

2021

**Community Assessment:
Montrose/Olathe Early Childhood Centers**



**Prepared by
Third Sector Innovations, Inc.**

September 2021

MONTROSE/OLATHE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT SEPTEMBER 2021

900 Colorado Avenue, Unit 4
P.O. Box 10,000, 81402
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	8
IV.	Data and Findings	
	Service Area	9
	Families in the Service Area	13
	Community Resources	18
V.	Data Review and Analysis	21
	Conclusions Based on Data Analysis	27
VI.	Recommendations and Priorities	29
VII.	Appendix	
	Community Assessment: Sources of Data	31

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early Childhood Centers (ECC) is part of and coincides with the service area of Montrose County RE-1J School District (MCSD) in the state of Colorado. ECC serves those residing in/near the city of Montrose and town of Olathe.

Montrose County is located in the southwestern quadrant of the state and has a population of more than 42,000 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 local housing market regularly experiences lower-than-state average median sale prices, yet housing costs are rising and continue to be an issue for many families, with wait times as long as two years to rent affordable family units. The Colorado Center on Law & Policy reports that Montrose County families need income more than two times the federal poverty level to make ends meet.

Access to affordable healthcare is an area of significant concern for Montrose County residents. Since passage of the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid enrollment has significantly increased, with 53.4% of the county's children enrolled in Medicaid and 13.7% in Colorado's publicly-funded CHP+. However, the proportion of uninsured children in Montrose County (8.6%) still is higher than in Colorado overall (5.7%), and the community is a federally-designated health professional shortage area so, even with insurance, accessing care can be difficult.

There are encouraging indicators, as well:

- The percentage of births to single women, as documented annually by Kids Count!, now is at 23.3%, down from 26.5% reported in 2020 and lower than the current 23.6% statewide figure.
- The percentage of Montrose County families receiving TANF assistance payments is now 2.9% and those receiving WIC vouchers is 58%, down from 3.3% and 60% respectively as reported in 2020 by Kids Count!.
- The unemployment rate in the county, at 5.6%, is down from a high of 12.3% in April 2020, and is lower than the state unemployment rate of 6.3% (Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2021).
- An estimated 72.7% of homes in the county are owner-occupied; the majority of residents (86.7%) live and work in Montrose County (American Community Survey, 2015-2019).

In response to community realities and needs, MCSD Early Childhood Centers is making a positive impact through its Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program, Children with Disabilities, Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement, and tuition programs by involving a total 271 children, 88 of these through Head Start.

Along with providing educational opportunity, ECC supports family access to dental exams, immunizations, nutrition and various other programs/supports, making a profound difference in the lives of low-to-moderate income families, as seen in the following figures from school year 2020-2021:

- 98% of ECC children were current on their vaccinations, higher than the state average of 94.7% (Colorado Department of Health and Environment, 2021).
- 84% of Head Start children have had dental care within the last 12 months, compared to 82% of children statewide (Kids Count Data Center, 2021).

An additional indicator of ECC success lies in the involvement of families, and particularly fathers, father figures, and male role models: During the 2020-2021 school year, parents, guardians, and family members contributed more than 9,000 volunteer hours, with 23% of volunteers being male.

ECC saw turnover of just one staff position (<2% annual turnover) during the most recent school year.

The following goals have been set for the MCSD Early Childhood Centers for the period 2019-2024:

1. Strengthen active supervision systems.
2. Provide professional development for ECC staff members; provide educational opportunities for parents to promote development of kindergarten readiness skills in children.
3. Improve the Centers' communication systems.
4. Acquire quality and sustainable facilities.

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

II. INTRODUCTION

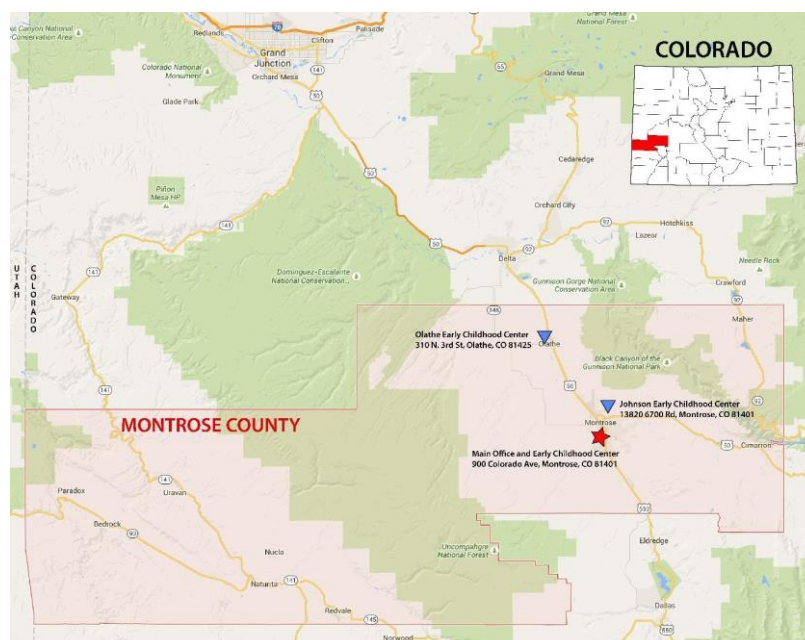
Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers (ECC) administers Head Start programming for preschool-age children and their families in the communities of Montrose and Olathe, Colorado; the service area coincides with Montrose County School District RE-1J (MCSD) boundaries. The towns of Nucla and Naturita also are in Montrose County (90 miles from the city of Montrose) and impact countywide statistics, but are part of the RE-2 Montrose School District, currently unserved by ECC/Head Start programs.

In 1993, three MCSD programs focused on addressing challenges to early childhood learning – Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) and MCSD’s Children with Disabilities (special needs program) – were integrated to form Early Childhood Centers. MCSD now provides preschool services through five distinct programs:

- Head Start, locally initiated in 1991
- Colorado Preschool Program
- Children With Disabilities
- Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE)
- Paid tuition, inviting children of School District employees and community families not otherwise eligible to attend preschool at an ECC site.

MCSD 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 ECC sites:

- In the city of Montrose – 900 Colorado Avenue, Unit 4
- Three miles east of the Montrose city center on the Johnson Elementary School campus – 13820 6700 Road
- Eleven miles north of Montrose in the town of Olathe on the Olathe Elementary School campus – 320 N. 3rd Street.



