



# Where do the Children Play?

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## **Introduction**

Play, for the purposes of this project, is defined as the unstructured activities of children that are freely chosen for pleasure and amusement and are directed by children themselves rather than adults. Research has consistently shown that play is an integral part of appropriate social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development. More specifically, play has the potential to incite various positive emotional and social benefits for children including the development of emotional expressiveness, emotional knowledge, and emotional regulation. Intimately linked with these social and emotional benefits are the positive mental health outcomes associated with play. In the broadest sense, play may be linked to an increased stress tolerance, increased affective stability, and overall improved mental health outcomes. Play is a significant vehicle for cognitive development in childhood and has been linked to the attainment of language skills, mathematics readiness, later academic achievement in math, and overall improved cognitive functioning. Finally, physical play offers children a valuable opportunity to develop their motor skills and is beneficial to their health in a variety of other ways. In summary, play is a complex, multi-faceted, and critical component in a child's developmental processes.

However, multiple barriers and challenges from the agency, community, and family levels act as impediments to play. Unfortunately, these barriers are particularly salient for vulnerable children, including children who are living in poverty, are homeless, or are involved in foster care. This vulnerable population also includes children of incarcerated parents, children of teen parents, children living in domestic violence shelters, and immigrant/refugee children. The Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center was commissioned by the Jessie Ball duPont fund to explore the concept of play for children in Duval County, Florida. The goal of this project is to better understand how youth serving providers and affordable housing providers understand and

consider questions about play in their decision making and planning for the populations they serve.

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## Youth Serving Agencies Summary

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Youth serving providers were asked to discuss community priorities for serving vulnerable children, to discuss the way they conceptualize the benefits of play, and to discuss the impediments to play at both the agency and community/family levels. In addition, youth serving providers were asked where they believe children typically play, what differences regarding play might exist between different groups of children, and how their agency incorporates what they know about play. The following section explores the major themes that emerged.

### *Community Priorities*

Prior to delving into the topic of play specifically, the facilitator asked youth serving providers what the community prioritizes in terms of serving vulnerable children. Youth serving providers described various priorities such as providing access to education and opportunities for children to participate in extracurricular activities. They stated that providing access to healthy food, facilitating social development, and connecting families to community services are important priorities as well.

### *Opportunities for Play/Where Children Play*

Youth serving providers were asked about their observations regarding where children they serve play when not engaged in their agencies' services. Providers stated they saw youth in the community playing in parks, with neighbors, in neighborhood streets, at school, and participating in extracurricular activities. However, one participant noticed a generational shift in the way children play as a result of

*"Society has changed. When I was a kid we played in the street together, but this doesn't happen anymore. Why? Because society is more dangerous. There are things like kidnappers and shootings, things that would inhibit parents from letting their children play outside."*

changes in supervision and safety. Participants indicated that society is more dangerous than it used to be and that there are increasing fears related to child predators, sexual assaults, shootings, and other community violence.

### ***Benefits of Play***

Youth serving agencies were asked about the benefits of play for underserved children. Responses to this question included references to positive educational, mental health, and social benefits of play. In regards to mental health benefits, one provider stated that play allows for a

*“Yes, [play] allows children to troubleshoot and make decisions using their own experience and to learn from trying and failing or succeeding by themselves. [Play] helps to incorporate social behavior and social learning in normal structure with adults and teachers.”*

“release! It allows them to walk away from abuse, for example. The ability to get away from the burden they have.”

In addition, providers indicated that play helps children learn to navigate their social world and relationships. They added that play enables children to practice decision making, encourages them to learn from their mistakes, and facilitates teamwork and getting along with others. Of note, youth serving agencies, particularly in the listening sessions, diverted the conversation from the benefits of unstructured play to the need for structured/directed play. Respondents noted that vulnerable children who lack structure at home need directed play to promote healthy social development.

