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*For a Houston without Homelessness*

## **House of Tiny Treasures**

## **Attendance Quality Improvement Initiative**

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### Abstract

Enrollment and attendance in an early childhood education program can yield many positive benefits for young children, especially children from families who have experienced chronic poverty, homelessness or housing insecurity. The purpose of this quality improvement initiative was to conduct a multifaceted quality improvement initiative focused on improving attendance at the House of Tiny Treasures (HTT), a *Reggio Emilia* inspired early childhood education program provided by SEARCH Homeless Services. The first part of this initiative focused on developing and implementing a multifaceted intervention to improve attendance, and then evaluating the improvement in attendance over time using a simple time series design. The second aspect of this initiative utilized a mixed methods evaluation to elucidate the views of House of Tiny Treasures families about: 1) the benefits of early childhood education, 2) the importance of regular attendance in early childhood education, and 3) any potential barriers impacting attendance. Of the 20 families surveyed, 19 completed the questionnaire. The top three reasons listed for enrolling a child at HTT was: 1) receiving day care services while working or searching for work (n=19; 100%); 2) the opportunity for their child to socialize with peers of the same age (n=9; 64%); and 3) receiving a pre-school education (n=8; 57%). The most common caregiver reasons for absence included: 1) illness of an enrolled child (n=12; 63%), 2) difficulties with transportation (n=8; 42%), and 3) weather (n=7; 37%). All parents indicated in the initial survey that attendance was extremely important, so the follow up qualitative interviews focused on the reasons why it was important from the caregivers' perspective. Themes highlighted the benefit of a "set schedule for the days", while others expressed some abivalence about consistent education given concerns about spending time with their child given work hours inconsistent with HTT and concerns about their child becoming ill from other students. Parents expressed high satisfaction with HTT, as well as some suggestions for improving the program. The evaluation of the attendance intervention supports improvement in attendance after its implementation. During the prior year, the median days attended increased from 70% to 74%, the number of students attending 90% or more of enrolled days increased from 0 to 5, and the total attending 80% of enrolled days doubled from 8 to 16. These findings help elucidate the views of HTT caregivers regarding attendance to inform future attendance interventions, as well as provide support for the promise of an attendance intervention at the House of Tiny Treasures.

## Introduction

Chronic absenteeism has been shown to impact academic performance among children of all ages. While much of the research to date has focused on adolescent school attendance, emerging research has also documented the importance of *both* enrollment and attendance in preschool, especially for families who live in high-poverty neighborhoods (Ehrlich et al, 2014). One study, conducted with a large sample of preschool children in Chicago Public Schools, found a correlation between the number of days of preschool missed and lower educational and socio-emotional scores in kindergarten, as well as more missed days in kindergarten and subsequent years of school (Ehrlich et al, 2014). In addition to poverty, young children in families experiencing homelessness and those in transitional housing face additional chronic stressors that can impact their development of self-regulation, school readiness and physical and mental health later in life (de Sousa, 2016). As such, it is a priority to connect families with young children experiencing housing insecurity and poverty to high quality early childhood educational services. Likewise, since both enrollment and consistent attendance are associated with better childhood educational outcomes, it is essential that these early childhood education programs are aware of and responsive to family needs, and that there are efforts made to support consistent and frequent attendance. One way to do this is to collect and use data on absenteeism to track progress, develop better strategies to improve attendance and to understand what may be causing absenteeism in the specific local context or program (Dahlin & Squires, 2016).

SEARCH Homeless Services' House of Tiny Treasures, located in Houston, Texas, provides NAEYC accredited early childhood education program. This educational program is based on *Reggio Emilia's* model – a system of early child education established in Italy by educator, Loris Malaguzzi. It is based on the concept that child development and learning happen as a network of interactions in which children interact, interpret and communicate about their environments in what is seen metaphorically as “one hundred languages.” The method seeks to enhance child development within the context of four principles: 1) Children must have some control over the direction of their learning, 2) Children must be able to learn through sensory and kinesthetic experiences, 3) Children must have a relationship with other children and the material items of the world, 4) Children must have endless ways and opportunities to express

themselves. This program offers an array of innovative services in addition to preschool education, including psychosocial skills training, nutritious meals, art therapy, play therapy and/or speech therapy. The overarching goal of SEARCH's House of Tiny Treasures is to prepare young children for kindergarten by equipping each child with the skills needed to self-regulate, build cognitive skills, and problem solve. This program also provides case management for the families of the children to provide family support, and help families attain and maintain self-sufficiency to break this cycle of homelessness.

In August 2017, SEARCH program leadership observed that several children in the program had missed a significant amount of school, which could impact the benefit of HTT. To address this concern, HTT initiated a quality improvement initiative to improve attendance in August 2017. One aspect focused on developing and implementing a multifaceted intervention to improve attendance, and then assessing its impact on attendance over time using a simple time series design. The second aspect included conducting a mixed methods evaluation to elucidate the views of House of Tiny Treasures families about: 1) the benefits of early childhood education, 2) the importance of regular attendance in early childhood education, and 3) any potential barriers impacting attendance. The following questions guided the evaluation:

- 1) What are the characteristics of enrolled families at the House of Tiny Treasures?
- 2) What are the reasons families utilize HTT Early Childhood Education Services, and how important is consistent attendance to the parents/guardians?
- 3) What are the most common reasons children attending HTT are absent?
- 4) Do caregivers find the requirements at House of Tiny Treasures burdensome?
- 5) Do parents have suggestions to improve services at HTT, and if yes, what are they?
- 6) Does a multifaceted attendance intervention increase preschool attendance among children enrolled in HTT?

This report will begin by reporting the findings of the mixed methods study. Following this, a brief section will describe the attendance intervention that was implemented and the trend in attendance that followed.

## **Mixed Methods Study**

This evaluation used a mixed-methods design, whereby quantitative data was used to inform follow-up qualitative interviews. In the first phase of the evaluation, a survey questionnaire with family caregivers was administered over a month and a half period during December 2017 and January 2018. This questionnaire (included in Appendix A) included questions regarding current family characteristics, needs, and potential barriers to preschool attendance. Participants were informed that all responses provided to the evaluator would remain confidential. These data were analyzed and used to inform the next phase of the research, which engaged eight randomly selected caregivers in May and October 2018 in a semi-structured qualitative interview (included in Appendix B) to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the responses to the quantitative survey.

It should be noted that completion of the initial survey occurred three months after the attendance intervention began, which may have impacted responses to some of the questions, specifically how caregivers reported feeling about attendance in an early childhood education program. However, this evaluation was designed to provide SEARCH with an objective, outside evaluation of HTT caregivers' views of attendance and services during the course of this intervention. This information, along with additional objective attendance data, is intended to be used to inform future strategies to improve attendance.

### ***Sample Recruitment/Data Collection***

Caregivers of enrolled children at House of Tiny Treasures were recruited onsite at the HTT preschool program by the evaluator. The study protocol was approved by the University of Houston and Baylor University Institutional Review Boards. One caregiver 18 years or older from each family with a child enrolled House of Tiny Treasures was asked to complete the questionnaire and consider participating in a follow-up interview if randomly selected. The investigator introduced the study and reviewed the protocol and consent document, emphasizing the confidential and voluntary nature of the project, and ensuring parents had their questions

about the study answered. Families were also informed that they would be compensated for their time with a \$20 gift card that was provided by SEARCH Homeless Services for the first phase of the study, and again for the second phase of the study if selected to participate. Each family was given two copies of the consent form (one to keep and one to sign and return) and the questionnaire to take home to complete. Caregivers were also encouraged to contact the evaluator if there were any further questions.

