

PDG-R Parent
Consortia
Report



Parent Input: Child Care Decision-Making and Impact of COVID-19 on Families

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Background	3
Recruiting and Conducting Parent Feedback Session	3
Parent Feedback Session Results.....	4
The Affect of COVID-19 on Families	4
COVID-19 is Foremost in Parent’s Minds.....	4
Greatest Needs Related to COVID-19.....	5
The Needs of Children Differ by Age	6
Sources of Support: PDG-R Cafés, Church, Friends, Community Resources	7
Communication is Key in Providing Support from School Districts and County Offices	7
Child Care Decision Making	7
Parents Consider a Wide Range of Factors When Looking for Child Care	7
Parents Use a Variety of Methods to Find Child Care	8
Parents Want a Positive Experience for Their Children, Quick Access to Their Children, and Communication and Supervision from the Child Care Program	8
Appendix A: Questions Asked in Parent Input Sessions	9
Appendix B: Potential Topics for the Future	10
Appendix C: Outreach and Recruitment of Parent Participants.....	10
Appendix D: Background of Parent Participants	11
Group 1: Choosing Child Care	11
Parent Feedback Session Attendee Information	11
Group 2: COVID and Child Care	12
Parent Feedback Session Attendee Information	12
Demographic Information of Parents.....	13

For questions about this report, please contact Dr. Susan Savage, ssavage@ccrcca.org

Executive Summary

In late December 2019, California was awarded a Preschool Development Grant Renewal (PDG-R) by the federal Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Child Care (OCC). The Governor appointed the California HHS Agency as the lead for this work, which is being conducted in partnership with the California Department of Education. As a component of PDG-R, CCRC is implementing Parent Feedback Sessions with the goal of informing policy and program implementers in order to improve services for California's families.

Two parent feedback sessions were held in December 2020. Parents were recruited from PDG-R Parent Cafés. A total of 15 parents (one couple) participated across the two sessions. The topics included child care decision-making and the impact of COVID-19 on families. Feedback on these two topics can help inform the state and other leaders in providing more effective services for families. A variety of child care types have been used by this group and has shifted during COVID-19 with some staying home. Seven used center-based programs, five used relative care, two used licensed Family Child Care, two used home-based programs (Early Head Start) and five are staying home (some changed from child care to staying home). The children in these families ranged in ages from eight months to high school-age. Six were under 3 years, seven were 3-5 years, 14 were school-age, and four were teens.

COVID-19 is of paramount concern for parents. This arose impromptu when asked about child care. Parents expressed concerns for the health of their children and extended family members who may have compromised health. They are concerned that other parents may send their children to child care with symptoms. Parents relayed stories of uneven child care patterns over the year due to child care closures and re-opening, employment challenges, or fear of COVID-19. They expressed concerns over children missing important developmental activities and milestones (e.g., relationships with peers and teachers, missing Prom/graduation) and the resulting effect on their mental health. Parents expressed the need for mental health supports for them and for their children (and needs for resources to help talk to their children about COVID-19). Parents relayed information about how each child has unique needs and the challenges in trying to meet the needs of each child. Younger children miss routine, their activities and usual places such as parks and libraries, and are concerned about lack of outdoor spaces if the neighborhood isn't safe.

Parents find support from the PDG-R cafés, family, friends/coworkers, church and community resources such as food pantries. Parents suggest that improvements can be made regarding communication with entities that are intended to support them such as school districts and county offices. Reaching a live person was described as a challenge. Additionally, even though hot spots are provided by districts, they may not work for all families, resulting in a new need for internet. This comes at a cost to the family along with increased electricity costs with having multiple remote learners at home. Families are absorbing the costs of having remote learners at home.

When asked about child care decision making a variety of responses included cleanliness/ ratios/ supervision, staff interactions with children, convenience (location/ hours), and relationship with families. Literature on child care decision making often finds that cost and convenience factors (location and hours) are some of the most common factors in selecting child care, but this was not found in these groups. COVID-19 may influence parent's decision-making. Once care is found, they described child factors such as happiness, excitement, and comfort as being the most important aspects of a child care program. Parents find their child care programs from a variety of methods. Word of mouth and individual searches were the most common. One found care through a local Resource and Referral agency and one parent had an older sibling provide care.

