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Delaware PDG B-5 User Experience Needs Assessment

OCTOBER 2019

THE STATE OF DELAWARE / EY-PARTHENON / IDEO

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Executive Summary

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Background

Over the past decade, the state of Delaware has taken many steps to improve its early childhood care and education system, including redesigning its quality rating and improvement system, expanding home visiting programs, and strengthening state licensing requirements. The state has come a long way, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

Many Delawareans struggle to take care of their families. Most see it as their responsibility, and too often, their failure. To get by, they cobble together solutions, and in the process, sometimes voluntarily demote themselves and pass up better job opportunities. Or, they rely on a patchwork of family, friends, and neighbors to care for their children. This can be inconsistent and difficult to coordinate, and the stress of the arrangement affects families tremendously. The high cost of care doesn't even have the silver lining for child care workers, who are so poorly compensated that if they have children of their own, their child care costs would eat up half their pay or more.

In July 2019, the state agencies responsible for early childhood care and education in Delaware began a three month collaboration with EY-Parthenon and IDEO to better understand the needs of families navigating the early childhood system. Specifically, IDEO focused on families as customers of early learning and care services, doing qualitative research to understand what families value and need the most. This executive summary, along with its associated report, is the outcome of IDEO's research. It is meant to offer a vision for policy makers, child care providers, educators, and communities to embark on the critical work to ask, listen to, and actively engage families in order to support them. Delaware's families are knowledgeable partners within the system, and engaging with them deeply is the first step to adopting a "service mindset".

Early childhood care and education in Delaware

Families need early childhood care and education to be accessible, affordable, and high quality. Yet, that convergence of factors is so rare, families feel "lucky" when they find it.

Finding child care options is a never-ending pursuit because "accessible", "affordable", and "high quality" are dynamic measures.

"It was affordable"

...but not since I lost my Purchase of Care after getting a raise at work.

"It was accessible"

...until the hours changed at dad's job.

"It did seem to be high quality"

...until our favorite teachers left.

Families are always looking for child care options with hours that better match their lives and curricular approaches that better match their children's needs. The constant work, stress, and anxiety of finding care weigh heavily on Delaware's most vulnerable families. While the state is mostly focused on the care of children, it's the adults in the system who need better support, guidance, and options.

Executive Summary

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Family needs

The care offerings in Delaware are tough to navigate and evaluate. Parents bear the tax of sifting through the various programs, processes, and requirements. For many families, the cost is so great that it makes parents wonder if they should just quit their jobs and stay home with their kids.

Parents are made even more anxious because they hear bad stories about kids getting hurt in child care facilities, and as a result, trust in the system is low. Families often feel judged by child care providers rather than supported and welcomed. Families want their child care options to be easy, supportive, and welcoming.

They also want childcare providers to treat their children as their own. Accessibility and cost are important, but families want a trustworthy caregiver above all else. Survey results concluded that families are most concerned with quality — more than cost, reliability, and availability combined. When asked what they value the most, ten times more parents answered “a caregiver they can trust” than “a caregiver who is licensed”.

A path forward

The state tracks licensing, but what families actually care about is trust. The state runs Purchase of Care, but what families actually care about is whether it all works out in their monthly budget. The state must shift from a policy mindset to a service mindset. Rather than asking what is possible in terms of policy, the state must ask, “what do most people need the most?”

Here’s what most people need the most— a universally accessible system that truly values care work, and treats child care like the long term investment that it is. Care work is among the most important work humans do for one another. The future will require the state of Delaware to be bold in its investments, and the return on those investments will mean a new, hopeful future for Delaware’s families. Investing in Delaware’s future will have ripple effects for us all.

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Early childhood care and education
is the single best investment
Delaware can make for its future.

To make the most of this
investment, Delawareans must
undergo a shift in perspective.



Early childhood success has never just been about children; it's about parents, families, and communities. It's about early-morning commutes, lunchtime check-ins, and bedtime routines.

Investing in Delaware's children requires us to understand the needs of Delaware's adults.



The following report is meant to give you insight into the lives of Delaware's families. By understanding their lives, we can see how early childhood success is built on the success of a system—a system that involves not just children, but also grandparents, car seats, and websites.

Investing in the early childhood system won't just raise Delaware's children.

It will raise the entire state.



Chapter 1

Meet Delaware's Families

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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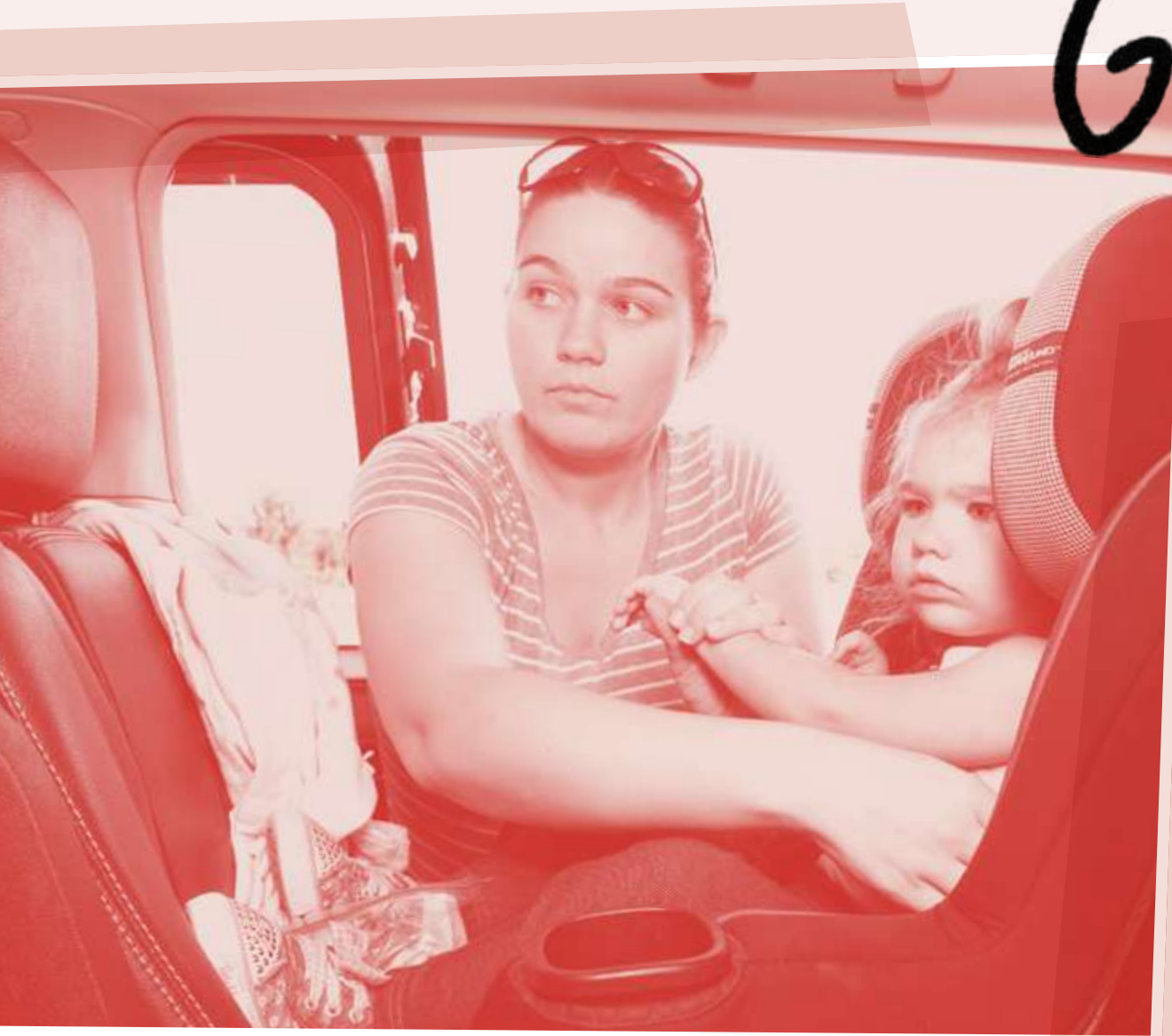


Grace

AGE 27

LOCATION **Dover, DE**

Grace has three
kids, and they
all have different
needs. As a single
mother, her days
are spent trying
to juggle them.





She wakes up at 6:30am before waking up her six-year-old, Austin, five-year-old, Annabelle, and two-year-old, Gabriella. Her fourth is due in a few weeks.



Grace has the help of her mother, who arrives at the house before 8am every morning to bring Austin and Annabelle to school. After seeing them off, Grace straps Gabriella into her car seat and heads to child care.

Grace works at a cafeteria at a local school. Unlike her last job at Lowes, Grace appreciates the predictable schedule which lets her pick her kids up from school.



Because Grace is on her own, the family does nearly everything together. As Austin visits the dentist, Grace helps Annabelle with her homework in the waiting room.

