

2018

Community Assessment:
Montrose/Olathe Early Childhood Centers



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MONTROSE/OLATHE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT DECEMBER 2018

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montrose County School District (MCSD) 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 quickly as Colorado's overall, with the county experiencing above state average unemployment rates and lower wages; the housing market is just now beginning to recover from the 2008/09 recession. 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.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) estimates that 32% of the county's children ages 2-14 years are overweight or obese. Data reported in the 2016 Kids Count categorized Montrose County as 21st among the 25 largest counties in the state for "overall child well-being" in consideration of health, family and economics, and education.

Healthcare is another area of concern for Montrose County. Since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid enrollment has significantly increased, with 58.9% of the county's children enrolled in Medicaid and 10.7% in Colorado's publicly-funded CHP+. However, the proportion of uninsured children in Montrose County still is 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!, now is at 8.3%, down from the 16.7% reported in 2015.
- Graduation rates rose between 2016 and 2017, from 78.0% to 80.9%, bring Montrose County above the 2017 state average (79.0%) (*Colorado Department of Education, 2018*).
- An estimated 69.6% of homes in the town of Montrose are owner-occupied, and the majority of residents (78.5%) live *and* work in Montrose County (*city-data.com, 2018*).

In response to community realities and needs, MCSD 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 and various other programs, making a profound difference in the lives of low-to-moderate income families, as seen in the following figures from school year 2017-2018:

- Just 14% of Head Start children were overweight and 9% were obese, compared to the county's far higher average of 34% (Kids Count 2016).
- 100% of ECC children were current on their vaccinations, compared to the state average of 74%.
- 97.5% 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 28.2% in the 2017-2018 school year, with 89 of 316 total volunteers comprising fathers/father figures. And, ECC saw turnover of only one staff position during the most recent school year.

The following goals have been set for Early Childhood Centers for the coming five years:

1. Meet 2016 Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) through March 31, 2019 to complete Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers' five-year grant cycle.
2. Vertically align Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers' kindergarten readiness skills to the District's Kindergarten Readiness Plan.
3. Strengthen active supervision systems for Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers.
4. Develop and implement a plan to improve the training and communication systems of Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers.
5. Acquire quality and sustainable facilities to house the operations and services delivery of Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers.

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 addressing 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:

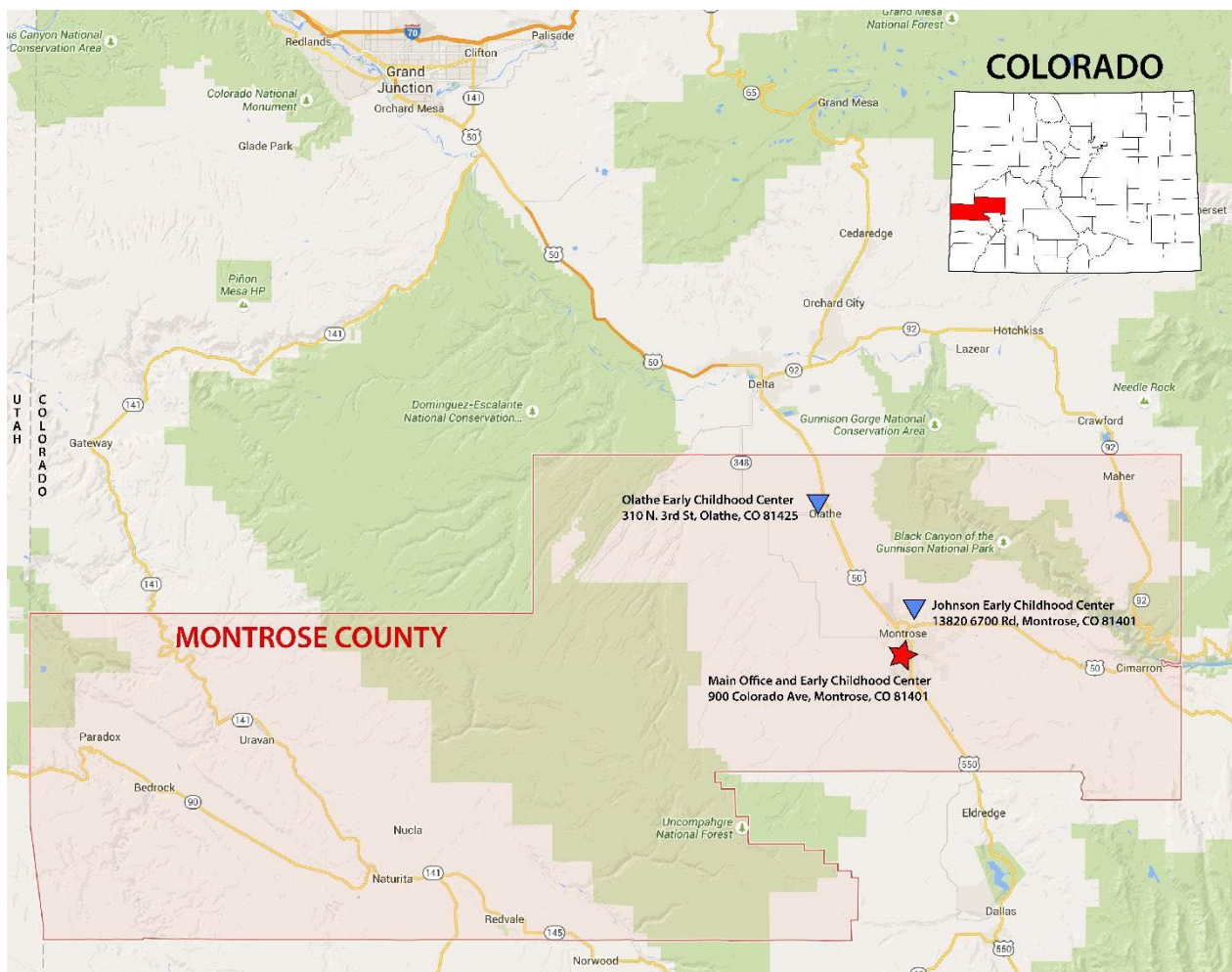
- Director and half-time Colorado Preschool Program Coordinator
- Colorado Preschool Program Coordinator Assistant
- Child Find/Disabilities Coordinator
- Program Operations Coordinator
- Administrative Assistant
- Parent, Family and Community Engagement Coordinator
- Education & Colorado Preschool Program Coordinator
- Mental Health & Disabilities Coordinator
- Health Services Technician
- Family Advocates (3.0 FTEs)
- Secretary
- Data Technician

