

Community Assessment 2024-2025

Head Start



Northwest Community Action 



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Executive Summary

The Northwest Community Action, Inc. (NWCA) Head Start program offers supportive services to children and families across Marshall, Roseau, Kittson, and Lake of the Woods counties in the Northwestern corner of Minnesota. Assessments were conducted to evaluate and inform both the current programming and future planning of Head Start. Information from state and federal government sites, nonprofit organizations, school districts, ongoing feedback from Head Start parents, Policy Council, staff, community partners, and surveys, were considered. The findings from these sources consistently indicate that Head Start is highly regarded within the community and stands out as one of NWCA's most recognized programs.

The assessment also highlighted the persistent challenges faced by the communities, notably poverty, homelessness, and associated complications. Given these ongoing issues, the importance and necessity of the Head Start program have remained consistent and become increasingly critical for children and their families in these counties.

Mission Statement

NWCA Head Start assists children in achieving appropriate physical and developmental growth. We also increase self-confidence and expand each child's ability to think, reason, and communicate. Head Start assists parents and families in improving their parenting skills, self-sufficiency, and the conditions in which they live, learn, and work.

Demographics

North Dakota geographically defines our service area to the west and Canada, specifically Manitoba and Ontario, to the north. The communities within this region vary significantly in size, with populations ranging from 50 to 2,700 people. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2018-22 5-year estimates, 32,288 people reside in the 5,843.68 square mile area. The population density of our service area is relatively low, estimated at six persons per square mile, which is significantly below the national average population density of 94 persons per square mile.

Total Population

County Report Area	Total Population	Total Land Area (Square Miles)	Population Density (Per Square Mile)
Kittson	4,191	1,099.00	4
Lake of the Woods	3,786	1,297.88	3
Marshall	9,017	1,775.06	5
Roseau	15,294	1,671.74	9
Minnesota	5,695,292	79,631.58	72

Data source: <https://cap.engagementnetwork.org/assessment-tools/assessment-tool/>



Population Age 0-4

Of the estimated 32,288 total population in the report area, an estimated 1,783 are children under 5, representing 5.52%—data based on the latest U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year estimates. The number of children under age 5 is relevant because this population has unique needs from other age groups.

County Report Area	Total Population	Population Age 0-4	Percent Population Age 0-4
Kittson	4,191	217	5.18%
Lake of the Woods	3,786	208	5.49%
Marshall	9,017	522	5.79%
Roseau	15,294	836	5.47%
Minnesota	5,695,292	340,546	5.98%

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22

Work Force

Historically, our area has predominantly relied on agriculture as its primary economic foundation. While this remains largely true, there has been a significant decline in the number of individuals directly engaged in farming, attributed to the expansion of farm sizes, as reported by the Minnesota Extension Service. Over the past 25 years, there has been a remarkable growth in the presence of large, globally recognized industrial employers in our region. Companies such as Marvin Windows and Doors, Polaris, Inc., Central Boiler, ANI Pharmaceuticals Inc., and Mattracks Inc. collectively employ thousands of individuals in both full-time and part-time capacities, often on swing shifts.

Additionally, the Seven Clans Resort and Casino, along with the Lake of the Woods fishing and resort industry, have also contributed to employment opportunities in the area. While large and local small businesses are actively hiring, some larger employers have resorted to bringing in contracted workers from outside the region to fill vacancies. Others need help offering full-time positions due to disruptions in the supply chain.



**Employment
Farm; Nonfarm; Private Nonfarm Earnings**

County Report Area	Farm Jobs	Farm Earnings (\$1,000)	Nonfarm Jobs	Nonfarm Earnings (\$1,000)
Kittson	533	\$58,325	2,140	\$105,621
Lake of the Woods	160	\$6,712	2,317	\$110,052
Marshall	1,066	\$114,431	3,539	\$237,821
Roseau	911	\$71,221	10,236	\$633,419
Minnesota	77,286	\$5,745,694	3,767,500	\$275,394,970

Many employment opportunities in our area, particularly those in the casino and resort sectors, offer lower wages, part-time hours, or are seasonal. Entry-level job rates in the region can be as low as \$12 per hour, and a significant portion of these positions are part-time. Given the educational background of many families we serve, they are increasingly susceptible to layoffs or working part-time.

