

Report to MN Department of Education

REPORT PERIOD: JULY 1, 2021 – JUNE 30, 2022



JEWISH FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICE OF MINNEAPOLIS (JFCS)

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REPORT SUMMARY:

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

ParentChild+ is a leading early childhood, school readiness program in 142 partner agencies across 15 U.S. states and 6 countries. Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis (JFCS) is proud to have been a ParentChild+ partner agency since 2006.

For more than 50 years, ParentChild+ has built a record of transforming lives. This research-proven program invests in children from families who are economically and educationally disadvantaged, ranging in age from 18 months to 4 years old. It works to strengthen families and empower parents by providing them with the skills and resources they need to prepare their children for school success. The program is built around an intensive two-year, home-visiting model that builds school readiness, child development, and parenting skills, led by an Early Learning Specialist (ELS). In effect, ParentChild+ creates a paradigm shift in which parent program participants become their child's first and most important teacher.

JFCS and our partners are proud to provide this important program in many communities, and present this report of how ParentChild+ is impacting Minnesota families. This exceptional program serves more than 300 families in the Twin Cities metro area and Greater Minnesota, including with our longtime partners in and around Cass County, Northland Area Family Service Center and Pine River-Backus Family Center, and three newer partner agencies that completed their second Year 2 cohort of ParentChild+ participants in spring of 2022:

- 1) Promise Neighborhood of Central MN serving families mainly in St. Cloud
- 2) Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association serving families in Rochester
- 3) Healthy Community Initiative serving families mainly in Faribault and Northfield (in and around Rice County)

When planning for the 2021-22 program year, JFCS had planned to focus on the Core Model, in which ELSs work directly with individual families, and also to resume provision of the FCC Model. The FCC Model of ParentChild+ is designed for family child care providers and the children in their care. Despite active recruitment to enroll 1-2 FCC providers, with a goal of serving 8 children, our efforts were unsuccessful in the 2021-2022 program year. The pandemic has caused a steep decline in the number of operating child care sites, and providers who are operating are not open to adding a new initiative during this time of great uncertainty and pressure. Under these pandemic-induced circumstances, the ParentChild+ leadership team decided to cancel the FCC component for this program year.

ParentChild+ works toward three primary outcomes:

1. Children are ready for school – age-appropriate in their social, emotional, cognitive, language and physical development.
2. Children live in safe, stable, nurturing environments – in families that demonstrate positive parenting techniques, promote language development and access needed community services.
3. Children are healthy – up-to-date with immunizations and well child check-ups.

There are additional positive outcomes for the program as well. Longitudinal research from ParentChild+ International reveals that ParentChild+ increases not only school readiness, but high school graduation rates. Children who participated in ParentChild+ graduated high school at a rate 30% higher than their socio-economic peers, and were 50% more likely to be ready for kindergarten.

NUMBERS AND LOCATIONS SERVED:

In the summer of 2021, we proposed to serve 360 children. With program outreach and recruitment still limited by pandemic restrictions during the summer of 2021, and with the cancelation of the FCC Model, JFCS and the Greater MN partner sites served 341 child participants, along with 348 parents/caregivers, in 304 families (with 37 sibling groups). Funding provided through MDE, which reimbursed eligible expenses, was equal to the program cost for 262 children, with foundation and individual donor funding equal to the program cost for 69 children. JFCS operating revenue covered the remaining expenses.

Across the five sites, ParentChild+ retained a total of 302 of 341 children who enrolled in fall of 2021 (89% retention rate). We had 39 children and their families (11%) leave the program before June 2022 for a variety of reasons, including relocation, job schedules and/or COVID-19-related reasons.

In June 2022, there were a total of 129 graduates between all ParentChild+ sites. JFCS' ParentChild+ program celebrated the graduation of 68 children and their families who completed the full two-year program, and our long-time site in Cass County celebrated with their eight graduates. This was the second graduation for our three newer Greater MN partner agencies: Promise Neighborhood of Central MN serving families mainly in St. Cloud with 17 graduates; Healthy Community Initiative with 25 graduates in Rice County, and Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association serving families in Rochester with 11 graduates again this year. We have 175 children who we anticipate will move to year two of the program in fall of 2022.

