



Impacts of COVID-19 on Child Care

Native American Parents with Children under Age 5

In November and December 2020, 19 interviews were conducted with Oregon parents of children aged 5 and under with Native American or Indigenous heritage. These interviews were part of a series of interviews and listening sessions funded by the Preschool Development Grant as an expansion of the 2019 statewide early learning needs assessment. The interviews were co-designed, organized, and facilitated by Portland State University and OSLC Developments, Inc, in partnership with representatives from the following organizations: Burns Paiute Education Program, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Klamath County School District Title VI program, Native American Youth and Family Center, Portland Public School District, and Coos Bay School District. The goal of the interviews was to understand the early learning needs and experiences of Native American, Indigenous, and American Indian families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, interviews will inform the development of the state's early learning plan.

All 19 of the parents interviewed were mothers. The families represented the Seminole Tribe, Navajo Nation, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Burns Paiute Tribe, Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone, Pit River Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw, the Coquille Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde (Umpqua, Rogue River, Kalapuya, Shasta, Molalla), the Klamath Tribes (Klamath, Modoc, Yahooskin), Cherokee Nation, and Sauk Suiattle Indian Tribe. In addition to having Native American or Indigenous heritage, some of the parents and/or their children were also African American, Eastern European, Pacific Islander, Mexican, and Filipino.

We recognize that these communities and indigenous nations have different experiences based on geography, cultural traditions, history, and other factors. As such, we developed separate briefs that summarize the parents' experiences for each of the five regions in which we recruited participants (Portland Metro Area, Klamath County, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Burns Paiute Tribe, and Coos Bay School District), in addition to this broader report highlighting common and shared experiences.

What does child care look like for these families during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The pandemic impacted child care for most of the mothers interviewed, who reported losing their child care during closures related to the pandemic. Three fourths (76.2%) of these mothers reported having a different child care situation pre-pandemic. Most parents described relying on a patchwork of family care (e.g., co-parents, other family members, or friends), informal care (e.g., babysitters), and formal care (home-based or center-based child care) to meet their child care needs during the pandemic. One parent from Klamath County described the care they were able to cobble together as “really scattered.”

Parents who were able to maintain some formal care during the pandemic described the confusion and inconsistency they experienced during the early months of the pandemic, including not knowing which programs were open, when they would re-open, and who could attend. A few families from Coos Bay paid for two months of child care but did not send their child to care, an enormous financial burden. A parent from Klamath County described that she lost her children’s spots due to not being a high-priority essential worker.

“I was considered essential, but once they started closing that gap of how many kids they could have there, I was considered not as essential as medical professionals, which is good, understandable.” –Klamath County Parent

The parents who were looking for care during the pandemic described how challenging it was to arrange care for their children. It was hard to find someone consistently available, let alone someone the parents trusted. Many parents noted that the pandemic exacerbated an already pervasive lack of available quality child care in their communities.

“I mean, you hear horror stories all the time about, you know, babysitters and even child care centers... How do I know someone is trustworthy? But then again, so many other families are trying to find people. I never did find anybody to watch them.” –Klamath County Parent

Despite these challenges, many parents were desperate to make care arrangements and needed to make compromises to get the care they needed during the pandemic.

“Looking on care.com was really just out of desperation... I need [my child] to have daycare. I have to go to work. His dad isn’t going to be able to care for him throughout the day like he has been, so I was really just kind of desperate at that point. But like I said, I didn’t want to go to anybody that didn’t have good references from people that I trust.” –Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

The compromises parents made to obtain care for their children included cost, location, and quality of care. Parents from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde provided several examples of these compromises.

“[At my previous care provider] I only would have had to pay like \$50 a month. And right now I’m paying \$250 a month for my kids to go to somebody for two...days a week. So money wise, it’s been a big impact.” –Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

“Once we found out [the tribal school was] not going to reopen, I started doing daycare. [We sent her to] her prior daycare and I felt safe taking her there... I have to spend the night in Salem two nights in order to be there in the morning to take her and then I come to work 45 minutes away. And then my husband picks her up. So it’s just a lot to coordinate.” –Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

“I’m not able to afford somebody who’s had years of experience, I can only afford these college teenagers [and] it’s not their career choice. They don’t understand developmental things about kids this age... Especially coming from him going from Head Start to this, now he’s just not getting as many of his needs met.” –Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

At some point in the pandemic, most parents worked from home to care for their children, some using paid time off to make it easier to manage remote work and child care.

