



MCCC Community Needs Assessment

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COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

June 2021

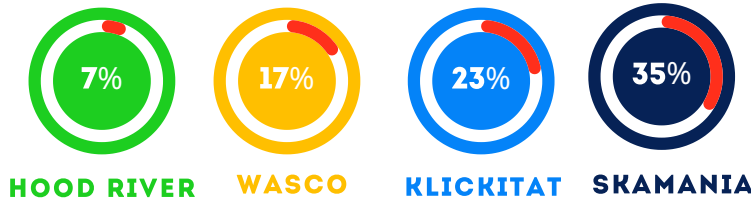
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND INFO

Mid-Columbia Children's Council (MCCC) is a non-profit organization that provides children and their families with the opportunity, tools, knowledge, and support to receive a positive, high-quality early childhood education. MCCC Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS) programs provide services to children under five based on income-eligibility, in addition to providing services to expectant mothers, children in foster care, children experiencing homelessness, and families receiving public assistance. MCCC is required to conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period to highlight community needs and partnered with Pacific Research and Evaluation to complete the 2021 assessment.

CURRENT EHS AND HS SERVICES

Percentage of children under five living below 100% FPL by County



721

of the estimated 4,670 children under five in the MCCC service area are income-eligible (below 100% FPL) for EHS and HS.

43%

of the 100% FPL income-eligible children receive HS and EHS services as of 2018-19.



Approx. **1 out of 4 children** served by HS and EHS have an identified disability.



Across the four counties, HS and EHS **service 626 children and expecting mothers** experiencing homelessness, in foster care, receiving public assistance, or who are over income or income-eligible (<130% FPL).



Hispanic/Latinx and White populations are most represented in enrollment numbers and in the MCCC service area population.

METHODS

Secondary Data Analysis of 30+ reports published by federal agencies, local organizations, universities, and MCCC EHS and HS program data. Examples of key sources include:

American Community Survey 2015-2019 (ACS)

2018-2019 HS and EHS Program Information Reports (PIR)

Limitations: Most secondary sources relied on data collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

MCCC Service Area

- Hood River County, OR
- Wasco County, OR
- Klickitat County, WA
- Skamania County, WA

GAPS IN SERVICES



Families face a lack of available spots in publicly funded and private child care programs in the MCCC service area, and this is especially the case for infants (ages 0-2).



Only a fourth of children age 0-2 under 100% FPL receive EHS services.



Around sixty percent of children age 3-4 under 100% FPL receive HS services.



Data suggest there may be a need for more EHS services for expecting mothers living in poverty in the MCCC service area.



Families who are living between 100-200% FPL represent approximately 22% of the total population in the MCCC service area. This population often feels stuck “in between” as they have limited options for subsidized care and cannot afford private child care.



Enrolled children and pregnant women who identify as Native American make up only 3.5% of total HS and EHS enrollment, despite this group having the highest poverty rate (27.8%) in the MCCC service area.



There is a need for more transportation options to/from child care, especially in geographically isolated communities.



Families in Oregon and Washington with children with disabilities struggle to access adequate care. The biggest challenge is the need for providers who are trained and experienced with children with disabilities that work in locations families can easily access.



There is a need for more data regarding children experiencing homelessness, especially as this population is served by HS and EHS programs. Two important factors that contribute to homelessness in Washington and Oregon include the rising cost of rent and the limited supply of available housing.

ADDITIONAL NEEDS RELATED TO CHILD CARE



New policies supporting **minimum wage increases and child tax credit adjustments** intended to reduce childhood poverty risk pushing families just over the threshold of eligibility to receive a variety of services offered to families living below FPL. More data are needed to better estimate the effects of these local policies on income eligibility for child care assistance.



As of June 2020, Child Care Aware data indicate Washington state experienced a 27% **drop in child care capacity**. Data for Oregon echo this trend in terms of new limits on child care capacity and reduced hours of care due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

★ CONSULT ADDITIONAL DATA SOURCES AND STAKEHOLDER DATA-SHARING

Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE) recommends MCCC update this community assessment on an annual basis with additional data sources that were not previously available and suggests increased data-sharing between local organizations to enrich the analysis.

Examples of additional sources:

- Oregon Department of Human Services data for child welfare and foster care data (extensive data request and approval process) and comparable data from Washington’s Department of Children, Family, and Youth
- 2020 Census Data (yet to be released)
- More community-level data from local, community-based organizations that could provide insight into child care needs for underserved populations such as children who identify as Native American, children with disabilities, and children experiencing homelessness

★ ACCESS MORE REPORTING FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Data management and collection has been impacted significantly by the pandemic. There are reports that have been recently published, however, that provide an important snapshot of early child care and education needs. Examples include the PDG Statewide Household Survey report published in Spring 2021 by the ELD that highlights Oregon child care trends.

★ FAMILIES LIVING “IN-BETWEEN” (100 TO 200%FPL)

More data is needed about those families that will be potentially impacted by state minimum wage increases and the Child Tax Credit and pushed just over the threshold of 100% FPL. Not only does MCCC need to know more accurately how many families might be affected, but also how threshold adjustments could benefit these families.

★ HISPANIC/LATINX FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The Four Rivers Early Learning Hub 2019 Community Plan indicates Hispanic/Latinx families with children with one or more disabilities are in greater need of services in Hood River and Wasco Counties. Parallel data need to be collected in Washington, and more detailed data needs to be collected in Oregon to better assess the need for culturally responsive providers.

★ PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

PRE recommends primary data collection to complement and deepen the secondary data analysis in this assessment and to better understand emerging child care needs in light of the pandemic. Family engagement efforts could build off of lessons learned from the 2019 and 2020 Four Rivers Early Learning Hub survey efforts conducted by PRE.

- ★ PRE also suggests MCCC consider consulting local businesses and early child care providers through interviews or focus groups to gather input and identify partnership opportunities for expanding early child care and education.

INTRODUCTION

Mid-Columbia Children’s Council (MCCC) is a non-profit organization that provides children and their families with the opportunity, tools, knowledge, and support to receive a positive, high-quality early childhood education. MCCC Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS) programs provide services to children under five based on income-eligibility, in addition to providing services to expectant mothers, children in foster care, children experiencing homelessness, and families receiving public assistance. The MCCC service area includes two counties in Oregon, Hood River and Wasco Counties, and two counties in Washington, Skamania and Klickitat Counties. MCCC has seventeen EHS and HS locations in the four-county region. MCCC is required to conduct an EHS and HS community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period to highlight community needs. The previous community assessment was conducted in 2018. In 2021, MCCC partnered with Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE), a research firm based in Portland, Oregon to complete an updated community assessment. This 2021 assessment includes secondary data analysis of over 30 sources including reports published by federal agencies (i.e., census data), community-based organizations, universities, and MCCC EHS and HS program data.

METHODS

The methodology for this report consisted entirely of secondary data analysis. Data sources included publicly available information such as the American Community Survey 2015-19 data as well as 17 documents shared directly with PRE by the MCCC CEO. PRE also accessed 10+ additional sources, such as recent reporting by Oregon State University’s (OSU) Oregon Child Care Research Partnership and the Oregon Department of Education Early Learning Division. While this assessment does not include primary data analysis (such as interviews and surveys), PRE has an ongoing research partnership with the Four Rivers Early Learning Hub that includes recent data collection efforts in Hood River and Wasco Counties. In 2019 and 2020, PRE supported the Hub in administering a family engagement survey and in creating a community plan required by the state for expanding early child care and education. Key findings from these efforts provide valuable insight into families’ child care needs amidst COVID-19 and complement this assessment. Each of the data sources referenced in this assessment are detailed in **Appendix A** with the date of publication, the publishing organization, and a summary of key content utilized for this assessment.

Limitations

Limitations that exist with secondary data analysis are that research is relying on aggregate data rather than individual level raw data files. Throughout the report, limitations are noted when data sources were not available at the desired level of detail or by the subpopulations of interest. Examples of limited data include those on families experiencing homelessness and children with disabilities. Data are few for geographically isolated communities and counties with smaller populations, such as Klickitat County and Skamania County. For example, there are very small counts for certain race/ethnicity groups in these rural counties, resulting in the data being suppressed. Underserved groups are often underrepresented in the data collection to begin with making it difficult to analyze trends. Migrant and seasonal HS program data are not included in this assessment as these programs are managed by Oregon Child Development

Coalition (OCD). Further, EHS and HS programs in the MCCC service area were not able to collect accurate and complete program data in 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, PRE relied on 2018-19 HS and EHS Program Information Reports for the purposes of this assessment. Lastly, PRE has included the most recent reports available, however many sources rely on data collected from 2016 through 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

FINDINGS

This community needs assessment is structured around the following three sections: (1) assessing who is eligible for services and who is enrolled in HS and EHS (2) identifying where the gaps are in services in the MCCC service area, and (3) offering future considerations for addressing these gaps. When possible, data are provided at the county level.



