

Experience with Family Services at Wilder's Child Development Center

Survey Results from CDC Parents

Introduction

Wilder is an incredible place and a great asset to me and my family. I've enjoyed every bit of being a part of the Wilder family. – CDC parent

The Wilder Child Development Center (CDC) offers parents whose children attend the center additional support services and referrals to foster their family's overall wellbeing. The CDC's Family Services Coordinator (whose role is currently supported through the Community Resource Center grant from the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families) conducts outreach with parents, identifies needs, and connects families with needed direct supports and referrals to outside resources.

To understand the experience and impact of the Family Services on families, Wilder Research administered an online survey to families in June-July 2026 that asked parents about the direct supports and referrals they received, the helpfulness of those supports and referrals, and their impact on their family's stability and wellbeing. A total of 30 parents out of 51 completed the survey, for a response rate of 59%. Parents received a \$20 gift card as a thank you for their participation.

The following summarizes the key findings from the survey.

Key findings

Of the 30 parents who participated in the Family Services survey, 26 (87%) said they had used or received the Family Services offered by Wilder's Child Development Center. One parent had not used the services, and 3 were unsure if they had used them (Figure 1). The parent who had not used or received Family Services said it was because they had not heard of it or did not know what it was.

1. Use of Family Services (N=30)

Have you ever used/received the Family Services offered by Wilder's Child Development Center?	N	Percentage
Yes	26	87%
No	1	3%
Unsure	3	10%

Referrals

Getting help and finding services has really improved [for our family]. – CDC parent

The most common referral parents received, by far, was related to paying for childcare, such as the Childcare Assistance Program and Early Learning Scholarships (79% of parents). About one-quarter or more of parents also received referrals to help with housing expenses (31%), food shelves (28%), mental health support (24%), and transportation (24%). See Figure 2 for a full list of referrals received.

In general, parents found the referrals they received “very helpful”, with only a few parents finding some of the referral sources to be “somewhat helpful.” One parent reported that their referrals were “not helpful” because they did not ask for or need the specific referrals (Figure 3).

2. Referrals received (N=29)

Type of referral	N	Percentage
Childcare (e.g., Childcare Assistance Program, Early Learning scholarships)	23	79%
Housing expenses (rent and utilities)	9	31%
Food shelves	8	28%
Mental health	7	24%
Transportation	7	24%
Education	6	21%
Household goods	5	17%
Medical/dental	4	14%
Employment	3	10%
Legal assistance	3	10%
Parenting	1	3%
Social/recreational camps	1	3%
Other (not specified)	1	3%
None of the above	2	7%

3. Helpfulness of referrals

Type of referral	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful	Have not followed up on yet
Childcare (e.g., Childcare Assistance Program, Early Learning Scholarships) (n=23)	21	1	1	0
Housing expenses (rent and utilities) (n=9)	9	0	0	0
Food shelves (n=8)	7	0	0	1
Mental health (n=7)	6	0	1	0
Transportation (n=6)	6	0	0	0
Education (n=6)	5	1	0	0
Household goods (n=5)	5	0	0	0
Medical/dental (n=3)	2	0	1	0
Employment (n=3)	1	1	1	0
Legal assistance (n=3)	2	0	1	0
Parenting (n=1)	1	0	0	0
Social/recreational camps (n=1)	1	0	0	0
Other (not specified) (n=1)	1	0	0	0

Note. All of the “not helpful” responses came from the same respondent.

Direct support from the CDC

My family has avoided foreclosure due to the direct payments from the Wilder Foundation. Thank you! – CDC parent

Two-thirds of parents (66%) also received direct support from the CDC related to childcare, such as Childcare Assistance Program and Early Learning Scholarship application and redetermination support. More than half of parents (59%) also received support related to basic needs, and about one-quarter or more received help with household goods (28%), housing expenses (24%), and transportation (24%; Figure 4). As with referrals, the vast majority of parents said the direct support they received was “very helpful” (Figure 5).

