

2024

Community Assessment: Montrose/Olathe Early Childhood Centers



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December 2024

MONTROSE/OLATHE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT DECEMBER 2024

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Montrose County is in the southwestern quadrant of the state and has a population of 44,156 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 have steadily risen since 2018 and continue to be an issue for many families, with wait times beginning at twelve months or more to rent affordable family units. The Colorado Center on Law & Policy reports that Montrose County families need income more than two and a half times the federal poverty level to make ends meet.

Access to affordable healthcare remains a significant concern for Montrose County residents. Medicaid enrollment remains high, with 65.5% of the county's children enrolled in Medicaid and 8.0% in Colorado's publicly funded Colorado Health PlanPlus (CHP+; Kids Count in Colorado!, 2024). Yet, the proportion of uninsured children in Montrose County (7.4%) still is higher than in Colorado overall (5%), and the community is a federally- designated health professional shortage area; even with insurance, accessing care can be difficult (Kids Count in Colorado!, 2024).

Despite these struggles, there are hopeful indicators as well:

- The unemployment rate in the county remains relatively stable, at 4.0%, up only slightly from 3.5% in 2023, and slightly lower than the statewide average of 4.3% (Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, August 2024).
- An estimated 76.2% of homes in the county are owner-occupied (compared to 65.7% statewide); the majority of residents (86%) both live and work in Montrose County (American Community Survey, 2018-2022).
- Montrose County families are taking advantage of available financial supports. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the eligible population are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a number that remained consistent since last year. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the eligible population are enrolled in Special Supplemental Nutrition for Women, Infants and Children, or WIC, which is a notable decrease from 2023, where 80% were enrolled.
- The July 2023 initiation of Universal Preschool Colorado (UPK) resulted in an immediate 40% increase in Pre-K enrollment statewide, which continues to impact enrollment numbers at MCSD Early Childhood Centers.

In response to community realities and needs, MCSD Early Childhood Centers is making a positive impact through its Head Start, UPK Colorado, Children with Disabilities, and tuition programs, currently involving a total of 260 children, 102 of these through Head Start.

ECC further supports families by providing 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 2023-2024:

- 88% of Head Start children received dental care within the last 12 months (an increase of 14% from 2023), compared to 83% of children statewide (Kids Count in Colorado!, 2024).
- 92% of ECC children were current on vaccinations, which is just under the statewide PK-12 student average of 93% (Colorado Department of Health and Environment, 2024).

An additional indicator of ECC success lies in the involvement of families, particularly fathers, father figures, and male role models: During the 2023-2024 school year, parents, guardians, and family members contributed 11,453 volunteer hours to ECC-related activities, with 14% of volunteers being male, an increase that has been built from a low of 8% in 2021-2022.

Across the State of Colorado, early childhood organizations struggle to retain employees. 2020-21 data from the Department of Early Childhood shows that the statewide retention of early care and education professionals is approximately 82%, with program directors having the highest retention rate at 87% and assistant teachers having the lowest at 69%. Likewise, retaining quality staff is a challenge for ECC. During the 2023-2024 school year, ECC 's retention rate was 79%.

The following goals have been set for, and will be pursued by Early Childhood Centers in 2025:

1. ECC will provide a high-quality, research-based instructional experience that is relevant and engaging for all students to develop kindergarten readiness.
2. ECC aims to create a culture that prioritizes respect and value and is continuously monitored to ensure that staff, students, and families experience an enjoyable, safe, and inclusive environment.
3. ECC aims to create well-structured and sustainable support systems for staff, students, and families and maintain safe and engaging facilities to enrich the ECC community.

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

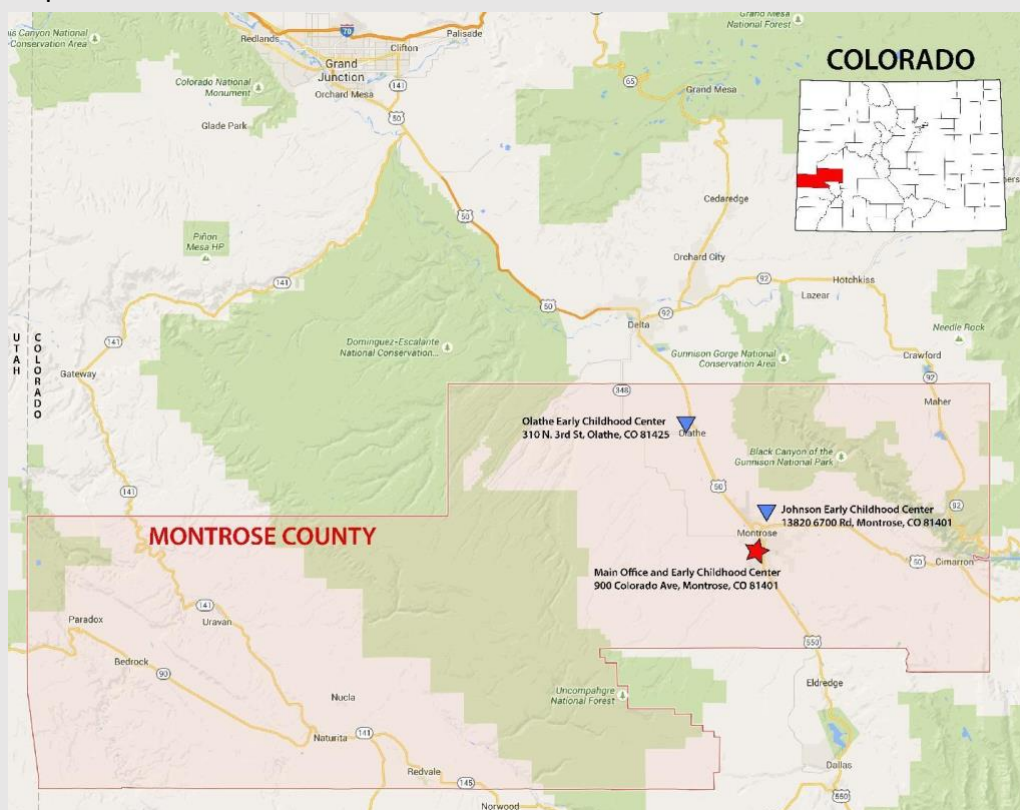
Montrose County School District RE-1J Early Childhood Centers (ECC) administers Head Start programming for preschool-age children and their families in the communities of Montrose and Olathe, Colorado; the service area coincides with Montrose County School District RE-1J (MCSD) boundaries. The towns 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 West End School District RE-2 (unserved by ECC/Head Start programs).

