

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Head Start / Early Head Start Community Assessment

*Data to understand the challenges, resources and strengths
of low-income families with children in
Columbia, Hamilton, Lafayette and Suwannee Counties, Florida.*

*Completed March 2019
Updated March 1, 2020
Updated April 1, 2021
Updated March 1, 2022
Updated February 24, 2023*

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES, CHANGING LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

Executive Summary

Purpose of Community Assessment

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Community Assessment provides data to demonstrate the need for child development and health services in Columbia, Hamilton, Lafayette and Suwannee Counties in north Florida. This data is used to design and implement the Head Start and Early Head Start programs offered by Suwannee Valley 4Cs.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs collects and analyzes data from the communities it serves using data from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, Florida Department of Health, Florida Department of Education, Office of Early Learning, community partners, as well as Suwannee Valley 4Cs Program Information Report (PIR) which provides a compilation of data regarding program services for each fiscal year.

Community members are invited to share their perspectives and knowledge as well as to brainstorm ideas for future planning through a community needs assessment survey. Two surveys are disseminated to parents annually to determine the needs and challenges of participating children and families.

Management staff analyze the data collected to inform decision-making and provide recommendations to the Policy Council and Board of Directors. Together, Council / Board members and management staff review agency recommendations then final recommendations are included in long and short-term plans and submitted to both full bodies for review/approval.

Methodology – (HSPPS 1302.11.b)

Every five years, Suwannee Valley 4Cs conducts a comprehensive community assessment to stimulate strategic thinking about the Head Start and Early Head Start programs, services provided, needs within the community and community strengths. An update is then completed each intervening year.

Per Head Start Program Performance Standard 1302.11.b:

- b. 1. The 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 possibly, 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.*
- b.2. The program must annually review and update the community assessment to reflect any significant changes including increased availability of publicly-funded pre-kindergarten (including an assessment of how the pre-kindergarten available in the community meets the needs of the parents and children served by the program, and whether it is offered for a full school day), rates of family and child homelessness, and significant shifts in community demographics and resources.*
- b.3. The program must consider whether the characteristics of the community allow it to include children from diverse economic backgrounds that would be supported by other funding sources, including private pay, in addition to the eligible funded enrollment. The program must not enroll children from diverse economic backgrounds if it would result in serving less than the eligible funded enrollment.”*

Recommendations:

March 2019:

- Seek EHS expansion to serve more infants-toddlers in Columbia and Suwannee Counties.
- Continue to focus on working with parents to obtain high school diploma or equivalent.
- Share health-related information with families and staff regarding smoking cessation, proper nutrition, exercise, mental health and the opioid epidemic.
- Contract with the Early Learning Coalition of Florida’s Gateway (ELCFG) for school readiness services in Columbia, Hamilton, and Suwannee Counties, as needed, based on needs of parents working or attending school.

March 2021:

- No new recommendations.

March 2022:

- Seek guidance from Regional Office regarding new State of Florida Minimum Wage Requirements.

February 2023:

- Work with the Head Start Regional Office to submit an Enrollment Reduction Application to address low compensation levels of staff in order to improve staff recruitment and retention efforts. (Reference 11/7/2022 Office of Head Start Information Memorandum ACF-IM-HS-22-09.

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Overview

Suwannee Valley Community Coordinated Child Care, Inc. (also referred to as Suwannee Valley 4Cs, the program or the agency) is a private, non-profit corporation formed in 1985. Suwannee Valley 4Cs was initially awarded the Head Start grant for Columbia, Hamilton, Lafayette and Suwannee counties in September of 1996. In September of 1998, the agency was awarded the Early Head Start grant for Columbia County and received an Early Head Start expansion grant for Hamilton and Suwannee counties in the summer of 2003. In March 2010, the agency was awarded another Early Head Start expansion grant to serve an additional 64 infants and toddlers in Columbia, Hamilton and Suwannee Counties through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Head Start and Early Head Start serves 415 children and their families in the four county service area with a high-quality child development and health services program for low-income families with children from birth to five and expectant moms. The program addresses Early Childhood Education, Health, Disabilities, Social Services, Nutrition, Mental Health and Parent / Family and Community Engagement.

Population and County Data

The Suwannee Valley 4Cs service area is comprised of four rural, low-income and under-resourced counties of Columbia, Hamilton, Suwannee and Lafayette located in extreme north central Florida with a total approximate population of 135,402. Columbia County is the most highly populated county in the service area (69,698), followed by Suwannee (43,474), Hamilton (14,004) and Lafayette (8,226). All our rural counties are identified as Fiscally Constrained Counties and are "Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO)" defined as rural communities, or a region composed of rural communities, that have been adversely affected by extraordinary economic events or natural disasters¹. The majority of the service area is undeveloped land or farmland, with population widely-scattered throughout. Population density per square mile ranges from 87 in Columbia, 63 in Suwannee, 27 in Hamilton and 15 in Lafayette.

Significant changes in population have occurred since 2010. In our two largest counties of Columbia and Suwannee, the population has increased by 3.2% and 4.6% respectively. While in our two lesser populated counties of Hamilton and Lafayette, the population has decreased by 5.4% and 7.3% respectively.

Individual county geographical information and population data follows.

Columbia County borders the state of Georgia to the north and is located in a rapidly growing region of North Central Florida. The intersection of two major interstate highways, I-75 and I-10, is located in the heart of Columbia County in Lake City. The county is also served by multiple rail lines. Based on information from the local chamber of commerce, the top four major employers in Columbia County are the County School Board, Veterans Administration Medical Center, HAECO Aircraft Maintenance, and the Columbia County Correctional Facility.

Columbia County Pop. Rank	2020 Pop. Estimate	Square Miles	Pop. Density <i>(per square mile)</i>	Pop. Change Since 2010
41st of 67	69,698	798	87.4	+3.2%

Columbia County Population Characteristics	County Poverty Rate ⁱⁱ	% Under Age 18	% 65 of age and over	Median Age (2017)	Inmate Population as of April 2020
	20.6%	21.3%	21.8%	40.6	3,575/5.0%

Hamilton County is located west of Columbia County, and shares its northern border with the state of Georgia. The county is divided by I-75, a major north/south corridor, and the east/west corridor of I-10 that nearly parallels the county's southern border. The most populated areas in the county include the City of Jasper (located in the heart of the county), followed by the towns of Jennings and White Springs. Based on information from the local chamber of commerce, major employers in Hamilton County are PCS Phosphate, the Department of Corrections, healthcare, retail, the County School Board and the County Government.

Hamilton County Pop. Rank	2021 Pop. Estimate	Square Miles	Pop. Density <i>(per square mile)</i>	Pop. Change Since 2010
63 rd of 67	14,004	514	27.2	-5.4%

Hamilton County Population Characteristics	County Poverty Rate	% Under Age 18	% 65 of age and over	Median Age (2017)	Inmate Population as of June 2019
	25.7%	19.2%	18.6%	40.0	2,543/17.6%

Lafayette County is located south-west of Columbia County, midway between Tallahassee to the northwest and Gainesville to the southeast. US Highway 27 is the major transportation route through the county. The most common employment sectors in Lafayette County are in public administration, educational services, agriculture and healthcare / social assistance.

Lafayette County Pop. Rank	2020 Pop. Estimate	Square Miles	Pop. Density (per square mile)	Pop. Change Since 2010
66 th of 67	8,226	543	15.1	-7.3%

Lafayette County Population Characteristics	County Poverty Rate	% Under Age 18	% 65 of age and over	Median Age (2017)	Inmate Population as of June 2019
	18.9%	19.3%	17.2%	38.6	1,212 / 14.4%

Suwannee County borders Columbia County to the west. As the county’s name implies, the meandering Suwannee River has a big influence on the county and forms three of its four boundaries (North, West, and South). Interstate 10 runs through the northern portion of the county, and the Interstate 75 interchange is a short distance east of the county line in Columbia County. CSX Railways operates east/west rail service through the northern part of the county. Based on information from the local chamber of commerce, the largest employers are Pilgrim’s Pride, Advent Christian Village, Suwannee Correctional Institute, Suwannee County School System and Klausner Lumber One.

Suwannee County Pop. Rank	2020 Pop. Estimate	Square Miles	Pop. Density (per square mile)	Pop. Change Since 2010
43 rd of 67	43,474	689	63.1	+4.6%

Suwannee County Population Characteristics	County Poverty Rate	% Under Age 18	% 65 of age and over	Median Age (2017)	Inmate Population as of June 2019
	20.6%	21.3	21.8%	43.5	1,979 / 4.5%

Program Options / Center Data

Suwannee Valley 4Cs operates eight Head Start / Early Head Start centers. All children are served under the center-based option. Suwannee Valley 4Cs Early Head Start program serves 184 infants / toddlers (birth to age three) and pregnant women in three of the counties (Columbia - 88 children, Hamilton - 40 children and Suwannee - 56 children) and 231 Head Start children in all four counties (Columbia – 108 children, Hamilton – 34 children, Lafayette – 17 children and Suwannee – 72 children). The program provides high-quality child development and health services and support for families designed to foster health, early education, parenting skills / engagement and economic stability. Pre- and postnatal screenings, education and mentoring are provided to participating pregnant moms.

Head Start operates on a ten-month program year with operational calendars that closely coincide with the service area public school calendars. Each Head Start classroom operates under the center-based, single session/full-day option. Voluntary Pre-K is offered to four-year-olds in Columbia and Suwannee County Head Start centers. The staffing pattern in each Head Start classroom is one Lead Teacher plus one Teacher or Teacher Assistant for every ten children. Center staff is supervised by a Site Coordinator who is supervised by the Education Coordinator.

Early Head Start operates under the center-based, single session/full-day/full-year (12 month) option. The staffing pattern is one Teacher for every four infants or toddlers. Efforts are made to maintain continuity of care by keeping the same teacher with the same group of four children for the entirety of the child’s enrollment in Early Head Start. Each Early Head Start center has a transition room to assist children and families in the program to successfully transition from infant/toddler experiences to preschool experiences. Center staff is supervised by a Site Coordinator who is supervised by the Education Coordinator.

<u>Head Start Centers</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Number of Classrooms</u>	<u>Funded Enrollment</u>
Lake City Learning Center	Columbia	258 SW Columbia Ave, Lake City, FL 32025	5	91
Ft. White Learning Center	Columbia	305 SW Dortch St, Fort White, FL 32038	1	17
Jasper Learning Center	Hamilton	6183 NW Hwy. 41, Jasper, FL 32052	1	17
Jennings Learning Center	Hamilton	1432 Turrett Ave, Jennings, FL 32053	1	17
Mayo Learning Center	Lafayette	173 NE Hawkins, Mayo, FL 32066	1	17
Live Oak Learning Center	Suwannee	843 SW Marymac St, Live Oak, FL 32064	4	72
Totals			13	231

<u>Early Head Start Centers</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Number of Classrooms</u>	<u>Funded Enrollment</u>
Lawton’s Place	Columbia	878 NE Jackson Ave, Lake City, FL 32055	9	72
Lake City Learning Center	Columbia	258 SW Columbia Ave, Lake City, FL 32025	2	16
Jasper Learning Center	Hamilton	6183 NW Hwy. 41, Jasper, FL 32052	3	24
Jennings Learning Center	Hamilton	1432 SW Turrett Ave, Jennings, FL 32053	2	16
Azalea Park First Class	Suwannee	405 SW Walker Ave, Live Oak, FL 32064	7	56
Totals			23	184

Estimated Number of Potentially Eligible Children

Children from birth to five are eligible, if family income is equal to or below the poverty line or the family is eligible for public assistance, the child is in foster care, the child has a diagnosed disability or the child is considered homeless. Three indicators are used to estimate the number of children in poverty:

- **Poverty Rate by County/Zip Code**(estimated 1489/1,447 children)
 - o **By family type** (1,022 children in single-parent households –69%, 467 children in two-parent households – 31%)
- **Medicaid Births** (estimated 2,795 children).

Children under Age Five Below Poverty Level, By County, 2017-2021 (5-Year Rolling Average)ⁱⁱⁱ

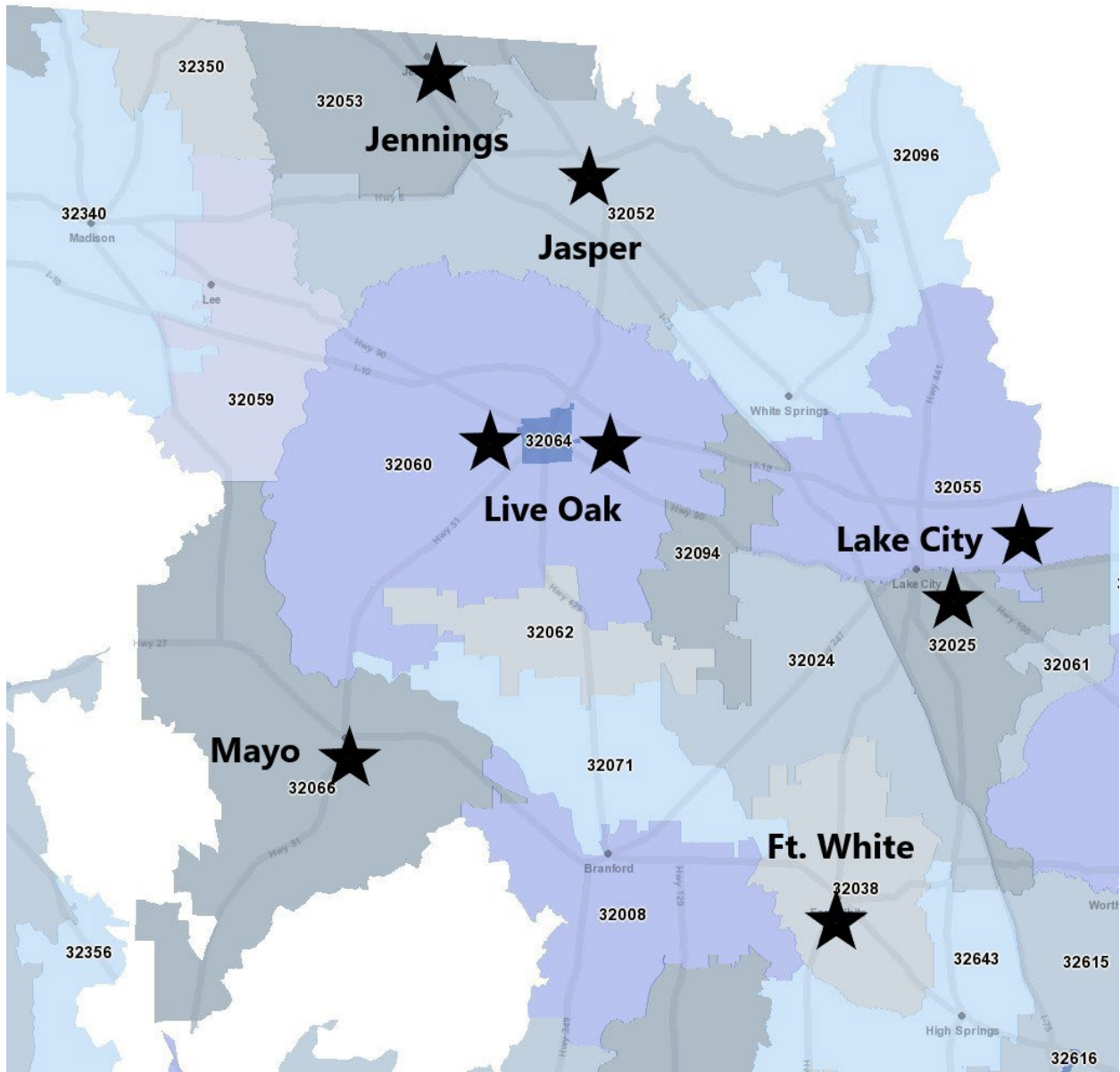
	Columbia	Hamilton	Lafayette	Suwannee	Service Area Total	Florida
Population estimate, All children under 5	3933	564	307	2160	6,964	1,072,077
Children under 5, below poverty level	689	263	88	449	1,489	208,418
% Children under 5, below poverty level	17.5%	46.6%	28.7%	20.8%	-	19.4%

Children under Age Five Below Poverty Level, by Zip Code, 2017-2021 (5-Year Rolling Average) vs Suwannee Valley 4Cs Cumulative Enrollmentⁱⁱⁱ

Columbia Zip Codes	Population estimate, Children under 5	Estimated % below poverty level	Estimated number below poverty level		Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR	
					Cumulative number served	Percentage served
Lake City 32024	838	19.0%	159	Total 689	257	37.3%
Lake City 32025	1,313	12.1%	159			
Ft. White 32038	460	15.4%	71			
Lake City 32055	1,322	22.7%	300			
Lulu 32061	0	0	0			
Hamilton Zip Codes				Total 263	96	36.5%
Jasper 32052	172	57.0%	98			
Jennings 32053	348	44.0%	153			
White Springs 32096	44	27.3%	12			
Lafayette Zip Code				Total 73	19	26%
Mayo 32066	292	25.0%	73			
Suwannee Zip Codes				Total 422	151	36%
Live Oak 32060	1,453	27.1%	394			
McAlpin 32062	38	44.7%	17			
Live Oak 32064	0 260	3.8%	10			
O'Brien 32071	125	0.8%	1			
Wellborn 32094	49	0.00	0			
Totals				1,447	523	36%

Suwannee Valley 4Cs served **36%** of the children in poverty within the service area in FY 2022. The total estimated number of children in poverty is well beyond the current funded enrollment for Suwannee Valley 4Cs.

