

2022 MIECHV STAFF SURVEY REPORT

Home Visiting Workforce: Burnout, Stressors, & Supports

THE SURVEY

The MIECHV Staff Survey is conducted each year by the Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Early Childhood, Bureau of Home Visiting (IDHS-DEC-BHV). The goals of the survey are to obtain feedback and better understand the needs of the Illinois MIECHV Home Visiting workforce. In 2022, 77 out of 116 MIECHV staff members responded to the survey, a 66% response rate. To learn more about Illinois MIECHV, including the communities served and benchmark achievements, see the [Illinois MIECHV Statewide Annual Report 2022](#).



BURNOUT AND WORK STRESS

Home visitor professional well-being includes areas such as job satisfaction, psychological well-being, job meaning and fulfillment, and self-efficacy and confidence (Sparr, M., Johnson, H., & Quigley Clark, M., 2022. Professional-Well-Being-HV). While promoting these factors is important, it is equally important to proactively address feelings of stress that often occur among professionals that service at-risk families. Factors like stress and burnout deplete or interfere with professional well-being. Therefore, it is essential to track, understand, and respond with resources and supports.

Burnout

- Survey participants responded to a single-item burnout measure of emotional exhaustion (Maslach, MBI-EE). In FY 2022, 1 in 4 members (26%) of the MIECHV home visiting workforce indicated some symptoms of burnout (i.e., "I am definitely burning out," "the symptoms of burnout won't go away," or "I feel completely burned out"). Compared to FY 2020 and FY 2021, this represents a slight increase in burnout levels. The responses to this question are charted below.

I enjoy my work. I have no symptoms of burnout.



Occasionally I am under stress, and I don't always have as much energy as I once did, but I don't feel burned out.



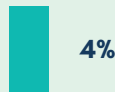
I am definitely burning out, and I have one or more symptoms of burnout such as physical and emotional exhaustion.



The symptoms of burnout that I'm experiencing won't go away. I think about frustration at work very often.



I feel completely burned out and often wonder if I can go on. I am at the point where I may need some changes or may need to seek some sort of help.



BURNOUT AND WORK STRESS (cont.)

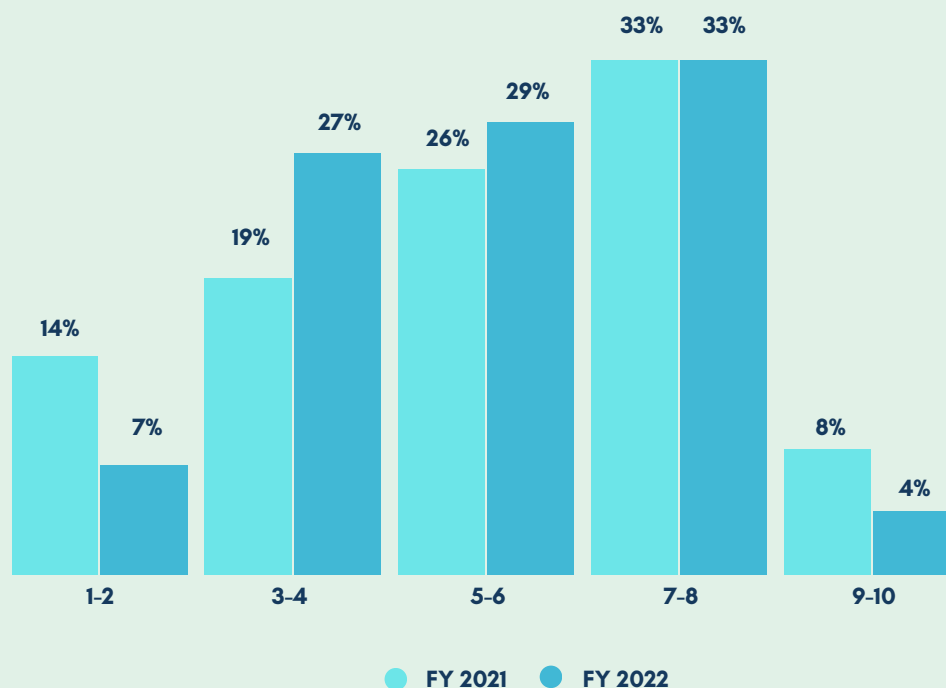
2020: 19% some symptoms of burnout
2021: 19% some symptoms of burnout
2022: 26% some symptoms of burnout

