



# HEAD START COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2023

*KOOTASCA Community Action, Inc.*

*201 NW 4th St – Suite 130, Grand Rapids, MN 55744*

# Executive Summary

As a Community Action Agency and Federal Head Start Grantee, KOOTASCA Community Action is responsible for understanding the changing needs of the communities and peoples it serves. To accomplish this, KOOTASCA conducts a Community Needs Assessment- an in-depth process of study, listening, and community engagement to learn more deeply about the needs of those we serve.

This Head Start Community Assessment is an annually updated supplement to KOOTASCA's 2024 Community Needs Assessment, incorporated therein, and to be read in conjunction with that document and its findings. This annual update is performed to capture key information to describe the context in which KOOTASCA's Head Start and Early Head Start programs operate. It is through this process that we can address the needs of the families we serve and maximize our efforts to support the children of our community. Trends throughout our service area become apparent and we can use that knowledge to guide program needs as well as training opportunities for families and staff.

KOOTASCA Community Action is annually using surveys with parents, staff, and community agencies to measure not only satisfaction levels but to monitor needs and areas of concern. This information then directly flows into our planning and program delivery efforts.

Based on the data collected from the multitude of sources, there is a continued need to focus on the following both in the community and throughout our Head Start program:

- Affordable childcare, especially for infants and toddlers
- Transportation
- Housing and homelessness
- Health & Wellness
- Drug and Alcohol addiction and a continuing opioid epidemic
- Mental health including issues brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Requirements

Head Start Program Performance Standards 45 CFR Chapter XIII, §1302.11 (b): To design a program that meets community needs, and builds on strengths and resources, a program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period.

# Demographic make-up of Head Start eligible children and families.

According to the 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, table B17024 the average number of Head Start and Early Head Start eligible children in Itasca and Koochiching Counties in the preceding 5-year survey period was estimated to be 810- that is, 810 children under 6 years of age living below 125% of the Federal Poverty Level.

A breakdown of eligibility by school district is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Head Start and Early Head Start Estimate of Eligibility**

School District	Population under 6 years of age	Population Under 6 years below 125% of Poverty	Percent under 125% of Poverty	Head Start Eligible Children	Early Head Start Eligible Children
Greenway 316	494	164	33.2%	55	82
Deer River 317	423	276	65.3%	92	138
Grand Rapids 318	1,829	494	27%	165	247
Nashwauk-Keewatin 319	275	126	46%	42	63
Itasca Total	3,021	1,060	35.0%	354	530
International Falls 361	431	148	34.4%	49	74
Littlefork-Big Falls 362	138	45	32.7%	15	22
South Koochiching 363	137	62	45.3%	21	31
Koochiching Total	706	255	36.1%	85	127
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,727</b>	<b>1,315</b>	<b>35.3%</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>657</b>

**Source: [usnews.com/education/k12/Minnesota/districts](https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/Minnesota/districts)**

*Note: To arrive at the estimated population under age 6 per district the total student enrollment of the district was divided by 13 classes, PK through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and then multiplied by 6 years. The total estimated population under 6 years old was then multiplied by the percentage of children qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch by district which is based on 130% of the poverty rate. Then, to arrive at the estimated number of children income eligible for Head Start, Population Under 6 years below 125% of Poverty is multiplied by 2/6 (representing ages 3 to and 4 to 5). To arrive at the number of children income eligible for Early Head Start, the Population Under 6 years below 125% of Poverty is multiplied by 3/6 (representing ages birth to 1, 1 to 2, and 2 to 3).*

## Languages Spoken at Home

**Table 2: Language Spoken at Home for the Population 5 Years and Over in Poverty**

	Itasca County	Koochiching County	Total
5 to 17 years	<b>784</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>1,128</b>
Speak only English	769	325	1,094
Speak Spanish	0	0	0
Speak other Indo-European languages	15	19	34
Speak Asian and Pacific Island languages	0	0	0
Speak other languages	0	0	0
18 years and over	<b>3,655</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>4,586</b>
Speak only English	3,551	910	4,461
Speak Spanish	13	13	26
Speak other Indo-European languages	51	3	54
Speak Asian and Pacific Island languages	6	3	9
Speak other languages	34	2	36

