



**Northwest
Community
Action
Partnership**

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Helping People. Changing Lives. Engaging Communities. Alleviating Poverty.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT 2025



**Northwest Community Action Partnership
Head Start Preschool & Early Head Start**
Supplemental Data Update

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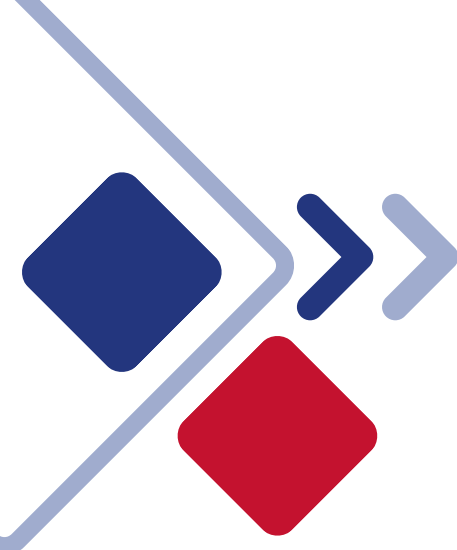


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**Northwest Community Action Partnership
Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start
www.ncap.info**

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I welcome you all to this annual community assessment conducted by the Northwest Community Action Partnership (NCAP) Head Start program. This assessment is a crucial step in understanding and addressing the needs of our community, enabling us to shape our program planning and set both short-term and long-term goals. By gathering information from various sources such as census data, online research, program and community information, and feedback from stakeholders, including parents, staff, and community partners, we have compiled a comprehensive document highlighting the strengths, needs, and resources within our community.

In today's rapidly changing landscape, it is essential for us to stay attuned to the evolving challenges faced by our families. Beyond the mandated formal assessment conducted every five years, NCAP Head Start actively engages with parents, staff, and community agencies through annual surveys to monitor satisfaction levels and identify areas of concern and pressing needs. This information directly influences our decision-making processes, shaping our selection criteria priorities, school readiness goals, Parent Family Community Engagement planning, and overall program objectives. We have found that the needs of our community closely align with the needs of our Head Start families.

Based on the wealth of data collected from diverse sources, we recognize the persistent need to prioritize the following areas in all the communities we serve and throughout our program:

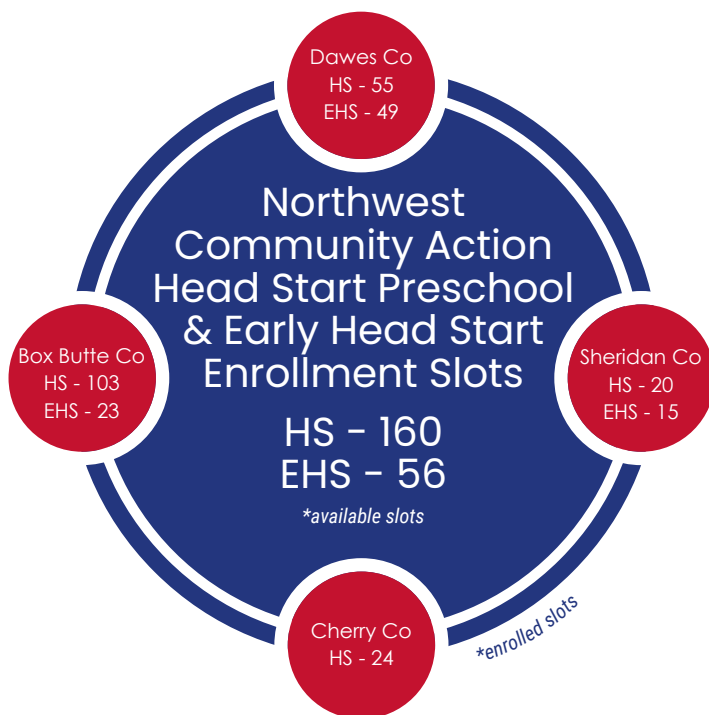
- Safe and affordable childcare
- Accessible public transportation
- Housing and homelessness
- Health and wellness
- Mental health, including trauma and domestic violence

Our commitment as a program is to generate new opportunities for the children and families within the NCAP Head Start service area. We strive to provide comprehensive services and establish strong partnerships that empower individuals to unlock their full potential in both learning and life. With over 50 years of experience in the early childhood community, we remain dedicated to supporting our community's growth.

Thank you all for your invaluable contributions to this assessment. Your input will guide us in developing targeted programs, training opportunities, and initiatives that meet the specific needs of our families. Together, we can create a brighter future for our children and strengthen the fabric of our community.

Jennifer Sorenson, Head Start Director





*Child Plus June 2024

INTRODUCTION

Northwest Community Action Partnership (NCAP) Head Start Preschool has provided school readiness services to eligible children and families for over 50 years in the Northwestern Panhandle of Nebraska. As the grantee for Box Butte, Sheridan, Dawes, and Cherry Counties, NCAP is federally funded to provide services to 160 Head Start Preschool (HS) children and 56 Early Head Start (EHS) children. During the 2023-24 school year, HS enrolled 202 children and EHS enrolled 87 children. These numbers include children that dropped our program during the year.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PLANNING PROCESS

In accordance with the federal Head Start Preschool Program Performance Standards (45CFR1302.11) and Head Start Act, NCAP Head Start Preschool conducted a Community Assessment in 2024. The following information was gathered, reviewed, and used to effectively plan five-year goals to support the growth of families and children within NCAP Head Start Preschool:

- **Demographic information about eligible infants, toddlers, preschool-age children, and expectant mothers.**
- **Eligible children and their families' education, health, nutrition, and social service needs.**
- **Employment and school schedules of parents with eligible children.**
- **Child development information detailing services, child care availability, and options available to eligible families.**
- **Resources available to families within the community.**
- **Strengths of the community and any identified gaps in available services for Head Start Preschool eligible families.**

Surveys, community partner reports, and other information were reviewed and analyzed for trends within the community, assisting the agency with its goal and program planning. Specifically, the following reports and information were used to develop a picture of the community and eligible Head Start Preschool families:

- **Program Information Reports (PIR) from the past 2 years**
- **2023 & 2024 NCAP Head Start Self -Assessment**
- **2024 Kids Count in Nebraska Report**
- **Buffet Early Childhood Institute Report**
- **U.S. Census Data**
- **Child Plus Data**





NCAP PROGRAM SERVICES



HEAD START PRESCHOOL & EARLY HEAD START

The inception of the Head Start Preschool program in 1965 marked the beginning of its administration by Chadron State College in Dawes County. Two years later, in 1967, the program came under the oversight of Northwest Community Action Partnership (NCAP) and extended its reach to include Box Butte, Cherry, and Sheridan Counties. Currently, NCAP Head Start operates nine centers across these four counties. Among them, two centers are collaborative efforts: Valentine Community Schools and Chadron State College's Child Development Center. These collaboration classrooms benefit from the expertise of certified early childhood teachers provided by the respective schools, enhancing the quality of child development. In addition to center-based programs, NCAP Head Start offers home-based options for children ages 3-5 and Early Head Start services for prenatal to age 3 (excluding Cherry County). Alongside its educational programs, Head Start Preschool provides family development services to assist families in achieving stability and self-reliance.



WEATHERIZATION

The Weatherization Program serves income eligible clients that have homes in need of weatherization measures to help them decrease the ever growing energy costs of heating and air conditioning. Weatherizing homes allows for more earned dollars to go into the families' overall budget. The program follows a priority system to identify the order in which qualifying persons are served, elderly (60+) persons are given the first priority followed by persons with disabilities. The service area for NCAP Weatherization covers 12 counties in the panhandle of Nebraska.



COMMUNITY SERVICE FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Community Services program provides services to qualifying families through Community Service Block Grant funds along with other grant programs to provide clients with assistance in food pantries, rent assistance, and utility assistance, along with other crisis services such as the ministerial associations, the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross and local businesses as necessary to expand client services in our rural service areas.

Other additional services are SOAR-SSI/SSDI are available throughout the Panhandle.

VOLUNTEER SERVICES



**AmeriCorps
Seniors**

The Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is a national volunteer program for active older adults ages 55 and above. Our objective is to match willing volunteers with non-profit organizations needing volunteers -- all for the good of our community. There is no cost to join and everyone is welcome. With 200+ volunteers serving at almost 40 non-profits organizations, RSVP impacts nearly every aspect of our community. Dawes & Sioux County RSVP is funded through AmeriCorps with matching local support.



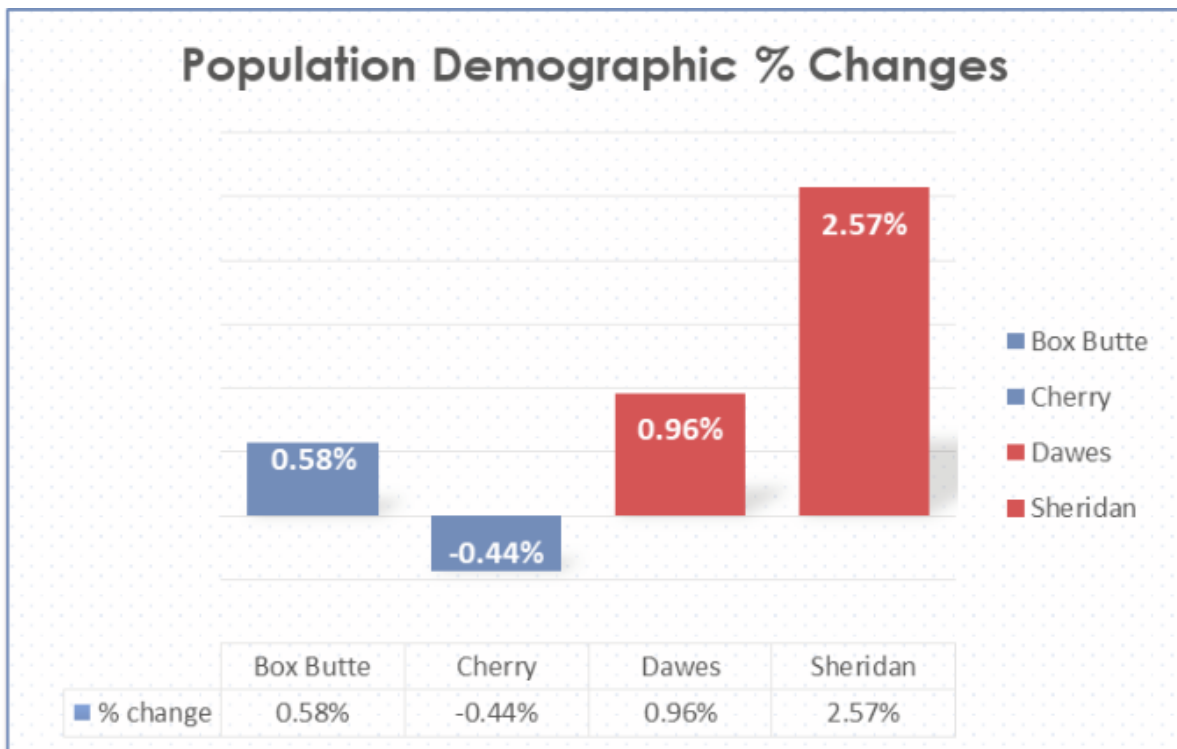
DIAPER BANK

The Diaper Bank program provides free diapers, pull ups and wipes to low income families in Box Butte, Cherry, Dawes, Sheridan and Sioux counties on a monthly basis. The program strives to alleviate diaper need and ensure an adequate supply of clean, dry diapers to families in need. The Diaper Bank works in partnership with other NCAP associated programs that work to fight poverty such as Head Start, Early Head Start, WIC, DHHS, Extra Helpings Food Pantries. Currently, the NCAP Diaper Bank serves nearly 200 infants and toddlers across the 5 country coverage area.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic data of NCAP is based on the 2024 Population Estimates Program. Below is a compilation of data consisting of geographic location, racial and ethnic composition, poverty statistics, employment data and a composition of Head Start Preschool demographic data.