Recommendations based on this report include:

- Providing resources for parents and agencies who work with parents on how to talk to young children about COVID-19
- Providing resources on activities that are relevant to a variety of age groups, can include multiple age groups (siblings), and are low- or no-cost; consider activities for children who may not have a safe outdoor environment
- Offer more PDG-R cafés to more parents as this seems to be a key support
- Consider how to help agencies that support parents (e.g., districts, county offices) increase their ability to respond (rather than having parents access phone trees)
- Consider ways to support parents with multiple remote learners (costs of internet and increased electricity)
- Work with CCRC on developing the next set of topics and questions
- Given that many parents had children with them and children and parents became restless shortly after one hour, it is recommended to keep these feedback sessions to less than an hour and a half. This would limit the number of questions that can be asked in one session

Background

The Preschool Development Grant-Renewal (PDG-R) supports states in their efforts to analyze and streamline the early learning and care (ELC) mixed delivery system resulting in improved quality of care. Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) leads California's efforts to engage families in feedback sessions that help inform policymakers on ways to improve then ELC system.

California is using PDG-R funds to support children, families and the early childhood workforce by: 1) increasing the supply and quality of early learning and care (ELC) opportunities, 2) building parental knowledge, elevating parent voices, and strengthening parent connections to ELC and other supportive services, and 3) developing a unified system for workforce professional development (PD). California received \$40,243,500 for three years to support work by multiple partners to achieve the activities described above. The Child Care Resource Center (CCRC), one of the contracted partners received \$1.7M in Year 1 and \$1.5M in each of Years 2 and 3 to implement parent and ELC cafés and parent feedback sessions (referred to as Parent Consortium in the contract). The contract runs from April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2022.

Recruiting and Conducting Parent Feedback Session

Topics were selected based on the original PDG proposal to the federal government along with timely events such as the publication of California's Master Plan for Early Care and Education as well as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Topics for the December 2020 parent input sessions included child care decision-making and supports needed by families in dealing with COVID-19. Specific questions can be found in **Appendix A**. Potential future topics can be found in **Appendix B**. Methods for outreach and recruitment for the feedback sessions can be found in **Appendix C**.

Parents were asked to complete a demographics questionnaire after the session ended. Additionally, CCRC's recruiter/facilitator asked a number of questions during recruitment to ensure the groups represented: 1) the parents with experience needed (e.g., those who use or have used child care for the group discussing child care) and 2) a diverse sample in general for each group. Results from the survey and the general information collection by the facilitator are presented in **Appendix D**.

The first session included parents who knew one another from prior cafés and the second session included parents who had not previously met. CCRC wanted to test whether one type of group would result in more engagement in parents as a result of a comfort level with having a previous relationship. It did not appear that one group was more engaged than the other. Therefore, being able to recruit parents from multiple locations may be beneficial in situations where recruiting a specific group of may be difficult (e.g. parents of children with special needs, parents in rural areas, parents from tribal regions, etc.). However, a group that is familiar with one another and feels a sense of safety may be preferable for exploring topics that may be extremely sensitive such as systemic or structural racism.

Parent Feedback Session Results

Results from the two parent feedback sessions are combined below. Impromptu topics arose that cut across both groups. Therefore, presenting results by group would be less informative than combining the feedback from the two groups.

The Effect of COVID-19 on Families

COVID-19 is Foremost in Parents' Minds

The first questions asked in group 1 included: “Have you had your children in non-parental care in the last 12 months? is your current child care in a center, in a licensed home-setting, or family/friend or neighbor?” Although not asked, an **impromptu topic bubbled up from all parents: the impact of COVID-19 on their child care situation**. The pandemic has woven its way into every element of the lives of families. Children in the care of these families ranged in age from 19 months to high school. The children in child care ranged from preschool to school-age, while those with younger children had them at home even prior to the pandemic. Child care options included centers, family child care and a combination of center care and relative care. **Concern for their families (children and grandparents)** was mentioned for all parents. Some expressed concern that other parents were sending their children to child care ill and therefore exposing their own children. One parent described her multi-generational situation where her parents cared for her child who also attends a center. She expressed concern that her father would not likely survive if he were to contract COVID-19. Three parents described **uneven child care patterns**: children attending, leaving, attending (either due to child care closing temporarily, or the parent pulling the child out). One became a provider after not finding child care herself and then closed one month after opening due to COVID-19 and then reopened in August. Another parent had her high school senior watch her young school-age child. The last parent talked about how having her 5-year-old start elementary school (remotely) at home makes it challenging to focus on her toddler. Parents also talked about **children missing out on important developmental activities** (relationships with friends and teachers; missing all traditional senior year activities; individualized attention for the younger children). The parent who became a child care provider expressed compassion for parents when she had to adhere to licensing and local department of health orders and send children home with cold symptoms. She understood that parents still had bills and rent to pay and thus **did not charge the parents for sick days, which reduced her own income**. Two parents talked about their preschool or young school-age **children’s understanding of COVID-19 (which is very limited on its own)**. One explained to her daughter and helped her watch You-Tube and Sesame Street to understand and another heard her preschooler make political statements about the responsibility for COVID-19.

