



Preventing
ACEs
Through
Collaboration
and
Economic
Supports
(PACES)

Year 2 Evaluation
Report

January 2023



The University of Texas at Austin
Texas Institute for
Child & Family Wellbeing
Steve Hicks School of Social Work



Preventing ACEs Through Collaboration and Economic Supports (PACES):

Year 2 Evaluation Report

January 2023

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Executive Summary

Background and Overview

Poverty and economic hardship can compound stressors that put children at risk of experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which can have long-term implications for their health and wellbeing. Foundation Communities created the Preventing ACEs Through Collaboration and Economic Supports (PACES) project to reduce financial strain and promote protective factors against ACEs for families by increasing the receipt of federal tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC). The PACES project aims to support low-income parents, particularly parents of color with young children who live within Austin's Eastern Crescent, an area with a high concentration of families experiencing poverty. This is done by training staff who work with low-income families at local organizations and through outreach and free tax filing assistance for families. Foundation Communities, in partnership with United Way for Greater Austin, has contracted with the Texas Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing (TXICFW) at The University of Texas at Austin to evaluate the PACES project.

Key Findings

STAFF SURVEYS

- The ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training significantly increased staff knowledge about tax credits and tax preparation services; however, this knowledge was not maintained over time. Staff may need additional training or follow-up on topics such as what qualifies families for different tax credits.
- After completing the training, staff were more likely to share information about tax credits and tax preparation services. They were also more likely to refer clients to Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services.
- For future trainings, staff requested resources tailored to immigrant families or more details to support clients with specific tax questions or financial needs.

FAMILY SURVEYS

- Participants who identified as Black claimed the EITC and CTC at significantly higher rates on their 2021 taxes.
- Of families that filed taxes, about one-third filed through Foundation Communities, one-third used an e-filing service, and one-third paid a professional to do their taxes. Latino/a/x families were the least familiar with Foundation Communities' services and the most likely to have paid a professional to do their taxes.

- Nearly all participants who filed their taxes received a refund. The most frequently mentioned priorities for using tax refunds included groceries, rent, and credit card debt.
- Economic hardship, housing instability, job stress, and childcare were common struggles among families who participated in the survey. However, participants who claimed the EITC reported significantly lower levels of hardship compared to non-filers.
- In terms of protective factors such as family environment and relationships, EITC claimers reported significantly more protective factors than non-filers.

Recommendations

- Continue to offer the ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training to staff at local organizations that serve low-income families in Austin in order to improve uptake of both free tax-filing services and the claiming of federal tax credits.
- Provide follow-up materials or additional trainings to help staff better understand tax eligibility and what to expect from the Foundation Communities tax preparation services to boost staff confidence in discussing these opportunities with clients.
- Bolster outreach to Latino/a/x families to improve their awareness and utilization of free tax preparation services and include specific information in staff training to better support families.



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Introduction

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events or experiences that can negatively impact a child's long-term health, wellbeing, and socioeconomic outcomes.^{iii,iv} ACEs can include abuse, neglect, experiencing or witnessing violence, and other factors that undermine a child's safety and stability.^v Poverty and economic hardship can compound these stressors and put children at greater risk for negative outcomes.^{vi} Children living in poverty also often experience ACEs at a greater frequency than their counterparts.^{vii} According to the Travis County Poverty Brief, one in four Travis County residents live below 200% of the federal poverty level and large areas of Eastern Travis County have 25–50% of residents living below 200% of the federal poverty level.^{viii} Additionally, Travis County residents who identify as Black or Latino/a/x experience poverty at a higher rate than White, non-Hispanic residents.^{ix} Children under the age of 18 and young adults ages 18–24 also experience higher than average poverty rates.^x

For families, strengthening economic supports may prevent or mitigate the impact of ACEs.^{xi} Federal tax credits, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) provide additional income that improves household financial security and reduces poverty for families.^{xii} The Preventing ACEs Through Collaboration and Economic Supports (PACES) project aims to ease environmental and economic conditions that place families and children at risk for experiencing ACEs by increasing receipt of the EITC and CTC among eligible families through support with free tax filing.

Eligible beneficiaries of anti-poverty tools such as the EITC and CTC must first file their taxes and then claim the credit on their tax return. Given that one in five tax filers who qualify for the EITC do not claim the tax credit, and approximately one in four EITC-eligible workers do not file a tax return, many opportunities exist to increase tax filing and credit claiming among families.^{xiii,xiv}

PACES Project Overview

Foundation Communities created the PACES project to reduce financial strain and promote protective factors against ACEs for families by increasing the receipt of federal tax credits such as the EITC and CTC. The PACES project aims to support low-income parents, particularly parents of color with young children who live within Austin's Eastern Crescent.

Through the PACES project, Foundation Communities hopes to reach EITC- and CTC-eligible families in the Eastern Crescent community both directly and indirectly to promote tax filing and credit claiming. To directly reach families, Foundation Communities uses social media, earned media, tabling at community events, text messaging platforms, and highly visible public messaging (e.g., city bus ads) in the Eastern Crescent to encourage families to file. To indirectly reach Eastern Crescent families, Foundation Communities partnered with numerous organizations to have their frontline staff conduct outreach by encouraging their clients to file. To prepare frontline professionals for their role in Foundation Communities' outreach efforts, partner organizations' staff receive customized training on the fundamentals of ACEs (e.g., definitions, signs, symptoms, and traumatic events), general risk and protective factors of

ACEs, and information on improving families' financial status through receipt of the EITC and CTC. By increasing knowledge about ACEs and federal tax credits, Foundation Communities hopes to equip frontline staff to inform their clients of the importance of tax filing and claiming federal tax credits. The project ultimately encourages staff to refer their clients to Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services in order to promote free tax filing and claiming of federal tax credits among families in the Eastern Crescent community.

Evaluation Overview

Foundation Communities, in partnership with United Way for Greater Austin, contracted with the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing (TXICFW) at The University of Texas at Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work to evaluate the second and third year of the PACES Project. The first year of the evaluation was completed by the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin and Dr. Cynthia Osborne and the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center at Vanderbilt University.

As part of this evaluation, TXICFW examines whether the PACES project's direct and indirect outreach efforts are associated with an increase in the number of clients who file their taxes and receive federal tax credits. The research team conducts this examination by assessing changes in tax filing behavior over three years using a convenience sample of Eastern Crescent families identified in the first year of the study (PACES sample). The evaluation also assesses the extent to which receipt of these federal tax credits is associated with a decrease in risk factors for ACEs and an increase in factors that protect against ACEs.

Over the evaluation period, TXICFW addresses the following research aims: (1) assess the effectiveness of staff training; (2) assess the effectiveness of participant outreach; and (3) identify the components of the PACES project that enhanced or detracted from the success of the project.

The data sources designed and administered by the Policy Impact Center included three surveys: The Austin Families Year 1 Survey (previously referred to as the PACES Client Survey) and the ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training Pre- and Post-Surveys (previously referred to as the Community Partner's Staff Surveys). The ACEs and Mitigating Factors Pre-Survey was administered to frontline staff in Fall 2021 prior to their participation in the training, and the ACEs and Mitigating Factors Post-Survey was administered to staff directly after this training. The Austin Families Year 1 Survey was administered to eligible families from 12 zip codes in Austin's Eastern Crescent area from July – September 2021 prior to tax filing outreach efforts.

In the second year of this study, TXICFW administered the ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training Follow-Up Survey approximately six to eight months after staff attended the training to assess changes in knowledge and referral behaviors. Interviews were also conducted with staff to understand how they felt about the training and in what ways the training impacted their work. Lastly, TXICFW administered the Austin Families Year 2 Survey to the PACES sample identified in year one to collect information on tax filing behaviors, risk and protective factors of ACEs, and clients' use of free tax preparation services.

At the end of the three-year evaluation, TXICFW will report on the overall effectiveness of outreach and referral activities by measuring changes in tax filing behavior and ACEs risk and protective factors in the PACES sample.

The Current Report

The current report focuses on findings from the Austin Families Year 2 Survey, ACEs Mitigating Factors Training Follow-Up Survey, and interviews with staff who attended the ACEs Mitigating Factors Training. All data for this report was collected between May 2022 and August 2022.



Evaluation Design & Methodology

Research Question

Using a mixed-method design, TXICFW assessed the following research aims by evaluating the corresponding research questions:

Research Aim 1: Assess the effectiveness of staff training.

- To what extent does training frontline staff increase knowledge about ACEs?
- To what extent does training frontline staff increase knowledge about the EITC?
- What proportion of frontline staff share information about the EITC with the community within six months of training?

Research Aim 2: Assess the effectiveness of participant outreach.

- To what extent do the EITC claims increase among families receiving outreach services?
- To what extent does receipt of the EITC increase among families receiving outreach services?
- To what extent do protective factors increase among families receiving outreach services?
- To what extent do risk factors decrease among families receiving outreach services?

Research Aim 3: Assess the value of each component of the approach.

- Which components of the intervention enhanced the success of the project?
- What components of the intervention detracted from the success of the project?
- To what extent do community members perceive that outreach efforts align with their cultural values and linguistic needs?

ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training

STAFF SURVEYS

Sample

From September to December 2021, Foundation Communities invited staff members from partner organizations who work directly with clients to participate in a one-hour training session led by a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Foundation Communities sent partner organization staff a pre-training survey link before the scheduled training and a post-training survey after the training took place. According to Foundation Communities' registration roster, 290 frontline staff members from 34 organizations participated in PACES' Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mitigating Factors Training. A total of 126 training participants completed both a pre-and post-training survey.

Approximately six to eight months following the training, individual survey links were emailed to all training participants. Assertive outreach strategies such as sending additional reminder emails were used to increase response rates. Fifteen participants were no longer eligible to participate in the survey (i.e., they had retired, left the organization, etc.). Of the remaining 276 training participants, 246 had working emails (89.1%) and a total of 85 of these participants completed the follow-up survey (34.5%).

Of the 126 participants who had completed the pre- and post- surveys, 54 completed the follow-up survey (42.8%). A logistic regression was performed to determine if there were any differences at baseline (pre-survey) between those who completed the 6-month follow-up survey and those who did not complete it on the following variables:

- Familiarity with ACEs (pre-survey)
- Number of ACEs quiz questions answered correctly (pre-survey)
- Directly interacted with clients (pre-survey)
- Shared information about tax credits with clients last year (pre-survey)
- Number of tax quiz questions answered correctly (pre-survey)
- Knew about Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services (pre-survey)
- Had a graduate level degree—Master's or higher (pre-survey)

Differences are important to account for, as they may influence findings. If only the participants who were highly knowledgeable about tax credits on the pre-survey participated in the follow-up survey, there would likely not be a significant change in level of knowledge about tax credits when examining scores for pre- to post- to follow-up. We would also not know how the training impacted those with lower scores who did not complete the follow-up survey.

Results of the logistic regression showed that staff who participated in the follow-up survey were more likely to have scored higher on the ACEs quiz and less likely to have a graduate level degree at the time of the pre-survey. Familiarity with ACEs, direct work experience, prior knowledge of Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services, prior sharing of information on tax credits, and number of tax items answered correctly on the pre-survey were not associated with participation in the follow-up survey.

The low response rate and differences in those who completed the follow-up survey as compared to those who did not limits the generalizability of findings because staff who attended training and completed all three surveys may not be representative of staff who attended training but did not complete all surveys. Simply put, all reported findings may not be representative of all 290 Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mitigating Factors Training attendees.

Lastly, the sample number in this report may vary depending on the type of analysis that was conducted and the number of participants who answered the question. In cases where no comparisons were being made across surveys, data could be provided for all 85 participants.

When changes from pre to post to follow-up were being assessed, findings were limited to the 54 participants who completed all three surveys.

Measures

All measures, unless specifically noted, were included in the pre-, post-, and follow-up surveys to assess changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior after participating in PACES' *Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mitigating Factors* Training.

ACEs and Federal Tax Credit Knowledge

To measure the change in knowledge about ACEs and federal tax credits, such as the EITC and the CTC, staff were asked to complete a six-question quiz on ACEs risk and protective factors and a short two-question quiz on federal tax credits. The ACEs and federal tax credit quizzes were scored independently at pre-, post-, and follow-up surveys to assess changes in knowledge. Each correct answer was worth one point. Scores for ACEs knowledge ranged from no correct answers (i.e., a score of 0) to all correct answers (i.e., 6). Scores for federal tax credits range from no correct answers (i.e., a score of 0) to all correct answers (i.e., 2). An average ACEs knowledge score and an average federal tax credit knowledge score were calculated at pre-, post- and follow-up.

Child Development Beliefs

Attitudes and beliefs of an individual or an organization can influence their professional behaviors.^{xv} Staff were asked a four-item measure to rate their level of agreement on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Two statements assessed the strength of staff's beliefs about children's predisposition to developmental outcomes, and two statements assessed the strength of staff's beliefs about whether external environmental supports improve children's developmental outcomes. These belief items were used to examine whether more staff hold attitudes consistent with the idea that social and economic supports can improve children's outcomes at post and follow-up than at pre.

Professional Responsibility

On the pre-survey, participants were asked about to indicate whether they shared tax filing information and/or referred clients to tax preparation services in 2020, to what extent they viewed preventing ACEs as a part of their job, and how confident they felt sharing information about tax preparation services. On the post and follow-up surveys, participants were also asked about the extent they viewed preventing ACEs as a part of their role and their level of confidence in sharing information about tax preparation services. Additionally, they were asked about their intention to share tax filing information and/or refer clients to tax preparation services in the future. The follow-up survey then asked participants to report whether they had shared tax filing information and/or referred clients to tax preparation services for the 2021 tax year.

Additional Items

In the follow-up survey, a new question was added that asked participants about their personal use of Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services.

Analytic Approach

This report examines differences between pre-, post-, and follow-up scores for the 54 staff who took all three surveys. In sections where differences are not being compared, findings are reported for 1) the number of staff who answered the questions even if they didn't participate in all three surveys and 2) the 54 staff who completed all three surveys. We will also examine whether there were any differences at the time of the pre-survey that may have influenced whether someone decided to participate in the 6-month follow-up survey.

All reported descriptive outcomes are unadjusted values or raw proportions. Repeated measures analysis of variances (ANOVAs) were conducted to examine differences in means for ACEs knowledge and federal tax credit knowledge at pre-, post-, and follow-up. Additionally, paired sample t tests were used to compare behavior change from pre- to follow-up. Qualitative responses from the staff survey were coded and analyzed in Microsoft Excel.

STAFF INTERVIEWS

Sample

TXICFW reached out to staff who completed the ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training Follow-Up Survey to thank them for participating in the survey and tell them about an opportunity to participate in an interview about the training. Once prospective interviewees responded, researchers scheduled phone interviews, which were conducted and recorded securely via Microsoft Teams. Researchers conducted individual interviews with 10 staff from eight different organizations serving a variety of clients. Staff worked in a mixture of direct service roles, supervisory roles, or a combination of the two.

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Researchers created a semi-structured interview guide for conducting interviews with staff. Questions in the interview guide, which can be found in the appendix, aimed to build upon findings from the follow-up survey to:

- Understand experiences regarding the logistics and content of the training
- Gather information about staff knowledge and referral behavior after the training
- Understand perspectives on how the training and promotion of referral efforts could be improved for the future of the project

Analytic Approach

Recordings were submitted to University of Texas Captioning and Transcription Services, where they were transcribed verbatim and returned to the research team as Microsoft Word documents. Researchers developed a coding scheme based on the semi-structured interview guide and coded transcripts using Dedoose, a qualitative coding software. Members of the research team independently coded transcripts, which the qualitative project lead then reviewed to mitigate any inconsistencies in coding. Coding excerpts were exported to Microsoft Excel and analyzed for major and minor themes. All participant information was

stored on UT Box, a secure cloud-based server, and qualitative data were de-identified before reporting.

Austin Families Surveys

AUSTIN FAMILIES SAMPLE

The sample for the Austin Families Surveys is a convenience sample of families residing in the Eastern Crescent with children who met eligibility criteria for the EITC during the 2020 tax season. Foundation Communities and partner organizations distributed the Austin Families Year 1 Survey to their clients (i.e., the families they serve). Organizations used social media platforms, flyers, community events, listservs, parent groups, and text messaging services to promote the survey. From July to September 2021, 624 eligible participants completed the Austin Families Year 1 Survey. Eligible participants were defined as individuals over the age of 18 residing in one of 12 targeted zip codes within Austin’s Eastern Crescent with at least one child under the age of 16. Participants also had to be eligible for the federal EITC, as calculated by marital status, income, and the number of dependents. Importantly, the data for Year 1, the baseline year, were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic and the rollout of the expansion of the Child Tax Credit with the passing of the American Rescue Plan Act.

