

Bernard van Leer  FOUNDATION

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Maria Cecília
Souto Vidigal

PARENTING

HOME VISITOR PRACTICES
ADAPTED TO THE PANDEMIC

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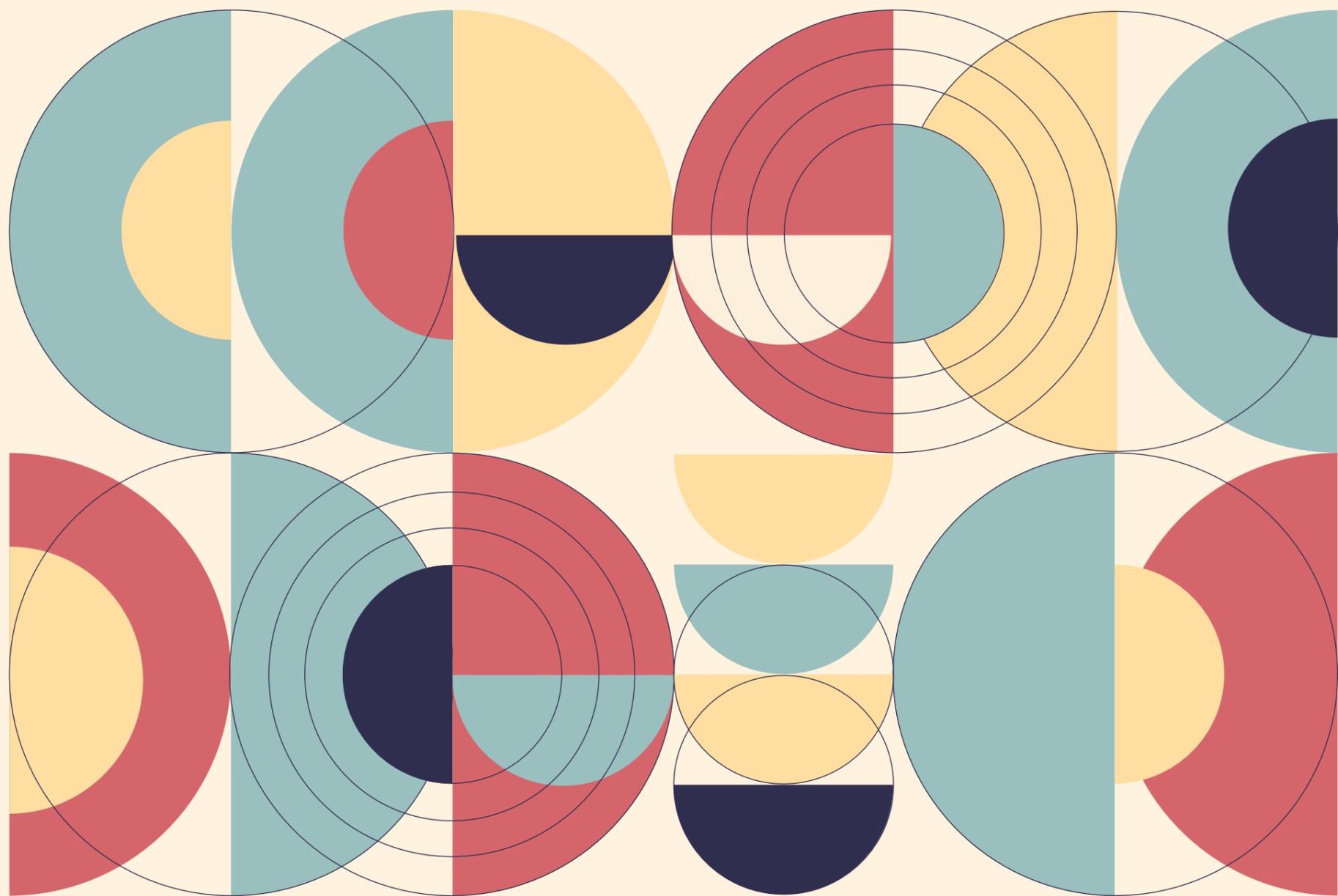
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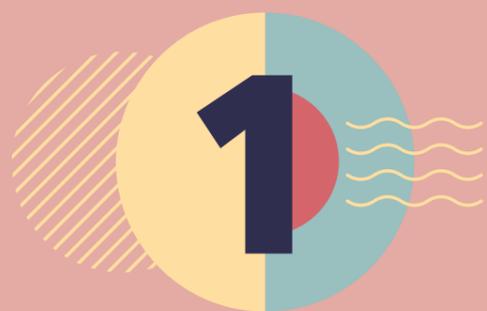
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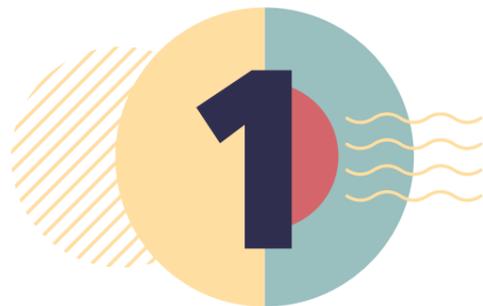


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INTRODUCTION

The Parenting Award: Good Home Visitor Practices During the Pandemic initiative was design from the possibility of recognizing, giving visibility to, and inspiring managers and teams that work directly with the public, close to the most vulnerable families in our country.

Difficulties intensified in the context brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, causing many home visiting programs to be adapted and even temporarily suspended. Meanwhile, the visiting professionals created strategies and adapted safe solutions to continue their work to support families. These adaptations were essential for home visiting programs to move forward despite the pandemic. Thus, this publication aims to register, recognize, and disseminate these adapted practices as part of an ecosystem with a positive impact on child development.

Home visiting programs are organized within the structure of social protection programs or social assistance whose main objective is to support families in care, protection, and activities that stimulate and form bonds for children's healthy and integral development from the time of birth to six years old.



This vital strategy also allows close contact with the reality that families experience and makes identifying vulnerable situations easier. It also allows a connection to the service network, especially in challenging periods like the one we live in when young children and their families are even more exposed to adversity.

In this sense, in periods of crisis, families require greater support to safeguard and promote child development by having their emotional and social needs identified and sharing practices for positive parental interactions. Visits can be a way to respond to these needs for protecting children and are therefore extremely important.

Home-visiting professionals are faced with some challenges in their work, such as families withdrawing from the home visitation program, unsafe conditions for professionals due to the violence in certain territories, difficulty in finding addresses, mothers or caregivers being absent during scheduled visits, among others.

The award recognized professionals who reinvented themselves using technology (WhatsApp groups and phone calls) to improve their methodology in the family approach. Others adopted biosecurity measures and protected themselves to continue making home visits when possible to guarantee the families' safety to the maximum extent.

In this context, Fundação Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal and the Bernard van Leer Foundation joined forces to hold the "Parenting Award: Good Home Visitor Practices During the Pandemic" initiative to promote the continuity and improvement of these professional family-monitoring practices and form a bank of good practices, extending the reach of these solutions.

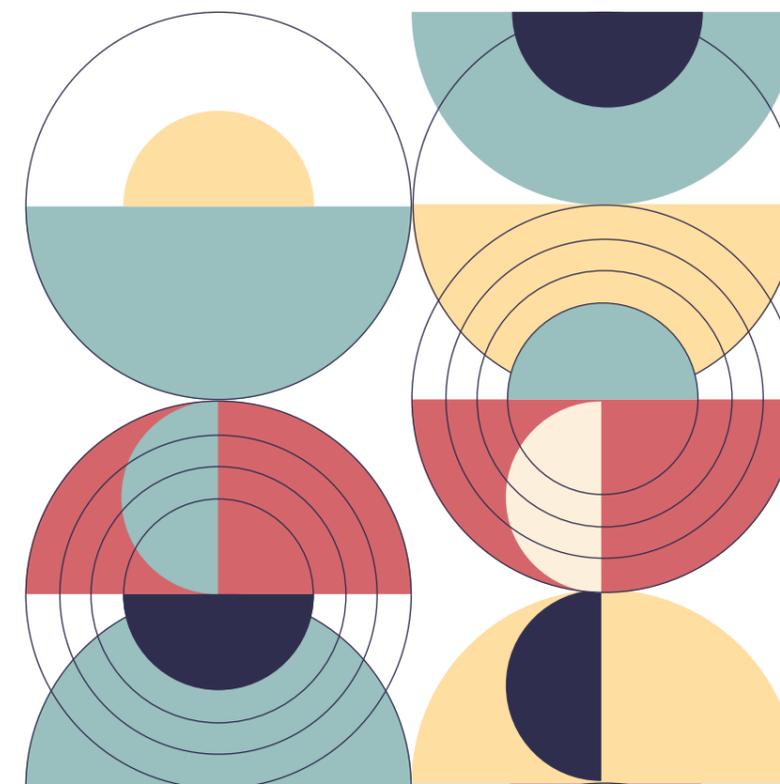
We hope that this publication will inspire the strengthening of home visiting programs that focus on attention to families with children in early childhood and promote good practices and active listening to the needs of these professionals and other groups that work with early childhood care and protection policies despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We hope that this publication will stir deep reflection for long-term strategies, such as a) the increase of beneficiaries (families and children) and the quality of home visiting

programs; b) expansion of courses and qualified training on Child Development; c) investment in more structured programs to support the monitoring and evaluation of child development. The Parenting Award: Good Home Visitor Practices During the Pandemic initiative was conceived from a co-creative process involving the participation of actors in this topic in Brazil. The awards took place between October 2020 and January 2021. The strategic and methodological pioneering nature of the process allowed for the target audience's optimal assimilation, resulting in 415 entries from all of the country's regions. The 100 awarded practices were determined from a two-phase evaluation of the initiatives, the final phase conducted by a group of specialists in the area.

This publication will present these 100 practices, highlighting 10 of them for "Inspirational Practices" and the other 90 awarded practices categorized in the "What the visits in the pandemic told us" section.

Enjoy the read!



ABOUT THE PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS

Bernard van Leer  FOUNDATION

BERNARD VAN LEER FOUNDATION

Believing that everyone deserves a good start, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation has been investing in Early Childhood for 50 years and has supported parenting programs in Brazil for over 40 years. We know that investing in the first years of life brings profound and lasting gains to society and that changing the beginning of history changes history as a whole.

We are also fully aware that it is at home, the heart of the family, that most interactions between children and caregivers take place. That's why supporting programs that stimulate building positive parenting practices is one of our central concerns. There is strong scientific evidence that family visitation programs are essential for developing positive parenting practices and promoting the integral development of infants and young children.

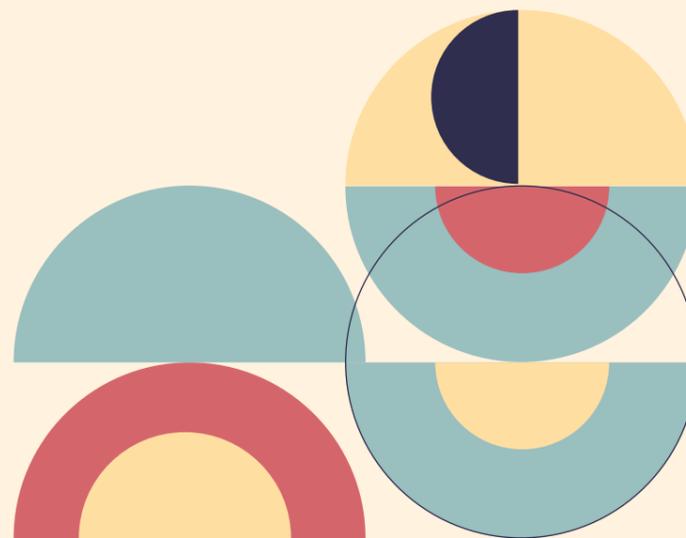
The fact is that several ingredients make home visiting programs successful, including structure, financing,

methodology, but above all, people. In unprecedented and challenging times like the one we live in, people and their commitments emerge as "a light at the end of the tunnel," as support and hope for those in a more vulnerable situation.

This award celebrates the importance of this form of action in our public policy, in which the "human encounter" is the central pillar for the promotion of health and integral development. Let's celebrate the "encounters" that we were able to create and maintain at this time in our history, getting to know better who makes it happen on a daily basis.

Cláudia Vidigal

Bernard van Leer Foundation representative in Brazil



FUNDAÇÃO
Maria Cecilia
Souto Vidigal

MARIA CECILIA SOUTO VIDIGAL FOUNDATION

Fundação Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal has over 50 years of history. Since 2007, we have elected early childhood development as our cause. We act to transform the lives of children from the time of birth to six years old, especially those most vulnerable, paving the way for a future with more perspective and a country with more equity.

We continue to search for new ways to add more and more value to the narrative of our leading motivators: young children. We want to continue spreading the idea that to sow complete development at this stage is to reap for a lifetime.

We believe in the importance of strengthening caregivers and supporting the most vulnerable families in early childhood development. Our goal is to

guarantee qualified assistance to adults responsible for caring, stimulating, interacting, setting limits, strengthening autonomy, and preparing children for the challenges and opportunities of the present and adult life. Those who are cared for learn to care.

Home visits are essential to promoting health and human development, with countless benefits for children, families, and society as a whole. Thus, in the volatile context of the pandemic, we believe that strengthening home visitor work is a fundamental part of supporting families.

The transformation we seek involves strengthening the field, increasing public policies on parenting and early childhood, and reducing inequality at the beginning of life so that new generations are stronger. Rewarding home visitors for the adaptations made to their professional practices is to recognize the importance of this work for strengthening families.

Mariana Luz

CEO of Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal Foundation

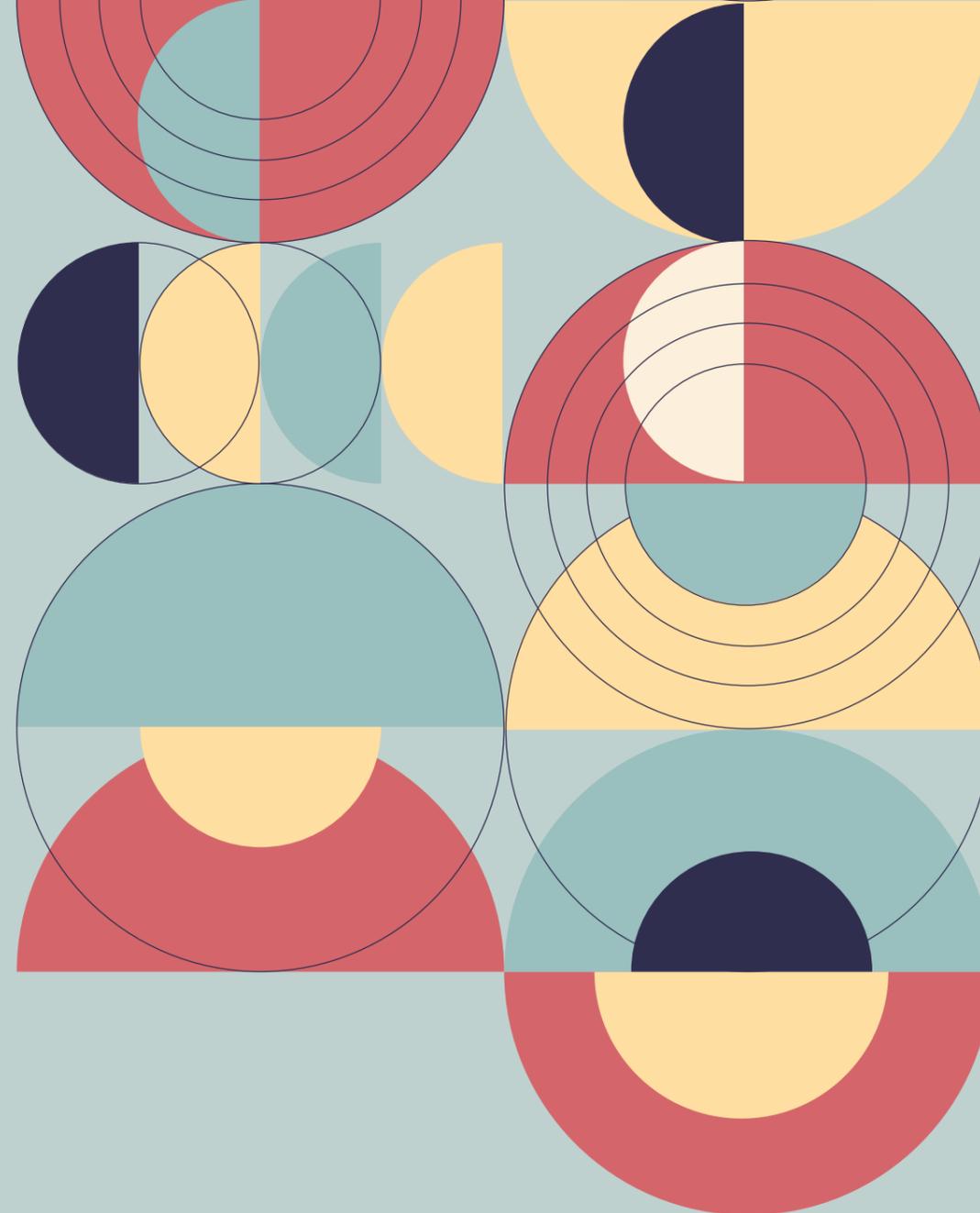


Watch the project's institutional video

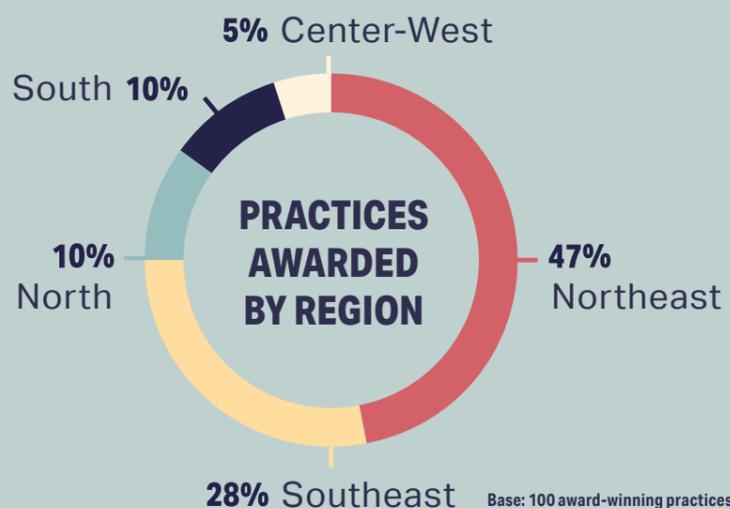
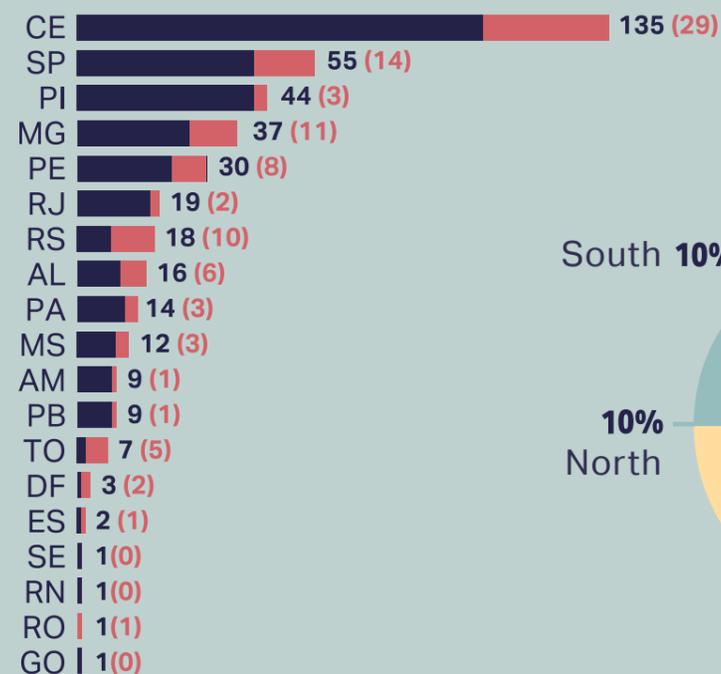


THE AWARD

THE AWARDS WERE ARRANGED TO IDENTIFY AND RECOGNIZE HOME VISITATION PROGRAM PROFESSIONALS AND GOOD PRACTICES THAT WERE ADAPTED AND IMPLEMENTED DURING THE PANDEMIC.



415 REGISTRATIONS **100** AWARD WINNERS



PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

THE AWARD IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES AND VALUES:

RESPECT – Active listening, consideration, and care for family dynamics and their specific needs.

EMPATHY – ability to put oneself in the other's place and understand the reality experienced by the people served;

DIVERSITY – importance of looking for different programs, realities, communities, and people;

COLLABORATION – importance of trust-based exchanges with teams and families;

INCLUSION AND WELCOMING –Strengthening bonds and closeness to families, welcoming their strengths and needs.

