

# Community Engagement Report

<b>Your Organization/Affiliation:</b> The Rainbow Project – Grandparent Support Group	<b>Your Name and Email:</b> Organizer – Serena Breining ( <a href="mailto:SBreining@therainbowproject.net">SBreining@therainbowproject.net</a> ) Moderator – Betsy Strahin ( <a href="mailto:strahin.betsy@countyofdane.com">strahin.betsy@countyofdane.com</a> )
<b>Community Engagement Activity:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Community Forum or Listening Session – virtual or in person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus Group Discussions – virtual or in person <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Interviews – by phone or in person <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook Live or Social Media Virtual Event <input type="checkbox"/> Paper or Internet Survey <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe): _____	
<b>Date/s of Event or Effort:</b> 6/12/2021	<b>Number of Participants or Respondents:</b> 5
<b>Key Issues Discussed:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- From your personal experiences, what are the main issues, problems, and challenges of “second time” parents (aka grandparents/grand_____ raising their relatives)?</li> <li>- What do you want these caregivers or the children in their care?</li> </ul>	
<b>Key Takeaways/Findings:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health insurance is a huge deal!                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Many of these children have been through trauma and have a great deal of need for care (e.g. behavioral therapy, psychiatrist, occupational/speech therapy, physical therapy, diagnostic testing for proper classification and covered supports, etc.)</li> <li>b. There are challenges of running out of coverage under private insurance and then what do you do when you have to pay out of pocket? The expenses add up quickly and likely result in having to cut back on the number of appointments.</li> <li>c. Health insurance also often dictates which providers you can go to for care and testing. However these providers can have long waitlists to get in (e.g. Journey Mental Health and Waisman Center – 2 years for ADHD testing)</li> <li>d. There is confusion about when a child can be on Badgercare and when they have to be on private insurance and if Badgercare can be a secondary insurance. The qualifications are complex and always changing with things like the child’s diagnoses, legal status (adoption versus legal guardianship), income of the caretaker...</li> <li>e. <b>Needs:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. coordination of healthcare coverage between primary and secondary insurer (not coordination of appointments)</li> <li>ii. choosing the right plan to put the child on</li> <li>iii. advocacy with private insurance to cover more care for these high-need children</li> <li>iv. help understanding the Badgercare system</li> <li>v. understanding the impact of legal custody versus adoption on benefits and rights</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>	

2. Generational gaps can be challenging to navigate
  - a. Some identities are new to older adults. They are interested in learning more and supporting children exploring the identities (GenZ, LGBTQIA+)
  - b. Stigma is getting better, but general population education about mixed families would help provide more support and create a feeling of belonging.
    - i. It can be hard to connect with younger (30's) parents as a grandparent who is parenting.
    - ii. School settings can be hard for both the child and (grand)parents to navigate. *"Oh you are the parent but you are actually a grandparent.* Makes both the grandparent and child feel like they do not fit in.
  - c. Feel out of place looking at things like Headstart, daycare, navigating IEPs.
  - d. **Needs:**
    - i. Continue to offer parenting classes with a focus on these topics
    - ii. Advocacy/Development of inclusive language for these family dynamics
    - iii. Ideas on how to create genuine connection with younger parents
3. Respite care is hard to come by. And it can be difficult to accept help guilt-free.
  - a. It is again a long wait list to get "respite" care
  - b. Some are single parents and others have overlapping conflicts (appointments and work) that make it hard to figure out how to get care of the child when the adults have personal needs to take care of.
  - c. The concept of self-care is relatively new to this generation and it is hard to prioritize themselves. Normalization and continued education on the importance/acceptance of help is needed.
  - d. **Needs/Wants:**
    - i. A program where they can drop off a child for a few hours of care (allows parents to go to appointments, get a short respite – don't need a whole day or weekend). Okay with them if they have to schedule/reserve a spot.
    - ii. Continued support for programs like the Boys & Girls Club and Big Brothers/Big Sister – one was on the waitlist for Big Brothers/Big Sisters but never got matched before the child aged out
    - iii. Pre-screened, reliable sitters so the grandparents know the child will be safe while they are away. They knew about UW but didn't sound like they could make the bridge to make a connection with UW about this service.
    - iv. Single parents would like a way to have opposite gender influence for their child
4. One had a child that was transitioning to adulthood.
  - a. **Need:** Help letting go and preparing the child for things they didn't learn in school – banking, credit cards, rental agreements. How to teach the child without "telling them what to do."
5. Other thoughts
  - a. Can there be reciprocity with other smaller counties that don't have the same resources as Dane?
  - b. More resources to advertise places like The Rainbow Project. Many were grateful but felt "lucky" that they found The Rainbow Project – newspaper ad, flyer in pediatrician office, lawyer, aging agency. Can schools, prisons, teachers get more involved?
  - c. Washington, D.C. has an apartment building for lower-income grandparents raising grandchild with things like a computer floor. Can we have something like that here? Creates built-in community and financial help.

**Planned Response:**

Share this form with AAA of Dane County to inform the drafting of their 2022-2024 strategic plan.