



The Understanding Family Engagement in Home Visiting report synthesizes research on facilitators and barriers to engaging families in early childhood home visiting programs.

7. Understanding Family Engagement in Home Visiting: Literature Synthesis

These programs aim to improve child and maternal health, economic self-sufficiency, and child development. The synthesis covers outreach, recruitment, retention, and active participation, identifying factors that influence family engagement and strategies for overcoming engagement challenges. The findings emphasize the importance of program flexibility, personalized support, and strong relationships between families and home visitors to improve retention and engagement.

1. Reasons for Reduced Retention

- **Mismatch in Expectations:** Families who felt the program did not meet their expectations or support their immediate needs were more likely to drop out.
- **Life Circumstances:** Changes in family situations, such as employment or relocation, made it difficult for families to continue with the program.
- **Negative Relationships with Home Visitors:** A lack of trust or discomfort with the home visitor could lead to disengagement.

2. Elements for Keeping Retention

- **Trusting Relationships:** A supportive and trusting relationship between families and home visitors was a key factor in retaining families.
- **Flexibility in Service Delivery:** Programs offering flexible scheduling, visit locations, and content were more successful in keeping families engaged.
- **Tailored Content:** Programs that adapted to the unique cultural and linguistic needs of families saw higher retention.

3. Strategies and Best Practice Recommendations

Successful Strategies

- **Flexible and Family-Centered Approach:** Programs that allowed families to control visit frequency, duration, and location saw improved retention.
- **Strong Home Visitor Relationships:** Programs that focused on building trust and rapport between home visitors and families helped improve engagement.
- **Tailoring to Family Needs:** Home visiting programs that addressed specific family needs and expectations, particularly

Unsuccessful Strategies

- **Inflexible Programs:** Programs that were rigid in their service delivery or did not adapt to family circumstances (e.g., moving or scheduling conflicts) faced higher dropout rates.
- **Limited Outreach:** Programs that did not actively reengage families after missed appointments or life changes saw reduced retention.

Prioritizing the Findings

The most impactful insights for retention, particularly applicable to community organizations helping low-income Canadians with financial literacy, are:

1. **Flexible Program Delivery:** Programs that offer flexibility in scheduling and content are more successful in keeping families engaged. This is crucial for families with unpredictable schedules or competing demands.
2. **Building Trust and Relationships:** Trust between families and home visitors is essential. Home visitors who are empathetic, culturally competent, and supportive foster stronger relationships that lead to better retention.
3. **Tailoring Services to Individual Needs:** Programs that provide culturally relevant and linguistically accessible content and adapt their services to address the unique challenges faced by families, see better outcomes.

Best Practices Context

- **Flexibility and Responsiveness:** The key to successful retention is the ability of programs to adapt to the evolving needs and challenges of families. Programs that offer flexible scheduling, personalized content, and consistent follow-ups are more effective in retaining participants.
- **Trust-Based Engagement:** The relationship between home visitors and families is critical. Home visitors who build trust, provide emotional support, and tailor services to each family's needs increase the likelihood of long-term engagement.