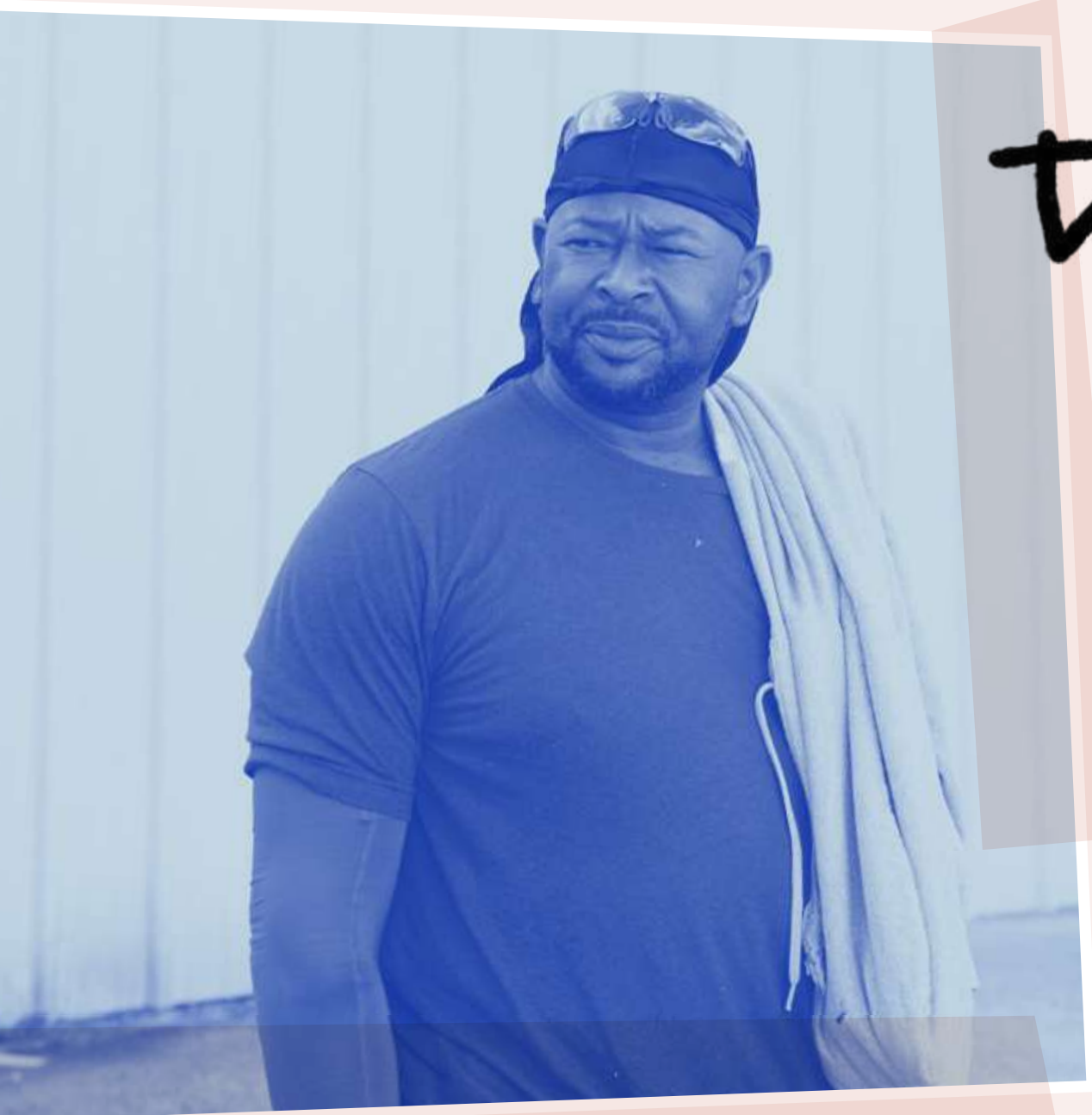


This is Grace during the school year. It may seem like she's holding it together. After all, she's got family in the area, her kids are all enrolled in early care and education programs, and they are happy. Most nights, Austin and Annabelle ride their bike while Grace pushes Gabriella around the neighborhood.

But the threads of support keeping Grace afloat are thin. Over the summer, Grace has to work another job at Wawa in order to maintain her child care subsidies. With so many responsibilities and another kid on the way, Grace barely has time to sleep—let alone build a life of her own.

To support families like Grace's, we must provide options for early childhood care and education that work for their lives.





DIALO

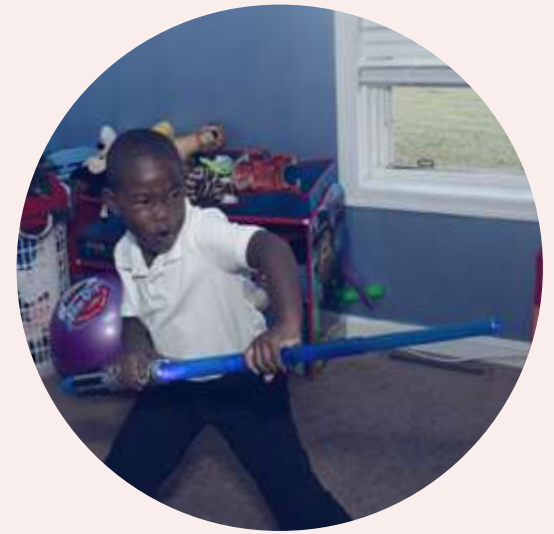
AGE **44**

LOCATION **Seaford, DE**

Dialo leaves for work
at 5:30am before
Chris, his five-year-
old son, wakes up.
Chris's days are
defined by a series
of transitions.



Ma-Mom, Chris' grandmother, is responsible for getting him ready for school. But Ma-Mom has to get to work by 8am, so she hands him off to a family friend, Twila, to take him to school.



Twila teaches at Chris' school, so he hangs out in her classroom as she gets ready for the day before she hands him off to his kindergarten teacher.

Ma-Mom, who also works in early childhood care and education, is stressed. Several of the staff at the center where she works have quit in the first month of the school year. But given what the center pays its employees, high turnover is the norm. At 3pm, she picks Chris up from school and fixes him a snack.

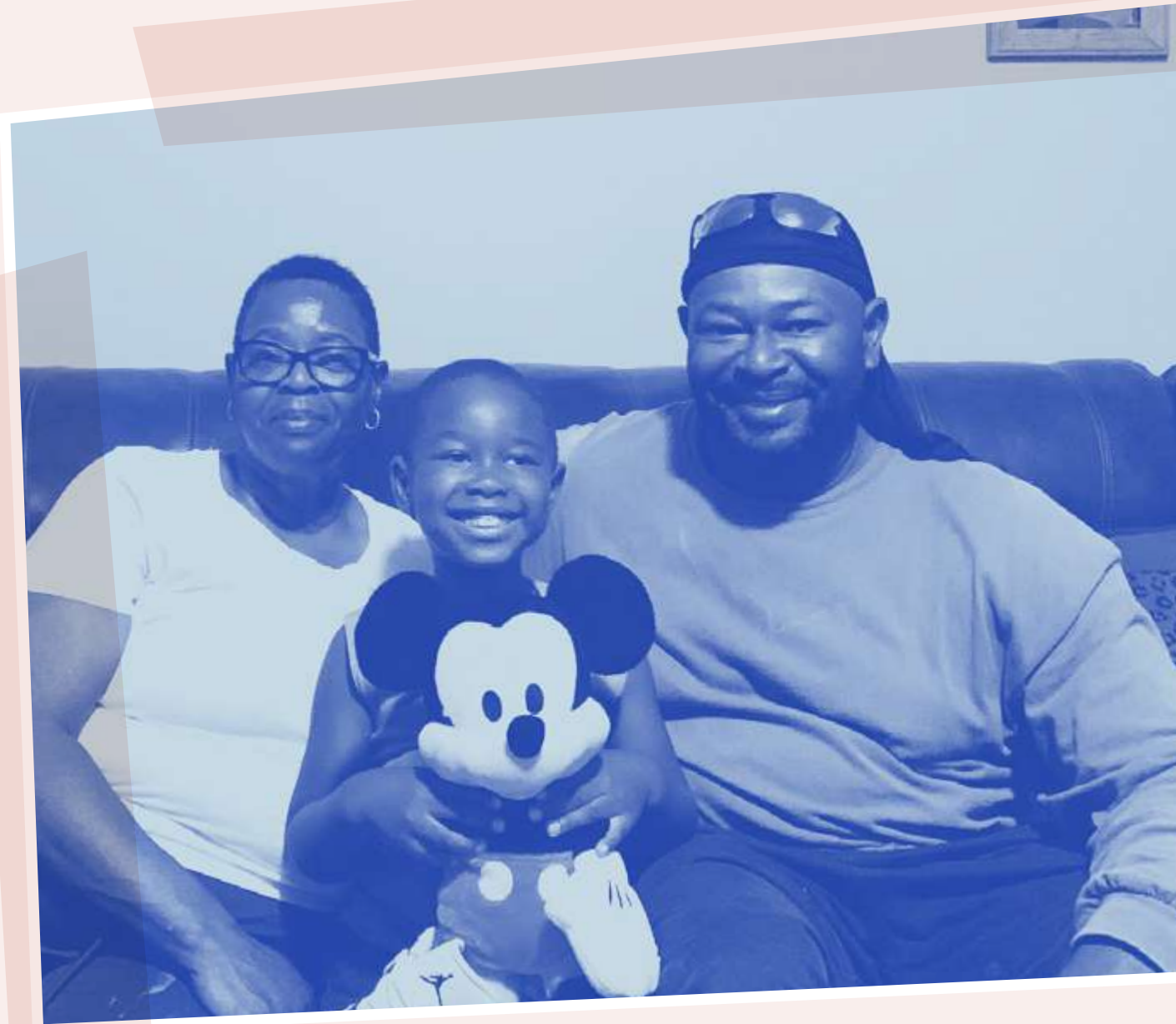


Dialo's schedule is variable. He installs solar panels for a living, so he never quite knows when he'll get off. Today, he's home early, so Ma-Mom can hand Chris off to get some rest. The family eats dinner together before the cycle repeats again tomorrow.

"I have it good," acknowledges Dialo. "Without my family I wouldn't [know how to] go through what an actual single father goes through." The village that raises Chris is held together by patchwork—different adults fill the cracks throughout Chris' day.

But Chris' situation is not unique. Many young families in Delaware get by thanks to a quilt of different support systems and services. Having a family friend to watch your child for a half hour before school can be the difference between falling behind and staying on track.

To support families like Dialo's, we must give assistance to parents and caregivers, not just children.



Zelivette

AGE 26

LOCATION **Newark, DE**

From 4:30am to 5am,
Zelivette has about
30 minutes to herself.
The rest of the day is
for her family.





By 6am, she walks out of the house with her one-year-old, Daniela, in her arms, her seven-year-old, Raul, and three-year-old, Dabdiel by her side.



At 6:30am, she drops her husband off at his construction job, her kids at child care, and then checks into work before 7am.

Zelivette works a full day at an international shipping company, translating port documents between Spanish and English.



Around 5pm, she leaves work to pick up her kids and husband. The family stops at the grocery store on the way home.



After dinner and bath time, she helps Raul with his homework. The family goes to sleep at 9pm. Then, they do it all over again.





In many ways, Zelivette has gotten lucky. When she moved her entire family to Wilmington from Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, she had a brother on the ground who was able to point her in the right direction. In the morning, she's able to drop off all of her kids at the same place because her child care center transports Raul to his elementary school. Her family benefits from the experience of having their culture honored, respected and included in the services her family receives at their community center.

In the current immigration landscape, Zelivette's story helps us understand how early childhood care and education professionals can support families experiencing the challenges of a new home. From schools to family child care to centers, ECCE professionals play an important role in helping families discover their own strength during life's transitions.

To support families like Zelivette's, we must design programs that are sensitive to the diversity of Delaware's inhabitants.

Chapter 2

About Our Research

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Along this collaborative journey, we've engaged over 410 people, including parents, extended family members, early learning providers, teachers, administrators, community partners, government staff, and experts. Their stories and perspectives have helped inspire, inform, and validate our insights.



