

# COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

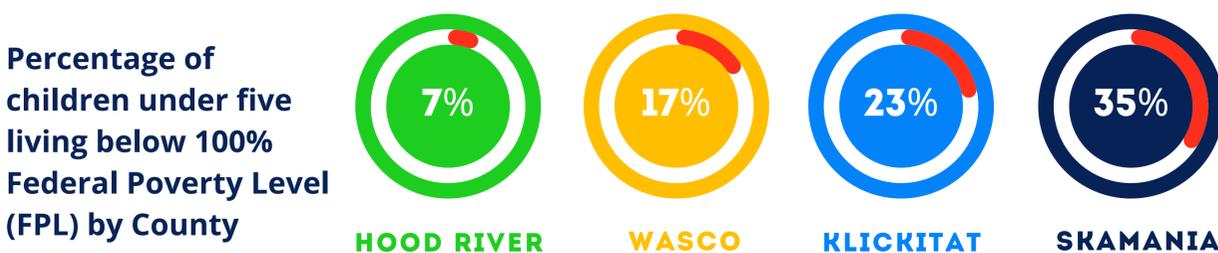
June 2021

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND INFO

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

### CURRENT EHS AND HS SERVICES



721

of the estimated 4670 children under five in the MCCC service area are income-eligible (below 100% FPL) for EHS and HS.

43%

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

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

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

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

### METHODS

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

American Community Survey 2015-2019 (ACS)

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

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

#### MCCC Service Area

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

## GAPS IN SERVICES



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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

## ADDITIONAL NEEDS RELATED TO CHILD CARE



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



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

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

### ★ CONSULT ADDITIONAL DATA SOURCES AND STAKEHOLDER DATA-SHARING

PRE recommends updating this community assessment on an annual basis with additional data sources that were not previously available and data-sharing between local organizations.

Examples of additional sources:

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

### ★ ACCESS MORE REPORTING FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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

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

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

### ★ HISPANIC/LATINX FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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

### ★ PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

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

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