	Box Butte	Cherry	Dawes	Sheridan
Land Area (Sq Miles)	1,075	5,960	1,396	2,440
Est. Population (2024)	10,754	5,468	8,212	5,058
% Change from 2023 Est. Pop.	+0.58%	-0.44%	+0.96%	+2.57%
avg # of people per mile	10	1	6	2
Language				
Primary	English	English	English	English
Secondary	Spanish, Lakota Sioux	Spanish, Lakota Sioux	Spanish, Lakota Sioux	Spanish, Lakota Sioux
Number of Schools				
Public School Districts	2	2	2	2
Schools - Public (K-12)	2	2	2	2
Schools - Private (K-12)	2	1	0	0
Post Secondary	2	0	2	0



*census.gov

*nebraska-demographic.com/counties_by_population

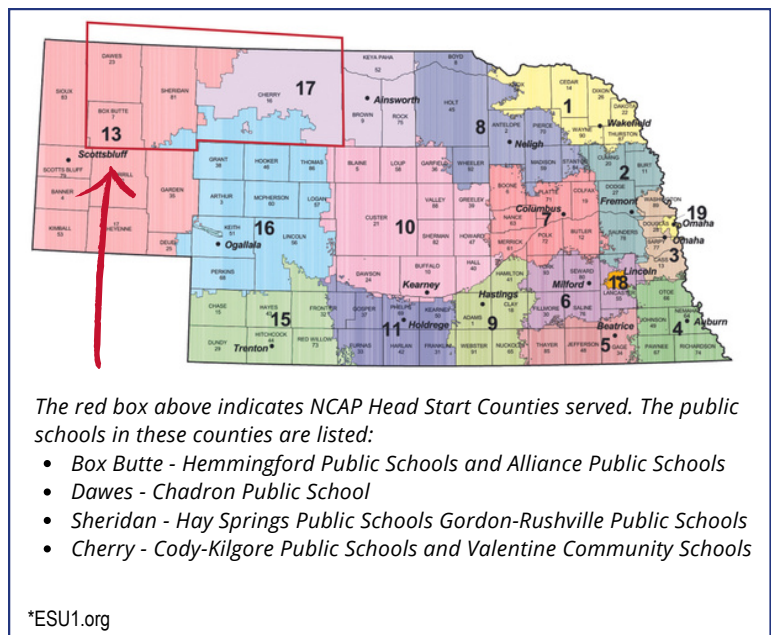
POPULATION ESTIMATES

Town/County	2022 est.	2023 est.	% Change 2022 - 2023	Square Miles	Population Density
Alliance	8,165	9,677	+18.5%		
Hemingford	771	767	-0.52%		
BOX BUTTE	10,672	10,692	+0.19	1,075	10.0
Cody	167	167	0%		
Crookston	73	72	-1.37%		
Kilgore	68	68	0%		
Merriman	87	88	+1.15%		
Nenzel	18	17	-5.56%		
Valentine	2,607	2,631	+0.92		
CHERRY	5,464	5,492	+0.51	5,960	1.0
Chadron	5,223	5,145	-1.49%		
Crawford	838	824	-1.67%		
Whitney	61	59	-3.28%		
DAWES	8,241	8,133	-1.31%	1,396	6.0
Clinton	41	38	-7.32%		
Gordon	1,465	1,444	-1.43%		
Hay Springs	578	575	-0.52%		
Rushville	799	784	-1.88%		
SHERIDAN	4,996	4,928	-1.36%	2,440	2.0
Harrison	233	240	+3.00%		
NEBRASKA	1,967,923	1,978,379	+0.53%	76,818	26.0

*census.gov

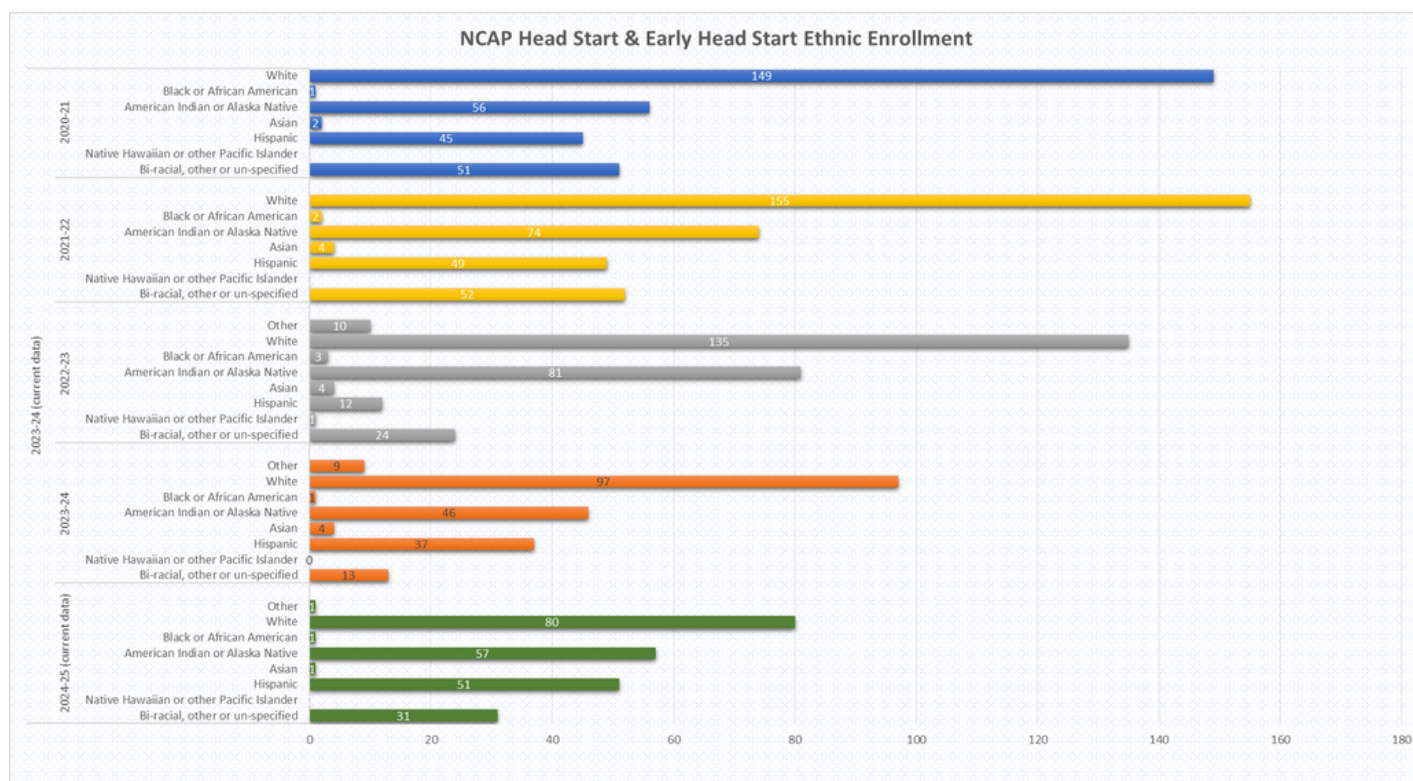
SERVICE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

NCAP Head Start reaches many more lives than just our clients. It is a community-based program that is involved in serving the entire community within our service area. Each program provides services to individuals and families, assisting them in building foundations for self-sufficiency. Nebraska studies have shown that the Panhandle's population has decreased as Nebraska's has increased. Although Cherry and Box Butte Counties have had a slight increase under 1% total, Dawes had a decrease of 1.31% and Sheridan County had a 1.36% decrease in population. The overall population reduction over the four counties we serve is 0.5%.



RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION

The racial/ethnic profile of the NCAP service area is comparable to the racial/ethnic profile for the State of Nebraska, with the majority of the citizens being White. The information below shows the specific racial/ethnic compositions of the service area's Head Start and Early Head Start families. The info shows Native American families making up the following two most prominent groups. English is the primary language spoken within the NCAP service area, with Spanish being the second most prevalent language. Bi-lingual aides are employed when available. Translation services are provided to the extent possible to all participants and families within the NCAP service area. Below are **HS and EHS Ethnic Enrollment Numbers**.