In 1993, three MCSD RE-1J programs were available to provide early childhood learning opportunities: Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), and MCSD's Children with Disabilities (special needs program). These programs were integrated to form Early Childhood Centers, now providing preschool services through four programs:

- Head Start, locally initiated in 1991
- Universal Preschool Colorado (UPK)
- Children With Disabilities (served through both Head Start and UPK programs)
- 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, Colorado on the Montrose County School District RE-1J administrative campus, Unit 4, housing the following staff:

- Early Childhood Centers Director
- Program Coordinators: Program Operations, Family and Community Engagement, Education
- Coordinator Assistant – Health & Safety@
- Mental Health Consultant
- Family Advocates (2)
- Administrative Assistant to the Director
- Secretary
- Data Technician

ECC employed a total of 55 staff during the 2023-2024 school year, including 15 preschool teachers, 19 classroom paraprofessionals, and two Family Advocates (including the family and community engagement coordinators), all of whom have direct involvement with enrolled children and their families.

During the 2023-2024 school year, parents, guardians, family members, and community members contributed 11,453 volunteer hours to ECC programs; 14% of volunteers were male. Volunteer hours are tallied when contributing via the following:

- Back-to-preschool orientation
- Budget/grant committee
- Classroom volunteerism
- Discovery Wonderland Carnival
- End-of-the-year BBQ
- End-of-the-year drive-in movie night
- Health Advisory Committee
- Home visits
- Interview committee
- Literacy night
- Meet & greet
- Parent-Driven Activities Committee
- Parent/teacher conferences
- Policy Council

ECC's 2023-2024 Head Start Policy Council comprised six 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 licensing of all ECC sites allows for the 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 in and participate through ECC's Head Start, UPK Colorado, or tuition programming. Those

five years old, on or before August 1, are eligible for kindergarten and thus may not be served through Head Start.

- 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 UPK Colorado eligible, s/he must have at least one qualifying factor outlined by State statute (outlined below). All four-year-olds are eligible for at least 15 hours per week of preschool through UPK.

Each child's parent(s) or guardian(s) is/are interviewed to collect information determining risk and eligibility. Eligibility criteria assign and accumulate 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.

An enrollee under the Children with Disabilities program is eligible for federal Part B services including preschool at the age of 33 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. During the 2023-2024 school year, ECC served the following:

Program	Registered/Placed (services provided for a minimum one day)	Funded Preschool Slots
Head Start*	118 children	102 children
Universal Preschool Colorado*	167	167
Tuition Pay	4	4
TOTALS	289 children	273+ children

*Students enrolled under Children with Disabilities are integrated with Head Start and UPK count.

As illustrated above, the number of children served by ECC during the 2023-2024 school year exceeded the number of available preschool slots funded by the various programs, suggesting that programming changes have made early childhood care more accessible for families. Before UPK, ECC was not operating at full capacity, as seen during the 2022-2023 school year when only 67.5% of the available slots were filled. These enrollment percentages align with statewide data from the 2023 Colorado Preschool Legislative Report which showed that prior to UPK, only 46.8% of funded preschool slots were being utilized for full-day services.

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 the overall population 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. Specific information is (most typically) provided regarding the families benefiting through ECC/Head Start during the most recent and fully completed 2023-2024 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. Additional data sources include 2020 U.S. Census statistics and American Community Survey projections for 2018-2022. 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 by the Colorado Preschool Program District Advisory Council and is updated as needed.

The process of community assessment began in 2002, as required by the U.S. Administration for Children and Families, with discussions at Policy Council, ECC staff meetings, and other community gatherings. After reviewing the first draft and working with a document for 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 has been 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 the 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 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. Many residents live in unincorporated areas of the county (45%). The City of Montrose is home to 47% of the county's residents; Olathe (5%), Naturita (2%) and Nucla (1%) are town centers providing residence for the remainder of the county's population (U.S. Census, 2020).

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

Service Area – Population, Racial/Ethnic Composition and Languages

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's July 2023 population estimates, the state of Colorado is home to 5,877,610 people, the majority of whom live in the eastern portion of the state, referred to as Colorado's Front Range. This number shows an increase of 16.9%, or 848,414 Colorado residents, in Colorado's population from 2010 to 2023 (Colorado State Demography Office, 2024).

Montrose County is one of 64 counties in Colorado and is ranked 17th based on total population. From 2010 to 2019, the population in Montrose County grew by 1,312 people (3%) from 41,188 to 42,500. From 2020 to 2029, the population of Montrose County is expected to grow 9% for a total of 46,712 residents (Colorado State Demography Office, 2024).

There currently are an estimated 2,451 children, ages five years and younger, in Montrose County; approximately 1,227 of these children are preschool-aged (Colorado State Demography Office, 2024).

