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Maryland Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting News

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Happy fall from the Maryland Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program!

The Maryland MIECHV team is getting back into the swing of things after hosting our third annual Home Visitors conference for Maryland MIECHV staff from Sept. 18-20. This year's three-day conference, "Shaping the Future of Home Visiting," was held in beautiful Ocean City, MD. Home visiting staff from each of Maryland's 16 MIECHV programs attended, and enjoyed a variety of sessions and workshops on topics including self-care, marijuana use and pregnancy, incorporating doulas into the Nurse Family Partnership model, better engaging fathers in home visiting, and many more. We were fortunate to have such dynamic speakers and current topics to support our work.

Members of our team have also been busy with two new pilot trainings for our programs -- one on **Goal Planning Strategies** and one on **Substance-Exposed Newborns**. Each is described in greater detail below, under "Sustainability Success" and "Promising Practice."

Finally, we have been joined by two new Morgan State University students to assist us with our continuous quality improvement and needs assessment efforts -- Nakilia Thompson and Oreoluwa Oluyen. We are excited to have these young minds join our MIECHV team for the fall semester!



Oreoluwa Oluyen & Nakilia Thompson

Unsung Chronicles of Home Visiting

Ebony's Story

This article first appeared in the [DRU/Mondawmin \(DRUM\)](#) Healthy Families 2018 summer e-newsletter

Ebony Simmons has always been ambitious. She has dreamed of becoming a hair stylist, fashion designer, and baker.

Back in 2003, her dreams seemed too daunting as she raised three children while pregnant with a fourth. That was until she heard about DRU/Mondawmin Healthy Families at a school health fair. She quickly joined the program.

"It was very helpful having Ms. Linda Smith (DRUM family support worker) talk to me and really push me to pursue these things I wanted," she says.

At the time, Ebony had dropped out of hair school because she was feeling overwhelmed at home. "I was pregnant with my third when I started hair school and then when I found out I was pregnant again-it was too much," Ebony says. "It seemed so difficult with these little ones."

The encouragement from her DRUM family support worker prompted Ebony to give it another try. She graduated from hair school that May while nine months pregnant.



"It took me a lot longer to finish but I was so happy when I did," she says. She recalls having to take a final test to finish the program. "The testing place wasn't even on the bus line, but Ms. Linda said she was going to make sure I got to the test because I had come so far. She actually took me herself," Ebony explains.

In 2007, she earned her associate degree in fashion design from Baltimore County Community College. She graduated with a 3.4 GPA.

"I remember my professor would always ask me how I do it all," Ebony says. "It was crazy because I still managed to come to play groups

at DRUM."

She says DRUM's weekly play groups are beneficial for her children.

"My youngest daughter would not go to anybody, but after six months, [DRUM support workers] told me to keep bringing her to improve her relationship skills," Ebony says. "People might think play groups are a small thing-but it's not just about playing with toys. They are learning to interact with new people. They sing and practice activities that all contribute to their growth. I also love that they send the children home with books. I notice a huge difference in my daughter."

Ebony says the support from DRUM helped her achieve even more than she thought was possible. She continued her education by earning a bachelor's degree in business from the University of Baltimore in 2012. She is considering a master's or a second bachelor's in digital communications.

The training will serve her well for her side business-Ebony's Baby Cakes. She bakes cakes and delectables for parties and other events. Cake pops are her specialty. Her love of cooking came from her grandmother.

"I've always loved dessert," Ebony explains. "I started experimenting with cupcake flavors, giving them to friends, and then they started requesting them."

Ebony is currently building a website for the business, and her hands are even more full at home. She now has five children and is caring for three of her nieces and nephews after her sister's passing.

Ebony says she is never too busy to encourage other moms and refer them to DRUM.

"When I see somebody pregnant walking down the street, I give them DRUM's number and encourage them to call," she says. "I tell them to go there if they want to better their child and get encouragement. I will always support DRUM."