*Child Plus Records 2020 thru May 2024

State / County	est. Total Population 2023	Hispanic	Caucasian	Black or African American	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders	Two or More Races
BOX BUTTE	10,692	11%	84%	1%	4%	1%	0%	8%
CHERRY	5,492	3%	88%	1%	5%	0%	0%	5%
DAWES	8,133	4%	86%	2%	4%	1%	0%	5%
SHERIDAN	4,928	4%	80%	1%	11%	0%	0%	6%
Nebraska	1,978,379	12%	84%	5%	1%	2%	1%	5%

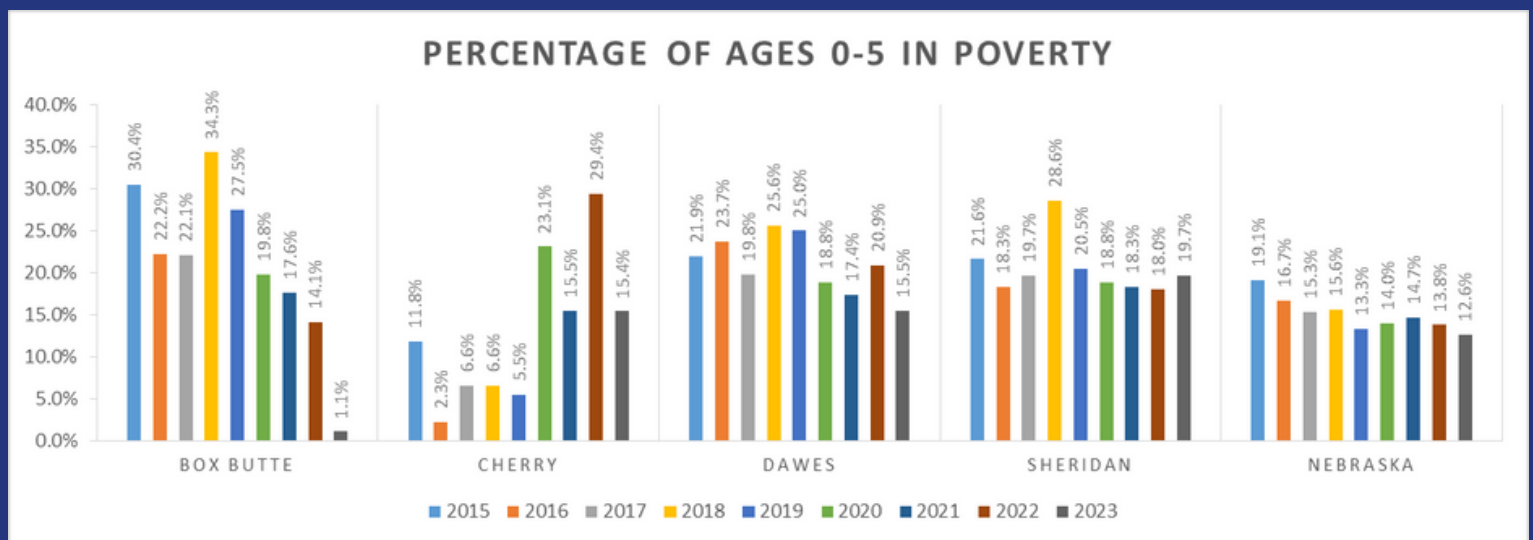
*Nebraska Legislative Research Office

*census.gov

POVERTY STATISTICS

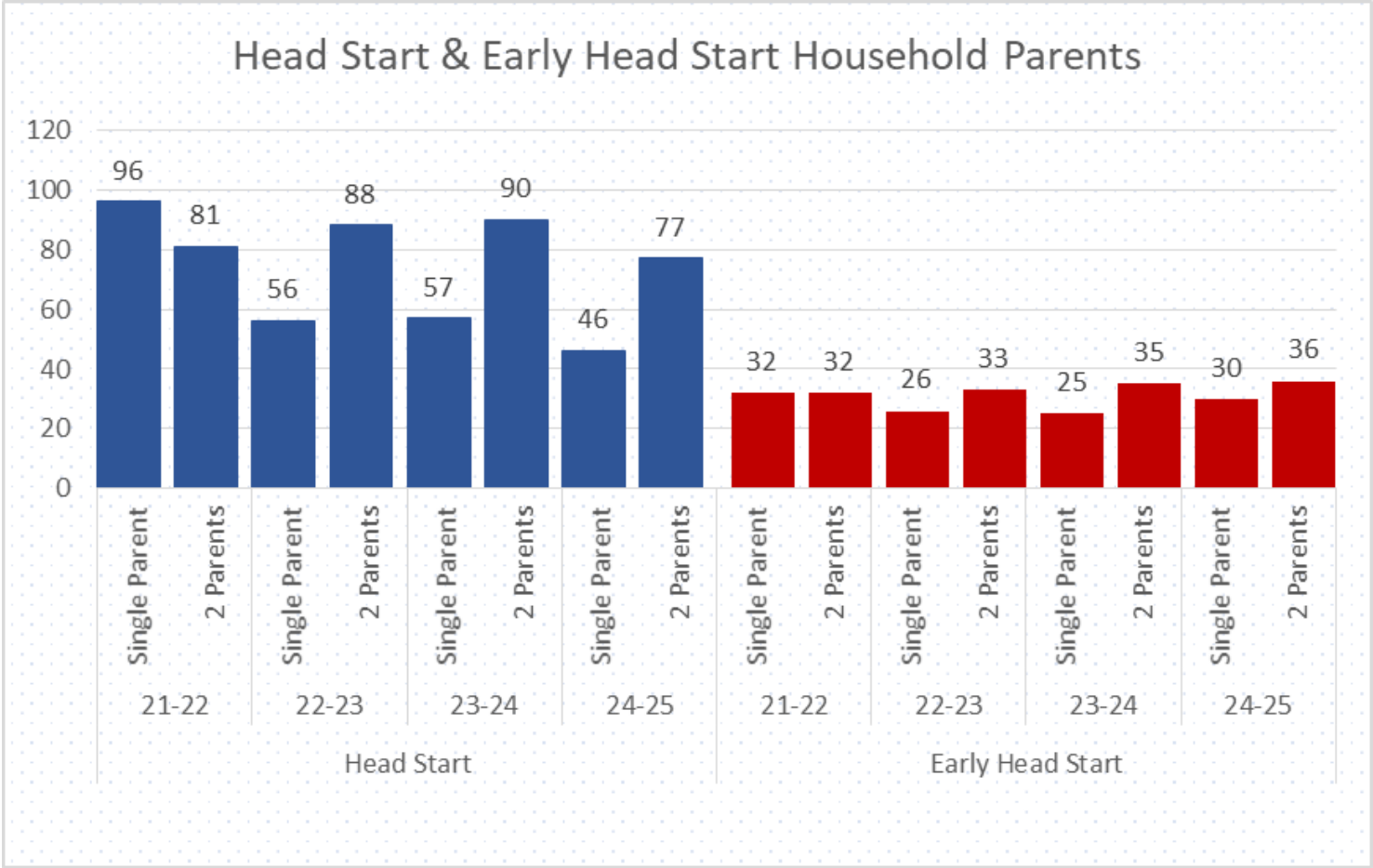
Using data from Census.gov 12.6% of children age 0-5 in Nebraska live in poverty. Sheridan County shows the highest percentage of children at poverty level with 19.7%. Dawes and Cherry County are at 15.5% and 15.4% respectively. Box Butte is at 1.1%. All counties covered by NCAP Head Start show higher rates of 0-5 in poverty except for Box Butte County. Using data for the last 10 years, ages 0-5 in poverty is trending downward for Box Butte County and the State of Nebraska. Dawes County shows a general trend in declining rates of ages 0-5 in poverty with slight spike in 2022. Sheridan County has not shown much variation in the ages 0-5 in poverty. Cherry County doesn't show a trend or pattern to the percentage of ages 0-5 in poverty.

2023 County Poverty Data by Age Group					
	County Population	All Ages Living in Poverty %	Under age 18 in Poverty %	Ages 0-5 in Poverty %	Median Household Income
BOX BUTTE	10,754	10%	4%	1.1%	\$68,778
CHERRY	5,468	7.2%	7.5%	15.4%	\$63,750
DAWES	8,212	12.6%	5.5%	15.5%	\$54,381
SHERIDAN	5,058	10.7%	14.2%	19.7%	\$56,900
Nebraska	1,965,926	10.5%	11.1%	12.6%	\$74,590



PARENTAL HOUSEHOLD STATUS

NCAP Head Start and Early Head Start families fluctuating enrollment years were more likely to be from a two-parent household than from a one-parent home. According to information from Kids Count, the State of Nebraska fluctuates each year in the number of children living with a single-parent or in non-traditional family units. NCAP HS Child Plus data results show a drop in both single parent house hold and in 2 parent households from the previous year of those enrolled in our programs. NCAPEHS Child Plus data results shows an increase in both single parent house hold and in 2 parent households from the previous year of those enrolled in our programs.



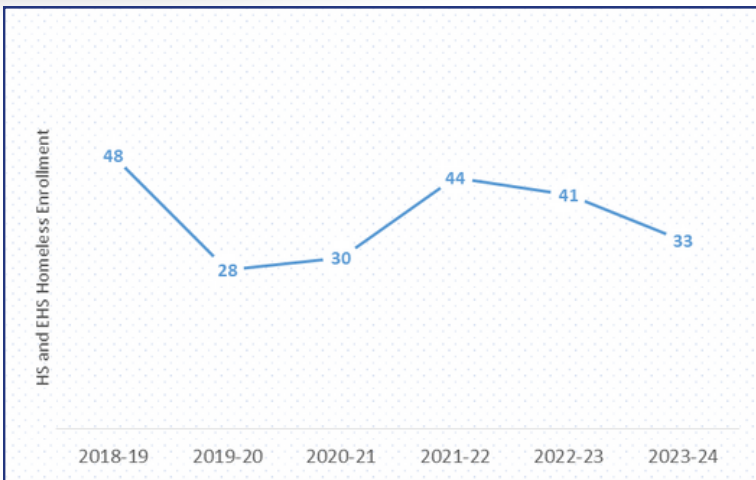
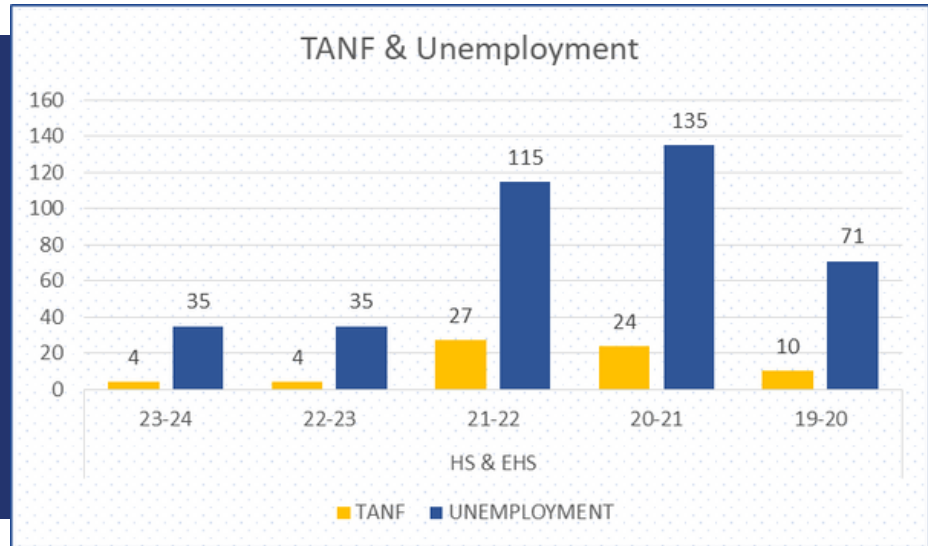
*Child Plus June 2025



Head Start and Early Head Start UNEMPLOYMENT and TANF Numbers

The number of NCAP HS and EHS families receiving TANF benefits has decreased by 85% from 2021-22 and the same numbers were reflected between the 2022-23 & 2023-24 enrollment years.

