

Great Parents, Great Start **Summary of Parents’ Opinions on Services Received**

2008-09 Program Year

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Highlights

- Data presented here come from one-third of the grantees. We have no way of calculating what percent of their families are represented in the data returned. Responses were received from 386 parents receiving home visiting and 529 parents participating in parent-child playgroups.
- **Frequency of participation.** Parents receiving home visiting were equally likely to receive weekly, biweekly, or monthly visits (about 1/3 in each category). Almost 2/3 of playgroup participants attended weekly groups with 25% attending biweekly and only 10% attending monthly.
- **Parent satisfaction.** Overall, parents were very satisfied with the services they received from their home visitors or playgroup facilitators. Over ¾ of each group said they were ‘very satisfied’ with the discussion of the following topics: ideas of activities to do with their children, the training on child development, questions answered by the home visitors/facilitators, and improving parenting skills.
- **Connections to other resources.** Home visitors were more likely to get requests for basic services, such as food and medical assistance, free or subsidized supplies for babies, utility numbers, and transportation to programs. Referrals for specialized services, such as developmental screening, vision/hearing screening as well as speech therapy and mental health services for children were more likely to arise in playgroup settings. Requests for job search information and parent education could arise from either source.
- **Other early childhood services.** Among parents receiving other early childhood services, families receiving home visits were receiving more health related services, such as immunizations, vision/hearing screening, doctor’s visits, and help related to child health insurance than their playgroup counterparts. However, parents in both groups used these services more than others.
- **Accessibility of early childhood services.** The great majority of parents participating in surveys thought that obtaining access to early childhood services was either “very easy” or “easy” in their community. Among the barriers to access mentioned by a few were lack of awareness or information about programs, limited choices or no appropriate choices for their children, eligibility issues, insurance issues, language barriers, and availability in terms of distance, hours of operation, etc.

Introduction

The Requirements¹

In the 2008-2009 Continuation Grant Plan, grantees were required to participate in surveys. This requirement included community partners who were funded by a grantee to provide services as part of the GP,GS plan. In terms of collecting parent satisfaction with the GP,GS programs, this was interpreted by the MSU Evaluation Team as follows (from the guidance memo sent to grantees in the Spring of 2009):

For the purposes of the state-wide evaluation, home visits and parent-child playgroups are the two services on which data are required.

You can fulfill this requirement in one of three ways:

1. **By July 31, 2009** you may send us a summary report on home visits and parent-child playgroups using your own surveys or other data collection methods. We will incorporate your results into our final report.

OR

2. **Also by July 31, 2009** you may send back a summary report using the Home Visiting and Parent-Child Playgroup surveys (attached) that were developed for your voluntary use in the 2007-2008 program year.

OR

3. **By July 15, 2009** you may send completed surveys back to us and we will summarize the information and send a brief report back to you. If you choose this option, you are responsible for the costs of duplicating the surveys and parent letters and for mailing surveys back to us.

Grantees who did not offer one or the other of these services were thus not required to submit data. Three grantees (5%) did not offer home visiting and 13 (23%) did not offer parent-child playgroups focused on child development topics for which the MSU playgroup survey was designed. Only one grantee did not offer either of these services.

Number of Survey Respondents

A total of 22 grantees (31%) returned Home Visit Opinion Surveys and a total of 20 grantees (36%) returned Parent-Child Playgroup Opinion Surveys; sixteen grantees returned both surveys. Because we have reports from approximately one third of the grantees, we are not able to say that this represents the experience of all 57 grantees.

The information about the number parents who completed home visiting and playgroup surveys is presented in Table 1. It is not surprising that more parents completed playgroup surveys (529 parents) than home visits (386) because the latter were group, not individual services. Unfortunately, there was not enough information in the proposals to calculate a response rate. Because we had no way of knowing

¹ This is substantially the same information as that found in the section on Parents' Opinions in the *Great Parents, Great Start* Evaluation Report – 2008-2009 Program Year.

the number of families receiving each of these services, we could not calculate the percent of parents completing the surveys out of all families receiving the services.

Table 1: Information about the Parents Completing Surveys

	Home visits (22 ISDs)	Parent-child playgroup (20 ISDs)
Number of parents	386	529
Average number of parents responding per grantee	18 (Range 1-56)	29 Range (5-179)

We realize that not all of the adults who participated with children were their parents. However, to reduce confusion in this report, we use the generic word “parent” for all parenting adults, whether they were parents, grandparents, guardians or other people with responsibility for the participating child.

