A young child with a stethoscope around their neck and a teddy bear next to them. The child is looking towards the right. The background is a bright window with blinds.

# What Have We Learned About Children's Well-Being During COVID-19? Policy and Practice Considerations for County Leaders

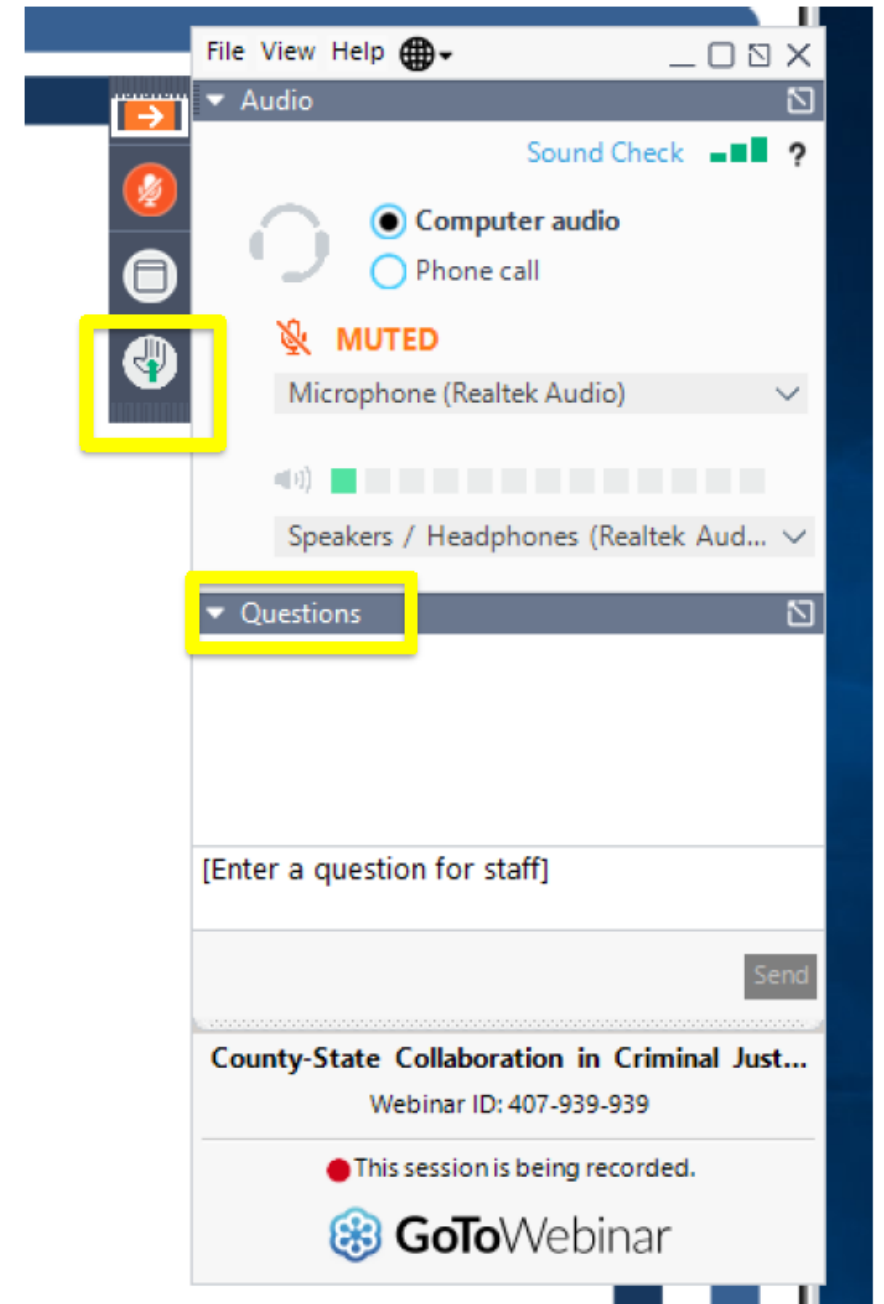
December 14, 2020



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# LOGISTICS

- The questions box and buttons are on the right side of the webinar window.
- This box can collapse so that you can better view the presentation. To unhide the box, click the arrows on the top left corner of the panel.
- If you are having technical difficulties, please send us a message via the questions box. NACoRF staff will reply to you privately and help resolve the issue.



# SPEAKERS



**Dr. Joan Lombardi**, Director of Early Opportunities, LLC



**Leigh Ann Ahmad**, Planning Manager, Ramsey County, Minn.



**Dr. Phil Fisher**, Philip H. Knight Chair and Professor of Psychology; Director of the Center for Translational Neuroscience, University of Oregon



**Kristin Johnson**, Deputy Director, Goodhue County Health and Human Services, Minn.



**Amy Merschbrock**, Parent Support Program Social Worker, Goodhue County Health and Human Services



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**RAPID ASSESSMENT  
OF PANDEMIC IMPACT  
ON DEVELOPMENT  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
HOUSEHOLD SURVEY**