The main office of ECC/Head Start is located in Montrose at the Family Service Center, housing administrative services and the following program support staff:

- Director & Colorado Preschool Program Coordinator
- Colorado Preschool Program Coordinator's Assistant
- Program Operations Coordinator
- Family and Community Engagement Coordinator
- Mental Health Consultant
- Education Coordinator
- Health Technician
- Family Advocates (3)
- Administrative Assistant to the Director
- Secretary
- Data Technician

ECC employs a total 52 staff; of these, 15 are preschool teachers, 16 are classroom paraprofessionals and three are Family Advocates, all having direct involvement with enrolled children and their families.

During the 2020-2021 school year, parents, guardians, and family members contributed more than 9,000 volunteer hours. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, volunteers were not able to assist in classrooms but were utilized to assist with returning homework, securing donations of school supplies and other items, and Policy Council work. In total, parents of current students volunteered on 385 unique occasions, 144 of these contributed by Head Start family members. Additionally, other community members volunteered on 46 occasions. 23% of all volunteers were male.

ECC's Head Start Policy Council for the 2020-2021 school year comprised four parent representatives and four community members. The Policy Council meets monthly and assists in the development of program goals and objectives, and additionally acts as liaison to parents, staff and the community at large on matters of specific concern.

Colorado childcare licenses held for all ECC sites allow for provision of services for children 2-1/2 years to six years of age.

- If a child turns three or four years old on or before August 1 of a given year, s/he may enroll through ECC's Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program, ECARE, or tuition programming. Children who are five years old, on or before August 1, are eligible for kindergarten and may not be served through Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program, or Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement funding.
 - For a three- or four-year-old child to be Head Start eligible, his/her family must be living at or below the federal poverty level, or receiving Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) or Social Security Income (SSI) for a disability; or, the child must be living with a foster family or be homeless.
 - For a three-year-old to be Colorado Preschool Program eligible, s/he must have at least three of ten risk factors outlined by State statute, while a four-year-old must have a minimum one of the ten risk factors.

- An enrollee under the Children with Disabilities program is eligible for Part B services (preschool) at the age of two years and nine months, and may be provided an additional year of preschool services beyond his/her fifth birthday, providing that policy requirements are met; one child met the criteria to extend participation this past school year.

Each child's parent(s) or guardian(s) is/are interviewed to collect information determining 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 needs are served.

During the 2020-2021 school year, ECC served the following numbers of children:

Program	Registered/Placed (served minimum one day)	Funded Preschool Opportunities
Head Start	88	102
Colorado Preschool Program	78	130
Children With Disabilities	52	52+/- (as needed)
Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement	48	60
Tuition Pay	5	16
TOTALS	271	360

As illustrated in the above table, the number of children served by ECC during the 2020-2021 school year did not equal the total number of preschool opportunities funded by state and federal organizations. It is believed that enrollment numbers were low due to COVID-19, as many parents have been cautious about their child(ren)'s potential exposure. During the school year, six students left school listing fear of COVID-19 as the reason.

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. Some 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 childcare options that will deliver and/or pick up children.

III. METHODOLOGY: COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This assessment endeavors to depict the community served by ECC, and to examine key factors impacting overall and child well-being:

- Community geography and economics, including employment, income, and housing
- Community demographics, including ethnic composition and languages, and children with disabilities
- Childcare and preschool programming
- Education
- Health and nutrition
- Social services, including child welfare
- Community resources

As applicable and available, county and/or school district-level data is provided and then compared with state averages. Then, specific information is provided regarding the families benefiting through ECC/Head Start during the 2020-2021 school year.

Prevalently cited as part of these annual assessments are periodic reports from Colorado Children Campaign: “Kids Count! in Colorado” provides widely-accepted information on overall childhood well-being. Also, important data sources are U.S. Census statistics (with 2020 data unavailable as of this report) and American Community Survey projections 2015-2019. Various State of Colorado agencies provide data on demographics, education, employment and housing, while the regional Early Childhood Council – Bright Futures – sources information specific to local childcare and preschool facilities. A complete list of information sources is included in the appendix to this report.

ECC annually conducts parent surveys, with feedback helping to inform the ECC Policy Council and staff regarding satisfaction with and direction of program services. The instrument used for this survey is reviewed each year by the CPP District Advisory Council and updated as needed.

The process of community assessment began in March 2002, as required by the Administration for Children and Families, with discussions at Policy Council, 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.

Information gathered through this assessment process reveals the ongoing and emerging challenges faced by children and families living in the ECC/Head Start service area, as well as the strengths of ECC in addressing these challenges through provision of quality early childhood services.

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 Colorado’s Western Slope. The community is 269 miles southwest of the Denver metro area beyond the Continental Divide, and nearly 100 miles east of the Colorado-Utah state line. Just fewer than half of Montrose County residents live in unincorporated areas (47%), while 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 5,758,736 people (U.S. Census, 2019 estimate), the majority of whom live in the eastern portion of the state, referred to as Colorado’s Front Range. From 2010 to 2019, Colorado’s population increased by 729,417 people, or 14.5%.

Montrose County is one of 64 counties in Colorado and is ranked 17th in the state for total population. In the first 19 years of the millennium, the population in Montrose County grew from 33,432 to 42,758, or 27.9% (U.S. Census, 2019 estimate). The population of Montrose County is expected to grow by 24,091 people, or 56%, from 2020 to 2050 (Colorado State Demography Office, 2021).

There currently are an estimated 2,507 children, ages five years and younger, in Montrose County; approximately 1,344 of these children are preschool aged (Colorado State Demography Office, 2021).

The U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015-2019 reports that, among Montrose County residents age five years or older, 17.5% speak a language other than English in the home (nearly exclusively Spanish), a figure aligned with the statewide number of 16.9%. 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%:

