



# **A Snapshot of Parenting Education in Oregon**

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## **Abstract**

This study provides a snapshot of current parenting education programs offered by organizations and a web-based directory throughout Oregon in March, 2009. Major findings include: parenting education is available in all 36 counties, but it is concentrated in the most populated areas. Typical organizations offering parenting education include state and local public agencies, private non-profits, schools, higher education institutions, and hospitals. Some coordination of services does occur, but it varies widely by county. Most organizations that offer parent education receive the majority of their funds from public sources, and the demand for programming far exceeds their resources. Parenting education programs serve very specific populations, such as families with young children, high risk parents, low income families, and teen parents. Parenting education programs use a variety of methods, particularly multi-session group classes, and use a wide selection of curricula, including evidence-based curricula in their delivery of services. Most parenting education programs serve limited numbers of families for a few months each year. Recommendations include promoting the use of evidence-based curricula, stabilizing funding, coordinating state and local leadership, and creating an infrastructure for professional development for parent educators as well as access to parenting education for all parents.

## Executive Summary

Parenting education improves the skills of parents, enabling them to guide and nurture the successful development of children's social, academic, and life skills. The *Oregon Governor's Summit on Early Childhood (March 2008)* identified parenting education for all families as a core component of Oregon's early childhood system of supports. Unable to uncover any centralized effort in Oregon to create an inventory of parenting education programs for the past 20 years, The Oregon Community Foundation and The Ford Family Foundation commissioned Oregon State University to examine the current status of parenting education programs and produce a web-based directory of Oregon programs. Through an exhaustive search of agencies and organizations, the contact list for the survey of parent education programs included 555 contacts, of which we were able to reach 351. Of the 351 responding organizations, 256 offer parenting education. This survey provides a snapshot of these current parenting education program efforts offered by 256 Oregon organizations in March, 2009.

A statewide directory of parenting education programs will be produced based on information collected in this study. There was no attempt to assess the quality or effectiveness of a program. In time, standards should be set on types of programs to include in the directory. The utility of this directory to various audiences (parents, planners, educators and others) should be assessed and findings used to improve future directories.

### Major Findings

Parenting education programs are offered by a variety of organizations including schools, hospitals, private non-profits, institutions of higher education, and state and local public agencies. Although the majority of these organizations have been in existence for many years, the average length of time they have been offering parenting education was far less. Forty-eight percent of the organizations had been offering parenting education for ten or fewer years. In addition, most organizations had few staff members associated with parenting education, with 47% reporting five or fewer.

Although some degree of parenting education is available in all 36 counties, more services are concentrated in the most populated counties in the state. Likewise, fewer organizations offered parenting education services in the less populated, more rural counties.

Most organizations reported offering parenting education services seven or more months per year. The vast majority of participants identified prevention as a focus of their services. Eighty percent of the organizations indicated that they do not charge for participation in parenting education programs. The majority of those charging for participation offered scholarships and/or sliding fee scales.

Overall, respondents indicated their organizations target a variety of audiences with parenting education services, although most tended to serve very specific audiences. Only 41% indicated that their organization targeted the *general population*. The largest percentage of organizations indicated that families with young children were their target audience. However, a substantial number of organizations selected audiences with significant challenges such as *high risk parents, low income families, and teen parents*.

Organizations reported serving a limited number of parents with 39% indicating they served less than 50 parents in 2008. Parenting education services are delivered through a variety of

methods including multi-session group classes, home visitation, support groups, counseling, referrals, written materials, and workshops. Although many organizations reported using curricula widely identified as being evidence-based, 68% of the organizations used other curricula. Many organizations indicated that they designed their own curriculum. Most organizations also offered additional services for parents including referral services, child care, nutrition education, and transportation. Although parents' length of participation varied depending on the types of services they were receiving, they were typically involved in parenting education programs for only a few months.

The community partners most commonly identified as offering parenting education were the Department of Human Services, school systems, local Commissions on Children and Families, Healthy Start, and Head Start. Fifty-six percent of the respondents reported that there were some efforts to coordinate parenting education within the community. However, in many of these communities there was a great deal of variability in the organization identified as "taking the lead".

Seventy percent of the organizations offering parenting education received 60% or more of their funding from public sources. Regardless of their funding sources, organizations were explicit in explaining that their programming demands far exceeded their resources. The current economic situation has already caused reductions in funding for these organizations and affected their ability to offer programs to clients. Organizations want to seek funding that can ensure their commitment to serve families over the long term. They recognize the importance of multi-year funding and its impact on their ability to provide consistent program delivery.

Based on the findings of this study, recommendations are provided for supporting parenting education in Oregon:

### **Programmatic Recommendations**

Programmatic recommendations to improve Oregon's parent education efforts include:

1. Too few programs are using evidenced-based approaches that have been shown to reliably improve parent skills and to change behaviors. Multiple factors may limit the use of such programs. Public and private funders that are committed to effective parent education programming must be willing to work with organizations to overcome each of these barriers.
2. Unstable funding undermines the availability and consistency of parent education in both urban and rural parts of the state. This seems especially true for prevention focused parent education for all families as opposed to education limited to specific target groups. More public-private partnerships should be developed to stabilize funding for local parenting education initiatives serving all families.
3. Clarifying state and local leadership for parent education would help to coordinate current services and create a base for the future development of effective parent education across the state.
4. The state's parent educators, and most importantly our families and children, will benefit from creation of a strong infrastructure that supports professional development for parent educators and promotes access for all parents to effective parenting education in each of Oregon's communities.

## **Research Recommendations**

Despite the vast amount of new information gathered by this survey, many questions remain unanswered about parenting education programs in Oregon. Most significant among them are:

1. What is the training and professional background of staff members who are delivering parenting education? What are the sources of pre-service and in-service professional development training for parent educators? What materials and other resources are accessible to support innovation in parenting education?
2. What evaluation strategies are guiding and informing the practice of parenting education? What are the outcomes being measured and achieved for parents and children receiving services?
3. How do parents perceive parenting education programming in their communities?
4. What factors contribute to the effective delivery of parenting education programs in local communities?
5. What are the organizational and programmatic infrastructure needs for parenting education at the local, regional and state level?
6. How is information being shared among both organizations and individuals who provide parenting education services?

Such information could enable researchers, community parent educators, and funding partners to design a long-term responsive system to support and advance parent education practices across the state.

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## Introduction

Parenting education improves the skills of parents, enabling them to guide and nurture the successful development of children's social, academic, and life skills. Effective parenting education utilizes skilled professional parent educators who deliver research-based curriculum programs. Health, education, and social service providers across Oregon recognize high quality parenting education as a powerful prevention strategy that not only reduces child maltreatment but also promotes positive family and child development.

The National Academy of Sciences' seminal report, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, concludes that healthy early childhood development depends on nurturing and dependable relationships with parents and other caregivers during the first years of life (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). When parenting is at its best, children thrive. Differences in parenting practices account for up to 50% of the gaps in school readiness. Effective early parenting contributes to later development of cognitive and social skills, positive parent-child and peer relationships, and prevention of delinquency, risky behaviors, and school failure (Family Strengthening Policy Center, 2007). Regardless of whether the parenting role is fulfilled by a biological parent, grandparent, foster or adoptive parent, or legal guardian, effective parenting is essential for children to achieve positive developmental outcomes.

Most importantly, parenting skills are learned. Parents have always sought support in raising their children regardless of their socioeconomic position or culture. Historically, parents obtained this support from their family network (Zepeda & Morales, 2001). As families have become smaller and separated by distance, the ease of passing on child rearing wisdom has decreased. In addition, many parents are at risk for child maltreatment or other negative child outcomes because their own rearing was not positive. These parents want and need help to learn more positive parenting practices. Lastly, all parents are bombarded with advice from books, television, and the internet. Often these media messages present advice that is conflicting, inconsistent, and confusing (Heath & Palm, 2006). As a result, recent national surveys have found that many parents feel unprepared for parenthood and are hungry for information. Some national surveys establish that *all* parents report a desire to learn more about parenthood. This information clearly suggests a universal demand for parenting education (Zepeda & Morales, 2001).

Parenting education is defined as "an organized, programmatic effort to change or enhance the child-rearing knowledge and skills of a family system or a child care system" (Arcus, Schaneveldt & Moss, 1993). Parent education expands parent knowledge about child development, builds parent skills, strengthens parent-child relationships, and promotes age appropriate care and activities that enhance a child's health, development, and social emotional skills (DeBord & Matta, 2002; Family Strengthening Policy Center, 2007). According to the National Parenting Education Network (2008), the field of parenting education currently has more than 250,000 professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers serving as parent educators in the United States. Many organizations offer parenting education as one piece of larger programmatic goals. For example, many pre-schools offer parenting programs to improve school readiness (Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2005), hospitals offer home visit services to ensure early parent-child attachment, and psychologists develop curricula to enhance parental knowledge, skills, and confidence with the goal of preventing behavioral and emotional problems in children and youth (Sanders, Markie-Dadds, & Turner, 2003). Overall, however, these programs are fragmented and inconsistent in applying best practices in parent education. Parenting education resources that address a diversity of parent needs are limited and few communities coordinate programs and resources in ways that address the multiple responsibilities of childrearing (Family Strengthening Policy Center, 2007). The numerous and diverse approaches and goals of parenting education programs mean that there is no clear set of professional standards, little agreement on content, and little consensus as to who is qualified to be a parenting educator (Glasser & Heath, 2004).

