



# Family Leadership Survey and Focus Group Feedback

What Rhode Island Families Want Leaders to Know  
2025



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# Parent and Family Leadership in Rhode Island: Survey and Focus Group Findings

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## Background

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) recognizes the critical role that parents and families play in shaping programs and policies that impact children and communities. To better understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities for family engagement, RIDOH conducted an online survey in November 2024 and online focus groups in January 2025.

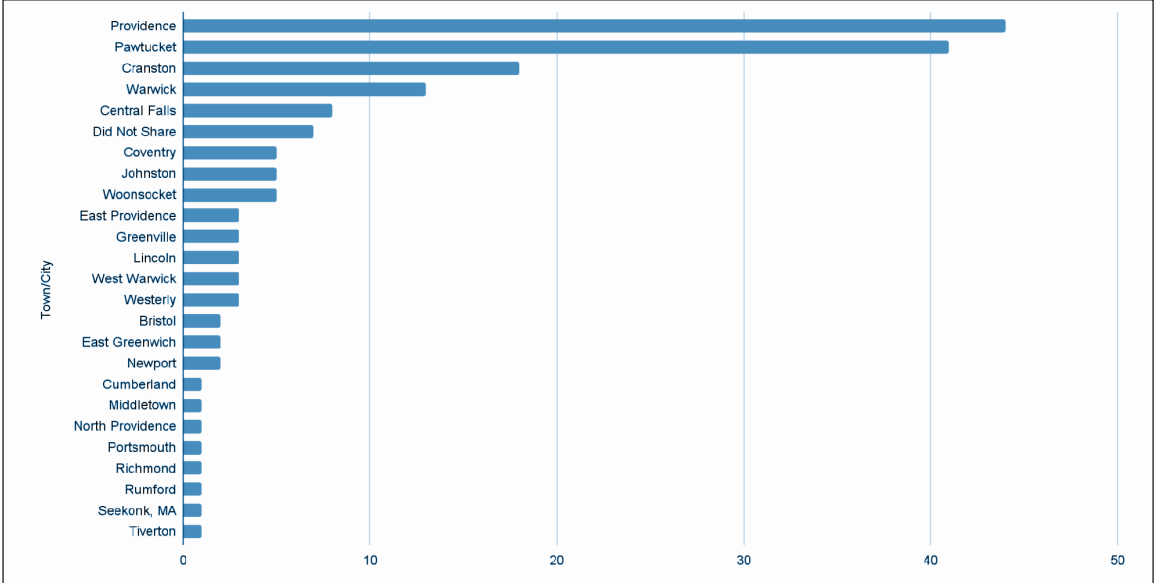
The goal of the survey and focus groups was to

- Identify the types of engagement and leadership opportunities that families find most meaningful;
- Understand the barriers families face in participating in decision-making processes; and
- Gather recommendations for improving family engagement in early childhood systems, healthcare, education, and community services.

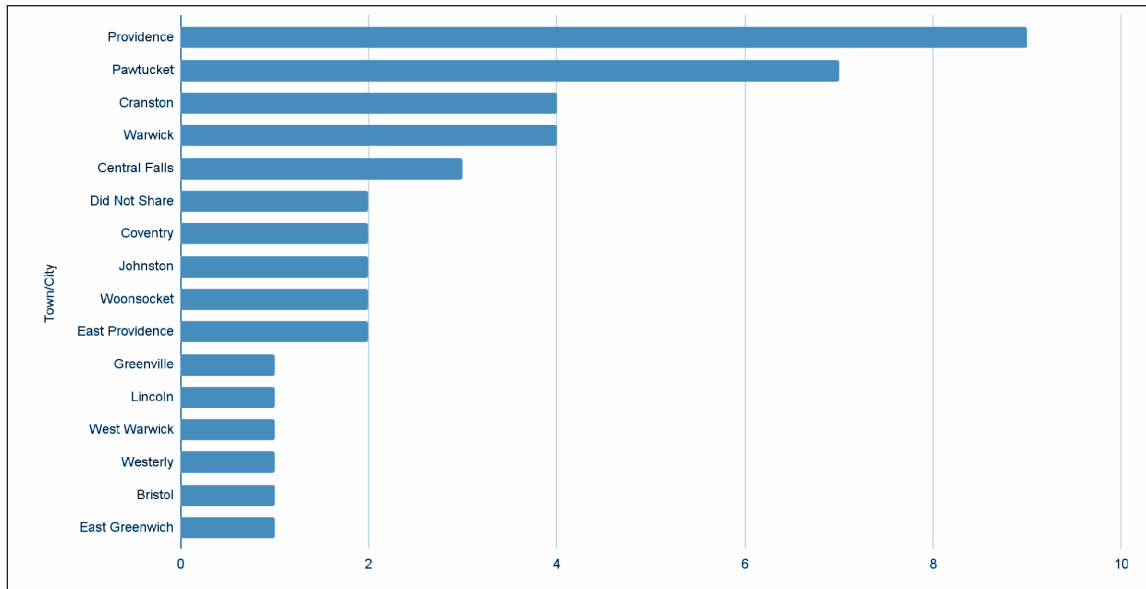
## Participants

A total of 179 respondents participated in the online survey, representing 25 towns and cities across Rhode Island. As illustrated by the table below, the majority of participants were from Providence, Pawtucket, Cranston, and Warwick.

