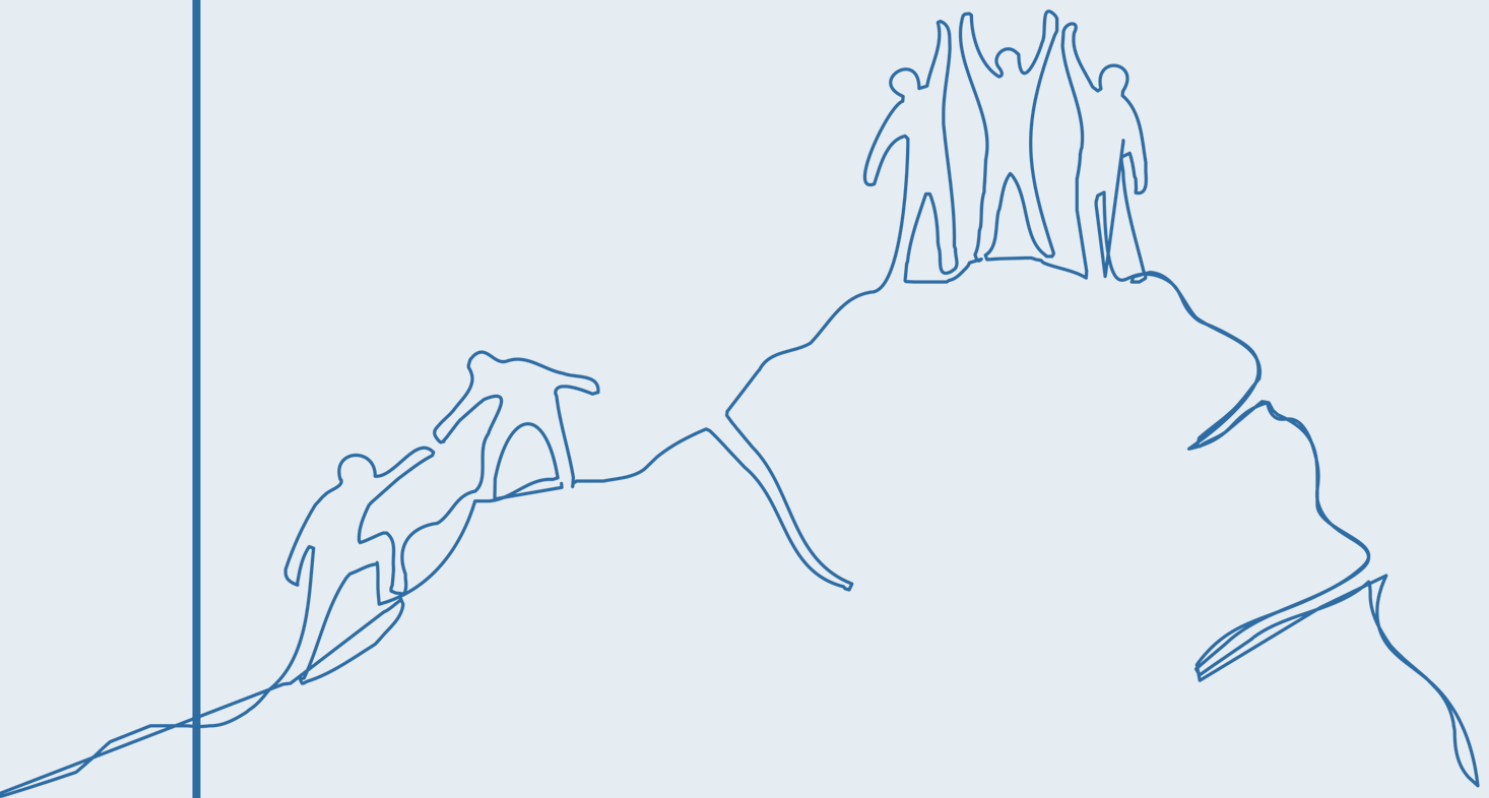


PARENT LEADERS IN HOME VISITING

The Experience and Impact of Michigan's
Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group



A Storytelling Project | 2023

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BACKGROUND

Michigan has a rich history of engaging and supporting parent leaders in early childhood systems.¹ Parent voice has been formalized within the home visiting system through Local Leadership Groups (LLG), which bring together local home visiting partners, including organizational partners focused on early childhood and parents, to engage in collaborative system building. To support parent members of LLGs, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) invested in a Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting group. The statewide group was originally convened by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation and is now convened by the MDHHS Home Visiting Unit. It is comprised of LLG parent leaders and offers a space to learn and grow with parent leader peers. The group met in Lansing six times per year for full days in-person from 2014 to 2020. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the group began meeting online in March of 2020. Virtual meetings are now held every two months for three hours.



¹Stark, D. R. (2020). Stepping Up and Speaking Out: The Evolution of Parent leadership in Michigan. Lansing, MI: Early Childhood Investment Corporation & Michigan Home Visiting Initiative. https://ecic4kids.org/stepping-up/files/eng_ECIC_Stepping_Up_Digital_10-28-20_web.pdf

NEED FOR EVALUATION

The impact of parent leadership on both home visiting systems and parent leaders has been reported anecdotally, but systematic studies of the process of cultivating home visiting parent leaders and the impact of parent leadership are limited. State leaders in home visiting and parent leadership initiated this study based on their interest in understanding the impact of the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting group. They noted that this group offered a unique space for fostering parent leadership and wanted to better understand the relationship between the experience of this group and the leadership trajectory of its participants. State leaders were invested in the idea of building a supportive and effective “parent pipeline” to engage parents in state and local early childhood system building and felt this group could help uncover strategies to facilitate that goal. They recognized that understanding parent leaders’ journeys would help state leaders remove barriers and put in place supports for future parent leaders. Additionally, state leaders wanted to understand the impact on both the parent leaders who participated and the systems that parent leaders influenced.

The main objective of the study was to learn about the experience and impact of being a member of the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting group and addresses the following questions:



What do parent leadership journeys look like for members of the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group?



What was their experience like in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group?



What impact has membership in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting group had for parent leaders?

Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) staff led the evaluation and recommended using storytelling methodology based on the nature of the study questions. Bryn Fortune, who also served as the group’s facilitator from 2014-2020, was a consultant for this project.

METHODS

This study used a peer-to-peer storytelling method based on the StoryCorps® model to capture the experiences of parent leaders in Michigan’s Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group. StoryCorps is a nonprofit whose mission is “to preserve and share humanity’s stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world.” All activities for this study were reviewed by the MPHI Institutional Review Board and approved as a research study.

This study used a highly collaborative and participatory approach to engage with parent leaders. As part of the design, parent leaders were invited to participate as storytellers, interviewers, or both. Under the direction of the funder, MPHI helped create the master list from attendance lists of parent leaders in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group since 2014. There were 97 individuals aggregated to form a population of eligible parent leaders.² To fully engage parent leaders in the study, several educational activities were held in preparation for recruitment, consent, and data collection. Interest and informed consent were built into procedures throughout the study to ensure that parent leaders understood the project and their opportunities for engagement. Accessibility was incorporated into all communications to support parent understanding of the study, especially for those with low literacy. Supports included using visual cues (icons) in communication and text-to-speech functionality on interest and consent forms so parent leaders could listen to the text being read. Parent leaders were also paid \$25 per hour for participating in all aspects of the study.



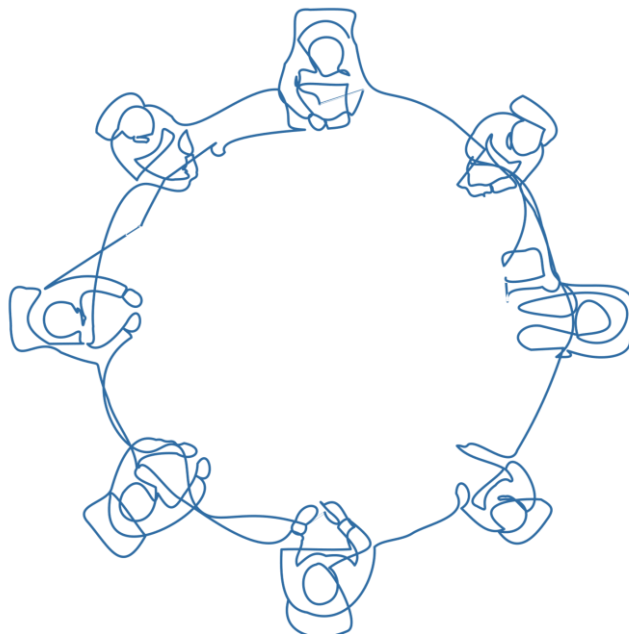
²It is important to note that lists varied across years, so the master list is likely not complete.

STORYCORPS **STORYTELLING WORKSHOP**

Staff from StoryCorps facilitated a two-day workshop in March 2022 as an introduction to their method of storytelling. MPHI invited all parent leaders who were members of the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group from 2014 to 2021 to participate in the workshop. Two pre-workshop orientation sessions were hosted by MPHI staff and Bryn Fortune. These sessions were optional and provided a space where parent leaders could ask questions and learn more about the project. StoryCorps collaborated with MPHI and state partners to create an agenda, develop structures for parent engagement within the sessions, and create workshop materials. The workshop covered the following topics:

- Introduction to StoryCorps and the power of personal narrative
- Effective interviewing: Eliciting powerful stories
- Everyone's story matters: Exploring identity and cultural humility
- Technical skills and best practices for recording

Summaries from each day are included in the Appendix. Fifteen parent leaders attended the workshop and were compensated \$25 per hour for up to 5 hours of their time.



GAUGING PARENT INTEREST

In April 2022 following the workshop, interest forms were sent to all 97 eligible parent leaders to understand who might be interested in the study and what role they were interested in. Several parent leaders reached out to MPHl staff on their own immediately after the StoryCorps workshop to express interest in participating. Parent leaders had the option to participate as a Storyteller, Interviewer or both roles. They were also informed that an MPHl facilitator would be present in each session for technical and storytelling support.

Two emails were sent to eligible parent leaders with a link to a form that included a summary of the different ways to participate and an interest form. The interest form also included steps of the project so parent leaders understood the process.

Evaluation staff monitored interest by region where parent leaders lived to make sure the sample was somewhat balanced by geography. An additional outreach by email and text was sent to parent leaders from the North and Southeast to try to ensure representation from these regions. There were 25 responses to the interest form (a 26% response rate). Of the 25 responses, 19 were interested in both roles, 5 were interested in being a Storyteller only and one was interested in being an Interviewer only.

MATCHING STORYTELLERS AND INTERVIEWERS AND DOCUMENTING CONSENT

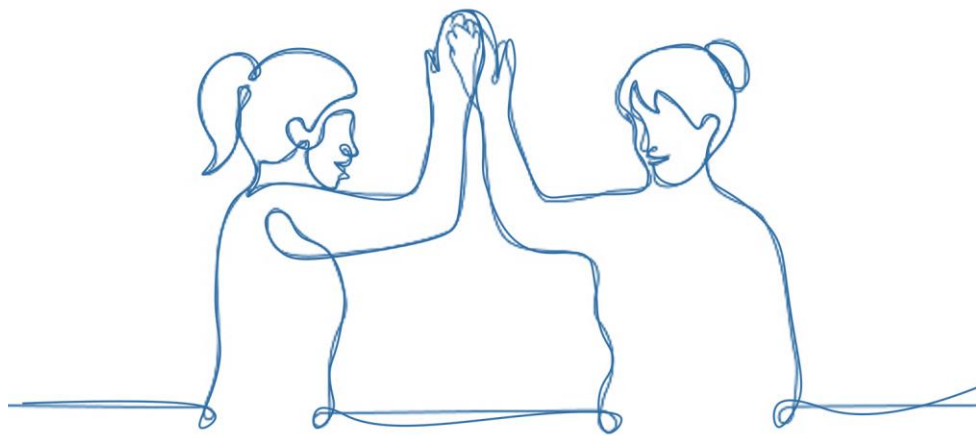
In June 2022, MPHl staff worked with the 25 interested parent leaders to match storytellers with interviewers and document consent. The goal of these conversations was to match storytellers to interviewers, go over consent, and set up session logistics. MPHl staff centered the storyteller's preference to ensure their comfort with the interviewer. MPHl staff recorded 1st and 2nd choices and then matched pairs in a spreadsheet trying to honor as many 1st choice preferences as possible while giving as many interviewers as possible an opportunity. No parent interviewer was assigned to more than two storytellers. Some pairs had existing relationships and others were meeting for the first time in the context of this study. Once matches were made, parent leaders signed consent forms. Through this process, three interested parent leaders declined to participate or did not respond.

PREPARING PARENT INTERVIEWERS

The Interviewer role was unique in this study. Parent leaders in this role were both participants in a study and collecting data as an interviewer. To support this special role, MPHI and StoryCorps developed an interviewer guide to share with parent leaders and hosted an interviewer preparation session in August 2022 with StoryCorps staff to review the guide and provide an opportunity for parent leaders to practice interviewing skills and techniques (see guide in Appendix). All interviewers were required to either attend the interviewer preparation session or watch the session recording and practice one on one with an MPHI staff member before they participated as an interviewer for the study. The guide and session reviewed setting up to record, how to use the question script, and supporting the storyteller during the session.














STORYTELLING SESSIONS

Twenty storytelling sessions took place over Zoom. Each session included a parent storyteller, a parent interviewer, and an MPHI facilitator. Sessions were scheduled for one hour and recorded. Parent leader interviewers used their scripts to lead each session. MPHI facilitators sometimes asked clarifying questions at the end of the session.



PARTICIPANTS

A total of 21 parent leaders participated in the project (20 as storytellers and 15 as interviewers; see visual below for demographics). Five interviewers conducted two sessions and 10 conducted one session.

Demographics of Parent Leader Participants			
Region ³		Count	
East		10	 48%
West		7	 33%
Southeast		3	 14%
North		1	 5%
Race			
Black		10	 48%
White		7	 33%
Unreported		4	 19%
Gender			
Female		20	 95%
Male		1	 5%
Time Period in Group by Meeting Modality ⁴			
In-person only		3	 14%
Mostly in-person, some virtual		5	 24%
Some in-person, mostly virtual		5	 24%
Virtual only		8	 38%

³ Michigan's Early Childhood Support Network Regions: <https://greatstarttoquality.org/support-networks/>

⁴ Meeting modality correlates with dates participating in group as the group moved to virtual meetings in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

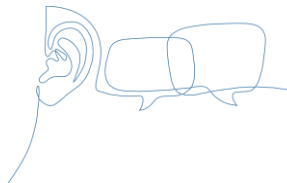
DATA ANALYSIS

Storytelling sessions were professionally transcribed for thematic analysis using NVivo software.⁵ A coding team of four evaluators from MPHl used the following approach for thematic analysis.

