



**Children's Services Council  
Palm Beach County**  
Focus Group Report  
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RESEARCH



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## Purpose of Research

This research was designed to determine the following of Palm Beach County parents with children age 0-5:

- Identify needs and gaps in services for mothers, families and children with a specific goal to enhance the Healthy Beginnings plan
- Needs, opportunities, gaps in services for families, children and pregnant women
- Opportunities and services families want most
- Barriers to finding and using available services
- Opportunities/needs to improve health of women before, during and after pregnancy
- What opportunities/needs do children aged 0-5 have to ensure they are safe, healthy, and ready for kindergarten
- What are the opportunities/needs for youth & teenagers

## Methodology

Twelve (12) focus groups were conducted across Palm Beach County. Collectively, groups were representative of Palm Beach County parents who require services, but homogenous within groups to promote synergy of discussion. Ten (10) groups were with women and two with men, as women are more likely to require services. The target population and location (in parentheses) for all 12 groups were as follows:

- Group 1: Haitian women with children age 0-5 (Boynton Beach)
- Group 2: Women with children age 0-5 (Delray Beach)
- Group 3: Hispanic women with children age 0-5 (Belle Glade)
- Group 4: Pregnant women (Belle Glade)
- Group 5: Men with children age 0-5 (Greenacres)
- Group 6: Hispanic women with children age 0-5 (Lake Worth)
- Group 7: Pregnant women (Lake Worth)
- Group 8: Men with children age 0-5 (Riviera Beach)
- Group 9: First-time pregnant women (Riviera Beach)
- Group 10: Women under the age of 25 with children age 0-5 (West Palm Beach)
- Group 11: Women with children age 0-5 (West Palm Beach)
- Group 12: Pregnant women under 25 (West Palm Beach)

The groups were moderated by Phillip Downs, Ph.D., Joseph St. Germain, Ph.D., Nury Lavandier (Spanish speaking), and Farrah Zamor (Creole speaking) and took place from April 6 – 28, 2016.

The purpose of the focus groups was to explore the feelings of pregnant women and parents of children age 0-5 at an emotional level and to help guide questionnaire construction for a follow-up survey of Palm Beach County residents.

The following section includes the topline findings of these groups. Also included in this report are a full transcript of all participant responses.

## Topline Findings

The script for these groups was broad focusing on issues parents had during pregnancy and in the first few years of their child(ren)'s lives. Each group covered different topics based on the life experiences of group participants. The topics presented in this section of the report reflect issues that came up in many of the 12 focus groups.

### Childcare

The most pervasive issue discussed by parents and pregnant women was child care. The high cost of childcare came up most often. The income threshold to qualify for aid is very low, so some parents choose to forgo their professional career in order to qualify for aid. Others work solely to cover childcare costs. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- “I wish it was a little cheaper, like it wasn’t as much money. I saw on the news probably a couple weeks ago, it’s as much as college tuition.”
- “I just saw a statistic today that said it costs 73% more to put a 4-year-old in childcare in the state of Florida than college. It’s got the highest childcare rates in the country and one of the lower college rates in the country. It’s an extraordinary amount to charge. I worked in daycare services and you want to pay these people, they’re taking care of your children, it’s not something where you want to cut corners. Childcare centers can’t really offer part-time because they have to have that employee in the room so you’re paying full-time even if you maybe only need two days a week or two hours.”
- “Daycare is so expensive, you work to pay daycare.”
- “So if you’re a full-time parent, and you’re making X amount of money per week or bi-weekly, you may not qualify for it [aid] because based on that amount of money that you make, you won’t get that assistance.”
- “I went, and I waited for a year on the waiting list and they finally called me and I went in the guy just told me “You make too much money to get this...family of two, you have to make less than that” because I went to school trying to learn and trying to get a better job but it’s not enough. For me, I’ve been doing a lot of research on it and it’s the biggest, biggest problem for all parents.”
- “I was just wondering why the people that make the decisions about programs, why they help the people that do nothing instead of helping hard working workers like us? The ones that work and ask for those programs, they say you make too much but they don’t take in consideration that you have other bills. All they want to know is how much you and your husband make. But I have 5 children and the cost of living is high plus all the other spending.”
- “You work full time they give you full time and they check how much you make. If you make too much you don’t get it.”

