

**United Parents**  
**Parents & Caregivers for Wellness**  
**State of the Community**  
**Annual Report 2025-2026**



Report Developed in Partnership with:

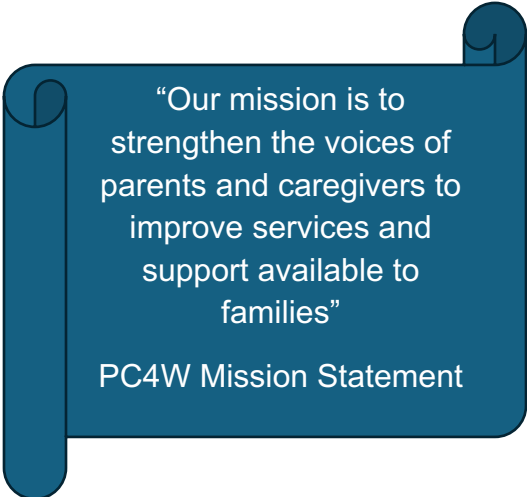


## About Us

### *United Parents*

United Parents (UP) is a grassroots community based nonprofit agency founded in 1990 on the basic but powerful principle of "Parents helping Parents." Our primary mission is to ensure that Parents and Caregivers are equal partners in both the care of their children and the design and oversight of our service delivery systems. In understanding the many unique challenges of families raising children with emotional, behavioral, or mental health disorders, UP helps families identify and bridge gaps in traditional services by connecting and integrating local resources that in turn enhance long-term outcomes for children, families, and their communities. Importantly, UP also advocates for and "powers with" families through training and capacity building of Parents/Caregivers at the local level and with policymakers at the state level through the principle of Family Voice and Choice. Throughout its history, UP has partnered with families for them to be recognized as full partners in the treatment and care of their children, knowing that it is the key to recovery and resiliency. This happens by activating partners, supporters, and policymakers to improve mental health services for children and youth, both regionally and statewide.

UP is dedicated to serving Parents, Caregivers, and families from historically underserved and marginalized communities to advance equitable access to necessary support and services to priority populations across all five County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California (CBHDA) regions across the state (i.e., Superior, Central, Bay Area, Southern, and Los Angeles). United Parents has helped to increase capacity in multiple regions by providing the necessary tools, resources, training, and recommendations for local communities to self-organize and cultivate the autonomy and influence to ensure that their child's and family's needs are being addressed.



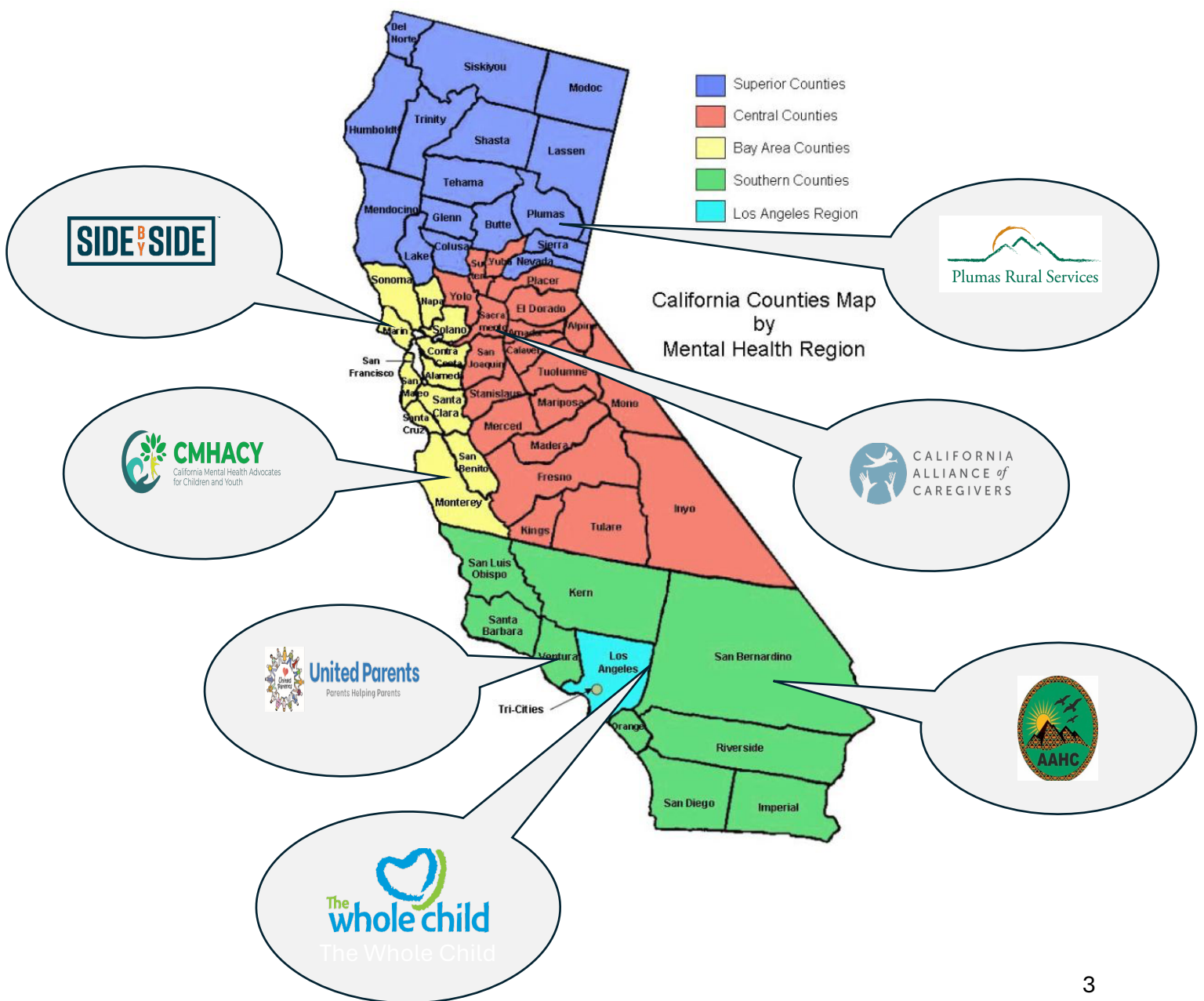
"Our mission is to strengthen the voices of parents and caregivers to improve services and support available to families"

PC4W Mission Statement

Parents and caregivers play a critical role in supporting children's and youth's health and well-being. And yet, they often face immense challenges in navigating California's mental health system and accessing quality treatment and support for kids in their care. To address these challenges, United Parents and its partners launched Parents and Caregivers for Wellness (PC4W), a collaborative project to strengthen the voice of parents and caregivers and improve services and support for families.

PC4W provides a variety of activities to parents, caregivers and those who provide supports and services to them and their children. These activities include community engagement and education campaigns, workshops and training, and local/statewide advocacy events.

Our PC4W project partners consist of parent and caregiver-run organizations and advocates for youth from across California that cover all 5 major regions, including African American Health Coalition (AAHC) in the Southern region, California Alliance of Caregivers (CAC) in the Central region, California Mental Health Advocates for Children and Youth (CMHACY) in the Bay Area region, Plumas Rural Services (PRS) in the Superior region, Side By Side (SBS) in the Bay Area region, and The Whole Child (TWC) in the Los Angeles region.



## Special Thanks

We extend our deepest gratitude to all who have made this work possible.

To the **parents and caregivers** who bravely share their stories to advocate for their children and families: *we hear you, we see you, we are with you.* Your voices and stories are the heart of our mission, and your courage and persistence drive meaningful change.

To our partners across California: thank you for your collaboration and commitment to serving children, youth, and families. Your partnership strengthens our collective impact and ensures families receive the support they deserve.



A special thank you to the **Commission for Behavioral Health (CBH)** for funding this initiative and for their continued investment in the well-being of families across our state. Your support makes this work possible.



And to our incredible staff, volunteers, and supporters - who are ***first and foremost parents and caregivers with lived experience:*** thank you for showing up every day, for uplifting one another's voices, and for

working tirelessly to create a better future for your children and so many others. You understand firsthand the challenges and triumphs of raising a child with mental health or special needs, and your dedication to advocacy, support, and systemic change is nothing short of inspiring.

With gratitude,

United Parents

## Letter from our Executive Director

Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

As peer support and the inclusion of individuals with lived experience continue to gain recognition as essential components of California's system of care, it is more important than ever that family-led organizations like United Parents remain at the center of this work. Peer-driven organizations bring an essential perspective to behavioral health systems to ensure that the voices of parents and caregivers of children with mental health and special needs are not only heard but meaningfully included in shaping policies and services. Simply put, families *must* be part of the conversation and the solutions.

For nearly a decade since 2017, United Parents has remained committed to uplifting the experiences of families navigating complex behavioral health, education, and social service systems. United Parents has expanded its Statewide work by focusing on rural and frontier communities across California, where families often face additional barriers to accessing care. These barriers include workforce shortages, long travel distances for services, limited specialty providers, and cultural and social stigma that can make it even more difficult for families to seek support.

Over the past year, one theme has continued to emerge across our work: parents and caregivers are powerful agents of change when they are given the tools, support, and opportunities to lead. Throughout our trainings, gatherings, and advocacy efforts, we have seen families step forward to share their stories, connect with one another, and engage in conversations that shape policies affecting their children and communities.

What has been especially meaningful is watching parents grow into confident advocates. Many families who initially come to our events feeling uncertain about speaking publicly or engaging with policymakers leave with a stronger sense of confidence and purpose. The courage it takes for parents to share their lived experiences that are often deeply personal and emotional continues to inspire us and reminds us why this work matters.

This year marks the second year of this grant cycle, offering an important opportunity to reflect on the progress made and the momentum built through this initiative. Over the course of this work, we have strengthened family leadership, expanded advocacy opportunities, and helped create spaces where parents and caregivers can learn from one another and support each other in their advocacy journeys.

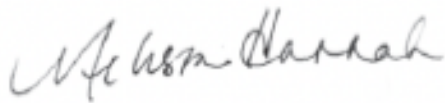
The work itself is far from finished. The relationships built, the knowledge shared, and the leadership developed during this time will continue to shape the future of family-driven advocacy across California. We look forward to continuing to build on this foundation in ways that expand opportunities for parents and caregivers to engage in

advocacy, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that family voices remain central to the behavioral health landscape.

We are deeply grateful to the Commission for Behavioral Health for supporting United Parents in this work. Your investment in parent-led and peer-driven solutions reflects a shared commitment to creating a system where families are recognized not only as recipients of services but as partners in shaping the future of behavioral health care.

Most importantly, we extend our sincere appreciation to the parents and caregivers who continue to show up, share their experiences, and advocate for their children and communities. Your leadership is the driving force behind this work, and we are honored to stand alongside you.

With appreciation and commitment,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melissa Hannah".

Melissa Hannah

Executive Director, United Parents



Queridos amigos, socios y simpatizantes,

A medida que el apoyo entre pares y la inclusión de personas con experiencia vivida se convierten en una prioridad creciente dentro del sistema de atención en California, es más importante que nunca asegurar que organizaciones como United Parents no sean excluidas. Las organizaciones lideradas y centradas en pares desempeñan un papel vital en la creación de políticas y servicios que realmente reflejan las necesidades de las familias. Nosotros aseguramos que las voces de los padres y cuidadores de niños con necesidades de salud mental y especiales no solo sean escuchadas, sino que estén integradas dentro de los mismos sistemas diseñados para apoyarlos. *No nos descarten. No nos dejen fuera de este trabajo.*

Desde 2017, hemos estado comprometidos con elevar las experiencias de las familias que navegan estos sistemas, asegurándonos de que sus voces den forma a las políticas y servicios que les afectan directamente. United Parents ha ampliado su labor a nivel estatal centrándose en las comunidades rurales y fronterizas de toda California, donde las familias muchas veces enfrentan barreras adicionales para acceder a la asistencia. Entre estas barreras se encuentran el déficit de trabajadores, las largas distancias para viajar por servicios, la limitación de especialistas y el estigma cultural y social que puede complicar aún más a las familias que pidan apoyo.

A lo largo del último año, un tema ha seguido surgiendo en todo nuestro trabajo: los padres y cuidadores son poderosos agentes de cambio cuando se les brindan las herramientas, el apoyo y las oportunidades para liderar. A lo largo de nuestras capacitaciones, encuentros y esfuerzos de incidencia, hemos visto a familias dar un paso adelante para compartir sus historias, conectar entre sí y participar en conversaciones que dan forma a las políticas que afectan a sus hijos y comunidades.

Lo que ha sido especialmente importante es ver a los padres convertirse en defensores seguros de sí mismos. Muchas familias que al principio vienen a nuestros eventos con dudas sobre hablar en público o colaborar con los legisladores se van con más confianza y un propósito más claro. El valor que tienen los padres para compartir sus experiencias, que suelen ser muy personales y emotivas, nos inspira constantemente y nos recuerda la importancia de esta labor.