Developed and Refined Coding Scheme. Codes were developed using an inductive (bottom-up) approach driven by both the questions in the interview script and parent leaders' responses. An exception to this was a series of codes that were inspired by FSG's Systems Change model to understand systemic impacts with codes including three levels of systems impact: structural, relational, and transformative.⁶ Codes were developed under the following categories:



Leadership experience
and personal journey



Thoughts for future/
other parent leaders



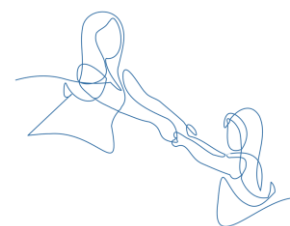
Parent leadership
impact on systems



Relationships and connections
with other parent leaders and
networking within the
Statewide Parent Leaders in
Home Visiting Group



Activities and structure
of the Statewide
Parent Leaders in
Home Visiting Group



Improving the
Statewide Parent
Leaders in Home
Visiting Group

⁵ Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

⁶ Kania, J., Kramer, M., & Senge, P. (2018). The water of systems change. https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/

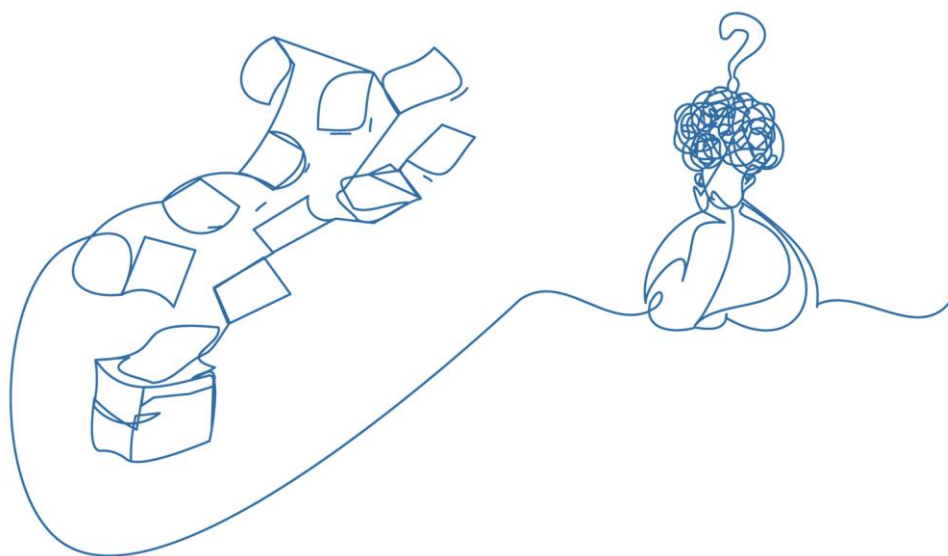
Reached Agreement. All coders coded two conversations in their own copy of the NVivo master file. Individual codes were merged and queried for inter-coder agreement. The team reviewed the coding comparison query results together and discussed any nodes with less than 80% agreement. The team discussed disagreements, adjusted code definitions, and refined the coding scheme if needed.

Team Qualitative Coding. Each conversation was coded by two team members. Once all coding was completed, all team members' files were merged and queried for inter-coder agreement. For codes with less than 80% agreement, a team of two coders was assigned to review disagreements within each conversation. That team made a final judgment and resolved the disagreement.

Thematic Analysis. Team members identified main ideas within and across each code. Identified themes were initially developed within each major coding category. Finally, the team reviewed the list of themes to formulate the major findings for presentation in the results section. Often, these major findings linked multiple themes across coding categories into a broader idea.

SENSEMAKING SESSION

Preliminary findings were presented in a webinar to storytelling participants to get their feedback on the broad themes and interpretation of them. Nine parent leaders attended the optional session and received \$25 per hour for their time. Parent leaders were able to comment on findings and validate that the themes were reflective of their experiences.



RESULTS

The Experience: Participating in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group

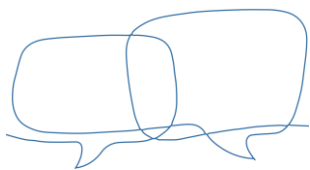
Parent leaders first asked each other to describe what it was like to participate in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting group.

Experiencing the statewide parent leaders in home visiting group in-person was very different than online.

Parent leaders emphasized that there were two distinct experiences of engaging with the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting group: before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, parent leaders met in-person and during and after, they met virtually. Nearly every story about the group experience was contextualized in this way with stories that were specific to in-person or virtual meetings.

Parent leaders described the in-person experience as being deeply personal and intimate, using words like “family,” “tribe,” and “loving” to describe it. In the earlier years of the meeting, parent leaders described having very few formal rules and that the group functioned on strong relationships. A major activity of the group was preparing for and presenting at the annual Home Visiting conference, which was often described as another opportunity for growth and group bonding. As the group grew, parent leaders described the need for more structure and ground rules. The shift to virtual meetings came suddenly in response to the pandemic and coincided with two other notable events for the group: an emotional meeting about the Black Lives Matter movement (discussed more below) and a change in facilitators. One parent leader who experienced both meeting settings described the transition in detail and reflects ideas about early intimacy, growing pains, and the sudden transition to a virtual space that was echoed by others: *(next page)*

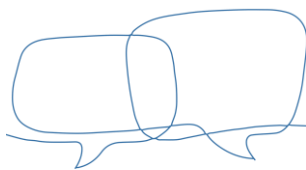




Early years of the in-person group

Not only was it, you know, someone that—that's—that's kind of leading the conversation **but it was like we were all on that same level.** It didn't seem like it was anybody that was little. And then when someone new came in, we just welcomed them in. This is all in-person. **We welcomed them in with open arms. There was not really any rules that were established because it was just like an open, loving—I** was so excited to come into the space because I see—I'm seeing all my friends from all over the, uh, the state that I don't—I wish you guys lived here because y'all just—y'all made me feel so loved.

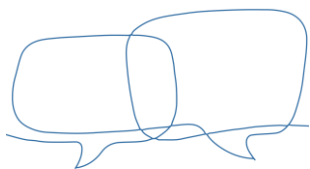
-Parent leader



In-person group growing and changing

As we started moving into like adding new people into the fold, I don't think—I don't know if we should have a screening process (laughs) to make sure that people are a good fit. But we had ran into some things that I had not seen in the space. And it really brought, you know, it was really hurtful because some things where people were having such a positive experience where we lost, you know, members because some people didn't understand the love that we have for each other and how—how we, how we like go through conflict. Because we had had conflict. **You know, things were said and but we all talked through it and we all respected each other.** And when that was not present, I'm like, "Oh, no, this is like everybody else's meeting. I don't even want to be here!"

-Parent leader



Group moves online

And then the pandemic hit (laughs). All that work we did in-person and trying to duplicate those warm and fuzzy feelings, those conversations during lunch, **it just not translate well like to virtual.** And then we—then it's like we had a whole other cycle of new—new people that were not necessarily welcomed into the fold in that warm and loving way. Welcoming somebody into a cold Zoom meeting, "Hi. We're here to do our work." We're not eating together. We're not talking.

-Parent leader

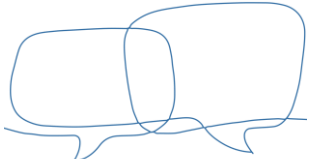


It is important to note that the virtual meetings are described differently depending on whether parent leaders are comparing them to their earlier in-person experience. Throughout the report, we note when the meeting timing and setting is important to the context of the finding.

Facilitators led and taught by example, then stepped back to let parent leaders grow and lead.

Parent leaders described facilitation strategies in the group that were both explicit and implicit. Parent leaders discussed that some strategies enhanced engagement during meetings. Parent leaders also discussed that over time, they learned how to engage others by using these same strategies. Parent leaders described several facilitation practices that supported the group, both in-person and virtually:

Creating a welcoming space that equally valued diverse voices was discussed by parent leaders. This intentional level-setting was discussed as creating a more democratic feeling that did not explicitly prioritize experience within the group, experience outside the group, certain personality styles, or regions within the state. This was cited as both a success and a challenge within the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group. Parent leaders described coming into the group with different backgrounds and needs and that it was sometimes hard to find a common pacing for everyone. Parent leaders indicated that it was important that facilitators met parent leaders “where they were at” and to support all voices within the group. As discussed by some parent leaders, this meant acknowledging the skills and connections they brought with them and for others this meant building brand new skills. In the virtual space, parent leaders described how facilitators used different modes of communicating, such as using the chat or virtual reactions, to engage parent leaders.



I really felt that at every meeting because when—whenever we would say something—like at least for me personally, **like whenever I would say, “This is an idea that I have,” it wasn’t just like, “Okay, thanks.” It was, “Yeah! That’s a good point. Let me write that down or let me—I see how that could work as far as this.”** Like they—there was active listening to where you could tell they were active listening because they would go—they would lean upon that.

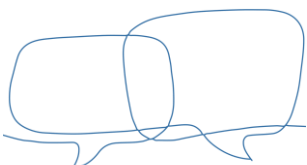
-Parent leader



I’ve really been working on and practicing is: Does what I am going to say or ask really contribute to the conversation and move things forward? **So I have been really focusing on listening first and then chiming in so I am not the person who is dominating the conversation.**

-Parent leader

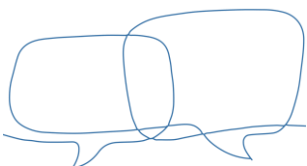
Parent leaders discussed appreciating facilitators for being human and understanding the competing demands on parent leaders' time. However, active participation was discussed by parent leaders as an expectation of the group. Many parent leaders reflected that engagement was also parent leaders' responsibility.



"You get out what you put in." So if you want something out the group, you've got to kind of participate. **You get out what you put in. If you work hard, you're going to—you're going to get great benefits.**

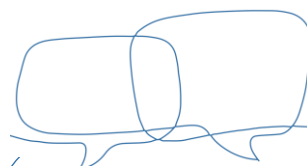
-Parent leader

According to parent leaders, **facilitation often felt "invisible."** Parent leaders described how facilitators, especially in-person, created a warm dynamic that prioritized relationships and group functioning. Through these powerful relationships, other work was happening, such as skill-building, consensus making, and conflict resolution.



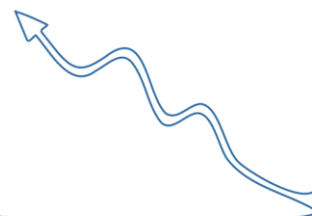
I have never been on another, group. **I had been on groups but this is like—it was so—I mean it was—it covered so many things. Like the friendship part, growing my leadership, developing—developing like professional development.** It was so many moving pieces the second or third time, you just were getting molded. And you didn't even realize you were getting molded! You thought you were just hanging out with your friends (both laugh).

-Parent leader



And then **the person that was leading the charge, she is just so insightful** and the way she moved through the—the things we were doing, she was so smooth with it, you didn't realize she was even working from an agenda.

-Parent leader

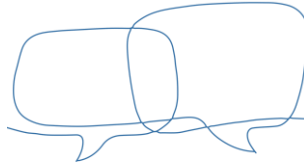


Setting clear ground rules was discussed by parent leaders as critical for group functioning. This was also discussed as something that seemed to evolve over time and became more explicit in recent years (see discussion on group evolution below).

By responding to parent leaders' interests, parent leaders indicated that facilitators gave them agency in the agenda and allowed them to shape some of the topics that were covered. This was discussed by parent leaders as both helping to increase engagement and signaling to them that they are the owners and creators of the group, creating a more democratic space that encouraged parent leaders to use their voice within the space.

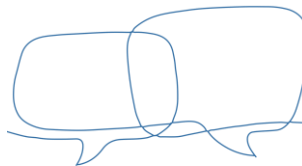
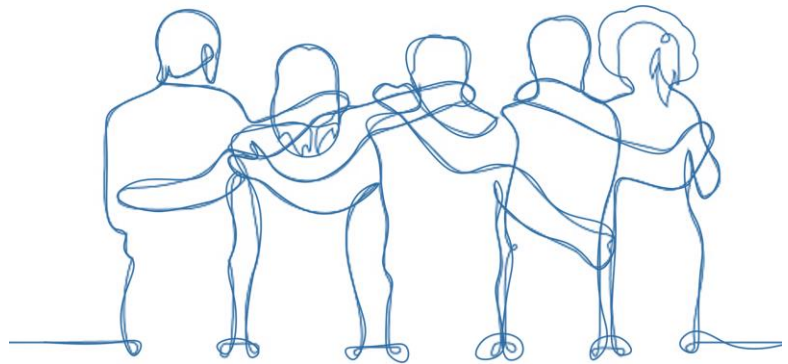
This group-leadership dynamic was mentioned by parent leaders more in the context of in-person meetings. Some parent leaders described the online meetings as more structured and less free-flowing, partly due to the different nature of interacting online.

Leading by example was discussed by parent leaders as providing an education in how to lead meetings and navigate group dynamics. Parent leaders described how facilitators modeled vulnerability in the group as they shared their own stories and personal journeys.



As a group if there was topics that we wanted to learn more about, the facilitators would find ways to bring those topics in. Like I think one time people wanted to learn more about like how they do self-care and things like that. So **as a group we might decide what the agenda is depending on those topics**. So there wasn't one meeting that was the same as the next meeting.

-Parent leader

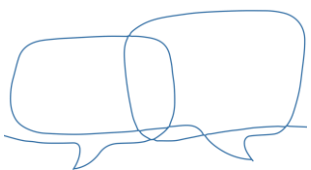


Listen! You—you said a whole word because like for real if—if [facilitator] did not teach us ten million things in one, and how to facilitate, and how to lead, and how to pivot with grace, and how—listen! **She taught us so much. And just like even watching her example like really kind of made us in a lot of ways, right?**

-Parent leader

Preparing parent leaders to share their stories, especially at the state home visiting conference, was a main goal of the group and a chance to build many skills at once.

Parent leaders who were engaged before the pandemic described preparing for and presenting at the annual home visiting conference as a central activity of the group. Many described developing confidence to share their personal journey in the context of that conference. For many, the opportunity to speak publicly was discussed as both intimidating and rewarding. Parent leaders described that preparing their personal story for the conference allowed them to see the impact parent voice can have.



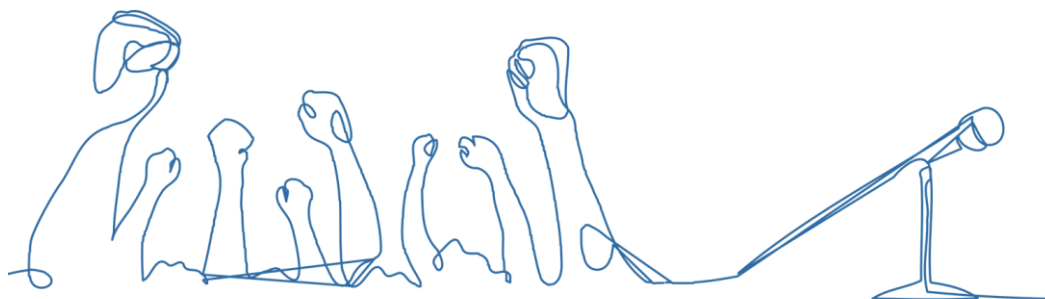
I know a lot of the other parents that were up there with me were, you know, one of them was—she does public speaking for church all the time, so she was like, “This is nothing,” and breezed through it. And boisterous like didn’t need the mic and because she’s so used to it and then other parents are like, “I can’t do this. I can’t (laughs),” shaking right along with me, you know. **But every one of us did it. And every one of us was so hyped afterwards and, you know, it was one of the most attended sessions at that conference so we did something right.**

—Parent leader

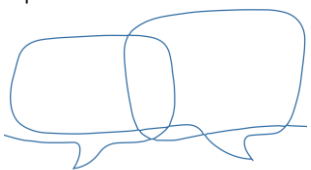


I can’t think of nothing else because the power of my story—the power of my story is like this—it’s the whole thing. This whole thing is the power of my story. Being able to tell my story and effectively leverage it to get opportunities, effectively leverage it to talk to legislators, effectively leverage it to even parent properly.

