

Audubon Area Community Services, Inc.  
Head Start Program

# Community Needs Assessment Update

2023 - 2024

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### A. Introduction

This Community Assessment is in fulfillment of the requirements of Head Start Performance Standards (45 CFR 1302.11) which requires an assessment of the needs of the communities served every five years. The objective is to provide a snapshot of the service region for Audubon Area Head Start and identify characteristics which may have a significant impact on agency planning and program development.

The Head Start Program Performance Standards and Other Regulations (45 CFR 1302.11 (b)) specify the information that must be included in the Community Assessment and submitted with the grant application.

To summarize, the grantee agency is required to collect and analyze information in the Community Assessment about:

1. The number of eligible children 0-5, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages spoken, including:
  - a. Children experiencing homelessness;
  - b. Children in foster care; and
  - c. Children with disabilities, including types and relevant services/resources provided by community agencies
2. The education, health, nutrition and social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being
3. Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children
4. Other child development, child care centers, and or family child care programs that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local preschools, and the approximate number of children served;
5. Resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families; and
6. Strengths of the community.

Head Start promotes the school readiness of young children from low-income families through agencies in their local community. The Head Start program is authorized by the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. Head Start and Early Head Start programs support the mental, social, and emotional development of children from birth to age 5. In addition to education services, programs provide children and their families with health, nutrition, social, and other services. Head Start services are responsive to each child and family's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage.

Head Start encourages the role of parents as their child's first and most important teachers. Programs build relationships with families that support positive parent-child relationships, family well-being, and connections to peers and community. Head Start began as a program for preschoolers. Three and four year-olds made up over 80 percent of the children served by Head Start last year. Early Head Start serves pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. Early Head start programs are available to the family until the child turns 3 years old and is ready to transition into Head Start or another pre-K program. Early Head Start helps families care for their infants and toddlers through early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive services.

Local services are delivered by about 1,700 public and private nonprofit and for-profit agencies. These agencies receive grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Head Start agencies design services for children and families that meet the needs of their local community and the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Some cities, states, and federal programs offer funding to expand Head Start and Early Head Start to include more children within their communities.

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/about>

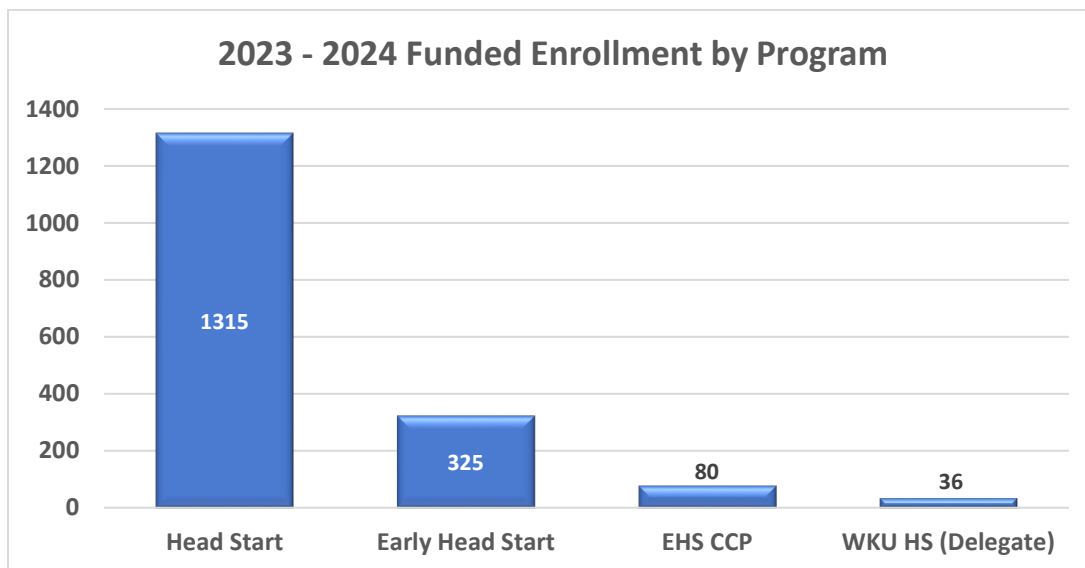
The Head Start Program Performance Standards and Other Regulations (45 CFR 1302.102) state that the information gathered in the Community Assessment (CA) must guide decisions based on the status of eligible families and the community setting(s) within the service area. Specifically, they state that:

### **The information in the Community Assessment will be used to:**

1. Help determine the grantee's philosophy, and its long-range and short-range program objectives;
2. Determine the type of component services that are most needed and the program option or options that will be implemented;
3. Determine the recruitment area that will be served by the grantee, if limitations in the amount of resources make it impossible to serve the entire service area.
4. If there are delegate agencies, determine the recruitment area that will be served by the grantee and the recruitment area that will be served by each delegate agency.
5. Determine appropriate locations for centers and the areas to be served by home based programs; and
6. Set criteria that define the types of children and families who will be given priority for recruitment and selection.

### **State of the Grantee**

Audubon Area Head Start offers a variety of program models for children from birth to five years old in order to meet the needs of the communities it serves. Audubon is the grantee for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs, which is where most of the children are served. Audubon is also the grantee for the Early Childcare Partnership (EHS CCP) grant which began in August of 2015, and is a delegate for Western Kentucky University (WKU). Due to the state of the economy, WKU is doing away with it's delegate program for restructuring. We will lose 17 slots at the end of the year, and the remaining 19 slots in the following year – 2024-2025.



Audubon makes available a variety of program options. For example, in the Head Start program, Audubon partners with 18 school districts in all 16 counties of the service area, as well as offering enrollment in stand-alone centers.

In Early Head Start, children ages birth to three may receive services in either center-based full day/full year programs, home based programs as well as a combination of center-based and home based such as our Teen Parenting programs.

Head Start 2023 – 2024	
Program Option	Classes Available
Double Session	60
Single Session	6
Full Day	46
<b>Head Start Totals</b>	<b>112</b>

Early Head Start 2023 – 2024	
Program Option	Classes Available
Home-Based	10
Standard Full Day	41
<b>Early Head Start Totals</b>	<b>51</b>

The majority of classrooms utilize the Creative Curriculum as their curriculum, and all classrooms use the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment System as their ongoing-assessment tool. The curriculum and assessment work in conjunction to help teachers prepare meaningful activities based on children’s interests as well as their individual levels of development. The curriculum is also aligned with the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards to ensure the skills assessed are the most important skills in preparing children to enter into the K-12 system.

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*As of June 1, 2024, in the 2023 – 2024 Program Year, Head Start and Early Head Start have served a cumulative total of 2,088 children. The Head Start program has served 1,563 children while the Early Head Start program has served 505 children, including 22 Pregnant Mothers served.*

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These programs, although diverse in scheduling and approach to service delivery, share the common goal of preparing children to be ready to enter kindergarten - academically, physically, and socially.