Current Services

Head Start and Early Head Start Eligibility and Enrollment

Key Findings:

- ◆ According to 2015-2019 American Community Survey data, an estimated 721 children under five are living at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) in MCCC's service area and are income eligible for EHS and HS services. EHS and HS enrollment data indicate less than half (42.6%) of these income-eligible children are receiving services in all counties combined.
- ◆ The largest race/ethnicity groups in the MCCC service include individuals who identify as White (non-Hispanic), followed by individuals who identify as Hispanic/Latinx, and these are also the groups with the greatest representation in HS and EHS enrollment. Notably, enrolled children and pregnant women who identify as American Indian/Alaskan Native make up only 3.5% of total enrollment, despite this group having the overall highest poverty rate (27.8%) in the MCCC service area of any race or ethnicity group.
- ◆ Data are very limited for children with disabilities in the service area. Children with disabilities are represented in the program enrollment numbers, however, as a fourth (23.4%) of those enrolled in HS have an identified disability.
- ◆ Families who are living between 100 and 200% FPL represent approximately 21.6% of the total population in the service area and multiple sources indicate these families often feel stuck "in between" as they have limited options for subsidized care and cannot afford private child care.
- ◆ Census data suggest there may be a need for more EHS services for expecting mothers living in poverty in the MCCC service area.
- ◆ Comparing data from the 2015-19 American Community Survey to EHS and HS Program Information Reports, it becomes clear that children birth to two years of age are particularly underserved, with additional need for access to services for children 3 to 4 years of age.

The following section outlines who is eligible for HS and EHS services based on data from the 2015-19 American Community Survey (ACS). Further, an overview of the characteristics of those enrolled in HS and EHS programs is provided based on the 2018-19 Program Information Reports.

Who is eligible?

Overall, an estimated 721 children under five are living at or below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) in MCCC's service area and are eligible for EHS and HS services. The following tables provide eligibility estimates for the MCCC service area by county. *Please note, the tables below include the poverty rate for children under five reported in the ACS 2015-19 and assume that the poverty rate is similar for individuals ages 0-2 and ages 3-4. The estimated counts for each age group should be interpreted with caution.*

Oregon

Hood River County: According to the 2015-19 ACS, there are an estimated 1,421 children ages 0-4 in Hood River County, Oregon and an estimated 6.6% of these children are living below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Eligibility Data for EHS and HS Programs in Hood River County (in terms of 100% FPL)

	EHS age 0-2	HS age 3-4	Combined EHS and HS age 0-4
Population	784	637	1421
Estimated Poverty Rate	6.6%	6.6%	6.6%
Estimated Eligible Children	51	42	93

Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey

Wasco County: The 2015-19 ACS estimates that there are 1,649 children ages 0-4 in Wasco County, Oregon and 17.0% of these children are living below the FPL (see Table 2).

Table 2. Eligibility Data for EHS and HS Programs in Wasco County (in terms of 100% FPL)

	EHS age 0-2	HS age 3-4	Combined EHS and HS age 0-4
Population	1021	628	1649
Estimated Poverty Rate	17.0%	17.0%	17.0%
Estimated Eligible Children	171	106	277

Source: 2015-19 American Community Survey

Combined, this leads to an estimated 370 income-eligible children under 5 years of age living below the FPL in Oregon within the boundaries of MCCC's service area.

Washington

Klickitat County: According to the 2015-19 ACS, there are an estimated 1,091 children ages 0-4 in Klickitat County, Washington. Of these, an estimated 23.2% are living below the FPL (see Table 3).

Table 3. Eligibility Data for EHS and HS Programs in Klickitat County (in terms of 100% FPL)

	EHS age 0-2	HS age 3-4	Combined EHS and HS age 0-4
Population	598	493	1091
Estimated Poverty Rate	23.2%	23.2%	23.2%
Estimated Eligible Children	137	113	250

Source: 2015-19 American Community Survey

Skamania County: The 2015-19 ACS estimates that there are approximately 509 children ages 0-4 in Skamania County, Washington. Of these, an estimated 34.9% are living below the FPL (see Table 4).

Table 4. Eligibility Data for EHS and HS Programs in Skamania County (in terms of 100% FPL)

	EHS age 0-2	HS age 3-4	Combined EHS and HS age 0-4
Population	266	243	509
Estimated Poverty Rate	34.9%	34.9%	34.9%
Estimated Eligible Children	90	81	171

Source: 2015-19 American Community Survey

When all the data are combined, it leads to an estimated 300 income-eligible children under 5 years living below the FPL in Washington within the boundaries of MCCC’s service area. Additionally, because the two counties in Washington have a smaller population and a higher percentage of children living below FPL, children under 5 years of age in Washington generally are more likely to be living in poverty than in the two Oregon counties in the MCCC service area.

Table 5 shows that a total of **721 (15.4%) of children under five are eligible for HS and EHS programs based on income level across the four counties in the MCCC service area**, with infants representing the slightly larger eligible age group.

Table 5. Eligibility Data for EHS and HS Programs in All Counties in MCCC Service Area (in terms of 100% FPL)

	EHS age 0-2	HS age 3-4	Combined EHS and HS age 0-4
Population	2669	2001	4670
Estimated Eligible Children	449	342	721

Source: 2015-19 American Community Survey

Income Eligibility up to 130% FPL

MCCC HS and EHS programs also provide services to some children under five between 100% to 130% of the federal poverty level. ACS 2015-19 data for the 0 – 4 age group are only available up to 100% FPL. In other words, information for other poverty ratios, such as 125% FPL are only available for *all* individuals living in each county and is not disaggregated by age group (Table 6). The table below provides some rough estimates for the percentage of the total population living below 125% of the federal poverty level.

Caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions from these estimates as the census data itself has limitations and margins of error.

Table 6. Eligibility Percentages for HS and EHS Programs in All Counties in MCCC Service Area (in terms of FPL)

	Population below 125%		Percent below 125%
	FPL	Total Population	FPL
Hood River	2,660	22,983	11.6%
Wasco	4,208	25,660	16.4%
Klickitat	5,192	21,636	24.0%
Skamania	1,925	11,623	16.6%

Race and Ethnicity

The 2015-19 ACS provides racial and ethnic data for the counties within MCCC’s service district. **The largest racial/ethnic group is White (non-Hispanic) throughout all four counties (see Table 7).**

Table 7. Population Estimates by Race/Ethnicity in the MCCC Service Area

	Hood River	Wasco	Klickitat	Skamania	Total
Black or African Am.	136	80	160	58	434
% of Total Population	0.6%	0.3%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%
Am. Indian/Alaska Native	152	815	548	213	1,728
% of Total Population	0.7%	3.1%	2.5%	1.8%	2.1%
Asian Am./Pacific Islander	383	392	157	145	1,077
% Total Population	1.7%	1.5%	0.7%	1.2%	1.3%
Hispanic/Latinx	7,221	4,725	2,597	738	15,281
% Total Population	31.1%	18.1%	12.0%	6.3%	18.5%
White, not Hispanic	14,636	19,110	17,781	10,244	61,771
% Total Population	63.1%	73.1%	81.9%	87.2%	74.6%
Other Race(s)	1,859	1,814	683	426	4,782
% Other Race(s) of Total Population	8.0%	6.9%	3.1%	3.6%	5.8%
Estimated Total	23,209	26,130	21,721	11,753	82,813

Source: 2015-19 American Community Survey

As seen in Table 7 above, **the second largest racial/ethnic group in terms of population is Hispanic/Latinx across all four counties, ranging from 6 to 31 percent of the population.** It is important to note that migrant and seasonal workers are not fully accounted for in the ACS data. Furthermore, while these are the largest racial/ethnic groups in the MCCC service area, neither is highlighted in the following Table 9 as having the highest rate of poverty in a given county. This implies that poverty is inequitably distributed among BIPOC individuals in these counties.

Across the whole service area, individuals who identify as American Indian/Alaskan Native are estimated to have a higher poverty rate (27.8%) than any other racial or ethnic group (see Table 8). Individuals who identify as Black and/or African American have the next highest estimated poverty rate (20.0%) in the four-county region.

In Hood River County, individuals who identify as African American and/or Black have the highest poverty rate at 36.8%. This represents a disproportionate amount of poverty among such a small portion of the overall county population; individuals who identify as African American and/or Black account for only 0.6% of the overall population in Hood River County.

In Klickitat County, individuals who identify as American Indian and/or Alaskan Native have the highest poverty rate at 57.3%. Once again, this represents a disproportionate amount of poverty among such a small portion of the overall county population; individuals who identify as American Indian and/or Alaskan Native account for only 2.5% of the overall population in Klickitat County.

