

Community Needs Assessment 2019



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I. Introduction

This Community Needs Assessment is presented in accordance with Head Start Program Performance Standard 1302.11(b)(1):

To design a program that meets community needs, and builds on strengths and resources, a program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period. The community assessment must use data that describes community strengths, needs, and resources and include, at a minimum:

- (i) 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; and
 - (C) Children with disabilities, including types of disabilities and relevant services and resources provided to these children by community agencies;
- (ii) 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;
- (iii) Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children;
- (iv) 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;
- (v) Resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families; and,
- (vi) Strengths of the community.¹

¹ *Head Start Program Performance Standards*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. September 2016.

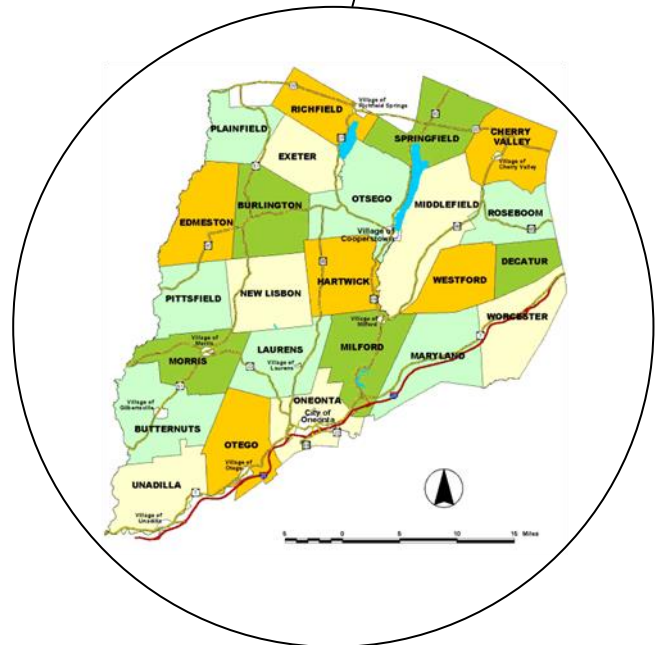
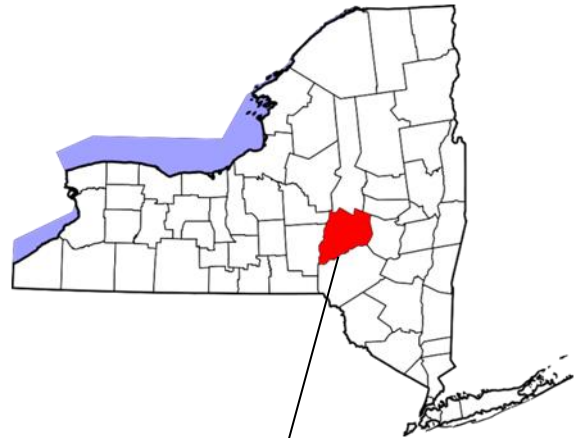
II. Data Collection

A. Overview of Service Area: Otsego County

1. Geography

Otsego County is centrally located in New York State, with the southern part of the county falling into the Catskill Mountain region. The county covers an area of 1,001.7 square miles and has an estimated population density of 62.2 people per square mile.² It is bordered on the west by Chenango County, to the south by Delaware County, to the east by Schoharie County, and to the north by Montgomery, Herkimer, Oneida, and Madison Counties. It is located approximately half way between Albany (86 miles) and Binghamton (67 miles). Serving as a connector route from the Capital District to Binghamton, Interstate 88 runs along the southernmost edge of Otsego County, allowing for easy access to these cities.

Otsego County is a heavily rural area with farms dotting the countryside. The county is comprised of 34 municipalities – 24 towns, 9 villages, and 1 city. The two largest communities within the county are Oneonta and Cooperstown. The City of Oneonta is home to three institutions of higher education – Otsego Area School of Practical Nursing, Hartwick College (population 1,201), and the State University of New York College at Oneonta (population 6,381).³ Cooperstown, the county seat, is home to the Baseball Hall of Fame, the Fenimore Art Museum, and the Farmers' Museum. Baseball camps throughout the county, along with several lakes and miles of trails throughout the mountainous region, continue to attract tourism. Otsego



² QuickFacts, U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/otsegocountynewyork,US/PST045218> on 10/8/2019

³ New York State Education Department. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://data.nysed.gov/profile.php?county=47> on 12/3/2019

County saw a 1.3% increase in total tourism employment from 2016 to 2017.⁴ More than \$22.2 million in sales and taxes are attributed to Otsego County's tourism industry, which accounts for 14.4% of the labor force.⁵

2. Economy and Employment

Historically, and typical of rural areas, Otsego County's economic base has consisted of farming, specifically family-owned dairy farms (as opposed to corporation-owned farms). Due to changing climate conditions and rising costs, both the number of farms and total farm acreage across New York State have seen a steady decline over the past 10 years. While farmland accounts for 24.1% of the total land area in Otsego County, the county saw the largest decline statewide in the number of farms during this period, with a loss of 100 farms.⁶ With farming on the decline, the largest industries in Otsego County are currently: health care and social assistance (employing approximately 5,436 people); manufacturing, construction, and utilities (employing approximately 4,313 people); educational services (employing approximately 4,221 people); and retail and wholesale trade (employing approximately 3,872 people).⁷ Figure 1 below outlines the county's industry profile.

Over 1,200 businesses are in operation within the county according to Otsego Now. Major employers include insurance companies, colleges, health care facilities, and retailers. A wide variety of products are manufactured in the area including communications equipment, integrated circuits, pharmaceuticals, transportation equipment, plastic and rubber products, and food and beverage.⁸ The city of Oneonta is the largest employment center in Otsego County. Due to its location in the southernmost part, combined with the overall size of Otsego County and the lack of public transportation, residents living other areas of the county often cannot access employment opportunities in Oneonta. In addition to year-round employment, the tourism industry is a major source of seasonal employment in Otsego County. Summer youth baseball camps surrounding Cooperstown and Oneonta have grown in number and size, creating a large demand for seasonal lodging and food service. While the tourism industry has helped create more jobs, these jobs are seasonal, leaving many people searching for supplemental employment during the better part of the year. Additionally, Otsego County's miles of lakes and trails attract many outdoor enthusiasts to the region, with numbers spiking during the warmer months and yet again creating more seasonal versus year-round positions. Presenting another challenge in regards to employment is the fact that almost 30% of the county's industries require an unskilled workforce, therefore paying lower wages.

⁴ New York State Regional and County Tourism Statistics. New York State Department of Labor. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/> on 11/25/2019

⁵ *Business Beat: Tourism official reports Otsego County data*. The Daily Star. (8/15/2015). Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.com/news/business_news/business-beat-tourism-official-reports-otsego-county-data/article_eca60919-87c0-5649-b5b4-73fd2d9e77ff.html on 11/22/2019

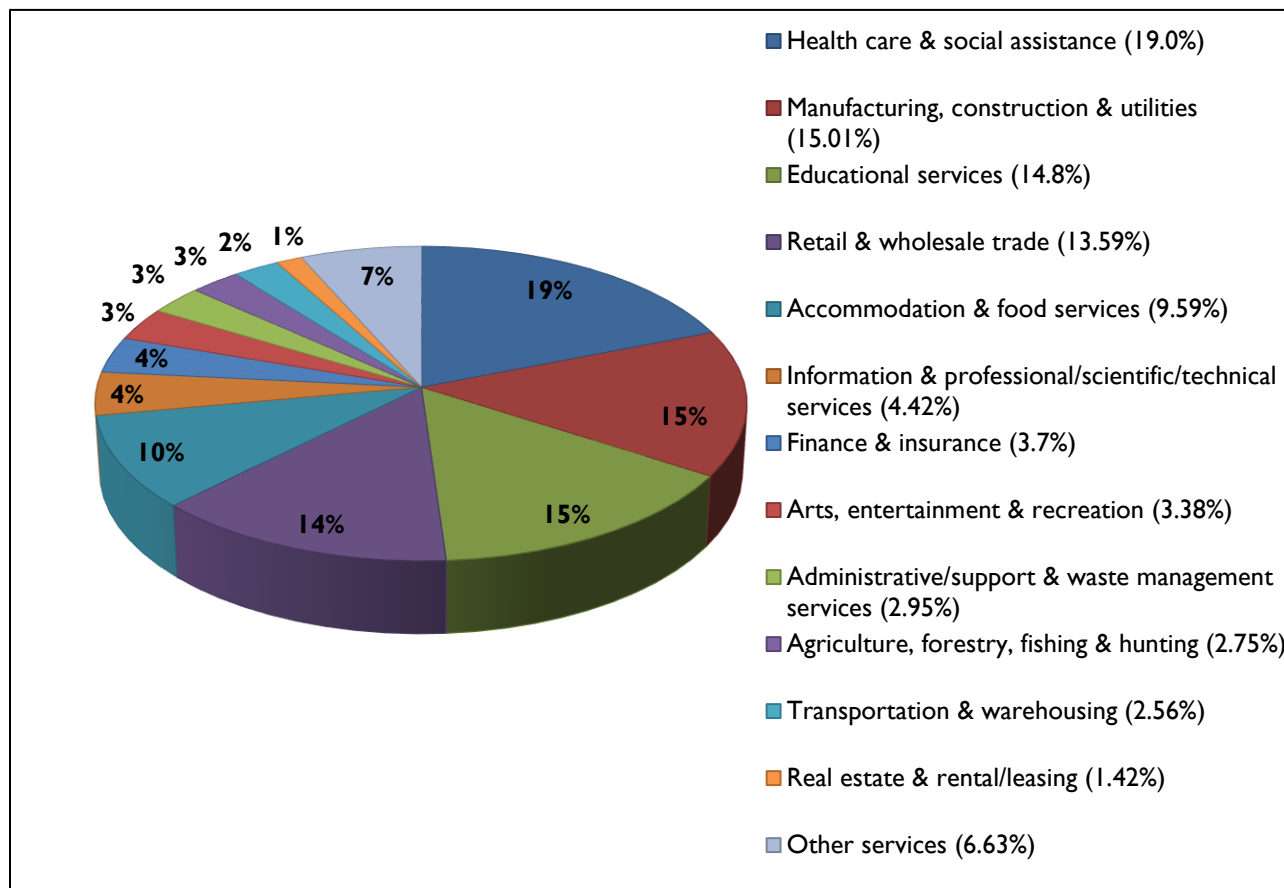
⁶ *A Profile of Agriculture in New York State*. Office of the New York State Comptroller. (August 2019). Retrieved from <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/economic/agriculture-report-2019.pdf> on 11/22/2019

⁷ Otsego County, NY – Data USA. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/otsego-county-ny> on 11/22/2019

⁸ County Overview. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://otsegonow.com/sites-and-buildings/county-overview/> on 11/25/2019

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Figure I Industry Profile⁹



Otsego County's labor force averaged 28,200 in 2018, which is a decrease of 3,500 (11%), since 2008. The number of unemployed in 2018 averaged 1,200 (4.3%), which represents a decrease of 600 (33%) since 2008. Between 2008 and 2018, unemployment decreased from 5.7% to 4.3%.¹⁰ While unemployment rates have been dropping, so too has the labor force, with 2016 – 2018 seeing the lowest labor force numbers since data on this topic was released by the New York State Department of Labor in 1990. Otsego County saw a 7.7% decrease from October 2018 to October 2019 in manufacturing jobs, which is one of the leading industries in the county.¹¹

Recent minimum wage increases in New York State have had a devastating impact on Head Start/Early Head Start enrollment. As part of the 2016 – 2017 state budget, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo implemented a complicated and staggered set of minimum wage increases. A schedule has been set to incrementally increase minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2021. This legislation separated the state into three regions (New York City; downstate, which includes Nassau, Suffolk, and

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Unemployment Rate: Otsego County. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://labor.ny.gov/stats/laus.asp> on 11/25/2019

¹¹ Minor County Employment: Data for Otsego County. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/cesminor.asp> on 11/25/2019

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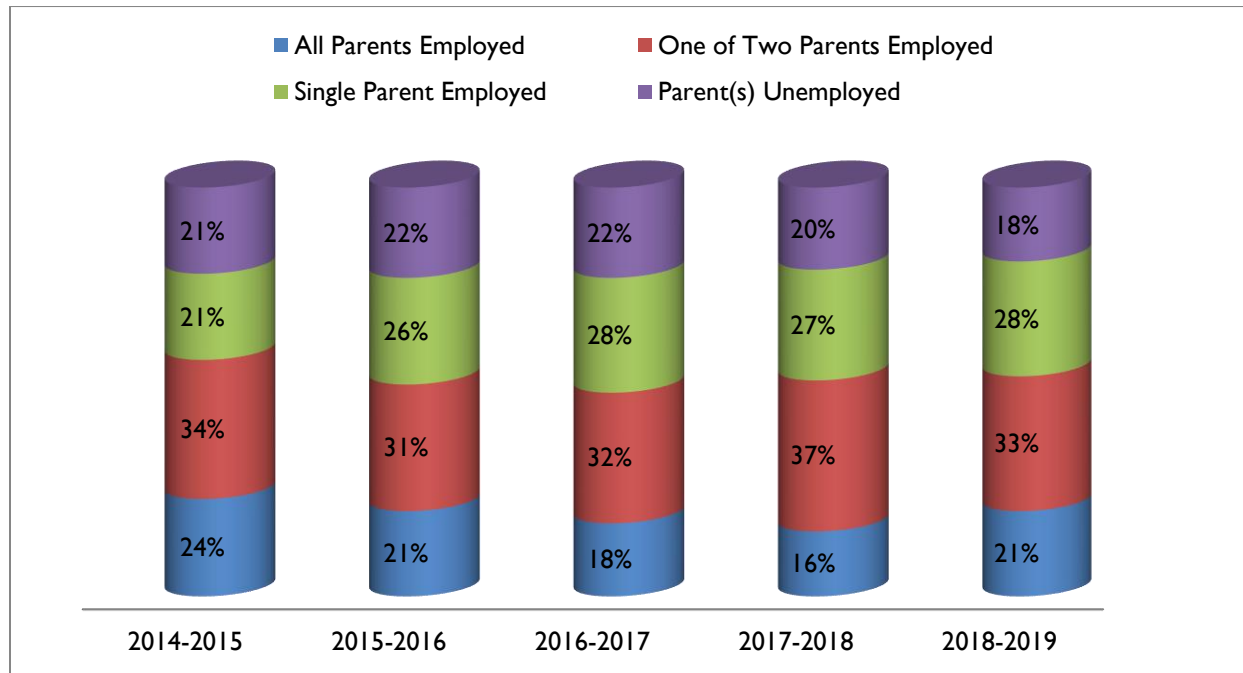
Westchester counties; and upstate, Otsego County's region, which encompasses the remainder of the state), and scheduled increases to occur at different rates for three different types of employees (regular minimum wage earners, fast food employees, and tipped employees). While minimum wage is set to increase at a faster pace in the New York City region, the expectation is that all New York State employers will meet the \$15 per hour mark by 2021. The first in a series of wage increases took place on December 31, 2016, raising minimum wage from \$9 to \$9.70. We are currently on the fourth wave of wage increases which occurred on December 31, 2019, raising minimum wage from \$11.10 to \$11.80 per hour for regular earners, \$12.75 to \$13.75 per hour for fast food establishment employees, and \$7.85 with a tip credit increase from \$3.60 to \$3.95 for tipped employees. Federal minimum wage, unchanged since 2009 despite the rising Consumer Price Index, is \$7.25 per hour, putting New York State's minimum wage an astounding 63% above the federal level. This bill was signed into law as a way to address the discrepancy between minimum wage and the actual cost of living in New York State. While these scheduled increases will move families earning minimum wage above the poverty line as intended, this plan does not take into account the support services and supplemental programs that low-income families will be losing due to increased earnings. These wage adjustments are quickly moving families out of the eligibility bracket for Head Start/Early Head Start. Furthermore, a growing number of wait list families are now over income based on the federal poverty level, creating a challenge in terms of finding and enrolling eligible families and keeping a viable wait list for program openings. For example, a single mother working 40 hours per week in the retail industry at minimum wage (\$11.80/hour) grosses \$24,544 per year. According to the 2019 Federal Poverty Guidelines, a family must be at or below \$16,910 per year to meet the 100% eligibility guideline, and at or below \$21,983 to meet the 130% eligibility guideline. While this child would be eligible to receive services as part of the over income allowance, a program is only permitted to enroll an additional 10% of participants whose earnings put them in this category. This child would therefore be excluded from receiving services if the program was already at that 10% benchmark. If this same single mother moved into the fast food industry and earned a higher minimum wage (\$13.75/hour), she would then gross \$28,600 per year, again putting her over income in terms of eligibility for Head Start/Early Head Start and making it unlikely that her child will receive services. These guidelines move this single mother and her child out of eligibility for Head Start/Early Head Start services, despite the fact that this family with several established risk factors (female head of household, single mother, only child, minimum wage job, low income) is exactly who this program was designed to support and benefit. Currently there is an excess of 104 children in Otsego County that are not eligible for services due to family income levels; this number accounts for 87% of the program's wait list.