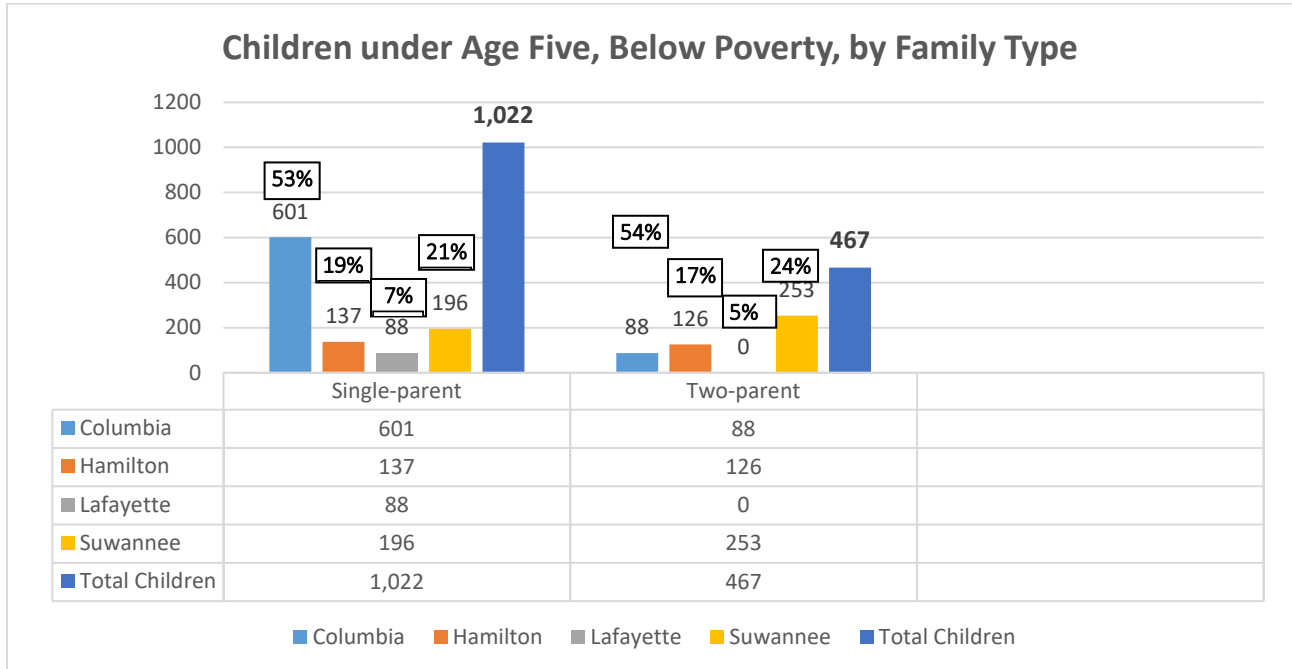
Service Area Zip Code Map with Center Locations



Children under Age Five in Poverty by Family Type

Single-parent families in poverty with children under age five are the most at-risk for poor outcomes in any community. Children growing up in single-parent families typically do not have the same economic or human resources available as those growing up in two-parent families.

Based on ACS data for 2017-2021ⁱⁱⁱ, the total estimated number of children under age five in poverty in the service area is 1,489 with 1,022 children in single-parent households and 467 children in two-parent households. This data is presented in the table that follows and is broken down by county and household type.



In FY 2022, Suwannee Valley 4Cs served 354 single-parent households program-wide, or 35% of the 1,022 estimated children in single-parent homes in the service area.

Estimated percentages for household type and child poverty by county from Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR data and shown in the table that follows. Program-wide, **76%** of the families served are single-parent households and **24%** are two-parent households.

	Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR Data	
	% Single-Parent Households	% Two-Parent Households
Columbia	76%	24%
Hamilton	82%	18%
Lafayette	33%	67%
Suwannee	78%	22%
Program-wide	76%	24%

Medicaid Births^{iv}

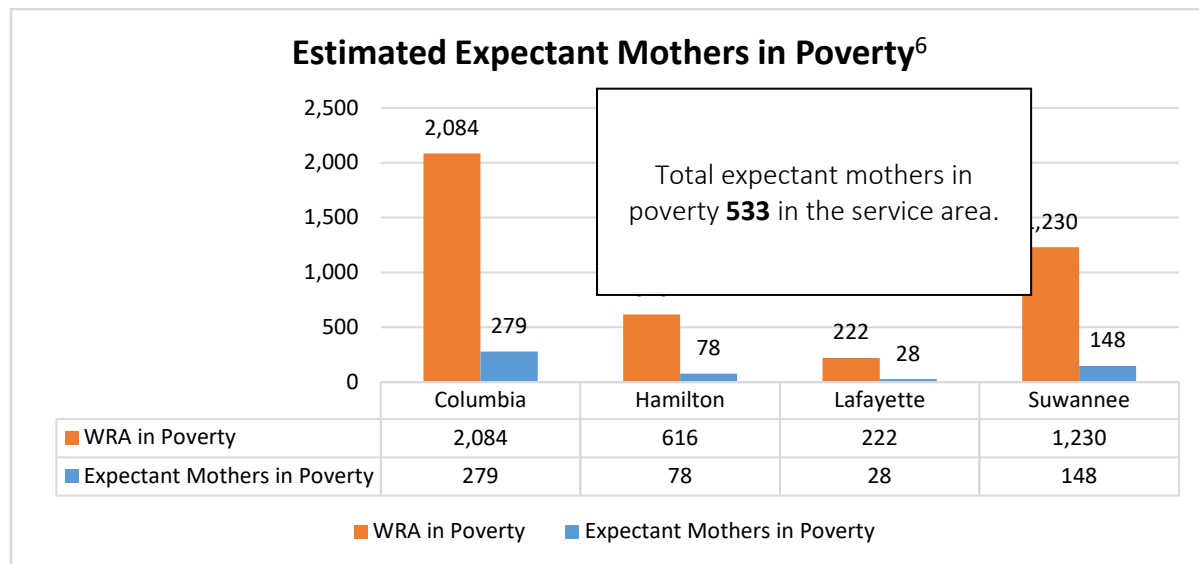
Medicaid eligibility is a low-income indicator that is reviewed in estimating the number of potential Head Start eligible children. Births covered by emergency Medicaid are typically nonresident/undocumented immigrant moms with little or no pre- or postnatal care. The most current 3-year data available follows.

2019-2021 Data	Total Births	Medicaid Births		Emergency Medicaid Births	
		Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Columbia	2247	1,470	65.4%	17	0.8%
Hamilton	489	335	68.5%	16	3.3%
Lafayette	186	115	61.5%	8	4.3%
Suwannee	1311	875	66.7%	22	1.7%
Service Area Totals	4,233	2,795			
Florida	645,843	298,951	46.3%	23,390	3.1%

Estimated Number of Potentially Eligible Expectant Mothers^v

Estimates of the number of women of reproductive age (WRA) from 15-44 in poverty is based on the American Community Survey 2017-2021, 5-year estimates. Using this data and the CDC formula to estimate the number of expectant women in a given area, we can estimate the number of expectant women in poverty by county.

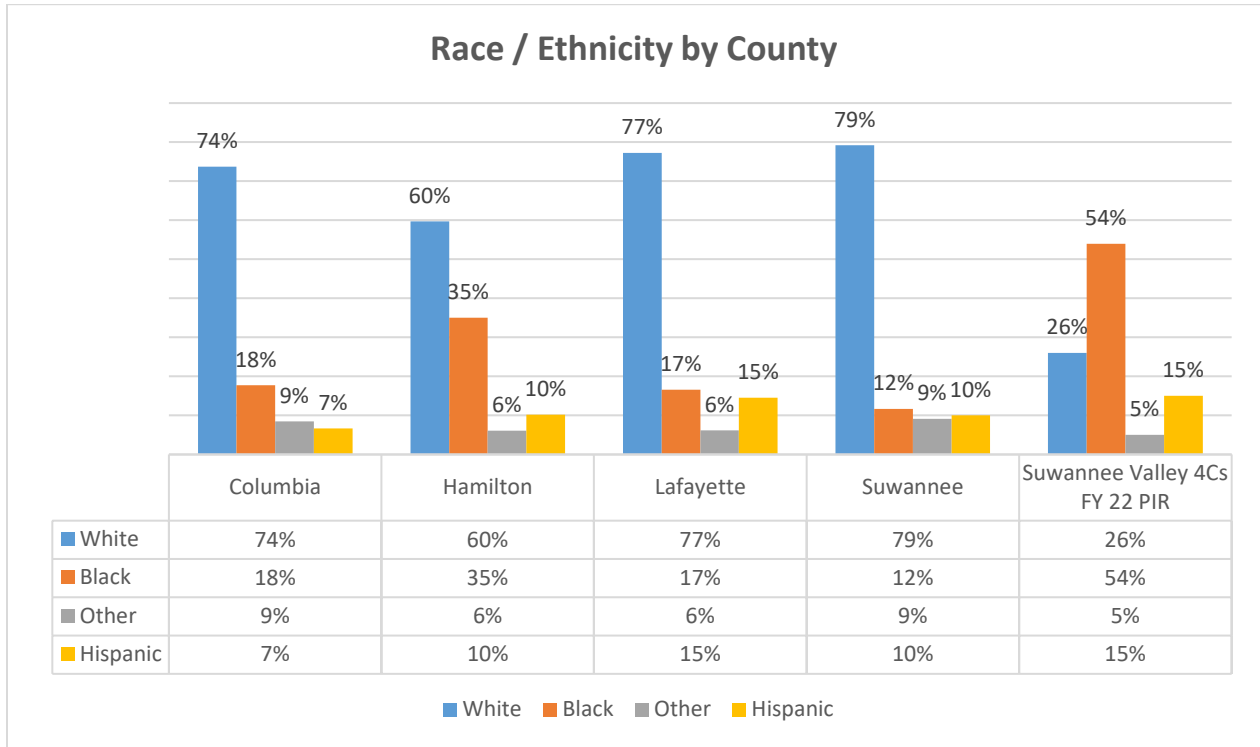
The total estimated number of expectant moms in poverty in the service area is 533. Estimates by county are provided in the chart that follows.



Suwannee Valley 4Cs Pregnant Mom Program (PMP) provides 12 slots for expectant mothers in Columbia, Hamilton and Suwannee Counties. Expectant moms participating in the program are provided with a guided curriculum that includes pre- and postnatal support, the benefits of breastfeeding, screenings, and resources.

Race / Ethnicity of Potentially Eligible Children^{vi}

An overview of service area race and ethnicity composition is provided in the chart that follows and includes Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR family data.



Additional tables follow that provide detailed county poverty data by race and ethnicity based on Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017-2021, 5-year estimates. A separate table is provided for each county.

Poverty Status, All Families, Race and Ethnicity, by County

(ACS 2017-2021, 5-Year Estimate, S1702)^{vi}

Columbia

Family Type in Poverty by Race / Ethnicity	All Families		Married-couple Families		Female Householder, no husband present	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Race						
White alone	12,938	6.1%	9,957	3.5%	2,006	19.3%
Black alone	2,136	19.1%	855	10.6%	1,011	21.9%
American Indian and Alaska native alone	15	26.7%	11	-	4	100%
Asian alone	180	19.4%	125	13.6%	37	-
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	22	-	22	-	-	-
Some other race alone	243	33.3%	129	20.9%	89	56.2%
Two or more races	592	34.3%	408	19.9%	107	89.7%
Ethnicity						
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	852	27.9%	596	18.1%	127	61.8%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	12,531	5.9%	9,654	3.6%	1,938	17.5%

Hamilton

Family Type in Poverty by Race / Ethnicity	All Families		Married-couple Families		Female Householder, no husband present	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Race						
White alone	1,857	15.2%	1,509	11.1%	255	42.4%
Black alone	888	25.9%	425	20.5%	390	31.5%
American Indian and Alaska native alone	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian alone	33	42.4%	33	42.4%	-	-
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-
Some other race alone	113	41.6%	24	100%	63	-
Two or more races	72	6.9%	29	17.2%	43	-
Ethnicity						
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	305	36.7%	169	52.7%	79	-
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	1,695	14%	1,393	8.8%	239	45.2%

Lafayette

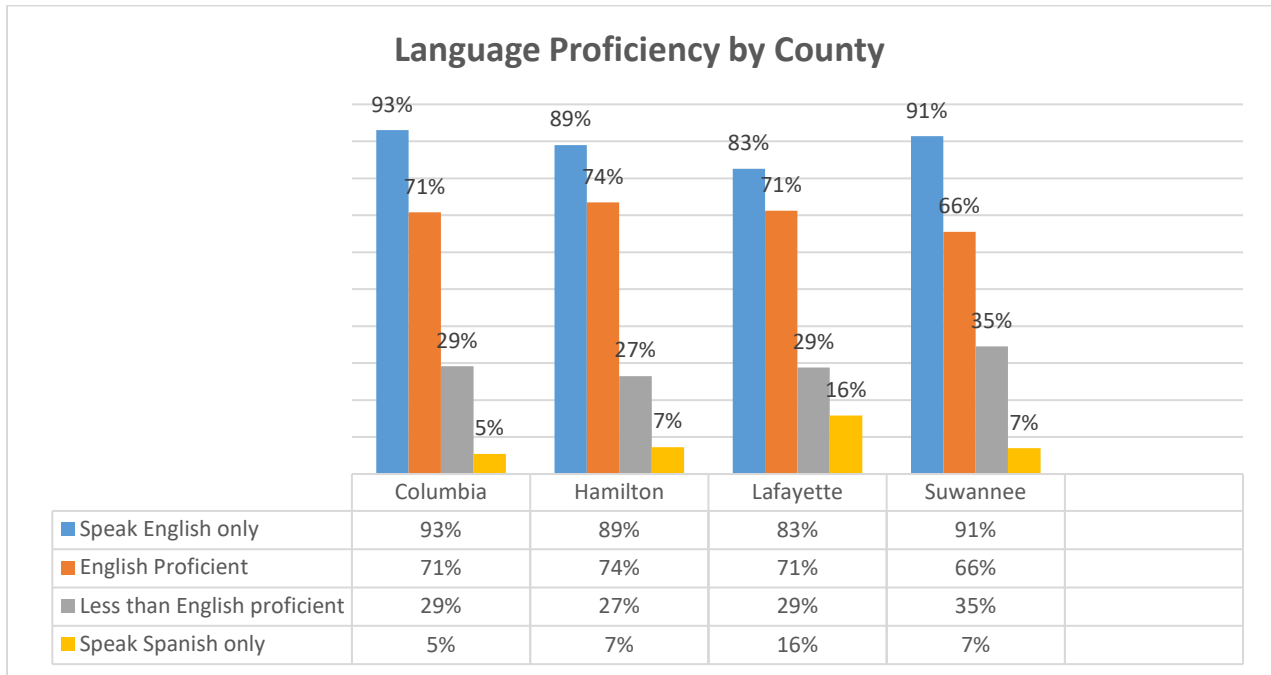
Family Type in Poverty by Race / Ethnicity	All Families		Married-couple Families		Female Householder, no husband present	
	Race	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
White alone	1,527	14.9%	1,013	7.7%	260	52.7%
Black alone	68	30.9%	37	-	31	67.7%
American Indian and Alaska native alone	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian alone	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-
Some other race alone	35	-	35	-	-	-
Two or more races	73	-	73	-	-	-
Ethnicity						
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	223	9.9%	213	8.9%	3	100.0%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	1,412	14.6%	908	6.5%	257	52.1%

Suwannee

Family Type in Poverty by Race / Ethnicity	All Families		Married-couple Families		Female Householder, no husband present	
	Race	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
White alone	9,038	9.5%	6,926	7.8%	1,404	15.8%
Black alone	784	19.5%	511	-	244	54.9%
American Indian and Alaska native alone	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian alone	70	-	70	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-
Some other race alone	289	-	279	-	10	-
Two or more races	433	11.5%	152	13.2%	55	54.5%
Ethnicity						
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	969	15.5%	799	15.1%	39	74.4%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	8,427	8.5%	6,473	6.6%	1,375	14%

Languages Spoken^{vii}

Spanish is the primary language in the four county area of those who are not English proficient. Language proficiency by county and PIR data follows.



Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR	English	Spanish	Other Language
Language spoken in the home	92%	8%	1%

Young dual-language learners (DLLs) lag behind their peers when they enter kindergarten and the gap in academic achievement appears to widen as children grow older. There is great variability among young DLLs with regard to the rate and the manner in which they learn a second language. Several factors influence the process of second language learning, like child age, motivation, personality, first language proficiency, and program/school factors (e.g., instructional approaches, teacher preparation), and socio-cultural factors (e.g., poverty, familial stress, incongruence between home and school environments).

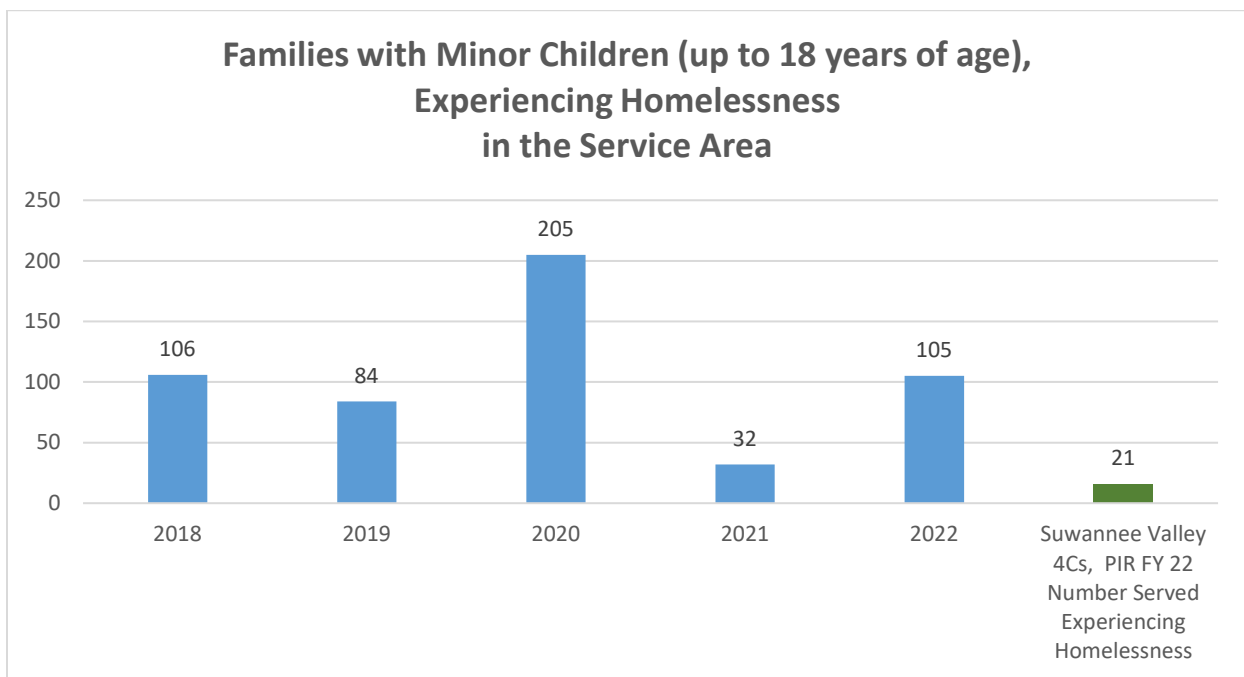
Suwannee Valley 4Cs staff encourage parents of DLLs to maintain their home language with their children to help ensure a strong language foundation for each child. Parents are encouraged to visit the classroom to teach an activity, read a story or sing a song in their home language. Children are encouraged to speak their home language with other children in the classroom who speak that language. At the same time, children are encouraged to learn the English language in the classroom through bi-lingual signage and activities. Teachers work toward children’s understanding of the English language and building their vocabulary through repetition, using non-verbal signs, and dual language references to objects or pictures. Bi-lingual staff is available.

Children Experiencing Homelessness

Children experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for enrollment per the McKinney Vento Act 2001. Homeless children are defined as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence." This would include an individual who:

- Is sharing housing with others
- Is living in a motel, hotel, travel trailer park or camping ground due to a lack of alternative, adequate accommodations
- Is living in an emergency or transition shelter
- Has a primary night-time residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Is living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, bus or train station or similar setting
- Is a migratory individual because he/she is living in circumstances previously described

The chart that follows provides 5-year data^{viii}, on families with minor children (up to 18 years of age) who are experiencing homelessness and, Suwannee Valley 4Cs PIR FY 2022 data.



Suwannee Valley 4Cs is an active member of the Homeless Network of Suwannee Valley with a written memorandum of agreement for mutual referrals for families with children that are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The United Way of Suwannee Valley is the lead agency for Columbia, Hamilton, Lafayette and Suwannee Counties.

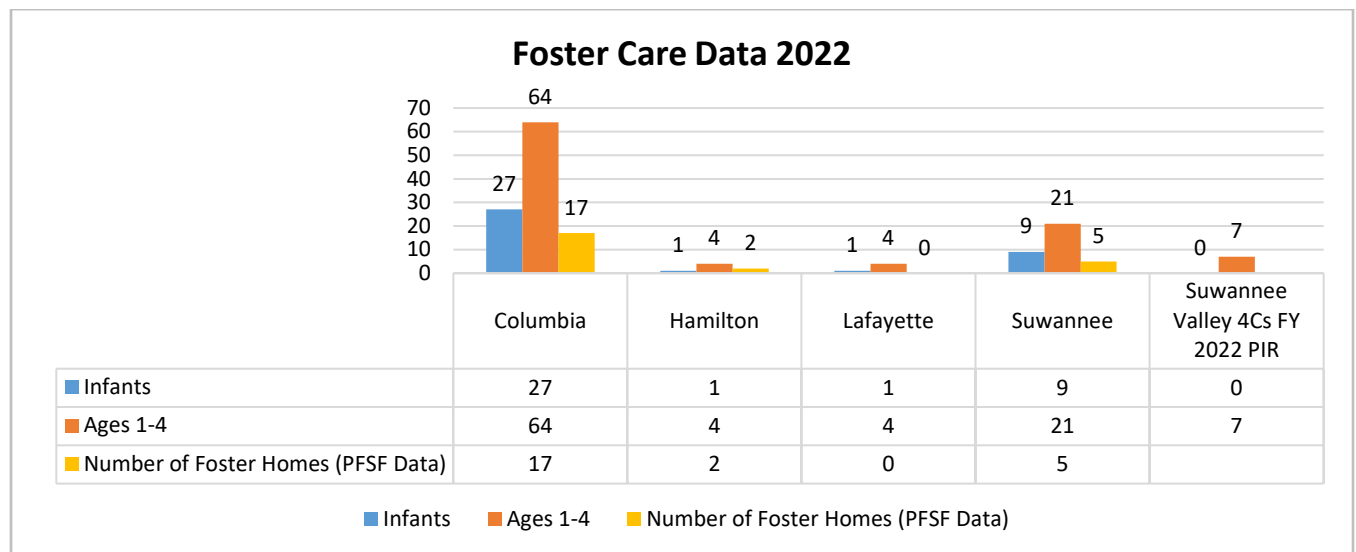
Children in Foster Care

Children in foster care are automatically eligible for enrollment. Children are removed and placed in foster care because of maltreatment by their parents or guardians. Most of these children were born in poverty.

Substance abuse contributes to 75% of incidents of child abuse and neglect of children in foster care. Nearly 80% of children in foster care have prenatal exposure to maternal substance abuse. Of the children in foster care, 80% have at least one long-term health problem. Twenty-five percent of children in foster care have three or more long-term health problems, which is three to seven times greater than the number of health problems found among other children living in poverty.

There is a growing body of research on the effects of early maltreatment on brain development. All children in foster care have experienced loss and trauma and are more likely to have behavioral and emotional challenges and are at a much higher risk of poor education, physical, social and emotional outcomes.

Data on children in foster care in 2022^{ix}, and foster care homes as of 2022 for the four county area, is provided in the chart that follows. Foster home data was provided by the Partnership for Strong Families (PFSF). Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR eligibility data for children in foster care is also provided.



Children in Out-of-Home Care

For the year 2022, data from the Department of Children and Families reported 165 children, from birth to age four, entered 'Out-of-Home Care' in the four county area. The majority were removed because of domestic violence, parental drug use, and the caretaker's inability to cope.

Columbia
87

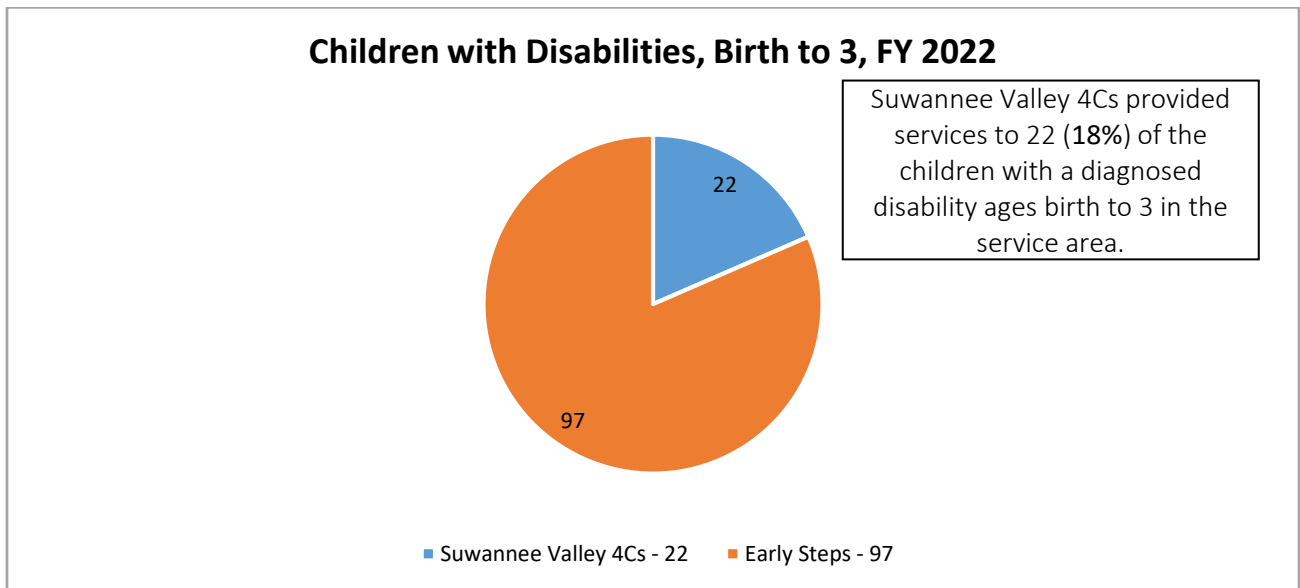
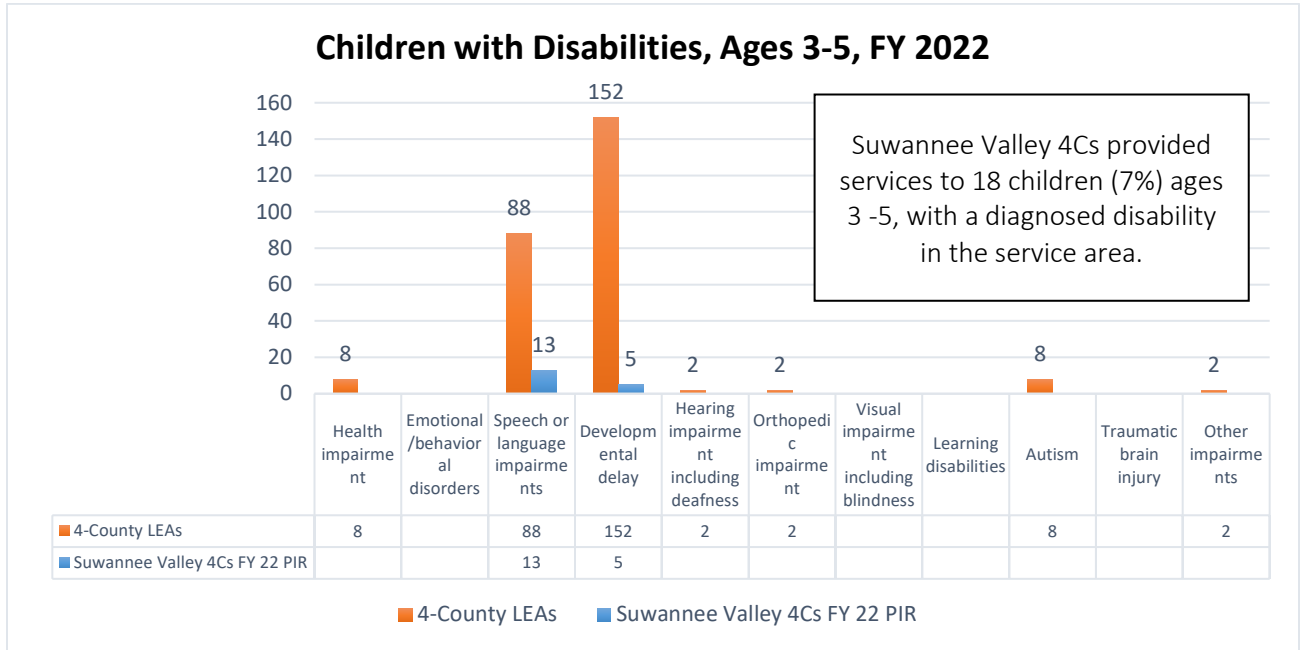
Hamilton
6

Lafayette
3

Suwannee
69

Children with Disabilities

Children with a diagnosed disability are automatically eligible for enrollment. Suwannee Valley 4Cs overall disability enrollment for FY 2022 was 8%. Suwannee Valley 4Cs served 7% of all children, ages three to five, in the service area and 18% of all children birth to three. Data from LEAs^x, Early Steps, and Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR is provided in the charts that follow.



