

Community Assessment

Duluth Head Start Program

2015-2016



Federal Head Start Performance Standards require programs to complete a full Community Assessment every 3 years and to provide updates every year in between. This data source is used to help programs determine the needs of families in their service area and whether or not existing programming meets those needs in terms of location, recruitment, and all areas of service to families embedded in the Head Start program. It can also be valuable in predicting future trends that may affect a program's service area. Other data sources include child outcomes, family outcomes, health statistics, Self-Assessment, CLASS Observation scores and information gleaned through parent and staff surveys. This collection of data is part of each grant proposal, decision making process and strategic planning.

Duluth Head Start is federally funded to provide 255 children in Duluth Minnesota the opportunity to participate in Head Start. Duluth Head Start operates 8 classrooms at 5 sites throughout the city with half-day, four day a week sessions, following the school calendar for the Duluth Public Schools. Each site has a morning and an afternoon session running three and a half hours each. State Head Start funds allow us to operate a Childcare Collaboration with the YWCA Spirit Valley Childcare Center for 21 children and families and to serve 18 families experiencing homelessness with our Families in Transition program option. This year we started a Home Base option serving 12 children and their families in their homes as well as exploring the community.

Having examined the demographics, social service, socio-economic trends and other area characteristics, this Community Assessment provides us vital insight to deliver high quality services to meet the changing needs of low-income children and their families.

Demographics

Geographic Boundaries (Size, Counties, Distinguishing Characteristics)

The Duluth Head Start program serves Minnesota resident families of birth to five-year-old or kindergarten enrollment age children living within the Duluth city limits or enrolled in a childcare situation within the city limits.

Duluth is built into a steep, rocky hillside, located at the westernmost tip of Lake Superior, halfway between Minneapolis/St. Paul and the Canadian border. There are 2,342 freshwater miles from the Atlantic Ocean to Duluth via the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway. The city boasts an extensive climate-controlled skywalk connecting downtown facilities—a useful way to navigate the downtown in the frigid winter climate.

Governing Structure

The city has a Mayor-Council form of government, with the City Administration making policy proposals to a nine member City Council. Duluth's five representational districts are divided into 36 precincts. Each of the five council districts elects its own Councilor, with four at-large Councilors representing the entire city.

Population and Related Trends

According to the 2013 Census update, the population of Duluth is 86,128 with a total of 200,540 in St. Louis County. This is a decrease of -0.2% from last year. Of the total population of Duluth, 22.1 percent (19.034) are living in poverty.

More than half of Minnesota's residents live in the 7-county Twin Cities region. It is one of the fastest growing regions in the Midwest and is predicted to continue rapid growth; adding nearly one-half million more residents by 2030.

According to the MDE birth to four census data, Duluth has a declining preschool population. The 2015-2016 school year reports a total of 978 four year olds, down from 1277 just three years ago.

Racial and Ethnic Composition, Gender, Ages

The population of Duluth is 90.4% white, 2.3% African American, 2.5% American Indian, and 1.5% Asian. Of these persons, 5.6% are under the age of 5 years old, 18.5% are under 18 and 13.8% are 65 and over. 51% are female; 49% is male. 2.9% of the population is foreign born and 4.7% speak a language other than English at home.

While Minnesota is not as racially diverse as the nation, that trend seems to be slowly changing. About 17 percent of our state's residents are now persons of color, compared to only about 1 percent in 1960. Between 2000 and 2010, the state's population of color grew by 55 percent, making them the fastest growing segment of the population. These individuals will make up an increasingly large part of our workforce, but data show that they are also more likely to live in poverty; less likely to graduate from high school; less likely to own their own home; and more likely to suffer from chronic illness.

Age trends are also transforming our state. By 2030, the number of Minnesotans over age 65 is expected to almost double and older adults will comprise about one-fifth of our population.

Minnesota's younger residents are more racially, culturally and linguistically diverse than older generations, which creates new challenges and opportunities for future economic and educational trends.

Household Composition

71.3% of Duluth residents own their own homes, the average value of owner-occupied housing units is \$137,500 compared to \$207,000 for the state of Minnesota. There is an average of 2.24 of persons per household. Among Duluth's households, 18.5% had children under 18, 12.5% had a female head of household, and 43.7% were non-families. 35.2% of all households were one-person households, and 13.8% had someone 65 or older living alone. The average household size was 2.24 and the average family size was 2.80.

Economy and Employment

Economic Activities

The Port of Duluth is a major transportation hub for the transshipment of coal, taconite, agricultural products, steel, limestone, and cement. Duluth is home to two four-year colleges and two vocational colleges. Headquarters for Maurices, a major retail outlet, and Cirrus Aircraft, a manufacturing facility, are located in Duluth. It is also a center for aquatic biology and aquatic science and a popular center for tourism and outdoor activities. The 148th Fighter Wing National Air Guard base is also a large area employer.

According to the July 2014 Regional Analysis by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development:

- Employment grew, adding 1,389 jobs (1.0 percent) for a total June estimate of 134,432.
- Increases were spread across most industries.
- The only losses were in Educational and Health Services (down 418 or 1.3 percent), and Government, down 1,424 (5.3 percent), largely from a decline of 1,144 (2.6 percent) in State Government.
- Employment levels in the Duluth metro also rose on an annual basis, albeit less dramatically, with the area adding 445 (0.3 percent) jobs over June 2013.

As of December 2014, the labor force in Duluth was 44,979, with 43,356 people employed, 1,623 unemployed and an unemployment rate of 3.6%

Minnesota unemployment rates for 2015 show the following statistics across racial lines: Whites 3.8%; Blacks 10.2% (Black men 22%); American Indians 39%; Hispanics 8.2%.

Future Trends

The *Regional Spotlight for Northeast Minnesota* reports, “manufacturing is projected to grow by 8.5 percent from 2010-2020 in the Northeast, adding jobs at a slower rate than the average for all industries (13.1 percent). Several Manufacturing subsectors will grow much more quickly, though. Wood Products Manufacturing, Nonmetallic Mineral Products Manufacturing, Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing, Transportation Equipment Manufacturing, and Furniture Manufacturing will each increase employment by more than 25 percent. Subsectors projected to lose jobs include Paper Manufacturing, Apparel Manufacturing, and Textile Product Mills. Almost all of the 179 projected new jobs in Transportation Equipment Manufacturing will occur in the Aerospace Product and Parts subsector, reflecting the growing aviation cluster in the Duluth area.”

A ratio-trend analysis suggests that Duluth-Superior metropolitan area will increase by approximately 9,000 jobs by the year 2035. If recent trends continue, new jobs in the *Retail* and *Other* categories will increase at a faster rate than the *Service* jobs. *Service* jobs will still account for the vast majority of the area’s employment.