The majority of Otsego County's Head Start/Early Head Start families are working. As shown in Figure 2, only 18% of families were unemployed in program year 2018 – 2019. This number has remained relatively stable, with program year 2018 - 2019 being the lowest unemployment rate in five years. Moreover, many of the available jobs, which are in health care, social assistance, manufacturing, education,

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retail/wholesale trade, and accommodation and food services (72% of jobs in Otsego County), generally tend to pay less and have less comprehensive benefits than other industries.

Figure 2 Employment Status for Head Start and Early Head Start Families in Otsego County¹²



There has been a 12% increase in the median household income in Otsego County from \$45,917 in 2010, to \$51,561 (estimated) in 2019.¹³ With a few exceptions, the overall cost of living has increased during that time period as well, as shown in the following tables.

¹² Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start Program Information Summaries. (2014-2019).

¹³ Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/saie/#/?map_geoSelector=mhi_s&s_state=36&s_county=36077&s_measures=mhi_snc&s_year=2017 on 11/26/2019

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Table 1 Sample Annual Consumer Expenditures in the Northeast Urban Region: 2009-2018¹⁴

Item	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Change
Fresh milk & cream	\$163	\$154	\$153	\$151	\$158	\$162	\$152	\$144	\$156	\$166	1.8%
Fuel oil & other fuels	\$516	\$429	\$456	\$475	\$462	\$463	\$407	\$303	\$282	\$357	-30.8%
Natural gas	\$723	\$672	\$610	\$550	\$533	\$597	\$658	\$607	\$538	\$579	-19.9%
Electricity	\$1,304	\$1,310	\$1,326	\$1,309	\$1,306	\$1,360	\$1,366	\$1,339	\$1,331	\$1,353	3.8%
Health insurance	\$1,837	\$1,923	\$1,977	\$2,092	\$2,315	\$2,793	\$3,173	\$3,198	\$3,432	\$3,523	91.8%
Gasoline & motor oil	\$2,086	\$1,845	\$2,209	\$2,506	\$2,446	\$2,322	\$2,037	\$1,709	\$1,665	\$1,797	-13.9%
Food at home	\$4,032	\$3,977	\$4,005	\$4,077	\$4,139	\$4,156	\$4,014	\$4,031	\$4,418	\$4,775	18.4%

Table 2 Sample Average Price Data in Northeast Urban Region: 2009-2018¹⁵

Item	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Change
Bananas, per lb.	\$0.66	\$0.64	\$0.68	\$0.67	\$0.65	\$0.62	\$0.57	\$0.57	\$0.58	\$0.57	-13.64%
Bread, white, pan, per lb.	\$1.73	\$1.73	\$1.63	\$1.55	\$1.44	\$1.43	\$1.53	\$1.41	\$1.29	\$1.17	-32.37%
Chicken breast, boneless, per lb.	\$3.44	\$3.50	\$3.38	\$3.42	\$3.51	\$3.56	\$3.70	\$3.55	\$3.59	\$3.33	-3.20%
Eggs, grade A, lg, per doz.	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	\$1.86	\$2.00	\$2.29	23.12%
Flour, white, all purpose, per lb.	\$0.57	\$0.54	\$0.57	\$0.57	\$0.59	\$0.65	\$0.61	\$0.66	*	*	15.79%
Milk, fresh, whole, fortified, per gal.	\$3.14	\$3.23	\$3.48	*	*	\$3.94	\$3.69	\$3.48	\$3.56	\$3.36	7.01%
Potatoes, white, per lb.	\$0.68	\$0.61	\$0.70	\$0.74	\$0.70	\$0.78	\$0.77	\$0.78	\$0.76	\$0.73	7.35%
Tomatoes, field grown, per lb.	\$1.84	\$1.86	\$1.95	\$2.00	\$2.27	\$1.88	\$1.95	*	*	*	5.98%
Electricity, per KWH	\$0.16	\$0.17	\$0.16	\$0.16	\$0.16	\$0.17	\$0.17	\$0.17	\$0.17	\$0.17	6.25%
Fuel oil #2 per gal.	\$2.54	\$2.92	\$3.69	\$3.72	\$3.69	\$3.68	\$2.59	\$2.09	\$2.42	\$3.09	21.65%

No data was available for boxes with an asterisk

While some food items have seen a price decrease in the past 10 years, other types of energy and food costs have been on the rise. Food prices continue to climb as a result of increased demand, reduced supply, and adverse weather conditions which impact crops. The decrease in gasoline prices has lifted a burden for rural upstate counties such as Otsego County where public transportation is limited and residents must travel greater distances to get to local grocery stores. The Consumer Price Index increased by 18% between October 2010 and October 2019.¹⁶

¹⁴ Consumer Expenditure Surveys. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/cex/csxregion.htm> on 11/26/2019

¹⁵ CPI Average Price Data, U.S. city average. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2019). Retrieved from <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/surveymost> on 11/26/2019

¹⁶ CPI Inflation Calculator. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl?cost1=1&year1=201010&year2=201910> on 11/26/2019

3. Population

The US Census estimates Otsego County's population to be 59,749, which represents a 4.1% decrease since 2010.¹⁷ The two largest communities within the county are Oneonta and Cooperstown, the county seat, with populations of 21,960 and 5,523 respectively.¹⁸

While New York State's population has seen a slight growth of 0.8% from 2010 to 2018, Otsego County's population has decreased from 62,277 to 59,749, a decrease of 4.1%.¹⁹ During the same time period, the under 5 population has decreased from 2,741 to 2,530 (a 7.7% drop), and the under 18 population has decreased from 11,618 to 9,550 (a 17.8% drop).²⁰ School enrollment data confirms that the county's youth population has seen a decrease, with a 10.3% drop from 2013 to 2018.²¹ While Otsego County's youth population has seen a significant decline between 2010 and 2018, the elderly population has been increasing. The 65 years and over population increased from 10,281 to 12,657 (a 23.1% increase), and the median age increased from 40.9 to 42.6 (a 4.2% increase).²² Otsego County population trends are noted in Figure 3 below.

¹⁷ Quick Facts, U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NY,otsegocountynewyork/PST045218> on 12/3/2019

¹⁸ American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau. (2017). Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=population%20data%20for%20Otsego%20County%20New%20York&hidePreview=true&table=B01003&tid=ACSDT5Y2017.B01003&g=0600000US3607783129,3607779972,3607776012,3607770310,3607763638,3607761467,3607758420,3607758343,3607755695,3607755629,3607754892,3607754881,3607750485,3607748494,3607747240,3607746910,3607745920,3607741531,3607732589,3607724845,3607723613,3607719895,3607715253,3607711528,3607711209&vintage=2017&layer=countysubdivision&cid=B01003_001E&lastDisplayedRow=74&tp=true on 10/10/2019

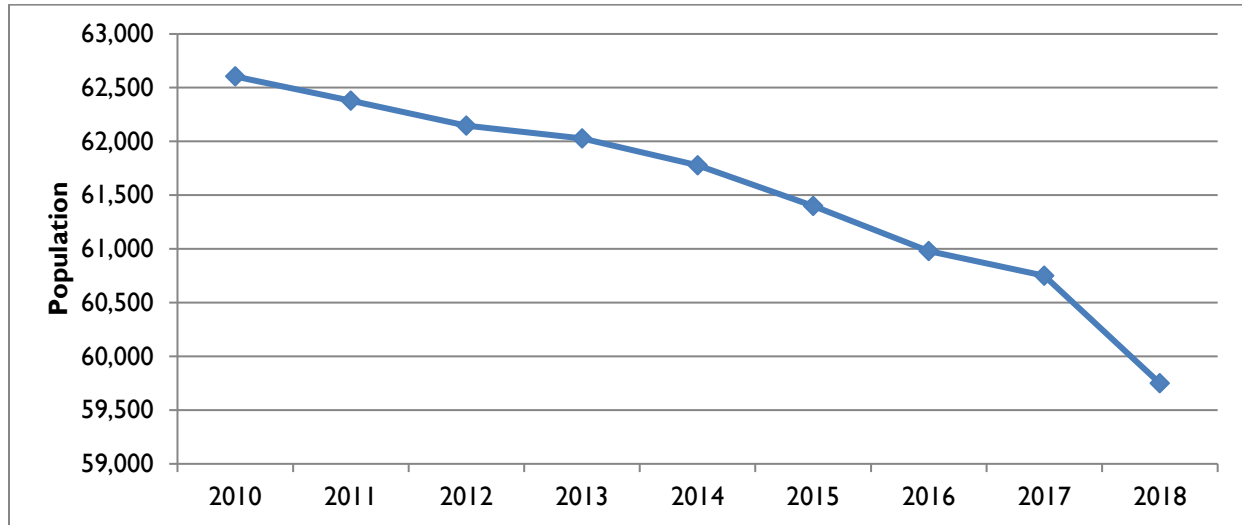
¹⁹ Quick Facts, U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NY,otsegocountynewyork/PST045218> on 12/3/2019

²⁰ American Fact Finder, U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF> on 12/3/2019

²¹ New York State Department of Education. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://data.nysed.gov/profile.php?county=47> on 12/3/2019

²² American Fact Finder, U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF> on 12/3/2019

Figure 3 Otsego County Population Trends: 2010 - 2018²³



In addition to a declining county population, there have also been shifts in the city and village populations. Over the past eight years, the villages of Cherry Valley and Laurens experienced the largest population growth; 23.6% and 15.8% respectively. In terms of actual numbers, Cherry Valley gained 104 residents while Laurens gained 32. Three other villages saw an increase in population of 10% or less. The city of Oneonta and the remaining four villages experienced a decrease in population over the same time period. Villages experiencing the most dramatic decreases were Milford and Otego. Milford lost 126 residents causing a population drop of 24.7%, while Otego lost 156 residents causing a population drop of 12.0%. City and village population changes are outlined in Table 3 below.

²³ Ibid

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Table 3 Changes in City/Village Population in Otsego County²⁴

Village/City	2010 Census	2011 Estimate	2012 Estimate	2013 Estimate	2014 Estimate	2015 Estimate	2016 Estimate	2017 Estimate	8 Yr. Change	
									#	%
Cherry Valley	440	497	514	472	537	562	536	544	104	23.6%
Cooperstown	1,764	2,030	2,138	2,080	2,133	2,185	1,935	1,941	177	10.0%
Gilbertsville	350	371	322	343	354	361	332	367	17	4.9%
Laurens	202	233	251	249	237	233	228	234	32	15.8%
Milford	510	481	447	397	420	396	372	384	-126	-24.7%
Morris	522	433	493	467	387	396	405	489	-33	-6.3%
Oneonta	14,006	13,938	13,890	13,922	13,906	13,862	13,863	13,932	-74	-0.5%
Otego	1,302	1,311	1,189	1,204	1,179	1,152	1,289	1,146	-156	-12.0%
Richfield Springs	1,008	1,107	1,193	1,123	1,193	1,229	1,121	1,102	94	9.3%
Unadilla	1,121	1,080	1,016	1,065	975	831	866	1,031	-90	-8.0%

Town populations have changed as well as shown in Table 4 below. In terms of actual numbers, the towns of Maryland and Morris have experienced the largest increase in population (308 and 220, respectively); and the towns of Worcester and Hartwick have experienced the greatest decline (-532 and -377, respectively). In terms of percentages, the towns of Maryland and Cherry Valley have experienced the largest increase in population (19.2% and 19.0%, respectively); and the towns of Pittsfield and Worcester have experienced the greatest decrease (-22.2% and -20.7%, respectively). Overall, 17 out of 24 (70.8%) towns in Otsego County saw a decrease in population since the 2010 census, which is in line with the decrease in the county population during the same time period. Of the towns that saw a population increase, 4 of 7 (57.1%) saw an increase of less than 10%.

Shockingly, both the city and town of Oneonta have experienced a decrease in population over the past eight years, with the last increase occurring in 2013. Oneonta is considered the hub of Otsego County, playing host to the majority of the county's employers and shopping opportunities, providing easy access to the interstate, and is the only municipality with regular public transportation routes and options. Also of note, 4 of the 7 (57.1%) towns that saw population increases are very small, rural communities. Because of their overall size, these towns do not have their own school districts; instead children living here attend school in communities that are geographically close and have higher population numbers. These shifts in population, along with the county's rising 65 years and over population, speak to the

²⁴ American Fact Finder, U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml on 12/5/2019

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fact that many people are moving out of the area for better and more diverse opportunities.

Table 4 Changes in Town Populations in Otsego County²⁵

Town	2010 Census	2011 Estimate	2012 Estimate	2013 Estimate	2014 Estimate	2015 Estimate	2016 Estimate	2017 Estimate	8 Yr. Change	
									#	%
Burlington	1,355	1,371	1,168	1,129	1,154	1,094	1,063	1,145	-210	-15.5%
Butternuts	1,894	1,925	1,819	1,964	1,991	1,966	1,756	1,864	-30	-1.6%
Cherry Valley	1,103	1,200	1,259	1,183	1,282	1,299	1,292	1,313	210	19.0%
Decatur	314	357	329	357	321	312	285	308	-6	-1.9%
Edmeston	1,724	1,928	1,867	1,978	1,874	1,897	1,836	1,766	42	2.4%
Exeter	867	885	898	928	943	892	895	818	-49	-5.7%
Hartwick	2,424	2,205	1,980	1,890	1,958	1,915	1,999	2,047	-377	-15.6%
Laurens	2,432	2,455	2,551	2,588	2,721	2,740	2,681	2,637	205	8.4%
Maryland	1,605	1,833	1,838	1,848	1,854	1,934	1,941	1,913	308	19.2%
Middlefield	1,824	1,827	1,962	2,038	1,965	1,993	1,964	1,882	58	3.2%
Milford	3,041	3,036	3,035	3,029	3,027	2,982	2,977	2,937	-104	-3.4%
Morris	1,604	1,506	1,550	1,506	1,551	1,616	1,785	1,824	220	13.7%
New Lisbon	1,164	1,008	1,101	978	918	1,013	1,122	1,068	-96	-8.2%
Oneonta	5,205	5,213	5,209	5,202	5,176	5,147	5,117	5,088	-117	-2.2%
Otego	3,141	3,127	3,109	3,102	3,073	3,049	3,019	2,961	-180	-5.7%
Otsego	3,916	3,911	3,895	3,882	3,867	3,832	3,796	3,794	-122	-3.1%
Pittsfield	1,674	1,581	1,526	1,467	1,295	1,267	1,257	1,303	-371	-22.2%
Plainfield	842	884	913	979	902	893	854	903	61	7.2%
Richfield	2,379	2,385	2,501	2,317	2,304	2,368	2,117	2,147	-232	-9.8%
Roseboom	803	819	696	699	619	669	663	664	-139	-17.3%
Springfield	1,437	1,364	1,328	1,356	1,397	1,342	1,356	1,342	-95	-6.6%
Unadilla	4,437	4,411	4,384	4,368	4,343	4,312	4,289	4,224	-213	-4.8%
Westford	846	796	939	884	914	906	882	835	-11	-1.3%
Worcester	2,567	2,415	2,400	2,435	2,423	2,099	2,170	2,035	-532	-20.7%

²⁵ Ibid

4. Poverty

While the number of people living in poverty in Otsego County has decreased from 2012 – 2017, including the number of children living in poverty under age 18, the percentage of the population living in poverty has stayed fairly steady. There was a slight increase of 0.2% for all ages, and a 1.0% increase in the percentage of children under age 18 living in poverty since 2012. The increase in the number of children under 18 living in poverty is especially noteworthy when you take into consideration the fact that the overall under 18 population has decreased 17.8% since 2010. The overall percentage of Otsego County residents living in poverty is 16.1%, which exceeds both New York State (15.1%) and the United States (14.6%) rates.²⁶ From 2015 – 2017 both the number and percentage of children under age 5 living in poverty decreased, while the number of children ages 5 – 17 decreased but the percentage increased slightly. It is estimated that 23.9% of children under 5 in Otsego County are living in poverty, which again, exceeds both the New York State (22.6%) and the United States (22.5%) rates.²⁷ Poverty estimates for Otsego County are displayed in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Poverty Estimates for Otsego County²⁸

