**nys**parenting
education**partnership**

**Enhancing parenting skills, knowledge, and behavior through a strong, statewide network that promotes and improves parenting education.**

# Parenting Education
# Access & Barriers
# Provider Survey Report

This survey is one of three information-gathering methods to develop a better understanding of availability and access, gaps and barriers in parenting education in our state. In addition, parents' own perceptions about those topics were sought through ten focus groups across the state. As of this writing, we also are conducting forums with child-and-family serving agencies in locations throughout New York to elicit their input. Data from all three information sources will be compiled into a summary report that will be made available to NYSPEP, our colleagues, and state leaders during 2011.

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**BACKGROUND**

In September-December 2010, through a Children's Plan Parenting Initiative project funded by New York State Office of Mental Health, the New York State Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP) conducted a survey of parenting education programs in New York State. The survey had two purposes:

1. Gather information about available parenting education programs for a searchable online database and the NYS Parent Helpline.
2. Identify access barriers and gaps in parenting education that meets families' varying needs.

The survey was posted on the SurveyMonkey website and also was made available as a fillable form  Parenting education providers were invited to complete the survey through repeated electronic messages to more than 500 NYSPEP members and their colleagues.

The introduction explained, "Programs with completed surveys (1) will be included in an online searchable data-base of parenting programs in NYS, and (2) will be eligible for small grants to support parents' participation in the program. (Completion of the survey does not guarantee receipt of a grant.)"  It also clarified that for survey purposes "parents" included anyone who has primary responsibility for raising and nurturing children.

Most survey questions were at the program level, with a separate survey completed for each parenting education program offered. Respondents were asked for contact information and a brief narrative description for the program they were describing.

**PROGRAM RESPONSES**

Providers from 212 agencies returned 302 surveys.  The programs are located in all five NYS OMH regions: 89 in Western NY, 59 in Central NY, 69 in the Hudson River Region, 48 in New York City, and 37 in Long Island.

**Format.** The majority of responses referred to group sessions.

▸ 56% (n=180) group classes/sessions
▸ 27% (n=86) mix of individual and group sessions
▸ 13% (n=41) individual parent at home
▸ 1% (n=4) individual parent at center
▸ 3% (n=11) other (group/individual work combined with web-based or teleconference learning and residential group homes)

**Program elements.** Research suggests that particular elements of parenting education programs lead to better outcomes for children. Respondents indicated if the program includes any of them:

▸ 85% address child development / behavior
▸ 91% address parent-child communication
▸ 93% address positive parent-child interactions
▸ 80% address child behavior management / discipline
▸ 46% provide opportunities during the program to practice what they are learning with their children, 41% include both opportunities during the program and through homework
▸ 33% provide homework, only, for parents to practice with children.

**Features That Suggest Program Quality**

**Curricula.** *"Is one or more specific curricula used for this program? If so, please list title(s)."*
- Slightly more than a third, 109 programs, use just one curriculum.
- Another third, 101 programs use two to four curricula.
- Almost half (46%) use curricula that are research-based or widely used by experienced practitioners based on preferences of families with whom they work.

**Provider preparation.** *"Do the direct-service providers receive training on how to present this specific program?"* 89% of respondents said yes; 9% said no; 2% did not answer this item.

**PARENTS SERVED**

**Eligibility and Referrals.** Eligibility requirements were described for 56% of the programs. Most commonly, requirements are based on:
- where the family resides
- child age (including pregnancy)
- low income

Other requirements, which were often related to program funding streams, included:
- child or parent challenges (mental health, developmental disability, substance use)
- families are served or referred by particular agencies (e.g. DSS, courts)
- parent descriptors (e.g. adoptive parents, kincare providers, low literacy level)