Through written interagency agreements between Suwannee Valley 4Cs, the Children’s Transition Network, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS), the Special Education Local Agencies and Early Steps (Part C), our staff help families access necessary early assessment and services. Suwannee Valley 4Cs staff participate in meetings with school districts and others on a regular basis. Shared training opportunities are in place and have been

successful. The Special Education Local Agencies in the service area are the four county school districts. School districts assign special education staff to Suwannee Valley 4Cs sites to provide services for children when needed.

Agencies providing resources to infants, toddlers and preschool aged children with disabilities and their families are available and accessible through FDLRS, exceptional student education programs and private providers throughout the service area. Services available include occupational, physical, speech and language therapy; assistive technology; counseling and support groups. Individual assistance, parent training and informational workshops provide learning opportunities for parents of children with disabilities.

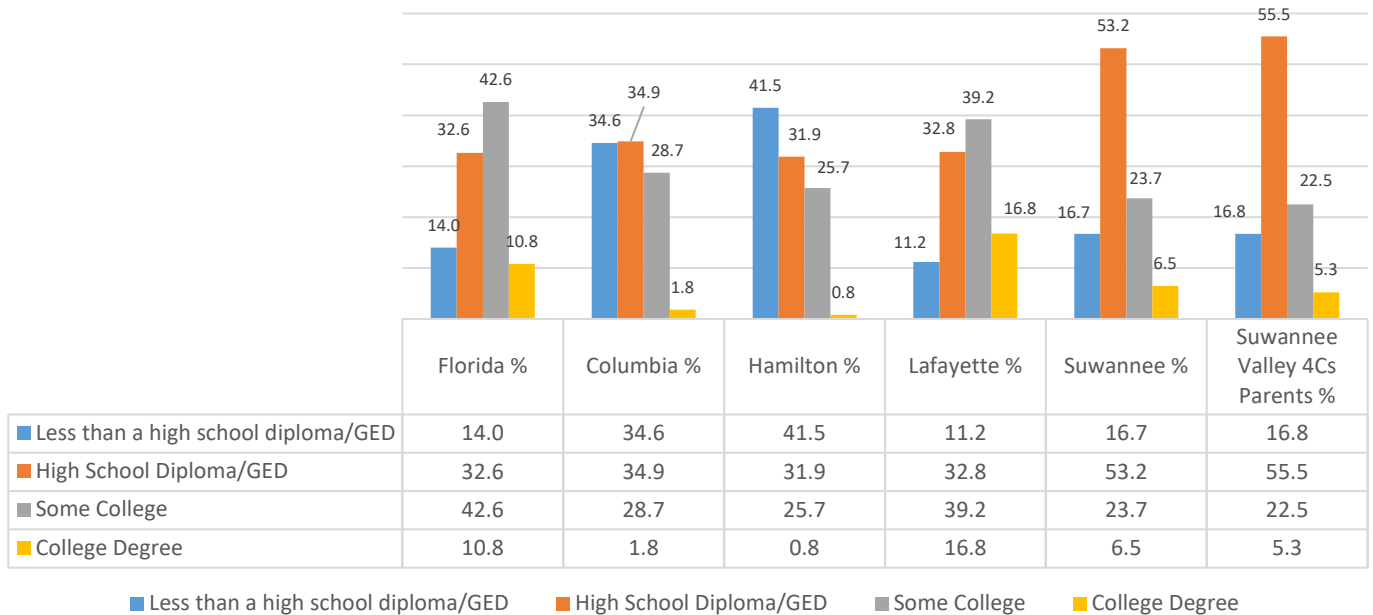
Needs of Eligible Children and Their Families

Education

Educational attainment is a strong indicator of family well-being and self-sufficiency. Family economic stability is strongly tied to the parent’s educational success that often leads to a child’s success. Therefore, lack of a high school diploma or equivalent can often lead to a cycle of poverty within the family.

Hamilton and Lafayette have the highest rates of adults 18 to 24 years with less than a high school diploma or equivalent. County^{xi} and Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR educational attainment data follows.

Educational Attainment, 18 to 24 year-olds, County Percentages Compared to Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR Parents



Parent Education Level Counts (at enrollment) Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR	Less than a High School Diploma / GED	High School Diploma / GED	Some College	College Degree
Columbia	33	92	52	10
Hamilton	17	55	9	5
Lafayette	3	14	1	1
Suwannee	14	62	29	5
Totals	67	223	91	21
Percentages	16.75%	50.1%	22.75%	5.25%

Continuing Education and Job Training

Suwannee Valley 4Cs maintains a productive relationship with the adult education departments in each county to assist parents in earning GEDs. Head Start parents who are interested in attending college are assisted in enrolling in either Florida Gateway College in the service area, or North Florida Community College in nearby Madison County. Parents are also assisted in accessing services and vocational training provided by the local Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) and River Oak Technical College in Live Oak.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR parent education / job training data is provided on the number of parents who expressed an interest or identified a need during the enrollment year and the number of parents receiving education / job training services and completing job training, a grade level or obtaining a diploma by the end of the enrollment year.

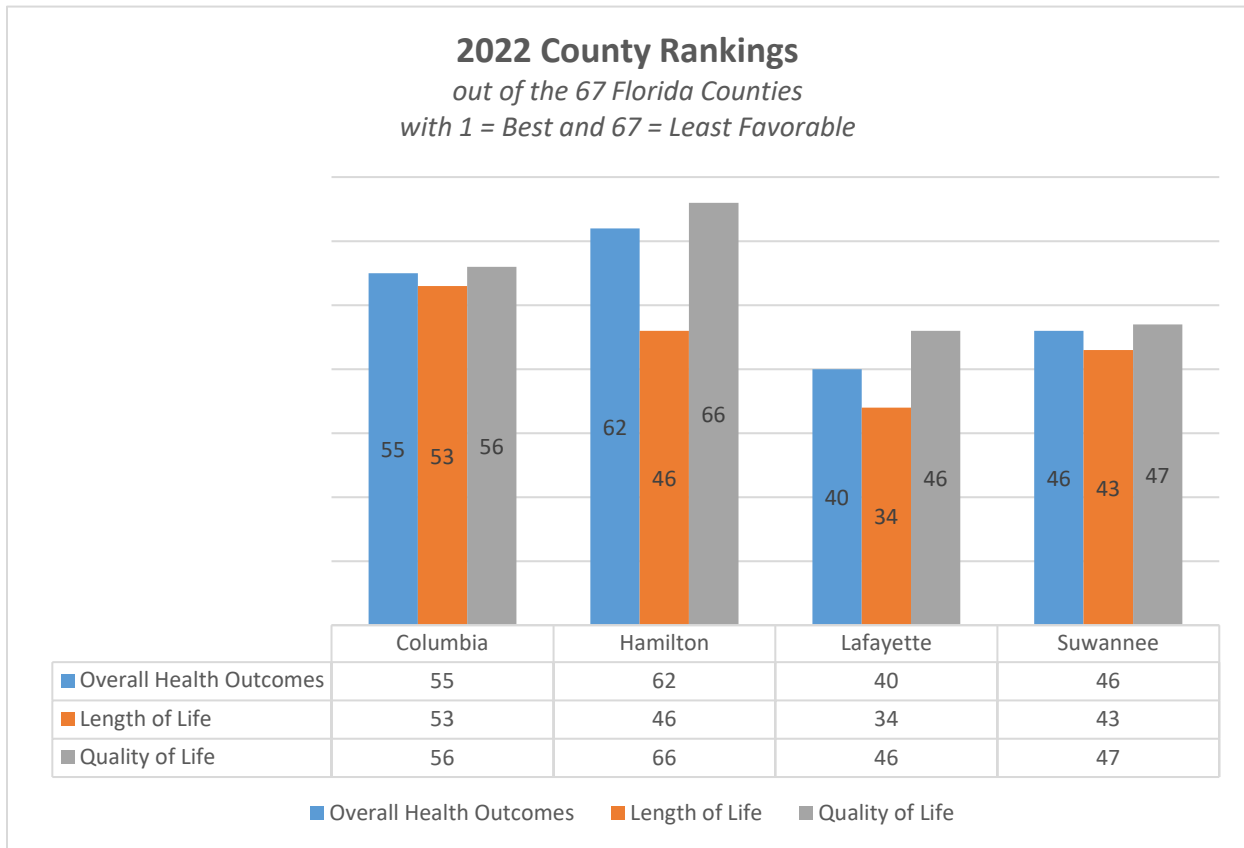
Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR	Expressed Interest	Received Services / Completed During Program Year
	Adult Education (GED Programs and College Selection) / Job Training	Adult Education (GED Programs and College Selection) / Job Training
Number of Parents	181	171

Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR	English as a Second Language (ESL) Services	
	Expressed Interest	Received Services (Referral)
Number of Parents	28	28

Health

County Health Rankings^{xii}

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) overall county health outcomes is based on two types of measures: length of life and quality of life. Length of life is measured as premature death before age 75. Quality of life is based on numerous health indicators including low-birth weight babies. Counties are then ranked on a scale of all counties within their state with 1 being the county with the best health outcomes.



Health Incidence - Adults

In reviewing all health indicators, three, smoking, adult obesity, and sedentary/inactive lifestyle, contribute to the overall low health outcomes for service area counties. County and state data on these indicators is provided in the table that follows.

Health Indicator ^{xiii}	Columbia		Hamilton		Lafayette		Suwannee		Florida
	%	Quartile	%	Quartile	%	Quartile	%	Quartile	
Adult Smoking	24%	4 th	24%	4 th	21%	4 th	20%	3 rd	15%
Adult Obesity	35%	4 th	37%	4 th	36%	4 th	40%	4 th	26%
Physical Inactivity	65%	4 th	65%	4 th	66%	4 th	59%	3 rd	26%

(Quartiles: 1 = Most favorable, 4 = Least favorable)

Opioid Epidemic

Drug overdose deaths are a leading contributor to premature death and are largely preventable. Currently, the United States is experiencing an epidemic of drug overdose deaths. Opioids also called opiates are depressant drugs and include both illicit drugs and legal opioid-based prescription drugs. They are considered narcotics and depress the central nervous system. Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone (OxyContin[®]), hydrocodone (Vicodin[®]), codeine, morphine, and many others.

According to the Florida Medical Association, 107,270 people died in the U. S. from opioid overdose in 2021. The State of Florida has seen an exponential increase in overdoses associated with fentanyl. Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid up to 100 times more potent than morphine. In 2020, more than 6,150 from overdoses involving fentanyl and fentanyl analogs in Florida.

To address this concern, Florida prioritized behavioral health issues, including alcohol and substance use, in its State Health Improvement Plan and just released a new Opioid Use Dashboard to their website. Current statistics for the opioid epidemic follows.

Opioid Epidemic Indicator 2021 <small>xiv</small>	Columbia	Hamilton	Lafayette	Suwannee	Florida
Opioid overdose deaths	13	4	-	2	6,442
Opioid overdose death rate <i>(per 100,000 persons)</i>	17.8	21.2	-	5.7	31.2
Suspected non-fatal opioid-involved overdose	5	16	-	44	42,380
Number of opioid prescriptions dispensed	78,504	5,027	3,713	35,819	15,300,313

Health Incidence – Children

Children and the Opioid Epidemic

Opioid abuse continues to require a focus, not only on the adults who are struggling with use and addiction, but on the epidemic’s extensive impacts on children. Infants who are born with prenatal exposure to opioids often experience neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), which is characterized by symptoms such as tremors or seizures, vomiting, fevers, excessive crying, poor feeding and rapid breathing.

NAS remains a critical public health issue and the rise in the incidence of NAS disproportionately occurs in rural areas. There is no one standardized tool to assess newborns for NAS. The most common tool has not been validated to show utility in improving outcomes for infants with NAS. In order to garner more timely data, Florida along with many states has made the syndrome a publicly reportable condition that will allow for improved public health surveillance and targeted response. ^{xv}

The most current state and county data, as available, reflecting NAS statistics follows. ^{xvi}

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) from Birth Defects Registry, Counts	2017	2018	2019	2020
Columbia	5	7	11	,5
Hamilton	<5	<5	<5	<5
Lafayette	<5	<5	<5	<5
Suwannee	<5	<5	<5	<5
Florida	1,503	1,375	1,238	1,121

Asthma

In reviewing Department of Health child data for 2019-2021, one health incidence affecting children, ages one to five, is chronic asthma. The tables that follow provide statistics for the service area, state and Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR data.

Asthma Hospitalizations Ages 1 - 5	Columbia	Hamilton	Lafayette	Suwannee	Florida
Number of Asthma Hospitalizations	36	-	-	21	8,149
Percentage	.284%	-	-	.274%	.232%

Chronic Asthma Diagnoses, Suwannee Valley 4Cs, FY 2022 PIR	Early Head Start	Head Start
Number	2	11
Percentage	1%	4%

Suwannee Valley 4Cs' Health Services Coordinator develops a health care plan for each child with a chronic condition based on the medical provider's diagnosis and treatment plan. The Health Care Plan is individualized to help ensure that the child's medical requirements are properly met during the day. The plan gives a description of the illness, signs and symptoms and what to do in the event that the child's condition flares up while in school. A parent signature acknowledgement on the plan is required.

The Health Services Coordinator performs ongoing monitoring of all health care plans in the classroom.

Obesity

Child obesity / overweight continues to be prominent in the service area with percentages exceeding those of the state. Percentages for 2021 WIC children ages two- to four-years old in the service area are provided in the table that follows.

2021 WIC Children, Ages 2 to 4	Columbia	Hamilton	Lafayette	Suwannee	Florida
Overweight/Obese Percentage	24.2%	30%	1%	34.4%	29.7%

Our Health Services staff perform body mass index screenings at the beginning of each program year. Screening results letters and a Health Readiness Checklist are provided to parents for all children. Parents with children possessing a BMI out of normal range are provided additional resources and offered a referral to WIC and the program’s contracted Nutritionist. Child BMI data from Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR is provided in the table that follows.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR BMI Results	Columbia	Hamilton	Lafayette	Suwannee	Result %
Underweight, BMI less than 5th percentile	0	0	2	4	2%
Healthy Weight	59	17	6	36	42%
Overweight	25	9	4	15	19%
Obese, BMI at or above 95th percentile	53	14	7	32	38%
Overweight % by County	19%	23%	21%	17%	
Obese % by County	40%	35%	37%	36%	

***FY 2021 Results = 33%**

Immunization – Vaccination Coverage^{xvii}

Vaccination is the most effective intervention to reduce morbidity and mortality from vaccine-preventable diseases in young children.

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program provides federally-purchased vaccine available to both public and private immunization providers. The program has succeeded in raising immunization coverage rates among high-risk children and reducing disparities in access to health care. Vaccinations are free at VFC providers. There are seventeen VFC providers in the service area.

The tables that follow reflect current vaccination coverage rates by age group.

Vaccination Percentages 2022	One year olds	Two year olds
Florida ^{xviii}	75.9%	92.2%

Vaccination Percentages 2021	Kindergartners ^{xix}
Columbia	95.1%
Hamilton	96.2%
Lafayette	97.2%
Suwannee	94.2%
Florida	95.9%

Upon enrollment into the program, Suwannee Valley 4Cs ensures each child is up-to-date on the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) schedule and recommended schedule of early childhood vaccines per the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Health Care

Health care incorporates a wide range of concerns from access, quality and cost, to patient education and prevention. Even though all counties in the service area have similar federal designations indicating shortages of health professionals (medical, mental health and/or dental providers) for either the low-income or whole population and/or geographical area, each county in the service area has its own public health department with all providing dental services. Health care providers in the service area are culturally competent and reflect the cultures and languages of the families served.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Health Services Advisory Committee meets regularly and includes participants from county health departments. County health departments provide professional and technical assistance to the program as needed. Formal partnerships continue with each county health department.

