

# COMMUNITY THEMES & STRENGTHS

## Early Childhood Health: Lancaster County Four Sector Needs Assessment

We collected surveys, held focus groups, and conducted interviews from parents, childcare providers, healthcare providers, and community stakeholders between October 2017 – March 2018. This handout highlights some of the cross-sector findings available in our full report.

### DIMENSIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH

In focus groups, parents and childcare providers were provided a handout showing these seven aspects of health that this assessment focused on to make sure young children are health and thriving:



Physical Well-being: Muscle control, coordination, balance, fine motor skills, safety rules, self-care

Mental well-being: Positive relationships, social competence, low stress, self-regulation



Brain development: New experiences, language, vision, hearing, social interaction

Basic Needs Are Met: Food, shelter, safe and stable living environment



Safe Neighborhoods: Well-maintained homes, caring neighbors, green spaces, good schools, community events

Access to Healthy Foods: Ability to find and purchase high quality and healthy food



Support & Education for Families: Access to community resources, support of culture, support networks, and parent education

Everyone agreed with these dimensions (and they were all covered within what each sector described as needs for children to be healthy and thriving), but said fun and play time needed to be added to all aspects

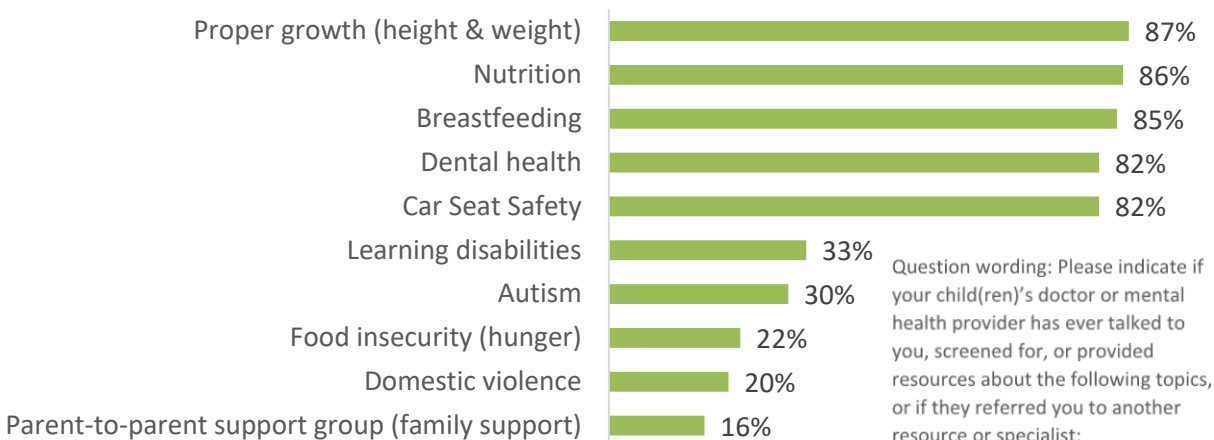


## PARENTS

### Resources (Top 5)

Percentage of Parents that have <u>used</u> the listed program		Percentage of Parents that have <u>never heard of</u> the listed program	
Child Care	84%	HEROES Weight Management Clinic	82%
Lincoln Parks and Recreation	58%	Mental health providers for parents	59%
YMCA	58%	Safe Kids	52%
Breastfeeding classes	55%	UNL Barkley Center	47%
Breastfeeding support groups	35%	Nebraska Family Helpline	40%

### Information, Screening, or Referral (Top and Bottom 5)



### Greatest Needs of Young Children, According to Parents

Early education (31%); childcare/daycare (22%); Affordability (18%); Community supports (14%); Parenting (12%): “Early child education 0-2 childcare services that are affordable and quality”; “Access to affordable, quality childcare. Community support for families, such as paid family leave, assistance with adjusting to new members of the family, through doula. Nursing, lactation, and postpartum support. “One of the greatest needs I see if for parents to learn how to appropriately partner w/ professionals & advocate for their children”



The other sectors were asked about what they would like parents to know or focus on to ensure young children are healthy and thriving. Feedback for parents included utilizing and acknowledging the resources that are available to them to better understand the importance of the different aspects of health.

