



Starting Strong: Onboarding a New LIA

Running a MIECHV-supported home visiting program is complex. To succeed, local implementing agencies (LIAs) need a great deal of support and information—both initially and over time. The content of these supports will vary depending on the experience and capacity of each LIA—for example, whether they currently run other home visiting programs and/or have experience implementing federal grant-funded programs. But there are general supports that all new LIAs need to be successful.

[Best Practices for Onboarding New MIECHV Employees: A Toolkit](#) defines onboarding as “a systematic process designed to cultivate a long-term relationship between the new staff member and the organization.” Organizations taking on new programs also need onboarding if they are to succeed over the long run. This resource is designed to help awardees develop practical and sustainable onboarding approaches that ensure that new LIAs have the capacity and systems in place to meet their deliverables, provide services in ways that align with MIECHV priorities, and have the support they need to become effective home visiting providers.



**Visit the MIECHV Program
website to learn more!**

The strategies described in this resource are appropriate for awardees who do not yet have processes in place for onboarding new LIAs or want to review existing processes. Awardees should tailor the general guidance provided here to their own contexts and structures (e.g., number of models the state/territory implements).

Also note that this resource focuses on what happens *after* a new LIA has been selected. Awardees interested in information about identifying and selecting LIAs, including developing requests for proposal or letters of interest and developing scoring criteria, are encouraged to review the TARC resource, [*Preparing for Success: The Awardee Role in Identifying and Supporting Local Community Agencies to Provide MIECHV Services.*](#)

Onboarding Strategies

The strategies presented below can help awardees develop systematic onboarding processes to support new LIAs. These strategies are grouped by phase: Setting the Stage, Initial Outreach and Kickoff, and Ongoing Technical Assistance and Support.

Setting the Stage

Having a plan in place *before* a new LIA is brought on is key to ensuring a smooth onboarding process. Awardees who have waited until they experienced the need for onboarding have reported that they've found it difficult to develop effective processes in a timely manner. Some important tasks to complete at the beginning of the onboarding process include the following:

- **Convene an onboarding team.** The team should include staff with in-depth knowledge of MIECHV and experience working with LIAs. Convening this team is an important step in creating a process that speaks to the needs of LIAs. Potential members include a representative from the awardee leadership team; staff who provide technical assistance (TA) and support to LIAs; staff responsible for reviewing awardee data and LIA contracts or agreements; an experienced peer LIA agency representative; and, if applicable,



a parent leader working at the awardee level. A designated lead should work with the team to develop onboarding content, a timeline for sharing this content, and processes for doing so.

- **Develop clear benchmarks for onboarding success.** These should reflect what “successful integration” should look like. Make sure the benchmarks are measurable and include key milestones. Be as specific as possible. For example, include criteria for a successful data report or a sound home visitor onboarding process, rather than just indicating that those activities should be completed.
- **Compile onboarding materials.** These should include documents that will be shared with LIAs right away (in an onboarding packet) as well as materials that will be introduced over time. When determining what to share, consider LIA capacity to absorb information; also plan on going back to previously introduced materials, as needed. Recommended onboarding materials include the following:
 - » State-developed program manuals or other guidance, if available: For example, Maine developed a program manager guidebook for LIA program managers (see Appendix A for the guidebook’s table of contents)
 - » Relevant excerpts from the MIECHV orientation and onboarding materials
 - » Recent federal guidance or materials from the TARC that are critical to first-year success (examples include [Engaging Families in Home Visiting: A Look at the Latest Research](#) and [Professional Development in Home Visiting: What to Do Before, During, and After the Training](#))
 - » Description of the home visiting program for LIAs to share with potential partner agencies and organizations
- **Consider developing a program guide for both new and continuing LIAs.** Topics may include: a brief history of home visiting in the awardee’s state or territory; structure and role of the awardee organization; information about the MIECHV Program, including information about required performance measures and CQI; other home visiting programs supported by the state/territory; home visiting model information; contract information, including reporting and meeting attendance requirements; onboarding processes for staff; and guidance on developing referral networks.