The ParentChild+ Core model served families in the following areas of Minnesota:

JFCS (Twin Cities Metro Area) – 187 Children

- 68 children in Minneapolis and 91 in suburban Hennepin County
- 11 children in St. Paul and 4 in suburban Ramsey County
- Other Metro Counties: 10 children in Anoka, 1 in Dakota, 1 in Sherburne, and 1 in Washington

Greater MN Counties – 154 Children

- Cass County served 2 children in Aitkin, 11 in Cass, 1 in Crow Wing, and 1 in Hubbard
- Promise Neighborhood of Central MN served 4 in Benton, 3 in Sherburne, and 24 in Stearns
- Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association served 40 in Olmsted
- Healthy Community Initiative served 68 in Rice

POPULATION SERVED:

- All families are at or below 200% of the 2020 Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG), with 66% at or below 100% of the guidelines, and 34% between 100%-200% FPG.
- 51% of child participants identified as female and 49% identified as male.
- ParentChild+ serves a diverse population, with 36% of the population identifying as Somali, 34% Hispanic/Latino(x), 13% other African, 6% African American, 6% white, 3% Multi-racial, 1% as Asian and 1% Native American.

COVID-19 IMPACT ON FAMILIES AND PROGRAM OPERATIONS:

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to shape program delivery during the 2021-22 program year, and ParentChild+ staff and families continued to be highly engaged and make strong progress despite these challenges. Following physical distancing guidelines from the CDC and Minnesota Department of Health, JFCS emphasized virtual home-visits instead of in-person in-home visits. As noted, and in contrast to previous years, we did not offer the Family Child Care (FCC) model—the early learning program designed for family child care providers—as many child care providers were forced to shut down. We continued to offer the Core model, working directly with parents, to great success over the past year.

As before the pandemic, the centerpiece of ParentChild+ is that ELSs provide families with twice weekly home visits. During these visits, the ELS models and facilitates enriched verbal interaction between the child and parent. Visits also model positive parenting techniques such as encouragement, nurturing, redirecting and engaging. ELSs also provide one educational toy or book to the participating child each week. For the 2021-22 program year, ELSs provided families with two virtual visits per week for a total of 60-90 minutes per week. ELSs used Facebook Live, WhatsApp, and Zoom to connect with families, as well as phone calls, email, and text messaging. In contrast to the 2020-2021 program year, when we prepared individualized videos for families, this program year we provided generalized videos to supplement live virtual home visits. Families have been very responsive to the virtual visits, which speaks to the positive and trusting relationships staff have developed with families. ELSs have continued to make weekly in-person deliveries of an educational book/toy, using physical distancing protocols to ensure everyone's safety.

Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed significant challenges on ParentChild+ participants. In a high percentage of homes, one or both parents lost jobs. Employment still remains a concern today; while some parents regained employment or received pay increases as the job market strengthened, limited access and the high costs of childcare and transportation continue to be barriers for many job-seekers. Also, many families have experienced a deep sense of isolation. For much of the program year, many families stayed indoors and limited their kids' outdoor activities due to the fear of getting the virus, as well as misinformation about the virus and physical distancing guidelines.

In response, JFCS trained ELSs on how to deal with the many physical and social emotional impacts of the virus on families, such as unemployment, housing insecurity, balancing work with education, and more. For example, many families struggled due to misinformation about the virus—a particular concern with families for whom English is not the first language.

ParentChild+ staff provided families with language-specific resources about COVID-19 and safety measures, such as a MN Somali YouTube channel. Some families, because of their immigration status, did not qualify for unemployment benefits or stimulus money. Several staff visited food shelves on their behalf to pick up food and deliver it to families. These additional supports have been critical in helping participants obtain basic necessities and maintain physical and mental health.

At the start of this program year, JFCS had concerns that the virtual format of the program might hamper recruitment, as families might choose not to participate in the program because they only wanted in-person visits. Fortunately, this was not the case. We were able track that only five families (3 sibling groups/8 children total) decided not to participate this year because of the virtual service delivery model. We are confident that the decision to continue virtual visits has had a positive overall impact on Core model program families.

Since the start of the program year in late summer 2021, we have observed a significant increase in technology needs for families. Last program year, many older siblings in participant families were home doing distance learning with devices provided by their schools. Many families were able to use the older siblings' devices to complete virtual visits with their ParentChild+ child and ELS. For the 2021-22 academic year, however, the majority of Minnesota schools provided in-person learning, and more families were without a device at home during most of the day when virtual visits happen. Last year, we only had one out of 223 Twin Cities' families that informed us of their need for a device to be able to do virtual visits. In contrast, by the end of October 2021, we had 15 families in need of devices to effectively and fully participate in virtual programming. JFCS has purchased and provided 16 Samsung Galaxy tablets for use by program participants. The devices were very important tools for families to better engage with the virtual visits.