Each questionnaire had a unique family ID to ensure confidentiality of responses during data collection. Caregivers were asked to place their signed consent form and completed questionnaire in a sealed drop box onsite at the House of Tiny Treasures. Participants were also given the option to complete the questionnaire by phone via interview with the evaluator. Three caregivers elected to complete their questionnaire by phone. The lead investigator collected questionnaires on a weekly basis. After completion of the questionnaire or phone interview, the lead investigator informed SEARCH Homeless Services staff, who then provided participants a \$20 gift card.

After the data were collected and analyzed for the first phase of the study, a qualitative semi-structured interview questionnaire was developed to obtain feedback on the results of the initial quantitative survey to obtain more in-depth information regarding caregivers' views on attendance and HTT services. The lead investigator randomly selected ten study participants to conduct a 45-minute interview using this semi-structured questionnaire by phone. Five of the ten invited study participants completed the interview.

### ***Data Collection Instruments and Analysis***

The quantitative survey from the first phase of the research is included in Appendix A. The semi-structured interview questions are provided in Appendix B. All quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 25. Descriptive statistics were utilized to describe the sample, variables related to views of attendance, and feedback about current services. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze responses to the open-ended questions on the questionnaire. Interviews from the second qualitative phase of the study were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis.

## ***Phase I Results: Quantitative Survey***

The results are reported below in response to each question guiding the current study for the first phase of the mixed methods evaluation.

### ***What are the characteristics of enrolled families at the House of Tiny Treasures?***

#### **Family Composition**

Of the 20 families surveyed, 19 completed the questionnaire. Among families responding, the age of children attending House of Tiny Treasures ranged from 21 months to 4 years, with 74% (n=14) of children in the Pre-Kindergarten class and 26% (n=5) in the Toddler class. Two families reported having more than one child enrolled, with one child in the Pre-Kindergarten class and one in the Toddler class. Family size ranged from 2 people (n=6; 31.6%) to 7 people (n=2; 10.5%), and eight families (42%) had siblings living in the home with ages that ranged from nearly one year old to 17 years old that were not enrolled at House of Tiny Treasures. Twelve families (67%) reported having at least one working adult in the home, and four (22%) reported two working adults in the home. Fifty-eight percent (n=11) of the families were single parent families. Of the families that had other adults in the home (n=8), five lived with their husband or partner. The remaining families lived with other family members such as a sibling, parent, and father and/or mother in laws.

#### **Caregiver Employment or Education**

Of the 17 families responding, eleven reported a permanent work position for one or both the parent and the husband/partner, and one had a seasonal position. The number of hours worked ranged from 20-50 hours, with 5 parents reporting 40 hours, one 50 hours, one 27 hours, one 25 hours, and two 20 hours. Parents reported working the following shifts: 10-2 or 8-3 (n=1), 8-5 (n=1), 9-3 (n=2), and nights (n=2). Eleven parents reported that they were currently pursuing their educational goals. Four of the parents were currently enrolled full-time at a university/college, while one parent was completing their GED full-time. Two parents reported attending a university/college part-time, while four were pursuing their GED part-time.

## Transportation and Drop Off Time Preferences

Nine families (47.4%) reported using a car that was owned or leased to transport their child to House of Tiny Treasures. Twenty-one percent (n=4) utilized public transportation (bus or light rail), while two (10.5%) used a family member or friend's car. Other forms of transportation reported included the HTT bus (n=1), or a combination of different transportation options (n=3) that included both walking and public transportation. One caregiver reported occasionally using Uber in addition to both walking and public transportation. This survey may not have reached as many of the families who utilize the HTT bus, as the survey was sent home with the children on the bus instead of approached individually by the evaluator on site. It is also possible that some of those reporting using the bus more generally were reporting their use of the HTT bus.

Sixteen of the seventeen families reported how long it takes for their child to be transported to House of Tiny Treasures. The largest proportion of families reported that it took more than 15 minutes but less than 30 minutes (n=7; 38.9%), followed by more than 5 minutes but less than 15 minutes (n=6; 33.3%). Three families (16.6%) reported that it took less than 5 minutes, while one family indicated it took more than 30 minutes and less than 45 minutes, and one family indicated it took more than 60 minutes.

The largest proportion (52.6%; n=10) of families indicated that House of Tiny Treasure's location was extremely convenient, while 31.6% (n=6) indicated it was moderately convenient and 15.8% (n=3) shared it was extremely inconvenient. With regard to preferred drop off time, the majority (72%; n=13) preferred a 6:30 a.m. drop off and 5:30 p.m. pick up over a 6:00 a.m. drop off and 5:00 p.m. pick up. Caregivers were given the option to provide feedback regarding the drop off and pick up times and procedures, and seven responded. One shared that pick up and drop off were "always a smooth process." Two suggested that an extension of the hours would help them to get a job or make it easier to be on time for pick up after work. One caregiver indicated wishing transportation was easier, sharing she "wishes she had a ride." One parent shared their child "doesn't ride the van because the 6:30 to 5:20 is the best." One parent shared it would be helpful if there was more clarity and consistency about the time frame – when it is ok to drop off and pick up.

### **What are the reasons families utilize HTT Early Childhood Education Services, and how important is consistent attendance?**

Caregivers from each family were asked to list the top 3 reasons why they are utilizing House of Tiny Treasures early childhood education services. Fourteen of respondents provided three or fewer responses to this question, but not all of these respondents provided three answers. As shown in Table 1, the most frequent reason that was listed among 100% of respondents was “My child will receive day care services while I work or search for work.” The second most frequent reason (n=9) was “My child is able to socialize with peers his/her own age.” The third most frequent reason (n=8) was “My child will receive pre-school education (or Pre-K),” while the fourth most frequent reason (n=3) was “Family involvement.”

**Table 1. Top Three Reasons Listed for House of Tiny Treasures Services and Percent of Respondents Providing that Reason (N=19\*)**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>My child will receive day care services while I work or search for work.</b>	14	100%
<b>My child is able to socialize with peers his/her own age.</b>	9	64%
<b>My child will receive pre-school education (or Pre-K).</b>	8	57%
<b>Family involvement</b>	3	21%
<b>It is close to where I live.</b>	2	14%
<b>Other supports my child receives (e.g., backpacks, Christmas/Birthday presents)</b>	2	14%
<b>My child is able to receive Speech therapy.</b>	2	14%

<b>My child is able to receive Art and/or Play therapy.</b>	1	7%
<b>The free transportation.</b>	1	7%
<b>Case management services</b>	1	7%
<b>*Three respondents checked nearly every option, so these responses only include 14 of those responding.</b>		

Caregivers were asked to rate how important it was to them on a scale of 1 (extremely unimportant) to 5 (extremely important) that their child or children receive a preschool (Pre-K) education. All parents responded with a “5” or that it was extremely important.

There was also an open-ended question that asked caregivers to share what they hoped their children would get out of his/her experience at House of Tiny Treasures. Eighteen caregivers provided a written response. Some caregivers shared what they believe their child or children already achieved at House of Tiny Treasures:

“Well, my child has already gotten a great deal out of being at HTT. [He/she] has learned to be with kids [his/her] own age. [His/her] speech improved greatly, and [he/she] is a lot more self-reliant.”

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“I want to continue to do speech therapy. Since [he/she] started in [month] I can see a big, big, big difference in improvement in talking. Can now understand what older one is saying. Within 3 weeks helped younger one get potty trained. A really great day care, I love it.”

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“I know X learned a lot in this two years. [He/her] can spell [his/her] 8-letter name, count, both in English and Spanish. [He/she] knows how to identify things you ask her about. They even helped with [her/his] potty training.”