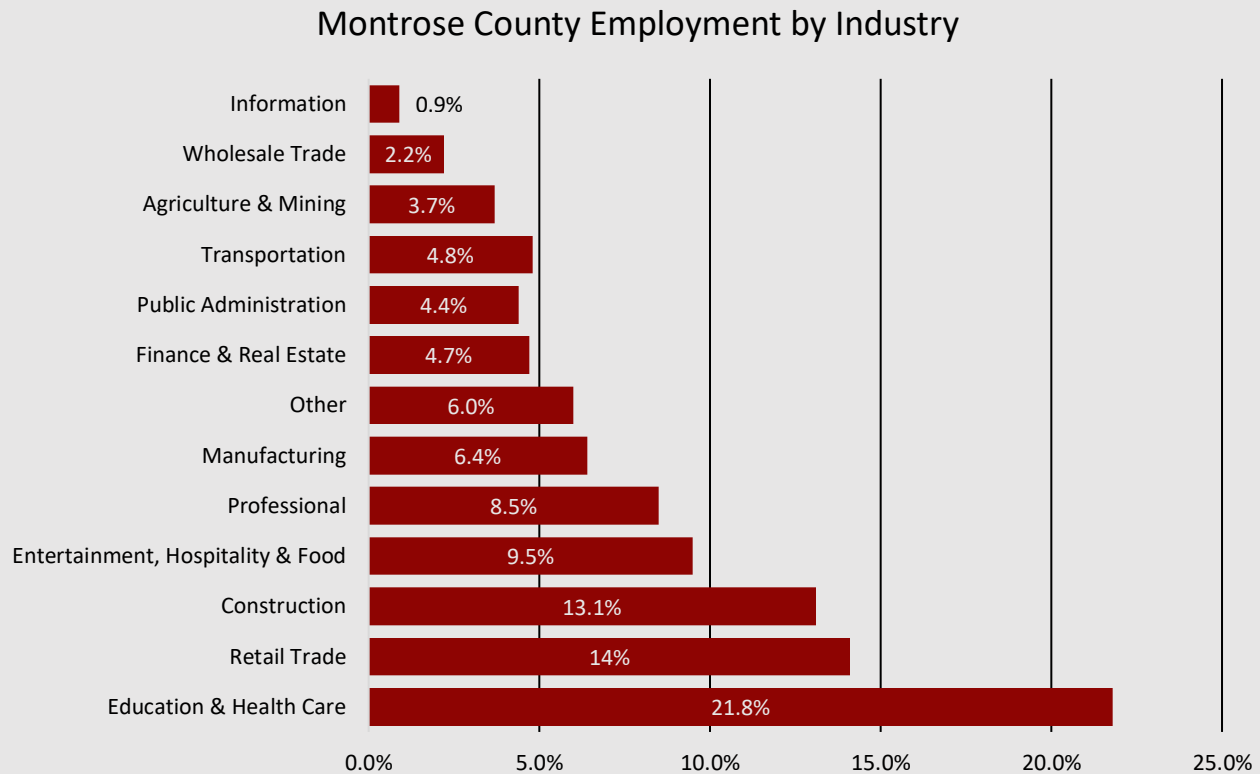
The U.S. Census Bureau's July 1, 2023, population estimations report that, among Montrose County residents aged five years or older, 16.8% speak a language other than English in the home (nearly exclusively Spanish), a figure slightly higher than the statewide figure of 16.0%. The same reports indicate the following ethnic/racial population breakdowns for Montrose County and Colorado (due to Census data reporting methods, totals do not equal 100%):

Population	White*	Black or African American*	American Indian and Alaska Native*	Asian*	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander*	Two or More Races	Hispanic/ Latino Origin
Colorado	66.1%	4.8%	1.7%	3.8%	0.2%	3.5%	22.7%
Montrose County	74.7%	0.8%	1.8%	0.9%	0.2%	2.3%	21.6%

*Not Hispanic or Latino
U.S. Census Bureau July 2023, Population Estimates

Service Area - Economy, Employment, and Income

The area's economy finds 61.4% of the workforce employed in the private sector, 11.8% employed by government, 9.1% employed by private not-for-profit, and 9.1% self-employed (American Community Survey, 2018-2022). The private, non-farm sector is made up of those working in the following trades:



The American Community Survey reports that 54.2% of households in Montrose County are family households (two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption); these households have an annual median income of \$78,074 per year.

The average hourly wage in the county still is far lower – at \$24.35 per hour – than the \$40.33 per hour state average, illustrating the need for dual-income family households to ensure ends meet (Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Quarter 1, 2024):

Geographic Area	Unemployment Rate (September 2024)*	Average Hourly Wage (1st Quarter 2024)*	Average Weekly Wage	Average Annual Wage
Colorado	4.1%	\$40.33	\$1,613	\$83,876
Montrose County	3.8%	\$24.35	\$974	\$50,648

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 20,135 (Colorado State Demography Office, 2023).

The median monthly rent rate in the County is \$1,061 (American Community Survey 2018-2022). Even with voucher assistance, the availability of affordable dwellings throughout much of the service area is limited. With the capacity to serve only 271 clients through its federal and state voucher systems, eligible families continue to see long wait periods for assistance through the Montrose County Housing Authority. The current wait time is twelve months, with 83 individuals on the waitlist for a housing unit; one year ago, there were only 35 individuals on this list.

Purchasing a home is equally challenging as the area continues to see rising home prices. From a 2011 recession-low of \$139,495 average single-family house sale price, the 2023 median sale price has more than tripled to \$496,750 (Colorado Association of Realtors, 2024). The average sales price also continues to climb, and there is no indication that the local real estate market is stabilizing.

Service Area - Social and Human Services, Child Welfare

To offset the high cost of living, many Montrose County families access public financial support (Kids Count in Colorado! 2024):

- 24.6% of Montrose County children are born to single mothers
- 2.8% of Montrose County families receive TANF assistance
- 43.5% of Montrose County families receive WIC vouchers.