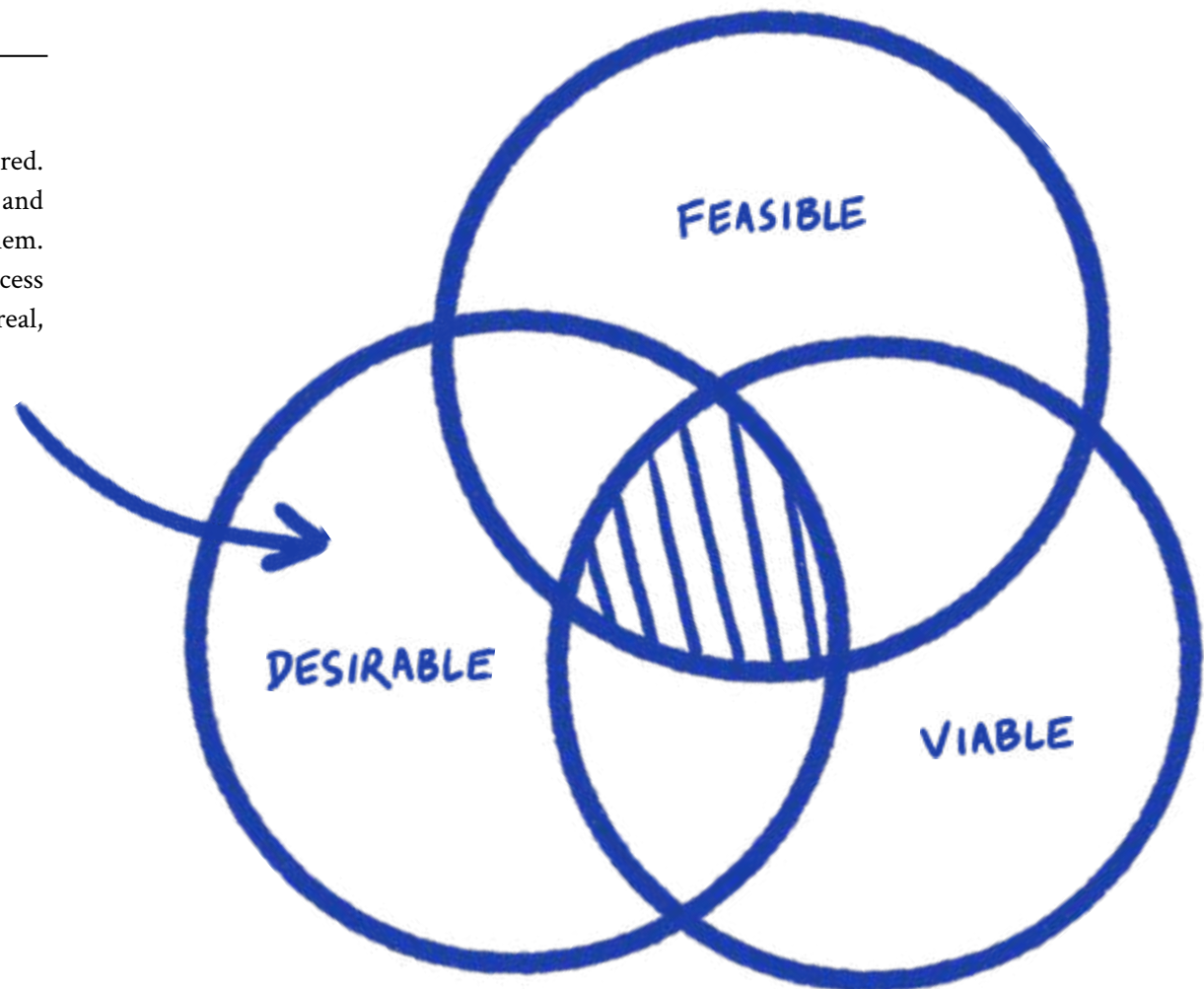
Ferran & Kingsley
WILMINGTON, DE

Chapter 2

About Our Research

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The design thinking process is human-centered. It starts with the people you're designing for and ends with new solutions that are tailored to them. Including Delawareans in the design process helps ensure that innovative ideas address real, human needs.



Think / Feel / Say / Do

A key insight in design thinking is that what people say and what they do are often different. For this reason, we not only interview people, but we also observe them in the real world so we can design for the natural inconsistencies of everyday life.

Generate in the extremes, validate with the mainstream

We learn from the “extremes”—people and organizations on the fringe of common behavior. This enables us to gather insights quickly because people who are at the edges often have exaggerated desires and behaviors. They magnify needs that exist in the mainstream but aren’t as visible.

The insights shared in this report are inspired by interviews with over 20 extreme users in addition to 6 pop-up sessions in public settings and a survey of over 300 families with children ages 0-5.



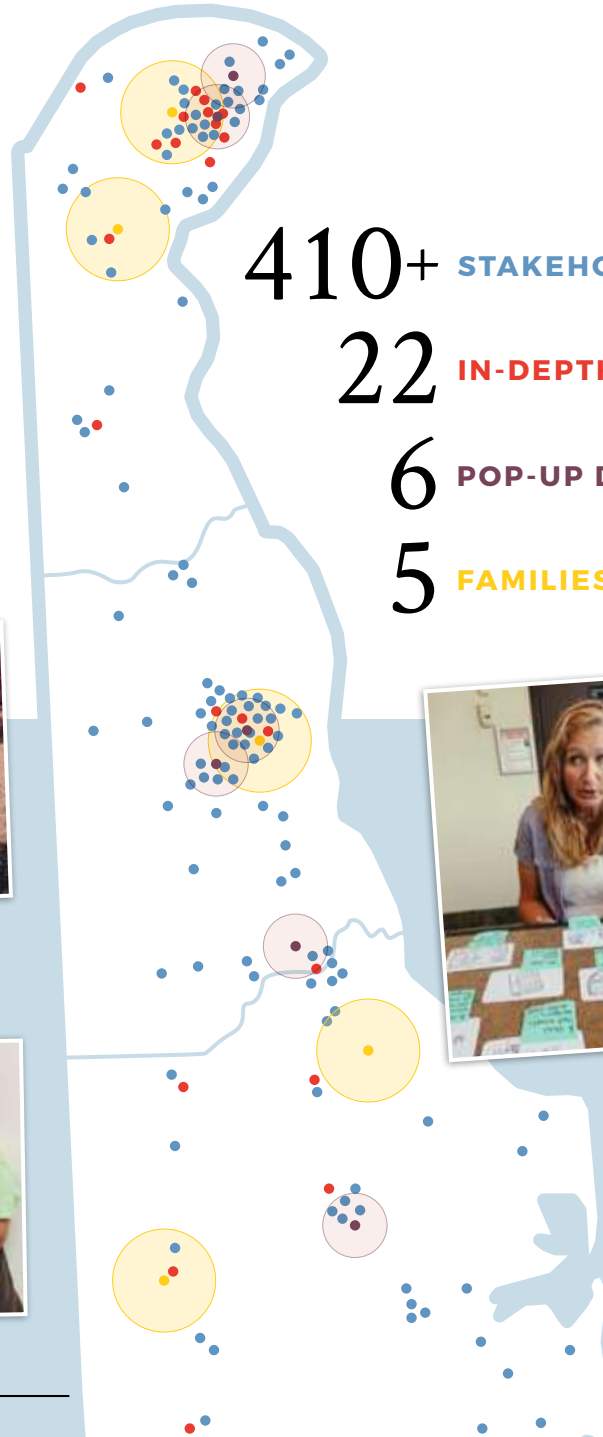
Chapter 2
About Our Research

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Chapter 2
About Our Research

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT



410+ STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED

22 IN-DEPTH FAMILY & PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEWS

6 POP-UP DESIGN SESSIONS

5 FAMILIES SHADOWED



Expert / Analogous Research

In addition to meeting families and professionals across Delaware, we also had 12 interviews with experts across a range of fields, some analogous to our study.



MARI NAKANO
*Director, NYC Mayor's Office
for Economic Opportunity*



BEN TERRETT
*CEO of Public Digital,
ex-Director of gov.uk*



NATALIE FOSTER
*Co-Chair, Economic
Security Project*



JACOB SOLOMON
*Former Product Manager
Code for America / CalFresh*



MIA BRUCH
*Historian, Researcher
& Strategist*



TIFFANY CHU
*Urban Planner,
Co-founder of remix.com*



MATT GLICKMAN
*Co-founder and VC,
Promise Venture Studio*



TAYLOR JO ISENBERG
*Executive Director,
Economic Security Project*



YONI KARPFEN
Research Manager, Airbnb



PAOLO PARIGI
Lead Trust Scientist, Airbnb



DAVID COGSWELL
Business Designer, IDEO



SEAN HEWENS
Design Director, IDEO

Chapter 3

Needs & Insights

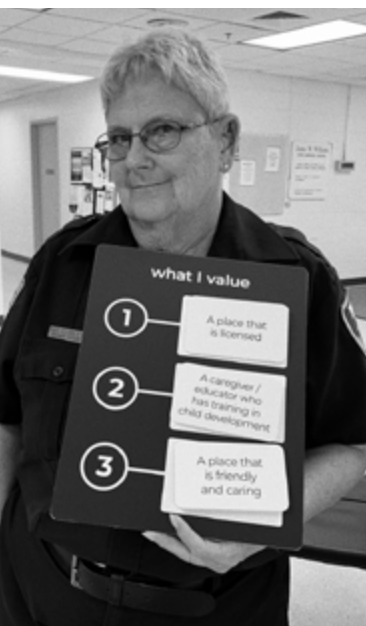
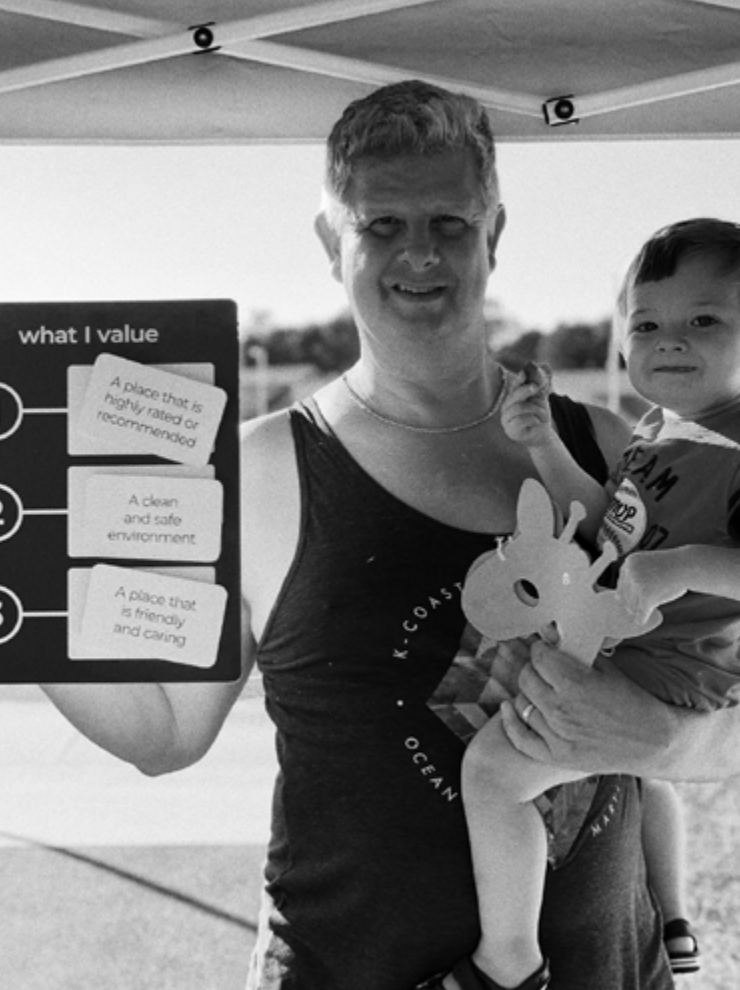
USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