Austin Families Year 2 Survey Participation

Researchers sent all 624 participants who completed the Austin Families Year 1 Survey an email requesting their participation in the Austin Families Year 2 Survey. The survey was available from July 12 to August 1, 2022. Within that time frame, participants received three additional reminder emails. Participants who had not responded after two weeks were called when a phone number was available.

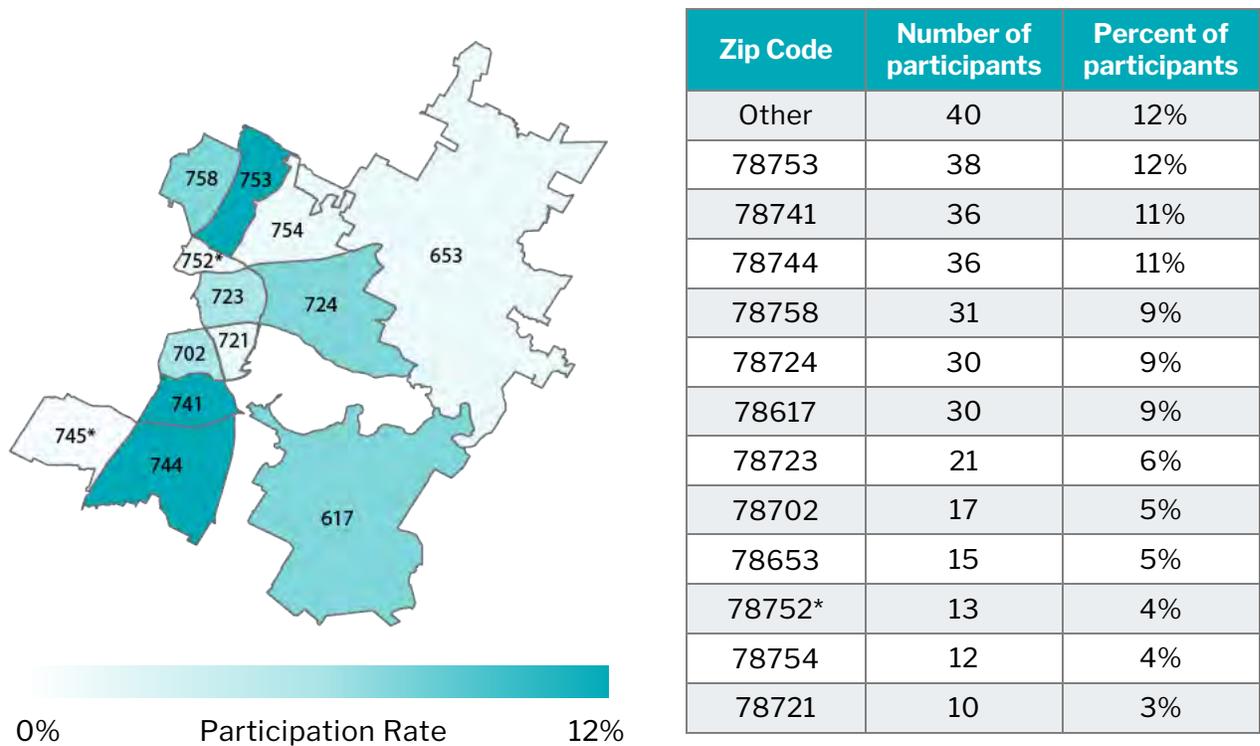
A summary of participation status for the Austin Families Year 2 Survey is provided in Table 1 below. Of the 624 participants, 339 (54.3%) completed at least 50% of the Austin Families Year 2 Survey.

Table 1. Austin Families Year 2 Survey Participation Status (N = 624)

Status	n	%
Completed at least 50% of survey	339	54.3%
Completed less than 50%	19	3.0%
Declined survey	1	0.2%
Emails that are not working, no longer active, or bounced	39	6.3%
Not completed	226	36.2%

Figure 1 provides a summary of participation by zip code for participants in Year 2.

Figure 1. Participation by Zip Code in Year 2 (N = 339)



Numbers reflect the zip code with the leading '78' removed for space considerations. A * after the zip code indicates there is a Foundation Communities Tax Help Center located within that zip code.

A logistic regression was conducted to determine whether there were any differences at baseline (year 1 survey) between those who completed the year 2 survey and those who did not on the following variables:

- Gender
- Language spoken at home
- Race and ethnicity
- Highest level of education (associates degree or higher)
- Marital status
- Age of participant
- Household income (2020)
- Familiarity with Foundation Communities
- Filing status
- Claimed EITC in 2020
- Claimed Child Tax Credit (CTC) in 2020
- Claimed Child and Dependent Credit (CDCTC) in 2020

Findings reveal some differences between those who completed the year 2 survey and those who did not complete it. Having a higher level of education was positively associated with year 2 survey participation. Individuals with an associate degree or higher were 1.8 times more likely to participate in the year 2 survey. There was also a relationship between claiming of an additional federal tax credit (Child and Dependent Tax Credit) and survey participation in year 2. Participants who did not claim the Child and Dependent Tax Credit (CDCTC) on their 2020 taxes were 1.6 times more likely to participate than those who claimed it. There were no differences in gender, race, ethnicity, language, marital status, income, age, filing status, claiming status of EITC and CTC, or familiarity with Foundation Communities between participants who completed the year 2 survey and those who did not. While participants were similar on most characteristics, differences between those who responded and those who did not should be considered when drawing conclusions about the year 2 findings, as they may not reflect the entire sample.

MEASURES

Tax Filing Behaviors

Participants were asked to report on their yearly income, tax return amount, use of their tax refund, whether they filed a tax return for the previous tax year, and whether they claimed the EITC and CTC for the year 2020. Researchers also asked about participants' knowledge of tax credits and their use of tax preparation services, such as Foundation Communities' services.

Family Wellbeing

To measure family wellbeing, multiple measures were adapted to assess potential risk and protective factors such as economic and material hardship, mental wellbeing, familial supports, and environmental stressors.

Economic and Material Hardship

Economic and material hardship was measured using 20 items that assess participants' perception of economic hardship across several areas, including how much financial strain they felt, their ability to make ends meet, having enough money for necessities, and whether they had to make any lifestyle adjustments due to financial need. All items were summed to create an overall hardship score, with higher scores indicating a greater perception of economic hardship.

Risk and Protective Factors

Risk and protective factors were measured using the Protective Factors Survey, 2nd Edition, to assess changes in protective factors over time across three key areas: family functioning/resiliency, social support, and nurturing and attachment.^{xvi} An average score for each key area was calculated, with higher scores indicating more protective factors.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Center for Epidemiological Studies of Depression Short Form (CES-D) is a self-reported measure assessing the presence or absence of negative and positive thoughts, feelings, and

behaviors experienced the week prior to taking the survey.^{xvii} For the purposes of this study, the CES-D was used to screen for symptoms associated with depression.

Environmental Stressors

Participants were also asked about their childcare arrangements, work environment, and other environmental stressors families often face.

New Item

One additional question was added to ask both filers and non-filers how they learned about Foundation Communities Prosper Centers' free tax filing services.

ANALYTIC APPROACH

For the Austin Families Year 2 Survey, data was descriptively analyzed based on point-in-time data collected in summer of 2022. All descriptive outcomes are unadjusted values or raw proportions. Two-sample t tests or proportion tests were used to test all items for statistical significance for all reported values that compare measures across tax filing groups or race/ethnic groups.

Throughout the report, researchers present four racial/ethnic categories: Black, Latino/a/x, White, and Other. For respondents who identified as multiracial (selecting multiple racial/ethnic categories), researchers assigned them to the reported racial/ethnic group that historically has experienced structural racism and systemic barriers that create and perpetuate societal and economic disadvantages. For example, if an individual self-identifies as both Black and White, researchers assigned their race as Black; for an individual who self-identifies as both Latino/a/x and White, researchers assigned their ethnicity as Latino/a/x. A small number of participants identified with multiple race/ethnic groups that have historically experienced structural racism and systematic barriers. For example, an individual who identified as Latino/a/x and Black would fall into this category. For the purposes of this study, these participants were included in the "Other" category along with participants who identified as American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, or preferred not to answer, as the sample size was too small to report results of these categories individually.

Throughout the report, we focus on two tax filing status groups created based on participants' reported tax behavior: 1) EITC claimers, or participants who both filed taxes and claimed the EITC, and 2) non-filers, or participants who did not file their 2020 tax return and therefore did not claim the EITC.



Findings

ACEs Mitigating Factors Training

The following section will discuss findings collected through surveys and interviews with staff about the ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training.

ABOUT PARTICIPANTS

Staff Follow-Up Survey Participant Characteristics

There were 54 staff who completed the pre-, post-, and follow-up training surveys. As a reminder, staff who did not have a graduate level degree and staff who scored higher on the pre-survey ACEs quiz were more likely to complete the follow-up survey. Table 2 provides basic information about the 54 participants who completed all three surveys.

Table 2. Follow-Up Survey Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	Summary
Highest Level of Education	9% had some college but no degree 4% had an associate degree 60% had a bachelor’s degree 26% had a graduate or professional degree <i>One participant did not specify level of education</i>
Organization and Role at Follow-Up	94% were working for the same organization 83% were in the same role
Direct Work Experience with Clients	87% indicated they often or always work with families in a typical month 74% directed low- and moderate-income families in Austin to other community resources that may benefit them 78% identified the needs of clients informally and 52% used formal assessments
Foundation Communities’ Tax Preparation Services	17% of staff had personally used Foundation Communities’ Tax Preparation Services 7 participants preferred not to say

Participating organizations: Any Baby Can, Austin Child Guidance Center, Austin Independent School District (AISD), Austin Voices for Education and Youth, AVANCE-Austin, American Youthworks – Austin, Catholic Charities of Central Texas, Communities in Schools (CIS) of Central Texas, Foundation Communities, Friends of the Children Austin, Giving Austin Labor Support (GALS), Goodwill Central Texas, Jeremiah Program, LifeWorks, Literacy Coalition of Central Texas, PelotonU, Saint Louise House, Todos Juntos Learning Center, and Welcome Table.

Staff Interview Participant Characteristics

Researchers conducted interviews with five direct-service providers, three supervisors who also provide direct services to clients, and two staff who only serve as supervisors, totaling 10 interview participants. Researchers interviewed staff from the following organizations, with multiple participants from some organizations:

- Catholic Charities of Central Texas
- Austin Independent School District
- Any Baby Can
- Austin Youthworks/American Youthworks
- Communities in Schools of Central Texas
- Goodwill of Central Texas
- LifeWorks
- AVANCE

Most participants worked with low-income families who live in or around Travis County, though some programs served adults only. Examples of client populations at individual organizations included low-income mothers and children, young adults with workforce needs, immigrant and refugee families, veterans, and students and their families. All interviewees in a supervisory role said that their direct service staff also attended the training.

PARTICIPANT TRAINING EXPERIENCE

Overall Impressions and Perceived Impact

Staff reported positive experiences with the training and all interviewees said that they would attend the training again and/or recommend the training to colleagues. Staff reported the training better equipped them to serve families by connecting them with a tangible resource to mitigate poverty and build protective factors.

In interviews, researchers asked staff why they decided to participate in the ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training. Most interviewees decided to participate in the training to help them support clients who experience trauma. Some participants were either required or strongly encouraged by their organizations to participate. One participant decided to participate because they wanted to learn more about the federal tax credits specifically.

"Well, I have actually done a couple of these ACEs trainings before, but this one was specific to that earned income tax credit. To be completely honest with you, I am not a numbers person. I know that the tax laws are constantly changing, so I just figured it would be good for me to kind of be well versed in that area. I do a lot of referrals out for our young people as well. Any resources that might benefit them I figured I wanted to learn about it. Come tax season, our young people come ask us all kinds of questions. I just wanted to be well versed on that. I thought it was an interesting thing. I've never actually been to a training that discusses how something like this would affect an ACE score... and it makes perfect sense to me and how it mitigates risk factors. It was just very unique

training and of course something like an area of the tax stuff that I am not super familiar with.” -Staff

Researchers also asked interviewees about their initial thoughts or impressions of the training. Participants’ initial thoughts were positive, with some mentioning it was a good refresher on a familiar topic with new information included. One participant specified that the training included new information about federal tax credits. Participants used words like “in depth”, “informative,” and “complete” to describe the content. Two participants mentioned being appreciative of the opportunity for self-reflection as part of the training.

“I thought it was pretty informative, especially I really liked the self-reflective part, seeing where you lie on the scale and how that shapes how you’re able to help others that maybe have a different experience than you.” -Staff Interviewee

All 10 interviewees said that they would attend this training again in the future and/or recommend it to others in their line of work, with one suggesting more of an emphasis on the tax credits and services for repeat attendees, as they already know a lot about ACEs.

“I would definitely recommend this training to others, and if there was another training, maybe more in-depth, or adding onto the training I went through, I would attend.” -Staff Interviewee

“Yeah, I definitely recommend it [...] I think if it has reminders about what is this year’s tax services and stuff, that’s new information. But if it’s just like the ACEs, I have attended so many training on that so far so I would probably wait a little bit of time for that.” -Staff Interviewee

In the follow-up survey, one open-ended question asked how the training impacted respondents’ work with families. Most staff responded more generally about the training helping them better understand the impact of ACEs on clients or better serve and connect clients with resources. Nine staff responded more specifically about how the training helped them understand the connection between ACEs, poverty, income, and how to connect people with the Foundation Communities tax resources and/or the federal tax credits.

“It’s made me more aware about how a small income bump could make a huge difference in a families’ overall wellbeing.” -Staff Survey Respondent

“It’s helped me know that there is a cash resource available to some families, so I have a good resource to point them toward.” -Staff Survey Respondent

“It made clear how to access Foundation Communities services to help families process their tax returns, and benefit from tax credits they may not be aware of.” -Staff Survey Respondent

“It has been integrated in our organizations resource list and we work with more mindfulness around sharing this resource with families.” -Staff Survey Respondent

Training Logistics, Cultural Relevance, and Recommendations

A little over half of staff interviewees preferred an in-person format for future trainings, and nearly all interviewees felt the training was culturally/linguistically relevant to their client population. Staff interviewees and survey respondents requested some additional information, such as resources tailored to immigrant families or more details to support clients with specific tax questions or financial needs.

The ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training was initially intended to be held in person but shifted to a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When asked if the training should continue to be virtual or resume in person, six out of 10 interviewees preferred in person training. Two interviewees preferred the virtual format and three suggested a hybrid option to accommodate the preferences of all trainees. Interviewees were also asked if they had any suggestions for virtual or in person training. One interviewee suggested a more interactive virtual experience and all interviewees who made in-person suggestions preferred the training to be held during business hours on weekdays.

Nearly all interviewees felt the training material was culturally and/or linguistically relevant, with one mentioning they could not specifically recall. One interviewee said they would not use ACEs terminology with clients, but that the material was presented in a way that helped them talk to clients about it. Three interviewees said that offering the training in Spanish would give people who speak Spanish with clients more familiar language to use. Two interviewees suggested including more information tailored to immigrant families or people who are undocumented, potentially sharing similar resources for those that may not qualify for the federal tax credits (e.g., because of documentation status).

When staff interviewees were asked if there was anything they wished they had learned that wasn't included in the training, they mentioned:

- How to discuss trauma with families more comfortably
- A pamphlet or takeaway materials to give to clients
- More details on the tax credit piece of the training to be able to answer more specific questions from clients
- Basic financial information beyond tax credits—for instance, what to do if clients don't have a bank account
- Getting information earlier before clients have already decided to pay someone for tax services

ACES AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Knowledge of ACEs

Staff survey respondents had an understanding of ACEs at baseline, and while their ACE knowledge scores were slightly higher in the post and follow-up surveys, this difference was not statistically significant.

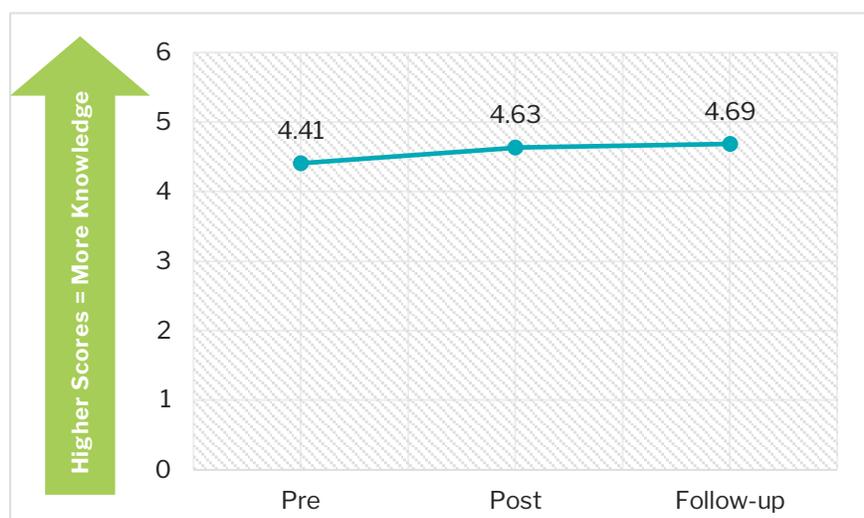
Survey participants were asked to rate their level of familiarity with ACEs on the pre-survey. Most participants indicated they were at least somewhat familiar with ACEs prior to the training. Table 3 summarizes responses.