Despite this, our area's unemployment rate closely mirrors the state average, mainly because larger companies tend to retain their workforce even during reduced supply or production periods. Instead of layoffs, employees often need to be provided with sufficient working hours. Most families in our region have both parents employed, and in single-parent households, the parent is typically in the workforce. Detailed labor force, employment, and unemployment data for each county within our report area are identified in the table below. As of January 2024, the overall unemployment rate for the report area stood at an average of 4.6%.

Children from families that lack secure employment are particularly vulnerable. The absence of at least one parent in full-time employment increases the likelihood of these children falling into poverty. Unfortunately, many parents desiring full-time work juggle multiple part-time or temporary positions that fail to provide a stable or adequate income. Some parents also need more education and skills to secure better-paying jobs. Even with a full-time position at low wages, it may not lift a family out of poverty.



NWCA is also aware children living in poverty experience a wide variety of risk factors, ranging from health concerns to increased difficulties at school. Research shows that, on average, families require a household income of about twice federal poverty guidelines to cover basic expenses.

Unemployment

County Report Area	Labor Force	Number Employed	Number Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Kittson	2,204	2,118	86	3.9%
Lake of the Woods	2,459	2,367	92	3.7%
Marshall	5,380	5,052	328	6.1%
Roseau	8,280	7,936	344	4.2%
Minnesota	3,077,855	2,976,870	100,985	3.3%

Note: This indicator compares to the state average.

Quality education, from pre-kindergarten through adulthood, is a pivotal tool in elevating individuals out of poverty and guiding them towards self-sufficiency. Research consistently underscores the manifold benefits of quality education for both individuals and the broader community.

The distribution of Educational Attainment within our report area offers valuable insights into the highest level of education adults achieve. This data is crucial for schools and businesses alike, helping them better understand the specific needs of the adult population. Whether it's workforce training or the development of opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, understanding educational attainment aids in tailoring appropriate programs and initiatives. The educational attainment is calculated for individuals over 25 years old and represents an estimated average from 2018 to 2022.

In our selected area, the data reveals that 15.94% of individuals have attained at least a bachelor's degree from college. Meanwhile, 36.97% of the population concluded their formal education after high school without pursuing further academic qualifications.



Education Level

County Report Area	No High School Diploma	High School Only	Some College	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
Kittson	4.0%	35.6%	22.1%	11.1%	18.9%	8.3%
Lake of the Woods	4.0%	32.1%	29.7%	12.9%	16.0%	5.2%
Marshall	7.4%	39.1%	21.2%	13.8%	14.5%	4.0%
Roseau	7.1%	37.4%	23.5%	12.0%	15.9%	4.1%
Minnesota	6.3%	23.7%	20.2%	11.7%	24.9%	13.3%

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22.

Of concern are Marshall and Roseau counties' students' failure to receive their high school diplomas. Each year, during interviews for our center staff positions, young moms report that they left high school when they were pregnant.

Transportation

Many teens and young adults opt out of obtaining a driver's license, citing various reasons. Economic factors significantly drive this shift, reflecting broader social trends. According to the most recent data from the Federal Highway Administration, only 25.6% of 16-year-olds acquired their driver's licenses in 2018; by 18, just 61% of teens were licensed drivers.

The economic challenges posed by poverty further hinder individuals' ability to own and operate a vehicle for employment purposes. Data indicates that a mere 13% of individuals aged 16 and older, living within poverty guidelines of up to 149%, own a vehicle. The financial burden of purchasing an additional car is often impossible for many families. Even sharing a single vehicle incurs significant ongoing costs, including insurance, fuel, and maintenance expenses.