## **The mission of Audubon Area Head Start is as follows:**

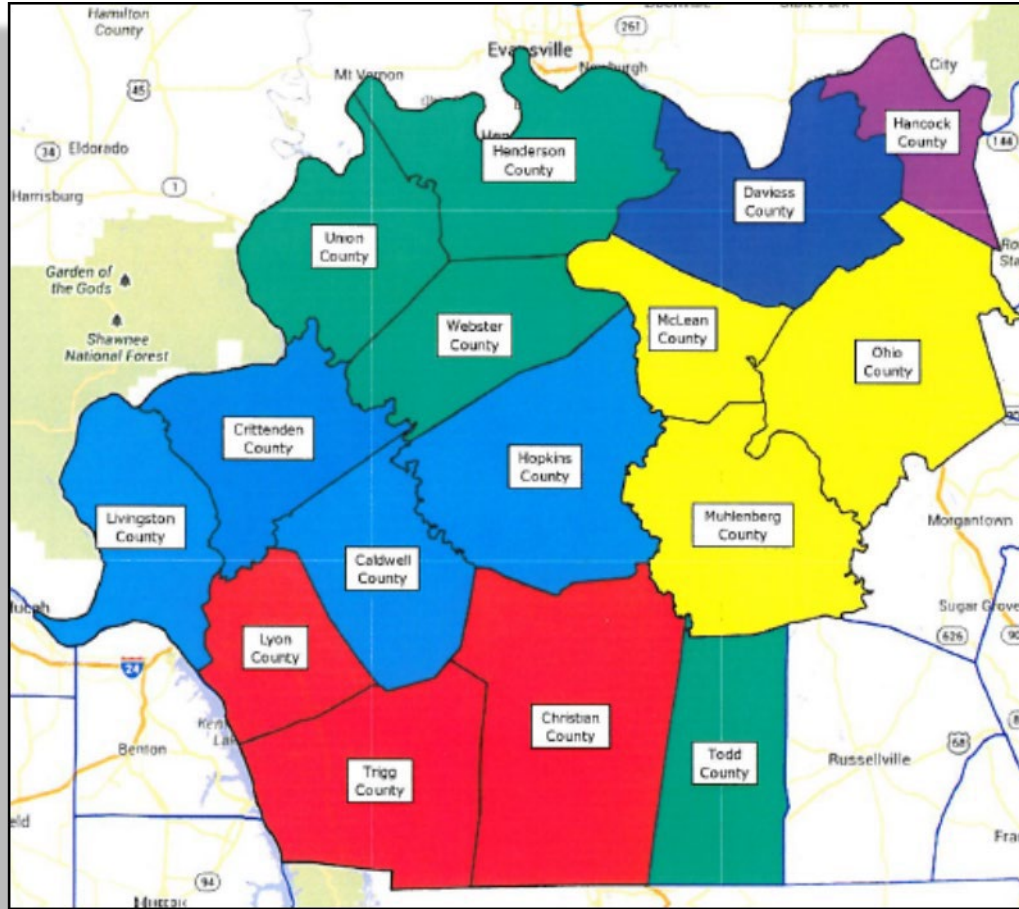
The mission of Audubon Area Head Start is as follows:

- Excitement in children through learning
- Empowerment in families through strengths
- Enhancement in communities through participation
- Enrichment in staff through experiences

Each of the components of the mission statement is accompanied by the following outcome statements:

- All participating children will be excited about learning and equipped with appropriate skills based on their individual needs.
- All participating families will be empowered with the ability to identify their needs and build upon their strengths to achieve their goals.
- All communities served by Head Start will be enhanced through ongoing collaborations and by the active participation of families.
- All staff will be enriched with a sense of accomplishment both professionally and personally through their Head Start experience.

## Service Area



Caldwell County	Hancock County	Lyon County	Todd County
Christian county	Henderson County	McLean County	Trigg County
Crittenden County	Hopkins County	Muhlenberg County	Union County
Daviess County	Livingston County	Ohio County	Webster County

Our central office is located in Daviess County at:  
 Audubon Area Community Services Inc.  
 Head Start Program (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor)  
 1700 West Fifth Street  
 Owensboro, KY 42301

## B. Methodology

A Head Start Community Assessment not only fulfills a federal requirement, it becomes the cornerstone of the program's evaluation and planning process. Every five years the program conducts a comprehensive collection and analysis of key indicators to evaluate the needs and characteristics of eligible Head Start/Early Head Start children and families. Once the comprehensive analysis is complete, an update is written annually for the next four years and becomes the synopsis of current community needs, and is used to: design new plans, choose additional community partners, develop strategic collaborations, evaluate progress of past recommendations, and make relevant decisions about program improvement changes expeditiously.

Multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data were utilized in the creation of this Community Assessment. The community assessment methodology focuses on different levels of analysis to further enhance Head Start program staff understanding and optimize services to children and families.

- 1) **Quantitative data** included governmental statistics such as: 2000 & 2010 decennial census, American Community Survey, Current Population Survey, Federal Reserve, Bureau of Labor Statistics, USDA Rural Atlas, along with numerous state, local and agency databases.
- 2) **Qualitative data** was used in the form of surveys of current Head Start parents and families which is conducted biannually by the Family and Community Services team. The results are analyzed by geographic location in our service area to quantify the level of satisfaction within the program and highlight those areas which may need to be strengthened.

The Community Assessment Update was researched and updated by William Logsdon, Data Analysis Specialist for Audubon Area Head Start.

## C. Identification & Prioritization of Issues or Problems

Once data was compiled and collected for each of the 16 counties in our service area, a thorough review of the findings was conducted.

### Challenge: Full Enrollment Initiative

The Office of Head Start (OHS) requires each Head Start agency to enroll 100 percent of its funded enrollment, while always maintaining an active waiting list. The full enrollment initiative is used to ensure that agencies are reaching this goal. OHS then designates any agencies that are Chronically Underenrolled. When classified as Chronically Underenrolled for four consecutive months, an agency must then submit a plan and timetable for reducing or eliminating the under enrollment.

If after a 12-month period, the agency is able to reach 97 percent of their funded enrollment for six consecutive months, then they will be served notice of successful completion. If, however, they are not able to maintain 97 percent of their funded enrollment, OHS has the authority to take action(s) against the agency. These actions can include recapturing, withholding, or reducing the annual funding and funded enrollment of the agency.

Grantees can appeal an action(s), giving them an opportunity to present testimony/written statements to support previously submitted evidence. Within 30 days of an appeal hearing, OHS will communicate its decision to the agency. Their decision is immediately implemented, as the decision is final.

While AAHS has not been greatly below the required threshold, we have been below the threshold for some time in the Head Start program – Averaging a range of 93% - 96% over the past year, while Early Head Start has remained at 98% - 100%.

Much of the reason for the inability to reach the threshold is due to challenges in staffing. Staffing has been a challenge for many years and was compounded by the COVID pandemic. Classroom closures are prevalent without the staff necessary to maintain ratios. The majority of which occur in communities where the services are needed the most.

AAHS has just received approval for a Change in Scope that will allow for the reduction and redistricting of funded enrollment slots to be effective in August 2023. Our hope with this plan is that we will be able to maintain the necessary enrollment with current staffing levels. This should help maintain ratios and reduce the number of staff performing duties outside of their job responsibilities.



## Recommendations: Full Enrollment Initiative

- Activate Change in Scope.
- Use the information from this current Community Assessment to identify areas for redistricting funded enrollment slots.
- To increase recruitment, develop a marketing plan to increase awareness of program services to the community.
- Reach out to fellow Head Start Agencies, to learn ideas for increasing enrollment and growth of community partners.
- Increase collaboration among community organizations, government agencies, and local businesses to increase partnerships and awareness to assist in recruitment and retention.
- Foster relationships with waitlisted enrollees with referrals to outside partners while awaiting enrollment.

## Update: Full Enrollment Initiative

- Change in Scope has been put in place for 2023-2024 school year.
- Funded enrollment slots have been redistricted according to the identified areas in the Community Assessment. These will continue to be monitored and updated as needed.
- WKU will be reducing its' participation in the delegate's program – reducing 17 slots at the end of 2023-2024 (these 17 students are transitioning to kindergarten) and will reduce the remaining 19 slots at the end of the 2024-2025 school year.
- The Family Services Team is utilizing SharePoint to provide the Office of Head Start recruitment materials that each site can individualize.
- The Family Services Team has created a form labeled Community Partnerships for Recruitment. This plan identifies community agencies that provide support with each of our selection criteria. The plan is completed by each local area and identifies individuals within those community agencies with contact information.
- Resources to families that identify the Kentucky State Childcare Aware website that lists local childcare centers along with STARS quality ratings.
  - Kentucky's Child Care Resource and Referral Network  
<https://www.childcareawareky.org/>

