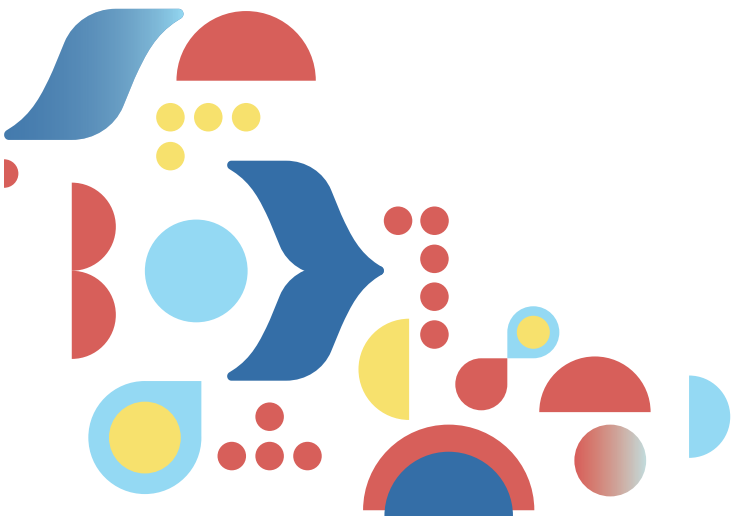
Head Start

MID-AMERICA REGIONAL COUNCIL

2022 –2023
Community Assessment



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MARC Head Start Data

MARC Head Start staff review data from multiple databases on an ongoing basis. Staff work toward continuous quality improvement in the Head Start program by collecting, reviewing and sharing program data with stakeholders for data transparency. Staff work to ensure data quality within the Head Start program.

Data Sources:
Children's Mercy Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment, 2022
MARC Head Start ChildPlus Database
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Missouri Department of Social Services
United Way of Greater Kansas City
U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey

About the Community Assessment

As required by Section 1305.3 Title 45, Volume 4 of the Code of Federal Regulations, MARC Head Start must conduct a community assessment once every five years. The community assessment is a strategic planning tool to help MARC Head Start determine long-term and short-term program goals and objectives. In addition, the community assessment identifies issues and trends within the MARC Head Start service area that directly impact vulnerable families with young children.

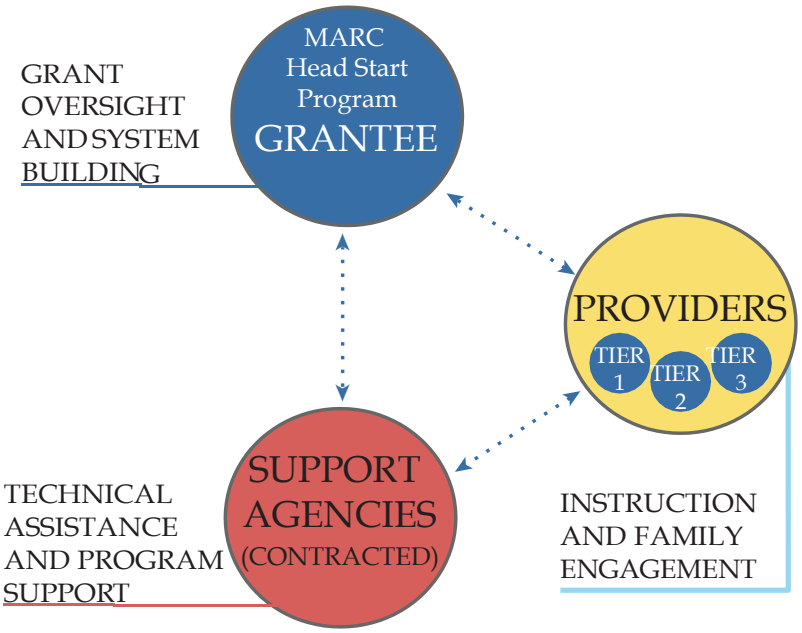
The 2022-2023 community assessment provides the most recent data available regarding demographics, early learning programs, disabilities, health and nutrition, and social services for children and families in the MARC Head Start region. The assessment provides a portrait of MARC Head Start programs and activities and identifies community resources available. This assessment also identifies where there are gaps between available services and needs.

The community assessment is used to drive appropriate delivery of Head Start services. It is a valuable resource for staff, parents and community partners to collectively think about the impacts of population shifts and equitable distribution of services.

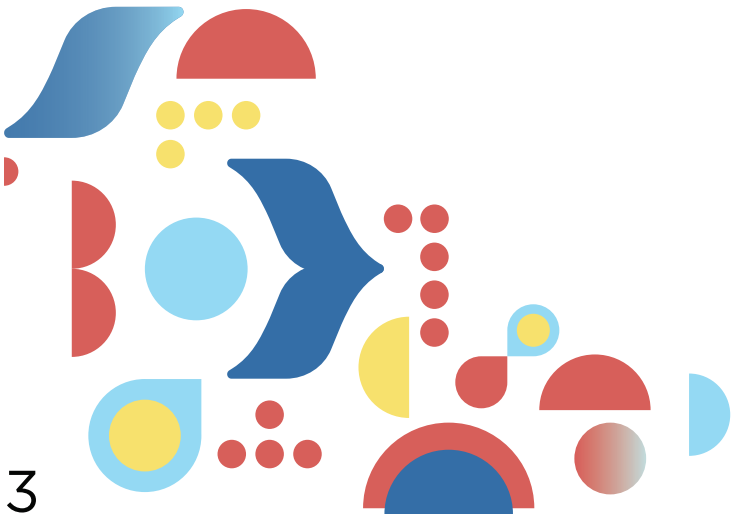
Program Structure

MARC's Head Start program transitioned to a new service delivery structure in the 2018-2019 program year. The new stucture included:

- A three-tiered system that differentiates service providers based on organizational size and available resources.
- A centralized intake system for families that improves access for children and families, serves those with the highest need first and streamlines the enrollment process.
- A professional development system that will help Head Start and Early Head Start teachers, family advocates and program directors develop new skills to improve educational outcomes.



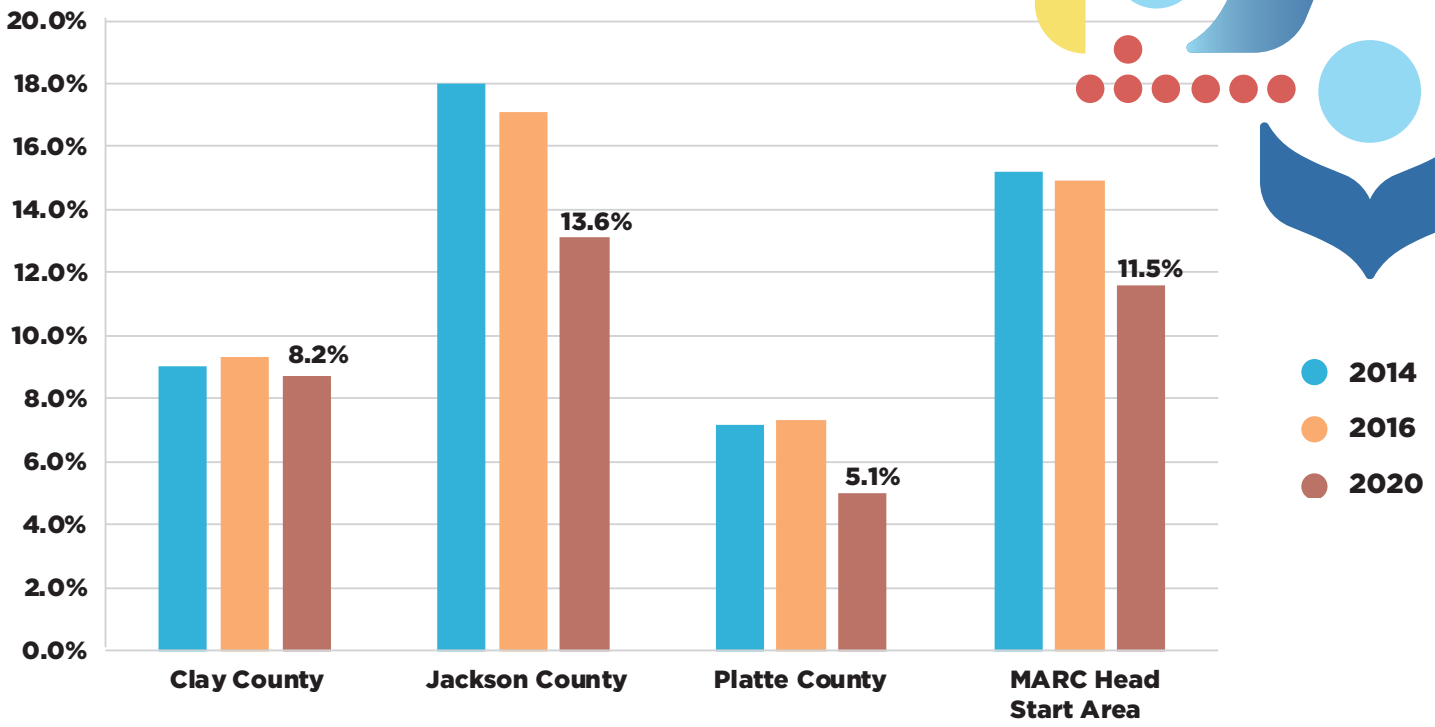
The service delivery model is built on three pillars -- the grantee, partners and support agencies -- working together to efficiently provide services to families. MARC's Head Start program serves as the administrative and policy arm of this structure. The partners, including school district and community early learning centers, provide comprehensive early childhood services for children and families. The third pillar is support agencies, providing technical assistance and program support.