For victims of domestic violence, a driver's license is not a luxury but a necessity. It is crucial for obtaining a restraining order against an abuser, securing employment, transporting children to medical appointments or school, and accessing city and state resources. Possessing a driver's license and a vehicle can offer victims the freedom and flexibility to alter their domestic situation.

The demand for reliable transportation is an identified need in our rural service area. Public transportation options are virtually nonexistent, and the challenges posed by winter weather conditions further underscore the importance of safe and reliable personal transportation. Additionally, the high cost of vehicle repairs presents another significant concern for families in our region.

Data source: <https://api.census.gov/data/2018/acs/acs5>



Persons Experiencing Poverty

Location	2019	2020	2021
Minnesota	491,782	458,302	519,437
	8.9%	8.3%	9.3%
Kittson	386	421	395
	9.2%	10.3%	9.8%
Lake of the Woods	337	325	391
	9.2%	8.8%	10.4%
Marshall	691	729	828
	7.5%	7.9%	9.3%
Roseau	902	1,087	1,487
	6.0%	7.3%	9.9%

Data Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program
 Available: Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program (census.gov)

Another factor of low-income households & extreme poverty can influence child health and cognitive child development. Poverty also impacts growth from early childhood, starting with brain development and other body systems. Poverty can negatively affect how the body and mind develop, and economic hardship can alter the fundamental structure of the child's brain. Children who directly or indirectly experience risk factors associated with poverty have higher odds of experiencing poor health problems as adults, such as heart disease, hypertension, stroke, obesity, certain cancers, and even a shorter life expectancy.

Data Source: <https://www.all4kids.org/news/blog/poverty-and-its-effects-on-children/>

Childcare

Approximately 61% of families in our area utilize at least part-time childcare services, with a significant portion of this care provided by extended family members or friends. According to data from the Kids Count Data Center, the average cost of childcare in our region is relatively low, standing at approximately \$880 per month for one child. Despite the seemingly affordable price, our area continues to grapple with a shortage of available childcare options. Even families that can afford childcare or qualify for childcare assistance often struggle to find suitable options, particularly for children under 2.

In families with infants, it is common for mothers to be less inclined to work outside the home during the first few years of their child's life. Additionally, families are often only willing to change their existing childcare arrangements if there is clear evidence of inadequate or insufficient care. Another complicating factor is the low threshold for qualifying for sliding-fee childcare assistance. Many families with two working parents must meet this program's eligibility criteria.



There is only one formal childcare center within our extended Early Head Start (E.H.S.) service area, with most available childcare offered in family childcare homes. We are underscoring our community's heavy reliance on center-based childcare options, particularly for children aged 3-4. NWCA can support working parents and alleviate some of the financial and logistical burdens associated with childcare and transportation, it would be beneficial to expand center-based childcare options by offering extended hours and additional days where space permits.

Childcare availability continues to decline, and childcare programs accepting childcare assistance are also declining.

Data Source: P.I.R. and Parent Survey

Licensed Family-Based Childcare

Location	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Kittson	15	16	13	15	9
Lake of the Woods	10	8	5	9	4
Marshall	62	56	55	52	39
Roseau	53	56	51	44	34
Minnesota	7,947	7,636	7,383	6,666	3,610

Data Source: <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/customreports/3861,3865,3871,3894/any>

Family-Based Childcare Willing to Accept or Accepting Child Care Assistance Program

Location	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Kittson	10	10	8	15	N.A.
Lake of the Woods	8	6	3	4	NA
Marshall	45	41	39	39	1
Roseau	36	36	32	34	NA
Minnesota	4,494	4,237	3,965	3,595	1,259

Data Source: <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/customreports/3861,3865,3871,3894/any>

Local Community Design Needs

Continuing with these trends, Northwest remains committed to offering center time for Head Start children that aligns with the needs of both children and their parents. The costs associated with Northwest's Head Start program have remained stable, as each school district provides and contributes transportation, space, and cafeteria meals. However, as school districts expand their preschool programs by adding more classes or extending session lengths, additional facility space for Head Start to increase classroom days or classrooms for our children may become limited, depending on the respective building plans.

