

2023

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

CCS EARLY LEARNING



EARLY
HEAD
START

HEAD
START

*Making a
difference
since 1971*

(907) 373-7000

www.ccsalaska.org

info@ccsalaska.org

PREPARED FOR CCS EARLY LEARNING BY ACTIONABLE DATA CONSULTING
DECEMBER 2023

Agency History & Executive Summary

CCS Early Learning has served as the federal grantee providing Head Start and Early Head Start Services for the area just north of Anchorage, Alaska (Chugiak, Eagle River and the Matanuska – Susitna Borough) since 1971. In the years from 1971-1988 services were only delivered in the Chugiak and Eagle River communities. However, in 1988 services expanded to include the rapidly growing population in the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough. As the Mat-Su population and need for services continued to rapidly increase – this became the area where the majority of our work was. The last Head Start services in the Chugiak/Eagle River communities were provided in 2022.

The Mat-Su Borough has been the fastest growing area of Alaska for nearly 50 years, with the population roughly doubling in the last 25 years (from 58,000 people in 1999 to 116,000 people in 2023). CCS only provided Head Start services until 2009 when the first Early Head Start grant was awarded. Several additional EHS expansion grants have been obtained since that original EHS application. However, as this community assessment clearly demonstrates, even with the addition of EHS, the need for services within the Mat-Su (both EHS and HS) continues to far exceed the number of funded slots (and funding amounts) that are available.

As CCS has operated in this rapidly changing and growing community, many adaptations have been made in order to continue providing the highest quality services – to the greatest number of children and families possible. The number and location of facilities has changed several times and the program offerings and options have constantly evolved to better meet the changing needs of the service area. However, the themes present in this community assessment continue to be very similar to those we have seen in the past:

1. The population growth (and the resulting level of increased child/family needs) in our service area has far exceeded our ability to meet the demand – even with our successful Early Head Start expansion efforts.
2. Along with the overall population growth in the Mat-Su – the population centers within the Borough have shifted. Knik-Fairview continues to experience rapid growth, necessitating additional services for this highly populated area.

While not contained within this report – the current environment of inadequate resources combined with the two facts above presents additional challenges that are incredibly difficult to balance and overcome. As we struggle to maintain our existing level of services to children and families (not keeping up with population growth and community demand) we also are faced with inflationary pressures that also are not adequately funded. This forces us to choose between maintaining current services and decreasing our level of service in order to make quality improvements (higher wages and better benefits, longer service hours, higher staffing ratios, etc). As long as funding is scarce – we anticipate this challenge will remain.

Table of Contents

- Agency History & Executive Summary2
- Table of Figures and Tables6
- Overview of the State of the Grantee and communities in the service area..... 10
 - Grantee Type, history, and other programs administered 10
 - Delegate agencies – CCS Early Learning has no delegate agencies..... 11
 - Eligibility Criteria..... 11
 - Number of eligible children and families to be served 11
 - Actual number of enrolled children and families including cultural and linguistic features 12
 - Program options offered 13
 - Location of centers 14
 - Homes, central office, other offices – There are no other homes or offices..... 14
 - Service and Recruitment Area..... 14
 - Location of delegate agencies – CCS Early Learning has no delegate agencies..... 16
 - Location of communities and population groups 17
- Methodology 19
 - Purpose of the Community Assessment 19
 - Community Assessment Team members, roles, responsibilities, and selection 19
 - Consultant Role 20
 - Overview of Training Provided to Team..... 21
 - Role of the Policy Council and the Board 21
 - Community Assessment Timeline 21
- Sources of CA Secondary Data 21
 - Internal data sources..... 21
 - External data, including census data, and data on underserved/new/emerging populations..... 22
- Methods of Data Collection, Trends, and Analysis (Surveys, interviews/focus groups/translation)..... 23
- Data collected and Findings 23

Employment patterns, noting major businesses and industries.....	23
Housing patterns	26
Public school patterns	29
Transportation patterns	33
Medical and environmental health issues.....	35
Social and economic status of population	45
Foster Care and OCS Involvement - Child Maltreatment.....	49
Language and cultural base of population and Race and Ethnic characteristics of population	52
Recent population changes including immigration, new or emerging populations	54
Population estimates and trends	56
Types and locations of childcare programs and arrangements for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.....	57
Eligible Unserved Children.....	64
Types and locations of childcare programs and arrangement for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities	67
Information and demographics on HS eligible children and their families, including new, emerging and underserved populations	69
Strengths and needs of Head Start eligible children and families as defined by the HS program and local institutions serving them.....	73
Domain 1: Physical, mental, dental health and developmental disability	73
Domain 2: Housing, employment, transportation, education, nutrition, social services	75
Domain 3: Culture, spirituality, language, and leisure	76
Comparison of strengths and needs of HS eligible children and families as defined by the families themselves and local institutions serving them.	77
Collaborative arrangements.....	79
Data Review and Analysis including major issues trend and concerns.....	82
Recommendations and priorities	85
Key issues facing eligible children and families to be addressed by the Head Start Program	85
Prioritized Recommendations:	86
• Strategic goals and measurable objectives	86

- Recruitment area for grantee..... 86
- Recruitment area for each delegate, if applicable 86
- Locations for centers and home-based programs..... 87
- Criteria for recruitment and selection..... 87

Financial implications of recommendations 87

Priority assigned to serving new, emerging or underserved populations that have been identified during the community assessment..... 87

Appendix A: Survey and Focus Group Feedback from Community Stakeholders on CCS Early Learning..... 88

Table of Figures and Tables

Table 1. 2023-24 CCS Early Learning Programs by Location	10
Table 2. 2023-24 CCS Early Learning Eligibility Guidelines (100% of Poverty – adjusted for Alaska)	11
Table 3. Number of classrooms by location, 2023-2024	11
Table 4. Number of slots for children by community, 2023-2024)	11
Table 5. Actual number of enrolled children and families by CCS community (2022-23)	12
Figure 1. Cultural characteristics of CCS enrolled children, 2022-2023, (%)	12
Table 6. Cultural characteristics of enrollees by center	13
Table 7 Linguistic characteristics of actual enrollees by center	13
Table 8. 2023-24 CCS Early Learning Slots by program	13
Figure 2. Location of centers in Matanuska Susitna Borough, Alaska.....	14
Figure 3. Map of Approximate CCS Early Learning Service Area Recruitment Boundaries.....	15
Figure 4. Map of CCS Early Learning Children Enrolled 2022-23.....	15
Figure 5. Map of CCS Early Learning Children Enrolled 2022-23 Who Received Bus Services.....	16
Figure 6. Matanuska Susitna Borough Census Designated Places.	17
Table 9. Population and Share of Borough Population by Community Served by CCS.....	18
Table 10. Community Assessment Core Team Members and roles.....	19
Table 11 Cross-sectional Group of Community Stakeholder Team Members	20
Table 12. Labor Force Participation for Mat-Su Borough Population (16+), 2021.....	24
Table 13. Unemployment Rate by Population Demographics, 2021	25
Table 14. Mat-Su Borough Average Monthly Employment and Wages by Sector, 2021.....	26
Figure 7. Total Households in the Mat-Su Borough by Type, 2021.....	27
Figure 8. Age of Own Children in Mat-Su Households, 2021	28
Table 15. Under 18 Population by Household Type in Mat-Su Borough, 2021	28
Table 16. Percentage of Children who Met All Goals for Kindergarten Readiness, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2016-2020	29
Figure 9. Educational Attainment of Mat-Su Borough Residents (25+), 2021	30
Figure 10. School Enrollment by Level for Mat-Su Borough Population (ages 3+), 2021	30

Table 17. Schools by Type in the Mat-Su Borough, 2022.....	31
Table 18. Mat-Su Borough School District Enrollment by School, 2021	32
Figure 11. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Report Someone Read Aloud to Child Yesterday, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020	33
Figure 12. Mat-Su Worker's Mode of Transportation to Work, 2021.....	34
Figure 13. Available Vehicles for Mat-Su Workers (ages 16+), 2021	35
Figure 14. Mothers of Newborns Reporting First Trimester Prenatal Care, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018 -2020.....	37
Figure 15. Mothers of Newborns who Smoked During Third Trimester, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018 - 2020.....	37
Figure 16. Mothers of Newborns who Drank During Third Trimester, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018 - 2020	38
Figure 17. Mothers of Newborns who Used Marijuana or Hash During Pregnancy, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018 - 2020.....	38
Table 20. Health Insurance Coverage for Children Under Age 6, 2021.....	39
Figure 18. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children Reporting Having a Provider Who Knows Child and is Familiar with Child's Health History, Mat-Su Borough and Alaska, 2018-2020	39
Figure 19. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Reported Their Child Had a Well-Child Appointment in the Previous 12-Months, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020	40
Figure 20. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Reported They Did Not Vaccinate their Child(ren), Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020	40
Figure 21. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Report Taking Their Child(ren) to the Dentist, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018 - 2020	41
Figure 22. Five-Year Annual Average Injuries Requiring Hospitalization by Age, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2017-2021 .	42
Table 21. Percentage of Three-Year-Olds Receiving Developmental Screenings, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2015-2019	42
Figure 23. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Report Their Child Witnessed Violence in the Household, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020.....	43
Figure 24. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children Who Report Feeling Down, Depressed or Hopeless During the Past Three-Months, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020.....	44
Figure 25. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Report Their Child Experienced the Death of a Household Member, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020.....	44
Figure 26. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children Who Have Someone to Help Them When Sick, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020.....	45

Figure 27. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children with Help to Go to Clinic, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020.....	46
Figure 28. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Have Someone to Ask for \$50 Loan, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020.....	46
Figure 29. Mat-Su Borough Household Income, 2021	47
Table 22. Poverty Status of Mat-Su Borough Population (<18), 2021	47
Table 23. Mat-Su Borough School District Free and Reduced-Price Eligibility by School, 2021-2022	48
Table 24. Mat-Su Borough Rates (per 1,000 children) of Substantiated Reports of Child Maltreatment, Trend Comparison 2018 to 2021	50
Figure 30. Substantiated Reports of Any Type of Child Maltreatment, Rate per 1,000 Children, 2019-2021.....	50
Table 25. Reports of Child Maltreatment Handled by Wasilla OCS Office by Type of Report and Type of Maltreatment, 2019-2021	51
Figure 31. Substantiated Reports of Child Maltreatment (per 1,000 Children) Handled by the Wasilla OCS Office by Type and Year	51
Table 26. Alaska Children in Foster Care, FY 2021	52
Figure 32. Mat-Su Borough Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2021	53
Table 27. Mat-Su Borough Population by Race / Ethnicity, 2021	53
Table 28. Alaska Population by Borough, 2011 to 2021 Population Change	54
Table 29. Mat-Su Borough Population Change by Community, 2020.....	55
Table 30. Estimated and Projected Population in the Mat-Su Borough 2021 – 2050 by Age.....	56
Table 31. Mat-Su Borough Population by Age, 2021	57
Figure 33. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children Reporting Regular Childcare Usage in the Past Six Months, Mat-Su Borough and Alaska 2018-2020.....	58
Table 32. Total Childcare Slots Available at Licensed Childcare Facilities in the Mat-Su, 2022	59
Table 33. Childcare Facility Closures During the Pandemic, 2020-2022	60
Figure 34. Before the COVID-19 pandemic began, did your child regularly attend school or use any type of childcare, such as preschool, daycare, Head Start, or in-home care by relatives or friends?	61
Figure 35. To what extent are the following statements true for you [related to childcare]. Since the COVID-19 pandemic:.....	62
Table 34. Early Childhood Education Participation, Capacity and Gaps, 2022.....	63

Table 35. Impacts of Childcare Shortage on Families with Children, Mat-Su Borough, 2022.....	64
Table 36. Full-Time Licensed Childcare Rates by Community and Age Range, 2021	64
Table 37. Disability Status of Mat-Su Residents, 2021	68
Table 38. MSBSD Students (under age 6) with an Identified Disability.....	68
Figure 34. Parent Interest List Responses by Area and Response Type, Fall FY21.....	69
Figure 35. Percentage of PIL Need Responses by Area, Fall FY21.....	70
Figure 36. Percentage of PIL Strength Responses by Area, Fall FY21.....	70
Figure 37. Parent Interest List Responses by Area and Response Type, Fall FY21.....	71
Figure 38. Percentage of PIL Identified Need Responses by Area, Spring FY21.....	71
Figure 39. Percentage of PIL Identified Strength Responses by Area, Spring FY21	72
Figure 40. Comparison of Average Family Outcomes from Fall to Spring, All Areas, FY22.....	72
Table 39. Comparison of strengths of Head Start eligible children and families as defined by themselves versus the community strengths identified by local institutions	77
Table 40. Comparison of challenges of Head Start eligible children and families as defined by themselves versus the community strengths identified by local institutions	78
Figure A-1 Percent of respondents by level of knowledge of CCS Early Learning Services	90
Figure A-2 Average number of stars given by respondents rating CCS Early Learning work with families	91

Overview of the State of the Grantee and communities in the service area

Grantee Type, history, and other programs administered

Founded in 1971, CCS Early Learning (formerly known as Chugiak Children’s Services) is a 501(c)(3) that provides early learning services to children and families with the goals of promoting children’s social skills and school readiness. CCS Early Learning offers Early Head Start programs for children ages zero to three, Head Start preschool programs for children ages three to five, and home-based services for prenatal moms and children ages zero to three (see Table 1). Using a multi-generational approach, CCS Early Learning partners with children’s first and most important teachers: the family. Many of CCS Early Learning’s 140 employees (and 20 substitutes) were once enrolled as children or parents themselves.

CCS operates in five different centers in the Matanuska Susitna Borough (Mat-Su). The Administrative Office for the agency is located on the same campus as the Wasilla facilities listed below. Table 1 shows the services that are available at each location. During the spring of 2022, CCS Early Learning made the difficult choice to close its founding location in Chugiak (within the Municipality of Anchorage) and move all available resources to the Mat-Su Borough, where the need for services is far greater than in this portion of Anchorage.

Table 1. 2023-24 CCS Early Learning Programs by Location

Center	Head Start Classrooms	Early Head Start Classroom	Early Head Start Home-Visiting
Wasilla Head Start	Part-day/Part-year (6 hour days, 5 days a week, extended year)		
Wasilla Early Head Start		Full-day/Full-year	Full-year
Palmer Center	Part-day/Part-year (6 hour days, 5 days a week, extended year)	Full-day/Full-year	Full-year
Meadow Lakes Head Start	Part-day/Part-year (4 hour days, 4 days a week, school year)		Full-year
Fairview Center	(Part-day/Part-year) (4 hour days, 4 days a week, school year)	Full-day/Full-year	Full-year

Delegate agencies – CCS Early Learning has no delegate agencies.

Eligibility Criteria

CCS Early Learning eligibility criteria includes those income qualified, children with disabilities, and/or children who are homeless or in foster care. Income guidelines for 2023 are summarized below:

Table 2. 2023-24 CCS Early Learning Eligibility Guidelines (100% of Poverty – adjusted for Alaska)

People in Family	Income Guideline
2	\$24,640
3	\$31,070
4	\$37,500
5	\$43,930
6	\$50,360
7	\$56,790
8	\$63,220

“If you look at the total numbers of children in Alaska who are homeless or in foster care who are also enrolled in any of the 17 Head Start and Early Head Start programs in our entire state, approximately half of those children who are either in foster care or whose families are experiencing homelessness are served by CCS Early Learning.”

Number of eligible children and families to be served

Table 3. Number of classrooms by location, 2023-2024

	Wasilla	Meadow Lakes	Palmer	Fairview	Total
Head Start	4	3	2	4	13
Early Head Start (center-based)	6	-	2	2	10
Total	10	3	4	6	23

Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2023

Table 4. Number of slots for children by community, 2023-2024)

	Wasilla	Meadow Lakes	Palmer	Fairview	Total and %
Head Start	60	45	30	60	195 61%
Early Head Start (center-based)	48	0	16	16	80 25%
Early Head Start (home-based)	11	11	11	11	44 14%
Total and %	119 37%	56 18%	57 18%	87 27%	319 100%

Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2023

Of the total available Head Start and Early Head Start slots offered by CCS, 37% are in Wasilla, 27% are in Fairview, 18% are in Palmer and 18% are in Meadow Lakes. The majority of slots at CCS are for Head Start (61%), followed by Early Head Start center-based (25%) and then Early Head Start home-based (14%).

Actual number of enrolled children and families including cultural and linguistic features

Table 5 presents that actual number of children and families who were enrolled in the 22-23 school year. Enrollment numbers will be different from child slots as children come and go throughout the year.

Table 5. Actual number of enrolled children and families by CCS community (2022-23)

	Wasilla	Meadow Lakes	Palmer	Fairview
Head Start	61 (+1)	43 (-2)	48 (+18)	30 (-30)
Early Head Start (home-based)	13 (+2)	10 (-1)	10 (-1)	9 (-2)
Early Head Start (center-based)	61 (+13)	0	27 (+14)	17 (-1)
Total	135	53	85	56

Source: CCS Early Learning PIR Data, for 22-23 school year. Note – CCS underenrolled during this year due to pandemic recovery and inflationary issues.

Figure 1 presents the cultural characteristics of enrollees by CCS center. Fifty percent of enrollees in 2022-2023 were white children, 22% were Alaska Native children, 14% were multi-racial, 7% were Hispanic, 3% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 1% identified as Black, 1% as Asian, the remaining 4% identified with another cultural group.

Figure 1. Cultural characteristics of CCS enrolled children, 2022-2023, (%)

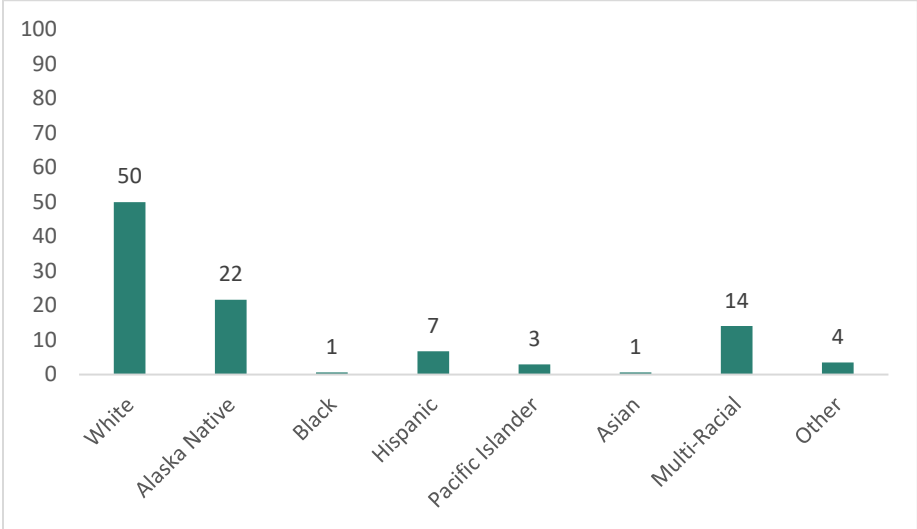


Table 6. Cultural characteristics of enrollees by center

	Wasilla	Meadow Lakes	Palmer	Fairview
White	77	31	31	32
Alaska Native	30	15	18	11
Black	0	0	2	0
Hispanic	8	2	10	3
Pacific Islander	4	0	2	4
Asian	0	2	0	0
Multi-Racial	18	5	7	18
Other	5	0	6	1
Total	139	55	76	69

Source: CCS Early Learning PIR Data, for 22-23 school year. Note – CCS underenrolled during this year due to pandemic recovery and inflationary issues.

Table 7 lists the linguistic characteristics of the enrolled children. All but two were first language English speakers. These two children spoke an Eastern Slavic language as their first language.

Table 7 Linguistic characteristics of actual enrollees by center

	Wasilla	Meadow Lakes	Palmer	Fairview
English language	134	53	66	55
Alaska Native language	0	0	0	0
Eastern Slavic language (Russian, Ukrainian, etc.)	1			1
Spanish language	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	135	53	66	56

Source: CCS Early Learning PIR Data, for 22-23 school year. Note – CCS underenrolled during this year due to pandemic recovery and inflationary issues.

Program options offered

In the 23-24 school year CCS Early Learning offers 319 total slots to Mat-Su families. CCS Early Learning operates 13 Head Start classrooms with an average class size of 15 children and 10 Early Head Start classrooms with class sizes of 8 children each. Table 8 below illustrates the options of services offered by CCS Early Learning. Most slots at CCS are for Head Start (61%), followed by Early Head Start center-based (25%) and then Early Head Start home-based (14%).

Table 8. 2023-24 CCS Early Learning Slots by program

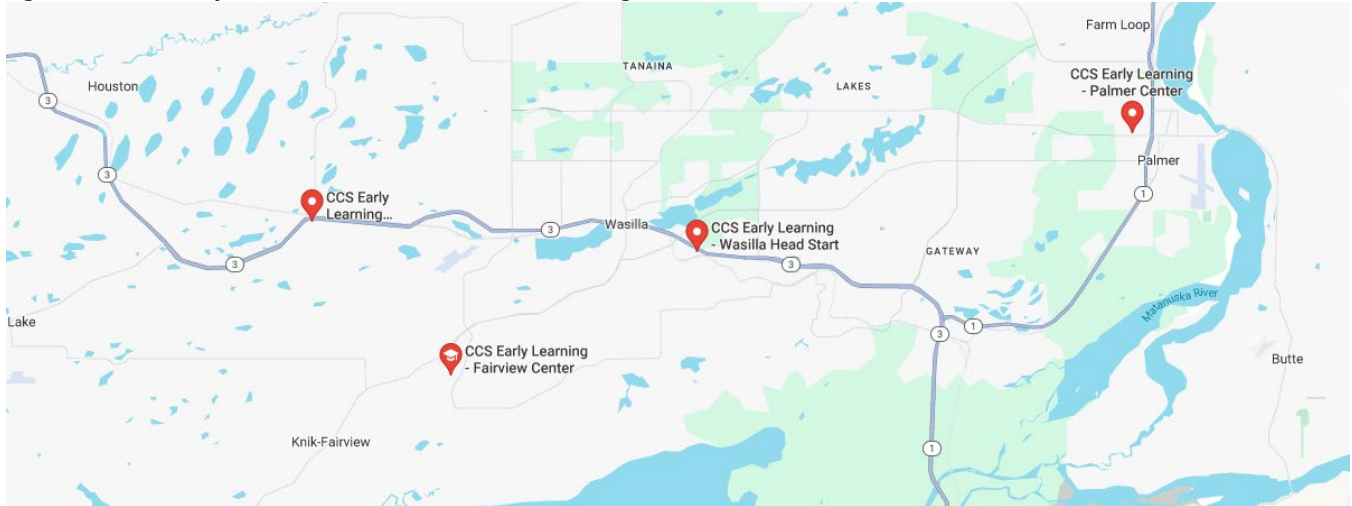
	Count	Percent
Head Start	195	61
Early Head Start (home-based)	44	14
Early Head Start (center-based)	80	25
Total	319	

Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2023

Location of centers

Figure 2 shows the four communities (Wasilla, Meadow Lakes, Palmer, and Knik/Fairview) in which facilities are located.

Figure 2. Location of centers in Matanuska Susitna Borough, Alaska



Source: Google Maps. Accessed December 2022.