Unemployment numbers reflect a decreased by 70% from the 2021-22 number to our current 2023-24 enrollment numbers, which were also the same in the 2022-23 enrollment year.



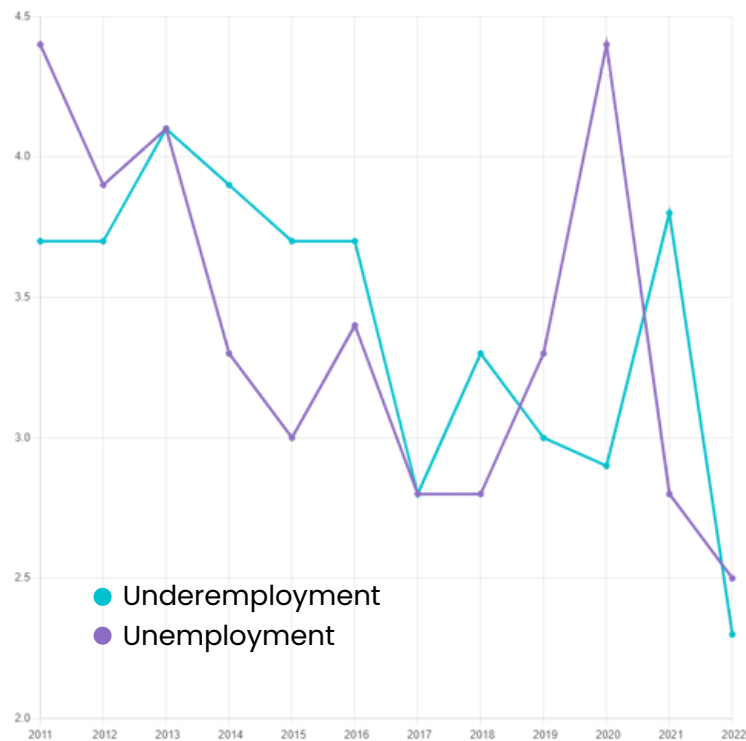
*Child Plus Records 2018-19 thru June 2024

11,000 workers in Nebraska earned minimum wage or below in 2022.

*Kids Count in Nebraska 2023 Report

In the line chart to the right, the lines represent the average unemployment rate for workers with children each year. The 2020 average unemployment rate for white Nebraskans with children, though higher than previous years, is still lower than that of workers of color with children in the previous six years. The line graph to the right represents the Nebraska unemployment and unemployment rate from 2011-2022.

NE Unemployment & Underemployment rate



*2023 Kids Count Nebraska

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND CARE

Shown are Head Start and Early Head Start program services. We support child development and child care for Head Start and Early Head Start eligible children and families. Publicly funded state and local preschool programs are also available.

Northwest Community Action Partnership Head Start and Early Head Start program availability in Northwest Nebraska service area are shown in the table below. Through collaborations between NCAP Head Start and the public schools, collaboration preschool programs operate along side Chadron Public Schools, Chadron State College (Child Development Center) and Valentine Community Schools.

CHILDREN AGES 0-5 SERVED BY HEAD START and EARLY HEAD START

	% of total population that are 0-5 CHILDREN	FUNDED SLOTS	PROGRAM OPTIONS	PROGRAM LOCATION
COUNTY	MAY 2023			
Box Butte	6% / 10,842 (650 children)	126	Head Start center base and home base	Alliance
			Early Head Start home base	
Cherry	7% / 5,455 (382 children)	24	Head Start center base	Valentine
Dawes	7% / 8,199 (574 children)	104	Head Start center base and home base	Chadron
			School collaborations (1)	Chadron
			Preschool collaborations (1)	Chadron
Sheridan	7% / 5,127 (359 children)	35	Head Start center base and home base	Gordon
			Early Head Start home base	
Total	1,965 kids 0-5	289		

The population of children 5 and under remained rather consistent in Box Butte and Cherry Counties from the previous year numbers. While, Dawes and Sheridan counties had an increase in children 5 and under by approximately 200 children from the previous year.

*Census.gov

*Child Plus June 2024

*2023 Nebraska Legislative Research Office - Counties at a Glance

CENTER WAIT LIST

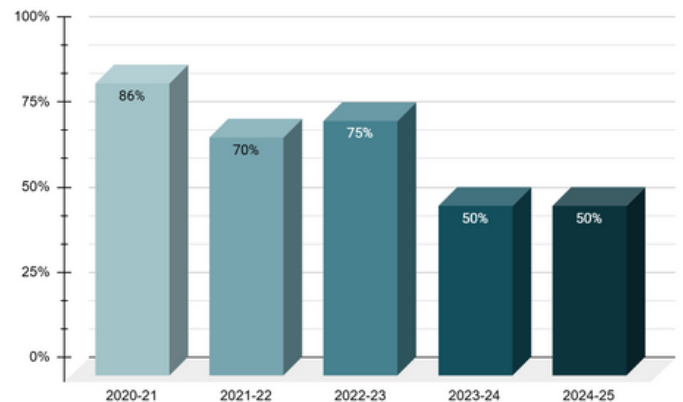
During the 2024-25 Head Start and Early Head Start Program year, half of the waitlisted applications were over-income families for both Programs. Some of these children have high needs with disabilities or other factors. We use our available 10% enrollment of over-income slots to enroll when possible.

Recruitment efforts are constantly being re-evaluated for our service areas. Family, friends, and staff continue to be the main source of those learning about HS/EHS programs, along with social media. Per government policy changes, families who are eligible for the SNAP program (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) are now categorically eligible for Head Start/Early Head Start programs as well. While many of our families are already eligible for the SNAP program, some of the middle to over-income families will possibly be eligible for HS/EHS.

Head Start Waitlist



Early Head Start Waitlist due to over income



County/City	Home Child Care	Center Child Care	Preschool	Enrolled w Step Up to Quality	Faith Based
BOX BUTTE	9	4	3	7	3
Alliance	7	4	3	6	3
Hemingford	2	0	0	1	0
CHERRY	8	0	1	4	1
Cody	0	0	0	0	0
Merriman	0	0	0	0	0
Valentine	8	0	1	4	1
DAWES	10	3	0	8	0
Chadron	9	3	0	8	0
Crawford	1	0	0	0	0
Whitney	0	0	0	0	0
SHERIDAN	3	2	2	0	2
Gordon	3	1	1	0	1
Hay Springs	0	1	1	0	1
Rushville	1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	30	9	6	19	6

*Child Plus June 2024

**HOME
and
CENTER
Childcare
Services**

HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START ELIGIBLE BEING SERVED BY OTHER PROVIDERS

County	Estimated number of Head Start Eligible Children	Capacity of all licensed child care facilities	Estimated of HS eligible children enrolled in other childcare
Box Butte	137	359	51
Cherry	64	104	26
Dawes	83	246	65
Sheridan	88	93	33

91%

of Nebraska counties do not have adequate childcare to meet the needs of families

31%

of Nebraska parents of children 0-5 say they left the workforce due to child care cost

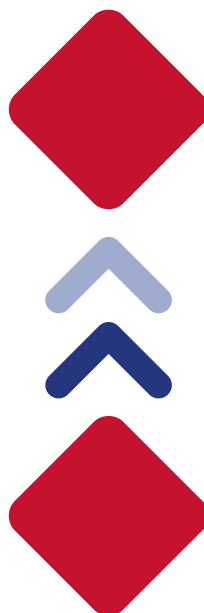
78%

say its hard to attract new businesses to communities with lack of child care

92%

believe affordable child care and early learning is essential for community growth

*nebraskacaresforkids.org



The chart on the previous page was assembled by using numbers only from licensed day care, preschool, and childcare centers. Cherry County does not have any other alternative Child Care Centers to offer preschool services. That is why NCAP Head Start shifted 24 slots to Cherry County. Although we have seen a decrease in the amount of child care providers we have seen the quality increase as more providers are enrolling in Step Up to Quality. NCAP Head Start has worked closely with daycare providers in Dawes County and continues to offer professional development opportunities. Dawes County has the highest number of Step Up to Quality providers in all of our service areas. The Head Start Director is on the steering committee for the Valentine Children and Families Coalition group to increase support in that county. These numbers continue to fluctuate with the opening and closing of daycare centers.

If parents cannot find affordable care, then labor participation becomes harder for them to justify. Based on the most recent data from 2021, however, child care is costing a significant percentage of a working parent's income. According to the 2023 Kids Count Report, the average rate of center-based care for an infant is 10% of the median income of a married couple and 33% of the median income of a single mother. Having two young children in need of care becomes especially costly as center-based care for an infant and a 4-year-old absorbs 19% of a married couple's income and 61% of a single mother's income. While the high and rising costs of college have garnered much national attention in recent years, a year of child care in Nebraska now rivals, and even surpasses, a years' worth of tuition and fees at Nebraska's public universities.

FAMILY STRESSORS

Community members were asked to identify the challenges families with young children will likely face in the next 3-5 years.

Basic needs and the economy: affordable and adequate housing, job opportunities and poverty

87% of communities in the Panhandle listed childcare and/or preschool

73% of communities showed concern with out of school care, health and wellness services and parent education and support

100% of people felt that basic needs were a concern

We continually shift more slots to meet the 45% duration requirement from Head Start. We see a growing need for longer day preschool offered.

