

What would help low-income families? ^[1]

Results from a North American survey of 2-1-1 helpline professionals

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In an online survey of staff providing referrals for low-income families with children across 44 states, Puerto Rico and Canada, childcare topped the list of most important services that, if addressed, would improve social mobility. All qualifying aspects of child care (e.g. affordability, special needs care, quality), were deemed inadequate by over half of respondents.

Abstract

Almost half of young American children live in low-income families, many with unmet needs that negatively impact health and life outcomes. Understanding which needs, proactively addressed, would most improve their lives would allow maternal and child health practitioners and social service providers to generate collaborative solutions with the potential to affect health in childhood and throughout the life course. 2-1-1 referral helplines respond to over 16 million inquiries annually, including millions of low-income parents seeking resources. Because 2-1-1 staff members understand the availability of community resources, we conducted an online survey to determine which solutions staff believed held most potential to improve the lives of children in low-income families. Information and referral specialists, resource managers, and call center directors (N = 471) from 44 states, Puerto Rico, and Canada ranked the needs of 2-1-1 callers with children based on which needs, if addressed, would help families most. Childcare (32%), parenting (29%), and child health/health care (23%) were rated most important. Across all childcare dimensions (e.g. quality affordable care, special needs care), over half of the respondents rated community resources inadequate. Findings will help practitioners develop screeners for needs assessment, prioritize resource referrals, and advocate for community resource development.

Region: International ^[3]

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