### ***Impediments to Play***

Providers identified impediments to play at both the agency level and at the community/family level. At an agency level, youth serving providers indicated that specific policies and practices act as barriers to facilitating play. Some responses about policies and practices were more connected to risk management and a concern about youth safety. For

*“One current example of how our city pools are not serving the needs of all of our children... We have a contract to take our girls to a pool on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. The pool holds at least 100, but the only swimmers allowed in the pool from 1:30 until 3:30 are our 35 girls. All the other neighborhood children are excluded. We are not allowed to go to the pool in the morning because of swim lessons. It is my understanding that parents have to be present for a child to take lessons. Down here on the Eastside there are VERY few parents that take their kids to swim lessons. In the late afternoon and evening again, a parent has to be with a child, so the pools are virtually empty. Such a waste.”*

example, providers indicated that staffing restrictions and having to eliminate one-on-one time between staff and youth as a result of safety concerns inhibited play and bonding.

Another salient theme that emerged as a challenge for youth serving providers was a lack of resources, such as qualified staff and safe spaces that are necessary for facilitating play. In addition to a lack of specific resources, youth serving providers explicitly mentioned a lack of funding as a barrier for providing play opportunities. Funding issues were often tied to risk management and requirements for multiple background screenings for

staff members. For example, one respondent stated, “I wonder about these risk management policies causing our programs to cost more funding. Staff salaries may be the cost that continues to rise as staff-child ratios get smaller. There is a need to hire more staff due to policies such as risk management... along with other staff positions that are now necessary due to safety concerns.” This was in reference to the “rule of three,” where policies prohibit/discourage one-on-one staff contact with children.

Youth serving providers mentioned a lack of resources as a challenge not only at the agency level, but at the community and family level as well. Providers mentioned that in some cases families lack actual play materials to keep youth occupied and engaged in pro-social play. One provider said, “Our younger ones don’t have games, books, or balls to play with at home.



Over school breaks, we try and give them something they can take home with them to keep them occupied.” Providers linked poverty and a lack of resources to families having priorities that overshadow opportunities for play. Respondents mentioned that in some cases families might prioritize academics or family responsibilities over opportunities for play. Finally, youth serving providers stated that families might not know the value or importance of facilitating play for children. For instance, one provider indicated that “Many people don’t consider play as a time for learning but rather as down time. Most people don’t consider playtime as a time of development for the child.”

*“I think that the parents of children living in poverty are trying so hard just to survive. It’s difficult to think about and promote play.”*

### ***Differences in How Children Play***

Providers were asked whether they have observed differences in how children play based on gender and culture. Specific to gender, participants noted that girls are likely to engage in more structured, less physical play while boys tend to play sports or rough house. Interestingly, when asked about cultural differences, youth serving providers tended to shift the conversation toward socioeconomic status instead. Youth serving providers commented that poverty creates a nexus of a lack of resources and parental stress which problematizes play for at risk youth. One respondent said, “The economic status seems to be a bigger indicator for play than culture.”

In terms of how children play, one youth serving provider noted: “There are types of play that are universal for kids, like dancing and singing. We serve primarily African American children, and then Latino American families – also some white children – but when they get together they just do their thing.” When the facilitator reframed the question to focus on how families from different cultural groups value play, one respondent noted that “Hispanic children feel more pressured about their responsibilities. They prioritize responsibilities above academics.

Academics are a struggle...Play is not even a priority at this point.”

### *Incorporating Play*

Throughout the listening sessions and interviews, youth serving providers discussed the ways in which their organizations incorporate what they know about play. Youth serving providers present at the listening session mainly incorporate what they know about play through programming and by ensuring safe play spaces are available/structured for the children they serve. There was also a brief mention of partnering with other agencies.

Respondents also noted a need for structured play in these vulnerable populations. One participant said, “It is critical with this population. I see the need for structured play with a purpose...At-risk youth could use directional play also to expose them to structure.” Another youth serving provider stated, “In the community, I think children are looking for structure since there is none at home... The number one thing kids are looking for is structure.”