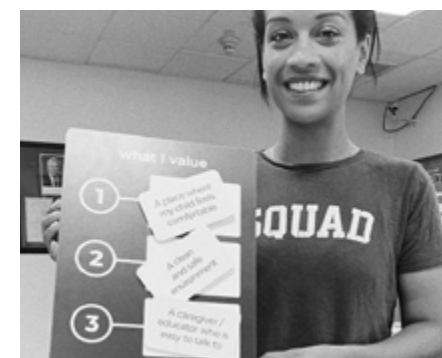
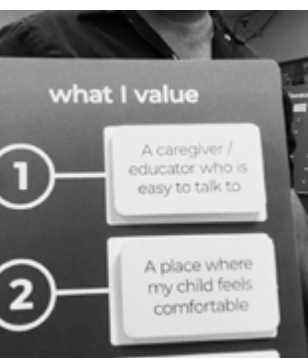
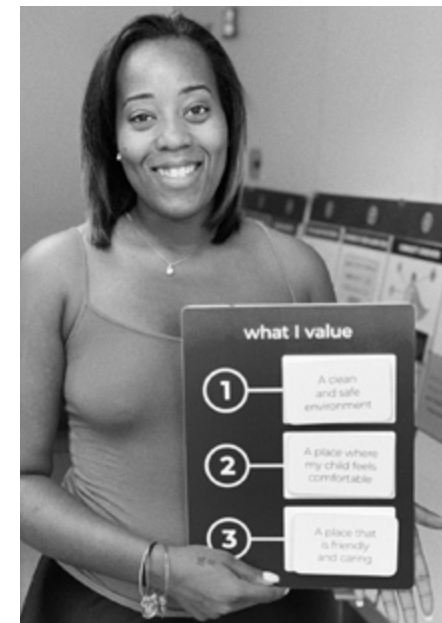
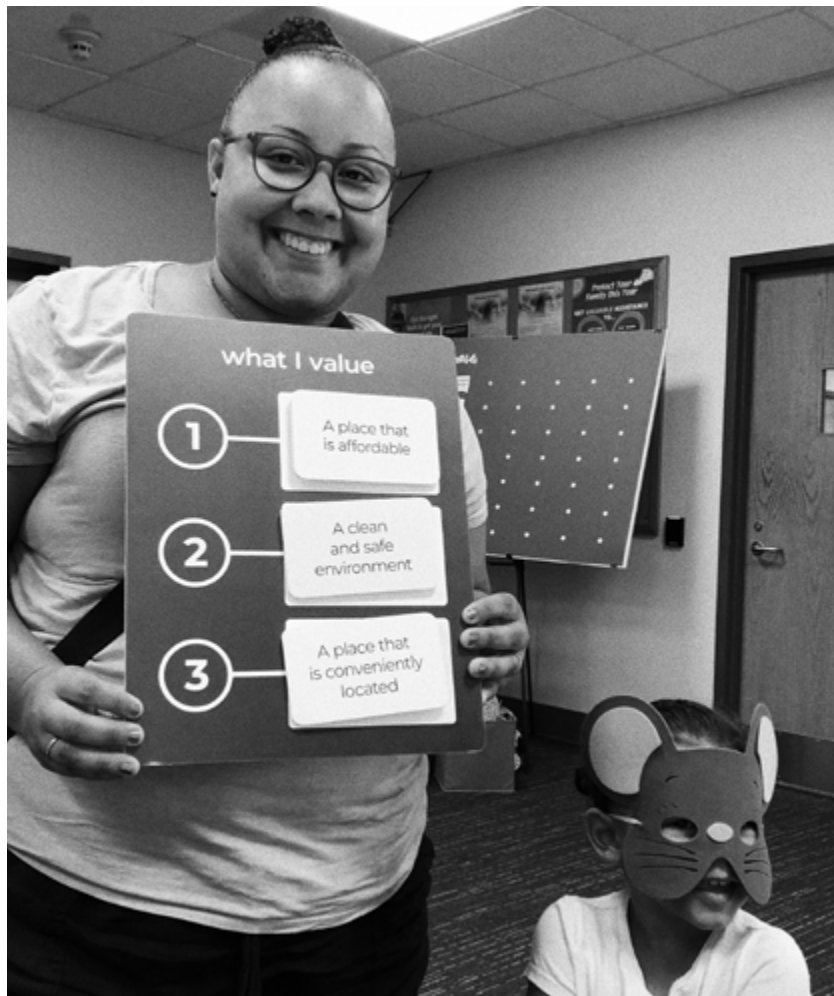
Insights are the result of what we've heard during our research. Our process takes us from inspiration to ideas, and from stories to themes. By condensing and synthesizing what we've learned, we're able to articulate what families across Delaware need and value. From there, we establish a new perspective on opportunities for innovation.

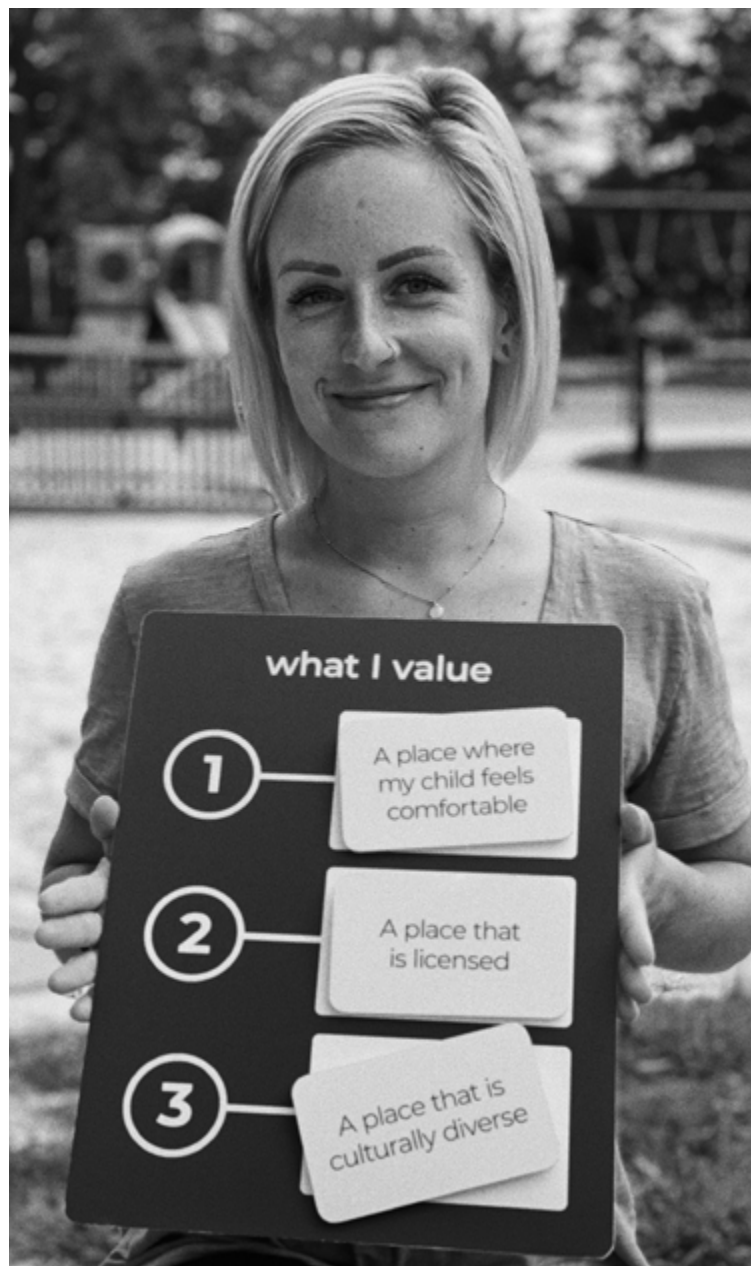


James
FATHER OF TWO
DELMAR, DE









Chapter 3

Needs & Insights

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The following insights and quotes capture both families' thoughts on early childhood care and education as well as their needs, aspirations, and challenges.

Policymakers, ECCE professionals, and the broader public can better serve children when they can empathize with families' unique situations.



*dear
Delaware,*

Earn my trust.

Make it easy on me.

Treat my child as your own.

Make me feel welcome.

Support my whole family.

dear
Delaware,

Earn my trust.

*I need to trust the people
caring for my kids.*

Most parents are risk averse when it comes to their kids—and for good reason. They worry that no one will care for their kids like they do. They hear horror stories of kids getting sick and hurt in child care facilities. Early childhood professionals must work to earn—and re-earn—parents’ trust.

“ I’m very particular about my kids. With today’s world you don’t know who you can trust. ”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

“ I really don’t trust daycares. The things you see on the news and Facebook - there’s a lot of stuff happening that is not good. ”

PARENT, SUSSEX

“ I don’t want to give my child to just anyone. I need to know that you are legit before I give my child to you. ”

PARENT, KENT

dear
Delaware,

Make it easy on me.

*I need child care to
make sense for my life.*

The life of a parent is a quilt of patchwork solutions to accommodate half-day pick-ups, rising costs, and holiday schedules. They'd rather spend mental energy on quality time with their kids instead of figuring out logistics. They need straightforward information and a stable routine, rather than a series of band-aid solutions.

“ Dropping off and picking up my son is hard. My job is so unpredictable, I never know what time I'll get off. I couldn't do it without my mom. ”

PARENT, SUSSEX

“ They send you different places too much. I'm in a domestic violence situation and I need emergency housing and child care. I don't have time to wait. ”

PARENT, KENT

“ That's the reason she's not in preschool. It's \$700 a month. I'm applying for Purchase of Care but for as much as I have to pay, I might as well not work. ”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

dear
Delaware,

Treat my child as your own.

I need a trusted partner, invested in my child's education and development.

Parents want their children to be prepared for entering kindergarten as capable, well-rounded human beings. They want to know that their early childhood professional is taking their kids in the right direction and at the right pace. Parents are proud to be their children's first teachers. They want their children's second teacher to be as invested in them as they are.

“ I want him to learn things that I can't teach him, like Spanish. ”

PARENT, SUSSEX

“ My daughter has learned so much in the preschool program here. They teach her what I can't when I'm at work. ”

PARENT, SUSSEX

“ I expect her to learn something, not just play all day, especially if I'm paying for it. ”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

dear
Delaware,

Make me feel welcome.

*I need to feel invited
and affirmed.*

No one wants to be perceived as a bad parent. It's easy for parents to become ashamed if they feel they can't provide as much as the parents of their child's peers. Parents are looking for a safe child care setting that feels like an extension of their family and makes them feel dignified.

