

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.

Stephenson County Health Department

Stephenson County Health Department (SCHD) family support worker, Kimberly Stahl, experienced some changes and concerns during the initial phase of the stay-at-home order. These changes—mostly related to conducting home visits virtually—directly impacted her work with program participants. She shared, “In some instances body language is important—a hug between a parent and child can convey a sense of comfort—and it ‘normalizes well.’” She further explained, “Sometimes this can be done verbally or through a video and sometimes you need to be there.”

During this time, Kimberly has talked with every client to ask if they felt the need to meet (virtually) weekly regardless of the level of services or support needed. She asked each family what she can do to ensure that each visit will feel like a regular in-person visit and—as a result—has applied their input. This has allowed her to help them to feel like a part of the solution.

Kimberly and others in the SCHD have noted that it has been very time consuming to make new activities to keep families busy and engaged. She also mentioned that it is challenging to focus on work and give 100% while helping children at home with schoolwork.

The SCHD team misses sharing an office, being able to see each other, and talking to co-workers in-person. Even then, Kimberly encourages her colleagues and others to “think outside of the box, involve the client in what works, and be creative.”

Agency Mission

The mission of the Stephenson County Health Department is to ensure that parents are connected to all the services they need, as early as possible, so that their children will enter school ready to learn.

"As parents, we all want our kids to have the best. The SCHD igrow home visiting program provides the tools and information needed to help children succeed in school and life."