Specific to program planning, monitoring, and development, one youth serving provider mentioned the need for creative play and stated she incorporated this into her service delivery by providing toys that encourage imaginative play. Other providers said they require children to participate in a variety of outdoor and athletic activities to facilitate more structured play. Still another provider stated that play is integrated into their art curriculum along with academic learning. The group was asked about the impetus for their focus on play and where it comes from. One respondent

*“Strategic plan includes play. We have a staffer whose role has to do with play and the achievement gap. We did imaginary sessions with families, so after we create plans and initiatives we have parents come in and brainstorm. They will usually line up with us. This is guided by the national branch and the board and the staff.”*

indicated that her agency has a national office focused on integrating research into curriculum building, and that office has recently started focusing on incorporating play into curricula.

### ***Provider Recommendations and Suggestions***

While youth serving providers were not explicitly asked to provide recommendations, providers made comments throughout the listening sessions and interviews suggesting ways that play might be better facilitated in our community. They also shed light on issues that warrant attention and possibly future research. One suggestion that surfaced throughout the listening sessions and interviews was that vulnerable children need a balance of both structured and unstructured play. Staff noted that unstructured time has the potential to provide risky situations for youth and that, especially for vulnerable youth, directed play offers structure and guidance.

Additionally, an interviewee suggested that services in the Jacksonville area need to be more coordinated: “We need one central organization or nonprofit – like the Department of Youth Services or Department of Social Services – to coordinate services. Or like the Cultural Counsel. We need the ability to pull events together or one central agency to help funnel resources in an appropriate way. There is a lot of inconsistency and turf protecting because of funding. There is not a science to tackle this opportunity to coordinate care.”

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## Affordable Housing Providers Summary

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Below is a summary of the themes emerging from affordable housing providers about the benefits of play, where children are playing, observed differences, experiences/observations about the impediments to play for families and communities, as well as ways that play is incorporated and facilitated within their agencies.

### *Community Priorities*

Before delving into play specifically, the listening session facilitator asked participants to describe what the Jacksonville community prioritizes in terms of service delivery for vulnerable youth. The major themes that emerged included: access to quality education, safe and affordable housing, access to healthcare, healthy food, and mental health services. Providers also mentioned the need for daycares, opportunities for extracurricular activities, and opportunities to engage in play.

### *Opportunities for Play/Where Children Play*

When affordable housing providers were asked where children play, some housing providers were not sure what children did outside of receiving their services, but one participant hypothesized: “Other things like scouts and sports and music lessons take up kids’ time. I am not sure if other kids participate in these activities because they may not be able to afford it.” Other participants reported observing children play at school, in extracurricular activities, at parks, and in neighborhood streets. Some participants added that children play in their apartment complexes, even noting that some apartment complexes have playgrounds, pools, and tennis courts. However, providers noted that in recent years, playing in the community has become dangerous either due to lack of supervision or crime.

Across listening session and interview questions, a focus on community safety emerged as a salient theme. Affordable housing providers mentioned a need for increased supervision for vulnerable youth. It was mentioned that neighborhood structure is not conducive to supervision as homes no longer have porches, parents work more, and communities do not watch neighborhood children. One respondent indicated that this absence of community supervision for youth combined with the criminality of some Duval County neighborhoods creates a dangerous situation. Criminal activities, gangs, drugs, and bullying were all identified as threats to the safety of vulnerable children.

*“When we were kids we just roamed with some informal supervision. In the neighborhoods we work in, the people do not mimic this trend. Roaming around on the east side is not the best thing for a child to be doing...I feel that neighbors do not look out for all of the kids on the street.”*

### ***Benefits of Play***

When asked about the benefits of play for vulnerable children, affordable housing providers were adamant that play is a critical component of the holistic development of vulnerable youth. In response to a facilitator’s inquiry, one provider exclaimed, “Is play important? Yes. All kids from all societies are engaging in play. It’s an evolutionary need!” The identified benefits of play included references to improvements in academics, increases in creativity, more opportunities for exercise, improved mental health outcomes, and the development of pro-social behavior.