Figure 1. Town/city demographics of survey respondents



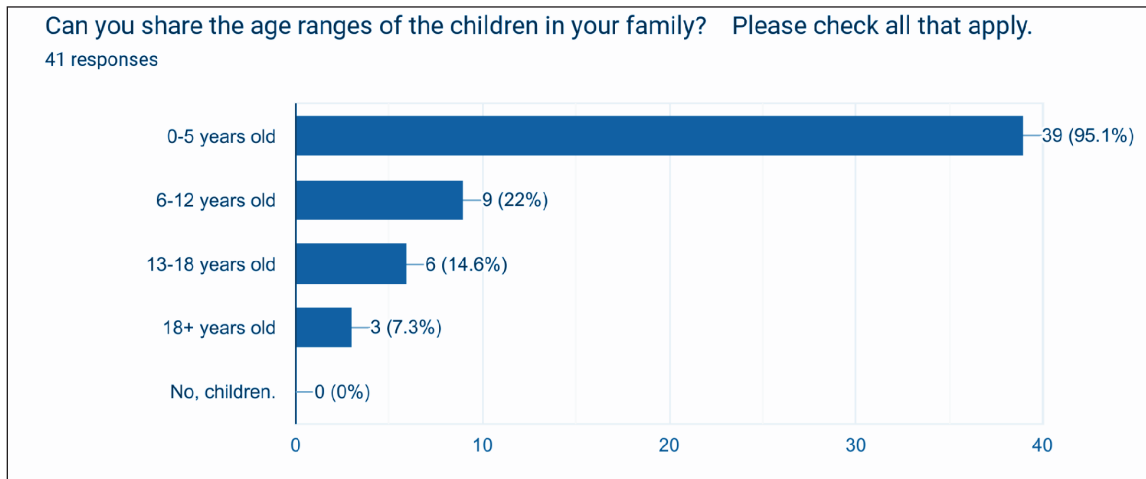
**Figure 2.** Town/city demographics of focus group participants



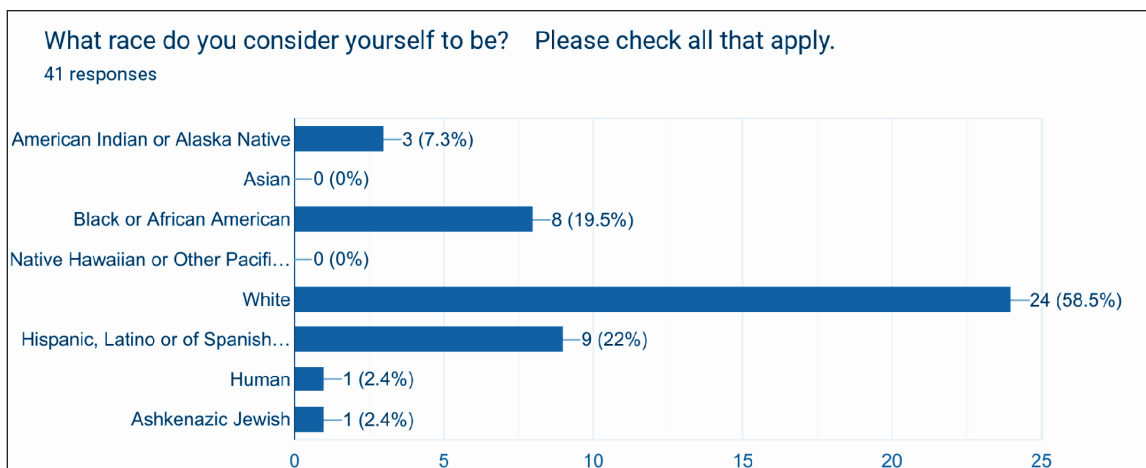
A total of 23 participants attended four online focus groups, representing 16 communities.

The focus groups included diverse parents and caregivers, with children primarily between ages 0-5. Spanish translation was provided as needed.