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“[He/she] is learning and she has gained a lot and we’re so grateful for this program.”

Caregivers also shared many of their hopes for their children while they are enrolled in House of Tiny Treasures. All of these comments are de-identified and provided below. Key themes included learning socialization and peer interaction skills, building relationships, developing self-esteem, and learning information that will help prepare their children for grade school.

“How to interact with children [his/her] own age in an effective manner, not bullying other kids. That they work with me in the age development skills. I would love for [him/her] to participate in art, speech, and play therapy.”

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“I hope [name omitted] will be ready to JUMP into a school classroom and continue his education without being behind, if anything ahead.”

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“I am hoping my child builds lasting relationships with his peers and teacher. It is equally important that [he/she] learns pre-school core content and more about nature.”

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“I’m hoping [he/she] gets knowledge, enhances speech, and learns to socialize with different children. Mainly just [his/her] education.”

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“I’m hoping my child will gain a pre-school education during [his/her] time in the program, as well as the skills to socialize and form friendships. I also want my child to have happy memories in school because [his/her] parents were involved in as much as possible.”

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“I hope [she/he] gets more social skills and learns to talk more.”

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“I am hoping that they will continue doing to work harder and learn everything they can.”

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“A good educational foundation to start grade school.”

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“I hope [he/she] gains trust with adults (familiar faces); interacts well with [his/her] peers and others; gains a sense of belonging; adapts to structured routine; learns about boundaries as well as taking risks; makes [his/her] own choices; and has freedom to peak interest in things that are educational and make [him/her] happy.”

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“I just hope that my child learns to be respectful through this experience. I hope that being around [his/her] friends excel [his/her] self-esteem. I hope [he/she] learns and become advanced before [he/she] starts school. I just want my [son/daughter] to be great!”

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“I’m hoping my child will be able to build [his/her] own confidence in speech in deeds, [he/she] will be able to learn from other kids and teachers how to conduct [himself/herself] among other kids.”

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“[Name omitted] doesn’t like to write or trace ABCs [his/her] numbers. I’m hoping [he/she] will learn how to spell out [his/her] name. I also hope that the more I ask what [he/she] learned at school, [he/she] will be able to tell me about [his/her] day.”

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“Word recognition, the ability to read, Spanish language acquisition, basic math skills, soft-skills including positive emotional expression and art therapy.”

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“I want [him/her] to learn, explore, and open up to new things.”

### **What are the most common reasons children attending HTT are absent?**

Caregivers were asked to list the reasons their child has missed school at House of Tiny Treasures. They could check all reasons that apply. The reasons provided are listed in order of frequency: 1) Illness of enrolled child (n=12), 2) difficulties transporting child (n=8), 3) weather (n=7), 4) own illness (n=7), 5) family related issue – other (n=3), 6) work schedule conflicted with HTT hours (n=2), 7) shared custody with another parent that was not able to or did not want to bring our child (n=3), 8) family-related reason - conflict in the home (n=2), 9) on vacation or out of town (n=1), 10) too difficult to get to school on time (n=1), 11) illness of a family member other than myself or child (n=1), and 12) It was more convenient to keep my

child home (n=1). For those indicating an “other” family related reason or unlisted reason for not attending shared the following: 1) “Funerals and out of town”, 2) “Had other appointments”, and 3) “Death in family or hospital.”

The next question asked caregivers to identify the two most common reasons their child missed school. These are reported in Table 2. Two parents indicated that this did not apply to them, so responses represent 15 caregivers’ top two reasons their children missed school. The most frequent response given was illness of an enrolled child (38%), followed by difficulties with transportation (14%).

**Table 2. The Two Most Common Reasons Children Miss School**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Illness of my enrolled child.</b>	11	38%
<b>Difficulties transporting my child.</b>	4	14%
<b>Weather</b>	3	10%
<b>Work schedule conflicted with HTT hours.</b>	2	7%
<b>Too difficult to get child to school on time.</b>	2	7%
<b>Family related reason other</b>	2	7%
<b>Shared custody with another parent that was not able to or did not want to bring our child.</b>	2	7%
<b>The illness of a family member other than myself or child.</b>	1	3%

<b>It was more convenient to keep my child home.</b>	1	3%
<b>My illness</b>	1	3%

### **Do caregivers find the requirements at House of Tiny Treasures burdensome?**

Caregivers were asked to indicate how burdensome they found the requirements for participation at the House of Tiny Treasures. The large majority (66.7%; n=12) indicated that these requirements were completely un-burdensome, while 2 families indicated it was somewhat un-burdensome, one family found them moderately burdensome, one somewhat burdensome, and two (11.1%) extremely burdensome. One caregiver did not answer this question. Following this Likert question, caregivers were invited to provide aspects of the program they found burdensome or difficult. Seven caregivers provided a written answer, and a summary of these responses is found below. One of the caregivers shared the following:

“Not difficult at all. Even the monthly meetings we have are very organized and they make them as fun and easy for us parents and children. They provide dinner as well.”

Two caregivers expressed that the hours of operation provided a challenge for them. Their responses are below:

“The hours of operation.”

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“Would give parents more opportunities, most jobs are 7 or 8:00, hard to get a job when you can’t drop off until 7:00.”

One caregiver shared a challenge of dropping a child back off after a doctor’s appointment:

“Not being able to easily pick up my child for a doctor’s appointment and bring child back after finished.”

Four parents expressed difficulty with the parent meetings, or in the requirement to interact with other people:

“Only when the mandatory parent meetings conflict with my evening school schedule, which is often every semester. The parking situation during this time can be burdensome.”

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“The parent meeting. I have a personal meeting I need to attend. These meetings end the time my appointments start at HTT. It conflicts with my schedule. More flexibility would be good. I can’t make mandatory meetings. It would be nice if 1:1 parent meetings that fit with my schedule.”

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“Right now I’m dealing with some issues that is allowing me to not really be around people that much. Other than that, not burdensome at all.”

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“Sometimes I find out about parent meetings late based off another parent, not sharing information, and find conflict with parent meetings being scheduled at the same time as work meetings.”

### **What suggestions do parents have to improve services at HTT?**

The final question asked caregivers to provide any feedback or suggestions they may have for the House of Tiny Treasures to improve services. Sixteen caregivers provided a written response, of which eleven of the responses were overwhelmingly positive. All are shown below:

“I believe they are doing a great job and should keep going in the direction they are going.”

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“I thank HTT for being there when I needed them most, especially when I was homeless. But most of all having an extraordinary facility that teaches my son to be himself and explore.”

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“You’re great!”

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“I am very satisfied with the school. In fact, House of Tiny Treasures has been very helpful and very resourceful to me and my family. Thank you, again, so much!”

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“My daughter has been at HTT for [omitted; but meant for a while]. The center director and the staff could not be any more helpful with learning and education. I’ve always felt safe and secure knowing [name omitted] is in great hands. Not only has [he/she] made a lot of friends, [he/she]

she enjoys yoga class, art therapy and [he/she] loves her teachers. The Director and Case Manager have helped me with many issues I may have had.”

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“Not really anything I can think of right now. Well organized and thought out.”

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“I think Tiny Treasures is a great school.”

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“Just thanking the agency for all they are doing for our kids.”

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“I don’t feel the school needs improvement.”

\*\*\*

“I love everything about it here. Such a great help to our family!”

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“N/A – maybe emails with photos or videos of child activity. Keep up the amazing work! Couldn’t imagine [him/her] being anywhere else!”

