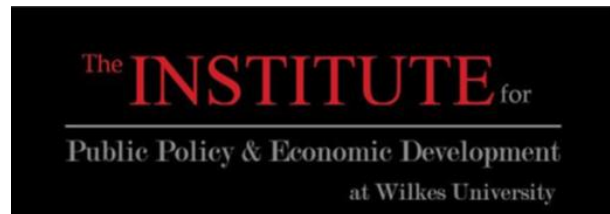


# CAPITAL AREA HEAD START

**Community Needs  
Assessment 2020**



**Prepared by:**



*The Institute is a partnership among Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Johnson College, Keystone College, King's College, Lackawanna College, Luzerne County Community College, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State Scranton, Penn State Wilkes-Barre, The Wright Center, University of Scranton, and Wilkes University*

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## Research Team

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## Introduction

This needs assessment was undertaken in order to better understand the demand for subsidized early childhood education services in the Capital Area region (Cumberland, Dauphin, and Perry Counties) and analyze the role of Capital Area Head Start in addressing those needs. This report identifies key outcomes and action items for Capital Area Head Start programming and is also designed to fulfill the federal requirement to undertake a community needs assessment every three years.

## Regional Data Profile

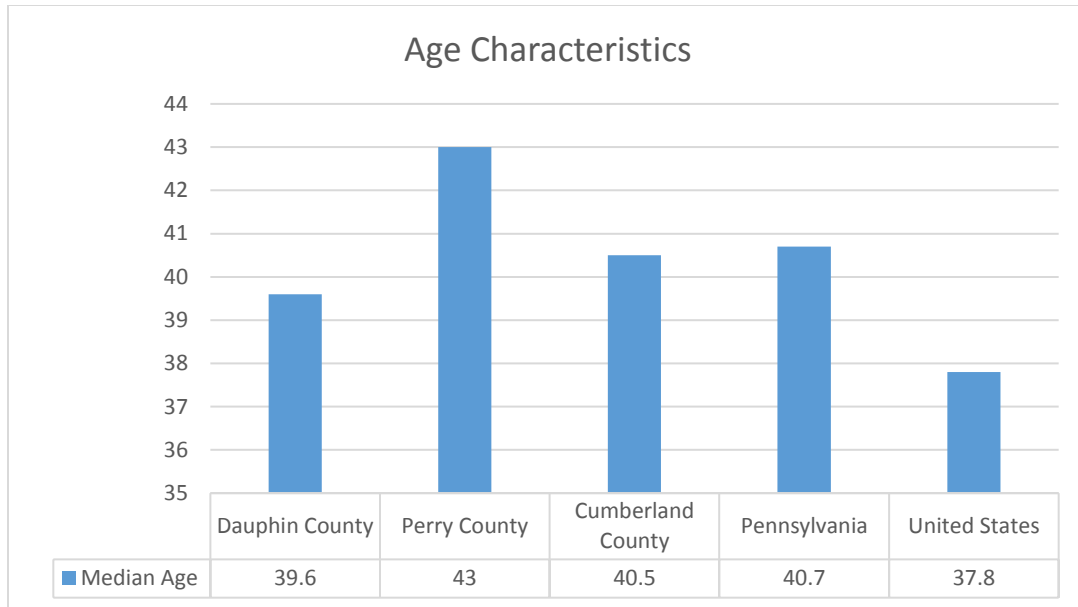
The profile below details demographic, education, economic, social service, housing, and transportation characteristics for Dauphin, Perry, and Cumberland Counties. All information produced in the report is secondary data from the Census Bureau’s 5-year 2017 American Community Survey unless otherwise noted.

### Demographic Characteristics

As of July 1, 2018, the total population of the three counties stands at 574,659. Both Dauphin and Cumberland Counties have seen a slight increase in their population each year since 2010. Cumberland County has seen the largest increase in population, seeing a growth of about 6.6 percent from 2010 to 2018. Dauphin County, meanwhile, has seen a 3.3 percent increase over that span. Perry County saw very slight decreases from 2010 through 2013, but has slightly increased in population size each year since. Overall, however, the population growth of Perry County has been much smaller than in Dauphin and Cumberland Counties, growing at a rate of just .46 percent from 2010 to 2018.

Geography	Population Estimates								
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Dauphin County</b>	268,272	269,218	269,997	271,439	272,241	273,138	274,266	275,831	277,097
<b>Perry County</b>	45,928	45,924	45,811	45,653	45,664	45,848	45,939	46,032	46,139
<b>Cumberland County</b>	235,902	237,101	239,252	241,071	243,301	245,766	247,435	249,238	251,423
<b>Total</b>	550,102	552,243	555,060	558,163	561,206	564,752	567,640	571,101	574,659

The ages of the residents living within the counties differ greatly. Dauphin County had the lowest median age of the three counties, at 39.6 years, which is slightly lower than Pennsylvania’s median age of 40.7 years. It is higher than the United States’ median age of just 37.8 years, however. Cumberland County, meanwhile, has a bit higher median age at 40.5 – nearly identical to that of Pennsylvania as a whole. Again, however, this is higher than the national median age. Perry County, on the other hand, has a median age that is much higher than both Pennsylvania and the United States. Perry County has a median age of 43; a number that reflects the disproportionately high amount of senior citizens in the area. This high number of senior citizens can be seen in the age dependency ratio, a measure of the ratio of dependents over the age of 65 to the working-age population.



Dauphin, Perry, and Cumberland Counties have all experienced growth in their Hispanic, African American, and Asian populations from 2010 to 2017. The growth and general diversity greatly differs throughout the three counties, however. Dauphin County is much more diverse than Perry and Cumberland Counties, with only 67.1 percent of the total population identifying as White. This number is significantly lower than the Pennsylvania average 77.3 percent, and just slightly higher than the national average of 61.5 percent. Compared to Pennsylvania, Dauphin County also has a higher proportion of residents who are Hispanic, African American, and Asian. Although the county exhibits a less diverse population than the United States as a whole, the African American population stands at 17.7 percent – well above the national average of 12.3 percent. Meanwhile, the growth in diversity and the backgrounds mentioned is very similar to the national average, and slightly greater than Pennsylvania’s growth rate.

Perry and Cumberland Counties are much less diverse than both Pennsylvania and the United States. Respectively, 95.8 percent and 86.9 percent of their populations are white. Their Hispanic and African American populations fall well below state and national averages. The percentage of Cumberland County residents who are Asian, however, is greater than that of the statewide population. There has also been a steady increase of diversity within the county, with above average increases in African American and Asian populations from 2010 to 2017. Perry County, on the other hand, has remained nearly stagnant in the growth of diversity over this same time span. Since 2010, the size of the White has dropped just 1.1 percent, with no significant growth of any race within the county. The population of Hispanics rested at just 1.8 percent, with African American and Asian populations under one percent – all greatly below statewide and national averages.

	2010				2017			
	White	Hispanic	African American	Asian	White	Hispanic	African American	Asian
Dauphin County	70.9%	6.4%	17.2%	3.0%	67.1%	8.5%	17.7%	3.9%
Perry County	96.9%	1.2%	.7%	.3%	95.8%	1.8%	.9%	.4%
Cumberland County	90.1%	2.6%	2.9%	2.7%	86.9%	3.5%	3.5%	4.0%
Pennsylvania	80.3%	5.2%	10.4%	2.6%	77.3%	6.8%	10.6%	3.2%
United States	64.7%	15.7%	12.2%	4.6%	61.5%	17.6%	12.3%	5.3%

The native born populations in Dauphin and Cumberland Counties (which stand at 92.5 percent and 93.9 percent respectively) are proportionally similar to the statewide average of 94 percent. The percentages of populations born in their state of residence (72.3 percent for Dauphin County and 70.6 percent for Cumberland County) are also very similar to the statewide average of 73 percent. Both Perry and Cumberland Counties have native born populations proportionally larger than the national average (87 percent), and much higher percentages of residents who were born in their respective states compared to the national average (59 percent). The percentages of their populations who are not U.S. citizens stand at about half the national rate.

Compared to Dauphin and Cumberland Counties, Perry County is much less diverse. Nearly 99 percent of the population is native to the United States – far above the statewide and national averages of 94 percent and 87 percent. Eighty-seven percent were born in Pennsylvania.

#### Nativity and Citizenship Status

	Dauphin County	Perry County	Cumberland County
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Native</b>	<b>92.5%</b>	<b>98.6%</b>	<b>93.9%</b>
Born in state of residence	72.3%	87.0%	70.6%
Born in other state in the United States	17.9%	11.0%	22.0%
Born outside the United States	2.3%	.6%	1.4%
<b>Foreign born</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
Naturalized U.S. citizen	3.7%	.6%	3.1%
Not a U.S. citizen	3.8%	.8%	3.0%

From 2013 to 2017, Dauphin and Perry Counties have experienced decreases in percentages of people under 18 years old and who have disabilities. The Dauphin County rates dropped from 5.1 percent to 4.2 percent, and Perry County’s rates dropped from 5.9 percent to 4.8 percent. Cumberland County’s numbers remained fairly consistent over this time period, with a very slight gain in percentage from 4.2 percent in 2013 to 4.3 percent in 2017. Of the overall population, however, the numbers of people with disabilities in Dauphin and Cumberland Counties increased throughout the same five year span. While Cumberland County experienced an increase of just .2 percent, Dauphin County faced a fairly significant increase of .7 percent. Perry County did not have this data available prior to 2016.

**Population With a Disability**

<b>Dauphin County</b>	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Percent: All ages with a disability	13.2%	13.3%	13.5%	13.0%	12.5%
Percent: Under 18 with a disability	4.2%	4.4%	4.6%	4.8%	5.1%
<b>Perry County</b>					
Percent: All ages with a disability	14.0%	13.4%	No Data	No Data	No Data
Percent: Under 18 with a disability	4.8%	5.5%	4.7%	5.3%	5.9%
<b>Cumberland County</b>					
Percent: All ages with a disability	11.3%	11.2%	11.2%	11.0%	11.1%
Percent: Under 18 with a disability	4.3%	4.1%	4.2%	4.1%	4.2%

Over the five years, all three the counties have noted increases in the amount of people who speak languages other than English. Those in Dauphin and Cumberland Counties have grown from 10.5 percent to 11.9 percent and 7.8 percent to 8.9 percent, respectively. Perry County experienced a slighter increase from 4.2 percent to 4.9 percent. The increase of people who speak English “less than very well” has correlated with the increase of people speaking languages other than English, with all three counties experiencing slight growth in these categories.

### Language Characteristics

Dauphin County	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Population 5 years and over	256,212	254,899	254,293	253,181	252,287
English only	88.1%	88.4%	88.6%	89.1%	89.5%
Language other than English	11.9%	11.6%	11.4%	10.9%	10.5%
Speaks English less than "Very well"	4.7%	4.7%	4.6%	4.3%	4.0%
<hr/>					
Perry County					
Population 5 years and over	43,249	43,004	43,027	43,080	43,081
English only	95.1%	95.4%	95.8%	95.8%	95.8%
Language other than English	4.9%	4.6%	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%
Speaks English less than "Very well"	1.0%	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%
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Cumberland County					
Population 5 years and over	232,524	230,704	228,595	226,689	224,761
English only	91.9%	91.4%	91.8%	92.0%	92.2%
Language other than English	8.9%	8.6%	8.2%	8.0%	7.8%
Speaks English less than "Very well"	3.2%	3.2%	3.0%	2.7%	2.7%



## Education Characteristics

Although the population of each of the counties has increased from 2013 to 2017, total school enrollment has decreased in all cases. Dauphin County experienced the largest decrease, with the total school enrollment dropping by 5.7 percent (over 3,000 fewer enrolled). Meanwhile, college and graduate school enrollment of people in Cumberland and Perry Counties was much lower than the statewide and national averages (22.5 percent and 17.6 percent, compared to statewide and national proportions of about 28 percent). Although that population decreased in Cumberland County, the region maintained a proportion approximately four percent higher than the state and national averages.

### School Enrollment

Dauphin County	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Population 3 years and over enrolled in school	61,050	62,067	62,636	63,931	64,760
Nursery school, Preschool	6.0%	6.3%	6.2%	6.3%	6.0%
Kindergarten	5.3%	5.2%	5.7%	6.0%	5.6%
Elementary school (1-8)	43.2%	42.5%	41.8%	41.1%	40.9%
High school (9-12)	23.0%	22.5%	22.5%	22.3%	22.3%
College or Graduate school	22.5%	23.5%	23.7%	24.4%	25.2%
Perry County	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Population 3 years and over enrolled in school	9,091	9,272	9,456	9,637	9,413
Nursery school, Preschool	3.8%	4.3%	4.3%	4.2%	4.5%
Kindergarten	5.2%	5.4%	6.2%	6.2%	5.9%
Elementary school (1-8)	48.1%	47.3%	46.0%	46.2%	46.8%
High school (9-12)	25.2%	24.4%	25.1%	25.3%	26.6%
College or Graduate school	17.6%	18.6%	18.5%	18.0%	16.1%
Cumberland County	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Population 3 years and over enrolled in school	58,582	58,107	58,716	58,914	59,014
Nursery school, Preschool	5.1%	5.0%	4.9%	5.3%	5.3%
Kindergarten	5.2%	4.5%	4.4%	4.4%	4.3%
Elementary school (1-8)	37.4%	38.2%	37.4%	36.5%	36.6%
High school (9-12)	20.1%	20.0%	19.9%	19.6%	19.3%
College or Graduate school	32.1%	32.3%	33.4%	34.3%	34.5%

Public school dropout rates differed greatly between the three counties. Cumberland County had the lowest dropout rate – .9 percent, which remained consistent throughout the five years. That number is about half of the state’s average. Perry County’s dropout rates also remained fairly consistent, in the low one-percent range and below Pennsylvania’s average. Dauphin County, on the other hand, experienced a large growth in dropout rate. In the 2013-14 academic year, 2.1 percent dropped out of school. This percentage has generally increased, hitting 3.3 in the 2017-18 period – nearly double the average of the state. This high rate is due partially to a few outliers.