—Parent leader

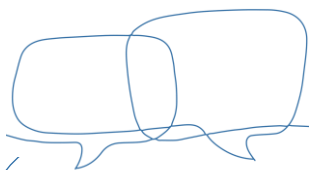


Parent leaders also described how conference preparation allowed for other skill-building opportunities, such as collaborating with peers on organizing their session. This close collaboration was described by parent leaders as an opportunity to support and encourage each other and model leadership within the group.



But the work that we were doing would be conference planning. So we would design a conference [session] from beginning to end. We would decide who would be in charge of what, we would set those, you know, tasks aside and then the next time we would meet, we would come back to, "Hey, let's do a dry run. Let's just see how this", so we're not repeating ourselves. "Let's make this conference flow."

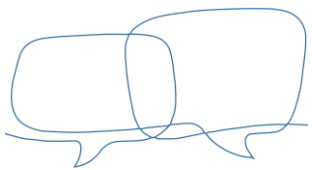
-Parent leader



So the meetings, the in—in-person were a lot of preparation for the presenting at the conferences. And being able to help the newer parents prepare. **Because it's a lot to present in front of a room of 200 or more people.** And just being there to support them and help them along the way or to get that support. If you are—even if you are older, you still have a hard time speaking in public. **That companionship and that camaraderie that we get, it helps... we boost each other up.**

-Parent leader

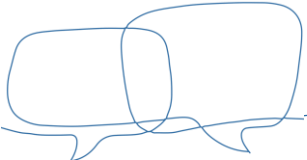
Finally, parent leaders described the networking opportunities at the conference. For many, the conference offered a unique chance to network with early childhood professionals. Parent leaders discussed sometimes being surprised by the respect and interest they received from professionals in home visiting and early childhood and saw the possibilities that these relationships could bring.



...they also bring in people to the dinners that we would have and—and they would come in and want to learn from us in—in more of a personal setting. And we'd sit down to dinner and they would ask us questions of what they could be doing differently and, you know, "What's it like when you are raising kids out in this small, little, tiny town? How do you guys get to doctors? What do you do? And how old are your kids?" And you're sitting there going, "This really important person took time away from other people that they could be sitting there with and—and they're choosing to sit here and have dinner with us because they want more info and they can't get enough." **It—it really makes you feel like that voice is important.** But it also makes you feel like there's more to be accomplished. There's so much more that can be done.

-Parent leader

Many parent leaders discussed being active in the group during the transition to online meetings. They discussed missing the opportunity to prepare for and sharing their stories at the conference and hoped to be able to attend in the future. Parent leaders described how the focus at group meetings changed after going virtual from focusing on preparing to share parent leaders' stories at the conference to having to find other ways to engage parent leaders.

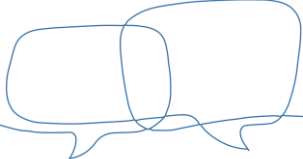


So it went from not—it went from focusing on building our workshop and working on that to more of an informative meetings. So the dynamics have changed completely. So it's not, **it's not us working toward one goal; it's getting information about something.**

-Parent leader

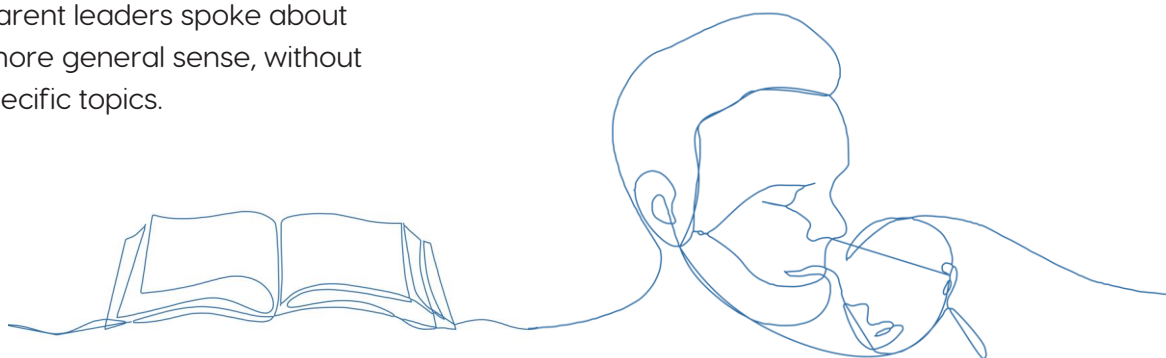
Creating a network of informed parent leaders requires sharing knowledge about early childhood systems and best practices.

Parent leaders discussed becoming stronger leaders when they learned about the early childhood system and best practices that benefit all families. Many parent leaders discussed that a huge benefit of participating in both their Local Leadership Group (LLG) and the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group was getting exposure to these systems and the resources available through these systems. Parent leaders mentioned many resources they were exposed to through the group, including safe sleep, resources for children with special healthcare needs (CSHCN), self-care, and preventing child sexual abuse. Most parent leaders spoke about learning in a more general sense, without referring to specific topics.

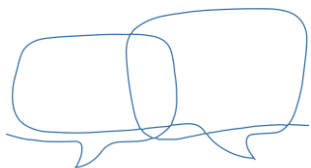


Honestly, I just liked the information I was getting. I was more in it to hear, to, you know, because you really got first ear for on what's going on. Especially like when they was changing. I—I got a lot of information to go back and ask my kids' school... So, uh, it was more for that being informed.

-Parent leader

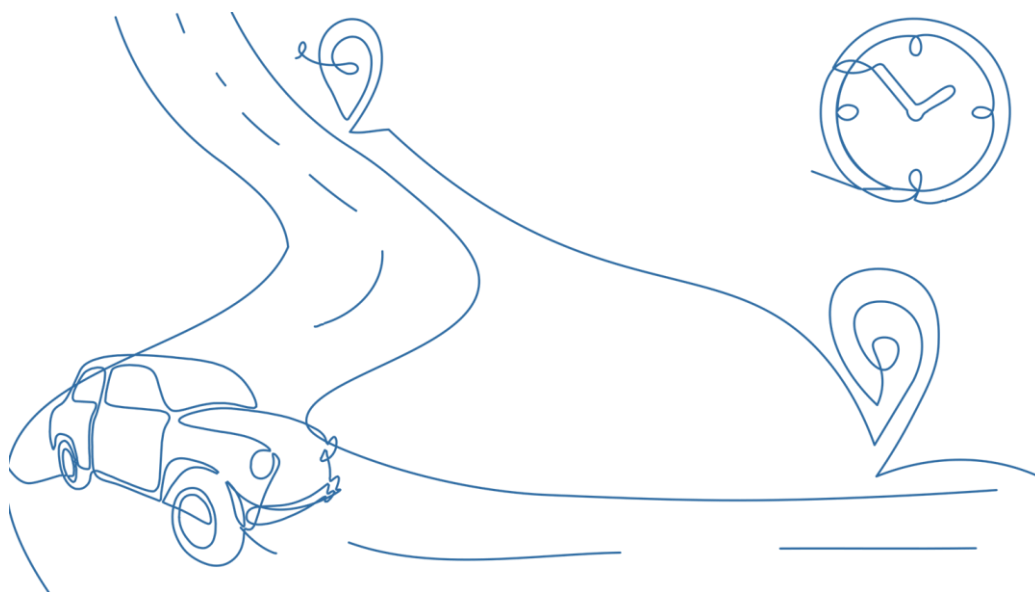


Parent leaders in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group were all members of their Local Leadership Groups (LLGs). As such, they were representatives of their communities in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group. Parent leaders described being a liaison between the state and local levels and how learning from other regions expanded their own knowledge and resources, which they were then able to take back and share with their local communities.



It started in the car. It started with that fellowship, that friendship. And—and we would talk about what's going on in our community, and what's going on in our families, and what we can be doing to share. And we—man, we came up with some good ideas when we were in the car. **So many things that we've used at our LLG, have come from those car rides.**

-Parent leader

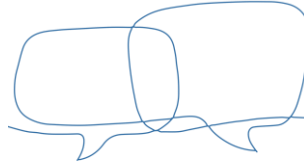


When parent leaders reflected on their experience in-person, they often led with the importance and strength of personal connections made in the group.

The in-person experience was unique for many parent leaders. Many described deep, personal connections they made in the group, often having met parents with shared experiences for the first time. They shared experiences of being a parent to young children, having received support from a home visitor, and having served as parent leaders on their LLG. Many shared that the group felt like a family or tribe.

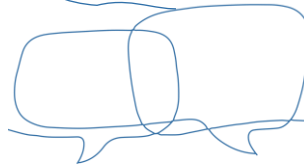
Parent leaders described the in-person meetings as a safe, non-judgmental space where new ideas and information contributed to changing minds.

Parent leaders discussed group cohesion was supported by meeting practices, including the establishment of healthy ground rules, encouragement of connection through ice breakers, and encouragement of informal socializing between agenda items. Many parent leaders mentioned that unstructured time such as carpooling to and from meetings, sharing meals, and connecting online outside of meetings fostered deeper connections with peers.



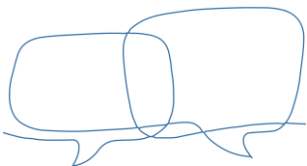
[Statewide Group] became a family. It became what I needed... that I didn't know I needed at the time. I needed these—this group of—of parents and females around me to keep me going. It was something that I was kind of hesitant at first because I didn't know what I was getting myself into, but I'm glad that I took a chance. And now we are family. It's just you all can't get rid of me no (laughs)—no matter how you try (both laugh).

-Parent leader



"Oh, that's genius! I never would have thought of that!" **So it's kind of a captain planet with our powers combined, we can accomplish anything.**

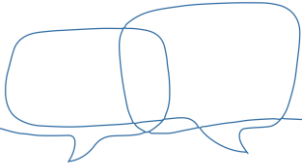
-Parent leader



And we would have catered lunch, which was always a bonus... And what better way to make relationships except over meals, right? Like everybody makes friendships over meals. So, that was a good time to bond with the other parent leaders and actually get to know the other parents throughout the state. And... the before and after of anyone that got there earlier if they wanted to hang out they, you know, that us parents could kind of mingle then.

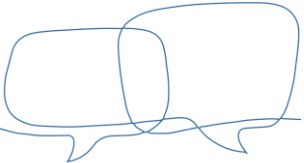
-Parent leader

Some parent leaders discussed that the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group provided a critical support network at a time they were facing personal challenges. Several parent leaders who had children with special healthcare needs (CSHCN) described how meeting others with similar challenges helped them gain perspective, hope, and resources while navigating care for their children. Many parent leaders described the feeling of being heard, seen, and understood by peers in the group.



And I know this sounds hokey, but to really feel like somebody is getting what you're laying down, it's a big thing. And for me as a parent right then, I was kind of at my wit's end like I was so tired of pretending. And I was tired of always trying to be strong and put a spin on it for my kids.

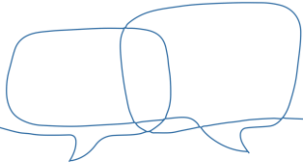
-Parent leader



Yes, these are my people! I am on the right path because these are my people and we're all passionate about equity, and little kids, and making sure that they get what they need.

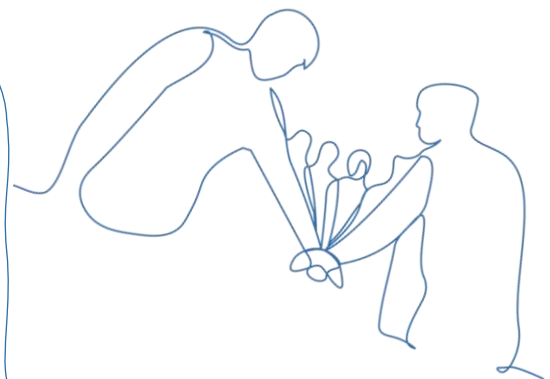
-Parent leader

Parent leaders described that the strong personal connections made during in-person meetings led to strong emotions sometimes being expressed during the in-person meetings. Most parent leaders described this as a positive and unique part of the group—even though some parent leaders indicated that it was unexpected or alarming at the beginning.



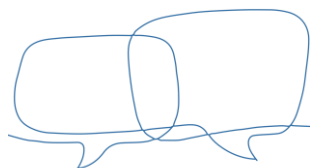
And so they started passing around cards and, you know, we were talking about like the amazing work we were doing. And then people started speaking from the heart and I said, "What kind of meeting is this?" I'm crying. I'm talking about full on tears. There was a little snot coming out my nose. I'm like, "Oh, no (laughs)! **What have I gotten myself into? This is a lot of emotion. First of all, you guys feel like a family. What kind of meeting is this???**"

-Parent leader



Parent leaders emphasized that the emotional engagement of the group changed when the group shifted from in-person to virtual meetings. They indicated that the nature of remote meetings dampened the raw emotionality of the group.

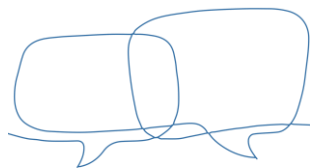
Parent leaders in virtual meetings described how they embraced the different modes of engagement that remote meetings offered and how the use of smaller break-out rooms supported group connection. However, parent leaders described that the virtual interactions did not reach the intimacy of in-person interactions during the group's in-person years.



Interviewer: **Don't know if we ever had a meeting where we didn't cry about something** (both laugh). You guys still cry at every meeting?

Storyteller: We haven't been. It's been over Zoom so you can turn your camera off (both laugh).

-Parent leader



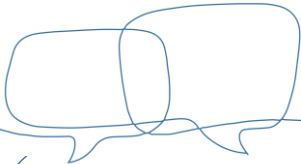
You know, with having a smaller group that, **for me it felt a little more comfortable with being able to talk and having that time to like more intimate time with people**, which, you know, and getting to know—getting to know them. And their experiences and, uh, you know, being able to hear and talk about, you know, “Well, when we did—when we did this, this is how we did it and that worked really well.” Or, “We tried this and this did not work.” And, you know, and to be able to ask questions about it in the smaller group.

-Parent leader



Close peer relationships kept parent leaders engaged in the group over time.

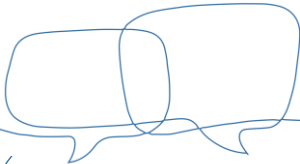
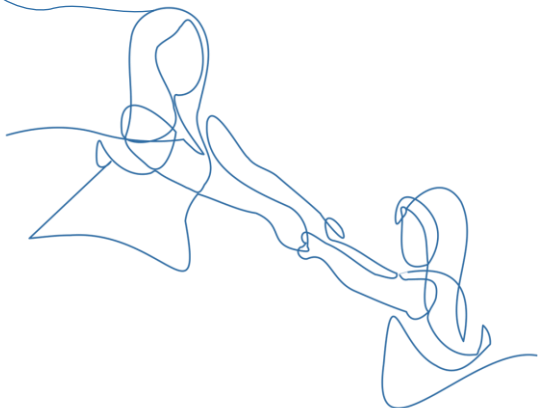
When the group met in-person, parent leaders discussed that seeing the “senior parent leaders” getting along so well was inspiring to new-comers and set an example of group interaction and culture. Parent leaders indicated that it was important that longer term members were welcoming of new members and supported their orientation and growth in the group. Parent leaders worried that maintaining a parent-driven culture was harder when the group only met virtually.



