

INFORMATION BRIEF

Understanding Possible Users as a Pathway Towards Sustainability and Impact

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Introduction

Right now, there is a lack of actionable, timely information on children and families under age five. Having more information about young children and families will lead to more effective programs, greater investments and awareness of challenges facing young families. Our overarching goal is to make Kidsights Data available to state, community and program users to provide insight into child development across populations.

In the first phase of our work, our primary goal was to develop a tool that could be useful for measuring child outcomes for children birth to age five. At the conclusion of year one of the Kidsights Data grant, the first report was released, titled [*Nebraska Spotlight: Key Findings That Highlight Connections Among Early Childhood Development, Families and Communities*](#). Now that we have developed the tool and demonstrated how the results can be applicable to policy and programmatic questions in Nebraska, we are looking for ways to embed Kidsights Data into early childhood data systems at the state or local levels in other parts of the country.

At present, as we will outline in greater detail below, no states, cities or counties have population-level information on child development birth to age five, and few have addressed the question of how to get it. While the federal government collects population-level data on child development for children three to five years through the National Survey of Children's Health, the idea of population-level data is still new to many and there is little infrastructure available to collect these data. As such, Kidsights Data doesn't yet have natural sponsoring organizations with aligned capacity and mission to collect population-level data on children birth to age five. To guide our next steps on making data on child development available to parents, communities and state policy makers, we have systematically explored the opportunities and barriers for scaling Kidsights Data.

At present, the National Survey of Children's Health produces national estimates of children's development during the preschool years, and 39 states and the District of Columbia have some form of kindergarten assessment¹. ChildTrends also recently reported that almost all states have access to information on Pre-K systems, for example, but few if any have information on child outcomes². There is less emphasis on monitoring child development for children aged birth to three years, primarily focused on health and nutrition status³, leading to less information about infant and toddler health and wellbeing both at the state level and nationally. **Complementing existing efforts and addressing gaps, we see an opportunity for Kidsights Data in providing fast, relevant information about trends and group differences in early child development at the state, community or large-scale program levels.** Kidsights Data complements several other non-federal data products in use within the United States, for example, the RAPID survey of parents and the many states using kindergarten readiness assessments.

1. <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-state-k-3-policies-2023/>

2. <https://cms.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Date-Capcity-of-State-Funded-Pre-K.pdf>

3. Ryberg, R., Wiggins, L., Moore, K. A., Daily, S., Piña, G., & Klin, A. (2022). Measuring state-level infant and toddler well-being in the United States: Gaps in data lead to gaps in understanding. *Child indicators research*, 15(3), 1063-1102.

Below we present several considerations that have influenced our thinking about Kidsights Data, followed by a deeper dive on three types of potential users at the state, city/county and large programmatic levels (see Table 1 for an overview).

IMPORTANCE OF GENERALIZABILITY OF RESULTS

One of the most critical considerations for use of population-level data is the extent to which the sample represents the underlying population and whether users want to be able to compare outcomes among different groups of children based on a set of specific characteristics (see Table 2). Using an epidemiological frame, the idea of generalizability is central to the definition of “population-level” data. But obtaining generalizable data comes at a price and must be weighed against the uses of the data. We have outlined the spectrum from the most rigorous definition of “representative” to fully convenience-based sampling (see Table 2). The sampling has a large impact on the feasibility of survey implementation: if there is a desire for representative data, the sampling requires access to a cohort of children and parents who can participate in the study and who represent the underlying population.

IMPORTANCE OF PARENT PERSPECTIVES

While parents are not listed below as a “user” since we do not have parent groups as potential sponsors of Kidsights Data, the importance of parent perceptions of Kidsights Data cannot be overemphasized. We reached out to parents for their views on Kidsights results in Nebraska in 2023. We emailed parents who participated in the survey a digital version of the report and asked for them to fill out a short survey sharing their reactions to the results. We also invited parents to join a focus group to further share their thoughts on the data. We held six focus groups. Below are some of the top themes we learned about engaging parents in Kidsights Data:

Parents are willing to participate

The survey took 20-30 minutes to complete, but parents were willing to take the time when they knew why the data was being collected, were able to complete the survey at their convenience, and could pause and return to survey.