ENGAGEMENT - Genuine performance, commitment to the cause and the public and thirst for knowledge to support families.

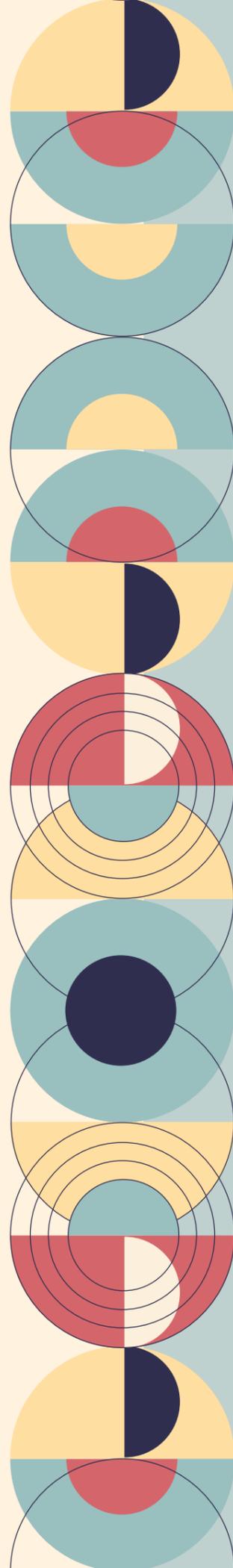
PROTAGONISM – Appreciate and recognize professionals on the frontline while being protagonists of the transformation.

WHAT THE REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE TWO STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF AWARD-WINNING VISITORS SAY

CEARÁ STATE

“ It is true that the art of raising children is built in practice with the experience of each and every one. But it is also very true that a good dialogue is very valuable, because it is, after all, a learning process. The home visiting program gives families the opportunity for a good dialogue and the opportunity to discover aspects of child development and what children need to develop the best way, with confidence and fulfilling their full potential. The programs can influence social policies that are essential for vulnerable families in overcoming these difficulties and having the sufficient and necessary level of stability so they can be stronger and more capable of caring for their children. It is a virtuous circuit that can promote the care of these children in the present and project a much better future. ”

Izolda Cela
Vice-Governor of the State of Ceará



“ I congratulate the award initiative, which gives national recognition to home visitors. Home visiting public policies are focused on strengthening the child's bond with the family, they are good parenting practices, and this will count for our children in the very near future. They will be safer, more resilient young people who can overcome all challenges. I want to thank all the visitors, especially those from Ceará (CE), from the Child Development Support Program (Programa de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Infantil – PADIN, in Portuguese) and from Criança Feliz, who are at enthusiastically and willingly at the forefront. ”

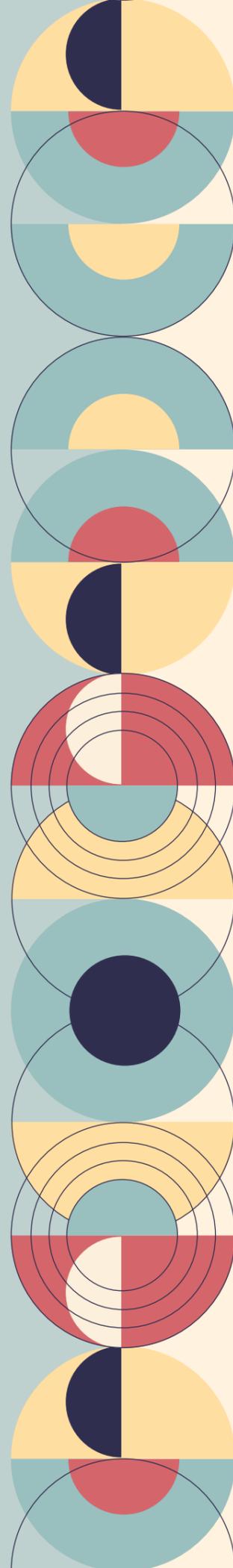
Onélia Santana
First Lady of the State of Ceará and creator of the Programa Mais Infância (More Childhood Program) Ceará

SÃO PAULO STATE

“ The practice of home visitation is fundamental to the process of welcoming and safeguarding the individual, fostering family and societal development, granting the guarantee of autonomy and rights as citizens. During the COVID-19 pandemic, visits contributed to the dissemination of information, guidelines, and recommendations on prevention against the spread of the novel coronavirus and on food and nutritional security, especially with the more socially vulnerable population. Therefore, the Parenting Award recognizes all the work developed to promote social mobility and autonomy and gives us even more traction to work actively and more closely to the people who need it most. ”

Célia Parnes

Secretary of Social Development of the State of São Paulo



“ The home visit of the Criança Feliz/Primeira Infância (Portuguese for Happy Child/Early Childhood) Program and the Brazilian Social Assistance System (SUAS) is a structuring axis of the program and becomes strategic and powerful as the professional gets to know and approach the reality of families living in socially vulnerable conditions. During this period of pandemic, home visits are essential to support families in exercising their parenting skills, strengthening bonds, and promoting child development, always from the perspective of valuing the family's role and autonomy. The “Parenting Award: Good Home Visitor Practices During the Pandemic” initiative portrays the context of intensified difficulties, and of strategies and the search for solutions. Making professionals visible is recognizing their work, but, above all, it's the beginning of a virtuous circle of communication about these initiatives. ”

Paola Pastrello

São Paulo State Coordinator of the Criança Feliz Program and representative of the State Committee for Early Childhood

AWARDED HOME VISITOR DISTRIBUTION PER HOME VISITATION PROGRAM

Criança Feliz



Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)



Programa de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Infantil (Padin)



Educação — Olhar para as diferenças



Primeira Infância Cidadã



Base: 100 práticas premiadas



WHAT DOES THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY FRONT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SAY?

“ From the moment you begin to understand the importance of a child's first years of life, you also begin to pay attention to the law differently. In a very special moment, the Brazilian House of Representatives created the Early Childhood Multiparty Caucus, a group of Representatives and Senators that totaled more than 250 lawmakers for the defense of early childhood. The Caucus discussed and drafted law No. 13257/2016, known as the Brazilian Legal Framework for Early Childhood Development. This law's greatest challenge is to fulfill its role and make the practical change that we need in the reality of Brazil's children, so inequality is not allowed to accumulate throughout their lives, so we can look at the implementation of public policies for early childhood, prioritizing it as an agenda and seeing a window of opportunity to reduce inequality and violence. When we look at the Criança Feliz Program, we see that it has consolidated its implementation within the Brazilian Legal Framework for Early Childhood Development. One of the Early Childhood Multiparty Caucus's main lines of action is implementing the Brazilian Legal Framework for Early Childhood Development, precisely so that this law can transform the lives of people and society. ”

Leandre Dal Ponte
Federal Representative
Early Childhood Multiparty Caucus

WHAT DO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PROGRAMS WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF AWARD-WINNING VISITORS SAY?

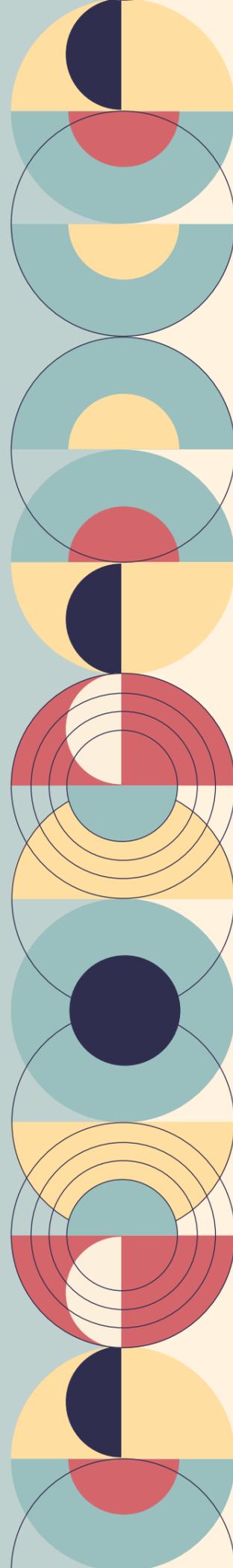
CRIANÇA FELIZ PROGRAM

“ Home visitation is an essential investment strategy in human development and is considered the best. We congratulate the initiative to reward our visitors, who are such vital actors in these home visiting policies, and congratulate them for their creativity and good practices during this pandemic. ”

Luciana Siqueira
National Secretary for Early Childhood Care of the Ministry of Citizenship
Criança Feliz Program

“ I would like to thank the Criança Feliz Program visitors for their hard work; all their dedication, creativity, and resilience, especially in 2020, which we know has not been easy. Without you we wouldn't be making history in the country's early childhood development policy. ”

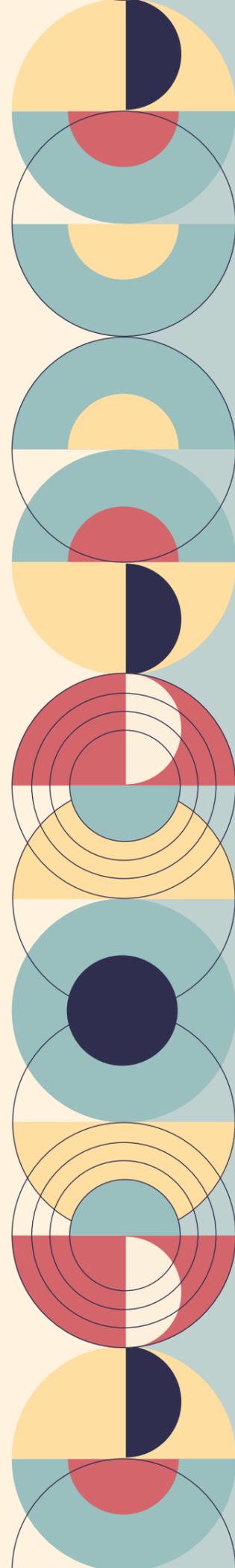
Ana Paula Matias
Director of the Criança Feliz Program Early Childhood Care Department of the
Ministry of Citizenship



THE PRIMEIRA INFÂNCIA MELHOR PROGRAM

“ The need for social distance the pandemic caused posed enormous challenges for us to find alternatives for continuing early childhood development work in the state. The Primeira Infância Melhor (Portuguese for Better Early Childhood – PIM) Program aligned with the Criança Feliz Program are considered as essential programs linked to Primary Health Care and Basic Social Protection, respectively, in the State of RS. They have sought alternatives to maintain their actions in the territories since the beginning of the Pandemic, coordinating with the other network services and helping families and communities to overcome the resulting adversities. I congratulate each and every one of the visitors who reorganized themselves in their family intervention strategies, which allowed the visitors to maintain the bond and individualized attention. Congratulations to the awarded visitors. ”

Arita Bergmann
Rio Grande do Sul (RS) State Secretary of Health
Primeira Infância Melhor Program – PIM



“ PIM has faced transformations in how it organizes its operations, given the need to ensure that everyone has access to essential services above all others. For the PIM, the period has been one of overcoming for the municipal teams to maintain family monitoring, a challenge with additional carefulness to ensure caregiving is provided with individualized plans for children and expectant mothers, without any of them failing to receive attention. Congratulations to the visitors for their dedication to adopting different practices to ensure early childhood rights, we are all very proud. ”

Gisele Mariuse da Silva
State Coordinator of Primeira Infância Melhor
Primeira Infância Melhor Program – PIM

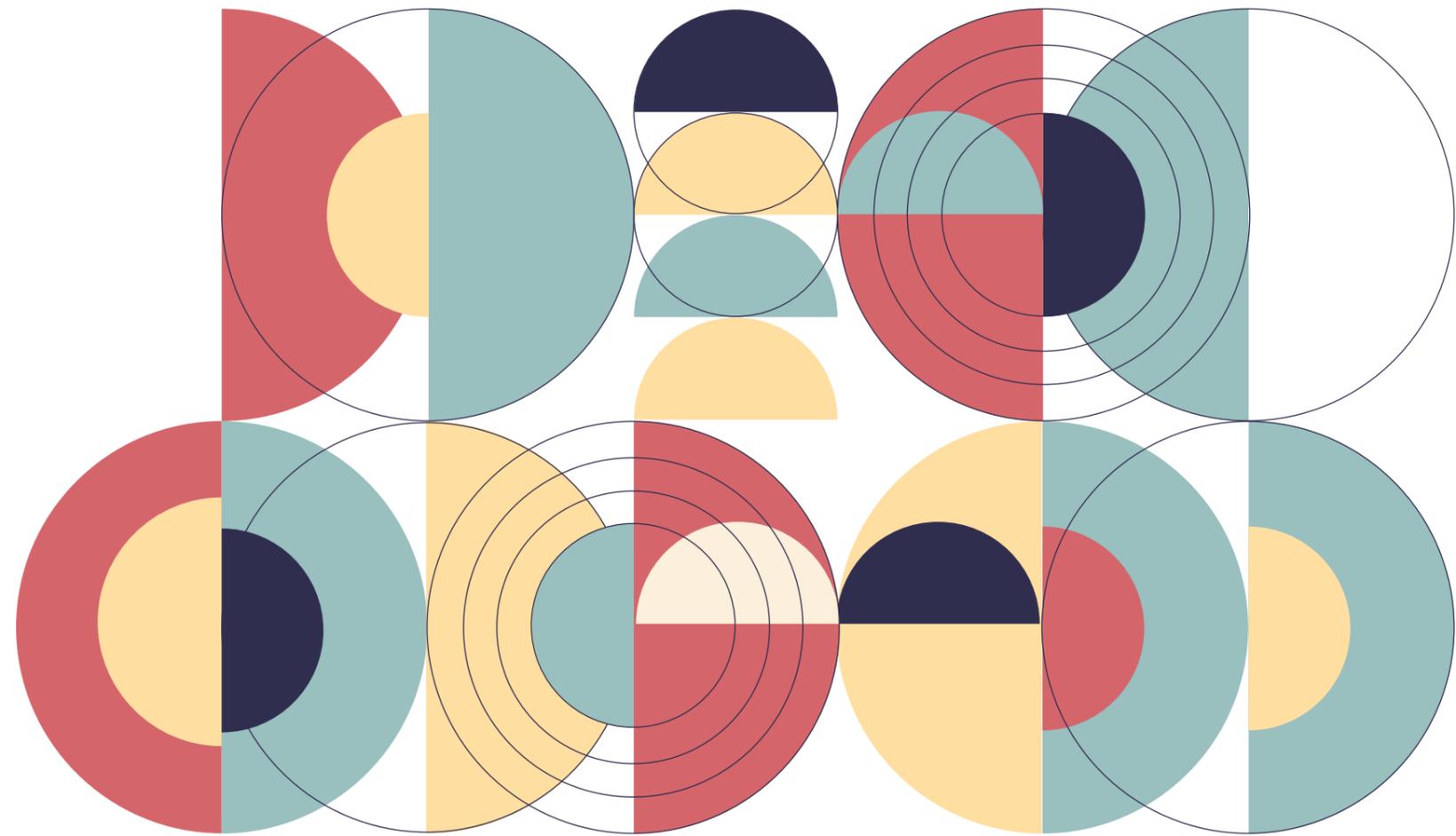
PARENTING AWARD: LESSONS LEARNED

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTING AND HOME VISITING
PROGRAMS FOR PROMOTING EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT

Lislaine Aparecida Fracolli, Sonia Isoyama Venâncio, and Gilvani Pereira
Grangeiro

Parents are the child's first social links. Thus, from an early age, it is up to them and other caregivers who assume this role to protect and care for the child to promote their well-being and full child development (CD) (PLUCIENNIK *et al.*, 2015). Certain situations arising from inopportune physical, emotional, and economic conditions impact the parents' ability to ensure their children's well-being. Therefore, investments are made to support parents in developing parenting skills as a transformative component for raising healthy children and building solid human capital (PLUCIENNIK *et al.*, 2015).

Parenting is understood as the set of activities developed to ensure a child's survival and development in a safe environment, to make them more autonomous, and to prepare them for the physical, economic, and psychosocial situations that will arise throughout a lifetime. In psychology, parenting can be understood as a bond established by a psychic affiliation, in which unconscious ties and a feeling of belonging are created between the family



group. This view goes beyond the understanding that the parental bond is biologically established (PLUCIENNIK *et al.*, 2015).

The consensus that seems to exist between Brazilian and international early childhood development (ECD) programs refers to the fact that the care to be provided needs to make sense to the family nucleus, and interventions need to comprehend each family's peculiarities to strengthen the parenting skills of the family caregiver. The hypothesis is that the family is the "place" where the child grows and develops and, therefore, this "place" should be a positive environment, with affection and good family interaction, in which situations of toxic stress, extremely harmful to the child's development, can be minimized. The bet is that improving parenting skills also improves the environment in which the child develops (GADSDEN, FORD, 2016).

All over the world, initiatives aimed at building positive parenting and ECD have been developed based on home visiting (HV) programs. These aim to

act in the various domains that interrelate and impact child development, such as physical and mental health, emotional and behavioral skills, and social skills.

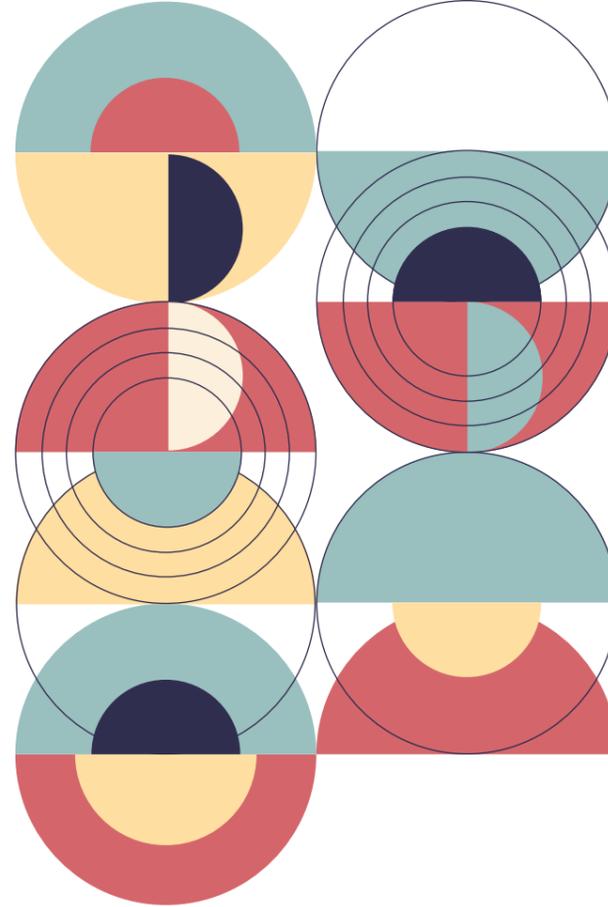
Given the centrality of HV in early childhood programs, it is considered extremely important that it can be evaluated and monitored. Therefore, evaluating the HV to understand the visit strategies and family engagement patterns is an essential tool for achieving ECD program objectives (ROGGMAN *et al.*, 2016).

Home visitation program evaluations are mainly based on three essential elements: dosage, content, and relationship. Dosage consists of the frequency of visits, program duration, and the average time of each home visit. Content refers to the program's curriculum, guidelines that were designed according to the objectives you want to achieve. (PAULSELL *et al.*, 2010) Relationship is the central element in the home visit, as the basis of the intervention is based on mutual trust and participant engagement.

For Roggman (2016), this HV approach should use the following strategies to engage families: (1) build a partnership with the family focused on child development; (2) respond to the family's potential with resources to support CD; (3) facilitate developmentally supportive parental interactions; and (4) work collaboratively and non-intrusively with the family. Implementing these practices has shown evidence of improved parenting even in unfavorable settings, such as in circumstances of poverty and with children with disabilities.

HOME VISITING PROGRAMS IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Brazil has several successful experiences of home visiting programs for promoting parenting and ECD, with an emphasis on the timeline for the programs *Primeira Infância Melhor/2003/RS*, *Cresça com Seu Filho* (Grow With Your Child)/2013/Fortaleza/CE, São Paulo *Carinhosa* (A Loving São Paulo)/2013/SP, *Família que Acolhe* (Welcoming Family)/2013/Boa Vista/RR, Programa de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Infantil (Support Program for Child Development)/PADIN/2014/CE, *Primeira Infância Acreana* (Acre State Early Childhood Program)/2016/AC and *Criança Feliz/2016*, within the scope implemented by the Federal Government's Ministry of Citizenship.



Home visits highlight the converging points of these experiences and the attention to early childhood development, which reinforces the essential nature of the agenda at the municipal, state, and national levels. The visits are adopted as a strategy to approach families and favors the analysis of the family in its family and community contexts and the frequent and systematic dialogue with the primary caregiver to strengthen bonds and responsive childcare, premises for promoting child development.