Montrose County has significantly higher rates of child abuse and neglect, and out-of-home placements, than statewide averages (Kids Count!, 2024), as well as a higher 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)	Number of Students served by McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program*
Colorado	7.6	5.4	19,515 (1.6%)
Montrose County	17.8	13.9	196 (2.2%)

*Colorado Department of Education, 2024

In 2023, the Dolphin House Child Advocacy Center (Montrose) provided services for 297 primary victims and 315 secondary victims of child abuse (children 0–17 years old), providing follow-up support for 27 previous families.

In an attempt to counter child abuse, Hilltop’s Family Resource Center provides a variety of programs for Montrose County families. Hilltop programming includes the High-Fidelity Wraparound program, 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 and/or 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. Those providing these services locally include Axis, River Valley Health, Peak, MarillacHealth's Montrose Clinic (formerly PIC Place), Northside Health Clinic, Integrated Insight Therapy, Pediatric Associates, and school-based mental health professionals. Both Dream Catchers and Pegasus Equine Therapy endeavor to address behavioral challenges via animal-assisted therapies for 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 2023-2024 school year, the following referrals were documented:

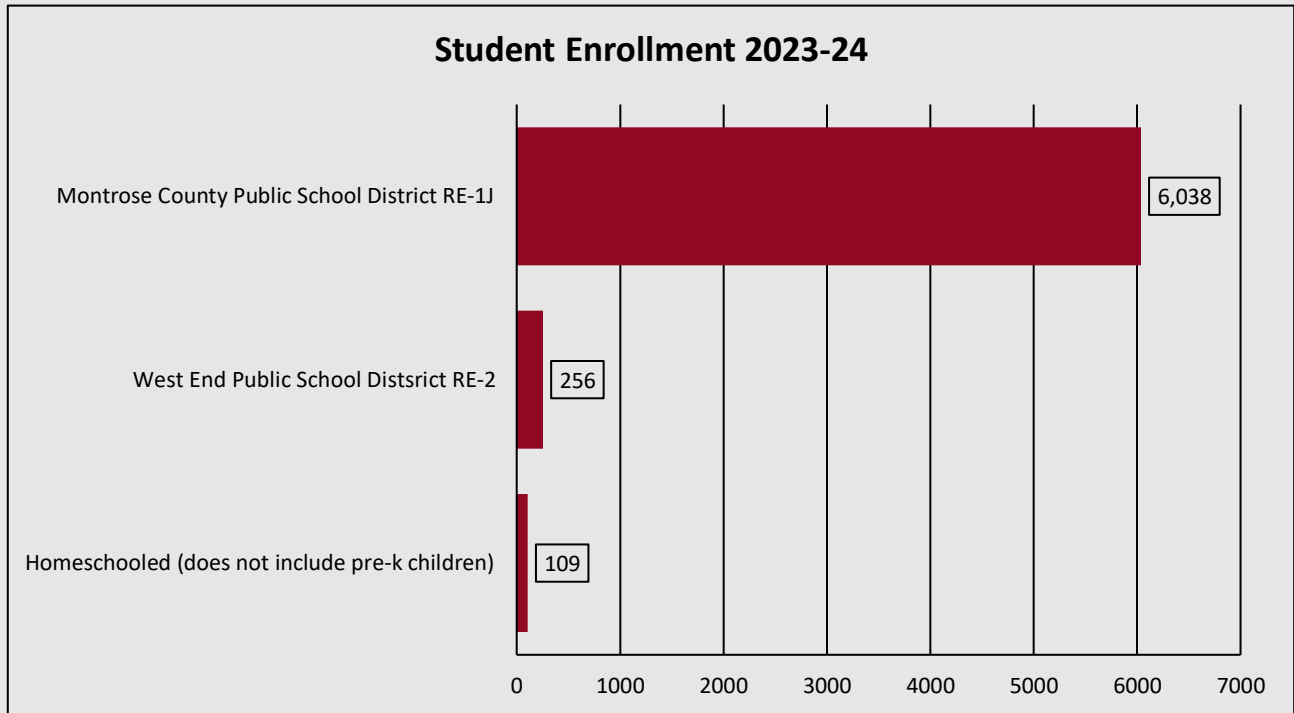
- Kids Aid (backpack food program) – 2,244 food bags
- Tom Goodrich Warm Hearts Memorial Project (coats) – 40
- Cobble Creek Angel Tree Community (Christmas presents/gift cards) – 32
- Parenting education – 20
- Emergency/crisis intervention – 10+
- Adult education ESL classes – 5

Service Area - Educational Institutions and ECC Service Delivery Sites

Numerous entities provide educational opportunities in Montrose County: Colorado Mesa University-Montrose (CMU-Montrose) provides degree programs at the associate, bachelor, and master levels, with total enrollment in the 2024 Spring Semester at 236 undergraduates students, including 66 high schoolers, a slight increase from Spring 2023 (223 undergraduates, 58 high school students).

Conveniently located in adjacent Delta County, Technical College of the Rockies offers certification programs including EMT, automotive services, computer-aided drafting and design, cosmetology, and medical and veterinary assistant. 2023-2024 enrollment included 32 Montrose/Olathe high school students, an additional 80 full- and part-time post-secondary Montrose County residents, and 133 community/supplemental education enrollees.

The majority of Montrose County Pre-K-12th grade students enrolled during the 2023-24 school attended Montrose County School District RE-1J as detailed by the following figures:



*Private K-12 institution data for the 2023-24 school year is not yet available.

Only 38.2% of Montrose County students in grades 3, 5, and 7 (grades selected by Colorado Department of Education for standardized testing) in Montrose County are meeting or exceeding expectations in English/Language Arts; the statewide average shows a competency rate of 43.7% (Kids Count!, 2024).