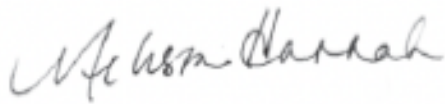
Este año marca el segundo año de este ciclo de subvenciones, ofreciendo una importante oportunidad para reflexionar sobre el progreso realizado y el impulso generado a través de esta iniciativa. A lo largo de este trabajo, hemos fortalecido el liderazgo familiar, ampliado las oportunidades de abogacía y ayudado a crear espacios donde los padres y cuidadores puedan aprender unos de otros y apoyarse mutuamente en sus trayectorias de abogacía.

El trabajo en sí no está ni cerca de terminarse. Los lazos creados, la información compartida y el liderazgo que surgió durante este periodo seguirán dando forma al futuro de la defensa familiar a lo largo de California. Esperamos seguir construyendo sobre esta base de maneras que amplíen las oportunidades para que los padres y cuidadores participen en la defensa de derechos, fortalezcan las alianzas y garanticen que las voces de las familias sigan ocupando un lugar central en el panorama de la salud conductual.

Extendemos nuestro más profundo agradecimiento a la Commission of Behavioral Health (CBH) por apoyar a United Parents en esta labor. Su inversión en soluciones dirigidas por padres e impulsadas por pares refleja un compromiso compartido de crear un sistema donde las familias sean reconocidas no solo como receptoras de servicios, sino como colaboradoras en la configuración del futuro de la atención de salud conductual.

Lo más importante es que expresamos nuestro sincero agradecimiento a los padres y cuidadores que continúan presentes, comparten sus experiencias y abogan por sus hijos y comunidades. Su liderazgo es la fuerza motriz detrás de esta labor, y nos sentimos honrados de estar a su lado.

Con aprecio y compromiso,



Melissa Hannah

Directora General, United Parents



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## Executive Summary

With 30 years of Parent/Caregiver advocacy experience, United Parents (UP) created the Parents and Caregivers for Wellness (PC4W) coalition of statewide agencies 8 years ago in 2017 with the award of their first Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) Parents/Caregivers Stakeholders contract. Informed by our data-driven, dynamic, and collaborative approach, we engaged hundreds of families across five counties—Sacramento, Monterey, Ventura, Los Angeles, and Modoc to identify community needs, strengthen partnerships, and build advocacy capacity at both the local and state levels.

### Key Accomplishments

- Local-Level Activities (LLAs)
  - We successfully planned and facilitated five regional Local-Level Activities (LLAs) in collaboration with local partners, with *over 100 parents and caregivers in attendance across all events*. These events were designed using community-specific data collected through surveys, key informant interviews and were tailored to the unique needs of each region.
- High Participant Satisfaction and Impact
  - Of those who participated in the LLAs, 100% reported being satisfied or very satisfied, and 98% stated they gained new tools to support their children with mental health needs.
- Parent Voice Data Collection
  - We supported our PC4W Organizational Partners in collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from dozens of families and community partners across the state in preparation for the five (5) Local Level Activities (LLAs) held this year in Marin, El Dorado, Lassen, Los Angeles, and Riverside Counties. This data-driven approach directly informed the planning and implementation of each LLA, with our team providing support to each PC4W partner throughout the process. Through key informant interviews and focus groups with families with lived experience, community members, and service providers, we identified consistent challenges, including limited access to trauma-informed care, difficulty navigating special education systems, lack of school-based supports, persistent stigma, workforce shortages, and gaps in early intervention services.



*“PC4W always treats its participants with so much care and respect. I always leave events feeling inspired and empowered.”*

- Policy and Systems Change
  - Our efforts led to direct engagement in the counties where our LLAs took place this year, resulting in several actionable next steps that included increased interagency collaboration and new cross-sector partnerships to support underserved families.

### *Advocacy Day at the Capitol*

In April 2025, United Parents/PC4W hosted the Parents and Caregivers for Wellness (PC4W) Advocacy Day at the Capitol in Downtown Sacramento. This year, 88 parents and caregivers attended, many attending for the very first time. Participants were trained in how to advocate for a bill, identify and share their personal stories effectively, and engage in meaningful conversations with legislators. Each parent or caregiver met with two different Assemblymembers or Senators to advocate for children’s mental health needs.

Attendees were also educated on the legislative process and the importance of advocacy. They learned about key bills: SB 531, which aims to decriminalize behavioral health conditions in schools by requiring that students with early signs of substance use disorder be referred to treatment.

According to post-event evaluations, 100% of attendees were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall event, and 95% reported gaining tools to better support their children’s mental health. Many parents left feeling empowered and inspired, with some even beginning the process of becoming parent peer support providers themselves. The day proved not only informative but transformational, offering many parents their first opportunity to share their stories with policymakers and advocate for systems change.

### *Emerging Themes Across Counties*

- Families across regions reported long waitlists for mental health services, especially in rural/frontier communities and under-resourced areas.
- Parents and caregivers emphasized the importance of respite care, educational advocacy, culturally competent services, and access to timely, coordinated support.
- Special education systems and IEP navigation remain a common pain point, with calls for more training, awareness, and family support.

### *Looking Ahead*

This year’s work was grounded in the growing movement to advance whole-person care with an equity lens across California. Major statewide initiatives, including Prop 1, CalAIM, CYBHI, and BH-CONNECT are reshaping how health services are integrated, with local implementation remaining a key focus for the year ahead.

United Parents (UP) continues to lead efforts in addressing social determinants of health, including providing Ventura County Behavioral Health's only respite care services, and championing legislative advocacy to decriminalize behavioral health conditions in schools through support of bills like AB 2711 and AB 2173. Schools have increasingly become vital hubs for mental health support, and our work supports stronger parent partnerships and advocacy around student accommodations.

We remain at the forefront of expanding peer support in behavioral health, urging leaders to center peer-led organizations like ours in decision-making and service delivery. We also continue to elevate the value of community-defined evidence-based practices (CDEPs) as essential to delivering culturally responsive care.

We are committed to deepening our partnerships with state and local systems, enhancing family-centered data collection, and investing in parent and caregiver leadership. In the coming year, we aim to support additional PC4W Partners in planning and hosting their own events, expand our reach to underserved populations with a priority focus on rural and frontier communities, and continue translating community voice into system-level change.

### **The Co-Powerment Approach: The Heart of Our Work**

Our work is informed by the belief that parents and caregivers are not just recipients of services; they are experts in their own experiences, integral decision-makers, and powerful agents of change. Yet, too often, systems designed to support families operate in ways that place them in passive roles, offering information without engagement, requesting input without accountability, and involving them in decisions without truly sharing power. This traditional, top-down approach not only limits the effectiveness of services but can also erode trust and reinforce disempowerment.

#### *Co-powerment is the solution.*

Rather than merely educating parents and caregivers, we engage in meaningful partnerships where knowledge is shared, not dictated. Traditional education and information-sharing assume that professionals and decision-makers hold all the answers while parents and caregivers simply receive guidance. However, when information is incomplete, outdated, or disconnected from the realities families face, it can lead to frustration, distrust, and a sense of being unheard. Instead, we believe in *two-way learning*, where families contribute their lived experiences and expertise to co-create solutions that are both practical and sustainable.

Moving beyond one-way communication, we actively listen and seek input, ensuring that families' voices are not only heard but truly valued. However, input alone is not enough. Parents and caregivers must see and experience firsthand that their

perspectives meaningfully shape the policies and services that impact them. Otherwise, they risk feeling like their time, energy, and insights are taken without recognition, reinforcing a cycle where decisions are made *for* them rather than *with* them. When families do not see their voices reflected in decision-making, they may feel further alienated from the systems meant to support them, reinforcing the notion that these systems were not built with them in mind. Without co-powerment, we risk perpetuating the very barriers we seek to break down, leaving families feeling disempowered and disconnected from the very services intended to help families succeed.

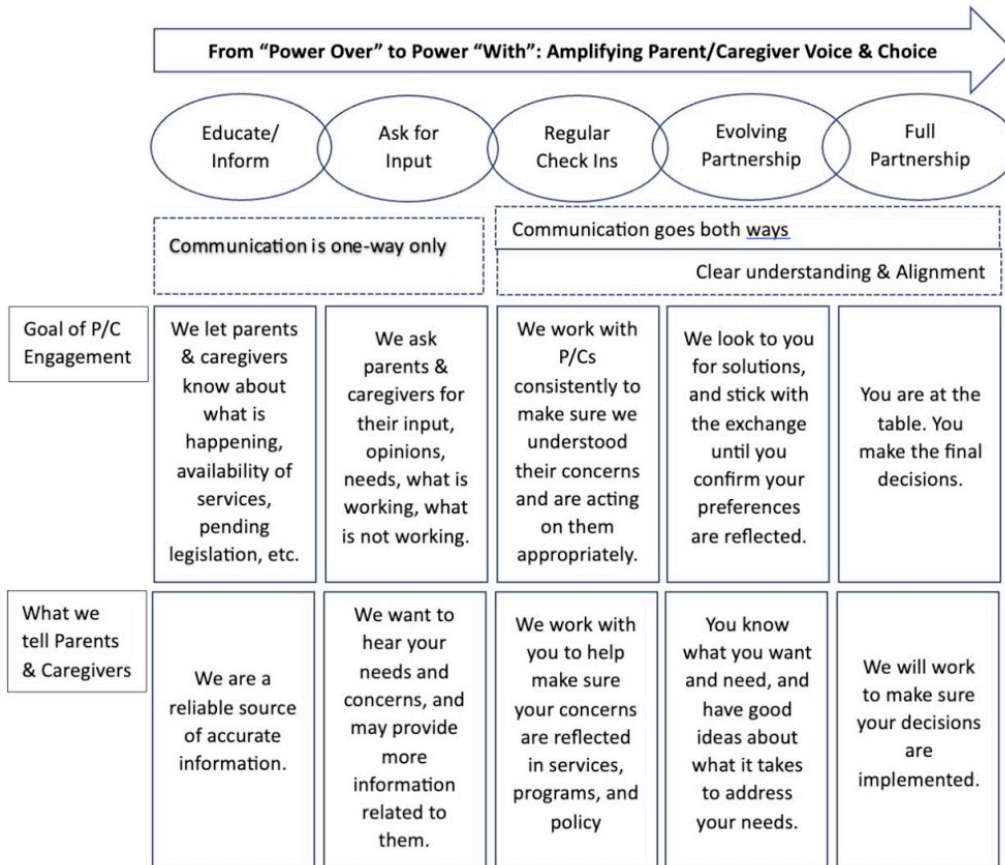
That is why we prioritize regular, reciprocal check-ins, creating opportunities for parents and caregivers to engage in decision-making conversations, refine solutions, and hold leaders accountable. This is more than a surface-level process; it requires training, support, and encouragement so that all participants, regardless of background or expertise, feel equipped to contribute meaningfully. When families are only engaged for compliance purposes, when their voices are heard but ignored, or when decisions are still unilaterally made by those in power, it undermines trust and reinforces the very barriers we seek to dismantle.

To truly transform systems, we must go beyond participation and move toward authentic partnership. This means recognizing parents and caregivers as equal stakeholders in decision-making, not just as passive contributors, but co-leaders in shaping solutions. Co-powerment requires us to shift from a mindset of “power over” to “power with,” ensuring that parents and caregivers share real authority in shaping programs, policies, and resources that directly impact them.

Our ultimate vision is to build a framework where full partnership is not just an aspiration, but a reality. A system where parents and caregivers do not just have a seat at the table but are helping to build the table. A system where parents and caregivers help set the agenda, shape the process, and make final decisions. This approach honors the strengths, resilience, and expertise of families while fostering a sense of ownership that leads to long-term, sustainable change.

When we embrace co-powerment, we do more than provide services. We build communities of trust, dignity, and shared responsibility, laying the foundation for real, lasting impact. Figure 1 below is a visual representation of our Co-Powering Continuum of Engagement.

*Figure 1. Co-Powering Continuum of Engagement*



### Q&A with our United Parents Executive Director, Melissa Hannah

As we close our third grant cycle, what does this milestone represent for the organization and the families we serve?

Closing our third grant cycle represents an important milestone for United Parents and the families we serve. Through this initiative, we have strengthened our ability to support parents and caregivers as essential partners in their children’s mental health and developmental care. Families who once felt isolated are now better informed, more confident, and more empowered to advocate for their children.

For United Parents, this reflects the growth of a trusted, community-based model centered on lived experience. Many of our staff and partners are parents who have walked similar paths, allowing us to provide meaningful support, education, and advocacy. We have also seen the increasing importance of peer support as a key part of healing and family well-being.

This work has expanded our reach across the state and strengthened trust with both families and funders. Families have entrusted us with their stories, giving us the responsibility to carry their voices into spaces where decisions about systems of care are made. We have also worked to ensure that community-based organizations have a seat at the table alongside larger systems.

