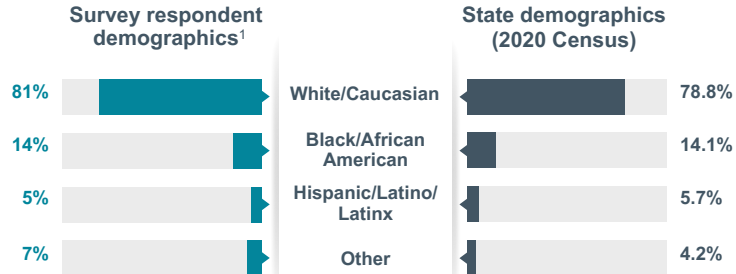
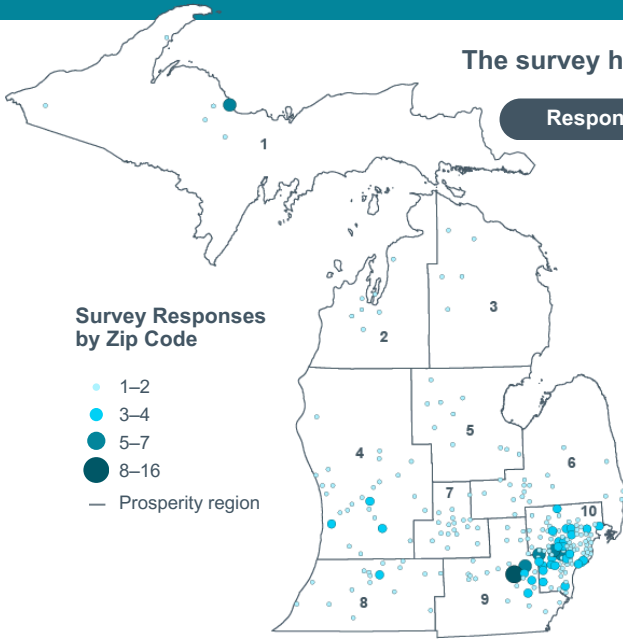


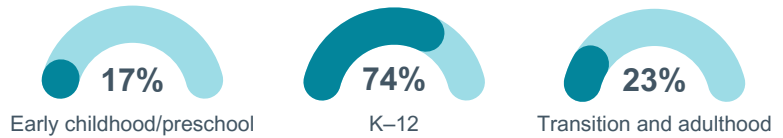
The Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM) was founded on the vision that people with autism will lead lives that meet their greatest potential. In 2023, AAoM fielded an unprecedented online survey to inform collective advocacy efforts to improve access and grow statewide opportunities for students with disabilities across the state.

The survey had **890** responses from across Michigan.

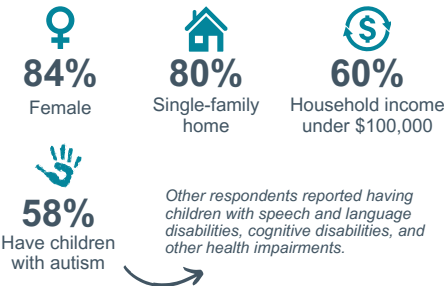
Respondents mirror Michigan's racial demographics:



Respondents included individuals with disabilities and parents of students with disabilities from various educational levels:



Respondent characteristics



### What Is Special Education?

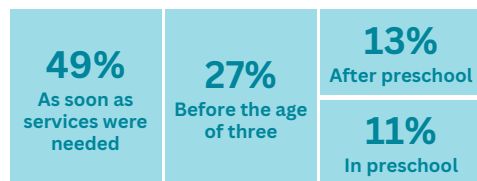
The system we refer to as "special education" is governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), enacted in 1975 and last reauthorized by Congress in 2004. Under IDEA, schools are obligated to provide a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to eligible students through an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or individualized education program (IEP). IEPs and IFSPs are legal documents outlining the services and supports a student needs. With tools like these, IDEA helps prepare eligible children with disabilities for further education, employment, and independent living.

## Establishing Special Education Services

### Identifying Disabilities

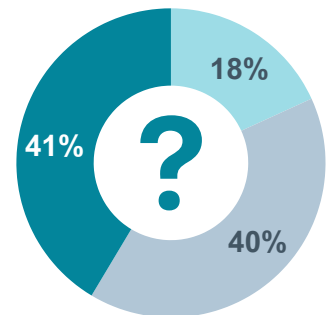
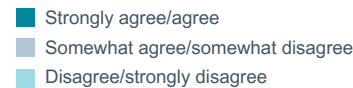
IDEA requires individual schools, intermediate school districts, and the Michigan Department of Education to identify and provide supports for those who may need special education services, which helps begin the process of implementing an IEP. Identifying disabilities early can help families access services that improve their child's outcomes.