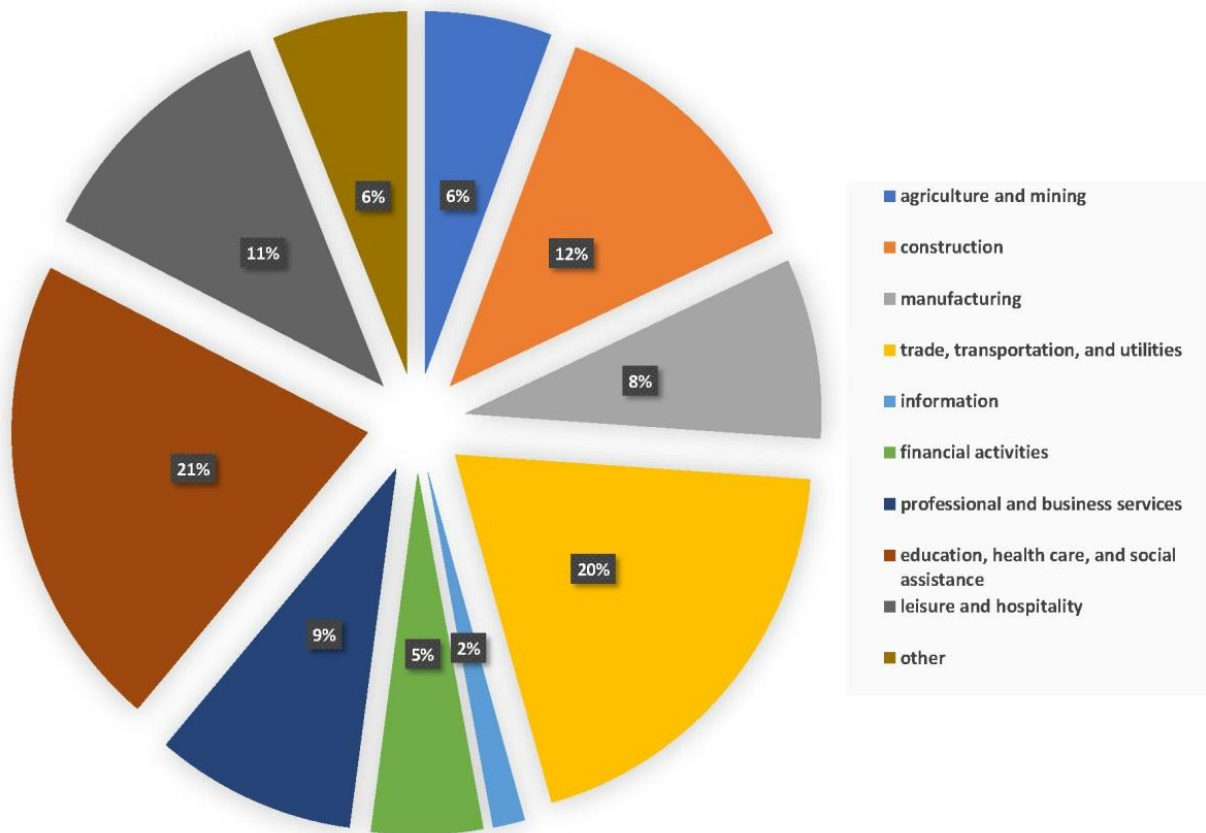
Population ⇒ ⇒ Geography ⇓ ⇓	White*	Black or African American*	American Indian and Alaska Native*	Asian/ Pacific Islander*	Some Other Race	Two or More Races	Hispanic/ Latino Origin
Colorado	67.5%	4.0%	0.6%	3.3%	0.2%	2.7%	21.8%
Montrose County	76.1%	0.3%	0.8%	1.1%	0.1%	1.1%	20.6%

*Not Hispanic or Latino

Service Area - Economy, Employment and Income

The area’s economy finds 74.4% of the workforce employed in the private sector, 14.1% employed by government and 11.6% self-employed (American Community Survey, 2015-2019). The private, non-farm sector is made up of those working in the following trades:

Montrose County Employment by Industry



(American Community Survey 2015-2019)

The American Community Survey reports 68.3% of households in Montrose County are family households; among these, 23.6% earn less than \$35,000 annually, with 37.37% earning less than \$50,000 each year.

While Montrose County has seen recent improvements in the unemployment rate, down to 5.8% in June 2021 from 9.9% one year prior, the figure is significantly higher than 2.7% of August 2019. Russell Stover Candies, the third-largest employer in the county, permanently closed its Montrose manufacturing facility in August 2020, eliminating more than 400 jobs.

The average hourly wage in the county still is notably lower – at \$22.55 per hour – than the \$34.40 per hour state average (Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2021):

Geographic Area	Unemployment Rate (June 2021)*	Average Hourly Wage (4 th Quarter 2020)*	Per Capita Annual Income (2019)**	Median Household Income (2019)**
Colorado	6.2%	\$34.40	\$38,226	\$77,127
Montrose County	5.8%	\$22.55	\$28,078	\$50,489

*Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2021

** American Community Survey 2015-2019

Service Area - Housing

Housing in Montrose County includes both owned and leased single- and multi-family homes, as well as small and large acreage farms. Estimated occupied housing units (i.e. no unoccupied dwellings included) total 17,140 (American Community Survey, 2015-2019).

An estimated 47.1% of renters and 33.4% of homeowners in the community spend more than 30% of income on housing (American Community Survey 2015-2019). From a 2011, recession-low \$139,495 average single-family house sale price, the April 2021 year-to-date median sale price is more than double at \$370,000, also marking a 35% increase from 2020 (Montrose Association of Realtors, 2021). The average monthly rent rate for a three-bedroom home is \$1,292.

The availability of affordable dwellings throughout much of the service area is limited. With the capacity to serve only 179 clients through its voucher system, Montrose County Housing Authority continues to see long wait periods for eligible families to receive assistance. The Authority closed its waitlist and stopped accepting new applications in March 2019, reopening the list 18 months later in September 2020. Even with voucher assistance, high rent prices currently present a significant difficulty as families try to secure affordable rentals (Montrose County Housing Authority, 2021).

Service Area - Social and Human Services, Child Welfare

2021 Kids Count! Colorado reports that 23.3% of Montrose County children are born to single mothers, and that 2.9% of Montrose County families receive TANF assistance payments, with 58% receiving WIC vouchers.

Montrose County has higher rates of child abuse and neglect and out-of-home placements than state averages (Kids Count!, 2021), as well as a high rate of students experiencing homelessness:

Geographic Area	Rates for Out-of-Home Placement (per 1,000 children)	Rates of Child Abuse and Neglect (per 1,000 children)	Percentage of Students served by McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program*
Colorado	7.6	9.7	2.4%
Montrose County	12.8	18.2	4.2%

*Colorado Department of Education, 2021

In 2020, the Dolphin House Child Advocacy Center (Montrose) provided services for 262 primary victims and 337 secondary victims of child abuse (0-17 year olds), and currently continues to provide follow-up support for 98 families.

In an attempt to counter child abuse, Hilltop Family Resource Center provides a variety of programs for Montrose County families. Hilltop programming includes the High Fidelity Wraparound program (“family choice and voice to create a family vision while identifying natural support systems”), Parents as Teachers (for children 0-5 years old and their parents), and Family Navigation and Intensive Family Development (educational and support services for parents with open cases for reunification with a child/children in foster care).