## Challenge: Qualified Teacher Shortage

The shortage of qualified teachers in our service area has led to many classroom closures over the past few years. A report released by the U.S Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education in March of 2015 indicates a shortage of Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education teachers for the 2015-2016 school year. Additionally, a report released in October of 2012 by the Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, shows a 1.4 ratio of individuals completing early childhood programs to projected

vacancies between the years of 2008 and 2012. The reports also noted that turnover for teaching staff is significantly higher in classrooms that have a high percentage of students in poverty. Neither of these reports take into consideration the effects of converting to a full day/school year programming model.

### **Recommendations: Qualified Teacher Shortage**

- Explore budgeting options which will allow for a more comparable rate of pay for Head Start teachers and District Pre-K teachers. Many times, these teachers leave to go work for the school district due to higher salaries offered by the districts.
  - Address the need to better compete with local school districts for better recruitment and retention of qualified teachers to fill the slots and hours needed.
  - Continue to improve wages/salaries and strive to recruit qualified individuals from colleges/universities, before graduation or shortly thereafter.
- Partner with area colleges and universities to actively recruit graduates from Early Childhood programs. (preferably before they graduate)
- Study patterns in teacher turnover to identify trends to be addressed.
- Partner with local colleges to create an internship program for those students who plan on entering the early childhood profession.
- Create a pathway for our current classroom staff that are not Lead Teachers to advance through the personnel ranks with the goal of becoming a Lead Teacher.
- Continue Conscious Discipline Academy, whose graduates can continue to teach some best practices to their colleagues, to help all staff to better handle issues that arise in the classroom.
- Utilize the Learning Lab for a successful orientation of new teachers and aides.
  - The Learning Lab is a learning community where staff attend an intensive training seminar for three weeks. These trainings are conducted face to face, on-line, and through actual classroom shadowing. The goal is for staff to be “classroom ready” by attending the following training topics:
    - Creative Curriculum
    - ChildPlus
    - Conscious Discipline
    - Classroom Environment
    - Teaching Practices
    - CLASS/MERIT
    - Lesson Planning/Individualization
    - Disability Services
    - Teaching Strategies

## Update: Qualified Teacher Shortage

- AAHS has been able to provide a 8.28% increase in wages in the previous two years. With an additional 3% COLA scheduled in September 2024.
  - Many positions received a substantially higher increase in wages, i.e. – Associate Level Teachers received an 18% increase.
- The Learning Lab has been replaced with a new “Onboarding” process has been developed to enable a two-week training period before new employees are released to their place of employment. This will hopefully mitigate the feeling of being “thrown to the wolves” without an adjustment period.
  - During this two-week period, staff will attend an intensive training schedule. These trainings are conducted face to face, and through actual classroom shadowing. The goal is for staff to be “classroom ready” by attending the following training topics:
    - Creative Curriculum
    - ChildPlus
    - Conscious Discipline
    - Classroom Environment
    - Teaching Practices
    - CLASS/MERIT
    - Lesson Planning/Individualization
    - Disability Services
    - Teaching Strategies
- The Family Community Services Team Manager is on the IECE Advisory Board for Owensboro Community and Technical College.