87%

CHILDCARE

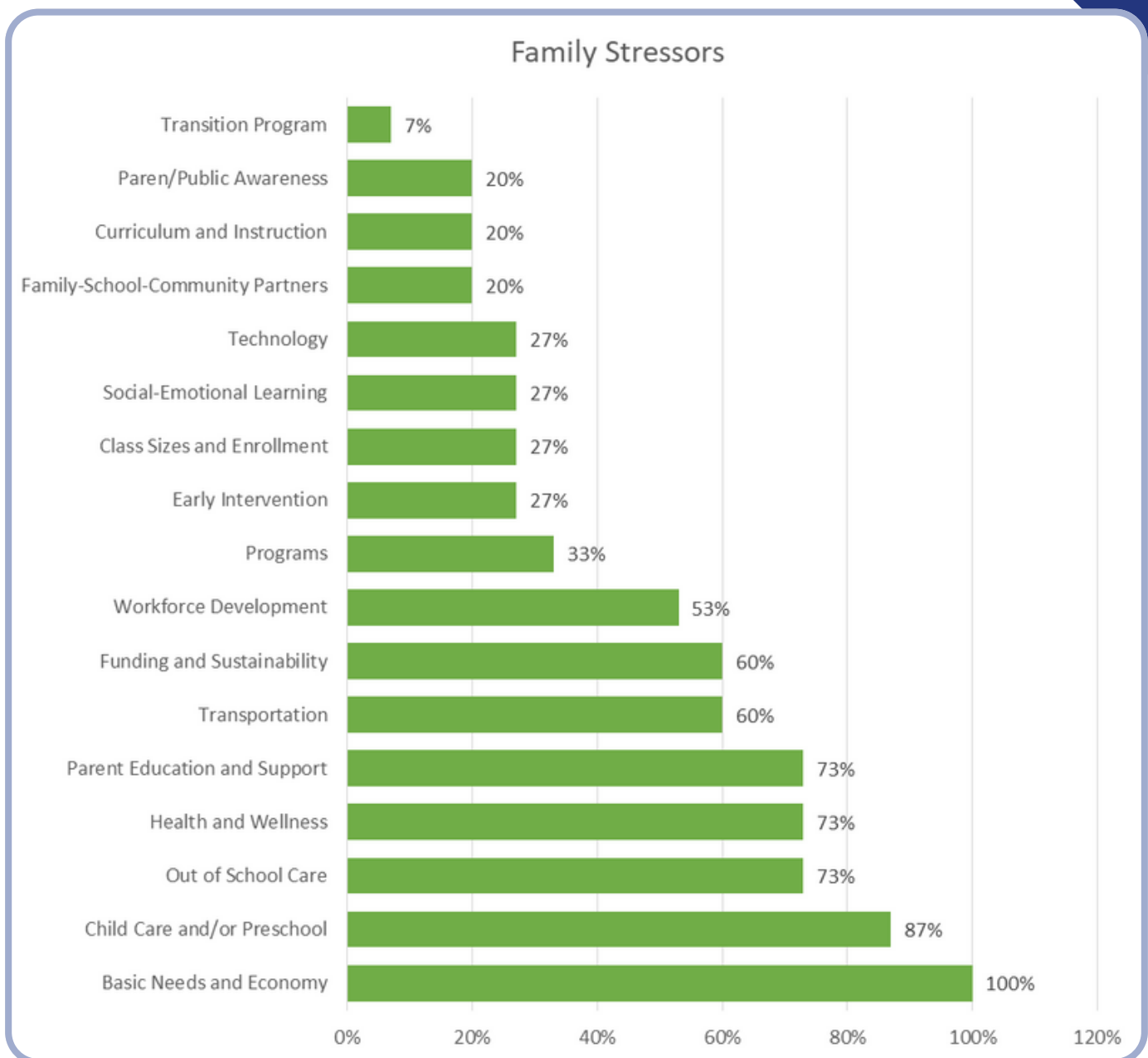
73%

WELLNESS

100%

BASIC NEEDS

In thinking about the next 3-5 years, what challenges will families with Birth - Grade 3 children face that you feel need to be addressed in your community?



DISABILITIES

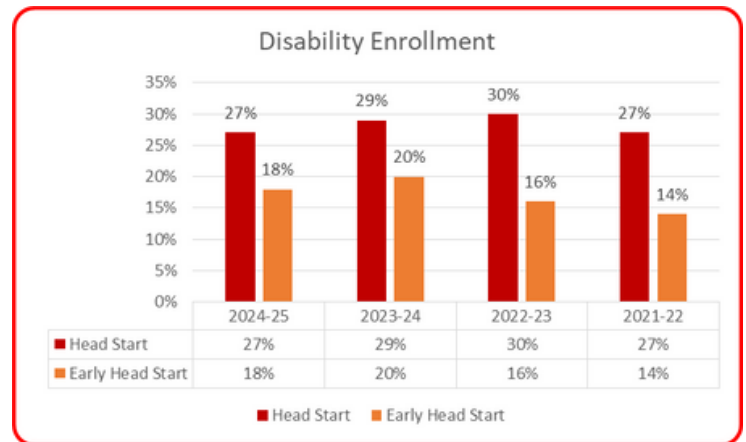
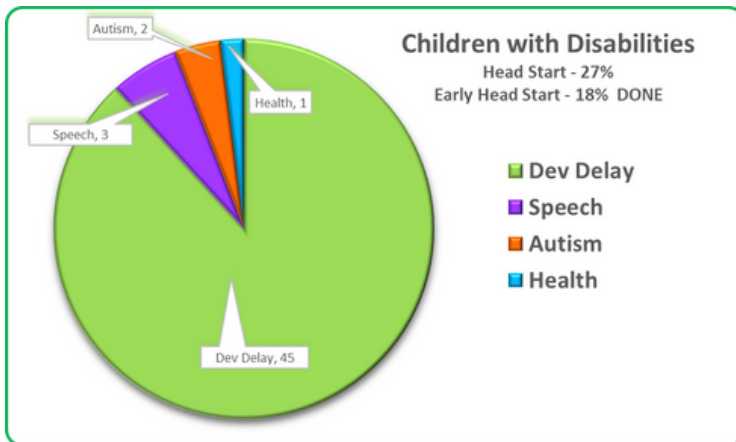
CHILDREN with DISABILITIES

The following chart shows the number of children diagnosed with disabilities and the type of disabilities over the last three years. As the charts show, we have seen a slight decrease in the number of disabilities and but not the severity of those disabilities. In the past 5 years our enrolled children with disabilities have gradually increased.

With our increase in disabilities we have also seen an increase in serious behavior concerns. Over the past several years, a number of studies have shown a rise in behavior problems among preschoolers and our program is no different. Some of these problems include prolonged tantrums, physical and verbal aggression, disruptive behaviors, property destruction and noncompliance. The Yale Child Study Center has found that U.S. preschoolers are three times more likely to be expelled from their classrooms than children in grades K-12. Challenging behaviors are one of the strongest predictors of more serious problems as children grow older, including delinquency, aggression, anti-social behavior and substance abuse.

Type of Disability	HS 2023-24	EHS 2023-24	HS 2023-24	EHS 2023-24	HS 2022-23	EHS 2022-23
Autism	2	0	1	0	1	0
Health Impairment	1	0	1	0	1	0
Hearing Impairment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Specific Learning Disability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Speech/Language	3	1	4	1	8	0
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Cat Dev Delay	36	9	43	10	44	10
Multiple Disorders	0	2	0	0	0	0
Total Disabilities	42	10	49	11	56	10

Head Start and EHS enrollment reflected a pretty consistent percentage of children with disabilities from last year. EHS decreased from 20% to 18% and HS decreased from 29% to 27%.



This pie chart shows the number of children enrolled in HS/EHS with documented disabilities. We have 45 children with developmental delays, 4 with speech delays and 2 children with autism and one with a health impairment. NCAP head Start has 27% of the enrollment with children with disabilities and Early Head Start is at 18%. This exceeds the 10% requirement.

EDUCATION, HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Data regarding the education, health, nutrition and social service needs of NCAP eligible children and their families and data compiled from Head Start families.

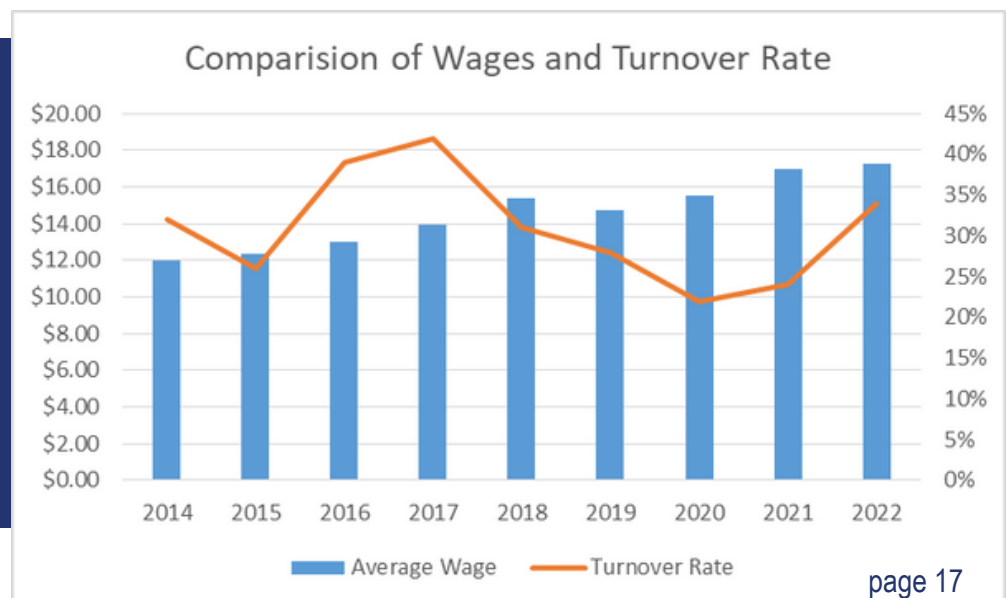
EDUCATION

Finding quality teaching staff remains an ongoing challenge for preschool programs nationwide, and we are no exception. To address this issue, we have implemented several measures to attract more candidates. Firstly, we have substantially increased wages and introduced hiring bonuses in the hope of enticing a larger pool of applicants. Additionally, we have strengthened our collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Education and their TEACH scholarship program, which supports our teachers in pursuing higher education degrees. Furthermore, we have initiated a partnership with WNCC to offer college-like classes, specifically designed to assist our teachers who may have reservations about returning to school. Through this collaboration, we aim to enhance their confidence and enable them to meet the requirements necessary to complete a college degree.

Education Credentials	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
Masters Degree	1	1	1	1	1	1
In Masters Program	0	2	0	0	0	0
BA/BS	8	7	8	9	10	8
AA	1	1	2	1	1	1
CDA	3	1	1	1	1	0
In College	5	2	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	18	14	12	12	13	10

Currently the average pay for Head Teachers and Assistant Teachers along with Classroom Aides is \$17.28. During the 2022-23 school year we had a turnover of 12 teaching staff leaving of the 35.

