

Supporting Texas Fathers

What Happens When Dads Participate in Home Visiting



What is the Child and Family Research Partnership?

The Child and Family Research Partnership (CFRP) is an independent, nonpartisan research group at The University of Texas at Austin's LBJ School of Public Affairs.

Starting in 2011, the Department of Family and Protective Services' Prevention and Early Intervention Division contracted with Dr. Cynthia Osborne and CFRP to evaluate the MIECHV-funded Texas Home Visiting (THV) programs. CFRP conducted 7 evaluations of THV programs, and is currently working on the 8th evaluation.

Overview

Across the evaluated THV program models, father participation is associated with longer family retention in home visiting

- Strategies to increase father involvement in home visiting
 - Be father-inclusive
 - Make fathers feel valued and connected
 - Schedule visits around fathers' schedules
 - Leave materials for the father
- When measuring father participation in home visiting, consider how fathers participate in ways home visitors see, during a visit, (observable) and in ways they cannot see before and after a visit (unobservable)
- When fathers participate in home visiting, families stay in the program approximately 7 additional months

Texas Home Visiting: program models

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)

Serves parents of children ages 3 to 5 years,
weekly for 30 weeks per year

Parents as Teachers (PAT)

Serves pregnant women and families from
birth to age 5, twice monthly

Nurse Family Partnership (NFP)

Serves low-income, first-time pregnant
women until their child is 2 years old

Note: CFRP's evaluations of THV include program models implemented with MIECHV funding. MIECHV also funds implementation of Healthy Families America (HFA), but too few families participate in HFA to include them in the evaluations.

Strategies to recruit and engage fathers in home visiting



- 1 Invite fathers!**
- 2 Make fathers feel valued and connected**
- 3 Use inclusive or gender-neutral language**
- 4 Schedule visits when fathers are available**
- 5 Address all documents to both parents, and include space for both parents' names**
- 6 Leave materials for fathers**

Father engagement strategies are found in CFRP's policy brief, "Involving Fathers in Home Visiting Programs: Lessons from the Dads."

Understanding father participation in home visiting

- When measuring fathers' participation in home visiting, consider how fathers participate in both **observable** and **unobservable** ways
 - **Observable ways include:**
 - Asking the home visitor questions
 - Attending parent or group meetings
 - Attending social events
 - Participating when the home visitor comes to the house
 - **Unobservable ways include:**
 - Asking the mom questions about home visits the father did not attend
 - Practicing home visiting lessons with the mom or child
- If we only measure when fathers are present for a home visit, we are **underestimating** their involvement
- When targeting services for fathers, consider the **various ways** that fathers participate

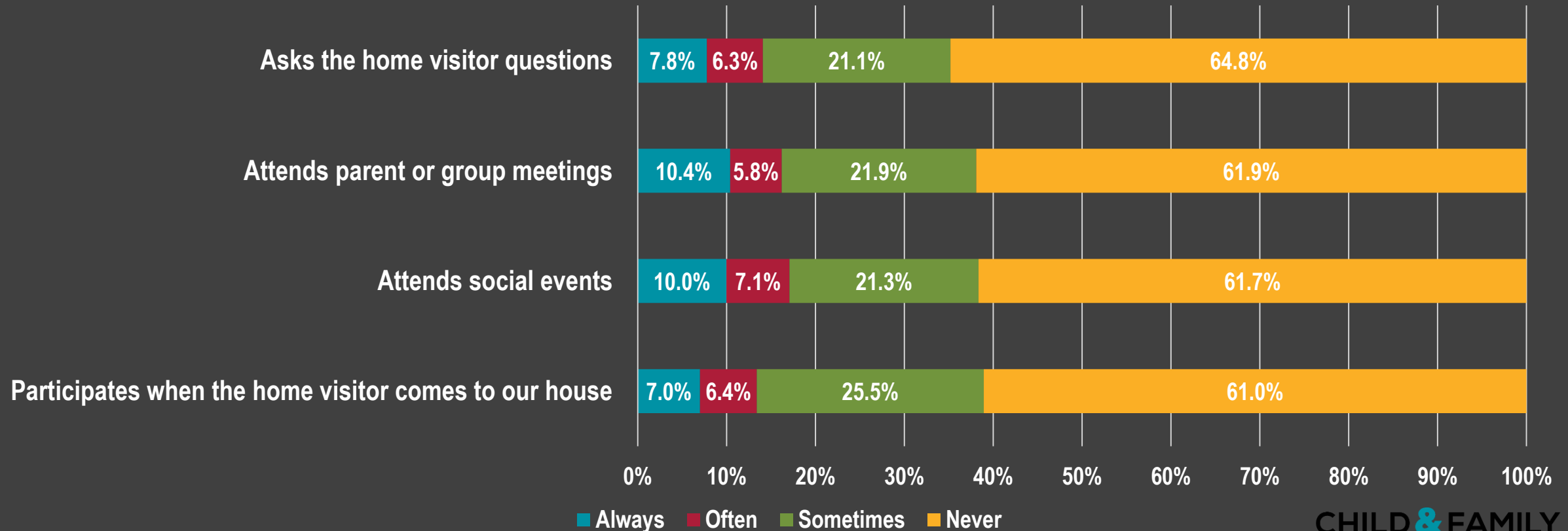
Some fathers want to participate, but face barriers