“ The biggest highlight was having our home visitor and having somebody that we actually looked forward to seeing every week. ”

PARENT, KENT

“ At my child's school, you can actually go sit in the classroom with your child. And I feel comfortable with that because it's an open environment. ”

PARENT, SUSSEX

“ The daycare was not able to understand my son because they did not place him with a teacher who speaks Spanish. I made a complaint with the person in charge, but she didn't do anything. ”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

dear
Delaware,

Support my whole family.

I need to feel like the needs of my family are being recognized.

Parents want their children's early childhood professionals to suggest services and resources that they wouldn't have otherwise known about. They want to feel like they have someone in their corner — an advocate who loves their child, but understands their family's context as well.

“ A provider who is attentive to both the child and the parent's needs makes everything easier.”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

“ Home visits are really amazing. They changed my whole outlook. I appreciate having some outside encouragement.”

PARENT, SUSSEX

“ Two months before I had my baby, the center started telling me there was a program called Early Head Start that could take her. I was glad because I didn't need to find a daycare and I knew she was going to be okay.”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

Chapter 4

Experiences that Matter

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

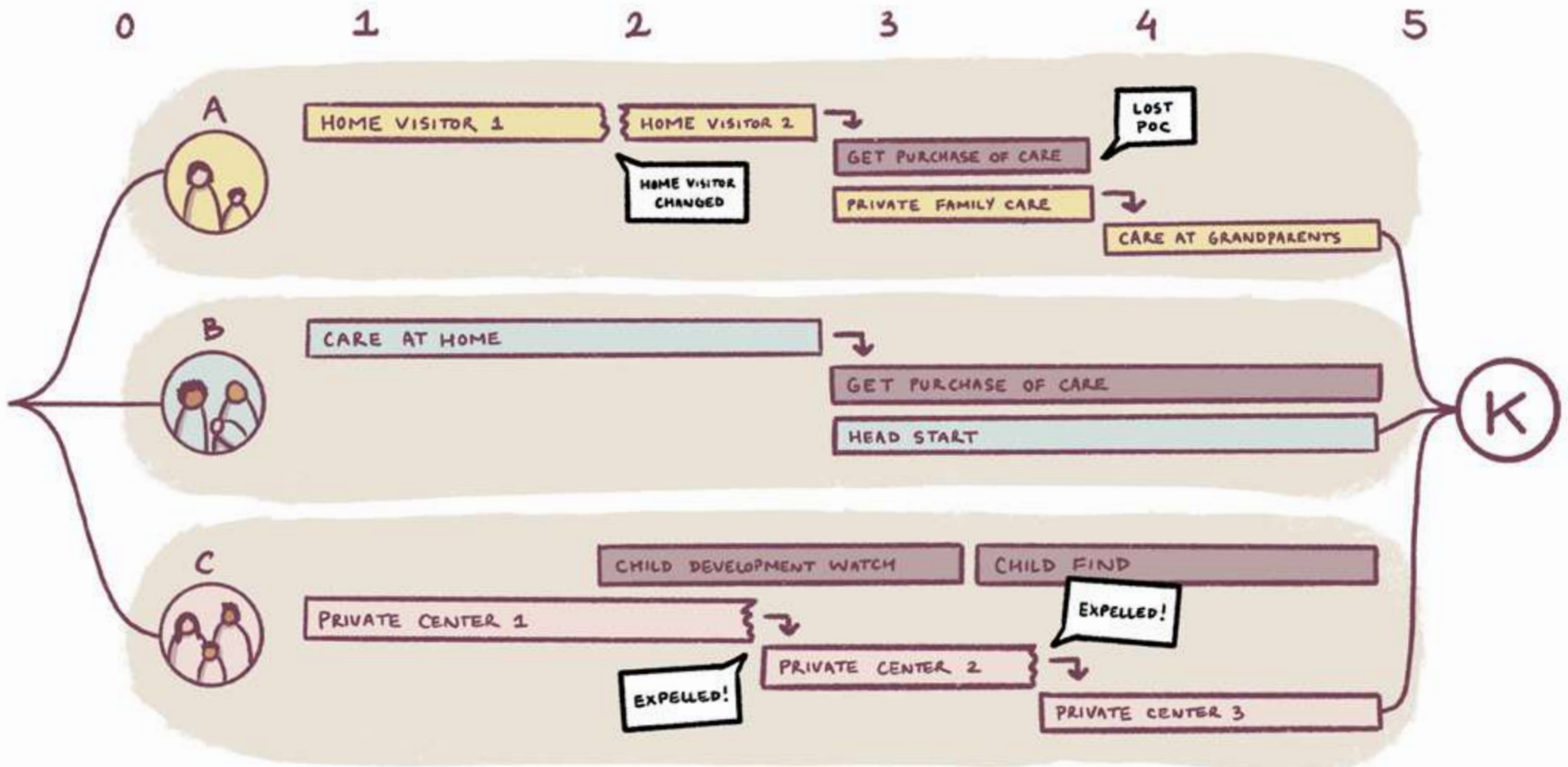
Families find their way to early childhood care and education in Delaware through several routes. Families receiving Purchase of Care apply through case managers. Children with developmental delays go through Child Development Watch or Child Find. Families may sign up for preschool with their local school district, ECAP program, or Head Start.



Rachel & Roslyn
GREENWOOD, DE

Chapter 4
Experiences that Matter

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Chapter 4

Experiences that Matter

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Figuring out which agency to go to can be a challenge. If you're lucky, you come in contact with a person or organization that both connects you to multiple programs and verifies your eligibility. But for most families, it is up to them to find a child care setting with space for their children. Parents are constantly burdened by a shortage of available child care spaces, unaffordable fees, and extremely long waitlists. On top of this, the process of finding care is difficult and time-consuming, as parents have

to navigate their way through resources that are uncoordinated and inconsistent. Together, these issues create a system that neither supports nor works for parents.

While each family navigates a different journey through the early learning landscape—from the moment of pregnancy—parents face several decision points that can determine the course of children's futures. We call these defining experiences the **Experiences that Matter**.

Let's focus on these experiences to rethink how Delaware can design a more effective early childhood care and education system.



**Becoming
your child's
first teacher**



**Finding
care that
works**



**Coping
with
adversity**



**Transitioning
to a new
setting**

① Becoming your child's first teacher



1 Becoming your child's first teacher

WHAT WE HEARD

“ Just to be around other moms and hear their breastfeeding stories... hearing that other people struggle somewhat, too, makes me feel not so bad and a little bit more normal that I'm struggling as well. ”

PARENT, KENT



WHY THIS MATTERS

Children grow up in an environment of relationships—the most important of which are formed with their families. Strong relationships are at the heart of healthy early childhood development.

However, many parents don't feel adequately prepared for parenthood. While the first five years are a critical period for child development, it's also when parents are in need of the most support—whether it's help with sleep, nutrition, behavior, health, or education.

A QUESTION WE'RE ASKING

How might we give parents and families the tools, networks, and opportunities they need to help their children get the best start possible?

TOPICS TO CONSIDER

- Early brain development
- Knowing what skills to expect across ages
- Recognizing when a child's development might be delayed
- Positive disciplinary strategies

1 Becoming your child's first teacher

WHAT IF DELAWARE HAD...

Home Visits for All

What if *all* families could have a trained professional visit them in their home to help them build a nurturing and happy environment for their child?

A child's first years are very exciting, but they can also be challenging. Imagine a free and voluntary home visitation program that would provide families of all incomes with the resources and tools they need to strengthen their family bonds.



growingupde.com

What if there was an online, one-stop shop for families to access services, programs, and events for their children?

Imagine a website aimed at helping make the hurdles of parenting easier by putting information at parents' and caregivers' fingertips on everything from child developmental milestones to events and programs across the state.



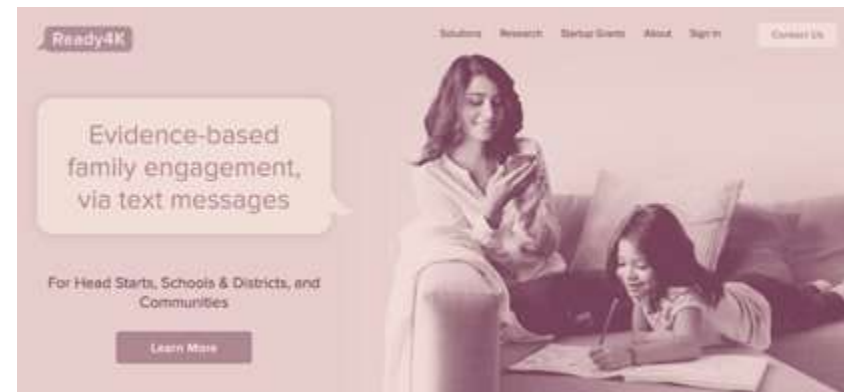
1 Becoming your child's first teacher

WE'RE INSPIRED BY...



Welcome Baby / First 5 L.A.

Welcome Baby provides an opportunity for parents to learn about parenting, early childhood development, and to get assistance on issues such as basic health care, insurance coverage, nutrition, breastfeeding, family violence, maternal depression, and improving home safety. The program is free, community-wide, and voluntary. It provides hospital and home-based interventions for pregnant and postpartum women.



Ready4K

READY4K! is an eight-month text messaging program for parents of preschoolers. This program simplifies parenting practices into short, manageable steps to increase parents' ability to support their children's literacy development.

② Finding care that works



② Finding care that works

WHAT WE HEARD

“ I work two jobs: one from 9pm to 6am and the other from 10am to 2:30pm. I need a place that can be flexible with me. ”

PARENT, KENT



WHY THIS MATTERS

For families, child care arrangements are not one-size-fits-all. Parents make child care decisions as one piece of a complex puzzle of work and family life. Constrained family finances, inflexible work schedules, and limited availability of suitable options make choices challenging for families.

Given the complexity of this dynamic decision-making process, many parents make child care choices quickly with inadequate information and a great deal of worry.

A QUESTION WE'RE ASKING

How might we provide child care decision-making assistance with information parents seek and trust, delivered in ways they can access and use?

TOUCHPOINTS TO CONSIDER

- Searching online for child care options
- How to choose and how to recognize “high-quality” child care
- Securing a child care subsidy
- Navigating waiting lists
- Securing after-hours care

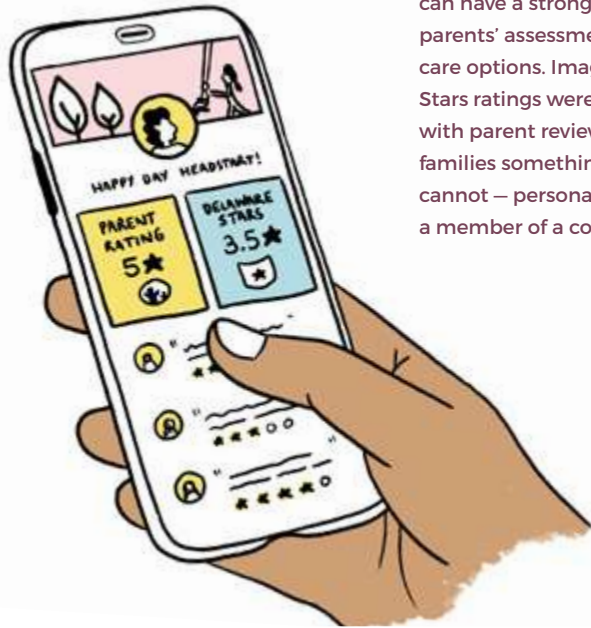
② Finding care that works

WHAT IF DELAWARE HAD...

