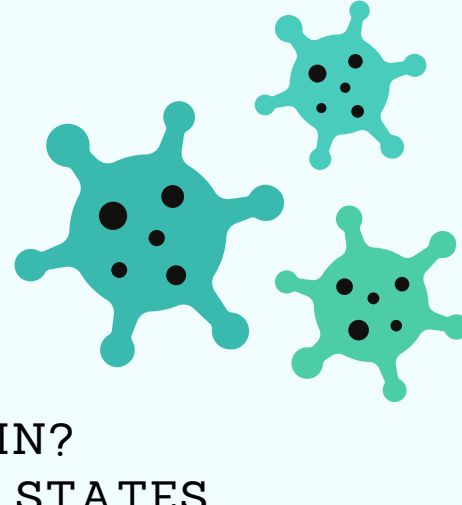


The Impact of COVID-19



HOW ARE FAMILIES DOING 18 MONTHS IN? INSIGHTS FROM FAMILY LEADERS IN 27 STATES

In August of 2021, the National Federation of Families hosted a series of roundtable discussions with Executive Directors of family-run organizations. This infographic was created to capture their insights about vaccine hesitancy and the toll the pandemic is taking on families and their staff.



families

Family leaders expressed great concern about the stress and fatigue families are experiencing as the pandemic continues.

Like most states across the country, the delta variant is causing a lot of concern and worry for our families throughout the state. (Colorado)

The correlation between the opening of tourism and the economy and increasing COVID cases has a lot of people on edge. Our families are very concerned about how to stay safe and access traditional resources. (Hawaii)

Parents are tired. The pandemic has been like a yo-yo, and they're throwing up their hands as if they don't care anymore. (Washington)

Families are extremely exhausted. We have families that are still experiencing financial and food insecurities. They are very worried about evictions even if they've heard about the relief packages. They feel tremendous uncertainty – they thought things were getting better and now they're disillusioned because it feels like we're backtracking. They don't know what the future holds – again. (Maryland)

We're seeing pandemic fatigue. Parents are exhausted. Kids are exhibiting behaviors and parents are too tired to deal with them. We're seeing a lot more children go to the emergency room for evaluations and on residential waiting lists. (Maine)

Families are dealing with mental health and substance use challenges all while dealing with COVID – we have to remember that. (New Jersey)

Parents of children who have disabilities can't get the supports they need in a virtual environment. They are wrestling with concerns about returning to school vs. not getting what their children need. And, if they do return to school, will I.E.P. guidelines be honored, will there be support in the classroom, how can they practice physical distancing and provide educational supports. (Pennsylvania)



culture and politics

Family leaders shared frustration about decisions to get vaccinated being politicized and about cultural disparities families face.

Primarily, here in Alaska, vaccination decisions seem to be political and not about science. (Alaska)

The disparity between the 'Haves' and the 'Have Nots' is increasing and that is really affecting families. They are made to feel bad because they are struggling with financial, housing, and food insecurity. (New York)

There are actually multiple pandemics – economic, racial injustice, digital divide, political contention – that have caused a great deal of trauma (individual, historic, collective) for our families. We need new approaches to support families – especially families of color. (Maryland)

Emotions are very high and only getting worse. We have a huge political divide between rural and urban populations which is only getting bigger with the pandemic. People see vaccinations and face coverings as a personal rights issue. (Washington)

It has become very hard to address an issue that has become politicized. We're family driven. We're respectful of family culture and values. Misinformation that challenges family values is a difficult barrier to overcome. (Oregon)

For people of color, we have to address the history of trauma and distrust in medicine in order to make progress with vaccine hesitancy. (Mississippi)

There is a history of mistrust. Initially tribal members thought the vaccine was how the U.S. government was finally going to get rid of us. It got to the point where we were losing so many community members that tribal elders said we needed to get vaccinated. Our vaccination rate is high now, but in the meantime, we completely depleted our burial fund and we had so many bodies that we had to cremate many tribal members which is against our cultural beliefs. (Oklahoma)

I can't believe we are talking about politics during a public health crisis. Politics shouldn't even be part of the conversation. (Texas)



school

Family leaders widely agree that families, school districts, teachers and students are all struggling with the return to school.