Affordable housing providers noted that there is an increasing trend to focus on academics at the expense of play. They added that when academics take priority creativity can be neglected. One listening session participant stated that, “if play is stifled, there are negative consequences to development.” Therefore, rather than seeing academics as a priority over play,

affordable housing providers expressed the belief that play can actually increase academic success. Providers recommended that play be integrated into academic curriculums, that academics and play “should be interrelated and not segregated. This is a false choice because academic success and play are hand-in-hand.”

The need for creative play was a focus of affordable housing provider discussions.

*“[Unstructured play] allows an opportunity to be creative. I ran an afterschool program for prevention/diversion and it was amazing how parents did not have any idea that their children were so gifted in certain areas like playing an instrument. These kids are low socioeconomic status, and once given opportunities for creativity parents couldn’t believe results.”*

Creative play was defined as critical to development, with one provider stating that it is an opportunity for vulnerable youth to explore talents they might not have otherwise known existed.

The opportunity to exercise was also identified as a benefit of play for children. Sports and physical extracurricular activities were noted to be generally beneficial. One provider mentioned that part of her

organization’s play initiative was the provision of an exercise space for both children and seniors in response to a community request. In addition to the physical health benefits that play offers in terms of exercise, providers also indicated that play can have an almost cathartic effect. In other words, releasing energy through play was associated with the reduction of aggressiveness or acting out behaviors.

*“Play is very important! Children who cannot play get frustrated, and will start to act out. Kids need the opportunity to get their energy and aggression out.”*

*“Absolutely, they need the ability to be a child, they need that outlet to open up and be themselves. Play is a way they can imagine and visualize a place where they can be a child rather than worrying about adult issues.”*

Similarly, according to providers, play offers mental health benefits. Multiple providers indicated that for youth who have experienced trauma or life stressors, play can act as an outlet and mechanism to

escape their day to day worries. One provider stated, “There are huge benefits to being able to play. It releases endorphins and is a stress relief. Children have stress – they are in a new environment. The power of play is huge...” From a social and behavioral perspective, providers noted that play helps children develop appropriate boundaries, build social skills, and increase confidence. Play was also noted to increase opportunities for community bonding.

### ***Impediments to Play***

Throughout the listening sessions and interviews, affordable housing providers noted the challenges of facilitating play for the youth they serve. Affordable housing providers described challenges and barriers at both the agency level and at the community and family level. Providers indicated that a lack of funding, resources, and awareness at the agency level can impede the facilitation of play. Providers indicated that political issues and reductions in city funding can problematize the service delivery of play related activities. One provider said, “We help facilitate

*“They used to have community schools where you could have an organized employee that gave boys and girls activities to do. This was taken away for whatever reason, but this really helped with social issues. The direction and vision of politics seems to be a barrier as well. There are such differences in support and funding across town. For sports, you can see a lot of sponsor signs on fields, and in the communities I work in and my kids grow up in there were hardly any sponsors and maybe one or two signs. I’m not sure if this is due to the communities being better organized or not.”*

activities through referrals but we can’t do it on our own. We have a lean staff. That is a barrier for

*“We as an organization need more information. We have an understanding about the value of play at an academic level but no one is talking to our clients. No one is talking on the client level about the need for play. It is a lack of education on our part.”*

us – we love our children to play, but we don’t have the manpower ...” Additionally, providers acknowledged that their agencies and organizations need help translating the benefits of play for their clients if they are to effectively facilitate play opportunities for vulnerable populations.

In terms of community/family level impediments, one housing provider stated that families might not have the ability to access play because of a lack of resources or money. Another provider suggested that play might not be a family priority for vulnerable populations.

