



Home Visitor Characteristics and Quality

Erikson Institute • Illinois State Board of Education

This fact sheet summarizes findings from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Prevention Initiative (PI) Evaluation, which was conducted by Erikson Institute. PI programs provide child development and family support services for expecting parents and families with children ages birth to three. They utilize a variety of delivery methods including home visiting, parent training, and parent-child interaction groups. All programs are required to use a research-based program model and curriculum for the services they provide. The evaluation took an in-depth look at a representative sample of 30 PI programs throughout the state (excluding the city of Chicago) from Fall 2011 through Spring 2012, assessing program quality through site visits with programs and case studies with home visitors and families. Home visitor characteristics and quality are presented below.

Home visitors were predominantly white, English speaking, and older than the parents served.

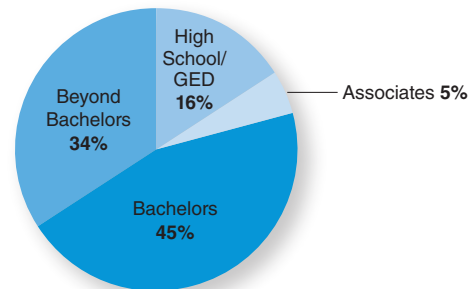
- The majority of home visitors (61%) were white, while 20% were Hispanic and 18% were African American.
- About three-quarters of teachers (76%) spoke English only, while 22% reported speaking English and Spanish.
- Home visitors who participated in the case studies (a subsection of total participants) ranged in age from 25 to 62, with a mean age of 44.7. They were older than the parents served, whose ages ranged from 18 to 40, with a mean age of 27.7.

PI programs had qualified and experienced home visitors.

More than three-quarters of home visitors (79%) held bachelor's degrees or higher and 81% had worked with families and their young children for at least two years.

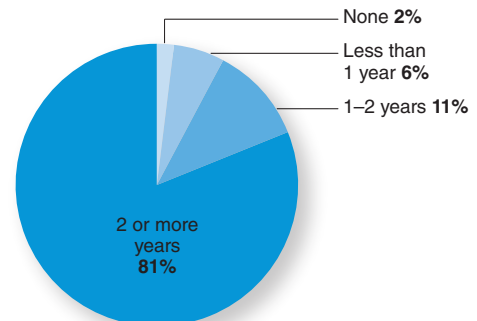
Home Visitor Education

Source: home visitor site visit survey (N=83)



Home Visitor Experience with Families and Their Young Children

Source: home visitor site visit survey (N=101)



Home visitors reported that working with caregivers with significant challenges was their greatest training need.

The most common training needs were working with caregivers with significant challenges such as depression, substance abuse, and domestic violence (46%), working with children with behavioral and/or mental health challenges (44%), and family empowerment techniques (38%).

Home visitors and parents reported positive, high-quality relationships with each other.

Home visitor and parent relationships were measured on two dimensions—the quality of the helping relationship and home visitor-parent alignment on goals. Home visitors and parents reported positive, high-quality helping relationships and moderate levels of alignment with each other. There was a significant correlation between the two dimensions; scores for both areas fluctuated together (as one increased, so did the other). There was also a significant difference between home visitor and parent ratings in both dimensions, with parents providing higher ratings.

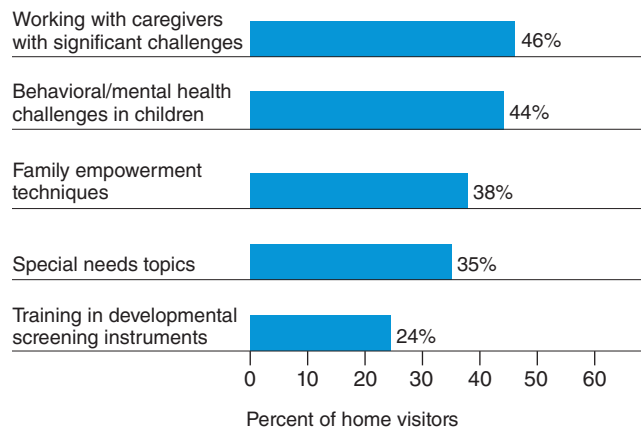
Home visitors had strategies for working with families, and families were engaged in the home visits.

Home visitors video-recorded 85 home visits, which the Erikson evaluation team scored using the Home Visit Rating Scales-Adapted & Extended (HOVRS-A+), a 7-point scale that measures home visit quality. The overall quality of the home visits was within the adequate-to-good quality range ($M=4.06$, $SD=0.99$).

