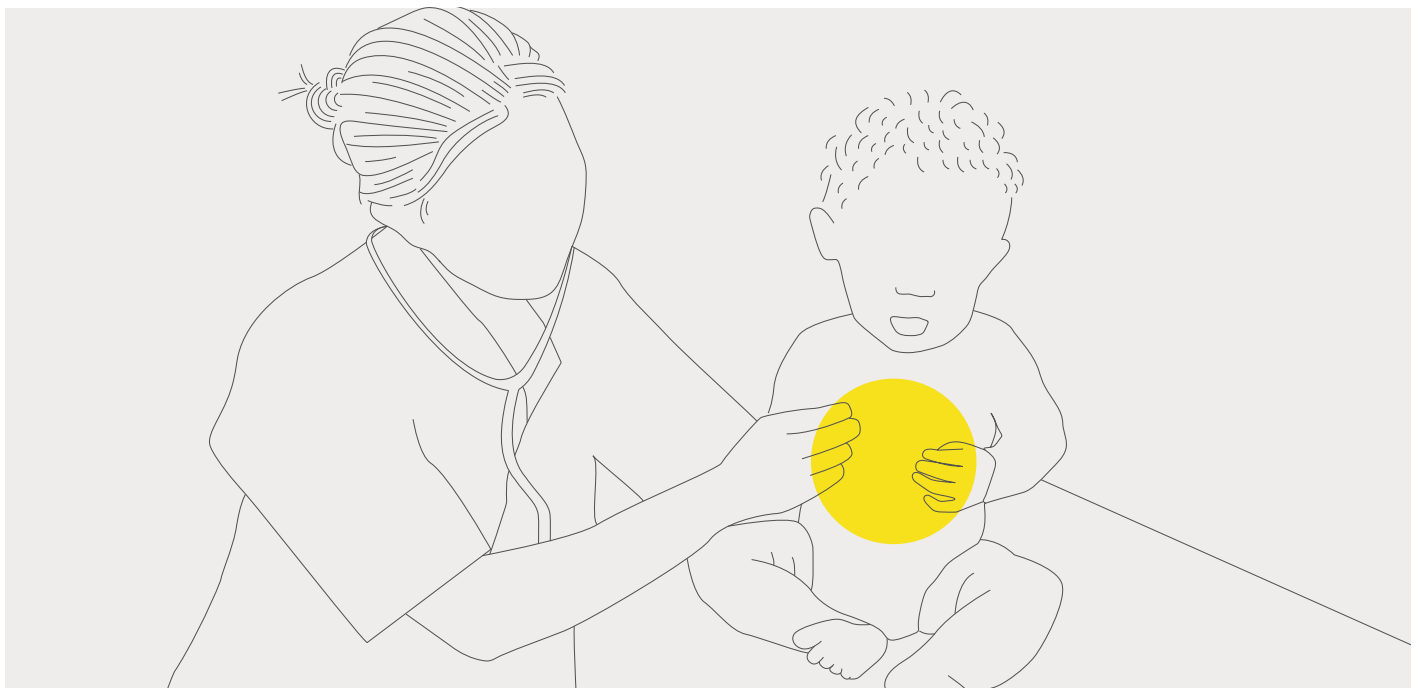


# PEDIATRICIANS ARE ESSENTIAL SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES

In March 2023, the RAPID national survey of families with young children included questions about caregivers' experiences with their child(ren)'s pediatricians. Overall, families reported high levels of trust in their pediatricians and endorsed them as their most trusted source of advice and support about their child(ren)'s physical health and emotional well-being. However, less than a third of parents reported their child(ren)'s pediatricians had asked them about experiences of financial hardship.

As medical professionals concerned with the health, welfare, and development of children, pediatricians are highly trusted by parents of young children. In this fact sheet, we dig deeper into ways that parents say their pediatricians support them and focus on opportunities to enhance this support for overall family well-being.



