



First 5 San Bernardino Community Listening and Learning Summary Report

Deepening Understanding: Insights and Strategic
Recommendations for Early Childhood Policy and Investment



June 2026

Report by the Inland Empire Community Collaborative (IECC) as part of our IE Children's Cabinet initiative on behalf of First 5 San Bernardino.



For questions about this report please contact IECC.

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This report provides an in-depth analysis of community perspectives and challenges related to early childhood policy and investment in San Bernardino County, drawing from comprehensive listening and learning sessions across the region. It offers strategic recommendations based on regional findings to inform future policy and resource allocation for improving outcomes for young children and families.

Acknowledgements

IECC extends sincere appreciation to the parents, caregivers, and family members who participated in the Community Listening and Learning Sessions and shared their experiences, priorities, and hopes for their children and communities. Your time, trust, and candor made this work possible and strengthened the collective understanding of what families with young children need to thrive.

We are grateful to the community-based organizations, community hosts, and local partners who supported outreach, provided trusted spaces, and helped ensure the sessions were welcoming, accessible, and grounded in community realities.

We thank the facilitators and note-takers whose trauma-informed and culturally responsive practice created psychologically safe environments and ensured that every voice was heard and respectfully documented.

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Finally, we recognize the broader IE Children's Cabinet network and regional partners whose ongoing commitment to equity, family well-being, and cross-sector collaboration continues to advance shared solutions for families across the Inland Empire.

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Introduction

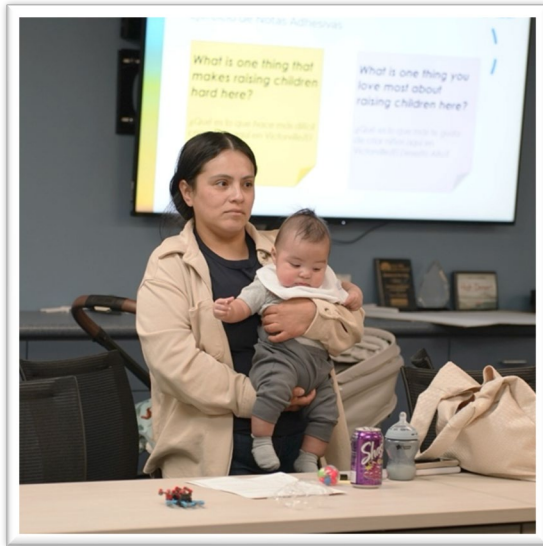
This qualitative summary report synthesizes themes and lived experiences shared by parents and caregivers during Community Listening and Learning Sessions held across San Bernardino County, including the High Desert, Valley, West End, and Mountain regions. The sessions surfaced both protective factors and pressing barriers affecting families with young children, with particular emphasis on child care, healthcare, developmental supports, housing, food access, transportation, public benefits, language access, and the rising cost of living.

For the purposes of this paper, the terms **parents** refer to individuals who have legal or primary responsibility for the care and upbringing of children ages 0-5. This includes biological parents, adoptive parents, legal guardians, and others with recognized custodial authority. The term **caregiver** is used more broadly to encompass not only parents and guardians, but also extended family members, family friends, or community members who provide regular and significant care for young children, regardless of legal status or formal relationship. This inclusive language recognizes the diverse family structures and caregiving arrangements present within Riverside County communities.



Across communities, families described a consistent pattern: services may exist, but they are often difficult to find, difficult to reach, difficult to qualify for, or difficult to use without trusted support. These barriers were experienced differently by region. In desert and mountain communities, geography and local service gaps made access especially burdensome. In more urban communities, families described fragmentation, eligibility cliffs, waitlists, and cost pressures that made systems hard to navigate even when services were nearby.

Families also described strong assets. Parents and caregivers lifted up extended family networks, schools, libraries, parks, community-based organizations, faith communities, food and diaper distribution programs, and trusted messengers who help families move from confusion to connection. These supports were especially important in helping families access resources, manage crises, and remain connected to their communities.