ECC employs a total 41 staff; of these, 13 are preschool teachers, 15 are classroom paraprofessionals and three are family advocates who have direct involvement with enrolled children and their families. Other support staff include special education teachers, paraprofessionals, family advocates, and data technician and coordinators.

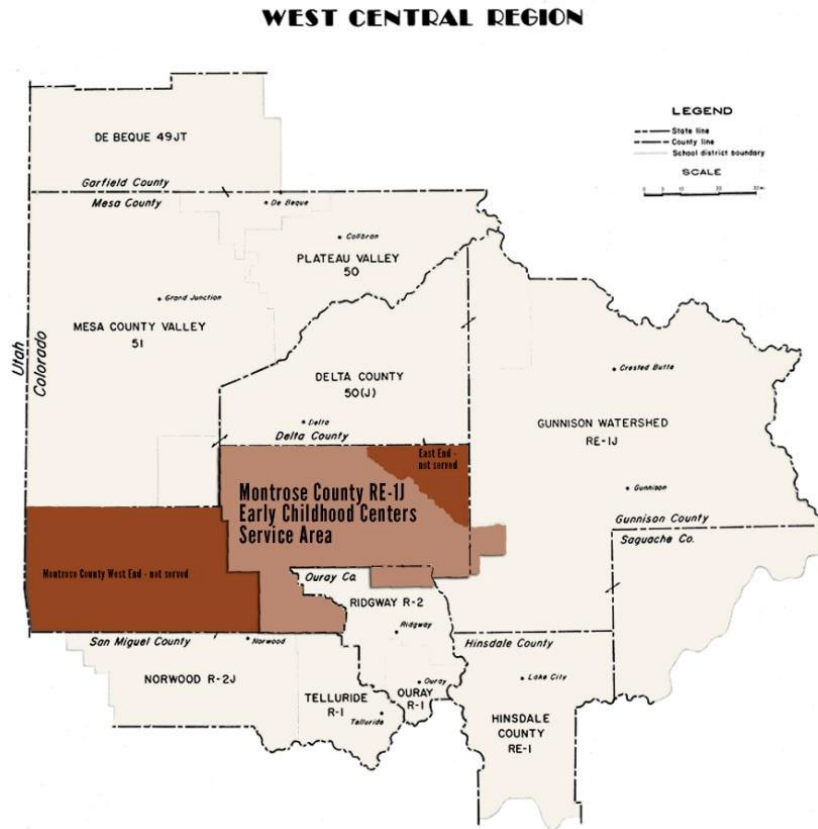
A total of 316 volunteers contributed to the program during the 2017-2018 school-year, including 195 parents of current enrollees and 121 other volunteers (community members, family members of children previously enrolled) assisting with classroom, administrative and Policy Council work. More than one-quarter (29.1%) of ECC volunteers are male.

ECC's Head Start Policy Council for the 2017-2018 school year was made up of nine parent representatives and three 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 identifies the center locations of 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 (light brown):



A child is eligible for Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program and tuition programming 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.

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; no child met the criteria to extend participation 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.

Likewise, Colorado Preschool Program serves three- and four-year-old children. To qualify, 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. Eligibility criteria assigns and accumulates points 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 2017-2018 school year at ECC, children served included:

Program	Registered/Placed (served a minimum of one day)	Funded
ACF/Head Start	122	102
Colorado Preschool Program	149	130
Children With Disabilities	80	73
TOTALS	351	305

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 for working parents who typically enlist family members or find child care options that will deliver and/or pick up children.