Given the high trust that parents have for their pediatricians, these data underscore an important opportunity for healthcare

providers to support parent and family economic well-being, including through referrals to nutrition and food programs.

## PARENTS ENDORSE PEDIATRICIANS AS THE TOP SOURCE SUPPORT ABOUT CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

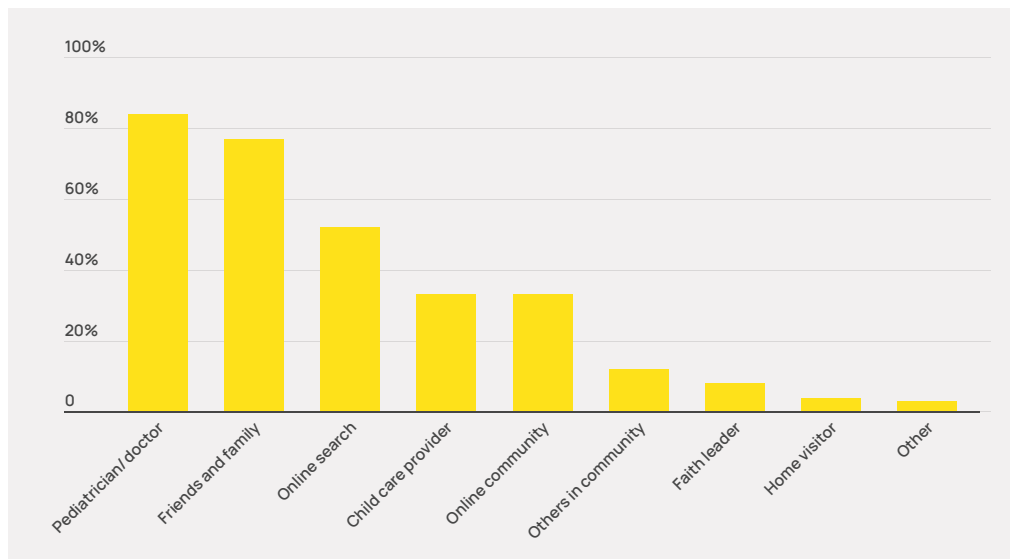
When asked who they turn to for advice and support about their child(ren)’s physical and emotional health and well-being, parents were most likely to say their pediatrician. Parents endorsed family and friends as the second-most relied upon source of advice and support. Parents were much more likely to endorse both pediatricians and family and friends than any other sources of support, including child care providers and teachers, faith leaders,

community members, online search engines, or online communities.

We also asked parents about their level of trust in their child(ren)’s pediatricians. Eighty-eight percent reported that they trust their child(ren)’s doctor. This high level of trust was found across parents in all racial, ethnic, income, and geographic groups and family types (e.g., one-parent and two-parent households).

**“My pediatrician having an advice nurse available by phone has been massively helpful for my mental health and my kids’ physical health.”**  
Parent in California

Sources of advice and support about child’s physical health and emotional well-being



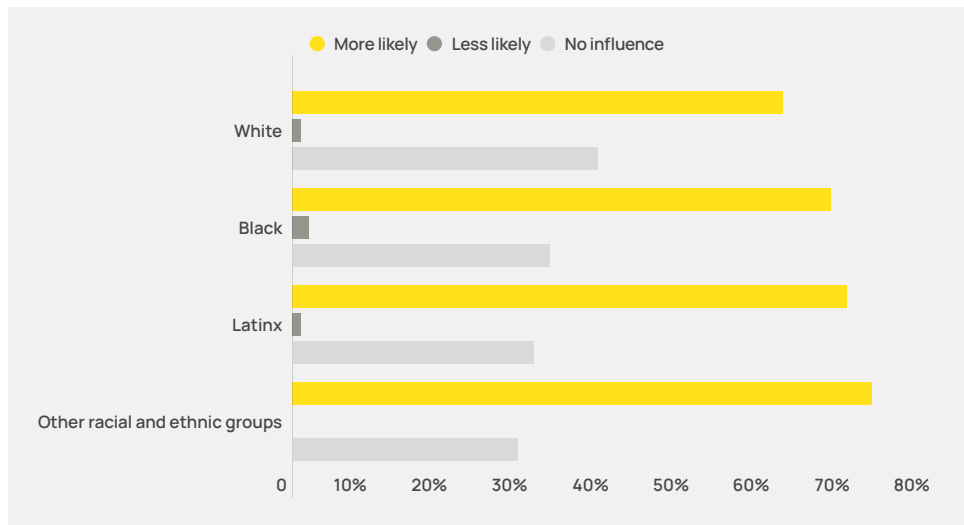
**“[What is helping us most right now are] state resources and our pediatrician have given us lots of information and resources in learning more about autism.”**  
Parent in California

