District 9 Summary of Key Themes

THE MISSION, BERNAL HEIGHTS, PORTOLA
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Production of this publication was managed and supervised by:
Sarah Duffy (Project Lead), Dori Caminong, Emily Davis, Michelle Gallarza, Colin Kimzey and Celeste Middleton.

Authors

Brightstar Ohlson, MS
Kristina Bedrossian, MPP
Vanetta Thomas, MPH
Holly Joshi, MA

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Comments, questions, and requests for additional information can be directed to:

Sarah Duffy, Data and Evaluation Manager
San Francisco, Department of Children, Youth and Their Families
(415) 554- 8416
sarah.duffy@dcyf.org
D9 (THE MISSION, BERNAL HEIGHTS, PORTOLA)

On November 16, 2019, the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families convened a family summit in District 9 to hear about the needs of children, youth, and families. The goal of the summit was to gather feedback from the community and learn about the lived experiences of families in the district, including the greatest pain points in their daily lives, what is working, what could work better, and how the City and County of San Francisco could improve their quality of life. The summit began with opening remarks from staff from Supervisor Hillary Ronen’s office and DCYF staff. Participants listened to a presentation about DCYF and the Community Needs Assessment process, then engaged in breakout table discussions, facilitated by Bright Research Group, for approximately 55 minutes.

PARTICIPATION IN THE FAMILY SUMMIT

A total of 27 family members and 8 providers participated in the breakout table discussions. The participants were broken into 4 focus groups-two family groups were facilitated in Spanish, one family group and one provider group were facilitated in English.

*Data in figures includes all community members who registered at the summit. Some participants did not register. Some attendees did not participate in the breakout discussions. Registrants were asked to select all applicable race/ethnicity categories.

Bright Research Group analyzed data by key theme. DCYF made the decision to redact the names of community-based organizations named by family members and youth as sources of support, out of concern that organizations have different levels of capacity when it comes to organizing their participants to attend community events.
**A Day in the Life**

Parents/caregivers were asked about the easy and difficult parts of a typical day in the life of their families. Parents identified strengths and assets that supported their ability to care for their children and family, including close access to BART for commutes to work; partner or other intergenerational support for getting their kids to school; the local library for enriching programs for their families; and reliable after-school programs that provide parents with the peace of mind that their children are being cared for until they can get off of work.

The most common theme during the day in the life discussion was the challenge of getting children to schools that may not be located in their neighborhood. Parents with children in different schools found this even more challenging. Some parents doubted that the schools that their kids were going to were any better than their local community schools. This challenge was especially acute for Spanish-speaking family participants, who were more likely to report that they did not have a car and relied on Muni to get their children to school.

Another key challenge identified by parents was the rising cost of living in their neighborhood. They noted the rising cost of rent, public transportation, lunch, and groceries. The rising cost of living had forced many family members’ friends or neighbors to leave San Francisco. Several parents shared that because many neighbors or community members had moved out of San Francisco, they had fewer people available to help them, whether by picking up their kids from school or making sure their kids were fed, when the parents were running late from work or dealing with other responsibilities.

Finally, parents shared that the few hours after their children get home and before they go to sleep were the most challenging. This time included getting dinner on the table, making sure their children do their homework, and other logistics and planning for the next day. Spanish-speaking parents in particular wished that their children had access to homework help and mentoring in their after-school programs to reduce this evening burden.
Needs of Families

Parents/caregivers in the Mission were most concerned about issues of housing and transportation, including affordability, displacement, gentrification, and parks; educational equity, including preschool access, school quality, after-school programs, academic tutoring, college preparation, and supports for children with special needs; and parent education and mental health supports, including parenting skills and advocacy support for families. The most cited concern raised by families in the Mission centered on affordable housing and public transportation, as well as the cleanliness of parks.

Spanish-speaking parents shared several challenges when it came to providing safe, affordable, and clean housing for their families. They felt that navigating the affordable-housing system was very challenging and relied on provider agencies to help them access subsidized or supportive housing slots. Many Spanish-speaking parents reported living in a constant state of fear with respect to eviction. Parents reported living in substandard housing with mold or rodent infestation but were too scared to tell their landlords, fearing that it could result in the loss of their housing. Families called for support with housing applications, lower rents, and subsidized housing options so that low-income families, school-district teachers, and foster youth/families are able to stay in the city.

The distance to school/work, full buses, and unreliable schedules created a lot of stress for families, resulting in long days and little time for activities or time together at home. Spanish-speaking parents with young children shared stories of discrimination with respect to Muni. Several participants reported that bus drivers did not lower the platform to allow them to bring a stroller on the bus or stop at all when they were waiting at a bus stop with their children in strollers.

Many parents are concerned about the state of the parks in the Mission neighborhood. Parents felt that the parks had become de facto housing for people who are homeless and noted that there were hypodermic needles and trash everywhere. Families wanted parks to be cleaned more regularly. They also shared concerns about high levels of marijuana use in parks and their children’s exposure to secondhand smoke from marijuana.