Stars + Parent Reviews

What if Stars incorporated parent reviews and personal stories of child care settings alongside official ratings?

The opinions of other parents can have a strong influence on parents' assessments of child care options. Imagine if official Stars ratings were supplemented with parent reviews, offering families something that data cannot – personal experience as a member of a community.



After-Hours Care

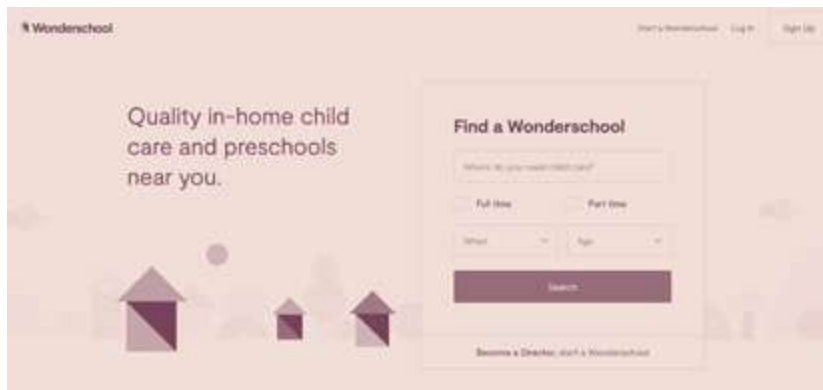
What if Delaware had a 24-hour, 7 days/week child care options?

Finding child care can be difficult, especially for families that work unconventional hours. Most child care programs are only open during the day, but imagine if Delaware had After Hours Care Centers that offered families high-quality care, support, and convenience by operating 24 hours a day.



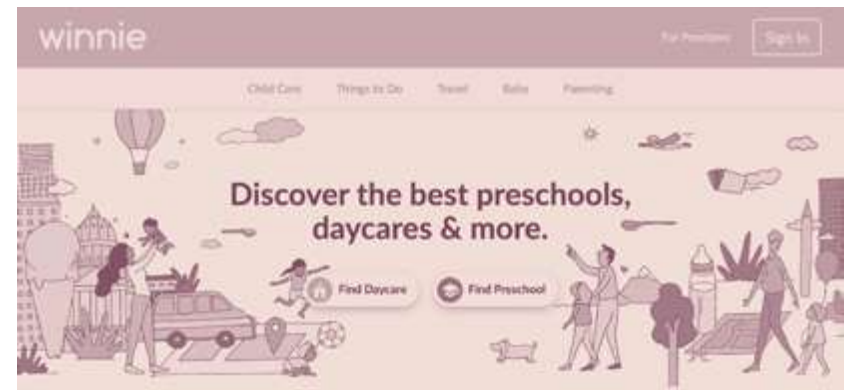
② Finding care that works

WE'RE INSPIRED BY...



Wonderschool

Wonderschool helps early childhood professionals start and grow their own programs out of their home. For parents, this serves as a network of modern program options that makes it easy to find and enroll in quality in-home programs.



winnie.com

Winnie helps create and organize information parents need, especially helping them find suitable child care and local activities.

③ Coping with adversity



3 Coping with adversity

WHAT WE HEARD

“After three weeks of being in kindergarten in Puerto Rico, the hurricane hit. So [my kid] never went back. When we got to Delaware, he started kindergarten again and he was really behind.”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE



WHY THIS MATTERS

Young children develop in the context of their families, where stability and supportive relationships nurture their growth. All families benefit from parenting support, and many—particularly those challenged by hunger, abuse, and neglect, household instability, and violence—require access to additional resources that help meet their children’s needs.

A QUESTION WE’RE ASKING

How might we provide the stability that families with young children need to support their child’s development?

TOPICS TO CONSIDER

- Calling 2-1-1
- Applying for social services programs on Delaware ASSIST
- Supporting families in accessing community resources, such as early intervention, and state supported social service programs

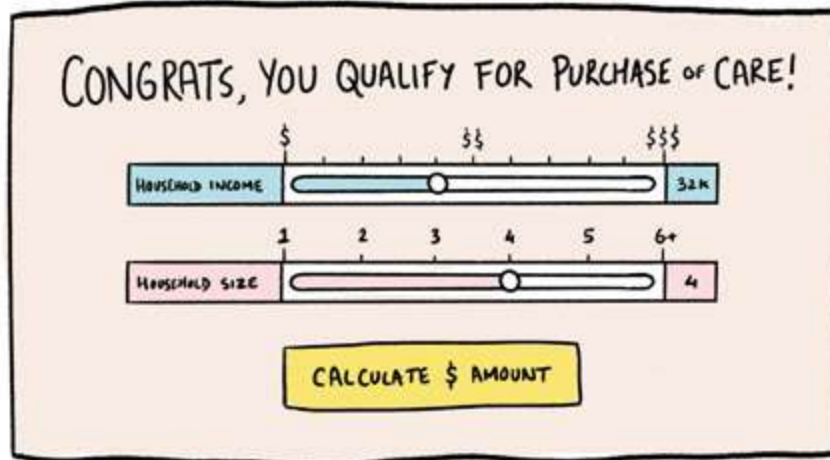
③ Coping with adversity

WHAT IF DELAWARE HAD...

Purchase of Care Sliding Scale

What if more families could receive some form of financial assistance for child care, no matter their income?

Imagine if Purchase of Care offered families direct financial assistance to help pay for child care on a sliding scale, based on their income and family size.



Access DE

What if a simple online tool could help families find which government services and programs they qualify for and help them apply?

Imagine a mobile-friendly, single point of access that provides information about the many city, state, and federal benefit services across Delaware. Available after hours on the web, Access DE would streamline the application process to these services, eliminating the need to take time off work or arrange for child care to apply for benefits in person.



③ Coping with adversity

WE'RE INSPIRED BY...



The Primary School

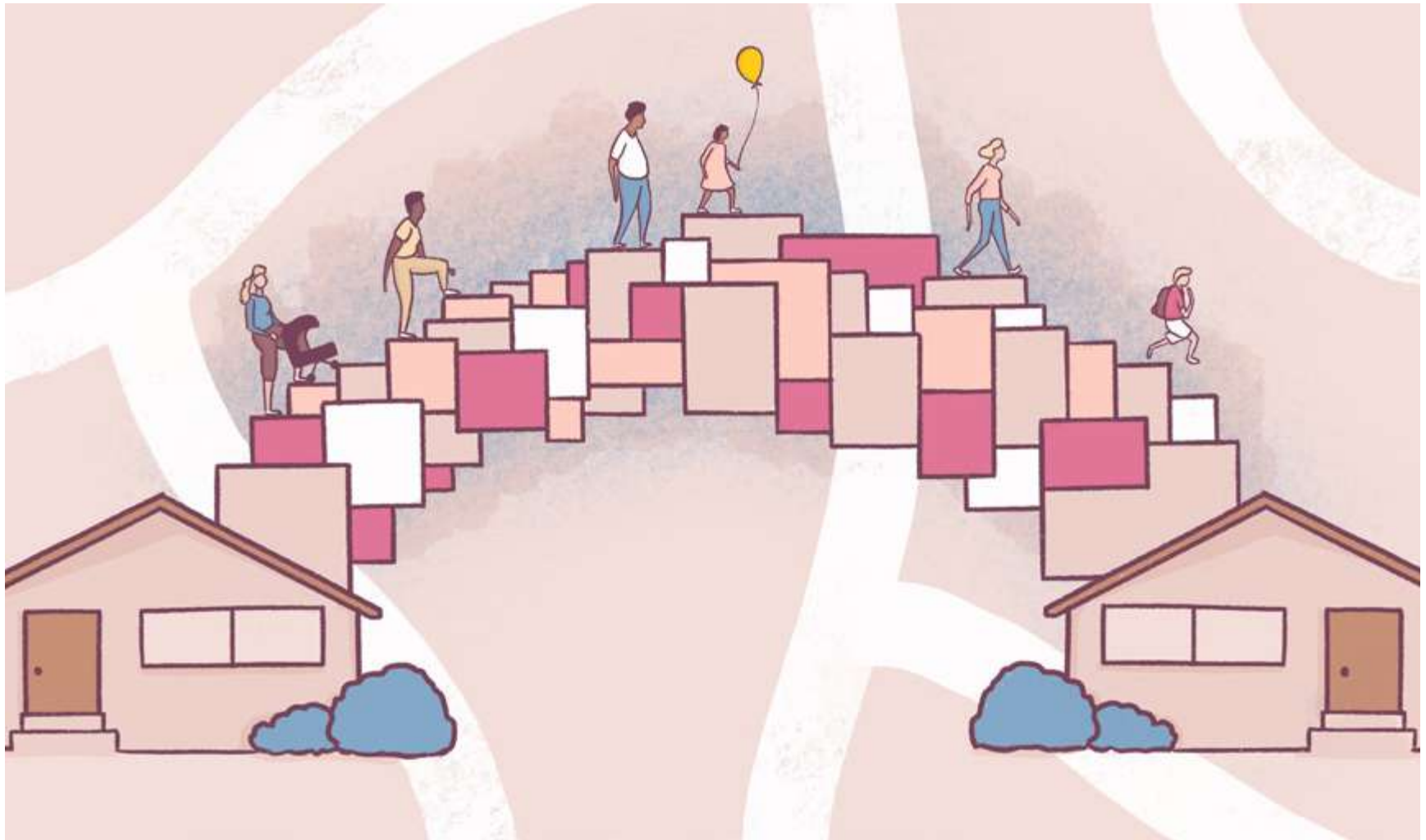
The Primary School integrates education, healthcare, and family support services to dramatically improve outcomes for underserved children. Their holistic model brings together parents, educators, pediatricians, and family support services, starting as early as birth.



gov.uk

The UK government is leading the way in using design to create simpler digital services for its citizens. Every week, millions of people use **gov.uk** to do bureaucratic tasks, such as booking a driving test, registering a birth, or starting a business.

④ Transitioning into a new setting



④ Transitioning into a new setting

WHAT WE HEARD

“ Switching child care is hard. If I could stay with one person until school, that would be great. ”

PARENT, KENT



WHY THIS MATTERS

Children experience a variety of early care and education settings during their first five years. It starts in the home, then possibly at a child care center or pre-K program, followed by the start of kindergarten. For both children and families, transitions can lead to excitement and joy as well as uncertainty and friction.

A QUESTION WE'RE ASKING

How might we design consistent high-quality care and education experiences across settings, from birth through the 3rd grade?

