

# Encourage Home Visiting Expansion That Fits Your Community

## Our “Why”

Home visiting stakeholders, advocates and providers often ask questions like: “What’s a home visiting continuum and why do you need one?”, “What are the elements of a home visiting continuum, or an expanded home visiting system?”, and “Who has been successful in building a home visiting continuum?” In response to these and similar questions, we hope this home visiting expansion infographic and companion resources will:

- Help you envision home visiting expansion in your state or community
- Offer avenues of reflection and inquiry that help you determine next steps in your continuum building journey
- Ensure your home visiting system centers equity, and community voice
- Provide other resources for deeper exploration and support for action
- Inspire, motivate and build enthusiasm for home visiting expansion and system development

## What is your continuum why?

What a home visiting continuum usually aims to accomplish is to strategically increase accessibility for families and improve the effectiveness of home visiting services by meeting a range of family characteristics, needs and desires. It moves services beyond a “one size fits all” approach, offering choice for families, and an opportunity to support a range of interventions that address different outcomes. We are also learning more and more about what programs work best for whom ([precision home visiting](#)). This emerging research offers a new opportunity to customize a home visiting continuum that is well-matched to needs and desires of your own community.



Home visiting expansion should also consider system development. Often, we see the great need for services in a community or see a funding opportunity and react by quickly implementing a program. The whole concept of system development and the idea of a continuum can be an antidote to this patchwork and often disconnected approach to building community resources. If you can engage in a strategic and thoughtful expansion process, you are more likely to build a cohesive and effective system. In addition, being intentional about how and where to expand services can increase the equity in your home visiting system. The federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program has supported research to help us understand different aspects of home visiting system development. You can learn more by exploring the [Home Visiting Applied Research Collaborative's Peer Reviewed Publications](#).

Ideally, building a home visiting continuum or any effort to expand home visiting will be a collaborative, highly inclusive and comprehensive endeavor, so getting clear about the shared motivation to engage in this effort is important. It's something that can carry a group through navigating different perspectives and help everyone persevere when the process takes longer than we wish. It helps keep our passion for this work alive!

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## *Defining home visiting*

The National Home Visiting Resource Center describes home visiting as “a service delivery strategy that connects expectant parents and parents of young children with a designated support person – typically a trained nurse, social worker, or early childhood specialist. Services are voluntary and provided in the family’s home or at a location of their choice.” Another definition from the National Conference of State Legislatures is: “Home visiting is a prevention strategy used to support pregnant moms and new parents to promote infant and child health, foster educational development and school readiness, and help prevent child abuse and neglect.” Others define home visiting in similar ways but nuances in definition can have impacts, especially when determining if a specific program or model fits within your definition. Despite clear and thoughtful definitions, when it comes to expanding services, and



building out a continuum, there are often unexpected questions and considerations.

For example, determining whether a specific program or model fits within your home visiting definition may mean grappling with your state's or community's expectations about a model's evidence, age of the target child, or level of family need. In the context of developing a home visiting continuum, determining, and articulating your specific criteria for programs or models to include is important. An existing definition of home visiting or established criteria might help you do this, so if your state – or community- has defined home visiting be sure to reference that definition. [Washington State](#) and [Michigan](#) provide examples of home visiting definitions. It's also important, right from the start, to consider the role home visiting plays in the broader early child/family support system and how that expectation can inform your definition.

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## ***Describing a home visiting continuum (be creative!)***

Once you have a clear understanding of the reasons and motivations behind your expansion effort, you can articulate your vision. There are many different ways to describe the array of home visiting services you have and want to build for your community. How you describe your particular set of services is often informed by your home visiting definition and other factors that are important to your community. A clear image of your vision can help stakeholders and families understand the differences between home visiting programs.

The concept of a continuum can be used to convey a vision for a range of home visiting services. A continuum imagines services defined along progressive criteria, for example child age or service intensity.

Another way to describe a set of home visiting services is through an organized but non-linear service array. This arrangement might reference numerous factors. For example:

- A map defined by geographic reach and age of the child.
- A quilt - implying everything (or everyone) is covered.
- A river - prevention to intervention with branches for specific demographics or needs.
- A link - to needed services and supports.

There are other components you can consider including in your home visiting continuum. Adjunct and supportive systems like a centralized intake, infant mental health consultation or a unified data system may be helpful to include. Adjunct services are any components that support multiple home visiting services and models.

Many communities have early childhood system or other system efforts in place. If this is true for you, it may also be helpful to describe how your home visiting continuum fits in the larger system picture. In this case, you may want to include complementary services such as services for homeless families, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), or infant and early childhood mental health services. By including complementary services you can demonstrate the relationships that are currently linked to existing home visiting services or emphasize relationships you want to develop. Considering how funding streams are coordinated, braided or blended may also help determine other services to include or how your system is constructed.

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### ***Remember: how you are approaching this work is as important as what you are doing***

There is not a single way to expand home visiting. We're encouraging you to approach expansion with intention and a meaningful, equitable process.

Ensure a collaborative process. To begin designing or expanding your home visiting service continuum, consider a deliberate approach to collaboration. Home visiting expansion is often initiated as a top-down approach, with funders, administrators and government entities making decisions about which programs will be implemented. Do better! Make sure your process incorporates sharing decision making power with providers and families.

We know that system building is complex and that even coordination of services is challenging. Developing the shared vision of your continuum is critical, and the substantial, collaborative work required will mean working through divergent perspectives.

Expanding your home visiting services is an iterative process. Moving away from linear growth ideas and accepting the truth that our systems are constantly changing is important. Aim to do the best you can with where you are right now and know that revisiting and revisioning will be needed.

Asking some or all of these [key questions](#) can clarify and further your efforts.

And these [video clips](#) can inspire and motivate you for what's possible!



**If you are interested in getting more support for your collaborative home visiting expansion work,**

**Contact the ZERO TO THREE State Policy Team**

Visit our [home visiting expansion video library](#) to hear advocates share about expansion efforts in their states.

### Helpful Links:

- [Home Visiting Continuum Infographic](#)
- [Home Visiting Key Questions](#)

