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# Community Assessment

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Third Annual Update

Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas  
**EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS**

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**PREPARED BY**

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**UPDATED**

February 2022

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## OUR MISSION

Develop opportunities for people and communities to realize their potential by providing resources and comprehensive services to empower Central Texans of all ages to become self-sufficient.

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# Executive Summary

For over 50 years, Head Start's mission has been to serve the greatest number of eligible children and families and those in greatest need of its services.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative data, typically available at the County-level, was pulled from various state and national resources. Qualitative assessments, in the form of agency-created online surveys, were completed by families and service providers.

## Major Findings

Lack of affordable housing and access to transportation continue to be the most commonly reported needs across Hays and Caldwell Counties. Additionally, addressing unmet mental health needs for underserved populations has become an area of focus.

## Recommendations

Efforts should work towards improving coordination of services, this begins with a common understanding of services available in the community and builds into creating more formalized, comprehensive systems of support. The development of a coordinated referral system for families is a possible solution.

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## 2020 Update

### COVID-19

The ongoing public health crises caused by COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on every person and every system in our society. We will continue to learn more about the full extent of the impact of this time on the development of young children and the stability, health, and wellness of their families. The inequities that exist in Hays and Caldwell Counties in regards to access to supportive services have become more apparent; families have had to navigate the trauma of this experience and may not be able to find the help they need. A shift to virtual service provision across systems has also clarified the digital divide in our communities; families living away from the IH35 corridor and/or larger communities struggle with limited bandwidth. During this time ensuring the financial stability and mental health of families has become of even more paramount concern for service providers.

#### *Recommendation*

The **Three Principles to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families**, developed by the Harvard Center on the Developing Child, represent a framework for understanding the supports a community can provide to ensure positive outcomes for children and families.

- *Support responsive relationships for children and adults.*
  - Serve-and-return interactions between adults and children.
  - Strong relationships between caseworkers and their adult clients.
- *Strengthen core life skills.*
  - Focusing on developing executive function (adults) and self-regulation skills (children).
- *Reduce sources of stress in the lives of children and families.*
  - Limiting chronic activation of stress response systems by focusing on alleviating the most stressful components of a family's life.

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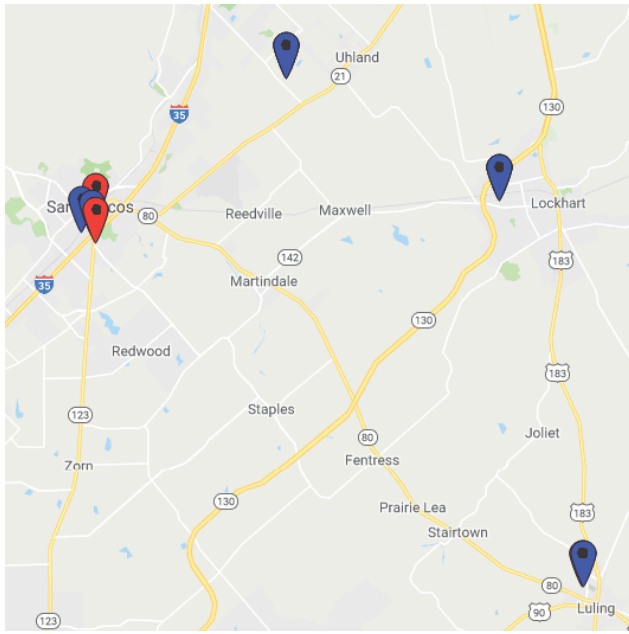
# Overview of Grantee

Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas (CAI) is a community-based not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization, established in October of 1965 under the War on Poverty initiative created by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Since that time, it has grown into a large integrated health, education, and human services agency that provides a multitude of services across nine counties in the rural capital area of Texas. CAI has a long history of engaging in strong partnerships with communities in order to develop quality opportunities for the people it serves.

Community Action, Inc. operated its first Head Start program, one of the first in the nation, in the summer of 1965. Since then, the CAI Head Start program has expanded and currently serves 547 children ages zero to five and their families in five communities in Hays and Caldwell Counties. Additionally, beginning in 2015 CAI expanded access to early childhood intensive home visiting services in Hays & Caldwell Counties; serving 240 families.

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# Overview of Grantee



## Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS)

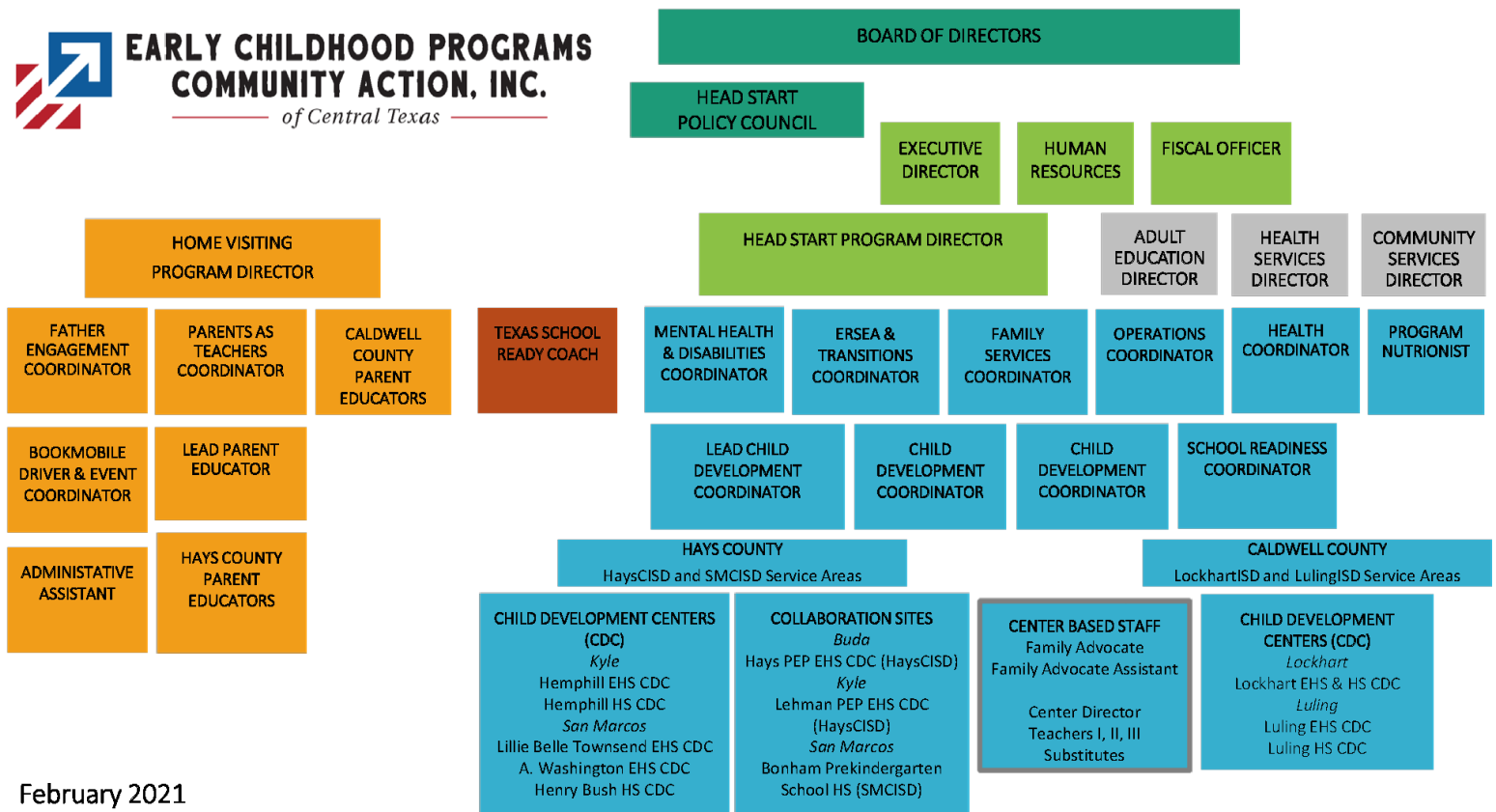
### Child Development Centers (CDC)