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Change
All Ages							
Count	9,167	8,883	9,288	9,275	9,106	8,966	-201
Percent	15.9%	15.5%	16.4%	16.5%	16.3%	16.1%	0.2%
Under Age 18							
Count	2,097	1,983	1,959	2,008	1,788	1,920	-177
Percent	18.5%	18.0%	18.4%	19.5%	17.8%	19.5%	1.0%
Ages 0 - 5							
Count	No data available			635	562	607	-28
Percent				25.1%	22.2%	23.9%	-1.2%
Ages 5 - 17							
Count	No data available			1,373	1,226	1,313	-60
Percent				17.7%	16.4%	17.9%	0.2%

Looking within Otsego County, one indicator of poverty is the number of students eligible for free lunch ($\leq 130\%$ poverty level). During the 2017 – 2018 school year, there were 2,602 students eligible for free school lunch in the 12 school districts within Otsego County, which represents 39% of the total school population. An additional 408 students were eligible for reduced-price lunch, accounting for 6% of

²⁶ American Fact Finder, U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF> on 12/6/2019

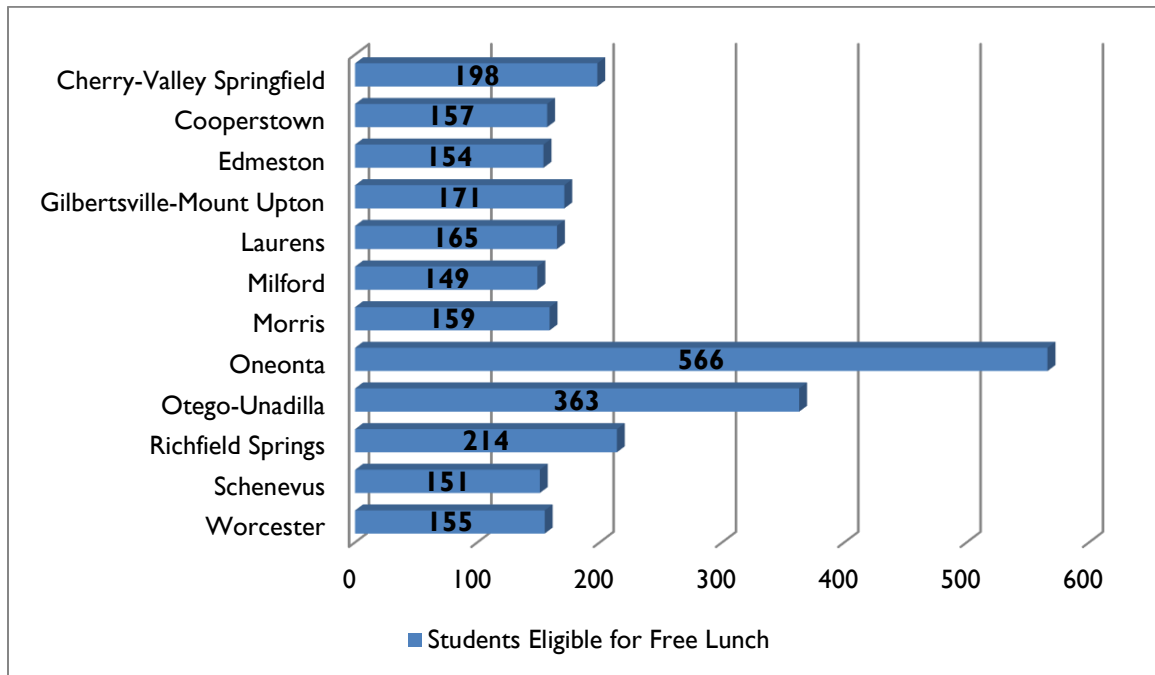
²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

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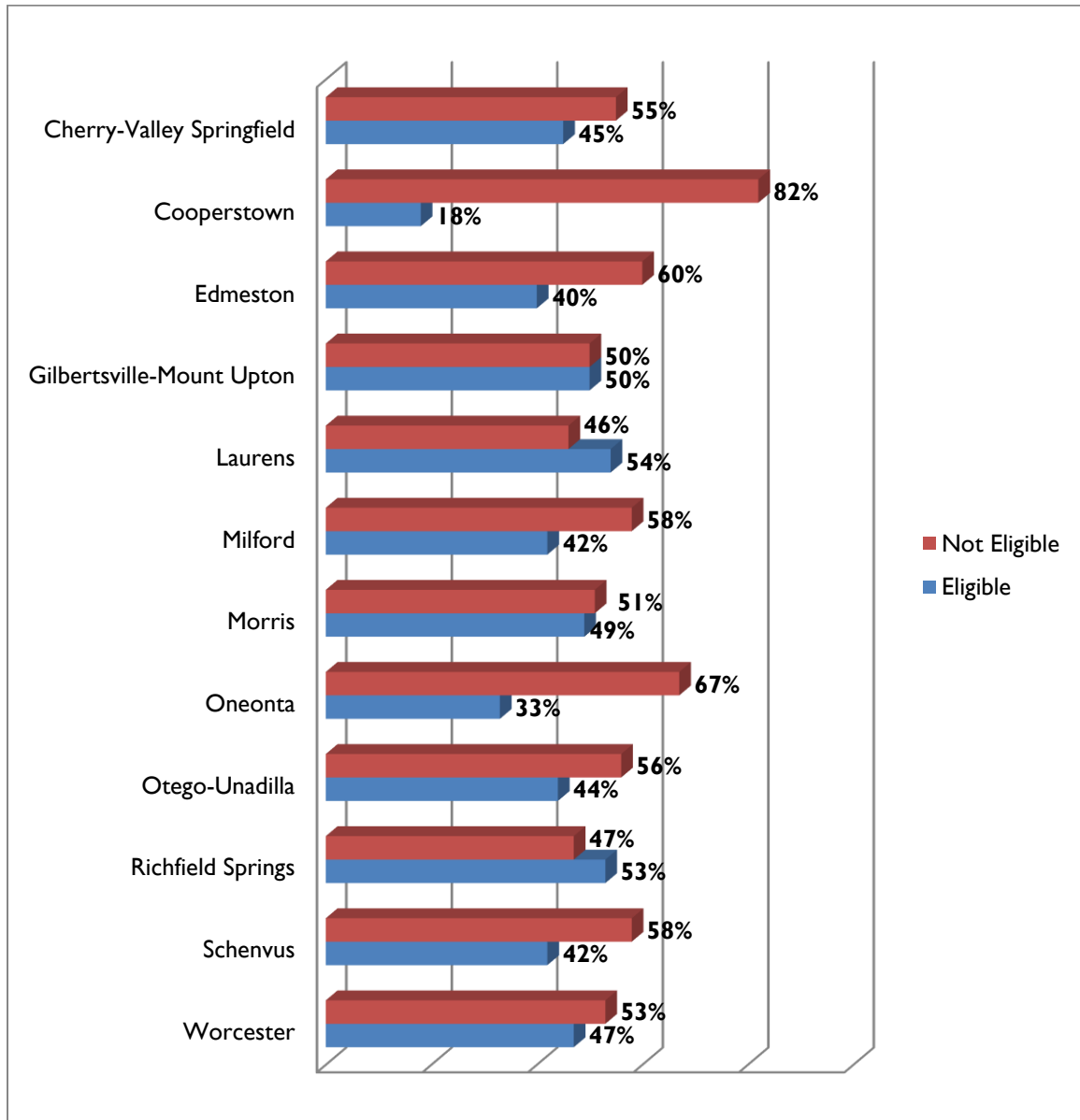
the county's school population. The following figures show where these students are located in Otsego County and the percentage of eligible students in each district.

Figure 4 Students Eligible for Free Lunch in Otsego County School Districts²⁹



²⁹ Student and Educator Report, New York State Education Department. (2019). Retrieved from <https://data.nysed.gov/lists.php?type=district> on 12/9/2019

Figure 5 Percentage of Students in Otsego County School Districts that are Eligible for Free Lunch³⁰



In 2017, 1.7% of the birth – 17 age group in Otsego County were receiving public assistance, 20% were receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, and 2.1% were receiving Supplemental Security Income.³¹ According to the Opportunities for Otsego 2017 – 2018 Annual Report, 17% of clients served were homeless during the October 2017 – September 2018 time period.³² An average of

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ New York State Kids' Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.nyskwic.org/get_data/indicator_profile.cfm?indicatorid=4&Go.x=17&Go.y=20 on 10/16/2019

³² "2017-2018 Annual Report." *Opportunities for Otsego, Inc.* (n.d.).

77 school-aged children experience homelessness each year in Otsego County, with the highest concentration in the Oneonta City School District, closely followed by the much smaller, rural school districts of Otego-Unadilla, Edmeston, Milford, and Richfield Springs.³³ While it is reported that 58% of families are income eligible to receive child care subsidy in Otsego County, it is important to note that the county's eligibility standards are 200% of the federal poverty guidelines, so it is not possible to determine how many of these children are Head Start/Early Head Start eligible.³⁴

B. Demographic Makeup of Head Start Eligible Children and Families

1. Estimated Number

According to the American Community Survey estimate, there are approximately 607 children under the age of 5 living in poverty throughout Otsego County, accounting for 23.9% of that population.³⁵ Using the agency database, it was identified that there were approximately 563 children who were eligible for Head Start (ages 3 and 4 and income \leq 100% poverty level) and 405 children who were eligible for Early Head Start (ages 0 – 2 and income \leq 100% poverty level) as of December 2019. This represents a decrease of 18.8% and 46.5% respectively in the number of eligible children in the agency's database since the 2014 Community Needs Assessment. The Head Start Reauthorization changed income eligibility guidelines and now allows for the eligibility of children up to 130% of the poverty level. This change has allowed for eligibility of an additional 73 children (ages 3 and 4) for Head Start and an additional 72 children (ages 0 – 2) for Early Head Start. This represents a decrease of 36.5% and 14.3% respectively in the number of eligible children in the 101 – 130% category in the agency's database since the 2014 Community Needs Assessment. Additionally, 2.2% of children in Otsego County are living in foster care, which is in line with the New York State rate of 2.3%.³⁶

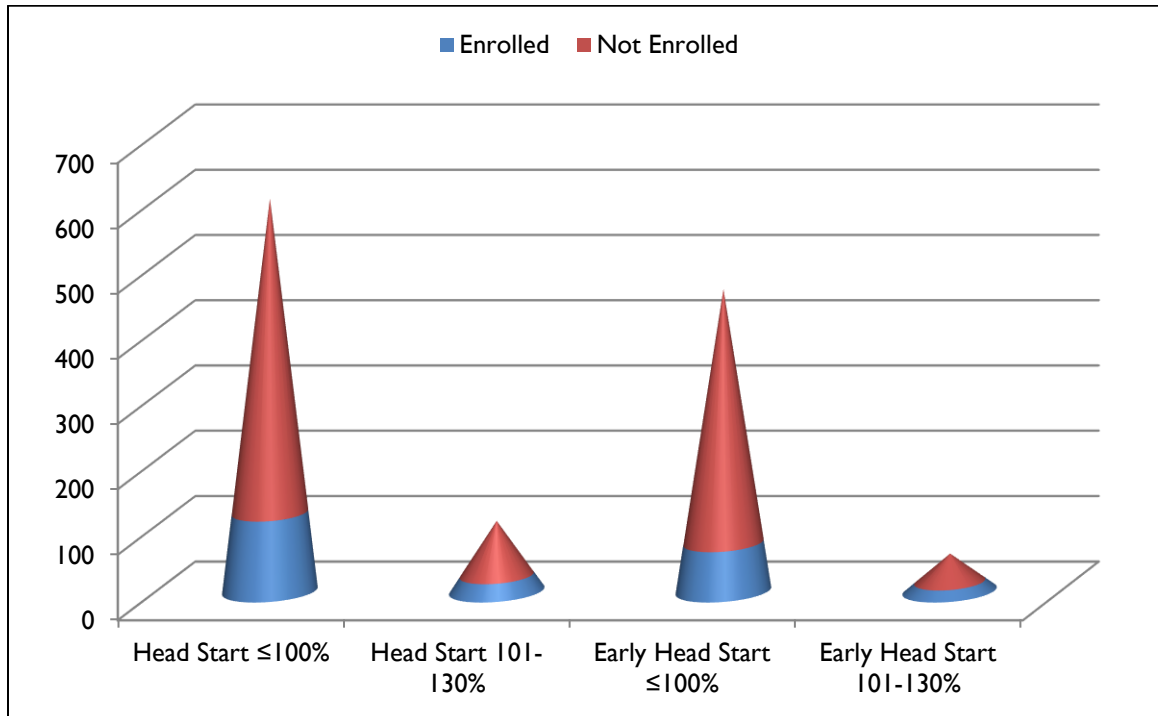
³³ Ibid

³⁴ "Child Care Support Services: 2019 Otsego County Child Care Report." *Catholic Charities of Delaware and Otsego Counties*. (n.d.).

³⁵ American Fact Finder, U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF> on 12/6/2019

³⁶ New York State Kids Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.nyskwic.org/get_data/indicator_profile.cfm?indicatorid=25&Go.x=28&Go.y=20 on 10/16/2019

Figure 6 Population of Children Who Were Age and Income Eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start³⁷

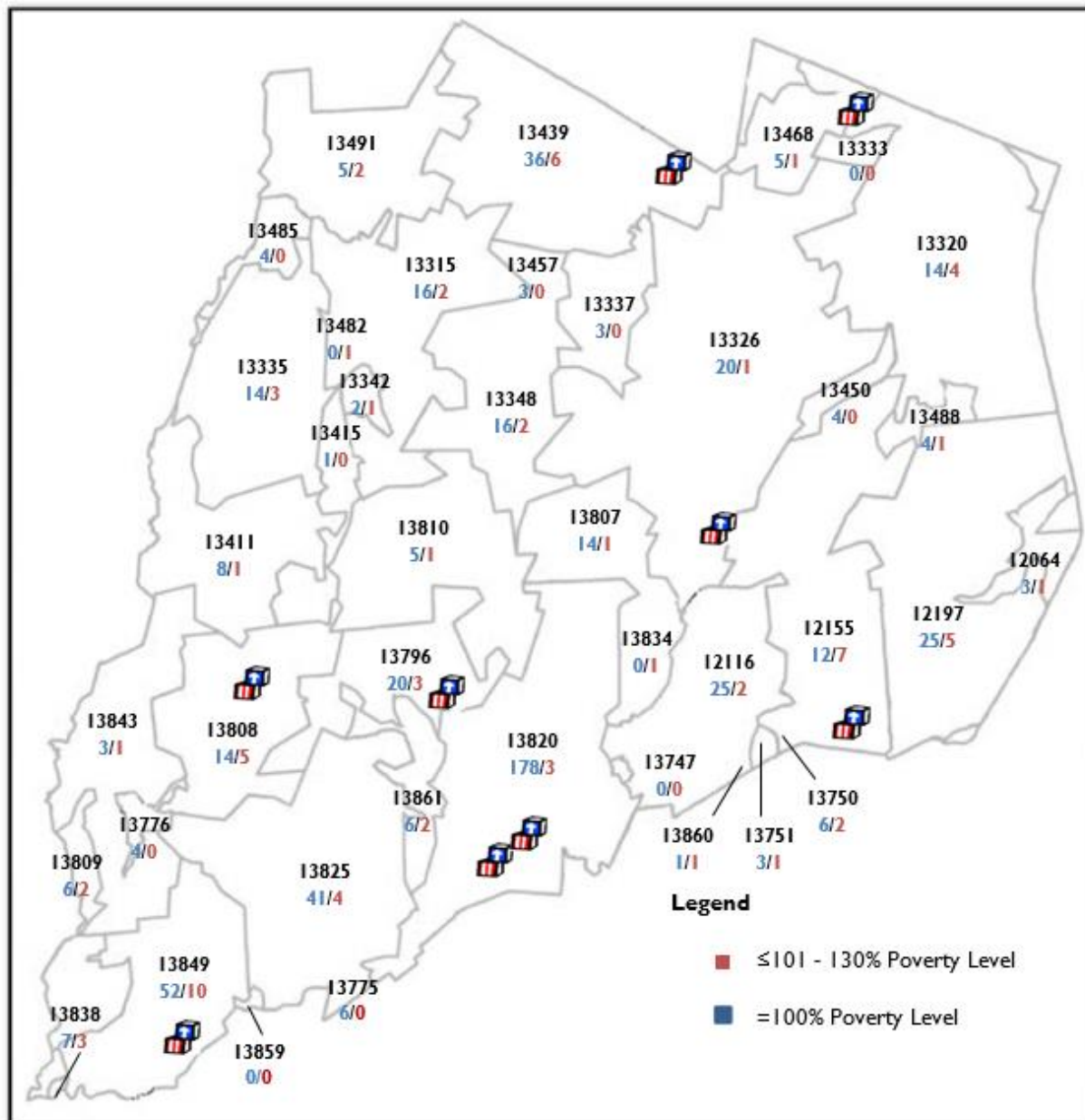


2. Geographic Location

The following maps show the location of children eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start in relation to the Head Start centers in Otsego County.