Oregon has some parenting education programs that reach across the state. These include the state funded *Oregon Healthy Start (OHS)* that screens all first birth families and offers in-home parenting education to those families at greatest risk of poor outcomes, including child maltreatment. *OHS* improves parenting skills and reduces the incidence of child maltreatment among these higher risk families. *Head Start* programs serve lower income preschool children combining early childhood education with parent education and comprehensive family support. *Birth to Three* is a nationally recognized parenting education program that has expanded from its birthplace in Eugene to several sites across Oregon and the nation. The *Oregon Commission on Children and Families* and the 36 affiliated *county commissions* fund local parenting education programs across Oregon. Some *Oregon Community Colleges* offer research-based early parenting programs. The *Oregon Community Foundation* and *The Ford Family Foundation* have invested in building parent education programs in multiple Oregon communities. The

*Oregon Department of Human Services*, the state's largest health and social services agency, has likewise supported parenting education through multiple family support programs (i.e. Child Protective Services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and alcohol and drug treatment interventions). The *Oregon Parent Training and Information Center (OR PTI)* is a statewide training and information center that serves parents of children with disabilities. The OPTI educates and supports parents, families, and professionals in building partnerships that meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities from birth to age 26. Through a regionalized model, OPTI serves all of Oregon. Most of the programs named above serve specific target audiences such as limited income or at-risk families.

The *Oregon Governor's Summit on Early Childhood (March 2008)* identified parenting education for all families as a core component of Oregon's fledgling early childhood system of supports. The importance of parenting education is also highlighted in the Oregon Department of Human Services' *Oregon Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plan* and the Oregon Commission on Children and Families' *Early Childhood Matters*, which is a "call to action" on behalf of all children in the state from birth through age five. In all of these major policy initiatives, parenting education is identified as a vital element.

In the late 1980's there was legislative interest in building parent education in Oregon but little was known about existing parent education resources. A coalition of parent education programs worked together to compile a directory of parent education resources. Programs from across the state were included; however, this effort was completed in an era with limited technology and resources. The data collected was not updated and access to the information was limited to those with a printed copy of the directory.

Given that there has been no other known centralized effort in Oregon to create an inventory of parenting education programs for over 20 years, The Oregon Community Foundation and The Ford Family Foundation commissioned Oregon State University to study parenting education in Oregon and produce a directory of identified programs. Tasks included:

1. Defining the parameters of parenting education (e.g. is a preschool that does parent/child conferences considered a parent education program?)
2. Determining the essential variables to include in a parenting education directory including indications of evidence-based approaches and curricula

3. Identifying and collecting contact information for providers of programs at both the state and local levels
4. Collecting, analyzing, and compiling the data describing parenting education programs

The goal of the current descriptive study was to document the location and characteristics of organizations providing parenting education across the state of Oregon, including the type of programming offered, the number of parents reached by those programs, and the gaps in availability of programs.

### **Survey Methodology**

This study was led by a team of Oregon State University researchers. To assure this study was respectful and responsive to providers of parenting education, a broad range of parent education providers and leaders helped the researchers define the study's fundamental parameters. Thus, all critical decisions reflected the shared knowledge of parent educators and leaders in the field as well as the OSU research team. Therefore a range of data collection methods were utilized including focus groups, key informant interviews, electronic surveys, and phone interviews, to gather program information and to document the concerns of Oregon's parent educators.

### **Focus Group**

A focus group was conducted with the Family Matters Task Force on January 12, 2009. This task force is a subcommittee of the Oregon Early Childhood Council. The subcommittee includes representatives from state agencies, local service providers, as well as institutions of higher education. The creation of a parenting education program directory dovetails with the task force's action plan. During the focus group, the Task Force members reviewed and approved the project, the data collection methods, and the project's definition of parenting education:

*Parenting education and support programs are on-going, institutional efforts to increase parents' ability (knowledge and skills) to support their children's optimal growth and development.*

The task force members reviewed and approved the proposed data collection methods including key informant interviews, focus group interviews, electronic survey, and phone

interviews. The task force members unanimously supported the creation of a statewide parenting education directory, seeing it as a valuable resource for individual parents seeking services as well as for organizations and agencies that serve families. They believed it would be most beneficial for such a directory to be easily accessible on the internet and linked to as many other websites as possible. Focus group participants identified statewide and local agencies that should be contacted for participation in either the key informant interviews or the electronic survey. Participants provided contact information to OSU for many programs as well as for their own local affiliates.

The focus group widely accepted the proposed information to be included on the electronic survey. They also suggested additional items to include on the survey and offered ideas for the survey design. These ideas included use of drop down menus of response choices with lists of widely recognized evidence-based curricula, delivery mechanisms, target audiences, etc.

During the focus group, the Family Matters Task Force members were also asked to share concerns about the data collection process or the directory itself. The participants discussed potential barriers that might inhibit local agencies from participating in the survey. These barriers included the length of the survey, lack of time for completing the survey, and concerns about how their program would be viewed by others if they did not utilize a particular curriculum or served only limited clientele. Participants also suggested that those invited to complete the survey were advised “what they would get out of it”. Benefits included the option of being listed in the directory, access to the directory itself and notification of Request for Proposals from the foundations sponsoring the project.

### **Key Informant Interviews**

During January and February 2009, key informant interviews were conducted with twenty-five leaders from a variety of statewide organizations having an interest in parenting education. These organizations included Oregon Commission on Children and Families, Multnomah County 211 and Safety Net, Birth to Three, Oregon Department of Human Services, Oregon Public Health Division, Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, institutions of higher education, statewide early childhood advocacy groups, Relief Nurseries, groups supporting families of color, and the United Way of Oregon.

Overwhelmingly, leaders from these organizations affirmed the need for an inventory of parenting education programs in the state. All participants described their organization's parenting education efforts and identified other professionals and organizations that they recognized as leaders in parent education in the state. These leaders also agreed to provide lists of their local affiliates to OSU so they could be contacted to complete the survey.

### **Identifying Parenting Education Programs**

A four-pronged method was used to identify the parenting education programs across the state. First, as described above, information was collected from focus group and key informant interview participants. Participants provided lists of parenting education programs associated with their agency. This included local contacts for: Birth to Three Curricula Training Recipients, Child Care Resource and Referral Directory, Children's Trust Fund of Oregon grantees, Commissions on Children and Families, County Health Departments, The Ford Family Foundation ESPP II grantees, Foster Families Resource List, Head Start (including Tribal Head Start and Migrant Education Programs), Oregon Healthy Start, Hospitals in the Oregon Hospital Association, Oregon Community Foundation Early Childhood Initiative grantees, Oregon High Schools' teen parent programs funded by the Oregon Department of Education, Relief Nurseries, and local YMCA/YWCA parenting programs.

Second, the Commission on Children and Families (CCF) and United Way of Oregon were contacted with a short online survey. In this survey, local CCF and United Way staff were asked to identify the parenting education programs funded by their organization as well as other programs offering parenting education in their county or region. The state Commission on Children and Families sent an email to the 36 county commissions informing them of the survey and encouraging them to participate. A link to the survey was then sent by OSU staff. Sixteen of the 36 county commissions responded, providing contact information for approximately 41 parent education programs across the state. Similarly, a link to the survey was sent by United Way of Oregon to local United Way staff. Seven individuals responded to the survey, identifying 11 organizations that offered parenting education.

Third, in order to reach programs that may serve families of color, OSU contacted all nine federally recognized Indian tribes in Oregon, one large metropolitan service organization for Native Americans, one large metropolitan Asian advocacy organization for Asian immigrants, four large organizations serving Hispanic families, as well as Catholic Relief Services and local

offices of the NAACP. Advocacy organizations were also contacted by phone, letter, and/or email and invited to participate in identifying parent education programs or completing the survey itself.

Fourth, internet searches and telephone calls were used to identify additional parenting education programs. In order to assure representation from programs in all Oregon counties, known parenting education programs in smaller counties were contacted to provide information on additional programs in their area. In addition, internet searches and telephone calls were used to locate contact information for agencies that were identified through the above described methods, but for which current contact information was not given or the information given was inaccurate.

Ultimately, the contact list for the survey included approximately 950 parenting education programs. This list was manually and electronically reviewed to eliminate duplicates. The final sample included 640 contacts for organizations that had been identified as offering parenting education across Oregon.

### **Online Survey**

OSU designed and conducted a web-based survey utilizing SurveyMonkey™ (www.surveymonkey.com). Information collected on the survey included: the name of the organization and program, contact information, geographic region served, funding sources, key collaborator groups and agencies, target population, core content provided to parents, curricula used, and primary delivery methods.

The survey was piloted with 18 organizations that are part of the Enhancing the Skills of Parents Program II funded by The Ford Family Foundation. The survey was then sent in two rounds to 521 individuals for whom email addresses were available. Participants were given two weeks to respond to the survey. Two reminders were sent prior to the deadline. Of those, 195 completed the survey online and an additional 32 responded via email or phone to indicate that they did not offer parenting education or that the survey was completed by another person in their organization.

Participants who did not respond online (235) and those for which a working email address was not available (167) were followed up with telephone interviews. Telephone interviewers

attempted to contact 342 organizations for which contact information was initially available in order to verify if they offered parenting education and/or to complete the survey over the telephone. The survey was completed with 131 of these organizations, contact information for 26 organizations could not be found, and the remaining 185 organizations did not respond (after one or two telephone messages).

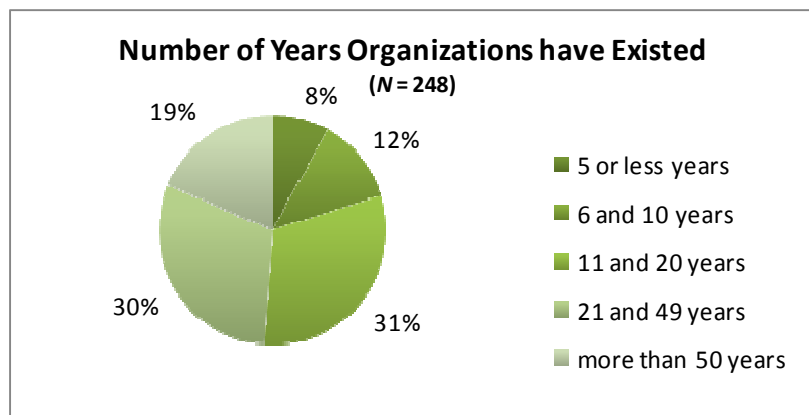
Out of the 640 original contacts, 85 were removed due to duplication or inability to locate contact information. Therefore, the response rate is based on the 555 unduplicated organizations for which some type of contact information was available. Of the 555, 351 responded via email, the online survey, or telephone interview, for a response rate of 63%. The remaining 204 (37%) were not able to be contacted despite numerous attempts via email and telephone. Of the 351 responding organizations, 256 offer parenting education and are included in the following analysis.

