

2017

Community Assessment:  
Montrose/Olathe Early Childhood Centers



Prepared by  
Third Sector Innovations, Inc.

November 2017

**MONTROSE/OLATHE  
EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS  
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

**NOVEMBER 2017 UPDATE**

Presented to  
Staff – January 2018  
Policy Council – December 2017  
Governing Board – December 2017

900 Colorado Avenue, Unit 4  
P.O. Box 10,000  
Montrose, Colorado 81401  
Telephone 970/249-5858  
Fax 970/249-7537

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Executive Summary	3
II.	Introduction	5
III.	Methodology: Community Assessment Process	9
IV.	Data & Findings	
	Service Area	11
	Families in the Service Area	16
	Community Resources	21
V.	Data Review and Analysis	24
	Conclusions Based on Data Analysis	32
VI.	Recommendations and Priorities	33
VII.	Appendix	
	Community Assessment: Sources of Data	35

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montrose County School District (MCS D) RE-1J Early Childhood Centers (ECC) is part of the Montrose County RE-1J School District in the State of Colorado. The ECC service area coincides with that of the Montrose County School District RE-1J, serving the towns of Montrose and Olathe.

Montrose County is located in the southwestern quadrant of the state and has a population just more than 41,000 residents. The county is considered rural, with residents traveling 60 miles north to Western Colorado's largest city (Grand Junction) for medical and other services.

The Montrose County economy has not rebounded as fast as Colorado's overall, with the county experiencing higher than state average unemployment rates, and lower wages; the housing market is just now beginning to recover. At the same time, the Colorado Center on Law & Policy reports that Montrose County families need income nearly two-and-a-half times the federal poverty level to make ends meet. Affordable housing is an issue for many families, with wait times of two years to rent affordable family units.

Healthcare is another area of concern for Montrose County. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) estimates that 34% of children ages 2-14 in the county are overweight or obese. Most-recently reported data in the 2017 Kids Count in Colorado report categorized Montrose County as 21<sup>st</sup> among the 25 largest counties in the state for "overall child well-being" in consideration of health, family and economics, and education.

Since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid enrollment has significantly increased, with 57.5% of the county's children enrolled in Medicaid and 13.3% in Colorado's publicly-funded CHP+. However, the proportion of uninsured children in Montrose County is still higher than Colorado overall, and Montrose County is a federally-designated health professional shortage area so, even with insurance, accessing a care provider can be difficult.

There are encouraging indicators in the community, as well:

- The percentage of uninsured children in Montrose County, as documented annually by Kids Count, is now at 7.4%, down from 16.7% just two years ago.
- Graduation rates rose between 2015 and 2016, bringing Montrose up to par with the state average (78.9%) (*Colorado Department of Education, 2017*).
- An estimated 61.9% of homes in the town of Montrose are owner-occupied, and the majority of residents (77.5%) live *and* work in Montrose County (*datausa.io, 2017*).

In response to community realities and needs, MCS D Early Childhood Centers is making a positive impact in the community through its Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program, Children with Disabilities and tuition programming. Along with educational opportunity, ECC supports family access to dental exams, immunizations and nutrition programs, making a profound difference in the lives of low-to-moderate income families, as seen in the following figures from school year 2016-2017:

- Just 12% of Head Start children were overweight and 6% were obese, compared to the county's far higher average of 21.9%.
- 100% of ECC children were current on their vaccinations, compared to the state average of 74%.
- 96% of Head Start children have had dental care within the last 12 months, compared to 77% of children statewide.

An additional indicator of ECC success includes the involvement of fathers: The percentage of fathers who participate in their child's ECC activities was 29.74% in the 2016-17 school year, with 152 of 511 total volunteers comprising fathers. And, ECC saw no (0%) staff turnover during the most-recent school year.

The following priorities have been set for ECC:

1. Develop and open ECC program sites at four of the six elementary schools in the Montrose RE-1J School District.
2. Expand ECC services to include full-day preschool programming.
3. Align ECC preschool services and programming so that children are able to meet/exceed District-set kindergarten readiness skill levels.
4. Meet 2016 Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) compliance dates through March 31, 2019.

Through active participation in the community assessment and planning processes, ECC administrators, staff, teachers and Policy Board (including parent participants) all are committed to these goals, and to providing exceptional early childhood education, including Head Start, and social supports for qualifying families and the Montrose County community at large.

## II. INTRODUCTION

The Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers (ECC) administers Head Start programming for the Montrose County School District in the state of Colorado. Preschool age children and families are served in the Montrose and Olathe communities. The service area for the MCSD RE-1J Early Childhood Centers aligns with the Montrose County School District boundaries.

In 1993, three programs that focused on challenges to early childhood learning – Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) and School District RE-1J’s special needs/Children with Disabilities program – were integrated under the title Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers. School District employees and community families not already eligible for inclusion have the opportunity to pay tuition for their children to attend preschool at an ECC site, effectively creating a fourth program offering. Thus, ECC integrates children from four programs into each classroom.

Montrose County School District serves as the Local Education Agency (LEA) for children with disabilities, qualifying these children for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and services at all three sites:

- in the city of Montrose
- seven miles east of the Montrose city center on the Johnson Elementary School campus
- in the town of Olathe on the Olathe Elementary School campus (11 miles north of Montrose).

The main office of MCSD RE-1J ECC/Head Start is located in Montrose, Colorado. The Family Service Center houses administrative services, including the following program support staff:

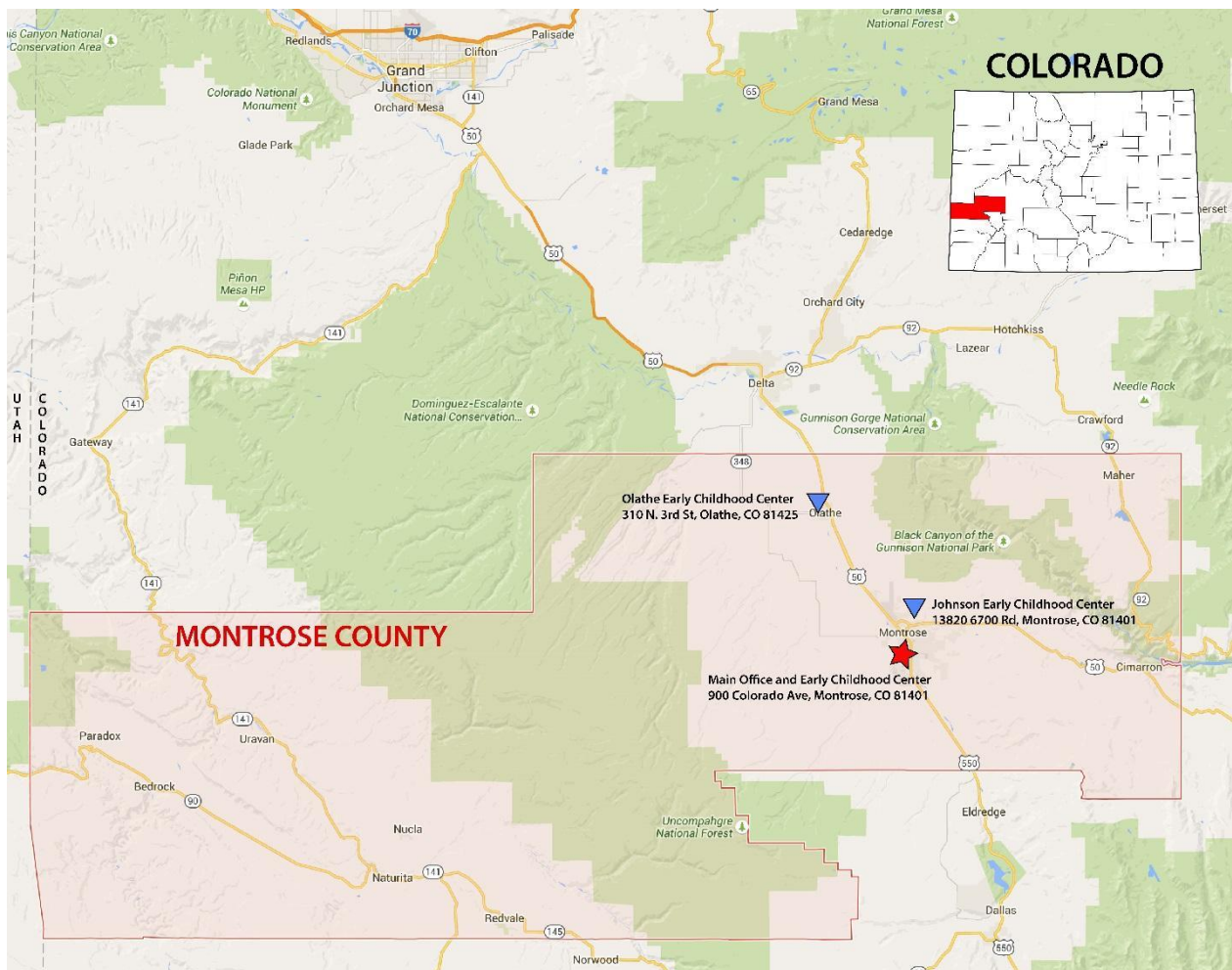
- Director
- Administrative Assistant
- Family and Community Engagement Coordinator
- Education
- Colorado Preschool Program Coordinator
- Program Operations Coordinator
- Health Services Technician
- Family Advocates (4.0 FTEs)
- Secretary
- Data Technician.