“Mondays and Wednesdays I work remote at home four hours a day and I PTO four hours... So I’m just taking paid time off so that I can be with her and not be on the computer the whole day.” –Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

“One ear to [my children], one ear to the meeting, and it’s a lot of like, ‘Oh, hey, I didn’t hear that, my kid was screaming, or I’m going to go on mute, or I’m going to turn my camera off for five minutes’. It’s not really like blocks of time that I focused on work. It’s more like I fit 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 30 minutes, an hour while he naps, whatever. And then the time I have with them, I’ve tried to carve out like that first hour and a half the day where it’s just us doing our thing.” –Portland Metro Area Parent

One parent from Klamath County stopped working and went on unemployment because working from home and managing virtual kindergarten for her oldest child was too much to manage.

"I just think it's really hard for parents, especially single parents that don't have another parent's help with child care for Zoom, because a lot of times the teachers are expecting the parents to teach so much to their kids. It's so hard to be a woman working and taking care of these kids and having Zoom."—Klamath County Parent

Another parent from Klamath County described the pressure that she felt from her job to find child care before coming back into the office.

"Work just [kept] telling us, 'Find it, you know you have a couple more weeks... Don't wait till the last minute to find child care.' I'm like, Yeah, I don't think anybody is waiting to the last minute to find child care. I think we've all been trying to find it."—Klamath County Parent

What factors influence families' decisions to send their child to care or stay at home?

Health and safety concerns were a predominant factor in parent decision-making about child care. Some parents noted that it was difficult for them to know if they were making the best decision for their family in the absence of clear nationwide guidance about health and safety practices. Inconsistent information created worries that they were not making the right decision.

"The weight and the stress of it is really falling on each state and each city and like, then it's, you know, on to each family to really decide like, 'Am I really comfortable sending my child into school?' Or is there like this national message that's coming through that says, like, 'We're all doing it this way together'. I think that's the part that's a little bit more like it weighs, like it weighs heavier I think onto each family in that regard. Yeah, so I think that's that's the part that makes a little bit more challenging too, to know like, am I really making the right decision?"—Portland Metro Area Parent

Other parents expressed concern about themselves and their children coming into contact with other persons who might be COVID-positive and/or have contacts with a broader network of people. Some parents chose small, in-home child care programs or babysitters to limit their families' exposure and to keep contact tracing, if necessary, manageable. Some parents with immunocompromised or elder family members were particularly concerned about their families' health.

"I don't know where anybody has been, you know, from A to B. You don't know if they're going out here or there or [have] gotten contact with somebody that might have...had COVID."—Klamath County Parent

"It is really stressful to think about the health and safety of my kids and my family. I already feel like I'm putting myself at risk a lot just in the job that I'm in... We do have elders in our life that we're just trying to keep safe... I feel really fortunate that I do have [a babysitter] that I feel safe with. But if something were to happen to that person, there's not really any options after that."—Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

"I personally feel like I have a whole different perspective because my four-year-old, when he was a baby he got sick a lot, and we ended up in the hospital all the time because of a common cold because his lungs couldn't handle it. So now, it's hard for me to want to let him go places that I think there's too many people or too many people have been through, like the regular store. So, I have more precautions I feel like than other parents."—Burns Paiute Parent

While all parents shared health and safety concerns, many took comfort in seeing the precautions that caregivers took to maintain a safe environment for their children.

"The current nanny, she's safe. If my kids have a cough, she doesn't want them there... She, you know, does the temperature checks and makes sure kids wear masks that are big enough. She's pretty cautious because I was concerned, so I'm happy about that."—Klamath County Parent

Cost of care relative to wages/income was another concern shared by some parents. Several parents from the Portland Metro Area said it was challenging for them to afford child care while trying to look for a job, particularly when they did not need and could not afford to have children in care for the hours providers required. Single parents and some co-parents across regions described the difficulty paying for child care along with other basic family needs, often exacerbated by job loss related to COVID.

"I would consider myself lower middle class, like right above the poverty line that they put out all the time, and while we have nice things, we definitely live paycheck to paycheck unless we do side jobs or extra work or something to build into our savings. And then with COVID and my husband being a mill worker, we've already had to dip into our savings, and it's almost depleted."—Burns Paiute Parent

But many parents also described that they did not have the option to not arrange care for their children, most for financial, and some for personal reasons.

