

National Home Visiting Network
2017–2026

Weaving Our Future: **A Collaborative Field Catalyst**

Bringing together a multitude of threads
to co-create the future of home visiting

Deborah Roderick Stark and Melissa L. Kelley
www.HVNetwork.org



Home Visiting is...

- A **voluntary** service matching expectant parents and caregivers of young children with a designated support person
- Support for nurturing **strong early connections** between parents and their children; providing **information on essential topics** like breastfeeding, nutrition, safe sleep; and encouraging early learning at home with parents as the primary teacher
- Connection to other **services and resources** in the community that help parents reach goals and provide for their family
- **Grounded in research** that demonstrates impacts on health, safety, and school readiness of children; maternal health; and family stability and financial security
- **Cost effective** with a return on investment of \$1.80 to \$5.70 for every dollar spent



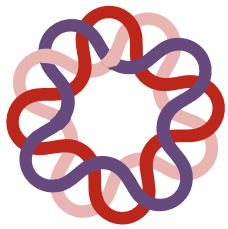
“When I was going through postpartum depression with my last baby, my home visitor was the only one in my corner. My family was grilling me about my kids, and it was nice to hear a home visitor telling me that I wasn’t doing anything wrong—that I was doing everything I could right. She encouraged me to keep going. That was such a dark hole, and she was the one helping me find the light.”

~Nicole Loveless

“Being new to this country, I didn’t know where things were, what was happening in my community. So when I started receiving services, it was really amazing. It opened doors and taught me things I didn’t know about being a mom. Someone was out there. Someone came to me and was able to listen to me, and understand me. It lifted the whole burden of being a new mom off my shoulders.”

~Cullbi O’Rock





Coming Together to Weave a Stronger, More Vibrant Field

The National Home Visiting Network was formed to inspire the growth of a well-networked field that catalyzes and magnifies the collective reach and effectiveness of home visiting.

Network Goal

The benefits of home visiting are accessible to all families.

Network Principles

Our interaction with one another was guided by four principles articulated by network scientist Jane Wei Skillern, PhD, Senior Fellow, Haas School of Business, University of California Berkeley.

Mission, Not Organization—As leaders, we adopt strategies and tactics to achieve our overall mission, not necessarily to stimulate the growth of any one organization or program.

Constellation, Not Stars—As partners, we see each of our organizations as part of a larger constellation of activity targeting our cause and shining bright together, not as individual stars shining bright alone.

Promote Others, Not Yourself—Our organizations work alongside our peers as equals and are willing to take a back seat when other partners are in a better position to lead.

Trust, Not Control—Trust and shared values guide how we interact and create an environment that maximizes our collective impact.

“We have built trusting relationships that did not previously exist. Network members now have the confidence and security to engage in difficult conversations with one another about issues of critical importance to the home visiting field.”

~Kathleen Strader

“We have a better understanding of what each Network partner is doing so that we don’t duplicate efforts or work at cross-purposes. **We also are better able to see opportunities for lifting-up what others are doing** and support mutual aims.”

~Allison West

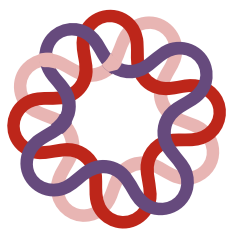
“The Network supports a collaborative approach to problem solving. It’s rare these days to step back and make space to think collectively. The Network helps us do this.”

~ Kelly Woodlock

“There are many sides and not many circles in Washington, DC. **The Network is all about circles**....Now, when I have a request for information, I have many colleagues I can call on to answer their questions.”

~ Catriona Macdonald





A Tapestry of Strategy: Building a Cohesive Field

In 2017, 36 leaders in home visiting—from research, practice, administration, policy, advocacy, and philanthropy—met at the Wingspread Retreat and Executive Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin to grapple with a growing challenge for the field.

At the time, investments were increasing across multiple entities and structures that had been created to support the home visiting field. But this work was happening in silos, and some of the most pressing cross-cutting challenges were not being addressed.

Participants committed to establishing the National Home Visiting Network (Network)—not another separate organization—that would provide a neutral, facilitated space for leaders across major national centers of activity to convene, build shared understanding, and strengthen the impact of both individual and collective work. The intent was to support conversations and idea generation untethered to any single organization's agenda, in service of the field as a whole, and a shared desire to extend the benefits of home visiting to all families. This convening marked the starting point of an experiment to test what sustained, cross-disciplinary collaboration could make possible.