- Home visitors are more likely to experience feelings of burnout and in fact are the only ones who chose the statements “the symptoms of burnout that I’m experiencing won’t go away. I think about frustration at work very often” and “I feel completely burned out and often wonder if I can go on. I am at the point where I may need some changes or may need to seek some sort of help.” Since the turnover rate for home visitors this year was 31% and the number one reason for leaving their positions was burnout, some likely felt burnout during the past year and opted to resign. It will be important to provide resources to address burnout to tackle this challenge before staff leave.
- The newest people to join the home visiting workforce (one year or less) reported the lowest feelings of burnout.

Work Stress

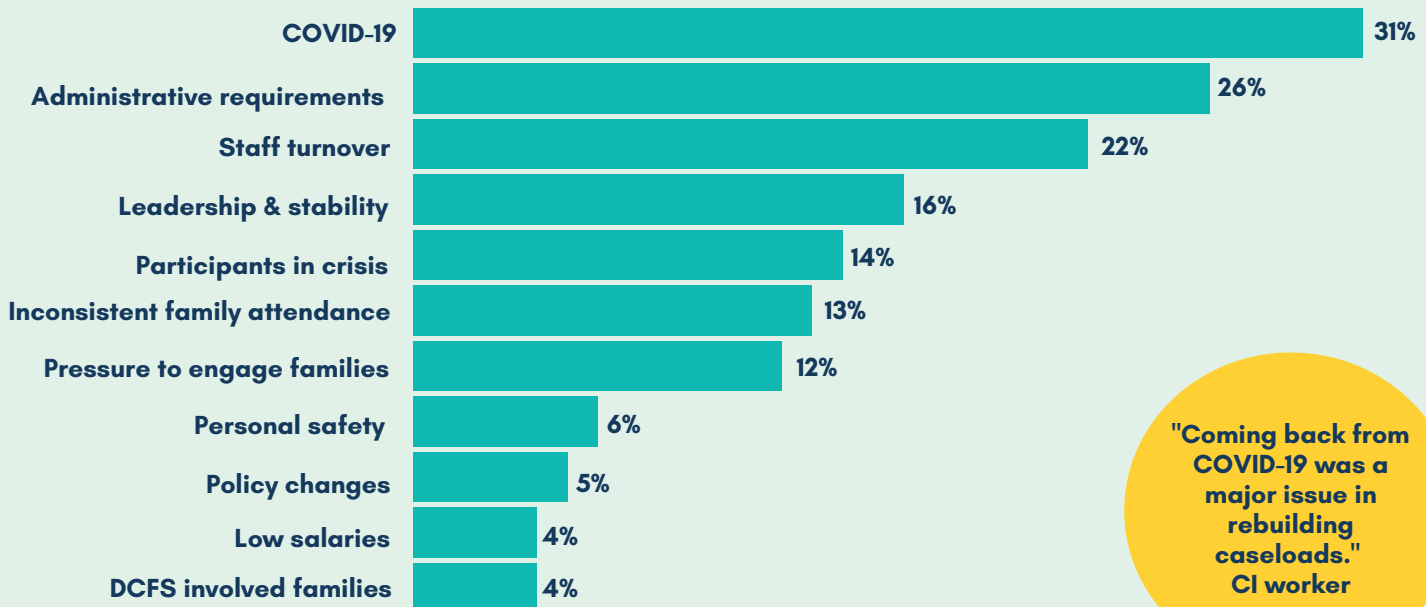
- Survey participants were asked to rate the stress they experience at their workplace. More than a third (37%) of the home visiting workforce rated their stress level as “7” or higher on a scale of 1 to 10, with “1” being lowest (not at all stressed) and “10” being highest (extremely stressed). This represents a similar rating as in FY 2021, which was 41%. Although stress rates were similar across roles, home visitors were the only ones who indicated their stress level was at 9 or 10. The responses to this question are charted below, with light blue (■) representing FY 2021 and dark blue (■) representing FY 2022.

Of all MIECHV staff, only 4% of home visitors ranked their stress at the highest levels of 9 or 10 in FY 2022.



BURNOUT AND WORK STRESS (cont.)

