



**Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services**  
**2018 Children with Special Needs Consumer Quality Assurance Survey**





Report prepared by:

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## ***Executive Summary***

At the request of and in cooperation with the Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), in 2019, **Neighborhood Analytics, LLC** analyzed the results of the 2018 wave of the ongoing Children with Special Needs (CSN) Consumer Quality Assurance Survey and compiled this report.

The CSN Consumer Quality Assurance survey is sent annually to the parents/guardians of every child who received services from the CSN unit within that calendar year (households that received services for >1 child receive one survey for each child). The survey seeks to measure satisfaction with several dimensions of case manager performance, perceptions of parent/guardian involvement, perceptions of outcomes, and preparedness for transition to adult services.

In 2018, 810 mail surveys were distributed; 149 completed surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 18%. By comparison, the response rates for the 2017 and 2016 waves were 17% and 24% respectively. The industry standard return rate for mailed paper surveys is ~10%.

Each survey question consists of a statement which respondents are asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with on a 5-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). For each question, the average response is presented, along with the overall distribution of responses across answer categories. Apples-to-apples comparisons across years (made possible by identical question wording across years) are also presented when possible. This wave included some changes to question wording designed to elicit more precise responses; these changes are clearly indicated in the body of the report and their impact is discussed.

## ***Major Findings***

- Aggregate satisfaction with multiple dimensions of case manager performance remains high and relatively stable over time.
- Average levels of satisfaction with program effectiveness continue to trend downward; fewer respondents are seeing improvements in day-to-day functioning, and fewer respondents see participation in programs as contributing to reaching their most important goals.
- Perceived self-involvement in service plan development/outcomes remains high, and has remained relatively stable across the past three waves.
- The proportion of respondents indicating that their child/family experienced severe health and/or safety concerns while waiting for services remains low.
- Families reporting having experienced concerns while waiting for services were more likely to say they were able to independently cope in 2018 when compared with 2017.
- Most respondents with children who were 17 as of July 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 said they are prepared for transition to adult services, and the vast majority strongly agreed that their case manager had assisted with preparation.

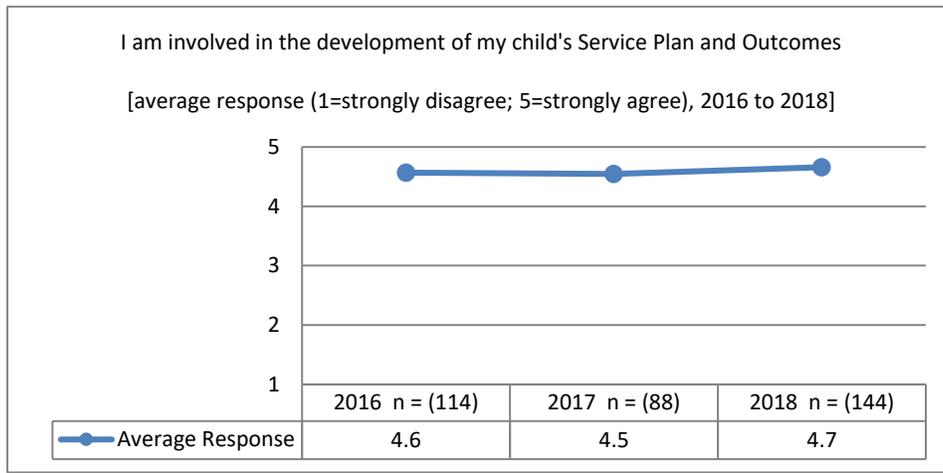
**Full Results**

The first question asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statement:

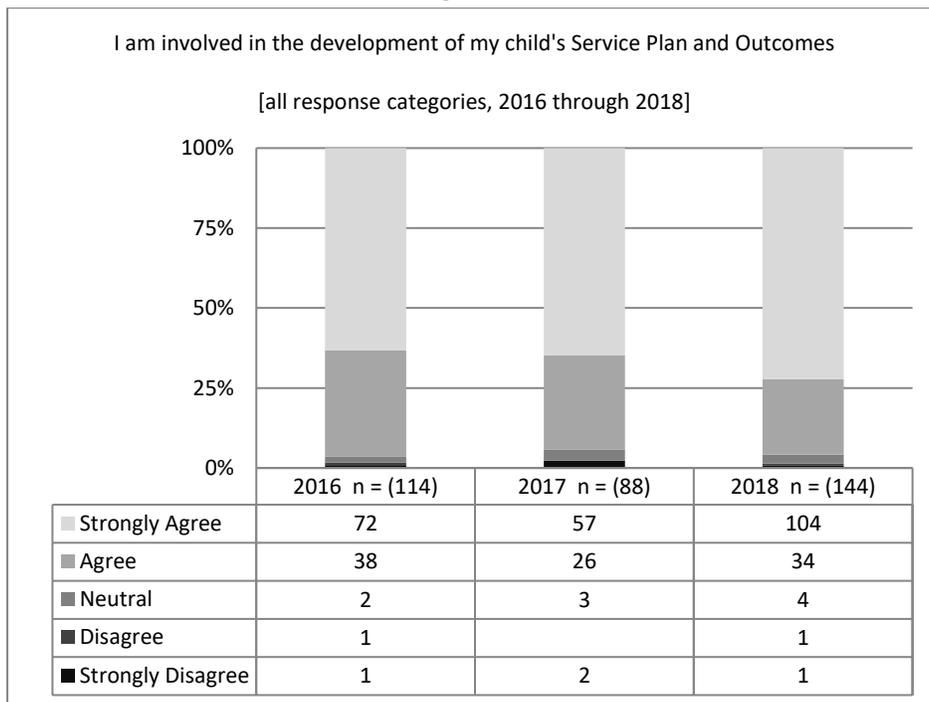
*“I am involved in the development of my child’s Service Plan and Outcomes.”*

Figure 1a shows that the average response (4.7) was closest to “strongly agree,” and that the average response to this question has remained stable over time. Figure 1b shows a slight increase in the proportion of respondents answering “strongly agree” over past years.

**Figure 1a**



**Figure 1b**

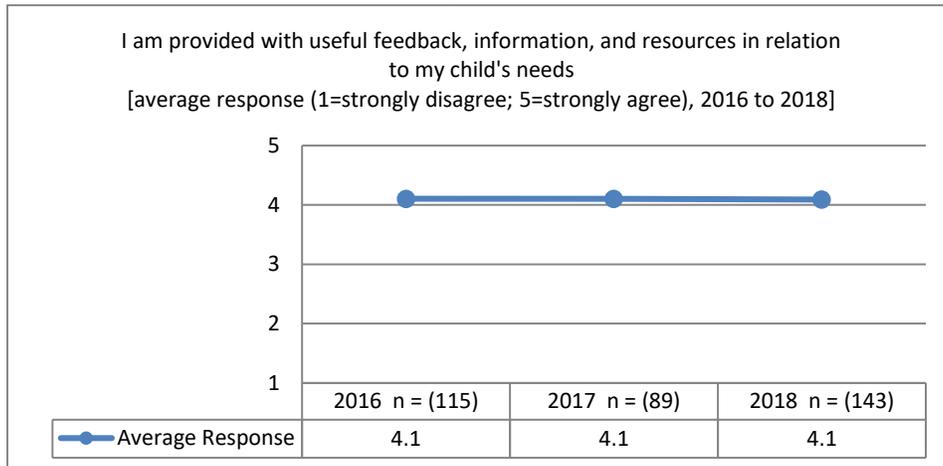


The second question asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statement:

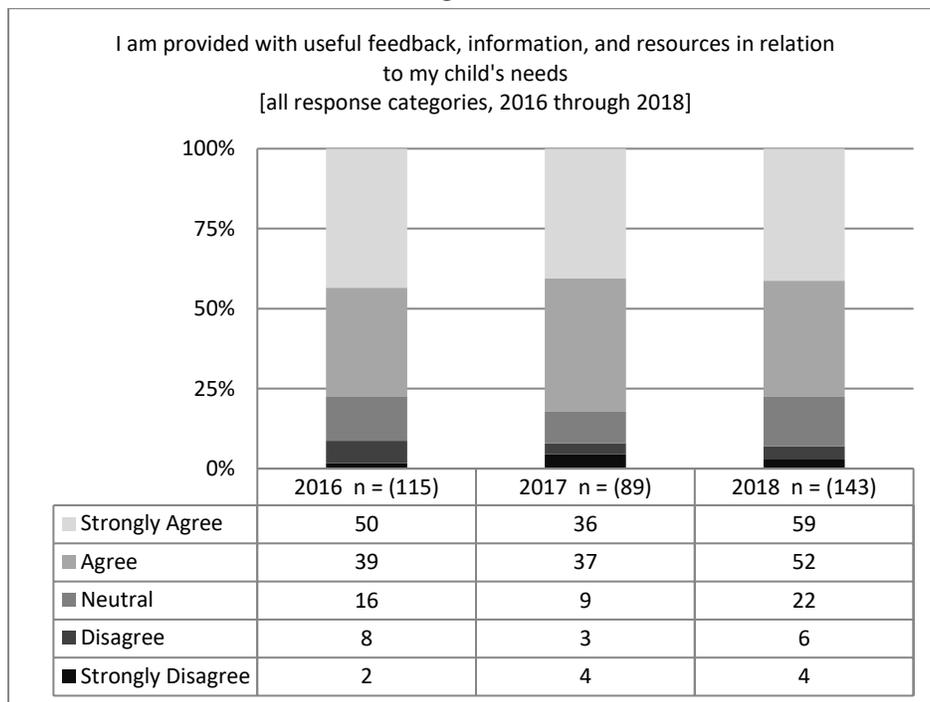
*“I am provided with useful feedback, information, and resources in relation to my child’s needs.”*

Figures 2a and 2b show that the average response (4.1) is closest to “agree”, and that both the average response and the overall distribution of responses have remained constant over the past three years.

**Figure 2a**



**Figure 2b**

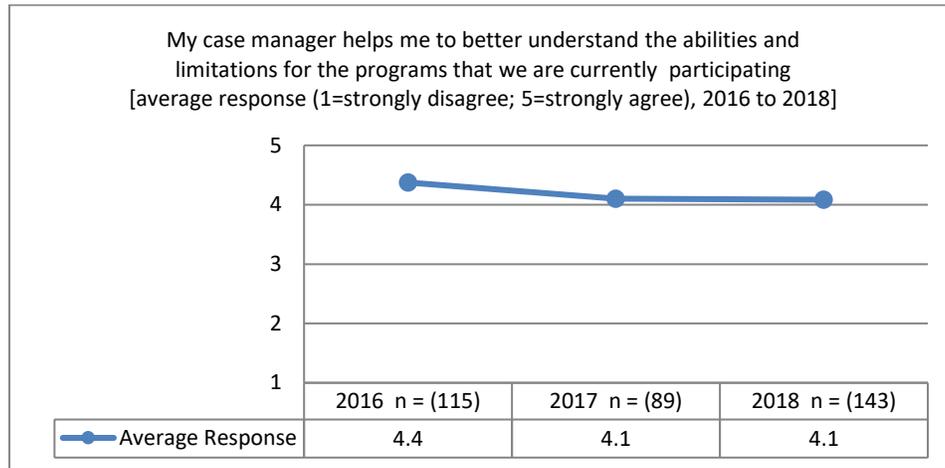


The third question asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statement:

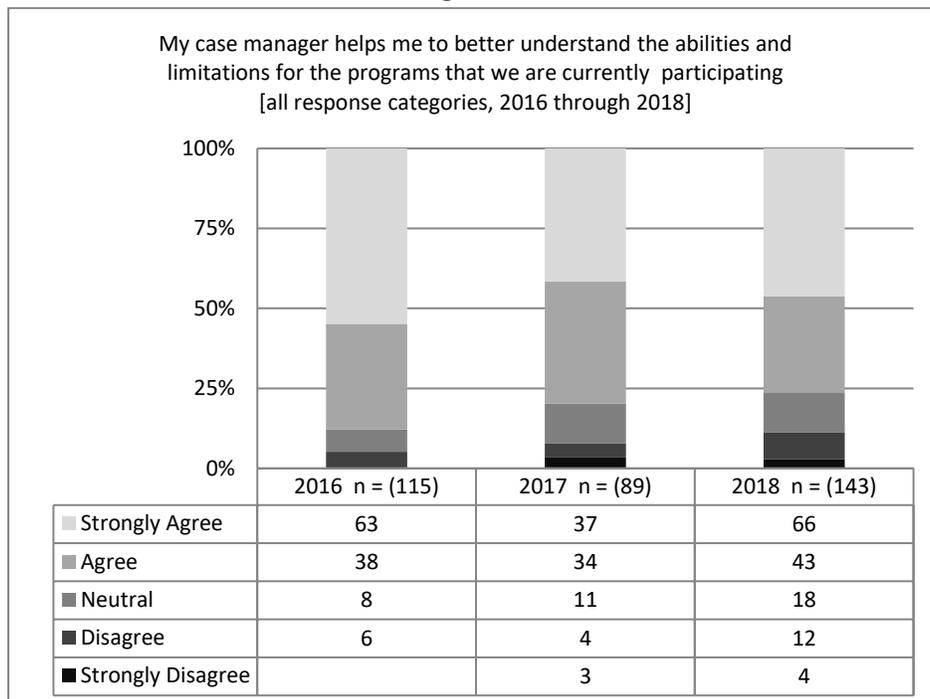
*“My case manager helps me to better understand the abilities and limitations for the programs that we are currently participating.”*

Figure 3a shows that the average response (4.1) is closest to “agree”, and that the average level of agreement has stabilized after dropping slightly between 2016 and 2017. Figure 3b shows slight polarization in the distribution of responses to this question when compared to last year; a small increase in the proportion of respondents answering “strongly agree” is offset by a similar increase in the proportion of respondents answering “disagree”.

**Figure 3a**



**Figure 3b**

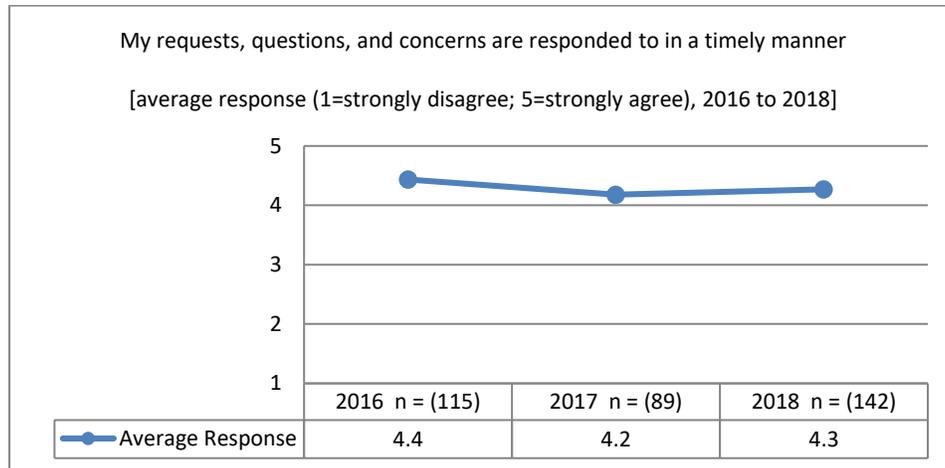


The fourth question asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statement:

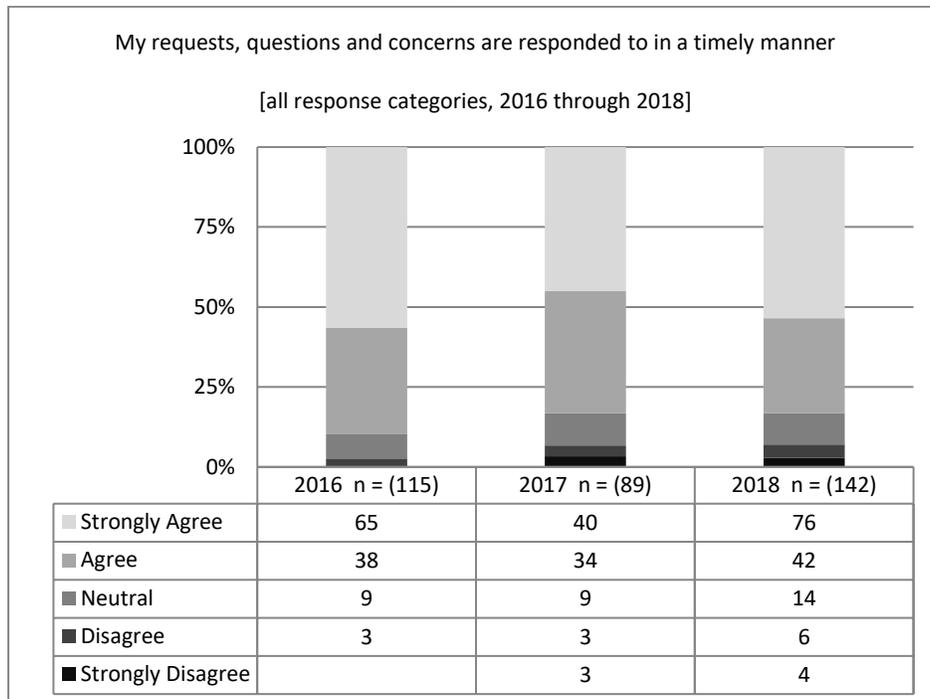
*“My requests, questions, and concerns are responded to in a timely manner.”*

Figure 4a shows that the average response (4.3) is closest to “agree”. The average level of agreement has remained largely stable over time. Figure 4b shows a very slight increase in the proportion of respondents answering “strongly agree”.

**Figure 4a**



**Figure 4b**

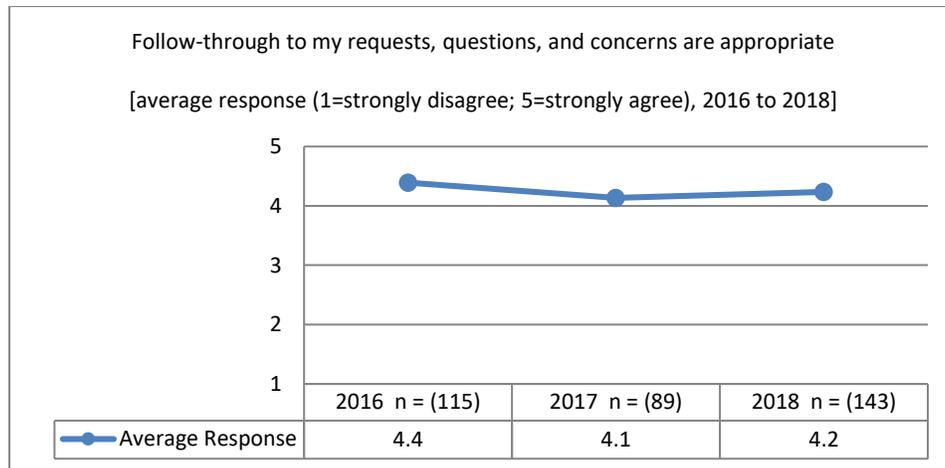


Question five asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statement:

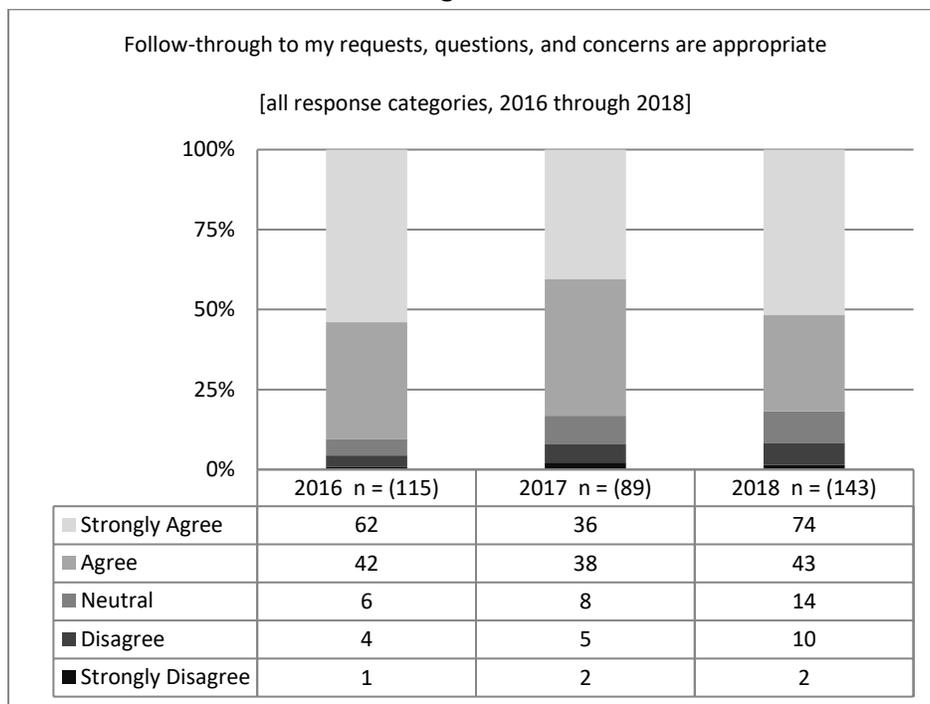
*“Follow-through to my requests, questions, and concerns are appropriate.”*

Figure 5a shows that the average response (4.2) is nearest to “agree”. After a slight decline between 2016 and 2017, the average response to this question has stabilized. Figure 5b shows a very slight increase in the proportion of respondents answering “strongly agree”.

