

2021 Community Needs Assessment Highlights

Summarized by Justine A. Wayne, MSW, MSPH, Evaluation Consultant, October 28, 2021

Stokes Partnership for Children (SPFC) recently conducted a community needs assessment and requested input via an online survey from parents, caregivers and professionals who work with young children. Relevant existing data from a variety of sources was also gathered and reviewed. The data and survey results¹ will shape the Smart Start funding priorities over a three-year period (2022-25) for programs in Stokes County that support children from birth to age five, but not yet in kindergarten.



In summary, the following key needs were identified:

- Expanded access to child care and Pre-K
- Support for behavioral and social-emotional (mental health) needs of children, both in child care setting & directly for parents.
- Increasing child care provider compensation (a living wage); providing health insurance; promoting child care providers as professionals.

Out of 100 counties, Stokes ranked **38th** in 2020, up from **39th** in 2018, and **40th** in 2014 - steady progress.

From the survey of 222 residents or those who work with young children in Stokes County, 161- 203 respondents rated the following "**Challenges** for your family and/or families you work with," most Often:

1. **Availability of high quality child care or pre-k near home or work**
2. **Affordable high quality child care or pre-k**
3. **Children with challenging behaviors**
4. **Access to before/after-school and/or summer programs**

Within challenges that were specifically services, 170-200 respondents ranked the following most often:

1. **Access to child mental health services**
2. **Access to adult mental health services**
3. **Affordable health insurance**

And out of other community issues, 175-200 respondents ranked the following most often:

1. **Unemployment, underemployment or availability of jobs**
2. **Alcohol/drug abuse**
3. **Family violence/ domestic abuse/ child neglect**

194 responded to which programs or services are most needed for families and young children:

1. **Affordable child care/ pre-K** (128, 66% selected)
2. **Services for children with behavioral challenges** (112, 58% selected)
3. **Mental health services/therapy for young children** (101, 52% selected)
4. **Mental health services/therapy for parents** (97, 50% selected)
5. **2nd or 3rd shift care** (97, 50% selected)

In conclusion, there are two themes across the challenges cited and the services needed:

- High quality child care and Pre-K is **insufficient** due to affordability as well as access
- **Social-emotional** issues are coming up more than pre-COVID in the last needs assessment

Child care providers continue to be severely underpaid, given the cost of living: **1 in 3 earn under \$12.50/hour**, so are not making a living wage. **72% earn under \$15/hour**, so depending on family size, may be living in poverty.

Only **39%** get health insurance through child care employment and **14%** are going without any health insurance.

For more details or questions concerning data sources or general inquiry contact Cindy Tuttle, Executive Director at ctuttle@stokespfc.com or Shannon Cox, Program Manager at scox@stokespfc.com or by calling (336) 985-2676.

¹ Not all of the data directly relates to the mission of SPFC or its funding sources such as Smart Start; therefore, SPC will focus mainly on the data that does directly relate to its core focus areas: early literacy, family support, health and early care and education. However, the data will be made available as it may be relevant and useful to other local agencies and to the public.