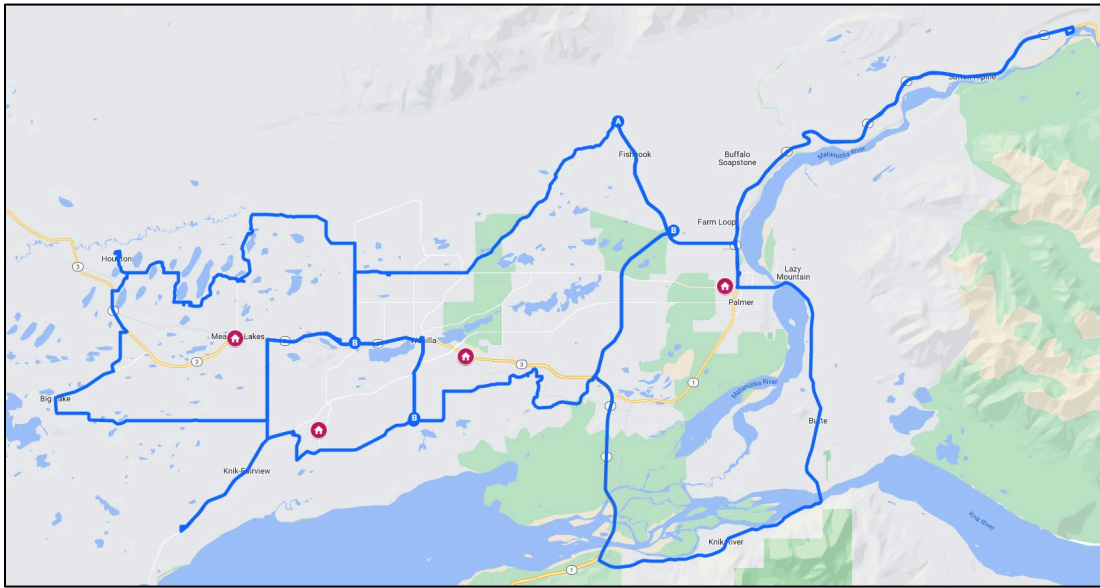
Homes, central office, other offices – There are no other homes or offices.

The central office is located on the same campus as the Wasilla Head Start and Wasilla Early Head Start facilities.

Service and Recruitment Area

Figure 3 provides the geographical boundaries for the service and recruitment area for each of the four CCS centers. In 2021, these communities had a total population of 95,724 representing approximately 92% of the borough population. Table 9 on page 18 provides specific data on the borough community subpopulation population that CCS serves. Figure 4 is a map that presents where CCS enrolled 2022-2023 students lived and Figure 5 presents the location of students who receive CCS bus services.

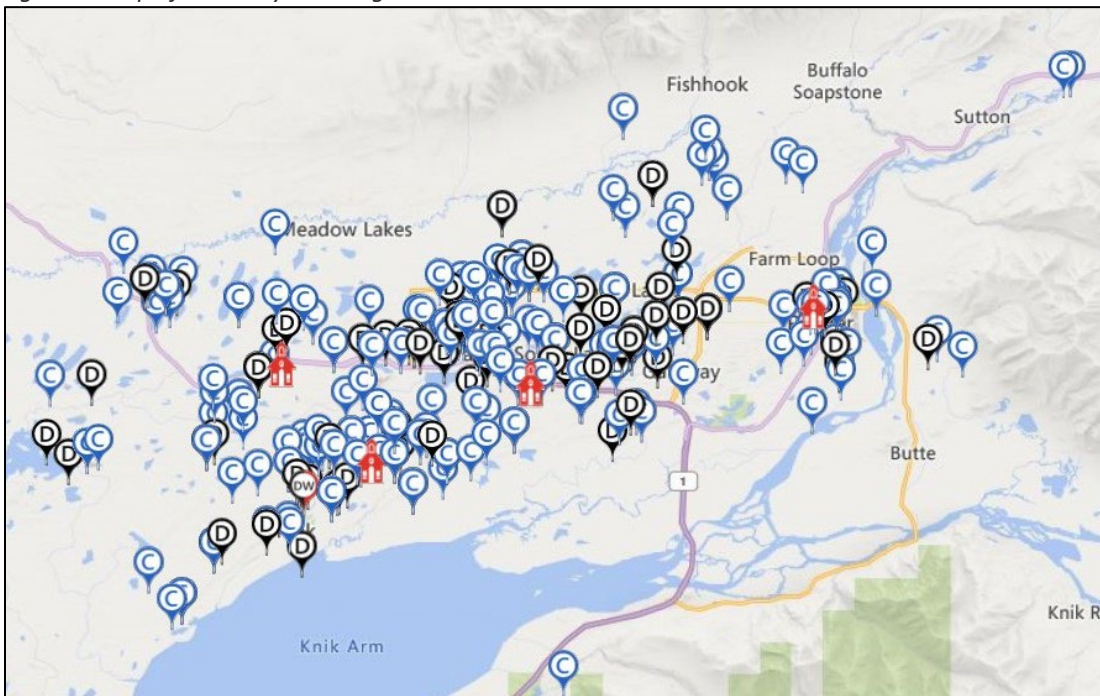
Figure 3. Map of Approximate CCS Early Learning Service Area Recruitment Boundaries



Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2022

Note: Service and recruitment area for each location is illustrated in blue. School locations are indicated by red pins.

Figure 4. Map of CCS Early Learning Children Enrolled 2022-23



Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2022-23 school year

Note: "C" pins indicate a child that completed the year with CCS. "D" pins indicate a child who dropped during the year. School locations are indicated by red pins.

Figure 5. Map of CCS Early Learning Children Enrolled 2022-23 Who Received Bus Services



Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2022-23 school year

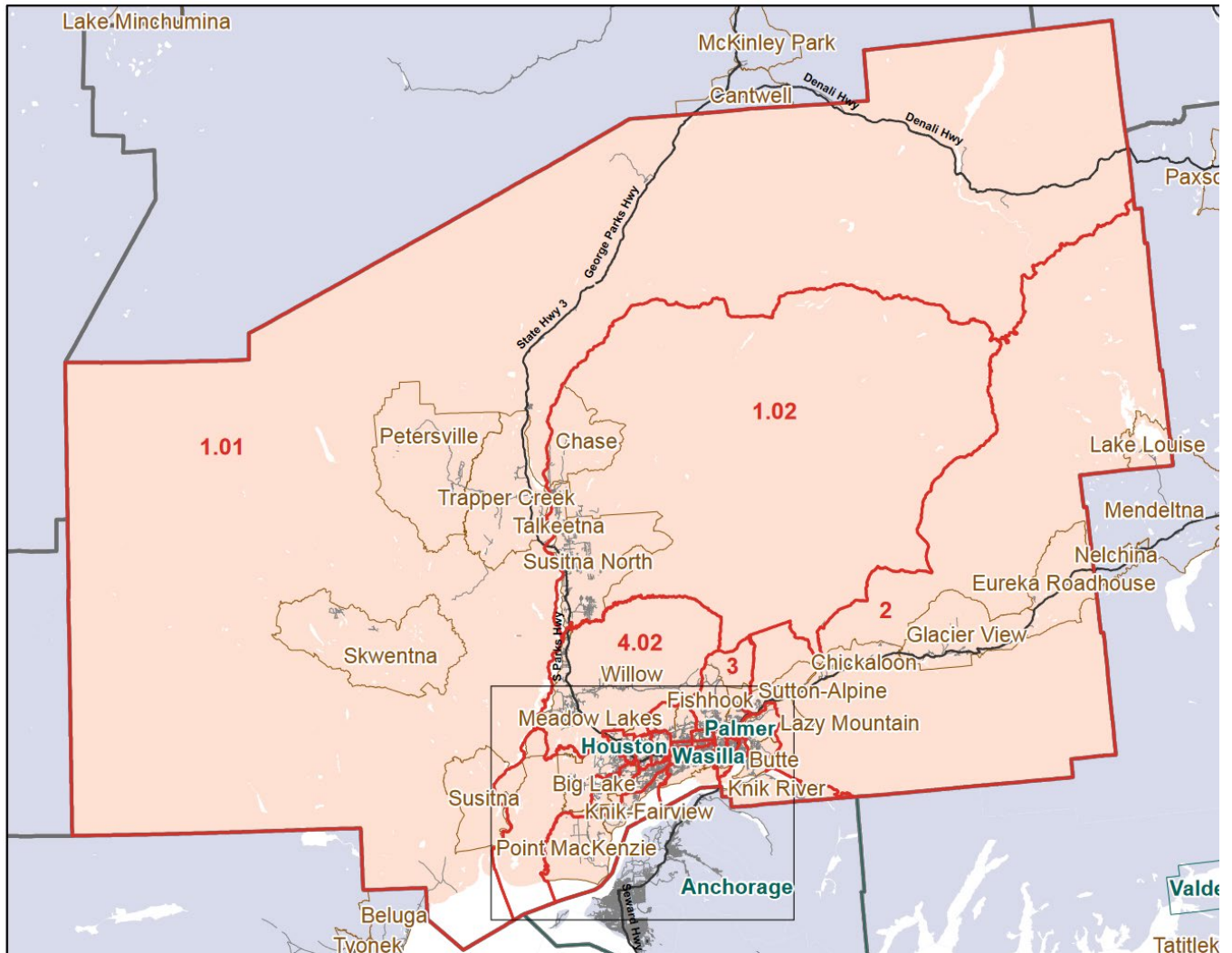
Note: "C" pins indicate a child that completed the year with CCS. "D" pins indicate a child who dropped during the year. School locations are indicated by red pins.

Location of delegate agencies – CCS Early Learning has no delegate agencies.

Location of communities and population groups

Figure 6 below shows the location of communities, many of which are identified in Table 9 which lists the population size for each community served by CCS.

Figure 6. Matanuska Susitna Borough Census Designated Places.



Source: State of Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, found at <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/cen/maps/censustracts/ct170.pdf>

Table 9. Population and Share of Borough Population by Community Served by CCS

Area Name	2021 Population	Percent of Borough Population
Areas of Mat-Su where CCS recruits and transports children		
Knik-Fairview CDP	18,282	17%
Tanaina CDP	10,314	10%
North Lakes CDP	9,941	9%
Wasilla City	9,098	9%
Meadow Lakes CDP	8,367	8%
South Lakes CDP	6,421	6%
Gateway CDP	6,305	6%
Palmer City	5,978	6%
Fishhook CDP	5,055	5%
Butte CDP	3,857	4%
Big Lake CDP	2,888	3%
Farm Loop CDP	2,549	2%
Chickaloon CDP	188	0%
Lazy Mountain CDP	1,766	2%
Houston City	1,739	2%
Sutton-Alpine CDP	1,228	1%
Buffalo Soapstone CDP	949	1%
Knik River CDP	799	1%
Subtotal	95,724	92%
Other areas of Mat-Su not served by CCS transportation		
Willow CDP	1,965	2%
Point MacKenzie CDP	1,364	1%
Susitna North CDP	1,193	1%
Talkeetna CDP	947	1%
Trapper Creek CDP	318	0%
Glacier View CDP	250	0%
Skwentna CDP	69	0%
Balance	4,977	5%
Matanuska Susitna Borough	106,807	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and 2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S0101. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed December 2022.

Methodology

Purpose of the Community Assessment

As outlined in the Head Start Program Performance Standards,¹ the purpose of this community needs assessment is to ensure that CCS Early Learning programming meets community needs and builds on existing strengths and resources within our communities. The assessment is completed in-full once every five years and updated annually to reflect significant changes in community demographics and resources.

Community Assessment Team members, roles, responsibilities, and selection

The Community Assessment team is composed of CCS Early Learning Staff, Actionable Data Consulting consultants, and Community Stakeholders. Table 9 shows the roles of core team members.

Table 10. Community Assessment Core Team Members and roles

Name	Role
<i>Mark Lackey</i>	CCS Executive Director – Coordination and Writing
<i>Patrick Cockrell</i>	CCS Data and Compliance Manager- Internal data collection and analysis
<i>Aaron Clements</i>	CCS Operations Director – Internal CCS Operations
<i>Janel Gagnon</i>	CCS Community Outreach Director - Stakeholder recruitment
<i>Michelle Bower</i>	CCS Human Resources Assistant - Editing
<i>Dr. Melissa Toffolon</i>	ADC consultant, facilitator, data analysis and reporting
<i>Lauren Rocco</i>	ADC consultant, Data gathering and reporting

Team participants were selected for their familiarity with CCS Early Learning and the needs of families with young children living in the Mat-Su Borough. In addition to the team members above, the stakeholders listed in Table 10 provided input on the community needs assessment at the community strategic planning meeting and follow-up survey. The Team members were selected because they are staff and consultants with expertise in conducting community assessments. The cross-sectional group of community stakeholders were invited from a comprehensive list of child and family services providers in Mat-Su. Approximately, 125 people were invited to participate and seventeen organizations/individuals participated. They were joined by CCS Early Learning staff and volunteers. Additionally, 8 people participated who had lived experience of having young children and are/were eligible for Head Start

¹ Determining community strengths, needs, and resources, 45 CFR § 1302.11.

Table 11 Cross-sectional Group of Community Stakeholder Team Members

Community Service Providers	
1. Stephanie Tucker	Mat-Su Services for Children and Adults Infant Learning Program
2. Adrian Bell	Matanuska Susitna Borough School District Student Support Services
3. Samantha Gamelgaard	Families, Infant, and Toddlers (FIT) Court
4. Jen Neilson	Family Promise (Transitional housing)
5. Leann Renick	Office of Children’s Services
6. Desire’ Shepler	Alaska Family Services (AFS)
7. Heather Miller	AFS Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program
8. Amy Gorn	Mat-Su Health Foundation
9. Dani Reed	Mat-Su Health Foundation
10. Betsy Larson	R.O.C.K (Raising Our Children with Kindness)
11. Amanda Heard	Southcentral Foundation, Nutaqsiivik/Nurse Family Partnership Program
12. Rene’ Dillow	Mat-Su Public Health
13. Michelle Bayless	The Children’s Place (a child advocacy center)
14. Stephanie Allen	The United Way of Mat-Su
15. Wendy Dodge	Breaking Down Barriers to Education
16. Dawn Paulsen	Beacon Hill
17. Pamela Conrad Michaels	Providence Nurse Family Partnership Program
18. Mark Lackey	CCS Early Learning – Executive Director
19. Janel Gagnon	CCS Early Learning – Community Outreach Manager
20. Neva Lancaster	CCS Early Learning – Wasilla Center Coordinator
21. Summer Keelan	CCS Early Learning – Fairview Family Partnership Coordinator
22. MJ St. John	CCS Early Learning – Professional Development Specialist – Head Start
23. Cindy Bergstrom	CCS Early Learning – Fairview Center Coordinator
24. Darilyn Byram	CCS Early Learning – Palmer Center Coordinator
25. Tammy Berdeaux	CCS Early Learning – Wasilla Early Head Start Family Partnership Coordinator
26. Susan Schroeder	CCS Early Learning – Board of Directors

Following an initial project kick-off meeting in September 2022, a core team of CCS Early Learning staff and consultants gathered data and met regularly over a period of eight months to review compiled quantitative data. Simultaneously, this group prepared to gather qualitative input from stakeholders within the community through a focus group session that was held in February 2023. A follow up survey was also sent to all those stakeholders who had been invited or who had attended the focus group session. Qualitative and quantitative data are combined to inform the needs assessment.

Consultant Role

CCS Early Learning hired Actionable Data Consulting (ADC) to conduct the community needs assessment. ADC gathered all qualitative and quantitative data, completed data analysis, facilitated regular progress meetings, and compiled the final report in collaboration with the core team and stakeholders.

Overview of Training Provided to Team

Due to the expertise that was present in the Team, it was not necessary for them to receive special training related to community assessments. To facilitate ease of updating the needs assessment, the consultant team included extensive citations and directions to data tables.

Role of the Policy Council and the Board

The Policy Council and Board of Directors for CCS Early Learning provided ongoing oversight of the Community Assessment process and on completion of the community needs assessment, discussed the final product, provided feedback, and ultimately provided approval that it accurately reflected the needs of the community and the efforts that CCS takes to meet those needs.

Community Assessment Timeline

The timeline below illustrates the dates of major check-in meetings to support the community needs assessment. Correspondence and data sharing occurred throughout and is not illustrated on this timeline.



Sources of CA Secondary Data

Internal data sources

Internal data sources used for the community assessment included:

- Program Information Report (PIR)
- Participation data
- Enrollment data
- Parent Interest List (PIL)

External data, including census data, and data on underserved/new/emerging populations

External data sources for the community assessment included:

- Alaska Department of Education and Early Development
- Alaska Department of Family and Community Services, Office of Children’s Services
- Alaska Department of Health, Division of Public Health
- Alaska Economic Trends
- Childcare Assistance Program
- Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey (CUBS)
- Community Health Rankings
- Kids Count
- Mat-Alaska Economic Trends
- Mat-Su Borough School District
- Mat-Su Health Foundation Community Needs Assessment, 2022²
- Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment, 2022
- National Survey of Children’s Health
- Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System
- State of Alaska, Maternal Child Health Epidemiology
- WIC
- Thread childcare data

Census data and other population figures including information on underserved and new or emerging populations were gathered from the following sources:

- Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- U.S. Census Bureau (American Community Survey 1-Year and 5-Year estimates)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System

² CCS Early Learning has supported the community wide needs assessment conducted and led by the Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) every three years. This assessment was underway at the start of this report and concluded mid-way. Data from the assessment was shared for use in this report.

Methods of Data Collection, Trends, and Analysis (Surveys, interviews/focus groups/translation)

Data were gathered via data requests from CCS Early Learning team members and consultants. Secondary data was also derived from a range of collection methods including online and telephonic surveys, interviews, and collateral information from completed forms. Data specifically gathered for this community assessment include qualitative data from the focus group conducted during the community strategic planning meeting that was held, along with a follow up survey with participants and others who were invited but didn't participate. Survey data was gathered using Alchemer survey software. The primary data for all participants was English and no translation services were used.

Quantitative data was analyzed using Excel and employed percentages, counts, confidence intervals, estimates and trends, projections, and calculations based on data. Qualitative data were analyzed via thematic analysis and include quotations from stakeholders.

Data collected and Findings

Employment patterns, noting major businesses and industries

MAJOR ISSUE/TREND -EMPLOYMENT

- Lowest income people are more likely to have a disability, no high school diploma, and be unemployed.
- Pandemic job loss in AK was significant and recovering those jobs has been slow.
- Parents listed "finances" and "employment" as the number three and four challenge that they face.

In 2021, the unemployment rate in the Mat-Su Borough was six percent.³ The age group with the highest unemployment rate is 16 to 19 years, followed by 60 to 64 years (15 and 13 percent, respectively).

³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1701. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

Table 12. Labor Force Participation for Mat-Su Borough Population (16+), 2021

Population (16+)	Labor Force Participation Rate ⁴	Employment Population Ratio	Unemployment Rate ⁵
16 to 19 years	43%	36%	15%
20 to 24 years	82%	76%	5%
25 to 29 years	67%	59%	5%
30 to 34 years	70%	65%	4%
35 to 44 years	82%	74%	5%
45 to 54 years	76%	71%	6%
55 to 59 years	61%	58%	4%
60 to 64 years	46%	39%	13%
65 to 74 years	22%	20%	6%
75 years and over	6%	6%	9%
Total	6%	55%	6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2301. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

There is little gender variation in the unemployment rate.⁶ Individuals who are below poverty level have four times the unemployment rate of individuals at or above the poverty level (20 percent).⁷ Individuals who identify as having a disability and those with less than a high school diploma are also more likely to be unemployed (10 percent and 13 percent).⁸

Impact of the Pandemic and Job Recovery

During the first year of the pandemic, Alaska lost a record and unprecedented 26,270 jobs in a single year.⁹ The low occurred in May of 2020 when Alaska recorded 45,717 jobs less than the previous May.¹⁰ Alaska's recovery of pre-pandemic jobs is slow and ranks 47 in the nation when comparing the first half of 2022 to the first half of 2019.¹¹

⁴ Labor force participation rate represents the proportion of the total 16 years old and over population that is in the labor force. Source: <https://www.census.gov/topics/employment/labor-force/about/glossary.html>.

⁵ Unemployment rate represents the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the civilian labor force. Source: <https://www.census.gov/glossary/>.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2301. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2301. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2301. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

⁹ Alaska Economic Trends. October 2022. Job Projections for 2020-2030. Available at: <https://labor.alaska.gov/trends/oct22.pdf>. Accessed October 2022.

¹⁰ Alaska Economic Trends. October 2022. Job Projections for 2020-2030. Available at: <https://labor.alaska.gov/trends/oct22.pdf>. Accessed October 2022.

¹¹ Alaska Economic Trends. October 2022. Job Projections for 2020-2030. Available at: <https://labor.alaska.gov/trends/oct22.pdf>. Accessed October 2022.

Table 13. Unemployment Rate by Population Demographics, 2021

		Unemployment Rate
<i>Gender</i>		
	Male	6%
	Female	5%
<i>Poverty Status</i>		
	Below poverty level	20%
	At or above the poverty level	5%
<i>Disability Status</i>		
	With any disability	10%
<i>Educational Attainment</i>		
	Less than high school graduate	13%
	High school graduate	7%
	Some college or associate degree	6%
	Bachelor's degree or higher	1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2301. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

Wages

In 2021, Mat-Su residents earned a \$1.3B in wages.¹² The top three sectors employing Mat-Su residents were: educational and health services; trade, transportation, and utilities; and local government.¹³ These sectors employed 54 percent of Mat-Su Borough workers and accounted for 52 percent of the wages earned that year.¹⁴

¹² Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Current Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Preliminary Annual Employment and Wages – 2021. Revised May 2022. Available at: <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/qcew/index.html>. Accessed October 2022.

¹³ Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Current Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Preliminary Annual Employment and Wages – 2021. Revised May 2022. Available at: <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/qcew/index.html>. Accessed October 2022.

¹⁴ Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Current Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Preliminary Annual Employment and Wages – 2021. Revised May 2022. Available at: <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/qcew/index.html>. Accessed October 2022.

Table 14. Mat-Su Borough Average Monthly Employment and Wages by Sector, 2021

Sector	Average Monthly Employment	Percent of Total Employment	Average Monthly Wages	Total Wages	Percent of Total Wages
Educational and Health Services	5,572	21%	\$4,228	\$282,671,502	21%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	5,458	21%	\$3,485	\$228,248,387	17%
Local Government	3,361	13%	\$4,332	\$174,712,347	13%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,980	11%	\$2,018	\$72,179,730	5%
Construction	2,823	11%	\$6,428	\$217,762,150	17%
Professional and Business Services	1,618	6%	\$4,370	\$84,847,672	6%
State Government	1,523	6%	\$5,023	\$91,793,954	7%
Other Services	990	4%	\$2,631	\$31,254,606	2%
Financial Services	921	3%	\$4,535	\$50,119,478	4%
Information	446	2%	\$6,392	\$34,208,374	3%
Manufacturing	344	1%	\$3,811	\$15,732,571	1%
Natural Resources and Mining	259	1%	\$3,257	\$10,123,168	1%
Federal Government	243	1%	\$8,355	\$24,362,954	2%
Unclassified Establishments	18	0%	\$2,609	\$ 563,547	0%
Total	26,556	100%	\$4,391	\$1,318,580,440	100%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Current Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Preliminary Annual Employment and Wages – 2021. Revised May 2022. Available at: <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/qcew/index.html>. Accessed October 2022. Note: Table data is sorted by percent of total employment, then percent of total wages.

Housing patterns

PRIORITY AREA/TREND -HOUSING:

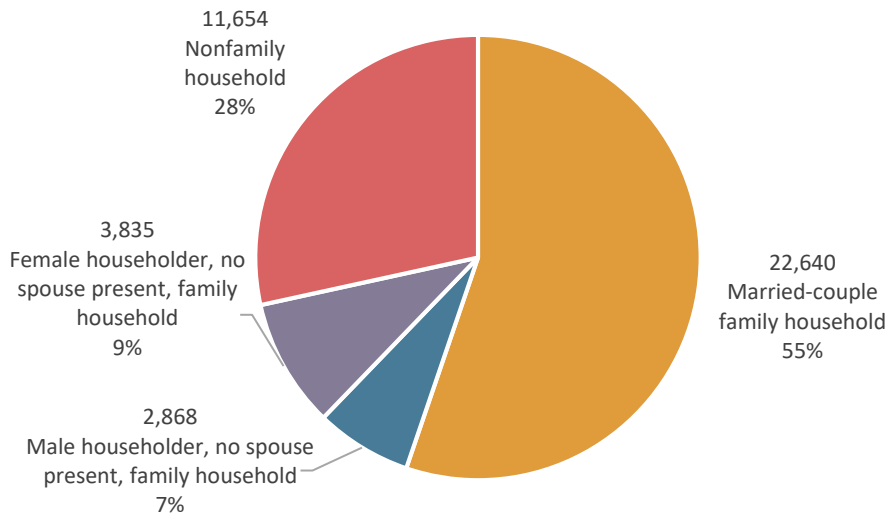
- 190 households with children were homeless in 2022.
- One in five residents experience severe housing problems.
- Temporary shelter is the number one services gap in the community.