“Well, I am essentially a single mother. I don’t have a second income. So, I have to work, I don’t have the choice to stay home as much as that sounds amazing and so much anxiety and stress would be gone, but I can’t. I have to have a full-time job to support my son and keep a roof over our heads and food in our bellies.” –Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

“I have a steady job and it does pay me fairly well... I work all year round, whereas my husband is seasonal and he’ll be on unemployment soon... And so I know how tight it can get in the winter months. I had to keep my job for as long as possible because who’s to say in, you know, two months we’re not all going to be in the same [position].” –Klamath County Parent

“I cannot afford to not work. There’s no way that I can’t not work, not just financially, but I also have always really enjoyed my career, the job that I’m working. So I felt like not only money wise, but for my own mental health, if I lost that part of me, that would be really hurtful and impact me really negatively.” –Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

What are parents most concerned about for their children during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Parents reported a variety of concerns about their children’s development and how it was being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. One common concern was the loss of the child’s peer interactions, friendship, and social emotional development.

“The other important thing is like social and emotional development too. That’s really crucial for, especially in that younger age group for like preschool aged children.” –Portland Metro Area Parent

“I’m not sure if he’s going to get scared to go see people after this, or if he was going to always have caution. You know, if he’s just going to always remember, hey, it’s COVID we can’t do that stuff. You know because it’s been a good full year that he’s been trying to learn the rules.” –Burns Paiute Parent

Related to this, one parent from the Portland Metro Area mentioned the need for more spaces for outdoor social interactions, such as classrooms outside or community gardens.

“If there was just more accessibility, for especially BIPOC kids to be in nature in a safe way that’s not at a playground, touching equipment that a lot of other kids have been touching. I just think there could be a lot more space for working parents, for work and parenting. That hasn’t really been an option because that wasn’t an option even before this pandemic, right? Even just more public spaces that are nature-focused for kids to be that are maybe like Wi Fi accessible.” –Portland Metro Area Parent

Some parents were also concerned about their children’s cognitive development and engagement in learning during the pandemic.

“I’m grateful she’s four. If she was 14, I don’t know I would teach her... [At home,] we do our projects. We practice her letters, we sound out everything, we do a calendar every day...but I know it was a deficiency, because when I took her back to daycare, even for that one day, [she comes home saying] Mommy, we’re learning about tornadoes, Mommy. We’re learning about weather, we’re learning... And I’m like, I was just trying to teach you how to write an essay. So I think it’s good but I definitely see how much more curriculum she gets when she goes to daycare, and I’m grateful that the daycare provider is sending me home curriculum and projects for the rest of the week when she’s at home with us.” –Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

“I think the growth and development part got put on hold a lot, even for their [center] program. I feel like private education, you know, that’s kind of what they go for. And I think that really lacked for the kids.” –Klamath County Parent

“She’s eager. She wants to learn, but I just can’t. I don’t have that energy, and I’d be lying if I said, Yeah, I’m just supermom, I gotta sit down with her. No, I do not have energy.” –Portland Metro Area Parent

“And I fear my daughter will not be ready socially, emotionally or academically for kindergarten, even though...I feel like she may be more academically bright... But I do have that fear that because I can’t make that choice [sending her to full-time child care] for her right now. Is that going to be damaging later on? And is she going to suffer in kindergarten?” –Coos Bay Parent

Behavioral concerns were also described, with some mothers noting that their children were displaying hyperactivity and other behavioral challenges. Some were interested in more help with behavior, and one parent mentioned that it would be helpful to receive early childhood mental health support for parents and children.

“At his age, even though it’s preschool, a school counselor would be so helpful because if they had check-ins just about their mental health at this age. Even if that was like through play, just about them and their feelings of what’s going on in their little world, that would be really helpful... It’d be really helpful if he had his own therapist or even his own time with the teacher, that’s not in this group setting of like 10 kids.” –Portland Metro Area Parent

Some parents were also concerned about how the pandemic has led to increased screen time for their children and reduced-quality virtual services for their children’s special needs.

“My one son, we were wondering if he’s autistic... We were getting the ball going right as the pandemic hit, so it’s kind of hard to keep that ball rolling when there’s no in-person anything right... And you know, virtual things, they’re just not the same.” –Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

In addition to COVID-related health and safety concerns, a few parents had more pressing concerns about how the pandemic may be affecting the safety of their children in care settings. For example, one Klamath County parent shared that the pandemic changed the way her children’s program communicated with her about her children’s time in their care. Daily updates about her children’s day stopped, and the center staff failed to communicate to her the details of an accident that her child had on the playground that resulted in a visit to the hospital. The lack of transparent communication contributed to mistrust of the people caring for her children.