“I try to do any online ones I get sent that seem pretty easy to do because I understand the importance of collecting data and information.”

–Nebraska Parent

Parents want to see the results

Parents appreciated short summaries of the major findings. Parents were open to receiving the results by mail, email, handouts sent home from their childcare provider or school, and/or through social media posts. In many cases, parents reported that seeing the data was affirming to them, as they realized that other parents are experiencing the same challenges they are:

"I was hoping to get [the results]. I feel like it's always interesting to know, yeah, what is going to come of the information that you collect and kind of how things turn out... but I didn't know if I should have expected it."

–Nebraska Parent

Parents value the data

Understanding what factors are associated with child development, how different groups compare, and how children are doing overall in the state were important to parents. It was helpful to learn what behaviors they could change to potentially influence development and know that they were not alone in their struggles. Some parents could also see the possibility of using the data for community advocacy to improve programs and policies relevant to young children and parents.

"Interactions at home kind of gave me some reassurance that I'm hopefully doing the right thing by my child."

–Nebraska Parent

We conclude that parents view Kidsights Data as an important part of sharing their perceptions and experiences. Going forward, it is important for users of Kidsights Data to think proactively about engaging parents in the results and gaining their insights in interpreting the findings. To learn more about what parents had to say, see Appendix A, Parent Perspectives.

IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS, CAPACITY-BUILDING AND COMMUNICATIONS ON USING THE DATA

We've learned that to be successful, Kidsights Data requires a process with organizations interested in using Kidsights Data, with capacity-building and data use at the center:

1. Begin with communication with potential users on what “population-based data” on child development means and how it might be a useful tool in policy and programmatic planning.
2. In collaboration with potential users, clearly define the purpose of the data, or what questions population-based data on child development can answer.
3. As users think through their goals and questions, work with them to understand approaches to sampling, or who responds to the survey within the population. Sampling in turn dictates whether we can compare across groups and over time.
4. To move Kidsights Data from a one-time exercise to a sustained tool, ensure enough technical capacity exists within the early childhood system to employ the resources and skills to implement the survey, analyze the results and use the data to influence stakeholders and make policy decisions.
5. Be prepared to have a communications plan to share data with key stakeholders and the public through the media.

Each of the steps in this process requires attunement to the unique circumstances of each user. For the Kidsights Data team, this means that scaling will also require a team of people who are focused on working closely with potential users.

“User Cases”: Who We Heard From and What We Asked

We began by identifying possible users based on geographic units, for example, at the federal, state, city/county or programmatic levels. These levels were selected as ways to maximize the use of population-based data that summarize and aggregate across a population. We do not describe possible federal uses here. The decisions on federal data are made by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and primarily concern National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), and thus are out of our scope for immediate decision-making regarding Kidsights Data. However, it is important to note that federal efforts are central to obtaining data on child development, and we hope that state and community uses of Kidsights Data will help build demand for federally sponsored, national measurement of child development for children ages birth to five years.

While our case studies are focused on state, city/country and large-scale programmatic users, we also had the opportunity to hear from a select group of people focused on early childhood efforts at the national and state levels. This group was convened in Washington, D.C., in early December and included people representing advocacy, policy and research groups (see Table 3). The discussion affirmed the value of population-level data on early childhood and also generated several leads on states and programs who might be good candidates for using Kidsights Data. Our attendees indicated that they had a good sense of why population-level data could be useful, and affirmed that reporting data at the population level – and thus without any identifying information — would sidestep some of the trickiest issues in collecting child development data. Participants emphasized the potential value of child development measurement for states, cities and counties, and had several ideas on partners to approach in 2024.

