



2022 Community Assessment Data Update

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Prepared for

Lower Columbia College Head Start/Early

Head Start/ECEAP

1720 20th Ave.

Longview, WA 98632

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The *2022 Community Assessment Data Update* report serves as an update and supplement to the *2019 Community Assessment, Lower Columbia College Head Start/Early Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)* (“2019 Community Assessment”) and subsequent *Community Assessment 2020 Annual Update* and *Community Assessment 2021 Annual Update*. The purpose of this report is to update essential information and to provide new and enhanced data related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that will help to ensure Lower Columbia College has the most current, accurate, and comprehensive information for program planning and grant writing.

OVERVIEW OF SERVICE AREA

Lower Columbia College (LCC) continues to directly operate Head Start and Early Head Start, federally funded through the Office of Head Start in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, serving pregnant women and children birth to age 5. LCC also continues to provide Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) services, providing state-funded preschool to children ages 3-5 years old. The service area for LCC’s Head Start, Early Head Start, and ECEAP programs is Cowlitz County, Washington.

In Cowlitz County, the total population is 106,778. The overall population has been increasing in recent years, a trend that mirrors the State of Washington. A majority of the population countywide is White (89.0%) or two or more races (5.6%) and non-Hispanic. The Longview-Kelso area continues to have the greatest portion of Hispanic or Latino individuals (11.5%), as well as the highest percentage of the population that speaks Spanish as their primary language (5.9%). Countywide, family composition trends toward children living with their own parents. There are communities within the service area where the rate of children living with grandparents or other relatives is high, in some cases double the statewide rate (Castle Rock and Rose Valley). Approximately 25% of children live in single-parent families.

In recent years, the poverty rate has been decreasing in Cowlitz County, though it remains greater than the statewide rate. There is disparity with regard to poverty level by race and ethnicity. Countywide, poverty rates are highest among Hispanic individuals, 25.8%, compared to 13.0% for non-Hispanic individuals. Poverty data specific to families show rates are highest among families with a single-parent mother and children under age 5, a finding consistent with the *2019 Community Assessment*. In the Longview-Kelso area, the poverty rate of single-parent mothers with young children is greater than 40%, and the rate is 46.7% in the Castle Rock area.

NEEDS OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The needs of children and families in Cowlitz County are multi-faceted and interconnected. Together with other agencies, LCC strives to meet the needs as a community partner, serving the area’s neediest families. The COVID-19 pandemic has had both health and financial impacts on families that will likely have long-term effects on the needs of eligible children and families in the service area.

In Cowlitz County, there are lower rates of adult educational attainment overall than statewide. During the 2019-2020 school year, four-year graduation rates in all Cowlitz County school districts were higher than the statewide rate. In most school districts, the percent of enrolled students who are English language learners or

whose families are low-income has risen. With regard to kindergarten readiness, in the 2019-2020 school year, all school districts in the county had a rate of readiness that was lower than the statewide rate.

Looking at health, Cowlitz County data show consistency in health outcomes and health factors, with high rates of smokers, obesity, and diabetes. Rates of excessive drinking and drug overdose mortality also continue to be high in the service area.

Cowlitz County has made improvements in the percent of women with access to prenatal care and has seen a recent decline in the percent of women with late or no prenatal care. Teen birth rate remains greater than the statewide rate, and there are disparities by race and ethnicity; rates are highest among Black and Hispanic teen mothers. The percent of babies born at a low birthweight has stabilized in recent years. With regard to childhood immunizations, the percent of kindergarten students with complete vaccinations has also remained relatively stable.

The child food insecurity rate in Cowlitz County is 20.4%, higher than the overall food insecurity rate (children and adults) of 15%. The rate of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch has been fluctuating or increasing in Cowlitz County school districts in recent years. Elementary school data show the highest rates in St. Helens Elementary and Kessler Elementary in Longview School District and Wallace Elementary and Barnes Elementary in Kelso School District.

Community safety data show an increase in the crime rate in Cowlitz County from 2019 to 2020. A high rate of offenses involves domestic violence (25%). There has also been an increase in juvenile arrests.

In Cowlitz County, median household income is lower than the statewide rate and ranges from \$46,747 in the Longview-Kelso area to \$82,182 in Rose Valley. Income inequality is significant in the county. Home value and affordability also vary widely across the service area. Rental cost burden (spending a significant portion of monthly income on rent) is high countywide and particularly in the Longview-Kelso area, where 54.8% of households are spending 30% or more of their monthly income on rent.

In Cowlitz County, a smaller portion of the population is participating in the workforce (employed and unemployed) than the statewide rate. Countywide, there continues to be a high percentage of households with children under age 6 in which all parents in the family are participating in the labor force. The top industries in Cowlitz County are educational services, and health care and social assistance; and manufacturing. According to the most recent data on unemployment, rates are higher in Cowlitz County than in Washington.

Transportation data continue to show that a majority of commuters drive alone to work, and public transit is minimally utilized countywide. In Cowlitz County, the rate of households with no vehicle available is consistent with the statewide rate, approximately 7%. The rate is highest in the Longview-Kelso area (9.1%).

ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN

In Cowlitz County, there are an estimated 1,364 children under age 5 living in poverty who are income-eligible for participation in Head Start/Early Head Start, an estimated 818 of whom are under age 3. The greatest number of income-eligible children are located in the Longview-Kelso area. There are an estimated 277 pregnant women in the service area who are income-eligible to enroll in Early Head Start.

A majority of school districts in Cowlitz County have rates of students experiencing homelessness that are greater than the statewide rate. A 2020 Point-in-Time count of persons experiencing homelessness in Cowlitz

County showed a 30% decrease in homelessness from the year prior. The Washington State Department of Commerce estimates there are 3,496 homeless or unstably housed individuals in Cowlitz County. During the 2020-2021 program year, LCC provided Head Start/Early Head Start services to 32 families experiencing homelessness.

As reported in LCC's 2019 *Community Assessment* and data updates, a high rate of child abuse and neglect is an ongoing concern in the service area. As of October 2020, there were 162 children birth to age 18 in an out-of-home placement in Cowlitz County; an estimated 62 of these children are birth to age 5.

In Washington and in Cowlitz County, the percent of children (birth to age 18) who are recipients of public assistance has continued to decline in recent years, however the rate in Cowlitz County is significantly higher than the statewide rate.

In all school districts in Cowlitz County, the percent of enrolled students with disabilities has increased in recent years. With the exception of Woodland School District, all school districts in Cowlitz County have rates of enrolled students with disabilities that are greater than the statewide rate. Applying the rate of students with disabilities in Washington (14.1%) to the number of children birth to age 5 in the service area (6,078), it can be estimated that there are 857 children birth to age 5 with disabilities.

AGENCIES SERVING ELIGIBLE CHILDREN

According to the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families, as of January 2022, there are 44 licensed child care programs (child care centers and family child care homes) in Cowlitz County, with the capacity to serve 2,145 children birth to school age. This is a decrease in the number and capacity of providers from prior years.

Across the service area, there has been an increase in the percent of licensed child care programs participating in Early Achievers (93%), the state's quality rating and improvement system. Approximately 70% of providers accept child care subsidies. Data continue to point to a need for infant/toddler capacity, as only 86% of programs are licensed to serve this age group. Further, Child Care Aware of Washington reports that, in 2019, 48% of referral demand was for infants/toddlers; referral demand for preschoolers was 20%. Informal child care (family, friend, and neighbor care) is highly utilized in Cowlitz County.

In Washington, home visiting services are coordinated by the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families through the Home Visiting Services Account (HVSA), a public and private partnership. In Cowlitz County, the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is implemented by Clark County Public Health. In 2021, there were 70 NFP slots in Cowlitz County. During the 2021-2022 program year, Cowlitz Tribe began implementation of one caseload of families being served through Parents as Teachers. Families in Cowlitz County may also access home visiting services through LCC's Early Head Start home-based program option. LCC is funded to serve 62 pregnant women and children in its home-based program.

Publicly-funded preschool in Washington is provided through the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families ECEAP program. Countywide, there are 504 ECEAP and Head Start slots. Slots include those implemented by LCC as well as slots allocated through service area agreements with Educational Service District 112 and EOCP (Educational Opportunities for Children and Families). Within the service area, data continue to show the highest need for ECEAP expansion in Kelso School District and Longview School District.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

In LCC's service area, there are a number of social services resources available to families in addition to those offered by the grantee. Collaboration and partnership among community agencies continues to be a significant strength in Cowlitz County and supports a coordinated approach to service provision. LCC Head Start/Early Head Start/ECEAP program administrators report stability in the number and type of community resource providers available to families. LCC program administrators also note challenges resource providers face with limited resources and staff while experiencing increased demand for services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given the needs that have become more prevalent or arisen from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, accessible resources continue to be of vital importance to communities. LCC Head Start/Early Head Start/ECEAP has internal expertise and partnerships with community agencies that help it to meet the unique needs of families in the service area.

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Per Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), Section 1302.11ⁱ, community assessment requirements include:

- 1) The number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages they speak, including:
 - a) Children experiencing homelessness in collaboration with, to the extent possible, McKinney-Vento Local Education Agency Liaisons (42 U.S.C. 11432 (6)(A));
 - b) Children in foster care;
 - c) Children with disabilities, including types of disabilities and relevant services and resources provided to these children by community agencies;
- 2) The education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being;
- 3) Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children;
- 4) Other child development, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local preschools, and the approximate number of eligible children served;
- 5) Resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families; and,
- 6) Strengths of the community.

Information in this report is organized according to the community assessment requirements noted above and aligned to the data in LCC’s *2019 Community Assessment* and data updates.

This *2022 Community Assessment Data Update* report also provides an essential snapshot into the immediate impacts of COVID-19, a worldwide pandemic. COVID-19 data is highlighted throughout the report.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA LIMITATIONS

Data collection methods include needs assessments and reports gathered from county and state departments and community agencies, along with information gathered from publicly available data sources, including the U.S. Census, state and federal agencies, and local, state, and national organizations.