III. METHODOLOGY: COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This assessment portrays the community served, and examines key data as 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 during the 2017-2018 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 “Kids Count! in Colorado” reports, providing widely-accepted information on overall childhood well-being, are prevalently cited within the assessment, as are U.S. Census statistics (2010, updates) and American Community Survey projections (2012-2016). 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 for 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 Colorado, a region referred to as the 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 5,607,154 people (U.S. Census, 2017 estimate), the majority of whom live in the eastern portion of the state, referred to as Colorado’s Front Range. From 2000 to 2017, Colorado’s population increased by 1,305,893 people, or 30.4%.

Montrose County is one of 64 counties in Colorado and is ranked 17th in the state for total population. In the first 17 years of the millennium, the population in Montrose County grew from 33,432 to 41,784, or 24.9% (U.S. Census, 2017 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 2,699 children ages five years and younger in Montrose County; 1,415 of these children are preschool aged (Colorado Demographer’s Office, 2018).

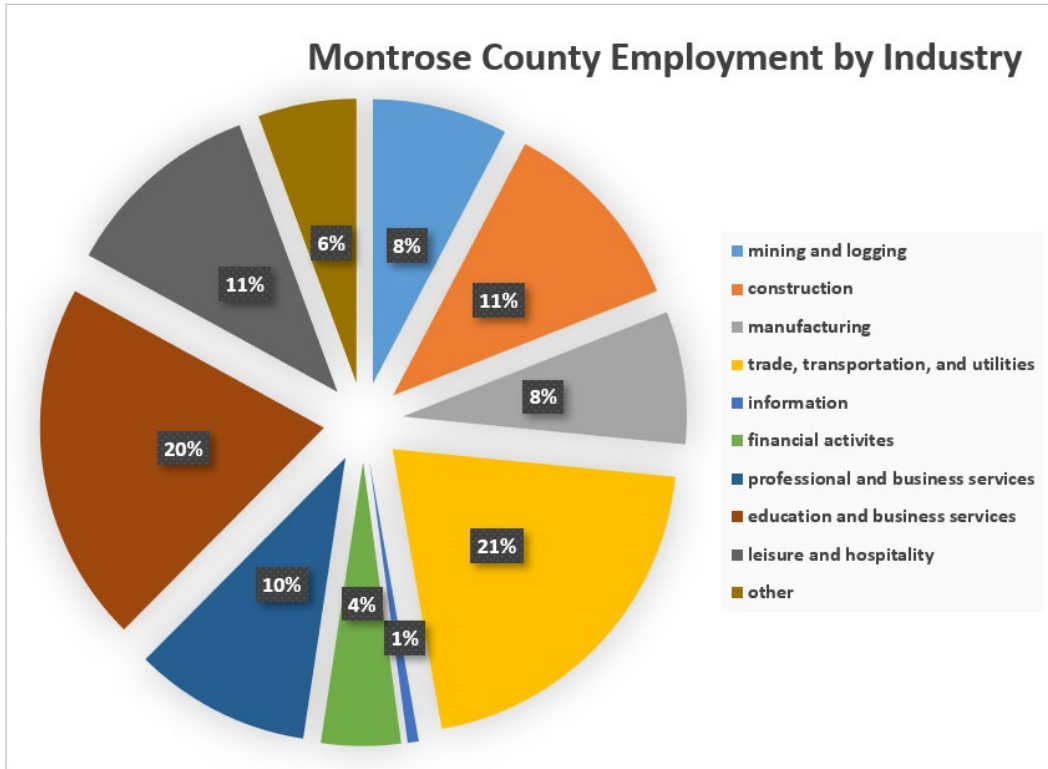
The U.S. Census American Community Survey 2012-2016 reports that, among Montrose County residents age five years or older, 15.6% speak a language other than English in the home (nearly exclusively Spanish). This figure actually is lower than the statewide 17.0% of residents speaking a language other than English in the 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>
Montrose County	76.4%	0.8%	1.8%	1.4%	1.6%	20.2%
Colorado	69.0%	4.1%	0.9%	3.0%	3.4%	21.1%

*NHO – Non-Hispanic Origin

Service Area - Economy, Employment and Income

The area’s economy finds 73.6% of the workforce employed in the private sector, 15.8% employed by government and 10.4% self-employed (American Community Survey, 2012-2016). The private, non-farm sector is made up of those working in the following trades:



(American Community Survey, 2012-2016)

According to the 2016 U.S. Census American Fact Finder, 67.6% of households in Montrose County are considered family households. Among these households:

- 29.1% of family households earn less than \$35,000 annually, while 15.7% earn \$35,000-\$49,999.
- Annual median income is \$43,890, marking a 20.9% increase since 2000. The Colorado Center on Law & Policy (2015) reports the self-sufficiency standard for Montrose County at \$54,026 in annual income for a family with two adults, one preschooler and one school-aged child.