In Wasco County, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have the highest poverty rate in the county at 32.0%. Finally, in Skamania County, the smallest county of all four counties in terms of population, individuals who identify as Black and/or African American have the highest poverty rate in the county at 50.0%.

Table 8. Estimated Poverty Counts and Percentages by Race/Ethnicity in the MCCC Service Area

	Hood River	Wasco	Klickitat	Skamania	TOTAL
Black or African Am.	50	13	21	2	86
Est. Poverty Rate	36.8%	19.1%	13.4%	50.0%	20.0%
Am. Indian/Alaska Native	0	151	314	16	481
Est. Poverty Rate	0.0%	18.7%	57.3%	7.6%	27.8%
Asian Am./Pacific Islander	11	123	20	24	178
Est. Poverty Rate	2.9%	32.0%	12.9%	16.6%	16.5%
Hispanic/Latinx	586	583	276	42	1487
Est. Poverty Rate	8.1%	12.3%	10.6%	5.7%	9.7%
White (non-Hispanic)	732	1974	2595	1363	6664
Est. Poverty Rate	5.0%	10.3%	14.6%	13.3%	10.8%
Other Races	81	271	176	78	606
Est. Poverty Rate	4.4%	15.5%	26.0%	18.7%	12.7%

Source: 2015-19 American Community Survey

Table 9 below provides counts and percentages for children under five by race/ethnicity in the MCCC service area. The data are suppressed for multiple communities of color. Notably, **the data that are suppressed are also the communities experiencing the highest rates of poverty**. While the data have limitations, a couple trends for children under five include that the majority (89.2%) of children living in

poverty in Hood River County identify as Hispanic/Latinx and almost a third (34.3%) of children who identify as Hispanic/Latinx are living in poverty in Wasco County. In Klickitat County, around a third (36.0%) of children who identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native are living below 100% FPL.

Of note, the Four Rivers Early Learning Hub 2019 community plan identified **families who identify as Native American in Wasco County as underrepresented in publicly available data**. These families were identified by community stakeholders in Hood River and Wasco Counties as a priority population for early child care and education expansion. Specifically, the Hub’s 2019 community plan highlights the need for expansion in the Dufur Elementary school catchment area (where approximately 10% of the school’s population identify as Native American), Celilo village, and the “In Lieu” sites along the Columbia River where the River Band tribes live and fish.

Table 9. Estimated Poverty Counts and Percentages by Race/Ethnicity for Children Under Five

	Hood River		Wasco		Klickitat		Skamania	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Black or African Am.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Am. Indian/Alaska Native	-	-	7	2.1%	90	36.0%	-	-
Asian Am./Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Races	-	-	84	25.5%	25	10.0%	5	2.8%
Hispanic/Latinx	83	89.2%	113	34.3%	36	14.4%	5	2.8%
White (Non-Hispanic)	10	10.8%	125	38.0%	99	39.6%	166	94.3%

Source: 2015-19 American Community Survey

Language Spoken at Home

The trends in the race/ethnicity data add a layer of cultural context to the data about the children eligible for early learning assistance. Some families are learning English as a second language and may experience additional barriers in access to services. Table 10 shows general population trends among children ages 5-17 in the four counties served by MCCC. **The most widely spoken non-English language at home for children in these four counties is Spanish.**

Table 10. Children 5 to 17 years old by Language Other than English Spoken at Home in the MCCC Service Area

	Hood River		Wasco		Klickitat		Skamania	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Spanish	1,607	40.0%	860	20.8%	601	19.2%	73	4.1%
Other Indo-European languages	44	1.1%	8	0.2%	15	0.5%	22	1.3%
Asian and Pacific Island languages	21	0.5%	23	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other languages	0	0.0%	18	0.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total population age 5-17	4,013	-	4,125	-	3,137	-	1,730	-

Source: 2015-19 American Community Survey

Disability Status

Disability data for children under five years is very limited in the 2015-19 ACS for counties served by MCCC, particularly for the more geographically isolated areas. The counts provided in the census are very small causing data suppression for any further disaggregation by race/ethnicity, and yet **multiple sources suggest these data are crucial to identifying trends in childhood poverty and disability by race and ethnicity.**

Table 11 provides some disability data for male and female children under five years with some counties reporting little to no children identified with a disability.

Table 11. Male and Female Children Under Five Years with a Disability in the MCCC Service Area

	Males under 5 years	Males under 5 years with a disability	% Males under 5 with a disability	Females under 5 years:	Females under 5 years with a disability	% Females under 5 with a disability
Hood River	712	-	-	737	9	1.2%
Wasco	890	24	2.7%	764	45	5.9%
Klickitat	539	-	-	552	-	0.0%
Skamania	289	-	-	220	-	0.0%
Total	2430	24	1.0%	2273	54	2.4%

Source: 2015-19 American Community Survey

PRE administered a family engagement survey in 2019 for the Four Rivers Early Learning Hub and the survey results provided insight into some of trends related to child care and children receiving EI/ECSE services. Findings suggest that Hispanic/Latinx families are in particular need of more specialized care for children with disabilities. Additionally, children in geographically isolated areas who are receiving EI/ECSE services represent another important intersection of need. The survey data are limited to Hood River and Wasco Counties. The key findings, however, align with multiple reports compiled by other organizations in

both Oregon and Washington that highlight concerns around limited care options for children with disabilities in rural counties (such as the 2018 Child Care Aware report).

Children Experiencing Homelessness

Like disability status, information regarding children experiencing homelessness is scarce and there are notable limitations with accurately collecting this information. For both 2018-19 and 2019-20, McKinney Vento counts accessed through the Oregon Department of Education indicate that no children (age 3 – 5) experiencing homelessness were enrolled in public preschools and Oregon Head Start programs in any of the three school districts in Wasco County in 2018-19, nor in Hood River County school district. This information does not align with the 2018-19 HS program reports.

Who is not eligible?

There is an important part of the population that is not eligible for publicly funded child care services, but still needs financial assistance. Those individuals that live above 100% FPL, but below 200% FPL, are often unable to access adequate child care. Data from the Four Rivers Early Learning Hub’s 2019 community plan clearly demonstrates this need, indicating that many families in Wasco and Hood Rivers counties report they feel stuck “in-between” when they make just enough to not qualify for assistance but are unable to afford private care options. Additional family survey data collected by PRE in 2020 for the Hub reveal that the pandemic resulted in notable disruptions to families’ work locations, hours, and child care needs, deepening concerns for parents who already felt stuck. COVID-19 restrictions further reduced child care slots in many child care programs, increased care expenses (especially as parents needed care for their school-age children), and left parents needing more hours of child care. Table 12 shows the proportion of all individuals that fall between 100% and 200% FPL. **This 100 to 200% FPL group overall represents a larger portion of the total population (21.6%) in the MCCC service area than those living below 100% FPL and includes a notable group of children with limited access to adequate care.**

Table 12. Population Estimates for Individuals Living between 100% and 200% FPL in the MCCC service area

	Below 100% FPL	At or below 200% FPL	Between 100%-200% FPL	Total	Percent between 100-200% FPL
Hood River	1,419	6,805	5,386	22,983	23.4%
Wasco	2,969	8,748	5,779	25,660	22.5%
Klickitat	3,371	8,204	4,833	21,636	22.3%
Skamania	1,492	3,191	1,699	11,623	14.6%

Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey

Table 13 reports the proportion of individuals who fall between 125% FPL and 200% FPL in the MCCC service area. Hood River and Wasco Counties have the highest percentages of individuals living between these poverty ratios. There are limitations as the data are not disaggregated by age group in the ACS data; more data are necessary to better understand the percentage of children below 5 that live between 125% and 200% FPL.

Table 13. Population Estimates for Individuals Living between 125% and 200% FPL in the MCCC service area

	Between 125%- 200% FPL	At or below 200% FPL	Total Population	Percent between 125%- 200% FPL
Hood River	4,145	6,805	22,983	18.0%
Wasco	4540	8,748	25,660	17.7%
Klickitat	3012	8,204	21,636	13.9%
Skamania	1266	3,191	11,623	10.9%

Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey

Who is currently being served by MCCC?