ECC employs a total of 46 staff; of these, 13 are preschool teachers, 15 are classroom paraprofessionals and four are family advocates who have direct involvement with enrolled children and their families. Other support staff include special education teachers and paraprofessionals, health technician, data technician and coordinators.

A total 384 volunteers contributed to the program during the 2016-2017 school-year, including 284 parents of current enrollees and 100 other volunteers (community members, family members of children previously enrolled) assisting with classroom, administrative and Policy Council work. More than one-third (37.6%) of ECC volunteers are male.

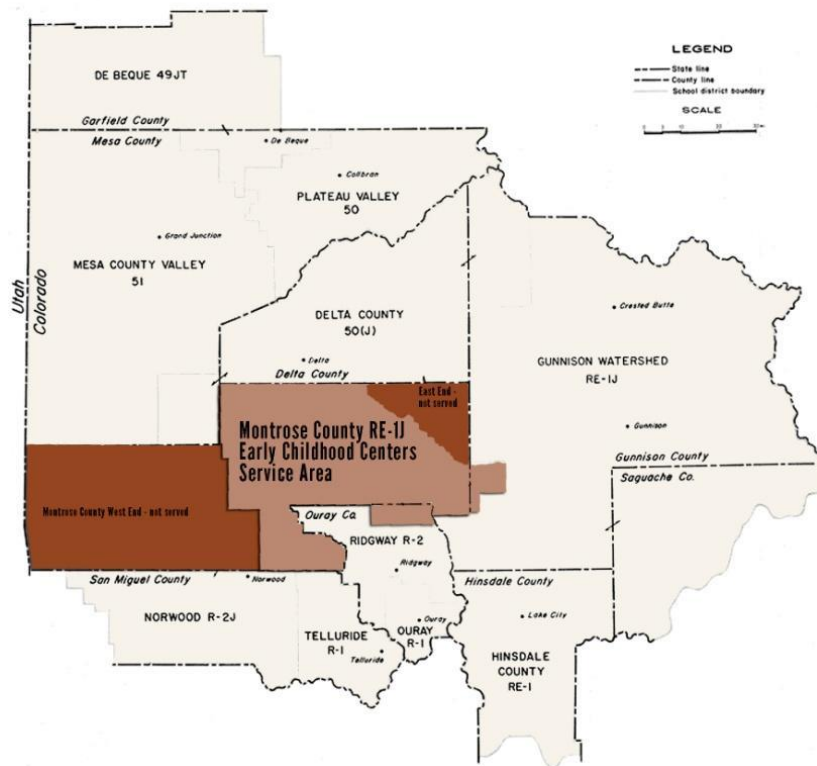
ECC's Head Start Policy Council for the 2016-2017 school year was made up of five parent representatives and five community members. The Policy Council meets monthly and assists in the development of goals and objectives for the program. In addition, the Policy Council acts as a liaison to parents, staff and the community at large regarding issues of specific concern.

The following map depicts the center locations for Montrose Early Childhood Centers:



The ECC service area coincides with the Montrose County School District RE-1J, serving the towns of Montrose and Olathe. Nucla and Naturita also are in Montrose County (90 miles from Montrose) and impact countywide statistics, but are part of the RE-2 Montrose School District, currently unserved by ECC/Head Start programs. Colorado Department of Education school district boundaries depict the ECC service area:

## WEST CENTRAL REGION



A child is age-eligible for Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program and tuition at ECC if s/he turns three or four years old on or before August 1 of a given year. Children with Disabilities qualified children are eligible for Part C services (preschool) at the age of two years and nine months.

The Colorado child care licenses held for all three ECC sites allow for provision of services to children 2-1/2 years to six years of age. Children who are five years old, on or before August 1 of a given year, are eligible for kindergarten and cannot be served through Head Start or Colorado Preschool Program funding. An enrollee under the Children with Disabilities program can be retained beyond his/her fifth birthday, providing that policy retention requirements are met; two children met the criteria to extend this past school year.

Head Start serves children who are three or four years old. A child is eligible to receive Head Start services if his/her family lives at or below the federal poverty guideline level; receives Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) or Social Security Income (SSI) for a disability; is a foster family for the child, or is homeless.

The Colorado Preschool Program also serves children who are three or four years old. A four-year-old child must have at least one of ten risk factors outlined by State statute, while a three-year-old must have three of the ten risk factors.



Each child's parent(s) or guardian(s) is/are interviewed in attempt to collect information to determine risk and eligibility. The eligibility criteria system assigns points that are accumulated for placement. A child with the highest number of accumulated points will be placed in a program first, while the child with the second highest points will be placed in a program second, and so on, ensuring that children and families with the most need are served first.

During the 2016-2017 school year at ECC, funded enrollment was 295, with 102 slots funded by Administration for Children and Families (ACF)/Head Start, and 193 slots non-ACF funded; of these, 130 were Colorado Preschool Program funded, 61 were Children with Disabilities funded and 2 were tuition.

Transportation services are not provided for ECC/Head Start children. Enrolled children must be dropped off and picked up by parents or care providers at the preschool site. ECC children attend school for 3-1/2 hours, so parents must pick up or deliver their child in the middle of the day, often posing hardship on working parents who must often enlist family members or find child care options that will deliver or pick up children.

### III. METHODOLOGY: COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This assessment examines key data that portrays the community served, and provides indicators of overall and child well-being:

- Community Geography and Economics, including
  - Employment and Income
  - Housing
- Community Demographics, including
  - Ethnic Composition and Languages
  - Children with Disabilities
- Childcare and Preschool Programming
- Education
- Health and Nutrition
- Social Services, including
  - Child Welfare
- Community Resources

Specific information is provided regarding the families benefiting through ECC/Head Start primarily during the 2016-2017 school year. Additionally, as applicable and available, county and/or school district-level data is provided and then compared with state averages.

The Colorado Children Campaign’s “2017 Kids Count! in Colorado” report, a widely-accepted source of information pertaining to overall childhood well-being, is prevalently cited within the assessment, as are U.S. Census statistics (2010) and American Community Survey projections (2010-2016). Various State of Colorado agencies provide data related to demographics, education, employment and housing, while the regional Early Childhood Council – Bright Futures – is the source of information specific to local childcare and preschool facilities. A complete list of information sources is included in the appendix to this report.

Parent surveys are conducted via telephone on an annual basis, and this feedback helps to inform the ECC Policy Council and staff regarding satisfaction with program services. The instrument used in this survey is being modified during the current school year for future use.

The process of community assessment began in March 2002 with discussions at Policy Council and ECC staff meetings, and other community gatherings. Reviewing the first draft and working with a document to final approval, the first Community Needs Assessment process and report were completed in September 2002. Since then and on an annual basis, the assessment process is repeated and improved, with staff gathering much of the internal data concerning services,

families and Head Start children as part of the organization's evaluative process. Other community, regional, state and national information is collected and compiled by an independent contractor, Third Sector Innovations, Inc. of Grand Junction, Colorado.

The information gathered through this assessment process reveals the ongoing and emerging challenges faced by those living in the ECC/Head Start service area, as well as the strengths of the organization in meeting and overcoming these challenges to provide services that benefit the children and families served.

## IV. DATA AND FINDINGS

### Service Area - Geography

Montrose County is 2,241 square miles, located in the west central portion of the state, a region referred to as Colorado’s Western Slope. It is 269 miles southwest of the Denver metro area over the Continental Divide, and nearly 100 miles east of the Utah state line. Just fewer than half of Montrose County residents live in unincorporated areas (47%), while the City of Montrose is home to 46% of the County’s residents. Olathe (4%), Naturita (1%) and Nucla (2%) are town centers providing residence for the remainder of the County’s population (U.S. Census, 2010).

