

Establishing Behaviors for Coaching Home Visitors: A Modified e-Delphi Study with Home Visiting Stakeholders

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Background:

In general, the transdisciplinary literature on coaching underscores shared commonalities of all coaching interactions, such as that it is a collaborative process between a coach and coachee (Allen & Huff, 2014; Rush et al., 2020). As identified by Walsh et al. (2022) and McLeod et al. (2021), considerations of coaching in home visiting should include common elements, such as: (a) characteristics of coaches, (b) characteristics of coachees; (c) logistics of coaching such as frequency, intensity, and location; (d) processes and content of coaching; (e) theoretical frameworks; (f) fidelity; and (g) outcomes.

Although some assert that every conversation has a potential for coaching and that coaching interactions are commonplace (Rush et al., 2020), we assert that the intent and the purpose of coaching need to be clear for coaching to produce positive outcomes. Even though coaching home visitors and home visitors coaching families share the goal of improved outcomes, each has distinct goals.

One goal of coaching for home visitors is to promote their attainment of implementation of skills to achieve enhanced measurable outcomes, such as using evidence-based strategies to support parent-child interaction. Another goal of coaching home visitors should be aimed at well-being. Home visitors are regularly exposed to families' experiences of trauma (Nathans et al., 2019) Two-thirds of home visitors are affected by secondary traumatic stress due to exposure to the family's trauma and limited available resources for home visitors to address their own wellness needs (Begic et al., 2019). The home visiting field needs coaching that also addresses competencies to promote home visitor well-being.

Study Aims/Objectives:

We propose to use a modified Delphi method (Revez et al., 2020) to explore the following question:

- What behaviors for coaching home visitors (i.e., home visitors-as-coachees) are valued by the home visiting field?

The Delphi method is an approach to eliciting responses from experts through a planned sequence of questioning (Brown, 1968). We will use a modified Delphi approach because Phase 1 will include open-ended items and items completed by a rating scale that the researchers created based upon a review of the literature (Revez et al., 2020) of coaching early childhood professionals. This approach is generally accepted (Banavan et al., 2015; Boulkedid et al., 2011; Eubank et al., 2016; Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Powell, 2003). The present study also included a defining feature of an e-Delphi approach. Specifically, an e-Delphi approach is the administration by email and an electronic survey (Keeney et al., 2011), which will be the modes of delivery in the current study.

Study Population:

Potential participants will be invited to complete a brief electronic application to participate in this study to determine if they are experts in coaching home visitors. We aim to select a minimum of 21 participants with at least 7 participants per three critical subgroups. (Beiderbeck et al., 2021). We expect a sample of adults (approximately 19 years to 99 years) given our targeted subgroups. Subgroups will include:

- a. Researchers ($n = 7$) in the early childhood home visiting field with experiences with or interests in coaching (home visitor-as-coachee).
- b. Stakeholders ($n = 7$) in the early childhood home visiting field with experiences in the successful operation of coaching (home visitor-as-coachee).
- c. Home visiting professionals ($n = 7$) are part of the home visiting workforce and have experience working as home visitors, supervisors, or in a similar capacity with experiences in coaching (home visitor-as-coachee).

We will collect information about demographic characteristics in Survey 1, and they will be reported in an aggregate manner.

Recruitment Process:

Participants will be invited to complete a brief electronic application to participate in this study to determine if they are an expert in coaching home visitors. This invite will be sent via the Home Visiting Research Applied Collaborative (HARC) and similar listservs. Thus, a recruitment email will be sent via the HARC and other listservs and the researchers contact information will be included in the recruitment email. Data collection via surveys will occur from April 2023 through August 2023. We selected HARC (and similar others) given that they are a national network of researchers, home visitors, and other home visiting stakeholders. The electronic application elicits information about involvement in home visitor coaching and professional roles. This will enable us to ensure that participants have experience in home visitor coaching and to sample various perspectives given their roles as researchers, stakeholders, and home visiting professionals. Further, details about their experience that are provided on the application will provide opportunity to represent various program models. The application will also ask if the potential participant will commit to the three points of data collection.

Measure

The *Coaching Behaviors for Fostering Home Visitor Competence* was created by members of the CoP blending perspectives from professional experiences and the research literature on professional coaching in early childhood education and intervention. This survey is structured according to four domains of coaching behaviors and knowledge: 1) Reflective Practice & Relationship Building [11 items], 2) Adult Learning, Guiding, & Goal Setting [18 items], 3) Professional Perspectives and Effects on Practices [13 items], and 4) Knowledge Areas [7 items]. Items are rated according to two dimensions: Applicability and Essentialness. For each domain, respondents will rate each item on a 5-point scale, ranging from not applicable/essential to critical. To obtain personal perspectives, participants will have added open-ended opportunities to respond. They can respond to each item, sharing their ideas about how the behavior may be better conceptualized. They can also list additional items that represent the domain. The survey will be presented through survey software (Qualtrics).

Data Collection Procedures:

Data collection will proceed through three iterative phases for eliciting participants' responses, building the description of coaching behaviors, and recycling information to participants for further refinement. The three phases are described below.

Phase I will present the initial *Coaching Behaviors for Fostering Home Visitor Competence Survey* to participants. We anticipate that participants will complete the survey in about 45 minutes. Descriptive analyses of participants' item ratings and consensus coding of participants' responses to open-ended questions will be conducted by the research team. These analyses will inform revisions to the *Coaching Behaviors for Fostering Home Visitor Competence Survey* to expand the content and fully represent participants' input.

In Phase II, participants will be asked to complete the revised Coaching Behavior Survey by rating all items on two 5-point Likert scales pertaining to applicability and essentialness. We anticipate that participants will complete the survey in about 45 minutes. Data from Phase II administration of the survey will be analyzed descriptively. A report will be generated for each stakeholder group (e.g., home visitors, supervisors, program directors) showing the means, medians, and range of responses per item, along with the participants' item ratings. This report will illustrate to the participants where their ratings fall, relative to peers within their stakeholder group.

Finally, in Phase III, participants will receive the Coaching Behavior Survey and descriptive report of item ratings for their group. At this time, they will be asked to either confirm or change their item ratings from Phase II Coaching Behavior Surveys. We anticipate that participants will complete the survey in about 45 minutes. Their final responses will be descriptively analyzed. Mean and median item ratings will be examined within each domain of the Coaching Behavior Survey to determine and compare applicability and essentialness rankings for each stakeholder group. Further, rankings of coaching behaviors will be compared across stakeholder groups, and

Approach to Analysis:

Any open-ended responses that participants provide will be analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The survey data will be analyzed by calculating the five-number summary or five descriptive statistics that divide the data set into sections. After the five-number summary, an interquartile range (IQR) can be obtained.

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