“As I look back on this whole pandemic, communication could have prevented a lot of ill feelings or ill will, any of these like feelings that kind of makes people feel less-than.” –Klamath County Parent

A Grand Ronde parent was particularly concerned about her children experiencing abuse and neglect from their child care providers.

“I have definitely had a lot of concerns. As somebody that works in a child care program, I’ve learned a lot of things about just what abuse can look like just all kinds of things that have had my eyes open. So I’m always thinking about, who are these people really? As much as they’re friendly to me and I feel like I can trust them enough to watch my kids, what really happens behind closed doors, you know? And that’s been something that’s been consistently on my mind since they’ve had to be at home or at other people’s houses, just not really just not fully knowing what is happening.” –Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

What supports are parents receiving and what do they need?

Some parents identified a number of helpful supports that they received related to child care during the pandemic. This included resources for self-care (parents and children), their child care programs sending craft projects, tips, and activities for supporting children’s learning and development at home, and virtual classroom visits. They also reported that receiving food, diapers, and other basic materials was helpful. One parent shared that the financial support she received from her Tribe has helped her whole family.

At the same time, some supports were felt to be less helpful, though the positive intention was recognized. A few parents shared that the virtual experiences offered by their children’s child care programs did not meet the social-emotional needs of their children.

“They’re not doing Zooms... They’re doing a FaceTime recorded live, but they’re not talking to the kids. And they’re not having the kids talk to each other... [My daughter] wants to talk to her teachers and she wants to talk to other students.” –Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

Another parent reported that her children’s center sent some activities on Youtube designed by the center’s national headquarters when the local center was closed. This support was not helpful for her children because the videos did not feature familiar teachers, classrooms, or activities.

While some parents stated that the supports they received were sufficient for their needs, others expressed that their families were missing connections with their community, their child care providers, and other parents. Nearly all parents talked about different stressors in life during the pandemic. For some mothers, the impacts of the pandemic on mental health and well-being are significant. At the same time, there was a sense of the need to “just carry on” and keep going despite the stresses and changes.

“It’s one of those things where you keep telling people like, this is a thing like, what’s going on? And everyone’s like, ‘Oh, you seem like you’re handling it so well.’ So you just keep going.” –Portland Metro Area Parent

Although parents did not specifically ask for broader mental health support for themselves, any resources to help these families ease the compounding financial and emotional stressors they are experiencing due to the pandemic would serve these families well. It was clear that parental stress and declining emotional and mental health are impacting family well-being, parenting, relationships, children's learning and development, and work. Although child care would greatly improve parents' mental well-being, some families cannot afford to send their child to care or find care that they feel is safe at this point in time. Supporting positive mental health for their children during the pandemic also led some families to connect with select family and friends or return to care.

And parents are really stressed... I've talked to so many parents who are really struggling with their own mental health right now and the daily stresses of life on top of the pandemic, on top of trying to figure out their child's school and all the details around that, on top of the constant changes with the metrics and how that's affecting their child's education and just their daily lives, really. And I really think that we need to really focus on mental health for our parents and our students for sure... I think that they're trying to support their kids, but they can hardly support themselves in the process." —Coos Bay area parent

One parent, who is also a home visitor, talked about the importance of having community supports for parents and children who do not feel safe in their home, due to domestic violence or child abuse. These supports included both material support for creating safe spaces for families to shelter in place as well as the therapeutic support those families may need. While none of the parents we interviewed expressed this concern for themselves, this participant suggests that there are families in these communities who need access to these specific resources.

"I'm talking about like families that I talked to, you know, when I do home visits virtually. Not all families are feeling safe at home. So this whole 'shelter at home, be safe' it's like, that's not safe for everyone or maybe even if it's safe, it's not supportive." —Portland Metro Area Parent and Home Visitor

How well have child care providers included parent input during the pandemic?

We asked parents about how child care providers were seeking their input since the start of the pandemic. Many parents reported having some opportunities to share information about their needs and preferences for child care. The primary ways that parents stated that they were asked for feedback was through informal discussions and through surveys.

