

Key Findings From the 2022 BEST Workforce Survey

The Birth through Eight Strategy for Tulsa (BEST) provides coordinated supports in the earliest years of children’s lives to help make Tulsa, Oklahoma, a good place for all children and families to live, grow, and thrive. By convening a diverse network of more than 50 community partners, BEST aims to develop a seamless multisector continuum of high-quality services for children from birth through age 8 and their families.

The American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) is conducting a multiyear study of BEST,¹ including annual workforce surveys of frontline staff and managers who work for BEST partners, to understand their experiences with delivering services to young children and families.² This brief summarizes the 2022 survey results compared with the 2020 and 2021 survey findings. Exhibit 1 illustrates the 2022 key findings. See page 2 for a detailed description of the findings.

Exhibit 1. 2022 BEST Workforce Survey Key Findings



¹ Information about the Birth through Eight Strategy for Tulsa (BEST) Study, including the study reports published to date, is available at best.airprojects.org. If you have questions about the BEST Study, contact Dr. Eboni Howard, project investigator/project director, at ehoward@air.org.

² In 2022, the survey was sent to 408 BEST frontline staff and managers within 43 BEST partner organizations. The survey response rate was 70% ($n = 287$). A total of 39% of respondents ($n = 112$) completed the survey in previous years; 24% of respondents ($n = 69$) completed the survey in all 3 years (2020, 2021, and 2022).



Frontline staff and their managers working in BEST partner organizations reflect a diverse, well-educated, and highly experienced workforce. In 2022, 78% of respondents had a bachelor’s degree or higher. Nearly half of respondents reported more than 10 years of experience in relevant fields. A total of 56% of the workforce survey respondents identified as Black, Indigenous, or people of color and 44% as White.



Staff working in BEST partner agencies reported that they enjoy their work and believe that they are making a meaningful contribution in their jobs. Nearly all staff reported that their work makes a meaningful contribution (98%). More than half (61%) of respondents indicated that their job was very stressful. In general, these trends are similar to those in past years.



Most staff reported making referrals as part of their jobs. The sectors that the most staff referred clients to were family support (69%), mental health (69%), health (68%), and housing assistance (67%). These also were the top referral sectors in 2021 and 2020.



About half of the staff who make referrals use “warm handoffs,” personally helping a client connect with a service provider. Survey responses in 2022 were very similar to those from 2021.



More than half of the BEST partner staff (65%) regularly communicated with staff in other agencies about shared clients. This is similar to responses in 2021 and a significant increase compared to 2020. Staff reported that the most common challenge to service coordination was lack of time.



Staff reported that conditions for children, families, and staff in Tulsa are improving. Most staff who completed the 2020, 2021, and 2022 survey reported that Tulsa is becoming a better place to work and raise children (see the chart that follows).

