

Talking Points on the Expiration and Reauthorization of MIECHV

October 2017

The story we want to tell:

Families across the country are at risk of losing critical home visiting services because congressional inaction allowed funding for programs helping parents who need a little extra help to expire. Every day Congress waits to renew federal funding for home visiting is a day closer to families losing services, home visitors losing or leaving their jobs, and local home visiting programs shutting down. Congress must work quickly to reauthorize MIECHV in a way that preserves flexibility and stability for states and preserves benefits for children and families.

Background information:

The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV) supports voluntary, evidence-based home visiting models in all 50 states as well as in many territories and tribal communities. MIECHV-funded models connect parents with trained home visitors, such as nurses, social workers, and educators, and have undergone scientific studies proving their effectiveness. Federally funded home visiting helps end multi-generational cycles of poverty and put families on the path to good health, educational success and economic self-sufficiency.

Core message points:

1. **Despite strong bipartisan support and decades of evidence that MIECHV-funded home visiting programs work, Congress let MIECHV expire.** We are deeply disappointed that congressional inaction led to even a small lapse in funding for programs children and families across the country have come to rely on. We will keep the pressure on Congress until they get the job done.
2. **States do not have the money on hand to make-up for Congress' inaction.** Nearly half of states are facing a budget shortfall this year. Because state budgets must reflect the money in their coffers, they will have no choice but to put contracts with local service providers on hold. This will result in providers freezing enrollment of new families and ending the recruitment and training of home visitors. Current home visitors, worried about long-term job security, may begin to look for new jobs.
3. **Children and families across the country are counting on Congress to reauthorize MIECHV quickly.** Every day Congress waits to reauthorize MIECHV is a day closer to local home visiting programs shutting down, home visitors losing or leaving their jobs, and families losing home visiting services. And once the home visitor-family relationships at the heart of home visiting – the very relationships that make it so successful – are lost, the damage will be irreversible. They will have lost trained, effective staff; missed key opportunities to help new families; and potentially even interrupted services to existing families, leaving them in a lurch.

Talking points:

What has happened

- **Since its inception, MIECHV has been strongly supported by members of Congress on both sides of the aisle**, because it produces real results for children and families, including improved birth and health outcomes, parenting skills, greater early childhood learning opportunities and increased workforce participation by parents.
- **On Sept. 30, Congress let MIECHV expire.** Although both the House and the Senate introduced measures to reauthorize MIECHV, they kicked the can down the road until it was no longer possible to meet the funding deadline.

What comes next

- **Congress must pass bipartisan legislation that reauthorizes MIECHV, preserving the flexibility and stability states need, and protects the benefits children and families rely on.** The best path forward is to pass the Grassley-Menendez legislation in the Senate (S.1829) which reauthorizes MIECHV for five years without requiring states to match federal funds – a provision in the House bill that could actually cause children and families to lose services.
- **The Senate’s MIECHV reauthorization proposal (S. 1829) should be included in any bipartisan legislative package that can be quickly passed through both chambers.** Quick action is the only way to prevent anxiety among families in every state and many tribal communities, and prevent further damage to the home visitor and parent relationships that make the MIECHV program so effective.

Why it matters

- **MIECHV-funded home visiting programs transform communities.** MIECHV-supported home visiting models are primarily evidence-based, which means that they have undergone scientific studies that prove their effectiveness. Proven outcomes of evidence-based home visiting include improvements in prenatal care and birth weight; early childhood health and development; school readiness; parenting practices; and economic stability. Additional outcomes include reducing child abuse, neglect and injuries; juvenile delinquency and crime; and prolonged dependence on public assistance.
- **MIECHV-funded programs can help stem the tide of the opioid crisis.** Pregnancy and childbirth are among the moments when people struggling with addiction are most likely to seek help to get off drugs and stay off them. Home visitors help pregnant moms get on track and stay on track for healthy pregnancies, ensuring they get prenatal care that can make all the difference in the health of their babies.
- **MIECHV-funded programs help families recover from trauma.** Home visiting helps parents, often in difficult circumstance or after trauma, be the best parents they can be. As pockets of the country are starting on the path to recovery and healing following Hurricanes Harvey, Irma

and Maria and the horrific shooting in Las Vegas, the support parents receive from home visiting that help them feel safe and secure are more important than ever.

- **MIECHV-funded programs make financial sense.** For every tax dollar spent on home visits, as much as \$5.70 is returned to the community. Federally-funded MIECHV programs are proven to increase healthy births and childhoods, while also decreasing juvenile delinquency and crime and prolonged dependence on public assistance.