Montrose County continues to lag behind state averages for employment, wages and income (Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2018):

<i>Geographic Area</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate (June 2018)</i>	<i>Average Hourly Wage (2017)</i>	<i>Per Capita Annual Income (2016)</i>	<i>Median Household Income (2015)</i>
Colorado	2.7%	\$28.33	\$51,999	\$63,945
Montrose County	3.3%	\$19.13	\$35,714	\$46,860

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 (suburbanstats.org 2018).

An estimated 25% of the community's households spend more than 50% of 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, when the average single-family house sold for \$139,495, the median sale price in November 2017 was \$223,000, with Fall 2018 sales prices 6.3% higher than the year-to-date 12-month rolling average (Montrose Association of Realtors). The monthly rent rate for a three bedroom home is \$1,200 or more.

Montrose County saw a 25% decrease in foreclosure filings in the fourth quarter of 2017, as compared with 2016. At 0.04%, Montrose County is ranked 26th of 64 Colorado counties in percentage of foreclosures (Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing, 2018).

The availability of affordable dwellings throughout much of the service area is limited; a zero percent (0%) vacancy rate was reported for the fourth quarter 2017. In the past five years, Montrose County Housing Authority has seen an increase in the wait 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 Authority currently has 124 families and individuals on its wait list. Its Sunshine Peak project, located in the city of Montrose, offers 91 units of one-to-three bedroom housing, assessing rent based on a sliding scale.

Service Area - Social and Human Services, Child Welfare

Among the statistics provided by recent Kids Count! In Colorado reports, 26.1% of Montrose County children are born to single mothers (2018). Additionally, in 2017, 4.2% of Montrose County families receive TANF assistance payments and nearly two-thirds receive WIC vouchers.

The 2017 Kids Count! report ranked the state's 25 largest counties (95% of the state's population) on overall child well-being, based on 12 indicators in the areas of health, education, family and community; Montrose County ranked 19th. (Child well-being rankings were not included in the 2018 Kids Count! report.)

Montrose County also has higher rates of child abuse and neglect than state averages (*Kids Count!*, 2018; *Colorado Department of Education*, 2018):

Geographic Area	Rates for Out-of-Home Placement (Per 1,000 children)	Rates of Child Abuse and Neglect (Per 1,000 children)	Students served by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program
Colorado	8.1%	8.4%	21,943
Montrose County	16.0%	14.0% (category of interest to Kids Count!)	337

In 2017, the Dolphin House Child Advocacy Center (Montrose) provided services for 236 primary victims and 262 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 a variety of programs for Montrose County families, including services for those with open cases for reunification through Colorado Community Responsive programs (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 for children 0-5 years old and their parents.

A significant community gap exists in meeting 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.

Montrose County School District 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) located in neighboring Delta County. CMU-Montrose enrollment for Spring Semester 2018 was 282 undergraduates; technical college 2017-2018 enrollment included 16 Montrose/Olathe high school students and an additional 313 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 for the 2017-2018 school year:

6,260 or 89.2% of students	Montrose County School District RE-1J
317 or 4.5% of students	West End Public Schools District RE-2
329 or 4.7% of students	private K-12 institutions
113 or 1.6% of students	home schooled (does not include PreK children)

Montrose County School District RE-1J reports only 39.8% of fourth graders are meeting or exceeding expectations in English/Language Arts, an important indicator of child well-being and four points lower than the Colorado statewide average (Kids Count!, 2017).

Specific to early childhood education, the following chart outlines the number of preschool facilities in the ECC/Head Start service area, with – literally – no open slots (*Bright Futures, Fall 2018*):

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**	14 (total 33 when including homes)	4	5	551	0
Montrose	9	3	2	397	0
Olathe	3	1	1	69	0