Five caregivers provided feedback on ways that HTT could improve services for their families. Two caregivers shared that they could use additional help with transportation as shown below:

“I would like transportation help for my child and help with core content such as counting while here at Tiny.”

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“The program has been a big help to my family and my child loves it. I do not have any complaints. I wish there were transportation services for when I cannot take my child to school, but the benefits of HTT far outweigh my lack of transportation at times.”

Three caregivers expressed that services could be improved with extended hours of operation, clarity and flexibility.

“I wish they would extend the hours of operation and drop off times. The overall care of the children is super. I love how they interact with the children and keep me updated and informed about my child’s progress.”

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“Clarity and flexibility. Clarity regarding pick up times. Good incident reports lately, but I have been concerned in past. So many times a week there were marks and no one told me about it. Flexibility about mandatory parent meetings and events. Sometimes bring it up last minute and I cannot make it. Sometimes my schedule conflicts. Other than that, it is a great school.”

\*\*\*

“Earlier drop off and not so hard on people being late, most are there for a crisis, it’s why they’re in the program. If you’re late your child can’t attend, but if you’re late for work, they don’t tell you not to come in.”

### ***Phase II Results: Qualitative Interviews***

Eight of ten invited parents completed the qualitative interview between May and October 2018. The purpose of this follow up qualitative interview was to obtain a deeper understanding of caregivers’ views of preschool attendance and follow up to better understand responses from the initial quantitative survey that was administered in December 2017 and January 2018.

#### **Why is Attendance Important to Caregivers?**

Since all caregivers indicated that attendance was extremely important in the initial quantitative survey (all rating it as a “5” on a 1-5 scale), one focus of the semi-structured interview was to better understand the reasons for this importance. Overall, three major themes emerged from the interviews, with one theme focusing on a perceived benefit of attendance and the other two reflecting ambivalence about consistent attendance. The primary benefit expressed was that their child would have a set schedule or routine with consistent attendance, while ambivalence was related to concerns about illness or becoming ill from being around other children and/or having disparate work hours (evening or weekends) from that of their child’s school and wanting to spend time with them when not at work. Of all parents, only one noted future educational preparation as an important reason for attendance, although parents clearly noted wanting their children to make educational gains at HTT when responding in the previous survey about their hopes for the services their child would receive. More details on the responses to this question are provided below.

A reason noted by four of five parents was the importance of a “set schedule for the days.” As one parent shared:

“When my child doesn’t go due to an appointment, it messes up his/her routine. We set up a routine and he/she loves it.”

Another parent shared:

“For every kid it makes it easier if they have a schedule and a routine they’re used to. They do learn while they’re there, and they have relationships and routines and schedules. That’s why it’s important. The most important thing for my child right now is letter recognition because he/she is pre-K.”

With regard to educational gains, a parent shared:

“...if he/she’s attending everyday she’s learning and she’s not missing out on anything. But if he/she misses a day, it kind of slows her down ‘cause I’ve heard that they have a curriculum they follow.”

Four of the caregivers shared some ambivalence about consistent attendance, with one parent sharing “I’m on both sides of the fence on this.” As noted above, there were two reasons for this ambivalence: 1) Not wanting to send their child when he/she is not feeling well or could become ill at school from other children, and 2) feeling conflicted about sending their child because they wanted to be with their children during school hours due to working nontypical 8-5 shifts. With regard to illness, one parent shared:

“There are illnesses that go around, like a stomach virus. Things keep spreading and I prefer for kids to stay home if they’re sick, but they don’t go home unless they have a fever. When my child gets sick it affects our whole family.”

Another caregiver shared, “No, it’s fine they want them to come every day. Although, sometimes, if I’m off [work], I don’t want to take my child so I can be with him/her.”

Yet another caregiver shared, “Being a single parent, I want to have more time with my child. I’m busy on Saturday and Sunday – I have to work – and I want to spend time with my child.”

As such, the ambivalence expressed about attendance was associated with maintaining the health of their child and family, and balancing their child’s school schedule with work and quality family time. One caregiver expressing such ambivalence also suggested that there were external reasons that attendance was important that did not have to do with their child, “From my understanding, this is how they get their money. If part of the grant, attendance is very important.

If it was regular, like elementary school, it would be important.” This also illustrates this caregivers’ perception that preschool or early childhood education may be less important than elementary school attendance.

### **Drop Off and Pick Up Times**

A few of the caregivers indicated that there was some confusion regarding drop off and pick up times, as well as a preference for earlier or later drop off times that corresponded with their work schedules. As such, one of the follow-up interview questions focused on learning more about these views. Three of the five parents shared that the drop off and pick up times were unclear, with one parent sharing:

“I was a little confused. When we fill out a paper you put your own pick up and drop off time. You fill it in, and we don’t talk about it.”

Another parent shared that the pickup and drop off times were clarified later, as they are stated in the monthly Newsletter. Yet another parent noted:

“I was given a time to drop and pick up that was different (8-4), and I didn’t know it could be 7-5:30. Maybe they were giving me a window?”

This suggests that verbally communicating drop off and pick up times at enrollment may be helpful.

Five of the eight parents shared a desire for extended school hours that work better with their work schedule. In particular, parents working in medical settings (10-12-hour shifts) or with fluctuating work schedules shared that it is more difficult for them to pursue or maintain employment and/or educational opportunities that do not fit with the hours of House of Tiny Treasures.

### **Mandatory Parent Meetings**

One of the questions from the initial survey asked parents whether there were any requirements at the House of Tiny Treasures that felt burdensome. In the first survey, six parents shared concerns – two related to the hours of operation, and four related to parent meetings. Given the frequency with which this response came up, a question in the follow-up interview specifically asked for caregivers’ views of the monthly required parent meeting. Three of the eight interviewed shared concerns that these meetings conflicted with work or were difficult to attend due to traffic. One parent suggested meetings may be more convenient on a Sunday.

Despite these challenges, most parents shared they are given plenty of notice, and that they find the meetings beneficial. Two parents offered suggestions for meeting topics or information for future parent meetings.

One parent suggested the parents at House of Tiny Treasures may benefit from a program called HIPPIE-TEACH with HISD, sharing “It might be good to have HISD teachers come to do the HIPPIE program. They could come to HTT and set up a table and enroll people for free. They also do fun activities.”

Another parent shared, “It would be helpful if there was a school fair to learn about schools the kids can transition to for kindergarten, and help the parents make good choices.... I suggest some topics like parenting, safety, discipline, mental health issues, and dealing with kids’ PTSD.”

### **Satisfaction with Services and Suggestions for Improvement**

#### ***What Were the Most Attractive and Least Attractive Aspects of House of Tiny Treasures Initially?***

Parents shared that the most attractive aspects of the House of Tiny treasures prior to enrollment, in comparison to other options, included transportation for their children to and from school, the unique focus of the school and specialized services, parent involvement, finding the site to be “nice and clean” and “warm, open...and a learning environment.” Parents shared the following:

“The set up and curriculum. The environment was warm, open and it was a learning environment.”

\*\*\*

“I had never heard of HTT. I didn’t know anything. It was the first time my [child] was going to school and I was nervous. I found a teacher I was comfortable with. Went in and was talking....by end of year he/she knew how to spell his/her name! They helped with everything I needed. I had no car, but they provided transportation. I was taking CNA classes and they gave me bus passes. I completed my CNA program when I was in transitional living, and now I have my own house! I live 25 minutes from the school, and I still take my child there in my own car because of the quality.”

\*\*\*

“It’s a clean place for the kids. I feel comfortable when I leave my kids here.”