Biggest Work Challenges That Cause Stress



- When asked about the biggest work challenges that cause stress, the most common response was related to the COVID-19 pandemic (24 people). 31% of all survey respondents described the continued impact of the pandemic as causing stress for them, with home visitors being most vocal. They described the negative consequences due to staff being ill, families being ill, changes to policies due to restrictions in the community or when doing virtual visits, and not being at the office to take advantage of resources. Another aspect of COVID-19 was inconsistent attendance of families at visits, and the need to re-build caseloads. Additionally, CI workers described difficulties with recruitment due to the limited number of in-person events.

"Not meeting with families on a consistent basis due to the pandemic has been very challenging."

HOME VISITOR

- The second most described work challenge that caused stress was administrative requirements. 26% of all survey respondents (20 people) described lengthy paperwork and administrative requirements. It was stressful, particularly for home visitors, when they fell behind in paperwork, data entry and case notes. Many expressed frustration with paperwork expectations for clients, even when they do not show up for visits or are non-responsive.

BURNOUT AND WORK STRESS (cont.)

"My biggest work challenge is the amount of the data that has to be put into the computer for each family. Plus the number of forms that parents have to complete that have to be updated and stored in binders."

HOME VISITOR

- Another work challenge mentioned by 22% of all survey respondents (17 people) was staff turnover, vacancies, and slow hiring processes. They articulated the impact of staffing issues on their work and stress level. Multiple respondents mentioned turnover, but also the impact of having to take over the exiting person's work and the slow hiring process of four months, eight months, and in one case two years. CI workers experienced profound impact with long vacancies in the communities before CI or CI supervisor positions were filled.
- Other work challenges are related to leadership and stability (16%, 12 people), such as situations where there is new leadership at the agency, lack of stability at the agency, or lack of leadership during times when there are home visitor vacancies were described.
- Feelings of being overwhelmed by families that are experiencing difficult situations or are in crisis also causes stress for the workforce. Fourteen (14%) percent of all survey respondents (11 people) described the challenges of supporting families during times of crisis, trauma, or lack of basic needs being met. Home visitors particularly articulated the strain on them of trying to help families, but not feeling productive with solutions.

"Three home visitors left my team over a four month time period, and the hiring process went very slowly, so I was short-staffed for a number of months."
HOME VISITOR
SUPERVISOR

"It's stressful observing the poverty and struggles of the families I work with, especially with housing, and not having any community resources to assist them."

HOME VISITOR

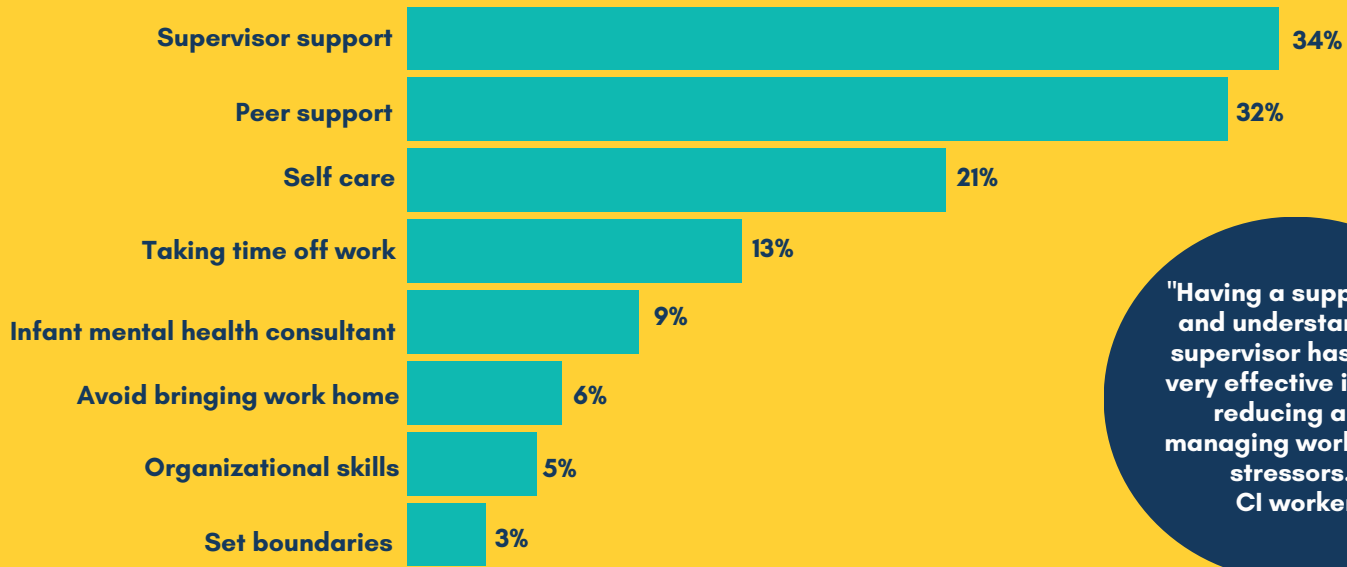
- Finally, 10 or fewer people also mentioned these work challenges: families that are inconsistently attending home visits or not taking action on recommendations for referrals to additional services; pressure to meet caseload requirements or find new ways for outreach when the current ways are not successful; feeling pressure to be available when they are taking a day off/on vacation; worrying about their personal safety while conducting home visits; changes to home visit policies and procedures; low salaries; and working with DCFS-involved families.