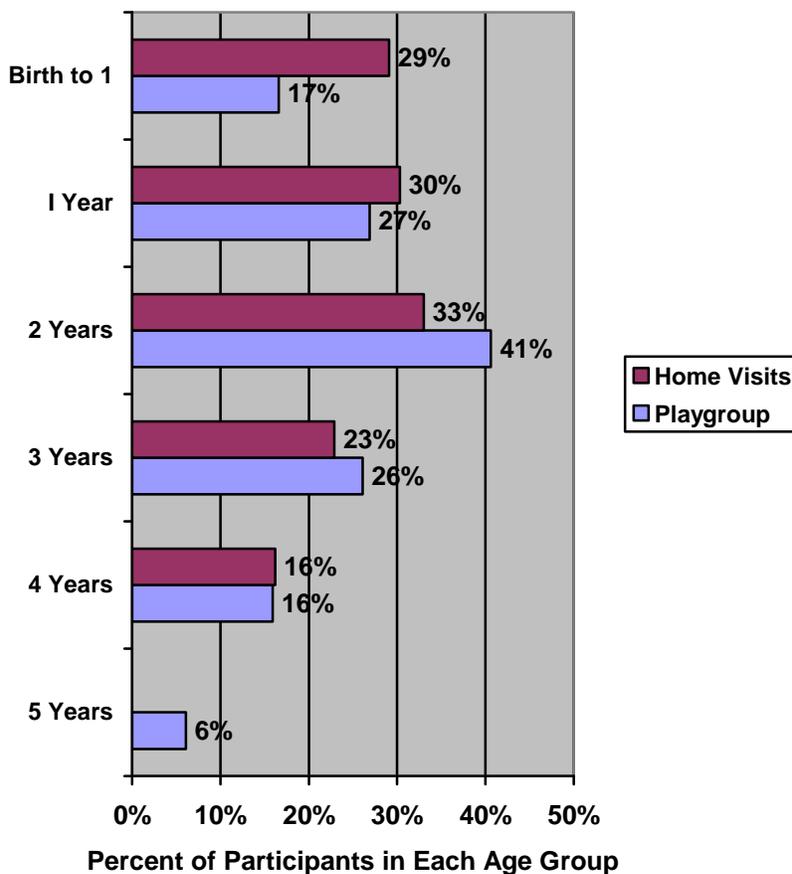
Families' Participation

Participating Children

What were the ages of children participating?

About 388 children from birth to 5 years of age received home visits and 559 children aged birth to 5 years participated in the parent-child playgroups. Participation in home visits was fairly evenly distributed among all age groups. In playgroups, about 40% of the participating children were 2 years old, with the remaining 60% distributed about equally among the other age groups. For both home visiting and parent-child playgroups, there were fewer participating children in the 4-5-year group (the oldest group) compared to the other age groups. Figure 1 shows a comparison of the ages of children reported to receive each of these services. Note that the ages were reported differently in each of the surveys. The figure reflects the way ages were reported in the playgroup survey; in the home visiting survey ages were reported at birth to 1 year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, etc.

Figure 1: A Comparison of the Ages of Children Participating in Home Visits and in Playgroups



More than half of the participants in both groups reported that only one child in their families received the home visits and participated in the playgroup, i.e., 69% and 65%, respectively. The average number of children per family in both groups who received these services was 1.4.

How often did the participants receive services?

Home Visits

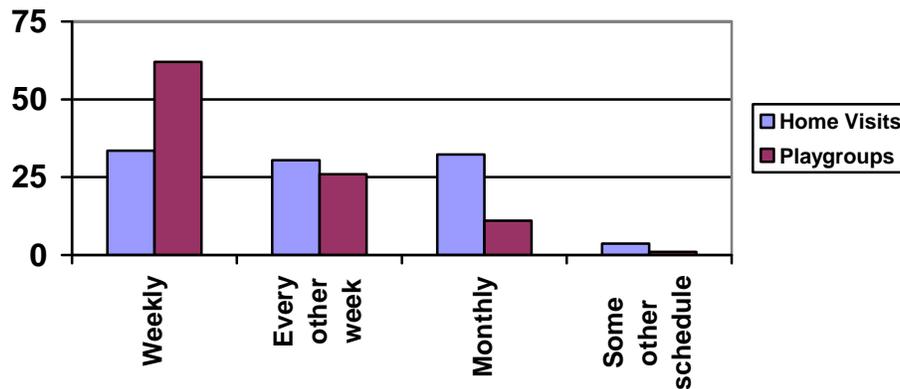
About an equal number of parents reported receiving home visits weekly (34%), every other week (31%), and monthly (32%). A very small number of participants mentioned other schedules such as one time only, when needed, every two-months, etc.