The home visits followed the methodological course provided for each of the programs. However, in March 2020, the global pandemic hit Brazil, registering the first novel coronavirus infections. The number of people infected and killed by COVID-19 began to evolve, revealing the new circulating virus's high potential for lethality that was setting up a worldwide public health emergency rapidly.

The novel coronavirus pandemic started demanding that humans live differently. We incorporated preventive actions into our daily lives, such as wearing masks, washing hands more frequently, using hand sanitizer, and social distancing—individual care measures for collective protection. The situation presented significant challenges and quickly revealed the impacts on the adults' and children's physical and mental health and on everyone's economic situation, especially families in vulnerable situations. The multidimensionality of these impacts demanded swift action be taken from the academy (regarding research), public policy managers, private services (in the provision of services), and from society as a whole—the future became the most significant challenge.

This health crisis posed numerous challenges for the healthcare, education, and social assistance sectors, including the need to seek alternatives for maintaining home visiting programs aimed at strengthening parental care and care that promotes child development.

Such programs start to play an even more relevant role during the pandemic, as there is evidence that the social isolation measures, school closings, and the increased unemployment and cases of domestic violence that are

part of this moment of crisis can have extremely negative repercussions on children's behavior and development. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE OF THE NÚCLEO CIÊNCIA PELA INFÂNCIA (2020).

Thus, strategies needed to be sought to guarantee the bond was maintained and the family support was uninterrupted, especially for more socially vulnerable families.

PARENTING AWARD: MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

The Parenting Award aimed to identify, value, and give visibility to good home visitor practices during the pandemic. Some criteria were considered while selecting these practices, such as their potential to strengthen the parents and/or caregivers in encouraging children, visitors demonstrating sensitivity to create spaces for a broader dialogue about the aspects of the pandemic that impact the families' lives and mental health, seeing the visitor-family bond strengthened, visitor-family engagement in the proposed activities, and the ability to adapt the visits to social distancing, with the search for strategies and solutions to reach the families.

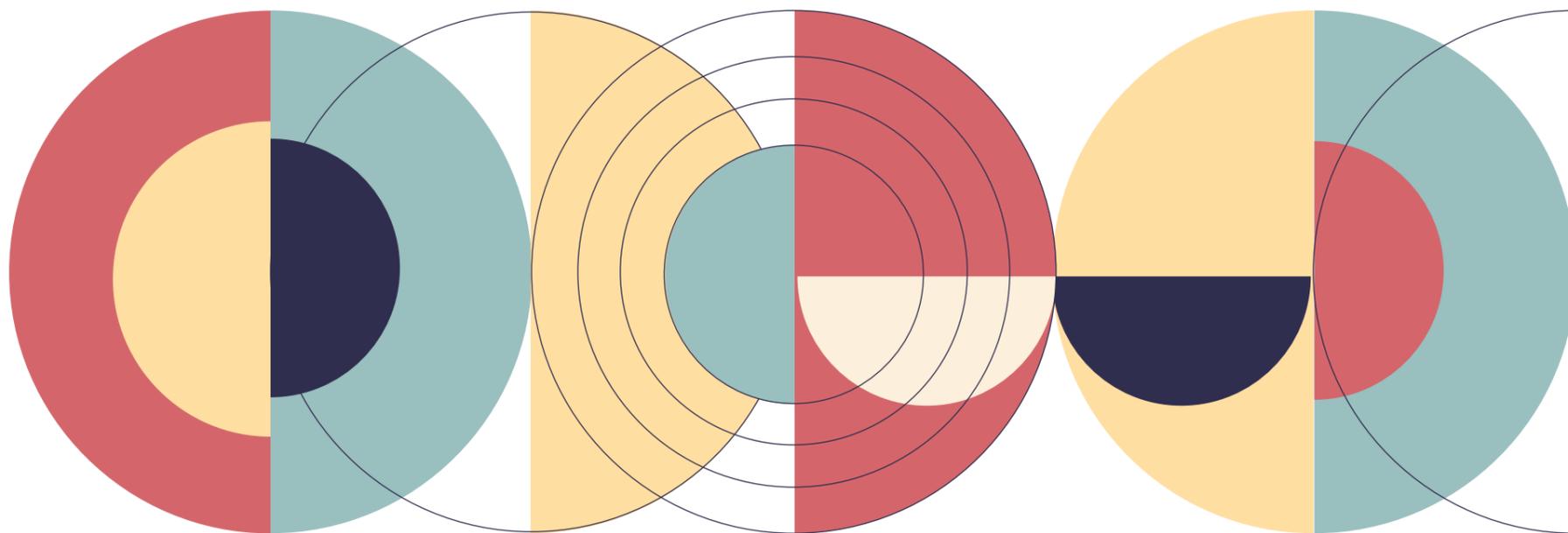
During the practice selection process, there were many surprises related to the number of experiences sent in and the quality of the visitors' experience reports.

The written materials, photos, and videos that were submitted allowed us to identify several strategies adopted for the continuity of the programs. Those strategies included using virtual resources such as WhatsApp messages, sending videos proposing stimulation activities, delivering activity workbooks to homes, and making phone calls. The visitors' attentiveness to identifying families with difficulties in accessing the internet caught our attention. Face-to-face visits were maintained for those families, adopting all biosafety measures to prevent contagion and transmission. The proposed activities proved to be powerful for promoting child development and the strengthening of parenting skills, involving strategies that encouraged the

construction of toys, the choice of games that took caregivers' back to their childhood, musical options with singing and storytelling, all of this immersed in the perspective of valuing local culture. We also observed stimulus for the father figure, now being more present at home, to be further engaged in childcare.

These experiences helped us to understand that it is possible to welcome and support families in such a delicate context, intensify contact through digital strategies, and strengthen the bond between visitors and caregivers even remotely, opening virtual channels for conversations about needs and positive aspects, valuing the intersectoral coordination in a network to welcome and solve the needs and demands that arose.

The families' engagement and receptiveness to this "new way of doing things" were also visible in the submitted videos. The videos showed the activities carried out with and for the children, an essential resource for giving the visitors a better view of the interactions between caregivers and children.



FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

In 2021 the challenges continue in the world and, more specifically, in Brazil. The COVID-19 pandemic's impacts on health and the economy are immeasurable. Humankind will have to learn to live with the social and psychological consequences of the novel coronavirus and its variants.

We will have to devise strategies based on short- and medium-term future perspectives to maintain the early childhood program support and offer of services to families, envisioning possible scenarios that will be configured from different variables, many of them utterly foreign to what we know now and our control.

It appears that in this period, several technological methods and tools were disseminated and incorporated into the work of various sectors (education, health, social assistance) in public and private spheres, including in early childhood programs, becoming a central element in the processes used to communicate with families. The use of digital technology greatly favored the connection and even expanded the home visitor's communication potential with children and their families.

What will the future hold for us? How will the early childhood programs that use home visits as a strategy for dialogue with families look?

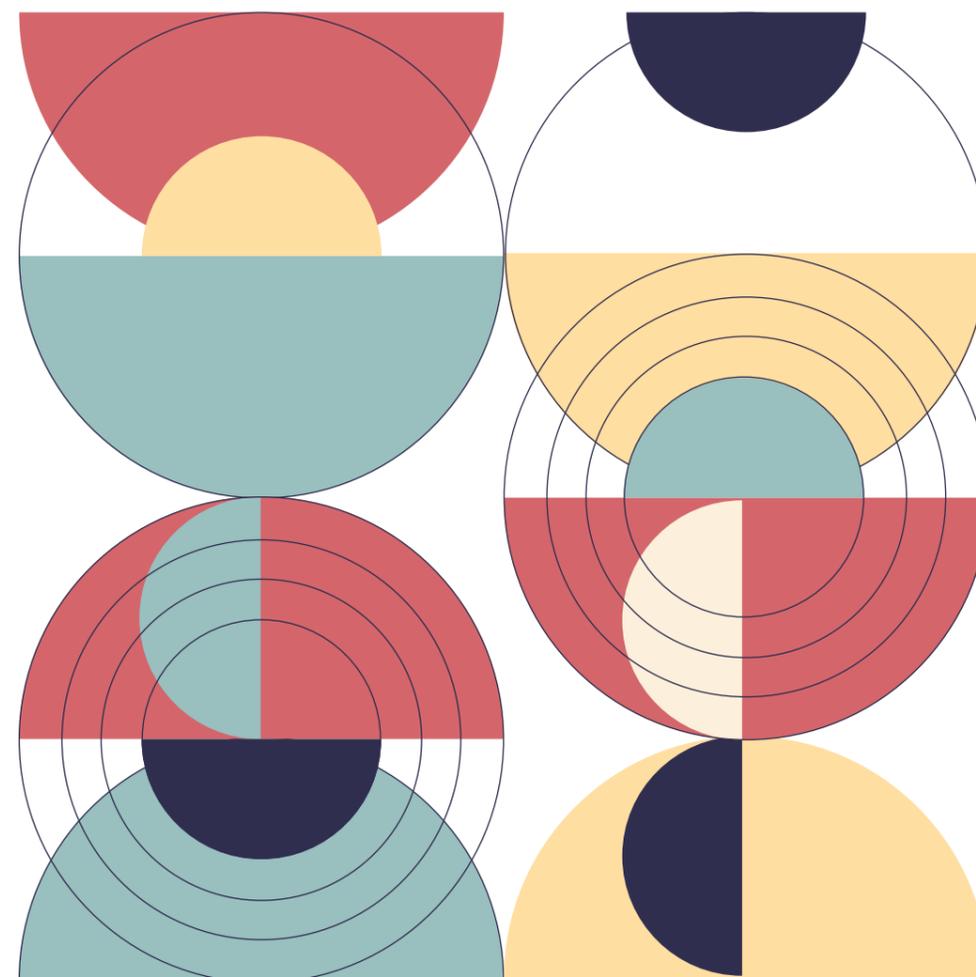
The answer to the first question takes time, due to the cloudy horizon of possibilities in the world, during and after the pandemic. Mass immunization against the coronavirus and the necessary changes in people's behavior need to materialize more assertive scenarios. Therefore, technological and digital tools have proven to be powerful resources in the teaching/learning/caregiving processes, given the impossible circumstances at hand. This is the viable way we have now and, to a large extent, in the future, to be in the world and to act in it.

However, it must be emphasized that the large-scale use of cell phones – smartphones – is still not for everyone, despite how easy it is for people to access information and communication technology. A significant part of the Brazilian population, including families that are part of early childhood support projects, has no access to this consumer good or is involved in this consumption to a limited extent.

We can also highlight the limited access to the internet as restrictive and challenging, often because the available platforms and the devices people have are incompatible, there are operational difficulties, the people using

these technological tools are unfamiliar with the technology, and the fact that many families do not even have a cell phone device, or, if they do, they have zero access to the WhatsApp platform.

Thus, hybrid formats are beginning to gain space in public agendas as present and future methodological possibilities. Home visit models that alternate between virtual and face-to-face encounters are included in these agendas as a strategy with great potential for the continuity of programs aimed at parenting and ECD. However, it is important to stress that visits and face-to-face meetings are the foundation for establishing solid bonds between professionals and families in programs that focus on building positive parenting skills and cannot be neglected. In these cases, one needs to understand that the technology aims to complement these programs' face-to-face activities.



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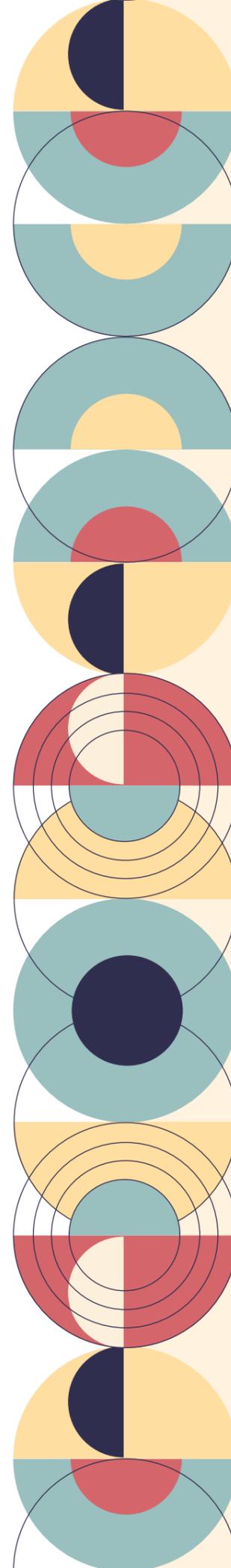
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“ COVID-19 caused an extremely sudden change in our routines. Most home visiting programs had to be interrupted due to social distancing. During the pandemic we have seen that, in addition to the difficulty of carrying out visits while social distancing, the stress level of families has dramatically increased. While following-up with some families, we found that 80% reported a greater perception of stress. Stressful environments are highly negative for a child's development. This stress is not only due to social isolation, but also to the instability and uncertainty of what will happen and the economic consequences of the pandemic. So families need support now more than ever. This support is not just a stimulus for child development, but also a support mechanism for parents, who need to somehow manage this stress. Family routines were changed and we also saw an increase in parental punitive behaviors, domestic violence, and food insecurity for children. At this moment, it is very important that visiting programs offer this support to the families.

The best way for a country to invest is by investing in early childhood and creating public child development policies, which enhance the development of society as a whole. Home visiting programs have significant potential for child development. It is the home visitors who observe the changes in families. This daily life with the families is very enriching. ”

Alexandra Brentani

Professor at the University of São Paulo Medical School (USP)



INSPIRING PRACTICES



PATERNAL PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES WITH THE CHILD

BECAUSE THEY HAVE MORE TIME AT HOME DUE TO THE PANDEMIC, SOME FATHERS HAVE DISCOVERED THE JOY OF HAVING CONTACT WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

Antonia Rosana Sousa Castro
Program: *Criança Feliz*
City: Pentecoste - CE

Antonia Rosana Souza Castro (home visitor in Pentecoste/CE) developed an action strategy to strengthen the paternal bond through play and saw the pandemic as the ideal time to apply it.

With the father figure more present at home due to the social isolation measures, Antonia agreed with the family that the father would perform the playing activity at least once a week. "Everyone in the house must collaborate, whether in caring for the children or in domestic activities," she advised.

Another of Antonia's tips for strengthening the family bond is that caregivers watch and listen to the guidelines she gives together. "Men often think that taking care of the child is the mother's task. They need an invitation, a little push to get involved with the children, but then they feel important," she added.

After the visitor's orientation, one father sat on the floor to play games that help the baby to crawl. When thinking back on the activity, the mother said that the father was so excited that he started playing with the baby often. Other games the visitor suggested to the families are traditional, such as playing ball, playing hide and seek, among others.

Antonia also highlighted the importance of adopting a suitable language for contacting the families and that the caregivers' return visits mostly happened through audio messages, photos, and videos on WhatsApp. "They find it easier because many of them don't know how to read and/or write."

Another point the visitor addressed during the pandemic was the guidelines for avoiding

domestic accidents. During remote visits, she gave simple video and audio tips, such as turning pan handles inward while cooking, storing cleaning products in places out of children's reach, and leaving matches, lighters, and medicine out of sight.

The support the supervisor gave was essential for Antonia to carry out her activities. "When I learned that I would have to go to a neighborhood that had a reputation for violence, I was very apprehensive, but my supervisor reassured me. Today I see that the people there need a lot of help and are not in that situation by choice," she concluded.

WELCOMING AND PLAYFULNESS TO SUPPORT FAMILIES IN DISCUSSING THE CORONAVIRUS

ADAPTING TO THE CONTEXT AND MAINTAINING A STRUCTURED ROUTINE CREATES SECURITY FOR FAMILIES

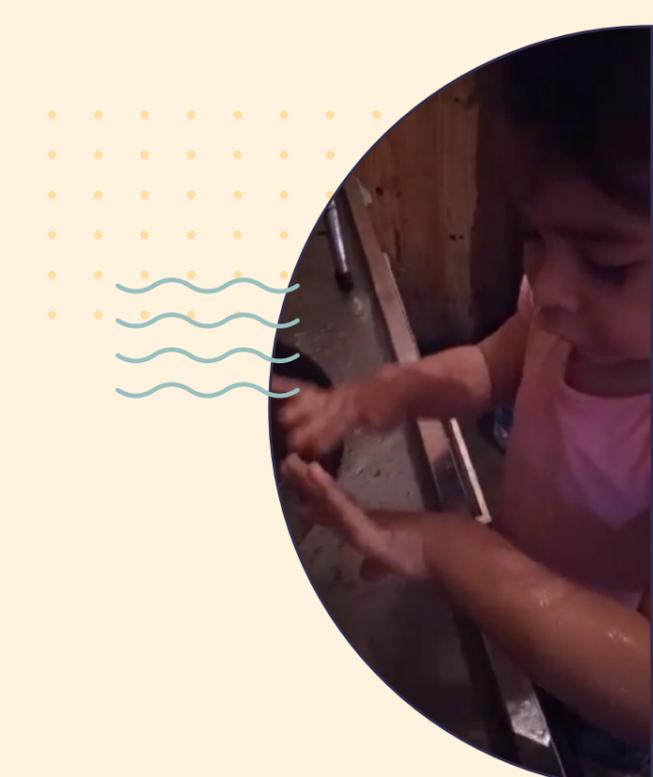
Bruna Trus Schiavi
Program: PIM - *Primeira Infância Melhor*
City: Porto Alegre - RS

Renewing the commitment, stipulating fixed days and times for carrying out the

"visits" was the way **Bruna Truss Schiavi** (home visitor in Porto Alegre/RS) found to not disrupt the services and continue the activities to promote child development during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Virtual visits via video or voice calls continued to take place on the same days and previously defined durations. That made it possible to maintain the assistance, ensuring that families and children did not feel abandoned and even more vulnerable in such a delicate moment.

Bruna highlighted her contact with the families was similar to the home visits and she would remain completely available to the family and interested in their daily lives for 45 minutes. "It's no use staying connected with the family for an hour if the contact lacks the necessary quality," she said. In the visitor's planned meetings, the conversation always began with the caregivers' report on the child's potential and vulnerability in



the proposed activity developed throughout the week. Based on this feedback, the visitor proposed new activities for the following week.

The visits, even if by telephone, made it possible to approach delicate matters lightheartedly and playfully. One of the games was "How to wash the little monster out of COVID-19." The visitor gave instructions for correct hand washing techniques and asked the parents to film the child using them. The result was a kid smiling and having fun because he was destroying the little COVID monster.

One mother said in her feedback session that every time she is washing dishes, the child asks if she needs help to finish off the little COVID monster. The activity demonstrated how it is possible to promote bond strengthening through simple games and carry out educational activities with children while playfully focusing on COVID-19.

Adopting a holistic view, Bruna highlighted the importance of meetings for caregivers as well. "These are times when they can talk to us about their difficulties, concerns, anxieties, and when they manage to do that, they end up playing a better role as caregivers. When they feel welcomed, they can welcome better."



THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO BRING FAMILIES CLOSER

VISITORS USED SOCIAL MEDIA TO ENGAGE FAMILIES AND EXTEND THE PROGRAM'S REACH

Francisco Sonyanderson da Silva
Program: *Criança Feliz*
City: Russas - CE

In tune with the latest news in social media, Russas (CE) visitors, including **Francisco Sonyanderson da Silva**, made the COVID-19 pandemic lighter for a group of families they care for in this small town in the countryside of Ceará, with about 80 thousand residents.

Looking for ways not to lose contact with the families at the beginning of the social isolation measures, they thought of activities that could be done at home, based on ideas they saw on social media. They would send a new video

every week as if they were actually visiting in person. The caregivers would give feedback by sending photos and videos of the children performing the proposed tasks.

As one can always be innovative, Francisco started off using TikTok to make fun tutorial videos on how to build homemade toys. Every week he and his team would get together to make a new tutorial on how to assemble a toy from materials found at home.

On June 12, World Day Against Child Labor, visitors dressed up and used a sound truck to

travel through several streets in the city and raise the population's awareness on the importance of the topic. The motorcade reached the homes of the families served, where home visitors could make contact with the children, even if from a distance and respecting the biosafety rules.

