



Empowering people, transforming lives

# Agenda

1. Overview of the Community Assessment
2. Service Area Demographics and Key Data Changes
3. The Impact of the Pandemic
4. Progress on Recommendations and Next Steps



# Community Assessment

## 2022 Annual Update

***Per Performance Standards, we are required to examine:***

1. Service Area Demographics
2. Eligible Children and Pregnant Women
3. Needs of Eligible Children and Families
4. Employment, Education, and Training
5. Agencies Serving Eligible Children
6. Resources Available to the Community to Meet the Needs of Eligible Children and Families

*The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was also captured to the extent possible.*



# Program Summary

## *Funded Enrollment and Service Area*

- WNCSource is funded to serve 608 children/families and pregnant women through:
  - Head Start (245);
  - Early Head Start (263); and
  - Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships programs (100).
- Services are provided in four counties, including:
  - Henderson County
  - Polk County
  - Rutherford County
  - Transylvania County



# Service Area Demographics

## Poverty, Racial and Ethnic Diversity

### North Carolina

- **Twenty four percent** of children, under age 6, in North Carolina live in **poverty**
  - Nearly 50% of all NC children live in families experiencing poverty.
  - Among Black or African American and Hispanic children, nearly 40% live in poverty.

### WNCSource Service Area

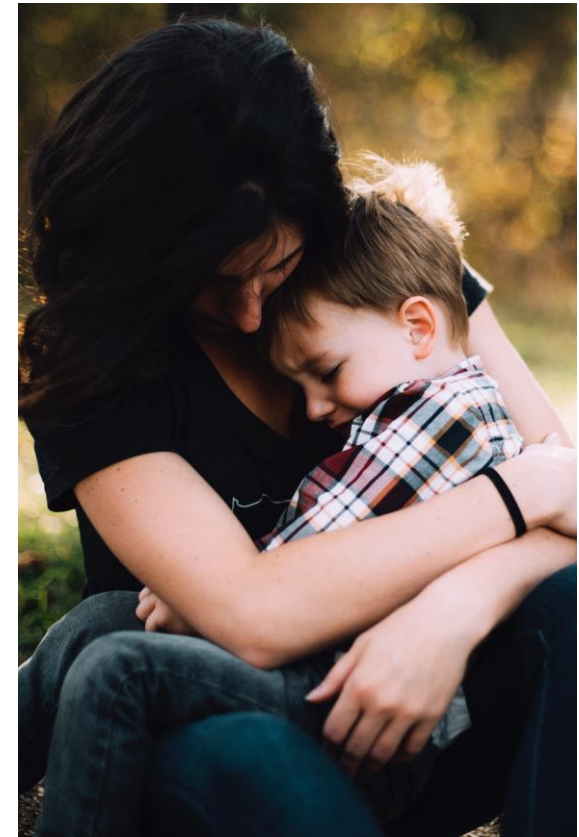
- All counties, with the exception of Rutherford County have a **poverty rate below the state rate (9.8% to 17.9%)**.
  - **Disparity exists by race** and are substantially higher among Black or African American and American Indian & Alaskan Native individuals than other races. In Rutherford County, for example, the poverty rate among Black or African American individuals is 33.9%, more than double the poverty rate among White individuals, 16.3%.
- The population in the service area is **predominantly White (96.8-91.6% as compared to 68.7% in the state)**. Counties within the service area remain less diverse than North Carolina as a whole, with the exception of Henderson County.
  - Racial diversity is the greatest in Rutherford County (9.5% Black/African American).
  - Henderson County has the most ethnic diversity (10.1% Hispanic or Latino).