Because if there's no seasoned parents who keep it going or build upon what we've already worked so hard for, then the group as a whole will just not be the same at all.

Especially now that, uh, it's—and you can see it now with there not being a conference [due to the pandemic], being the dynamics of the group is not the same. It's not that, getting together and working or bringing topics and working towards them. It's giving us something that the higher ups think we need. But so it's not really the parents that's bringing.

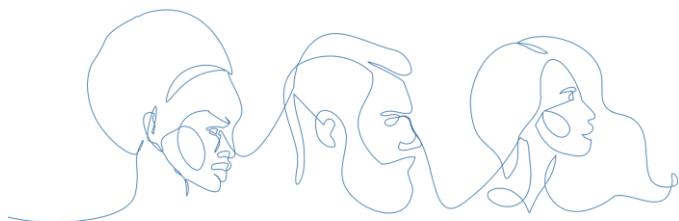
-Parent leader



Some of the parents had been long-standing parents that knew each other very well, so that was always like, “Ooh, I want to, you know, like I want to be the seniors.” You know, and I was the freshman or something when meeting in-person that definitely—you’ve definitely seen the—you could see the people that knew each other where virtually, it’s—I don’t feel like it’s as easy to tell who already knows each other and has the connections that you could see when you walk in and you don’t know anybody and everybody seems to know each other. **So there is that kind of—there was a little bit of that intimidation of, “Oh, my God. I’m the only one that doesn’t know anyone?”** Compared to virtually we don’t—I didn’t—there isn’t that.

-Parent leader

Parent leaders discussed that parent leadership can be a small world, where leaders network and run into each other in many different spaces. Many parent leaders said the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group was one of the places where many parent leaders come together. Parent leaders discussed that seeing familiar faces helped engagement within the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group and other parent leadership groups.

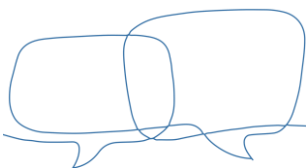


So just like seeing different like names like when I—I think it was when I joined Think Babies. It was two of the moms that were also in the statewide group that—**so that was kind of cool that it was like some people I already kind of was familiar with.**

-Parent leader

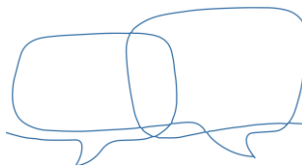
Parent leaders need tangible support to do their work and engage in meetings.

Parent leaders emphasized that tangible supports allowed them to remain engaged in the group. Before the pandemic, parent leaders described having to travel both to meetings in Lansing and to the home visiting conference. Some parent leaders discussed needing support beyond money, including around the time required to engage in parent leadership activities and caring for young children, especially those with special healthcare needs.



And like **the childcare stipend helped a lot** because, you know, when my kids were little if I couldn't have found childcare or afforded it for that day, I wouldn't have been able to go.

-Parent leader

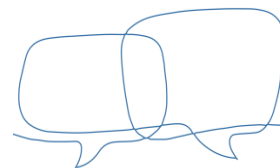


"We recognize that you couldn't be here without [family member] providing childcare." And so people were like fully—and I was—because it was like I may have mentioned it or something, but they were the ones who were like, "No, we fully recognize that for you guys this is a family affair and that you couldn't be here without her." You know, and I was always like, **"Okay, like that is going above and beyond to make sure that the accommodation is there."**

-Parent leader

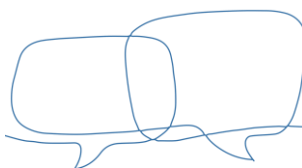
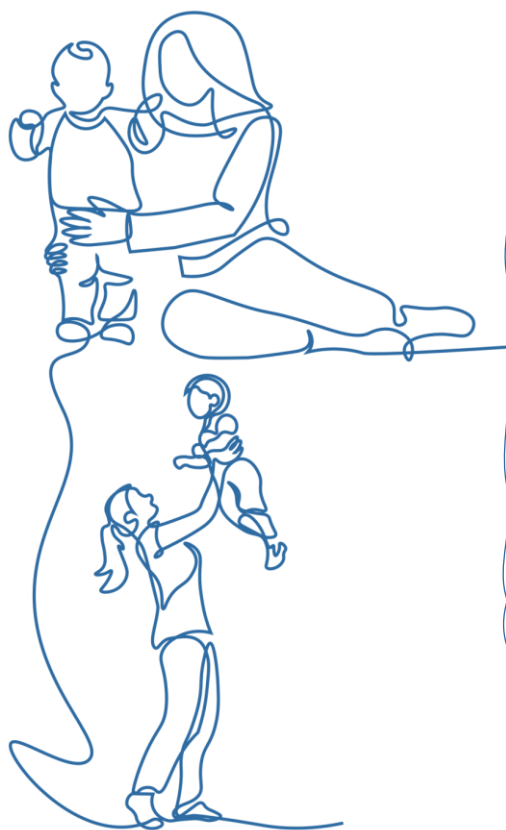
Parent leaders discussed that the approach to the tangible supports identified above needed to be flexible and equitable because each participant was coming from a different place. For example, some parent leaders described the meetings as a welcome break from normal family routines while others described that time away from their children was stressful. Parent leaders observed that the compensation may not have been adequate for all families. In one conversation, parent leaders talked with each other about selling clothes or packing food to be able to afford attending the home visiting conference.

Parent leaders described online meetings as convenient for parent leaders and noted how online meetings removed barriers to attendance such as travel, tight schedules, and family and work obligations.



Like I know what it's like to travel to the conference or to, you know, travel and be like, **"This is my last bit of money."**

-Parent leader




So no, no in-persons as far as that goes, unfortunately, but it was—which actually made it easier for me because with everything as it was during Covid and with my having a house full of children, like I couldn't get out. My husband was working full-time. I couldn't even get out to meetings if I wanted to. **So the only way that I was actually able to participate was because they were Zoom meetings. So for me, it actually worked out great because otherwise I couldn't have done it.** It worked out good that way.

-Parent leader

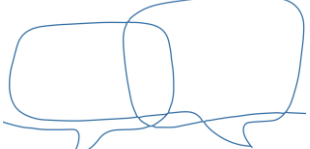
Conflict within the group exposed challenges to group functioning and presented opportunities for growth.

Conflict was discussed by parent leaders as needing to be handled with respect and care. Some parent leaders described that they felt this respect and care was possible due to the depth of connection among the group's members fostered by facilitation practices that encouraged open, respectful dialogue.



I think when there was conflict though, like in that situation, I think pretty quickly [facilitator] saw that like, "Oh," she had to step in and kind of—**she had this way of like rerouting things** without realizing that you were even rerouted sort of (laughs). Like detour, you know. So she was pretty good at that.

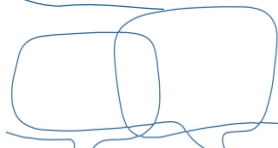
-Parent leader



And they [facilitators] always made a point to say that, **"We're going to listen. We're going to be respectful. We don't judge. There's no, you know, there's no talking. There's no over-talking. We're going to be—we're going to respect people whatever their opinion is."** And so they always made sure the facilitators made sure that there was always a respect between us. And then you could feel like you could speak what your true opinion was on something. And so that I thought was helpful. So I would say both really, the facilitator, and the moms, and the parents.

-Parent leader

Parent leaders shared that the group always allowed space to provide feedback, but sometimes parent leaders felt things weren't fully addressed and the group had to move on with unresolved issues. Parent leaders described that sometimes resolution came within sub-groups or smaller networks of friends who would have separate conversations to debrief about a conflict. Some parent leaders described tension between the relationship-based nature of the group and the need to live with disagreement and stay focused on a goal.

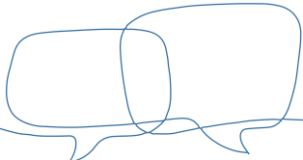


Sometimes issues were just kind of swept under the rug and they weren't really addressed. And I think that people had some hurt feelings that never really got addressed. We just kind of moved on. But that's what you do when you're in a working relationship (laughs). You—you—you just kind of move on from certain things and as long as the—the purpose stays true and everybody has the same goal, **we don't have to all love each other. You know, and that that's okay.**

-Parent leader

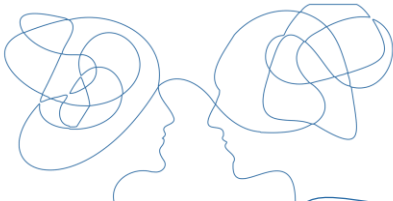
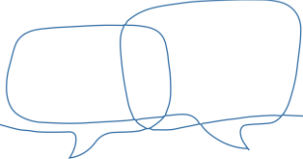
Some parent leaders noted that the “family” culture of the group made it harder for them to set boundaries, deal with conflicts, or offer differing views. They found it challenging to move forward with new people and voices, and they noted challenges with being open with people who might not “fit” into the tight-knit group. At some point, members decided more structure would help the group better navigate this challenge.

Participants noted that, even with accountability strategies in place, conflicts arose within the group. They described situations where the path toward resolving inter-personal issues was difficult and noted that they lost members when things become too uncomfortable or personal. Participants reflected on the facilitation support that was needed in these moments, and how difficult it was to face conflict openly and bring resolution.



I mentioned when there was an issue with parents and it was brought up with the higher ups: [Facilitator], it wasn't resolved or addressed. It was just kind of like, “Oh, well, you guys will work it out and deal with it.” And it was a professional environment, but it was also a family environment. So it was very much she—they made it very clear, “This is not your job. We are—you are here, but this is—you're not working for us. You're just here to provide us what we—what we need from you.” **And I feel like that was a really hard line for them to draw, hey, we're crying together, we're bonding, we're family. But yet, now be professional and have these professional relationships.** I just don't think it was spelled out—no one knew what it was going to be when it first started. And so learning that this is what it is and these are, you know, this is what's going to work, it's—it's just going to keep changing with the group.

-Parent leader

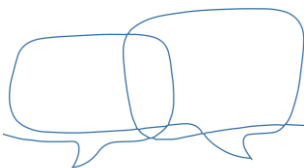


So a time when there were conflicting voices I remember one of the meetings got a little heated between—and these two women had very strong, strong voices, strong personalities and were literally about to come to blows, if you know what I mean. But the facilitator at the time... she separated the two and gave them techniques to use to calm down. And after a period of time they—of course in the room, they were separated. But they were able later to—I—I don't—actually I believe one of the ladies ended up never coming back. **But they were able to talk, but it was still, it was still awkward for—for people because it should have never got that far.** But because of the strong personalities, it did.

-Parent leader

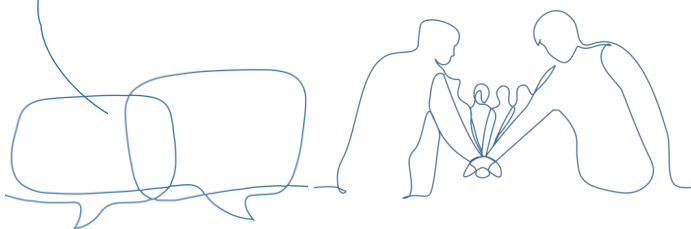
When parent leaders were asked about a time that the group experienced conflict, many talked about a time during the height of the Black Lives Matter movement when group members wanted to discuss what was happening nationally around police brutality. Given the diversity of group membership and the tone and tenor of the national conversation at this time, the group conversation got heated according to most parent leaders. Many parent leaders were sympathetic to the facilitators and their attempt to navigate a sensitive conversation, particularly because the group was transitioning to virtual meetings at the same time due to the pandemic. However, many parent leaders felt the conversation did not reach resolution.

They also noted how the experience was a source of reflection for how to better address sensitive topics in the future, with some parent leaders describing later parent-led conversations about equity to help the group find a common understanding, especially when parents are coming to the group with different lived experiences.



There was a—I'm not going to say a summer because it's happening all the time—but, there had been a lot of deaths, you know, by black from black people and just it—it was a very hard time. And it was something that we as a group wanted to talk about because people had different perspectives and different opinions. And I think that sometimes what different individuals said rubbed other individuals the wrong way. And **I think that there was times where everybody didn't feel heard or valued and it got a little heated at times.** I don't really feel like it was resolved.

-Parent leader



I was able to ask what was a different like what were the ladies' understanding to what is racial equity. And in that conversation... there were women that are, that are Arabic, there are women that were Caucasian and women that were African American, there are some that were biracial. But we all were able to give our perspective on racial equity, on what's happening in our community. So, my example was that the difference on just the side of town that you stay on can make a difference of the produce that you're given... And then there was a parent that gave an example of the difference of her racial equity where she learned and her language, her vocabulary. This happened to be a Caucasian parent and she was saying that it was—she based off of her growing up in her small town, there wasn't any African American people there... So, when she was exposed to the [statewide] group... or even exposed to different people from being a part of leadership or parent leadership, it allowed her to learn different ways on how to communicate in that wasn't offensive ...a lot of us that were able to say, **"Thank you for giving your perspective. Thank you for being transparent and saying that you didn't know or that you didn't—you weren't educated on, you know, on this ...** Like things of that and just us having a safe space, we were able to be transparent with, you know, real life experiences but then it was to be educated so that we won't be able to use ignorance as an excuse.

-Parent leader

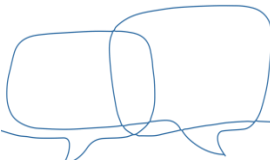
RESULTS

Impacts of Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group Membership

Parent leaders described many impacts of their participation in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting group.

Parent leaders gained new knowledge and skills.

Parent leaders discussed gaining new knowledge and skills through participating in the Statewide Parent Leadership in Home Visiting group. Many spoke about how much their confidence grew as they learned about the role parent leaders play in the early childhood system and practiced leadership skills like public speaking. Multiple parent leaders indicated that as they learned and practiced how to share their personal stories, they realized that their voice was powerful and that they could make a difference.



And just being able to lead them and seeing the different things that was going on in the community and that I could write some of those issues, just **being that voice and stepping up**. I didn't know that I was allowed to do that. I didn't know that was a thing.

-Parent leader

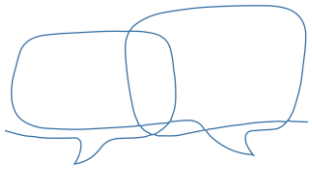


I started when I first joined that group, I wasn't the same young lady that I am today. Where now I don't mind publicly speaking, now I don't mind carrying on conversations with other moms, and being transparent about where my mind is at, and how I'm feeling...I do feel like being a part of the first—of being—first being initiated into and being able to know or experiencing the local leaders was one thing. But then being connected to the statewide and seeing all of the other mothers, all of the other ladies that how they speak out, the diversity of it, yeah, I feel like it has helped me improve greatly.

