

Summary of Family Survey Results

A Study of Educational Neglect Diversion Programs in Minnesota

"[The program] helped a lot. My child has only missed two days this school year."

The following is a summary of findings from the Educational Neglect Family Survey, administered in March-April 2024. Families in five counties in Minnesota who had participated in an educational neglect diversion program in school years 2022-23 or 2023-24 (first half) were invited to participate in the online survey and received a \$20 incentive for completing it. A total of 97 families completed the survey, which gathered information about child and family challenges, parents' perceptions of attendance, the type and amount of support and services provided to the family, parents' perceptions of the program's impact, and recommendations.

The survey is part of a larger process and outcome evaluation being conducted by Wilder Research, with support from the Sauer Family Foundation and Casey Family Programs, about educational neglect diversion programs in select Minnesota counties (see figure below). Results from additional components of the evaluation will be released in 2025.



In Minnesota, **educational neglect** occurs when a child under the age of 12 has seven or more days of unexcused absences in a school year, prompting a child protection response. But some Minnesota counties are taking a different approach, implementing diversion programs to support families outside of child protection.

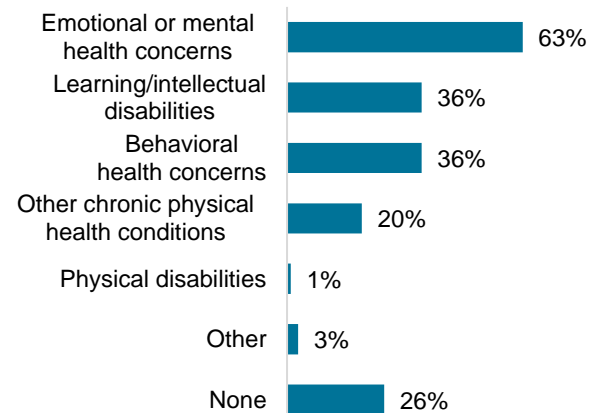
Key findings

Families report multiple and varied attendance challenges. Support services, therefore, need to be multi-faceted and tailored to families' individual needs.

Challenges to attendance

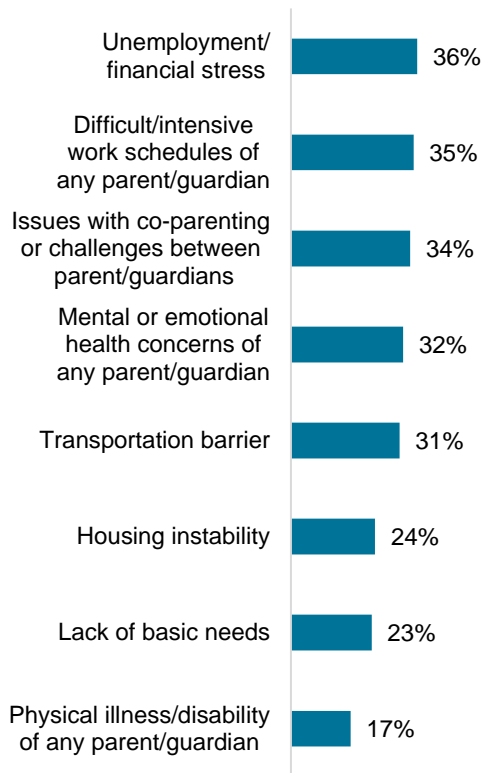
When parents were asked about the experiences of their children when they were having school attendance challenges, parents primarily reported emotional or mental health concerns (63%). Parents could name multiple challenges.

Children's challenges (n=94)



Parents were also navigating challenges that they felt impacted their children’s ability to attend school, particularly financial stress (36%), difficult work schedules (35%), co-parenting challenges (34%), mental health concerns (32%), and transportation barriers (31%).

