



# Community Assessment Update

## April 2024



Empowering people, transforming lives

# Changes Since January 2023



## **Demographics in Service Area:**

- Total population in our service area has been fluctuating or increasing over the last 5 years
- Birth rate over the last year has been increasing
- There is a projected increase of 1,155 children under age five, from 2024 to 2028. 260 would be living below the poverty level and could be income-eligible for our program

## **Poverty Rates:**

- Increased in all service area counties except for Henderson County over the last year
- In Transylvania County, the number/percent of Hispanic individuals below the poverty level increased from 66 individuals (6.1%) to 350 individuals (31.3%)
- For single mothers with young children who live in poverty, Transylvania County showed a 22.2% increase

# Changes Continued



## Education in Service Area:

- High school graduation rates decreased in all counties except for Rutherford County
- High school dropout rates decreased in all counties except for Transylvania County

## Health in Service Area:

- Out of 100 counties in North Carolina, counties in the service area rank in the top 20% for health outcomes, with the exception of Rutherford County (72 out of 100)
- Vaping statistics, in terms of percentages, high school teen students in North Carolina (35.5%) vape more than in any other state, with the exception of West Virginia (35.7%)
- Data for North Carolina indicates that in the state in 2023, the number of suspected overdose deaths decreased by 10%. Highest rates for counties in our service area are Polk and Rutherford Counties.

# Changes Continued



## Health (Continued):

- Since last year, an additional 7,489 adults enrolled in Medicaid Expansion representing a range of 4.6% to 8.0% of adults in our counties
- Dental care continues to be a challenge for some residents, especially the youngest children
- The percentage of women who receive early prenatal care has increased in all our service area except for Transylvania County
- Percentage of low birth weight has decreased among all of our service area

## Nutrition:

- Food insecurity rates are elevated
- WIC and SNAP: decrease in participation over last year

# Changes Continued



## **Social and Economic Factors Impacting Well-being:**

- Home values increased in service area
- Median rent and owner costs have also increased greatly over time in the service area
- Many households have difficulty affording rent or home ownership
- Cost of living increased

## **Labor Force, Industries, and Occupations:**

- In our service area, the percentage of the population in the labor force is lower than the statewide rate
- Unemployment rates in service area are around the state average 3.1%

# WNCSource Changes



## **Education and Training:**

- Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship
- CDA Teacher Training Program
- Dogwood Health Trust Grant
- Site Supervisor Trainee Program

## **Transportation:**

- Public Transportation
- Access to Vehicles

# Head Start/Early Head Start Eligible Children and Pregnant Women

**Table 83. Estimated Number of Children in the Service Area Eligible for Head Start or Early Head Start Services<sup>53</sup>**

| Eligibility Criteria                              | Estimated Eligible Children (Ages 0-3) | Estimated Eligible Children (Ages 3-5) | Estimated Eligible Children (Ages 0-5)<br>(Percent Change from 2023 Community Assessment data) | Number of Eligible Children (Ages 0-5) Served by WNCSource Head Start, Early Head Start, and EHS-CCP by Primary Type of Eligibility (2022-2023) |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Income-eligible children                          | 1,398                                  | 929                                    | 2,327 (-1.4%)  | 170   |
| Income-eligible pregnant women                    | n/a                                    | n/a                                    | 665 women (+32.3%)   | 1   |
| Children experiencing homelessness                | 20                                     | 3                                      | >23 (+8.7%) <sup>54</sup>  | 24  |
| Children in foster care                           | 86                                     | 57                                     | 143 (-11.2%)   | 10  |
| Children receiving public assistance              | 1,750                                  | 1,166                                  | 2,916 (+1.9%)  | 104   |
| Children with disabilities (potentially eligible) | 265                                    | 432                                    | 697 (+36.9)  | 34  |

# Updates Continued

## Child Poverty:

- Estimated number of children under age 5 living in poverty is showing a decreasing trend over the last 3 years

## Language:

**Table 89. Language Spoken at Home (5 Years and Over) by Geographic Area and Percentage of Population (2018-2022)<sup>exl</sup>**

| Geographic Area     | English | Spanish | Other Indo-European | Asian and Pacific Island | Other |
|---------------------|---------|---------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Henderson County    | 89.7%   | 8.0%    | 1.1%                | 0.8%                     | 0.4%  |
| Polk County         | 93.0%   | 5.1%    | 1.6%                | 0.1%                     | 0.2%  |
| Rutherford County   | 94.9%   | 4.0%    | 0.5%                | 0.5%                     | 0.1%  |
| Transylvania County | 97.4%   | 1.8%    | 0.6%                | 0.0%                     | 0.1%  |
| North Carolina      | 87.7%   | 7.8%    | 2.0%                | 1.8%                     | 0.7%  |



# Updates Continued

## Children Experiencing Homelessness:

- Percentage of homeless children/youth enrolled in public schools has been fluctuating over the last 5 years. In the last year, it has increased
- Point-in-time data for 2019-2023 indicates a fluctuating number of children in homeless families in the service area, with 44 children in 2023; 23 of which were from Henderson County.