Our experiences working with ParentChild+ families during the pandemic have demonstrated that the program is more important than ever, and plays a strong role in helping families from communities that are underserved prepare for school at a time of social and financial disruption. We are grateful for MDE's support that helps JFCS and our partners continue to provide this life-changing program that helps families build a strong foundation for educational and parenting success.

PROPOSAL OUTCOMES OVERVIEW:

Despite significant pandemic disruption and modified service delivery, children and parents have met or exceeded most measurable goal outcomes. Participating children are learning and

demonstrating age-appropriate development that will help make them successful when they enter kindergarten. As appropriate, ParentChild+ Early Learning Specialists help families connect with Early Childhood Special Education or other community resources to help support their development. Families are developing an enriched literacy environment in their home. Parents are demonstrating positive, responsive parenting techniques that support children’s social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Verbal interaction between the children and their parents shows significant improvement. Plus, families are better integrated into the community, and better able to access necessary resources that will support a safe, stable and nurturing environment for their children. Almost all children participants are up-to-date in their immunizations and well-child check-ups.

Goals, Activities, Measurable Outcomes:

Goal #1: Children are ready for school. Children ages 2-4 years will demonstrate age-appropriate social, emotional, cognitive, language and physical development

Activity 1.1: Home Visiting

Children receive at least 46 and up to 60 home visits a year (totaling 92-120 visits over 2 years), during which the Early Learning Specialist models and facilitates enriched verbal interaction between the child and parent, and models positive parenting techniques such as encouragement, nurturing, and redirecting. The participating child receives one educational toy or book each week, over 23 weeks minimum, each of 2 years. JFCS and Greater MN partners provided 16,546 virtual and in-person outdoor visits in the 2021-22 program year. Approximately 4,248 educational books and 4,279 toys were given to a total of 341 children and their families.

Site	Number of Visits
Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association serving families in Rochester	2240
Promise Neighborhood of Central MN serving families mainly in St. Cloud	1844
Healthy Community Initiative serving families mainly in Faribault and Northfield (in and around Rice County)	3010
Northland Area Family Service Center and Pine River-Backus Family Service Center serving families in and around Cass County	634
JFCS serving families in Twin Cities metro area	8,818
Total Visits	16,546

In order to complete the program year, participants need to complete a minimum of 46 visits. This year, 84% of all enrolled children reached this 46-visit goal. This includes 39 children who

received at least four visits and then dropped out of the program. Of children that remained enrolled through the whole program year, 95% reached the 46-visit goal.

Outcomes 1.1:

1. 90% (Goal was 85%) of children demonstrated age appropriate development within six domains as measured by the ASQ and ASQ-SE developmental screening tool: 90% Communication, 90% Gross Motor, 93% Fine Motor, 92% Problem Solving, 92% Personal-Social and 83% Social-Emotional.
2. 93% (Goal was 85%) of children participated in kindergarten screening for three-year-olds. This was a great rebound from 65% of eligible children having kindergarten screenings at the end of the previous program year in spring 2021. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Early Childhood Screenings from area school district ECFE programs were closed for several months, but throughout the program year they were more widely made available again. ParentChild+ staff provided referrals, information and support to families who reported that they had not completed their child(ren)'s screenings.
3. 100% (Goal was 100%) of participating children showed increased familiarity with reading and written materials such as pre-school books and magazines.
4. 60% of first year and 96% of second year participating children (goal was 60% of first year and 85% of second year children) showed increased attention span and ability to listen to books being read for a sustained period of time.
5. 52% of first year and 81% of second year children (goal was 60% of first year and 85% of second year children) showed increased ability to take turns and tolerate frustration.

Activity 1.2 Children receive early interventions as appropriate

Children who do not demonstrate they are age-appropriate in all domains are flagged and tracked by the ParentChild+ Coordinator and Program Manager, who may also consult with an Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) school district representative to help determine when/if a referral to early intervention services is appropriate. In some cases, the ParentChild+ Program Manager may determine a referral is appropriate even when the child has passed all six domains measured by the ASQ.