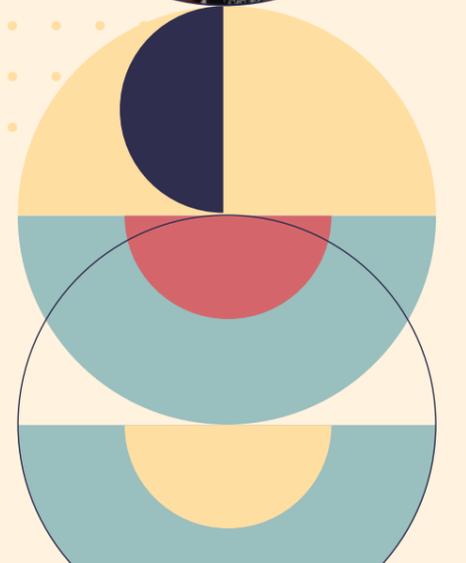
On Children's Day, celebrated in Brazil on October 12, visitors ran a toy drive with the help of sponsors. The toys were first sanitized and then distributed, making the day happier for the little ones.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERSECTORAL COLLABORATION

THE VISITOR'S SENSITIVITY WAS ESSENTIAL FOR ACTIVATING THE SOCIAL AND HEALTHCARE NETWORK

Josué Almeida Anjos
Program: *Criança Feliz*
City: São Domingos do Capim - Pará (PA)

During the coronavirus pandemic, visitors from São Domingos do Capim (PA), including **Josué Almeida dos Anjos**, noticed that residents of remote areas with little access to technological resources were becoming completely unattended. They then decided to change the action strategy to ensure assistance was given to vulnerable families with small children and/or expectant mothers.



In addition to the “remote visits/approaches” by phone, the visitors also started in-person visits to families lacking access to technology that enabled remote contact, respecting all biosafety and social distancing protocols. These in-person visits were essential in preventing people with COVID-19 symptoms from getting worse. Without access to the healthcare system due to mobility difficulties, the families had no one to turn to, and the visitor’s presence allowed the social assistance network to be set in motion and adequate referral to healthcare. “Our work allowed healthcare to reach these families immediately,” explained Josué.

Despite all the uncertainties at the time, the visitors prepared the Pandemic Action Plan (*Plano de Ação Diante da Pandemia*) at the beginning of the pandemic to maintain assistance to families. “It wasn’t so easy to prepare this plan because we didn’t know

how long this situation would last. Over the days/months, we implemented the plan and adapted new practices,” explained Josué.

Initially, contact only took place remotely, and the families received guidance through text messages or phone calls. These messages reinforced personal hygiene, the use of masks, and COVID-19 social distancing measures. As the months went by and considering the need to assist families with no access to telephone and internet, contact was made in person, with monthly visits.

Josué feels very gratified with the results of his work. “Fortunately, we had no deaths within the family groups that are part of our program. We managed to get some prenatal and food assistance for expectant mothers who were in urgent need, and today we can see in the mothers’ smiles and children’s hugs that better days are ahead.”

REMOTE SERVICE CORNER

THE CREATION OF AN ATTRACTIVE SPACE WAS ONE OF THE TOOLS USED TO INVOLVE FAMILIES AND GIVE CONTINUITY TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT WORK

Maísa Ferreira da Silva
Program: *Criança Feliz*
City: Valencia - Piauí (PI)

To encourage caregivers and children to watch and carry out the activities proposed by the team

of home visitors from Valença (PI), **Maísa Ferreira da Silva** created the “Remote Service Corner” (*Cantinho do Atendimento Remoto*), a playful space decorated with a rug, drawings, toys, and activities made with recyclable material where the team would record videos and make video calls with the children and families assisted in the social program. However, this strategy only reached the group of families that have cell phones.

After four months of having no contact with the families lacking communication means, and being faced with the need to reintegrate them into the social program, the team developed an interactive booklet. The team prepared the booklet’s contents and layout themselves and included photos of each home visitor to reaffirm the link between the home visitors, caregivers, and children.

Initially aimed at the most vulnerable group, the team managed to obtain resources to print more booklets, distributing them to all the social program participants. Besides the booklet, the kit contained materials for making toys and carrying out the activities.



INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICES AND TOYS MADE WITH RECYCLABLE MATERIAL

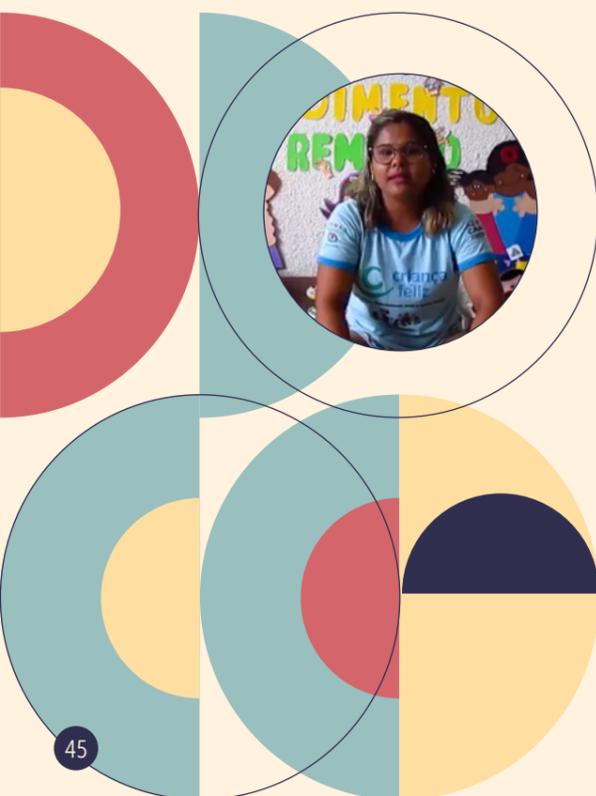
WITH INDIVIDUALIZED PLANNING, THE HOME VISITOR WAS ABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF EACH CHILD AND EXPECTANT MOTHER

Marilene Carvalho Da Rocha
Program: *Criança Feliz*
City: Monte do Carmo - Tocantins (TO)

From the beginning of the pandemic, **Marilene Carvalho da Rocha** (home visitor in Monte do Carmo/TO) realized that she would have to find a new way to pass the activities on to the 25 children and expectant mothers that she assisted in the visitation program.

After researching early childhood content, she made an individual plan for every expectant mom and child under her care, adapting the activities to videos and audio messages sent through an app. Every week, in addition to video calls, Marilene recorded a video with activities, guidelines, and child development goals. For families with no internet access, the activities were carried out in person, always respecting the biosafety protocols and taking all the necessary precautions.

Among the proposed activities, there were shape matching games (made with recyclable material) using geometric shapes, number sequences, and color identification games



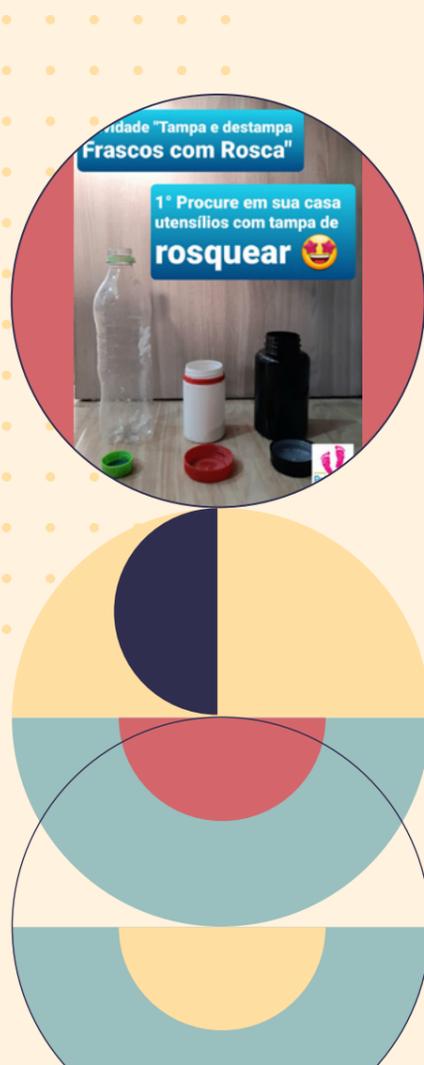
with bottle caps. "The kids, even the smallest ones, loved it when we called," said Marilene.

Contact, even if virtual, was also important for the caregivers, who felt isolated and unattended due to the pandemic and always asked when face-to-face visits would start again.

The home visitor created a conversation group in the app to encourage caregivers to share their experiences, but adherence was low, and the group was dissolved. Marilene believes that caregivers felt embarrassed when giving

feedback on the proposed activities. "They sent me videos, photos, and recorded audio, but all in private mode."

In her activity as a home visitor, Marilene also attended to expectant mothers, many of whom were apprehensive about COVID-19. After advice from her supervisor, she took online courses on coronavirus-related care that expectant mothers should adopt. "Many pregnant women asked us how they could protect their babies from the virus, and the courses gave us all the information we needed to reassure them," she explained.



THE JOY OF LEARNING TOGETHER

THE HOME VISITOR'S WORK HELPED CAREGIVERS TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE CHILD'S LEARNING CONTRIBUTES TO EVERYONE'S DEVELOPMENT

Mayelin Daiana da Silva
Program: *PIM - Primeira Infância Melhor*
City: Porto Alegre – RS

As with other home visitors, **Mayelin Daiana da Silva** (Porto Alegre/RS) remained connected during the pandemic using a chat app and having phone calls with the families who had the device, or she visited the most vulnerable families in person, respecting the biosafety standards.

On those occasions, she always listened attentively with her trained ear, whether about the child's development, based on feedback on how they performed in the proposed activities, or various issues and needed pandemic-related care.

Mayelin always prioritized real-time video calls with the families and often performed the step-by-step of the proposed activities along with them. "My intention was to show them what I was doing and work on it together, that I was really there for them."

On other occasions, the home visitor sent the activity explanations via audio, either because the family had some difficulty in reading or as a way of getting closer, contributing to positively maintaining the bond. "Many sensations and emotions are transmitted by voice. The audio also gives the family room to respond more comfortably," added Mayelin.

Over time, the home visitor realized that parents could use the activities to broaden their view of their children's abilities and better understand why it is important to offer activities that stimulate their early childhood development.

Creating a routine for carrying out the activities made it possible to introduce a new activity to them on a specific day and time, which posed a challenge for the parents and

the child to carry out the proposed activity. "Parents feel enthusiastic about carrying out the activities and helping the child to reach their goal and to acquire new skills. In other words, co-participation helps parents and children develop together," she added.

The activities proposed throughout this period allowed caregivers to really take the lead. Many of them became truly creative, as when mothers went above and beyond the home visitor's instructions. Most of the children that the home visitor attends at the moment are under three years old, so all the proposals were compatible with this age group. She is always looking for information and techniques that would help her have a closer relationship with the families and develop activities that would meet each family's needs.

One of the activities gave step-by-step instructions on transforming scrap into toys. The home visitor would do this activity at home, imagining that the families would also have the same materials. She would show what she was doing and walk them through the activity on a video call.

This technology helped to adapt the in-person home visits into virtual ones. These visits are always prepared and planned based on understanding and adequacy according to each child's and caregiver's particularities.

THE CHILD INSIDE US ALL

BRINGING THE CAREGIVER CLOSER TO THE UNIVERSE OF PLAY WAS THE HOME VISITOR'S STRATEGY TO CONTINUE WITH THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

Valdenice Febrônio de Almeida
Program: *Criança Feliz*
City: Correntes - Pernambuco (PE)

Empathetically bringing out the child that exists in every adult was the way **Valdenice Petrônio de Almeida** (home visitor in Correntes/PE) found to engage the children's caregivers she attended during the coronavirus pandemic.

The adapted visits addressed the preventative and cautionary measures for COVID-19 and the need to keep the children's vaccines and vaccination cards up to date.

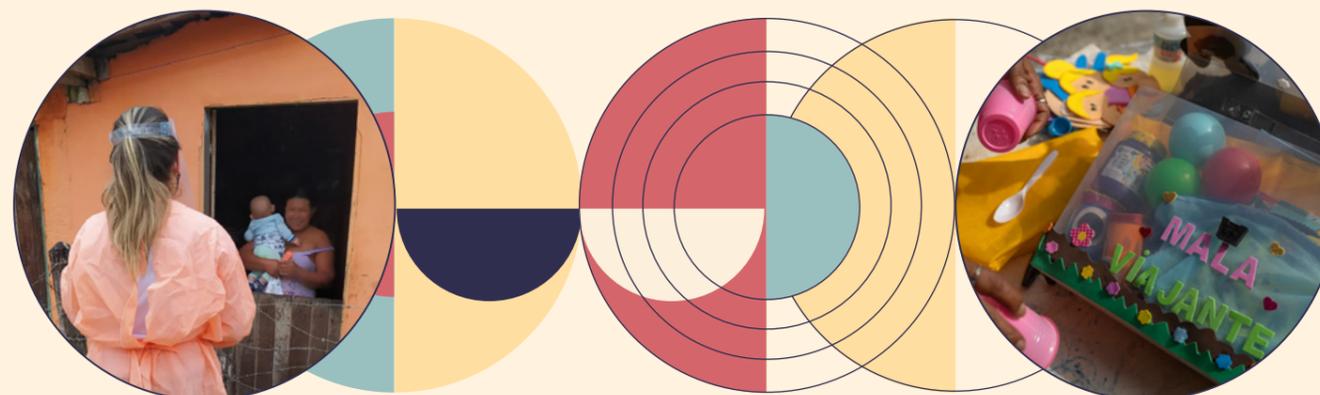
While working with vulnerable families, Valdenice realized that more often than not, besides the exhausting routine of household chores, caregivers do not know how to play in the child universe empathetically. They also think that they need to buy toys to play with children.

Even with the pandemic, face-to-face visits to the neediest families, who have no telephone, continued to take place once every two weeks. Using all the protective equipment, keeping her

distance, and complying with the necessary biosafety protocols, Valdenice took some items on her visits to make toys after she had noticed that many households lacked the adequate material.

On one occasion, the home visitor helped a mother make a rattle for her six-month-old baby, using a small plastic bottle, some beans, and colored tape. "The mother was very moved when I gave the rattle to the child, and he started to play, and she thanked me for that magical moment. She said she had never done something like that with her son," Valdenice explained.

Valdenice also reminded parents of traditional games, such as hide-and-seek, hopscotch, and playing ball. "I once asked a father if he liked soccer. He said he loved it. So I said, 'and why don't you play with your boys?'" told the home visitor, who reinforces with parents how important these moments are for strengthening the affective bond.



THE TRAVELING SUITCASE (MALA VIAJANTE)

INITIATIVE THAT ENSURED CHILDREN CONTINUED TO RECEIVE WEEKLY TEACHING ACTIVITIES EVEN DURING THE PANDEMIC

Valeria Patricia Lima Nunes de Oliveira
Program: *Criança Feliz*
City: São Vicente – São Paulo (SP)

How about receiving a little suitcase at your house full of fun things to do with your child? This was **Valéria Patrícia Nunes de Oliveira's** (home visitor in São Vicente/SP) idea to continue the activities developed with families during the coronavirus pandemic.

In her work as a home visitor, Valéria had already used the "suitcase of books," with good results every time. It was then that she decided to create the Traveling Suitcase (*Mala Viajante*), filled with ideas for games and playful activities to help in the development of the children she attends.

The fact that the group of children she cared for reside nearby in a housing complex contributed to the logistics for the Traveling Suitcase. Each family used the suitcase for a week, sanitized it, and left it at the concierge for the next family.

The suitcase contains playful games (many of them created by the home visitor herself), books, opaque watercolor, construction paper, pens, and crayons. In addition to the suitcase, Valéria sends weekly videos explaining how each activity should be carried out, and the parents are always asked to record the moment and then send it to her. The remote visit also includes a time for conversation when the home visitor assesses the child's development and clarifies any of the parents' questions.

Valéria created four suitcases, one for expectant mothers and the other three with activities that vary according to the child's age group, which ranges from zero to three years old. Materials available in the first suitcase include topics such as family planning, proper prenatal care, and the importance of the father's participation in pregnancy, suggesting that he talk to the baby. The home visitor also clarifies expectant mothers' questions at the time of contact.

Valéria created a panel with objects, numbers, colors, and activities such as hopscotch, in which the child must pick random numbers,

and the caregiver helps identify them. She also created videos to help children identify vowels and their names with a few letters.

The traveling suitcase also gets the caregivers involved, another benefit for strengthening the family bond. Using the opaque watercolor for children to paint with their hands and feet is one of the most popular activities. Valéria says that she thinks about how to spark the caregivers' interest while she creates the activities, which results in the strengthening of the bond.

The home visitor also emphasized how important it is for home visitors to actively listen and be cautious not to impose on the family. "The mother has to feel that I'm not there to teach her how to raise her child. My role is to help promote the child's development."

LET'S TELL A STORY?

USING A LOT OF CREATIVITY, THE HOME VISITOR SHOWED CAREGIVERS THAT ANYONE KNOWS AND CAN PERFORM THIS ACTIVITY FOR A CHILD

Vanessa Cristiane Severiano Silva
Program: *Criança Feliz*
City: Sabará – Minas Gerais (MG)

Who says that you must have a book or know how to read to tell a story? That is the

question **Vanessa Cristiane Severiano Silva** (home visitor in Sabará/MG) asks the child development program caregivers when they claim they cannot read to children. Vanessa is a born storyteller, and she makes a point of teaching all her tips to caregivers due to the importance of that activity for a child's development.

During the pandemic, Vanessa continued her work remotely using audio and video messages via cell phone, and she visited the families with no telephone or internet in person, respecting all the biosafety protocols imposed due to COVID-19.

Vanessa used puppets to tell a story in the videos. For homework, the child would have to retell the same story back to her the following week. Both in the videos and at the in-person

meetings, the home visitor would give tips on grasping the child's attention while narrating the story.

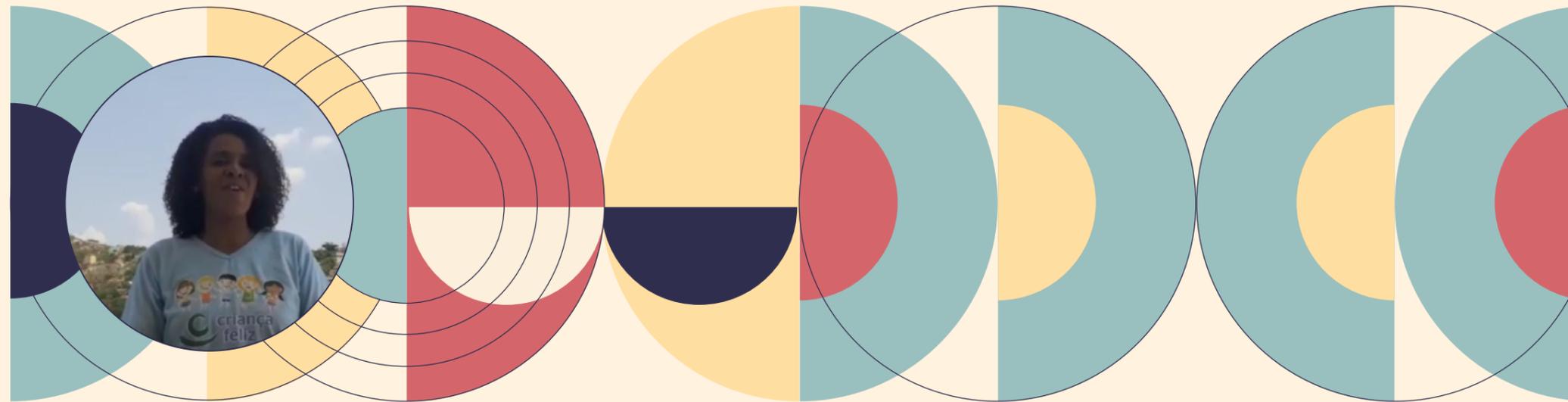
"First of all, anything can be turned into a story. Any object in the house can become a character," she explained. Another way is to have the child help tell the story. Ask them questions, like "Now, what will happen? Who else would you like to be in the story? Do you think the (character) likes that?" Inserting colors and numbers is another tip, taking advantage of the playful moment to teach something. Even a plain old sock can be turned into a puppet just by painting little eyes on it.

For Vanessa, a conversation is a vital component for strengthening the family bond. As caregivers begin to get closer to the child's world, they feel as their figure as

a caregiver is strengthened at the same time. "In my contacts, I always try to highlight the importance that they (caregivers) have in the child's life," she added.

Active listening is also fundamental in a home visitor's work. According to Vanessa, using the mothers' report to monitor the child's development is very gratifying. "Mothers love to hear the assessment of their child's evolution, and this engages them even more."