TRANSITIONS TO CONSIDER

- From hospital to home
- From home to child care/preschool
- From Child Development Watch to Child Find
- Child care/preschool to kindergarten

④ Transitioning into a new setting

WHAT IF DELAWARE HAD...

Continuity of Care

What if all children could stay with the same early childhood professional for the first three years of their life?

It is important to a child's well-being to develop a special bond with his or her primary caregivers - not only mom and/or dad, but ECCE professionals as well. Imagine if Delaware had a policy that encouraged bonding relationships by keeping teachers with the same children for at least the first three years. This policy would enhance child development by minimizing periods of transition.



Common Kindergarten Registration

What if families could enroll their child in kindergarten online, over the phone, or in-person, regardless of their school district?

There are more than 28 different kindergarten registration processes in Delaware. School districts and charters provide five different months for the start of kindergarten registration. Imagine if there were streamlined ways to enroll a child in kindergarten, no matter which school district a family wanted to send their child.



④ Transitioning into a new setting

WE'RE INSPIRED BY...



NYC Dept of Education Family Welcome Centers

Family Welcome Centers are available to address the enrollment needs of all New York City families with children in pre-kindergarten through high school. They are open 8am to 3pm, Monday through Friday.



photo: ©Charles Young

Universal Preschool in West Virginia

Unlike most states, West Virginia offers free, universal preschool to all 20,000 of its 4-year-olds, as well as to 3-year-olds with special needs. Preschool and kindergarten teachers are required to communicate with each other about the students they will eventually share, ensuring each child transitions smoothly between grades.



Becoming your child's first teacher



Finding care that works



Coping with adversity



Transitioning to a new setting

Chapter 5

Shifts & Design Principles

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Change is hard. Sustaining change is even harder. It requires new habits, achievable milestones, and continuous improvement.

When you break it down to the most basic definition, change is simply a “from-to”: it’s going from today’s current state to a desired future state. While the definition may seem simple, identifying the right “from” and “to” for early childhood care and education in Delaware—much less activating that change—is a large undertaking.

Systemic change to Delaware’s early childhood care and education infrastructure will require five key structural shifts.

D



Amy
MOTHER OF TWO
WILMINGTON, DE



E

FROM
**Policy
Mindset**



TO
**Service
Mindset**

We know that government services should be accessible to everyone, equitably distributed, effectively evaluated, and improved over time. Often, the government's drive toward fair distribution can get in the way of recognizing people as individuals or as families with pronounced needs. They aren't "Purchase of Care recipients"—they are moms and dads struggling to get by.

FROM
**Pay
Later**



TO
**Invest
Now**

The research is clear: investing in the well-being of our youngest children—and the people who raise and care for them—pays off in a big way. Economists estimate a \$4 to \$9 return on investment for every dollar spent on high-quality early care and education—in reduced spending on health care, special education, incarceration costs, increased productivity, and tax revenues in the future.¹

¹ Harvard Center on the Developing Child. (2013). Five Numbers to Remember about Early Childhood Development. http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/interactive_features/five-numbers/

FROM

Stigmatized



TO

Universal

Today, government-sponsored early childhood care and education programs have a stigma. Advocates for universal child care argue this is because these programs are determined by income. By expanding those who are eligible to take advantage of government-sponsored programs, we can strengthen public commitment to quality, while providing a legal foundation for care for all children.

FROM
Undervalued



TO
Valued

Caring and educating young children occupies a paradoxical place in our society. On the one hand, we hold caring and educating our young as one of our most sacred duties. On the other hand, we tolerate an early childhood system that is expensive, difficult to find, and mediocre at best.

The early child care and education professionals who provide this invaluable labor, many of them women of color, are grossly underpaid. So how can something so important be so undervalued? Throughout history, we've assumed that people, traditionally women, will do it for free, and this has costs for everyone. What if Delaware recognized the value of care? Not just moms, dads, grandparents and ECCE professionals—but policymakers and civic leaders, too?

FROM

Focus on
Compliance



TO

Focus
on Kids

The lack of affordable, accessible, and quality care options is a major burden for parents. But the situation isn't easy for ECCE professionals, either. Administrative burdens such as licensing, marketing, and business administration can distract early care and education professionals from doing what they do best—caring for and educating children. Let's dignify their work by supporting the workforce as they start, operate, and grow their programs.

Design Principles

Our research has inspired a set of design principles that can be used to guide the strategic planning process.

Design principles are actionable reflections of our insights. We use them as a tool to guide policy, program, and service design. They serve as a reminder to stay true to our insights into users' needs.

1 Lead with what families need and value

Whether you're preaching to the choir or persuading the undecided, shared values are a good place to start. Reminding audiences of why early childhood development matters helps build common ground.

Communications research shows that audiences are more receptive to unfamiliar arguments when they are framed by shared values. If we only present a litany of facts that conflict or appear to conflict with an audience's core values, they often disregard the facts. Furthermore, many audiences are less familiar with the details of controversies and policies than we are, which means we can quickly overwhelm them. It is important to connect arguments to universal values that all Delawareans care about.

2 Promote tangible concepts

Emphasizing tangible concepts gives our audience something to believe and counters "compassion fatigue," in which people see a parade of social problems as impossible to solve. We have to be for something positive, not just against potential threats.

3 Trade technicalities for aspirational themes

We connect new information and ideas to familiar stories, metaphors, or concepts that we already understand. For instance, instead of beginning the conversation with policy-speak around school readiness, brain development, or universal pre-K, prime the discussion with values of stewardship, future prosperity for society, or reciprocity (give to children now, so they can give back to society later).

Design Principles *cont.*

4 **Tell a systemic story**

Research shows that when people exclusively hear about someone's struggles, they assume that person should solve their problems without outside support. Be sure to offer both—individuals' stories and the big-picture solution. We want to tell long-term narratives that point audiences toward future solutions rather than dwell on problems.

5 **Think in systems, not in silos**

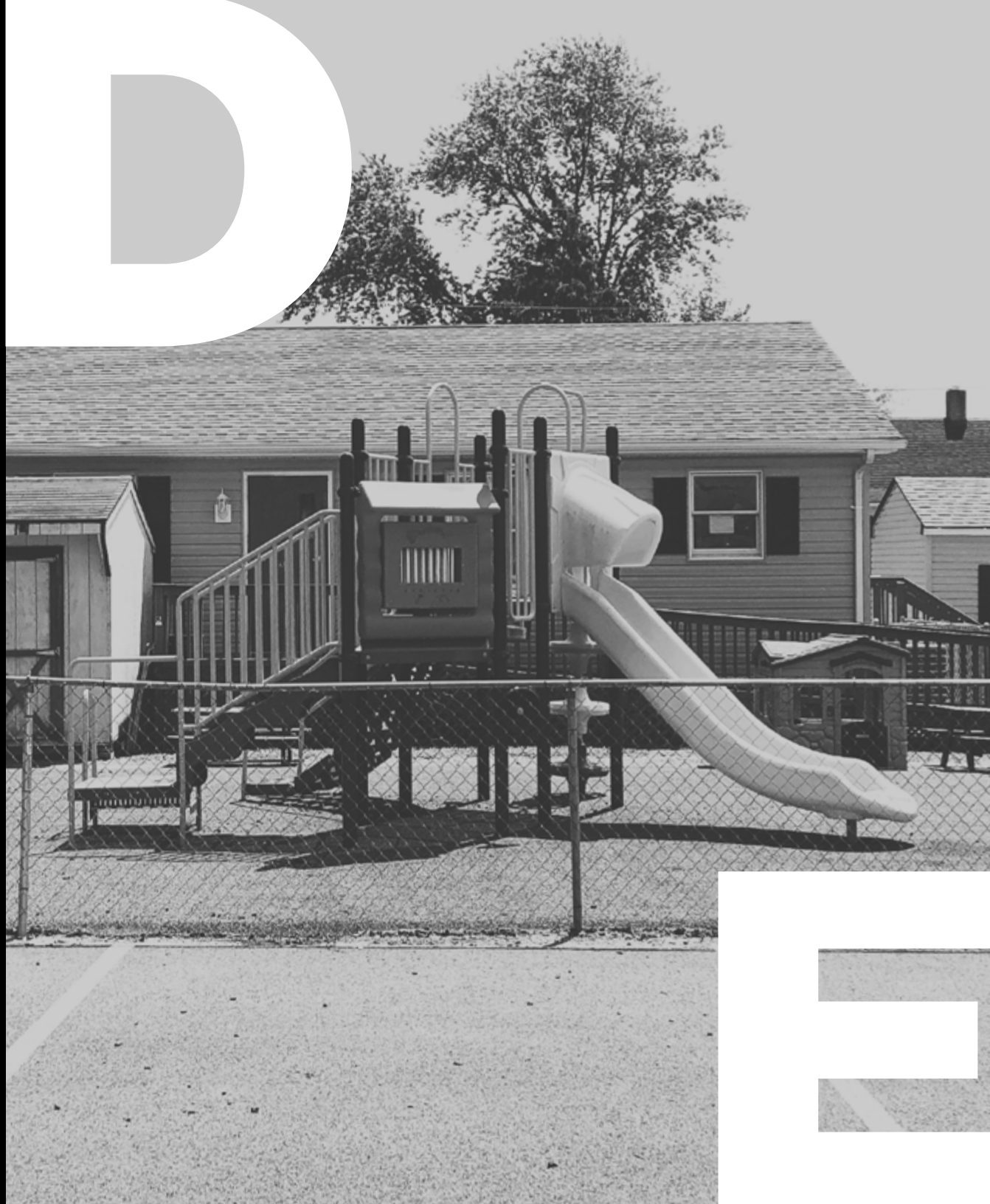
Much of Delaware's early childhood field is dependent upon (and crippled by) a program-first approach, where policy is defined by a set of siloed programs (ex: home-visiting, pre-K, Head Start, child care, etc.). A comprehensive early childhood system recognizes and designs for connections between services and programs, and leverage those connections to improve outcomes.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

D



E

The science is clear: Children's early experiences set the stage for lifelong success.

The research is clear: For every dollar spent on early childhood care and education, there is a 10-15% return on investment. Those with access to early childhood education earn more money, pay more taxes, and cost the state fewer resources.

Making child care and education accessible, affordable, and high quality is an obvious investment in Delaware's future. But today, this convergence is so rare families feel "lucky" when they find it.

It doesn't have to be this way.

We must work to value child care and education in the same way we value our children. We can no longer afford to consider this “women’s work.” We must consider it “essential work.”

Because when we invest in Delaware’s future, the benefits ripple to us all.