**Figure 3.** Ages of children in focus group participant households



**Figure 4.** Racial demographics of focus group participants



## Summary of Findings

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### The Importance of Parent/Family Leadership

Parent leadership plays a vital role in strengthening families and communities. When parents are empowered to lead, they gain intellectual and social resources that enable them to influence the institutions, programs, and systems that serve their families. Meaningful parent engagement brings valuable insights into how these systems function and can spark innovative ideas for improvement.<sup>1</sup>

Parent leaders are individuals who use their lived experiences to drive positive change—in their families, communities, and at the state and national levels. By building on their knowledge and skills, they step into leadership roles across programs, agencies, and communities. As trusted advocates, they elevate the “parent voice,” shaping services and policies that better support families like their own.<sup>2</sup>

To illustrate how parent leaders are an important part of early childhood systems who can help shape the direction of services for themselves and other families, one focus group participant shared how Head Start gave her a place to engage as a parent which led to a career path in supporting families in her community.

“I ended up working at a Head Start program... I worked there, and I was a parent there. At first I just thought it would be another job, but then I saw how that system of Head Start really works around engaging the parent into the decision-making process of the whole program, like who's hired, the policies, the procedures...I got really involved at that point, and then I was working there as a family advocate. Well, long story short, I am now the Family and Community Engagement Specialist for our program, and it is my passion to work with the parents and encourage them to be more involved.”

### How Families Would Like to Be Involved in Their Child's Education and Healthcare

The results of the survey reveal that families in Rhode Island are eager to be involved in their children's education and healthcare, but they prefer different methods of engagement. The following graph is an analysis of the survey results, highlighting the ways families would like to be asked for input and engagement.

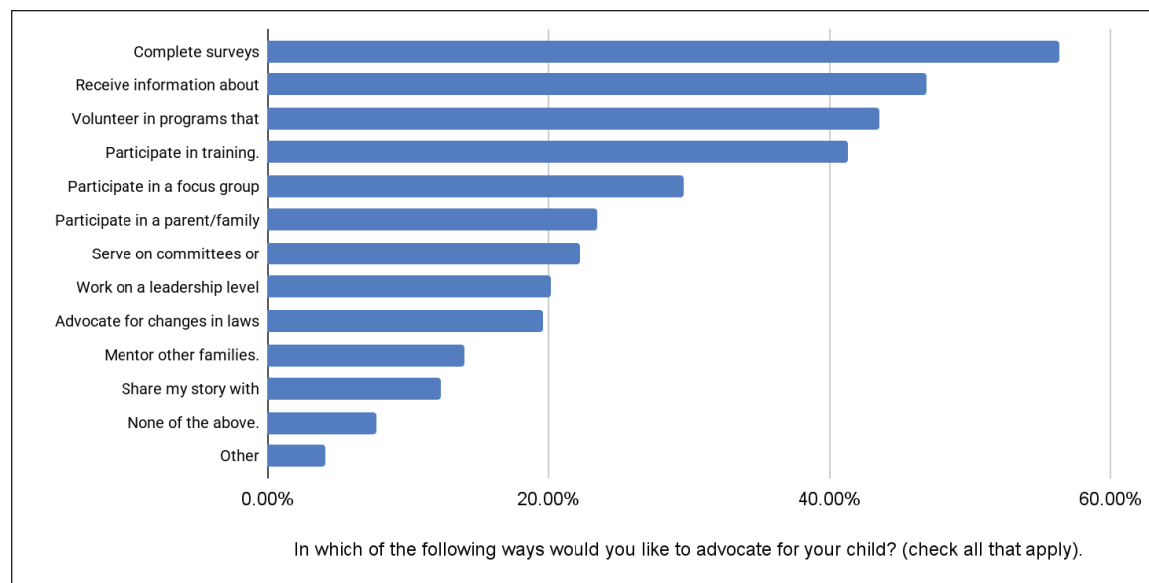
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<sup>1</sup> Bolívar, J. M., & Chrispeels, J. H. (2011). Enhancing Parent Leadership Through Building Social and Intellectual Capital. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(1), 4–38.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831210366466>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/resource/parent-leaders-are-vital-for-stronger-early-childhood-systems/>

**Figure 5.** Preferred methods of advocacy chosen by survey respondents



**Completing Surveys:** The most popular method of engagement was completing surveys, with 56.4% of respondents expressing interest in providing input through this format. Surveys are seen as a convenient and low-pressure way for families to share their opinions and experiences without requiring a significant time commitment.

**Receiving Information About Engagement Opportunities:** Nearly half of the respondents, 46.9% expressed a desire to receive information about parent/family engagement opportunities. Families want to stay informed about ways they can get involved, whether through volunteering, attending events, or participating in decision-making processes. Both survey respondents and focus group participants highlighted the importance of frequent communication about available opportunities and the desire for more information about parent/family engagement.