The area is considered mountain desert, experiencing four distinct seasons and a temperate climate.

### Service Area – Population, Racial/Ethnic Composition and Languages

The state of Colorado is home to 5,540,545 people (U.S. Census, 2016 estimate), the majority of whom live in the eastern portion of the state, referred to as Colorado’s Front Range. From 2000 to 2016, Colorado’s population increased by 1,239,284 people, or 28.8%.

Montrose County is one of 64 counties in Colorado and is ranked 17th in the state for total population (U.S. Census). In the first 16 years of the millennium, the population in Montrose County grew from 33,432 to 41,471 or 24% (U.S. Census, 2016 estimate). The population of Montrose County is expected to grow by 22,669 people, or 51%, from 2010 to 2025 (*Montrose County Housing Needs Assessment*, 2009).

There are an estimated 2,776 children ages five years and younger in Montrose County; 1,371 of these children are preschool aged, or 3-5 years old (Colorado Demographer’s Office, 2016).

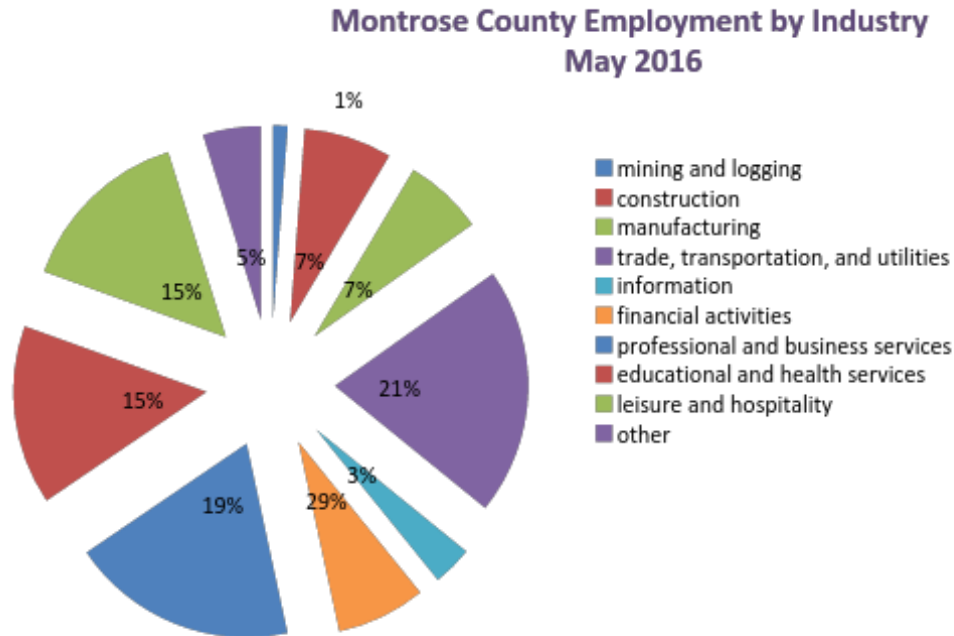
The U.S. Census American Community Survey 2011-2015 reports that, among Montrose County residents age five years or older, 15.6% speak a language other than English at home (nearly exclusively Spanish). This figure actually is lower than the statewide 16.9% of residents speaking a language other than English at home. The same survey reports the following ethnic/racial population breakdowns for Montrose County and Colorado (due to Census data reporting methods, totals do not equal 100%):

<i>Population Percentages</i>	<i>White NHO*</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>American Indian and Alaska Native</i>	<i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>	<i>Two or More Races</i>	<i>Hispanic/Latino Origin</i>
<b>Montrose County</b>	76.2%	0.8%	1.8%	0.3%	2.0%	20.4%
<b>Colorado</b>	68.6%	4.5%	1.6%	3.5%	3.0%	21.3%

\*NHO – Non-Hispanic Origin

## Service Area - Economy, Employment and Income

The area's economy finds 61.5% of the workforce employed in the private sector, 2% employed by government and 36.5% self-employed (city-data.com, 2017). The private, non-farm sector is made up of those working in the following trades:



(Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2016)

According to the 2015 U.S. Census American Fact Finder, 69.5% of households in Montrose County are considered family households. Among these households:

- 30.9% of family households earn less than \$35,000 annually, while 14.5% earn \$35,000-\$49,999.
- Median income is \$4,885, with a 27.4% increase since 2000 (citydata.com, 2017). The Colorado Center on Law & Policy reports the 2015 self-sufficiency standard for Montrose County is \$54,026 annual income for a family with two adults, one preschooler and one school-age child.

In assessing current work opportunities for local families, Montrose County continues to lag behind state averages for employment, wages and income (Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2017):

<i>Geographic Area</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate (May 2017)</i>	<i>Average Hourly Wage (2016)</i>	<i>Per Capita Annual Income (2016)</i>	<i>Median Household Income (2016)</i>
Colorado	2.3%	\$26.67	\$52,059	\$63,909
Montrose County	2.8%	\$18.80	\$25,157	\$43,999

## **Service Area - Housing**

Housing in Montrose County includes single- and multi-family homes, both owned and leased, as well as small and large acreage farms. Estimated occupied households (as opposed to unoccupied dwellings) total 16,484 (2016-suburbanstats.org).

An estimated 25% of the community's households spend more than 50% of their income on housing. Housing costs in Montrose County were at an all-time high in 2007-2008, then extremely volatile during the period 2009-2011. From a low in 2011 (average single-family house sale at \$139,495), the median sales price in May 2016 was \$211,500; the current median sales price is 6.4% higher than the year-to-date 12-month rolling average (Montrose Association of Realtors). The median rent rate per month for the first quarter of 2017 was \$1,200, marking a 2% rise from the same period last year.

Montrose County saw a 13.3% decrease in foreclosure filings during the first quarter of 2017 when compared with last year. Montrose County is ranked 18<sup>th</sup> of 64 Colorado counties in percentage of foreclosures, with a rate of 0.08% (Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing, 2017).

The availability of affordable dwellings throughout much of the service area is limited; vacancy rates reported for the first quarter of 2017 were 0%. The Montrose County Housing Authority's Sunshine Peak project, located in the city of Montrose, assesses rent based on a sliding scale that considers three income levels (30%, 40% and 50% of median family income) for 91 units of one-to-three bedrooms.

In the past five years, Montrose County Housing Authority has seen an increase in the waiting period for eligible families to receive assistance from an average 3-6 months to 18-24 months, depending upon the type of application. With the capacity to serve just more than 300 clients through its voucher system, the Housing Authority has – as of June 2017 – put on hold all 72 families on its wait list, taking a “wait and see” approach as it awaits funding that may not arrive.

## **Service Area - Social and Human Services, Child Welfare**

To determine overall child well-being, the 2017 Kids Count! in Colorado report ranks the state's 25 largest counties (95% of the state's population) based on 12 indicators in the areas of health, education, family and community; Montrose County is ranked 17<sup>th</sup>. Among the statistics provided by the most recent report, 30% of Montrose County children live in single parent homes, with 24% of children being born to single mothers. Additionally, in 2016, 4.3% of Montrose County families received TANF assistance payments and two-thirds received WIC vouchers.

Montrose County also has higher rates of child abuse and neglect than state averages (*Kids Count!, 2016*):

<b>Geographic Area</b>	<b>Rates for Out-of-Home Placement (Per 1,000 children)</b>	<b>Rates of Child Abuse and Neglect (Per 1,000 children)</b>	<b>Students served by the McKenney-Vento Homeless Education Program</b>
<b>Colorado</b>	7.6%	7.8%	23,954
<b>Montrose County</b>	13.1%	13.3% (category of interest to Kids Count!)	334

In 2015, the Dolphin House Child Advocacy Center (Montrose) provided services for 158 primary victims and 203 secondary victims of child abuse (0-17 years). Dolphin House continues to provide follow-up support for 110 families from the prior year of service.

In an attempt to counter child abuse, Hilltop Community Services provides families in Montrose County with a variety of programs. Services are available to those with open cases for reunification through Colorado Community Responsive programs (centering on goal setting for the prevention of child abuse), the High Fidelity Wrap Around Program (family choice and voice to create a family vision while identifying natural support systems) and the Parents and Teachers program, working with children 0-5 years old and their parents.

A significant gap exists in the community’s ability to meet the need for mental health services for children. It is particularly difficult to find and secure an appointment with a mental health professional both trained to work with children and accepting Medicaid or sliding fee scale payment. While providing a very different form of treatment, both Dream Catchers and Pegasus Equine Therapy endeavor to address the behavioral challenges presented by the community’s at-risk youth and Children with Disabilities participants.