*"If they're living in the back of a car or camping in the woods, they are going to be more concerned about survival."*

More specifically, a provider mentioned that when families are facing poverty or homelessness their focus shifts from play to satisfying the basic needs of their family. Other providers echoed this sentiment. Providers also mentioned priorities that were independent from economic status, and said that in some cases children are distracted by electronics or focused on after school activities at the expense of play.

### ***Differences in How Children Play***

Affordable housing providers were asked if they have observed differences in the way children play based on gender or culture. Some participants noted seeing gender differences more in older children. One participant reported, "The smaller they are the more similar their activities. Sometimes you spy some gender differences. Gender shifts begin to take shape around middle school. I think that the shift might be due to hormones." Other hypotheses proposed by providers included socialization factors. In other words, children might feel pressured to engage in specific activities to adhere to gender norms.

Specific to culture, housing providers identified the differences between Latino and Caucasian children.

*"Not really culturally difference more like SES differences. Families of low SES are focusing on meeting the basic needs of their children. For the income vulnerable, play is not a high priority it is a focus on housing, food, a bed for their children, clothing. They are focusing on healthy kids and meeting basic needs."*

They noted that the multigenerational Hispanic culture might affect the way Hispanic youth play (e.g. multigenerational play or have responsibilities as younger sibling caretakers which impedes



play) whereas Caucasian children tend to play more independently. In some cases, affordable housing providers noted that there are more significant differences as a result of socioeconomic status than as a result of cultural background. For example, income vulnerable youth might not have access to summer camps or to the extracurricular activities other more privileged youth do because their parents are focused on providing shelter or food.

### ***Incorporating Play***

Affordable housing providers reported mainly incorporating what they know about play through planning/monitoring and partnerships with other agencies. For example, one provider said, “When we do our projects we try and make sure there is a playground and a space for kids to be kids. When we start to plan a new project, depending on the population we will serve, play spaces are incorporated.” Others added that they provide a safe, physical terrain for youth to

*It can be incorporated but we need push from the parents as well. The parents’ input is very important. We need to incorporate times for our children to play to help them de-stress.*

play. One provider mentioned that they integrate the family into the play activities to facilitate future play in the home and to validate and integrate parental feedback into play activities.

Providers indicated that partnerships were often tied to creating safe play spaces or play programming opportunities for

children. For example, “we also went through our property management partners to have structured/unstructured after school events and parties. They will bring stuff just for kids to have some fun. It (incorporating play) has been an objective of ours since we started working with children.”

### ***Provider Recommendations and Suggestions***

Affordable housing providers were not specifically asked if they had suggestions or recommendations regarding how the Jacksonville community could better facilitate play in the

future, but providers occasionally contributed these recommendations throughout the listening session. They gave examples of ways of improving play, but they also noted that there were basic needs that the Jacksonville community needed to help meet for vulnerable children.

Specific to play opportunities, affordable housing providers mentioned the need to coordinate services. Some providers acknowledged that there are multiple agencies and partners in the community but that a lack of communication prevents them from appropriately and effectively managing referrals.

In addition, housing providers observed a difference in structured versus unstructured play, and multiple providers suggested that children need both kinds of play opportunities. One respondent mentioned that unstructured play has the potential to be hazardous for children and stated, “You need a balance. There are a lot of parks, but there are not a lot of structured activities. The parks are also a location for illegal activities, and this causes problems.” Providers also suggested that the city invest in recreational activities or park safety to ensure safer opportunities for children to play.

## **Girls' Perspectives**

### **GMIE Girls Perspectives**

A total of 41 girls who participated in the *Girl Matters<sup>®</sup>: It's Elementary (GMIE)* Enhancement Groups were asked about their perspectives on play. During the discussion group, they were specifically asked where and how they liked to play, and whether or not they felt safe when playing outside. This sample represented girls from North Shore and Jacksonville Heights elementary schools. Girls from George Washington Carver Elementary School filled out their responses on paper. These responses are summarized below.

