

What Is Motivational Interviewing?



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Health

Why Use Motivational Interviewing in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs?



Q: What is motivational interviewing?

A: Motivational interviewing is a collaborative conversation to learn about and strengthen an individual's motivation for changing behavior.

Motivational interviewing can help parents (and others) sort through any thoughts, ideas, uncertainties, and mixed feelings they may have about making a change. Using motivational interviewing, parents can explore the benefits and barriers to changes they may wish to make.

Q: What is at the heart of motivational interviewing?

A: A trusting mutual relationship is at the heart of motivational interviewing.

Motivational interviewing:

- Includes parents as equal partners in talking about change
- Is collaborative and respectful of a parent's right to make his or her own decisions about changes in his or her life

Q: What is the evidence for using motivational interviewing?

A: There are more than 1,100 publications in peer-reviewed articles and more than 200 clinical studies published on motivational interviewing. It is effective in reducing problem behaviors (eg, problem drinking, gambling, HIV risk behaviors) and promoting healthy behavior change (eg, exercise, diet, medication adherence).¹

Research has shown that the ability to use empathy and develop trusting relationships with parents or clients is a large part of what makes motivational interviewing so effective.

Q: How can motivational interviewing help me in Head Start and Early Head Start programs?

A: Using motivational interviewing in Head Start and Early Head Start programs can help you:

- Enhance the strength of your relationship with families
- Foster communication that builds bridges and connects you with the families in your program

¹http://faculty.fortlewis.edu/burke_b/criticalthinking/readings/mi-burke.pdf

- Feel more confident in your approach with families by using an effective, evidence-based strategy
- Reduce feelings of frustration as you understand more about the change process

Using motivational interviewing in Head Start and Early Head Start programs can help families:

- Engage and partner with Head Start and Early Head Start program staff
- Decide if they want to make a change in their lives at this time and, if so, what kind of change
- Decide, if they do want to make a change, how they make the change
- Feel good about their ability to make meaningful change

Q: What do staff in Head Start and Early Head Start programs who use motivational interviewing say about it?

A: “Motivational interviewing is...

- “Phenomenal”
- “Inspirational”
- “Encouraging”
- “Equal communication”
- “A chance to make a difference in the families’ lives” <http://vimeo.com/84873378>

Q: How can I learn more about motivational interviewing?

- Early Head Start National Resource Center Webinar: Engaging Families Using Motivational Interviewing Strategies and Principles

This webinar includes an overview of motivational interviewing. It also includes examples of how to use motivational interviewing in Early Head Start programs as well as a question-and-answer segment.

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/comp/family-engagement/EngagingFamilies.htm;YW15bmh1bnRlclg==>

- ZOE Project: Zero Out Early Childhood Tooth Decay; Vimeo video

This video includes information about motivational interviewing, examples of using motivational interviewing to improve children’s oral health, and testimonials about using motivational interviewing from Early Head Start program staff.

<http://vimeo.com/84873378>

- Motivational Interviewing website

This website includes materials that are designed to facilitate the dissemination, adoption, and implementation of motivational interviewing.

<http://www.motivationalinterviewing.org/>

- University of California, Davis, Motivational Interviewing in Child Welfare Services video <http://webcast.ucdavis.edu/llnd/176c5ce6>