**Volunteering in Programs:** In addition, 43.6% of respondents expressed interest in volunteering in programs that impact their child/family. Volunteering allows families to contribute directly to their children’s education and healthcare while building relationships with educators and healthcare professionals.

**Participating in Training:** Interestingly, 41.3% of respondents were interested in participating in training focused on the parent-child relationship. Families expressed interest in workshops on topics like positive parenting, communication strategies, and advocacy. See pages 8-9 for more findings on the types of training that families are interested in.

**Participating in Focus Groups:** Roughly 29.6% of respondents were interested in participating in focus groups, either online or in-person, to share their experiences and ideas in a more interactive setting. Those that were interested shared that they appreciated the opportunity to engage in deeper discussions about issues affecting their children. Additionally, 61% of survey respondents expressed interest in participating in an online focus group to further discuss parent/family engagement and leadership training opportunities.

**Joining Parent/Family Support Groups:** Around 23.5% of survey respondents expressed interest in participating in a parent/family support group or network. They felt that these groups provided emotional support, resource sharing, and a sense of community for parents facing similar challenges.

**Serving on Committees or Advisory Groups:** Additionally, 22.3% of respondents were interested in serving on committees or family advisory groups because they allow parents to have a direct impact on decision-making processes in schools, healthcare systems, and community organizations. Focus group participants shared that these experiences help to both broaden their perspective and deepen their knowledge of how these systems provide services to families. In some cases, such roles serve as a stepping stone to career opportunities focused on building relationships and supporting families with resource coordination (positions such as Family Liaison, Family Services Coordinator, Family Engagement Specialist, Parent Educator, Community Engagement Officer/Manager, etc.).

**Working at a Leadership Level:** Roughly, 20.1% of respondents expressed interest in working at a leadership level to shape program priorities. These parents want to take on more active roles in shaping policies and programs that impact their children and communities.

**Advocating for Changes in Laws and Regulations:** Only 19.6% of respondents were interested in advocating for changes in laws and regulations. These parents want to influence policies at the local, state, and national levels to create better outcomes for their children and families.

**Mentoring Other Families:** Around 14% of respondents expressed interest in mentoring other families. These parents want to share their experience and knowledge to help other families navigate challenges related to education, healthcare, and community services.

**Sharing Their Story with Policymakers:** Only 12.3% of respondents were interested in sharing their story with policymakers. These parents want to use their personal experiences to influence decisionmakers in a way that could lead to policy changes.

## How Families Want to Be Treated

Focus group participants reported on what made their interactions with educators and health professionals positive and meaningful.

Specifically, they noted the following

**Families Appreciate Providers Who Listen:** Parents/caregivers highly value healthcare professionals and educators who take the time to listen to their concerns and provide empathetic, non-judgmental support. This type of engagement helps parents feel heard and respected, which is critical for building trust and fostering meaningful relationships. For example, several parents appreciated pediatricians who were patient and attentive, taking the time to answer questions without making them feel rushed or lacking. Another parent shared how meaningful it was to have a pediatrician who reassured her about her parenting skills.

**Families Want Providers to Provide Personalized Guidance:** Parents/caregivers value providers who offer personalized guidance tailored to the unique needs of their children and family. This includes healthcare professionals who explain medical conditions and treatment options in a way that is easy to understand, as well as educators who accommodate learning strategies to meet individual children's needs.

For example, parents appreciated specialists who took the time to explain complex medical conditions and provide clear, actionable guidance. One focus group participant shared her experience with a specialist:

"The conversations and the guidance they gave us... They actually just sat and talked with us, and weren't in front of their computers and stuff. So it was really nice."

Another parent praised a behavioral therapist who provided strategies to address her daughter's potty training issues.

"The behavioral therapist sat and worked with us. We would have sessions to go over how things were progressing, and she would give us strategies to use."

Parents also praised Pre-K teachers who listened to their concerns about their child's behavior and provided personalized learning plans and carryover instructions for home. For example, one parent shared how her child's preschool staff helped her son cope with a difficult family situation by listening and thoughtfully introducing age-appropriate books on emotional topics in class.

"We felt like we could talk to them and they could introduce things into the class through reading or through discussion, and really customized it around the needs of the children... It felt so special to be able to tell them family details."

Another parent shared how important it was that she could approach her child's Pre-K teacher to discuss behavioral concerns.

"It was really helpful. Just using some of the same language... he's (my son) seeing what's happening at school, also happening at home."

**Families Appreciate Providers Who Involve Them in Decision-making:** Parents/caregivers want to be actively involved in decision-making processes that affect their children. They appreciate providers who seek their input, involve them in planning, and treat them as equal partners in their children's care and education.