A significant community gap exists in meeting the mental health services needs of 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 behavioral challenges presented by the community’s at-risk youth/teens and Children with Disabilities participants.

Montrose County School District RE-1J and many local human service providers have long been educated in and committed to the tenets of “Bridges Out Of Poverty.” This client-focused, strengths-based approach to service provision is prominent in the work of Montrose’s social services providers, promoting understanding and largely defining the experiences of families frequently interacting with local agencies.

Early Childhood Centers/Head Start proactively provides referrals to other resources/services available in the community. During the 2020-2021 school year, the following referrals were documented:

- Kids Aid (backpack food program) – 32
- Mental health services – 9
- Parenting education – 12
- Child mental health – 16
- Tom Goodrich Warm Hearts Memorial Project (coats) – 9
- Cobble Creek Angel Tree Community (Christmas presents/gift cards) – 32
- Emergency/crisis intervention – 2
- Adult education – 1

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, located in neighboring Delta County. CMU-Montrose total enrollment in 2020 was 293 undergraduates, including 71 high school students; Technical College of the Rockies 2020-2021 enrollment included 13 Montrose/Olathe high school students, an additional 91 full- and part-time post-secondary Montrose County residents, as well as 69 community/supplemental education enrollees.

Following are the enrollment figures for Montrose County Pre-K-12th grade students for the 2020-2021 school year:

5,836 or 89.9% of students	Montrose County School District RE-1J
266 or 4.1% of students	West End Public Schools District RE-2
221 or 3.4% of students	private K-12 institutions
168 or 2.6% of students	home schooled (does not include Pre-K children)

MCS D reports only 35.6% of fourth graders are meeting or exceeding expectations in English/Language Arts, 12 points lower than the Colorado statewide average (Kids Count!, 2020, with updated numbers for 2021 unavailable due to COVID-19 response-related cancellation of assessments statewide).

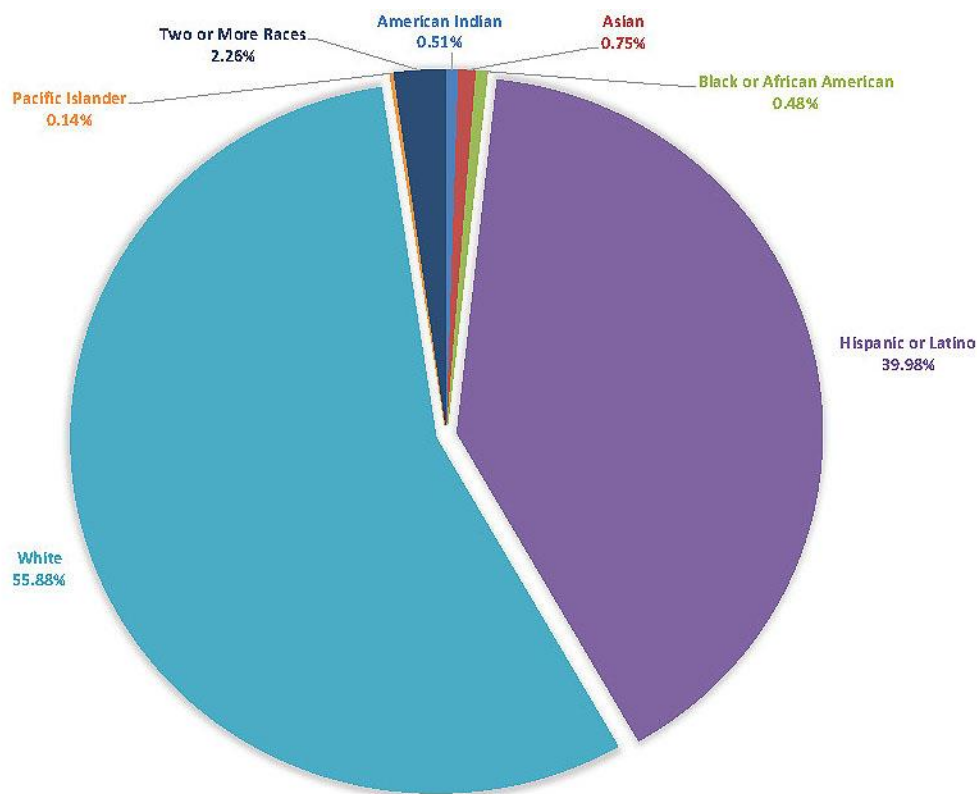
Specific to early childhood education, the community historically has experienced shortages of licensed facilities. The following chart outlines the number of preschool facilities in the ECC/ Head Start service area. Currently, there are 10 open slots; at any given time, there typically are no open slots but, due to current health concerns, some parents have opted not to enroll their children at this time. (Bright Futures, Fall 2021):

Geographic Area	Total # Licensed Facilities	# ECC/ Head Start Facilities	# Facilities Accepting CPP Children	Total # Slots (full- and half-day)	Current # of Open Slots
Montrose County	12* (total 24 when including private homes)	3	3	723	10
Montrose	8	2	2	640	6
Olathe	2	1	1	83	4

*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 (pre-K through 12th grade) for the 2020-2021 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 (62%), while 9% of students’ first language is Spanish.

Families in the Service Area - Residency/Mobility

The majority of local individuals and families consider Montrose County their long-term residence. 86.7% of residents live and work in Montrose County and 72.7% of households are owner-occupied (American Community Survey, 2015-2019).

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). It is assumed these figures continue to fairly represent the situation in the state.

The cost of childcare is prohibitive for many of Montrose County’s low-income families. The current average cost for full-time childcare is \$40.50 per day for a child younger than two years, \$37.95 per day for a toddler or preschooler (Bright Futures, 2021). With average rent at \$1,292/month, a single-parent, female-led family with two children can easily spend 90% of family income to meet just housing and childcare expenses.

To ensure 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). 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 childcare costs, and are required to be working, searching for employment, training, or enrolled in Colorado Works (Colorado's TANF program).

In response to the need for out-of-home childcare, the State of Colorado requires specific education and certification standards for childcare facility staff. Educational expenses typically are the responsibility of the staff person and are not necessarily rewarded with a pay increase, adding to the challenge of attracting and retaining 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 the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) to serve the young children in Colorado most vulnerable to starting elementary school unprepared – funded through the Colorado Public School Finance Formula and administered under the Office of Teaching and Learning, Colorado Department of Education. CPP provides for preschool programming, with eligibility/participation based on a child's situation: being raised in a low-income family or by parents having completed lower educational levels, involvement with foster care, involvement with violence/neglect in the home, and/or delays in language and social development.