### Public School Dropout Rates

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Dauphin County	2.1%	2.5%	2.8%	2.0%	3.3%
Perry County	1.2%	1.2%	1.0%	0.8%	1.3%
Cumberland County	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%	0.9%
Pennsylvania	1.7%	1.5%	1.7%	1.7%	1.8%

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education

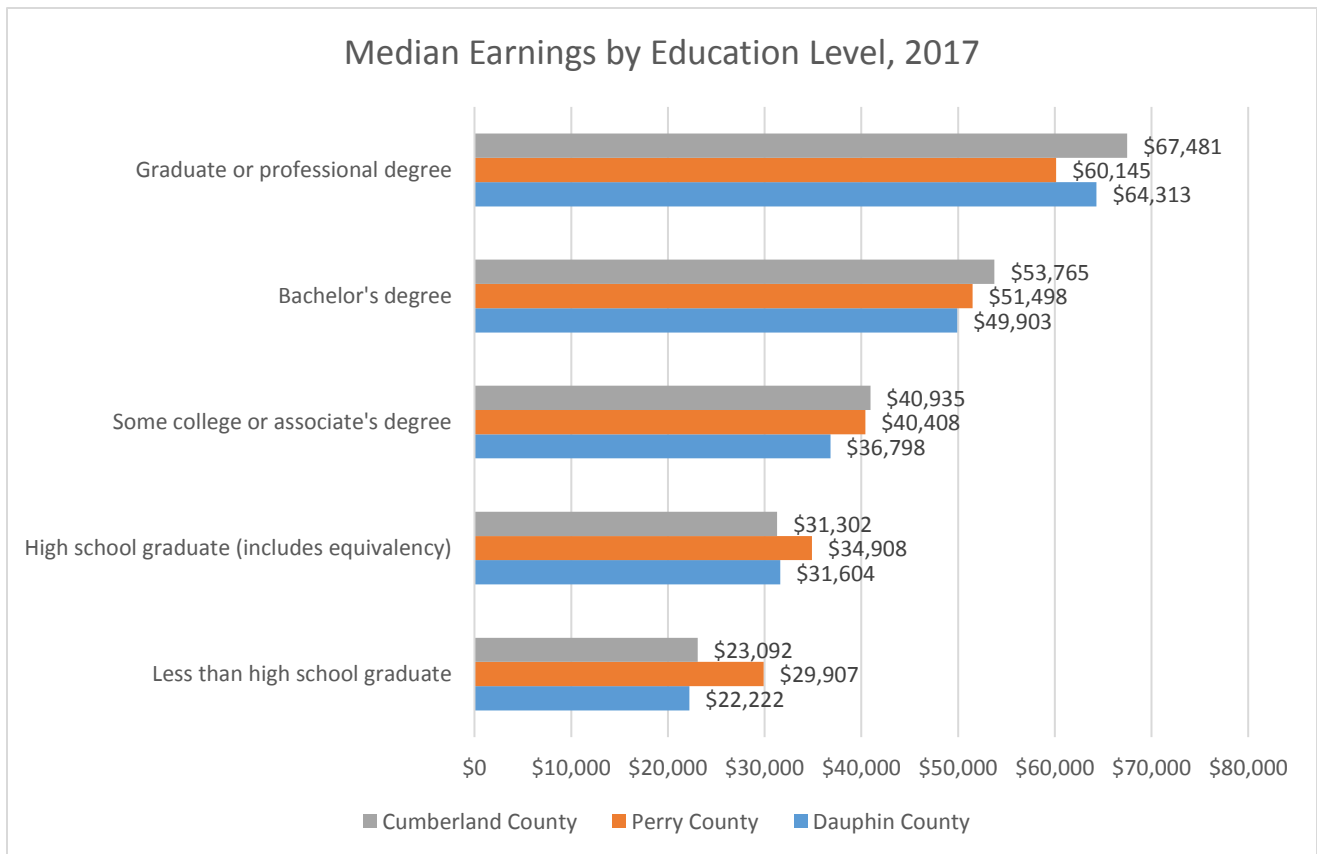
Dauphin and Cumberland Counties have similar educational attainment statistics. Approximately half the population 25 years and older in each area has a high school diploma or some college experience. The percentage of people with a bachelor's degree in Cumberland County is higher, however (21.2 percent to 18.5 percent in Dauphin County). The same is true for those with graduate degrees (13.5 percent to 11.3 percent in Dauphin County). Dauphin County's are similar to statewide averages for every category, falling within .5 percentage points in all cases. Cumberland County's rates of college degree attainment is slightly higher than the statewide rate. Perry County, meanwhile, falls below statewide averages in educational attainment. The statewide averages are 18.3 percent and 11.8 percent, respectively. However, the percentages of high school graduates, as well as those with bachelor's degrees, have increased in all three counties.

### Educational Attainment

Dauphin County	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Population 25 years and over	184,560	185,654	186,900	187,732	188,832
Less than 9th grade	3.3%	3.5%	3.5%	3.4%	3.3%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	7.8%	7.7%	7.7%	7.5%	7.0%
Some college or High school graduate	52.8%	52.3%	52.0%	51.3%	51.6%
Associate's degree	7.8%	8.2%	8.4%	8.5%	8.4%
Bachelor's degree	17.3%	17.1%	17.6%	18.0%	18.5%
Graduate or professional degree	11.1%	11.0%	10.8%	11.3%	11.3%
Percent high school graduate or higher	89.0%	88.7%	88.8%	89.1%	89.8%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	28.5%	28.2%	28.4%	29.3%	29.8%
<b>Perry County</b>					
Population 25 years and over	31,755	31,824	31,931	32,017	32,359
Less than 9th grade	4.6%	4.1%	3.2%	3.1%	3.3%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	8.7%	8.3%	8.3%	8.7%	9.0%
Some college or High school graduate	63.4%	62.6%	63.6%	63.2%	62.0%
Associate's degree	7.8%	8.8%	8.9%	8.7%	9.1%
Bachelor's degree	10.1%	10.8%	10.6%	10.9%	11.3%
Graduate or professional degree	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%	5.3%
Percent high school graduate or higher	86.7%	87.5%	88.5%	88.3%	87.7%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	15.5%	16.1%	16.0%	16.3%	16.6%

Cumberland County					
Population 25 years and over	163,630	165,519	167,431	169,530	171,176
Less than 9th grade	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	2.5%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	6.3%	5.9%	5.9%	6.1%	5.6%
Some college or High school graduate	51.3%	51.1%	50.8%	49.8%	48.9%
Associate's degree	7.4%	7.6%	7.9%	8.0%	8.2%
Bachelor's degree	20.0%	20.1%	20.3%	20.8%	21.2%
Graduate or professional degree	12.5%	12.6%	12.4%	12.9%	13.5%
Percent high school graduate or higher	91.1%	91.5%	91.5%	91.4%	91.9%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	32.5%	32.8%	32.7%	33.6%	34.7%

Increases in education level positively correlate with increases in median income. In Dauphin and Cumberland Counties, people with bachelor’s degrees more than double the incomes of those without the degrees. In Perry County (where the income for those with less than a high school degree is relatively high), doubling the median income would require a graduate or professional degree.



## Economic Characteristics

Dauphin County’s median household income was the lowest of the three counties, but slightly above the Pennsylvania median. It was slightly below that of the United States. Perry County’s median household was significantly higher than both the state and national averages. Cumberland County’s median household income was also much greater than state and national

<b>MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY REGION</b>	
United States	\$57,652
Pennsylvania	\$56,951
Dauphin County, Pennsylvania	\$57,071
Perry County, Pennsylvania	\$60,847
Cumberland County, Pennsylvania	\$65,544

medians. In fact, the county’s median household income is 15.1 percent greater than state median household income and 13.7 percent greater than the United States.

The three counties had high labor force participation rates compared to statewide and national averages of 62.6 percent and 63.4 percent, respectively. They fell at 65.3 percent for Dauphin County, 64.8 percent for Perry County, and 64.3 percent for Cumberland County. Dauphin County had an unemployment rate of 5.7 percent – considerably higher than those for Pennsylvania and the United States (4.1 percent for each). At 4.2 percent and 4.3 percent, respectively, Cumberland and Perry County had unemployment rates just slightly higher than the national and state average.

	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment/Population Ratio	Unemployment Rate
Dauphin County	65.3%	61.5%	5.7%
Perry County	64.8%	61.9%	4.3%
Cumberland County	64.3%	61.4%	4.2%

All three counties, along with Pennsylvania and the United States, experienced household income growth from 2011 to 2017. Perry County experienced the most improvement, at 11.3 percent. This is one and two percent higher than the growth in Pennsylvania and the United States, respectively. Changes in household income were not as significant in Dauphin and Cumberland Counties. Dauphin County’s increased by 6.1 percent; more than four percent lower than the state’s average and three percent lower than the national average. Cumberland County had a growth of 7.7 percent, about 2.6 percent and 1.6 percent off state and national averages respectively.

### Household Income Growth, 2011-2017

Median Household Income	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Dauphin County	\$53,771	\$54,066	\$54,066	\$54,337	\$53,754	\$54,968	\$57,071
Perry County	\$54,626	\$56,205	\$57,375	\$57,417	\$57,177	\$58,585	\$60,847
Cumberland County	\$60,832	\$60,883	\$60,826	\$61,417	\$61,820	\$62,640	\$65,544
Pennsylvania	\$51,651	\$52,267	\$52,548	\$53,115	\$53,559	\$54,895	\$56,951
United States	\$52,762	\$53,046	\$53,046	\$53,482	\$53,889	\$55,322	\$57,652

## Social Services Characteristics

The percentages of people with health insurance increased in all three counties. The largest increase (of 3.1 percent) took place in Dauphin County. As of 2017, Cumberland County had the highest percentage of people with health insurance – nearly 94 percent. While the percentage of those insured increased, the proportion of people with private health insurance actually decreased. The trend may be due to public health insurance being more readily available to people, so they have decided to begin using insurance – not necessarily because people switched from public to private health insurance.

### Health Insurance Status

Dauphin County	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Civilian noninstitutionalized population	270,039	268,502	267,726	266,222	265,202
With health insurance coverage	92.9%	91.9%	90.7%	90.0%	89.8%
With private health insurance	72.7%	72.2%	72.4%	72.5%	73.0%
With public coverage	34.7%	33.8%	32.4%	31.5%	30.4%
No health insurance coverage	7.1%	8.1%	9.3%	10.0%	10.2%
<b>Perry County</b>					
Civilian noninstitutionalized population	45,351	45,137	45,172	45,289	45,306
With health insurance coverage	90.6%	90.0%	88.8%	88.2%	88.4%
With private health insurance	76.0%	76.4%	76.2%	76.1%	76.2%
With public coverage	31.0%	29.0%	27.5%	26.4%	26.0%
No health insurance coverage	9.4%	10.0%	11.2%	11.8%	11.6%
<b>Cumberland County</b>					
Civilian noninstitutionalized population	239,154	237,370	235,088	233,159	230,971
With health insurance coverage	93.9%	93.7%	93.0%	92.7%	92.7%
With private health insurance	81.3%	81.4%	81.4%	81.5%	81.9%
With public coverage	28.0%	27.5%	26.6%	25.9%	25.5%
No health insurance coverage	6.1%	6.3%	7.0%	7.3%	7.3%

All three counties maintained similar trends in terms of benefits distribution. Supplemental Security income increased from 2013 to 2017, while the mean cash assistance income decreased within each of the counties. The number of people receiving SNAP benefits increased as well. Meanwhile, Dauphin and Perry Counties have experienced an increase in recipients of both Supplemental Security Income and cash assistance. Cumberland County, however, experienced slight decreases in the amount of people receiving cash assistance and Supplemental Security income.