# FAMILIES ARE MORE LIKELY TO ENROLL IN FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IF PEDIATRICIANS INFORM THEM THAT THEY'RE ELIGIBLE

We also asked parents about the influence their child(ren)'s doctor could have on their decision to sign up for food programs, like WIC or SNAP. About two-thirds (64%) of parents reported that they would be more likely to sign up for those programs if their pediatrician told them they were eligible. Parents

of color were even more likely to say this than white parents (67% of Black parents, 69% of Latinx parents, and 72% of parents in other racial and ethnic groups), compared with 61% white parents. This shows the importance of pediatricians providing this information to families.

Likelihood that pediatrician would influence decision to apply for support



**“WIC and our pediatrician’s office have helped tremendously.”**  
Parent in Colorado.

**“Our pediatrician is super supportive.”**  
Parent in Washington

**“[What is helping us most right now is] a good relationship with the pediatrician, who has given us a lot of great advice.”**  
Parent in Oklahoma

# LESS THAN A THIRD OF PARENTS REPORT PEDIATRICIANS ASKING ABOUT EXPERIENCES OF HARDSHIP

RAPID data from the past year reveal that, after pandemic-related disruptions to routines and preventive healthcare,

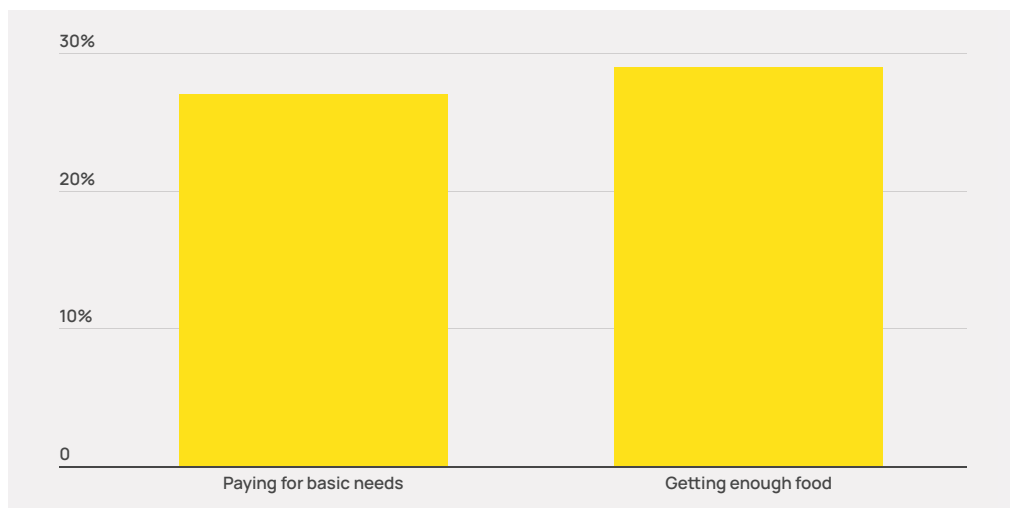
caregivers and young children are returning to well-child visits with greater consistency. Further, RAPID has also found that families

with young children continue to experience persistent, high rates of material hardship, including hunger.