Playgroups

About 56% of the playgroup parents said that their child attended more than one playgroup; of those who were attending more than one playgroup, about 67% of parents mentioned that their child attended two different playgroups, and another 22% attended more than three playgroups.

Almost two-thirds of participants (62%) reported attending a playgroup session on a weekly basis. Figure 2 compares the frequency of participation for those families receiving home visits and those families attending playgroups. As can be seen, most families attended playgroups weekly with 25% attending every other week and only about 10% attending monthly group. On the other hand, about equal numbers of families received home visits weekly, biweekly or monthly.

Figure 2: A Comparison of the Frequency of Families' Participation in Home Visits and Play Groups



Home Visits and Playgroups

This section discusses the topics that were common to both home visit and playgroup surveys as well as those that were unique to one or the other.

Common Survey Topics

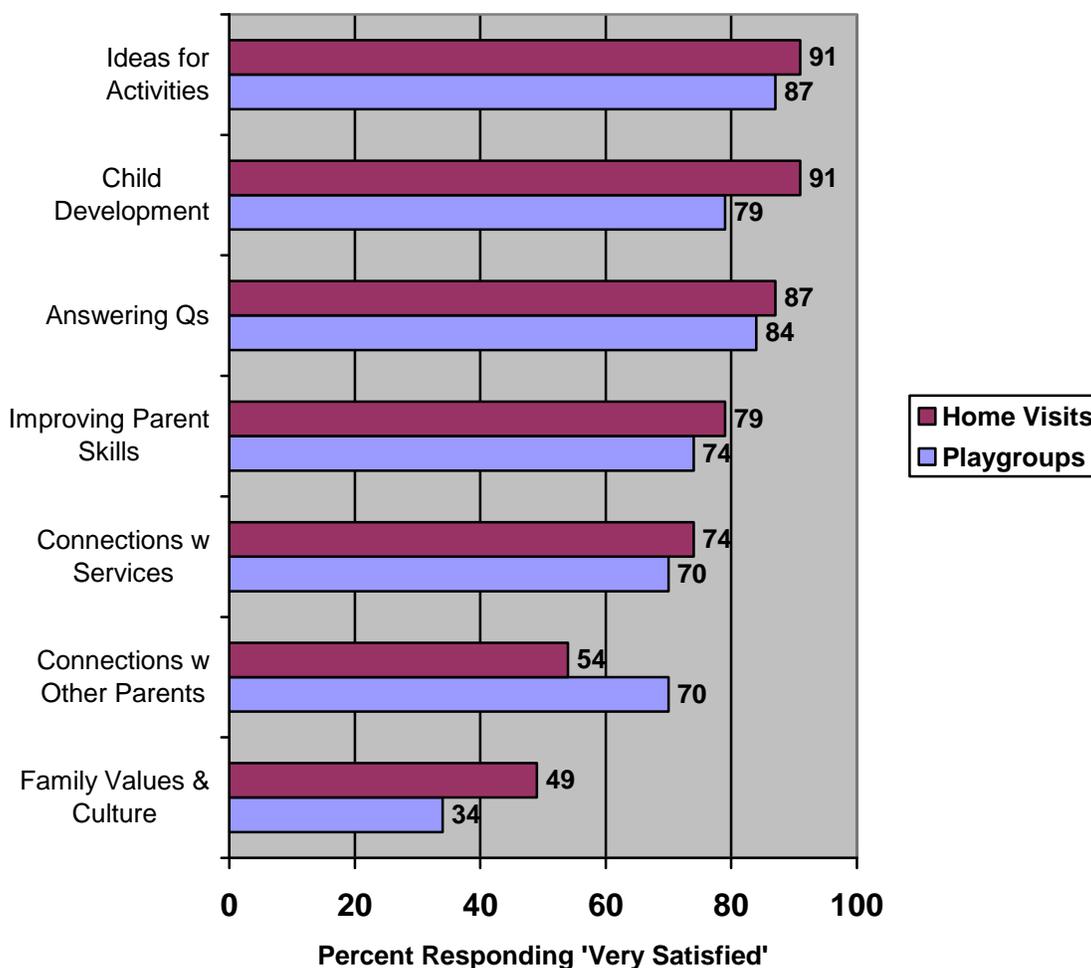
How satisfied were the parents with home visits and playgroup?