-Parent leader

The Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group fostered leadership in parents who varied in their readiness to identify as a parent leader.

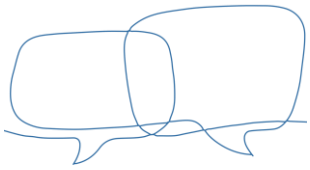
Some parent leaders discussed becoming a leader through their LLG and Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group as an entirely new and surprising experience. Some parent leaders discussed overcoming feelings of shyness or being reserved. Others discussed that it meant overcoming long-held beliefs about the value of their opinions and experiences.



Interviewer: If you're shy and someone approaches you about being a parent leader, what was your first thought?

Storyteller: I was like, "What?" I was like, "What? Do who? When?" And I was like, "Really?" And they was like, "Yeah, you'd be good. **You know, you can voice your opinion and you can advocate.**"

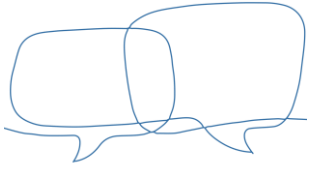
-Parent leader



Shocked (laughs), I guess. Because, uh, somebody—it's like I guess growing up, especially in the home I grew up in, I didn't think my words or opinion mattered. **So to think that somebody felt that my words and opinion mattered made a difference.** I'm like, "Oh, okay, you want to actually hear what I have to say. Oh, thank you (laughs)."

-Parent leader

Other parent leaders came into the role more naturally. Some described their own personalities as natural leaders—assertive and not afraid to speak out.



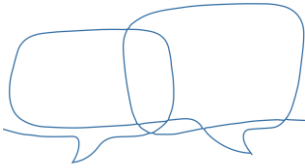
I always thought I was a pretty boisterous, confident person in myself. But through becoming a parent leader, **I have learned more tactful ways of being boisterous** (laughs) that can be still very assertive but more articulately and what, you know, like where you just get your voice heard more clearly without so much emotions.

-Parent leader



The Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group facilitated many parents to embrace the identity of 'parent leader'.

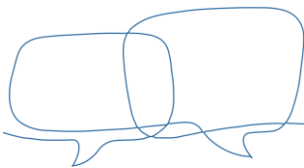
Many parent leaders spoke about their personal transformation into a parent leadership role. Some parent leaders discussed being initially motivated to lead to advocate for their own family and to become a better parent. Parent leaders often described a profound shift in how they thought of themselves as they learned about the leadership role they could take on through participation in the Local Leadership Groups and the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group.



I remember when I first came, I was like, "Oh, I'm just a parent. I'm just a parent..." And I was told—I was stopped right then and like, **"You are not just a parent. We are not just parents. We are so much more."** And we really are. We are more than parents.

-Parent leader

Some parent leaders talked about how their journey as a parent leader was impacted by their experience as a parent of a child with special healthcare needs (CSHCN). Parent leaders who had children with special healthcare needs (CSHCN) often described feeling motivated to be part of the early childhood system. Several parent leaders credited their home visitors with encouraging screening and supporting their families through diagnosis and early intervention. Becoming a parent leader in the home visiting space was described by parent leaders as allowing them to give back and advocate for a system that had a positive impact on their own family.



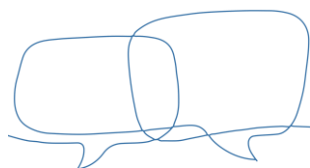
I came to the table as a parent of [number] kiddos with autism...And **our home visitor was the reason that my kids were diagnosed.** Without her saying, "Hey, I feel like I see something different. Okay, we're not reaching our milestones. Maybe we should look at something else." And holding my hand through that process because it was not easy. I was able to take that story and we had somebody come in from the state and they were asking, you know, "How do we know that these home visitors are making a difference?"

-Parent leader

Some parent leaders described how the group helped them identify their interest in advocating for early childhood systems and described it as finding their path or purpose in their life.

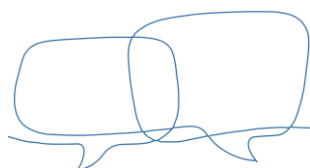
Finally, parent leaders described how their transformation into a leadership role was validated by both peers and professionals. Parent leaders described how they received support from their peers, particularly around sharing their stories and being encouraged to continue engaging in leadership activities.

One example of validation that parent leaders discussed was the reception that parent leaders described receiving as parent leaders in professional settings, such as the Home Visiting Conference. Parent leaders also discussed feeling validated when professionals engaged with the group explicitly for their feedback as a group of experts.



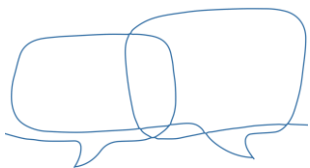
When I went to that first meeting, I was just—I was hooked from there. Because realizing that it's possible to make a difference and not just for my kids, but other people's. I thought, **"You know what? I feel like this is what I was born for. I feel like this is it."**

-Parent leader



[Interviewer speaking to Storyteller]: And see that, **that viewpoint right there is why we need you to stay in the group until it is time to age out because we need your voice, we need your husband's voice to get more fathers in there** so you cannot (both laugh)—this is my plea. This is my—this is my plea, no my demand....if that's your passion and it's not there, then that's a need in our system that you can possibly fill.

-Parent leader



It was right after I presented at the home visiting conference. When I had home visitors, directors, supervisors, etc. coming to all of the parents and not just me in particular, but to the parents and saying how much they look forward to that particular workshop. Like that is the most well attended workshop ever. Just to have people validate our purpose and asked us, was just talking to us like we were for equals or experts basically. **And they were looking at us like experts. And—and we are!**

-Parent leader

Parent leaders became involved in more state and national leadership opportunities after being a member of the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group.

	BEFORE <i>Statewide Group membership</i>	DURING & AFTER <i>Statewide Group membership</i>
 Family roles	Informal advocacy for family	Informal advocacy for family
 Community roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Leadership Group • Great Start • Scouts • Church groups • Parent Advocate or Community Board Member • Volunteer (food pantry, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Start • Little Free Libraries • Local Conference Participant • Children's Advocacy Center • County Commissioner's Board • Invited Talks at Community Events
 State roles		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group • Parents Partnering for Change Training • Co-chair or tri-chair Home Visiting Advisory Group • Lead Expansion Advisory Program • State Conference Participant
 National roles		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Home Visiting Network Michigan Representative • Healthy Families Parents for Teachers Board • National opportunities (unspecified)

Figure 2. Parent leaders participated in more state and national roles after being a member of the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group.

Many parent leaders reported being actively engaged in their families and communities before joining the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group (see Figure 2). Importantly, parent leaders discussed participating in more state and national leadership roles after being in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group. Even parent leaders who were active at the community level prior to their participation in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group described being in more formal roles during and after their participation in the group.

Parent leaders discussed participating in additional leadership groups but could not recall the timing of their participation relative to the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group. These included:

Community Organizing Family Issues (COFI)

Ready by Five Review Board

Think Babies of Michigan Steering Committee

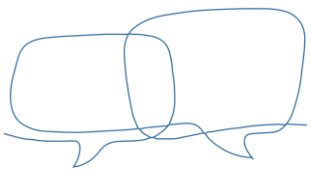
Regional Perinatal Quality Collaborative

Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition

Chairman on the Policy Council for Mid-Michigan Community Action Agency

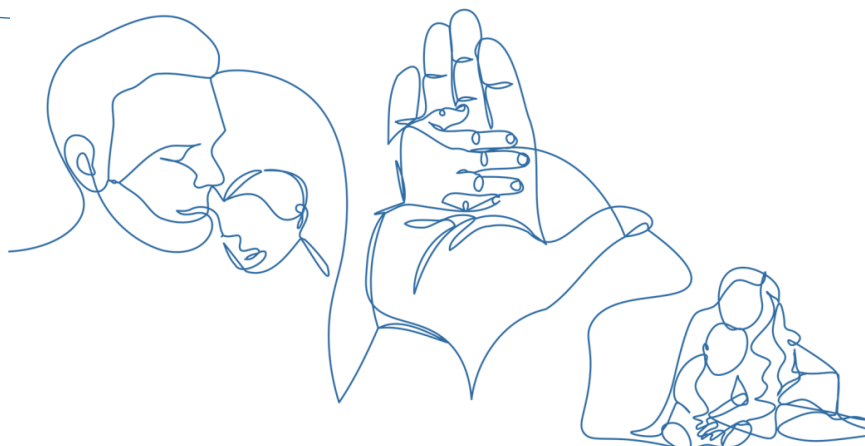
Family Leadership Network for MI Family-to-Family Health Information Center

Parent leaders also noted that once they became active in their communities, they got tapped for many opportunities and it became more difficult to keep different groups straight.



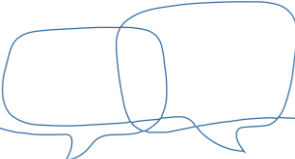
I'm trying to think because I feel like I was just like thrown in all the groups and I didn't really know what groups I was going to meetings for; I was just showing up at meetings... Then I'd be like, "Okay, so what meeting was that?" And, "What meetings are we meeting for now?" **...I just knew I jumped in and if I had an input, we made sure we gave it, and that was it.**

-Parent leader



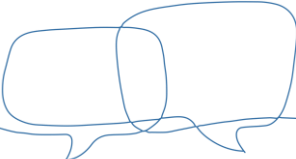
Parent leaders' perspectives were broadened by working with peers from communities across Michigan.

Many parent leaders discussed that being brought together with parents from across the state helped teach them how to navigate differences. Some indicated that this was one of the first times they had met and talked deeply with peers who lived in other communities with different strengths and challenges than their own community. Parent leaders discussed being able to find common ground despite differences in their perspectives and supporting each other across these differences.



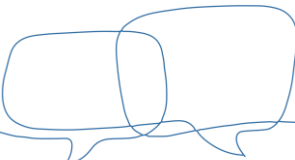
And I'm like, "You're telling your four year old what?" You know, and it broke my heart to like imagine it and like it even now gets me emotional because I have a [number] year old and a [number] year old and I never thought to tell them, you know, like, **"If we get pulled over, you put your hands where the officer can see you."** Like that never crossed my mind. **And the fact that I didn't know that parents have to do that with their babies broke my heart.**

-Parent leader



Like we have the counties that are so rural that **it's a whole different life almost in the same state** compared to what our Wayne County parents that are inner city and dealing with things that the world would be—the parents are like that like, "What?!?" And then Wayne County's like, "What do you mean you don't have a bus line that runs through town?"

-Parent leader



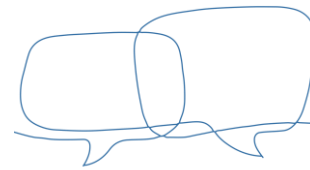
...one of the gals, her and I had talked about my son is—I'm not entirely sure if he's gay or not or, you know, that type of thing. He—he's talked with us about it. And so she is, I think she is non-binary or, you know, something. She is very involved with—with different things. And obviously I—I know nothing, right? And so, she has really helped reach out to me like with different local events and she's like, "Oh, did you see that this is going on?"...**I think that's really helped grow our relationship, you know, my relationship with my son is that I have someone who I can reach out to, you know, if I need advice, if I need to help my—to help my son with something.**

-Parent leader

Some parent leaders translated their experiences into professional opportunities closely related to early childhood work.

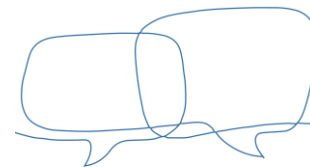
Parent leaders reflected on the degree to which their experience in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group helped prepare them for professional roles and paid work. A few parent leaders described how their leadership experiences helped to transition them into their current roles in the early childhood field. Several others described engaging in freelance or consulting work, believing strongly in the impact they were having. Several other parent leaders described how they were exploring transitions into paid work but had not found a position. For example, a few parent leaders described applying to parent coordinator positions but not receiving offers. Other parent leaders described that they supported early childhood work but were not interested in seeking professional roles due to feeling that these positions are often underpaid and under respected.

Finally, some parent leaders described the sense of emotional loss that might come from leaving a strong parent leader community and becoming a professional in that space instead. They noted the loss that may come with a transition from speaking from a personal perspective to moving into a professional role where one is representing organizational priorities.



That's right. **This is a labor of love** for real...because nobody gets in this for the money, I'm—I'm telling you.

-Parent leader



And that I was talking with [facilitator], who's kind of become a mentor. And she's like, "Yeah, if you're a home visitor, you can't really advocate for home visiting because you've got—and as a parent you've kind of got that muddled perspective. You're going to have to let that go." I'm like, "Oh. Oh."...It's gotten as far as **I don't want to work full-time yet and I don't want to do anything that restricts my ability to advocate for home visiting.** So that's kind of as far as I've gotten.

-Parent leader

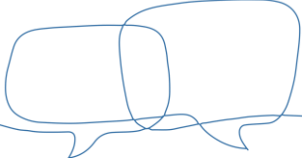
Parent leaders' increased skills and knowledge led to benefits for their families, communities, and early childhood systems.

Parent leaders became stronger advocates and role models for their families.

Parent leaders described how the most immediate benefit of participating in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group for their families was learning about general resources in their communities that support families and resources specific to child development such as reading and literacy. They also described how they applied some behavioral techniques with their families that they learned through leadership training, such as learning how to respond and not react and adopting a growth mindset (admitting mistakes and learning from them).

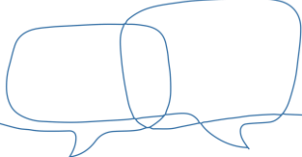
Parent leaders also described how taking on a leadership role outside of parenting helped them find balance in their life. This additional role was the source of increased self-esteem and sense of personal agency. Some parent leaders spoke about the pride they had in being a role model for their own children as their leadership was acknowledged.

Finally, parent leaders discussed using their leadership skills to advocate for their own families more effectively. They discussed applying the skills and techniques they learned from the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group and other parent leadership opportunities to the challenges their own family faced.



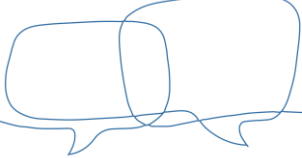
This pregnancy is worlds different than my first pregnancy because **I have the resources and the support that I did not have when I was pregnant with my first.**

-Parent leader



When your kids start to see the difference that you're making, it changes you.

-Parent leader

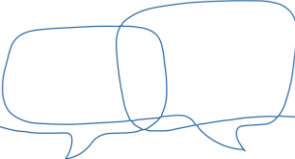


[Talking about intervening with teachers] I wouldn't have been able to do that if I didn't have the tools from the group, this group and, you know, to put that together to say, **"Hey, you do matter. You know, you do. Your voice matters and you are important in those ways."**

-Parent leader

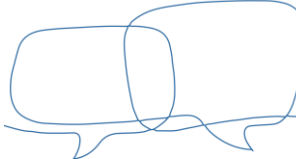
Parent leaders advocated for others in their community.

Parent leaders described a shift from being a person seeking support to a person offering help to others. Many discussed being proud to play a role in building their community through sharing resources and experiences so other parents could more easily navigate challenges during early childhood.



