

PARTICIPANT INPUT REPORT:

PARENTING EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

2023
EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY





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PROJECT SUMMARY

The mission of The Children’s Trust (The Trust) is to partner with the community to plan, advocate for, and fund strategic investments through community partnerships. This work strives to improve the lives of children and families in Florida’s Miami-Dade County. By investing more than \$22 million in various promising and evidence-based parenting programs, The Trust provides Miami-Dade’s diverse families with a continuum of care, from which they can choose a program from a range of options that suits their needs and preferences. More than 10,000 parents and caregivers attended Parent Club workshops in 2021-22, and there were more than 43,000 members in The Trust’s monthly Book Club. More than 5,800 families with over 10,000 children attended selective parent education programs for an average of 10 group sessions each. Nearly 1,000 families with almost 2,000 children utilized indicated therapeutic interventions for their families, attending an average of eight individual sessions per family.

The Trust has partnered with Q-Q Research Consultants (QQRC), a consulting firm located in Miami-Dade County, to conduct research and evaluation services that inform The Trust’s ongoing work. The objectives of this research are to 1) assess the needs and interests of potential program participants to inform planning for future investments and 2) incorporate input from current service recipients to support providers’ continuous learning and quality improvement. The research activities described in this report focus on parenting education and support services, which includes classes, workshops, and similar programs that aim to support community members in their role as parent or caregiver.

This Executive Summary report highlights findings from a community parent survey and focus groups with parents. In addition to gauging on-average attitudes and experiences, this report also draws comparisons across different populations (i.e., by race/ethnicity, income level, and neighborhood of residence) to explore whether different facets of the community have different experiences and needs. Details on the methods and samples are provided in the appendix.

FINDINGS

Support and Availability of Services For Parents

How supported do parents feel in Miami-Dade County?

The parent survey asked all respondents how supported they felt raising children in Miami-Dade County (see Figure 1). About 40% of respondents felt either *not at all supported* or just a *little supported*. Less than a third reported feeling *very supported*, pointing to opportunities to increase support for parents in the community.

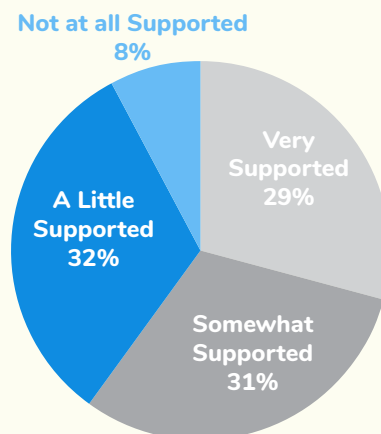
Group comparisons conducted with survey data indicated some important differences in the perceptions of different segments of the population.

- Hispanic/Latino, Haitian, and Asian respondents were more likely to feel *not at all supported*, as compared to White and Black/African American respondents.
- The second-lowest income group (\$25,000 - \$49,999) was more likely to say that they felt just a *little supported*.
- Parents of children with disabilities were more likely to say that they felt *not at all supported*.

Further insights came from an open-ended survey question that asked participants what would help them to feel more supported as parents in Miami-Dade County. Respondents most indicated a need for general supports in areas such as children's success at school, after-school programming, housing, health and insurance, mental health for both children and parents, and financial assistance. Many also indicated a need for improvements in community safety as well as specialized services for children with special needs.

“As a parent of a special needs kids, it is hard to find resources for extra-curricular activities and even therapies.”
(Survey respondent)

Figure 1: About 40% of parents reported feeling *not at all* or only *a little supported* as parents raising their children in Miami-Dade County.



Findings from focus groups provide additional perspectives that help contextualize this finding. Participants spoke about lacking awareness of available resources and difficulty navigating services. Participants also articulated the challenges of having to work and how this competes with time for children and parenting. They also discussed relationship and co-parenting struggles among mothers and fathers, particularly when there is an absent father, separation, and/or divorce, as this impacts emotional and financial support. Participants also expressed concerns for their children's

safety, exposure to negative influences, and healthy development during out-of-school time. This suggests a need for developing parenting strategies to help address these challenges.

“Balancing work life with having children. I have to work, and my working hours don’t give me enough time to spend with my kids.”
(Focus group participant)

How easy or difficult is it to find programs and services in Miami-Dade County?

The parent survey also asked how hard it was for respondents to find parent education and support services that meet their needs (see Figure 2). About 50% of respondents found these services either *very hard to find* or *somewhat hard to find*. Just 14% said that it was *very easy to find* programs meeting their needs.

In keeping with survey results, some focus group participants shared that information on parenting programs was not readily available. They suggested that some kind of assistance in locating programs would be helpful.

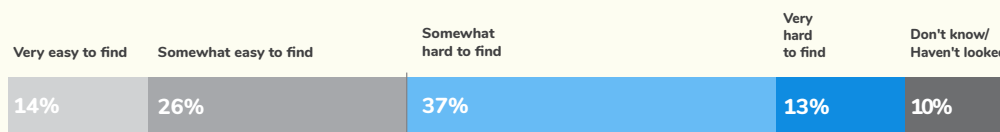
“I find it difficult to find programming for parents. I think the availability of information is not really out there, so you have to go digging.”
(Focus group participant)

Again, group comparisons revealed different experiences for different groups in the community.

- Hispanic/Latino and Asian respondents were more likely to say that it was *very hard to find* parent education and support services.
- Lower income respondents were more likely to indicate that it was either *somewhat or very hard* to find services.
- Residents of the Far South were also somewhat more likely to say it was *very hard to find* parent education and support services.

These findings suggest that outreach efforts to improve access to parenting education and support services may need to be more tailored for groups who are feeling less supported or encountering greater difficulty in finding a program, particularly non-White (i.e., Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Haitian) and lower-income communities.

Figure 2: Half of respondents thought it was *very hard* or *somewhat hard* to find parenting programs and services in Miami-Dade County.



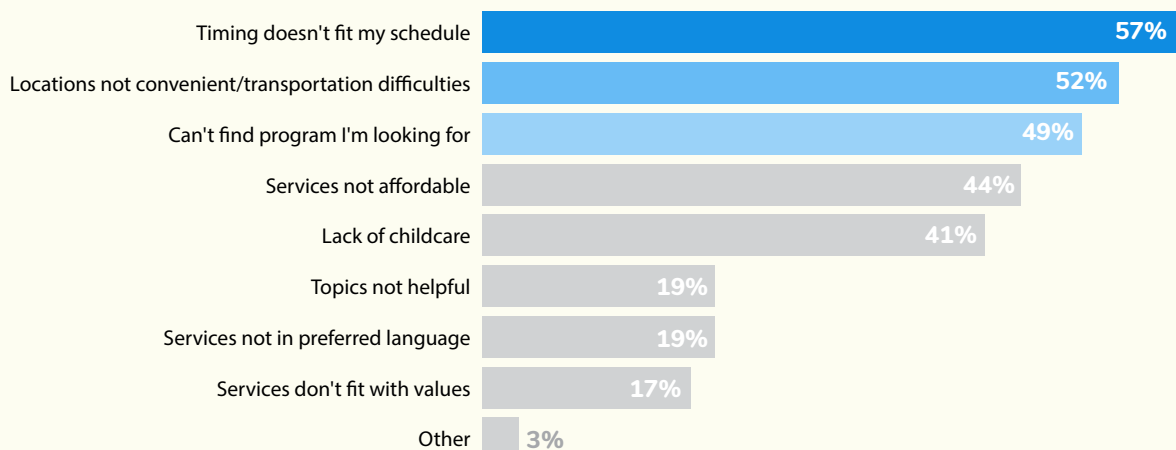
What makes it difficult to find a parenting education or support service in Miami-Dade County?