Specific to early childhood education, the community's licensed facilities are concentrated in the more populous area of Montrose. The following chart outlines the number of preschool facilities in the ECC/Head Start service area. (Bright Futures, Fall 2024):

Geographic Area	Total # Licensed Facilities (included private homes)	# ECC/ Head Start Facilities	# of Facilities Accepting UPK Children	Total # Slots (full- and half-day)	Current # of Open Slots
Montrose County	24*	3	18	780	46
Montrose	21 (1 pending)	2	15	696	32
Olathe	3	1	3	84	14

*Includes two preschool programs in the towns of Naturita and Paradox, geographies 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 2023-2024 school year show a greater portion of students who identify as Hispanic enrolled in Montrose County School District RE-1J schools than the community-at-large:

Population	White*	Black or African American*	American Indian and Alaska Native*	Asian	Native Hawaiian /Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Hispanic/ Latino Origin
MCSC RE-1J	56.56%	0.43%	0.60%	0.61%	0.10%	2.57%	39.14%

(*U.S. Census Bureau July 1, 2023, Population Estimates)

Of the 6,038 students enrolled in pre-K through 12th grade during the 2023-24 school year, 43% (2,623) students were race/ethnic minorities.

Families in the Service Area - Residency/Mobility

The majority of local individuals and families consider Montrose County their long-term residence. 86% of residents live and work in Montrose County and 76.2% of households are owner-occupied (American Community Survey, 2018-2022).

Families in the Service Area - Childcare Needs

According to Early Milestones Colorado, labor force participation rates indicate that 63% of all children in Colorado under the age of six have all parents in the workforce, requiring families to make arrangements for child care (*The Colorado Child Care Challenge: Capacity for Infants and Toddlers*, 2024). This situation is particularly tough for low-income families who rely on programs such as the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program for Families since it is only accepted by 49% of licensed programs (*Building an Equitable Early Care and Learning System in Colorado*, 2024).

Nearly one-third (32%) of Montrose County families with two children are considered childcare cost-burdened (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2024). The average local cost for full-time childcare is \$67 per day for a preschooler and \$70 for an infant or toddler. This marks an increase of \$15-\$20 per day compared to 2023 (Bright Futures, 2024). With average rent at \$1,061/month, a single-parent, female-led family with two children can easily spend 90% of family income on 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 Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), which 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 185% of federal poverty guidelines) and reimburse participating local childcare providers according to County-defined, predetermined 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's TANF program administered by Colorado Works.

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 greater compensation, 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. The exact number of children receiving care from family/friends is difficult to calculate; the National Survey of Early Care and Education estimates approximately 12 million children across the country are in this situation (Kids Count! 2024). Early Milestones Colorado reports four out of five Colorado infants and toddlers require care from a parent or unlicensed caregiver due to limited slots at licensed facilities (*The Colorado Child Care Challenge: Capacity for Infants and Toddlers*, 2024).

Families in the Service Area - Preschool Needs

Preschool is widely acknowledged as a critical contributor to early childhood education, laying the foundation for a child's future educational success. In a 2022 survey, Early Milestones reported that 83% of families that would likely send their children to preschool if it was affordable for their family (*Still Struggling: Colorado Families' Views on Child Care and Hope for Universal Preschool*, 2022). This remains true in 2024. When parents were given the opportunity to increase the number of hours of preschool their child can receive under UPK, most parents opted in (Colorado Sun, 2024).

Beginning in 1988, the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) funded preschool programming for children being raised in low-income families or by parents having completed lower educational levels, involved with foster care or involvement with violence/neglect in the home, and/or showing delays in language and social development. At that time, ECC was the only CPP provider in the Montrose-Olathe community. In July 2023, CPP was replaced with Universal Preschool Colorado (UPK) through the passage and funding of House Bill 22-1295, creating a no-cost preschool program under the newly formed Colorado Department of Early Childhood. Recognizing the importance of equal access to early childhood education, UPK ensures all Colorado 4-year-olds have access to at least 15 hours of preschool instruction per week; three-year-olds being raised in low-income households and with one additional qualifying factor (IEP, homelessness, dual language learner, or foster/kinship care) are also eligible for 10 hours of UPK-funded preschool instruction.

Regional Local Coordinating Organizations (LCOs) are responsible for assisting families with questions they have about UPK and helping them complete the online registration. LCOs also work with local providers to register them as a qualifying preschool and report slot availability. Bright Futures, the region's Early Childhood Council, acts as the Local Coordinating Organization (LCO) for coordinating the UPK delivery system in Montrose County.

UPK is touted as a game changer for early childhood education in Colorado, helping the many working families who did not qualify for financial support in the past. As of January 2024, 60% of eligible children were enrolled in UPK (Kids Count! 2024). In the 2023-2024 school year, Bright Futures found that Montrose families who participated in UPK saved an average of \$6,000/year. This number exceeds the predicted \$4,300/year forecasted in Fall 2023 for statewide household savings.

These UPK reports have been consistent with the findings of Montrose Early Childhood Centers (ECC) after a full year of the program. With cost no longer a barrier, enrollment in (ECC) has increased by 25%. While this is less than the increase in statewide enrollment (40%), Montrose County's numbers may be impacted by capacity issues, including the number of licensed centers and the ability to retain qualified staff.

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 with (potential) developmental concerns and helps to prepare them for a successful start in their education. The local Child Find Coordinator provides screenings for individual families/children throughout the year; from June 2023 to 2024, 184 screenings and 76 evaluations were completed with those living in the ECC/Head Start service region; among those evaluated, only four children did not meet required program involvement thresholds.