#### ***Where Children Play***

When asked where they liked to play, *GMIE* girls gave a variety of responses that included community spaces, parks and playgrounds, Pay to Play Spaces, and school. More specifically, *GMIE* girls explicitly referenced playing in the neighborhood, at home, or in the yard. They were most likely to indicate that parks or playgrounds were their play spaces of choice. In addition to the community play spaces, *GMIE* girls also reported enjoying playing in pay-to-play spaces like Chuck E. Cheese, Disney World, or water parks. Of note, only one *GMIE* girl explicitly said she enjoyed playing at school, and one additional girl said she enjoyed playing during *GMIE* programming. Recess was never specifically mentioned by any girl.

#### ***GMIE: How Children Play***

When asked how they liked to play, *GMIE* girls mentioned specific toys and games. They mentioned both structured and unstructured types of activities including playing with dolls and engaging in sports. Girls also mentioned enjoying pretend play such as “Pretend Daycare” or “Pretend Family” and creative play such as singing, dancing, and producing artwork. *GMIE* girls also reported enjoying social play such as playing with siblings and friends.

### *GMIE: Safety Discussion*

An important theme that emerged during the play discussion was safety. When asked where she liked to play, one girl responded “somewhere safe,” even though she had not yet been prompted about this issue. When girls were specifically asked if they felt safe when playing outdoors, responses were mixed (see call out box). North Shore was the only school where every girl at least sometimes felt safe playing outdoors. At Jacksonville Heights Elementary, more girls from our sample reported never feeling safe during outdoor play than reported always feeling safe during outdoor play.

*Direct quotations from George Washington Carver girls:*

- *Sometimes. I do not feel safe when adult men are around because they do bad things to girls.*
- *Not that safe. They shoot at the park.*
- *Yes*
- *No because you can get hurt.*
- *Yes but not around boys cause of shooting.*
- *I feel safe where I play.*

## **Girls Leadership Council Perspectives**

As part of the Girls Leadership Council (GLC) interview process, a total of 22 young women were asked about where and how they played as children. The candidates were also asked if they think there are any barriers that prevent children from playing. All candidates were female and between the ages of 15 and 21. Their responses are summarized below.

### ***GLC: Where Children Play***

When asked where they played as children, the large majority of GLC candidates referenced playing in their neighborhood or community. They recalled playing at home, playing at friends' houses or relatives' houses, and playing outdoors in the yard. Interestingly, only one candidate mentioned playing at a park or playground.

### ***GLC: How Children Play***

Candidates, when asked how they enjoyed playing as a child, referenced specific toys and electronics. They also mentioned playing sports or board games. Creative types of play were also mentioned including playing piano, acting and drawing. Pretend play was mentioned explicitly in some responses, and games like playing tea or playing house were described by multiple candidates. Many young women also stated they played socially with peers or siblings.

### ***GLC: Barriers to Play***

When asked if they believed anything prevents children from playing, candidates gave responses that had to do with safety and supervision, lack of resources, and electronic distractions. The most prominent theme was that safety concerns inhibit children from playing, or inhibit parents from allowing their children to play. Typically, safety concerns were mentioned in relation to violence and crime, but candidates also mentioned things like environmental hazards and speeding cars. Two candidates mentioned that children can be

prevented from playing when they do not have parks or playgrounds nearby, and one candidate said that children can be distracted from play by watching TV or playing video games.

## Synthesis of Results

Between the youth serving providers and affordable housing providers, similar themes emerged. Both groups identified various priorities in serving vulnerable populations, including providing access to healthcare or mental healthcare, quality education, healthy food, and safe spaces to play. Specific to the benefits of play, both types of providers mentioned benefits that aligned with those identified in the Policy Center's literature review. Providers noted that play was advantageous to successful social-emotional, mental health, academic, and physical outcomes. Interestingly, both youth serving and affordable housing providers suggested that Duval County providers could benefit from increased knowledge about the services that other agencies provide for vulnerable populations and said that increased partnership between agencies would be beneficial. Finally, a salient theme throughout the sessions with youth serving providers, affordable housing providers, and girls was the focus on safety. Safety concerns revolved around neighborhood criminality, a lack of supervision, and a lack of safe play spaces.