Child Health and Oral Health

Healthy children are ready to learn. Good physical and oral health is important for children to develop skills and knowledge. Healthy children have better attendance, are more alert, engaged and better able to concentrate and learn. There is a strong correlation between poor oral health status and other systemic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and pre-term and low-weight births.^{xx}

Health routines, as practiced in Suwannee Valley 4Cs classrooms and in the home, help children stay healthy and when established early in life will help children as they grow into adults to continue to practice healthy habits.

Regular checkups with access to ongoing primary and dental care is essential. Suwannee Valley 4Cs ensures each child has an ongoing source of continuous, accessible health and dental care and is up-to-date on a schedule of age-appropriate preventative and primary health care according to the EPSDT schedule for well-child care. Each county in the service area has its own public health department with all providing varying levels of pediatric dental care.

Screenings for developmental progress, health, dental, vision and hearing are provided to all Head Start and Early Head Start children, as appropriate, by program staff and qualified contractual providers. Referrals and treatment are provided when concerns are identified.

Parental health literacy is another important factor in the physical and oral health of a child. Parents who have health information they can understand can make better health choices for their children. Suwannee Valley 4Cs provides each parent with a Health Readiness Checklist with their child's screening results letter that explains in everyday language the link between health and school readiness and a child's ability to learn. Multiple parent workshops are provided each year on the topics of child health and oral health.

Insurance - Medicaid / KidCare

Medicaid provides much needed health care coverage for low-income families. Families of enrolled children are assisted by our Family Support Specialists in obtaining Medicaid coverage, when needed. Insurance coverage data from the American Community Survey, Florida Department of Health and Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR is provided in the tables that follow.

	Health Insurance Coverage Status, Children Under Six Years of Age^{xxi}			
	With Coverage		No Coverage	
	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Columbia	4436	96%	184	4%
Hamilton	620	86%	101	14%
Lafayette	352	81.9%	78	18.1%
Suwannee	2,467	92.4%	202	7.6%
Florida	1,240,774	94%	78,743	6%

Health Insurance Coverage – Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR Data – beginning of / at end of enrollment

Pregnant Women Cumulative Enrollment	Type Coverage At Enrollment	Beginning Enrollment Percent	End of Enrollment Percent
12	Medicaid	92%	92%
1	Private Insurance	8%	8%

EHS Children Cumulative Enrollment	Type coverage at enrollment	Beginning Enrollment Percent	End of Enrollment Percent
244	Medicaid	97%	97%
	Private Insurance	3%	3%
	No Insurance	-	-

HS Children Cumulative Enrollment	Type coverage at Enrollment	Beginning Enrollment Percent	End of Enrollment Percent
277	Medicaid	97%	97%
	Private Insurance	2%	2%
	No Insurance	1%	1%

Suwannee Valley 4Cs program-wide child health insurance coverage exceeds the state rate of 94%.

Maternal and Infant Health

Maternal health and prenatal care is the most important factor that determines infant health. Timing and adequacy of prenatal care (PNC) is essential for a healthy outcome for both mom and baby. Studies have linked late or no prenatal care, low birth weight and infant death rates to the mother’s educational attainment and level of poverty. Service area PNC and other maternal and infant data^{xxii} for 2021 is provided in the tables that follow.

	Birth Rate (per 1,000 pop.)	Received PNC in 1st Trimester, Percentage	Received PNC in 3rd Trimester or No PNC Percentage
Columbia	24.1	75.3%	7.7%
Hamilton	14.9	75.3%	7.7%
Lafayette	14.9	71.0%	8%
Suwannee	14.9	68.8%	10.5%
Florida	14.9	75.3%	7.7%

	Mothers with Less than High School Diploma (age 19 and over), Percentage	Low Birth Weight Percentage	Infant Death Rate (per 1,000 live births)
Columbia	21.6%	10.9%	7.9
Hamilton	31.3%	14.7%	10.1
Lafayette	24.2%	9.6%	10.6
Suwannee	28.0%	9.4%	8.3
Florida	14.2%	8.8%	7.0

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Pregnant Mom Program (PMP) arranges regular scheduled pre- and postnatal care and expectant mom / family education and services (breastfeeding education, smoking cessation, fetal development, bonding, shaken baby, SIDS/Sleep Safe, etc.).

Suwannee Valley 4Cs partners with multiple agencies, such as Healthy Start and WIC, in all four counties of the service area to provide pre- and postnatal education and access to care for pregnant women. Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) provides services in Columbia and Hamilton Counties only.

Teen Pregnancy^{xxiii}

Teen pregnancy and childbearing bring substantial social and economic costs through immediate and long-term impacts on teen parents and their children. Pregnancy and birth are significant contributors to high school dropout rates among girls.

Children of teenage mothers are more likely to have lower school achievement and to drop out of high school, have more health problems, be incarcerated at some time during adolescence, give birth as a teenager, and face unemployment as a young adult.

These effects continue for the teen mother and her child even after adjusting for those factors that increased the teenager’s risk for pregnancy, such as growing up in poverty, having parents with low levels of education, growing up in a single-parent family, and having poor performance in school.

Florida’s Teen Pregnancy and Prevention Program is an initiative that emphasizes the importance of education (staying in school), personal responsibility (abstinence), and building lasting relationships. Since 2010 when the initiative began, Florida’s teen birth rate has fallen from 15.7 to 6.7 in 2021 (per 1,000 female teens). The teen birth rate for each of the four counties in the service area is above the state rate in 2021. While the percentages are still high for the service area, a drastic reduction in all counties has been seen since the 2010 initiative began. Comparison of 2010 teen birth data and the most current data available is provided in the table that follows.

Rates per 1,000 Female Population	Teen Female Population, 2010	Teen Birth Rate, 2010 <i>(Per 1,000 female teens)</i>	Teen Female Population, 2019	Teen Birth Rate, 2019 <i>(Per 1,000 female teens)</i>	Teen Female Population 2021	Teen Birth Rate 2021 <i>(Per 1,000 female teens)</i>	Birth Rate Change <i>(Per 1,000 female teens)</i>
Columbia	2,017	29.3	1,851	15.1	1,851	10.8	-18.5
Hamilton	390	25.6	326	24.5	307	29.3	3.7
Lafayette	215	41.9	252	4.0	267	11.2	-30.7
Suwannee	1,220	31.1	1,224	18.0	1,204	10.8	-20.3
Florida	591,435	15.7	588,355	7.9	594,807	6.7	-9.0

Teen moms in high school have the opportunity to participate in Suwannee Valley 4Cs Pregnant Mom Program and are referred to Suwannee Valley 4Cs by the local education agencies (LEA) as part of formal written agreements (Drop Out Prevention Program).

Postpartum Depression^{xxiv, xxv}

Postpartum depression (PPD) is moderate to severe depression that affects 11 – 18% of women any time after giving birth. Women with PPD may experience feelings of guilt, anxiety, irritation, decreased energy and motivation, and a sense of worthlessness. They may also experience sleep difficulties, loss of concentration, and changes in appetite. Mothers with postpartum depression may also be unable to care for herself or baby, be afraid to be left alone with her baby, and have negative feelings toward the baby.

Depressed mothers report higher incidences of intimate partner violence, rape, child abuse and are at increased risk for future major depression or mood disorders. Postpartum depression in mothers is also associated with negative health effects in their children. Infants of mothers with postpartum depression are more likely to be abused, neglected, become hospitalized with health issues, and to be diagnosed with failure to thrive. The cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral development of these children can all also be negatively affected. Young age and low socioeconomic status, single marital status and low educational attainment have been found to increase a woman’s risk for postpartum depression.

For participating moms, Suwannee Valley 4Cs Health Services Coordinator makes a home visit after the baby is born to check on the mom and baby. An informal screening is made for postpartum depression and a referral is provided if needed. Additional materials on infant care is provided and includes emergency care and contact numbers.

Mental Health^{xxvi, xxvii}

Child Mental Health – Just as you can help prevent a child from catching a cold or breaking a bone, you can help prevent a child from having mental health problems. We know what it takes to keep a child physically healthy—nutritious food, exercise, immunizations - but the basics for good mental health aren’t always as clear. The first “basic” is to know that children’s mental health matters. We need to treat a child’s mental health just like we do their physical health, by giving it thought and attention and, when needed, professional help. Although there can be a genetic or biological component to mental illness, and many children live in unsafe environments that put them at risk of developing mental health problems, the consequences of mental illness may often be prevented through early intervention. At the very least, it is possible to delay mental illness and/or lessen symptoms.

The best way to promote children’s mental health is to build up their strengths, help to protect them from risks and give them tools to succeed in life. Promoting a child’s mental health means helping a child feel secure, relate well with others and foster their growth at home and at school. We do this by helping to build a child’s confidence and competence - the foundation of strong self-esteem. This can be achieved by providing a child with a safe and secure home; warmth and love; respect; caring and trusting relationships with family, friends, and adults in the community; opportunities to talk about experiences and feelings; time to play, learn, and succeed; encouragement and praise; and consistent and fair expectations with clear consequences for misbehavior.

Beginning at birth, children need positive relationships with the adults who care for them. When children learn to recognize and share their feelings with trusted adults, they feel good about themselves. These relationships help them develop the confidence to learn new skills, and learn how to manage their feelings, thoughts and behaviors.

The tables that follow provide three year combined state data and Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR data on child mental health and our contracted mental health professional consultations, services and referrals.

Mental Health Treatment Services, 2019-2021 , Children Ages One–Five <i>(Table reflects combined 3-year totals.)</i>	Columbia	Hamilton	Lafayette	Suwannee	Florida
2019-2021 Population, Ages One–Five	12,635	2,329	1,177	7,647	3,514,613
Count	0	0	0	0	9,504
Rate per 1,000 children	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.7

Number of Children Receiving Mental Health Services Through Suwannee Valley 4Cs, FY 2022 PIR	Early Head Start	Head Start
Mental Health professional consulted with staff/parents	1	9
Individual mental health assessment provided	1	6
MH professional facilitated a referral for services	0	3

Adult Mental Health – Mental disorders, when serious and untreated, can cause significant morbidity, reduced quality of life, numerous hospitalizations and a burden to the local healthcare

system. Mood disorders are particularly important contributors to disability-adjusted life years lost and to years lived with disability.^{xxviii}

Suwannee Valley 4Cs’ Mental Health Consultant provides direct-service counseling and treatment for children and families enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start. The region’s community mental health provider, Meridian Behavioral Health Services, also provides counseling and treatment for low-income families based on a referral system.

The table that follows represents Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR data on the number of parents who expressed an interest or identified a need at the beginning of the enrollment year and the number of parents receiving services by the end of the enrollment year.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR	Early Head Start Parents	Head Start Parents
Expressing interest / identified a need for mental health services	15	7
Received services	15	7

Substance Abuse^{xxix}

The opioid epidemic is a public health issue and the effects on the service area / state were discussed earlier in the Foster Children and Health Incidence sections of this report.

There are many symptoms and warning signs of substance abuse including: using the substance on a regular basis (daily, weekends or in binges), tolerance for the substance, failed attempts to stop using the substance, physical and/or psychological dependence, withdrawal symptoms (delirium tremens, trembling, hallucinations, sweating and high blood pressure), and in some cases dementia. The specific causes of substance abuse are unclear, though they seem to be a combination of hereditary, environmental and social factors.

The table that follows provides FY 2022 PIR data on substance abuse prevention and treatment as an interest / identified need by parents at the beginning of the enrollment year and services that were provided.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR	Expressing an interest or identified need during the program year	Received services (referral or workshop) during the program year
Substance Abuse Prevention	4	4
Substance Abuse Treatment	2	2

Nutrition

The relationship between nutrition, health and learning is undeniably strong: nutrition is a major factor that can impact a child's development. Poor nutrition, and by extension food insecurity, has been shown to influence health and well-being throughout the life cycle, from the prenatal period on into elder years.

Undernourished children birth to three years of age cannot learn as much, as fast, or as well because chronic under-nutrition harms their cognitive development during this critical period of rapid brain growth, actually changing the fundamental neurological architecture of the brain and central nervous system. They do more poorly in school and have lower academic achievement because they are not well prepared for school and cannot concentrate. They have more social and behavioral problems because they feel bad, have less energy for complex social interactions, and cannot adapt as effectively to environmental stresses. Undernourished children are sick more often, and more likely to have to be hospitalized, suffer growth impairment that precludes them from reaching their full physical potential, incur developmental impairments that limit their physical, intellectual and emotional development. ^{xxx}

Suwannee Valley 4Cs provides family-style meals and snacks that are nutritious and represent the cultures of the children served. All menus are reviewed and approved by the contracted nutritionist. Parent workshops are provided on nutrition and the relationship to child development and school readiness. Parents have the opportunity to receive services from the contracted nutritionist. Information on health and nutrition is included in many issues of the Family Focus newsletter that is distributed to parents.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs, WIC and county health departments work together to address the issues of childhood obesity and other nutrition-related concerns affecting young children.

Food Environment^{xxxi}

The food environment index ranges from zero (worst) to ten (best) and equally weights two indicators of the food environment: limited access to healthy foods and food insecurity.

Limited access to healthy foods estimates the percentage of the population that is low income and does not live close to a grocery store. Living close to a grocery store is defined differently in rural and non-rural areas; in rural areas, it means living less than ten miles from a grocery store whereas in non-rural areas, it means less than one mile. "Low income" is defined as having an annual family income of less than or equal to 200% of the federal poverty threshold for the family size.

Limited Access to Healthy Food, 2022	Columbia	Hamilton	Lafayette	Suwannee	Florida
Percentage of Low-income Population Living More than ten miles from a Grocery Store (Rural)	7.6%	6.2	8.3%	7.6%	7.8%

Food insecurity refers to the USDA's measure of lack of consistent access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Food-insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time. Food insecurity may reflect a household's need to make trade-offs between important basic needs, such as housing or medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

The table that follows represents 2022 estimated food insecurity data from Florida’s Department of Health in our service area counties and the state.

Florida Department of Health Estimates, 2022	Child Food Insecurity	Population within ½ mile of Healthy Food Source	Population within ½ mile of Fast Food Restaurant
Columbia	20.6%	5.8%	7.2%
Hamilton	21.9%	.3%	0.3%
Lafayette	17.6%	0.2%	0.3%
Suwannee	21.3%	1.4%	1.1%
Florida	17.1%	29.9%	33.6%

Suwannee Valley 4Cs provides nutritious breakfast, lunch and snacks daily to every child enrolled according to USDA guidelines. Local food assistance is provided through coordination with the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC), the Christian Service Center and Catholic Charities, among others.