“I felt bad about sending kids home so I didn’t charge the family [for sick days].” - Parent/Provider

“The school said they’d be closed for two weeks, but then I blinked and the world changed.”

“So COVID just messed everything up.” - Mother quoting her first-grade child

“We had to adjust in the dark. Even though the world stopped we still had to move forward. Still have bills to pay, there’s still worry, children’s questions we can’t answer, we still have to feed our children. None of that stopped.”

Some non-COVID-related topics arose with this question. One parent talked about how his 3-year-old struggled with day care at first, but once he matured, he was excited about attending. This parent described the **R&R agency’s library as a resource to meet other parents and learn about parenting and child development.** As a first-time parent this was a valuable resource.

“I met so many people at the library. It’s impressive. There are many ways of doing something. Child care is not just about having someone take care of them.”

Greatest Needs Related to COVID-19

When group 2 was asked what their family’s greatest needs were related to COVID-19, four parents provided comments and mental health was primary. Parents discussed issues of isolation, depression and anxiety. One parent described receiving support from her family during a serious health crisis and that she was placing her family at risk by having them watch her child. One parent described the need for more child care support for families (she had to drive long distances) and another described the need for utility support for families whose children are full-time remote learners (the free hot spot did not work so they had to purchase internet and the electricity bill increased because of five full-time remote learners).

- Mental Health (isolation, depression, anxiety)
- Family Support (watching child during health crisis and related appointments)
- Funding for Internet/Electricity (increased costs associated with remote learners)
- Increased Support for Child Care

Parents – COVID-19 Related Needs



“Mentally. More resources to reach out to if you have depression or anxiety because people are isolated.”

“I found out I had cancer. There’s no social distancing in watching him including for doctor appointments and treatments. Family support was important. They sacrificed themselves for that.”

“I can’t take the baby [newborn] anywhere. I was so scared for my newborn because of no shots. They said don’t let anyone in our house. I have six kids and it was really hard.”

“School is at home. I have five kids doing class in a two-room apartment. The hotspots for low-income families does not work here. So, I now have to pay \$100 for my internet and electricity is more now. \$200. It’s very hard.”

The Needs of Children Differ by Age

Group 2 was asked about the needs of their different children (if their needs differed by age, special need, personality, etc.). Six parents responded to this question and all six described the fact that each child has unique needs related to COVID-19. Parents of younger children described lacking the energy, missing their usual routines/places/people, and needing new activities. Parents of older children described missing friends as well as important milestones, and expressed concerns about how this affects their mental health. While parents and children are learning to be more creative, they are interested in resources for additional ideas for activities. An interesting statement revealed the need for activities that are relevant for multiple age groups. Given the similarity with the need for home-based child care providers (serving multiple age groups), providers and parents may be fruitful resources for one another on this topic.

Parents – Each Child Has Unique Needs, Which Often Vary by Age



- Child Has Different Needs

- Younger* – need more energy from parent, miss routine, activities, how to explain COVID and help children, outside activities are a challenge if the neighborhood is not safe, need activities

- Older* – miss friends and life milestones (Prom, Graduation)

- Parents and Children Are Increasing Creativity - Activities (even more challenging with multi-age households)

- Need Ideas for Activities

“People talk about how overwhelmed they are but what about the children?”

“That’s what has given the biggest toll on me. I don’t know how to support my kids. If we could have more resources on knowledge of what we can do.”

“How do you explain you can’t go there anymore. We had all these activities we can no longer do. I don’t always have the energy to go walk with my kids. If you don’t have the energy its hard. The 4-year-old has virtual learning and speech. It’s hard to get him to focus and a 2-year-old who wants your attention. I need resources – what to do and we got in a rhythm and then the fire started and we had to stay indoors.”

