



# SUPPORTING HOME VISITORS WORKING WITH FAMILIES

## KEY FINDINGS FROM STEPS FOR LEARNING NEAR@HOME

Maternal, Infant & Early Childhood  
Home Visiting (MIECHV)  
Region X Innovation Grant Evaluation

June 2019

*More information on Region X Innovation Grant (see back page) & visit:*  
[www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/child-dev-support-providers/home-visiting/innovation-grant](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/child-dev-support-providers/home-visiting/innovation-grant)

# Strengthening the Home Visiting Workforce: Key Findings - 'Steps for Learning NEAR@Home'

## What is 'Steps for Learning NEAR@Home'?

The NEAR@Home approach provides training and ongoing support to strengthen capacity in the home visiting workforce for addressing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) with families by:

- ✓ Increasing knowledge of brain science and early childhood trauma;
- ✓ Using and understanding the CDC's Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Questionnaire; and
- ✓ Learning strategies for building family resiliency.

Home visiting staff participated in a foundational science conference call, a full day of in person learning including use of the 'NEAR@Home Toolkit', and 4 months of support calls with the NEAR facilitator (see last page for more details).

16 Home Visiting Programs (4 from Each Region X State) Were in The Evaluation  
(Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington)



## The NEAR approach was highly valued by home visiting staff for a number of reasons.

- ✓ Flexibility to wait for the right time to attempt a NEAR visit, and trusting home visitor judgement.
- ✓ Giving the families choice to complete a NEAR visit.
- ✓ Focusing on supportive supervision time (reflection, talking about ACEs, and building confidence for NEAR@Home visits).

## There were many helpful aspects of NEAR Learnings discussed.

- ✓ Feeling heard and respected during learnings and their time with Facilitators.
- ✓ Example scripts, engaging in peer support, and getting peer feedback.
- ✓ Completing an ACEs Questionnaire themselves.
- ✓ Support calls with Facilitators and team members that provided affirmation & support.

Now I really understand how it [NEAR@Home] can help people, empower them with knowing and help them overcome and break the cycles. -Home Visitor

NEAR@Home helps you understand the 'how' ACEs affect you. It gives you an opportunity to reflect on your own life and understand 'maybe that's why I reacted that way ...because of something I experienced in my own childhood'. That helps you understand your client and perhaps decisions that they've been making too.

-Home Visitor

## Meaningful benefits to home visitors emerged.

- ✓ Understanding of their own ACEs and how it impacts their own behavior when working with families.
- ✓ Developing insight & increased empathy for families.
- ✓ Seeing the importance and value of their critical role in family support.

## Benefits to families were highlighted by home visiting staff.

- ✓ Building parent skills in stress management, reflective skills and awareness processes.
- ✓ Parents gaining hope for the future & resiliency.
- ✓ Understanding ways to promote healthy experiences for their children and protect against challenging ones.

## After the 4-months of NEAR@Home supports, staff were more actively using NEAR skills, & more confident in doing NEAR@Home visits.

- ✓ Increased activity in the 5 key NEAR@Home elements (Preparing, Asking Listening, Affirming, and Remembering).
- ✓ Home visitors shared about improved confidence doing NEAR visits as their practice, support, and successes grew.



## Implementation was more successful when certain factors were present.

- ✓ Supervisors valued the approach, and had training in and were supportive of regular reflective supervision (group and/or individual).
- ✓ Organizations had a strengths-based approach.
- ✓ NEAR facilitators recognized and built on the prior training that staff received related to trauma informed practices and ACEs.

## Next Steps & Opportunities for Growth

### Enhancements to the approach were discussed; some were incorporated along the way.

- ✓ Increase opportunities for supported practice: more role playing & recorded examples of successful NEAR visit sessions & add practice during supports phase.
- ✓ Develop tools for NEAR activity practice and successes.
- ✓ Provide more contact between home visiting teams and NEAR facilitators during the supports phase.
- ✓ Provide one-on-one supervisory support to facilitators (supervision calls/model lead observations/feedback).

## Reflections: A NEAR@Home Facilitator Describes 'Aha' Moments During Interview.

A NEAR@Home facilitator described learning that was shared during support calls with home visiting teams. She noted that early in the implementation process, teams expressed concerns about NEAR@Home going too deep into personal lives and clients not being receptive. The “aha” moments came when home visiting staff realized that once families trust you, they want to talk about ACE’s because it’s healing and can help them process early adverse events. Home visitors found that the approach was not re-traumatizing as they had feared.