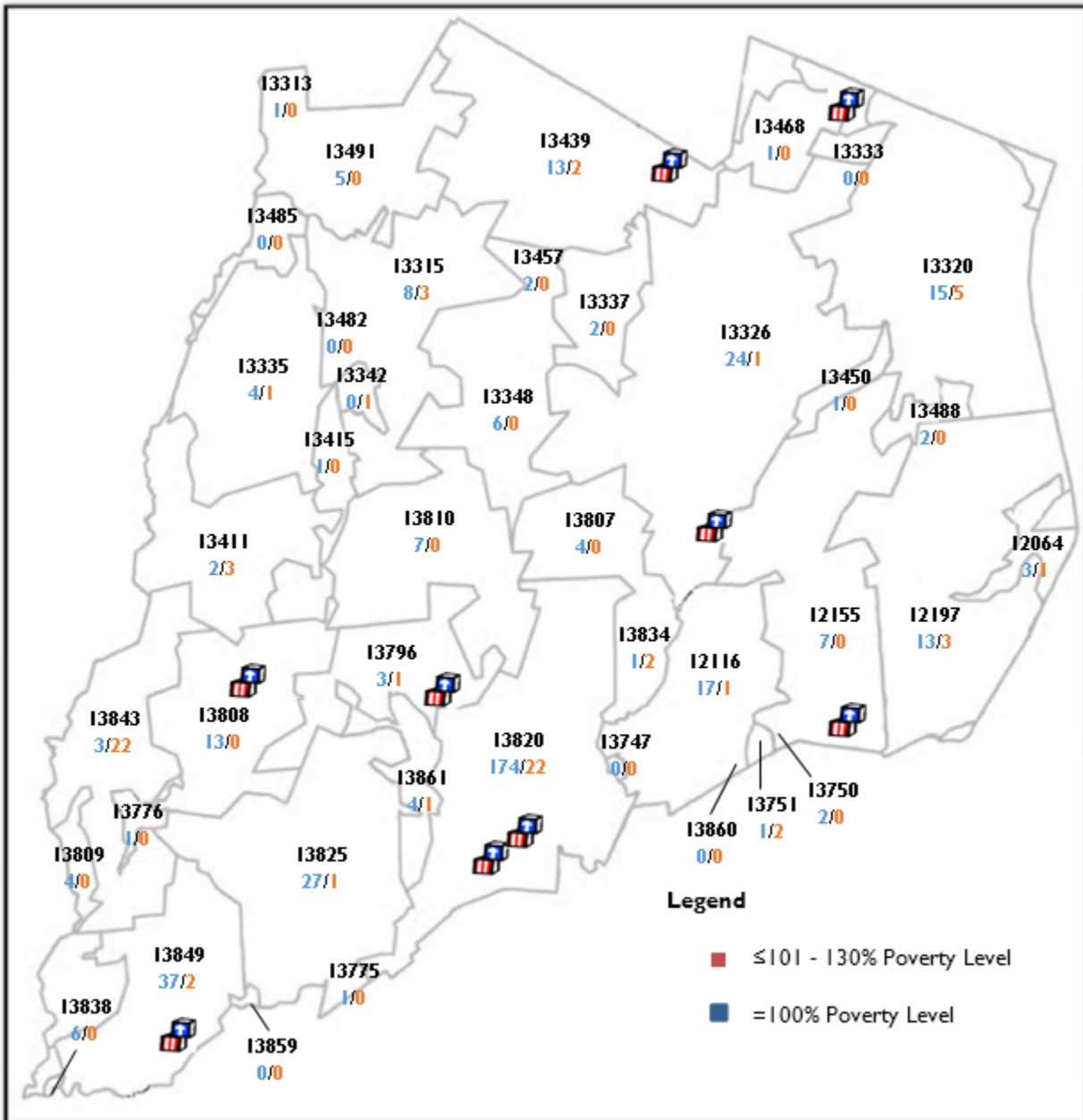
³⁷ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc. Agency Database. (2019).

Figure 7 Location of Children Who Were Age and Income Eligible for Head Start (Ages 3-4 and \leq 130% Poverty Level)³⁸



³⁸ Ibid

Figure 8 Location of Children Who Were Age and Income Eligible for Early Head Start (Ages 0-2 and \leq 130% Poverty Level)³⁹



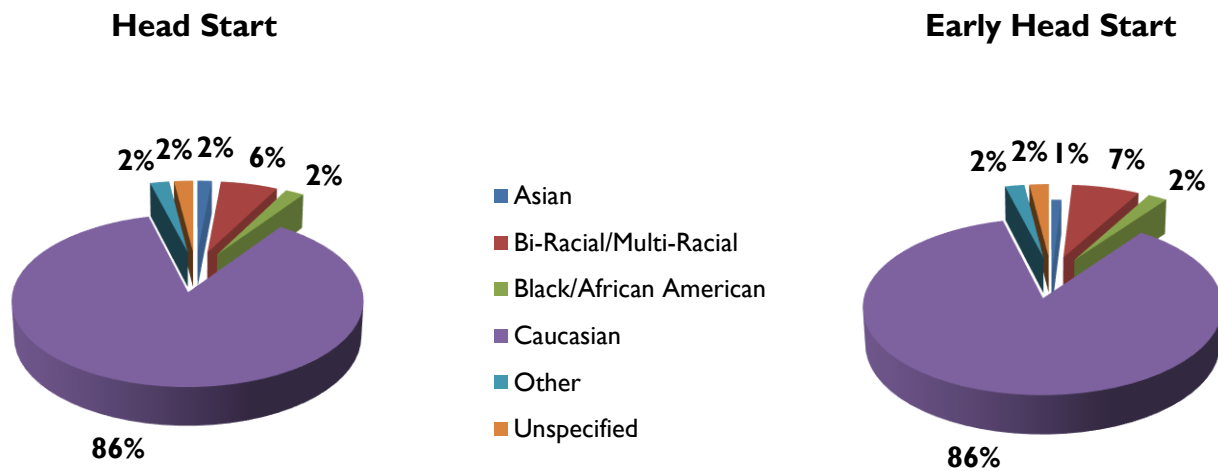
3. *Racial Composition*

Like many rural counties in the region, the 2018 U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Otsego County's racial composition is overwhelmingly Caucasian (94.1%), with small Black/African American (2.4%), Bi-Racial/Multi-Racial (1.7%), and Asian (1.5%)

³⁹ Ibid

populations.⁴⁰ The racial composition of the county's Head Start eligible children follows this trend, with a slightly larger Bi-Racial/Multi-Racial population, as shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9 Racial Composition of Children Who Were Age and Income Eligible (≤130% Poverty Level) for Head Start (Ages 3-4) and Early Head Start (Ages 0-2)⁴¹



American Indian/Alaskan Native and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander populations were less than 0.2% for both Head Start and Early Head Start

4. Ethnic Composition

As with racial composition, Otsego County's ethnic composition is not particularly diverse. The population is primarily non-Hispanic/Latinx (91.1%), with small Hispanic/Latinx population (3.8%)⁴². The ethnic composition of the county's Head Start and Early Head Start eligible children is fairly similar, with a slightly larger Hispanic/Latinx population, as shown in Figure 10 below.

⁴⁰ QuickFacts, U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved from

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/otsegocountynewyork,US/PST045218> on 12/9/2019

⁴¹ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start Program Information Summaries. (2019).

⁴² QuickFacts, U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved from

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/otsegocountynewyork,US/PST045218> on 12/9/2019

Figure 10 Ethnic Composition of Children Who Were Age and Income Eligible ($\leq 130\%$ Poverty Level) for Head Start (Ages 3-4) and Early Head Start (Ages 0-2)⁴³



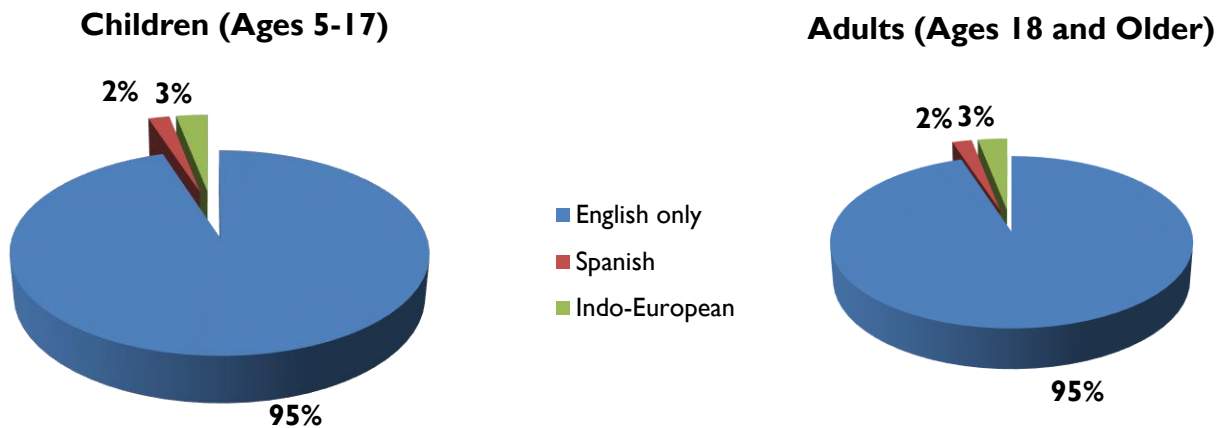
5. Languages Spoken

As outlined in Figure 11 below, the majority of Otsego County residents speak English only, followed by Indo-European and Spanish. The percentage of English-speaking residents is higher than both the New York State and national rates. For children ages 5 – 17, 70% in New York and 78% in the United States speak English only; for adults ages 18 and over, 69% and 79% respectively speak English only.⁴⁴

⁴³ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc. Agency Database. (2019).

⁴⁴ American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved from censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US36077-otsego-county-ny/ on 12/4/ 2019

Figure 11 Languages Spoken at Home in Otsego County for Children (Ages 5-17) and Adults (Ages 18 and Older)⁴⁵



*Asian/Islander and Other languages were less than 1%
for both age groups*

C. Child Development and Child Care Programs Serving Head Start Eligible Children and Families

1. Universal Pre-Kindergarten

Established in 1998, Universal Pre-kindergarten is a preschool education initiative implemented by New York State, with the intention to offer pre-kindergarten to all 4-year-old children in the state, regardless of family income or other risk factors. According to *The State of Preschool 2018*:

New York preschool enrolled 121,572 children in 2017-2018, a decrease of 1,299 children from the prior year....In the 2013-2014 school year, the state continued targeting its pre-K funding, launching the New York State Priority Prekindergarten Program (NYSPPK) offering competitive grants creating new full- and half-day slots for high-need children in low-income school districts and enabling districts to convert half-day slots to full-day...In 2015-2016, the Expanded Prekindergarten for 3- and 4-Year-Old Students grant began, creating new slots for both 3- and 4-year-olds. New York was also awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG) supporting enrollment of additional low-income 4-year-olds in five school districts. In 2017-2018, over 75% of children were served in school-day programs.⁴⁶

As shown in Table 6 below, of the 12 school districts that are located within Otsego County, 8 offered UPK programs in the 2019 – 2020 school year, with a total capacity of 271 children. This is an increase of 5 slots since the 2014 Community Needs Assessment, which represents an increase of 1.8%. Among the 9 school districts that border or are partially located in Otsego County, 8 had UPK programs in the 2019 –

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ *The State of Preschool 2018; State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education. 2019.

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2020 school year. Thus, for the 21 school districts in and around the county, 17 districts are implementing UPK.

Table 6 UPK Programs within Otsego County

Otsego County School Districts	Capacity
Cooperstown	0
Cherry Valley-Springfield	32
Edmeston	17
Gilbertsville-Mount Upton	0
Laurens	0
Milford	38
Morris	21
Oneonta	95
Otego-Unadilla	0
Richfield Springs	30
Schenevus	18
Worcester	20
Subtotal for Otsego County School Districts	271

Oneonta operates eight part day UPK classrooms, two of which are run by Opportunities for Otsego, Inc. In the past, some Head Start classrooms operated at different times from UPK so that they did not compete with each other for enrollment of eligible children 4 years of age. This has become increasingly difficult due to the Head Start Program Performance Standards released in 2016 requiring center-based Head Start classrooms to transition to 1,020 annual hours of operation by August 2021. Oneonta City School District and Opportunities for Otsego, Inc. have collaborated to provide wrap-around services, allowing families the opportunity for their children to participate in both programs for a full day of early childhood education services. With the increased hour requirement, many school districts are unable to run UPK classes at differing times from the Head Start center, or have expanded their services to encompass a full day of programming. This has had an impact on recruitment and enrollment at Head Start in these school districts.

Head Start and UPK programs are similar in that both offer free services and focus on school readiness preparing preschoolers for a successful transition to their school setting. There are, however, several differences between each program. Head Start provides services to low-income 3 and 4 year old children that fall at or below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines, whereas UPK provides services without income eligibility to 3 and 4 year olds residing within their school district (at this time, there are no UPK programs in Otsego County that offer services to 3 year olds). Head Start teachers are required to have a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education, whereas UPK teachers must hold a current teacher certification in the state in which they are teaching. Some UPK programs require children to be potty-trained before

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accepting them into the program, whereas Head Start takes doesn't instill prerequisites and uses this as an opportunity to partner with the family and help the child obtain the skills needed to successfully master this task. Opportunities for Otsego Inc.'s Head Start offers both full- and part-day programming. Transportation services are limited to those areas with the greatest need when a bus is available. In select areas in Otsego County, UPK is able to offer a full day of programming and transportation to enrolled children. While Head Start offers more to families in the way of social and supportive services, referrals to area resources, and developmental screenings for enrolled children, it is challenged to compete with a program that can provide a full day of programming which appeals to working families and those without access to transportation. UPK is also appealing to families who have another child who is already attending school. In regards to transportation, parents can put both children on the bus instead of transporting a younger child to the nearest Head Start center, saving the family time, mileage, and money. Having an older child in the school district means parents are familiar with school personnel and have established relationships with district staff as well. Parents often choose UPK over Head Start because of these factors, and due to the decreased amount of paperwork required to enroll in a UPK program.