- Kyle
  - Hemphill EHS CDC
  - Hemphill HS CDC
- San Marcos
  - Lillie Belle Townsend EHS CDC
  - A. Washington EHS CDC
  - Henry Bush HS CDC
- Lockhart
  - Lockhart EHS & HS CDC
- Luling
  - Luling EHS CDC
  - Luling HS CDC

### Collaboration Sites

- Buda
  - Hays PEP EHS CDC (HaysCISD)
- Kyle
  - Lehman PEP EHS CDC (HaysCISD)
- San Marcos
  - Bonham Prekindergarten School HS (SMCISD)

## Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas



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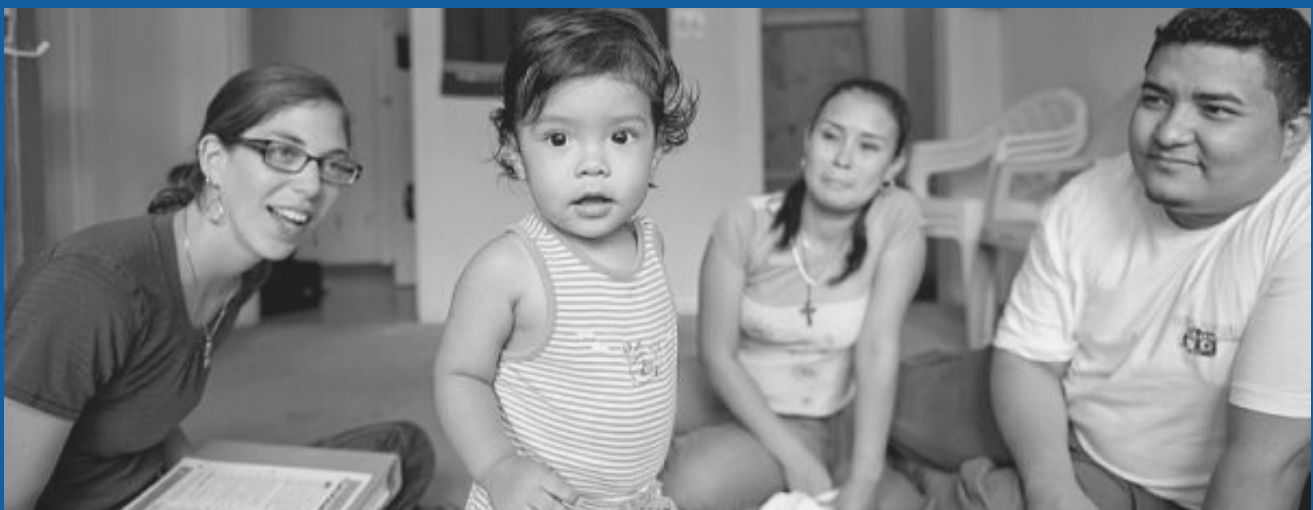
# Methodology

The following is an outline of the planning process and data collection used in this Community Assessment.

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As this was not the first Community Assessment for this grantee, a baseline of previously collected data was available for initial review. In 2019, the Home Visiting and Community Partnerships Coordinator held individual meetings with Head Start content-area Coordinators to review goals and methods for the Community Assessment. Numerous sources were used to gather quantitative data; creating profiles of each county outlined in the pages of this report. Additionally, a set of surveys, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, were developed from templates available on the Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (ECLKC).

One survey was designed to collect data from community residents while the other was intended for professionals providing services in the community. See Appendix A for the full survey. With support from the San Marcos Commission on Children and Youth and Early Childhood Coalition of Hays County, data collection began in September 2019. The surveys were closed on November 1, 2019. Additionally, a survey was developed in December 2020 to gather qualitative input from service providers related to COVID-19. This survey closed on February 1, 2021; the results are included in this report.



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# Population and Related Trends

## In Hays and Caldwell Counties and the state of Texas

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The Service Area that includes Hays and Caldwell Counties, has been recognized among the fastest growing city or county in the nation. This trend is widely forecasted to continue.

A notable characteristic of the recent rapid growth in population in Hays County, TX is that much of it is from Travis County, TX. (U.S. Census Bureau). It is speculated that this is in large part due to the rapid increase in cost of living in Travis County, especially relative to Hays and Caldwell Counties, although cost living is rising considerably in these counties as well.

In addition, rapid population growth had caused an extreme upsurge in demand for housing which supply has been unable to keep up with. Much housing supply, primarily geared towards middle and higher-income families, is in production; however, this issue is one of the primary contributing factor to rising cost of living in the Service Area.

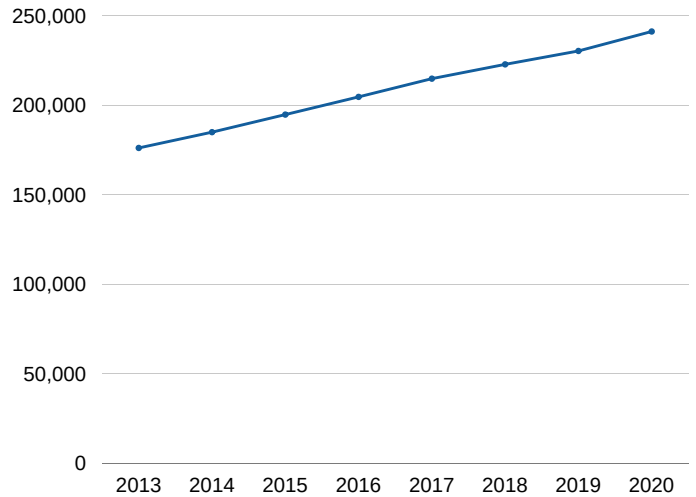
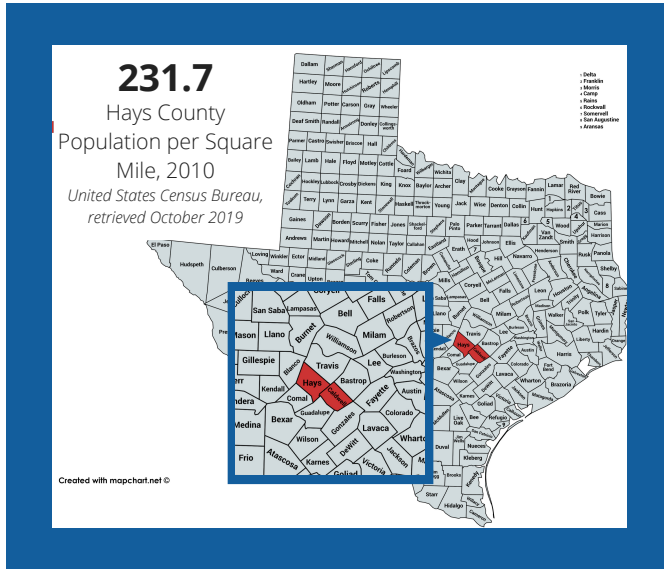
### *Zero to Three* State of Babies Yearbook 2021

Texas is home to 1,160,963 babies, representing 4.0 percent of the state's population. As many as 45.6 percent live in households with incomes less than twice the federal poverty line (in 2019, about \$51,500 a year for a family of four), placing them at economic disadvantage. The state's youngest children are diverse and are raised in a variety of family contexts and household structures.