The 2015-2019 ACS data suggest that there are approximately 721 income-eligible children ages 0-4 in the service area. EHS and HS enrollment data provided reported by the MCCC indicate less than half (42.6%) of these eligible children are receiving services in all counties combined. HS and EHS programs maintain a database of information on enrolled children and pregnant women, including characteristics such as age, eligibility type, race and ethnicity, primary language, early intervention services, new enrollment, foster care status, and homelessness. Based on the 2018-19 Program Information Report, a total of 307 children living below 100% of the FPL were enrolled in HS and EHS in the service area (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Total population count income-eligible and enrolled for EHS and HS in the MCCC service area



EHS reports providing services to 220 children and pregnant women in MCCC’s service area in the 2018-2019 school year. This enrollment information was collected at roughly the same time as the 2015-19 ACS was collecting their data on population statistics referenced earlier. **As seen in Table 14, of the 220 children and pregnant women enrolled, just over half (51.0%, n = 112) are receiving EHS services based on income below 100% of the federal poverty level. The remaining individuals being served represent other populations in notable need of accessible child care.** Other reasons why children and pregnant women were identified as eligible for EHS were that their family was receiving public assistance such as TANF or SSI, the child was in foster care, the child or family was considered homeless, or the family was over 100% of the FPL, but below 130% of FPL. Additionally, an estimated 5.0% of children and pregnant women were served who do not qualify for publicly funded slots.

Head Start reports providing services to 406 children in MCCC’s service area in 2018-2019. **Of these 406 children, an estimated 48.0% (n = 195) received HS services based on income-eligibility (100% FPL).** Other reasons why children were identified as eligible for HS were that their family was receiving public assistance such as TANF or SSI, the child was in foster care, the child or family was considered homeless, or the family was over 100% of the FPL, but below 130% of FPL. Additionally, an estimated 9.1% of

children were served who do not qualify for publicly funded slots. **Notably, despite the limited data provided in the ODE McKinney-Vento counts for 2018 through 2020, six percent (6.2%) of those enrolled are children or pregnant women experiencing homelessness.**

Table 14. Enrollment Data by Primary Eligibility Category for MCCC Service Area

	Below 100% FPL	Between 100% and 130% FPL	Public Assistance (TANF, SSI, etc.)	Foster Child	Homeless	Over Income	Total Enrolled
EHS	112	36	34	17	10	11	220
HS	195	80	42	23	29	37	406
Total	307	116	76	40	39	48	626

Source: MCCC EHS PIR 2018-2019, MCCC HS PIR 2018-2019

In 2018-19, seventeen pregnant women were enrolled in EHS programs (Table 15). All these women were enrolled in Medicaid and received prenatal health care while enrolled in the program. Most women also received postpartum care, prenatal education on fetal development, and information on the benefits of breastfeeding. Eight of these women experienced medically high-risk pregnancies. For context, Table 16 provides estimated birth rates and the number of women who gave birth in the past year for each county in MCCC’s service area. According to the 2015-19 ACS, approximately 15.9% (n = 6,684) of all women who had a birth in Oregon in the past twelve months were living below 100% of the federal poverty level. While not available at the county level, **all these data combined suggest there may be a need for more services for expecting mothers living in poverty in the MCCC service area.**

Table 15. Enrollment Data by Age for MCCC Service Area

MCCC Service Area	Pregnant Women	Under 1 Year	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years	Total enrolled
EHS	17	64	67	72	-	-	220
HS	-	-	-	-	196	210	406

Source: MCCC EHS PIR 2018-2019, MCCC HS PIR 2018-2019

Table 16. Estimated Births and Birth Rates, by County

	Number of women 15-50 years old who gave birth in past 12 months	Birth rate among women 15-50 years old
Hood River	206	3.9%
Wasco	276	5.2%
Klickitat	174	4.3%
Skamania	39	1.7%

Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey

Enrollment By Health Care Access

The majority of enrolled children have health insurance and continuous access to quality care in both programs (Table 17). Notably fewer children, especially infants, are up to date on preventative care and have continuous access to quality dental care. It is highly likely that the pandemic exacerbated this issue.

Table 17. Enrollment in EHS and HS by Health Care Access

	Has Health Insurance	% of Total enrolled	Continuous Access to Quality Health Care	% of Total enrolled	Up-to-date Preventative Care	% of Total Enrolled	Continuous Access to Quality Dental Care	% of Total Enrolled
EHS (n = 203)	199	98.0%	198	97.5%	127	62.6%	144	70.9%
HS (n = 406)	404	99.5%	397	97.8%	353	86.9%	381	93.8%

Source: MCCC EHS PIR 2018-2019, MCCC HS PIR 2018-2019

Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity

According to the 2018-19 Program Information Reports, 220 children and pregnant women are enrolled in EHS and 406 children are enrolled in HS. Of these women and children, most identify as White or Hispanic and reflect the largest race/ethnicity groups present in all four counties (Table 18). **Population trends indicate that the races and ethnicities with the highest poverty rates, however, are the least represented in enrollment numbers. Specifically, only 3.5% of total children enrolled in both EHS and HS combined are children who identify as American Indian/Alaskan Native, despite this group having the overall highest poverty rate (27.8%) in the MCCC service area of any race or ethnicity.**

Table 18. Enrollment in EHS and HS by Race and Ethnicity

	Black or African Am.	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian Am./Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White (non Hispanic)	Other Race(s)	Total
EHS	3	11	5	92	102	7	220
HS	5	11	6	165	205	14	406
Total	8	22	11	257	307	21	626

Source: MCCC EHS PIR 2018-2019, MCCC HS PIR 2018-2019

Enrollment by Disability, Homelessness, and Foster Care Status

Other groups of children who are tracked by EHS and HS in the Program Information Reports include children receiving services for disabilities, children who experience homelessness, and children who are in foster care (Table 19). These numbers reflect children enrolled during the 2018-2019 school year. Data for these categories are available in a limited capacity outside of HS and EHS reports and are not disaggregated by county.

Table 19. Subcategories of Eligibility for EHS and HS in MCCC Service Area

	Eligible for Early Intervention Services	Experienced Homelessness	Received Foster Care Services
EHS	30	11	19
HS	95	33	26

Source: MCCC EHS PIR 2018-2019, MCCC HS PIR 2018-2019

While disability categories are not identified in the PIRs for EHS, they are identified in the Program Information Reports for children receiving HS services. Refer to Table 20 for primary disability categories.

The 95 children with identified disabilities represent approximately a fourth (23.4%) of those enrolled in HS. Over sixty-percent of the children enrolled in HS in the MCCC service area have a speech language impairment. Another common area of disability is Developmental Delay, since disabilities are difficult to identify accurately in young children. "Other disability" includes autism, other health impairment, and multiple disabilities.

Table 20. Disability Data for Children Enrolled in HS in MCCC Service Area

	Speech Language Impairment	% of Total Identified with Disability	Developmental Delay	% of Total Identified with Disability	Other Disability	% Total Identified with Disability
HS enrolled	59	62.1%	30	31.6%	6	6.3%

Source: MCCC HS PIR 2018-2019

Enrollment By Languages Spoken at Home

Among children enrolled in MCCC's early learning programs, around one-third of children speak Spanish as their primary language. Table 21 shows primary language data disaggregated by program. Enrollment reflects the most widely spoken non-English language spoken by children under five across all counties.

Table 21. Primary Languages Spoken at Home and Percentages, by Program

	EHS	Percent of total enrolled	HS	Percent of total enrolled
English	158	71.8%	291	71.7%
Spanish	62	28.2%	114	28.1%
Other Language	0	0.0%	1	0.2%

Source: MCCC EHS PIR 2018-2019, MCCC HS PIR 2018-2019

Eligibility Compared to Enrollment

Comparing data from the 2015-19 American Community Survey to EHS and HS Program Information Reports, it becomes clear that children birth to two years of age are particularly underserved, with additional need for access to services for children 3 to 4 years of age. Table 22 shows that only a fourth (24.9%) of children ages 0-2 that are eligible based on FPL are receiving services through EHS in the MCCC service area. Closer to sixty percent of children ages 3-4 that are eligible based on FPL are receiving services through HS in the MCCC service area.

Table 22. Eligible Children Being Served in MCCC Service Area

	Total Enrolled	Enrolled with Primary Eligibility: Below 100% FPL	Estimated Eligible by FPL	Est. Percent Served based on FPL
EHS	220	112	449	24.9%
HS	406	195	342	57.0%
Total	626	307	721	42.6%

Sources: EHS PIR 2018-2019, HS PIR 2018-2019, 2015-19 American Community Survey



GAPS IN SERVICES

Service Gaps and Community Needs.