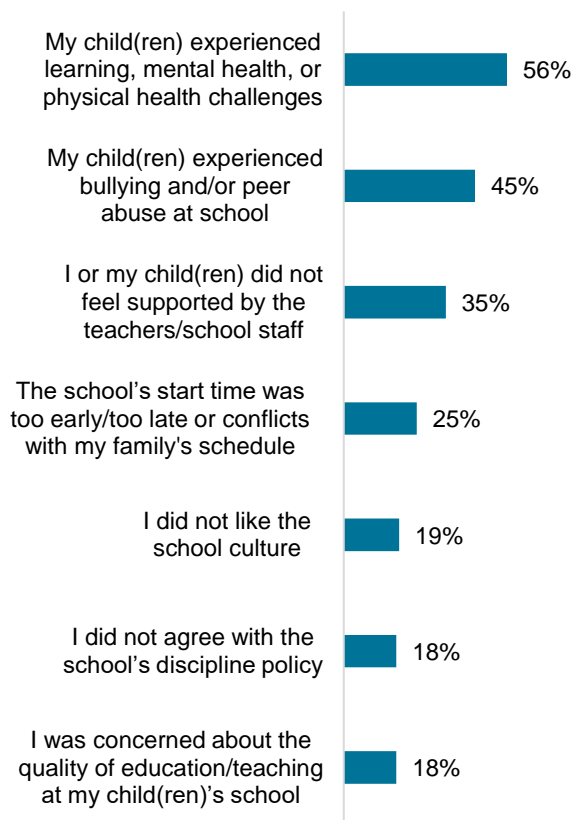
Family challenges impacting attendance (n=89-96)



Note. Additional challenges reported include: substance use/chemical health concerns for a parent/guardian (5%), and an intellectual disability of a parent/guardian (4%). Parents could name multiple challenges.

Parents cited their children’s learning, mental health, or physical health challenges (56%), followed by experiences of bullying (45%), as the most common reasons regular school attendance was challenging.

Reasons school attendance was challenging (n=89-96)



Note. Additional challenges reported include: child not having clean clothes, enough food, or other basic needs (10%), and child walks to school and there are safety/other issues related to walking (8%). Parents could name multiple challenges.

Communication with school/county

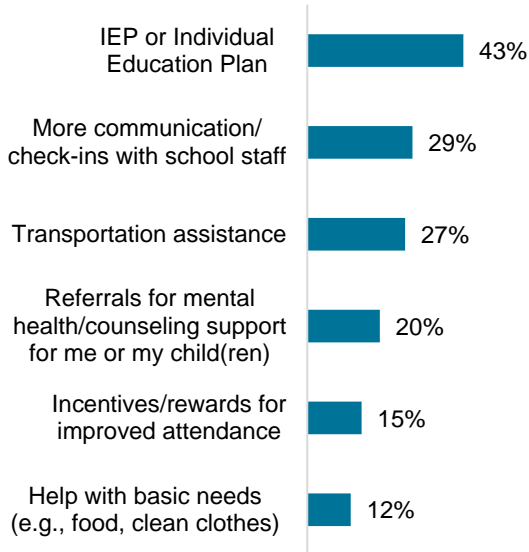
Most parents received emails/mail (76%) or phone calls (68%) from their child’s school or county about their child’s school attendance, although 13% said they did not receive any communication. Sixty-nine percent participated in at least one meeting with school/county staff about their child’s attendance. Those who did not participate in a meeting (n=30) were mostly likely to say it was because they were not invited to participate in a meeting (56%). The most common topics discussed at the meetings focused on information about attendance policies (77%), followed by the family’s barriers and challenges (73%).



Supports received

The most common supports or services offered by schools and counties to families with attendance challenges were IEPs (43%), increased communication/check-ins with school staff (29%), and transportation assistance (27%).

Services offered to families (n=91)

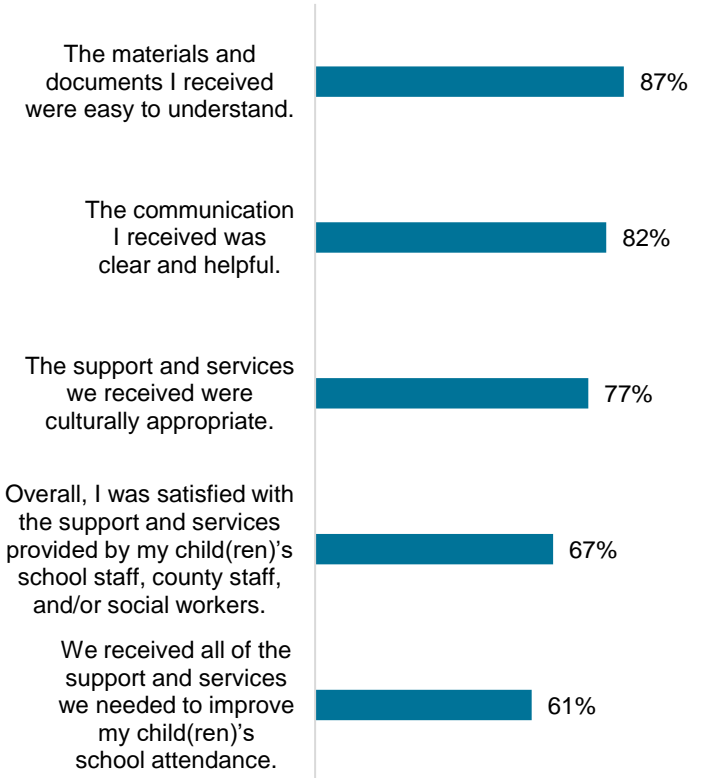


Note. Additional services reported include: changes to adapt to my/my child's schedule (10%), referrals for the Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP; 9%), and needed supports around daily life (e.g., alarm clock, school bus application; 9%).