2. Child Care Programs

Catholic Charities of Delaware and Otsego Counties is the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency for Otsego County. They provide services to both parents seeking child care and the child care community in an effort to meet the needs of working families with young children. The following information on day care centers and providers was obtained by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Table 7 Capacity of Licensed Family and Group/Family Day Care Providers in Otsego County⁴⁷

Type of Provider		Capacity: Ages 6 Weeks - 12 Years
Family Day Care Providers		180
Group/Family Day Care Providers		108
TOTAL		288

⁴⁷ Day Care Facility Search, New York State Office of Children and Family Services. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/ccfs_template.asp on 12/5/2019

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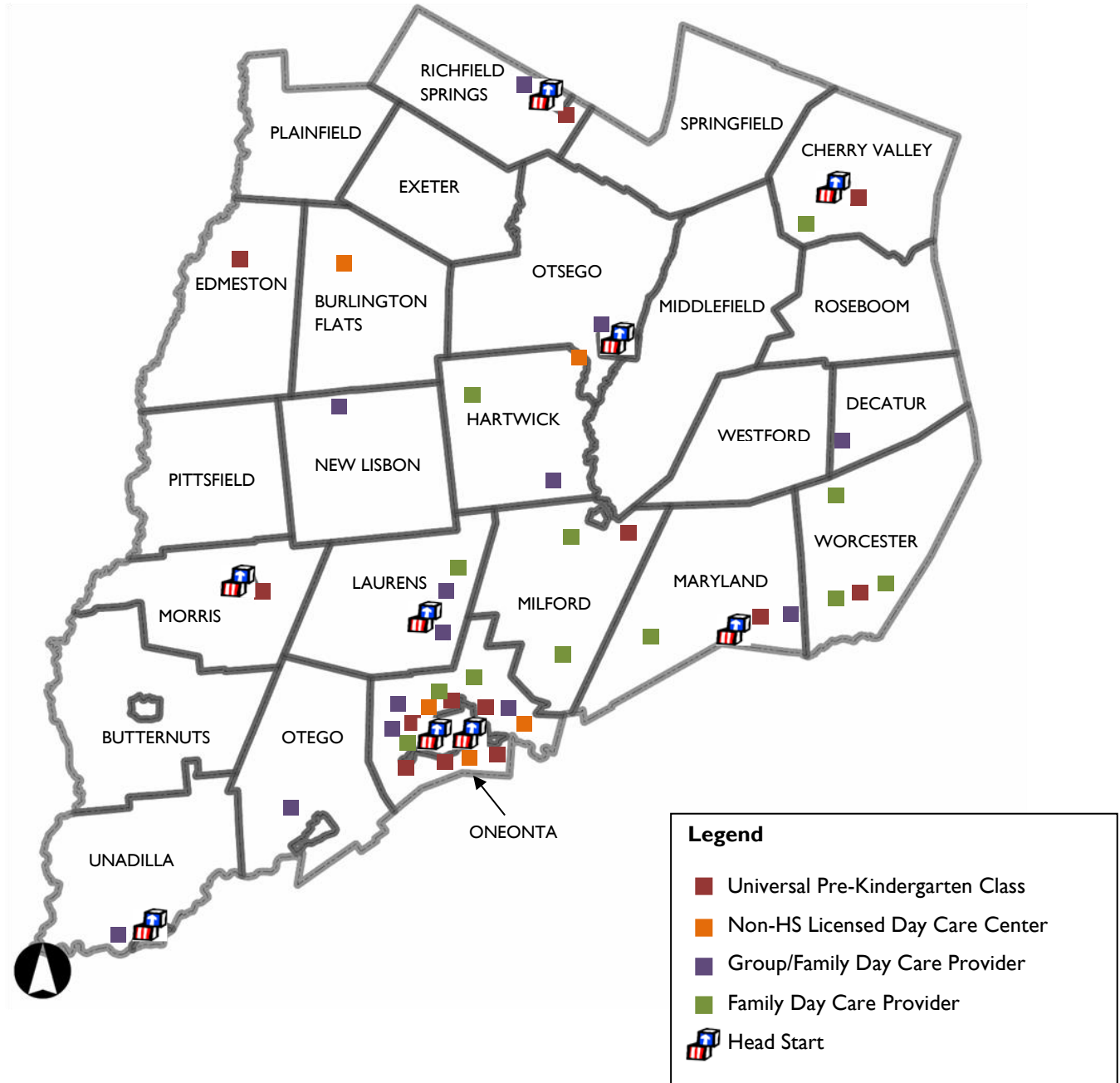
Table 8 Capacity of Licensed Day Care Centers in Otsego County⁴⁸

Name	Location	Infant	Capacity	
			Toddler	Preschool
Great Beginnings Preschool	Burlington Flats	0	0	30
Kids Unlimited Preschool	Oneonta	0	0	72
OFO - Cherry Valley HS	Cherry Valley	0	0	20
OFO - Cooperstown HS	Cooperstown	0	0	20
OFO - Laurens HS	Laurens	0	0	20
OFO - Morris HS	Morris	0	0	17
OFO - Oneonta HS	Oneonta	0	8	36
OFO - Richfield Springs HS	Richfield Springs	0	0	19
OFO - Schenevus HS	Schenevus	0	0	44
OFO - SUNY Oneonta HS	Oneonta	0	0	40
OFO - Unadilla HS	Unadilla	0	0	20
Oneonta Family YMCA	Oneonta	0	0	75
SUCO Children's Center (Bugbee)	Oneonta	16	24	59
The Brookwood School	Cooperstown	16	41	66
TOTAL		32	73	538

The following map shows the location of child development and/or child care providers in 2019.

⁴⁸ Ibid

Figure 12 Location of Child Development and Child Care Providers in Otsego County for Children Ages 0 – 5⁴⁹



There is an identified lack of licensed day care centers in Otsego County, especially centers that provide services to infants and toddlers. According to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, there are a total of 5 day care centers in

⁴⁹ Ibid

the county, with a total capacity to serve 32 infants, 65 toddlers, 302 preschoolers, and 107 school-aged children.⁵⁰ This represents a decrease of 2 preschool slots in the past year. Additionally, Head Start provides services to 206 preschoolers and Early Head Start provides services to 8 toddlers in a center-based setting. Otsego County has 12 licensed Family Day Care providers and 13 licensed Group Day Care providers, with a capacity to serve 72 and 156 children (ages 6 weeks to 12 years) respectively.⁵¹ This represents a decrease of 3 Family Day Care facilities and an increase of 4 Group Day Care facilities, for a total increase of 24 child care slots in these categories since 2018. There is one community center that offers school-age only child care for a capacity of 40 children in this age group.⁵² Available child care slots in Otsego County only decreased slightly since 2018, with an overall loss of 7 slots. The Child Care Support Services 2019 Otsego County Child Care Report states there are 487 infants (82% of that age group population) and 2,040 toddler/preschoolers (59% of that age group population) in need of child care services.⁵³ Furthermore, 69% of parents are looking for full time care, and less than 3% of parents are looking for care for a special needs child.⁵⁴ While it is reported that 58% of families are income eligible to receive child care subsidy in Otsego County,⁵⁵ the county's eligibility standards are 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, so there is no way to determine how many of these children are Head Start/Early Head Start eligible.

D. Children with Disabilities

During the 2017 – 2018 school year, the Otsego County Department of Health's Division for Children with Special Needs reported providing services to 196 children ages 0-2 and 189 children ages 3-5.⁵⁶ The following graphs display the breakdown of services that were provided to these children. It is important to note that some children received more than one service, so the number of services provided is larger than the number of children that received services. Catholic Charities of Delaware and Otsego Counties reports that less than 3% of parents are looking for child care for a special needs child.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *Child Care Support Services: 2019 Otsego County Child Care Report*. Catholic Charities of Delaware and Otsego Counties. (n.d.).

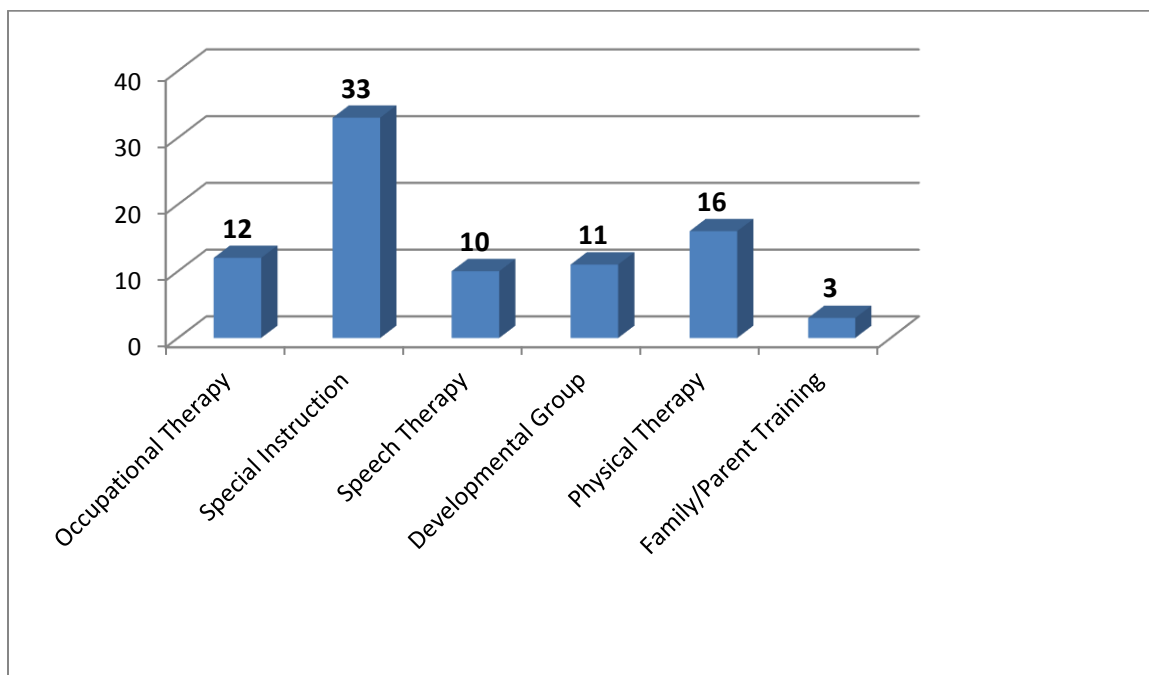
⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

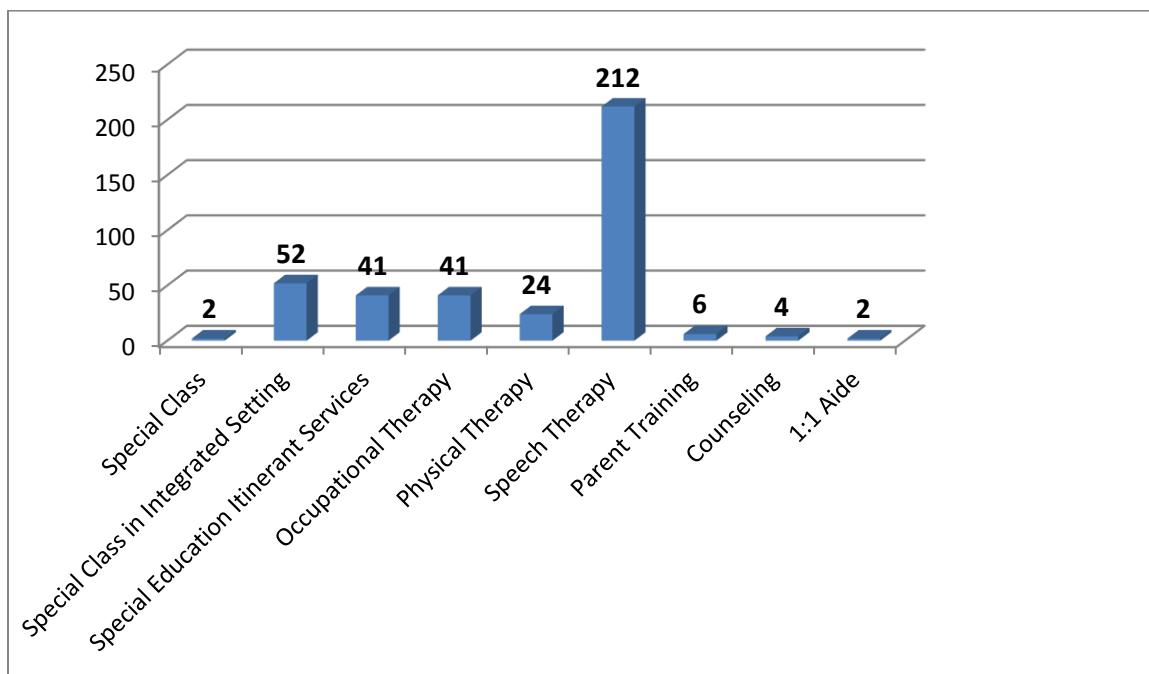
⁵⁶ Otsego County Department of Health, Division for Children with Special Needs. (2019).

⁵⁷ *Child Care Support Services: 2019 Otsego County Child Care Report*. Catholic Charities of Delaware and Otsego Counties. (n.d.).

**Figure 13 Disabilities Services Provided to Children Ages 0 – 2 in Otsego
County: School Year 2017 – 2018⁵⁸**



**Figure 14 Disabilities Services Provided to Children Ages 3 – 5 in Otsego
County: School Year 2017 – 2018⁵⁹**



⁵⁸ Otsego County Department of Health, Division for Children with Special Needs. (2019).

⁵⁹ Ibid

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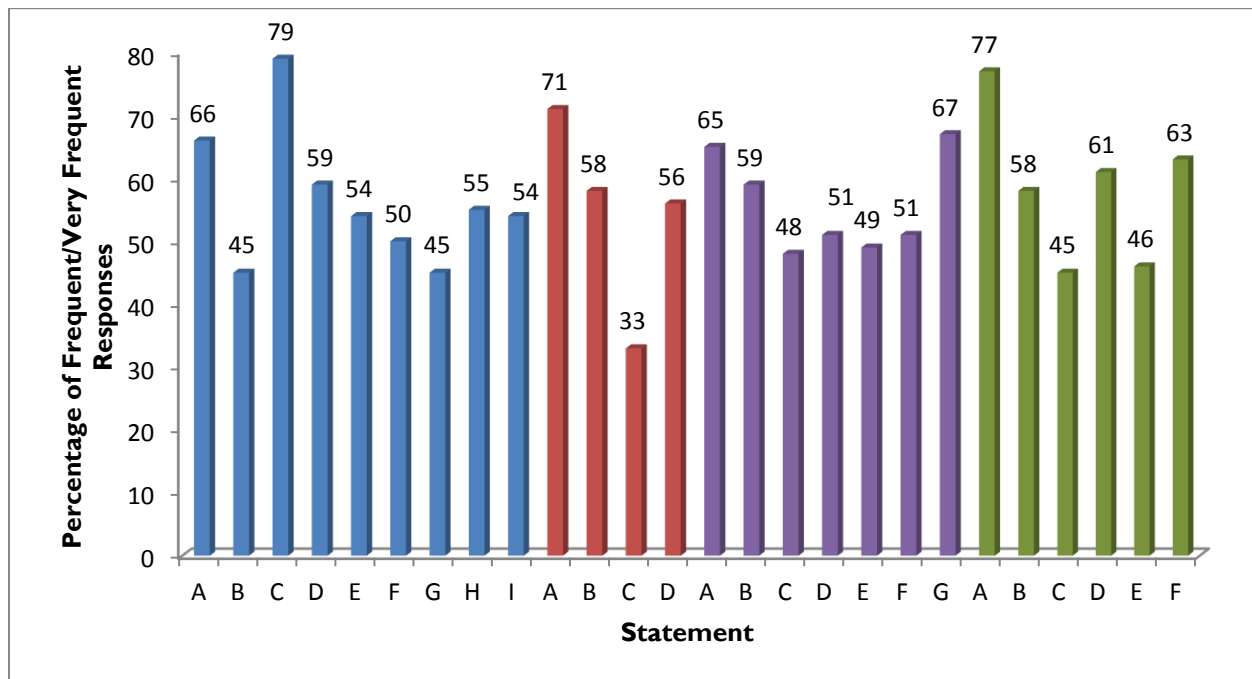
For the 2018 – 2019 program year, 23 Early Head Start children (16% of total cumulative enrollment) and 44 Head Start children (19% of total cumulative enrollment) were determined to have a disability. For the Head Start children, all 44 were diagnosed as non-categorical/developmental delay.⁶⁰ (Note: Diagnoses are not provided for Early Head Start children.)

E. Education, Health, Nutrition, and Social Services Needs of Head Start/Early Head Start Eligible Children and Families

1. Education

Head Start has collaborative UPK agreements with all school districts in which a center operates. As part of the kindergarten transition process for Head Start children, information is collected from kindergarten teachers in November to assess how well Head Start children are adapting to their new classroom. Figure 15 below shows the responses from kindergarten teachers for 2018.

Figure 15 2018 Kindergarten Transition Reports for Otsego County Head Start Children⁶¹



Category I: Language Literacy

- A Identifies 10 letters of the alphabet; especially letters in their name, out of order.
- B Correctly uses new or rare words introduced by adults or peers.
- C Writes his/her own name.
- D Understands and follows spoken directions.

⁶⁰ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start Program Information Summaries. (2019).

⁶¹ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Kindergarten Transition Reports. (2018)

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- E Follows words from left to right, top to bottom and page by page.
- F Understand rhyming and sound patterns.
- G Attempts to write a letter or letters to represent a word.
- H Follows directions of two or more steps.
- I Demonstrates awareness or relationships between sounds and letters.

Category II: Mathematics

- A Uses one-to-one correspondence in counting objects 1-10.
- B Identifies shapes regardless of size.
- C Understands addition and subtraction.
- D Can identify which number of objects is more, less, greater than, fewer or equal to another group of objects.

Category III: Social/Emotional

- A Accepts guidance/direction from, and asks questions to familiar adults.
- B Interacts positively with children during play and/or conversation.
- C Uses turn taking, trading and problem solving.
- D Has the ability to control strong emotions in appropriate manner.
- E Follows limits, expectations and redirection from adults.
- F Exhibits self-confidence by attempting new tasks independently (without prompt or reinforcement).
- G Has one or more preferred playmates.