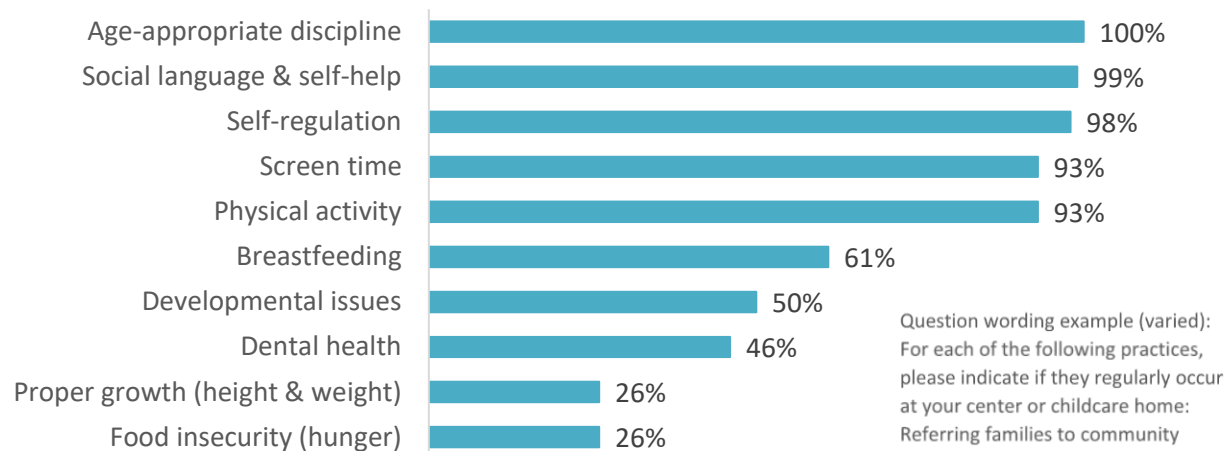
*“I want [parents] to know how to choose a high quality early childhood program, so I want them to know what they should be looking for, what they should be asking of the program.”*

## CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

### Resources (Top 5)

Percentage of Childcare Providers that have referred someone to the listed program		Percentage of Childcare Providers that have never heard of the listed program	
Lincoln City Libraries	68%	HEROES Weight Management Clinic	77%
Lincoln Parks and Recreation	60%	Dental home	52%
LPS Early Intervention Services	58%	Healthy Families America/Home visiting program	50%
WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program	49%	UNL Barkley Center	32%
Head Start/Early Head Start	47%	Mental health providers for parents	31%

### Information, Screening, or Referral (Top and Bottom 5)



### Greatest Needs of Young Children, According to Childcare Providers

Early education (24%); child development support (18%); parenting (18%); affordability (17%); childcare/daycare (14%); healthcare (14%): “Free programming for young children ages 0-5. Drop in programs, classes, etc.”, “Getting parents to know expectations of where kid should be developmentally. Even my clients that are educators don't pay attention to this. Or are too busy to let kids take time to learn self help, help w/ social emotional skills, correct behavior or help with language.”

The other sectors were asked about what they would like childcare providers to know or focus on to ensure young children are healthy and thriving: utilize training on behavioral health and development and increasing communication with the parents, as well as an emphasis on how critical and valued their role is in ensuring young children are healthy and thriving.

*“I really want them to see the value in understanding children’s social-emotional health, understanding guidance discipline behavior as it related to young kids and eliminating completely this notion of kicking kids out because of behaviors.”*