Marshall County Central School District utilizes a Head Start waiver because classroom space is shared between Head Start and the public school's School Readiness program. Marshall County Central anticipates completing



construction in 2024, enabling our program to serve children an additional day per week, totaling four days.

To meet the needs of our community, NWCA has adjusted the Roseau classroom to serve 4-year-old children for four days a week. Shifting to four days a week changed our open slots at this site to a wait list for the Roseau classroom.

Given the declining number of families in our service area and the projected continuation of low enrollment, building upon our collaborative efforts in sharing programming, staff, training, and other services is crucial. Flexible solutions tailored to each community's specific needs will be essential. These solutions may necessitate specific local combinations to address the service requirements for a smaller number of participants in collaboration with the local school partner.

Shifting staff from our Roseau center to the Warroad community, combined with School Readiness and Head Start enrollments, allowed us to add additional children to our programs. Our partnership with Warroad School District provided us with additional classroom space, transportation, and cafeteria meals.

While there have been no significant changes in the demographic statistics of our communities, Roseau County remains our most populated area with the highest number of income-eligible families. Due to the local manufacturing needs at Polaris Industries in Roseau, MN, there has been an influx of Spanish-speaking families from Puerto Rico. These families often have one working parent and may qualify for Head Start and Early Head Start services. We are supporting our families with recruitment materials translated into Spanish. Outreach efforts include Polaris, Roseau County Social Services, and the Roseau School District.

There is strong community support for local education, with our communities consistently backing their local, small schools in tax matters and appreciating the quality programming provided. Within each of the 11 school districts in our Head Start service area, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) services are offered in our communities. The two additional school districts in our Early Head Start service area also provide similar services. The predominant focus in most of our school districts is School Readiness (state-funded preschool) for 4-year-olds, leaving limited opportunities for parents of infants and toddlers. Despite 13 school buildings in Northwest's service area, comprehensive 0-2 programs are scarce in our communities, with only one childcare center available in our extended E.H.S. service area. Approximately 50% of our enrolled families participate in their school district's program.



Medically Underserved

The Grygla and Badger community schools continue to present enrollment concerns. After several years of declining population, the number of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds has dropped to the point that providing a program can present challenges. We serve these communities under Section 645(a)(2) [42 U.S.C. 9840] regarding participation in Head Start programs. These communities have fewer than 1000 people, no other preschool program, are a designated medically underserved area and are geographically isolated from other preschool programs. The nearest alternative is more than 20 miles away, with no public transportation available. Northwest will continue to work with these communities to meet their children and family needs.

Designated Rural, Primary Care, and Medically Underserved Areas (M.U.A.)

Service Area Name	Designation Type	County	Status	Rural Status	Designation Date
ROSEAU SERVICE AREA	MUA	Roseau	Designated	Rural	03/25/1982
Marshall	M.U.A.	Marshall	Designated	Rural	11/01/1978
Low Income - Lake of the Woods	M.U.A.	Lake of the Woods	Designated	Rural	08/30/2013
KITTSON SERVICE AREA	MUA	Kittson	Designated	Rural	12/08/1997

Data Source: <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/mua-find>

Rural Dental Health and Early Prevention

The A.D.A indicates that children covered by Medicaid are not receiving adequate dental care. Health Policy Institute reports that only 50% of children between the ages of 3 and 17 on Medicaid had a dental appointment within the past year (2019). Additionally, the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research highlights that one-fifth of adolescents in the country have untreated dental decay, with a significant portion of these cases affecting African-American or Hispanic children or those from low-income households.

Medicaid recipients are generally unaware of their dental benefits—the A.D.A. Health Policy Institute (H.P.I.) reports that 31.3% of Medicaid participants were uncertain about their dental benefits.