Appendix

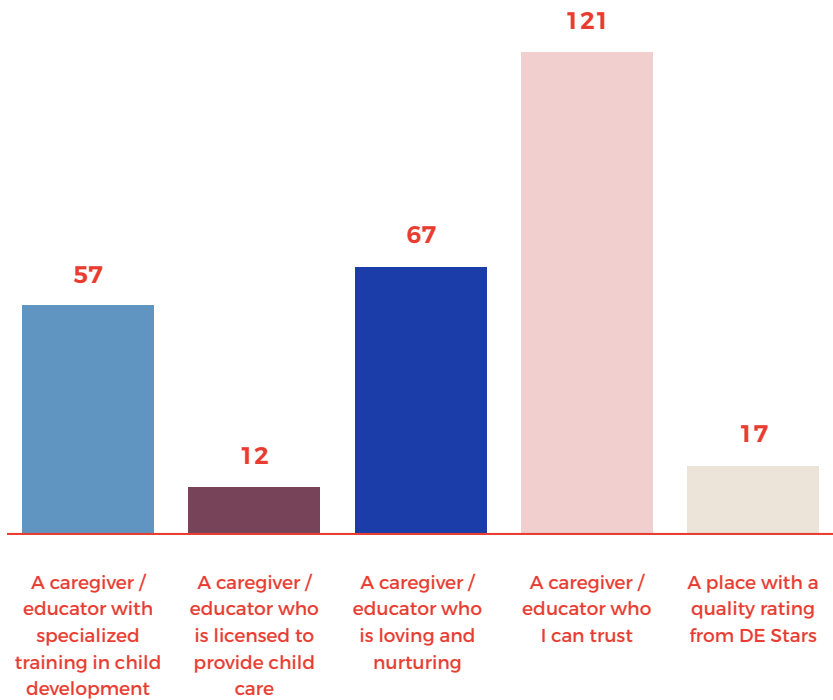
USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

DDOE / EY PARTHENON / IDEO

Survey Results

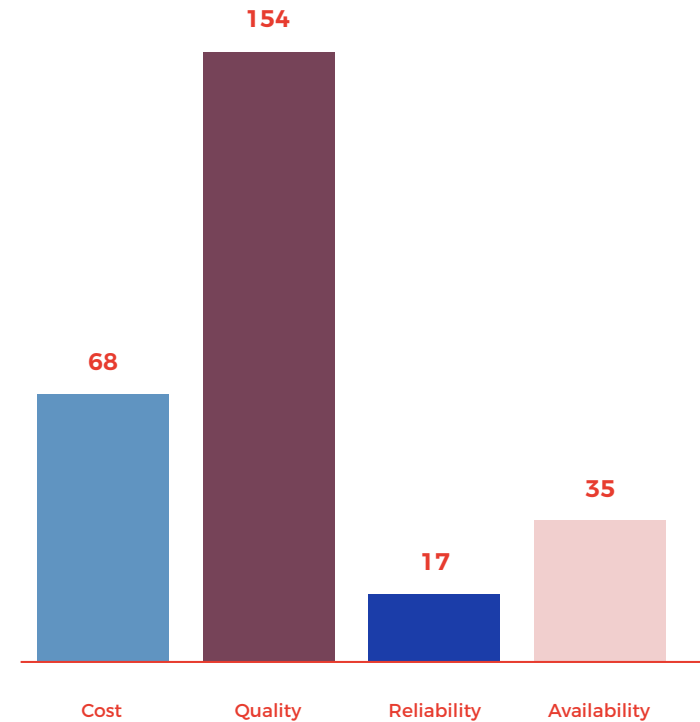
Question

HERE IS A LIST OF WHAT MANY PARENTS VALUE WHEN THEY ARE SEEKING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION. WHAT DO YOU VALUE MOST?



Question

WHAT IS YOUR SINGLE BIGGEST CONCERN ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION?



Appendix

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Question

IF YOU COULD TELL POLICYMAKERS ONE THING YOU'D LIKE TO SEE CHANGE RELATED TO DELAWARE'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

“ I'd love to see more options for families. For example, I had to drive my son 35 minutes away in order to enroll him in a quality program since there were none in the Dover area. ”

PARENT, KENT

“ There needs to be more equity in opportunities. I pay a fortune for early childhood education and care, but many families in Delaware are not able to do the same. Their children deserve the same level of care and school preparation as mine. ”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

“ Quality childcare needs to be affordable and attainable for ALL families. ”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

“ Affordable education is hard to find in lower Delaware for children in preschool. ”

PARENT, SUSSEX

“ You should not have to be low income in order to qualify. ”

PARENT, KENT

“ More emphasis on the importance of play in early childhood. Let children learn through play while being kids! ”

PARENT, SUSSEX

“ Create one early childhood system with one set of policies and procedures for all families and staff. There are too many different rules/guidelines in DE. Rules are different in private Pre-K, child care, public Pre-K, Head Start, Birth-3 early intervention, and home visiting. This is too difficult for families and staff. ”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

“ In my area there is never enough space for a child, so you always have to be put on a waiting list... I am a grandmother and I actually take care of my grandkids so my daughter can work... they are too expensive for a single mother, and also you have to wait too long to get into a center. ”

GRANDPARENT, SUSSEX

“ I would like to see things planned better. It seems like everything is thrown together without thinking all the steps through. (i.e., Let's move the pre-K from lower Sussex schools to one location... And then the 3-4 year old kids will be on the bus for 1.5 hrs each way). ”

PARENT, SUSSEX

“ Make more money available to early childhood education. It builds the foundations our children need to succeed. ”

PARENT, KENT

“ Every single provider really needs to have a special needs specialist on staff. Being repeatedly told your toddler has needs that are “too complex for this center to handle” is frustrating. ”

PARENT, SUSSEX

“ Increase the Purchase of Care threshold so more families can have financial support for quality care. ”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

“ The cost to have my child cared for while I work should not exceed my salary. ”

PARENT, KENT

Appendix

USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Question

IF YOU COULD TELL POLICYMAKERS ONE THING YOU'D LIKE TO SEE CHANGE RELATED TO DELAWARE'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

“ Find a way to provide affordable, quality, trustworthy childcare for peoples' kids who can't go to school yet. The current costs are what is stopping me from having a third kid which we would really like. ”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

“ The caregivers definitely need a pay increase. They have a tremendous responsibility caring for our children. ”

PARENT, SUSSEX

“ Offer full day for 3 year olds. ”

PARENT, KENT

“ Every classroom needs a nurturing, highly-qualified and highly-paid teacher who will stay! ”

PARENT, KENT

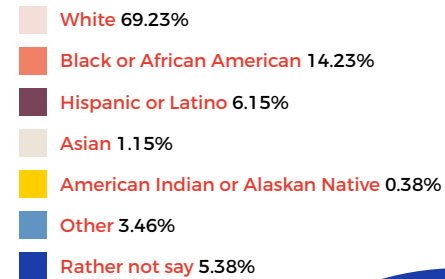
“ I'd like to have child care options for parents that work overnight shifts such as at a hospital. ”

PARENT, KENT

“ More information regarding what the kids are doing in class so that us parents can do the same and help as well. ”

PARENT, NEW CASTLE

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS






Appendix

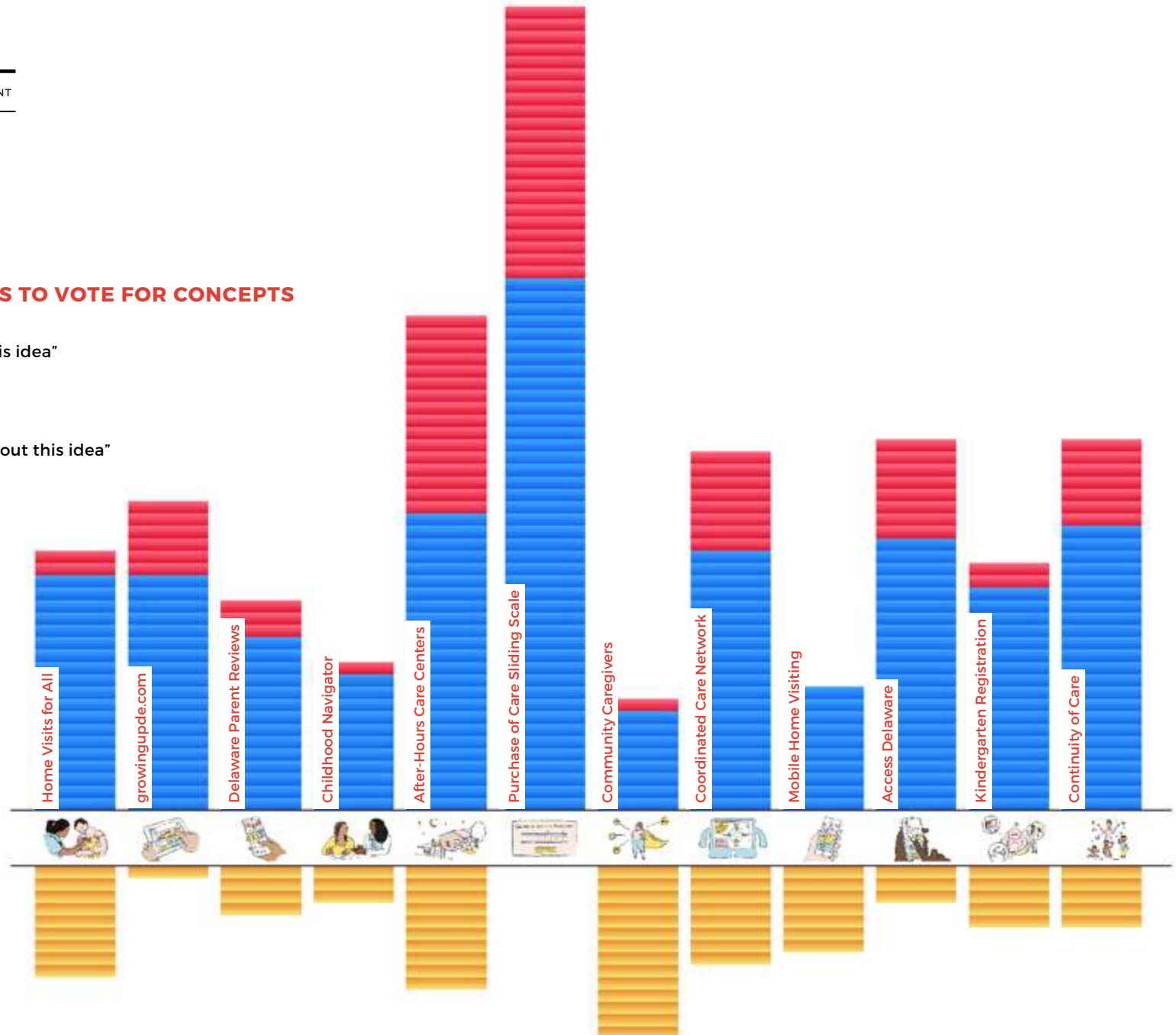
USER EXPERIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Concept Voting

Prompt

USE THESE STICKERS TO VOTE FOR CONCEPTS

-  "I love / really need this idea"
-  "I like this idea"
-  "I don't like or care about this idea"



ECC Workshop Voting

Prompt

**COMPLETE THE SENTENCE.
USING THREE STICKERS ON
EACH SIDE OF THE BOARD.**



