



2001 FAMILY TIME REPORT

Executive Summary

It's time for families.

A statewide look at the attitudes and activities impacting the quality and quantity of family time in Washington



There are 365 days in a year, 24 hours in a day, and 60 minutes in an hour. That means in one year, people have to make decisions about how they will spend 525,600 minutes. In one month alone there are approximately 43,000 minutes to be allocated. And while this may seem like a large amount of time when we look at it on paper, most feel there's never enough time. We are busy people and we seem to have no problem filling every last minute of our life with activities. So how do we find time for the things that are important? How do we find time for family?

It has been said, "You will never find time for anything. If you want time you must make it." This is especially true for family time. It's easy to think that there will be time later, after work, after the chores are done, on the weekend, during the summer, but does the time ever come? Spending time together as a family is becoming increasingly rare and in order to have that time, parents must choose to make time.

This report is about the condition of family time here in Washington. Are parents making time for family or are they simply hoping to find time for family? What things are keeping parents from making the time? How much time do parents spend with their children and what activities do they engage in? And what about marriage? How does that factor into family time?

The indicators highlighted here give a snapshot of the current condition of family time in our state. They also show that the issue of family time reaches beyond the interaction of parents and children, but also includes the interaction between spouses. As these indicators are measured over time, they provide a measure of how we are doing in our pursuit to strengthen families.

1. A large number of parents (66%) agree with the idea that "to raise children properly, a parent must spend a lot of time with each child everyday." Close to half (45%) agree strongly. As research shows, quantity of time often affects quality of time.

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2. Fully three-quarters (75%) of Washington parents agree with the idea that “it is more important that a person spend quality time with a child than to spend a large amount of time with the child.” Half of parents (52%) strongly agree with this idea. The debate between quality time and quantity time has been widely discussed, and current research shows that parents are seeing the necessity for both.

3. In general, the more time children are able to spend with their parents, the better the outcomes for those children. Three-quarters of Washington parents (74%) feel that the quality of their life is also improved by spending time with their children. Forty-three percent of parents said having more time to spend with their children would improve the overall quality of their life a lot. When parents spend time with children both of them benefit.

4. A majority of Washington parents (75%) are currently married. This study and others continue to show that the marital status of parents impacts the quality and quantity of parent-child interaction. Furthermore, with so many parents being married, it is important to address the issue of marriage and spouse time when discussing the topic of family time. Just as parent-child interaction is important, parent-parent interaction is important as well and should not be overlooked in the discussion of family time.

5. As children get older, the types of activities they share with their parents change. But, according to findings from this study, the type of activities parents say they share with their children are very interactive. The most common parent-child activity among parents with children under 5 is “playing together” (59% of parents with children under 2 and 66% of parents with children ages 3-5 spend at least 15 minutes a day in this activity). Among parents with children ages 6-9, “reading together” is the most common parent-child activity (42% spend at least 15 minutes a day in this activity). Parents with children ages 10-13 report “eating meals” with their children everyday (36% spend at least 15 minutes in this activity). And finally, parents with teenagers report “just talking together” as the most common parent-child activity (40% spend at least 15 minutes in this activity).

6. Although a fair number of parents with teenagers report talking with their child for at least 15 minutes everyday, only 32 percent of all parents say they “spend 30 minutes or more at one time talking about things that the kids think are important.”

You can read Families Northwest's 2001 Family Time Report “It's Time for Families” in its entirety by going to www.familiesnorthwest.org.



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Families Northwest commissioned Barna Research Group, Ltd. of Ventura, California to conduct the research reported in this publication. Barna was responsible for survey design, data collection, tabulation and analysis. Questions about this study should be directed to Greg Magnoni, Director of Communications and Development at Families Northwest.

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