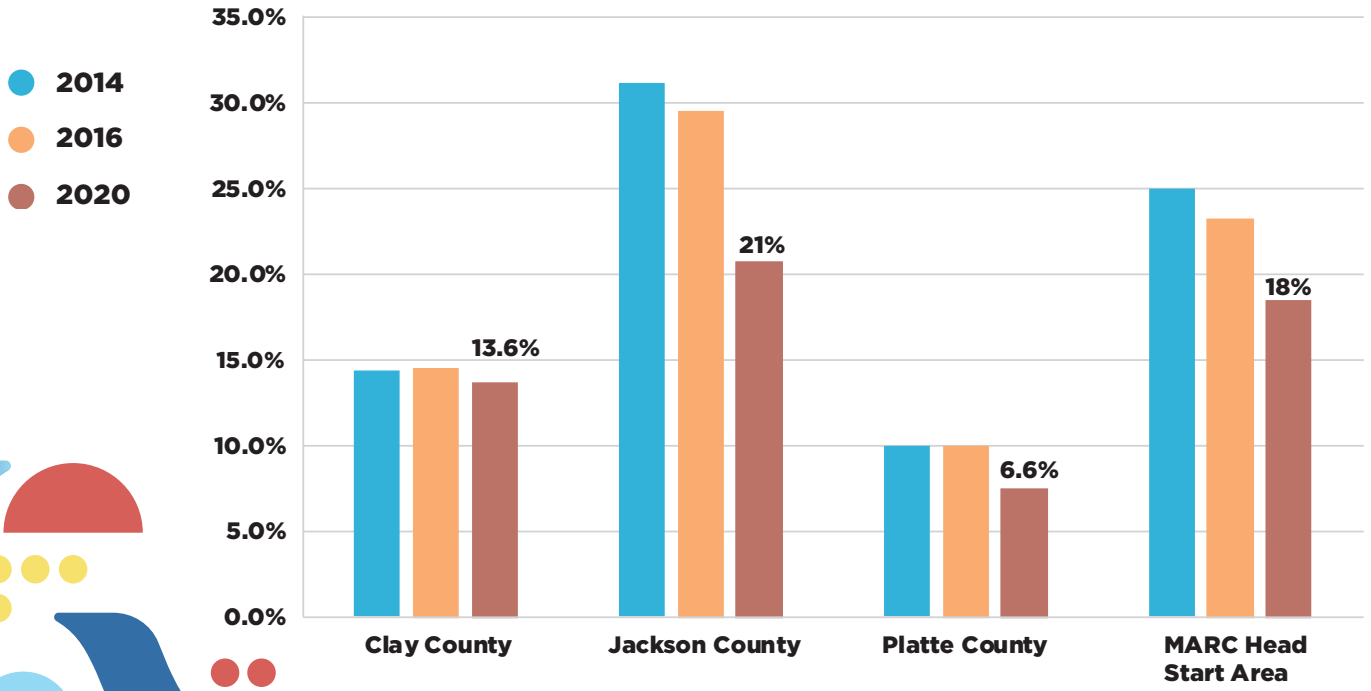
Demographics

Poverty Level

Poverty rate



Poverty rate (children 5 and under)

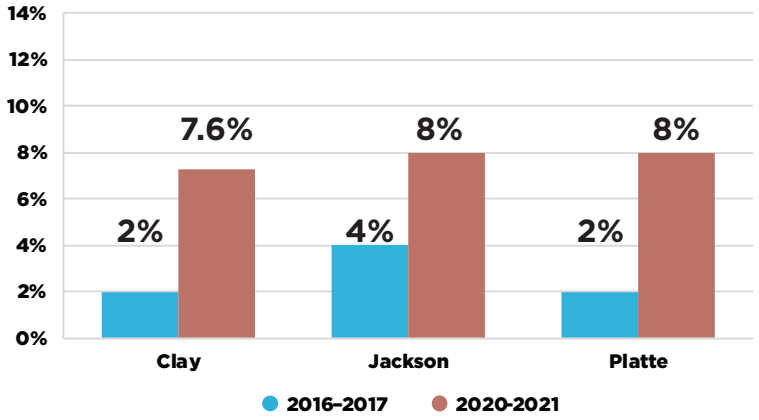


Between 2014 and 2020, the total population living in poverty in Clay, Platte and Jackson counties decreased by 1.5%. In 2020, 18% of all children ages 5 and younger in the MARC Head Start region lived in poverty.

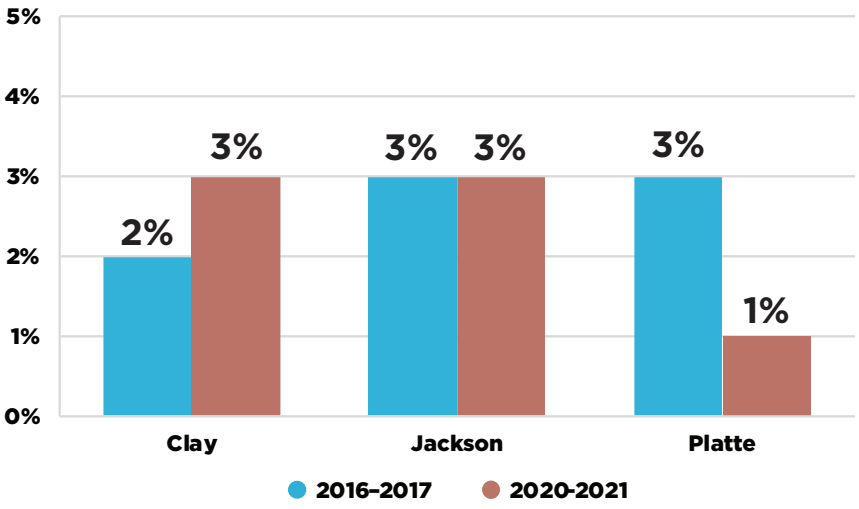
Eligible Children

Percent of Head Start children who qualify as homeless

At the time of application, the percentage of children who qualify as homeless enrolled in MARC Head Start programs has steadily increased in all three counties. The lack of affordable housing in Jackson County has created a migration to Clay and Platte counties where more opportunity for affordable housing can be found.



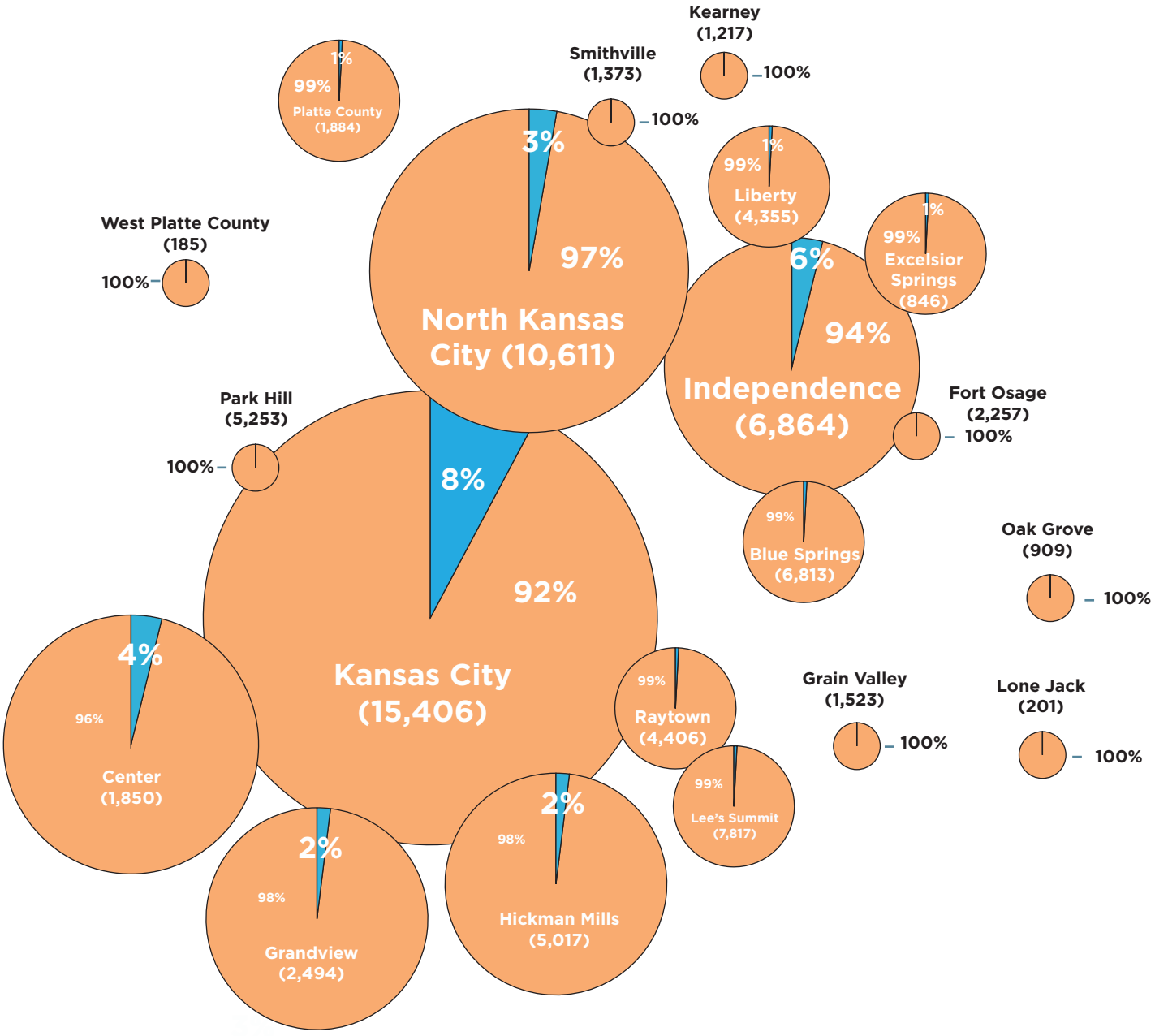
Percent of Head Start children who are in foster care