Key Findings:

- ◆ A reoccurring theme in the data is that families face a lack of available spots in publicly funded and private child care programs in the MCCC service area, and this is especially the case for infants (ages 0-2).
- ◆ A report published by Child Care Aware of Washington in 2019 indicates that the three major needs of families seeking child care for children ages 0-4 are flexible hours, subsidized care, and care for children with special needs. An additional need for more transportation options to/from care, especially in geographically isolated communities, is also a common thread in the analysis. Data pertaining to Hood River and Wasco Counties in Oregon echo these child care needs.
- ◆ Families in Oregon and Washington with children with disabilities often struggle to access adequate care for their children. The biggest challenge in providing quality child care is the need for individuals who are trained and experienced in working with children with disabilities that work in locations families can easily access.
- ◆ There is a need for more data regarding children experiencing homelessness in MCCC's four-county region, especially as this population is served by HS and EHS programs. Two important factors that contribute to homelessness in Washington and Oregon include the rising cost of rent and the limited supply of housing available.
- ◆ New policies supporting minimum wage increases and child tax credit adjustments intended to reduce childhood poverty run the risk of pushing families just over the threshold of eligibility to receive a variety of services offered to families living below FPL. More data are needed to better estimate the effects of these local policies on income eligibility for child care assistance.
- ◆ As of June 2020, Child Care Aware data indicate Washington state experienced a 27% drop in child care capacity. Data for Oregon echo this trend in terms of new limits on child care capacity and reduced hours of care due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gaps in services are identified below that have a notable impact on access to child care in the MCCC service area. The following section outlines what the gaps are, where they exist, why they have emerged, and what the needs of the community are going forward.

What are the gaps?

Overall, the lack of available spots in child care programs as well as limited flexible and accessible child care options are essential areas to address in terms of gaps in early child care and education services. Three groups that especially struggle to access these services are children with disabilities, children experiencing homelessness, and families that currently are or soon will be living between 100 and 200% of the federal poverty level.

Saturation levels and child care deserts for children under five

Saturation levels refer to the number of eligible children who receive services. **A reoccurring theme in the data is that families face a lack of available spots in child care programs in the MCCC service area.** Considerations for this community needs assessment include not only those eligible for HS and EHS based on income level and other factors, but also wider trends around how many children overall in the service area have access to child care in any capacity. This report refers to public and private slots, meaning publicly funded or privately paid space for one child to receive a full day of care. Regulated child care refers to care facilities registered with the state (center-based, large home-based, and small home-based care) that are eligible to receive public funding slots. Data on saturation levels is compiled differently in Oregon and Washington, and therefore discussed separately below. Organizations such as the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), Child Care Aware, and Oregon's Early Learning Division each create reports on saturation and child care deserts independently. Head Start and Early Head Start programs also track saturation data in their Program Information Reports.

Flexible and accessible child care options

The 2019 Four Rivers Early Learning Hub community plan indicates that there are a number of gaps related to access to child care in Hood River and Wasco Counties in Oregon. **Parents have limited options for transporting their children to the place of care, must often miss work to care for children, and need longer or different hours of care than are available.** Data from the Washington DCYF parallels findings in the Four Rivers Early Learning Hub report. Educational Service District (ESD) 112, which provides services in Klickitat County, conducted a 2018 community assessment that further emphasized concerns with transportation and a lack of child care providers.

Children with Disabilities

One trend noted in OCDC's 2017 Statewide Community Assessment Update indicates that **families who have children eligible to receive EI/ECSE services often struggle to access adequate care for their children.** These children either have an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), depending on disability status and age of the child. There are at least 13 federally recognized categories of disability that the government provides services for; the five most common areas of disability in the MCCC service area are speech or language impairment, developmental delay, autism, emotional disturbance, and health impairment. Other common categories of disability include visual impairment, hearing impairment, and physical disabilities that do not necessarily affect the child's health. Typically, a child needs to be diagnosed by a medical or mental health professional in the community to receive services, but this is not always the case. Speech and language impairments and autism spectrum disorder do not generally require formal diagnoses outside of the school to receive services.

The biggest challenge in providing adequate, quality child care to these children is the need for trained and experienced individuals to work in areas the families have access to. Typically, families who live below FPL have difficulty finding transportation to take children a greater distance from where they live. This means that either adequate, quality child care for children with disabilities must be available in regions near these families or better access to transportation needs to become available.

Spanish-Speaking Families with Children Receiving EI/ECSE Services

Beyond just the need for trained and experienced individuals to work with children with disabilities, families who speak a language other than English as their primary language need access to primary language communication and resources. **The Four Rivers Early Learning Hub community plan (2019) highlighted families who identify as Hispanic/Latinx and who have a child with a disability as a nexus area in terms of the need for better care options.**

Children Experiencing Homelessness

There is currently limited data available about children experiencing homelessness that are eligible for services, although data are available for unhoused children enrolled from the most recent HS Program Information Reports (2018-19). While these children only account for a very small number of children enrolled, it is important to note that homelessness and houselessness are difficult to track and might not be accurately measured. Children experiencing homelessness or houselessness are likely to have a more difficult time accessing high quality, consistent child care.

"I quit my job in order to stay home with my son because I could not find quality child care that was affordable enough to make it worthwhile to go back to work. (i.e. I would only be bringing home a few hundred dollars per month after paying for child care.) It wasn't worth it to us and we decided I would care for him, even though it has been challenging financially."

**-Example of family input
from the Four Rivers Community Plan**

Families in or soon to be in the range of 100%-200% FPL

Families with young children living between 100% and 200% FPL in the MCCC service area are likely to have difficulty accessing affordable child care. Evidence from data collected for the Four Rivers Early Learning Hub's community plan (2019) indicates that these families struggle to pay for child care. The research to support the Hub's Community Plan was conducted by PRE. The income generated from one more adult in the workforce would help with covering child care costs, but without child care assistance, families are often resigned to living off a single income.

Where are the gaps?

There are notable gaps in available data as well as gaps in child care services, and both types of gaps often exist for the same populations. The following highlights where these gaps have emerged in the MCCC service area.

Oregon

In 2019, Children First for Oregon published data indicating Hood River County has a 34.4% early education enrollment rate (compared to the Oregon statewide rate of 43.7%). This refers specifically to children ages 3-4 enrolled in school. **Additionally, this report notes Hood River has a child poverty rate of 14.6%**, as compared to the federally estimated 6.6% child poverty rate found in the 2015-19 ACS (see Table 1). Wasco County has a similar early education enrollment rate, at 33.6% of children ages 3-4.

However, based on data compiled by Children First for Oregon, Wasco’s childhood poverty rate is higher at 20.8% (as compared to the federally estimated 17.0% child poverty rate found in the ACS, see Table 1). These data indicate there are likely more children eligible for HS and EHS than the census data capture.

Oregon’s Early Learning Division reports data in terms of child care deserts rather than public funding saturation rates. Child care deserts are defined by ELD as a county with fewer than 33% of its children having access to child care slot, whether in publicly funded programs (Head Start, Early Head Start, OPK, Preschool Promise, Baby Promise, etc.) or market price programs. Table 23 shows percentages for Hood River County, Wasco County, and Oregon state as a whole. In Hood River County, only 18% of children ages 0-2 years have access to a regulated child care slot, while 53% of children ages 3-5 years have access to a regulated child care slot. Wasco County demonstrates a similar level of access, with 25% of children ages 0-2 years having access to a regulated slot, and 43% of children ages 3-5 years having access to a regulated slot. In sum, both Hood River and Wasco Counties are considered child care deserts for children ages 0-2.

Table 23. Percent of Children with Potential Access to a Regulated Child Care Slot, by Age Group

	Age 0-2	Age 3-5	Age 0-5
Hood River	18%	53%	36%
Wasco	25%	43%	34%
Oregon	14%	32%	23%

Source: Oregon’s Child Care Deserts 2020: Mapping Supply by Age Group and Percentage of Publicly Funded Slots

Washington

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families reports data in terms of saturation of publicly funded child care slots. According to a 2019-2020 study, 122 children ages 3-4 are estimated to be eligible for ECEAP services in all three school districts combined in Klickitat County and 89.3% of these children are being served (Table 24). Skamania County is estimated to have 58 children ages 3-4 that are eligible for ECEAP services in its two school districts combined and 94.8% of these children are being served. Of note, most of those unserved and underserved groups of children are living in small pockets separated by geography. Geographically isolated children are unlikely to be served by a surrounding school district with extra slots due to the large distances and limited transportation options. Geographically isolated areas are therefore a higher priority for early child care expansion. Based on the percentage of unserved children and child maltreatment rates, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families rated Goldendale and Skamania school districts as a higher priority for expansion than the other school districts in Skamania and Klickitat Counties.

Table 24. ECEAP Eligibility Data for Klickitat and Skamania Counties

	ECEAP and HS Slots (Age 3-4)	Est. Eligible Children Ages 3-4	Est. Percent Served
Klickitat County	109	122	89.3%
Skamania County	55	58	94.8%

Source: 2019-20 ECEAP and HS Saturation Study (Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families).

Table 25 indicates where slots are concentrated as of 2019-20. The Washington Department of Children, Youth and Families study notes a limitation includes that less accurate eligibility counts are provided for school districts with smaller populations, which may cause it to appear that public slots are inflated relative to the number of eligible children. This study emphasizes a need for more community-level data to better estimate children eligible for services.

