

Appendix A

Health Aspects of Kindergarten Readiness Technical Workgroup

Kindergarten Readiness Family Focus Group Findings

87 parents/caregivers participated in 8 focus groups in communities across Oregon. The project sought participation of African American and Latino families, families with low resources, and families of children with special health needs.

What does school readiness mean to families?

Ready children

- Strong social-emotional and executive functioning skills were most important to many families.
- Helping children to be familiar with the school and understand classroom and school routines.
- Pre-academic skills (literacy and math) were important to families whose home language was Spanish.
- Other skills include being able to be independent away from parents, being able to do personal care, having fine motor skills, and discovering their interests and a love for learning.

Ready families

- Providing support for children's learning at home from birth, including establishing routines.
- Building relationships and communicating with early learning providers and teachers and obtaining information about kindergarten transition and expectations.
- Having health supports in place, especially for families with children with special health needs.
- Families also support readiness by providing tangible materials and connecting with other parents.

How do health services support school readiness?

- Most importantly, through health care providers who take time to build trust and listen to families.
- By providing comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care, as well as parental health services (especially mental health), to give families a healthy and stable foundation.
- Conducting developmental screenings and monitoring child development.
- Providing other developmental supports like timely immunizations, nutrition supports, and encouraging literacy.
- Making referrals to needed health, early learning and family support services.

How can health services continue to improve their supports for school readiness?

- Spend more time with families and develop trusting relationships.
- Share expertise, information, and guidance.
- Identify and communicate developmental concerns earlier, with referral to services and follow-up.
- Additional suggestions include diversifying health care providers, ensuring families have access to translation services, increasing local access to health services (especially in rural areas) and approaching health care holistically across the life span.

What are families' perceptions of best practices for the health sector to support school readiness?

- Provide referral coordination and case management support.
- Coordinate services across health, early learning, schools, and specialty care providers.
- Promote early literacy by encouraging reading at home.
- Provide guidance on what milestones are coming up and how parents can support future development.
- Have up-to-date information about early learning and developmentally supportive activities and provide opportunities to enroll in services while families are in health care settings.

"It's a really healthy mix of conversation, resources, handouts, websites, Apps. It opens doors. You establish a relationship [with provider] and then you know you can call and get help if you need it."