Parents shared how much they valued Early Intervention (EI) teams that involved them in creating Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and provided strong support during transitions.

"I'll say the thing that I will fondly remember is that the meeting started at 11am and every few minutes another EI person would join... We had eight people from EI behind us at that IEP meeting... an EI army behind us."

Parents particularly expressed appreciation for Head Start programs that involved them in policy-making and program planning. One focus group participant shared how her involvement in the Head Start Policy Council empowered her.

"It's been really nice to see the back end of what goes into caring for your child... as parents, you know, we kind of just tend to focus on what we have to do. But there's also a backside to it."

One focus group participant summarized:

"I have such a place in my heart for Head Start and I just wish it was more available for more people."

**Families Want to Be Informed of Local Resources and Supports:** Parents/caregivers also valued family visiting programs like Healthy Families that connected them to local resources and supports as well as other community-based organizations.

One parent shared that she was from a family of immigrants who faced educational barriers. As a first-generation, first-time parent, she received guidance in navigating her child's educational needs from a community-based organization and AmeriCorps.

"I've always loved kids, but I came from my parents who immigrated here, so I'm the first generation. They didn't go to school. They had to work. The females had to do home stuff. So, I didn't have all the right support growing up. And as a first time mom, with my daughter, I needed support, and I didn't know where to start. Children's Friend was a big support to my family. The family advocate pushed me towards AmeriCorps, and now I'm actually taking early education classes to become a teacher."

**Families Want System Leaders and Providers to Reach Out to Them:** Families expressed a desire for more proactive outreach from schools, healthcare professionals, and community organizations to share information about available resources and services while also seeking family feedback on issues impacting their children.

"System leaders need to initiate conversations... Parents may not reach out because they lack confidence."

## The Need for Community and Connection

Focus group participants also spoke about the importance of community and connection.

Specifically, they noted the following:

**Parents/Caregivers Seek and Value Community Building Opportunities:** Parents and caregivers highly value opportunities to connect with other families, share experiences, and build supportive communities. Community building activities, such as cultural celebrations, family gatherings, and community events, foster a sense of belonging and mutual support. These opportunities allow families to showcase their heritage, learn from one another, and feel more connected to their communities.

For example, one parent talked about a Family Fun Day hosted by her child's early childhood provider that included cooking classes, parent groups, and cultural extravaganzas. Other focus group participants highlighted the importance of events that celebrate diverse culture, language, music, and heritage. These events help families feel seen and valued in their communities. They are also fun, highly attended, and help build a sense of community among families.

Focus group participants also expressed a desire for more opportunities to connect with other families through parent support groups and networks. This is especially true for parents of children with disabilities. These groups provide a space for parents to share experiences, offer advice, and build relationships.

**Parents/Caregivers Need Networks of Support:** Some focus group participants shared how parents/caregivers need support networks in the workplace as well as community settings to effectively manage their well-being, citing the importance of employee resource groups, family-friendly policies and flexible work arrangements.

One participant felt extremely supported by her tight knit team at work who are all working women and parents.

“I live about 5,000 miles away from my immediate and extended family. I’m very lucky in that I work on a very small, very tight knit team. Most of my team are mothers who have children, so it was really great to be able to lean into people who have done it before...I was very lucky to be able to lean into that without having very many close familial or friendships nearby.”

**Parents/Caregivers Wish for Community Resources, Healing and Therapy Sessions:** Some focus group participants suggested that schools could serve as spaces for community building, resource sharing, as well as healing and therapy sessions. Families and staff could come together to address burnout, mental health challenges and better understand the needs of students, especially those of complex and neurodivergent learners.

## Family Interest in Leadership Training and Other Topics

Many survey respondents and focus group participants expressed interest in participating in leadership training programs that empower them to advocate for their children and communities. Parents/caregivers believe that these skills will help them communicate more effectively with policymakers, educators, and healthcare professionals, and enable them to take on leadership roles in their communities.

Parents/caregivers are most interested in the following types of training:

**Storytelling:** Parents/caregivers are especially interested in training programs that teach them how to use storytelling to communicate effectively with agencies, funders, legislators, and peers. Storytelling allows parents to share their personal experiences in a compelling way, making their voices heard and their concerns understood. For example, the survey results showed that the most preferred training option was a 3-hour workshop on storytelling, offered either in-person or online.

**Training on Family Leadership and Advocacy:** Parents/caregivers are also interested in both short and long-term training programs that focus on how to participate in local government, school boards, and community organizations. These programs help parents understand how to navigate systems, influence policy decisions, and take on leadership roles in their communities.