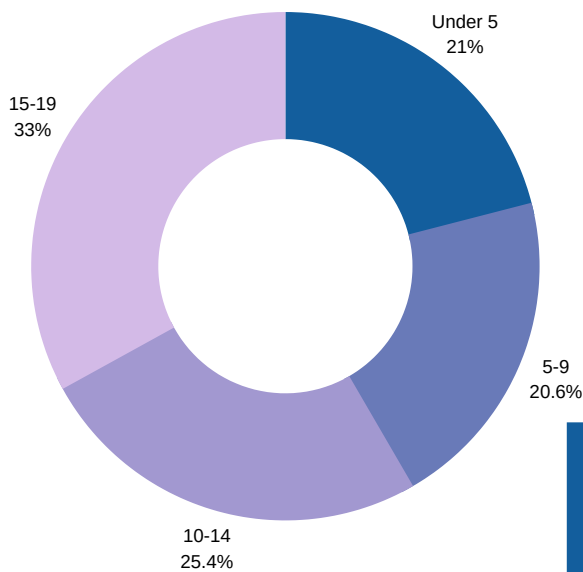
Learn more at [stateofbabies.org/state/texas/](https://stateofbabies.org/state/texas/) about the indicators related to *Good Health, Strong Families, and Positive Early Learning Experiences*.

# Service Area Data

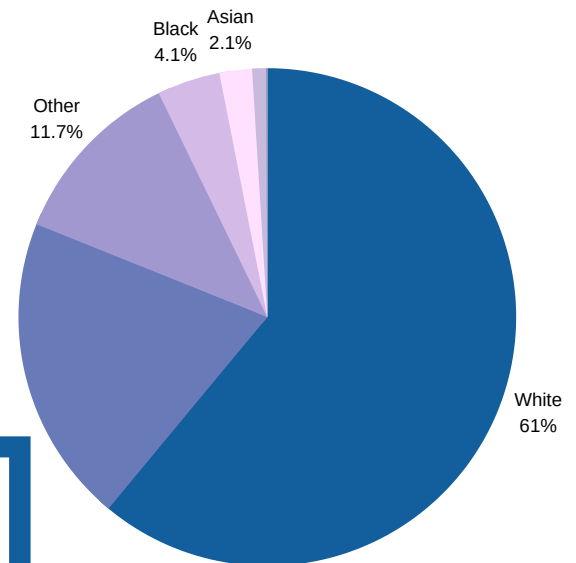
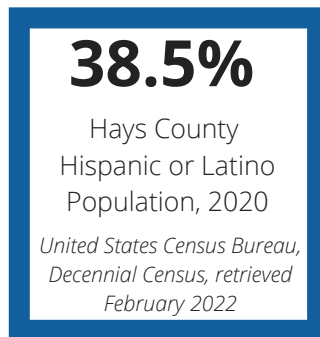
## General Demographics: Hays County



Hays County Population  
*United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey &  
Decennial Census, retrieved February 2022*



Hays County  
Child population by age group, 2019  
*United States Census Bureau, American Community  
Survey, retrieved February 2022*

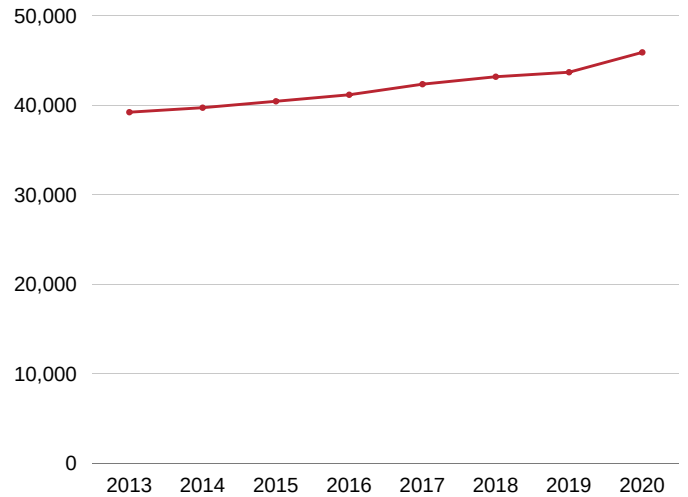
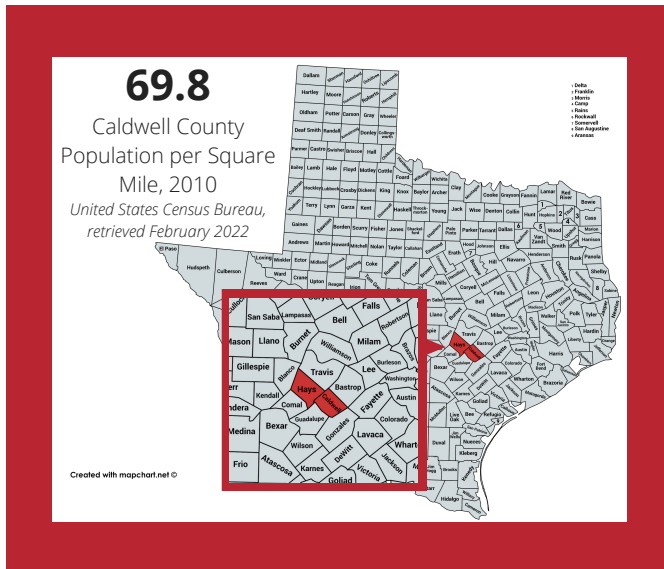


Hays County Population by Race, 2020  
*United States Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial  
Census, retrieved February 2022*

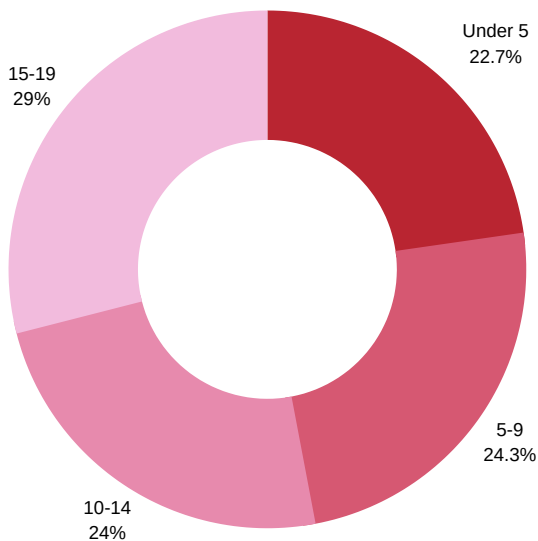


# Service Area Data

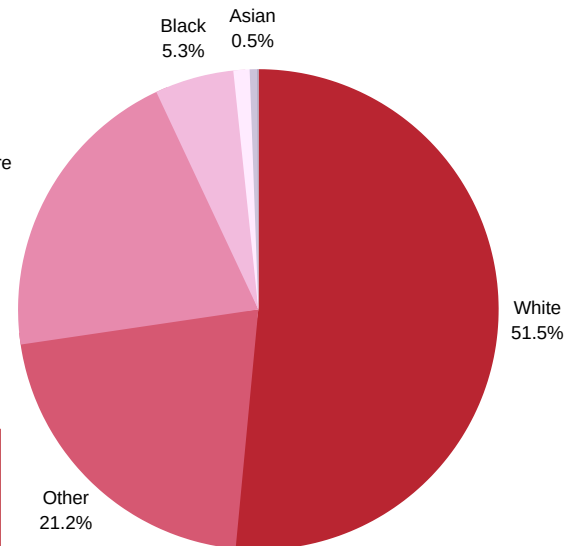
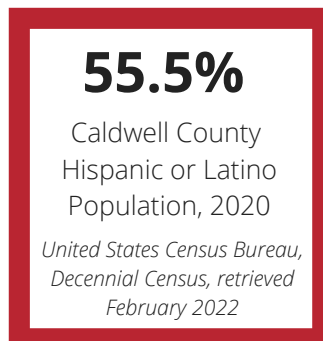
## General Demographics: Caldwell County