176 of Colorado's 179 school districts participated in CPP in school year 2019-2020, with MCSD's Early Childhood Centers being the only CPP provider in the Montrose-Olathe community. Colorado Department of Education estimates that 28,057 potentially eligible 3- and 4-year-olds living in Colorado were not enrolled in either CPP or Head Start in the same school year (CPP Legislative Report 2021).

Early Childhood Centers had provided preschool services for 45% of MCSD enrolled kindergartners in the 2020-2021 school year. An ECC survey of 358 parents of incoming kindergartners further indicated that 88% of kindergartners had childcare or preschool experience.

- Of the 12% responding that their child(ren) had no childcare or preschool experience, top reasons given for lack of this experience included stay-at-home parent (44%), could not afford (12%), and no openings (12%).

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 local Child Find Coordinator provides screenings for individual

families/children throughout the year, as needed. From June 1, 2020 to May 31, 2021, Child Find completed 120 screenings and 78 evaluations in the ECC/Head Start service region; of those evaluated, only four did not qualify for services. Across the past two school years, the total number of parents requesting screenings and the number of evaluations completed have been lower than in previous years, assumed due to health concerns and restrictions related to COVID-19.

Children identified as qualified through Child Find benefit from an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and are provided services through Part C funding. Community Options is the local agency responsible for providing therapeutic services for these children from birth to just younger than three years. Shortly before a child turns three, s/he is reassessed to determine if the developmental delay will significantly impact educational development; if yes, the child receives an Individual Education Plan (IEP), and will receive services and preschool programming through ECC in an integrated classroom with children funded through Head Start, CPP, ECARE, 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 (Health Resources and Services Administration, 2021), with significant provider shortages creating unmet demand for services.

While Colorado has made significant gains to ensure the health care of its youngest residents, Montrose County has experienced inconsistent trends regarding those children continuing to be uninsured:

Kids Count! In Colorado Report	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Montrose County Uninsured Children	8.5%	8.3%	6.2%	6.2%*	8.6%
Montrose County Children Eligible yet Not Enrolled in Medicaid or CHP+	5.4%	8.5%	1.5%	10.1%	13.0%

*Data repeated from 2019/not updated in 2020 Kids Count! report.

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), a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), 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, dental, and behavioral health services and medications at a discounted price via a bilingual staff (Spanish) and 29 full-time and part-time providers (primary and behavioral health, dentists/hygienists, pharmacists). In 2020, River Valley accommodated 6,941 patients (unduplicated count) from three facilities located in Olathe (10 examination rooms), Montrose (20 exam rooms) and Delta (10 exam rooms).

PIC (Partners in Integrated Care) Place opened in June 2017 to serve patients living at or below 250% of federal income guidelines, including all Medicaid and CHP+ clients, as well as those experiencing difficulty accessing health care services in the community. Those without insurance can qualify for PIC Place's sliding fee schedule for discounted services (sometimes up to 100%) based on ability to pay. PIC Place provides fully-integrated primary (family practice) health, preventive and restorative dental, optometric and behavioral health services for unserved/underserved residents of Montrose and Delta counties via 12 full- and part-time providers (primary and behavioral health, dentists) and 19 exam rooms. In 2020, 5,881 patients (unduplicated count) received services.

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, an estimated 1,864 households received benefits through SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (American Community Survey, 2015-2019), and 58% of children live in homes receiving WIC vouchers (Kids Count!, 2021). This not only indicates the nutritional challenges of Montrose County residents, but contributes to the ever-growing concern of childhood obesity, most particularly impacting those of low-income who rely on less expensive/nutritional foods (i.e. other than lean meats, fresh fruit and vegetables). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that youth (ages 2-19 years) living at or below 350% of the federal poverty level are 3.5 times more likely to be obese than their more affluent peers. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment approximated in 2017 that 23% of Colorado children (ages 5-14 years) are overweight or obese; the figure is 32% in Montrose County, ranking sixth highest among Colorado's 25 largest counties (Kids Count!, 2016).

Montrose County Child and Family Services works to address nutritional needs by providing 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 25 years and older:

- 11.0% have less than a high school education
- 31.4% graduated high school
- 25.3% have some college/no degree
- 7.1% have an Associate's Degree
- 25.2% hold a bachelor's degree or higher (American Community Survey, 2015-2019).

In 2019-2020, K-12 dropouts in Montrose County increased to 2.2%, up from 2.0% the previous year. The County's graduation rate of 77.3%, down from 78.8% in 2018, is lower than the state average of 81.9%. Colorado Department of Education's 2021 data provides further details:

Geographic Area	Total Enrollment (PK-12)	% Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch (PK-12)	Graduation Rate 2020	Dropout Rate 2020
Colorado	883,199	40.2%	81.9%	1.8%
MCSO RE-1J	5,836	54.7%	77.3%	2.2%
Montrose High	1,352	44.1%	90.3%	1.5%
Olathe High	271	54.2%	93.4%	1.6%
Peak Virtual Academy	204	16.2%	81.8%	0.0%
Vista Charter School	172	56.4%	24.7%	14.2%

Community Resources

The following programs are a comprehensive list of community agencies currently working in collaboration with Early Childhood Centers/Head Start:

PRE-K THROUGH 12TH GRADES, HIGHER AND CONTINUING EDUCATION RESOURCES

Colorado Mesa University
Colorado West Christian School
Community Options
Holy Guardian Angel School
Maslow Academy
Montrose County School District RE-1J
Pope John Paul II
Technical College of the Rockies

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING AND PLACEMENT RESOURCES

Colorado Workforce Center
Community Staffing
Elwood Staffing
State of Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

PRIMARY/BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE, HUMAN SERVICES, AND FAMILY SERVICES RESOURCES

Cedar Point Health
CSU Cooperative Extension/4-H
Dolphin House Child Advocacy Center
Dream Catcher Therapy Center
Farm Workers' Health Services
Hilltop Community Services Montrose
The Center for Mental Health
Montrose County Department of Human Services
Montrose County Department of Public Health
Montrose Memorial Hospital
My Pediatric Dentist

Northside Community Health Clinic
Over the Rainbow Behavioral Consulting
Peak Professionals
Pegasus Equine Therapy
PIC Place
River Valley Family Health Center
Shepherd's Hands
Smiles 4 Kids
Solutions Wellness Center
The Center for Mental Health
Tri-County Health Network
Urgent Care
Volunteers of America
Western Colorado Migrant and Rural Coalition