# RAPID - Early Childhood

Rapid Assessment of Pandemic Impact on Development (RAPID) - Early Childhood



@PhilFisher99

<https://www.uorapidresponse.com>

# RAPID-EC Funders



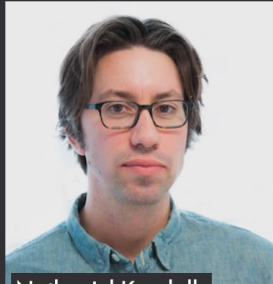
Joan Lombardi, PhD

Chair - National Advisory Team

Director

Early Opportunities LLC

International expert on child development and social policy



Nathaniel Kendall-Taylor, PhD

Chief Executive Officer

FrameWorks Institute



Megan Gunnar, PhD

Director

Institute of Child Development



Kathrine Stohr, MPP

Project Manager

Pritzker Children's Initiative



Brenda Jones-Harden, PhD

Distinguished Professor

University of Maryland - School of Social Work



Natalie Renew, MPA

Director

Home Grown Collaborative



Barbara Chow, MPP

Director - Education Program

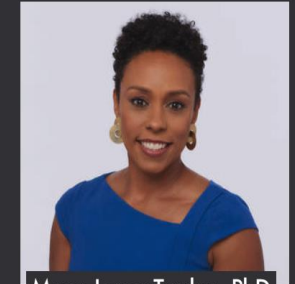
Heising-Simons Foundation



Miriam Calderon, MSW

Director

State of Oregon Early Learning Division



Myra Jones Taylor, PhD

Chief Policy Officer

Zero to Three



Portia Kennel, MSW

Senior Vice President

Ounce of Prevention Fund



**RAPID ASSESSMENT  
OF PANDEMIC IMPACT  
ON DEVELOPMENT  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
HOUSEHOLD SURVEY**



- Ongoing survey of over 1000 households with at least one child age 5 and under, beginning April 6
- Goal is to be nationally representative in terms of geography, income, race & ethnicity
- 15 minute paid questionnaire completed via computer or smartphone in English or Spanish
- Results posted on Medium.com (<https://medium.com/rapid-ec-project>)

# BEARING WITNESS: FAMILY VOICES WE CAN'T IGNORE

*Just because many policy makers have never had to deal with being unable to afford childcare or worrying about access to high quality food or transportation, or choosing between affording rent or medical care, doesn't mean these problems don't exist. There is no way any parent who is dealing with this pandemic head on can "pull themselves up by their bootstraps." We need systems at a state or federal level in place, not just individuals in a community who care. ~ Oregon parent*

*The cost of food is insane. ~Florida parent*

*We are having issues making sure bills are paid. We have had to choose between food, vehicle, or internet for my job. ~ Tennessee parent*

*Food goes so quickly. My son's school offers free lunch but it's during his school hours and he can't be left at home alone so I can go get the lunch. ~Arizona parent*

*I have \$150 left to pay bills and buy food for a family of five for the next two weeks. ~Mississippi parent*

# Overall findings



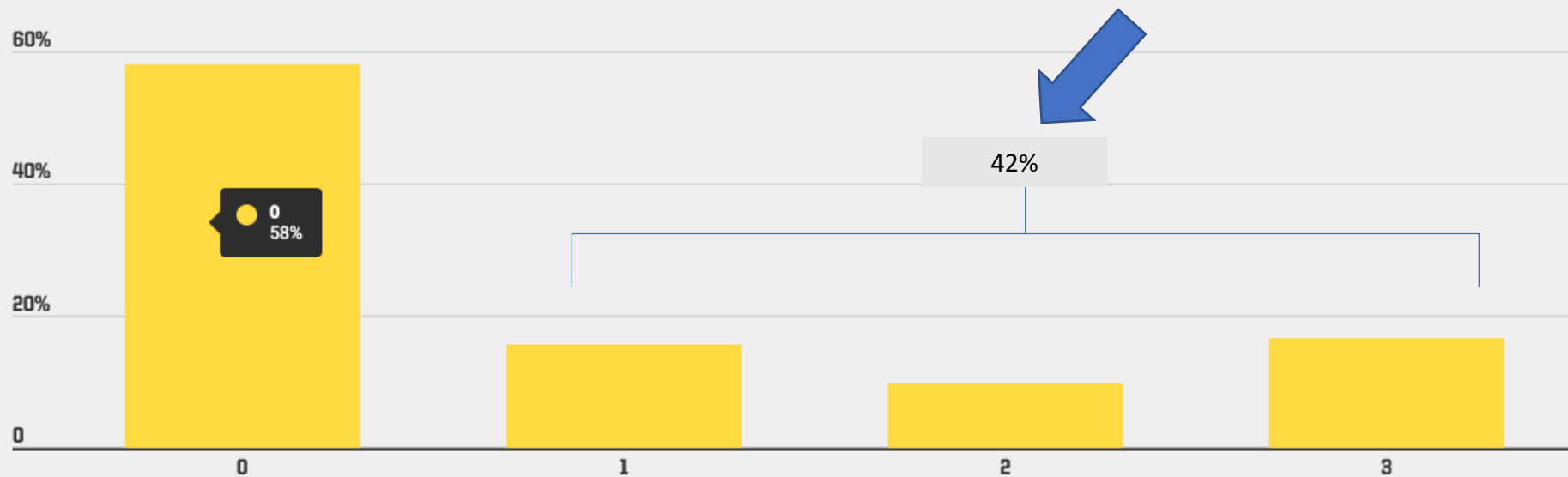
- **Difficulty paying for basic needs** is at the root of difficulties for adults and children during the pandemic
- Household emotional distress rises and falls **in parallel with infection rates**
- COVID-19 is widening **inequality gaps based on income and race/ethnicity** in the US across many areas of family well-being



# Proportion of families with children 5 and under reporting difficulty paying for basic needs since the national relief package (CARES Act) expired in July

## NUMBER OF MATERIAL HARDSHIPS REPORTED AFTER THE END OF CARES BENEFITS

Caregivers were asked to report which, if any, hardships they expect to face in the next month out of not being able to pay for food, losing housing due to eviction or foreclosure, and not being able to pay utility bills.



# HUNGER

- *Our data reveal that hunger has increased significantly during the pandemic — 28% of parents in our survey now report being food insecure.*
- Not surprisingly, rates of hunger are much higher for families at or below 1.5 times the federal poverty income guidelines for family size — 49% of these families are currently experiencing hunger. However, hunger has also increased significantly for families that were middle/upper income before the pandemic, increasing from 13% to 20%.
- Hunger is significantly higher for Black and Latinx households in our survey than for White households (39%, 33%, and 25%, respectively). It is also higher in single-parent households than in dual-parent households (43% vs. 26%), and in households with a child with special needs relative to others (42% vs. 26%).