# Service Area Demographics

## *Single Parent Households, Female Head of Household*

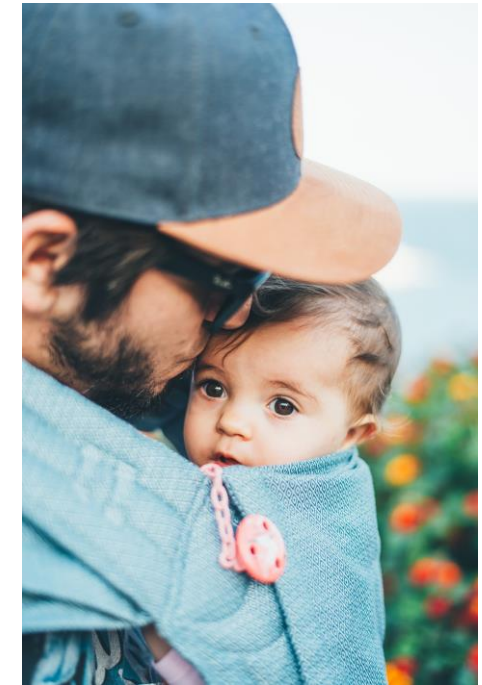
- In the service area, there are many **single parent households (29-43.3%)**;
  - Rutherford and Transylvania counties have rates higher than the statewide rate (36.4%); and
  - Children served by WNCSource have rates higher than the state rate (41-64%).
- The poverty rate is substantially higher for **female heads of houses with no spouse and children under five**
  - Rates are highest in Polk (52%) and Transylvania County (47.4%).



# Eligibility Criteria

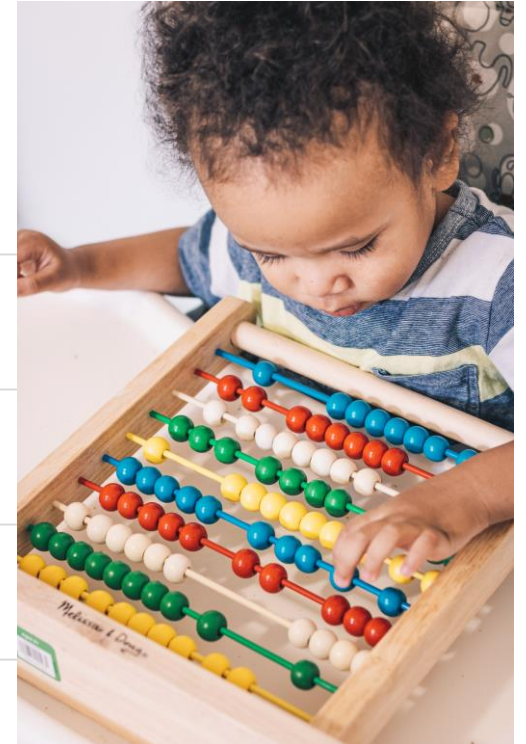
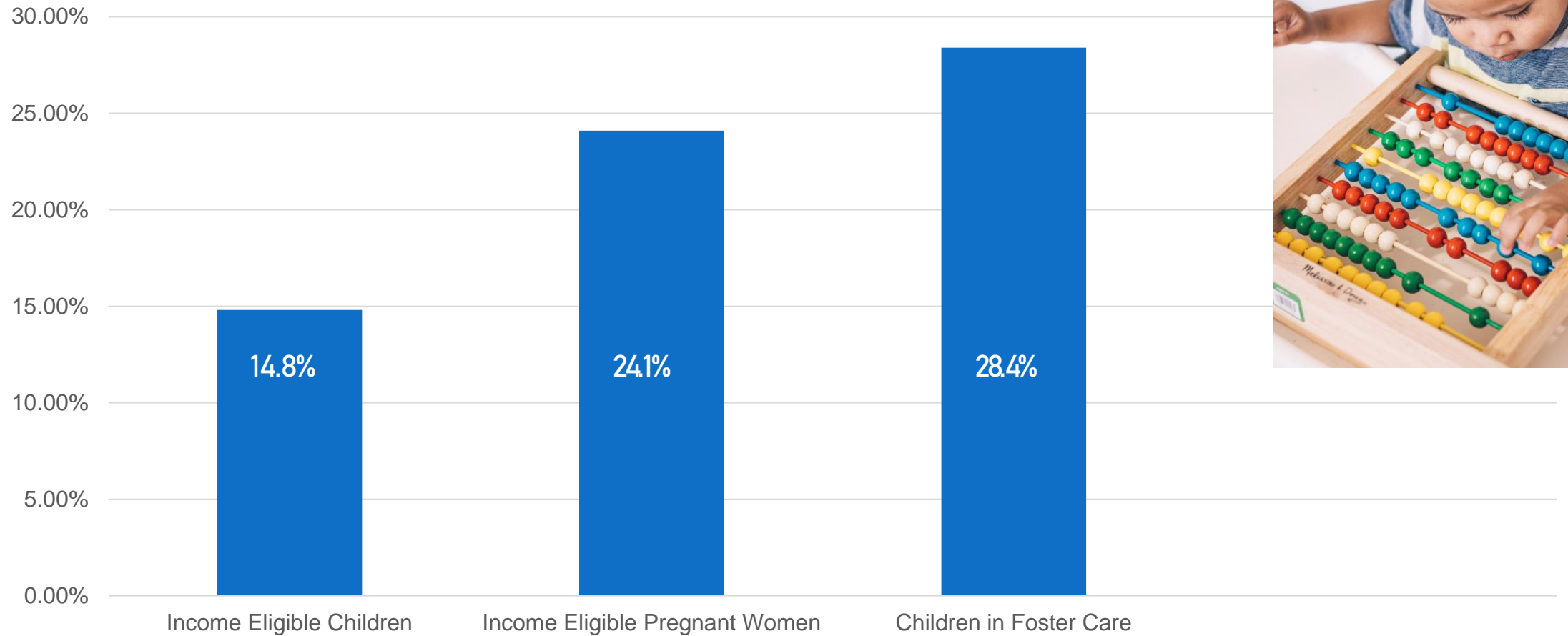
## Service Area and WNCSource Enrollment

