



Get in the Loop: Recommendations to Address Information and Opportunity Needs for Parents of Young Children in Hamden, Connecticut

“...like we were saying before, you get into that loop, you’re good to go. Once you have that certain circle of people that either have a little bit of experience or knowledge of what’s available out there, then the world you’ve got in the palm of your hand.”

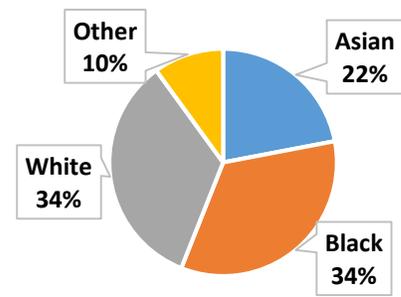
Hamden’s Partnership for Young Children (HPYC) has contracted with the Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE) at Southern Connecticut State University and Yale University to design a study exploring how to expand learning opportunities for parents of young children (birth to seven) in Hamden.

In the fall of 2017, CARE conducted four focus groups with 32 participants. The average age of participants was 39 years and 84% (27) were female and 16% (5) were male.

Four primary themes emerged from the focus group discussions:

1. Parenting struggles and information needs related to parenting
2. Current resources for parents of young children and opportunities to expand resources
3. Preferred source and mode of information delivery
4. Joys of parenting and parenting philosophy

Participant Race/Ethnicity



4 Primary Themes and Subthemes from Parent Focus Groups

Parenting Struggles

- Children’s difficult behaviors & parental response
- Eating, toileting, sleeping, etc.
- Developmental milestones
- Finding information & activities for children
- Needs of special populations of parents (dads, grandparents)
- Parental self-care

“...I’ve heard several interesting things here that will be helpful for me and it’s also nice to see people who have the same problems. Now I feel better about myself, like I’m not alone, there are people who have the same challenges as I do and that’s comforting.”

Current Resources

- In-person resources & opportunities
- Organizations, services & programs
- Paper & hard copy resources
- Technology resources

Preferred source & mode

- Preferred source & mode depended on the type of information.
- When parents sought information related to parenting advice, they wanted a trusted figure in person.
- Parents specifically wanted to receive information about who to contact, activities/events, programs, resources, & reminders via technology (websites, apps, email, text messages and phone calls) or hard copy (flyers home from school, grocery store, doctor’s office, etc.).

Joys of Parenting

- Parents valued raising happy, loving, and well-adjusted children.
- Children’s display of intelligence, helpfulness, and potential to succeed in the world were also valued by parents.

“I just feel like no matter how hard your life is, if the kid goes to bed every night knowing that they’re loved is just the most important thing.”

Recommendations

- 1. Further augment in-person opportunities intended for parents and caregivers to build a sense of community.**
- The desire for social support and opportunities to build relationships with other parents and caregivers outweighed the need to discuss any particular topic related to parenting or child development.
 - These opportunities should have a consistent and persistent presence in the community, as developing trust, rapport, and a good reputation in the community takes time and sustained effort, which will translate into greater parent engagement.

- 2. Offer in-person family activities for caregivers and children birth to seven that keep parent and child engaged, separately and together.**

- As described by parents, the Family Resource Center has already served as an excellent model for this type of activity.
- Modeling and observational learning were highly valued by parents.



- 3. Ensure opportunities are inclusive of special populations (e.g., fathers, grandparents, parents of children with disabilities) and offer special opportunities for these specific groups of caregivers.**

- 4. Provide educational opportunities for specific parenting and child development topics, as dictated by parents and caregivers.**

- Interactive sessions focused on tips and strategies from other parents and experts related to struggles with effective discipline, social and emotional development, and daily living activities, such as child's eating habits, toilet training, sleep habits, and oral care, may be of interest.

- 5. Tailor the source of delivering parenting information based on the type of information.**

- 6. Promote increased awareness among Hamden parents about available resources utilizing a comprehensive, multi-pronged outreach approach.**

- Strengthen outreach efforts through multiple modes, including flyers, a comprehensive website, and technology.
- Conduct outreach to parents not "in the loop," such as families new to Hamden and families who have children not yet engaged in a formal school or child care setting.
- A clear strength of the HPYC is the depth of its existing partnerships in Hamden. Many key partners are already at the table. Consider engaging non-traditional partners.
- Consider an outreach model that utilizes "parent influencers" to leverage their existing social networks.

- 7. Streamline and refine communications and dissemination of information related to HPYC partner activities offered to parents and more generally, the community resources available for families.**

- 8. Unify and leverage points of entry to "the loop" of information for Hamden families.**

- Points of entry include pediatricians, day cares, preschools, Birth to Three, community organizations, local community venues that parents frequent (e.g., parks, playgrounds, and grocery stores), hospitals at childbirth, easy-to-navigate and up-to-date websites that populate in web searches, and social media platforms.



- 9. Encourage sensitivity to messaging and framing parenting struggles and needs when advertising to or connecting with parents.**



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