MARC Head Start continues to work toward increasing enrollment of children in foster care. While there was a modest increase in Clay county from 2021 to 2022, the logistics involved in the placement of foster care children remain challenging. Children in the foster care system typically need immediate enrollment in an early childhood program and cannot wait for an opening at a center that is already full. This makes it difficult to find an opening at the right location and at the right time. Collaborative relationships with local Departments of Social Services including reciprocal processes for referral are in place.

School District Demographics

Population under age 6 in poverty by school district boundaries



This graphic shows the percentage of children enrolled in MARC Head Start programs in relation to the total number of children under the age of 6 living in poverty. The size of each pie chart corresponds with the total number (in parenthesis) of children under the age of 6 living in poverty in each school district. School district boundaries give a deeper understanding of the availability of Head Start resources in the three counties served by MARC Head Start. School districts with less than 10 children living in poverty are not included in the graphic.

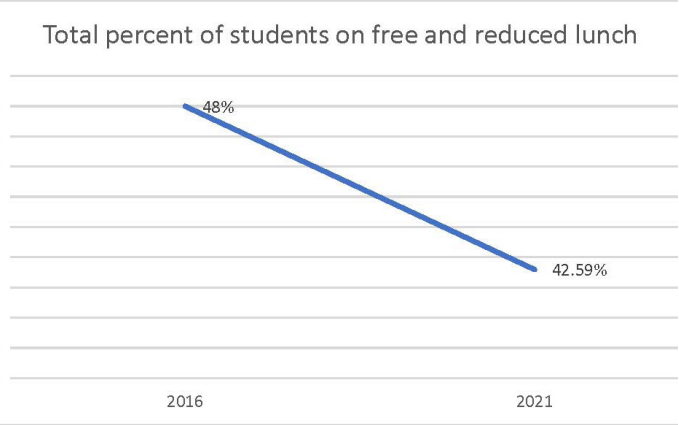
School District Demographics

Percent of students on free and reduced lunch

School District	2016	2020
Blue Springs	30%	28.30%
Center	76%	73.4%
Excelsior Springs	50%	50%
Fort Osage	57%	53.4%
Grain Valley	17%	24.1%
Grandview	78%	77.6%
Hickman Mills	100%*	100%
Independence	72%	70%
Kansas City, Mo.	100%*	100%
Kearney	14%	14.4%
Lee's Summit	19%	19.3%
Liberty	19%	19.2%
Lone Jack	20%	14.7%
North Kansas City	50%	47.1%
North Platte County	24%	24.9%
Oak Grove	39%	30.6%
Park Hill	29%	27.1%
Platte County	24%	21.3%
Raytown	68%	64.9%
Smithville	16%	13.8%
West Platte County	24%	20%
Total	48%	42.5%

*Beginning in 2015, based on federal regulations allowing for "Community Eligibility," the Hickman Mills and Kansas City, Missouri, Public School districts have provided free meals for all students due to their ranking as high-poverty communities.

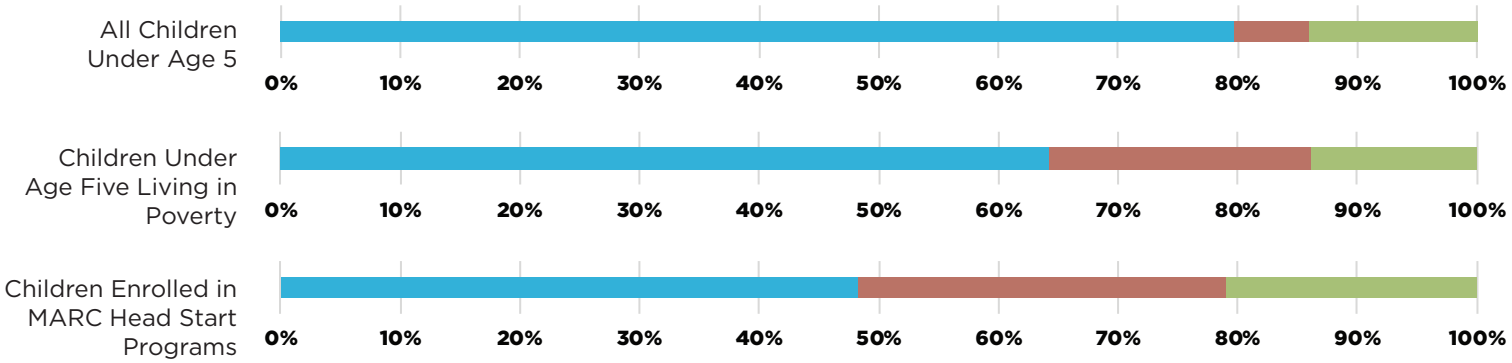
Total percent of students on free and reduced lunch



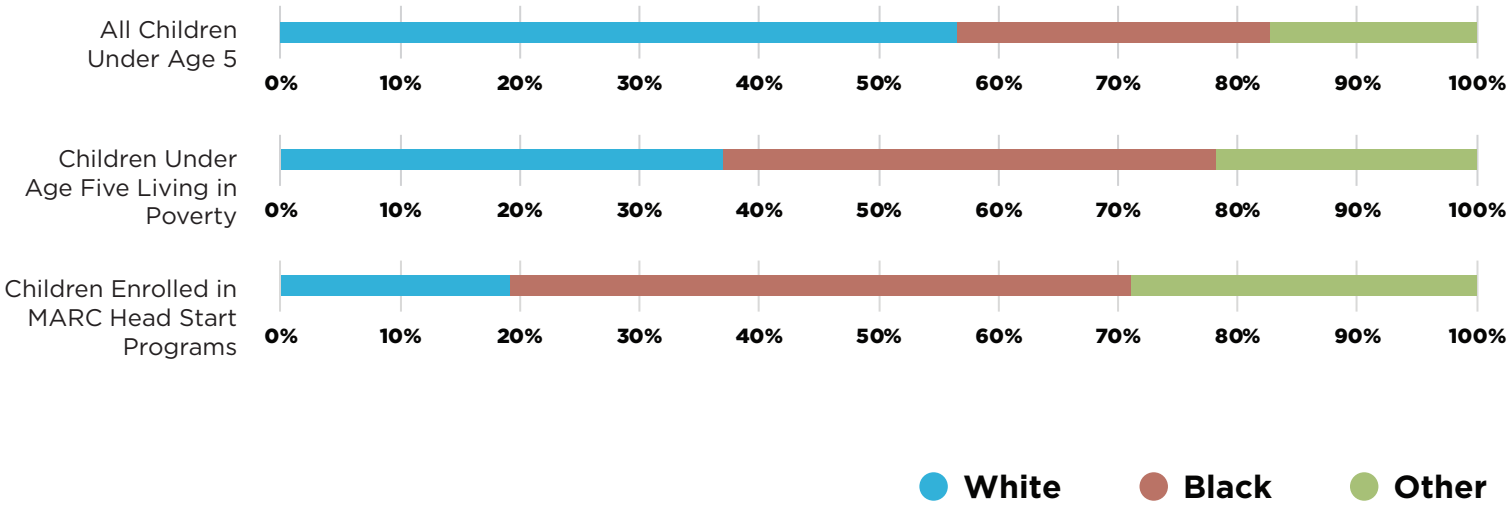
Between 2016 and 2021, the percentage of public-school students participating in free and reduced-price lunch programs in the MARC Head Start region decreased from 48% to 42.59%. While the data shows a decrease, 18 of the months were during the COVID-19 pandemic when all children received free lunch. There has been an increased need in suburban communities. This is particularly evident for Excelsior Springs, North Kansas City, Fort Osage, Grandview, Independence, Raytown and Center School districts, which all surpassed the regional average (43%) for students receiving free and reduced-price lunch in 2021.