"Once late August hit, the school has been very intentional about keeping really good communication with all of the families and went through many surveys and different thoughts from the parent community about what we would like school to be like this year. And what would make us feel safe and comfortable on behalf of our children." —Portland Metro Area Parent

Parents shared that providers are communicating with families remotely, including more emails and virtual meetings. For a few Coos Bay parents, relying on technology as a primary means for communication has not worked well. In fact, one child's slot was lost because the parent was unable to find the email notification and respond quickly. No other follow-up attempts were made by program staff before the slot was filled.

Some parents expressed disappointment and frustration at the quality of communication they received from their care providers.

"It's more just, like, not very much interaction at all. We're just kind of out here like, 'Hey, we did provide child care, but now we don't, so good luck!'" —Portland Metro Area Parent

"You feel like it's disrespectful and that they're not being considerate of you. But I think that's just because the COVID-19...it's like she's not very clear on things herself." —Coos Bay Parent

A few parents shared negative experiences with care providers ignoring or avoiding their attempts to share input or otherwise communicate about their children's care during the pandemic. Even so, one of these parents did not want to alienate her care provider too much by being harsh, because available care was so scarce that she did not want them to quit. She felt the need to continue with low quality, in some cases neglectful care, because there were no other options available.

How do child care providers meet families' linguistic and cultural needs?

We asked parents about the extent to which their early care and education providers were providing care that met their children's cultural and linguistic needs. Most parents' shared that the child care providers that they are utilizing during the pandemic did not specifically support their children's cultural needs, but care providers they had prior to the pandemic have provided this support in the past. Many of these families had been using tribal schools or culturally-specific programs that explicitly immerse children in Native traditions, practices, and languages.

"Yeah, it's a tribal school. So there is singing and dancing... They bring traditional songs, they speak the language... They do have the tribal library books that are translated into ancient language and then they hold events in the evening in collaboration with culture [department] to provide story time."—Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

"In the Early Head Start program, they often had culture circles and they participated in a lot of the language program activities. Plus, we also went to events and stuff like that. So yeah, before the pandemic, he was definitely getting language and culture stuff in the classroom."—Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

"With my oldest child and I was really happy because she was at a tribal school...she'd be singing me [a] whole song in a Native American language, you know, and I was really happy about stuff like that."—Klamath County Parent

"They do pow wow dancing almost every day, either pow wow dancing or yoga almost every day, and they have native books every day and they talk about animals and stories in a native lens."—Portland Metro Area Parent

Other parents shared that their providers, while not providing specific language and cultural supports, were responsive to and created space for their children's culture.

"It's more on parents, you know, families... We just remind the teacher, 'Hey, it's November and it's Native American Heritage Month.' We've always done like a presentation with the children and offered that out to teachers along the way, and they have always been very open in that regard. So I would say that they're responsive, for sure."—Portland Metro Area Parent

But for some parents, the cultural responsiveness of their child care providers was superficial. One Portland Metro Area parent described her disappointment with the lack of cultural diversity in child care as compared to her own experience being homeschooled.

"It's never been my first choice to send my kids to school. I would so much rather do it at home, just because of that [cultural] piece. I was raised with cultural specificity woven into my childhood... That shaped me, right, and so it is weird when we had to send [our child] to this random school, it was like, 'Oh, this is so nice to bring art' and it's cute and stuff, but it was just like guitar and like other white kids. And we're like my kid didn't see himself in the curriculum. So it was just kind of like, well, I guess it's fine. They're safe, but it's not really super rich."—Portland Metro Area Parent

All parents felt that including cultural practices in their children's child care experiences is important. They connected their own background and upbringing with their hopes for continuing traditions with their children.

"I grew up around my culture and elders, and my children haven't... I just think there should be more of our heritage taught because it's not in, you know, public schools that much. Not the right stuff, anyway."—Klamath County Parent

"They need to know where they come from, but also...I hope they never experienced some things I've had to in my past."—Klamath County Parent

"I grew up doing it, my brother and my sister grew up in the youth education programs...and a lot of the people that I grew up with are the teachers now. So it's really nice to know that he's interacting with these people that I know and I love and he's a part of the community, in that sense, because it really does build closer bonds, I think."—Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

"I would say that that is a number one for me, a priority. I think that if my kids are losing that, then we're losing generations that forget the meaning and the importance behind their traditions and their heritage. And I also think, when I talk about my child's identity and kind of what I identify as or what they view themselves as, it's really important that they understand where they come from and also that they understand the amazing things the generations before them did and how they're overcoming, all the prejudice and all that stuff that happened years ago with a lot of Native American groups."—Coos Bay Parent

Mothers who did describe culturally responsive practices expressed appreciation for how the provider recognized and valued their children's cultural identities. They also connected that to their goal of teaching their children to respect and celebrate diverse identities.