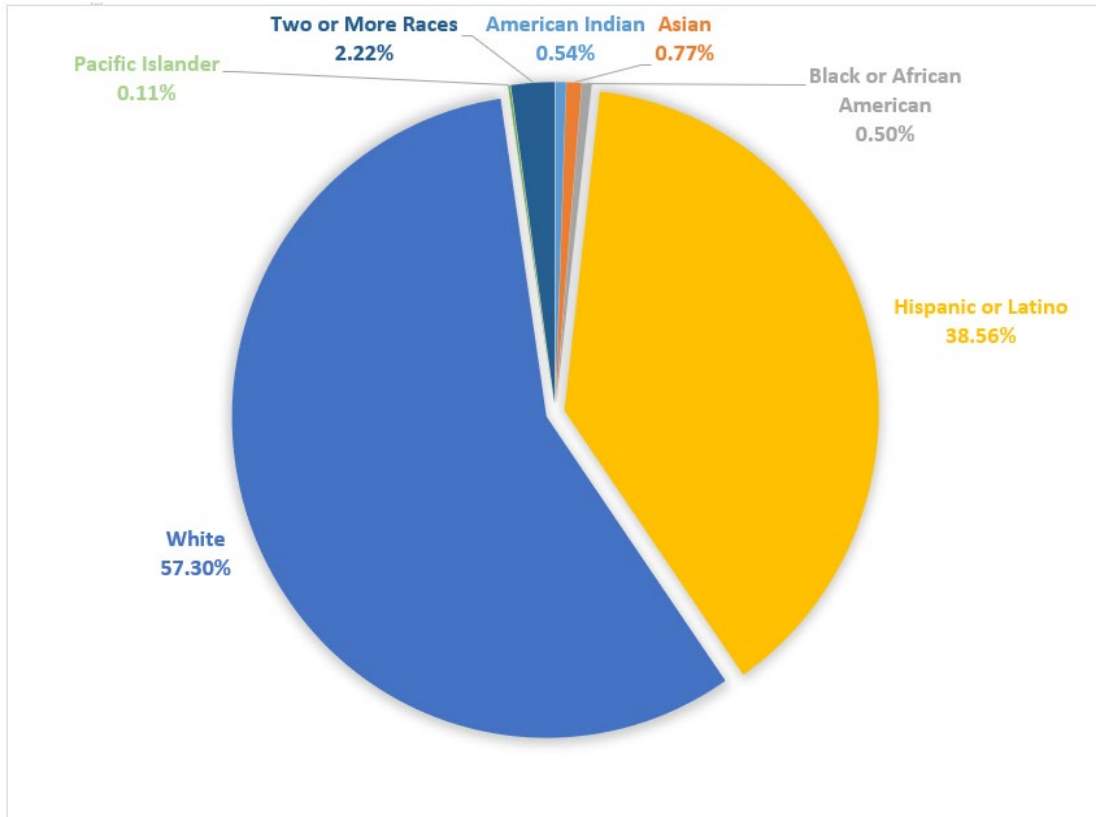
*MCS D RE-1J ECC currently provides its services at three sites:

- 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 2017-2018 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 (74%), while 24% of students' first language is Spanish and approximately 2% use Native Central American or South American languages.

Families in the Service Area - Residency/Mobility

The majority of the local population consider Montrose County their long-term residence. 78.5% of residents live and work in Montrose County and 69.6% of households are owner-occupied (*city-data.com, 2018*).

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 37th in spending, 22nd in access to preschool for four-year-olds, and 10th 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, 2018). With average rent at \$1,200/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 or Human 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).

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, adding to the challenge to attract and retain qualified childcare staff. In recent years, center and home-based care closures due to a "lack of qualified staff" have further depleted needed childcare slots, leaving families 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 CPP – the Colorado Preschool Program, 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 several factors: low-income family, foster care, violence/neglect in the home, parents' educational levels, delays in language and social development.

175 of Colorado's 179 school districts (including MCSD RE-1J) participated in CPP in school year 2016-17. Among participating children, 80.8% were served in public schools, 10.8% were in community programs and 8.4% were in Head Start programs (*Colorado Department of Education, 2018*). Due limited slots, Colorado Department of Education estimates as many as 8,925 at-risk four-year-olds had no preschool funding available to them through either CPP or Head Start in school year 2016-17; Early Childhood Centers is the only CPP provider in the Montrose-Olathe community.

Early Childhood Centers provided half-day preschool services for 56% of Montrose County School District RE-1J enrolled kindergartners during the 2017-18 school year. That same year, 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:

- 78% indicated their kindergartner had child care or preschool experience; of these, 83% had been in a child care or educational setting for one or two years
- 22% responded that their child(ren) had no child care or preschool experience; top reasons given for this lack of this experience included stay-at-home parent (57%), home schooling (9%) and no transportation (7%).

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, 2017 to May 31, 2018, Child Find completed 220 screenings and 93 evaluations in the ECC/Head Start service region; of those evaluated, only six did not qualify for services.

Community Options is the local agency responsible for providing therapeutic services for children with developmental delay from birth to just younger than three years. Children identified as qualified through Child Find have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and are provided services through Part C funding. Shortly before a child turns three, s/he is reassessed to determine if the developmental delay will significantly impact educational development. A child who receives an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for educational delays will receive services and preschool programming through MCSD 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, 2018*). Significant provider shortages lead to notable unmet demand for services.

Colorado has made significant gains in the past five years to insure the health care of its youngest residents. While the figures inconsistently trend, it is apparent that the number/percentage of uninsured children has dropped, based on annual Kids Count! data:

Kids Count! In Colorado Report	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Montrose County Uninsured Children	13.7%	16.7%	7.4%	8.5%	8.3%
Montrose County Children Eligible but Not Enrolled in Medicaid or CHP+	14.9%	not reported	9.9%	5.4%	8.5%

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+.

