

Feedback from DULCE Parent Advisors

This document summarizes key themes from discussions with DULCE parent advisors on February 11, 2026 and March 14, 2024. The quotes are from 7 parent advisors representing 5 different DULCE sites.

Parents described feeling a power imbalance between them and the pediatrician, that they do not feel with the family specialist. They expressed the importance of seeming like a competent parent and a concern about being judged as a parent by the pediatrician if they are struggling in any aspect of their life.

- “I want my pediatrician to respect my opinion, essentially, for the sake of my child, and I wouldn’t want to jeopardize that by potentially making myself look less than highly competent and qualified as a parent.”
- “I remember having postpartum anxiety right after I had [my first child] and lying to my OBGYN and even pediatrician on the PPD screening survey because I was embarrassed and wanted to seem ‘normal’ to them.” “[My family specialist] just made me feel like it was okay and like it was normal and that I could call her, ask her any questions.”
- “I was anxious and a little bit hidden with having just the pediatrician there. So I was glad when [family specialist] would walk in because I felt a little bit more comfortable to say what was on my mind, like, I have a concern or something.”

Parents also recognize the time constraints pediatricians have to spend with parents. While none of them mentioned feeling rushed in appointments, they did not feel comfortable taking time from the pediatricians to get all their parenting questions or anxieties addressed. They felt the family specialist was more accessible and felt more comfortable asking them questions.

- “It’s a little intimidating to ask your child’s pediatrician all the questions you might have. I didn’t really feel comfortable talking her ear off about sleep issues, so having someone that feels like an expert, but is a little bit more accessible...is very unique and made a big difference for us.”
- “I really appreciated when I did have those questions that came up where I’m like ‘I wouldn’t bother my pediatrician with this’, but I really would like an expert’s opinion on this, then I have someone I could reach out to.”
- “Being a first time mom and having no idea what the hell I’m doing, it definitely helped knowing that [family specialist] knew what she was doing.”

Parents mentioned the importance of knowing that the family specialist was dedicated to getting them help if they had needs and their trust in the relationship with the family specialist.

- “When you’re filling out these surveys, there can be some questions about ‘where is this going? Who’s gonna read it?’ And having a family specialist that’s like a real person that you can just talk to. So the family specialist, who’s a human who can say, like, I’m here to help you, here’s how I can help you access resources, is so much more impactful than, like ‘fill out this piece of paper.’”
- “I consider my pediatrician the medical provider for my child, not the medical provider for me and so I shared with the family specialist because she was there, and because it was the most effective, efficient means of me accessing support.”
- “As a state, Vermonters can be very proud and we don’t like to ask for help, so using someone they trust to get help is really valuable.”
- “I would say one thing that I really like was that [family specialist] and myself were able to keep up the relationship that we have after [child] graduated. I’ll text her every once in a while. I’ll say ‘Hey, I need help with this, or what am I supposed to be doing here?’”
- “Our pediatricians are nice, and the nurses are nice, but I feel like [family specialist] was a friendly face who I would look forward to seeing. And the resources that she would give me were so helpful, and I wasn’t getting them anywhere else.”
- “I have a hard time asking for help. But [family specialist] made it very easy to ask for help if I needed it.”

Importance of DULCE

- “It’s one person who’s been getting to know the needs of the community. It’s really key.”
- “If you support these other social programs for Vermonters, and you’re looking at their cost relative to their output, look at what value Dulce is by comparison. It’s like a booster, you know? It’s like, you want to support food assistance, you want to support heating assistance, you want to support all of these sorts of assistance, but if you want those to be really effective, this... this program is going to intensify that efficacy.”
- “The family specialist is there to be even more broad and more general about your whole life as a parent and as a family and supporting this child.”
- “There are so many questions that come up with parenting (it never ends!) and so many touchpoints where support is appreciated and needed, and DULCE bridges those gaps!”

- “DULCE is *essential* support for new parents...even as a second time then a third time parent, I really appreciated and benefitted from DULCE support.”