An estimated 40,997 households lived in the Mat-Su in 2021 with an average household size of 2.65 people.¹⁵ Of these households, 55 percent were married couple households, 16 percent were single householders with families, and 28 percent were nonfamily households.¹⁶

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1101. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022.

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1101. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022.

Figure 7. Total Households in the Mat-Su Borough by Type, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1101. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022.

Households with Own Children

In 2021, an estimated 13,461 households with own children¹⁷ under the age of eighteen resided in the Mat-Su Borough.¹⁸ Of these, 43 percent included a child under the age of six.¹⁹ An estimated 29,032 children under the age of 18 lived in the Mat-Su Borough in 2021, 26 percent of the total population.²⁰

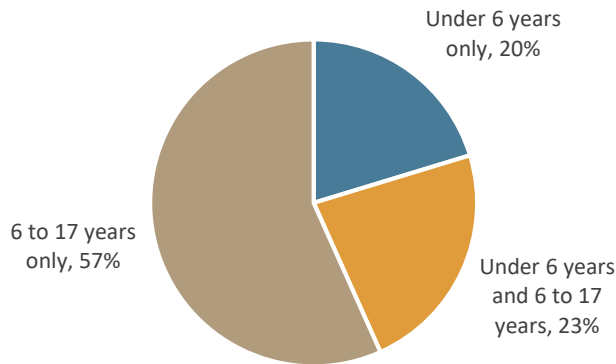
¹⁷ Own children refers to children of the householder.

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1101. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022.

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1101. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022.

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP05. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed December 2022.

Figure 8. Age of Own Children in Mat-Su Households, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1101. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022.

Households with Individuals under 18

In 2021, of the 28,983 individuals under 18 living in households, the majority live in married-couple households (71 percent).²¹

Table 15. Under 18 Population by Household Type in Mat-Su Borough, 2021

Household Type	Population (< 18)	Percent of Population (<18)
Married-couple household	20,495	71%
Cohabiting couple household	2,886	10%
In male householder, no spouse/partner present household	1,426	5%
In female householder, no spouse/partner present household	4,176	14%
Total	28,983	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B09005. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B09005. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

Housing & Homelessness

In 2021, of the 40,997 households in the Mat-Su, 79 percent owned their housing unit and 21 percent rented.²² In 2022, an estimated 630 households in the Mat-Su experienced homelessness. Of these, 190 were households with children.²³ A recent homelessness needs assessment identified a gap of 110 homes to meet the needs of households for families with children.²⁴ Additionally, the Mat-Su Community Health Needs Assessment completed in 2022 stated that one in five (20.1%) of residents experience severe housing problems (overcrowding, high costs, lack of kitchen or plumbing facilities). The assessment also found that temporary shelter is the number-one service gap identified by the health and social services local information and referral agency.²⁵

Public school patterns

PRIORITY AREA/TREND -EDUCATION:

- Only 23% of Mat-Su children met all goals for kindergarten readiness (this is higher than all Alaska children (18.7%).
- Seven percent of the population 25 years or older have less than a high school level of education.
- Six out of ten mothers of three-year-olds report that someone read to their child the prior day.

Kindergarten Readiness

Between 2016 and 2020, 23.1 percent of Mat-Su children met all goals for kindergarten readiness, as compared to 18.7 percent of Alaska children.²⁶

Table 16. Percentage of Children who Met All Goals for Kindergarten Readiness, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2016-2020

Year	Mat-Su	Alaska
2016 - 2017	23.5%	18.4%
2017 - 2018	19.6%	17.6%
2018 - 2019	22.4%	19.1%
2019 - 2020	26.7%	19.8%
<i>Average</i>	<i>23.1%</i>	<i>18.7%</i>

Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Kids Count.

²² U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1101. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022.

²³ Agnew::Beck Consulting. Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment. Summary report for Mat-Su Health Foundation. February 2022. Available at: <https://www.healthymatsu.org/learning/mshf-reports>.

²⁴ Agnew::Beck Consulting. Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment. Summary report for Mat-Su Health Foundation. February 2022. Available at: <https://www.healthymatsu.org/learning/mshf-reports>.

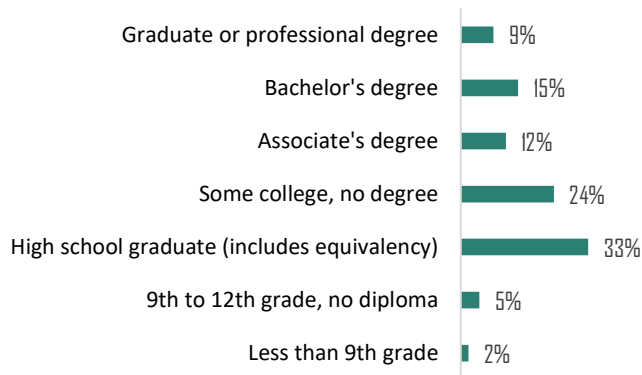
²⁵ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Health Needs Assessment.

²⁶ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Health Needs Assessment. Data from: Kids Count.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education that an individual has completed, which is distinct from the level of school that an individual may be attending.²⁷ In 2021, 24 percent of the Mat-Su Borough population aged 25 and older had earned a bachelor’s degree or higher.²⁸ One-third of residents attained a high school diploma as their highest degree.²⁹ Nine percent of Mat-Su residents have attained a graduate or professional degree.

Figure 9. Educational Attainment of Mat-Su Borough Residents (25+), 2021

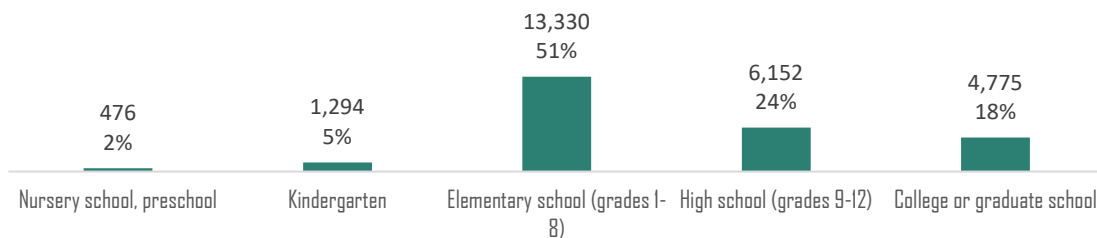


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP02. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

School Enrollment

In 2021, 26,027 individuals ages 3 and over were enrolled in school. Of these, 2 percent were enrolled in preschool or nursery school (476 children). The Mat-Su Borough School District has 49 schools and enrolled 19,443 students during the 2021-2022 school year.

Figure 10. School Enrollment by Level for Mat-Su Borough Population (ages 3+), 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP02. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

²⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, Educational attainment. Available: <https://www.census.gov/topics/education/educational-attainment.html>. Accessed December 2022.

²⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP02. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

²⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP02. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

Table 17. Schools by Type in the Mat-Su Borough, 2022

Elementary	Middle	High School	Non-Traditional
Big Lake Elementary	Colony Middle School	Burchell High School	Academy Charter (K-8)
Butte Elementary	Houston Jr/Sr School	Colony High School	American Charter Academy (K-8)
Cottonwood Creek Elementary	Palmer Jr Middle School	Houston Jr/Sr High School	Beryozova (K-12)
Dena'ina Elementary	Redington Jr/Sr High School	Career & Tech High School	Birchtree Charter (K-8)
Finger Lake Elementary	Teeland Middle School	Palmer High School	Fronteras (K-8)
Goose Bay Elementary	Wasilla Middle School	Redington Sr Jr/Sr High School	Glacier View (K-12)
Iditarod Elementary		Susitna Valley Jr/Sr High School	Knik Cultural Charter (K-12)
Knik Elementary		Valley Pathways	Midnight Sun (K-8)
Larson Elementary		Wasilla High School	Twindly Bridge (K-12)
Machetanz Elementary			Mat-Su Central School (K-12)
Meadow Lakes Elementary			Mat-Su Day School (3-12)
Pioneer Peak Elementary			Mat-Su Middle College (9-12)
Shaw Elementary			Mat-Su Secondary
Sherrod Elementary			
Snowshoe Elementary			
Sutton Elementary			
Swanson Elementary			
Talkeetna Elementary			
Tanaina Elementary			
Trapper Creek Elementary			
Willow Elementary			
21	6	9	13

Source: Mat-Su Borough School District. Available at: <https://www.matsuk12.us/>. Accessed: October 2022.

Table 18. Mat-Su Borough School District Enrollment by School, 2021

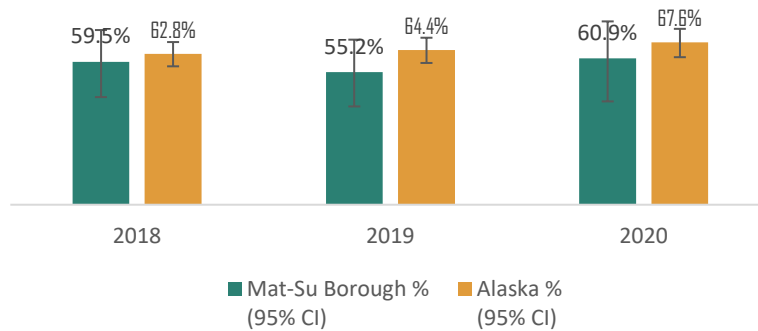
School	Total PK-12	Percent of District Enrolled
Academy Charter School	258	1%
American Charter Academy	195	1%
Beryozova School	30	0%
Big Lake Elementary	358	2%
Birchtree Charter School	406	2%
Burchell High School	236	1%
Butte Elementary	271	1%
Colony High School	1165	6%
Colony Middle School	708	4%
Cottonwood Creek Elementary	433	2%
Dena'ina Elementary School	422	2%
Finger Lake Elementary	421	2%
Fred and Sara Machetanz Elementary School	457	2%
Fronteras Charter School	316	2%
Glacier View School	34	0%
Goose Bay Elementary	347	2%
Houston High School	369	2%
Houston Middle School	317	2%
Iditarod Elementary	412	2%
Joe Redington Senior Jr/Sr High School	580	3%
John Shaw Elementary	539	3%
Knik Elementary School	265	1%
Larson Elementary	385	2%
Mat-Su Career & Tech Ed High School	791	4%
Mat-Su Central School	2179	11%
Mat-Su Day School	70	0%
Mat-Su Middle College School	187	1%
Mat-Su Youth Facility	13	0%
Meadow Lakes Elementary	294	2%
Midnight Sun Family Learning Center	186	1%
Palmer High School	794	4%
Palmer Middle School	562	3%
Pioneer Peak Elementary	509	3%
Sherrod Elementary	373	2%
Snowshoe Elementary	318	2%
Susitna Valley High	211	1%
Sutton Elementary	44	0%
Swanson Elementary	397	2%
Talkeetna Elementary	95	0%
Tanaina Elementary	355	2%
Teeland Middle School	783	4%
Trapper Creek Elementary	17	0%
Twindly Bridge Charter School	567	3%
Valley Pathways	198	1%
Wasilla High School	828	4%
Wasilla Middle School	608	3%
Willow Elementary	140	1%
Mat-Su Borough School District	19,443	100%

Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Data Center. Available at: <https://education.alaska.gov/data-center>. Accessed: October 2022.

Reading Aloud

Prior to being enrolled in school, the child’s first teacher is in the home in the form of family members. In 2020, similar percentages of Mat-Su and Alaska mothers of three-year old children report someone read aloud to their child for 30 minutes or more the day before (60.9 percent and 67.6 percent).³⁰

Figure 11. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Report Someone Read Aloud to Child Yesterday, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

Transportation patterns

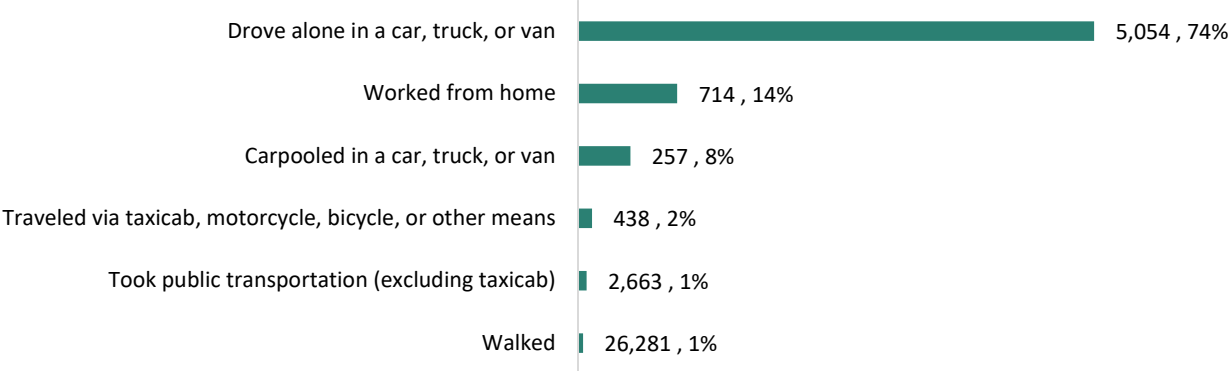
PRIORITY AREA/TREND -TRANSPORTATION

- Most individuals in Mat-Su who responded to the census reported having a vehicle to drive.
- 1,246 households do not have a vehicle for transportation, and this can limit their ability to get their basic needs met, as well as interfere with ability of their children to go to school or recreational events.
- A school bus driver shortage and a driver strike provide a challenge to families without a vehicle to get their child(ren) to school during the 2022-2023 school year.

³⁰ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

Of workers ages 16 years and older living in households, most have one or more vehicles available (98 percent).³¹ Most workers reported driving to work alone in a car, truck or van during the last week (74 percent).³² Fourteen percent of workers reported working from home.³³

Figure 12. Mat-Su Worker's Mode of Transportation to Work, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B08541. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed January 2023.

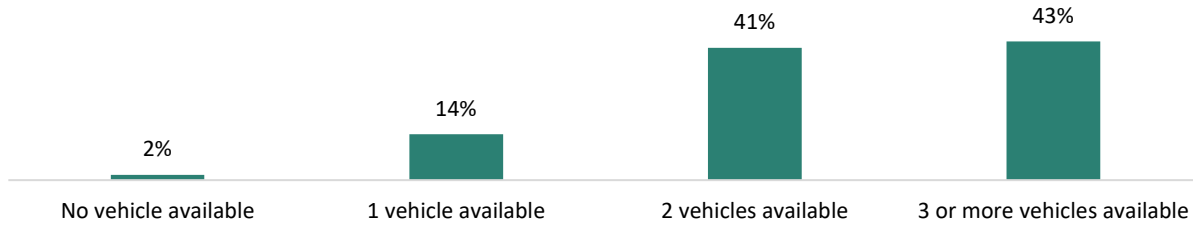
Director in Tribal Health Organization

Challenges

"I still get weekly and daily phone calls regarding what are the resources available to folks for transportation. For some folks that's just more added layers of challenges that they have to work through. Having resources and supports that can help do outreach is critical."

³¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B08541. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed January 2023.
³² U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B08541. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed January 2023.
³³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B08541. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed January 2023.

Figure 13. Available Vehicles for Mat-Su Workers (ages 16+), 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B08541. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed January 2023.

The Mat-Su Community Health Needs Assessment found that in 2021, 1,246 households have no vehicle, and lack of transportation is a challenge for these individuals and families, especially in the more rural areas. Focus groups and a photo voice project conducted for this assessment found that youth participation in community and afterschool activities is limited by lack of transportation in the family. Survey data found that one in five households report that transportation issues have increased with the pandemic.³⁴ Additionally, for several months during the 2022-2023 bus service for local schools was stopped or limited due to a shortage of drivers and a strike by drivers.

Medical and environmental health issues

PRIORITY AREA/TREND -MEDICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Strengths:

- Many Families are accessing prenatal and pediatric care: Prenatal care during first semester (91.2%) and having a provider who knows three-year-old children (94%).
- Mothers reporting prenatal exposure to alcohol has decreased since 2018 from 5.9% to 2.6 %.
- Mothers reporting prenatal exposure to marijuana use has decreased from 13.5% to 7.7% since 2018.
- There has been a trend of more mothers of three-year-old reporting that their child received a developmental screening from 2016-2019.

³⁴ Mat-Su Health Foundation Community Health Needs Assessment.

Challenges:

- Only 79% of mothers of three-year-olds report taking their child to a well child check-up in the last 12 months.
- Prenatal exposure to tobacco has remained the same since 2018.
- Approximately 1 in 4 mothers of three-year-olds report not taking their child to the dentist.
- 1,154 Mat-Su children under the age of 6 did not have health insurance in 2021.
- The percentage of mothers who report not vaccinating their children has risen from 6.8% in 2018 to 16.2% in 2020.
- The percentage of mothers of three-year-olds who report that they have been depressed/feeling down/hopeless has not changed significantly since 2018. It was 31% in 2020.
- Significantly more mothers of three-year-olds have reported the death of a household member in that same time (.9 to 6.7%).

Prenatal Care and Exposures

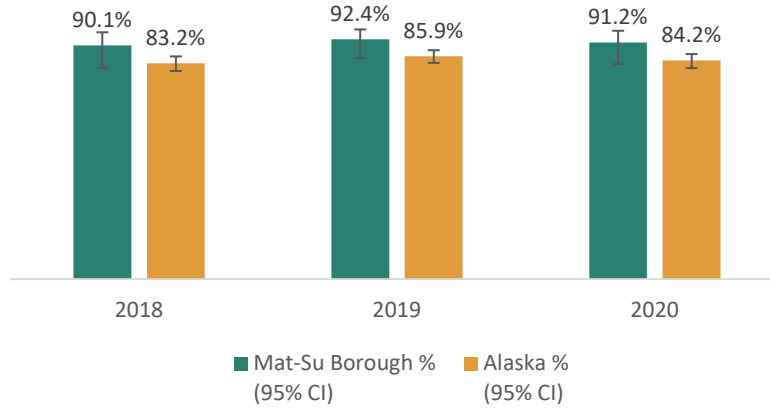
The State of Alaska Division of Public Health conducts an ongoing, annual survey of mothers of newborns called the Alaska Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS). The survey gathers data on maternal attitudes and experiences before, during and after pregnancy via phone interview and mailed paper survey.³⁵

³⁵ Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System. Alaska Department of Health. About the Program. Available at: <https://health.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/pages/mcheipi/prams/default.aspx>. A copy of the 2020 instrument can be found here: https://health.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Documents/mcheipi/prams/PRAMS_SurveyPh8_2020.pdf.

Prenatal Care

In 2020, 91.2 percent of Mat-Su mothers of newborns reported receiving prenatal care during their first trimester of pregnancy.³⁶

Figure 14. Mothers of Newborns Reporting First Trimester Prenatal Care, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018 -2020

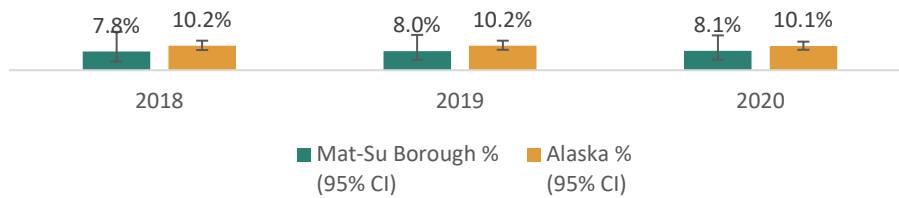


Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System.

Prenatal Drug Exposure - Tobacco

During the last three years, similar percentages of mothers of newborns responding to the PRAMS survey reported smoking cigarettes during the last three months of pregnancy. In 2020, 8.1 percent of Mat-Su mothers of newborns and 10.1 percent of Alaska mothers of newborns smoked during their third trimester.³⁷

Figure 15. Mothers of Newborns who Smoked During Third Trimester, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018 - 2020



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System.

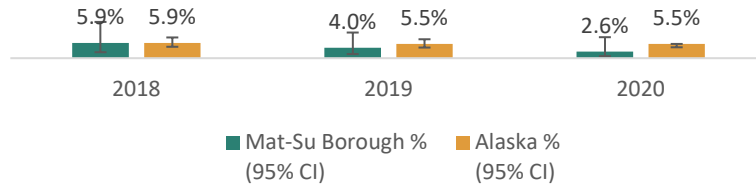
³⁶ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Health Needs Assessment. Data from: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System.

³⁷ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System.

Alcohol

Mat-Su and Alaska mothers of newborns reported similar rates of alcohol usage during the third trimester of pregnancy. In 2020, 2.6 percent of Mat-Su mothers of newborns and 5.5 percent of Alaska mothers of newborns drank during the last trimester of pregnancy.³⁸

Figure 16. Mothers of Newborns who Drank During Third Trimester, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018 - 2020

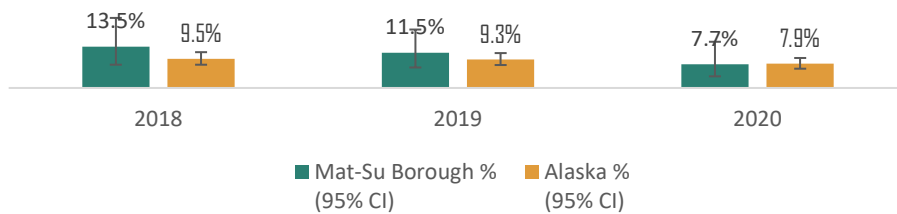


Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System.

Marijuana

Over the last three years and compared to Alaska overall, mothers of newborns report using marijuana or hash during pregnancy. In 2020, 7.7 percent of Mat-Su mothers of newborns responding to the PRAMS survey used marijuana or hash during pregnancy.³⁹

Figure 17. Mothers of Newborns who Used Marijuana or Hash During Pregnancy, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018 - 2020



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System.

³⁸ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System.

³⁹ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System.

Insurance Coverage

In 2021, 1,154 Mat-Su children under the age of 6 did not have insurance coverage.⁴⁰ Overall, 86.2 percent of children under the age of six are insured in the Mat-Su Borough as compared to 91.9 percent and 95.5 percent of children under six in Alaska and the United States.⁴¹

Table 20. Health Insurance Coverage for Children Under Age 6, 2021

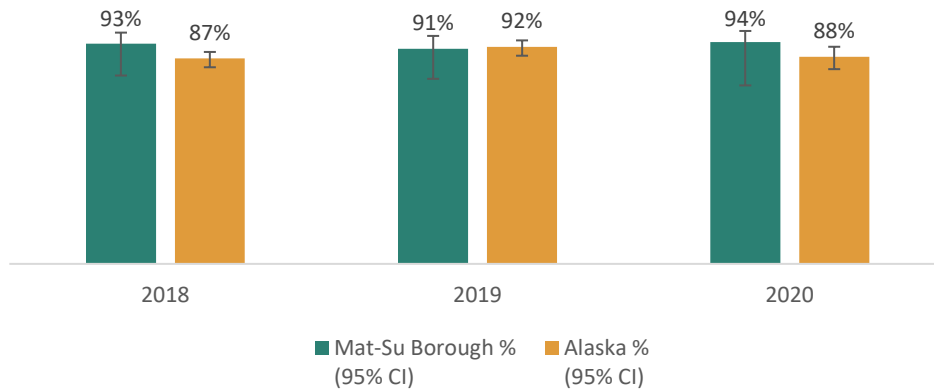
Insurance Status	Mat-Su Borough	Alaska	United States
Insured	86.2%	91.9%	95.5%
Uninsured	13.8%	8.1%	4.5%

Source: Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2701. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed January 2023. Note: Reported data are for the civilian non-institutionalized population.