Median Income Level:

In 2013, Duluth's median household income was \$46,517; \$13,319 less than the median MN household income. The per capita income was \$25,946. About 16.4% of all residents were below the poverty line. 15.3% of children under 5, and 11.6% under 18 in Minnesota were living in poverty

2016 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia	
Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$11,880
2	16,020
3	20,160
4	24,300
5	28,440
6	32,580
7	36,730
8	40,890
<i>For families/households with more than eight persons, add \$5200 for each additional person.</i>	

Principle Source of Income

The number of full-time job openings in NE MN rose 14% from 2011 to 2014. The median hourly wage for all jobs in St. Louis County is \$12.05, compared to \$18.15 throughout the state.

Many jobs in the Duluth-Superior area are in retail and service industries, which typically offer low-pay and part-time positions. Of 84,696 jobs posted in St. Louis County in the 2nd quarter of 2014, 42% were part-time, 16% seasonal and 36% required a post-secondary education.

Number Below Poverty Level

In 2015, poverty in Duluth was estimated at 21.9%, down slightly from the 2010 census at 22%. However, this is up significantly from the 2000 rate of 15.5%.

A higher poverty level affects persons of color and children in Duluth. African Americans have a poverty rate of about 63% and Native Americans have a poverty rate of about 67.6%. 24.3% of households with children under the age of eighteen receive food assistance, compared to the state average of 12.5%. Females are somewhat more likely to be living in poverty. Having less than a high school degree or being a minority increases the likelihood of living in poverty.

The federal poverty line is only \$11,770 for an individual and \$24,250 for a family of four. A person working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year would earn \$15,080 at the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. Barriers to work—the inability to find work, the unaffordability of childcare, and disability—may be greater contributors to poverty status than wages.

Issues That Will Affect the Economy

According to an article in the Duluth News Tribune, there are five key issues that will affect the economy in 2015.

- Interest rates – Expected to rise a quarter of a percentage point possibly four times in 2015, and at a much faster rate in 2016. Rising interest rates will make it more expensive to buy a home or purchase a car.
- Oil prices – While the drop in oil prices has been a welcome relief for consumers, it will also affect the economy as oil companies cut back their drilling plans, which directly impacts hiring and job cuts.
- Housing – In November of 2014, home sales were down 3.8% from a year earlier. Tight credit makes it difficult for many Americans to get mortgages.
- Household formation – During the recovery, there was a low rate of new household formations (people moving in together as couples or roommates). This trend is expected to rise dramatically in 2015.
- Global events – Weakness in the rest of the world, could be a positive thing for the U.S., by lowering commodity prices—which, in turn, helps keep inflation and interest rates low.

New Minimum Wage Law

According to the September 2014 Minnesota Economic Trends Quarterly, *“Women, most minority racial groups, people with disabilities and residents in Greater Minnesota stand to benefit the most from a new law that will raise the state’s minimum wage to \$9.50 an hour by August 2016.”*

DEED’s workforce development programs target economically vulnerable Minnesotans, ranging from those with persistent employment barriers to those who were recently laid off from a steady job.

Many of these Minnesotans earn a wage at or near the current legal minimum and will be affected by the stepped increase of the state’s minimum wage to \$9.50 per hour¹ in August 2016 at large establishments.”

New Legislation

If passed, a new bill, proposed to the State Legislature, would provide funding of \$4.5 million in competitive grants to nonprofit agencies that would offer low-interest car loans to low-income people. The Getting to Work bill could provide assistance to 4,000 to 6,000 low-income Minnesota families, creating self-sufficiency and the ability to get and maintain employment in areas where public transportation is scarce.

Black Household Income Plunges in MN

An article from the Minneapolis Star Tribune (September 2015) stated that household incomes for blacks in Minnesota dropped during the past year, according to survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau. From 2013-14, the median income for black households in the state fell 14%. That was a drop from about \$31,500 to \$27,000 in one year's time.

The statewide poverty rate for black residents rose from 33% to 38%, compared to a stable overall state poverty rate of 11%.

Income and poverty for other racial groups in Minnesota remained stable. There is no apparent reason for the declining income, and higher unemployment in the black community was not a factor.

Head Start Eligible Children and Families

General

The Duluth Head Start program serves Minnesota resident families of birth to four-year-old children living within the Duluth city limits or enrolled in a day care situation within the city limits. According to the 2013 Census update, here are approximately 10,428 children under the age of 5 living in St. Louis County.

Racial and Ethnic Composition in St. Louis County

Black	White	Native American	Asian	Other/Unspecified	Multi/Bi Racial
1.5%	92%	2.3%	1.0%	1.0%	2.2%

Education - Adult Educational Attainment

THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY UPDATE OF 2010 provides us with the data in EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN DULUTH, which summarizes the educational attainment of residents of Duluth over the age of 25. Over 63 percent of the general population has taken college level classes or received advanced degrees.

Information on Functional Literacy Levels

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN DULUTH		
Level of Education	Count	Percent
Less than High School Grad	4,453	13.1%
High school graduate/GED	15,605	28.7%
Some college, /Associate's degree	17,393	32
Bachelor's/Graduate/ Professional Degree	17,006	31.2

Graduation Rates/Dropout Rates

On-time graduation rates for Denfeld High School decreased from 84.59% to 78.74% and Duluth East High School decreased from 91.94% to 91.52%.

Preliminary Statistics on Families with Children Enrolled in the Program for the 2015-2016 School Year

HEAD START HOUSEHOLD EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2015-2016		
Level of Education	Count	Percent
Less than High School Grad	29	12.13
High School Grad or GED	89	37.24
Some College/ Associates	100	41.84
Bachelors or Higher	18	7.53
Unreported	3	1.26

Employment/Job Training Status of Head Start Parents During the 2015-2016 School Year To Date (Employed and unemployed numbers do not reflect retired or disabled parents.)

	Two Parents	One Parent
School/Job Training	0	5
Employed	20	120
Unemployed	14	80

Languages Spoken

Head Start Program Primary Language Spoken at Home

LANGUAGE	13-14	14-15	15-16
English	98.5	98.44	99.6
Asian/Pacific Island (Hmong)	0	0	0
Spanish	0	0	0
European	.5	.31	0
Hindi	0	0	0
Far East	1.0	1.25	.4

Data from the State of Minnesota reports:

- In 1920, about 1 in 5 Minnesotans was foreign-born; today about 1 in 14 are (2010-2012).
- The largest groups of foreign-born Minnesotans were born in Mexico (71,000); India (26,000); Laos, including Hmong (24,000); Somalia (21,000); Vietnam (19,000); Thailand, including Hmong (15,000), and

China (14,000) (data from 2010-2012). These estimates do not include U.S.-born children of these immigrants. They also likely underestimate the size of our immigrant populations because trust and language issues depress response rates to Census surveys.