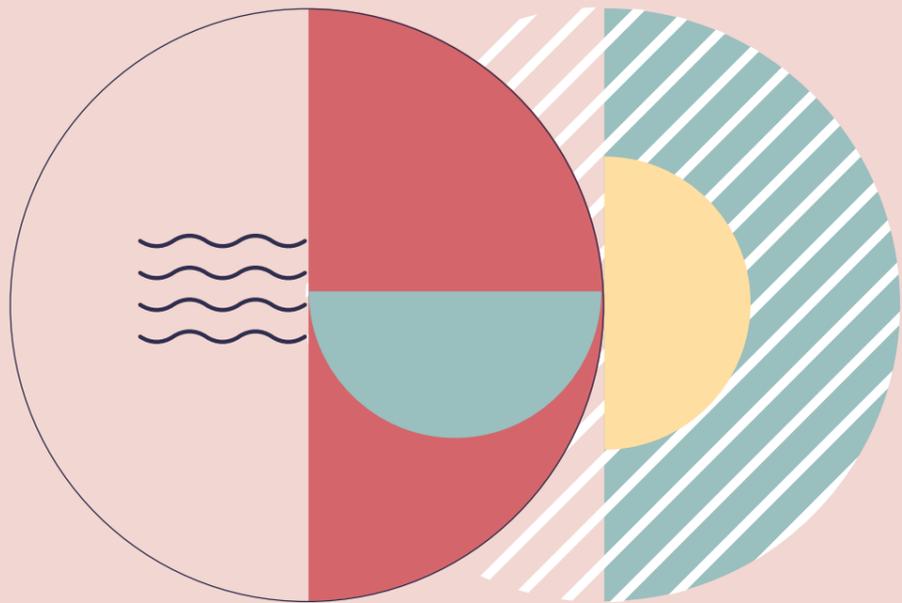
Vanessa believes that the work a home visitor develops does not happen alone and that the support and guidance a supervisor gives is fundamental. She points out that training and videos are often made available to help the work improve.





4

WHAT DID THE VISITS DURING THE PANDEMIC TELL US?



USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS

HOW TECHNOLOGY MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR HOME VISITORS TO WORK DURING THE PANDEMIC

The use of group chat applications, sending messages, photos, and videos, and having telephone conversations was unanimous among the home visitors who participated in the Parenting Award: Good Home Visitor Practices During the Pandemic initiative. The available technology provided a closeness to the families, making it possible to give guidance and monitor child development and pregnancies.

Antonia Orquidéia Carlos de Lira (home visitor in Lagoa do Sítio/PI) realized that, even with the pandemic, she could not distance herself from the families she attended. By creating a conversation group in an app, she was able to demonstrate that she would always be close, reassuring the families. Antonia

continued her activities as a social home visitor, sending text and audio messages and making video calls, showing the families that she was still close, even while having to be socially distanced. "In a way, I ended up creating bonds and became even more attached to the caregivers and children," said Antonia.

Renata Bezerra (home visitor in Itarema/CE) kept in touch via an app for sending messages or making voice or video calls to maintain ties with families and promote child development. "One of the most effective actions was creating tutorials with my own three-year-old daughter. I used the videos to teach them how to assemble toys using household recyclable material and then how to use them," said Renata.

Because of the social distancing measures, **Beatriz Martins Cesário** (home visitor in Choró/CE) had to adopt other methods to stay connected to the families. She decided to use cell phone apps to provide guidance, hold conversations via text messages, voice or video calls, and suggest games, such as family-made board games. Beatriz said, "What most impacted children from zero to three years old were activities that encouraged hygiene practices that teach them how to wash their hands by themselves."

Girleide Gomes Bezerra Lima (home visitor in Linhares/ES) always uses YouTube videos to get ideas for practices that can be developed with the children in her care. She then introduces and discusses the suggestions in weekly meetings with the management team to assess whether the content is age-appropriate. "We make a schedule with all the activities, so the caregivers receive new weekly suggestions to carry out with the children," said Girleide.

Valter Moreira (home visitor in Campo Grande/MS) believes that technology was a great ally in keeping the families engaged in their children's development during the pandemic. Phone calls, video calls, or messages helped to maintain the bonds between the caregivers, children, and home visitors and allowed the caregivers to reuse the material once it was stored on the cell phone. The home visitor also pointed out that caregivers gained another advantage as they could evaluate the content offered. "We always asked them to evaluate our work and make suggestions on what could be improved," explained Valter.

For **Kelrem Aparecida Gonçalves da Cruz** (home visitor in Pedro Gomes/MS), digital tools have become all the home visitors' companions, as most of the activities aimed at stimulating child development are sent to program participants by cell phone. "Technology has helped us to get closer to families, not leaving them void of the much-needed follow-up, especially at this time, when we have aggravated social vulnerabilities," said Kelrem.

To encourage children and families to perform the activities, **Fernanda Maria da Silva Lima** (home visitor in Sete Lagoas/MG) changed her strategy and started recording tutorial videos of the activities and inviting the whole family to participate along with the children. "This change was very positive, and one of the mothers returned to me saying that after her daughter saw 'aunt Fernanda' explaining in the video, the child wanted to do the activity for several days in a row," she said proudly.

ACTIVITY KIT DELIVERY

ACTIVITY KITS ENSURE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

To continue working with families who had no access to telephones or the internet, many home visitors decided to deliver activity kits as a solution, containing materials to carry out activities with the children.

Edilardo Nunes de Freitas (home visitor in Marco/CE) said that his team met daily to create kits for children and expectant mothers, with ideas for activities that stimulate child development according to each age group. "The families loved the initiative and enjoyed the suggested activities because it helped those who do not have access to digital tools. Despite all the work to create the activities, it was, and is, worthwhile because we love what we do. The activities have been successful because they promote the children's inclusion and creativity," said Edilardo. In these kits, families found drawings for coloring, activities such as fishing for "paper fish", and games with cardboard cutouts that helped children with fitting in the shapes and color recognition.

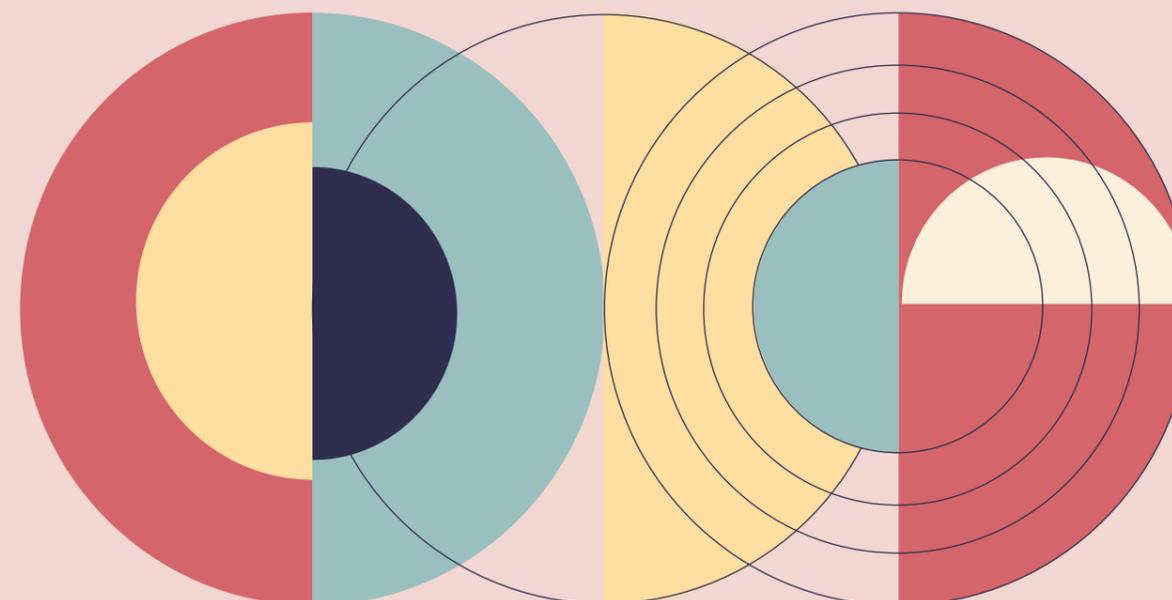
At the beginning of the pandemic, **Queitiane dos Santos Matias** (home visitor in Maranguape/CE) only had remote contact with the families she attended, making it impossible to provide adequate monitoring because many caregivers had no telephone and/or internet or even lacked the necessary skills to use the technology. The program team then decided to

prepare kits with instructions and materials so caregivers could have guidance for carrying out the stimulating activities with the children. "In general, this type of service brought the home visitors closer to the families and allowed us to maintain contact with all those benefiting from the work," said Queitiane.

After noticing the low response to the proposed activities on a cell phone application, **Gabriela San Martins Vaz's** (visitor in Caxias do Sul/RS) team decided to deliver the child development activity kits to all the families in the program, not just to those without cell phones and/or internet, as had been the case. The initiative had a significant improvement in return. "The positive feedback from the families as a whole was remarkable, as it allowed for shorter contact times when using the app. After delivering the kit, we would contact the families throughout the month to find out how the activities were going and if they had any questions," said Gabriela.

Marli da Mata Santos's (home visitor in Queimada Nova/PI) team had help from the supervisor and the city's social assistance system to plan the activities and assemble the families' weekly kits for delivery. "We would bring activities in sanitized plastic pouches and deliver them to the caregivers outside their homes, having zero contact with the children," Marli explained.

Cícera Jeane Fernandes Faria (home visitor in Palmares/PE) visited families who live in rural areas with restricted internet access and delivered kits consisting of teaching material, a description of activities for the families to carry out with their children, and a personalized schedule for each child's routine prepared in partnership with caregivers. A



40-45-minute timeframe was stipulated for the planned activities, and their main focus was to strengthen the bond. "Even from a distance, I tried to talk a little with the children alongside the caregivers to maintain and reinforce the interaction and trust, leaving time for listening to set goals to stimulate child development and share the children's experiences," explained Cícera.

Elza Martinelle dos Santos's (home visitor in Maceió/AL) home visiting team made weekly remote contact and used the activity kit delivery strategy to ensure the program's child development proposal. "We made educational toys, placed them in sanitized pouches, and delivered to the families, taking all the necessary precautions," said Elza.

Tatiane Marcena Rodrigues (home visitor in Potengi/CE) performed her job online for families who had a telephone and internet and respected biosafety protocols to make in-person visits to those who did not have those tools at home. "When talking to my coordinators, we decided to set a day and a time for the families to pick up the material at the Social Assistance office," explained Tatiane.



Watch the video "Home Visiting practices in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic"

MULTIPLE STRATEGIES FOR REACHING AND INVOLVING FAMILIES

IS IT POSSIBLE TO GUARANTEE CONTACT WITH FAMILIES WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING?

Given the pandemic, the home visitors used digital tools, delivered activity kits to families, and resorted to several other ways to contact the families to ensure the continuity of the child development support activities. They were also obligated to review their own work plans, constantly redesign their action strategies to tend to the families' responses, and use a combination of strategies, showing a great capacity to reinvent themselves, be creative, and adapt to the local realities.

With face-to-face visits being suspended, **Viviane Silveira Bezerra's** (home visitor in Sobral/CE) team's first initiative for reaching the program's families was to update the municipal registry of families assisted in the social programs. "This strategy was fundamental to ensuring that all the registered children continued to receive the activities through messages and phone calls," Viviane explained.

For **Isabella Quintanilha de Souza Tavares** (home visitor in Arraial do Cabo/Rio de Janeiro

– RJ), preparing a plan with information on the activities planned for each age group was essential to maintaining communication with the families. "Since we couldn't be in direct contact with the children, this planning helped to send the families weekly notices, ensuring the children's development," explained Isabella.

Unable to provide assistance to families who had no cell phone, **Maria Narjanna Gonçalves Ferreira da Silva's** (home visitor in Assaré/CE) team found a unique way out. "We sought a partnership with the city's local radio station so that we had somewhere to be able to pass on information to these families. Once a week, for an hour, tips on activities and games to be performed with the children and care related to the coronavirus were broadcasted," Maria said.

Seeking to serve the families in the program more effectively, **Joyce Louyse Macedo Nascimento Garcia** (home visitor in Barbalhas/CE) thought about creating a website. "Thanks to a partner company, the idea left the drawing board and became reality. The site has games, recreational activities, educational videos, and other content and has been fundamental for improving my activities," said Joyce.

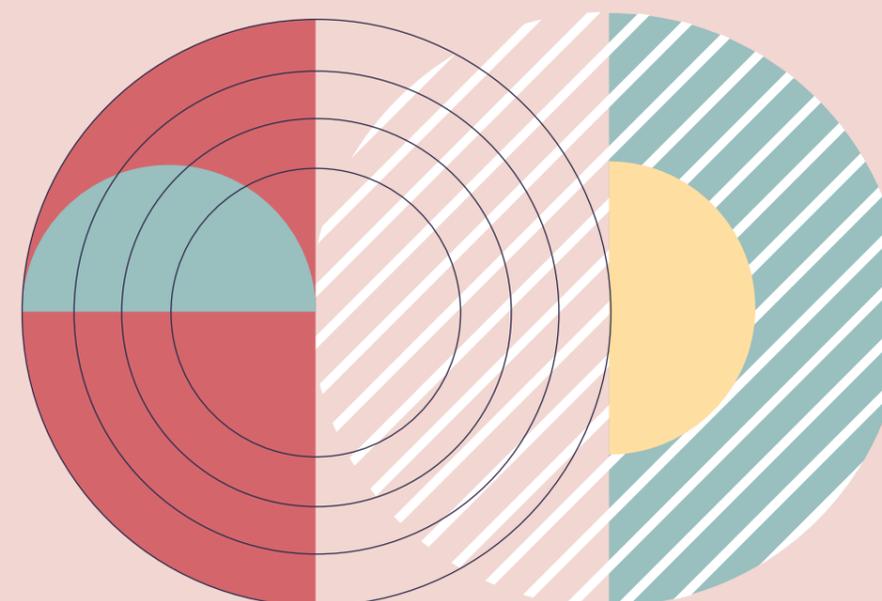
Antonia Selmaria de Sousa Silva (home visitor in Crateús/CE) tested out and improved different strategies to ensure families were engaged. She first attempted to send video stories and e-books using messaging apps, but many mothers said they didn't know how to use the app. Antonia then started to record videos proposing and giving examples of bond-building activities using household materials, but many mothers claimed they didn't have everything they needed. "I had to

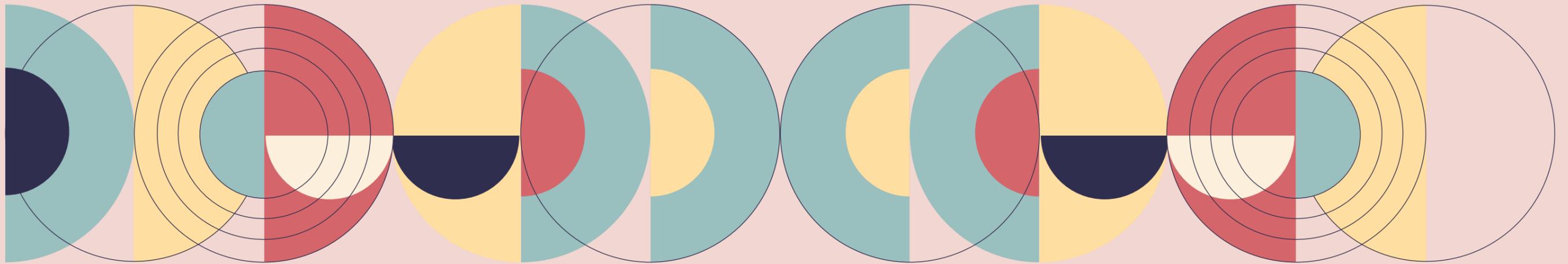
reinvent everything for the third time. I planned the activities, started assembling kits with brushes, crayons, opaque watercolor, and dropped them off at each family's house. I also recorded videos showing how to do the activities using the provided material. This was the only work model that helped me obtain a better return from the families, and this sparked their interest to sit down with the children and do the proposed activities," Antonia said.

As many families were not responding adequately to the proposed activities, **Marcos Ferreira da Cunha** (home visitor in Sumaré/SP) decided to find out why. Many of them had a restricted cell phone data plan, which made it impossible to watch, record, and send the desired amount of videos. That's when he and the supervisor team developed a weekly podcast that addressed a specific

child development topic each week, which was sent out using an app. "This had an impact on the families because they could download (the podcasts) without using too much of their data plan and listen to them whenever they wanted," explained Marcos. The podcasts addressed the importance of playing, preventing domestic accidents, and the Yellow September campaign for suicide prevention.

Maria do Socorro Claudino Bezerra de Almeida's (home visitor in Venturosa/PE) team's first step was to ensure parent involvement by offering them online courses, training, and lectures. After this step, the program service was replicated remotely. "For families who had no telephone and internet, I arranged for the material and proposed activities to be picked up from schools close to the children's homes," explained Maria do Socorro.





READING AND STORYTELLING

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Storytelling is one of humanity's oldest oral traditions, and despite the countless changes technology has instilled, it is still perpetuated to this day, even counting on the help of electronic means to remain present. Often unable to make regular home visits because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the home visitors found out that using apps to send storytelling videos and PDFs was the way to keep in touch with children and families and teach them about child development.

Simone Morais de Araújo (home visitor in Viçosa do Ceará/CE) created a "storytelling hut" under the guidance of her coordinators and supervisors. Parents could create a hut for reading to their children with simple video

instruction (e.g., placing a sheet on top of two chairs facing back to back and slightly apart from each other). "This activity introduced a more playful environment that directly triggered creativity, imagination, and strengthened family bonds since the whole family could participate in this activity designed for zero- to three-year-olds," Simone explained.

Iara Ferreira dos Santos (home visitor in Guapiara/SP) recorded a video for her work in teaching about the importance of a healthy diet, using dolls and puppets to tell a story about foods that compete to see who goes into the pot first. Using very simple language aimed at children up to three years old, Iara managed to get a large following of families. "Many families responded with the activity that the video requested. It was beautiful to see how we can influence the lives of these people in a good way," Iara said enthusiastically.

To achieve more caregiver engagement, **Tairine Camila Fernandes** (home visitor

in Santa Isabel/SP) launched the "Reading Challenge". Parents were to record a video of themselves reading to their children from a book that had been given to them. "We received several videos of mothers reading with their children and testimonials stating that this moment made the children calmer since they are more agitated given the pandemic," said Tairine.

One small apartment and eight children, three of whom receive program assistance. This was the setting for **Tainara Pinheiro Prestes's** (home visitor in Rio Grande/RS) online work. The home visitor had no option but to include the older siblings in the consultations as they were out of school due to the pandemic. They all gathered to listen to stories in the video calls, and the older ones would manage the younger ones during the activities, giving everyone time to relax. "I also ask caregivers and those who can already read to read to the youngsters and then talk about the book, so the whole family can be involved by working together," said Tainara.

Knowing the importance the first years of life have on child development, during the pandemic, **Vanderlândia Pereira Lima** (home visitor in Parambu/CE) reinforced activities that develop children's taste for reading. "I always used stories in videos and PDF format, and I explained to the families that this time together with the children was crucial for strengthening their bonds," explained Vanderlândia.

After discussing an idea with the supervisor, **Ana Ruth Pereira de Souza** (home visitor in Cariús/CE) began researching stories for zero- to three-year-olds about universal values. "I've always loved reading, and after some research, I saw that it is important for children from an early age. That was when I decided to invest time in this idea," said Ana.

LEARNING WITH MUSIC

HOME VISITORS USE VARIOUS TECHNIQUES TO INCORPORATE MUSIC AS A MEDIATOR TO STIMULATE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

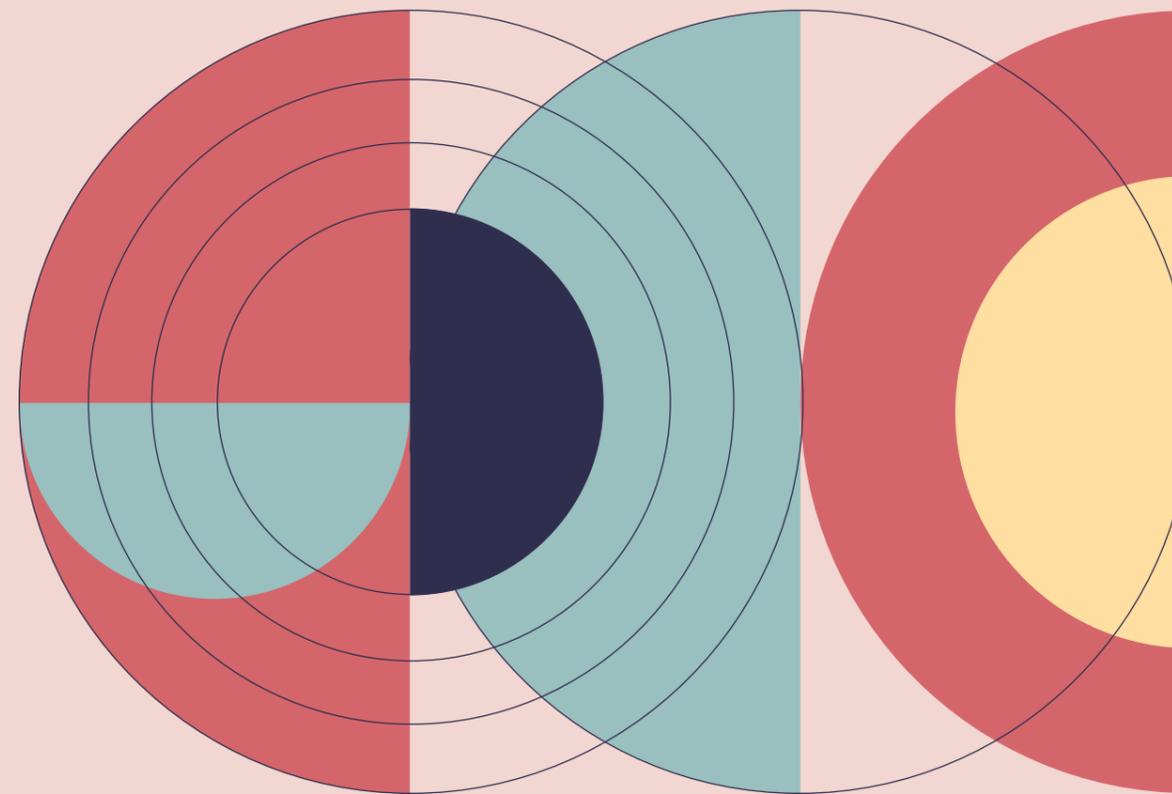
Activities involving musical stimuli that use different tools and practices were essential for engaging the children and their development. **Susiele Aparecida da Silva Oliveira** (home visitor in Riolândia/SP) realized that the pandemic could be a good opportunity to create real connections in everyday life through music. Together with her team, she carried out a musical experience training, which enabled new strategies for encouraging families to use music to stimulate child development and strengthen the caregiver-child bonds. "This practice impacted the families' lives. I received reports from mothers who didn't sing to their children because they said the child didn't like it. But, after my guidance, one of the mothers commented that she tried at a quieter time, and both of them now love to sing, and the child asks her mother to sing for her every day," celebrated Susiele.