Outcome 1.2

5% (our estimated need was 8%) of participant children were referred for intervention services by the Early Learning Specialist in consultation with the ParentChild+ Coordinator. Referrals are recorded in Early Learning Specialist case notes, the JFCS client data base system and the ParentChild+ National Center data base. Data shows type of referral and status of receipt of service.

Goal #2: Children live in safe, stable, nurturing environments.

Activity 2: Home visits are described in Goal 1.

Outcome 2.1 Families demonstrate positive, responsive parenting techniques that support children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development

88% (goal was 85%) of families showed progress in demonstrating positive, responsive parenting techniques with their children (e.g., recognize and respond to child's needs, exhibit empathy and understanding, talk with the child at eye-level, take deep breaths and speak calmly to diffuse a high-stress situation, and praise the child for positive behavior).

Outcome 2.2 Families promote children's language development

90% (Goal was 85%) of families showed an increase in parent/child communication techniques that promote language/literacy skills of children (e.g., have daily conversations with their child, read to their child, play alphabet and word games to increase vocabulary, do storytelling, and play with their child).

During weekly visits, Early Learning Specialists record case notes of observations and parent feedback that are used for anecdotal indicators, such as asking a parent how often they read with their child. (Note: Of the 348 adult participants, 5 are a caregiver other than a parent.) Near the end of a family's participation in ParentChild+, parents complete a ParentChild+ Parent Survey, which asks parents to reflect on areas of positive parenting techniques. Parents are asked to first assess how often they are utilizing these positive parenting techniques. Then, the survey asks parents to assess if they do these techniques less than, the same as, a little more, or much more than before they participated in ParentChild+. The data reported is a percentage of parents who implement these positive parenting techniques either a little more or much more than before participating in ParentChild+.

Outcome 2.3 Families access community services as needed

100% (goal was 100%) of families received at least two referrals to essential community resources (e.g., emergency financial assistance, medical or legal consultation, food pantry, library). This year, Early Learning Specialists made a total of 2,159 referrals (an average of 6.3 per child), which helped families connect to needed resources such as for assistance for housing, transportation and food; referrals for legal, educational and employment-related services; referrals for mental, physical and dental health; and referrals for reduced fee or free recreational activities for families and children.

Outside of the pandemic, ParentChild+ offers library events to all participants in the program to help families gain greater familiarity with their local library, obtain library cards, and visit the library at least once during the year. During the pandemic, many local libraries have been

closed and staff were not able to meet indoors with families, so library events were not possible during this program year. Early Learning Specialists had at least one conversation with each family about their local library to ensure that they could access online or other resources even when libraries were not open to the public. Based on the number of library referrals for tutoring, story times, computer access, etc., we estimate that nearly all families became more familiar with their library system.

97% (goal was 95%) of families received follow-up in accessing these referrals. Receipt of referral was noted by Early Learning Specialists and entered into the agency client database. Early Learning Specialists confirm follow-up receipt of community resources by parents self-reporting during visits.

Goal #3: Children are healthy.

Activity 3.1: Parents are asked at intake and again at the annual evaluation if their children are up-to-date on immunizations and well-child check-ups. Information and referrals are made when a family needs assistance in this area.

Outcome 3.1 Children are up-to-date with immunizations

96% (goal was 85%) of parents reported that their children have up-to-date immunizations.

Outcome 3.2 Children complete annual well-child check-ups

96% (goal was 85%) of parents will report that their children have completed an annual well-child check-up.

These results are particularly important due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the landscape for how families access health care. Some people may have lost health care benefits due to job losses. Parents continued to face time constraints as they juggled return to work and school. Also, according to the Minnesota Department of Health, 2020-21 school immunization data showed a troubling drop in the percentage of kindergartners who are fully vaccinated. Coverage for kindergarten students dropped by 3 percentage points for MMR, Varicella, DTaP, and Polio, when comparing the 2019-20 kindergarten cohort to the 2020-21 cohort.

EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES

Over 40 measurable indicators are used to assess program goals and outcomes. Examples of specific indicators are included within the goals and outcomes described in the previous section. Outcomes are measured by June of each program year, or after 23 weeks of visits. Some are measured periodically throughout the year.