Families shared several concerns and needs related to academic supports for their children. Families wanted more information and access to affordable, high-quality preschool options. Spanish-speaking parents, in particular, felt that they did not have enough information and access to free or subsidized preschool options in their neighborhood. Many parents shared that there were long wait lists at the local preschool and that the programs were too short to accommodate their work schedules (e.g., preschool programs that are only three to four hours long when they have an eight-hour workday).

Parents were also highly concerned about public-school quality in San Francisco and felt that their children needed improved academic supports and tutoring in English and math as well as intentional preparation for college applications and enrollment. Parents wanted additional supportive services for children in special-education programs. Spanish-speaking families felt that poor education and access to academic supports was impacting their children’s ability to perform in school, graduate, and access college and career opportunities.
Spanish-speaking parents, especially those who had newly immigrated, wanted additional academic support in after-school settings for their children to do well in school; they felt that they did not have the information to be able to support their children in the way that they needed.

When asked how parents found out about options for after-school programs, parents named a number of community-based organizations dedicated to serving immigrant families, schools, school-based organizations, and the San Francisco Recreation & Parks department. Parents were not aware of a clearinghouse or directory for after-school programs across the city.

Lastly, families and providers identified the need for parent education and information supports so that families can better support their children. This included classes at City College (especially online classes that they can complete while caring for their children at home) and parent-skill-building classes, as well as advocacy to shape policies that impact children, youth, and families in the city.

Key Themes from Provider Break-Outs

Common Needs
Providers called for more academic supports and quality after-school programming in the Mission. Many providers felt that the quality of SFUSD schools was poor and getting worse, especially for Latin@ youth. They shared that youth were demanding academic support and homework help but that after-school programs were primarily funded to provide enrichment. Providers felt that there was an opportunity for Our Children Our Families Council (OCOF) to develop a common set of academic standards for SFUSD as well as DCYF-funded after-school programs. This would allow after-school programs to build curriculums that are aligned with what kids are learning in school.

Providers shared that there needed to be more support for the integration and acculturation of immigrant families to the American educational and child/youth-services support systems. Several provider participants had grown up in San Francisco and were now raising children in San Francisco. These providers felt that after-school programs and community-based organizations were offering targeted, culturally competent supports that ensured that newcomer children can go to college, pursue their careers, and be successful.
Providers also shared the need for culturally competent mental health services and supports in schools for Latin@ youth and families, especially recent immigrants/newcomers. This includes more counseling support and also cultural-healing activities. Several providers also shared the negative impact that social media was having on youth; they needed a curriculum and support around helping young people who are experiencing depression or anxiety as a result of social media. Some providers also shared the need for residential treatment for youth with substance-use issues.

Providers felt that many of the challenges facing families in the Mission were also facing the nonprofit workforce. Nonprofit workers have low wages and are increasingly unable to live in these neighborhoods; longtime nonprofits in the Mission are no longer able to afford rent and are at risk of displacement. Many nonprofits are trying to raise capital to purchase the buildings they are in so that they can ensure the longevity of their existence in the Mission. Providers felt that DCYF could lengthen their grant cycles so that organizations were able to create more realistic projections about their funding. Providers also wanted DCYF to convene local community-based organizations in each neighborhood to ensure that they know about each other’s services and can refer youth to each other. Several providers actually exchanged business cards at the Family Summit and saw the summit as an important opportunity to learn about other organizations in the neighborhood that they can turn to for support with some of their program participants.

**Neighborhood Issues**
When asked about which types of neighborhood factors were affecting the well-being of children, youth, and families, providers felt that many young people in the neighborhood were experiencing trauma from witnessing rampant homelessness, drug use, and people with untreated mental illnesses in the streets around their homes, community-based organization offices, and parks. Providers shared that streets and parks did not get cleaned unless there was some big event or a visit from the mayor. Providers highlighted that some TAY program participants in the community are parents and also need access to affordable housing, free Muni, and other parenting-skills supports.

Several providers also are especially concerned about the needs of transitional-age youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system, those at risk of arrest, and/or who are being targeted by police. With juvenile hall closing in San Francisco, providers recommended additional supports for the Black and Brown youth who would have ended up in the hall; they also expressed concerns that Black and Brown youth will just be sent to adult jail instead of receiving restorative or therapeutic supports or services.
**PARTICIPANT QUOTES**

“SFUSD does have a lot of programs, and I was able to access them for my son, but only because I am informed as a parent who works at a community-based organization. But what about those parents who aren’t? Those who don’t know how to ask or advocate?”

– Parent, D9

“The city also needs to invest in a system of support for the success of Latino students since it’s a group that is underperforming academically.”

– Parent, D9

“Make Muni free for children—maybe for everyone!”

– Parent, D9

“All local public schools in the Mission are below level. Even though you hear they are making strides, SFUSD is failing our kids. Five days a week, our kids come in, and we’re supposed to do enrichment, but they are begging for academic support.”

– Provider, D9