Through the survey, parents and caregivers who responded that it was very or somewhat difficult to find a parenting program or service meeting their needs were then asked what challenges they encountered. From a list, they were asked to select the three most significant difficulties (see Figure 3). The most selected barriers to participation were: 1) timing and schedule difficulties, 2) inconvenient locations and transportation issues, and 3) not being able to find the program they were looking for. This top challenge of timing that does not fit parents' schedules could be an indication that parents simply do not have enough time in their lives to fit parenting services in with other work and family demands, which is a difficult challenge to overcome. The least selected barriers were: 1) unhelpful topics, 2) services not being available in their preferred language, and 3) fit of existing programs with personal values. Among the 3% of respondents that indicated some other reason apart from the listed options, the most common themes were not knowing where to find programs and a lack of available information.

- As compared to White residents, non-White and particularly Hispanic/Latino respondents were more likely to say that they could not find the program they were looking for.
- Hispanic/Latino respondents were also most likely to name childcare as a key barrier.
- Lower income households (<\$50,000) were more likely to cite affordability as a primary difficulty. Around half of the households in that income range selected this option.



Figure 3: Most parents responded that scheduling challenges, inconvenient locations/transportation difficulties, and being unable to find a program were their biggest barriers to participating in parenting education or support.



- The \$50,000 - \$74,999 income group was most likely to say that fit with values was a challenge, while the lowest income group (<\$25,000) was least likely.
- White respondents were most likely to say that the language of services was a challenge in find a program fitting their needs.

During focus groups conducted with parents in the community, participants offered some additional thoughts on the difficulties they encountered. In line with findings from the survey, key themes that emerged were obstacles associated with transportation, finances, and childcare.

“Transportation is another issue... You don’t have the resources to get there because of financial deficit.” (Focus group participant)

In addition, focus group participants reported issues related to user-friendliness and general customer service. Participants also discussed cultural barriers, including fear and shame, language, and technology. In addition, DCF involved parents mentioned concerns around trusting the system. These observations point to ways in which parenting programs may make their services more accessible for diverse members of the community.

“There are also barriers of shame. If I go in here, they’re going to think something is wrong with me or I’m a bad parent.” (Focus group participant)

“Trusting the system. Signing up for some of these services... they give you a million pages to fill out. They (provider staff) be rude to you...they be giving you attitude. It’s like a handout. It makes you feel small.” (Focus group participant)

Experiences shared in focus groups shed some light on the experiences of community members of color as related to program access. Spanish-speaking parent participants expressed a lack of information regarding community resources, and Haitian Creole-speaking participants indicated difficulty navigating community programs, with both groups citing communication barriers. Spanish-speaking and Haitian Creole-speaking participants also discussed challenges associated with increased reliance on technology. Spanish-speaking participants stated technology can impede quality service provision, particularly for medical supports.



“What about a parent who just came from another country or who doesn’t speak English? I feel like technology is a double-edged sword. I know how to maneuver the technology, but we got some parents who are not that good online.”

(Spanish language focus group participant)

The need for basic supports (e.g., childcare, housing, cost of living, healthcare, and safety) was also expressed during parent focus groups. Although these groups were designed to center on topics related to parenting education programs, participants repeatedly stressed

needs in these key areas. Multiple parents described how work demands and financial pressures make it difficult to spend enough time with their children. This demonstrates the close relationship between parenting issues and basic needs, particularly where lower-income families face a rising cost of living.

“I got rent, light, water, and still got to take care of children with this little bit of money. The jobs are not paying, then the rent is sky high, you have to work two jobs to maintain a household for your family, and you barely have time for them. If you go to the supermarket, everything has gone up.”
(Focus group participant)

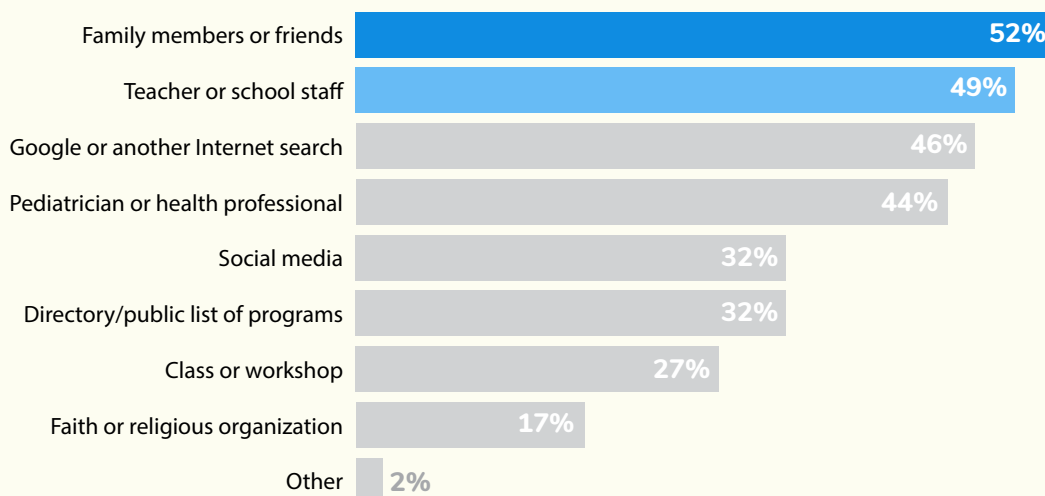
Information Sources

Where do parents look for information about parenting education and support services?

The parent survey asked respondents what sources of information they were most likely to consult when looking for parenting education and support services. From a list of options, the survey asked for the three sources of information they were most likely to consider (see Figure 4). The most selected sources of information were:

1) family members and friends, 2) teachers or other school staff, and 3) Google or another search engine. The least selected source of information was a faith or religious organization, yet this source was still endorsed by nearly one in five respondents.

Figure 4: For parents looking for information on parenting education, the most common source was family members or friends followed by teachers or school staff.



- White respondents were more likely to say that they would get information from social media as compared to other groups.
- The lowest income group (<\$25,000) was less likely to get information from social media.
- Non-White respondents and residents of the Far South were more likely to use Google or another search engine to find information.
- Hispanic/Latino respondents were more likely to find information through family or friends, as compared to other groups.
- Haitian and Asian respondents were more likely than others to get information through a faith or religious organization.

This topic was also explored during focus groups with parents in the community. In response, participants discussed a preference for information coming directly from people they know and social media rather than pamphlets.

In keeping with findings from the survey, this highlights the utility of leveraging word-of-mouth and social networks for disseminating information on parenting programs. That said, focus group participants also suggested promoting 2-1-1 as a resource for service and program information, which aligns with the survey finding that many endorsed consulting a directory or publicly available list of programs and services.

“Have information come from people rather than pamphlets. I look on social media. Advertise networking as part of the programming. Promote food and gift cards to get people to actually show up. Something to promote more dads to come into programs.”
(Focus group participant)

Features of Interest in Parenting Programs

What are parents looking for in parenting education and support services?

Through the parent survey, respondents were asked to select from a list the *three* qualities that they found most important in a parenting class or service (see Figure 5 on the next page). The most selected options were: 1) hands-on learning and practice, 2) learning and sharing ideas and experiences with other parents, 3) trusted sources of information, and 4) convenience of location. However, even the least selected option, the relevance of topics, was endorsed by one third of parents, pointing to community interest in a variety of program topics.



Figure 5: The top things parents were looking for in a parenting education and support service were hands-on learning and practice, learning and sharing ideas with other parents, and a trusted source.

