

Service Spotlight: Addressing Staff Recruitment and Retention through a Health Equity Lens

Reflective discussion, combined with a SMARTIE goal that places inclusion and equity at the forefront, offers MIECHV awardees the flexibility and opportunity to uncover gaps and potential inequities in hiring and retention practices, and identify sustainable solutions.

Health equity is a core goal of many home visiting programs. Even when exploring other topics, awardees and local implementing agencies (LIAs) often find that integrating health equity into their work provides a lens for a deeper understanding of the issue they are exploring. One example of this is staff recruitment and retention.

Retaining a strong home visiting workforce can be challenging at both the awardee and local levels. Low pay and limited opportunities for career advancement may point to larger systemic challenges that are often outside of the control of an individual awardee or LIA. Focusing on an element awardees and LIAs *can* control, such as the impact of equity and inclusion on recruitment and retention, particularly as they relate to hiring practices, job satisfaction, and staff burnout, has the potential to change staffing outcomes for the better.

When faced with challenges related to recruitment and retention, it can be helpful to apply an equity lens to the discussion. Below are some suggestions for doing so:

- **Develop a SMARTIE goal to guide your work.** SMARTIE goals add two crucial elements to the traditional SMART¹ goal—Inclusion and Equity. Including these elements helps to ensure that these priorities stay front and center. Specifically, inclusion helps to ensure that traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups are brought into processes, activities, and decisions/policymaking in a way that shares power. Equity seeks to address systemic injustice, inequity, or oppression. (*Source: OpenSource Leadership Strategies*).

Here's an example of a SMART goal transformed into a SMARTIE goal:

SMART Goal	SMARTIE Goal
By December 2020, we will increase the percentage of children enrolled in home visiting who receive timely services	By December 2020, we will increase the percentage of Hispanic children enrolled in home visiting who receive timely

¹ "SMART" goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-based.

following a positive screen for developmental delays from 73% to 85%.	services following a positive screen for developmental delays from 41% to 68%.
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- **Create a process that supports open and honest discussion.** Issues of equity and inclusion can be challenging to discuss. Make room for questions and curiosity, and for ensuring that diverse voices feel included and heard. Be willing to spend time in reflective discussion before jumping to solutions. The more the space protects and invites diverse voices, the more likely people will be to share, brainstorm, and explore new or different pathways for doing the work. If possible, engage a skilled facilitator, such as a technical assistance specialist or other external consultant, to guide the process.
- **Consider how inequity and a lack of inclusivity may be affecting your hiring process.** Look critically at how hiring processes currently function, how new hires are received, and how this reception may vary depending on the lived experience and cultural background of the applicant. Do the people involved in hiring reflect the hiring pool? Are there subtle or even unconscious factors that might influence hiring decisions (e.g., are resumes filtered based on an applicant's name or assumed race/ethnicity?) Once identified, explore ways to adapt these processes to avoid and mitigate inequities (for example, by creating a policy that hides applicants' names at time of review).
- **Consider how inequity and lack of inclusivity may be affecting retention.** For example, are there inequities related to race, ethnicity, language, or gender that might be contributing to staff turnover or advancement? Are staff provided the professional development supports they need to succeed—and is there recognition that these needs won't be the same for everyone? Have you inadvertently created a power imbalance by excluding certain people or roles in workforce processes, activities, and decision-making?
- **Hold yourself accountable.** Develop and track progress on your SMARTIE goal (see attached SMARTIE Goals Worksheet and Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Planning form). Explore ways to measure and test the presence of bias by, for example, conducting a "blind" review of applicants or having different teams review the same set of resumes. Developing an objective scoring system, and sticking to it, also helps to remove a great deal of bias from the selection process.
- **Learn from others.** For example, in 2017, Washington State received a MIECHV Innovation Award to better understand the home visiting pipeline within one of its regions. In reviewing the region's hiring processes, they discovered a requirement that all supervisors have a master's degree. This created an inequity in who could be promoted to a supervisor position. Learning about Washington's discovery could open a window for

other awardees to look at whether or not their own requirements create potential inequities.

These processes offer a helpful framework for identifying and correcting inequities that may contribute to recruitment and retention challenges. They also lay the groundwork for making equity and inclusion a priority for all home visiting services—starting with the people who support and deliver home visiting services—and are an integral part of all the work we do.

Next Steps

Consider these steps for moving your equity efforts forward:

- Read articles, watch videos, listen to podcasts, and access additional resources about equity.
- If applicable, work with your organization's equity office or officer to identify areas of improvement in your recruitment and retention practices.
- Contact your home visiting model representative(s) to learn about their equity efforts.
- Connect with your TARC TA Team for more information on developing/expanding an equity initiative for your home visiting program.