



Family Listening Session

Hearing from Parents About Their Child Care Needs

Northwest Regional Early Learning Hub

In January of 2020, individual listening sessions were conducted with parents in Clatskanie and Scappoose, Oregon to learn about their experiences with, and needs for, child care in their community. The interview sessions were co-designed, planned and conducted by researchers at OSLC Developments, Inc., Portland State University, and the Early Learning Division. 11 parents contributed. Seven parents were interviewed by phone, two of the parents are from Scappoose and the rest are from Clatskanie. Four parents were interviewed in a focus group in Clatskanie (10 moms, 1 dad).

Finding Appropriate Care

What do they want in child care, how easy or difficult is it to find, what got in the way?

All of the parents that were interviewed mentioned how difficult it is to find child care in Clatskanie. There is a general lack of care options as well as certified and trained providers. Many parents who tried to find child care could not find it so, they ended up caring for their children themselves or found friends and family to look after their kids.

What kind of things did you look for when figuring out child care and or preschool arrangements?

Most of the parents interviewed reported that safety of the provider and the environment, and affordability were priorities. Getting to know the provider will increase parents' sense of safety and comfort. Two parents that have children experiencing disabilities mentioned they were looking for a provider who had experience and could specifically care for children with special needs. In particular, providers who are accredited so the state will help with the cost of care. One half of the parents mentioned that they were looking for care that was in a facility or center versus in home, private care and that they would prefer this location to be close to their home. One parent specifically said they were looking for transportation. Parents felt like having care in a center will increase the likelihood that providers will be certified, have training, and the environment will be safer.

What information did you have?

Most of the parents reported that word of mouth from family and friends, knowing and feeling comfortable with the provider, and facility was information that helped them make their decision. However, many of the parents also mentioned that the lack of registered or certified providers in the area, in particular for children with special needs, made child care prohibitive or parents were put on long waitlists. Cost versus income was also a factor for some parents. Due to the cost of care and because they preferred to raise their own children, they are choosing to stay home.

Where did you get the information?

Most parents got their information from Facebook, doing a search for care in their area or the providers websites. Parents specifically mentioned their Clatskanie community Facebook page, Facebook groups, schools and preschools, and the state licensing website for providers. Other parents mentioned word of mouth and knowing the provider personally.

What would you ideally want to know to make a good decision?

Most parents mentioned wanting to know the background of the provider including background checks and references. In addition, knowing and touring the environment their child was going to be in, as well as knowing they could go in any time and check on their kids. They wanted to understand things like safety, (e.g., no swimming pools and appropriate bathroom situations), what the children would be fed, how much outside time they would have, whether they used a curriculum, and how situations would be handled disciplinary wise.

What was most important to your final decision?

Safety and trustworthiness were important for all family's final decisions. Parents wanted to know that children were safe and comfortable. They also want to meet the providers and feel comfortable with the facility. One parent could not find trained and qualified providers, which lead her to care for her children herself.

Did you have to make compromises about what you were looking for?

Parents felt like they did need to make compromises for a variety of reasons, many of which were work related. Some parents mentioned they had to reduce the number of hours they worked, or rearrange their work schedule; one parent mentioned she did not work so she could care for her kids, while another had to turn down a job offer. One parent reported that her grandson's parents rearranged their visitation schedule to accommodate child care, and two mothers said they had to look for child care in another town due to lack of options in Clatskanie.



Equity and Inclusion

To what extent do you feel your provider created opportunities to highlight your child's family background, traditions, and culture? Have you ever felt that you or your child were disrespected or not valued by a child care provider because of your race, ethnicity, language, or other factors?

All families but two reported that they only spoke English in their homes. One family also spoke Japanese in their home and one family also spoke Spanish. None of the families felt their provider had ever disrespected them personally or their child, due to their race, ethnicity, language, or other factors. In response to the question about whether they felt their provider created opportunities to highlight their family background and traditions, parents either said it was not something that was ever done or thought of, nor was it relevant to their family, or that their provider recognized their child's birthday, Christmas, Thanksgiving, or their Christian religion as examples of family culture. One family mentioned their daughter's preschool was very open to inviting families to bring in books or cultural practices that made them comfortable.

Their Ideal Child Care Situation

Most parents mentioned that an ideal child care would be one that is centrally located in town, in a safe facility, with certified teachers possibly in one of their schools. One person mentioned specifically a facility—such as the Head Start preschool with cameras and enough people supervising the children. Another parent mentioned she would like a parent co-op, where you sign up for different times, and families would go together and volunteer to watch each other's kids. Only one parent mentioned their ideal location would be in someone's home.

What would your child learn at this ideal arrangement?

All of the parents mentioned that social interaction, how to get along with other kids and adults, was their main priority. Parents also mentioned safety and the importance of good routines. Other things they would learn included: basic early learning skills such as manners, independence, shapes, colors, numbers, letters, playing with others, and arts and crafts.

One parent commented **"I don't expect them to be learning that's an actual preschool I just want them to be safe."**

And another parent chimed in **"I think we've experienced...had such a drought in daycare I think we are so starved for someone we can trust to watch our kid to get us through the day...is so high priority at this point, we haven't even thought about the rest of it for so long, 'til they get to preschool age..."**

How would your child get there?

All parents said they would self-transport their children. A few of the parents mentioned that they would utilize transportation if it was provided.

What times of the day or days of the week would your child or children be there?

