

Prêmio Parentalidade (Parenting Award)

Recognizing Home Visitors for their Efforts during COVID-19



Introduction

Evidence shows that the home visiting workforce plays an important role in supporting young children and their families during COVID-19 (Williams et al., 2020). In Brazil for example, home visitors from the Criança Feliz (Happy Child) programme have been using a combination of remote and social distanced in-person home visits to improve the physical, social, and socio-emotional skills of young children during the pandemic (UNDP Brazil, 2021). Despite these efforts, home visitors are seldom recognized for the work that they do to support families, which can result in decreased workforce morale, motivation, and job satisfaction (Putchá et al., 2020). To address this problem, the [Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal Foundation](#) and the [Bernard Van Leer Foundation](#) launched [Prêmio Parentalidade](#) (Parenting Award) to recognize home visiting personnel in Brazil for their work and highlight the approaches they were using to support young children and their families during COVID-19.

Overview of Prêmio Parentalidade

Launched in October, 2020, Prêmio Parentalidade is intended for early childhood professionals who primarily carry out home visits in their line of work. To be eligible for the award, applicants must be: 1) Affiliated with a home visiting program at either the



municipal, state, or federal level; 2) Working with parents and caregivers to promote the development of children between the ages of 0 to 6; and 3) Supporting young children and their families in accordance with municipal laws related to COVID-19 (e.g., promoting the use of personal protective equipment, enforcing social distance guidelines). To ensure that news of the award reached all home visitors, including those working in rural areas, program officials worked closely with home visiting programs and local foundations to disseminate information about the award to eligible personnel. They also posted information about the award online and held webinars to ensure the widest reach possible.

To apply for the award, home visitors were required to submit a video, audio, or written application via WhatsApp that outlined an approach they were using to support young children and their families during the pandemic. In their applications, home visitors were asked to describe how their approach was developed, how they were using it to impact the lives of young children and their families during COVID-19, and how they would use the award (R\$3,000.00) to improve their approach if they were selected as a winner. They were also required to submit proof of employment documents and a letter of recommendation from their supervisors.



Home visitor calling one of the families under their care

In November 2020, a panel of early childhood and home visiting specialists nominated by the program's organizers began reviewing the applications that had been submitted for the award. When reviewing applications, the specialists evaluated the effectiveness and adaptability of the featured approach, the extent to which it was supporting parents and caregivers during the pandemic, and the manner in which it was being used to strengthen home visitor's bond with the families under their care. In December, 2020, 100 home visitors from 16 different states and 5 different home visiting programs in Brazil were selected as winners (Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal Foundation and Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2020). Each home visitor received R\$3,000 for their efforts and some were featured in various news articles and videos that highlighted the approach they had developed. In August 2021, the approaches were highlighted in an [e-book](#) that was made

available in both Portuguese and English (Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal Foundation and Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2021). Some of the winning approaches include:

- The development of an action strategy that encourages caregivers, especially father figures, to play with their children.
- The distribution of homemade toys to young children and the use of social media (e.g., Tik Tok videos) to provide caregivers with tutorials on how to create these toys using materials at home.
- The creation and distribution of kits with various activities (e.g., coloring pages, games) intended to promote the developmental stimulation of young children (Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal Foundation and Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2021).

Enablers and Barriers to Implementation

Prêmio Parentalidade received over 400 applications from home visitors in 19 Brazilian states, including those in rural and poor areas. Home visitors who received an award expressed their gratitude at being recognized, indicating that it was one of the first times that they were being acknowledged for their work during the pandemic. They also indicated that they were planning on using the award money to improve their knowledge on child development and further support the children and families under their care. For example, some home visitors in rural areas stated that they were planning on using the R\$3,000 to buy motorcycles to access children and families in hard to reach areas.

Although the program reached home visitors all over Brazil, when developing the award, program officials recognized that limited internet connectivity and a lack of computers, particularly for home visitors working in rural areas, could prevent certain personnel from applying. To mitigate this potential challenge, officials selected WhatsApp as the platform for accepting applications as it is a popular means of communication in Brazil. In addition to written applications, organizers also accepted video and audio submissions to make it easier for all home visitors to express themselves and provide specific examples and illustrations of their approaches.

Prêmio Parentalidade's Impact

Brazil's experience with Prêmio Parentalidade highlights the importance of recognizing and celebrating home visitors for their work. By creating an avenue for home visitors to be rewarded for their work, program officials are ensuring that these personnel are not only satisfied in their roles, but also motivated to continue using their approach to support children and their families both during and beyond COVID-19. Although there are no immediate plans to launch an additional round of awards in the future, Prêmio Parentalidade could serve as inspiration for other countries that are interested in identifying new and emerging promising approaches related to supporting the home visiting workforce at scale.

References

Key informant Interview with Prêmio Parentalidade Officials

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