Initial Outreach and Kickoff

Soon after selection, the designated lead for onboarding should send out an introductory email to the new LIA that describes what to expect from the onboarding process and presents potential dates and times for an initial kickoff meeting—ideally within the first month after selection. It is also helpful to include an onboarding packet with this initial communication.

The kickoff should lay the groundwork for how the awardee and LIA will continue to interact over the course of their contract. If feasible and affordable, try to hold the kickoff in person, as in-person meetings tend to allow for more genuine connection.

Recommended topics to address during the kickoff meeting include the following:

- Review of the onboarding packet
- Information on MIECHV and the state/territory's approach to home visiting (with a focus on both what the approach is and how it is implemented)
- Federal funding requirements and processes for addressing them
- Overview of what to expect during the first year, including key milestones, metrics for performance, and due dates
- Overview of how and when various materials, topics, and requirements will be covered throughout the year, and where to go for support when questions arise
- Information on opportunities for TA and peer support (if available)

During the meeting, allow ample time for LIA staff to ask questions and express any initial concerns about any program requirements or expectations.

Who Should Participate?

Participation in the initial onboarding meeting will vary by state or territory. At a minimum, participants should include the LIA program manager and other key LIA staff (for example, those responsible for fiscal reporting and data management and reporting). Also consider including model representatives, someone from an experienced LIA who could possibly serve as an LIA mentor, and a family leader who has been active in state or local home visiting programs.

Establishing a Regular Meeting Schedule

One of the key goals of the kickoff should be to establish a regular meeting schedule for continued onboarding. Frequency will vary depending on factors such as awardee and LIA capacity and level of support provided by model developers. Consider holding more frequent check-ins initially, then fewer over time. For example, Florida initially scheduled weekly meetings with its new LIAs, then reduced the frequency as the LIAs mastered requirements and had fewer questions.

Ongoing Technical Assistance and Support

Continued support throughout the first year helps to ensure that LIAs receive the real-time guidance and clarification needed to successfully meet all contracting deliverables, make informed decisions, and provide quality services. Related activities include the following:

- **Hold regular meetings.** Regular meetings that include both awardee and LIA leadership are important for building relationships, providing just-in-time support, and addressing identified problems before they grow. Participation can vary depending on agenda priorities but should always include both the awardee and LIA team leads. To increase utility, invite LIAs to help shape meeting agendas based on their questions and needs. Whenever possible, try to align meeting dates with the schedule established during the kickoff meeting.
- **Address issues as they arise.** Careful monitoring during the first year can help uncover issues that can be addressed during regular meetings or through ad hoc training sessions with staff. But ongoing support shouldn't be limited to scheduled meetings. Encourage LIA leadership to reach out with questions, and make sure they know who to contact about what. Also make sure that designated awardee staff members know to expect these calls and to respond in a timely fashion.
- **Support LIA onboarding of their own staff.** Awardees can play an important role in helping to ensure that LIA staff have the knowledge and skills they need to effectively implement home visiting programs. For example, to reinforce the importance of accountability in reporting, Florida's awardee provided a series of trainings on data and reporting to staff hired by a new LIA. When appropriate, staff onboarding can be provided in collaboration with model developers. Awardees can also support LIA leadership in developing their own staff onboarding approaches.
- **Facilitate connections between new and experienced LIAs.** For example, awardees should make sure to include new LIAs in all regularly scheduled "all-LIA" meetings and dedicate time to introducing new LIA staff during these meetings. Awardees can also connect new LIAs with more seasoned ones. For example, Maine's awardee connects new LIA program managers with peers who work in similar communities, serve similar populations, or implement the same model. These informal mentoring opportunities provide LIAs the opportunity to learn from their peers as well as from the awardee agency.



Example from the Field

Maine puts new program managers and all technical staff through a "core training" that aligns with a similar training that their home visitors complete. This helps to ensure that everyone is familiar with the service delivery side of the program.