Program experience and impact

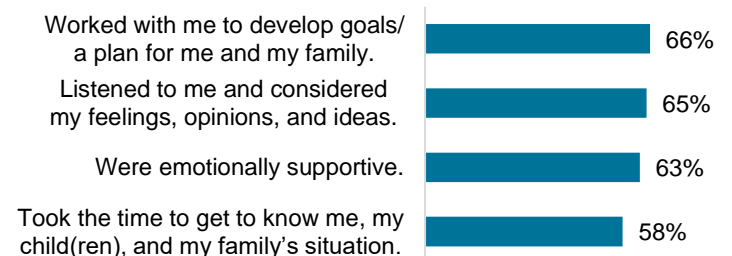
Two-thirds of parents (67%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the support and services provided by school/county staff, and 61% agreed or strongly agreed that they received all of the support and services they needed to improve their child's attendance.

Parent perceptions of services (n=76-88)



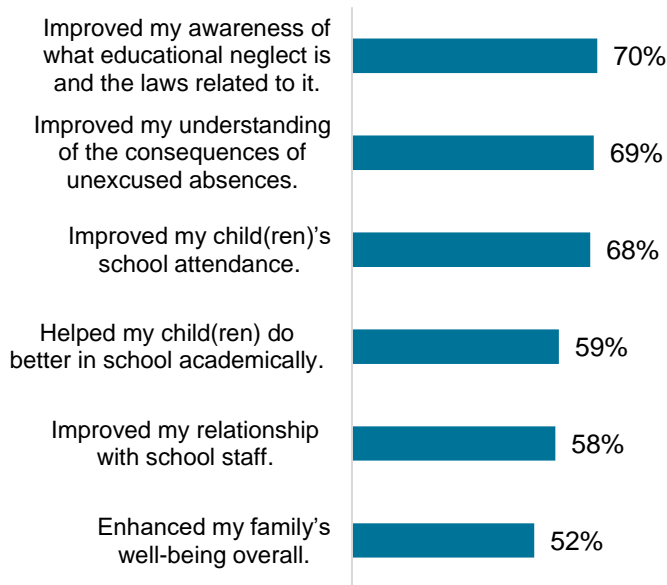
When asked about their experience with school and county staff, two-thirds of parents agreed or strongly agreed that staff worked with them to develop goals/a plan for their family (66%), and listened to them and considered their feelings, opinions, and ideas (65%).

Parent perceptions of school/county staff (n=86-88)



At least two-thirds of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the support and services they received to help with their child's school attendance improved their awareness of educational neglect and related laws (70%), their understanding of the consequences of unexcused absences (69%), and their children's attendance (68%).

Parent perception of impact of services (n=86-88)



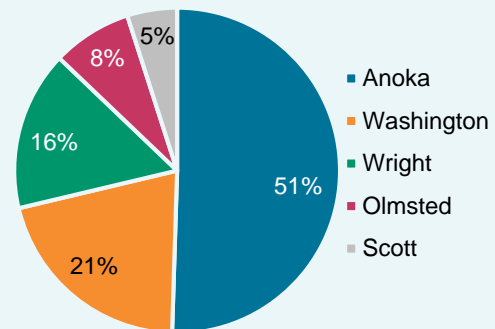
Participant suggestions

Respondents were asked (in an open-ended question) about the changes they would make to the support and services they received. A total of 69 parents responded to the question; of those, 24 (35%) did not suggest any changes. Responses were coded into themes. The most common suggestions related to increasing school/county staff's understanding of children's/family's health and other challenges (n=18); improving listening, communication, and collaboration (n=16); and offering additional supports and resources for families (n=15).

Participants

- A total of 119 (of 515) parents at least partially completed the survey (23% response rate); 97 parents (19%) completed enough of the survey to be included in the full analysis.
- Half of the parents who completed the survey were from Anoka County (51%), followed by Washington County (21%).
- Most participants identified as White (62%) or Black/African American (26%); 40 of the participants (41%) were BIPOC.

County (N=97)



Race/ethnicity (N=97)