Children identified as qualified through Child Find benefit from an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and are provided services through federal Part C funding for infants and toddlers. Community Options is the local mandate to provide therapeutic services for these children. Shortly before a child turns three, s/he is reassessed to determine if the identified developmental delay will significantly impact educational development; if yes, the child receives an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and will benefit from ECC's preschool programming and other services in an integrated classroom with children funded through Head Start, 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, 2023), with significant provider shortages resulting in chronic 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 health insurance coverage for and enrollment of its children. 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+.

Montrose County Children's Health Coverage	2021	2022	2023	2024
Montrose County Uninsured Children	8.6%	8.6%	7.2%	7.4%
Montrose County Children Enrolled in Medicaid	53.4%	58.3%	63.5%	65.5%
Montrose County Children Enrolled in CHP+	13.7%	10.1%	8.6%	8.0%

(Kids Count in Colorado!, 2021 -2024)

The local River Valley Family Health Center, 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 bilingual staff (Spanish) and 33 full-time and part-time providers (primary and behavioral health, dentists/hygienists, pharmacists). River Valley served 8,642 patients in 2023 (unduplicated count) via 40 examination rooms at three facilities located in Olathe, Montrose, and Delta.

MarillacHealth's Montrose Clinic (formerly known as PIC Place - Partners in Integrated Care) serves patients of all ages regardless of ability to pay, including uninsured (sliding scale fees), underinsured, and insured (including Medicaid, Medicare Advantage Plans and Rocky Mountain Health Plans. The Clinic is a fully integrated primary (family practice) health, preventive, and restorative dental, optometric, and behavioral health services for residents of Montrose and Delta counties that historically served approximately 6,000 unduplicated patients each year.

Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Testing is provided by the Montrose County Health Department to identify children with unmet medical needs. These children may be eligible for TANF and/or Medicaid benefits.

Numerous Montrose County families wrestle with nutritional challenges, including the ever-growing concern of childhood obesity; this is most particularly an issue for those of lower income who rely on less expensive foods (typically highly processed items other than lean meats, fresh fruit, and vegetables). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that youth (ages 2-19 years) with a family income at/below 130% of the Federal Poverty Level are two times more likely to be obese than their more affluent peers.

2024 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps data reveals that 27% of Montrose County adults are obese, 11% of residents are food insecure and eight percent have limited access to healthy foods, all of which are three points higher than state averages and put Montrose children at greater risk of low nutrition diets, food anxiety, and health problems including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and poor mental health.

Eligibility for free/reduced lunch is another indicator of the need for supportive nutrition services. Free/reduced lunch rates increased for both Colorado and Montrose County School District RE-1J in the 2023-2024 school year, but RE-1J increased at a higher rate:

- Montrose RE-1J – 60% (up 8%)
- Colorado – 46% (up 6%)

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 the preparation of fresh foods.

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

Among Montrose County adults 25 years and older American Community Survey data (2018-2022) reports:

- 10.7% have less than a high school education
- 33.2% have a high school diploma or equivalent
- 22.1% have some college/no degree
- 34% have a degree (6.3% associates, 18.6% bachelors, 9.1% graduate/professional)

During the most recently reported year, local K-12 dropouts continued to decrease as graduate rates increased; Montrose and Olathe High schools show figures in alignment with or better than statewide averages (Colorado Department of Education):

Geographic Area	Total Pupil Count 2022-23	Graduation Rate 2023	Dropout Rate 2023
Colorado	468,412	83.1%	2.1%
MCSD RE-1J	3,136	78.2%	1.4%
Montrose High	1,466	89.3%	1.1%
Olathe High	506	93.7%	0.5%
Peak Virtual Academy	219	92.0%	0.9%
Vista Charter School	236	29.6%	8.1%

Community Resources

The following provides a comprehensive list of community agencies and programs currently working in collaboration with Early Childhood Centers/Head Start:
(located in the city of Montrose, unless otherwise noted)

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

Colorado Mesa University
 Colorado West Christian School
 Community Options
 Goal High School
 Holy Guardian Angel School
 Maslow Academy

Montrose Christian Church Preschool
Montrose County School District RE-1J
Pope John Paul II
Sonshine Patch Preschool
Technical College of the Rockies

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING AND PLACEMENT PROVIDERS

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

PRIMARY AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE, HUMAN SERVICES, AND FAMILY SERVICES PROVIDERS

Cedar Point Health
Cobble Creek Community
CSU Cooperative Extension/4-H
Dolphin House Child Advocacy Center
Dream Catcher Therapy Center
Farm Workers' Health Services
Hilltop Community Services Montrose (including the Family Resource Center)
The Center for Mental Health
MarillacHealth
Montrose County Department of Health and Human Services
Montrose Recreation District
Montrose Regional Health
My Pediatric Dentist
Northside Community Health Clinic
Over the Rainbow Behavioral Consulting
Peak Professionals
Pegasus Equine Therapy
River Valley Family Health Center
Shepherd's Hands
Smiles 4 Kids
Solutions Wellness Center
The Center for Mental Health
Trek Bicycle Montrose
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 Regional Health Rehabilitative Services
Montrose County School District RE-1J Special Education
Pegasus Equine Therapy

LOW-INCOME HOUSING AND SHELTER PROVIDERS

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

Babbette's Kiddy Kampus
Bright Futures Child Care Resource and Referral
Bright Beginnings Child Care
Creative Hands
First Presbyterian Church
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
Precious Child Care & Learning Center
Regional Early Childhood Council
Sonshine Patch
Smart Start

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

All Points Transit

Other community organizations working in partnership with the ECC/Head Start programs are Walmart, Office Depot, Montrose United Methodist Church, local grocery stores and banks, and local fire, 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 2023-2024 school year are as follow for Early Childhood Centers, including Head Start enrollees*:

	White	Hispanic	Native American	Black	Asian	Pacific Islander	Other
Enrollment	253	174	7	1	2	0	0
% of Enrollment	66.9%	45.3%	1.8%	0.3%	0.5%	0%	0%

*During the 2023-24 school year, 118 children were enrolled at least one day in Head Start's 102 funded slots.