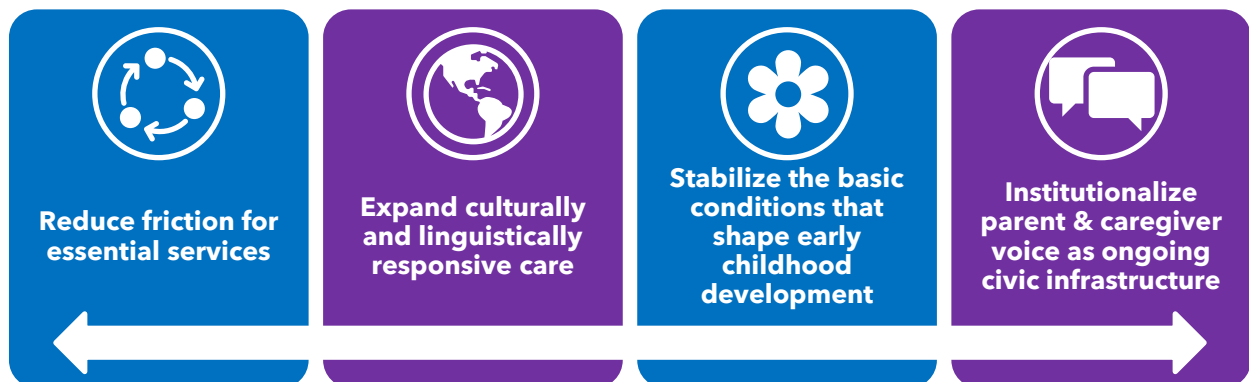
The sessions also clarified that barriers rarely occur in isolation. Families described how transportation, work schedules, and cost burdens compound one another, turning routine tasks (a pediatric appointment, a child care search, enrolling in benefits, securing healthy food) into multi-step obstacles with high time and emotional costs. In several instances, parents noted that the cumulative effect of these frictions contributes to delayed care, missed opportunities for early support, and increased stress for both parents and children, particularly for families facing

language barriers, immigration-related fear, or unstable housing.

The findings point to a set of cross-cutting priorities for early childhood policy and investment decisions: reduce access friction for essential services, expand culturally and linguistically responsive care, stabilize the basic conditions that shape early development, and institutionalize parent and caregiver voice as ongoing civic infrastructure.

The findings point to a set of cross-cutting priorities for early childhood policy and investment decisions: (1) reduce access friction for essential services, (2) expand culturally and linguistically responsive care, (3) stabilize the basic conditions that shape early development, and (4) institutionalize parent and caregiver voice as ongoing civic infrastructure.

Cross-Cutting Priorities



Key Cross-cutting Themes

The themes below reflect what families consistently raised across sessions, regardless of region. Together, they highlight the shared conditions shaping daily life for parents, caregivers, and young children countywide.

	Child care access remains misaligned with family work schedules, affordability, and early learning needs. Across regions, families described child care as limited, expensive, inflexible, and difficult to secure. Parents shared that available care often does not match work schedules, seasonal employment, nontraditional hours, or the needs of infants and young children.
	Healthcare access is constrained by distance, wait times, limited specialty care, and lack of culturally responsive support. Families described delays in pediatric care, pregnancy care, mental health support, developmental services, dental care, speech therapy, and specialty referrals. Rural families often travel long distances for care. In more urban areas, families still face long waits, high costs, insurance barriers, and confusing referrals.
	The rising cost of living is pushing families into constant tradeoffs between basic needs and child-related expenses. Parents described living paycheck to paycheck even when employed. Families raised concerns about the high cost of basic needs including rent, utilities, food, and out-of-pocket healthcare expenses. Many described benefit cliffs and affordability pressures leave families in survival mode and increase stress for both parents and children.
	Geography, transportation, and local infrastructure shape whether families can realistically access services. Families described transportation barriers, fragmented referrals, and difficulty reaching services that may exist but are not practically accessible. Across the county, families need services closer to home and flexible models that reduce travel, time, and cost burdens.

	Families need stronger navigation, trusted messengers, and warm handoffs to access existing resources. Participants repeatedly shared that resources exist but are difficult to find, understand, or complete. Families called for centralized information, culturally responsive navigators, and relationship-based support that helps them follow through when barriers arise.
	Children and youth need more safe and inclusive opportunities to learn, play, socialize, and belong. Parents across regions called for more free or low-cost activities and programs that support school readiness, social connection, emotional development, confidence and belonging, especially for those with specialized learning or developmental needs.
	Language access, cultural responsiveness, and trust are essential to equitable service delivery. Spanish-speaking families and families of color navigating specialized health or developmental needs described the importance of being heard, respected, and understood. Families emphasized that access is not only about whether a service exists, but whether families can use it with dignity and confidence.