A few parents wanted a few days a week for 2 to 3 hours at a time but many parents mentioned all daycare. One helpful comment a mother made was that one of the largest industry's in Clatskanie is the mill so, many families start work as early as 6:30am. She mentioned that 6:30am to 7:00pm would be ideal for her family. Many families agreed daycare starting at 7:00am Monday through Friday would be ideal, with ending times ranging from midafternoon to as late as 7:00pm.



Families with Children with Special Needs

Have you had any difficulties finding care for your children experiencing disability?

Four parents reported children with special needs, mostly speech. Parents reported that getting child care where the providers understand and have experience or are trained and certified to work with children with special needs is difficult to find in Clatskanie. A couple of parents mentioned that finding care for a child three years or older who is not potty trained is also difficult. Two parents said that they found out about a provider through their medical professional, one being their child's physical therapist and one their child's psychologist. One parent specifically talked about not being able to find a provider who is certified or trained to work with children with special needs so, her sister is going through the process to get state certified. This has been a barrier to care; the process is time consuming and her sister is dropping her hours at work in order to do this. Those who did find a good provider feel that their child's needs were being met in a way that was sensitive and supportive.

Have you ever chosen not to work because child care was too expensive?

All of the parents except for one mom said that they have chosen not to work at some point because of the expense of child care. However, the mom shared that if she did not have her grandmother to help with child care, one of the parents would not be able to work. Three of the parents explained having to weigh the cost of child care with how much they make to ensure they are paying for the cost of child care and still bringing money home. One mom said *"we sat down and literally went through dollars and cents...We figured out how much time can we allow that's just chill TV, toys, playtime at someone else's house, versus ok we need to work...We figured out if I take time off it makes more sense than if my son who makes 5 times as much as I do. And if there's a sick day, we're like, who makes the least amount of money in the situation and can take the hit?"* Three parents explained weighing the costs of child care with how much they are making, and spending time with their kids. One mom stated *"it wasn't worth it to miss out on my child's growing up for a few hundred dollars after paying out."*

Current Child Care Experiences and Building School Readiness

How important is it that your child care provider help you and your child to be more ready to start kindergarten?

Most of the parents agreed that kindergarten readiness was important but certain factors were particularly important. Four of the parents said it was particularly important to them that their child care providers focus on social skills. One of these four parents shared that playing and learning while playing was important to them. Three of the parents interviewed said it was particularly important for their children to learn basic school skills such as; getting used to a longer day, being able to sit for long periods, knowing the routine of school environment, riding the bus, knowing basic classroom expectations, and having experience with school structure. Two of these three parents shared it was also important for their children to learn how to respect adults. One of the parents shared that *"to have a daycare facility where they can learn, that would be huge in the transition to kindergarten."* Two of the parents interviewed felt that kindergarten readiness would come with preschool and that it was more important to have safe providers, and also just the fact that they are getting child care, because there's such a *"desperate situation for child care"* in Clatskanie.

What does your provider do to help with school readiness, including social skills?

Four parents shared information about how the provider supports children with social skills through, playtime, interaction with other kids, teaching them how to get along, and learning to share space and materials. One of these parent's shared that her daughter's preschool uses the Second Step curriculum to help guide children through conflicts and solving social problems. One mom shared that her provider does a lot of activities, arts and crafts, sensory things, ABC's, numbers, and learning about listening and following directions. One mom shared that her provider does not do anything focused on social or other skills, she just watches her child. One mom shared that her private providers did not have the training to help their child with social or other school skills.

What does your provider talk to you about in terms of things you can do to help your child be ready to start school?

For four of the parents interviewed, this question did not apply because they are child care providers themselves. For one of the parents, their provider has good communication about what is going on in the classroom. The provider has a class website, provides newsletters, emails, and gives worksheets to take home with things they are working on in class (e.g., finding upper- and lower-case letters). One parent's provider talks with her about being consistent with attendance and how to do things he does at school at home. One parent's provider talks to them about their experience with kids they have who are already in kindergarten. For one of the parent's, their provider has not said anything about what they can do to help them be ready to start school.

What gets in the way of being able to be the best parent you can be?

Four of the parents felt that not having enough time to spend with their child got in the way. All of these four parents listed work as getting in the way of them being able to spend time with their child. One of these four parents also mentioned her commitments and the children's activities getting in the way of spending time with her children. Three of the parents mentioned feeling drained or exhausted as getting in the way, one of these parents is a caregiver for multiple children with special needs. One parent shared that not having a larger income gets in the way because it doesn't allow for her child to have as many opportunities. One parent shared that the stress of not having quality daycare gets in the way because "you don't have the daily reminder your kids are in a safe structured spot."

What would help you to feel you were doing the best you could?

Four of the parents mentioned that having quality child care providers would help them feel they were doing the best they could as a parent. These parents particularly mentioned providers who are safe, trust worthy, the best care possible, trained, and focused on learning as being helpful. One of these parents mentioned quality child care would be helpful because it would allow her to get a break from the 24/7 care she provides to her children with special needs and would give her time for all the paperwork, transporting to OHSU, and appointments she has to do because her children have special needs. Two of the parents mentioned having support from family. One parent interviewed mentioned access to local educational parenting resources. One parent mentioned, just in general, feeling like she could meet all of her children's needs. Another parent shared that being a voice for her son with special needs would help her feel she was doing the best she could as a parent.

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