## Results

### Organizations Offering Parenting Education

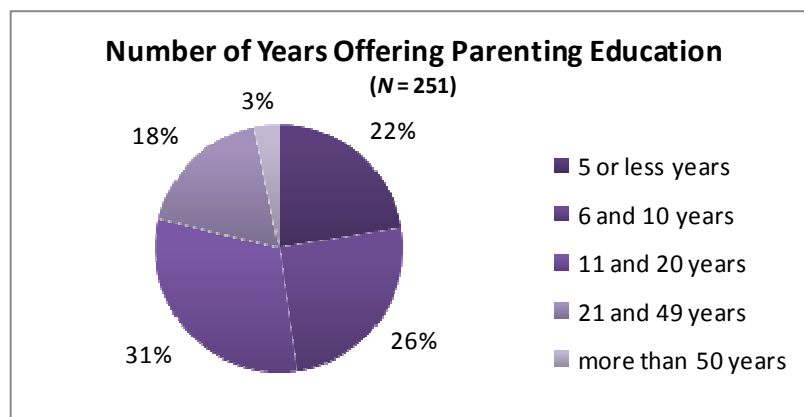
To better understand the organizations offering parenting education in Oregon, survey participants completed a series of questions focused on organizational infrastructure. Parenting Education Survey respondents represented a wide variety of organizations and agencies. Using the organization name and parenting program name, organizations were grouped into several categories. Education or school systems were the largest single category of organizational sponsor. This included programs for teen parents in Oregon high schools (40), programs sponsored by the school district or elementary school (11), and programs administered by Education Service Districts (4). Health related organizations were also well-represented in the sample. Twelve respondents were from County Health Departments (often providing Healthy Start services), 9 additional agencies provided Healthy Start to first time parents, and three respondents represented hospitals. In addition, 98 other community-based organizations or agencies responded including 19 Head Start or Early Head Start services, 13 Family Resource Centers, 12 libraries, and 10 mental health or alcohol and drug treatment agencies. Additional responses were received from eight Relief Nurseries, six Community Action Teams, six Child Care Resource and Referral services, and six universities or community colleges. YMCA and faith-based organizations had five respondents each and Online/Web-based services and pregnancy support centers each had three respondents. Two respondents represented local Commissions on Children and Families. The remaining 84 agencies represented a range of non-profit organizations which could not be categorized based on the organization and program name.

Organizations completing the survey had been in existence an average of 32 years. Twenty percent (n=50) of the organizations reported having been in existence for ten years or less. Thirty-two percent (n=77) of organizations reported having been in



existence between 11 and 20 years. Twenty-nine percent (n=75) of the organizations have been around between 21 and 49 years. Another 19% (n=46) have been in existence more than 50 years. Clearly, the organizations that offer parenting education in Oregon are well established.

Although the majority of organizations have been in existence for many years, the average length of time they have been offering parenting education was only fifteen years. Forty-eight percent (n=120) of survey respondents indicated their organizations had been offering parenting education for ten or less years. Thirty-one percent (n=78) reported offering parenting education



between 11 and 20 years. Another 18% (n=45) had been offering parenting education between 21 and 49 years. Only 3% (n=8) had been offering parenting education for more than fifty years.

### **Employees**

Organizations varied widely in their number of employees. Fifty-one percent (n=132) of the organizations had 25 or fewer staff in their entire organization. However, 29% (n=76) employed 100 or more staff. The remaining twenty-one percent (n=55) said their organizations employed between 26 and 99 staff. Respondents were also asked how many of their organization's staff were associated with parenting education, including coordinators, home visitors, and facilitators. Forty-seven percent (n=114) of the organizations had five or fewer employees associated with parenting education. Another 24% (n=58) reported between six and ten employees dedicated to this area. Only 2% (n=5) of the organizations had 50 or more staff associated with parenting education implementation.

**Table 1. Number of Employees in Organization and Number of Employees associated with Parenting Education (N = 249)**

Employees in Organization		Number of Employees	Employees associated with Parenting Education	
Percentage of Organizations	Number of Organizations		Percentage of Organizations	Number of Organizations
24%	62	1-5	47%	114
10%	26	6-10	24%	58
17%	44	11-25	16%	40
10%	27	26-50	11%	28
7%	17	51-75	1%	3
4%	11	76-99	0%	0
29%	76	100+	1%	2

**Counties Served**

Survey respondents reported that parenting education was available to some degree in all thirty-six Oregon counties. Not surprisingly, organizations offering parenting education were concentrated in the most populated counties in the state (Multnomah, Lane, Washington, Clackamas, and Marion). Likewise, fewer organizations offered parenting education services in the less populated, more rural counties.

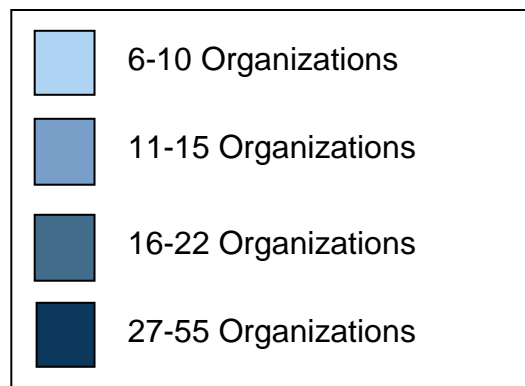
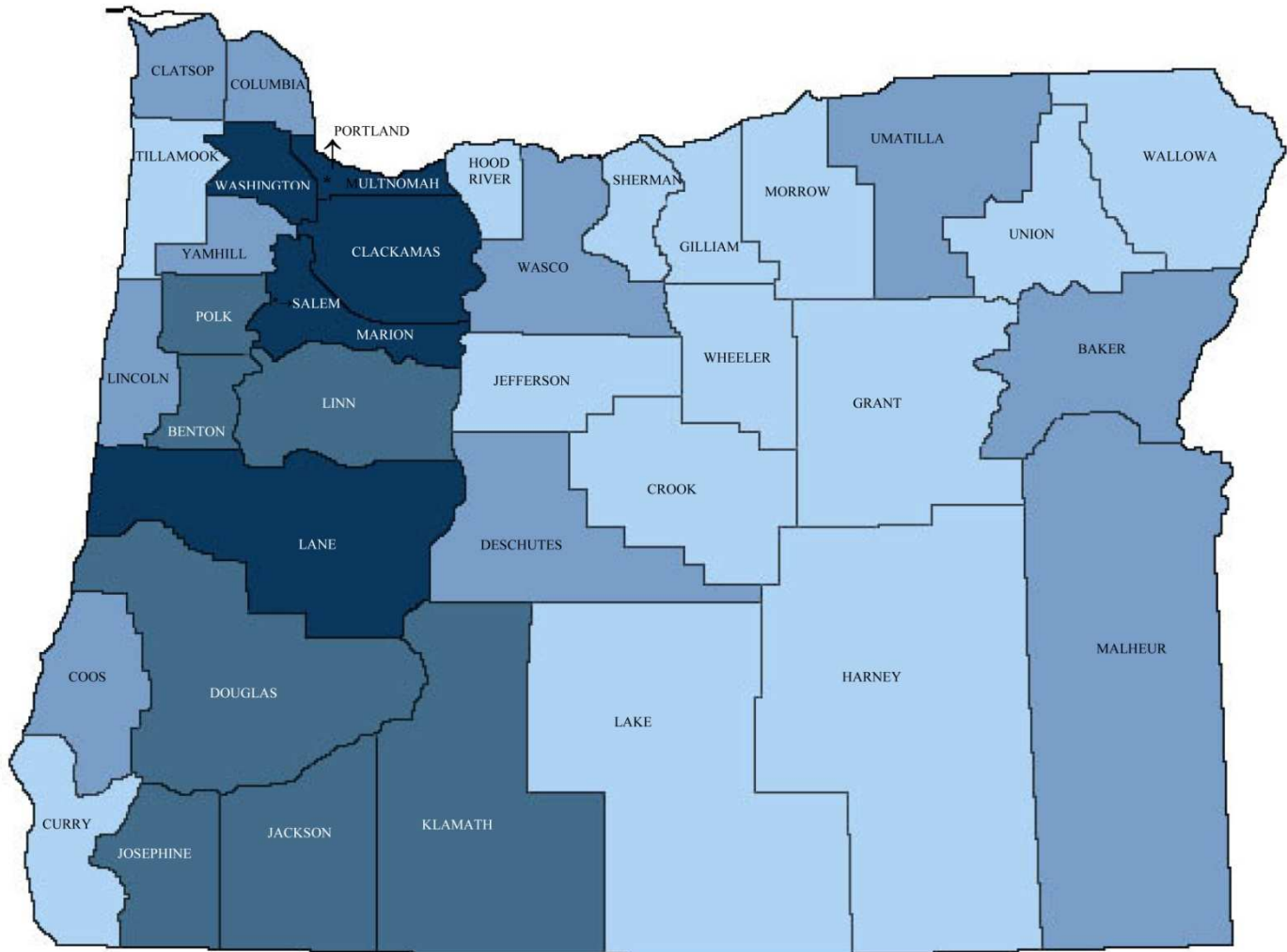
Sixty-seven of the responding organizations reported serving multiple counties. Only four organizations, two of which were online parenting resources, reported offering parenting education programs in all 36 Oregon counties [Family Works, Inc. (Parenting Wisely); Holt International Children's Services; Northwest Media (fosterparentcollege.com); Oregon Parent Training and Information Center].