Race and Ethnicity

Clay County

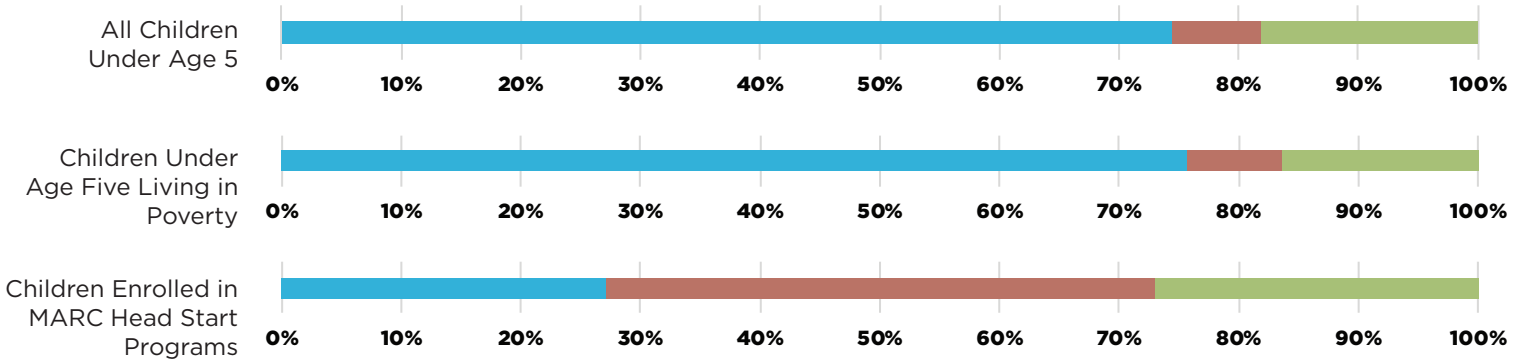


Jackson County

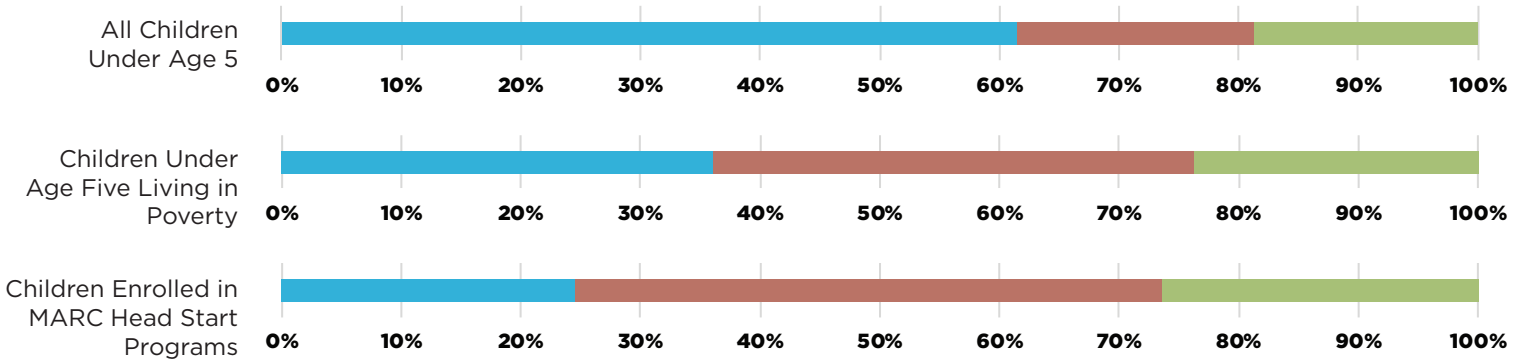


Race and Ethnicity

Platte County



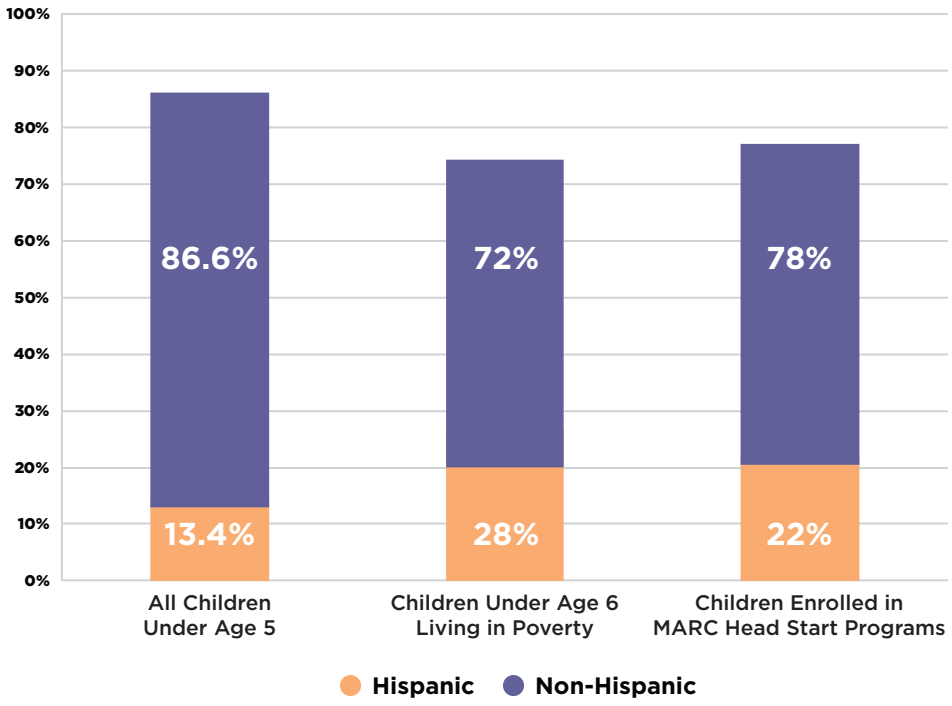
Total



Within the limits of available funding and child care slots, MARC Head Start strives to meet the needs of families and children who could benefit from Head Start services. Currently, 48% of children enrolled in MARC Head Start programs are Black, 25% are white, and 26% identify as a race other than Black or white. The racial background of children enrolled in MARC Head Start reflects the impact poverty has on racial minorities in the region. Currently, 74% of children who live in poverty in the MARC Head Start region are either Black or a race other than Black or white. Conversely, children who are Black or a race other than Black or white make up only 26% of the population in the region.

Race and Ethnicity

Hispanic population as a percent of the Head Start and total MARC Head Start regional population (2020–2021)



The chart above shows the percent of Hispanic children under the age of 6 who live in the region, are living in poverty and are enrolled in MARC Head Start programs. This data is presented separately from the racial distribution bar charts found on pages 9 and 10 because children may be categorized as white, Black, or other in race, while simultaneously identifying as Hispanic in ethnicity. Currently, 28% of children living in poverty are Hispanic and 22% of children enrolled in MARC Head Start programs are Hispanic. This indicates that the Hispanic population served is below the general regional population.

Native Language

Languages spoken in the home of children enrolled in MARC Head Start programs

Languages spoken in the Home (2020–21)

Language	Number of children
English	1,847
Spanish	255
Somali	51
Arabic	47
Vietnamese	8
Karen	14
Mixteco	6
Burmese	9
African	5
Creole	3
Amharic	11
French	3
Ibu	4
Urdu	5

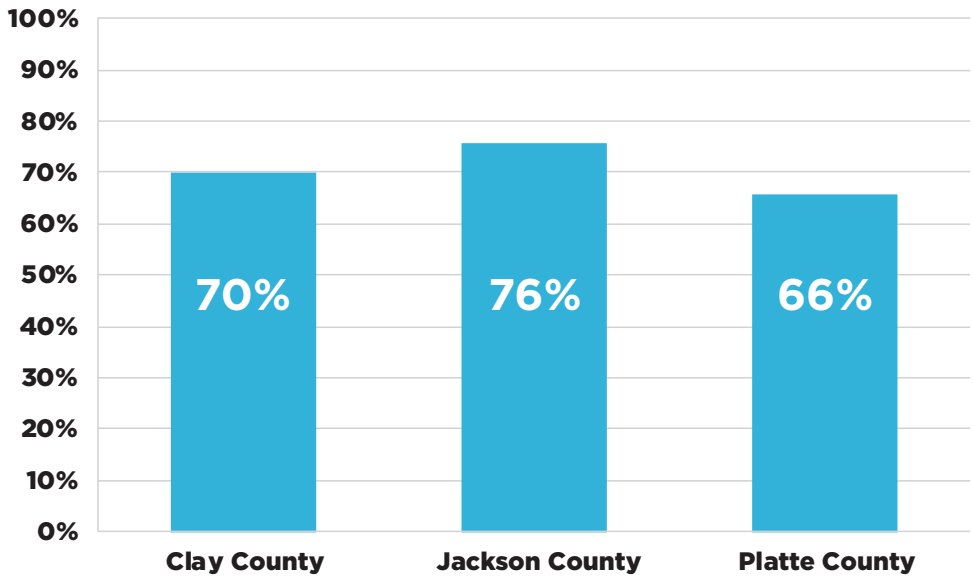
The table to the left includes the languages spoken in the home during the 2020–2021 program year. English continues to be the predominant language that MARC Head Start families speak in the home. In the 2020-2021 program year, there were 2,291 families enrolled in MARC Head Start programs. This means 81% of the families in that program year spoke English in the home. The number of families speaking Spanish in the home declined in the past three years from 375 to 255, while the languages of Amharic, Karen and Urdu were either new to the list or saw a modest increase.

