



## Family Listening Session

# Hearing from Parents About Their Child Care Needs

## Latino Network

In January 2020, a listening session with parents was held in Gresham, Oregon to learn about their needs for, and experiences with, child care in their community. This listening session was part of a series of family listening sessions funded by the Preschool Development Grant as a part of a statewide early learning needs assessment. The goal of the listening sessions was to hear family voices that have not yet been captured in understanding families' early learning needs and experiences. The sessions were co-designed, planned, and hosted by Latino Network and by researchers from AB Cultural Drivers, OSLC Developments, Inc., and Portland State University. Eight caregivers attended the session, 6 mothers and 2 grandmothers currently living in Gresham. Most caregivers had come to Oregon from various areas of Mexico (Oaxaca, Chiapas, Pachuca, and Hidalgo), and one was born in the United States. The listening session was conducted in Spanish.

## Current Child Care Experiences and Building School Readiness

### Who currently takes care of your children ages 0-5 years and what activities do they do?

Three mothers shared that they take care of their children themselves, two participants have children watched by friends or neighbors, and two participants take their children to child care centers. Mothers who care for their children at home said that they write, sing, dance, and do chores with their children at home, while others said their children draw, paint, dance, exercise, and do station activities while cared for by others. Only three participants said that their child's caregivers speak Spanish to their children and provide culturally specific activities. One mother shared that at her son's Head Start program "they speak Spanish to him, give him Mexican food, and make tortillas." "Les hablan en español, les dan comida mexicana, y les hacen tortillas." Another shared that for the Day of the Dead, the teachers asked her family to bring a 'pan de muerto' to the celebration where they made sugar skulls and spoke Spanish. Two other participants shared that those who take care of their children do not speak Spanish or support their child's culture or traditions.



### **What time or days of the week would you like your child to be in care?**

As might be expected, different families had different needs:

Two mothers need care every day they go to work, which includes weekends. One of these mothers shared that “on weekends there is no care.”

**“Los fines de semana, no hay cuidado de niños.”**

The other adjusted her work schedule drastically. She works nights 2 days a week in order to coordinate care with her husband.

Another mother shared that her Head Start schedule works well, 12:30-4pm, Tuesday through Friday. Then a neighbor takes care of her child for a few hours before their father is available.

One mother takes her child to care only one day a week, while another mother needs care every day of the week.

### **How would you like your child to arrive at their ideal child care situation?**

Every mother would prefer to take their child to their early child care provider, but multiple mothers wanted care that provided transportation to school. One of these mothers said this because she currently “has to take two children to school at the same time.”

**“Tengo que llevar a dos niños a la escuela al mismo tiempo.”**

### **How do educational and artistic activities help prepare your children for kindergarten?**

Participants who have their children in preschool classrooms shared that educational and artistic activities allow their children to build confidence, become familiar with being in a classroom with teachers and other children, learn and practice English.

**“Because they are developing more and they’re having more confidence with the teachers and with other children, they are not embarrassed, they are not insecure and so that in the future they will have a career and learn a little bit of everything.”**

**“Porque así se van desarrollando más y van teniendo más confianza con las maestras y con otros niños, no tienen pena, no son inseguros...y para que en un futuro lleguen a tener una carrera y que aprendan de todo un poco.”**

**“They are better prepared! My girl went to the Head Start, missed her mom and dad a lot, cried at school every day...Now, she likes school, and she hasn’t given me any complaints. It helped her a lot, because she’s been in a child care center since a young age and now she speaks English very well. She knows how to translate Spanish and English.”**

**“¡Se despiertan más! Mi niña iba al Head Start, extrañaba mucho a su mamá y papá, lloraba en la escuela todos los días, pero igual la dejaba. Y ahora sí le gusta la escuela, y no me ha dado ninguna queja. Sí le ayudó mucho, porque ha estado desde pequeña en un centro y ahora habla muy bien en inglés. Sabe traducir en español e inglés.”**

### **Their Ideal Child Care Situation**

#### **What kinds of educational, artistic, and other activities would you like your children to receive to help them prepare for kindergarten?**

Caregivers wanted their children to learn basic academic skills, such as the alphabet and numbers. They also wanted their children to learn to be social with other children, and learn to obey and be respectful of others. One caregiver wanted her child to **“learn the basics, their address [and] phone number, [so] if anything happens they can say it.”**

**“que aprendieran lo más básico, su dirección, teléfono...en caso pase algo, puedan decirlo.”**

Another caregiver wanted her child to also have opportunities for music and gymnastic activities, in addition to academic activities.

## Concerns About the Quality of Care

Two mothers said that it is important that their child care provider feeds their children. While other mothers shared that their current care situation provides food, the two mothers who prioritized food expressed concern about their children not being able to eat.