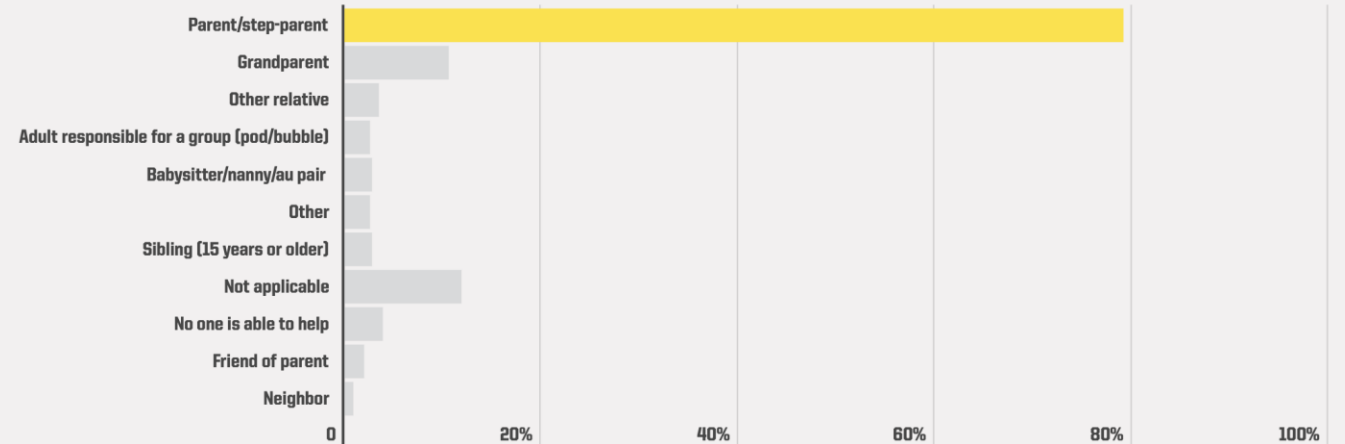




## Something's Gotta Give

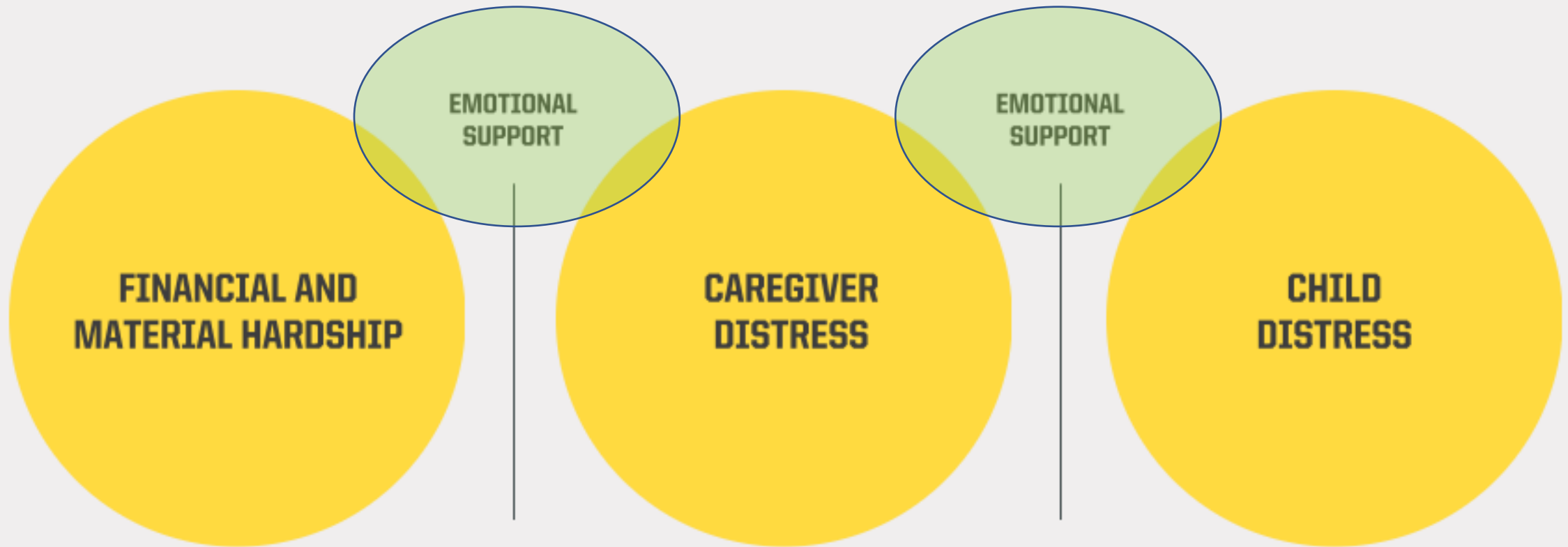
### ASSISTING WITH CHILDREN'S ONLINE LEARNING – OVERALL

Respondents were asked to check all that apply.