When Disabilities Were Identified:



“Autism is often not understood well in schools. Too many kids are identified only by behavior, and many staff don't understand what drives behavior (sensory needs).” —Michigan parent

### My Student's IEP Goals Are Challenging and Appropriate



“Goals and expectations should remain high, even for students who struggle. The expectations we set, they will meet.” —Michigan parent

### Tailoring Goals and Supports

An IEP pinpoints students' unique needs, establishes challenging and appropriate goals, and documents the supports and services that the school district will provide to help the student reach these objectives. **Less than half of respondents with autistic children (41%) felt that the goals outlined in their IEP were challenging and appropriate.**

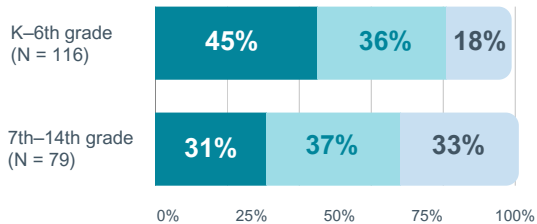
<sup>1</sup> Survey demographic questions were optional.

# Services and Supports

## Implementing with Fidelity

IFSP or IEP implementation includes offering the agreed-upon services at the correct frequency and duration with the appropriate professional or service provider in the agreed-upon location.

### The School Is Implementing the IEP as Written



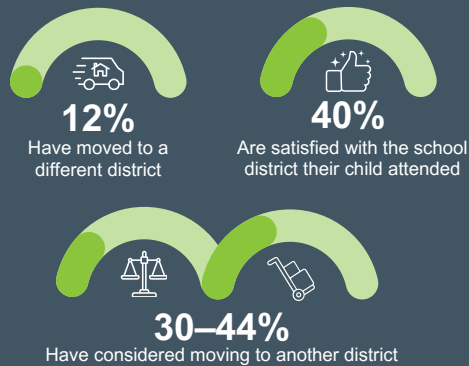
■ Strongly agree/agree    ■ Somewhat agree/somewhat disagree    ■ Disagree/strongly disagree

“Various teachers have tried their best to help, but everyone is always overwhelmed and the ones who suffer are the special needs students who can't express themselves to state their needs.” —Michigan parent

## Service Impact on School Experience

Families' satisfaction with the school influences their choice of whether or not to move to another district for better education, services, and support. **Respondents' three most common reasons for moving or considering moving to other districts were: student well-being, dislike of school experience, and lack of understanding for their child's disability.**

### Among Preschool and K-12 Respondents:



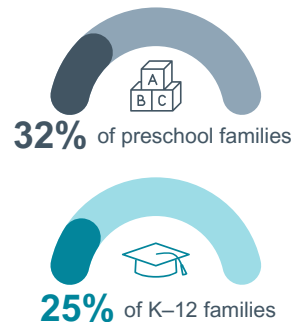
## Satisfaction with Services

As children progressed in age and school setting, **satisfaction with service quality decreased** and respondents **felt their children were receiving fewer services than needed.**

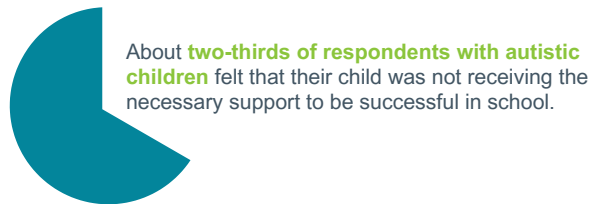
## Service Provision

Respondents with children of all ages listed three main services insufficiently provided in their children's IFSP or IEP: **social skills/peer intervention, applied behavior analysis, and sensory integration therapy.**

Felt that paraprofessional support was needed but unavailable:



“The consequences of not getting adequate services is life threatening for minorities . . . if the right tools and skills are not available when molding [my children]. I feel like our mistakes can render them 'useless.'” —Michigan parent

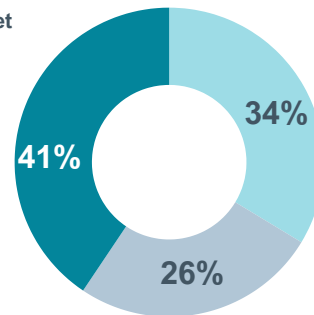


## Pursuing Private Services

When families do not have access to the services they need in school, many turn to private service provision. **Speech therapy, occupational therapy, and applied behavior analysis** were the three main services respondents were pursuing privately regardless of their child's age (occupational therapy often encompasses sensory needs and social skills).

### Respondent Out-of-pocket Expenditures for Private Services Per Year

■ \$0-\$4,999    ■ \$5,000-\$9,999    ■ >\$10,000



Note: Items may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

“We were fortunate to be able to help him with school but made sacrifices personally and professionally to ensure our child continued to make progress. Some areas of need were unable to be addressed because of school closure. Some areas of need were not addressed, even when it became feasible to do so.” —Michigan parent

To learn more about Autism Alliance of Michigan or to get involved, go to: [autismallianceofmichigan.org/education-initiatives/](http://autismallianceofmichigan.org/education-initiatives/) or

**SCAN THIS CODE FOR MORE INFO**