*Child Plus Records 2019-20 thru May 2024

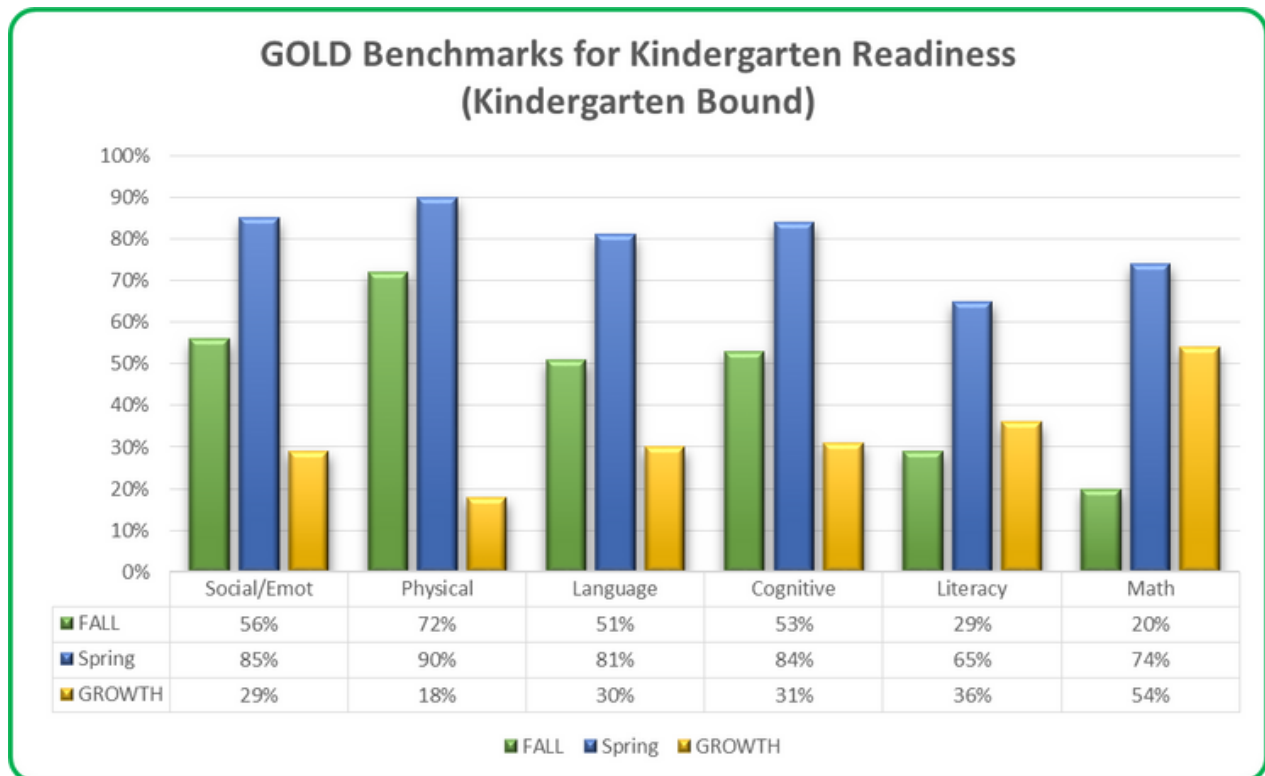


SCHOOL READINESS OUTCOMES

School Readiness goals were developed by a committee of parents, Head Start/Early Head Start staff, Policy Council, Health Advisory and with input from NCAP Board of Directors. Goals were created based on Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Outcomes Framework, with input from parents, staff and professionals, on the needs of children in the service area. The School Readiness goals are aligned with the main curriculums (Creative Curriculum}, Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines, on-going assessment tool (GOLD}, and Local Education Agency's expectations. Using on-going assessment, GOLD, data is collected throughout the year, on every child. Data is aggregated and analyzed three times a year for part year programs. This analysis determines areas of strength and needed improvement. Using the aggregated data, each classroom and home base program completes an action plan to facilitate improvement in methods of instruction.

Another tool that is used to assess classrooms is CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System). Through rigorous reliability testing; CLASS measures adult/child interactions in each classroom and is completed monthly. Based on a 7 point scale, classrooms are scored in multiple areas, including positive and negative climate, behavior management, and concept development. After each observation, teachers' complete action plans to help improve their scores. Scores are aggregated by classrooms and program overall.

The data below demonstrates a substantial average growth of 33% in the percentage of kindergarten-bound children meeting GOLD® benchmarks for kindergarten readiness. Notably, all six developmental areas showed significant improvement from fall to spring.



*Teaching Strategies Gold

*ChildPlus

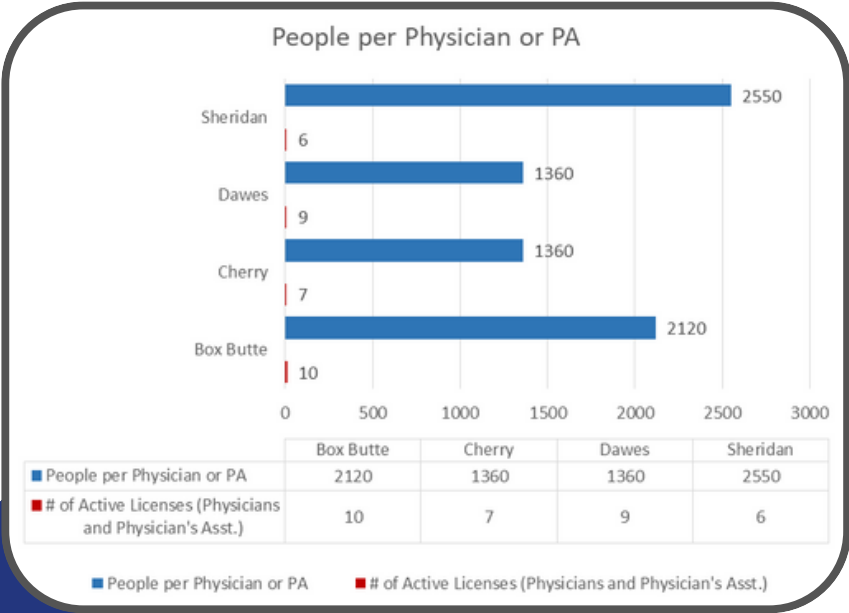
HEALTH CARE

Lack of medical providers in these four counties make it difficult for individuals to receive healthcare. Often people are forced to travel extended distances to Rapid City, SD, Scottsbluff, NE, Omaha, NE (300 or more miles) and even Denver, CO to seek medical services, particularly specialists. Children and families that are on Medicaid are limited to which specialist they can see because Nebraska Medicaid doesn't contract with many providers out of the State of Nebraska. Children and families may have to travel hundreds of miles to see a specialist. This is a hardship for families as this is an added major expense with gas, food and possible hotel.

County Health Rankings								
	State Rankings out of 79 counties			Health Behaviors				Uninsured Adults
	Overall Health Outcomes	Overall Health Factors	Overall Ranking	Adult Smoking	Adult Obesity	Excessive Drinking	Teen Births	
Box Butte	66	64	63	15%	41%	21%	20	13%
Cherry	45	36	33	20%	42%	21%	18	9%
Dawes	54	15	34	16%	40%	22%	8	9%
Sheridan	75	66	74	17%	36%	21%	22	13%
Nebraska	*20		*17	14%	34%	22%	15	9%
*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2024 Rankings *NE Ranking 2024 AHR Annual Report								

The small communities within the NCAP service area do not have an OB/GYN specialist within the same community and all pregnant mothers are forced to drive to neighboring communities for prenatal care.

The County Health Rankings are based on a model of population health that emphasizes the many factors that, if improved, can help make communities healthier places to live. All counties within the Agency's service area out of 79 counties saw changes in the rankings for Overall Health Factors, with adult smoking and adult obesity being higher than the state average for this county. The teen birth ranking shows, three of the four counties served by NCAP Head Start/Early Head Start programs have a higher score than the State of Nebraska for this category, indicating an even greater need for Early Head Start services in the area. All 4 counties have a lower score than Nebraska for excessive drinking.



AVG. PEOPLE PER PROVIDER IN THE SERVICE AREA...

1,848 PEOPLE PER PROVIDER

PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS

Western Community Health Resources (WCHR) collaborates with communities in the provision of quality health and human services. Their vision for the members of their communities is that they are Respected, Informed and Empowered. WCHR provides the following services: Adult & Children Immunization Clinic, Worksite Wellness Screenings, Family Reproductive Health Services, HIV Education & Counseling, Prescription Assistance, Ryan White Program, Children's Outreach, Respite, Early Development Network, Community Essentials Pantry, Behavioral Health (Community Support), Emergency Community Supports, Youth Transition Services, Commodity Supplemental Food Programs, and Circle of Security (Parenting Training).

The Nebraska Women, Infant & Children Nutrition provides healthy food at no cost and nutrition information to help keep pregnant women, infants and children under five healthy and strong.

Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) provides the following essential services to communities and individuals in the Panhandle:

- Monitor health status to identify health problems
- Investigate health problems and hazards
- Inform and educate about health issues
- Mobilize community partnerships
- Develop policies and plans that support health efforts
- Enforce laws and health regulations to ensure safety
- Link people to needed personal health services
- Assure competent health care workforce
- Evaluate quality and accessibility of health services
- Research for new solutions to health problems

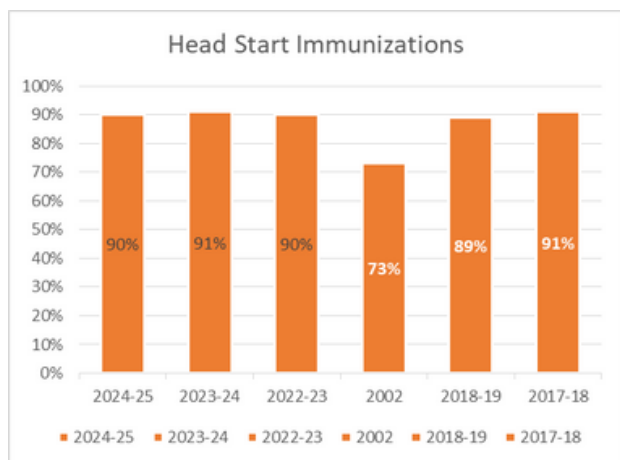
DENTAL CARE

To help address some of the issues with a shortage of dental care in the service area, NCAP teamed up with Community Action Partnership of Western Nebraska (CAPWN) Public Dental Clinic in Gering, NE to establish a dental clinic designed specifically for the low income population. CAPWN Dental Clinic in Chadron completes dental health screenings on Head Start/Early Head Start and public school aged children in Dawes and Sheridan Counties. The program's effort is to provide dental screenings to alert the parent/guardian of the need for dental treatment and will apply fluoride treatments that are parent approved. Nebraska's DHHS

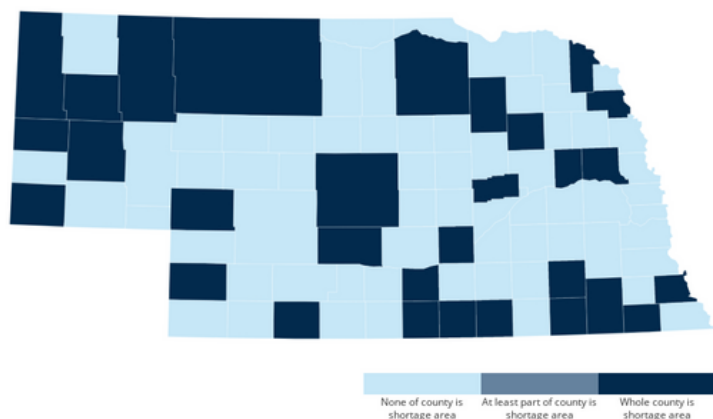
Office of Rural Health monitors information regarding health care provider practice locations and availability. Updated July 2024, Office of Rural Health identified a shortage area in dentistry. Cherry County and Sheridan County both have the whole county as a shortage of Dental Care where as Dawes and Box Butte show there is no longer a shortage in those areas, which was the case in 2019.