## Although NEAR@Home visits were reported as challenging for some home visitors early on, as staff successfully completed NEAR@Home visits, confidence and comfort increased.

- ✓ Facilitator reflections showed overtime that difficult issues raised by staff early in doing NEAR visits were often creatively resolved at later implementation.
- ✓ Talking about NEAR visit successes & challenges during support calls, and ‘community of practice’ calls were critical to staff learning and confidence.

I feel like it's much more about a way of being than what I'm actually doing.... The big picture is... we want to model the parallel process for them, so the way that we are with home visitors is hopefully the way they are with their clients, so...[using] the same principles that you would use in home visiting to establish trust and create relationship and that kind of thing. -Facilitator

## Attending to the variability in cultural norms for discussing personal issues is essential.

- ✓ Take into account the values of different cultural groups: talking about sensitive material, expressing emotions & openness to sharing with professionals.
- ✓ Gather information about adaptations needed from culturally & linguistically diverse staff and families.

## Guidance on how to integrate NEAR@Home elements with home visiting program models will be useful for future learning & implementation.

## Reflections: Changes in Perception of NEAR@Home in a Culturally Diverse Rural Community.

The following is derived from 2 interviews (early & later NEAR@Home implementation) and Step 4 support call reflection forms from 1 facilitator working with a home visiting team in a diverse community.

Shortly after the in-person learning day, a rural community home visitor shared with their facilitator that she was worried about doing NEAR@Home because of the cultural norms of families on her caseload. She explained that sharing sensitive information outside the family was frowned upon, and seen as bringing shame to the family. This was coupled with the reality that in their small community, it could be upsetting for those who revealed their ACEs scores and the home visitor to run into each other in town. During a support call, the same home visitor shared how she began the NEAR@Home process with one family: she took extra time, across multiple visits to move into talking about NEAR science, revised scripts to use language matched to the family, and talked about resiliency as one of the first discussions. On a later support call, she reported that the family had completed the ACEs questionnaire. To her surprise and excitement, the client expressed appreciation and relief after getting her ACEs score, relating that 'nobody had ever asked' about her early life experiences and that it felt good to tell someone. After his experience, the home visiting team decided together to talk about the information provided by NEAR@Home as important public health information for all families, including those on their caseloads. Soon after, some of the local community leaders who were once against revealing sensitive information began to encourage NEAR@Home visits for interested families.

### More about ... the Region X Innovation Grant

As part of the **MIECHV Innovation Grant** to The State of Washington's Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), Region X States (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington) provided workforce supports to home visiting teams.

*NEAR@Home activity included:*

- ✓ **Training 5 community based facilitators** to deliver NEAR@Home Learning Steps (see box to left);
- ✓ **Providing 28 home visiting teams with Learnings in the NEAR@Home Approach;**
- ✓ **Evaluation & Data Collection**, including feedback to NEAR leads/facilitators on successes/ challenges.

16 programs completed surveys and talked with the PSU evaluation team about their experiences with NEAR@Home over time. Over 135 people participated in the evaluation.

### THANK YOU for sharing your time & insights!

Special thanks to WA DCYF, NEAR@Home state facilitators, NEAR@Home co-model developer, THRIVE, and Region X Grant leadership, committees, and stakeholders, and Butler Institute for Families.

#### Images:

Cover: Mother with child. Digital image. Idaho Department of Health and Welfare; MIECHV Programs. June 2019. <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Portals/0/Children/HomeVisiting/MIECHVSlide4.png>

Pg 1. Training session. Digital Image. I-Stock Photo. June 2019.

Pg 2. Home visitor & family. Digital Image. Southern California Public Radio (SCPR). May 2017. <https://a.scpr.org/i/5844967b1a7d10a5bec4bdf5f165e589/159549-full.jpg>

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### Details on Steps for Learning NEAR@Home

The NEAR@Home approach utilizes the **NEAR@Home Toolkit** training manual and guided processes. For Region X home visiting programs, 'Steps' for Learning NEAR@Home included:

**Step 1:** An exploratory 'readiness conversation'.

**Step 2:** A two-hour foundational science webinar.

**Step 3:** An all day, in-person facilitated learning session

**Step 4:** 4 month, supports (telephone/in person), staff & facilitators.

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