MCSO RE-1J and many human service providers in the community have long been educated in and committed to the concepts of “Bridges Out of Poverty.” This client-focused, strengths-based approach is prominent in the work of numerous local service agencies, and largely describes the experiences of families frequently interacting with Montrose’s social services providers. In addition, ECC recently has introduced “Parent Café: Strong Families” to build family resiliency based on five factors: Parent Resilience, Social Connections, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, Concrete Support in Times of Need, and Social/Emotional Competence of Children. Three program sessions are held each month at two times (day and evening), with childcare and the parallel “Children’s Café” provided both for ECC participating families and the community at large.

**Service Area - Educational Institutions and ECC Service Delivery Sites**

Numerous entities provide educational opportunity in Montrose County. Colorado Mesa University-Montrose provides degreed higher education, while certification programs are available at Technical College of the Rockies (formerly Delta-Montrose Technical College and located in neighboring Delta County). CMU-Montrose enrollment for Spring Semester 2017 was

242 undergraduates; technical college 2016-2017 enrollment included 30 Montrose/Olathe high school students and an additional 289 full- and part-time post-secondary Montrose County residents.

Hilltop Community Services provides space and resources at its regional office in Montrose for K-12 students to receive tutoring and assistance with academic planning and completion of homework, and to obtain the community service hours required for high school graduation.

Following are the enrollment figures for Montrose County PreK-12 students in Fall 2016:

6,252, or 88.7% of students	Montrose County District RE-1J
299, or 4.2% of students	West End Public Schools District RE-2
377, or 5.4% of students	private K-12 institutions (does not include PreK children)
124, or 1.7% of students	home schooled (does not include PreK children)

Montrose County District RE-1J reports 35% of fourth graders are not proficient readers, an indicator of child well-being and two points higher than the State average (Kids Count 2015).

Specific to early childhood education, the following chart outlines the number of preschool facilities in the ECC/Head Start service area (*Bright Futures*):

Geographic Area	Total # of Licensed Facilities	# of ECC/Head Start Facilities*	# of Facilities Accepting CPP Children	Total # of Slots (full- and half-day)	Current # of Open Slots
Montrose County**	12 (35, including homes)	4	5	551	0
Montrose	8	3	2	397	0
Olathe	2	1	1	69	0

\*MCSD RE-1J ECC currently provides its services at three sites:

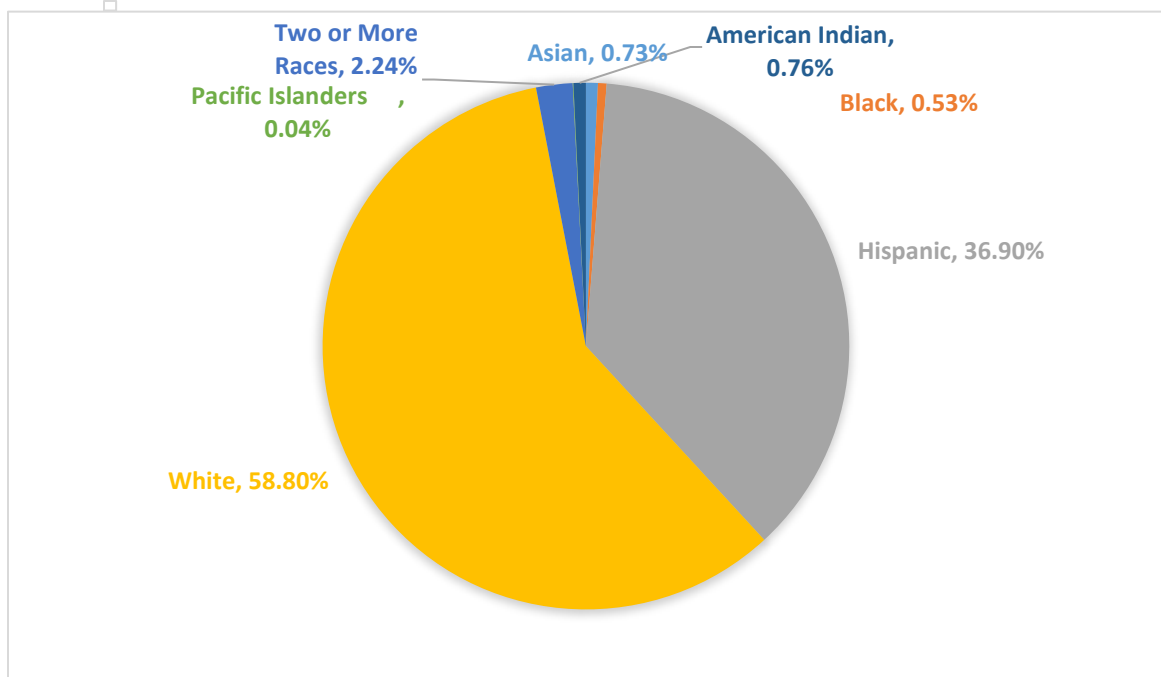
- Early Childhood Centers (ECC) –900 Colorado Avenue, Unit 4, Montrose, Colorado
- Johnson Early Childhood Centers (JECC) – 13820 6700 Rd, Montrose, Colorado
- Olathe Early Childhood Centers (OECC) –320 N. 3rd Street, Olathe, Colorado

\*\*Includes two preschool programs in the towns of Naturita and Paradox, unserved by ECC



### **Families in the Service Area - Ethnic Composition and Languages**

Colorado Department of Education enrollment figures (preschool through high school) for the 2016-17 school year show the following ethnic make-up of students enrolled in Montrose County School District RE-1J schools:



The predominant language spoken by MCSD RE-1J Early Childhood Centers' students is English (72%) while 23% of the students speak Spanish as their first language; 5% are bilingual and approximately 1% use American Sign Language.

### **Families in the Service Area - Residency/Mobility**

The majority of the Montrose County population consider the community their long-term residence. 72.9% of residents live and work in Montrose County (*city-data.com, 2017*) and 61.9% of households are owner-occupied (*Data USA 2017, Montrose County CO*).

### **Families in the Service Area - Childcare Needs**

Colorado continues to be a challenging place for those families needing childcare: Among the 41 states with state-supported preschool programs, Colorado ranks 37<sup>th</sup> in spending, 22<sup>nd</sup> in access to preschool for four-year-olds, and 10<sup>th</sup> in access to preschool for three-year-olds (*Kids Count Data Book 2017*).

The cost of childcare presents real difficulty for Montrose County families, and is prohibitive for many low-income families. The current average cost for full-time child care is \$31 per day for a child younger than two years, and \$28 per day for a toddler or preschooler (Bright Futures, 2016).

With average rent at \$829/month, a single-parent, female-led family with two children can easily spend 90% of family income to meet just housing and child care expenses.

To ensure that more Colorado families have access to quality childcare, the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care oversees the state- and federally-funded CCAP (Colorado Childcare Assistance Program) to provide assistance to low-income families. CCAP is administered by individual county departments of Social Services. Counties set program eligibility requirements (within the federal mandate to serve families with incomes at or below 165% of federal poverty guidelines) and reimburse participating local childcare providers according to County-defined, pre-determined rates. Participating families must meet income-qualifying guidelines, are responsible for a portion of the cost, and are required to be working, searching for employment, training or enrolled in the Colorado Works Program (Colorado's TANF program) (*Kids Count! Data Book, 2016*).

Relatedly, the State of Colorado recently implemented new education and certification standards for child care facility staff. Educational expenses are, typically, the responsibility of the staff person and are not necessarily rewarded with a pay increase. Therefore, it is becoming harder and harder to attract qualified childcare staff. In recent years, center and home-based care closures due to a "lack of qualified staff" further depleted needed slots, meaning many families have little choice but to leave their children in the care of friends or family in unlicensed homes.

### **Families in the Service Area - Preschool Needs**

Preschool is widely acknowledged as a critical component of early childhood education, laying the foundation for a child's future educational success. In 1988, the Colorado General Assembly created the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP – funded through the Colorado Public School Finance Formula and administered under the Office of Teaching and Learning, Colorado Department of Education) to serve the young children in Colorado most vulnerable to starting elementary school unprepared. CPP provides preschool programming, with eligibility based on a variety of factors: low-income family, foster care, violence/neglect in the home, parents' educational levels, delays in language and social development.

In the 2016-17 school year, 175 of Colorado's 179 school districts (including MCSD RE-1J) participated in CPP. Among children who participated, 76% were served in public schools, 15% were in community programs and 10% were in Head Start programs (*CDE, 2017*). However, due to limited slots, not all children who qualify can enroll in the program; the Colorado Department of Education estimates that as many as 8,400 at-risk four-year-olds had no preschool available to them through either CPP or Head Start in the 2016-17 school year.