How has this initiative strengthened our organization's capacity to support and elevate parent voice?

This initiative has strengthened United Parents' capacity to elevate parent voice by expanding our reach statewide and building a stronger network of parent and peer leaders. Through regional events, rural outreach, and our annual Advocacy Day at the Capitol, we have created more opportunities for parents to share their experiences and engage directly with decision-makers.

We have moved beyond simply supporting families to actively carrying their voices into systems-level conversations. Families trust us with their stories, and we ensure those perspectives are represented in policy discussions, partnerships, and planning efforts. This work has also strengthened our role as a bridge between families, community-based organizations, and larger systems of care, reinforcing that those closest to the community must be included in decision-making.

Internally, it has built our confidence and capacity to show up as leaders, advocate with intention, and continue elevating parent voice in meaningful and lasting ways.

In what ways has this work influenced system-level conversations, partnerships, or policy efforts?

This work has helped ensure that the voices of parents and caregivers are consistently included in systems-level conversations. Through our regional events and annual Advocacy Day at the Capitol, we have supported parents to share their lived experiences directly with decision-makers and engage in policy discussions. We have built strong partnerships with behavioral health, education, and community-based organizations, helping shift conversations to be more family-centered and grounded in real community needs. By bringing forward feedback from thousands of families, we have helped highlight barriers and inform more coordinated and responsive approaches to care.

By connecting what we hear locally to state-level efforts, we have reinforced that families and community-based organizations must be included from the beginning in shaping systems and policies.

Looking ahead, what is your vision for the future of parent and caregiver advocacy, and what will it take to get there?

While we have made meaningful progress, the work continues. New families, evolving systems, and emerging challenges mean that elevating parents' and peers' voices will always be essential.

Sustained investment in parent and caregiver advocacy is essential because families are the constant in a child's life. When we invest in parents and caregivers, we are not just supporting individual families; we are strengthening the entire system of care.

At United Parents, we see every day that when parents are supported by peers who have walked a similar path, something shifts. They build resilience, confidence, and the

ability to cope in ways they didn't think were possible. In a system where there can be too many resources and no clear starting point, peer support helps families make sense of it all, narrowing the path, guiding them forward, and ensuring they don't have to do it alone. This work is not about power over families; it is about power with them. It is a partnership. We learn from parents just as much as we support them, and that shared experience strengthens both the family and the system. We also recognize that many parents and caregivers carry deep guilt, especially biological parents, when their child receives a diagnosis. Advocacy is not just about navigating systems; it is also about healing. When parents feel supported, understood, and less alone, they are better able to show up for their children and for themselves. Parent and caregiver advocates also bring something systems cannot replicate: real lived experience. They help shift systems from being service-driven to truly family-centered by naming barriers, building trust, and ensuring decisions reflect what families actually need.

What message would you like to share with CBH and partners who have made this work possible?

We are deeply grateful to CBH and our partners for recognizing the value of parent and caregiver voice and investing in this work. Your support has allowed us to reach families across the state, build trust within communities, and ensure that lived experience is not only heard, but valued in shaping systems of care.

This partnership shows what is possible when systems and community-based organizations work together with a shared commitment to families. Because of this investment, parents are more connected, more confident, and better equipped to advocate for their children.

We encourage continued commitment to sustaining and expanding this work, especially peer-driven supports and community-based partnerships, so that families remain at the center of decisions that impact their lives.

Together, we are not only supporting families today—we are helping shape a stronger, more responsive system for future generations.

### **Q&A with our OAC Statewide Grant Coordinator, Steve Varner**

What are you most proud of accomplishing during this third grant cycle?

I am most proud of the community we have built among parents and caregivers who often feel alone while supporting children with behavioral and mental health needs. Over this third cycle, we have created a space where families feel safe, supported, and understood. Seeing parents return year after year and bring others with them, showing that this program is making a real difference.

How have you seen parents and caregivers grow in confidence, knowledge, or advocacy skills as a result of this grant?

Many parents come to us feeling overwhelmed and unsure how to help their child. Over time, we see them gain confidence and knowledge about how systems work and what

their rights are. Parents who once felt afraid to speak up are now asking questions, advocating in meetings, and helping guide other families who are just beginning the journey.

Can you share a brief story or example that captures the impact of this program on a family?

One parent shared that before attending our program, she felt completely alone trying to navigate services for her child. Through connecting with other parents and learning about available resources, she began to feel hopeful again. Later she told us the biggest change was realizing she was not alone, and that she now had the confidence to speak up for her child.

What key lessons have you learned over the course of these three grant cycles?

The biggest lesson we have learned is that connection is just as powerful as information. Parents need a place where they feel heard and understood. When families connect with others who share similar experiences, they begin to build the confidence and strength needed to advocate for their children.

How has the program evolved or improved from the first cycle to now?

Since the first cycle, the program has grown in both reach and depth. We have expanded language access, strengthened trainings, and listened closely to parent feedback. The program has also become more parent-driven, with returning participants helping support and encourage new families.

What do parents and caregivers consistently tell you they need, and how has this grant responded to those needs?

Parents consistently tell us they need clear information, connection with others, and guidance on navigating complicated systems. This grant has allowed us to provide trainings, bring families together, and offer interpretation and translated materials so more parents can fully participate and feel supported.

What excites you most about continuing this work in the years ahead?

What excites me most is seeing parents realize their strength. When caregivers gain knowledge and confidence, it changes not only their child's future but the entire family's path. I am excited to continue reaching more families and helping parents become powerful advocates for their children.

As part of our ongoing effort to elevate the voices of parents and caregivers navigating the behavioral health system, we had the opportunity to speak with Steve Varner, an adoptive father and the OAC Statewide Grant Coordinator of the PC4W BHSOAC grant. With personal experience raising two children with behavioral health needs, Steve

brings both compassion and clarity to his work, helping families feel seen, supported, and empowered. We asked him to share his journey, the challenges he's faced, and how his lived experience informs his leadership. We are extremely grateful for his continued dedication and leadership in ensuring the success of this vital program.

## **Supporting and Empowering CA Parents/Caregivers through Local Level**

### **Activities**

A core component of our advocacy work is engaging parents and caregivers directly in their local communities, connecting them with resources and supports, and breaking down silos to promote a whole-person care approach. In collaboration with our PC4W partners, we planned and hosted Local-Level Activities (LLAs) across Lassen, Marin, El Dorado, Los Angeles, and Riverside Counties, ensuring that advocacy efforts reflect the unique needs of each region.

Local Level Activities (LLA) are more than just one-time events; they are a multi-phase, data-driven process designed to gather community insights, drive meaningful advocacy, and deliver targeted resources and training to parents and caregivers.

Through this structured, multi-phase process, we:

- Ensure that every event is uniquely tailored to the real, lived experiences of families in each county.
- Leverage data-driven insights to inform advocacy efforts and policy recommendations at both the local and state levels.
- Empower parents and caregivers by making their voices central to decision-making.
- Strengthen partnerships with county leadership and service providers, building long-term solutions based on community-identified needs.

### *Phase I: Community Needs Assessment*

Our process begins with a Community Needs Assessment to identify local service gaps and priorities for advocacy. This phase ensures that the training, resources, and support services offered at each LLA is tailored to the specific challenges families face.

#### *Phase Ia: Family Voice Survey Data Collection*

We collect quantitative data through our Family Voice Needs Assessment survey, which is administered by LLA partner organizations to the families they serve. This data provides a broad overview of commonly reported concerns, service barriers, and unmet needs by parents and caregivers.

#### *Phase Ib: Qualitative Data Collection*

We conduct focus groups and key informant interviews with families and community partners to gather in-depth insights about their experiences.

This qualitative data provides important context to the survey findings, helping us better understand the nuanced challenges caregivers face.

### *Phase II: Data Analysis and Interpretation*

Once the data collection process is complete, we:

- Analyze and interpret common themes and trends across both qualitative and quantitative data.
- Identify priority areas for training, advocacy, and resource development to directly support parents and caregivers.
- Ensure that findings are presented in a way that is accessible, actionable, and centered on community-identified needs.

### *Phase III: Event Planning and Resource Development*

With clear data-driven insights, we:

- Create simple, user-friendly infographics that visually present key findings, making the information easily digestible for families, providers, and stakeholders.
- Design training sessions and resource offerings based on the most pressing needs identified by parents and caregivers.
- Plan logistical details of each LLA, ensuring that:
  - Scheduling is convenient for caregivers.
  - Translation services and accommodation are provided for accessibility.
  - Community partners are engaged to strengthen support networks.

### *Phase IV: Post-Event Debriefing and Policy Advocacy*

After each LLA, we focus on ensuring that parent and caregiver voices lead to tangible change.

We coordinate with our PC4W partner from CHMACY to arrange a follow-up meeting with county leadership, where we:

- Present translated findings and visually engaging infographics.
- Highlight the most urgent and impactful needs facing families in the region.
- Explore how the findings can inform policy decisions and drive service improvements.
- Discuss potential partnerships between the PC4W Partner and the children's system of care.
- Introduce our team and offer support in addressing local challenges.

- Advocate for the inclusion of peer support and peer providers in all processes and decision-making efforts.

The insights gathered through our LLA planning process help us continuously shape future planning and advocacy efforts.

We integrate feedback from county leadership into continuous quality improvement efforts for future events.

These findings contribute to quarterly and annual reports submitted to BHSA/CBH, ensuring that these local insights influence statewide advocacy and funding priorities.

*LLA Participation*

<b>Location</b>	<b># of Participants</b>
Marin County	23
El Dorado County	31
Lassen County	15
Los Angeles County	61
Riverside County	33
Total	163

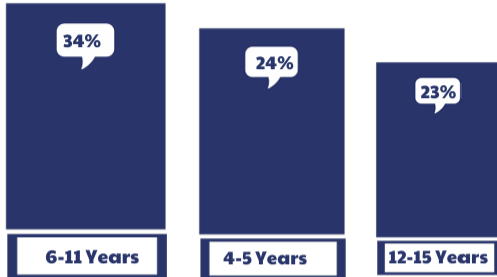
*How we stay connected with our community*

<b>Method</b>	<b>Output</b>
Monthly Newsletters	1,775 recipients with a 33% open rate
Monthly Children and Youth Policy Update	6,187 recipients, 32% average open rate
Social media	1,045 followers of the PC4W Facebook page 738 followers of the United Parents Facebook page
Family Voice Surveys	The most commonly reported methods of finding out about our events ranked by popularity were: Word of Mouth (60%), Social Networking sites (48%), and Referrals (45%)

## PC4W Statewide Parent Voice Survey Data

Top 3 answers shown in this infographic

### Age of Child Requiring /Receiving Mental Health Services



### Relationship to Child\*

- Biological Parent**  
65%
- Adoptive Parent**  
22%
- Foster/Resource Parent**  
11%

### What concerns do you have about the child/ren you care for regarding their:

#### Physical/Neurological Health

- 1) Autism
- 2) Developmental Disabilities
- 3) Insomnia

#### Mental Health

- 1) Anxiety Disorders
- 2) Depression
- 3) Mood Disorders

#### Behaviors

- 1) Not Following Directions/Inattention
- 2) Temper Tantrums
- 3) Problems Making Friends

### Which local agencies/individuals need to be trained on your child's needs?

Mental Health Provider	<b>39%</b>
Schools / Teachers	<b>38%</b>
Child and Family Services	<b>37%</b>

**73%**  
of respondents  
believe the  
physical,  
neurological,  
mental health  
and/or  
behavioral  
challenges are  
because of trauma

Funding provided by the Behavioral Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission

# Are you receiving the SERVICES & SUPPORTS

you need for the child/youth you care for?



Why?

*I don't know what is available to help me or how to find resources*



*The services and supports I need are not available in my community*

*Services not covered by insurance/can't afford services*

## What services are you missing?

1) Quality Childcare / Respite

2) Appropriate Family Therapy

3) Behavioral Support

## Parent/Caregiver Training Needs\*

- 1) Advocating for Family/Self
- 2) IEP & Educational Advocacy
- 3) Bullying/Cyberbullying

## What would you advocate for?\*



**Understanding what I need to better care for my child/youth**



**Better supports in school**



**Information about state and federal laws and regulations**

## How do you find out about community resources and supports?\*

Social Networking Sites 39%

Referrals 31%

Brochures or Flyers 30%



*A collaborative project to strengthen the voice of parents and caregivers and improve services and supports for families.*

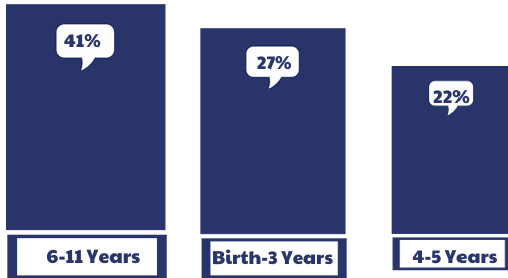
Funding provided by the Behavioral Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission

Marin County LLA Event

Family Voice Survey Infographic

# Marin County Parent Voice Survey Data 2025

## Age of Child Requiring /Receiving Mental Health Services



## Relationship to Child\*

- Biological Parent**  
88%
- Adoptive Parent**  
15%
- Foster/Resource Parent**  
3%

**What concerns do you have about the child/ren you care for regarding their:**

<u>Physical/Neurological Health</u>	<u>Mental Health</u>	<u>Behaviors</u>
1) None	1) Trauma	1) Not Following Directions
2) Special Education	2) Depression	2) Temper Tantrums
3) Being Bullied	3) Anxiety Disorders	3) Problems Making Friends

## Which local agencies/individuals need to be trained on your child's needs?\*



**20%**  
of respondents believe the physical, neurological, mental health and/or behavioral challenges are because of trauma

\*Respondents selected more than one option

# Are you receiving the SERVICES & SUPPORTS

you need for the child/youth you care for?