Healthcare Provider Access

Most mothers of three-year old children in the Mat-Su who responded to the CUBS survey report having a provider⁴² who knows their child and is familiar with his/her health history (94 percent in 2020).⁴³

Figure 18. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children Reporting Having a Provider Who Knows Child and is Familiar with Child's Health History, Mat-Su Borough and Alaska, 2018-2020



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁴⁰ Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2701. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed January 2023. Note: Reported data are for the civilian non-institutionalized population.

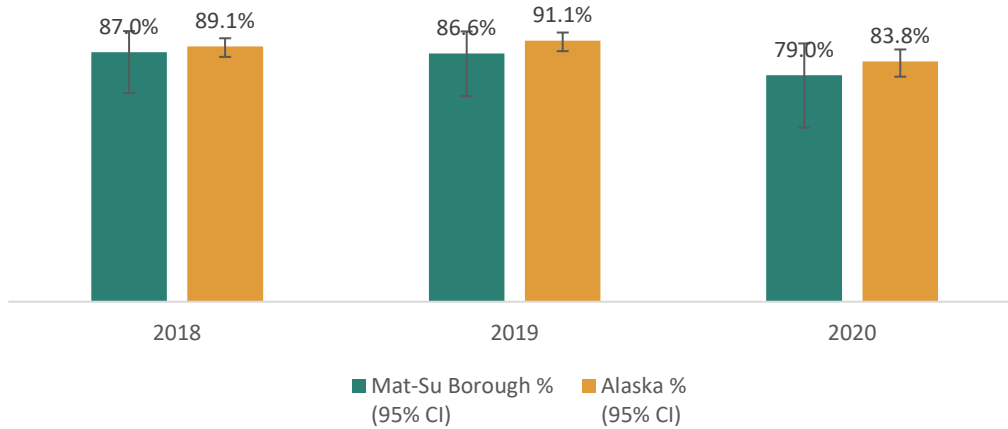
⁴¹ Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2701. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed January 2023. Note: Reported data are for the civilian non-institutionalized population.

⁴² Provider refers to a doctor, nurse, physician assistant, community health aide, or similar health care worker.

⁴³ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

In 2020, 79 percent of Mat-Su mothers who responded to the CUBS survey reported taking their child to a medical provider for a well-child check-up in the previous 12 months.⁴⁴

Figure 19. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Reported Their Child Had a Well-Child Appointment in the Previous 12-Months, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020

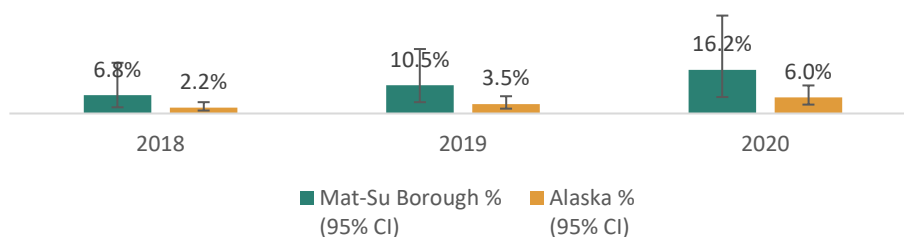


Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

Immunizations

In 2020, 16.2 percent of Mat-Su mothers of three-year olds who responded to the CUBS survey said they did not get vaccinations for their child(ren) for reasons other than illness or allergy, as compared to 6 percent of Alaska mothers of three-year olds who responded to the survey.^{45,46} The percentage of mothers of three year olds who did not get vaccinations for their child(ren) increased from 2018 to 2020.

Figure 20. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Reported They Did Not Vaccinate their Child(ren), Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁴⁴ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

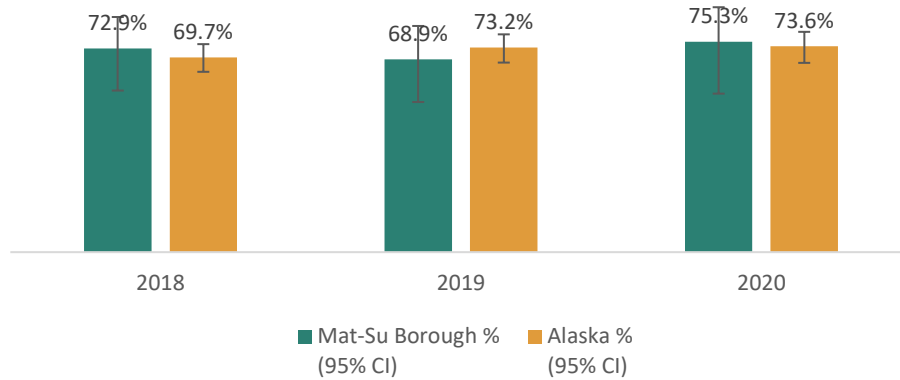
⁴⁵ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁴⁶ The survey item states the question does not apply to the flu shot.

Dental Care

Most Mat-Su mothers of three-year olds report taking their child(ren) to a dentist or dental care provider (75.3 percent).⁴⁷ Likewise, most mothers of three-year olds in Alaska also report taking their child(ren) to the dentist (73.6 percent).⁴⁸

Figure 21. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Report Taking Their Child(ren) to the Dentist, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018 - 2020



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

WIC

During the summer of 2022, the Mat-Su Borough WIC program served 2,500 total clients; 60 percent (1,500) are children between the ages of 0-5.⁴⁹ Of these, 475 are infants, and 40 percent are breastfed, 51 percent are formula fed, and the remainder are a combination of both.⁵⁰ Of the approximately 525 women currently served, 35 percent are pregnant, and the remainder meet either the six-month post-partum qualification for non-breastfeeding mothers or 12 month requirement for those whose breast feed.⁵¹

Child Injuries Requiring Hospitalization

Between 2017 and 2021, children under 5 years of age accounted for 4.9 percent of injuries requiring hospitalization in the Mat-Su and 4.6 percent in Alaska overall.⁵² In 2021, 22 children under five required hospitalization for injuries.⁵³

⁴⁷ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁴⁸ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁴⁹ WIC Program Administrator. Alaska Family Services. Data request via email correspondence. Received June 2022.

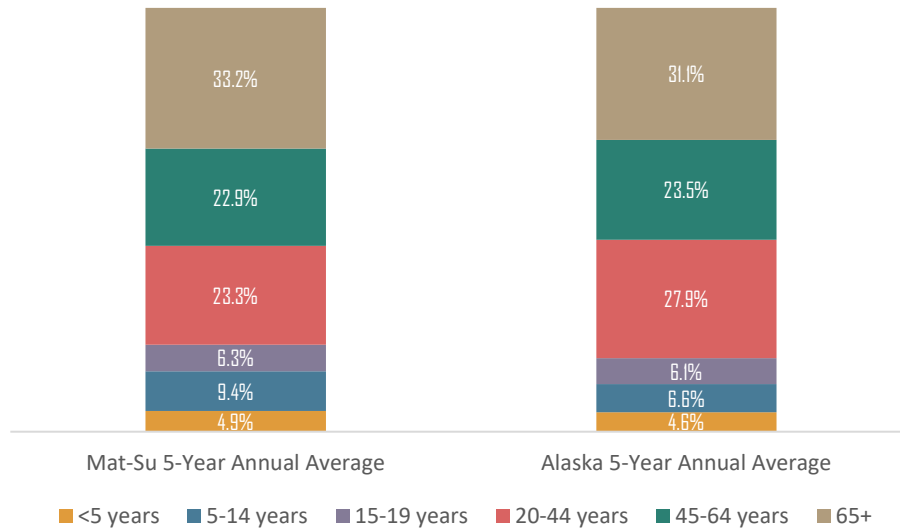
⁵⁰ WIC Program Administrator. Alaska Family Services. Data request via email correspondence. Received June 2022.

⁵¹ WIC Program Administrator. Alaska Family Services. Data request via email correspondence. Received June 2022.

⁵² Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Alaska Department of Health, Division of Public Health, ATR. Note: Data excludes patients with unknown or unreported ages.

⁵³ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Alaska Department of Health, Division of Public Health, ATR.

Figure 22. Five-Year Annual Average Injuries Requiring Hospitalization by Age, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2017-2021



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Alaska Department of Health, Division of Public Health, ATR. Note: Data excludes patients with unknown or unreported ages.

Developmental Screening

Between 2015 and 2019, similar percentages of Alaska and Mat-Su three-year olds received developmental screenings. On average, 77.4 percent of three-year old children in the Mat-Su received a developmental screening, as compared to 79 percent of Alaska three-year old children overall.⁵⁴

Table 21. Percentage of Three-Year-Olds Receiving Developmental Screenings, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2015-2019

Year	Mat-Su	Alaska
2015-2016	80.5%	76.6%
2016-2017	76.5%	76.7%
2017-2018	77.1%	76.8%
2018-2019	82.0%	79.4%
<i>Average</i>	<i>79.0%</i>	<i>77.4%</i>

Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Kids Count. 2015-2019.

Infant Learning Program staff

What have you been seeing in your program since the Pandemic?

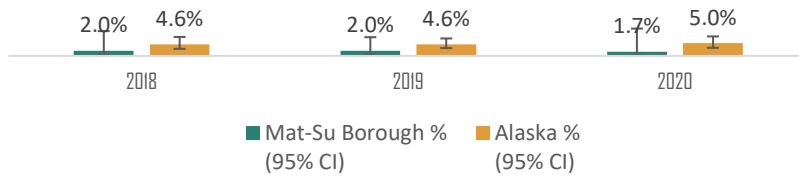
“We’re seeing, at least in our center, and I would assume that Head Start is seeing the same thing - families in crisis, like a lot deeper in crisis than they were before, and a lot more of them. For us at least our entire caseloads are in crisis.”

⁵⁴ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Kids Count. 2015-2019.

Stressors- Behavioral Health- Witnessed Violence in Household

When asked about experiences their three-year-old child may have had, 1.7 percent of Mat-Su mothers and 5 percent of Alaska mothers reported their three-year-old had witnessed violence of physical abuse between household members in 2020.⁵⁵

Figure 23. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Report Their Child Witnessed Violence in the Household, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

Maternal Depression

In 2020, 30.8 percent of Mat-Su mothers of three-year old children and 35.2 percent of Alaska mothers of three-year old children reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless always, often or sometimes during the past three months.⁵⁶ More than half of Mat-Su and Alaska mothers report rarely or never feeling down, depressed, or hopeless during the past three-months (69.2 percent and 64.8 percent, respectively).⁵⁷

Domestic Violence Shelter staff

What have you been seeing in your program since the pandemic?

“We’re seeing an increase in violence in the homes leading to a lot of the family crisis. And then also, housing concerns for the families. We are keeping a lot of people in the shelter a lot longer because they’re having a hard time finding new housing.”

Child Advocacy Center Director

Challenge

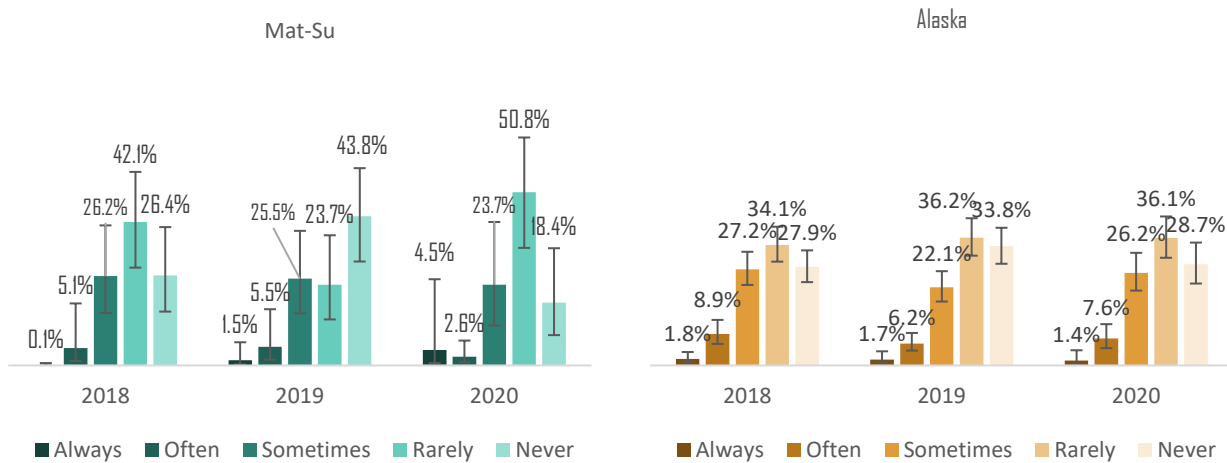
“It is very hard with our population of clients to find mental health services that deal with the types of things our clients deal with and also our low income status of most clients. [It is hard] to get someone in right away. So there is a four to six month waiting list

⁵⁵ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁵⁶ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁵⁷ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

Figure 24. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children Who Report Feeling Down, Depressed or Hopeless During the Past Three-Months, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020

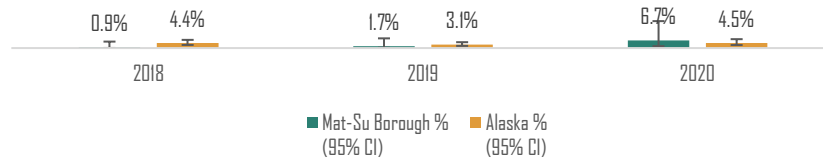


Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

Death of Household Member

In 2020, 6.7 percent of Mat-Su mothers of three-year old children and 4.5 percent of Alaska mothers of three-year old children reported their child had experienced the death of a household member.⁵⁸ The percentage of Mat-Su mothers appears to have increased from .9 percent in 2018 to 6.7 percent in 2020.^{59,60}

Figure 25. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Report Their Child Experienced the Death of a Household Member, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁵⁸ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁵⁹ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁶⁰ Note: This is not a statistically significant difference because the confidence intervals overlap.

Social and economic status of population

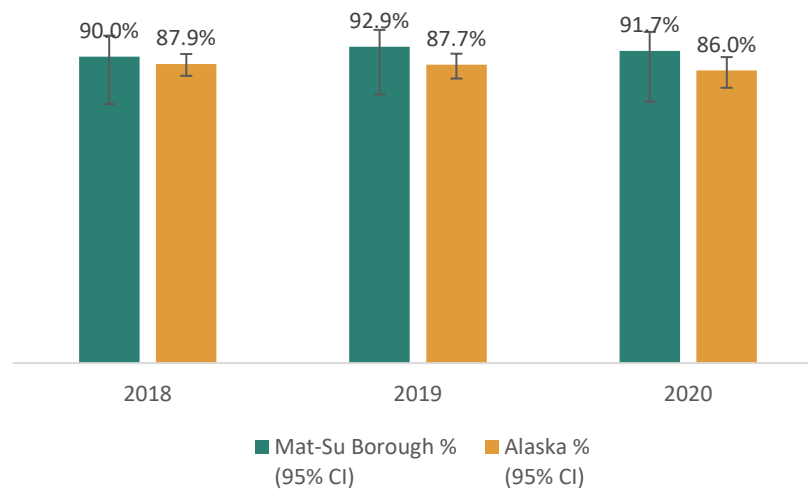
PRIORITY AREA/TREND -SOCIAL TRENDS – SUPPORT AND CHILD WELFARE

- Most Mat-Su mothers of three-year-olds report having support when they are sick (91.7%), need help to get to the health clinic (86.6%), and if they need a \$50 loan (85.6%).
- Child maltreatment: the rate per 1000 children for all types of substantiated maltreatment has doubled 2018 to 2021, while the number of reports per 1000 children has only increased from 31 to 34.6 from 2019 to 2021.
- The number of children in Foster Care on September 30th has increased from 2739 in 2017 to 2828 in 2021
- Local providers state there is a need for access to human translators and a need to increase the number of situations where non-English languages can co-exist with English.

Supports-Help When Sick

In 2020, over 90 percent of Mat-Su mothers of three-year old children who responded to the CUBS survey reported they had someone to ask for help if they were sick and needed to be in bed (91.7 percent).⁶¹ Eighty-six percent of Alaska mothers of three-year olds reported having assistance when sick also.⁶²

Figure 26. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children Who Have Someone to Help Them When Sick, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

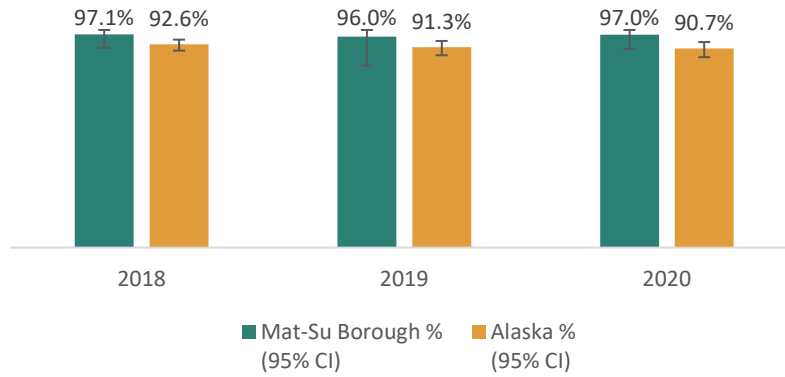
⁶¹ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁶² Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

Help Going to Clinic

In 2020, nearly all Mat-Su mothers and most Alaska mothers of three-year old children who responded to the CUBS survey reported having someone to take them to the clinic or doctor’s office, if they needed a ride (97 percent and 90.7 percent respectively).⁶³

Figure 27. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children with Help to Go to Clinic, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020

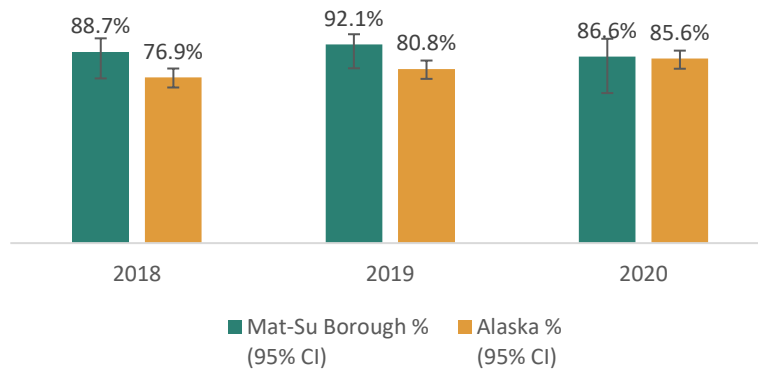


Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

Immediate Financial Help

Most mothers of three-year old children who responded to the CUBS survey reported having someone to loan them \$50 if they needed help now (86.6 percent of Mat-Su mothers, and 85.6 percent of Alaska mothers).⁶⁴

Figure 28. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children who Have Someone to Ask for \$50 Loan, Mat-Su and Alaska, 2018-2020



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

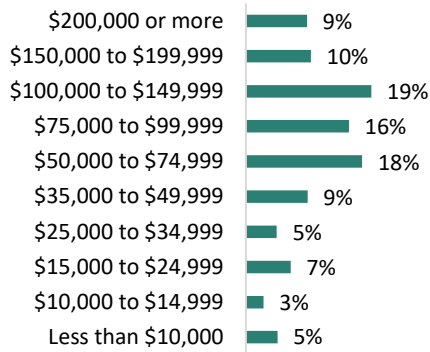
⁶³ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁶⁴ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

Household Income in Past 12 Months

In 2021, the median income in the previous 12 months for a household in the Mat-Su Borough was \$78,856.⁶⁵ Most households in the Mat-Su Borough earned between \$50,000 and \$149,000 per year (53 percent).⁶⁶ The median household income in the past twelve months for families with own children under 18 was \$92,618.⁶⁷

Figure 29. Mat-Su Borough Household Income, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1901. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed

Poverty Status

In 2021, eleven percent of the Mat-Su Borough population for whom poverty status is determined fell below poverty level.⁶⁸ Of these, 797 were children below the age of five.⁶⁹ Twelve percent of Mat-Su children under five years fall below poverty level.

Table 22. Poverty Status of Mat-Su Borough Population (<18), 2021

Age	Population	Population Below Poverty Level	Percent of Population Below Poverty Level
Under 5 years	6,497	797	12%
5 to 17 years	21,141	3,080	15%
Under 18 years	27,638	3,877	14%

⁶⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1901. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

⁶⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1901. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

⁶⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1903. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

⁶⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1903. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

⁶⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1903. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

Free & Reduced Lunch

During program year 2022, 42 percent of students enrolled in the Mat-Su Borough School District qualified for free or reduced lunch.⁷⁰

Table 23. Mat-Su Borough School District Free and Reduced-Price Eligibility by School, 2021-2022

School	Free	Reduced	Enrolled	% F& R
Burchell High School	215	0	236	91%
Sutton Elementary	38	0	44	87%
Trapper Creek Elementary	14	0	17	83%
Valley Pathways	151	0	187	81%
Big Lake Elementary	257	0	339	76%
Dena'ina Elementary School	284	0	387	73%
Meadow Lakes Elementary	199	0	275	72%
Iditarod Elementary	265	0	374	71%
Houston Jr./Sr. High School	473	0	686	69%
Redington Jr./Sr. High School	384	0	570	67%
Willow Elementary	82	0	126	65%
Tanaina Elementary	226	0	353	64%
Beryozova School	14	0	30	47%
Snowshoe Elementary	128	16	318	45%
Swanson Elementary	146	23	397	43%
Susitna Valley Jr/Sr High	79	9	209	42%
Sherrod Elementary	131	25	371	42%
Talkeetna Elementary	33	7	97	41%
Wasilla Middle School	217	26	604	40%
Palmer Middle School	197	22	555	39%
Knik Elementary School	93	10	265	39%
Glacier View School	10	3	34	38%
Goose Bay Elementary	100	30	342	38%
Butte Elementary	80	22	271	38%
Teeland Middle School	249	42	778	37%
Larson Elementary	125	16	382	37%
John Shaw Elementary	147	32	542	33%
Cottonwood Creek Elementary	113	29	431	33%
Wasilla High School	233	27	809	32%
Mat-Su Day School	23	0	73	32%
Palmer High School	190	42	789	29%
Colony Middle School	168	30	699	28%
Finger Lake Elementary	108	12	425	28%
Pioneer Peak Elementary	127	14	511	28%
Colony High School	265	37	1,142	26%
Alaska Middle College School	44	2	187	25%
Mat-Su Career & Tech Ed High School	123	18	751	19%
Fred and Sara Machetanz Elementary School	64	14	456	17%
Total	5,796	508	15,062	42%

⁷⁰ Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Child Nutrition Program. National School Lunch Programs. Free and Reduced Price Meals Report for Program Year 2022. Available at: <https://education.alaska.gov/cnp/nslp>. Accessed October 2022.

Foster Care and OCS Involvement - Child Maltreatment

The CDC defines child maltreatment as “all types of abuse and neglect of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caregiver, or another person in a custodial role” and categorizes maltreatment in four ways:

- Physical abuse is the intentional use of physical force against a child,
- Sexual abuse means engaging a child in sexual acts,
- Emotional abuse describes treatment that harms a child’s sense of self-worth and/or emotional well-being,
- Neglect is failure to meet a child’s basic needs (food, care, clothing, shelter, medical attention, and/or education).⁷¹

Alaska’s Office of Children’s Services (OCS) further describes physical and sexual abuse to include when a caregiver creates a “substantial risk” of physical harm or sexual abuse.⁷² Additionally, within the state of Alaska, the terms “mental injury” and “mental abuse” are used to describe emotional abuse and refer to “injury to the emotional well-being or intellectual or psychological capacity of a child.”⁷³

In the Mat-Su, rates of all types of substantiated child maltreatment increased between 2018 and 2021 with the rate of all types of substantiated child reports nearly doubling from 7.8 per 1,000 children in 2018 to 14.8 substantiated reports per 1,000 children in 2021.⁷⁴

CCS Staff members

Challenge

“We are seeing an increase in cases [of children] without parents. These are kids in state custody and the parents are not with the children when they come to our facility, so we don’t get a good medical history and any referrals. It just complicates things and [can delay care.]”