Respondents were asked to indicate all of the sources that refer parents to the program.
- 14% Agency Clients ONLY
- 85% Parents' Self-Referral
- 76% Referral from Other Service Providers
- 61% Child Protective Services (CPS/ACS) Referrals
- 46% Court-Referral
- 28% Other  (schools, previous participants, community organizations, churches, libraries, social services, medical providers)
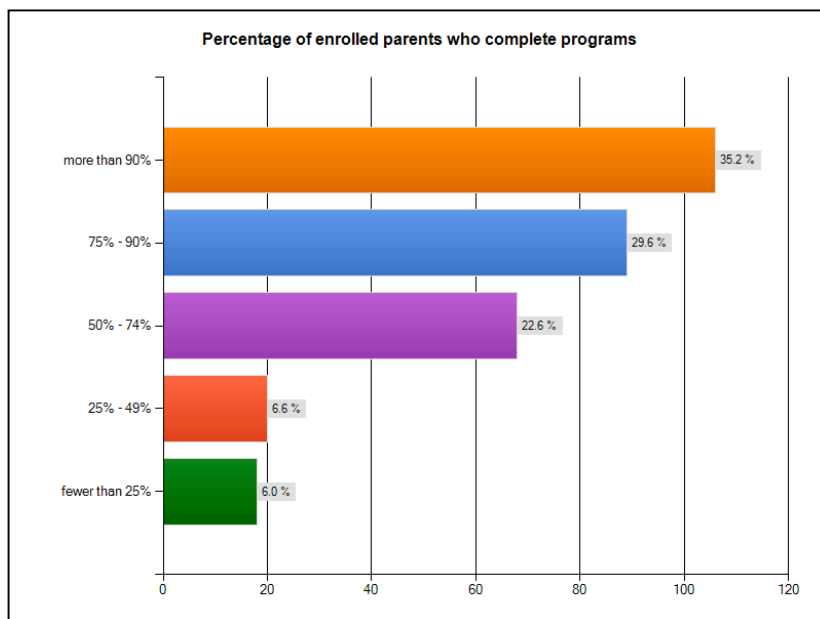
**Numbers Served.**
*" What is the largest number of parents who <u>can</u> be in the program at any one time?"* Responses ranged from 3 (autism services with individual parents) to 1,000 (a large multi-site agency). Seventy percent (70%) of the programs could serve 12 to 70 parents at a time. The most common responses, from 27% of respondents, were 20 to 25 parents.

*What is the average, or typical, number of parents / caregivers who <u>are</u> in the program at any one time?* Answers ranged from 2 to 500. Comparing the number who <u>are</u> served to the number who <u>could be</u> served: 15% are at full capacity, 19% are at 75%- 98% capacity, 50% are at half to three-quarters capacity, 16% are at less than half capacity.

**Barriers to completing the program.**
*"Of parents who enrolled in the last 12 months, what percentage completed it?"* Almost two-thirds of respondents indicated that 75% to 100% of participants complete the program, fewer than 25% did <u>not</u> complete the program. On the other end of the continuum, 12.6% indicated that fewer than half completed the program.

**Percentage of enrolled parents who complete programs**

| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| more than 90% | 35.2 % |
| 75% - 90% | 29.6 % |
| 50% - 74% | 22.6 % |
| 25% - 49% | 6.6 % |
| fewer than 25% | 6.0 % |

Two hundred sixty five (265) respondents answered the open-ended question *"What do you think are the main reasons for <u>not</u> completing the program?"* Most cited more than one reason. The answers were coded into ten categories of reasons. The chart on the following page describes the relative frequency of the ten categories, as well as how often it was the only reason given.

The most common problem with completing a program was time: scheduling conflicts and other commitments demanding the parents' time, most often work, but also court, school, appointments with other service providers. Respondents who gave this reason tended to also identify transportation and family crises as issues preventing program completion.

The second most common barrier, overall, was transportation, in combination with other challenges. Transportation was seldom cited as a single barrier. Similarly lack of childcare, the third most common reason overall, was rarely the single barrier to program completion.