Sources of Support: PDG-R Cafés, Church, Friends, Community Resources

When asked where parents go for support, five parents across the two sessions responded. One mentioned church, another mentioned coworkers helping each other and offering humor. One parent mentioned using the food bank at the homeless shelter she where she’s employed. Three parents mentioned the PDG-R cafés and one mentioned parenting classes.

Communication is Key in Providing Support from School Districts and County Offices

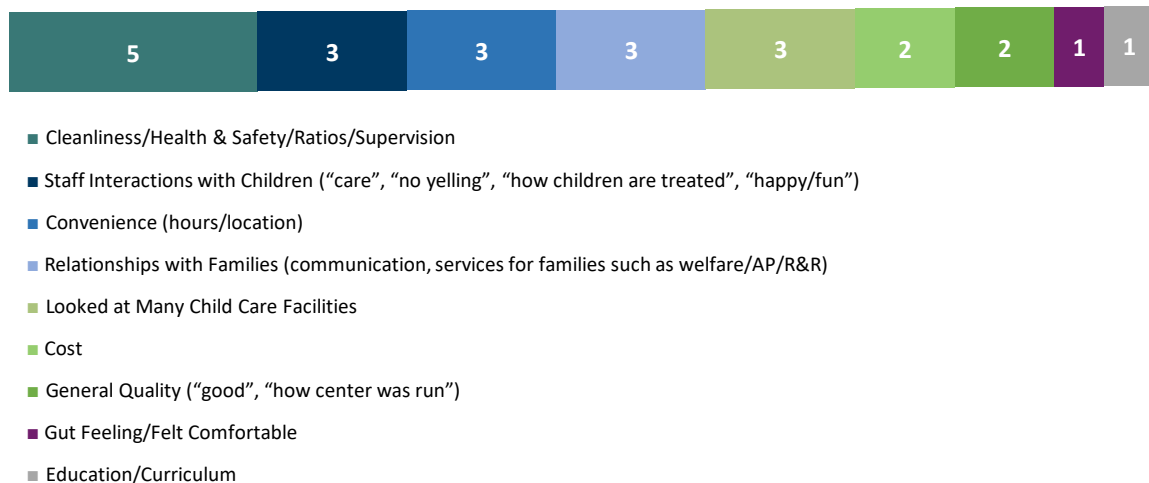
When asked how specific entities such as state, county or school districts could better support their family, two parents responded. Both parents mentioned communication. One parent wished the school district, county offices and even doctor’s offices would communicate more effectively. She expressed feeling that she only talks to machines and never a live person. Another parent shared that she finds support from her school district, including food, clothes, shoes and information for her daughter who is looking at universities.

Child Care Decision Making

Parents Consider a Wide Range of Factors When Looking for Child Care

This question was asked of both groups. The responses are summarized across the two groups. When parents were asked the most important factors they looked for in child care, no single theme stood out. Additionally, when asked if COVID-19 changed this, there were little references to the pandemic. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the topic became an impromptu theme in the prior question and they felt they expressed their thoughts about the topic already. Four of the parents responded to this question. The table below illustrates the wide range of factors considered by parents when looking for child care.

Parents – Factors Influencing Child Care Decision Making

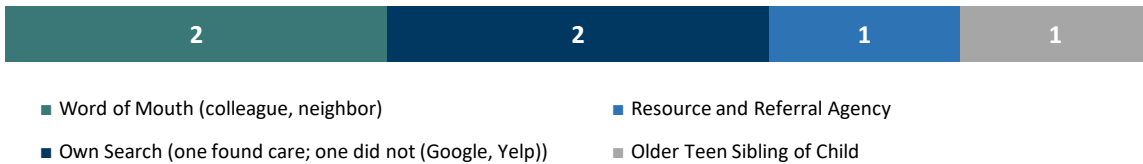


“The cost is a big deal. It’s like going to a store – do I get brand or generic. I had no idea what people were charging. There’s nowhere to go to get a list of prices so you have to call everyone.”