- Behind English, the most common languages spoken in the homes of Minnesotans 5 and older are Spanish (about 198,000 speakers), Hmong (54,000 speakers), and Somali (37,000 speakers) (data from 2010-2012).

Transition Activities

Duluth Head Start supports families as their children transition both from Early Head Start (Birth-3) and from Head Start to Kindergarten. Families with children birth to age 3 are eased into the new care setting with frequent visits to the new setting, transition conferences and parent input into the process. For children moving on to kindergarten, transition activities include visits to kindergarten rooms, lunch in the cafeteria and participation in district wide Kindergarten Round-Up activities. Round Up is a good opportunity for Head Start staff to introduce Head Start families to the greater school community. Head Start provides assistance with kindergarten enrollment paperwork, childcare for siblings and transportation to the spring Round Up events.

Number of Enrolled Children with Disabilities and Types of Disabilities (By Diagnostic Category) of Enrolled Children

Multiple Disabilities	Speech Language	Emotional/ Behavior	Developmental	Hearing Impaired	Visually Impaired
0	3	0	40	2	0

As a school district program, Duluth Head Start has a strong working relationship with the district’s Early Childhood Special Education program. This relationship allows us to streamline our work with children and families in need of special education services.

Resources Provided to Enrolled Children with Disabilities by Other Agencies

HELP ME GROW

Help Me Grow is the initial point of contact in the city of Duluth for health and development questions about children ages birth to twenty-one. Help Me Grow staff assists families with appropriate referrals and access to needed services for children who have medically diagnosed conditions or have conditions with a high probability of resulting in developmental delay. They also provide developmental screening and/or in- depth evaluation. Special Education services are available to children who meet the Minnesota state special education criteria. Services include speech, physical and occupational therapy, service coordination, special instruction, vision, hearing and nurse services. All services provided through the school system are free of charge.

Scottish Rite Clinic Childhood Language Disorders

Provides families with the assessments and tools for all areas of communication disorders. The services they provide include:

- Hearing assessments
- Communication assessments
- Direct management of language disorders
- Referral to the medical and educational communities’ services
- Onsite outreach visits
- Intensive parent education

The Robert F. Pierce Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic

The Robert F. Pierce Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic is the clinical teaching unit within the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

The goals of the Clinic are to: assist people of all ages with speech language, and hearing disorders through comprehensive assessment and individually designed treatment programs; provide a practicum experience for students in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders who are supervised by professional speech-language pathologists and audiologists; and help clients, family members, and other professionals gain a better understanding of communication disorders advance knowledge of communication disorders through research. Therapy and treatment include:

- Group or individual speech therapy
- Family Counseling & Education
- Parent Education to integrate activities from therapy at home
- Group Therapy & Social Activities
- Individual & group interaction to enhance spoken English skills of non-native English speakers

Essentia Health–Polinsky Medical Rehabilitation Center

Part of Essentia Health Children’s Services, the Polinsky Center pediatric rehabilitation team offers physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and psychology services. They see children with a wide variety of conditions, from developmental delays to serious brain and spinal cord injuries.

Arc Northland

ARC Northland aids families through many supportive services, by helping people with disabilities and their families overcome challenges and thrive in community life. They serve individuals in Southern St. Louis, Carlton, and Lake Counties. Arc Northland's mission is to create equal opportunity for quality living and to enhance dignity and respect for people with disabilities and their families.

St. Luke’s Pediatrics

As part of the St. Luke’s Medical Center, the Pediatrics unit, provides speech therapy, along with occupational and physical therapy and psychological services. Services are available to children with a wide array of physical and developmental conditions.

Mental Health

Duluth Head Start employs two contracted Mental Health Consultants, who assist with classroom observations and provide resources to classroom teachers. Consultants also provide referrals for families to area mental health facilities—the Human Development Center and Amberwing.

Health

Incidence of Drug and Alcohol Abuse

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

- In 2013, young adults aged 18–25 had the highest percentage of alcohol dependence or abuse (13.0%) among individuals aged 12 or older, and the percentage was higher for males (8.7%) than females (4.6%).
- In the United States, 6.7% of persons aged 21 or older (an estimated 15.1 million individuals) in 2013 reported heavy alcohol use within the month prior to being surveyed. This percentage has not changed significantly since 2009.
- In 2013, percentages of alcohol dependence or abuse were higher among those who lived in metropolitan areas and among those without health insurance.
- The percentage of alcohol dependence or abuse decreased from 7.5% in 2009 to 6.6% in 2013. This decrease was found for adolescents aged 12–17 and young adults aged 18–25 but not for those in older age groups.

- In the United States, 2.6% of individuals aged 12 or older (an estimated 6.9 million individuals) in 2013 were dependent on or abused illicit drugs within the year prior to being surveyed. This percentage has not changed significantly since 2009.
- In 2013, illicit drug dependence or abuse was more prevalent among males (3.4%) than among females (1.9%).

Children Under 6 at Risk

According to a study done by the Wilder Foundation, there are fifteen high-risk counties in Minnesota for children younger than six. These are counties which may have high rates of poverty and unemployment and low access to health care and other services that ensure children get off to a good developmental start. St. Louis County was identified as one of the high-risk counties.

Incidence of Abuse and Neglect

St. Louis County reports that there were 1,657 reported cases of child maltreatment in 2013.

The Governor's Task Force on the Protection of Children is charged with making recommendations for comprehensive improvements to the child protection system to the 2015 Legislature. Areas of interest include children protection screening, Family Assessment Response, training for county child protection staff and state oversight.

According to the key findings Minnesota's Child Welfare Report of 2013:

- Minnesota counties, and the Leech Lake and the White Earth Bands of Ojibwa, assessed 17,716 reports of maltreatment involving 24,962 children in 2011.
- Of all maltreatment reports, 12,243 received a Family Assessment, a strengths-based and family-focused method for working with families in the child protection system where no determination of maltreatment is made.
- Neglect was the most common allegation of maltreatment, found in 63 percent of Family Assessments and 52 percent of Family Investigations. This includes neglecting to provide adequate food, clothing or shelter, endangerment, educational neglect, abandonment and inadequate supervision. Medical neglect is counted separately.
- The need for ongoing protective services was identified in 51 percent of Family Investigations and 16 percent of Family Assessments. Another 15 percent of Family Assessments were offered optional supportive services.
- American Indian and African American/Black children had the highest rates of contact with the child protection system. They were more than six and three times more likely to be reported as abused or neglected than were White children, respectively.
- Fewer than 3 percent of all determined victims had at least one subsequent determined report of maltreatment within six months.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women. It is estimated that one in four women in Minnesota will experience violence from an intimate partner at some point in their life.