Caldwell County Population  
*United States Census Bureau, American Community  
Survey & Decennial Census, retrieved February 2022*



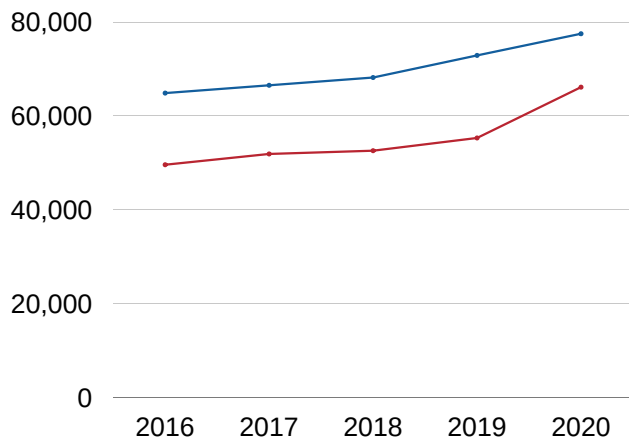
Caldwell County  
Child population by age group, 2019  
*United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey,  
retrieved February 2022*



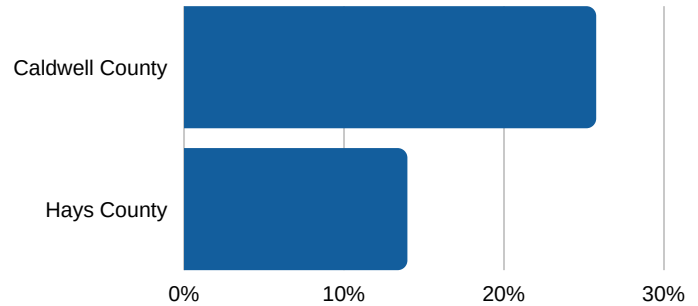
Caldwell County Population by Race, 2020  
*United States Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census,  
retrieved February 2022*

# Service Area Data

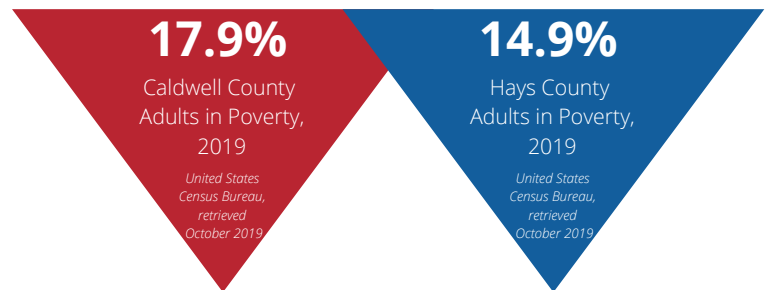
## Economic Demographics of Hays and Caldwell Counties



**Caldwell County & Hays County Median Income**  
 United States Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), retrieved February 2022



**Children in Poverty (Ages 0-17), 2019**  
 United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, retrieved February 2022

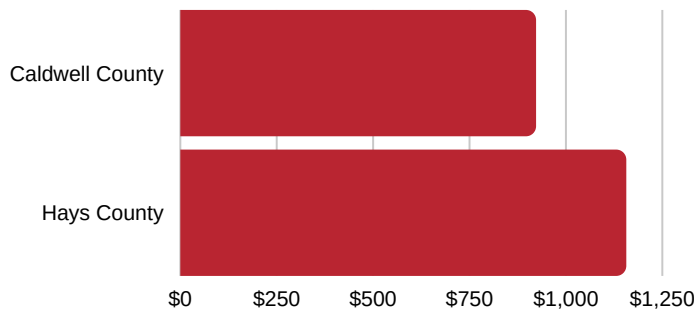


**17.9%**  
 Caldwell County  
 Adults in Poverty,  
 2019

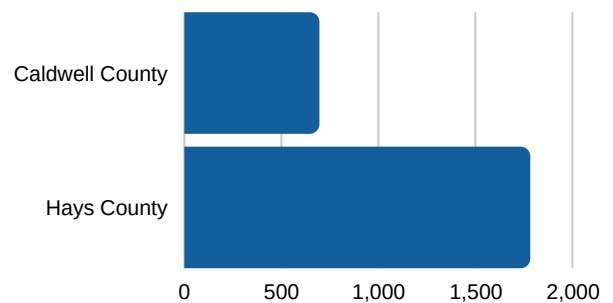
**14.9%**  
 Hays County  
 Adults in Poverty,  
 2019

United States  
 Census Bureau,  
 retrieved  
 October 2019

United States  
 Census Bureau,  
 retrieved  
 October 2019



**Median Gross Rent, 2019**  
 United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, retrieved February 2022



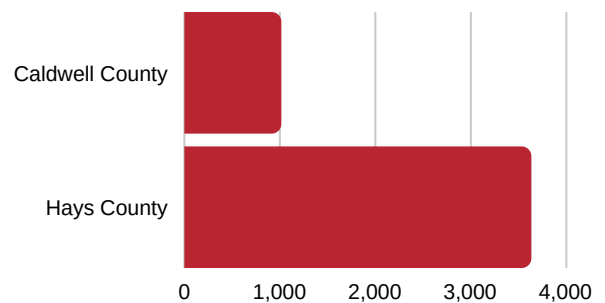
**Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, 2019**  
 United States Census Bureau, retrieved February 2022



**31.4**

Mean (Hays and Caldwell Counties) Travel Time to Work (Minutes), 2019

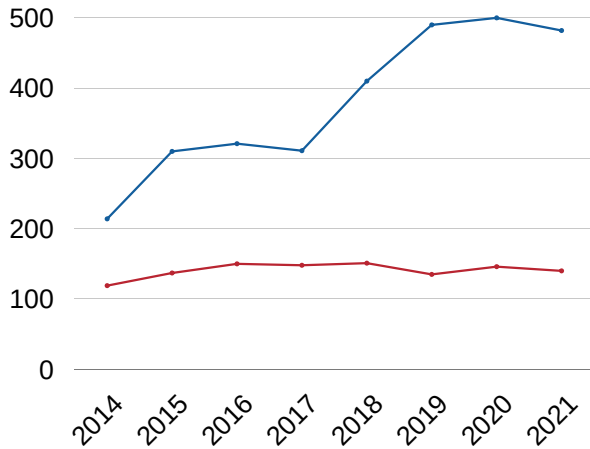
United States Census Bureau, retrieved February 2022



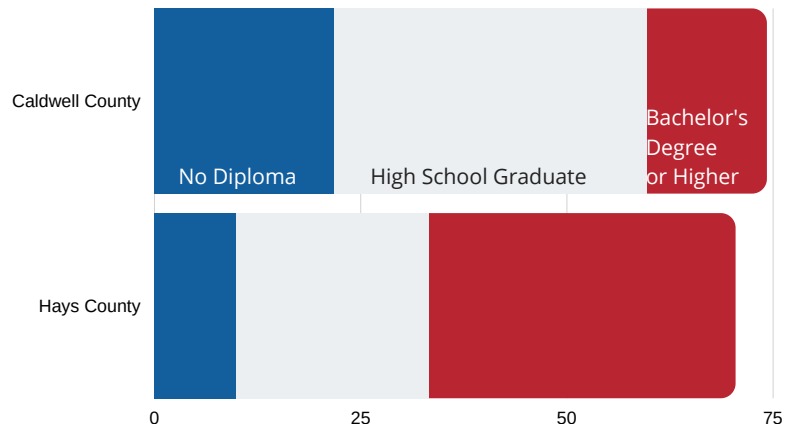
**Single Parents, 2019**  
 United States Census Bureau, retrieved February 2022

