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Mental Health Services Among Children Involved in Child Welfare: Identifying Parental Views and Barriers to Accessing Services

Katrina Ohmann-Thai

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Purpose & Significance

- In the child welfare field there is an growing need for mental health support for children. This need is due to exposure to or victimization of abuse and neglect. On average only 15-25% of children identified as needing services are actually participating in some type of mental health support. This may be due to the many barriers that exist when seeking mental health support.
- This research project surveyed parents in Independent School District (ISD) 196 regarding potential mental health services offered through the School-Linked Mental Health Services grant. Information was collected through a survey of parents from two schools within the district; Parkview and Cedar Park Elementary.

Methodology

- A needs assessment was conducted using an electronic survey. The survey was developed by completing a literature review and collaborating with Parkview and Cedar Park Elementary school social workers, Clinical Director of FACTS therapeutic agency, and MNSU Faculty Advisor.
- The survey was distributed via email to all parents with children enrolled at Parkview & Cedar Park Elementary.
- Total recruitment count was 727 participants.
- The survey included 12 questions.
- The questions identified:
 - History of mental health services
 - Participants' interest in future supportive services
 - Specific barriers to accessing services
 - Views on school involvement in mental health support

Limitations

- Specific data for target population of child welfare recipients was not captured within the results.
- Lower response rate from Cedar Park possibly due to:
 - One data collection method used which limited some parents from participating
 - Lack of internet/not checking emails regularly
 - Language barriers

Key Findings

Response Rates:

Parkview's response rate was 143 out of 500 = 29%

Cedar Park's response rate was 37 out of 227 = 16%

- Results showed a substantial interest in future services from both schools with 75% interest, despite that more than half of the participants had never accessed mental health services for their children in the past.
- Parents' perceived barriers to accessing services:
 - Employment-unable to take off work
 - Unsure what services to access
 - Lack of appointments
 - High cost of co-pay/deductible
- School involvement in mental health support:
 - Parkview results showed 73% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with schools being involved in mental health support
 - 60% of the Cedar Park respondents either agreed or strongly agreed

Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by child's grade level.

School	K	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
Parkview	28	35	42	33	35	22
Cedar Park	7	9	9	5	9	8

Figure 2. Specific concerns that parents identified about their child.