In 2018, the Network was launched as a space to:

- Catalyze connections;
- Elevate voices;
- Identify challenges, especially stubborn, pervasive barriers hindering progress for families;
- Engage in difficult conversations that are often avoided; and
- Collectively ideate solutions to try, learn from, and refine.

Over the next eight years, the Network's conversations and relationships formed a strategic tapestry for advancing the home visiting field, weaving together research, policy, and practice in ways that built on one another and stayed grounded in families' lived-experience. In many ways, these conversations were prescient, anticipating what the field would need next.

Weaving Our Future: A Collaborative Field Catalyst

"There is no other table where I have been that has created this degree of trust and commitment to authentic equity. And the growth of the network leadership has been demonstrated here in ways that I've not seen anywhere else. This experience has truly inspired my approach to our future initiatives."

~David Willis

"We've had the benefit of being able to come to the group knowing we'll have **thought partnership and thought pushing and boundary testing**...a space that is trusting and where we can be vulnerable to talk about issues we might be grappling with alone."

~Kelly Woodlock

"Being a parent at the Network table opened opportunities for me. I was matched with an awesome mentor, and her just listening to me and knowing my passion was so helpful. She put me in places where I could use my voice on a broader scale. For example, I presented at the Michigan Infant Mental Health conference."
~Kinea "Kandi" Wright



Collective Action During a Crisis

During the COVID-19 pandemic—an exceptionally challenging time for families and for health and human service systems—the Network’s principles proved their worth.

As Malia Ramler, education program officer at the Heising-Simons Foundation, observed: “Funders value and invest in evidence-based programs, but we don’t often recognize and invest in the infrastructure—the connective tissue—that is essential for these programs to become a connected field.”

Because the Network had created the enabling conditions for strong relationships, trust, and collective action, Heising-Simons and other funders invested in Home Visiting Rapid Response—a field-wide effort to quickly and thoughtfully meet families’ needs as shutdowns disrupted daily life and access to essential services.

Rapid Response helped the field move quickly to share best practices, resources, and expertise. It was an unprecedented crisis met with a collaborative, practice-informed rapid response that was free and available to all those engaged in home visiting regardless of funding source. As a result, the field quickly pivoted from in-person to virtual home visits, strengthened supports for urgent family needs (including food access and stress management), and many home visiting programs stayed open when most providers closed.

According to Ramler, “In moments of crisis, relationships between and across partner organizations are critical for resilience.”

National Home Visiting Network Partners

- Alliance for Early Success
- Association of State & Tribal Home Visiting Initiatives
- Education Development Center
- First 5 Los Angeles
- Home Visiting Applied Research Collaborative
- Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals
- National Alliance of Home Visiting Models
- National Home Visiting Coalition
- National Home Visiting Resource Center
- Nurture Connection
- Start Early
- Zero to Three
- Three cohorts of parent leaders
- And federal partners with the Department of Health & Human Services: Health Resources & Services Administration and Administration for Children & Families.

A full list of all those involved in the Network since its inception is included on page 13.





“Being part of the Network helped me see myself as Nicole. I wasn’t just a mom changing diapers and a wife. Because I was able to see Nicole, I gained different leadership opportunities. I’m now connected with Reach Out and Read. I’m on the steering committee of Nurture Connection. I’m a parent ambassador for the Centers for Disease Control. And I’m the Chair of Indian Education at the Albuquerque Public School District. It’s just cool to have all that cultivated from my time as a parent leader at the Network table.



I’ve also been able to help other parents start fires in their hearts—to help them pause, listen, and stand up. It’s like I’m holding the candle and helping them light their own candle ... so other parents can start seeing their own light too.”

~Nicole Loveless

Ten Tips for Weaving an Effective Network

1. Emergent, Purpose-Driven Dialogue

Come together to learn and engage on critical issues facing families—not just organizational challenges. Allow conversations to unfold organically rather than driving toward a predetermined outcome.

2. Welcoming Convening Spaces

Gather in settings that do not privilege the largest or most powerful partner, reinforcing shared ownership and inclusivity.

3. Neutral, Skilled Facilitation

Use facilitation that actively addresses power dynamics, encourages deep listening, and advances learning through thoughtful questioning.