DISABILITIES RESOURCES

Community Options
Child Find
Dream Catcher Therapy Center
Montrose Memorial Hospital Rehabilitative Services
Montrose School District RE-1J Special Education
Pegasus Equine Therapy

HOMELESS AND LOW-INCOME HOUSING RESOURCES

Cottonwood Apartments
Habitat for Humanity
Haven House
House of Promise
Montrose Housing Authority
Pavilion Gardens Apartments
Sunshine Peak Apartments

CHILD CARE PROVIDER AND REFERRAL RESOURCES (located in the city of Montrose, unless otherwise noted)

Babbette's Kiddy Kampus
Bright Futures Child Care Resource and Referral, Telluride
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
Regional Early Childhood Council
Sonshine Patch
Smart Start
First Presbyterian Church

CLOTHING, FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SERVICES RESOURCES

Canyon Chiropractic
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
Delta-Montrose Electric Association (DMEA)
Farmers' Market
Food SHARE America
Habitat for Humanity ReStore
Heirlooms for Hospice Store
Kids Aid
Mexican American Development Association (MADA)
Montrose County Department of Health and Human Services
Montrose County School District RE-1J
Sharing Ministries Food Bank
Shepherd's Hands
The Salvation Army
Tom Goodrich Warm Hearts Memorial Project

TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

All Points Transport

Among other community organizations working in partnership with the ECC/Head Start programs are Walmart, Office Depot, Montrose United Methodist Church, local grocery stores, local banks and local fire, and police and ambulance services.

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 2020-2021 school year are as follow for Early Childhood Centers, including Head Start enrollees (total 271 reporting):

	White	Hispanic	Native American	Black	Asian	Pacific Islander	Other
Enrollment	259	154	5	10	3	3	8
% of Enrollment	96%	57%	2%	4%	1%	1%	3%

*Numbers total more than 100% (enrollees can mark more than one box for ethnicity)

The dominant language of children in the Montrose Early Childhood Center program is English, spoken as the only language by 62% of the children enrolled during the 2020-2021 school year. The second most common language is Spanish, spoken as the only language by 9% of children. An additional 27% are bilingual, with the remaining 2% of children using sign language, other spoken languages, or not reporting. These percentages are in alignment with overall MCS D RE-1J enrollment figures.

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

The most recent Kids Count! data shows the percentage of Colorado children (<18 years old) living in poverty declined in 2019. While this is welcome news, the current estimate still is higher than in 2000, when just ten percent of Colorado kids lived in poverty. And Montrose County rates are far higher than statewide figures:

Geographic Area	Children (0-18 years) Living in Poverty* 2019	School Children (5-18 years) Living in Poverty* 2019
Colorado	11.2%	10.7%
Montrose County	18.5%	17.8%

*Income below 100% of federal poverty guidelines

It is conservatively estimated that one-third of preschool-aged children in Montrose County are eligible for Head Start services based on economic factors alone. Beyond economic considerations, Head Start allows for categorical eligibility based on homelessness and/or living in foster care. And, as noted above, other funding sources have differing eligibility criteria.

The economic landscape of all ECC families served in the 2020-2021 school year is:

- 40% of children were living in families at or below 100% of federal poverty level
- 40% of children were living in families with income over the federal poverty level
- 20% of children were living in families not required to provide proof of income as a result of meeting other eligibility criteria.

Twenty-one (21) children automatically qualified for Head Start programming due to family homelessness, receipt of public assistance, or foster care placement, and 91 children qualified with an IEP.

The employment situation among Head Start families is often concerning. With average hourly wages equating to \$46,904 in annual income (Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2020) and the self-sufficiency standard for Montrose County at \$61,794 (two adults, one preschooler and one school-aged child, per Colorado Center on Law & Policy, 2018), many Head Start families struggle to make ends meet. In the 2020-2021 school year, 45% of Head Start families reported being single-parent households and 55% two-parent households. Additionally, families reported the following employment status:

- 79% had at least one parent employed at the time of child enrollment, dropping to 55% employed at the end of the school year.
- 7% had at least one parent enrolled in training or school at the time of child enrollment.

84 Head Start parent respondents to ECC's 2020-2021 survey self-report the following educational attainment:

- 15% non-graduates
- 40% with high school diplomas/GEDs
- 36% with associates degrees and/or some college or advanced training
- 7% with bachelor's and/or master's degrees.

Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Child Welfare

ECC staff members, including those employed via Head Start funding, are required to report suspected child abuse/neglect, with seven cases reported during the 2020-2021 school year.

Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Health and Nutrition

At ECC in 2020-2021, 69 (78%) of 88 Head Start children were enrolled in Medicaid or CHP+; eight had private health insurance, 11 were without insurance.

As an important indicator of childhood well-being, immunizations are taken very seriously at ECC/Head Start. Among ECC children enrolled during the 2020-2021 school year, 98% were up to date on all immunizations.

Within 45 days of a child's start date, ECC/Head Start works with the parent(s)/guardian(s) to complete a child nutrition assessment. BMI (Body Mass Index) results are generated and analyzed twice annually by a registered dietician, and parents of enrolled children are given the option of

consultation with the dietician. Of the Head Start children enrolled at ECC during the 2020-2021 school year, 19% were overweight and 22% obese.

The ECC/Head Start program implements Healthy School practices by incorporating:

- 30 minutes of daily physical activity
- nutritious snacks
- education on healthy eating; participation in a school garden grown by students and staff
- commitment that all Head Start-enrolled children are up to date on immunizations, physicals and annual dental exams (57 Head Start children received a professional dental examination during the 2020-2021 school year, and none had signed waivers from participation).

MCSD RE-1J data collected during the September 2020 registration process identified the following risk factors among 226 total (78 Head Start) children entering preschool:

Risk Factor	All ECC Programs (226)		Funded Head Start Enrollees (78)	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Qualifies for Free/Reduced Meals	168	74%	73	94%
Homeless	33	15%	18	23%
In Family Experiencing Domestic Violence	42	19%	20	26%
In Family Experiencing Substance Abuse	46	20%	21	27%
Child of Teen Parent	11	5%	6	8%
Parent Not Having Completed High School/Equivalent	79	35%	18	23%
In Family Experiencing Frequent Moves	53	23%	21	27%
Potential Developmental/Social Delay	15	7%	5	6%
Speech/Language Delay/Concerns	95	42%	30	38%
In Family Impacted by Natural Disaster	61	27%	23	29%
In Family Experiencing Military Deployment	2	<1%	1	1%
Family or Child Experiencing Mental Health Concerns	76	34%	32	41%
Family Member with Learning Disability	61	27%	27	35%
In Family Experiencing Family Crisis	92	41%	37	47%

Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Childcare and Preschool

In any given year, Early Childhood Centers has served more than 40% of all children enrolling in MCSD kindergarten through one of its five 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 continue to need quality early learning and care opportunities for preschool-age children. ECC’s increase in on-line applications, phone inquiries and spring registration appointments suggest that families who were thinking about relocation have decided to stay in Montrose County. Coupled with an increase in new families moving to the county, ECC had 18 children on its waiting list by the end of the 2020-2021 school year.

