



SENDCAA HEAD START BIRTH TO FIVE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Overview of the Grantee Pg 2
 - What is Community Assessment?
 - Data Sources
 - Assessment Process and Results
- Summary of Program Pg 3-7
 - Site Locations
 - Staffing
 - Service Area
 - Demographics
 - Race and Ethnic Representation
 - Disabilities and Available Resources
- Identified Needs of the Program Pg 7
 - Education
 - Family
 - Health/Nutrition
- Community Resources and Strengths Pg 8
- Identified Needs of the Community Pg 8
- Next Steps Pg 9-10
 - Childcare and head start classroom options
 - Partnerships

OVERVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE GRANTEE

WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

This report, the Community Assessment, represents a needs assessment study of barriers to the low-income population in our service area. It will be used to evaluate the needs of Head Start-eligible families and to assist in planning future program options based on the data collected. The data will be used to adjust current program options to fulfill needs identified, over the next five-year grant cycle.

DATA SOURCES

The Community Assessment contains both survey data and data derived from the United States Census Bureau, North Dakota Kids Count, and the North Dakota Department of Health. Data was also collected from Child Plus, which is our Head Start Data Management system.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND RESULTS

SENDCAA Head Start Birth to Five conducts a Community Assessment once every five years by surveying currently enrolled families and community partners in the counties of Cass, Ransom, Richland, and Sargent. The method of data collection was electronic surveys. The data will be used to establish programming priorities and guide future planning.

The following sectors were surveyed for the 2023 Community Assessment:

- Currently Enrolled Families
- Community-Based Organizations
- Healthcare Providers
- Mental Health Providers
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Educational Institutions

Surveys were sent out virtually in June to all identified recipients. Currently enrolled parents received surveys that consisted of several questions requesting information on barriers, needs, and accessibility of current resources provided by Head Start and our communities, as well as work/training schedules, desired program options, and prioritization of family circumstances. Survey respondents were also given the option of submitting additional comments to questions, which gives additional insight into the barriers families are facing in their pursuit of quality Pre-K education. Data was then reviewed by the management team consisting of the project director, two Head Start education coordinators, one Early Head Start education coordinator who works with birth to three, one lead health and nutrition coordinator, and one ERSEA and family coordinator.

SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAM

SENDCAA Head Start Birth to Five is a grantee of the Southeastern North Dakota Community Action Agency (SENDCAA) and is currently funded to serve 346 children in six facilities, which spans across three counties. All Head Start program options are center-based and follow the public school calendar of the city in which they are located. The children attending Head Start are ages 3 -5. The Early Head Start program options are also center-based and operate year-round, having one month off in summer. This program option serves ages six weeks to three years, as well as four pregnant mom slots. In addition to the 346 enrollment slots we currently serve, we maintain an average waiting list of 302 in Head Start and 213 in Early Head Start.

SITE LOCATIONS

The location and number of enrollment slots during the 2022-2023 school year are as follows:

- Central Site (3233 S University Drive, Fargo)-72
- South Site (3329 S University Drive, Fargo)-90
- West Site (109 3rd St E, West Fargo)-49
- Wahpeton Site (1202 Westmore Ave, Wahpeton)-18
- Lisbon Site (418 5th Ave W, Lisbon)-17
- Early Head Start (3600 15th St S, Fargo)-52, which includes 4 pregnant mom slots

At the end of our school year in 2022 we were notified that we had to relocate out of our site previously known as Agassiz due to Fargo Public Schools needing space for their own classrooms. During the 2022-2023 school year, we explored various places in the Fargo and West Fargo communities to reopen this site. During this transition, we tried to hire staff to create a 3-year-old room at our Early Head Start site. Unfortunately, due to a lack of staff and not being able to hire, we were not able to open this room. While we were funded for 346, we were only able to serve 298 families during this past school year.

The Central and South sites are located in South Fargo, and each has a combination of part-day and full-day classrooms. Central has two full-day classrooms and two part-day classrooms. South has two part-day classrooms and three full-day classrooms.

The West site is located in the West Fargo Public Schools ECSE building. This site consists of two part-day classrooms and one full-day classroom.

The Lisbon site has one full-day classroom and is located in the city of Lisbon. The Wahpeton site has one full-day classroom and is located in the city of Wahpeton.

The Early Head Start site is located in South Fargo and consists of six full-day, full-year classrooms.

At the end of the 2022-2023 school year, we finally were able to locate a building for the two classrooms that we had to close this past year. This new site will be located at 2761 12th Ave S,

Fargo, ND 58103, and will have one full-day classroom and two part-day classrooms, which will serve a total of 52 children. These classrooms will open at the new site for the 2023-2024 school year.