To better serve the foreign-born populations, MARC Head Start has built partnerships with organizations such as Jewish Vocational Services, the leading assistance organization for refugees and displaced persons in the Kansas City metro. The long-term goals are to achieve positive outcomes for children in language and literacy development, including second language acquisition and effectively transition children into kindergarten.

Note: Table includes languages spoken by three or more families.

Parent and Family Data

MARC Head Start households headed by single parents



"MARC Head Start has made such a wonderful impact on my family. Although I started out frustrated that my son had to attend Head Start for a second year because of his birthday, I now realize that was a blessing in disguise. Not only was my son able to receive more (care and assistance with IEP); but I was able to learn more about MARC Head Start from the inside out. I have received so much knowledge and resources to help my family and myself. I have also met people that I will remember and connect with forever. I look forward to continuing my journey (as a legacy parent). This program has also shown me that I do have a voice and that I can help make a difference in my life, my children and my community."

—Chilah Harris
Parent/Policy Council Member

Employment Data

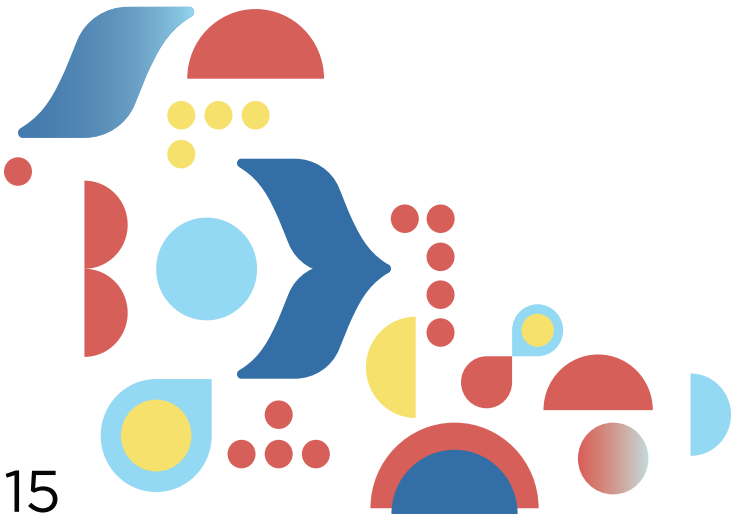
Employment data for families in MARC Head Start region with children under the age of 6 (2021)

	Clay		Jackson		Platte	
Households	Actual	Percent	Actual	Percent	Actual	Percent
Two Parents Both in Labor Force	8,438	47.1%	20,624	38.4%	3,652	49.9%
Two Parents One in Labor Force	3,735	20.8%	10,809	20.1%	1,962	26.9%
Two Parents Neither in Labor Force	98	0.5%	318	0.6%	38	0.5%
One Parent in Labor Force	4,854	27.1%	17,841	33.2%	1,447	19.8%
One Parent Not in Labor Force	791	4.4%	4,092	7.6%	207	2.8%
Total Households with Children Under 6	17,916	-	53,684	-	7,313	-

Note: Individuals in the labor force may either be employed or seeking employment. The total number of families with children under the age of 6 in the MARC Head Start region is 78,799.

During 2021, the data showed an increase in families joining the workforce. In Clay, Jackson and Platte counties, there was an increase of parents working and decrease of parents not in the labor force. This shows the need for child care slots in all three counties.

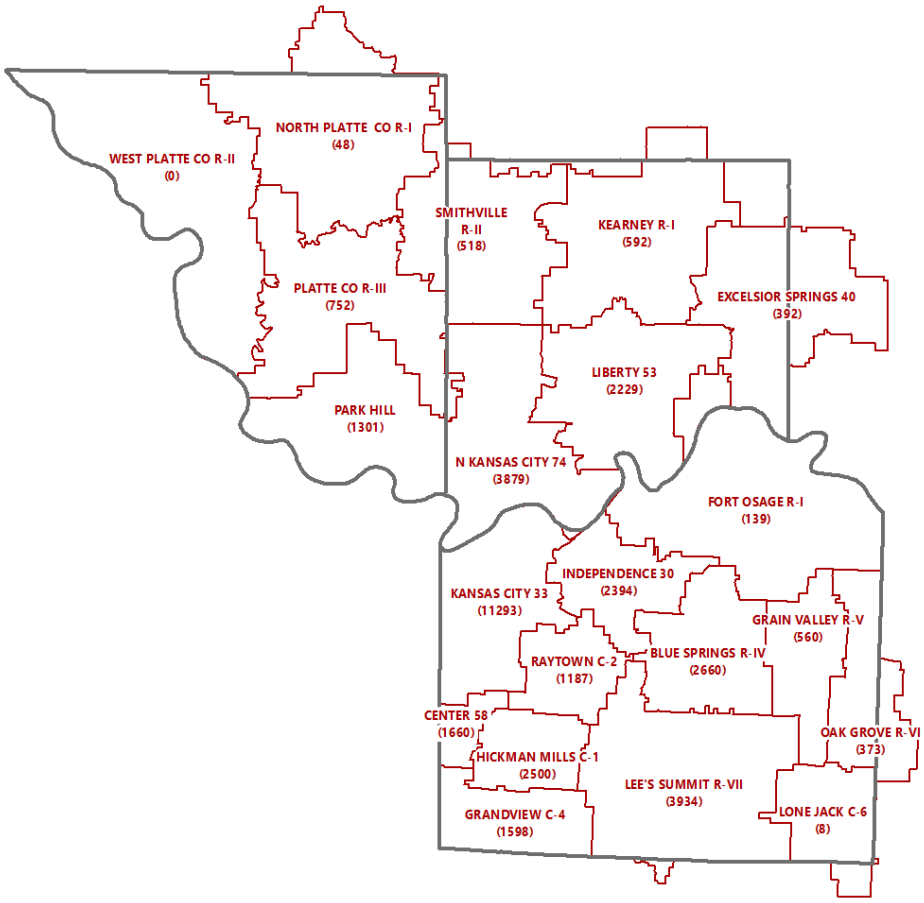
The largest survey category for household composition in the MARC Head Start region included two-parent households, with both parents in the workforce. From 2015 to 2021, there was a 10% increase in two parents in the labor force. There was a 6% increase in Jackson County alone. The number of households with one parent in the labor force remained the same from 2015-2021 in Jackson County, with a slight increase in Clay County.



Early Learning Programs

School District Boundaries

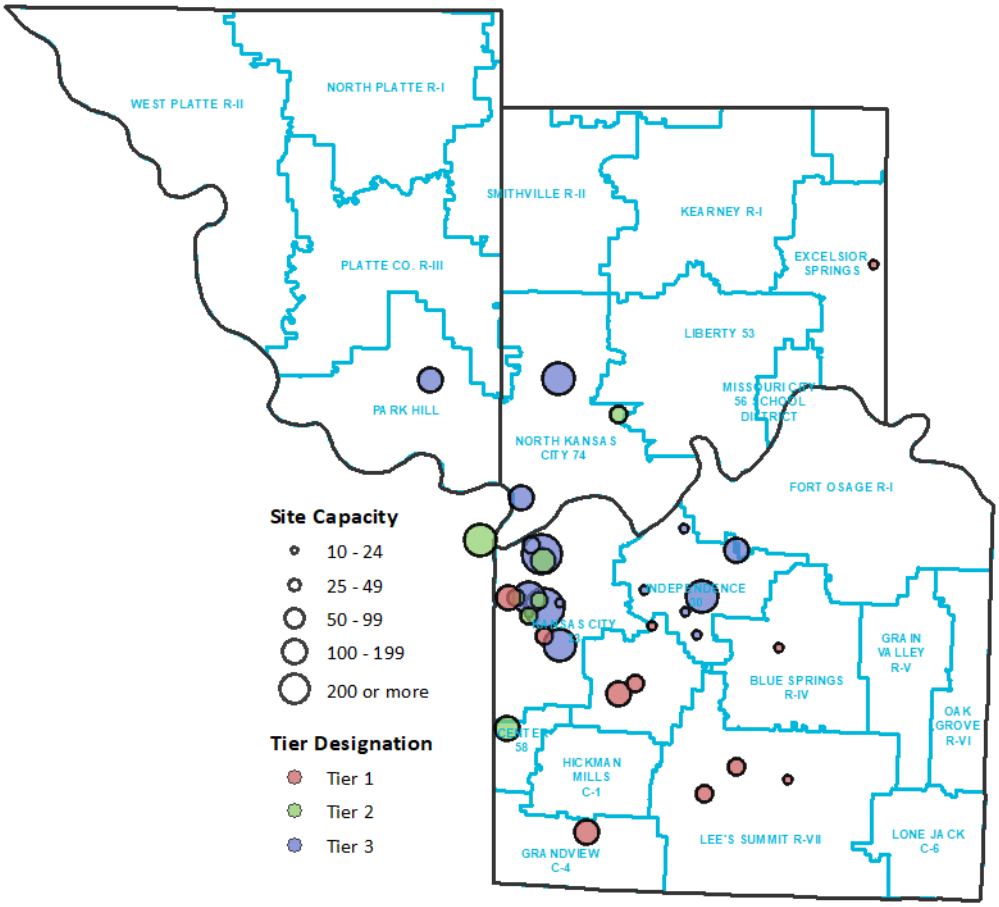
Licensed early learning slots within school district boundaries



In this section, school district boundaries are used as a reference point to examine trends across the region. School districts do not operate all centers or sites. The early learning capacity is included in brackets under each school district name. This map illustrates the capacity of all licensed early learning sites, including Head Start, school district and private centers within each school district boundary.