# HOUSEHOLDS REPORTING HIGH EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

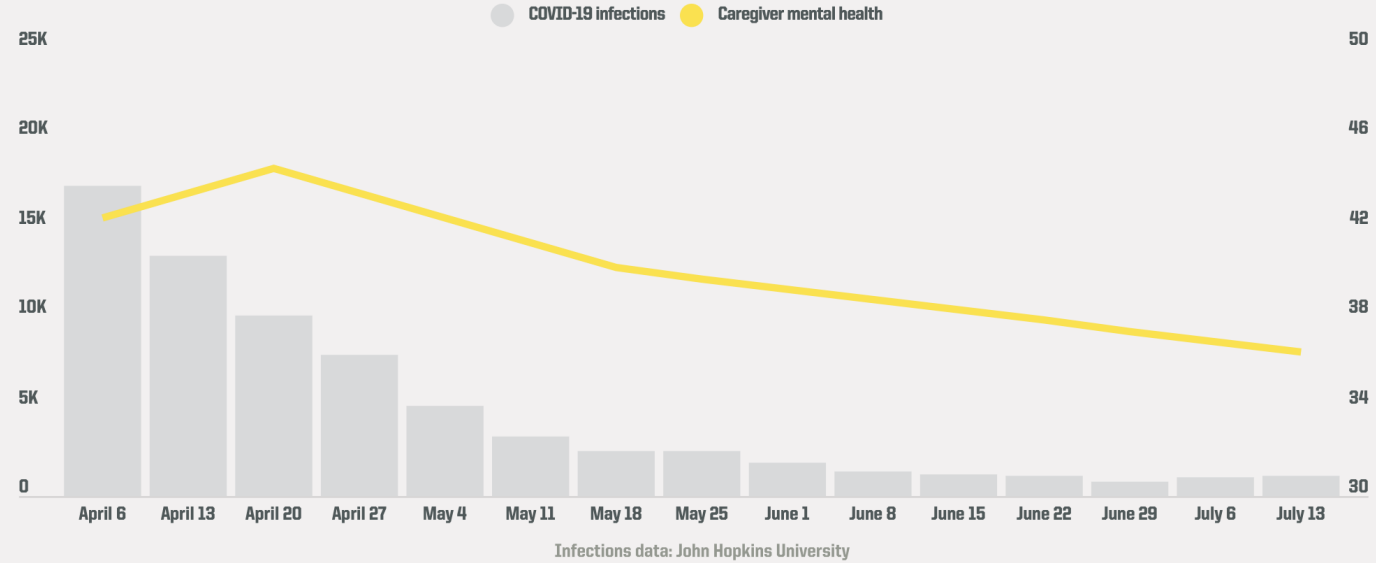
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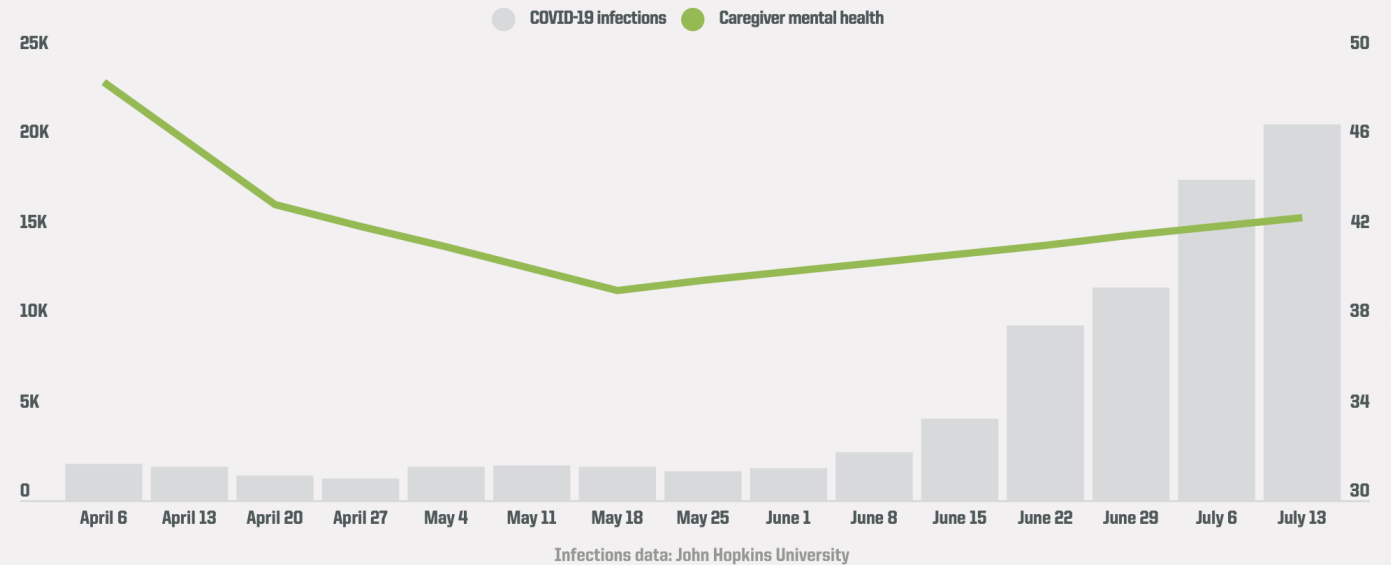
# AS INFECTION RATES DECREASE, CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH IMPROVES

