

Share Your Story...

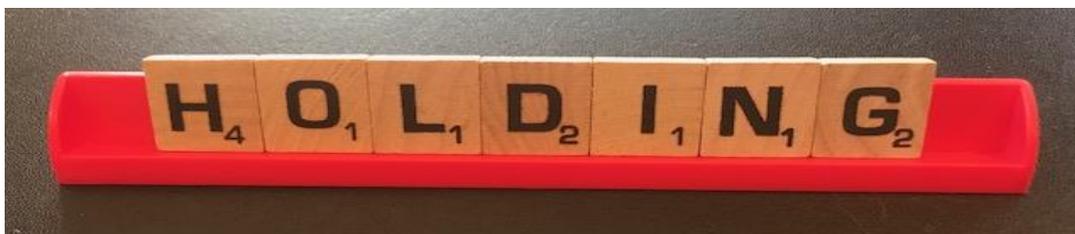
Illinois Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Development Home Visiting Program

Home visiting has a demonstrated track record of improving infant and maternal health outcomes. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, it is providing a critical way to engage children and families who are especially vulnerable during this time. Home visitors are on the front lines in supporting families by going above and beyond to quickly adapt and find creative ways to meet the basic needs of children and families.

Through its “Share Your Story” initiative, the Illinois Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program in the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development has provided an opportunity for home visitors to share on-the-ground stories of their experiences, including the bright spots as well as challenges. The focus of these stories is to bring attention to the amazing work they do, to share what has been working in serving families, and to illustrate how home visitors can be supported to continue carrying out their work.

On “Holding”

This profile was prepared by Delreen Schmidt-Lenz, Statewide Consultation Coordinator/Project Lead of MIECHV Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

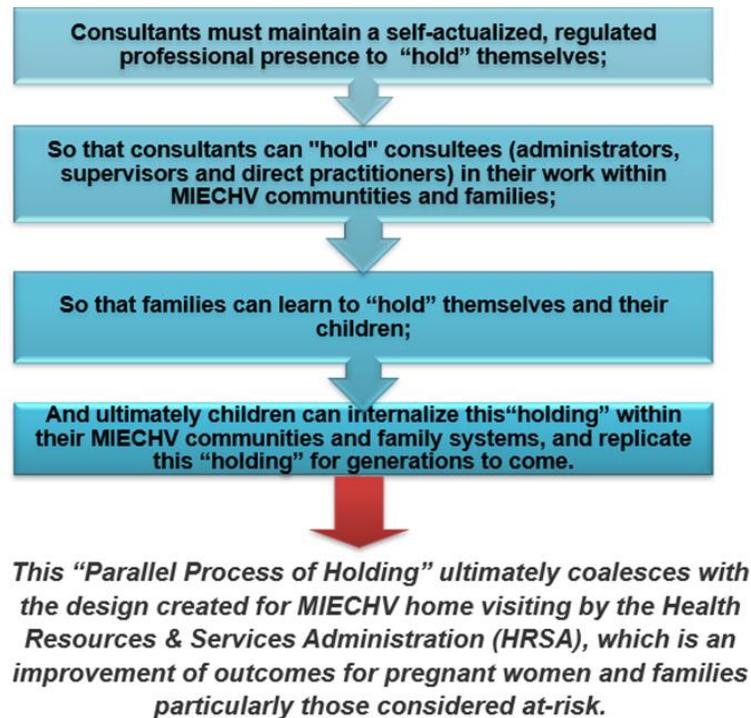


Throughout my life, the word “hold” has had a myriad of meanings to me. I think of holding my sweet dog; holding my niece and four nephews when they were babies; holding my Grandpa Schmidt’s hand as a child; and even accidentally holding a stranger’s hand (instead of my husband’s) walking out of a dark movie theater a few years ago!

I also think of the word “hold” in a different way when I speak about relationships and interactions with one another. In this context, “hold” becomes less concrete, and more about describing a felt experience. I use this version of “hold” in the realm of connectedness and attunement to others, and have recognized the importance of this from Linda Gilkerson, PhD, in her work creating the [FAN—Facilitating Attuned Interactions](#).

“Holding” MIECHV Professionals During COVID-19 Pandemic

In her role, Delreen Schmidt-Lenz was recently asked to describe the impact of mental health consultation. After much thought, she responded by explaining the parallel process of holding, described in the visual that follows:



The MIECHV Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants are the most dedicated, compassionate professionals I have had the pleasure of working with in my 25-year career.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they have spent countless hours “being with” MIECHV supervisors, home visitors, doulas, and coordinated intake workers through the ups, downs, and rapid, significant adjustments to the world we all knew. Their commitment has been to “hold” the vast array of feelings, stressors and realities the MIECHV professionals have experienced, while the MIECHV professionals have tirelessly and diligently “held” the feelings, stressors and realities that families have experienced.

In the flurry of emails...and trainings...and resources...and webinars—all of which have been so very important but at times perhaps a bit overwhelming—the consultants have recognized the importance of maintaining a space for MIECHV professionals to slow down, feel validated, and yes, be “held.”

I have had the privilege to participate in bi-weekly HV-CI Supervisor Support Office Hours via video that have been organized and facilitated by Lesley Schwartz and Michelle Esquivel during the pandemic. Over the years, I have had participated in calls and meetings with Lesley, Michelle and the MIECHV supervisors, but I recognized during the last video call that I was witnessing a special and powerful “holding experience.” Lesley and Michelle have been phenomenally open to listening, supporting and “being with” the MIECHV HV-CI supervisors, and in turn the MIECHV supervisors have clearly felt this genuine gesture, and have demonstrated their commitment to supporting and validating their MIECHV staff.

During this very unprecedented experience in our lives, I have been awestruck by each and every one of you in your dedication to genuinely hold one another. It gives me hope that children for generations to come will also feel ‘held’.

Appreciation

Delreen and the MIECHV team would like to acknowledge the team of MIECHV IMH Consultants....

*Theresa Atchley | Tanya Blackshear | Teri Burrows | Courtney Clark | Jake Jacob | Tammy Livingston
Tajuana Rice | Maria Roman | Zully Vock*

It is a privilege to know them and work with them.

“Being with” and connecting with others can be described as such—‘Sharing the experience with no attempt to change what the person is doing or believing’.”

Stern. 1985;148 (Core training on Facilitating Attuned Interactions)

I/ECMHC Overview

The goal of Illinois’ Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) is to increase the capacity of home visiting programs to identify and address the mental health needs of young children and families, and to instill reflective practices into their organizational culture. It is a multi-level preventative intervention that aligns mental health professionals with home visitors and supervisors.

The Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership provides I/ECMHC, along with training/technical assistance, to a variety of home visiting programs throughout Illinois—funded by MIECHV and other sources.