The Women's Program at Safe Haven Shelter in Duluth provides battered women and their children with 24-hour emergency shelter, food and clothing, personal advocacy, and a safe environment to explore their options. Advocates work closely with the women, connecting them to available resources in the community including economic assistance, medical services, education and employment opportunities, and permanent

housing. Safe Haven Shelter and Resource Center assisted 1,695 people in 2014. As of 03/31/2015, six Head Start families have reported incidents of domestic violence.

The Lake Superior Regional Family Justice Center (FJC) continues to serve the greater Duluth Community as a one-stop shop for women in abusive relationships. The FJC includes a wide range of services and programs available, serving victims of domestic violence community wide.

Infant and Child Birth and Death Rates

St. Louis County's birth rate of 10.4 births per 1,000 is lower than state-level rates of 12.9 births per 1,000. In 2012, 82.5% of births in St. Louis County had adequate prenatal care (nine or more prenatal visits and seen in the first trimester) compared with 78.2% in 2007 and 84.2% in 2003.

- The overall infant mortality rate in Minnesota is the lowest in the nation, and infant mortality rates for African American, Asian, and Hispanic infants are significantly lower than the national average. The American Indian rate is nearly the same as the national average (2003-2005).
- Relatively small numbers of annual births and infant deaths in some Populations of Color including American Indians mean that the prevention of even one infant death can significantly impact rates. Looked at within this context, the EHCI target could have been reached in the 2001-2005 reporting period if there had been five fewer infant deaths for African Americans per year and three fewer deaths for American Indians.

Number of Low-Birth Weight Babies

Babies born weighing 5 pounds, 8 ounces or less are considered to have a low birth weight - which carries a range of health risks and potentially decreased cognitive and social development. A baby's weight at birth indicates both the mother's health status and her baby's chances for growth and overall development. Low birth weight babies have an increased risk of disease and even death during their early months. In 2013, 6.4% of babies born in Minnesota (all births) had a low birth weight. Down from 8% in 2010.

Teen Pregnancy Rates

Overall, birth rates among adolescents ages 15-19 decreased 7.8% from 2009 to 2010, while pregnancy rates decreased nearly 10%. Pregnancy data indicate a drop in number of pregnancies since 2007, marking an overall decline of 38% from 1990 to 2010.

For the first time in more than twenty years, adolescent birth rates for African American adolescents in Minnesota fell below the national average, marking a decrease of nearly 24% from 2009. Birth rates for American Indians decreased 31%, Asian/Pacific Islanders decreased 23%, and Hispanic/Latina decreased 22% from 2009 to 2010. In comparison, birth rates for white adolescents dropped only 0.67%. Possible explanations for these dramatic decreases in rates among populations of color are improved access to culturally appropriate medical and educational services resulting in more young people making informed decisions about their sexual health. Although adolescent pregnancy and birth rates are highest among Minnesota populations of color compared to white populations, the greatest number of adolescent births is still to white females. Rates for all racial groups fell between 2009 and 2010.

Immunization Levels Among School Children

According to the Minnesota Department of Health, 95-100% of children 24-35 months in St. Louis County are up to date with their immunizations. To date, 78% of Duluth Head Start children are current; this includes homeless children enrolled in our FIT program.

Prevalent Health Problems

The number of children without health insurance rose sharply in the past two years in Minnesota, making it the only state to see a significant increase since 2008. This is an increase from 5.8% to 6.6% or a total of 84,000 children. The national rate is 8%, down from 9% in the same period. MN has always had a higher rate of children and adults covered by employer-based health insurance, so the recession had a more dramatic impact here as businesses cut workers, raised premiums or dropped health plans altogether. To address chronic budget deficits MN lawmakers reduced adults' eligibility for subsidized health programs such as Medical Assistance and Minnesota Care and eliminated the General Assistance Medical Care program. While enrollment standards haven't changed for children, they have been affected. When you cut parents' health care, you lose the children as well. Of the 292 children that have been enrolled in Duluth Head Start for the 2015-2016 school year so far, 268 have health insurance; Medicaid covers 250 of these children.

Communicable Diseases and Health Concerns

No major disease outbreaks have been documented for St. Louis County. There are periodic cases of infectious disease, including influenza, chicken pox and whooping cough.

<http://www.bridgetohealthsurvey.org>

Air and Water Quality

One of the big draws for people in this area is the air and water quality. We are fortunate to be located on the eastern shore of Lake Superior, the largest freshwater lake in the world. It contains almost 3,000 cubic miles of water, an amount that could fill all the other Great Lakes plus three additional Lake Eries. With an average depth approaching 500 feet, Superior also is the coldest and deepest (1,332 feet) of the Great Lakes. Most of the Superior basin is sparsely populated, and heavily forested, with little agriculture because of a cool climate and poor soils. More on water and air quality information can be accessed at <http://www.pca.state.mn>

Nutrition - Children Receiving Free Lunch and Breakfast

Duluth Head Start Centers are located in Elementary schools with the highest percentages of children receiving Free and Reduced Lunch services.

2015-2016: 40.7% of Duluth school children are eligible for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program, down from 42.5% in the previous year.

School Name	Enrolled	Percentage
Congdon	586	21.8
Homecroft Elementary	426	25.6
Lakewood Elementary	236	33.9
Lester Park Elementary	496	20.4
Lowell Elementary*	345	48.4
Laura MacArthur Elementary*	428	74.1
Myers-Wilkins*	416	78.8
Piedmont Elementary*	482	64.1
Stowe Elementary*	320	65.3
Early Childhood Special Education	184	35.3

*Schools where Head Start classrooms are located.

Food Support Recipients

Our statistics show that 129 of our current Duluth Head Start parents are enrolled in the SNAP program.

Participant in Food Distribution Programs, Availability of Low-Cost Food

Hunger Solutions MN

Hunger Solutions MN is a comprehensive hunger relief organization that works to end hunger in MN. They support agencies that provide food to those in need. Through their HelpLine, they have helped thousands of families and seniors find emergency food and enroll in public nutrition programs. They have distributed more than one million dollars in grants to food shelves so far this year.

Minnesota Nutritious Food Coalition

The MNFC is a public-private partnership whose goal is to raise awareness and increase participation in the federal Food Support program and provide guidance on means of better serving Minnesotans in need of healthy food. Their main charge is to address food access issues, increase participation in the federally funded Food Support program, identify barriers and areas for expansion, and develop a coordinated outreach effort to ensure all Minnesotans who are eligible for the program have an opportunity to apply for it.

