Introduction

Programs have diverse interpretations of Early Head Start (EHS) home visiting purposes, resulting in lack of a consistent evidence based model (Petkus, 2015). Research on home visiting has blossomed, but some question the effectiveness of existing approaches and minimal results (Gomby et al., 1999). More recently, researchers have focused on the quantity and quality of home visits (Raikes et al., 2006; Roggman et al., 2008) to suggest the essential components that promote positive family outcomes. We suggest that alignment with the strengths-based family life education (FLE) methodology (prevention, education, collaboration) and/or Certified Family Life Educators (CFLE) as home visitors, would bring more consistency to this important component to EHS services. We sought to identify perspectives about this model from the perspectives of CFLEs, Family Scientists, and Early Childhood Professionals.

FLE Model

We designed a questionnaire that contained 23-items including demographic (see Table 1) and six open-ended questions (e.g., To what extent does FLE prepare EHS home visitors?). The survey was electronically administered. Qualitative data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Sandelowski, 2000) and “analyst triangulation” (Patton, 2002, p. 560). The authors coded the data separately then met as a group to discuss and finalize the major coding themes.

Results

We collected data from 123 participants. Eighty-two participants agreed that FLE could be a model for EHS home visiting, while 72 participants thought training in FLE prepares an individual to be a home visitor. Despite this agreement, participants were almost split with 59 participants stating yes that CFLE could be an educational requirement. One percent disagreed and 17% expressed uncertainty that FLE could be a model for EHS home visiting. About one fourth of participants said that training in FLE prepares an individual to be a home visitor while 2% said that it does not.

Participants

Gender Identity: Female (94.3%), Male (7%)

Highest Level of Education: Associate’s degree (1.6%), Bachelor’s degree (29.3%), Master’s degree (30.9%), Doctoral degree (35.8%), Other (2.4)

Age: Mean age 46.51, Standard deviation 14.68, Range 22 – 81

Family Life Education and Early Head Start

Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE): Yes (73.2%), No (26.8%)

Familiar with CFLE: Yes (78.8%), No (21.2%)

Familiar with EHS home visits: Yes (77%), No (23%)

Conclusion

This project is the first step to explore evidence in regards to the proposed integration of FLE and EHS home visiting. These findings will help stakeholders start to seriously explore this approach as well as prompt future research on how to further develop and refine this FLE model.

Method

Findings

Theme (Benefits) | Thematic Elements | Representative Quote
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FLE Model is Beneficial | 0 FLE content areas are beneficial | “...well-trained professionals who understand and know how to work with families. A CFLE has a broad based training in several areas of family education, so they can guide parents and provide good tips and counsels for the families.”

FLE is relevant educational training for home visiting | 0 FLE provides relevant training for home visiting | “My family life education training prepared me to help families learn within their homes and to help them improve their parenting skills, through home-based visits.”

FLE is a step to professionalization of EHS home visiting | 0 FLE would provide consistency in training and approach | “FLE is an ecological approach, and as such, fits well with HS’s focus on improving the system of the family to help the child. Additionally, unlike parent education only, a FLE can help families with all family life issues.”

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Note: Additional findings from this study will be presented at SRCD in Austin, TX.