Both surveys asked parents to rate their satisfaction level on various topics that the home visitors and the playgroup facilitators addressed with the families. Satisfaction was measured on a scale of 1 to 4, with '1' being 'very dissatisfied' and '4' being 'very satisfied'. The participants also had an option to choose 'No answer' in case the home visitors or the playgroup facilitators did not discuss that topic with the families.

Seven topics in which parent satisfaction was assessed were common in both surveys: 1) teaching about child development; 2) improving parenting skills; 3) answering questions pertaining to child development; 4) discussing the importance of family values and culture; 5) providing ideas for activities; 6) helping you connect with other parents; and 7) helping you get other services that your family or child needs. In both groups, the staff did not discuss family values and culture and its impact on parenting to any great extent; 32% of the parents receiving home visits and 51% of the parents who were members of playgroup recorded "no answer" for this topic. Overall, the participants reported high satisfaction level with discussion of these topics.

Figure 3 shows the percent of those who responded who said they were "very satisfied" with the discussion of these seven topics during their home visits or playgroups. Participants from both groups were most satisfied with discussions of ideas of activities to do with their children, training on child development, questions answered by the home visitors/facilitators, and improving parenting skills; for all of these topics over three-quarters of parents in both groups responded that they were "very satisfied". The participants in home visits showed a slightly higher level of satisfaction than their play-group counterparts in most areas. It is not surprising that more parents in playgroups were very satisfied with connections to other parents, as this can be attributed to the group participation aspect of parent-child playgroups.

Figure 3: Percent of Parents' *Very Satisfied* Responses to Common Home Visit and Playgroup topics



There were four topics that were not common across the two surveys, but dealt with satisfaction of some aspect of either service so they are included here. Parents receiving home visiting were asked about their satisfaction with the abilities of home visitors to prepare their children for preschool/kindergarten; this was not asked of parents taking their children to playgroups. Two thirds of the parents were very satisfied, but about 22% participants choose the “no answer” option. This can be attributed to the fact that most children receiving home visits were very young and were not ready for either preschool or kindergarten.

On the playgroup survey, parents’ satisfaction was assessed on three topics that were believed to improve the group experience for parents and their children: 1) developing children’s social skills, 2) treating all parents as important people, and 3) providing time for parents to share their ideas and thoughts about being a parent. Parents were very satisfied with their group facilitator’s ability to treat all of them as important (91%), improve their child’s ability to interact with other children (89%) and the opportunity to share with other parents (77%).

Did families receive any other assistance?

About 50% of the parents receiving home visiting mentioned that they received other services with the help of their home visitor. Only about one-third of parents participating in playgroups reported receiving services as a result of a referral from a playgroup. The types of services are somewhat different, as Table 2 shows. Home visitors were more likely to get requests for basic services, such as food and medical assistance, free or subsidized supplies for babies, utility numbers, and transportation to programs. Referrals for specialized services, such as developmental screening, vision/hearing screening as well as speech therapy and mental health services for children were more likely to arise in playgroup settings. Requests for job search information and parent education could arise from both sources.

Table 2: Services Received as a Result of Referral

<i>Home Visits</i>	<i>Parent-Child Playgroups</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Referrals to Early Head Start/Head Start program ▪ Food assistance program ▪ Medical assistance programs ▪ Getting free or subsidized supplies for babies (such as diapers, clothes, toys) ▪ Nutritionists ▪ Job search for parents ▪ Transportation to different places (school, doctor's visits) ▪ Translation of official language ▪ Advocacy for parents and children ▪ Teen parent program ▪ Special education/services ▪ List of utility numbers ▪ Couple counseling classes ▪ Parenting classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Early On</i>® services for very young children ▪ Free books ▪ Free developmental screening ▪ Vision/hearing screening ▪ Referral for preschools ▪ Mental health services for children ▪ Home Visits ▪ Literacy activities (library/books/magazines) ▪ Speech therapy ▪ Information on resources and activities in the area ▪ Parent education (Love and Logic etc.) ▪ Information about jobs for parents

Unique Survey Topics

What subjects did the home visitors discuss?