# Service Area Data

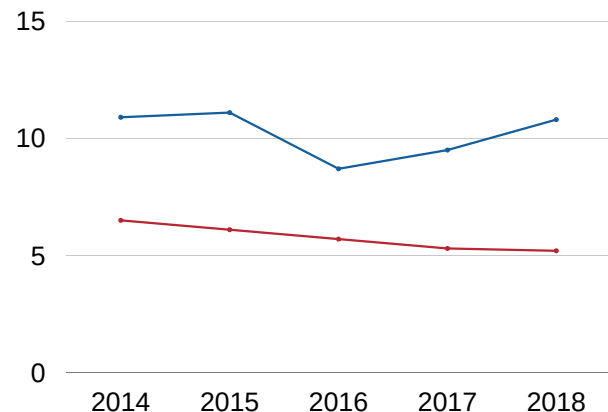
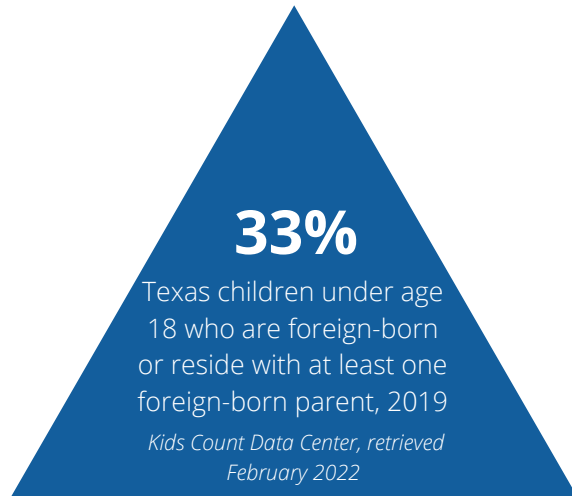
## Social Demographics of Hays and Caldwell Counties



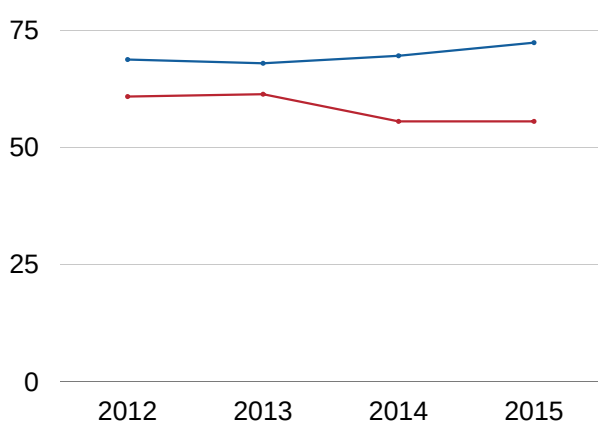
Caldwell County & Hays County Children in DFPS Legal Responsibility  
Texas Open Data Portal, retrieved February 2022



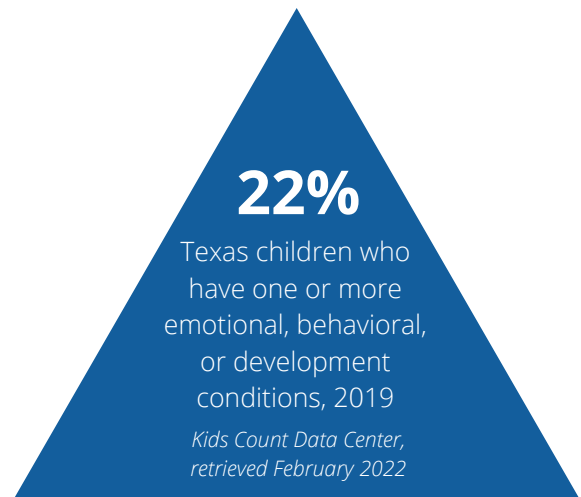
Educational Attainment, 2019  
United State Census Bureau, American Community Survey, retrieved February 2022



Caldwell County & Hays County Births to Teens  
Kids Count Data Center, retrieved February 2022



Caldwell County & Hays County Prenatal Care in First Trimester  
DSHS Health Facts Profiles, retrieved February 2022

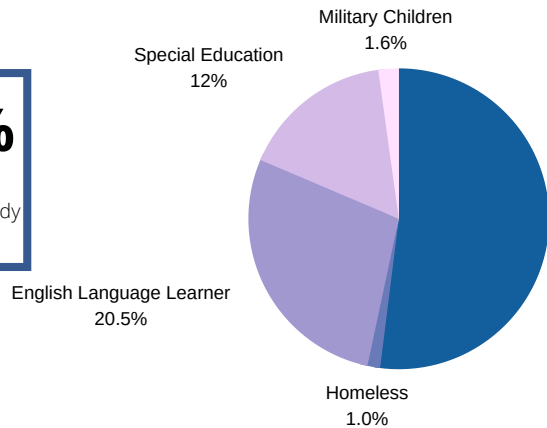


# Service Area Data

## Public Kindergarten Programs of Hays and Caldwell Counties

**33.7%**

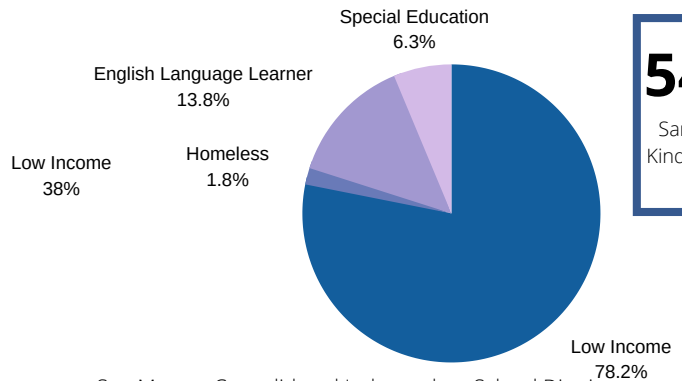
Hays CISD  
Kindergarten Ready



Hays Consolidated Independent School District  
Public Kindergarten Enrollment Demographics  
for 2020-21 School Year  
*Texas Public Education Information Resource, retrieved February 2022*

**54.8%**

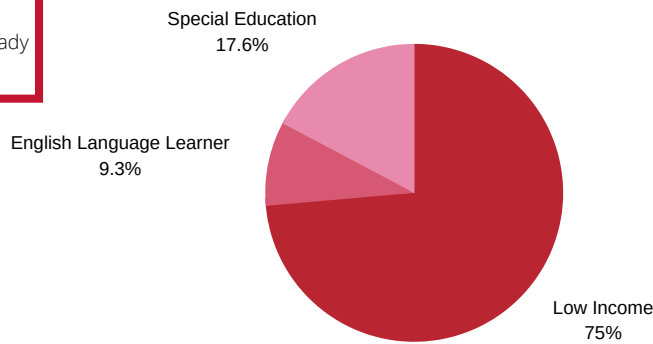
San Marcos CISD  
Kindergarten Ready



San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District  
Public Kindergarten Enrollment for 2019-20 School Year  
*Texas Public Education Information Resource, retrieved February 2022*