Eligibility Criteria	Estimated Number of Eligible in the Service Area (Percent Change from May 2019 Community Assessment)	Number Children Served by WNCSource (2020-2021) by Eligibility
Income-eligible children	2,634 children (+14.8%)	353
Income-eligible pregnant women	523 (+24.1%)	9
Children experiencing homelessness	>32 (-44.4%)	29
Children in foster care	180 (+28.4%)	17
Children with disabilities	>401	35
Children receiving public assistance	2,808 (-0.4%)	21
Over income/Other/Exceeding over income	8,095	43



# Eligibility Criteria: Head Start/Early Head Start Services

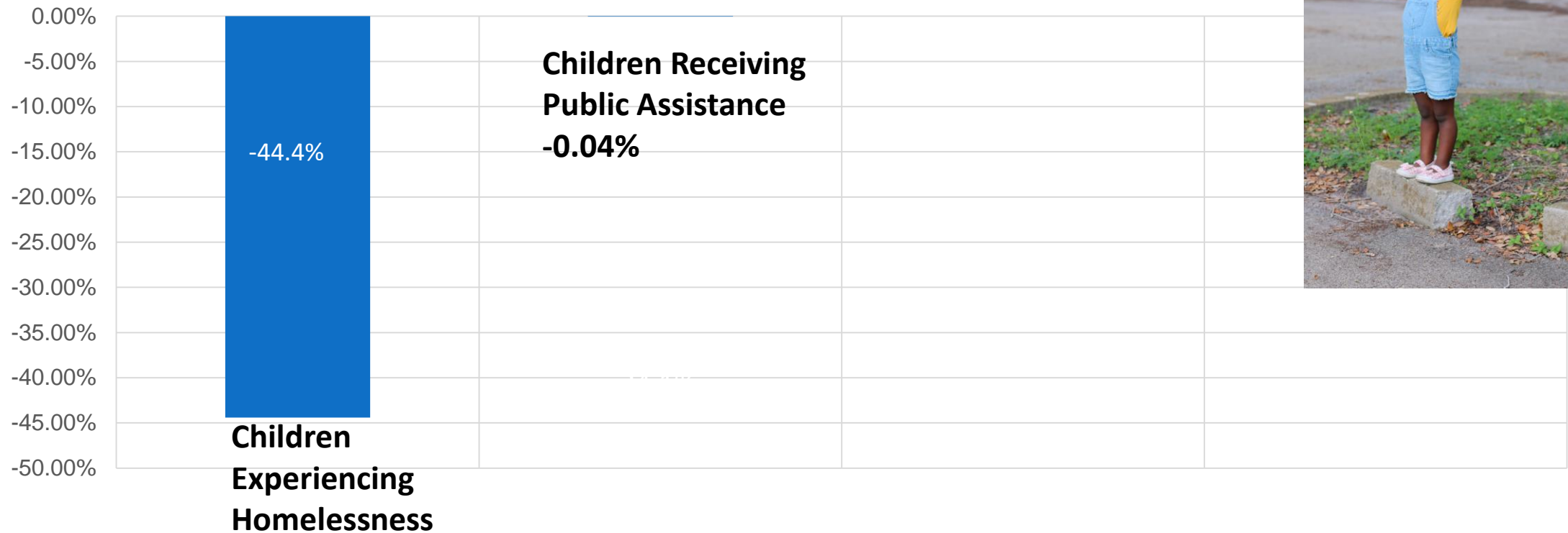
*Eligibility Populations: Increased (2019 to 2021)*