**Figure 5a**



**Figure 5b**

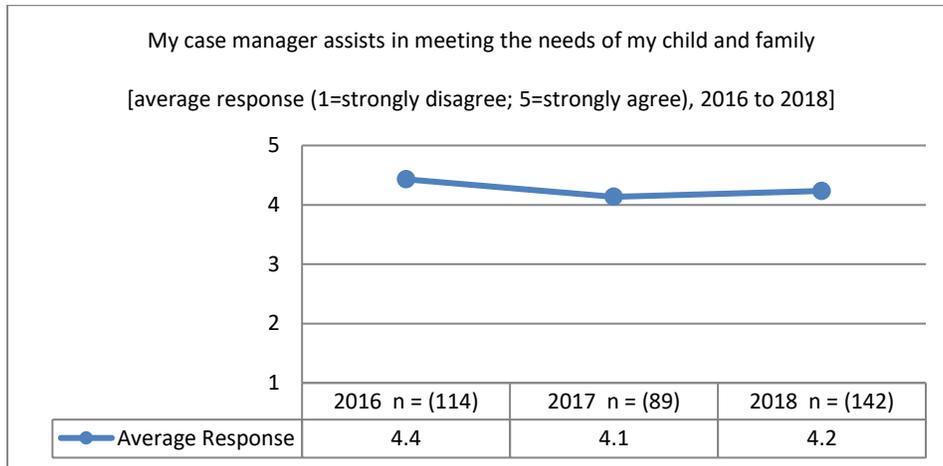


Question six asked respondents about their agreement or disagreement with the following statement:

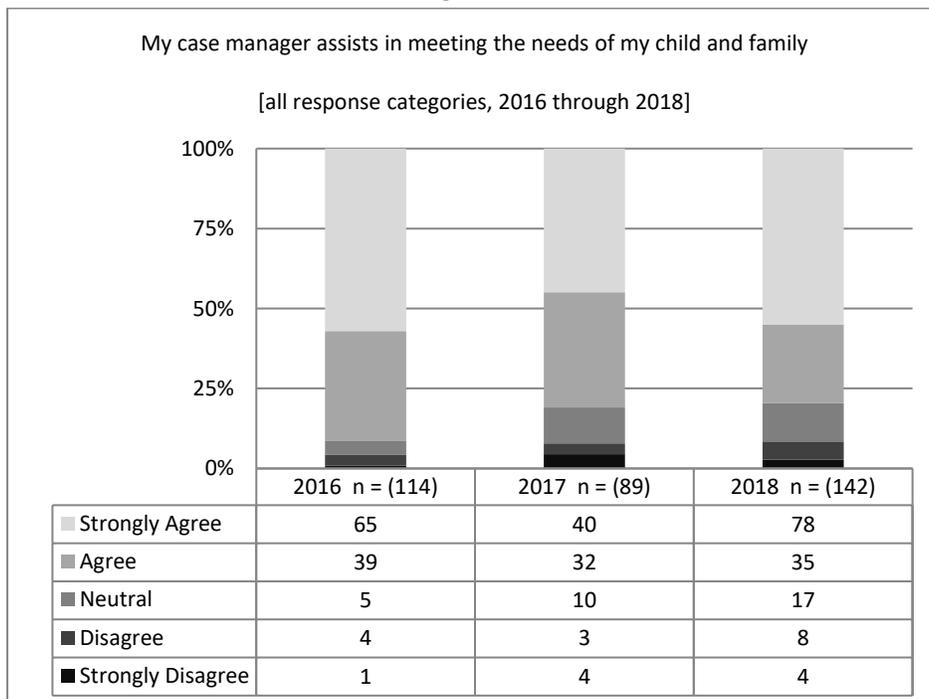
*“My case manager assists in meeting the needs of my child and family.”*

Figure 6a shows the average response (4.2) is closest to “agree”, and that the average level of agreement with this statement has stabilized after a slight dip between 2016 and 2017. Figure 6b shows an increase in the proportion of respondents answering “strongly agree” when compared with the previous year.

**Figure 6a**



**Figure 6b**

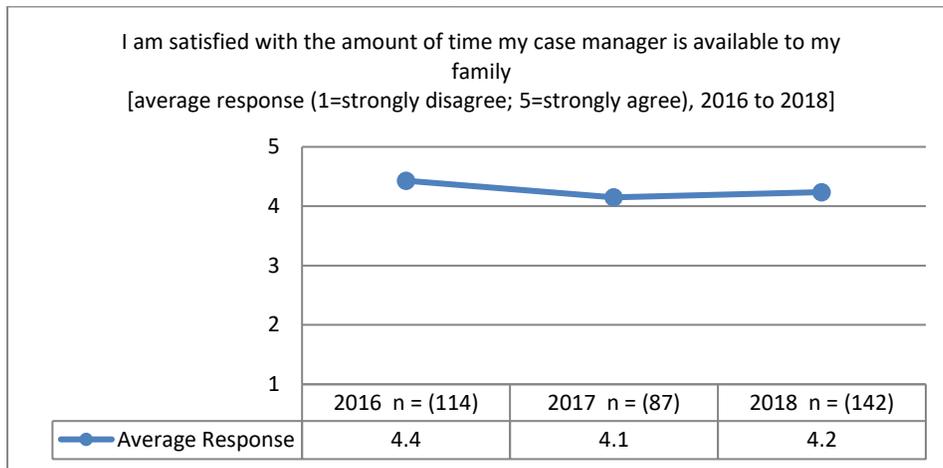


Question seven asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statement:

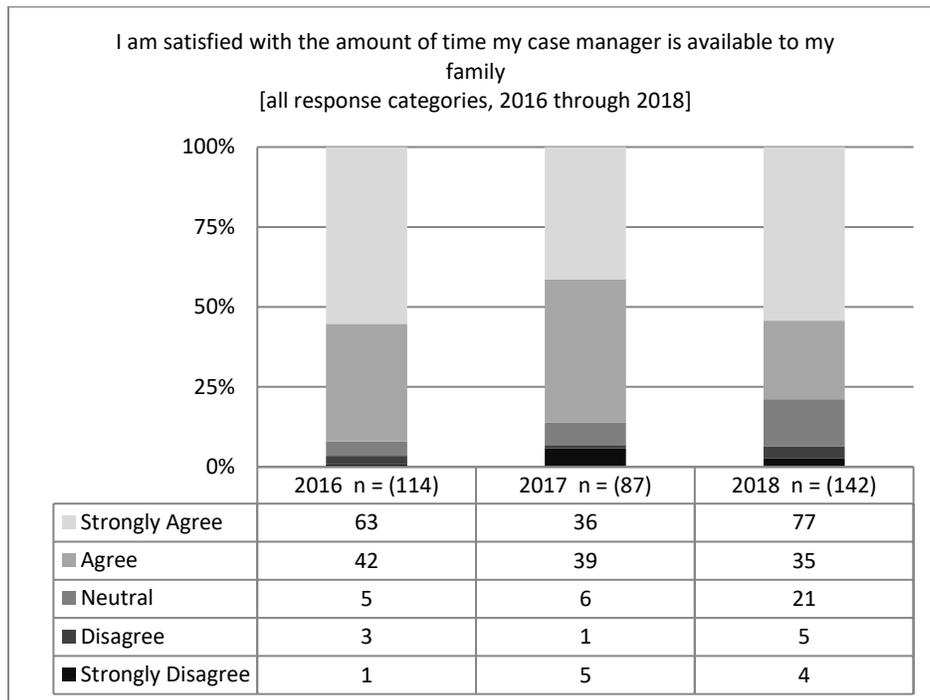
*“I am satisfied with the amount of time my case manager is available to my family.”*

Figure 7a shows that the average response (4.2) is closest to “agree”. Consistent with several of the other questions, the average response to this question has bounced back after a slight decrease between 2016 and 2017. Figure 7b shows increased polarization in the distribution of responses when compared to the past year, with an increase in the proportion of respondents answering “disagree” offset by a similar increase in the proportion of respondents answering “strongly agree”.