Together, these findings elevate both urgent barriers and community strengths that shape daily life for families with young children across San Bernardino County. The sections that follow provide additional context, regional detail, and actionable considerations aligned with these priorities.



Regional Insights at a Glance

While many themes were consistent across communities, families also described distinct place-based realities shaped by geography, local infrastructure, cost pressures, service availability, and community assets.

Community	Primary Needs Surfaced	Key Barriers	Noted Assets
Victorville / High Desert	- Flexible and affordable child care aligned to work schedules - Local pediatric, mental health and developmental services - Clean water, food access, and basic needs support	- Long travel distances and limited local service infrastructure - Child care waitlists, limited hours, and no drop-in options - Limited culturally responsive care and delays in specialty services	- Diaper banks and resource fairs - Churches and trusted nonprofits - Strong reliance on trusted messengers and warm referrals
San Bernardino / Valley Region	- Affordable child care and support for employment stability - Maternal health, postpartum, mental health supports - Parenting education, food support, and trusted navigation	- High child care costs and benefit cliffs - Fragmented systems and limited case management support - Rising food, utility, and basic living costs	- Parks, schools, community centers, and children and youth programs - Strong family aspirations and desire to remain rooted locally
Ontario / West End	- Centralized information and service navigation - Affordable child care, preschool access, and children and youth enrichment - Developmental services, health care, and special needs supports	- Income eligibility cliffs, paperwork burdens, and confusing referrals - Rising housing costs, gentrification, and cost of living strain - Long wait times, limited provider availability, and transportation	- Extended family networks, grandparents, and siblings supporting care - Schools and local nonprofits - Community commitment to supporting children
Big Bear / Mountain Region	- Local health, pregnancy, pediatric, and specialty care - Flexible child care and early learning options - Affordable housing, utility support, activities, and language access	- Geographic isolation, winter weather, and unsafe travel conditions - High costs tied to tourism - Limited public benefits offices, bilingual services, and local providers	- Schools, libraries, parks and recreation - Strong informal parent networks and deep commitment to place

Background and County Context

San Bernardino County's size, regional diversity, and uneven infrastructure shape what families with young children experience day to day. Families live across dense urban corridors, fast-growing suburban areas, desert communities, and mountain towns where services are more dispersed and travel can be



difficult. As a result, the meaning of access changes by place. In some communities, the barrier is distance or winter weather. In others, the barrier is cost, paperwork, insurance, waitlists, or not knowing where to begin.

These conditions help explain why families described early childhood systems as interconnected. Child care affects employment. Transportation affects healthcare. Housing affects food security. Language access affects whether a family can use a program with dignity and confidence. Families experience these issues as one continuous pathway rather than separate programs. When one link breaks, the entire household can be affected.

County Context Snapshot

The following conditions should be kept in mind when interpreting community input and translating it into action:

- **Geography drives access:** Distance, winter weather, extreme heat, transit availability, and travel time can determine whether families can realistically reach child care, healthcare, public benefits, food, and enrichment opportunities.
- **Regional diversity requires place-based strategies:** Families in the High Desert, Valley, West End, and Mountain regions experience different service landscapes, cost pressures, and infrastructure barriers. A single countywide approach will not fit every community.
- **Cost pressures compound quickly for families with young children:** Housing, utilities, food, transportation, child care, healthcare, and

child-related expenses intersect, leaving many families with little margin for emergencies, delays, or out-of-pocket costs.

- **Systems are experienced as one continuous pathway:** Families do not experience child care, healthcare, developmental supports, food access, housing, and public benefits as separate systems. When referrals are outdated, paperwork is confusing, or follow-up is inconsistent, the entire pathway becomes harder to navigate.
- **Navigation and warm handoffs are essential infrastructure:** Families repeatedly emphasized that resources may exist but are difficult to find, qualify for, or complete without trusted support. Centralized information, navigators, and culturally responsive follow-through can reduce access friction.
- **Language access and cultural responsiveness are foundational:** Bilingual staff, interpretation, translated materials, culturally responsive outreach, and providers who listen and believe families strongly influence whether services can be used with dignity and confidence.
- **Trust and perceived safety influence help-seeking:** Families' willingness to seek services is shaped by prior experiences with institutions, concerns about being dismissed, fear related to immigration enforcement, and whether programs are delivered through trusted messengers.
- **Community-based organizations and informal networks are key infrastructure:** Schools, libraries, parks, faith communities, family networks, food and diaper distribution programs, and trusted nonprofits often serve as the first point of connection when formal systems are hard to access.

