

Families of Children with Developmental Disabilities

Face More Challenges Finding & Keeping Services



In April of 2024, **755 Ohio families** shared their experiences through the [Family Voices Project's first survey](#), highlighting significant challenges such as difficulty finding affordable child care and barriers to accessing health care services. These insights are crucial for shaping policies that make a real difference in the lives of Ohio's children and their families.



! Nearly **1 OF 5** respondents reported having at least one child with a developmental disability.

This data reveals that families with children with disabilities are navigating complex emotional, financial, and logistical challenges, which demand targeted policy interventions and support. These families face difficulties in securing timely health care, finding child care, and maintaining child care subsidies; all while experiencing higher levels of parental stress and emotional distress in their children. Families also face practical and emotional challenges that can lead to increased isolation. Balancing caregiving responsibilities with care for their other children and work responsibilities may overwhelm parents, causing more stress and anxiety.

..... > **Of these families with a child with a developmental disability:**

44% applied for a child care subsidy.

60% found it difficult to find a child care provider who could meet their child's needs

60% experience difficulty in maintaining a child care subsidy

80% experience workforce disruption due to child care arrangement

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Child care centers have told me they don't have the ability to take care of my child with a disability due to staffing.”

- Ohio Parent

Key Findings

Navigating Child Care

Parents of a child with a developmental disability struggle to work and meet basic needs more frequently than parents of a child without a disability. Even if families are able to successfully navigate obtaining and keeping a child care subsidy, they still face challenges navigating the system and finding reliable child care.

Families with children WITH disabilities:

ARE 3X MORE LIKELY to cite difficulties in completing the application than families without children with disabilities.

1 IN 3 experienced an eligibility determination process that took **MORE THAN 3 MONTHS**.



60% of Ohio families reported challenges in maintaining their child care subsidy.

vs.

Families with children WITHOUT disabilities:



32% Only half as many reported challenges in maintaining their child care subsidy.



58% had difficulty finding a provider that would accept their child care subsidy.

vs.



37% had difficulty finding a provider that would accept their child care subsidy.

Accessing Health Care

Families with a child with a disability face greater challenges accessing needed health care than their peers.

Families with children WITH disabilities:



26% of Ohio families missed a preventative care check up

vs.

Families with children WITHOUT disabilities:



15% of Ohio families missed a preventative care check up

Emotional & Mental Health

Families of children with disabilities experience increased stress related to barriers and inequities that exist for their family.

Families with children WITH disabilities:



52% OVER HALF Ohio parents are receiving mental health support.

vs.

Families with children WITHOUT disabilities:



29% NEARLY 1 IN 3 Ohio parents are receiving mental health support.

From Data to Action...



Early childhood is a key time for early intervention to support the impact of disability on a child.

More needs to be done to support parents of children with developmental disabilities to access and maintain needed services for their child.



Ohio Needs to:



Invest in Early Intervention

Part C Early Intervention (EI) is essential for supporting children with developmental disabilities, offering critical services during the key early years of development. These services help children meet milestones and assist families in navigating challenges. EI improves child care access by equipping both children and providers to create more inclusive environments, allowing children with disabilities to integrate more easily into early learning settings.

Make Child Care More Accessible

The new federal rule from the Administration for Children and Families requires states to use grants and contracts to serve vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities. Ohio can leverage these grants and contracts to help families of children with disabilities better navigate the child care system. The new federal rule also requires states to cap copayments for child care at 7% of household income and encourages states to waive copayments entirely for vulnerable populations, including families with children with disabilities. Removing financial barriers will alleviate the strain on families and support them in accessing the services needed.

Elevate Community Solutions

Programs and initiatives that serve children with disabilities and their families can have a profound impact on improving health care access and mental health support. When families are connected to these community-driven resources, they are better positioned to navigate the often complex health care system—leading to improved outcomes for both the child and the family as a whole. Many of these programs are trusted resources and are tailored to meet the complex needs of families, ensuring that resources such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, and mental health services are accessible and utilized effectively.



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