



The Children's Community Head Start & Early Head Start

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT 2012

The Children's Community Head Start (CCHS) aims to meet the changing needs of families and children residing in our service area. We regularly collect data on the health and well-being of children from birth to age five and families in Suffolk County as part of an annual Community Assessment. Information gathered on trends related to poverty, hunger, health, employment and housing status enable us to modify and enhance our programs and plan services to meet the needs of the community. CCHS is needed now more than ever before.

Highlights and Program Implications

Following is a summary of some of the findings in the 2012 Community Assessment and their implications for future program planning:

- Long Island families are "struggling in suburbia" in the wake of the recession that began in 2007. Suffolk County is experiencing unprecedented rates of poverty, home foreclosures, unemployment, and high demand for food stamps, emergency housing and Medicaid. The "safety net" is fraying as government lay-offs increase while demand for government services grows.
- The Hispanic/Latino population continues to grow dramatically in the county and in the Head Start/Early Head Start program thus increasing the need for continued bilingual/bicultural programming efforts and access to programs for English Language Learners (ELLs). Of the 204 Head Start children served in 2011-12, 50.4% were Hispanic/Latino compared to 36% in 2009-10 and 28% in 2006-7.
- Immigrant families enrolled in Head Start report experiencing discrimination in their local communities.
- From 2005 to 2010 there was an increase in Suffolk County children and youth receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. During this time period the rate increased from 3.6% to 10.3%, or from 13,475 to 36,937 children. Hunger is a serious concern in the county.
- As of April 2012, Nassau and Suffolk had regained only 47.3% of the 53,700 jobs lost during the 2007-09 downturn indicating a lagging economic recovery.
- Suffolk's significant rate of home foreclosures has exacerbated an already serious housing/homeless

problem. Foreclosures grew in the second quarter of 2012 over the previous year with banks holding more foreclosure sales and repossessing more homes.

- The loss of subsidized child care slots in Suffolk in 2012 has had a devastating impact on low-income working families and on the availability of early childhood education and care providers. From January to July 2012 up to 2,128 Suffolk children were removed from the DSS subsidized child care program.
- New initiatives by CCHS to address the growing problem of childhood obesity have had a documented positive effect.
- Asthma is a continuing health concern for young children. In addition, whooping cough (pertussis) is suddenly on the rise with 670 cases reported in Suffolk in the first six months of 2012.
- The increasing number of child abuse and maltreatment reports in Suffolk County may reflect the economic stress felt by families and the need for support services. In 2010, there were 4,555 children in the county with indicated/confirmed reports of abuse or maltreatment.
- Early Head Start's (EHS) waiting list of 168 infants and toddlers demonstrates the need for more EHS slots, especially for center-based care.
- Parent feedback indicates the need for extended program hours to meet the needs of working families.
- Parents indicate enthusiasm about the Children's Community Head Start and Early Head Start and the progress they see in their children. They expressed great appreciation for teachers, family advocates and home visitors.

With the dedication of our staff, parents, volunteers and supporters, our program continues to offer high-quality, effective, and life-enhancing programs and services to Long Island's low-income children and families. For more information contact The Children's Community Head Start:

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Community Assessment Update 2011

In March and April 2011, families and staff at The Children's Community Head Start and Early Head Start reflected back on the year and the real challenges faced by our local communities. The consensus is that many of the challenges, especially homelessness and increasing poverty, have intensified.

However, The Children's Community Head Start and Early Head Start programs were perceived as a light in the darkness. Here are some highlights:

- The dedication of staff, including Teachers, Teacher Assistants, Home Visitors and Family Advocates was commended. Overall, parents felt that Head Start and Early Head Start had enabled them to learn more about their child's development, become more involved in their child's education, and learn how to be an advocate for their child. Many expressed that HS/EHS had helped them finish school and find employment.
- Parents felt that their children's academic needs were being met and they were pleased with the utilization of the curriculum in both center-based and home-based options.
- Parents in the Early Head Start Home-based option indicated a need for center-based opportunities so that they could continue to pursue school and/or employment opportunities. Other parents also indicated that access to extended program hours would help them better coordinate with work schedules.
- Health and Dental Homes for children are consistently available; however, affordable dental care for adults is lacking.
- Transportation issues ranked high on the "most challenging" list. The high cost of fuel and the lack of reliable vehicles impacted children's attendance and parent participation.