**61.5%**

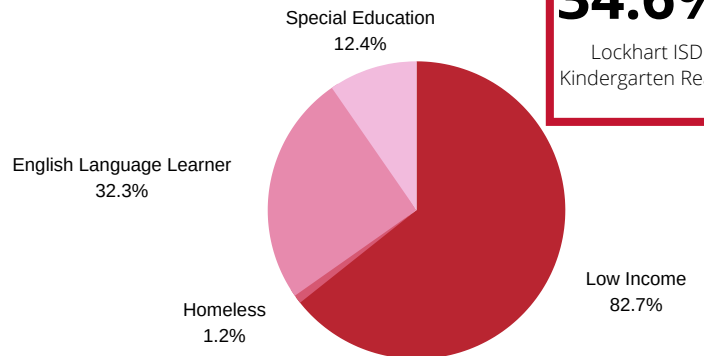
Luling ISD  
Kindergarten Ready



Luling Independent School District  
Public Kindergarten Enrollment Demographics  
for 2020-21 School Year  
*Texas Public Education Information Resource, retrieved February 2022*

**34.6%**

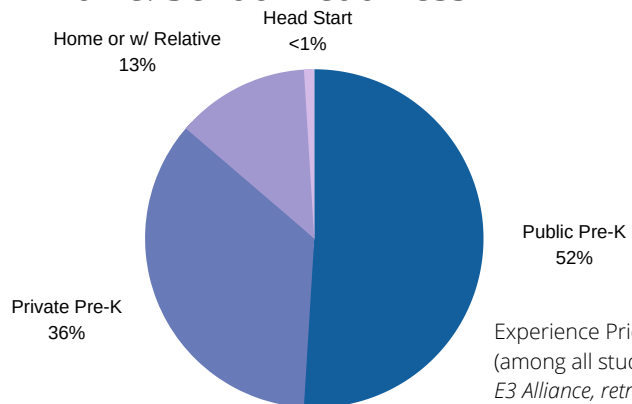
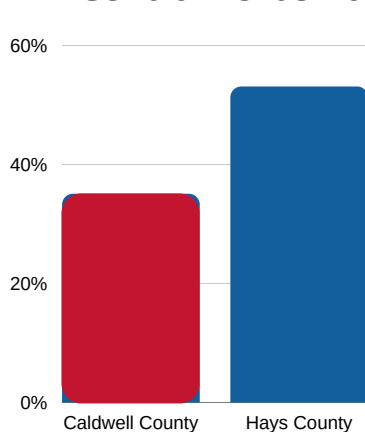
Lockhart ISD  
Kindergarten Ready



Lockhart Independent School District  
Public Kindergarten Enrollment Demographics  
for 2020-21 School Year  
*Texas Public Education Information Resource, retrieved February 2022*

## Central Texas Education Profile: School Readiness

Child Care Capacity as % of Under 5 Population, 2019  
*E3 Alliance, retrieved February 2022*



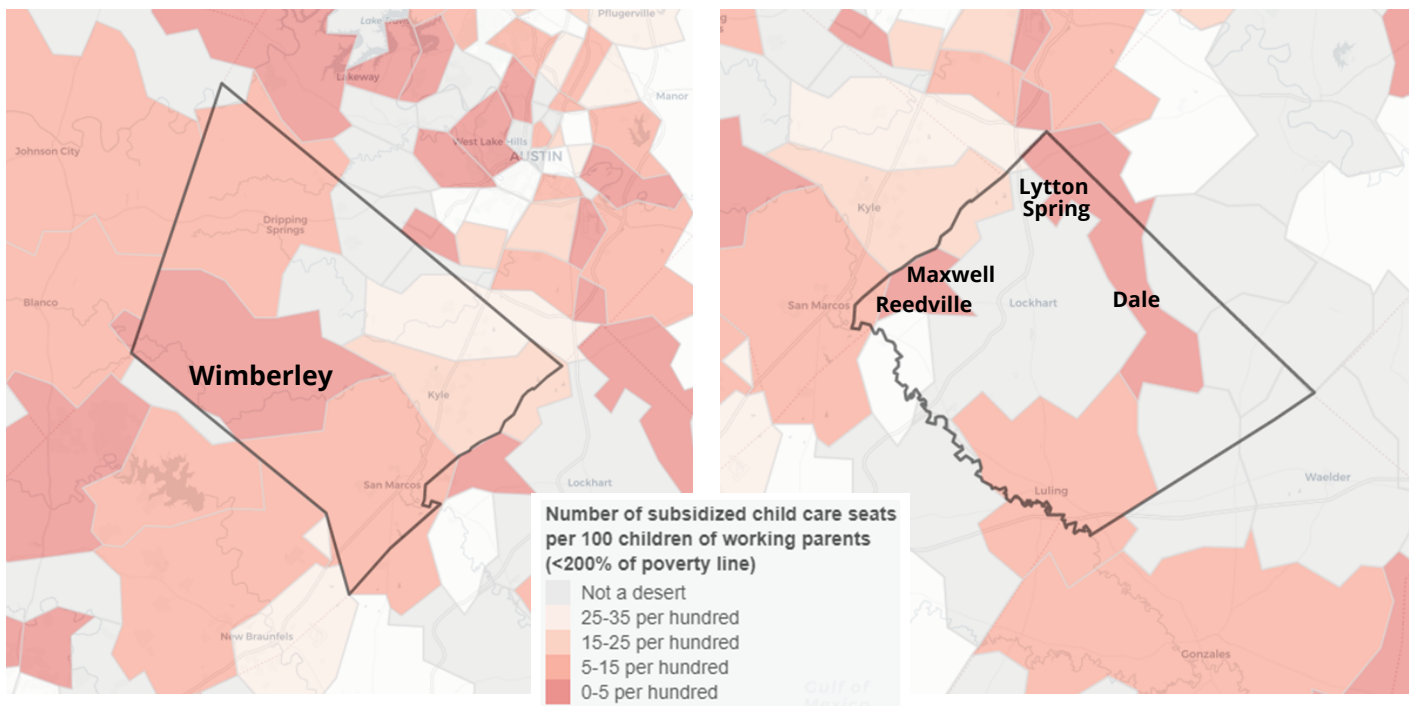
Experience Prior to Kindergarten  
(among all students), 2019-20  
*E3 Alliance, retrieved February 2022*

# Service Area Data

Cities and Towns in Hays and Caldwell Counties and Subsidized Child Care Availability

## Subsidized Child Care Desert Map

CHILDREN AT RISK



### Hays County

- Buda
- Dripping Springs
- Hays
- Kyle
- Mountain City
- Niederwald
- San Marcos
- Uhland
- Wimberley
- Woodcreek

### Caldwell County

- Lockhart
- Luling
- Lytton Springs
- Martindale
- Maxwell
- Mustang Ridge
- Niederwald
- Reedville
- Uhland