Mayara Cristina Fagundes Martins (home visitor in Arujá/SP) used music to help stimulate a child's speech. The home visitor sent tips and exercises through messages that focused on speech and communication for the family to carry out with the child. The

visitor used the knowledge she acquired in an undergraduate course in psychology to help. The mother recorded a feedback video performing the musical activities and exercises Mayara had proposed and reported that there has been significant progress. "While making home visits, I have noticed that music has generally helped to strengthen the bond between caregivers and children and broadened child development," Mayara explained.

In the age-appropriate videos she sent to families with suggested activities, **Taona Natalina de Almeida Rocha** (home visitor in Piracicaba/SP) always stressed how involving music helps children's development and how the simple act of singing strengthens bonds. "We made some playful and musical videos so mothers could use with their children and then tell us how the child reacted to the activity," said Taoana.

Fabiano Nunes da Silva (home visitor in Arapiraca/AL) used a cell phone app to maintain an open channel with mothers or guardians so that they could continue developing activities with their children. Silva proposed interventions using music and materials commonly available at home. "Some activities I proposed for the families were: bowling with plastic bottles or milk cans, making soap bubbles, and singing songs about body parts or animal sounds," explained Fabiano.



GAMES WITH HOMEMADE AND RECYCLABLE MATERIALS

HOW TO INVENT NEW TOYS AND GAMES

One of the strategies visitors widely used during the pandemic was sending videos or text messages to walk the families through how to build toys with recyclable materials or household items.

When contacting families using a cell phone app, **Jeciana Alves da Silva Dias** (home visitor in Crateús/CE) always emphasized that toys could be created with recyclable materials when sending out the activities. "For example, children's motor skills are developed when they screw a cap onto a plastic bottle, and cognitive abilities are developed when colors are introduced. The family can also encourage the child to put plastic containers inside others and then take them out," Jeciana explained.

For **Ione Ferreira dos Santos** (home visitor in São Miguel dos Campos/AL), the video with the cup-stacking game that stimulates motor skills and cognitive development with color recognition was the most successful. "I ask the caregiver to sit on the floor facing the

child and stack the cups together with them, and when necessary, secure the child's hand to help," explained lone.

Letícia Aureliano Fernandes Ferreira (home visitor in Juazeiro do Norte/CE) highlighted the importance of strengthening bonds in her teachings and offered families the chance to encourage the children's development using basic household objects. "One of the activities that the children enjoyed the most was the 'find the lid' game. The caregiver spreads several plastic containers and lids on the floor and asks the child to find the right lid," stated Letícia.

Among the proposals that **Robson Monteiro Barroso Braga** (home visitor in Tururu/CE) presented for caregivers to perform with three-month to one-year-old children were activities that used household materials or items, such as cardboard boxes, mirrors, plastic cups, brushes, balls, and paper. Two- to three-year-olds were given educational material to cut, paint, and draw. "I always explained to the caregiver how each of the activities develops motor skills, cognitive abilities, and vocabulary," emphasized Robson.

In addition to remote visits, **Daynara Ferreira Braga** (home visitor in Garanhuns/PE) also made some monthly face-to-face home visits during the pandemic, during which they could monitor the families' needs and propose activities for them to carry out with the children. "Our team created a monthly activity notebook with relaxation techniques for managing anxiety to help improve affective bonds. We proposed the "Assemble a toy for your child" activity, using easy-to-find items, like plastic bottles, newspaper, cardboard, and Popsicle sticks, to stimulate children's integral development according to

their age group," explained Daynara.

When **Lísia Maria Damaso Albuquerque de Gusmão** (home visitor in Boca da Mata/AL) would do her activities before the pandemic, they involved everyone who was home at the time of the visit. With in-person home visits being prohibited, the home visitor used videos to simply adapt her strategy to the new guidelines. "I decided to bring back the traditional games, like jump rope, hopscotch, hide and seek, musical chairs, and nursery rhymes for the older ones and, for the babies, the caregivers could talk and put the baby on their feet to take their first tiny steps," explained Lísia.

In her work, **Vanúdia Medeiros Gomes** (home visitor in Mombaça/CE) always gave tips for carrying out activities using household materials. "I sent videos I recorded myself showing how to use practical and recyclable materials, such as cardboard, plastic bottles, bottle caps, balled-up socks, and plastic cups. Afterwards, the families had to video record the children's activities and send them back to me," explained Vanúdia.

Isolda Souza Nascimento (home visitor in Olho D'água do Casado/AL) reported that the main strategy the group adopted in her city (before the home visits were suspended due to the pandemic) was to teach mothers how to carry out the activities when the home visitors could not be there. Isolda told us, "We instructed caregivers to use what they had at home – plastic bottles, rice, beans – so that the father or mother would be able to do the activity even when the home visitor was not there."

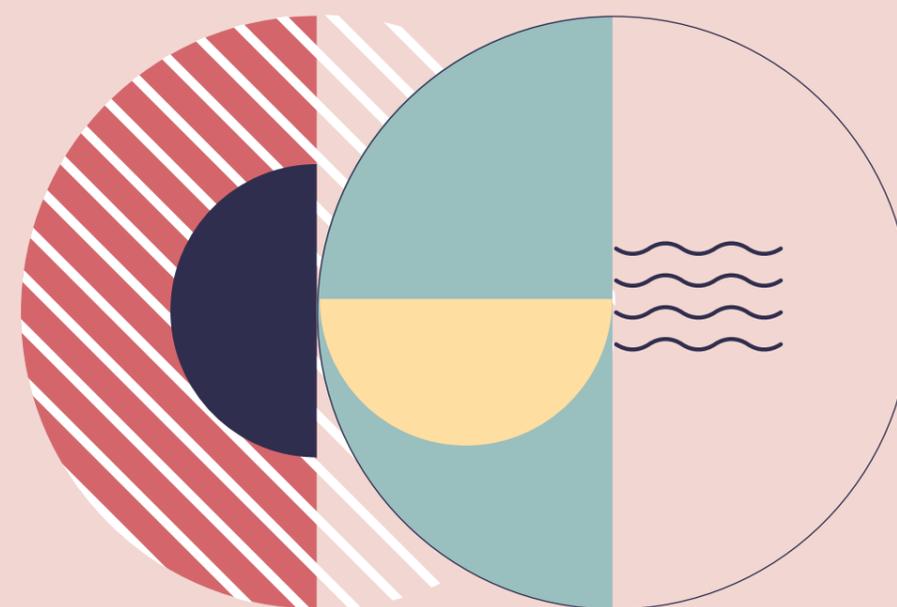
Cleane Pereira Loureiro (home visitor in Independência/CE) said one of the most

successful activities was building a tower with plastic and disposable cups. Instructions were sent via video in a messaging application. "We always said that praising the child was one way to encourage them to do the activities," said Cleane.

Valéria Siqueira Silva Lavareda's (home visitor in Itupiranga/PA) supervisor supported her in preparing a home visit plan designed around each family's reality that used suitable household materials for carrying out child development activities. "One of the suggestions was to make several holes in a large plastic bottle. Afterwards, the child should pass a wooden toothpick through the holes.

The families prepared the activity with the utmost patience and sent back a video or photo," Valéria explained.

Just a few different colored plastic bottle caps and a clothespin are enough to contribute to developing motor skills, cognitive abilities, and creativity. These materials also help children count and identify numbers and colors. That was the message given in one of the many videos made by **Uniquiele Barbosa Monte** (home visitor in Sobral/CE). "The child picks up the caps with the clothespin, and the parents help by counting and introducing the colors," explained Uniquiele.



CREATIVE GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

The desire to make a difference, offering solutions that go beyond those normally proposed, is the characteristic that moves many home visitors in their remote or face-to-face visits.

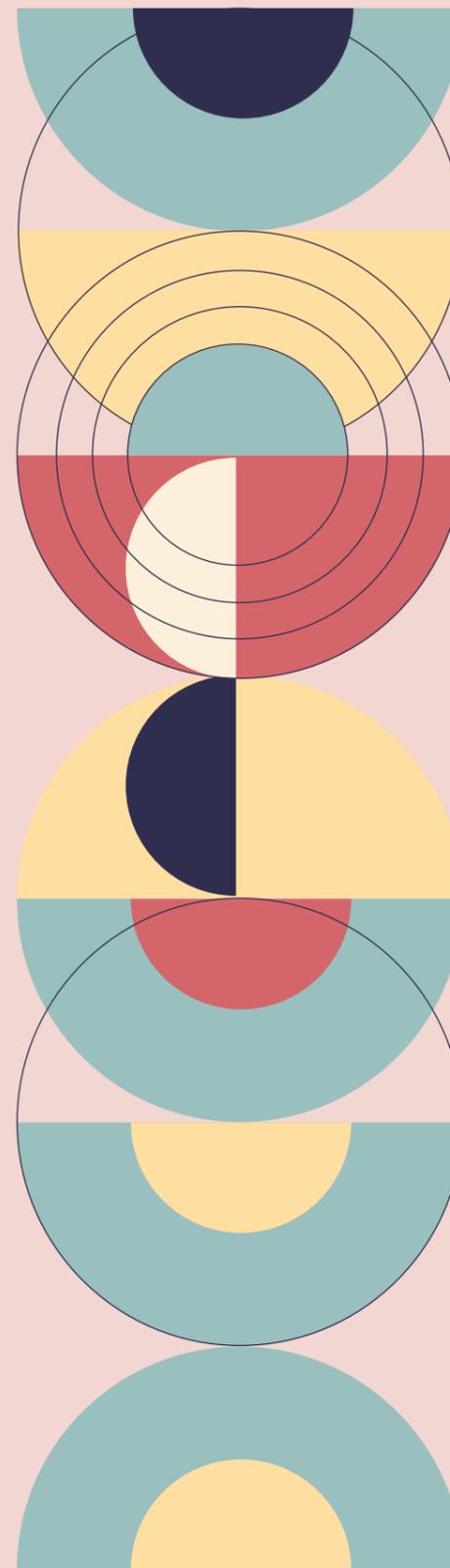
Açaí is an ordinary palm tree in Pará. As the fruit is easily found throughout the region, **Ana Paula Corpes Santiago** (home visitor in Castanhal/PA) had the idea of suggesting an activity with the children using the fruit. "Handling the açaí seeds stimulates fine motor skills, so the children should put the seeds into a small basket and then take them back out," explained Ana Paula.

Carla Daniele dos Santos Domingues's (home visitor in Ituiutuba/MG) main strategy to stimulate children up to three years old was to build a sensory panel, or busy board, putting them into contact with different textures, colors, and shapes. For her face-to-face home visits, Carla took the equipment she built using items such as a brush, felt, pieces of pipe – used as a tunnel for little balls – a switch, caster wheels, a wired plug plugged into an outlet, and a faucet handle. All biosafety and hygiene protocols were followed after each use. Carla explained the importance of the board: "By exploring the objects comprising the environment created on the board, the children gain autonomy and acquire experiences that will support future behaviors and decisions."

Delcileni Santos Pimenta (home visitor in Montes Claros/MG) used her work to strengthen the caregivers' trust, emphasizing that any type of playing can stimulate child development. She suggested to one family that they play a game by spreading socks around the room and asking the child to pair them up. The mother became frustrated that the child did not succeed. "I explained to the mother that getting it right was not the important thing. It's to awaken the child's curiosity to persist and learn," said Delcileni.

How about making a beauty salon at home? That was one of **Luana Cruz Oliveira's** (home visitor in Piracicaba/SP) suggestions to caregivers to provide the exchange of care with the child and develop gross and fine motor skills. Household items can be used for the game, such as a hairbrush and clips, comb, bows, body creams, or any other item that you would find in a beauty salon. "With these simple activities, the child's development stimulus goes uninterrupted, even with the pandemic," said Luana.

One of the activities **Myllena Araújo Paes Leme** (home visitor in Varjota/CE) proposed during this pandemic was "Giving Life to Objects." The activity consists of cutting out cardboard in the shape of little eyes, a nose, and a mouth, then painting them with colored pencils or opaque watercolors. These shapes are then glued to basic household items, such as a spoon, cup, or plastic bottle. "This way, the children give life to the objects and, through them, they and the caregiver can elaborate a story, stimulating the imagination and strengthening the bond with the caregiver," explained Myllena.



Leide Carla de Freitas (home visitor in Limoeiro do Norte/CE) always researched which activity was most suitable for the child's age group before passing it along on to the caregivers. "We always found thought-provoking activities, such as asking the child to clip on and unclip clothespins from the rim of a bucket, which helps develop motor skills. Another suggestion was to make holes in an egg carton and ask the child to pass a cotton swab or straw through the holes," explained Leide.

Nilo Ednilson Liesem Hyacinth (home visitor in Teutônia/RS) bet on spontaneous play to encourage child development. The visitor highlighted the importance of performing simple games in his face-to-face or virtual contacts, preferably with activities from the caregivers' own childhood, allowing them to access good memories and feelings. One of Nilo's suggestions was to tie a string around the handles of a plastic bag, transforming it into a kind of balloon for the children to hold. "With simple practices like this, I'm managing to make families proponents of strengthening their affective bonds, so essential and relevant in our work, especially in times of social isolation," commented Nilo.

Based on the idea of using what is around the house, one of the activity suggestions proposed by **Maria Celeste Marques** (home visitor in Ervália/MG) was to use chalk and pebbles to develop motor skills. "The caregiver draws a picture on the floor, which could be a snail, for example, with plenty of space between the outlines and asks the child to fill in the lines with small stones," explained Maria Celeste.

ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORT FOR EXPECTANT MOTHERS

EXPECTANT MOTHERS ALSO RELY ON THE HOME VISITORS' SUPPORT

Monitoring, providing guidance, and supporting expectant mothers is also part of the activities home visitors carry out. During the pandemic, this work continued remotely by telephone, video calls, messaging apps, and via face-to-face visits that followed all safety protocols for delivering materials.

The strategy **Silmara da Silva Bezerra's** (home visitor in Iguaraci/PE) home visiting team developed was to create activity workbooks delivered monthly to families. Arraiá da Gestante (Expecting Mothers' June Festival) was one of the suggestions for mothers-to-be to work on self-esteem, the affective bond with the baby, and bring back their local culture with popular songs and sayings. The family would set up a typical Brazilian June Festival atmosphere using household materials (pots, colored cloths, a broom, and decorative flags). "Once everything was ready, the family would form a circle to tell childhood stories, sing songs, play old games and at the end, draw a picture on the expectant mother's belly and take several photos to record the moment," explained Silmara.

The expectant mothers that **Ozineide**

Cristina Fernandes de Freitas (home visitor in Picuí/PB) attends were very apprehensive about the coronavirus. "To make the mummies-to-be calm, we always suggested videos and directed them to talk to their babies, gently rubbing their bellies so that the baby could feel the mother's warmth and affection," explained Ozineide, who also reinforced the importance of mothers maintaining current medical care.

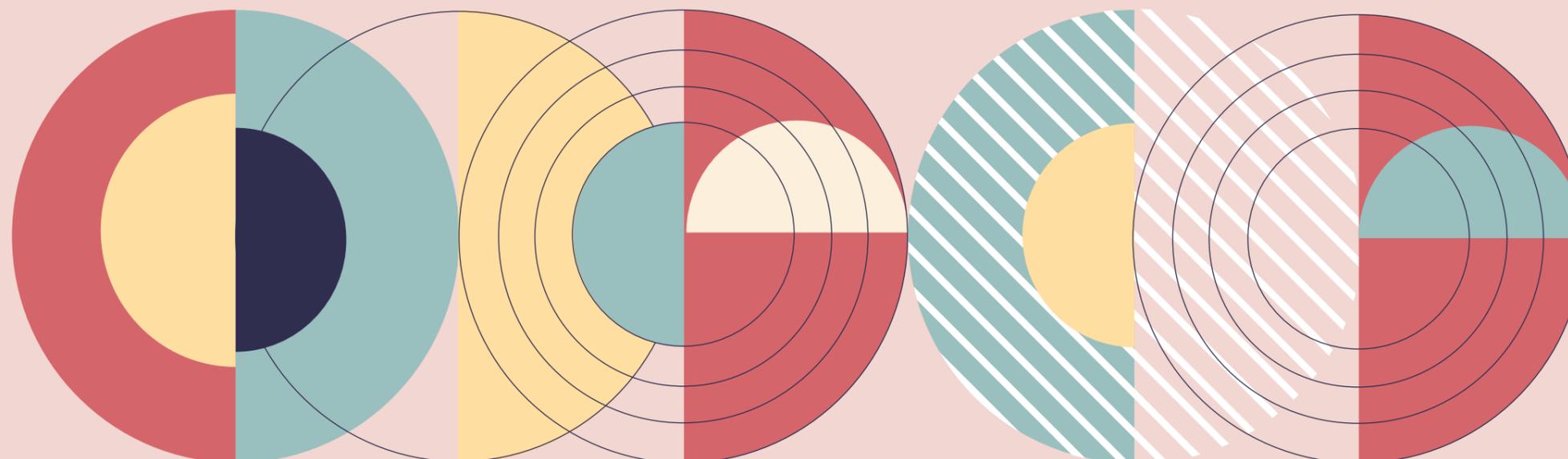
To continue her work, **Ana Clara Estevam Vaz** (home visitor in Garanhuns/PE) maintained contact with families and expectant mothers that participate in the program through remote visits. "In the work of welcoming families in situations of social vulnerability, specifically for expectant mothers, I sent videos with information from the *"Guia sobre a Importância da Amamentação e os Cuidados com o Bebê* (Guide on the Importance of Breastfeeding and Baby Care)," said Ana Clara.

SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FOR FAMILIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

HOME VISITORS PROVIDED COMFORT AND SECURITY FOR FAMILIES WHILE FACING THE PANDEMIC

The pandemic caused visitors, even from a distance, to broaden their vision to the entire family and sharpen their sensitivity even further to understand the impact of such an unexpected situation on a family's daily life.

With her work, **Rita de Cássia Morais Negreiros** (home visitor in Salitre/CE) was able to offer support to families, always with an attentive approach, leading to an understanding of what was happening in the world. She passed on guidelines on coronavirus prevention and precautions to be adopted, answered questions, and reassured the families, so they felt safe, cared for, and loved. "I always tried to maintain communication with the families,



calling, asking how they were doing, if they needed anything, always looking to interact with a willingness to help," explained Rita.

Lorena Trevizani (home visitor in Novo Horizonte do Oeste/RO) was also attentive in supporting caregivers regarding the pandemic. She took a coronavirus prevention course so she could provide parents with better guidance. "I advised the families on COVID-19, the importance of social distancing, the correct use of masks, the need to sanitize and wash your hands well on all my appointments," added Lorena.