Finding quality childcare facilities was another problem for Palm Beach County parents. There is a perceived lack of quality for childcare centers. In addition, many parents weren’t sure how to find the quality centers. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- “Most people don’t know how to pay attention to a kid. You leave your kid with somebody and you’re worried if they know how to take care of the kid.”
- “If you’re working, you want the place where the kids are being cared for to be a clean place, healthy, a place that makes you feel confident that your child will come home and is not going to be sick.”
- “A lot of times, you get these daycares where the kids may just go there, play around for a while, take a nap, get up, and eat. They aren’t really learning anything. It’s not really educational for them, and I’m really concerned about my child’s education.”
- “I haven’t seen any official ratings. You can look at reviews, but sometimes that’s hard too because you don’t know if those are the employees.”
- “I think the worst is with daycare. There’s less quality daycare in Palm Beach. Anybody you ask will agree. They cost more and have less service.”

A third issue with childcare in Palm Beach County was availability. Parents complained of long wait lists and procedural issues of signing up for the wait lists, such as not knowing where to sign up or having to reapply every six months. Parents also mentioned problems attending required meetings for childcare aid and dropping off/picking up their child(ren) at childcare facilities due to their work schedule. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- “Palm Beach County needs to come build a daycare center. One with not as long of a process like that. They just need to build something over here and get it over with. Because I know that most of these daycares are just for like, migrants, or for when they had been there for years. And now, they started to make daycares at their house, but that is only when they get childcare.”
- “Another important thing is to have babysitters in schools. I went to this school because they have babysitters. But there are only two groups. I changed schools to learn English better, but there aren’t any babysitters there. I didn’t study for half a year because they didn’t have babysitters, and someone had to take care of my daughter.”
- (about Family Central) “I tried to, I put my name on the list and I had to call and put it back on the list every six months. I never really got through. Bridges had an option but the problem is after you get through with them they still require you to go a couple of times a month to their meetings. Not everyone’s work schedule can go with the times that they have available.”
- “I have one more thing. I know we were talking about childcare, but now I want to talk about kids with disabilities. That is another thing. I don’t know a lot of people out here that have kids with disabilities, but I know there are people out here with kids with disabilities. And they always, always have to go to West Palm or Palm Beach. There is nothing out here – nothing! The lady at Early Steps, she comes to Palm Beach all the way to my house. There is nothing out here for kids with disabilities. All kids with disabilities, it doesn’t matter what you have, it is hard.”
- “I’ve also heard of something but I don’t have anyone to leave my son with. So you can’t take your child to those types of meetings so I prefer not to go because I would have to pay someone to take care of him for one or two hours so then I can’t.”

- “It’s hard for me because for my job, I have to be there at 6. Most daycares are open at 6:30, 7:00.”
- “My first daughter, I went through so much with her for daycare. So with the second one, the minute I know I’m pregnant I’m like ‘OK, what am I going to do, because this is the biggest problem in Palm Beach County.’ People are waiting in line at Family Central for years, years, you can never go through.”

## Support Groups

A lack of support groups in the community was another issue brought up by Palm Beach County parents and pregnant women. Some were looking for support groups in order to get information from parents who have been through similar experiences. Parents and pregnant women were also looking for someone to talk for their mental health.

Hispanic and Creole women were more likely to have support groups in their extended family and community. However, they were also more likely to be viewed unfavorably by family and their community if they had a child out of wedlock.

Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- “I had to look up everything. I Googled everything. I asked for pamphlets. I read the pamphlets. Early Steps helped me a lot. They would tell me more stuff about Down syndrome. They gave me a chart of where she was supposed to be.”
- “Well I think that Palm Beach County needs to provide like a place, more than a support group. That has the resources that are out there and help. They actually help you find things. And most of the things around here not what you know, but who you know. As far as getting into daycares and jumping over the waiting lists and stuff. And more so, like a place where everything is fair. They don’t care who you are; they will help you and you can come and get that help. And I think that that would be helpful for new moms and old moms, no offense (laughs)! Or moms with more than one child. You know, just to have options. Like with me, if I want to come find something, I mean, they help me with everything.”
- “We have monthly meetings here. All of us share information about help centers in your community, where food is provided. For example, in Lantana they give you diapers.”
- “We need more information groups. Especially what Adriana said, about education. The parents should be educated. There should be free service for low-income people.”
- “Like I said, we should try to open more orientation centers to provide more information for people who come from abroad and don’t know anything about this country. We should open more centers to help them. Also, support for the parents, to help them keep their kids away from drugs and gangs, of which there are a lot.”
- “I said a mother’s support and mentoring group. It’s kind of like, two-tiered. The first would be pairing a first-time mother with an experienced mother. Like, I guess you could profile the candidates and have them, if they have the same interests or whatever, somebody who’s doing it for the first time would be paired with somebody who’s done it before, and there would be a little bit of a mentorship program between the two of them. And then secondly, having a group

of mothers come together similar to this, weekly, to discuss fears, accomplishments, and then even later on establish play-dates with their children.”