Despite these similarities, a few differences emerged. For example, youth serving providers placed a strong emphasis on structured/directed play whereas affordable housing providers did not mention the need for directed play for vulnerable populations. This difference may stem from the respective roles that youth serving providers and affordable housing providers play. Programming is a major focus for youth serving providers, and being able to articulate the specific structured activities that youth will engage in may be beneficial for communicating within their agencies and for communicating with funders. In contrast, affordable housing providers are more focused on providing safe spaces than on providing programming, and this may lend itself to an emphasis on unstructured play. In addition, both groups incorporate play differently. While there is an emphasis on children's play as a part of

both groups' planning, youth serving providers were more likely to report that play is embedded in their curricula and programming whereas the housing community emphasized access and availability of play spaces.



## Appendix A: Participants

### Youth-Serving Providers

YMCA	Candace DeMarco	Youth Development Director	Listening Session
Daniel Memorial	Joe Marazzo	Therapist	Listening Session
Daniel Memorial	Greg Dedmond	Director of School Based Mental Health	Listening Session
Hope Haven	Barbara Brutschy, M.A.	Director of Intake	Listening Session
MOCA	Allison Galloway	Director of Education	Phone Interview
Boys & Girls Club	Dr. Shannon Perry	President/Chief Professional Officer	Listening Session
Sanctuary on 8th	Vicky Watkins	Executive Director	Listening Session
Big Brothers Big Sisters	Warren Grymes	Chief Executive Officer	Listening Session
Girl Scouts of America	Mary Anne Jacobs	Chief Executive Officer	Phone Interview
Boy Scouts of America	Fredo Adriano	Program Specialist Scout Reach Program	Listening Session

### Affordable Housing Providers

LISC	Janet Owens	Executive Director	Phone Interview
LISC	Eugene Montgomery	Senior Program Officer	Listening Session
Sulzbacher House	Irene Ingram-Bailey	Housing Director	Listening Session
Ability Housing	Shannon Nazworth	Executive Director	Listening Session
HabiJax	Angela Leatherbury	VP of operations & Organizational planning	Phone Interview
World Relief	Michelle Clowe	Refugee Services Coordinator	Phone Interview
Lutheran Family Services Health Systems	Kristellys Zolondek	Community Engagement Specialist	Listening Session
Operation New Hope	Paula Jamison	Program Coordinator	Phone Interview

## Leaders and Initiatives

Participants were asked to identify community leaders or models for promoting play for underserved populations. There was some dialogue about not knowing who they are and one comment, “not really sure there is one.” The chart below references organizations identified as leaders in play, the type of stakeholder that identified them, and our level of contact with that agency.

Leader in Play	Identified by	Notes
HeadStart	Housing Provider	Should be contacted for next phase of project
Boselli Foundation	Housing Provider	Should be contacted for next phase of project
Jewish Community Center	Housing Provider	Should be contacted for next phase of project
YMCA	Housing Provider	Participated in listening session
NFL60 – Jaguars	Housing Provider/ Youth Agency	Should be contacted for next phase of project
KaBOOM	Housing Provider	Should be contacted for next phase of project
Jacksonville Public Education Fund	Housing Provider	Should be contacted for next phase of project
Lutheran Services	Housing Provider	Participated in listening session
Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA)	Housing Provider/ Youth Agency	Conducted individual interview
Ability Housing	Housing Provider	Participated in listening session
Newton Success Fund	Housing Provider	Should be contacted for next phase of project
Children’s Commission	Youth Agency	Should be contacted for next phase of project

## **Appendix B: Methodology**

The primary method of assessment for this exploratory research was qualitative, with a combination of listening sessions, individual interviews, and facilitated group discussions.