More than 500,000 Minnesotans access food support benefits monthly, yet many more, particularly seniors are eligible for the program. Currently, only 65% of eligible Minnesotans and 44% of eligible seniors receive food support benefits. Minnesota's fifth and eighth Congressional Districts (which includes Duluth) have the highest rates of food insecurity, with both districts containing approximately 96,000 Minnesotans who are food-insecure. St. Louis County has a food insecurity rate of 13% or 27,110 individuals. Thirty-eight percent of St. Louis County's food insecure individuals are NOT eligible for Federal Nutrition Assistance.

Statewide outreach includes:

- More than 20 agencies, which are Food and Nutrition Service grant recipients and are part of Minnesota's formal state outreach plan.
- Recruitment of local partners to conduct outreach.
- Coordination between the Minnesota Department of Human Services and counties to provide infrastructure for material updates, supplies, training and communications.
- Free nutrition education materials and classes (SNAP-Education) through the University of Minnesota Extension and Minnesota Chippewa Tribe to help SNAP participants make good purchasing choices and stretch their food dollars.

Second Harvest Northern Lakes Food Bank

Second Harvest is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations and the sole distributor of surplus food products to over 120 charitable food programs, including our region's soup kitchens, food shelves and shelters. As a food bank, their primary role is to provide food to the front-line charitable agencies that offer meals to the hungry. In addition, they provide food to over 1,000 people per month as part of their own direct service programming.

As part of Feeding America, Second Harvest rescues food and non-food items from national and regional manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, restaurateurs and growers. These products are then distributed to agencies and people in need throughout their service region.

In NE Minnesota/NW Wisconsin:

- 15% or 49,342 people, live in poverty;
- 12% of people are food insecure meaning they don't have access at all times to enough food to live a healthy, active life;

- 16% of children are food insecure;
- 30% of those receiving food from food shelves are children;
- Food shelf use has increased 70% since 2008;
- Food shelf use among children has increased 19% since 2008;
- Food shelf use among seniors has nearly quadrupled the last 5 years.

Churches United in Ministry's Emergency Food Shelves

The food shelf provides a five-day food order for people without food or the resources to buy food and advocacy services connecting people to community resources (e.g. shelter, medical care, children's services, employment, clothing, and emergency monies). Staff, along with approximately 100 volunteers, distributes 260,000 pounds of food annually. An average of 570 households receive emergency food each month; roughly 35% of those fed are children. People using the food shelves have access to an advocate who provides information and referral service and short-term counseling

Damiano Center

The Damiano Center operates the largest on-site meal program in the city of Duluth serving 7 hot meals each week, plus a continental breakfast 5 days a week. In 2012 the Soup Kitchen served 124,000 meals to people in need using salvaged food.

Union Gospel Mission

Located in the heart of downtown Duluth, the Mission provides a free on-site meal program. 80,000 meals were served in 2014. They also provide a food shelf program, with a 21 meal per person food box, with a 7-day supply. 500 households were served in 2014 through the food shelf.

Other Area Food Banks

Fruit of the Vine Food Shelf

Living Waters Food Shelf

Salvation Army Food Shelf – Duluth

WIC – Women, Infants, and Children

The mission of WIC is to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care. WIC accepts women, infants, and children who are at or below 185% of poverty. They receive a three-month voucher when they make an appointment. WIC has presumptive eligibility up to 275% when they sign up for medical assistance or Minnesota Care within two weeks.

Automatic Qualifiers for the WIC Program:

- Head Start
- Minnesota Care/Medical Assistance
- Food Stamps
- Reduced or Free School Lunch
- MFIP
- Fuel Assistance
- SSI-Client
- Ready Work

The average monthly YTD enrollment for St. Louis County in 2015 was 4,159.

So far this year, 112 children enrolled in Head Start are receiving WIC services.

Housing

Access to safe and affordable homes builds the foundation for all communities. As Minnesota's economy grows stronger, even working Minnesotans often lack good housing options, and aging homes create health and energy concerns. In St. Louis County, there are about 60,414 owner and 24,369 renter households. More than 53% of those homes are at least 50 years old.

For 24% of owners and 56% of renters in St. Louis County, housing consumes 30% or more of their household income, often at the sacrifice of other basic needs like food and medicine. Saving for education or emergencies often becomes impossible, especially for lowest-income households.

In St. Louis County, 29% of households are renters. Recent data for Northeastern Minnesota shows that renter incomes have fallen by 10%, while rents have risen by 16% since 2000. There are now 33 affordable units available for every 100 extremely low-income renters in St. Louis County. The county ranks 79 out of the state's 87 counties for the most units affordable and available to this income group.

In St. Louis County, approximately 8% of homeowners and 29% of renters pay at least half of their income on housing.

The median sale price for homes (excluding foreclosures) was \$139,195 in 2014 in the county. Since 2006, median home prices have decreased by 4%, after adjusting for inflation.

From 2005-2013, there were 3,781 foreclosures in St. Louis County. Statewide, 3.1% of primary mortgages were delinquent by 60-plus days in early 2014, compared to an average of 1.7% from 1979 to 2004.

Minnesota has the nation's largest racial homeownership gap. In St. Louis County 71% of households own a home, with white, non-Hispanic households accounting for 73%.

HUD Housing

Section 8 Rental Housing Assistance is a program that makes market rate rental housing affordable for low-income families. Program participants pay a minimum of 30% of their monthly-adjusted income for rent and utilities. The current waiting list for Section 8 housing is 24 months.

In 2010, Duluth had the highest level of renters paying more than 30% of their income for housing of any of the major Minnesota metros. An alarming 56% of renters in the Duluth metropolitan area fell into this category. When families pay even 30% of their income for housing, housing is considered unaffordable. Families then often must choose between paying for their housing and other needs such as food, medications, and transportation.

Unfortunately, the Duluth area, like the state of MN as a whole, has seen a marked increase in both the number of homeless people and the number of foreclosures since the middle of the decade. There were 698 foreclosures in Duluth in 2010, up from 260 in the year 2005.

Homeless Count

Each night in Duluth, as many as 300 homeless men, women and children seek refuge in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters and transitional housing facilities. Currently there are 5 organizations that provide emergency shelter and services. They provide 125+ beds available on any given night for the homeless. There are 7 transitional housing agencies providing 174 beds. Agencies that provide housing and supportive services for homeless persons assist more than 1,500 homeless persons each year in Duluth.

St. Louis County and the city of Duluth initiated the plan in 2005 to end homelessness. A diverse group was assembled to create the End Homelessness in Ten Committee (EHIT). Members of EHIT represented urban and rural areas, private and public sectors and a wide range of disciplines, including mental health, chemical dependency, human services, youth programs, anti-poverty agencies, domestic violence, employment and training, housing developers, school corrections, homeless shelters and services, and the faith community. Eight members of the committee experienced homelessness first-hand or have been part of the safety net for relatives and friends who have become homeless.