4. Intentional Relationship Building

Prioritize relationships as foundational to the work. Dedicate 15–20% of time in every gathering to meaningful connection and trust-building. Engage in periodic one-on-one conversations to surface individual perspectives and ensure they are heard, recognizing that full-group discussions can sometimes drift toward groupthink.

5. Representative and Balanced Participation

Include many perspectives—research, policy, practice, and lived experience—while maintaining a manageable, representative group. Encourage differing viewpoints, but avoid including participants whose intent is to obstruct progress.

6. Ongoing Learning and Reflection

Treat community and history as a continuous learning journey. Pair training with deep reflection and dialogue to support meaningful integration and transformation in practice.

7. Catalyze Distributed Action

Create conditions that inspire participants to carry insights back to their own contexts, sparking self-organized action and broader impact.

8. Orient Toward Learning vs. a Project Mentality

Emphasize continuous, shared learning rather than one-off project collaborations. Cultivate a “beginner’s mind”—embracing curiosity, questioning assumptions, and staying open to new possibilities.

9. Independent, Aligned Funding Support

Engage multiple neutral funders who are committed to the work without imposing specific outcomes or directing the group’s focus.

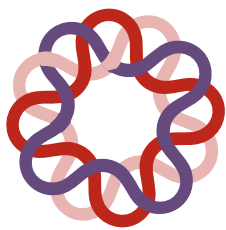
10. Whole-System Perspective

Consider the full ecosystem - addressing structural, attitudinal, and transactional forces and realities both upstream and downstream - to drive lasting change.

“In the beginner’s mind, there are many possibilities. In the expert’s mind, there are few.”

~Shunryu Suzuki





Field Collaboration Creates a Tapestry of Change

Over the Network's tenure, members came together to take on shared challenges – sometimes in deep, difficult conversations. Those conversations, and the actions that followed, helped weave a tapestry of change for the home visiting field.



COMMUNITY AND FAMILY CONTEXT

What we did

- Undertook a multi-year learning journey on how community and family context shapes the health and well-being of children and families, and translated our learning into practical action steps for home visiting research, policy, and practice.
- Engaged in a Tribal learning journey to deepen understanding of Native American and Alaska Native history, sovereignty, and trauma – and the role of healing and connection.

Evidence of change

- **Organizational:** ParentChild+ used the Network's study of community and family context to strengthen internal and external conversations. As Sarah Walzer (past CEO) noted, "Sharing the Network's learnings increased confidence with our

partner sites, the Board, and funders. It helped to reinforce changes we needed to make to our organization's training, curriculum, research, and program materials."

- **Field-wide:** In 2019, only two major national centers at the Network table named community and family context as a driving principle (and only three had begun training or facilitated discussions). After the intensive portion of the learning journey, 19 major national centers had launched conversations – adopting commitments, updating practices (content/curriculum, hiring, outreach and enrollment), adjusting evaluation designs, and extending conversations about community and family context into broader early childhood and family support systems.



PARENT LEADERSHIP AND VOICE

What we did

- Invited parents to join as Network members and built the supports to make their participation real (mentors, coaching, prep/debrief calls, and compensation).
- Made lived experience central to how we thought about the next evolution of home visiting research, policy, and practice.
- Supported parent leaders to advance goals on their own terms.

Evidence of change

- **Individual:** Parent leaders reported increased confidence, clarity, and agency. As Network parent leader Annette Castro put it, “Participating in the Network got me out of my comfort zone. It’s given me more knowledge and made me feel more confident in myself. After being a stay-at-home mom for so long, I’m not ready to get back into the workforce – but once my youngest starts school, maybe I’ll become a home visitor.”



- **Organizational:** The need for parent voice increasingly shaped how partners framed their work. In a meeting on evaluation design, a federal advisor noted that she challenged her colleagues to “consider what families bring to the table and design evaluations that build on their strengths.” And a national partner emphasized that her organization has undertaken a monumental shift in perspective and action regarding parent voice. They now are working to support states and communities to build parent leadership to inform policy and practice.
- **Field-wide:** Inspired by the Network’s approach – both our principles and commitment to centering the voices of parents – David Willis built an expanded family leadership approach into his launch of Nurture Connection, a field-wide movement to highlight flourishing and the importance of early parent-child relationships. Nurture Connection’s Family Network Collaborative engages parents as co-creators helping to shape messaging, practice, and research.