When examining U.S. Census data, zip code level data is based on the census designated “Zip Code Tabulated Area,” an approximation for that geographic area.ⁱⁱ Zip code level data does not always align with one county, as zip codes can extend geographically across county boundaries. In order to best target and understand the precise location of the capacity of child care, as it relates to the number of children age 5 and under, this report utilizes Census data that is gathered by zip code and county. Other Census data is reported by county subdivision.

Due to lag times in the collection and reporting of community data, more data and information helpful for program planning, particularly as it relates to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, will become available in coming months and years. For example, 2020 Census data, which will contain key information about children and families in the service area, is anticipated to be released by Spring 2022. Census data will include information such as: poverty rate of the general population, poverty rate for children birth to age 5 (and thereby the number of Head Start/Early Head Start income-eligible children), and many other population demographics and characteristics of families.

OVERVIEW OF SERVICE AREA

Defining the Service Area

Lower Columbia College (LCC) continues to directly operate Head Start and Early Head Start, federally funded through the Office of Head Start in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, serving pregnant women and children birth to age 5. LCC also continues to provide Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) services, providing state-funded preschool to children ages 3-5 years old. The service area for LCC’s Head Start, Early Head Start, and ECEAP programs is Cowlitz County, Washington.

LCC’s service area includes two federally designated Opportunity Zones (designed to increase economic development by providing investors with tax benefits). This includes census tracts 53015001100 (Kelso) and 53015000300 (Longview/Kelso).ⁱⁱⁱ

Demographics

In Cowlitz County, the total population is 106,778, and overall population has been increasing in recent years, a trend that mirrors the State of Washington. However, population has been fluctuating or decreasing in certain areas in the county, specifically Northeast Cowlitz and Rose Valley (Table 1).

Table 1. Population by Geographic Area and Year (2017-2019)^{iv}

Geographic Area	2017	2018	2019	Three-Year Trend
Castle Rock CCD*	15,357	15,746	16,155	Increasing
Kalama CCD	6,493	6,585	6,725	Increasing
Longview-Kelso CCD	64,234	64,723	65,545	Increasing
Northeast Cowlitz CCD ¹	1,888	1,754	1,674	Decreasing
Rose Valley CCD	5,077	5,240	5,091	Fluctuating
Woodland CCD	10,859	11,382	11,906	Increasing
Cowlitz County	103,590	105,112	106,778	Increasing
Washington	7,169,967	7,294,336	7,404,107	Increasing

* Per the U.S. Census Bureau, CCD stands for Census County Subdivision. Census county divisions are the statistical entities established cooperatively by the Census Bureau and officials of State and local governments.

Woodland and Longview-Kelso have the highest percent of the population under age 5. Castle Rock, Northeast Cowlitz, and Rose Valley have the highest percentages of the population over age 65 (Table 2).

Table 2. Median Age by Geographic Area (2019)^{v,2}

Geographic Area	Median Age	Percent of Population Under Age 5	Percent of Population Over Age 65
Castle Rock CCD	44.9	5.0%	21.6%
Kalama CCD	47.1	4.8%	17.6%
Longview-Kelso CCD	39.1	6.5%	18.4%
Northeast Cowlitz	46.7	4.3%	20.6%
Rose Valley CCD	47.4	3.9%	19.3%
Woodland CCD	40.0	6.7%	17.5%
Cowlitz County	41.3	6.0%	18.8%
Washington	37.7	6.1%	15.1%

Racial and ethnic diversity in Cowlitz County, compared to the State of Washington, is described in Table 3 and Table 4. Consistent with the 2019 *Community Assessment*, a majority of the population countywide is White (89.0%). The Longview-Kelso area of the county continues to have the greatest portion of Hispanic or Latino individuals (11.5%).

¹ Northeast Cowlitz CCD includes Silver Lake, Toutle, Kid Valley, and St. Helens.

² Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

Table 3. Population (and Percentage of Population) by Race and Geographic Area (2019)^{vi,3}

County	White	Black or African American	American Indian and Alaskan Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	Some other race	Two or more races
Castle Rock CCD	15,170 (94.2%)	22 (0.1%)	206 (1.3%)	56 (0.3%)	57 (0.4%)	52 (0.3%)	539 (3.3%)
Kalama CCD	6,360 (95.3%)	0 (0.0%)	24 (0.4%)	0 (0.0%)	108 (1.6%)	53 (0.8%)	127 (1.9%)
Longview-Kelso CCD	56,518 (86.3%)	691 (1.1%)	1,166 (1.8%)	1,060 (1.6%)	32 (0.0%)	1,246 (1.9%)	4,779 (7.3%)
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	1,395 (86.1%)	23 (1.4%)	97 (6.0%)	19 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)	38 (2.3%)	49 (3.0%)
Rose Valley CCD	4,649 (92.3%)	0 (0.0%)	51 (1.0%)	140 (2.8%)	20 (0.4%)	0 (0.0%)	178 (3.5%)
Woodland CCD	10,895 (91.9%)	111 (0.9%)	81 (0.7%)	90 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	348 (2.9%)	328 (2.8%)
Cowlitz County	94,987 (89.0%)	847 (0.8%)	1,625 (1.5%)	1,365 (1.3%)	217 (0.2%)	1,737 (1.6%)	6,000 (5.6%)
Washington	5,581,128 (75.4%)	281,683 (3.8%)	94,449 (1.3%)	631,333 (8.5%)	49,090 (0.7%)	333,038 (4.5%)	433,386 (5.9%)

Table 4. Ethnicity as a Percentage of the Population by Geographic Area (2019)^{vii}

Geographic Area	Hispanic or Latino Origin (of any race) ⁴	Hispanic or Latino Origin: Mexican	Hispanic or Latino Origin: Puerto Rican	Hispanic or Latino Origin: Cuban	Hispanic or Latino Origin: Other
Castle Rock CCD	3.3%	1.1%	1.3%	0.0%	0.8%
Kalama CCD	3.9%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
Longview-Kelso CCD	11.5%	10.2%	0.2%	0.1%	1.0%
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	7.9%	7.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Rose Valley CCD	3.8%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Woodland CCD	7.9%	6.4%	0.2%	0.0%	1.3%
Cowlitz County	9.0%	7.6%	0.3%	0.1%	0.9%
Washington	12.7%	10.1%	0.5%	0.1%	2.0%

Linguistic diversity also varies by region. English continues to be the primary language spoken at home in Cowlitz County. The Longview-Kelso area has the highest percentage of the population that speaks Spanish as their primary language, 5.9% (Table 5).

Table 5. Language Spoken at Home (Age 5 and Over) by Geographic Area and Percentage of Population (2019)^{viii,5}

Geographic Area	English	Spanish	Other Indo-European	Asian and Pacific Island	Other
Castle Rock CCD	97.2%	1.9%	0.4%	0.4%	0.1%
Kalama CCD	96.5%	1.8%	0.8%	0.9%	0.0%
Longview-Kelso CCD	91.6%	5.9%	1.1%	1.3%	0.1%
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	97.2%	1.0%	0.5%	1.2%	0.0%
Rose Valley CCD	96.4%	0.9%	0.7%	2.0%	0.0%
Woodland CCD	92.1%	4.0%	3.2%	0.3%	0.4%
Cowlitz County	93.1%	4.5%	1.2%	1.0%	0.1%
Washington	80.3%	8.6%	3.9%	6.0%	1.2%

³ Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

⁴ Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

⁵ Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

Countywide, 4% of the population is foreign-born, and 51.2% of the foreign-born population are non-US citizens. The predominant birthplace region for the foreign-born population in Cowlitz County is Latin America. The Longview-Kelso area has the highest population of foreign-born individuals and foreign-born individuals who are non-US citizens (Table 6).^{ix}

Table 6. Foreign-Born Population by Geographic Area (2019)^{x, 6}

Geographic Area	Percent Foreign-Born	Percent of Foreign-Born Population that is non-US Citizen
Castle Rock CCD	261 (1.6%)	160 (61.3%)
Kalama CCD	233 (3.5%)	79 (33.9%)
Longview-Kelso CCD	3,108 (4.7%)	1,666 (53.6%)
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	56 (3.5%)	20 (35.7%)
Rose Valley CCD	188 (3.7%)	51 (27.1%)
Woodland CCD	381 (3.2%)	190 (49.9%)
Cowlitz County	4,227 (4.0%)	2,166 (51.2%)
Washington	1,056,534 (14.3%)	553,179 (52.4%)

In Cowlitz County, family composition trends toward children living with their own parents (biological, step, or adopted). There are, however, communities within the service area where the rate of children living with grandparents or other relatives is high, in some cases double the statewide rate (Table 7). Further, in Cowlitz County, 24% of children birth to age 18 live in single-parent families (2015-2019); this is a decrease from 37% in 2014-2018.^{xi}

Table 7. Percentage of Children (ages 0 to 18-years-old) by Relationship to Householder and Geographic Area (2019)^{xii, 7}

Geographic Area	Own child (biological, step, or adopted)	Grandchild	Other relatives	Foster child or other unrelated child
Castle Rock CCD	81.5%	13.9%	0.5%	4.1%
Kalama CCD	86.8%	3.1%	5.8%	4.3%
Longview-Kelso CCD	81.9%	11.8%	2.4%	4.0%
Northeast Cowlitz	87.3%	9.6%	0.0%	3.0%
Rose Valley CCD	87.8%	12.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Woodland CCD	92.8%	6.1%	1.1%	0.0%
Cowlitz County	83.7%	11.0%	2.0%	3.4%
Washington	90.1%	5.9%	1.9%	2.0%

Poverty

In Cowlitz County, the poverty rate has been decreasing in recent years, though it has consistently remained higher than the statewide rate (Table 8). It is important to note that poverty data from the U.S. Census Bureau does not yet capture the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and there are many families who may be living on the brink of poverty (discussed in the section that follows).

Table 8. Poverty Rate by Geographic Area and Year (2017-2019)^{xiii}

Geographic Area	2017	2018	2019	Three-Year Trend
Cowlitz County	16.9%	16.0%	14.4%	Decreasing
Washington	12.2%	11.5%	10.8%	Decreasing

⁶ Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

⁷ Rates greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

As illustrated in Table 9 and Table 10, there is disparity with regard to poverty level by race and ethnicity. The percentage of the population living below poverty is also higher for Hispanic or Latino individuals than it is for non-Hispanic or Latino individuals. These trends remain consistent from years prior.

