



New York State Home Visiting Coordination Initiative: Promoting Programs as Partners

The HVCI, originally funded through a 2018 legislative award and currently funded via the federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG), is housed at PCANY. It is a forum for education and conversation. The intent is to provide cutting-edge information, build cross-program relationships, and offer additional opportunities for cross-systems operations. Ultimately, it aims to help programs increase staff retention and serve more families.

Background: NYS has long supported universal, comprehensive home visiting as a two-generation strategy to improve birth outcomes, increase school readiness, and decrease child abuse and neglect. Multiple research-based programs operate in the State—Early Head Start, Family Connects, Healthy Families New York, Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, Parent-Child Home Program, Power of Two, and the NYS Department of Health’s (DOH) Maternal, Infant, Community Health Collaboratives (MICHCs) and Community Health Workers.

Unfortunately, these programs still only serve 5% of eligible children.

Existing programs are scattered across the State and, where more than one model is at work, there is a lack of service coordination. DOH has recently championed central intake in several communities, with mixed results. There is a great need for programs to work across their silos in order to serve more families.

At quarterly meetings of the NYS Home Visiting Workgroup, program representatives voiced frustration that there were no model-neutral trainings that could span the gap experienced by providers. They felt that offering trainings and resources to every home visitor in the State could level the playing field and start a cross-program conversation. Since staff retention is an issue (and the loss of a trusted provider often results in the early exit of a family from a program), they also believed that increasing home visitors’ knowledge would simultaneously increase their comfort level and thereby increase retention.

The HVCI, Phase I: The project aims to provide a model-neutral space for home visitors, supervisors, and administrators to discuss opportunities and challenges at the community and state level and will provide learning opportunities for providers to expand their skill sets in the most current and pressing topic areas needed to best support families' success. The Initiative launched on October 1, 2018 with a website (www.nyshomevisitcoord.com). Monthly recorded webinars have included presentations on: central intake; trauma-informed practice; maternal depression; infant mental health; and working with immigrant families; as well as New York State- specific webinars on paid family leave, the Pyramid Model, and the State's early childhood workforce registry. The Initiative also brought national experts from Start Early, formerly known as the Ounce of Prevention, to the State to facilitate a cross-agency/cross-program discussion on collaboration.

The HVCI, Phase II: With PDG funding, PCANY hired staff and contracted with ten backbone organizations (BBOs) and facilitators to complete the following: at least two summits in each of ten regions, resulting in ten Development Plans that outline the 0-5 landscape, challenges to serving more families, and recommendations to increase access and capacity. PCANY brought Start Early back for a second meeting with key state stakeholders to discuss opportunities for coordination. Finally, PCANY/HVCI subcontracted with the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy to collect county/regional data; these data sheets are essential to understanding the landscape and will inform our discussions moving forward. The culmination of these efforts resulted in a final report, released in July 2020 (located under the "HVCI Report" tab on the website).

The HVCI, Phase III: The work will continue between 2020-2023, with a launch event/ virtual statewide summit in September 2020. Subsequent Statewide summits will be held in the years following on a yearly basis, with all BackBone organizations and regional partners in attendance. The 2020 summit showcased our work to date and spotlighted innovation in states such as Oregon. Over the next three years, the HVCI staff will support regions in implementation of their Development Plans. We are also continuing our partnerships with Start Early and the Schuyler Center, as well as with the New York Association for the Education of Young Children. We have updated our website and are scheduling more interactive webinars.

Home Visiting Programs and Other Partners

While those traditionally engaged in the home visiting realm (home visitors, program administration, early childhood professionals, etc.) played an integral role in summit convenings, other key players such as community members and parents provided contributions that yielded multi-faceted regional recommendations. The addition of individual voices contributed to encapsulating the nuanced, complex needs of NYS's regions.

The HVCI has facilitated the opportunity for cross-program coordination and collaboration. We are fortunate to have convened in-person summits during 2019.

These in-person summits (and prep meetings) turned out to be critically important, in that they laid the foundation for positive relationships that now make “going virtual” a little easier. It is our hope that transitioning HVCI work to a more virtual platform will also facilitate increased parent involvement, by making the work more accessible.

Participation in regional work can be done on an individual basis or as part of a broader, regional team network. If you feel you would have contributions to statewide conversations with regard to the landscape of Home Visiting, please contact Jenn O’Connor, Director of the HVCI: joconnor@preventchildabuseny.org.

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