San Bernardino County's size and regional variation shape how families experience early childhood systems. In mountain and desert communities, distance, weather, limited local providers, and fewer in-person access points can make basic supports difficult to reach. In the Valley and West End, services may be closer geographically but remain difficult to use because of cost, capacity, waitlists, eligibility rules, and fragmented referrals.

Families described early childhood systems as interconnected. A parent's ability to work depends on child care that fits their schedule. A child's health depends on nearby, affordable, culturally responsive care and timely developmental supports. A family's stability depends on whether rent, food, utilities, transportation, and healthcare costs can be managed at the same time. When one system fails, families often experience the impact across multiple parts of daily life.

The sessions also highlighted the importance of trusted local relationships. Families often rely on relatives, schools, community-based organizations, faith communities, libraries, parks, food banks, diaper banks, and informal parent networks to fill gaps when formal systems are difficult to navigate. These assets are critical, but they are often under-resourced and cannot replace the need for coordinated, accessible, and accountable public systems.

Findings: Cross-cutting Themes

Findings are presented in two ways: cross-cutting themes that appeared across communities, followed by regional snapshots that highlight context-specific needs and assets.

Child care is a core condition for employment and family stability.

Across regions, families described child care as limited, expensive, and inflexible. Parents emphasized that care must align with work schedules, seasonal employment, nontraditional hours, and the needs of infants and young children. Families often rely on informal arrangements, but those arrangements can be unstable and may not support early learning needs.

Health and developmental supports are difficult to access and sustain.

Families described delays in pediatric care, pregnancy care, postpartum support, mental health care, speech therapy, dental care, behavioral health, and specialty referrals. The challenge was not only whether a provider existed, but whether care was timely, affordable, culturally responsive, in-person when needed, and coordinated across systems.

Cost pressures force families into constant tradeoffs.

Parents repeatedly described the stress of balancing rent, utilities, food, transportation, child care, healthcare costs, and child-related expenses. Families described benefit cliffs and eligibility rules that leave them earning too much to qualify for assistance but not enough to meet basic needs.

Access depends on place.

The same service challenge looks different across the county. Families in Big Bear and the High Desert described long drives, unsafe weather, limited local providers, and fewer in-person access points. Families in San Bernardino and Ontario described services that may be nearby but are difficult to navigate, expensive, full, or fragmented.

Navigation and trust are essential infrastructure.

Families repeatedly said they need help understanding what resources exist, whether they qualify, how to apply, and what to do when a referral does not work. Trusted messengers, warm handoffs, community navigators, bilingual staff, and relationship-based support were lifted up as practical solutions.

Children need safe, affordable opportunities to belong.

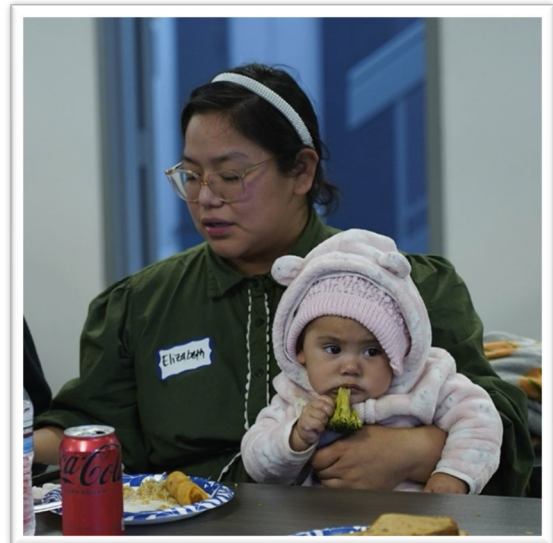
Parents wanted more children and youth activities that build confidence, social connection, emotional development, school readiness, and creativity. Families emphasized a need for affordable third spaces, inclusive programming for children with disabilities or specialized needs, and year-round activities that are accessible during extreme heat, cold, snow, or school breaks.

Regional Snapshots

High Desert: Victorville

WHAT FAMILIES SAID IS WORKING:

Families identified diaper banks, resource fairs, churches, Sister Connections, and trusted community-based organizations as sources of support. Parents emphasized that successful connections often happened because a trusted individual helped them navigate the system.