“I had a kiddo who needed surgery and it had to be delayed three times because ultimately we had to get a court order to get that surgery done.”

⁷¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Understanding Child Maltreatment. 2014. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/cm-factsheet--2013.pdf>.

⁷² Office of Children’s Services. Glossary of OCS terms. Accessed December 2022. Available at: <https://dfcs.alaska.gov/ocs/pages/statistics/default.aspx> and https://dfcs.alaska.gov/ocs/Documents/statistics/Webdata/static_webdata_definitions.pdf.

⁷³ Office of Children’s Services. Glossary of OCS terms. Accessed December 2022. Available at: <https://dfcs.alaska.gov/ocs/pages/statistics/default.aspx> and https://dfcs.alaska.gov/ocs/Documents/statistics/Webdata/static_webdata_definitions.pdf.

⁷⁴ Mat-Su Health Foundation Community Needs Assessment. Trends Analysis. Received November 2022. Note: The 2018 rates were calculated using population estimates for Mat-Su Borough children under 18 from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development; 2021 rates calculated using data for children under 18 from the County Health Ratings. Confidence intervals were not available for this data, thus caution should be used when interpreting trends.

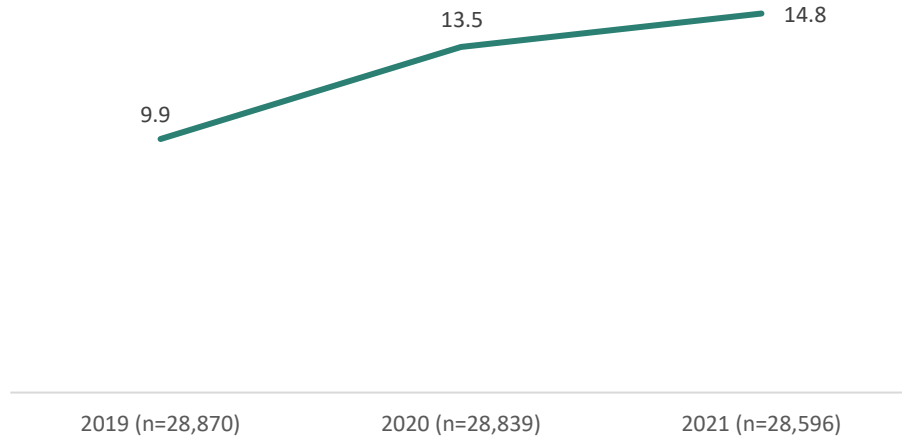
Table 24. Mat-Su Borough Rates (per 1,000 children) of Substantiated Reports of Child Maltreatment, Trend Comparison 2018 to 2021

	Comparison Year (2018)	Most Recent Data (2021)	Trend
Substantiated Reports of Physical Abuse	1.8	5.5	↑
Substantiated Reports of Sexual Abuse	0.6	1.3	↑
Substantiated Reports of Mental Abuse	1.3	3.4	↑
Substantiated Reports of Neglect	6.5	11.7	↑
Substantiated Reports of All Types of Child Maltreatment	7.8	14.8	↑

Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation Community Needs Assessment. Trends Analysis. Received November 2022. Note: The 2018 rates were calculated using population estimates for Mat-Su Borough children under 18 from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development; 2021 rates calculated using data for children under 18 from the County Health Ratings. Confidence intervals were not available for this data, thus caution should be used when interpreting trends.

Data from the Wasilla OCS office shows year over year increases in rates of overall substantiated reports of child maltreatment.

Figure 30. Substantiated Reports of Any Type of Child Maltreatment, Rate per 1,000 Children, 2019-2021



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation Community Needs Assessment. Received November 2022. Alaska Department of Family and Community Services, OCS data. Note: Rate calculated using population estimates from County Health Rankings.

OCS data tracks reports of child maltreatment in three ways: all reports received, screened in reports, and substantiated reports. Screened in reports refer to protective service reports where a decision is made that the reporter’s concerns constitute a potential threat to child safety. If a report is screened out, the case is closed without further action. An initial assessment follows a screened in report. An initial assessment determines if a child is safe or unsafe as well as the findings for each allegation. The determination of the initial assessment results in either a substantiated report (child maltreatment occurred) or an unsubstantiated report.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Office of Children’s Services. Glossary of OCS terms. Accessed December 2022. Available at: <https://dfcs.alaska.gov/ocs/pages/statistics/default.aspx> and https://dfcs.alaska.gov/ocs/Documents/statistics/Webdata/static_webdata_definitions.pdf.

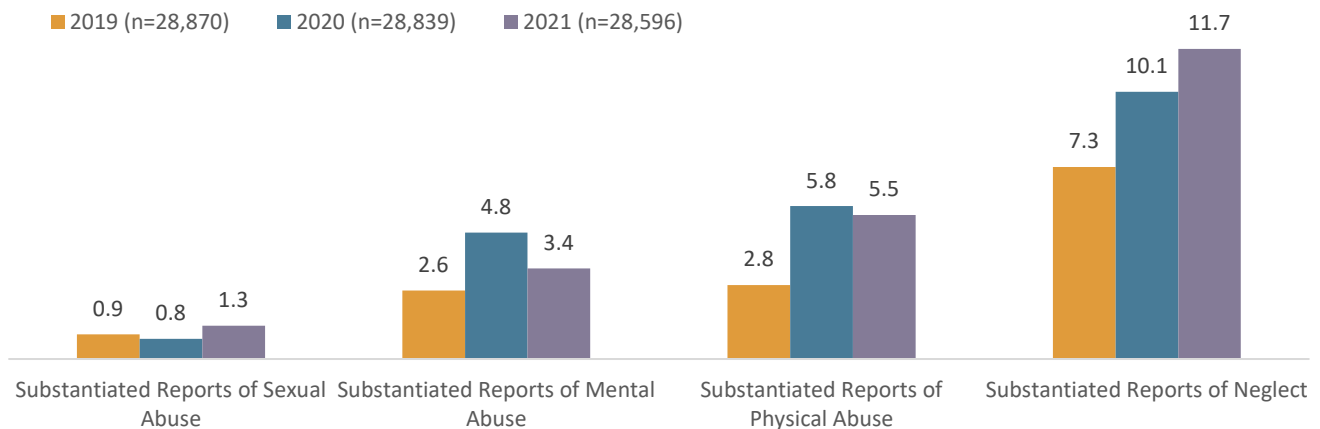
Table 25. Reports of Child Maltreatment Handled by Wasilla OCS Office by Type of Report and Type of Maltreatment, 2019-2021

	2019 (n=28,870)	2020 (n=28,839)	2021 (n=28,596)
Physical Abuse			
All Reports	27.6	24.3	26.4
Screened In Reports	17.0	14.7	15.0
Substantiated Reports	2.8	5.8	5.5
Sexual Abuse			
All Reports	21.2	15.6	20.0
Screened In Reports	8.5	5.2	7.4
Substantiated Reports	0.9	0.8	1.3
Mental Abuse			
All Reports	31.0	29.7	34.6
Screened In Reports	22.8	17.6	21.7
Substantiated Reports	2.6	4.8	3.4
Neglect			
All Reports	73.6	64.3	67.9
Screened In Reports	45.4	33.9	41.0
Substantiated Reports	7.3	10.1	11.7
Any Child Maltreatment			
All Reports	104.6	90.5	100.3
Screened In Reports	63.1	46.7	55.4
Substantiated Reports	9.9	13.5	14.8

Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation Community Needs Assessment. Received November 2022. Alaska Department of Family and Community Services, OCS data. Note: Rate calculated using population estimates from County Health Rankings.

Neglect is the most prevalent type of child maltreatment, followed by physical abuse and mental abuse, with sexual abuse being the least prevalent form of child maltreatment reported or substantiated.

Figure 31. Substantiated Reports of Child Maltreatment (per 1,000 Children) Handled by the Wasilla OCS Office by Type and Year



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation Community Needs Assessment. Received November 2022. Alaska Department of Family and Community Services, OCS data. Note: Rate calculated using population estimates from County Health Rankings.

Children in Foster Care

During FY 2021, a total of 2,828 Alaska children were in foster care, with an average of 7.7 years of age.⁷⁶ Of these, 40 percent or 1,141 were children under the age of 6.⁷⁷

Table 26. Alaska Children in Foster Care, FY 2021

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of Children in Foster Care on September 30	2,739	2,781	2,879	2,860	2,828
Number of Children who Entered Foster Care during FY	1,321	1,337	1,496	1,353	1,324
Number of Children who Exited Foster Care during FY	1,346	1,251	1,337	1,338	1,291
Number of Children Served by Foster Care System during FY	4,085	4,032	4,216	4,198	4,119
Number of Children Waiting to be Adopted on September 30	1,032	1,006	951	1,019	972

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2021 data. The AFCARS Report: Alaska. Available at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcars-tar-ak-2021.pdf>.

Language and cultural base of population and Race and Ethnic characteristics of population

PRIORITY AREA/TREND -POPULATION TRENDS, INCLUDING LANGUAGE, ETHNICITY AND RACE

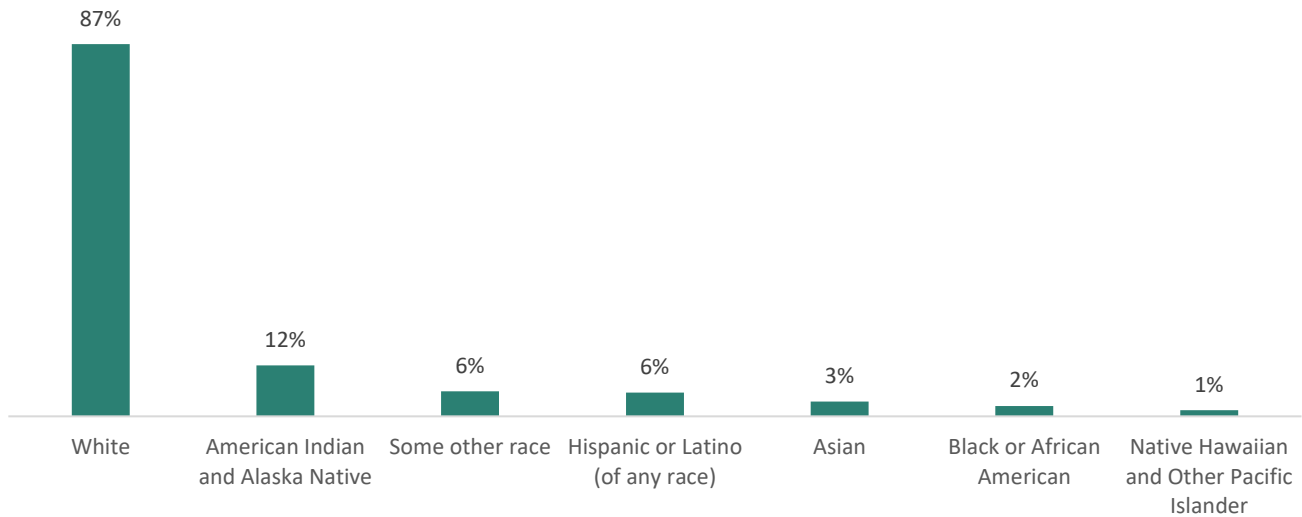
- 23% increase in overall population since 2011 (86,817 to 106,807). The centers for CCS are located in the eight highest growing areas of the borough.
- It is estimated that the population will grow to 122,830 in 2030 and will continue to grow through 2050.
- The majority of the population in Mat-Su are white (87%) and speak English (93.8%).
- People who are American Indian and Alaska Native make up approximately 12% of the population, Hispanic/Latino people represent 6%, and Asian people represent 3%. There is another 6% of people who are classified as another race/ethnicity.
- Non-English languages spoken in Mat-Su include Spanish (1.7%), Indo-European languages (2.5%), Asian or Pacific Islander (1.3%) or another language (.8%).

⁷⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2021 data. The AFCARS Report: Alaska. Available at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcars-tar-ak-2021.pdf>.

⁷⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2021 data. The AFCARS Report: Alaska. Available at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcars-tar-ak-2021.pdf>. Note: Age determined by age on September 30.

Most of the Mat-Su Borough population over the age of five speaks only English (93.8 percent). The remaining 6.2 percent speak a language other than English: Spanish (1.7 percent), other Indo-European language (2.5 percent), Asian or Pacific Island language (1.3 percent), or another language (.8 percent).⁷⁸ Residents of the Mat-Su Borough predominantly identify as white (76 percent).⁷⁹ When demographic responses are combined so that all individuals who identify as a race alone or in any combination, this percentage increases to 87 percent (see figure below). Eleven percent of Mat-Su residents identify as two or more races.

Figure 32. Mat-Su Borough Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP05. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022. Note: Population estimates are for race alone or in any combination with one or more races.

Table 27. Mat-Su Borough Population by Race / Ethnicity, 2021

Race	Population	Percent of Population
White	96,653	87%
American Indian and Alaska Native	13,264	12%
Another race (not listed in the survey)	6,473	6%
Hispanic or Latino	6,198	6%
Asian	3,826	3%
Black or African American	2,691	2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1,591	1%
Total	110,686	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP05. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022. Note: Population estimates are for race alone or in any combination with one or more races.

⁷⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S1601. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed January 2023.

⁷⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP05. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022.

Recent population changes including immigration, new or emerging populations

CCS Early Care and Learning provides services in the fastest growing region of the state. Between 2011 and 2021, Alaska’s population increased modestly by 5 percent overall; while the Mat-Su Borough’s population increased by 23 percent, or 19,990 people.⁸⁰ The Mat-Su Borough’s population has averaged more than 6 times the state’s average growth for the past ten years.⁸¹

Alaska’s population density varies substantially throughout the state. In 2021, the population by borough ranged from 562 people in Yakutat City and Borough to 292,545 people in the Anchorage Municipality. Population estimates and population growth during a ten-year period are shown for the most populous regions of the state in Table 28.

Table 28. Alaska Population by Borough, 2011 to 2021 Population Change

Area Name	2011 Population	2021 Population	Population Change (count)	Population Change (percent)
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	86,817	106,807	19,990	23%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	54,718	58,711	3,993	7%
Juneau City and Borough	31,244	32,240	996	3%
Anchorage Municipality	287,390	292,545	5,155	2%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	96,161	97,149	988	1%
Alaska	700,703	735,951	35,248	5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and 2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S0101. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed December 2022. Note: Data are sorted by population change.

The Mat-Su borough is made up of many smaller communities. The five areas with the largest shares of the Borough population are: Knik-Fairview CDP⁸² (17% of the Mat-Su Borough population), Tanaina CDP (10%), North Lakes CDP (9%), Wasilla City CDP (9%), and Meadow Lakes CDP (8 percent). CCS Early Learning has facilities in four of the top eight most populous areas; see bolded rows in Table 9 (page 18). Of the CCS Early Learning facilities, three are in the top five areas of the Mat-Su Borough with the greatest increase in population from 2011 to 2021. The Knik-Fairview CDP, where CCS Early Learning opened a facility in 2022, saw the greatest population change during this period- an increase of 4,662 people.⁸³

⁸⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and 2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S0101. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed December 2022.

⁸¹ Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Alaska Population Overview. 2019 Estimates. Available at: <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/estimates/pub/19popover.pdf>. Accessed: September 2022. Combined with 2020 Census data available at ADOLWD.

⁸² CDP stands for Census Designated Place. For more information: <https://www.census.gov/data/academy/data-gems/2018/cdp.html>.

⁸³ Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. 2020 Census Data. Available at: <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/>. Accessed: September 2022. Note: Data are sorted by population change.

Table 29. Mat-Su Borough Population Change by Community, 2020

Community	2011 Population	2021 Population	Population Change (count)	Population Change (%)
Knik-Fairview CDP	13,620	18,282	4,662	34%
North Lakes CDP	7,595*	9,941	2,346	31%
Meadow Lakes CDP	6,224	8,367	2,143	34%
Farm Loop CDP	968	2,549	1,581	163%
Wasilla City	7,678	9,098	1,420	18%
South Lakes CDP	5,032*	6,421	1,389	28%
Point MacKenzie CDP	336	1,364	1,028	306%
Tanaina CDP	9,403	10,314	911	10%
Gateway CDP	5,437	6,305	868	16%
Butte CDP	3,248	3,857	609	19%
Lazy Mountain CDP	1,281	1,766	485	38%
Talkeetna CDP	501	947	446	89%
Fishhook CDP	4,690	5,055	365	8%
Buffalo Soapstone CDP	763	949	186	24%
Willow CDP	1,819	1,965	146	8%
Knik River CDP	668	799	131	20%
Palmer City	5,891	5,978	87	1%
Skwentna CDP	0	69	69	--
Glacier View CDP	242	250	8	3%
Eureka Roadhouse CDP	0	0	0	0%
Petersville CDP	0	0	0	0%
Chickaloon CDP	204	188	-16	-8%
Susitna - Alpine CDP	24	0	-24	-100%
Lake Louise CDP	29	0	-29	-100%
Sutton-Alpine CDP	1,271	1,228	-43	-3%
Trapper Creek CDP	361	318	-43	-12%
Chase CDP	47	0	-47	-100%
Houston City	1,910	1,739	-171	-9%
Susitna North CDP	1,419	1,193	-226	-16%
Big Lake CDP	3,479	2,888	-591	-17%
Balance	2,677	4,977	2,300	86%
Matanuska Susitna Borough	86,817	106,807	19,990	23%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and 2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S0101. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed December 2022. Note: Data are sorted by population. Note: Date for communities marked with an '*' was not available in 2021 5-Year ACS Estimates and was gathered from Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. 2020 Census Data. Available at: <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/>. Accessed: September 2022. Note: Data are sorted by population change (count). The bolded community names indicate where CCS has a center and the blue highlighted rows indicate where CCS recruits children for enrollment.

Population estimates and trends

The Mat-Su Borough population is projected to increase by 38,753 people through July of 2050.⁸⁴ Six percent of this increase is attributed to children under the age of 5; an increase of 2,363 children under the age of 5 in the Mat-Su.⁸⁵

Table 30. Estimated and Projected Population in the Mat-Su Borough 2021 – 2050 by Age

Age	Population Estimate	Project Population					
	July 1, 2021	July 1, 2025	July 1, 2030	July 1, 2035	July 1, 2040	July 1, 2045	July 1, 2050
0-4	7,221	7,453	8,078	8,880	9,516	9,670	9,584
5-9	8,765	8,095	8,212	8,837	9,623	10,235	10,344
10-14	8,959	9,141	8,694	8,766	9,376	10,132	10,707
15-19	7,619	8,945	9,127	8,618	8,637	9,200	9,911
20-24	5,240	6,808	8,343	8,405	7,776	7,721	8,150
25-29	6,463	6,116	7,652	9,179	9,194	8,514	8,368
30-34	7,691	7,396	6,981	8,482	9,997	9,967	9,234
35-39	8,334	8,317	8,170	7,768	9,246	10,749	10,677
40-44	7,307	8,470	8,649	8,482	8,068	9,495	10,962
45-49	6,195	6,918	8,512	8,664	8,471	8,030	9,398
50-54	6,281	6,323	6,983	8,525	8,654	8,432	7,965
55-59	6,742	6,227	6,295	6,923	8,400	8,498	8,251
60-64	7,081	6,710	6,086	6,135	6,728	8,125	8,201
65-69	6,039	6,463	6,275	5,658	5,678	6,234	7,559
70-74	4,335	5,244	5,800	5,606	5,015	5,002	5,528
75-79	2,281	3,281	4,533	5,022	4,840	4,307	4,279
80-84	1,295	1,759	2,610	3,625	4,024	3,870	3,449
85-89	643	817	1,224	1,823	2,537	2,820	2,700
90+	314	453	606	900	1,352	1,930	2,291
Total	108,805	114,936	122,830	130,298	137,132	142,931	147,558
Median Age	36.5	37.1	37.6	37.6	37.4	37.8	38.5

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Alaska Population Projections 2021 to 2050. Available at: <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/projections.html>. Accessed October 2022.

⁸⁴ Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Alaska Population Projections 2021 to 2050. Available at: <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/projections.html>. Accessed October 2022.

⁸⁵ Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Alaska Population Projections 2021 to 2050. Available at: <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/projections.html>. Accessed October 2022.

Age

Six percent of the Mat-Su Borough population is under the age of five (7,048 children).⁸⁶ The median age of the Borough population is 36.9 years of age.⁸⁷

Table 31. Mat-Su Borough Population by Age, 2021

Age	Population	Percent of Population
Under 5 years	7,048	6%
5 to 9 years	7,139	6%
10 to 14 years	9,862	9%
15 to 19 years	7,310	7%
20 to 24 years	6,140	6%
25 to 34 years	15,390	14%
35 to 44 years	16,017	14%
45 to 54 years	12,729	12%
55 to 59 years	6,968	6%
60 to 64 years	7,443	7%
65 to 74 years	10,225	9%
75 to 84 years	3,395	3%
85 years and over	1,020	1%
Total	110,686	100%
Median age (years)	36.9	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP05. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022.

Types and locations of childcare programs and arrangements for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers

PRIORITY AREA/TREND -CHILD CARE FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS WITH DISABILITIES

- In Alaska in 2020, 20% of survey respondents reported having a child between the age of 3 and 17 with a mental, emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem.
- In 2021, 13 percent of the Mat-Su population identified as having a disability, with 5% being under the age of 18 years (659).

⁸⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP05. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022.

⁸⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP05. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed September 2022.

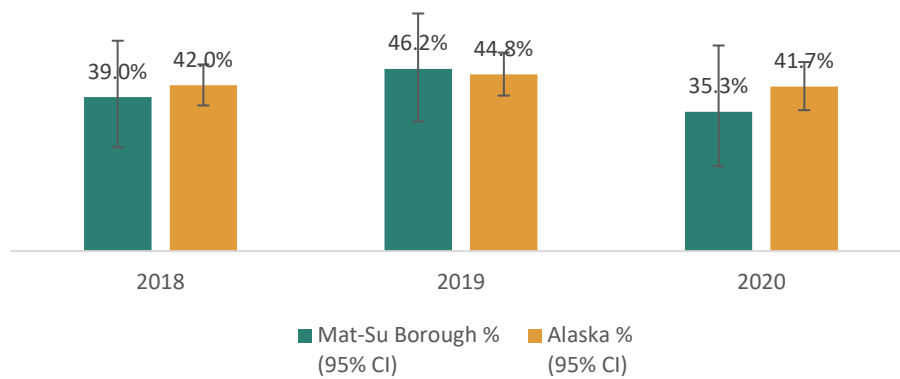
- Matanuska Susitna Borough school District had 216 students under the age of six with an identified disability an increase from 9 percent to 13 percent from the year before.

Regular Childcare Usage

The Childhood Understanding Behaviors (CUBS) Survey⁸⁸ gathers information from Alaska mothers of three-year old children. Mothers who responded to the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) Survey and who still live in Alaska are contacted to complete the CUBS survey by mail or phone three-years later. The survey gathers data on child-focused topics like health and nutrition, child care usage, parenting behaviors, developmental behaviors and more.⁸⁹

In 2020, between 35.3 percent of Mat-Su Borough mothers of three-year old reported regularly using childcare in the past six months.⁹⁰ During the same time period, the percentage of Alaska mothers ranged from 41.7 percent.⁹¹

Figure 33. Mothers of Three-Year Old Children Reporting Regular Childcare Usage in the Past Six Months, Mat-Su Borough and Alaska 2018-2020



Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

Mat-Su Licensed Childcare Facility Capacity

Availability of childcare varies substantially in even most populous areas of Alaska. In 2022, the Mat-Su Borough had an estimated 24 childcare centers per 1,000 children under 5 years old compared to 105 childcare centers per 1,000 children under 5 in the Anchorage area.⁹²

⁸⁸ A copy of the 2020 to present survey instrument can be found at:

<https://health.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Documents/mcheipi/cubs/CUBS%20survey%206%202020--Accessible.pdf>.