Why?

I don't know what is available to help me or how to find resources



The services and supports I need are not available in my community

Services not covered by insurance/can't afford services

## What services are you missing?

1) Appropriate Family Therapy

2) Trauma Informed Care

3) Support Group

### Parent/Caregiver Training Needs\*

- IEP/Educational Advocacy
- Help With Children's Behavior
- Parenting Classes/Tools

## What would you advocate for?\*

- Better supports in school
- Quality child care
- Understanding what I need to better care for my child or youth

## How do you find out about community resources and supports?\*



Referrals 63%

Word of Mouth 58%

Therapist 35%

### Which category best describes your child?

<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>Latina/Latino</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>White/Caucasian</b>	<b>15%</b>

### What's your child's sex at birth?

<b>Male</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>48%</b>



*A collaborative project to strengthen the voice of parents and caregivers and improve services and supports for families.*

Contact Information:  
svarner@unitedparents.org  
ph 805-384-1555  
<https://parents caregivers4wellness.org/>

Funding provided by the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission



# Supporting and Empowering Parents and Caregivers In Marin County

For Parents/Caregivers of Children with Behavioral/Mental Health Needs

<p><b>SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2025 10AM ~ 4PM</b></p> <p><b>SIDE BY SIDE 300 SUNNY HILLS DR SAN ANSELMO, CA</b></p>	<p><b>TRAINING TOPICS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• IEP/504 Advocacy</li><li>• Parent/Caregiver Strategies</li><li>• Resources</li></ul>
--	---

**EVENT INCLUDES:**

- Complimentary Light Breakfast and Catered Lunch
- Gift Giveaways
- FREE CHILDCARE

*In Collaboration With...*



**REGISTER BY CLICKING [HERE](https://bit.ly/PC4Wevent)  
OR GO TO THE WEBSITE:  
<https://bit.ly/PC4Wevent>  
OR CALL: 707.889.7901**



**\*SPANISH INTERPRETATION AVAILABLE\***

Funding provided by the Behavioral Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission

## Parents and Caregivers for Wellness (PC4W) Advocacy and Training



### PARTNER INFORMATION

**Organization Name:** Side by Side

**Population(s) served:** Youth ages 5-26

**Website:** [Home - Side by Side](#)

**Phone:** 415-457-3200

**Org location(s):** Marin, Napa, Sonoma, Alameda Counties

**Social Media:** [Side By Side \(@sidebysideyouth\)](#) • [Instagram photos and videos](#)

### LOCAL ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- The Marin County event was held at the SIDE BY SIDE office location. They went above and beyond to ensure that parents were comfortable and that kids had many fun activities to keep them safe and busy. We had a training on “Parent Strategies with Mental Health Awareness,” “Advocating for a Child with Special Needs,” and “Fundamentals of IEP & Effective Parent Advocacy.” We had resource tables and a few guest speakers to talk about services and parent/caregiver tools.
- Our goal was to equip parents to advocate for their youth’s educational support needs, and to offer strategies to address challenging behavior, including behavior affected by trauma.
- We outreached to partners in behavioral health, education, and child welfare.

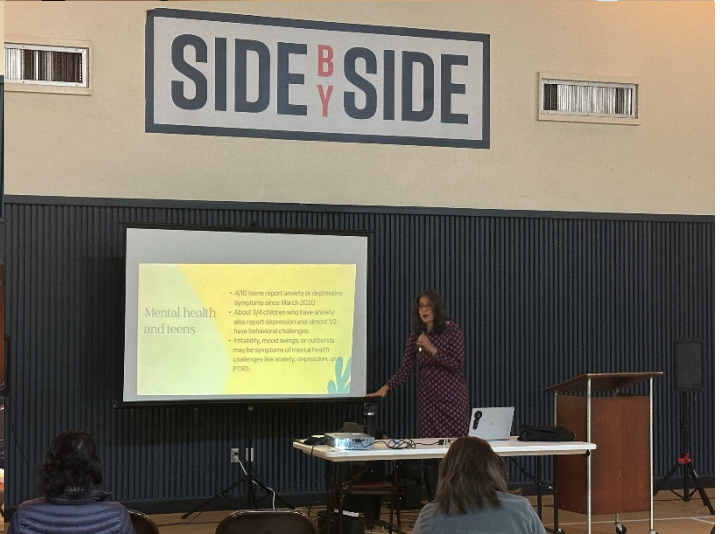
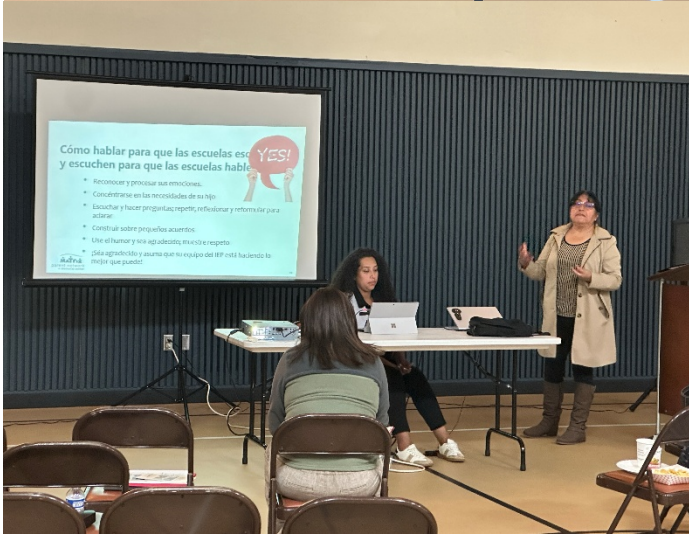
### Local Level Activity Statistics

- **Total number of event attendees: 23**

### LESSONS LEARNED

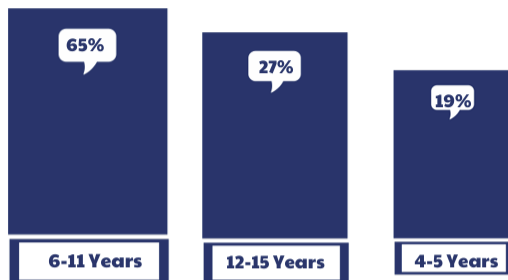
- We had many families register, which showed that our outreach was affected; however, we had many last-minute cancellations. We will do more outreach to see if we can support families to attend amid last-minute challenges that arise.
- With parents/caregivers’ current fear of deportation, we believe this affected our overall attendance. Although the marketing and outreach were done, the fear doesn’t seem to be lessening.
- Doing early and constant outreach with many partners and having many “perks” for attendees, including childcare/activities, food, and information on many resources.
- We learned that most of our parents/caregivers are learning about these events through word of mouth, social media, and parent partners.
- All parents/caregivers were Spanish-speaking and in need of translation services. Continue to offer a translator at these events.
- We learned that there is still a dire need for respite, additional training for service providers, and more free events at school to support parent advocacy.

## Event Photos



## El Dorado County Parent Voice Survey Data 2025

### Age of Child Requiring /Receiving Mental Health Services



### Relationship to Child\*

- Biological Parent**  
48%
- Adoptive Parent**  
36%
- Foster/Resource Parent**  
16%

### What concerns do you have about the child/ren you care for regarding their:

#### Physical/Neurological Health

- 1) Autism
- 2) Developmental Disabilities
- 3) Special Education

#### Mental Health

- 1) Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- 2) Anxiety Disorders
- 3) Trauma

#### Behaviors

- 1) Problems Making Friends
- 2) Temper Tantrums
- 3) Not Sleeping

### Which local agencies/individuals need to be trained on your child's needs?\*

<b>Mental Health Provider</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>Social Worker/Therapist</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>Medical Doctor</b>	<b>54%</b>

**54%**  
 of respondents believe the  
 physical,  
 neurological,  
 mental health  
 and/or behavioral  
 challenges are  
 because of trauma

\*Respondents selected more than one option

**Are you receiving the SERVICES & SUPPORTS**

**you need for the child/youth you care for?**



Why?

Services not covered by insurance/can't afford services

Slow process to receive services

I don't know what is available to help me or how to find services

**What services are you missing?**

- 1) Appropriate Family Therapy
- 2) Quality Child Care
- 3) Behavioral Support

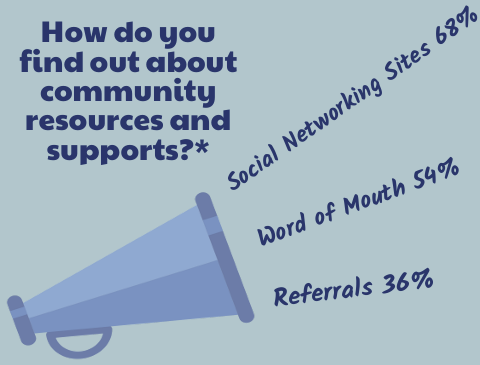
**Parent/Caregiver Training Needs\***

**IEP/Educational Advocacy**  
**Help With Children's Behavior**  
**Parenting Classes/Tools**

**What would you advocate for?\***

- Better supports in school**
- Clear understanding of what services are available and how to get them**
- Understanding what I need to better care for my child or youth**

**How do you find out about community resources and supports?\***



## Which category best describes your child?

<b>White/Caucasian</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Hispanic/LatinX</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Black/African American</b>	<b>4%</b>

## What's your child's sex at birth?

<b>Male</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>50%</b>



*A collaborative project to strengthen the voice of parents and caregivers and improve services and supports for families.*

Contact Information:  
svarner@unitedparents.org  
ph 805-384-1555  
<https://parents caregivers4wellness.org/>

Funding provided by the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission



*Supporting & Empowering  
Parents & Caregivers in  
El Dorado County*

For Parents/Caregivers of Children with Mental Health Needs

- Educational Rights & Special Education Resources
- Understanding & Responding to Trauma/Strategies for Challenging Behavior
- Modeling De-escalation & Self-Regulation
- Community Resource Tables

Sat, May 17, 2025  
9AM - 3PM



Vintage Grace Church  
931 Lassen Lane  
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762

Event Includes:

- Complimentary light breakfast and catered lunch
- Gift Giveaways
- FREE CHILDCARE
- Calm Kits

For more information email:  
[events@cacaregivers.org](mailto:events@cacaregivers.org)

Funding provided by the Commission for Behavioral Health



## Parents and Caregivers for Wellness (PC4W) Advocacy and Training



CALIFORNIA  
ALLIANCE of  
CAREGIVERS

### PARTNER INFORMATION

**Organization Name:** California Alliance of Caregivers

**Population(s) served:** Foster, Kinship, Guardian & Adoptive Families in CA

**Website:** [www.cacaregivers.org](http://www.cacaregivers.org)

**Phone:** 530-312-0480

**Project location:** California - statewide

**Social Media:** @cacaregivers

### LOCAL ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- The El Dorado County event was held at the Vintage Grace Church, in El Dorado Hills, CA. They went above and beyond to ensure that parents were comfortable and that kids had many fun activities to keep them safe and busy.
- We had a training on “Educational Advocacy and Special Education Resources,” “Modeling De-Escalation & Self-Regulation,” and “Fundamentals of IEP & Effective Parent Advocacy”, along with how occupational therapy can help in many ways. Parents/caregivers received free Calm Kids and we had resource tables and a few guest speakers to talk about services and parent/caregiver tools.
- Our goal was to equip parents to advocate for their youth’s educational support needs and to offer strategies to address challenging behavior, including behavior affected by trauma.
- We outreached to partners in behavioral health, education, and child welfare.

### Local Level Activity Statistics

- Total number of event attendees: 31

### LESSONS LEARNED

- Over 50% of parents/caregivers are learning about these free events on social media.
- We learned that there is still a dire need for more training and education on behavior interventions and autism support.
- Parents/caregivers shared that they found information about attachment and sensory processing most interesting during this event.
- Vintage Grace Church, where the event was held offers so many great resources for families, including adult groups, children’s activities, and resource events. It is great to bring families in to see what is available at this organization. Regular in person events build trust in this valuable community partner. It would be great to have an annual event like this at Vintage Grace Church so that families can get connected to community support.

