Creative Recruitment: Connecting Outside the Box
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June 2016

NMAIMH competencies addressed
Theoretical Foundations
- family relationships and dynamics
Systems Expertise
- community resources
Working with Others
- collaborating
- building and maintaining relationships
Communicating
- listening
- speaking
Reflection
- contemplation
- self-awareness

I was fortunate to recently travel to a small coastal community in Baja California Sur, Mexico. Each morning I took delight in sunrise over the Sea of Cortez as I walked on El Malecón, greeting each person, “Hola, buenos días.” After three days, I recognized familiar faces and our reciprocal greeting was becoming a connection.

Home visiting is a brilliant tapestry of connections. The foundations of home visiting are collaborative, strengths-based relationships, within reflective practice. With trust, respect, sensitivity and honesty, relationships are formed over time. However, before a relationship is formed there is a connection. You can make connections at the grocery store, park, gas station, doctor’s office or school parking lot. Making connections and forming relationships is essential to home visiting and recruitment. However, what if making connections and talking about home visiting in public is outside your comfort zone? How might you use your home visiting supports such as your program manager or CDD HV Training/Technical Assistance Consultant as you consider stepping outside your comfort zone?
Most of New Mexico’s CYFD-funded home visiting programs recently participated in the Regional Workshop, *Retention and Recruitment*. Many acknowledged that their program’s sustainability depends upon ongoing recruitment. They collaboratively discussed their home visiting program’s “elevator speech” possibilities and their recruitment successes and challenges. Beliefs about who is more likely to want and/or need home visiting were explored, as well as one’s comfort level in talking about home visiting in public. Collectively the home visiting staff acknowledged having previous conversations about their home visiting talking points or “elevator speech” and showed interest in other programs’ ideas and common language. The challenge and necessity of ongoing recruitment was verbalized by many. You may wonder, who else might be interested in home visiting? What is creative recruitment?

Creativity is characterized by the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions (Naiman, 2014). Consider the possibility of brainstorming recruitment ideas with your program. Brainstorming is a useful tool to generate and connect ideas that might be outside your comfort zone or “outside the box.” What might brainstorming and creative recruitment look like for your home visiting program?

At the beginning of the brainstorm session, staff are invited to share all of their ideas. No idea is too silly or ridiculous and the more the better. Criticism is not allowed. The creative process is more likely to flow when participants know all ideas are welcome and free from criticism. Combining ideas or building on another person’s idea is also acceptable. It is recommended to evaluate these recruitment ideas during a second meeting. When ideas are evaluated, each person might vote for their top five ideas. They can vote five times for one idea, five different ideas or any other combination (Sachs, 2013).

Making connections and building relationships is foundational to home visiting and recruitment. Reflecting on and acknowledging one’s current comfort zone in meeting new people is equally important. Knowing and utilizing the supports available to you in home visiting is essential. Creative brainstorming within your home visiting program may lead to possibilities and connections you might not have considered in the past. You meet people every day during your daily activities and interactions. How might these interactions become opportunities for sharing your passion and understanding of home visiting? You already have relationships within your community. How might you use these existing relationships to talk about home visiting and they in turn will share home visiting with people they know? There is the possibility that someone you are already connected to may know a pregnant woman or a family with an infant and/or toddler and talk about home visiting. I invite you to creatively explore and consider new recruitment possibilities that might be waiting just outside your comfort zone.

The fact is that original breakthroughs rarely occur in places with which we are familiar. This includes the places in our own minds where we carry our preconceived notions about the people and places around us and where current knowledge resides (Wahl, 2013, p. 191).
Questions to encourage discussion and reflection…

- What are my thoughts about who might want or need home visiting?
- What do I currently share about home visiting in my community?
- In my experience, what is working well within my home visiting program’s recruitment?
- In my experience, what do I perceive as areas needing improvement within my home visiting program’s recruitment?
- What connections in my community feel outside my comfort zone?
- What might creative recruitment look like in my home visiting program?

References/Additional Resources