⁸⁹ Alaska Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey. Alaska Department of Health. Division of Public Health. Available at:

[https://health.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/pages/mcheipi/cubs/default.aspx#:~:text=Alaska%20CUBS%20is%20a%20program,Assessment%20Monitoring%20System%20\(PRAMS\)](https://health.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/pages/mcheipi/cubs/default.aspx#:~:text=Alaska%20CUBS%20is%20a%20program,Assessment%20Monitoring%20System%20(PRAMS)). Accessed January 2023.

⁹⁰ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁹¹ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey.

⁹² Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Community Health Rankings 2022.

As of the fall of 2022, 51 active childcare facilities offered a total of 2,223 childcare slots in the Mat-Su.⁹³ Of these, 17 percent or 329 slots are offered by CCS Early Learning (see section titled “CCS Services for more detail). Table 29 illustrates the breakout of childcare slots by age range.

Table 32. Total Childcare Slots Available at Licensed Childcare Facilities in the Mat-Su, 2022

Facility	Capacity	Starting age, through	ending age
1	47	0 months	12 years
2	8	0 months	12 years
3	68	0 weeks	12 years
4	150	0 weeks	12 years
5	8	0 weeks	12 years
6	12	0 weeks	12 years
7	126	0 weeks	12 years
8	12	0 weeks	12 years
9	8	0 weeks	12 years
10	68	0 weeks	12 years
11	22	0 weeks	12 years
12	12	0 weeks	12 years
13	8	0 weeks	12 years
14	60	0 weeks	12 years
15. CCS Wasilla EHS	48	0 weeks	3 years
16	8	0 weeks	5 years
17. CCS Palmer	92	0 weeks	5 years
18. CCS Fairview	140	0 weeks	5 years
19	6	0 years	12 years
20	142	0 years	12 years
21	65	0 years	12 years
22. CCS Wasilla HS	130	0 years	5 years
23	22	3 weeks	36 months
24	82	4 weeks	12 years
25	58	1 month	12 years
26	12	6 weeks	12 years
27	5	6 weeks	12 years
28	55	6 weeks	12 years
29	8	6 weeks	12 years
30	60	6 weeks	12 years
31	70	6 weeks	12 years
32	12	6 weeks	12 years
33	81	6 weeks	12 years
34	40	6 weeks	12 years
35	12	6 weeks	12 years
36	12	6 weeks	12 years
37	8	6 weeks	12 years
38	42	6 weeks	12 years
39	65	6 weeks	12 years
40	12	4 months	12 years
41	8	6 months	12 years
42	100	19 months	12 years

⁹³ Childcare Assistance Program. Alaska Family Services. Data shared via request in November 2022. Note: Data accurate as of October 1, 2022.

Facility	Capacity	Starting age, through	ending age
43	22	19 months	12 years
44	24	22 months	12 years
45	8	24 months	12 years
46	20	2 years	6 years
47	12	3 years	12 years
48	20	3 years	12 years
49. CCS Meadow Lakes	75	3 years	5 years
50	8	3 years	5 years
51	30	5 years	12 years

Source: Childcare Assistance Program. Alaska Family Services. Data shared in November 2022 by request. Note: Data accurate as of October 1, 2022.

COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts- Facility Closures During the Pandemic

Eleven childcare facilities closed in the Mat-Su between 2020 and 2022⁹⁴ resulting in a loss of 241 childcare slots for Mat-Su children, eleven percent of currently available childcare slots.⁹⁵

Table 33. Childcare Facility Closures During the Pandemic, 2020-2022

Facility	Date of Closure	Capacity	Age Range
1	4/30/20	8	0 weeks through 12 years
2	7/1/20	12	6 weeks through 12 years
3	12/31/20	86	0 weeks through 12 years
4	7/31/21	12	0 weeks through 12 years
5	9/1/21	8	0 weeks through 12 years
6	1/31/22	5	0 weeks through 10 years
7	3/31/22	8	6 months through 12 years
8	7/31/22	8	6 months through 12 years
9	9/15/22	8	0 weeks through 5 years
10	10/31/22	86	1 month through 12 years
Total		241	

Source: Childcare Assistance Program. Alaska Family Services. Data shared in November 2022 by request. Note: Data accurate as of October 1, 2022.

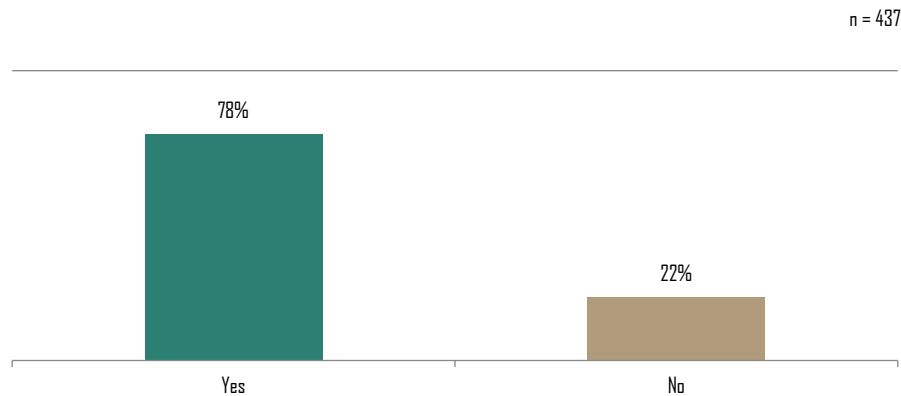
During the winter of 2020, the State of Alaska’s Maternal Child Health Epidemiology Unit fielded a survey about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Alaskans. Over one thousand Mat-Su residents responded to the survey which included questions about mental health, service, and childcare impacts. Fourteen percent of respondents were parents or guardians of a child pre-kindergarten age or younger. Prior to the pandemic, most respondents said their child regularly attended school or childcare (78 percent).⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Data based on reports for January 2020 through June 2021 and August 2021 through September 2022.

⁹⁵ Childcare Assistance Program. Alaska Family Services. Data shared via request in November 2022. Note: Data accurate as of October 1, 2022.

⁹⁶ State of Alaska. Maternal Child Health Epidemiology. COVID-19 Winter Follow-Up, 2020. Shared by: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Available at: <https://dhss.alaska.gov/health/dph/wcfh/Pages/mchepe/default.aspx>.

Figure 34. Before the COVID-19 pandemic began, did your child regularly attend school or use any type of childcare, such as preschool, daycare, Head Start, or in-home care by relatives or friends?



Source: State of Alaska. Maternal Child Health Epidemiology. COVID-19 Winter Follow-Up, 2020. Shared by: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Available at: <https://dhss.alaska.gov/health/dph/wcfh/Pages/mchepe/default.aspx>.

Between the beginning of the pandemic and the winter of 2020, 37 percent of Mat-Su respondents said their child’s school or childcare closed or stopped offering care.⁹⁷ Just under half of Mat-Su respondents said that childcare or school closures made it difficult for them to work or complete household tasks (49 percent).⁹⁸

Public Health Nursing Director

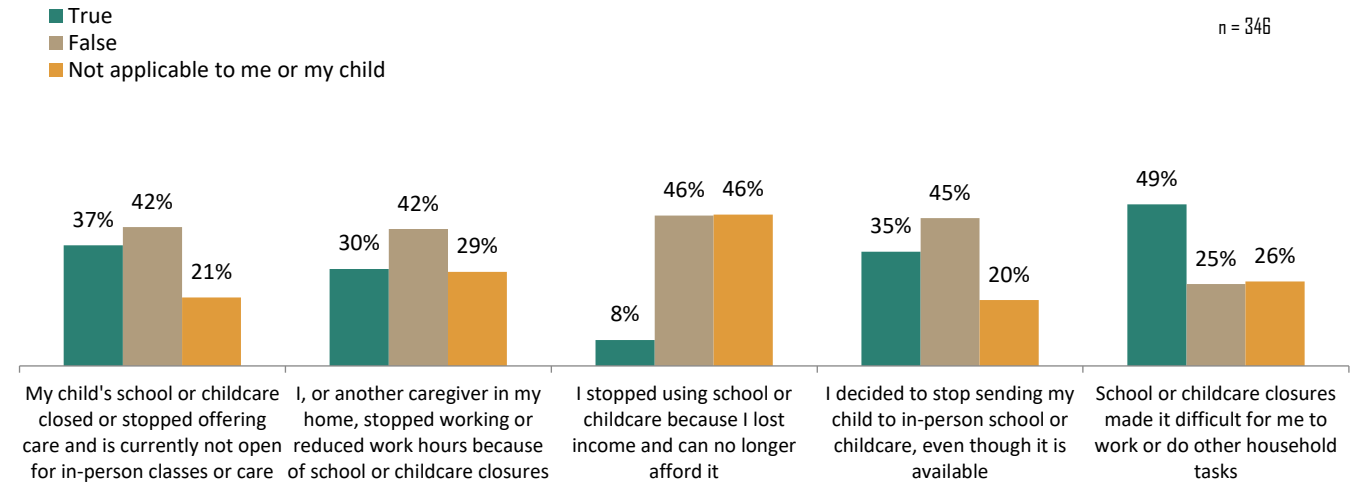
Challenges

‘Transportation, housing.....I think the childcare [challenge] is huge. I know that’s not “health” but it really does affect health when parents have so many demands on their time as far as transporting kids and coordinating with work, it’s really difficult to get to a preventative kind of appointment like immunizations’

⁹⁷ State of Alaska. Maternal Child Health Epidemiology. COVID-19 Winter Follow-Up, 2020. Shared by: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Available at: <https://dhss.alaska.gov/health/dph/wcfh/Pages/mchepe/default.aspx>.

⁹⁸ State of Alaska. Maternal Child Health Epidemiology. COVID-19 Winter Follow-Up, 2020. Shared by: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Available at: <https://dhss.alaska.gov/health/dph/wcfh/Pages/mchepe/default.aspx>.

Figure 35. To what extent are the following statements true for you [related to childcare]. Since the COVID-19 pandemic:



Source: State of Alaska. Maternal Child Health Epidemiology. COVID-19 Winter Follow-Up, 2020. Shared by: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Available at: <https://dhss.alaska.gov/health/dph/wcfh/Pages/mchepi/default.aspx>.

Human Service Organization CEO

Strength

‘It feels like we’ve got quite a few options for home visiting for families – primary prevention with parents as teachers to very targeted programs for families involved with the Office of Children’s Services.’

Early Childhood Education Gaps

Approximately 4,305 children in the Mat-Su under the age of six need access to quality early childhood education.⁹⁹ Of these, 2,905 children are currently enrolled in licensed childcare settings, public pre-k programs, Head Start or Early Head Start programs, or military early childhood education services. An estimated 1,400 children in the Mat-Su do not have access to early childhood care their family needs.¹⁰¹

Table 34. Early Childhood Education Participation, Capacity and Gaps, 2022

	Mat-Su	Alaska
Population of Children		
Number of children under 6 years of age	9,364	60,188
Not in Need (Children in Households with at Least One Adult Not in Workforce)¹⁰²		
Number of children	5,059	25,615
Percentage of children	54%	43%
Quality Early Childhood Education Services Capacity		
Number of children in licensed or approved early childhood education services	2,103	12,993
Number of children in public pre-k programs	495	3,988
Number of children in Head Start or Early Head Start programs	307	3,249
Number of children in military early childhood education services	0	1,139
Total number of children attending early childhood education services	2,905	21,369
Total percentage of children attending quality early childhood education services	31%	36%
Gap Between Need and Capacity		
Number of children without early childhood education services	1,400	13,204
Percentage of total children under 6 without early childhood education services	15%	22%

Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Mat-Alaska Economic Trends, The Childcare Shortage, April 2022.

Families Struggling with Childcare Shortage

During April of 2022, Alaska Economic Trends reported on the childcare shortage in Alaska. Alaska families with children under the age of five were more likely to use paid leave, cut their work hours, and leave their job to care for their children than families with children between the ages of five and eleven.¹⁰³ Families with children under age five and families with children between the ages of five and eleven reported similar percentages for taking unpaid leave to care for their children (4.6 and 4.9 percent, respectively).¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ This estimate assumes that children who live in households where at least one adult is not currently in the workforce do not require childcare and may underestimate need, if households where one adult is not currently in the workforce might choose to work if there were care available for his/her/their children.

¹⁰⁰ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: thread Alaska. Accessed September 2022. Available at: <https://www.threadalaska.org/dashboard/>

¹⁰¹ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: thread Alaska. Accessed September 2022. Available at: <https://www.threadalaska.org/dashboard/>

¹⁰² As mentioned above, this may be an overestimate of children not in need, because households where one adult is not currently in the workforce might choose to work if there were care available for their children.

¹⁰³ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Mat-Alaska Economic Trends, The Childcare Shortage, April 2022.

¹⁰⁴ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Mat-Alaska Economic Trends, The Childcare Shortage, April 2022.

Table 35. Impacts of Childcare Shortage on Families with Children, Mat-Su Borough, 2022

	Took Unpaid Leave to Care for Children	Used Paid Leave to Care for Children	Cut Their Work Hours to Care for Children	Left a Job to Take Care of Children
Under Age 5:	4.6%	11.9%	12.9%	5.0%
Ages 5-11:	4.9%	5.8%	4.1%	2.3%

Source: Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: thread Alaska. Accessed September 2022. Available at: <https://www.threadalaska.org/dashboard/>

Childcare Cost Burden

The estimated percent of household income required to cover childcare expenses in the Mat-Su is 18 percent, compared to 21 percent in Anchorage and 20 percent in Alaska overall.¹⁰⁵

Childcare Rates

The Childcare Assistance Program (CCAP) publishes a reimbursement rate schedule for childcare facilities by community and child age. Mat-Su Borough reimbursement rates are considerably lower than rates in other similar populated boroughs.

Table 36. Full-Time Licensed Childcare Rates by Community and Age Range, 2021

	Anchorage Municipality	Fairbanks North Star Borough	Juneau City and Borough	Matanuska Susitna Borough
Infants	\$ 1,135	\$ 1,342	\$ 1,205	\$ 805
Toddlers	\$ 1,148	\$ 1,119	\$ 1,137	\$ 760
Pre-School	\$ 1,019	\$ 929	\$ 1,071	\$ 706

Source: Child Care Assistance Program Rate Schedule, Draft 2021 Rate Schedule. Provided by CCS Early Learning.

Eligible Unserved Children

CCS Early Learning uses two formulas for estimating the number of eligible Head Start and Early Head Start children in the Borough. The first, shown below, uses the poverty rate to estimate need.

Step 1: # children under 5 living in poverty ÷ number of age groups = # eligible children per age group

Step 2: # eligible children per age group × # age groups served by each program = # eligible children per program

Step 3: $\frac{\text{\# children served by each program}}{\text{\# eligible children per program}} = \% \text{ eligible children served per program}$

Step 4: # eligible children per program – # eligible children served = # unserved eligible children

¹⁰⁵ Mat-Su Health Foundation. Community Needs Assessment. Data from: Community Health Rankings 2022.

Eligible Unserved Children (Determined by Poverty Rate)

Using the poverty status formula, as shown below, CCS Early Learning serves 19 percent of Early Head Start eligible children and 56 percent of Head Start eligible children in the Mat-Su Borough. Approximately 536 Early Head Start eligible children and 195 Head Start eligible children are currently unserved.

Step 1: 1,100 children under 5 living in poverty ÷ 5 age groups = 220 eligible children per age group

*Step 2 (Early Head Start): 220 eligible children per age group × 3 age groups served in Early Head Start
= 660 children eligible for Early Head Start*

*Step 2 (Head Start): 220 eligible children per age group × 2 age groups served in Head Start
= 440 children eligible for Head Start*

Step 3 (Early Head Start): $\frac{124 \text{ children served in Early Head Start}^{106}}{660 \text{ children eligible for Early Head Start}} = 19\% \text{ of Early Head Start eligible children served}$

Step 3 (Head Start): $\frac{245 \text{ children served in Head Start}}{440 \text{ children eligible for Head Start}} = 56\% \text{ of Head Start eligible children served}$

*Step 4 (Early Head Start): 660 children eligible for Early Head Start – 124 children served
– 536 unserved Early Head Start eligible children*

*Step 4 (Head Start): 440 children eligible for Head Start – 245 children served
= 195 unserved Head Start eligible children*

The estimates above are extremely conservative for the following reasons:

- US Census Data (stats above) do not take into consideration the increased cost of living in Alaska. The federal poverty level for Alaska is adjusted upward by 25% to account for this fact, meaning more families are eligible for services under the Alaska Federal Poverty Level (AK FPL) which is 125% of FPL.
- More families are eligible and enrolled based on additional reasons other than low income (families in crisis, homelessness, children in foster care, disabilities, etc.).
- We are allowed to enroll children from families in the 100% - 130% of poverty (using AK FPL) as income eligible.

The second formula uses free and reduced lunch eligibility to determine program eligibility, as shown below.

Step 1: # children under 5 × % children eligible for FRL = # children under 5 eligible for FRL

Step 2: # children under 5 eligible for FRL ÷ number of age groups = # eligible children per age group

Step 3: # eligible children per age group × # age groups served by each program = # eligible children per program

¹⁰⁶ CCS Early Learning Home-Based Early Head Start and Center-Based Early Head Start combined offer 124 slots.

$$\text{Step 4: } \frac{\# \text{ children served by each program}}{\# \text{ eligible children per program}} = \% \text{ eligible children served per program}$$

$$\text{Step 5: } \# \text{ eligible children per program} - \# \text{ eligible children served} = \# \text{ unserved eligible children}$$

Eligible Unserved Children (Determined by FRL)

Using Free and Reduced Lunch to determine eligibility, as shown below, CCS Early Learning serves 7 percent of Early Head Start eligible children and 20.7 percent of Head Start eligible children in the Mat-Su Borough. Approximately 1,652 Early Head Start eligible children and 939 Head Start eligible children are currently unserved.

$$\text{Step 1: } 7,048 \text{ children under 5} \times 42 \% \text{ children eligible for FRL} = 2,960.2 \text{ children under 5 eligible for FRL}$$

$$\text{Step 2: } 2960.2 \text{ children under 5 eligible for FRL} \div 5 \text{ age groups} = 592 \text{ eligible children per age group}$$

$$\text{Step 3 (Early Head Start): } 592 \text{ eligible children per age group} \times 3 \text{ age groups served in Early Head Start} \\ = 1,776 \text{ children eligible for Early Head Start}$$

$$\text{Step 3 (Head Start): } 592 \text{ eligible children per age group} \times 2 \text{ age groups served in Head Start} \\ = 1,184 \text{ children eligible for Head Start}$$

$$\text{Step 4 (Early Head Start): } \frac{124 \text{ children served in Early Head Start}^{107}}{1,776 \text{ children eligible for Early Head Start}} = 7\% \text{ of Early Head Start eligible children served}$$

$$\text{Step 4 (Head Start): } \frac{245 \text{ children served in Head Start}}{1,184 \text{ children eligible for Head Start}} = 20.7\% \text{ of Head Start eligible children served}$$

$$\text{Step 5 (Early Head Start): } 1,776 \text{ children eligible for Early Head Start} - 124 \text{ children served} \\ = 1,652 \text{ unserved Early Head Start eligible children}$$

$$\text{Step 5 (Head Start): } 1,184 \text{ children eligible for Head Start} - 245 \text{ children served} \\ = 939 \text{ unserved Head Start eligible children}$$

PRIORITY AREA/TREND -CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION

- During the pandemic Mat-Su lost 11 childcare facilities and 241 slots.
- It was reported by Alaska Economic Trends in 2022, that AK families were more likely to use paid leave, cut their work hours, or leave their job in order to care for children between the ages of 5-11 years.

¹⁰⁷ CCS Early Learning Home-Based Early Head Start and Center-Based Early Head Start combined offer 124 slots.

- An estimated 1400 children in Mat-Su do not receive early childhood education services.
- In Mat-Su 18% percent of household income is required to cover childcare expenses
- The percent of Early Head Start children served in Mat-Su ranges from 7% to 26% depending on formula for determining need (poverty status or free and reduced lunch).
- The percent of Head Start eligible students served in Mat-Su ranges from 77% to 20.7% depending on the formula used.
- A State of Alaska online survey 2020 responded to by 1000 Mat-Su residents found that 49% of respondents with children said that pandemic child care/school closures made it difficult for them to work or complete household tasks.

Challenge

“You can just say we’re not seeing necessarily more kids in infant learning, but they are more severe. All of them. Every kid is multiply impacted. [We need to] tease out what comes from trauma and crisis and what is true delay and it is really hard....their families are all incredibly in crisis at the same time.”

Types and locations of childcare programs and arrangement for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities

Disabilities

The National Survey of Children’s Health, fielded online and via mail by the Census Bureau, gathers data about children’s mental and physical health; healthcare access; and family, neighborhood, and school contexts. In 2020, 20 percent of Alaska survey respondents reported have a child between the ages of three and seventeen with mental, emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem compared with 23 percent of respondents

nationally.¹⁰⁸ Between 2019 and 2020, 9 percent of Alaska survey respondents reported a child between the ages of one and seventeen receiving services under a special education or early intervention plan, as compared with 9 percent of respondents nationally.¹⁰⁹

In 2021, 13 percent of the Mat-Su population identified as having a disability (13,989 people).¹¹⁰ Of individuals who identified as having a disability, five percent or 659 were under the age of 18.¹¹¹

Table 37. Disability Status of Mat-Su Residents, 2021

Age	Number of People who Identify as Having a Disability	Percent of Population with a Disability	Percent of Mat-Su Borough Population ¹¹²
Under 18 years	659	5%	1%
18 to 64 years	8,183	58%	8%
65 years and over	5,147	37%	5%
Total	13,989		13%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP02. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

The Matanuska Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD) provides special education services for students with an identified disability. During the 2022 – 2023 school year to date, 216 students under the age of 6 have an identified disability. The percentage of special education students under 6 with an identified disability increased slightly from last year (9 percent versus 13 percent).

Table 38. MSBSD Students (under age 6) with an Identified Disability

Students (under age 6) with an Identified Disability	FY21-22	FY22-23*
Total Number	286	216
Percentage of MSBSD Special Education Students	9%	13%

Source: Matanuska Susitna Borough School District. Via data request. Data shared: December 2022.

¹⁰⁸ National Survey of Children’s Health. 2020. Available at: <https://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=8933&r=1&r2=3>. Accessed November 2022.

¹⁰⁹ National Survey of Children’s Health. 2020. Available at: <https://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=8665&r=1&r2=3>. Accessed November 2022.

¹¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP02. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

¹¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP02. Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. Accessed October 2022.

¹¹² The universe for this table is the total civilian non-institutionalized population.