**"...there are many child care places where [they] do not feed them."**

**"...hay muchos lugares q no les dan de comer."**

**"I used to work hard and cook for my children every day. I noticed that my children were losing a lot of weight, the provider did not feed them the food I left for them, did not change their diapers, nor their clothes. I would provide everything to the babysitter to take care of them...One day, I left work early and went to pick up my children before the normal time and caught the provider eating the food that I had taken to my children that day...I took my children with me, the diapers and left the babysitter's house upset, but I didn't say anything."**

**"Yo antes trabajaba mucho y les cocinaba todos los días a mis hijos. Note que mis niños estaban adelgazando mucho, la proveedora no les daba de comer la comida que yo les dejaba, no les cambiaba los pañales, ni su ropa. Yo le llevaba todo a la chica para que me los cuidara. No me los cuidaba bien, yo un día salí del trabajo antes de tiempo y fui a recoger a mis niños antes de la hora de recogerlos y encontré a la proveedora comiendo la comida que yo les había llevado a mis hijos ese día y ellos comiendo la comida de ella, ella no cuidaba bien a los niños. Yo me lleve a los niños conmigo, los pañales y me salí de la casa de la babysitter molesta pero no le dije nada."**

While focused on their children's access to food, these mothers' concerns indicate negative experiences with child care that failed to address their children's basic needs. These families are not always able to access quality care.

## Finding Appropriate Care

### What resources have you used in the past to find care?

Four mothers shared that they received recommendations for child care and preschool programs from a nurse that visited their home once a week to check on how their child was developing.

### What challenges have you experienced in finding care?

Three mothers applied to put their children in Head Start, but encountered the same challenge of not meeting the income requirement. One of these mothers was on the waiting list for 2 years for Head Start, and, once she had her last child and started meeting the requirement, her child was ultimately admitted for the 2019-2020 year.

One mother shared that a family member's child was mistreated by his provider. He was withdrawn and afraid of the provider. She decided not to put her child in daycare because of this. Two other mothers shared some mistrust of care providers, and some of their care decisions have been informed by this mistrust.

A mom who has her son in a special center for autistic children said, **"In my case where my child goes to, he gets scared, it's a center where there are children who do not speak and scream, my child gets scared and does not want to go there...Once, my son didn't want to go to the center...He told us he didn't want to see [his therapist]."** The mother asked the principal to change her son's therapist. **"I never knew what happened...the school said that because he saw an episode of a girl who cried a lot and did not stop crying, that was the reason why my boy was crying but [I knew] that it wasn't because of that."** In the end, they changed the child's therapist.

**"En mi caso donde mi niño va, se asusta, es un centro donde hay niños que no hablan y gritan, mi niño se asusta y no quiere ir...Una vez, mi hijo no quería ir al centro...Nos decía que no quería verlo (terapeuta)."** La mamá le pidió a la directora que le cambiaran de terapeuta. **"Nunca supe que pasó...la escuela dice que porque el niño vio un episodio de una niña que lloraba mucho y no paraba de llorar y por eso el niño lloraba, pero la mamá sabe que no fue por eso."** Así que al final sí le cambiaron de terapeuta.

**"When my son went to [school], I always would tell my child that nobody should touch his private parts, only mom and dad. The boy knew that no one should touch his private parts, and he didn't even want the teacher to touch him to change his diaper."**

**“Cuando mi hijo fue a la escuela, yo siempre le decía a mi niño que: ‘nadie te debe de tocar tus partes íntimas; sólo mamá y papá. El niño sabía que nadie le debía de tocar sus partes íntimas, y hasta no quería que la maestra lo tocara para cambiarle el pañal.”**

Some mothers shared that their children struggle to communicate in English. One of these mothers wanted to find care in Spanish so that her child could be understood. This was less important to other mothers in the session, because their children speak both Spanish and English. One mother struggled to find care in Spanish.

### **Have you ever had to leave work to take care of your children because paying to care for them is too expensive?**

Four mothers shared that the cost of care impacted their choice to put their child in care or work.

**“Oh yes, I’ve left work, I was paying \$34 a day (for babysitter), I worked only 6 hours and I was earning only \$12 an hour, it wasn’t worth it.”**

**“Oh si, yo si he dejado el trabajo, estaba pagando \$34 al día, yo trabajaba solamente 6 horas y ganaba solo \$12 por hora; no me salía a cuenta.”**

**“I’d like to leave him at a daycare, but I started to check daycare prices and it was too expensive, even for a few hours, so I made the decision to stay home with him...I’m just going to wait for him to go to school, this next year he’s going to school.”**

**“Si me gustaría dejarlo en una guardería, pero empecé a averiguar los precios de las guarderías y están demasiado caras, aun por pocas horas, por eso mejor tomé la decisión de quedarme con él en casa...solo voy a esperar que vaya a la escuela, este año que viene va a la escuela.”**

**“I’ve found a program that has started at the school where you can leave them there, but it’s like \$75 an hour for care, it is too expensive.”**