4. Direct Supports received from the CDC (N=29)

Type of direct support	N	Percentage
Childcare (e.g., Childcare Assistance Program and Early Learning Scholarship application and redetermination support)	19	66%
Basic needs	17	59%
Household goods	8	28%
Housing expenses (rent and utilities)	7	24%
Transportation	7	24%
Education	4	14%
Legal assistance	3	10%
Medical/dental	3	10%
Employment	1	3%
None of the above	3	10%

5. Helpfulness of direct supports

Type of direct support	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful	Have not followed up on yet
Childcare (e.g., Childcare Assistance Program and Early Learning Scholarship application and redetermination support) (n=19)	18	1	0	0
Basic needs (n=17)	16	1	0	0
Household goods (n=8)	8	0	0	0
Transportation (n=7)	7	0	0	0
Housing expenses (rent and utilities) (n=7)	5	2	0	0
Education (n=4)	4	0	0	0
Medical/dental (n=3)	3	0	0	0
Legal assistance (n=3)	2	0	0	1
Employment (n=1)	1	0	0	0

In addition, about one-third of parents (35%) said they received direct financial support from Wilder. Of those nine parents, eight (89%) said it improved their family's situation or wellbeing "a lot" (Figure 6).

6. Financial support (N=26)

	N	Percentage
Received financial support from Wilder	9	35%
Did this financial support improve your family's situation or wellbeing? (n=9)		
Yes, a lot	8	89%
Yes, somewhat	1	11%
No	0	0%

Impact of Family Services

My income has increased. My son has hit more milestones, for example, he is fully potty trained and can recognize his name! I am able to provide a stable home for my son! – CDC parent

Receiving childcare services, the scholarships as well as the care, support, and education from Wilder is astronomical. This has helped shape my entire family household, not just the parent and the child attending. It builds structure and routine for all; it provides safety and well-being. The scholarship assists with financial goals and planning and... hopefully/eventually saving, which is a goal for most. Thank you, Wilder staff and supporters! – CDC parent

They help my child in so many ways. It has boosted her confidence to be at the Wilder Foundation CDC. She now loves school and gets ready every day to go. They also help me financially [and] pay some of my rent that needed to be paid. Me and my family did not lose our housing because of their help. And they helped get me glasses that I could afford for my little daughter so she could see.
– CDC parent

After meeting with parents, the Family Services Coordinator follows up with families via a recap email about the services, referrals, and next steps discussed in the meeting. Most parents found this email recap “very helpful” (69%) or “somewhat helpful” (14%). One parent (3%) said it was not helpful, and 14% of parents said they had not received an email recap. When asked what, if anything, would be more helpful to receive, parents had few concrete suggestions, with one parent identifying “more teachers” (Figure 7).

7. Helpfulness of email recap about services/referrals (N=29)

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful	Have not received an email recap
How helpful is the email recap the Family Services Coordinator sends out about supports, referrals, and next steps after you meet?	69%	14%	3%	14%

Note. The five respondents who responded “somewhat helpful” or “not helpful” were asked what would be more helpful to receive. Four respondents provided responses: emails are fine; more teachers; unsure at the moment; and very helpful.

Overall, most parents said the referrals, direct supports, and/or financial support they received increased their family’s stability and wellbeing “very much” (55%) or “quite a bit” (24%; Figure 8).

8. Impact of Family Services on overall family stability and wellbeing (N=29)



When asked to describe in their own words how the Family Services impacted them, families most commonly described general help or improvement that they experienced as a result of Wilder and its services (n=8). Five parents cited the impact of the financial support and stabilization it provided their families, while four parents noted how they received mortgage/rent support and other housing assistance that stabilized their housing. Several parents also described how the Family Services through the CDC helped address critical basic needs, such as food (n=3), transportation (n=3), household items (n=2), and children’s needs, such as diapers and glasses (n=2). Figure 9 includes a full list of the ways in which parents were impacted by the Family Services.