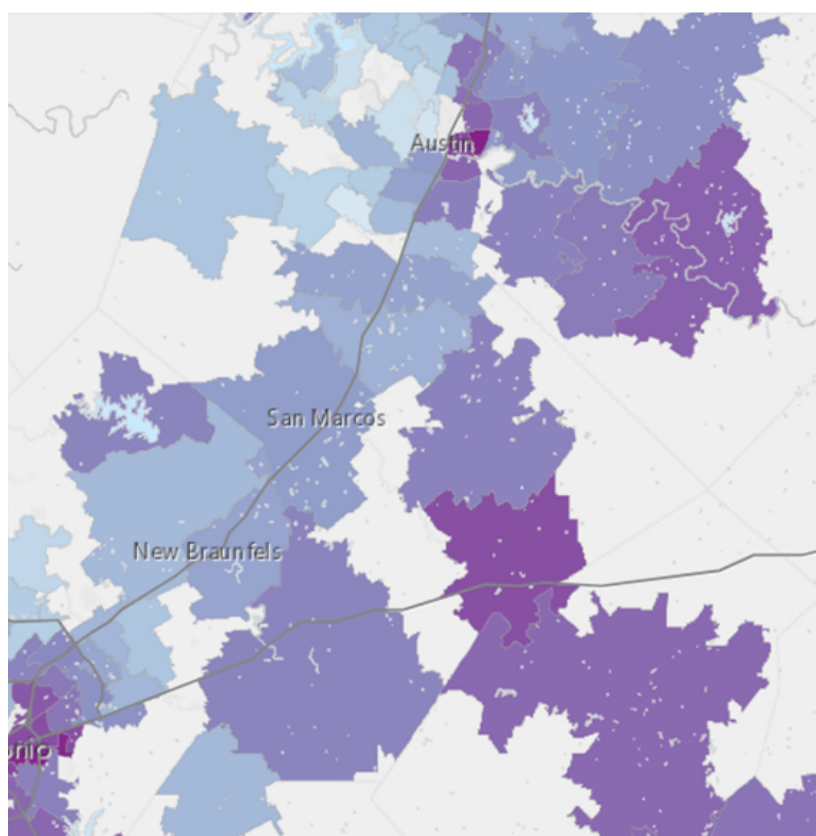
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# Service Area Data

Risk for Child Maltreatment (1 to 4 years old)

## **Maltreatment Risk Map, 2016**

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES  
PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION



### **Hays County**

Three zip-codes in Hays County are included in the Head Start service area; 78666 (San Marcos), 78640 (Kyle and surrounding), and 78610 (Buda and surrounding). These areas all have an average risk of child maltreatment (lighter color).

### **Caldwell County**

Two zip-codes in Caldwell County are included in the Head Start services area; 78644 (Lockhart and surrounding) and 78648 (Luling and surrounding). 78644 has an above average maltreatment risk; 78648 has among the highest risk in the state (darker color).

## **Community-Level Risk Factors**

### **Infants and toddlers are at high risk for maltreatment relative to older children.**

The following factors are associated with the highest risk for infants and toddlers:

*Child Health & Safety* as reflected by serious injuries; *Health & Disability* representing a variety of health behaviors, including maternal smoking, low breastfeeding rates, low education attainment, and high rates of adult disability. *Families in Poverty* and *Low-Income* factors (non-poverty factors associated with low income work) are also significant. Additionally, the *Assault Needing Medical Care* measure is an important risk indicator in the non-urban and rural areas of Hays and Caldwell Counties.

# Strengths and Needs

Statewide trends in early care and education.

## STRENGTHS

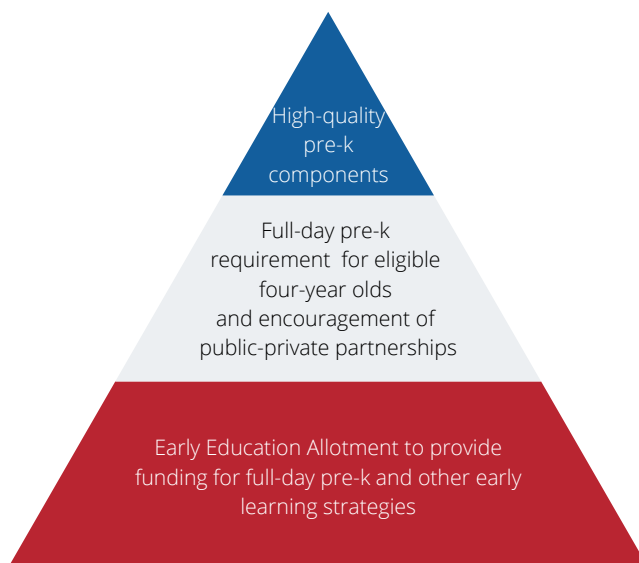
State of Texas passes full-day pre-k funding in 86th Legislative session

Noted early childhood provisions in the final version of the Texas School Finance Bill (HB 3)

## NEEDS

Access to **high-quality** infant/toddler child care

A supply of affordable (subsidized), quality (Texas Rising Star), child care that meets the demand for services among children of working parents



Texas Workforce Commission, March 2018, Retrieved October 2019

# Strengths and Needs

Key Findings from Partners Survey  
With COVID-19 Updates



**71%**

Reported a decrease in household income due to the COVID-19 pandemic

**50%**

Reported a decrease in job availability due to the COVID-19 pandemic



## COVID-19

Many community-based providers reported that their agency was able to shift to providing some basic needs support and remote/virtual services during the pandemic. Issues related to employee health and safety as well as recruitment and attendance due to connectivity issues were also apparent. Overall, a theme of concerns related to the state of the economy, a looming eviction increase, mental health, and lost learning was found.

Educational needs included social-emotional support and materials sent home to improve the virtual learning experience. Health care and nutrition-related issues were reported around general access and preventative practices.

Respondents mentioned access to basic needs support (utility assistance, housing, etc.), mental health care, and child care as the most needed social services in the community. Barriers to accessing mental health services included availability, accessibility (cost, connectivity, transportation), and child care.

**Virtual access to parenting supports, behavioral intervention, mental health, and developmental screenings were offered as additional programs to bring to the community.**

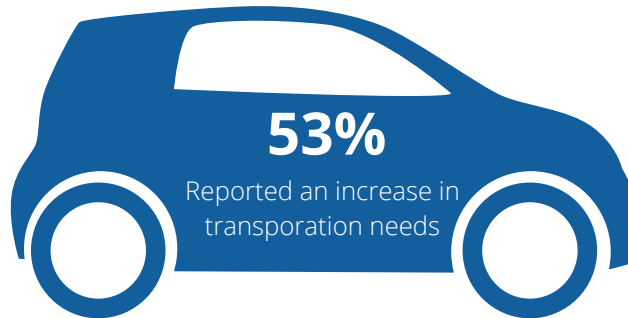
**52%**

Reported an increase number of families involved with Child Protective Services (CPS) and/or children in foster care



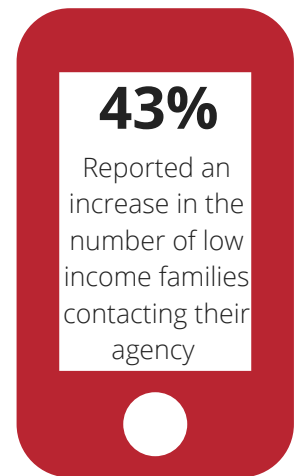
**53%**

Reported an increase in transportation needs



**43%**

Reported an increase in the number of low income families contacting their agency



*"Keeping up with the growing population is necessary. We need more low-income childcare programs and services as well as some for those that are only a little over the income guidelines. We see this a lot, they are trying but they are in no win situations many times. For marginal populations; they are living pay check to pay check and/or in constant debt to where they can't catch up."*

