The MOMS Partnership 2016 Data Report on Mothers in New Haven

The MOMS Partnership is a collaboration of agencies across the City of New Haven that work together to support the wellbeing of mothers and families living in the city. The collaboration includes: the Diaper Bank, Clifford Beers Clinic, the State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families, Department of Social Services, the Housing Authority of New Haven, New Haven Healthy Start, the New Haven Public Schools, the New Haven Health Department, and the Yale School of Medicine. The overall mission of the MOMS Partnership is to transform the delivery of services for mothers and children through community and neighborhood-based resources that are dedicated to their wellness and to strengthen generations of families.

The goals of the MOMS Partnership are informed by information and input shared with us from mothers across New Haven through a confidential questionnaire/interview. The questionnaire asks mothers about their sources of support, goals, challenges they face as they raise their families, and what supports and services they find useful as moms. The questionnaires were conducted by New Haven mothers who were hired and trained by the MOMS Partnership to be Community Mental Health Ambassadors. In this report, we present results from our interviews with more than 2,100 mothers living in New Haven.

**Characteristics of 2,194 Mothers Interviewed**

**Figure 1. Interviewed Mothers’ Place of Residence in the City of New Haven**

- MOMS Partnership Community Ambassadors interviewed mothers in areas where mothers live, work, and raise their children such as public housing, schools, playgrounds, libraries, and grocery stores.
- This map shows the neighborhoods where mothers lived at the time of the interview.
Table 1. Age of Mothers and Number of Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Mothers</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25 years</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35 years</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45 years</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>46+ years</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children under 18 Living with Mothers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 child</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 – 3 children</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 or more children</td>
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
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- The majority of mothers interviewed were Black or African-American, Hispanic. Approximately 9% of mothers spoke Spanish as their primary language.
- Most mothers were between the ages of 26 and 35 years. The average age of mothers was 36 years.
- Forty-two percent of mothers had 2-3 children under the age of 18 living with them.
- Almost all mothers had received food stamps, WIC, or TANF at some point, and 77% of mothers felt their children have a doctor who knows them well.

### Areas in which Mothers Need Support

- Mothers reported needing support in the following areas:
  1. Getting a good amount of exercise
  2. Skills to control stress and eating healthily
  3. Neighborhood safety and basic needs such as food, clothing, diapers, and housing

- 71% of mothers reported needing help coping with traumatic events.
- 71% of mothers reported needing help managing sadness.
Basic Needs

- 53% of mothers reported that their family sometimes runs out of food before the end of the month, what we call food need. Of mothers with food need, 50% said they go to a food bank or soup kitchen when their food runs out, and 15% said their family goes without food if they run out.

  “[What stresses me out is] taking care of a growing child without enough money, food, supplies to get by.”

- Of mothers who had children ages 3 and under, 52% reported that they sometimes feel they do not have enough diapers to change their children as often as they would like, what we call diaper need. Of mothers with diaper need, 32% said that they stretch the diapers they have when they run out.

  “[I wish there were] programs that help with bills, food, pampers…”

- The number of mothers reporting difficulty meeting these basic needs varied by neighborhood in the City of New Haven.

  Figure 4. Percent of Mothers Reporting Food Need by New Haven Neighborhood

  Figure 5. Percent of Mothers Reporting Diaper Need by New Haven Neighborhood

- The percentage of mothers reporting running out of food before the end of the month was the highest in the Hill, Newhallville, and Dixwell neighborhoods.

- Mothers living in the Edgewood, Fair Haven, and West Rock neighborhoods reported the most difficulty obtaining enough diapers to change their children as often as needed.
Figure 6. Percent of Mothers Reporting Poor Emotional Health by New Haven Neighborhood

- 84% of mothers reported needing help to manage feelings of sadness or depression, controlling stress, and coping with traumatic events, what we call poor emotional health.

- In all 18 neighborhoods surveyed, more than 75% of mothers reported poor emotional health. In 17 out of 18 neighborhoods surveyed, more than 80% of mothers reported poor emotional health.

- The percentage of mothers reporting poor emotional health was highest in Fair Haven, Edgewood, and West Rock neighborhoods.

Figure 7. Number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Reported by Mothers

- Of mothers who responded (n=2,082 or 95%), 48% reported one or more adverse childhood experiences.

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) include sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, a family member who is an alcoholic or drug-user, a family member who is imprisoned, a mother who is mentally ill, a mother who is treated violently, or growing up without one or both biological parents.

Figure 8. Depressive Symptoms

- Of mothers who responded to questions designed to assess for symptoms associated with depression (n=1,542 or 70%), 60% reported moderate to high levels of depressive symptoms.
Figure 9. Mental Health Treatment among Mothers with Emotional Health Need

- 34% have received mental health treatment
- 28% felt it was easy to get mental health treatment

Figure 10. What Stops Mothers From Getting Mental Health Treatment

- Not sure where to go: 19%
- Stigma or judgement: 23%
- Pride or embarrassment: 16%
- Lack of time or support: 11%
- Denial: 15%
- Fear of losing custody of children: 8%
- Cost or lack of insurance: 5%
- Language or culture barrier: 2%
- Not sure where to go: 1%

- Of mothers with emotional health need (n=1,836 or 81%), one-third reported having received treatment for stress, sadness, depression, or anxiety.
- Of mothers with emotional health need, 28% felt it was easy to get the help they needed.

- A total of 1,333 mothers (61%) responded to questions regarding what stops mothers from getting the help they need for feelings of sadness, depression, stress, or anxiety. Many mothers reported that pride, embarrassment, and fear of being judged for getting mental health treatment stop mothers from getting the help they need.

- Some mothers reported that mothers fear Department of Children and Families involvement or losing custody of their children if they seek mental health treatment.

  “[Mothers don’t get help] because they’re afraid if they say something their kids will be taken.”
• Of mothers who responded (n=1,849 or 84%), 18% reported social isolation.

• Mothers reported feeling alone in raising their children and that they do not have significant sources of support in their lives.

“Lots of challenges [as a mom] because I am doing it on my own most of the time.”

Goals and Supports

• Of those who responded, 76% of mothers reported the support of family, friends, church, and community programs in raising their children.

“My mom is a big help. I don’t know what I would do without her.”

• Mothers reported that the MOMS Partnership can help them raise their children, manage their stress, and meet their goals.

“MOMS Partnership can help because I can use the resources they offer and be around moms dealing with the same issues.”

• A total of 1,799 mothers (82%) reported personal goals and hopes for the next year:
  1. Finding a good job and having a successful career
  2. Enrolling in school or finishing a degree
  3. Buying a house or car
  4. Exercising more and improving physical/mental health
  5. Improving finances, saving money, and paying bills
  6. Strengthening their relationship with their children and improving their children’s wellbeing
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