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 bilingual staff (Spanish) who conducted 8,976 patient visits in 2017. River Valley opened a second facility in the city of Montrose in October 2015; with six exam rooms, this location provided 6,338 patient visits in 2017. In September 2017, River Valley opened a third facility in Delta, providing 680 patient visits in the last four months of 2017. In whole, River Valley accommodates 4,134 patients (unduplicated count) via ten full-time and part-time providers (River Valley Family Health Center, 2018).

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 accredited vocational programs in healthcare 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 income guidelines, including all Medicaid and CHP+ clients, the under/uninsured who have commercial insurance but still find healthcare unaffordable. Those without insurance can qualify for PIC Place's sliding fee schedule that discounts services (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, 2,582 families received SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits in 2015, and 65.8% of children live in homes receiving WIC vouchers (*Kids Count!*, 2018). 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% are overweight, nine points higher than those living in households with higher incomes. 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 32% in Montrose County, ranking sixth highest 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, MCSD 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 offers free nutritious 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 SNAP also provides recipes for preparation of fresh foods.

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

Among Montrose County adults, 11.2% have less than a high school education, while 32.1% graduated high school and 14.6% hold a bachelor’s degree (*American Fact Finder, 2018*). In 2016-2017, K-12 dropouts in Montrose County was 2.8% (*Colorado Department of Education, 2018*). 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 2017</i>	<i>Dropout Rate 2017</i>
Colorado	910,280	41.7%	79.0%	2.3%
MCSD RE-1J	6,557	49.7%	80.9%	2.8%
Montrose High	1,531	35.0%	92.0%	2.2%
Olathe High	365	39.2%	93.8%	0.5%
Passage Charter	28	90.9%	40.0%	28.6%
Peak Academy	187	19.7%	88.9%	1.1%
Vista Charter	263	47.2%	26.3%	15.6%

Community Resources

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

EDUCATION RESOURCES

Community Options – developmental disabilities

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

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

Maslow Academy – private education, Pre-K through 5th grade

Pope John Paul II – private education, Pre-K through 8th grade

Colorado West Christian School – private education, Pre-K through 12th grade

Holy Guardian Angel School – private education, K-9th grade

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

JOB TRAINING RESOURCES

Colorado Workforce

Community Staffing

Elwood Staffing

Vocational Rehabilitation

PRIMARY/BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE AND HUMAN SERVICES RESOURCES

CSU Cooperative Extension/4-H

Dolphin House Child Advocacy Center

Dream Catcher Therapy Center

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

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

Pegasus Equine Therapy

PIC Place

River Valley Family Health Center

Smiles 4 Kids

Solutions Wellness Center

The Center for Mental Health

Treasured Teeth

Tri-County Health Network

Urgent Care

Volunteers of America

DISABILITIES RESOURCES

Community Options

Child Find

Dream Catcher Therapy Center

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

Montrose School District RE-1J Special Education

Pegasus Equine Therapy

FAMILY SERVICES RESOURCES

CSU Cooperative Extension/4-H

Dream Catcher Therapy Center

Dolphin House Child Advocacy Center

The Center for Mental Health

Montrose County Department of Health and Human Services

Over the Rainbow Behavioral Consulting

Western Colorado Migrant and Rural Coalition

Hilltop Community Services Montrose

Pegasus Equine Therapy

Shepherd's Hands

Solutions Wellness Center

HOUSING RESOURCES

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

CHILD CARE RESOURCES

(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

CLOTHING, FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SERVICES RESOURCES

Christ’s Kitchen
Habitat for Humanity ReStore
Heirlooms for Hospice Store
Mexican American Development Association (MADA) – food, no-cost clothing, emergency assistance
The Salvation Army
Sharing Ministries Food Bank
Tom Goodrich Warm Hearts Memorial Project – coats
Kids Aid – backpack program to provide food outside school days
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension – commodities distribution, food baskets
Farmers’ Market
Montrose County School District RE-1J Summer Feeding program; contracted, registered dietician/nutritionist at Early Childhood Centers
Montrose County Department of Health and Human Services – food stamps, TANF
Food SHARE America
Sharing Ministries Food Bank
Shepherd’s Hands

TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

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 2017-2018 school year are as follow for the Montrose County School District Re-1J ECC, which includes the Head Start program (total 325 reporting):

	<i>White</i>	<i>Bi-Racial</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Other</i>
Enrollment	133	16	161	7	2	2	4
% of Enrollment	87%	5%	42%	4%	1%	1%	2%

*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 Montrose Early Childhood Center program is English, spoken by 74% of the children enrolled during the 2017-2018 school year. Spanish is the second most common language (24% of children). 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 in Colorado declined in 2016. 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* 2016</i>	<i>School Children (5-18 years) Living in Poverty* 2016</i>
Colorado	13.4%	12.8%
Montrose County	23.7%	20.2%

*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 351 children enrolled at MCSD RE-1J ECC for the 2017-2018 school year:

- 138, or 39% of ECC children, were living at or below 100% of the federal poverty level
- 135, or 38% of ECC children’s families had income over the poverty threshold.