**Anonymous Survey Respondent**



# Strengths and Needs

Qualitative data from Family Survey

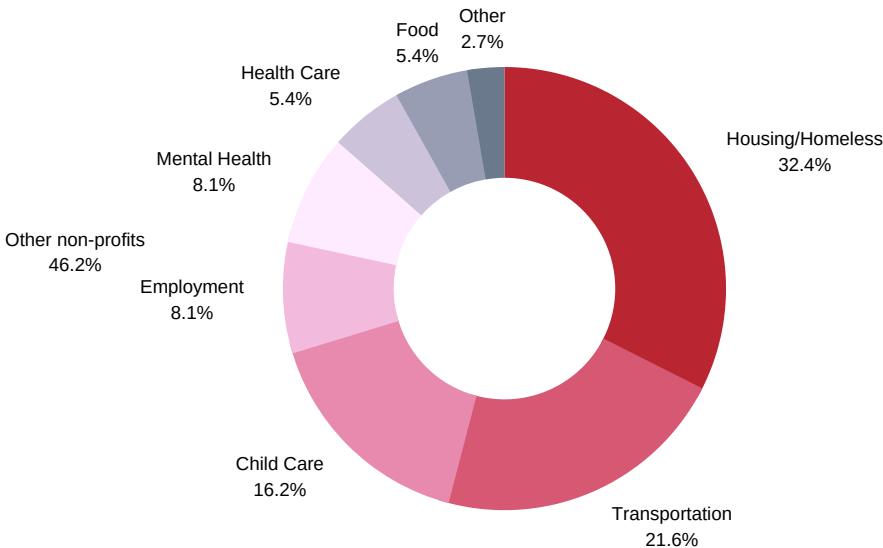
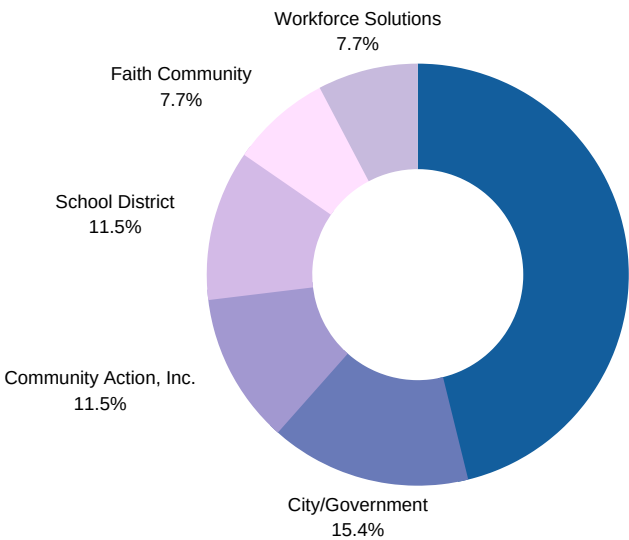
## STRENGTHS

*"It's still a small town and if you need help, you are only one or maybe two degrees away from knowing someone who can help."*  
**Anonymous Respondent**

## NEEDS

*"Resources, coordination between helping entities"*  
**Anonymous Respondent**

The following were explicitly mentioned by survey respondents:



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# Community Resources

Resource availability and accessibility for children and families.



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## START SMART HAYS & CALDWELL

The early childhood coalition of Hays and Caldwell Counties became a part of the Start Smart Texas network in 2020.

Start Smart Hays & Caldwell (SSHC) is a group of organizations and concerned individuals who are passionate about supporting families with young children in our community. SSHC believes that every child deserves to get a chance at a good start in life. Because the most important learning happens before school starts, SSHC supports families with children from ages zero to five. **The vision of SSHC is that every child will have the resources to be happy, healthy and successful in a thriving community.**

## COMMUNITY ACTION, INC. OF CENTRAL TEXAS

- Adult Education
  - HSE/ESL
  - Career Counseling
  - College Prep Academy
- Community Services
  - Case Management
  - Utility Assistance
  - Senior Citizen Center
- Health Services
  - Family Planning
  - Breast & Cervical Cancer Services
  - Rural AIDS Services Program
- Early Childhood Programs
  - Head Start
  - Home Visiting

## VILLAGE MAIN

- Any Baby Can
  - Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas
  - Family Justice Center
  - WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)
-

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# Issues and Recommendations

## Adverse Childhood Experiences in Head Start eligible families

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Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years).

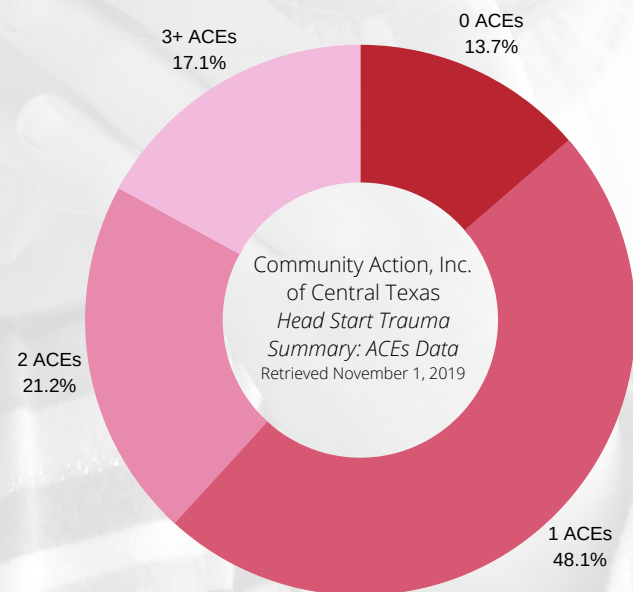
### Issue

ACEs include events such as experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence in the home; and having a family member attempt or die by suicide. Also included are aspects of the child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding such as growing up in a household with substance misuse, mental health problems, or instability due to parental separation or incarceration of a parent, sibling, or other member of the household.

Adverse Childhood Experiences have been linked to

- risky health behaviors,
- chronic health conditions,
- low life potential, and
- early death.

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for these outcomes.



### Recommendation

Relevant early childhood-focused ACEs prevention and mitigation strategies include:

- Early childhood home visitation
- High-quality child care
- Preschool enrichment with family engagement
- Social-emotional learning
- Parenting skills and family relationship approaches

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# Issues and Recommendations

## Lack of specific services, access concerns, and coordination of efforts

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*"As a community of service providers, we need to be aware of the services that each agency offers and assist our clients in finding the help that they need."*

Eleanor Owen-Oshan, Executive Director of Hays County Foodbank

### Issues

As in previous years, and highlighted in prior community assessments, lack of affordable housing and access to transportation are the most commonly reported needs across Hays and Caldwell Counties. Lack of access to reliable, consistent transportation leads to an inability to access other services, including child care, food bank, mental health, and employment services. A theme found in the qualitative analysis of provider surveys related to improving coordination of services. Being knowledgeable about local resources and the systems in which they are embedded is a key, initial, facet of this; as highlighted in the provider quote above.

### Recommendations

Support for expanded in-home service provision with partnerships that can support early childhood development, mental health, and case management. For example, a partnership with Any Baby Can and Community Action, Inc. home visiting could create those opportunities for families. Additionally, there should be a continued emphasis on collaborative systems-level efforts, such as Start Smart Hays & Caldwell and SMTX Mental Health Coalition. This requires the ongoing support of such efforts across and within programmatic leadership. This could also be a starting point for the establishment of a referral system, with sufficient access to funds to build out such a system.

### Head Start Program Recommendations

- There continues to be a great need to expand Early Head Start services in Kyle and San Marcos.
  - After evaluating waiting lists, a proposal has been submitted requesting the conversion of 2 HS classrooms to 2 EHS toddler classrooms; one each in Kyle and San Marcos.
- Continued and growing need to serve children under the care of the Department of Family and Protective Services; with attention paid to the placement of children with extended family (aka. kinship placement).
- Need to improve dual-language model and align programming with school district-specific scope and sequence.

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# Appendices

## HEAD START

Services are delivered through 1,700 agencies in local communities. Programs provide services to over a million children every year, in every U.S. state and territory, in farmworker camps, and in over 155 tribal communities.

A01

### Community Assessment Surveys

Family and Partners Survey Questions  
COVID-19 Partners Survey Questions

A07

### Community Resources

Sample Complete Listing



**EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS  
COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.**

*of Central Texas*

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