



Family Listening Session

Hearing from Parents About Their Child Care Needs

Doulas Latinas International

In January 2020, a listening session with parents was held in Hillsboro, Oregon to learn about their needs for, and experiences with, child care in their community. This listening session was part of a series of family listening sessions funded by the Preschool Development Grant as a part of a statewide early learning needs assessment. The goal of the listening sessions was to hear family voices that have not yet been captured in understanding families' early learning needs and experiences. This session was co-designed, planned and hosted by Doula Latinas International and by researchers from AB Cultural Drivers, OSLC Developments, Inc., and Portland State University. Eleven mothers attended the session, currently living in Hillsboro. The mothers had come to Oregon from Mexico. The listening session was conducted in Spanish.

Current Child Care Experiences and Building School Readiness

Who currently takes care of your children ages 0-5 years and what activities do they do?

In addition to taking care of their children themselves, six mothers have their children in preschool, three have friends and neighbors who help, and two rely on family members. The mothers described a number of different activities that the children do with their caregivers such as drawing, playing, singing, playing musical instruments, watching TV and playing video games, going for walks to the park, going shopping, and spending time with other children. Many caregivers speak Spanish with the children but do not celebrate their families' traditions or culture. Finally, mothers talked about the activities caregivers do to help children develop social and other school readiness skills, including helping children learn to share and take turns with other children, do activities with other children, respect others, recognize and interpret their emotions, and express themselves.

Not every care provider offers learning opportunities to these families' children. One mother said, "if I leave my daughter with my neighbor, she is not prepared to take care of the children, she doesn't do activities with my daughter." Another shared, "Sometimes we turn to the neighbors or a friend because we can't afford quality of care, like a child care center. You see the difference when you take the kids to a child care center versus when they are cared for by a family member, a neighbor, or a friend."

This shows that some mothers needed to choose between affordability of care and quality of care for their children.

"Si le dejo a cuidar a mi vecina, ella no esta preparada a cuidar niños, ella no hace actividades con mi niña. En la escuela si les enseñan mucho a los niños."

"A veces recurrimos a la vecina o amiga porque no podemos pagar algo más de calidad, como un centro, se ve la diferencia cuando se le lleva a los niños a un centro y cuando los cuida un familiar o una vecina o amiga."

Where would you like your care to be?

The mothers wanted care that was close to their home, with providers who speak Spanish. They wanted a place with “room for children to play, a large playground and structure for physical exercise” and “diverse activities.”

They were concerned about the ratio of teachers per child, wanting “5 to 8 children [per teacher] depending on age.” Six mothers said that they would like to take their kids to care, and five mothers said that they would like their children to get there using transportation.

What time or days of the week would you like your child to be in care?

As might be expected, different families had different needs:

A few mothers wanted care Mondays through Fridays, though their desired hours varied. One mother wanted 9am-12pm, another wanted care 8am-5pm, and yet another wanted 6am-4pm.

Four mothers were not working and weren't looking for any care. Mothers had a difficult time finding care outside of traditional work hours. For example, one mother noted, “There is no care in the evenings. For example, when my other baby was born I was looking for someone to stay two nights with my other child.” She struggled to find that short-term support when she needed it.

“No hay cuidado de noche; por ejemplo, cuando mi otro bebe nació estaba buscando por dos noches para que se quede con mi otro hijo.”

Their Ideal Child Care Situation

What would you like your children to learn?

One mother said, “Providers should tell children about our culture and where we are coming from, learn to make meals from our country, folk dances, learn my dialect. Head Start should be a dual or bilingual program, more bilingual staff, should teach them arts, and sports like soccer or some physical sports corresponding to the child's age. They should have nutritious meals, and provide fruits and vegetables to the children.”

“Que los proveedores les hablen de nuestra cultura y de las raíces de donde somos, aprendan hacer comidas típicas, bailes folclóricos, que aprendan mi propio dialecto, que el Head Start sea dual o bilingüe, que haya más personal bilingüe, que le enseñen a hacer arte, deportes: futbol, algún deporte físico que los niños pueden hacer acorde de su edad. Que sea la comida más nutritiva, les den frutas y vegetales a los niños.”

Why is it important for your children to have educational, artistic, and other activities to help them prepare for kindergarten?

One mother shared that “it's very important for a school-age child to learn in a group...to socialize, to spend time together, to learn to share with other children...the children do not go to school scared, because they know what they are going to be taught.”

“Es muy importante que un niño de edad escolar aprenda en grupo...a socializar, a convivir, a aprender a compartir con otros niños. Los niños no van con tanto miedo a la escuela, porque ellos saben que les van a enseñar.”

Another mother said that these activities can help “identify if the children have any special needs and what their strengths and skills are.”

“Identificar si hay alguna necesidad especial e identificar cuáles son las fortalezas y habilidades que los niños tienen.”

How have caregivers helped you and your child be more prepared to start kindergarten?

Most mothers said that their caregivers have helped prepare them and their children for the start of kindergarten. One mother said that their caregivers recommend “taking [her child] to the school they are planning to attend before they start school, having a school tour,” and supporting basic academic skills (e.g., colors, numbers, writing their name) at home. Other mothers said that their caregivers help their children with basic responsibilities, like, “[going] to the bathroom alone before kindergarten”; “[dressing] themselves”; and “[picking] up their plate, their toys, and [taking] their trash out.”

Why is it important to find providers that speak Spanish? Is it difficult to find providers who speak Spanish?