Symptoms & Behaviors

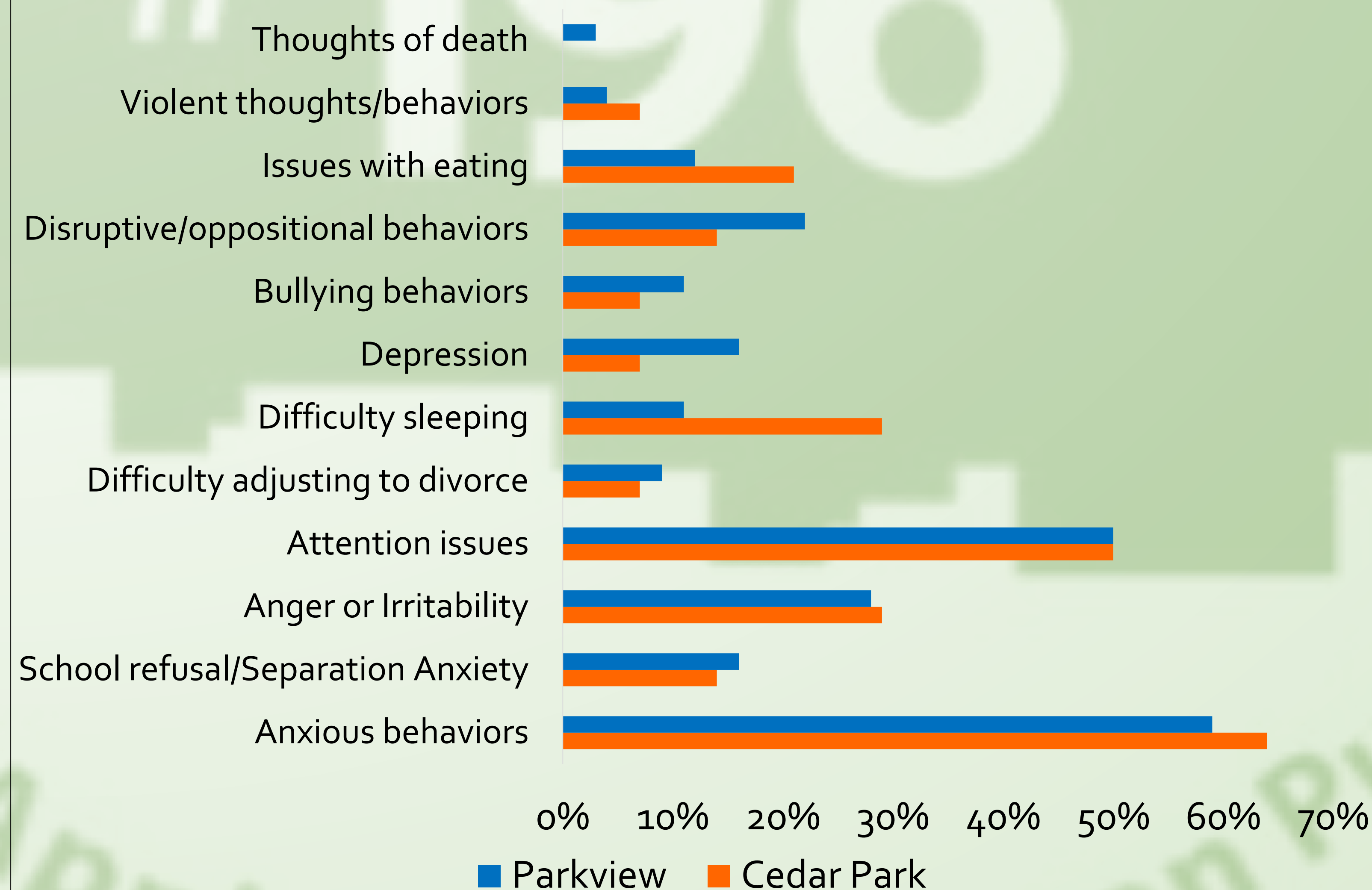
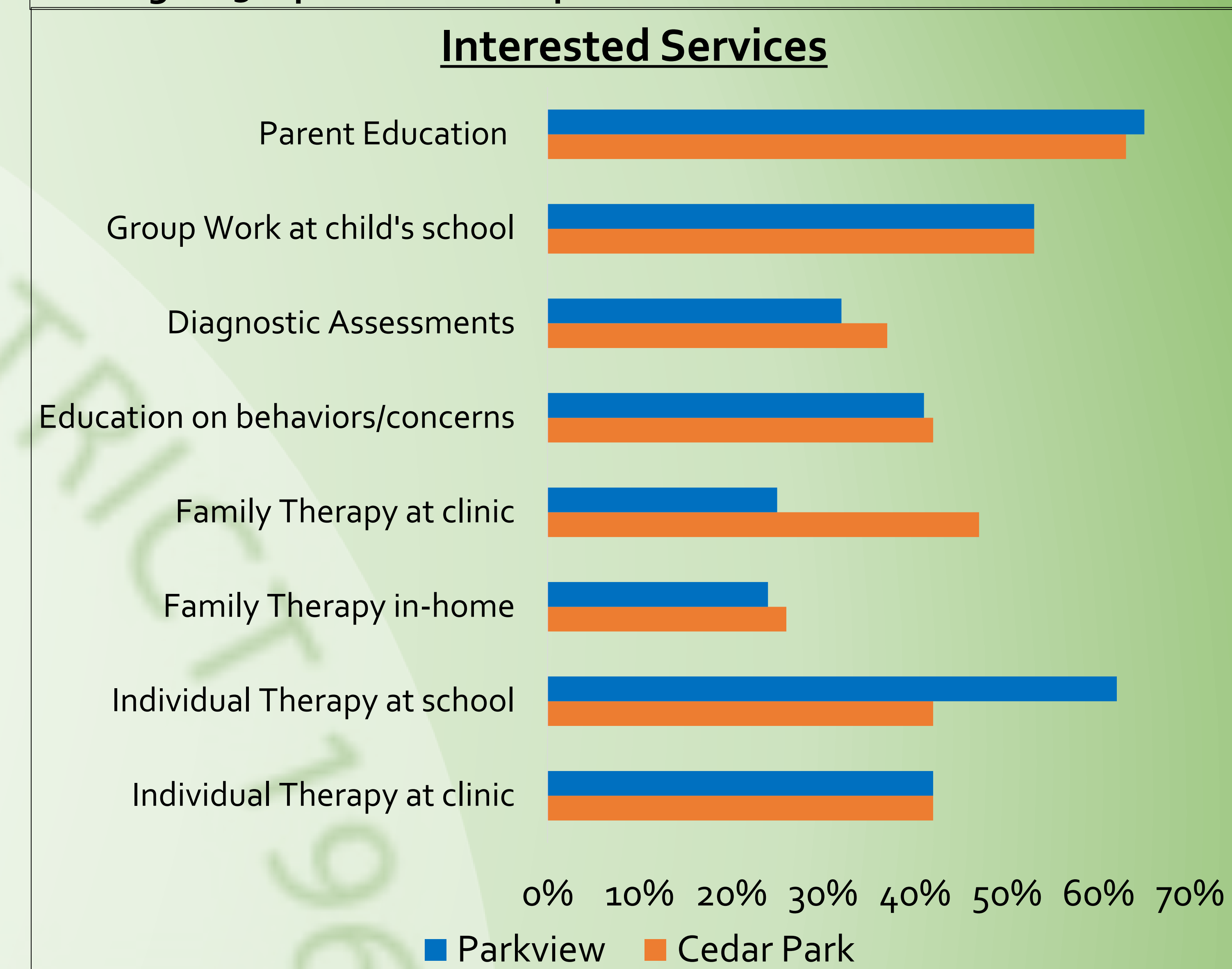


Figure 3. Specific services parents indicated an interested for.



Recommendations

- That ISD 196 utilize the survey tool with other schools within the district to collect individual data.
- To train referring district staff on the SLMHS grant.
- To engage participants, each school should invite parents to meetings which include a FACTS staff member to ensure that parents fully understand the intention of the grant, services offered, financial details, availability, and individual school policies.
- Provide parent education evenings at each school throughout the year.

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Agency: Independent School District 196

Field Instructors:

Renea Bethke, MSW, LICSW, Parkview Elementary

Diane Johnson, BSW, Cedar Park Elementary

Academic Advisor: David Beimers, PhD, LISW

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