- *Home Visitor Strategies* measure the home visitor’s ability to form a relationship with the family as well as their facilitation of parent-child interactions. The average score for this area was within the adequate-to-good quality range ($M=3.71$, $SD=1.03$). Home visitors demonstrated strategies for developing relationships with families and, to a

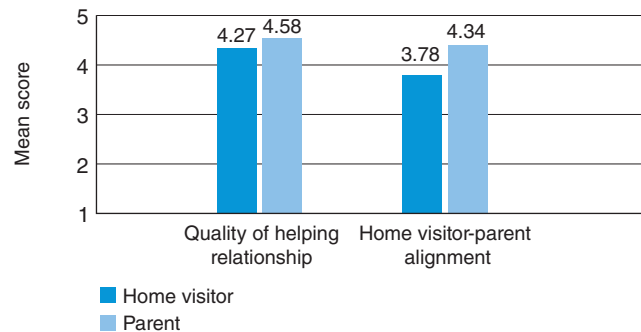
Home Visitor Training Needs

Source: home visitor site visit survey (N=104)



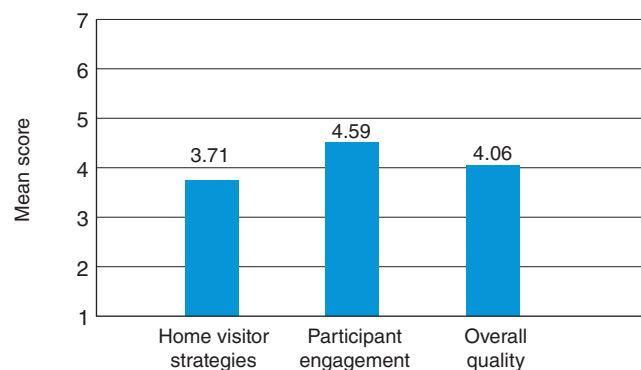
Home Visitor-Parent Relationship

Source: parent interviews (N=69) and home visitor case study survey (N=77)



HOVRS-A+ Mean Scores

Source: home visit video recordings (N=80-83)



lesser extent, collaborating with parents. However, they were not as skilled in facilitating parent-child interactions.

- *Participant Engagement* assesses parent and child engagement. The average score for this area was within the adequate-to-good quality range ($M=4.59$, $SD=1.11$). Parents and children were engaged in home-visit activities and with each other.

What are the policy and practice implications?

Evaluation findings have several implications for improving home visitor quality. Results from both the case studies and the site visits are discussed here. *See the Program Quality Fact Sheet for more on the site visits.*

- Home visitors were educated and experienced but struggled somewhat with individualizing their approach to families. Home visitors showed positive and warm interactions with families, and both home visitors and parents reported strong helping relationships. However, home visitors reported lower ratings than parents in the quality of the relationship and alignment on goals. Home visitors also reported a need for additional training in working with families with mental health/behavioral issues or other challenges. Programs should consider providing more training in these areas.

- The review of home visits as part of the case studies suggested that home visitors could improve their strategies for facilitating parent-child interaction. This finding converged with findings from program site visits (see the *Program Quality Fact Sheet*), which also suggested that home visitors struggled to incorporate facilitation of parent-child interaction into their work. Increased training and supervision in these areas may be helpful. Regular observation of home visits, using a tool such as the HOVRS-A+, would likely be of benefit to monitoring quality of home visits and supporting visitors in this area.

About the data: *The evaluation team collected data from multiple sources, including a web-based survey of home visitors who participated in the site visits and the case studies, a telephone interview with families, and video recordings of home visits.*

For more information about the Prevention Initiative (PI) Evaluation, visit www.erikson.edu/PIEvaluation.

Herr Research Center for Children and Social Policy at Erikson Institute

Evaluator

Erikson Institute advances the ability of practitioners, researchers, and decision makers to improve life for children and their families through its academic programs, applied research, and community partnerships and initiatives.

The Herr Research Center conducts original research, evaluations, and analysis to inform, guide, and support effective early childhood policy.

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Early Childhood Division

Illinois State Board of Education

Funder

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) administers public education in Illinois. The Early Childhood Division focuses on children from birth to 8 years old, early intervention for at-risk students, prekindergarten programs, early literacy, and partnerships among schools, communities, and service providers.

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