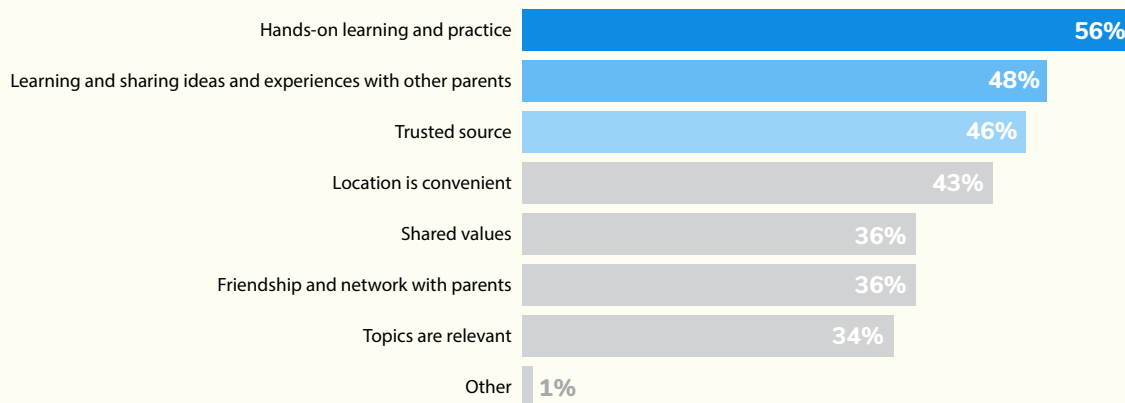
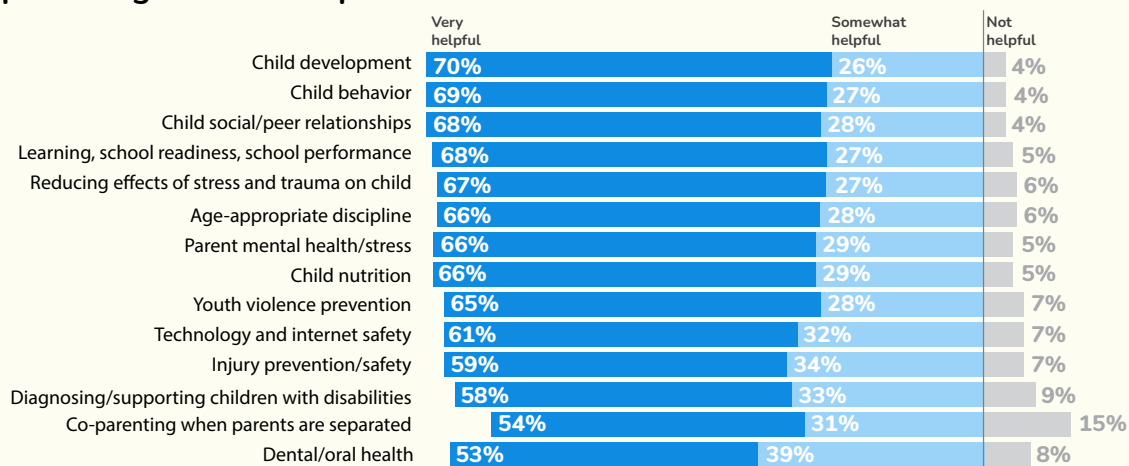


Figure 6: Most respondents rated all topics as very helpful, with the highest-rated topics being child development and child behavior.



- Non-White and lower-income respondents were more likely to prioritize trusted sources.
- The lowest income group (<\$25,000) was more likely to prioritize hands-on learning and practice.
- White respondents were on average more likely to prioritize shared values as compared to other groups.

What topics would be most helpful for parents?

The parent survey provided respondents with a list of parenting education topics, and in each case, they were asked to rate the topic as either *very helpful*, *somewhat helpful*, or *not helpful*. More than half of respondents rated all topics as *very helpful*, again suggesting an interest in varied service topics related to parenting (see Figure 6).

In the parent survey, associations between interest in particular parenting topics and demographic factors were consistently significant. Looking across all these associations, some important trends are apparent.

- For all topics, non-White groups were more likely to rate the topic as *very helpful*. The exception is that helpfulness ratings among Asian Americans were generally more comparable to those of White respondents.
- Across the topics listed, the lowest income bracket was more likely to indicate that the topic would be *very helpful*.
- Helpfulness ratings were generally a bit higher among residents of the Far South and the Northeast.

Rather than suggesting different interests for different segments of the community, these findings point to higher levels of interest across topics among less advantaged residents.

Adding to findings from the survey, participants in parent focus groups also discussed topics that they thought would be most useful in parenting education programs. A theme that emerged in these conversations was a need for programs that reduce stress by allowing for some respite from daily responsibilities and teaching skills that can reduce daily burden. Participants indicated that they needed support with managing parenting, life, and financial responsibilities. Some parents also expressed an interest in guidance when the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is involved.



**“One of the things that doesn’t exist is respite for parents...a way for them to get a break, be able to think clearly, get away from the situation, and come back rejuvenated.”
(Focus group participant)**

Education is another area emphasized repeatedly during focus groups. Parents voiced concerns about the overall quality of education, support with homework, and after-school programs to support success in school. One participant expressed that parents feel pressure to move when schools are inadequate in their home area.

**“I hate the fact that we had to move our kids out of the neighborhood that we were raised in to give them a better education. That needs to stop. That’s the problem. My children don’t have the resources academically. The support system isn’t there. The resources aren’t there. My biggest concern is when parents have a problem with a teacher or principal, and there’s no outside source (neutral third-party negotiator) that parents could go to.”
(Focus group participant)**

During conversations about education, participants also discussed the need for better communication with teachers. To illustrate, one parent expressed that this would help them in their role as a parent.

“More parent support in terms of education and supporting your child so that they can get their homework done. Bring back PTA in public schools... some type of parent meeting with teachers. Have some kind of system where they could report back to us. Some schools have an app. A daily parent teacher log.”
(Focus group participant)

Another important theme was interest in parenting classes and services to meet the needs of specific segments of the population. During focus groups with fathers, for example, participants described how the system favors mothers and that there is a lack of parenting programs focused on the needs of fathers. There was an interest in increasing the participation of fathers in parenting classes and programs.

“Let’s do a dads’ class. Sign the dads up...let all the dads come by themselves. For dads that have participated, the feedback has been positive. We need to have people who are able to navigate through those DCF cases.”
(Focus group participant)

Parent participants of children with disabilities also stated they needed respite supports, as well as legal services. They emphasized difficulties in navigating the education system and advocating for their children’s best interests. Participants cited teachers not knowing students’ Individualized Educational Program (IEP) plans and limited competence and accountability among some school and program staff. They also described poor internal communication and interactions with parents, who frequently struggle for recognition, respect, and fair treatment of their children. They mentioned a need for after-school programs and legal services tailored to the needs of children with disabilities.

Another group with unique experiences was parents of LGBTQ+ youth. These parents emphasized how the political landscape influences their role as parents and expressed a desire for The Trust to partner with more LGBTQ+ organizations to support their community.

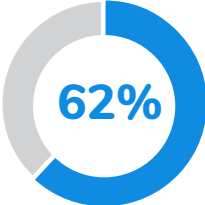
Finally, participants discussed how the unique pressures faced by teen and single parents further complicate parenting. Single parents described the tremendous challenges of navigating financial pressures and juggling multiple demands while caring for a child. For teen parents, a major challenge was continuing education within the context of early parenting demands.

“My challenge has been advocating for myself. It will be hard for you to go to school and go to work and take care of a baby. Housing for me being a single mom has been the hardest thing I’ve been facing. For young parents to do their GED and then go to college if possible.”
(Focus group participant)

During focus groups, Spanish-speaking and Haitian Creole-speaking participants encountered unique childrearing and discipline challenges. Spanish-speaking participants discussed a need for more medical supports and financial education. They also described difficulties associated with single parenthood and concerns about their children being exposed to drugs. Both Spanish and Haitian Creole-speaking participants related wanting to ensure their family values and culture transitioned from generation to generation.

Experiences with Parenting Programs

What proportion of parents previously participated in a class, program, or service to support them in their role as a parent?



62%
of survey respondents had participated in a parenting program, class, or service.

- White respondents were substantially more likely to report having participated in a program or service to support them in their role as a parent.
- Lower income groups were substantially less likely to report having participated in a parenting program or service.
- Residents of the Far South and Northeast were somewhat less likely to report having participated.

