Supporting Families through Home Visitor Transitions
Julia Bergkamp, IMH-E (II)
May 2019

NMAIMH competencies addressed:
Direct Service Skills
- Observation & listening
- Responding with empathy

Working with Others
- Building & maintaining relationships
- Empathy & compassion

Reflection
- Contemplation
- Self-awareness
- Curiosity
- Professional/personal development

Change and transition is inevitable in our lives, especially in the field of home visiting. I can attest to this transition, as I have most recently transitioned from Home Visitor to Home Visiting Consultant. Leaving my families who I had been with for some 3.5 years, and reflecting on my journey with them during this time was beautiful, but also sad. I obviously wanted the utmost best for them going forth, which included my intention that they stay in home visiting even after I left. The unfortunate reality was that less than half of my caseload continued with services and transitioned to another home visitor. This experience made me reflect on what I could have done differently to support the transition and how I could have facilitated their continuation of home visiting. It also made me wonder what other programs around the state observe when a home visitor leaves, in whatever capacity that may be. In my looking back, a few commonalities are highlighted for the families who did stay. These families had attended some of the social activities that the program had put forth and were familiar with the team. These families had the opportunity to really “check-out” the other home visitors, and put faces to their names when exploring who could be an ideal match for them. In this, there was buy-in and a sense of comfort and trust. Another area I noted was my own comfort level with how I sold the program in attempts to keep them in services; I remember apprehensively asking them, “Would you like to continue home visiting?” In retrospect, I believe that if I had been more confident in my delivery, and honed into my wholehearted belief in the program I could have been more successful.

I had the opportunity to check in with another provider who had recently transitioned out of her role as home visitor, and reflect on her experience. Her experience was much different than mine, in that about three quarters of her families continued in home visiting after she left. In our conversation, I asked about what worked in her transition. “I was very intentional about my home visiting being a link to the program as a whole, not just a relationship with me and my
skills,” she said. “I think it mattered ‘what’ I said, but also my true belief in home visiting.” These words really highlight the power in our intentionality with families and invites reflection around our own process and comfort levels with change.

Questions to encourage discussion and reflection...

- How and what can we do to keep families engaged in services when there is transition in home visitor?
- When families do continue with services, what are some common themes/characteristics?
- Think back to when you have experienced a change in provider (eg. Doctor, therapist), what enabled you to continue services or not.

References/Additional Resources

New Mexico Home Visiting Program Standards [PDF]. (n.d.).