### Benefits and Recipients

Dauphin County	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Supplemental Security Income recipients	5.6%	5.7%	6.1 %	5.9%	5.3%
Mean Supplemental Security Income	\$10,136	\$10,471	\$10,247	\$10,310	\$9,885
Cash public assistance recipients	3.3%	3.3%	3.4%	3.3%	2.9%
Mean cash public assistance income	\$2,458	\$2,511	\$2,627	\$2,890	\$2,926
Food Stamp/SNAP recipients	12.5%	12.8%	12.5%	12.1%	11.2%
<b>Perry County</b>					
Supplemental Security Income recipients	4.0%	3.7%	3.8%	3.9%	3.5%
Mean Supplemental Security Income	\$10,040	\$9,913	\$10,220	\$9,681	\$9,431
Cash public assistance recipients	2.3%	2.2%	2.3%	2.0%	2.1%
Mean cash public assistance income	\$2,071	\$2,084	\$2,173	\$2,954	\$3,035
Food Stamp/SNAP recipients	9.3%	9.3%	8.8%	8.7%	8.0%
<b>Cumberland County</b>					
Supplemental Security Income recipients	2.9%	3.0%	3.1%	3.2%	3.0%
Mean Supplemental Security Income	\$10,054	\$9,595	\$9,793	\$10,299	\$9,747
Cash public assistance recipients	1.8%	1.8%	1.7%	1.7%	1.9%
Mean cash public assistance income	\$2,390	\$2,399	\$2,872	\$2,890	\$3,405
Food Stamp/SNAP recipients	7.0%	7.3%	7.1%	6.8%	6.0%

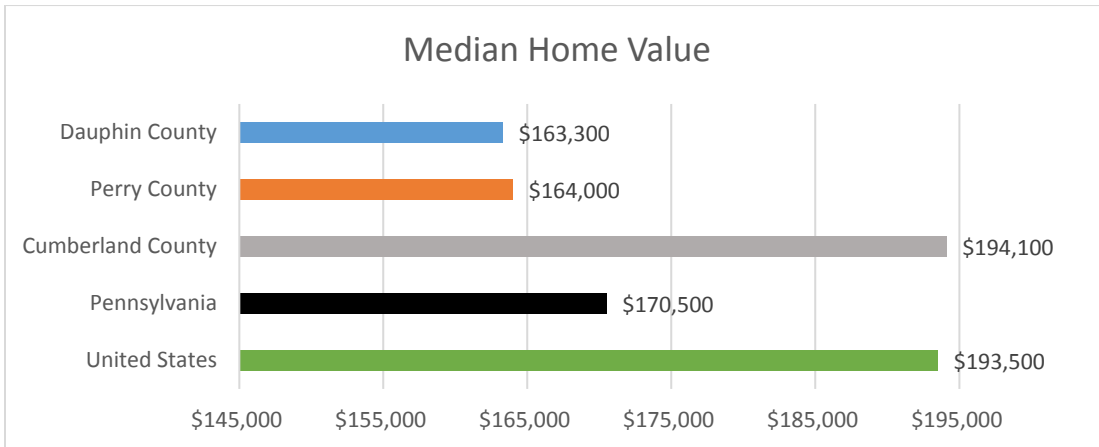
The poverty rates in Perry and Cumberland Counties were nearly half of Dauphin County's poverty rate. The rates in these two counties also fell well below the state's poverty rates (8.9 percent for families, 13.1 percent overall, and 18.6 percent for those under 18 years) and the national poverty rates (10.5 percent for families, 14.6 percent overall, and 20.3 percent for those under 18). Dauphin County's numbers aligned closely with state averages. Although Dauphin County's poverty rates were rather high compared to Perry and Cumberland Counties, however, the numbers were lower than the national averages. All three counties were similar in that they enjoyed decreases in poverty rates from 2013 to 2017 (although Dauphin County's rates dropped less than .4 percent in each category over the five-year period). Perry County experienced the most significant decline of poverty, with family poverty rates falling 1.7 percent, individual rates dropping 1.3 percent, and rates for children and adolescents decreasing 3.6 percent.

### Poverty Rate

Dauphin County	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Family Poverty Rate (past 12 months)	8.9%	9.1%	9.4%	9.5%	9.2%
Individual poverty rate	13.2%	13.4%	13.6%	13.6%	13.3%
Under 18	20.1%	20.4%	20.1%	20.1%	20.2%
<b>Perry County</b>					
Family poverty rate	4.6%	5.2%	6.2%	6.6%	6.3%
Individual poverty rate	8.4%	8.7%	9.4%	9.7%	9.7%
Under 18	11.4%	12.0%	13.6%	14.8%	15.0%
<b>Cumberland County</b>					
Family poverty rate	4.7%	5.7%	5.6%	5.5%	5.4%
Individual poverty rate	7.8%	8.6%	8.8%	8.7%	8.3%
Under 18	10.8%	12.1%	12.2%	11.8%	11.1%

### Housing and Transportation Characteristics

Dauphin County, with the lowest median income of the three geographies, had a median home value of \$163,300 – just slightly lower than that of Perry County (\$164,000). Cumberland County, which had a much higher median income than Dauphin and Perry Counties, had a median household value of \$194,100 – more than 18 percent higher than the median prices within the other two counties. While both Perry County had a median household income higher than both state and national averages, and while Dauphin County had a median household income similar to state and national medians, the median prices of housing statewide and nationally (\$170,500 and \$193,500 respectively) were higher than the values in both counties.



As of 2017, 63.5 percent of housing units within Dauphin County were occupied by the homeowner. At 80.1 percent, that number was higher in Perry County. Cumberland County, however, had a higher rate of ownership at 70.7 percent. There is a considerable gap in income level between those who own housing units and those who rent them. This gap largest in Dauphin County, where 36.5 percent of

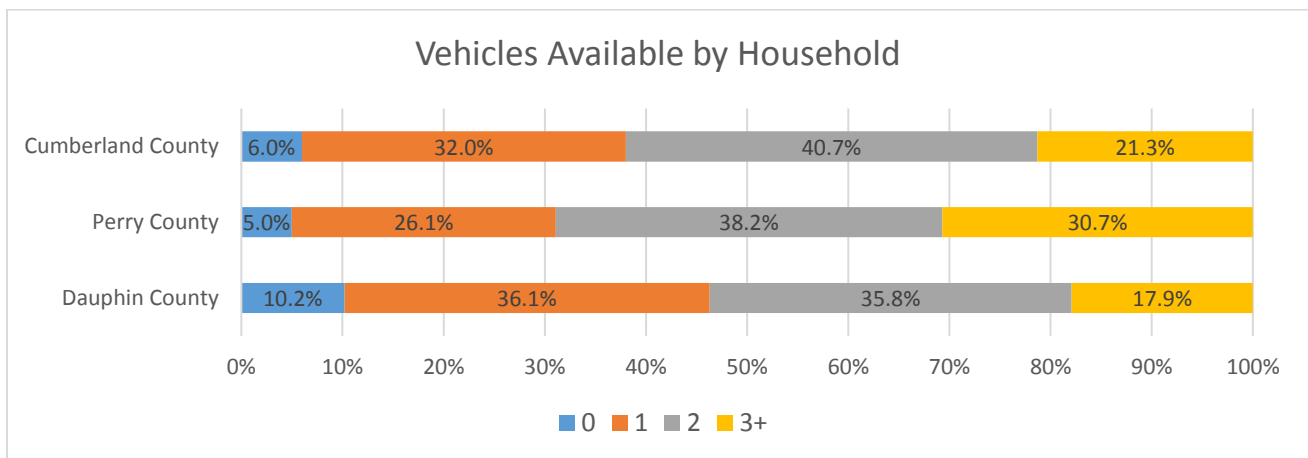
people rented their housing. In that geography the median income for renters was \$35,509 – less than half the \$73,854 of homeowners.

Median Household Income by Housing Status	Owner-Occupied Housing Units	Renter-Occupied Housing Units
Dauphin County	\$73,854	\$35,509
Perry County	\$68,009	\$38,761
Cumberland County	\$79,263	\$40,330

Overall, residents of the three counties commuted to work in similar ways. A higher percentage of people from Dauphin County used public transportation to get to work, however, and a higher percentage of people in Perry County carpooled to get to work. Proportions of people using public transportation in the three geographies were lower than those of the state and nation, which stand at 5.6 and 5.1 percent, respectively.

Commuting to Work	Dauphin	Perry	Cumberland
Car, truck, or van - drove alone	79.1%	79.2%	81.9%
Car, truck, or van - carpooled	9.1%	12.3%	8.2%
Public transportation	2.7%	0.4%	0.7%
Walked	3.5%	2.1%	3.9%
Other means	1.5%	0.8%	1.1%
Worked at home	4.1%	5.2%	4.3%

People in over 10 percent of Dauphin County’s households did not own vehicles – more than double the amount of those without vehicles in Perry County. Dauphin County also had the highest proportion of households with just one vehicle each. Perry County had a significantly higher number of households with three or more vehicles (over nine percent more than Cumberland County, and nearly 13 percent higher than Dauphin County).





## Child Welfare Statistics

The data presented in the tables below are sourced from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. They cover topics related to children enrolled or who could enroll in Head Start programs. The data on disabilities in the two counties were taken from the ACS five-year estimates.

Across the region, there are over 33,400 children under age five. Among the pre-kindergarten population in all three counties, there is a varying degree of racial and ethnic diversity. In Dauphin County, less than half of this age group is white non-Hispanic, compared to 78 percent in Cumberland and 92.5 percent in Perry County. In all three counties, the preschool aged population is more diverse than the population of that county as a whole, indicating that the counties' demographic shifts are being driven at least in part by an increase in children of diverse backgrounds residing in the area.

Pre-K Age Children			
	Dauphin County	Cumberland County	Perry County
Total children age 0 - 4	17,190	13,614	2,629
% White, Non-Hispanic	49.13%	77.79%	92.51%
% Hispanic or Latino, of any race	20.95%	6.15%	3.58%
% African American, Non-Hispanic	7.39%	5.48%	0.87%
% Asian, Non-Hispanic	5.40%	5.30%	0.42%
% Two or More Races, Non-Hispanic	6.59%	5.05%	2.47%

There are nearly 8,000 children enrolled in SNAP in the three counties combined. This number represents 23.8 percent of all children aged 0-4 in the area. In all three counties, between 62 and 69 percent of two-parent families have both parents in the labor force. Among single parent families in Dauphin County, the parent is in the labor force in nearly 80 percent of the time. This share rises to nearly 97 percent of single parent families in Cumberland.

Socioeconomic and Labor Force			
	Dauphin County	Cumberland County	Perry County
Children age 0 to 4 enrolled in SNAP	5,430	2,116	416
Children age 0 to 5 below 100% FPL	4,110	910	No Data
Labor force status of parents with children age 0 to 5:			
% of Single Parent Families with Parent in Labor Force	79.5%	96.7%	No Data
% of Two Parent Families with Both Parents in Labor Force	65.0%	68.7%	62.4%

In a 2018 snapshot, there were 606 children in foster care in the three counties. A large portion, 38.6 percent, of these children were preschool age or younger. In all counties, non-white or Hispanic children made up a disproportionate share of children in foster care.

Children in Foster Care			
	Dauphin County	Cumberland County	Perry County
Total children in foster care (Sept. 30 2018 snapshot)	338	233	35
Children age 0 to 5 in foster care (Sept. 30 2018 snapshot)	133	88	13
% White, Non-Hispanic - All children in foster care	33.1%	67.0%	80.0%
% Hispanic or Latino (any race) - All children in foster care	18.0%	9.0%	8.6%
% African American, Non-Hispanic - All children in foster care	39.1%	11.6%	8.6%
% Other Races, Non-Hispanic - All children in foster care	9.8%	12.5%	2.9%

Of all children aged 3-4 in the three-county region, 25.3 percent in Dauphin, 11.9 percent in Cumberland and 8.9 percent in Perry do not have access to high-quality, publicly funded pre-k. In Dauphin County, about one in five children age 0 to 5 live below the federal poverty line, and nearly half of children age 5 or younger live below 200 percent of the poverty level. In the other two counties, these ratios are lower but still represent a considerable share of children.

While it is estimated that Head Start and Early Head Start programs served over 1,300 children per this data source, a significant share of children nonetheless lack access to high quality Pre-K. Additionally, a relatively small share of child care centers in the region met high quality standards, defined as 3 or 4 starts in the Keystone Stars model. Fewer than half of child care centers in Cumberland County, 35 percent of centers in Dauphin, and no centers in Perry County met this standard per the most recent data available.

Pre-K Access			
	Dauphin County	Cumberland County	Perry County
Children with access to publicly funded, high quality Pre-K <sup>1</sup>	1,700	620	99
Percent of all children ages 3-4	25.3%	11.9%	8.9%
Percent of children under 100% FPL	20.7%	5.7%	11.2%
Percent of children under 200% FPL	47.9%	28.7%	42.4%
Percent of children under 300% FPL <sup>2</sup>	69.4%	43.0%	62.7%
Children served by EHS and HS programs	1,047	244	32
Percent of Child Care Centers meeting high-quality standards <sup>3</sup>	35.0%	43.8%	0.0%

<sup>1</sup> Ages 3-4

<sup>2</sup> Percent under various percentages of FPL reflect ages 0-5

<sup>3</sup> Defined as 3-star or 4-star center.

Among children age five and younger, over 3,600 were receiving Early Intervention. While the number of Early Intervention recipients has fluctuated in Cumberland County, those numbers for Dauphin and Perry Counties have seen a strong upward trajectory.

According to Census estimates, there are 79 children under age five with a hearing disability, and 36 children under age five with a vision disability. There are several limitations to availability of local data on children with disabilities. The Census estimates below are collected via survey and are subject to a margin of error. Furthermore, Census definitions of disabilities do not necessarily reflect all children eligible for and IEP. Additionally, autism is an important area of special need where insufficient data exists regarding the Capital Area region.

Young Children with Disabilities			
	Dauphin County	Cumberland County	Perry County
Number of children receiving Early Intervention <sup>4</sup>			
2017-2018	1,997	1,131	475
2013-2014	1,602	1,276	266
2008-2009	1,390	1,115	244
Under 5 years old with a hearing difficulty	42	27	10
Under 5 years old with a vision difficulty	23	13	0

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<sup>4</sup> Ages 0-5.

## Head Start Parent/Guardian Survey

Head Start staff distributed a survey to parents and guardians in Head Start families. The survey was designed to assess parent perceptions of the program, identify social service needs among the Head Start family population, identify opportunities for programmatic improvement or change, and allow space for critical family feedback. Options for electronic and paper surveys were included in the process, and the survey was made available in English, Spanish, Nepali, and Arabic. A total of 153 responses were received to the Head Start parent and guardian survey.

### Survey Items

The first survey item asked respondents to rate their agreement (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) with a series of 12 statements.

The second item asked respondents to rate how informed they are on: how and where to report health and safety concerns/complaints, ways they can aid their child's learning and development, and their child's overall progress.

The third item asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with several aspects of the Head Start program on a scale from Very Satisfied to Not at All Satisfied.

The fourth item asked participants to indicate if various life challenges are a challenge rarely or never, some of the time, most of the time, or all the time.

Finally, four open-ended prompts were offered to respondents.

