In 2021 and 2022, The Endowment for Health, community members in New Hampshire, and Child Trends worked together on the Early Childhood Equity Movement (ECEM). The goal of the ECEM is to improve access to services, like early care and education, healthcare, and other family services (e.g., housing or SNAP/EBT) for diverse families in New Hampshire. We led three virtual group chats (also called focus groups) with African American families last year. Families shared both community strengths and challenges in accessing services.

Community strengths:

• **Having available resources is a relief.** Families liked having access to reliable resources for their needs, like early support services for their children. Service groups like the Moore Center make sure that families have all the information they need for the development of their children.

• **Kind and helpful people improve experiences.** African American families shared that many of the staff members in services for education, child care, and healthcare were kind and helpful. This improved their experiences learning about and getting services.

• **Families use community connections when services can’t help them.** Community connections like friends and family help African American families access care or save money when getting services.

Community challenges:

• **Feelings of discrimination and mistrust make it hard to get services.** African American families shared that they had a tough time getting services because they felt places would discriminate against them because of their identity and economic standing. African American fathers also felt that service providers did not take them seriously because of their gender.

• **Getting services can be confusing and frustrating.** It can be hard for families to know what they need to do to get services, and who they can talk to for help. They need to fill out many documents and applications. A lot of families have a tough time getting services because of these processes.

• **Services are costly.** Getting access to child care services can be expensive. Many African American families shared that cost was a big problem for them in accessing child care. When their income increases slightly, they might not qualify for child care assistance, which can make it hard for them to be able to enroll their children in programs.

• **COVID-19 made these problems worse.** These problems have been around for many years, but COVID-19 made them worse. It made it harder for families to get help because agencies did not pick up the phone and the offices were closed. African American families were worried about the quality of telehealth services, especially with developmental diagnoses for their children.

Sign up to receive updates about this work: endowmentforhealth.org/early-childhood-equity-movement

The next phase of the Early Childhood Equity Movement is to spread lessons learned then take action to help African American families. This movement is growing, and all are welcome to join – every person can help.