Oregon Family Voices: Impacts of COVID-19 on Early Childhood Education and Care

Equity Training, June 2021
Oregon Early Learning Division (ELD)
Goals

1. **Share findings** from a recent survey and listening sessions with Oregon families

2. **Focus on evidence of disparities** across different groups of families

3. **Provide opportunities for reflection and discussion**
Intended Outcomes

1. **Learn** about the experiences of Oregon families during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. **Increase your understanding** of your own identity and background, and the diversity of your coworkers, families you serve, and people in your local community.
3. **Develop** new questions about families’ experiences during the pandemic and new ways to support children and their families.
Families appreciated the hard work of their early education and care providers to stay open and offer safe care during the pandemic.
“I’ve always felt the teachers and the specialist staff are always really welcome and open and always, even if it’s just via email or setting up a quick Zoom call, are very receptive to input or if there’s any concerns like, even when we had to do our parent-teacher conferences over Zoom, you know all of them just continued to echo ‘just reach out anytime.’ The communication lines are constantly open.”

- Parent of a child experiencing disabilities and/or chronic health care needs
Statewide Survey & Listening Sessions

Research Goal:

To learn about Oregon families’ experiences, preferences, needs, and challenges in accessing and using early education and care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research was led by Dr. Beth Green and Dr. Katherine Pears

Statewide survey of 2,105 families (October 2020)

Interviews and listening sessions (Fall 2020):

19 parents with Native American/American Indian Indigenous heritage
5 Latinx parents living in rural areas of Oregon
6 African American parents living in the Portland metro region
16 parents living in frontier or very rural areas of Oregon
12 parents of children with intellectual or developmental disabilities and/or chronic health care needs
Key Terms

**Parents and caregivers** refers to the survey and listening session participants—biological parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, grandparents, legal guardians, and other primary caregivers of young children.

**Culturally Responsive Care** starts with recognizing, respecting, and valuing the diverse cultural values, beliefs, and customs of children and families. It involves using information about families’ cultural backgrounds to create and/or adapt early education and care practices that better meet the needs of children and families.

**Equitable education** is the idea that EACH and EVERY child and family will receive the necessary support and resources they need individually to thrive in Oregon’s early learning settings no matter what their national origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability/disability status, home language, or other characteristics.

Reflection: What does equity mean to you and how does it show up in your work?
Five Aspects of Families’ Diversity

1. Home language
2. Household income
3. Geographic region
4. Race/ethnicity
5. Ability/disability status

To what extent does families’ diversity in the data reflect the diversity of Oregon families?

The family survey data are mostly representative of Oregon’s population.
One-fifth of the families in the survey speak Spanish at home.

Figure 1-1. Respondent home language  n=2,101

- English 73.8%
- Spanish 20.3%
- Other 5.9%
More than half of the families in the survey are at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.
About one-third of the families in the survey live in rural or frontier regions.

**Figure 1-3. Respondent region**  
$n=2,105$

- Urban 66.0%
- Frontier 3.9%
- Rural 30.1%
Children of families in the survey are many races and ethnicities.

Figure 1-4. Race/ethnicity of respondent’s focal child  n=2,029

- American Indian/Alaska Native: 3.8%
- African American/Black: 6.4%
- Asian: 3.8%
- Hispanic/Latinx: 21.8%
- Middle Eastern/North African: 1.0%
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 0.5%
- White: 56.5%
- Multiracial: 5.8%
- Other Race: 0.3%
Nearly 1 of 6 families have a child experiencing disabilities and/or chronic health care needs.

Figure 1-5. Children experiencing disabilities and/or chronic health care needs  

- Experiencing disabilities and/or chronic health care needs: 15.6%
- All other children: 84.4%
The Importance of Disaggregated Data

Demographic characteristics of children and families provide insights into their unique lived experiences and perspectives.

Reflection: In what ways do you already use or would you like to use disaggregated data in your work?
Key Findings

1. Families face many different kinds of challenges during the pandemic.
2. Families are worried about children’s opportunities for socializing and learning.
3. Families want their children’s identities and cultures to be celebrated.
Key Findings
1. Families face many different kinds of challenges during the pandemic.

Stress and Isolation
Income Uncertainty
Racism
“I have a steady job and it does pay me fairly well… I work all year round, whereas my husband is seasonal and then 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].”

- Native American/Indigenous parent in Klamath County
"And people are really stressed... I’ve talked to quite a few 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..."

- Native American/Indigenous parent in Coos Bay
“When you have to imagine if you can actually get home to your kids because you’re this color that people hate, it’s a hard thing. And also, I think it does tie into everything that’s been going on, the pandemic, including what we’re talking about right now, which is childcare. How can I get across town in order for me to be safe, in order for my children to be safe? What if there’s an all Black childcare center and someone knows about that, and then they try to burn it down or something? These are things that are real life.”