Forty-two of the organizations primarily served specific regions of the state. Of those, 13 serve the tri-county Metro area (Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas); eight serve Northeast Oregon and the region east of the Willamette Valley (Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Hood River, Jefferson, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Wallowa, Wasco, and Wheeler). Seven serve Southern Oregon (Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, and Lake). Five serve the Mid-Valley (Marion, Polk, and Yamhill). Seven serve the South Valley (Benton, Douglas, Lane, and Linn). Two serve primarily the Northern Coast (Clatsop, Columbia, and Tillamook). The remaining 21 served a range of counties across different regions. See Table 2 below for the number of organizations who reported serving each county (organizations could report serving multiple counties).

**Table 2. Percentage and Number of Organizations Serving Each County**

<b>County Served</b>	<b>Percentage of Organizations</b>	<b>Number of Organizations</b>
Multnomah	21%	55
Lane	17%	46
Washington	16%	43
Clackamas	11%	28
Marion	10%	27
Douglas	8%	22
Linn	7%	18
Polk	7%	18
Benton	6%	17
Jackson	6%	17
Klamath	6%	17
Josephine	6%	16
Lincoln	6%	15
Umatilla	6%	15
Yamhill	6%	15
Columbia	5%	13
Deschutes	5%	13
Baker	5%	12
Coos	5%	12
Clatsop	4%	11
Malheur	4%	11
Wasco	4%	11
Tillamook	4%	10
Wallowa	4%	10
Hood River	3%	9
Jefferson	3%	9
Morrow	3%	9
Union	3%	9
Crook	3%	8
Gilliam	3%	8
Grant	3%	8
Harney	3%	8
Sherman	3%	8
Wheeler	3%	8
Curry	3%	7
Lake	2%	6

## Number of Organizations Reporting Parenting Education Services by County



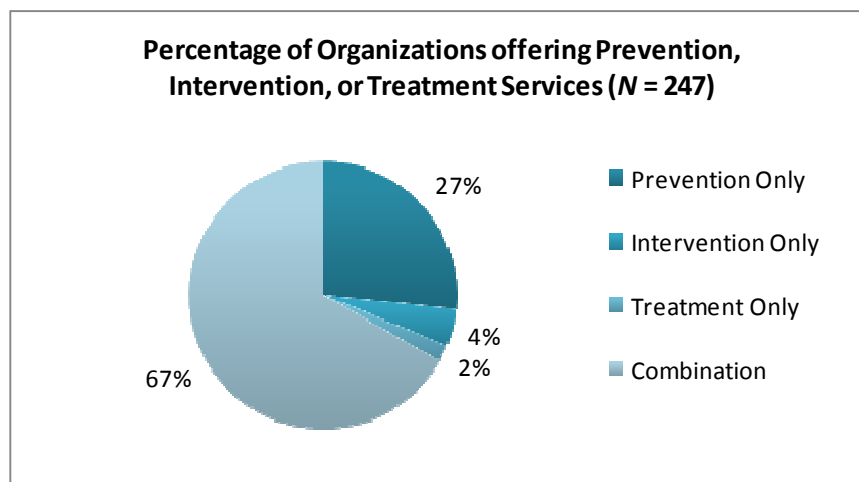
### **Communities Served**

Organizations were also asked to list the specific communities and/or school districts where they offered parenting education services. Organizations indicated that the majority of services within counties are offered in communities with the greatest populations. Often organizations listed the entire “county” or “school district” as the location for their services. There was evidence that organizations were making efforts to reach more isolated or sparsely populated communities within their counties. See Appendix 1 for the list of communities reported as being served in each county.

### **Parenting Education Services Offered**

Organizations provided information about various characteristics of the parenting education services they offered. Most organizations reported offering parenting education services during most of the year. Fifty-two percent of the organizations offered parenting education eleven to twelve months each and 31% offered programming for seven to ten months of the year. Only 17% of the organizations offered programming for six months or less.

One survey item asked organizations to identify their focus as prevention, intervention and/or treatment. Respondents could choose more than one focus. Fifty-five organizations said they offered all three services: prevention, intervention, and treatment programs. The vast majority of respondents, 90% (223), selected prevention as a focus of their services. Of those, only 66 indicated that prevention was their only focus. Sixty-nine percent (170) of the respondents reported having an intervention focus. However, intervention was the single focus for only eleven organizations. Treatment services were selected by 29% (72) of the respondents. Only five organizations listed treatment as their solitary focus.



### ***Fee for Service***

When asked if their organization charged for participation in any of their parenting education programs, the answer was overwhelming “No”. Eighty percent (n=208) of the organizations responded that they did not charge for participation.

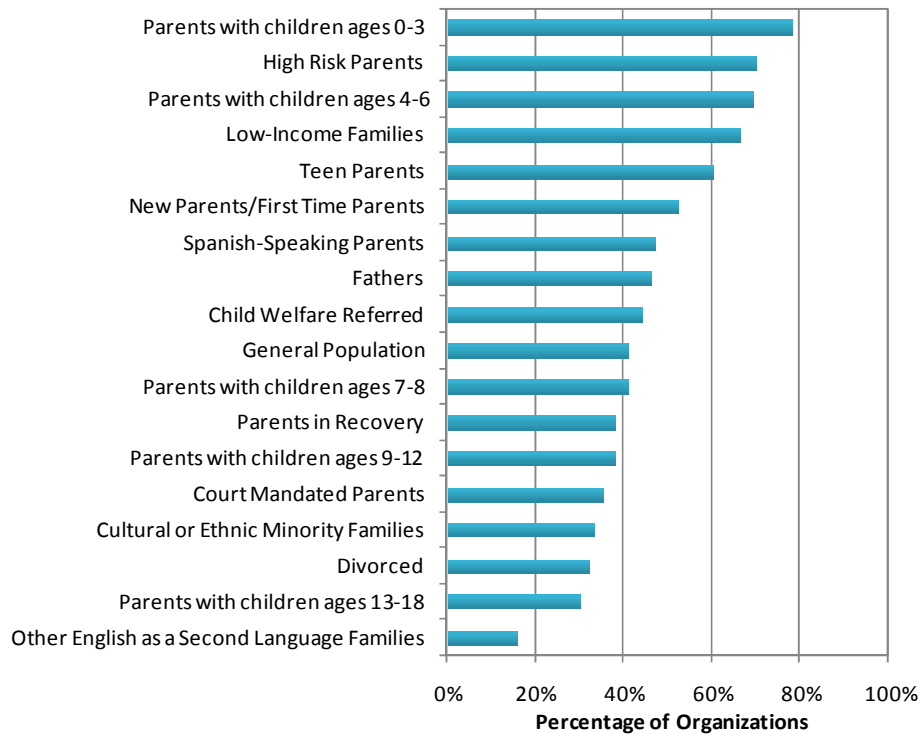
Of the 20% of organizations (n=51) who charged for services, 36 offered scholarships for parents who are unable to pay. Many of those charging a fee also indicated that their organization had a sliding fee scale based on income and that no one was turned away because of an inability to pay. Because of the diversity of services offered by organizations, there was a great deal of variation in the amount charged for services. For example, intensive treatment programs were much more expensive than a single workshop. Many organizations also indicated that charging a fee depends on how the individual service is funded. One organization illustrated this point:

*“[We] only charge for those who are NOT referred by a community program, or if they are not on the Oregon Health Plan. \$25 is charged to everyone else.”*

### ***Target Audiences***

Respondents indicated their organizations target a variety of audiences with parenting education services. The survey provided a list of eighteen target audiences and asked organizations to select all of their target audiences. Organizations responding to the survey tended to serve very specific audiences in their community. This could be the result of a variety of factors such as the mission of individual organizations, funding streams dictating the provision of services to specific audiences, or the priority needs determined by the community. Only 41% (n=104) of the respondents indicated that their organization targeted the *General Population*.

**Percentage of Organizations serving Target Audiences (N = 256)**



Seventy-eight percent (n=200) of the organizations indicated that *Parents with children ages 0-3* was a target audience. Sixty-nine percent (n=176) selected *Parents with children ages 4-6*. Significantly fewer organizations (41%; n=104) picked *Parents with children ages 7-8*. Parents with children over the age of eight were targeted by smaller percentages of organizations. *Parents with children ages 9-12* were selected by 38% (n=97) of the respondents and *Parents with children ages 13-18* were targeted by only 30% (n=77) of the organizations.

The largest percentage of organizations served families with young children as their targeted audience. However a substantial number of organizations selected audiences with significant challenges. *High Risk Parents* were targeted by 70% (n=178) of the organizations and *Low-Income Families* were targeted by 66% (n=168). *Teen Parents* were selected by 60% (n=154) of the respondents. *New Parents/First Time Parents* were also among the top six target audiences with 52% (n=132) of the respondents selecting this option.