- What do you like most about the Head Start program?
- What do you like least about the Head Start program?
- Do you have suggestions for improving the Head Start program?
- Other Comments

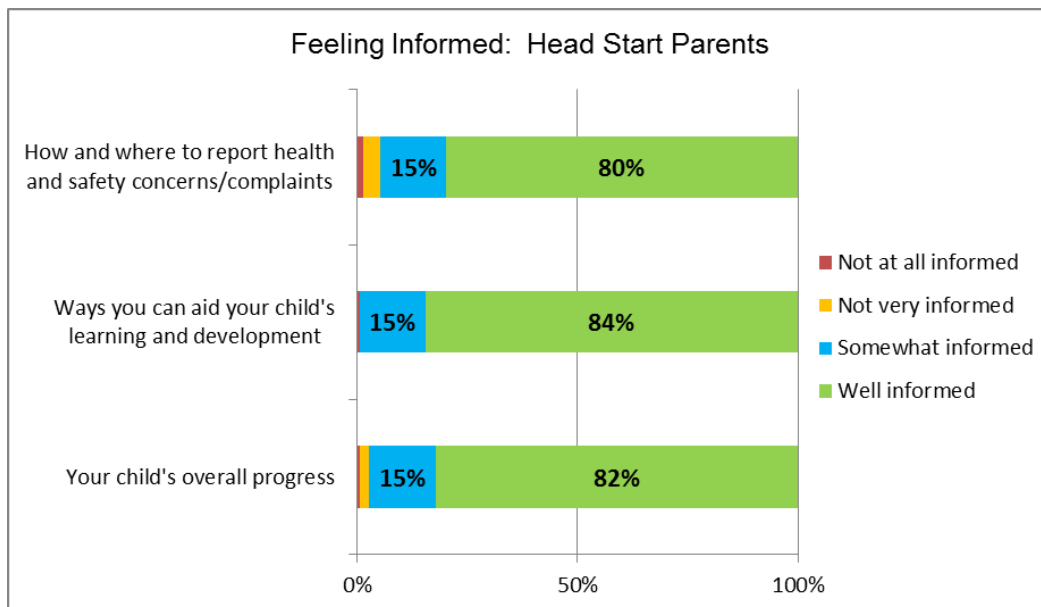
### Quantitative Rankings

The first section of survey items asked Early Head Start parents and guardians to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements. A significant majority of the 153 respondents indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with each statement. The strongest agreement was indicated with the statement "I feel that the Head Start program has benefitted my child."

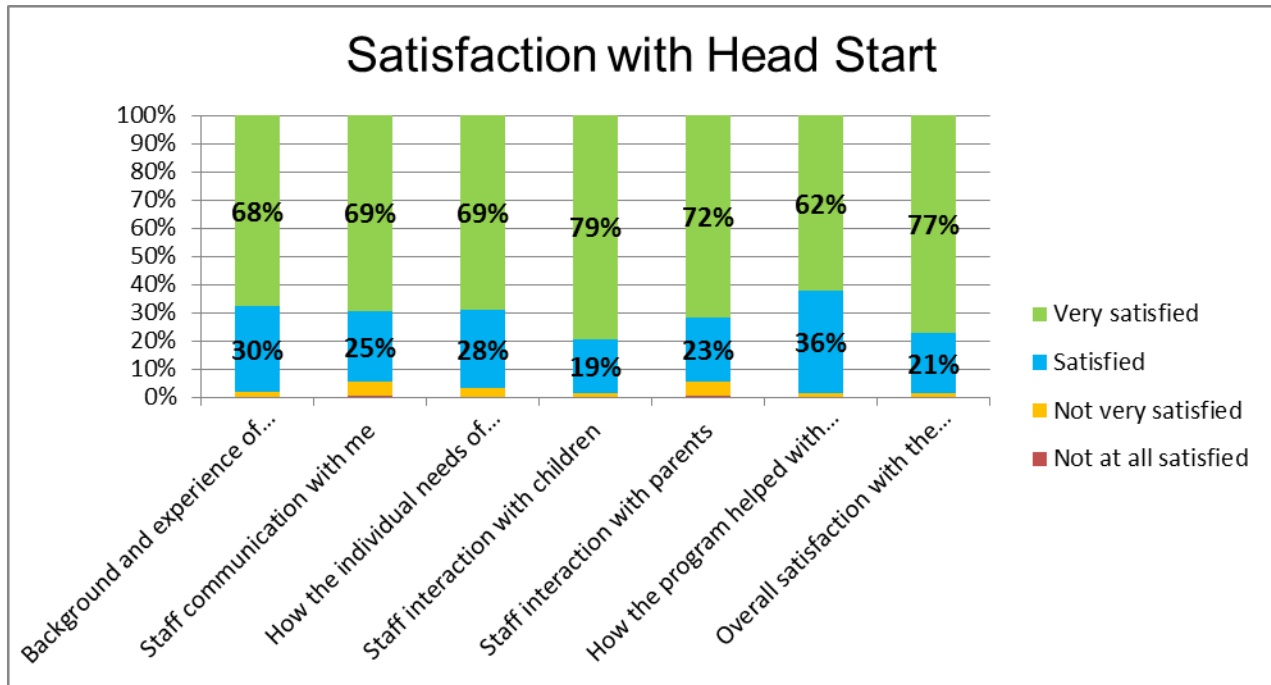
For each of these statements, at least half of respondents indicated that they strongly agree, and no more than nine percent indicated that they disagree or strongly disagree with any statement. The consistently high levels of agreement show positive sentiment towards various aspects of the Head Start program.

Head Start Parent Ratings	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Total
I feel that my needs and the needs of my child are met in the program.	3%	5	1%	1	34%	52	62%	95	153
I feel that the Head Start program has benefited me as a parent.	3%	5	1%	1	35%	54	61%	93	153
I feel that the Head Start program has benefited my child.	3%	5	0%	0	21%	32	76%	116	153
I feel that the program is welcoming and inclusive.	3%	5	1%	1	30%	46	66%	101	153
I feel my child is safe with the program.	3%	5	1%	1	28%	43	68%	103	152
I feel my family's experience in the program is positive.	3%	5	0%	0	33%	51	63%	97	153
I feel the program has helped my child's learning and development.	3%	5	0%	0	28%	43	69%	105	153
I am satisfied with the meal program for the children.	4%	6	5%	7	38%	58	54%	82	153
I am satisfied with the preventative health services offered.	3%	5	1%	1	40%	61	56%	84	151
I am satisfied with the program staff's experience and training.	3%	5	1%	1	29%	45	67%	102	153
I am satisfied with the overall quality of the Head Start program.	3%	5	0%	0	31%	47	66%	100	152
I was given sufficient information about the program's mission, goals, policies,	3%	5	0%	0	28%	42	69%	105	152

Participants were also asked to rate how well informed they feel on three different items. For being informed on where and how to report health and safety concerns, 80 percent indicated they are well informed and another 15 percent felt somewhat informed. Similarly, a significant majority of respondents feel well informed about ways they can aid their child's learning and development and on their overall progress. For all three items, five percent or fewer of respondents felt not at all informed or not very informed.



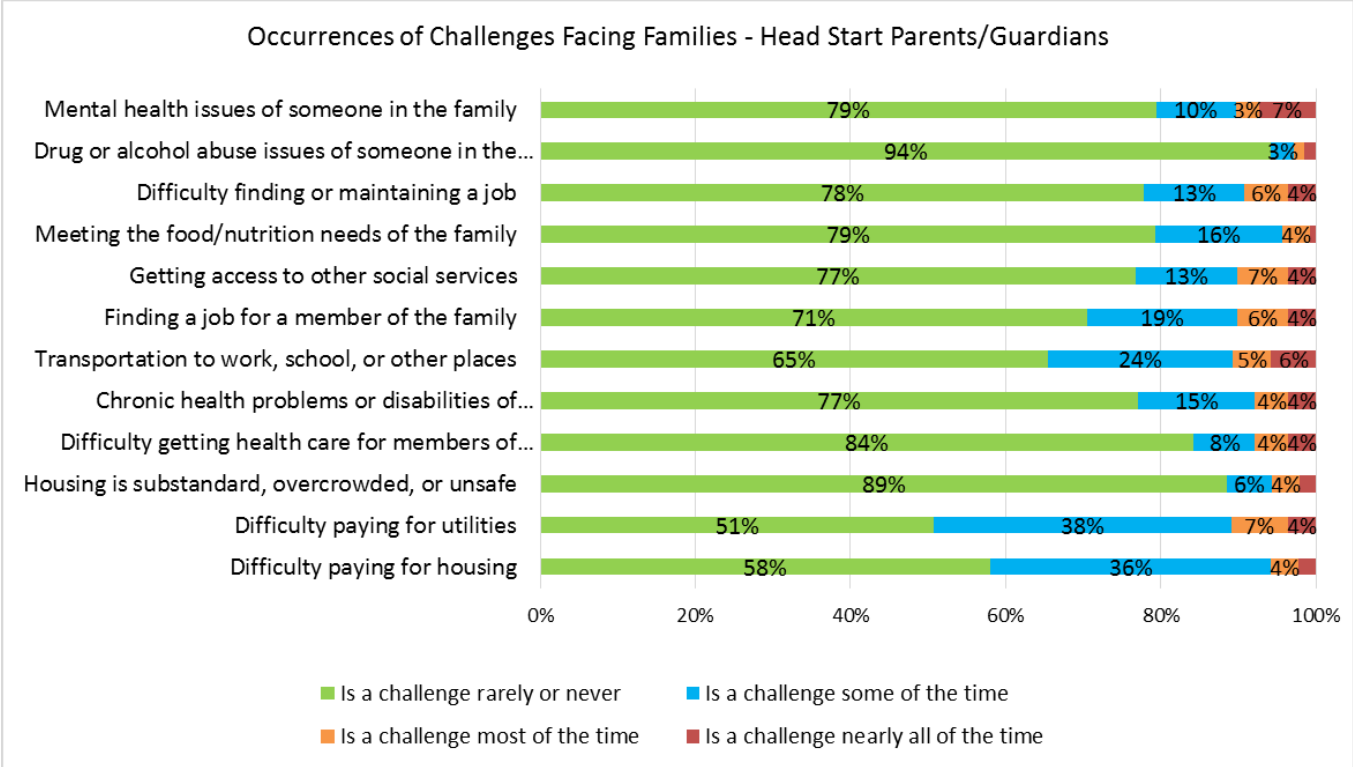
Parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with specific elements of the Head Start program. Each component had no more than six percent of respondents who were less than satisfied (either satisfied or very satisfied).



The items with the highest share of “very satisfied” respondents were staff interaction with children, staff interaction with parents, and overall satisfaction with the program.

Head Start Satisfaction	Not at all satisfied		Not very satisfied		Satisfied		Very satisfied		Total
Background and experience of staff	0%	0	2%	3	30%	45	68%	101	149
Staff communication with me	1%	1	5%	7	25%	38	69%	104	150
How the individual needs of my child are met	0%	0	3%	5	28%	41	69%	103	149
Staff interaction with children	0%	0	1%	2	19%	29	79%	119	150
Staff interaction with parents	1%	1	5%	7	23%	34	72%	107	149
How the program helped with my or my family's health, housing, nutrition, or other needs	0%	0	1%	2	36%	54	62%	93	149
Overall satisfaction with the Head Start program	0%	0	1%	2	21%	32	77%	116	150

As the final quantitative rating section, parents and guardians were asked to indicate the frequency of various types of life challenges their family might face. For each item, respondents were most likely to self-report that that particular challenge occurred rarely or never. The most frequently faced challenges included paying for utilities, getting access to social services, transportation, and finding a job. For each of those items, at least ten percent of respondents stated that it is a challenge most or nearly all the time. The least frequently faced per respondents’ self-assessment were drug and alcohol issues.



### What do you like most about the Head Start program?

121 Head Start parents provided comments to this question. Responses tended to fall into several broad categories. The most frequent group of responses (34 responses) involved positive sentiments towards teachers or staff and how staff teach or interact with children. Another 32 responses were overall or generalized positive comments about the program. A total of 29 responses referenced the progress that their child(ren) has made in academics or overall growth and development. Nineteen responses referenced the socialization or exposure to other children their child gets in the program. Eight responses referenced good communication between the program and families. There were seven responses specifically citing school readiness or helping a child be ready for kindergarten. Five comments mentioned safety, diversity, or inclusion, and two comments mentioned the program’s help in connecting families with social service resources. Six respondents had miscellaneous or other comments not falling into these categories, such as single mentions of allowing children to have new experiences and the hours the program operates.

<b>What do you like most about Head Start?</b>	
Teachers & Staff	34
Overall/General Positive	32
Child's Progress/Growth	29
Socialization	19
Program Communication	8
School Readiness/KG Prep	7
Other/Miscellaneous	6
Safety, Diversity, Welcoming Atmosphere	5
Connecting with Social Services	2

### What do you like least about the Head Start program?

Fewer participants responded to this question, especially after excluding those who stated “nothing,” “N/A,” or similar responses. Of the 50 responses to this question, 14 mentioned a specific circumstance or incident, or were single responses not cited by any other respondent. Of the remainder, the largest are of concern was staff communication – including frequency or lack of communication about school day activities or incidents or perceived tone or insensitive communications. It is important to note that the number of comments expressing negative sentiments about staff members’ communications with families are balanced by a larger number of responses to the previous question expressing positive sentiments about teachers and staff.

Nine respondents mentioned lack of transportation services at their center and five mentioned aspects of the preschool program content, curriculum, or activities. Four respondents mentioned the length of the day or schedule – generally that the school day is too short or not a full day. Four respondents also mentioned traffic or parking issues at centers. Two mentioned either having a child on the waitlist or a lack of capacity or resources to serve more families. Finally, two mentioned the quality of meals served.

<b>What do you like least about Head Start?</b>	
Misc./Specific Incident or Occurrence	14
Staff Communication	11
Lack of Transportation	9
Content/Activities	5
Hours/Schedule/Length of Day	4
Traffic or Parking Issues	4
Waitlist, Capacity, Lack of Resources	2
Quality of Meals	2

### Do you have suggestions for improving the Head Start program?

After excluding comments to the effect of “no suggestions” or “n/a,” 29 participants offered responses to this question. Most mirrored items of concern brought up in the previous question. Seven comments suggested providing or expanding transportation services for Head Start. One person suggested having parking on-site, and two suggested improving pick-up and drop-off traffic safety. One individual suggested having a parking lot attendant would be helpful.