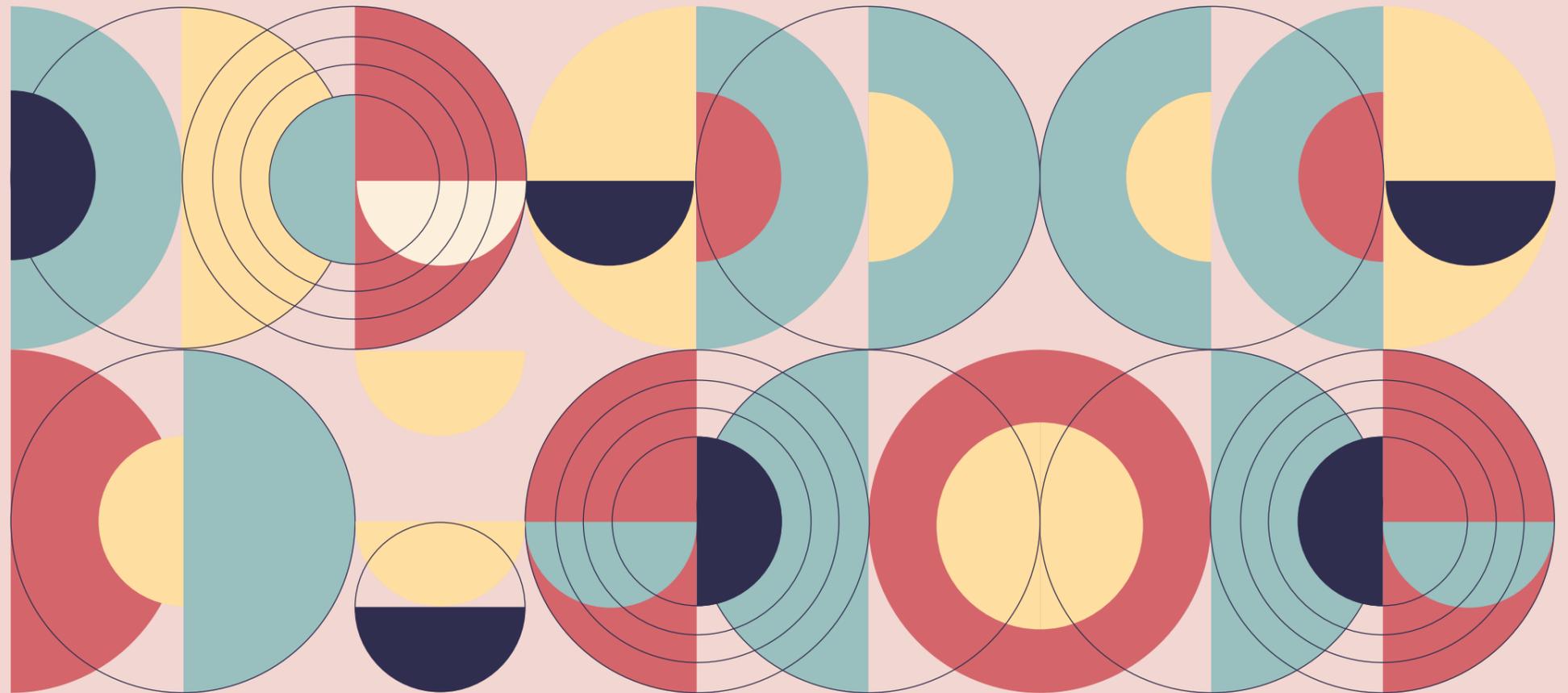
Dulce Marileia Souza (home visitor in Montes Claros/MG) used apps and managed to be present in the families' daily lives, clarifying questions that arose with the intense fear concerning COVID-19. "I gave tips on how the caregiver could simply explain to the child what was happening so that they could begin to understand the importance of healthcare in our lives," explained Dulce.

With the onset of the pandemic, visits began to take place remotely via telephone calls or messages. In every situation, Domingas listened carefully and enlightened the families, informing them that the remote visits aimed at protecting and caring for the health of all family members, mainly because some families had people in the COVID-19 risk group. "The families often confided that just the call or the visit helped them feel comforted, and they were happy to know that there is someone who is always there for them offering support and trust," said Domingas.

On **Graziella Teixeira Sobral's** (home visitor in Garanhuns/PE) visits, many caregivers questioned not having face-to-face visits

because they did not correctly understand what was happening. Graziella took advantage of these moments to clarify any questions about the coronavirus. "Many people didn't know how to take care of themselves, how to wear masks correctly, and the importance of social distancing," explained Graziella.

Maria Alves Rodrigues (home visitor in Milagres/CE) said that the team had to adapt so as not to lose the bond with the families in the program, and the pandemic also became one of the issues addressed. The form the management chose was to maintain contact remotely through phone calls, video calls, and messages. "We home visitors were committed to regularly sending messages that clarified concerns about the coronavirus and then suggesting an activity to be carried out with the child," explained Maria.



CAMPAIGNS AND FUNDRAISERS

IS IT POSSIBLE TO DO MORE?

Serving families in situations of social vulnerability, home visitors mobilized to extend aid through donations.

Francisca Ariana Estevão (home visitor in General Sampaio/CE) said she developed strategies to assist the families during the pandemic, including creating a conversation group on an app, where she posted suggestions for activities and storytelling weekly. Another way to help was through food collection campaigns. "With these campaigns, we

were able to collect cleaning and personal care products, food, and milk to assemble basic food baskets and distribute them to families who have lost their income due to the COVID-19 pandemic," explained Francisca.

Realizing the financial situation of the families participating in the program, which was aggravated by the pandemic, **Milena Dalila Ferreira Lima** (home visitor in General Sampaio/CE) decided to talk to her supervisor to propose some form of help. They decided to run campaigns to collect cleaning products and food. In addition to children's activity kits and information on coronavirus prevention, the home visitor also started to deliver basic food baskets to families. "In addition to guiding the children's development, we were able to help the whole family with these donations," explained Milena.

 See a little more of these stories by watching the video "The Importance of Family Visits for Early Childhood"

STRENGTHENING THE BOND

HOW TO USE THE ROUTINE TO STRENGTHEN THE BOND

The bond can be strengthened at any time, especially when the caregiver's attention and interest are directed towards the child. Several visitors emphasized the focus of their activities on strengthening bonds.

As many mothers said they did not have time to run activities with the children, **Sara Cristina de Aguiar Pereira** (home visitor in Sumaré/SP) started to send them suggestions on how to include children in routine activities to strengthen their bond. "I send something that makes the families reflect so that they can include the possibility of strengthening the bond in the family care routine. For example, at bath time or when changing clothes, caregivers must listen carefully and curiously to the child's feelings," concluded Sara.

Gessica de Oliveira Santana (home visitor in Piracicaba/SP) started to use a similar strategy when she realized that many families were not responding as expected to the proposed activities because they did not have the time. The home visitor offered new possibilities based her knowledge on the families' routine, always striving to guide and emphasize what the family can do. "As a visitor and knowing the families' routine, I always seek to understand and teach what can be done and the best way to help the children's development," explained Gessica.

Ana Maria Gonçalves Santos (home visitor in São João da Lagoa/MG) always asked caregivers to record and photograph child development activities performed with the child and then send them to the program, and she reported how caregivers recognized this process as essential for strengthening their bonds. "Parents who previously reported not knowing how to interact with their children discovered how technology could facilitate the strengthening of family bonds," explained Ana Maria.

Sirlei de Jesus Vaz de Souza (home visitor in Alvorada/RS), realizing that some families faced emotional and social difficulties while social distancing, always sought to provide families with activities that would give all family members a more uniting and sharing experience through carefully designed and easily assimilated activities. "We even took courses to learn how to make toys to include them in the kits delivered to the families," explained Sirlei. The toys used a variety of easy-to-find materials, such as plastic bottle caps.

STRENGTHENING SUPPORT NETWORKS

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUPPORT NETWORK

In the rush of daily life, many caregivers end up setting self-care aside, overloading themselves with the work routine, housework, and childcare. Being able to rely on help, no matter however small, benefits everyone, including the child.

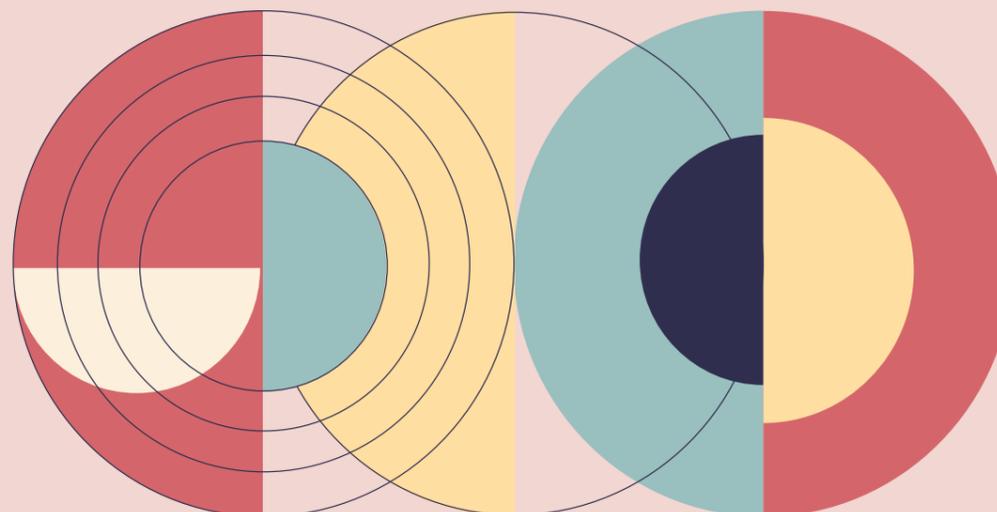
Even with the visits taking place remotely, **Helena Maia Braga** (home visitor in Sumaré/SP) realized in the contacts with caregivers that mothers were overwhelmed by the pandemic. With the support of her supervision, Helena decided to promote a space for listening and reflection, in which mothers

could share their feelings arising from their sense of overload. "Many mothers were able to reflect on the importance of building support parenting networks and, after that, some of them opened up to their friends and family about the situation, while others sought help from services they felt they needed," said Helena.

For **Rosicleia Pereira de Oliveira** (home visitor in Montes Claros/MG), with creating a chat group in a messaging app, families could interact, exchange experiences among themselves, and help each other overcome such a delicate moment. "This was a way I found to pass on my activities and, at the same time, make sure the families realize everyone was going through the same situation," explained Rosicleia.

Mainara Martins (home visitor in Santa Bárbara do Sul/RS) also created a chat group in the app to stay connected to families and promote connections between them. "This convenience positively impacted the families, leaving them confident and enabling mothers to exchange experiences. They also constantly talked to me in private about vaccines, development indicators for the child's age group, and other matters," said Mainara.

Elisandra Simonett (home visitor in Parobé/RS) believes children have a unique way of understanding the pandemic and communicating their feelings and anxieties, so their focus was to create specific care strategies for them and their caregivers. "I tried to identify how the family was organizing themselves and if they had a support network. I also started to give guidance so that everyone felt more secure and entrusted," said Elisandra.



STRENGTHENING THE FATHER FIGURE

STRENGTHENING THE FATHER'S PARTICIPATION IN CHILD CARE AND ACTIVITIES

To show the benefits of paternal engagement in childcare, home visitors took advantage of this time in the pandemic to propose activities for families that involve the fathers.

The team of home visitors from Pentecoste/CE, among them **Eveline Menezes Marques**, has been discussing the importance of the father figure with the families. When in contact with the family, visitors also encourage the father to participate in playful activities, guide parents on the importance of responsive care,

and practice praising their children more. One of the proposed activities was playing games from the caregivers' childhood. "It was beautiful to see. The children had fun, but so did the caregivers," said Eveline emotionally.

One weekly activity that **Mariluce de Oliveira Aguiar** passed on during her remote visits was for caregivers to read stories and then instruct the child to draw a picture about what they liked most. Although the home visitor was afraid to accept the suggestion since families were unaccustomed to reading, the feedback was very positive. One of the fathers gave some particularly noteworthy feedback to this activity. "One of the children drew a time when their father had read to them. The father was very touched, as he had never read to his son before, and it was very gratifying for me to experience," said Mariluce.

Valdelice da Silva Lopes (home visitor in Barra do Ouro/TO) felt gratified to obtain good results on the development of an almost two-year-old child because the father was involved in the activities with the child.



Watch the video "Home Visits in the strengthening of intersectoriality"



INTERSECTORAL COLLABORATION

HOW HOME VISITORS CAN BRIDGE THE GAP WITH OTHER SOCIAL POLICIES

Home visitors are often the only communication channel for families in vulnerable situations. Therefore, it is up to them to liaise with other social assistance,

education, and healthcare sectors to adequately meet the demands that directly impact the well-being of children and families as a whole. During the coronavirus pandemic, the home visitor's role was even more relevant.

With an empathic ear, **Daniely Maciel da Luz** (home visitor in Sete de Setembro/RS) managed to offer help to a mother distressed with her son's speaking difficulties. When making in-person home visits, the 17-month-old mouthed his first words, but there was a setback with the onset of the pandemic. "The mother then told me that she didn't know who to turn to for treatment and was very upset because her oldest daughter also had learning difficulties," explained Daniely. The visitor reported the mother's concern during the weekly Municipal Technical Group Meeting, and the child was referred to specialized care, with ten speech therapy sessions to stimulate the child's speech. In addition to all the work developed, Daniely stressed all the effort needed to maintain contact with families living in rural areas.

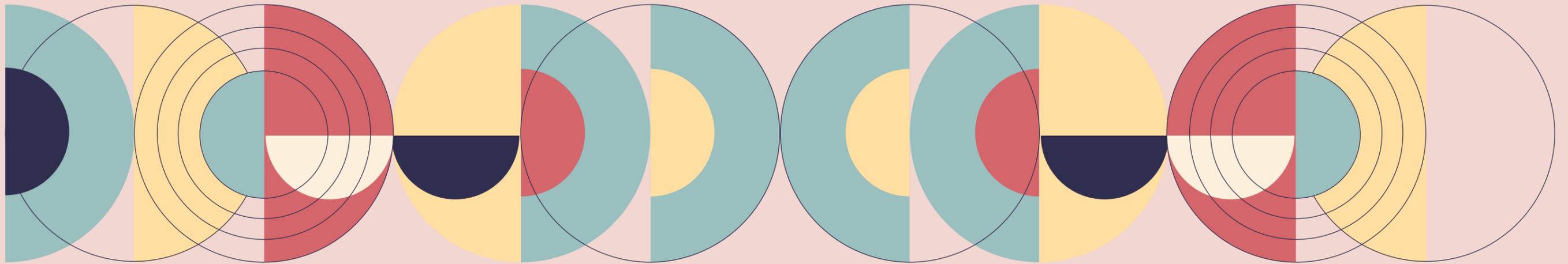
Erica Carvalho de Oliveira (home visitor in Perdões/MG) had a similar experience directly involving the child's mother but generating results that benefited the whole family. The appointment was scheduled for a two-and-a-half-year-old girl who had pulled through cancer treatment. The child was anxious from the long period spent in the hospital, had insomnia, and had difficulty relating. Erica realized that the child's primary caregiver, her mother, needed psychological care. Separated from her husband, the mother had to face her daughter's treatment alone, making her very weary, which led to the onset of depression. "Together with the Social Assistance Referral Center (CRAS) psychologist, we directed the treatment, previously planned for the child, to the mother, as we noticed that she was very emotionally fragile due to the family context,"

explained Érica. Soon after treatment began, the mother showed significant improvement, being more patient to take care of her child, who also became calmer, resulting in a significant improvement in family life.

Maria Irineu dos Santos (home visitor in Santa Quitéria/CE) attributes the success of her work to the trust she gained with the families assisted by the program. That trust opened doors for her to be able to make connections with other public service support networks. "We had two cases of depression that I noticed early on because the caregivers opened up to me, telling me of the difficulties they were going through," said Maria. The visitor sought guidance from her supervisor, who referred the situation to the municipal social assistance network.

Edna Firmino da Silva Marcena's (home visitor in Ceilândia/DF) follow-up phone calls, video calls, and even messages made her realize that some families were shaken due to the social isolation. "In these situations, I referred to my supervisors, who connected me with support networks, like CRAS, to provide support to these individuals. The families were happy to receive support and qualified listening in this delicate moment," said Edna.

For **Roseane Moraes Santos** (home visitor in Triunfo/PE), the team's adopted strategy positively impacted the lives of the 33 families, 27 children (zero to three years old), and six expectant mothers monitored in the program. "Home or remote visits are complemented with intersectoral collaboration, whereby the demands identified in each family context are the object of case studies with the CRAS referral team, to mediate families' access to SUAS services, programs, benefits, and other intersectoral collaborative policies," explained Roseane.



THE SUPERVISOR'S ROLE

TEAMWORK

Before the home visitor goes to field or initiates virtual contact, as has happened more frequently due to the coronavirus pandemic, it is necessary to carry out a lot of prior work involving a whole team.

The process begins with a survey of the families and expectant mothers who will be assisted, identifying and respecting each of their particularities. Next, a schedule and all the pedagogical material are prepared by age groups. Then comes the home visitor's turn. The pandemic impacted this process, forcing everyone to reinvent themselves and seek new solutions from planning to approach and contact with families.

The solutions found to give continuity to the activities that encouraged child development and care for expectant mothers were the most diverse but were always discussed with the entire team.

In the testimonies of home visitors who participated in the Parenting Award: Good Home Visitor Practices During the Pandemic initiative, it is evident how important the supervisors' and coordinators' support is for the visitors to feel confident in carrying out their work.

Patricia Leal Lima Veneziani (home visitor in São José dos Campos/SP) began her home visiting work in June 2020 amid a pandemic and feared how receptive the families in the program would be. "The support and training we received from the three supervisors and our coordinator were essential for our initiation of approaching and visiting the families," said Patrícia.

The pandemic generated a new situation for **Luzinete de Sousa Pereira** (home visitor

in Rio Sono/TO), with many adaptations and exchanges of experiences between home visitors and supervisors. "Our supervisor contributed a lot, always instructing us on the best way to do something. If we recorded a nonideal video, she would ask us to modify it and explained how to improve it," said Luzinete.

Daniele dos Santos Almeida (home visitor in Tefé/AM) had the help of her supervisor to develop a home visit workbook containing four age-specific activities for each child, which was delivered monthly to the 25 families she assisted. "The strategy was for the caregiver to use ordinary household objects in the child's development, which could be containers with plastic lids to put on and take off, a bed sheet for playing peekaboo, or a table for the child to pass under," informed Daniele. She also emphasized how essential the support of her supervisor Maria da Silva Oliveira and other home visitors on her team was to design this strategy and carry out the activities.

Sabrina de Oliveira Silva Costa (home visitor in Maricá/RJ) believes the help of the coordi-

nator and supervisor was essential in selecting and adapting activities. "Their help was essential to distinguish which activities would be necessary for each child according to their age group, keeping the assisted families informed on the situation and sending them weekly reports with tips on precautions, healthcare, food, and personal care" said Sabrina.

Élida Andrade dos Santos (home visitor in Arapiraca/AL) explained how the coordination and supervision teams were essential for her achieving excellent results in caring for a child with speech difficulty and another with walking difficulty. Based on a monthly plan, she instructed the families on how to carry out activities, what materials to use, and the importance of feedback so that the visitor could assess the child's difficulties and progress. "All this work was made possible by the program's coordinator and supervisor who developed strategies for continuing the follow-ups," said Élida.

BENEFITS OF THE HOME VISITORS' WORK

THE RESULTS ACHIEVED BY THE VISITORS

Even with all the restrictions and difficulties imposed by the pandemic, with most care taking place remotely, visitors reported the benefits families felt thanks to the work developed.

Before the pandemic, **Juliana Botelho Garcia** (home visitor in Rio Grande/RS) cared for a two-and-a-half-year-old child who had assistance from an institution specialized in stimulating child development. This child had limitations, such as walking, talking, sitting up, and even raising anything to the mouth. The visitor then gave instructions on activities that encouraged the child to hold things (such as rattles) and songs and stories to stimulate speech. With the arrival of the pandemic and no face-to-face visits, the visitor reinforced communication with the caregiver, managing to work together. "I always gave her guidance to encourage the child's autonomy and reinforced that, as she was the one who spent the most time with him, she had to give the most encouragement," explained Juliana. A few months later, the mother reported that the child was already sitting up, would eat a cookie on his own, and raise a bottle to his mouth.