\*\*\*

The only unattractive aspect of HTT noted by a parent when first accessing House of Tiny Treasures was “the hidden location.” Since the collection of this data, the location of the House of Tiny Treasures has changed.

***How Does House of Tiny Treasures Compare with Other Early Childhood Education Services You’ve Received?***

All eight parents shared that House of Tiny Treasures was the very best option they have for their children, and they have had better experiences with regard to feeling supported, having opportunities to learn for their children and feeling their child is safe. Each statement speaks for itself below:

“HTT has exceeded my expectations. My older child [not HTT] went to PreK and can’t compare what he knows to what my child [at HTT] knows. My child [at HTT] will memorize books because they are read at school, and my two kids are at the same reading level.”

\*\*\*

“It is way better. They are more involved one-on-one with the parents. They have speech therapy, and good activities in class like dance class, water activities and crafts.”

\*\*\*

“I like HTT better than the last place I utilized because of the set up. They actually teach. They have a way of having kids do yoga and dance. I like that. In other childcare centers, it is not offered.”

\*\*\*

“They seem very passionate and understanding compared to other day cares. If it were a different place, we would have been kicked out. They see the paperwork and don’t think I’m lazy and don’t want to get up. If my child is sick, they know I am taking care of my child and that I’m scared to lose him/her. They trust I know my kid.”

\*\*\*

“I tried to take him/her to another day care. [My child] called the other place “bad child care” because he/she likes HTT. He/she wants to be there.”

\*\*\*

“I like that they have cameras because I don’t just leave my child anywhere and if something was to happen they could look back at the cameras. I tried three other day cares and they didn’t

work out. One of them...you know, I came in and they left my baby on the changing table and walked out to attend to another child. And the other day care center...I saw a lady pinch a child on his arm and kind of made him sit down, so I took my child out.”

\*\*\*

“No, HTT is not like other places. I hear other stories of places where children are abused. When I’m at work I don’t have to worry about that. I can focus on my work. I love that they have cameras.”

On a follow up probing question, one parent shared:

“Other day cares are nothing like HTT. The teachers [at other places] are usually young and have attitudes, and the kids cry when you go there. I expect my child to cry for a bit, but every day it should get better. At HTT, I saw children soothed when you left, and things are different now. My child doesn’t cry anymore. My child has dance classes and different teachers that sit with him/her. There is a lot of help around the holidays. During Christmas they treat you like a family unit. There are gifts not just for your kid [at HTT], but all of your kids.”

One of the parents also shared the following about her experiences with House of Tiny Treasures compared to other early childhood settings, “From my experience it’s different because they’re actually learning versus some daycares where it’s just playtime all day every day...and at the last day care she was at, they just watched TV and played. I didn’t really like that. I wanted her to learn.”

### ***What Would You Recommend to Improve House of Tiny Treasures?***

Seven of eight parents provided recommendations for improving House of Tiny Treasures. Three parents indicated that extending the hours to accommodate varied working and school schedules would make a big difference since they both plan to work non-traditional hours due to new employment. Two parents also suggested that they would love to see a Spanish class added to the curriculum, and to perhaps hire additional child care staff that speak Spanish. Another parent shared that it would be very helpful if House of Tiny Treasures helped “...parents learn about next steps and prepare parents for their child to go to kindergarten. I want to know more about options. I want someone to sell my child a dream. There are so many schools in the Ward, but I want to send my child to the best one. Most women at HTT are from a transitional facility, so they don’t know about schools. We need more information.”

One caregiver noted that HTT could improve by having less teacher turnover. She shared, “I don’t like that teachers change so much. My child gets used to someone and then people are

different. The teachers have a big impact on the students and I don't think they realize it.” Another parent shared they would like to see the teachers trained more on trauma and discipline so they can “discipline the children without having the parents pick them up. It makes things very difficult for me since I work and go to school.” Finally, one parent shared that the parent meetings should be opened up to include other non-nuclear family members who are consistently involved in their child's life. This parent was disappointed and “felt bad” because here she was informed that her non-nuclear family member, who was benefitting from these meetings, could not attend.

Other additional suggestions included making sure the front gate/door is locked and shut all of the time and getting a new transportation van for the children. One concern with the van included times when the air conditioner was not working and the children were hot, or the windows were down for this reason and it was raining. The other concern related to the reliability of the van, as sometimes it would break down and this would cause the parent to be late to school or miss school due to needing to watch her child or ride public transportation to get her child to school. One parent shared sending her child to school with a neighbor:

“Yeah. Sometimes I have to miss school. Yeah, I'm like...I talk to a neighbor. Please can you drop my child? And now you're like, what if something happened on the way? You know, you don't trust people like that. Something can happen...when the tiny treasures bus picks up our kids we feel more comfortable because we know they're going to get to school and get back home. No problem. If they go with the neighbor your heart is beating so hard.”

### ***What are the Best Parts of Your Experience at House of Tiny Treasures?***

Each response is provided in its entirety below. Responses emphasize the quality of the environment, preparation, staff, school, and the family involvement and support that is provided during the holidays and special events.

#### *How Much Their Child Has Grown/Quality of Services*

“The staff, the school, the readiness...HTT is always prepared. When they have meetings, they are always ready and have food and everything.”

\*\*\*

“The way they interact with the children and the activities they provide. The overall communication, and all of the yoga, dance and speech and play therapy programs. I enjoy the

program. It is a great program. Very beneficial. It prepares them for school where at a day care they just play.”

\*\*\*

“How much my child’s speech has grown from working with them at the school. My child really enjoys going to school. I also like how much they help during the holidays. It is a really great place.”

\*\*\*

“The case worker and the staff. The caseworker really helped me with the housing stuff.”

\*\*\*

“The staff are very sweet. They say good morning and listen, and don’t have an attitude.”

#### *Family Involvement and Events*

“The holidays – Easter and stuff. My family didn’t do anything for the holidays. We go and have fun. I wish they had more. They don’t leave out the other children – you can bring your whole family. For Christmas, it’s not just a few gifts, it’s a lot of gifts, so many that you don’t need to buy anything. They do a lot. I really like the events. I wish they would do something for Mother’s Day. They have us a gift for Mother’s Day, but I would have loved an event. The events are my favorite thing.”

\*\*\*

“They gave my child a gift on his/her birthday when I couldn’t. I want my child to have everything. They are passionate and understand my child. The holiday events – I don’t celebrate with my family, so it is nice to be able to celebrate, like part of a family. We also received so many nice things – clothes, shoes, and help when transitioning from homelessness.”

\*\*\*

“Um, the best parts is everything. Like when the kids start school, um the Christmas they get gifts for the kids, clothes, everything that the family needs. And they give it to everyone in the house, like all the kids. So that’s very helpful for me because sometimes you don’t have the money to buy gifts for the kids, clothes, and the best part is the food. They give them healthy food, breakfast and lunch. And then if they are a baby, you don’t have to worry about diapers. They provide that and it is a relief.”

\*\*\*

“It’s nice to have events to get to know the parents. It’s like a family here. We get to know each other more.”

## Description of Attendance Intervention/Attendance Trends

The attendance intervention began in August 2017 after recognizing that 93% of students had experienced chronic absenteeism after receiving the 2015-2016 evaluation report. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of school days during a school year (on average, more than 2 days per month). As shown below in Table 3, only 2 students had achieved a 90% attendance rate over the last two years, and both were in the 2015-2016 year. The average percentage of days attended across students has also decreased, as did those attending at least 80% of the time. In July 2017 alone, the average attendance rate across all students for the month was 66%, with only 20% (6 of 30) attending 90% or more classes for the month.