MARC Head Start Site Location and Capacity

Head Start capacity in each school district and partner site



This map shows the locations of MARC Head Start school district and community-based sites. The size of each bubble reflects the number of Head Start students at each partner and delegate site. As shown in the map, most MARC Head Start early learning sites are in the urban core and inner ring suburbs; Excelsior Springs School District's Early Learning Program being the one exception.

Child Care Capacity within School District Boundaries

School District Boundary	Population Under Age 6	Child Care Slots Available	Number of Children per Available Slot
Fort Osage	2,270	139	16.33
Park Hill	5,370	1,301	4.13
Raytown	4,354	1,187	3.67
Lee's Summit	7,974	3,934	2.03
North Kansas City	10,666	3,874	2.75
Grain Valley	1,744	560	3.11
Excelsior Springs	1,221	392	3.11
Blue Springs	6,668	2,660	2.51
Liberty	4,532	2,229	2.03
Lone Jack	333	8	41.63
Hickman Mills	5,340	2,500	2.14
Oak Grove	881	373	2.36
Smithville	1,297	518	2.50
Kearney	1,361	592	2.30
Independence	6.508	2,394	2.72
Grandview	2,423	1,598	1.52
Center	1,885	1,660	1.14
Platte County	1,942	752	2.58
North Platte County	381	48	7.93
Kansas City, Mo.	15,236	11,293	1.35

Child care capacity
(Refers to table on page 19)

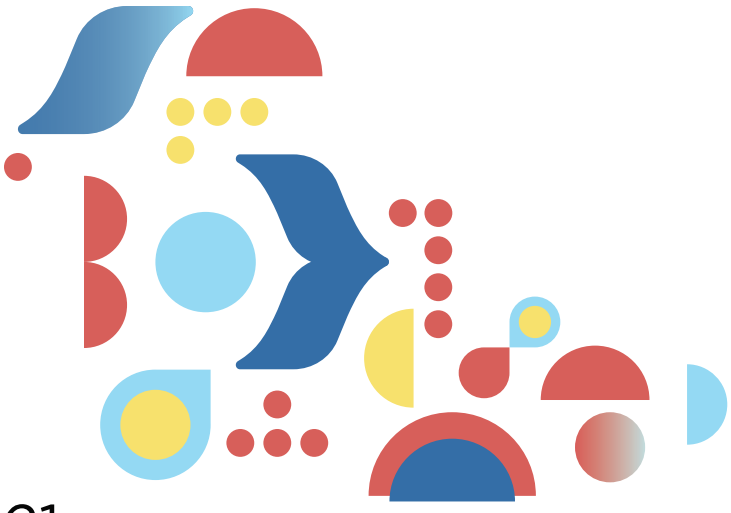
Families living in or commuting to Kansas City's urban core have the most child care options available. Two suburban school districts, Park Hill and Raytown, and three rural school districts, North Platte County, Lone Jack and Fort Osage, all have relatively limited capacity within their district boundaries to meet the child care needs of their communities.

Accredited early learning centers

	Capacity of Accredited Programs (2016)	Number of Accredited Early Learning Centers (2023)
Clay	91	5
Jackson	349	22
Platte	27	2

While accessibility to child care centers is varied across the region, access to accredited early learning centers continues to decline. Similarly, Jackson County saw a decrease from 43 to 22 accredited early learning facilities in the same time period. In 2020-2021, a significant number of child care facilities closed. With all the closures, there was a decrease of accredited early learning centers.

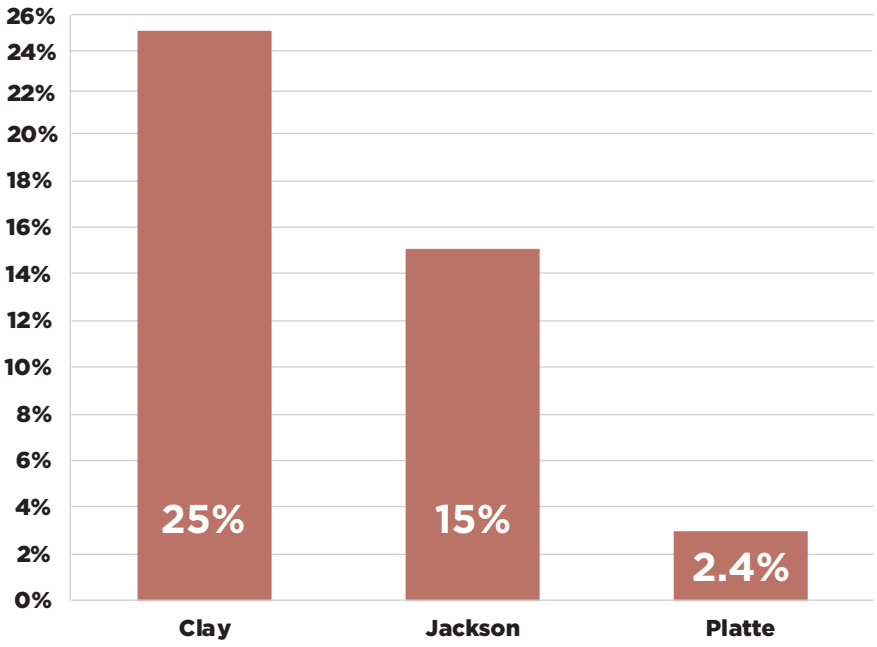
Note: Programs are accredited through The National Association for the Education of Young Children or the Missouri Accreditation of Programs for Children and Youth. Programs included in the table on page 19 met state license regulations for child care centers, while programs in the table on page 20 met state and national early learning accreditation standards. According to the Missouri Accreditation of Programs for Children and Youth, "Programs that achieve accreditation become a member of an elite and unique group because they have achieved a high standard of quality."



Disabilities

Numbers and Data

Head Start children with disabilities



Note: The numbers used to calculate the percents in the chart above are from the entire program year 2021-2022.

Breakdown of identified disabilities among MARC Head Start children by county

	Clay	Jackson	Platte
Development Delay	30	135	4
Speech Impairment	10	40	0
Autism	0	4	0
Brain Injury	0	0	0
Other*	7	35	2
Total	47	214	6

*Note: One child may have multiple identified disabilities. Disabilities in the "other" category include health impairments, orthopedic disabilities, hearing impairments, orthopedic disabilities, visual disabilities and intellectual disabilities.

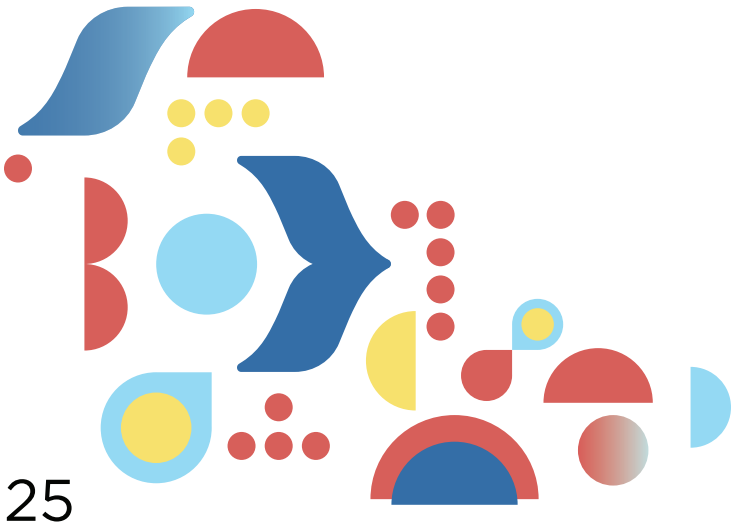
Services Provided

Part C services

First Steps is Missouri's early-intervention program designed for children from birth to 3 with developmental delays or diagnosed conditions. First Steps offers coordinated services and assistance to young children with special needs and their families. MARC Head Start has memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with two First Steps agencies or system points of entry (SPOE): Greater Kansas City SPOE and Northwest SPOE.