Move from the service area, family crises, and lack of interest (more often than not related to having been pressured or required to attend) were each cited by about 15% of respondents.

To examine whether there are different barriers for parents who have been required to take parenting programs, we looked at the subset of programs that accept child protective services and/or court referrals. While time/scheduling was the most frequent reason for this subset, as it was for all respondents, programs who accept CPS and court referrals were far more likely than others to cite "lack of interest: had been pressured/required to attend" as a barrier, and somewhat more likely to cite "overwhelmed/chaotic/stressed life" and "child care problem."

## Reasons for Not Completing the Program
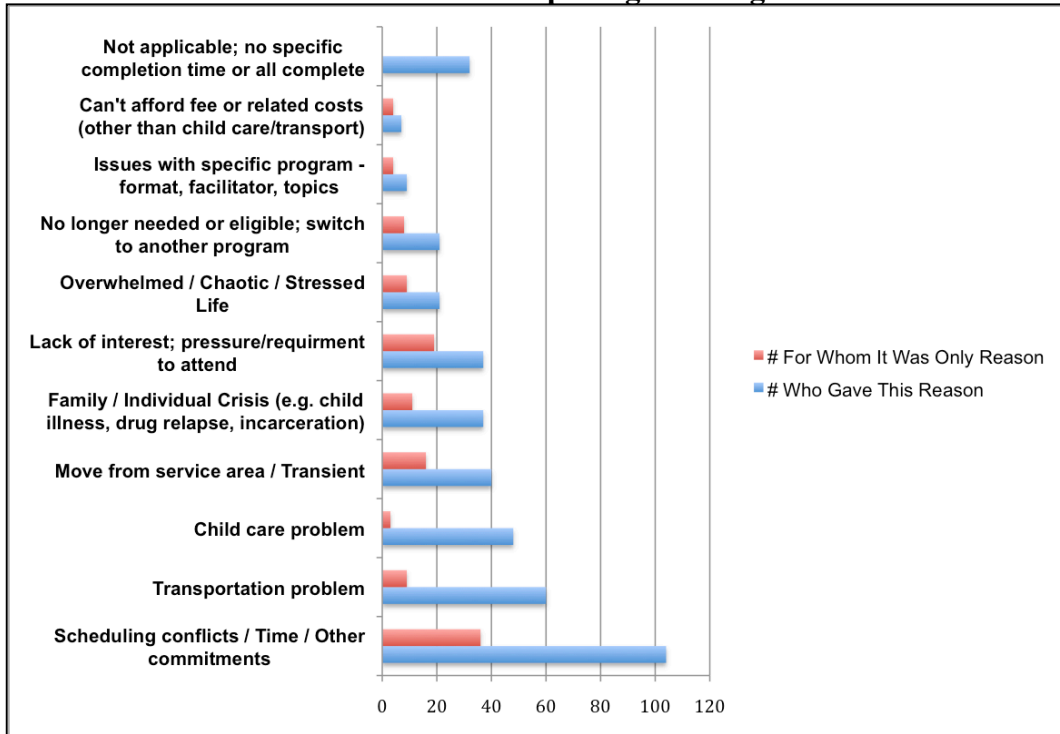


**Barriers to Enrollment.** *"During the last 12 months, approximately how many parents requested or were referred to the program but did not enroll?"* Answers ranged from 1 to 200. There appeared to be no relationship between the numbers who did not enroll and program size. Respondents were asked to select, from a list, all reasons that applied and rank them, 1 = most common reason, etc. As with not *completing* the program, the most frequent reason for not enrolling was time/scheduling, followed by transportation problems, then childcare and not being able to start the program when they wanted or needed to, most frequently an issue for those required to take part in parenting education.

