

# Assessing **Child Care** Needs for the Community Assessment



The Head Start Program Performance Standards require programs to collect data on child care programs for inclusion in their community assessment as follows:

“Other child development and child care programs that are serving Head Start eligible children, including publically funded State and local preschool programs, and the approximate number of Head Start children served by each.” 1305.3 (C)(2)

Child Care and State and local preschool data is an important part of assessing the effectiveness of your program options and vital in program planning efforts. In light of the American Families Plan and the expansion of state preschool in many states, the ability to gather and analyze data that describes the full make up of the early childhood system is even more important. While some states collect data that can assist in this task, it is difficult to devise a way to accurately determine the characteristics of the child care landscape in the manner required by the Head Start Program Performance Standards and in a way that can truly help your program fill gaps in the community. This Tip Sheet shares strategies and tips that Heartland utilizes to uncover child care needs when we are assisting programs in developing their community assessment or community assessment update.

**Strategy 1. Use Census Data to the Extent Possible** - The U.S. Census, American Community Survey provides data about the population 3 years and older enrolled in school. To use this data, visit the American Fact Finder website and enter your desired location in the search box. From that page, select the Education topic and the School Enrollment option. Using the table, identify the number of children in nursery school in your area. For programs with more than one county you need to do this several times. Heartland also gathers the data for all major cities in the service area.

**Strategy 2. Call your Local Resource and Referral** - The child care resource and referral agency for your area (some areas may have multiple agencies) keeps data on the number of children that receive child care subsidies. If your state does not offer county-based statistics that capture this information on a website call your resource and referral agency and ask for the number of children that receive child care subsidies by age. When describing the data in your community assessment discuss the income threshold for child care subsidies and the percent of poverty level that these reach. This will allow you to estimate the number of Head Start eligible children that are in local child care programs.

**Strategy 3: Access State Preschool Data** - In most cases, the children eligible for state preschool programs are also eligible for Head Start. Therefore, gather data on the number of State Preschool Program slots funded in your area. Usually, you need to gather this data by district or school. In some states this information is readily available on the website of the program administering these slots. For example, your state department of education or on the school district website.

**Strategy 4: Collect Data from Parents about Their Needs** - To truly uncover the need for program changes it is important to also collect data from program parents about their child care needs. Heartland has created a summary of survey questions that we utilize on a regular basis to make this determination.



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