IMMUNIZATIONS

NCAP's Head Start Program closely monitors immunizations of enrolled children throughout the program year. Immunization counts change as children are vaccinated. Numbers for Head Start children fluctuate daily, and figures are as up to date as possible for Early Head Start children.

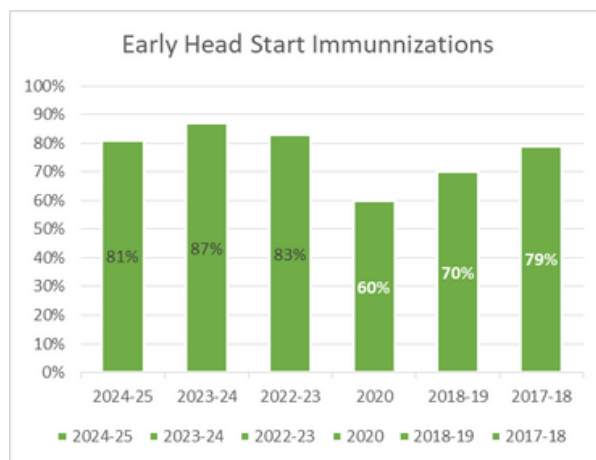


Health Professional Shortage Areas: Dental Care, by County, April 2025 - Nebraska



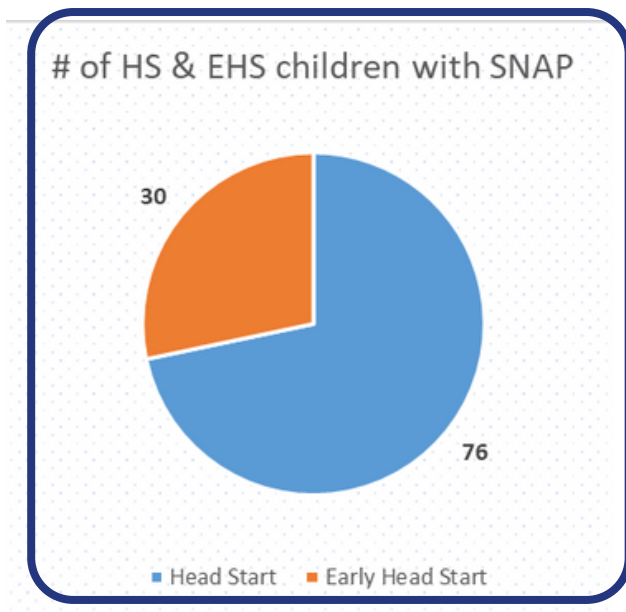
Source: data.HRSA.gov

Dental shortages Box Butte, Sheridan & Cherry Counties



SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Office of Head Start recently added SNAP as an eligibility plan for Head Start/Early Head Start. If a family is eligible for SNAP, they are automatically eligible for HS/EHS. SNAP provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families so they can purchase healthy food and move towards self-sufficiency.



*ChildPlus

138

NCAP families receive free/reduced meals

NUTRITION

The NCAP Head Start program designs and implements a nutrition program that meets each child's nutritional needs and feeding requirements, including those with special dietary needs and children with disabilities. Our nutrition program serves a variety of foods that consider cultural and ethnic preferences and broaden the child's food experience. The program uses USDA Food funds as the primary payment source for meal services. Early Head Start/Head Start funds may be used to cover those allowable costs not covered by the USDA.

Each child enrolled in our center-based setting receives meals and snacks that provide at least half the child's daily nutritional needs. All children in morning center-based locations who have not received breakfast when arriving are served a nourishing breakfast.

Feeding America estimates approximately 49 million people - 1 in 6 - received charitable food assistance sometime in 2022

2022 had a 60% increase in people relying on food banks



1 IN 6 CHILDREN ...

13 MILLION U.S. CHILDREN HAVE FOOD INSECURITY

CHILDREN - FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity hits children particularly hard. A large majority of the counties within the state of Nebraska experience food insecurities. Studies show that not having consistent access to enough food can affect cognitive abilities, overall health, moods, and attention spans - not to mention the psychological effects of living with scarcity. Below is the 2022 Food Insecurity chart for our service area along with the Nebraska numbers and percentages.

County Name	# Food Insecure Children	Avg Meal Cost	Food Insecurity % Rate		% Income-eligible for nutrition programs
			Child	County	(income at or below 185% of poverty)
Box Butte	550	\$3.79	20%	14%	57%
Cherry	300	\$3.76	23%	14%	100%
Dawes	310	\$3.79	20%	14%	63%
Sheridan	250	\$3.79	22%	15%	67%
Nebraska	91,240	\$3.71	19%	14% (overall pop)	40%

According to the 2022 MAP, Map the Meal Gap - The Food Insecurity Report - 19% of children in NE under 18 are at risk for hunger. Of the four counties, our HS program serves Cherry Co. has the largest percentage of Child Food Insecurities at 23%. The average number of children experiencing food insecurities in the four counties is 21.25%. In all 4 counties, including state-wide, the percentage of child insecurities are higher than the overall population percentage.

Various resources are available to families within the NCAP service area to assist with food availability. NCAP Head Start staff works closely with the NCAP Community Services department that offers families a comprehensive array of food support through local food pantries, and mobile food pantries. Mobile food pantries arrive approximately every three months, providing fresh produce and meats to the area residents. For services that cannot be provided internally by NCAP, staff refers families to other community partners for services such as NE DHHS, Women, Infant and Children (WIC) program, other food pantries, churches, soup kitchens, or other community programs. Box Butte and Dawes counties have backpack food programs that are sent home weekly to children to supplement food insecurities over the weekend.

1,410
children
experience
food
insecurity in
our service
counties



NUTRITIONAL RESOURCE ASSISTANCE

FOOD PANTRIES ○ SOUP KITCHENS ○ FOOD BACKPACKS

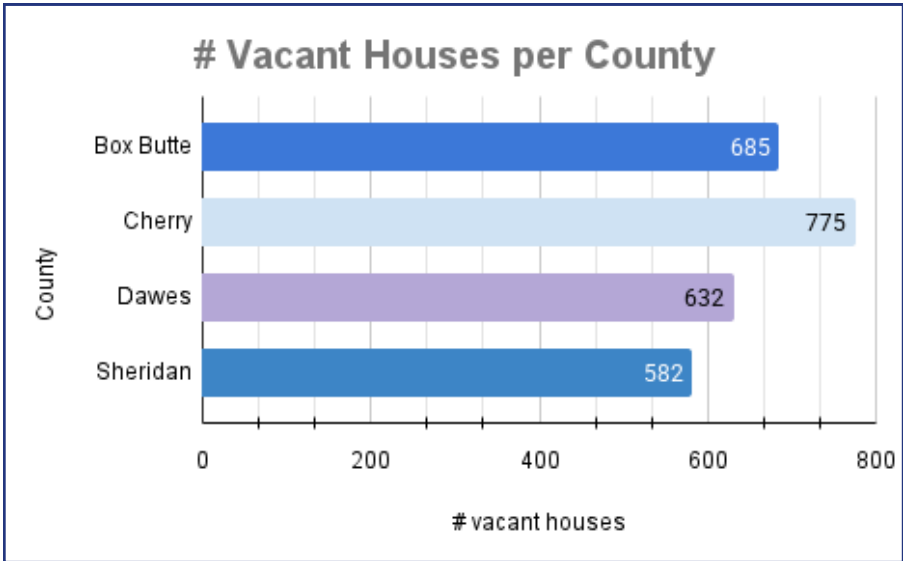
*2021 MAP - Map the Meal Gap
www.map.feedingamerica.org

HOUSING

Across Nebraska, 2023 shows a shortage of rental homes affordable and available to extremely low income households (ELI), whose incomes are at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area median income (AMI). Many of these households are severely cost burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing. Severely cost burdened poor households are more likely than other renters to sacrifice other necessities like healthy food and healthcare to pay the rent/mortgage.

NEBRASKA NUMBERS

59,088 or 22% Renter households that are extremely low income	-37,210 Shortage of rental homes affordable and available for extremely low income renters	\$30,790 Average income limit for 4-person extremely low income household	\$42,267 Annual household income needed to afford a 2 bedroom rental home	75% Percent of extremely low income renter households with severe cost burden
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Box Butte County Median Income: \$68,778
Cherry County Median Income: \$63,750
Dawes County Median Income: \$54,381
Sheridan County Median Income: \$56,900

The data from 2023 shows that NCAP Head Start’s demographic population continue to have a difficult time finding affordable and adequate housing. In Box Butte County the median household income is \$68,778. Cherry County, the median household income is \$63,750. Of the housing units available, 775 are vacant due to the level of poverty and the pricing of adequate housing. Dawes County, the median household income is \$54,381 and that of the housing units available, 632 are vacant due to the level of poverty and the pricing of adequate housing. Sheridan County, the median household income is \$56,900, 582 are vacant.

*University of Nebraska Omaha research - source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates
*nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/nebraska

TRANSPORTATION

Northwest Community Action Partnership collaborates with the city of Alliance, which has revitalized its public transportation system to strengthen the usability of the program. They provide a fee service ride for the public. There is no charge for students going to or from school, including Head Start, for this service. The Alliance church also provides transportation six days a week for school, work, and appointments both local and out-of-town. The Panhandle Trails Intercity Public Transit bus service, based out of Alliance, connects individuals with area transportation resources and destinations throughout the Nebraska Panhandle Region. Chadron Public Transportation operates one 12-passenger bus with a wheelchair lift within the Chadron city limits. This Demand Route runs weekdays on a donation basis. In addition, Chadron Transportation also has a Fixed/Deviated bus route that includes 10 designated stops within the city limits. Airport rides within the city are by appointment only, 8 am - 4 pm. Head Start programs are not required to provide transportation services. However, when they do provide those services, they must comply with key regulations.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PROGRAM TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Grantee and delegate agencies must comply with transportation regulations if they decide to transport children. This resource may be used by Head Start staff to better understand federal requirements for program transportation services.