Ranking in the middle of selected targeted audiences, *Spanish-Speaking Parents* were the target audience of 121 organizations (47%). *Fathers* were specifically targeted by 46% (n=118)

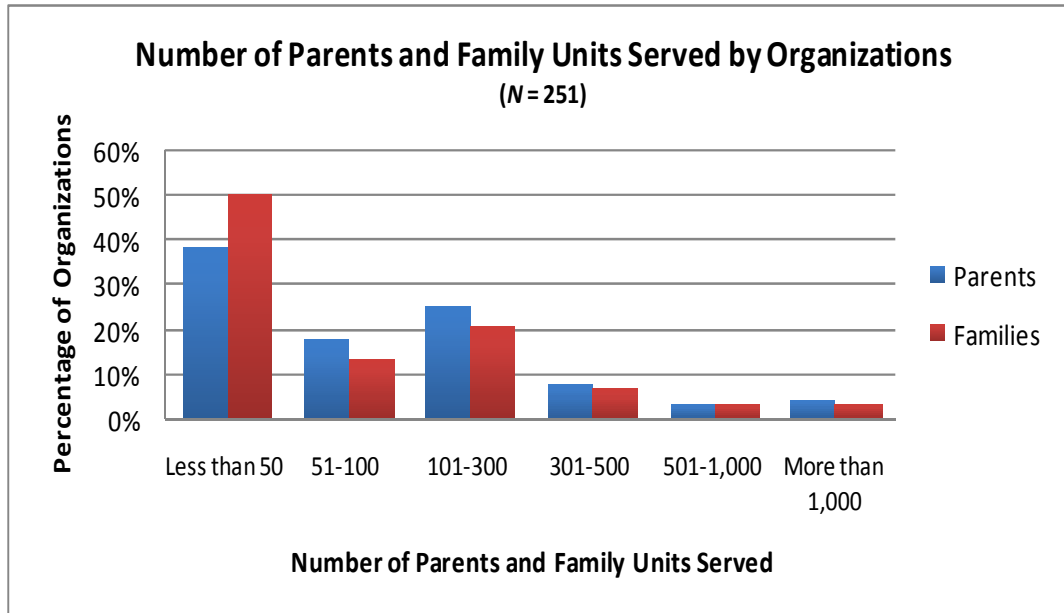
of the respondents. Forty-four percent (n=113) of the organizations provided services to those who were *Child Welfare Referred*. The least targeted audience was *Other English as a Second Language Families* (i.e. Russian, Chinese, etc.), selected by only 16% (n=41) of the respondents. This is expected as Spanish speakers represent the largest second language population in the state. Other lower ranking target audiences were *Parents in Recovery* (38%; n=97), *Court Mandated Parents* (35%; n=90), *Cultural or Ethnic Minority Families* (33%; n=85), and *Divorced Parents* (32%; n=82).

An *Other* category was also available for identification of additional target audiences not included on the survey list. Those mentioned the most often in this category were *Incarcerated Parents*, *High School Students*, *Families with Special Needs Children*, and *Adoptive Families*.

### ***Parents and Families Served***

Organizations reported the number of parents and family units served by their parenting education program in the past year. Thirty-nine percent (n=99) of organizations completing the survey served less than fifty parents during 2008. Eighteen percent (n=45) of the organizations served between 51 and 100 parents. Another 26% (n=66) served between 101 and 300 parents. Twelve percent (n=31) of the organizations served between 301 and 1,000 parents. Only 5% (n=11) of the organizations served more than 1,000 parents during the past year. Two of these eleven organizations were hospitals. Other organizations serving large numbers of parents were located in metropolitan areas or offered services either statewide or regionally.

The number of family units served by organizations during 2008 corresponded with the number of parents served. Fifty-one percent (n=127) of respondents reported that their organizations had served fifty or fewer family units during the past year (2008). Thirty-five percent (n=88) of the organizations reported serving between 51 and 300 family units. Fifteen percent (n=36) of the organizations served from 301 to more than 1,000 family units.

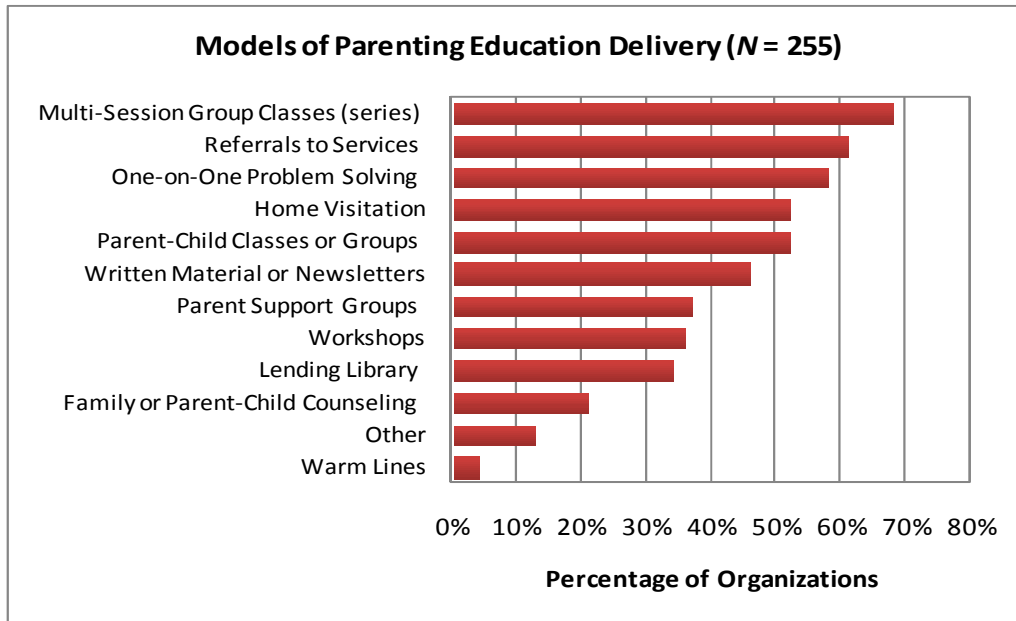


## Parenting Education Programming

### ***Models of Service Delivery***

Organizations identified their primary model(s) of service delivery for parenting education. The survey provided a list of eleven service delivery models. Organizations could choose multiple models of service delivery. The most popular method of service delivery selected by organizations was *Multi-Session Group Classes (series)* with 68% (n=172) of the responses. *Home Visitation* was chosen by 52% (n=133) of the organizations. Other selections which included more direct services were *One-on-One Problem Solving on Specific Short-Term Issues* (58%; n=148); *Parent Child Classes or Groups* (52%; n=133); *Parent Support Groups* (37%; n=95); *Workshops* (36%; n=91); and *Family or Parent-Child Counseling* (21%; n=53).

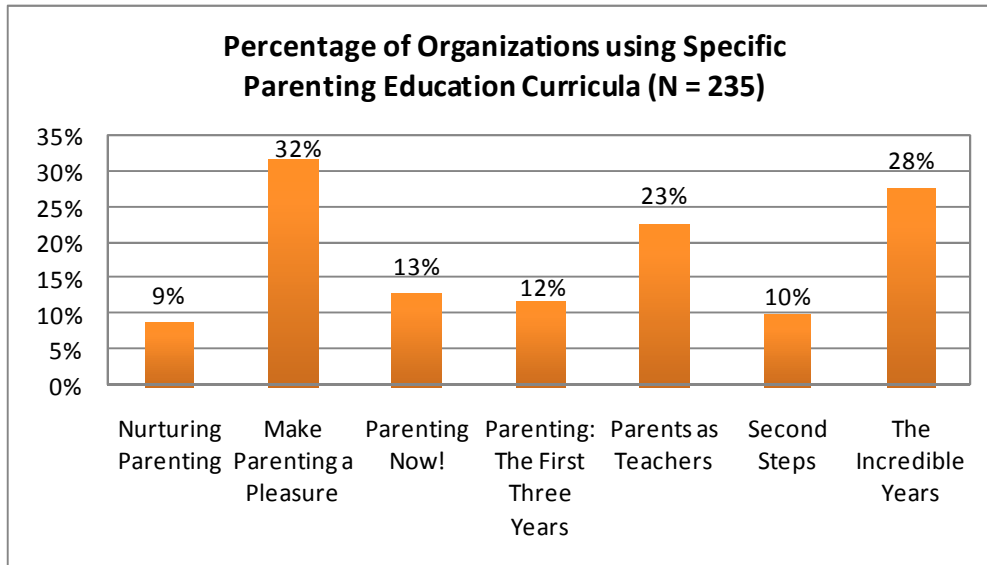
Some organizations also selected delivery models which directed parents to services or to educational materials. For example, sixty-one percent (n=156) chose *Referrals to Services*. Forty-six percent of the organizations delivered education through *Written materials or Newsletters* and 34% (n=87) through a *Lending Library*. Only 4% (n=11) of the organizations reported delivering services through *Warm Lines*.



Organizations were able to list additional primary delivery methods that were not included in the survey list. Those methods mentioned most frequently were high school child development courses, computer-based programs, DVD self-study courses, and family activities.

### ***Curricula Use***

As evident above, the majority of organizations use multi-session group classes or series as the primary model of service delivery. Approximately 235 organizations reported using at least one parenting education curriculum. The survey listed seven curricula that are widely recognized as evidence-based and are designed for use with families with young children. Of the seven listed curricula, 32% (n=76) of the organizations used *Make Parenting a Pleasure*. *The Incredible Years* was used by 28% (n=65) and *Parents As Teachers (PAT)* by 23% (n=54). *Parenting Now!* and *Parenting: The First Three Years* were both utilized by 12-13% (n=28; 31) of the organizations. The least employed of the seven listed curricula were *Second Steps* utilized by 10% (n=24) of the respondents and *Nurturing Parenting* used by only 9% (n=22).