Part B services

At age 3 through kindergarten entry, children are eligible to receive special education services through their local school district as defined by Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. There are 22 school districts in the MARC Head Start service area providing Part B services: Blue Springs, Center, Excelsior Springs, Fort Osage, Grain Valley, Grandview, Hickman Mills, Independence, Kearney, Lee's Summit, Liberty, Lone Jack, Missouri City, North Kansas City, North Platte, Oak Grove, Park Hill, Raytown, Platte County, West Platte, Smithville and Kansas City Public Schools.



Health and Nutrition

Numbers and Data

Head Start children with identified health care needs

	Asthma		Hearing Difficulty		Overweight/ Obese	
	Actual	Percent	Actual	Percent	Actual	Percent
Clay	22	7%	13	4%	50	16%
Jackson	151	8%	39	2%	538	30%
Platte	11	11%	2	2%	17	17%

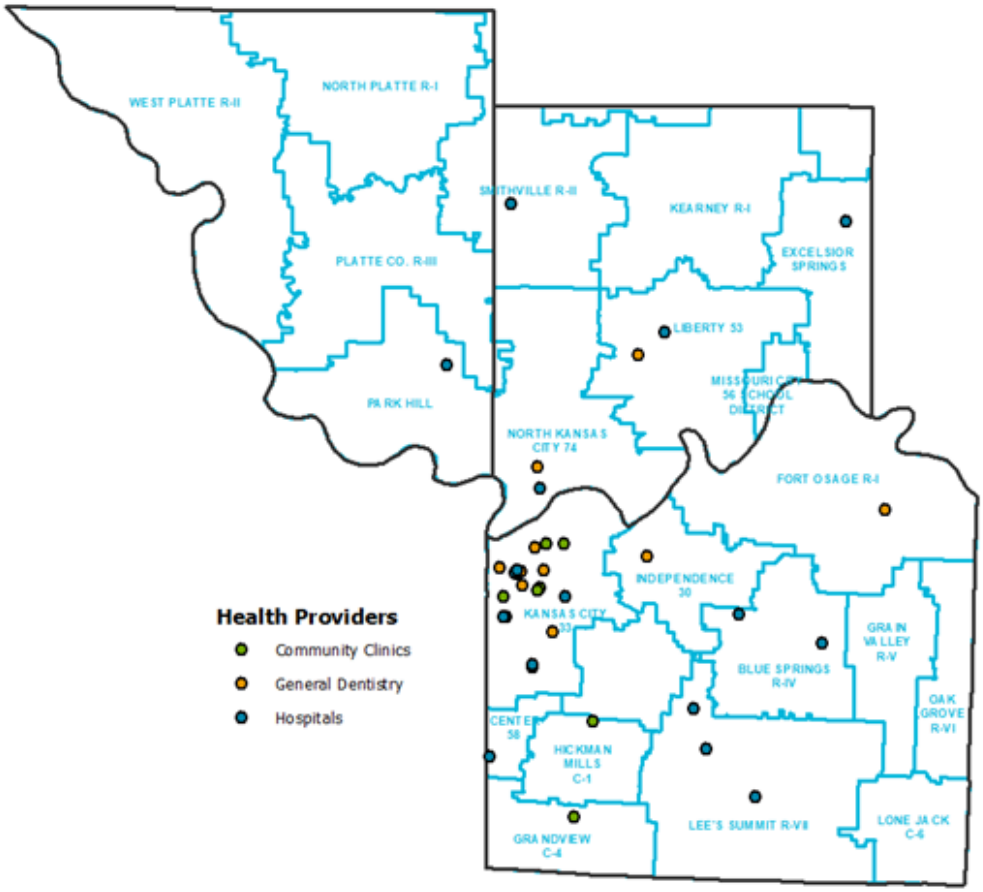
In a review of enrolled children's health care records, asthma is our program's most prevalent chronic health condition. MARC Head Start works with medical providers and families to ensure that all children have current and up-to-date asthma action plans and medications in both program and homes. These requirements aid in our efforts to decrease emergency room visits and absenteeism.

A further health care concern is the number of children in our programs considered overweight or obese, defined as having a high BMI. In a review of our last four Program Information Reports (PIR), the percentage of children who are overweight is 14-15%, while children considered obese is 17-21%. MARC Head Start routinely monitors menus to ensure all meals and snacks served are developmentally and culturally appropriate, nutritionally balanced and follow USDA requirements.

MARC Head Start will work with community health partners to identify and address the percentage of overweight and obese children in Head Start. Prior to enrollment, child health records are reviewed to determine the child's health status. Within 90 days of enrollment the program determines if a child is on a schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary medical and oral health care. Chronic health conditions, such as asthma, are identified and monitored for individualized health care plans and medication compliance prior to enrollment and attendance. As part of Head Start's on-going delivery of health care services, child health is continuously monitored throughout the program year.

Health Care Centers by School District Boundaries

Includes clinics, medical and dental in the MARC Head Start region

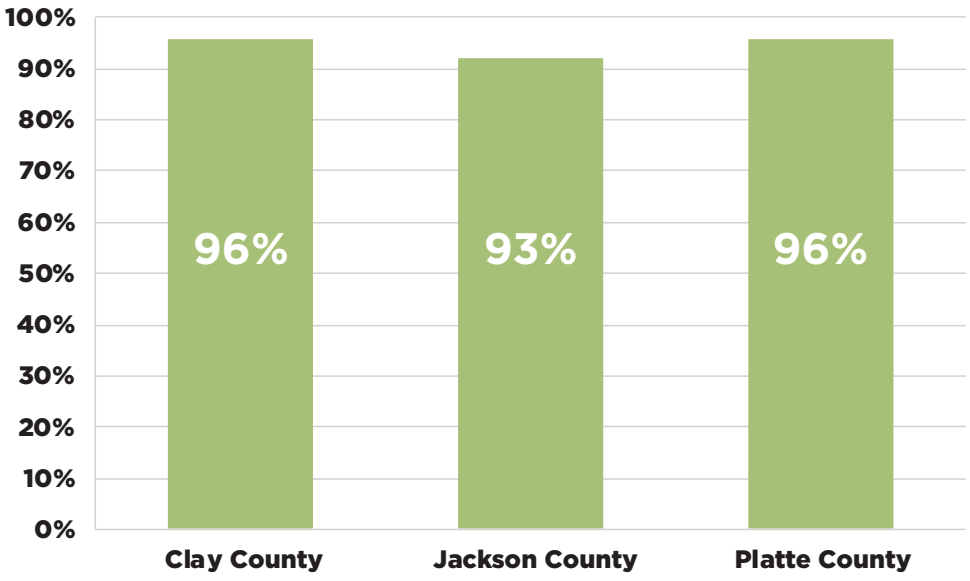


Note: This map does not include private service providers. It only identifies service providers referred by the United Way of Greater Kansas City.

MARC Head Start families living in rural, and some suburban communities, have limited access to health care providers. The lack of medical and dental providers creates a barrier to care for our Head Start families due to the lack of multiple access points to continuous health care. The Head Start families living within the Kansas City metropolitan area have greater access to health services due to increased access to medical and dental provider availability. MARC Head Start will continue to develop partnerships with community providers to address the barriers to care in the rural and suburban communities.

Immunization

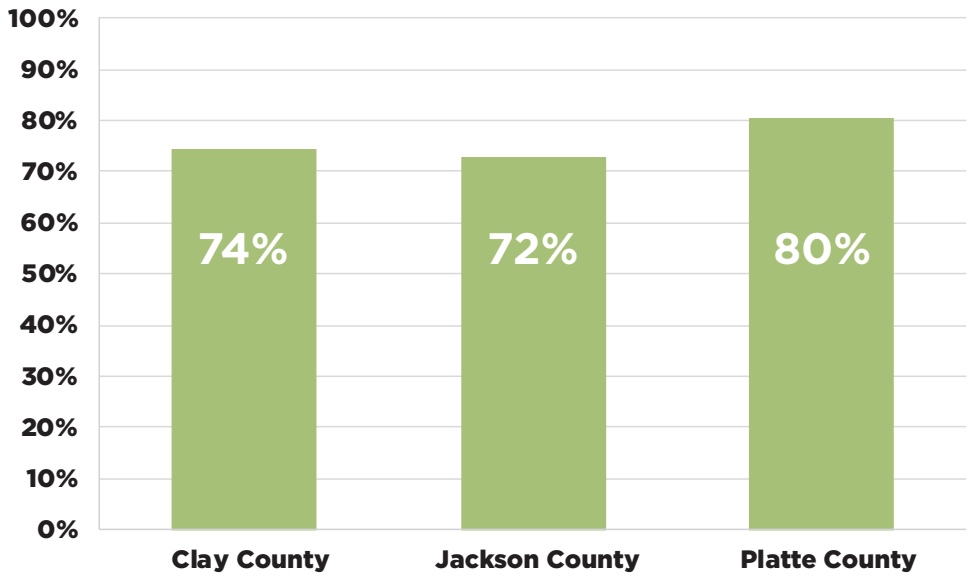
MARC Head Start enrolled children who received immunizations (2020–2021)



Head Start programs mandate that enrolled children have all required vaccinations and exemptions on file, dependent upon their age. MARC Head Start data shows a very high success rate of greater than 95% in ensuring that all enrolled children have received their vaccinations. This improves child health and learning outcomes by reducing health- related absenteeism and potential health risks.