**Additional Training Topics:** Survey respondents shared the following additional topics of interest for training:

- Organize and conduct congressional visits;
- Serve as role models for at-risk youth;
- Identify the impact of technology and social media on children’s mental health;
- Support positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes through evidence-based interventions/practices;
- Create a collaborative partnership between school staff and parents/caregivers;
- Foster conversations on bullying, including in trainings and at community events;
- Learn the positive impacts of spending time outdoors and in nature;
- Plan for long-term goals for your child, such as Cradle to College; and
- Achieve work/life balance.

## Challenges and Success in Advocacy

Families shared via survey that they have experienced more successes than challenges in advocacy. More than half of survey respondents at 65.4% cited that they have not faced challenges when advocating for their child and family with an organization, agency, policymaker, school, healthcare professional, etc., while 34.6% reported “Yes” to facing challenges.

When asked about achieving successes in advocacy, 76% of survey respondents reported that they have had success in advocating while 24% shared that they have not experienced success.

## Barriers to Family Engagement

Despite their desire to engage, families face several barriers to engaging in their children’s education, healthcare or the community:

**Limited Access to Information:** Many families in Rhode Island reported that it is hard to find information about schools, before and after-school care programs, healthcare professionals, and community services. They often rely on social media but noted that these sources can be inconsistent, inaccurate, or difficult to navigate, leaving parents feeling frustrated and uninformed. Without reliable information, families find it difficult to navigate school and healthcare systems.

Families highlighted the need for community-specific information, such as local events, child care options, resources, and support services. They expressed a strong desire for a centralized online hub that would provide reliable, up-to-date, and easily accessible information about resources and services in their communities. One focus group participant shared how a centralized hub would make their life easier.

"It would be so helpful to have one place where I can find information about schools, pediatricians, and after-school programs. Right now, I have to search multiple websites and Facebook groups, and it’s overwhelming."

**Financial Challenges:** Financial challenges prevent many parents from participating in leadership training programs, focus groups, or other engagement opportunities that could help them advocate for their children. Families living paycheck to paycheck often struggle to afford basic necessities, with no time to volunteer or participate in leadership opportunities. For example, focus group participants noted that taking time off work or paying for child care are real barriers that limit their ability to participate, attend meetings, training sessions, or other engagement activities. Parents stressed the need for child care during meetings to enable their participation in leadership and decision-making processes.

**Lack of Language Accessibility:** Many families in Rhode Island face barriers to engagement due to language accessibility issues. Non-English speaking families often struggle to access information, participate in meetings, and navigate complex systems related to their children’s education, healthcare, and community services. The lack of translation services and materials in multiple languages prevents these families from fully engaging and advocating for their children. Families emphasized the need for language support to ensure that all parents, regardless of their primary language, can participate meaningfully in decision-making processes.

For example, one focus group participant shared how much she appreciated the live Spanish interpretation that was offered during the session. She also noted how the survey and other communications to families being available in both English and Spanish felt inviting. She shared that it was the first time she had been reached out to in her native language and how it encouraged her to participate.

**Impact on Mental Health and Well-Being:** Families have a variety of stressors that often take a toll on the mental health of parents and caregivers, making it even more difficult for them to engage in their children’s education, healthcare, or community services. It was expressed in focus groups that families wished system leaders understood the types of stress they typically face, such as

- Coordinating services;
- Managing medication for their children;
- Addressing financial concerns
- Dealing with time constraints; and
- Advocating for their family needs.

**Lack of Confidence:** Many parents and caregivers want to share their stories and lived experiences but need encouragement and safe spaces to do so. They need system leaders to proactively and frequently reach out to families, encouraging them to participate in ways that can meaningfully impact their child’s health, school and community.

## Recommendations for Addressing Barriers to Family Engagement

Families proposed several strategies to improve engagement

**1. Improve Access to Community-Specific Information:** Families wanted a centralized online platform where they could find reliable, community-specific, up-to-date information about schools, healthcare providers, child care options, and community services. This hub should be easy to navigate and available in multiple languages.

“I do think that it’d be very helpful for [my] town to have some sort of a website to go to, or something where people can build their lives around what services are available for their children.”

**2. Proactively Reach Out to Families:** Schools, healthcare professionals, and community organizations should proactively share information with families through multiple channels, including email, text messages, and flyers. Focus group participants stressed that this is especially important for non-English speaking families. For non-English speaking families, proactive outreach from schools, healthcare professionals, and community organizations is essential to ensure access to critical information and resources. Organizations should use multiple communication channels, such as email, text messages, and flyers, to share information in the families' primary languages.

By using multiple channels and providing information in families' primary languages, organizations can break down language barriers and empower non-English-speaking families to engage more fully in their children's education, healthcare, and community life.

**3. Provide Child Care During Meetings:** Systems and providers should offer free child care during meetings, training sessions, and community events to enable parents to participate without the added financial burden.