HOME VISITOR ENGAGEMENT

What we did

- Convened home visitors during the 2020 National Home Visiting Summit to explore interest in creating a professional association, and learned about their desire to have more voice in program decisions and greater recognition and support.
- Responded to emerging research on home visitor well-being to ensure home visitors' own perspectives were understood and documented.
- Hosted a webinar with more than 1,600 attendees to center home visitor experience and complement research on the workforce. Participants emphasized that well-being depends on team support, flexibility, time to recover between visits, attention to safety, reflective supervision, recognition of job complexity, and fair compensation.

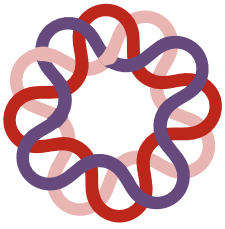
Evidence of change

- **Organizational:** When a federal grant opportunity was announced to fund a technical assistance center, several Network partners chose collaboration over competition – co-creating what became the Institute for Home Visiting Workforce Development and the Jackie Walorski Center for Evidence-Based Case Management.
- **Field-wide:** After hearing home visitors call for greater recognition, Network member Janet Horras launched the National Home Visitor Week – now supported by sponsors (including the Network) and with proclamations from state and federal leaders to celebrate home visiting professionals and their contributions to maternal and child well-being.

“It has been amazing to watch the Network evolve. In the beginning, our relationships were warm and collegial, but largely transactional. As our work became more interconnected, so did we.

We were most engaged, energized, and invigorated when we embarked on intensive learning —stretching our thinking, becoming more adaptable, following our curiosity, and seeing where it might lead us. Those were the moments when the Network felt most alive.”

-Melissa L. Kelley



Additional Examples of Change

Other positive changes emerged over the past eight years contributing to the state of home visiting as we know it in 2026.

Home Visiting Practice: Programs are increasingly responsive to families' contexts and are using family input to strengthen how support is delivered.

Universal + Targeted Approaches: The field continues to explore pairing universal home visiting (so all families can get a strong start) with targeted evidence-based models for those who want additional support. Two states – New Jersey and Oregon – passed legislation in 2021 and 2022 calling for implementation of universal nurse home visiting. Several other states are close to securing support for universal home visiting.

Federal Investments: With bipartisan support, investments in the Maternal, Infant

and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program continue to grow—from \$100 million in FY2010 to \$650 million in FY2026, including an expanded set-aside for Tribal Home Visiting.

State Investments: Since 2019, there have been 331 bills introduced across 45 states that address some aspect of home visiting, and 44 of these bills have been enacted. More states are investing their own resources in home visiting. Some are exploring how to leverage private insurance to expand universal models. Still others are exploring how to nest home visiting within broader early childhood systems.

Research: There is more participatory research, more work that takes context into account, and a stronger focus on precision—what works best for whom, and why.

What's Next

And there is still more to do. An important next step is to strengthen home visiting's reach and impact by weaving stronger connections across the broader tapestry of systems that support families with young children. There are promising examples to learn from that highlight connection between home visiting and:

- Child welfare
- Early care and education
- Elementary education
- Housing
- Infant and early childhood mental health

The National Home Visiting Network website, www.HVNetwork.org, has more detail on its work and opportunities for extending the reach of home visiting.





“When I was enrolled in home visiting, I saw the benefits I was receiving. I saw the difference it was making in my daughters’ lives...I always go back to the fact that being new to this country, people don’t always know what’s available in the community. So I wanted to create awareness for other families like it was done for me. I just have love for people, love for families. I just need to see families thrive and be empowered to do things on their own....it really helped me ease into becoming a home visitor because I saw it was something other parents could benefit

from.... Moving up to the Network table was easy because I had to get my voice to be able to speak. Sitting at the table, I feel like my voice is being heard and things I say are being taken into consideration... It built that strong community for me...a safety nest... it also gave me a push to try new things.”