ECC is the only CPP provider in the Montrose-Olathe community. Additionally, MCSD RE-1J Early Childhood Centers provided half-day preschool services for 41% of 2017-2018 enrolled kindergartners.

During the 2016-17 school year, the MCS D RE-1J ECC conducted a survey of parents to determine the percentage of incoming kindergartners who had previous experience in a child care or preschool setting. Of the 313 parent respondents, 85% indicated that their kindergartner(s) has had child care or preschool experience, while 15% responded that their child(ren) had not. Seventy-four percent (74%) of the children with prior experiences had been in a child care or educational setting for one-to-two years. Among those with no early care or preschool setting experience, the top reasons given were:

1. stay-at-home parent (comprising 39% of the “no experience” respondents)
2. no transportation
3. child is home schooled.

### **Families in the Service Area - Children With Disabilities**

Child Find, available for children birth to 21 years and using the Denver II screening tool, identifies Montrose County children presenting potential developmental concerns and helps to prepare them for the coming school year. The Child Find Coordinator provides screenings for individual families/children throughout the year, as needed. From June 1, 2016 to May 31, 2017, Child Find completed 250 screenings and 88 evaluations in the ECC/Head Start service region.

Community Options is the local agency responsible for providing therapeutic services for children birth to just younger than three years. Children in this age group and identified through Child Find as having a developmental delay will have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and be provided services through Part C funding. Shortly before a child turns three, s/he will be reassessed to determine if the developmental delay will significantly impact educational development. A child who is receives an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for educational delays will receive services and preschool programming through MCS D RE-1J Early Childhood Centers and will be integrated with children funded through Head Start, CPP and tuition programming.

### **Families in the Service Area - Health and Nutrition**

Montrose County is a federally-designated Health Professional Shortage Area for primary care providers, mental health providers and dentists (*Colorado Health Institute, 2016*). These significant provider shortages lead to an increase in local unmet demand for services.

Colorado has made significant gains in the past five years to insure the health care of its youngest residents – particularly important in Montrose County where the percentage of uninsured children increased last year (from 7.4% to 8.5%). The percentage of children eligible for but not enrolled in CHP+ or Medicaid is 10%, on par with the state overall (*Kids Count 2017*):

<b><i>Geographic Area</i></b>	<b><i>% Uninsured Children (0-20 yrs)</i></b>	<b><i>Children (0-20 yrs) Enrolled in CHP+</i></b>	<b><i>Children (0-20 yrs) Enrolled in Medicaid</i></b>
<b>Colorado</b>	4.44%	6.4%	43.2%
<b>Montrose County</b>	8.5%	13.3%	57.7%

Income-eligible families with children younger than 18 years may qualify for Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) or Medicaid. CHP+ allows children to receive necessary health care services, including well child check-ups, immunizations and mental health services for a reduced fee. Prescriptions, eyeglasses, hearing aids and dental services also are provided under CHP+.

There are an estimated 3,500-4,000 Medicaid qualified individuals in the community with no primary care provider (River Valley Family Health Center, 2017). The River Valley Family Health Center (formerly Olathe Community Clinic) serves low-income, under/uninsured individuals and families, as well as migrant workers. The Clinic accepts Medicaid/Medicare and CHP+, and has a sliding fee scale for payment by uninsured patients. The Clinic offers medical and behavioral health services, and medications at a discounted price from a 6,000-square-foot facility featuring 12 exam rooms and bi-lingual staff (Spanish) that see roughly 2,400 patients each year. River Valley additionally leased space for a second clinic in the city of Montrose in October 2015; with six exam rooms, this location now sees approximately 1,600 patients each year. In whole, River Valley accommodates upwards of 13,000 visits via eight full-time providers.

The PIC (Partners in Integrated Care) Place opened in June 2017 to provide fully-integrated primary (family practice) health, preventive and restorative dental, optometric and behavioral health services to un/underserved residents of Montrose and Delta counties. The organization is an expansion of services and relocation of the former Community Dental Clinic, and includes a primary care lab, denture lab and classroom for providing vocational, accredited programs in the healthcare field in partnership with Technical College of the Rockies. PIC Place also provides free lunch-and-learn programs of interest to the community. To be eligible for PIC Place services, patients must be at or below 250% of Federal Poverty Guidelines, including all Medicaid and CHP+ clients, the uninsured or underinsured who have commercial insurance but still find healthcare unaffordable. Those without insurance can qualify for PIC Place's sliding fee schedule that provides a discount (sometimes up to 100%) based on ability to pay.

Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Testing (EPSDT) is provided by Montrose County Health Department to identify children with unmet medical needs. These children may be eligible for TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) and/or Medicaid benefits. Regardless, families who do not qualify for Medicaid, CHP+ or health insurance through employment often seek primary health care at local hospital emergency rooms, Urgent Care, River Valley Family Health Center and/or PIC Place.

In Montrose County, 16-21% of children receive SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, and 66.7% receive WIC vouchers (*Kids Count*, 2017). This not only indicates the nutritional challenges of Montrose County residents, but also plays into the ever-growing concern of childhood obesity, which most particularly impacts low-income children who rely on food that is less expensive and nutritional than lean meats and fresh fruit and vegetables. Research conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that among children living at or below 250% of the federal poverty level, 32% were overweight, nine points higher than those living at or above 250% of poverty level. In the state of Colorado, approximately 27% of children (ages 2-14 years) were deemed overweight or obese during the

period 2010-2014, whereas the figure is 34% in Montrose County, ranking sixth among Colorado’s 25 largest counties (Kids Count, 2016).

Knowing that many families are financially dependent on the schools to feed their children, and in response to the growing obesity epidemic, Montrose County School District RE-1J has created the Healthy Schools Project. The Project endeavors to improve District nutrition services (i.e. school breakfast and lunch programs) by using local and/or organic produce whenever possible, and providing fresh-made whole-grain breads for school meals. The program also increases minimum physical education (P.E.) requirements and improves access to community health care, including primary, mental and dental care services. MCSD RE-1J Nutrition Services also provides free, nutritional meals to students during the summer.

The community has further addressed nutritional needs through a Montrose County Child and Family Services program that provides a "prescription" to receive fresh fruits and vegetables from the local Farmers’ Market, where the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) also provides recipes for preparation of fresh foods.

**Families in the Service Area – Adult Graduation Rates, Education Level**

Among Montrose County adults, 12.6% have less than a high school education, while 31.6% graduated high school and 24.5% hold a bachelor’s degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). At 2.7%, Montrose County unfortunately ranks fifth among the 25 largest counties in Colorado for K-12 dropout (Kids Count! Data Book, 2016). Colorado Department of Education data provides the following details:

<i>Geographic Area</i>	<i>Total Enrollment</i>	<i>% Students Eligible Free/Reduced Lunch</i>	<i>Graduation Rate 2016</i>	<i>Dropout Rate 2016</i>
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>905,018</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>78.9%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>
<b>Montrose RE-1J District</b>	<b>6,551</b>	<b>47.5%</b>	<b>77.9%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>
<b>Montrose High</b>	1,506	35.6%	89.3%	2.6%
<b>Olathe High</b>	353	43.4%	87.5%	0.3%
<b>Passage Charter School</b>	19	87.5%	n/a	47.4%
<b>Peak Academy</b>	191	25.3%	87%	0%
<b>Vista Charter School</b>	210	64.1%	27.3%	16.2%

## **Community Resources**

A comprehensive list of community agencies currently working in collaboration with the MCSJ RE-1J Early Childhood Centers/Head Start follows:

### **EDUCATION**

Community Options – developmental disabilities

Colorado Mesa University – associate’s degrees in Business Administration, Computer Information Systems, Humanities, Social Science and Early Childhood Education

Technical College of the Rockies – basic training in a variety of vocations, including early Childhood and certification in Director Qualification for Child Care

Maslow Academy – private education, Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade

Pope John Paul II – private education, K4 through 8<sup>th</sup> grade

Colorado West Christian School – private education, Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade

Holy Guardian Angel School – private education, K-9<sup>th</sup> grade

Montrose County School District RE-1J – pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade public, virtual and alternative education programs; English as a Second Language (ESL), General Education Diploma (GED), Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes

### **HEALTH CARE/HUMAN SERVICES**

CSU Extension/4H

Dolphin House Child Advocacy Clinic

Farm Workers’ Health Services – immunizations and sliding fee-scale physicals

Hilltop Community Services Montrose

The Center for Mental Health

Montrose County Department of Health and Human Services

Montrose Memorial Hospital

Northside Community Health Clinic

PIC Place

River Valley Family Health Center

Smiles 4 Kids

Treasured Teeth

Urgent Care

Volunteers of America

Tri County Health Network - Free Screenings

### **FOOD AND CLOTHING**

Christ’s Kitchen

Habitat for Humanity Restore

Heirlooms for Hospice Store

Mexican American Development Association (MADA) – no-cost clothing, household goods, furniture

The Salvation Army

Sharing Ministries Food Bank

Tom Goodrich Warm Hearts Memorial Project – coats

Kids Aide - Backpack program at all schools

Tom Goodrich Foundation - provides free coats, hats and gloves to children

### **NUTRITIONAL SERVICES**

Colorado State University Cooperative Extension – commodities distribution, food baskets

Contracted, registered dietician/nutritionist for the Early Childhood Center

Farmers Market

Mexican American Development Association (MADA)

Montrose County School District RE-1J Summer Feeding Program

Montrose County Department of Health and Human Services – food stamps, TANF

Food SHARE America

Sharing Ministries Food Bank

Kids Aid – backpack program to supply nutrition outside school days

### **CHILD CARE**

(located in the city of Montrose, unless otherwise noted)

Adventure World

Babbette's Kiddy Kampus

Black Canyon Gymnastics

Bright Futures Child Care Resource and Referral, Telluride – child care assistance, clothing

Bright Beginnings Child Care

Creative Hands

Learning Cottage

Little Harvard

Little Sprouts

Living Word Lutheran Preschool

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, Olathe

Montrose Christian Church

Montrose County Department of Health and Human Services

Passage Charter School– for children of enrolled students, ages birth to two (2) years

Sonshine Patch, First Presbyterian Church

Tenderhearts

### **AGENCIES SERVING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

Community Options

Child Find

Dream Catcher Therapy Center

The Center for Mental Health

Montrose Memorial Hospital Rehabilitative Services – speech, motor/physical therapies

Montrose School District RE-1J Special Education Department

Over the Rainbow Behavioral Consulting – consulting, parent training, Community Resource Fair

### **AGENCIES ASSISTING FAMILIES**

CSU Extension/4H

Dream Catcher Therapy Center

Dolphin House

The Center for Mental Health

Montrose County Department of Health and Human Services

Over the Rainbow Behavioral Consulting

Tandem Families – respite placement for children 0-18 years

Western Colorado Migrant and Rural Coalition

Hilltop Community Services Montrose

Pegasus Equine Therapy

Solutions Wellness Center

### **HOUSING**

Cottonwood Apartments – privately-owned, HUD subsidized apartments

Montrose Housing Authority – HUD rental assistance

Habitat for Humanity – homeownership through work equity

Haven House

House of Promise

Pavilion Gardens Apartments – apartments for qualified low-income families

Sunshine Peak Apartments

### **JOB TRAINING**

Colorado Workforce

Community Staffing

Elwood Staffing

Vocational Rehabilitation

### **TRANSPORTATION**

All Points Transport Bus Service

Additional community organizations working in partnership with the ECC/Head Start programs include the Montrose Association of Churches, Girl Scouts of America, Walmart, Office Depot, local banks and local fire, police and ambulance services, among others.



## V. DATA REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

### Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Racial/Ethnic Composition and Languages

Percentages and actual enrollment numbers by ethnicity for the 2016-2017 school year are as follow for the Montrose County School District Re-1J ECC, which includes the Head Start program:

	<i>White</i>	<i>Bi-Racial</i>	<i>NHO*</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Asian</i>
<b>Enrollment</b>	114	10	51	63	1	0	1
<b>% Of Enrollment</b>	88.6%	8.77%	0	0	.88%	0	.88%

\*NHO – Non-Hispanic Origin, numbers total more than 100% (enrollees can mark more than one box for ethnicity)

The dominant language spoken by children in the MCSD RE-1J Early Childhood Center program is English, spoken by 72% of the children enrolled during the 2015-2016 school year. Spanish is the second most common language (23% of children), while 5% are bilingual (English and Spanish). These percentages are in alignment with overall MCSD RE-1J figures.

### Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Economics, Employment, Income and Housing

The most recent Kids Count! Colorado data shows that the percentage of children 0-5 years old living in poverty declined in both 2013 and 2014. While this is welcome news, the current estimate still is much higher than in 2000, when only 10 percent of Colorado kids lived in poverty. And, Montrose County rates are far higher than statewide figures:

<i>Geographic Area</i>	<i>Children (0-18 years) Living in Poverty* 2014</i>	<i>School Children (5-18 years) Living in Poverty* 2014</i>
<b>Colorado</b>	15%	15%
<b>Montrose County</b>	23.8%	21.2%

\*Income below 100% of federal poverty guidelines

It is conservatively estimated that one-half of preschool-aged children in Montrose County are eligible for Head Start services based on economic factors alone. Of the 311 children enrolled at MCSD RE-1J ECC for the 2016-2017 school year:

- 148, or 47.5% of ECC children, were living at or below 100% of the federal poverty level
- 124, or 39.8% of ECC children’s families had income over the poverty threshold.
- 40, or 12.7% of ECC children qualified with an individual education plan (IEP); these families are not required to provide proof of income for services.

Thirty (30) families automatically qualified for Head Start programming due to family homelessness, the receipt of public assistance, or foster care.

Among Head Start families, the employment situation – and thus financial difficulties – often is severe:

<i>Employment Status of Head Start Parents/Guardians, 2015-2016</i>				
	<i>Two-Parent Families</i>		<i>Single-Parent Families</i>	
	<i>#</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>One parent is employed</b>	34	52%	28	55%
<b>Both parents are employed</b>	12	27%	n/a	n/a
<b>Neither parent is working</b>	3	22%	25	45%
<b>One parent is enrolled in training or school</b>	4	6%	8	5%

Figures do not add up to 100% in each category due to some parents working while attending school, etc.

114 Head Start parent respondents to ECC’s 2016-2017 survey self-report that 6% have master’s degrees and/or bachelor degrees, 25% have associates degrees and/or some college or advanced training, 40% have high school diplomas/GEDs, and 21% are non-graduates (8% did not respond to the question).

Early Childhood Centers/Head Start proactively provides housing-related referrals (e.g. subsidies, repairs and/or other assistance) and referrals for health and well-being programs. During the 2016-2017 school year, the following additional referrals were documented:

- Kids Aid (student backpack food program) – 32
- parenting education – 10
- child mental health – 3
- Tom Goodrich Warm Hearts Memorial Project (student coat program) – 2
- Emergency/crisis intervention – 31

### **Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Social and Human Services, Particularly as Regards Child Welfare**

Early Childhood Centers' staff members, including those employed via Head Start funding, are required to report suspected child abuse/neglect. There were two cases of suspected child abuse during the 2016-2017 school year.

As part of ECC's commitment to supporting its families, staff members are committed to inviting fathers/significant male role models to participate as classroom volunteers, to attend parent/teacher conferences, to utilize weekly take home totes and otherwise get involved with committees, councils and other facility projects. In 2016-2017, 58 fathers or father figures of 114 Head Start-enrolled children participated in community celebrations or activities.

### **Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Health and Nutrition**

At the Early Childhood Centers in 2016-2017, 102 (95.4%) of 112 Head Start children were enrolled in Medicaid or CHP+; three had private health insurance, and none were without insurance.

Immunization rates are another important indicator of childhood well-being, and something that ECC/Head Start takes very seriously. ECC children enrolled during the 2016-2017 school year were at 100% minus those meeting State guidelines for exemption from immunization.

A registered dietician at ECC/Head Start completes a nutrition assessment with parents enrolling each child, and a BMI (Body Mass Index) test is administered. Of the Head Start children enrolled at ECC in February 2017, 12% were overweight and six percent obese.

The Montrose County School District RE-1J ECC/Head Start program implements the Healthy School Program by including the following in its programming:

- 30 minutes of daily physical activity
- nutritious snacks
- education on healthy eating
- commitment that all Head Start-enrolled children are up-to-date on immunizations, physicals and annual dental exams (110 Head Start children received a professional dental examination during the 2016-2017 school year, including some children who left the program during the school year).