Only parents completing the home visitor survey were asked what topics the home visitor discussed with them. They were given the following list of topics which are presented in order of frequency of responses:

- 92% - Child's development
- 75% - Improving parenting skills
- 65% - Behavior and discipline
- 62% - Safety
- 60% - Preparation for preschool
- 59% - Health and nutrition

The parents had the option to list as many subjects as were discussed with their home visitors. About 18% participants reported other subjects of discussion, which are summarized here: maternal health, mother's education, infant massage, development delays, reading books, couple relationships, family communication, housing and emotional support to the families.

What one thing would the parents like to improve in the playgroup?

Parents were asked to cite one thing they would like to improve in the playgroup. Less than half of the parents (42%) completing the playgroup survey responded to this question. Of those who responded, less than half (about 43% or 18% of all parents) reported positive comments such as "everything was fine," "remarkable," or "no need to improve." The suggested improvements are:

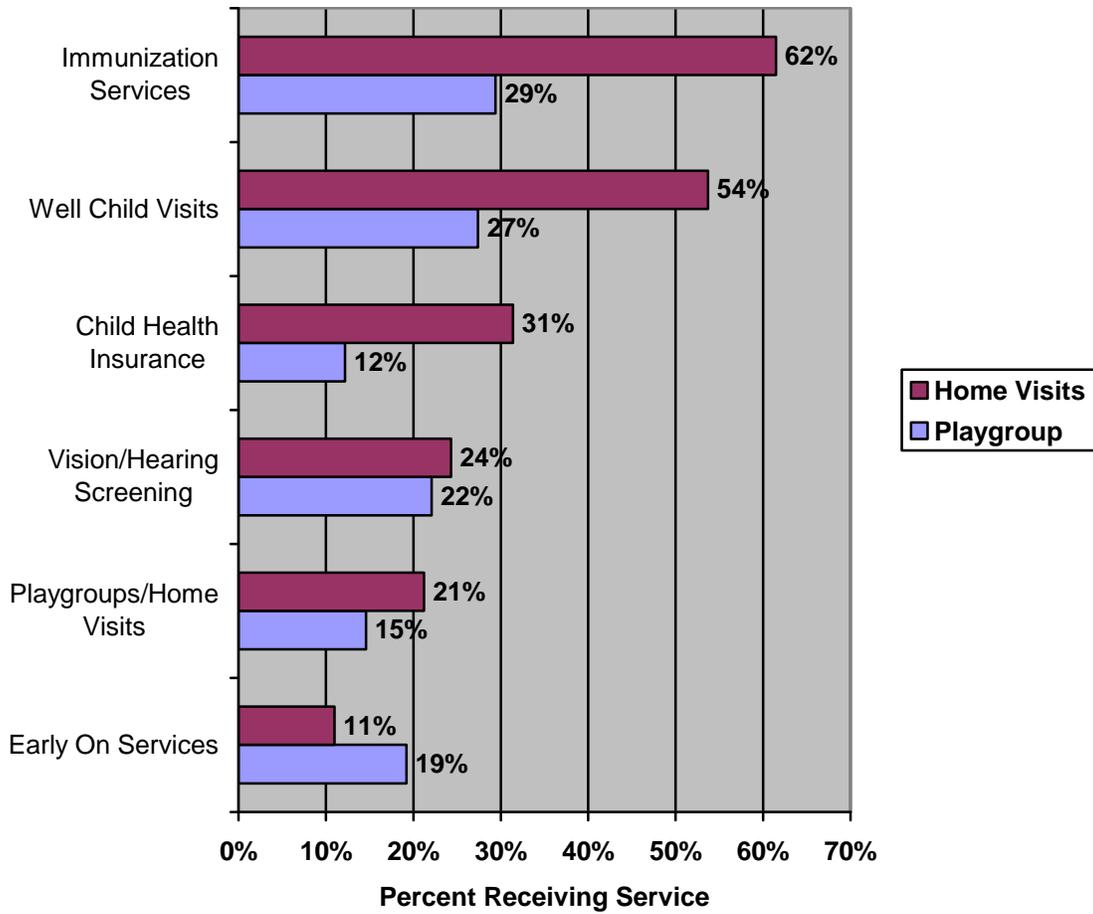
- Increase time and frequency of the playgroup
- Provide additional assistant to help the facilitators
- Have closer range of ages for children in the playgroups
- Make the playgroups more accessible in all neighborhoods
- Add more age-appropriate games/activities
- Have more flexibility in schedules tailored to individual child's needs
- Encourage more parental involvement including fathers
- Have bigger/spacious areas for the playgroups for safety and movement
- Have conducive environment (temperature, designated area, play equipments)
- Have more open communication between parents and teachers/facilitators
- Have more structured play sessions
- Emphasize parents' networks outside of the playgroups