**Figure 7a**



**Figure 7b**

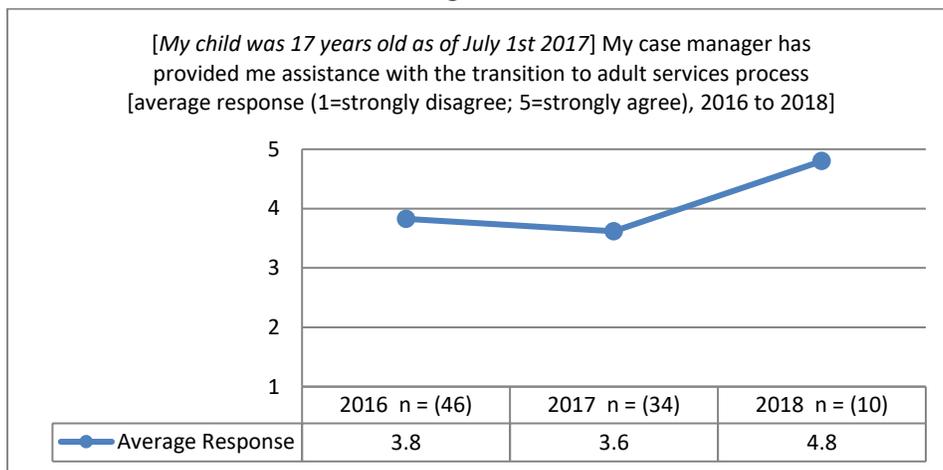


Question eight asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statement:

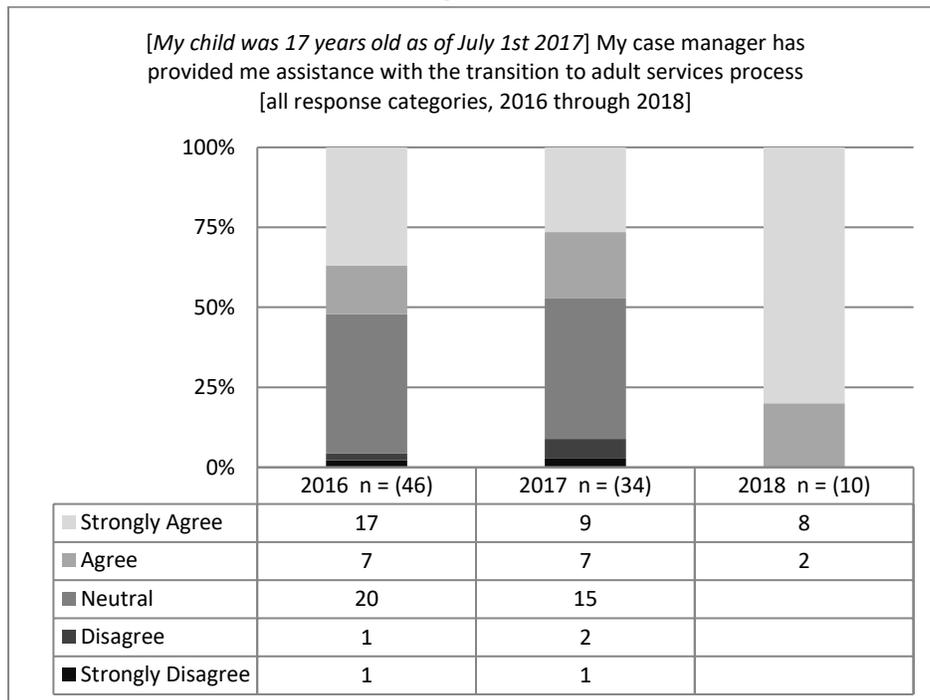
*“[My child was 17 years old as of July 1<sup>st</sup> 2017] My case manager has provided me assistance with the transition to adult services process.”*

Previous waves of this survey asked for responses from those whose “child is close to turning 18.” The change in question wording introduced this wave (asking from responses only from those whose child was 17 years old as of July 1<sup>st</sup> 2017) dramatically decreased the proportion of respondents who provided a response, from ~38% in 2017 down to ~7% in 2018. It is very likely that the striking positive changes to the average response and the overall distribution of responses shown in Figures 8a and 8b are due to a smaller and more objectively defined eligibility requirement for answering the question.

**Figure 8a**



**Figure 8b**

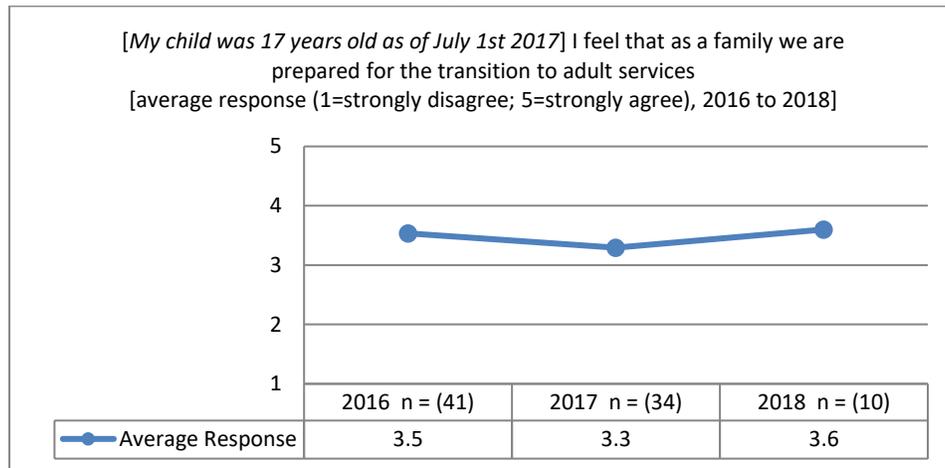


Question nine asked respondents to state agreement or disagreement with the following statement:

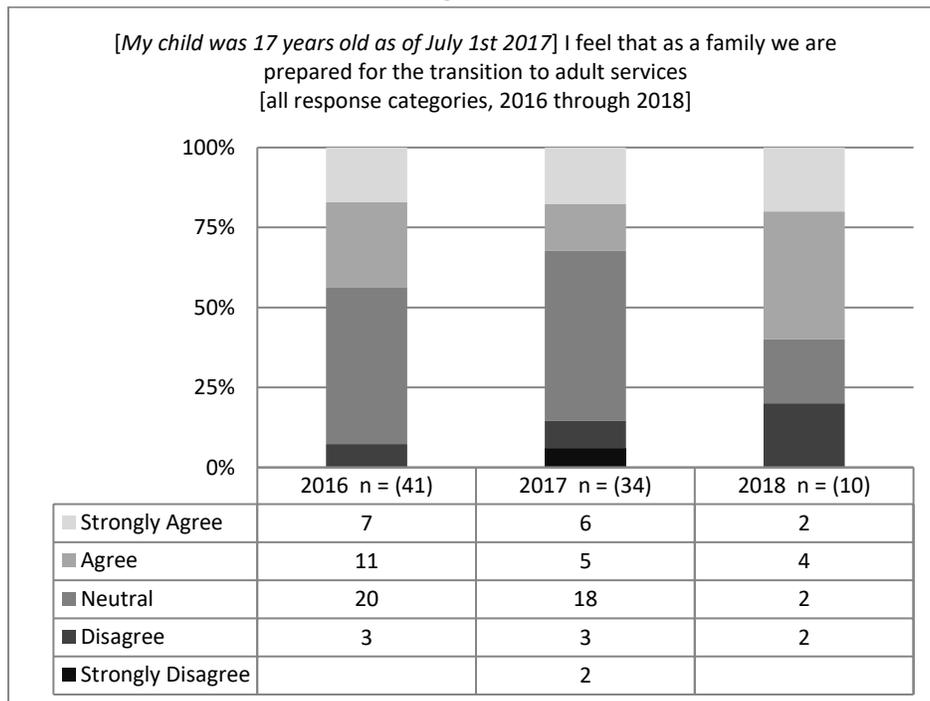
*“[My child was 17 years old as of July 1<sup>st</sup> 2017] I feel that as a family we are prepared for the transition to adult services.”*

Similar to the previous question, the eligibility requirement for providing a response to this question was tightened this wave. Additionally, the question was moved from the end of the survey to the middle. The resulting differences between this wave and the last in the average response and the distribution of responses displayed in Figures 9a and 9b are likely driven by these changes.