*Event Photos*

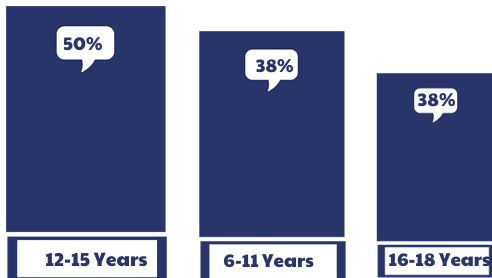


*Lassen County LLA Event*

*Family Voice Survey Infographic*

# Lassen County Parent Voice Survey Data 2025

## Age of Child Requiring /Receiving Mental Health Services



## Relationship to Child\*

- Biological Parent**  
88%
- Adoptive Parent**  
13%
- Foster/Resource Parent**  
13%

### What concerns do you have about the child/ren you care for regarding their:

<u>Physical/Neurological Health</u>	<u>Mental Health</u>	<u>Behaviors</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Being Bullied</li> <li>2) Autism</li> <li>3) Special Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder</li> <li>2) Anxiety Disorders</li> <li>3) Mood Disorders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Temper Tantrums</li> <li>2) Defiant Behaviors</li> <li>3) Not Following Directions/Inattention</li> </ul>

### Which local agencies/individuals need to be trained on your child's needs?\*



**50%**  
of respondents believe the physical, neurological, mental health and/or behavioral challenges are because of trauma

\*Respondents selected more than one option

**Are you receiving the SERVICES & SUPPORTS**

**you need for the child/youth you care for?**



Why?

Services not covered by insurance/can't afford services

The services and supports I need are not available in my community

I get too overwhelmed

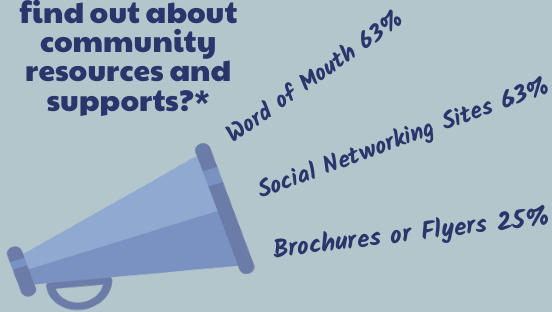
**What services are you missing?**

- 1) Family Advocate or Partner
- 2) Behavioral Support
- 3) Respite



- Parent/Caregiver Training Needs\***
- 1) Supporting Child With Health Needs
  - 2) Any
  - 3) RBT Training and License Help. ABA for Individual/Social Groups

**How do you find out about community resources and supports?\***



**What would you advocate for?\***

- Clear understanding of what services are available and how to get them
- Better supports in school
- Information about state and federal laws and regulations

## Which category best describes your child?

<b>White</b>	<b>86%</b>
<b>More Than One Race</b>	<b>14%</b>

## What's your child's sex at birth?

<b>Male</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>43%</b>

**\*PLEASE NOTE:** Although we ask for only one survey per child, sometimes the parent/caregiver provide information for more than one child which will lead to numbers exceeding 100%



*A collaborative project to strengthen the voice of parents and caregivers and improve services and supports for families.*

Contact Information:  
svarner@unitedparents.org  
ph 805-384-1555  
<https://parents caregivers4wellness.org/>

Funding provided by the Behavioral Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission



# Supporting and Empowering Parents and Caregivers In Lassen County

For Parents/Caregivers of Children with Behavioral/Mental Health Needs

**SATURDAY,  
AUGUST 16, 2025  
9AM ~ 3PM**

**COMMUNITY CHURCH  
65 S LASSEN STREET  
SUSANVILLE, CA**

**TRAINING TOPICS:**

- Educational Advocacy
- IEP/504 Basics
- Compassion Fatigue
- And More...

**EVENT INCLUDES:**

- Complimentary Light Breakfast and Catered Lunch
- Gift Giveaways
- FREE CHILDCARE

*In Collaboration With...*



**REGISTER BY CLICKING HERE  
OR GO TO THE WEBSITE:  
<https://bit.ly/PC4Wevent>  
OR CALL: 530.283.2735, EXT. 812**



Funding provided by:  **Commission for Behavioral Health**

LLA PC4W Partner Spotlight: Plumas Rural Services (PRS)

## Parents and Caregivers for Wellness (PC4W) Advocacy and Training



### PARTNER INFORMATION

**Organization Name:** Plumas Rural Services  
**Population(s) served:** Residents of Plumas, Lassen, Sierra & Modoc Counties  
**Website:** <https://plumasruralservices.org/>  
**Phone:** 530-283-2735  
**Project location:** Alturas CA, Modoc County  
**Social Media:** Facebook - @prs.social  
Instagram - @plumasruralservices\_inc

### LOCAL ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- The Lassen County event was held at the Community Church, in Susanville, CA.
- We had a training on “Educational Advocacy”, “IEP/504 Basics”, and “Compassion Fatigue.” Parents learned foundational IEP strategies, practical approaches to behavioral challenges, and the importance of self-care. We had resource tables and a few guest speakers to talk about services and parent/caregiver tools.
- Strengthened parents ability to navigate IEPs and encouraged participation in broader advocacy efforts such as the Annual Advocacy Day. Several families expressed interest in participating in the upcoming 6th Annual Advocacy Day at the Capitol in April 2026.
- The family-friendly BBQ meal created a welcoming environment and encouraged parent-to-parent connection. The parent-to-parent connection was evident throughout the training. Parents and caregivers engaged in open discussions, sharing personal experiences and practical strategies in small group activities. Many connected informally during breaks, offering mutual encouragement and validation. Several exchanged contact information and resources, laying the foundation for continued peer support beyond the event. This sense of community created an environment where participants felt less isolated and more empowered. We outreached to partners in behavioral health, education, and child welfare.

### Local Level Activity Statistics

- **Total number of event attendees:** 15

### LESSONS LEARNED

- We had parents/caregivers in attendance who had a child(ren) in child welfare system, and at risk of conservatorship.
- Parents/caregivers shared concerns about supporting children long term from foster care, and also accessing resources for trauma.
- This event set the stage for expanded caregiver and parent advocacy in rural communities. The enthusiasm and skills built here will directly inform participation in the 6th Annual Advocacy Day at the Capitol in April 2026, alongside PC4W’s six partner organizations.
- Parent/Caregivers expressed a need to prioritize their own self-care and avoid burnout.

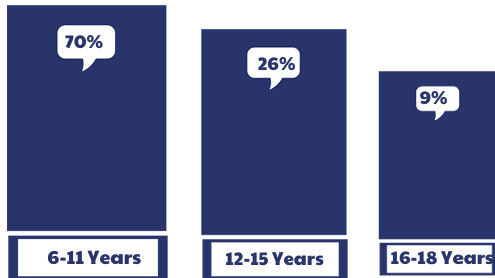
Lassen County Event Photos



Los Angeles County LLA Event  
Family Voice Survey Infographic

# Los Angeles County Parent Voice Survey Data 2025

## Age of Child Requiring /Receiving Mental Health Services



## Relationship to Child\*

- Biological Parent**  
74%
- Relative Caregiver**  
16%
- Adoptive Parent**  
5%

## What concerns do you have about the child/ren you care for regarding their:

### Physical/Neurological Health

- 1) None
- 2) Autism
- 3) Developmental Disabilities

### Mental Health

- 1) Anxiety Disorders
- 2) Depression
- 3) Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

### Behaviors

- 1) Not Following Directions/Inattention
- 2) Problems Making Friends
- 3) Harm to Self/Others

## Which local agencies/individuals need to be trained on your child's needs?\*

<b>Teachers</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Mental Health Providers</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Other School Staff</b>	<b>38%</b>

**52%**  
of respondents believe the physical, neurological, mental health and/or behavioral challenges are because of trauma

\*Respondents selected more than one option

**Are you receiving the SERVICES & SUPPORTS**

**you need for the child/youth you care for?**



*Not sure*

Why?

*I don't know what is available to help me or how to find services*

*Slow process to receive services*

**What services are you missing?**

- 1) Behavioral Support
- 2) Respite
- 3) Family Advocate or Partner



**Parent/Caregiver Training Needs\***

- 1) IEP/Educational Advocacy
- 2) Trauma Informed Care
- 3) Crisis Plan - What To Do In a Crisis Situation

**How do you find out about community resources and supports?\***



**What would you advocate for?\***

- Clear understanding of what services are available and how to get them
- Understanding what I need to better care for my child or youth
- Better supports in school

### Which category best describes your child?

<b>More Than One Race</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>I Don't Want to Answer This Question</b>	<b>21%</b>

### What's your child's sex at birth?

<b>Female</b>	<b>56%</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>31%</b>



*A collaborative project to strengthen the voice of parents and caregivers and improve services and supports for families.*

Contact Information:  
svarner@unitedparents.org  
ph 805-384-1555  
<https://parents caregivers4wellness.org/>

Funding provided by the Behavioral Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission

LLA Los Angeles County Event Flyer



Funded by: Behavioral Health Services Oversight & Accountability Commission

In collaboration with:



**FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIORAL/MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS**

**Friday, September 26 | 8:30 am - 3:00 pm**



**New Season LA**

9001 Paramount Blvd Downey, CA 90240

**Training Topics:**

- Destigmatizing Mental Health
- Project Eli: The Dangers of Social Media
- Immigration, Adaptation and Resilience
- TASK: Guidance, Education, and Support

**Event Includes:**

- Gift Giveaways
- Complimentary breakfast and lunch
- Free childcare

REGISTER HERE



<https://bit.ly/pc4wevent2>

For more information, please contact The Whole Child: ☎ 562-692-0383 ✉ [twcinfo@thewholechild.org](mailto:twcinfo@thewholechild.org)



LLA PC4W Partner Spotlight: The Whole Child

## Parents and Caregivers for Wellness (PC4W) Advocacy and Training



### PARTNER INFORMATION

**Organization Name:** The Whole Child Mental Health & Housing

**Population(s) served:** Children and Youth (0-17) and Adults 18-59 in LA County SPA 7

**Website:** <https://thewholechild.org/>

**Phone:** (562) 692-0383

**Project location:** 10155 Colima Road Whittier, CA 90603

**Social Media:** <https://www.facebook.com/TheWholeChildCA>

### Local Level Activity Statistics

- Total number of event attendees : 61

### LOCAL ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- The Los Angeles County event was held at the New Season LA Church, in Downey, CA.
- We had a training on “Destigmatizing Mental Health”, “Project Eli: The Dangers of Social Media”, “Immigration, Adaptation and Resilience-LA County Office of Immigration Affairs: Know Your Rights”, and “TASK: Guidance, Education & Support (IEP Basics and Advocacy).” Parents gained vital information about mental health stigma, digital safety, and immigrant rights—equipping them to better support their families and communities. We had resource tables and a few guest speakers to talk about services and parent/caregiver tools.
- The inclusion of TASK provided actionable guidance on IEP processes and advocacy for children with special needs.
- Topics on immigration and resilience resonated deeply with participants, reflecting the unique challenges faced by LA County families.
- Several families expressed interest in participating in the upcoming 6th Annual Advocacy Day at the Capitol in April 2026.
- Provided evidence-based education on special education, digital safety, and self-advocacy with informative presentations.
- Offered interactive, culturally informed sessions relevant to Los Angeles’ diverse population.
- Empowered participants with actionable strategies to support their children both at home and in school systems.

### LESSONS LEARNED

- Partnered with The Whole Child to expand outreach to multilingual, immigrant, and underserved families in Los Angeles County. To have successful attendance, we had to expand our outreach efforts across various avenues, including community agencies, current and prospective clients, various school districts, the Department of Mental Health, and child welfare. Event information was shared with these groups via, email, phone calls, and community presentations.
- We learned that parents/caregivers who attended the event are caring for a child(ren) who are: chronically homeless or at risk of homelessness, involved in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system, in the child welfare system, or at risk of conservatorship.
- We learned that parents/caregivers who attended the event are interested in additional training/offerings for group family/parenting classes.
- Parents/Caregivers shared feedback regarding adding stretch breaks, shorter presentations, and adding a Q & A section.
- Building on the success of this event, UP/PC4W and The Whole Child will continue to engage parents in advocacy and training activities leading up to the 6th Annual Advocacy Day at the Capitol in April 2026, ensuring that the voices of Los Angeles County families are represented statewide. We look forward to a successful Advocacy Day with increased parent/caregiver attendance and participation.