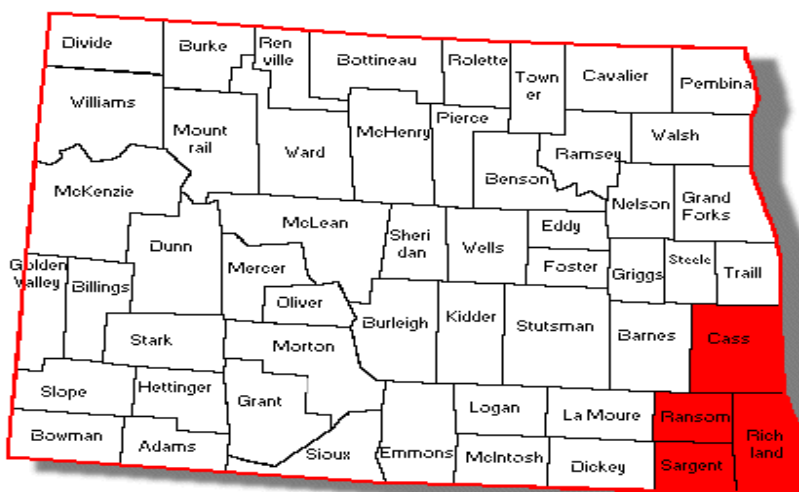
STAFFING

Currently SENDCAA Head Start Birth to Five has 57 employees who work in the program in the component areas of administration, education, family, and health. Our program is currently not fully staffed, and when we have all positions filled, we have 68 employees.

SERVICE AREA

In Cass County, the cities of Fargo and West Fargo accommodate the majority of our enrollment population, and we have two smaller sites in Lisbon (Ransom County) and Wahpeton (Richland County). Some families in our Lisbon and Wahpeton sites are from Sargent County and receive our services. The total size of our service area is 4,921.58 square miles. Below you will find a map of our county service area:

Picture 1:



Source: diymaps.net (c)

DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographics for our service area (by county) are as follows:

POPULATION

Table 1:

	Population	Median Income	Below Poverty	Children in Poverty
Cass	184,525	\$66,009	10.6%	10.6%
Ransom	5,703	\$67,480	11.2%	20.1%
Richland	16,529	\$62,481	10.77%	13.35%
Sargent	3,862	\$67,467	5.7%	5.0%

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020 (Decennial Census)

According to *US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020 (Decennial Census)*, a total of 210, 619 people live in the 4,921.58 square mile service area defined for this assessment.

In addition to living below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, there are several other factors considered when a family applies for Head Start Birth to Five services. Among these are homelessness and children in foster care. The following table will indicate the number of expectant mothers and children in our service area, and those who are homeless and living in foster care.

Table 2:

	Children under 5	Expectant Mothers	Children experiencing homelessness	Children in Foster Care
Cass	15,029	14,245	513	421
Ransom	393	332	0	10
Richland	1,183	1,026	32	45
Sargent	267	219	0	6

Data source: North Dakota Department of Health- Cass, Richland County Community Health Profile 2019, Ransom and Sargent County Community Health Profile 2018, and North Dakota KIDS COUNT 2019 and 2021 data

RACE AND ETHNIC REPRESENTATION

Our currently enrolled children come from varying backgrounds and cultures and speak numerous different languages. There are 104 children identified as African American/Black for primary race, 93 as Caucasian/White, 17 as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1 as Pacific Islander, 8 as Asian, 40 as Multi/Bi-Racial, and 2 were Unspecified or chose Other. Along with the varying backgrounds, there are also numerous languages spoken within our centers. Among the languages spoken by our families is Arabic, Spanish, English, Nepali, French Creole,

Somali, Bosnian, Kirundi, and Swahili (*Information derived from ChildPlus for currently enrolled families*).

The following tables illustrate additional information regarding race and ethnic composition within our service area (by county).

Table 3:

	White	Black	Asian	Native American/ Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Hispanic
Cass	85.9%	6.9%	3.2%	1.6%	0.1%	2.4%	3.2%
Ransom	91.9%	1.0%	1.3%	1.0%	0.2%	4.7%	3.2%
Richland	92.6%	1.3%	0.6%	3.2%	0.1%	2.2%	3.7%
Sargent	93.1%	2.5%	1.0%	1.5%	0.2%	1.8%	3.5%

Data source: 2020 US Decennial Census.

DISABILITIES AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES

All Head Start and Early Head Start programs serve children with disabilities and special health care needs, children who are at high risk for developmental delays. 10% of enrolled slots must be filled by a child with a disability.

Staff supports children with special health care needs or disabilities by:

- Identifying health and developmental issues through screening and ongoing child observation
- Working with the child's family and health care professionals to make referrals for further evaluation or more intensive support when necessary
- Implementing individualization plans that include specific instructions for adaptations to ensure that each child can participate in program activities

During the 2022-2023 school year, a total of 68 Head Start children were on an IEP, and a total of 14 Early Head Start children were on an IFSP. The total number of children on an IEP/IFSP was 82. The diagnosed disabilities included autism, ADHD, speech, and other delays. A total of 15 children were receiving mental health services by the end of the year.

The following community partners provide support and services for children with a disability:

- Fargo Public Schools ECSE
- West Fargo Public School ECSE
- Southeast Human Service Center
- Anne Carlsen Center
- Early Intervention Partners
- Wahpeton Public School ECSE

- South Valley Special Education

IDENTIFIED NEEDS

EDUCATION

In the survey results, parents noted that they were satisfied with education services, stating that SENDCAA Head Start has supportive staff. Parents said that they like the learning environment and that their children were able to grow academically. Parents also stated that they liked that our teaching staff were able to meet the children's emotional needs by allowing each child to grow at their own pace. SENDCAA Head Start felt like a second home for our families by providing a daily consistent program.