## Challenge: Addressing Classroom Behavioral Issues

While behavioral issues have always been present in educational settings, there is no denying that the COVID-19 Pandemic contributed to a rise once education transitioned back into its traditional formats. According to the National Center for Education Statistics in 2022, 87% of public schools reported a negative impact to student socio-emotional development during the 2021-2022 school year. NCES reports that 84% of public schools also agreed or strongly agreed that students’ behavioral development has also been negatively impacted, along with a 72% increase in chronic absenteeism. Other indicators from the 2021-2022 year indicate the following effects:

- Classroom disruptions from student misconduct – 56%
- Acts of disrespect towards teachers and staff – 48%
- Rowdiness outside of classroom – 49%
- The prohibited use of electronic devices – 42%

Schools reported needing:

- Support for student and/or staff mental health – 79%
- Training on supporting students’ socio-emotional development – 70%

- Hiring of more staff – 60%
- Training on classroom management strategies – 51%

Since COVID, AAHS has seen an increase in the following social emotional concerns and other mental health needs:

- Increase in aggression
- Inability to communicate needs in an appropriate manner
- Difficulty in forming relationships with peers and adults
- Increase in anxiety
- Difficulty with self-regulation or self-soothing strategies

Social emotional needs assessments and observations have been implemented to support classrooms and teachers. We have utilized the DECA to implement conscious discipline and positive guidance strategies. The Developmental Services Coordinator in coordination with the Education Specialists provide modeling and reflective practices to support classroom staff in implementation. The Mental Health Coordinator has developed a tool kit for teachers in the classroom, utilizing the Masloch Burnout Inventory for educators for targeted strategies.

While the challenges faced are vast, multi-faceted and vary from county to county; many that are shared by all areas include:

- Lack of outside resources in the community
- Volume of need in correlation to the large service area
- Staffing difficulties
- Staff turnover
- Staff buy-in
- Overall mental health of the families we serve as well as staff

### **Recommendations: Addressing Classroom Behavioral Issues**

- Hiring of the Classroom Support Advocates to provide more intensive support of implementation of strategies
- CSAs will spend extended periods of time in identified classrooms to model and assist staff in intentional practices
- Increasing the amount of follow-up provided to staff
- Identify barriers in the community and within the family that negatively impact consistent routines
- Provide training to staff on supportive conversations to support relationships with families
- Evaluate the correlation between attendance issues and child behaviors

Additional recommendations for Addressing Classroom Behavioral Issues for 2024-25:

- Implementation of the PBIS/Pyramid Model throughout the agency
- All Education Specialists are considered as a part of the “Behavior Team” at the Tier 1 level.
- New staff Onboarding process, including one full day of training on Positive Guidance to more effectively train and prepare teaching staff for the classrooms.

## Update: Addressing Classroom Behavioral Issues

- Classroom Support Advocates have been hired to provide more intensive support for the implementation of strategies – They will be trained by the AAHS Program Specialist, July 2024.
- Additional Education Specialists were added to the Emotional Support Management Team to meet the influx of requests for support from classroom staff in a more timely and efficient manner.
- A mandatory mental health training was attended by all AAHS staff to address staff mental wellness, teaching staff strategies to use to reduce stress and improve emotional self-regulation.
- Additional Positive Guidance trainings are offered at sites reporting a higher percentage of behavioral concerns in classrooms.
- All specialists on the Child Development Team completed TTA in Positive Guidance.
- An area-wide Conscious Discipline Leadership Academy was conducted.
- A Conscious Discipline/Positive Guidance training will be offered to all Local Area Managers, Local Area Manager Assistants, and all Head Start Central Office staff in June 2024.
- The Child Development Team has developed “Hot Button Trainings” - Mini training sessions using scenarios to identify triggers. These are being given at area staff meetings.
- The Executive Team has a standing agenda item to discuss attendance action plans.
- The School Readiness Committee will assess classroom data with attendance issues to identify any prevalent data.
- The FCS and Health Teams will offer 3 sessions at the summer training institute about creating positive relationships with families:
  - Conscious Discipline
    - Bridging the gap between home and school
    - Creating a school family
  - Cesa 5 – This session provides an opportunity to explore how your own life experiences, values and biases ‘come along’ in your interactions with others.
- The Family Services’ Information Systems Specialist will update the Attendance Action Plan so that each local area will receive the necessary resources to provide families with the help to remove barriers.