And it's nice to be like, **"Yes! I am working towards making it better for other families and not just taking care of my own."** I like having that bigger purpose and the statewide meetings definitely help with that.

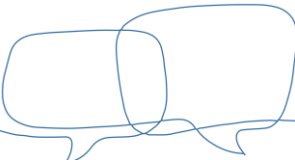
-Parent leader



Whenever you're afforded an opportunity, most times it's not for you; it's for you to help somebody else that used to be in a place that you was in.

-Parent leader

When operating from within a leadership group, many parent leaders discussed being able to see home visiting as a strategy for addressing inequities. Some discussed having a role in building trust with other parents in the community to reduce stigma of home visiting services. Parent leaders indicated that it was important to them that home visiting was seen as a support for families and not a sign that something was going wrong.



I used to be a kindergarten teacher. And I was like, "Catching them by kindergarten is early enough." And I got my Masters in early childhood and I was like, "This is not enough." Like **home visiting is the way to bring equity.**

-Parent leader

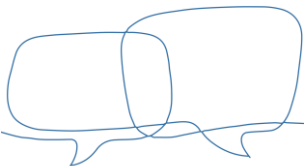


Parent leaders impacted early childhood systems.

Parent leaders also discussed how their leadership impacted early childhood systems. When coding this section, the MPHI team used the FSG's systems change model to understand the types of systems changes being described. It is important to note that some parent leaders were not sure or did not know how their parent leadership activities impacted the early childhood system.

Explicit Structural Change (Policies, Practices, or Resource Flows)

Structural change refers to how the system operates and describes changes to the way things are done and what activities are supported with resources. Parent leaders described examples of changing policies and practices within the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group or LLG to better support parent voice.

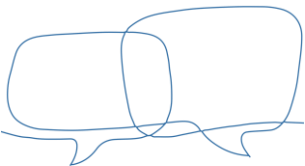


I think some of the stuff that we came up with, **some of the things that we fought for was actually adopted and implemented in the—in the local LLGs or in the bylaws of—of certain groups.** So yeah, I think it was very effective.

-Parent leader

Semi-explicit Relationship Change (Relationships and Connections, or Power Dynamics)

Relational change refers to how people within a system interact with each other and influence decision-making. Parent leaders described relationship and networking effects as a result of their participation in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting group, such as having the ears of system leaders and being able to provide feedback when asked.



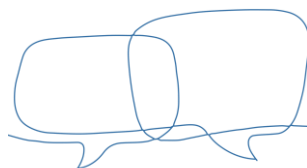
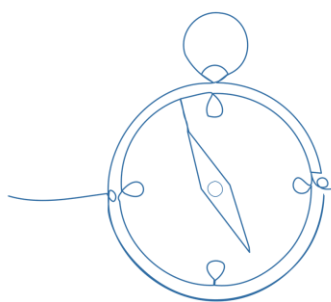
We do not have no one taking care of our children like you do. We are, as you say, low on the totem pole. We're not making the big bucks like you are. **So unless you can come down to our level** and feel what we go through and manage our family on what you put down and what you say that we can work off of and that we've managed off of, **you have no right telling us what we can and cannot do and what we cannot say.**

-Parent leader

Parent leaders also described being able to speak to gaps between design and implementation as the major stakeholders of home visiting programs. Parent leaders described using their voice and real-life perspectives to help make sure programs work the way they are intended.

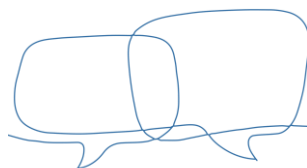
Implicit Transformative Change (Mental Models)

Transformative change is made to a system when thoughts and beliefs about that system change. Parent leaders described how their efforts are consistent with mental model shifts for home visiting. For example, some parent leaders described how home visiting as a key to achieving social equity and a support that would benefit all families. Others spoke to the historic power dynamics in the home visiting system (having majority white staff serving communities of color) that need to be changed for effective service delivery.



I mean you can look at numbers, you can look at data, you can look at all of that stuff, you can say, “Well, with this, we project this.” But unless you actually have the parents and you’re listening to their voices because they’re the ones that are in the trenches with the children and they’re doing it day-to-day, (laughs) you know, they’re the ones that are being able to pull these—these opportunities and—and implement them in their families. And unless they’re being implemented as they’re supposed to be, then they’re just a bunch of paper and they’re not doing any good. **So by getting the involvement from the parents, and knowing what’s actually working and what’s not working, I think that’s—that was what’s good about having us in there, I would say.**

-Parent leader



First and foremost, **I try to get these organizations that I work with now to try to like not just look at where we are right now, but to take a historical view.** And what that means to the minority community because a lot of times the minority community, whenever a worker got involved—and that worker was usually Caucasian—the minority family or community lost. So what I try to do now, as being a parent leader is get these organizations to recognize that and acknowledge that and then go from there.

-Parent leader

RECOMMENDATIONS

What could be done differently to make the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting group better?

To build upon the strengths of the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group that are highlighted throughout this report, parent leaders were asked to provide feedback on how to continue to improve the group for members. Their recommendations are summarized below.

Flexibility in meeting structure may help increase connection and engagement.

Parent leaders discussed how having more flexibility in how meetings are delivered would help more individuals participate and engage in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group. This recommendation is closely linked to the observations highlighted earlier in the report related to the strengths of different meeting structures. Parent leaders' suggestions included:



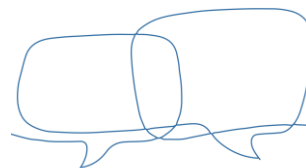
Having hybrid meetings will allow parent leaders to attend in the format that they prefer to best meet their needs.



Recording meetings and having them available for parent leaders to watch at a later time if they have scheduling conflicts.



Rotating in-person meeting locations, making it easier for individuals that live close to the meeting location to attend in-person, rather than having one location be a barrier to the same parent leaders all the time.



So I think as well—it went really well for a first run with a bunch of parents from a different, you know, areas and I mean maybe the location could have been a little more central than Lansing for those of them coming from up North. Because I know some of those people had to drive like six hours or so back and forth. And like that's a huff of a day, especially with like childcare and stuff. So maybe like **changing the location every couple months or something, you know, so you get more representation from the further away areas or make it less of a burden for them.**

-Parent leader

Opportunities for connection are important for creating relationships and fostering engagement.

Parent leaders identified the importance of making social connections to feeling connected to and engaged in the group. In support of this, parent leaders suggested more opportunities to connect in the group, especially since the transition to virtual meetings. Suggestions to increase connections among parent leaders included:



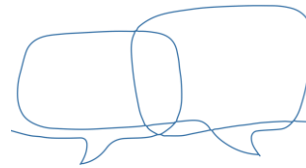
More in-person opportunities, such as in-person meetings or informal get togethers.



More small breakout groups during meetings to allow group members to connect and get to know each other on a more intimate level.

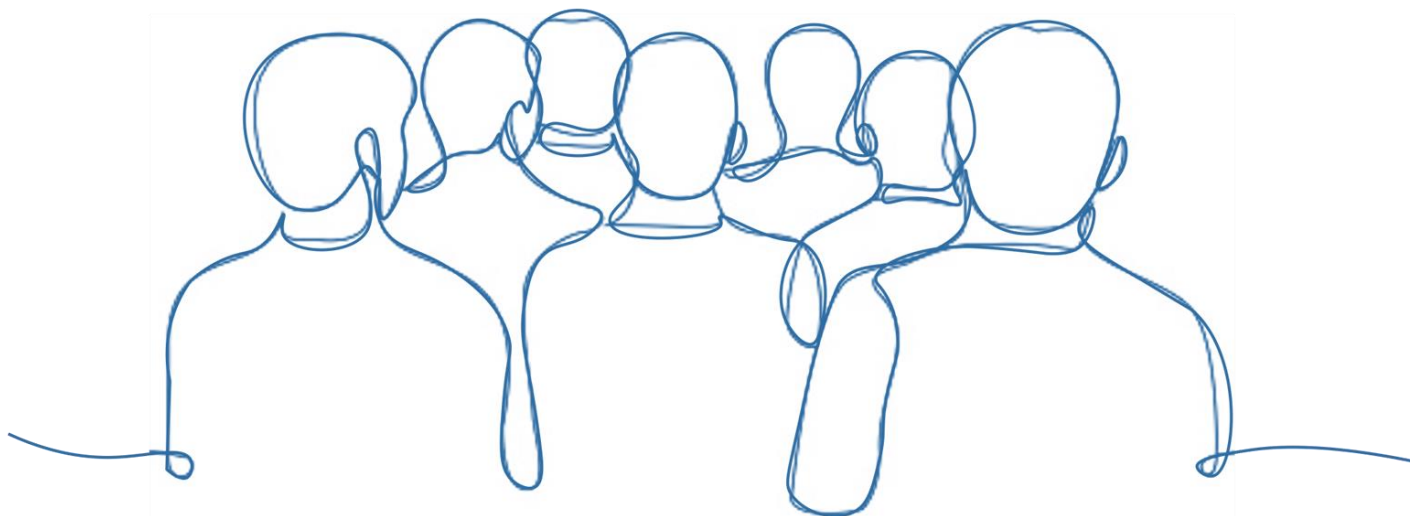


More social time built into the meeting to allow group members to get to know each other better and foster relationship building.



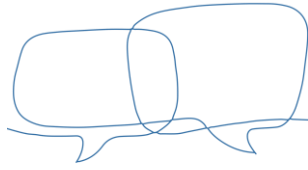
I know we're here to get information, we're here to maybe speak on things, we are here to like be a group that can go out and do leadership in other spaces. I get that, but the most impactful is the relationships. And you're not building good relationships with people I never seen in-person. It's just not—it's not giving—it's not giving what it needs to give. And so that is really what my recommendation. **We have to figure out a hybrid model or something like something. I just I don't like being on Zoom.**

-Parent leader



Parent leaders are looking for more opportunities to practice and use their skills.

Parent leaders discussed that having more trainings to develop their skills and more opportunities for engagement with systems stakeholders outside of the Home Visiting Conference would help parent leaders feel more engaged and better able to impact the early childhood system. Parent leaders also discussed how having the tangible needs of parent leaders met (such as childcare, food, and travel) would help parent leaders attend and be present during meetings.



We've been trained. Use us because we're only going to help you. Because we're... your biggest fighters. We're your—we are soldiers. Use us. Let us meet more. **Give us—give us opportunity to be that advocate for you and for our families.** That would be awesome to actually be used. I mean we do the whole Michigan conference, we do our meetings, we do our local things. But put us at that change. Put us at that change point. Send us in front of the governor. Send us in front of, you know, the other people. Send us—put us in front of the people that has control over the system.

-Parent leader

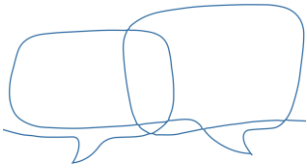
Expanding membership requirements and targeted recruitment may increase shared knowledge and diversity in the group.

Seasoned parent leaders have wisdom and knowledge to share.

Parent leaders discussed how they age out of the parent leadership group still feeling they have knowledge and experience to share with new parent leaders. This transition left seasoned parent leaders feeling a loss of identity and uncertainty about how they could still engage in parent leadership once their child reached a certain age. Their suggestions on how to address this issue included:

Changing the current age limit for parent leaders to be involved in the group, which would allow for parent leaders to continue to be involved.

Create a mentorship role for those that would “age out” under the current membership requirements, allowing them to share experience and knowledge with newer parent leaders.



Bring back parents like... who have been doing this for a while. Bring them back sporadically to be mentors to newer families. This is what we know and love- once our child ages out what do we do with all of this training. Even parents close to aging out- would be good to mentor.

-Parent leader

Recruitment efforts focused on expanding the diversity in parent voices in the group.

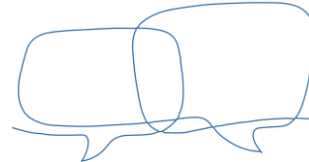
Parent leaders also discussed the desire to increase racial, geographical and gender diversity in group membership, to ensure that more parent voices and experiences are heard. Several parent leaders emphasized the need to incorporate a stronger fatherhood perspective in the group and highlighted efforts to raise this issue in group discussion. Their suggestions on how to address this issue included:



Increasing recruitment efforts at the local level to build greater community representation.

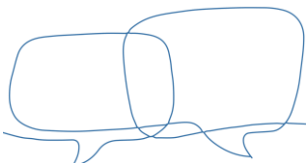


Targeting recruitment towards individuals with diverse racial, geographic, and gender identities to increase the diversity of representation and voice in the group.



Well, we know that this work is like 99.9% women (laughs).

-Parent leader



Everyone's voice should be heard. But think about all the counties that don't participate and the things that they have going on there or they don't have going on there. We need to hear those voices, too. And the U.P. is a big area and it's a shame that we can't grab more voices from there, whether it's like Tribal voices or—I mean we just need—we need to collect more.

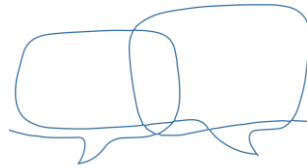
-Parent leader

Facilitator trainings may help navigate group conflict and member differences.

Trainings for facilitators help ensure group cohesion through conflict and member differences.

Parent leaders discussed throughout their interviews the key role that facilitators played in setting the mood of the group, particularly as it related to navigating group conflicts and diversity in member experiences and opinions. Being able to navigate these conflicts and differences was discussed as by parent leaders as a key component in supporting connection and cohesion among a diverse set of group members. Parent leaders suggested that facilitators participate in trainings focused on conflict resolution and diversity to develop strong skills in supporting groups through challenging conversations.

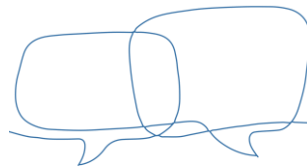
Additionally, parent leaders suggested that facilitators engage in trainings to address different learning styles, ensuring that they are able to meet all group participant needs in learning new skills and knowledge.



We need to work more on diversity, but we also need to have somebody that's trained in learning how deal with the issues when it comes down to diversity.

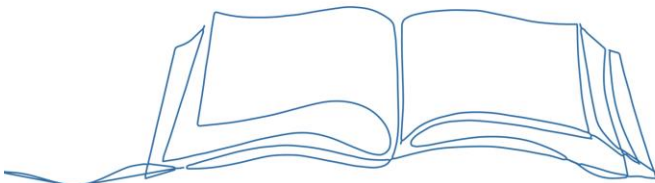
And when we want to—when we want to discuss it, don't push it under the rug. Don't change it. When you've got an issue and a conversation going on about it, keep it wide open. Don't—don't shut it down.

-Parent leader



So, that's like I said, one of my—one of my soapboxes is, you know, making sure that people understand different disabilities, different demographics, and all of that kind of thing. And all of the variation that comes with that, and what the personal needs might be. So **I think that that's one way that parents could probably be better served in this.**

-Parent leader



RECOMMENDATIONS

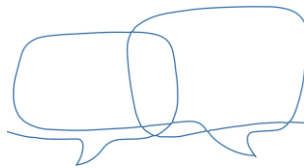
What thoughts would parent leaders share with future parent leaders?

Parent leaders were also asked to share words of wisdom and lessons learned from being a parent leader for future leaders.

Take advantage of opportunities and use your voice to make a difference.