Table 3. Level of familiarity with ACEs prior to training (N = 54)

Level of familiarity	%
Not at all familiar	11%
Slightly familiar	11%
Somewhat familiar	45%
Very familiar	32%

Staff were also asked to complete a six-item quiz about ACEs on the pre-, post-and follow-up surveys. ACE knowledge scores were slightly higher on the post and follow-up surveys; however, this difference was not statistically significant. (See Figure 2.) It is important to keep in mind: 1) ACE knowledge scores were high at baseline, and 2) participants who completed the pre-survey had higher scores on the ACEs quiz prior to the training compared to those who did not complete the follow-up and therefore may look different for those who did not complete it.

Figure 2. Mean ACEs Scores on the Pre-, Post- and Follow-Up Surveys (N = 54)



Beliefs About Child Development

Six months after the training, most staff survey respondents still believed that children could overcome adversity with the right environmental supports.

Research demonstrates that while early life experiences impact children’s brain development and early adversity can lead to negative lifelong outcomes,^{xviii} ensuring children and their families have access to adequate resources can prevent early adversity from occurring.^{xix} Figure 3 and Figure 4 demonstrate that in the pre-, post-, and follow-up surveys, the majority of staff demonstrated beliefs consistent with the science that nurturing environments support healthy child development while recognizing that individual characteristics also play a role. Staff were significantly less likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, “How well children respond to stress depends on their natural makeup” over time. The findings can be interpreted as a reflection on the complexities of internal and external factors that impact how children respond to stress over time. There were no significant differences across time for the other three items.

Figure 3. Beliefs About Children’s Natural Characteristics

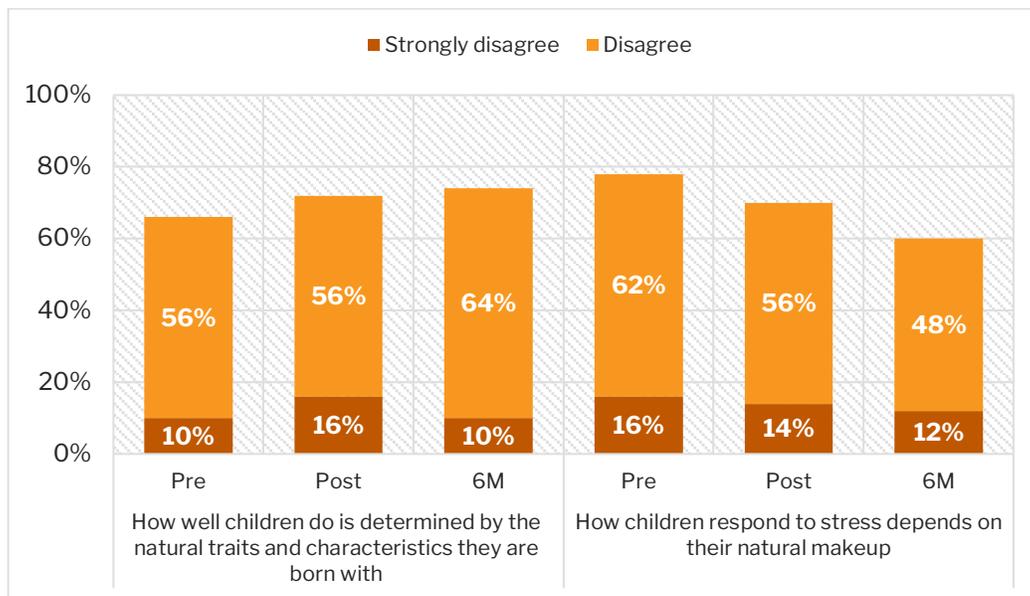
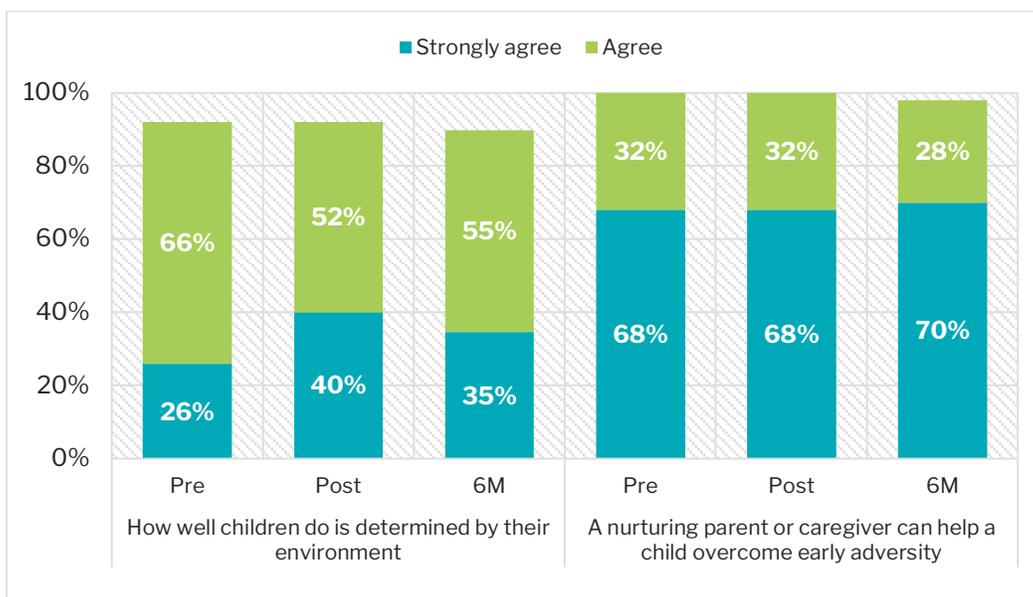


Figure 4. Beliefs about Children’s Environment

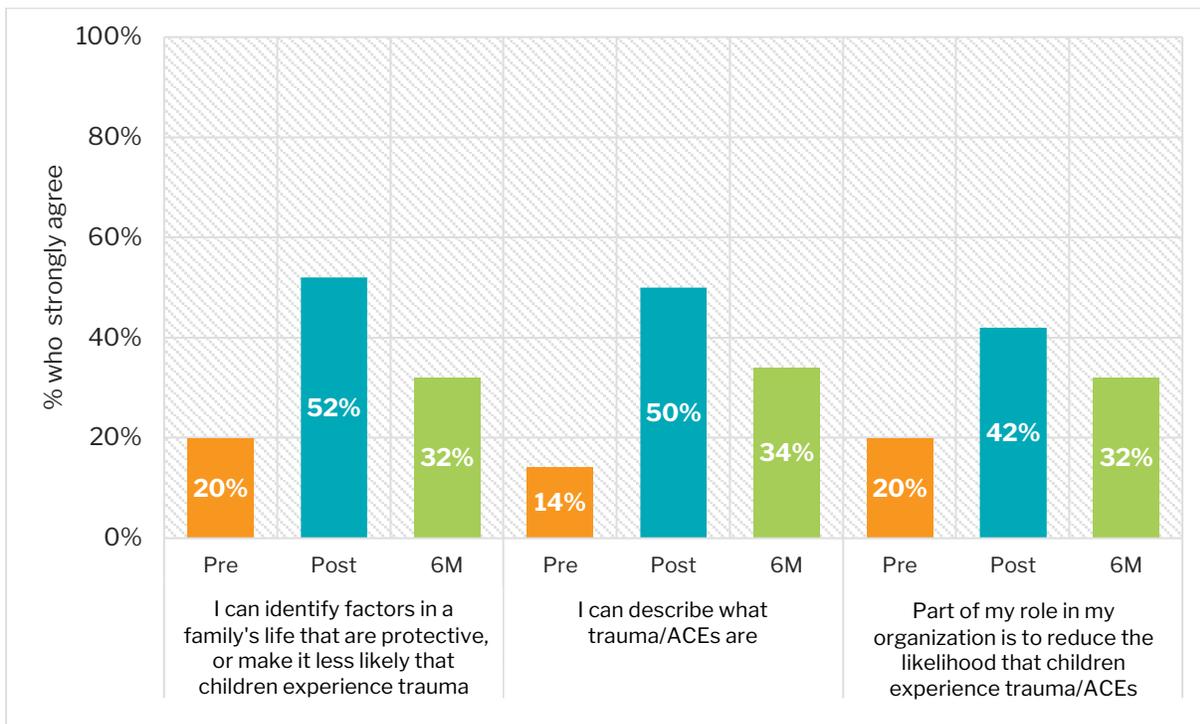


Understanding of Trauma and Professional Role in Promoting Resilience

The training had a significant impact on staff understanding of trauma and their professional role to promote resilience. However, the follow-up survey results indicate this effect was not as strong over time.

The pre-, post-, and follow-up training surveys also measured staff understanding of trauma and their professional role to promote resilience. This included being able to describe what trauma and ACEs are, identifying protective factors with families, and knowing that part of their role is to reduce the likelihood of childhood trauma and ACEs. A significant increase from pre- to post-survey was found in the number of staff who felt they could identify factors in a family’s life that are protective or make it less likely children experience trauma. This number was still significantly higher at the time of the follow-up survey compared to the pre-survey but was also significantly lower than the post-survey. In other words, the training had a significant impact on the number of staff who felt they could identify factors, but over time, this effect was not as strong. The same pattern was true for the number of staff who reported they could describe what trauma/ACEs are and the number of staff who felt it was their role to reduce the likelihood that children experience trauma/ACEs (see figure 5).

Figure 5. Understanding of Trauma and Professional Role to Promote Resilience (N = 54)



Connection Between ACEs and the Earned Income Tax Credit

Staff interviewees demonstrated an understanding of the connection between ACEs and the EITC. For some staff, this translated to helping clients become more aware of the availability of the EITC.

In interviews with staff who participated in the training, researchers asked what participants had learned about the connection between ACEs, mitigating factors, and EITC to gain better insight on the overall impact of the training. A few participants spoke to the connection between ACEs and poverty and how extra income in the form of tax credits can serve as a mitigating factor. Some participants mentioned simply learning about the availability of these tax credits and how to connect families with them. Two people could not recall specifics about the federal tax credit piece of the training.

"Definitely, the one thing that our families struggle with is the financial aspect. I think that if our family understands all the things that they can get with tax credits, they can bring a lot more wealth for their families. I think that if we can teach our families how to properly do their taxes and in a way that they can benefit from them, then they can, for example, get credit for their children or for another series of stuff. They can provide more wellness for their family because having more money, it will allow them maybe to have better resource[s] for the family, better quality of food, better time to share with the family because maybe mom doesn't have to work outside their home." -Staff Interviewee

Researchers then asked staff if they had utilized anything from the training in their work with clients. A few staff recalled talking to families more generally about ACEs and protective factors. Some staff spoke more specifically about making clients aware of tax credits and how to get connected with them, either through Foundation Communities or through other resources. Two staff said the training was a good reminder for them to simply remain cognizant of ACEs and poverty when working with clients and families.

"I knew that information already, but maybe just linking it in my mind as a way of talking to families about it. [Understanding] how poverty and racism and all that works together. But I think, giving us that language to talk to families about that connection was good and also just to help us feel more comfortable talking to families about the different programs that are out there and making sure they're utilizing them appropriately." -Staff Interviewee

TAX CREDITS AND TAX PREPARATION RESOURCES

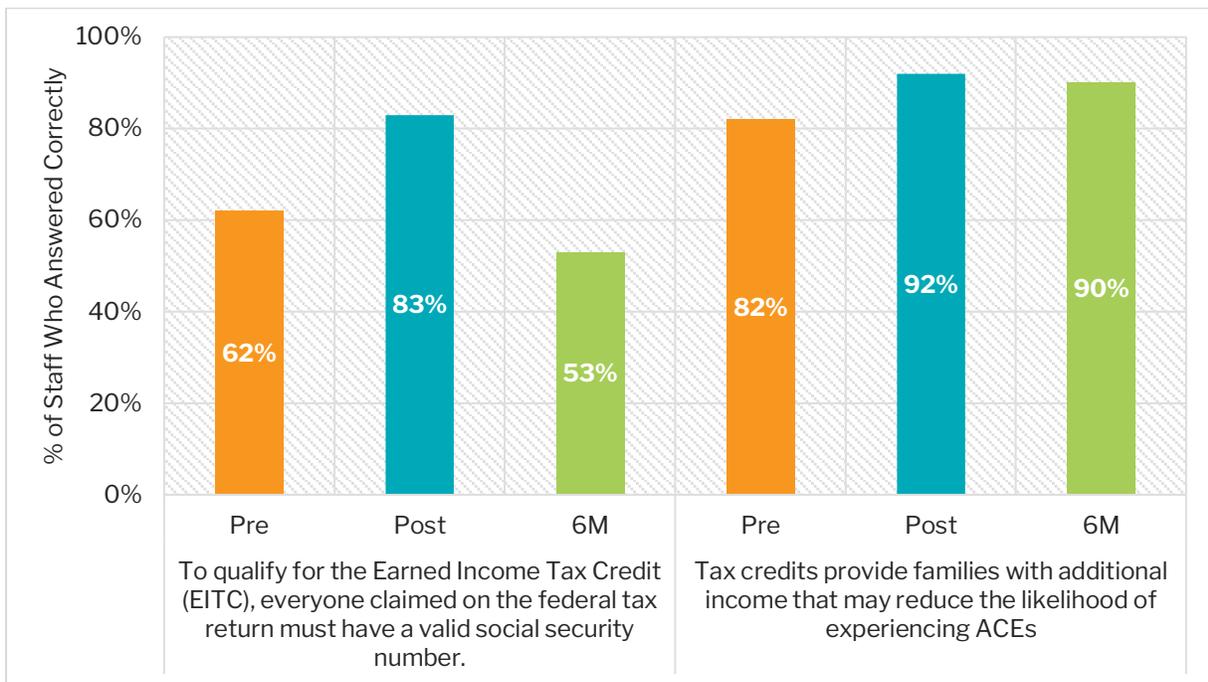
Knowledge of Tax Credits and Tax Preparation Resources

Staff maintained a high level of understanding about the relationship between taxes and ACEs but needed a refresher on what qualifies families for the EITC.

Tax credits and tax preparation services are key factors in boosting resilience for families, making it important for staff who interact with clients on a regular basis to have knowledge of both. Two questions assessed tax knowledge on the pre-, post-, and follow-up surveys. The first question focused on EITC eligibility. Understanding that all household members need a social security number to receive the EITC is important for anyone who serves families that might have household members without a social security number. The percentage of staff who indicated that a valid social security number is needed for the EITC significantly increased between the pre- and post-survey, but this increase in knowledge was not maintained over time. Almost 50% of staff members incorrectly answered the question in the follow-up survey, reporting that all family members do not need a social security number to be eligible to claim the EITC, indicating that EITC-eligibility criteria may be an area of focus for additional follow-up and future trainings.

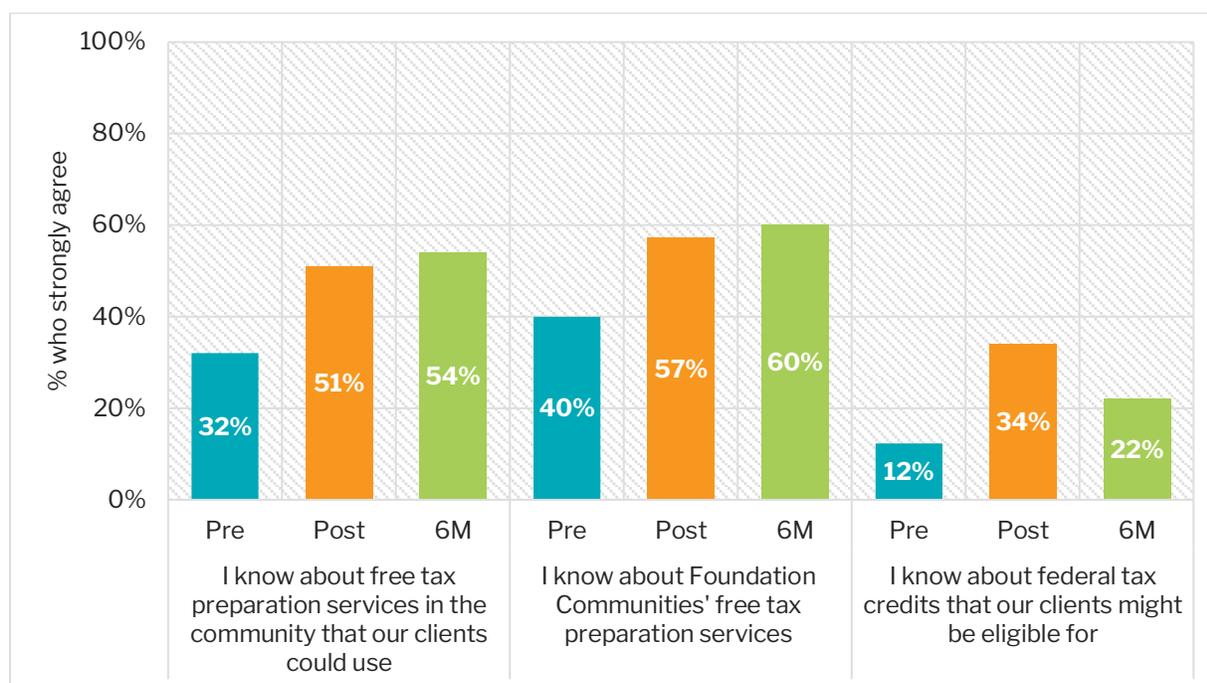
The second tax question focused on the relationship between taxes and ACEs. A high percentage of staff answered this question correctly on the pre-survey (82%), post-survey (92%) and follow-up survey (90%). These percentages were not statistically different across time (see figure 6).