## Reasons for Not Enrolling in the Program
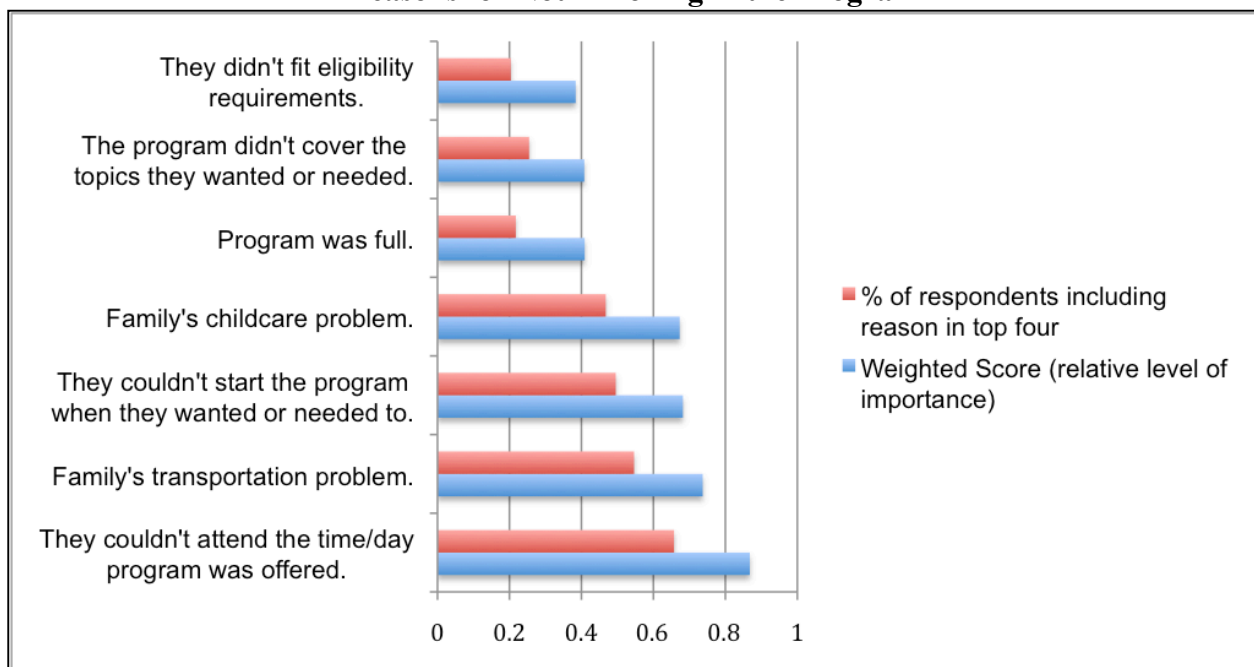
**Service to Parents with Diverse Needs and from Diverse Backgrounds**

To begin understanding if there are gaps between what parents need in terms of parenting education and what is being offered, the final survey sections presented two sets of charts, one dealing with characteristics of children, the other with characteristics of parents. For each, respondents were asked to first *"Characterize the number of requests for parenting education that you receive for each parent group"* (few to none - some - many), then to *"Characterize your agency's ability to address the particular parenting challenges of each group"* (poor - limited - good - excellent).

Responses from the 285 providers who completed this section are summarized in the charts on the following pages. We don't know from our data whether the relatively higher or lower number of requests from particular groups of parents reflects the level of need in those groups or, rather, relates to the nature and purpose of the agencies and their programs.