- “Yeah, it was the same thing... when you’re pregnant, you get depressed. Mostly for me, it’s the same thing too, you get depressed and you wish there was someone outside your family to talk to. I guess it’s normal because a lot of people are going through depression, I know a lot of people when they’re pregnant and after pregnancy.”
- “I think just finding a good support group. There’s a lot of support groups for pregnancy, like the clinic that I went to, I think they have like a support group where moms go, first time moms, and for every meeting that you go to they give you fake money that you can use at a store they have for things for your baby.”
- “A women’s group was formed among us [Hispanic women], and we’re trying to provide help. You can learn many things. We’re trying to see what’s in our community.”

### Nutrition (WIC)

When the subject of nutrition was brought up, the WIC program was mentioned by all groups. Most were very complimentary of the program with many relying on WIC for the nutritional needs of themselves and their family. A handful of parents complained of being taken off of WIC because their baby was deemed to be overweight. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- “I always said to myself – if WIC didn’t exist, I would not have had more than one child because there is no way that you can afford them. If you go and you get all of your WIC in one transaction and it said one hundred and something you’re like oh my god thank you lord Jesus. There’s no way. And you still have to provide however many cans out of your own pocket out of that isn’t even enough, and then you think to yourself if I can barely pay for these three how am I going to pay for all twenty that we use throughout the month. It’s crazy, so yeah, yay for WIC!”
- “I was living below the poverty line, level or whatever. So WIC and food stamps really helped. Formula and the baby food are so expensive. But, with the government assistance, I was able to really stock up on all of that stuff.”
- “They called me about WIC but I don’t qualify because of my husband’s income which hardly supports me.”
- “He was overweight and WIC kicked me off when he was six months because they told me that he was overweight. So I ended up having to buy three things of milk a week and that was a big expense because milk is expensive.”
- “Once I had my baby they stopped my WIC, they told me he was overweight, they didn’t help me anymore with him. Like what do they expect you to do not feed your baby like when they are hungry? Do they expect you to not give them food? I don’t understand. Because he’s overweight you stop me from getting WIC - that’s crazy to me.”
- “There are apps for that. If you go to the app store, go to Ovia, and there’s a whole bunch of apps that tell you what to eat, food recommendations. Go to WIC, they give you benefits. They give you a little EBT card and because you’re pregnant with a baby they give you milk and bread and eggs and peanut butter, you know, the nutritionists, you ask them anything you want, that’s what they get paid for. You tell them, “This is what I’m facing”. And they’re going to prick you,

they're going to ask you how you are and find out if you're OK. They're nutritionists, they're supposed to tell you about your health and your diet and anything about exercise. They give you a chart, they give you pamphlets, there's one in Greenacres, on 45th, there's a whole bunch."

### What to Expect during Pregnancy

During their first pregnancy, women in Palm Beach County looked to their family and online resources to figure out what to expect during their pregnancy. While most could trust the advice of their family, women were not sure which information to trust online. However, once they found a website or app that they liked, women trusted the information. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- "My mom was [my main source of information] because she feels like she knows everything. She was always like been there done that. I think, though, that you can't always trust her. You need to get outside information from people who have been your age and done these things and didn't have the support that you had. You want to know how did they go about doing this and that. And what helped them? Like I got a lot of information from my mom, but the people that were also going to school – I got a lot of resources from them, too."
- "When I first found out I was pregnant, I was 35 or 36. I think for me, it was an overload of information. Everyone has something to say, on Facebook, on email, and everyone is shoving their opinions in my face. Should I breastfeed or no? Do I need this? No, you don't...I didn't know how to prepare, so I shut everyone out. I didn't know what to buy beyond, OK, diapers and a thermometer, but what kind of thermometer? So you go online, but it's an overload, and everyone has something to say. I asked my mom and she says one thing, I ask my neighbor and she says another. If there was one class that simplified everything you need to know and what to get you going. I was stressed out!"
- "There are a lot of support groups online. There's Baby Bop, Baby Center, there's a lot of apps you can download."
- "She took me to this link, WhatToExpect.org. Right now, I'm learning what to eat, like avocados.... I just wish I had a pregnancy diet plan. Like what to do, how to work out, what to eat, day 1, day 2, day 3."
- "A lot of times, with my first pregnancy I did go on the Internet looking at stuff because when my mom was pregnant, it was years ago, versus something that she could be telling me... but I went on a forum called BabyCenters.com. Usually if there was something going on during any trimester whether it was nausea, the baby moving, predicting the sex, or whatever, I would go on there and look at the forums online. And even after the baby was born, looking at what other women were doing to get back in shape, stuff like that. So I went online for a lot of stuff."
- "She's (but not me) been getting texts ever since the baby was born, like maybe you should do this, I forget what website... but it was really helpful. Like, "your baby should be doing this now", like every couple months before she was born... I got to find out the website."
- "I think I find that on my app like on this Ovia app they give you healthy pregnancy recipes which I will try and if I have a headache I check to see if I can take any medicine and of course the answer is no, you know you go on there and see like emergency or airborne I did that one day and someone's like oh maybe you shouldn't take that because it has got a lot of vitamins in it so

