



# Evaluating FLE Use of Family Life Coaching Technique with EHS Home Visitors

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## ABSTRACT

Coaching has been proposed as a technique that FLEs can use to provide program-level support for professionals such as EHS HVs. To address a current lack of evaluation in the family life coaching (FLC) literature, the current study applied FLC hallmarks discussed by Allen (2016) and evaluated FLC conducted by a CFLE with EHS HVs. According to the Clifton Strengths Finder, home visitors are highly skilled in relationship-building. Results also demonstrate a clear positive trend in evaluations over time as a result of incorporating FLC with EHS HVs. The home visitors unanimously endorsed FLC by a CFLE as valuable.

Table 2. Participant Level Session Data

Participant	No. Sessions	M	SD	Min	Max
1	8	18.00	2.27	13	49
2	7	25.71	3.73	15	38
3	7	32.57	2.07	15	37
4	7	41.29	3.09	17	46
5	7	52.33	8.66	41	68

M and SD represent minutes

Table 3. Aggregate Level Data

Aggregate	No. Sessions	Length of Session
M	7.20	33.98
SD	.45	13.38
Min	7	13
Max	8	68

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## Objectives

- To describe hallmarks of a four-month individualized coaching intervention by a CFLE using FLC techniques with Early Head Start Home Visitors.
- To identify EHS HV themes from the Clifton StrengthsFinder and organize them by domain (Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building, Strategic Thinking).
- To compare home visitors' evaluations of coaching from the start to finish of the professional development program using qualitative and quantitative analysis.

## Aims/Goals

Coaching is used to support home visitors' skills, such as reflection (Tomlin, Hines, & Strum, 2016), and is a technique that home visitors use in their practice with families to support quality interactions in the parent, child, and home visitor triad (Hughes-Belding, Rowe, Peterson, Clucas, Fan, Wang, & Dooley, 2017). Home visitors benefit from program-level supportive factors, such as coaching to prevent against secondary traumatic stress (Gurwitch & Williams, 2017).

Family life coaching (Allen, 2016) is an optimal technique for family life educators in practice but there is limited empirical research on FLC as a technique used by FLEs (Myers-Walls, 2014). FLEs can use FLC to build strengths, to ask questions that promote appreciation about the coachees' goals and motivations, and to empower coachees to find solutions to challenges (Allen, 2016). Family life education, and the techniques associated with it, is one potential approach to home visiting services and to the professionalization of home visitors (Petkus, 2015; Walsh, Mortensen, Edwards, & Cassidy, in review). There is strong shared theoretical alignment between FLE and home visiting. The purpose of this study is to describe and evaluate family life coaching conducted by a family life educator with home visitors at an Early Head Start site.

	Executing				Influencing				Relationship Building				Strategic Thinking				
	Adhiver	Belief	Discipline	Focus	Command	Humor	Self-Insurance	Woo	Empathy	Harmony	Individualization	Relator	Analytical	Prudic	Ident	Learn	Strategic
Home Visitor	X			X							X	X					
Home Visitor										X				X	X	X	X
Home Visitor									X	X	X	X			X		
Home Visitor									X	X	X	X				X	X
Coach	X				X											X	X

Table 1. Domains and Themes

## Method

### Context and Participants

Twenty-one participants were evenly divided among three groups. Group 1 received professional development in FLE. Group 2 received professional development in FLE and coaching. The comparison group received neither professional development nor coaching. The focus of the present study is to provide a description of coaching in Group 2, all of whom were from one Early Head Start home visiting site. Professional development included four modules. Each module included one video on an FLE approach to EHS HV, and each video had an accompanying information sheet and access to a discussion board on the video topic, which was moderated by a CFLE. The first week of the coaching process started simultaneously with the distribution of the professional development modules. The coach is a CFLE with a doctoral degree, and this study was her first experience coaching home visitors.

### Coaching Procedure

**Intake Packets and Strengths Finder.** The intake packets were developed based on Allen's (2016) model of intake packets. These included a letter from the coach to the coachee including: (a) norms and policies for scheduling coaching sessions, (b) coaching and education agreement, (c) inquiry about current solutions to situations, and (d) questions about the home visitors' present and future goals.