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

In alignment with MCSD RE-1J's overall enrollment, the dominant language of children served through ECC is English, spoken as the only language by 157 children enrolled during the 2023-2024 school year. The second most common language is Spanish, being the only language spoken by 63 children. Twenty-three children are English/Spanish bilingual, and five children use sign language, other spoken languages, or did not report. These numbers are in alignment with overall MCSD RE-1J enrollment figures.

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

Montrose County continues to have higher rates of poverty than statewide averages:

Geographic Area	Children(0-18 years) Living in Poverty* 2022
Colorado	11.1%
Montrose County	15.4%

*Income at/below 100% of federal poverty guidelines, 2024 Kids Count! Report

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.

Among families served by ECC in the 2023-2024 school year:

- 146 children were living in families at or below 100% of the federal poverty level
- 108 children were living in families with income above the poverty level

- 15 children were living in families not required to provide proof of income as a result of meeting other eligibility criteria.

In the 2023-2024 school year, 38% of Head Start families reported being single-parent households and 62% two-parent households, with the following employment status:

- 80% had at least one parent employed at the time of child enrollment.
- 15% had at least one parent enrolled in training or school at the time of child enrollment.

Head Start parents self-report the following educational attainment:

- 30% non-graduates
- 28% with high school diplomas/GEDs
- 31% with associate degrees and/or some college or advanced training
- 6% with bachelor's and/or master's degrees
- 5% non-reporting

Seventeen (17) of 118 children automatically qualified for Head Start programming due to family homelessness, receipt of public assistance, or foster care placement, and seven children qualified with an IEP.

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 eight cases reported during the 2023-2024 school year.

Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Health and Nutrition

At ECC in 2023-2024, 107 (91%) of 118 Head Start children were enrolled in Medicaid or CHP+; five had private health insurance, and six 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 2023-2024 school year, 100% 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. Twice a year, the ECC Health Technician measures students' heights and weights which revealed that of the Head Start children enrolled at ECC during the 2023-2024 school year:

- 9% qualified as overweight (5% more than 2022-2023)
- 3% qualified as obese (11% less than 2022-2023)
- 11% qualified as underweight for their age/sex

The ECC/Head Start program implements Healthy School practices by incorporating 30 minutes of daily physical activity, nutritious snacks, and education on healthy eating. In addition, Montrose ECC ensures that all Head Start-enrolled children are up to date on annual physicals and dental exams. 108 Head Start children received a professional dental examination during the 2023-2024 school year, and no child had a signed waiver from participation in physical activity).

Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Childcare and Preschool

The Montrose and Olathe communities continue to need quality early learning and care opportunities for preschool-age children. The following figures illustrate the significant potential for Head Start in the ECC service area, with an estimated 305 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 2023-2024
1,284	423	118

*Colorado State Demography Office, 2024

**Based solely on economic factors' eligibility

ECC had no children on its waiting list by the end of the 2023-2024 school year.

Eligible Head Start Children and Families – Children with Disabilities

During the 2023-2024 school year, 17 Head Start enrollees had IEPs (a decrease of four from the prior year), and 55 enrollees in other programs, for a total of 72 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.

When a developmental delay is identified, the family/child is referred to and/or receives supports and speech, motor, and educational services. For qualifying children ages 3-5 years, an IEP is created, including attention to specific therapy needs.

All ECC classrooms are fully inclusive, which means children with IEPs participate in all classroom activities with their same-age peers. Accommodation for children with IEPs (e.g., support staff and/or equipment) ensures 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 meets Head Start Performance Standards for monitoring the quality of services. The parent, staff, and community volunteer 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 because 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. A recruitment policy is in place and is followed by all staff; methods for recruitment include:

- Child Find screenings, 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, posted and distributed at local grocery stores, community service agencies, post offices, libraries, medical facilities, public schools, private/public preschools, and businesses.
- Public service announcements, submitted to local newspapers, local cable access channels, radio stations, and other regionally distributed media publications.
- MCSD RE-1J website, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media postings, disseminating program information and updates.
- Annual re-enrollment of returning children, and discussions regarding younger siblings, held on an ongoing basis; active and encouraged word-of-mouth promotion.

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 2023-2024 school year, the 17 Head Start children diagnosed with an identified disability – or 17% of 118 enrollees –exceeding 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 four ECC programs, the family is instructed to inform ECC of any changes in their situation that could indicate eligibility.

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 also benefits MCSD RE-1J staff enrolling their own children at ECC and typically results in full enrollment at both sites.

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 and the 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, finding solutions to address otherwise 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.

Conclusions Based on Data Analysis

Since initiating the annual community assessment process two decades ago, Montrose County has experienced significant population growth – particularly as a result of those with significant financial resources relocating to the community (and driving up housing costs) – and wages that continue to lag statewide averages. In a post-pandemic and inflation-ridden environment, these factors strain infrastructure, as agencies scramble to keep up with community demand for affordable housing, healthcare, education, and social/human services.

It is in this context that ECC/Head Start identifies the following trends, concerns, and gaps as most noteworthy:

- A shortage of affordable housing continues to persist and even worsen. Population growth is projected to continue, creating an exceedingly competitive housing market that presents great problems for lower-income families, many of whom are Head Start eligible.
- Jobs that pay living wages remain a concern in Montrose County, impacting not only individuals and families but also the service providers tasked with meeting the needs of these families. Low wages, and notable inflation, result in families' inability to survive on one or even two parents working full-time jobs, especially as childcare costs increase.
- UPK presents new opportunities along with the challenges of increased enrollment. Fall 2024 enrollment at ECC indicates an increased demand for services. This increased demand has a ripple effect on programming and operations:
 - Financial impacts - To accommodate changes to enrollment processes and prepare for UPK rollout, staff logged more summer hours (which has financial impact) than in previous years.
 - ECC/Head Start is serving an increasing number of children identified as special needs, requiring additional staffing (thus funding) to ensure coverage for students with IEPs.