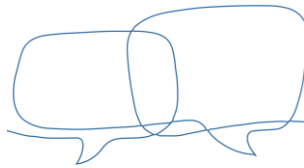
One of the main themes discussed by parent leaders throughout the interviews is how powerful the parent voice is and how it makes a difference in creating change. Using the parent voice was also discussed as a key lesson learned that parent leaders wanted to share with future parent leaders. They discussed how future leaders need to know that their voice matters and that parent leaders are the true experts in what needs to change to help other parents.

Parent leaders also discussed that it's important for future leaders to take the opportunities that are available to them. They discussed that taking opportunities, even when they think they will not lead to anything, can lead to other opportunities to make an impact for their families and their communities and should be looked at as a gift.



I would first tell them they're not just a parent. They're not just a mom. They're not just a dad. They are the leaders of their household and they are leaders out in their community, schools, classrooms, their work, that we can change things for the better with just our story, just using our voice.

-Parent leader

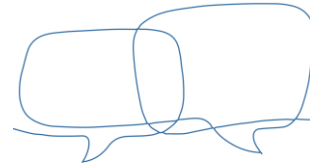


Do not take this opportunity for granted. This is a gift. It's a blessing. It's an opportunity.

-Parent leader

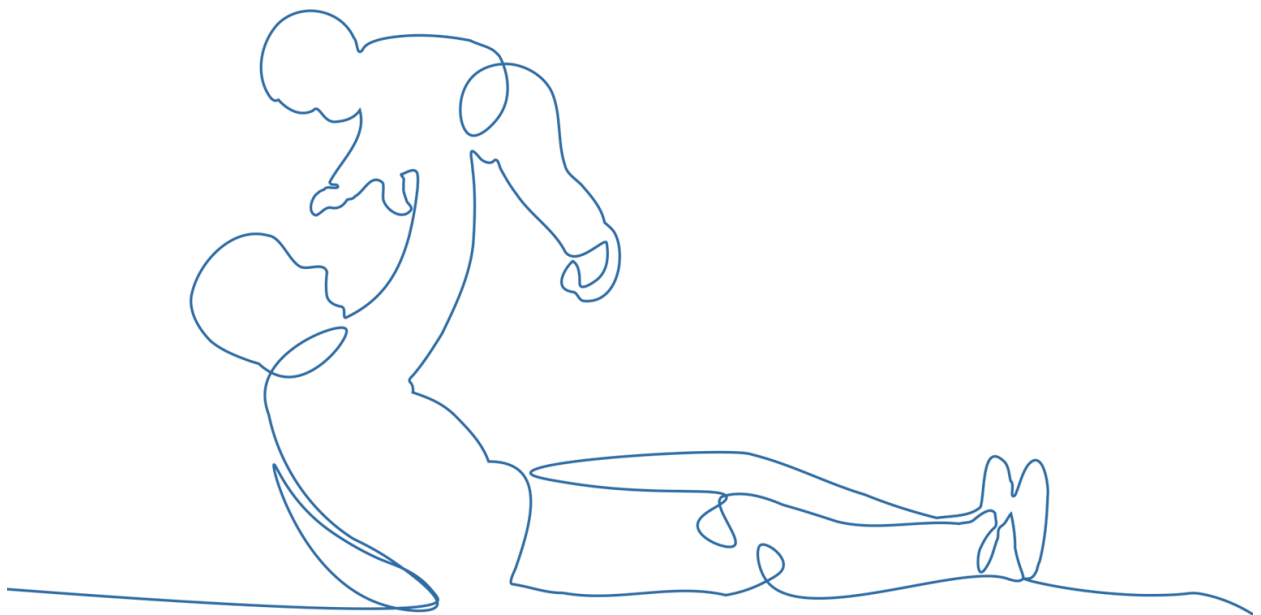
Setting appropriate boundaries is important for yourself and your child.

Another lesson learned that parent leaders wanted to share with future parent leaders is to set appropriate boundaries for themselves and their children. Parent leaders discussed the importance of engaging in self-care, making sure that parent leaders don't overextend themselves, and to take appropriate care of their mental health. Parent leaders also discussed the importance of reflecting on what you want to include in your personal story—both for themselves and their children. Parent leaders discussed that once they share their story, it is in the public sphere. They discussed how important it is to recognize that what and how much a parent leader decides to share could have potential future impacts on their child, including children who have grown up not being comfortable with what their parent had shared about their early life.



I would say we started when our kids were little like younger and my kids are older now. So the stories that I shared then, I probably wouldn't share now that one of them is legally an adult and the other one is an older teen. So I would caution upcoming parents. **Your story is important, but think about your child and what they want out there like their privacy in the future.**

-Parent leader



CONCLUSIONS

The twenty conversations between parent leaders who participated in Michigan’s Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group provided many insights into both supportive practices for parent leadership and opportunities to strengthen this system.

These findings suggested that relationship building among parent leader peers is critical for deeper and longer-lasting engagement in parent leadership activities. These relationships are more robust when parent leaders can get to know each other in person and while connecting over shared work towards a defined goal. While preparing for presentations at the home visiting conference served that purpose, there may be other opportunities to build relationships through collaborative leadership work. This may also help in building the bridge between making personal connections and coming together to have an impact on the system.

The group experienced two very different meeting structures: fully in-person and fully remote. Parent leaders articulated the strengths and challenges of each format and suggested a path forward for building off the strengths of each to create a meeting strategy that is both more broadly accessible and provides opportunity for social connection.

Diverse voices are critical for both personal growth and for ensuring that the activities, goals, and products of the parent leadership group are serving many communities. The group embraced diverse perspectives and membership, and they wanted greater diversity and better representation of the state’s home visiting population. Continuing to provide tangible support that meets diverse needs for parent leaders to engage is critical for maintaining robust membership.

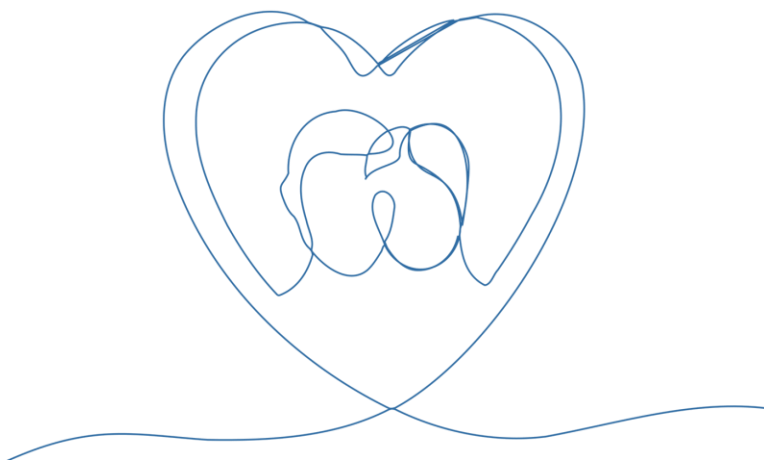
Facilitators have a powerful role in setting the tone of the group, modeling leadership practices, providing opportunities for growth, and navigating transitions. Parent leaders praised the skill of the group’s facilitators and identified aspects of facilitation practice that worked especially well, such as creating a culture of inclusiveness, creating a tight-knit community, and supporting professional skill development. Facilitators may benefit from ongoing professional development and support as the group continues to grow and evolve—especially with the growth of diversity among members.



Parent leadership provides many opportunities for personal growth and the experience of this group inspired some to remain engaged in parent leadership and early childhood work. Membership in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group appeared to have a strong impact on connection to formal leadership positions at the community, state, and national levels. While some members embraced opportunities and navigated a path forward, others would benefit from supportive transition practices to understand what comes next. Early childhood leaders may also be engaged to think about how to work with the group and its alumni to continue to improve the early childhood system and take advantage of many years of institutional knowledge and investment. Parent leaders in this study certainly expressed the desire to do more.

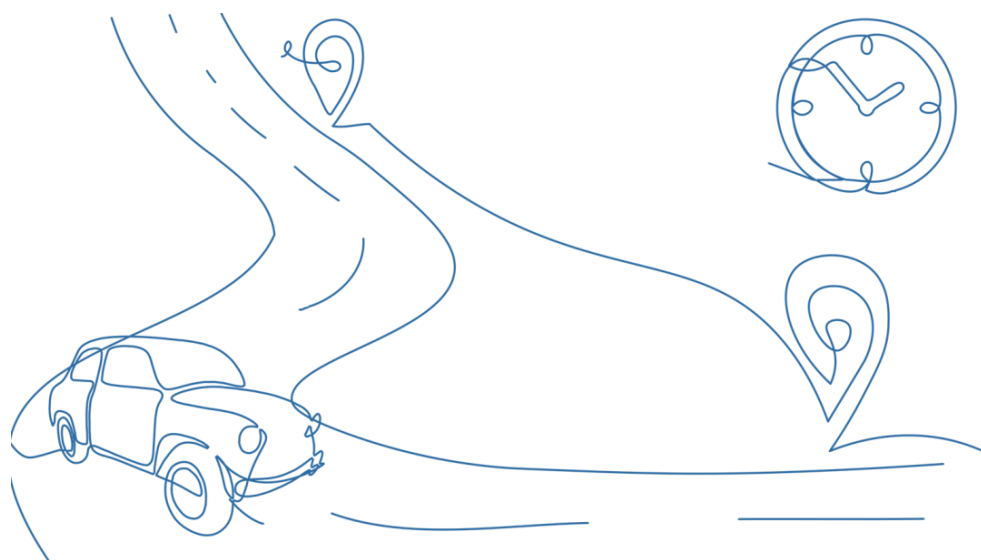
Engaging parent leaders to be present in early childhood system conversations is an important system change. It fosters relationships between families and early childhood professionals and creates the possibility for power sharing in spaces where decisions are being made. Parent stories help professionals understand the experiences of home visiting families that may impact their decisions, as well as how they think about the people served by the system and its programs. However, parent leaders often do not know what professionals do because of parent leadership efforts. Increased transparency and communication about the influence of parent leaders may benefit leaders themselves and help identify the mechanisms through which parent leadership leads to improvements in early childhood services for Michigan's families.

There are several limitations to this study. While the opportunity to participate was shared broadly with parents who had participated in the statewide parent leaders in home visiting group, it was not possible to hear all experiences and perspectives. There may be some experiences not represented here. The storytelling methodology was chosen to allow parent leaders to reflect on their experience. Future research should supplement these findings using population-based methods to understand how representative these experiences were for parent leaders participating in this group. Finally, this study focused on one parent leadership experience in Michigan. Additional work on different parent leadership supports and systems is necessary to understand the common practices that best support parent leaders and maximize their impact on systems.



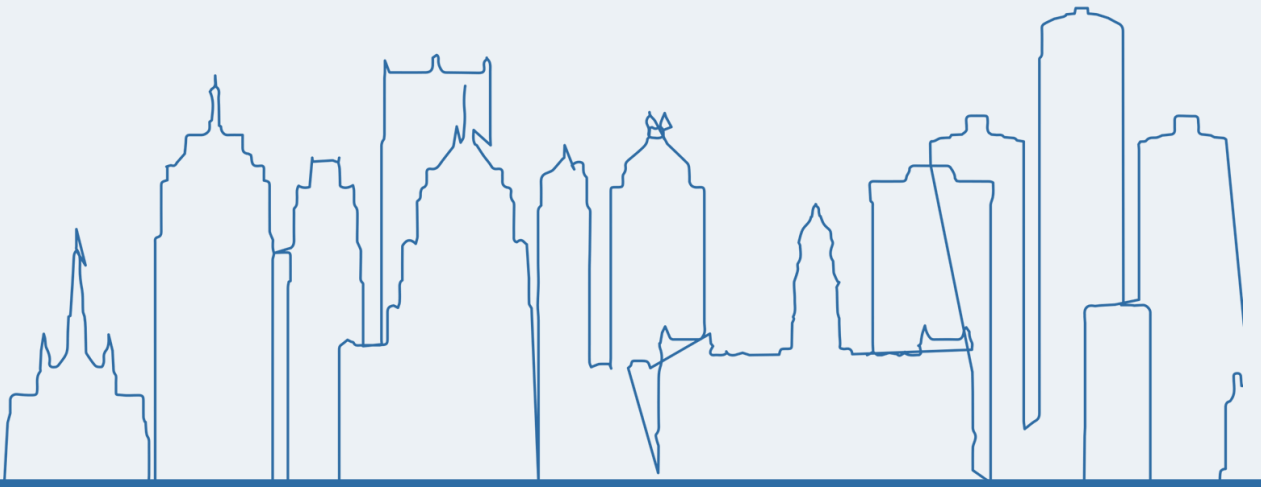
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the parent leaders who engaged in this project: from the StoryCorps workshop to the sense making session. We appreciate their taking the time to document their parent leadership experience through this study and lift up their voices and support their peers as interviewers. Thanks also to the staff at StoryCorps® whose guidance helped create a supportive process for parent leaders. Finally, thanks to Bryn Fortune for her consultation, wisdom, and support as we engaged parent leaders in this study and endeavored to understand the context of their experiences.



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APPENDICES





Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group Storytelling

Interview Guide



Getting Ready to Record

Here are some things you can do to make sure you are ready to record with your storyteller. These steps are important to make sure we can hear the conversation clearly and not miss important parts of the story.

- Make sure you're comfortable!
- Set-up in a quiet location and eliminate background noise and distractions (when possible)
- Use headphones if you have them
- Close other programs on your phone or computer and limit other internet use in your location
- Turn your camera on—it is important for the storyteller to see you

Using Your Own Words

The questions we would like you to ask your storyteller are listed below in the Interview Script. Some people are more comfortable reading the questions as they are and that's ok. Some people might want to change the words a little so they sound more like the way they talk. That's ok too as long as the question still has the same meaning. The MPHI facilitator will be listening to make sure the idea of the question got asked and answered.

 Original question	 Means about the same
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In what ways did you feel actively engaged in the meetings of the Statewide group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happened in the group that made you feel really “into it”?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What learning opportunities did you have in the Statewide Group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What new skills did you learn or practice in the Statewide Group?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In what ways has participating in the Statewide group made any difference for you personally?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell me how being a part of the Statewide group changed your life.



Flow of the Conversation

The storyteller may say something that answers a question that is asked later. This is fine! You have some options:

1. If you feel like they fully answered the question, you can cross it off your question list.
2. If they start to answer, but you want more detail, you can jump to that question and ask follow-up questions in the moment.
3. If you are more comfortable following the flow of the questions, you can ask the question when it comes, remind them of what they already said, and ask if they have anything to add.



Supporting the Storyteller

As an interviewer, your role is to support the person who is sharing their story. Here are some examples of what that looks like:

 Things you can SAY	 Things you can DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect their answers back by repeating or summarizing• Use follow-up questions and prompts to guide and support• Cover all the question topics to give everyone the same chance to share• Remind them they don't have to answer questions they don't want to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make eye contact, show that you're listening by nodding or smiling• Give your partner time to reflect and share, a bit of silence is ok• Keep the things you hear in the session confidential—what's said in the conversation, stays in the conversation• Listen carefully and ask questions when something is unclear

Asking Follow-Up Questions

Here are some of the follow up questions StoryCorps staff shared to help people give details to their stories (FACTS) and reflect on what their experiences mean to them (FEELINGS):

 Facts	 Feelings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happened next?• Can you paint a picture in words?• Can you give me an example?• What was there with you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How did it make you feel?• What was the turning point for you?• What were you thinking when that happened?• How has this changed you?