**Figure 9a**



**Figure 9b**



Question ten had two parts; the first asked respondents about their level of agreement with the following statement:

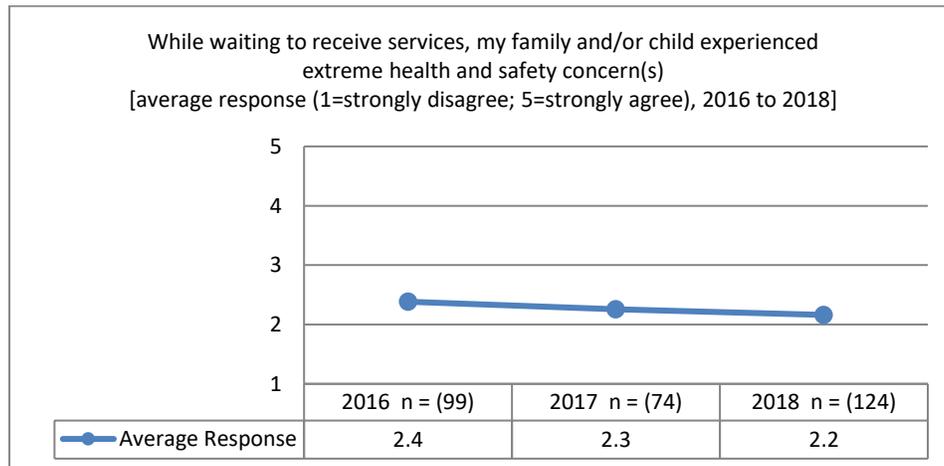
*“While waiting to receive services, my family and/or child experienced extreme health and safety concern(s).”*

Those who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” were asked to state their agreement with a follow-up statement:

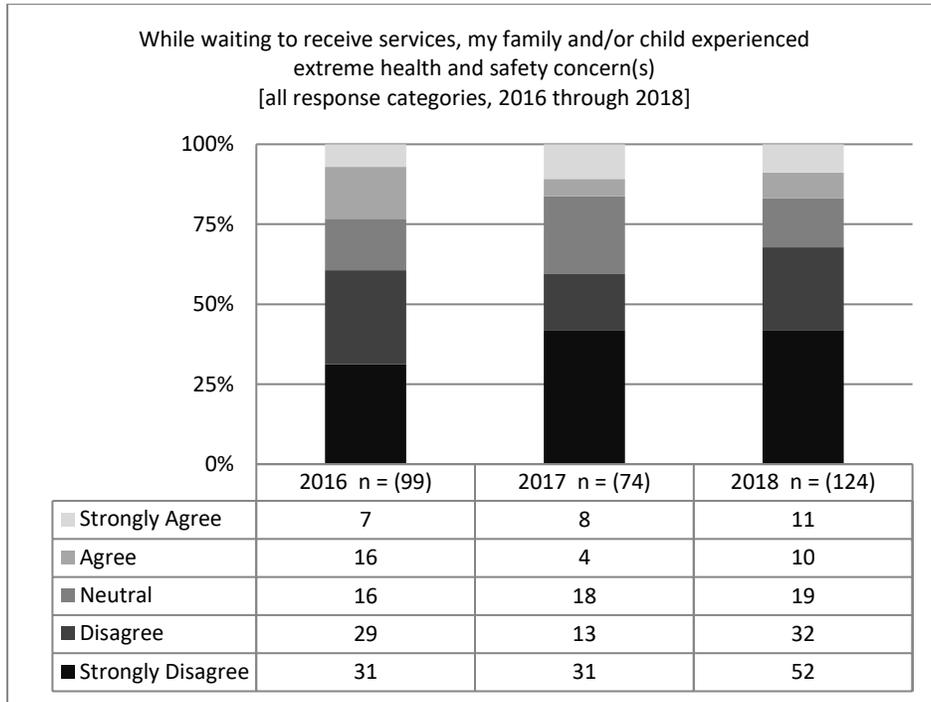
*“While waiting to receive services, my family was able to address the extreme health and safety concern(s).”*

Figure 10a shows a very slight downward trend in the average response to this question over the past three waves (down to 2.2 [closest to “disagree”] in 2018). Figure 10b shows that about 20% of respondents expressed some level of agreement with the assertion that they had to deal with extreme health and safety concerns while waiting to receive services, and that proportion has remained relatively stable over the past two waves. The continuing decrease in the average response has been driven by increasing certainty on the part of those who felt that their family had not experienced such concerns.

**Figure 10a**

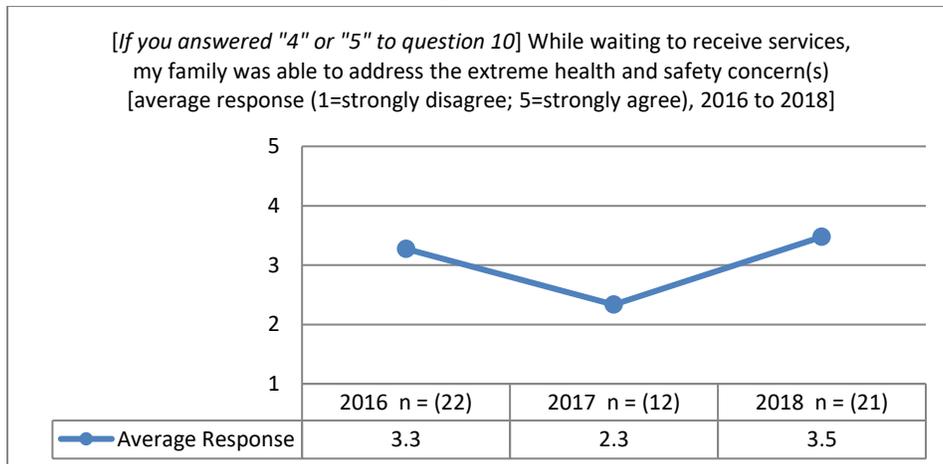


**Figure 10b**



Among those who experienced health and safety concerns while waiting for services, a higher proportion was able to independently address those concerns in 2018 when compared to 2017. Figure 10c shows that the average response improved from 2.3 (closest to “disagree”) in 2017 to 3.5 (closest to “agree”) in 2018. Figure 10d shows that the overall distribution of responses shifted dramatically in a positive direction between 2017 and 2018.