- **Work schedules** are the primary barriers to residential fathers participating in home visits
- Mothers can act as **gatekeepers** for nonresidential fathers



By only measuring observable participation, the majority of fathers appear to never engage in home visiting activities

How often does your youngest child's biological father engage in the home visiting activity described? (N=1,386)



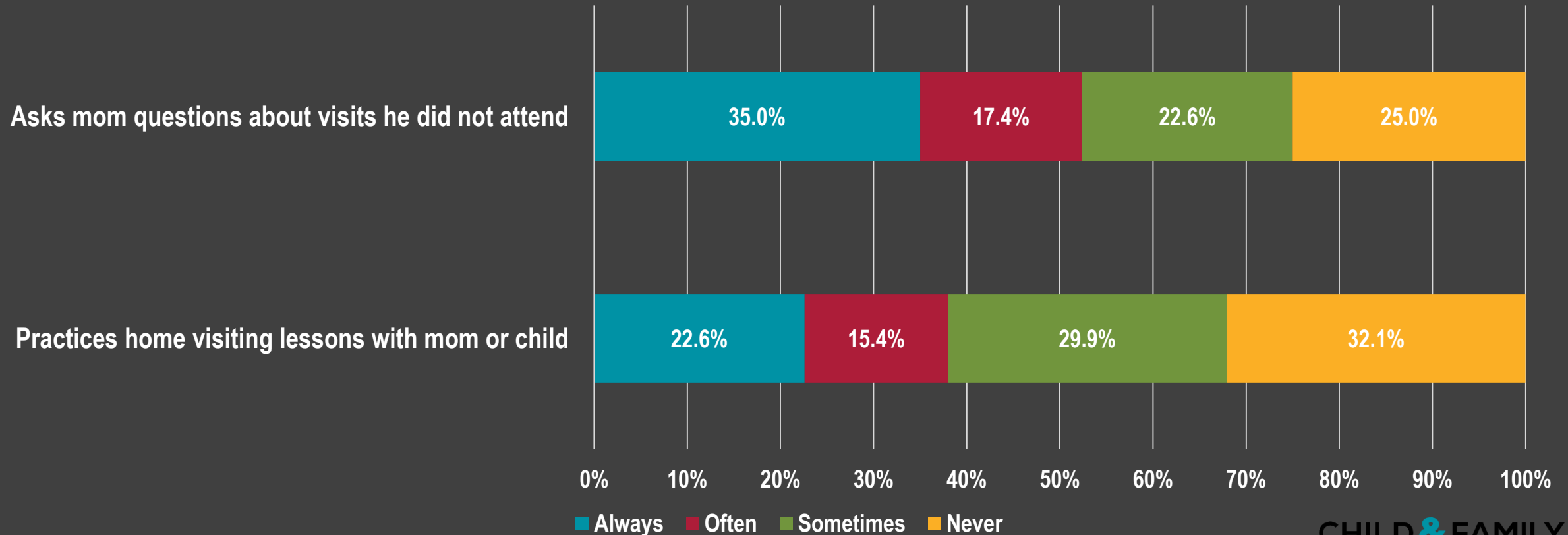
Fathers participate in home visiting in observable and unobservable ways