## New York and New Jersey



# AS INFECTION RATES INCREASE, CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH WORSENS

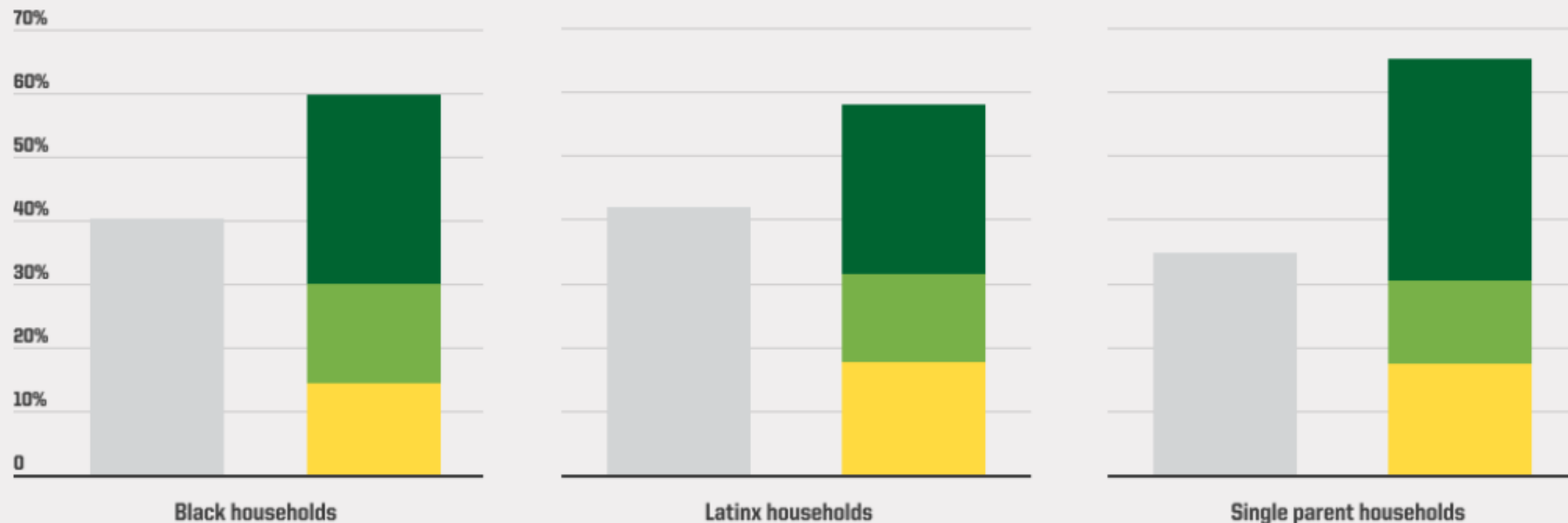
## Arizona, Florida and Texas



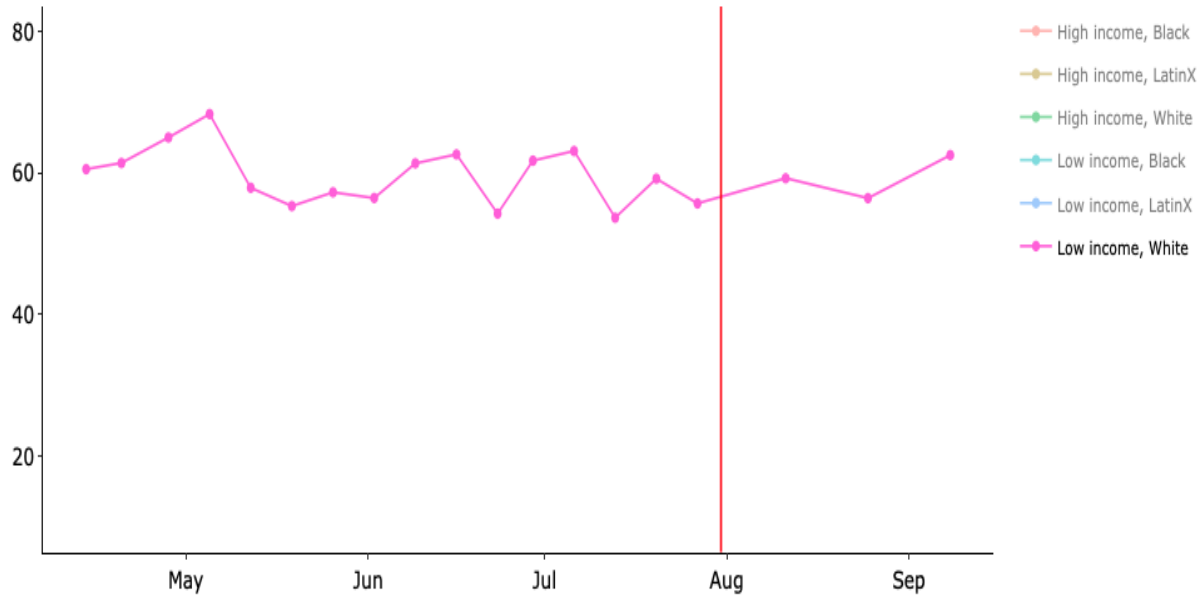
# Proportion of households in specific subgroups reporting worries about paying for food, housing, utilities as of August 10 (vs. 42% of households overall)

## NUMBER OF MATERIAL HARDSHIPS REPORTED

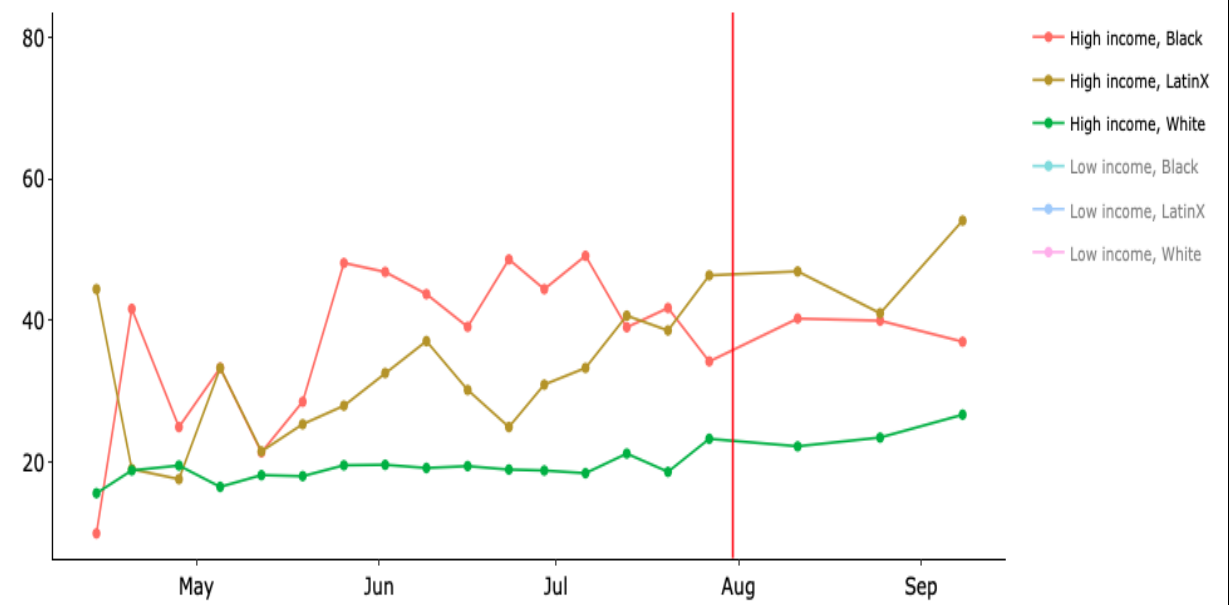
Caregivers were asked to report which, if any, hardships they expect to face in the next month out of not being able to pay for food, losing housing due to eviction or foreclosure, and not being able to pay utility bills.



