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 one virtual group chat (also called focus group) with Swahili speaking families last year. Families shared both community strengths and challenges in accessing services.

Community strengths:

- **Agencies are helpful in getting services.** Dealing with unknown systems can be hard, especially in a new country. For the families who qualified, resettlement agencies like the International Institute of New England helped them find services. They were a great source of information about community resources like early education programs, cash and rent assistance, food stamps, health care, and more.

Community challenges:

- **Lack of translators make it hard for families to get services.** Families shared that they had a hard time getting services because many places do not have translators to help them communicate. They have a hard time filling out paperwork and understanding what different documents were saying.

- **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 need to 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 and can take long to access.** Child care and healthcare services can be expensive. Many families shared that cost was a big problem for them. They also said that they have to wait a long time for services.

- **Quality of services and lack of follow-up.** Families were worried about the quality of telehealth services, especially with developmental diagnoses for their children. They also shared that new providers would refer the wrong medication for their child. They felt there was not enough follow-up from providers.

- **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. Families had a tough time using online services because this technology was new to them.

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

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