For those parents who had participated in a parenting class or service, what type of program did they attend?

For parents who previously utilized parenting services, several survey questions explored the structure and content of these experiences.

Respondents most commonly reported attending either: 1) multiple sessions of a group/class or 2) one-time workshops/classes (see Figure 7). A substantial proportion also said that their experience included multiple individual sessions in their home. The least selected program type involved multiple individual sessions in a community location, although even in this case nearly one in five survey respondents had participated in this program type.

- Black/African American, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino respondents were more likely to say that they participated in a one-time workshop or class.
- Those in the lowest income group were most likely to say that they participated in a one-time workshop or class.
- The lowest income group was least likely to participate in individual sessions at home and at a community location.
- White respondents were most likely to participate in individual sessions at home and in a community location.

Figure 7: Most respondents indicated that they attended multiple sessions of a parenting group or class, with a similar percentage indicating they attended a one-time workshop or class.

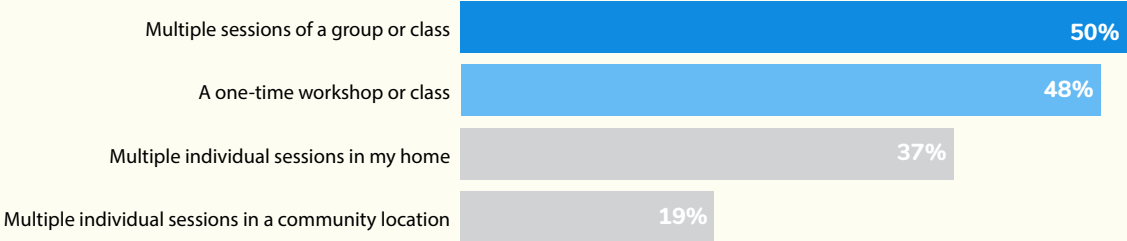


Figure 8: Most respondents attended a parenting program 2-5 times. One-quarter of respondents attended 6-10 times.



Figure 9: More than 40% of parents reported attending all in-person services, but a third attended all virtually. A quarter of parents took part in a mix.

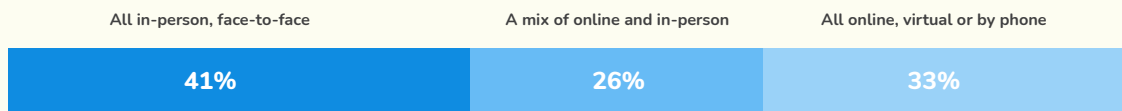
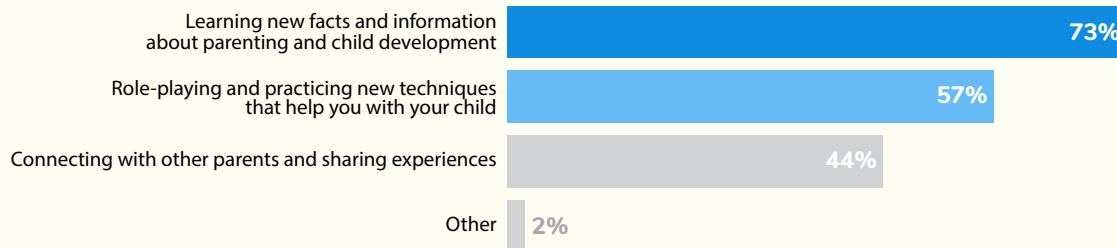


Figure 10: Almost three-quarters of respondents said their parenting education program experience included learning new facts and information about parenting and child development. Over half of respondents also reported experience with role-playing and practicing new techniques.



When asked how many times they attended the parenting program(s), just over half said that they attended two to five times, followed by a quarter saying that they participated six to ten times (see Figure 8). About one in ten said that they joined just once and another one in ten participated more than 10 times. Responses did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity, income, or neighborhood of residence.

Another survey item asked about the modality of classes and services attended (see Figure 9). Respondents most commonly said that their experience was with an in-person, face-to-face format. That said, more than half reported participating in a program that was either virtual or a mix of online and in-person, a finding that likely reflects in part the COVID-19 context.

- Residents of the Far South were somewhat more likely to report having used a remote/virtual program.

Respondents were also asked about the kinds of experiences they had in the parenting program(s), with response options that reflected best practices in parenting program implementation (see Figure 10). Nearly three quarters of respondents said that their experience included learning new facts and information about parenting and child development. Over half said that they used role-playing and practiced new techniques to help them with their child. A bit less than half said that the program included connecting and sharing experiences with other parents. Responses did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity, income, or neighborhood of residence.

How did participating in parenting programs help?

An open-ended survey item asked parents who had participated in parenting services how the programs had helped them. The most common themes in their responses were learning about general parenting skills such as communication, discipline, patience, and generally being a good parent. Stress reduction was also frequently mentioned. Respondents also responded that both virtual and face-to-face modalities were helpful.

Following the open-ended item, parents who had previously participated in a program or service were asked to what degree their experiences: 1) helped them decrease stress related to parenting and 2) helped their family get along better (see Figure 11). In both areas, a strong majority of respondents expressed that their experiences had helped them either *somewhat* or *a lot*. Responses did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity, income, or neighborhood of residence.

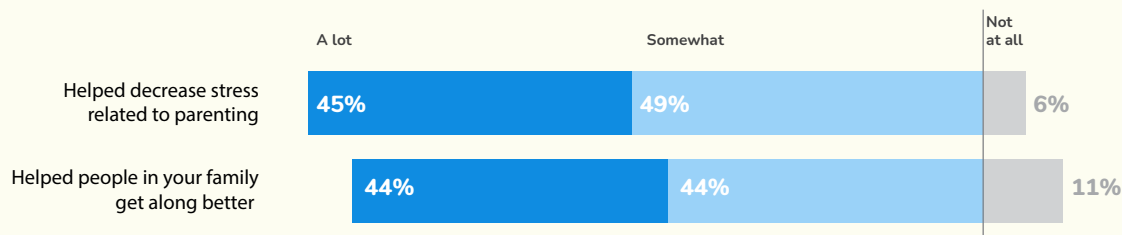
During focus groups, parents shared positive experiences with parenting classes and services. Positive aspects cited included improved communication skills and emotion regulation.

“The parenting program helped me understand how to communicate and helped me a lot. I did learn a lot like how to listen to the children, how to understand them, how to give them their time and space, so yes, it has helped us a lot.”
 (Focus group participant)

“I really looked forward to my parenting classes. I worked really hard (...), and it worked amazing. Help from that parenting class helped me. I learned a lot because now I know how to control my anger and myself. Teaches you how to be a better parent and support your children. (...) It helps you even with your self-esteem. My husband got classes for fatherhood, and it worked.”
 (Focus group participant)



Figure 11: Almost all respondents indicated that the program helped them **somewhat or **a lot** with regards to decreasing parenting-related stress and helping the family get along better.**



Interest Among Parents NOT Participating in Parenting Programs

What kinds of parenting programs or services would parents prefer?

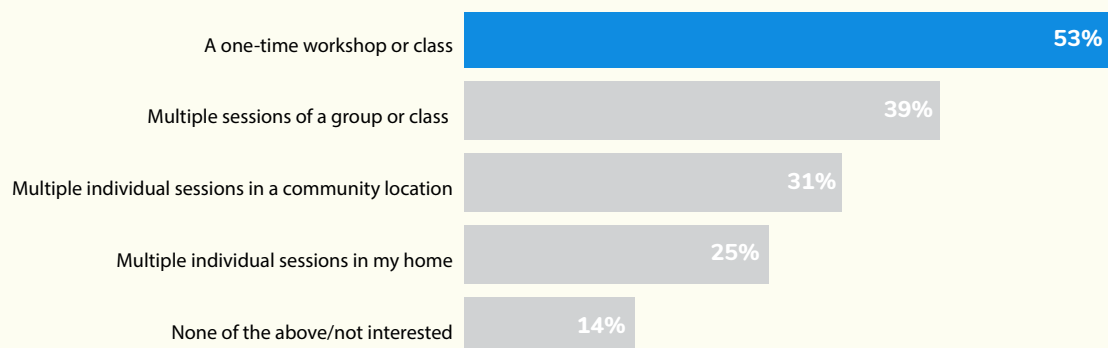
Survey respondents who indicated that they had not previously participated in a parenting class or service were asked about the sorts of programs they might prefer in the future. Survey items gathered perspectives on preferences on the structure and content of services, such as program types, numbers of sessions, modality, and experiences.