There's a lot of concern and worry among families – especially as school is starting. What they're thinking and how they're feeling is all over the place. (Missouri)

Many parents are concerned about children returning to school – especially those too young to be vaccinated. (Delaware)

We're all bracing ourselves for what is going to happen as school continues and what we're going to see with cases among younger children. (Arizona)

Our governor is threatening to withhold funding if schools issue a mask mandate, and many districts are not offering a virtual option for students. (Florida)

My daughter took chemistry with a substitute teacher all of last year because they can't get teachers to work. They aren't willing to put their own health at risk and masks are not required (Wisconsin)

Parents are worried about children under 12 years old going back to school and those over age 12 who are not vaccinated – even if masks are worn. There is great fear about what all of this means. It feels like the foundation is shaky – it feels like it's crumbling. (Washington D.C.)

My oldest child missed his first year and a half of in-person college. My daughter with intellectual disabilities missed 1.5 years of her approved private school and virtual classes were really confusing for her. My youngest is entering his senior year in high school and will be returning to in-person classes for the first time since March of his sophomore year with mandated masks. My kids are anxious even though we are all vaccinated. Many of them know people who have had breakthrough cases. (Georgia)



staff

Family-run organizations are struggling to get staff vaccinated and to provide support for families in the field.

Our staff are experiencing increased anxiety and stress along with hesitancy to get the vaccine. (Michigan)

We have a mandate that all staff be vaccinated. We don't have clear guidance from the state which has made things very challenging. (Oregon)

We've tried various approaches to encourage staff members to get vaccinated that haven't worked. I'm afraid that COVID will have to touch them in a close way before they change their minds. (Colorado)

I told my staff from the beginning that we were going to follow public health guidelines, but I have some staff members that refuse to get the vaccine. Not having state or federal guidelines puts us in a difficult position. (Wisconsin)

Our staff are and have been on the front lines. Because of the surge in the delta variant, we may have to revert entirely to telehealth. We still have to serve families, but we have had so many people test positive now that we can't continue to provide support to them one-on-one. (Georgia)



youth and young adults

Family leaders say it is particularly challenging to convince young people to get vaccinated.

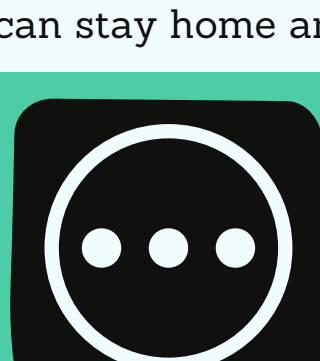
There's a huge divide with youth ages 18 to 29. A lot of people don't have the right information, so they're ambivalent about getting vaccinated. (Florida)

We are having a lot of debates with youth in our community. We're trying to get the right information to them so they can make an educated decision. If we tell them they must get vaccinated, they shut down, so we have to approach them from a stance of trusted information and lived experience rather than mandates. We have to meet them where they are. (Idaho)

News about the need for booster shots is causing blowback. Many people, especially young people, are saying, "If we have to get booster shots, what's the point? We may as well take our chances getting sick." (New Jersey)

Youth are concerned about side effects from the vaccine. They have the perception that they are young, strong and invincible. They don't understand the implications of this for their families, friends and community. (Delaware)

We've even heard of young people making pacts to try to get sick so they can stay home and continue virtual learning. (Tennessee)



other

Overwhelmingly, family leaders expressed stress, worry, and frustration for themselves, their staff, and the families they serve.

I wish we had a mask mandate for everyone, but we don't. (Maine)

Having a panel of people with lived experience share their perspective is the safest way to engage families. (Florida)

This misinformation campaign is really negatively impacting parents making accurate, informed decisions and they don't trust the information they receive. If you have an informational forum, the people that need to be there will not attend. (Maine)

The challenge is striking a balance. As important as COVID is, the pandemic is just a small piece of what our families are facing. Since we started sharing information about vaccinations, we've seen our audience unfollow us on social media at 200% times more than the usual rate. I worry that we will lose our credibility as a trusted resource. We don't want to create a wedge between our organization and the families we serve who need our support in so many other areas. (Maryland)

Even though we're in uncertain times, the world still goes on. The natural things that would happen are compounded by the mental, social, and emotional strain of the pandemic and many people have not sought help. We're silent in our grief. (Connecticut)