I looked on there and of course I find Vitamin A is level X toxic drug, I'm like oh great okay so I definitely turn there to the app a lot for food and drugs."

- "I'm part of a mommy group on Facebook and they always post stuff, you guys should check it out. There's clothes, there is any type of baby items..."
- "I call a social worker. Ever since I got pregnant with my girl I've been in touch with her. When I got pregnant I had a friend, and he gave me her brochure, and I called her. She does the pregnancy tests; she makes the appointments for you at the hospital. She helps you with the WIC, Medicaid, and everything."

## Transportation

Getting to doctor appointments, meetings, classes, etc. were a problem for many Palm Beach County parents. Many parents had to rely on friends or family to take them appointments and meetings, share a vehicle with their significant other, or use public transportation. This is particularly difficult during pregnancy when there seemed to be an appointment or class basically every week. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- "Yes, I only have one friend. Whenever I need a ride I ask her and if I have money I give her some and she waits for me. So then I can only count on her."
- "It would be nice for a charter thing because me and my husband only have like one vehicle. So the days that I have to go to the doctor, when you're pregnant happens more often than not, those days I have to wake up extra early for him, drop him off at work, have the car, go to my doctor's appointment then pick him up and that is a real struggle for everybody."
- "You know how many times I had to cancel therapy because my truck didn't work? And it is hard because I'm like she needs therapy. And I don't have a car. And then they punish you when you don't go. Now they did the new rules that if you miss two without cancelling, they cut you off. Or if you cancel three ahead of time, then they cut you off. And then you have to do the process all over again."
- "Well, with me they had they- she gave me a number to call so whenever I need transportation to the doctor appointments, they gave me a number to call, but she'd have to call them like a week before."
- "I didn't have a car. I left at 6:00 AM and walked there."

The transportation issue was a larger issue in Belle Glade due to the lack of services in the area. Belle Glade relies on one pediatrician and one OBGYN. Therefore, many had to drive nearly an hour or more to receive specialized services for their child(ren) or if they don't like the local doctor. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- "My child has Down syndrome, so when I was, when she was diagnosed, there was not a lot out here in Belle Glade. So, I would have to go all the way out there, so she has her pediatrician right next to Palm Springs, you know. When she was three months, she was in the hospital for two weeks. She had RSV. The next month she had heart surgery. And it was all the way at St. Mary's, way out there at Belle Glade. So, like, yeah it is hard."

- “I think that it should be easier. I think it should be easier, especially out here in the Glades. I mean I know we’re apart of Palm Beach County, but the way that they – how can I put it? We’re here, like yeah we are Palm Beach County, but we are way out here. Like why do we still have to, like, I don’t know. It should just be easier because we are such a small community. Like, why is it so hard for these tiny little towns like where we are at. Why is it so hard to get help, you know? Like why do we have to go all the way to Palm Beach? I don’t understand.”
- “Access to services. So you know there are a lot of programs in Palm Beach County. Most of them their offices are over there, and maybe we just don’t know about it because we don’t know, we don’t live there. I think maybe if they go through the hospitals, if they go through our OB doctors, if they go through the health department to give us – that would help us. And bring some of it out here. If it was once a month or twice a month, you know? Bring services to us and we’ll come out and bring our kids or bring or participate.”
- “I think that overall people forget about the Glades, like really? We are still apart of Palm Beach County, and they just forget about us.”
- “You don’t have any options. There’s like one good pediatrician, one OBGYN...That’s not really good. You have one with one employee in there...so it’s either you wait for hours or you drive an hour, wait thirty minutes for that request to come back...so, better quality healthcare providers and more parenting classes.”