Other Early Childhood Services

Have the participants received any other early childhood services that were *not* related to participating in either home visiting or playgroups?

Parents taking both surveys were asked about other early childhood services that they received. About 55% parents mentioned receiving additional early childhood services. A comparison of the additional services received by approximately 20% or more of the families receiving either home visits or playgroups are shown in Figure 4. The Home Visit/Playgroup item shows how many families receiving one service also received the other. It is clear that the families receiving home visits were receiving more health related services, such as immunizations, vision/hearing screening, doctor's visits, and help related to child health insurance than their playgroup counterparts. On average, parents in playgroup were also making use of these services more than any other services. A number of other services were used by less than 20% of either group. Specialized services, such as Early Childhood Mental Health Services were the least used services by both the groups.

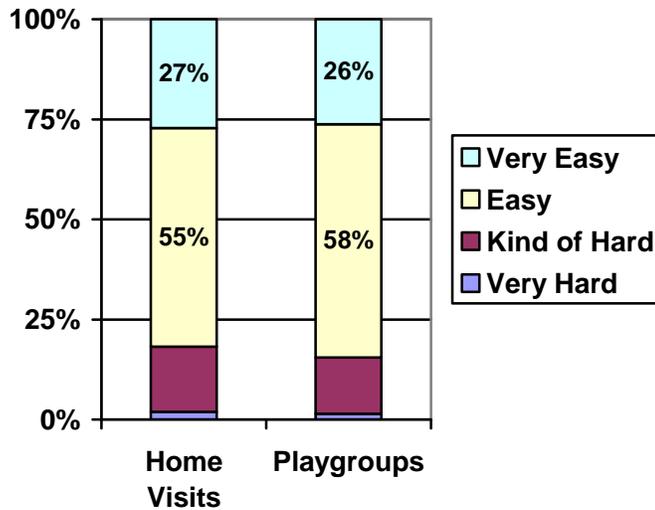
Figure 4: A Comparison of the Services Reported by ~20% or more of Families in Either Group



Was it easy to get the early childhood services the parents wanted in the community?

Overall, almost all parents mentioned that it was either ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ to get the early childhood services in their community. Less than 20% parents in each group thought that it was ‘kind of hard’ to obtain these services (Figure 5)

Figure 5: Ease of Finding/Receiving Early Childhood Services



Reasons for difficulty in availing the early childhood services in the community

We asked the parents of both groups the reasons why it was ‘kind of hard’ and ‘very hard’ to get the early childhood services in their communities. In Table 3, we have listed the common reasons that the parents using both services mentioned followed by the reasons mentioned by one group but not the other. A few parents also mentioned that they were new in the community.

Table 3: Reasons for difficulty in getting the EC services in the community

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Reasons</i>
Both groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited choices of programs in certain communities • Unaware of the programs in the community • Unable to pay for the services • Child not qualified for some services (due to age and income level) • Lack of transport (sometimes long distances)

Table 3: Reasons for difficulty in getting the EC services in the community

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Reasons</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long waiting lists• Lack of readily available information about the programs• Lack of time/conflict with parents' routines
Those Receiving Home Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language barriers for some parents (lack of interpreters)• Lack of coverage by insurance
Those Receiving Playgroups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of age-appropriate programs in the communities• Lack of specialized services for special needs children• Barriers due to immigrant status (language, long working hours, insurance, length of stay)