

MIECHV as Node within a Constellation of Programs Needed to Achieve Health Equity

National Home Visiting Network Network Principles in Action

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The federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) was launched in 2010 to provide evidence-based home visiting services to families with young children in low-resourced communities. While the law called for connections to the broader early childhood and health systems, in the earliest days, simply getting the program up and running needed to be the first order of business. In short time, however, and with the experience of the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems program, a deep look at the health of children and families in rural areas, and other related efforts, those leading the implementation started prioritizing connections. “We began to realize that MIECHV is just one small part of a larger field working to advance outcomes for children and families. Our success is dependent on the ability of other parts of the system working well too,” said Monique Fountain Hanna, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This notion of operating as a node within a broader system is a core principle of network theory that is beginning to shape how those in the health and social sectors envision their work. Fountain Hanna notes that it takes humility to work in this way.

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In the last few years, as the program has matured, federal staff have become more intentional to seek out the connections with other programs and systems that would help to fortify the work. Not only are MIECHV federal staff initiating connections, they are being sought out as well. “People are reaching out to us in ways that are unique and present wonderful opportunities for partnership. Whether it is connections from the National Institute of Health or the Centers for Disease Control, or

groups representing oral health, optometry, or homelessness, we are being pulled out of the four walls of the program and beyond the partnerships and collaborations that we would naturally seek,” said Fountain Hanna.

Even with this intense external interest in collaborating with MIECHV, Fountain Hanna stays focused on the role of MIECHV as a node rather than a hub. “MIECHV alone cannot achieve health equity. It will take all of us working together to do that.”

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Based on interviews and written communication with Monique Fountain Hanna, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.