Los Angeles County LLA Photos

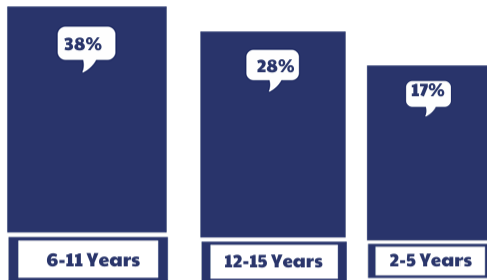


Riverside County LLA Event

Family Voice Survey Infographic

## Riverside County Parent Voice Survey Data 2025

### Age of Child Requiring /Receiving Mental Health Services



### Relationship to Child\*

- Biological Parent**  
71%
- Adoptive Parent**  
25%
- Relative Caregiver**  
16%

#### What concerns do you have about the child/ren you care for regarding their:

<u>Physical/Neurological Health</u>	<u>Mental Health</u>	<u>Behaviors</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Autism</li> <li>2) Developmental Disabilities</li> <li>3) Violence in the home/community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Depression</li> <li>2) Mood Disorders</li> <li>3) Anxiety Disorders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Defiant Behaviors</li> <li>2) Temper Tantrums</li> <li>3) Not Following Directions/Inattention</li> </ul>

### Which local agencies/individuals need to be trained on your child's needs?\*



**82%**  
of respondents believe the physical, neurological, mental health and/or behavioral challenges are because of trauma

\*Respondents selected more than one option

**Are you receiving the SERVICES & SUPPORTS**

**you need for the child/youth you care for?**



Why?

*Slow process to receive services*

*Not enough time in the day to access services/supports*

*I don't know what is available to help me or how to find resources*

**What services are you missing?**

- 1) Trauma Informed Care
- 2) Behavioral Support
- 3) Appropriate Family Therapy

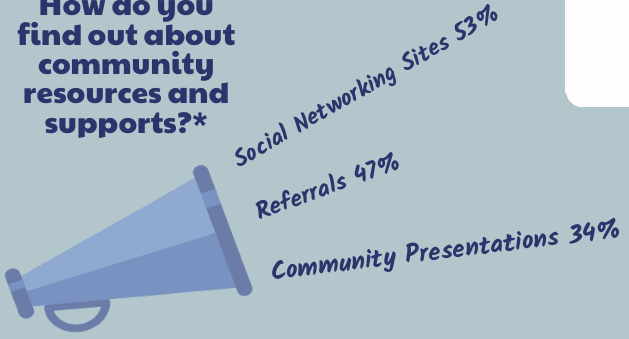
**Parent/Caregiver Training Needs\***

- 1) Advocating for Family/Self
- 2) Bullying/Cyberbullying
- 3) Crisis Plan/What To Do In a Crisis Situation

**What would you advocate for?\***

- Understanding what I need to better care for my child/youth**
- Better supports in school**
- Quality Child Care**

**How do you find out about community resources and supports?\***



### Which category best describes your child?

<b>White/Caucasian</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Black/African American</b>	<b>17%</b>

### What's your child's sex at birth?

<b>Male</b>	<b>53%</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>46%</b>



*A collaborative project to strengthen the voice of parents and caregivers and improve services and supports for families.*

Contact Information:  
svamer@unitedparents.org  
ph 805-384-1555  
<https://parentsandcaregivers4wellness.org/>

Funding provided by the Behavioral Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission



**Supporting and Empowering  
Parents and Caregivers  
In Riverside County**

**For Parents/Caregivers of Children  
with Behavioral/Mental Health Needs**



**WEDNESDAY,  
DECEMBER 17, 2025  
9AM - 2PM**

**REACH OUT  
8300 LIMONITE AVE #G  
JURUPA VALLEY, CA**

**SPANISH INTERPRETATION AVAILABLE**

**EVENT INCLUDES:**

- Complimentary Light Breakfast and Catered Lunch
- Gift Giveaways
- FREE CHILDCARE

*In Collaboration With...*



**REGISTER BY CLICKING HERE**  
**OR GO TO THE WEBSITE:**  
**<https://bit.ly/PC4W1>**  
**OR CALL: 909.571.4964**



Funding provided by:  **Commission for Behavioral Health**

LLA PC4W Partner: African American Health Coalition (AAHC)



## PARTNER INFORMATION

**Organization Name:** African American Health Coalition (AAHC)  
**Populations served:** African American consumers, family members, youth, TAY, elders, children, disabled veterans and young adults.  
**Website:** <https://theaamhc.org/>  
**Phone:** (909) 571 - 4964  
**Organization Location:** San Bernardino, CA

## LOCAL ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- The Riverside County event was held at the Jarupa Valley Resource Center in, in Jarupa Valley, CA. The Jarupa Valley Resource Center provides services in the following areas: Housing & Financial Education, Workforce Development, Youth Education, Family Health & Wellness, Violence Prevention & Support, Substance Use Prevention, Legal & Translation Services, and Local Government & Agencies.
- We had a training on “The Dangers of Social Media”, “Project ELI”, and information on fentanyl. We had resource tables and a few guest speakers to talk about services and parent/caregiver tools.
- Topics on immigration and resilience resonated deeply with participants, reflecting the unique challenges faced by Riverside County families.
- Several families expressed interest in participating in the upcoming 6th Annual Advocacy Day at the Capitol in April 2026.
- Empowered participants with actionable strategies to support their children both at home and in school systems.
- AAHC continues to expand partnerships with PC4W partners, caregivers, community and family resource centers, and local media outlets throughout Riverside County.
- Advocated for African American mental health awareness, playing a significant role in promoting policy changes and eliminating barriers to care.
- A complimentary light breakfast and catered lunch were provided. Gift giveaways and free childcare were also provided.

## Local Level Activity Statistics

- **Total number of event attendees:** 33

## LESSONS LEARNED

- We learned that parents/caregivers who attended the event hear about these events through word of mouth.
- We learned that parents/caregivers who attended the event are interested in additional training/offerings for information on IEPs and special needs services.
- Parents/Caregivers shared feedback regarding adding stretch breaks, shorter presentations and adding a Q & A section.
- Building on the success of this event, UP/PC4W and The Whole Child will continue to engage parents in advocacy and training activities leading up to the 6th Annual Advocacy Day at the Capitol in April 2026, ensuring that the voices of Los Angeles County families are represented statewide. We look forward to a successful Advocacy Day with increased parent/caregiver attendance and participation.

Riverside County LLA Photos



## Parents and Caregivers for Wellness (PC4W) Advocacy Day at the Capitol

### *Overview*

United Parents/PC4W hosted the United Parents Presents: Parents and Caregivers for Wellness (PC4W) Advocacy Day at the Capitol on April 22nd. A total of 88 attendees were welcomed at The Hyatt Regency Hotel in Downtown Sacramento, each having the opportunity to meet with different Assemblymembers and Senators.

### *Event Recap*

We hosted our 5th Annual Advocacy Day at the Capitol in Sacramento on April 22, 2025, for a total of 88 attendees. The event was held at The Hyatt Regency Hotel in Downtown Sacramento and began with breakfast, followed by a warm welcome from United Parents Executive Director, Melissa Hannah. First-time attendees found the event inspiring and eye-opening and expressed newfound passion and confidence in continuing their advocacy efforts. Overall, the event facilitated strong community building and networking among parents. The connections made during the event will likely support ongoing collaboration and mutual support in advocacy efforts.



Watch our video featuring highlights from this year's advocacy day along with other local level events that took place this past year:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwQ2AmcOvvA>



**5th Annual**



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# United Parents Presents: Parents and Caregivers for Wellness Advocacy Day at the Capitol

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Parents/Caregivers have the opportunity to advocate for children's mental health rights with state representatives in Sacramento.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025**

**Hyatt Regency Hotel  
1201 L Street ~ 15th Floor  
Downtown Sacramento**

**7:45am – 6pm**

**Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner Provided**

**Parents and Caregivers will:**  
**Meet with Local District Representatives**  
**Advocate for Children's Mental Health**  
**Network with Like-Minded Parents and Caregivers**  
**Connect and Share Stories**

***\*Spanish Interpretation will be available\****

**Funding provided by:**



## *Themes*

### Introductions and Setting the Stage

United Parents and Caregivers for Wellness hosted its 5th Annual Advocacy Day at the Capitol on April 22, 2025, in Sacramento. The event brought together 88 parents, caregivers, and advocates (out of 100 registrants, with an additional waitlist) for a day of learning, connection, and legislative advocacy focused on improving mental health supports for children and families.

The day began at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Downtown Sacramento with a catered breakfast and opening remarks from Melissa Hannah, who welcomed attendees and acknowledged the Indigenous communities whose land the event took place on. Melissa emphasized the important role parents and caregivers play as natural advocates for their children and validated the emotional experiences many families face when navigating systems such as schools and the IEP process.

Participants were oriented to the day's agenda and the goals of Advocacy Day, which focused on strengthening parents' advocacy skills and preparing them to meet with legislators to discuss the importance of children's mental health policies.

- Parents' introductions and reasons for attendance

Throughout the morning, parents and caregivers introduced themselves and shared why they chose to attend Advocacy Day. Many participants expressed a desire to advocate for their children and ensure that policymakers understand the challenges families face when navigating mental health systems, education systems, and community services.

Several parents described attending for the first time and shared that they wanted to learn how to advocate effectively so that other children and families would not face the same barriers they experienced. Others returned after attending previous Advocacy Days and were eager to continue building relationships and strengthening their advocacy efforts.

- Overview of the program's support

Participants were reminded that Advocacy Day is part of a broader effort to support parents and caregivers in becoming effective advocates for children's mental health and well-being. The event emphasized building knowledge, confidence, and community among parents while encouraging engagement with policymakers on issues that impact families across California.

- Explanation of materials and agenda

Participants received materials to guide them through the day's activities, including information about legislative advocacy, talking points, and guidance for legislative visits. The agenda included presentations, advocacy training, opportunities for networking, and scheduled meetings with legislative offices at the California State Capitol.

#### Icebreakers and Initial Engagement

- Icebreaker activity with each table sharing a word that described their feelings
- Words shared included: happy, anxious, inspired, excited, fantastic, great, optimistic, hopeful, exhausted
- This activity helped participants recognize the shared emotions in the room and created a sense of connection among attendees who were beginning their advocacy journey together.

#### Parent Stories and Advocacy

- Parents shared personal stories throughout the day
- Stories highlighted challenges in the foster care system, personal experiences with advocacy, and the impact of legislation on their lives
- Throughout the day, parents and caregivers shared powerful personal stories about their experiences navigating systems of care for their children. These stories highlighted the real-life challenges families face, including barriers within education systems, experiences advocating for services, and the emotional toll of supporting children with mental health or developmental needs.
- Some parents shared stories related to autism, trauma, disabilities, and the difficulties families encounter when trying to obtain appropriate services and supports. Others discussed the importance of creating stronger systems that recognize and respond to children's mental health needs earlier in life.
- These personal narratives became a central part of the advocacy effort, helping policymakers better understand the lived experiences of families across the state.

#### Educational Sessions and Materials

- The event included several educational sessions designed to prepare parents for legislative advocacy. One highlight was a dynamic advocacy presentation led by Ipani Lockert, who encouraged participants to reflect on the question, "What are you willing to advocate for?" Through interactive exercises, attendees discussed issues such as support for caregivers, early childhood mental health interventions, equitable services, and school-based supports.

- Advocacy training was also provided by partners from the California Alliance of Caregivers, who offered guidance on how to prepare for legislative visits. Through presentations and role-play exercises, participants practiced telling their stories, focusing their message on specific policy goals, and making clear requests to legislators and their staff.
- These sessions helped participants feel more confident and prepared before meeting with policymakers later in the day.

### Cultural and Linguistic Inclusion

- The event highlighted the importance of ensuring advocacy spaces are inclusive and accessible to all families. Spanish-speaking parents participated in the event and shared their stories in Spanish during discussions and reflections. Their participation reinforced the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate resources, including materials available in Spanish and other languages.
- Participants also discussed how systemic barriers, including implicit bias and inequities within systems of care, can impact families' ability to access mental health services and support for their children.

### Legislative Discussions

- A key focus of the day was SB 531, a bill introduced by Senator Susan Rubio that would expand mental health education in schools from grades 7–12 to include grades 1–6.
- Senator Rubio joined the event and spoke about the importance of early mental health education and how providing students, teachers, and families with the right tools can help address mental health challenges earlier in life. She shared insights from her background as a public-school teacher and emphasized the importance of ensuring mental health education is age-appropriate and inclusive of parents and caregivers.
- Participants learned about the legislative process and the importance of advocating for policies that support mental health education and services for children and youth.

### Advocacy in Action

- After completing the morning sessions and a working lunch, parents and caregivers traveled to the California State Capitol to meet with legislators and legislative aides.
- During these meetings, participants shared their personal stories and explained why legislation like SB 531 is important for families across

California. Caregivers spoke about the challenges their children face and the need for stronger mental health education and support systems within schools and communities.