Percent of households experiencing at least one material hardship



Percent of households experiencing at least one material hardship

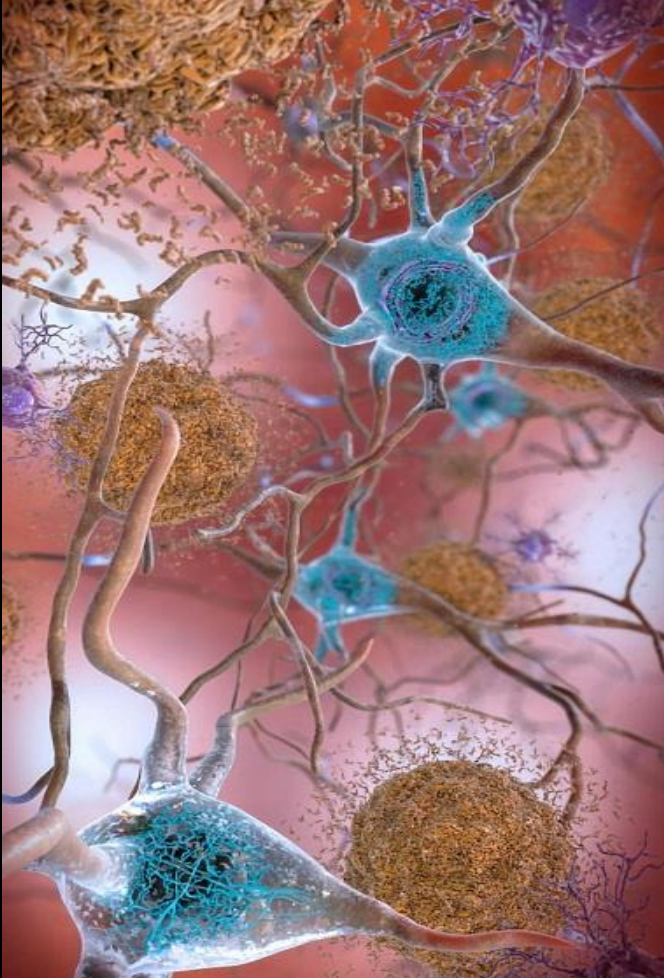


# Why is this data important?



- *Chronic stress + Lack of parental buffering = Toxic Stress*
- In light of the extensive scientific evidence of the importance the early years of life on brain development, social/emotional well being, and health across the lifespan, reducing financial difficulties and material hardship among households with young children must become an extremely high priority issue.
- We must also attend to the growing inequality gaps based on race/ethnicity, income, and family structure
- As long as these hardships exist among households with young children, we can expect to see long term effects on individuals and communities
- This is likely to impact the economy for decades





- *But it is not too late*
- We know that early childhood is a time of great plasticity in human development
- And we know that children and families have great potential to be resilient, even in the face of hardships like the pandemic
- With the appropriate support and resources from the national, state, and local governments and from communities, there is great reason for hope.

# **What Have We Learned About Children's Well-Being During COVID-19? Policy and Practice Considerations for County Leaders**

Leigh Ann Ahmad, Planning Manager

December 14, 2020

## RAMSEY COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

- 2nd largest MN county population at 547,000
  - One of every three Ramsey residents receives Medical Assistance; 76,553 are children
  - Most diverse County in Minnesota
    - 31% Native American and People of Color
    - 20% residents speak a language other than English
  - Minnesota ranks high in all quality-of-life statistics and Ramsey's general population outperforms most U.S. household in income and education
  - *YET, Minnesota's Native Americans and Persons of Color have some of the highest disparities in U.S.*
-

# RAMSEY COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

Percentage of Eligible Children Enrolled in Selected Programs that Support Early Childhood Development (2016)\*

	WIC	Family Home Visiting	Childcare Assistance Program (CCAP)	Early Childhood Screening	Head Start/ Early Head Start
Dakota	45%	15%	14%	48%	12%
Hennepin	56%	14%	18%	29%	22%
Ramsey	68%	11%	13%	23%	18%
Washington	42%	12%	14%	41%	11%

\* Source: Chase, R., et al. (2018). Minnesota early childhood risk, reach, and resilience: Key indicators of early childhood development in Minnesota