Data collected from the 2017-2018 registration process for MCSD RE-1J Early Childhood Centers identified the following risk factors among children entering preschool:

	All ECC Programs		Head Start Enrollees (110)	
Free/Reduced Meals	214	73%	110	100%
Homeless	23	8%	15	14%
Domestic Violence	33	11%	22	20%
Substance Abuse	48	16%	20	18%
Teen Parent	14	5%	9	8%
Education	131	45%	48	44%
Frequent Moves	60	21%	30	27%
Social	271	93%	102	93%
Speech/Language	166	57%	56	51%
DHHS Interventions	17	6%	7	6%

	All ECC Programs		Head Start Enrollees (110)	
0 Risk Factors	10	3%	0	0%
1 Risk Factor	18	6%	7	6%
2 Risk Factors	45	15%	11	10%
3 Risk Factors	84	29%	26	24%
4 Risk Factors	84	29%	35	32%
5 Risk Factors	34	12%	20	18%
6 Risk Factors	9	3%	5	5%
7 Risk Factors	7	2%	6	5%
8 Risk Factors	1	<1%	0	0%

### **Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Childcare and Preschool**

In any given year, Early Childhood Centers has served 44-45% of all children enrolling in RE-1J kindergarten through one of its four programs. One of the Centers’ core goals – and something it does quite successfully – is to ease the transition into kindergarten.

The following figures illustrate the significant need for Head Start in the ECC service area:

<i>Estimated # of children, ages 3-5 years, in service area*</i>	<i>Estimated # of Head Start-eligible children in service area**</i>	<i># of children enrolled in ECC Head Start 2016-2017</i>	<i>Estimated total # eligible but unserved Head Start children in service area</i>
1,393	626	102	524

\*American Community Survey 2009-2013

\*\*Based on economic factors' eligibility only

The Montrose and Olathe communities are in need of quality early learning and care opportunities for preschool-age children. The ECC early spring registration, and calls for appointments for registration during the summer of 2016, suggest that demand is increasing as families who were planning to move from the community are deciding to stay, while additional families with preschool-age children are moving in to the service area. By May 31, MCSD RE-1J ECC saw an increase in acceptance of families for the 2016-2017 school year. This increase will translate into a larger waiting list for preschool services during the 2016-2017 school year at all three ECC sites.

### **Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Children with Disabilities**

During the 2016-2017 school year, ECC saw an increase in the number of children diagnosed with disabilities: 27 Head Start enrollees had Individual Education Plans (IEPs), a 50% increase over the prior year, with an additional 57 Children with Disabilities enrollees served by IEPs, a slight increase over the prior year.

Children with IEPs automatically qualify for preschool placement. Eligibility for other children displaying significant delay in one or more areas of development is determined based on a special needs placement assessment, involving parents and either the Early Childhood Special Education Assessment Team or the Child Find Team (including a speech language pathologist, an occupational therapist and a Special Education teacher with early childhood Special Education background).

If in-depth assessments are needed, the ECC staffing team (school psychologist, occupational therapist and speech pathologist) work with the Child Find Coordinator (Masters level education in early childhood Special Education) to conduct the assessment in a child's native language, with interpreters available for parents/guardians during the assessment and at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, as needed.

- A child, 0-3 years, with significant delays is referred to Community Options for the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Case management, early intervention work and needed therapies all are coordinated through this regional, state-mandated provider of services for individuals with developmental disabilities.
- For qualifying children ages 3-5 years, an IEP is created, including attention to specific therapy needs. Speech, motor and educational services are provided at ECC/Head Start, where these children automatically qualify for placement.

All Montrose County School District RE-1J ECC classrooms are fully inclusive. Children with disabilities participate in all activities with their same-age peers. Accommodations are made in terms of support staff and equipment to ensure participation by and access for children with disabilities. In addition, proactive outreach activities are continuously conducted to inform families in the community of ECC's commitment to serving children with special needs.

All ECC/Head Start sites utilize the expertise of a team of educational specialists for evaluating and testing children with disabilities. Also screened and assessed are behavioral/mental health conditions, and ECC employs a Colorado-licensed Mental Health Coordinator.

### **Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Early Childhood Centers**

In response to many and various needs of the community's children and families, and in support of the Montrose County School District RE-1J District Mission Statement, ECC delivers high-quality, comprehensive, developmentally-appropriate services for young children and their families. Early Childhood Centers has been providing Head Start programming for families and children since Fall 1991, developing a strong infrastructure both within the agency and with community partners, allowing for sustained quality programming regardless of any changes in the community.

The ECC team is organized by collaborative teams that participate in the ongoing monitoring of and planning for Head Start programs. A program self-assessment is conducted annually to ensure that the requirements are known and implemented by the program staff, and to meet Head Start Performance Standards for monitoring quality of services provided. The parents, staff and community volunteers who are members of the Program Self-Assessment Team collect data that identifies areas working well or in need of improvement. Team members take pride in their participation, and ECC improves as a result of this community self-monitoring process.

Staff meeting dates and times are posted monthly, and parents are invited to attend.

#### ***Our Mission***

In partnership with our families and our communities, the children of the Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers will acquire a positive foundation for lifelong learning.

#### ***Recruitment Strategies, Recruiting New Students***

During the Fall 2016 enrollment period, Early Childhood Centers received complete applications from 343 ECC-eligible children; of these, 15 did not enroll. Of those enrolled, 40 children left the program, with nine of these being Head Start children. Of 32 children on the waiting list at the end of the school year (May 2017), one-half were income-eligible and one-half exceeded family poverty guidelines.

ECC's Enrollment Policy requires that no more than 30 calendar days elapse before a vacancy is filled from any existing waiting list. The policy also makes provision for 10% of total enrollment to comprise Children with Disabilities. During the 2016-2017 school year, 27 Head Start children and an additional 57 Early Childhood Center children were diagnosed with an identified disability, far more than the required minimal targeted enrollment of this specific population.

Recruitment is a continuous activity at Early Childhood Centers/Head Start. A recruitment policy is in place and is followed by all staff. Briefly, the methods for recruitment are as follow:

- Child Find screenings are held throughout the year. All families attending these events are provided with information on Head Start, and are encouraged to enroll when eligible.
- Posters, flyers and other written materials are distributed at local grocery stores, community service agencies, post offices, libraries, medical facilities, public schools, private and public preschools and other businesses.
- Public service announcements are submitted to local newspapers, local cable access channels, radio stations and other regionally-distributed media publications.
- Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets are used to disseminate program information and updates.
- Annual re-enrollment of returning children, and discussions regarding younger siblings, are held.
- Word of mouth promotion is active and encouraged.
- The Montrose County School District web page provides information on the program.
- The Child Plus online application is available to complete in both English and Spanish.

The ECC staff and Policy Council, and Colorado Preschool Program/Education District Advisory Council, continuously work to engage new methods for recruitment and retention of students, and to reach out to additional communities to encourage hosting ECC/Head Start services.

Currently, there are preschool classrooms at two MCSD RE-1J elementary schools: Johnson and Olathe Elementary schools. It is convenient for parents to have their older children and preschool age children receive educational instruction at the same campus; this convenience has resulted in full enrollment at each of the two existing sites, including use by MCSD RE-1J teachers who have enrolled their own children on these campuses. Building on this success, ECC goals for the future include expansion of programming provided at elementary school sites, with full-day instruction available in the future.

### **Community Programs and Resources Available**

Early Childhood Centers always has worked diligently with other community resources to expand, enhance and supplement the education provided by its programs. Collaboration occurs with many community agencies to cooperatively meet specific objectives for staff, parents and children.

Families and siblings of Head Start children, depending on circumstance, may be eligible for services or enrolled in programs through other early childhood service provider agencies, including Kids Thrive (a national early childhood development initiative for children ages 0-3 years), subsidized childcare from Montrose Department of Human Services, Kids Aid (backpack food program), Tom Goodrich Warm Hearts Memorial Project (coats) and the School District (free/reduced lunches).

Despite the sometimes overwhelming needs presented by the community, and particularly by ECC/Head Start families, the overall outlook in Montrose County remains positive, and community agencies work well together to find solutions to unmet needs. Montrose RE-1J Early

Childhood Centers continues to strive for ways to reach as many Head Start-eligible children as possible, while implementing programming to provide quality early childhood education for enrollees and additional resources/supports for their families.



## *Conclusions Based on Data Analysis*

Since initiating the community assessment process, Montrose County has endured the highs and lows of a boom-and-bust economy while simultaneously experiencing significant population growth. These factors have put strains on community infrastructure as agencies have scrambled to keep up with the increased demands of hardship and population. Housing, healthcare, education and social/human services all have been impacted by changing demographics and the economy.

Employment and earnings have been and remain huge concerns, as unemployment rates and costs of living (particularly for housing) are consistently higher than state averages, while earnings and wages are significantly lower. This struggle strains not only individuals and families, but also those service providers in health, human services and education responding to the needs of families. Further, Montrose County's isolated and rural location, and stagnant economy, makes it difficult to attract qualified professionals in health care, and even to find/retain childcare workers and preschool teachers.