When it comes to general program type, interest was highest in one-time workshops or classes, although there was substantial interest in other formats as well (see Figure 12). The least selected option was multiple individual sessions at home, and even in this case a quarter of respondents expressed interest. It is notable that 14% of respondents said that they were not interested in any of these types of parenting programming, suggesting that there is overall strong interest (though not unanimous) in parenting programs in the community. The patterns of interest by program types among parents who had not previously attended are similar to those of parents who had previously utilized such services, as described above.

- As compared to White respondents, Black/African American, Asian, Haitian, and Hispanic/Latino respondents were more likely to express interest in a program that meets *just once*.



Figure 12: Overall, most parents who had not previously attended parenting programs preferred a one-time workshop or class.



The survey also contained an item asking how many times respondents would be willing to participate in a parenting program or service. By a large margin, parents preferred to participate in a program meeting 2 to 5 times (see Figure 13). The second most selected option was for services that meet just one time, with nearly a quarter of respondents selecting this choice. Responses did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity, income, or neighborhood of residence. Interestingly, parents who had not yet attended programs were more likely to express interest in shorter frequencies, as compared with parents who had attended services who more often attended multiple sessions (as shown previously in Figure 8 on page 12).

When it comes to program modality, respondents expressed interest in hybrid-style programs that combine online and in-person components, with more than half selecting this option (see Figure 14). Notably, this was the least commonly selected modality noted by respondents who had previously attended parenting programs, as noted above (see Figure 9 on page 12). This suggests a need in the community for novel parenting programs that incorporate multiple delivery approaches.

- White respondents were somewhat more likely to prefer an in-person program as compared to non-White respondents.

The survey also inquired into the interest among respondents who had not previously participated in parenting services in specific types of experiences. Respondents prioritized the importance of learning new facts and information related to parenting and child development, as well as role-playing and practicing skills to help them with their children (see Figure 15 on next page). Nearly half of previously non-participating parents also indicated that they would like to connect and share with other parents. Responses did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity, income, or neighborhood of residence. It is worth noting that the future interests expressed by non-participating parents were well-aligned with the experiences of those who had previously participated in parenting programs (see Table 10 on page 12).



Figure 13: Most parents not previously attending were willing to participate in a parenting program or service 2-5 times, however, nearly one-quarter preferred the one-time option.

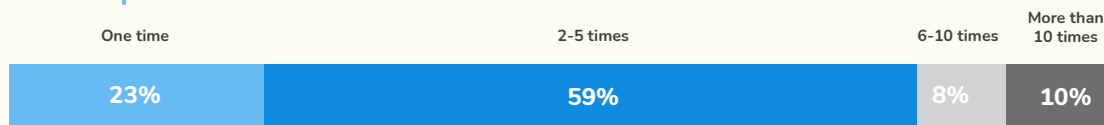


Figure 14: More than half of parents who had not previously attended reported interest in a mix of online and in-person services, and just under half are interested in all virtual.



Figure 15: Respondents who had not participated in parenting services were the most interested in learning new facts and information about parenting and child development.

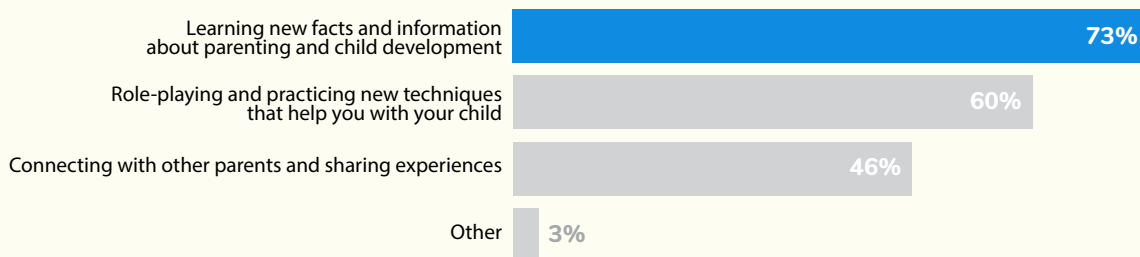
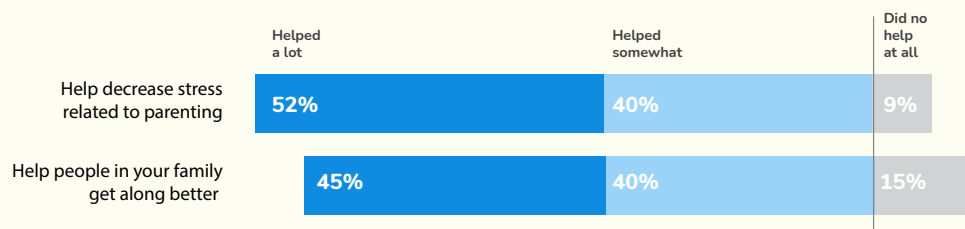


Figure 16: Almost all respondents who had not attended parenting services thought programs could help them somewhat or a lot with regards to decreasing parenting-related stress and helping the family get along better.



There was also strong interest in programs to both reduce stress related to parenting and to help families get along better (see Figure 16). Just over half of survey respondents who had not yet participated in a parenting program said that decreasing stress would help a lot. Similarly, a bit less than half said that helping the family get along better would help a lot.

- Non-White participants and the lowest income group (<\$25,000) were more likely to say that decreasing stress would help a lot.
- White respondents more likely to be interested in helping family get along better.

During parent focus groups, participants were asked what would promote parents' mental health and well-being. The interest in stress reduction was also apparent through this qualitative work. Participants discussed self-care, balancing life and parenting duties and responsibilities, and time management.

Participants reported the need for mental health supports especially for uninsured individuals. They also expressed the importance of prioritizing health, both mental and physical, while de-stigmatizing programs and services. There was interest in individual, group, couples, and family counseling. Spanish-speaking parent participants also emphasized the value of someone to talk with and family therapy.



“Have resources so you (parents) can get time for yourself—self-care 101. We are concerned about many things and neglect ourselves as women and as mothers, so sometimes that affects us a lot psychologically... A support group to minimize

stress and prevent it from happening... I would definitely be interested in family counseling. I don't have and can't afford insurance so mental health counseling would have to be provided for free. Free or affordable.”
(Focus group respondent)

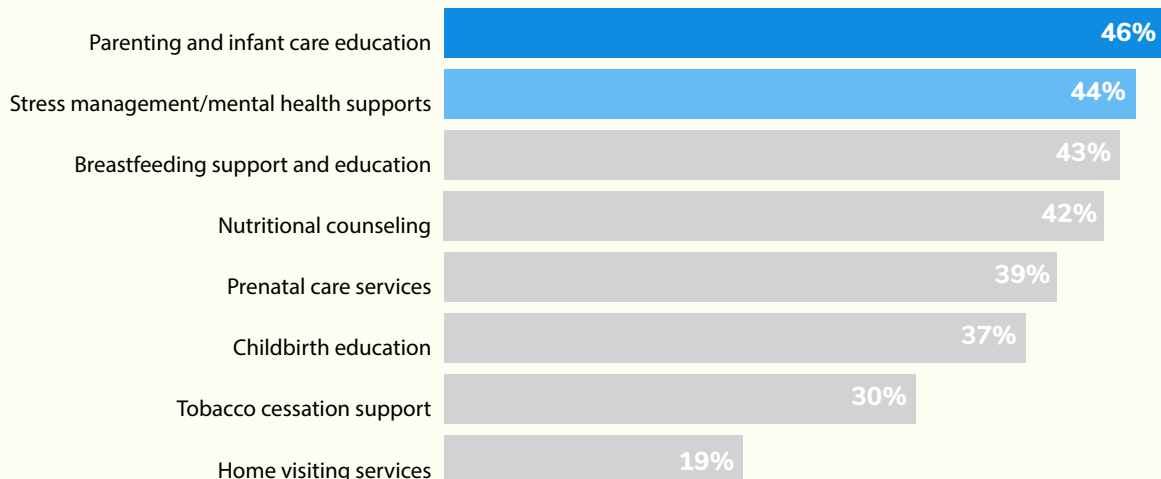
Expecting Parents

What prenatal and early childhood health information and services did respondents feel were most needed?

