INTRODUCTION

The Zero to Five Lewis and Clark County Collaborative created a survey to gather feedback from families to direct the collaborative’s efforts moving forward. The survey included items on parenting resources, supports, challenges, and strengths. The survey also collected information on child care and suggestions for how the community can better support parents and families.

The Lewis and Clark County Zero to Five collaborative used a variety of recruitment strategies to gather family feedback. An online survey was created, and staff visited several sites and provided families with ipads and phones to complete the survey.

- Augusta: Survey was emailed to parents.
- Lincoln: Family night at the school and the survey was emailed to parents.
- 3x5 cards were distributed to local childcare facilities to share with parents. The card explained the purpose of the survey and included a QR-code with a link to the survey.

In-person respondents were given a $5 gift card to the local grocery store. Each survey took about 4-5 minutes to complete.

The following report provides a summary of the core findings.
SURVEY RESPONDENTS

A total of 306 parents/caregivers completed the survey from November 1 – December 19, 2019. Eighty-one percent of respondents reported parenting with their partner/spouse, 37% with help from family, 20.3% with help from friends, 16.3% with help from the community, and 13% with child’s other parent (multiple responses could be selected). The collaborative made an effort to gather responses from families across the county. Seventy percent of responses were from Helena and East Helena, and the other 30% came from towns across the county including, Lincoln, Clancy, Augusta, and Townsend.

The majority of respondents (49.3%) were between the ages of 25-34, with White being the primary race/ethnicity reported (see charts below).

Survey respondents reported a range of education levels and income levels (see charts below).

The majority of survey respondents (92%) had children under the age of five. Forty percent had children ages 6-10, 20% with children ages 11-15, 6.7% ages 16-20, and 5% with children over 20. Twenty-two percent of the survey respondents identified as single parents. One hundred and five respondents reported having children that are adopted or being fostered.

“He is a foster child and a delight to have.” — Parent
CHILD CARE

According to the Early Childhood System Needs Assessment conducted in September 2019, Lewis & Clark County can meet 75.4% of child care capacity for children under the age of 6 with both parents in the workforce, and the existing early childhood education capacity can serve 34% of infants and toddlers. The survey asked parents about their child care experiences. Fifty-nine percent of survey respondents reported that they had struggled to get to work, school, or complete other responsibilities due to lack of child care, and 41% did not have challenges due to lack of child care.

The top three child care challenges reported by parents/caregivers were (multiple responses could be selected):

- Costs too much: 60.9%
- Finding quality child care: 39.8%
- Not enough available options: 34.4%

Additional challenges identified included, could not find care for the times needed (24.4%), finding information about available options (19.4%), could not find a spot for my child’s age (16.1%), too far from home/work (13.4%), and have faced no challenges with child care (19.7%).

“At lack of support, not being able to work because of the cost of daycare.” — Parent

“At childcare for the hours I need and price.” — Parent

PARENTING INFORMATION

Parents/caregivers reported a variety of sources for parenting information (multiple responses could be selected). See the chart below.

The majority of respondents (87.2%) reported having someone to contact with parenting questions. Forty percent had taken a parenting class before, and of those who had taken a parenting class majority (85.7%) found the class was helpful to their needs as a parent.

---

**PARENTING CHALLENGES & SUPPORTS**

The survey collected information on parenting challenges and supports.

**Parenting Struggles**

The top five parenting struggles reported were financial stress (64.1%), feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and being overwhelmed (58%), dealing with difficult child behaviors (34.9%), differing parenting styles/techniques within the household (32.2%), and personal physical and mental health issues (30.8%).

Other challenges reported included, one or both parents being absent frequently (26.1%), single parenting (24.7%), co-parenting with an ex or former partner (21%), supporting a child with physical, mental health, or developmental needs (20.7%), meeting family’s basic needs (18.6%), access to quality healthcare (11.2%), and access to parenting resources (8.1%). (Multiple responses could be selected).

“I have sacrificed my career path, my hobbies, my free time, my money, my independence to be a Mom. Even despite all of the sacrifices, to be told that it isn’t enough, that you need to do more, be better, that it isn’t enough has absolutely unraveled me. You carry around a constant supply of guilt, regret, worry that you aren’t doing a good job.” — Parent

The survey included an open-ended question that asked respondents to name their greatest challenge as a parent. Two hundred seventy-one parents responded, and the answers were organized into eight themes. The greatest challenge named was balancing responsibilities as a parent and having time for kids. The other category included a variety of responses, limiting screen time and junk food, consistency, influential peers, and getting through tough times together. See the chart below.

“*I’m stuck in the pay range where I make too much to qualify for help but not enough to pay for basic needs in this expensive economy. State assistance doesn’t keep up with inflation, especially with real estate.*” — Parent
Parenting Support

Survey respondents were asked how parents could be better supported in the county. Respondents reported increased employer support for parenting challenges (60.8%), greater availability to programs for parents (support groups, drop-ins, workshops, etc.) (60.1%), increased access to information on existing programs and services for parents (through schools, social services & healthcare providers) (52.4%), more opportunities to connect with other families for support (through community activities and events) (48.6%), increased access to information on addressing common parenting challenges (through school, social services, etc.) (44.9%). (Multiple responses could be selected). See the chart below.

How can parents be better supported in the county?

- Increased employer support for parenting challenges - 60.8%
- Greater availability to programs for parents - 60.1%
- Increased access to information on existing programs/services for parents - 52.4%
- More opportunities to connect with families for support - 48.6%
- Increased access to information on common parenting challenges - 44.9%
- Other - 8.8%

“I would be great to have some parenting classes during the day, and childcare provided during for the children.” — Parent
PARENTING JOYS & FAMILY ACTIVITIES

The survey included an open-ended question to gather information from parents on their greatest joys of parenting. Two hundred eighty-two parents responded, and the answers were organized into eight themes. The other category included a variety of responses, too many things to name, building a legacy, and raising the next generation to be better. See the chart below.

What do you enjoy most about being a parent?

- Connection with spouse/children
- My children
- Personal discovery
- Other
- Everything
- Family togetherness
- Love/Joy/Laughter/Support
- Watching children grow and learn

“I have never fully-known how much love you could have for anyone. While it has been the hardest thing that I have ever done, it has also been the most rewarding.” — Parent

“I love watching my kids grow and develop into their own unique selves.” — Parent

The final open-ended response of the survey asked parents to report what their family does for fun or recreation. Two hundred seventy-nine parents responded, and the answers were organized into four themes, outdoor activities, indoor activities, outdoor and indoor activities, and other. The other category included a variety of responses, play, travel, and visit family. See the chart below.

Activities for Fun and Recreation

“Read books and visit the library, play outside in our backyard or at parks, take drives in the mountains and explore our beautiful state, dance parties in our living room.” — Parent
CONCLUSION

The Lewis and Clark County Zero to Five Collaborative will use the data from the survey to inform the development of strategies to meet the needs of children and families in the County.

Thank you to all the parents/caregivers who completed the survey.

For more information about the Lewis and Clark County Zero to Five Initiative, contact Jeff Buscher, Local Collaboration Coordinator, jeff@unitedwaylca.org or visit zerotofive.org/lewisandclark.