- Around **60%** of fathers **never engage** in any observable home visiting activity
- For fathers who participate in observable home visiting activities, the child's mother reported the majority of fathers **only engage in the activity some of the time**
- But mothers reported that around **70%** of fathers **engage in unobservable home visiting activities at least some of the time**



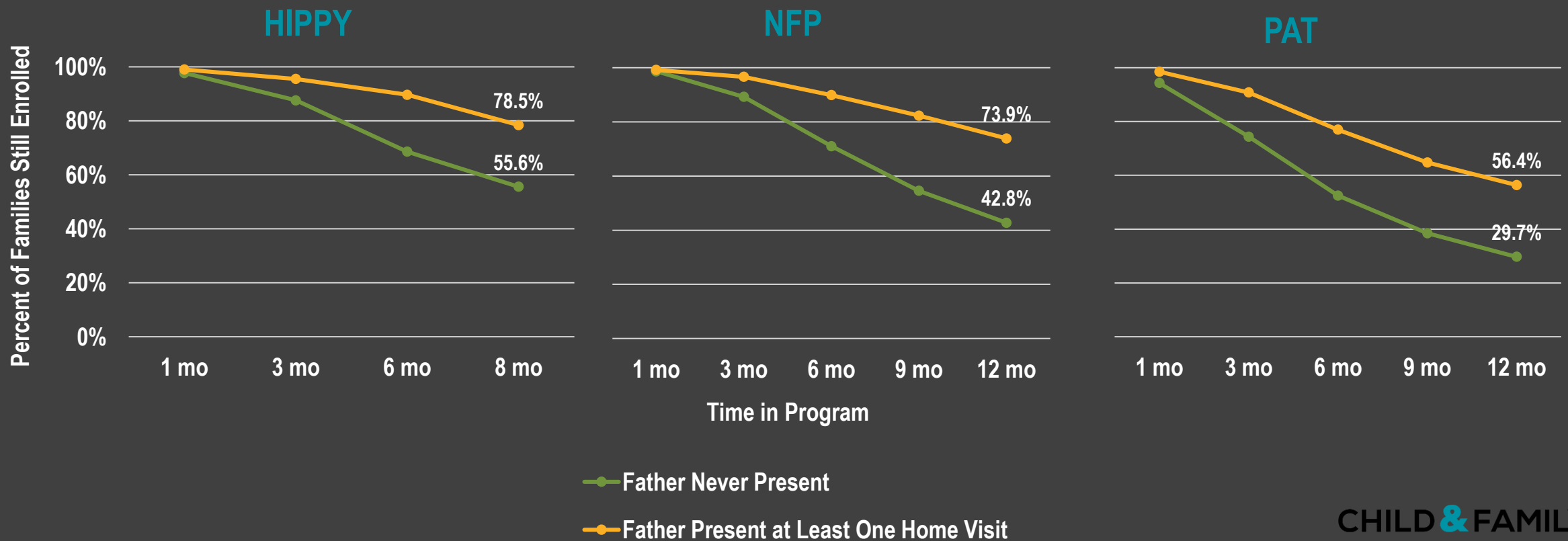
When unobservable participation is measured, fathers appear more consistently engaged and more involved in home visiting

How often does your child's biological father engage in the home visiting activity described?
(N=1,386)



When fathers are present for at least one home visit, families stay in the program an average of 7 months longer

Retention by Father Presence at Home Visit



In Texas, we are considering how to engage fathers in service delivery

- Making sure fathers feel welcome in home visiting
- Learning how fathers participate, even when they cannot attend the home visits
- Understanding that when fathers participate, families stay in the home visiting program longer



When reviewing father involvement in your home visiting program, consider...

- Fathers participate even if you do not see them
 - Think about how to encourage **unobservable participation** (e.g. leave materials behind for fathers to review)
 - When collecting information on father participation, look for **observable** and **unobservable behaviors**
- When fathers participate, families stay in the home visiting program longer

Want to learn more about CFRP's Texas Home Visiting evaluations?

Visit:

www.childandfamilyresearch.utexas.edu