**Table 95. WNCSource Head Start/Early Head Start Homelessness Services (2022-2023)<sup>cli</sup>**

|   | Early Head Start | Early Head Start-CCP | Head Start | Total (and Change from 2021-2022) |
|---|------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|
| Total number of families experiencing homelessness that were served during the enrollment year      | 14               | 6                    | 3          | 23<br>(+3 families)               |
| Total number of children experiencing homelessness that were served during the enrollment year      | 14               | 6                    | 3          | 23<br>(+2 children)               |
| Total number of families experiencing homelessness that acquired housing during the enrollment year | 1                | 2                    | 1          | 4<br>(no change)                  |

# Updates Continued



## **Children in Foster Care:**

- 514 children in foster care under age 18 within WNCSource's service area

## **Children Receiving Public Assistance:**

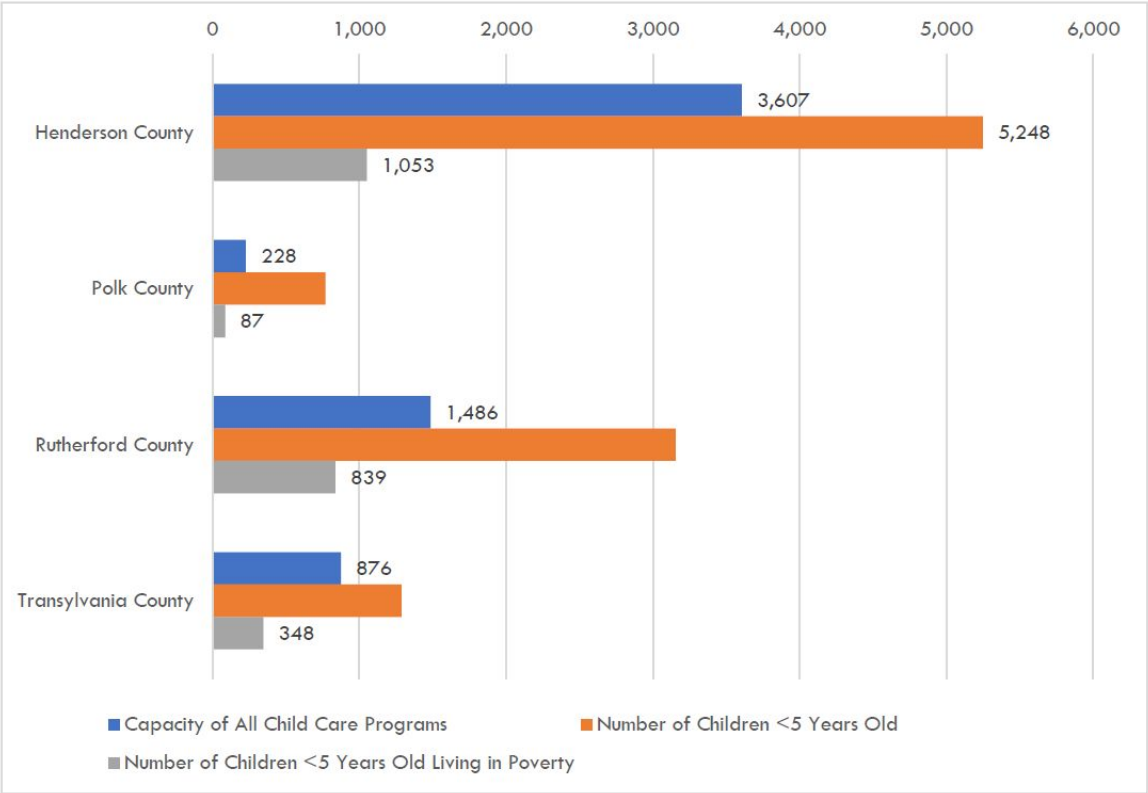
- In the service area in 2022, 260 households received Work First benefits (TANF in NC)– the lowest number of participants in five years

## **Children with Disabilities:**

- 265 children received early intervention services in the WNCSource service area
- In 2022-2023, WNCSource served 53 children in its HS/EHS program with an IEP/IFSP

# Child Care Centers and Family Child Care:

Figure 13. Number of Children Birth to Age 5 Compared to Licensed Child Care Capacity by Geographic Area<sup>clxxxix</sup>



# Reflections



The following reflection areas will be considered to support the program's continued responsiveness to community needs.

1. Program Design
2. Community Partnerships
3. Reliable Transportation
4. Mental Health Supports
5. Staff Recruitment, Professional Development, and Retention
6. Continue Provision of Community Information, Resources, and Referrals
7. Bilingual Supports and Cultural Alignment
8. Affordable Housing and Homelessness
9. Promote Head Start Through Friend and Family Referrals