Through the parent survey, expecting parents were asked what prenatal and early childhood health information services they felt were most needed. Respondents selected their top three options from a list of eight (see Figure 17). More than 40% of parents selected the following options as one of their most important: 1) parenting and infant care education, 2) stress management and mental health supports, 3) breastfeeding support and education, and 4) nutritional counseling. The least prioritized health information service was home visitation, although even this option was selected by nearly one in five respondents as a priority area.

- Residents of the Far South were more likely to prioritize breastfeeding support and education.
- The lowest income bracket (<\$25,000 per year) as well as non-White groups were on-average more likely to prioritize stress management and mental health supports.

Figure 17: The most important prenatal and early childhood health information to expecting parents was parenting and infant care education followed by stress management/mental health supports.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase Funding and Access to Parenting Services and Supports

Increase Funding for Parenting and Other Community Needs: A significant portion of parent survey respondents (40%) indicated that they felt not at all or a little supported as parents raising children in Miami-Dade County. Parents who reported not feeling supported specifically mentioned a need for more child and youth programming, inclusion supports for children with special needs, and ways to support their children's success in school. In part, this indicates a need to increase funding for parenting education programs and support services.

- The Children's Trust recently added more than \$6 million to its latest funding recommendations for 45 parenting and family strengthening group, individual and home visitation programs that begin a new funding cycle in October 2023, totaling \$23.2 million.

However, parenting services alone cannot address all needed supports. Parents who reported not feeling supported also described challenges related to housing, health and mental health services, financial and basic needs, community safety, and work demands that limit their schedules and time available for their children and parenting responsibilities. Those more likely to report feeling unsupported include lower income families, Hispanic/Latino parents, parents of children with disabilities, and families living in the far south of the county.

- The Children's Trust will continue to partner with key community stakeholders and to advocate at the local and state levels for policies and strategies that can address these family needs for broader economic supports.
- Continue to promote the Miami 211 Helpline as a source for accessing resources and navigation assistance to address basic needs.

- Starting in October 2023, The Trust will double its funding to more than \$1.5 million for public benefits enrollment supports for families and other vulnerable populations negatively impacted by poverty, lack of opportunity, and other related neighborhood and social factors, including those with children and youth with disabilities.
- Since 2018, The Trust contributed to a funder collaboration project to prevent and address youth homelessness in Miami-Dade County by partnering with Miami Homes for All, the Helping Our Miami Youth (HOMY) Collective, and more recently, the Homeless Trust to develop a live housing inventory database to assist in locating additional housing leads for those experiencing homelessness; with youth and homeless families being the top priority for housing placement.
- Within The Trust's Family and Neighborhood Support Partnerships initiative, there is funding to support family stabilization costs for basic needs emergencies for enrolled families with significant life challenges. Additional funds support families of children with significant disabilities with in-home respite care and youth development program inclusion funding. Parenting programs should refer families to these programs when indicated.
- The Trust should consider expansion of funding for high-quality child care options for parents who cannot afford them, such as the Thrive by 5 Families Forward child care scholarships for parents up to 300% of poverty, as well as match funding for Head Start and Early Head Start slots. This expansion is needed by Trust and other public and private funding sources.

Increase and Tailor Communication Strategies:

About half of parent survey respondents mentioned that it was either very hard or somewhat hard to find parenting services. Survey and focus group respondents expressed varying opinions about their preferred sources for information on parenting classes, most commonly mentioning family and friends, teachers at their child's schools, Google or other search engines, and pediatricians or health professionals. The Children's Trust and its parenting providers should utilize outreach strategies that are aligned with the sources of information most frequently used by parents, and consider the subgroup differences noted in detailed findings to inform outreach strategies for specific groups.

- Programs must ensure positive word-of-mouth from past participants and encourage sharing through social networks.
- They must also build connections with local schools, child care programs and pediatric offices to distribute their program information.
- The Children's Trust and provider agencies need to ensure that program information appears in Google searches through search engine optimization, and regularly update program information within the 211 Helpline community resource directory and other relevant directory listings.
- More broadly, The Trust should work with the Miami 211 Helpline to strengthen and increase the useability of its community resource directory by ensuring that the information needed by parents is included in the directory and that the information is up to date.
- Continue to foster and expand The Children's Trust active social media presence.
- Looking to the future and considering that younger generations (e.g., millennials, Gen Z) are currently or could soon be parents, heightening or expanding The Trust's presence on apps like Instagram and TikTok is recommended. In doing so, The Trust could invite actual parents to participate in the creation of content and testimonials to foster trust among peers.

Address Barriers to Access: The top challenge reported in the community survey by parents who found it difficult to find parent education programs that meet their needs were issues with limited time availability, scheduling limitations, service locations and transportation challenges, and childcare needs.

- While programs cannot create more time in parents' busy schedules, they should strive to offer flexible class schedules and locations that meet the scheduling needs of parents. For example, offering parent programs while children are in school, after standard work hours, and/or on the weekends. It may benefit working parents if parenting programs broker partnerships with large employers to offer services within the workplace at convenient times and locations. Offering transportation resources or supports to attend community locations can be helpful.
- Incorporate child activities into parenting services and/or offer childcare services during parenting programs to ensure parents can attend without this worry.
- Incorporate family meals or snacks (depending on timing) into group services to incentivize participation and remove one more demand on parents' responsibilities.



Tailor Parenting Service Content, Design, and Structure to Parent Preferences

More than half of parent survey respondents (62%) have previously participated in parenting services, and 86% of non-participants indicated that they had some interest in attending parenting programs in the future.

Offer an Array of Parenting Topics: Parents indicated that they were interested in a wide variety of programming content areas, especially among less advantaged respondents. As detailed in the findings, topics deemed most helpful by more than two-thirds of parents related to child development, behavior, social/peer relationships, learning, school readiness/school performance, and reducing the effects of stress and trauma on children. Notably, all 14 topics on the survey were rated as *very helpful* by more than half of respondents. In focus groups, Spanish-speaking and Haitian Creole-speaking parents want to ensure their family values and culture transitioned from generation to generation. When asked about how parenting programs had or could help them, parent survey respondents were overwhelmingly interested in programs that decrease parenting stress and help the family get along better. Expecting parents were interested in prenatal and early childhood health information and services related to 1) parenting and infant care, 2) stress management/mental health, 3) breastfeeding, and 4) nutritional counseling.

The need for mental health support services that are high-quality, affordable, and accept individuals without insurance was also mentioned in open-ended survey responses and focus groups. While The Trust already funds organizations that provide affordable mental health services, parent respondents indicated that they either are not aware of these services or do not know how to access them. Parents expressed wanting opportunities to decompress, connect and share with other parents to improve their overall well-being, and communicate with parents facing similar experiences. Additionally, 66% of parents indicated parent mental health/stress management topics would be helpful, and 94% of respondents who previously participated in a parenting class or service reported that this

experience helped them decrease stress related to parenting either a lot or somewhat.

