

Home Visiting Systems Coordination Key Stakeholder Interview Summary Year 5 Siskiyou Region

Prepared by Callie Lambarth, Ron Joseph, Isabella Ginsberg, and Beth Green

Center for Improvement of Child & Family Services

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The Center for Improvement of Child & Family Services (CCF) at Portland State University integrates research, education and training to advance the delivery of services to children and families. The CCF research team engages in equity-driven research, evaluation and consultation to promote social justice for children, youth, families and communities.

Introduction & Background

As part of the Home Visiting Systems Coordination (HVSC) project, funded by The Ford Family Foundation (TFFF), members of the Portland State University (PSU) evaluation team at the Center for Improvement of Child & Family Services (CCF) conducted a series of key stakeholder interviews by telephone in August through September 2021.

The HVSC project aims to create a coordinated home visiting (HV) system that strengthens and benefits all home visiting models as part of each region's birth-to-five early childhood development system. The long-term goal for the project is to improve outcomes for families and expand each region's capacity to serve more families.

Purpose of Interviews in 2021

These interviews collected information about HV system accomplishments, challenges, needs, and strengths five years into the project. Participants were asked a series of questions about each of the four major project goals:

- (1) Building strong internal communication systems (within and between HV programs)
- (2) Developing a shared intake and referral system for HV programs in the region
- (3) Establishing a coordinated system of professional development (PD) for home visitors, and
- (4) Building community awareness about home visiting.

Interviews explored the extent to which stakeholders perceived change in their region over the past year with respect to these four goals, what challenges the region has, what is helping to address those challenges, and what else might be needed to move work forward in each area.

Additionally, participants were asked about overall HV systems coordination efforts and changes. This report summarizes themes that emerged from the Siskiyou, California region.

Participants

Key stakeholders represented HV program and partner agency directors, managers, coordinators, and direct service providers involved with the project.

Seven (7) stakeholders were interviewed from the Siskiyou County, California region. Interview participants have been involved in the region's Advisory Team, in addition to home visiting network gatherings, and related regional work groups

Siskiyou County, CA



Backbone Organization



Contact Info

For information about the HVSC Siskiyou region strategies:
Michelle Harris
mharris@first5siskiyou.org

For more information about the HVSC project evaluation:
Callie Lambarth
lambarth@pdx.edu
Beth Green
beth.green@pdx.edu

Additional Project Partners



such as the Community Resource Collaborative, early childhood education committee, and other collaboratives in the region.

Most Important Accomplishments of the HVSC Project During 2021

Stakeholders were asked to describe what they considered the most important accomplishment of the HVSC project in their region during the past year.

Stakeholders emphasized the **importance of partnerships** among home visiting programs in the region, to assist each other in reaching out to support families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and connecting them with additional resources.

Stakeholders also described the **expanded use of a coordinated referral form** to help families connect with resources they are seeking. Seeing referral partners in the region use the form more regularly, and seeing more partners in the region testing it out, were both seen as crucial accomplishments from the past year.

Shared professional development opportunities were also described as an important accomplishment. In particular, the expansion of engaging virtual series to support the home visiting and family support workforce, especially during the challenges of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

HVSC Project Impacts on Stakeholders

Stakeholders were asked to describe how being involved in the HVSC project has impacted their work. Overall, stakeholders appreciated knowing who other providers were in home visiting and family supports organizations, and they felt more knowledgeable about available community resources for families.

Stakeholders also felt that these relationships and knowledge made it easier for them to link families up more quickly with the resources they are seeking. Ultimately, they felt that families were better served as a result of the partnerships among programs.

Bucket of Work: Internal Communication

Stakeholders were asked to describe progress made in the area of internal communication, that is the information sharing that occurs within and across home visiting and family support programs about services, trainings, families, or other resources.

“We made a focus of really finding those hard to reach families. [Our coordinator] has done a really good job at bringing in new agencies that have those outer touches to families and really being able to connect and provide information.”

“I’m really excited about the coordinated referral form. We’re actually seeing it start to be used by WIC and some other partners.”