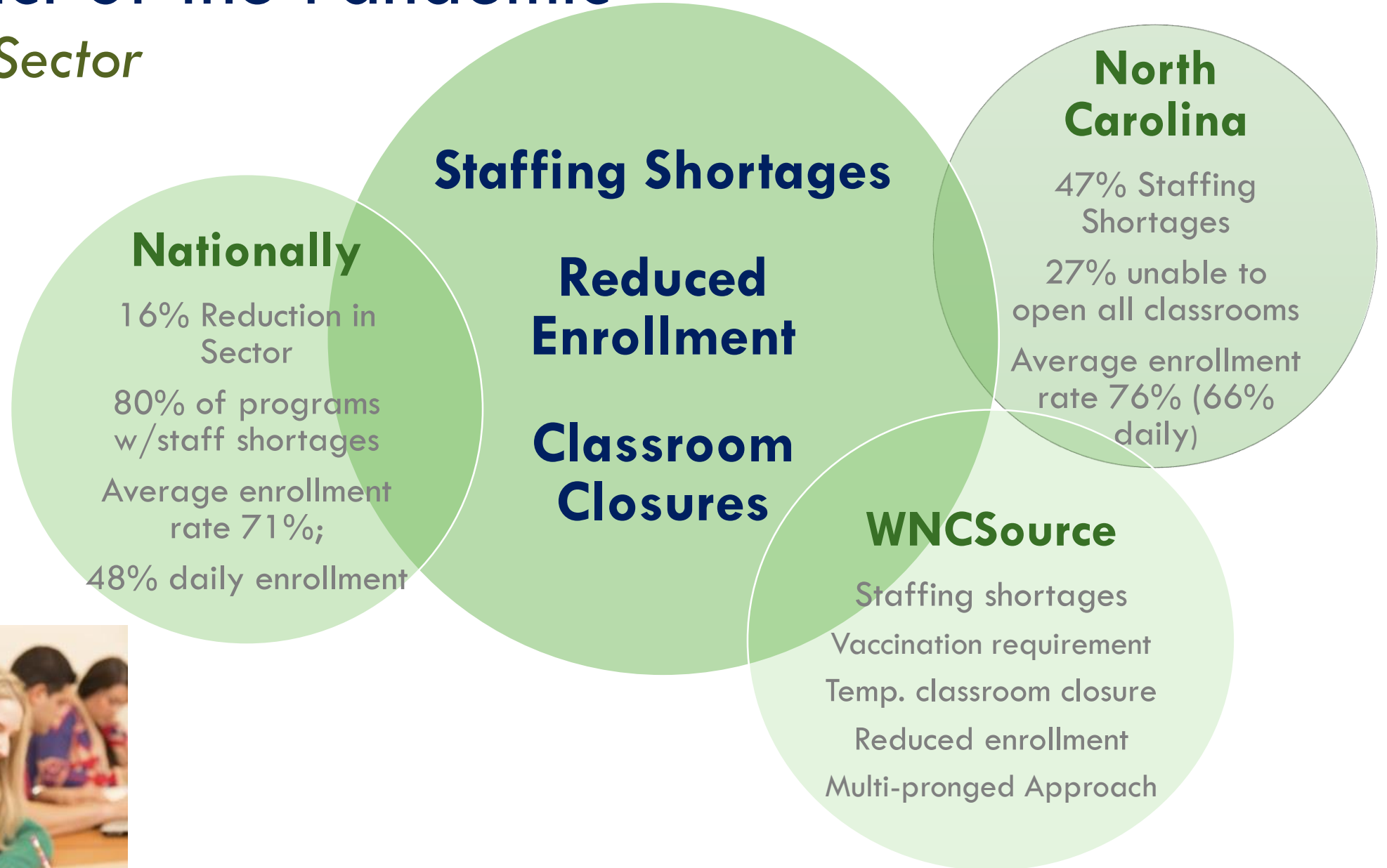
# Eligibility Criteria: Head Start or Early Head Start Services