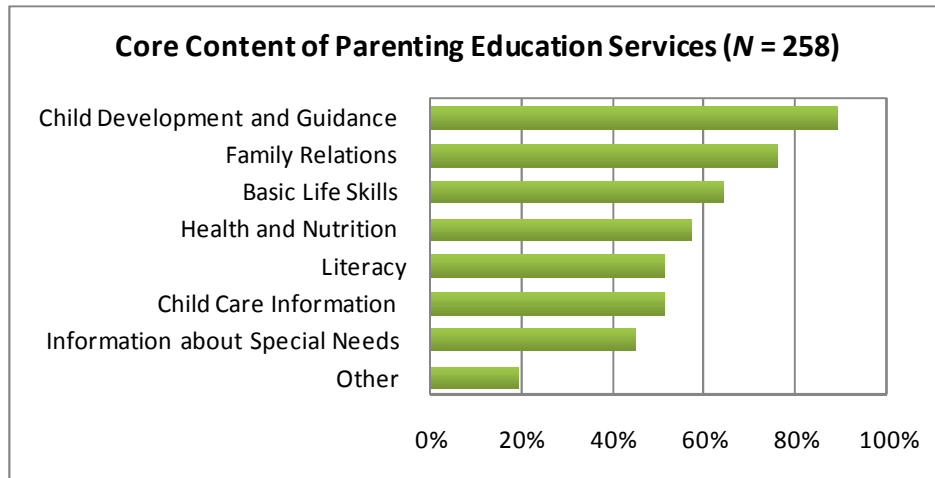


About 68% (n=160) of the organizations indicated they used “Other” curricula. The most frequently listed other curriculum was *Strengthening Families* (n=21), an evidence-based program designed for use with families with children ages 10 to 14. In 2008, the Oregon Department of Human Services provided training and financial contracts for implementation of this curriculum in multiple communities across the state. *Parenting Wisely*, the only evidence-based curriculum delivered via a computer program, was used by eight organizations. High schools generally used Oregon Department of Education’s Parenting Curriculum with their teen audiences. Other frequently mentioned curricula included *Love and Logic*; *Parenting Inside Out*; *Active Parenting*; *Every Child Ready to Read*; *Directions*; *1, 2, 3 Magic*; and *Creative Curriculum*. Many organizations indicated that they designed their own curriculum. Several reported using “bits and pieces” of several curricula.

### **Core Content of Programming**

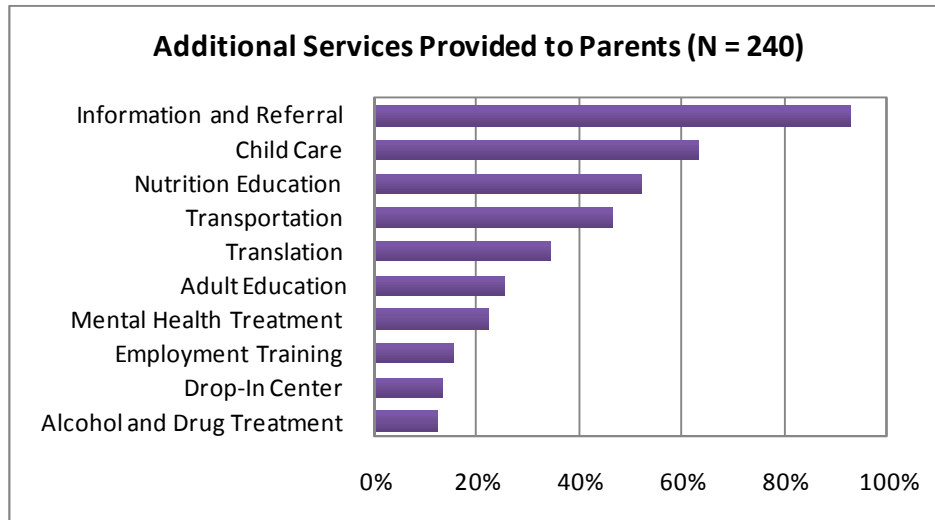
Organizations were asked to report on the core content of information delivered during their parenting education programming. From a list of seven options, organizations could choose all of the options that applied to their program. *Child Development and Guidance* was selected by 89% (n=229) of the organizations. The next most popular selection was *Family Relations* chosen by 76% (n=197) of the respondents. Sixty-four percent (n=165) selected *Basic Life Skills*. *Health and Nutrition* was chosen by 57% (n=146) of the respondents. *Literacy* and *Child Care Information* were each selected by 51% (n=131). Forty-five percent (n=117) of respondents selected *Information for Families of Children with Special Needs*. Only 19% (n=48)

opted to specify *Other* types of core content. The most frequently mentioned topics included stress management, anger management, communication skills, and pre-natal care.



### ***Additional Services Offered***

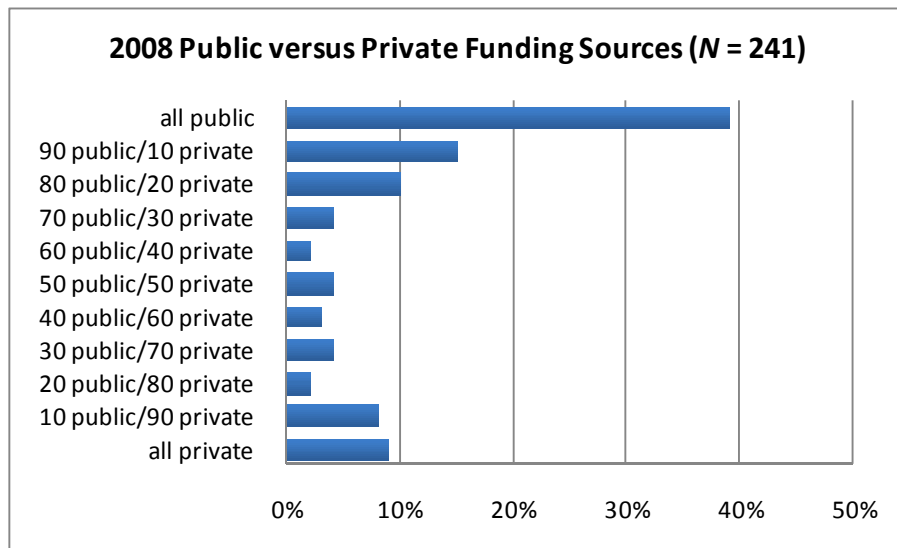
Organizations reported offering a variety of additional services to parents involved in their parenting education programs. The vast majority (93%, n=222) indicated they offered *Information and Referral* services. *Child Care* was provided by 63% (n=150) of the organizations. Fifty-two percent (n=124) offered *Nutrition Education* and 46% (n= 110) provided *Transportation* services. *Translation Services* were made available by 34% (n= 82) of the organizations. *Adult education (i.e. GED)* programs were offered by 25% (n=60) of the organizations, and 15% (n=35) offered *Employment Training*. Treatment services for *Mental Health* and *Alcohol and Drugs* were provided by a few organizations (22%, n=53 and 12%, n=32 respectively). Only 13% (n= 32) of the organizations offered a *Drop-In Center*. A few organizations identified *Other* services that were not included on the survey list. Most often these other services included: provision of a meal during the parenting program, emergency food and clothing, and English as a Second Language classes.



Information provided by the responding organizations indicated that parents typically participated in parenting education programs for only a short span of time. Twenty-three percent (n=57) of the organizations indicated that parents were involved less than four months per year with the parenting education program. An additional 13% (n=33) of organizations reported that parents were engaged 4-11 months. Seventeen percent (n=43) of the organizations indicated that parents received services for one to two years. Only 1% (n=2) of the organizations had parents who were typically served for over four years. Thirty-seven percent (n=93) of the organizations indicated that the length of time a parent was typically served by the program varied depending on the services offered. For example, a parent may participate in a series of classes lasting for twelve weeks or a parent may qualify for a home visitation program that could last up to three years.

### **Funding for Programs**

Organizations were asked to estimate the ratio of funding for their parenting education programs that come from **public** (e.g., government agencies or grants, public schools) versus **private** (e.g., foundations, businesses, tuition fees, local fundraising, donations) sources for the past fiscal year. Of the 241 organizations responding to this survey question, the vast majority (70%; n=168) received 60% or more of their funding from public sources. Of these, 39% (93) received only public funding. In contrast, only 9% (n=22) of the organizations were completely funded through private sources. Twenty-six percent of the organizations (n=64) reported that more than half of their funding came from private sources. Only four percent (n=9) of organizations indicated their funding ratio was evenly split between public and private sources.



Private sources of funding for parenting education identified by the respondents included foundations, United Way, donations, and small grants from a variety of groups, including Children’s Trust Fund of Oregon and Wal-Mart. Head Start, public school districts, Department of Human Services, county general funds, local Commissions on Children and Families, and public libraries were most often cited as sources of funds for those organizations funded primarily through public sources. Many respondents commented on the complexity of their funding:

*“Funding for the education programs is complicated. Funding is sometimes drawn from surpluses, which there are none of this year.”*

*“We receive funding from a county agency---they received the funds from a private foundation.”*

*“The state provides a bulk of the financing, and the district fills in the gaps in funding. Facilitator of program also has written some grants.”*

*“Budget varies year by year depending on amount and duration of all grants. Community donations held fairly stable until mid 2008.”*

*“Healthy Start funding comes from the State through the Commission on Children and Families. Other program funding comes from grants and foundations. We are looking to increase our local giving programs.”*

*“Funding fluctuates, so sometimes the funding is tight, sometimes there’s enough to grow and develop the site.”*

*“It is woefully inadequate. The few things that do happen are so sporadic because of a lack of continuity in funding. Resources come and go too quickly.”*

Regardless of funding sources for parenting education, organizations were explicit in explaining that their programming demands far exceeded their available resources. Comments included:

*“They [the organization] are in need of funding for the scholarships; the services are reliant on the scholarships, and this is a growing concern for the organization. All in all, there is never enough funding.”*

*“Funding is limited in regards to being able to provide resources, and to obtain what is necessary to provide all the services the organization offers.”*

*“It is becoming more and more difficult for the state to provide funding for the program. The program ran out of money last year, because it became so large. There is not as much federal money as in the past.”*

*“There is a huge demand for [our] programs, but [we] will lose the grants that have supported these programs in the past at the end of the fiscal year.”*

*“This program is over utilized and under-funded. Could use at least one more staff person. The amounts of referrals have increased, and [we] are finding it challenging to keep up with the demand.”*

*“In the English program, they would like to offer food, but cannot afford to do this. With Spanish groups, [we] provide funding for families to make dinner to bring to share with the group. Ultimately there is not enough funding, especially without the help of a small grant that was received. County is very poor, so they would like to provide more support groups, but do not have the funding.”*

Because the majority of respondents are dependent on public funds, they also expressed their concerns about reductions in current and future funding due to the national, state and local economic downturn. These reductions in funding have already impacted the ability to offer programs to their clientele. Organizations described “*bracing for the long term effects*” of the current economic situation.