- Less personal interaction with families during enrollment – UPK’s online enrollment system versus the in-person enrollment of the past means Family Advocates have fewer interactions with families and limited opportunities to get to know them.
- UPK’s online enrollment system (versus the in-person enrollment of the past) results in ECC’s Family Advocates having fewer interactions with families and limited communication opportunities, resulting in more miscommunications and greater challenges in addressing child learning and behavioral challenges.
- Changing policy impacts – The schedule for local school district enrollment does not always line up with the timing of changes to statewide policy; sometimes changes must be made during or post-enrollment, impacting families and ECC classrooms.
- Adequate facilities must be available to accommodate the growing number of children enrolled in programs, particularly those with disabilities. Montrose County School District RE-1J recognizes this need, putting a bond measure on the November 2024 ballot to address district facility issues, including space for the Montrose ECC. The measure was voted down, and while the District recognizes the need still exists, there is no definitive timeline for securing funding.

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 years) and short-term (specific components/programs) goals.

Based on the results of these various assessment processes, updated data contained herein, the needs of the community and the formal strategic plans set forth in September 2023 by representatives of the MCSD RE-1J Board of Education, ECC Policy Council, preschool education staff and ECC staff leadership, Early Childhood Centers intends to pursue the following goals and objectives in 2025:

Instructional Goal:

ECC will provide a high-quality, research-based instructional experience that is relevant and engaging for all students to develop kindergarten readiness.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that all teaching teams score at the competitive CLASS threshold of Head Start guidance.
2. Expand instructional practices to include inclusion and differentiation in every ECC classroom so that learning is engaging to all students.
3. Develop ECC Kindergarten readiness SMART goals for all five learning domains.

Culture Goal:

ECC aims to create a culture that prioritizes respect and value and is continuously monitored to ensure that staff, students, and families experience an enjoyable, safe, and inclusive environment.

Objectives:

1. Collect and analyze all relevant staff data that will inform positive ECC culture (i.e., staff succession survey, staff satisfaction survey, etc.).
2. Develop a 2025-2026 school year budget that will prioritize a positive culture for ECC staff.

Systems Goal:

ECC aims to create well-structured and sustainable support systems for staff, students, and families and maintain safe and engaging facilities to enrich the ECC community.

Objective:

1. Create an induction program for all first-year teachers, teachers who obtain a waiver, and new teaching teams.

VII. APPENDIX

Community Assessment: Sources of Data

Information has been obtained via scanning websites and email correspondence with the following:

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 Department of Education. Data Dashboard: Retention of ECE Professionals 20-21 School Year. Website at https://itableau.du.edu/views/CDECECEWorkforceDashboard/Retention?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aorigin=card_share_link

Colorado Center on Law & Policy, The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2022; 789 Sherman Street #300, Denver, CO 80203; (303) 573-5669; Web site at <https://cclponline.org/resources-publications/publications/self-sufficiency-standard/>

Colorado Center on Law & Policy, Human Services Gap Map 2024; 789 Sherman Street #300, Denver, CO 80203; (303) 573-5669; Web site at: <https://gapmap.org>

Colorado Children's Campaign; Kids Count in Colorado!, 2000-2024 reports; 1120 Lincoln Street, Suite 125, Denver, CO 80203; Web site at <http://www.coloradokids.org>

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>

County Health Rankings and Roadmaps; Web site at <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/colorado/montrose?year=2024>

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>

Early Milestones Colorado. (2022). *Still Struggling: Colorado Families' Views on Child Care and Hopes for Universal Preschool*. Web site at: <https://earlymilestones.org/resources/>
https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/EM-Preschool-StillStruggling_updated.pdf

Early Milestone Colorado. (2024). *Building an Equitable Early Care and Learning System in Colorado*. Web site at: https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Building-an-Equitable-Early-Care-and-Learning-System-in-Colorado_FINAL.pdf

Early Milestone Colorado. (2024). *The Colorado Child Care Challenge: Capacity for Infants & Toddlers*. Web site at: https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/EM-009-Child-Care-Capacity_OneSheet_r2.pdf

Eason, B. (2024, March 4). The cost of universal pre-K in Colorado: Thousands of at-risk kids got less classroom time. Colorado Sun. Web site at <https://coloradosun.com/2024/03/04/colorado-pre-k-at-risk-enrollment/>

MarillacHealth, Montrose Clinic; 87 Merchant Drive, Montrose, CO 81401; (970) 200-1674; Web site at <https://marillachealth.org/marillachealth-locations-and-hours/>

Montrose County Housing Authority; 222 Hap Court, Olathe, CO 81425; (970) 323-5445; Web site at <https://montroshousingauthority.com/>

Montrose County School District RE-1J; P.O. Box 10,000, Montrose, CO 81402; Web site at <http://www.mcsd.org>

Montrose Association of Realtors; 125 Merchant Drive, Montrose, CO 81401; Web site at <https://montrose.stats.showingtime.com/docs/lmu/x/MontroseCounty?src=map>

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 Early Childhood, Web site at <https://cdec.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>

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

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/>

Universal Preschool Colorado; Web site at <https://cdec.colorado.gov/universal-preschool-colorado>

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; *American Community Survey, 2018-2022*. Web site at [https://data.census.gov/profile/Montrose County, Colorado?g=050XX00US08085](https://data.census.gov/profile/Montrose%20County,%20Colorado?g=050XX00US08085)

U.S. Census Bureau; *Quick Facts, Montrose County, Colorado*, July 1, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/montrosecountycolorado,CO/PST045223>

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