



**TRI-COUNTY
HEAD START**
Berrien • Cass • Van Buren

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT UPDATE



2021-2022

INTRODUCTION

TRI-COUNTY COUNCIL FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT, INC. (TCCCD) OPERATES THE TRI-COUNTY HEAD START (TCHS) GRANT. HEAD START GRANTEES ARE REQUIRED TO CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT EVERY FIVE YEARS, CORRESPONDING WITH THE ORGANIZATIONS 5-YEAR GRANT CYCLE, AND UPDATED ANNUALLY. THE PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT IS TO COLLECT RELATED DATA TO THE NEEDS OF AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HEAD START ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. THE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT IS ALSO USED TO INFORM THE HEAD START PLANNING PROCESS, UTILIZING DATA TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. THIS REPORT INCLUDES THE 2021-2022 COMMUNITY UPDATES.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following key findings and recommendations were discovered during the analysis of the collected data:

- Childcare Workforce Crisis - TCHS will continue to work towards solutions to raise wages
- Expansion of State-Funded PreK - TCHS will look for avenues to continue to serve Head Start eligible children and work in collaborative ways with our state-funded partners
- Mental Health Support - TCHS will invest in an additional Conscious Discipline Coordinator and trainings and materials for staff. This will help support staff, families, and children in developing healthy social-emotional skills that impact mental wellness.

POPULATION STATISTICS

	Berrien	Cass	VAN BUREN
CHILD POPULATION, BIRTH - 5 (CHANGE SINCE 2010)	10,540 (-8.7%)	3,136 (-13.3%)	5,496 (-6.9%)
CHILDREN IN POVERTY, AGES 0-17	22.3%	19.9%	17.6%
KIDS ELIGIBLE FOR HEAD START BASED ON POVERTY	2,350	624	967
HOUSEHOLDS IN POVERTY & ALICE	38.1%	37.5%	35.8%
3 & 4 YEAR OLDS IN PREK	48.8%	32%	36.8%
AVG COST OF FULL-TIME INFANT CHILDCARE PER MONTH	\$634	\$598	\$632
LESS THAN ADEQUATE PRENATAL CARE	44.8%	57.3%	35.5%
CHILDREN IN INVESTIGATED FAMILIES	110.0 per 1,000	118.5 per 1,000	125.2 per 1,000

All three counties are experiencing a decrease in birth rates, this will continue to impact the number of children served, however in all three counties there still a significant number of children living in poverty (Head Start eligible) and even more who are in families that are in ALICE households (ALICE = Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). ALICE families are typically not eligible for Head Start but would be more likely qualify for the state childcare assistance.

Additionally with the expansion of the State-funded PreK of 35,000 slots, more Head Start eligible children have the potential to be served in those classrooms.

CHILD CARE: CRITICAL NEED

The pandemic saw many child care providers close permanently and many others are now operating at a reduced capacity. All three counties do not have enough childcare slots for the children that need to be served, and if slots are available they are unaffordable for most. The average cost of child care in the three counties is \$7,456 per year. If a parent earns \$12/hr. (\$24,960 per year) at a full-time job, child care consumes 30% of their income, if they have more than one child, child care requires more than half of their income. This family would also be over the income requirements for Head Start services if they were a family of two or three.

1

BERRIEN COUNTY

There are 81 child care providers as of 2021 in Berrien County, down 37% since the pandemic and of those open only a portion accept infants.

2

CASS COUNTY

There are only 20 child care providers as of 2021 in Cass County, down 41% since the pandemic. Cass County is considered a true child care desert with 4.3 children for every available child care slot.

3

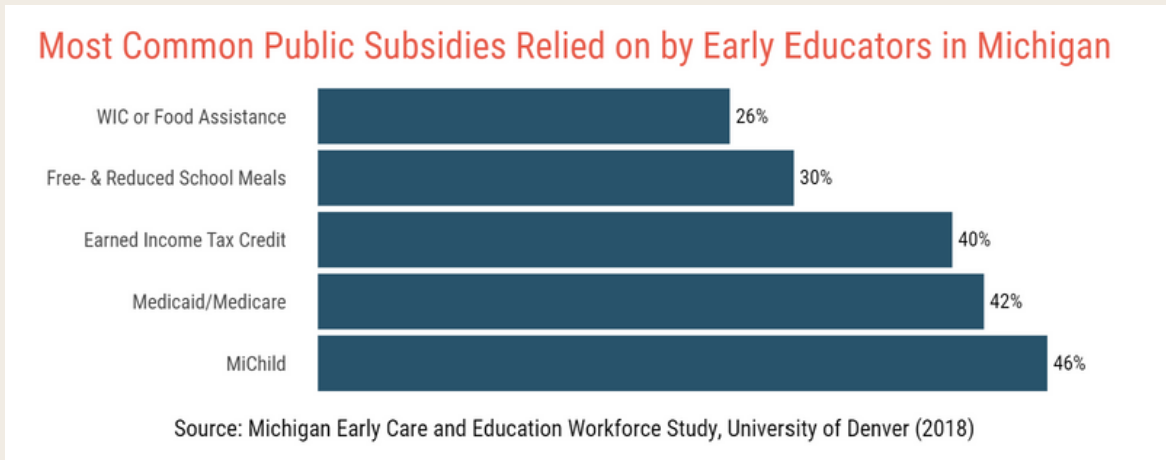
VAN BUREN COUNTY

There are 53 child care providers as of 2021 in Van Buren County, down 38% since the pandemic. While Van Buren county is not considered child care desert only 37 providers offer services to infants, and many of those providers only have 1-2 infant slots.