Figure 6. Tax Credit Knowledge Quiz Scores Over Time



The pre-, post-, and follow-up surveys also asked staff if they knew about free tax preparation services in the community, specifically Foundation Communities tax preparation services, and about the federal tax credits for which their clients might be eligible. Results indicated that staff had a higher level of knowledge about tax preparation services, including Foundation Communities services, in the post-training survey as compared to the pre-survey. This progress was maintained in the follow-up survey. This pattern held true for knowledge about federal tax credits. However, the percentage of participants who felt like they had a strong understanding of federal tax credits was much lower across all three time points. Only 12% of participants strongly agreed that they knew about federal tax credits their clients were eligible for, and while this increased to 34% after the training and was closer to 22% at follow-up, most staff did not have a strong understanding of federal tax credits (see Figure 7.) Future trainings may need more emphasis on this topic.

Figure 7. Knowledge About Tax Credits and Tax Preparation Services



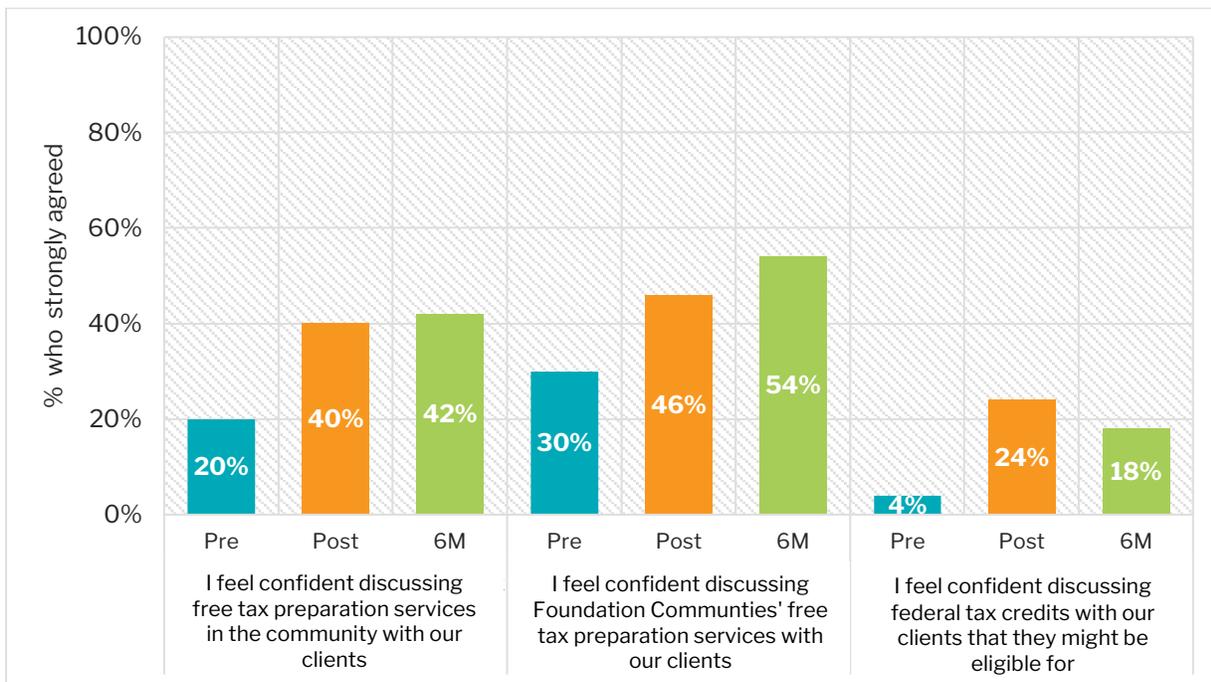
Confidence in Discussing Tax Preparation Services and Tax Credits

Staff confidence in discussing free tax preparation services and tax credits increased after the training and was maintained through follow-up. However, a significant proportion of staff still did not feel confident discussing these topics with clients after the training, particularly around eligibility for federal tax credits.

Staff not only need to be knowledgeable about what tax credits and tax preparation services are available to families, but also must have the confidence to discuss these services with families. The percentage of staff survey respondents who strongly agreed they felt confident discussing free tax preparation services increased from pre-survey (20%) to post-survey (40%) and was maintained at the time of follow-up (42%). The pattern was similar for those who strongly agreed they felt confident discussing Foundation Communities' tax preparation services. About one-third of participants strongly agreed they felt confident at pre, which increased to roughly half at post (46%) and follow-up (54%). (See Figure 8).

Overall, staff were not as confident in discussing federal tax credits for which their clients might be eligible. Only 4% strongly agreed they felt confident before the training, and this percentage significantly increased to 24% after the training. At the time of follow-up, an increase was maintained, but only 18% strongly agreed they felt confident in this area (see Figure 8). Trainings may need additional information about tax credits and eligibility (particularly around immigration status) in order to help staff feel more confident discussing this information with clients.

Figure 8. Confidence in Discussing Tax Credits and Tax Preparation Services



An open-ended question on the survey asked staff what challenges they had encountered when talking to families about filing their federal tax return. The most cited challenge was immigration and/or documentation status and fear of tax filing. Related to this, a couple of respondents mentioned uncertainty over contract work or being paid in cash. Others mentioned general trust, misinformation, or lack of financial literacy. Some staff felt that they themselves still did not have the info they needed to feel comfortable talking to families about filing taxes, not knowing how to answer questions that arise. Others mentioned time or transportation barriers.

‘Many families I work with are under-documented, so they are worried about filing their taxes and receiving governmental aid. Many times, it takes multiple conversations about how the family will be protected and the benefits of filing taxes and receiving the tax credits before the family feels comfortable filing.’
 -Staff Survey Respondent

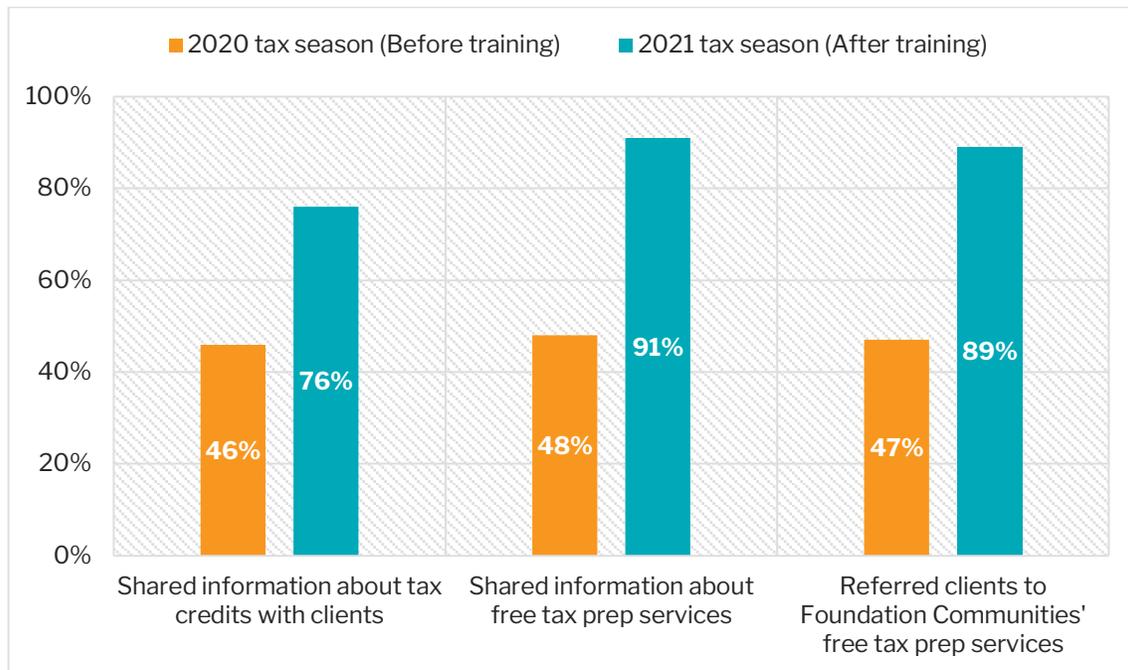
Referrals and Outreach

After completing the training, staff were more likely to share information about tax credits and tax preparation services. They were also more likely to refer client to Foundation Communities’ free tax preparation services.

Staff were encouraged to share information with their clients about tax credits and refer them to free tax preparation services to promote free tax filing and claiming of federal tax credits among families in the Eastern Crescent community.

- During the 2020 tax season (prior to the training), only **46%** of participants had shared information about tax credits. During the 2021 tax season (after the training), this number significantly increased to **76%** participants who had shared info about tax credits with their clients.
- Similarly, during the 2020 tax season, only **48%** of participants had shared information about free tax services. During the 2021 tax season, this number significantly increased to **91%** of participants who had shared information about free tax services with their clients.
- During the 2020 tax season, **47%** of participants had referred clients to Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services. This number also significantly increased to **89%** during the 2021 tax season.

Figure 9. Outreach and Referral Behavior of Staff Before and After the Training (N = 54)



Researchers asked interviewees if they felt they had enough information about the training to generally walk a client through what accessing Foundation Communities tax preparation services and the federal tax credits would look like. Six participants felt they had enough info to generally walk a client through the referral process and give general information about Foundation Communities tax preparation services, with one of these interviewees suggesting an annual refresher on this process. Two interviewees said that they knew enough to be able to refer clients to the tax preparation services, but that it was hard to answer any specific questions or details brought up by clients.

‘I know when we first did it, I felt pretty confident about that. I think it's always good to refresh every year only about what's going on.’ -Staff Interviewee

‘I feel like, to an extent, I did, but I wasn't completely—how do I say it?— knowledgeable about it, simply because I didn't know if there were any changes that may have been made or if there was anything else that I needed to have them be prepped for that. It was oftentimes more having them rely on Foundation Communities giving them that information after me just referring them over.’ -Staff Interviewee

Seven interviewees said that they did or do refer to Foundation Communities tax preparation services, and five participants already had a practice of referring to these tax preparation services before the training. When asked if clients typically follow through on these referrals, most interviewees said their clients utilize the services, but some said it depends on the client whether they follow through and attend. Interviewees who said their clients did not follow through and attend these services cited a few reasons. One client was not close to where the services were being offered, and to their knowledge could not attend virtually. One participant said the client’s case managers had already connected them with other resources. Another participant said that some clients don't attend because they are simply overwhelmed with information. Eight interviewees said they plan to make these referrals or continue making these referrals in the future.

‘I send out an email to all of them just highlighting this service around tax season time. Then I'll do check-ins with people, monthly or biweekly. If they say to me like, ‘Hey, I need assistance with tax services,’ then I will refer them to that.’ -Staff Interviewee

‘Sometimes, yes, and sometimes, no. It depends on the client. I will say, if the client is, like I said, Spanish speaking, possibly immigrant, and have never filed taxes before, they often tend to fall off and are sometimes not following through with the referral, or they just get so frustrated with the amount of information that they're getting that they prefer not to deal with the referral. That's often what I feel like what has happened in the past.’ -Staff Interviewee

When asked if there was anything that would make clients more likely to attend Foundation Communities tax preparation services, interviewees suggested the following (some of which Foundation Communities may already be doing):

- Reiterating that the tax preparation services are free
- Offering services onsite at a familiar organization and at different locations throughout the city
- Marketing to younger clients who don't already have someone to do their taxes
- Advertising more on social media
- Building trust with immigrant communities
- Giving staff more information to be able to refer, for instance, a Frequently Asked Questions resource
- Getting the information out sooner before some have chosen who will do their taxes

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK FOR FOUNDATION COMMUNITIES

At the close of the follow-up survey, researchers asked participants if they had any additional feedback for Foundation Communities or the evaluation team.

Most survey respondents reflected positive experiences with the training or with Foundation Communities in general. Some participants said they would like to attend the training again to get a refresher or that they would recommend the training to others. A few suggestions included:

- Marketing the training more toward case managers and resource specialists who would be more likely to talk about taxes and income with families
- More information specific to certain client populations or having partnerships with organizations to serve specific client populations
- More information, data, or examples about how income and ACEs are connected

"Thank you for the ACEs Training and I hope your organization can continue providing this essential service! More people should learn about this topic and I would be grateful for another opportunity to complete the training again, or participate in a refresher course. Upon filling out this post-training survey, I realized how several aspects of the training have already faded from my memory." -Staff Survey Respondent

Austin Families Year 2 Survey Findings

The following section includes findings from the Austin Families Year 2 Survey. As a reminder, there were two differences between participants in the sample who responded to the year 2 survey and those who did not: 1) individuals with an associate degree or higher were 1.8 times more likely to participate in the year 2 survey and 2) individuals who did not claim the Child and Dependent Tax Credit (CDCTC) on their 2020 taxes were more 1.6 times more likely to participate than those who claimed the CDCTC. There were no differences in gender, race, ethnicity, language, marital status, income, age, or filing status, claiming status of EITC and CTC, and familiarity with Foundation Communities between participants who completed the year 2 survey and those who did not.

ABOUT PARTICIPANTS

The following table provides demographic information about the 339 participants who completed the Austin Families Year 2 survey in 2022.

Table 4. Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Year 2 Summary
Age	34.5 years: average age of respondents in our sample. 5% were younger than 25 years old 24% were between 25 and 30 years old 52% were between 31 and 40 years old 18% were 41 years or older
Dependents	24% had one dependent, 41% had two dependents, 16% had three dependents, and 18% had four or more dependents
Race/Ethnicity	53% identified as Latino/a/x 26% identified as White 17% identified as Black 4% selected another race or more than one race
Education	17% did not have a high school diploma or an equivalent degree 32% had a high school diploma or an equivalent degree 29% had some college 4% had an associate degree 17% had a bachelor’s degree or higher
Home Language	67% primarily spoke English 32% primarily spoke Spanish <i>Remaining participants primarily spoke Arabic, French, Nepali, or Yoruba</i>
Gender	79% of respondents were female <i>Remaining participants were male or non-binary</i>
Marital Status	62% were legally married

TAX FILING BEHAVIOR

As previously mentioned, anti-poverty tools such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) strengthen household financial security and improve family wellbeing by mitigating environmental and economic conditions that place children at risk for experiencing ACEs.^{xx,xxi} The PACES project aims to increase the claiming of the EITC and CTC among the Eastern Crescent community to improve a family's financial security, which, over time, may promote protective factors against ACEs.

While not the focus of this study, researchers also examined families' claiming of the Child and Dependent Tax Credit (CDCTC), as it may further contribute to household financial security. The CDCTC is a federal tax credit that helps families pay for care of their eligible children and dependents in order to work, look for work or attend school. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 significantly increased the amount of expenses that could be credited as well as broadened the eligibility criteria for the credit.

The year 2
survey
found that:

- 87% of respondents filed a 2021 tax return
- 90% of filers received a tax refund
- \$4,150 to \$4,772: Average refund amount
- 56% of respondents claimed the Earned Income Tax Credit
- 47% of Latino/a/x respondents claimed the EITC
- 70% of White respondents claimed the EITC
- 73% of Black respondents claimed the EITC
- 66% of respondents claimed the Child Tax Credit
- 38% of respondents claimed the Child and Dependent Tax Credit

Changes in Tax Filing Behavior

There were no significant differences in the number of participants who filed taxes in 2021 compared to 2020, but participants claimed the CDCTC at a significantly higher rate in 2021. Participants who identified as Black also claimed the EITC and CTC at a significantly higher rate in 2021.