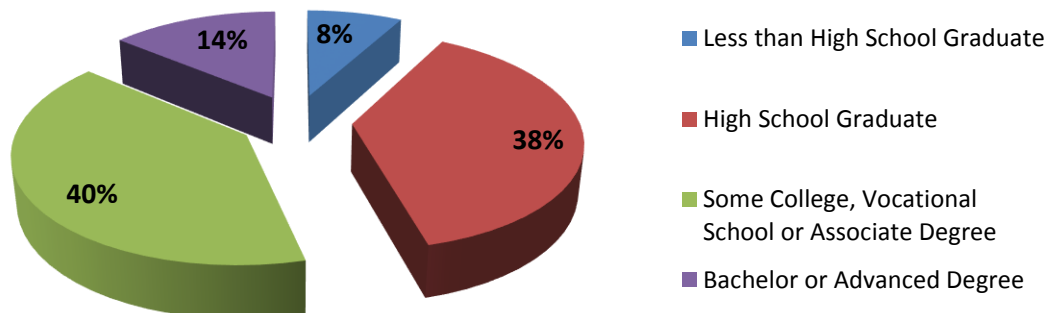
Category IV: Approaches to Learning

- A Engages in pretend and imaginative play.
- B Willingly engages in new experiences and activities.
- C Maintains focus on a task/follows routine independently.
- D Maintains focus on a task/follows routine with assistance.
- E Can solve problems through trial and error, problem solving or interactions with adults and peers.
- F Participates in small/large group activities.

Figure 16 below shows that 54% of parents have more than a high school graduate degree/GED in program year ending 2019. This is not only an increase over prior program years, but the largest percentage of parents that have at least some college education that the program has seen. In program year ending 2012 only 37% of parents had an education beyond high school.

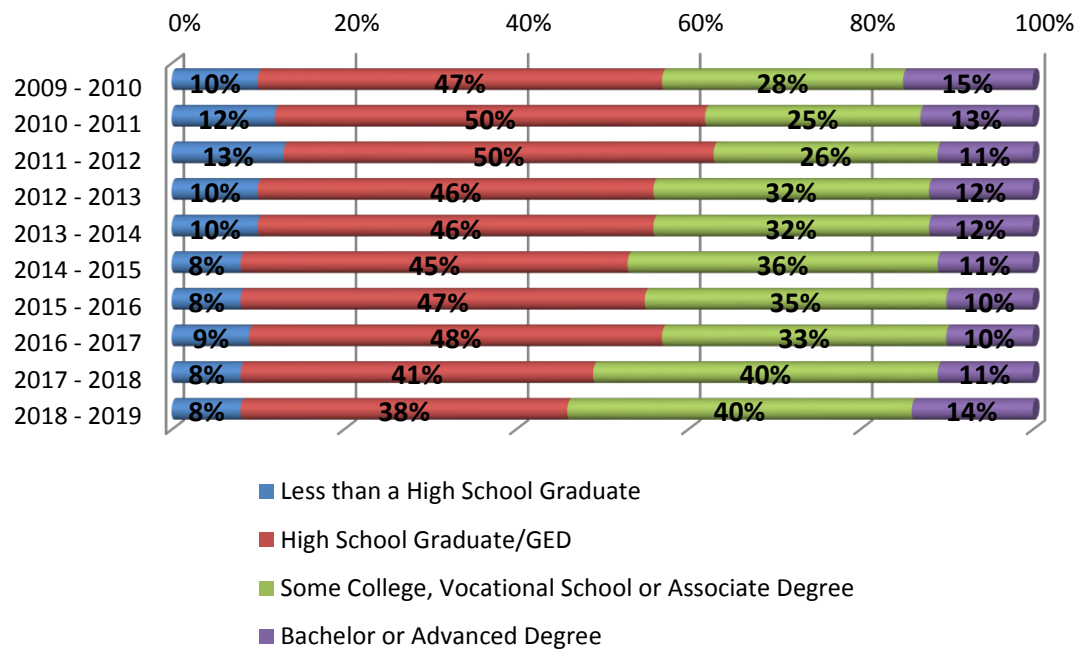
Figure 16 Education Level of Head Start/Early Head Start Parents:

PY 2018 – 2019⁶²



⁶² Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start Program Information Summaries. (2019).

**Figure 17 Education Level of Head Start/Early Head Start Parents:
2009 – 2019⁶³**

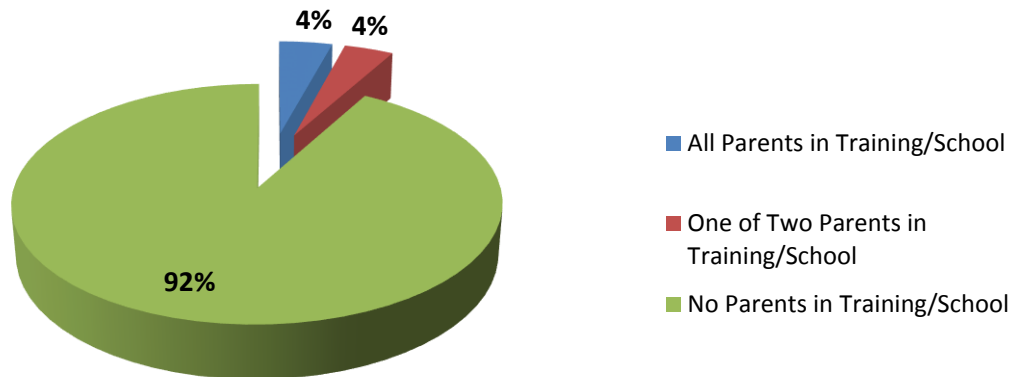


Only 8% of Head Start/Early Head Start parents were enrolled in a job training program or school during the 2018 – 2019 school year. The percentage of parents participating in job training/school from 2009 – 2019 has decreased 3%. The low number of parents participating in job training/school may be associated with the increased number of parents with an education beyond high school. “Higher levels of education increase the chance an unemployed person will emerge with a comparable wage and reduce the time required to find new employment.”⁶⁴

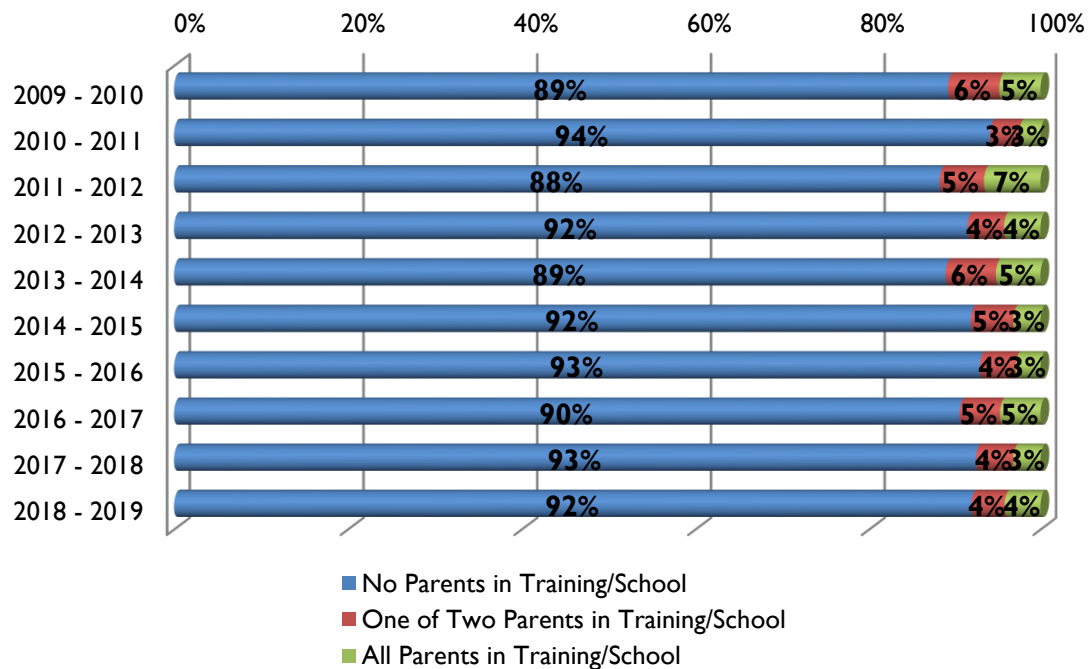
⁶³ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start Program Information Summaries. (2009-2019).

⁶⁴ *The Importance of Education for the Unemployed*. Zimmer, Timothy. Indiana Business Review. (Spring 2016). Retrieved from <http://www.ibrc.indiana.edu/ibr/2016/spring/pdfs/article2.pdf> on 12/12/2019

**Figure 18 Head Start/Early Head Start Parents Attending Job Training/School:
PY 2018 – 2019⁶⁵**



**Figure 19 Head Start/Early Head Start Parents Attending Job Training/School:
2009 – 2019⁶⁶**



2. Typical Work, School, Training Schedules of Parents

According to Catholic Charities of Delaware and Otsego Counties, 69% of parents are looking for full-time child care, 28% are in need of part-time care, and 3% are

⁶⁵ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start Program Information Summaries. (2019).

⁶⁶ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start Program Information Summaries. (2009-2019).

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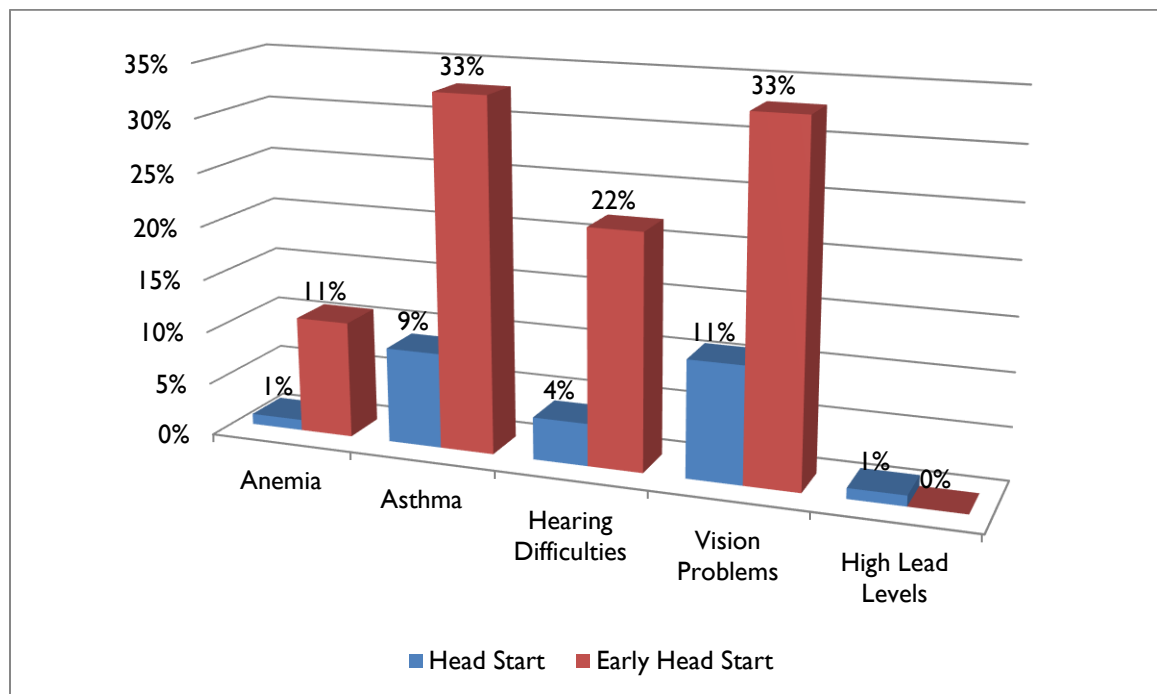
looking for a combination of both full-time and part-time child care services.⁶⁷ Additionally, 14% are in need of early day/morning child care, 4% need late day/afternoon care, 18% need evening child care hours, 21% need weekend child care hours, 11% need child care with flexible hours, and 32% need care during snow days.⁶⁸ When surveyed about program satisfaction during the 2018 – 2019 school year, 91.4% of parents said they preferred a full-day option to better align with sibling school schedules and work schedules.⁶⁹

3. Health

a) Physical Health

For Head Start, approximately 10% (24 of 234) of enrolled children during the program year 2018 – 2019 were diagnosed as needing medical treatment; of those diagnosed, 100% (24 of 24) received medical treatment. For Early Head Start, approximately 5% (7 of 148) of enrolled children during the program year 2018 – 2019 were diagnosed as needing medical treatment; of those diagnosed, 100% (7 of 7) received medical treatment. The following graph shows the breakdown of medical conditions for the HS/EHS children receiving treatment.

Figure 20 Conditions Which Head Start/Early Head Start Children Received Medical Treatment: PY 2018 – 2019⁷⁰



⁶⁷ *Child Care Support Services: 2019 Otsego County Child Care Report*. Catholic Charities of Delaware and Otsego Counties. (n.d.).

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Annual Parent Survey. (June 2019).

⁷⁰ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start Program Information Summaries. (2019).

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The Otsego County Community Health Assessment, completed in 2016, identified the following areas were in need of improvement in regards to maternal/infant/child health for the county:

- Newborn drug-related diagnosis rate
- Percentage of pregnant women in WIC with gestational diabetes
- Percentage of pregnant women in WIC with gestational weight gain greater than ideal
- Percentage of pregnant women in WIC with hypertension during pregnancy
- Percentage of children (aged under 19 years) with health insurance
- Rate of hospitalizations for short-term complications of diabetes aged 6-17 years
- Percentage of children aged 3-6 years who have had the recommended number of well child visits in government sponsored insurance programs
- Percentage of children aged 12-21 years who have had the recommended number of well child visits in government sponsored insurance programs
- Percentage of third-grade children with evidence of untreated tooth decay
- Tooth decay: Ratio of low-income children to non-low income children.⁷¹

b) Mental Health

Of the 234 children enrolled in Head Start for the 2018 – 2019 program year, mental health professionals consulted with program staff about 8 children (3%) and with parents about 7 children (3%).⁷² Of the 148 children enrolled in Early Head Start during the same time period, mental health professional consulted with program staff about 4 children (3%) and with parents about 3 children (2%).⁷³

Table 9 Mental Health Services Provided to Head Start/Early Head Start Children: PY 2018 – 2019⁷⁴

Mental Health Professional Services	# of Head Start Children	# of Early Head Start Children
Consults with Staff	8	4
Provides 3+ Consultations with Staff	5	9
Consults with Parents/Guardians	7	3
Provides 3+ Consultations with Parents/Guardians	0	0
Provides Individual Mental Health Assessment	7	5
Facilitate Referral	2	1

⁷¹ 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment. Bassett Healthcare Network & Otsego County Health Department. (n.d.).

⁷² Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start Program Information Summaries. (2019).

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Ibid

c) *Oral Health*

The Health Disparities Research Program has found that oral and dental conditions are among the most common health problems for low income individuals.⁷⁵ In a report published by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, dental caries (tooth decay) was identified as the most common chronic disease of children in the United States. It was noted that 80% of tooth decay was found in 20 – 25% of children who live in poverty or low-income households and lack access to an ongoing source of quality dental care.⁷⁶ According to the Centers for Medicaid and Medicaid Services, only 40.2% of children and adolescents ages 1 – 20 who were enrolled in New York's Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program Medicaid Expansion program had at least one preventive dental service in 2018.⁷⁷

In general, the number of children entering the program with access to continuous oral health care has been decreasing, as shown in Figures 21 and 22 below. While the number of both Head Start and Early Head Start children with access to continuous oral health care at the end of year has seen an increase each program year, recent percentages are lower than past percentages, especially in regards to Early Head Start. These decreases are most likely a result of a more distinct definition of dental home, coupled with the ongoing shortage of providers that will either see pediatric patients or accept Medicaid payments in Otsego County and the surrounding areas. These circumstances have created a hardship for families living in the 1,002 square miles of Otsego County in accessing dental professionals who are specifically trained to provide treatment to young children. The decrease in these numbers can be seen as contributing factors to the percentage (22.4%) of third-grade children with evidence of untreated tooth decay in Otsego County, and the ratio (2.57%) of low-income to non-low income children with evidence of tooth decay (which is higher than the New York State ratio of 2.46%).⁷⁸

⁷⁵ National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, Health Disparities Research Program. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/Research/DER/ClinicalResearch/HealthDispar.htm> on 8/1/2014

⁷⁶ *Policy on Workforce Issues and Delivery of Oral Health Care Services in a Dental Home*. American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. (2019).

⁷⁷ 2018 Child Health Care Quality Measures, Centers for Medicaid and Medicaid Services. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://data.medicare.gov/Quality/2018-Child-Health-Care-Quality-Measures/ydk-a66j> on 12/13/2019

⁷⁸ 2016 *Community Health Needs Assessment*. Bassett Healthcare Network & Otsego County Health Department. (n.d.).

Figure 21 Head Start Children with Continuous Accessible Oral Health Care: 2009 – 2019⁷⁹

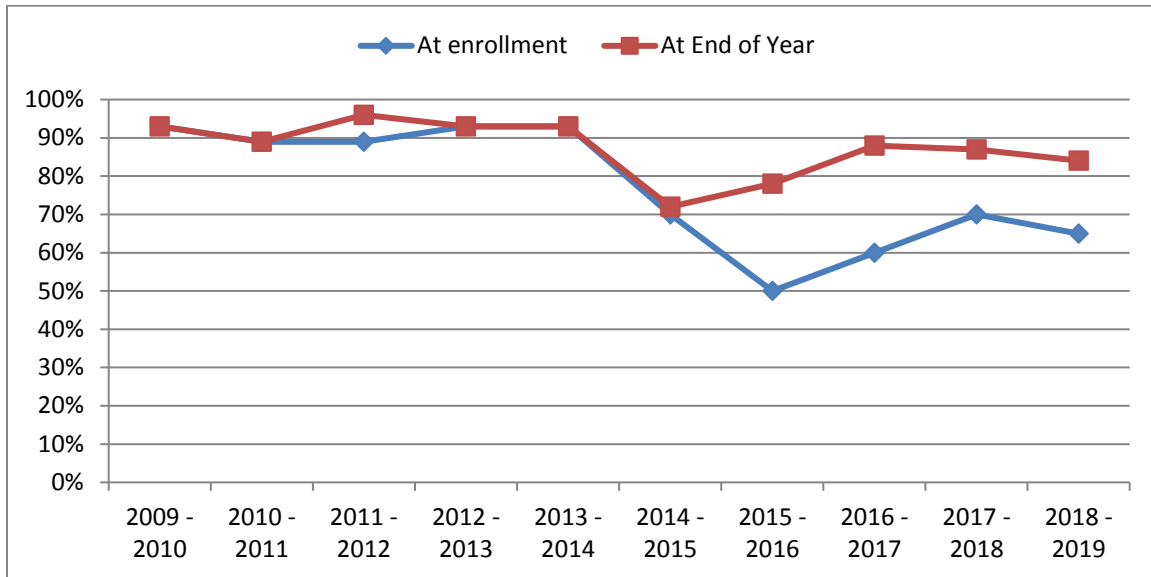
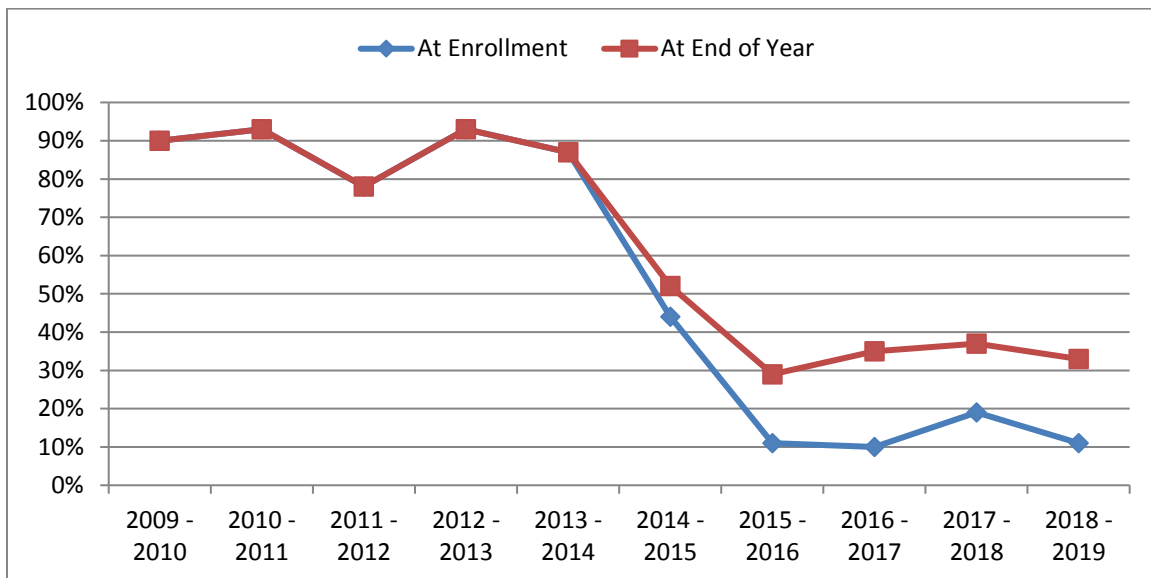


Figure 22 Early Head Start Children with Continuous Accessible Oral Health Care: 2009 - 2019⁸⁰



Much like the trend seen in children with access to continuous oral health care, the number of children that completed oral health exams has also seen a decline over the past 10 years. The number of Early Head Start children completing oral

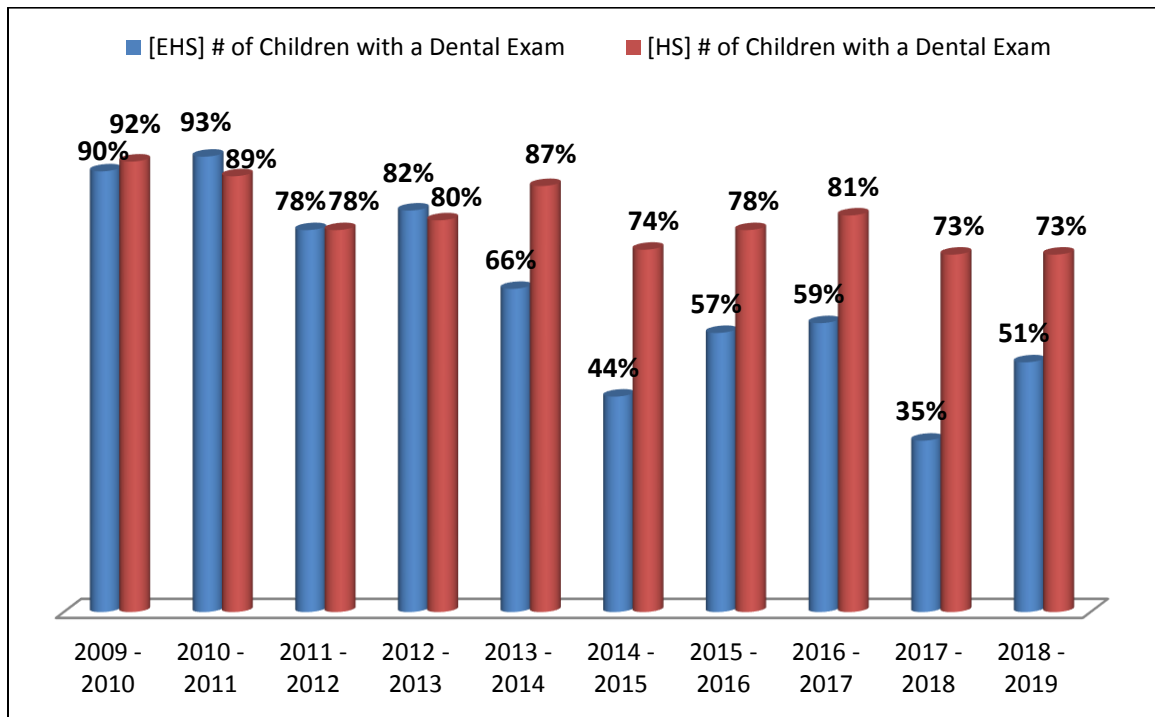
⁷⁹ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start Program Information Summaries. (2009-2019).

⁸⁰ Ibid

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health exams decreased 39%, and Head Start children completing oral health exams decreased 19%.

Figure 23 Head Start/Early Head Start Children Receiving Oral Health Care: 2009 - 2019⁸¹



Several successful collaborations with dentists outside of Otsego County have proven to be effective in providing children with much needed services. Our Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide transportation to families to assist with these out-of-county oral health visits. A partnership with a local dentist has allowed for oral health exams to be performed at Head Start centers throughout the county, increasing access to and completion of oral health exams for children enrolled in both Head Start and Early Head Start. While these collaborations have opened doors to accessible oral health care, there is still a need for dental providers in the area to ensure families have access to preventive and emergency services.

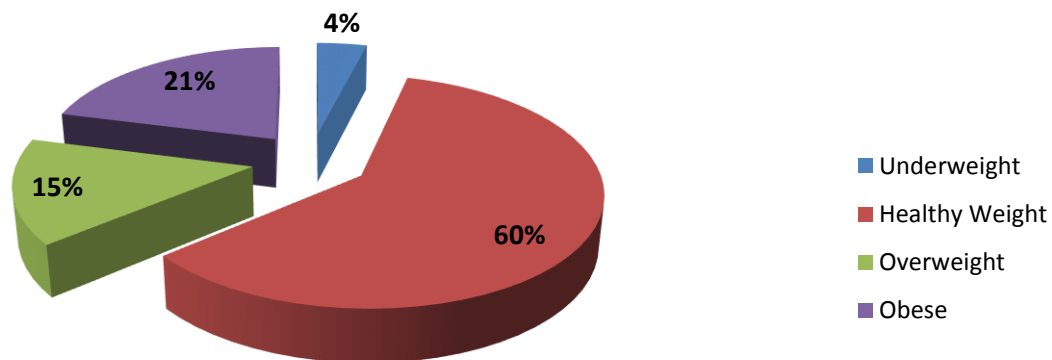
⁸¹ Ibid

4. Nutrition and Fitness

The New York State Department of Health reports that obesity has become an epidemic in the state and across the nation. “As more children in the United States become overweight and inactive, type 2 diabetes, which used to be diagnosed mainly in overweight adults, has become increasingly common in the youth population. It now accounts for 8% to 45% of new cases of childhood diabetes.”⁸² Overweight appears to be more prevalent in girls and increases as children get older. Overweight is most likely a result of unhealthy eating and lack of physical activity. Habits and patterns of behavior are established early in life which is why it’s important to teach young children about healthy lifestyles that include nutritious meals and daily physical activity.

Head Start has seen a rise in the number of enrolled children with Body Mass Index (BMI) above the 85th percentile. A BMI of 85 – 95% is categorized as overweight and above 95% is categorized as obese. In Head Start, program year 2018 – 2019, 36% of enrolled children fell into the overweight/obese category.

Figure 24 BMI Status of Head Start Children: 2018 – 2019⁸³



To continue to promote healthy habits and lifestyles, Head Start began incorporating the *Eat Well, Play Hard* program into daily routines in 2019. This program, funded by New York State’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education Program, is a childhood obesity prevention initiative that has been incorporated into public health food and nutrition programs that serve low-income preschool children and their families. The goals of the program are to:

- Increase developmentally appropriate physical activity;
- Increase consumption of 1% or fat-free milk and low-fat dairy products;
- Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables;
- Decrease TV and screen time; and

⁸² *Prevention Agenda Toward the Healthiest State – Priority Area: Physical Activity and Nutrition*. New York State Department of Health. (December 2015).

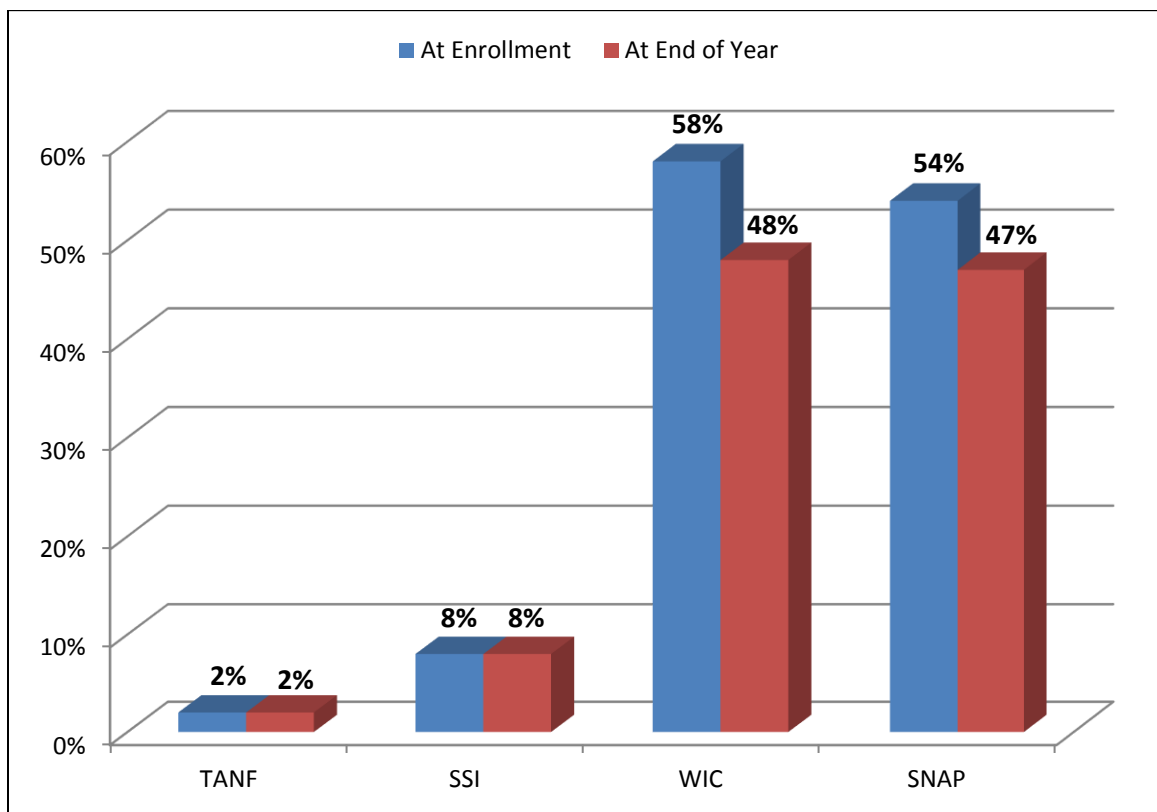
⁸³ Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., Head Start/Early Head Start Program Information Summaries. (2019).

- Increase the initiation and duration of breastfeeding.⁸⁴

5. Social Services

As shown in Figure 25 below, WIC and SNAP services were in great demand by Head Start and Early Head Start families, while only 2% of families used TANF funding during the program year. The usage of both WIC and SNAP services decreased from the time of enrollment to the end of year, meaning children either aged out of the program (as is the case with WIC which only provides support to families up until a child reaches age 5) or families moved into a new income bracket and were no longer eligible for these services.

Figure 25 Federal or Other Assistance Being Utilized by Head Start/Early Head Start Families: PY 2018 - 2019⁸⁵



Emergency/crisis intervention, housing assistance, and mental health services were the most requested services during the 2018 – 2019 program year, as outlined in Figure 26 below. Some services were received at a higher rate than parents showed interest,

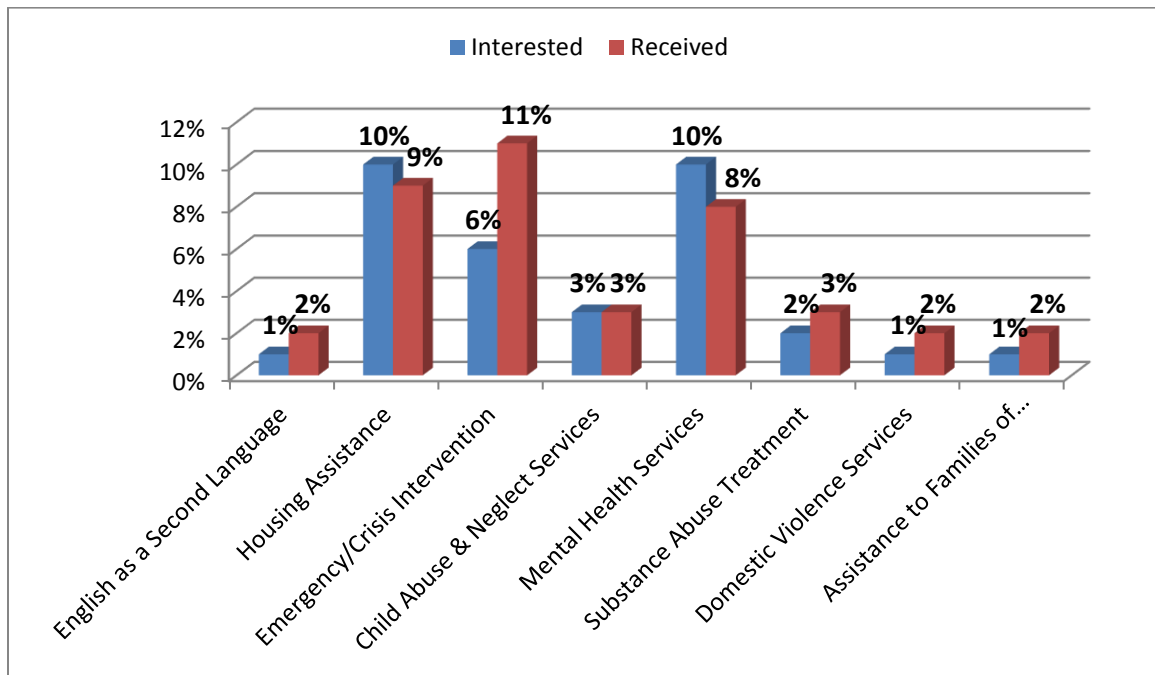
⁸⁴ *Prevention Agenda Toward the Healthiest State – Priority Area: Physical Activity and Nutrition*. New York State Department of Health. (December 2015).

⁸⁵ Ibid

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meaning that needs in these specific areas arose and were addressed during the program year.

Figure 26 Services Being Requested and Received by Head Start/Early Head Start Families: PY 2018 – 2019⁸⁶



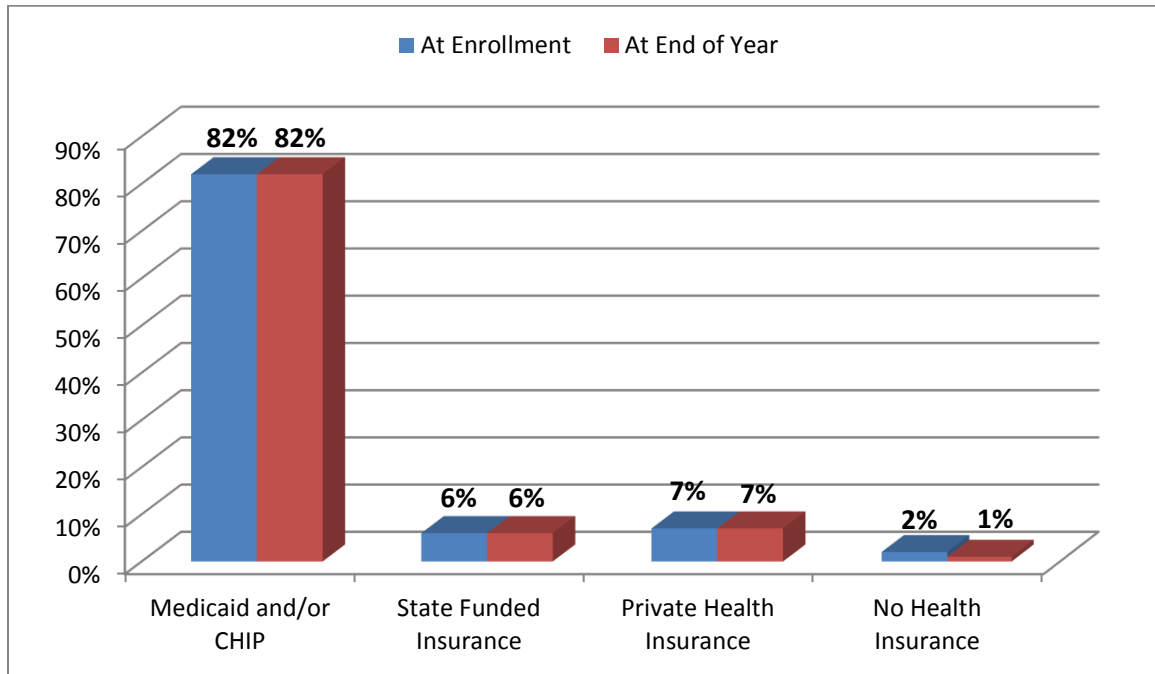
The majority of Head Start and Early Head Start families are enrolled in Medicaid and/or CHIP insurance programs. In New York State, a family must be at or below 133% of the federal poverty guidelines and meet at least one of the following qualifiers to be eligible for Medicaid:

- Be over the age of 64; or
- Be pregnant or have a child 18 or under; or
- Be blind or disabled; or
- Have a child, parent, or spouse in your household who is blind or disabled.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ New York Medicaid – Benefits Categories: Healthcare and Medical Assistance. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/1637> on 12/13/2019

Figure 27 Type of Insurance Being Used by Head Start/Early Head Start Families: PY 2018 – 2019⁸⁸



6. Needs Defined by Families, Residents, and Community Institutions

a) Access to Employment

The geography of employment in Otsego County poses barriers for those without reliable transportation in obtaining and maintaining employment. Oneonta, the only city within the county, is the hub of businesses in the area, however its location at the southernmost portion of the county has limited those living outside of Oneonta from seeking employment. Residents living in outlying areas must travel on average 11 – 40 miles one-way to get to Oneonta, which is impossible for individuals without a regular means of transportation. Employment is also available in the Cooperstown area and northern border of the county, however, these employers usually require specialized skill sets.

Seasonal employment also creates a unique situation for those in Otsego County. Outdoor employment and summer employment serving baseball enthusiasts and tourists are readily available; when the summer ends, however, these employees typically live on unemployment benefits which are not substantial enough to meet basic needs.

According to the Needs Assessment Survey distributed by Opportunities for Otsego, Inc. in summer 2017, county residents saw the cost of transportation, a

⁸⁸ Ibid

lack of full-time jobs with benefits, and low paying jobs as the biggest barriers to employment in the area.⁸⁹

b) Affordable Housing

The housing stock in Otsego County is old and often in substandard condition, posing significant challenges for those seeking safe, stable housing on a limited income. This dilemma is exacerbated by the presence of two higher education universities in the City of Oneonta and summer recreation programs tailored to visitors of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and surrounding youth baseball camps. Housing otherwise available to low-income residents has been converted to more profitable housing for students from fall to spring and baseball enthusiasts in the summer.

These factors have forced low-income families to seek housing away from Oneonta and Cooperstown and into the more isolated areas of the county, which are inadequately serviced by public transportation. Unfortunately, the lack of accessibility to public transportation often causes families to choose between affordable housing and access to employment.

According to the Needs Assessment Survey distributed by Opportunities for Otsego, Inc. in summer 2017, county residents saw the cost of rent/house payments, limited housing for families due to seasonal rentals, and affordable security deposits/down payments as the biggest housing issues in the area.⁹⁰

c) Availability of Transportation

Head Start provides bus transportation for as many enrolled children as possible. Due to the relatively large size of the county, increasing costs of maintenance, and shortage of qualified bus drivers, it has not been possible to provide transportation to all enrolled children. As a result, some parents must self-transport their children either to the center or to a designated meeting point between their home and the center or their children cannot receive Head Start services. Many eligible families on the wait list are unable to accept available slots at the nearest Head Start center due to transportation barriers.

The cost of gasoline and reliable vehicles has made self-transportation increasingly difficult for low-income parents. While public transportation does not exist in some areas, there is limited service provided between Oneonta and Cooperstown with stops throughout the city and village.

Also contributing to transportation issues in Otsego County are the weather conditions and size and layout of the county. Long, harsh winters and a lack of main thoroughfares have a negative effect on road conditions. Potholes, frost heaves, and unavoidable damage from snow plows and salt destroy the pavement, thus creating more wear and tear on vehicles regularly traveling these roads. When families are already struggling financially, added vehicle repair costs due to

⁸⁹ Otsego County Community Needs Assessment 2017. Opportunities for Otsego, Inc. (n.d.).

⁹⁰ Ibid

substandard road conditions are often not feasible or put families at greater risk of financial instability.

According to the Needs Assessment Survey distributed by Opportunities for Otsego, Inc. in summer 2017, county residents saw the cost of public transportation, a lack of bus routes and schedules that meet the needs of the community, and the cost of owning a car as the biggest transportation barriers in the area.⁹¹

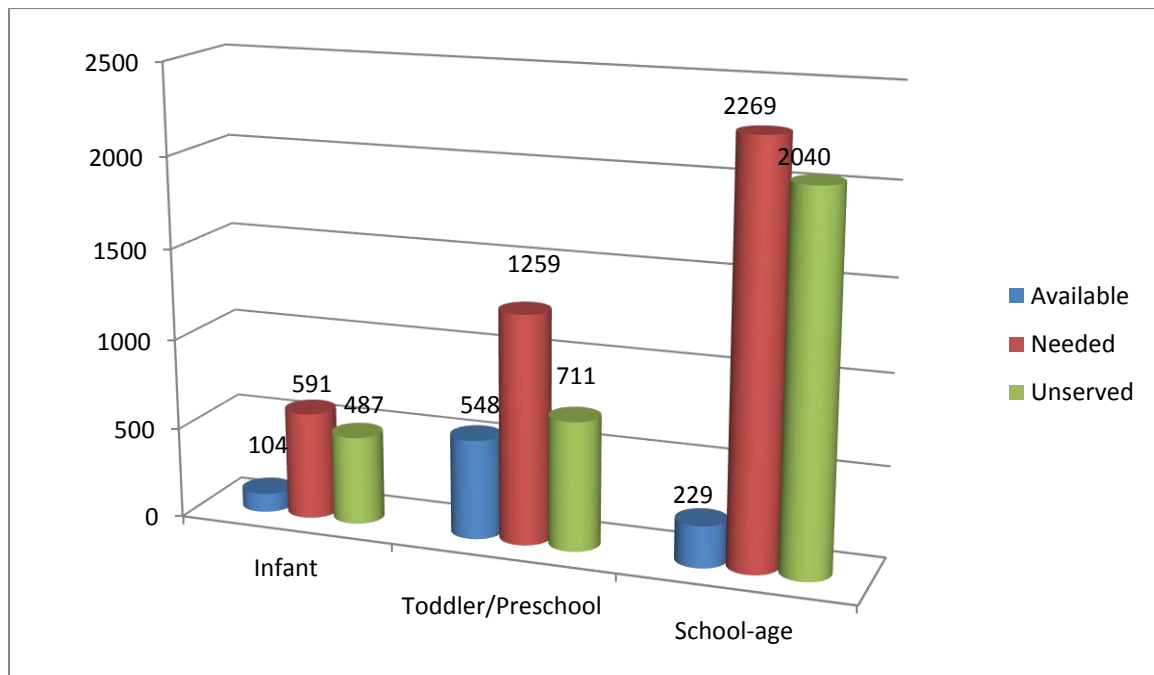
d) Child Care

According to the *Child Care Support Services: 2019 Otsego County Child Care Report*,

Changes in regulations and availability of incentives began a downward trend of registered and licensed programs in Otsego County. The loss of preschool age children to pre-k programs, along with the retirement of many long-term providers without new programs opening to fill the gap also lead to the steep decline in child care programs.⁹²

This report indicates a high demand for child care that is not being met by licensed child care providers.

Figure 28 Child Care Demand in Otsego County⁹³



An additional barrier to child care in this area is the stringent day care licensing regulations regarding space/buildings. Otsego County is a heavily rural area with many historical sites and large farming communities. Being that these communities

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² *Child Care Support Services: 2019 Otsego County Child Care Report*. Catholic Charities of Delaware and Otsego Counties. (n.d.).

⁹³ Ibid

have not experienced much population growth, there has been very little growth in terms of development. Day care centers are required to meet strict New York State uniform fire prevention and building codes. According to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services Fire and Safety Representative who performs building inspections for licensing requirements, our county faces a unique challenge in identifying and passing buildings for day care use due to the age of available structures and the building materials used. The majority of buildings in Otsego County are old and often in substandard condition, therefore limiting viable options when it comes to finding structures that will meet Office of Children and Family Services licensing requirements.

According to the Needs Assessment Survey distributed by Opportunities for Otsego, Inc. in summer 2017, county residents saw the cost of child care, difficulty finding quality and safe care, and lack of providers and available slots as the biggest child care concerns in the area.⁹⁴

F. Community Resources to Address Needs of Head Start Eligible Children and Families

In partnership with Bassett Healthcare and Otsego County Department of Social Services, the Otsego Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (OCCAN) published the most recent edition of *The Parent Handy Book: The Parent Handbook of Otsego County Community Resources* in 2017. The book includes hundreds of resources organized into 12 sections:

1. Counseling, Listening, and/or Referral
2. Education, Job Skill Development
3. Energy Conservation & Emergency Energy Service
4. Food and Nutrition Services & Clothing
5. Crisis Intervention - Family Support Services; Safety Net Agencies
6. Housing
7. Legal and Consumer Services
8. Services for Children & Adults with Special Needs
9. Medical/Dental Services
10. Youth Programs and Services
11. Transportation Services
12. Telephone Index

This book is updated every few years to provide Otsego County residents an accurate and comprehensive listing of community resources and services. The idea behind this resource guide is that families will know where to turn in times of need without having the added stress of trying to search for or find needed services in times of angst.

Residents of Otsego County can also contact 2-1-1 Susquehanna River Region Contact Center for information and referrals to agencies and programs in the area. 2-1-1 is a free and confidential service that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

⁹⁴ Otsego County Community Needs Assessment 2017. Opportunities for Otsego, Inc. (n.d.).

Assistance with identifying and locating needed resources can be attained by contacting their call center or using the online database of more than 6,000 regional resources. Resources in the online database are organized into the following categories:

- Food
- Mental Health
- Utilities
- Clothing
- Housing
- Household Goods

III. Summary and Recommendations

A. Summary

- There has been a decrease in both the labor force and unemployment rates over the past 10 years.
- Almost 30% of industries require an unskilled labor force, therefore paying lower wages.
- Farming, a strong economic base in past, has seen a significant decline over the past 10 years.
- The tourism industry is booming, however these only provide seasonal employment.
- December 31, 2019 saw the fourth minimum wage increase in a series of staggered increases, raising minimum wage to \$11.80 per hour (for regular earners). These increases are quickly moving families out of eligibility for Head Start and Early Head Start, as well as other supportive service programs.
- While the Consumer Price Index has increased, gas prices have decreased, relieving a huge burden for this rural area where public transportation is limited and residents must travel greater distances to access employment and resources.
- There has been a decrease in the overall county population but an increase in the number of people living in poverty.
- The under 18 population decreased, while the 65 and over population increased.
- Both the city and town of Oneonta, the hub of Otsego County, saw a population decrease.
- The percentage of children living in poverty exceeds both the state and national rates.
- There is a lack of regulated child care, especially for infants and toddlers.
- During the 2018 – 2019 program year, 16% of Early Head Start children and 19% of Head Start children were determined to have a disability.

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- The number of parents with some college or a college degree in program year 2018 – 2019 was the highest this program has seen to date.
- The number of children entering the program with access to continuous oral health care and the number of children completing oral health exams has been decreasing.
- WIC and SNAP are the most utilized federal programs by enrolled families.
- Medicaid and/or CHIP are the most utilized insurance programs by enrolled families.
- Housing assistance, mental health services, and emergency/crisis intervention are the most requested services by enrolled families.
- Families have difficulty finding affordable housing in proximity to employment centers.

1. Head Start Specific

- 8 of 12 school districts offer UPK programs, with a total capacity of 253.
- Health concerns for children include vision problems, asthma, and hearing difficulties.
- There has been a rise in the number of children with a Body Mass Index above the 85th percentile, which is categorized as overweight and obese.
- 3% of children received mental health interventions during the 2018 – 2019 program year.
- It is difficult for families to self-transport children to the nearest Head Start center due to the lack of available public transportation and the distance from rural outlying areas to the location of centers.
- There has been a reduction in the number of 4 year olds available for enrollment due to the number of school districts that implement UPK programs.

2. Early Head Start Specific

- There is a lack of regulated child care for infants and toddlers.
- Implementation of UPK programs and transportation barriers families experience have had little to no impact on Early Head Start due to the age of children and the home-based configuration of services provided.
- Health concerns for children include vision problems, asthma, and hearing difficulties.
- Gestational weight gain greater than ideal, gestational diabetes, and hypertension are health concerns for women participating in WIC.
- There has been an increased rate of newborn drug-related diagnoses.
- 3% of children received mental health interventions during the 2018 – 2019 program year.

B. Recommendations

The following courses of action appear to be justified at this time:

- Continue to promote affordable housing solutions for low-income families in and around major employment centers such as Oneonta and Cooperstown.
- Continue to advocate for oral health providers in Otsego County that will see pediatric patients and accept Medicaid payments.

1. Head Start Specific

- Explore the feasibility of shifting funded Head Start slots to locations with greater populations of children living in poverty.
- Continue to seek out licensable space for classrooms in areas of greater poverty.
- Consider reducing Head Start enrollment and converting Head Start slots to home-based.
- Continue efforts to collaborate with school districts implementing UPK to ensure that the needs of Head Start eligible children and families are being met.
- Seek parent input on preferred center/classroom hours of operation based on families' needs as we shift to 100% full-day programming.
- Continue implementation of *Eat Well, Play Hard* curriculum to address overweight/obesity.

2. Early Head Start Specific

- Continue to seek out licensable space for Early Head Start classrooms and consider transitioning more home-based slots to center-based slots.
- Consider converting some Early Head Start home-based slots to center-based Early Head Start slots.
- Continue to promote prenatal health and education, and explore possible collaborations to improve outcomes for expectant mothers.