KEY BARRIERS AND NEEDS RAISED BY CAREGIVERS:

In the High Desert, families described barriers that are shaped as much by geography as by service availability. Parents emphasized that everyday tasks such as securing child care, accessing healthcare, obtaining healthy food, or participating in community activities often require significant travel, coordination, and expense. The priorities below reflect the most common challenges families raised and the conditions they identified as necessary for family stability and child well-being.

- **Child care availability, flexibility, and affordability:** Families described long waitlists, limited provider options, and child care schedules that do not align with work hours. Parents emphasized the need for affordable infant care, flexible scheduling, and drop-in options that allow caregivers to maintain employment,

attend appointments, and respond to family needs without risking income or job stability.

- **Healthcare access and culturally responsive care:** Caregivers reported difficulty accessing pediatric, developmental, mental health, and specialty services close to home. Long travel distances, extended wait times, and overreliance on telehealth created barriers for families with young children. Parents also described experiences of feeling dismissed by providers and emphasized the need for culturally responsive care that listens to and trusts family concerns.
- **Food access, clean water, and basic needs stability:** Families raised concerns about the affordability of healthy food, limitations in public assistance programs, and environmental health issues such as concerns about water quality. Rising household costs were described as forcing difficult decisions between food, utilities, housing, transportation, and other necessities.
- **Limited local infrastructure and family resources:** Parents described a lack of nearby family-centered services, enrichment activities, and community events, particularly in communities such as Adelanto. Long travel distances and limited awareness of available resources contributed to social isolation and reduced access to support systems. Families emphasized the need for more local programming and trusted points of connection within their communities.

Valley Region: San Bernardino

WHAT FAMILIES SAID IS WORKING:

Families lifted up parks, schools, community centers, children and youth programs, and community offices where staff helped families directly. Parents described strong aspirations for their children and a desire to remain rooted in their communities.

KEY BARRIERS AND NEEDS RAISED BY CAREGIVERS:

In the Valley Region, families described a community rich in assets and opportunity but constrained by persistent economic pressures and fragmented support systems. Parents emphasized that employment, caregiving, health, and financial stability are deeply interconnected, and that small disruptions can quickly escalate into crisis when supports are difficult to access or insufficient to meet family needs.

- **Employment barriers and child care cost burdens:** Families described the challenge of balancing employment and caregiving responsibilities in a context where child care costs consume a significant portion of household income. Parents also identified employment-related expenses, credentialing

requirements, and limited financial flexibility as barriers to achieving long-term economic stability.

- **Maternal health, mental health, and recovery supports:** Parents shared experiences with postpartum depression, anxiety, medical trauma, and difficulty obtaining coordinated mental health support. Families emphasized the importance of culturally responsive maternal health services, expanded doula support, and stronger systems of care that support parents during pregnancy, recovery, and major health challenges.
- **Food insecurity and rising cost-of-living pressures:** Caregivers described living under constant financial strain as utility costs, food prices, transportation expenses, and household bills continue to rise. Families repeatedly referenced benefit cliffs and affordability challenges that leave working families struggling to meet basic needs despite employment and educational attainment.
- **Parenting support, navigation, and access to information:** Families expressed a strong desire for parenting education, developmental guidance, and trusted assistance navigating systems. Parents reported uncertainty about where to seek help and emphasized the need for warm referrals, culturally responsive navigation, and practical supports that help families move from crisis management toward long-term stability.

West End: Ontario

WHAT FAMILIES SAID IS WORKING:

Families described extended family networks, grandparents, older siblings, schools, mentors, and local nonprofits as important supports. These informal networks help families manage child care gaps, transportation, work schedules, and summer routines.

KEY BARRIERS AND NEEDS RAISED BY CAREGIVERS:

In the West End, families described a community where services, amenities, and opportunities may exist, but are often difficult to access because of cost, complexity, eligibility requirements, and limited system coordination. Caregivers emphasized that navigating family supports can feel overwhelming, particularly for working parents balancing housing costs, child care responsibilities, healthcare needs, and the pressures of daily life.

- **Economic instability, work-life imbalance, and benefit cliffs:** Families described rising housing costs, increasing household expenses, and wages that have not kept pace with the cost of raising children. Parents shared that long

work hours and multiple jobs often reduce time with family while still leaving households financially vulnerable.