The findings also suggested that parents want opportunities to decompress, connect and share with other parents to improve their overall well-being. Parents expressed in focus groups the need to communicate with parents facing similar experiences. Parents in non-English speaking focus groups, as well as parents in specialized focus groups (i.e., parents of children with disabilities, parents of children in the child welfare system), found that simply getting together and being around other parents sharing similar experiences was helpful to them.

- Ensure the array of funded parenting and family strengthening services funded covers diverse topics related to those of interest.
- Fund programs that help parents understand the educational system, including how to communicate with school personnel and advocate for their child in these settings, to streamline communication between teachers and parents.
- Trust-funded parenting services must ensure staff cultural and language diversity, as well as culturally-sensitive programming related to Haitian Creole-speaking and Spanish-speaking families.



- Utilize resources already in place to enhance mental health support for parents. Emphasis should be placed on helping parents connect with Trust services like the Miami 211 Helpline and using the Parent Club workshops and other support group programs as a gateway to more intensive supports when needed.
- All funded providers should share community mental health resources with participants of their parenting classes.
- Collaborate more closely with community mental health partners and programming, such as Thriving Mind of South Florida and programs within the school system and county government, to better coordinate these services for parents.
- Fund community support groups for parents as a service that could address lack of support and combat isolation.

Support the Needs of Special Populations:

The overall findings suggest that improvements are necessary to better support parents from all backgrounds, including parents of children with disabilities, expecting parents, single parents, teen parents, fathers, families of LGBTQ+ youth, and parents involved in the child welfare system.

- Develop specific parenting workshop outreach strategies, topics and supports tailored to the needs of the populations noted.
- Continue to fund educational navigation and support services for families of children and youth with disabilities. Promote awareness and parent utilization of Trust-funded youth program inclusion and in-home respite care supports for children with significant disabilities and accommodation needs.
- Single parents may be in particular need of economic supports and resources like those described above, as well as social support.
- In the most recent Trust funding awards for parenting programs beginning in October 2023, programming for prenatal and early childhood was expanded in response to



this community need, so there should be increased outreach to expecting parents.

- Teen parents will benefit from programs that support the continuation of their education while parenting, such as high school/GED completion supports, standardized test preparation courses, college application workshops, and interview preparation services, all offered at flexible times to accommodate different schedules.
- Father-specific outreach and programming should be included in the array of parenting services offered. The Trust recently specified this in its competitive solicitation.
- Families of LGBTQ+ youth reported unique support needs and concerns for their children's safety and protection. The Trust is collaborating with relevant community organizations dedicated to LGBTQ+ protections to get input and develop actions related to the data we collect, outreach, and provider capacity building. Trust social and emotional wellness/racial equity, diversity and inclusion (SEW/REDI) efforts also address these needs. Trust Academy provider training will be offered to ensure programming is welcoming and supportive. Parent Club workshops will be developed around parenting education as related to LGBTQ+ needs.

Design and Structure Considerations: Parent survey respondents reported interests in key features of parenting services, as well as preferences for frequency and modality. Program features of greatest interest included more hands-on learning opportunities to practice new parenting skills; learning and sharing ideas and experiences with other parents; trusted sources of information; and convenient locations. Both parents who have and have not previously participated in parenting services endorsed that they had or would be interested in attending one-time or multiple session groups or classes, from one to five sessions. Prior parenting participants reported attending services in-person or face-to-face (41%), but one-third expressed interest in online, virtual or phone services. More than half of parents who had not participated in parenting programs expressed interest in hybrid-style programs that combine a mix of online and in-person modalities. However, several focus group participants noted parents' limitations in

technology usage and suggested providers offer less technology-based services.

- Continue to offer one-time workshops, but also add short-series groups of up to five sessions through The Children's Trust Parent Club for the large portion of parents interested in attending one to five sessions.
- Offer standing, open support groups around specific themes, topics, or needs through The Children's Trust Parent Club.
- Incorporate multiple delivery approaches and modalities, including in-person experiences along with virtual participation options. Providers must be aware of potential limitations in technological capacity for some parents when designing and supporting virtual participation.

ONGOING PROGRAM QUALITY AND EVALUATION

One of the challenges to participation in parenting services raised by parent focus group participants revolved user-friendliness and general customer service. Participants also discussed cultural barriers, including fear and shame, language, and technology. In addition, DCF involved parents expressed concerns around trusting the system. These observations point to ways in which parenting programs may make their services more accessible for diverse members of the community.

- Focus parenting provider training and supports around best practices for ensuring good customer service and cultural sensitivity. In particular, parenting providers must work hard to combat the potential for stigmatization and deficit framing when parents seek out or are potentially mandated to take part in parenting programs. Strengths-based frameworks should be utilized and can be emphasized through Trust Academy parenting provider supports.

- Implement regular customer service satisfaction surveys in English, Haitian Creole, and Spanish with parenting program participants. The survey could solicit information on a variety of topics, including whether services were respectful and honored participant cultures and values.



APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

QQR took a mixed-method approach to meet the key evaluation objectives regarding Trust-funded parenting education and support programs. Quantitative data were captured from a community survey across 3,477 respondents. Qualitative data were obtained from a total of 17 focus groups conducted with 107 parents and caregivers to learn about parenting strengths, needs, and services. These focus groups allow for the contextualization of the survey results.

SURVEY DESIGN

The survey was designed through a collaboration between QQR and staff from The Trust. Together, the team developed the survey to focus on experiences, attitudes, needs, and preferences in four priority areas:

- **Early Childcare and Education:** Childcare arrangements and preschool programs for infants and young children before starting kindergarten.
- **Parenting:** Classes, programs, and support services geared toward helping parents and caregivers to better meet the needs of children in their care.
- **School Health:** School-based health services, including nursing and auxiliary services such as mental health and dental check-ups.
- **Youth Development:** Summer and after-school activities to support learning, well-being, and healthy development for children and youth.

The needs of families and children vary according to the child's age. For example, the health needs of adolescents differ from those of young children. For this reason, the survey was designed to offer modified questions depending on the age of the respondent's child(ren). At the start of the survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had any children 1) from birth to age four, 2) from age 5 to 10 years old, 3) from 11 to 13 years old, or 4) from 14 to 18 years old. Throughout the report, we refer to these

groups as preschool, elementary, middle, and high school ages. Respondents were also asked whether they or their partner were expecting a child at the time of taking the survey.

- All survey respondents who said they or a partner were expecting a child when completing the survey were shown a survey block containing items specific to the experience of expecting parents, such as parenting needs, plans, and preferences for early childcare.
- Those who indicated having a child or children in just one of the age groups were shown a set of survey items designed for that age group (i.e., preschool, elementary, middle, or high school).
- For those who indicated that they had children in multiple age groups, the survey randomly assigned them to a set of survey items corresponding to one of the age groups selected. Instructions asked them to consider their experiences with the child in that particular age group.

The survey was developed and hosted on the Qualtrics platform. It was available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.

Survey Sampling Procedure

The research team used a stratified convenience sampling approach with quotas by Miami-Dade County ZIP codes in order to approximate a representative sample. Quotas were calculated by ZIP code based on data from the United States Census to ensure that the final sample would be geographically representative of the county. The Trust collaborated with community partners to conduct outreach, and fliers with QR codes were posted in community locations. Research partners at QRC conducted biweekly analyses of sample demographics to guide survey recruitment efforts and ensure that the final sample was as representative as possible.

Survey Analytic Sample

The final analytic sample (n = 3,477) drops responses from those who completed less than half the survey. Also dropped were 1) anyone who started the survey but indicated that they did not live in Miami-Dade County for at least half the year, and 2) those that started the survey but indicated that they either did not have a child or were not expecting at the time of participating. The final sample drops cases that Qualtrics flagged as possible bots as determined by a ReCaptcha score below 0.5.