For each of the “user cases” below, we have identified themes around existing capacity and data use as a way of exploring how we can position and build Kidsights Data as we go forward. We summarize the rationale for why Kidsights Data would be helpful and how the data could be used; the potential challenges and barriers; and lessons learned and potential next steps (see Table 1). These cases are designed to elucidate the realities of using population-based data on child development within the present U.S. system. The user cases were informed by a series of conversations with people representing three types of potential users:

- State government
- Cities/counties and health departments
- Large programs (*routinely providing services to more than 1,500 children and families*)

Below we have outlined three possible use cases which we describe using the following format:

1. Who are the primary users?
2. Why might these users find Kidsights Data useful?
3. How could Kidsights Data be integrated into existing data and/or complement ongoing efforts?
4. How could Kidsights Data be collected?
5. How could Kidsights Data lead to changes on behalf of children and families? (Pathways to impact)

STATE LEVEL USES

Who are the primary users in this group

State-level government administrators focused on early childhood (for example, in the newly emerging early childhood departments in some states); state-level advocacy organizations focused on early childhood; or large-scale statewide programs addressing health or education of young children.

Why they might find Kidsights Data useful

These users may find state-level data on child development useful in tracking trends in early child development, including identification of groups of children who may require further investments to ensure their healthy development. When using the scales over time, data can be used to document the impact of large-scale investments such as programs or policy changes.

How Kidsights could be integrated into existing efforts

As we go forward, we will learn more about how Kidsights Data fits into ongoing data collection at the state level. At present, few if any states seem to be sponsoring ongoing monitoring of child development or family characteristics before the start of school at the population level, meaning there is little or no infrastructure available to build upon. While many states have invested in early childhood data management systems, these systems are designed to track children who are receiving services, rather than the population as a whole. As of 2020, at least 35 states and the District of Columbia have assessments once children enter school, primarily to inform curricular development. However, it is unclear if these assessments will continue as most rely on teacher observation and reporting, and several were funded federally and may not be sustained over time.

All states have access to information from the NSCH on child development before the start of school. Although these data can't always be disaggregated at the community level depending on the size of the state sample and do not include children birth to age two years, this information is available and includes information on family environments, economics and characteristics of communities. Kidsights thus could potentially complement results from Health and Ready to Learn (HRTL) as we gain more insight into if and how states are taking advantage of data from NSCH.

Kidsights Data had discussions with public officials in two states:

Recap: State Senator in State #1 | September 2023

In an interview with a skilled legislator who has been an advocate for a variety of family-focused initiatives and an effective leader of building data systems we learned:

- Data can be effectively used by legislators, but there is a growing approach that may not take advantage of data and data systems. "Facts don't get in the way of what they want to do."
- Legislative environments that increasingly support party line agendas that may or may not have evidence to explain the effort. The discussion led to a suggestion: data should be presented district-by-district through a mapping feature to illustrate what is transpiring in each area.

- An initiative like Kidsights Data should begin working with progressive counties in the United States.

Recap: State Government Leader in State #2 | November 2023

In an interview with a progressive early childhood expert who is a senior leader in state government, we continue to see positive progress toward a possible partnership with Kidsights Data and a meeting is set for the end of January 2024. This state prioritizes early childhood and has data as a central part of the work.

Recap: Thoughts from partners working across states

In an interview with members of an organization dedicated to providing advisory and strategy to education leaders, they suggested these states may have capacity to work with Kidsights Data as the second site:

- o Georgia
- o Iowa
- o Kentucky
- o Virginia

Additional conversations with a group of early childhood leaders in Washington, D.C., in early December 2023 added these states to the list:

- o Indiana
- o Michigan
- o Minnesota
- o New Jersey

How Kidsights Data could be collected

Like other users, decisions on the desired sample are the driving factor in determining how data could be collected. Below we have outlined key questions to address:

Generalizable to the underlying population, or not? To our knowledge, few if any states have access to birth cohorts with information that would allow easy access to parents of all young children, which is the key component of ensuring representation. However, some states, such as Colorado, have large-scale registries of parents who are interested in specific programs, such as help finding childcare or enrolling in public pre-K.