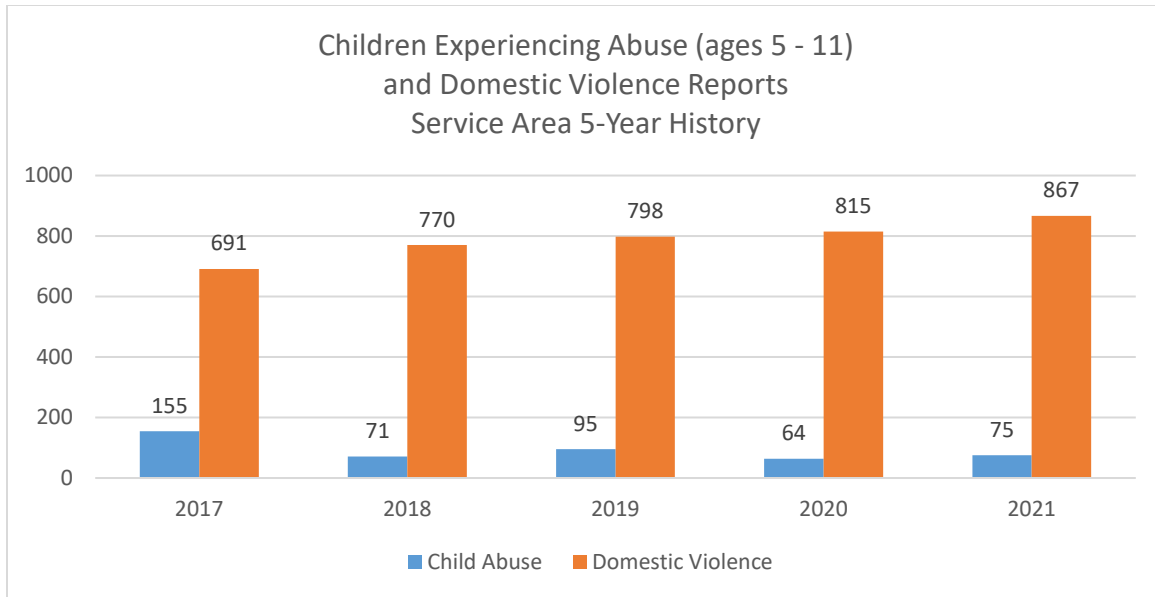
Social Services

Social services covers a wide array of issues and can include health care, insurance coverage, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, employment, parent / family engagement and assistance to address material needs. Suwannee Valley 4Cs provides comprehensive services to participating families that includes referrals to community resources and parenting education based on a research-based parenting curriculum. The family and Family Support Specialist, in partnership, identify the family’s needs. Family Support Specialists provide community agency referrals and assistance to families to meet the needs of the family and support if the family and children experiences a crisis.

Child Abuse / Domestic Violence^{xxxii}

Children exposed to domestic violence are at a greater risk of experiencing abuse and / or neglect. The turmoil of an environment of domestic violence is likely to produce behavioral and emotional challenges for children and higher risk of poor educational, social and emotional outcomes.

Data on the number or rate of children birth to five years old experiencing abuse / neglect was not immediately available. Data for children aged five to eleven years old experiencing child abuse / neglect is provided in the chart that follows and is shown comparatively with domestic violence reports for the same time period.



Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR data on the number of parents who expressed an interest or identified a need at the beginning of the enrollment year and the number receiving services during the program year is provided in the table that follows.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 PIR	Parents expressing an interest or identified need during the program year	Parents received services (referral or attended workshop) during the program year
Child abuse and neglect services	14	14
Domestic violence services	16	18

Suwannee Valley 4Cs partners with local domestic violence agencies, Another Way and Vivid Visions, to provide referrals for parents experiencing domestic violence and to provide annual parent workshops on Domestic Violence Awareness. Through the Department of Children and Families, Suwannee Valley 4Cs provides an annual Child Abuse and Neglect Detection and Prevention staff workshop.

Employment / Unemployment^{xxxiii}

January 2023 Unemployment Rates:					
	Employed	Unemployed	2023 Unemployed Rate	2010 Unemployed Rate	Nov. 2020 Unemployed Rate
Columbia	28,642	822	2.8%	10.8%	5.7%
Hamilton	4,005	151	3.6%	11.4%	7.3%
Lafayette	2,737	75	2.7%	7.3%	4.8%
Suwannee	17,159	525	3.0%	9.8%	5.2%
Florida	10,569,000	286,000	2.6%	11.1%	6.3%
National	160,138,000	5,694,000	3.4%	-	6.7%

Unemployment rates continue to decrease from 2020 highs, when rates had doubled for almost all groups evaluated, presumably due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Black and Hispanic populations, though, are still experiencing higher unemployment rates than the current state and national averages. Hamilton County ranks 5th highest unemployment rate in the State of Florida and also exceeds the January 2023 national rate for unemployment.

Public Assistance^{xxxiv}

Families receiving public assistance with age-eligible children are automatically eligible for services. The following table provides the most current data (20224,804 ACS) on public assistance by county in the service area and FY 2022 PIR data.

Number of Households	Public Assistance Income or Food Stamps/SNAP in the past 12 Months	Suwannee Valley 4Cs PIR FY 2022 Public Assistance as Basis for Eligibility
Columbia	4,804	61
Hamilton	1,237	5
Lafayette	372	2
Suwannee	2,487	15
Florida	1,079,253	-

Transportation

Public transportation is nearly non-existent in our very rural, widely-scattered population service area which can make transportation a major challenge for some low-income families. There is one public transportation entity, Suwannee Valley Transit Authority^{xxxv} (SVTA), which provides assistance for medical and groceries trips for transportation disadvantaged residents in Columbia, Hamilton and Suwannee Counties. Additionally, Medicaid provides transportation to medical appointments only for Medicaid recipients.

Typical Parent Schedules (Working, School, Training)^{xxxvi}

Information on parent schedules in regards to work, school or training, is obtained two ways: through the program’s enrollment application and a mid-year participating-parent survey. Working parent (WP) as used in this report also refers to parents in a training program or going to school.)

Enrollment Application Information:

FY 2022 enrollment applications show that the typical weekly schedules identified by working parents are Monday through Friday, in a standard day format (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) and number of hours worked between twenty and forty per week.

The following table provides FY 2022 program enrollment application information derived from working parent applications and their response on the application to hours offered by Suwannee Valley 4Cs.

There were 643 enrollment applications submitted in FY 2022 with 507 (79%) of those being from parents who work, go to school or are in a training program. Of these, 469 (92%) stated the program hours would meet their child care needs.

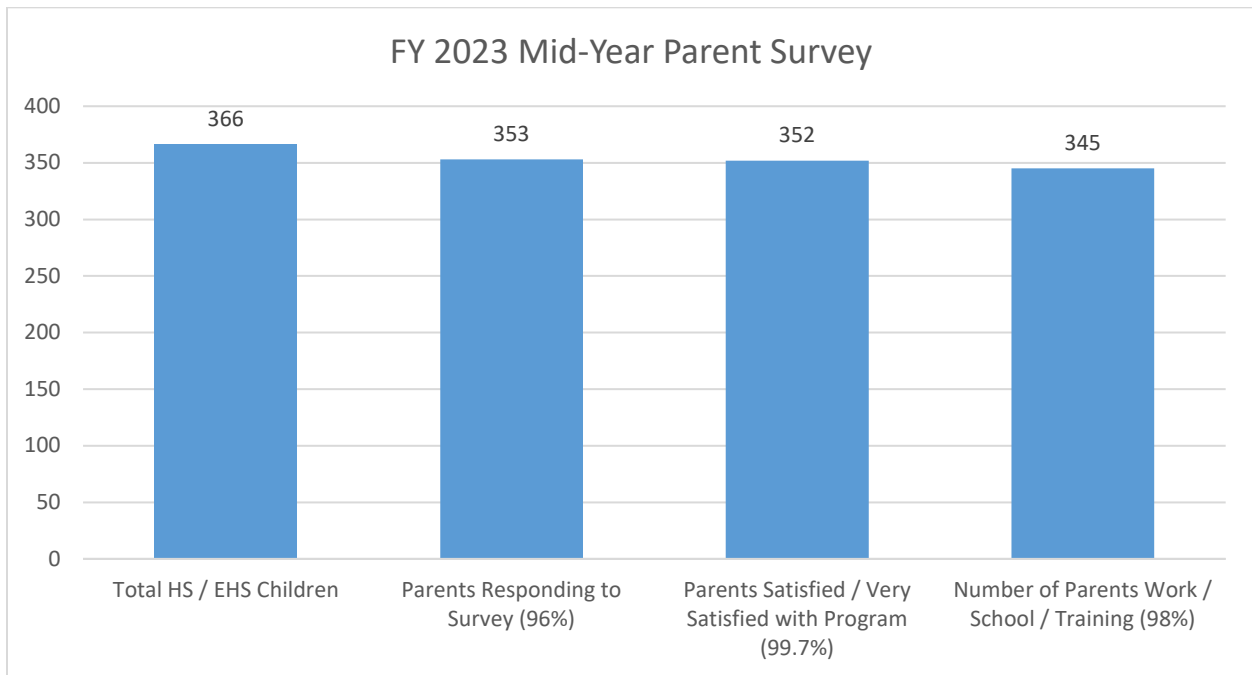
Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 Working Parent Enrollment Applications	Number of WP Applications	Percentage of WP Applications
Columbia	214	65%
Hamilton	96	66%
Lafayette	26	68%
Suwannee	171	69%
Of the 643 applications	507	79%
Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2022 Working Parents Child Care Needs Met by Suwannee Valley 4Cs	Number of WP Needs Met	Percentage of WP Needs Met
Columbia	197	92%
Hamilton	90	94%
Lafayette	25	96%
Suwannee	157	92%
Of the 507 WP applications	469	92%

Mid-Year Parent Survey:

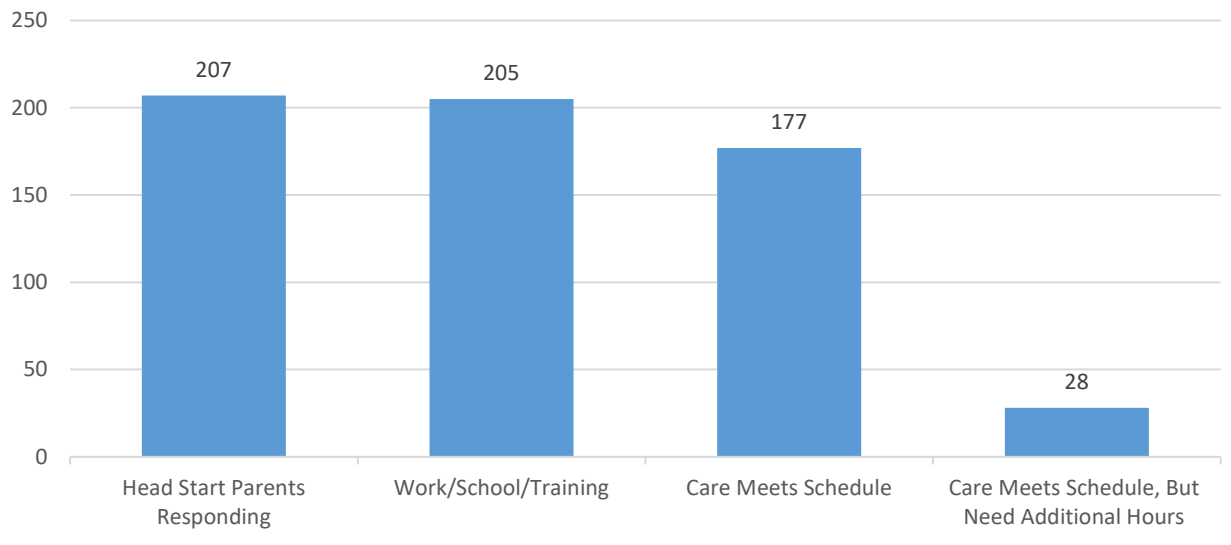
February 2023 Update: 353 Parents Responding:

Satisfied / Very Satisfied	99.7%
Parents Working / School / Training	98%
Needs Met (Parents Working / School / Training)	85%

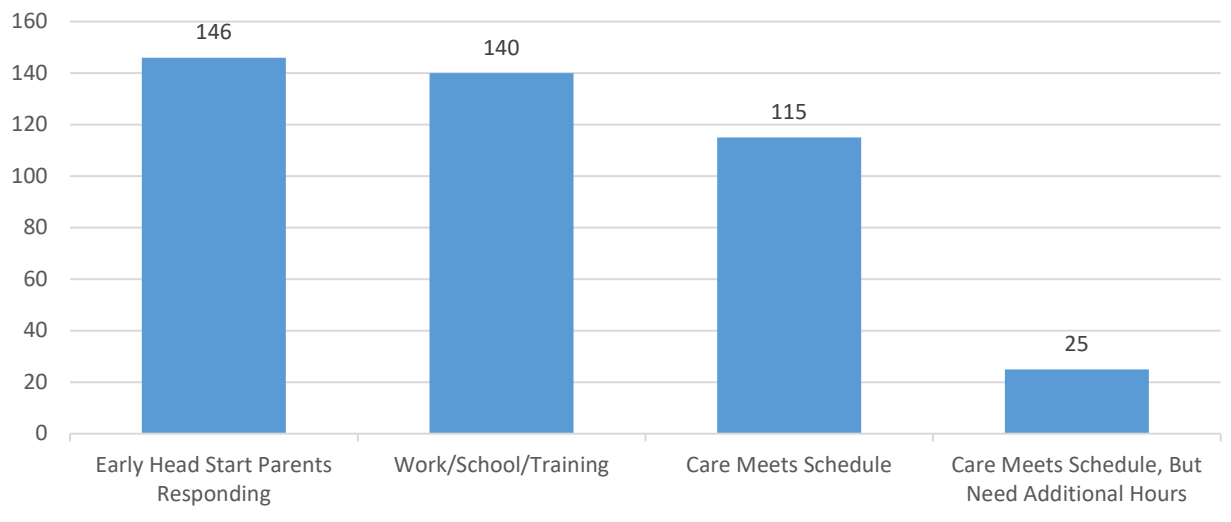
The annual mid-year participating parent survey asks parents to rate their satisfaction level with the program and to provide program improvement feedback and suggestions. Parents who work, go to school or are in training are asked to describe their typical weekly schedule and child care needs. Of the 366 children enrolled in the program at the time of survey, 353 of their parents (96%) responded. Of the 353 responding, 99.7% are very satisfied / satisfied with the program and 345 (98%) are working parents (or going to school or in training). Families are currently referred to the Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Gateway for service hours outside what is provided by the program. Working parent survey results are provided in the charts that follow.



Do Program Hours Meet the Needs of HEAD START Parents Working / In School / In Training?



Do Program Hours Meet the Needs of EARLY HEAD START Parents Working / In School / In Training?



Other Child Care Services

The service area has a variety of resources and providers of early childhood, child care and child development services. The child care delivery system includes family child care, private and faith based centers, Head Start, Early Head Start and public schools. The economic reality of working families continues to reflect a need for full-day and wrap-around child care. The cost of child care remains prohibitive for many working families. The average annual cost of child care for one preschooler and one infant can range from \$10,000 - \$15,000 a year.

Parents may choose whichever form of care they feel is best suited for their children, and may also choose to blend child care options, such as VPK with Head Start. Use of part-time and full-time services is available based on the needs of the family.

School Readiness Providers

School readiness (birth to school-age) programs are administered by The Early Learning Coalition of Florida’s Gateway, Inc. (ELCFG) which oversees provider contracts. The school readiness program is a financial assistance program (sliding scale) for working families who are income-eligible or whose children are at risk of abuse or neglect.^{xxxvii}

School readiness providers fill a critical gap in child care for low-income parents (up to 150% of FPL) who are working or going to school. It should be noted that school readiness providers do not provide the same level of Head Start/Early Head Start comprehensive early childhood education services including family and health services.

State fiscal year 2021-2022 (as of June 2022) data for school readiness for each county in the service area follows.

School Readiness (SR) Providers by Type^{xxxviii}	Private Center/School	Family Day Care Home	Total
Columbia	24	1	25
Hamilton	2	3	5
Lafayette	2	0	2
Suwannee	11	3	14
Total SR Providers	39	7	46
Children (birth to 5), Served by SR Providers	Infant / Toddler	Pre-K	Total
Columbia	638	409	1,047
Hamilton	40	33	73
Lafayette	13	2	15
Suwannee	235	110	345
Total Children Served	926	554	1,480

Waitlists for Suwannee Valley 4Cs and School Readiness Programs

As of September 2022, waitlist data is provided in the following tables that follow.