Six made suggestions related to activities, including several who suggested including more art projects, and one comment suggesting more field trips and two suggesting more outdoor activities. One respondent suggested offering school pictures. Another respondent suggested that there should be more recognition of holidays or cultural activities in classrooms, on a class by class basis based on community preferences which vary from center to center.

Several respondents had suggestions related to meals: improving overall quality, more options for children with allergies or better vegetarian options, and providing a menu of what food is served.

Two respondents made general comments suggesting improving communications between staff and parents.

### Other Comments

Finally, participants were asked for other comments or feedback. Responses to this question were generally positive overall feedback on the quality of the program: "It's a great place for kids to learn," "Head Start is a great way to get the children ready for kindergarten," and "My son is doing a lot better learning and reaching goals. He loves it."

## Early Head Start Parent/Guardian Survey

Head Start staff distributed a survey to parents and guardians in Early Head Start families. The survey was designed to assess parent perceptions of the program, identify social service needs among the Early Head Start family population, identify opportunities for programmatic improvement or change, and allow space for critical family feedback. Options for electronic and paper surveys were included in the process, and the survey was made available in English, Spanish, Nepali, and Arabic. A total of 82 responses were received to the Head Start parent and guardian survey.

### Survey Items

The first survey item asked respondents to rate their agreement (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) with a series of statements.

The second item asked respondents to rate how informed they are on: how and where to report health and safety concerns/complaints, ways they can aid their child's learning and development, and their child's overall progress.

The third item asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with several aspects of the Head Start program on a scale from Very Satisfied to Not at All Satisfied.

The fourth item asked participants to indicate if various life challenges are a challenge rarely or never, some of the time, most of the time, or all the time.

Finally, four open-ended prompts were offered to respondents.

- What do you like most about the Early Head Start program?
- What do you like least about the Early Head Start program?
- Do you have suggestions for improving the Early Head Start program?
- Other Comments

### Quantitative Rankings

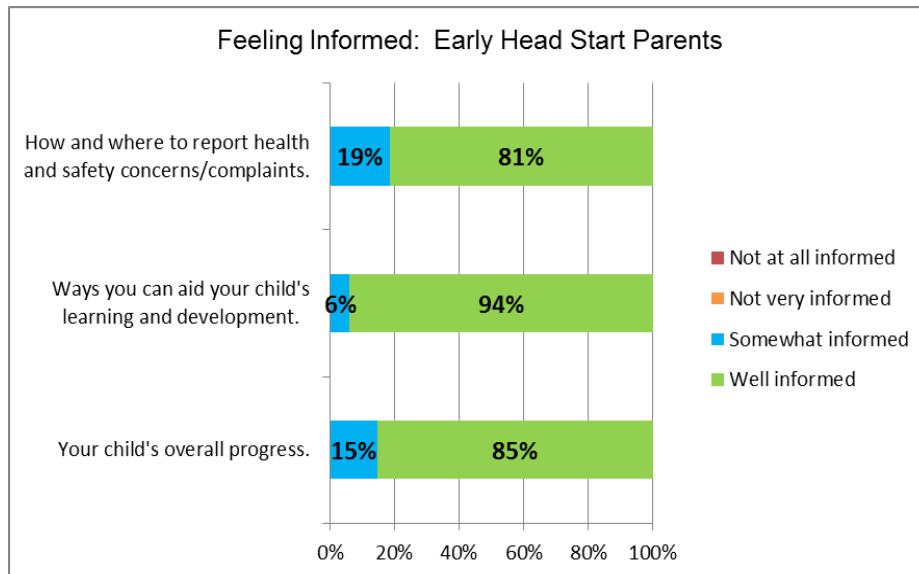
The first section of survey items asked Early Head Start parents and guardians to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements. All but two of the 82 respondents indicated that they agree or strongly agree with each statement. The strongest agreement was indicated with the following statements:

- I am satisfied with the overall quality of the Early Head Start program
- I feel my child is safe with the program
- I feel that my child is provided enough home visiting time to meet his/her needs

For each of these statements, about three in four respondents indicated that they strongly agree. Each of the eleven statements had at least 62 percent of respondents indicating that they strongly agree. The consistently high levels of agreement show positive sentiment towards various aspects of the EHS program.

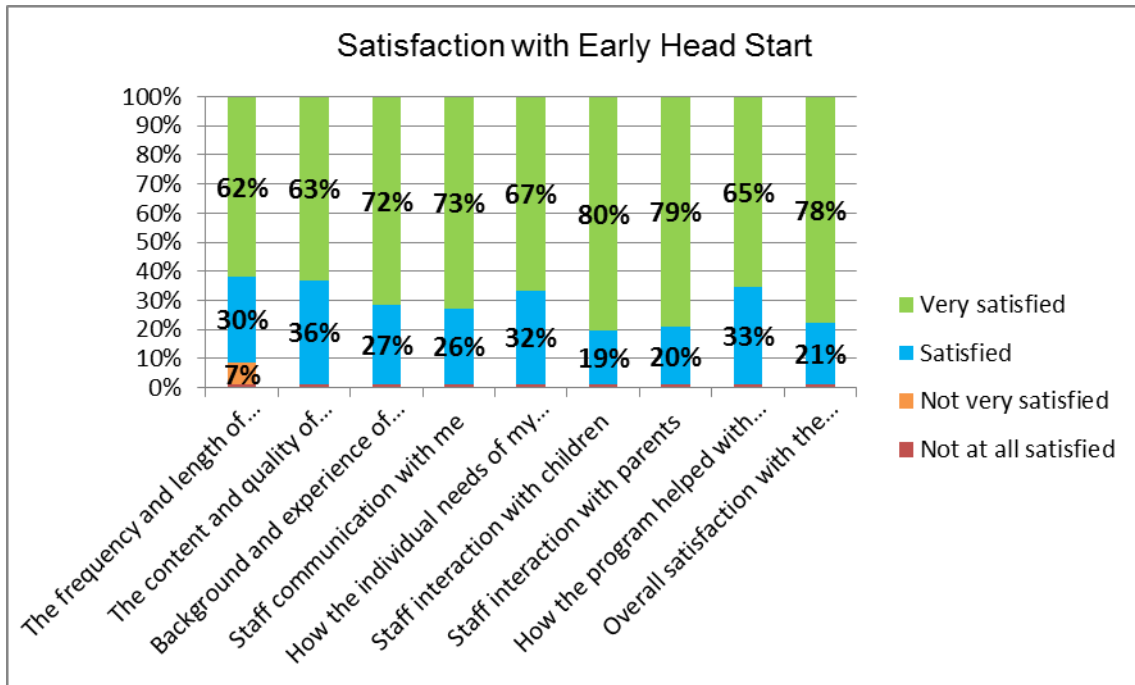
Early Head Start Parent Ratings	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
I feel that my needs and the needs of my child are met in the program.	2%	2	0%	0	32%	26	66%	54	82
I feel that the Early Head Start program has benefited me as a parent.	2%	2	0%	0	35%	29	62%	51	82
I feel that the Early Head Start program has benefited my child.	2%	2	0%	0	27%	22	71%	58	82
I feel that the program is welcoming and inclusive.	2%	2	2%	2	24%	20	71%	58	82
I feel my child is safe with the program.	2%	2	0%	0	23%	19	74%	61	82
I feel my family's experience in the program is positive.	2%	2	0%	0	28%	23	70%	57	82
I feel the program has helped my child's learning and development.	2%	2	0%	0	26%	21	72%	59	82
I am satisfied with the program staff's experience and training.	2%	2	0%	0	26%	21	72%	59	82
I am satisfied with the overall quality of the Early Head Start program.	2%	2	0%	0	22%	18	76%	62	82
I was given sufficient information about the program's mission, goals, policies, and procedures.	2%	2	0%	0	29%	24	68%	56	82
I feel that my child is provided enough home visiting time to meet his/her needs.	2%	2	7%	6	16%	13	74%	61	82

Participants were also asked to rate how well informed they feel on three different items. For being informed on where and how to report health and safety concerns, 81 percent indicated they are well informed and the remainder felt somewhat informed. Similarly, a significant majority of respondents feel well informed about ways they can aid their child's learning and development and on their overall progress. For these questions, no survey respondent indicated that they felt not very informed or not all informed.



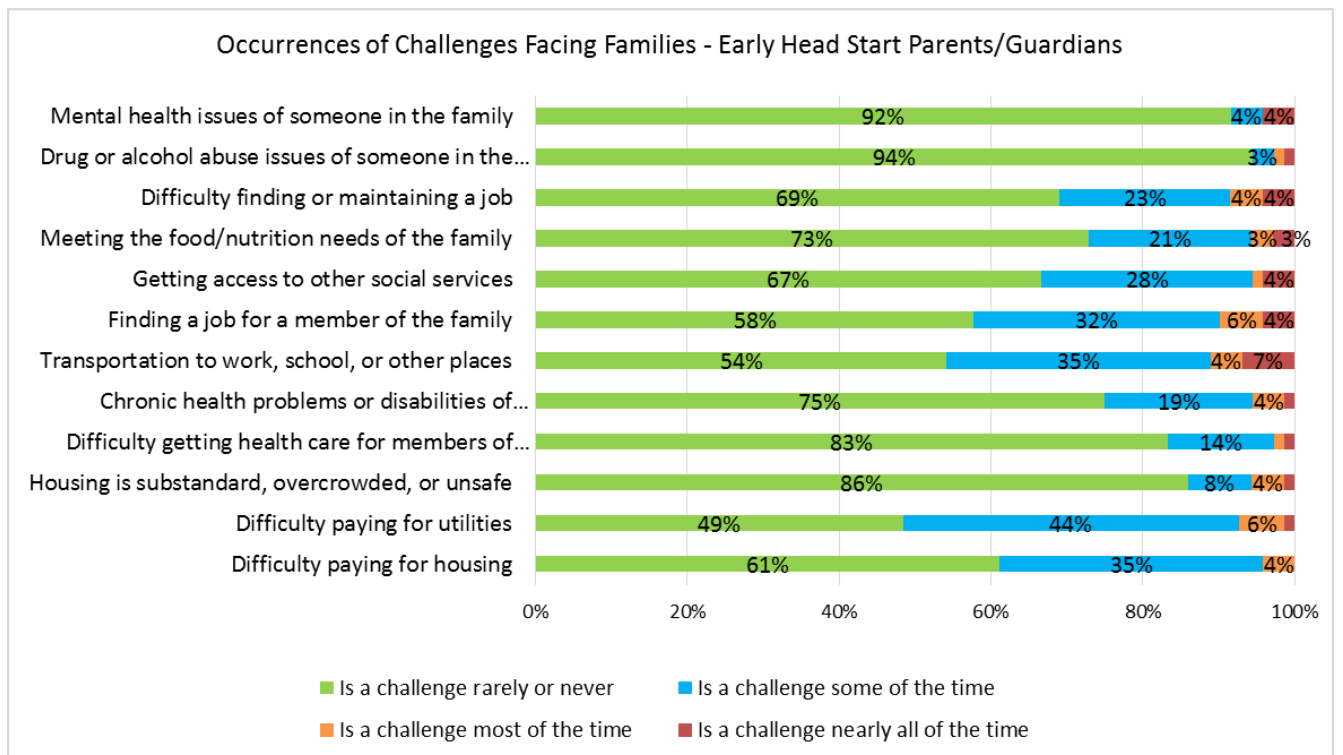
Parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with specific elements of the Early Head Start program. Each component had no more than 8 percent of respondents who were less than satisfied. Except for

the frequency and length of home visits, each other item had 99 percent satisfaction (either satisfied or very satisfied). The items with the highest share of “very satisfied” respondents were staff interaction with children, staff interaction with parents, and overall satisfaction with the program.



Early Head Start Satisfaction	Not at all satisfied		Not very satisfied		Satisfied		Very satisfied		Total
The frequency and length of home visits	1%	1	7%	6	30%	24	62%	50	81
The content and quality of home visits	1%	1	0%	0	36%	29	63%	51	81
Background and experience of staff	1%	1	0%	0	27%	22	72%	58	81
Staff communication with me	1%	1	0%	0	26%	21	73%	59	81
How the individual needs of my child are met	1%	1	0%	0	32%	26	67%	54	81
Staff interaction with children	1%	1	0%	0	19%	15	80%	65	81
Staff interaction with parents	1%	1	0%	0	20%	16	79%	64	81
How the program helped with my or my family's health, housing, nutrition, or other needs	1%	1	0%	0	33%	27	65%	53	81
Overall satisfaction with the Early Head Start Program	1%	1	0%	0	21%	17	78%	63	81

As the final quantitative rating section, parents and guardians were asked to indicate the frequency of various types of life challenges their family might face. For each item, respondents were most likely to self-report that that particular challenge occurred rarely or never. The most frequently faced challenges included paying for utilities, transportation, finding a job, and paying for housing. The least frequently faced per respondents’ self-assessment were mental health and drug and alcohol issues.



### What do you like most about the Early Head Start program?

71 Early Head Start parents provided comments to this question. Many cited general positive sentiments: that they love the program in general, that their child is thriving and learning, and the home visits. Other specific things mentioned included: the staff, personal or one-on-one interaction, exposing children to school activities to get them ready for preschool, respectfulness, open-mindedness of staff, diversity, and getting to interact with other children on Family Days.

### What do you like least about the Early Head Start program?

21 participants responded to this question after excluding those who stated “nothing,” “N/A,” or similar responses. Those responses included several who indicated that home visits or too long in duration, or should be shorter but more frequent. One mentioned that hours of visiting should be more flexible for working parents. Another mentioned that family days should be more frequent, while another mentioned being unsure that their child is safe from bullying at family days. Another participant cited the relatively small amount of time spent in a classroom environment and suggested that children should have more exposure to a classroom environment to prepare for preschool. Another suggested activities for parents only.