**Figure 10c**



**Figure 10d**

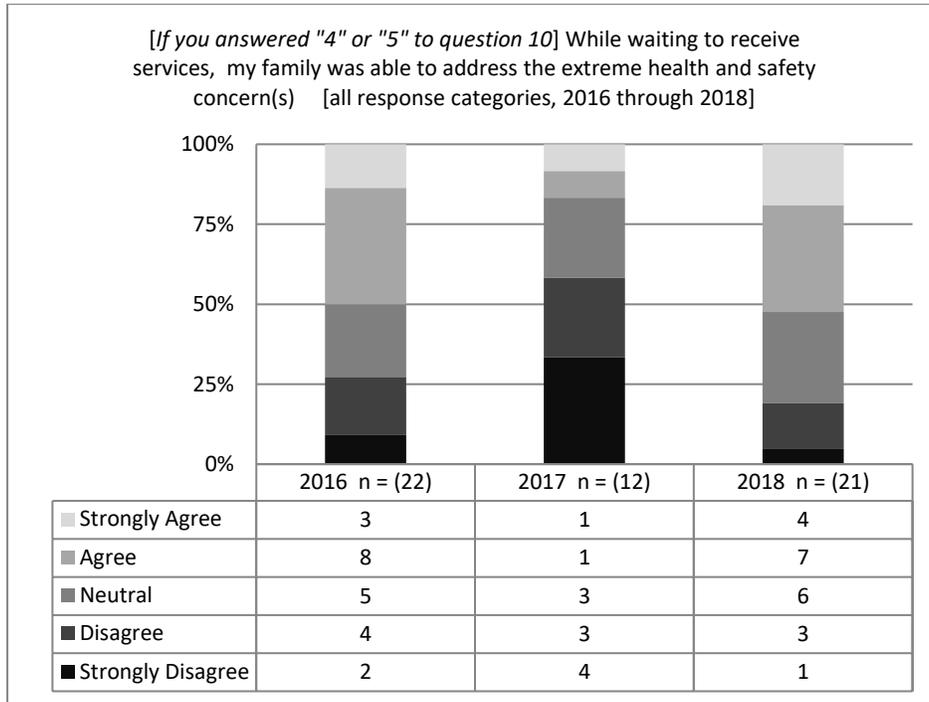
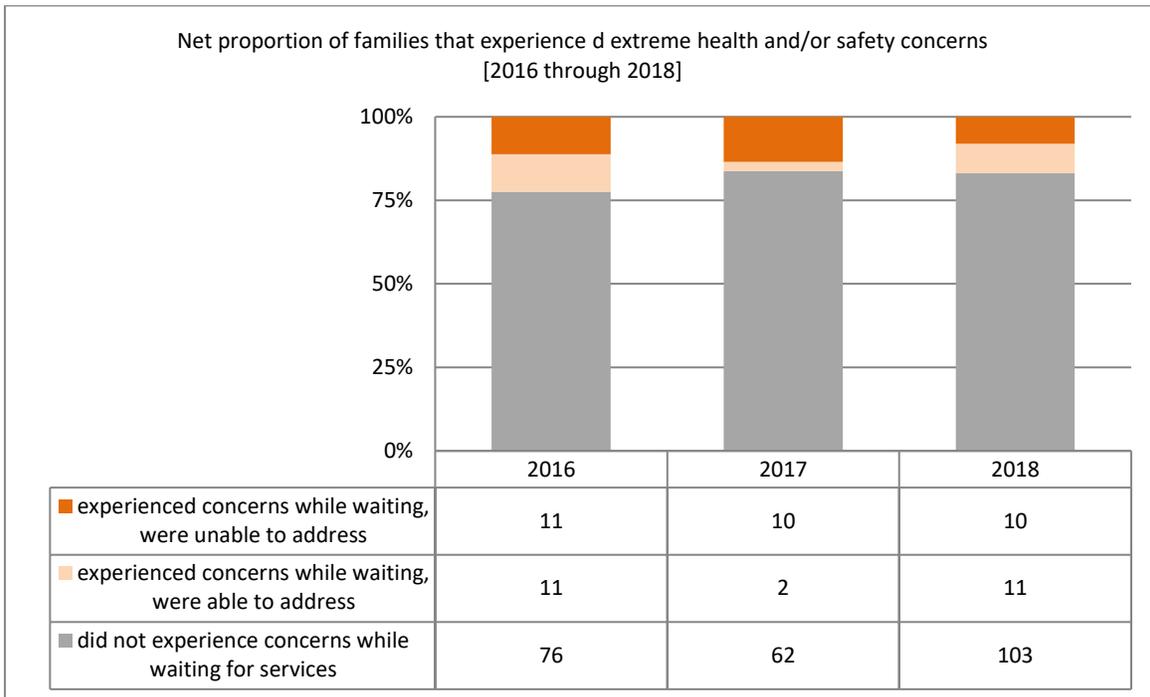


Figure 10e shows the complete picture; the proportion of respondents who agreed that they experienced significant concerns while waiting for services remained stable over the past two waves, but more of those families were able to cope in 2018.

**Figure 10e**

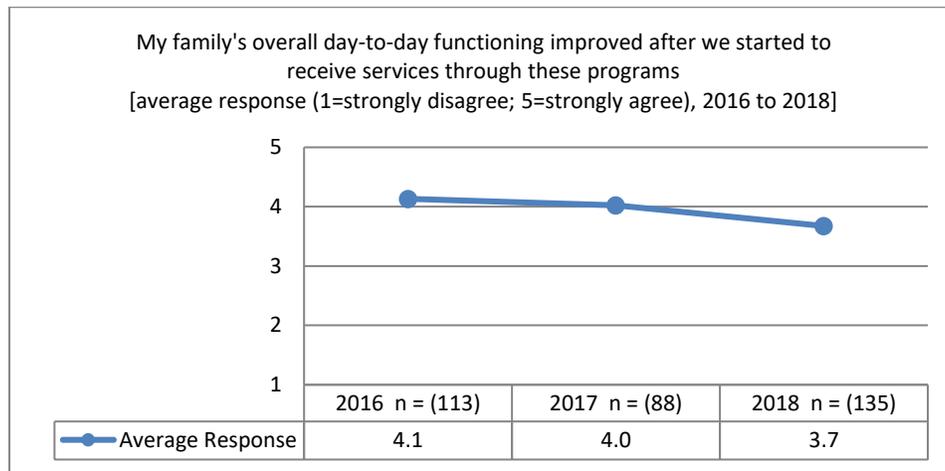


Question eleven asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statement:

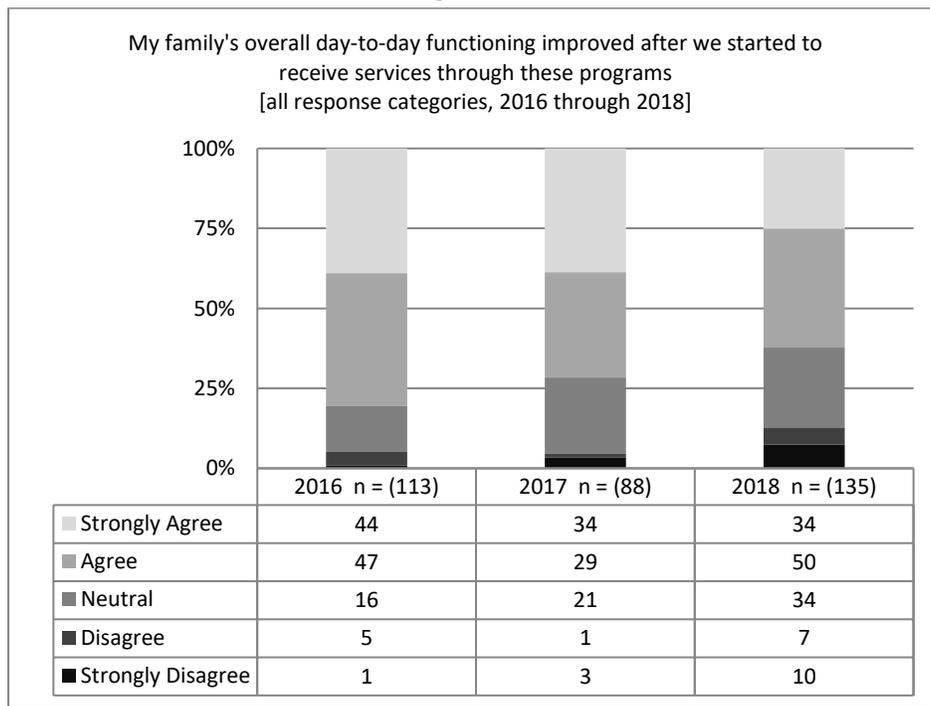
*“My family’s overall day-to-day functioning improved after we started to receive services through these programs.”*

Figure 11a shows that the average response (3.7) is closest to “agree,” but that the 3-year trend is increasingly negative. Figure 11b shows increases in the proportions of respondents expressing negative sentiment, and a decrease in the proportion of respondents expressing very positive sentiment.