“This group provides such amazing professional development, and they’ve really turned on a dime with getting virtual trainings out there.”

“The more we all understand what each other does, the better we can all promote and steer people in a better way.”

“This project has really brought me into Siskiyou County and enabled me to make connections that really benefit our families.”

Internal Communication: Progress

Stakeholders emphasized progress related to maintaining the structures and processes that the Siskiyou regional coordinator facilitated, that allowed stakeholders to stay connected to and involved in the HVSC work, build and maintain relationships with one another, review and reflect on data, and share information about each other's programs. Some stakeholders felt that this was made easier by switching meetings to Zoom. Although this was born out of necessity due to the pandemic, it had the unanticipated consequence of allowing more partners to participate from around the region, who otherwise would have faced long distances and travel times and may not have been able to make the trip.

Stakeholders also described additional communication strategies that complemented the regular meetings, and were available to them in case they were unable to participate, but also to use as reference in their work. Stakeholders referenced other ways their regional coordinator helped them stay connected and informed, including regular phone calls, emails, flyers, and utilization of social media platforms to disseminate information about upcoming professional development opportunities.

Internal Communication: Challenges

Stakeholders most often mentioned the challenge of time and workload that made it more difficult for them to always be able to attend regular advisory meetings. For some, this was due to increased demands on them and their teams due to adapting to public health pressures related to the pandemic. For others, it was related to the personal stress and demands they were experiencing and that were exacerbated by COVID-19 conditions.

Another primary challenge around communication over the past year has been adjusting to changing conditions, largely a result of COVID-19, and fluctuations in cases and hospitalizations. Health and safety guidelines issued by the State meant that some services were able to be provided in person for part of the year, but many services went through changes over the course of the year, between in-person and virtual services.

Internal Communication: What's Needed Moving Forward

Stakeholders largely emphasized that they would like to see current communication strategies continue: regular advisory meetings, phone check-ins from the regional coordinator, as well as utilization of tools such as flyers, email, and Facebook.

“One thing we do really well is hold Zoom meetings. I feel like there's a lot of connection. I think more people are attending now.”

“Even if I can't make a meeting, I can look at the notes and review the agenda and know what's happened. It's keeping me in the loop no matter what.”

“My biggest challenge is availability to make the meetings. Still now even in virtual, the most challenging piece is just being able to make the meeting timewise, without conflicting meetings.”

“Our programs have had various forms of starting and stopping, or going or not going. It's just been difficult to coordinate that piece and know where everybody's at.”

Some stakeholders were interested in the potential for setting a new day/time for recurring meetings, noting that the current day/time might make it difficult for some partners that routinely attend.

Some stakeholders hoped for expanded outreach, supports for, and participation of additional partners, in particular, from programs operating in the remote rural parts of the region, tribal partners, and Modoc County programs. Especially as leadership and staff changes continue, regular opportunities to meet and orient new people to the work will continue to be important.

Bucket of Work: Coordinated Referral

Stakeholders were asked to describe progress made in the area of coordinated referral. This relates to work done to establish better systems for connecting families to the best match home visiting program and to supplemental support services like parenting education, play groups, and other resources.

Coordinated Referral: Progress

Stakeholders talked about the expanded use of the shared referral form and process to link families up with needed supports in their community. Some stakeholders also mentioned that they were becoming more familiar with the electronic data system that will support the referral process, and expressed eagerness about beginning to be able to use it.

In addition to using the referral form and process, some stakeholders also described the use of the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) developmental screening tool as part of this process. They felt this was an important component to helping families see some of their child's strengths and possible areas for additional support.

Coordinated Referral: Challenges

Stakeholders most often described the challenges of a lack of resources and supports available in their communities for families. Health services, family resource centers, and home visiting supports are not always available in families' home communities. Although referrals could be made to existing resources, they are not always accessible for families.

Stakeholders described a need for expanded cultural and linguistic responsiveness of programs. Most often, stakeholders spoke of the challenges of serving Spanish-speaking families, with very few Spanish-speaking staff currently working within home visiting and family support programs. The Mam community in the region was also mentioned, as a possible

“My feeling is that we have the ball rolling and we can't let it stop. We have to continue to build capacity, and get more people involved.”

