or the leader of trainings, team meetings, or CQI efforts
- Provide opportunities for home visitors to learn new skills and knowledge aligned with individualized professional development plans
- Offer scholarship programs or stipends for home visitors pursuing higher education

*Potential Strategy for Action (Compensation, Validation, and Recognition):
To bolster staff salaries and prevent turnover, think about offering the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H) and Family Support and Performance and Education Yield Success (PAEYS) programs. These programs provide scholarships and salary supplements for home visitors. In 2021, T.E.A.C.H recipients in Iowa reported a 93% retention rate and 16% increase in average hourly wages.^{4,5}*

4 T.E.A.C.H. – Family Support. Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children. Accessed February 24, 2022. <http://www.iowaaeyc.org/family-support-model.cfm>

5 PAEYS – Performance and Education Yield Success. Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children. Accessed February 24, 2022. <http://www.iowaaeyc.org/paeys.cfm>

3

Develop a Plan to Implement the Strategy and Track Improvement

Once you select a strategy, you should create an implementation plan that clarifies roles and responsibilities, specific steps, and expectations. After you develop the plan, you can monitor how the strategy is being implemented and whether it is being implemented as planned. You can use the same measures that helped you identify areas in need of improvement to assess change and track improvement. That data can inform next steps and the ultimate decision to adopt, adapt, or abandon the strategy.

Conclusion

These steps follow basic concepts of CQI. For additional information and resources, refer to the CQI toolkit developed by the Design Options for Home Visiting Evaluation project. Modules of particular interest include [Module 1: Introduction to CQI](#), [Module 2: Using Data to Drive CQI and Identify Topics](#), and [Module 8: Key Driver Diagrams](#).

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Submitted to

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Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Contract Number: HHSP-2332-01-5001-331

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This report is in the public domain. Permission to reproduce is not necessary. Suggested citation: Sparr, M., Johnson, H., & Quigley Clark, M. (2022). *Improving home visitor professional well-being: A resource for state and tribal home visiting programs, model representatives, and local programs* (OPRE Report No. 2022-139). Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation; Administration for Children and Families; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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