## Breastfeeding

The decision whether or not to breastfeed was a tough decision for many Palm Beach County women. Some were confused by the conflicting information that was available on breastfeeding. A few were misinformed and refuse to breastfeed because of the “negative” effects. Doctors promote breastfeeding, but when women have difficulty breastfeeding they feel shamed by others. Many who had issues breastfeeding have found help from programs such as Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies. However, some women were not sure where to turn if they have problems. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- “Something that I just thought about that to me was really unsettling was with the breastfeeding, I have to say that I got a ton of contradicting information and to me it was the toughest part about having a child in general.”
- “They need more support for women not just that want to breastfeed, but that just have issues breastfeeding.... help them cope.”
- “At the hospital they gave me the device and they showed me how to pump out the milk since the baby stayed in the hospital and I was discharged they gave the pump.”
- “Me too, it was at the hospital because my mom didn’t know how. Also the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies nurse also helped me. I breastfed my daughter even after my son was born. I breastfed both at the same time. My daughter was 4. I was trying to stop breastfeeding my daughter but she didn’t want to because she would see me breastfeeding my son so I stopped breastfeeding both. I had one on one side and the other on the other (laughter) and I couldn’t do anything ever.”

- “I would’ve liked to have a little training as far as the breastfeeding and stuff. I mean I breastfed my son for about 5 months before I decided I wanted to start drinking wine again, but prior to that it was good but I feel like I could’ve given more if I had known, like... the nurse who helped me when I was in the hospital, she had some good techniques, but after having the baby, sometimes I felt like he wasn’t getting all that he needed, so I would supplement with formula when I felt like I could’ve done more breastfeeding and I actually know some people gave it one shot and didn’t get it so they just went straight to formula.”
- “Oh no, I cannot [breastfeed]. I did not have my baby breastfeeding. The first child, no, nothing. I had to pump it-that didn’t work. It was swollen. Nothing would come out. I told them [doctor], but they treated it as ‘oh that is normal, I guess you just can’t breastfeed.”
- “It [the class] just taught you a lot about breastfeeding. At first I was going to formula-feed, but then I found out formula only has like 70 ingredients whereas breast milk has like 216. And if your baby gets sick your breast milk can give them nutrients so that he’s not sick and he doesn’t develop something in his brain. It’s really good with all of that, you get skinny. “
- “I have nodules and I didn’t know that that affects your milk supply and by a month and a half, my milk started drying, so my husband naturally called the first thing that he saw online that was “La Leche League” and they told him that I wasn’t breastfeeding because I didn’t want to. And that destroyed me. I think that was more damaging to my relationship with my husband than anything else.”
- “When you go to the lactation consultant and you want to do it, that’s great, but I think there’s a lot of shaming on people who don’t want to do it or can’t do it. So I think maybe just teaching those, giving some guidance to the mothers and saying ‘it’s OK.’”
- “And the ones that can’t produce, let them know that it’s OK, don’t rub it in and say ‘Oh, the mothers that breastfeed their kids, they’re going to be smarter’ cause I felt that.”

### Palm Beach County Programs & Services

Palm Beach County parents were complimentary about the services of programs such as Bridges, Healthy Mother, Healthy Babies, etc. However, some were not sure where to find these services or how to qualify. In addition, there was a minority who found useful programs and services during pregnancy, but could not find quality assistance after their child(ren) were born. Others hoped for more communication between programs. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- “I knew about Bridges... I came to the labor classes; they taught how the babies were born. They also told us about depression and gave us contact information.”
- “I went to Highland; I lived near that area. A lady told me they had a program where kids could get help. I subscribed and became a member there. I’m very thankful for Bridges; it has been a blessing in my life. It has opened several doors. It has helped me very much. The only thing new arrivals need is economic support, or maybe there being places where you can stay at and live there. Finding somewhere to live is difficult at first.”
- “She’ll [Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies] get you through different programs, she’ll help you with classes, she’ll help you with WIC, she’ll help you through all those different programs if your mom or someone older than you is not helping you do that for yourself. Your Healthy

Mothers, Healthy Babies lady will talk to you about that, she'll actually get you through it if you're willing to work around work."