Parents Use a Variety of Methods to Find Child Care

When parents were asked how they found their current child care program, two found their program from word of mouth. One started their own search and described the cultural aspect that in his community family watches young children, but searched on his own and then used a suggestion from a neighbor that worked well for his family. Two changed programs because they were not comfortable with the distance. One of these parents described the situation of transitioning from a home-based program where the child had attended for years to a center that provided little supervision and was far from her home, resulting in a search for a new center that was closer to home and offered greater supervision. The parent who found her care from the Resource and Referral agency transitioned to becoming a provider herself and is now being mentored by her child’s former provider.

Parents – How Parents Found Their Child Care Program



“Growing up Hispanic we were used to having a family member care for children and don’t go to daycare – just Grandmas or whatnot so we never thought we would need a provider.”

“There’s a lot more guys getting involved. Some are unemployed and become stay-home dads. We share stuff about kids just like women share.”

Parents Want a Positive Experience for Their Children, Quick Access to Their Children, and Communication and Supervision from the Child Care Program

When asked what the most important factors were in finding child care parents mentioned a variety of factors. Compared to the question asking what they looked for in their initial search for child care, fewer parents mentioned health and safety, supervision, and cleanliness and more mentioned the importance of child factors such as happiness, excitement and comfort. Once parents find the child care program that meets their needs for health and safety, supervision, location and cost, their child’s ability to thrive in the environment becomes of primary importance. Five parents commented and the child’s feelings were of primary importance to three parents and location of the facility was also important. Communication and supervision at the child care program were also important factors in why they chose the child care program (or to stay in the program). One parent mentioned the extensive experience of her provider. One parent mentioned that since COVID-19 she has added more health and safety factors to what she would look for in a child care program.

Parents – Why They Chose Their Child Care Program



- Child Happy/ Excited/ Comfortable/ Attachment to Teacher
- Location (both parents changed because prior location was too far from home)
- Communication from Provider
- Supervision (one changed because of lack of supervision at prior center)
- Provider Experience (20 years)
- Health and Safety (since COVID-19)

“It felt liked moving from a cottage to a city apartment.” (referring to the move from a home-based environment to a program with little supervision (she transitioned to a new center shortly after).

“There were staff everywhere and everyone knew everybody’s name. It made a difference in being comfortable at work.”

When parents were asked about what they liked about their current child care program they did not provide any responses. They may have felt they answered it in the question asking what they were looking for in a child care program.

Appendix A: Questions Asked in Parent Input Sessions

Topic 1: Child Care Decision-Making

1. Ice breaker: have you had your children in non-parental care in the last 12 months? is your current child care in a center, in a licensed home-setting, or family/friend or neighbor?
2. When you were looking for child care, what were the most important things you were looking for in child care? Has COVID changed this?
3. How did you find your current child care? [getting at the idea of “sitter-city” “R&R” “I drove by and saw a sign” or “word of mouth”]
4. What do you like about your current child care/how does it meet your family’s needs?
5. What do you wish you could change about your current child care?

Topic 2: Needs and Supports for Families Around COVID-19

1. What are your family’s greatest needs related to COVID-19?
2. How do the needs of your children differ (by age, special needs, personality, etc.)?
3. Where do you go for support or help? What resources do you know of?
4. How can specific entities such as the state, county, school districts, etc. better support your family?

Appendix B: Potential Topics for the Future

Potential topics for future feedback sessions may include but are not limited to: child care decision-making, transitions in the ELC system, improving services for children with disabilities informing the development/improvement of *My Child Care Plan* site, and access to needed resources. It is recommended that future topics and questions for parent feedback sessions be collaboratively developed in with CCRC, WestEd and California HHS. The topic of *Racism* is under development based on input from multiple parents and ELC providers through both personal communications to multiple leaders at CCRC and observed scheduled and impromptu topics in multiple professional groups (e.g., Listening Sessions held by California Department of Social Services, expert panel on Home-Based Child Care (funded by ACF-OCC), and professional conferences). One of the interested parties who approached CCRC about this topic will be asked to assist with question development and an internal expert will be asked to facilitate this important and sensitive topic. Both interested parties have experience facilitating conversations on this topic and are African-American. If this is not a topic of interest for a future parent feedback session CCRC will conduct this through other means given its timely and primary importance.