These registries, even if not representing all children within a population, are a great place to start as they provide a way of being in touch with parents. A registry can provide the basis for sampling intentionally to obtain representation by specific groups (for example, parents who have college degrees vs. those who do not; rural vs. urban). This approach would attempt to generate some form of generalizability using underlying census weights and responses from the NSCH. This approach would recruit parents using convenience sampling, with targeting of specific groups.

Drawbacks to this approach include 1) the desire to have more granular information on where children are thriving vs. not, for example at the community or county level; and 2) the challenges in recruiting valid responses from parents statewide.

Disaggregated at a sub-state level, for example, within specific communities or counties?

This is another sampling question – here the extent to which state users would like to be able to report on specific regions within the state. This will also determine sampling decisions, which in turn influences how data are collected. As noted below, many state users may desire this information, even though it is challenging to obtain.

If there are other statewide survey efforts underway that reach all or many parents, it is also possible to integrate Kidsights survey questions into these surveys.

How Kidsights Data could lead to changes for children and families

We anticipated value arising from the ability to track trends in child development and family characteristics. As we heard more from possible users, we also heard about the importance of disaggregating at the county or legislative level, which is a challenge for maintaining any kind of representation among the population. As noted from a state senator, we also heard about the limitations of statewide data – the concern that even if there are data, it doesn't necessarily lead to changes on behalf of children and families.

COMMUNITY OR COUNTY-LEVEL USERS

Who are the primary users

These users are leaders at the community or county-level who are interested in understanding the population of children and families more deeply, and who may also be interested in tracking trends in equity especially in response to community-level investments in early childhood. This can include city or county government leaders as well as large-scale programs.

Why they might find Kidsights Data useful

At present, there is little if any information available at the county or community level on child development. While state-level data from NSCH is available, as noted above, this information cannot always be disaggregated for use at the community level, even though many new interventions are focused on counties and/or communities. As counties and cities increase investments in early childhood, having relevant local information could be very useful in identifying where additional investments are needed to support healthy child development.

How Kidsights could be integrated into existing efforts

To our knowledge, few if any cities and counties are collecting population-based estimates of child development. However, county and city health departments have strong capacity in data collection and analyses, and thus may have more internal capacity to analyze data and integrate with other routinely collected health indicators. As noted below, there are several programs run through cities and counties that provide access to children and families, which could be leveraged to provide access for Kidsights.

How Kidsights Data could be collected

Like states, a key question for county and city-level users is how to gain access to a cohort of young children and parents that represents the underlying population as closely as possible. Universal home visiting programs offer an innovative way to build a birth cohort, potentially by asking parents to enroll in a Kidsights Data study when their children are newborns, and contacting them on a regular basis from that point forward, and/or targeting older children in the household as well to provide a wider range of ages. While this approach could take several years to complete, it would offer the opportunity to track children over time, which would provide interesting insight into the emergence of disparities. County and city health departments also have access to parents of young children through programs such as WIC, as well as active networks of healthcare providers and childcare providers. Working within a more constrained geographic boundary may help to recruit parents efficiently, but the smaller boundaries also may make it more challenging to emulate a representative sample.

How Kidsights Data could lead to changes for children and families

Cities and counties are playing an increasingly large role in delivering early childhood services to families⁴, and are often able to provide responsive and innovative approaches to early childhood programming and policy. Providing data at a more local level could provide a powerful source of information to local stakeholders on where and how to invest.

Recap: We spoke with a member of an organization focused on providing technical assistance and support to county and city health departments in maternal and child health. She affirmed that county health departments may value having insights on child development and family characteristics, especially for children birth to age three and for families who are enrolled in WIC and other programs administered by county health departments. Further, many health departments have capacity for data collection and analyses because of their emphasis on monitoring key health indicators.