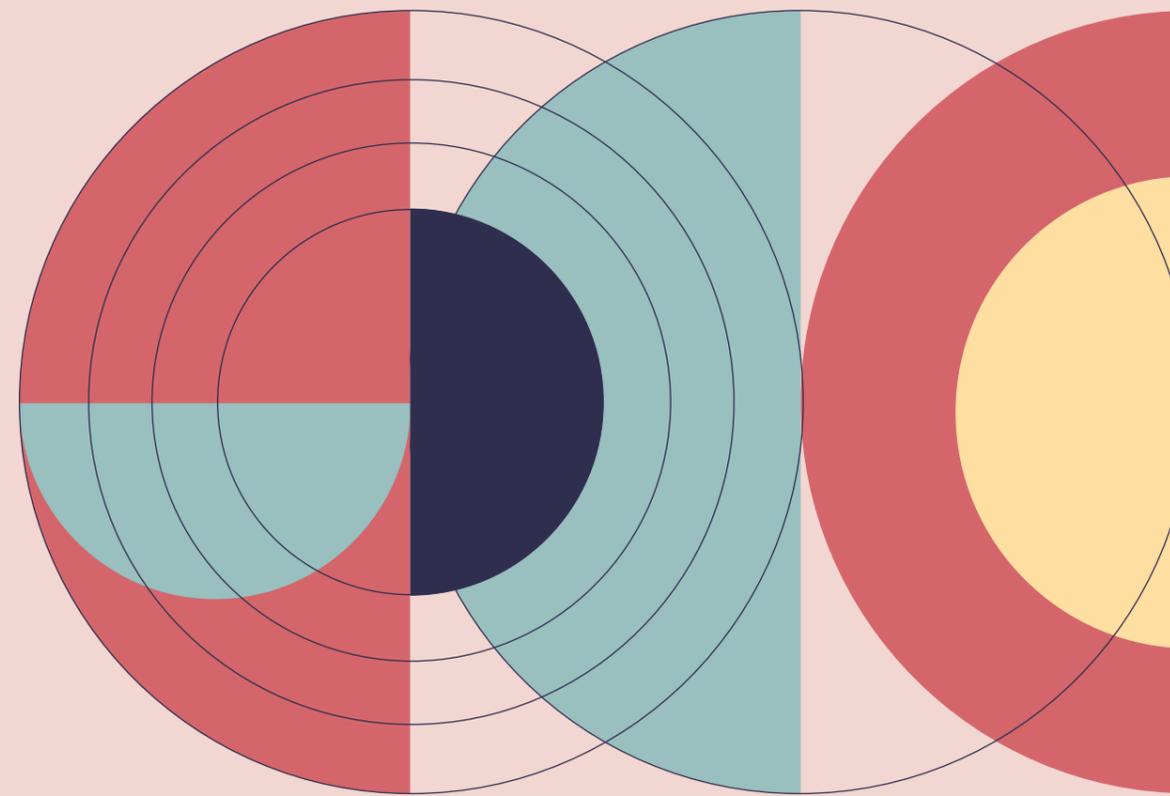
When **Taís Soares Marques's** (home visitor in Perdões/MG) home visiting work began,

activities had already been suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic. After defining which visits would be remote and which ones would be in person (for caregivers who lacked the technological resources), the visitors began contacting the families. According to feedback from the beneficiaries themselves, the visits were greatly welcomed. "For example, a mother commented that she had never imagined playing with her child in such a fun pedagogical manner and still providing the child with something to learn," said Taís.

To stay connected to the families she serves, **Taciane de Souza Lopes** (home visitor in Barbalha/CE) made use of the technological resources at hand, a lot of empathy, and attentive listening. When contacting the families, she always gave the caregivers guidance about praising the children during their activities, encouraging them to develop. "The best outcome I got was that the caregivers want the follow-ups to last until the children are six years old because some families will be getting released from the program when the children turn three," celebrated Taciane.

Even at a distance, **Thais Ramos de Araújo's** (home visitor in São Vicente/SP) work positively impacted the lives of the assisted families through phone calls, video calls, or messages. The visitor suggested activities in her videos that used plastic bottles, newspaper, and toilet paper rolls. "I realized that these families greatly evolved in strengthening their bonds and in the children's development," explained Thais.

When contacting the families she served, even from a distance, **Francislaine Saraiva Dias** (home visitor in Montes Claros/MG) always explained the objective of the activity: development of motor skills and reasoning,



strengthening bonds, and others. "The children assisted by the program are developing much better thanks to these activities, a fact that is proven by the report that the caregivers send us, with photos and videos of the children doing the activities," said Francislaine.

Despite the change in the home visit format, which shifted to a virtual one, the families assisted by **Juliana Maciel dos Santos** (home visitor in Corumbá/MS) reacted positively. "I had one family report that their child loved to run the activity with his mother and that they wanted to continue playing all day because the caregiver pretended to be the home visitor," Juliana explained.

For **Aline Maria do Nascimento Brito da Silva** (home visitor in Redenção/CE), the work of a home visitor makes all the difference in

children's lives because many caregivers are unaware of the importance of early childhood development. "I attended to a child who could not walk because the mother would not put her on the ground, fearing she would fall and get hurt. After numerous conversations, showing support, and passing on some activities for the child, the mother felt more secure and started to encourage the child to walk," said Aline.

Mayra Chaves Borges (home visitor in Muricilândia/TO) reported that what most caught her attention was that caregivers began to interact with the children more because of the tips for using household materials to carry out the activities. "This generated spontaneity on the part of caregivers because they realized that they could enter the child's world using simple things, maintaining and strengthening their bond," said Mayra.

COMPLETE LIST OF AWARD WINNERS

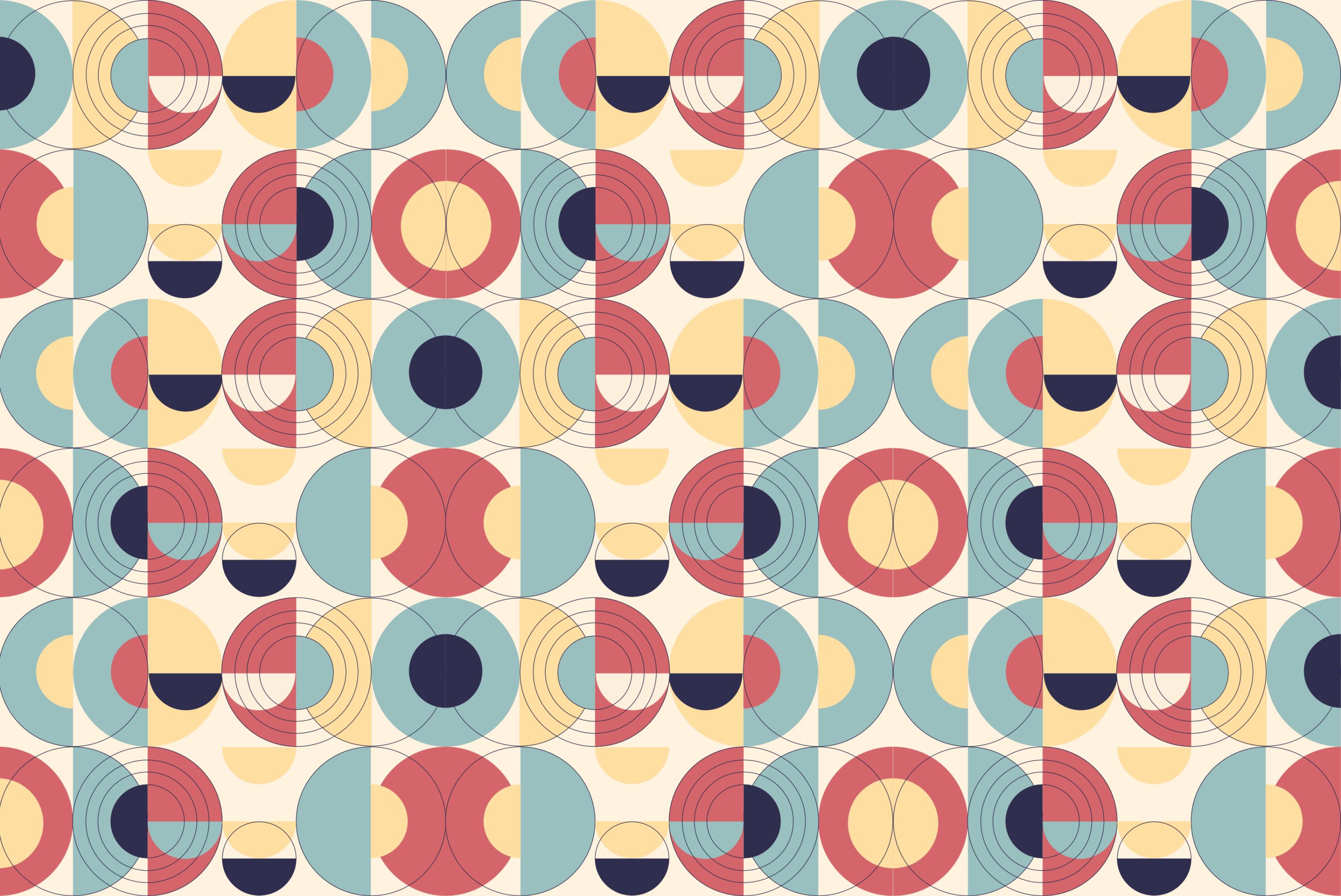
- Criança Feliz
- Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)
- Programa de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Infantil (Padin)
- Educação - Olhar para as diferenças
- Primeira Infância Cidadã

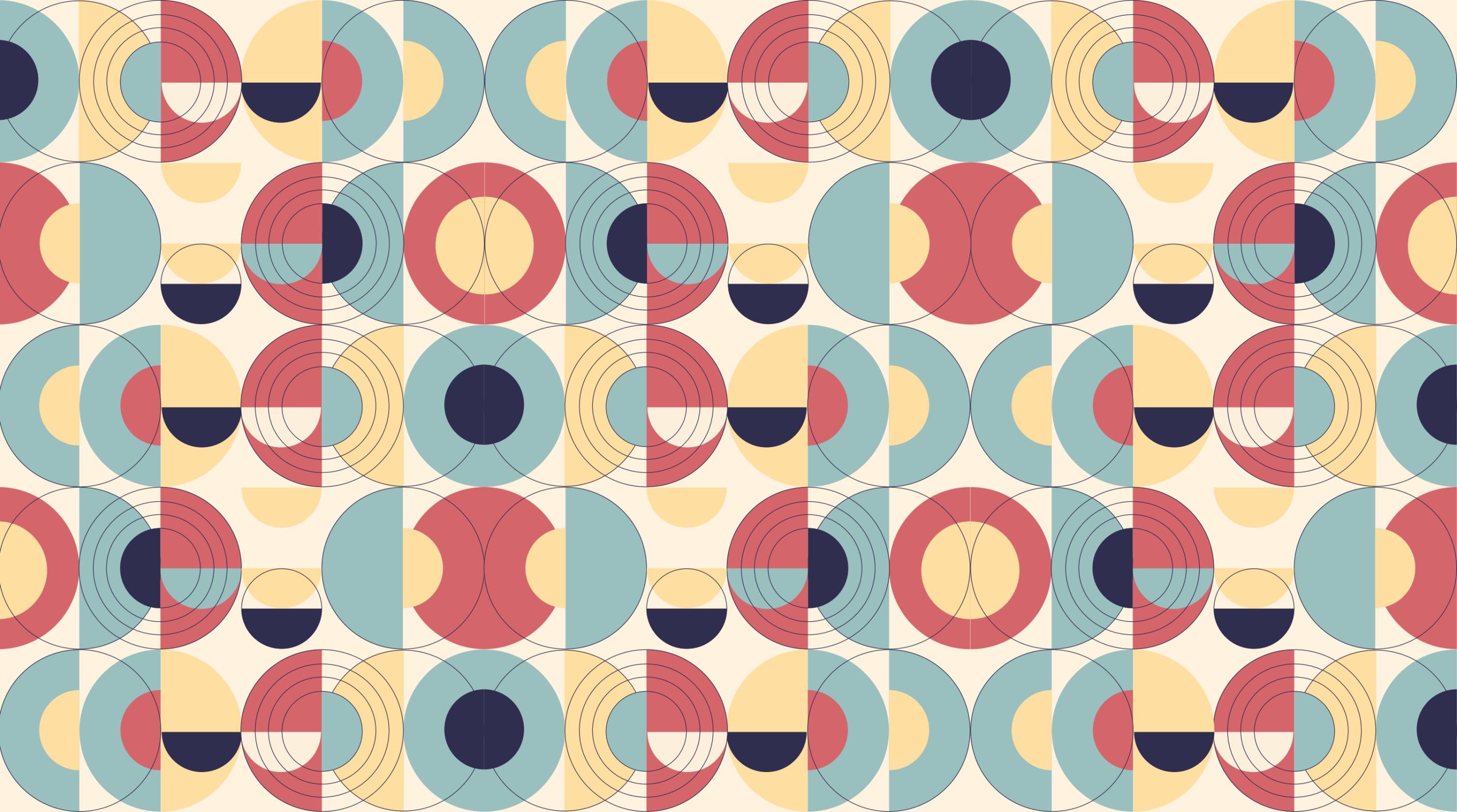
NOME COMPLETO	PROGRAMA	CIDADE	ESTADO
Aline Maria do Nascimento Brito da Silva	● Criança Feliz	Redenção	CE
Ana Clara Estevam Vaz	● Criança Feliz	Garanhuns	PE
Ana Maria Gonçalves Santos	● Criança Feliz	São João da Lagoa	MG
Ana Paula Corpes Santiago	● Criança Feliz	Castanhal	PA
Ana Ruth Pereira de Sousa	● Programa de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Infantil (Padin)	Cariús	CE
Antonia Orquideia Carlos de Lira	● Criança Feliz	Lagoa do Sítio	PI
Antonia Rosana Sousa Castro	● Criança Feliz	Pentecoste	CE
Antonia Selmaria de Sousa Silva	● Criança Feliz	Crateús	CE
Beatriz Martins Cesário	● Programa de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Infantil (Padin)	Choró	CE
Bruna Trus Schiavi	● Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)	Porto Alegre	RS
Carla Daniele dos Santos Domingues	● Criança Feliz	Ituiutaba	MG
Cicera Jeane Fernandes Faria	● Criança Feliz	Palmares	PE
Cleane Pereira Loureiro	● Criança Feliz	Independência	CE
Daniele dos Santos Almeida	● Criança Feliz	Tefé	AM
Daniely Maciel da Luz	● Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)	Sete de Setembro	RS
Daynara Ferreira Braga	● Criança Feliz	Garanhuns	PE
Delcileni Santos Pimenta	● Criança Feliz	Montes Claros	MG
Domingas Pereira Rabelo	● Criança Feliz Brasileira	Santa Maria	DF
Dulce Marileia Sousa Mendonça	● Criança Feliz	Montes Claros	MG
Edilardo Nunes de Freitas	● Criança Feliz	Marco	CE
Edna Firmino da Silva Marcena	● Criança Feliz Brasileira	Ceilândia	DF
Élida Andrade dos Santos	● Criança Feliz	Arapiraca	AL
Elisandra Simonett	● Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)	Parobé	RS

NOME COMPLETO	PROGRAMA	CIDADE	ESTADO
Elza Martinelle dos Santos	● Primeira Infância Cidadã	Maceió	AL
Érica Carvalho de Oliveira	● Criança Feliz	Perdões	MG
Eveline Meneses Marques	● Criança Feliz	Pentecoste	CE
Fabiano Nunes da Silva	● Criança Feliz	Arapiraca	AL
Fernanda Maria da Silva Lima	● Criança Feliz	Sete Lagoas	MG
Francisca Ariana Estevão Andrade Silva	● Criança Feliz/Primeira Infância Program and SUAS	General Sampaio	CE
Francisco Sonyanderson da Silva	● Criança Feliz	Russas	CE
Francislaine Saraiva Dias	● Criança Feliz	Montes Claros	MG
Gabriela San Martins Vaz	● Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)	Caxias do Sul	RS
Gessica de Oliveira Santana	● Criança Feliz	Piracicaba	SP
Girleide Gomes Bezerra Lima	● Criança Feliz	Linhares	ES
Graziella Teixeira Sobral	● Criança Feliz	Garanhuns	PE
Helena Maia Braga	● Criança Feliz/Primeira Infância Program and SUAS	Sumaré	SP
Iara Ferreira dos Santos	● Criança Feliz	Guapiara	SP
Ione Ferreira Dos Santos	● Criança Feliz	São Miguel dos Campos	AL
Isabella Quintanilha de Souza Tavares	● Criança Feliz	Arraial do Cabo	RJ
Isolda Souza Nascimento	● Criança Feliz	Olho d'Água do Casado	AL
Leciana Alves da Silva Dias	● Criança Feliz	Crateús	CE
Josué Almeida Anjos	● Criança Feliz	São Domingos do Capim	PA
Joyce Louyse Macedo Nascimento Garcia	● Criança Feliz	Barbalha	CE
Juliana Botelho Garcia	● Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)	Rio Grande	RS
Juliana Maciel dos Santos	● Criança Feliz	Corumbá	MS

NOME COMPLETO	PROGRAMA	CIDADE	ESTADO
Kelrem Aparecida Gonçalves da Cruz	● Criança Feliz	Pedro Gomes	MS
Leide Carla de Freitas Nunes	● Criança Feliz	Limoeiro do Norte	CE
Letícia Aureliano Fernandes Ferreira	● Criança Feliz/Primeira Infância Program and SUAS	Juazeiro do Norte	CE
Lísia Maria Damaso Albuquerque de Gusmão	● Criança Feliz	Boca da Mata	AL
Lorena Trevizani	● Criança Feliz	Novo Horizonte do Oeste	RO
Luana Cruz Oliveira	● Criança Feliz	Piracicaba	SP
Luzinete de Sousa Pereira	● Criança Feliz	Rio Sono	TO
Mainara Martins	● Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)	Santa Bárbara do Sul	RS
Maísa Ferreira da Silva	● Criança Feliz	Valença	PI
Marcos Ferreira da Cunha	● Criança Feliz	Sumaré	SP
Maria Alves Rodrigues	● Criança Feliz	Viçosa do Ceará	MG
Maria Celeste Marques	● Criança Feliz	Ervália	MG
Maria do Socorro Claudino Bezerra de Almeida	● Educação - Olhar para as diferenças	Venturosa	PE
Maria Irineu dos Santos	● Criança Feliz	Santa Quitéria	CE
Maria Narjanna Gonçalves Ferreira da Silva	● Criança Feliz	Assaré	CE
Marilene Carvalho Da Rocha	● Criança Feliz	Monte do Carmo	TO
Mariluce de Oliveira Aguiar	● Criança Feliz/Primeiríssima Infância Program and SUAS	São Vicente	SP
Marli da Mata Santos	● Criança Feliz	Queimada Nova	PI
Mayara Cristina Fagundes Martins	● Criança Feliz	Arujá	SP
Mayelin Daiana da Silva	● Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)	Porto Alegre	RS
Mayra Chaves Borges	● Criança Feliz	Muricilândia	TO
Milena Dalila Ferreira Lima	● Criança Feliz	General Sampaio	CE
Myllena Araújo Paes Leme	● Criança Feliz/Primeira Infância Program and SUAS	Varjota	CE
Nilo Ednilson Liessem Jacinto	● Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)	Teutônia	RS
Ozineide Cristina Fernandes de Freitas	● Criança Feliz	Picuí	PB
Patrícia Leal Lima Veneziani Bernardo	● Criança Feliz	São José dos Campos	SP
Queitiane dos Santos Matias	● Criança Feliz	Maranguape	CE
Renata Bezerra de Sousa	● Criança Feliz	Itarema	CE
Rita de Cássia Morais Negreiros	● Programa de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Infantil (Padin)	Salitre	CE

NOME COMPLETO	PROGRAMA	CIDADE	ESTADO
Robson Monteiro Barroso Braga	● Criança Feliz	Tururu	CE
Roseane Morais Santos	● Criança Feliz/Primeira Infância Program and SUAS	Triunfo	PE
Rosicleia Pereira de Oliveira	● Criança Feliz	Monte do Carmo	TO
Sabrina de Oliveira Silva Costa	● Criança Feliz	Maricá	RJ
Sara Cristina de Aguiar Pereira	● Criança Feliz	Sumaré	SP
Silmara da Silva Bezerra	● Criança Feliz	Iguaraci	PE
Simone Morais Araújo	● Criança Feliz	Viçosa do Ceará	CE
Sirlei de Jesus Vaz de Sousa	● Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)	Alvorada	RS
Susiele Aparecida da Silva Oliveira	● Criança Feliz	Riolândia	SP
Taciane de Souza Lopes	● Criança Feliz	Barbalha	CE
Tainara Pinheiro Prestes	● Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM)	Rio Grande	RS
Tairine Camila Fernandes	● Criança Feliz	Arujá	SP
Taís Soares Marques	● Criança Feliz	Perdões	MG
Taoana Natalina de Almeida Rocha	● Criança Feliz	Piracicaba	SP
Tatiane Marcena Rodrigues	● Criança Feliz	Potengi	CE
Thais Ramos de Araujo	● Criança Feliz	São Vicente	SP
Uiniquele Barbosa Monte	● Criança Feliz	Sobral	CE
Valdelice da Silva Lopes	● Criança Feliz	Barra do Ouro	TO
Valdenice Febrônio de Almeida	● Criança Feliz	Correntes	PE
Valeria Patricia Lima Nunes de Oliveira	● Criança Feliz	São Vicente	SP
Valéria Siqueira Silva Lavareda	● Criança Feliz/Primeira Infância Program and SUAS	Itupiranga	PA
Valter Moreira	● Criança Feliz	Campo Grande	MS
Vanderlandia Pereira Lima	● Criança Feliz/Primeira Infância Program and SUAS	Parambu	CE
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