

Head Start Graduate Student Research Program: 2014 Research Scholars

Allison West

Project Title: The Benefits and Costs of Caring: A Mixed-Methods Study of EHS Home Visitors

Mentor: Dr. Lisa J. Berlin

Project Funding Years: 2014-2015

University Affiliation: University of Maryland

Project Abstract: The proposed mixed-method study will build on and expand an ongoing Early Head Start (EHS)-University Partnership addressing the prevention of toxic stress through attachment-based intervention. Guided by a strengths-based, developmental-ecological framework, the proposed study will examine the influence of individual, occupational, and organizational factors on compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue in EHS home visitors. Home visitor compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction data will also be examined as predictors of home visitor turnover and family engagement. In the first, quantitative phase, in collaboration with current EHS program partners, a Home Visitor Survey will be designed. Approximately 70 EHS home visitors, representing all EHS home visitors in the state of Maryland, will be recruited to complete the survey. Survey data from a subsample of 28 home visitors will be linked with family-level data from the Buffering Toxic Stress study in order to examine effects of family risks on home visitor wellbeing. Home visitor wellbeing will also be linked with home visitor job turnover at 6 to 9 months post-survey and with several indicators of EHS family engagement, including mothers' perceptions of their working alliance with their home visitor, and EHS program participation. Data will be analyzed using multilevel modelling techniques. In the second, qualitative phase, 4 to 6 EHS home visitors with different degrees of wellbeing will be selected to complete an interview addressing occupational stress. Thus, findings are anticipated to contribute to EHS research, practice, and policy, particularly by addressing the large gap in knowledge about the wellbeing of home-based staff and its relation to family risk engagement.

Sample:

All home visitors (approximately 28) from five local EHS programs that are currently participating in the Partners for Parenting will be invited to participate in this study additionally; up to 40 home visitors from nine EHS programs in Maryland will be recruited.

Measures:

Home Visitor Survey

- Demographics
- Educations and Experience
- Physical Health and Mental Health
- Trauma History
- Personal Resources

Occupational Characteristics (Home Visitor Survey, Partners for Parenting Project)

- EHS Family Cumulative Risk
- Job Characteristics
- Perceived Working Conditions
- Home Visitor Perception of the Working Alliance

Organizational Characteristics (Home Visitor Survey, Program Administrators' Reports, Program Information Reports)

- EHS Program size, urban/rural, overall client demographics, frequency of supervision, other supports

Proximal Outcomes (Home Visitor Survey)

- Professional Quality of Life
- Intent to Leave/Job Withdrawal

Distal Outcomes (Program Administrators' Reports, Partners for Parenting Project)

- Home Visitor Turnover
- Family Engagement

Alayna Schreier

Project Title: Early Head Start Home Visitors' Identification of Risk for Maltreatment

Mentor: Dr. David Hansen

Project Funding Years: 2014-2016

University Affiliation: University of Nebraska Lincoln

Project Abstract: Little is known about whether home visitors recognize the association between risk factors (e.g., parental mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence) and maltreatment. There is a critical need to understand how home visitors identify the behaviors that constitute maltreatment and the factors that place families at increased risk for experiencing maltreatment. The primary objectives of the proposed study are to: (a) identify how Early Head Start (EHS) home visitors understand maltreatment, determine risk for maltreatment, and refer families identified as at-risk to relevant EHS program and community-based services; and (b) identify the association between presence of risk factors and court-substantiated child maltreatment in order to develop the model that best predicts maltreatment occurrence. Archival data on approximately 600 EHS families will be utilized in this study. Records include EHS services received, mental health services received, and juvenile court records of substantiated instances of maltreatment. In addition, qualitative interviews exploring identification and determination of risk for maltreatment will be conducted with all EHS home visitors and supervisors employed by the program. Analyses will utilize mixed methodology in a sequential design to identify the presence of risk factors and predict occurrence of maltreatment. The findings will inform EHS researchers, practitioners and policy makers on how to better serve families within the context of an ongoing intervention; provide information about the role that home visitors play; conduct effective training for staff to successfully assist and engage families in services; and engage families and deliver services that reduces risk for and prevents maltreatment.

Sample:

Approximately 600 families enrolled in EHS home-based services between 2008 and 2015. All EHS home visitors and supervisors (n=17) employed during the identified recruitment periods will be invited to participate in the qualitative component of the study.

Measures:

- Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)
- Behavioral, Emotional, and Social Screening (BESS)
- Semi-Structured Program Interview
- EHS Records
- Mental Health Clinical Records
- Nebraska JUSTICE Records