

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.

District 118 igrow H.O.M.E Program

The District 118 igrow H.O.M.E Program is located in Danville. Program staff note that it has been a very interesting time while Parent Educators at D118 have risen above the challenges and stayed positive during the COVID-19 learning curve.

“The staff have done a fabulous job staying connected to the families in our community and we have even gotten a very good response rate on our end of the year surveys, which we all know is difficult in ordinary times,” said Brandye Kizer, EdM, Lead Early Childhood Coordinator, Birth-3 igrow Program.



The D118 Parent Educators have been reaching out to families via phone, virtual visits and text messages on a weekly to biweekly basis. Several Parent Educators have implemented a private Facebook group with just their families so the families can still communicate with each other in a “safe” manner. The group is also used for providing fun videos—even some goofy Parent Educator videos—and activities for families to view.

The program staff feel incredibly fortunate to be able to use extra funds to purchase items such as formula and food for families that have had a negative impact due to COVID-19. The school district has been offering food distribution weekly for families who reside in the same community, and they have included the district’s Birth-3 families in this food distribution. Brandye stated, “This has been such a valuable resource for our families who struggle with food insecurity and they are very grateful for the weekly packages that many parent educators have been delivering weekly since March.”

The Danville District 118 igrow team is disappointed to not be able to do all the fun summer activities they had planned

like weekly pool days, the Balloon Classic and the Bubble Day at the Park, but they continue to provide the families with activities to keep them busy and learning throughout the spring and now summer. The families have already received three different packets of activities that have included sidewalk chalk, Play-Doh, finger paints, pretend food, crayons and paper, stickers, books, recipes to make their own finger paints and moon dough, and activities to build fine motor, language and cognitive skills.

D118 Parent Educators have encouraged families to reach out for any needs they have as Parent Educators want them to feel just as supported even if they cannot meet in-person.

Brandye encourages her colleagues to deeply reflect on their own self-care during this time. She shares that experience has been very overwhelming and exhausting on so many levels and taking the time to take care of oneself is extremely important, especially with trying to balance so many new routines at home.

Agency Mission

The H.O.M.E. Program is for families with children Birth-3 in age. The program provides opportunities for young parents to gain access to recent research using the national Parents as Teachers (PAT) curriculum within the comfort and security of their home.

The Parent Educator meets with the family on a regular scheduled basis to introduce parents and to child age appropriate PAT materials and activities that will support and nurture the further development of the infant or toddler.

“This is a new learning curve for all of us but I see so many great and positive things that can come out of this, if we really take the time to look at what can be taken away from this experience and used in the future to better serve our families and community!”

“We hope everyone enjoys their summer and takes time to relax and enjoy.”