St. Louis County Significant Findings:

- 40% of homeless persons are children, with an average age of 7 years.
- 71% of the homeless adults interviewed had been discharged from a correctional or human service facility within the past year.
- 27% of homeless adults meet the definition of chronically homeless (compared to 5-10% national estimates).
- 38% of homeless women are fleeing abuse.
- 80% of homeless adults report a serious or chronic disability that limits work or daily living skills.
- The vast majority (80%) of homeless adults have been Minnesota residents for three or more years, with nearly 40% having lived in the state longer than 20 years.
- Veterans and people of color are disproportionately represented among the homeless. 45% of Duluth's homeless population is white, while African Americans make up 25% and American Indians or Alaska Natives make up 17% of this group.
- In the six months preceding the survey, homeless individuals had 339 visits to hospital emergency rooms in St. Louis County.

In the 2015-2016 school year to date, Duluth Head Start has served a total of 45 children experiencing homelessness. Duluth Public Schools are predicting this academic year will see more homeless kids than it did last year.

Foster Care

During the 2015-2016 school year so far, there have been 25 Head Start children in Foster Care.

There is currently a severe shortage of qualified foster care placements in St. Louis County. According to the Duluth News-Tribune, there are 500 children living in out-of-home foster placements at any given time. This figure is up by 25% in just five years. But there are only about 200 registered foster parents in the county. Many of those are assigned a specific child because they are related.

The goal of the Foster Care system is to keep children in their communities, near family and their home school district, and whenever possible, to keep siblings together.

According to Jessie Schunk, Professional Development Coordinator for St. Louis County Child Foster Care, the demand for foster care is up because more young parents are experiencing more problems – often related to alcohol and drugs, which lead to financial and behavioral crisis and an inability to care for their children. Northstar Care for Children, a new program launched January 1, 2015 throughout the state, is a unified benefit program designed to reduce the length of time children spend in foster care by finding them families through adoption or legal guardianship. The program hopes to see more children leave foster care more quickly and become part of permanent families.

Child Care Needs

- An estimated 76 percent of Minnesota families will use childcare while they work.

- In 2010 childcare problems prevented 12 percent of parents from taking or keeping a job.
- Families earning low incomes devote 29% of their income to childcare costs.
- Nearly a third of families report they use “whatever child care arrangement they could get” in order to work. This is up from 21 percent in 1999. Families earning low incomes are more likely to describe their childcare arrangement this way (35 percent).
- In 2010, 29 percent of families surveyed were not able to find childcare in their preferred area; 13% were not able to find quality childcare; and 25% encountered problems paying for childcare.

Early Childhood Screening

Early childhood screening is required for kindergarten entrance, but screening at age 3 or 4 provides more benefit to children and the schools who will receive them. Efforts to screen children at a younger age are improving; 4 out of 5 of the children screened across the state in 2010 were under age 5.

Names and Locations of other Child Development Programs

SCHOOL READINESS

School Readiness is a program offered through ISD #709 that serves three and four-year-olds. The program uses researched based curriculum and incorporates all areas of development. Parents have opportunities to participate in the program in various ways that may include: attending special family events, volunteering in the classroom, serving on the School Readiness advisory board and conferences twice a year. They provide service three times per week at three sites: Stowe, Piedmont, and Lester Park.

School Readiness is supported by funding from the state of Minnesota as well as parent fees. Fees are based on a sliding scale determined by annual income.

EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION

ECFE is a program providing information and support for parents and their young children (from birth through age 3), with classes offered at Stowe, Piedmont, Lester Park and Washington Center. A sliding fee is paid determined by the family income however; no one is turned away for inability to pay. Families are welcome to join at any time.

COMMUNITY ED PRESCHOOL

This program emphasizes teaching literacy and mathematics through activities such as music, art, and dramatic play. Professionally trained adults instruct each class. To enroll in the MWF program, the child must be 4 years old by Sept 1. To enroll in the TTH program, the child must be 3 by March 1. Fees are \$15.00 for registration, \$95 per 4 weeks for the MWF classes, \$85 per 4 weeks for the TTH classes. Sessions are held at: Homecroft TTH or MWF am or pm and MacArthur TTH or MWF.

BLENDED CLASSROOMS

Duluth Public Schools Early Childhood Programs are working to blend funding and classrooms to create classroom offerings to all Duluth families with the goal being preschool opportunities available across the city at a family’s home school.

Infant and Toddler Programs (0-3 yrs)

According to Childcare and Referral, there are 169 daycares in Duluth and 20 centers.

TANF/MNFIP recipients

A family of three — a parent with two children — with no other income receives \$532 per month in financial assistance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits of \$446. That adds up to \$978, 58% of the poverty level of \$1,674 for a family of three. When parents work, and earnings increase, MFIP assistance phases out.

South St. Louis County provides cash services to families under 4 separate programs. SNAP and health care may also be benefits included in these numbers as they are a part of the benefit set when people apply for cash assistance.

This year 67% of Head Start children are on MFIP or SSI.

Availability of Public Transportation Services

The location of low-income residents is important to transportation planning because individuals in this subset often face challenges similar to mobility-limited populations. They often lack the means to transport themselves to/from work and other destinations, and often they're reliant on public transit or other services that do not always provide the flexibility they need to effectively chain different trips together (work, daycare, shopping, etc.).

These concentrations are near the downtown districts of Duluth and Superior, the Central Hillside and Lincoln Park neighborhoods of Duluth, as well as Duluth's university district (full-time students are included in the low-income subset). It is important to note that significant distances (two miles in Superior, and greater than four in Duluth) exist between these concentrations and the area's major retail centers, which represent the greatest number of low-skilled or entry level employment opportunities in the area.

As with areas of concentrated poverty, it is also important to consider the impacts of public transportation decisions as they relate to neighborhoods with a high representation of racial or ethnic minorities. Racial minorities make up less than 6% of the Duluth-Superior population while individuals of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity made up only 1% of the metro area population. The largest concentrations overall exist in Duluth's Central Hillside neighborhood near the downtown, which also represents a high concentration of people living below the national poverty line.

The average travel time to work in Duluth is 19 minutes; 17.4% less than the MN average. 10.3% of workers carpool, 4.2% takes public transportation and 5.0% walk to work. Duluth International Airport serves the city and surrounding areas with daily flights to Minneapolis, Detroit and Chicago. Greyhound and Jefferson Lines offers daily bus service to Minneapolis/St. Paul.