Table 9. Number (and Percent) of Individuals Below Poverty Level by Race and Geographic Area (2019)^{xiv,8}

County	White	Black or African American	American Indian & Alaskan Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Some other race	Two or more races
Castle Rock CCD	1,227 (8.1%)	8 (47.1%)	82 (39.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	84 (15.6%)
Kalama CCD	416 (6.6%)	n/a	6 (25.0%)	n/a	0 (0.0%)	43 (81.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Longview-Kelso CCD	10,310 (18.6%)	97 (14.2%)	542 (48.5%)	37 (3.6%)	1 (3.1%)	125 (10.2%)	878 (18.8%)
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	112 (8.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	19 (100.0%)	n/a	0 (0.0%)	5 (10.2%)
Rose Valley CCD	214 (4.6%)	n/a	11 (21.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	n/a	0 (0.0%)
Woodland CCD	740 (6.8%)	12 (10.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	n/a	162 (46.6%)	0 (0.0%)
Cowlitz County	13,019 (13.9%)	117 (14.1%)	641 (40.7%)	56 (4.2%)	1 (0.5%)	330 (19.2%)	967 (16.4%)
Washington	523,438 (9.5%)	55,397 (20.4%)	20,275 (22.3%)	58,017 (9.3%)	7,346 (15.3%)	66,048 (20.2%)	54,723 (13.0%)

Table 10. Number (and Percent) of Individuals Below Poverty Level by Ethnicity and Geographic Area (2019)^{xv,9}

Geographic Area	Hispanic or Latino Origin	Non-Hispanic or Latino Origin, White Alone
Castle Rock CCD	49 (9.3%)	1,201 (8.1%)
Kalama CCD	114 (48.1%)	345 (5.6%)
Longview-Kelso CCD	1,990 (26.7%)	8,985 (17.6%)
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	0 (0.0%)	112 (8.9%)
Rose Valley CCD	24 (12.7%)	190 (4.3%)
Woodland CCD	268 (28.6%)	634 (6.2%)
Cowlitz County	2,445 (25.8%)	11,467 (13.0%)
Washington	169,168 (18.4%)	436,470 (8.7%)

Poverty data specific to families show substantial disparities countywide. Poverty rates are highest among families with a single-parent mother and children under age 5, a finding consistent with the 2019 *Community Assessment*. In the Longview-Kelso area, the poverty rate of single-parent mothers with young children is more than 40%, and the rate is 46.7% in the Castle Rock area (Table 11).

⁸ Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

⁹ Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

Table 11. Poverty Status of Families in the Past 12 Months by Geographic Area (2019)^{xvi,10}

Geographic Area	All Families with Related Children Under Age 5	Married-couple Families with Related Children Under Age 5	Families with Female Householder, No Spouse Present, with Related Children Under Age 5
Castle Rock CCD	4.8%	0.0%	46.7%
Kalama CCD	11.3%	11.3%	11.4%
Longview-Kelso CCD	20.1%	0.0%	40.6%
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	0.0%	0.0%	n/a
Rose Valley CCD	0.0%	0.0%	n/a
Woodland CCD	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Cowlitz County	14.3%	0.5%	38.1%
Washington	10.4%	3.9%	34.4%

NEEDS OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The needs of children and families in Cowlitz County are multi-faceted and interconnected. In an area where there is great diversity of need, families experience many factors that impact their well-being. Together with other agencies, LCC strives to meet the needs as a community partner, serving the area’s neediest families.

In Summer 2021, Lower Columbia Community Action Program (CAP) conducted surveys of community members and community agencies in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties to understand their top concerns related to household and community needs. Results from those surveys showed consistency with many of the needs and priorities identified in Lower Columbia CAP’s community needs assessments.

As presented in the *Lower Columbia CAP Community Needs Assessment, October 2021*, Table 12 describes the top concerns.

Table 12. Community Priorities Identified in Lower Columbia CAP Community Needs Assessment (2021)^{xvii}

Priority	Community Consumer Response	Community Leadership Response
1	Housing/rent costs	Housing/rent costs
2	Homelessness and help paying/reducing utility costs	Homelessness
3	Inadequate income for households	Substance use (drug and alcohol abuse)
4	Substance use (drug and alcohol abuse)	Affordable day care
5	Health care costs (medical, dental, vision, and mental health)	Inadequate income for households

Growing and Changing Community Need Due to COVID-19

In December 2019, COVID-19 emerged as a new infectious disease in Wuhan, China. COVID-19 quickly spread throughout the world, and on March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic.^{xviii} The COVID-19 pandemic has had both health and financial impacts on families that will likely have long-term effects on the needs of eligible children and families in the service area.

As of January 14, 2022, there were 16,213 cumulative cases of COVID-19 in Cowlitz County. More than 70% of cases were located in Longview zip code 98632 and Kelso zip code 98626.^{xix}

¹⁰ Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

Education

In Cowlitz County, there are lower rates of educational attainment overall than statewide (Table 13). There has been a slight increase in the percent of the population with a Bachelor's degree or higher. The rate was 16% in 2017, as reported in the *2019 Community Assessment*, and rose to 17% in 2019. When considering Census subdivision data, educational needs become more evident. In the Longview-Kelso area, for example, the highest level of educational attainment for 12.3% of the adult population (age 25 and over) is less than a high school diploma.^{xx}

Table 13. Education Attainment (Ages 25 and Over) by Geographic Area (2019)^{xxi}

Geographic Area	Less Than 9th Grade ¹¹	9th to 12th Grade, no diploma ¹²	High school graduate	Some college, no degree	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Advanced degree
Castle Rock CCD	2.2%	7.0%	32.4%	30.5%	11.2%	10.7%	6.0%
Kalama CCD	0.9%	4.6%	32.6%	27.9%	11.1%	16.2%	6.8%
Longview-Kelso CCD	3.7%	8.6%	30.9%	29.9%	11.5%	9.7%	5.8%
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	0.9%	5.4%	43.2%	28.4%	10.8%	4.2%	7.1%
Rose Valley CCD	4.1%	2.5%	18.4%	32.4%	17.4%	13.3%	11.9%
Woodland CCD	1.6%	8.9%	28.8%	30.3%	11.4%	11.9%	7.1%
Cowlitz County	3.0%	7.7%	30.6%	30.0%	11.7%	10.6%	6.4%
Washington	3.7%	5.0%	22.0%	23.3%	10.0%	22.4%	13.6%

In school districts in Cowlitz County, four-year on-time high school graduation rates have been fluctuating in recent years. During the 2019-2020 school year, graduation rates in all Cowlitz County school districts were higher than the statewide rate. Castle Rock School District and Woodland School District have the lowest graduation rates countywide (Table 14).

During the 2019-2020 school year, all school districts in Cowlitz County had a four-year, on-time graduation rate that was greater than the statewide rate (82.9%). The highest graduation rate in Cowlitz County was in Kalama School District (92.6%).

Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2022). <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>

Table 14. Four-Year On-Time Graduation Rate by School District and Year^{xxii,13}

Geographic Area	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Three-Year Trend
Castle Rock School District	79.8%	82.9%	85.1%	Increasing
Kalama School District	87.5%	85.7%	92.6%	Fluctuating
Kelso School District	87.3%	88.4%	90.4%	Increasing
Longview School District	88.1%	86.2%	87.5%	Fluctuating
Toutle Lake School District	>92%	>93%	87.0%	Fluctuating
Woodland School District	85.2%	79.1%	85.6%	Fluctuating
Washington	80.9%	80.9%	82.9%	Increasing

With the exception of Castle Rock School District and Toutle Lake School District, the percent of English language learners enrolled in school districts in Cowlitz County has increased from 2017-2018 to 2020-2021. Woodland School District has the highest percent of enrolled students in the county who are English language learners at 8.2% (Table 15).

¹¹ Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

¹² Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

¹³ Rates less than the statewide rate are highlighted.

Table 15. Percent of Enrolled Students who are English Language Learners by School District (2020-2021)

Geographic Area	2017-2018 ^{xxiii}	2020-2021 ^{xxiv}
Castle Rock School District	2.5%	1.9%
Kalama School District	2.7%	3.8%
Kelso School District	6.2%	6.4%
Longview School District	5.4%	6.9%
Toutle Lake School District	0.3%	0.0%
Woodland School District	7.9%	8.2%
Washington	Not reported	11.9%

Similarly, the percent of enrolled students whose families are low-income has risen in most school districts in Cowlitz County. Longview School District continues to have the highest percent of enrolled low-income students, 63.7% (Table 16).

Table 16. Percent of Enrolled Students whose Families are Low-Income by School District and Year (2020-2021)

Geographic Area	2017-2018 ^{xxv}	2020-2021 ^{xxvi,14}
Castle Rock School District	48.2%	51.3%
Kalama School District	33.9%	33.8%
Kelso School District	54.4%	61.3%
Longview School District	60.9%	63.7%
Toutle Lake School District	38.4%	42.9%
Woodland School District	45.2%	42.9%
Washington	Not reported	44.5%

The most current data on kindergarten readiness in Cowlitz County is from the 2019-2020 school year. As described in Table 17, with the exception of Kalama School District, all school districts in the county had a rate of students who entered kindergarten ready in all six assessed areas of development and learning that was lower than the statewide rate.

Table 17. Percent of Students Who Entered Kindergarten Ready in All Six Areas of Development and Learning by School District and Year¹⁵

Geographic Area	2016-2017 ^{xxvii}	2019-2020 ^{xxviii}
Castle Rock School District	50.6%	37.5%
Kalama School District	65.4%	58.0%
Kelso School District	26.4%	25.1%
Longview School District	26.5%	45.2%
Toutle Lake School District	23.8%	21.7%
Woodland School District	43.6%	48.0%
Washington	47.4%	51.5%

When looking at elementary school data, it becomes evident that there is disparity within districts. In Longview School District, for example, rates of kindergarten readiness range from a low of 5.1% in Olympic Elementary to a high of 71.3% in Robert Gray Elementary (Table 18).