As noted above, survey respondents were assigned to blocks of items according to the ages of children in their household. The following table shows the number and percentage of respondents who completed each block. Respondents who were both expecting and already had one or more children completed two survey blocks. For this reason, total numbers sum to more than the final sample size. It is worth noting that there were fewer respondents for the middle and high school age groups.

Table 1: Number of Survey Respondents for Each Age Bracket

| Survey block | Number of responses | Percentage |
|---|---------------------|------------|
| Expecting parents | 579 | 17% |
| Preschool age (from birth to about 4 years old) | 1,294 | 37% |
| Elementary school age (about 5 to 10 years old) | 1,325 | 38% |
| Middle school age (about 11 to 13 years old) | 414 | 12% |
| High school age (about 14 to 18 years old) | 340 | 10% |

The final sample was well-aligned with targets set by ZIP code and also roughly matched the demographic composition of Miami-Dade County, with one notable exception. Hispanic and Latino/a groups were underrepresented. To address this, a survey sample weight was generated to increase the relative importance of Hispanic and Latino/a participants in analyses. This survey weight was created with a raking procedure using the *anesrake* package¹ in the R statistical program.



1 Pasek, J. (2022). Package 'anesrake'. Compr. R Arch. Netw. Retrieved from: <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/anesrake/anesrake.pdf>

The following table provides information on the demographic composition of the final sample.

Table 2: Final Survey Demographics

| Variable | Category | Number | Percent |
|-------------------------------|--|--------|---------|
| Gender | Female | 2,453 | 71% |
| | Male | 847 | 24% |
| | Prefer not to say | 40 | 1% |
| | Non-binary or third gender | 9 | <1% |
| | Self-describe | 3 | <1% |
| | Not answered | 125 | 4% |
| Race/Ethnicity | White (non-Hispanic, non-Haitian) | 1,333 | 38% |
| | Hispanic/Latino-a-x | 1,212 | 35% |
| | Black/African American (non-Hispanic, non-Haitian) | 505 | 15% |
| | Haitian | 134 | 4% |
| | Asian | 58 | 2% |
| | Prefer not to say | 77 | 2% |
| | Other | 32 | 1% |
| | Not answered | 126 | 4% |
| Parent Age | 18-29 | 651 | 19% |
| | 30-39 | 1,723 | 50% |
| | 40-49 | 822 | 24% |
| | 50-64 | 146 | 4% |
| | 65+ | 14 | <1% |
| | Not answered | 121 | 3% |
| Parent Educational Attainment | Less than high school | 88 | 3% |
| | High school diploma or GED | 498 | 14% |
| | Some college | 1,016 | 29% |
| | Associate degree | 577 | 17% |
| | Bachelor's degree | 788 | 23% |
| | Graduate degree | 382 | 11% |
| | Not answered | 128 | 4% |
| Household Income | Less than \$25,000 | 531 | 15% |
| | \$25,000 to less than \$50,000 | 1,035 | 30% |
| | \$50,000 to less than \$75,000 | 929 | 27% |
| | \$75,000 or more | 566 | 16% |
| | Prefer not to say | 279 | 8% |
| | Not answered | 137 | 4% |
| Caregiver role | Mother | 2,511 | 72% |
| | Father | 768 | 23% |
| | Grandmother | 42 | 1% |
| | Grandfather | 5 | <1% |
| | Stepmother | 15 | <1% |
| | Stepfather | 13 | <1% |
| | Foster mother | 11 | <1% |
| | Foster father | 3 | <1% |

Survey Analytic Approach

All analyses were conducted using the R Program for Statistical Computing.² Descriptive statistics were calculated for all categorical and ordinal items. The percentage of respondents selecting each response option was adjusted using the survey weight described above. This survey weight was included when generating frequency tables using the `questionr` package³ for R.

Statistical tests were conducted to determine whether item responses varied significantly by 1) income category, 2) race/ethnicity, and 3) neighborhood of residence. A neighborhood variable was created based on ZIP codes. In the case that the respondents reported a ZIP code associated with a post office box, the location of the post office was used. The neighborhoods were Far South, Kendall/Near South, Beaches, Northeast, and Northwest. Statistical significance was determined using a more conservative threshold of $\alpha = 0.001$. Given the large sample size, it is possible for group differences to be statistically significant but small in magnitude. This report includes only those findings that are 1) statistically significant, 2) practically significant in that differences are large enough in magnitude to be meaningful, and 3) actionable in that The Trusts' activities can potentially use this information to inform their future work. Analyses used Chi-square and Fishers exact tests as implemented in the `finalfit` package⁴ for R.

Open-ended, qualitative survey items were analyzed using an inductive coding approach. The research team reviewed responses to identify key themes and calculated the frequency of responses according to those themes. The most cited themes are described in this report.

FOCUS GROUPS

17 focus groups were conducted by facilitators from QQRC in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole. Of these, there were 107 total participants, of which 62 participated in English, 40 participated in Spanish, and 5 participated in Haitian Creole. The participating organizations and respondents were identified by The Trust. Recordings of focus group conversations were transcribed to faithfully represent the information and perspectives shared by participants. These recordings were then analyzed and subjected to an inductive coding process that identified key themes mentioned by participants.

Focus group recruitment efforts were intentional to ensure input from special populations of parents and caregivers, including: alternate and biological caregivers involved in the dependency system, parents with children in the juvenile justice system, parents of children with significant disabilities, parents of LGBTQ+ youth, expecting parents, teen parents, and fathers. Most focus group participants were parenting service recipients, but some were not. Groups were conducted across all the geographic areas of the county.



- 2 R Core Team (2018). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. URL: <https://www.R-project.org/>
- 3 Barnier, J., Briatte, F., & Larmarange, J. (2023). Package 'questionr'. Compr. R Arch. Netw. Retrieved from: <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/questionr/questionr.pdf>
- 4 Harrison, E., Drake, T., & Ots, R. (2023). Package 'finalfit'. Compr. R Arch. Netw. Retrieved from: <https://cran.uni-muenster.de/web/packages/finalfit/finalfit.pdf>

Table 3: Focus Group Demographics

| Variable | Category | Number | Percent |
|--|--|--------|---------|
| Race/Ethnicity | White (non-Hispanic, non-Haitian) | 4 | 4% |
| | Hispanic/Latino-a-x | 51 | 47% |
| | Black/African American (non-Hispanic, non-Haitian) | 25 | 23% |
| | Haitian | 13 | 12% |
| | Asian | 0 | <1% |
| | Prefer not to say | 2 | 2% |
| | Other | 2 | 2% |
| | Not answered | 10 | 9% |
| Age | Less than 18 years old | 2 | 2% |
| | 18-34 | 39 | 36% |
| | 35-50 | 50 | 47% |
| | Above 50 | 6 | 6% |
| | Not answered | 10 | 9% |
| Parenting Role* | Mother | 84 | 78% |
| | Father | 11 | 10% |
| | Grandmother | 4 | 4% |
| | Foster Parent | 1 | <1% |
| | Other | 4 | 4% |
| | Not answered | 10 | 9% |
| Educational Attainment | Less than high school | 21 | 20% |
| | High school diploma or GED | 27 | 25% |
| | Some college | 22 | 21% |
| | Associate degree | 11 | 10% |
| | Bachelor's degree | 12 | 11% |
| | Graduate degree | 4 | 4% |
| | Not answered | 10 | 9% |
| Children in respondents care with a disability | Yes | 30 | 28% |
| | No | 67 | 63% |
| | Not Answered | 10 | 9% |

*Respondents could select multiple responses; therefore, the number will not add up to 100%.

Focus Group Analytical Approach

Qualitative analyses were conducted separately from the quantitative data to ensure that emergent themes were not biased by survey findings. Once themes were identified, QQR triangulated the quantitative with qualitative results to see trends in strengths and areas of need in current summer and afterschool programming. Similar to the quantitative findings, qualitative data was also compared by participant category to see if any themes differed.



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