Find out more about [DRUM's great home visiting work on their website](#), where you can also sign up for their newsletter.

Provider Perspective

"Dear Opioid-Addicted Moms-To-Be, We Are Here for You"

Adapted from a MotherToBaby.org blog post by Dr. Sarah Običan, OBGYN, MotherToBaby Florida

As opioid addiction is on the rise, so too is the number of pregnant women battling this disease. As the home visiting community knows well, the perceived stigma many pregnant women feel around drug use can prevent them from seeking the help they need, both for themselves and for

their babies.

Dr. Sarah Običan, an OBGYN in Florida, recounted her realization of the importance of offering a safe and nonjudgmental environment to pregnant moms dealing with addiction in a recent [MotherToBaby blog post](#). As she says,

"Opioid abuse is lonely. Sooner or later, many of my patients feel isolated. They are scared and feel shunned from their community. They can be addicted with very little resources extended to them for their care. You don't need to be a doctor to know that good prenatal care leads to healthier pregnancies. However, women who abuse opioids are much less likely to get appropriate prenatal care. These moms often suffer from anxiety and depression and may use substances along with opioids that have an impact on their pregnancy, such as alcohol and tobacco."

Dr. Običan goes on to stress the importance of fighting for more resources to battle this epidemic, and impresses that when addressed in a supportive and comprehensive way, mothers and babies can surpass obstacles. In her words: "It's not enough to show burden of disease, but more important to enrich our communities with possibilities. That is all of our jobs, no matter if you are a doctor, mother or neighbor."

[See her full post here](#), which includes a list of helpful resources for both mothers and health care providers.

Program Spotlight

Maryland Family Connects

[Maryland Family Connects](#) is an innovative program that makes home visiting services accessible to all. The program is brief (1-3 nurse home visits) and implemented universally to maximize population reach and community acceptance. Its goals are:

- to connect with the mother in order to enhance maternal skills and self-efficacy;
- to assess each family's unique strengths and needs;
- and to connect the family with needed community services such as health care, child care, and financial and social support in order to promote family functioning and child well-being.



Modeled after [Durham Connects](#) in North Carolina, Maryland Family Connects was established as a pilot program in 2017 out of [The Family Tree](#) in Baltimore City. After operating as a "promising practice" for its first few years in Baltimore, Maryland Family Connects has recently received its official designation as an evidence-based program from the model developer. The program provides up to three nurse visits free of charge to all mothers who deliver at [Sinai Hospital](#), and works to connect families to additional resources in the community.

Find out more about Maryland Family Connects [here](#), and view a [short video](#) about the program and other services offered by The Family Tree.

Sustainability Success

Substance Exposed Newborns Pilot Training (SEN)

Contributed by the UMBC Training Team

Earlier this month, the UMBC Home Visiting Training Team piloted a multidisciplinary training targeted at providers of home visiting, Department of Social Services (DSS), and Infants and Toddlers working with substance exposed newborns (SENs) and their families. Prior to the training, participants were asked to complete seven online modules discussing several topic areas including addiction and recovery, treatment, developmental effects of substance exposure, trauma and mental health, and the experiences of mothers with substance use challenges. The training included video segments where a multidisciplinary group of providers discussed their experience and best practices for working with substance exposed mothers and children, and their families, and offered advice for engaging with this population.



We are grateful to the many professionals who met with us to discuss their work with substance using mothers and newborns. There are video segments from medical providers, substance abuse treatment specialists, Neonatal Intensive Care doctors and nurses, as well as community agency directors and providers. [Watch a video segment](#) from Dr. Lauren Janssen from the

Hopkins Center on Addiction and Pregnancy (CAP) discussing her experiences working with mothers and babies in substance exposed families.

