



# Voices from the Field: Moving from Conversation to Demonstration

## Introduction

Empowering Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) home visitors through leadership enrichment is not only an ethical imperative but also a strategic investment in building a more equitable and inclusive workforce. The [\*Leadership Pathways for Home Visitors of Color: An Exploration\*](#) project sought to learn directly from home visitors and supervisors of color about the successes, barriers, and strategies that this vital component of the workforce incurs when striving for leadership opportunities in the field. The project was led by two home visitors of color, Clare Williamson (Home Visitor/Parent Educator, Georgetown University Parenting Support Program) and Claudette Kabera (Family Case Manager, Community of Hope) who provided unique perspectives that helped shape the project's process and content. At the work's close, they described the project as a pathway for their own leadership development and an opportunity to recommend actionable change in policy and practice. In this paper, Claudette and Clare describe concrete ideas to move the field “from conversation to demonstration” in advancing BIPOC home visitor leadership pathways.

**CLAUDETTE KABERA**

Family Case Manager, Community of Hope

**COLLEEN MURPHY**

Vice President Early Childhood Community Systems  
Building, Start Early

**CLARE WILLIAMSON**

Home Visitor/Parent Educator, Georgetown University  
Parenting Support Program

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## Recommendations for Home Visiting Programs

### 1. Intentionally recruit BIPOC staff

One meaningful action that home visiting programs can take to increase racial and ethnic diversity in home visiting is to ensure that recruitment efforts actively seek out and attract candidates from diverse backgrounds. Claudette suggested expanding your talent pool through targeted recruitment activities such as partnering with BIPOC serving organizations and by recruiting from high schools, colleges, and technical schools. Program representatives can attend career fairs, be a guest speaker at underrepresented schools, and offer student internships.

### 2. Expand the recruitment pool

Claudette also recommended expanding the recruitment pool to previous home visiting participants. She explained that these are good candidates as they are familiar with home visiting and its benefits.

### 3. Make the application and interview process more equitable

To increase BIPOC representation in home visiting, programs can create and train racially and ethnically diverse interview panels to assess potential candidates without bias which can result in more diverse hires. Programs can also reconsider implementing application screening and job requirements (e.g., higher education degree). Additionally, programs can incentivize participation in recruitment and referral programs by providing benefits, such as compensation.

**“There are change levers at multiple levels that need to be addressed to increase equity for home visitors of color. Home visitors and supervisors are not responsible for solving these issues. Policy makers, funders, and state systems leaders must assume a share of the responsibility for building workforce equity.”**

CLAUDETTE KABERA AND CLARE WILLIAMSON

### 4. Provide training and networking opportunities

Home visiting programs can and should offer training and professional development opportunities to support home visitors of color starting on the first day of employment. For example, both Clare and Claudette emphasized the importance of providing trauma informed care training as part of the onboarding process and yearly professional development focusing on home visiting and early intervention. Home visiting programs can partner with local community

colleges and universities for education opportunities to attain degrees or certifications. Networking opportunities, such as the [National Home Visiting Summit](#), can connect BIPOC staff with peers and mentors.

## 5. Support staff mental health

Claudette said that it is important to give new home visitors a lower caseload for the first two years to avoid overwhelming them. She also recommended that home visiting programs have a trained therapist on staff to address the needs of home visitors. This is especially effective when the therapist also identifies as BIPOC. Clare added that providing a mental health day is also beneficial and sends the message that the program is investing in this important aspect of the work.

# Recommendations for Policy Makers

## 1. Set goals to increase leadership pathways for BIPOC home visitors

Policy makers must set clear and impactful goals to positively increase leadership pathways for BIPOC home visitors. Before setting goals, they should assess the current situation and understand the challenges and opportunities that exist. The [Leadership Pathways for Home Visitors of Color Project](#) provides relevant data, research, and insights from BIPOC home visiting experts that policy makers can use to inform decisions.

## 2. Collaborate with BIPOC home visitors to shape policy

Ensuring the experiences and voices of these groups are at the decision-making table requires a shift in power. Policy makers can collaborate with BIPOC home visitors to align objectives and ensure that policies are equitable and responsive to their needs. BIPOC home visiting policies should be shaped by the people with lived experiences including home visitors, supervisors, communities, advocacy groups, and families of color.

## 3. Support BIPOC home visitors' contributions with compensation and feedback

BIPOC home visitors can contribute and guide policy making by highlighting topics and issues that matter most to them and by showing how a policy could affect people differently within the same community. Policy makers should compensate BIPOC home visitors for their time, expertise, and knowledge just as they would compensate a consultant. Clare and Claudette both stressed the importance of sharing information and feedback so BIPOC home visitors can see how their voices and experiences shape newly created or updated policies.

#### 4. Track performance indicators in partnership with BIPOC home visitors

Working together, policy makers and BIPOC home visitors can define policy objectives and identify key performance indicators to track the impact of progress on policy initiatives. It will be imperative to establish timelines and milestones which are realistic while moving forward with a sense of urgency to address the needs and aspirations of the home visiting field.