*Eligibility Populations: Decreased (2019 to 2021)*



# The Impact of the Pandemic

## Child Care Sector



# The Impact of the Pandemic

## *Mental Health*



**The pandemic has had clear mental health impacts on both early childhood educators and the children and families they serve.**

- **Educators:** at risk for increased mental health challenges.
- **Children and families:** widespread disruption to family life can have a significant impact on mental health (loss of access to child care, household crowding, job loss, food insecurity etc.)”.
- **Potential for long lasting effects** without appropriate supports; those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are twice as likely to report emotional/behavioral difficulties.
- **The drug overdose mortality rate has increased** dramatically in the service area and across the state. Polk and Rutherford counties both have higher rates of unintentional drug and opioid overdoses than the state rate
- **WNCSource approach:** new wellness efforts, additional Mental Health Consultant, collaborative MH Consultation Model for all Classrooms, staff wellness efforts.

# Progress on 2019 Recommendations



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**Recommendation 1:** Review WNCSource program design to determine the best ways to increase the number of full-day/full-year center-based slots for birth to five (particularly infants and toddlers) and maintaining home-based slots for families who need them.



### **Progress to Date:**

- Completed slot conversion
- Created additional partnerships
- Ensured facilities meet needs

### **Our work moving forward:**

- Finalize renovations of new properties, recruit staff
- Continue strategic planning and partnership efforts to be responsive to the demonstrated community need.
- Consider implications of waiting list data.

**Recommendation 2:** Continue to build upon strong community partnerships to increase access to comprehensive services in WNCSource sites. This will alleviate transportation issues by bringing health, mental health, and social services into locations where children and families regularly gather.



### **Progress to Date:**

- Improved engagement with families and programs by relocating Family Advocates
- Increased ability to communicate (languages other than English)

### **Our work moving forward:**



- Continue to communicate and brainstorm solutions with local resource providers and enrolled families to monitor the pulse of ongoing and one-time family needs as pandemic-related funds and services potentially reduce or expire.

**Recommendation 3:** Formalize process for reaching outside the WNCSource service area to access additional services including mental health, substance misuse, adult health, developmental disability, and other social services.

