

Public Abstract  
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Emotional Labor in Early Intervention  
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The purpose of this study was to examine the scope and impact of emotional labor in early intervention. The study was designed to extend the findings of research investigating emotional labor in other professions to the work of Early Head Start home visitors. Focus groups were conducted with home visitors from three Early Head Start programs, and individual interviews were completed with five participants. Data from the focus groups and interviews were analyzed to determine the presence of emotional labor in the work of the participants, and the impact of emotional labor on their personal and professional activities.

Findings from this study show emotional labor to be present in the work of Early Head Start home visitors. Participants experienced physical and emotional effects from managing their emotions in order to maintain an appropriate presence with families. Aspects of the work that contribute to their emotional labor include program expectations of a relationship-based approach with families, the physical and conceptual placement of their work in the center of families' lives, the scope of work with families in poverty, the vulnerability of the children, logistics of the work, and absence of supervisory support.

Study participants identified strategies used to attempt to balance the emotional labor they experienced. The implications of this study suggest the need for additional investigation into the phenomenon of emotional labor in early intervention, and the implementation of policies that will ameliorate this aspect of early intervention work.