## Recommendations for Funders

### 1. Support long-term solutions through funding

Both private and public funders can move from conversation to demonstration by looking for and supporting long-term solutions to strengthen leadership pathways for BIPOC home visitors. Funders can support program practices that promote equity and address BIPOC home visitors' needs, such as mental health support and trauma informed care education. Funders can earmark funds for anti-racism, implicit bias, and cultural competency training for all staff, as well as direct funds to the recruitment of a more diverse workforce. Funders can also prioritize funding for additional research related to supporting home visitors and supervisors of color.

### 2. Tailor program requirements and expected metrics

Claudette urged funders to work with home visiting programs to tailor program requirements and expected metrics as these are often burdensome to the program and may not necessarily reflect the work programs are doing to advance BIPOC leadership pathways.

### **3. Allow flexible funding to support the workforce and program priorities**

Funding streams must support both home visitor workforce challenges and program-specific staffing priorities. By providing more flexibility with funding, funders will help home visiting programs adequately compensate the home visiting workforce and provide leadership development, education, and skill building for the current and future BIPOC home visiting workforce.

## **Recommendations for State Systems Leaders**

### **1. Generate an action plan based on an annual audit**

State systems leaders can move from conversation to demonstration by conducting an annual audit to assess the current level of diversity within their systems. This can result in an action plan to increase diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and provide training on such to all members of state systems, especially those with an underrepresented BIPOC workforce.

### **2. Provide networking and mentorship opportunities**

BIPOC home visitors and supervisors may have limited access to networks within systems making it difficult for them to connect to those who can help them advance in their careers. State systems leaders can invite BIPOC home visitors and supervisors to network and mentorship opportunities helping them to make connections. Having these opportunities outside of the home visiting field can be useful for succeeding in the home visiting field as BIPOC individuals access the wisdom and expertise of those who have already carved out a successful career.

### **3. Support BIPOC home visitors as leaders**

As state systems leaders develop partnerships and relationships with home visiting programs that serve BIPOC communities they can, where possible, ensure that the home visiting program's leadership is representative of the communities it serves. They can also leverage BIPOC home visitors and supervisors to sit on task forces, committees and other decision-making bodies and engagement opportunities. State systems leaders can also offer time limited internships to provide BIPOC home visitors and supervisors with valuable work experience and the opportunity to learn from experienced professionals.

#### 4. Partner with educational institutions

State systems leaders can also work with schools, universities, and other educational institutions to provide exposure to home visiting for BIPOC students to learn, grow, and develop the skills needed to pursue home visiting as a profession.

#### 5. Share successes

Leaders can disseminate success stories and examples of best practices highlighting improvements on creating more diverse workforces across state systems.

## Conclusion

Increasing leadership pathways for BIPOC home visitors and supervisors is achievable as we all work together to embrace their talents, lived experiences, and voices. As we partner to co-design opportunities for career growth and remain informed of the challenges BIPOC home visitors and supervisors face, we all can contribute to a more diverse home visiting field. Check out the rest of the findings from the [Leadership Pathways for Home Visitors of Color Project](#)<sup>1</sup> for more ideas on creating BIPOC leadership pathways for home visitors of color.



<sup>1</sup> All materials from the project can be found here: <https://www.startearly.org/resource/leadership-pathways-for-home-visitors-of-color>

## Bios

### **Claudette Kabera**

Family Case Manager, Community of Hope

A transplant from the West Coast, Claudette Kabera is a home visitor with a local NGO in D.C for almost 5 years, working with pregnant mothers, new and seasoned parents using the Parent As Teachers model to provide education, support and empowerment. Prior to this, Claudette worked as a Health Education Specialist for San Bernardino County Department of Public Health's Perinatal Substance Use Intervention program. Claudette got her BAs in French and International Studies at Oregon State University and an MPH in Global Health at Loma Linda University.

### **Clare Williamson**

Home Visitor/Parent Educator, Georgetown University Parenting Support Program

Originally from upstate New York, Clare Williamson has been a Home Visitor in the DMV supporting parents with intellectual disabilities for the past eight years. With Georgetown University's Parenting Support Program, Clare's passion for building trusting relationships is implemented with a strength-based and person-centered approach.

### **Colleen Murphy**

Vice President, Early Childhood Community Systems Building, Start Early

Dr. Colleen Murphy has 30 years' experience working with early childhood programs at the local, state, and national level including Head Start, Help Me Grow, MIECHV Home Visitation, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems, Child Care Licensing, and Early Intervention. She has also provided technical assistance to communities and states on topics such as early childhood system building, data integration, measurement strategies, home visiting, and developmental screening initiatives. Colleen holds a PhD in Infant and Early Childhood with an emphasis in Social-Emotional Development and Master of Science degrees from Benedictine University in Management and Organizational Behavior and a Master of Arts in Infant and Early Childhood Development with an emphasis in Mental Health & Developmental Disorders from Fielding Graduate University.





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