## RAMSEY STRATEGIC PRIORITY (UPDATED )

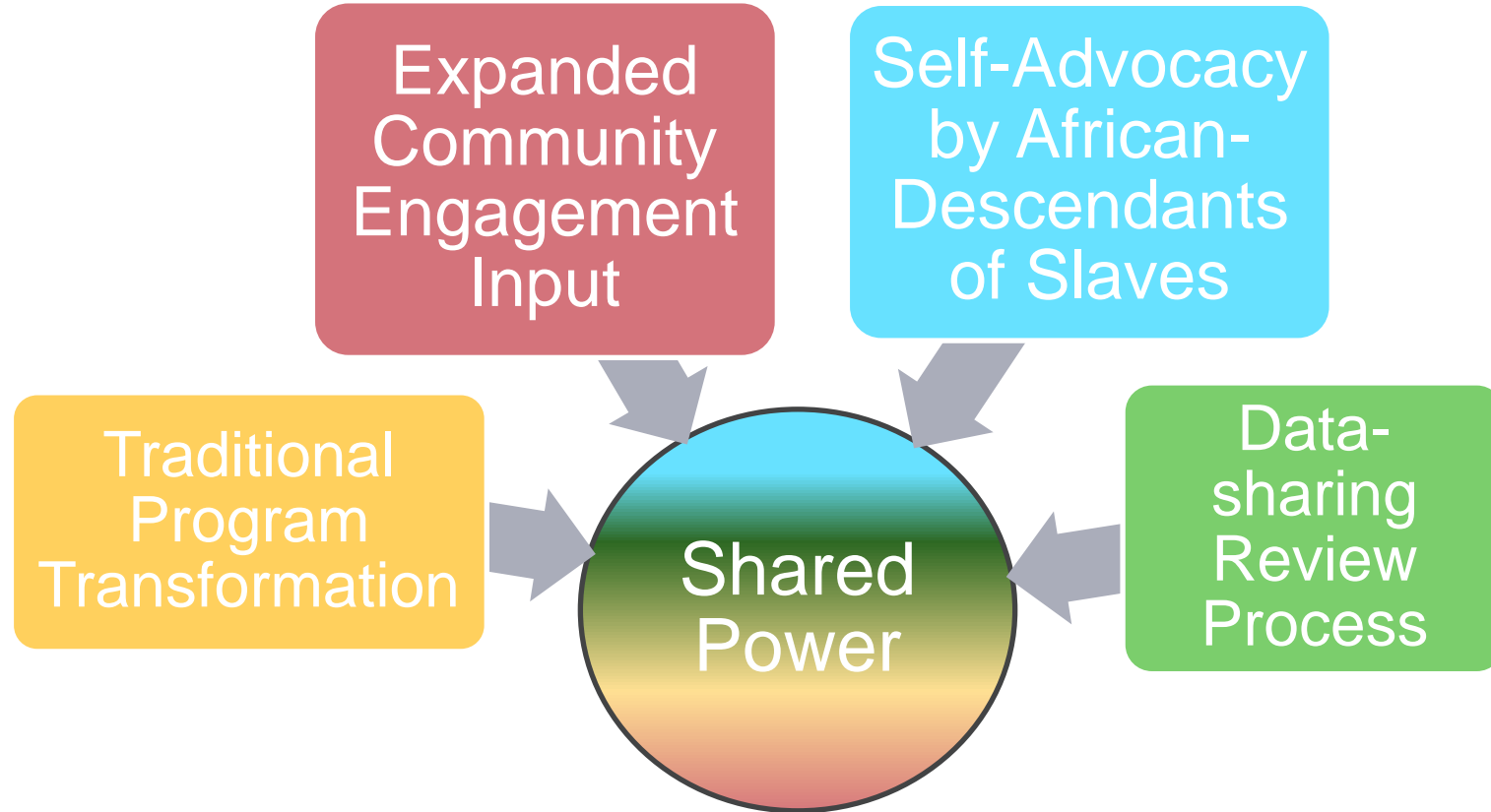
Advancing a Holistic Approach  
to Strengthen Families

*“Ramsey County will strengthen families by listening to and understanding families’ needs and barriers while **providing non-traditional services and opportunities** that promote wellbeing for infants, children, youth and their families.”*

A County core value is: *“transform structures and practices to reduce disparities and improve outcomes for all.”*

---

## PUSHING THE ENVELOPE



**Ramsey County's New Legacy to Early Childhood**

## SERVICE CENTER PRIORITIES

- Newly formed set of 5 Ramsey County Service Centers
- Support “Residents First” Program delivers effective and efficient services for the community
- Offering effective, efficient and accessible operations
- Residents can access county services from any given location with the goals of:
  - Creating a virtual experience
  - Providing navigation support with community partners
- **Provide streamlined access to early childhood resources** along with all other services- career center, pay taxes, etc.
  - ❖ **Leapfrog and IPAD access while family visits the center**
  - ❖ **Curated activity kit, culturally reflective books, child-sized mask and children’s mental health resource information**
  - ❖ **Preschool Development Grant- Family Coach Model**

## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS > COVID RESPONSE

- *“We need a personal tutor at the shelter – perhaps retired teachers to help our kids.”*
- *“I want life coaches somebody that can be there to check in on them, you know, outside of their teachers to try not just like a life coach, but for kids.”*
- *“Our children need more hands-on learning – they really don’t like school now with the computer.”*
- *“By not having the technical - Not the equipment Wifi, hotspot, training and time. Again, no matter how much we say what is needed for early childhood, they're more apt to fall even further behind.”*
- *“I hope that children are able to get through this period with this little emotional scarring as possible.”*

## COVID-19 RESPONSE- EARLY CHILDHOOD NEEDS

- Grants targeting family-childcare centers
  - Family Homeless Shelter Support for Children (100 children)
    - ❖ YMCA contractor for Teen Thrive Homework Help
    - ❖ YMCA contracted for Drop-in Child Care and early learning toys and games
    - ❖ YMCA Family Passes
    - ❖ Child activity kit subscription services and Leapfrogs
  - Workforce Solutions Support for Children – MFIP/TANF (850 children)
    - ❖ Child activity kit subscription services
-

# COVID-19 RESPONSE- EARLY CHILDHOOD NEEDS

## Parenting Tips for Challenging Times

Get answers to your questions from early childhood experts.  
To register contact [marty.smith@metroecsu.org](mailto:marty.smith@metroecsu.org)