*“All federal funding. [We are] losing all grants at the end of this fiscal year.”*

*“Due to budget cuts, we have laid off a part time parent educator and combined her duties with another position.”*

*“We no longer have an in-house teacher and are unable to afford to hire trained teachers. Therefore, we are currently offering parent support services only, not classes.”*

*“We are predicting sizable reductions in services for '09-'11 and the answers to the above [survey] questions will look different by August 2009.”*

*“Head Start services are threatened if they do not receive funding. Services would have to be decreased if funding is cut.”*

*“Given the current economic crisis, I am concerned the state may reduce funding to an extent our offerings to our students may be affected.”*

*“There is a great need for parenting education in our community, and families are requesting it. However, due to lack of funding, programs are not being offered at this time.”*

Organizations conveyed their desire to seek funding that could ensure their commitment to deliver services to clientele over the long term. They recognized the importance of multi-year funding and its impact on their ability to provide consistent program delivery.

*“It is getting harder to find base funding for ongoing programs that should always be provided to high-risk families, such as parenting education.”*

*“Funding is tough, and multi-year funding is most appreciated.”*

*“It is getting more and more difficult to find funding for any social service work in school districts, private funding for the population I work with is also very limited. I would love to find steady funding to continue working in all the school districts I have made contacts with.”*

*“The Oregon Community Foundation’s generous and strategic support has made it possible for us to expand from a 10-week program serving 15 families at one elementary school to a full 30-week program serving 132 parents and children at three high needs schools each year.”*

### **Parenting Education in the Community**

Survey respondents were also asked to provide information about parenting education programs in their community. They were asked to identify the other organizations in their community who offered parenting education. Of the 184 organizations that responded to this question, 23 indicated they did not know who else in their community offered this service. Thirteen organizations indicated “many”, “numerous” or similar answers that were not quantifiable. The remaining 147 organizations provided answers that ranged from 0 to 65. The average number of other organizations known to offer parenting education reported was 5.5. As one organization explained:

*“It seems to be a patchwork quilt, dependent upon who has funding when. There is not a comprehensive approach.”*

There was a great deal of discrepancy in the numbers reported by organizations within the same county. This inconsistency was true for both metro and rural communities. The range reported for metro areas was largest even when controlling for more isolated communities within a predominantly urban county. For example, respondents from Multnomah County identified between 2 and 65 providers of parenting education; Lane County metro respondents identified between 2 and 58 providers; and the range reported by Marion County metro respondents was 3 to 30 providers. The range was smaller for more rural communities but still quite variable. Examples include ranges reported for Harney County (1-13); Josephine County (2-8); Malheur County (2-8), and Tillamook County (1-6).

### ***Coordination of Parenting Education***

Organizations were asked if there was an effort to coordinate all parenting education programming within their communities. Forty-four percent (n=98) of the respondents reported there were no efforts to coordinate parenting education programming in their community. However, a slight majority (56%, n=122) of organizations indicated that there were efforts to coordinate parenting education programming within the community.

Organizations that reported having a coordinated effort within their community were asked to identify the organization within their community that was taking the lead for the initiative. The most prevalent answer was the local Commission on Children and Families. Regionally, a few organizations were named by multiple responding organizations. Among the organizations identified as coordinating parenting education in various areas were: Linn-Benton Community College, Southwestern Oregon Community College, The Next Door, Inc. (Hood River), and the Douglas County Early Childhood Planning Coalition. However, in many communities there was a great deal of variability in the organization identified as “taking the lead”. For example in Eugene’s metro area, nine respondents identified seven different organizations that were taking the lead. Likewise in the rural community of Ontario, three respondents identified three different lead organizations.

Some respondents commented on the importance of organizing parenting education efforts within the community and state:

*“No one wants to duplicate efforts and everyone wants to stretch what dollars are available for parent ed programming to the best possible outcomes. I see this effort now being stressed by reductions in services, layoffs, and general anxiety reflected by programs.”*

*“We try to offer what others are not offering without duplicating or competing.”*

*“No organization has tackled this issue formally for the past several years. We do this on an informal, ad hoc basis....to collaborate and coordinate service.”*

*“I would like to see the formation of a state-wide commission, operating in each county, dedicated solely to providing parent education program development, training, guidance and networking.”*

Although the survey did not ask for specific examples of coordination efforts, several respondents offered that a key function of the coordination efforts in their community by a lead agency was to provide a periodic calendar of parenting education classes and events. The calendars not only reduce the overlapping of offerings in the community but also serve as a tool to inform both parents and agencies of upcoming programs. There was evidence in some communities that lead agencies were facilitating meetings to determine parenting education needs.

### ***Community Partnerships***

Information was gathered from organizations about their perceptions of their primary partners in offering parenting education. Organizations indicated in the comments section of this question that primary partnerships did not have to involve financial support for parenting education. Some suggested that partnerships could be formed on the basis of making referrals for services, providing speakers for programs, use of facilities, bartering of resources, or collaborative programming.

For eight potential partners listed, organizations indicated whether or not each was a primary partner with their organization in offering parenting education by choosing either “yes” or “no”. Each organization could indicate more than one primary partner. Seventy-two percent (n=142) of the organizations identified the *Department of Human Services* as a primary partner. The *School System* was specified by 66% (n=128) of the organizations and local *Commissions on Children and Families* by 64% (n=126). *Head Start* and *Healthy Start* were each reported as primary partners by approximately half of the organizations. The *Faith-Based Community* was

identified as a primary partner by 34% (n=62) of organizations and the *Juvenile Department* by 27% (n=46). Twenty percent (n=34) of the organizations recognized the *Circuit Court* as a primary partner.

**Table 3. Percentage and Number of Organizations Reporting Primary Partnerships**

Partner Organization	Yes		No		Total Reporting
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	
Department of Human Services	72%	142	28%	55	197
School System	66%	128	34%	67	195
Commission on Children and Families	64%	126	36%	70	196
Head Start	53%	101	47%	89	190
Healthy Start	50%	96	50%	96	192
Faith-Based Community	34%	62	66%	118	180
Juvenile Department	27%	46	73%	125	171
Circuit Court	20%	34	80%	137	171

Organizations also identified agencies or organizations other than those on the survey list that they considered a primary partner in providing programs. Those named most often by the organizations included family resource centers, Even Start, mental health services, health departments, United Way, Relief Nurseries, and libraries. There were also organizations that were predominantly recognized in specific geographic regions. These included Birth to Three (Lane County), The Next Door, Inc. (Hood River and surrounding counties), and Multnomah ESD.

***Unmet Parenting Education Needs in Local Communities***

When asked which audiences (from a list of eighteen) were not having their parenting education needs met in the community, organizations indicated that each audience had some level of unmet need. Recognizing the increasingly diverse population of Oregon, *Spanish-Speaking Parents* were the most often identified as having unmet needs with 46% (n=78) of the organizations selecting this audience. *Other English as Second Language Families* were identified by 37% (n=62) of the organizations. Thirty-one percent (n=52) of the organizations said the parenting education needs of *Cultural or Ethnic Minority Families* were unmet. Other audiences identified by many organizations as having unmet needs included *Parents of Teenagers* (44%; n=74) and *Fathers* (41%; n=69). Several organizations listed *Families of Children with Special Needs* as being an audience with unmet needs in the *Other* category.

Table 4 below outlines the number and percentage of organizations that specified a target group as having unmet parenting education needs in their community.

**Table 4. Percentage and Number of Organizations reporting Unmet Parenting Education Need for Target Audiences**

<b>Target Audience</b>	<b>Percentage of Organizations</b>	<b>Number of Organizations</b>
Spanish-Speaking Parents	46%	78
Parents with children ages 13-18	44%	74
Fathers	41%	69
High Risk Parents	37%	63
Other English as a Second Language Families	37%	62
General Population	36%	61
Teen Parents	36%	60
Cultural or Ethnic Minority Families	31%	52
Parents with children ages 9-12	31%	52
Divorced	28%	48
Parents in Recovery	28%	48
Child Welfare Referred	27%	45
Court Mandated Parents	27%	46
Low-Income Families	27%	45
Parents with children ages 0-3	23%	38
Parents with children ages 4-6	22%	37
Parents with children ages 7-8	22%	37
New Parents/First Time Parents	20%	33

Percentages of organizations identifying families with young children as having unmet parenting education needs were low. Only 20% (n=33) of the respondents identified *New or First Time Parents* as an audience with unmet needs. Likewise, *Parents with Children ages 0-3; 4-6; and 7-8* were identified as having unmet parenting education needs by only 22-23% (n=37-38) of respondents. However, it is important to note that these were the target age groups of most of the respondents.