The local bus system is run by the Duluth Transit Authority, which serves Duluth and Superior. Ridership for 2010 surpassed the 3 million rider mark for the 3rd consecutive year and is up 21.6% since 2005. Transit use is up by all segments of the general population but U-Pass ridership for the local colleges has shown the most consistent gains; 4.5% over 2009. DTA Bike & Bus ridership for 2010 also surpassed the previous year's total by 2.5%. In the year 2009, the DTA began providing the Bike & Bus service on a year-round basis. The DTA extends and/or adds service routes during festivals, parades, New Year's Eve and various events in Duluth.

Current public transportation routes and schedules do not cover all the geographic areas where jobs are located. Travel is difficult or impossible during the late night and early morning hours that job schedules may require. Even when the bus is an option, the time required to wait for transfers to get to their destination is prohibitive. The Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) works to plan routes and schedules to accommodate the higher concentration work places. They recently added new routes to accommodate employees at United Health Care that did not previously have access to public transportation.

Proportion of Population with Telephones/Cell Phones/Televisions/Computers

Communication with Head Start families is accomplished in a number of ways. Because most parents and family members transport their children to Head start classrooms, we have an opportunity to connect face to face twice a day. In addition, teachers send home newsletters and make phone calls as needed. Family Advocates make frequent contacts with families in person and phone calls and increasingly with text messaging. We are updating our website and building a strong distribution list to share Head Start data widely.

Head Start Enrolled Children and Families

Recruitment Area

The Duluth Head Start program serves Minnesota resident families of birth to four-year-old children living within the Duluth city limits or enrolled in a childcare situation within the city limits. Our recruitment area and service area are the same, the Duluth city limits.

Center Location

CURRENT PROGRAM INFORMATION FOR DULUTH HEAD START	
Site Name	Site Address
Barnes Early Childhood Center	2102 N. Blackman Avenue, Duluth, MN 55811
Laura MacArthur Elementary	727 North Central Avenue Duluth, MN 55807
Myers-Wilkins	1027 N 8 th Avenue E. Duluth, MN 55805
Piedmont Elementary	2827 Chambersburg Avenue, Duluth, MN 55811
Stowe Elementary School	715-101st Avenue West, Duluth, MN 55808
Washington Center (FIT)	310 N 1 st Avenue West, Duluth, MN 55806
YWCA Childcare Collaboration- Spirit Valley	411 North 57th Avenue West Duluth, MN 55807

Number and Location of Currently Enrolled Children

Barnes	MacArthur	Myers Wilkins	Piedmont	Stowe	YWCA	FIT
31	51	64	55	23	11	7

Ages of HS Children at enrollment (Includes Those Who Have Left the Program During the Year)

3	4	5 & Older	Males	Females
79	167	11	135	122

Tribal/Racial/ Composition of Enrolled Children

Race/Ethnicity	Percent 13-14	Percent 14-15	Percent 15-16
American Indian	9.96	8.7	7.36
Asian/Pacific Island	0	1.1	.76
Black/African American	13.52	9.1	10.85
White	46.62	53.5	63.06
Multi Racial	25.62	27.3	24.81
Unspecified/Other	4.28	.3	1.16

Attendance/Waiting Lists/Over-Income Children

Average Daily Attendance

September	October	November	December	January
90.19%	87.06%	85.05%	82.14%	82.27%

As of 03/29/2016, Head Start has a waiting list of 59 children; of these 14 is over-income.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is and always has been part of Head Start's success. We believe parent involvement in Head Start is the beginning of a parent's advocacy for their children throughout their school careers. In Duluth, parents can choose to serve on the Policy Council, a decision making board made up of current and former Head Start parents and community members. The majority of Policy Council members are elected representatives from parent committees formed at all Head Start building sites, our childcare collaborations and Families in Transition. Policy Council, along with the ISD 709 School Board, our Governing Board, makes up the decision making body of Duluth Head Start.

Parents participate in their child's education in number of other ways as well. Here are a few examples: home visits, conferences, parent and family events, Head Start service area committees, national, state and local community advocacy and involvement, ensuring their child's regular attendance and supporting their child's health and development by all they do at home to support school readiness and success.

Head Start and Early Head Start Parent and Family Engagement

As research suggests, parents and family members are more likely to become engaged in their young child's development and learning when they have positive and trusting relationships with those who support them.¹ In Head Start and Early Head Start, these relationships focus on goals that families develop with the support of program leadership, staff, and engaged community partners. These goal-directed relationships are part of the two-generational approach of working with children and adult family members and distinguish Head Start and Early Head Start from other early childhood initiatives. They are most likely to take root within programs that take intentional steps to promote parent and family engagement.

Families play a critical role in helping their children to prepare for school and a lifetime of academic success. Agencies are required to consult with parents in establishing school readiness goals (45 CFR 1307.3 (b) (1) (iii), as amended). It matters when programs engage parents and families in their children's development and learning. In fact, research indicates that:

- Children with supportive home learning environments show increased literacy development, better peer interactions, fewer behavior problems, and more motivation and persistence during learning activities.²

- Among the youngest children, daily parent-child reading from infancy prompts cognitive skills as well as early vocabulary gains that lead to more reading and vocabulary growth³, a pattern of growth that has been compared to a snowball.
- Continued family engagement is important through the school years. Longitudinal studies of low-income children show that high family involvement offsets the risks of children growing up in low-income households and in households with low parent education.⁴

The launch of the PFCE Framework marks the beginning of a new wave of technical assistance resources that will be made available to programs in the coming year through the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. The PFCE Framework can be used in program-wide strategic planning, program design and management, systems of continuous improvement, professional development for staff, and with governing bodies and parent groups. It can be used to help improve program services or to inform community partners about Head Start parent and family engagement goals and the importance of those goals for school readiness. The PFCE Framework is intended to inspire a renewed spirit of collaboration with families and community partners as programs identify and take next steps to engage parents, families, and the community to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

Duluth Head Start Staff

Staff Ethnicity & Education	
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	36
Hispanic/Latino	1
Staff Race	
White	36
Tribal Composition	0
Languages spoken	
English	36
Educational Attainment	
Advanced Degree	
Director/HB Supervisor	1
Coordinators	3
Family Advocates	1
Teachers	5
Baccalaureate Degree	
Coordinators	1
Home Visitors	3
Teachers	3
Assistant Teachers	1
Associates Degree	
Assistant Teachers	4



Duluth Head Start
2015-16 Mid-Year Parent Survey

February 2016

We value your comments and suggestions about your experiences with Duluth Head Start. Information gathered from this survey will help us learn how we can better serve your child and family. Thank you for taking the time to help us.

1. Do you feel the staff in your child's classroom are friendly and welcoming?

YES 108 NO 0

If so, how?

- Always smiling
- "Good morning's"
- Feels personal
- Kids love staff
- Parents feel child is in safe, happy place

If not, what could improve?