- Many participants described the meetings as both emotional and empowering. Legislative staff members listened attentively and took notes while parents shared their experiences, reinforcing that personal stories can be a powerful tool for influencing policy decisions.
- For many attendees, especially first-time participants, this experience was transformative and helped them realize the impact their voices can have in shaping public policy.

### Feedback and Reflections

- At the end of the day, participants reconvened for a report-out and reflection session, where they shared how their legislative visits went and what they learned from the experience.
- This session became one of the most powerful moments of the event, as parents openly discussed their personal stories, the emotional impact of the advocacy process, and their hopes for improving mental health systems for children and families. Many participants expressed that they felt heard and valued by the legislators and aides they met with.
- Post-event evaluation results indicated very strong satisfaction with the event:
  - 1) 100% of participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the overall event
  - 2) 90% reported gaining tools to support children with mental health needs
- Participants also emphasized the value of connecting with other parents and caregivers who share similar experiences.

### Future Opportunities and Impact

- Advocacy Day helped inspire many parents and caregivers to continue engaging in advocacy efforts beyond the event. Several first-time participants reported feeling more confident and motivated to speak up for their children and communities.
- The event also fostered strong community building and networking among parents, caregivers, and partner organizations. These relationships are expected to support ongoing advocacy efforts and create opportunities for continued collaboration.
- Overall, the 5th Annual Advocacy Day successfully empowered parents and caregivers to use their voices to advocate for policies that support

children's mental health and wellbeing, while building a stronger community of advocates committed to improving systems of care across California.

### *Quotes/Stories*

- *“This was my first time and I feel like I took so many notes and plan on looking more things up and learning more even past today and keep advocating for mental health services for our children. Prevention measures are what will stick with me, just like advocating for early intervention services for kids with disabilities, I will now be an advocate for prevention services for mental health.”*
- *“This was an empowering event, and I am so grateful to be part of it.”*
- *“Parents and Caregivers for Wellness always treats its participants with so much care and respect. I always leave events feeling inspired and empowered.”*
- *“This advocacy day is so empowering and positive. We are all leaving with more confidence and purpose. Thank you all.”*
- *“Advocacy for children's mental health is an important pillar in shaping the outcomes of future generations.”*
- *“Investing in preventive behavioral health care needs is never wasted. Collectively, we can do more than we could alone- and every story matters.”*

### *Parent Success Story*

A mother attended our statewide advocacy day event for the first time as a guest of one of our PC4W partners. While there, she heard powerful stories from other parents navigating similar challenges in accessing services for their children. Encouraged to know she was not alone, she gained insight into the advocacy process, met with two representatives from her district, and shared her story about why AB 2711 and AB 2173 were so important to her.

This experience sparked a deeper interest in advocacy, inspiring her to explore becoming a parent peer support staff after seeing other parents in that role. Her journey highlights the transformative impact of statewide advocacy events like ours, which not only empower parents but also strengthen the behavioral health workforce for children, youth, and families by fostering new leaders in peer-led services.

### *Post Event Reflection*

Several parents reported positive interactions with lawmakers and their aides. These meetings were characterized by active listening, empathy, and a genuine interest in the parents' stories. The legislators' openness to discussing the bills and considering

parents' perspectives was a highlight. The event successfully created a welcoming atmosphere. Participants appreciated the efforts to make everyone feel relaxed and included, which was crucial for open discussions and effective advocacy. The reminder of why they were there, and the importance of their voices added a motivational element that resonated deeply with many parents. The supportive environment and the opportunity to connect with others passion about advocacy left a strong impression. Many expressed newfound passion and confidence in continuing their advocacy efforts. One first-timer's reflection on feeling overwhelmed yet empowered by the experience underscored the event's impact.

The event provided recognition and encouragement for parents' efforts. Many parents expressed feelings of empowerment and support in their advocacy journey. The acknowledgment of their emotional and personal investment in the issues was crucial in validating their efforts and motivating continued engagement.

The event facilitated strong community building and networking among parents. Attendees valued the chance to meet others with similar experiences and goals, fostering a sense of solidarity and shared purpose. The connections made during the event will likely support ongoing collaboration and mutual support in advocacy efforts.

### *Recommendations for next year's Statewide Advocacy Day Event*

#### Strengthening Advocacy Skills

- Include more educational sessions on legislative processes and advocacy strategies.
- Develop interactive materials that simplify the understanding of complex legislative topics.
- Devote more time to role play and practicing prior to the event

#### Expanding Peer Support:

- Explore opportunities to incorporate peer partners in advocacy and support roles within the community
- Develop programs that leverage the experience of peer advocates to support both parents and youth

#### Future Advocacy Initiatives:

- Identify and support new advocacy initiatives inspired by participants' experiences and stories
- Encourage attendees to stay engaged and support each other in ongoing and future advocacy efforts

ADVOCACY DAY 2025 PHOTOS



## **Mental Health Statewide Trends**

### *Integrating Whole-Person Care with an Equity Lens*

Statewide initiatives such as Prop 1, CalAIM, CYBHI, and BH-CONNECT are driving the integration of physical and behavioral health services, ensuring individuals receive care through a whole-person approach with an equity lens. As these initiatives continue to evolve, local implementation will remain a key focus in the coming year.

### *Addressing Social Determinants of Health*

Supporting mental health goes beyond clinics and hospitals; it is woven into our daily lives and communities. Common-sense solutions, such as respite care for overwhelmed caregivers, have proven to be effective. As Ventura County's only mental health respite provider, United Parents continues to advocate for expanded support services that help families manage stress and improve overall well-being.

### *Decriminalizing Behavioral Health Conditions Through Advocacy*

Legislative efforts, such as AB 2711 and AB 2173, are crucial in shifting the approach to early substance use disorders (SUD) and behavioral health conditions from punishment to treatment. Advocacy at the state level remains essential to ensuring schools connect children, youth, and families to treatment rather than disciplinary action, decriminalizing behavioral health conditions and increasing access to care.

### *Schools as Hubs for Mental Health Support*

Grant opportunities such as through the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) have allowed school districts and counties to expand evidence-based and community-defined practices (EBPs/CDEPs), increasing mental health services for students. Recognizing and addressing mental health conditions in schools also offers the opportunity to strengthen partnerships with parents and caregivers, helping to secure better accommodation in IEPs, and reinforcing the importance of advocacy for student support services.

### *Expanding the Role of Peer Support in Behavioral Health*

As peer support services increasingly become a critical part of behavioral health care, peer-led organizations like United Parents bring invaluable expertise that must be recognized and prioritized. The state's certification for peer support staff is a step forward, but true progress requires deep integration of peer-led organizations in service delivery, leadership, and policy decisions. **United Parents, founded by parents, for parents**, has long been at the forefront of this work, ensuring that families receive support from those who truly understand their experiences. As peer support expands,

leaders must actively engage and invest in peer-led organizations, ensuring they have a central role in shaping the future of behavioral health services.

### *Recognizing Community-Defined Practices as Essential to Healthcare*

At the state level, there is growing acknowledgment that community-defined evidence-based practices (CDEPs) must be integrated into healthcare systems to ensure services are culturally responsive and effective. Expanding these approaches will remain a priority in advancing equitable, community-driven mental health care across California.

## **Emerging Trends**

### *Continued commitment to supporting immigrant families*

We continue to stand alongside immigrant families, not as saviors, but as partners in the fight for dignity, security, and justice. Our co-powerment approach guides our work, ensuring that every parent and caregiver has not only the resources they need but also the power to shape the policies, protections, and services that impact their families.

A key focus will be ensuring immigrant families are informed of their rights, providing multilingual education on constitutional protections, what to do if approached by ICE, and how to navigate interactions in schools, workplaces, and healthcare settings. We are committed to sharing information in real-time through trusted community networks, ensuring that families can both access and contribute to critical updates about enforcement actions that may impact their safety.

We will also strengthen privacy protections at our local level and statewide advocacy events, clearly marking designated private vs. public spaces to help families understand where their privacy is legally safeguarded. By training staff to uphold confidentiality and ensuring that service locations provide safe, welcoming environments, we reaffirm our commitment to protecting the dignity and security of those we serve.

Through these efforts, we do more than provide support. We honor the resilience of immigrant families, amplify their voices, and work alongside them to create lasting, systemic change. Together, we build a future where every family, regardless of immigration status, can flourish in a community that recognizes their rights, respects their contributions, and values their leadership.

### *Continued commitment to health equity*

As DEI initiatives face increasing challenges, our commitment to health equity remains unwavering. Equity is not a trend, it is a necessity to ensure that all individuals, regardless of background, have access to quality care. We will continue to center lived experiences, disaggregate data to address disparities, ensure culturally responsive services, and advocate for systemic change. Even as policies shift, we remain steadfast

in building a healthcare system rooted in fairness, dignity, and shared power, ensuring that every individual can flourish in a society that values their well-being.

### **Parent/Caregiver Testimonials**

Melissa was a client of The Whole Child when she was a kid and teen growing up in Whittier. Now she sees her own child, Ruben, benefitting from the same kind of support that she received from The Whole Child back then.

“I was having some issues in elementary school and my mom found The Whole Child. I’m 27 years old and it’s still really good for me. Now my son is in therapy and he’s blossomed. The Whole Child is just amazing.”.

*-Melissa (mother) and Ruben (son), Los Angeles County*

“The event was great. I thought it was great that we had childcare so both my husband and I could attend. Usually, I only attend these types of events because he stays home with our children so I can get the information, but since you offered childcare, it was great that my husband could also attend so he hears directly how he can help his daughters and help himself too. The only thing that made me sad was that not a lot of parents attended. I wish more parents would attend these types of things so that they can get help too.” (Translated from Spanish)

*-Parent who attended Marin County Event, Marin County*

After the visits, I sensed a strong energy from the parents in my group (there were 4) and as we walked back to the hotel, I encouraged parents to speak about their experience that day and one theme rang throughout all their sharing, which was connection and resilience. All 4 parents shared that they were still in “shock” to find themselves at the Capital advocating. They shared that they had come to Side by Side many years ago seeking help and treatment for their respective children and at that time, they could not see a positive outcome. But that day at the Capital, they were able to reflect on their own resilience and how change can happen. This led to conversation on their hope that more parents, particularly Latinx parents, will participate in events like Advocacy Day at the Capital.

*-Parent from Marin County, Advocacy Day at the Capital*

## Continuous Quality Improvement: Feedback Sessions with LLAs – Recap of 2025

How does your agency receive the latest information on behavioral health state policies, bills, trends, events, etc.? Choose all that apply.

- CA Alliance of Child and family services; United Parents; BMH Dept of Mental Health LA County
- United Parents Newsletter; Local community meetings ; Social Media Platforms (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, X, etc.)
- Another agency or organization ; Local community meetings ; Social Media Platforms (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, X, etc.); Professional Membership Network; Word of Mouth ;
- Word of Mouth ; Professional Membership Network; Social Media Platforms (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, X, etc.); Local community meetings ; Another agency or organization ; United Parents Newsletter; Your internal newsletter; Mental Health Service Act (County) Commissioner's Meetings presentations on community resources/services (SB & Riverside County), Loma Linda University, attendance in stakeholder meetings (bring parent/caregiver to meetings), depts come to present to families
- Another agency or organization ; Professional Membership Network; Word of Mouth ; local community outreach, California Alliance (professional network), CEO is also involved in community, senior leadership are part of other groups, weekly meetings (whats new? new news? Then share with agency)

Within the last year, what was your agency's greatest success?

- Opened a family shelter, in first year of operations, for children and families, ICMS intensive case management, first floor has clinicians, case management, parenting classes, nutrition program, building is funded, not not operative costs. Opened in July 2025
- Training in Lassen County, opened door for professionals, developed new referrals
- Been providing stakeholder feedback on the new foster care tiered rate structure, set to start 7/2027. massive program that will be implemented, feedback on the creation of the new budget, proposed by CDSS, CA Dept of Social Services in 2024,
- James Ramos, assembly member & United Parents Support, the bill was passed
- 1) Credentialed through the Joint Commission (global organization) quality improvement and patient safety, meeting a certain level of quality care, standards in place for providers (safe and high quality care), very proud of this, an intensive audit, June or July 2025, audit is done every 2-3 yrs, prepped significant months with all policies and procedures, audit direct services, HR, as well as

building/structures. (4-day process), correctible findings, and joint agency work effort 2) Trauma-informed: agency-wide training Ken Hardy, agency and staff, continue learnings into weekly and monthly meetings, this is now more intentional and done internally 2) Sustainability: driving force for services, keeps services going, understanding contracts, services, and advocacy for sustainable contracts and services, change since SBS inception (100 yrs ago) started as an orphanage 3) Independent living program (Alameda County) identified youth foster/SBS- evolve, expand,

Where do you host most of your events or programs? Choose all that apply.