**Table 3. Attendance Trends Per Student Prior to Attendance Intervention**

	July 2015-Jun 2016	July 2016-June 2017
Average % of Days Attended Across Students	89%	82%
Median Days Attended Across Students	67%	70%
Total Attending 90% of Days or Above	2	0
Total Attending 80% of Days or Above	14	8

Starting in August 2017, this quality improvement initiative focused on implementing an attendance intervention (described below) and improving the tracking of attendance data over time.

### ***Attendance Intervention***

Until August 2017, the only organized program effort specifically focused on attendance was a banner that says, “Every day counts.” The intervention that was developed focused on the following program components.

*Improved Tracking of Attendance.* A spreadsheet was developed to track the percent of days attended per month for each child. Likewise, the on-site case manager began asking parents about the reasons for non-attendance and began documenting them.

*Parent/Family Engagement at Enrollment, Assessment and Ongoing.* The onsite case manager began engaging the parents in discussion about the importance of attendance at enrollment, assessment and throughout ongoing meetings. The case manager used Motivational Interviewing -strategies to engage parents in discussion about their expectancies and expectations about their child's education. Specifically, the case manager explored the caregivers' own experiences of school growing up, and their hopes and dreams for their child. The case manager also elicited the caregivers' expectations regarding communication and safety, and provided education about the services that would be provided. House of Tiny Treasures was described as a school, not a day care. The curriculum was also described, and it was emphasized that the purpose of early childhood education was to help to identify any developmental gaps and address them early. Parents were also informed about the research which has linked missing more than two days per month to less readiness for kindergarten among children who have previously experienced homelessness. The case manager was encouraged to reflect and elicit caregivers' views through the process using Motivational Interviewing. If there was a challenge or barrier with attendance, the case manager would engage the parent in problem solving around these barriers.

*Attendance Works Manual for Early Education Providers.* This manual provides guidance on how to establish good attendance habits among families to ensure that children can fully benefit from high-quality preschool programs and continue in these habits as they enter primary school. Guidance is provided in the areas of family engagement, children's engagement, and self-assessment. The manual comes with an "Early and Often Toolkit" that provides materials to promote family and child engagement, and implement attendance initiatives within a preschool setting (<http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/early-education-toolkit/>). Additional toolkit materials were utilized from the Chicago Office of Early Childhood Education (<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Supporting-Good-Improved-Attendance-with-Appendices-1-26-2-1.pdf>)

*Monthly Newsletter.* The monthly newsletter highlighted children with perfect attendance for the month.

*Attendance Certificate and Gift Card.* In early December 2017, caregivers whose children had achieved 90% or above attendance for any month from July 2017 forward received an attendance certificate and gift card for each month. Parents received gift cards ranging from \$20 to \$120. Eighteen of twenty-four parents (75%) received a certificate and at least one gift card. Staff who attended the event where these awards were given shared that parents were very surprised, expressed joy at being recognized, and that some reflected on what it meant to receive an award after rarely receiving positive recognition in their past. One parent shared, “I felt like I was losing steam, this feels like a way to keep going.”

*Training Teachers to Engage Parents/Families.* Teachers were trained to work on and reflect on the importance of greeting parents/families and keeping them engaged and updated. They were also trained to call the parents if the child is absent with a specific script.

*Engaging Students.* Teachers and staff highlighted upcoming special events and learning activities at school so students would be motivated to attend. Likewise, when children were absent, teachers and staff highlighted activities that were missed and communicated that the child was missed, valued and needed. It was hoped that these efforts would also lead children to communicate their desire to attend school with their parents, therefore increasing their actual attendance.

*Integration of Bringing Attendance Home Activities.*

It should be noted that the lead case manager resigned during the implementation of the intervention during the first Month of February. The new case manager was not hired until August 2018 (the new school year).

### ***Attendance Trends Over Time***

To improve measurement of attendance and efforts to improve attendance, a data collection and analysis process was initiated to analyze trends over time and changes from before and after the attendance intervention. The average days attended across all children at House of Tiny Treasures from November 2017 to May 2018 is graphed in the Figure 1 in a simple time-series design, with 9 months of observation before the intervention (baseline phase) and 9 months observation after the intervention (intervention phase). The wide perpendicular line/arrow shows where the attendance intervention began. The baseline mean (before the

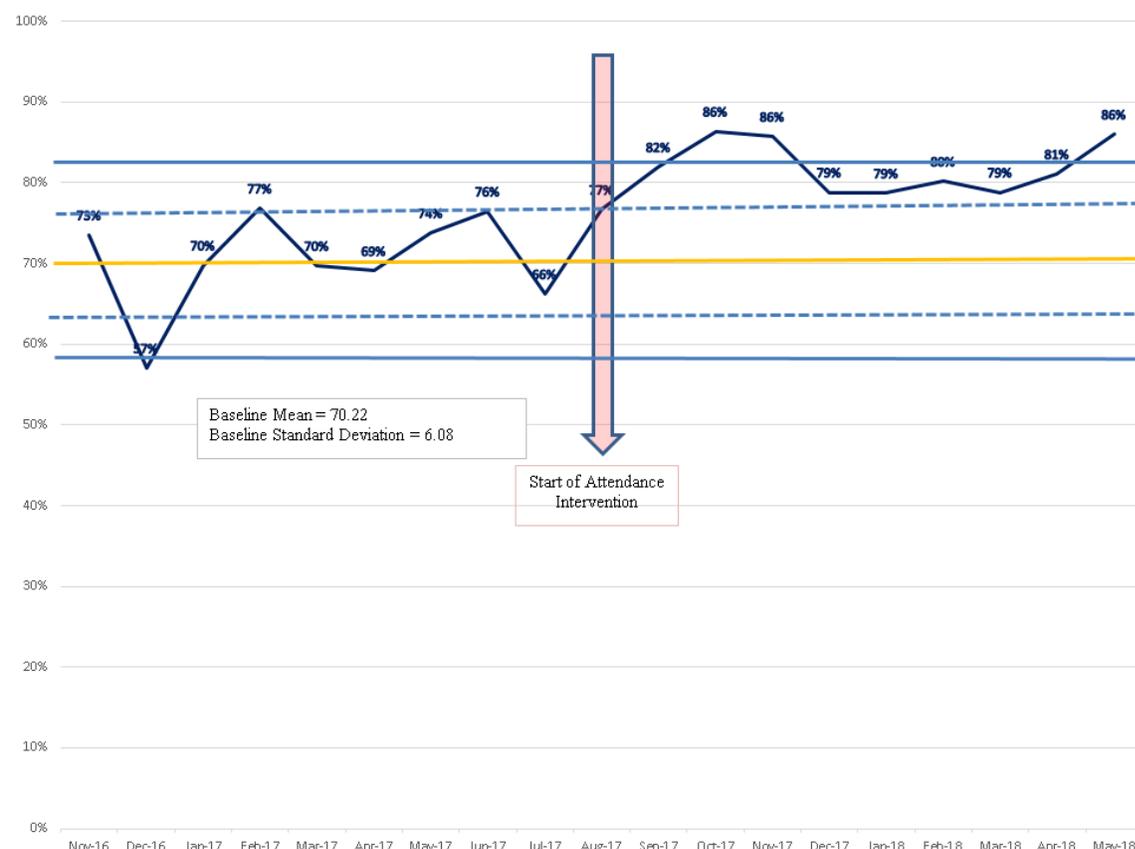
intervention started, from November 2016 to July 2017) was 70.22 ( $SD=6.08$ ). The dotted line represents one standard deviation outside the mean, and the solid blue line two standard deviations outside the mean. Visually, the trend supports the improvement of attendance after the attendance intervention was introduced. The presence of at least two consecutive intervention points outside the two standard deviation band suggests statistically significant improvement after the attendance intervention.