The following tables report changes in tax filing behavior between the baseline survey (2020 taxes) and year 2 survey (2021 taxes) for participants who completed both surveys.

Table 5 reports overall changes, and Table 6 reports changes by participant race/ethnicity. Overall, there were not significant differences in the percentage of participants who filed taxes, received a tax refund, claimed the EITC, or claimed the CTC from baseline to year 2. However, there was a significant increase in the percentage of participants who claimed the CDCTC in year 2 (38%) compared to the percentage who claimed the CDCTC at baseline (23%). This finding may be a result of the eligibility changes made to the CDCTC for 2021.

Table 5. Changes in Tax Filing Behavior (Baseline to Year 2).

	Baseline		Year 2		t	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Filed taxes	0.85	0.36	0.87	0.34	0.80	338	0.423
Received a tax refund	0.88	0.32	0.90	0.30	0.71	263	0.481
Claimed EITC	0.52	0.50	0.56	0.50	1.39	337	0.166
Claimed CTC	0.61	0.49	0.66	0.48	1.62	337	0.106
Claimed CDCTC	0.23	0.42	0.38	0.49	4.98	337	<0.001**

*p<.05, **p<.01

Changes in tax filing behavior from baseline to year 2 differed by race and ethnicity. The percentage of Black families who claimed the EITC significantly increased from 42% in the 2020 tax season (baseline) to 73% in the 2021 tax season (year 2). The percentage of Black families who claimed the CTC also significantly increased from 36% in the 2020 tax season to 75% in the 2021 tax season. There were no significant differences for Latino/a/x and White families in claiming the EITC or CTC. See Table 6 below.

Table 6. Changes in Tax Filing Behavior by Race/Ethnicity (Baseline to Year 2).

	Baseline		Year 2		t	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Black							
Filed taxes	0.96	0.19	0.95	0.23	-0.44	54	0.659
Received a tax refund	0.96	0.20	0.98	0.14	0.57	49	0.57
Claimed EITC	0.42	0.50	0.73	0.45	3.61	54	<0.001**
Claimed CTC	0.36	0.49	0.75	0.44	5.05	53	<0.001**
Claimed CDCTC	0.13	0.34	0.42	0.50	4.05	54	<0.001**
Latino/a/x							
Filed taxes	0.85	0.36	0.83	0.38	-0.58	176	0.565
Received a tax refund	0.81	0.39	0.82	0.38	0.21	134	0.836
Claimed EITC	0.51	0.50	0.47	0.50	-0.90	175	0.367
Claimed CTC	0.64	0.48	0.62	0.49	-0.43	175	0.669
Claimed CDCTC	0.28	0.45	0.35	0.48	1.67	175	0.096
White							
Filed taxes	0.79	0.41	0.95	0.22	2.97	81	0.004**
Received a tax refund	0.95	0.22	0.98	0.13	1.00	60	0.321
Claimed EITC	0.62	0.49	0.70	0.46	1.18	81	0.242
Claimed CTC	0.68	0.47	0.68	0.47	0.00	81	1.000
Claimed CDCTC	0.21	0.41	0.41	0.50	3.49	81	<.001**

*p<.05, **p<.01

Lastly, there were significant increases in the percentage of Black families and White families who claimed the CDCTC on their taxes from 2020 to 2021. During the 2020 tax season (baseline), only 13% of Black families and 21% of White families claimed the CDCTC. During the 2021 tax season, 36% of Black families and 41% of White families claimed the CDCTC. There were no significant differences for Latino/a/x families.

Comparing Non-Filers to EITC Claimers in Year 2

There were significant differences in income level, employment status, and education level for those who did not file their 2021 taxes and those who claimed their EITC.

- **59%** of **non-filers** reported an average yearly income below \$15,000 compared to **25%** of **EITC claimers**.
- **52%** of non-filers were unemployed compared to **20%** of EITC claimers.
- **56%** of non-filers had a high school education or less as compared to **44%** of EITC claimers.

Reasons For Not Filing

The most frequently cited reasons for not filing taxes in 2021 included not making enough money or not receiving a W-2.

Non-filers were asked about the reason they did not file 2021 taxes. Table 7 provides a breakdown of responses.

Table 7. Reasons For Not Filing in 2021 Taxes (N = 44)

Reason for not filing	%
I am not required to file my taxes because I did not make enough money	27%
I did not receive a W-2 from my employer	23%
I would have liked to file my taxes, but I did not know how	18%
I did not know about free tax preparation services	11%
I worry that if I file my taxes, I will do something wrong and get in trouble with the IRS	11%
I did not think I would get a refund this year	11%
Other*	34%

*Other reasons included not working, not filing yet due to filing extension, documentation status, receiving SSDI or SSI, or currently repaying a tax refund loan.

How Families Filed

About one-third of families filed taxes through Foundation Communities, one-third used an e-filing service, and one-third paid a professional to do their taxes. Participants who identified as Latino/a/x were most likely to pay a professional whereas participants who identified as Black or White were most likely to file through Foundation Communities.

For families that filed, 32% filed through Foundation Communities, 28% used an e-filing service and 30% paid a professional to file their taxes. Families of caregivers who identified as Latino/a/x were significantly more likely to pay a professional. Families of caregivers who identified as White or Black were more likely to use Foundation Communities. See Table 8 below.

Table 8. Tax Filing Method by Race/Ethnicity (Year 2)

Tax filing method	Black (n = 52)	Latino/a/x (n = 140)	White (n = 78)	Other* (n = 12)
Foundation Communities	52%	9%	69%	0%
Other free tax professional	0%	9%	4%	8%
Paid professional	13%	46%	9%	8%
E-filing	33%	31%	17%	67%
Other tax filing method**	2%	5%	1%	17%

* The percentage breakdown for the 12 participants who selected another race or more than one race should be interpreted with caution due to the low sample size.

** Other tax filing method includes doing taxes themselves or having a family member file taxes.

About participants who paid a tax professional

- **81%** identified as **Latino/a/x**
- **68%** had a **high school degree or less**
- **44%** made **less than \$25,000**

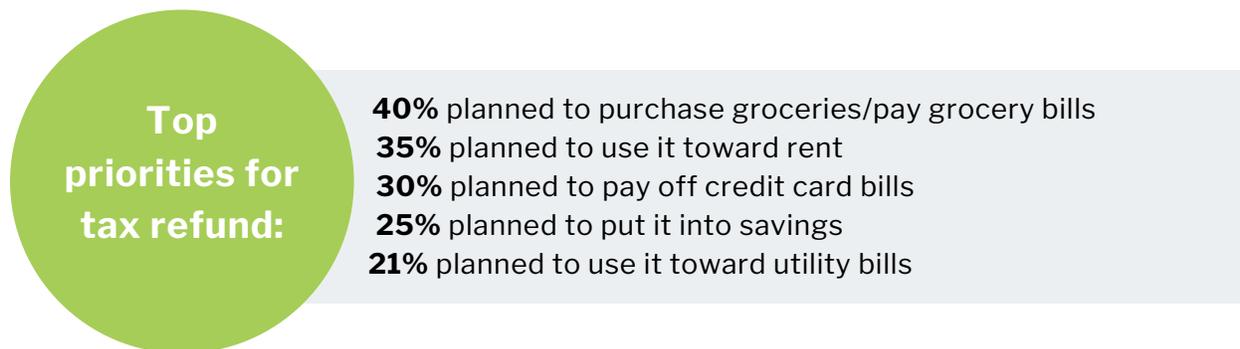
About participants who used Foundation Communities

- **58%** identified as **White**
- **45%** had a **high school degree or less**
- **18%** made **less than \$25,000**

Use of Tax Refund

Nearly all participants who filed their taxes received a refund, and the most frequently mentioned priorities for using tax refunds included groceries, rent, and credit card debt.

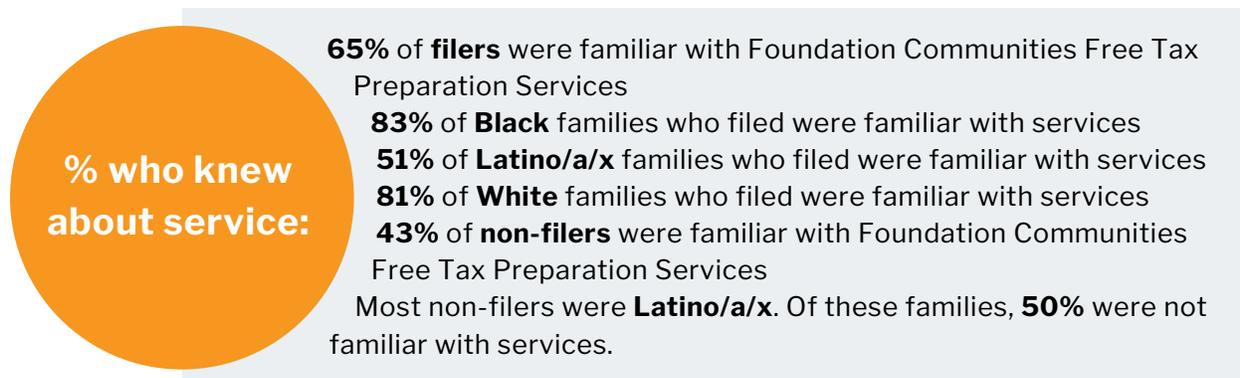
Ninety percent of participants who filed received a tax refund. The average refund amount was between \$4,150 and \$4,772. Filers were asked to select their top priorities for how they would use their tax refund, which included the following:



Knowledge of Foundation Communities Tax Preparation Services

Sixty-five percent of tax filers were familiar with Foundation Communities tax preparation services compared to 43% of non-filers. Most non-filers identified as Latino/a/x.

Foundation Communities has a free Tax Help Program to help people file a federal tax return. These free tax preparation services are online as well as at six locations (Prosper South at IH-35, Prosper North at Airport Blvd, Round Rock Public Library, Montopolis Recreation Center, Goodwill Community Center, and Turner Roberts Recreation Center). In the Austin Families Year 2 Survey, participants were asked to indicate whether they were familiar with Foundation Communities' Free Tax Preparation Services.



Participants familiar with Foundation Communities' Free Tax Preparation Services were asked where they had learned about these services. The most common responses included seeing an ad on social media (21%), receiving a newsletter/email/flyer (14%), and learning about services from a family member or friend (14%). Table 9 provides a summary of these findings.

Table 9. How Participants Learned About Foundation Communities' Tax Preparation Services

How participants learned	%
I saw an ad on social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)	21%
I received a newsletter, email, and/or flyer	14%
I heard about it from a family member and/or friend	14%
I heard an ad on the radio and/or saw an ad on TV	10%
A local organization recommended getting tax help from a Prosper Center	9%
I have used a Prosper Center to file my taxes before	8%
I saw a yard sign, billboard, and/or bus sign	7%
I received a text message	7%
I heard about and/or attended community meeting(s)	5%
Other*	1%
None of the above	3%

*For those that selected other, these included local community spaces such as the library, an accountant, or by word of mouth.

FAMILY WELLBEING

Parents who experience financial hardships, such as having a low income or living in poverty, are more likely to experience stress, depression, and relationship conflicts, which can make parenting more challenging.^{xxii,xxiii} Financial insecurity also increases social experiences and conditions, such as frequent moves or experiencing food insecurity, that increase the risk of experiencing ACEs.^{xxiv} The PACES project aims to improve family wellbeing by increasing receipt of the EITC among families in Austin's Eastern Crescent, which may reduce the likelihood of children's exposure to ACEs.

Economic and Material Hardship

EITC claimers reported significantly lower levels of economic hardship compared to non-filers for the 2021 tax season. Overall, economic hardship was a common experience among Austin Families Survey Year 2 survey respondents.

Survey participants were asked 20 questions about their experiences of economic hardship and wellbeing. The scores for each item were combined and summed to calculate an aggregate hardship score. Scores ranged from 0 to 47, where higher scores indicate more economic hardship. Overall, EITC claimers reported lower levels of perceived economic hardship compared to non-filers for the 2021 tax season (Year 2 Survey). See Table 10.

Table 10. Economic Hardship: Non-Filers vs. EITC Claimers (Year 2)

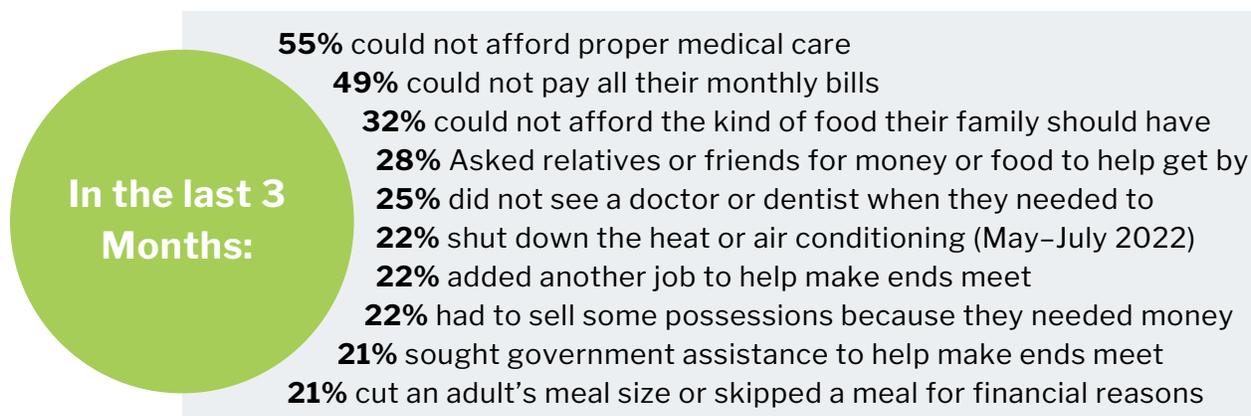
	Non-filer		EITC		t	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Economic Hardship Score	23.8	8.40	20.2	7.74	2.34	49.85	0.023*

*p<.05, **p<.01

The year 2 survey showed...

- **40%** of families were at least somewhat worried about meeting their basic needs in the next three months
- **46%** of families reported being short on money at the end of each month
- White families were significantly less likely to report being short on money (22%) compared to Black families (49%) and Latino/a/x families (56%)
- **55%** of **non-filers** reported being short on money compared to 46% of **EITC claimers**
- **1 in 3** families indicated they did not have enough money for food in the past three months
- **72%** of families adjusted their livelihoods in some capacity to make ends meet
- **Non-filers** report more experiences of economic and material hardships, such as difficulty paying their monthly bills compared to **EITC claimers**.

Among all families who participated in the year 2 survey...



Housing Stability

Most survey respondents were renters, over one third of whom were worried about being evicted in the next month. Approximately one quarter of families had experienced housing instability over the past three months.

Most families who completed the year 2 survey rented their home (62%). A smaller percentage of families indicated they owned their home (22%), lived with family (11%), or lived in a house or condo owned by another family member (3%). The remaining 3% of families reported living somewhere else (e.g., temporary housing, shelters, experiencing homelessness, living arrangement provided by a job).

For families who rented, 37% were “slightly” or “somewhat” worried about being evicted in the next month while 8% were “very” or “extremely” worried about being evicted.

Approximately 1 in 4 families experienced some housing instability over the past three months.

- **16%** missed a rent or mortgage payment
- **8%** had to move in with other people even for a little while because of financial issues
- **7%** had to move to another house or apartment to save some money
- **4%** stayed at a shelter, in an abandoned building, an automobile, or any other place not meant for regular housing for at least one night

Employment

Nearly all participants reported being employed, with almost one third reporting they worked more than one job and received no benefits. Participants also commonly reported job stress.

Almost 90% of families indicated that they were employed or that their partner was employed. When asked specifically about their own employment status, 50% of participants reported working full-time while another 20% reported working part-time. Fourteen percent were looking for employment and/or temporarily out of work, 11% were not working and not looking for employment, and 6% selected “other”. For those who selected other, explanations included being the primary caregiver for a household member, typically for children; relying on a partner’s income; or being a student.

Of those who were employed:

- **27%** worked more than one job
- **12%** worked 50 hours or more each week

Employment benefits varied among participants who were employed:

- **29%** received no benefits
- **51%** received health insurance while **25%** received dental insurance
- **44%** received vacation/paid time off
- **27%** received medical leave
- **26%** received overtime pay
- **25%** received paid sick leave
- **25%** received a retirement plan or pension

Participants who were employed rated statements regarding job stress based on how often they were true for them.

- **74%** participants were not always able to work hours/shifts that they needed to meet their family’s needs
- **61%** of participants did not always know their work schedule two weeks in advance
- **45%** indicated their work schedule often or always causes extra stress on their family

Additional Sources of Income and Benefits

Over half of respondents reported utilizing children’s Medicaid for their families, almost half reported using SNAP, and over one third reported using WIC.