Head Start programs are not required to provide transportation services. However, there are key regulations in Transportation, 45 CFR § 1303.70 (2016) with which grantee and delegate agencies are required to comply:

- **Help parents arrange transportation**
- **Provide pedestrian transport and riding safety education**
- **Only release children to those who have been authorized in writing by parent/guardian**



Pupil Transportation is a division of the Nebraska Safety Center at the University of Nebraska at Kearney campus. The Pupil Transportation program was created in May of 2000 through a contract with the Nebraska Department of Education to provide services regarding Nebraska Department of Education's administrative rule code. Located in West Center on the University of Nebraska at Kearney Campus, the Nebraska Safety Center was established by the Nebraska Legislature in 1978.

We are requiring all teaching staff to participate in a two hour In-Service Training for Pupil Transportation Drivers on the University of Nebraska System.

*eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov

*Nebraska Department of Education - education.ne.gov

*unk.edu

FINANCIAL

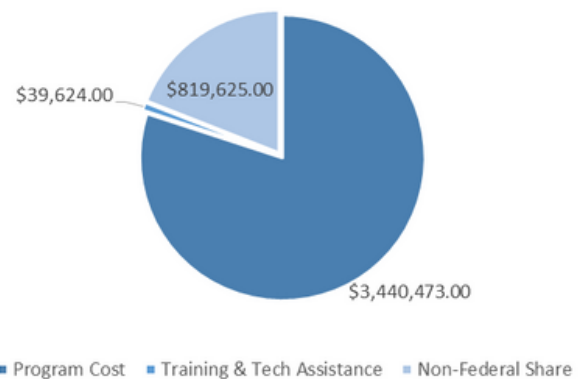
Grant Expenditures, Fund Allocations and Proposed Budget

Head Start and Early Head Start fiscal year runs from December 1, 2023 thru November 30, 2024. Our proposed budget for this fiscal year was \$3,480,097. Non Federal Share - \$819,625.

Funding Sources	Dollars
July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024	
HS/EHS	\$3,255,188.53
CACFP	\$96,858.62
Parent Fundraising	\$885.00
In-Kind	\$903,028.20
Donations	\$3,432.00
Insurance Claims	\$8,686.10
Total Funding Sources	\$4,268,078.45

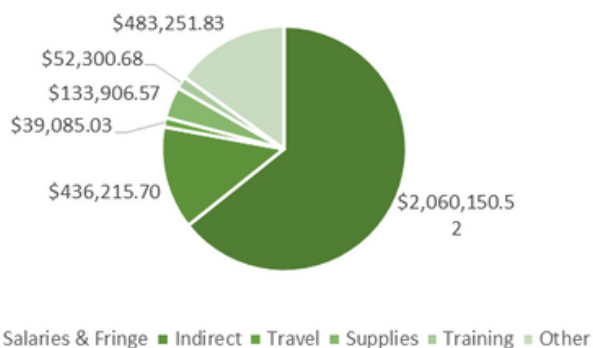
Total Grant Expenditures:
\$3,204,910.33
 Proposed Budget:
\$3,480,097

Proposed Fiscal Year Budget
 December 224-November 2025



- Program Cost - \$344,0473
- Training & Tech Assistance - \$39,624
- Non-Federal Share - \$819,625

Grant Expenditures Grant Expenditures
 July 2023- June 2024



- Salaries & Fringe - \$2,060,150.52
- Indirect - \$436,215.7
- Travel - \$39,085.03
- Supplies - \$133,906.57
- Training - \$52,300.68
- Other - \$483,251.83

COMMUNITY RESOURCES



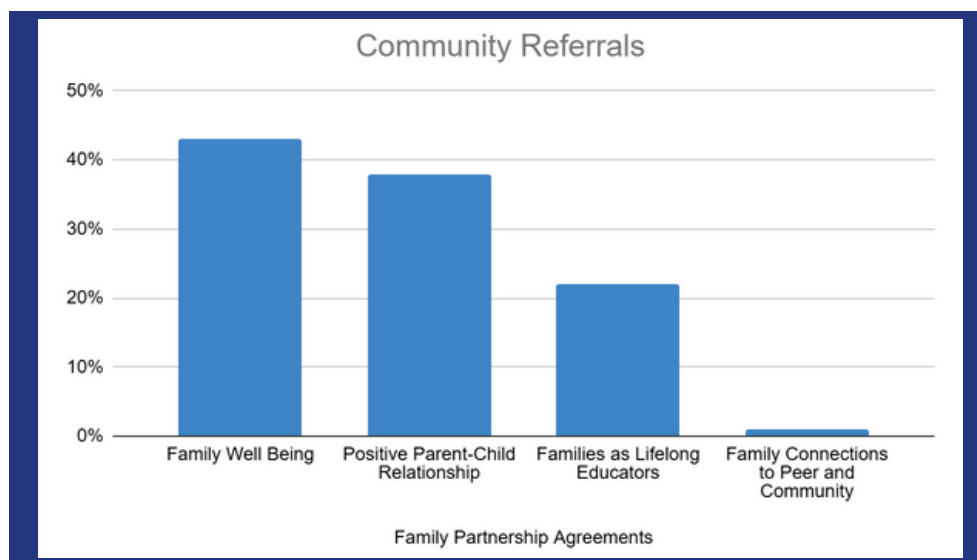
**PANHANDLE
PARTNERSHIP**

Rooted in Frontier Spirit, Committed to the Future

1517 Broadway, Suite 106
Scottsbluff, NE 69361

(308) 633-3818
info@panhandlepartnership.com

Tracking our Family Partnership Agreements helps identify community needs and interests.



We partner up with many local resources such as: Community Food Pantry, DHHS, NCAP, Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, OHD, The DOVES Program, United Way of Western Nebraska and WCHR; among many other partners.

- During the 2024-25 year Family Well Being goals were identified as needs by 43% of families. This includes Emergency/Crisis, Asset Building, and Mental Health services. Resulting in referrals to our community partners including: In Spirit Counseling, the Doves Program and Nebraska United Way.
- Positive Parent-Child Relationship includes Managing My Child's Behavior, Developing Routines for My Child, and Spending Quality Time with My Child. A high percentage of goals in this domain identifies the need for increasing parent/child connection.
- Families as Lifelong Educators encompasses our Screening and Assessments goals and Educational Goals through Supporting Learning at Home. Screening and assessments are conducted by referral to our community partners for mental health, dental, and developmental screenings. Assessments and Screenings facilitates early intervention and results in positive outcomes in the short and long term.
- Families as Lifelong Learners includes enrolling parents in adult education programs.
- Family Connections to Peer and Community encourages the development of immediate and extended Family Support Systems and Families as Advocates and Leaders encourages Volunteering and Speaking Up for Their Child.
- Community referrals facilitated through NCAP partnerships with providers are essential to address the needs of families that they identify in our Family Partnership Agreement. A major goal of Parent Family Community Engagement is to increase community partnerships to facilitate delivery of resources by referral.

Please refer to individual County Resource Directories for information concerning Community Resources available at: www.ncap.info

For a complete list of our County Resource Directory visit www.panhandlepartnership.com/directory/

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The Head Start community assessment for the year provides valuable insights into the program's current state. Here is a one-page summary of the key findings:

TANF AND SNAP TRENDS

- In 2023-24 number of NCAP Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits and unemployment rates have remained stable compared to the previous year.
- There has been a 19% rise in families on SNAP benefits.

FOOD INSECURITY

- Approximately 1,410 children in the service counties are currently experiencing food insecurity. This is an increase of around 460 children from the previous year.
- The average child food insecurity rate across the four counties ranges from 20%-23% of the child population which is higher than the state average of 19% of the child population experiencing food insecurity.

ENROLLMENT CHALLENGES

- During the 2023-24 HS program year and Early Head Start, 50% of each waitlist applications are of over-income families.
- The program utilizes available 10% enrollment slots for over-income families whenever possible.

HEALTHCARE AND INSURANCE

- The percentage of uninsured adults decreased by 2% in Box Butte and Cherry Counties, while Dawes stayed the same and Sheridan County decreased by 1%.
- There continues to be a shortage of healthcare providers, both medical and dental across all communities.
- There are fewer dental providers accepting Medicaid as well.

PERSISTENT CHALLENGES

- Some issues have remained consistent from the previous year's assessment, including:
 - A shortage of affordable rental homes for low-income households.
 - Childcare scarcity remains a top stressor for families in the community.
 - Referrals to community partners have increased significantly from the previous year.
 - The number of children with disabilities is on the rise, with a significant increase in the category of Developmental Delay.

SCHOOL READINESS

- Our kindergarten bound children are meeting school readiness outcomes at an increase of 1% over last year. 93% are meeting expectations over 92% last year.
- Our 3 and 4 year old's continue to excel especially in the area of Physical with 98% meeting expectations.
- We have also seen substantial growth in math with 35% meeting expectations.

In conclusion, the Head Start community assessment highlights significant changes in public assistance utilization, food insecurity, and childcare challenges. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of addressing healthcare access and affordable housing issues. Despite these challenges, the program has shown positive results in educational readiness, indicating progress toward its goals.

This summary provides a concise overview of the key findings from the assessment, which can guide future efforts to support and improve the Head Start program within the community.

community assessment **REFERENCES**

- NCAP 2023 Community Assessment
- NCAP Head Start 2024 Community Assessment
- Child Plus data up to June 2025
- 2020 Census Bureau - census.gov
- nebraska-demographic.com/counties_by_population
- ESU1.org
- 2023 Nebraska Legislative Research Office: Counties at-a-Glance
- University of Nebraska Omaha Public Affairs Research
- 2024 Kids Count Nebraska
- DHHS Child Care Roster
- nebraskacaresforkids.org
- 2020 Buffett Institute
- Teaching Strategies Gold
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2024 Rankings
- NE Ranking 2024 AHR Annual Report
- Rural Health Information Hub
- data.HRSA.gov - July 2024
- Stacker.com
- 2021 MAP - Map the Meal Gap - www.map.feedingamerica.org
- UNO Research - US Census Bureau, American Community 5-year Estimates
- ECLKC - eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov
- Nebraska Department of Education - education.ne.gov
- unk.edu
- ACS 2017-2020 population estimates

Northwest Community Action Partnership
Head Start and Early Head Start
www.ncap.info