### **Selection/Recruitment**

Recruitment for the listening sessions included identifying youth serving and affordable housing providers in the Duval County area, including but not limited to duPont fund eligible organizations. Personal invitations were extended to agency leaders and/or designees to participate in listening sessions or to share their insight regarding play via phone interview.

### **Listening Sessions**

On June 26, 2014, one listening session was facilitated with eight youth serving agencies and another included four representatives from affordable housing providers in the Jacksonville area. Listening sessions lasted approximately 1.5 hours. They began with a brief introduction of the Policy Center, an overview of the exploratory research on play, and an explanation of the purpose of the listening session. The protocol provided structured questions and standard probes to encourage participation, elaboration, or to clarify specific points. Two note takers were designated to transcribe the information shared during the listening sessions

### **Individual Interviews**

Individual interviews were extended to providers that were recruited for listening sessions but were unable to attend. Additionally, some listening session participants identified agencies that would be important to follow up with. Those providers were extended an invitation to interview as well. As of July 10, 2014, eight phone interviews were conducted. Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. The script and questions used in the listening sessions were slightly modified for use in an individual setting. Similar to the listening sessions, the interviews

began with introductions of the interviewer, the Policy Center, and overview of the exploratory research. Following the administration of the interview protocol, all notes were transcribed verbatim by the interviewer.

### **Facilitated Discussion Groups/Interviews**

Less formal discussion groups were facilitated with elementary age girls to get their perspectives on play. A total of 41 girls who participated in the *Girl Matters: It's Elementary* Enhancement Groups were asked about their perspectives on play. The group discussion was incorporated as part of the Girl Talk time and lasted approximately 5 minutes. There was one designated note taker who transcribed the data.

In addition, 22 young women who were applying for a position on the Policy Center's Girls' Leadership Council (GLC) were asked about their perspectives on play. The questions specific to play lasted approximately 5 to 10 minutes. Their responses to the play questions were provided to the research team by the GLC interviewer.

### **Questions Guiding Discussion(s)**

Several questions were asked of listening session participants and interviewees. These questions are listed below:

1. What is the main focus of the services you provide in the community?
2. What are some of the priorities of working with underserved/vulnerable children?
3. Would opportunities for unstructured play be beneficial for underserved/vulnerable children you serve? If so, how?
4. What do you know about play opportunities outside of the time children spend with you?
5. Do you think opportunities for unstructured play are as important as other needs of children for their development? Why or why not?

6. Is there emphasis on play in your services? If so, how/in what ways is it encouraged?
7. If there is not an emphasis on play, what are the barriers or constraints to encouraging play?
8. What are ways that play can be incorporated into the day to day activities of the population you serve?
9. From your experience, who is the leader (or model) for promoting play for underserved populations in our community?
10. In your work/field of expertise, do you observe cultural differences in the value of play or amount of play? Does this also impact gender expectations for play?
11. Does your agency incorporate what you know about play in your planning, decision making, or initiatives?
12. Is there any particular research or initiative you would recommend we review? Anyone you recommend that we speak with?

Facilitators of the Enhancement Groups asked elementary school girls:

1. Where do you like to play?
2. How do you like to play?
3. Do you feel safe when you play outside?

Young women applying for a position on the GLC were asked:

1. When you were a child, how did you like to play?
2. Are there any barriers to children playing?

## **Appendix C: Data Analysis**

A qualitative data analysis approach was used to analyze the three data sources. Three research team members individually reviewed the transcripts looking for themes/codes. A codebook was developed that was a result of merging and revising the code families through a collaborative process. A senior researcher vetted and finalized the codebook, streamlining it to apply across all data sources. All of the transcripts were reviewed and coded by a member of the team using the approved codebook. Codes were continually reviewed, merged, and deleted, as appropriate.

Data was then aggregated by major stakeholder (youth serving provider, affordable housing provider, and girls). Data was analyzed for overall themes as well as conceptual similarities and differences.