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Johnston County Community Needs Assessment

Executive Summary

In recognition of its tenth year of operation in the Johnston County community, the Partnership for children of Johnston County decided to fund an assessment of the needs of the community in relation to services for children birth to age five. The Partnership commissioned Kiker, Strickland & Associates to conduct the community needs assessment in the spring of 2008. The primary objective of the needs assessment is to have a collection of data and information that can be used to determine how the Partnership can best meet the needs of the community through its currently funded programs and to identify and measure county level needs and changes.

Survey Methodology

Parents and human service agency representatives in Johnston County were surveyed to determine the needs of young children and their families and to assess the resources currently available to meet these needs. Because of the growing presence of Hispanic families in the Johnston County community (10.5% compared to NC average of 6.7% based on US Census Bureau 2006 data), particular attention was given to this population sub-group with a Spanish survey.

Two surveys were developed with significant input from the Partnership staff. A Parent Survey in both English and Spanish versions and a Human Service Agency Representative Survey were distributed to seek information from both the users and providers of services in the county. Parent surveys in both English and Spanish were distributed through a wide variety of venues in the county including businesses, churches, child care facilities, schools, and agencies. The English version of the survey was also available on-line so that parents with computer access could easily complete the survey and it was widely used by some sectors of the population.

Representatives from human service agencies that strive to help families of young children were also surveyed. The Human Service Representative Survey was available on paper or an on-line version and representatives had access to either version. Surveys were received from the Department of Social Services, Health Department, child care facilities, Head Start, Cooperative Extension, Early Intervention, Johnston County Community College and other agencies.

A total of 402 Parent Surveys (89% English and 11% Spanish) and 83 Human Service Representative Surveys were collected for the community needs assessment. The percent of Spanish surveys closely matches the Hispanic population in the county according to the 2006 census information. Of the 402 Parent Surveys, 33% of the survey respondents were from the Clayton/Cleveland area of the county and 67% of the survey respondents were from other areas of the county. In order to show the diverse populations in the

county, the information from the surveys was segregated and reported to show the following different groups:

- English – Clayton/Cleveland
- English – Other Areas of the County
- Spanish – Clayton/Cleveland
- Spanish – Other Areas of the County

The only exceptions to the reporting of data in the above four populations are a few questions where there were no distinguishable differences in the two Spanish or English populations so they were reported together.

The data generated from the surveys appears in this report in both chart and table formats. Since it was possible for respondents to choose multiple answers in some of the survey items, the aggregated responses in the tables and charts that follow do not always equal 100%. The responses to the surveys provide excellent quantitative data regarding the needs of parents and young children, some of the barriers experienced when accessing services, some of their ideas for future programs and services. Significant findings from the parent surveys can be found beginning on page 37 of this report.

Focus Groups

In addition to the quantitative data gathered from the written survey responses from parents and human service agency representatives, valuable qualitative data was gathered from three focus group sessions that were conducted by the consultants. Two parent focus groups, one at the First Citizens Bank in Smithfield and one at the Benson Housing Authority, were held which provided opportunities for lively and informative discussion of the needs of families and parents of young children. The two groups of parents attending the focus groups were clearly from very different income levels and life styles and revealed some significant differences in the needs of these respective groups. In spite of the differences in the groups, there were, however, some common needs and similar findings from the two groups. Summaries of the parent focus groups can be found beginning on page 30 of this report.

Human service agency representatives also met for a focus group session during the May meeting of the Human Services Council. The consultants provided lunch for the meeting and the program consisted of the focus group session where the attendees were given an opportunity to share their understandings of the needs of parents and young children in Johnston County as perceived through their work with clients. There was a lively and informative discussion of the barriers the human service representatives had identified in their survey as compared to the barriers identified by English and Spanish parents on their surveys. A summary of this focus group session can be found beginning on page 59 of this report.

Significant Population Background Information for Johnston County

Some Significant Background Data

Demographic

- Johnston County had a total population of 152,143 according to 2006 Census information. The total population of the county saw a 24.8% increase between April 1, 2000 and July 1, 2006 compared to a 10.1% population increase statewide during the same time period. The county population may be expected to continue to increase with the creation of the new US 70 bypass around Clayton making travel to and from the Wake County area faster and easier.
- In 2006 the number of children under five years old was approximately 11,715 or 7.7% of the population compared to the North Carolina average of 6.9%. During the same time period the number of persons 65 years old and over represented 9.1% of the Johnston County population compared to 12.2% of the North Carolina population. (US Census Bureau)
- 15.8% of the county population is African American compared with the statewide percentage of 21.7%. (2006 Census)
- 10.5% of the county population is Hispanic or Latino origin compared to a statewide average of 6.7%. (2006 Census)
- 5.9% of the Johnston County population was foreign born in 2000 compared to 5.3% of the North Carolina population. (US Census Bureau)
- 17% of children in Johnston County are living in poverty as defined by family income of \$20,000 or less for a family of four. This compares to a NC state average of 21% of children living in poverty. (2006 NC Children's Index)
- The median household income in Johnston County was \$44,099 compared to the state median income of \$40,863. (U. S. Bureau of Census 2005)

Child Health

- 30% of children in Johnston County were enrolled in Medicaid in 2004 which is slightly lower than the state average of 33%. (DHHS 2005)
- 22% of the children in Johnston County are judged to be overweight compared to a statewide average of 17%. (2006 NC Children's Index) *New county specific*

data will be available in the 2008 NC Children's Index in August or September 2008.

- In 2006, 3% of the children in Johnston County were enrolled in early intervention services to reduce the effects of developmental delay, emotional disturbance, and/or chronic illness, which is lower than the statewide average of 4% according to the North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program 2005 and 2006. The percentage enrolled in the county had risen to 4% in 2007.
- In 2004 there were 15% low birth weight infants born to minority parents in Johnston County compared to 13% statewide. For the same year there were only 7% low birth weight white infants in the county and in the state. (State Center for Health Statistics)
- In 2004, 5% of the Johnston County births had had late or no prenatal care compared to 3% of the births statewide. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count)
- The percentage of Medicaid eligible children from birth to five years of age who are receiving dental services in the county is 24%, the same as the statewide average. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count)

Education

- 24.1% of Johnston County persons 25 years old and older do NOT have a high school diploma compared to the North Carolina average of 21.9%.
- 15.9% of Johnston County persons 25 years old and older have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to the North Carolina average of 22.5%
- In 2006, 27% (642 of 2338) of Johnston County infants were born to mothers with less than a high school education compared to the NC average of 23% for the same year. (State Center for Health Statistics)
- According to the May 2008 Division of Child Development Statistical Detail Report, 469 children (9%) were enrolled in state regulated family child homes in Johnston County and 4,870 (91%) were enrolled in state regulated child care centers in Johnston County. Enrollment in licensed facilities was as follows:
 - 1 star facilities – 570 children (11%)
 - 2 star facilities – 612 children (11%)
 - 3 star facilities – 1,134 children (21%)
 - 4 star facilities – 1,042 children (20%)
 - 5 star facilities – 1,335 children (25%)

This total number of children in regulated child care probably represents less than 50% of the total population of children birth to five in Johnston County.

Parent Information

Introduction

A Parent Survey in English and Spanish was designed by the consultants with significant input from the Partnership staff to seek quantitative data from parents in Johnston County. The 36 question survey asked for respondent feedback on demographics, child care issues, child health issues, literacy school readiness issues and family/parent support issues. The surveys were completed by residents throughout the county representing a good geographic, ethnic, income, education and gender balance. The demographic information is shown in Charts 1 - 7 in this section.

The Parent Survey was made available in both printed and on-line formats. Sixty-six parents responded to the on-line computerized survey, and 336 paper surveys were completed. Although a larger sample was sought, the total of 402 surveys provides a reasonable sampling of parents from the broad range of the parent population of the county.

Surveys in both English and Spanish were distributed to parents through the assistance of representatives of human services agencies, churches, child care centers, schools, the community college, businesses and the Partnership. The following specific agencies provided assistance in distributing the surveys.

- Benson Housing Authority
- Building Blocks Child Care and Development Center #1
- Building Blocks Child Care and Development Center #2
- Building Blocks Child Care and Development Center #3
- Christ Community United Methodist Church
- Cleveland Community Church
- Community Action Head Start
- Family Support Network
- First Baptist Church of Smithfield
- First Citizens Bank
- Johnston Community College
- Johnston Community College Child Development Center
- Johnston County Public Health Department
- Johnston County Public Schools
- KS Bank
- Little People's Developmental & Learning Center
- More at Four Programs
- Parents As Teachers
- Partnership for Children of Johnston County
- Small Blessings Childcare Center

A graph or table was developed to present the data received in response to each question on the survey and is reported in the Parent Survey Information pages in this section.

Two parent focus groups were also held to gather qualitative responses regarding issues related to parents and children's needs in the county. Summary reports for each of the parent focus group meetings follow in this section.

Important findings from parents are reported in the Significant Findings included in this section.