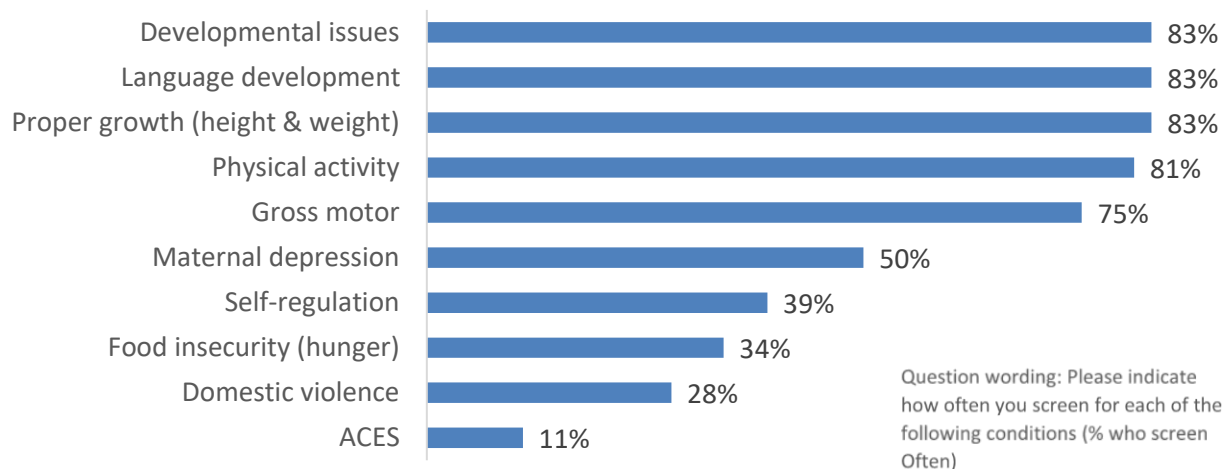


## HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

### Resources (Top 5)

Percentage of Healthcare Providers that referred someone to the listed program		Percentage of Healthcare Providers that have never heard of the listed program	
WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program	93%	Healthy Families America/Home visiting program	54%
Child Protective Services	89%	Nebraska Family Helpline	39%
Lactation consultation	87%	Safe Kids	39%
Head Start/Early Head Start	83%	Dental home	26%
LPS Early Intervention Services	83%	HEROES Weight Management Clinic	26%

### Information, Screening, or Referral (Top and Bottom 5)



### Greatest Needs of Young Children, According to Childcare Providers

Parenting (39%); early education (35%); affordability (19%); literacy (19%); language services (13%); reduced screen time (13%): "A stable home environment that is safe and has involved parents." "You don't mention financial planning - most families waste financial resources, thus lose opportunity across the spectrum." "Education or getting kids off of screen, not to even let them use screens at a young age. It snatches away their innate curiosity to learn & problem solve. Good media campaigns might be helpful (like there are on car seats, nutrition, etc.)."



The other sectors were asked about what they would like healthcare providers to know or focus on to ensure young children are healthy and thriving: ensure they are taking a comprehensive approach to health, are taking cultural aspects into consideration, and are communicating with parents and childcare providers.

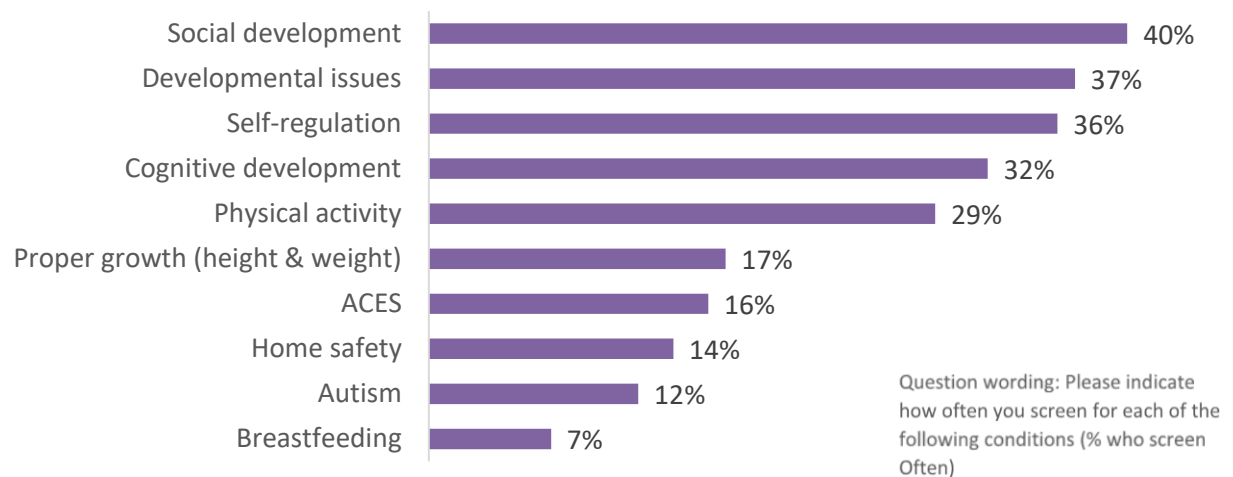
*"I would like to keep reminding [healthcare providers] of the importance of their role in education, advice giving. I think they're just a really critical advisor to families".*

## COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

### Resources (Top 5)

Percentage of Community Stakeholders that have referred someone to the listed program		Percentage of Community Stakeholders that have never heard of the listed program	
LPS Early Intervention Services	79%	HEROES Weight Management Clinic	45%
Child Protective Services	74%	Healthy Families America/Home visiting program	31%
Lincoln Parks and Recreation	71%	Nebraska Family Helpline	19%
Disability resources	64%	Safe Kids	19%
WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program	64%	UNL Barkley Center	17%

### Information, Screening, or Referral (Top and Bottom 5)



### Greatest Needs of Young Children, According to Community Stakeholders

Childcare/daycare (50%); early education (36%); affordability (29%); community supports (29%); mental health (25%); parenting (25%); basic needs (21%); child development support (21%): “High quality, affordable, accessible child care, high quality medical home services (including education on development, screentime, sleep, safety, nutrition), high quality mental health services for children and families in need.” “Parenting and safety, referrals to early education services, children who do not get screened and thus don't get early treatment, basic food/shelter needs.”

The other sectors were asked about what they would like community stakeholders to know or focus on to ensure young children are healthy and thriving: knowing the importance of getting services and resources to the families and those involved in ensuring young children’s health, and to make those resources affordable and accessible to everyone, because early investment will lead to benefits in the community workforce and the health of the population.

*“Sometimes we like to blame parents or schools, but really it’s a lack of having adequate resources that often is our biggest barrier.”*



## Overall

We collected data from parents, and three other sectors that we can consider service providers for families (childcare providers, healthcare providers, and community stakeholders). All of the service providers described their role in ensuring young children are healthy and thriving as being a resource for parents. Parents saw (part of) their role as seeking out community resources for their child(ren). However, they expressed some frustration in focus groups about the difficulty in learning about needed resources. When asked about specific resources, the knowledge of and usage of resources varied a lot by sector. Only one resource was used or referred by at least half of respondents in each sector: Lincoln Parks and Recreation. However, out of a list of 37 resources, 13 were known by at least half of each sector.



When given many options, or when asked an open-ended question, the different perspectives of the respondents in each sector dominated. For example, when asked about the greatest needs of young children, answers ranged across 12 topics, with several mentioned by only one or two sectors. Only three topics appeared as themes in all four sectors: early education, parenting, and affordability. When asked about what is included in a healthy, thriving child, all sectors identified physical well-being and safe neighborhoods. Overall, they addressed all seven items that we considered the main aspects of health for children ages 0-8 years old: physical well-being, mental well-being, brain development, basic needs are met, safe neighborhoods, access to healthy foods, and support and education for families. When asked specifically about these aspects, respondents agreed with them, but said one thing was missing: fun, or play.



When asked more in-depth questions about specific issues, concerns were shared by all sectors. Based on survey data, we asked focus group and interview participants specifically about parent-child interactions, mental health/behavioral health, and attachment and brain development. While they thought each of these were very important issues, they shared similar desires to address each of them: help parents understand why each are important and what they can do to improve outcomes for children. Further, addressing the mental health needs of parents to help support healthy and safe environments for kids. These issues come down to educating parents and having available, accessible resources to address issues children and families experience – resources they know how to find, and can afford to use.



The availability of resources is a concern in Lancaster County, but informing parents and families about existing resources is an important gap that needs to be addressed. All sectors recognized the importance of this in their own roles and in their expectations for others. To fulfill this need, increased and improved communication between sectors would need to take place. While accessing health services was deemed important, coordination of care and knowledge of different expertise/specialization/services, and resources was a greater concern to the respondents and participants for this needs assessment.