For More Reports on the 2022 MIECHV Staff Survey:

- [Parent Engagement & Caseload Capacity Report](#)
- [Professional Development Report](#)
- [Assessing Disparities in Home Visiting Report](#)
- [Home Visiting Workforce: Demographics, Salaries, & Turnover Report](#)
- [Home Visiting Workforce: Burnout, Stressors, & Supports Report](#)

MOST HELPFUL STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING WORK STRESS

Addressing factors that either interfere with or promote home visitor professional well-being will affect outcomes for home visitors, programs, children, and families (Sparr, M., Johnson, H., & Quigley Clark, M., 2022. Professional-Well-Being-HV).



"Having a supportive and understanding supervisor has been very effective in both reducing and managing workplace stressors."
CI worker

- Survey participants were asked to share strategies that help them manage work stress. The two most common strategies noted are having a supportive and understanding supervisor that engages in reflective supervision (26 people) and having a strong peer support network of co-workers (25 people). A third of all survey respondents mentioned both strategies as effective in managing work stress.
- Self-care was an additional strategy that is highly utilized (16 people). The most stated self-care strategy was related to spirituality, such as prayer, mindfulness practice, and meditation. Other helpful strategies include bingeing favorite shows, listening to music, breathing exercises, yoga, and engaging in activities that bring happiness.
- Other strategies for managing work stress include taking time off work, engaging in meetings with Infant Mental Health Consultants, avoiding bringing work home, organizing work to prioritize tasks, and setting boundaries between work life and home life.

"What helped me to de-stress was the home visitor meetings that take place twice a month (Reflective Practice from Start Early). There we talked about the experiences as a home visitor and so I could know that something similar happened to all of us and there we talked about a solution."

HOME VISITOR

SUPPORTS FOR HOME VISITORS

Home visiting is a relationship-based, specialized field requiring a breadth of expertise and emotional resiliency. An array of supports are in place to bolster MIECHV home visitors, CIs and supervisors including a wealth of professional development content through the Start Early training institute, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health consultation, reflective supervision, CPRD TA, CQI and data support, and supervisor and CI group meetings.

"The focus to help staff in any possible way and listening to our feedback (with Visit Tracker or barriers we've encountered) helps me feel valued by MIECHV."

HOME VISITOR

Top 3 reasons why home visitors consider staying

Through all survey years, "Making a difference in the lives of others" and "Variety and flexibility of work" are the top two reasons chosen for staying in the job. "Support from Supervisor/Agency" has usurped the practically undefeated champion through survey years, "Personal commitment to home visiting" as third highest. Respondents also highly endorsed two other statements as reasons they consider staying "Acknowledgement and respect as a professional in the field" (58%) and "MIECHV colleagues in my agency" (58%). All of these are integral in promoting professional well-being in the workplace.



Top 3 reasons why home visitors consider leaving

"Salary" appeared as the top reason that home visitors considered leaving their positions for fiscal years 2014-2021 (mean = 60%). However, in FY 2022, the percentage dropped to 48% and to the second reason for considering leaving (salary floors may have helped). "Burnout" (58%) and "MIECHV requirements for assessments and other data collection," (42%) rounded out the top three reasons home visitors considered leaving their positions in FY 2022.