- **Child care access, early learning, and family support:** Parents reported difficulties qualifying for subsidized child care, navigating complex application processes, and finding affordable providers with available openings. Families emphasized the need for flexible child care, preschool access, and navigation supports that reflect the realities of working parents, single-parent households, and multigenerational caregiving arrangements.
- **Healthcare, developmental services, and maternal mental health:** Families raised concerns about long wait times, high costs, limited provider availability, and challenges obtaining developmental services for children with disabilities and special healthcare needs. Parents also emphasized the need for stronger postpartum mental health supports, earlier intervention, and care systems that respond promptly when concerns are raised.
- **Children and youth enrichment, safe spaces, and inclusive opportunities:** Caregivers expressed a strong desire for affordable afterschool programs, summer activities, mentorship opportunities, and safe community spaces where children and youth can learn, socialize, and develop confidence. Families emphasized the importance of inclusive programming for children with disabilities, specialized learning needs, and diverse cultural backgrounds.
- **Housing affordability, navigation challenges, and community conditions:** Families described concerns about gentrification, housing instability, homelessness, neighborhood conditions, and the difficulty of navigating fragmented systems. Parents repeatedly called for stronger case management, trusted navigators, and coordinated services that help families access resources before challenges become crises.

Mountain Region: Big Bear

WHAT FAMILIES SAID IS WORKING:

Families identified schools, libraries, parks and recreation, The Mom and Dad Project, The Dad Project, WIC, CARE, food banks, faith communities, birthing classes, and informal parent networks as meaningful supports. Parents valued programs that reduce stigma, build parenting skills, and create connection.

KEY BARRIERS AND NEEDS RAISED BY CAREGIVERS:

Families in the Mountain Region described a community defined by strong relationships and deep commitment to place, but also by geographic isolation, severe

weather conditions, and limited local infrastructure. Parents emphasized that routine activities such as accessing healthcare, enrolling children in early learning programs, obtaining public benefits, or participating in enrichment opportunities often require substantial travel, planning, and expense.

- **Child care and early learning capacity:** Families identified child care as one of the most urgent needs in the region. Parents described limited infant care, insufficient preschool availability, high costs, and a lack of flexible options that accommodate seasonal and nontraditional work schedules. These gaps were described as barriers to both family economic stability and child development.
- **Healthcare access, pregnancy care, and specialized services:** Parents reported limited availability of pediatric, maternal, dental, behavioral health, and specialty providers, often requiring lengthy travel for routine care. Families emphasized that distance, weather, cost, and long wait times create significant barriers, particularly during pregnancy, postpartum recovery, and when children require developmental or specialty services.
- **Housing affordability, infrastructure, and economic pressures:** Families described the combined effects of tourism-driven housing markets, rising living costs, utility burdens, and seasonal employment patterns. Parents expressed concern that short-term rentals, high rents, and economic instability are making it difficult for working families to remain in the community.
- **Children's enrichment opportunities and safe community spaces:** Caregivers called for more affordable, inclusive, and year-round recreational opportunities for children and youth. Families highlighted the importance of indoor activities, arts, sports, and social spaces that remain accessible during winter weather and support children's emotional well-being, confidence, and connection to community.
- **Public benefits access, language support, and family navigation:** Families described difficulty accessing public services, in-person assistance, bilingual resources, and reliable navigation support. Spanish-speaking and immigrant families emphasized the need for trusted messengers, culturally responsive outreach, and language-accessible services that reduce confusion, isolation, and barriers to care.

Quotes Directly from Parents and Caregivers

Parents and caregivers shared personal stories that illustrate how systems-level barriers show up in daily family life. The quotes below are de-identified and included to preserve parent voice while protecting participant confidentiality.

Taken together, the quotes reflect parents who feel deeply committed to their children while also carrying the emotional weight of systems that often make family life harder than it needs to be. Across the region, parents described frustration, exhaustion, worry, and at times heartbreak as they balance work, caregiving, health, transportation, and basic needs. Statements about missing time with children, being told that local services cannot support pregnancy or birth, spending most of a paycheck on child care, or needing children to step into caregiving roles show how policy and service gaps affect family relationships, parental confidence, and children’s sense of stability. At the same time, the quotes also convey love, determination, and hope. Parents want their children to feel safe, supported, educated, and able to succeed, and they are asking for systems that recognize their effort, respect their dignity, and make it possible for families to thrive close to home.

“I put in so much work and have nothing to show for it.”

“My daughter had to write a report about one of her parents for school and she wrote, ‘I don’t really know my dad, but I know he does a lot to provide for our family.’”

“You can’t have a baby here.”