The in-person training held at the Caroline County Public Library included forty-two providers from DSS, home visiting, and Infant and Toddlers working in Caroline, Dorchester, Queen Anne's, and Kent Counties. In addition, several of our partners from Maryland Department of Health, Johns Hopkins University, and University of Maryland School of Medicine sat in on the training. The training offered a more in depth and interactive discussion of core topics and challenges faced when working with SEN families. The training was designed to not only provide education, but build and reinforce the network of local agencies that can work together in supporting these families. Participants were able to share their experiences with SEN cases, and discuss how they could collaborate with other individuals in the room to provide the most comprehensive care for the families they serve. The UMBC Home Visiting Training Team will review the feedback of the SEN Training and continue to develop a training that best fits the needs of its participants. The goal is to implement the training regionally across the state of Maryland to support professionals working with SENs and their families.

For more information about this training, please contact the [UMBC Training Center](#).

Promising Practice

Goal Plan Strategy Pilot

In January 2017, the Maryland Department of Health and the New Jersey Department of Children and Families were jointly granted an [Innovation Award](#) from the [Health Resources and Services Administration](#), a competitive grant available to MIECHV programs. The Innovation Award is meant to be used to develop, implement, and evaluate innovations to strengthen and improve home visiting services. The two states decided to focus primarily on family engagement and retention and worked with the training center at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) and stakeholder input to develop the Goal Plan Strategy (GPS). GPS is an innovative approach that involves in-depth training on goal planning and communication strategies for home visitors as well as an accompanying coaching training for supervisors or experienced home visitors who will meet with home visitors on a regular basis to support them in their application of skills acquired.

Both the coaching training and the training for home visitors are accompanied by a set of online modules that must be completed beforehand. The modules focus specifically on communication strategies and their application in goal planning. Once the training is complete, home visitors and site coaches will meet on a regular basis for the following three months to review recordings of home visits and discuss strengths as well as areas for growth. Coaches are trained to be supportive, non-evaluative resources for helping the home visitor improve his or her practice and to help ensure that the skills learned are being correctly applied. Site coaches will also meet with experienced trainers to discuss their coaching sessions and any issues that may have arisen.



This past August, Healthy Families Prince George's piloted the GPS trainings and provided excellent feedback to the training team throughout. Their home visitors and coaches are now preparing to meet over the next three months; we are very excited to hear how this added support affects goal planning activities and approaches to family engagement overall! The MIECHV team will be rolling out the official GPS training in January and February 2019, and have been in discussions with sites interested in

participating. If your MIECHV site is interested or you'd like to find out more information about this project, please contact [Maggie Geraghty](#).

CQI Corner

Contributed by Dr. Maelondy Holman, EdD, Continuous Quality Improvement Consultant

During the summer the focus of the state Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) lead was collecting and processing data from sites related to CQI topics. In addition, the state lead worked on the required CQI Plan. Esther Sayki, an intern from Morgan State University, worked closely with CQI consultant Maelondy Holman on the coordination of a Home Visiting Career and Resource Fair geared toward workforce development that will be held on Thursday, Nov. 15,

2018, from 8 a.m. to noon.

The goal of this event is to promote home visiting while also enlightening participants regarding relevant resources that are available to them throughout the state of Maryland. Some of our home visiting (HV) programs will set up exhibitor tables to share information about their sites.

Sessions related to the work that we do to support children and families will be conducted. During this event, site leaders will be able to interact with and recruit potential home visitors for their programs. Participants will also have an opportunity to receive feedback on submitted resumes. In addition, this is an opportunity for business networking. Find out more information on the [event flyer](#) and please share with your networks!

From September 18-20, the MIECHV team hosted a conference in Ocean City, MD. During the conference, the CQI consultant conducted a session that included an exercise designed to promote quality and to help participants to apply the concepts of the exercise to how they work with families. During the session, participants were able to sort and analyze data and report out to other programs in attendance. At the end of the CQI activity, participants formulated quality improvement recommendations related to the exercise. The exercise was a symbolic way of collecting and reviewing data in terms of continuous quality improvement. It can also be used to assess the different variables and backgrounds that program managers or home visitors may encounter when dealing with the children and families served and can help with how one might help problem solve and make suggestions for personal or professional development as it relates to the children and families we support.