**“Ha entrado a la escuela a un programa que los puedes dejar ahí, pero está como \$75 la hora por el cuidado, es demasiado caro.”**

**“...Sometimes it’s not convenient to go to work because they charge much more. State [licensed] child care providers charge more.”**

**“A veces no nos conviene ir a trabajar porque cobran mucho más. Las proveedoras del estado cobran más.”**

### **Support for Special Needs**

**“My child has had about four speech therapies, but I felt that they didn’t help him. The therapists would tell me to play with him. I thought they were going to teach him how to pronounce the words, to give names to things, and make him repeat. They would just play with cars or the ball. I didn’t feel that it helped him at all...My boy learned because I would go to the dollar store and buy him flash cards and he learned that way.”**

Her son is currently in a preschool program at Earl Boyles, and she shared that **“he’s learning a lot and talking more.”**



### **Their Needs as Parents**

#### **What would help you be the best parent you can be?**

Parents in this session wished they had more patience with their children:

**“Be tolerant and stay calm when children are young.”**

**“Ser tolerante y guardar la calma cuando los niños son pequeños.”**

**“Patience, because we stress at work and we lash out at them and they are not to blame.”**

**“Paciencia porque nos estresamos en el trabajo y nos desquitamos con ellos y no tienen la culpa.”**

## Key Takeaways

- ▶ These families value educational and artistic activities for children because they foster familiarity with the school system and build self-confidence.
- ▶ Home visiting nurses and Early Intervention staff were important referral resources for finding child care and specialized support.
- ▶ Some families have had negative experiences with child care providers, and these experiences have influenced their child care decisions.
- ▶ Mothers were challenged by the cost of care, which often exceeds what they make at work and forces mothers to stop working.
- ▶ Some of these families struggled to access public child care because they made too much money to meet the income requirements, but did not make enough money to afford to pay out of pocket for child care.
- ▶ Some of these families spent a long time on waitlists for a spot to open up in a public child care program.
- ▶ About one half of the families have care providers who speak Spanish and do culturally specific activities with their children, and about one half of the families do not. Some families shared that they and their children struggle to communicate in English, and one family struggled to find care in Spanish.
- ▶ Based on their personal experiences or the experiences of close family, some of these families displayed distrust of child care providers and therapists that has influenced their care decisions.

**“Mi niño ha tenido como 4 terapias del habla, pero sentí que no le ayudó. Las terapeutas me decían que juegue con él. Pensé que le iban a enseñar a pronunciar las palabras, a poner nombres a las cosas y hacerles repetir, solo se ponía a jugar con los carritos o a la pelota, no sentí que le sirvió de nada... El niño aprendió porque yo iba al dollar store y le compraba flash cars y aprendió así. Yo le enseñe a mi hijo desde que estaba pequeño, le iba explicando las cosas. Las terapeutas no le ayudaban en repetirle las palabras.”**

**“De ahí el empezó en la escuela en Earl Boyles, ahí está aprendiendo mucho y hablando más.”**

Another mother said: “[The therapists] would give me guidelines of what to do at home with him, they told me to organize his toys in a category, and motivate him by playing and ask him what he wants to play with. Do you want blocks? Cars? He would just point at things. [The therapists] would come for 45 minutes but would never model to him how to pronounce the words.”

**“[The therapist] me dieron pautas para que yo hiciera con él, me decían que separa los juegos en categorías, y jugara con él para motivarlo a que dijera que quería jugar. ¿Quieres bloques carros? Antes solo señalaba. Venían [las terapeutas] por 45 minutos pero nunca modelaban como debía de pronunciar las palabras.”**

Another mother had a hard time finding the therapy her child needed in Spanish. “It took a lot of work to find the place where my child goes to. I was looking for therapies in Spanish, I went to a place but they rejected me because nobody spoke Spanish. Now my child goes to a center called CARD (Center for Autism and Related Disorders). The director speaks Spanish, but the therapies are in English.” She relied on a referral from an Early Intervention Program staff member to find this center.

**“Para encontrar el lugar donde está yendo mi hijo me costo mucho trabajo, yo estaba buscando terapias en español. Fui a un lugar pero me rechazaron porque nadie hablaba español. Ahora mi hijo va un centro que se llama CARD, el director habla español pero la terapias son en inglés.”**

## Acknowledgements

**AB**  **CULTURAL DRIVERS**  
Responsive Evaluation & Research

 **ODI**  
OSLC DEVELOPMENTS, Inc.

 **Portland State**  
UNIVERSITY



**LatinoNetwork**

*Funding for this work was provided by the Oregon Early Learning Division as part of the Preschool Development Grant. We would like to thank staff from Latino Network for agreeing to work with us to create an opportunity to hear from families. We are especially grateful to the families who took the time to share their experiences, needs, and hopes with us.*

*The project described was supported by Grant Number 90TP0020-01-02 from the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (DHHS). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of DHHS.*