2. Has the teacher helped you understand your child's progress?

YES 108 NO 0

If so, how?

- Written progress
- Daily conversations
- Phone calls during day if needed

If not, what could improve?

3. Have you talked with your child's Minnesota Reading Corp member?

YES 59 NO 41

If yes, have you used the Talk, Read and Write bags?

YES 54 NO 5

- Children love reading new books and drawing
- Engaging parents
- Fun to see them love reading

4. Has Head Start helped you better communicate with your child and understand their behavior?

YES 100 NO 4

If yes, how?

- Understanding behavior/what's normal
- Better behavior at home
- Child talks more/expresses feelings

*One parent said they would like to know about hitting/name calling

5. Has the Family Advocate been able to help you meet your family's needs or goals?

YES 83

If so, how?

- Receiving information on resources and programs
- Bus/cab help
- Museum passes
- Good listener

If not, what could improve?

6. In what ways have you been able to participate in Head Start?

51 Home Visit 76 Conference 84 Pick Up and Drop Off 2 Fundraiser
12 Classroom Volunteer 25 Family Night 10 Policy Council 13 Other

What were your experiences like for you? Anything you would change or improve?

- All positive responses

7. Are there factors that have prevented you from being more involved in Head Start?

18 Transportation 42 Work Schedule 3 Location 12 Childcare
3 Lack of Information/Communication 3 Not interested 4 Other
(between separated parents) ("too busy")

Do you need assistance with any of these areas?

- After school childcare
- Busing requests

8. What would you tell other families about Duluth Head Start? Would you recommend it?

YES 91 NO 0

- Great program
- Helps children get a 'head start'
- Great teachers
- Children love school

9. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience with Duluth Head Start or any changes you feel would improve our program?

- Busing requests
- After school childcare
- Celebrate Valentine's Day and Halloween
- A few parents wanted more communication with teachers
- Treats on birthdays
- Lots of positive 'Thank you's'

Thank you again for your time and interest!

Duluth Head Start Community Assessment Summary

Weather

Duluth's cold weather requires families to ensure their children are dressed warmly for half the year. There are a few good clothing resources we connect families to in Duluth. Kid's Closet is a free service offered by retired teachers and social workers. Families with Head Start and school age children can obtain jackets, snow pants, boots, hats, gloves, mittens as well as 3 sets of clothing twice each year.

Bethany Crisis, an arm of Lutheran Social Services, helps out families with younger children with clothing and diapers. We have been fortunate to be the recipients of donations from church groups as well as a group of women who refer to themselves as the Shoe Ladies. Basically they are retired educators who buy shoes and other essentials like underwear and socks.

Economy and Employment

Duluth is a college town and this is reflected in the educational attainment level of Head Start families. While the numbers are somewhat encouraging when we look at unemployment and new job growth, Head Start families and other Duluthians living at or near the poverty line are still struggling to make ends meet. The issues mount when families are relying on 1, 2 or 3 low paying jobs without benefits and they experience illness or a crisis that keeps the working parents away from work. Without paid time off, families can be at risk for losing their job and may impact their childcare arrangements including subsidies and then the lost wages put them at risk for losing their housing.

Affordable housing, well-paying benefit eligible jobs and a tiered system of supports are needed to help address these problems for families living in poverty. Much of our information about issues impacting the Head Start community comes from the Minnesota Head Start Association. Our task in Head Start is to advocate for these issues every chance we get and to use the incredible power of parents who are the best advocates and can tell their stories to elected officials.

Transportation

The climate and terrain of the Duluth community have a major negative impact on families needing to access public transportation or walk to and from schools, work and needed services. As we see in the comments from parents on our Parent Survey results, this is a major barrier. We are invested in helping find short term and long-term solutions to this community issue and have and will continue to meet with community groups to work on this. We are currently piloting a one-way transportation option for children at 2 of our most difficult to reach centers thanks to Early Learning Scholarship funds. It should be noted, Head Start does not require programs to provide transportation nor do they provide specific funding for that purpose

Demographic Data from the State of Minnesota

Changing state statistics are beginning to impact the demographics of Duluth but certainly at a far slower rate than larger Minnesota communities like Minneapolis, St. Paul and Rochester. For Head Start, we need to be aware of and provide for translation and interpretation services to families whose home language is something other than English.

Racial inequity persists and the disparity between children living in poverty and their middle-income peers is a growing concern. We must lead the conversation on race and racial inequality. Our work to blend early childhood classrooms that are currently separated by income levels is one example of our efforts to address this issue.

Disabilities

We have seen a growing number of children with disabilities coming to Head Start for services. Currently 18% of our enrolled children use Special Education Services. Perhaps it is a result of our community's excellent early intervention services that help our district identify and serve more children with disabilities. This means we must pay close attention to the progress of children who receive special education services to ensure they, along with their typically developing peers, are making good progress on the individual goals as well as school readiness goals.

Foster Care/Alcohol and Drug Abuse

St. Louis County Child Protection workers report feeling they are overrun with abuse and neglect cases largely due to drug and alcohol abuse. In turn, this creates a larger demand for county Foster Care providers. This demand is not keeping pace with the number of Foster Care providers. The impact on children is longer stays in emergency shelters and less stability.

Head Start has made some strides in addressing this concern by developing and fostering relationships with St. Louis County Social Services and by developing a form that when used will enable county workers to help keep Head Start children in their classrooms when out of home placements occur.

Domestic Violence

Duluth has led the way in handling domestic abuse cases. This approach, known as the Duluth Model has been recognized locally, nationally and internationally for transforming the way the community addresses domestic violence. Head Start is vitally connected to the domestic violence resources for parents.

Housing and Homelessness

This topic looms large in Duluth. We are fortunate to have many great community resources for families struggling to keep their housing or begin the process of stabilization that may help them move out of homelessness. We have a program option that began to help the growing number of families with young children experiencing homelessness and presenting themselves at the congregate shelter in Duluth. We will continue to support this option as we grow in our understanding of how we can help families avoid homelessness by being more skilled in identifying the barriers to maintaining housing.

Parent Survey

Parents with children in Duluth Head Start are generally pleased with the program. The majority feels welcome by staff and is in partnership with advocates to work on family goals. Parents know and understand the added

value of having Minnesota Reading Corps members in classrooms and see the gains made by their children as a result of our efforts.

Transportation and work schedules have kept some parents from accessing program offerings. Transportation, which ended some years ago, continues to be a major barrier for Head Start families. We are invested in helping find short term and long-term solutions to this community issue and have and will continue to meet with community groups to work on this. We are currently piloting a one-way transportation option for children at 2 of our most difficult to reach centers thanks to Early Learning Scholarship funds. It should be noted, Head Start does not require programs to provide transportation nor do they provide specific funding for that purpose.

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