9. Open-ended responses: Impact of the Family Services (N=27)

Coded themes	N
Received help/experienced improvement (generally) because of Wilder and services	8
Received/experienced financial support and stabilization	5
Stabilized housing, avoided foreclosure/eviction, etc.	4
Received food/groceries	3
Received transportation support	3
Received household items/necessities	2
Received support to purchase items for child(ren) (e.g., diapers, glasses)	2
Support allowed family to achieve goals	2
Child(ren) made developmental progress (e.g., achieved developmental milestones)	2
Child(ren) felt welcome at school, confident/excited about school	2
No impact/didn't know about the services	2
Other impacts	9

Note. The above represents the coded themes based on the open-ended responses to the question: "Finally, we would like to know more about the impact of the Family Services on your family. How have the Family Services you have received made a difference for you and your family? What has changed or improved because of the Family Services you have received?"

"Other" impacts include the following, mentioned by one parent each: structure and routine; safety and wellbeing; stress relief; increase in income; childcare scholarships helping pay for childcare; financial knowledge gained through financial literacy class; educational stability for child(ren); support helped parent go back to college; and childcare allowed parent to work.

Overall, many parents shared gratitude and praise for Wilder and the Family Services they received, citing the program and staff as "helpful", "caring", and "awesome" (Figure 10).

10. Open-ended responses: Additional comments about the Family Services (N=21)

Coded themes	N
General thanks/praise for Wilder and services	13
Nothing else to add	5
Promote/talk about services more	2
Provide more funding for parents	1

Note. The above represents the coded themes based on the open-ended responses to the question: "Is there anything else you would like to add about the Family Services offered by Wilder's Child Development Center?"

I love this place. I feel good and safe with my child there. The staff is very helpful and awesome. I am happy to know that my child will be moving on to the next class with this facility in September. – CDC parent

So happy to be a part of this family!! They have been so helpful for my family through different struggles; love all of them!! – CDC parent

I'm very grateful to be able to utilize these opportunities and services. – CDC parent

I was overjoyed and surprised by the amount of support that is available to families. Had I known ahead of time that these levels of support were available, I would have switched to Wilder services years ago. – CDC parent

Conclusions and recommendations

Results demonstrate that parents are utilizing the supports and referrals offered through Wilder's Child Development Center, particularly those related to childcare assistance, and find them very helpful.

Opportunities for additional follow-up include:

- **Ensure that all families are made aware of the Family Services that are available.** While only a few parents noted that they were not aware of the services, it's also possible that some of the parents who did not participate in the survey are similarly unaware. Promote services using multiple forms/formats (e.g., flyers/posters, emails, texts, in-person conversations) from different sources (e.g., universal messaging/postings; communication from the Family Services Coordinator, teachers, and other staff) to ensure all families who want services have the opportunity to receive them.
- **Consider additional opportunities to recap parent meetings.** The email recap is helpful for most, but not all, families, and a few families report not receiving the email recap. Although the follow-up survey responses did not provide any specific suggestions, consider alternate formats for providing the recap, such as texts or written summaries, depending on the parents' preferences, or presenting the information in the emails differently to ensure it is clear and accessible to all parents.
- **Seek out opportunities for feedback.** Most families are very satisfied with and grateful for the services and support they have received. To ensure continued satisfaction and identify any potential obstacles for families in accessing supports or referrals or other services they might need, regularly gather formal and/or informal feedback from parents. This can be done through one-on-one conversations with the Family Services Coordinator or other staff, focus groups, surveys, or bead voting. Bead voting is a method of collecting "votes" from participants using physical tokens and labeled containers whereby participants answer a question by putting beads or other small tokens in jars representing different responses to a question. By visualizing their votes, bead voting demonstrates that participant ideas are heard and valued.

For more information

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