Example from the Field

To encourage peer connections and learning, Florida introduced its new LIAs to other LIAs that used the same model. A result of this connection is that one of the new LIAs contracted with consultants from the peer LIAs to help them implement their shared model.

- **Celebrate success!** Acknowledging and celebrating new LIA successes should be a standard part of year-one onboarding—and beyond! Recognition can range from “shout-outs” during all-LIA meetings to certificates or small gifts for achieving milestones. Marking milestones also serves as an opportunity to support and engage all LIAs in program improvement activities. For example, an all-LIA meeting that includes a celebration of a new LIA’s successful completion of data collection can segue into a broader conversation about data collection in general and ideas for improving future data collection processes.

Foundational Topics for New LIAs

There is a lot for LIAs to learn about during their first year. Table 1, below, presents a list of foundational topic areas, suggested delivery modalities, and related TA resources for awardees to use as source material to support LIA learning.

Table 1: MIECHV Foundational Topics and TA Resources

Foundational Topic Area	Modalities for Addressing	Related TA Resources
MIECHV philosophy/ approach	Kickoff meeting, award-ee program guide	• MIECHV Program (website)
Use of evidence-based models	Kickoff meeting, award-ee program guide	• Models Eligible for MIECHV Funding (website)
Referral relationships	Kickoff meeting, on-going TA meetings, awardee program guide, training session with key LIA staff, peer support	• Preparing for Success: The Awardee Role in Identifying and Supporting Local Community Agencies to Provide MIECHV Services (brief) • Supporting Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Their Children—The Role of Home Visitors (particularly “Partnering with IPV Organizations” section) (TARC newsletter, May 9, 2023) • Supporting Parents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (QuickLearn) • Supporting Families Who are Experiencing Homelessness (brief) • Addressing Caregiver Depression (TARC newsletter, July 27, 2022)

Foundational Topic Area	Modalities for Addressing	Related TA Resources
Data collection and improvement	Kickoff meeting (overview), ongoing TA meetings, awardee program guide, training session with key LIA staff (consider including other LIAs for peer support)	• CQI toolkit modules
Budgeting allowable expenses and payment processes	Kickoff meeting (overview), training session with key LIA staff (details), awardee program guide	• Best Practices for Developing and Documenting MIECHV Award Fiscal Policies and Procedures (brief) • What Do We Mean by Adequate Documentation? (brief)
Staff development	Kickoff meeting (overview), routinely include in agenda for ongoing TA meetings after kick-off, peer support	• Best Practices for Onboarding New MIECHV Employees: A Toolkit • Professional Development in Home Visiting: What to Do Before, During, and After the Training (brief) • Finding an Infant and Early-Childhood Mental Health Consultant to Support Your Home Visiting Program (brief) • Prioritizing Joy as a Staff Retention Strategy in Virginia (podcast)
Family engagement/ leadership strategies	Kickoff meeting (overview), include as a topic in one of the ongoing TA support meetings	• Meaningful Parent Leadership from the Ground Up (brief) • Elevating Parent Voice in Home Visiting: Preparing for Authentic Parent Partnerships (brief) • Making MIECHV More Father-Friendly (webinar) • Engaging Families in Home Visiting: A Look at the Latest Research (webinar)
Contract oversight and support	Kickoff meeting (overview), awardee program guide, subrecipient monitoring plan	• Risk-Based Subrecipient Monitoring: A Strategic Approach (brief)

Conclusion

Bringing on new LIAs is common practice for most awardees, yet many still scramble anew each time they are tasked with doing so. Preparing a general plan that can be fleshed out or amended over time can go a long way toward ensuring that new LIAs receive the initial and ongoing supports they need to be successful. Onboarding materials such as program manuals can also serve the dual purpose of supporting current LIAs who may be experiencing staff turnover. Taking time to develop a plan for a new LIA before you need to can strengthen your program and ensure you are prepared when you need to bring on a new LIA.



Appendix A: Table of Contents from Maine’s Program Manager Guidebook for LIAs



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This document was prepared for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), by Education Development Center, under HRSA contract number 75R60219D00040/75R60220F34001.