"Having child care during meetings would encourage more participation. Right now, I can't afford to pay for a babysitter just to attend a meeting."

**4. Provide Financial Assistance for Engagement:** Provide stipends or reimbursements for parents who participate in leadership training, focus groups, or other engagement opportunities to offset costs like transportation and lost wages.

**5. Provide Translation Services:** Provide live translation or interpretation at meetings, events, and focus groups to ensure that non-English speaking families can fully participate. Live translation or interpretation benefits all focus group participants by building better connections and communication between them.

**6. Provide Translated Materials:** Offer flyers, forms, websites, and information in multiple languages, such as Spanish, to make information accessible to all families.

**7. Conduct Proactive Outreach to Non-English Speaking Families:** Conduct targeted outreach to non-English speaking families to ensure they are aware of available resources and services.

**8. Provide Mental Health Support for Parents:** Offer mental health resources and support groups for parents to help them cope with financial stress and other challenges. One focus group participant suggested that there should be community healing spaces where families and teachers can come together to address burnout and mental health challenges.

**9. Offer Flexible Engagement Opportunities:** Provide flexible meeting times and virtual options to accommodate parents' schedules and reduce stress.

**10. Promote Parent/Family Engagement and Leadership:** Promote examples and opportunities of parent and family engagement. Families seek to understand how their voices matter, especially when it comes to creating meaningful changes with system leaders.

**11. Create Safe Spaces for Families to Feel Heard:** Provide environments that set the tone for respectful communication, encourage active listening, foster empathy and understanding while promoting inclusivity and participation. Focus group participants shared the following

## Quotes from Focus Groups

“We all come from varied backgrounds and approaching a governmental leader can be intimidating, especially when we don't know all the laws or all our rights. So, if the policymakers would have open arms, or just be non-judgmental, that would create an open, safe environment and would work wonders with having people come forward and feeling comfortable, in wanting to participate and share their stories.”

“I would like leaders themselves to be vulnerable and share what their family experiences have been.”

“I'd say, meet us where we're at... Seek understanding. That all families are not alike. Listening to that family and what they identify as their needs.”

## Focus Group Findings by System

Families shared the following feedback for system leaders in preschool, school, child care, healthcare and community settings:

System	Findings	Quote
State Lottery PreK	While families greatly appreciated the State Lottery Pre-K program, they expressed frustration with how long it takes to learn of placement. This uncertainty creates stress, financial strain, and difficulty planning for the upcoming school year.	“I was playing the lottery upon the lottery... Do I get on a wait list somewhere? What if it's somewhere where I have to put some money down? It was just too much to try to figure out.”
Head Start	Families praised how welcoming, communicative and approachable staff were. Families also noted how impactful and engaging it was to participate on the Policy Council. Participants stressed the need to address a major teacher shortage causing closures of classrooms.	“There is a huge teacher shortage... especially for Early Head Start. We had to shorten our hours. We worked very hard on increasing our pay, but they quit to work in public schools. We've had to close classrooms.”

System	Findings	Quote
Child Care	Families appreciated child care providers who kept them informed about their child’s daily progress and activities.	“They just updated me along the way on everything, and shared all of the stories they were reading. It made me feel like she’s learning and she’s safe.”
Child Care Assistance	Financial barriers to child care were a significant challenge. One focus group participant shared how income eligibility for child care assistance needs to be revised to account for the minimum wage increase.	“I couldn’t find any financial compensation for child care, and that is just absolutely devastating. We are paycheck to paycheck.”
Public Schools	<p>Families would like more school access and information about the school experience prior to enrollment, especially for kindergarten. Many participants shared the need for more centralized, public resources to help navigate school choices, enrollment and before/after school care. Families would also like additional touchpoints with school staff throughout the school year.</p> <p>Participants wondered if schools could be a space for community building, resources and healing/therapy. Some participants also shared frustration with understanding and navigating school choices and resources for summer.</p>	<p>“(It’s important to have) more time to interface with actual teachers and administrators for our kids when they get to public schools. So just increase the touch points with families... maybe instead of just doing an open house at schools once a school season, you do it, maybe monthly, and that will require extra time on the teacher.</p> <p>But maybe that teacher gets paid for that extra time. Just for parents to come in and talk about their child, and what’s going on. Having an open-door policy and being able to talk to these teachers (is needed).”</p>
Before and After School Care	Working parents and caregivers expressed the need for affordable before and after-school care, especially for special needs students.	“Sometimes we can’t find work because of the hours of their schools, and it almost feels like a loss within itself. You’re struggling with work and can’t find the after-school care programs.”
Pediatric Services	Families valued responsive and reassuring pediatricians but reported limited access in rural areas.	“My pediatrician’s office is a 30-minute drive. They were literally the only office accepting new patients, so it would be great to have more accessible pediatricians.”