LARGE SCALE PROGRAMS

Who are the primary users

These users run large-scale programs that are intended to reach hundreds if not thousands of young children, often through a mix of home visiting, childcare and preschool programs.

Why they might find Kidsights Data useful

At present, collecting information on child outcomes for these programs is very difficult, due to the expense of individual assessments. Using the Kidsights survey would make the process much less expensive and easier, provided that programs serve enough children to meet the sample size requirements of at least 200-300 children participating in each survey administration.

4. <https://www.nlc.org/article/2021/08/05/aligning-city-county-and-state-for-early-childhood-success/>

How Kidsights could be integrated into existing efforts

Data on children's development could be helpful to programs in tracking the effects of programs over time and identifying groups of children and families who may need more support. If statewide data using generalizable samples also exists, data can be used to compare average scores among children participating in programs vs. those who are not.

How Kidsights Data could be collected

Many programs are already collecting information on parents. Using Kidsights would then involve sharing a link to a survey, ideally through texting or email, that would target parents who are participating in the programs. A drawback is that this approach does not include parents who are not participating in programs, which could lead to skewed estimates of population-level child outcomes if results are not used or interpreted correctly and/or families who are not receiving services are not included in the sampling plan.

How Kidsights Data could lead to changes for children and families

This information could be valuable for programs interested in tracking their impact on child development across large-scale intervention efforts. It is possible to add questions to determine how much exposure parents had to various intervention efforts, which in turn would allow estimates of how much impact various approaches have on child development.

Recap: We spoke with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, who administer the SixPence program which provides home visiting and other services to families of infants and toddlers in Nebraska. As described by the leader of a large-scale state program, "Kidsights Data will enable us to gain deeper insights into child development, family characteristics, and overall family well-being. Based on the outcomes, we will use the data to plan for the upcoming year. Kidsight will provide us with a comprehensive approach to data analysis, filling in the gaps in our current evaluation." While Sixpence has an evaluation program, collecting data on child outcomes is expensive and time-consuming. Using the Kidsights Data tools would expand their insight into the children and families they are serving.

Conclusions on Building Demand and Scaling Kidsights Data

As we go forward, we will target different types of users of Kidsights Data to more fully assess the opportunities and barriers to use. Questions we will consider include the following:

Where might there be pockets of data and analytic capacity that we can more fully mine in scaling Kidsights Data? While early childhood systems may not have capacity at first glance, we are interested in exploring where partners and others might have additional capacity that we can tap in connecting with parents, analyzing and reporting on Kidsights Data results.

How do results from Kidsights Data align with the content of state kindergarten entry assessments and other tools focused on screening children's development? Since so many kindergarten assessments are presently in use, as well as screening tools used by pediatricians and school districts to identify children with special needs, we are also interested in understanding how the results from Kidsights Data align with existing assessments so that messages about children's development are coherent across different types of measures.

What appetite among states, counties and cities is there for tracking a cohort of children over time? This is the ideal structure for the Kidsights Data tool in that all children would be included and it would be possible to track trends in children's development. While the cost of administering the survey could be reasonable over time, it would require ongoing leadership within the sponsoring organization and a commitment to recontact parents to repeat the survey. It will be important for us to learn about the realities of proposing a long-term structure and building the capacity to maintain it over time.

How can we effectively communicate the value of Kidsights Data and how it complements other efforts? There is a complex (and sometimes confusing) landscape of data products and opportunities, underscoring the need to communicate very clearly the value-add of Kidsights Data. The mix of data tools and purposes – including kindergarten readiness assessments, NSCH, integrated early childhood data systems, and health indicators – means that communication on the purpose and value of Kidsights Data is essential for finding the right fit for Kidsights Data in the early childhood data ecosystem.

