

Report Highlights abstracted by Molly Clark

- *The purpose of this evaluation and needs assessment* was to gather reliable and valid information about the child care needs of families with children who have special needs.
- *The specific goals of this needs assessment* were to:
 - Examine the experiences of parents/guardians of children with special needs in accessing quality child care
 - Help identify any barriers experienced in accessing quality child care
 - Obtain parent/guardians' views of what child care providers need in order to provide quality services for their child with special needs
 - Complete a literature review (results of survey were consistent with literature review)
- High quality child care for young children improves health and promotes development.
- Families with children with special needs frequently have difficulty finding high quality child care, are least likely to have access to quality child care, and often have difficulty enrolling their children in the few programs that will accept them.
- *Challenges in obtaining quality child care by parents/guardians with special needs children include:* the inability or unwillingness of child care providers to accept children with special needs because of inadequately educated or trained staff, fear of not being able to meet the child's needs, budgetary constraints and/or logistical problems, lack of health consultation to child care programs and inadequate coordination between early intervention services and child care programs.
- Children with developmental problems and autism spectrum disorder have been found to be associated with a higher probability that child care issues will greatly affect parental employment.
- Special needs children can be defined as children with physical, developmental, mental, emotional, behavioral, or medical needs that requires different levels of care than other children their age.

The results of this survey indicate the following:

- **Approximately 51% of children with special needs age 5 or younger in Nebraska are in some type of childcare (child care center, preschool, nanny, relatives, etc.) for 10 or more hours per week which is less than the 58% of children without special needs who are in childcare in Nebraska.**
- **Developmental delay, language delay, and mobility problems were the top three diagnosed special needs identified.**

- **Inability of parents/guardians to access quality child care for their children with special needs did affect the economic status of the family**
 - **Approximately one fourth of the parents/guardians had to stop working because they were unable to find quality child care.**
 - **One third of the parents/guardians in the total sample had to cut back on work hours because of the inability to find quality child care.**
 - **One fourth had to hire someone to come into their home to care for their child with special needs because they were unable to find quality child care.**
- **Over half of the total urban sample and one fourth of the rural sample with an annual income of less than \$29,000 had difficulties accessing quality child care.**
- **Open ended questions and additional comments about the major themes reported related to:**
 - **How to find support groups or seminars**
 - **How to find and contact other parents/guardians with special needs children to talk with**
 - **How to talk with teachers about child's needs or parents/guardians' concerns**
 - **How to find what services are available to help**
 - **Lack of child care programs in areas in which families live**
 - **Lack of quality child care programs**
- **Fifty two percent of survey respondents indicated they needed more support in caring for their child with special needs.**
- **Of the 94 parents/guardians who answered yes that their child with special needs was attending child care, 65(69%) reported having difficulty finding a quality child care program that would accept their child. *Reasons given to parents/guardians by child care providers as to why their child was not accepted to the child care program were related to the:***
 - **Child care provider and/or the facility**
 - **Characteristics of the child**
 - **Willingness of child care providers to enroll the child**
- **The Americans with Disabilities Act states that child care providers cannot deny enrollment to a child with special needs by claiming their staff does not have enough training, it is their legal responsibility to find the training they need in order to make reasonable accommodations for the child.**
- **A limitation of this needs assessment and evaluation is the convenience sample. The inability to contact the parents/guardians directly to assess and evaluate their needs in accessing quality child care for their children with special needs may have biased the results.**

The full report can be viewed at:

http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Pages/lifespanhealth_childcarehealthconsultation.aspx