- "Today I actually went to the library because they have yoga for babies, and it's free and I'm not working and I can't afford to pay for anything I'm only on my husband's salary. They have it for newborns for non-crawling for crawling like different ages. I didn't know about it I just went to the classes at the library that I think I saw on the news and when I was there I saw all these different activities that they have for kids."
- "They should tell you about it at the hospitals. They should have advertising for the people who go there, or in the schools themselves."
- "I don't know about pregnant, but post-partum I think there are really limited resources. I think for a lot of women that's when they really, really need it. They've been pretty well taken care of and then it's like the floor comes out from underneath them. So post-partum services would be beneficial."
- "There should be a list at the doctors [office]. I feel like that would be good like a list of places you can go while you're pregnant."
- "Maybe, when she reaches out to one, and they would just network. And all of those different programs that help you with health, that help you with mommies with depression, or help mommies with breastfeeding. If they would just all sync. Why do I have to apply to this, this and this, when you guys can just network and get back to me and tell me which one of y'all can help me, or which one where I fit in. Or, if you tell me no, then tell me these people can help me. I just feel that it is a lot of running around for every little thing, when they should just be a conglomerate, working together. So then I could just go to one place and you let me know out of all of these different programs, which one I qualify for."

### Socialization of Children

When asked what they hope for their child(ren) in the upcoming couple of years, many parents mentioned getting their children to be more sociable with other adults and children. While the child(ren) did not seem to have issues within their family, as their social circle expanded some child(ren) were having problems adapting. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- "The baby needs to learn how to share, because I don't plan to have another baby for a long time and he needs somebody to play with. So I want to put him in school so he can learn how to share and be with other kids."
- "Um...just to be more sociable you know. Right now some kids, he's afraid to be around and every once in a while like if it's somebody new he gets kind of upset or something... or he's not real like sociable. He doesn't like to be around too many other kids."
- "We tried to take him out to parks and try to get him to be more sociable because he's not really around kids his age. Which brings me to what I wrote which is cost-efficient child care so he can be around kids his own age, so he can be a little bit more sociable and not so shy and afraid of stuff."
- "He has a tutor that he sees like once a week to talk to him and to socialize with other kids because he doesn't get along with kids. I had to go to the school he had beat some child up and

I'm like you don't fight other kids you're supposed to get along with them. He was like I don't like getting along with other kids they are bad."

## Finding Quality Healthcare

Many parents reported difficulty finding quality healthcare in Palm Beach County. Earlier in this report, the issues for parents in Belle Glade were discussed. In addition to these issues, parents had a hard time finding low cost medical providers, doctors that they like, and doctors with reasonable wait times. Young pregnant women and mothers found that they are "talked down to" by many doctors. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- "I had a midwife for my first child. It was a good experience for me because I felt more comfortable with a woman – it was my first child, so I felt that whatever she needed to do, she was doing her job and that was it. So that was a good experience for me."
- "There should be more information and support in terms of low-cost medical programs, not free, for kids who come to the United States. These exist, but sometimes they're expensive."
- "Honestly, it's just finding the doctor, if you like the doctor or not. You know there's like pediatric associates and other ones, but I have been trying to find more of a private doctor where it's just one doctor that knows your child and it's not a different doctor every time you go to see them. It's not very easy finding one that your insurance covers or even just finding a private pediatrician in general that you like."
- "I think they should do therapy for pregnant people for free, because I can tell you I have apologized to my husband so many times because the hormones are so whack."
- "It's a two hour ordeal every time at the OBGYN, every time!"
- The problem that present for me is just that to know this information it's one more Dr. to my list and at those clinic yes the service might be free but it's so long to wait, 2-3 hours if wait. So if I don't have private insurance forget about it. I won't go to the doctor."  
*\*Another participant in agreement with the previous comment\** "It's true, it's ridiculous, me I was 6 months pregnant and still never been to the doctor."
- "One of my main concerns is that I couldn't receive any services. I couldn't get Medicaid because I worked. So it was like, if you work, you don't get help. You work to maintain your bills, but then you can't afford the \$60 copays for a doctor's visit. So having something set up for mothers who work that can't afford those high deductibles but don't qualify for state care."
- "Me being a very young parent, she treats me like I have no common sense. You know like, if a parent talks to a baby? That's how she talks to me and I don't like it. She talks to me as if my mind doesn't process stuff as fast as it's supposed to, and I brought it up to her because I don't like it, like I'm a fast learner, you shouldn't be talking baby talk to me."
- "I want them to do their job and not put in anything extra because I don't go there for anyone to talk to me about life problems or life situations. I have a very strong support system, everything is OK where it needs to be. I just go there to make sure my baby's OK, I don't need anything extra from them. And them adding extra on top of everything else is not making it better because while they're adding extra they're treating me like I'm 2 or 3 years old, they're talking to me slow, they're like "It's OK, I'm here if you need me..." one of my OB's gave me her

number, what do I need your number for? “Here’s my personal number if anything ever happens at home...” I was like... OK.”