### Do you have suggestions for improving the Early Head Start program?

24 participants offered responses to this question. Some items mirrored dislikes mentioned in the previous question. Suggestions included a bigger family day classroom, providing transportation if possible, more frequent family days, offering a day care program, and more frequent home visits.

A common suggestion was to employ more bilingual staff members for home visits.

## Other Comments

Finally, participants were asked for other comments or feedback. Responses to this question were generally positive overall feedback on the quality of the program: “Love the program. Blessed to be a part of it for so many years,” “Thankful for program. Helped so much in a difficult time,” and “Absolutely perfect in practically every way.” One parent suggested that it would be great if more people could participate, even if they are slightly outside income requirements.

## Staff Survey

A survey was developed for staff members of Capital Area Head Start. The survey was distributed electronically across staff at all locations and in all job capacities. A total of 102 individuals responded to the survey.

### Survey Items

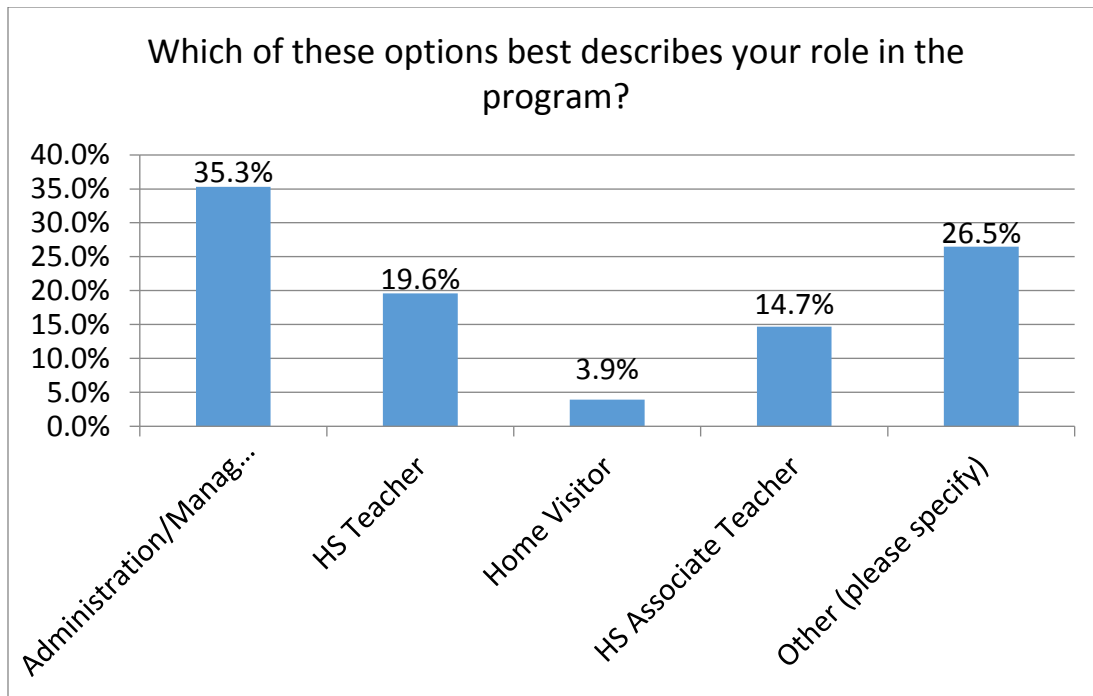
Respondents were presented with the following prompts as listed:

1. Which of these options best describes your role in the program?
2. What are some of the benefits that Head Start/Early Head Start provides to families?
3. What are some of the benefits that working at Head Start/Early Head Start provides to you personally?
4. What are the biggest challenges you face in doing your job effectively?
5. Tell us about the opportunities you see for the program in the next three years.
6. What, if anything, would you add, change, or eliminate from the program to improve it?
7. What is the perception of Head Start and Early Head Start among the community?
8. What is the perception of Head Start and Early Head Start among the parents and families it serves?
9. Describe some of the issues children and families in the program commonly face.
10. For each of the following items, please indicate if it is a challenge for families you encounter rarely or never, some of the time, most of the time, or nearly all the time.

### Roles in the Program

Respondents began the survey by describing their roles in the program, choosing from the options of 'Administration/Management,' 'HS Teacher,' 'Home Visitor,' 'HS Associate Teacher,' or 'Other (please specify).'

Most respondents are members of the administration/management staff or Head Start teachers (54.9 percent), followed by those indicating 'Other.' Over 44.0 percent of individuals selecting 'Other' described themselves as some type of support professional, and 22.2 percent identified as behavioral health professionals. The full list of unedited responses to this and all survey questions is located in the appendix.



### Program Benefits

Respondents to the second survey item, regarding the benefits the Head Start/Early Head Start program provides to families, consistently noted the available resources – especially early education for children; community support; and basic goods like diapers, clothes, and meals – for families in need. In fact, the term “family” appears in 60 responses (58.8 percent), mostly in reference to the “comprehensive assistance/resources for all of the needs of a family with young children.”

Approximately half the responses specifically mention the early education opportunities for the children of families in need, but attention is given much more generally to the full of range of support that the programs offer. “Wrap-around, comprehensive” services include, but are not limited to “dental care,” “assistance with health needs,” “a strong social emotional curriculum,” and the “opportunity to interact with other parents” to help create a “community connection.” There is also emphasis on parenting skills and family education in addition to school readiness efforts on behalf of the children.

Some prevalent themes emerged in response to the inquiry regarding benefits to themselves as staff members. For instance, a large majority of survey participants highlight the support they give and receive, as well as the joy they experience from the opportunity to create positive impact in others’ lives. They also appreciate salary and benefits, flexible scheduling, summers and holidays off, and professional growth.

Overall, most of the respondents find their work to be “meaningful” and “rewarding” in nature due to benefits provided to them as employees or due to their positive influence in the community, particularly among families in need. Two respondents chose to share constructive feedback in their responses as well. One person expressed concern regarding an unsupportive supervisor, and another noted, “I have



come to see how rigorous the performance standards are and how that affects the staff in both positive and negative ways.”

### Challenges and Opportunities

Strong themes also emerged when respondents are asked to identify the challenges they face. Insufficient staffing and high demand within time constraints are by far the biggest concerns among staff. Issues include lack of accountability, poor communication, and interpersonal conflicts, such as staff members who “see guidance as criticism instead of learning opportunities,” who “don't seem to have a great deal of understanding/empathy” for lower-income families, and who are “not supportive” of fellow staff members.

*“Shortage of staff is the biggest challenge.”*

Staff Member

Several respondents link the shortage of staff members to shortages in time allowed to meet deadlines and associated workloads that follow. As one respondent puts it, “I might have enough time if I ever had enough staff... We also end up hanging on to staff that we shouldn't because we know we won't get more staff.” One response simply reads, “Adequate time and adequate staffing,” and another response begins, “Too much to do and more being given to us all the time.”

Other common issues noted by respondents include the large amounts of paperwork that must be completed to comply with regulations, a lack of consistency within the organization (which pertains to the employee turnover rate, and minimal participation from parents).

Fortunately, 91 of the 102 respondents also proposed opportunities they perceive to be available in the next three years. Most individuals focus on growth – not only in terms of physical expansion but also in terms of improvement regarding existing clients and service areas. They are eager to find new ways to help families and strengthen relationships with families and the community, and to increase the quality of services already offered. According to one person, “This program could move miles to change lives, but if there isn't enough staff to safely and effectively run the program that should be addressed BEFORE other improvements are implemented.”

Other opportunities identified included:

- Building a sturdier foundation and infrastructure.
- Aligning catchment area with our facilities.
- Using wait list to make data-driven and fiscally sound decisions.

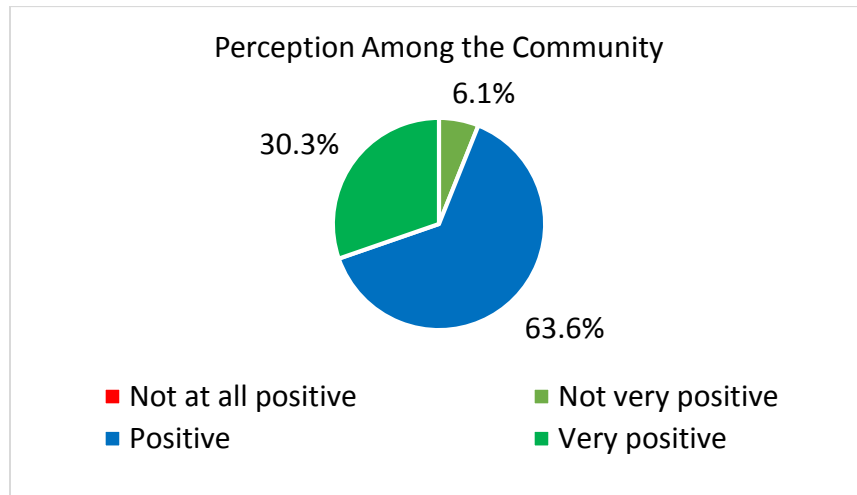
Furthermore, many staff members hope for more funding opportunities. Such possibilities could increase salaries and improve staff retention, and perhaps enhance support for families impacted by mental health issues, substance abuse, and trauma.

Ninety-eight of the 102 survey participants then shared their ideas regarding additions, changes, and limitations that could improve the program. The most prevalent insights include enhanced staff training

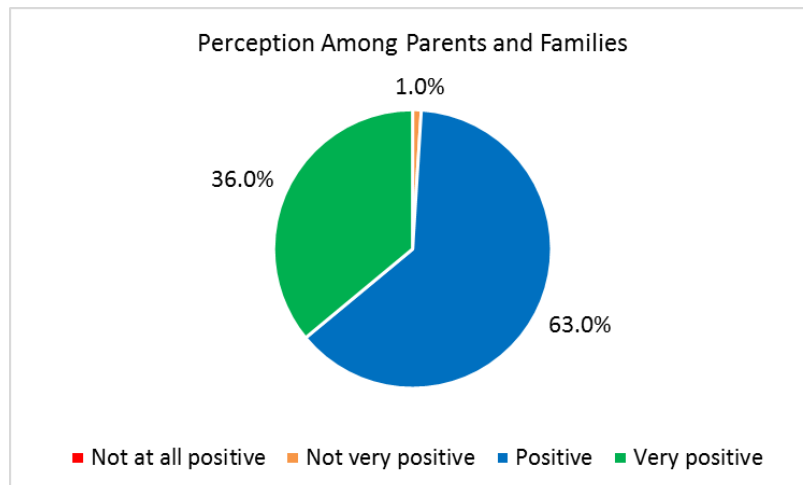
and education, more wellness support, better equipment, and greater emphasis on emotional and social student behaviors. Some respondents mentioned better workload balance from one staff member to the next, along with livable wages and greater program and curriculum continuity. A few others mentioned the possibility of transportation assistance – particularly for children who live in rural areas.

### Perceptions

When asked how they think community members perceive Head Start and Early Head Start, participants could choose response options of ‘Not at all positive,’ ‘Not very positive,’ ‘Positive,’ and ‘Very positive.’ Ninety-nine people answered the question, and 93.9 percent of them selected either ‘Positive’ or ‘Very positive.’ Of the 99 respondents, 93 individuals (93.9 percent) selected either ‘Positive’ or ‘Very positive.’



One hundred people then chose from the same response options to assess the perception of Head Start and Early Head Start among parents and families. Ninety-nine percent selected either ‘Positive’ or ‘Very positive.’



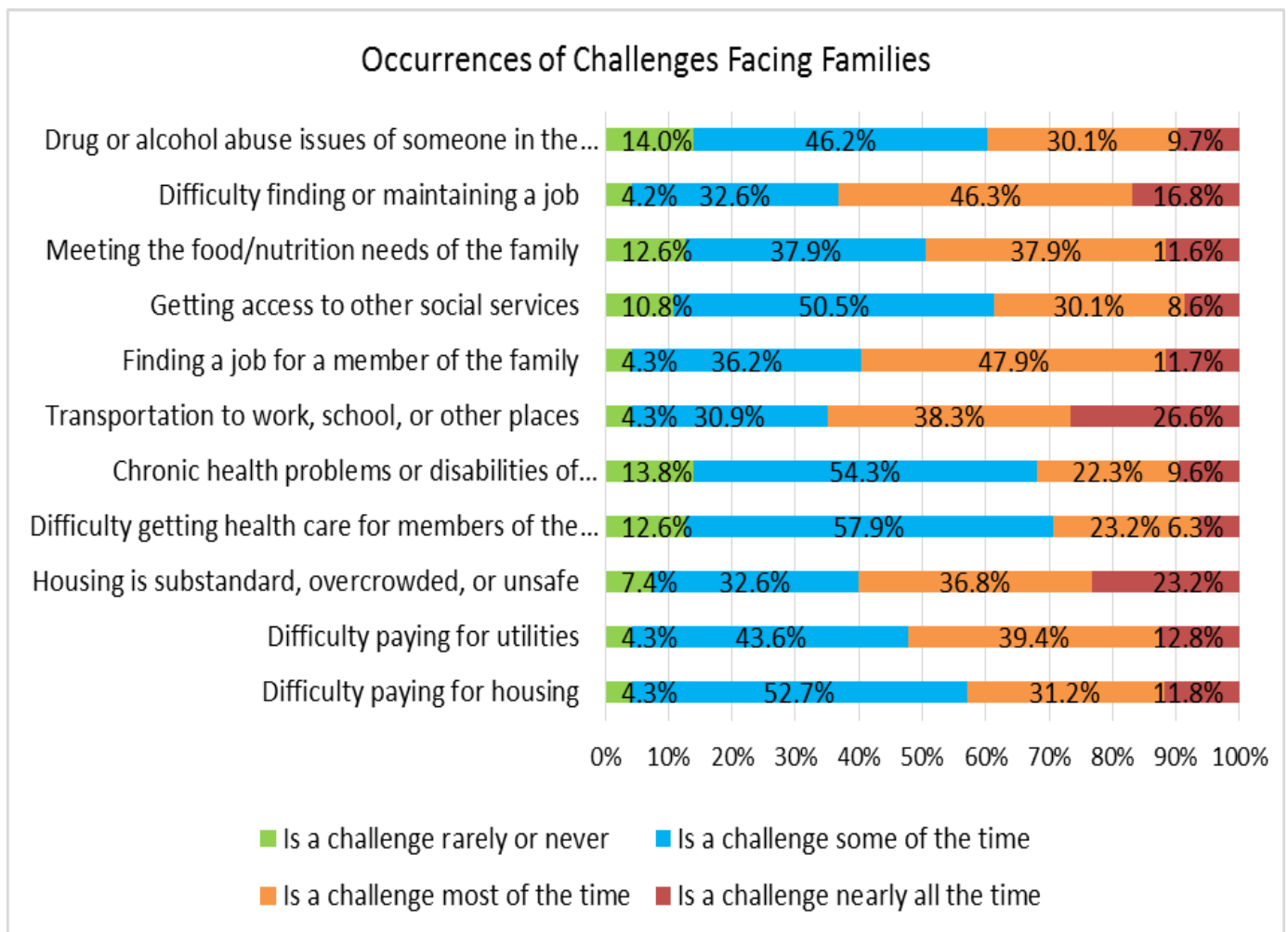
## Challenges Facing Children and Their Families