Source: US Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B16009

## Children in Foster Care

**Table 3: Number of children in out-of-home care by age and agency**

	Birth - 2 years	3 - 5 years	6 - 8 years	9 - 11 years	12 - 14 years	15 - 17 years	18 or older	Total children
Itasca County	40	27	23	23	41	75	15	244
Koochiching County	16	13	10	15	10	10	7	81
<b>Total</b>	56	40	33	38	51	85	22	325

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services. Minnesota's Out-of-Home Care and Permanency Report, 2020 (January 2022)

**Table 4: Number of children in out-of-home care by race, ethnicity, and agency**

	African American / Black	American Indian	Asian or Pacific Islander	Two or more races	Unknown /declined	White	Total children	Hispanic (any race)
Itasca County	*	38	*	59	*	144	244	*
Koochiching County	*	12	*	*	*	67	79	*
<b>Total</b>						211	323	*

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services. Minnesota's Out-of-Home Care and Permanency Report, 2020 (January 2022)

\*The number of children is less than seven and is omitted to prevent identification of individuals.

## Children Experiencing Homelessness

Wilder Research conducts statewide homelessness studies to better understand the prevalence of homelessness in Minnesota. The most recent study took place on October 25, 2018. For the Northeast Region (Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Cook, and Carlton Counties) 2 unaccompanied homeless minors and 55 children under age 18 accompanied by their parents were identified as homeless.

One of the most comprehensive sources of information on Homelessness in Minnesota, the study captures homelessness information from (1) People staying in all known emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, and transitional housing sites throughout the state and (2) people experiencing homelessness who were found through outreach in non-shelter locations such as encampments, hot-meal programs, and other drop-in service locations. The study does not contain estimates of the uncaptured or unidentified homeless population.

For more information visit [mnhomeless.org](http://mnhomeless.org).



## Children with disabilities

During the 2023-24 school year, a total of 39 Head Start students had IEP's and 8 Early Head Start had IFSP's, indicating that they had been determined eligible to receive special education. The diagnosed disabilities among the Head Start students are 29 Developmental Delays, 2 Learning Disabilities, 2 Orthopedically impaired, 1 Hearing Impaired, 5 Speech/Language Disordered, and 1 Emotional/Behavior Disorder.

According to the US Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2 children four years old or younger had a disability in Itasca County and 26 children four years old or younger in Koochiching County had a disability.

### ***Community agencies providing services for children with disabilities***

Services for children with disabilities in Itasca and Koochiching counties include Itasca County Health & Human Services, Koochiching County Public Health and Human Services, Early Childhood Special Education, KOOTASCA Community Action, Interagency Early Intervention Committees, Northern Lakes Special Education Co-op, and the Forget-Me-Not Foundation.

Other agencies that provide services to children with disabilities include:

### ***Statewide resources***

**The PACER Center** – A Minnesota coalition concerned with education of children and youth with physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral disabilities.

**The University of Minnesota Extension Service** – Provides information and resources as requested by professionals and families.

**Disability Hub MN** - Is a free statewide resource network maintained by the Minnesota Department of Human Services that "helps people with disabilities solve problems, navigate the system and plan for the future."

**Table 5: Data regarding the education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of Head Start children and their families.**

<b>Head Start</b>	<b>2017-2018 School Year</b>	<b>2023-2024 School Year</b>
Number of children with household income below 100 percent of federal poverty line.	101	118
Number of children with health insurance.	215	204
Number enrolled in Medicaid and/or CHIP.	186	171
Number of children with chronic condition.	24	26
Number of children overweight.	36	33
Number of children obese.	50	21
Number of children who had an Individualized Education Program or Individualized Family Service Plan.	56	47
Number of families who received emergency/crisis intervention.	102	89
Number of families who received housing assistance.	81	27
Number of families that experienced homelessness.	16	24
<b>Highest level of education obtained by the child's parent(s)/guardian(s)</b>		
An advanced degree or baccalaureate degree	10	17
An associate degree, vocational school, or some college	118	99
High school graduate or GED	70	62
Less than high school graduate	6	6