WORKFORCE CRISIS

The child care system nation-wide is in crisis. Historically low-wages, higher requirements, and challenging work conditions are driving staff with a passion for early childhood to leave the profession for more lucrative opportunities.

In Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties, the average starting salary for a K-12 teachers with a Bachelors degree is \$39,129 per year. In early child care the median wage is \$23,150 per year, placing them among the lowest wage earners in Michigan with most living in poverty.

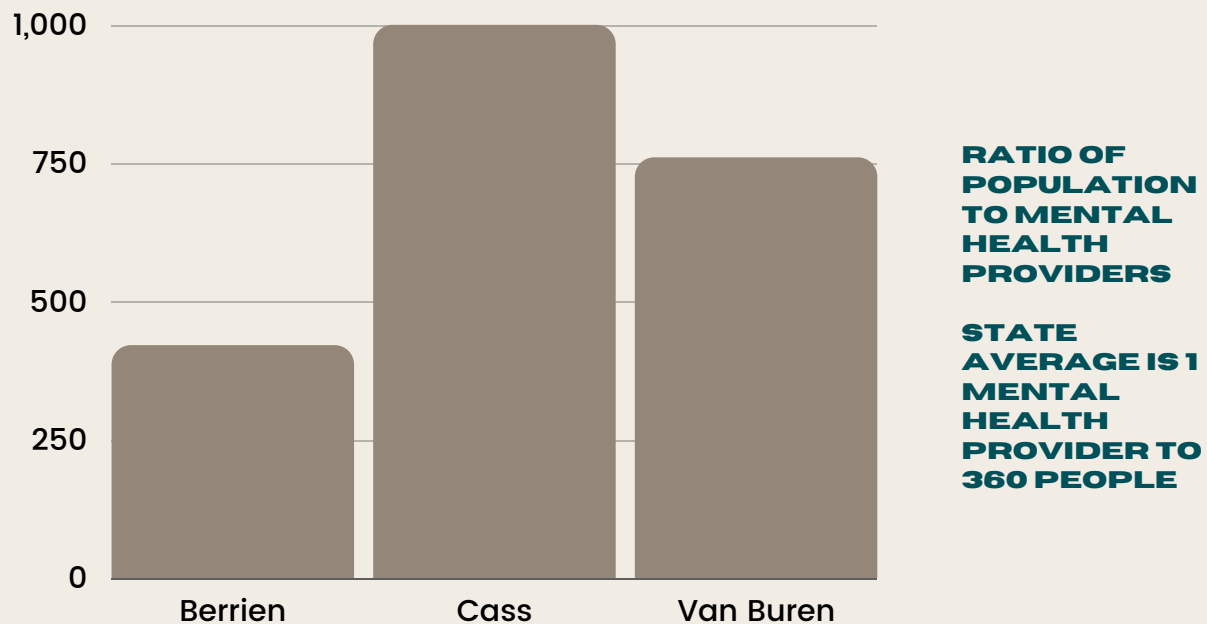


A recent Head Start program survey indicated that:

- 57% of respondents indicated compensation is the number one reason for staff leaving
- 85% of respondents indicated staff turnover is higher than in a typical year
- 90% of respondents' programs have closed classrooms permanently or temporarily due to lack of staff
- An estimated average of 30% of staff positions are currently unfilled

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health and Social-Emotional Supports have received an increased focus as the world is exiting the global pandemic, and violence is on the rise. However there are currently not enough Mental Health providers to fill these critical needs.



In Michigan, 20.32% of adults have Any Mental Illness (AMI) is defined as having a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder, other than a developmental or substance use disorder. Any mental illness includes persons who have mild mental illness, moderate mental illness, and serious mental illness.

- 4.61% of Michigan adults have had serious thoughts of suicide
- 53.9% of Michigan adults with a mental illness have received no treatment

2ND SUICIDE IS THE 2ND LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH
AMONGST PEOPLE AGES 10-34

RESOURCES

Michigan League for Public Policy, 2021 Kids Count In Michigan Data Book, 2021
<https://mlpp.org/kids-count/2021databook/>

Michigan League for Public Policy, Child Care in Michigan
<https://mlpp.org/child-care-in-michigan/>

Mental Health America, Prevalence Data 2022
<https://www.mhanational.org/issues/2022/mental-health-america-prevalence-data#>



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