¹⁴ Rates greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

¹⁵ Rates less than the statewide rate are highlighted.

Table 18. Percent of Students Who Entered Kindergarten Ready by School (2019-2020)^{xxix,16}

Geographic Area	2019-2020
Castle Rock School District	
Castle Rock Elementary	37.5%
Kalama School District	
Kalama Elementary	58.0%
Kelso School District	
Barnes Elementary	17.9%
Beacon Hill Elementary	17.7%
Butler Acres Elementary	44.1%
Carrolls Elementary	38.9%
Catlin Elementary ¹⁷	37.5%
Rose Valley Elementary	14.3%
Wallace Elementary	12.1%
Longview School District	
Columbia Heights Elementary	25.4%
Columbia Valley Garden Elementary	48.4%
Kessler Elementary	59.2%
Mint Valley Elementary	42.9%
Northlake Elementary	49.2%
Olympic Elementary	5.1%
Robert Gray Elementary	71.3%
St. Helens Elementary	53.3%
Toutle Lake School District	
Toutle Lake Elementary	21.7%
Woodland School District	
Columbia Elementary	27.2%
North Fork Elementary	65.2%
Yale Elementary	Data unavailable
Washington	51.5%

One of the most significant impacts of COVID-19 on families with school age children in the service area has been the closure of K-12 schools. School closures in Washington began on March 11, 2020, with the announcement that Seattle Public Schools would be closing. In March 12, Governor Jay Inslee ordered the closure of public and private K-12 schools in three counties, King, Snohomish, and Pierce, at the center of the state's COVID-19 outbreak. The following day, the governor expanded his order to close all schools statewide. The closures took effect March 17, 2020.^{xxx}

On December 16, 2020, the governor issued updated school guidance, recommending in-person instruction in communities where COVID-19 cases were "low" (less than 50 cases per 100,000). For communities with "high" cases (more than 350 per 100,000), the guidance recommended in-person instruction only for elementary and high-risk students in small groups of 15 or fewer.^{xxxi}

On March 15, 2021, one year after initially ordering all schools to close, Gov. Inslee ordered all public K-12 schools to provide an in-person option for students beginning in April 2021. During his press conference, the governor acknowledged the impact of the prolonged school closures on children's mental health. "The youth mental health crisis has become significantly worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is time to provide an in-person learning option to help students that need it."^{xxxii}

¹⁶ Rates less than the statewide rate are highlighted.

¹⁷ As of the 2021-2022 school year, Catlin Elementary is permanently closed. Students who attended Catlin Elementary now attend Lexington Elementary, a newly built, larger elementary school located in Kelso.

Health

Adult Health and Well Being

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, ranks communities across health and wellness factors. The overall rankings in health outcomes represent how healthy counties are within the state. The healthiest county is ranked #1.

According to the 2021 rankings, Cowlitz County ranks 33rd out of 39 counties in Washington for Health Outcomes. This is steady from a rank of 33rd in 2020 and a slight decrease from a rank of 31 in 2019.^{xxxiii}

Cowlitz County ranks 33rd out of 39 counties in Washington for Health Outcomes. This is steady from a rank of 33rd in 2020 and a slight decrease from a rank of 31 in 2019.

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (2021). <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

As seen in Table 19, factors related to poor health, as well as the average number of physically and mentally unhealthy days per month, in Cowlitz County are more challenging than the statewide rates. This is consistent with recent years' data.

Table 19. Health Outcomes Data by Geographic Area^{xxxiv,18}

Geographic Area	Years of Potential Life Lost (2017-2019)	% Poor or Fair Health (2018)	Physically Unhealthy Days (2018)	Mentally Unhealthy Days (2018)
Cowlitz County	8,400	20%	4.9	4.8
Washington	5,600	15%	3.7	4.0
Top U.S. Performers ¹⁹	5,400	14%	3.4	3.8

Cowlitz County residents continue to experience challenges with other health-related factors. Rates of smokers, obesity, and adults who are diabetic are described in Table 20.

Cowlitz County has the third highest incidence of obesity among counties in Washington. Diabetes prevalence is also high; Cowlitz County has the fifth highest rate in the state.

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (2021). <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

Table 20. Adult Health Factors by Geographic Area^{xxxv,20}

Geographic Area	% Smokers (2018)	% Obese (2017)	% Diabetic (2017)
Cowlitz County	18%	38%	13%
Washington	12%	29%	9%
Top U.S. Performers	16%	26%	7%

Rates of excessive drinking (Table 21) and drug overdose mortality continue to be high in the service area (Table 22). Further, Cowlitz County is part of the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA).^{xxxvi}

Table 21. Excessive Drinking (Percentage of Adults Reporting Binge or Heavy Drinking) by Geographic area (2017) ^{xxxvii,21}

Geographic Area	% Excessive Drinking
Cowlitz County	18%
Washington	17%
Top U.S. Performers	15%

¹⁸ Rates greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

¹⁹ Top 10% of counties nationwide

²⁰ Rates greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

²¹ Rates greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

Table 22. Drug Overdose Mortality Rate by Geographic Area, per 100,000 Individuals by Geographic Area (2016-2018) ^{xxxviii,22}

Geographic Area	Overdose Mortality Rate
Cowlitz County	18
Washington	16

The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that researchers have observed increases in substance use since the COVID-19 pandemic began. And, according to provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 93,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in 2020. This is the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period, and it is a nearly 30% increase from 2019.^{xxxix} While community-level data on the impact of COVID-19 on populations with substance use disorders has yet to be reported, this provisional data provides a snapshot into what those impacts might look like in some communities.

The percent of adults under age 65 in Cowlitz County that is uninsured is 8%; 92% of adults have health insurance coverage, consistent with the rate reported in the *2019 Community Assessment*.^{xl} Clinical care is generally accessible in Cowlitz County, though data may not reflect access challenges (e.g., transportation, affordability) experienced at the neighborhood-level, and rates for primary care and dental care are more challenging in the county than statewide rates (Table 23).

Table 23. Ratio of Health Care Providers by Geographic Area^{xli,23}

Geographic Area	Primary Care Provider Ratio (2018)	Dentist Ratio (2019)	Mental Health Provider Ratio (2020)
Cowlitz County	1,600:1	1,650:1	220:1
Washington	1,180:1	1,200:1	250:1

* Includes nurse practitioners, physician’s assistants, and clinical nurse specialists.

COVID-19 had an immediate impact on Washington residents’ well-being. From July to December 2020, U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey data showed 33-39% of adults living in households with children felt nervous or on edge for more than half of the days or nearly every day in the past week.^{xlii} During the first quarter of 2021, the rate remained high, ranging from 31-40%. By the second quarter of 2021, there was some improvement in the data, though the percent of adults living in households with children who felt nervous or on edge for more than half of the days or nearly every day in the past week remained high. The rate was 23-28% from April to July 2021.^{xliii}

Infant and Child Health and Well Being

Child health and well-being begins with adequate prenatal care. The percent of women who received first trimester prenatal care in Cowlitz County was 78% in 2019, an increase from years prior. The percent of women who received late or no prenatal care declined during the same period (Table 24).

Table 24. Percent of Mothers with First Trimester Prenatal Care and Late or No Prenatal Care in Cowlitz County (2017-2019)^{xliv}

Geographic Area	2017	2018	2019
First Trimester Prenatal Care	77%	75%	78%
Late or No Prenatal Care	7%	7%	5%

²² Values greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

²³ Rates greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

In Cowlitz County, the teen birth rate is 26 per 1,000 women ages 15 to 19, greater than the statewide rate. There is significant disparity by race and ethnicity within Cowlitz County; rates are highest among Black and Hispanic teen mothers (Table 25).

Table 25. Teen Birth Rate per 1,000 Women Ages 15-19 by Race and Ethnicity and Geographic Area (2013-2019)^{xlv}

Geographic Area	All	AIAN	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
Cowlitz County	26	19	18	36	31	24
Washington	16					

The percent of babies born at low birthweight in Cowlitz County is equal to the statewide rate, 6%, and has been steady for the past five years. There is also disparity with regard to low birth weight by race and ethnicity (Table 26).

Table 26. Percent of Babies Born at Low Birthweight by Race and Ethnicity and Geographic Area (2013-2019)^{xlvi}

Geographic Area	All	AIAN	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
Cowlitz County	6%	Not reported	10%	Not reported	6%	6%
Washington	6%					

Cowlitz County has historically had one of the highest rates of infant mortality in the State of Washington. Infant mortality rate remains high at 7 per 1,000. Compared to 4 per 1,000 in Washington.^{xlvii}

With regard to childhood immunizations, the percent of kindergarten students with complete vaccinations has remained relatively stable within districts in Cowlitz County in recent years. The lowest rate of kindergarten students with complete vaccinations is in Toutle Lake School District (74.2%) (Table 27).

Table 27. Percent of Kindergarten Students with Complete Vaccinations by School District and School Year^{xlviii,2425}

Geographic Area	2017-2018	2018-2019
Castle Rock School District	88.5%	91.6%
Kalama School District	*	*
Kelso School District	93.8%	94.2%
Longview School District	90.2%	88.5%
Toutle Lake School District	72.5%	74.2%
Woodland School District	88.4%	87.6%
Cowlitz County	90.2%	89.7%
Washington	85.7%	89.7%

* Data not reported.

²⁴ Rates less than the countywide rate are highlighted.

²⁵ Per the Washington State Department of Health “Complete” is defined as a count of students with a signed Certificate of Immunization Status (CIS) form showing they have all required vaccinations for their grade level or showing a proof of immunity.

Nutrition

The child food insecurity rate in Cowlitz County is 20.4% (2019).^{xlix} The child food insecurity rate is greater than the overall food insecurity rate (children and adults) of 15%.^l

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) data show decreasing numbers of recipients in recent years (Table 28). Many infants/children are also receiving WIC benefits in Cowlitz County (Table 29).

Table 28. SNAP Benefits Recipients in Cowlitz County by Year (2017-2019)^{li}

2017	2018	2019	Three-Year Trend
22,940	21,630	21,438	Decreasing

Table 29. Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Participants in Cowlitz County (2020)^{liii}

Total Participating	Infants/Children	Women
4,207	3,074	1,133

Also illustrating nutrition needs, there are four low-income and low-access census tracts (food deserts) in Cowlitz County: tract 53015001300 (northern Kelso), tracts 53015000704 and 3015000703 (West Longview), and tract 53015000502 (Highlands).^{liii,26}

Further, across the service area, the rate of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch has been fluctuating or increasing in recent years. Elementary school data provides local insight into nutrition needs. St. Helens Elementary and Kessler Elementary in Longview School District and Wallace Elementary and Barnes Elementary in Kelso School District have the highest rates of free and reduced price lunch countywide (Table 30).

The Cowlitz County Farmers Market in Longview, along with four grocery stores (in Longview, Kelso, and Woodland), participates in SNAP-Match. The program allows customers who use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/EBT benefits to buy more fruits and vegetables by matching their benefit dollars.

Washington State Department of Health (2022). <https://www.doh.wa.gov/>

²⁶ Low-income census tracts where a significant number or share of residents is more than 1 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket.

Table 30. Free and Reduced Lunch Rate by School District/Elementary School and School Year (2018-2021)^{liv}

Geographic Area	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Three-Year Trend
Castle Rock School District				
Castle Rock Elementary	50.2%	48.3%	52.3%	Fluctuating
Kalama School District				
Kalama Elementary	39.0%	32.5%	35.2%	Fluctuating
Kelso School District				
Barnes Elementary	72.0%	73.0%	79.6%	Increasing
Beacon Hill Elementary	48.6%	50.2%	58.3%	Increasing
Butler Acres Elementary	46.2%	45.7%	53.8%	Fluctuating
Carrolls Elementary	29.8%	40.3%	36.4%	Fluctuating
Catlin Elementary ²⁷	67.5%	68.5%	78.3%	Increasing
Rose Valley Elementary	21.5%	27.0%	37.0%	Increasing
Wallace Elementary	73.9%	79.8%	100.0%	Increasing
Longview School District				
Columbia Heights Elementary	47.7%	48.7%	49.8%	Increasing
Columbia Valley Garden Elementary	45.1%	44.9%	48.5%	Fluctuating
Kessler Elementary	79.1%	72.9%	77.3%	Fluctuating
Mint Valley Elementary	67.5%	67.9%	68.3%	Increasing
Northlake Elementary	73.6%	73.9%	71.0%	Fluctuating
Olympic Elementary	69.2%	65.0%	71.7%	Fluctuating
Robert Gray Elementary	38.9%	35.6%	43.6%	Fluctuating
St. Helens Elementary	84.0%	84.3%	84.7%	Increasing
Toutle Lake School District				
Toutle Lake Elementary	44.6%	46.3%	37.9%	Fluctuating
Woodland School District				
Columbia Elementary	48.9%	56.3%	54.7%	Fluctuating
North Fork Elementary	47.3%	32.9%	37.3%	Fluctuating
Yale Elementary	36.2%	26.8%	32.6%	Fluctuating

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Agriculture began a universal free lunch program to provide free meals to all students regardless of their income level. This program was extended through the 2021-2022 school year.^{lv}

Social and Economic Factors Impacting Well-being

Community Safety

The crime rate in Cowlitz County is 25.0 per 1,000, an increase from 22.5 the year prior. This rate represents 1,207 offenses reported in 2020, a 12.6% increase from 2019.^{lvi} The top five crime rates, by type of offense, in Cowlitz County are described in Table 31.

Table 31. Offenses with the Highest Crime Rate in Cowlitz County (2020)^{lvii}

Type of Offense	Crime Rate per 1,000
Larceny - Theft	4.2
Simple Assault	4.1
Drug/Narcotic Violations	2.7
Destruction of Property	2.1
Violation of No Contact/Protection	1.8

²⁷ As of the 2021-2022 school year, Catlin Elementary is permanently closed. Students who attended Catlin Elementary now attend Lexington Elementary, a newly built, larger elementary school located in Kelso.

Out of the 1,207 offenses reported in 2020, nearly 25% or 290 involved domestic violence. A majority of domestic violence offenses were simple assault, violation of no contact/protection order, and destruction of property.^{lviii}

Further, there were 29 juvenile arrests in Cowlitz County in 2020, an increase from 25 juvenile arrests in 2019.^{lix, lx}

Income Inequalities

In Cowlitz County, median household income is lower than the statewide rate and ranges from \$46,747 in the Longview-Kelso area to \$82,182 in Rose Valley (Table 32). Countywide, median household income has continued to increase in recent years.^{lxi}

Table 32. Median Household Income by Geographic Area (2019)^{lxii,28}

Geographic Area	Median Household Income
Castle Rock CCD	\$66,643
Kalama CCD	\$77,327
Longview-Kelso CCD	\$46,757
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	\$53,932
Rose Valley CCD	\$82,182
Woodland CCD	\$73,006
Cowlitz County	\$54,506
Washington	\$73,775

Income inequality remains significant in Cowlitz County, as the top 80th percentile income and the bottom 20th percentile income have increased. According to the most current data from County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, the top 80th percentile income in the county is \$104,188 and the bottom 20th percentile income is \$23,697.^{lxiii}

Updated data on household survival budgets and families living within the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold is not available.

Reflections from LCC’s 2019 *Community Assessment* and subsequent data updates reflect on the impact of the rising minimum wage and families’ ability to remain income-eligible for Head Start/Early Head Start services. As of January 1, 2022, the minimum wage in Washington is \$14.49, an increase from \$13.69 in 2021.^{lxiv} Federal poverty guidelines have increased as of January 12, 2022, which may also impact whether families are able to qualify for services.^{lxv}

Data show increases in the top 80th percentile and bottom 20th percentile incomes in Cowlitz County from 2014-2018 to 2015-2019, though significant income inequality remains. The top 80th percentile income increased from \$100,714 to \$104,188 and the bottom 20th percentile income increased from \$22,384 to \$23,697.

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (2021).
<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

²⁸ Values less than the countywide rate are highlighted.

Housing Availability and Affordability

Home value and affordability vary widely across the service area, with median home value ranging from \$188,900 in Longview-Kelso to \$296,600 in Rose Valley. There is consistency across the county with regard to median owner costs and median rent; countywide costs are lower than the statewide rate (Table 33).

Table 33. Median Home Value and Costs by Geographic Area (2019)^{lxvi}

Geographic Area	Median Home Value ²⁹	Median Owner Costs	Median Rent
Castle Rock CCD	\$254,100	\$1,429	\$889
Kalama CCD	\$288,100	\$1,651	\$776
Longview-Kelso CCD	\$188,900	\$1,359	\$854
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	\$208,600	\$1,457	\$750
Rose Valley CCD	\$296,600	\$1,638	\$858
Woodland CCD	\$290,000	\$1,688	\$880
Cowlitz County	\$219,300	\$1,447	\$854
Washington	\$339,000	\$1,886	\$1,258

As described in Table 34, Cowlitz County has a low rental vacancy rate. This is a trend that has continued since the 2019 Community Assessment was conducted. A low rental vacancy rate means there are fewer homes available to renters in these areas.

Table 34. Housing Characteristics by Geographic Area (2019)^{lxvii}

Geographic Area	Rental Vacancy Rate ³⁰	Households Spending 30% or More of Monthly Income on Rent ³¹
Castle Rock CCD	1.9%	34.8%
Kalama CCD	0.0%	35.5%
Longview-Kelso CCD	1.7%	54.8%
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	0.0%	14.7%
Rose Valley CCD	0.0%	50.0%
Woodland CCD	0.0%	41.7%
Cowlitz County	1.5%	51.7%
Washington	3.6%	47.7%

Also described in Table 34, rental cost burden (spending a significant portion of monthly income on rent) is high countywide and particularly in the Longview-Kelso area. A high rental cost burden can strain a family’s finances and make it difficult to sustain stable housing and have enough income available to support other expenses (food, medical care, etc.).

In Cowlitz County, median rent has continued to increase in recent years. The most up-to-date data from the U.S. Census Bureau show an increase in median rent of 6.8% from 2017 to 2019. LCC program administrators also note rising rents and decreased availability of affordable housing.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

²⁹ Values less than the countywide rate are highlighted.
³⁰ Rates less than the statewide rate are highlighted.
³¹ Rates greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

On February 29, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee issued Proclamation 20-05, proclaiming a State of Emergency for the state as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Included in the proclamation was a temporary moratorium on evictions intended to “reduce economic hardship and related life, health, and safety risks to those ... impacted by layoffs and substantially reduced work hours or who are otherwise unable to pay rent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.” Throughout 2020 and 2021, the governor issued a series of extensions, including expanding protections to cover lots/parcels (some motor home owners own the vehicle but lease the lot), transitional housing, and public lands (camping grounds). After more than 18 months, the governor allowed the moratorium to expire on October 31, 2021.^{lxviii, lxix}

The expiration of eviction protections may cause some families to face eviction from their residences. Repayment barriers and challenges agreeing upon a repayment schedule could also make it difficult for families to maintain affordable housing.

EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Labor Force, Industries, and Occupations

In Cowlitz County, a smaller portion of the population is participating in the workforce (employed and unemployed) than the statewide rate. Labor force participation is highest in Kalama, Rose Valley, and Woodland. Countywide, there continues to be a high percentage of households with children under age 6 in which all parents in the family are participating in the labor force (Table 35).

Table 35. Percent of the Population in Labor Force (Age 16+) by Geographic Area (2019)^{lxx, 32}

Geographic Area	Population Age 16+	Living in Households with Children Under Age 6, All Parents in the Family in the Labor Force
Castle Rock CCD	51.0%	60.2%
Kalama CCD	63.6%	64.3%
Longview-Kelso CCD	55.6%	62.9%
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	52.8%	69.6%
Rose Valley CCD	63.2%	86.9%
Woodland CCD	60.3%	54.3%
Cowlitz County	56.3%	62.3%
Washington	64.5%	60.6%

A majority of employed individuals in Cowlitz County are private wage and salary workers (Table 36).

Table 36. Number of Employed Individuals (Age 16+) and Percentage of the Employed Workforce by Class of Worker and Geographic Area (2019)^{lxxi}

Geographic Area	Cowlitz County	Washington
Private wage and salary workers	35,869 (80.3%)	2,816,093 (78.3%)
Government workers	6,486 (14.5%)	561,645 (15.6%)
Self-employed in own not incorporated business workers	2,247 (5.0%)	209,872 (5.8%)
Unpaid family workers ³³	77 (0.2%)	6,669 (0.2%)
Total	44,679 (100%)	3,594,279 (100%)

³² Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

³³ Defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as people who worked without pay in a business or on a farm operated by a relative.

The top industries in Cowlitz County are educational services, and health care and social assistance; and manufacturing. The percent of the population in Cowlitz County that is working in the manufacturing industry is more than double the statewide rate (Table 37). Also notable is the high rate of the workforce that is employed in production, transportation, and material moving occupations, 21.6% compared to 11.7% statewide (Table 38).

Table 37. Percentage of the Employed Workforce (Age 16+) by Industry and Geographic Area (2019) ^{lxxii}

Industry	Cowlitz County	Washington
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1.3%	2.6%
Construction	7.4%	7.3%
Manufacturing	20.4%	9.5%
Wholesale trade	2.9%	2.8%
Retail trade	11.7%	11.3%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	6.5%	5.4%
Information	0.8%	2.2%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	3.7%	5.1%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	7.3%	14.0%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	24.2%	21.2%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	5.2%	9.1%
Other services, except public administration	3.8%	4.8%
Public administration	4.7%	5.0%
Total	99.9%	100%

Table 38. Percentage of the Employed Workforce (Age 16+) by Occupation and Geographic Area (2019) ^{lxxiii}

Occupation	Cowlitz County	Washington
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	27.5%	43.3%
Service occupations	19.5%	17.3%
Sales and office occupations	20.3%	18.1%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	11.0%	9.6%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	21.6%	11.7%
Total	100%	100%

According to the most recent data on unemployment, rates are higher in Cowlitz County than in Washington as a whole (Table 39).

Table 39. Unemployment Rate by Month and Geographic Area and Month (2020-2021) ^{lxxiv}

Month/Year	Cowlitz County ³⁴	Washington
January 2020	6.3%	4.6%
April 2020	16.4%	16.3%
July 2020	12.0%	10.7%
October 2020	6.8%	6.3%
January 2021	7.2%	6.8%
April 2021	6.6%	5.6%
July 2021	5.3%	5.0%
October 2021	4.7%	4.4%

In early to mid-2020, unemployment rates in Cowlitz County and the State of Washington were elevated due to the extended impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In late 2020 and early 2021, employment rates began to fall. By July 2021, the unemployment rate in Cowlitz County had recovered to a pre-pandemic level.

³⁴ Rates greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

Transportation

As reported in the 2019 Community Assessment Data Update, a vast majority of commuters drive alone to work and public transit is minimally utilized. The rate of commuters driving to work was 81.6% in 2017 and has since risen to 82.0% (2019) (Table 40). Mean travel time to work has also increased from 24.8 minutes (2017) to 25.7 minutes (2019) (Table 41).^{ixxv}

Table 40. Transportation to Work by Geographic Area (2019)^{ixxvi,35}

Geographic Area	Car, truck, or van: drove alone	Car, truck, or van: carpooled	Public transportation	Walked	Other means	Worked from home
Castle Rock CCD	79.2%	12.2%	0.0%	1.5%	0.7%	6.4%
Kalama CCD	82.1%	6.5%	0.0%	2.4%	1.5%	7.5%
Longview-Kelso CCD	81.6%	10.0%	0.4%	2.4%	1.5%	4.1%
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	84.8%	4.3%	0.0%	3.3%	2.1%	5.5%
Rose Valley CCD	91.2%	7.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Woodland CCD	82.2%	10.6%	0.0%	1.2%	0.2%	5.8%
Cowlitz County	82.0%	9.9%	0.2%	2.0%	1.2%	4.7%
Washington	71.6%	10.0%	6.6%	3.7%	2.0%	6.1%

Table 41. Mean Travel Time to Work by Geographic Area (2019)^{ixxvii,36}

Geographic Area	Mean Travel Time to Work (Minutes)
Castle Rock CCD	33.7
Kalama CCD	27.3
Longview-Kelso CCD	22.6
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	40.2
Rose Valley CCD	25.5
Woodland CCD	30.1
Cowlitz County	25.7
Washington	28.0

In Cowlitz County, the rate of households with no vehicle available is consistent with the statewide rate, approximately 7%. Within the county, the rate is highest in the Longview-Kelso area (Table 42).

Table 42. Households with No Vehicle Available by Geographic Area (2019)^{ixxviii,37}

Geographic Area	Percent of Households with No Vehicle Available
Castle Rock CCD	3.3%
Kalama CCD	2.4%
Longview-Kelso CCD	9.1%
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	0.0%
Rose Valley CCD	0.0%
Woodland CCD	5.0%
Cowlitz County	6.9%
Washington	6.8%

³⁵ Rates greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

³⁶ Values greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

³⁷ Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN

Children must meet an age requirement to participate in Early Head Start or Head Start. The age requirement is 0 to 2 years old (up to age 3) for Early Head Start and 3 to 5 years old for Head Start. Children are eligible to receive services if they meet one or more of the eligibility requirements: their family has an income at or below the federal poverty level, the family is eligible for public assistance (e.g., TANF), the child is homeless, or the child is in foster care. At least 10% of program enrollment must be children eligible for services under IDEA (children with disabilities).

Table 43 provides estimated numbers of eligible children in the service area, by eligibility category. Primary eligibility captures only one factor by which a child is eligible for services, and many children have needs that fall into multiple categories. The source for each of the data points in this table is described in the sections of the report that follow.

Table 43. Estimated Number of Children in Service Area Eligible for Head Start or Early Head Start Services

Primary Eligibility Criteria	Estimated Number of Eligible Children	
	Ages 0-3	Ages 0-5
Income-eligible children	818	1,364
Pregnant women (income-eligible)	277	n/a
Children experiencing homelessness	>32	>32
Children in foster care	37	62
Children receiving public assistance	380	634
Children with disabilities (10% program enrollment requirement)	514	857

Child Poverty and Geographic Location

In Cowlitz County, there are an estimated 1,364 children under age 5 living in poverty who are income-eligible for participation in Head Start/Early Head Start, an estimated 818 of whom are under age 3 and eligible for Early Head Start. Data on child poverty and the income-eligible population is provided by county subdivision, as well as zip code. As illustrated in Tables 44 and 45, the greatest number of income-eligible children are located in the Longview-Kelso area.

Table 44. Estimated Children Under Age 5 and Child Poverty by Geographic Area (2019)^{1xxix,38}

Geographic Area	Child Poverty Rate (0-18)	Poverty Rate for Children < Age 5	Number of Children < Age 5	Number of Children < Age 5 Living in Poverty	Number of Children < Age 3 Living in Poverty ³⁹
Castle Rock CCD	8.3%	9.1%	795	72	43
Kalama CCD	7.8%	10.6%	322	34	20
Longview-Kelso CCD	24.5%	30.3%	3,910	1,184	710
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	13.8%	27.6%	58	16	10
Rose Valley CCD	5.4%	5.2%	194	10	6
Woodland CCD	8.0%	6.0%	799	48	29
Cowlitz County	18.1%	22.4%	6,078	1,364	818
Washington	13.6%	14.4%	446,109	64,038	38,423

³⁸ Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

³⁹ Estimated by calculating 3/5 of the number of children birth to age 5 living in poverty.

Table 45. Estimated Children Under Age 5 and Child Poverty by Zip Code (2019)^{lxxx,40}

Geographic Area	Child Poverty Rate (0-18)	Poverty Rate for Children < Age 5	Number of Children < Age 5	Number of Children < Age 5 Living in Poverty	Number of Children < Age 3 Living in Poverty ⁴¹
98581 (Ryderwood)	n/a	n/a	0	0	0
98603 (Ariel)	0.0%	0.0%	54	0	0
98609 (Carrolls)	n/a	n/a	0	0	0
98611 (Castle Rock)	4.7%	5.8%	397	23	14
98616 (Cougar)	0.0%	0.0%	15	0	0
98625 (Kalama)	7.7%	11.3%	302	34	20
98626 (Kelso)	25.8%	38.1%	1,450	553	332
98632 (Longview)	21.0%	23.2%	2,979	690	414
98645 (Silver Lake)	0.0%	0.0%	150	0	0
98649 (Toutle)	23.9%	69.6%	23	16	10
98674 (Woodland)	8.2%	4.6%	744	34	20
Cowlitz County	18.1%	22.4%	6,078	1,364	818
Washington	13.6%	14.4%	446,109	64,038	38,423

As described in Table 46, the number of young children living in poverty has been fluctuating countywide in recent years.

Table 46. Three-Year Trend for Number of Children Under Age 5 living in Poverty by Geographic Area (2017-2019)^{lxxxii}

Geographic Area	2017	2018	2019	Three-Year Trend for Number of Children <5 in Poverty
Castle Rock CCD	121	149	125	Fluctuating
Kalama CCD	87	88	87	Steady
Longview-Kelso CCD	1,365	1,388	1,237	Fluctuating
Northeast Cowlitz CCD	68	69	69	Steady
Rose Valley CCD	62	65	63	Fluctuating
Woodland CCD	68	100	101	Increasing
Cowlitz County	1,453	1,541	1,364	Fluctuating
Washington	73,417	69,304	64,038	Decreasing

Data from the Washington State Department of Health show a decline in the birth rate in Cowlitz County from 2016 to 2019; the birth rate was 12.3 per 1,000 in 2016 and has steadily fallen to 11.4 per 1,000 in 2019. In 2019, there were 1,238 births to

women residing in Cowlitz County.^{lxxxiii} While data on the number of pregnant women who would be income-eligible for Early Head Start is not available, the number can be estimated by applying the poverty rate for children birth to age 5 in the county (22.4%) to the number of live births annually (1,238). Therefore, there are an estimated 277 pregnant women in the service area who are income eligible to enroll in Early Head Start.

In Cowlitz County, the birth rate has been steadily declining since 2016. In 2019, there were 1,238 births to women residing in Cowlitz County.

Washington State Department of Health. (2022). Data and Statistical Reports. <https://www.doh.wa.gov/DataandStatisticalReports>

⁴⁰ Rates greater than the countywide rate are highlighted.

⁴¹ Estimated by calculating 3/5 of the number of children birth to age 5 living in poverty.

Children Experiencing Homelessness

Many school districts in Cowlitz County have a rate of public school students experiencing homelessness that is greater than the statewide rate; the highest rate is in Woodland School District, 4.3%. In every school district in the county, the rate decreased from the 2017-2018 school year to the 2020-2021 school year (Table 47).

Table 47. Percent of Public School Students Experiencing Homelessness by School District and Year⁴²

Geographic Area	2017-2018 ^{lxxxiii}	2020-2021 ^{lxxxiv}
Castle Rock School District	1.9%	1.8%
Kalama School District	3.8%	1.3%
Kelso School District	3.7%	3.2%
Longview School District	6.5%	2.9%
Toutle Lake School District	5.0%	2.7%
Woodland School District	6.5%	4.3%
Washington	3.4%	2.2%

Questions remain about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ability of public schools to identify homeless students during remote learning. A 2020 survey of McKinney-Vento Liaisons in Washington public school districts found that, second to food, the top needs of homeless students during the COVID-19 pandemic were mobile hotspots/internet access and devices.^{lxxxv}

A January 2020 Point-in-Time (PIT) count of persons experiencing homelessness in Cowlitz County found 328 persons experiencing homelessness, representing 252 families. This is a 30% decrease from 2019 when 468 individuals were found experiencing homelessness.^{lxxxvi}

The Washington State Department of Commerce estimates there are 3,496 homeless or unstably housed individuals in Cowlitz County, 32% of whom are part of single- or two-parent households with minors.

Washington State Department of Commerce. (2022). <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/>

Out of the 252 families experiencing homelessness, 28 were households with minors (representing 81 homeless individuals).^{lxxxvii}

Given that the Point-in-Time count may not reflect the full extent of homelessness (e.g., excluding individuals living with extended families or friends), the Washington State Department of Commerce uses Medicaid, economic service, and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to provide supplemental estimates of homelessness. It is estimated there are 3,496 homeless or unstably housed individuals in Cowlitz County; 1,112 of these individuals are part of single- or two-parent households with minors.^{lxxxviii}

Data on the number of children birth to age 5 who are experiencing homelessness is not publicly available. During the 2020-2021 program year, LCC provided Head Start/Early Head Start services to 32 families experiencing homelessness. It is therefore estimated there are more than 32 children under age 5 years old who are experiencing homelessness in Cowlitz County.

⁴² Rates greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

Children in Foster Care

Updated data on the rate of child abuse and neglect in accepted referrals to the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families is not available. As reported in LCC's 2019 *Community Assessment*, and highlighted in the 2021 *Community Assessment Update*, a high rate of child abuse and neglect is an ongoing concern in the service area.

As of October 2020, there were 162 children birth to age 18 in an out-of-home placement in Cowlitz County. Of these children in out-of-home placements, 38% are under age 5.^{lxxxix} Applying the percent of children under age 5 in out-of-home placements (38%) to the number of children birth to age 18 in foster care (162 children), it can be estimated that there are 62 children in foster care at a point-in-time who would be categorically eligible for Head Start/Early Head Start services, 37 of whom are birth to age 3 and eligible for Early Head Start.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant effect on the number reports of suspected child abuse and neglect in Cowlitz County. The Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families data show a 48% decrease in open assessments and investigations from April 2019 (350 cases) compared to April 2020 (181 cases). By July 2020, the number of reports had increased, but there were still fewer open assessments and investigations than pre-pandemic levels (24% decrease from the year prior).^{xc}

Children Receiving Public Assistance

Cowlitz County makes up a small portion of the number of cases or clients receiving TANF/SFA (State Family Assistance) benefits in Washington. As of June 2021, there were 866 TANF/SFA cases in Cowlitz County, representing 1,986 clients (Table 48).

Table 48. TANF/SFA Caseload by County of Residence (June 2021)^{xc}

Geographic Area	Number of Cases	Percent of Statewide Total	Number of Clients	Percent of Statewide Total
Cowlitz County	866	3.1%	1,986	3.1%
Washington	27,522		63,922	

In Washington and in Cowlitz County, the percent of children (birth to age 18) who are recipients of public assistance has continued to decline in recent years, however the rate in Cowlitz County is significantly higher than the statewide rate (Table 49).

Table 49. Percent of Children (0-18) Receiving Public Assistance (SSI, Cash Public Assistance, and TANF) by Year and Geographic Area (2017-2019)^{xcii}

Geographic Area	2017	2018	2019	Three-Year Trend
Cowlitz County	39.2%	38.4%	37.6%	Decreasing
Washington	25.5%	23.8%	22.2%	Decreasing

Since Head Start/Early Head Start eligibility based on receipt of public assistance is limited to SSI and TANF, information is provided in Table 50 to serve as a proxy for estimating the number of eligible children. Based on this data, there are an estimated 380 children birth to age 3, and 634 children birth to age 5, who are eligible for Head Start/Early Head Start based on receipt of public assistance.

Table 50. Estimated Number of Children Birth to Age 5 Eligible for Head Start/Early Head Start Based on Receipt of Public Assistance by Geographic Area (2019)

Geographic Area	Percent of Children Receiving Public Assistance (SSI, Cash Public Assistance, SNAP) ^{xciii}	Number of Children Birth to Age 5 ^{xciv}	Number of Children 0-3 Living in Households Receiving Public Assistance ⁴³	Number of Children 0-5 Living in Households Receiving Public Assistance ⁴⁴
Cowlitz County	37.6%	6,078	380	634

Children with Disabilities

In all school districts in Cowlitz County, the percent of enrolled students with disabilities increased from the 2017-2018 school year, as reported in the 2019 *Community Assessment*, to the 2020-2021 school year. With the exception of Woodland School District, all school districts in Cowlitz County have rates of enrolled students with disabilities that are greater than the statewide rate (Table 51).

Table 51. Percent of Public School Students with Disabilities by School District (2020-2021)

Geographic Area	2017-2018 ^{xcv}	2020-2021 ^{xcvi,45}
Castle Rock School District	18.1%	20.9%
Kalama School District	16.4%	17.9%
Kelso School District	15.0%	15.5%
Longview School District	18.7%	18.9%
Toutle Lake School District	12.9%	18.3%
Woodland School District	13.4%	13.8%
Washington	Not reported	14.1%

Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) oversees early intervention (Part C) services in Washington. The Washington Department of Children, Youth & Families coordinates ESIT, which serves children birth through 2-years-old. ESIT is implemented by local lead agencies across the state. Progress Center provides early intervention services in Cowlitz County. The State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction oversees preschool special education (Part B) services in Washington.

Up-to-date data on the number of children receiving early intervention and preschool special education services in Cowlitz County is not publicly available. However, applying the rate of students with disabilities in Washington (14.1%) to the number of children birth to age 5 in the service area (6,078), it can be estimated that there are 857 children birth to age 5 with disabilities who could be eligible for Head Start/Early Head Start, 514 of whom are birth to age 3 and eligible for Early Head Start services.

Emerging research shows that babies born during the COVID-19 pandemic scored lower in gross motor, fine motor, and social-emotional development when assessed with the Ages & Stages Questionnaire at 6 months old than babies who were born prior to the pandemic. Unprecedented stress on families and their ability to provide the interactions and stability necessary to support their children’s development may contributing factors. Continuing to provide support to families with young children is essential, and these research findings point to the importance of early identification and referral for early intervention services.^{xcvii}

⁴³ Estimated by applying the percent of children 0-18 living in households receiving public assistance to the population of children birth to 3

⁴⁴ Estimated by applying the percent of children 0-18 living in households receiving public assistance to the population of children birth to 5

⁴⁵ Rates greater than the statewide rate are highlighted.

AGENCIES SERVING ELIGIBLE CHILDREN

Across the country, the child care industry has been greatly impacted as child care facilities nationwide are reporting a stark lack of staff and ability to retain existing staff. The National Association for the Education of Young Children found that four in five child care programs nationwide are understaffed, with 78% of those surveyed indicating that low wages are the main reason for the difficulty in recruiting new employees.^{xcviii}

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused dramatic changes in the landscape for child care and early education programs in the United States. Historically, child care programs have provided care on thin margins and were asked to continue to do so during the pandemic, leading to extreme financial upheaval.

Additional burdens were placed (and often continue) on these strained programs to: meet a fluctuating and unpredictable demand for child care, increase health and safety procedures (e.g., decreased ratios, more stringent cleaning procedures), and shift programming to full or partial virtual learning upon mandate. As a result of these burdens, costs for providers increased while enrollment in child care programs decreased, leaving child care programs across the county to navigate the ensuing financial consequence.^{xcix}

The LCC Head Start/Early Head Start/ECEAP program has experienced many of these challenges. As a part of a Washington state agency, LCC staff were subject to a vaccination mandate effective, October 18, 2021. As a result of this mandate, 27 staff left the LCC Head Start/Early Head Start/ECEAP program.

Child Care and Family Child Care

According to the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF), there are 44 licensed child care programs (child care centers and family child care homes) in Cowlitz County, with the capacity to serve 2,145 children birth to school age as of January 2022 (Table 52). This is a decrease from 2020.^c

Cowlitz County continues to experience a decline in the number of licensed child care providers and capacity to serve children. As of January 2022, there are 44 licensed child care providers in Cowlitz County.

Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families. Child Care Check. <https://www.findchildcarewa.org/>

Table 52. Number and Capacity of DCYF Licensed Child Care Programs (Serving Children Birth to School Age) by Type and Geographic Area (January 18, 2022)^{ci}

Geographic Area	Child Care Centers		Family Child Care Homes		Total	
	Number of Centers	Capacity	Number of Homes	Capacity	Number of Centers/Homes	Capacity
98581 (Ryderwood)	0	0	0	0	0	0
98603 (Ariel)	0	0	0	0	0	0
98609 (Carrolls)	0	0	0	0	0	0
98611 (Castle Rock)	2*	105	1	12	3	117
98616 (Cougar)	0	0	0	0	0	0
98625 (Kalama)	1	50	0	0	1	50
98626 (Kelso)	7**	492	2	24	9	516
98632 (Longview)	16***	1,206	9	90	25	1,296
98645 (Silver Lake)	0	0	1	8	1	8
98649 (Toutle)	0	0	0	0	0	0
98674 (Woodland)	3	140	2	18	5	158
Service Area Total	29	1,993	15	152	44	2,145

*Includes LCC Head Start ECEAP Castle Rock

** Includes LCC Head Start ECEAP Barnes and LCC Head Start ECEAP Barnes North

*** Includes LCC Home & Family (LCC Early Learning Center), LCC Head Start/ ECEAP, and LCC Head Start ECEAP Memorial Park, and LCC Longview Early Head Start Partnership

Across the service area, a majority of licensed child care programs, approximately 93%, are participating in Early Achievers, the state’s quality rating and improvement system (Table 53). This is an increase from September 2020, when approximately 70% of licensed child care providers in Cowlitz County were enrolled in Early Achievers.^{cii} All of LCC’s sites are participating in Early Achievers.

Table 53. Percent of DCYF Licensed Child Care Programs Participating in Early Achievers (January 18, 2022)^{ciii}

Geographic Area	Total Number of Programs Participating in Early Achievers (and Percent of Total Licensed Programs)
98581 (Ryderwood)	N/A
98603 (Ariel)	N/A
98609 (Carrolls)	N/A
98611 (Castle Rock)	3* (100%)
98616 (Cougar)	N/A
98625 (Kalama)	0 (0%)
98626 (Kelso)	8** (88.9%)
98632 (Longview)	24*** (96%)
98645 (Silver Lake)	1 (100%)
98649 (Toutle)	N/A
98674 (Woodland)	5 (100%)
Service Area Total	41 (93.2%)

*Includes LCC Head Start ECEAP Castle Rock

** Includes LCC Head Start ECEAP Barnes and LCC Head Start ECEAP Barnes North

*** Includes LCC Home & Family (LCC Early Learning Center), LCC Head Start/Early Head Start/ECEAP, and LCC Head Start ECEAP Memorial Park

LCC’s *Community Assessment 2020 Annual Update* noted the lack of infant/toddler care in the service area. Data continues to point a need for infant/toddler capacity, as only 86% of programs are licensed to serve this age group (Table 54). Further, Child Care Aware of Washington reports that, in 2019, 48% of referral demand was for infants and toddlers; referral demand for preschool-age children was 20%.^{civ}

Table 54. Number and Percent of Child Care Programs Licensed to Serve Infants and/or Toddlers (January 18, 2022)^{cv}

Geographic Area	Number and Percent of Programs Licensed to Serve Infants and/or Toddlers
98581 (Ryderwood)	N/A
98603 (Ariel)	N/A
98609 (Carrolls)	N/A
98611 (Castle Rock)	2 (66.7%)
98616 (Cougar)	N/A
98625 (Kalama)	1 (100%)
98626 (Kelso)	7 (77.8%)
98632 (Longview)	23* (92%)
98645 (Silver Lake)	1 (100%)
98649 (Toutle)	N/A
98674 (Woodland)	4 (80%)
Service Area Total	38 (86.3%)

* Includes LCC Home & Family (LCC Early Learning Center) and LCC Longview EHS Partnership Center

Further, 62% of child care providers accept state subsidy for children of all ages (an additional 11% of providers accept subsidy only for school age children), contributing to challenges that low-income families face accessing high-quality, affordable child care. This may be particularly true for families with infants and toddlers as the median monthly cost of child care for young children is higher than other age groups. The median cost (per month) of care is \$910 for infants, \$770 for toddlers, and \$678 for preschool age children.^{cvi}

Table 55 compares the total number of children birth to age 5 and the number of children birth to age 5 living in poverty to child care capacity. Many child care centers and family child care homes are licensed to provide school-age care, and programs serve families of all income levels, which may limit the actual capacity to serve infants, toddlers, and preschool age children from low-income families.

In Cowlitz County, the number of children birth to age 5 far exceeds licensed child care capacity. In zip code 98626 (Kelso), the number of children birth to age 5 living in poverty exceeds licensed child care capacity.

Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families. Child Care Check. <https://www.findchildcarewa.org/>

Table 55. Children Under Age 5 and Children Under Age 5 Living in Poverty (2019) Compared to Licensed Child Care Capacity (January 2022) by Zip Code

Geographic Area	Number of Children <5 Years Old ^{cvii}	Number of Children <5 Living in Poverty ^{cviii}	Licensed Child Care Capacity (including School Age) ^{cxix}
98581 (Ryderwood)	0	0	0
98603 (Ariel)	54	0	0
98609 (Carrolls)	0	0	0
98611 (Castle Rock)	397	23	117
98616 (Cougar)	15	0	0
98625 (Kalama)	302	34	50
98626 (Kelso)	1,450	553	516
98632 (Longview)	2,979	690	1,296
98645 (Silver Lake)	150	0	8
98649 (Toutle)	23	16	0
98674 (Woodland)	744	34	158
Service Area Total	6,078	1,364	2,145

As reported in the *Community Assessment 2020 Data Update*, the Cowlitz Community Network declared child care as critical priority for the county. Since then, the Network undertook a study of child care access in the county. A 2021 report on this study highlighted that informal child care (e.g., family, friend, and neighbor care) is highly utilized in the county. Many community members surveyed (73%) reported that the cost of child care is a significant factor in the type of child care they choose. The availability of affordable child care is impacting families’ ability to remain enrolled in school and maintain their regular work hours.^{cx}

Home Visiting

In Washington, home visiting services are coordinated by the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families through the Home Visiting Services Account (HVSA), a public and private partnership. Eight home visiting models are implemented in counties across the state; all home visiting models are either evidence-based, research-based, or promising practices. In Cowlitz County, the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is implemented by Clark County Public Health.^{cxii} In 2021, there were 70 NFP slots in Cowlitz County.^{cxii} During the 2021-2022 program year, Cowlitz Tribe also began implementation of Parents as Teachers, serving one caseload of families.

Families in Cowlitz County may also access home visiting services through LCC’s Early Head Start home-based program option. LCC is funded to serve 62 pregnant women and children in its home-based program.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused HVSA to modify the way home visits are implemented and how families access services. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 94% of HVSA home visits statewide were conducted in-person (July 2019 – March 2020). From April 2020 through June 2021, only 19% home visits were conducted in person. A majority of visits were by phone or video conference.^{cxiii}

Publicly Funded Preschool

Publicly-funded preschool in Washington is provided through the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families ECEAP program.

In Cowlitz County, data continue to show the highest need for ECEAP expansion in Kelso School District (Priority Group 2) and Longview School District (Priority Group 3).

Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families. (2021). <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov>

Table 56 describes Head Start and ECEAP slots as a percent of estimated eligible children (“Percent Served”), estimated eligible 3 and 4-year-olds not served by ECEAP or Head Start (“Unserved Eligible Children”), and priority group for district to expand ECEAP slots, with lower numbers indicating higher priority. The source of this information is a report from the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families, *2020-2021 ECEAP and Head Start Saturation Study*. Countywide, there are 504 ECEAP and Head Start slots. Slots include those implemented by LCC as well as slots allocated through service area agreements with Educational Service District 112 and EOCF (Educational Opportunities for Children and Families). Data continue to show the highest need for ECEAP expansion in Kelso School District (Priority Group 2) and Longview School District (Priority Group 3).

Table 56. Head Start and ECEAP Saturation by School District (2020-2021)^{cxiv}

	ECEAP and Head Start Slots	Estimated Eligible Children	Percent Served ⁴⁶	Unserved Eligible Children	Priority Group
Castle Rock School District	34	33	104%	0	7
Kalama School District	0	18	0%	18	5
Kelso School District	105	353	30%	248	2
Longview School District	318	526	60%	204	3
Toutle Lake School District	0	7	0%	7	5
Woodland School District	47	9	553%	0	7
Cowlitz County Total	504	946	53%	442	

⁴⁶ Percentages greater than 100% indicate there are more slots available than estimated eligible children. Whereas 0% indicates there are no slots for the children estimated to be eligible.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

In LCC's service area, there are a number of social services resources available to families in addition to those offered by the grantee. Collaboration and partnership among community agencies continues to be a significant strength in Cowlitz County and supports a coordinated approach to service provision. LCC Head Start/Early Head Start/ECEAP program administrators report stability in the number and type of community resource providers available to families. LCC program administrators also note challenges resource providers face with limited resources and staff while experiencing increased demand for services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A listing of service providers appears in the 2019 *Community Assessment* report, and is provided in Table 57 for reference.

Table 57. Community Resource Providers

	Government Funded	Locally Funded ⁴⁷
Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Washington State Department of Social and Health Services - Housing Authority of Southwest Washington - Children and Family Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - United Way – 23 agencies - Lower Columbia CAP - CASA - Love Overwhelming - Goodwill - Parents Place - Youth and Family Link
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Columbia Wellness - SeaMar Behavioral Health - Cowlitz Tribe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family Health Center - CORE Health - Private counselors
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - St. John's Medical Center - Kaiser Permanente - Cowlitz Tribe - Cowlitz County Health and Human Services Department - 1st Steps - WIC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Health Partners - Family Health Center - FISH - Community Home Health and Hospice - Nurse Family Partnerships
Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - USDA Commodities - FEMA - USDA School Breakfast and Lunch Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FISH - Lower Columbia CAP - St. Vincent DePaul - Local churches - Volunteer feeding programs
Disability Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developmental Disability Services - Vocational Rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local schools - Life Works - ARC - Progress Center

Given the needs that have become more prevalent or arisen from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, accessible resources continue to be of vital importance to communities. LCC Head Start/Early Head Start/ECEAP has internal expertise and partnerships with community agencies that help it to meet the unique needs of families in the service area.

⁴⁷ Parents Place and Youth and Family Link were added to the list of community resource providers during the 2022 data update.

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