Parent Survey Information

Demographic Information

Chart 1: Gender of Respondents

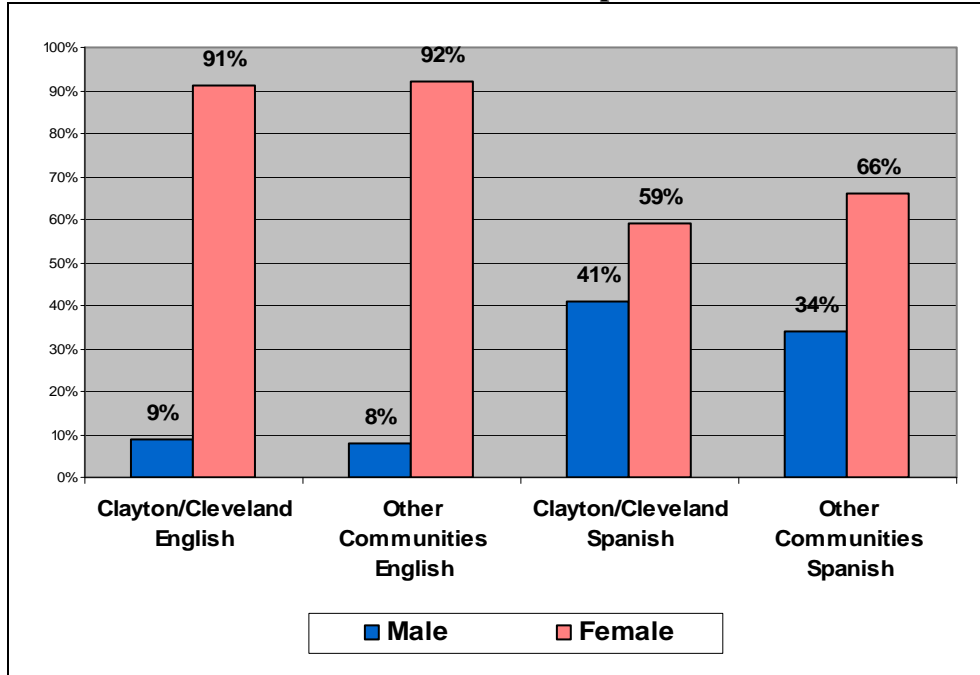


Chart 2: Ethnicity of Respondents

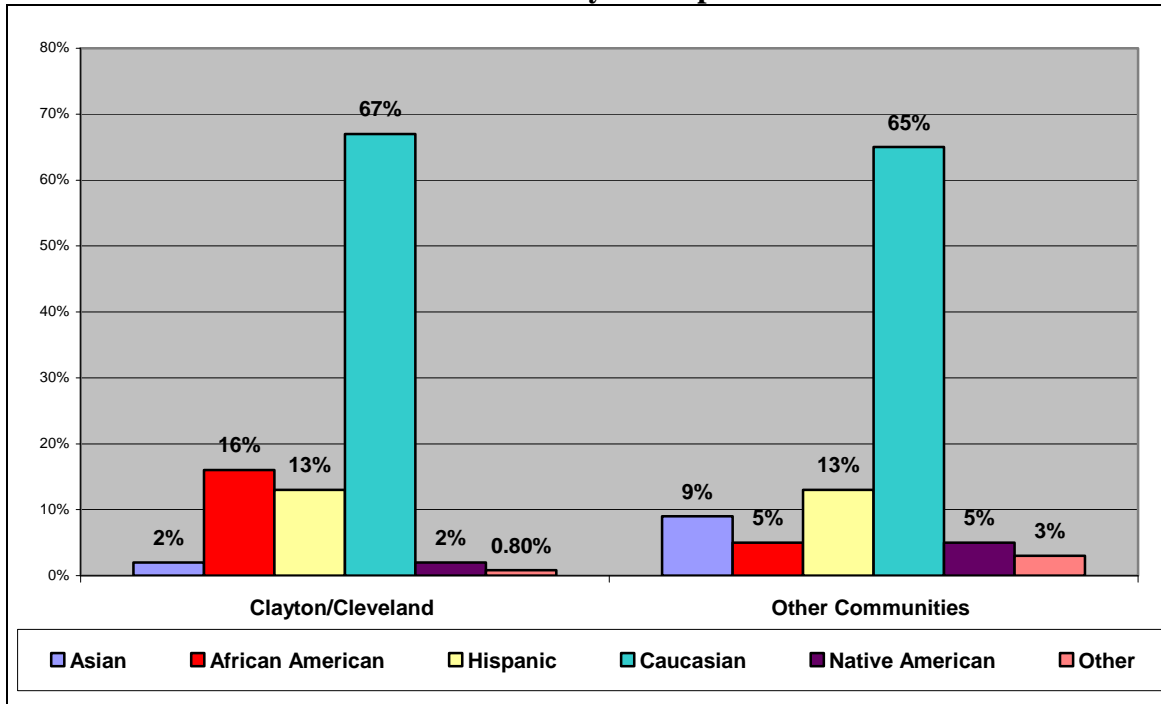


Chart 3: Ages of Survey Respondents

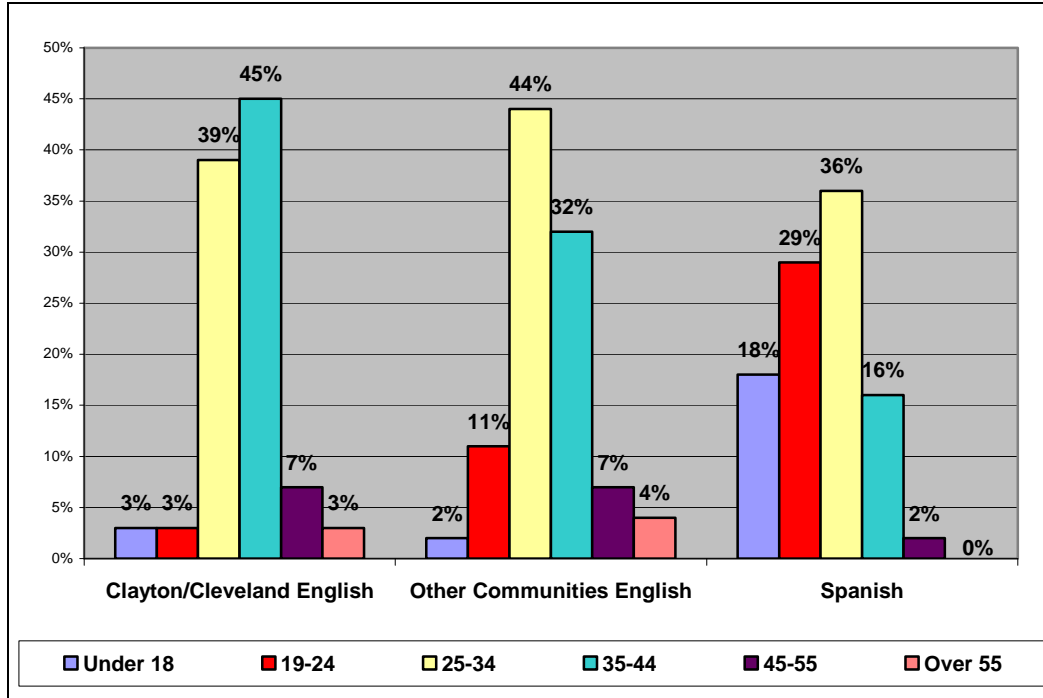


Chart 4: Education Level of Respondents

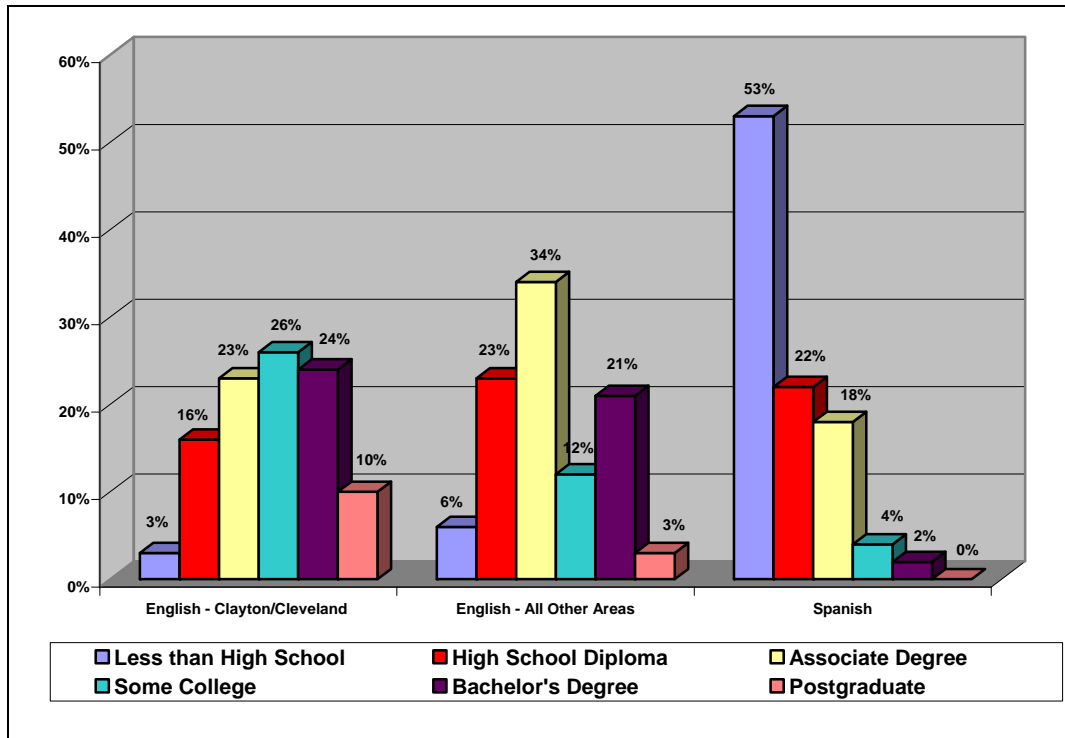


Chart 5: Household Income of Survey Respondents

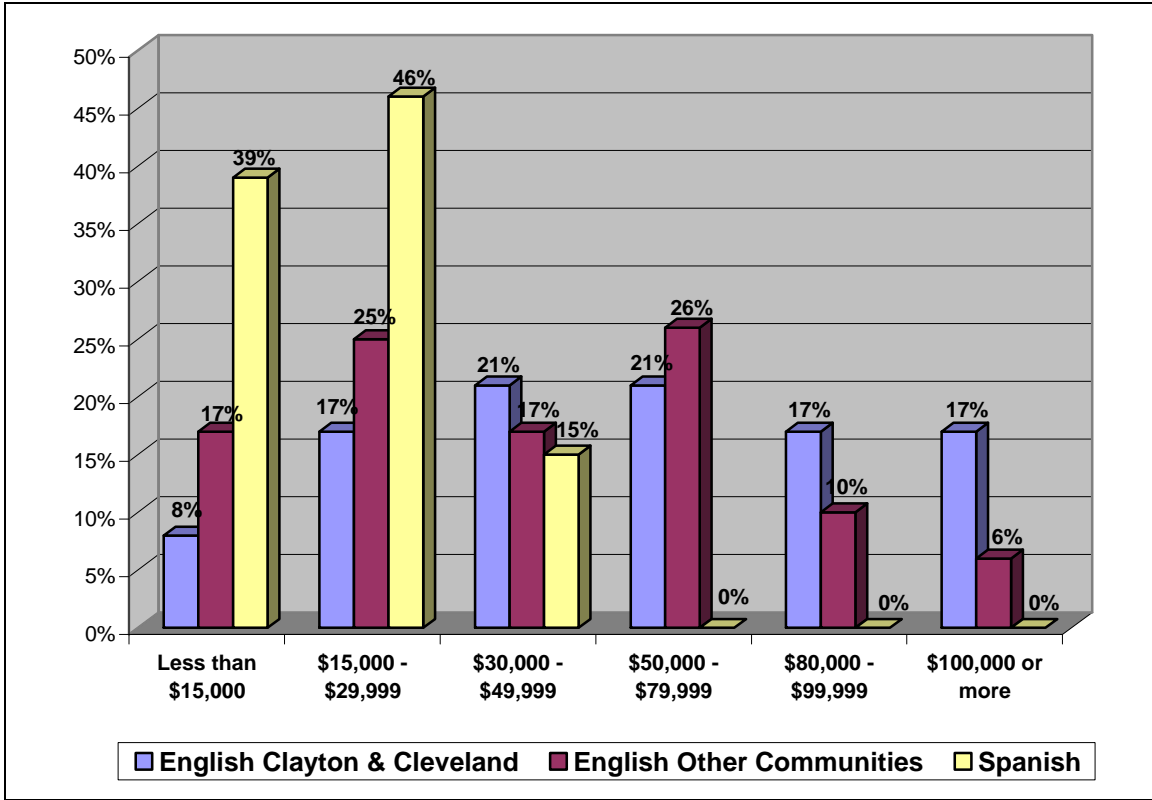


Chart 6: Community Representation of Survey Respondents

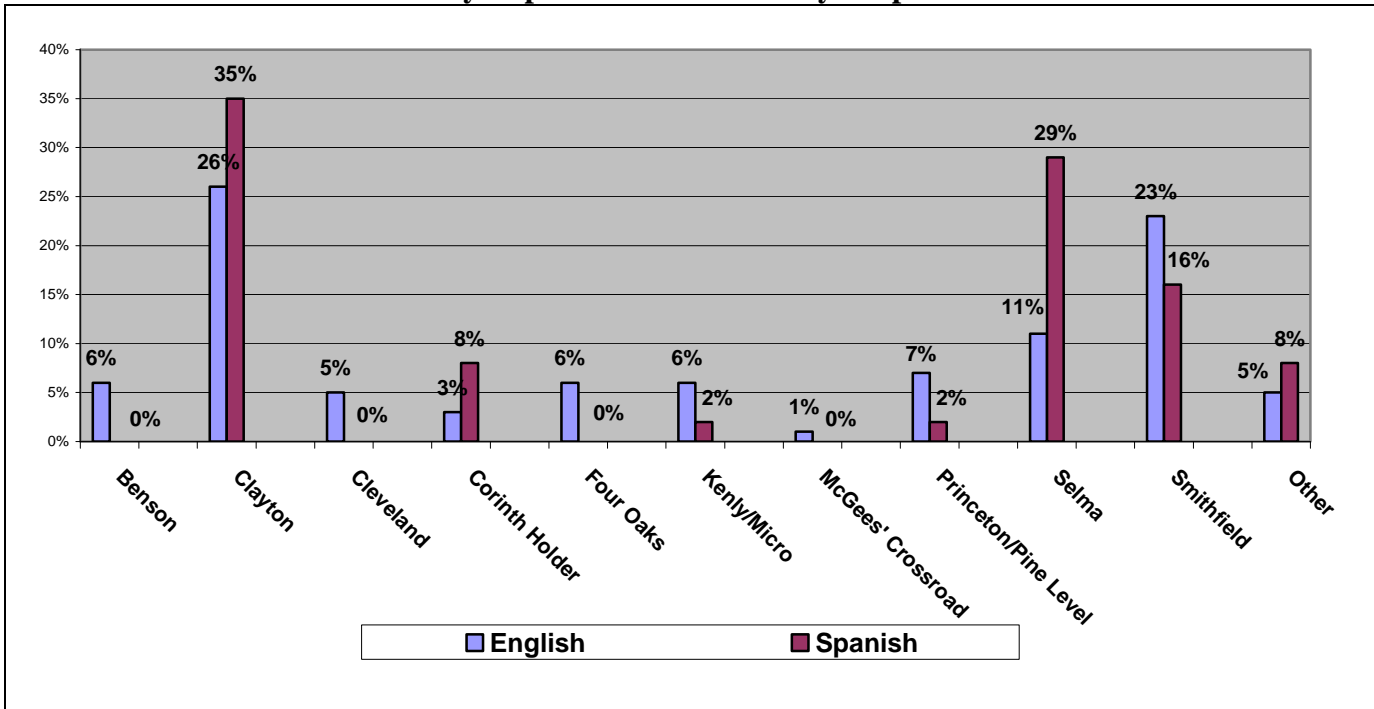
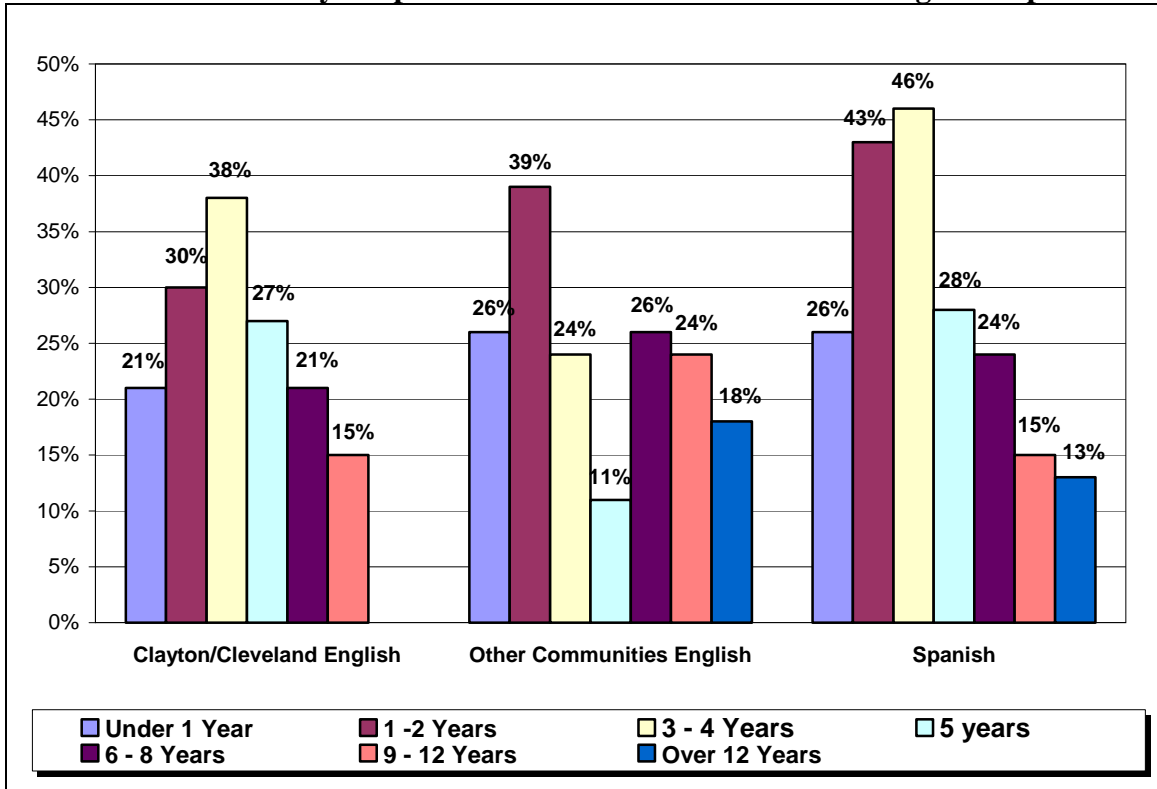


Chart 7: Survey Respondents with Children in Different Age Groups



Early Care and Education Information

Chart 8: Survey Respondents' Daytime Child Care Choices

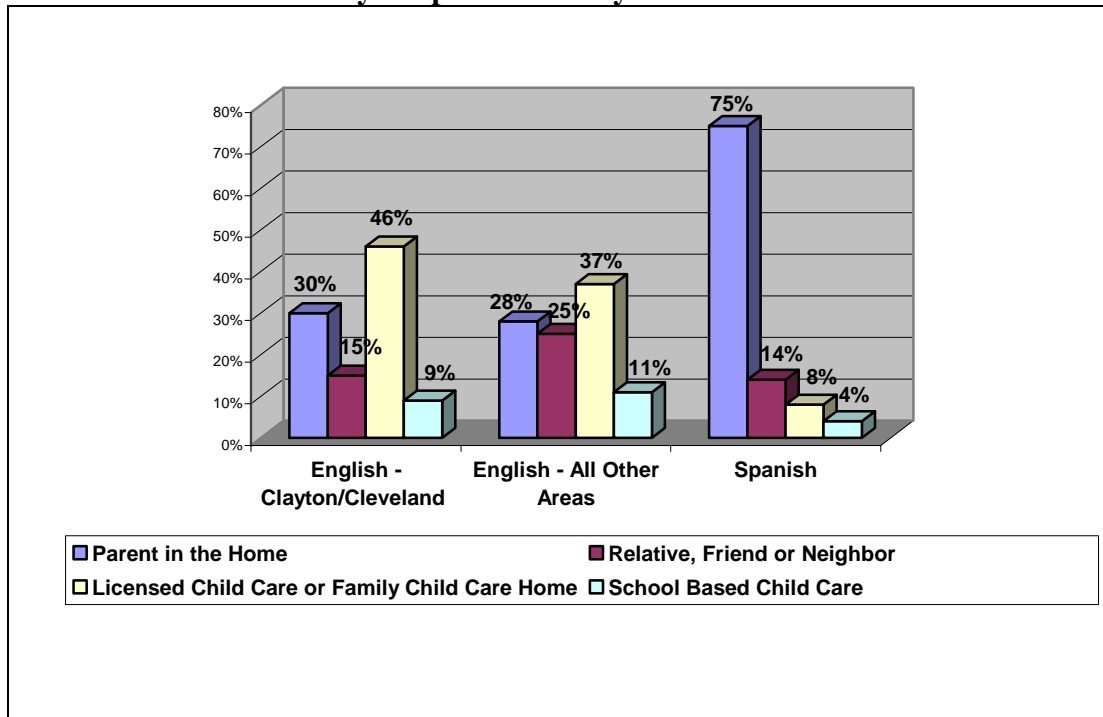


Chart 9: Adequacy of Current Child Care in Preparing Child for School

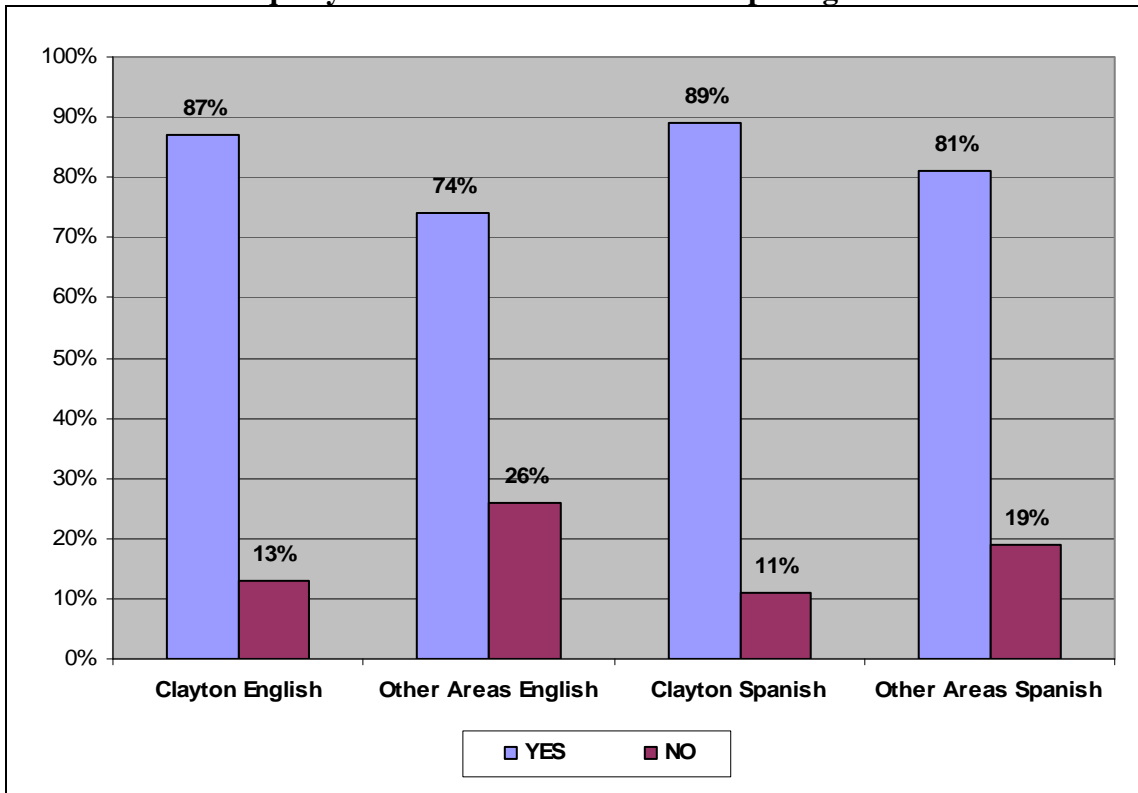


Chart 10: Most Important Things a Caregiver Needs to Do to Prepare a Child for School

	Clayton/Cleveland English	Other Areas English	Spanish
Teach child to write and recognize letters & numbers	58% #2	82% #1	100% #1
Provide worksheets & coloring books	2%	11%	15%
Teach them to tie shoes	3%	9%	15%
Teach child name, address & phone	21%	38% #4	63% #3
Provide opportunities for art & music	21%	24%	11%
Love and nurturing	62% #1	71% #2	54% #4
Provide group instructional time	56% #3	27%	17%
Talk to child and ask child questions	38% #5	32% #5	20% #5
Have lots of play time	17%	15%	7%
Read books	54% #4	58% #3	70% #2
Watch movies like Baby Einstein/Dora the Explorer	0%	4%	15%

Chart 11: Transportation Needs to Get Children to Child Care

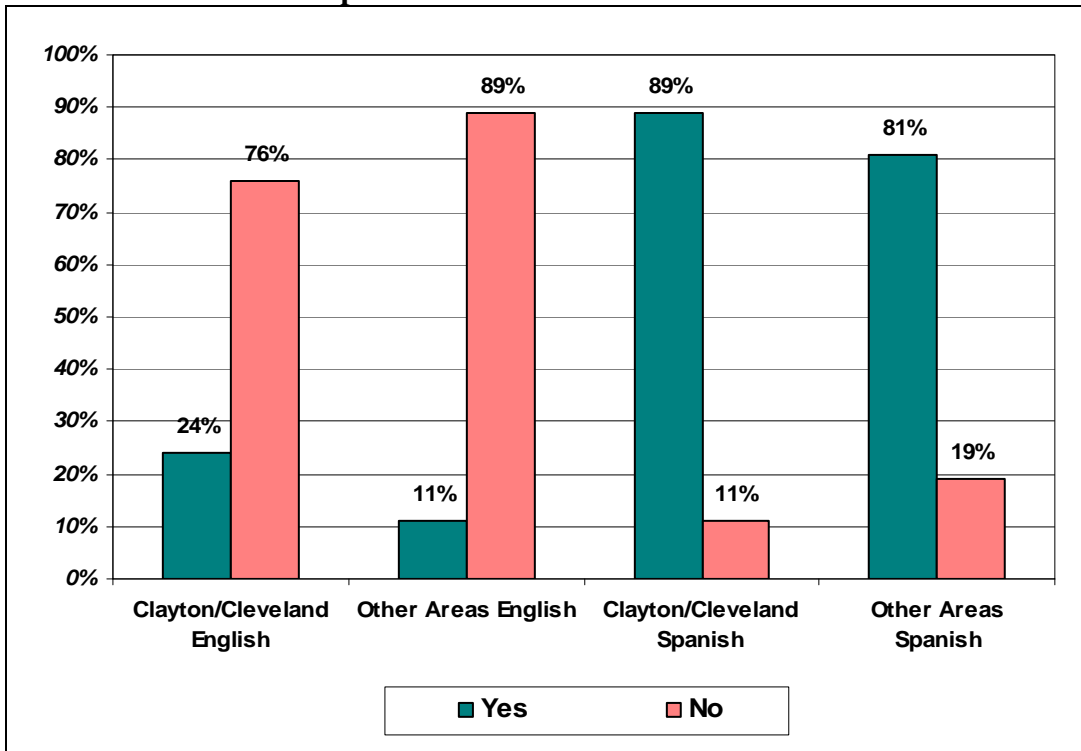


Chart 12: Lengths of Time Parents are Willing for Their Children to be Transported for a Free Pre-K Program

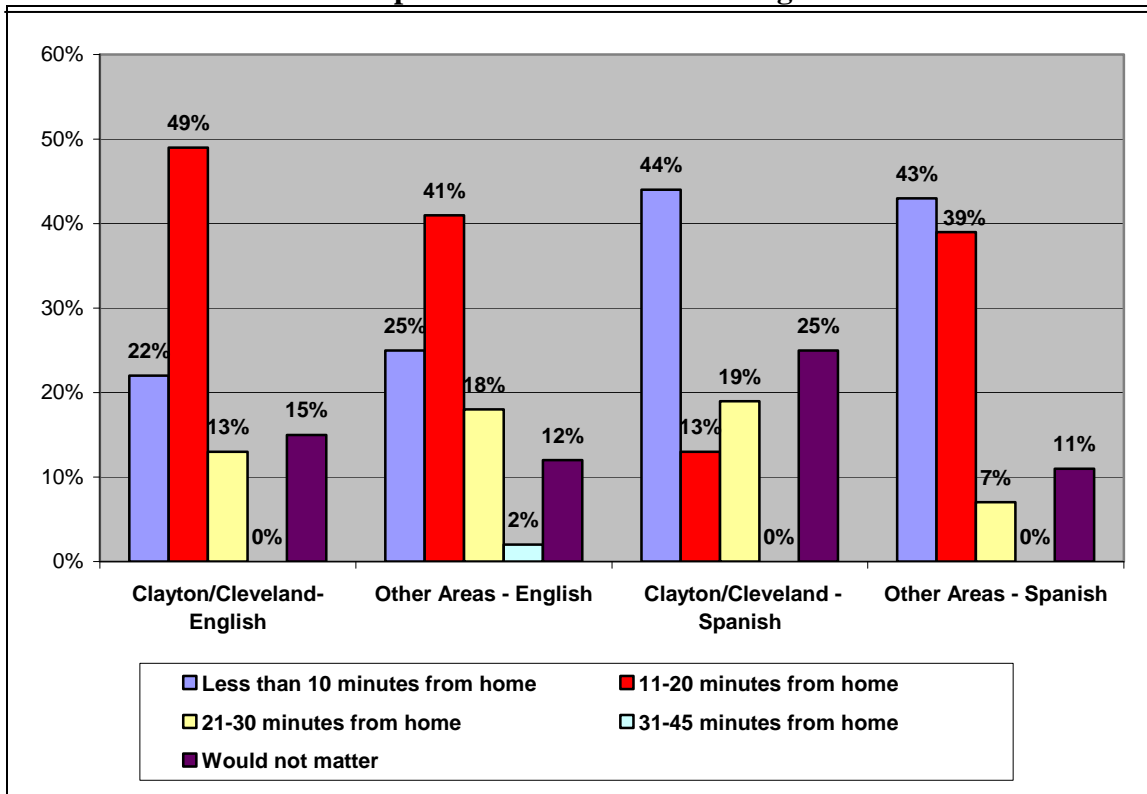


Chart 13: Factors Survey Respondents Say Are Important to Them in Selecting the Care for Their Children

	Clayton/Cleveland English	Other Communities English	Clayton/Cleveland Spanish	Other Communities Spanish
Cost	13% #2	17% #1	17% #2	17% #2
Close to Work	6%	10% #3	7%	1%
Staff/Child Ratio	9%	9%	10% #3	4%
Care for Special Needs	1%	2%	3%	2%
Prefer Home Environment	1%	4%	20% #1	12%
Prefer Someone I Know	4%	6%	7%	6%
Shift Availability	3%	3%	7%	4%
Star Licensing	13% #2	10% #3	7%	6%
Staff Education	12% #3	9%	0%	11%
Close to Home	5%	3%	7%	18% #1
Weekend Care	6%	5%	0%	0%
Provider Experience	13% #2	10% #3	17% #2	15% #3
Friend's Recommendation	0%	1%	0%	2%
Prefer Center Environment	44% #1	12% #2	0%	2%

(Respondents could select as many factors as applied)