Dynamic Data

Maryland's 2018 Statewide Home Visiting Needs Assessment

Contributed by Jarvis Patterson-Askew, MS, Data and Fiscal Program Administrator, MD MIECHV

Maryland is a rapidly changing state that requires constant evaluation to assure that the health and wellbeing needs of its population are being met. The Maryland Department of Health's Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program completed a statewide needs assessment in 2010 to set state priorities and serve as a reference for funding agencies. Maryland is currently in the process of updating that needs assessment, which will be significant to the Maryland Department of Health's MIECHV program since the last needs assessment was administered eight years ago. The new assessment offers the possibility of maximizing local home visiting site involvement in Maryland. The MIECHV indicators in 2010 that influenced Maryland home visiting programs and families were:

Percent Preterm Births, 2010-2015	Percent Families in Poverty, 2010-2015
Percent Low Birth Weight, 2010-2015	Crime Rate, 2010-2015
Infant Mortality Rate, 2010-2015	Rate of Protective Orders, 2010-2015
Percent Late or no Prenatal Care, 2010-2015	High School Dropout Rate, 2010-2015
Teen Birth Rate (per 1,000 live births), 2010-2015	Kindergarten Readiness, 2016-2017
Unemployment Rate, 2010, 2015	Substance Abuse Treatment Rate, FY 2010-2014
WIC Enrollment Rate, 2012, 2015	Abuse and Neglect Investigation Rate, 2012, 2016
Medicaid Enrollment Rate, 2010-2015	

In order to capture potential change in Maryland's home visiting service areas, the 2010 MIECHV indicators have been updated to include factors that will provide additional insight into the demographics of Maryland communities. The MIECHV indicators that have been added to those used in 2010 are:

Percent Less Than or Equal to High School Education	Gestational Diabetes Hospitalization Rate
Percent Below Normal Gestational Weight Gain	Childhood Injuries Emergency Department Visit Rate,
Percent Maternal Tobacco Use	Percent Very Low Birth Weight & Very Preterm
Pregnancy-Associated Hypertension Hospitalization Rate	Uninsured Rate

Considering the updated MIECHV indicators, the methodologies for MIECHV's indicator maps were also improved to show the percent of elevated indicators at the census tract level instead of the raw number of elevated indicators at the zip code level.

The updated maps [can be viewed here](#). The maps created in 2010 were in PDF form; these new

maps are web-based, which allows them to be more accessible, interactive, and easy to use. In addition, users not only have the ability to see how jurisdictions match up to state findings, but also how a particular jurisdiction is composed internally.

Updates about the 2018 needs assessment will be shared as they become available.

Resources and Updates

- **Tooth Brushing at the Table**

Encouraging tooth brushing in child care programs helps promote oral health and teaches children a lifelong habit. [Use this video](#) to train staff to begin a daily toothbrushing program in child care programs.

- **[Substance Use Screening Tools](#) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**
- **Resources from HRSA Specifically focused on [maternal health in the post-natal period](#)**

Upcoming Events and Trainings

Thursday, November 15: 2nd Annual Home Visiting Career and Resource Fair, 8 a.m. - noon. DoubleTree by Hilton Baltimore North-Pikesville 1726 Reisterstown Road Pikesville, MD 21208.

Please join the MIEHV team for our second annual Career and Resource Fair, focused specifically on the home visiting field. There will be workshops, resume assistance, light refreshments, and the opportunity to network with like-minded peers. If planning to attend, [please register here](#).

Get in Touch

The newsletter team wants to hear from you! Please contact us with questions, comments, and suggestions for content. We can be reached by [email](#) or phone: (410) 767-7066. For more information on home visiting in Maryland, [visit our website](#). Not subscribed yet? [Sign up here](#).

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