- Your agency's site; Local schools; Community Centers/Parks; Partner Sites ;County Owned Sites ;City Owned Sites ;Churches (UP)
- Local schools; Community Centers/Parks; Partner Sites
- Community Centers/Parks; California Endowment Sites (Sacramento, LA, Oakland), churches ;
- Your agency's site; Local schools; Community Centers/Parks; Partner Sites; County Owned Sites ; City Owned Sites; Barber shops, beauty salons, civic organizations, universities, hospitals, police department (law enforcement), churches, state legislature, city council, county board of supervisors (SB & Riverside County)
- Your agency's site; Community Centers/Parks; Partner Sites ;County Owned Sites ;main campus, regional events held within partner sites

Within the last year, what has been your biggest challenge with parent/caregiver participation? Choose all that apply.

- Schedules, transportation (no car, no funds for gas)
- Low attendance; Parent/Caregiver transportation; Lack of childcare; Lack of sustainable funding; incentives needed to increase attendance, as a parent, is it worth attending? (food?); Language barriers
- Low attendance; Lack of sustainable funding ;Parent/Caregiver schedules ;Parent/Caregiver transportation; Lack of childcare
- Immigrants are fearful of going out into the community, which impacts attendance, amongst marginalized communities, across all ethnic groups, Caribbean, Nigerian, Kenyan, Ghanan, Haitians, and more!
- Low attendance; Parent/Caregiver schedules; Parent/Caregiver transportation; Lack of childcare ; Language barriers; low attendance: based on different factor, language is a barrier, hard to hire bilingual staff, especially clinical, foundations/grant level: funding, what is funded? especially with current administration, language DEI, agency serves majority of marginalized groups, created huge impact, North Bay: school budget impacts, deficits, cutting back on

their contracts, impacted services, scale back, or no contract, impacts youth that don't have insurance, especially social and emotional support

Are there other opportunities that PC4W as a collective can better advocate for your community and for your client service population? If so, tell us more.

- budget cuts, Cal Fresh healthy living (advocacy) attending meetings, grant opportunities, other sources of funding, children's nutrition, 4 pillars, (nutrition pillar is fully funded by this program), LA county (providers have been looking at advocacy efforts, any opportunities as a whole county), share a need, took many years for collaborations and partnerships, food boxes, food distributions, little pots of money, whole system was built on minimal funds
- 1) Having trainings available, and state collaboration, events that can be inclusive and fun, but also include trainings and resources 2) support groups are great; online support group every week provided since May 2020, keep trying even attendance is low, offer it virtually and in person 3) Support partners for parent support person services, billing as community health care worker 4) PC4W can support partners as a main contact for new information and updates
- "so far they have done a terrific job. Anything we ask, they have been supportive, everything that we mention, they consider it and provide recommendations. UP has been the best organization I have worked with."
- 1) Potential opportunity to better advocate for sustainable cultural practices, cultural support (reduce stigma, can deter parents/caregivers) 2) As a collective, advocating collectively, sharing information about resources, providing resources for all regions, a "resource hub" that is centralized

Within the last year, what types of challenges have your clients seen in their community when it comes to accessing services for children? Choose all that apply.

- transportation, field visits available, schedule (takes longer to get them into the programs, intake), fear about ice (other) shift to home visits or virtual, (deliver groceries, case managers delivering groceries)
- Appointment availability; Stigma; Parent/Caregiver Transportation; Parent/Caregiver schedules; Discrimination; Not enough promotion/outreach about available services ;Language barriers; Cost of services; traveling out of state to access services, and lack of services during summer break through school district, cannot afford therapist hourly rate, sometimes there are online services but limited
- Parent/Caregiver Transportation; Parent/Caregiver schedules; Appointment availability ;Not enough promotion/outreach about available services; Cost of services

- Discrimination ; Stigma; teacher/school supports and advocating for wellness centers on site, communication is started and sharing challenges, build parent volunteers
- Parent/Caregiver Transportation; Parent/Caregiver schedules; Stigma; Discrimination; Appointment availability; Not enough promotion/outreach about available services ; Language barriers; Cost of services; We have seen an increase in fear, contributing to access of services, Latinx community, state/community events, especially if they do not know who organization is, fear of deportation, fear of being "set up", concern even among those who have legal documentation, surveys show that this has keeps them from accessing services

I believe United Parents has helped our agency succeed in the following areas:

Greater parent/caregiver engagement into our programs and services - 100% Very Helpful

Helping us get connected with more local resources for our clients – 1 Neutral, 2 Fairly Helpful, 2 Very Helpful

Making more meaningful connections with our local decision-makers – 2 Fairly Helpful, 3 Very Helpful

Learning more about the state's policy landscape as it relates to mental health services for children, youth, and families – 100% Very Helpful

Becoming a more impactful advocate within our own community – 100% Very Helpful

How can United Parents improve the partnership with your agency?

- For future, continued partnership, sustainable funding, caregivers are invested in Advocacy Day, Alumni group of text group messages, and ambassadors helping others at the event
- Partnership has been great! Nothing at this time to add
- looking for mentorship for parent support, enhance care management, parent support care programs
- Allowing us to look for different counties that are in need of services/resources. (focus on southern counties) San Diego, etc to be involved
- 1) It has been a great partnership, 2nd year working with UP, hoping to continue the partnership. In my second year, there is more understanding of what can be done and what the partnership means. Partnership has encouraged parents to

advocate on the state level. Share with parents their "voice matters!" All parents who attended Advocacy day last year, were all Spanish-speaking. It was neat to see parents sharing their voice in their native language with representatives who are also Spanish-speaking. Able to share back with staff at their agency 2) Only a few staff get to attend advocacy day. Is there a way to be able to share experience with staff, share impact, video? other ideas? visually share?

Are there any opportunities to improve the PC4W Meetings?

- not experts on bills, but maybe a more in-depth description of new bills coming up. Resources or flyers, nothing at this time
- incorporate information about policies, but overall, really good meetings
- Having partners take turns sharing best practice/program or service, something that they have learned about working with parents/something in their work
- Learning more about what each provider is doing new, and having an intimate conversation about the services about the status of each organization
- No, they are pretty focused driven, nothing comes to mind

Additional Comments

- Even though we don't know what the future looks like, we would like to continue to partner, advocacy, agency, nice opportunity to grow programs, grant writer new to the team, excited for the future
- Advocacy Day is wonderful, a great opportunity for parents to learn more about how policies work, and parents/caregivers are a part of the change for future policies
- Concern: about the budget and funding that is so vital for the parents. What does the forecast look like? This funding is vital, conducive, and important for parents and families, cost more in the long run due to the vulnerability of funding.
- Parent involvement: parent voice within budget meetings, start a conversation about advocacy for funding (sustainable), currently not something that is available to parents, advocate to the appropriate committee to create sustainable funding

## **Key Insights and Practical Next Steps**

### **INSIGHT 1 – Accessibility**

Ongoing. Language Barriers, lack of trauma-informed trained professionals, cost of services, services not available in parents/caregivers' city, town, county, or state. Virtual vs. in-person services.

### **INSIGHT 2 – Fear**

Ongoing. Offering safe spaces. Parents/Caregivers feel like they will be “set up” by receiving services for their families. Uncertainty, unease, and families don't leave their homes due to feeling unsafe. Families not receiving resources to avoid being detained or deported.

### **INSIGHT 3 – Basic Needs**

Ongoing. Lack of food, housing, employment, transportation, etc. Parents/caregivers do not qualify for free or subsidized services or cash aid.

### **INSIGHT 4 – Parent/Caregiver Care**

Newly identified. Lack of respite services for families, behavioral health needs for parents/caregivers, support groups need to be available, virtual and in-person, in multiple languages, when parents are not working, or taking care of child(ren). Burnout present, emotional and physical needs of parents/caregivers are not being met.

### **INSIGHT 5 – Training Needs**

Ongoing. Increase in training for teachers, other school staff, mental health providers, the public, and county leaders/elected officials. Education and training, for these groups, are urgently needed. This has been expressed by parents/caregivers who live with firsthand experiences in systems that are lacking, outdated, and slow due to high turnover, budget cuts, and a lack of resources for the number of families who need services.

Next Steps...

## **COMMUNITY INPUT**

Invite California State Representatives/Legislatures, County Leaders to all events, trainings, and Advocacy Day. Conduct Press/Media Releases for statewide events, including State Advocacy Day. Consider reaching out to potential sponsors/donors to sponsor parent/caregiver travel costs for Advocacy Day.

Develop Cohort community meetings/committees to include Alumni from our programs, community volunteers, community leaders, interns, etc., as an extension of PC4W, and include interested partners, parents, and caregivers.

Continue ongoing activities:

- Needs Assessments
- Parent Voice Survey
- Post Evaluation Surveys
- LLA Feedback – Annual (CQI)
- Community Meetings

## WORD OF MOUTH

One Client Model: one client is all clients. One client's experience and interaction with United Parents/Partners is a reflection of all future interactions. According to our Parent Voice Survey, over 50% of parents/caregivers learn about our events through Word of Mouth. This reflects the strong conversation that is happening behind the scenes amongst families, friends, and communities. We must increase cultural competence among staff, teams, and our leaders. We must increase trauma informed trainings and language at our workplace, partner sites, and churches. Ongoing efforts in gathering parent/caregiver feedback is key through completing surveys, reflecting on service satisfaction, and increasing referrals through our current partners, paying close attention to constructive feedback and raised concerns that may not be prioritized otherwise.

## COMMITMENT

Create a PC4W honor code that demands accountability and responsibility for helping families in need, including clear expectations. Incorporate a Plan B,C, & D for a course of action for families in crisis.

## SAFE SPACES

Introduce a statewide campaign that will reassure families that the services/programs that they are accessing are SAFE SPACES during the current immigration policies, legal challenges, and continuous threats to the health and safety of American families. Conduct regular assessments for immigration climate and provide thorough access to hotlines, training, workshops for immigration policies, legal support, and protections.

## IMPACT

Consider the current student-to-teacher ratio in education systems. Consider the current client-to-behavioral health professional ratio. Consider the current patient-to-doctor ratio. Overrun, burnout, and turnover are among the most basic needs for children and families. Funding for basic needs such as therapy, counseling, and education creates

structure for families who are currently struggling in their homes and family life. A disruption of routine can seriously harm a child who relies on these services to thrive in an already broken system due to budget cuts, turnover, and an impacted behavioral health system. Consider the needs of all Priority Populations.

### *Summary*

#### Top Concerns for Families Raising Children with Mental Health Needs

- Lack of Mental Health Education – Many families are uninformed about mental health conditions, making it difficult for them to access or advocate for services.
- Cultural Stigma and Language Barriers – Particularly in Latino communities, mental health issues are often misunderstood or dismissed, creating shame and reluctance to seek help. Language barriers further limit access to education, services, and advocacy tools.
- Service Delays and Provider Shortages – Families report long wait times due to a lack of mental health professionals, leaving children without the timely care they need.

#### Existing Support That Has Been Helpful

- Basic Needs Assistance – Food, shelter, and clothing have been crucial for families in need.
- Respite Care and Self-Care Resources – Caregivers benefit from having time to recharge.
- Parent Partners and Peer Support Networks – Families find empowerment through advocacy training, parenting classes, and support groups.

#### Unmet Needs and Gaps in Services

- Severe Shortages of Mental Health Providers – Parents frequently report that their child’s clinician has left their position, leading to months-long gaps in services.
- Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services – There is a critical need for mental health education and training in Spanish to break stigma and improve access for Latino families.
- Drop-in Centers for Families – More safe spaces for vulnerable communities are needed, including those with children who are chronically homeless or at risk of homelessness, involved in or at risk of entering the justice system, reentering the

community from prison or jail, in the child welfare system, at risk of conservatorship, and/or at risk of institutionalization

### Training and Policy Recommendations

- Reduce Wait Times for Mental Health Services – Policies must address clinician shortages and improve hiring/retention.
- Expand Cultural Competency Training – Mental health professionals need deeper understanding of the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse communities.
- Increase Trauma-Informed and Specialized Training – Parent partners, educators, social workers, and clinicians should receive more training on working with high-risk youth, reducing stigma, and serving families equitably.

### Advice for Other Parents and Caregivers:

- "Don't be afraid to create a community for yourself and your children. Be the voice your child needs." – Many parents don't realize how many services exist to support them.
- "Our fight is for our future generations and to heal the past." – Families are encouraged to ask for help and connect with organizations like United Parents.
- "We can mold the world. We can shape & influence society." & "Unidos nuestras voces se escucharán más fuerte" – Knowing your rights and pushing for the right services can make a difference in a child's mental health journey.

### Findings

These interviews emphasize critical gaps in access, awareness, and culturally competent care, reinforcing the need for:

- More mental health education and advocacy training for parents.
- Expanded access to bilingual and culturally responsive services.
- Stronger policies to address provider shortages and long waitlists.
- Increase trauma-informed and stigma-reducing trainings for professionals.