What capacity is needed, what capacity does our team have at present, and how should we think about filling the gaps? We are learning from each conversation on what capacity can be built upon and what capacity is needed to scale Kidsights Data within each setting. As we complete our work in 2024, we will be evaluating the question of capacity and how to build it most efficiently.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF USERS

	State	City/Counties	Large Service Delivery Programs
Who?	Governors, legislators, state departments	Departments of Health; Mayors; School districts	e.g. Head Start, Early Head Start
Why do they want data?	Inform policy and funding; (unless the governor is engaged) legislators looking for more information at the legislative district level; state departments (e.g. NDE) want data at the community level	Inform policy, investment, and programs	Inform program design and reach
How could they get access to parents?	State systems (for example, ECIDS, but only access to children in programs; state registries for childcare or pre-K enrollment); possible to use birth cohorts if they exist	Birth records (within health departments); school districts (families with younger children); enrollment in WIC and other large-scale programs administered through county health departments	Direct access to families they serve
Degree of technical capacity?	Some capacity, but not always allocated to analyses (look for partners that have that capacity)	Internal capacity for data analysis at the health department; less capacity within other entities	Range of capacity depending on the program
Geography/Reach/Relatability?	Entire state; in the future, potential for regional/comparisons if data is collected in multiple states <i>Highest potential for generalizability possible</i>	City or county level—large cities/county can reach hundreds of thousands to millions of families <i>Potential for generalizability with access to the birth registry; more difficult outside of the health department—difficult to get data at the county/city level</i>	Families participating in the process (can be city, county, or statewide) <i>Generalizability is not the intention</i>
Problems/barriers?	In competition with the NSCH; Seems less likely that the data will be used directly UNLESS it supports existing agendas	More difficult to recruit (in terms of not having email addresses); less publicly available data for generalizability	Smaller reach; only applicable to those in the program; not able to compare to those not in the program to consider the program effectiveness
Degree of influence?	Depending on users and opportunities for policy influence, could have impact on policy changes	Potential for rapid changes in programs/policies administered through counties and cities in response to data	Programmatic influence
Direct impact on families?	Indirectly through potential policies, funding, programs	Potential for more direct impact through investment in programs	Possibly the most direct and rapid impact on families through potential changes in service delivery in response to data

Table was originally prepared for the Kidsights Data User Cases December 2023.

TABLE 2: SPECTRUM OF GENERALIZABILITY				
Define the Sample	Census of the entire population	Sample representing the population	Sample based on specific criteria intended to generalize to underlying population	Convenience sample
Recruitment	Recruit the entire population	Recruit from the entire population using a cohort or other system for randomly identifying participants	Recruit from the entire population using criteria for identifying groups to compare based on demographic characteristics	No strategy for recruitment, looking for responses from whomever responds; can compare sample characteristics to underlying population
Process	Recruit parents of every child aged birth to age 5 within the population	Monitor sample and compare to publicly available data on specific criteria (census and NSCH); target recruitment toward values from public data; weight data post hoc	Monitor sample based on criteria, target recruitment towards reaching criteria (e.g. 50% of responses from parents with 4-year high school degree)	Monitor sample towards total number of responses
Advantages	Strongest evidence to make claims about the population	Strong evidence to make claims about the population	Easier to recruit and collect data	Of the options, easiest to recruit and collect
Disadvantages	Not at all feasible, even for present-day census	Need publicly available data for the geographic area	Claims from data are limited- must be very clear in describing the sample	Few if any claims can be made about the underlying population from the data collected
	Most likely to be generalizable <—————> Least likely to be generalizable			

Table was originally prepared for the Kidsights Data User Cases December 2023.

Appendix A. Parent Perspectives

After releasing the results for *Kidsights Data: Nebraska Spotlight*, we reached out to parents who participated in the study to provide them with the key messages from the technical report in the form of a brief and to elicit their reactions to the results through a short survey and virtual focus groups. Our questions focused on what parents felt was important based on the results and how they could see using the data. Several themes emerged from the parent responses with regards to the value for child development, the value for parents personally and professionally, and the potential use of the data for change.