Research-based assessment tools are used to assess all ParentChild+ children and parents throughout the program. The “Child Behavior Traits” tool, the Evaluation of “Parent and Child Together,” tool, the ASQ and ASQ-SE, and the Positive Parenting Indicator Assessment designed by Wilder Research and modified by JFCS with permission from Wilder Research are used throughout the two-year program. Outcomes of all measures are reviewed by ParentChild+ local and international program representatives who use the information to monitor program quality and fidelity to national standards.

Client and program data is managed through the agency’s client data base system, which is EHR compliant (electronic health record). Collection protocols are managed by the ParentChild+ Program Manager and overseen by JFCS. In addition, data is recorded in the ParentChild+ National Center, which develops annual reports that track our site outcomes along with 142 ParentChild+ sites nationally and internationally (e.g., Bermuda, Canada, Chile, Ireland, Singapore and United Kingdom).

MINNESOTA FAMILY SUCCESS STORIES

There are many success stories from ParentChild+ this year, but two families’ experiences show not just the positive impact of the program, but also its ability to adapt in light of changing circumstances brought about due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This past year, two participating families were forced to move back to their respective home countries of Ecuador and India for several months. The moves were always planned to be temporary; but in the past, gaps of that duration would have likely meant the families would not be able to complete the minimum visits required, and would have to exit the program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, we have transformed ParentChild+ so that it can be delivered virtually. This means that we were able to adapt to meet the needs of these two families, and ensure they could continue. The families’ ELSs were able to provide the books and toys for the families in advance, and send everything with the families to use while they were living abroad. And using a combination of Zoom, email and texts, the ELSs were able to complete the scheduled home visits virtually, so that the children were able to continue the program without a break! Happily, the families have since returned to Minnesota and have completed the full program year, meeting every measure of success. These families’ successes are also a clear indicator of how committed participating families are to the program, and how diligent the participating parents are in ensuring their children stay with it.



Another success story involves a family from St. Cloud. ParentChild+ parent participants Holli and Joe, along with their daughter, Lynzee, are a very quiet and reserved family, and have mentioned that it takes time for them to warm to strangers. Normally, this isn't a problem, because we strive to keep the same staff working with each family for the two full years. Holli and Joe were disappointed to learn that their ELS, who had done so much to earn their trust, was going to be moving away, and they would be getting a new ELS. The family had their reservations, but knew ParentChild+ was very beneficial to their child's education, and had confidence that all ELSs would be able to deliver the program as skillfully as the previous one. Fully trusting the process, the family chose to continue the learning experience.

Their confidence was amply rewarded. ParentChild+ hires and trains all staff to know the importance of building positive relationships with families to ensure success, and the new ELS immediately established trusting connections with the family. She helped the family complete the child's early childhood screening, assisted family to get up to date on immunizations and well-child checks, and helped the family with their application and intake for Head Start. Holli and Joe shared that they thoroughly enjoyed their assigned ELS, and the ParentChild+ program as a whole! The ELS attended Lynzee's graduation last June. Holli and Joe have become committed advocates for the program, and have repeatedly recommended it to others in their community.



Another story involves a young girl we'll call Leylo. Leylo's grandmother enrolled her in ParentChild+ after hearing about the program's benefits from friends in the community. Grandmother had already successfully raised her own children, but felt she needed help with Leylo to make sure she was well-positioned for success in the American school system. Grandmother was deeply impressed with the program, and in conversations with her ELS raved about the many ways it helped her and her grandchild alike. Specifically, grandmother talked at length about how transformative it was learning about how to learn through play, and to witness the rapid progress Leylo made in forming and understanding new words using this technique. Grandmother also appreciated learning about positive parenting techniques that are central to ParentChild+. She noted how much she wished she knew about them when raising her daughter, but is delighted to use them with Leylo. Grandmother was brimming with emotion, saying that she feels like she now has a second chance at raising a child by going

through this program, and that she looks forward to continuing to help Leylo thrive in school and beyond.

To close this report, the story of Faiza shows how ParentChild+'s impact can last a lifetime. Faiza enrolled her daughter Sumaya in ParentChild+ back in 2015. She quickly recognized the program's power to change lives, and sought to stay with the program even after Sumaya graduated. Faiza went on to complete a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, and



returned to ParentChild+ as a Program Coordinator (supervisor). She subsequently completed her Master's Degree in Educational Leadership, and remains committed to the program today. Best of all, Faiza's commitment to the program has inspired an upcoming generation. Her daughter Sumaya proudly reports that when she grows up, she wants to work for ParentChild+ too!