As an area of need, parents said that they would like better support for teachers and stated that they are overworked due to being understaffed.

FAMILY

Parents surveyed stated that SENDCAA Head Start Birth to Five provided many opportunities for family engagement, parent meetings, and educational opportunities. Parents felt that the goals they set throughout the year benefited their families.

For areas of need in the family component, parents stated that they would like to see more parent involvement in the program, transportation for emergency help, and extended hours for more care for their children. Parents stated that some of our program options did not work with their work schedules.

HEALTH/NUTRITION

Parents agreed or strongly agreed that the health and nutrition services we provided were beneficial to their children. Most surveys noted that their child had grown in physical development and that the health information and screening results that we shared were beneficial. Parents found that our consist reminders of upcoming well-child and dental visits were helpful along with our onsite well-child exams and dentist visits were helpful in ensuring our children were getting those completed. Parents said that they felt that the meals that were provided met the needs of their children.

This past year our main dental partnership Apple Tree Dental discontinued their services with our program due to Medicaid not paying for our children's exams. In our communities, there are not many dentists who take Medicaid, and the ones that do often aren't taking new clients. We were able to establish a new community partnership with Family Health Care Dental Mobile Van which visits our sites and can provide exams to our children. This mobile unit was able to make weekly trips to our sites in April and May.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND STRENGTHS

The communities in Cass, Ransom, Richland, and Sargent counties have many strengths. The strengths within our community that were identified by our community partners included the following:

- Have many caring professionals, who are understanding and have sympathy
- There are many mentorships in the area that are willing to help and guide
- Community connections to various resources
- Organizations provide resources to teach life skills to help them thrive later in life
- Strong collaborations between community partners and the school districts
- Many free educational opportunities
- Takes state insurance for healthcare
- Many organizations meet families where they are at
- Many evidence-based programs available in the community

IDENTIFIED NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

Based on the data from compiled from our community partner surveys, the top three needs of low-income clients in our service area are:

1. Mental Health Services
2. Parenting Education
3. Affordable Housing (Rental & Ownership)

The top three causes for the needs identified are:

1. Availability of Childcare
2. Low Parental Education
3. Lack of Awareness of Available Resources

In addition to the indicated causes, there were two more concerns indicated by the data. Those were the need for dental services and the lack of transportation available for our families.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of the 2023 Community Assessment data revealed the underlying needs of eligible families in our service area, as well as their barriers. The community partner and currently enrolled family data reveal that more families are working and in need of extended hours of care. The availability of quality Pre-K education and childcare options also proves to be a challenge faced daily by many families in our communities.

CHILDCARE AND HEAD START CLASSROOM OPTIONS

Quality, available childcare was indicated as a need in our 2023 Community Assessment Survey data. There currently are no other full-day, publicly funded Pre-K programs in our service area. The following table will indicate the number of available Licensed Child Care Providers by county and the number of children being served. This includes all children aged 0-13 and indicates a lack of available childcare in our area.

Table 4:

	Number of Licensed Providers	Capacity
Cass County	305	11,744
Ransom County	11	236
Richland County	41	954
Sargent County	5	151

Data Source: ND Kids Count 2023

Currently, the SENDCAA Head Start program has 8 part-day classrooms, which are open 8:00 am to 11:30 am and 12:00 pm to 3:30 pm. Each part-day classroom has 17 children. Our program has a total of 134 children who are enrolled in the part-day option. Filling our part-day spots is quite challenging and there are constant transitions of children in these classrooms, as a lot of families cannot make these spots work with their schedules. While our program is able to serve more children in our communities with part-day classrooms, we are not able to meet our family's needs. Our program plans to look further into transitioning our part-day classrooms to full-day classrooms to be able to meet the needs of our families.

PARTNERSHIPS

By utilizing the Parent and Community Survey data results, SENDCAA Head Start Birth to Five will continue to build community partnerships within Cass, Ransom, Richland, and Sargeant counties. After the COVID-19 pandemic and a change of staff, our program has lost connections that we previously had with community partners. There are new and more available resources within our communities that we can connect with in order to provide better services to our children and our families in the areas of disabilities, education, family, health, and mental

health. By connecting further with different community partners, we will be able to help a majority of the needs that have been brought to our attention in our community assessment. With further collaborations with community partners, we will also be able to help meet the needs of transportation and dental services that our families currently face. By connecting with more service agencies, we can help families find affordable housing. Our program will also work to provide more education opportunities to our families on the resources that we can help connect them to with the community. One of our strengths as a program is the fact that we work under a Community Action Program. SENDCAA has many programs that we are fortunate to connect our families with which include self-sufficiency, energy and rehab, child and adult food programs, and housing. As a program, we will work on building community partnerships to better support the children and families that we serve.

All of these needs that have been stated in this community assessment will be reflected in the planning and goal setting process of our next 5-year grant cycle.