The following figures illustrate the significant potential for Head Start in the ECC service area, with an estimated 360 children eligible but not enrolled:

Estimated # of children, ages 3-5 years, in service area*	Estimated # of Head Start-eligible children in service area**	# of children enrolled in Head Start 2020-2021
1,344	448	88

*Colorado State Demography Office, 2021
 **Based on economic factors' eligibility only

Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Children with Disabilities

During the 2020-2021 school year, 26 Head Start enrollees had IEPs (an 85.7% increase from the prior year), as did 52 enrollees through the Children with Disabilities program (a 31.6% decrease from the prior year) and 13 enrollees in other programs, for a total 91 children being served with IEPs.

Children with IEPs automatically qualify for preschool placement. For other children displaying significant delay in one or more areas of development, eligibility is determined based on a special needs placement assessment. Assessments are conducted in the child's native language and involve the child's parents, Early Childhood Special Education Assessment Team and Child Find Team including:

- Speech language pathologist
- Occupational therapist
- Child Find Coordinator (master's-level Special Education)
- School psychologist
- Language interpreter, as needed

When a developmental delay is identified, the family/child is referred to and/or receives supports and services based on the age of the child:

- 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 ECC/ Children with Disabilities placement.

All ECC classrooms are fully inclusive, which means children with IEPs for development delays participate in all classroom activities with their same-age peers without developmental delay. Accommodation for children with IEPs (e.g. support staff and/or equipment) ensure full participation in classroom activities. Proactive outreach is continuously conducted to inform families in the community of ECC's commitment to serving children with special needs.

Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Early Childhood Centers

In response to the 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 programming and the ability to continue responding to the needs of the community by offering quality early childhood education.

Collaborative staff teams at ECC participate in the ongoing monitoring of and planning for Head Start programs. An annual self-assessment ensures that Head Start requirements are known and implemented by ECC 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 Committee collect data to identify areas working well and those in need of improvement. Team members take pride in their participation, and ECC improves as a result of this school-community self-monitoring process.

The ECC Mission

In partnership with our families and 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

ECC staff, Policy Council, and Colorado Preschool Program 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. The Child Plus online application is available to complete in both English and Spanish.
- Posters, flyers and other written materials are distributed at local grocery stores, community service agencies, post offices, libraries, medical facilities, public schools, private/public preschools, and 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, and the MCSD web page provides information on ECC programming.
- Annual re-enrollment of returning children, and discussions regarding younger siblings, are held on an ongoing basis; word-of-mouth promotion is active and encouraged.

Head Start Performance Standards require that no more than 30 calendar days elapse for a vacancy to be filled from any existing waitlist. The policy further provides for 10% of total enrollment to be comprised of those served through the Children with Disabilities program. During the 2020-2021 school year, the 52 children diagnosed with an identified disability – or 19% of 271 enrollees – far exceeded the required minimal enrollment of this population.

ECC maintains a waitlist of eligible or potentially-eligible children. At the time of registration, if a child is determined not to be eligible for any of the five ECC programs, the family is instructed to inform ECC of any changes in their situation which could change eligibility. Of 18 children on the ECC waiting list at the end of the school year (May 2021), none qualified for any ECC program.

Currently, there are ECC classrooms at two MCSD 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, as well as use by MCSD teachers enrolling their own children, typically results in full enrollment at both sites.

Community Programs and Resources Available

Early Childhood Centers has always 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, and/or subsidized childcare available via Montrose Department of Human Services.

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 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.

COVID-19 Impact, Adjustments, and Response

ECC, in collaboration with federal and state funders, worked diligently to continue service delivery for the 2020-2021 school year, while navigating the impacts of COVID-19 and fully complying with the MCSD RE-1J Return To Learn Plan. Mitigation practices from July 2020 to present have included:

- Additional cleaning/sanitizing of high-touch surfaces several times per day; disinfecting of toys minimum once per day and as otherwise needed.
- Daily student and staff health checks prior to entering school including symptom tracking and temperature checks.
- Social distancing; use of face masks (required for all staff as well as students and parents at drop-off/pick-up, home visits, and parent teacher conferences; masks made available for both staff and students via MCSD RE-1J and donations); and “cohorting” practices to keep all children and staff within a given group each day.
- Reduction of the number of individuals inside facilities (e.g. curbside drop off/pick up of students, no volunteers in classrooms).
- MCSD RE-1J collaboration with Montrose County Public Health Department to provide access to free COVID-19 testing for students and staff at an offsite, easy-to-use, drive-thru location.

From August 2020 to May 2021, children accessed ECC preschool in traditional and remote/ hybrid learning environments:

- In-person classes were available throughout the school year, except for two weeks in January 2021 when ECC's main campus and Johnson Elementary School location were closed due to a high number of teachers in quarantine related to COVID-19. During this time, classes continued online via Zoom following the remote preschool format (see below).
- Remote preschool was made available for up to 30 students, with students transitioning between remote and in-person classes based on parent preference. Virtual classes were provided by two co-teachers, held four days a week (3-1/2 hours per day for half-day preschool, 8 hours per day for full day preschool). Daily Zoom offerings included large class meetings, smaller groups based on skill level and ability to participate, and individual sessions for students and their parents/guardians; additional individual sessions were available for students as needed. Instructional packets and materials were prepared for families to pick up once a month, and teachers held virtual office hours to answer questions and provide additional support.

In July 2020, ECC received emergency COVID-19 Head Start funding to provide summer school for 2019-2020 enrolled children transitioning to kindergarten. Classes were held for four weeks, five hours each day Monday through Thursday. 45 students in five classrooms (one in Olathe, four at ECC's main campus in Montrose) were taught via 20 staff members – including one mental health consultant involved on an as-needed basis – and provided breakfast and lunch each day.

Additional funding was made available for the 2020-2021 school year by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service to provide free breakfast and lunch for all children in the School District on scheduled school days. Two locations, Olathe Elementary School and MCSD District Office, provided parents/guardians the ability to pick up meals for those students participating remotely, including during the two weeks campuses were closed.