“Doula support was critical for me during pregnancy.”

“We need help finding what is out there and someone to follow up with us.”

“We want our children to feel safe, loved, educated, and able to succeed.”

“I had to rely on my children to help me with daily activities after my stroke.”

“I spend almost an entire paycheck on child care.”



Recommendations for Policy and Investment

Recommendations below reflect themes raised by families and are framed for early childhood system leaders, public agencies, philanthropy, and community partners making policy, program, and investment decisions. They emphasize place-based implementation, equity, cultural responsiveness, and sustained caregiver engagement.

Expand accessible, flexible, and high-quality child care and early learning infrastructure

Increase mixed-delivery child care and early learning capacity, including family child care homes, center-based care, Head Start, Early Head Start, state preschool, flexible care, and drop-in models. Prioritize affordability, schedule fit, infant and toddler care, and options close to where families live and work.

Strengthen local pediatric, maternal, mental health, and developmental care

Bring pediatric, prenatal, postpartum, mental health, lactation, developmental, dental, and specialty care closer to families through mobile services, satellite clinics, family resource hubs, developmental screenings, and coordinated referral pathways. Prioritize in-person care for young children when relationship-based support is needed.

Build a countywide family navigation and warm handoff system

Create centralized, multilingual, regularly updated information and referral systems supported by community navigators and trusted messengers. Families need help not only finding information, but completing next steps and receiving follow-up when barriers arise.

Reduce cost-of-living pressures through family economic stability supports

Expand flexible rental assistance, utility support, food access, transportation assistance, emergency cash supports, basic needs distribution, and benefits navigation. Advocate for policies that reduce benefit cliffs and better reflect the real cost of raising young children.

Invest in place-based access strategies for rural, mountain, desert, and urban communities

Design solutions around local realities, including winter conditions, extreme heat, long travel distances, limited public transportation, and fragmented urban service systems.

Support mobile services, pop-up events, transportation, satellite hubs, and community-based access points.

Expand safe and inclusive enrichment opportunities for children and youth

Invest in free and low-cost afterschool, summer, sports, arts, music, library, indoor recreation, and third-space programming. Ensure programs are inclusive for children with disabilities, developmental needs, language access needs, and specialized learning needs.

Sustain and scale trusted community-based family support programs.

Provide sustained funding for trusted local nonprofits, schools, libraries, parks and recreation spaces, faith communities, food and diaper distribution programs, parenting programs, and informal parent networks that already support families.

Improve housing stability and community conditions for families with young children

Expand homelessness prevention, rental assistance, family-centered housing supports, supportive services, and local planning strategies that prioritize year-round residents and families with young children in communities facing displacement or short-term rental pressures.

Strengthen cultural responsiveness and trust across systems

Invest in bilingual staff, interpretation, translated materials, culturally responsive outreach, Black maternal health supports, community health workers, parent ambassadors, and partnerships with organizations families already trust.

Center parent and caregiver voice as ongoing civic infrastructure

Sustain regional Community Tables, parent advisory groups, compensated engagement opportunities, and feedback loops tied to the IE Children's Cabinet. Families should help shape implementation, monitor progress, and hold systems accountable.

Conclusion

Families across San Bernardino County described a clear set of needs that shape early childhood well-being: reliable child care, timely healthcare, developmental supports, affordable food, stable housing, safe transportation, accessible public benefits, culturally responsive communication, and systems that are easier to navigate. At the

same time, parents and caregivers emphasized community strengths and a willingness to partner when engagement is respectful, sustained, and connected to action.

The listening sessions demonstrate that families are not only identifying barriers. They are pointing toward solutions. Their experiences highlight the importance of local infrastructure, trusted community partners, culturally responsive systems, warm handoffs, and continued opportunities for parent and caregiver leadership.

The IE Children's Cabinet will continue to build on the momentum created through these Community Listening and Learning Sessions by inviting parents and caregivers to participate in regional Community Tables. These tables can help families share priorities, review emerging recommendations, build advocacy skills, and work alongside community partners to advance health, racial, and economic equity for children and families.

Acting on these findings requires coordinated investment across sectors and a durable commitment to caregiver voice as a core component of accountability and impact. When families are centered, systems become stronger, communities become more responsive, and children have a better chance to flourish.

Methodology

IECC, in partnership with local hosts and community partners, convened Community Listening and Learning Sessions to gather place-based input from parents and caregivers of young children and identify priorities to inform strategic planning. Sessions used a participatory, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive approach that combined structured qualitative inquiry with simple consensus-building techniques, including visual theme clustering and group prioritization.

