EARLY CHILDHOOD
RESOURCE CENTER

The Ripple Report

Insights from The Ripple Effect Summit

November 6, 2026

INSIDE: What we heard, learned, and identified as next steps during the summit — a day built on listening to parents, questioning assumptions, and identifying what our organizations can change about the experience we create.



"Relationships are built in moments long before they are measured in attendance."

-Tiffany Roper, Director of Outreach & Parent Education

AT A GLANCE

75
attendees

10
parent panelists

Multiple
family-serving sectors

Rich
feedback & actionable data

Thank You...

YOU made the day a success!

To our sponsors, community partners, professionals, ECRC staff, and everyone who spent the morning learning alongside us—thank you. The Ripple Effect Summit invited us to move beyond our individual organizations and ask a shared question: How can we show up differently for families?

And most importantly, to the parents who trusted us enough to share their voices: thank you. Parenting is one of the most important jobs a person will ever have—and one of the hardest. Families are carrying a lot, and no parent is expected to do it alone.

WHAT WE CARRY FORWARD

Meaningful family engagement is a relationship pillar—not a numbers game. Families need to feel seen, heard, valued, and trusted. We can listen longer, make the extra call, involve parents earlier, show up even when we have nothing to promote, and measure success by the relationships we are building.

"Let's keep showing up differently."

What happens in one room can influence the next person, the next family, and the next program.

MOMENTS FROM THE SUMMIT









Action Lab 1

Family Engagement Reality Check

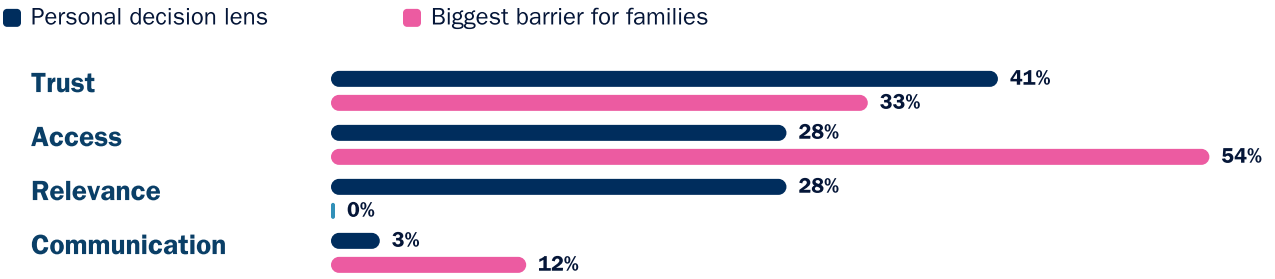


Through movement, voting and reflection, participants compared what influences their own decisions with the barriers families face when engaging with organizations. The clear learning: meaningful family engagement is not simply about attendance.

The Four Recurring Engagement Drivers

Trust	Access	Relevance	Communication
Familiarity, credibility and follow-through	Time, transportation, childcare, cost and logistics	Does this matter to my family right now?	How clearly and personally the opportunity is shared

What influences our decisions vs. what families face



What participants identified in the Reality Check...



Aggregated across both rotations. Response totals varied slightly by question.

Key Takeaways

- Meaningful engagement depends on whether families experience partnership.
- Trust is foundational — built through consistency, familiarity and follow-through.
- More reminders do not automatically create more engagement.
- Access barriers can prevent participation even when interest exists.
- Relevance: families weigh whether the opportunity fits their needs right now.

What Participants Realized

- Their own choices are shaped by trust, ease and relevance.
- Families navigate barriers that make participation hard even when interest exists.
- Outreach should create conditions where an opportunity feels trustworthy, relevant, accessible and clearly communicated.
- The lens matters: answers changed when participants shifted from their own perspective to the family perspective.

Action Lab 2

Engagement Dissection



Participants examined real examples of programs and events that did not produce the participation organizations expected. Instead of blaming families, groups worked backward to identify where the disconnect happened, what assumptions were made, and what the experience may have felt like from the family's perspective.

TRUST

Cold invitations, unfamiliar organizations, inconsistent follow-through, and feeling judged can make participation feel risky.

ACCESS

Time, transportation, childcare, work schedules, technology, location, and cost can make a good program impossible to use.

RELEVANCE + VALUE

Families are weighing: "Is this for me? Is this worth my time? Does it solve something I actually need right now?"

VOICE + CO-DESIGN

Participants repeatedly recommended involving parents earlier as planners, ambassadors, advisory members, and sources of lived experience.

COLLABORATION

Stronger partnerships with schools, community groups, trusted messengers, and other providers reduce duplication and increase reach.

> *"Consider what is really on parents' minds — not what we want or expect of them."*
>
> -Participant statement, Action Lab 2

What participants said organizations can influence

- Plan **with** families instead of only **for** families.
- Use trusted people and active parents as ambassadors and connectors.
- Follow up after events and use feedback to change the next experience.
- Offer more than one time or pathway to participate when possible.
- Match outreach to families' language, culture, location, and communication preferences.
- Collaborate so families are not left to navigate fragmented systems alone.

Parent Listening Session

What Families Told Us



Ten parents answered questions about communication, trust, participation, and what organizations should do differently. Their message was direct: families notice who is inviting them, whether participation is realistic, and whether organizations act on what families say.

WHO WAS REPRESENTED ON THE PANEL

The panel reflected a range of caregiving and access experiences, including foster, adoptive and kinship parenting, disability, transportation barriers, and financial constraints. These perspectives grounded the conversation in real barriers, real strengths, and the different ways families experience outreach, trust, and participation.

The strongest signals

Parent panel responses (n=10)



What parents asked organizations to remember

Parents emphasized transparency, follow-through, consistency, meeting people where they are, and treating families as people rather than “clients.” They also reminded the room that accommodations, children’s needs, schedules, and belonging all affect whether participation is possible.

> *“If you say you’ll follow up, follow up. Trust is real.”*
>
> -Parent panelist quote

What ECRC Is Doing Differently?

In-Reach + Presence Before Programming

ECRC is moving beyond simply offering programs. We are building trust, visibility, responsiveness, and meaningful connection with families before expecting engagement.

IN-REACH

Intentionally reaching into communities, relationships, and everyday spaces where families already are — rather than waiting for families to come to us.

PRESENCE BEFORE PROGRAMMING

Building trust and visibility first: showing up consistently, listening deeply, and creating connection before expecting participation.

The ECRC Ripples:

PLAYDATES WITH MISS OLIVIA

Child-centered experiences create natural opportunities to connect with children and parents in a welcoming, relational way.

IRON CLAD DADS

A fatherhood initiative building brotherhood, support, and authentic connection through honest conversation and community.

FAITH IN ACTION BREAKFASTS FOR THE FOSTER HUB

Intentional relationship-building with faith communities and partners to strengthen foster care recruitment and support.

FLEXIBLE BUT RELEVANT CURRICULUM FOR PARENTS

Parent education shaped around what families actually need, rather than a one-size-fits-all model.

MEANINGFUL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT THROUGH PARENT & YOUTH AMBASSADORS (PYAS)

Parent and Youth Ambassadors help ensure families are followed up with, supported, and connected personally.



"If families only see us when we have something to promote, we haven't built presence—we've built advertising."

-Tiffany Roper, ECRC

What This Means

- We are showing up before we are asking families to show up.
- We are listening for gaps and adjusting our approach accordingly.
- We are building programs with relationship, trust, and relevance in mind.
- We are making engagement more personal, visible, and responsive.