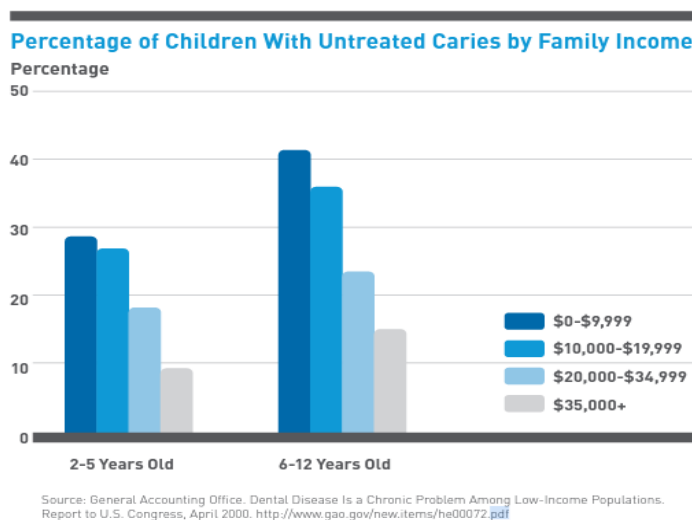
A secondary challenge is the limited number of dentists who accept Medicaid. In 2018, only 38%, or about 75,000 of the 200,000 licensed dentists in the United States, accepted Medicaid, according to the A.D.A. Many dentists hesitate to accept Medicaid patients due to the significantly lower reimbursement rates



than private insurance. Medicaid typically pays as little as half of what private insurance covers for the same procedures, as indicated by a survey conducted by The Wealthy Dentist.

Early childhood caries, or tooth decay, is the most prevalent chronic disease among children in the U.S. according to information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (C.D.C.) on caries, which refers to tooth decay and the crumbling of a tooth or bone. Early childhood caries is an infectious disease that can initiate as early as a child's teeth first appear, usually around six months of age, and can progress rapidly. This type of decay can cause severe pain and has the potential to impact a child's speech, eating, sleeping, learning, and playing abilities.

According to a report from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), more than one-third of children have early childhood caries by the time they enter kindergarten. Many children afflicted with this type of decay require costly treatments ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000 per child per year. Despite its prevalence and the high cost of treatment, early childhood caries is preventable.



BY THE AGE OF 3

5-10%
of U.S. children have oral health issues

BY AGE 5

ABOUT 60%
of U.S. children will have had caries at some point, including the 40 percent of children who have it when they enter kindergarten.

While completing a search for a dentist on *the A.D.A. Find-a-Dentist* site for Roseau, Kittson, and Marshall counties, five dentists in Grand Forks, North Dakota (averaging over 100 miles) showed as accepting Medicaid. In the search for Baudette in Lake of the Woods County, one dentist showed Medicaid as a payment source in International Falls, MN (average 70 miles).

Rural areas need flexibility and resources to develop innovative solutions that meet their needs. Prevention must be at the front line of rural oral health care, with systematic approaches that cross health professions and health sectors.

Data Source: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/oralhealth/programs/healthybaby.html>
<https://findadentist.ada.org/>



Eligibility

The estimated number of children who are income-eligible or otherwise eligible for our programs is under 500, according to the Minnesota Department of Education, School Census, and Agency/C.D.F. data. Interestingly, the data indicates a higher number of eligible children in the 0-2 age range compared to the 3 to 4-year-old group. Our recruitment efforts target identifying and serving the relatively low numbers of ethnic minorities and children living in poverty. The poverty rate in our service area mirrors that of the state, standing at approximately 10%, though the rate for children living in poverty is slightly higher. Establishing relationships with new families is crucial, as it bridges Early Head Start to Head Start, creating continuity in our services. New families as defined by new to our area as well as first time parents.