Table 25. ECEAP Slots and Eligibility Data by School District

	ECEAP and HS Slots (Age 3-4)	Est. Eligible Children Ages 3-4
Klickitat SD	10	1
Goldendale SD	68	114
White Salmon Valley SD	31	7
Skamania County SD	0	3
Steven-Carson SD	55	55

Source: 2019-20 ECEAP and HS Saturation Study (Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families).

Why do the gaps exist?

Multiple reports and sources from both Washington and Oregon indicate a number of reasons why gaps exist between currently offered services and what services the community needs. One of the key reasons why gaps exist appears to be that those children living just above 100% FPL have limited access to federally funded child care and other benefits. Even as Washington’s ECEAP program allows children living between 100% and 130% FPL and Oregon’s Pre-K program allows children living between 100% and 110% FPL to use state funded slots, those living just above these thresholds are not eligible to receive much-needed benefits and services. Other reasons include the high cost of living and non-inflation adjusted income levels, inadequate child care supply, insufficient training and experience for those working with children with disabilities, and a lack of access to current child care slots.

Limited options for children just above FPL thresholds

New policies supporting minimum wage increases and child tax credit adjustments intended to reduce childhood poverty run the risk of pushing families just over the threshold of eligibility to receive a variety of services offered to families living below FPL. Critically, this includes access to affordable child care.

The number of individuals and families who will be out of the income range that makes them eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start is challenging to predict, but new policies that might decrease the number of children eligible for these services can be identified. Families with young children who live above 100% FPL but below 200% FPL are unlikely to be able to sustainably afford market rates for child care.

Minimum wage increases. The Oregon Pre-K Community Assessment Update that includes data from 2017 indicates that policies increasing minimum wage are likely to push a significant portion of children who currently are eligible for publicly funded child care slots over the FPL. The Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families accounted for this effect in its Caseload Forecast Report for 2019-2020 and estimates that 0.3% of children previously eligible for ECEAP will no longer be eligible in future years due

to minimum wage increases. **More data are needed to better estimate the effects of minimum wage increases on income eligibility for child care assistance.**

Child Tax Credit. Increased benefits attached to the federal Child Tax Credit for 2021 are expected to bring a substantial number of children out of poverty. This is expected to benefit BIPOC children living in poverty, who are disproportionately more likely to be living in poverty. While this might be a promising expansion of care, it might also push some families above 100% FPL, making them no longer eligible for crucial services they are unable to afford at the market rate. No estimates for this effect have been calculated yet. **More data are needed to better estimate the effects of new provisions in the Child Tax Credit on eligibility of children needing child care assistance.**

High cost of living and limited housing supply

Multiple reports, including the 2018 Community Assessment for ESD 112 EHS and ECEAP programs and the OPK Community Assessment Update published in 2017, indicate that **a growing reason for homelessness and houselessness in both Washington and Oregon is the rising cost of rent.** Another factor is **the limited supply of housing available in relevant areas;** the OCDC Statewide Community Assessment Update of 2017 indicates that vacancy rates across the state of Oregon have remained very low at 2.0%-2.8%. This is a strong indicator of insufficient supply of affordable housing, especially in communities with highly concentrated groups of low-income earning people. Ultimately, there are not enough places for people to live at a rate they can afford. **This housing burden affects families' ability to access transportation, child care, and other forms of support.**

Inadequate child care supply

Regardless of whether slots are federally funded or market price, there is an overall shortage of child care

"There is a lack of spaces that are affordable. We don't make enough to pay for the full time care, but make too much to qualify for low income programs. The only affordable option near us has a 2-year waitlist."

-Example of family input from the Four Rivers Community Plan

in Oregon and Washington, based on data from Oregon's Child Care Deserts 2020 Report and Child Care Aware of Washington's 2019 Annual Report. This is particularly true for children ages 0-2. Care for infants requires a smaller adult to child ratio, meaning providers are more likely to take on more children ages 3 to 5 instead. Child care deserts are likely to be reduced with increased public funding for early child care. Evidence suggests that publicly funded slots play an important role in maintaining an adequate supply of child care in a given county; several counties in Oregon that are not currently

child care deserts would become child care deserts without any publicly funded slots.

Lack of access to child care supply that exists

According to the Four Rivers Early Learning Hub 2019 Community Plan, a number of barriers to access have been identified by parents. Many families who are eligible for publicly funded child care slots struggle to access these slots for a variety of reasons. **For many families, transportation is a significant obstacle to accessing child care. For other families, the main obstacle is that child care does not align with parent work schedules.** This lack of access

to child care disproportionately impacts BIPOC families, and especially those who identify as Hispanic/Latinx in Oregon.

"My biggest barrier is that programs are not affordable or I do not qualify because my family isn't considered low income but I am unable to afford a private daycare."

-Example of family input from the Four Rivers Community Plan

What are the needs of the community?

Community needs in the MCCC service area include an increase in qualified early learning teachers, with a focus on provider training for working with children with disabilities. There is also a need for expanding child care programs at large, especially for infants (age 0-2). Families across the MCCC service area require transportation to care and more flexible and affordable care options, especially as the pandemic has exacerbated the lack of available spots in programs.

Oregon

OCDC's 2017 Statewide Community Assessment Update report identifies a **qualified early learning teacher shortage as a significant issue in Oregon.** This affects multiple areas of interest, including quality of care and education, health and safety concerns in the place of care, accessibility of care, culturally relevant programming, the ability of families to join the work force, and the quantity of families receiving public assistance. **Child care deserts are a related problem identified by Oregon's Early Learning Division.**

According to a report including data from early 2020 (before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down), Hood River and Wasco counties are child care deserts for children 0-2 years old. Further, each county has less than 60% of its population of children ages 3-5 with access to a child care slot. This indicates that greater access to and a greater quantity of child care providers are needed in Oregon. As noted in the 2019 Oregon Child Care Deserts report, adding slots alone is not the only solution as families cannot utilize added slots unless they are affordable, high quality, and meeting the safety and developmental needs of their children.

One population in Oregon whose needs are especially not being met are young children of Hispanic/Latinx families, and especially those with identified disabilities. A community plan compiled for the Four Rivers Early Learning Hub in 2019 identifies that the main barriers these families reported in accessing early care and education for their children were: "High program costs, lack of available slots in a program, lack of flexible hours of operation, lack of transportation to/from programs, limited bilingual providers that can communicate with families, and lack of mental health and special needs supports." Additionally, they identified a need for full-day and school day care programs in a center-based care

“Care is not full-day and my work is impacted. There are no bilingual staff which means there is no good communication happening between teachers and students.”

-Example of family input from the Four Rivers Community Plan

environment, affordability of care, and the ability to align care with parent work schedules. Families also indicated that they need transportation options and additional support for their children with disabilities. While these families did not identify sharing language and culture with staff as one of their top priorities, they did indicate that having staff share their home language and culture makes child care more accessible.

Washington

A report published by Child Care Aware of Washington in 2019 indicates that the three major needs of families seeking child care for children ages 0-4 are flexible schedules and hours, child care subsidies and financial assistance, and care for special needs children. They found that families were seeking child care for about 18% of children (throughout all of Washington) during non-standard hours of child care. This typically means after 6:30pm or on weekends. About 2% of families sought overnight child care options. Slightly more than 2% of children needed even more flexible child care, such as on a rotating shift, drop-in care, or temporary/emergency care.

According to Child Care Aware, over 57% of families in all of Washington are seeking child care providers that accept subsidies or other public financial assistance. The report highlights that the Washington state subsidy system reimburses providers at rates that do not cover the cost of high-quality care. Providers often only accept a few children on a subsidy, further restricting access for low-income families. **Moreover, 2020 Child Care Aware data indicates a drop in the number of providers and capacity due to the pandemic, with 27% of child care capacity temporarily closed in Washington as of June 2020 and some sites remaining permanently closed.** Finally, special needs children, particularly those under 3 years of age, struggle to find appropriate care. This requires that providers have experience or training with handling the variety of special needs of very young children, a criterion that is difficult for families to locate.