Some follow-up question ideas are also listed in the script below. You do not need to ask all these follow-up questions! They are in **ORANGE text** so you can tell which is an optional question. You can also use a follow-up from the table above or one that makes sense to you.

Role of the MPHI Facilitator

You will have a MPHI facilitator with you in the session and we may politely interrupt once in a while. We might hear something that's really interesting to us and we want to hear more about it. It doesn't mean you are not doing a great job! Everybody hears something different and has their own questions. These are the roles of the facilitator:

- **Second interviewer:** Might interrupt with follow-up questions, have some more questions at the end if there is time and help keep track of which questions have been answered
- **Timekeeper:** Suggest we move onto a new question if time is growing short
- **Tech Support:** Will keep an eye on the Zoom call and make sure everything is running smoothly

Interview Script

We are looking forward to hearing your story about being a parent leader in the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting group. Most of these questions are about your experience in this group. We know you have been a part of other leadership groups, but today we'd like you to focus your storytelling on your experiences with the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting group. Sometimes the questions will refer to this group as the "Statewide group". I was part of that group too, from [YEAR] to [YEAR]. I am also going to ask some questions about bigger ideas outside of that group too.

[Name] is also with us from MPHI as a facilitator. She may also ask a follow-up question or have some additional questions at the end of the session. She will also be in charge of the Zoom call and can help if you have any trouble with technology.

Remember, you do not have to answer questions that you don't want to and you can stop our conversation at any time. Do you have any questions for me or [MPHI facilitator] about our conversation today?

[MPHI facilitator] will start the recording now.

**** 8-10 minutes

*** 5-7 minutes

** 3-5 minutes

* 1-2 minutes

1. What does it mean to you to be a parent leader? ***

2. What other parent leadership experiences did you have before joining your local leadership group? *

3. Can you describe what a meeting with the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group was like?
Can you paint me a picture in words?****
 - a. What did you do?
 - b. What did it feel like to be there?
 - c. What did you look forward to?
 - d. What didn't work well for you?
 - e. Were meetings in person or virtual? If both, what were some differences?
 - f. Did you feel comfortable being yourself during the statewide group meetings?
 - g. Did certain voices dominate the conversations? Were things done to try to hear from everyone in the group?
 - h. If things got hard or uncomfortable, was the issue ignored? Or did it get resolved over time?

4. In what ways did you feel actively engaged in the meetings of the Statewide group? ***
 - a. Did you feel welcomed into the group?
 - b. Did you feel your voice and input mattered and was valued?
 - c. What or who supported your engagement?
 - d. What else would have supported your active engagement?

5. In what ways did you connect with other parent leaders in the group? ***
 - a. How important were those connections to you?
 - b. Can you tell me about a time when group members supported each other?
 - c. Can you tell me about a time when group members had conflicting views?

6. In what ways has participating in the Statewide group made any difference for you personally? ***
 - a. In what ways has it made a difference for your family? **

7. What learning opportunities did you have in the Statewide Group? **
 - a. Tell me about a time that you practiced something you learned? (If you can't that's ok!)
 - b. What was the most important thing you learned?

8. How did the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group contribute to Michigan's home visiting system to better serve families? *

9. What could be done differently to make the Statewide Parent Leaders in Home Visiting Group better? *

10. What thoughts would you share with future parent leaders? *



**StoryCorps & Michigan Public Health Institute
Lessons from StoryCorps**

WORKSHOP GUIDE

Monday, March 7

Thank you for joining us and spending time together today. We've provided this guide as your "notes" from our session so you can come back to it any time you'd like to revisit the stories or what we discussed.

PRESENTERS:

Perri Chinalai and Emily Janssen, StoryCorps

Stories:

[Double Major](#)

[Destined to Be](#)

[Russell and David](#)

[Yelitza and Willie](#)

[Keith and Ellen](#)

[Kevin, Isaiah, and Josiah Fredericks](#)

What we did today:

- Listened to stories from StoryCorps
- Reflected on why sharing parent leaders stories are so important
- Did an exercise to name aspects of our identities that make us who we are and become a part of our stories
- Begin to prepare to record a conversation as part of the Parents as Leaders Storytelling Project

What is the Parent Leadership in Home Visiting Story Capture Project?

- Invitation for Parent Leaders to share your experience and reflections.
- These stories will help measure the impact of being a parent leader and help the state understand how they can support future leaders.
- We want to hear your personal experience being a parent leader in your own voice.
- Do you have questions about the project?
Contact Allison at amorey@mphi.org

What is StoryCorps?

StoryCorps is supporting the project to share what we've learned from recording and sharing personal stories for almost two decades.

Watch this video to hear our founder, Dave Isay, talk about how StoryCorps began:

[About StoryCorps: How we started](#)
[Transcript](#)

Explore StoryCorps' website to learn more about what we do and to listen to more stories: www.storycorps.org

StoryCorps' Mission

StoryCorps' mission is to preserve and share humanity's stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world.

Listen to a StoryCorps Story

The best way to understand StoryCorps is by listening to a story.

Watch the animation [Double Major](#). We hear just a few minutes of a longer, forty minute conversation that Wil Smith recorded with his daughter, Olivia.

Key Ingredients of this project:

Here are some things to keep in mind about how this storytelling project is designed:

- You set aside time and space without distraction to be present and have a thoughtful conversation.
- You choose your conversation partner and lead the conversation.
- Focus on your leadership journey as parent leaders within the home visiting system.

COMMUNITY STORIES: WHY OUR STORIES MATTER

Why do you think stories about parent leaders could be important to share and hear?

Watch: [DESTINED TO BE](#)

Listen: [RUSSELL AND DAVID](#)

REFLECT (For each story):

This story made me feel... because...

I could really picture when...

This story made me think of....

I think it was important for [Sabrina and Shantay] / [Russell and David] to share this story because...

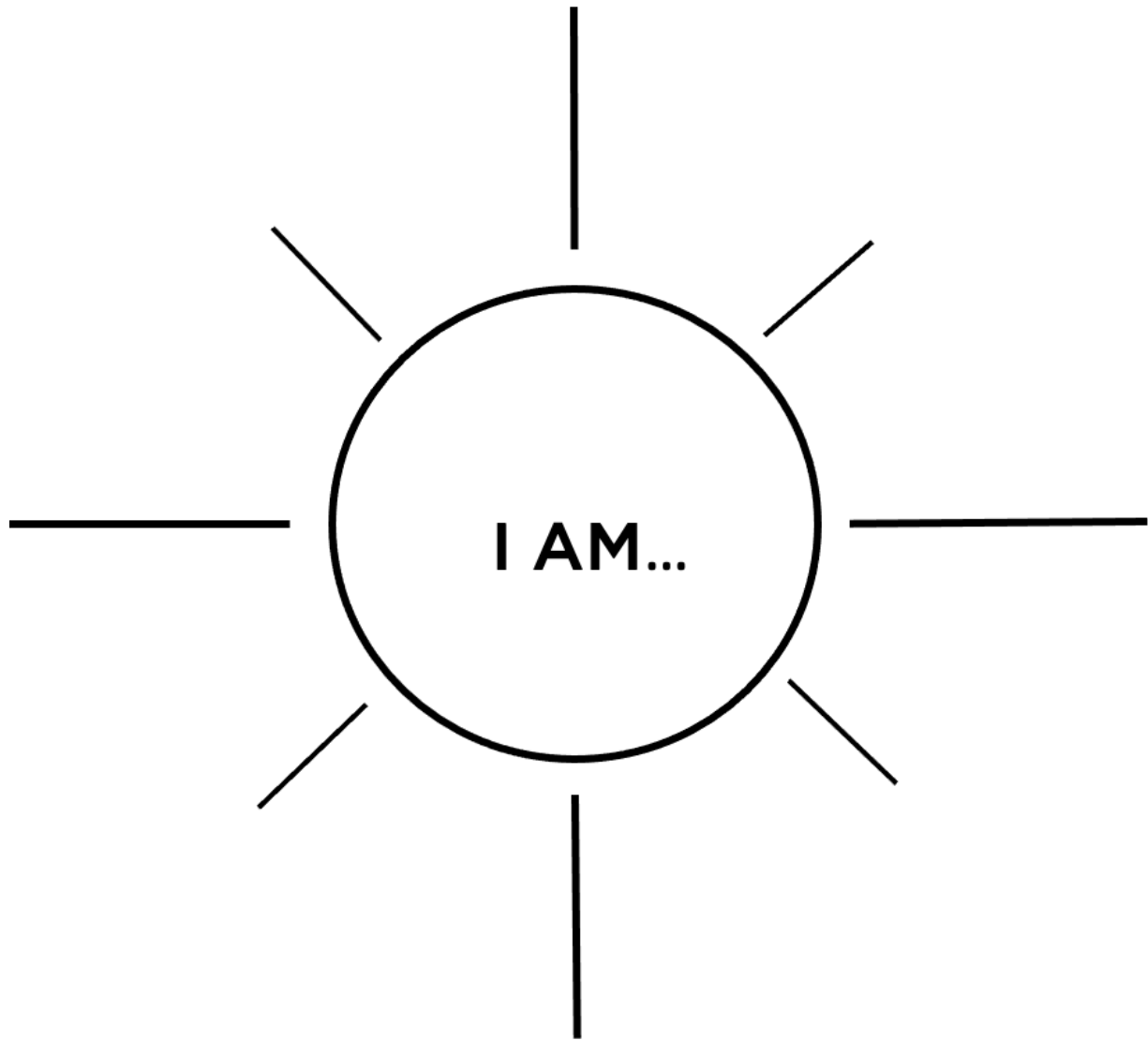
Stories like this feel important to share because...

BRINGING OUR WHOLE SELVES: IDENTITY MAPPING EXERCISE

Instructions:

1. On the image on the next page,, write a word at the end of each spoke that describes who you are. Think back to the factors of identity we talked about. For example, if you practice a religion and it's important to who you are, you could write that as one of your words. If your family is important to who you are, you might write something like "daughter" or "my family."
2. Put a circle around each word. If you consider something a larger or more important part of your identity, make that word and circle bigger.
3. Now look at your map and put **two checkmarks** to the **two words** or phrases that you think are most important.
4. For one of these words, write 1-2 sentences about a specific memory or experience that connects to that aspect of your identity.
5. Finally, if you've ever experienced someone else making an assumption or mistake about part of your identity that you've listed, **put an exclamation point** by that word.

Identity Map



PREPARING FOR YOUR CONVERSATION

Who would you like to invite to participate in an interview about your parent leader experience? You'll be sharing your story, and your partner will act as your interviewer, asking you questions and helping you share your experiences and reflections.

Sample Questions

The MPHI team will send you a suggested question list with questions about yourself and what it's like to be a parent leader. Here are some examples:

- Why did you decide to become a parent leader?
- Tell me about your first experience in a parent leader role.
- What has the statewide parent leaders home visiting group done that you're most proud of?
- Who have you learned from on your parent leadership journey? Who do you admire for their leadership?
- What hopes and dreams do you have for yourself? Your community? For the parent leaders program?
- What words of wisdom do you have for future parent leaders

WATCH: [YELITZA AND WILLIE](#)

Homework: Ask someone in your life one question that you normally wouldn't ask them. Then report back on that experience. We'll ask you how this went on Wednesday!



**StoryCorps & Michigan Public Health Institute
Lessons from StoryCorps**

WORKSHOP GUIDE

DAY TWO

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

PRESENTERS:

Perri Chinalai and Emily Janssen, StoryCorps

Stories

[Keith and Ellen](#)

[Happy and Taz](#)

[Adrien and Judy \(Raw tape\)](#)

[Sharon and Larry](#)

Goals for today:

Know what to expect if you record a Parent Leader interview with MPH

Identify tips for being a supportive interview partner

Practice answering questions in small groups

Listen: [KEITH AND ELLEN](#)

Reflection:

What did you take away from the first session on Monday?

Did you ask someone in your life a question you've never asked before? How did it go?

Parent Leader Interview Process

- You will be recording with someone you invite on the zoom platform. One person will be the designated "storyteller." The person you invite will help you share your story by asking interview questions, listening, and being in conversation with you.
- There will also be an MPH staff person there to support you through the process and handle the technical portion. They will be able to answer any questions you might have.

- The conversation will be 45 minutes to an hour long.

Getting Ready to Record

- Make sure you're comfortable !
- Set-up quiet location
- Use headphones if you have them
- Eliminate background noise and distractions (when possible)
- Close other programs on your phone or computer and limit other internet use in your location while you record

Exercise: Listen Closely

To help set up a quiet space, try this exercise to listen closely to your room:

Close your eyes and sit silently for 30 seconds and "listen" to the room.

What sounds did you hear?

Supportive Interview Techniques & How to Encourage Meaningful Storytelling

Reflection:

What makes you feel heard?

What can you do to support your partner as they share their story?

- Make eye contact, show that you're listening with your body language
- Reflect their answers back
- Use follow-up questions and prompts to guide and support ("Tell me more about...")
- Practice patience and give your partner time to reflect and share

Listen: [Happy and Taz](#)

Asking Follow-Up Questions: Examples of Fact and Feeling Questions

Here are some of the follow up questions we like to use at StoryCorps to help people give details to their stories (FACTS) and reflect on what their experiences mean to them (FEELINGS):

What happened next? (FACT)

How did it make you feel? (FEELING)

Can you paint a picture in words? (FACT)

Can you give me an example? (FACT)

What was the turning point for you? (FEELING)

What were you thinking when that happened? (FEELING)

How has this changed you? (FEELING)

Listen: [Adrien and Judy \(Raw tape\)](#)

In this excerpt we hear from mother and son Judy and Adrien who came to the StoryCorps booth to have a conversation. Judy's father/Adrien's grandfather was supposed to come with them that day, but he wasn't feeling well. But they did talk about him throughout their conversation.

At the point where we listen in to this conversation, Judy and Adrien were wrapping up. The StoryCorps Facilitator who was recording their story jumped in to ask them a little more about Judy's father, who they had been talking about earlier.

Reflection:

What do you notice in this conversation?

What descriptive details do you hear about Adrien's grandfather?

What follow-up questions do you hear the Facilitator asking?

Practice|Breakout Rooms:

Question 1: Do you remember the first Michigan Home Visiting Parent Leaders Group from Local Leadership Groups meeting you attended? What was that experience like? How did you feel?

Question 2: How has being a Parent Leader in the Home Visiting Statewide group for Michigan's Local Leadership Group made a difference in your life? For your family?

Listen: [Sharon and Larry](#)

Next Steps:

Allison from MPHl will be in touch about how to volunteer if you would like to record, and will share materials to help you prepare.

Reach out to Allison with questions:

amorey@mphl.org

Thank you for spending these hours with us this week! We appreciate all of the reflections and stories you shared with everyone who came together. It is clear what great advocates and listeners you all are, and we're excited to hear about how you're able to share your insights with each other and MPHl.

-Perri and Emily, learning@storycorps.org



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