- 78, or 23% of ECC children qualified with an individual education plan (IEP); these families are not required to provide proof of income for services.

Sixty-six (66) 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 difficulty – often is severe:

<i>Employment Status of Head Start Parents/Guardians, 2017-2018</i>				
	<i>Two-Parent Families</i>		<i>Single-Parent Families</i>	
	<i>#</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>One parent is employed</i>	52	45%	24	21%
<i>Both parents are employed</i>	10	9%	n/a	n/a
<i>Neither parent is working</i>	5	4%	24	21%
<i>One parent is enrolled in training or school</i>	4	3%	6	5%

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

115 Head Start parent respondents to ECC’s 2017-2018 survey self-report the following educational accomplishments: 8% with master’s and/or bachelor’s degrees, 25% with associates degrees and/or some college or advanced training, 42% with high school diplomas/GEDs, and 25% non-graduates.

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 2017-2018 school year, the following additional referrals were documented:

- health education for families – 94
- Kids Aid (student backpack food program) – 37
- mental health services – 12
- parenting education; child mental health – 3 each
- Tom Goodrich Warm Hearts Memorial Project (coats) – 2
- emergency/crisis intervention; adult education – 1 each

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 ten (10) cases of suspected child abuse during the 2017-2018 school year.

As part of ECC's support for 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 2017-2018, 89 fathers or father figures of 120 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 2017-2018, 115 (95.8%) of 120 Head Start children were enrolled in Medicaid or CHP+; five had private health insurance, none were without insurance.

As an important indicator of childhood well-being, immunizations are something ECC/Head Start takes very seriously. Among ECC children enrolled during the 2017-2018 school year, 100% were up-to-date on immunizations.

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 2018, 14% were overweight and nine percent obese.

The Montrose County School District RE-1J ECC/Head Start program implements the Healthy School practices by incorporating:

- 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 (117 Head Start children received a professional dental examination during the 2017-2018 school year, and three had signed waivers from participation).
- Participation in a school garden grown by students and staff.

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 (103*)	
Free/Reduced Meals	200	78%	103	100%
Homeless	10	4%	9	9%
Domestic Violence	42	16%	19	18%
Substance Abuse	54	21%	20	19%
Teen Parent	11	4%	6	6%
Education	100	39%	48	47%
Frequent Moves	47	18%	20	19%
Social	248	97%	98	95%
Speech/Language	139	55%	69	67%
Interventions by Department of Health & Human Services	18	7%	9	9%

	All ECC Programs		Head Start Enrollees (103*)	
0 Risk Factors	1	<1%	0	0%
1 Risk Factor	19	7%	1	<1%
2 Risk Factors	43	117%	9	9%
3 Risk Factors	82	32%	35	34%
4 Risk Factors	67	26%	31	30%
5 Risk Factors	22	9%	14	14%
6 Risk Factors	10	4%	8	8%
7 Risk Factors	9	4%	3	3%
8 Risk Factors	2	1%	2	2%

* Includes over-enrollment by one over 102 funded children

Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Childcare and Preschool

In any given year, Early Childhood Centers has served 45% of all children enrolling in MCSD 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 Montrose and Olathe communities are in need of quality early learning and care opportunities for preschool-age children. The ECC early spring registration, calls for appointments for registration, and online applications during Summer 2017 suggest that demand is increasing as families who were planning to move from the community decide to stay, while additional families with preschool-aged children move to the service area. By May 31, 2018, ECC saw an increase in acceptance of families for the 2018-2019 school year, which translates to a longer waiting list for preschool services at all three ECC sites.

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 2017-2018</i>	<i>Estimated total # eligible but unserved Head Start children in service area</i>
1,415	707	103***	604

*American Community Survey 2012-2016

**Based on economic factors' eligibility only

***Includes over-enrollment by one over 102 funded children

Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Children with Disabilities

During the 2017-2018 school year, 19 Head Start enrollees had Individual Education Plans (a 29.6% decrease from the prior year), as did an additional 75 enrollees through the Children with Disabilities program (31.6% increase from the prior year), for a total 94 children being served with IEPs.

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).

When in-depth assessments are needed, the ECC staffing team (school psychologist, occupational therapist and speech pathologist) works with the Child Find Coordinator (master's-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 of age 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 ECC classrooms are fully inclusive; here, children with disabilities participate in all activities with their same-age peers. Accommodations of support staff and equipment ensure participation by and access for children with disabilities, and 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 MCSD RE-1J 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

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. A recruitment policy is in place and is followed by all staff; methods for recruitment include:

- 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 disseminate program information and updates. The Montrose County School District web page provides information on the program.

- Annual re-enrollment of returning children, and discussions regarding younger siblings, are held; word of mouth promotion is active and encouraged.
- The Child Plus online application is available to complete in both English and Spanish.