- African American parent
As families consider in-person education and care, their main concern is exposure to COVID-19.
Disaggregated data reveal unique experiences among different groups of children and families.
Disaggregated data reveal disparities in which families are concerned about COVID-19 exposure.

- Middle Eastern and North African children reported 100.0% concern.
- African American and Black children reported 93.4% concern.
- Asian children reported 88.5% concern.
- Children in urban regions reported 85.2% concern.
- Multiracial/Multiethnic children reported 84.3% concern.
- Hispanic and Latinx children reported 83.7% concern.
- Children in frontier regions reported 81.6% concern.
- White children reported 80.7% concern.
- Children in rural regions reported 75.7% concern.
- American Indian and Alaska Native children reported 73.2% concern.

Higher percentages of most families of color and of families in urban regions reported concern about COVID-19 exposure compared to the rate across all families.
Key Finding 1 Reflection Opportunity

1. What challenges have you experienced related to the pandemic? What challenges in addition to the pandemic have you experienced? In what ways have your own challenges been the same or different than those experienced by families of a different racial or cultural background?

2. What are some resources that you currently share or could share to support families and ease their concerns about COVID-19? What information may be needed to connect with and support families who have diverse racial, cultural, and/or linguistic backgrounds?

3. How can Oregon’s early learning system address the inequities determined by these findings about how the pandemic disproportionally impacted different groups of families? What system-level changes do you think could and should be made?
Key Findings

2. Families are worried about loss of opportunities for their children’s socializing and learning.
“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?”

- Native American/Indigenous parent in Coos Bay
“It’s that learning and picking up from the other children, they’re not going to get that. They’re just going to learn and pick up from mom and dad and siblings in the home versus a variety of things that help them figure out who they are and what they like and things like that.”

- African American parent
“It was getting really bad with not having the socialization and his behavior was changing like dramatically so I made the decision, you know, if he’s going to go back he’ll learn. He’s already so far behind anyway. I think he needed it more than anything.”

—Parent of child experiencing disabilities and/or chronic health care needs
Families report ever being asked to leave their early education and care setting.

- All children: 6.3%
- Children experiencing a disability and/or chronic...: 14.7%
- Hispanic and Latinx children: 9.5%
- American Indian and Alaska Native children: 9.0%
- Children living in frontier regions: 7.2%
- Children living in lower-income households: 7.0%
- Multiracial/Multiethnic children: 6.8%
- White children: 5.4%
- African American and Black children: 4.6%
Key Finding 2 Reflection Opportunity

1. What are examples of practices in early childhood education and care that create equitable learning opportunities for young children?

2. What supports are needed from Oregon’s Early Learning System to strengthen these practices so they are easily understood and routinely applied in early childhood education and care programs?

3. What supports are needed from Oregon’s Early Learning System in relation to these practices, specifically for families with children who have been disproportionately suspended or expelled?
Key Findings
3. Families want their children’s identities and cultures to be celebrated.
“Yeah, it’s a tribal school. So there is singing and dancing. Our cultural department comes to the tribe, and they rotate the classrooms. I wish there was more of it. They’re doing the best they can. They’re doing a great job... 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.”

—Parent from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
“Yes, they would ask about that kind of stuff. My children are Hispanic and so they, they ask, oh, is there any specific way that you celebrate holidays differently? Are there different meals that you guys have or languages that are spoken?”

—Parent in rural/frontier Oregon
“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.”

—Native American/American Indian parent in the Portland metro area
Families of color struggle to find providers who reflect their families’ cultural backgrounds.

- **All children**: 31.0%
- **American Indian and Alaska Native children**: 55.3%
- **African American and Black children**: 67.6%
- **Asian children**: 51.4%
- **Hispanic and Latinx children**: 55.4%
- **Middle Eastern and North African**: 100.0%
- **Multiracial/Multiethnic children**: 60.3%
- **White children**: 13.8%
1. What is your own cultural background? In what ways are your cultural values, beliefs, and customs acknowledged and celebrated by others in your communities?

2. How do you use your role to acknowledge and celebrate the cultural identities of families in your community? Where do you see opportunities for greater acknowledgment and celebration of families’ diverse cultural values, beliefs, and customs within Oregon’s early learning system?

3. What are examples of systems-level practices or policies in early childhood education and care that promote culturally responsive care for children and families?
We are grateful to the families who participated in this research!

For more information and to read the full set of reports, please visit the ELD website: oregonearlylearning.com/PDGAssessment

If you have questions about this training, please contact your program manager.

Thank you for supporting Oregon’s young children and their families by participating in this training!

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