Children’s Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) were the top three sources of additional income and benefits that families received. Table 11 shows the percentage of families who received each type of support.

Table 11. Additional Sources of Income and Benefits (Year 2)

Benefits	N = 290
Children's Medicaid	66%
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	42%
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	36%
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	17%
Adult Medicaid	14%
Child Support	12%
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	9%
Housing Assistance/Housing Choice Voucher	7%
Childcare Assistance/Subsidies	6%
Medicare	6%
Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)	5%
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	2%
Head Start/Early Head Start Services	2%
Unemployment Benefits	1%
Veteran's Benefits	1%
Other*	4%

*For those that selected other, this included the Medical Access Program, the Healthy Texas Women program, Social Security Death Benefits, community support such as at a local health clinic, friends and family, and free insurance through the marketplace.

Childcare

Quality, affordable, and reliable childcare was a common struggle among survey families.

Affordable, quality childcare options are essential for working families, yet 41% of families did not have any childcare arrangements and 40% of families relied on a childcare arrangement with a relative (paid or unpaid). Other childcare arrangement included afterschool programs (13%), childcare centers (12%), public pre-K (9%), Head Start (6%) or home-based childcare (6%). Only 41% of families with childcare felt very satisfied with their arrangements.

- **32%** reported they had to change their childcare arrangements and move to a new program or facility in the last 12 months
- **Over 50%** of families reported they had to make at least one special childcare arrangement in the past month because their usual childcare arrangements were not available or fell through
- **35%** of participants who work indicated that it is often or always difficult to deal with childcare problems during working hours

Of families without childcare arrangements (N = 138), 42% indicated they would ideally want to have an arrangement. Families without childcare arrangements were asked about the reasons they did not have childcare, with the option to select more than one answer:

- **76%** of families could not afford the type of care they wanted
- **12%** did not like the types of childcare in their area
- **12%** did not like the quality of childcare in their area
- **12%** had bad experiences with childcare arrangements in the past

Caregiver Health and Wellbeing

Overall, families who claimed the EITC reported better health and mental wellbeing than families who did not file taxes. However, depression was common among all families, with almost half of non-filers and one third of EITC claimers screening positive for possible depression.

When asked about their overall health:

- **5%** of participants rated their health as poor
- **25%** rated their health as fair
- **37%** rated their health as good
- **16%** rated their health as very good
- **17%** rated their health as excellent

There were also significant differences in perceived health for non-filers and EITC claimers. See Table 12 below.

Table 12. Perceived Health: Non-Filers vs. EITC Claimers

	Non-filers	EITC	Test for differences
Would you say your health is...?	n= 42	n= 187	$p = 0.025$, Fisher's exact test*
Poor	7%	6%	The proportion of EITC claimers who reported excellent health was higher for those who claimed the EITC compared to those who did not file
Fair	21%	24%	
Good	50%	32%	
Very Good	17%	15%	
Excellent	5%	23%	

Depression

- **7%** of participants reported they rarely felt happy (less than 1 day) over the past week while **26%** reported they felt happy all of the time (5-7 days)
- **5%** of participants reported they felt depressed all of the time (5 to 7 days) over the past week while **54%** reported they felt depressed rarely (less than 1 day).
- **42%** of non-filers screened positive for depression on the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) compared to **33%** of EITC claimers, although this difference is not statistically significant.
- **39%** screened positive for possible depression in 2022 compared to **27%** in 2021

Caregiver Relationship and Support

Over half of survey participants were married, and most participants reported quality relationships with their partners and between their partners and children.

When asked about their relationship status, 24% of participants indicated they were not in a current relationship, 57% indicated they were married, 13% indicated they were living with a partner, 5% indicated they were in a relationship but not living together, and 1% indicated they were dating. There were 10 participants who did not answer this question. The percentage of participants who reported being married differed slightly from those who reported being legally married.

Quality of Relationship with Partner

When participants in a relationship (N = 250) were asked about the quality of their relationship, most viewed their relationship favorably.

- **37%** viewed their relationship as excellent
- **24%** viewed their relationship as very good
- **29%** viewed their relationship as good
- **9%** viewed their relationship as fair
- **1%** viewed their relationship as poor

Over 90% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that their partner:

- was fair and willing to compromise when they had a disagreement
- expressed affection or love for them
- encouraged or helped them do things that were important to them
- really understood their hurts and joys

Over 90% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that their partner:

- tried to prevent them from going to work or school
- withheld money, made them ask for money, or took their money
- pushed, grabbed, or shoved them

Quality of Partner's Relationship with Child(ren)

Participants were also asked to rate their partner's relationship with their children. Most viewed the relationship between their partner and their children as good (24%), very good (24%) or excellent (46%). Four percent of participants viewed their partner's relationship with their children as fair, and two percent indicated that relationship was poor.

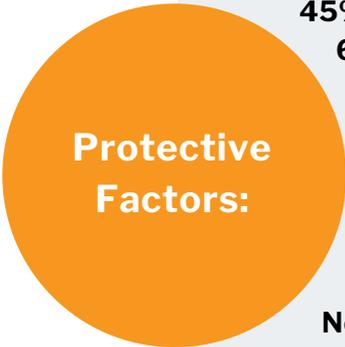
Partner's Financial Contribution

In terms of contributing financially to the family, 74% of participants indicated their partners contributed a lot, 21% indicated they contributed a little, and 4% indicated their partner did not contribute at all.

Family Protective Factors

Protective factors for families varied across categories, but non-filers reported significantly fewer protective factors compared to EITC claimers.

Families were asked to rate a list of statements on how much they felt the statement matched what they feel. The data reported below is based on the number of respondents who indicated the statement was "quite a lot like their life" or "just like their life".



Protective Factors:

- 45%** of participants felt the future looks good for their family
- 61%** of participants had things they did as a family that were special to them
- 68%** of participants have people in their life who believe in them.
- 52%** of participants have no trouble finding someone to look after their kids on short notice.
- 22%** of participants do not feel like they constantly have to tell their children "no" or "stop."
- Non-filers** reported significantly lower protective factor scores (nurturing and attachment, social scores) compared to **EITC claimers**.

Organizational Involvement

Half of families were involved with or receiving services from local organizations, and these organizations varied across families.

Many organizations around Austin work to provide services to families. Participants were asked if they were involved with or receiving any services from local organizations. A little over half of participants (55%) reported they were involved with or receiving services from at least one organization. See Table 13.

Table 13. Involvement with Organizations (N = 329)

Organization	n	%
Austin Public Health – WIC program	79	24.0%
CommUnity Care	47	14.3%
Austin Achieve Public Schools	24	7.3%
Foundation Communities	21	6.4%
Austin Voices for Education and Youth	21	6.4%
United Way for Greater Austin	18	5.5%
Any Baby Can	18	5.5%
Communities in Schools (CIS) Care Coordination	16	4.9%
AVANCE-Austin	11	3.3%
Todos Juntos Learning Center	11	3.3%
None	149	45.3%

Note: Organization with less than 3% participation included: Friends of the Children-Austin, Mainspring Schools, Saint Louise House, Black Mamas ATX, Giving Austin Labor Support (GALS), Literacy Coalition of Central Texas, Welcome Table, Inc., Breakthrough Central Texas, El Buen Samaritano, the Jeremiah Program, Lifeworks, Partners in Parenting, and Vela Families.



Limitations

As with any study, there are limitations worth considering when interpreting findings. For the staff survey, response rates were generally low, with 290 total training participants, but only 126 who completed the pre and post surveys, and only 54 who completed all three surveys. The aforementioned differences in baseline data from staff who completed and did not complete the follow-up survey make it difficult to draw conclusions about the entire sample (i.e., since participants who completed the follow-up survey had higher scores on the ACEs quiz at baseline, it is hard to say whether the training improved ACEs scores for those who did not score as high at baseline). Lastly, data collection for the follow-up survey occurred over the summer. Participants who worked in schools may not have seen the request to take the follow-up survey until they returned to work in fall, at which point the survey had already closed.

For the Client Survey, it is worth considering the limitations that come with convenience sampling. Since the sample was not chosen through random selection, it may not be fully representative of the study population. Data for Year 1, the baseline year, were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the expansion of the Child Tax Credit took place with the passing of the American Rescue Plan Act. Additionally, the response rate in Year 2 was 54%, and there were some significant differences between those who completed it and those who did not, which makes it more difficult to generalize findings. When looking at race and ethnicity, some categories had to be combined into “Other” due to small numbers of individuals who fell into those categories. Ideally, researchers would have been able to analyze data for these categories individually but did not have an adequate sample size for each of these categories. Lastly, the research design limits what we can say about cause and effect. We don’t know if the training caused some of the changes in tax filing behavior by families.



Conclusions

STAFF SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

Findings from staff surveys and interviews indicate that staff found value in the ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training, with many being familiar with ACEs but learning new information about tax credits and their relationship to family protective factors. For future trainings, staff requested resources tailored to immigrant families or more details to support clients with specific tax questions or financial needs. Changes in staff understanding of ACEs across all three survey time points were not statistically significant as staff had a good understanding of ACEs at baseline, but certain topic areas such as understanding how natural characteristics influence stress response and professional responsibility to promote resilience could use more follow-up or emphasis to ensure staff maintain this understanding over time.

Findings from surveys and interviews also suggest that staff maintained an understanding about the relationship between ACEs, poverty, and mitigating factors such as tax credits. However, staff could use more follow-up on specific details such as what qualifies families for the EITC as a significant proportion of staff reported low confidence in discussing these topics with clients. Some staff recommended more emphasis on tax credits and other financial information during the training or provided as follow-up (such as a hand-out or FAQ resource).

After completing the training, staff were more likely to share information about tax credits and tax preparation services and to refer client to Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services.

In summary, the ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training was impactful for staff, giving them a greater understanding of the connection between ACEs, poverty, and protective factors such as additional income. Additional trainings and/or follow-up information about specific information regarding tax credits would be beneficial for staff and the clients they serve.

CLIENT SURVEYS

Findings from client surveys indicate that EITC claimers had significant higher income, employment, and education than non-filers and while there were no significant differences in most tax filing behaviors between the baseline survey and year two, there was a significant increase in the percentage of participants who identified as Black and claimed the EITC and CTC in year two. The percentage of participants who claimed the CDCTC significantly increased in year two, which is likely the result of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 that expanded eligibility and the amount of expenses that could be credited for the CDCTC.

The most frequently cited reasons for not filing taxes in 2021 included not making enough money or not receiving a W-2. About one-third of families filed taxes through Foundation Communities, one-third used an e-filing service, and one-third paid a professional to do their taxes, but there were significant differences in how families filed based on their self-reported racial/ethnic identities. For instance, Latino/a/x families more often paid a professional to do

their taxes rather than utilizing free services. Nearly all participants who filed their taxes received a refund, and the most frequently mentioned priorities for using tax refunds included groceries, rent, and credit card debt.

Over half of tax filers who responded to the survey were familiar with Foundation Communities tax preparation services, and under half of non-filers were familiar with these services. Most non-filers identified as Latino/a/x, and Latino/a/x survey respondents were the least familiar with Foundation Communities tax preparation services across all racial and ethnic categories.

While economic hardship, housing instability, job stress, and childcare were common struggles among families who participated in the survey, EITC claimers reported significantly lower levels of hardship than non-filers across many of these categories. Quality, affordable, and reliable childcare was a common struggle among survey families, with nearly all participants reporting they could not afford the type of childcare they wanted.

In terms of protective factors such as family environment and relationships, EITC claimers reported significantly greater protective factors than non-filers. Many families utilized resources such as Medicaid, SNAP, and WIC, and half of families were involved with or receiving services from local organizations.

In summary, findings indicate that the EITC is beneficial for families in reducing stressors and helping to build protective factors, and that free tax filing services such as those provided by Foundation Communities provides support for families in accessing these credits. Further outreach and support may be needed to ensure that Latino/a/x families can access free tax preparation services. While additional income in the form of tax credits is beneficial for families, low-income families—particularly in the Eastern Crescent of Austin/Travis County—still need broader support when it comes to common family stressors such as financial hardship, housing instability, job stress, and childcare.



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Appendix A

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mitigating Factors Training Follow-Up Survey

You are invited to take this survey because you participated in Foundation Communities' *Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mitigating Factors Training* on [date]. This survey is part of an evaluation study conducted by researchers at the The University of Texas - Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing (TXICFW) that seeks to understand the value of this training for professionals around Austin.

We appreciate your honest and complete responses to all of the questions in this survey. Your participation in this survey is **voluntary** and you may stop participating at any time. Your participation will not impact your position at your organization or your relationships with Foundation Communities and The University of Texas at Austin in any way. Your name will not be publicly linked in any of your responses, and all of the information you provide will remain confidential. If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact our research director, Laura Marra at laura.marra@austin.utexas.edu.

This survey should take about **10 minutes** to complete and will ask you about any impact the training may or may not have had as well as your understanding of federal tax credits and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Once you complete the survey, your name will be entered into a **drawing for a \$50 gift card**. If your name is selected, you will be notified by the end of July. We value your feedback and thank you for taking the time to provide us with this important information.

Do you consent to participating in this survey?

- Yes, I consent to participating in this survey.
- No, I do not wish to participate in this survey.

Professional Background

What organization do you currently work for?

- AFSSA (Asian Family Support Services of Austin)
- Any Baby Can
- Austin Area Urban League
- Austin Child Guidance Center
- Austin Independent School District (AISD)
- Austin Voices for Education and Youth
- Austin Youthworks
- AVANCE-Austin
- Black Mamas ATX
- Black Women In Business
- Catholic Charities of Central Texas
- Central Texas Allied Health Institute
- Communities in Schools (CIS) of Central Texas
- Dress for Success Austin
- Foundation Communities
- Friends of the Children Austin
- Giving Austin Labor Support (GALS)
- Goodwill Central Texas
- Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA)
- Jeremiah Program
- LifeWorks
- Literacy Coalition of Central Texas
- Mainspring Schools
- Partners in Parenting
- PelotonU
- Pflugerville Independent School District (PfISD)
- Saint Louise House
- Skillpoint Alliance
- Todos Juntos Learning Center
- Welcome Table
- Women Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program
- Other organization _____
- I am self-employed
- I am not currently working
- Prefer not to say

Were you working for [organization] when you completed this training on [date]?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Has your position changed since you completed this training on [date]?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

For the purposes of this survey, we will refer to the families who participate in the programs or services provided by your organization as clients. Please answer the following questions about your daily work experience with clients.

In a typical month, how often do you...?

Directly interact with clients

<input type="radio"/> Never	<input type="radio"/> Sometimes	<input type="radio"/> Often	<input type="radio"/> Always
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Direct low- and moderate-income families in Austin to other community resources that may benefit them

<input type="radio"/> Never	<input type="radio"/> Sometimes	<input type="radio"/> Often	<input type="radio"/> Always
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Identify the needs of clients through formal assessments

<input type="radio"/> Never	<input type="radio"/> Sometimes	<input type="radio"/> Often	<input type="radio"/> Always
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Identify the needs of clients informally, such as by talking with them while providing services

<input type="radio"/> Never	<input type="radio"/> Sometimes	<input type="radio"/> Often	<input type="radio"/> Always
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Child Development and ACEs

We are interested in your thoughts about children and child development. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of these statements.

How well children do is determined by the natural traits and characteristics they are born with

<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree
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A nurturing parent or caregiver can help a child overcome early adversity

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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How children respond to stress depends on their natural makeup

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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How well children do is determined by their environment

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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We are interested in your understanding of childhood trauma, or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Trauma experienced by children can often be prevented

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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A child who is exposed to chronic adversity cannot thrive in adulthood

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Additional household resources (i.e., income) can reduce parenting stress

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Children are not affected by their parents' level of stress

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

For families with low or moderate incomes, having a higher income would make their children less likely to experience trauma

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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We would like to know how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) relate to your professional practices. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

I can identify factors in a family's life that are protective, or make it less likely that children experience trauma

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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I can describe what trauma/ACEs are

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Part of my role in my organization is to reduce the likelihood that children experience trauma/ACEs

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Federal Tax Filing and Tax Preparation Services

As a reminder, we refer to the families who participate in the programs or services provided by your organization as clients. We understand that you may or may not work in a role that directly serves clients. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

I know about **free tax preparation services** in the community that our clients could use

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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I feel confident discussing **free tax preparation services** in the community with our clients

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

I know about **Foundation Communities'** free tax preparation services

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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I feel confident discussing **Foundation Communities'** free tax preparation services with our clients

<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree
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I know about **federal tax credits** that our clients might be eligible for

<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree
--------------------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------------	---

I feel confident discussing **federal tax credits** with our clients that they might be eligible for

<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree
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During the 2021 tax season (Fall 2021 through today), did you share information about tax credits (e.g., the Earned Income Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit) with any of your clients?