We also examined attendance trends by comparing the mean and median percentage of days attended across students, as well as how many children attended 90% of days on average or 80% of days on average throughout the year. The trends in Table 4 suggest that average attendance during 2017-2018 was slightly lower, but this may have been impacted by: 1) Hurricane Harvey, 2) and a child who was an outlier due to only attending 19% of the time during the one month enrolled. In this case, the median may be a better measure to compare. The median during the 2017-2018 year was higher than either of the two prior years and the number of students achieving 90% attendance or greater increased by 5 students in the last year, while those achieving 80% or better improved by 8.

**Table 4. Attendance Trends Per Student Prior to and After Attendance Intervention**

	July 2015-Jun 2016	July 2016-June 2017	July 2017- August 2018
Average % of Days Attended Across Students	89% ( $SD=18.9\%$ )	82% ( $SD=14\%$ )	71% ( $SD=20\%$ )
Median Days Attended Across Students	67%	70%	74%
Total Attending 90% of Days or Above	2	0	5
Total Attending 80% of Days or Above	14	8	16

**Figure 1. Average attendance at House of Tiny Treasures each month across all children from January 2017 to April 2018.**



## Discussion and Recommendations

Existing research suggests that consistent preschool attendance can improve future primary school achievement and attendance. The potential impact of preschool attendance is even more pronounced of among children in families experiencing homelessness or in transitional housing, as the structure, support, nutritious meals and education from a high quality preschool can also support self-regulation and positive physical and mental health outcomes as well as increase school readiness. These gains and benefits decrease when children are not attending regularly, or when there is chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of school days during a school year (on average, more than 2 days per

month). When SEARCH Homeless Services recognized that many of their families were experiencing chronic absenteeism, a quality improvement initiative was implemented.

One aspect of this quality improvement initiative included a mixed methods study to examine the caregivers' views of attendance, reasons for missing school, as well as any additional information that would be helpful in informing improved services to increase engagement. This study started with a survey of all caregivers served by House of Tiny Treasures. This survey identified the top two reasons that their children missed school, with illness as the top reason followed by transportation issues and weather (Hurricane Harvey occurred this year). Other reasons were only endorsed by two or fewer parents, and included the illness of the caregiver, conflicting work schedule with HTT hours, family related issues and other family related events. ***Despite some encouraging trends of improvement in attendance this year, most children continue to miss more than 20% of school days during the year. It may be useful to track the reasons for missed school attendance over time, and confirm if illness is indeed the most common reason for absences or if there are other similarly common reasons for missed attendance that could be addressed. This data may also highlight attendance issues that help elucidate reasons some families miss more days than others, and inform individualized approaches to increasing attendance.***

All caregivers indicated that attendance at HTT was extremely important when responding to the quantitative survey. The reasons for its importance were explored in a semi-structured interview with a randomly selected sample of caregivers who responded to the initial survey. Most caregivers shared the primary benefit was offering their child a set schedule or daily routine. Half of the caregivers did express ambivalence about bringing their child to school every day. The primary reasons parents were “on both sides of the fence on this” were wanting to keep their own child from contracting illness from other children and feeling conflicted about sending their child to school due to their own working hours falling outside of the regular 8-5 schedule and wanting more time with their child. ***Caregivers did not make the direct connection between the importance of preschool attendance and future academic success when asked about the importance of attendance.*** The top reason caregivers were seeking services at HTT was to receive child care services while working or searching for work, and this reason was selected by all respondents. This is not surprising, as most families served by HTT are seeking to

increase their financial stability. The next two top reasons, endorsed by more than half of caregivers, included the chance for their child or children to socialize with peers (64%) and receive pre-school education (57%). While it is encouraging that more than half of parents indicated pre-school education was one of their top three reasons for enrolling their child in HTT this also means that over 40% did not enroll their child for this reason. ***It may be useful to consider making a clearer connection between the importance of preschool attendance and future academic success for caregivers of children who are not consistently attending, while also continuing to reinforce the message of the positive benefits of attendance among caregivers who are consistently bringing their children.***

A second aspect of this quality improvement initiative included a new attendance intervention. After the implementation of this intervention, the median attendance of students increased in comparison to the last two years and 5 additional students attended above 90% threshold compared to the prior year. In addition, analysis of the attendance data utilizing a simple time-series design demonstrated both a visual and significant improvement in the trend of attendance data when comparing the nine months prior to the intervention to the nine months after. ***These data suggest that these efforts to improve attendance using a multifaceted intervention are promising. However, there continues to be room for improvement. It is recommended that efforts are made to assess whether these attendance interventions are impacting all students equally and whether more intensive, individualized or classroom specific interventions may be beneficial for improving attendance across a larger number of students.***

Caregivers also provided feedback regarding their experiences at HTT, and all caregivers were very satisfied with the services their children were receiving as illustrated by the many positive comments shared in this report. Overall, caregivers expressed feeling grateful their children were in a safe, reliable, and nurturing learning environment. Many caregivers contrasted their experience at HTT with other child care options, and noted that they appreciate the opportunity their children have to learn and experience enrichment opportunities, such as dance and crafts. Caregivers also expressed enjoying the family events, and the gifts and supplies they are given throughout the year for their families and children. ***Despite overwhelmingly positive responses, some caregivers made suggestions to improve services. These include: 1) extended***

*hours for parents who work longer shifts, 2) adding a Spanish class for children and childcare staff who speak Spanish, 3) helping parents prepare for kindergarten and selection of a school, 4) minimizing childcare staff turnover, 5) ensuring the front gate/door is always locked, and 6) increasing the reliability of transportation by the HTT van.*

## **References**

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## Appendix A: Quantitative Survey Questionnaire

### SEARCH HOUSE OF TINY TREASURES

#### FAMILY SURVEY

Fall 2017

Family ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS:** Please respond to each question below, and return your answers in the Drop Box at HTT with your signed consent form. Your responses will be kept completely confidential from HTT staff and will only be reported in summary with other parents' responses. The **incentive gift card** will be provided after we receive both your completed consent form and survey.

#### BASIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. How many children do you have enrolled at the House of Tiny Treasures (HTT)? \_\_\_\_\_

For each child, please list their date of birth below:

Child 1: Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Child 2: Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Child 3: Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Child 4: Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Child 5: Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

2. How many people live in your current residence? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many siblings does your enrolled child (or children) have that are not enrolled at House of Tiny Treasures and living in the home? \_\_\_\_\_

If applicable, please list ages here: \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many adults are working in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Are you currently employed? (Please select the option that best describes you)

Yes – A Permanent Position

Yes – A Temporary Position

Yes – A Seasonal Position

No

I don't know

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

If employed, how many hours a week do you typically work? \_\_\_\_\_

If employed, which hours (shift) do you typically work? \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you currently attending school (GED or College)?

- Yes – Full time GED  
 Yes - Full time College  
 Yes - Part time GED  
 Yes - Part time College  
 No

2. **If there are other adults in your household**, please indicate your relationship to them, their current employment status and hours worked below. Please list information for up to 3 adults. If this does not apply, please skip to the section on Transportation (question #8).

**ADULT #1:**

Relationship:  Husband/Partner  Boyfriend/Girlfriend  Your Sibling  Your Parent  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Employment status:

- Yes – A Permanent Position  
 Yes – A Temporary Position  
 Yes – A Seasonal Position  
 No  
 I don't know  
 Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours (shift) typically worked: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this adult currently attending school (GED or College)?