MCSD RE-1J/Head Start identifies the following trends, concerns and gaps as most noteworthy:

- Population growth in Montrose County has been substantial over the last decade, and this is projected to continue. This presents greater problems for lower-income families, many of whom are Head Start eligible.
- Wages continue to be lower, overall, than in Colorado's more populated counties, especially on the Front Range. Lower wages result in families' inability to exist on one or even two parents working full-time jobs, especially as child care costs increase.
- A far greater number of children are living in poverty in Montrose County than currently can be served by area resources. This includes a lack of childcare centers, preschool environments and other child development services. Services to sparsely populated, outlying communities must be partnered with other community resources or service providers in order to create a viable delivery system.
- Facilities must be secured to house the growing number of children enrolled in programs.
- Appropriate programs must be in place for children whose families are above income guidelines – i.e. those whose families are a part of the “working poor” and are unable to afford quality programming, yet who have incomes substantial enough that they do not meet eligibility guidelines.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

Based on the results of the ongoing assessment process and updated data contained herein, as well as the needs of the community served and Montrose County School District RE-1J, Early Childhood Centers set out to achieve four main priorities during its five-year grant period, 2013-2018:

- 1. Develop and open ECC program sites at four of the six elementary schools in the RE-1J District.**
  - ECC program sites currently are operated at two of the six elementary schools: Johnson Elementary School and Olathe Elementary school.
- 2. Expand ECC services to include full-day preschool programming.**
  - ECC and MCSD RE-1J have made a commitment to offering a full-day program at Olathe Early Childhood; additional programming may occur.
- 3. Align ECC preschool services and programming so that children are able to meet/exceed District-set kindergarten readiness skill levels.**
  - MCSD RE-1J kindergarten classrooms and teachers are being trained to use portions of Teaching Strategies (TS) GOLD 2.0. Once the use of the assessment tool is familiar, a plan will be developed to ensure that kindergarten readiness skills for incoming kindergartners are developmentally appropriate, align to the TS GOLD objectives, meet Head Start requirements and incorporate the goals of the parents.

These initiatives resulted from the on-going assessment of ECC's philosophical and programmatic approaches, including the MCSD RE-1J ECC community assessment and self-assessment, child outcomes, parent involvement data and parent surveys, CLASS assessments and staff member feedback, all driving ECC's goals both long-term (five year) and short-term (specific components/programs).

MCSD RE-1J ECC/Head Start now is entering the fifth and final year of working within these goals. The following provides the plan of action for each of the original goals outlined above (at the time of publishing this assessment report, objectives for Year Five still are being finalized):

**Goal 1:** Develop and open Early Childhood Center classrooms at four of the six elementary schools in the MCSD RE-1J service area.

***Goal suspended at the request of the Grantee Agency.***

**Goal 2:** Expand Early Childhood Centers' programming to include a full-day preschool option.

***Objective 1:*** Address full day, full school year logistics that arise as the school year progresses.

***Objective 2:*** Determine the feasibility of expanding full day, full school year programming programming.

**Objective 3:** *Assess the outcomes of integration of full day, full school year preschool programming.*

**Goal 3:** Vertically align ECC preschool services with the Montrose County School District RE-1J Kindergarten Readiness Plan and stated readiness skills.

**Objective 1:** *Work collectively with MCSD RE-1J Instructional Services Director to ensure that Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) for full day kindergarten is being implemented at planned.*

**Objective 2:** *Collaborate with MCSD RE-1J Director of Instructional Services, kindergarten teachers and preschool teachers to design a shared document outlining the developmentally-appropriate skills a child will need when s/he enters kindergarten.*

**Goal 4:** Meet 2016 Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) compliance dates through March 31, 2019.

**(This goal added in 2016 to the MCSD RE-1J 5-year plan to ensure accountability).**

**Objective 1:** *Develop a system to ensure that the children who speak another language (Spanish) are being screened and assessed by a qualified bilingual staff member in English and the home language by August 1, 2017 (1302.33(c)(2) and (3)).*

**Objective 2:** *Revise background check procedures to include language from Performance Standard 1302.90(b)(2) by August 1, 2017.*

**Objective 3:** *Develop a system that will coordinate a coaching strategy and ensure coaching staff qualifications by August 1, 2017 (1302.92(c)).*

**Objective 4:** *Develop a system that measures the implementation of the curriculum with fidelity and provides feedback, professional development and supervision by August 1, 2017 (1302.32(a)(2)).*

**Objective 5:** *Design and implement a system that ensures management of program data to effectively support the availability, usability, integrity and security of preschool data, and maintains child and family confidentiality by August 1, 2017 (1302.101(b)(4)).*

## VII. APPENDIX

### *Community Assessment: Sources of Data*

Information has been obtained via scanning web sites and telephone interviews from/with the following:

Affordable Housing; Web site at [affordablehousingonline.com](http://affordablehousingonline.com)

Bright Futures; 620 Mountain Village Blvd, Telluride, CO 81435; (970) 369-1312  
Web site at <http://www.brightfuturesforchildren.org>

Colorado Children's Campaign, Kids Count in Colorado!, 2000-2016 reports  
1120 Lincoln Street, Suite 125, Denver, Colorado 80203  
Web site at <http://www.coloradokids.org>

*The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2011*, Colorado Center on Law & Policy  
789 Sherman Street #300, Denver, CO 80203; (303) 573-5669 ext. 314  
Web site at <http://cclponline.org/our-issues/economic-self-sufficiency/>

City Data; Web site at <http://www.city-data.com>

Colorado Health Institute; Website at [www.coloradohealthinstitute.org](http://www.coloradohealthinstitute.org)

Data USA; Website at <https://datausa.io>

Technical College of the Rockies; 1765 Hwy 50, Delta, CO 81416; (970) 874-7671

Dolphin House Child Advocacy Center; 236 S. 1<sup>st</sup> St. #311, Montrose, CO 81401; (970) 240-8655  
Web site at [www.montrose-child-advocacy.org](http://www.montrose-child-advocacy.org)

Early Childhood Centers Montrose-Olathe, Head Start  
P.O. Box 10,000, Montrose, Colorado 81402; (970) 249-5858  
Web site at <http://www.ecc.mcsd.org>

Housing Colorado; 225 East 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 575, Denver, CO 80203; (303) 863-0123  
Web site at <http://www.housingcolorado.org>

Colorado Mesa University, Montrose Campus  
234 S. Cascade, Montrose, CO 81402; (970) 249-7009  
Web site at <http://www.coloradomesa.edu>

The Center for Mental Health: Montrose Clinic  
605 East Miami Road, Montrose, CO 81401; (970) 249-9694

Montrose County Housing Authority; 222 Hap Court, Olathe, CO 81425(970) 323-5445

Montrose County School District RE-1J; P.O. Box 10,000, Montrose, Colorado 81402

Web site at <http://www.mcsd.org>

Montrose Economic Development Corporation

100 Tessitore Court, Suite A, Montrose, Colorado 81401; (970) 270-0211

Web site at <http://www.montroseedc.org>

Montrose Realty Association; 1519 E. Main St #200, Montrose, Colorado 81402; (970) 249-6213

Web site at [www.montroseassociationofrealtors.com](http://www.montroseassociationofrealtors.com)

National Research Center; 3005 30<sup>th</sup> Street, Boulder, CO 80301; (303) 444-7863

Web site at <http://www.n-r-c.com>

PIC Place; 87 Merchant Drive, Montrose, CO 81401; (970) 252-8896

River Valley Family Health Center; 308 Main Street, Olathe, CO 81425; (970) 323-6141

Web site at <http://www.rivervalleyfhc.com/index.html>

State of Colorado, Demographer's Office; Web site at <http://www.dlg.oem2.state.co.us>

State of Colorado, Department of Education, Colorado School Districts

Web site at <http://www.cde.state.co.us>

State of Colorado, Department of Labor and Employment

Web site at <http://lmi.cdle.state.co.us>

State of Colorado, Department of Local Affairs; Web site at <http://www.dola.state.co.us>

Suburban Stats; Web site at <https://suburbanStats.org>

Trulia, real estate search engine; Web site at <http://www.trulia.com>

U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; Web site at <http://www.bea.gov>

U.S. Census Bureau; Web site at <http://2010.census.gov>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/>

Montrose County Health & Human Services, 2014 Annual Report

Web site at <http://www.co.montrose.co.us/107/Health-Human-Services>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services; Web site at <http://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov>