



## Head Start Program zero-to-five

### 2014 Community Needs Assessment Update

#### Background/Demographic Information

Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas (CAI-CT) is a non-profit organization that operates the Head Start programs in Hays and Caldwell Counties. Although CAI-CT serves a 10 county region, its Head Start grant serves Hays and Caldwell Counties. Within those counties, the program identified through the March 10, 2012 Community Needs Assessment, the communities of San Marcos, Kyle, Wimberley, Lockhart and Luling as the neediest communities, thus they served as the program's recruitment areas for the school year 2012-2013. In February 2013, the program completed an update of the 2012 Community Needs Assessment that again identified that within Hays and Caldwell counties, the communities of San Marcos, Kyle, Lockhart, and Luling remained the neediest communities; however there was a change with regards to the community of Wimberley. A review of the Census Data using the American Fact Finder tool on the census.gov website indicated no significant changes in the number of estimated children in poverty in each of the communities previously identified except for the community of Wimberley (*see 2013 Head Start Eligible Children Estimates chart*). In this community, the number of estimated children in poverty decreased by almost half. The pattern also held true when using the Economically Disadvantaged Student Rates generated by the Texas Education Agency. These numbers generate a more liberal estimate of Head Start Eligible children, and again, no significant changes were noted for the school districts located in the Program's service area, except in the community of Wimberley, which showed a significant decrease in the number of estimated Head Start Eligible children (*see 2013 Head Start Eligible Children Estimates chart*).

In looking at the numbers for the community of Wimberley, however, the program acknowledged that these numbers did not reflect the whole story. Christi Moeller, principal at Scudder Elementary, stated that "although the community is small, the need for Head Start remains." Moeller pointed to the number of ELL students currently attending the school (53 of 335) and the fact that census numbers don't accurately reflect the undocumented immigrant population of Wimberley. She further pointed out that this population has the greatest need for services in the community, and Head Start is one of the only resources available to them.

In answer to this concern, Head Start staff and parents completed additional surveying within the community to research in depth from the parent perspective the need for Head Start services. The policy council representative from the community, in coordination with the Head Start teacher and Family Advocate, generated a list of parents through door to door surveying and word of mouth which identified approximately thirty children ranging in age from birth to three. The list further identified that many of the families within this population of undocumented immigrant families consisted of families in which the mothers stayed at home while the fathers worked. Using this information, the program implemented an Early Head Start Home Based Program in the community of Wimberley for 9 families for the 2013-2014 school year. This Home Based program incorporates weekly home visits by a home visiting teacher and twice monthly group socializations. Thus far, program participation in this Home Based option has been high (with an average monthly attendance of 94%) and no families have left the program (a waitlist of four families has been maintained). All families selected were income eligible as well.

One gap in services identified in the community of Wimberley is services for children turning three. Because the Early Head Start Program serves children until the child turns three, a transition plan must be completed to identify next steps for the child's care and education beyond their third birthday. However, for children in the Wimberley Home Based program, challenges have occurred in identifying next steps for those children turning three which will be later explored in this document when looking at the availability of other child care programs.

Overall little change occurred in the ethnic make-up of both Hays and Caldwell Counties from that reported in the 2012 Community Needs Assessment and the 2013 update. According to the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census (2008-2012), Hispanic or Latino origin persons in Hays County were estimated to constitute 35.4% of the its population (as opposed to 35.3% reported in the 2010 U.S. Census). Caldwell County was estimated at 47.3% (as opposed to 47.1%). The foreign-population in each county shifted a small amount and in fact, seemed to show a shift in the opposite direction with Hays County shifting from 5.7% to 7.2%, and in Caldwell County shifting from 6.5% to 5.6%. Again, a sizeable proportion of children older than 5 years live in homes where a language other than English is spoken (23.5% in Hays and 29.9% in Caldwell).

According to the 2012-2013 CAI EHS/HS Program Information Report, 94.3% or 613 enrollees of 650 total cumulative enrollees (418 in HS and 232 in EHS including 12 pregnant women) had income below 100% of the federal poverty line, were receiving public assistance such as TANF and SSI (72), were homeless (4), or were foster children (22). Out of all enrollees in 2012-2013, 81% were of Hispanic or Latino origin, and 3% were Black or African American. Spanish is the primary language at home for 25% of the enrollees.

### **Other Child Development and Child Care Programs for Low Income Children**

For the school year of 2012-2013, Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas collaborated with five school districts to serve four year old children in the previously referenced communities; therefore the recruitment effort for these collaborations focused on recruiting four year old children that resided within the public school district boundaries (Wimberley ISD, Luling ISD, Lockhart ISD, Hays ISD, and San Marcos CISD). Because of the makeup of the San Marcos CISD, which includes some portions of Guadalupe County, Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas also recruited and continues to recruit in the Rancho Vista neighborhood and the Redwood Community (as identified in the Community Needs Assessment) so that those children can benefit from preschool services within the community where they will be attending public school when they reach school age. These areas are otherwise not served by the Community Council of South Central Texas which serves other areas of Guadalupe County. As previously noted, for the school year 2013-2014 Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas did not continue its collaboration with Wimberley ISD to serve four year old children because of the decrease in the numbers of Head Start eligible children in the community as well as the grassroots survey which showed a larger number of children under three, thus indicating a greater need for Early Head Start services in the community.

While Kindergarten and First Grade are offered in all of the communities in which Community Action, Inc of Central Texas provides services, each school district implements their Pre-Kindergarten program differently. San Marcos CISD offers full day Pre-Kindergarten services for four year old children that qualify on one campus in 20 classrooms. They serve three year old children only within in their special education program. In the upcoming school year of 2014-2015, San Marcos CISD also plans to construct a separate Pre-Kindergarten center to provide Pre-Kindergarten services to even more children. Texas Preparatory School in San Marcos also offers fee based Pre-Kindergarten services to the community and serves both four year old children (2 classes) and three year old children (1 class). Lockhart ISD offers full day Pre-Kindergarten services for four year old children that qualify on two campuses, Carver Elementary (9 classes) and Bluebonnet Elementary (3 classes). Three year old children are served at Carver Elementary in its special education program, but are not served at Bluebonnet Elementary. In summary, Pre-Kindergarten services for four year old children in these two communities are offered in a full day capacity with limited services to three year olds.

Rather than limiting its Pre-Kindergarten programs to one or two campuses as in San Marcos and Lockhart, Hays ISD offers Pre-Kindergarten services on all six of its Elementary Campuses utilizing



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a part day model with its greatest number of Pre-Kindergarten classes on its Hemphill Elementary Campus (11 classes – five morning sessions and five afternoon sessions averaging approximately 17 children in each class with bilingual classes having as much as up to 23 children). Three year old children are served only within the special education program. *See School District Pre-Kindergarten Services chart for complete numbers on other campuses in Hays ISD.* Luling ISD also provides Pre-Kindergarten services utilizing a part day model; however, on just one of its Elementary campuses (4 classes). They do not serve three year olds. Lastly, Wimberley ISD offers Pre-Kindergarten services in a part day model (4 classes; 2 of which are special education classes). They also serve three year old children only in their special education program.

Because of the differences in how each school district provides its Pre-Kindergarten services, Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas collaborates with each school district differently in supplementing the services provided to four year old children. For those districts that offer a part day model, CAI – CT offers a program to families that extends the classroom services so that the children received educational services all day rather than just part day. Some challenges have arisen in those collaborations with school districts that already offer services to families in a full day capacity. Primarily, the challenge has been in maintaining full enrollment for those sites. At some sites, the waitlist of eligible children has been exhausted because those children were already enrolled in the all day Pre-Kindergarten program and chose not to enroll in the Head Start Program because that would involve changing classrooms for their child. Consequently, children that are over the income guidelines have had to be selected to maintain full enrollment despite additional recruitment efforts. For example, in the 2013-2014 school year to date, the program at Hernandez Elementary has experienced 9 withdrawals from the program, 6 of which have had to be filled by children whose families had an income above the income guidelines.

Again, in all of these communities, while services are offered to four year old children, services to three year old children are limited; school districts often limit the services they provide to three year old children to only those with special needs as defined by their criteria. Therefore, Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas Head Start services to three year old children in each of these communities help bridge the gap for these three year olds with the exception of the community of Wimberley. In this community a gap of services for three year old children exists.

According to the US Census American Community Survey (2008-2012), Pre-school enrollment was 2,851 in Hays County and 633 in Caldwell County. This shows significant growth from the figures quoted in the 2012 Community Needs Assessment (Pre-school enrollment for 2009-2010 was 937 in Hays County and 330 in Caldwell County). Although the need is greater, little has changed in the number of child care centers available since the 2012 Community Needs Assessment and the 2013 Update to that assessment. In a search using the search engine on the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services website of licensed child care centers in Hays County, a lesser number of child care centers were found (72 versus 80 found in 2012), the least of which were found in the community of Wimberley which has only 4 licensed child care centers. A search for Caldwell County was similar (15 versus 16 in 2012). Both of these lists also included the names of the Head Start Child Care Centers, so the number of child care centers available to the community as a whole is actually smaller.

## Education, Health, Nutrition and Social Service Needs

Major findings of the 2012 Community Needs Assessment Report included the great need for affordable child care for low income families, a need for pediatric health services accepting Medicaid, more mental health services needed by both children and their parents or guardians, and a need for a variety of services for children's families. Those parents identified with the greatest needs included parents with serious employment, housing, and transportation problems, single parents,

immigrant parents, grandparents as caregivers, families with incarcerated parents, and those affected by domestic violence. A survey of parents and community partners in the 2013 update showed a very similar pattern.

As in 2012 and 2013, survey results for 2014 showed a very similar pattern in terms of the needs identified. Respondents again identified Employment concerns as 42.4% of respondents stated that within the last year they had looked for work, but could not get a job. Housing and Transportation were also concerns identified including needs for affordable housing and public transportation. Other specific needs identified that mirror the results found in previous years included Immigration, families of Incarcerated individuals, and Grandparents raising grandchildren. Additional specific needs identified included Child Support, Substance Abuse, Family Crisis, Homelessness, and Utility Assistance. Lastly, services for adults in the areas of Education and Health were also identified including GED services, Health Insurance for Adults, and Affordable Dental Care for Adults. 35.8% of respondents identified GED services as a need of their family or a family they may know. 48.9% of respondents indicated that within the last year either they or someone in their family needed to see a dentist but could not afford to go; and 44.7% indicated the same for needing to see a doctor. Lastly, 37.1% indicated that with the last year they or someone in their family needed to buy medicine, but could not afford to.

Several of the needs identified can also be supported in looking at the U.S. Census Data in the American Community Survey (2008-2012). For example, the percentage of adults ages 18 to 64 in Hays County that were not insured was 24.1%. In Caldwell County, this percentage was even greater at 36.6%. Of those uninsured that are 25 years or older, 47.6% in Hays County and 37.1% in Caldwell County were less than high school graduates. Also, of those uninsured that are 18 years or older, 42.8% in Hays County and 55.8% in Caldwell County were unemployed. These figures show not only the need for greater health coverage for adults, but the need for adult education programs such as GED and greater opportunities for employment as well. In Hays County, of the 3,408 grandparents living with their own grandchildren under the age of 18 years, 32.2% were responsible for their grandchildren. In Caldwell County, this percentage was 38.6%. In terms of single parent households, according the County Health Rankings, 25% of children in Hays County lived in single parent households, while 42% of children in Caldwell County lived in single parent households.

In Hays County, specifically the community of Kyle, Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas also collaborates with the Hays ISD School Age Pregnant and Parenting Education Program to serve the needs of pregnant teens and teen parents in the community at both Hays High School (14 slots) and Lehman High School (14 slots). In the community of San Marcos, although Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas no longer maintains a site located at the Phoenix Academy, communication is maintained to continue serving those pregnant and teen parents referred to the program by the San Marcos CISD School Age Pregnant and Parenting Education Program. In Caldwell County, pregnant teens and teen parents are also actively recruited in Luling in collaboration with the school district because that community does not have its own School Age Pregnant and Parenting Education Program. Lockhart ISD also maintains its own School Age Pregnant and Parenting Education Program, of which Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas recruits when those students complete its program.

### **Resources in the Community to Address the Needs of Head Start Eligible Children and their Families**

Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas acts an umbrella organization, not only for the Head Start Program, but also includes programs that offer Health Services, Social Services, and Adult Education Services, and thus some of its greatest strengths lie in the ability to refer clients to programs within the same agency and the communication and coordination opportunities that can



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result from working within the same agency. Health Services include family planning clinics, breast cancer awareness and outreach program, prescription assistance, and the Rural Aids Services Program. Social Services include utility assistance, case management, and senior citizens centers. Adult Education services include both ESL and GED classes as well as college preparation and career counseling services. Head Start families have access to all of these programs should they need these services, and staff work to ensure that the process of referral is smooth.

Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas continues to maintain partnerships with many Community Organizations in order to best serve its clients. These partnerships include organizations/programs that offer child education and developmental care, health services, social services, disability services, mental health services, and nutrition services. As identified in its Head Start Annual Report these organizations include the school districts in which it works, as well as non-profit agencies including the Hays County Health Department and Early Childhood Intervention Services. Other agencies include the San Marcos Area Food Bank, the Hays Caldwell Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, and the Greater San Marcos Youth Council (*for a more complete listing of other Community Resources see also attached Community Resource Lists for each community*). In addition to these resources, Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas has also expanded its partnerships with private therapy companies in the 2013-2014 to expand services to children with disabilities. These companies include Care Options for Children and Himmel Home Health Care.

The Community Needs Assessment of March 10, 2012 identified several barriers to accessing these resources as did the 2013 update. A survey of Community Partners in 2014 again showed many of the same barriers. Overall the predominant barriers identified in accessing services included Awareness and Knowledge of the services, Identification, and Transportation. One concern noted several times from the community partner surveys comments was the lack of community agencies providing social services for families in Caldwell County specifically.

## **Children with Disabilities Four Years Old or Younger**

According to the 2012-2013 CAI EHS/HS Program Information Report, the program served 52 children who had an Individualized Education Plan and were thus receiving special education services from their local school district. Seventeen children were served who had an Individualized Family Support plan and were thus receiving services from an Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program. Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas maintains partnerships with both the local school districts in providing services to these children with disabilities as well as with the local Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) programs. In many cases, the therapists either from the school district or the ECI program often provide services at the Head Start center the child attends. Also, as previously stated, Community Action Inc. of Central Texas has expanded its community partnerships to expand services to the children with disabilities enrolled in the program to include private therapy companies who can offer services to children with disabilities who may not qualify for services offered through the school district or ECI. Types of disabilities for children that were identified by the community partner survey as what is most often seen in their communities included speech impairment, emotionally disturbed, intellectual deficiency, multiple disability, specific learning disability, and autism.

## **Implications of the Community Needs Assessment 2013 Update**

As previously stated, this update sought to determine if any significant changes had occurred to the information given in the 2012 Community Needs Assessment and the 2013 Community Needs Assessment Update. To do this several data sources were used. These included a review of the U.S. Census American Community Survey (2008-2012) Data, County Health Rankings data, and data

from the Texas Education Agency School District Performance Reporting Snapshot for 2012. A survey was also conducted that solicited responses from both currently enrolled parents and community partners. Lastly, data was reviewed from the 2012-2013 CAI-CT EHS/HS Program Information Report. Overall, the greatest change identified is in the growth of Pre-Kindergarten services offered to four year old children in each of the communities served while a gap still remains in services offered to three year old children. Lastly, because the needs identified by the surveys conducted showed a very similar pattern to those identified in the 2012 Community Needs Assessment and the 2013 Community Needs Assessment Update, it is recommended that the program's Selection Criteria remain in effect.