“We're getting those connections with Modoc and starting to really pull in the tribal community.”

“The fact that we have orgs using the form is so much to be proud of.”

“There was a training in north and south county about how to use [the referral form], how to introduce these resources to a mom who may have no idea that any of them exist. What to do to follow-up, how to make sure those connections are made.”

“Families come to this area that you know it's going to be difficult to get providers here.”

cultural and language population that is currently being underserved as well.

Coordinated Referral: What's Needed Moving Forward

Overall, stakeholders hoped that the shared referral form could continue to be utilized by a growing number of community partners. They were aware that the regional coordinator is doing some of the important work to cultivate new partnerships with health and mental health providers as well as additional family support programs, beyond Siskiyou County to utilize the form and referral process.

Stakeholders described work to translate referral materials into Spanish, but also want to see more bilingual English/Spanish speaking staff within programs to work with Spanish speaking families.

Bucket of Work: Coordinated Professional Development

Stakeholders were asked to describe progress made in the area of coordinated professional development (PD) and planning. This relates to developing a regional home visiting professional development plan and promotion of shared training opportunities.

Professional Development: Progress

Stakeholders expressed the value they put on the range of professional development opportunities available to them in the region. For some of the required training for specific programs, stakeholders spoke to the progress made around sharing the costs of trainings across programs that came about as a result of the partnerships established through the project.

Stakeholders also described the continued strength of feeling like their and their staff's training needs are being addressed. They appreciated being asked what topics or formats they would like to see more of, and how to continue to strengthen their skills. Some stakeholders referenced the development of a PD calendar for their programs, which allowed them to provide better feedback on the types of trainings they would like to see offered.

Many stakeholders specifically mentioned the training and coaching series with Dr. Ernie Mendez. Not only did they appreciate the content of the training series, but felt that he was skilled at engaging participants in the virtual setting.

Professional Development: Challenges

Stakeholders described a mix of challenges around professional development over the past year. Some felt overwhelmed with

“Finding staff that can culturally meet the populations we serve. We need to find staff who are going to feel comfortable having conversations with families, allowing them into their homes.”

“I had a training on our curriculum and the cost I had to pay was for 25 people, but I only had 11 staff that needed training. So I opened it up to other agencies. We're doing things like that, working with other agencies.”

“Ernie Mendez was just amazing, someone who is really engaging the entire time. That's hard to do when you have got a three or four hour training [over Zoom].”

the volume of opportunities being offered. Many of these stakeholders also expressed feeling burned out on virtual/online training opportunities.

Other stakeholders described feeling so overwhelmed with the intensified needs of families and adapting to delivering services virtually, that they were unable to participate in trainings offered.

Professional Development: What's Needed Moving Forward

Stakeholders want to continue to focus on meeting the PD needs of the workforce, and how that may vary across the region. Stakeholders spoke to the ongoing challenge of workforce development to staff early childhood home visiting programs. Home visitors are required to have a range of specific and specialized skills, as well as work with families facing intense challenges. And the relative low pay with relative high demands of staff, create conditions where there is regular staff turnover, which impacts families and programs.

Much of what stakeholders shared emphasized focusing on building up the home visiting and family support workforce to serve remote rural families, and to ensure that staff reflect the communities served. In particular, they want to see more pathways for Spanish-speaking staff to access the education and training requirements of home visiting programs in the region.

Specific topics that stakeholders shared included supporting families with mental health challenges and ensuring that all services are culturally and linguistically responsive.

Bucket of Work: Community Awareness

Stakeholders were asked to describe progress made in the area of community awareness. This relates to raising awareness about the availability and benefits of home visiting programs with families, community partners, and the community at large.

Community Awareness: Progress

Stakeholders mentioned the completion of outreach, information, and resource materials that have been distributed to key community partner organizations in the region. They described this as helpful to families to learn more about home visiting supports in their communities.

Stakeholders described additional outreach tools and strategies such as social media posts, flyers, and encouraging both staff and families to talk about their experiences with home visiting one-on-one with other families.