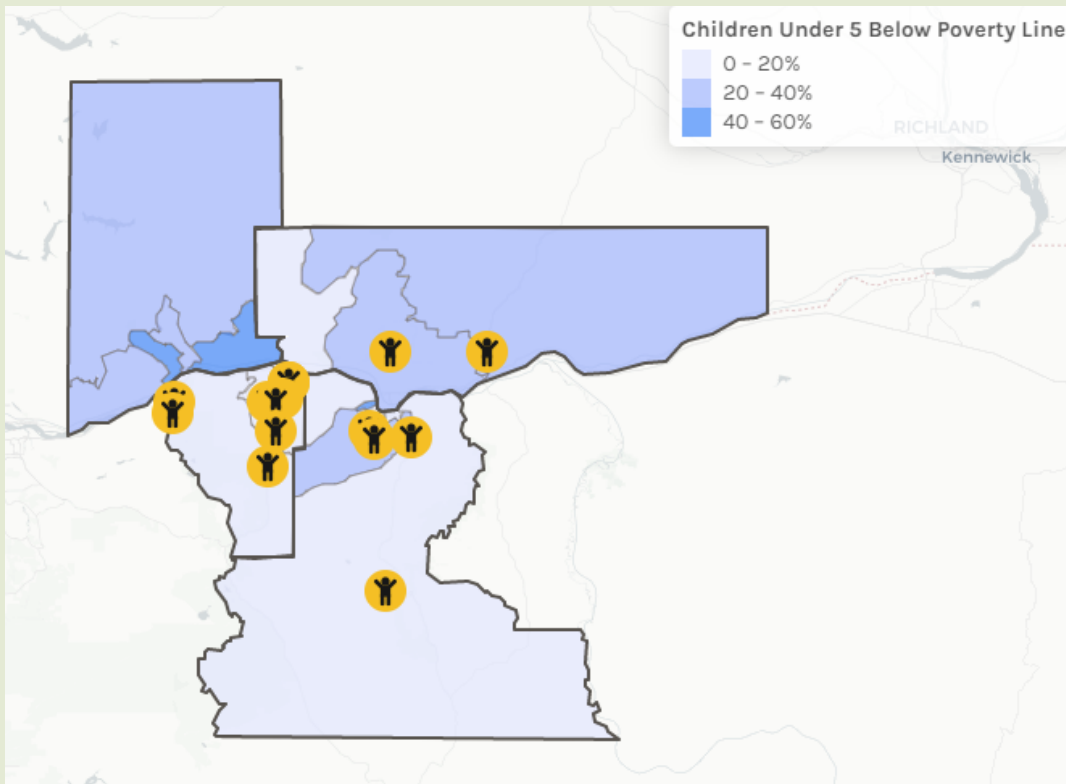
MCCC SERVICE AREA HEAT MAP

The MCCC service area heat map shows where each of the sixteen Head Start and Early Head Start Centers are located. Percentages of children under 5 years old living under 100% of the federal poverty level by census tract are also displayed in this map. All data for this map comes from the 2015-2019 American Community Survey published by the U.S. Census Bureau.



****Please note that there are high margins of error at the census tract level so data should be interpreted with caution.** This map is best used to understand general trends about children and families experiencing poverty in the MCCC service area. Margins of error are especially high in rural communities.

The map shows the highest child poverty rates in Skamania County and the lowest child poverty rates in Hood River. Margins of error are significant, however trends align with other data referenced in this report. HS and EHS Centers are located in two of the three census tracts with the highest poverty rates between 40% and 60%. Most Centers are concentrated around urban areas suggesting there may be more need in outlying communities (such as Klickitat and Skamania Counties).



To access the more detailed interactive map, please follow the link below:

<https://mccmap.pacific-research.org/>

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The secondary analysis included in this assessment points towards missing or limited data and gaps in child care services, often for the same populations. Gaps in data and services include children with disabilities, BIPOC children experiencing the highest poverty rates in each county, children experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care. Further populations experiencing gaps in care include individuals living between 100% and 200% FPL and families with infants (age 0-2).

Hispanic/Latinx families with children with disability/ies

While some data is available for Oregon through the Four Rivers Early Learning Hub Community Plan for Hispanic/Latinx families with children with one or more disabilities, this area of the population is in greater need of services in general. Parallel data needs to be collected in Washington, and more detailed data needs to be collected in Oregon.

Families Living "In-between" (100 to 200%FPL)

More data is needed about those families that will be potentially impacted by state minimum wage increases and the Child Tax Credit and pushed just over the threshold of 100% FPL. Not only does MCCC need to know more accurately how many families might be affected, but also how threshold adjustments could benefit these families.

Consult Additional Data Sources and Stakeholder Data-Sharing

To address these gaps, PRE recommends updating this community assessment on an annual basis with additional data sources that were not previously available. Examples of additional sources include Oregon Department of Human Services data for child welfare and foster care data (extensive data request and approval process) and comparable data from Washington's Department of Children, Family, and Youth, 2020 Census Data (yet to be released), and more community-level data from local, community-based organizations that could provide insight into child care needs for underserved populations.

Additionally, it is important to note that conducting this analysis required consultation of sources from a large number of early learning stakeholders, many who service the same populations in similar service areas. More opportunities for data sharing between these organizations, rather than conducting siloed community assessments, would enhance the analysis.

Access more reporting from the COVID-19 pandemic

Data management and collection has been impacted significantly by the pandemic. There are reports that have been recently published, however, that provide an important snapshot of early child care and education needs. The results of a large-scale quantitative and qualitative data collection effort were recently made available by the Oregon Early Learning Division to showcase statewide trends. **The questions from the household survey utilized in this study could inform future family engagement efforts by MCCC to better understand current family needs in the service area and how they compare to statewide findings.**

The 2020-21 Early Learning Division reporting highlights heightened parent concerns with safety, child development, and a reduced child care supply in light of the pandemic. These data collection efforts also reveal, however, that Oregon parents have the same concerns that were already an issue prior to COVID-19, including access to quality care for children with disabilities (especially in frontier counties), a need for more culturally responsive child care options, and a general desire for more available child care slots. A summary of Oregon trends identified in the household survey and parent listening sessions is included below:

Impacts of Covid-19 on Families' Experiences with Child Care (Winter 2020): This report includes findings from listening sessions conducted in 2020 with families across Oregon. Families reported receiving a patchwork of child care from family, friends, and neighbors during the pandemic. Those at home struggle to juggle remote work to care for their children and there was a perceived diminishment in the quality of child care during the pandemic. Parents expressed fear of exposing their children to COVID-19 and concerns that other families utilizing the same care options were not following COVID-19 safety guidelines. Families indicated a loss of income and higher concerns about affordability. Further, families reported concerns over the impact of the pandemic on children's development in terms of limited peer interaction, social emotional health, and kindergarten readiness. Families reported a need for adult emotional supports, connecting with other parents, and more communication from providers. Parents also noted providers were accepting less subsidies as a result of pandemic, and BIPOC families highlighted experiences with racism and not being heard by providers.

Covid-19 and Child Care: A Summary of Findings from the 2020 Household Survey (Spring 2021): A statewide family survey was administered in Fall 2020 to assess the impact of COVID-19 on child care and early education. Findings included a decrease in the child care supply in 2020, and parent concerns over finding the type of care they wanted and the availability of slots. Families reported challenges with finding a provider that reflected their cultural background and/or spoke the child's language. Parents in frontier areas of the state and those with children experiencing disabilities and/or chronic health care needs were most likely to cite difficulties in finding a provider who could support the needs of their child with a physical or other disability. Parents indicated a need for more provider training in effectively working with children with disabilities. Findings also include that children of color and children with disabilities and/or chronic health care needs were asked to leave care at high rates. Most families experienced a disruption in care and special services as a result of the pandemic. The report concludes: "These findings suggest that if families are going to opt for in-home care at higher rates, at least in the short term, considering how to increase opportunities for in-home caregivers to receive information about child development and early learning might contribute to the development of the children in their care. Making such information easy to access would also be important. For families who opt for center-based care, helping those families to understand the precautions being taken to prevent COVID-19 exposure might help to allay some families' worries."

Primary Data Collection

PRE recommends primary data collection to complement and deepen the secondary data analysis in this assessment and to better understand emerging child care needs in light of the pandemic. Family engagement efforts could build off of lessons learned from the 2019 and 2020 Four Rivers Early Learning Hub survey efforts and the 2020 statewide household survey conducted by the Oregon Early Learning Division. If possible, PRE recommends exploring multiple family engagement modalities beyond online surveys to increase access (for example, modalities that are often more accessible for Spanish-speaking families include paper-pencil surveys collected during in-person events, and radio programming). PRE evaluators recommend MCCC rely on local networks and community-based groups to increase engagement and better understand child care needs. PRE also suggests MCCC consider consulting local businesses and early child care providers through interviews or focus groups to gather input and identify partnership opportunities for expanding early child care and education.

APPENDIX A. Methods Addendum

The following table provides additional information about sources and a summary of how they were utilized for this assessment.