**Characteristics of Children:**

**Age:** Three-quarters of the programs had a good or excellent ability to serve parents of all age groups. More than half of the programs received many requests from parents of young children sought parenting education from more than half of the programs; fewer than half received many requests from parents of older children. Overall, parents of teens are least likely to seek these programs' services.

| Age Children | Agencies with Excellent Ability to Serve Type of Parents | Agencies with Good to Excellent Ability to Serve Type of Parents | Agencies Receiving Many Requests from Type of Parents |
|---|---|---|---|
| infants and toddlers (0-3) | 67% | 86% | 55% |
| young children (4-8) | 63% | 91% | 56% |
| older children (9-12) | 50% | 79% | 44% |
| teen aged children (14-18) | 48% | 74% | 41% |

**Special needs**: Providers indicated that parents of children with emotional/mental health challenges were both more likely to request services and more likely to find good to excellent services, compared to children with developmental disabilities or significant health issues.

| Children's Challenges | Agencies with Excellent Ability to Serve Type of Parents | Agencies with Good to Excellent Ability to Serve Type of Parents | Agencies Receiving Many Requests from Type of Parents |
|---|---|---|---|
| emotional/mental health | 44% | 78% | 41% |
| developmental disabilities | 27% | 58% | 12% |
| significant health issues | 21% | 53% | 6% |

**Characteristics of Parents:** We asked about four descriptive characteristics: relatives/kincare providers, limited English proficiency, new immigrants, and minorities. More than three quarters of respondents indicate their agency has a good or excellent ability to address the challenges of minority parents and relatives/kincare providers. But only a quarter to a third receive many requests for service from those groups.
Many fewer said they have a good or excellent ability to address challenges of new immigrants or of parents with limited English proficiency. The percentage of agencies that receive requests for programs from these groups of parents is also low.

| Descriptive | Agencies with Excellent Ability to Serve Type of Parents | Agencies with Good to Excellent Ability to Serve Type of Parents | Agencies Receiving Many Requests from Type of Parents |
|---|---|---|---|
| particular minority | 57% | 92% | 35% |
| relatives/kincare providers | 55% | 77% | 25% |
| limited English proficiency | 20% | 45% | 16% |
| new immigrants | 19% | 52% | 13% |

We also asked about six special issues or challenges for parents: substance or alcohol use issues, significant health issues, developmental disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, founded abuse/neglect, current or recent incarceration. For only one issue, abuse and neglect, did a majority of respondents indicate an excellent ability to address the parents' challenge.

| Issue | Agencies with Excellent Ability to Address Challenges | Agencies with Good to Excellent Ability to Address Challenges | Agencies Receiving Many Requests from Parents w/Challenges |
|---|---|---|---|
| founded abuse/neglect | 51% | 85% | 31% |
| current or recent incarceration | 29% | 66% | 8% |
| psychiatric disabilities | 28% | 61% | 23% |
| substance or alcohol use issues | 27% | 71% | 26% |
| developmental disabilities | 20% | 59% | 9% |
| significant health issues | 17% | 57% | 6% |

**SUMMARY**

Providers from 212 agencies across New York State returned 302 surveys. Almost all of the programs (97%) cover one or more topics related to parents understanding of their children and the role they play in their children' lives; child development and behavior, communications, parent-child interactions, behavior management and discipline. In addition:

- Most (83%) are group, rather than individual, programs.
- Most (80%) include in-class or homework for parents to practice with their children.
- About two-thirds serve parents of young children, ages 0 to 8, compared to just under half that serve parents of older children and adolescents.
- Almost two-thirds (63%) accept referrals from child protective services and/or courts.

Barriers to accessing parenting education were similar whether they prevented parents from enrolling or prevented them from completing programs. The most common problem, by far, was time: scheduling conflicts, other commitments and demands on time, or the program not being available when needed. Transportation and childcare were also high on the list of barriers.

Programs that accept child protective and court referrals were more likely than others to cite "lack of interest: had been pressured/required to attend" and somewhat more likely to cite "chaotic lives" as barriers to program completion. However those programs, like others, identified time, transportation and childcare as the most compelling challenges.

The major gaps in meeting the needs of parents appear to be in programs intended for families addressing child or parent developmental disabilities and significant health issues, and for parents who are new immigrants and/or English language learners. At the same time, this group of programs indicated they have very low numbers of requests from those groups. Further exploration would be needed to determine how well the level of availability relates to the level of need for these groups.