Upon request for insight into challenges faced by children and their families, nearly 41.0 percent of 98 respondents described transportation issues. In addition to lack of transportation, common responses include:

- Discrimination
- Domestic violence
- Drug and alcohol use
- Family separation and incarceration
- Insufficient food and clothing
- Lack of health care
- Lack of knowledge surrounding child development and community resources
- Language barriers
- Low-wage jobs or unemployment
- Migrant or refugee status
- Neighborhood violence
- Poor mental health
- Poverty
- Safe and affordable housing
- Trauma

Finally, survey participants were presented with a list of potential challenges and asked to determine how often families encountered those challenges. Ninety-six individuals responded to this prompt, although in some cases few opted not to rate certain challenges.

More than half the respondents indicate that families face certain challenges most of the time or nearly all the time, with ‘Transportation to work, school, or other places’ at 64.9 percent; ‘Difficulty finding or maintaining a job’ at 63.1 percent; ‘Housing is substandard, overcrowded, or unsafe’ at 60.0 percent; ‘Finding a job for a member of the family’ at 59.6 percent; and ‘Difficulty paying for utilities’ at 52.2 percent. Several matters were also identified by many as challenging some of the time – such as ‘Difficulty getting health care for members of the family’ at 57.9 percent, ‘Chronic health problems or disabilities of members of the family’ at 54.3 percent, ‘Difficulty paying for housing’ at 52.7 percent, ‘Getting access to other social services’ at 50.5 percent, and ‘Drug or alcohol abuse issues of someone in the family’ at 46.2 percent.



## Community Partner Survey

A survey was developed for community partners – representatives from outside organizations and educational agencies that partner or collaborate with Capital Area Head Start. The survey was distributed electronically. A total of 13 individuals responded to the survey.

### Survey Items

Respondents were presented with the following prompts as listed:

1. Please describe the nature of your organization's collaboration (if any) with the Head Start program.
2. Please describe any benefits to your organization from this collaboration.
3. Do you see any other opportunities to collaborate with Head Start in the near future? If so, please describe.
4. What is the perception of the Head Start Program among other providers in the education and social services communities?
5. What is the perception of the Head Start program among lower-income families in the region?
6. Do you think the need for subsidized early childhood education is being adequately met? Why or why not?
7. Describe some of the issues children and families in the program commonly face.
8. For each of the following items, please indicate if you believe each is a challenge to low-income families in the greater Harrisburg area nearly all the time, most of the time, some of the time, or rarely/never.
9. Do you have any additional comments?

### Partnership Benefits and Opportunities

Respondents began the survey by explaining how their organizations collaborate with the Head Start program. These collaborations pertain to local school districts that share space with the program, community and health coalitions that share information and resources, and academic partnerships that conduct research on behalf of the program. The full list of unedited responses to this and all other survey questions is located in the appendix.

Survey participants then described the benefits of their collaborations with Head Start. They identify enhanced coordination of services that meet the needs of students and their families, with goals to “address and implement long-term solutions.” In sum, one person noted, “We share information on the needs of local families, share training opportunities for staff and/or families when possible, share data needed for grant requirements...”

When asked whether they see other opportunities to collaborate with Head Start in the future, all respondents answered affirmatively. They are eager to move forward together in areas such as kindergarten readiness, health literacy, site expansion, program promotion, improved service delivery, continued research, and even safety planning for babies and young children affected by substances. One respondent elaborated, “We would like to work closer to create a better transition for our students who enter kindergarten. We would also like to partner to agree on what school readiness looks like.” It is

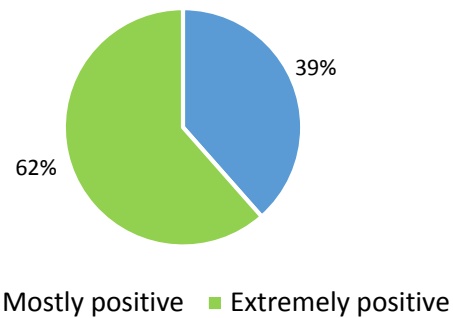
evident that creating a more efficient and successful program for children to succeed is desired by all organizations and partners.

### Perceptions of the Program

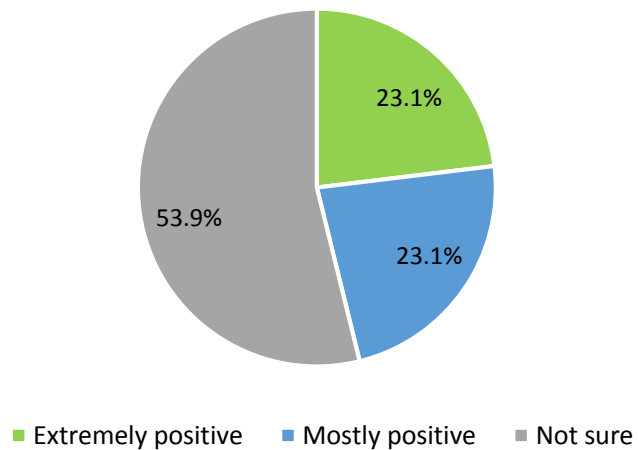
The responding community partners next reported that the perception of the Head Start program by providers in the education and social services communities is positive. In fact, 61.5 percent asserting that the perception is extremely positive. No one suggested that the perception was mixed, mostly negative, or extremely negative. Similarly, no one reported that they are unsure of the perceptions.

There was a bit more variation to responses regarding the perception of the Head Start program among lower-income families. Although none of the participants indicated that the perceptions are mostly negative or extremely negative, 53.9 percent were unsure overall. Over 23.0 percent asserted that the perceptions are mostly positive, and the same percentage identified the perceptions as extremely positive.

Perception of Head Start Among Providers of Education and Social Services Communities



Perception of Head Start Among Lower-Income Families



## Assessment of Community Needs

In response to the survey item regarding whether the need for subsidized early childhood education is being adequately met, one person noted, “I feel it’s improving as Head Start opens more locations to address the need!” Two others reported feeling unsure. The remaining 76.9 percent asserted that subsidized early childhood education needs are not satisfied. They cited necessity for more funding, bilingual information, better kindergarten preparedness, and need for shorter waiting lists. One individual stated succinctly, “My impression is that there are more families in the community that would benefit from subsidized early childhood education that are not currently being served.”

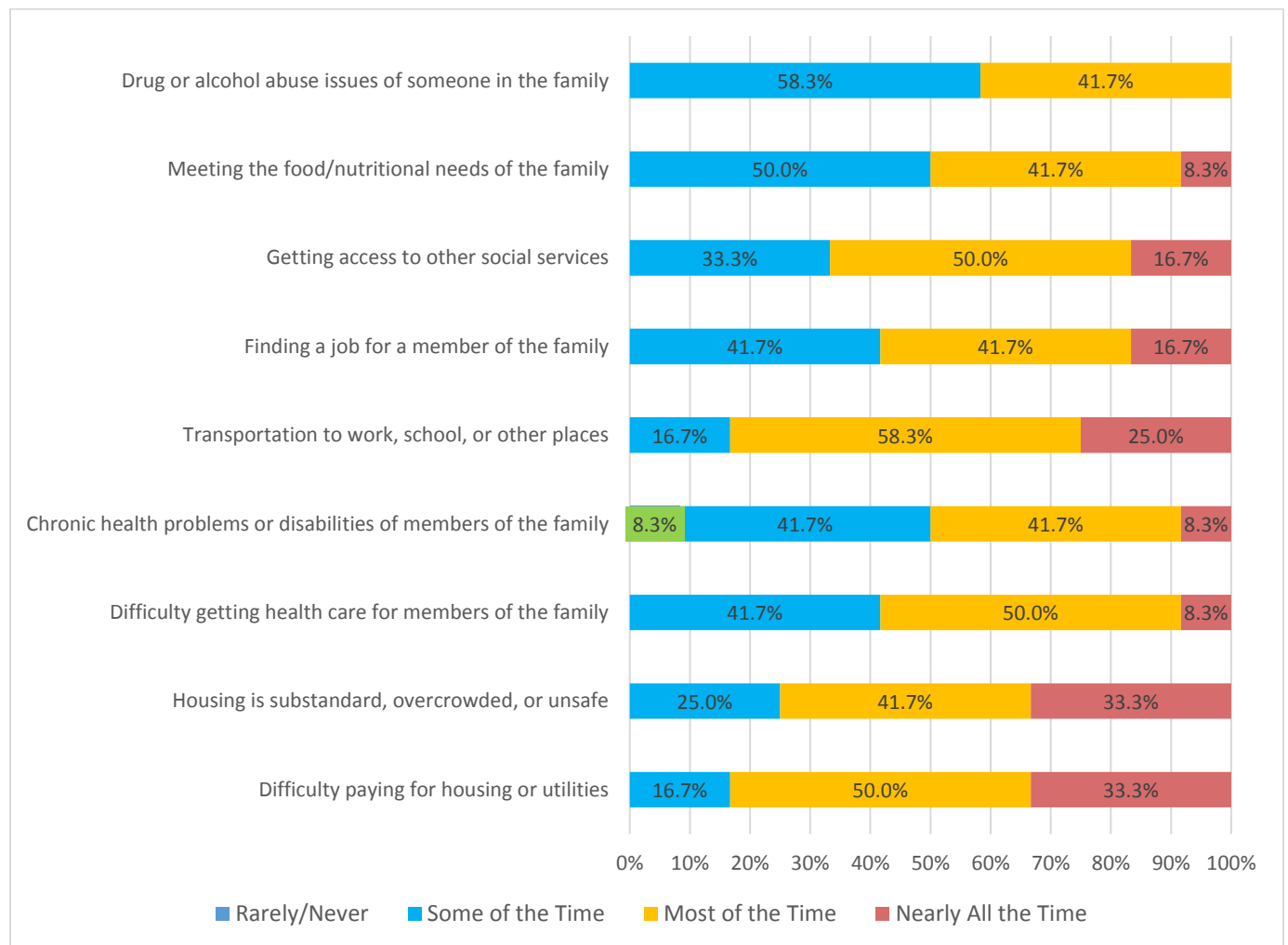
## Challenges Facing Children and Their Families

The following question allowed respondents to elaborate on the issues commonly faced by the children and families in the program. They identified the following challenges:

- Barriers to safe and affordable housing
- Behavioral issues
- Crime and violence
- Developmental delays
- Domestic violence
- Food insecurity
- Incarcerated parents
- Lack of information
- Lack of transportation
- Low employment
- Medical issues
- Poverty
- Substance abuse
- Trauma

Respondents were also provided with a list of potential challenges faced by low-income families in the greater Harrisburg area. Individuals determined whether each of the items are problematic nearly all the time, most of the time, some of the time, or rarely or never. One person opted not to respond to this request.

Overall, participants indicated that every item on the list represents challenges at least some of the time; only 8.3 percent suggested that chronic health problems of family members are rarely or never problematic. Drug or alcohol issues of someone in the family received the most designations of being problematic some of the time, at 58.3 percent. Otherwise, the plurality of respondents rated the remaining issues as challenging most or nearly all the time. Transportation to work, school and other places – along with difficulty paying for housing or utilities – received the most response activity in these areas (83.3 percent). The items are followed by substandard, overcrowded, or unsafe housing (75.0 percent); access to other social services (66.7 percent); finding a job for a member of the family (58.4 percent); difficulty getting health care for members of the family (58.3 percent); and meeting the food/nutritional needs of the family (50.0 percent).





## Additional Comments

Nine individuals responded to the final survey question, a request for additional comments. Four of these participants simply indicated that they did not have further input. Another individual stated, “We do not have space within our schools to house a Head Start site, but I would be willing to work with you toward serving the needs of West Shore SD families.” The remaining four respondents expressed gratitude and appreciation for the program.

## Parent Focus Groups & Interviews

Parents and guardians were contacted through Head Start center staff for participation in focus groups and interviews. One in-person focus group was conducted with four participants, one telephone focus group was conducted with two participants, and three individual phone interviews were conducted, for a total of nine parent/guardian participants.