Population by Ethnicity/Race Composition	Service Area Percentage	Head Start/Early Head Start Percentages
Caucasian	95.12%	79%
American Indian	1.0%	5%
Asian	1.4%	0%
Black	.65%	1%
Hispanic/Latino	2.6%	4%
Bi-Racial	1.78%	11%

Data source: NWCA PIR 2022-2023 P.I.R. Report A.25 and [https:// factfinder.census.gov](https://factfinder.census.gov)- American community survey <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts>
 Data Source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/MN>

Homeschool

Meeting families where they are is a fundamental principle of Head Start. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a notable increase in families choosing homeschooling as an option, which continues to be a prevalent choice in our area. In 2023, parents of homeschooled students aged 5 through 17, with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade, were surveyed to identify the reasons behind their decision to homeschool. The results revealed that more than one-third of homeschooled students had parents who cited concerns about the school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure (85 percent), a desire to provide moral instruction (72 percent), emphasis on family life together (75 percent), and dissatisfaction with the academic instruction at other schools (68 percent) as reasons for homeschooling. When asked to pinpoint the most important reason for homeschooling, 30 percent of parents identified concerns about the school environment. In comparison, 16 percent cited dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools, and 130 percent mentioned a desire to provide religious instruction.

Data Source: https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/homeschool/TableDisplay.asp?TablePath=TablesHTML/table_4.asp



Childhood Special Needs

Each school district in the region provides Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) for children who qualify. In each case, Northwest collaborates closely with the school districts and other partner programs to address the unique needs of each child. Participation in the region's Interagency Early Intervention program for children aged 0-4 has been beneficial for Northwest in developing and implementing child and family service plans. Continued support and cooperation with partnering agencies are essential for delivering optimal services and ensuring efficiency. The ultimate goal of these collaborations is to establish an integrated, mainstream center where staff from each agency can provide services within the classroom.

The primary disabilities for which our enrollees qualify for Individualized Education Plans (I.E.P.s) or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) include speech impairments, language impairments, hearing impairments, autism, and developmental delays.

Special Needs children per school district (I.E.P., IFSP)	School District	Head Start/ Early Head Start
Kittson County	112	4
Lake of the Woods County	55	1
Marshall County	525	5
Roseau County	480	25
Total	1,172	32

Data source: NWCA 2022-2023 P.I.R. Report C.25, C.27; National Center for Education Statistics <https://nces.ed.gov>, <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data>

Mental Health remains a growing concern for our children and their families. Northwest has partnered with organizations to provide information, consultations, and referrals. Our primary contracted partner, Alluma, continues to meet with each classroom's team to develop mental health strategies for students and guides Early Head Start home visitors in employing techniques to assist parents.

The full implementation of Conscious Discipline (CD), an evidence-based, trauma-informed approach to social-emotional learning, commenced in 2022 with a week-long training for an implementation team. CD will be utilized with Head Start/Early Head Start children and parents during home visits and in the classroom. Ongoing implementation of CD continues to meet the needs of our staff and families.

Northwest's partnerships also extend to each county's Public Health. Northwest leverages this resource and its information by contracting with them for health screenings for children in our communities. This relationship helps Northwest understand community health goals and needs and introduces families to Head Start. Data



collected from various sources indicates that children and families are accessing necessary supports such as Free and Reduced Meals, the SNAP program, W.I.C., and local food pantries to meet their nutritional needs.

Nutrition/Food Support

Report Area	Total Students	Students on Free/Reduced Lunch	HS/EHS students on SNAP
Kittson	597	236	7
Lake of the Woods	443	202	17
Marshall	1296	519	11
Roseau	2676	896	27
Total	5012	1853	62

Data Source: MN Dept of Health <https://mndatamaps.web.health.state.mn.us/interactive/frpl.html> Free & Reduced-Price Lunch data map; nces.ed.gov

A survey in the fall of 2021 indicates that, too often, families continue to make choices about their food that are not considered healthy and nutritious. Our efforts in family support and outreach continue with topics on nutrition at parent meetings. Northwest will continue to contract with a Dietician who helps to give added training to staff about the importance of nutrition so that they are better equipped to teach parents. Head Start will continue efforts to include information about healthy snacks provided at centers to parents. The health screening tool provides each family's account of their eating and nutrition patterns. Families are reporting adequate nutrition. However, other providers, such as dieticians, are seeing the need for healthier choices and further nutrition education. School districts are also seeing the need for nutrition for their students, and three of our districts continue to offer the back-pack food program, sending nutritious food home over the weekends to those children in need. Schools continue to work to meet nutritional needs and have gotten funding from the government to offer free meals to all students.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Children with families accessing (SNAP)	Kittson	Lake of the Woods	Marshall	Roseau
Under one year old	5	7	13	34
One year old	15	13	35	58
2-year old	10	9	31	54
3-year old	12	14	38	50
4-year old	11	12	47	65
5-year old	17	12	39	70