Dental and Oral Health

MARC Head Start enrolled children who received dental services (2020–2021)



MARC Head Start requires that all children must receive oral health exams within 90 days of enrollment. In the MARC Head Start region, and across Greater Kansas City, there has been an increase in oral health providers actively providing oral care to the MARC Head Start population. This increase is a direct result of the active collaborations that were formed during the MARC Head Start oral health roundtable in 2017. In late 2017, MARC Head Start and Swope Health Services Federally Qualified Health Center began a collaboration to provide on-site oral health exams twice a year. In 2019, MARC Head Start began a working relationship with KC Surgical Center to provide oral health treatment services. During the 2021-22 program year, as COVID-19 concerns lessened, the collaborative between MARC Head Start strengthened and grew to include the Swope Mobile Dental Unit providing on-site dental services to 15 to 17 sites. In addition, Swope Health Services provides an on-site dental clinic in one Head Start program.

New Health Initiatives

HRSA Grant: In May 2021, MARC Head Start received a grant from the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) for the Pediatric Primary Prevention P4 Challenge.

The grant goals were to:

- Work with community partners to improve the number of completed well-child exams and immunizations.
- Results: In May 2022, MARC Head Start noted a significant increase in well child visits, immunizations, dentals and continuity of care for underserved and uninsured children through the establishment of medical and dental homes.

HRSA Grant: In July 2022, MARC Head Start received a grant from the HRSA for the Building Bridges to Better Health: A Primary Health Care Challenge.

The grant goals were to:

- Develop possible solutions to mitigate poor health and social determinants of health outcomes, including greater access to medical services.
- Plans include the establishment of a school-based clinic at the Excelsior Springs Early Childhood Center, serving a rural community in Clay County. Services will include medical, oral and optometry.

Social Services

Community Needs

Social service providers by county

County	Housing	Food	Crisis Intervention
Clay	2,354	386	3,628
Jackson	19,463	3,830	3,0186
Platte	762	150	1,210

Top needs in MARC Head Start region

Need	Total Need	Unmet Need	Percent Unmet
Electrical Service	20,549	993	4.83%
Water Service	5,834	283	4.85%
Gas Service	6,716	378	5.63%
Rent Payment	10,920	582	5.5%
Food Pantries	2,656	139	5.23%
Community Shelters	2,656	139	5.53%

Note: The 2-1-1 data was provided by the United Way of Greater Kansas City. Data is from Aug. 13, 2020, through Aug. 12, 2021, thus providing MAHS staff a year's worth of data regarding social services available in Clay, Jackson and Platte counties. The 2-1-1 data included 71,567 total calls. During that same time period, the need count was 67,407. The need count is higher than the calls received because some callers have multiple need requests.

Community Needs

In the MARC Head Start region, most social service providers are in Jackson County. This reflects the population concentration in Jackson County and the need based on the number of children in poverty. In this section housing services include community shelters, housing down payment loans, rent payment assistance and public housing. Food services include programs such as food pantries, community food banks and soup kitchens. Crisis intervention includes programs such as gas and electric service payment assistance.

This data indicates that more families in the MARC Head Start region need financial assistance for basic utility needs, such as electrical, water and gas services. Within a year's time, there were 49,331 calls to 2-1-1 in Clay, Jackson and Platte counties. Of these calls, nearly 42% were for electric service payment assistance, and nearly 67% were for electric, water and gas service payment assistance.

To support the needs identified above, MARC Head Start continues to be a contributing partner with IMPACT KC. The Impact Model is an effective cross-sector collaboration of trusted partners with unique knowledge in their respective domains. They help solve complex community problems such as food, income, housing and employment on a large scale. Through IMPACT KC, the MARC Head Start network addresses families' immediate needs while developing a plan for permanent and lasting solutions.

Summary of Findings

Demographics

Poverty

- From 2020-2022, all children received free lunch at school due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Six of the 20 school districts do not have any MARC Head Start children served. These are in rural school districts.

  - Eighteen percent of children ages 5 and younger live in poverty.
  - Within each of the 20 school district boundaries, the number of children enrolled in MARC Head Start programs ranges from 1% to 20% of the children under five living in poverty.

Homelessness and foster care

- In the past five years, the percentage of enrolled children who qualify as homeless increased from 7% to 8% in Clay and Platte counties. An increased effort is needed to regain partnerships with homeless-serving agencies within the region to reinforce suppports for this vulnerable population.

Race, ethnicity and languages spoken

- The top five languages MARC Head Start families speak in the home include English, Spanish, Somali, Arabic and Karen.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a decrease in Spanish speaking families applying for MARC Head Start services. Intentional efforts for recruitment were made and continue to support this population.

Summary of Findings

Demographics

Family data

- Single parents head a majority of MARC Head Start households.
- In Clay and Platte counties, most families with children under the age of 6 have two parents who are both in the labor force.
- Almost 8% of families in Jackson County have a single parent who is not in the labor force.

Families living in Clay, Jackson and Platte counties continue to face poverty and the need for additional resources. MARC Head Start aims to address these concerns by enrolling families who demonstrate the greatest need and identifying partner school districts and centers that can best serve these families.

Early learning programs

- Head Start programs are located in 11 of the 21 school district boundaries in the MARC Head Start region.
- The median number of children per available licensed child care slot in the region is 5.14.
- The total number of centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children or Missouri Accreditation decreased by 21% between 2014 and 2021.

The number of children per available slot range from 0.88 in the Kansas City School District boundary to 10.16 in the Fort Osage School District boundary.

Access to licensed and accredited early learning programs varies greatly throughout the MARC Head Start region. As more school districts offer early learning opportunities to families, MARC Head Start will need to carefully consider the availability of quality early childhood programs, as well as the percentage of families living in poverty and the total number of early childhood slots available in each school district boundary, when determining the best placement of Head Start and Early Head Start slots in each community.

Summary of Findings

Disabilities

- Over 10% of the children enrolled in MARC Head Start have an identified disability.
- The majority of the children with an identified disability have a developmental delay followed by a speech impairment.
- Part B services are provided by schools districts in Jackson, Clay and Platte counties.
- Part C services are coordinated by First Steps.

Early intervention services gives children the best chance of developing to their full potential. MARC Head Start will continue to partner with local school districts and First Steps to identify and coordinate services for children with developmental delays. Community resources are provided to all children based on identified needs.

Health and nutrition

Asthma is the prevalent chronic health condition in the MARC Head Start program. Diligent program efforts ensure all children with asthma have current asthma action plans and medications. Childhood obesity is the second most prevalent chronic health condition. Fifteen percent are overweight and 21% are obese. The proportion of obese children in our program mirrors the regional rate of childhood obesity.

There are multiple access locations to health care services available to families living in the urban core. While the lack of primary care and dental providers continues to be a concern in some suburban and rural communities.

Ninety-five percent of enrolled Head Start and Early Head Start children are up-to-date on immunizations.

MARC Head Start's partnership with a federally qualified health center and a pediatric surgical center shows continued progress in the percentage of children receiving oral health care. The number of children receiving routine oral health care (twice a year) and follow-up dental treatment increased substantially.

Future Forward Strategies:

MARC Head Start will collaborate with community health partners and programs to identify and address the causes and concerns relevant to Head Start children who are overweight or obese. We will continue to work with community health partners to address barriers to care in rural and suburban areas. This includes maintaining a partnership with a federally qualified health center to provide primary and oral health care through its mobile medical and dental units.

Summary of Findings

Social services

- The majority of social service providers are located in Jackson County, where there is the highest number of children living in poverty.
- The majority of 2-1-1 calls in the MARC Head Start region are for basic utility needs. Nearly 44% of all 2-1-1 calls were for electrical, water and gas service payment assistance.
- In Kansas City, Missouri, MARC is creating a pipeline to workforce through the Head Start program. The newly created workforce development training program is called Head Start Connections Career Readiness. The program seeks to provide Head Start parents with information that allows them to connect, learn and explore career pathways that lead to sustainable wage jobs. The program teaches how to identify passions and strengths, connect with resources in the community, create and fine-tune resumes, sharpen interviewing skills and network with local employers who have hiring needs. It also exposes individuals to job search tools and engines and money management tools.

This data indicates where families are facing financial gaps and provides a basis for MARC Head Start staff to continually search for new resources available to Head Start families.

There are many barriers for Head Start families, some not addressed in the data outlined in this community assessment. These include transportation, affordable housing and workforce pathways. The recent economic downturn has placed marginalized communities in complex situations where the basic needs such as food, housing and utilities are compromised and many families are forced to choose which need is greater on a daily basis.

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