- Yes
- No
- Does not apply - I do not work directly with clients
- Prefer not to say

About how many clients did you share information about tax credits with? Please provide your best estimate.

_____clients

During the 2021 tax season (Fall 2021 through today), did you share information about any free tax preparation services with any of your clients?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

About how many clients did you share information about any free tax preparation services with? Please provide your best estimate.

_____clients

During the 2021 tax season (Fall 2021 through today), did you direct any clients to [Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services](#)?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

About how many clients did you direct to [Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services](#)? Please provide your best estimate.

-----clients

Have you personally ever used Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Knowledge of Trauma and ACEs

We would like to understand your knowledge about childhood trauma/ACEs and the effect that trauma can have on children. Please answer to the best of your ability. It is okay if you need to guess the answer to these questions.

Children who experience trauma, or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), are more likely to experience which of the following?

- Learning problems
- Behavioral issues
- Early sexual activity
- All of the above [\[correct\]](#)

One population at higher risk for experiencing childhood trauma are children who have recently become involved with the child welfare system. What other populations could be at a higher risk for experiencing trauma? Select all that apply.

- Children from a household with a lower income [correct]
- Children who feel close to their parents
- Children with parents who experience high levels of stress [correct]
- Children who live in communities with high unemployment rates [correct]

Choose the words that BEST complete the following sentence:

_____ resulting in trauma can shrink a person's _____. This means that they have a greater tendency to become over or overwhelmed when experiencing stressful events.

- Negative perceptions / amygdala
- Conflict / attribution bias
- Misunderstandings / life expectancy
- Adverse experiences / window of tolerance [correct]

What is a connection between toxic stress and ACEs?

- Exposure to adverse experiences excessively activates a body's stress response called toxic stress, which can negatively impact a child's healthy development [correct]
- Toxic stress occurs when a child is exposed to carcinogens that change the brain structure of a child, resulting in a higher likelihood of ACEs
- Toxic stress and ACEs do not have long term impacts

Which of the following situations are examples of acute trauma? Select all that apply.

- Physical assault [correct]
- Natural disasters [correct]
- Patterns of domestic violence
- Motor vehicle accident [correct]
- Repeated sexual abuse

The following list includes both risk and protective factors associated with ACEs. Determine which are protective factors. Select all that apply.

- Parental stress
- Supportive family environments [correct]
- Community violence
- A parent's history of ACEs
- Policies that strengthen economic support for families [correct]
- Subsidized childcare [correct]

We would like to better understand your knowledge of federal tax credits. Please answer to the best of your ability. It is okay if you need to guess the answer to these questions.

True or False:

To qualify for the [Earned Income Tax Credit \(EITC\)](#), everyone claimed on the federal tax return must have a [valid social security number](#) (i.e., be a US citizen or documented noncitizen/migrant).

- True [correct]
- False

How are tax credits related to ACEs?

- Families who file their taxes are more likely to be from higher-income families, who are less likely to experience ACEs
- Tax credits provide families with additional income that may reduce the likelihood of experiencing ACEs [correct]
- Families with lower incomes may end up owing the federal government more money when they file their taxes, increasing the likelihood of a child experiencing ACEs (3)

Training Feedback

This is the final page of the survey. Any feedback you provide in these last three questions will be summarized and used to improve the Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mitigating Factors Training. We appreciate you taking the time to answer each question.

How has the *Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mitigating Factors* training impacted your work with families?

What challenges have you encountered when talking to families about filing their federal tax return?

Please describe any feedback you would like to share with Foundation Communities or the evaluation team.

Thank you! Please submit your survey.

Appendix B

Preventing ACEs Through Collaboration and Economic Supports (PACES) Staff Interview Guide

Research Objectives

Foundation Communities has contracted with the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing to evaluate its Preventing ACEs Through Economic Supports (PACES) program, which aims to improve participation in the earned income tax credit in order to alleviate economic burden and build protective factors against ACEs for families. This study is comprised of interview and survey data from clients who utilize Foundation Communities tax preparation services and community partners who attend the Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mitigating Factors Training. The study also includes de-identified data from Foundation Communities internal database. The research objectives include:

1. Assess the effectiveness of staff training.

- a. To what extent does training frontline staff increase knowledge about ACEs?
- b. To what extent does training frontline staff increase knowledge about the EITC?
- c. What proportion of frontline staff share information about the EITC with the community within six months of training?

2. Assess the effectiveness of participant outreach.

- a. To what extent do the EITC claims increase among families receiving outreach services?
- b. To what extent does receipt of the EITC increase among families receiving outreach services?
- c. To what extent do protective factors increase among families receiving outreach services?
- d. To what extent do risk factors decrease among families receiving outreach services?

3. Assess the value of each component of the approach.

- a. Which components of the intervention enhanced the success of the project?
- b. What components of the intervention detracted from the success of the project?
- c. To what extent do community members perceive that outreach efforts align with their cultural values and linguistic needs?

Introduction

Foundation Communities has contracted with the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing to evaluate its Preventing ACEs Through Economic Supports (PACES) program, which aims to improve participation in the earned income tax credit in order to alleviate economic burden and build protective factors against ACEs for families. As part of this evaluation, TXICFW is conducting focus groups with community partners and interviews with clients who participate in the Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mitigating Factors Training to learn more about their experience and the impact of the program. TXICFW is also collecting staff and client surveys as well as de-identified data from Foundation Communities conduct this evaluation. Interviews will be audio recorded so that they can be transcribed and analyzed by our research team, but all of your information and responses will be stored securely on a password protected server to which only the TXICFW research team has access.

Staff Interview Questions

Introduction and Background

1. To start, can you tell me a little bit about your organization and your role there?
 - a. How long have you been in this organization/role?
 - b. Do you work directly with clients/communities? Are you in a supervisory or managerial role? A combination of both?
 - c. Are you a volunteer or do you manage volunteers? Does your organization work with volunteers in its programming to directly support clients?
 - d. Tell me about the clients/communities/populations that you work with.
2. What made you decide to register and participate in the Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mitigating Factors training?
 - a. What were your initial thoughts?

ACEs and Mitigating Factors Training

3. This training was initially intended to be held in person but was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ideally, do you think this training should continue to be held virtually or should it be held in person?
 - If virtual attendance is more ideal, why? Is there anything that would have made the virtual experience better?
 - If in person attendance is more ideal, why? Do you have any recommendations to ensure the date, time, and location are feasible for you and your colleagues?
4. **(Supervisors/managers only)** As a supervisor/manager, did your direct care employees also attend this training?
 - a. If not, would it have been beneficial/feasible for them to attend?

5. What did you learn, if anything, that felt relevant to your work?
 - What did you learn about the connection between Adverse Childhood Experiences, mitigating factors, and the Earned Income Tax Credit?
 - In what ways have you or your direct care staff (if supervisor/manager) utilized this knowledge, if at all, when working with clients/communities?
 - What do you wish you had learned, if anything, that was not included in the training?
6. Did the material feel culturally and/or linguistically relevant to the population of clients/community members that you serve?
 - **If so**, please explain?
 - **If not**, what would have made it feel more culturally or linguistically relevant?

Since the Training...

7. After the training, did you feel you had enough information to generally walk a client through what the referral and tax preparation services would look like?
8. Since the training, have you or your direct care staff made any referrals to Foundation Communities tax preparation services?
 - a. **If so**, what did that look like?
 - i. Did clients utilize these services?
 - ii. If clients didn't utilize these services, what got in the way?
 - iii. What would make them more likely to attend?
 - b. **If not**, what got in the way of referring clients to these services? What would have made you more likely to refer clients to these services?
 - c. Do you or your direct care staff plan to make these referrals in the future?
9. Would you consider attending another training like this or recommend this training to others in your line of work?

Closing Thoughts

10. Is there anything else about the training, Foundation Communities, or your work/organization that you'd like to share before we close?

Appendix C

Austin Families Year 2 Survey

Foundation Communities, in partnership with United Way for Greater Austin, has contracted with The University of Texas at Austin - Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing (TXICFW) to conduct the Austin Families Study to better understand the social and economic wellbeing of families in the Austin area. The Austin Families Study is a three-year study that asks you to complete a survey each year. **You are being asked to complete the Austin Families Year 2 Survey** because you completed the Year 1 Survey last year. This survey will ask you questions about your financial security, access to tax refunds, access to other public benefits, and your overall health and wellbeing.

This survey should take between **30-35 minutes** to complete. Your participation is voluntary and will not affect you or your family's ability to receive any services from Foundation Communities, United Way, or any community partner organization. All of your information and responses will be kept confidential. We will not share your individual answers with anyone outside of the research team.

As a thank you for your participation, you will be sent a **\$20 gift card** for completing the survey. You will also be entered into a **drawing to win an additional \$100 gift card**. Only one survey entry per household will be allowed.

We value your feedback and thank you for taking the time to complete all the questions in the Austin Families Year 2 Survey by **August 1, 2022**. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Research Director, Laura Marra, at laura.marra@austin.utexas.edu.

Would you like to participate in the Austin Families Year 2 Survey?

- Yes
- No

Eligibility

We would like to ask you three questions to make sure you are still eligible to participate in this survey. Please answer each question to the best of your ability.

What was your legal marital status on December 31, 2021?

- Married
- Not Married

Select the number of children who are younger than age 18 that you consider as dependents for whom you have primary physical custody.

- 1
- 2
- 3 or more
- I have no children younger than 18

Earned income generally means any money received from wages, salaries, tips, unemployment benefits, other taxable employee pay, and net earnings from self-employment.

Please indicate your and your spouse's total earned income between January 2021-December 2021. [Married]

- No income was earned
- Between \$1-\$47,000*
- More than \$47,000*

**The income level is adjusted to \$53,000 for two children and \$56,000 for three children*

Please indicate your total earned income between January 2021-December 2021. [Not married]

- No income was earned (\$0)
- Between \$1-\$42,000*
- More than \$42,000*

**The income level is adjusted to \$47,000 for two children and \$51,000 for three children*

Based on the information you provided, you are eligible to take the Austin Families Year 2 Survey.

First, we will ask you for some contact information, and then the survey will start. This survey will take you about 30 minutes to finish. You can take this survey in more than one sitting. All your progress will automatically be saved, and you can click your survey link to pick up where you left off.

Contact Information

We will use the following contact information to send you a gift card, follow-up with you if there are any gift card issues, and reach out to you about next year's survey. **Please be as accurate as possible when entering your contact information.**

First name: _____
Last name: _____
Email address: _____
Phone number: _____

Please provide a long-standing and permanent mailing address in case we need to reach you or if there are any issues sending your gift cards. If you anticipate moving, you may think about putting down the mailing address of a close relative or friend.

Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____
Zip Code: _____

We intend to email you an [electronic gift card](#) that will arrive in your inbox. Are you comfortable receiving your gift card by email?

- Yes, an [electronic](#) gift card is fine
- No, please [mail](#) me a [physical](#) gift card

We will be emailing your gift card to the following email address: [\[email address\]](#)

Is this the best email address?

- Yes, please email my gift card to this email address
- No, please email my gift card to this email address instead: _____

We will be mailing your gift card to this mailing address: [\[mailing address\]](#)

Is this the best address?

- Yes, please use this mailing address
- No, please use the following mailing address instead: _____

Would you like to be considered for a small discussion group to share more about your and your family's experiences living in the Austin area?

- Yes
- No

Survey

We would like to learn more about your household's income and tax filing practices. Remember, your responses to this survey are confidential and will not be shared. This survey is not affiliated with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or any other federal government agency.

The first set of questions are about your earnings and income. If you are legally married, please combine your and your spouse's earnings. Your total earned income on your federal tax return is the sum of any wages, salaries, and tips from your W-2, plus unemployment benefits, other taxable employee pay, and net earnings from self-employment.

Please indicate your (and your spouse's) total earned income between January 2021-December 2021. Can you tell me if it was...

- Less than \$5,000
- \$5,001 to \$7,500
- \$7,501 to \$10,000
- \$10,001 to \$12,500
- \$12,501 to \$15,000
- \$15,001 to \$17,500
- \$17,501 to \$20,000
- \$20,001 to \$22,500
- \$22,501 to \$25,000
- \$25,001 to \$27,500
- \$27,501 to \$30,000
- \$30,001 to \$32,500
- \$32,501 to \$35,000
- \$35,001 to \$37,500
- \$37,501 to \$40,000
- \$40,001 to \$42,500
- \$42,501 to \$45,000
- \$45,001 to \$47,500
- \$47,501 to \$50,000
- \$50,001 to \$52,500
- \$52,501 to \$55,000
- \$55,001 to \$57,500
- \$57,501 to \$60,000
- More than \$60,000

Tax Returns

Did you (or your spouse) file a federal tax return for income that you earned in 2021 (January 2021-December 2021)?

- Yes
- No

If participant filed taxes:

To the best of your knowledge, did you receive a refund after filing your tax return?

- Yes
- No

Approximately how much money did you receive as a tax refund this year?

- \$1 to \$500
- \$501 to \$1,000
- \$1,001 to \$1,500
- \$1,501 to \$2,000
- \$2,001 to \$2,500
- \$2,501 to \$3,000
- \$3,001 to \$3,500
- \$3,501 to \$4,000
- \$4,001 to \$4,500
- \$4,501 to \$5,000
- \$5,001 to \$5,500
- \$5,501 to \$6,000
- \$6,001 to \$6,500
- \$6,501 to \$7,000
- \$7,001 to \$7,500
- \$7,501 to \$8,000
- \$8,001 to \$8,500
- \$8,501 to \$9,000
- \$9,001 to \$9,500
- \$9,501 to \$10,000
- \$10,001 to \$13,000
- \$13,001 to \$15,000
- More than \$15,000

Please select your top three priorities on how you will be using your tax refund:

- Put it into savings
- Vacation
- Recreation / entertainment
- Share money with family members
- Purchase groceries / pay grocery bills
- Pay off a bank loan
- Credit card bills
- Medical bills
- Pay off personal loans
- Rent
- Utility bills
- Other bills
- Car payments
- Purchase or repair a vehicle
- House repairs / maintenance
- Purchase household furnishings (ex: furniture, major appliances)
- Moving expenses
- Tuition/school expenses
- Child care bills
- Child summer care / afterschool care
- Purchase clothing for a child
- Purchase school supplies for a child
- Purchase clothing for self
- Other, please explain: -----

Foundation Communities has a free Tax Help Program to help people file a federal tax return. These free tax preparation services are online as well as at six locations (Prosper South at IH-35, Prosper North at Airport Blvd, Round Rock Public Library, Montopolis Recreation Center, Goodwill Community Center, and Turner Roberts Recreation Center).

Are you familiar with Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services?

- Yes
- No

We are trying to share information about Foundation Communities Prosper Center's free tax filing services with the community.

Which of the following have you seen or experienced this year (2022)? Select all that apply.

- A local organization that I am involved with recommended getting tax help from a Prosper Center
- I saw a yard sign, billboard, and/or bus sign
- I heard an ad on the radio and/or saw an ad on TV
- I received a newsletter, email, and/or flyer
- I received a text message
- I heard about and/or attended community meeting(s)
- I saw an ad on social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
- I heard about Foundation Communities' Prosper Centers from a family member and/or friend
- I have used a Prosper Center to file my taxes before
- Other (specify): _____
- None of the above

Did you use Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services to file your 2021 federal tax return?

- Yes
- No

How did you file your 2021 tax return?

- I used another Volunteer Income Tax Assistant (VITA) site
- I used a free tax professional
- I used a paid chain tax store (ex: H&R Block, Jackson Hewitt)
- I used tax software to file online (ex: Turbo Tax)
- I used a local paid tax professional
- I completed the paperwork myself and mailed my return
- I don't know what I used to file my taxes
- Other (please specify) _____

If participant did not file taxes:

What were some reasons for not filing your 2021 tax return? Select all that apply.

- I did not receive a W-2 from my employer
- I am not required to file my taxes because I did not make enough money
- I did not know about free tax preparation services
- I worry that if I file my taxes, I will do something wrong and get in trouble with the IRS
- I would have liked to file my taxes, but I did not know how
- I did not think I would get a refund this year
- Other (please specify) _____

Foundation Communities has a free Tax Help Program to help people file a federal tax return. These free tax preparation services are online as well as at six locations (Prosper South at IH-35, Prosper North at Airport Blvd, Round Rock Public Library, Montopolis Recreation Center, Goodwill Community Center, and Turner Roberts Recreation Center).

Are you familiar with Foundation Communities' free tax preparation services?