We asked parents if their pediatricians had asked them about their family's experiences of economic hardship. Overall, we found that less than one-third of parents reported their child(ren)'s pediatricians asked about

experiences of hardship during recent appointments. Twenty-nine percent of parents reported their child(ren)'s doctor asked about challenges getting enough food for their family and 27% reported their child(ren)'s doctor asked about challenges paying for basic needs (e.g., housing, utilities).

Percent of parents whose pediatricians asked about economic hardship



The healthcare system in the U.S. currently focuses resources and attention on care of adults, though access to high-quality preventive healthcare and support in the earliest years can lead to improved health, emotional well-being, education, and economic outcomes throughout the lifespan. Some physicians are developing and practicing new models of primary and pediatric care that include interdisciplinary teams that collaborate to support a range of children's and families' health needs and that integrate healthcare with other preventive and supportive resources, such as asthma programs.

These data highlight an important role that pediatricians can play in promoting children's health by supporting overall family well-being, including economic well-being. Pediatricians and other service providers can ask parents of young children directly about their experiences of economic hardship or food resource eligibility, even if a screening questionnaire has already been administered within the healthcare setting. Training and support from organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics on how best to ask parents about these experiences can help pediatricians be most effective in supporting young children and their families.

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**“Our pediatrician’s office referred us to a parenting specialist who is AWESOME!! We’ve had two telehealth sessions and it’s been really helpful.”**  
Parent in Ohio

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**“Food bags and diapers from the doctor’s office [are helping us the most right now].”**  
Parent in North Carolina

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## GUEST COMMENTARY: PROMOTING FOOD SECURITY

**By Kimberly Montez, M.D., M.P.H.,  
Associate Professor of Pediatrics  
at Wake Forest University School  
of Medicine**

A compelling body of evidence demonstrates that assuring access to nutrition can be an effective way to improve children's developmental and health outcomes. As healthcare systems increasingly screen for and intervene on food insecurity among families with young children due to emerging national social care accountability initiatives, we are learning about how healthcare systems can effectively contribute to improving social care outcomes. Social care are services delivered by some healthcare providers to address social factors, such as barriers to food access, that can have negative impacts on health. Based on the evidence, innovative

new national policies have the potential to establish standards for social care in healthcare settings and reimbursement from payors, which ultimately promote positive health outcomes for children and families.

With the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition and Health, the opportunity for innovative efforts to address food insecurity in healthcare settings is ripe. For example, the American Academy of Pediatrics is supporting a number of state chapter projects on federal nutrition program referrals from the healthcare system. Preliminary findings show promising results. Given the trusting relationship that pediatricians have with parents, addressing food insecurity in clinical settings has the potential to promote food security and improve the health and well-being of all children.

# ABOUT THE RAPID PROJECT

RAPID is under the direction of Philip Fisher, PhD, Director of the Center on Early Childhood at Stanford University

Data in this fact sheet about parents' experience with their child(ren)'s pediatrician are based on the RAPID national household survey. Analyses are of responses collected from 820 caregivers of young children in March 2023. These caregivers represent a range of voices: 14.07% are Black/African American, 18.40% are Latinx, and 35.64% live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Data in this fact sheet about trusted sources of advice and support are also based on RAPID national household survey. Analyses are of responses collected from 1,236 caregivers of young children between August 2022 and March 2023. These caregivers represent a range of

voices: 11.25% are Black/African American, 17.32% are Latinx, and 33.66% live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. Proportions/percentages are calculated based on the item-level response rates, not on the total sample. The data for these analyses are not weighted.

RAPID collects data monthly from caregivers and child care providers in all 50 states. The surveys are national in scope, though not technically nationally representative. RAPID collects snapshots of data across time and can also assess trends longitudinally.

For more information about RAPID study design and methods, see [here](#).

7,000+

Providers

19,000+

Households

50

US States