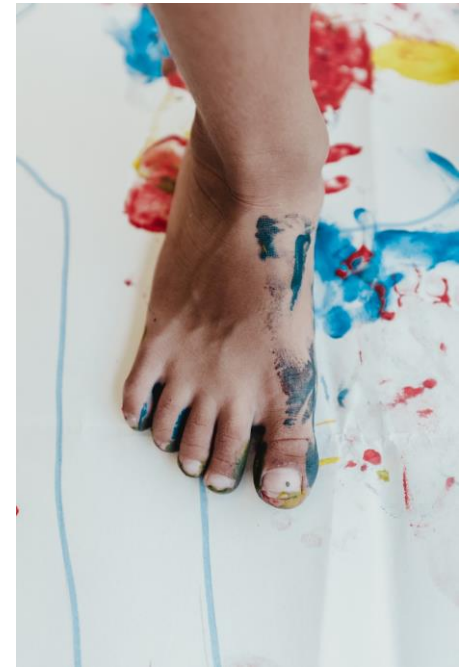
**Progress to Date:**

- Ensured synergies in service area: staff serve on local community councils and boards
- Formalized contracts with mental health providers
- Hired Volunteer and Recruitment Coordinator

**Our work moving forward:**



- Volunteer and Recruitment Coordinator and other staff will continue exploration and relationship building outside of the WNS Service area to better connect enrolled families to extended resources.



**Recommendation 4:** Identify service area transportation successes and challenges in order to enhance overall quality of services for families. Use previous experiences with Apple Transportation to identify solutions. Identify partnerships with Medicaid transportation services to coordinate better systems for collaboration. Work with families to better understand the Apple Transportation system.

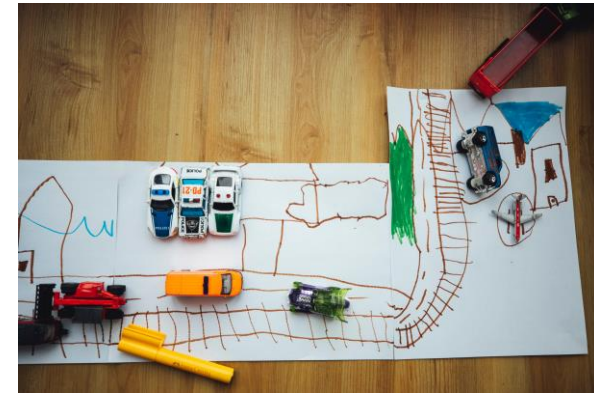
**Progress to Date:**

- Collaborated to create short-term strategies for transportation, due to pandemic related shortages.

**Our work moving forward:**



- Continue to develop systemic transportation strategies to overcome challenges created during the pandemic.





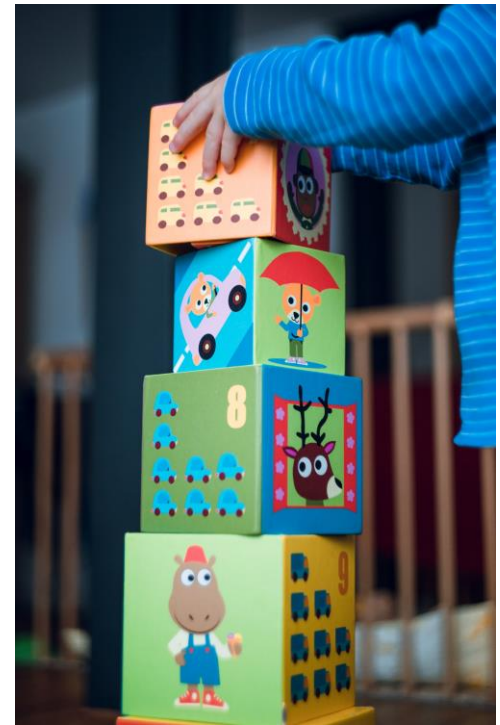
**Recommendation 5:** Ensure WNCSource representatives participate on local task forces with community partners to address identified challenges and develop strategic plan for partnerships.

**Progress to Date:**

- Implemented best practices during pandemic to ensure health/safety
- Participated in advocacy efforts
- Collaborative professional development

**Our work moving forward:** 

- Continue to work with local partners to ensure children and families are supported appropriately through the pandemic.
- Continue networking to ensure representation in the community to work toward solutions to effectively support enrolled children and families with the most difficult barriers they face, beyond the pandemic.