Data Source: <https://public.education.mn.gov/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=514>



Head Start Eligible Children and Families

Program	Head Start		Early Head Start	
	2021	2022	2021	2022
Family composition	2021	2022	2021	2022
Single adult household	36%	40%	30%	36%
Two adult household	64%	60%	70%	67%

Data source: NWCA 2022-2023 P.I.R. Report C.43

By raising the income threshold, we can ensure that low-income families burdened by high expenses, such as childcare and medical expenses, can put food on their tables and make Minnesota a healthier place for all who live there. SNAP Income Limit Increase to 200% in the Fall of 2022.

Children living in food-insecure households face myriad challenges to their well-being. We found negligible impacts of food insecurity transitions on first-grade academic achievement. However, we found consistent negative impacts on teachers' reports of children's externalizing behaviors, self-control, and interpersonal skills and on parents' reports of children's overall health status. Taken together, our findings underline the importance of food security for children's healthy development.

Data Source: HealthAffairs.org

Housing

Local Schools, Social Services, Public Health, W.I.C., and other community partners assist Northwest with referrals and ongoing support. They are also active recipients of Northwest's referrals, including referrals for the children in the foster care systems within our service area. During the 2022-2023 school year, there were 10 Head Start children in foster care and 33 children who were homeless (NWCA 2022-2023 P.I.R. A.13).

Community partners that provide family social services participate with Northwest on County Collaborative Committees and, through their input, have been able to better Family Outcomes. Building these relationships is essential for helping our families smoothly access services. It will remain a goal to continue building on these effective partnerships as input from community partners, staff members, parents, and Policy Council members has provided information regarding the needs of families in our area and what responses could be effective.

Northwest's housing services include advocacy for families to help find their housing through the Family Self Sufficiency Program (F.S.S.), as well as utilizing the Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.), Family Homeless and Prevention Assistance Program (FHPAP), Transitional Housing Program (T.H.P.), Youth Homeless Demonstration Program (Y.D.H.), COVID housing assistance program



(CHAP), and FEMA housing program (ESGI). There continues to be a strong need for affordable housing in our service area. Due to this, new families to our service area and programs will continue to have housing needs. Northwest also participates in new initiatives that arise to fund affordable housing.

Children in Out of Home Placement

County	2018	2019	2020	2021
Kittson	15	10	11	6
Lake of the Woods	6	11	7	9
Marshall	19	16	10	8
Roseau	23	43	30	45
Minnesota	16,488	15,297	13,442	12,312

Data Source: <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

Children placed in care had 57% greater odds of being in the lowest 10% in at least one developmental area (*physical well-being, social competence, communication and general knowledge, emotional maturity, language, and cognitive development*). While children placed in the care of Child Protective Services before age 5 were significantly less ready for school on each specific developmental Early Development Index domain, the most significant odds ratio was seen for emotional maturity, while the smallest odds ratio was for language and cognitive development.

Data Source: <https://journals.sagepub.com/>

Key Findings

In summary, information, data collection, and informal and formal surveys consistently reveal a theme of needs. When these needs are supported with services, collaboration, creative ideas, and community, the betterment of our families and children can be maximized. The effort and investment in meeting these needs have long-lasting positive implications for changing the trajectory and legacy of our families and communities.

Additional Community Needs

Access to resources	Community Engagement	Mental Health Services
Pride to utilize resources	Family Engagement	Parenting Education
Data collection to show needs and growth	Employee Onboarding and Continuing Education	Childhood Special Needs