THE VALUE OF THE DATA FOR CHILDREN: EFFECTS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Unsurprisingly, parents were interested to learn about the relationship between different associated factors and child development. Some parents shared that they were aware of how different family characteristics or environments could affect development, but seeing the relationships between the different associated variables and child development helped them to understand the bigger picture. One contribution from a Nebraska parent to this point is included, below:

"I really thought the [food insecurity] part was the most interesting, that just how we can help families have security and know where their next meal is going to come from. They need resources for food, stuff like that... And that, you know, school was the kids' only meals sometimes, and how much free lunch and free school supplies really helped them financially... I mean, kids can't develop right when they are hungry. And parents being stressed, you know, they don't have the time to sit down with their kids and interact and stuff. And I think that all surrounds development and feeling secure as a parent, as a child, you know, having housing, food, stuff like that. So, it's just a whole circle of our basic needs."

–Nebraska Parent

Stimulation in the home/home learning environment demonstrated a strong relationship with child development scores and that was helpful for parents to see. During discussions, it seemed that for many who were struggling with economic insecurity or stress, they did not feel there was much they could control, but hearing the data about positive effect of interacting with their child in the home made them feel more optimistic.

"[Data on] interactions at home kind of gave me some reassurance that I'm hopefully doing the right thing by my child."

–Nebraska Parent

"That the very little I feel I do at home makes a difference."

–Nebraska Parent

Parents also noted that hearing about the relationship between stimulation in the home and child development motivated them to want to do more with their children at home. This feedback was an example of how the data could potentially influence parent behavior to improve their child's development.

THE VALUE OF THE DATA FOR PARENTS: NOT FEELING ALONE

Many parents mentioned the ways in which the data helped them to feel connected in a broad sense. These parents discussed the challenges they were facing and how those challenges mapped onto the Kidsights Data results that we presented. Seeing that many other parents and families were facing the same challenges helped the participants to feel less alone. We have included a few of the parent responses below that illustrate this point:

"I think most parents are struggling, but no one is openly discussing this, so it's almost reassuring that others stated it was a concern."

–Nebraska Parent in reference to results
about economic security concerns

The contributions from this parent indicate that the data can play a key role in providing information that can start conversations that might not be happening. In the following quote, the parent suggests that knowing that others feel the same can be a catalyst for coming together to support each other as parents.

"I think it's good to just knowing that other people are struggling. I think sometimes us as parents, we get so judgy. Well, it's out there everywhere, but we do judge ourselves based on how well we're doing in the home. And, and it's like, okay, there's a lot of parents that are here and we're not the only ones that are feeling incompetent or unable to do some of those things. It sucks, but it's still a comforting thing to know that it's not just me that's not doing what I should be doing there. It's out there. And this is how all of us need to get together and try to support each other through this."

–Nebraska Parent in reference to parenting stress

During focus groups, it seemed that parents connected across the data because the results did not compare different groups but focused on parents in general. One parent noted:

"It's not just single moms and dads, grandparents, one adult family households, but it's everybody that is having issues, not only with being able to pay your bills to be able to live, but to be able to afford your food because right now we're a two-adult household with a five-year-old and he works. I don't [work], but now I'm going to have to because everything is going up so much. We can't make it on just one income. And you know, I was a single mom before cause I have a son too. And being a single mom, it was tough enough. But now in a two-adult household, I have to go back to work in order for us to make it. And it's just, it's sad. It's sad, but it's also nice to know that there's more than just our family out there that is suffering too."

–Nebraska Parent in reference to results
about economic security concerns

Additionally, parents who did not experience challenges also noted their surprise at the results and their empathy for parents and families that were struggling:

"I guess I am always perplexed by the amount of families not having support and needing additional support. It's always great to see many have it and see the value of support systems but then thinking many don't I wonder why or how they make anything work because it's true—it takes a village!"

–Nebraska Parent

"If parents are struggling like I want to know what helps them."

–Nebraska Parent

It was clear from the survey responses and discussions that the results cause many parents to think more about those around them and the struggles they might have in common or how they can help other parents that are struggling.

