

Shifting Behavior from a Model-Specific Orientation to Cross-Model Collaboration: The Evolution of the National Alliance of Home Visiting Models

National Home Visiting Network Network Principles in Action

OCTOBER 2020

The National Alliance for Home Visiting Models (Alliance) was formed in 2014 with the goal of supporting home visiting models to work together to advance evidence-based home visiting on a national scale. Prior to that time, Sarah Walzer of ParentChild+ reflects, “There were high points when we would all drop barriers and come together to work on something very specific, but once that work was done, we would go back to our silos.” Years of competition for money, visibility, and recognition scarred the field as models wrestled for position in an environment with limited resources. With the creation of the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visit (MIEHCV) program in 2010 as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, a dedicated stream of funding began to flow to states and select tribal communities to provide evidence-based home visiting to families at high risk. While substantial, even this funding has fallen far short of what is needed to serve all eligible families; today, about 18 million pregnant women and families (including 23 million children) could benefit from home visiting but are not being reached.¹ Achieving better coverage and outcomes for all children requires more than added program slots. It requires better communication, collaboration, and alignment among model developers to truly grow the field.

Early on, skillful facilitation and leadership of the Alliance by Miriam Westheimer and Deb Daro helped members expand prior relationships among the models, assisting them in having difficult conversations, including how the models could maintain their own identity while also working collaboratively. The quarterly face-to-face meetings and regular calls of model leadership provided opportunities to learn about each other’s model in a deeper way, and to discuss common challenges and work collaboratively to take on these challenges as a unified group rather than going it alone. Building relationships and trust has been a critical element of the Alliance.

According to David Willis, (formerly Division Director, Home Visiting and Early Childhood Systems, Health Resources and Services Administration, and now with the Center for the Study of Social Policy) “Leadership changes within the models was an ongoing evolution, and these new leaders

¹ National Home Visiting Resource Center. (2010). 219 Home Visiting Yearbook. Arlington, VA: James Bell Associates and the Urban Institute. <https://nhvrc.org/yearbook/2019-yearbook/>

joined the table that had already been set and influenced with the network mindset. Newcomers had less connection to the early history and were able to see and act on the emerging and evolving opportunity....The collectivity of purpose was more important than competitive individualism.”

Of course conflict remains and competition still plays out at the state and local level. Strong relationships and trust among the model leaders help assuage local conflicts and support cross-model collaboration.

Like with any group, organizational development and growth has allowed the Alliance to evolve yet again and to recommit to working together. In late 2019, the Alliance took another step to formalizing cross-model collaboration when they co-developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that calls out a commitment to the networking principle of mission, not organization.

With this MOU, the ten models² that make up the Alliance commit to guiding principles and shared goals that align with networking principles. And they are putting money on the table (calibrated to their size) to support the ongoing operation of the Alliance and to deepen the collaborative mindset. According to Walzer, “This is a really big statement. Five, ten, fifteen years ago people were not at a place where they saw enough value to buy in. They would come to the table if someone else was paying. Then they began to contribute by paying for the staff travel to meetings. Now, they see the value and want to work collaboratively, and are pitching in to fund the Alliance.”

Specifically, the MOU explains that the shared work will be guided by respect, integrity, transparency, trust, and equity. The shared goals include:

- Continue to foster collective messaging regarding the importance of evidence-based early childhood home visiting;³
- Strengthen partnerships between national home visiting models and the work underway at the federal, tribal, state, and local levels to expand the availability and quality of early home visiting
- Work collaboratively to improve service quality and service integration across home visiting models as well as with other elements of an emerging early childhood system of care; and
- Play an active role in positioning the work of the models within a larger family support infrastructure to advance the field by working with other organizations with aligned missions.

² As of November 2019, the models participating in the Alliance include: Attachment Biobehavioral Catchup, Child First, Family Connects, Healthy Families America, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschoolers (HIPPPY), Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, ParentChild+, and Safe Care. Early Head Start also participates but does not vote.

³ A positioning statement on advocacy adopted by the Alliance members further defines the principles and actions related to this goal.

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Jeanna Capito, the current Alliance facilitator notes, “It is clear that the models today are trying to elevate the impact of home visiting as a field, not just their own model.” And they are not just focused on MIECHV, which in reality is a small (but important) funding stream for home visiting. Surely hot spots will arise, but the investment of time and energy that has been made in developing relationships, creating a common language, and establishing expectations for ongoing engagement will serve the Alliance – and the broader home visiting field – well in the years to come. “Folks see the Alliance as a place where they can have the challenging conversations. They understand this is the way we need to work as opposed to retreating to our silos,” said Walzer.

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Based on interviews and written communication with Jeanna Capito, facilitator of the National Alliance of Home Visiting Models, Sarah Walzer, Executive Director of ParentChild+, David Willis, Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of Social Policy, and historical documents from Deborah Daro and Miriam Westheimer.