

A Call to Action to Advance Racial Equity in Home Visiting

National Home Visiting Network

February 2022

In 2019, the National Home Visiting Network Advisory Committeeⁱ began our racial equity journey to better understand the role racism plays in the health and well-being of children and families. We set out to develop collective actions to dismantle racist policies, systems, and structures that prevent children and families from thriving. Since then, we've witnessed a global pandemic; an economic recession; and the brutal executions of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. These events brought America's structural racism into stark focus. Their burdens fell disproportionately on communities marginalized by structural inequities. Today, we stand united in our commitment to root out structural inequities and racist policies within the home visiting field and society at large. Doing so requires the hard work of listening to, learning from, and partnering with communities most affected.

Our Hope for the Field of Home Visiting

We call upon our colleagues in the home visiting, early childhood, health, and related fields to join together as we take bold, antiracist actions to advance equity. Only with collective engagement can we understand the roots of racism within our systems, name racial and other inequities in home visiting, forge an alternative vision free from institutional and systemic racism, and act to implement changes. This call to action defines our guiding principles and outlines concrete initial recommendations for researchers, policy advocates, and practitioners.

Guiding Principles

The following principles reflect the Advisory Committee's learnings, values, beliefs, and aspirations for a new, antiracist United States where all children and families can thrive.

- **PRIORITIZE EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND JUSTICE.** We assert that our society will have achieved equity, inclusion, and justice when race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, language, zip code, immigration status, and ability no longer predetermine opportunities to succeed in life.ⁱⁱ We must embed these priorities within all actions rather than treating them as buzzwords.
- **ACKNOWLEDGE OUR HISTORY.** We acknowledge the well-intentioned, yet biased origins of home visiting and support truthful exploration of its unvarnished history. We must confront the history of home visiting in an effort to learn from and rectify past wrongs.
- **AUTHENTICALLY ENGAGE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES.** We prioritize the authentic engagement of parents and communities with lived experience. We must partner with families to disrupt systems that undermine families' and communities' self-determination.
- **FOCUS ON FIXING SYSTEMS.** We acknowledge that modern-day home visiting often seeks to "fix" children and families, rather than fix inequitable systems and address social issues. Home visitors will continue to support families through direct service, but this must happen in concert with efforts by the home visiting community at large to rethink systems and structures to address the root causes of inequity.

- **COLLABORATE WITH OTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNERS.** We recognize that families with young children interact with a variety of systems and that remaining siloed will prevent us from achieving our antiracist goals. We must work with our counterparts in the health, reproductive justice, education, housing, environmental, civil rights, and other fields to promote equitable, inclusive, and just outcomes for children and families.
- **LEAN IN AND FALL FORWARD.** We know that advancing equity and justice is a lifelong journey during which we will make mistakes. We must learn from our errors and from the wisdom and work of others to continually advance equity and justice.

Initial Recommendations

We recognize that many working in the home visiting field are already making changes to achieve antiracist goals with significant impacts in the short and long term. To contribute to these efforts, the Advisory Committee will initially focus on three areas.

- **Parent and Community Leadership:** The voices and leadership of parents and community members are essential for reshaping policy, practice, and research in ways that are responsive to home visiting consumers and their communities.
- **Workforce Development and Support:** From frontline staff to program administrators, researchers, and advocates, we need to grow a more diverse pipeline of applicants familiar with inequity and structural racism and committed to shepherding change.
- **Evidence to Promote Equity Outcomes:** It is essential to retool evidentiary standards and practices to promote the use of mixed-methods and disaggregated data that can help illuminate progress.

Here are practical recommendations for researchers, policy advocates, and practitioners.

Parent and Community Leadership	Workforce Development and Support	Evidence to Promote Equity Outcomes
<p>Researchers can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership with parents and community members to identify research questions important to families, develop the study design, interpret the data, and participate in the framing and reporting of findings • Identify the next round of research needed on parent and community leadership <p>Policy advocates can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a durable infrastructure—through federal and state policies, guidance, and programmatic budget expectations—to prepare, support, and compensate parents as program co-creators, consultants, staff 	<p>Researchers can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate researchers on how to create study designs that allow for a more detailed look at program elements, participant characteristics, and service delivery progress • Support diversity and inclusion in the research workforce through mentoring, scholarships, and other opportunities and pathways <p>Policy advocates can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the workforce definition in federal and state policy to encompass those with lived experience mirroring that of families enrolled in programs and the communities in which programs work, and recognize the value of 	<p>Researchers can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaggregate data to understand the effects of home visiting on different populations and communities • Rethink measures and design studies to capture changes in structural racism rather than simply focusing on disparity in outcomes, and create and seek out more equitable outcome measures <p>Policy advocates can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in narrative work to define family well-being and home visiting as a universal public good • Remove structural and funding barriers that impede smaller home visiting models and those that serve diverse or specific populations from

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Determine receptivity for continuing programmatic flexibilities, such as virtual home visiting, permitted to meet the needs of families during the COVID-19 pandemic and advocate for continuation as part of MIECHV reauthorization <p>Practitioners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide supports and accountability for families to be engaged in program design and implementation ● Spread awareness to all states of what works for parent and community leadership 	<p>experience as a qualification for employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop compensation policies to make home visiting a viable career path <p>Practitioners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Embed cultural competence, racial equity, and implicit bias awareness into all hiring policies and training requirements for national home visiting models ● Reverse the bias against home visitors who are peers and community members with lived experience 	<p>demonstrating their effectiveness</p> <p>Practitioners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make sure the stories told by data are strength based and outcome focused ● Actively inform families about how data will be used and engage families in the interpretation of data to increase transparency
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Time to Act

The time for tepid, incremental change is over. Whether you are new to these issues or have embarked on your own learning journey, we hope this call to action motivates and supports you in this critical work.

ⁱ About the National Home Visiting Network

The National Home Visiting Network was formed in 2018 to inspire the growth of a well-connected field that catalyzes and magnifies the collective reach and effectiveness of home visiting. Guided by [four core principals](#), our goal is to see that the benefits of home visiting are accessible to all families. As such, we:

- *Catalyze connections across the home visiting field.*
- *Elevate the voices and perspectives of home visiting professionals and consumers.*
- *Create a space for challenging conversations that cannot be solved by any one group alone and instead require a networked approach.*
- *Vow to purposely identify, discuss, and challenge issues of racial and economic inequities and the impact they have on our organizations and the people who enroll in home visiting.*

The National Home Visiting Network is led by an Advisory Committee with representatives from research, policy, and practice, and includes home visiting consumers. The Heising-Simons Foundation supports the effort.

ⁱⁱ The definition of equity, inclusion, and justice is adapted from the [Annie E. Casey Foundation Race Equity and Inclusion Guide](#).