*“After 15 years of programming, we still believe that the highest demand is for families with children under [age] eight---when enthusiasm is high and ‘problems’ less prominent.”*

Likewise, organizations were explicit in the comments section that all audiences needed more services:

*“Many of these populations are served by programs, but not everyone who needs the services are receiving them.”*

*“Although there may be services available to some of these populations, parents may not know how to access them or they may not even know there are resources available to them.”*

*“There are not enough services for everyone, many are turned away due to limited space or availability of parent ed is sporadic.”*

*“Met to some extent but there is still a great need.”*

*“Sustainability and capacity building efforts will be increasingly difficult in the next two years, but our hope is that parent education will not be limited only to high risk, mandated populations and that a prevention priority maintains the stature accomplished in the last ten years,”*

*“There are a few classes for each target group, but there is room for improvement. There could be more frequent classes for example.”*

*“These services are being offered, but only in small amounts.”*

*“We need to grow this program. I believe we would affect outcomes more positively. I also manage the Pediatric Dept. at our hospital and believe that parents with children of all ages need help with education and parenting.”*

*“Parenting education is needed by all families---most of the time. The role of a parent as their child’s first and most important teacher is vital to the child, the family and the community. We are not born with the skills of good parenting. We are short sighted when we do not provide the information, resources, mentoring, and understanding that all parents need in order to raise and nurture healthy, happy, and emotionally whole children---children who are ready to learn when they enter school in order to become productive citizens in Oregon. When this happens we will know that things are better.”*

### **Parenting Education Directory**

Of the 256 responding organizations that offer parenting education, 210 indicated that they would like to be included in the Parenting Education Directory. Only 26 organizations indicated they did not want to be listed in the directory. An additional 20 organizations did not answer the question regarding inclusion in the directory. However, we anticipate the number of organizations included in the directory will change with future follow-up.

Because several organizations wanted to review the directory entry for their organization before it is published, the directory included in Appendix 2 is a draft copy. This draft directory includes the name of the organization, name of the parenting program, contact name, and contact information for all parenting education programs that agreed to be included in the directory. The

directory is divided into sections by county, with programs listed alphabetically by organization name under each county. Programs that serve multiple counties are listed under each county they serve, except for the three organizations that serve all counties, which are listed on a separate page. It is anticipated that additional information, such as types of parenting education offered and geographical region served would be included in the directory in the future.

Prior to a directory being finalized, a draft of the directory entries will be sent to each organization for review and approval. Follow-up will also be made with organizations that did not answer the question about inclusion in the directory. Many of these organizations did not get to the end of the survey, therefore, did not have the opportunity to answer the question.

A chart has been created for each county as a summary of target audiences, focus of services, and models of service delivery by each organization listed in the directory. The chart is included in Appendix 3.

## Study Limitations

This survey cast a wide net in an effort to provide a comprehensive description of parenting education in Oregon. Although intensive efforts were made to reach all organizations offering parenting education programs in the state, this effort may have been limited due to the following factors:

- It was challenging to identify and gather contact information for all of the agencies and organizations that may be offering programs. No single agency or professional organization maintains a comprehensive list of parenting education programs in Oregon. Therefore programs may not have been known to our informants. Despite intensive efforts to reach all programs, some programs may have been missed, especially if the program was small or limited to a specific target audience. For example, few faith-based programs were included due to the difficulty in identifying primary contacts for these organizations.
- Even though an organization may have been identified, their contact information may have been unavailable or incorrect.
- A variety of staff responded to the survey. Therefore responses may have been limited to information accessible to them in comparison to an Executive Director or Program Manager.
- If we reached a program, the director may not have responded to the survey. Time constraints limited follow-up attempts with survey non-responders.
- The broad-based approach led to the inclusion of many programs that the organization defined as parenting education but may not match the definition used by the study. Therefore the number of parenting education programs included in this study are possibly inflated.
- The information regarding an organization's parent education was not verified but rather reflected the knowledge of the respondent for that organization.
- There was no attempt to assess the quality or effectiveness of a program. If a program was identified and chose to respond to the survey, it was included in the analysis and this report.
- The information in this survey reflects the status of parenting education programs as of March, 2009. Many programs have unstable funding. In addition, programs are continually modifying their services. Therefore, it will be important to update the information frequently.

## Conclusion

This survey provides a snapshot of current parenting education program efforts offered by organizations throughout Oregon in March, 2009. Parenting education programs are offered by a variety of organizations including schools, hospitals, private non-profits, institutions of higher education, and state and local public agencies. Although the majority of these organizations have been in existence for many years, the average length of time they have been offering parenting education was far less. Forty-eight percent of the organizations had been offering parenting education for ten or fewer years. In addition, most organizations had few staff members associated with parenting education, with 47% reporting five or fewer.

Although some degree of parenting education is available in all 36 counties, more services are concentrated in the most populated counties in the state. Likewise, fewer organizations offered parenting education services in the less populated, more rural counties.

Most organizations reported offering parenting education services seven or more months per year. The vast majority of participants identified prevention as a focus of their services. Most organizations indicated that their programs offered some combination of prevention, intervention, and/or treatment services. Eighty percent of the organizations indicated that they do not charge for participation in parenting education programs. The majority of those charging for participation offered scholarships and/or sliding fee scales.

Overall, respondents indicated their organizations target a variety of audiences with parenting education services. However, most tended to serve very specific audiences in their community. Only 41% indicated that their organization targeted the *General Population*. The largest percentage of organizations indicated that families with young children were their target audience. However, a substantial number of organizations selected audiences with significant challenges such as *high risk parents*, *low income families*, and *teen parents*.

Organizations reported serving a limited number of parents with 39% indicating they served less than 50 parents in 2008. Parenting education services are delivered through a variety of methods including multi-session group classes, home visitation, support groups, counseling, referrals, written materials, and workshops. Although many organizations reported using curricula widely identified as being evidence-based, 68% of the organizations also reported using other curricula. Many organizations indicated that they designed their own curriculum.

Most organizations also offered additional services for parents including referral services, child care, nutrition education, and transportation. While parents' length of participation varied depending on the types of services they were receiving, they were typically involved in parenting education programs for only a few months.

The community partners most commonly identified by organizations as partners in offering parenting education were the Department of Human Services, school systems, local Commissions on Children and Families, Healthy Start, and Head Start. Fifty-six percent of the respondents reported that there were some efforts to coordinate parenting education within the community. However, in many of these communities there was a great deal of variability in the organization identified as "taking the lead".

Seventy percent of the organizations offering parenting education received 60% or more of their funding from public sources. Regardless of their funding sources, organizations were explicit in explaining that their programming demands far exceeded their resources. The current economic situation has already caused reductions in funding for these organizations and affected their ability to offer programs to clients. Organizations want to seek funding that can ensure their commitment to serve families over the long term. They recognize the importance of multi-year funding and its impact on their ability to provide consistent program delivery.

## **Recommendations**

We offer three types of recommendations – programmatic recommendations to improve Oregon’s parenting education efforts; research recommendations for future statewide surveys of parenting education programs; and directory recommendations for accessing information about parenting education programs.

### **Programmatic Recommendations**

Programmatic recommendations to improve Oregon’s parent education efforts include:

1. Too few programs are using evidenced-based approaches that have been shown to reliably improve parent skills and to change behaviors. Multiple factors may limit the use of such programs, including the expense of training and materials, high skill levels required of educators, parents’ resistance to attending multiple session programs, the lack of programs proven to engage diverse populations, and the limited number of “evidence-based” programs. Public and private funders that are committed to effective parent education programming must be willing to work with organizations to overcome each of these barriers.
2. Unstable funding undermines the availability and consistency of parent education in both urban and rural parts of the state. “Boom and Bust” funding limits the development of consistent local programming on which communities can rely. Most programs rely on a mix of public and private funding. Moreover, most programs are housed within organizations whose missions are broader than parent education. Without more consistent public-private partnerships in funding of parent education, access will continue to be episodic and limited. This seems especially true for prevention focused parent education for all families as opposed to education limited to specific target groups. Local Commissions on Children and Families are major resources for local funding for parent education, but this funding is dependent on legislative approval and is limited especially during poor economic conditions.
3. Statewide programs such as Oregon Healthy Start and various DHS programs offer vital support to higher risk, targeted families. When such programs reliably demonstrate positive outcomes for parents and children, they should be supported by local communities, as well as public and private funders.
4. There appears to be little local coordination of parent education across the state. In many communities, the local Commissions on Children and Families guide local parent education initiatives. But in too many communities there is no clear plan regarding parent education to support young families; if anyone is in charge, few programs recognize who it is. Clarifying state and local leadership for parent education would help to create a base for the future development of effective parent education across the state.

5. The survey reveals the lack of strong leadership for cross-program coordination and networking or professional development. The state's parent educators, and most importantly our families and children, will benefit from creation of a strong infrastructure that supports professional development for parent educators and promotes access for all parents to effective parenting education in each of Oregon's communities.

### **Research Recommendations**

Despite the vast amount of new information gathered by this survey, many questions remain unanswered about parenting education programs in Oregon. Most significant among them are:

1. What are the training and professional background of staff members who are delivering parenting education?
2. What are the sources of pre-service and in-service professional development training for parent educators? What materials and other resources are accessible to support innovation in parenting education?
3. What evaluation strategies are guiding and informing the practice of parenting education? What are the outcomes being measured and achieved for parents and children receiving services?
4. How do parents perceive parenting education programming in their communities?
5. What factors contribute to the effective delivery of parenting education programs in local communities?
6. What are the organizational and programmatic infrastructure needs for parenting education at the local, regional, and state level?
7. How is information being shared among both organizations and individuals who provide parenting education services?

Such information could enable researchers, parent educators, and funding partners to design a long-term responsive system to support and advance parent education practices across the state.

## Directory Recommendations

A statewide directory of parenting education programs will be produced based on information collected in this study. There was no attempt to assess the quality or effectiveness of a program. If a program indicated their desire to be listed in the directory, it is included in the draft. The research team makes the following recommendations concerning a statewide directory of parenting education programs:

1. The utility of this directory to various audiences (parents, planners, educators and others) should be assessed and findings used to improve future directories.
2. In time, standards should be set on types of programs to include in the directory.
3. The directory should be accessible via the web for both parents and professionals. It should be linked from as many statewide and local organizations and agencies as possible. This format allows easy updating as needed and an annual comprehensive update process.
4. The directory should include sorting features allowing programs to be searched by county, type of program, etc.
5. An entity should be identified to host, maintain, and monitor the directory website.
6. The directory should include a limitations statement noting that programs currently listed in the directory have not been assessed for quality or effectiveness. Readers are encouraged to carefully review program descriptions before choosing a parent education program.

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