**Source: 2017-2018 KOOTASCA Community Action Head Start PIR, 2022-2023 KOOTASCA Community Action Head Start PIR**

# **Other child development and childcare programs that are serving Head Start eligible children.**

## **School Readiness and Early Childhood Family Education**

The school districts in both Itasca and Koochiching counties provide School Readiness and Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) programming. School Readiness is specifically designed for high-risk children ages 3-5 and consequently serves many Head Start eligible children. ECFE is provided to all children ages 0-5, however, it also serves a high percentage of Head Start eligible children.

## **Early EDge**

Another significant program that provides child development programming in Itasca County is Early EDge - previously known as Invest Early. Early EDge is a collaboration between the four Itasca County school districts and the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative.

More than 50 Invest Early slots had previously been dedicated to infants and toddlers - this will not be the reality moving forward, as Early Edge has elected to not offer I/T care. At any one time, approximately 98% of the historical infants and toddlers served by Invest Early are Head Start eligible.



## Child Care Centers

**Table 6: Licensed Childcare Center Capacity in Itasca and Koochiching Counties**

Child Care Centers*	City	County	Capacity	Ages Served	Full school-day care?
Our Redeemers Little Lambs Preschool	Cohasset	Itasca	54	Preschool	Half-day
Little Red Wagon Child Care Center	Cohasset	Itasca	84	Infants, Toddlers, Preschool	Yes
St Joseph's Preschool	Grand Rapids	Itasca	16	Preschool	Yes
Stepping Stones Preschool	Grand Rapids	Itasca	20	Preschool	Half-day
Rainy River Rugrats	International Falls	Koochiching	53	Infants; Toddlers; Preschool; School age	Yes
Rockin Round The Clock II	Grand Rapids	Itasca	52	Infants; Toddlers; Preschool; School age	Yes
YMCA/Wee Folksgarten	Grand Rapids	Itasca	90	Infants; Toddlers; Preschool; School age	Yes

**Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services Licensing Lookup (June 2023)**

\*Excludes KOOTASCA Head Start and Invest Early Child Care Centers.

## Family Child Care

**Table 7: Licensed Family Childcare Capacity**

City	Type of License				Total Licensed Capacity	Total Family Childcare Providers
	Church-based Care	Commercial Space	Employer-based Care	Residential dwelling		
Bigfork			12	24	36	3
Bovey				80	80	7
Cohasset				30	30	3
Coleraine				32	32	3
Deer River				46	46	4
Grand Rapids	28			385	413	35
Hill City				42	42	4*
Marble				14	14	1
Nashwauk				36	36	3
Pengilly				12	12	1
Taconite				12	12	1
<b>Itasca Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>65</b>
International Falls				176	176	14
Littlefork				28	28	2
Northome				10	10	1
<b>Koochiching Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>927</b>	<b>967</b>	<b>82</b>

**Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services Licensing Lookup (June 2021)**

\*Provider is located in Itasca County.

# Community Resources that could be used to address the needs of Head Start eligible children and families:

KOOTASCA Community Action	Invest Early	Boys & Girls Club
Itasca County Health and Human Services	Planned Parenthood	Grace House
Koochiching County Community Services	Salvation Army	Servants of Shelter
University of Minnesota Extension	Northland Counseling	Baby Steps Boutique
Second Harvest Northcentral Food Bank	Legal Aid	Bigfork Food Shelf
Early Childhood Family Education	Minnesota Chippewa Tribe	First Call for Help 211
Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency	Ross Resources	Project READ
Advocates for Family Peace	Falls Hunger Coalition	Project Care
North Homes Children and Family Services	Area medical clinics	Support Within Reach
Itasca County Family YMCA	New Beginnings	

These resources are generally widely available and affordable; however, a lack of transportation or awareness can create accessibility challenges for some. In addition, a lack of insurance or medical assistance can make it difficult to obtain medical treatment.