**Recommendation 6:** Create a task force related to services for pregnant women and young children (birth-5) that focuses on the wide range of issues that impact them in a way that builds upon the Transylvania Task Force Model.



**Progress to Date:**

- Created a task force and assessed available resources
- Clarified the service needs of pregnant women and young children
- Refined services and program advancement

**Our work moving forward:** 

- Continue to refine the understanding of the evolving needs of pregnant women and young children (birth-5) in the service area, and planning and implementation efforts to meet those needs.

**Recommendation 7:** Continue to develop and communicate clear policies and procedures to staff, families, and partners regarding program operations. Ensure all stakeholders understand all program operations, the process for using vouchers and child care subsidy, referral and follow up roles and responsibilities, and communication strategies (both formal and informal).



### **Progress to Date:**

- Strengthened policies and procedures
- Continued strengthening communications and relationships

### **Our work moving forward:**

- Continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure policies and procedures are clearly understood and followed consistently.

**Recommendation 8:** Continue to create a program-wide focus on mental health supports for families, addressing challenging behaviors, and using trauma-informed practices. Integrate resources from national, regional, and statewide resources to enhance social and emotional supports in each center and home visiting setting.



### Progress to Date:

- Received staff training, consultation, and coaching on a trauma-informed approach to promote culturally responsive, relationship-based practices, through the Infant-Toddler Trauma-Informed Care (ITTI Care) Project.

### Our work moving forward:

- Continue to understand and train on best practices in order to support families to address challenging behaviors, with a particular focus on behaviors emerging as a result of isolation, etc., from the pandemic.

**Recommendation 9:** Continue to enhance professional development for all staff. Training should include program policies and procedures, communication systems, processes for referral to community services, inclusive practices, management or leadership development opportunities, addressing challenging behaviors, and using trauma informed approaches



### **Progress to Date:**

- Training linked to career advancement
- Strategic professional development offerings

### **Our work moving forward:**

- Continue to provide comprehensive training and engage with staff to clearly outline the promotional pathways and supports available to support their continuous internal career development.

**Recommendation 10:** Explore how EHS-CCP sites are utilizing supplies, materials, and supports that enhance teacher capacity and are communicating with and/or coaching the EHS-CCP programs regarding the logistical considerations related to supplies and materials.



### **Progress to Date:**

- EHS-CCP sites have received supplies for outdoor learning environments and have been provided curriculum training
- Each site has an identified mentor-teacher to supports the EHS teachers daily in implementing ReadyRosie, curriculum, and assessments.

### **Our work moving forward:**

- Continue to explore supports for the EHS-CCP program and materials needed to successfully support teachers to implement the curriculum.

**Recommendation 11:** Compare teacher job descriptions with real-world activities to ensure job description accurately reflects job requirements in a realistic and manageable way. Continue to improve use of technology and data systems to streamline work tasks. Integrate reflective supervision as part of the process of managing expectations, job requirements, and strategies to become more time-efficient.



### **Progress to Date:**

- Job description accurately reflects job requirements
- Reflective supervision has been integrated as part of the process of managing expectations, job requirements, and strategies to become more time-efficient.

### **Our work moving forward:**

- Continue to provide reflective supervision and ensure job descriptions reflect job requirements and use evolving technology to improve efficiency of work tasks.

**Recommendation 12:** Review workloads and schedules for staff to identify more flexible staffing patterns while maintaining adult-child ratios. Considering rotating schedules, job shares, and longer days with shorter weeks as potential solution to flexible hours.



### **Progress to Date:**

- Completed a workforce study of staffing patterns and supports across sites to ensure an equal division of support staff, based on the number and age of children and type of classrooms.

### **Our work moving forward:**

- Continue to review workloads and evaluate the implementation of the formula-based staffing model to ensure equity in staffing levels across sites.
- As staffing levels increase, ensure pre-pandemic staffing supports and patterns return equitably.



# Questions