~Cullbi O’Rock



Acknowledgements

We extend our gratitude to the members, past and present, of the National Home Visiting Network Advisory Committee who came together to advance the early childhood home visiting field: Mimi Aledo-Sandoval, Christina Altmayer, Moushumi Beltangady, Jeanna Capito, Diana Careaga, *Annette Castro, *Regine Cherry, Jamie Colvard, Jill Filene, Bryn Fortune, Kimberly Friedman, Alison Gee, Jaclyn Gray, Monique Fountain Hanna, Benjamin Hazelton, *Melina Hernandez, Rachel Herzfeldt-Kamprath, Janet Horras, Karen Howard, Amanda Innes, Dina Lieser, *Nicole Loveless, Catriona Macdonald, Nancy Geyelin Margie, Allison Meisch, *Cullbi O'Rock, Allison Parish, Carrie Peake, Kathy Pillow-Price, Meghan Schmelzer, Christine Silva, *Natasha Snider, Kathleen Strader, *Jennifer Vincent, Sarah Walzer, Allison West, Miriam Westheimer, David Willis, Kelly Woodlock, *Kinea Wright, and to co-facilitators Melissa L. Kelley and Deborah Roderick Stark.

We thank the individuals who came together at the 2017 Wingspread field-building retreat which informed the formation of the Network: Mimi Aledo-Sandoval, Christina Altmayer, Mary Catherine Arbour, Suzin Bartley, Moushumi Beltangady, Sue Birch, Frank Daidone, Anne Duggan, Jill Filene, Barbara Gebhard, Claire Gibbons, Deanna Gomby, Constance Gully, Jenny Harper, Charles Homer, Janet Horras, Karen Howard, Judith Jerald, Tamara Johnson, Melissa L. Kelley, Bart Klika, Marty Kooistra, Jon Korfmacher, Jeff Langlieb, Paul Lanier, Catriona Macdonald, Mary Mackrain, Marianne McPherson, Tom Novick, Diana Rauner, Deborah Roderick Stark, Lauren Supplee, Sarah Walzer, Miriam Westheimer, and David Willis.

We appreciate the expertise of those that provided education, training, and guidance to our Network efforts and critical conversations: Marty Kooistra, David Ehrlichman, Anton Treuer, Paula Dressel, Audrey Jordan, Holly Kreider, and Trystan Reese. Throughout the years, we visited multiple sites that informed our conversations including: Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, the National Museum of African American History

“Our fast-paced work environment requires that we focus much of our individual time DOING task-based work. The Network provides leaders across research, policy, and practice, together with parents, [a time and facilitated space] to dig deep into critical issues. We’ve spent time learning together about how we can walk alongside and support ALL families. And doing this together as opposed to in silos or in the confines of our own programs and organizations allowed us to learn from one another and to see ripple effects that impact the whole field.”

~Miriam Westheimer

and Culture, the National Museum of the American Indian, and the Catawba Indian Nation.

We also honor and remember Deborah Daro (1949-2025). Deb was an instrumental leader in the field of home visiting and an early champion of the Network from its inception at Wingspread and served as a member of the Network Advisory Committee.

Most importantly, we are profoundly grateful to the visionary leadership of Miriam Westheimer whose forward-thinking collaborative values guided the formation of the Network.

This work was made possible with the generous support from the Heising-Simons Foundation, and the thoughtful partnership of both former Executive Director, Deanna Gomby as well as our program officer, Malia Ramler. Deanna's unwavering commitment to field-building as essential to advancing home visiting was instrumental in the development of the Network and many of the backbone infrastructural supports that bolster the field today. Malia too has been a strategic thought-partner who sees the value and necessity of “connective tissue” for advancing systems change.

**Denotes parent leaders*



“Home visiting gave me a different perspective of what parenting can be. When you feel like you’re not equipped, knowing that there is somebody – or at least resources out there — to support you, empower you, and uplift you makes all the difference. My nurse will forever have a lifetime connection with me based on the support she offered me when I was pregnant. I went from being a person who received help way back then, to now being the help and light to other parents. That shift gives me hope.

Participating in the National Home Visiting Network allowed me to stand in my truth. It helped me grow out of my timidity. I always came off as confident, but there were moments when I second-guessed myself or felt discouraged. Connecting with the other women helped me see myself differently and encouraged me to advocate more. We learned together, but we also gave back – sharing from the parent perspective what worked, what didn’t, and how to use words that reflect our reality. That experience showed me how parent leadership can push change in real ways – how feedback from parents actually reshapes programs, policies, and the way systems build relationships with families.

I sang ‘Rise Up’ [song by Andra Day] at a Network meeting because it represented what we’ve all gone through – as parents, as staff, as leaders. Sometimes we feel broken down or tired, but we ‘rise up’ because we know we aren’t doing this alone. The unity builds the community. Together, we’ve overcome things that once made us feel defeated, and when we come together, we all rise – one by one, and as a collective.”

~ *Regine Cherry*

