

Parent and Community Input on Needs and Available Resources- August/September 2018

As part of the PSESD Early Learning Program Community Needs Assessment, we talked with parents of children in our program and asked them to identify the needs and challenges faced by low-income families with young children in their communities, strengths in their communities, and resources they access. This information complements the data collected as part of the Community Assessment report compiled by BERK, which includes quantitative data on community needs and qualitative data on the resources available in the two counties of the PSESD Early Learning Program.

Parent Focus Group

A parent focus group was held on August 28, 2018 and the parents were asked the following questions:

- ***What is working best in our city / our communities for young parents?***
- ***What are the biggest challenges that are being faced by young parents?***
- ***If you had the power, what would you change?***

- Financial security/debt/asset building
- Access to early childhood resources for babies and children (child care, education, early intervention)

A summary of the information shared is included below.

Parent Focus Group Themes/Comments

Needs and Challenges

- Families/parents experience isolation
 - Early Learning programs, and Home Visiting are strategies that helps address the isolation
- Transportation and access issues:
 - Public Transportation varies: in some areas is good; in other areas there is none
 - Families borrow cars from friends, walk
 - Costs to get Driver's License, insurance for car, gasoline
 - Purchasing older cars, cost for repairs, safety, lower gas mileage and higher gas costs
- No ability to save for emergencies;
- Accessing resources is a challenge
 - Don't always know what resources are available, hard to find
 - Embarrassed to ask for help
- There are "resource 'cliffs'" in the system that make it hard to get ahead
 - For example, you get a job or a raise and you lose benefits, such as section 8 housing
- Housing challenges

- Not enough housing
- Waitlists and lotteries to get housing
- Child Care
 - Subsidy cliff
- Lots of resources for abused women but not for single moms or for men
- Financial resources needed to meet basic needs
- Need more Home Visiting slots, Early Learning Prenatal to 5 years
- Need time for self-care:
 - The kids come first
 - Parents know that they need to care for themselves, so that they can be there for their children
 - Want to break the cycles of poverty for themselves and their children

Accessing resources

- Parents learn to be resourceful; learn the hoops they must jump through
 - WIC: worth it because of the basic food items and the cost of formula
 - Odessa Brown Clinic
 - Nurse/Family Partnership program
 - Relationship Helpers
 - Some School Districts have social workers that help support pregnant teens
 - Early Learning and Home Visiting programs are resources
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Policy Council Leadership Review of Community Needs

In September 2018, Policy Council leadership engaged in a review of previous Community Assessment information and provided additional insights into the needs and issues experienced by families across King and Pierce Counties. They were asked to review the previous 2014 version of this document, determine if the needs were still current, and share the needs and strengths of their communities as they experience or perceive them.

King County

Needs & Challenges

- Affordable childcare
- Transportation – especially to school
- High quality classrooms, regarding ratio of adults for children
- Affordable food for families
- Affordable housing
- Birth control (education)
- More Early Learning slots and centers (Early Head Start, Head Start, ECEAP)
- Culture/existing policy
- Activities/job training/how many jobs
- Personal up-keep

- Training/education (tutors)
 - Additional education/learning opportunities needed in King Co outside of Seattle
 - Medical support
 - Nutrition education

Issues & Accessing Resources

- Transportation – public bus is hard to do
- Clothing – uniforms (family support)
- Family support (counselors)
- How do you have a voice in your situation?
- Seattle has a concentration of service; not equitable for those who cannot get there
- Crime
- Safety in low income areas/King County Housing Authority housing
- Parents who were not born in the USA express fear and do not access resources even when available, given current political/social climate.

Strengths

- The community bands together to advocate for their passions
- The main bus line along Pacific Hwy runs frequently
- Libraries are open long hours

Pierce County

Needs & Challenges

- Housing
- Medical services (health/dental) including OT, PT & speech therapy), affordable health insurance
- Clothing
- Food
- Mental health & counseling
- Some areas of County lack resources/support, e.g., resources for utilities
- Healthcare
- Transportation to work, school, etc.; reduced bus routes in rural parts of County
- Financial support (work/connections to programs)
- Information on Policy & WACs information

Issues & Accessing Resources

- Housing
 - Support for housing for people in educational programs currently on assistance
 - Lower waiting period & increased areas to use (i.e. community housing)
 - Must be homeless to get help
 - Section 8 = long waiting period
 - Very extreme differences
- Transportation
 - CRIPPLES a family's ability to improve their life/potential
- Financial support
 - Having money doesn't mean we can manage it; we need education
 - People don't know how to manage the income they get
- Some families report that they don't know how to access information and resources

- Discrepancies between health services and insurance; for example, one parent reports that ADHD is treated as a medical issue, yet state insurance sees it as a mental health issues; the insurance doesn't allow MH issues to be served outside the county the patient lives in, yet there are limited ADHD services in Pierce County.
- Parents who were not born in the USA express fear and do not access resources even when available, given current political/social climate.

Community Resources/Strengths

- Parents identified multiple community resources that they access and see as supports including specific partners providing:
 - Mental Health Supports
 - Food Access resources
 - Support for children with disabilities
 - Pregnancy supports
 - Health support
 - Bus access (specifically, there is a great bus system in some parts of county)
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Work Schedules and Needs of Parents:

- PSESD parents report varied working schedules across the region
- Many families work in the service industry and other jobs with non-regular hours and at times outside the typical 9-5 workday
- Families also report being challenged to meet our State requirements of working a minimum of 20 hours a week, which is the threshold needed in order to receive childcare supports so that they can pursue their education goals