System	Findings	Quote
Family Services, Support and Resources	Families found meaningful support and resources from visiting programs like Healthy Families.	“I do appreciate Healthy Families and how they really do gather a lot of information and disperse it...They just sent me a flyer for free diapers and wipes...And again, that’s right up the street from me that I never knew was there.”
Early Intervention (EI)	Families valued timely referrals to EI services, which provided critical support for their children.	“Our first meaningful family engagement really came from working with her pediatrician and early intervention. We started when she was only 12 months old, ended when she was three, and now her new daycare has a therapeutic aspect.”
Behavioral Health	Families valued access to behavioral therapists but noted a lack of in-school resources. This leaves families confused about alternative and out of district placements for neurodivergent students.	“I used to work with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) kids and a lot of them were getting outplaced instead of helping them and keeping them in a public school setting... but they weren’t offering it to all of my families.”
Mental Health	Families wished system leaders understood the depth of their stress: the stress of coordinating services, medication management for their children, addressing financial concerns, dealing with time constraints and advocating for their family needs.	“Creating forums where everyone can come together, you know, and have these discussions...gearing more towards family (group) therapy... because burnout is real...families really do struggle, teachers too... and you know, in some of our cultures therapy is taboo... so kind of non-official therapeutic sessions around helping the child would be an idea.”

## Appendix Items

For detailed information and insights into the methodology of obtaining family feedback, please refer to the following appendix items containing survey and focus group questions.

**Appendix A** - Online Survey Questions

**Appendix B** - Online Focus Group Questions

# APPENDIX A - Online Survey Questions

## Survey Question 1: In which of the following ways would you like to advocate for your child/family?

Please check all opportunities that interest you:

- I would like to participate in training focused on the parent-child relationship.
- I would like to participate in a parent/family support group or network.
- I would like to volunteer in programs that impact my child/family.
- I would like to work on a leadership level shaping program priorities.
- I would like to serve on committees and/or family advisory groups.
- I would like to advocate for changes in laws and regulations.
- I would like to receive information about parent/family engagement opportunities.
- I would like to mentor other families.
- I would like to complete surveys to provide input on topics impacting my child/family.
- I would like to share my story with policymakers.
- I would like to participate in a focus group (online or in-person).
- None of the above.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_.

**Survey Question 2:** There are several types of parent/family leadership training that are being considered. Please review the following no-cost training opportunities and tell us which one(s) most interest you.

Please check the parent/family training opportunities that most interest you:

- An online 20-week training program with occasional in-person meetings, focused on civic engagement and developing leadership/advocacy skills.
- A 3-day training, offered in-person or online, to learn skills for program planning and policy development on boards or committees.
- A 3-hour workshop, offered in-person or online, on using storytelling to effectively communicate with agencies, funders, legislators, organizations and peers.

**Survey Question 3:** Do you have other ideas on parent/family leadership training formats or topics that you would like to see offered? If so, please share your ideas below.

- Other training ideas: \_\_\_\_\_.
- I don't have other ideas to share.

**Survey Question 4:** Have you faced challenges when advocating for your child and family with an organization, agency, policymaker, school, healthcare provider, etc?

- Yes
- No

**Survey Question 5:** Have you experienced successes when advocating for your child and family with an organization, agency, policy maker, school, healthcare provider, etc.?

- Yes
- No

**Survey Question 6:** Would you like to participate in an online focus group to further discuss parent/family engagement and leadership training opportunities?

The online session will be conducted via Zoom and will last no longer than 90 minutes with simultaneous Spanish translation provided as needed. Sessions will be offered during different times of day to accommodate as many parent/family schedules as possible.

Each parent/family is allowed to participate in only one focus group and will be provided a gift card for participation.

Please answer Yes or No.

- Yes, I would like to participate.
- No, I would not like to participate.

If Yes, please provide us with your email and our facilitator will contact you.

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_.

## **APPENDIX B - Online Focus Group Questions**

**Focus Group Q1: Let's explore what meaningful engagement looks like for families.**

- Can you name one system in which you have felt engaged?
- What made it meaningful?
- What would improve things for families with young children in your community?

**Focus Group Q2: Let's identify strategies to increase Parent/Family Leadership.**

- What types of communication or outreach make you feel heard and included?
- What resources or supports would help you feel more confident in participating?
- Are there specific practices or approaches that you have seen that have worked well to engage families?
- What would make you feel more included in the decision-making processes within early childhood systems (e.g., schools, healthcare, community services)?

**Focus Group Q3: What advice would you give to leaders about making engagement meaningful for families?**