### Relationship/Communication with Child’s Father

Relationships between women and their baby’s father varied throughout the county. While some women reported solid relationships, others were not as fortunate. Some women, especially young women, mentioned that once they were pregnant their behavior and lifestyle had to change immediately, while their baby’s father was not willing to make a similar change. Other women wanted counseling sessions and/or childcare/birthing classes with their baby’s father to help their relationship. When women faced issues with their baby’s father, many developed a “my baby and I against the world” in order to help cope. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- “Jump on board with you. It’s kind of hard with the first one because you have no choice but to grow up and stuff, going out, but they have to learn that it’s them too that needs to stop drinking... they need to be on the same page as you.”
- “I think some kind of counseling because not even just my situation, a lot of people as soon as they have their child, they fall out. A lot of people, it’s like, something happens when they first have that child together, they fall out.”
- “And I think the reason why guys bail out is because first of all, they may be too young, and then on top of that they’re just scared because they feel like they’re the man, they’re supposed to hold everything down financially, you know, emotionally and everything. And if they feel like they can’t offer that to you, they’d rather just leave and deal with it like that.”
- “Not really, I remember the first time I was pregnant I was like I need him to be present, to come to Lamaze classes, to come for checkup. Reality is that they don’t and then you realize that you can do it all by yourself minus the stress.”
- “But as far as having support like they said a lot of time the first baby the [relationship with the] baby’s father doesn’t work so if he’s young and immature your basically on your own. So now you know mentally the woman has to be so much more advanced than the man and it really has to come through.”
- “Sometimes men don’t value a woman. I had the same issues with the father of my kids. My biggest hope and motivation was to see my daughter being born. I didn’t care if he was sleeping around or drunk, or doing whatever he wanted. I just wanted what I was carrying inside of me. That’s where I focused.”
- “My expectation is for a man to be a man. So, like, with my husband, I can expect him to do fatherly duties, but a lot of times you have to lay out for a guy what you need him to do. Otherwise, they’re going to expect you to do it all. So, you know, if I’ve had a long day, I need you to give him a bath. Otherwise, if I don’t say it, he won’t get a bath... ..my experience has been explain, explain, explain.”
- “If we had the resource for like, a mediator for the household or something, then that’d be something different. As far as two individuals being domestically involved with no assistance then those two are going to be responsible for working the situation out. If we had someone to

step in, like say maybe a neutral party, and they said “Maybe it’d be a good idea if you guys could work it out like this...” then maybe it’d make it a little smoother.”

- “Couples therapy would be really nice too because personally I do not feel like I am super hormonal and I attack my husband for no reason. I cannot say we are perfect, we definitely fight, but I can say that now that the feelings that I have, like before in our relationship I was like oh lets work through it, let’s do this and this. But now if there is something that is just too big or you just need to fix this about you. I have way to much going on with me and I don’t feel afraid to walk away because I know that stress is really bad for the baby and if he is causing me stress. I feel everyone in my life is an accessory now. The only people who matter are me and my baby and I feel that couples therapy would be nice too because I think there are other people in the world who feel that way and I bet you that is why people split up too.”
- “I mean that [relationship counseling as a part of birthing classes] sounds awesome cause you’re both there.”
- “I think he [the father] needs to, like, have a support group... I don’t really know. He still doesn’t know how to change a diaper, too. So I don’t know what I’m going to do. I just wish that he could go to a class, maybe like for men or something, like for you- Mom and Dad type of classes.”