Appendix C: Outreach and Recruitment of Parent Participants

Responsibility:	Community Engagement Facilitator (CEF)
Resource and Referral (R&R) Outreach Process:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CEF had a meeting with Hub Coordinator (HC) ➤ HC scheduled meet and greets with all LA County RR's ➤ During this meeting CEF shared about role and details. CEF shared dates to schedule a meeting with R&R Café host to discuss Café details/ outreach process and connect with all café hosts. ➤ CEF met with each R&R and asked the following questions (please see next section) ➤ CEF was invited to upcoming cafes ➤ Follow up emails have been shared between all R&R Café hosts and CEF
Participant Outreach Process:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ After Connecting with each RR, CEF was invited to attend Café(s) ➤ CEF introduced themselves at the end of each Café ➤ CEF shared about their role and details about Parent Feedback Sessions ➤ A contact list of all Café participants was provided by Café Host at the end of each Café (with permission) ➤ If a Café was not hosted the Café Host would contact some of their reoccurring participants and share the information to see if parent was interested. If parent was interested their contact information was provided to CEF ➤ CEF contacted each participant on their contact list by phone

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ During this first call CEF would share feedback session details and the following questions were asked (please see next section) ➤ The CEF contacted each participant a second time to confirm Parent Feedback Session Date and time. ➤ An invite for feedback session was sent to all participants via email ➤ Parent feedback session would be hosted by CEF ➤ After session ends CEF sends out incentives and survey.
Questions asked during Phone Outreach/ initial contact w/ Participant:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Name ➤ Phone Number ➤ Email ➤ Address ➤ Number of Children & ages ➤ Are your children in child care or have they been in the last 12 months? ➤ Is your current child care in a center, in a licensed home-setting, or family/friend or neighbor? ➤ Did COVID impact your child care? ➤ R&R Office Location ➤ CEF would share 3 different dates and times and ask parent availability. ➤ Incentive details were shared (please see details in next section)

Appendix D: Background of Parent Participants

Group 1: Choosing Child Care

Group 1 was held on December 7, 2020 and lasted a little over an hour. The topic was child care and the questions can be found in Appendix A. Seven parents (one couple) responded to the outreach and were sent a Zoom link for the discussion session. Six parents (one couple) attended the feedback session. Parents were recruited from an R&R agency in San Bernardino County. The table below summarizes information about the parents from the session.

Parent Feedback Session Attendee Information

Child Ages (Years)	Child Care Type	Child Care Impacted by COVID	Attended Session
5	Grandparent	No	No
7	CCC (home now)	Yes	Yes
7 (and high school teen)	Afterschool CCC	Yes	Yes
18 months	CCC	Yes	Yes

5	Home-based Head Start	Yes	
3 (and teen)	Grandparent then became FCC	Yes	Yes
4	CCC + grandparent	Yes	Yes

Group 2: COVID and Child Care

Group 2 was held on December 9, 2020 and lasted a little over an hour. The topics covered were how COVID has affected their family and choosing child care. The questions can be found in Appendix A. Nine parents responded to the outreach and were sent a Zoom link for the discussion session. All nine attended the feedback session. Parents were recruited from R&R agencies in Los Angeles County and five R&R agencies provided contact information from parents (one from San Bernardino County) who agreed to have their information released for this activity. The table below summarizes information about the parents from the session.

Parent Feedback Session Attendee Information

Child Ages (Years)	Child Care Type	Child Care Impacted by COVID	Attended Session
1 8	Grandparent	No	Yes
16 months	None	N/A	Yes
8 months 4 7 9 (and two teens)	Early Head Start Head Start	Yes (Zoom now)	Yes
5 10	Family	No	Yes
12	After school (now Grandmother and mother)	Yes	Yes
3 9	FCC	Yes (one home due to health)	Yes

11 months	None	Yes (was planning on starting child care until COVID hit)	Yes
3	None	No	Yes
4			
5			
7			
8			
10			
2	CCC	Yes	Yes
4			

Demographic Information of Parents

An electronic survey was distributed to parents who participated in the feedback sessions. A total of 13 parents opened the electronic survey; 12 parents responded to the question asking their relationship to the children they care for and 100% selected “parent”. When asked about their race/ethnicity, almost 70% selected “Hispanic/Latino” (69.2%), 15.4% were Black/African-American, and 15.4% were White/Caucasian. 85.7% live in Los Angeles County and 14.3% live in San Bernardino County. Seven (7) of the 13 respondents said they were interested in participating in future feedback sessions.

PARENT RACE

■ Latinx/Hispanic ■ White/Caucasian ■ Black/African-American