Table 26. Sources List with Summaries and Publication Information

Title of Document	Date of Publication	Publishing Organization	Summary
2018 Data Report: Trends, Child Care Supply, Cost of Care, & Demand for Referrals	2018	Child Care Aware of Washington	See pg. 12 for data specific to child care needs identified in Washington state.
County Ranking Data Report Release Final	2019 & 2020	Child Care Aware of Washington	Outlines most and least expensive counties for child care in WA, as percentage of median household income. Provides website to access county-specific data related to costs of child care. Reports statewide trends for child care provider capacity as of June 2020.
CFFO-County Data 2019: Status of Oregon Children and Families	2019	Children First for Oregon (CFFO)	County data sheets about population, family supports (including ERDC), health, child welfare, financial stability, early childhood education, and youth development and education.
Columbia Gorge Regional Community Health Assessment 2019	2019	Community Advisory Council (CAC)	Includes data from Wasco, Hood River, Sherman, Gilliam, and Wheeler counties in OR, and Skamania and Klickitat counties in WA, not disaggregated unless specified. Identifies gaps in data. Most relevant infographic: "Built Environment, Part 2," addresses child care directly.
ESD 112 EHS and ECEAP Community Assessment	2018	Educational Service District (ESD 112)	ESD 112 serves Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, and Pacific Counties. Recommendations by ESD 112 including need for more child care transportation options for families. Highlight rising cost of rent and homelessness. Demographic data disaggregated by county. Eligibility and needs of pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and preschool children. Includes data for unserved, eligible children and school districts in Klickitat County (useful for saturation study).

Title of Document	Date of Publication	Publishing Organization	Summary
Four Rivers Early Learning Hub: Community Plan	2019	Four Rivers Early Learning Hub / Pacific Research and Evaluation	A 2019 family engagement survey, conducted by PRE, identified families' needs and priorities as it relates to child care in Hood River and Wasco counties. Identifies priority populations, including Hispanic/Latinx Families. Identifies a nexus area with overlapping need: Hispanic/Latinx families with children enrolled in EI/ECSE.
Four Rivers Early Learning Hub Survey Report	2021	Four Rivers Early Learning Hub / Pacific Research and Evaluation	The Four Rivers Early Learning Hub, Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R), and the Regional Solutions Team partnered together to learn more about the needs and challenges that local families and businesses are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic with regard to child care. Research activities focused on assessing child care needs in the five-county region (incl. Hood River and Wasco Counties) and included a family input survey and an employer survey. Surveys were administered online in English and Spanish in September of 2020.
1302.11 Determining community strengths, needs, and resources	Unknown	HS: Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center	Requirements for compiling a community assessment for HS and EHS.
2018-2019 Early Head Start Program Information Report 10CH-0221-200 Mid-Columbia Children's Council, Inc.	2019	MCCC EHS	Used data from EHS PIR to report on age, eligibility type, race and ethnicity, primary language, early intervention services, new enrollment, children in foster care, and children experiencing homelessness.
2018-2019 Head Start Program Information Report 10CH-0221-000 Mid-Columbia Children's Council, Inc.	2019	MCCC HS	Used data from HS PIR to report on age, eligibility type, race and ethnicity, primary language, early intervention services, new enrollment, children in foster care, and children experiencing homelessness.

Title of Document	Date of Publication	Publishing Organization	Summary
MCCC Annual Report	2020	MCCC	Identifies current enrollment data, including disability data.
2020 Estimated Supply of Child Care and Early Education Programs in Oregon	2020	Oregon Child Care Research Partnership - Oregon State University	See pg. 5-10, 12 for tables disaggregated by county.
Hood River and Wasco Counties Community Assessment	2009	Oregon Child Development Coalition (OCDC)	Data on Migrant/Seasonal Farm Workers' children that qualify for EHS and HS services. Overview of economic conditions and eligibility. Used as background information for Hood River and Wasco Counties. OCDC provides services to Migrant/Seasonal Farm Worker families.
Oregon Pre-K Community Assessment Update	2017	Oregon Child Development Coalition (OCDC)	Some data for all of Oregon, but counties mentioned do not include Wasco or Hood River. Data on how raising minimum wage could impact eligibility and create child care deserts in Oregon.
Statewide Community Assessment Update 2017	2017	Oregon Child Development Coalition (OCDC)	This is an updated version of Hood River and Wasco Counties Community Assessment, but for all of Oregon. Contains tables with info regarding eligibility estimates, income, race and ethnicity, etc., disaggregated by county. Wasco one of highest housing rental rates in state (50% of renters paying above 35% of household income).
McKinney-Vento Homeless Student Data	2018-2019 & 2019-2020	Oregon Department of Education	Counts for PK enrollment (age 3 to 5) in public preschools and Oregon Head Start programs by school district
Oregon's Child Care Deserts: Mapping Supply by Age, Group, Metropolitan Status and Percentage of Publicly Funded Slots	2019	Oregon Department of Education - Early Learning Division	Non-metro counties (such as Wasco and Hood River) have a higher proportion of public funding than metro counties but are still child care deserts for infants and toddlers (ages 0-2), though not for children ages 3-5. Wasco has a higher proportion of publicly funded slots than Hood River.

Title of Document	Date of Publication	Publishing Organization	Summary
Updated PDG Workbook 2	2019	Oregon Department of Education – Early Learning Division	Estimated HS/OPK enrollment data for Wasco and Hood River Counties; also contains poverty data.
Raise Up Oregon: Progress Report 2019-2020, Highlights	2020	Oregon Department of Education - Early Learning Council	Report on previous goals surrounding school readiness and child welfare/health. Priorities for 2021-2023 listed. Student Success Act expands current early learning services. Funding provided to pilot coordinated enrollment for Preschool Promise (and OPK, Baby Promise, and other ELD programs to follow).
Updated Oregon Child Care Deserts	2020	Oregon Department of Education – Early Learning Division	Tables 1 and 2 give estimated access to and number and percent of public, regulated slots. Data is disaggregated by county, Oregon only.
Health Complexity in Children - Pacific Source-Columbia Gorge	2019	Oregon Pediatric Improvement Partnership (OPIP), Oregon DHS, OHA	Medical complexity and social complexity scores for children using Pacific Source-Columbia Gorge state Medicaid plan, over a 3 year period, to indicate areas of services and areas of need. Overall, in a sample/population of 6,201 children, "32% of children had some level of medical complexity" (pg. 3).
Child tax credit expansion set to benefit 90% of Oregon's children under 18	2021	Our Children Oregon	Estimated data for children under 17 that would benefit from an increased child tax credit program. BIPOC children would disproportionately benefit. This might affect eligibility for services/resources requiring children to live under a certain percentage of the poverty level.
Saturation Data: Supplemental Master Doc for County Snapshots, Final	2018	Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE)	Saturation data for Wasco and Hood River counties, disaggregated by age (0-2, 3-5) based on Preschool Development Grant (PDG) workbooks.

Title of Document	Date of Publication	Publishing Organization	Summary
Covid-19 and Child Care: A Summary of Findings from the 2020 Household Survey	2021	Pears, K.C., Miao, A.J., Green, B.L., Lauzus, N., Patterson, L. B., Scheidt, D., & Tremaine, E.	Executive summary of Oregon Preschool Development Grant Birth to Age 5 Strengths and Needs Assessment: 2020 Statewide Household Survey Results. A statewide family survey was administered in Fall 2020 to assess the impact of COVID-19 on child care and early education. Findings included a decrease in the child care supply in 2020, and parent concerns over finding the type of care they wanted and the availability of slots. Needs for culturally responsive child care options, more provider training and options for children with disabilities in frontier counties, support for in-home caregivers, and more parents seeking more information regarding safety precautions taken in center-based care.
Impacts of COVID-19 on Families' Experiences with Child Care	2020	The Center for the Improvement of Child and Family Services - Portland State University and OSLC Developments, Inc.	Research funded by a federal Preschool Development Grant to the Oregon Early Learning Division. Listening sessions with 58 families across Oregon to learn about their experiences and needs related to finding and using quality child care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Provides insight into statewide trends such as disruptions to child care, parent concerns about safety and child development, a decrease in providers accepting subsidies and the need for social emotional supports for children and parents alike.
Census Data	2019	US Census Bureau	American Community Survey data estimating population and demographic data for 2015-2019.
2018-2019 ECEAP Outcomes Report	2019	WA State Dept. of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF)	Overview of ECEAP services aggregated for all of Washington state. Most relevant sections are "Enrolling Washington's Most Vulnerable Young Children," "Child Development and Learning," and the two sections relating to kindergarten readiness.

Title of Document	Date of Publication	Publishing Organization	Summary
2019-2020 ECEAP Caseload Forecast Report	2019	WA State Dept. of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF)	Forecasting a need for 4,769 more slots to serve all eligible children likely to participate by 2022-2023 school year. Current slots do not meet needs for children who are both eligible and likely to participate.
2019-2020 ECEAP and Head Start Saturation Study	2020	WA State Dept. of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF)	Saturation data for all Washington school districts. ECEAP expansion priority ratings provided. Based on the percentage of unserved children and child maltreatment rates, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families rated Goldendale and Skamania school districts as a higher priority for expansion than the other school districts in Skamania and Klickitat Counties.