Many mothers agreed that it is important to have providers that speak Spanish so that “our children speak the language. Children sometimes don’t want to speak Spanish anymore, just English.”

“...nuestros niños hablen el idioma, a veces los niños no quieren hablar ya el español solo el inglés.”

Three mothers shared that it is difficult to find providers who speak Spanish:

“...almost everyone speaks English here. The Hispanic community is small, there are fewer Hispanics, so we are the minority.”

“...casi todos hablan ingles aquí. La comunidad de hablo Hispana es baja, hay menos hispanos, somos minoría.”

“Hispanic providers can’t be found on the internet.”

“Los proveedores hispanos no lo encontramos en la internet.”

“The cultural diversity is so much that they can’t speak Spanish, but [providers] speak Chinese or other non-Spanish languages. More providers are needed who speak Spanish.”

“La diversidad cultural es tanta que no pueden hablar español, pero por ejemplo hablan chino o otros idiomas que no son español. Se necesita más proveedores que hablen español.”

Finding Appropriate Care

Many mothers said that they rely on friends who have already been through the process of finding child care to help them find care. One mother shared that she found child care information through “coworkers, the internet, a mother’s group, and [by] calling 211.” The last was new information to most of the mothers, who did not know that they could call 211 for information about child care.

What information or help would you like to have in the future to make a good decision about child care?

In addition to referrals from other families, personal friends, and coworkers, a mother shared that pricing info is very important, particularly for bilingual schools, which are more expensive. Another mother shared that availability information is very important because “many places have a waitlist.” The mothers would look to advertisements (online and flyers) for this information, and one said “there should be a specific website for this information.”

Have you ever felt that the people who care for your children disrespect you or your child?

Four mothers in the session shared examples of their children being disrespected by their caregivers. Two mothers’ concerns had to do with the quality of supervision and the communication they received from the caregivers:

“One day my child was playing in the school’s playground, my son came to the house, he looked different and went to sleep. I wondered: did anything happen at school? I called the school and the teacher told me that the child had fallen but it wasn’t serious...I took him to the hospital to be checked, since then, I don’t trust her because the caregiver didn’t tell me the truth.”

“Una vez mi niño estaba en la área de juegos en la escuela, mi hijo llevo a la casa diferente y se fue a dormir, me pregunte: algo paso en la escuela? llame a la escuela y la maestra me dijo que el niño se había caído pero no fue grave, la maestra no le aviso a su mama. Mama lo llevo al hospital para chequearlo, yo desde entonces tenía desconfianza del cuidador por no decirme la verdad.”

“[A child] threw wood in [my son’s] eyes and face...When I called the teacher, she just said ‘They’re just playing kids’ games.’”

“...le echaron madera en los ojos y en la cara...cuando mama la llama a la maestra. Ella solo dijo: Son juegos de niños, solo estaban jugando.”

One mother shared an example of a Head Start teacher who was disrespectful to many families:

“The same person yelled at me...the lady had problems with several families, and there were families who volunteered at school and you could see the rejection from the teacher.”

“La misma persona me grito...la señora tenia problemas con varias familias, y era familias que están de voluntarias en la escuela y se veía el rechazo de la maestra.”

One mother was concerned about her son's language not being respected in the classroom, saying, "...he did not speak English at school, and he could not express himself."

"...no habla Ingles en la escuela, no podia expresarse el mismo."

Have you ever had to leave work to take care of your children because paying to care for them is too expensive?

Four mothers said they had to leave work to care for children because of the expense of child care. Two mothers shared that what they were making at their job was essentially what they were paying their babysitter.

Their Needs as Parents

What would help you be the best mom or dad you can be?

Many mothers wished they had more resources to help them take care of their children. One asked for Spanish books on child development, three asked for parent trainings on a variety of topics (e.g., cognitive development, cooking for picky eaters) in Spanish to help prepare them to care for children, and two parents specifically wanted to know more about parenting than their own parents did to avoid "repeating the same patterns."

One new mother had no information about how to care for her new baby. She said, "I ask my neighbor and friend how to change diapers, how to breastfeed, the basic things."

"...le pido ayuda a mi vecina y amiga como cambiar los pañales, como darle de lactar, las cosas básicas."

Other mothers wished they had more patience with their children, help with housework, and better understanding of their teen children.

Key Takeaways

- ▶ These mothers valued activities that help prepare their children for kindergarten, particularly social activities that help them learn to interact with other children and gain confidence in a school setting; they also held a high value for culturally specific activities, but none of their care providers do activities to celebrate their children's culture or traditions.
- ▶ These mothers struggle to find care providers who speak Spanish, and they are concerned about their children not being able to express themselves during care, or not wanting to speak Spanish at all anymore. Dual and bilingual programs are desired.
- ▶ These mothers highlighted that care providers should serve their children healthy, nutritious foods.
- ▶ A few mothers reported that care providers disrespected them and their children. Care providers failed to communicate pertinent information about their children's experience under their care. Others were concerned that their children's language and culture were not accepted or respected by their care providers.
- ▶ These mothers were challenged by the cost of care, which often exceeds what they make at work. Four of them stopped working to take care of their children.
- ▶ Most mothers relied on referrals from friends or coworkers to find care. Most of the mothers did not know that dialing 211 is a resource to find information about child care. This shows that many families in this community lack access to reliable information sources.
- ▶ Some mothers needed to choose between affordability of care and quality of care.
- ▶ Many mothers wanted more parent education trainings and resources in Spanish to help them be the best moms they can be.

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AB  **CULTURAL DRIVERS**
Responsive Evaluation & Research

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