Head Start performance standards require 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 be comprised of those served through the Children with Disabilities program. During the 2017-2018 school year, the 92 children – or 26.2% of 351 enrollees – diagnosed with an identified disability far exceeded the required minimal targeted enrollment of this specific population. Among the 103 Head Start children served, a total 19 held IEPs.

Of 21 children on the ECC waiting list at the end of the school year (May 2018), three were income-eligible and 15 exceeded family poverty guidelines. Additionally, three had transportation difficulties.

Currently, there are preschool classrooms at two MCSD RE-1J schools: Johnson and Olathe Elementary schools. It is convenient for parents to have their older children and preschool-aged 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.

Community Programs and Resources Available

Early Childhood Centers always has worked diligently with other local/regional resources to expand, enhance and supplement the education provided through its programs. Collaboration occurs with numerous agencies to 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 through 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. Early Childhood Centers continues to strive in reaching 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.

MCSO 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/service providers to create a viable delivery system.
- Facilities must be available to serve 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 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 has set for following priorities for the five-year period 2019-2023:

1. Meet 2016 Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) through March 31, 2019 to complete Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers' five-year grant cycle.
2. Vertically align Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers' kindergarten readiness skills to the District's Kindergarten Readiness Plan.
3. Strengthen active supervision systems for Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers.
4. Develop and implement a plan to improve the training and communication systems of Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers.
5. Acquire quality and sustainable facilities to house the operations and services delivery of Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers.

These program goals are a result of the on-going assessment of ECC's philosophical and programmatic approaches, including MCSD RE-1J Early Childhood Centers' self-assessment and community assessment, child outcomes, parent involvement data and parent surveys, CLASS assessments and staff member feedback, all of which drive both long-term (five year) and short-term (specific components/programs) goals. Additionally, a formal strategic planning process occurred in 2018, involving numerous individuals representing the MCSD RE-1J Board of Education, school district leadership, ECC Policy Council, preschool education staff and leadership, and the community.

The following provides the plan of action for each of the goals outlined above:

GOAL 1: MEET 2016 HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS (HSPPS) THROUGH MARCH 31, 2019 TO COMPLETE MONTROSE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-1J EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS' FIVE-YEAR GRANT CYCLE.

Objective 1: *Develop a system to ensure that non-English speaking children are being screened and assessed by a qualified bilingual staff member in English and the home language.*

Objective 2: *Revise background check procedures to include language from Performance Standard 1302.90.*

Objective 3: *Develop a system that measures implementation of the curriculum with fidelity and provides feedback, professional development and supervision.*

Objective 4: *Develop a system that ensures management of preschool program data to effectively support its availability, usability, integrity and security, and maintains child and family confidentiality.*

GOAL II: VERTICALLY ALIGN MONTROSE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-1J EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS' KINDERGARTEN READINESS SKILLS TO THE DISTRICT'S KINDERGARTEN READINESS PLAN.

Objective 1: *Create a document that outlines desired and developmentally-appropriate kindergarten readiness skills for use within the School District and with other community stakeholders (e.g. TS Gold widely-held expectations).*

Objective 2: *Promote use of new kindergarten readiness skills document with Montrose County School District RE-1J strict administrators and kindergarten staff; Early Childhood Centers' staff and families; community Early Childhood educators, childcare providers and stakeholders; and local pediatric medical care providers.*

Objective 3: *Inform kindergarten staff of the identified kindergarten readiness skills document.*

Objective 4: *Inform preschool staff of the identified kindergarten readiness skills document.*

GOAL III: STRENGTHEN ACTIVE SUPERVISION SYSTEMS FOR MONTROSE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-1J EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS.

Objective 1: *Strengthen procedures around Active Supervision of students in the classroom, on the playground, and when transitioning.*

Objective 2: *Create and implement secondary system of monitoring to ensure that Active Supervision procedures are being followed.*

Objective 3: *Train staff, students, volunteers and families on Active Supervision procedures.*

GOAL IV: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN TO IMPROVE THE TRAINING AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS OF MONTROSE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-1J EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS.

Objective 1: *Identify a plan for year-one systems.*

Objective 2: *Implement newly-developed systems into the Early Childhood Centers program.*

Objective 3: *Develop a long-term plan to address remaining program systems*

GOAL V: ACQUIRE QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE FACILITIES TO HOUSE THE OPERATIONS AND SERVICES DELIVERY OF MONTROSE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-1J EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS.

Objective 1: *Have a conceptual plan designed for facilities.*

Objective 2: *Develop a capital project fundraising plan.*

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

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!, 2000-2018 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

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. 1st St. #311, Montrose, CO 81401; (970) 240-8655
Web site at 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://ecc.mcsd.org>

Housing Colorado; 225 East 16th 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

National Research Center; 3005 30th 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>

State of Colorado, Demographer's Office; Web site at <https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/>

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 <https://www.colorado.gov/cdle>

State of Colorado, Department of Local Affairs

Web site at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola>

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 <https://www.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 <https://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/>