Health and Nutrition Information

Chart 14: Survey Respondents with a Regular Family Doctor

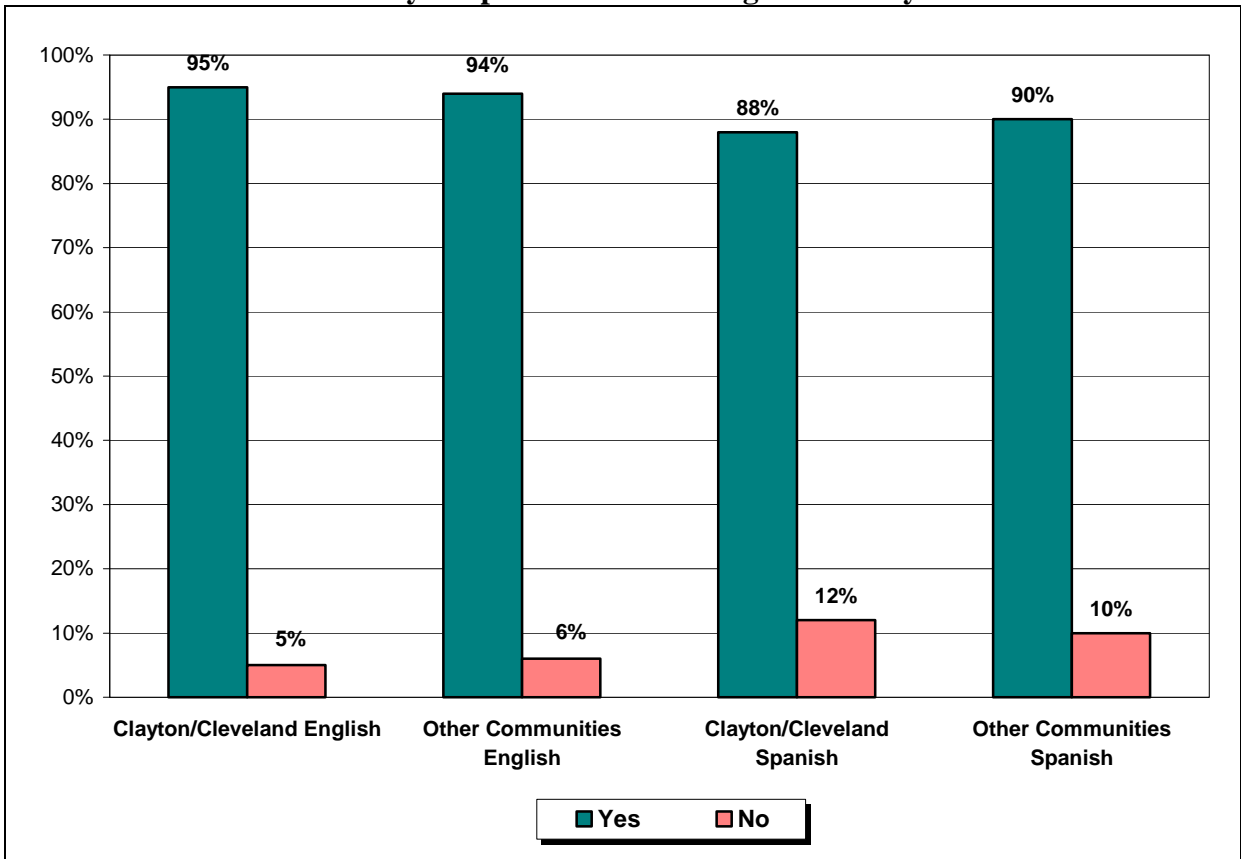


Chart 15: Family Doctors Located in Johnston County

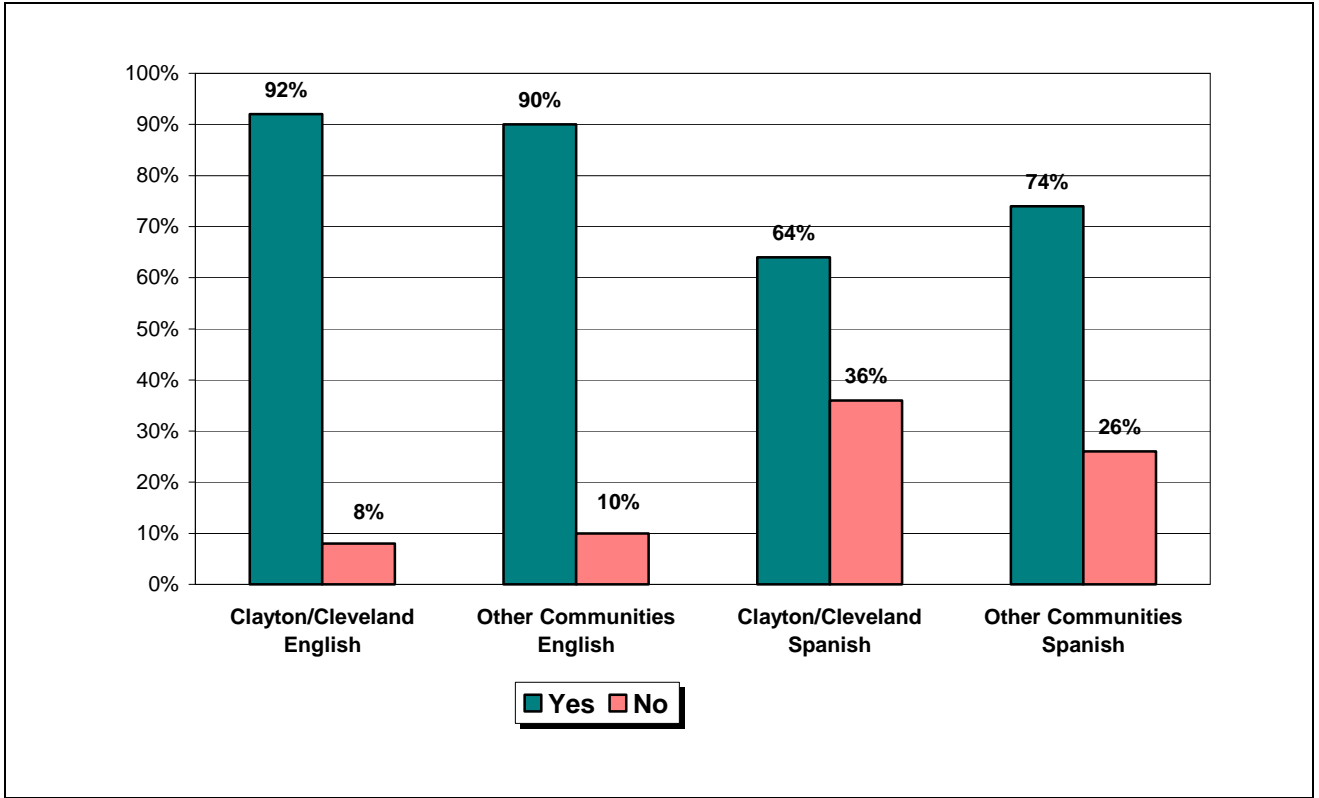


Chart 16: Where Children are Receiving Health Care Services

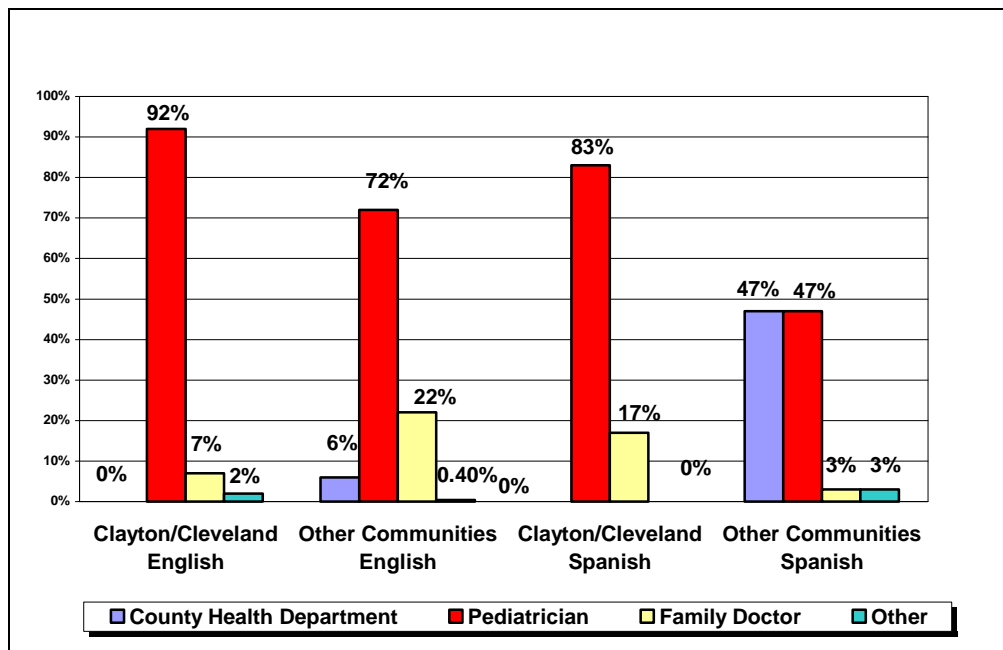


Chart 17: Children Are Regularly Taken to the Dentist

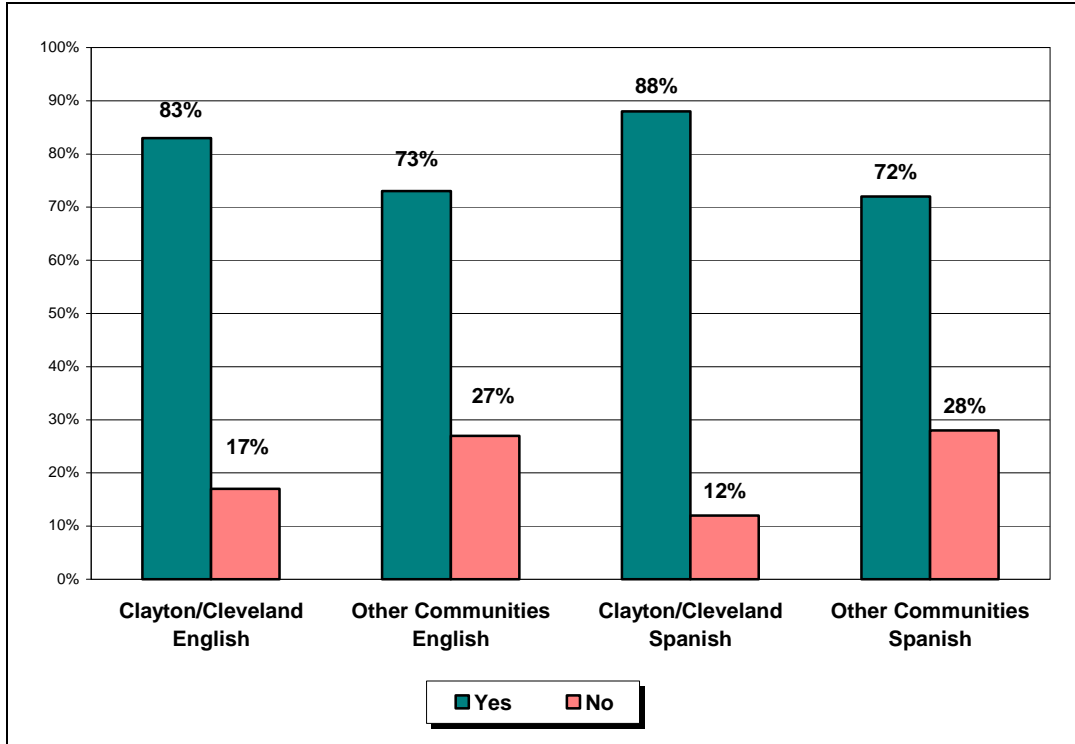


Chart 18: Children are Covered by Health Insurance

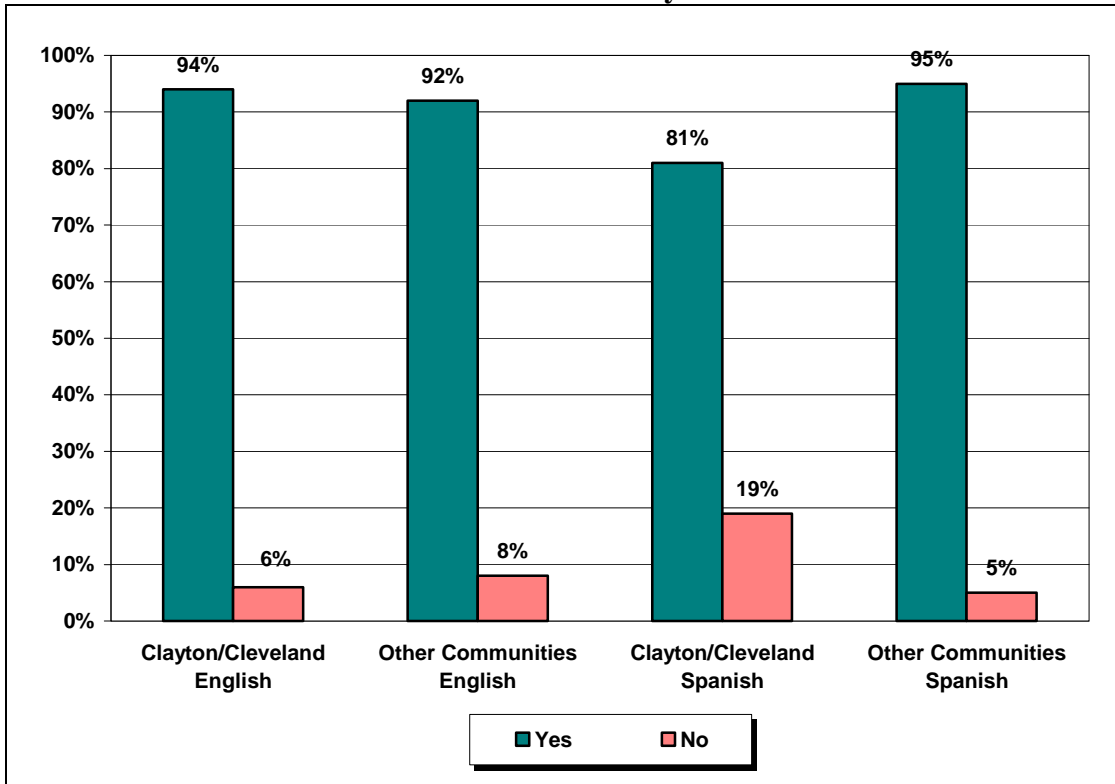


Chart 19: Types of Children's Health Insurance Coverage

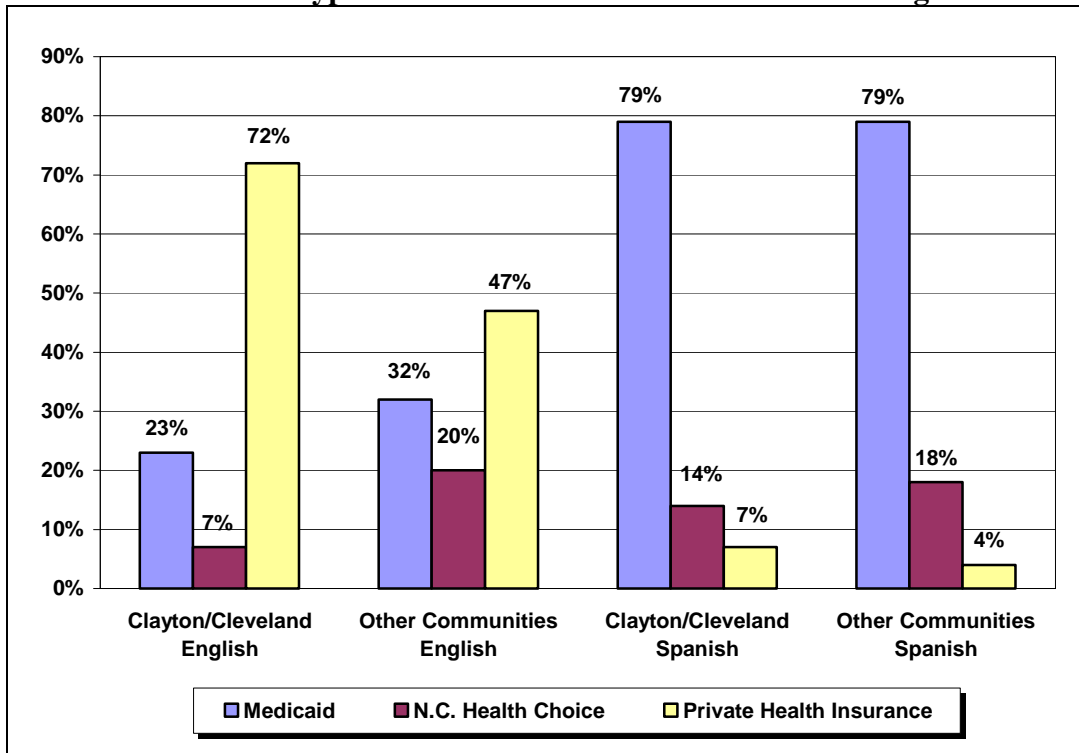


Chart 20: Types of Health Concerns Respondents Have Had Regarding Their Children

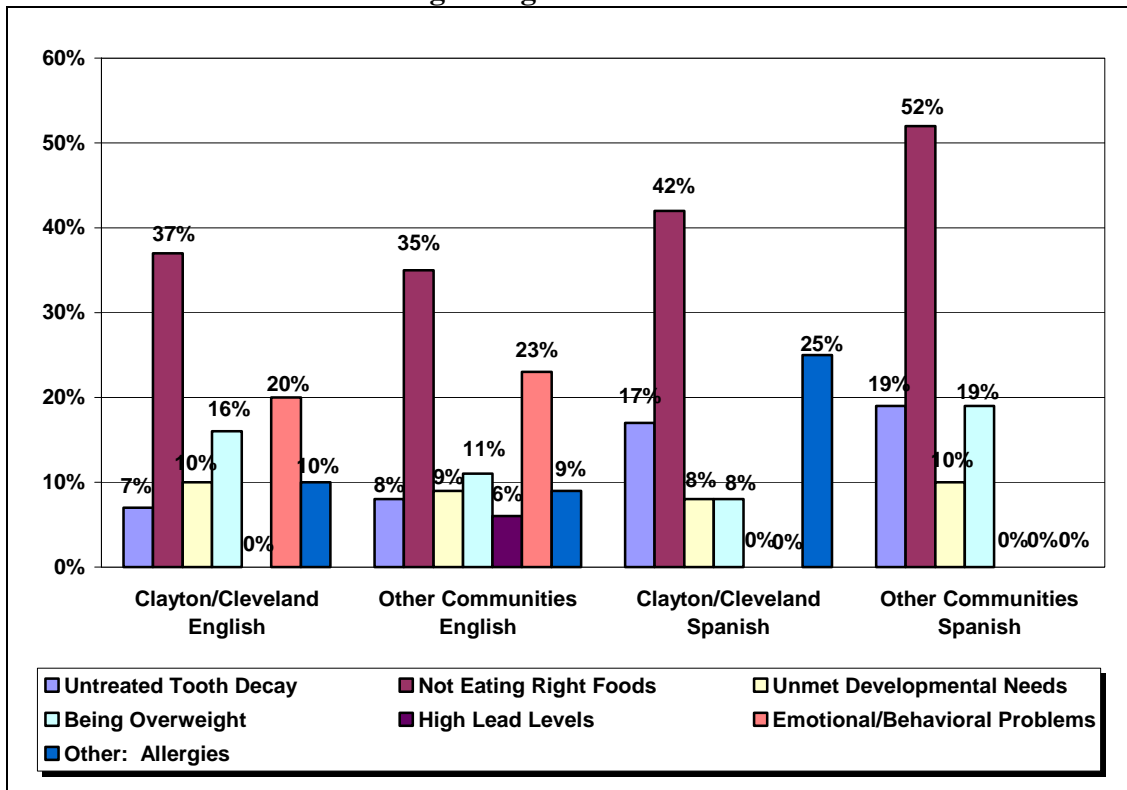


Chart 21: What Would Help Respondents Better Meet the Nutritional Needs of Their Children

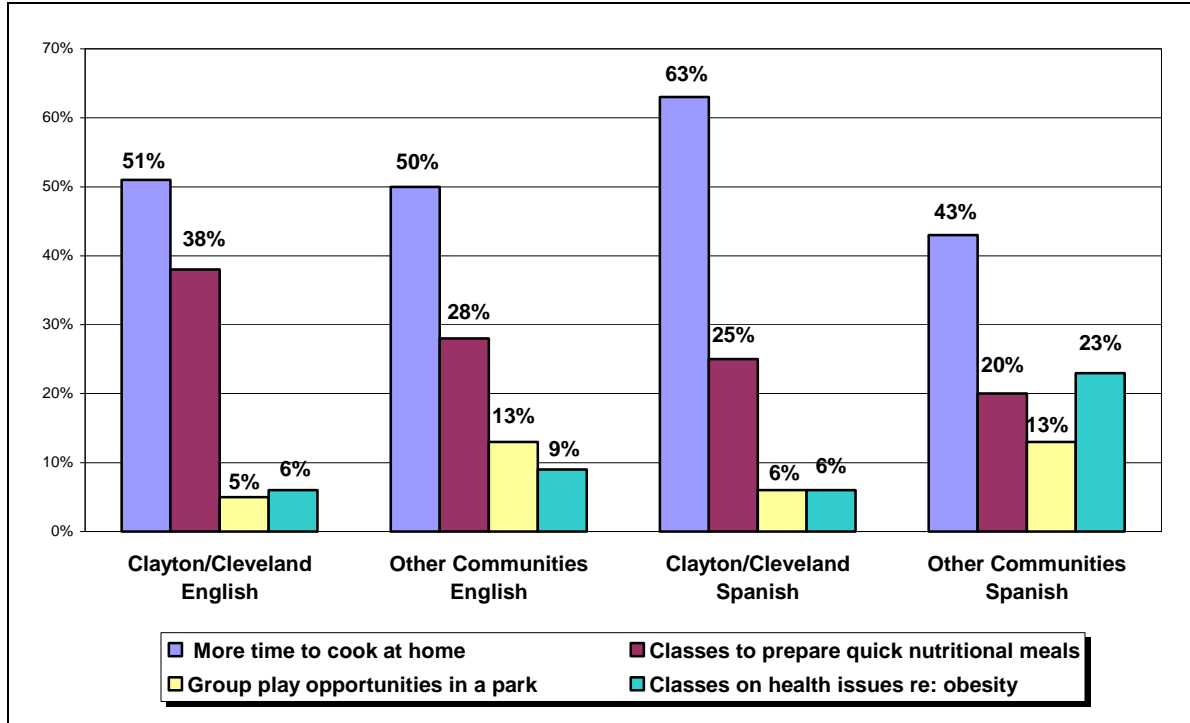


Chart 22: Frequency of Families Eating Restaurant or “Fast Food”

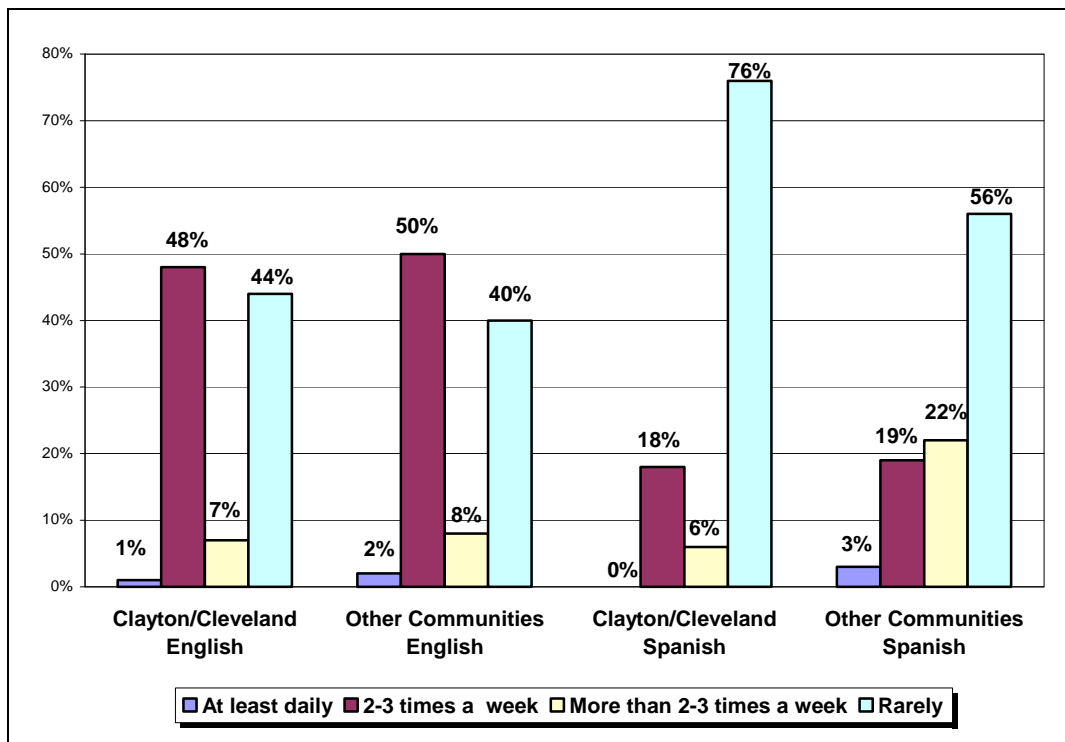


Chart 23: Respondent Frequency of Exercising for at Least 20 Minutes or More

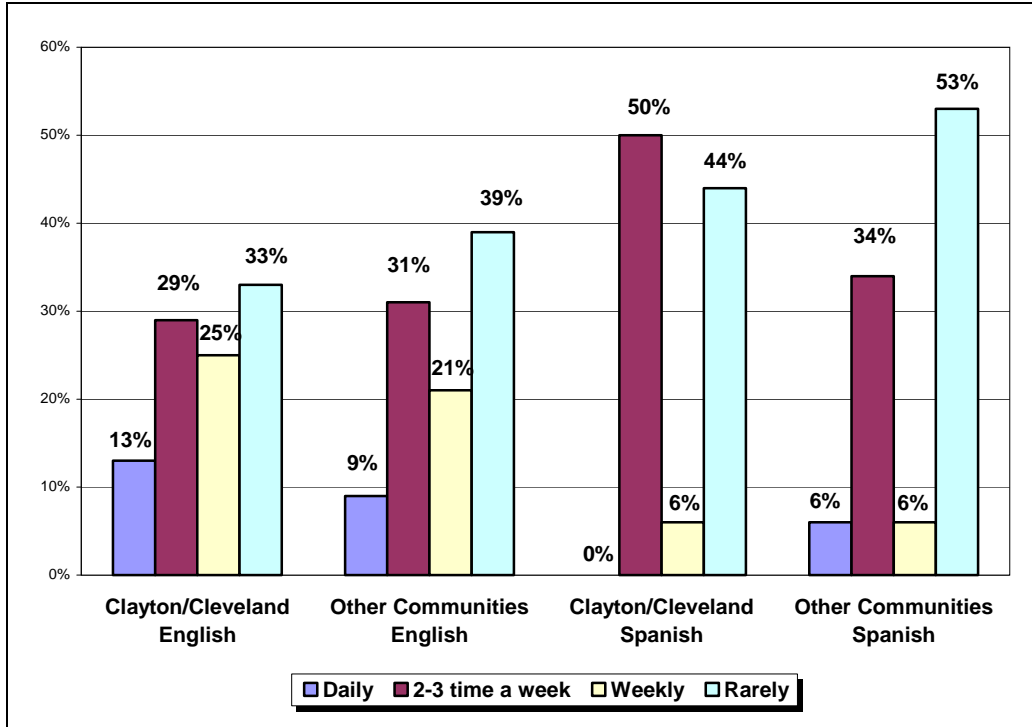
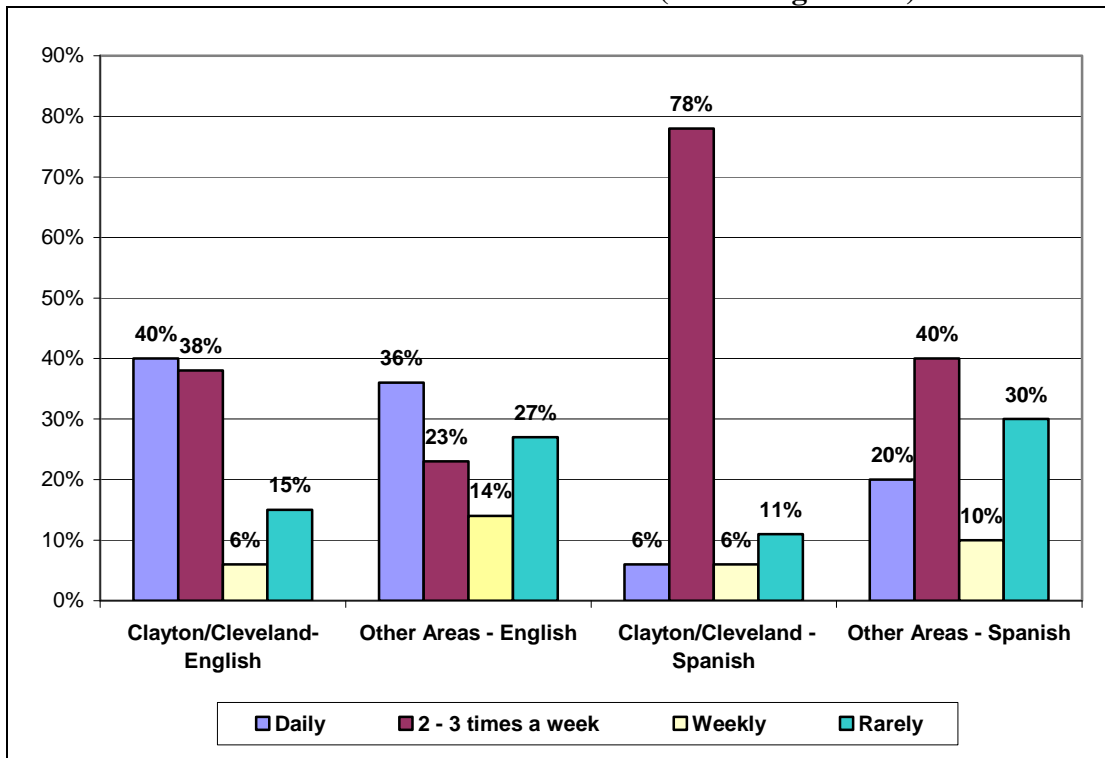


Chart 24: Children's Frequency of Exercising for at Least 20 Minutes or More (Excluding School)



Literacy and School Readiness Information

Chart 25: Respondent Frequency of Spending at Least 15- 20 Minutes per Week Reading with Their Children or Talking About Books or Stories

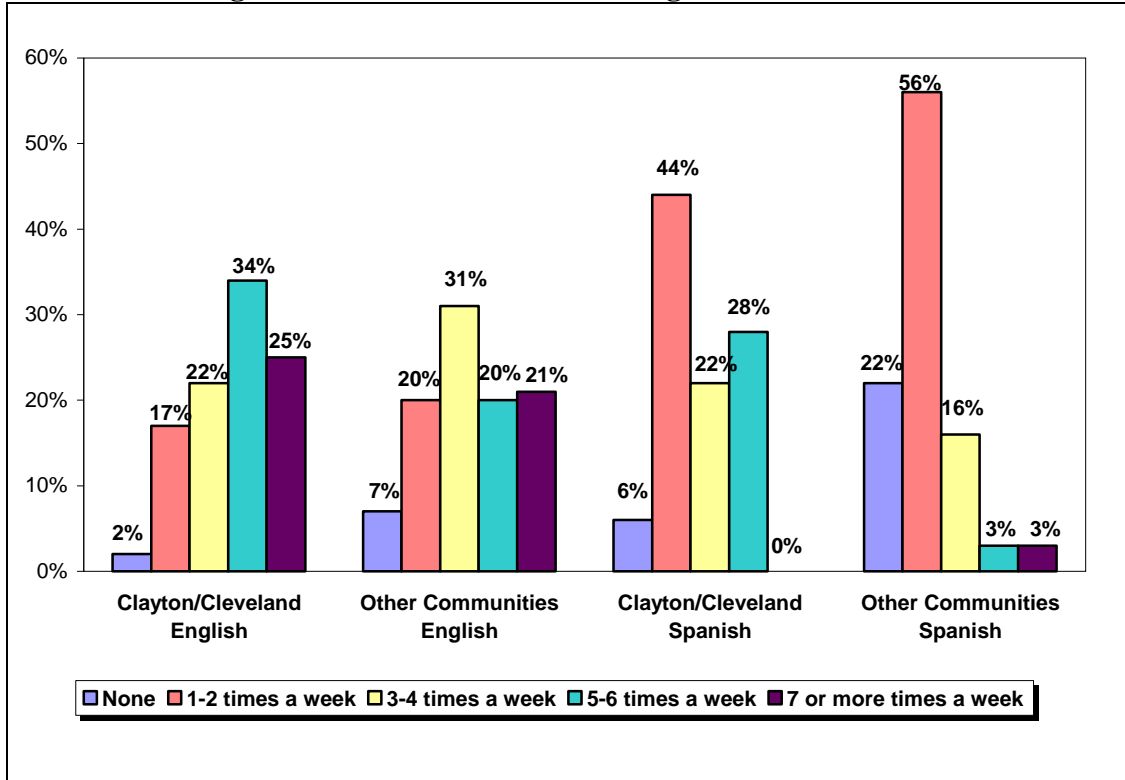


Chart 26: Respondents Who Have Had Problems Knowing What to Do With Their Young Children to Help Them Be Prepared to Learn in School

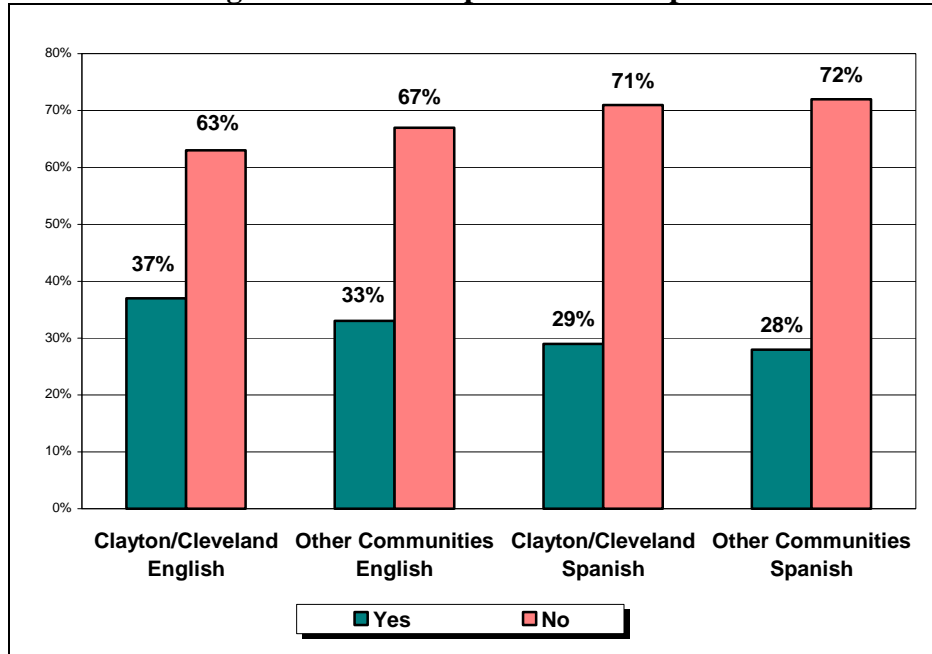


Chart 27: Problems Respondents Have Had in Helping Their Children Be Prepared to Learn in School

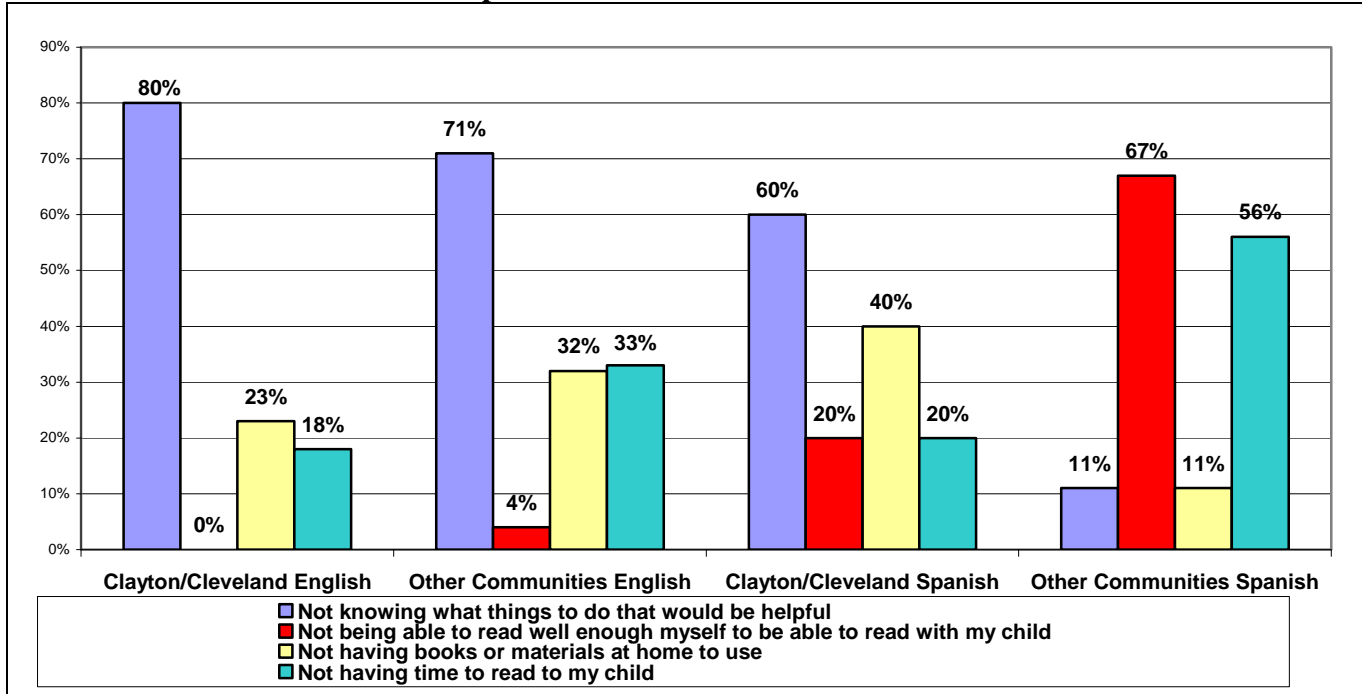
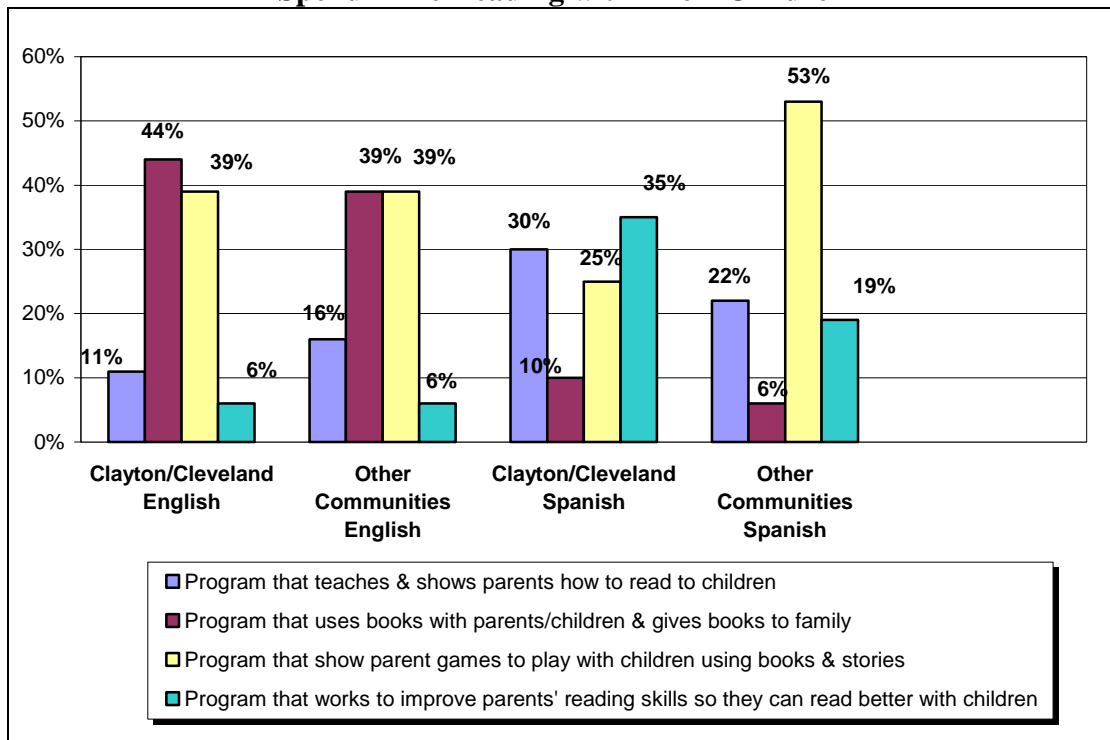


Chart 28: Types of Programs Parents Want to Help Them as They Spend Time Reading with Their Children



Family and Parent Support Information

Chart 29: Respondents Who Indicated They Had Ever Had Questions Related to Parenting that They Needed Help Answering

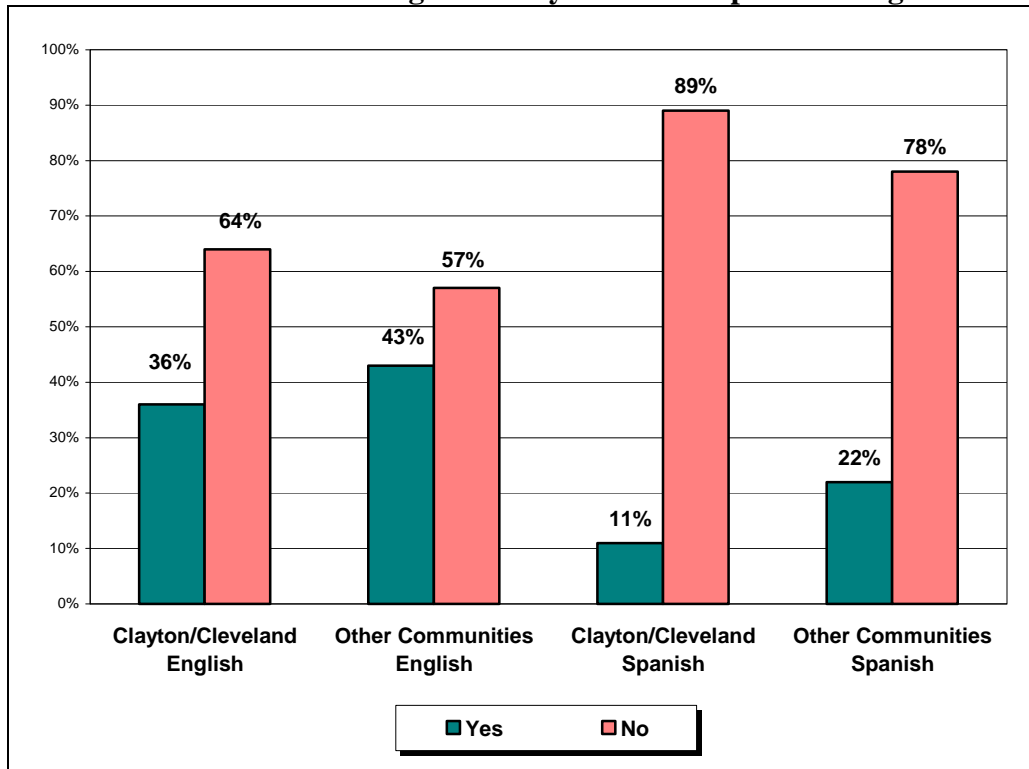


Chart 30: Problems Respondents Have Had Regarding Parenting

	Clayton/Cleveland English	Other Communities English	Clayton/Cleveland Spanish	Other Communities Spanish
Didn't know who to contact	37% #1	29% #1	78% #1	25% #2
Didn't have a way to get to services	6%	4%	0%	33% #1
Didn't have money to pay for services	29% #2	25% #2	0%	33% #1
Services not available	5%	9%	0%	0%
Didn't have a way to call	0%	2%	0%	8%
Made contact but didn't get answers	8%	10%	0%	0%
On waiting list for services	8%	5%	11% #2	0%
Other	8%	16%	0%	0%

Chart 31: Important Factors in Locating Family/Parent Support Services

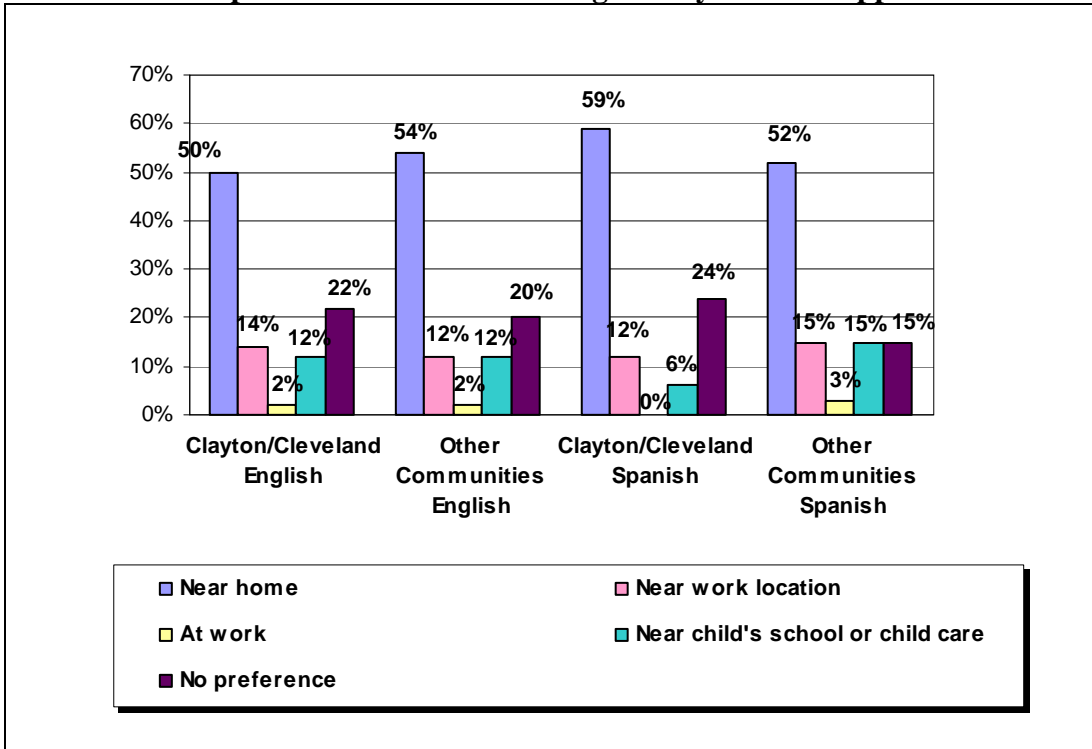


Chart 32: Where Respondents Want Family/Parent Support Services Located in Their Communities

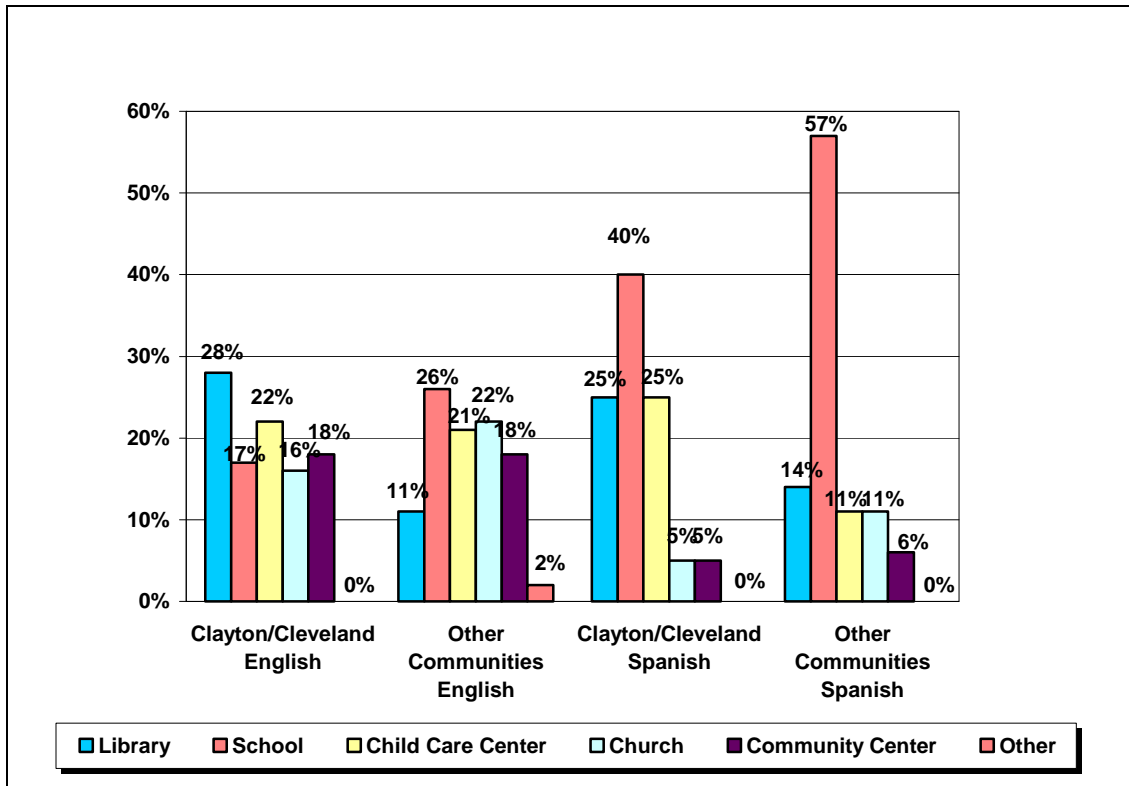


Chart 33: Most Convenient Times for Family/Parent Support Classes or Workshops

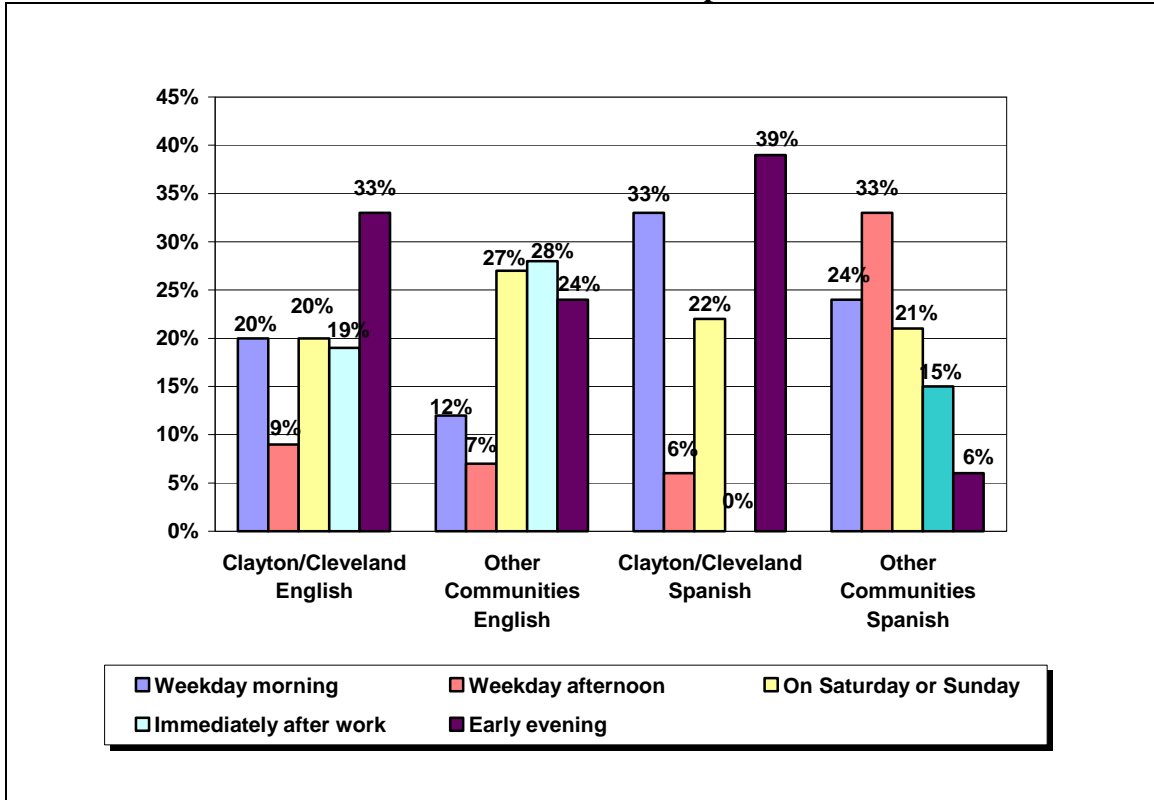


Chart 34: Respondents' Need for Transportation to Attend Family/Parent Support Programs

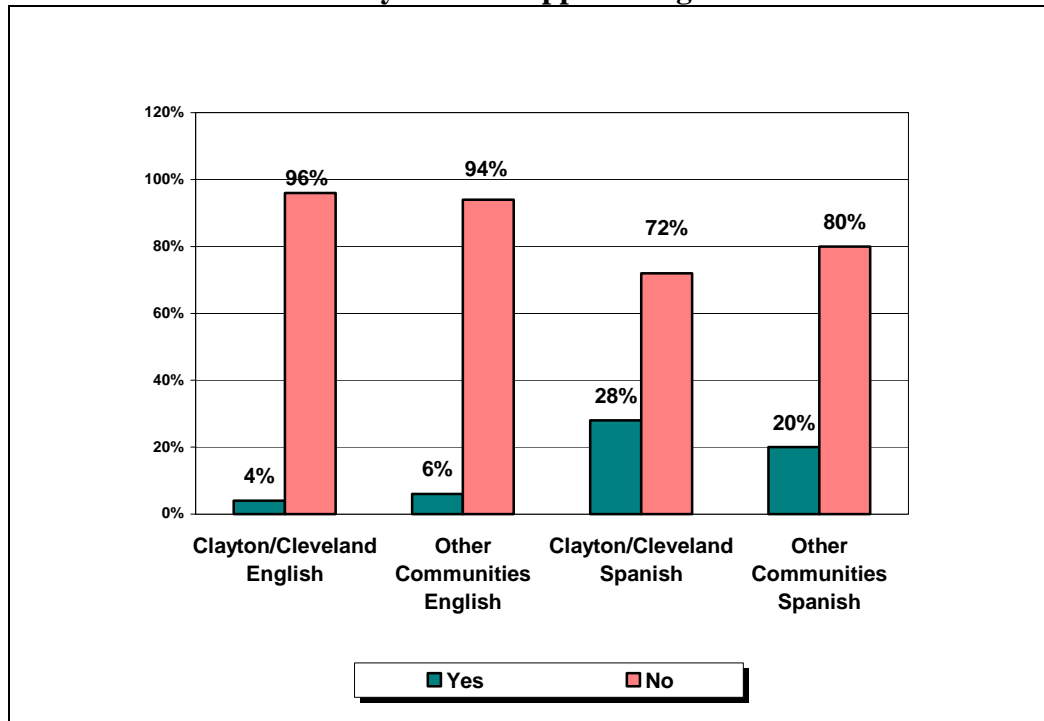
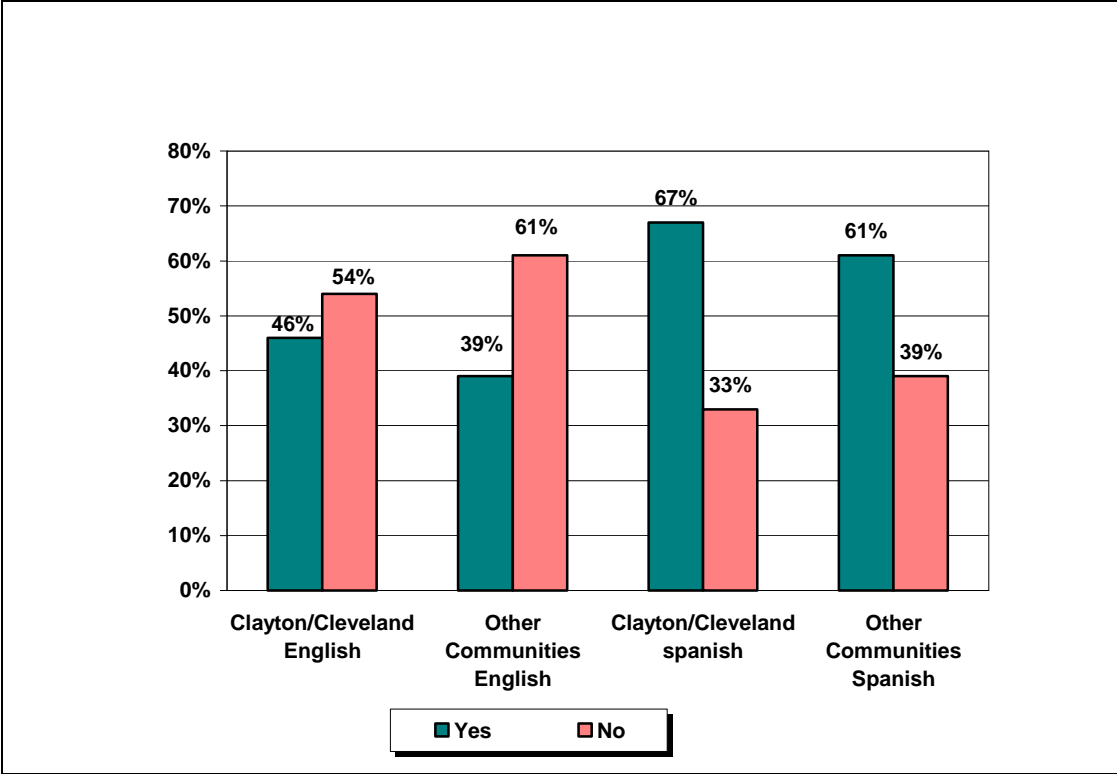


Chart 35: Respondents' Need for Child Care to Attend Family/Parent Support Programs



**Chart 36: Family/Parenting Topics Respondents Would Like
To Know More About**

Topic	Clayton/Cleveland English	Other Communities English	Spanish
Discipline Techniques	48% (1)	51% (1)	66% (2)
Building Self-Esteem	46% (2)	42% (3)	27%
Managing Stress	32% (3)	36% (4)	17%
Homework	32% (3)	34%	63% (3)
Social Skills	31% (4)	25%	20%
Ideas for Family Activities	27% (5)	43% (2)	46% (4)
Time for Self	26%	35% (5)	22%
Peer Pressure	25%	29%	2%
Sibling/Family Relationships	23%	26%	24%
Nutrition	21%	26%	56% (5)
Problem Solving	21%	25%	34%
Managing Anger	20%	24%	12%
Communicating with Children	19%	24%	71% (1)
Child Development	17%	23%	37%
School Problems	15%	18%	32%
Toilet Training	14%	21%	7%
Aggressive Behavior	14%	24%	32%
Conflict Resolution	12%	14%	32%
Health Issues	8%	12%	32%
Drugs and Alcohol	7%	14%	12%
Emergencies	6%	18%	32%
Absentee Parent Involvement	6%	13%	15%
Divorce	5%	14%	7%
Choosing Quality Childcare	4%	5%	2%
Blended Family/Step Parenting	4%	10%	1%
Childbirth Preparation	3%	2%	0%
New Baby Care	2%	3%	5%

(Top five choices are numbered for each group of respondents)

Ranking		Rating
1	Services cost too much for me.	463
2	Do not meet eligibility requirements.	442
3	Hours of service are not convenient for me.	309
4	I have to wait too long when receiving services.	361
5	When I call I don't get to speak to a person.	356
6	I do not like to ask other people for help.	346
7	I am concerned about confidentiality.	317
8	Services not available.	311
9	Locations are not convenient for me.	309
10	I don't know whom to call.	308
11	I have been put on a waiting list for services.	307
12	There is no handicap access.	279
13	Had a bad experience when getting services	241
14	The quality of services is poor.	235
15	Not having child care so to get to the services.	232
16	Don't have transportation.	217
17	Do not have a way to call.	196
18	Service providers do not speak my language.	185

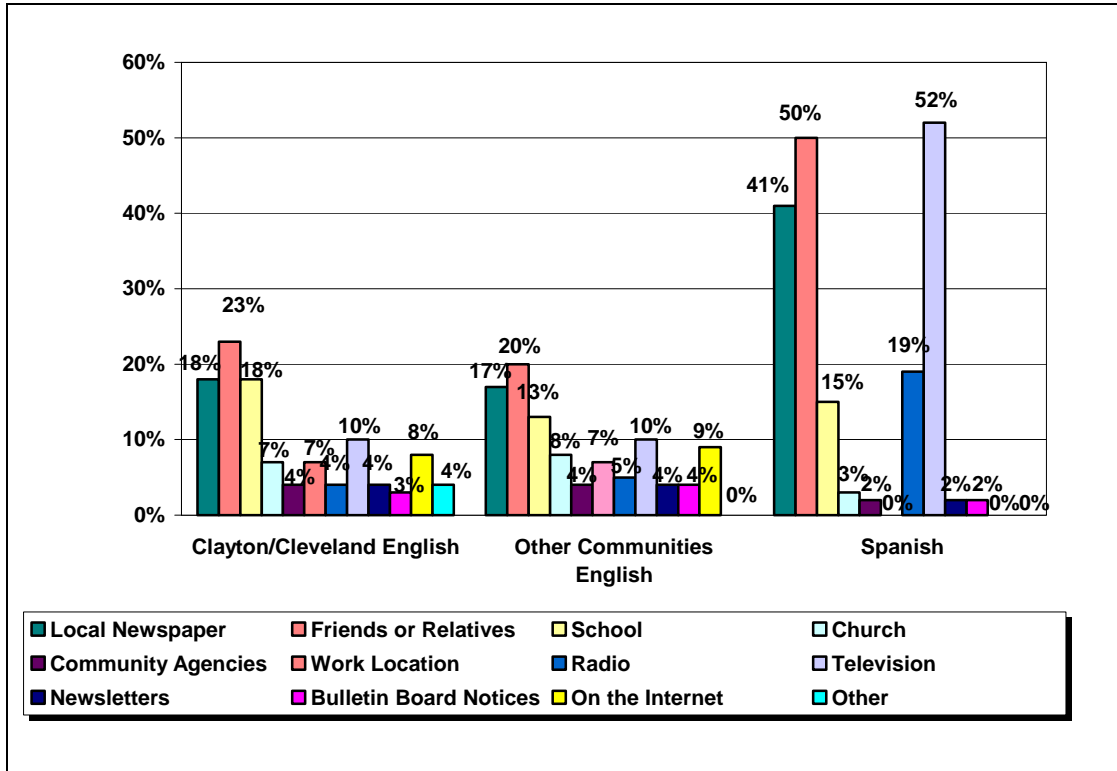
Chart 38: Barriers English Speaking Survey Respondents Said Prevent Their Use of Family and Parent Support Services

Ranking	Barriers	Rating
1	Service providers do not speak my language.	114
2	Services are not available.	107
3	Do not have child care to get to the services.	96
4	Services cost too much for me.	94
5	Don't know whom to call.	93
6	Have had a bad experience when getting services	86
7	Hours of service are not convenient for me.	84
8	When I call I don't get to speak to a person.	81
9	Have to wait too long when getting services.	80
10	Don't have transportation.	78
12	Locations are not convenient for me.	77
13	Do not meet eligibility requirements.	76
14	I am concerned about confidentiality.	72
15	Do not have a way to call.	70
16	There is no handicap access.	67
17	Have been put on a waiting list.	35
18	Do not like to ask other people for help.	32

Chart 39: Barriers Spanish Speaking Survey Respondents Said Prevent Their Use of Family and Parent Support Services

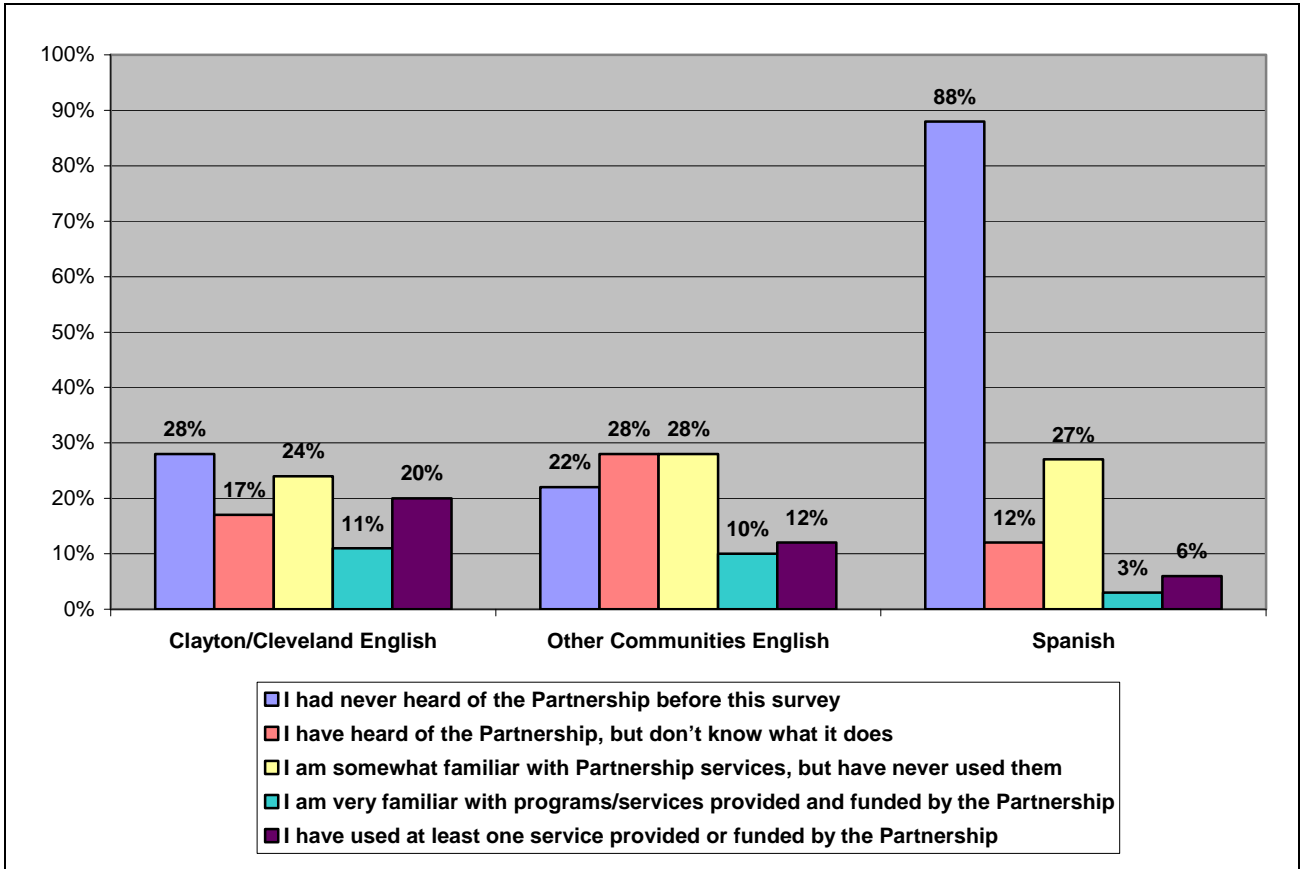
Awareness and Outreach Information

Chart 37: Where Respondents Say They Learn about What is Going On in Johnston County



	Clayton/Cleveland English	Other Communities English	Spanish
Local Newspaper	18% #2	17% #2	41% #3
Friends or Relatives	23% #1	20% #1	50% #2
School	18% #2	13% #3	15%
Church	7%	8%	3%
Community Agencies	4%	4%	2%
Work Location	7%	7%	0%
Radio	4%	5%	19%
Television	10%	10%	52% #1
Newsletters	4%	4%	2%
Bulletin Board Notices	3%	4%	2%
On the Internet	8%	9%	0%
Other	4%	0%	0%

Chart 38: Survey Respondents' Familiarity with the Partnership for Children of Johnston County



**Parent Focus Group
First Citizens Bank
Smithfield, North Carolina
April 24, 2008**

On the morning of April 24, 2008 a group of parents gathered in the conference room at the First Citizens Bank in Smithfield for a focus group to share information regarding the child care and family support services and health services in Johnston County. All of the meeting attendees except one were young working mothers employed by First Citizens Bank; one was a young mother who is not employed outside the home at this time. All of the attendees were from two parent homes.

The mothers first discussed the problems and challenges they are having with child care as a working parent with young children.

- Their primary concern was finding good, high quality child care for their children while they are at work. None of the mothers had ever heard of the child care resource and referral services that are offered by the partnership. They were surprised and pleased that such a service was available free of charge in their county
- They said that finding affordable and flexible child care was also a big issue for their families. They said that it would be very helpful to have more child care providers who offered more non-traditional hours of care. Several told how difficult it was for them or their husbands to have to rush to the child care facility to be there before 6 pm to avoid the exorbitant late charges.
- Several indicated that there seem to be a lot of good part time programs available for young children. However, if one works full time, it is too difficult to juggle coverage and move children from one place to another to get full day coverage. One mother had tried to move her child between a part time church pre-school and a grandmother for a period of time before the juggling became too difficult.

When asked about what issues they had about their children's health, most of the mothers seemed to indicate that this was not an area of great concern for them.

- Pediatric care in the county seemed adequate according to the group. There were no concerns about the quality of care received from their pediatricians. They indicated that they got all the information they needed during well child check ups. Wait times were sometimes problematic but were not usually too unreasonable.
- Two mothers were having specific problems getting their children to eat a well balanced diet at home. When questioned, they said that they do often cater to their child's tastes by providing them special foods. This is creating a problem for their children while they are at child care because they are not eating the food they are being served at breaks and at lunch. The mothers know that the food their children are being served is a part of a good, well balanced diet but they are concerned that their children are not eating anything all day. They are not

allowed to pack their child's lunch or snack so the child is very hungry when picked up in the afternoon. They have not been satisfied with discussions with the facility director as to how this situation might be addressed to keep the child from being hungry at the end of the day. One child has been told by the doctor that she is under weight which is causing the mother even more concern.

- The mothers also expressed concern about the limited amount of exercise children seem to be getting which might be contributing to obesity. This seems to be more of a problem in the public schools than in child care. The group seemed to understand that in the public schools, children only get physical education every seven days and that the other days are spend in free play with no structured activities.

The group also talked about problems and challenges of being able to find fun recreational things for their family and children to do in Johnston County. They felt like there were very limited activities and facilities for young children and their families in the county. Most of them indicated that they had to leave the county to find quality facilities for young children. Even though most of them said they could afford to go outside the county to find recreational opportunities, they realized that not all families could afford to travel outside the county.

- The group mentioned that there is a good parks and recreation program in the county but it seems to be focused on older children and more in the Clayton and Smithfield areas. If one has young children or lives in other parts of the county, the parks and recreation program does not seem to have many benefits.
- There is a YMCA program in the Clayton area, but that serves a limited area and provides limited services.
- Some of the community parks in the county do not seem to be in locations that are safe for young families. The young mothers mentioned several parks especially in the Clayton area that they would not feel safe in alone with their children.

We spent a lot of time talking about what they felt they needed to help their children be more "ready" for school when they entered kindergarten.

- There was overall consensus the child care experience or pre-school experience helped children be more socially ready for school. They felt that their children had learned to get along better with other children and had learned the basic structure of an educational day in the child care environment.
- One mother had recently moved her four year old child from one child care facility to another and was very pleased that he was now getting so much more that she thought was preparing him for school. She said that he was now learning the alphabet and phonics and she thought this was much better preparation for school.

We had a very energized discussion about the kindergarten checklist that is distributed each spring to four year olds when they register for kindergarten. At least three of the mothers said that their child had been very stressed by having to learn some of the things on the list in the last couple of months before school started. One of the most problematic things on the list is that the four or five year old child must know how to tie

shoes. Since many children do not even wear shoes with shoe strings that need to be tied, the children have not had experience in needing to tie shoes but they still must be able to demonstrate that they can tie a shoe. The mothers said this had caused a high level of stress for not only the child but their entire family.

- The mothers would like to have had a better understanding of what is expected of children as they enter school much earlier in the process – much earlier than spring registration.
- They would like to see kindergarten registration having some non traditional time for attending. Several said that they had had to take time off work to be able to take their child to the spring registration.
- They did not feel that the child care teachers were very knowledgeable of what the schools are expecting of kindergarten students. They would like for the child care facilities to be able to take their four year old class to visit a kindergarten class room. Even if it was not the class that the child would attend the next year, at least the child could see what a “big school” room looked like and his teachers could also see how the kindergarten class operated.
- Without exception, the working mothers who had children in kindergarten or older, did not like the staggered entry program. They said it was very hard to explain to their child why they went to school one day but did not go the next. One mother said her child told her after the first day that his teacher told him he did not have to go back the next day. He thought he was through with kindergarten for the year! They said that it was also challenging to arrange for child care on the days that the children were not in school.
- The transition to kindergarten could be easier if children were exposed to some types of “home work” when they were completing the last year in a four year old program. They said that they had been surprised by the amount of homework that there children had in kindergarten and that it was too much too soon for the children. They would like for children to have been exposed to some projects that asked them to bring items from home or to do something with their parents in the last few months in the four year old class so that they could begin to understand what it meant to have to do something at home for school.
- The issue of naps in kindergarten was also an issue for some. Some children had not been used to taking naps so getting them to lie down in kindergarten had been a problem. For others, it was getting them used to a day without a nap in the late fall and winter that proved to be difficult. There does not seem to be a universal practice in the schools of how long naps are or when naps are no longer taken.

We spent some time talking about the fact that the group knew so little about the programs and services of the Partnership for Children of Johnston County and Smart Start. Early in the discussion, they had said that they did not know the child care resource and referral service existed. They said that this would have been a very beneficial service for them and for other working parents in the county.

- When they were asked how the CCR&R should advertise to parents, they suggested that brochures/flyers should be placed in the following locations:
 - Ob/gyn offices so that mothers would see them during prenatal visits
 - Pediatrician offices

- Gyms, exercise studios
- Children's program locations such as karate classes, ballet studios, etc where parents can have access to the information while they wait for their children
- Churches
- They thought information about CCR&R services would be very helpful to have for the information kits that are provided to new employees at First Citizens Bank. They thought that other employers in the county would be interested in including this type of information in their new employee packets also. It was suggested that someone from the CCR&R program contact the human resource representative at First Citizens Bank. CCR&R might then be able to go through the county HR group that meets periodically to get information out to other businesses.

Summary

This focus group provided an excellent opportunity to hear from young, working parents in Johnston County. They were very forthcoming about their issues regarding their children and their concerns about their children being ready for kindergarten. The quality of early care and education and the transition to the kindergarten setting seemed to be some of the most important issues for these focus group participants.

It was surprising to learn in this setting that so few of the participants knew anything about the work and activities of Smart Start and the Partnership for Children of Johnston County. With the exception of the focus group participant who is a member of the Board of Directors, most of the participants thought that the programs were limited to children and families from lower socio-economic strata of the population. It is apparent from the lack of knowledge of these young, working mothers that it is important for the Partnership to develop communication strategies about the services it offers for all parents and young children in Johnston County.

**Parent Focus Group
Benson Housing Authority
May 1, 2008**

A group of parents who are residents of the Benson Housing Authority met on the morning of May 1, 2008 in the meeting room at the Housing Authority building in Benson for a focus group to share information regarding the family and child care support services and health services in Johnston County. Of the eight participants, four were working mothers, two were not employed, one was a grandmother guardian and one was an employed father who has full-time custody of two young children whose wife is a full-time employee in another distant community with full-time custody of two older children. The latter two adults live apart because they are unable to find employment in the same community and see each other only on alternate weekends.

The objectives of this focus group meeting were to hear parents' perspectives of the needs of their families and to learn about any barriers they have encountered as they have tried to get services for their children and families. The parents each expressed rather significant stress related to the challenges of trying to raise their children without adequate fiscal and psychological support systems. Although some shared very specific problems related to parenting, everyone agreed that everything that was mentioned and discussed in the session represented a fair picture of problems related to the needs of parents and children in their area.

The parents first discussed the problems and challenges they are having raising their children. The following are some points raised by the parents.

- All of the parents expressed deep concern about the environment in which they live as being unhealthy and unsafe for their children. Although their housing development is clean and in good physical condition, the social atmosphere, particularly "after hours," is characterized by brazen drug trafficking and other "unhealthy" behaviors usually by persons who are not residents of the community. Parents spoke of seeing young children being sent out to the cars of drug dealers to purchase drugs for someone in their apartment. Parents agreed that the playground behind their housing units is not a safe place for young children in the evening hours. There seems to be little consistent policing of these activities, and parents are unable to cope with the problems short of just keeping their children inside the house. This problem means that some children are not able to have adequate outdoor experiences and exercise.
- Parents expressed considerable distress over not being able to find quality child care that they can afford. Although some have been able to enroll their children in Head Start programs, most have to rely on other available friends or relatives to keep their children while they work. When asked whether their present child care arrangements were adequate for preparing their children to be ready to learn when

they enter public school, all but the Head Start parents expressed serious doubts about that level of preparation.

- Parents said that they have considerable difficulty teaching their children not to cling and whine. Indeed, three young children who accompanied their parents to the session demonstrated these behaviors throughout the meeting. Some parents offered the idea that because they are gone from their children so many hours of the day that the children are simply expressing their deep need for love and attachment. But with the pressures of being single parents they said that they often don't have the time or energy to give to the children.
- Parents generally agreed that, although they try to discipline their children appropriately, they are not really having success with their methods. They again feel that having to be away from their children so much and living in an atmosphere that is characterized by a rather lack of discipline generally contributes negatively to their attempts to maintain discipline. Most also expressed concern bordering on anger at the absence of the fathers of their children and the lack of positive male role models in their children's lives.
- Parents feel somewhat trapped in a system that penalizes them if they increase their earnings by raising the rent on their apartments. The result is that even if they can find better employment, it is often not worth it to make a move upward. But overall, parents in this area feel depressed by the overall lack of economic opportunity for them. A number who are employed have to drive considerable distances to their jobs, and that takes more time away from parenting and also comes at an unreasonably high cost for travel. The father in the group has to travel to Smithfield every night for his late shift job.
- All of the parents indicated that they are living on the slimmest possible edge economically even with the public assistance they receive. There is no such thing as available money after the absolute necessities are provided. All of the parents, after considerable thought, characterized themselves as being poor.

The parents discussed their concerns regarding health care for their families and especially their children. The following major points were brought up by the parents.

- All of the families are on Medicaid although several expressed concern that it was so difficult to gain that coverage. They spoke of other parents who have not been able to get on Medicaid and do not have any other insurance coverage.
- Only one parent responded that he had what could be called a "family doctor." The rest of the parents utilize the services of the health department or go to a private physician when possible. There was general dissatisfaction with using the public services because of the wait time and the time it takes to get the services although the parents feel good about the quality of care their children receive there. Transportation to these services is a serious problem for some parents.
- Most of the parents expressed concern about whether their children are really eating appropriate and nutritious foods. In many cases children are eating meals with care givers who parents feel do not provided the most nutritious meals. The Head Start parents expressed the feeling that one of the best things about having their children in that program is that it guarantees that the children are getting some very good food daily. The major problem the Head Start parents have with

- the program is that it ends so early in the afternoon, and they have to make arrangements to have their children picked up at times when they cannot get off work. This adds an extra expense to already stressed budgets.
- Parents who utilize the Department of Social Services feel generally good about the services they receive, but they expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of time it takes to get the appropriate services. The parents generally do not feel good about what they perceive as the attitudes of DSS staff toward people like themselves who are on welfare.

The parents were asked about their knowledge of the Partnership for Children of Johnston County and its programs and services.

- None of the parents present had ever heard of the Partnership, and obviously none had utilized any of its services.
- When told of the Parents as Teachers program, all indicated an interest in such a program and would like to be able to utilize such a program to help them with their parenting. There was concern expressed about when such programs could take place in their homes due to their hectic schedules.
- Some of the parents raised the question of the cost of participating in Partnership programs; they were surprised to learn that they were free.
- When discussing the services provided by the CCR&R program, parents all expressed the feeling that such services would be very helpful, but they doubted that they would be able to afford the child care that the program would recommend. We discussed the child care subsidies available through DSS and some of them were already familiar with this program.

Summary

It was obvious that the parents who attended this focus group meeting are all trying to do the very best they can in raising their children. They are struggling against very difficult forces in just trying to keep their heads above the economic waters. As single parents, they are in great need of a variety of family support and health service programs. They are aware of some of the programs in the county that can offer them assistance as parents, but they indicated that they still need more information on services and eligibility requirements. Quality child care that will appropriately prepare their children to be ready to learn when they reach public schools is generally viewed as beyond their ability to access. Even though the mood of the session at times bordered on despair, the parents are still trying to do the best that they know how to do and can do for their children. There is a strong desire to no longer be on public assistance and to have a home for their children that is healthy and sound. As one parent expressed, “We are stuck down here, and nobody seems to care what happens to us.” There were nodding heads in agreement, but that was followed by the expression of commitment to keep on trying to do the best that they can for the sake of their children.

Significant Findings from Parent Surveys

Survey Findings

Demographic Findings

- Of the 402 respondents who completed the Parent Survey, 89% (356 of 402) completed English surveys and 11% (46 of 402) completed Spanish surveys.
- Of the 402 respondents who completed the Parent Survey, 33% (134 of 402) lived in the Clayton/Cleveland area of the county and 67% (268 of 402) lived in other areas of the county. These totals include both English and Spanish respondents.
- 22% (88 of 402) of the survey respondents were African Americans, 3% (14 of 402) were American Indian, 1% (5 of 402) were Asian, 59% (236 of 402) were Caucasian, 13% (51 of 402) were Hispanic. 2% (8 of 402) of the survey respondents indicated “Other” for their ethnic group. The ethnic distribution seemed to be approximately the same for the Clayton area as it was for the rest of the county; however, there was a slightly higher African American population represented in the Clayton area and fewer Asians.
- The overwhelming majority of the survey respondents were female. The percentage of female respondents was much higher (over 90%) on English surveys than on Spanish surveys which were 34-41% female. This may be due to the male dominated Hispanic/Latino culture with the males completing the survey information for the family.
- The 25-34 and 35-44 age groups had the highest representation of all age groups for both the English and Spanish survey respondents.
- Only 3% of the English respondents from the Clayton area and 6% from the other areas of the county had less than a high school education. However, 53% of the Spanish survey respondents had less than a high school education. 26% of the English respondents from the Clayton area had some college while only 12% in other areas of the county had some college education. The Spanish population had much lower educational levels than the English population.
- 55% of the English population from the Clayton area reported incomes of \$50,000 or over annually and 42% of the English population from the other parts of the county reported incomes of this level. This is slightly higher than the \$40,863 median income for 2005. 0% of the Spanish respondents reported incomes of this level. 85% of the Spanish population reported incomes of less than \$30,000 per year.
- All ten geographic areas of the county that were named on the survey had some respondent representation. Clayton had the largest representation with 26% of the English respondents and 35% of the Spanish respondents; Selma had 11% of the English and 29% of the Spanish; and Smithfield had 23% of the English and 16% of the Spanish.
- The 402 survey respondents indicated that they had a total of 701 children with 55% (383 of 701) children being birth through age five.

Early Care and Education Findings

- The majority of Spanish respondents (75%) have a parent in the home caring for the children during the daytime. This is true for only 30% of the English in Clayton and only 28% of the English from the other areas of the county.
- 46% of the English respondents from the Clayton area said that their children are in a licensed child care center or family child care home. Only 37% of the English in other areas of the county have their children in licensed care and only 8% of the Spanish respondents said their children were in licensed child care.
- Most all survey respondents indicated that they felt their current child care was preparing their children for school and there was not a significant variation between the survey respondent populations (English 74% to Spanish 89% positive responses)
- When asked what were important things for a caregiver to do to prepare a child for school, 100% of the Spanish respondents said teaching a child to write and recognize letters and numbers and only 54% of them said love and nurturing. Teaching children to write and recognize letters and numbers received the most selections or the second most selections in all three population groups. Having lots of play time was NOT one of the more frequently selected choices even though this is a very important activity for young child in an early childhood educational environment. From the survey responses, it is obvious that parents still need a lot more education on quality indicators for good child care environments, school readiness indicators and developmentally appropriate activities.
- Most all survey respondents indicated that they did NOT need transportation to get their children to child care. The responses ranged from 76% NO in the English Clayton population to 89% NO for the other areas English and the Clayton Spanish population. The area indicating the greatest need for transportation was the Clayton area English population (24%) which also had the highest percent of children in licensed child care. Many of the others who indicated that they did not need transportation may have their children at home with a parent or with a friend/relative during the day and have more flexible hours.
- When asked about the distances they would be willing for their children to be transported for a free Pre-K program, there was a wide range of responses. Most of the English respondents would be willing for their children to be transported up to 20 minutes from home. 43% and 44% of the Spanish respondents chose less than 10 minutes from home. Almost no one chose 31-45 minutes from home.
- When asked about the factors that are important as they select care for their children, the English survey responses were very similar between Clayton and the other parts of the county. The top five factors were almost identical: cost, preferring a center environment, star licensing and provider experience. The Clayton respondents chose staff education as their #3 factor while the other English respondents chose being close to work as their #3 factor. The Spanish responses were very similar to each others but somewhat different from the English. The Clayton Spanish chose preferring a home environment as their #1 factor while the other Spanish chose “close to home” as their #1 factor. They both had cost and provider experience as important factors.

Health and Nutrition Findings

- Almost all of the English survey respondents indicated that they had a regular family doctor (95% in Clayton and 94% in other parts of the county). The percentage with a family doctor was only slightly lower for the Spanish populations (88% from Clayton and 90% in other parts of the county).
- The English respondents with a regular family doctor have doctors that are primarily located in Johnston County. (92% from the Clayton area and 90% from the other parts of the county). Fewer Spanish respondents had doctors located in Johnston County (64% from the Clayton area and 74% from other parts of the county).
- The English respondents were far less likely to use the county health department for their children's health care; they primarily use pediatricians. The Spanish population in the Clayton area also indicated that they did not use the health department but used pediatricians. The Spanish respondents from other part of the county equally chose the county health department and pediatricians for their children's health care.
- The majority of all respondents said that they regularly take their children to the dentist. The percent saying they did NOT take their children regularly was slightly higher in other parts of the county for both English and Spanish than in the Clayton area.
- The vast majority of children are covered by health insurance of some kind. The Spanish population in the Clayton community has a slightly lower percentage of children covered with only 81% covered compared to 92-95% in the other populations.
- Most of the English survey respondents' children are covered by private insurance with the percent being much higher in the Clayton area 72% compared to 47% in other parts of the county. Most of the Spanish respondents' children are covered by Medicaid with both populations of children covered at 79%. Very few of the Spanish children are covered by private health insurance 4-7%.
- When asked about the types of health concerns they had about their children, all parents had "not eating the right foods" as their #1 selection. Untreated tooth decay was a concern of both Spanish populations. Emotional and behavioral problems were a concern of both English populations. Several of the Spanish respondents had mentioned allergies as other health concerns of their children.
- To help meet the nutritional needs of their children, the #1 selection of all survey respondents was to have more time to cook at home. The next highest choice was to have classes on preparing quick nutritional meals. This selection got the highest percentage from English survey respondents in the Clayton area.
- Spanish survey respondents said that they eat restaurant or "fast food" much less than the English respondents. 76% of the Spanish respondents in Clayton and 56% in other areas said they eat out rarely compared to 44% and 40% of the English respondents. This may be a factor of economics since the Spanish survey respondents had a much lower annual income or there could be cultural factors.
- Almost none of the Spanish survey respondents indicated that they exercised daily (0% in Clayton and 6% in other areas). 44% of the Spanish respondents from Clayton said they rarely exercised and 53% of the Spanish respondents from other areas rarely exercise. More of the English respondents exercise with more frequency;

however, 33% of the English respondents from Clayton and 39% from other areas indicated that they rarely exercised.

- The children of survey respondents seem to be getting more exercise than their parents. The English and Spanish survey respondents said their children were getting more exercise than the children in other parts of the county. The 78% of Spanish children from Clayton participating in exercise at least 2-3 times seems unusual.

Literacy and School Readiness Findings

- English survey respondents indicated that they are spending more time reading to their children than the Spanish survey respondents. 22% of the Spanish respondents from areas other than Clayton indicated that they never spent at least 15-20 minutes reading with their children and 56% of these respondents said they only spent this time once or twice a week. Only 2-7% of other respondents said they never read to their children. Approximately one fourth of the other respondents indicated that they read to their children or talked about books or stories daily with their children.
- It was surprising to see that the majority of survey respondents indicated that they had not had problems knowing what to do with their young children to help them be prepared for school. Only about one third of each survey population indicated that they had experienced problems.
- The Spanish respondents from areas other than Clayton indicated that their biggest problem was not being able to read well enough themselves to be able to read with their child. This helps to explain why most of these respondents said on an earlier question that they are not reading to their children. These same respondents also said that not having time to read to their children was the next biggest problem. Most other respondents said their biggest problem was that they did not know things to do with their children that would be helpful in preparing them for school.
- When asked what types of programs would be helpful for them as they spent time reading with their children, 53% of the Spanish respondents from areas other than Clayton said that they needed a program to show them games to play with their children using books and stories. This may seem to be a good choice for these respondents who said that they cannot read well, but only 19% of them said that they would like a program that works to improve the parents' reading skills. The Spanish respondents from the Clayton area had a much higher percentage who indicated that they would like a class to improve parent reading skills (35%). The English survey respondents indicated that they would appreciate a program that uses books and gives books to families (44% and 39%) but this was not a high priority with the Spanish respondents (10% and 6%).

Family and Parent Support Findings

- There was a significant difference in the English and Spanish responses to whether or not the respondents had ever had questions related to parenting. Only 11% of the Spanish respondents in Clayton said they had questions and 22% of other Spanish respondents had questions. 36% of the English respondents in Clayton had questions and 57% of other English respondents had questions.
- If respondents had questions about parenting, the biggest problem seemed to be that they did not know whom to call to get information. This was especially true for the

Spanish respondents in the Clayton area where 78% indicated this was a problem. Not knowing whom to call for parenting information was the #1 or #2 problem of each survey population.

- If parents wanted family or parent support services, the majority of respondents wanted these services to be located near their homes. Almost a quarter of respondents said they had no preference for the location of these services.
- If the family and parent support services are located in the community, the English respondents from the Clayton area preferred the library as a location followed closely by a child care center or community center. The Spanish respondents from the Clayton area preferred a school setting followed closely by the library or a child care center. The English and Spanish respondents from all other parts of the county said they preferred a school setting for these services.
- The most convenient times for family or parent support services varied greatly. The English survey respondents did NOT prefer the weekday morning or afternoon times while these were more favored times of the Spanish respondents. Generally, early evening seemed to be a good time for all populations except for the Spanish respondents in areas other than Clayton who said this was their last choice of a time for a class or workshop.
- Generally survey respondents indicated that they do NOT need transportation to attend family and parent support programs. More Spanish respondents needed transportation than English but the percentages were still low with only 20% and 28% needing transportation.
- There was a greater need for child care to attend parent and family support services but more respondents did NOT need child care than needed it. The need for child care was highest for the English respondents from the Clayton area where 46% said that they would need child care to attend family support service programs.
- The topics respondents wanted to know more about varied between survey populations. The Spanish populations were so much alike that they were grouped together for the summary. Learning more about discipline techniques was the #1 topic for all English survey respondents. The English respondents were more interested in topics about stress, homework, peer pressure and self esteem than the Spanish respondents. The #1 topic of interest for the Spanish respondents was communicating with their children. The Spanish ranked nutrition and child development as topics of more importance than their English counterparts.
- It was not surprising that the Spanish respondents said that language was their biggest barrier to getting family and parent support services. It was surprising that not having transportation was so low on the barrier list for both the English (#16) and Spanish respondents (#10) because that is so often heard as a reason why families are not making appointments or getting services. There was a great deal of disparity between the barriers listed by the survey respondents and the perceived barriers listed by the human service representatives who completed a survey.

Awareness and Outreach Findings

- The #1 way the English survey respondents from all parts of the county learn about what is going in Johnston County is from their friends or relatives. For the English

respondents from Clayton, local newspapers and schools tied as the next most important ways to learn about the county. The English from other parts of the county chose local newspapers as the #2 medium and schools and the #3 place to learn about the county. The Spanish respondents had a very different #1 choice with the television as their #1 way of learning what is going on in the county. Friends and relatives was their #2 selection and local newspaper was their #3 selection with several mentioning the Que Pasa publication.

- 88% of the Spanish respondents from areas other than Clayton indicated that they had never heard of the Partnership for Children of Johnston County before completing this survey. The familiarity of the Spanish population with the partnership and its programs appeared to be very low from the survey responses. The English familiarity was somewhat better, but 28% of the English respondents from Clayton and 22% from other parts of the county had never heard of the partnership before completing this survey. 31% of the English respondents from Clayton and 22% of English respondents from other parts of the county were very familiar with partnership programs or had used at least one partnership program. Only 9% of the Spanish respondents fit these same criteria.

Significant Findings from Parent Focus Groups

- Almost all of the parents in both focus groups had very little knowledge of the Partnership for Children of Johnston County before attending the focus group meetings. The few that had heard of Smart Start or the Partnership thought that its programs and services were solely for low income families.
- The working parents attending the focus group at the bank were very interested in the referral services of the child care resource and referral program but they had never heard of them before the focus group meeting. They felt that these services would be very beneficial to young working parents if they just knew about them. They had several suggestions for getting more information out to local businesses so that it could be shared in employee orientation packages and on bulletin boards.
- The working parents were very interested in kindergarten readiness issues and were very concerned and stressed about some of the expectations kindergarten teachers have of incoming students such as being able to tie shoes.
- The parents who lived at the Benson Housing Authority and attended that session expressed profound concern for the physical health and safety of their children. They are in great need and expressed the desire to have as much help as could be found with parenting and general family support.

Human Service Agency Representative Survey Information

Introduction

A Human Service Agency Representative Survey was designed by the consultants in collaboration with the staff of the Partnership for Children of Johnston County to seek quantitative data from the providers of human services in the county based on the feedback they have received from their clients. Surveys were available in paper format and also through an on-line format on Free Online Surveys.com. Hard copies of the human service surveys were distributed at March 5 meeting of the Partnership Program Committee. Members of the Program Committee were encouraged to complete the Human Service Agency Representative Survey and to take copies of the Parent Surveys to distribute to their clients. They were also given the link to the online survey tool so that they could complete the survey online. Human Service Agency Representative Surveys were also shared with Board members at the March 14 Partnership for Children of Johnston County Board of Directors meeting. Partnership staff also notified agency representatives via email about the survey and the online link.

Completed surveys were received from representatives from the following:

- Private child care facilities
- Head Start
- Department of Social Services
- Health Department
- Johnston County Community College
- Early Intervention
- Public schools
- Cooperative Extension
- Partnership for Children of Johnston County

A total of 83 human service agency representatives completed surveys which were compiled and analyzed. A table for each question was developed and converted into a chart which has been reported in the Human Service Agency Representative Information pages in this section. The results of certain significant data points related to the barriers that prevent parents from securing services were included on both the Parent Survey and the Human Service Agency Representative Survey. The results from all surveys are compared on page 62 of the Human Service Agency Representative Focus Group Summary. There were times when human service representatives reported the same needs and at other times they had a different perspective from the clients they serve. When there are discrepancies between what parents and agency representatives reported, it is suggested that more emphasis be placed on the direct reporting of the parents. Therefore, more focus is given to parent report in this assessment summary.

Human service agency representatives participated in a focus group to collect qualitative information regarding the needs of young children and families of young children in Johnston County. Approximately 24 representatives attended the focus group.

Human Service Agency Representative Survey Information

The percentages shown in the following tables, charts and graphs represent the percent of 83 survey respondents who checked that response. It should be noted that not all respondents answered every question. Further, responses do not always add up to 100% as some respondents did not complete all answers to survey items.

Chart 1: Human Service Agencies Represented

Agencies	Representatives	Percentage of Total
DSS	4	5%
Public Schools	1	1%
Early Intervention	3	4%
Partnership for Children	3	4%
Health Department	10	12%
Johnston Community College	8	10%
Cooperative Extension	1	1%
Child Care Facility	35	42%
Head Start	5	6%
Other or Unlisted	13	16%

Chart 2: Representatives' Knowledge of Other Agencies

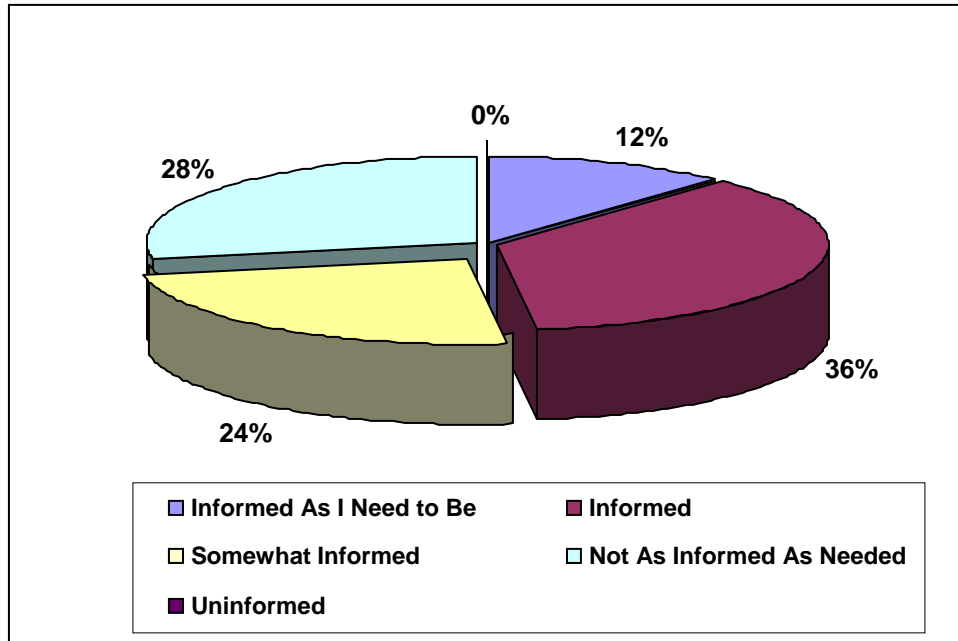
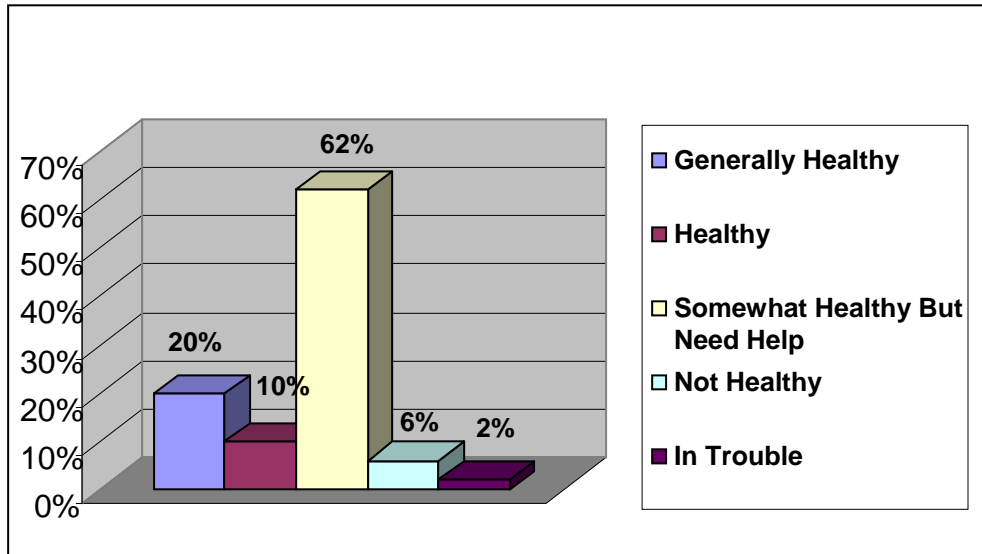


Chart 3a: General Well Being of Families in the County Based Interactions with the Families Served

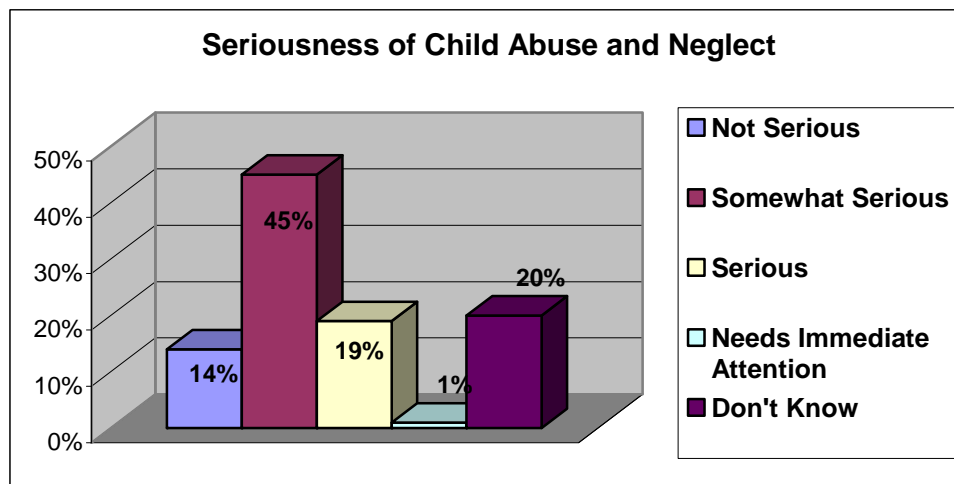


3b. Why do you feel the way you do about the health of families?

- Many families are disconnected. There is less family support and less respite for parents. Often times, couples do not get a break from the children and their marriage/relationship suffers.
- There is much work to be done with families and many service providers need to partner to help provide services. Linking nutrition and child care, parenting and money management, etc. We need to make linkages that haven't been made before.
- I notice young children having to fend for themselves. One parent homes are on the rise. Mothers are often overwhelmed and need emotional support.
- There are more fathers who don't pay child support.
- Mothers are told to seek public child support because the family knows the father has little or no money and cannot afford or will not pay child support. This puts the baby and mother on the system.
- We have a high number of immigrants and families of poverty.
- Most of the children I work with are healthy because the majority have Medicaid. However, their parents often have no insurance which makes them not get health care unless absolutely necessary.
- Most of the population I see is not healthy. Many families I work with are low income and a lot of them don't have access to health care. Most don't have employment that provides health care and can't get Medicaid.
- Everyone has access to health care with some limitations due to Medicaid, Medicare, doctors and pharmacies' help in getting medications and health care.

- We are an agency that deals with families who have children with developmental delays. Families are usually in the midst of dealing with multiple stressors.
- I feel that families are not getting the health care they need due to their not having health insurance.
- The failing economy has put more Johnston County citizens at risk, and as a general rule people cannot survive raising a family based on the current cost of living.
- I work with individuals with chronic disabilities. The majority of them do not have health care. They do not get the needed treatment or assistance with preventive care.
- Because society and the economy is so bad, everybody is suffering
- Health care is not affordable, and there are several citizens without any health care in our county.
- I really do not interact with our clients very much because I only deal with them on the phone. They call up and I schedule transportation to medical appointments.

Chart 4a: Seriousness of Child Abuse and Neglect, Based on Interactions with Families



4b. If you think child abuse and neglect is a serious problem in our community, what should we do to address this problem?

- We need to be creative in teaching parenting skills, most importantly self-care skills.
- Parenting classes should be available for all (potential) mothers and fathers. Mental health support should be made available in churches and other community locations.
- Increase parent and family training in appropriate discipline and care. (3)
- Provide more parenting education for families. (3)
- DSS and other agencies need to work more closely with other helping organizations in the community.
- Provide more resources.
- Providers need to be more aware of what constitutes neglect.
- More emphasis on programs promoting attachment
- Provide education on expectations
- Support DSS – learn proper referral procedure
- Provide more support for families living in poverty: higher paying jobs, affordable housing; affordable health care
- Train human services workers on symptoms to look for; offer free trainings for parents
- Require parents on public assistance to take parent training
- Resources for safety
- More severe punishment for abuse and neglect
- More case workers for one-to-one attention and follow-up with parents (3)
- If something is reported, even if it isn't considered child abuse, have someone to contact families and offer ideas on how to deal with the issues

Chart 5: Seriousness of Problems Young Children Are Having with Literacy and/or Pre-Literacy Skills, Based on Interactions with Families

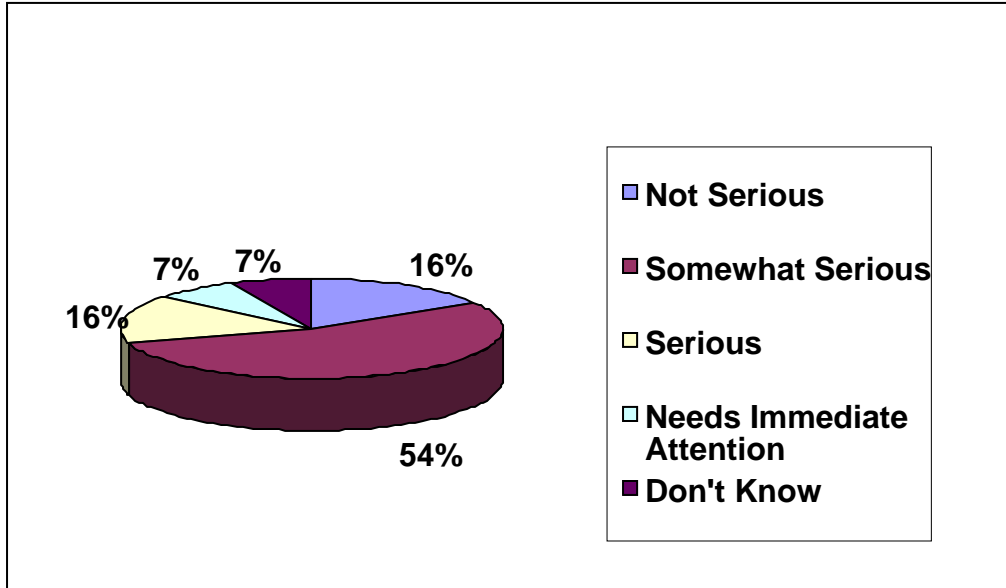


Chart 6: Seriousness of the Problem Adult Family Members Have with Literacy As They Help Their Children with Literacy Activities, Based on Interactions with Families

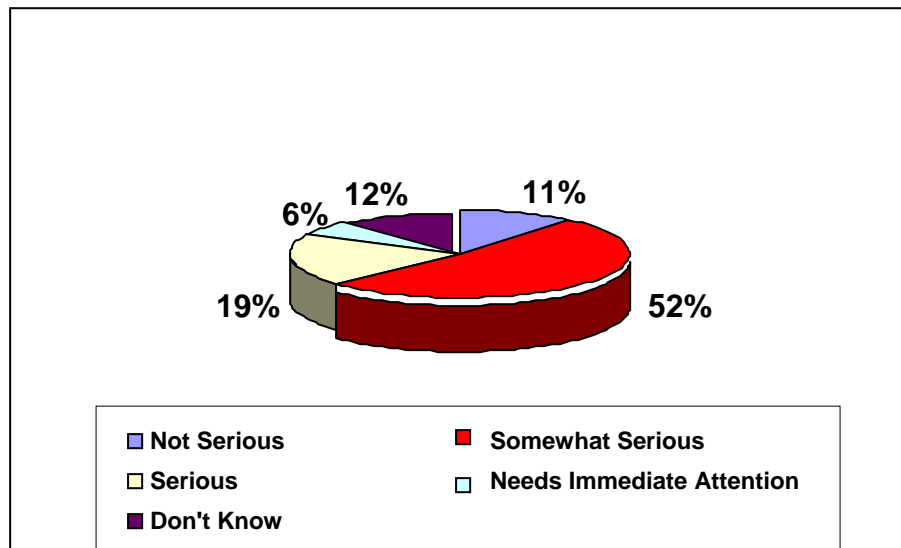


Chart 7: Availability of Pediatric Health Care Services in Johnston County?

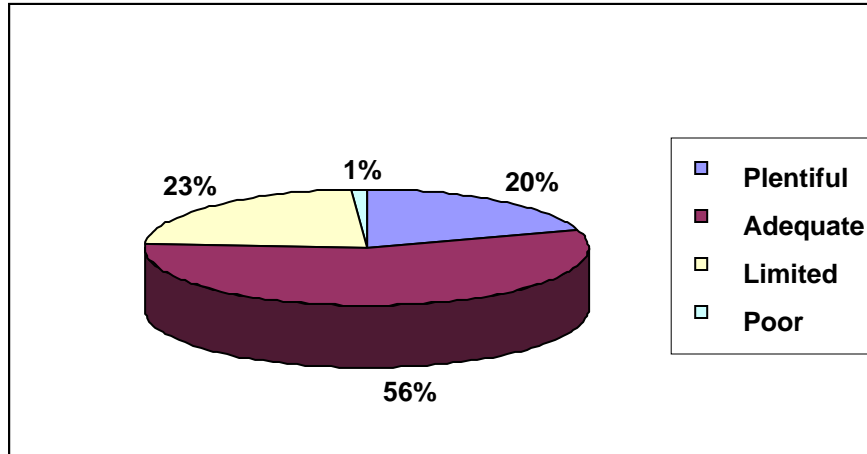


Chart 8: Quality of Pediatric Health Care Available to Families in Johnston County?

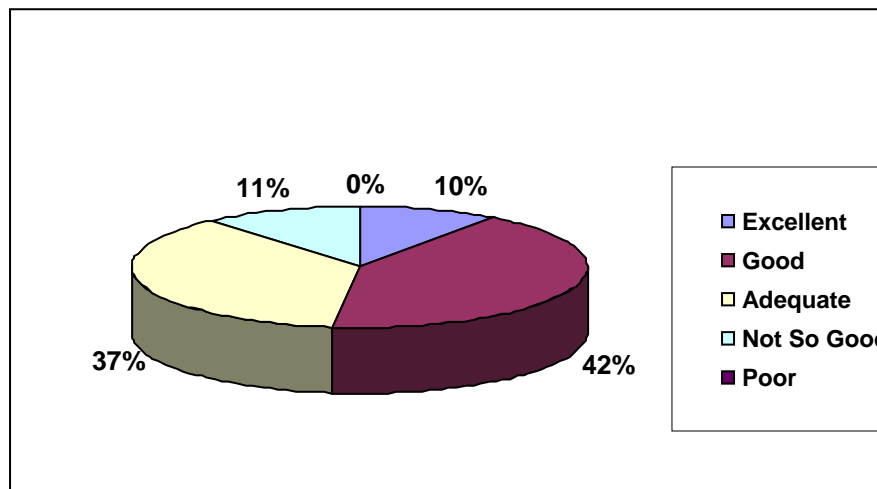


Chart 9: Types of Child Health Problems Seen in Families Served

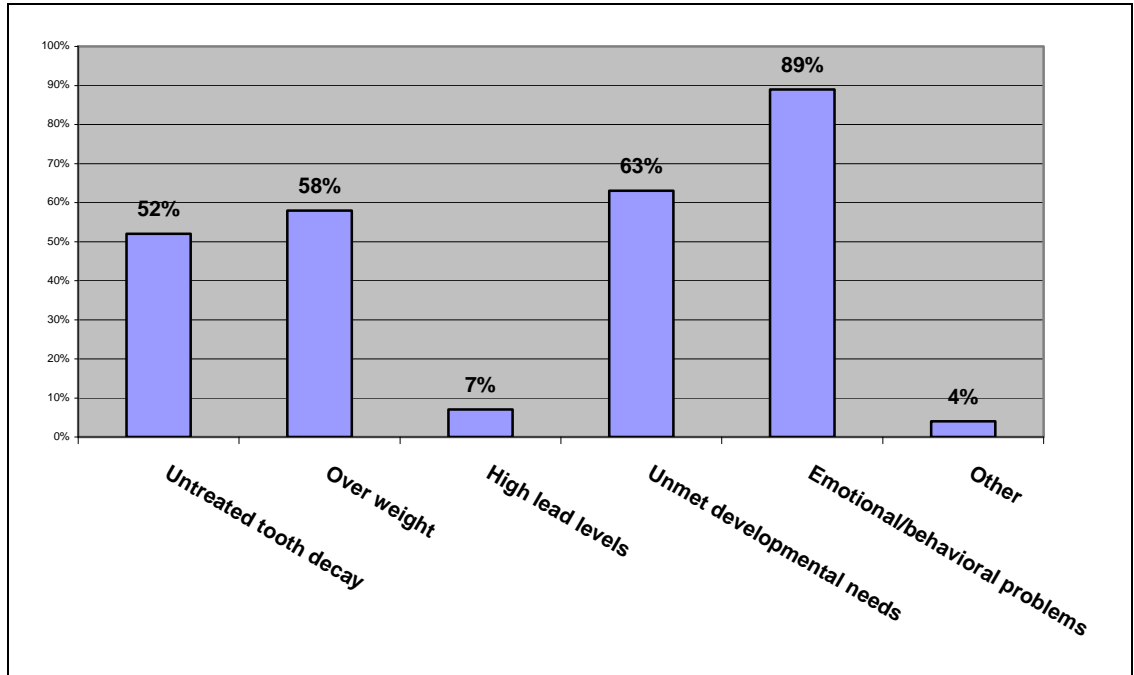
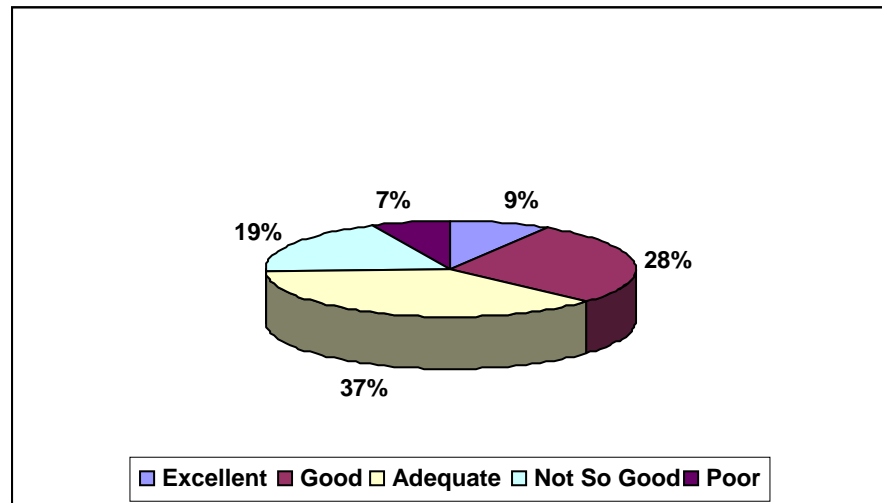


Chart 10: Availability of Family and Parenting Support Programs for Parents of Children Birth to Age Five in Johnston County



11. Representatives' Perception of Barriers That Might Prevent People from Using Existing Family/Parent Support Services Based on Client Reporting

(Barriers are ranked in order of importance with Number 1 being the top barrier from the perspective of the representatives. Percentages represent the percent of respondents selecting the option.)

Representative's Overall Ranking of Barriers	Not At All Serious	Not Very Serious	Somewhat Serious	Very Serious	No Opinion/Don't Know
1. Not Having Transportation	6%	13%	41%	36%	4%
2. Having Been Put on A Waiting List for Services	8%	10%	40%	36%	6%
3. Having Had to Wait Too Long When Receiving Services	6%	15%	47%	24%	8%
4. Services Costing Too Much	9%	17%	40%	29%	6%
5. Not Knowing Whom to Call	11%	12%	36%	33%	8%
5. Service Providers Not Speaking Their Language	8%	16%	40%	27%	9%
5. Not Meeting Eligibility Requirements	8%	18%	41%	24%	9%
6. Not Getting to Speak to A Person When Calling	8%	17%	43%	20%	12%
7. Not Having Child Care So That They Can Get to the Services	8%	16%	43%	23%	9%
7. Locations Not Being Convenient	8%	29%	45%	14%	4%
8. Hours of Service Not Being Convenient	11%	28%	42%	13%	6%
9. Not Liking to Ask Other People for Help	13%	18%	38%	18%	13%
10. Not Having A Way to Call	13%	30%	29%	16%	12%
11. Services Are Just Not Available	14%	33%	37%	6%	9%
12. Having Had A Bad Experience When Getting Services Before	13%	22%	39%	8%	18%
13. Quality of Services Being Poor	21%	39%	25%	3%	12%
14. No Handicap Access	29%	23%	25%	3%	20%
15. Concerns About Confidentiality	24%	44%	19%	1%	12%

Chart 12a: Frequency of Referrals of Clients to a Class or Workshop for Information to Help Them Be a Better Parent

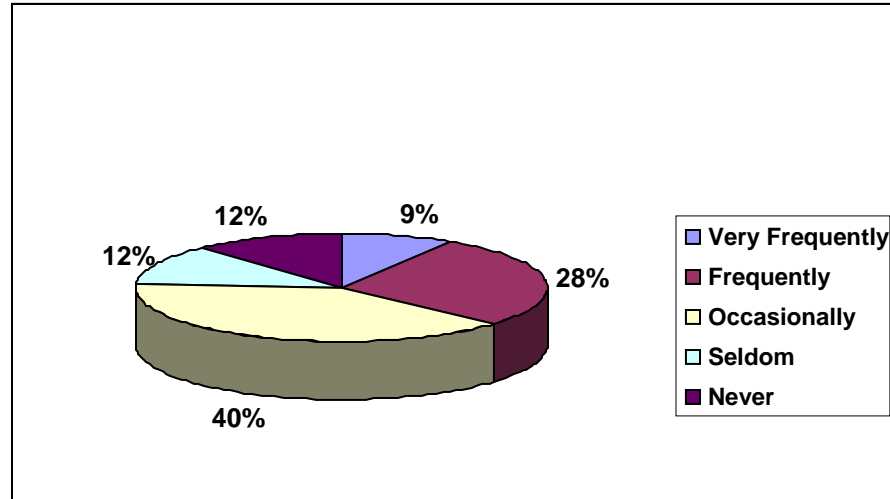


Chart 12b: Where Parents are Referred for Parenting Classes

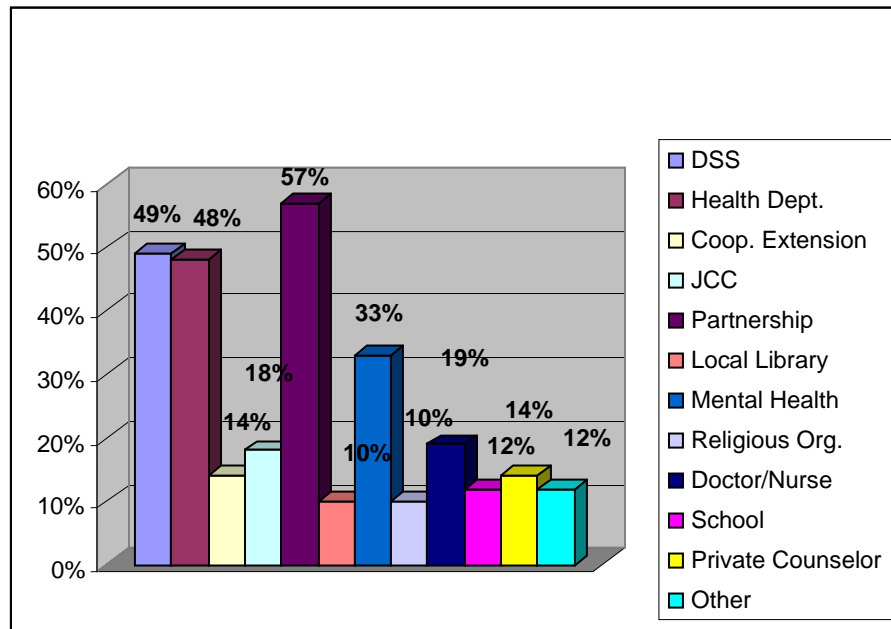


Chart 12c: Reasons Clients are Not Referred to Classes

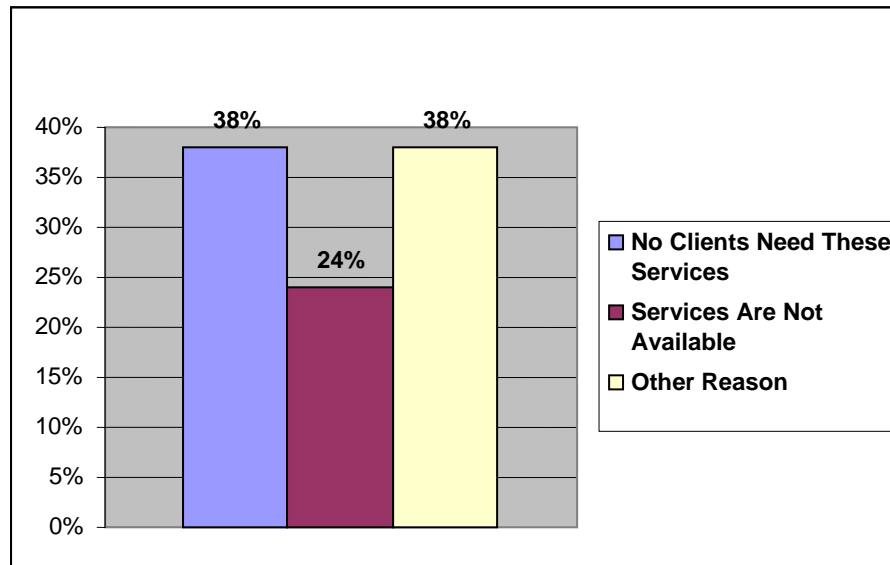
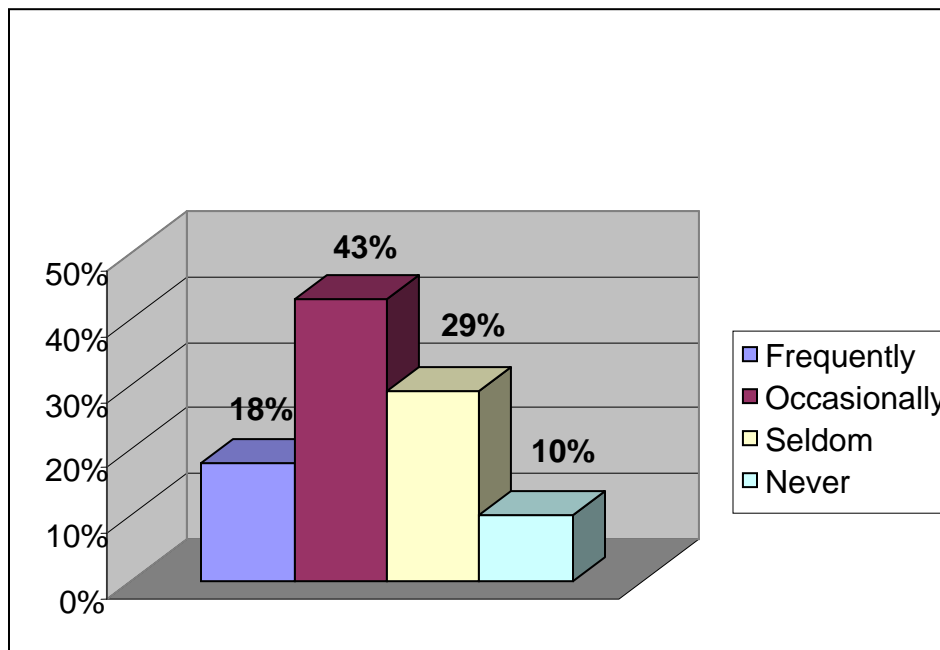


Chart 13: Frequency of Clients/Families Saying They Have Had Problems Finding Services for Their Family in Johnston County



14. Representatives' Suggestions for Family and Parent Support Services to Be Provided in Johnston County:

- Advertise more in newspaper, schools and at DSS (12)
- Provide more money (3)
- Expand FSN
- Develop better communication between agencies to get information and resources out and available to the community
- Make it easier to find on the internet or on the Johnston County page
- Have a one-stop shop to provide services to the families such as child care, medical services, etc.
- Not have a waiting list for child care assistance so that parents can work and therefore afford things they need to help their families (3); also so they can enroll their children in higher quality child care where their children can receive services needed
- Let them be known
- Need support groups, parenting resources for all families
- Find a way to let lower class families understand there are opportunities and services available
- Better transportation
- Support an Early Head Start
- Be more supportive
- Join together more
- Give equal opportunities to all races more frequently
- Weekend support
- Regulate the children's money more to account for money spent on a child
- Employ bi-lingual employees to better assist Spanish speaking families and English speaking providers
- Expand current services
- More mental health resources (promoting attachment and bonding)
- Additional links to other sources
- Full-time family support network
- Help people who need help regardless of who they are or what they have or don't have
- More support for Spanish speaking parents, translation of all materials (2)
- Have all services listed in one place and maybe have a "Wal-Mart" place where all services are offered
- Do more outreach

15. Representatives' Suggestions of What Johnston County Can Do to Improve Child Health:

- Provide low health care costs (4)
- Satellite clinics
- Make sure that each family has at least a monthly visit to the doctor
- Make it more knowledgeable
- Provide preventive care
- More openings at doctor's office
- Force the parent to do it; check teeth, eyes, etc. at school, and make parent get it taken care of
- Availability to more people at higher income ranges for assistance
- Make it more affordable to all who qualify
- Availability of health care consultants...more of them
- Preschool dental care
- Provide more staff and room for service
- Have an advocate or someone working for the county to try to communicate with parents about all the different areas that children need
- Help decrease childhood obesity
- An insurance program besides Medicaid to help those families with children that do not qualify for Medicaid and can't afford private insurance
- Better insurance coverage
- Free or low cost services to all families
- List easy to find services on Johnston County internet page
- Make it available so that people weren't afraid to seek it for their children, especially for illegals
- Provide more money (3)
- More school involvement
- Parent education
- Educate doctors
- Awareness of all services (2)
- Outreach, nutrition, lowering J.C. obesity rate; immunization updates
- Offer and advertise free services once a quarter in different locations of the county; monthly clinics for low income families
- Make health care more available and affordable
- Give all children help they need whatever it is; "no child left behind" health care
- Make doctors accountable for developmental screenings and health assessments
- Mobile health clinic
- More money for Medicaid/Health Choice; lower income requirements
- Nutrition surveys
- More dental providers to work with young children
- Support families in obtaining services, transportation and insurance for those not qualifying for Medicaid

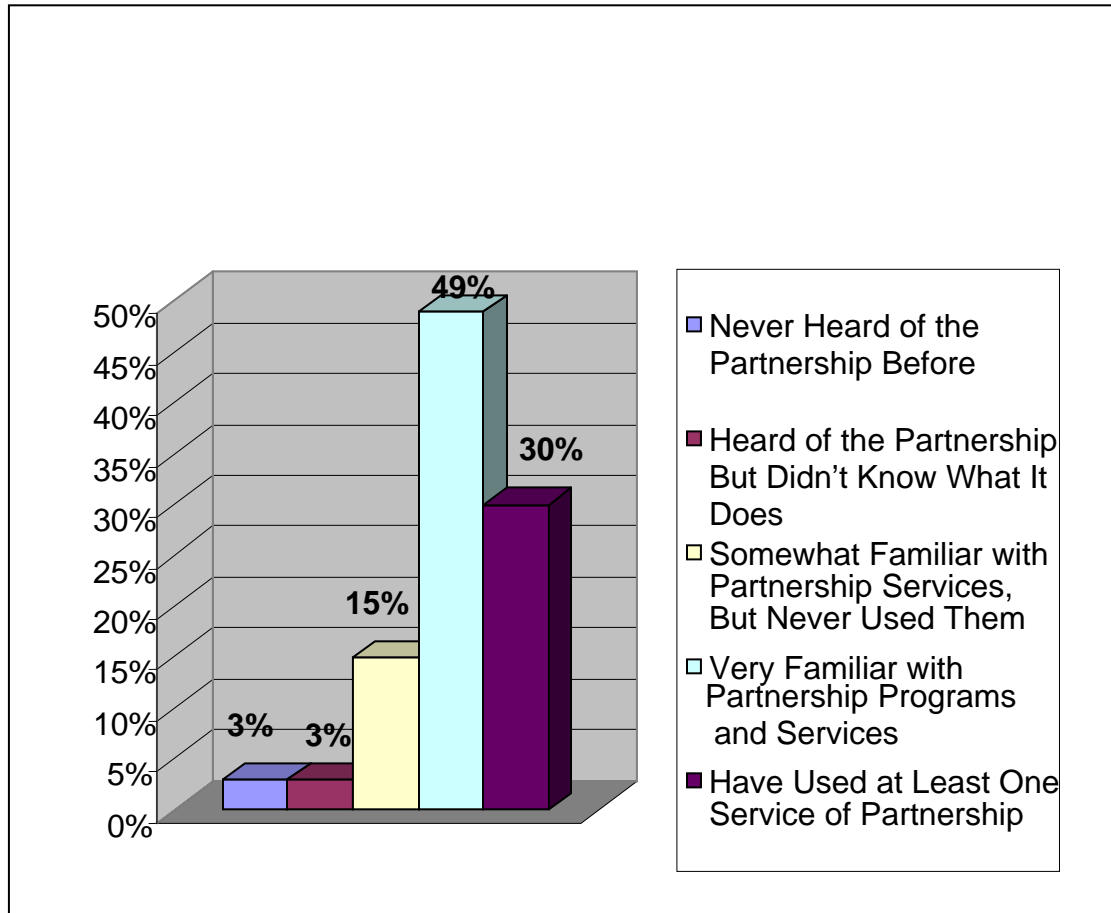
16. Representatives' Suggestions of Things Johnston County Can Do to Improve Family and Child Literacy in Johnston County:

- Offer more second language programs
- Free workshops at various locations stressing parenting and literacy
- Practice reading more
- Make sure children know how to read before going to the next grade
- Make resources available
- Raise teachers' pay and provide more teachers
- If they are having problems, then help them; don't go by a score on a piece of paper
- More information on bookmobiles to families
- Have more support services such as tutors (2)
- Raise funds for books to give to day cares
- Train volunteers to work with adults and children
- If JCC could provide a 6 week class or 3 month class for folks to learn English. Free of charge...Maybe provide transportation 7-9 or 6-8 p.m....or a program aired on TV
- Have more county programs that can contact families and show them how to help their children. I only know of one program, PAT, that does this, and they can only help when they receive referrals
- More programs in schools for reading
- Having bilingual therapist for PT, ST, OT etc. Allow more services for the Spanish speaking population
- Provide free classes
- More schools. More teachers
- Educate parents about the importance of literacy (3)
- Provide more opportunities for family and children to explore literacy in the community
- Advertise easy to find literacy programs on the Johnston County page
- Get the parents involved; get Spanish speaking into ESL classes
- More money (2)
- Book campaign
- Early intervention learning
- Buy more books and distribute to community
- Book resources that are qualified more than the library
- After school fun classes where a meal is served
- Outreach and family support...additional classes and workshops (2)
- Add Motherhead Programs and Imagination Library to community
- Provide services to all children and families
- Offer "prepare" to read workshops or require parent involvement in funded programs
- Encourage parents to get and use library cards for children and themselves
- Introduce families to the library

17. Representatives' Suggestions for Additional Things that Need to Be Done for Children and Families in Johnston County:

- Health fairs all over the county with screening for developmental and health issues
- So many families cannot afford child care to be able to work much less keeping the children healthy
- Letting families know what services are available
- More money for DSS so there is not a waiting list for child care assistance
- Continue on current path and build up activities currently in place
- Provide another CCHC for this county
- Provide classes on learning to read for parents in English and Spanish
- Letting families know that early childhood services are for all children, not just low income or ESL. The scope of services should be so broad that there is no stigma
- Dental clinic expansion; discipline education; developmental expectation education
- OT for sensory in schools... not available, and most family can't afford privately
- More home health agencies willing to care for medically fragile children
- We need to empower families to take care of themselves instead of hand holding them (2)
- Look at more affordable/safe housing in the county
- Offer training at convenient places at convenient times and not cancel them
- Follow up with families and provide services they need in a timely manner
- Offer assistance to families without so many waiting lists; so many families need help and are sitting on waiting lists (2)...Church is about the only place we don't have to wait!
- Services need to be accessible to all families and affordable
- Teach parents to follow through when assistance is arranged for them
- There needs to be county educational fairs that are advertised on TV that help grab the attention of families...find ways that will help the parent understand their children's needs more
- More programs for exceptional children are needed
- Create more affordable opportunities

Chart 18: Familiarity with Services the Partnership for Children of Johnston County Funds and Provides in the Community?



Human Service Agency Representatives Focus Group
Johnston County Human Services Council
May 27, 2008

On May 27, 2008, the Human Services Council of Johnston County met for its monthly meeting with approximately 24 members in attendance. The program for this meeting was the community needs assessment project of the Partnership for Children of Johnston County. The following Johnston County agencies were represented in this meeting: Health Department, Department of Social Services, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Department of Mental Health, Johnston County Community College, the domestic violence program, Council on Aging, Community Action (Head Start Program), Cooperative Extension Service, and the Partnership for Children of Johnston County.

Literacy Needs and Issues of Children and Families

The group was asked to share information about what types of problems their clients were having with literacy. The following issues were discussed by the group:

- Difficult for clients to read and understand materials that they are given;
- Clients are often more lower functioning in literacy than staff may expect;
- Agencies are using testing and evaluation services to assess the abilities of some clients to know how to help them improve their skills;
- Bilingual services are greatly needed but present challenges;
- Different dialects make translations difficult;
- Most agencies have translators but not enough; being able to provide translation services is still a problem; there are no translators at the Council on Aging or at Vocational Rehabilitation Services;

Parenting and Family Support Needs and Issues

The human service agency representatives shared the following information about what types of problems their clients are having in the area of parenting and family support:

- Parents say they don't have sitters or child care so they can attend sessions or support group meetings;
- Parents are struggling with their children who have special needs and the issues that these children have; parents often say they do not know how the best ways to help them;
- It has been difficult to get child care providers to understand about special needs and to get them to work with children who have special needs; they need more information and support in order to work with these children;
- Many parents of children with special needs do not know how to advocate for their children; parents want information on how to advocate; it is challenging to get these parents the information they need and want
- Transportation to services is often a problem for families;

- Agencies are often seeing families that are struggling with balancing the stress of work, family and elder care; it is challenging to help these families; they often need more than money and resources;
- Many representatives indicated that they are seeing more and more families who are “living on the edge” and barely getting by on their income; with the price of gas and problems with mortgages there is a fear that this is only going to get worse;
- Parents may need to be more knowledgeable of what is “developmentally appropriate” for their children; they often do not know whether or not their children are doing what is age appropriate for their age or not;
- Parenting education in Johnston County seems to be limited to a few offerings at mental health and DSS; these classes are not limited to the clients at these agencies; however, the agencies may carry a stigma that prevents the general population from attending the parenting sessions they offer; generally only clients who are mandated to attend the parenting sessions are attending.

Child Health Issues and Needs

The human service agency representatives identified the following areas of child and family health:

- There seem to be an increasing number of ADHD and ADD child behavior problems being seen; questions about whether these are true ADHD/ADD or if the parents/providers are not understanding behaviors;
- Child behavior issues may be misdiagnosed as ADHD;
- Parents often are not taking children to mental health for evaluation for ADHD/ADD behavior issues; transportation is a factor for many of these families;
- DSS is transporting more clients than ever to medical appointments; many of these are children;
- Child victims of sexual abuse may have difficulty getting the appropriate services from specialists if not on Medicaid due to costs;
- There are limited mental health services for children under the age of five;
- Johnston County may have enough pediatric services but there are sometimes questions about the quality of this care;
- Limited speech therapy services; bilingual speech therapy is in great demand but limited services are available;
- There seem to be more and more children with asthmatic symptoms;
- Pediatric dentistry needs are numerous.

Barriers to Obtaining Services

The focus group participants were asked to list what they thought were the primary barriers to getting services in Johnston County and they quickly identified two primary barriers to services:

- Transportation
- Language barriers (not enough translators)

The results of the Human Service Agency Representative Survey question about barriers to services were shown to the group.

Human Service Agency Representatives	English Speaking Respondents	Spanish Speaking Respondents
1. Not Having Transportation	1. Services cost too much for me.	1. The service providers do not speak my language.
2. Having Been Put on A Waiting List for Services	2. Do not meet eligibility requirements.	2. Services are not available.
3. Having Had to Wait Too Long When Receiving Services	3. Hours of service are not convenient for me.	3. I do not have child care so that I can get to the services.
4. Services Costing Too Much	4. I have to wait too long when receiving services.	4. Services cost too much for me.
5. Not Knowing Whom to Call	5. When I call I don't get to speak to a person.	5. I don't know whom to call.
5. Service Providers Not Speaking Their Language	6. I do not like to ask other people for help.	6. I have had a bad experience when getting services before.
5. Not Meeting Eligibility Requirements	7. I am concerned about confidentiality.	7. Hours of service are not convenient for me.
6. Not Getting to Speak to A Person When Calling	8. Services not available.	8. When I call I don't get to speak to a person.
7. Not Having Child Care So That They Can Get to the Services	9. Locations are not convenient for me.	9. I have to wait too long when getting services.
7. Locations Not Being Convenient	10. I don't know whom to call.	10. I don't have transportation.
8. Hours of Service Not Being Convenient	11. I have been put on a waiting list for services.	11. Locations are not convenient for me.
9. Not Liking to Ask Other People for Help	12. There is no handicap access.	12. Do not meet eligibility requirements.
10. Not Having A Way to Call	13. Had a bad experience when getting services	13. I am concerned about confidentiality.
11. Services Are Just Not Available	14. The quality of services is poor.	14. I do not have a way to call.
12. Having Had A Bad Experience When Getting Services Before	15. Not having child care so to get to the services.	15. There is no handicap access.
13. Quality of Services Being Poor	16. Don't have transportation.	16. I have been put on a waiting list.
14. No Handicap Access	17. Do not have a way to call.	17. I do not like to ask other people for help.
15. Concerns About Confidentiality	18. Service providers do not speak my language.	18. The quality of services is poor.

The group discussed the following key differences in barriers for family support services.

Lack of Transportation

- While human service agency representatives listed clients' lack of transportation as the number one barrier to their receiving services, parents did not agree. English speaking parents listed this lack as their number sixteen barrier while Hispanic parents listed it as number ten.
- Agency representatives seemed very surprised that parents had not ranked transportation as being more of a problem.
- Members discussed that clients may sometimes tell them that transportation is the reason for their not keeping appointments because that is a "safe" excuse/reason for them to give. In reality, it may be that there are other reasons such as those that came out on the survey that are the reasons.

Concerns about Privacy

- While agency representatives did not perceive parents' concerns about privacy and confidentiality as being significant (the last on their list), parents expressed a much more significant level of concern about this matter as a barrier that would make them reluctant to seek services at an agency.
- Agency representatives ranked this barrier last on their list of barriers; however, parents ranked it much higher. It was seventh on the list for English speaking parents and thirteenth on the list of Spanish speaking parents.
- Again agency representatives seemed surprised that parents would be concerned about privacy and confidentiality. They indicated that most of their clients did not seem to be concerned. It was mentioned that some people may not be coming in for services because of this concern.
- Agency representatives discussed how they are mandated by law to protect the confidentiality of their clients and that they thought their client understood this. We discussed that clients may not be concerned primarily with agency staff members sharing information but about people who might see them in the waiting area, see them entering the agency, or overhear their conversation with agency staff. It was surprising to learn that many of the agency staff who do intake of private information from clients do not have hard walled offices but work in cubicles where conversations can easily be overheard.

Services are Not Available

- The human service representatives listed services not being available as their number eleven barrier but it appeared much higher on the parent barrier lists.
- Spanish speaking parents had services not being available as their number two barrier while English speaking parents listed it as their number eight barrier.
- We discussed that since services are available in the county, awareness of services must be a key issue. The awareness of services is obviously more of a problem for the Spanish speaking population.

General Perceptions of Barriers

- Both groups of parents expressed the feeling that the cost of agency services were too expensive for them to afford. Agency representatives did not disagree with

- this perception although they placed it lower than parents. The human service representatives felt that parents may often not even know how much services cost.
- It was not surprising that “service providers not speaking their language” was the number one barrier of the Spanish speaking population.

Summary

The group of agency service representatives agreed that they appreciated the opportunity to come together to discuss the needs of families and children in Johnston County. Although there were some differences of opinion, there was also agreement that children and families in Johnston County still have many unmet needs especially in the area of parenting and parent education. They seemed to feel that reaching children and families early in a child’s life is very important in order to make a difference later in life. One of the major opportunities identified to improve services to families was in the area of parent education and training.

The participants were all quite willing to discuss their perceptions of the state of families and children and their needs and were very interested in the differing perceptions offered by the analysis of the three surveys conducted for the Partnership in this study. Many of the attendees agreed that it is very helpful for them to come together regularly to share and discuss their respective services so they can better help their clients.

Overall Findings and Recommendations

1. Issues with Literacy in Johnston County Especially with the Spanish Population

By analyzing the data in several survey questions, it is evident that there are problems with literacy especially in the Spanish population and especially those living in areas of the county outside the Clayton/Cleveland area.

- 53% of all Spanish respondents said they had less than a high school education
- 67% of Spanish respondents from areas other than Clayton/Cleveland said they were not able to read well enough themselves to be able to read to their children
- 22% of Spanish respondents from areas other than Clayton/Cleveland said they never read to their children and an additional 56% said they only spend 15-20 minutes reading once or twice a week. 6% of Spanish respondents from the Clayton/Cleveland area said they never read to their children and an additional 44% said they only spend 15-20 minutes reading once or twice a week.

These literacy problems become even more of a concern to the Partnership when compared to the information respondents gave to the question about daytime child care. When asked who is caring for their young children during the day, 75% of the Spanish respondents said their children are cared for by a parent in the home. By inference, it would seem that many young children of the Spanish survey respondents are being cared for in the home by parents without a high school education who are not able to read well. This could have long lasting implications for these young children.

The Partnership may want to consider funding some programs and activities to reach the parents of young children who do not have strong literacy skills. This would have to be done in a careful and culturally sensitive manner. When asked what type of program would help them most as they spent time reading with their children, only 25% of the overall Spanish population selected a program that works to improve parents reading skills so they can read better with their children. Thirty nine percent (39%) did select a program that uses books with parents and gives books to families that participate. A program that teaches literacy through the use of books with families such as the Motherread or Fatherread program would be something to consider. These programs have a research based curriculum of books that are given to families who participate in the program and the books are usually published in Spanish and English. Many community colleges in North Carolina have Motherread trained instructors on their staff who use the program in their ESL program and they might be willing to work with the Partnership in a literacy program.

Another program that could be used to help get books into the homes of both Spanish and English children is the Dolly Partin Imagination Library and many of these books are published in Spanish and English. Many communities who are using the Dolly Partin Imagination Library have had a lot of success getting private funding for the program from local civic groups and clubs such as Rotary Clubs. Club members can easily see the importance of the cause, the need in the local community and that their money can be used to buy books for a child for a year. A Partnership can start with a small sector of the community such as certain zip codes that have a high concentration of low income or Hispanic families.

2. Community Awareness and Outreach Issues

With so many of the survey respondents and focus group participants saying that they had never heard of the Partnership for Children of Johnston County, the Partnership may want to re-evaluate its methods of sharing information about its programs and services in the county. Since 88% of the Spanish survey respondents said they had never heard of the Partnership before completing the survey, the Hispanic community seems to be especially in need of knowing more about Partnership programs and services. These Spanish respondents are also families with low incomes since 85% of them reported annual incomes of less than \$30,000. Many of them may be in need of the programs and services funded by the Partnership. Even the English survey respondents knew very little about the Partnership with 45% of the English respondents in the Clayton area and 50% of the respondents from the other areas of the county either having never heard of the Partnership or not knowing what the Partnership does. All focus group participants, except for the one Board member who organized the bank focus group, had either never heard of the Partnership or did not know anything about what the Partnership does.

The Partnership may want to pay close attention to the information in the survey question asking how respondents learn about what is going on in Johnston County. The primary way both English and Spanish respondents learn about things in the county is from friends or relatives. What could this mean for the Partnership's community outreach efforts? It could mean more focus on personal presentations to churches, businesses, civic groups, school groups, agencies and any other groups of parents and adults in the county who can then share the information with their friends and relatives. The Spanish population indicated that their primary medium for learning about the county was the television so trying to tap into community access channels and public service announcements might be positive ways to communicate with the Hispanic community. The English respondents favored local newspapers and schools as ways to learn about the county. All survey populations rated newsletters very low in their importance for learning about the county. Since reading maybe a problem for many residents, the effectiveness of newsletters, if they are being widely used to reach families, may need to be evaluated.

3. Educating Parents on Developmentally Appropriate Activities for School Readiness in Child Care Programs

One question on the Parent Survey asked parents about the most important things for a caregiver to do to prepare a child for school. Parents were given a choice of eleven things that a caregiver could do with young children. Some activities are considered very developmentally appropriate for four and five year old children and some are not. Some activities appear on the kindergarten checklist that parents receive when they register their children for kindergarten in the spring. Some activities do not provide any positive and developmentally appropriate learning to prepare children for school.

The activities that were thought to be most important varied between the English and the Spanish populations. It was encouraging that very few respondents chose watching movies like Baby Einstein or Dora the Explorer or doing worksheets and coloring sheets as being important preparations for school. It was discouraging that parents thought it was most important for children to be taught to write and recognize letters and numbers. Parents obviously do not understand the importance of play for young children because it was one of the lowest rated activities for all populations.

It was very apparent in one of the parent focus groups that parents did not fully understand what child care facilities should be doing to prepare their children for kindergarten. One parent was so proud of the fact that her four year old was in a new child care facility and had learned so many letters and sounds in the last several months. This was very important to her and she felt it was the preparation needed for kindergarten. Parents in this focus group were very concerned about the kindergarten checklist that is being distributed by the public schools in the spring at kindergarten registration. They felt that there were items on this list that were not developmentally appropriate for their children and that trying to get them to learn these things before starting kindergarten was creating stress in their home.

The Partnership is probably doing a good job of working with many child care providers on developmentally appropriate activities for children. The challenge is to educate parents so that parents are not pushing providers to teach inappropriate things or to engage in inappropriate activities. Continuing to work with the schools on the Ready Schools initiative to help keep the expectations for kindergarten realistic and developmentally appropriate will be important.

4. Transportation to Child Care

According to survey responses, the majority of English respondents did NOT need transportation to get their children to child care. The opposite was true for the Spanish respondents. 89% of the Spanish respondents from Clayton and 81% of the Spanish respondents from other parts of the county said they needed

transportation to get their children to child care. When asked about the factors that were important to them in selecting child care for their children, the #1 choice for the Spanish respondents living outside of the Clayton area was child care that is close to their home. This was even more important to them than the cost of child care or any of the other quality indicators on the list.

When parents were asked about the times they were willing for their children to be transported if they were able to attend a free Pre-K program such as the More at Four program, the majority of all populations preferred that their children NOT be transported for more than 20 minutes from home. Of the Spanish respondents who live in areas of the county outside of Clayton, 82% preferred transportation times of 20 minutes or less from their homes. In the Clayton areas, 57% of the Spanish population preferred transportation times of 20 minutes or less. The English respondents have very similar preferences, with 71% of the Clayton respondents and 66% of the respondents from other areas of the county preferring transportation of 20 minutes or less.

These parental preferences could have important implications in determining the locations of More at Four classrooms across the county. Often More at Four programs have high Hispanic populations which have indicated on the survey that they have transportation needs in getting their children to child care. Since most Spanish and English parents do not want their children transported more than 20 minutes, it would seem preferable to try to ensure that the Pre-K/More at Four classrooms were located in most all communities in Johnston County so that children would not have to be transported across the county.

5. Parent and Family Support Education

The area of parent and family support for the families of young children did not emerge as a distinct and clear picture from the community needs assessment. When asked directly whether they had had questions related to parenting that they needed help in answering, the majority of the survey respondents said NO. The percentage indicating they had had problems was much lower in the Spanish respondents than in the English respondents. However, when asked about different topics they would like to know more about, there were a large number of responses from parents. Of the total English respondents, 80% wanted to know more about discipline, and 68% wanted to know more about building self esteem. Of the total Spanish respondents, 71% wanted to know more about communicating with their children and 66% wanted to know more about discipline. There seemed to be great interest when asked about specific topics.

During the parent focus group sessions, when parents were asked directly about parenting issues, they were slow to respond at first. It often took more prompting and guiding with other questions to get them to open up and talk about problems and issues related to parenting. Once they started talking, many of the focus

group participants said that although they did not have major problems, they often had questions related to their children and being parents.

On the Human Service Agency Representative Survey, only 1% of the respondents felt that the abuse and neglect problem in the county needed immediate attention, but 64% said that they felt the problem was serious or somewhat serious. When asked about the availability of parenting or family support services, 74% of the respondents said that they thought the availability of these services was excellent, good or adequate. Thirty seven percent (37%) of the agency representatives said that they refer clients to parenting classes frequently or very frequently and an additional 40% refer clients occasionally. The place clients are most often referred is the Partnership for Children of Johnston County. The second agency receiving referrals is the Department of Social Services and the third is the Health Department.

There may be an unmet and an almost unspoken need for more information on parenting in the county for parents of young children, but it is not clear from this assessment. From the Human Services Agency Representative focus group, it seems that very few agencies in the county are actually offering parenting workshops or trainings. The Department of Social Services and Mental Health offer classes for their clients and these classes are open to the public; however, there may be a stigma attached to attending these classes offered by or at DSS which may limit the participation of the general public. The Partnership or other agencies in the county may want to investigate further the need for general parenting sessions that are well marketed and are offered at convenient times and locations.