The mental health of students and their families, as well as staff and their families, was prioritized during the 2020-2021 school year. The Director and Mental Health Consultant provided monthly check-ins with staff members to support and assess mental health needs. MCSD RE-1J provided each staff member information on mental health resources available through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which offered up-to three free therapy sessions for staff and their families, when needed. Teachers and Family Advocates provided information on available mental health resources and services for children and families when requested.

Conclusions Based on Data Analysis

Since initiating the community assessment process, Montrose County has experienced significant population growth and low wages. These factors strain community infrastructure as agencies scramble to keep up with the increased demands prompted by hardship and population growth. Housing, healthcare, education and social/human services all have been impacted by changing demographics and the economy.

Employment remains a concern; while unemployment rates currently are lower than state averages, the recent permanent closure of Montrose County's third-largest employer has displaced many workers. This impacts not only individuals and families, but also those service providers responding to the needs of families. Further, Montrose County's isolated and rural location, combined with an unpredictable economy, makes it difficult to attract qualified professionals in health care, childcare, and preschool teaching.

ECC/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 childcare costs increase.
- Steeply-rising housing prices and high cost of rent present difficulties for families to secure affordable housing, particularly lower-income families.
- A far greater number of children are living 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, particularly for the more sparsely-populated outlying communities of the county where resource/service providers must partner with one another to create viable, sustainable service delivery systems.
- Adequate facilities must be available to accommodate 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

Early Childhood Centers is committed to ongoing assessment of philosophical and programmatic approaches, self-assessment and community assessment, child outcomes, parent involvement data and parent surveys, Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) 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 Board of Education and District leadership, ECC Policy Council, preschool education staff and leadership, and the community.

Based on the results of the assessment process and updated data contained herein, as well as the needs of the community served by MCSD, Early Childhood Centers has set the following priorities for the five-year period 2019-2024:

1. Strengthen active supervision systems.
2. Provide professional development for ECC staff members; provide educational opportunities for parents to promote development of kindergarten readiness skills in children.
3. Improve the Centers' communication systems.
4. Acquire quality and sustainable facilities.

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

Goal I: TO STRENGTHEN ACTIVE SUPERVISION SYSTEMS FOR THE MCSD RE-1J EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

Objective 1: *To monitor the completion of the 2021-2022 Active Supervision Committee Action Plan*

Objective 2: *To assess the secondary monitoring data of the current system for usefulness, effectiveness, and ability to drive program planning and improvement*

GOAL II: ADDRESS TRAINING NEEDS BY PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO MCSD RE-1J EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS STAFF MEMBERS AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO PARENTS THAT PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF KINDERGARTEN READINESS SKILLS IN CHILDREN

Objective 1: *To provide preschool families with opportunities to gain knowledge and understanding in Pyramid Model strategies and the Prevent, Teach, Reinforce for Young Children (PTRYC) process for Level 2 and Level 3 Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)*

- Objective 2:** *To develop a calendar that offers ECC parents' educational opportunities*
- Objective 3:** *To seek knowledge and build partnerships with community agencies that provide family support and share the knowledge with ECC staff members and parents*
- Objective 4:** *To build positive culture at all ECC campuses*
- Objective 5:** *To provide Practice Based Coaching for CLASS to MCSD RE-1J Early Childhood Centers education staff and improve scores in the Instructional Support domain*
- Objective 6:** *To provide professional development opportunities to increase the use of Google drive for all ECC staff members*

GOAL III: IMPROVE THE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS OF MCSD RE-1J EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

- Objective 1:** *To improve the MCSD RE-1J onboarding training for new staff members by revising all job descriptions*
- Objective 2:** *To improve the MCSD RE-1J onboarding training for new staff members by having a technology training implementation plan*
- Objective 3:** *To improve the MCSD RE-1J onboarding training for new staff members by completing the training plan for active supervision*
- Objective 4:** *To improve the MCSD RE-1J onboarding training for new staff members by developing a training plan for Pyramid Model*
- Objective 5:** *To develop a sustainability plan for future implementation of Pyramid Model*
- Objective 7:** *To strengthen safety ECC safety procedures and inform all ECC staff members*
- Objective 8:** *To develop and implement a plan to communicate the new ECC policies and procedures handbook to all ECC stakeholders*

GOAL IV: TO ACQUIRE QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE FACILITIES

- Objective 1:** *To work with the Master Planning Executive Committee to develop a recommendation for facility improvements to the Montrose County School District Board of Directors*
- Objective 2:** *To work with Montrose County School District to develop a plan to eliminate the use of modulars for preschool Services.*

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 <https://affordablehousingonline.com/>

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

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Web site at <https://www.cdc.gov.html>

Colorado Center on Law & Policy, The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2018; 789 Sherman Street #300, Denver, CO 80203; (303) 573-5669; Web site at <https://cclponline.org/resources-publications/publications/self-sufficiency-standard/>

Colorado Children's Campaign; Kids Count in Colorado!, 2000-2021 reports; 1120 Lincoln Street, Suite 125, Denver, CO 80203; Web site at <http://www.coloradokids.org>

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE); Web site at <https://www.colorado.gov/cdphe>

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

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

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

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, CO 81402; (970) 249-5858; Web site at <http://ecc.mcsd.org>

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, CO 81402; Web site at <http://www.mcsd.org>

Montrose Economic Development Corporation; 100 Tessitore Court, Suite A, Montrose, CO 81401; (970) 270-0211; Web site at <http://www.montroseedc.org>

Montrose Association of Realtors; 125 Merchant Drive, Montrose, CO 81401; (970) 249-6213; Web site at www.montroseassociationofrealtors.com

River Valley Family Health Center; 308 Main Street, Olathe, CO 81425; (970) 323-6141; Web site at <http://www.rivervalleyfhc.com>

State of Colorado, Demography 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>

Technical College of the Rockies; 1765 Hwy 50, Delta, CO 81416; (970) 874-7671; Web site at <https://www.tcr.edu/>

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center; Web site at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

The Center for Mental Health, Montrose Clinic; 605 East Miami Road, Montrose, CO 81401; (970) 252-3200; Website at <https://www.centermh.org/>

The PIC Place; 87 Merchant Drive, Montrose, CO 81401; (970) 252-8896; Web site at <https://www.pic.place/>

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

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

U.S. Census Bureau; Web site at <https://www.census.gov/>

U.S. Department of Health Resources and Services Administration; Web site at <https://data.hrsa.gov/>