- Yes
- No

We are trying to share information about Foundation Communities Prosper Center's free tax filing services with the community. **Which of the following have you seen or experienced this year (2022)? Select all that apply.**

- A local organization that I am involved with recommended getting tax help from a Prosper Center
- I saw a yard sign, billboard, and/or bus sign
- I heard an ad on the radio and/or saw an ad on TV
- I received a newsletter, email, and/or flyer
- I received a text message
- I heard about and/or attended community meeting(s)
- I saw an ad on social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
- I heard about Foundation Communities' Prosper Centers from a family member and/or friend
- I have used a Prosper Center to file my taxes before
- Other (specify): _____
- None of the above

Tax Credits

Below is a list of some common federal tax credits that many individuals can receive. For each credit, please select the option that is most true for you.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

- I received this tax credit when I filed my 2021 tax return
- I received this tax credit in the past, but NOT for the tax year 2021
- I have never received this tax credit
- I have never heard of this tax credit

Child Tax Credit (CTC)

- I received this tax credit when I filed my 2021 tax return
- I received this tax credit in the past, but NOT for the tax year 2021
- I have never received this tax credit
- I have never heard of this tax credit

Child and Dependent Care Credit

- I received this tax credit when I filed my 2021 tax return
- I received this tax credit in the past, but NOT for the tax year 2021
- I have never received this tax credit
- I have never heard of this tax credit

Between July 2021 and December 2021, did you or anyone in your household receive a **monthly “Child Tax Credit” payment, that is, an advance payment from the expansion of the child tax credit as part of the Federal Government’s 2021 American Rescue Plan? *Please report “yes” if you received the payment as a paper check or direct deposit.***

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

If received CTC: How much were your monthly Child Tax Credit payments?

- Less than \$150 per month
- \$150 to \$199 per month
- \$200 to \$249 per month
- \$250 to \$299 per month
- \$300 to \$349 per month
- \$350 to \$399 per month
- \$400 to \$449 per month
- \$450 to \$499 per month
- \$500 to \$549 per month
- \$550 to \$599 per month
- \$600 to \$649 per month
- \$650 to \$699 per month
- \$700 to \$749 per month
- \$750 to \$799 per month
- \$800 to \$849 per month
- \$850 to \$899 per month
- \$900 or higher per month
- I'm not sure

Economic Circumstances

We would now like to learn more about your ability to make ends meet and employment.

Below is a list of some common sources of income and benefits. Please tell us if you are **currently receiving any of the following:**

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Unemployment Benefits
- Veteran's Benefits
- Child Support
- Child Care Assistance/Subsidies
- Head Start/Early Head Start Services
- Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
- Children's Medicaid
- Adult Medicaid
- Medicare
- Housing Assistance/Housing Choice Voucher
- Other (please specify) _____
- None of the above

In the **next three months, how worried are you that your family will experience bad times such as poor housing or not having enough food?**

- Not at all worried
- Slightly worried
- Somewhat worried
- Very worried
- Extremely worried

In the **next three months, how worried are you that your family will have to do without the basic things that your family needs?**

- Not at all worried
- Slightly worried
- Somewhat worried
- Very worried
- Extremely worried

Have you set aside emergency or rainy-day funds that would cover your expenses for **three months in case of sickness, job loss, economic downturn, or other emergencies?**

- Yes
- No

The next set of questions are going to ask you about your circumstances in the last three months. These three months are between April and June of 2021. **Think back over the past three months. Generally, at the end of each month, did you end up with...**

- More than enough money left
- Some money left
- Just enough money left
- Somewhat short of money
- Very short of money

Please think about how you felt about your family's economic situation over the past three months. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

We had enough money to afford the kind of home we should have

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

We had enough money to afford the kind of clothing we should have

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

We had enough money to afford the kind of furniture or household appliances we should have

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

We had enough money to afford the kind of car we should have

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

We had enough money to afford the kind of food we should have

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

We had enough money to afford the kind of medical care we should have

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

We had enough money to pay all our monthly bills

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

We had enough money to afford leisure and recreational activities

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

We had enough money to treat our kid(s) to a special meal, a little gift, or a special outing

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

In the last three months, has your family made any of the following adjustments because of financial need? Select all that apply.

- Shut down the heat or air conditioning to save money even though it made the house/apartment uncomfortable
- Did not go to see a doctor or dentist when needed to save money
- Asked relatives or friends for money or food to help get by
- Added another job to help make ends meet
- Sought government assistance to help make ends meet
- Sold some possessions because we needed the money (even though we really wanted to keep them)
- Cut my or another adult's meal size or skipped a meal because there wasn't enough money for food
- Cut my child(ren)'s meal size or skipped a meal because there wasn't enough money for food
- We have not made any of these adjustments

Have any of the following occurred in the past three months...? Select all that apply.

- We have missed a rent or mortgage payment
- We had to move in with other people even for a little while because of financial problems
- We have stayed at a shelter, in an abandoned building, an automobile, or any other place not meant for regular housing, even for one night
- We had to move to another house or apartment to save some money
- None of these have occurred in the past three months

What is your **current housing situation?**

- Rent my apartment or house
- Live with family or friends who rent, and I contribute part of the rent
- Live with family or friends who rent, but I do not pay rent
- Own my own home
- Live in a house or condo owned by another family member
- Live in temporary housing or a group shelter
- Experiencing homelessness
- Other (please specify) _____

How worried are you about being evicted in the **next month?**

- Not at all worried
- Slightly worried
- Somewhat worried
- Very worried
- Extremely worried

Think back between **January 2021-December 2021, was there ever a time when you were without health insurance?**

- Yes
- No

What about your child(ren)? Was there ever a time between **January 2021-December 2021 when your **children** were without health insurance?**

- Yes
- No

Employment

Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

- Working full time
- Working part-time
- Looking for employment
- Temporarily out of work, laid off, or furloughed
- Not working and not seeking employment
- Other (please specify) _____

What is your partner's current employment status? If you do not have a partner, please select "not applicable."

- Working full time
- Working part-time
- Looking for employment
- Temporarily out of work, laid off, or furloughed
- Not working and not seeking employment
- Other (please specify) _____
- Not applicable

If employed:

Do you currently work more than one job?

- Yes
- No

How many jobs do you currently have?

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

Between all of your jobs, how many **hours per week do you **usually** work altogether? Please round to the nearest whole hour.**

- 0-4 hours
- 5-14 hours
- 15-24 hours
- 25-34 hours
- 35-39 hours
- 40-49 hours
- 50+ hours

We refer to your primary job as the one at which you work the most hours. Does your primary job offer any of the following? Select all that apply.

- Paid sick leave
- Paid parental leave
- Vacation time/ paid time off
- Pension/ retirement plan
- Medical leave
- Health insurance
- Dental insurance
- Overtime pay
- None

Please tell me how true each of the following statements are.

Where I work, I know my work schedule at least two weeks in advance

Always true

Often true

Sometimes true

Never true

I am able to work the hours that I need to meet my family's needs

Always true

Often true

Sometimes true

Never true

Where I work, I am able to work shifts (weekends, evenings, nights, weekdays) that fit my family's needs

Always true

Often true

Sometimes true

Never true

My shift and work schedule cause extra stress for my child(ren) and me

Always true

Often true

Sometimes true

Never true

Where I work, it is difficult to deal with child care problems during working hours

Always true

Often true

Sometimes true

Never true

In my work schedule, I have enough flexibility to handle family needs

Always true

Often true

Sometimes true

Never true

Child Care

We would like to know more about your children and the care arrangements you have made for them. Qualifying dependents are children who you can claim on a federal tax return. A child is your dependent if they...

1. Live with you for more than 6 months out of the year
2. Are related to you by blood, adoption, or fostering through a government or private agency

Please answer the following questions **ONLY** about the children in your care that meet these two above criteria.

Please select the number of dependents you care for that are **under age 6**.

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10+

Please select the number of dependents you care for that are **age 6 through 17**:

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10+

Please select the number of dependents you care for that are **age 18**:

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10+

We are interested in the types of care arrangements your children use. Which of the following do your children use on a regular basis? Select all that apply.

- We do not use any care arrangements
- Head Start
- Childcare center
- Public pre-k
- Afterschool program
- Unpaid arrangement with a relative (grandparent, brother, sister)
- Paid arrangement with a relative (grandparent, brother, sister)
- Unpaid care in a private home (regular sitter, neighbor)
- Paid care in a private home (regular sitter, neighbor, child care)

If participant has care arrangements:

Approximately how many days in the past month did you have to make special arrangements because your usual care arrangements for your children were not available or fell through?

Please include times when your care providers were sick or unavailable due to a holiday or vacation.

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

In the last 12 months, how many times have you had to switch your child(ren)'s care arrangements and move to a new program/facility?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

In general, how satisfied are you with your children's current care arrangements?

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

You have indicated that none of your children participate in any care arrangements on a regular basis. Ideally, would you like to have your child(ren) participate in a type of care arrangement?

- Yes
- No

If no child care arrangements:

Below are a few reasons why families cannot participate in different types of care arrangements.

What are the reasons your children are not participating in any type of care arrangement? Please select all that apply.

- We cannot afford the type of care we want
- We do not like the types of care arrangements in our area
- We do not like the quality of the care arrangements in our area
- We have had bad experiences with care arrangements in the past
- Other, please explain:

Parental Health and Wellbeing

The next set questions ask about your mental and physical health, your disciplining practices for your children, and your relationship with a partner to better understand your wellbeing and how you feel about your family life. As a reminder, you may skip a question or withdraw from the study at any time. Your responses are confidential. We will never publicly associate your name with any of your responses.

How old are you?

_____years

Would you say your health is...?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good
- Excellent

Do you have problems, such as keeping a job or getting along with family and friends, because of alcohol or drug use?

- Yes
- No

About how satisfied are you with your life overall?

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

Below is a list of some of the ways you may have felt or behaved. Please indicate **how often you have felt this way during the **past week** by checking the appropriate box for each question.**

Rarely or none of
the time
(less than 1 day)

Some or a little of
the time
(1-2 days)

Occasionally or a
moderate amount
of time (3-4 days)

All of the time
(5-7 days)

1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me
2. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing
3. I felt depressed
4. I felt that everything I did was an effort
5. I felt hopeful about the future
6. I felt fearful
7. My sleep was restless
8. I was happy
9. I felt lonely
10. I could not "get going"

Please tell me the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Being a parent is harder than I thought it would be

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

I often feel tired, worn out, or exhausted from raising a family

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

For each of the following, mark the response that most closely matches how you feel.

The future looks good for our family

Not at all like
my life

Not much like
my life

Somewhat
like my life

Quite a lot
like my life

Just like my
life

In my family, we take time to listen to each other

Not at all like
my life

Not much like
my life

Somewhat
like my life

Quite a lot
like my life

Just like my
life

There are things we do as a family that are special to us

Not at all like
my life

Not much like
my life

Somewhat
like my life

Quite a lot
like my life

Just like my
life

For each of the following, mark the response that most closely matches how you feel.

I have people who believe in me

Not at all like
my life

Not much like
my life

Somewhat
like my life

Quite a lot
like my life

Just like my
life

I have someone in my life who gives me advice, even when it's hard to hear

Not at all like
my life

Not much like
my life

Somewhat
like my life

Quite a lot
like my life

Just like my
life

When I am trying to work on achieving a goal, I have friends who support me

Not at all like my life	Not much like my life	Somewhat like my life	Quite a lot like my life	Just like my life
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When I need someone to look after my kids on short notice, I can find someone I trust

Not at all like my life	Not much like my life	Somewhat like my life	Quite a lot like my life	Just like my life
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I have people I trust to ask for advice

Not at all like my life	Not much like my life	Somewhat like my life	Quite a lot like my life	Just like my life
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For each of the following, mark the response that most closely matches how you feel.

My children misbehave just to upset me

Not at all like my life	Not much like my life	Somewhat like my life	Quite a lot like my life	Just like my life
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I feel like I'm always telling my kids "no" or "stop"

Not at all like my life	Not much like my life	Somewhat like my life	Quite a lot like my life	Just like my life
-------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------

I have frequent power struggles with my kids

Not at all like my life	Not much like my life	Somewhat like my life	Quite a lot like my life	Just like my life
-------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------

How I respond to my children depends on how I'm feeling

Not at all like my life	Not much like my life	Somewhat like my life	Quite a lot like my life	Just like my life
-------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------

Child Discipline

Children sometimes do things that are wrong or disobey their parents. We'd like to now ask you about how you discipline your children.

Please indicate **how frequently you did the following** in the **past three months** in response to your **child's behavior**. If you have multiple children, please indicate how often you did the following responses to any of your children.

I explained to my child(ren) why something they did was wrong.

- This has never happened
- This has happened but not in the past three months
- Once
- Twice
- 3-5 times
- 6-10 times
- 11-20 times
- 20+ times
- This does not apply to me because of my child's age

I spanked my child(ren).

- This has never happened
- This has happened but not in the past three months
- Once
- Twice
- 3-5 times
- 6-10 times
- 11-20 times
- 20+ times
- This does not apply to me because of my child's age

I took away privileges from them.

- This has never happened
- This has happened but not in the past three months
- Once
- Twice
- 3-5 times
- 6-10 times
- 11-20 times
- 20+ times
- This does not apply to me because of my child's age

I put my child(ren) in "time-out" or sent them to their room (ex: grounded them).

- This has never happened
- This has happened but not in the past three months
- Once
- Twice
- 3-5 times
- 6-10 times
- 11-20 times
- 20+ times
- This does not apply to me because of my child's age

I shouted, yelled, or lost my temper at my child(ren).

- This has never happened
- This has happened but not in the past three months
- Once
- Twice
- 3-5 times
- 6-10 times
- 11-20 times
- 20+ times
- This does not apply to me because of my child's age

Relationship Status

Before going further, we would like to know your current relationship status. Are you...

- Married
- Living with a partner
- In a relationship, but not living together
- Dating
- Not currently in a relationship

If in a relationship:

These next few questions are about your relationship with your [current](#) partner. **In general, would you say that your relationship with your partner is...**

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good
- Excellent

What kind of parent to your children do you feel that your current partner is?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good
- Excellent

In general, how much would you say that your partner contributes financially to your household?

- Not at all
- A little
- A lot

Children sometimes do things that are wrong or disobey their caregiver. In the **past three months, how often has your partner spanked any of your children?**

- This has never happened
- This has happened but not in the past three months
- Once
- Twice
- 3-5 times
- 6-10 times
- 11-20 times
- 20+ times
- This does not apply to me because of my child's age

Now, think about how your partner behaves toward you. For each statement you read, please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

They are fair and willing to compromise when we have a disagreement

<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
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They express affection or love for me

<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
---	--------------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------------------

They insult or criticize me or my ideas

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

They encourage or help me to do things that are important to me

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

They try to keep me from seeing or talking with my friends or family

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

They try to prevent me from going to work or school

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

They withhold money, make me ask for money, or take my money

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

They insult or criticize me for not taking good enough care of the child(ren) or my home

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

They push, grab, or shove me

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

They listen to me when I need someone to talk to

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

They really understand my hurts and joys

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Since your **oldest child** was born, please indicate the number of partners you have had, including your current partner

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10+

Demographics

We have just a few more general questions about you and your family.

Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10+

What is your date of birth? (mm/dd/yyyy) _____

What gender do you identify with?

- Male
- Female
- Nonbinary
- Other (please specify) _____

What is the highest degree or year of regular schooling that you have completed? Please select one.

- No formal schooling
- 1st-8th grade
- 9th-12th grade
- High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- Some college
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree or higher (BA, BS, AB, etc.)

Which of the following racial/ethnic groups best describes you? Please select all that apply.

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White, non-Hispanic
- I would prefer not to say

What is the zip code for your current residence?

- 78617
- 78653
- 78702
- 78721
- 78723
- 78724
- 78741
- 78744
- 78752
- 78753
- 78754
- 78758
- Other, please specify: _____

Many organizations around Austin work to provide services to families. Are you **involved with or receiving any services** from any of these organizations? Select all that apply.

- I am not involved in any Austin organizations
- United Way For Greater Austin
- Foundation Communities
- Any Baby Can
- Austin Achieve Public Schools
- Austin Public Health- WIC program
- Austin Voices for Education and Youth
- AVANCE-Austin
- Black Mamas ATX
- Communities in Schools (CIS) Care Coordination
- CommUnity Care
- Friends of the Children-Austin
- Giving Austin Labor Support (GALS)
- Literacy Coalition of Central Texas
- Mainspring Schools
- Partners in Parenting
- Saint Louise House
- Todos Juntos Learning Center
- Welcome Table, Inc.
- Other (please specify) -----

You have reached the end of the survey!

Thank you for your time. Your participation will help many families in Austin. We look forward to keeping in touch and hope to see you back in April 2023 to complete this survey again to receive a \$25 gift card and another chance to win an additional \$100 gift card! Please expect to receive your gift card in the next few weeks. We will contact anyone who wins one of our four \$100 gift cards!

You may now close this survey.



The University of Texas at Austin
**Texas Institute for
Child & Family Wellbeing**
Steve Hicks School of Social Work