"So long story short, [my child] needs to know who he is, so that he can better integrate in the world, so that he can be okay with being all three races, being predominantly African American. With what society standards are for tri-racial babies, you know, and the difficulties he will have in that, but also the positives that will come from it."—Portland Metro Area Parent

"I think it's important because it gives you a sense of identity. And as you go through your life you know who your ancestors are, you know the teachings. They provided you know your value. And I believe culture provides value. You are tied into something that's bigger than yourself and to honor our culture is to honor yourself. And so it really teaches positive life skills. And so to me it's, it's very important."—Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Parent

One Klamath County parent described why she believes that cultural experiences and exposure have value not only for Native children, but for all children in her community.

"It's important for me for my kids to know where they come from. I think it's also important for their peers to also know... I think cultural competency training would be super important, not just for the teachers who have an Indian kid in their class right now, but just in general, overall... Especially for those communities who have Tribes, to learn about local history. I think that it could really benefit people."—Klamath County Parent

Negative Experiences in Child Care

Several parents described instances in which providers were disrespectful to them or their children. These experiences ranged in severity and impact. One parent felt their child was treated as a number, not receiving the care and attention they truly needed, though this was something she has advocated for in the past.

"I don't feel like it's the best care that he's getting anymore, and I feel like sometimes with state care, it's a numbers game. And so you have to get your number so that you can still have your funding... It's par for the course."—Portland Metro Area Parent

Some parents shared the feeling of being dismissed by providers when they expressed concerns about their children. Examples included not supporting a child's transition to a new preschool or ignoring parental distress about potential developmental delays. One Portland Metro Area parent reported suspecting that the child care provider had physically injured her child, observing an adult handprint on her child's face. This mother described that the child care provider changed the explanation of what happened multiple times, even blaming the child for running into someone else's hand. Although that child is now in school, the experience affected how she thinks about child care for her youngest child.

"So that's where my hesitation comes a lot with looking for daycares. And you know what, like just really thoroughly investigating into finding a good daycare for, you know, my daughter. I don't want her to have a bad experience."—Portland Metro Area Parent

Another parent shared that her child's child care providers failed to document and communicate that their child had a severe accident that resulted in a broken bone. This parent described that the staff and center director avoided her attempts to get transparency about the injury and how it was handled in the moment and were dishonest with her about how they were addressing her concerns.

Despite these events, when directly asked if they felt they or their child had been discriminated against by a provider because of their racial, ethnic, or cultural background, all but one parent said no. The remaining parent—the parent whose child suffered a broken bone during care—described how hard it is to be sure if the disrespect is due to her and her children's race, but that she relies on her judgement guided by experience to interpret negative situations.

"I really tried not to go there, like, Oh, someone doesn't like me, it must be because I'm Indian... But I did have to, I did go there. I did think, you know, it must have something to do with who I am... I mean like I try not to go there, but also experience is experience, especially in Klamath County."—Klamath County Parent

Key takeaways

- ▶ Despite facing significant challenges, these parents told stories of resiliency, flexibility, and resourcefulness in working to meet the needs of their families and children.
- ▶ The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated previously existing issues, particularly the availability and cost of care. One parent specifically recommended that the Early Learning Division, especially during the pandemic, invest resources into recruiting people who are willing to do child care.
- ▶ Parents made substantial compromises in the cost, location, and quality of child care during the pandemic.
- ▶ Parents were greatly concerned about the health and safety implications of sending their child to care, in terms of their own/the child's health as well as by risking exposure of other family members in contact with the child.
- ▶ Despite these concerns, many parents did not have a choice to not use child care for financial and personal reasons.
- ▶ At some point during the pandemic, most parents needed to work from home and manage child care. To do this, some parents used paid time off and other leave to manage their responsibilities. Some chose to leave the workforce, because managing both work and child care at home was infeasible.
- ▶ Parents were concerned about their children falling behind in their social-emotional development during the pandemic. Virtual social experiences are not meeting the needs of these families.
- ▶ During the pandemic, the child care providers these parents have found are not providing cultural and linguistic supports for their children.
- ▶ Though many parents said that, at some point, they or their children have been disrespected by care providers, the majority said that they have not experienced discrimination due to their race, culture, or language.

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