Infants / Toddlers Waitlisted	2021			2022		
	SV4Cs EHS	Early Learning Coalition ^{xxxix}	Combined Waitlisted Infants / Toddlers	SV4Cs EHS	Early Learning Coalition ^{xi}	Combined Waitlisted Infants / Toddlers
Columbia						
Age 0 - 2	19	43	62	36	0	36
Hamilton						
Age 0 - 2	21	7	28	29	0	29
Lafayette						
Age 0 - 2	-	3	3	0	0	0
Suwannee						
Age 0 - 2	30	25	55	36	0	35
Totals						
Age 0 - 2	70	78	148	100	0	100

3 to 5 year-olds Waitlisted	2021			2022		
	SV4Cs HS	Early Learning Coalition ^{xii}	Combined Waitlisted 3 to 5 year-olds	SV4Cs HS	Early Learning Coalition ^{xlii}	Combined Waitlisted 3 to 5 year- olds
Columbia						
Age 3 - 5	15	34	49	40	0	40
Hamilton						
Age 3 - 5	16	8	24	14	0	14
Lafayette						
Age 3 - 5	1	4	5	0	0	0
Suwannee						
Age 3 - 5	8	7	15	12	0	12
Totals						
Age 3 - 5	40	53	93	66	0	66

Infant / toddler waitlists continue to show the significant number of children in this age group in need of care, particularly in Columbia and Suwannee Counties. Pre-K waitlists, while less in number, still show the need for three to five-year-olds in the service area.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) Providers^{xliii}

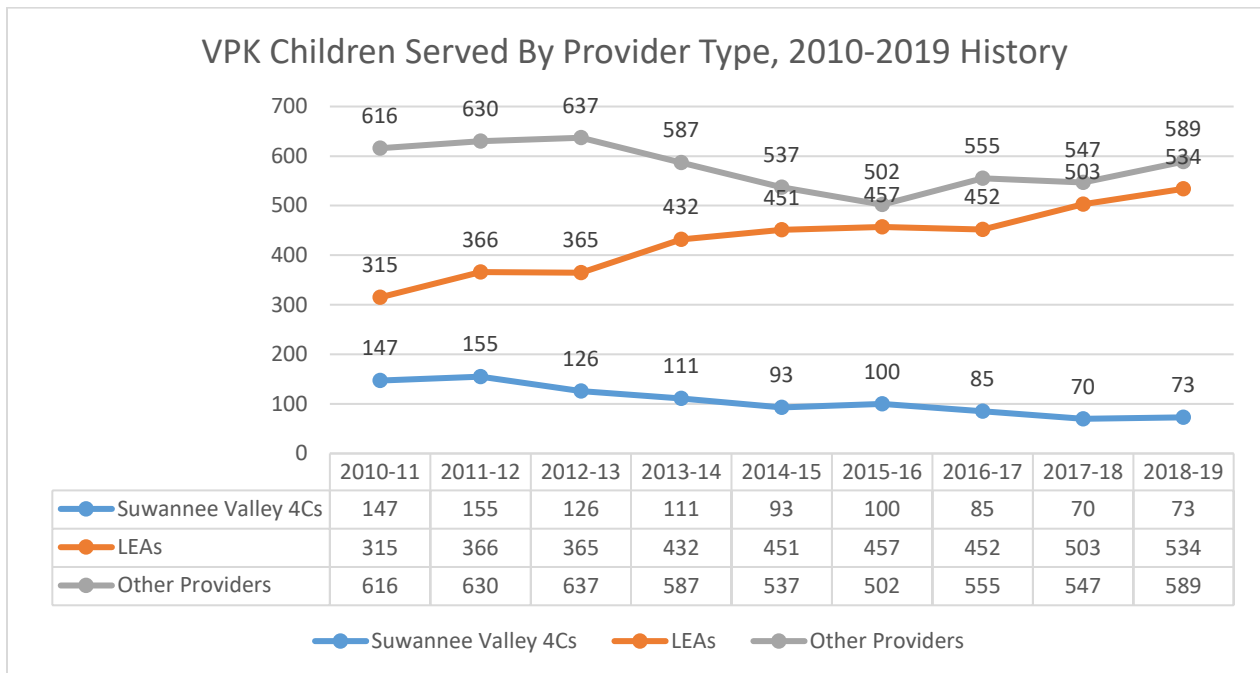
Voluntary Pre-K (for four-year-olds) programs are also administered by The Early Learning Coalition of Florida’s Gateway, Inc. (ELCFG) which oversees provider contracts.

Florida’s Voluntary Pre-K program is free to all four-year-olds. The state ranks 4th in the country for enrolling four-year-olds, with 58% of four-year-olds participating in the 2020 – 2021 school year.^{xliiv} The increase in availability of VPK through LEAs and private providers over the last 9 years has had a negative impact on Suwannee Valley 4Cs Head Start VPK program enrollment. (See line graph below.)

The FY 2022 data for VPK for each county in the service area follows.

VPK Provider Type	Suwannee Valley 4Cs Head Start	Private Center/School	LEAs	Total VPK Providers
Columbia	1	20	10	31
Hamilton	0	1	1	2
Lafayette	0	3	1	4
Suwannee	1	9	4	14
Total VPK Providers	2	33	16	51

VPK Children Served by Provider Type	Suwannee Valley 4Cs Head Start	Private Center/School	LEAs	Total VPK Children Served
Columbia	26	241	291	558
Hamilton	0	7	48	55
Lafayette	0	18	40	58
Suwannee	21	83	103	207
Total VPK Served	47	349	482	878



Home Visiting Parenting Program^{xlv}

The Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program serves at-risk pregnant women and parents with children up to three years of age. The program provides parenting skills services in Columbia and Hamilton Counties only. In 2019, MIECHV served 29 families in Columbia County and eight in Hamilton.

Healthy Families of Florida (HFF) provides home visiting services for expectant parents and parents of newborns experiencing stressful life situations. In 2019, HFF served 265 parents in Columbia County, 65 in Hamilton, 65 in Lafayette and 82 in Suwannee County.

Head Start / Early Head Start

East Coast Migrant Head Start Project (a six-month program) provides services to 100 migrant and seasonal farmworker families in Hamilton County.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Head Start and Early Head Start funded enrollment per program / county / center is provided on page 4.

Other Licensed Providers^{xlvi}

As of 2023, there are 9 other licensed child care providers in the service area, however, they do not serve low-income families. In addition, these providers do not provide VPK or school readiness programs to the 477 children they serve.

Ongoing Staff Shortages / Low Wages / Florida Minimum Wage Requirements:

Staff Shortages Due to Low Wages Predominantly Among Teaching Staff: Suwannee Valley 4Cs teacher positions comprise the majority of staff overall. Out of 141 total staff in FY 2022, 81 (or 57%) were teaching staff positions. Head Start Teacher Assistant and Early Head Start Teacher positions have been the most difficult positions to keep filled. During FY 2022, we experienced 33% turnover rate among all teacher positions resulting in eight (8) classroom closures starting in January 2022. Currently, as of February 2023, five (5) classrooms remain temporarily closed due to staff shortages (one Head Start classroom - Lake City Learning Center) and 4 Early Head Start classrooms (Lawton's Place-Lake City (2) and Azalea Park-Live Oak (2)).

Teacher exit interview data revealed that, of staff who provided a reason for leaving, 65% left for "other employment/better pay" and 24% departed due to "COVID vaccine requirements." **Addressing the low pay levels of these teaching positions is critical to ensure a well-compensated and supported workforce, which will reduce turnover and improve recruitment and retention of staff.**

Florida Minimum Wage Requirements:

In November 2020, Florida voters approved changes to the state's minimum wage, which will gradually increase to \$15 per hour by September 2026. Employers must implement the following hourly minimum wage schedule through 2026:

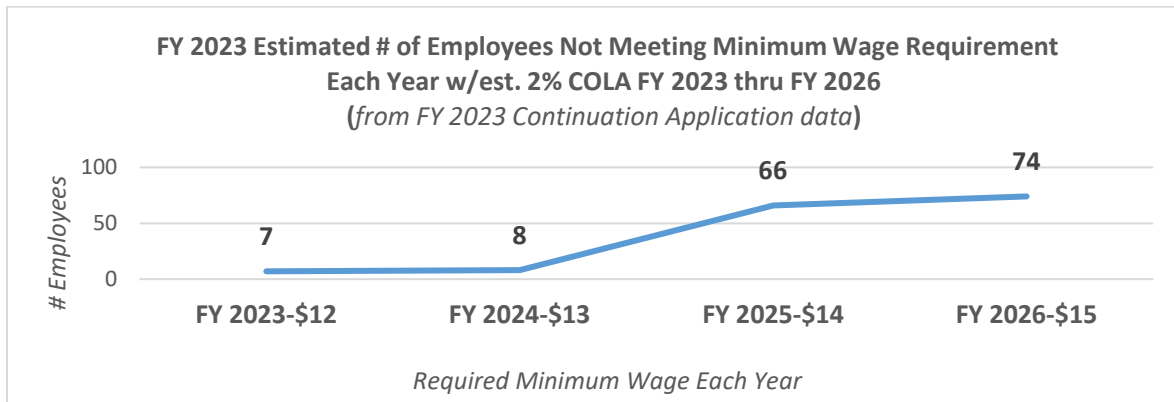
Florida Minimum Wage Requirements January 1, 2021 – September 30, 2026	
Effective Date	Florida Minimum Wage
January 1, 2021	\$8.65
September 30, 2021	\$10.00
September 30, 2022	\$11.00
September 30, 2023	\$12.00
September 30, 2024	\$13.00
September 30, 2025	\$14.00
September 30, 2026	\$15.00

In a rush to meet new Florida Minimum Wage Requirements, many local employers (fast food restaurants, private child care, Walmart, Target) were quick to announce new pay rates of \$15.00/hour or higher which resulted in an immediate loss of staff for Suwannee Valley 4Cs.

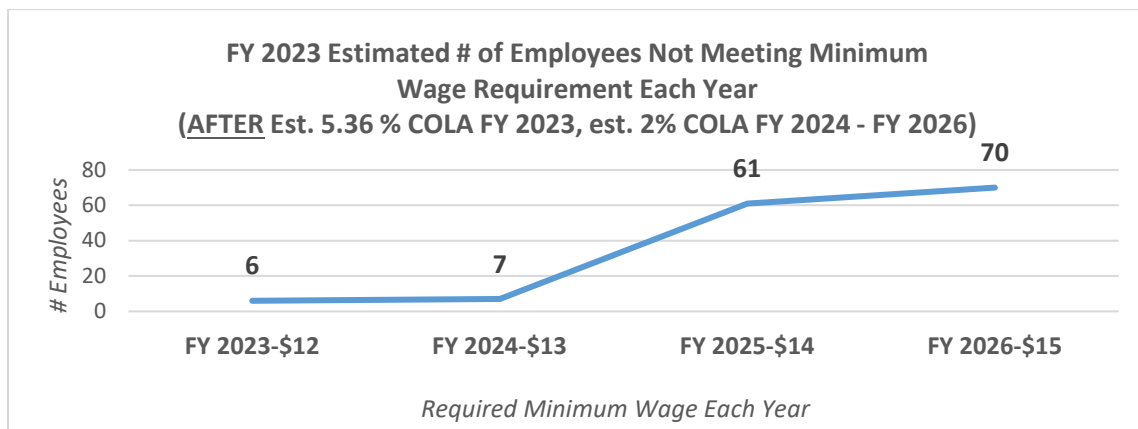
Entry-Level (HS Diploma) Employment Available in Local Area:	Advertised Rate
Walmart Cashier	\$13.36-\$15.00
Target Warehouse	\$19.00-\$21.50
Home Depot Cashier	\$15.00-\$17.00
Lutheran Services – Family Support Worker	\$16.33
Circle K Convenience Store	\$15.00
Secretary - Union County Schools	\$15.45
Pilgrim's Pride (Poultry plant)	\$13.35-\$17.40
CVS	\$15.00-\$18.00
State of Florida Records Technician	\$15.22-\$19.70
State of Florida Records Specialist	\$15.63
Dr. Office Front Office Assistant	\$13.00-\$15.00
Coffee Shop Barista (BW Blacksmith)	\$11.00-\$16.50
Panera Bread Cashier	\$11.88-\$15.05
Panera Bread Salad/Sandwich Maker	\$12.36-\$15.67
Medical Receptionist (North Fla. Pediatrics)	\$15.00-\$15.34
Human Resources Assistant (North Fla. Pediatrics)	\$15.00-\$16.00
Customer Care Specialist (Ameris Bank)	\$16.59-\$21.00
State of Florida Food Support Worker	\$15.00
Pet Smart Retail Sales Associate	\$12.02-\$15.24
SNAP Facilitator	\$20.00
Servpro Scheduling Coordinator	\$12.50-\$15.00
Retail Stocking Associate (Harbor Freight)	\$15.00
Warehouse Associate (US Cold Storage Inc)	\$16.50
Tractor Supply (Cashier/Sales Associate)	\$11.35-\$14.38
Farmer's Furniture (Office Clerk)	\$11.10-\$14.03
CMS Transport (Office Assistant)	\$13.00-\$15.00
Dermatology Solutions Group (AR Specialist)	\$13.00-\$17.00
Meridian Behavioral Healthcare (Customer Service Rep)	\$15.00

Examples of current local entry-level employment and pay rates are listed below and represent similar jobs Suwannee Valley 4Cs staff have left for.

After implementation of the FY 2022 Office of Head Start 2.28% COLA, a staggering 68% of Suwannee Valley 4Cs staff hourly pay rates were under \$15.00/hour. Suwannee Valley 4Cs FY 2023 Continuation Application included concerns with meeting the new Florida Minimum Wage Requirements each year through FY 2026. A chart estimating a 2% COLA for future years through FY 2026 was included and reflected the number of staff not meeting minimum wage requirements each year. A summary of this data is shown in the chart on the following page.



The chart below reflects an updated projection showing the number of employees not meeting minimum wage requirements each year based on receiving the upcoming FY 2023 COLA **estimated at 5.36%** and an estimated 2% COLA FY 2024 through FY 2026:



When considering estimated COLAs through FY 2026, 70 employees would still not be at the required minimum wage rate of \$15.00 per hour by FY 2026 further supporting the critical need for a significant boost to compensation levels for low wage staff.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Wage Comparison data also reflects the need to address compensation levels of staff, specifically teachers and support staff. Most Suwannee Valley 4Cs teacher and support staff pay levels range within 8% - 28% below comparable positions in our service area and in comparison to the county school systems.

Child Care Staffing Shortages is a Nationwide Issue: Excerpts from the September 2, 2022 Center for American Progress (CAP) article titled “*The Child Care Sector Will Continue to Struggle Hiring Staff Unless It Creates Good Jobs*” stated:

“As the U.S. labor market continues its historic and remarkable recovery from the depths of the pandemic-induced recession, the child care workforce stands out in stark contrast, struggling to regain its significant pandemic-related job losses. More than two years after the start of the pandemic, the child care workforce—mostly employing women and, disproportionately, women of color—continues to operate below pre-pandemic levels...