THE VALUE OF THE DATA FOR PARENTS: EVIDENCE FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES

When parents were asked how they might use the data, many parents saw clear opportunities to use the data in their professional lives. Some parents worked in fields associated with early childhood, but other parents saw touchpoints with their work with parents.

"I'm in the early childhood world. Being able to share with families about how important these activities are and what things they're linked to, like when it says the higher child development scores, things like that, that you can say, 'This is why it's important to do this. And I know you're already doing a lot of things at home,' but just continuing to promote that information and that the importance of those activities"

–Nebraska Parent in reference to home stimulation

"I use some of the data for work. One of the programs that we have is helping to connect parents to resources through their workplace like as an employee benefit. They might get to come to a webinar and learn about child development or learn about discipline strategies, those kinds of things. Sometimes people are very receptive to that idea and sometimes it's more like, you know, 'Why would I want to let my employees spend their time on this thing that's not related to their work?' So we make the argument about parental stress and how that's impacting their employees well-being. I also like the child's well-being and the next generation of Omohans or Nebraskans. I'll be using this data is to make that connection back to a stressed parent is going to impact the development of their child. And why would we not want to protect children by supporting those parents?... This is the kind of data that's really helpful to drive those conversations and like open people's eyes up to the fact that these are important things that we need to be doing for the well-being of our community as a whole."

–Nebraska Parent

"I'm a mental health therapist. I really liked the [data on] stress because I mean that's a significant number of parents that are obviously dealing with some stress... As a mental health clinician, these folks are like my clients. I can just use it specifically for like different programs. I can do groups or any other things besides like the one-on-one therapy that I'm doing. It's helpful to know what's going on with this population and like different questions I can ask at an intake that are geared around, just a little bit more specific to just parenting in general."

–Nebraska Parent

THE VALUE OF DATA TO PARENTS: POTENTIAL FOR ADVOCACY

The final theme that emerged from the parent feedback centered around how parents saw the data being used for advocacy purposes to influence programs and policy. Parents felt the results from Kidsights Data could help policymakers and improve programming to meet the needs of the parents and families in Nebraska.

"If we knew all the data, it gets that discussion going in communities to possibly come up with a solution and to help policymakers... If we knew [the data], we could have discussions about it. And if it was out in the open, it would be a push, you know, cause I'm sure some families don't know there's so much food insecurity in our communities. If they get this information, it could become a community solution to get things changed."

–Nebraska Parent

"I think a lot of our policymakers don't understand how important education is prior to three-years-old. I think they just assume they're just kids. They don't realize the importance of a lot of things are established by three years old. I love this piece of paper. I'm going to take this to my parents. I work a lot with just grabbing our parents and letting them know they can use our Zero to Three program, our Early Head Start... So how awesome to have [the brief] at our fingertips. I love this for my case, and I'll be able to really push that in there. But I think the big guys don't really understand that early childhood education importance at all."

–Nebraska Parent

"I think that 53 percent of parents having trouble covering the basics is very scary and I could see myself using that as like an advocacy tool around policy or you know, just keeping that stat available to share as a reason why we should be supporting programs in our community to support families."

–Nebraska Parent

"This research is particularly alarming knowing the significant number of families who struggle to meet necessities like food and housing as well as the differences between rural and urban locations and levels of education. It highlights the effects of economic insecurity on families' daily lives in the real world and highlights the necessity for specific efforts and laws to address these problems to improve general wellbeing."

–Nebraska Parent

Collecting parent feedback was an insightful exercise to understand what type of information is important to Nebraska families and to hear the different ways in which data can be used. We will continue to engage with parents to develop communication activities and consider different ways to feed the data back to parents.

About Kidsights Data

Kidsights Data is an initiative to build demand for and generate population-level data that tracks the development of children from birth to five in the United States using the Kidsights Measurement Tool. This tool is the first population-based measurement tool of a core set of child development skills for children birth to age five in the United States. For more information about Kidsights Data, located in the College of Public Health at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, visit www.kidsightsdata.org.