The first individualized coaching session included time for each participant to complete the Clifton StrengthsFinder or CSF (Gallup, Inc., Washington, DC), which assesses an individual's talents with the most potential for strengths building. CSF is electronically completed with 20 seconds allotted for responses to each stem, such as I like to help people (Apslund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2007, p. 3). A report is generated on the individual's top five talents or themes, and the remaining results are not shared unless one pays additional fees. Gallup and other researchers have examined the psychometric properties of this instrument (see Apslund et al., 2007). See Table 1 for the top five themes of each participant within four domains.

**Coaching Sessions.** The allied component of the coaching session during the first four weeks was the professional development modules on FLE and EHS HV. Each coachee used an online booking tool to schedule individual sessions with the coach. The coach had wide availability and always met at the times coachees selected. The structure of the coaching sessions was individual and onsite at the EHS HV site. The coaching program spanned four months (see Tables 2 and 3 for other procedural information). The process and content of the coaching sessions included the coach following procedures underscored by Allen (2016), such as a strengths-based approach, appreciative inquiry, goal setting and action plan formation, visualization, highlighting successes and solutions, questioning techniques, and reflection

**Evaluations.** Evaluation questions, including three Likert-scale questions and one open-ended question, were administered via PsychData to capture home visitors' perspectives about their coaching experiences. Approximately four months later (follow-up), or near the end of the coaching experiences, the home visitors were again administered Likert-scale questions about coaching and two open-ended questions (helpful vs. unhelpful features of coaching).

Table 4. Coaching Evaluations

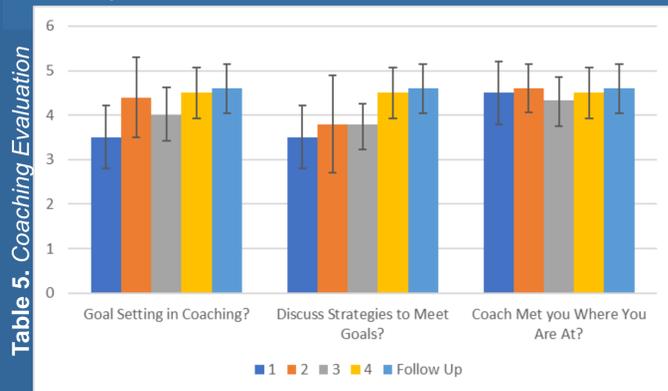
	Survey 1		Survey 2		Survey 3		Survey 4		Follow Up	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Goal Setting in Coaching?	3.50	.71	4.40	.89	4.00	.63	4.50	.58	4.60	.55
Discuss Strategies to Meet Goals?	3.50	.71	3.80	1.10	3.80	.45	4.50	.58	4.60	.55
Met you Where You Are At?	4.50	.71	4.60	.55	4.33	.52	4.50	.58	4.60	.55

## Analysis and Preliminary Results

The quantitative results show a clear positive trend in evaluations over time (see Tables 4 and 5). Overall, the home visitors had positive responses to coaching. During Time 1, 2, 3, and 4 evaluations, home visitors unanimously endorsed it as valuable. For example, one participant stated, "The coaching session was organized, we focused on thoughts and strategies to reach the goals of a home visitor from a FLE perspective." Another stated, "I feel it was very helpful and brings my work to a meaningful place." At follow-up, home visitors maintained that coaching was valuable, including (a) getting a perspective but being encouraged to have own perspective about a variety of families, (b) open and honest interaction, (c) forming a goal and an action plan for oneself, (d) comfortable place to exchange ideas, and (e) answering questions to narrow down thoughts and to reflect. Two participants mentioned that finding the time in their schedules for coaching sometimes posed challenges.

## Implications

The coaching sessions are currently being qualitatively analyzed to explore the process and the content of using family life coaching as a technique with EHS HV. As this line of research progresses, it will be important to define the coaching processes and content hallmarks for home visitors, which may include similarities to and differences from existing coaching subfields.



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