### Session 1: Supporting your child through difficult times

Thursday, July 16 1-1:30 pm

### Session 2: Well-child checkups: are they safe during the pandemic?

Thursday, August 13 1-1:30 pm

### Session 3: Challenging behaviors during challenging times

Thursday, August 27 1-1:30 pm



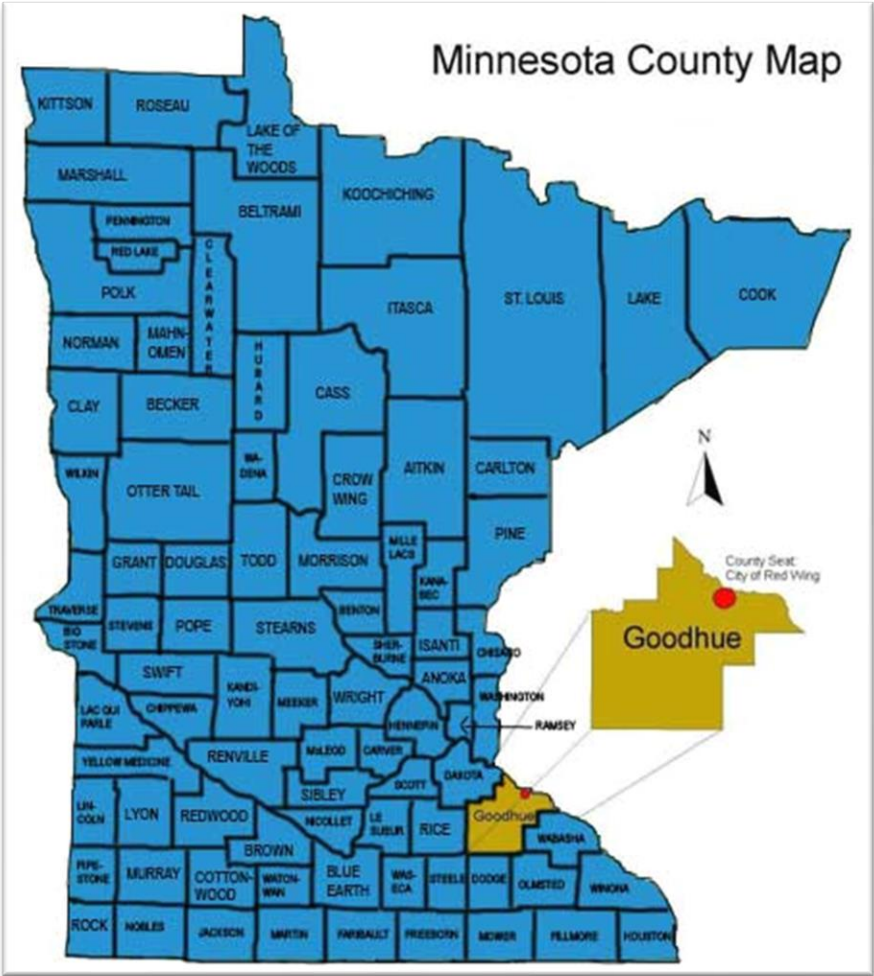


# Goodhue County Health and Human Services

Kristin Johnson, Deputy Director  
Amy Merschbrock, Social Worker



# Goodhue County, Minnesota



Located in SE Minnesota, approximately 50 miles south of Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area

Population: 46,217

Unemployment rate: 3.4%

Poverty rate: 9.9%

# Goodhue County Health & Human Services

- **Joint Public Health and Human Services agency**
  - Child and Family Services
  - Adult Mental Health Services
  - Economic Assistance
  - Child Support
  - Public Health
  - Waiver and community support
- **118 employees**
- **Child and Family Services**
  - Child Protection intake, assessment and investigation
  - Ongoing case management
  - Adoption
  - Licensing
  - Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP)

# Parent Support Outreach Program



Built around protective factors

Provides support for parents and families who have risk factors and at least one child under age 10

Can be referred by self, community member, or screened out child protection report

Financially supported by Minnesota DHS and Child Welfare Medicaid funds

# Child Welfare Response During COVID



Focus on **basic needs, social support**

Reduce expectations for schooling (“do what you can, let go of the rest for now”)

Paying for safe child care, respite care, cleaning supplies; connecting with food and transportation resources



# QUESTIONS

Please use the chat box to share questions with the panelists.



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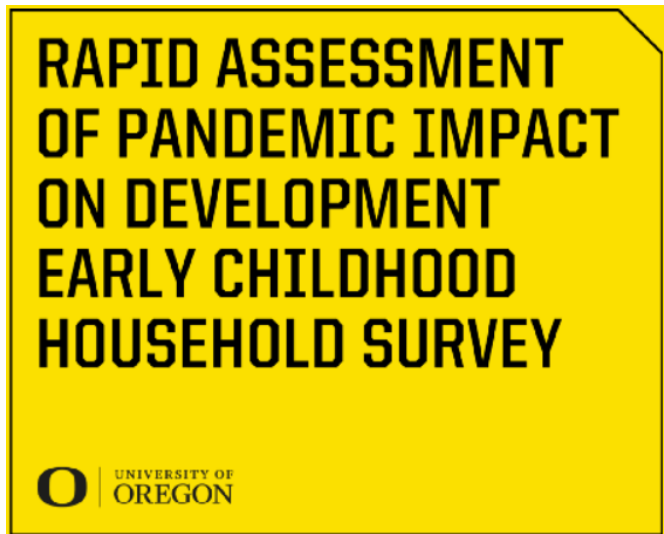
DECEMBER 2020



# THANK YOU!

Learn more about RAPID-EC's project and findings:

- [www.medium.com/rapid-ec-project](http://www.medium.com/rapid-ec-project)
- [www.uorapidresponse.com](http://www.uorapidresponse.com)



Learn more about getting involved in Counties for Kids:

- [www.countiesforkids.org](http://www.countiesforkids.org)
- Email [info@countiesforkids.org](mailto:info@countiesforkids.org)



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