

Evaluation of Awareness and Utilization of Kids Matter Framework

Executive Summary

Prepared by Organizational Research Services, March 2006

☞ The success of the early childhood systems work, and Kids Matter, has elevated early childhood issues to a much higher level in state government.

-- Respondent Affiliated with
State Government

METHODOLOGY

Purpose. To document baseline data about the awareness and utilization of the Kids Matter plan among early childhood stakeholders.

Process. Data were collected by surveying individuals associated with groups or organizations that have been formally or informally introduced to the Kids Matter framework. The final sampling frame consists of 499 early childhood stakeholders at local, regional and statewide levels representing 298 groups and organizations. The final response rate was 54.7 percent (273 respondents). It is expected that this survey will be repeated annually.

Survey Tool. The online survey tool contained 14 open- and closed-ended questions regarding respondent background and affiliation, awareness and familiarity with Kids Matter, potential contribution of the plan for young children and their families, and current utilization of the framework including changing relationships, partnership or collaborations.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- **There is widespread awareness of the Kids Matter framework.** Over two-thirds of respondents (68.8%) had heard of the Kids Matter plan prior to receiving the survey. Of these, almost 80 percent learned about the framework at meetings, participation in workgroups, or from a colleague. Fifty-eight separate groups and meetings were listed by respondents as the point of their initial awareness.
- **Stakeholders are familiar with specific content of the framework.** Almost fifty percent (48.4%) of respondents are 'somewhat' or 'very familiar' with the framework. Characteristics of the plan identified as having the greatest importance are that it:
 - ◆ Functions as an integrated and overarching framework with a comprehensive systems focus (57.1%)
 - ◆ Approaches systems building as a collaborative effort (13.8%)
- **Over one-third (35.5%) of respondents have developed new or different relationships, partnerships or collaborations through their familiarity and/or involvement with Kids Matter that advance early childhood outcomes.** Changes mentioned by respondents include: aligning existing collaborative work with Kids Matter, developing new relationships to further the goals of the plan, and sharing the plan with potential partners to encourage their involvement in efforts to improve outcomes for young children and their families.
- **Respondents are optimistic that a plan of this nature can be instrumental in advancing outcomes for children.** According to stakeholders, areas of potential contribution include:
 - ◆ Increased awareness about the importance of early childhood systems leading to increased resources and support
 - ◆ Comprehensive framework and research-based strategies that can be implemented locally and statewide
 - ◆ Encourages collaboration and coordination resulting in decreased fragmentation
 - ◆ Provides common outcomes and goals for increased accountability

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Geographic Focus of Work:

Respondents focus their work at all geographic levels – statewide and local or regional. Forty-seven percent of respondents noted that their work and that of their organizations focuses on the local or regional level; 18 percent focus on efforts for the entire state; and, almost 35 percent are involved in both statewide and local efforts.

Primary Affiliation:

Respondents noted primary affiliation with a wide variety of agencies. The largest number are affiliated with local government (24.1%) or state government (18.9%).

Involvement with Early Childhood Groups and Processes:

Respondents are also involved in a wide array of groups and process related to early childhood. Over 25 percent noted involvement in Head Start/Early Head Start Programs (33.3%), the Born Learning Campaign (28.6%), Healthy Child Care Washington (26.0%), and the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (25.3%).

SUMMARY OF RESULTS, CONTINUED

- **Fewer respondents are currently engaged in implementing the plan.** Almost 29 percent of stakeholders reported that they are currently using the framework. These stakeholders are more likely to have a statewide, than a local or regional, focus to their work. Specific applications that they identified include:
 - ◆ Internal planning and strategy development (59.3%)
 - ◆ Tool to increase understanding and awareness among stakeholder groups (37.3%)
 - ◆ Develop and carry out outcome-based evaluation (15.3%)
 - ◆ Support existing partnerships and collaborations and encourage the creation of new relationships (13.6%)
 - ◆ Grant writing and other funding requests (10.2%)

☞ I have re-focused my grant-writing strategy to include alignment with Kids Matter goals and outcomes. I worked with the Collaborative to ensure that the priority legislative items would be in alignment with the goals of Kids Matter.

-- Respondent Affiliated with a Nonprofit Organization

- **Stakeholders at all levels – statewide and local or regional - expressed substantial interest in receiving additional and ongoing support that would assist their organizations in using the Kids Matter framework.** Specific areas of assistance mentioned include:
 - ◆ More in-depth information about Kids Matter and how it connects to the work of respondents and their organizations (49.0%)
 - ◆ Training and information about implementing the plan, including practical applications and examples of current use (22.9%)
 - ◆ Communication materials about Kids Matter (e.g., summary documents, press releases) (14.4%)
 - ◆ Resources to support implementation (e.g., funding, staff) (10.5%)
 - ◆ Support in developing new and existing collaborations and partnerships (8.5%)

☞ It's wonderful to have something that various organizations, both public and private, at all levels can use as a common framework for communicating and developing their efforts. -- Respondent Affiliated with Local Government

☞ Hear, see, and practice doing what others are already doing with the framework. I need the HOW of implementation. -- Respondent Affiliated with Tribal Government

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