“Those agencies we have helping with the referral process, we built incredibly strong relationships with, it’s a really nice give and take. That trust has to be there, and I feel like in the last year, that’s really what the focus has been on. We’ve built that up and made good rapport with them.”

“This is COVID-related that certain agencies we would like to get into are so overwhelmed. They don’t have the time to even sit down and have a quick meeting about what we’re trying to do and the families we’re trying to reach. It’s just a very hectic time, and just finding the opportunities for those agencies that we want to get into and team up with has been a struggle.”

“Overcoming that stigma that because someone comes to visit your home every week, doesn’t mean you’re a bad parent. It means you’re trying to be a better parent, and add tools to your toolbox.”

“Word of mouth, having someone you know talk to you about it. I feel like that is one of the biggest promotions, the best kind of promotion we have. Just talking it up is really important.”

Largely through expansion of coordinated referral and shared professional development, stakeholders described gains in raising community partners' awareness about the benefits and availability of home visiting programs in their communities.

Community Awareness: Challenges

Stakeholders raised the challenge of not being able to gather in person, which could create opportunities for people and programs not familiar with home visiting, to learn more about home visiting supports and what is available in their communities. At the same time, existing partnerships with family support programs such as Family Resource Centers, were important places for families and other community members to learn more about home visiting supports and what is available to them.

Stakeholders also felt that community partners often had reduced bandwidth to have conversations to learn more about home visiting supports, due to increased demands and reduced capacity as a result of COVID-19 conditions. That has made it more difficult for home visiting programs to get the word out and cultivate new partnerships during the pandemic.

Stakeholders also raised the ongoing issue of working to combat stigma or fear that families attach to home-based services. Some families worry that they will be perceived as deficient parents, and some may also worry about home-based services leading to child welfare involvement.

Community Awareness: What's Needed Moving Forward

Stakeholders emphasized the importance of continuing to utilize a range of community awareness-raising strategies. Using social media platforms and flyers will continue to get the word out widely about home visiting supports. At the same time, they stressed the value of one-on-one conversations with families and community partners to describe current services available, eligibility, and access.

For some stakeholders, they saw an increased role for parents/caregivers to be involved in the project, to inform strategies for getting the word out to communities and partners about home visiting and its benefits.

Summary & Implications

Based on the accomplishments, challenges, benefits, and next steps identified by stakeholders, the following provides a summary of implications for future work for the Siskiyou region through the HVSC project.

Internal Communication

Stakeholders interviewed recommended:

- Continuing regular Advisory meetings, with the potential for revisiting day/time scheduling to allow more partners to attend,
- Continuing to use and expand communication tools such flyers, email updates, and social media communications,
- Continuing focus by the coordinator on doing outreach, orientation, and engagement of potential new partners with focus on remote rural communities, Modoc County and tribal partners, and
- Creating opportunities to meet in person when conditions allow.

Coordinated Referral

Stakeholders interviewed recommended:

- Continuing to expand the number of community partners around the region who utilize the shared referral form and system, and
- Building up language accessibility with bilingual English/Spanish speaking staff.

Professional Development

Stakeholders interviewed recommended:

- Continuing to assess the professional and workforce development needs of staff and programs throughout the region, some topics may include supporting families with mental health challenges, and ensuring that all services are culturally and linguistically responsive,
- Continuing to strengthen the cultural and linguistic responsiveness of the workforce by identifying education and training pathways, and
- Continuing to address challenges to workforce retention.

Community Awareness

Stakeholders interviewed recommended:

- Continuing to employ a range of community awareness-raising strategies,
- Engaging parents/caregivers in the development of community awareness-raising strategies and story-telling, and
- Identifying opportunities for one-on-one conversations with families and community partners about the availability, eligibility, and accessibility of home visiting services and other family supports in communities.

Programs & Organizations Represented by Interview Participants

- First 5 Siskiyou
- Modoc Early Head Start
- Shasta Head Start
- Siskiyou Child Care Council
- Siskiyou Community Resource Collaborative

Thank you to each interview participant for sharing your perspectives and your time.