Information and demographics on HS eligible children and their families, including new, emerging and underserved populations

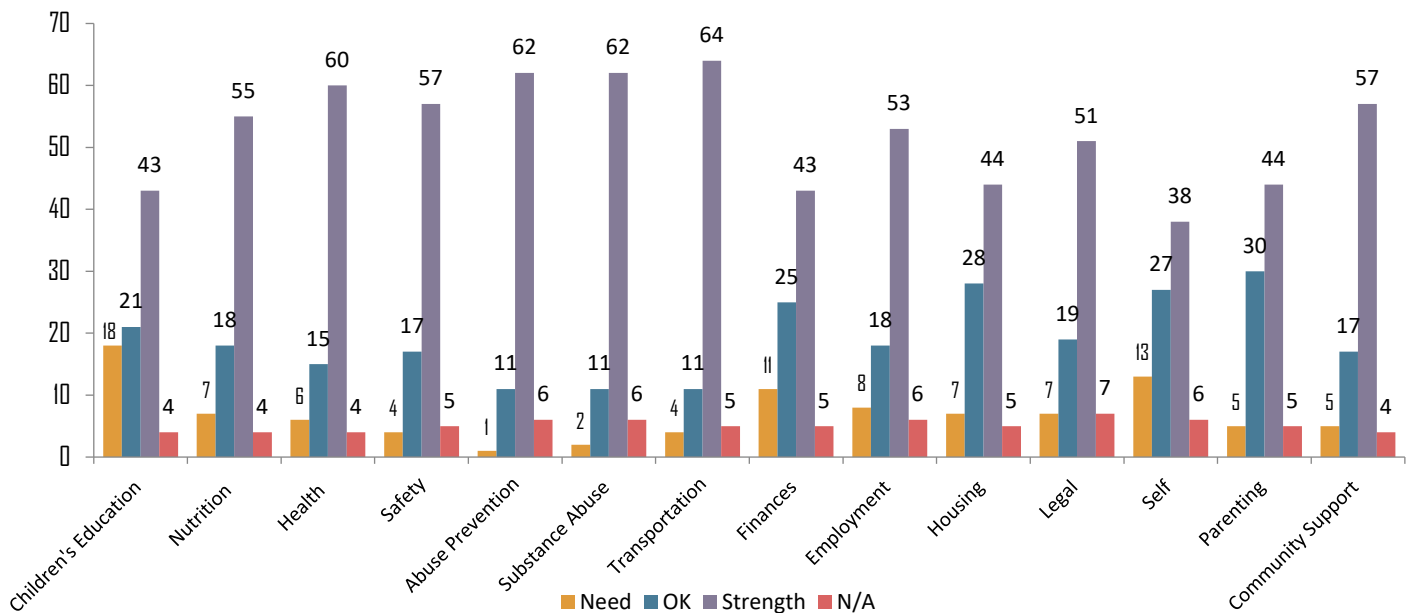
Note: Also see pages -- ---- Overview of service area and recruitment area for other related findings.

During enrollment in August and September, August/September), a CCS Early Learning staff member meets with parents to complete the Parent Interest List (PIL) and determine what services are desired and which are not needed by families enrolled at CCS Early Learning. The PIL covers fifteen areas of focus and is revisited later in the year once families have an established relationship with CCS Early Learning. Within each area, parents have four answer options: area of need, okay in this area, area of strength, and not applicable. The PIL is typically reviewed monthly throughout the year. The staff member schedules trainings and connects the family with resources, classes, or trainings to support the family’s self-identified needs.

Fall Results

During the Fall of FY21, parents who responded to the PIL were more likely to describe each area as a place of strength than an area of need.

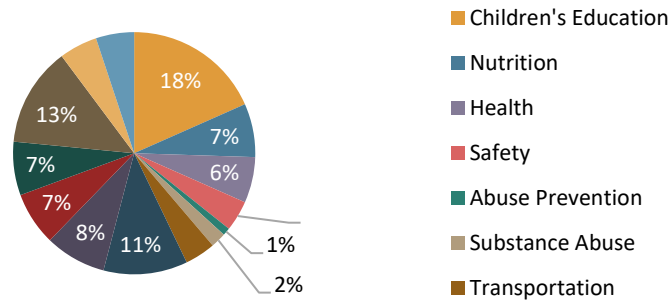
Figure 34. Parent Interest List Responses by Area and Response Type, Fall FY21



Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2022

Of all needs identified, the most common area was Children’s Education (18 percent) followed by finances (11 percent).

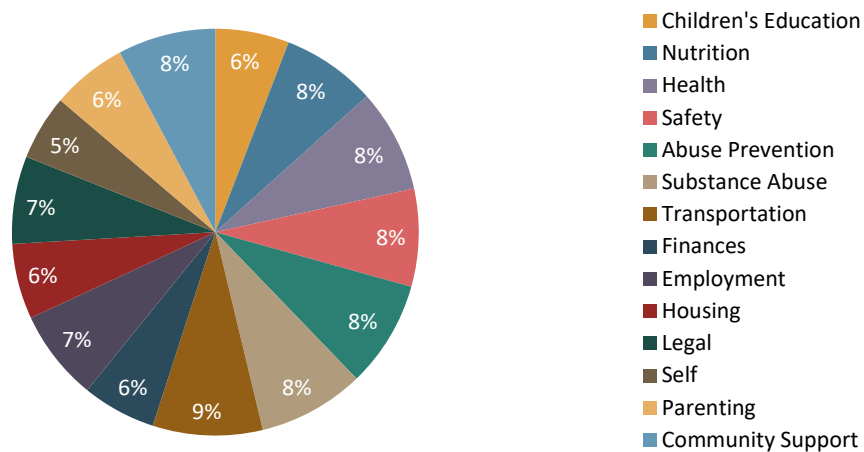
Figure 35. Percentage of PIL Need Responses by Area, Fall FY21



Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2022

Of all strengths described, the most common area was Transportation (9 percent) followed by Nutrition, Health, Safety, Abuse Prevention, and Substance Abuse (8 percent, respectively).

Figure 36. Percentage of PIL Strength Responses by Area, Fall FY21

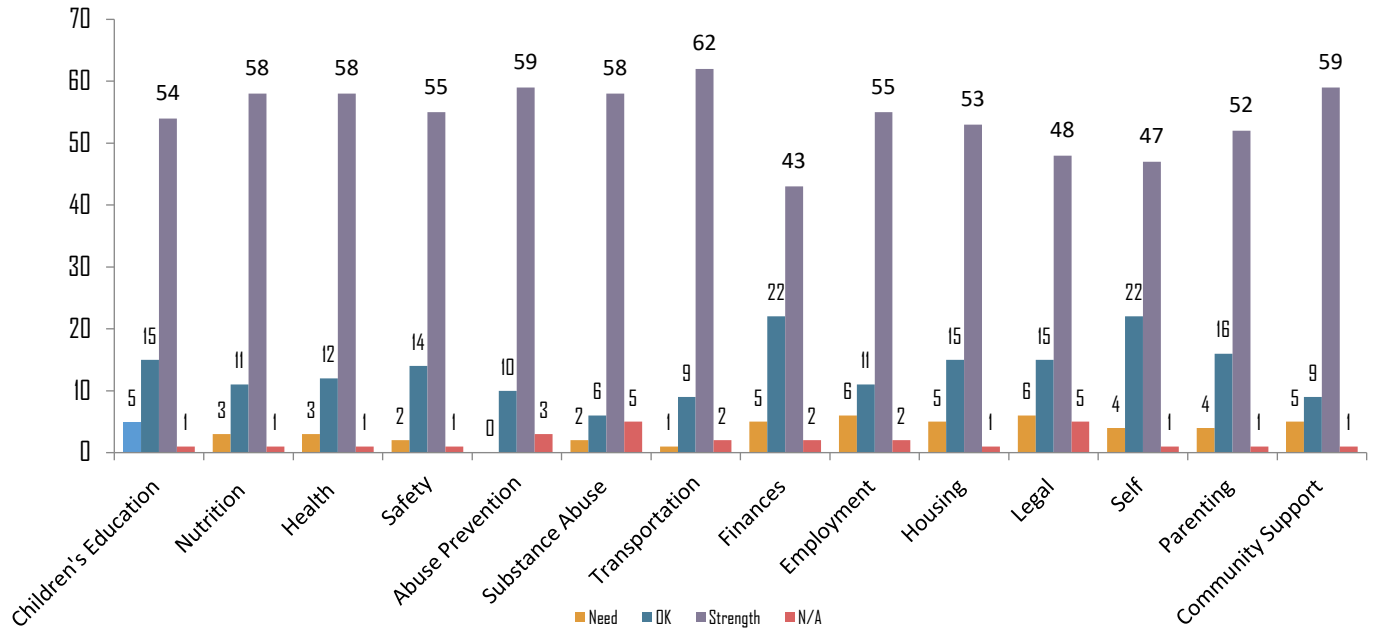


Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2022

Spring Results

As in the fall, parents who responded to the PIL in the spring were more likely to describe each area as a place of strength than an area of need.

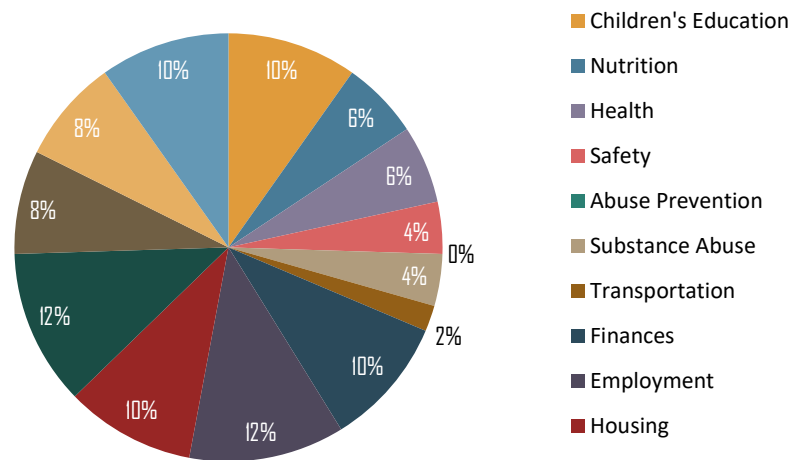
Figure 37. Parent Interest List Responses by Area and Response Type, Fall FY21



Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2022

In Spring of FY21, of all needs identified, the most common were Employment and Legal (12 percent, respectively). No parents identified abuse prevention as an area of need (0 percent of responses).

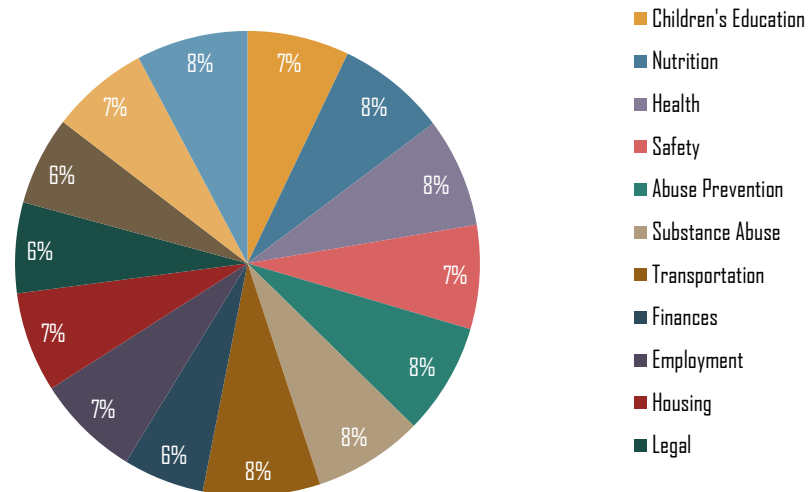
Figure 38. Percentage of PIL Identified Need Responses by Area, Spring FY21



Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2022

Nutrition, health, abuse prevention, substance abuse, transportation, and community support were the most common areas of strength identified by parents in the spring.

Figure 39. Percentage of PIL Identified Strength Responses by Area, Spring FY21

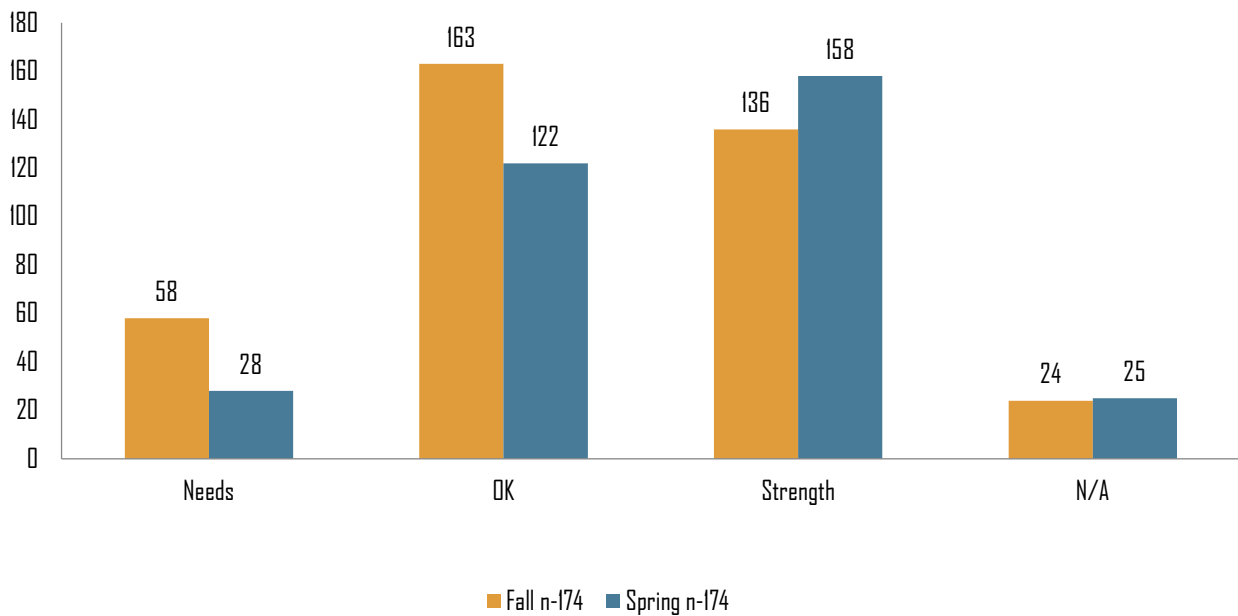


Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2022

Fall to Spring Comparison

From the fall to the spring, parents responding to the PIL indicated improvement. Fewer needs were identified on average in the spring compared to the fall (28 compared to 58) and more strengths were identified on average in the spring compared to the fall (158 compared to 136).

Figure 40. Comparison of Average Family Outcomes from Fall to Spring, All Areas, FY22



Source: CCS Early Learning Data, 2022

Strengths and needs of Head Start eligible children and families as defined by the HS program and local institutions serving them

In February 2023, a meeting was held with CCS Early Learning staff and staff from other local institutions that serve the target population children and families. There were 27 attendees. Following the focus group type meeting, a survey was sent out to get more information from this group and others who had been invited and did not attend. Twenty-seven individuals filled out the survey.

Domain 1: Physical, mental, dental health and developmental disability

Public Health Nursing Director quote: *“A strength that's come out of the pandemic is that some of our pediatric providers will provide vaccines to kids without charging. And so we're not the only ones that can do that now. And that's really helpful in connecting kids with providers when they can go there for their vaccines first.”*

Human Service Organization staff quotes:

- *“It feels like we've got quite a few options for home visiting for families – primary prevention with parents as teachers to very targeted programs for families involved with the Office of Children's Services.”*
- *“There's a lot of pediatric providers now. There's also a lot of general practitioners who do family care. So, if they're not comfortable with pediatricians, they have a lot of other choices, at this point.”*

Health and Human Services Staff quote: *“The cost of medical care. We have a lot on Medicaid – at the very minimum their medical care is covered. But I don't know how many families we see not doing things for their kids and certainly not for themselves because they have a \$5000, \$6000, or \$10,000 deductible and they got a 30% copay and they just can't do it.”*

Infant Learning Program Director quote: *“Infant mental health is lacking. There are less than a handful of providers who are trained specifically to do that didactic work that involves the parent or caregiver – which is appropriate for that age group. It barely exists here.”*

Strengths

The group was asked to identify strengths that are present in the community in the following three domains: Physical, mental, dental health and developmental and disability; Basic needs; and Culture, spirituality, language, and leisure.

All the strengths related to physical, mental, dental health and developmental and disability mentioned by participants are related to capacity that is increasing in these areas. Participants identified the following strengths in this domain:

1. Physical health: There are a sufficient number of pediatricians, and more pediatric specialists than before.
2. There are more private providers who provide free vaccinations.

3. There are more providers who routinely do developmental assessments.
4. There is more availability of care for families via telemedicine.
5. Mat-Su has many urgent care clinics.
6. The number of behavioral health staff in school is increasing.
7. Sunshine Community Health Center which served the Upper Susitna area of Mat-Su has a robust behavioral health staff. Life Clinic in Sutton has added behavioral health visits.
8. There are quite a few home visiting options for families.
9. The 1115 waiver has opened options for helping children/youth increase prosocial behaviors.
10. More parents/kids getting into dental appointments (addressing backlog from pandemic).
11. Children with autism have more options for treatment and interventions.
12. There are more diagnostics for children with neurodiverse diagnoses in Mat-Su.
13. There are more SUD health options for adults.
14. The Child Find Program has been an enormous help in terms of connecting programs like CCS Early Learning with the school District and helps to identify children who have special needs and disabilities to address those issues early

Challenges

Participants were asked to identify challenges in this domain at the focus group meeting and they were sent a survey to rank the challenges that were mentioned. The challenges are listed below in the order of which they were ranked. The top three challenges stood out as being ranked highest by respondents. These were staff shortages that affect health and human service programs, the long wait time that exists for children and families to see behavioral health providers, and the fact that the behavioral issues that children and youth face are more severe than before the pandemic. The following is a complete list of challenges in order of ranking:

1. There is staff shortages and high turnover in behavioral health, public health and other programs.
2. There are long wait lists for children to be seen by behavioral health providers.
3. Child/youth behavioral health issues are more severe than previously seen before the pandemic.
4. The lack of childcare makes it hard for parents to seek healthcare.
5. There are delays for children and families being approved for Medicaid/Denali Kid Care.
6. Current domestic violence cases are more severe than pre-pandemic cases.
7. Infant development delays are more severe.
8. Health and human services staff are drained and feel post-pandemic general depression.
9. There are not enough infant mental health services.
10. There are long wait lists to see occupational and physical therapists.
11. A high number of children who are not living with their parents cannot receive healthcare without parental consent, which is often difficult to obtain.
12. Specialty care in the Tribal System is only available in Anchorage (45 miles away) and lack of transportation is a barrier faced by many.

Domain 2: Housing, employment, transportation, education, nutrition, social services

CCS Early Learning Director quote: *“So, we normally would have 146 employees, just like every other business in the world we've had a really hard time hiring all the people that we need right now. And for us, that means if we don't have teachers and we don't have aides, we're not serving all the children that we should be serving. So, we are slowly building up our staffing and also building up our enrollment, but it's been a real challenge this year for us to serve all the children that we should.”*

Summary from Basic Needs breakouts session facilitator quotes:

- *“Housing assistance is available in greater quantities than it used to be. Providers are doing a better of coordinating and talking to one another about where beds are and where they're available at this time.”*
- *“We talked about how there is kind of increase access for families right now. We were all kind of wondering how long those things will last. But for instance, right now WIC can do appointments on the phone. We have things like that available for families.”*
- *“We talked about libraries and just the strengths of those in our communities, especially in our rural communities.”*
- *“Our lowest income residents, children, families don't have the resources to get housing or to purchase transportation or purchase food that's more expensive and where supply chains are making it even harder to purchase. So not enough housing, temporary beds, public transportation options across our huge geographic area.*

Strengths

In terms of basic needs, the strengths that were mentioned by participants were related to community providers increasing the services they offer, doing their job well, and being coordinated with each other. The strengths related to basic needs are:

1. Libraries provide a lot of services and resources.
2. There are more housing resources available and housing funding is higher and more available.
3. Providers are talking more to each other.
4. Public Transportation providers are working towards being fully staffed. Sunshine transport does a good job meeting need.
5. Food banks are working hard, and some have expanded in space. Kids Cupboard does a great job.
6. OCS/Troopers/Children's Place are all under one roof and coordinating services.
7. School safety officers are doing a good job.
8. School nurses are providing services and connecting families to resources.
9. People can do the WIC application on the phone.
10. MSHF has scholarships available for those pursuing health career.

Challenges

The challenges related to basic needs that were mentioned by Head Start and community partners are presented in a ranked list below.

1. Food is more expensive.

2. There is an insufficient amount of housing, including temporary beds, in Mat-Su.
3. Lowest income children and families don't have sufficient means to meet their basic needs.
4. There is a lack of transportation for families to get to places to meet basic needs.
5. There are long delays for individuals to get SNAP benefits.
6. Lack of transportation related to school bus strike.

Domain 3: Culture, spirituality, language, and leisure

Facilitator for Culture breakout session quotes:

- *“Knik tribe is really kind of leading the way in many aspects of providing for families and children ages zero to five in terms of culture, spirituality, language, recreation, and leisure.”*
- *“The most important challenges when it comes to culture, spiritual, language, recreation, leisure time for families of children ages 0-5 is that if we're focusing so much on basic needs, if we think of Maslow's hierarchy of needs – it's harder to address or to even think that there's an opportunity to address those sort of luxury opportunities in terms of recreation and leisure.”*

Strengths

In terms of culture, spirituality, language, and leisure the strengths that were mentioned were mostly related to leisure time activities, however, they included cultural programming provided by a local organization focused on Alaska Native people. The strengths identified in this domain were:

1. Knik Tribe is leading the way in many aspects of providing for families and children ages 0-5 in terms of culture, spirituality, language, and leisure.
2. Public libraries are providing for families and young children in an equitable way.
3. There are bountiful opportunities for getting outside and recreating in our state.
4. Time for Tots is being utilized by CCS Early Learning home-based educators.
5. CCS family fund nights are going well.
6. There are sports and recreations opportunities for children that can be costly but offer scholarships.
7. The United Way of Mat-Su Resource Guide is helpful for people to identify resources in these areas.

Challenges

The challenges mentioned by participants are reported in the ranked list below:

1. There is a lack of focus by organizations and others on culture, spirituality, language, and leisure time activities because of an increased demand for basic need assistance.
2. Families and children with lower incomes do not have proper clothing for recreation outside, especially in the winter.
3. There is lack of access to human translators in education, health and human service situations.
4. There are a lack of “community hubs” for different types of cultures such as Latino, Ukrainian (for recent refugees), etc.
5. There is a lack of situations where non-English languages can co-exist with English.

Comparison of strengths and needs of HS eligible children and families as defined by the families themselves and local institutions serving them.

Table 39 compares the strengths ranked highly by Head Start parents with strengths mentioned for the community by Head Start and local institution staff. It is important to note that the strengths in the latter group were not ranked. Additionally, parents were thinking of their own strengths and staff were thinking of the strength of services and resources in the community. There may be a linkage between these two types of strengths. The strengths mentioned by parents that were not mentioned by staff were: abuse prevention, employment, legal support, and finances.