Sessions were held in trusted community settings with language access supports to reduce barriers to participation and promote authentic dialogue. Each session followed a standardized facilitation guide that included introductions, purpose, group agreements, language access guidance, issue identification, small-group discussion, large-group synthesis, and closing reflections.

Session Logistics and Participation Summary

IECC held five in-person listening sessions across San Bernardino County in the cities of Big Bear, Ontario, San Bernardino, and Victorville.

Big Bear Session Details

- Session conducted in both English and Spanish
- Date and Time: May 21, 2026
- Location: 41965 Big Bear Blvd. Big Bear Lake, CA 92315.
- Target Region: Big Bear City and surrounding mountain communities.
- Number of initial registrants: 20
- Number of parents/caregivers present at the session: 15
- Key demographics collected from session: Participants were primarily families coming from Big Bear, Big Bear City, Big Bear Lake and Sugarloaf. The majority identified as Hispanic or Latiné with 2 parents identified as White.

Ontario Session Details

- Session conducted in both English and Spanish
- Date and Time: May 14, 2026
- Location: First United Methodist Church. 918 North Euclid Avenue, Ontario, CA 91764
- Target Region: San Bernardino West-End
- Number of initial registrants: 8
- Number of parents/caregivers present at the session: 28
- Key demographics collected from session: Participants were primarily families coming from Ontario, San Bernardino, Rancho Cucamonga, Montclair, and Upland. The majority identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and Hispanic or Latiné, with some parents identifying as Black or African American and Asian.

San Bernardino: CCRC Session Details

- Session conducted primarily in English with Spanish translation available.
- Date and Time: February 12, 2026, from 5:00 to 7:00 PM.
- Location: Child Care Resource Center San Bernardino. Child Care Resource Center Victorville, 15456 W Sage St, Victorville, CA 92392
- Target Region: San Bernardino (Valley Region)
- Number of initial registrants: 20 people registered.
- Number of parents/caregivers present at the session: 3 attendees, with ~10 children.
- Key demographics collected from session: Participants were primarily parents and family members from San Bernardino County communities. The majority identified as Black/African American, with one parent identified as Asian.

San Bernardino: El Sol Session Details

- Session conducted primarily in English with Spanish translation available.
- Date and Time: February 19, 2026, from 5:00 - 7:00 PM.
- Location: El Sol NEC (Neighborhood Educational Center). 1535 S D St, San Bernardino, CA 92408.
- Target Region: San Bernardino West-End.
- Number of initial registrants: 12 people registered.
- Number of parents/caregivers present at the session: 6 attendees, and 3 children

- Key demographics collected from session: Participants were primarily parents and family members from San Bernardino County. With most identifying as Black/African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latiné and White families.

Victorville Session Details

- Session conducted primarily in English with Spanish translation available
- Date and Time: January 26, 2026, from 5:30 - 7:30 PM
- Location: Child Care Resource Center Victorville, 15456 W Sage St, Victorville, CA 92392
- Target Region: High Desert Region
- Number of initial registrants: 4 people registered.
- Number of parents/caregivers present at the session: 3 attendees and 7 children.
- Key demographics collected from session: Participants were primarily parents and family members from the city of Adelanto and Hesperia, with most identifying as Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latiné.

Data Documentation and Synthesis

Data collection relied on facilitator documentation rather than audio recording. Facilitators captured clustered themes, key discussion points, de-identified examples and quotes where feasible, observations about assets and barriers, and recommendations for improving future sessions. Notes were compiled and reviewed across sessions to identify recurring themes and location-specific priorities.

Limitations

Findings should be interpreted with the following limitations in mind:

- **Non-representative participation:** Participants were recruited through community partners and voluntary attendance; perspectives may not reflect all families in each community.
- **Uneven participation across locations:** Differences in turnout may influence the prominence of themes across communities.
- **Facilitator notes as the primary data source:** Without audio recording, documentation relied on facilitator notes and real-time synthesis; this supports participant comfort and privacy but may limit verbatim capture.
- **Translation and interpretation considerations:** While bilingual facilitation was provided, nuance may be affected when experiences are shared across languages or summarized during synthesis.
- **Group setting dynamics:** Sharing in a group may be influenced by comfort level, perceived risk, and social desirability despite trauma-informed practices.