### Language and Cultural Barriers

Hispanic and Haitian women reported issues with language and cultural barriers in getting help for themselves or their family. Many required translators at meetings and appointments, even at places that claim to have Spanish or Creole speaking translators available. In addition, many bilingual women found themselves translating in order to help others who didn’t speak English. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

- “Okay, so I wrote easier access to all of the programs that are supposed to help the community, and that the process time frame is so long for these programs that it makes it frustrating. And also, that these organizations have representatives that spoke Spanish or Creole, for example, it would make it wonderful for those that don’t speak English. The language barrier is a big thing.”
- “I feel bad sometimes, when I would be at certain appointments, when a Spanish person is up there asking questions, and she’s like, “Uh, you don’t have anyone to translate for you?” I’ll be in the back and say let me help you. I feel bad. Like, you know, we’re out here, the majorities, so why don’t you guys have someone in there to help?”
- “So, I think that they need to know that we have a lot of people that speak Creole; we have a lot of people that speak Spanish, why don’t you have somebody like that in each of these offices and hire them. Like, yeah I’m looking for a job”
- “Here’s a service I wish there was that we don’t have. Service given by our own [Haitians]. I don’t need to deal with that stress when I’m pregnant so that’s why a lot of the service that they talk about I don’t use.”

## Male Perceptions

While most of the groups focused on mothers and pregnancy, a few themes emanated from the two male groups. Male parents in Palm Beach County mentioned issues with a system designed to keep them down, a lack of outreach support systems for fathers, and a lack of information aimed at fathers. Here are some representative quotes from participants:

### System Designed to Keep them Down

- “Our society just leaves fathers out, really. As far as the courses, the childcare, healthcare, schools, they barely even acknowledge fathers.”
- “If you’re going to charge me something (child support) per week that you’re aware that I can’t afford, all I’m saying is work with me.”
- “Last year I went through about four months where I couldn’t find a job ...they actually suspended my license which I needed to drive to work. If I couldn’t pay [child support] by a certain time, then I’d go to jail. Not only am I having trouble financially, and I’m having trouble finding a job, I also might get put away because I’m not able to find a job.”
- “The job that I was going to, the information was sent and they were taking money out but for some reason for a couple of months the child support system wasn’t communicating properly so they assumed that I wasn’t paying and they suspended my license. Once I proved that there was no gap, they sent me to reinstate my license and I had to pay.”

### Support for Men

- “It’s called “Real Men, Real Talk”. If there aren’t two men in there, there’s only about four of us in there. I don’t know if he’s just not getting enough guys or if guys aren’t interested... I don’t know what you have to do to get the men to come out. In “Real Men, Real Talk”, whatever I might be going through, he can say something to help me. I want to hear from another guy.”
- “I’m thinking about the whole counseling thing, and I’m speaking to my counselor and letting my counselor know all the problems with what’s going on, maybe my counselor can give me some tools to help deal with the situation and help me deal with the situation better than the other parties, you know what I mean?”
- “I mean, they could have some groups for the daddy and me class that he needs (laughs). You know what I’m saying? A support group for the dads. I know with me, the first six months he wasn’t too attached to her. Now he is, now he is because she walking and crawling and stuff. I felt like he was distant from her.”
- “As soon as you find out that she’s pregnant or whatever the case may be, you should get some type of counseling right off. The nine months of the pregnancy, and then after, the two of you have to go to counseling, man.”

### Lack of Information

- “For instance, whenever there are programs out there, I think there’s a lot more correspondence to the mothers. The fathers aren’t thought of as much because stereotypically the fathers aren’t thought of as caretakers. Looking at the Bridges schedule here, a lot of the

programs are when fathers would be in work. So we wouldn't even be able to involve ourselves."

- "I think that the father in some situations may require a little bit more help than we [women] do. In a way, I felt more prepared, we had a planned pregnancy, and even then sometimes I would look at my husband and he was in panic mode."
- "I wish they would have a program for clueless dads and I say that for a reason. Just like she says it kind of sucks that every time the mother gets pregnant they kind of target the mother on okay, you're pregnant what are you going to do? How about they track down the fathers and let's say they put the fathers on child support instead of having him just pay because that's all its going to be either he pays or he doesn't, have him as a part of the payment plan join a class where a class can teach him how to become a father. You have a son or daughter; take your child to the park that could be a part of your 'daddy duties'."
- "They should have some type of program set up in the hospital to pass some information on and help people take advantage of all the programs and all the good things they have to offer, just so you'd be able to get a step ahead already. That way you have the knowledge, you have the baby, somebody meets you and you're good to go, and they give you all the papers right there in the hospital. Especially for the fathers too though, right?"
- "It seems as if we're (men) lacking resources."
- "I heard about Bridges a few months back, I didn't even know it was there, and it was right down the street from me."