

Birth to 3 Program Public Outreach Campaign Online Family Input Session Summary

Background

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) wants every parent or caregiver of a child with a delay or disability to be aware of the Birth to 3 Program, understand the benefits of early intervention, and know how to access the program. To do this, DHS is working on a [public outreach campaign](#) for spring 2021 that will include materials and other resources to improve and expand the reach of the Birth to 3 Program.

About the input sessions

DHS hosted two online family input sessions where families had the chance to learn about the Birth to 3 Program, learn about the outreach campaign, and share their thoughts and ideas in their own words. DHS held the first session on Tuesday, March 9, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. and the second session on Thursday, March 11, 2021, at 6 p.m.

Families were asked the following questions:

- How would you describe the Birth to 3 Program to your friends or family members?
- What made you decide if you should enroll in the Birth to 3 Program? What impacted your decision to say “yes” or “no”?
- Is there anything you wish would have been done or said differently when you were first told about early intervention or the Birth to 3 Program? What information or explanations would have helped you with this decision?
- What do you think families need to know to make informed choices about early intervention that should be added to our outreach materials?
- Is there anything you would like to add or want us to know?

Feedback from families

DHS heard a lot of valuable feedback from families during the online input sessions. These thoughts and ideas are helping shape the public outreach campaign and improve the Birth to 3 program.

Families shared with DHS that:

- The program is able to identify developmental concerns and has had meaningful outcomes for children. One parent described the impact of hearing their child speak their first words as a result of program intervention. Another parent described a positive experience that started with the person who answered their initial call and explained the program, made sure they understood all options, and answered questions.
- The program needs to do a better job of reaching all referral sources and agencies with consistent messaging to ensure they know about early intervention. This will help make sure families easily find information about the program.

- It is best for the program to bring the information right to families at doctor's appointments, hospitals, community gathering spots, and other places families spend time. Families valued services in their home and community locations.
- Program cost is not widely understood, and some referral sources do not understand it enough to explain it to families. Information about program costs should be shared right away so families can understand their next steps.
- The importance of acting early when noticing signs of delays or disabilities is a crucial message for both families and providers. The benefits of acting early in understanding a child's development and addressing needs as soon as possible is also important to know and understand.
- There is some inconsistency with what they are experiencing in programs across all 72 counties, including how staff engage and talk with families. Ideas about why this happens included not having the same resources in every county and each county running their local Birth to 3 Program slightly differently.
- The program does not always adequately serve children with higher levels of need. How often and what kind of services offered to families are not individualized or often enough to meet the needs of children with more significant delays or complex disabilities.