



California Budget & Policy Center

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Spanish-Speaking Families in Monterey County

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Virtual - Zoom

About the focus group

- **Number of Attendees:** Five parents attended the focus group
- **Communities Represented:** Greenfield and Salinas
- **Number of Children:**
 - Two parents had one child
 - Two parents had two children
 - One parent had three children
- **Ages of Children:** Ages ranged from 1 and 14. A few parents also mentioned their child care experience with their now adult children.

Types of Care

- Overall parents have utilized several types of care, including non-licensed providers and state-subsidized child care programs.
 - **Parents primarily rely on non-licensed providers to meet their needs.** Some of the parents work in agriculture and have specific scheduling needs, limiting their options.
 - **Some families have been able to find subsidized child care.** Parents mentioned how difficult it is to find information, and at least one parent mentioned how she was able to find a center after having negative experiences with an unlicensed provider.

Context for the Unmet Need in Monterey County

Parents are residents of two different cities within Monterey County, Greenfield and Salinas. Generally, parents in Greenfield have fewer child care options and therefore face greater difficulty finding care. While parents in Salinas may have greater access to child

care, options are often limited to unlicensed providers who charge a daily fee. For most families, unlicensed care ends up being the only child care option, but families would prefer licensed providers if available to them.

Availability of Affordable Child Care

Finding affordable child care in both Salinas and Greenfield is difficult, and some families don't know of everything that's available in their communities.

- **Parents feel like they don't have enough or the right information on finding a provider that meets their needs.** At least one of the parents who works in agriculture mentioned that they find it difficult to access information on any child care options available to them. One of the parents, who is also preparing to become a provider, mentioned programs families can look into, especially programs that are not specific to migrant families working in agriculture.
- **Parents fear that their immigration status will impact their eligibility for subsidized programs.** Several parents mentioned not knowing whether their immigration status blocks them from accessing programs and that they fear having to answer those types of questions.

"I think so, sometimes there's still that fear that when they ask for documentation, they might ask about your status or something like that. There's a bit of fear about whether you're eligible or not."

- **Families are aware of child care centers in their communities, however it's difficult to navigate the enrollment process.** At least one parent has a child enrolled in a licensed center and described the long process of finding it and enrolling their child.

"And that's when I started making noise, and that's how they began helping me—one agency transferred me to another. And in this way, I was able to reach the San Lucia Center."

Parent Preferences for Child Care

Overall, parents have a preference for licensed child care providers. While they didn't mention preference for any particular setting, several parents talked about how beneficial it is for their children when providers support their developmental and socio-emotional needs while participating in the program.

Families who are currently enrolled in a program value how providers support their children's developmental and socio-emotional needs. Two of the parents described

how they've observed their children learning to interact with other children, draw, and communicate. These parents work and don't have time to engage in these and other activities, such as reading to their children, at home. One of the parents also shared her concern about potential developmental delays in her child and how a center helped secure specialized services for them.

State-Subsidized Child Care

As mentioned, two parents in the group have utilized a state-subsidized program — one family uses a center, and the other a home-based provider.

State and other publicly-supported programs offer families a connection to other services in addition to child care. For example, one of the parents, who had concerns with their child's development, was able to connect with other state-supported programs to access services for her child. Another parent mentioned how her provider is helping her navigate the age requirements to try to help her stay enrolled.

Families generally trust state-subsidized child care programs over unlicensed providers. Several parents mentioned that they don't fully trust unlicensed providers. One parent shared how a negative experience, in which her child was hurt, forced her to look for a different option, ultimately leading her to enroll her child in a center. Another parent shared how she has built trust with her current licensed provider and noticed that her child enjoys this particular program.

"...with the provider I go to now, she has helped me a lot and has earned my trust. And also, it depends on my child—how he arrives, and how in the first weeks, children don't want to go or anything, but later he even calls her his second mom. That's what makes me happy about the provider and the program."

Other Options

Most families have relied on unlicensed providers to meet their child care needs at some point. As previously mentioned, families hesitate to go with this option for various reasons, including increased rates and generally not trusting those providers that they don't know. To partially address these concerns, families ask relatives and others for references on providers (more on this in the following section).

Community Assets

Knowing that there's high demand for child care services and the difficulty navigating the systems, parents in these two communities within Monterey County benefit from various systems of support.

Infrastructure-Related Assets

Local organizations help families connect with child care options. Most families mentioned engagement with specific organizations that supported them with finding child care and other services. This included nonprofits and foundations. These organizations provide services and distribute information to families. Additionally, some organizations support parents who want to become providers themselves. Parents mentioned connecting with these organizations by going to community events.

"And so, trying to find and do the best I can to help them move forward. And, um, there was an event the other day in González, and I think it was at one of those where I saw one of those programs. This is how I got here."

Relationship-Related Assets

Parents seek recommendations from family members and acquaintances when looking for child care. Given that many parents have to rely on unlicensed providers, they consult with each other to find and vet potential providers. One parent mentioned that when she was unsuccessful in finding an option through family and acquaintances, she would also go to grocery stores and see if someone was advertising services.