**Figure 11a**



**Figure 11b**

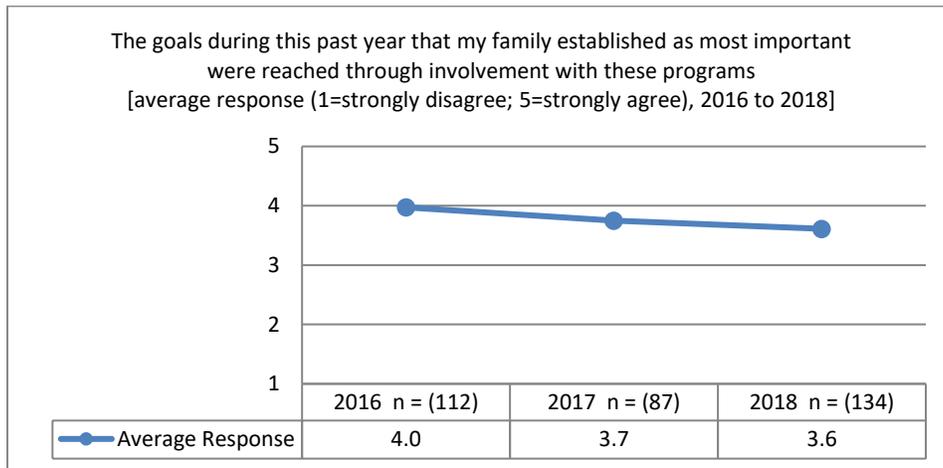


Question twelve asked respondents to state their level of agreement with this statement:

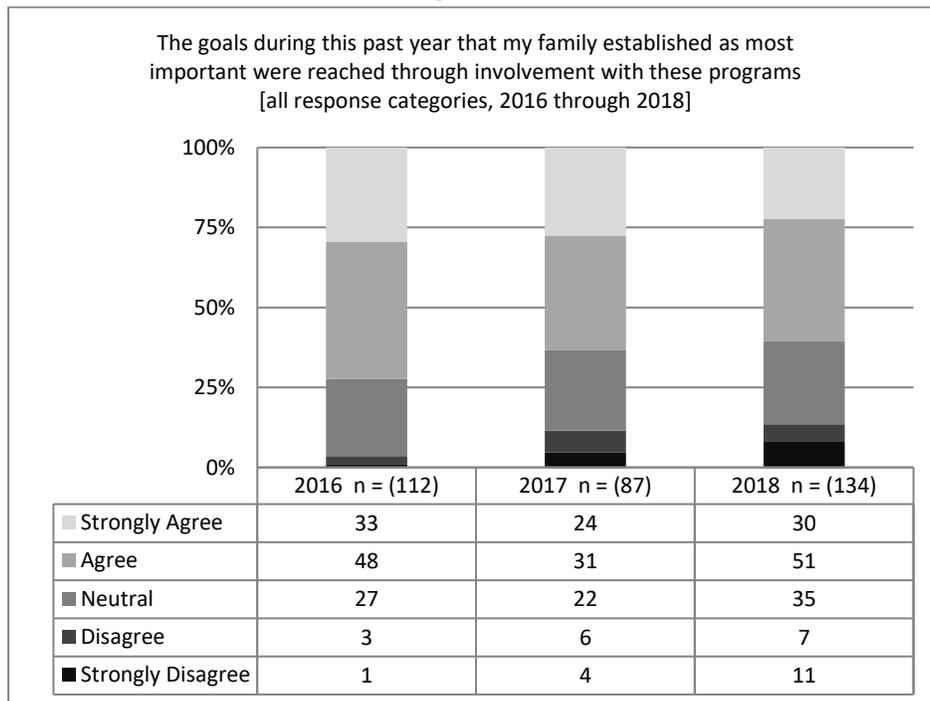
*“The goals during this year that my family established as most important were reached through involvement with these programs.”*

Figure 12a shows that the average response (3.6) is closest to “agree,” but that the overall trend over the past three waves remains slightly negative. Figure 12b shows a negative shift in the overall distribution of responses; less people strongly agreed that involvement with these programs contributed to reaching their most important goals, and more people disagreed.

**Figure 12a**



**Figure 12b**



Respondents were also asked a series of open-ended questions. The first was as follows:

*“What type of advice would you offer to families or parents of children with special needs that are new to the program?”*

100 out of 149 respondents replied to this question; some respondents provided multiple responses. For analysis purposes, similar responses were grouped into themes (for a complete digest of responses organized by theme, refer to Appendix A).

- 29 respondents specifically discussed specific resources and/or how to handle resources.
- 22 respondents discussed communication; more specifically, 10 of these 22 advised to ask questions.
- 12 respondents talked about case managers; generally, these responses centered around the idea that the case manager should be utilized often and viewed as part of the team.
- 12 respondents advised in the theme of remaining patient due to program waitlists and paperwork.
- 5 respondents stated that they were too new to offer advice.
- 4 respondents discussed seeking to understand the program.
- 3 respondents discussed early intervention as key to success.
- 13 respondents provided responses that could not fit into one of these categories above or another cohesive theme. Notable responses in this group include “Don’t forget to take care of yourself,” “Be appreciative,” “Save receipts and stay on vendors to be sure they deliver services budgeted not that parental payments are billed by budget not services rendered.”

The second open-ended question was as follows:

*“What services or support were most helpful to your family? Where are the gaps in services/support?”*

Out of 149 respondents, 94 provided responses to question 2; some respondents provided multiple responses. Similar responses to this question were grouped into themes for analysis purposes (refer to Appendix B for a complete digest of responses organized by theme).

*“Most helpful”*

- 44 respondents listed a service or support that was described as most helpful.
- 16 respondents mentioned respite as helpful.
- 7 respondents mentioned summer camp.
- 6 respondents mentioned case managers.
- 4 respondents mentioned social skills groups.
- 3 respondents mentioned obtaining items.
- 2 respondents mentioned music therapy.
- 2 respondents mentioned teachers.
- There were 10 other individual programs/services mentioned as helpful.

*“Gaps”*

- 36 respondents described gaps in services/supports.
- The most common gap (6 respondents) involved waiting for services; either a waitlist for the program, or a waitlist for a provider.
- 5 respondents indicated that they have been waiting for services to be set up.
- 4 respondents indicated a lack of resources and information about resources.
- 3 respondents said that support had been minimal.
- 3 respondents were looking for more financial support specifically.
- 2 respondents asked for swim lessons.
- 2 respondents asked for horseback riding.
- 2 respondents asked for a list of services covered to be provided.

Other

- 16 responses gave just the name of a service or their response could not be understood as a support or a gap. Of these responses, 11 mentioned respite, 2 stated “no gap”, and the rest were one-off responses.

The third open-ended question was as follows:

*“Based on your experience, please offer any other suggestions or ideas you may have for changes you’d like to see.”*

70 out of 149 respondents replied to this question; some respondents provided multiple responses. Similar responses to this question were grouped into themes for analysis purposes (refer to Appendix C for a complete digest of responses organized by theme).

- 43 respondents asked for more services—either new services, additional providers, more hours for existing services, or general funding for services. Respondents in this category also requested financial support, understanding of the family needs, and/or support during time spent waiting for services.
- 16 respondents asked for better access to information about the programs; what are the programs, what is covered, or what to expect. This category also included responses suggesting making information more available online so that families can find information and forms to be completed there.
- 6 respondents talked specifically about case managers and having more contact with them, having them provide more information and resources to them, and having them understand the programs better.
- 4 responses included compliments.