Table 39. Comparison of strengths of Head Start eligible children and families as defined by themselves versus the community strengths identified by local institutions

Family Strengths identified by parents, Fall 2023 (ranked by parents)	Community strengths identified by HS staff and local organization staff (identified but not ranked)
1. Transportation	Public transportation providers are increasing staffing and doing a good job
2. Substance abuse prevention	More SUD treatment options
3. Abuse prevention	
4. Health	Health: increased dental and physical health services, urgent care, behavioral health services and access to vaccination; increased access via telehealth
5. Community Support	Libraries and school nurses provide services and connection to resources; providers are talking more to each other
6. Safety	School safety officers are doing a good job; OCS/Troopers/child advocacy center working together
7. Nutrition	Food banks are working hard and expanding their space; WIC application can be done by phone
8. Employment	
9. Legal support	
10. Housing	More housing resources and funding available than before
11. Parenting	Home visiting serves are available
12. Finances	
13. Children’s education	The Child Find program helps connect CCS Early Learning with the school district and identify developmental and disability issues early
14. Self	College health care educational scholarships are available
	More services for children with autism
	Providers are talking to each other
	Local organization focuses on culture, spirituality, language, and leisure
	Many recreation/leisure time activities available

Table 40 compares the challenges that were ranked by both parents and Head Start and local institution staff. Parents were thinking of their own strengths and staff were thinking of the strength of services and resources in the community. Staff ranked the topics in the three domains separately. The similarities in ranking challenges in the top five appeared in the areas of children’s education, finances, and nutrition. Parents mentioned challenges with community support and safety, while staff did not mention challenges in these areas. Staff mentioned the following challenges which were not mentioned by parents: lack of focus by organizations on culture, spirituality, language, and leisure time because of time meeting other needs, staff shortages and existing staff being drained and depressed, lack of access to human translators, lack of community hubs for different types of cultures, and lack of situations where non-English languages co-exist with English. The discrepancies between the challenges/needs identified by these two groups are that the parents were in Head Start and the staff were talking about children and families who may or may not have been enrolled in Head Star

Table 40. Comparison of challenges of Head Start eligible children and families as defined by themselves versus the community strengths identified by local institutions

Family challenges identified by parents, Fall 2023		Community challenges identified by HS staff and local organization staff		
		Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3
1	Children’s education	4, 7		Infant developmental delays are more severe
2	Self			
3	Finances		3, 5	2 Lowest income families don’t have means to meet basic needs; families don’t have funding for outdoor clothing for recreation
4	Employment			
5	Nutrition		1	Food is more expensive than in the past. Long delays for getting SNAP benefits
6	Housing		2	Insufficient amount of housing
7	Legal support			
8	Health	2, 3, 5		Long wait list to see behavioral health providers; child/youth behavioral health issues are more severe; delays in getting Medicaid; Tribal specialty care is 45 miles away
9	Parenting	4		A high number of children are not living with their parents and receiving consent for care is difficult
10	Community Support			
11	Safety			
12	Transportation		6	Lack of transportation related to school bus strike and getting to places to meet basic needs
13	Substance abuse prevention			
14	Abuse prevention	6		Domestic violence is more severe

Family challenges identified by parents, Fall 2023	Community challenges identified by HS staff and local organization staff	
	1	Staff shortages in health and human service programs
	4	Lack of childcare
	1	Lack of focus by organizations on culture, spirituality, language, and leisure time activities because of time meeting other needs.
8		Health and human services are drained and depressed
	3	Lack of access to human translators
	3	Lack of community hubs for different types of cultures
		Lack of situations where non-English languages can co-exist with English

Note: Domain 1 – Physical, mental, dental health and development and disability; Domain 2 – Basic needs; Domain 3 – Culture, spirituality, language, and leisure.

Collaborative arrangements, partnerships, and formal agreements

CCS Early Learning works collaboratively within our community to help children and families receive the support that they need to overcome challenges and be successful. The following organizations (not an exhaustive list) are some of the ones that we partner with:

Collaborative Partner	Area of Partnership	Type of Agreement
Mat-Su Borough School District	Preparing children for success in school. Eligibility and enrollment. Disability services (3-5). Staff training. Data/facility sharing. Student transition.	Formal Agreement
Mat-Su Services for Children and Adults	Disability services (0-3)	Formal Agreement
Families in Transition (FIT) Court	Closely staffing and case management for families involved with OCS to insure rapid/final placement for the child	Community Partner
Office of Children’s Services	Prioritize Head Start services to children in out of home placement	Formal Agreement

Collaborative Partner	Area of Partnership	Type of Agreement
Alaska Family Services	WIC, Child Care Assistance, Domestic Violence Shelter, PAT, Family Contact, Tobacco Prevention, Circles of Support, Diaper Pantry	Formal Agreement Community Partner
Raising our Children with Kindness - R.O.C.K Mat-Su	Community Collaborative to Strengthen Families and End Child Abuse and Neglect	Formal Agreement Community Partner
Mat-Su Coalition for Housing & Homelessness	Services for homeless and under-housed families	Formal Agreement Community Partner
United Way of Mat-Su	Community Resource Guide. Volunteer Coordination. Early Childhood Partnership of Mat-Su	Funder and Community Partner
Denali Family Services	Mental Health Services	Formal Agreement
Alyeska Physical Therapy	Physical Therapy Training/Services	Formal Agreement
Knik Tribe	Tribal services, child care assistance	Community Partner
Beacon Hill	Family Support Services, Training, Family Resources, Safe Families Respite Care, Family Contact Support Center, Foster Well community support for resource families	Collaborative Arrangement and Community Partner
Alaska Center for Resource Families	Information, Family Foster and Adoption Training and Education Services, Family Support Services for Resource Families	Community Partner
Mat-Su Food Bank	Basic Needs	Community Partner
Set Free Alaska	Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment	Community Partner
Food Bank of Alaska	SNAP Eligibility/Family Resources	Community Partner

Collaborative Partner	Area of Partnership	Type of Agreement
Best Beginnings	Reading and training resources for families	Community Partner
thread	Alaska's childcare and resource referral organization	Community Partner
Family Promise	Homelessness services and resources	Community Partner
HeartReach Center	Pregnancy and Sexual Health Services - referrals	Community Partner
Help Me Grow Alaska	Resource and referral	Community Partner
All Alaska Pediatric Partnership	Health education, services, referral and follow up	Community Partner
Connect Mat-Su	Resource and referral	Community Partner
My House	Homelessness, employment and training resources	Community Partner
The Children's Place	Child Advocacy Center (CAC) specializing in assessments, advocacy, and therapy services for abused and neglected children in Wasilla, AK.	Community Partner
Valley Charities	Basic needs for families	Community Partner
Alaska Youth and Family Network	Behavior Health Services, Education, Peer-Supported Advocacy	Community Partner
Compassionate Directions (CODI)	Mental Health Services	Community Partner
Volunteers of America (Kinship Program)	Family Support Services for Kinship/Relative caregivers, Mental Health Services, Case management, Financial assistance, Respite Care, Peer Support	Community Partner
LINKS Mat-Su	Parent Resource Center	Formal Agreement Community Partner

Data Review and Analysis including major issues trend and concerns

CCS Early learning operates five centers in the Matanuska Susitna Borough (Mat-Su) with 23 classrooms. They offer 195 Head Start slots, 44 home-based Early Head Start slots, and 80 center-based Early Head Start slots totaling to 319 slots. The centers are in catchment areas with 95,724 residents out of a total of 106,807 individuals in the entire borough. There are 13,461 households in Mat-Su, of which 43% have a child under the age of six.

Employment, housing, and poverty trends

The effects of the pandemic can still be felt by the Mat-Su population. In addition, there have been changes in the level of resources and services that are available to the Head Start eligible population in the borough. Alaska has ranked 47th in the nation in terms of recovering pre-pandemic jobs. The Mat-Su data shows that the lowest income individuals in the borough are more likely to have a disability, no high school diploma, and be unemployed. In 2021, approximately 12% of the children lived below the poverty level and 42% of the school population of students are enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. In 2022, 190 households with children were homeless. This quantitative data is consistent with the qualitative data from CCS Early Learning parents and community stakeholders. Staff from local community organizations said that they are seeing more need for assistance with basic needs such as housing and food. Currently enrolled CCS parents ranked “food” as the number five challenge they face and housing as the number six challenge. There is a delay in receiving SNAP benefits after signing up for the program and this is compounding the crisis of families experiencing food insecurity.

Transportation

While many households in Mat-Su have a vehicle for transportation, there are at least 1,246 that do not. These households are presumably low income, and the lack of transportation can limit their ability to meet their basic needs, be socially connected, access education for themselves and their children, and otherwise integrate into the community. The CCS families that were surveyed ranked transportation 12th in terms of the challenges that they face. Transportation was identified as a need by other providers who serve families with young children as well as in the recent Mat-Su Community Health Needs Assessment completed in 2022. Survey data found that one in five households’ report that transportation issues have increased with the pandemic. Additionally, for several months during the 2022-2023 bus service for local schools was stopped or limited due to driver shortage and strike. While the data may seem to contradict itself with many households having transportation and transportation challenges for currently enrolled families not being ranked highly, it may indicate that this challenge affects the lowest income and most disconnected households who may not be receiving CCS services. During the 22/23 school year, CCS provided transportation to 113 of 182 (62%) of their enrolled Head Start students in the most densely populated portion of the Borough (see Figure 5).

Medical and Environmental Health

According to community stakeholders and CCS staff, the physical and behavioral health services landscape in Mat-Su has more options than in the past, but not enough to meeting the current need. Community stakeholders stated that there are more options for pediatric specialty care, however, there is still not enough, and many times parents have to travel 45 miles to Anchorage to get this care.

While prenatal health and medical care appears to be sufficient for most Mat-Su women and their babies, childhood vaccination rates have decreased since the start of the pandemic. A significant number of mothers (31%) report feeling depressed for at least a two-week period within the last year, and access to behavioral health for parents and children is limited. Additionally, the percent of mothers of three-year-olds who have experienced a death in their household increased dramatically to 6.7% in 2020. Although more mothers report that their child received a developmental screening and community stakeholders report that more providers are doing developmental screenings, infant learning staff report that the delays they are seeing are more intense than in the past. While CCS Early Learning parents ranked “health” as their 8th greatest challenge, they also ranked “self” as their second greatest challenge. This latter ranking could be related to behavioral health issues.

Social Support and Child Welfare

Most Mat-Su mothers of three-year-olds have support when they are sick (91.7%), need help to get to a clinic (86.6%), and if they need a \$50 loan (85.6%) and these percentages have not changed significantly since 2018.

From 2018 to 2021, all types of substantiated child reports of maltreatment increased with the overall rate doubling from 7.8 per 1000 children to 14.8 in 2021. The number of children in the statewide foster care system has increased from 2,739 in 2017 to 2,828 in 2021. Local community stakeholders expressed frustration that it is often difficult to provide needed services to children in foster care because parental consent is required and difficult to attain. The local DV/SA program stated that the cases of domestic violence they are seeing are much more severe than what they saw before the pandemic.

Local community stakeholders said that there are staffing shortages in all types of social service programs and a need for more access to human translators and an increase in the number of situations where non-English language can co-exist with English in service provision. CCS Early Learning parents listed “parenting” and “community support” as the #9 and #10 ranked challenges that they face.

Population Trends including language, culture, and race/ethnicity

Mat-Su is an area of Alaska that experiences consistent population growth. Since 2011, the borough population has grown 23% from 86,817 to 106,807. It is estimated that the population will grow to 122,830 in 2030. Of the

CCS Early Learning facilities, three are in the top five areas of the Mat-Su Borough with the greatest increase in population from 2011 to 2021. The Knik-Fairview CDP, where CCS Early Learning opened a facility this year, saw the greatest population change during this time period, an increase of 4,662 people.

The majority of the population in Mat-Su are white (87%) and speak English (93.8%). People who are American Indian and Alaska Native make up approximately 12% of the population, Hispanic/Latino people represent 6%, and Asian people represent 3%. There is another 6% of people who are classified as another race/ethnicity. Non-English languages spoken in Mat-Su include Spanish (1.7%), Indo-European languages (2.5%), Asian or Pacific Islander (1.3%) or another language (.8%).

Early Childcare and Education

During the pandemic Mat-Su lost ten childcare facilities (241 slots). There are an estimated 1400 Mat-Su children who do not receive early learning services. In Mat-Su 18% of household income is required to cover childcare expenses. CCS Early Learning estimates that they are serving between 7-26% of early learning children who are eligible for services. This estimate comes from computing with the formula that uses free and reduced lunch eligibility to determine program eligibility (See the Eligible Unserved Children section).

Childcare programs for infants, toddlers and preschool children with disabilities

In Alaska in 2020, 20% of survey respondents reported having a child between the age of 3 and 17 with a mental, emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem. In 2021, 13 percent of the Mat-Su population identified as having a disability, with 5% being under the age of 18 years (659). Matanuska Susitna Borough school District had 216 students under the age of six with an identified disability, an increase from 9 percent to 13 percent from the year before.

Recommendations and priorities

Key issues facing eligible children and families to be addressed by the Head Start Program

This community assessment identifies the following continued issues that children and families in CCS Early Learning's service area can help to address:

Lack of early childhood service options. Child care and early learning options in Alaska and in the Mat-Su Borough are very limited and recently have been further decreasing. This is especially true for high quality services. While there are 51 Licensed Child Care Facilities in the Mat-Su – CCS provides 22% of the total licensed slots in the Borough. Our crucial role in early childhood is further reinforced when you look at the large number of these total licensed slots that are reserved for school age services. While the State of Alaska recently has established a funding mechanism for State Pre-K, the local school district will be limited in the number of slots that they are able to offer because space within their school facilities is needed for the growing population of K-12 students.

Demand for services far exceeds the supply. As the population of the Mat-Su continues to increase families increasingly have fewer options for their children to enroll/learn in a facility that meets their needs. CCS has been fully enrolled and had waiting lists for the 53 years of our existence – until this recent period of time after COVID. This period of under-enrollment has been caused by lack of employees – and is true across the early learning field. Children and families who need services in order to work or to help their children and families thrive are often not able to find a timely solution that meets their needs.

Families experiencing homelessness and children in foster care continues to be a huge community issue. For the past 10 years CCS has consistently had an enrollment of approximately 33% homelessness or in foster care. In recent years, with our limited staffing levels – this has risen to 50%. With such high percentages of our slots being used for these categorical eligibility areas of crisis – this further limits the number of slots that we can offer to families who have not been through crisis.

Transportation services (and their associated costs) are a continued community challenge. With the vast geographic area CCS serves, the limited number of school facilities, the scarcity of public transit, and the fact that many CCS families do not have access to reliable and affordable transportation options – transportation services for children (while not required) will continue to meet a crucial need in our community.

Prioritized Recommendations:

- **Strategic goals and measurable objectives**

CCS Early Learning began its 10 year strategic planning process in 2023 and waited to complete it so that the results of this community assessment could be analyzed and incorporated into our goals, our objectives – and our strategic priorities in the coming years. These are listed below:

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (2020-2030)

1. **Effective Programs:** CCS Early Learning has been able to maintain its core programs, and through a focus on addressing both upstream and downstream effects, has incorporated strategies and practices to fully meet the needs of children and families.
2. **Employee Development:** CCS Early Learning has fully incorporated an individualized model of staff training, responsive to all learning styles, that enhances educational development, builds foundations for future growth, and which leads to fulfilling careers in supporting and assisting children and families in their development.
3. **Fully Enrolled - Serving as Many as Sustainably Possible - Prioritizing Those in Need :** CCS Early Learning has achieved and sustained full enrollment, and is meeting the needs of children under the age of 5, and their families. We will continue to seek out and serve those who most are in need of a Head Start and an Early Head Start.
4. **Sustainable Staffing:** CCS Early Learning has achieved full employment because it is widely recognized as a top employer, with competitive wages and benefits, and embodies a culture of caring for children and families, and for its employees - in a way that makes a lasting positive difference at both the individual and the community levels.
5. **Growing Community Partnerships:** CCS Early Learning has effectively curated existing, and established new, partnerships to improve its ability to meet its core mission.
6. **Financial Foundation:** CCS Early Learning has put into place a solid and sustainable revenue stream to support a thriving organization, incorporating a mix of grant, earned, and contributed income, and is successfully building robust reserves.

Prioritized Recommendations:

- **Recruitment area for grantee**

CCS will continue to focus our recruitment on the areas of the Mat-Su Borough of Alaska where the population is most densely located. This is locally referred to the “Core Area” in and around the incorporated cities of Palmer and Wasilla.

Prioritized Recommendations:

- **Recruitment area for each delegate, if applicable**

CCS does not have any delegate organizations or agreements.

Prioritized Recommendations:

- **Locations for centers and home-based programs**

The current locations of CCS Early Learning centers continue to be advantageous for best serving the recruitment area. CCS has continued to adjust locations over time and the facilities in place at this time are located in highly populated areas – with the ability to serve as a catchment location for the surrounding area. In addition our current facilities allow us to provide services in a very cost effective manner.

Prioritized Recommendations:

- **Criteria for recruitment and selection**

With the ongoing, sometimes incremental, adjustments that we have made to our recruitment and selection criteria over time – and with the evidence of being fully enrolled for many years – with waiting lists (when fully staffed), and with a high percentage of our services continually being provided to families that are categorically eligible – we are confident that our existing criteria will serve us well as we move into the next years of service.

Financial implications of recommendations

With the current environment of scarcity of resources and high inflation – it appears that our program will be in a long-term battle to maintain our existing level of services, even as the population and community need grows around us. The recommendations that have been outlined based upon our community assessment data will allow us to continue serving as many children and families as possible, in the most efficient manner we can.

Priority assigned to serving new, emerging or underserved populations that have been identified during the community assessment

The new, emerging, and underserved population that CCS currently serves – and which continue to be evident in our community assessment (quickly growing low income population, high numbers of families experiencing homelessness and children in foster care) will continue to receive our priority. We will continue to focus our efforts on these populations and ensure our success in service delivery with full enrollment of families in our community who are most in need.

Appendix A: Survey and Focus Group Feedback from Community Stakeholders on CCS Early Learning

In the community stakeholder meeting, participants were asked to identify strengths and areas for improvement for CCS Early Learning. The following are quotes from stakeholders about CCS Early Learning strengths:

- *I think they do a great job of becoming trauma informed.*
- *Serving the special needs of children in their care, especially in light of the high percentage of children from foster care and low income.*
- *I would add that they're actively training and working with their staff to work with their families in a trauma informed way.*
- *They do everything they can to stay open as much as they can. They are, they have bent over backwards to try and keep staff going, to keep people there, and to keep open as much as possible through the pandemic and then beyond with all the illnesses going around.*
- *As a nutritional educator I really get excited about consistency of food for families who are probably facing some scarcity, but also, just the nutritional food and the variety of food that's offered. It really kind of gets us excited when we find that a child is in that program, because they're more likely to try different foods and get a general idea about what you teach about eating vegetables and a well-balanced meal. So that part of things really makes us happy. And like I said, this consistency of getting those two meals a day, I think it's awesome.*
- *I love how they serve more the whole family and not just the child.*
- *I really like the fact that we are all coming together- we were invited to this because of CCS makes it nice when we all come together. We're all interdependent when it comes to helping the families and the students. And so working with the school district and now kind of building that little bridge with some of the families and the students that are at CCS with those kiddos that are going to be coming to the school district really helps us with family and transition. So, I really appreciate just kind of the fact of all of us coming together for the common cause.*
- *I think their active role in partnership building contributes to all of that [working together]. They're really active in that space to have those collaborations and those avenues open. And then an in adding to the array of services they provide. They're willing to chase down complicated funding and opportunities in order and be creative to increase resources to add to those services and to see where the need is. They're data driven in that way and understanding their families and knowing where to open up a new facility- where should that be located in the community. So all of that. They're just very motivated."*
- *They do a really good job of identifying children's needs and helping to connect them with resources and services.*

- *On that creativity piece, they just, they think outside the box. They don't operate in a box, which is impressive seeing how largely un-funded they are.*
- *Also just impressed by their presence in the community because people know who CCS is [even if they] don't know what Head Start is and they don't have young children. They don't have any reason to connect with them, but they know who they are and they typically know the people personally. It's impressive when an organization can have that kind of a presence.*
- *I think the fact that they offer transportation for the kiddos is a huge help for parents as well.*
- *Just kind of on the administrative side, the, the effort and the time and the planning and all of the things that it takes to build a building is just phenomenal. And they've, they've put out some really nice buildings in the last few years. I think that says a lot about them providing the best possible environment for their kids. And then also a sign of the times. I heard recently in the last few months that their buses or some of their vehicles were vandalized with the catalytic converter thieving and things that went on and they just look for a solution and fix it. They just keep on going. It doesn't even slow them down.*
- *They take care of their staff. They like truly care about their staff and they watch out for them and they take care of them. And they not just holding their... I don't know, professional development necessarily, but holding their personal development as well. They truly invest in their people.*
- *I also want to share, they do a really great job of seeing that whole child. I know we've all talked about it, we all know it, but even the children from my perspective with disabilities or perceived disabilities, and they're open to seeing them as a whole child, not just a child with a disability. And they work really well with us. We have students that we see and they also attend CCS or vice versa. And, they really work hard to identify that, but work through all of their needs, not just the one that is the most difficult for them. So, I/we really appreciate that. And they're always open and asking questions and wanting information ...it's like, 'tell me more.' Tell me more, tell me more. And I really appreciate that they're always wanting to grow.*

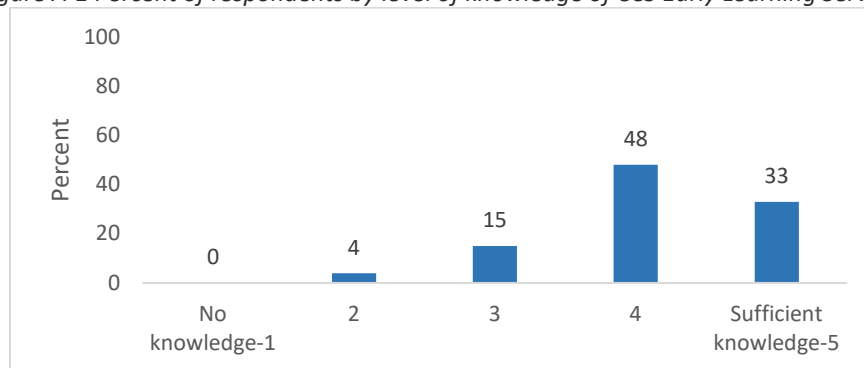
The following quotes were from stakeholders when they were asked what CCS could do to improve services:

- *The complaints that I get sometimes from foster parents is that it can be a challenge that there are the many days that they take off. And that childcare is not available to those foster parents that are relying on that for their own jobs. Whether that's weather days like today or spring breaks and things like that. Then they have pretty strict health requirements. Like, you know, a foster parent will say 'There's a couple spots on his belly and he needs to be out for a week - he has Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease. Well, we're concerned about hand, foot and mouth. Well, like, it's not hand, foot and mouth, it's obviously not hand, foot and mouth. He has a documented eczema.' But foster parent has to leave work, go pick up child schedule another doctor's appointment. So, I understand that goes into keeping the center open for health reasons. [That is what I have heard from foster parents.]*

- *I've heard about delays in applications where they don't get a call back for weeks or months and then it's up to the parent to really push that application through or months or weeks go by and then they [parents] find out at the end of all the efforts they're not eligible.*
- *So, I don't know if they can do this or if it's federal [guidelines], but increasing income amount is so that more people would be eligible. Because if you make 30,000 a year and you're a family of four, you're barely getting by. If you make 31,000 and you're not eligible and you have to pay \$2,000 a month for childcare, you just can't do it. There's no way. So maybe just a more practical look at the financial side of it and how this really is impacting families. And the cost of childcare without services like CCS is just phenomenal.*
- *I would say that that waiting period of getting the application packet, especially for children in foster care, when they don't have vaccine records, they don't have birth certificates, and they don't have, you know, all of those things. We know they're going to qualify, but it takes weeks upon weeks [to get into services]. It's a lot of hoops to jump through and the burden is on the foster parent.*
- *Well, and I know this is, is being worked on, but the communication piece between CCS and OCS staff. So case workers have a more direct line to CCS so that they can get things handled, questions answered, help foster parents. So it would just make families' lives easier. A little easier on case workers too.*

In the follow-up survey to the Community Stakeholder meeting, invitees were asked “What level of knowledge do you have about the services and supports that CCS Early Learning provides for families and children in Mat-Su? Figure A-1 provides the responses to this question.

Figure A-1 Percent of respondents by level of knowledge of CCS Early Learning Services



Source: Online Survey for Community Stakeholder Meeting invitees

Community stakeholders were also asked in the survey to rate the services provided by CCS Early Learning. Figure A-2 shows their responses.

Figure A-2 Average number of stars given by respondents rating CCS Early Learning work with families
CCS Early Learning work with families

Providing comprehensive child development services	★★★★☆ Count: 26 Not Applicable: 0
Promoting school readiness	★★★★★ Count: 26 Not Applicable: 0
Engaging parents in their children's learning and helping them to make progress	★★★★☆ Count: 27 Not Applicable: 0
Developing trusting and collaborative relationships between parents to support them	★★★★☆ Count: 27 Not Applicable: 0
The services they provide for children 0-3 years	★★★★☆ Count: 26 Not Applicable: 0
The services they provide for children 0-5 years	★★★★☆ Count: 27 Not Applicable: 0

Source: Online Survey for Community Stakeholder Meeting invitees