"For my two-year-old, what I would do was ask people I knew if they knew anyone, or also, when I ran out of options, I would go to stores because sometimes they post ads saying they babysit children. And, well, the truth is that as a mother, you also take a risk because you don't know these people, and no one has recommended them to you."

Child Care Priorities

Community-Specific Priorities

Families prioritize programs that support children's language development as multilinguals. Several children are learning three different languages: English, Spanish, and Triqui or Mixteco. Parents want their children to be supported in developing as

multilinguals, recognizing that while that is an asset and will open opportunities for children, it can also be overwhelming for them and they may fall behind. One parent mentioned that the provider supports her child with English and Spanish and that she supports her child with Triqui at home.

"And the provider helped me so that the child could do many things. She helped him speak both in English and in Spanish now."

Families prioritize child care options that meet their work schedule. Most parents work to meet their basic necessities and need care that works with their shifting schedules and other work arrangements. One parent who works in agriculture shared how her schedule depends on how far she needs to travel. Moreover, in the morning many working parents have to be ready an hour before because they carpool to work, which means that children need to be dropped off even earlier so parents can make it to work on time.

"The ride comes an hour earlier, like at six o'clock, and you have to leave depending on how far it is. Before, when I lived on Eighth Street, the babysitter who took care of my child lived on Third Street, and I had to walk several blocks and then return. I would leave around five in the morning and come back to wait for the ride at six."

Age Group-Specific Priorities

Parents would like programs in their communities that also provide services for infants. For example, one parent mentioned that her infant child was part of a program that focused on their socio-emotional development and now that her child is a preschooler she sees the impact of this program. Access for infant and toddler care is even more limited compared to other age groups.

Information for Policymakers

Throughout the conversation families touched on supportive child care policies that can make it easier for families to get the resources they need, but there are many restrictive policies that often get in the way, making it harder for communities to thrive.

Helpful policies

Language support with navigating child care programs. Immigrant families that don't speak English often don't know if they will find help in their own language, as they assume that the entire process will be conducted only in English. Therefore, it's helpful when they're

able to get help in their own language, however, there should be more support for families who speak Mixteco or Triqui.

In addition to child care, families may also need support in accessing others services.

As previously mentioned, a parent in this group shared her concerns about her child's development and wanted to seek any support her child could receive. The parent ended up getting services at a regional center, which only happened because the child care center helped her get connected with those other programs.

Harmful policies

Access to child care (and other programs) is limited, especially in Greenfield. Parents who live in Greenfield say that there are less opportunities in Greenfield and they're often referred to programs in Salinas, but Salinas is far for many families, especially for families that don't drive. Having other options even in nearby areas would better support their child care needs.

"This is how I got here, and speaking of resources, I feel that in the city of Greenfield there is a lack of programs. The majority I find are in Salinas, and I can't find anything around me, like in Greenfield, King City, Soledad, or at most, González. But Salinas feels a bit too far for me."

Strict age limits in certain programs disrupt care for their children. In the 0-5 continuum, and before children become school-age, there are programs that provide services for children of specific age ranges. As the child gets older, families may lose access to a program of their choice.

Families who cannot find or don't qualify for state-subsidized child care programs have to rely on unlicensed providers, but cost may be prohibitive. Even when families are able to find an option that partially meets their needs, as is the case with unlicensed providers, the cost ranges from \$30 to \$35 dollars per day, and given their wages, they cannot afford those costs.

Recommendations

Throughout the conversation parents shared recommendations to improve access and delivery of child care services. Those include the following:

- **There should be more child care providers who speak the languages families and children speak in order to promote multilingualism.** As previously mentioned, families value language and culture and see it as an asset that can create future opportunities for their children. Parents also see an increase in families who speak languages other than English, such as Mixteco and Triqui. One way to accomplish this is to have more staff who reflect this diversity.

"I believe that if there were people who speak different languages, it would be much better for daycare centers, as our communities are growing and there are different needs, as I mentioned before. I think it's important to provide those languages in child care for the communities as well."

- **Materials, and resources should be made available in languages other than English, especially Mixteco and Triqui.** Parents commented on the importance of having educational materials for children to foster a more supportive child care environment.
- **Income requirements should be adjusted to ensure more families have access to programs.** Families say that they have to work to cover costs such as housing, gas, and food, which continue to increase, but covering these costs means that they're not able to qualify for state-supported child care. Often, families go over those limits by only a few dollars, but that doesn't mean they're able to pay for child care.

"Yes, it's the income, because sometimes it's just a small amount, a dollar and cents. Then you no longer qualify. And it's frustrating as parents because many times you don't know. And when you finally find out and they tell you that, you get frustrated."

- **Parents would like to see more centers located close to their communities.** All parents recommended that policymakers should open more centers, and those centers should be located close to their communities. Many parents don't drive, and they would prefer not to walk long distances for child care.
- **Provide parents with easy-to-access information on child care opportunities.** Parents may not have the time to search for options and would like to see information in places where they already spend their time, like grocery stores. One parent shared an app that provides timely information on a variety of topics that parents can access through their mobile phones and translate to their preferred languages.