## Participant Composition & Background

All parents currently or recently had children in the regular Head Start program, and several also had been participants in Early Head Start. Some parents had several years of involvement with the program with multiple children, while one had only been with Head Start for a few weeks or months. One stated that she had previously participated in Head Start in another city before moving to the Capital region. Several parents stated that they have or had multiple children in the program, while others had only a single child participate.

## Overall Impressions

Participants shared consistently positive overall sentiments towards the Head Start program. One parent stated that the program does a great job, especially while serving so many children. Another described different ways the program has helped: teaching her how to be a teacher in the home, helped her find resources for help like a food pantry and income tax prep assistance, and helping to get Early Intervention when she knew her unborn baby would be born with special needs. One parent also mentioned that the program helped them to gain confidence. One parent who had previously utilized Head Start while living in another state said that the quality of the program here was favorable in comparison.

Some parents who were or had previously been Early Head Start participants also expressed positive sentiments toward that program, though one mentioned that regular Head Start was a better fit for her child than the Early Head Start program.

Participants also described positive impressions of communication between Head Start staff and families, and of opportunities for family involvement in the program, though one mentioned that she felt she didn't know the child's teachers as well as she would like. It was mentioned that family members are welcomed as volunteers. One parent described use of a whiteboard outside her child's classroom that summarizes the day's activities and felt that this was an effective means of communication. Parents consistently stated that staff members were communicative and able to answer questions as needed, though a few stated that sometimes parents are given short notice when being asked to come in for meetings and that this can cause difficulties due to work or other family obligations.

## Assessment of Children's Progress in Head Start

When asked about their children's progress in Head Start, parents spoke about academic and kindergarten readiness benefits. Several parents mentioned that their children already knew how to write their name before starting kindergarten. A few mentioned that their children were successful in recognizing and writing letters, and others mentioned their child learned their numbers.

Parents and guardians also described social and emotional benefits on their child's development. Several mentioned that the program has helped their children learn to share and take turns. One parent mentioned that this was especially helpful in preparing their child for kindergarten, as their child is the only child at home so Head Start provides an important space to develop socially with other children. One expressed appreciation that her child was taught about stranger danger. Another stated that her child is adopted and has special needs, so the social and emotional benefits of the program were particularly important.

One parent describes positive emotional benefits – her son learned how to “stop, breathe, and say the problem” when dealing with difficult feelings. Another mentioned that the program has been sensitive to her child's separation anxiety and allows her to stay at the start of the day to ease this.

Another parent described help through the intermediate unit obtained through Head Start – getting a child an IEP and speech therapy for kindergarten.

## Opportunities for Change or Improvement

Participants had the opportunity to discuss areas for improvement or change with regard to the programs. Several parents mentioned transportation as a challenge, and suggested that transportation be offered. One parent described how they must make last minute arrangements if their children's father is unavailable to take their child. Another parent reported carpooling with other parents, and occasionally having to pay for a taxi if other transportation arrangements fall through. Some participants indicated they are able to walk to their Head Start center, while others are not able to do so. One parent stated that the lack of transportation problems might be causing some kids to not come to school in bad weather, especially if parents lack weather-appropriate clothing, umbrellas, etc. Another parent mentioned that transportation was provided when she utilized Head Start while living in another city outside Pennsylvania.

Though most parents had very positive impressions of parent involvement opportunities, one mentioned that she would like to see more parent activities. She mentioned that more workshops could be offered with different activities than the few that she indicated had been offered already. That parent also suggested better family communication with teachers generally, and that the home visits should be more spaced out; i.e. the first home visit takes place too soon after the Meet the Teachers event.

Finally, a few parents agreed that they would like to see program foods and holiday celebrations incorporate more diversity of cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

## Family Needs & Challenges

Participants also had the opportunity to discuss family needs and challenges affecting their own family or families they know in the program. Several discussed clothing challenges. One mentioned that she

gets a free voucher at a local thrift store; others said they were unaware of any clothing banks or resources for clothing for their families. It was stated that it's particularly difficult to have enough clothing to send along changes of clothes each day when potty training at school. It was mentioned that many parents do not have washers or dryers at home. One parent suggested having some at Head Start. Another parent mentioned having already accessed clothing assistance (winter jackets) through the program.

One parent mentioned after school care as a challenge, and another utilizes a different provider for child care after school. It was stated that sometimes doctors' appointments or other obligations can come into conflict with picking up their children at the end of the school day.

One participant stated that mental health is an issue in the community. She said there is a need for more resources. She stated that she has no insurance and must buy costly mental health medications herself but does not qualify for assistance.

### Other Comments

One parent mentioned having been unaware of the program for her first child, but was unsure about how she eventually found out about Head Start. Another shared similar sentiment, and mentioned having previously paid an unsustainable cost for private preschool. One individual stated that there is a waiting list at her child's Head Start center.

## Synthesis & Summary

### Parent & Family Satisfaction

In general, consistent themes emerged in the focus groups around parent and family satisfaction. Parents surveyed and who participated in focus groups were largely complimentary towards the program overall and provided confirmation of the effectiveness of the program at enhancing their children's early childhood education and kindergarten readiness as well as assistance provided to families.

The frequent things Head Start parents cited as the best part of the program were the teachers and staff, their child's growth or progress, and the opportunity for their children to develop socially in a classroom setting. Early Head Start parents cited many of the same positive aspects of their family's participation in the program. In keeping with the largely positive outlook on the program, relatively few respondents to the two surveys offered areas for improvement, though transportation was a common theme among parent survey respondents who did so.

Staff members and community partners also viewed the perception of the program among the families it serves and the broader community as generally positive.

### Capacity & Demand for Service

There is a continued demand for subsidized early childhood education and family support services. A significant number of community partners responding to the survey felt that the need for these services are not being adequately met. In response to the survey item regarding whether the need for subsidized early childhood education is being adequately met, 77 percent of community partners indicated that subsidized early childhood education needs are not satisfied. They cited the necessity for more funding and shorter waiting lists. One individual stated succinctly, "My impression is that there are more families in the community that would benefit from subsidized early childhood education that are not currently being served."

Secondary data also corroborates a continued persistent need for high-quality, subsidized early childhood education. Of all children aged 3-4 in the three-county region, 25.3 percent in Dauphin, 11.9 percent in Cumberland and 8.9 percent in Perry do not have access to high-quality, publicly funded Pre-K. In Dauphin County, about one in five children age 0 to 5 live below the federal poverty line, and nearly half of children age 5 or younger live below 200 percent of the poverty level.

Additionally, a relatively small share of child care centers in the region met high quality standards, defined as 3 or 4 starts in the Keystone Stars model. Fewer than half of child care centers in Cumberland County, 35 percent of centers in Dauphin, and no centers in Perry County met this standard per the most recent data available.

### Adapting to a Changing Community

There are several characteristics of Head Start's target population that are also important in meeting community needs. All three counties in the Capital Area region have become more racially diverse; all three counties have a growing percentage of Hispanic, African American, and Asian residents. As the community has diversified, the population of young children has reflected this change as well. In Dauphin County, nonwhite and Hispanic children now make up the majority of pre-K aged children.

Needs for specialized education or intervention are also shifting. In Dauphin and Perry Counties, there has been significant growth in recent years in the number of children receiving Early Intervention. Respondents among staff and community partners indicated community needs such as trauma, behavioral issues, developmental delays, and general mental health.

### Community Poverty & Social Service Needs

Families with children in the region appear to have significant social service needs. Poverty, including the poverty rate among children, has seen some improvement in Perry County but very limited improvement in Cumberland County and almost no improvement in Dauphin County over the past several years. In light of persistent economic insecurity of many children in the Capital Area region, families have varied day to day challenges and obstacles.

The table below shows top socioeconomic challenges as identified by each stakeholder group in each of the surveys. Due to differences in perspectives, the staff members and community partners were much more likely to rank each item as a challenge at least “some of the time” compared with parents. This could be due to parents being more reluctant to recognize or admit to challenges in these areas. However, commonalities are evident. Transportation was identified as a top issue among all stakeholder groups. Difficulty finding a job and paying for utilities also arose as key needs in terms of how frequently they impact Head Start families. Staff and community partners were more likely to see substandard housing as a frequent concern, while parents were more likely to see getting access to other social services as a concern.

Socioeconomic Challenges Faced by Head Start Families

Percent responding is a challenge “Most of the time” or “Nearly all of the time”	Head Start Parents	EHS Parents	Staff	Community Partners
Difficulty paying for housing or utilities	-	-	-	83%
Difficulty paying for housing	6%	4%	42%	-
Difficulty paying for utilities	11%	7%	52%	-
Housing is substandard, overcrowded, or unsafe	6%	6%	60%	75%
Difficulty getting healthcare for members of the family	8%	3%	29%	58%
Chronic health problems/disabilities in the family	8%	6%	32%	50%
Transportation to work, school, or other places	11%	11%	65%	83%
Finding a job for a member of the family	10%	10%	60%	58%
Getting access to other social services	10%	6%	39%	67%
Meeting the food / nutrition needs of the family	4%	6%	49%	50%
Drug or alcohol abuse issues of someone in the family	3%	3%	40%	42%

*Among each stakeholder group, the highest percentages are shaded in orange and lowest three are shaded in green.*

## Recommendations

### Work to Expand Capacity to Reduce Waitlists and Address Unmet Needs

Families currently being served are generally satisfied with the program, and stakeholders believe it to be effective. There will always be a small margin not satisfied with one or two elements, but there does not appear to be a need for significant changes to the nature of the programs offered. Instead, the area of greatest need appears to be increasing services to meet demand and offering more support services for families through collaborative partnerships.

Secondary data as well as persistent waitlists for services supports further expansion of the existing programs to serve more families in the Capital Area region. However, there is a recognition that the capacity of programs are largely limited by available public funding. Capital Area Head Start can continue to explore innovative ways to expand program capacity to fulfill community needs.

One approach to this would be to continually evaluate center catchment areas in order to distribute resources to the communities most in need. Another important component is continual efforts to expand available resources through various avenues of fundraising – in order to make large scale increases in programming, more funding sources will be necessary to provide the necessary increases in staffing.

### Continually Invest in Staff Capacity, Recruitment, Retention and Well-Being

The capacity constraints described above go hand-in-hand with limitations on staff. A number of staff members surveyed feel that there are significant shortages in staff capacity. Contributing factors cited include a large paperwork burden, lack of parent participation at some centers, and generally insufficient staffing unable to keep up with the workload.

One participant mentioned that not all staff have sufficient empathy or understanding for lower-income families; one parent echoed this sentiment. However, it was also noted that some staff are either eligible for Head Start themselves or have been participants in the past. Capital Area Head Start should ensure that sufficient training is in place to ensure sensitive, empathetic, and open communications between families and staff.

Keeping up current staffing levels was also seen as a challenge. Capital Area Head Start should also continually evaluate ways to attract and retain high-quality staff. While staff overwhelmingly value the work they do, many acknowledge feeling underpaid. Ensuring that compensation and benefits are competitive within the financial constraints of the program is a necessary part of staff attraction and retention. Exploring unique ancillary benefits or day-to-day morale boosters could also be helpful yet cost-effective. For instance, the organization could implement employee wellness programs, if not already in practice, such as competitions to reach wellness goals, partnerships with fitness centers, yoga classes, or other health activities for staff. Ensuring that benefits includes adequate mental health and counseling coverage is also important due to the inherent stress and difficulties in the work of program staff. Professional development opportunities should also be a priority.

### Explore Ways to Meet Community Transportation Needs

Transportation was universally seen as an important community need. It was identified by all stakeholder groups surveyed as a frequently occurring challenge for Head Start families. Lack of

transportation is affecting numerous families, and barriers exist to some families from walking to Head Start such as busy highways or lack of weather-appropriate clothing. Some parents and guardians who live too far to walk may rely on carpools with other parents or their family members, and might utilize taxis or simply miss a day of school when those plans fall through.

Solving regional transportation access challenges at a large scale would take significant resources and coordination among many agencies; however, Head Start can explore ways to fill in gaps for families with transportation obstacles and maximize the number of families served by transportation programs.

### Prioritize Diversity and Inclusion

Community data indicates that the region's population is growing more diverse, with increasing shares of Hispanic, African American, and Asian families. Capital Area Head Start should ensure that information about programs are available in all languages with significant community representation and ensure that sufficient bilingual staff are in place, including Early Head Start home visitors.

Several parents also suggested incorporating more cultural or holiday celebrations in classrooms. Capital Area Head Start can explore a variety of ways to better reflect its diversifying community in its programming, including by serving meals and snacks related to its families' cultures and expanding lessons or arts and crafts activities that celebrate the diversity of Head Start families.

### Make Adjustments to Operations and Programming Where Necessary

Staff surveyed were eager to find new ways to help families and strengthen relationships with families and the community, and to increase the quality of services already offered.

There were several suggestions, many from parents, for changes or adjustments to center operations or programming. Several expressed concerns about traffic and parking issues, particularly at drop-off and pick-up times. Head Start should work at the individual center level to identify specific problems and solutions, including the possibility of reassigning staff to assist with traffic control and safety during key times of the day.

Capital Area Head Start should also review how staff in all centers communicate with parents about the day's activities and any incidents or occurrences involving their child. Appropriate changes can be made if any center has room for improvement. One parent had positive comments about how teachers write this information on a board for all family members to see. Communication best practices like these should be shared across centers if this is not happening already.

Several suggestions were made to increase art-related activities. Other suggestions to consider are implementing school pictures, additional field trip opportunities, and better integrating clothing assistance programs or offering laundry facilities on site. The latter item was mentioned as an issue, especially for parents who are potty-training and may not have enough clothing to send a clean change of clothes with their child each day. These suggestions represent fine-detail adjustments to most fully meet the expectations and needs of family members.

Overall, it is evident that Capital Area Head Start operates a successful and well-regarded program that is most constrained by a need for resources and staff as it carries out its mission to serve a community which has a persistent need for high quality early childhood education.