- Yes – Full time GED  
 Yes - Full time College  
 Yes - Part time GED  
 Yes - Part time College  
 No

**ADULT #2:**

Relationship:  Husband/Partner  Boyfriend/Girlfriend  Your Sibling  Your Parent  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Employment status:

- Yes – A Permanent Position
- Yes – A Temporary Position
- Yes – A Seasonal Position
- No
- I don't know
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours (shift) typically worked: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this adult currently attending school (GED or College)?

- Yes – Full time GED
- Yes - Full time College
- Yes, - Part time GED
- Yes- Part time College
- No

**ADULT #3:**

Relationship:  Husband/Partner  Boyfriend/Girlfriend  Your Sibling  Your Parent  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Employment status:

- Yes – A Permanent Position
- Yes – A Temporary Position
- Yes – A Seasonal Position
- No
- I don't know
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours (shift) typically worked: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this adult currently attending school (GED or College)?

- Yes – Full time GED
- Yes - Full time College
- Yes, - Part time GED
- Yes- Part time College
- No

## TRANSPORTATION

1. Please indicate your primary type of transportation to House of Tiny Treasures:

- Car – Owned/Lease  
 Car – Family Member/Friend  
 Walk  
 Public Transportation (e.g., Light rail/Bus)  
 Other: (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

2. How long does it typically take you to get from where you currently live to House of Tiny Treasures in the morning? Check one answer below.

- Less than 5 minutes  
 More than 5 minutes, but less than 15 minutes  
 More than 15 minutes, but less than 30 minutes  
 More than 30 minutes, but less than 45 minutes  
 More than 45 minutes, but less than 60 minutes  
 More than 60 minutes

3. How convenient is the location of House of Tiny Treasures? (please circle your response)

- |                        |                       |                      |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1                      | 2                     | 3                    |
| Extremely Inconvenient | Moderately Convenient | Extremely Convenient |

11. Which preschool drop off and pick up times work best for your work or family schedule? Please select one answer below.

- 6:00 a.m. drop off with 5:00 p.m. pick up  
 6:30 a.m. drop off with 5:30 p.m. pick up

Please provide any feedback you have regarding drop off and pick up times/procedures:

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Please **check the 3 top reasons** you enrolled your child at House of Tiny Treasures below. Place a check by the 3 top reasons below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ My child will receive day care services while I work or search for work
- \_\_\_\_\_ My child is able to socialize with peers his/her own age
- \_\_\_\_\_ My child is able to receive Speech Therapy
- \_\_\_\_\_ My child is able to receive Art and/or Play Therapy
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cost
- \_\_\_\_\_ My child will receive pre-school education (or Pre-K)
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is close to where I live
- \_\_\_\_\_ The free transportation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other supports my child receives (e.g., backpacks, Christmas and Birthday presents)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Family involvement (e.g., Carnival, Easter Egg Hunt)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Case management services

11. How important is it to you that your child (or children) attends House of Tiny Treasures every day, except when sick?

**(please circle the number below that best reflects your response)**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Extremely Unimportant</b>	<b>Somewhat Unimportant</b>	<b>Moderately Important</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Extremely Important</b>

13. What are some of the reasons that your child has missed school at the House of Tiny Treasures?  
**(check all that apply)**

- My child has not missed any days of school/this doesn't apply.
- Illness of my enrolled child
- My illness
- The illness of a family member other than myself or child
- Vacation
- My work schedule conflicted with HTT Hours
- Difficulties transporting my child
- Shared custody with another parent that was not able to or did not want to bring our child
- Child was fearful of school
- Too difficult to get child to school on time
- Weather
- It was more convenient to keep my child home
- I was unhappy with the preschool
- Family-related reason – conflict in the home
- Family-related reason – other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

13. Of the reasons provided above, which were **the two most common** reasons for absences?  
**(check only the two reasons that are most common)**

- My child has not missed any days of school/this doesn't apply.
- Illness of my enrolled child
- My illness
- The illness of a family member other than myself or child
- Vacation
- My work schedule conflicted with HTT Hours
- Difficulties transporting my child
- Shared custody with another parent that was not able to or did not want to bring our child
- Child was fearful of school
- Too difficult to get child to school on time
- Weather
- It was more convenient to keep my child home
- I was unhappy with the preschool
- Family-related reason – conflict in the home
- Family-related reason – other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

14. How burdensome do you find the requirements (e.g., paperwork, parent meetings, home visits) of the House of Tiny Treasures program? **(please circle the number below that best reflects your response)**

1	2	3	4	5
<b>Completely Unburdensome</b>	<b>Somewhat Unburdensome</b>	<b>Moderately Burdensome</b>	<b>Somewhat Burdensome</b>	<b>Extremely Burdensome</b>

Please indicate what aspects of the program you find burdensome or difficult: \_\_\_\_\_

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13. How important is it that your child or children receive a preschool (Pre-K) education?

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Moderately Important	Somewhat Important	Extremely Important

In your own words, please indicate what you are hoping your child will get out of his/her experience at the House of Tiny Treasures:

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In your own words, please indicate any feedback or suggestions you have for the House of Tiny Treasures to improve services:

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**PLEASE RETURN THIS AND YOUR COMPLETED CONSENT FORM INOT THE  
DROP BOX AT HOUSE OF TINY TREASURES. THAN YOU!!!**

## Appendix B: Qualitative Semi-Structured Interview Questions

### Semi-Structured Interview

#### House of Tiny Treasures

**READ:** Thank you for taking the time to talk with me about your experiences with House of Tiny Treasures and your views about early-childhood education. You were randomly selected from a group of families that completed the questionnaire about your experiences with the HTT program and your needs and preferences for preschool education.

This interview will only take 30-45 minutes (probably closer to 30), and I will be asking you some open-ended questions about your experiences and views so that we can help the House of Tiny Treasures be as supportive to your family and other future families as possible. As noted earlier in the informed consent process, you can decide not to answer any question at any time, and participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. However, your honest responses are very valuable for helping to understand your views and needs. I will be the only person who is able to identify your individual responses, and all information collected from you and 9 other randomly selected individuals will be reported together (in the aggregate) without any identifying information.

Do you have any questions that I can answer? [answer questions]

If agree to proceed, will ask the following questions with follow-up probing as needed.

1. How did you come to learn about and select House of Tiny Treasures for your child?
  - a. What were the most attractive aspects of HTT when you decided to take your child or children here?
  - b. What were the least attractive aspects of HTT when you decided to take your child or children here?
2. Nearly all of the parents shared in the survey that they believed attendance at HTT was important. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
  - a. Why is attendance in this program important or unimportant? (probe)
3. How does HTT compare to other early childhood child care services you've received?
  - a. Are there certain kinds of services or care that you see that is different at HTT?
  - b. Has your experience been similar or different compared to other places?

4. Some of the parents shared that they were unclear about drop off/pick up times. Do you feel that these times are clear? Do they work for you? Do you have any feedback about these times and rules?
5. Some of the parents shared that mandatory parent meetings would sometimes conflict with their schedule or not be flexible with regard to time. What has been your experience or view point of these parent meetings?
6. Are there any specific challenges that you are dealing with that make bringing your child to HTT difficult, or that have made it difficult for you to bring your child in the past?
7. What would you recommend to improve the HTT program?
8. Given your experience with HTT, what are the best parts of your experience at HTT?  
[Probe]
  - a. Teachers
  - b. Site Location
  - c. NAEYC (National Accreditation for the Education of Young Children)
  - d. Speech/Art/Play Therapy
  - e. Case management services
  - f. Free transportation
  - g. Other supports (backpacks, Christmas, etc)
  - h. Day Care