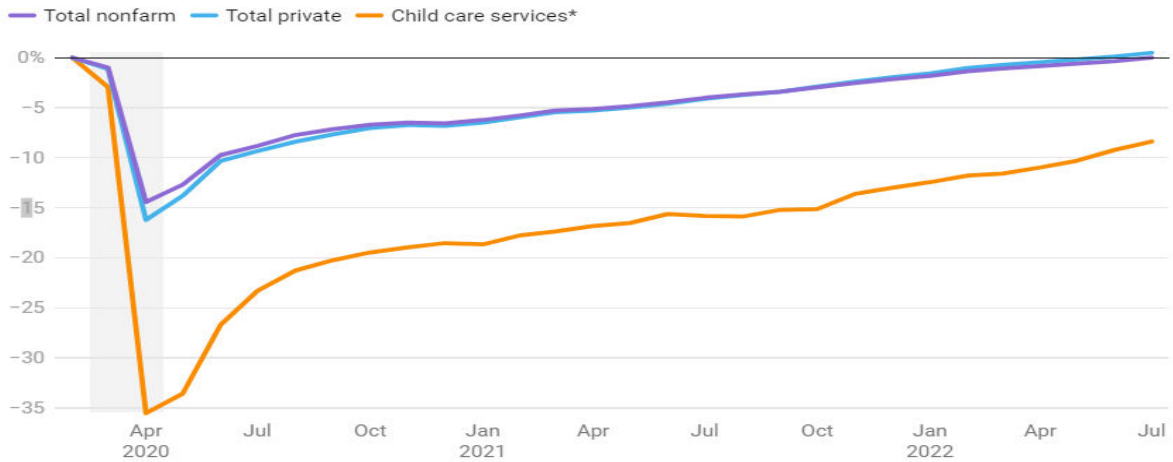
While pandemic-related lockdowns and associated challenges account for the initial decline in employment, the child care sector was already on an unsustainable path prior to the pandemic. The pandemic and economic recovery merely exposed a critical workforce issue plaguing the sector: a lack of good jobs. Child care workers—which include both teachers and aides/assistant teachers—are some of the lowest-paid workers in the United States...

Amid a tight labor market that has given low-wage workers more power, many low-wage workers are reassessing their career choices and seeking better jobs from their employers and the labor market...

...Since February 2020, the childcare workforce has lost 88,000 jobs, or 8.4 percent of its pre-pandemic workforce. (see Figure 1 below) In stark contrast, all private sector jobs and nonfarm employment have been recovered. Over the course of the past 2 1/2 years, the child care workforce has struggled to keep up with the job growth taking place in other sectors. While child care job growth has occurred for much of 2022, it has been too slow to make up for the large deficit and remains slower than job growth in other sectors. In fact, in June 2022 the sector had only just reached more than 10 percent below pre-pandemic employment.

The child care sector is recovering slower than others from coronavirus pandemic-related job losses

Percentage change in employment in the nonfarm, private, and child care sectors from February 2020 to July 2022, by date



Hover or click to see values.

* The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics calls this sector "child day care services."

Notes: Data are seasonally adjusted.

Chart: Center for American Progress • Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "All employees, thousands, total nonfarm, seasonally adjusted," available at <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CES0000000001> (last accessed August 2022); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "All employees, thousands, total private, seasonally adjusted," available at <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CES0500000001> (last accessed August 2022); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "All employees, thousands, child day care services, seasonally adjusted," available at <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CES6562440001> (last accessed August 2022).

...Without relief funding included in the Biden administration's American Rescue Plan (ARP), the sector would have suffered even larger workforce losses. ARP dollars were integral to keeping many sites open, preventing the permanent closures of nearly 75,000 sites and saving more than 3 million child care spots. Significantly, three-quarters of stabilization grant recipients used these funds to support worker compensation—mostly through bonuses, though 38 percent increased baseline pay. However, bonuses are not sufficient, and wages are still too low to attract and retain staff.

...The ARP funding was a temporary fix applied to a long-term structural issue. More must be done.

...More than two years after the start of the pandemic, child care sites continue to operate at reduced capacity because of struggles hiring staff—particularly as many workers have left the sector altogether and moved toward jobs that pay them more. Survey data from across the country point in the same direction: Hiring staff for child care is more difficult than ever. As a result, more than half of all providers are serving fewer children than their full capacity because they cannot hire or retain enough staff members."

Community Resources

Suwannee Valley 4Cs partners with multiple agencies in the service area to improve service delivery, increase access to services and prevent duplication of services. A number of community partners have already been identified within prior sections of this community assessment, many of whom are participating agencies in the umbrella agreement known as The Children's Transition Network. The agreement includes:

Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities – University of Florida

Department of Children and Families

Division of Blind Services

Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Gateway

East Coast Migrant Head Start/Hamilton

The University of Florida Early Steps Program

Children's Medical Services Network

Florida Department of Health in Columbia, Hamilton, Lafayette and Suwannee Counties

Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Gateway (FDLRS)

Florida School for the Deaf and Blind Outreach Infant Toddler Program for North Central Florida

Healthy Families

Healthy Start

Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV)

Northeast Florida Educational Consortium

Partnership for Strong Families

Rural Partnership for Healthy Kids

School Districts of Columbia, Hamilton Lafayette and Suwannee Counties

W.I.C.

Additional agreements are in place with:

Family Literacy Council

Pregnancy Care Center

Suwannee River Economic Council

United Way of Suwannee Valley

And other agencies.

A resource directory is provided in the appendix of this report.

Community Strengths ^{xlvii}

As part of Suwannee Valley 4Cs planning process, a survey is conducted with community partners / providers each year to assess family and children needs.

The questions and responses from the January 2023 survey is as follows.

“What are the most significant strengths in our communities?”

1. Community Involvement
2. Community Church

“Greatest challenges facing children and families.”

1. Job skills / training
2. Affordable Housing

“Services needed but not well-provided.”

1. Transportation
2. Emergency Shelters

“Greatest barriers to obtaining assistance.”

1. Transportation
2. Unaware of Available Services

“Populations of special concern.”

1. Children
2. Homeless & Teen Parents (tied for #2)

“Number of clients served last year.”

1. Decreased & Increased (tied for #1)
2. No Change

Conclusions

Unemployment: Rates of unemployment continue to improve nationally, in the State of Florida, and in all SV4Cs service areas over the past year, after highs in 2020. However, Hamilton County ranks 5th highest for unemployment rate in the State of Florida and also exceeds the national rate of unemployment.

Staffing Shortages: Even though unemployment rates have improved in each county served, Suwannee Valley 4Cs continues to experience staffing shortages, most significantly with teacher positions. Data included in this community assessment along with Suwannee Valley 4Cs Wage Comparability data reflect the need to improve staff compensation levels. As stated in the recommendations section at the beginning of this assessment, Suwannee Valley 4Cs will work with the Head Start Regional Office to submit an Enrollment Reduction Application to address low compensation levels of staff in order to improve staff recruitment and retention efforts. (Reference 11/7/2022 Office of Head Start Information Memorandum ACF-IM-HS-22-09.)

State of Florida Minimum Wage Requirements: The new minimum wage requirements continue to be a challenge for many employers in our 4-county area. Suwannee Valley 4Cs is working with the Regional Office regarding options to improve compensation levels of staff.

Resources: Availability of Comprehensive Early Childhood Education. Suwannee Valley 4Cs is the only full-year comprehensive early childhood education and family engagement program for low-income families in the four-county area.

Appendix: Resource Directory

Alphabetical Listing:

ACCESS Healthcare Enrollment Center

(386) 951-5444

Adult Literacy Council, Columbia County

(386) 758-2111

Alcoholics Anonymous Hotline

(800) 870-3795

Another Way

(386) 719-2700 or (386) 792-2747

Broome Eye Care & Optical

(386) 466-1062

Child Birth Classes (*Call your county Health Department*)

Children's Medical Services (CMS)

(800) 523-7545

Christian Service Center

(386) 755-1770

Crisis 24- Hour Help Line

(800) 330-5615

Department of Children & Families

(866) 762-2237

Domestic Violence Hotline

(800) 500-1119

Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Gateway

(386) 752-9770 or (866) 752-9770

Early Steps (for children with special needs)

(800) 334-1447

Express Employment Professionals

(386) 269-1055

Florida Abuse Hotline

(800) 96-ABUSE

Florida Gateway College **(386) 752-1822**

FDLRS/NEFC **(386) 329-3811**

G.E.D. Tests

(386) 755-8190 or (386) 364-2750

Guardian Ad Litem

(386) 758-1170

Health Departments

Columbia County

(386) 758-1068

Suwannee County

(386) 362-2708

Lafayette County

(386) 294-1321

Hamilton County

(386) 792-1414

Hospitals

Gainesville (Shands-UF)

(352) 265-0111

Jasper (S. Georgia Med. Ctr)

(229)433-1000

Jennings (S. Georgia Med. Ctr)

(229)433-1000

Lake City (Lake City Medical Center)

(386) 719-9000

Live Oak (Shands at Live Oak)

(386) 362-0800

River Valley Medical Center

(386) 294-1226

Jobs & Benefits- Career Source Florida Crown

(386) 755-9026

Lad's Soup Kitchen

(386) 758-2217

Libraries

Branford **(386) 935-1556**

Ft. White **(386)497-1108**

Jasper **(386) 792-2285**

Jennings **(386) 938-1143**

Lake City – Main Branch **(386) 758-2101**

Lake City – West Branch **(386) 758-1321**

Live Oak **(386) 362-2317**

Mayo **(386) 294-1021**

White Springs **(386) 397-1389**

Meridian Behavioral Healthcare

(800) 330-5615

North Florida Eye Care (Lake City)

(386) 752-1722

North Star Family Resource Center

(386) 758-3319

North Florida Eye Care (Live Oak)

(386) 362-5055

Parent Helpline

855-427-2736

POISON CONTROL 800 222-1222

Prescription Assistance

(800) 477-2669

Pregnancy Care Center (Columbia)

(386) 755-0058

Pregnancy Care Center (Suwannee)

(386) 330-2229

Pregnancy Care Center (Hamilton)

(386) 792-1182

Public Housing Authority

Columbia County

(386) 752-4227

North Central Housing Authority

(386) 935-1198

Northwest FL. Regional Housing Authority

(850) 263-4442

Renewed Thrift store (Clothing & Food Pantry)
(386) 319-7161

Resolutions Health Alliance
(386) 754-9005

School Boards

Columbia County (386) 755-8000

Hamilton County (386) 792-1228

Lafayette County (386) 294-1351

Suwannee County (386) 647-4600

Subsidized Child Care (Early Learning Coalition)
(386) 752-9770 or (866) 752-9770

Suwannee River Economic Council

(SHIP, Home Winterization, Home Repairs)

Columbia County (386) 752-8726

Hamilton County (386) 792-2941

Lafayette County (386) 294-2202

Suwannee County (386) 362-4115

Suwannee Valley Transit

(386) 362-7433 or (386) 362-5332

Three Rivers Legal Services

(386) 752-5960

Vivid Visions

(386) 364-5957

Vocational Rehabilitation

Columbia County (386) 754-1675

Suwannee County (386) 362-5461

VPK Registration (Early Learning Coalition)

(386) 752-9770 or (866) 752-9770

River Oaks Technical College

(386) 364-2750

White (Henry & Rilla) Foundation

(386) 752-7813

W.I.C.

(800) 342-3556

By Category

ABUSE	
Child Abuse (800) 422-4453	Elder Abuse (866) 363-4276 or (800) 962-2873
Florida Abuse Hotline (800) 962-2873 or (800) 458-5145 (TDD)	Peaceful Paths (352) 377-8255 (Gainesville)
Another Way (800) 500-1119 (Florida Domestic Violence Hotline) Outreach (386) 719-2700 or (386) 792-2747	Refuge House (850) 973-4144 (Madison) (850) 584-8808 (Taylor)
Vivid Visions (386) 364-2100 (Hotline) (386) 364-5957	Victim Services, Inc. (State Attorney) (386) 362-2320 Crisis: (800) 262-9799
Hamilton County Alcohol & Drug Prevention Coalition (386) 792-9388	Suicide Crisis Hotline (800) 273-8255
Pregnancy Care Center (Lake City) (386) 755-0058	Pregnancy Care Center (Live Oak) (386) 330-2229
Pregnancy Care Center (Jasper) (386) 792-1182	Self-Abuse/Self harm (800) 366-8288

AFTER SCHOOL CARE	
Annie Mattox Recreation Center (386) 755-5076	Boy Scouts of America (800) 232-0845
Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Gateway (386) 752-9770	Girl Scouts of Gateway Council (USA) or (877) 764-5237
Suwannee County Police Athletic League (386) 364-3422	

CHILDREN SERVICES	
Center for Children with Disabilities (800) 695-0285	Guardian Ad. Litem/Voices for Children (386) 758-1170 (Columbia) (386) 364-7720 (Live Oak)
Child Birth Classes: Call your county's Health Department for this information.	Henry & Rilla White Foundation (386) 752-7813
Child Support Hotline (800) 622-5437	National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (800) 843-5678
Children's Home Society (352) 334-0955 (Gainesville) (904) 493-7744 (Jacksonville)	Partnership for Strong Families (386)243-8800 or (866)832-5562 (Lake City) (386)364-7774 or (866)850-8133 (Live Oak)
Interface Youth Program (386) 487-0190	Runaway Switchboard (800) 621-4000 or 1-800-RUNAWAY
Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Gateway (VPK, Subsidized Child Care) 1104 SW Main Blvd, Lake City (386) 752-9770 or (866) 752-9770	Suwannee Valley 4C's (386) 754-2222
	Youth Line Crisis (877) 968-8491

CLOTHING SOURCES	
Hopeful Baptist Closet (386) 752-4135	LOVE INC. (386) 364-4673 (Live Oak)
Christian Service Center (386) 755-1770	Melody Christian Center Live Oak Thrift Store (386) 688-6611
First Baptist Church of Live Oak (386) 362-1583	Renewed (386) 319-7161

CONSUMER / BUSINESS SERVICES	
Attorney General, Florida (866) 966-7226	Free Items Online www.freecycle.org
Better Business Bureau (904) 721-2288	IRS Problem Resolution Office (800) 829-1040
Blind Services (352)955-2075	Office of Citizens Services (800) 321-5366
Consumer Complaint, Business & Professional Regulation (850) 487-1395	Consumer Product Safety (800) 638-2772
Consumer Services, Fla. Division of Scams, Frauds & Alerts (850) 410-3800	Financial Services, FL Dept. (877) 693-5236
Poison Control (800) 222-1222	Prescription Assistance (800) 477-2669
Veteran's Service Office (386)792-1272 (Hamilton County) (386) 758-1013	Vital Statistics (904) 359-6900 (Jacksonville)

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES	
Columbia County (386) 752-9212	Suwannee County (386) 362-2222
Hamilton County (386) 792-1001	Florida Sheriff's Youth Ranches (386) 842-5501
Lafayette County (386) 294-1222	

CRIMINAL	
Crime Stoppers (Report Crime Anonymously) Columbia: (386) 754-7099 Hamilton: (386) 792-8477 Lafayette (386) 232-8477 Suwannee: (386) 208-8477	
Department of Corrections Adult Probation Suwannee County: (386) 362-2869 Columbia County: (386) 755-9419 Hamilton County: (386) 792-3447	Public Defender Columbia County: (386) 758-0540 Suwannee County: (386) 362-7235
Department of Juvenile Justice Suwannee County: (386) 362-6838 Columbia County: (386) 758-1448	Application for Expungement Department of Law Enforcement (850) 410-7870
Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Inc. (305)573-1106	

DENTAL HEALTH	
Acorn Dental Clinic (352) 485-2772	Miles of Smiles (386) 752-9914
Kids Only Dental Place (352) 335-7777	Palm Dental (386) 752-5904
Lafayette County Health Dept. (386) 294-1321 ext 223	Dr. Jerry Smith, Jr. (386) 792-1197
Madison Dental Associates (Dr. Rogers) (850) 973-6621	Suwannee County Health Dept. (386) 362-2708
Madison Health Dept. (850) 973-5000 ext 3	UF College of Dentistry (352) 273-6701 or (352) 273-7643

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES (DCF) (Child Abuse – Food Stamps – Medicaid – TANF)	
Client Relations Coordinator (Complaints) (800) 342-9004	Food Stamps/Medicaid/Cash Assistance Customer Care (866) 762-2237
Protective Services Investigations Lake City: (386) 243-6067 Live Oak: (386) 243-6129	National Medicaid/Case Fraud Hotline (800) 447-8477 or (800) 633-4227

ELDERLY SERVICES

Aging & Adult Services Columbia: (386) 755-0235 Suwannee: (386) 364-5814	Area Agency on Aging North Fla. (850) 488-0055
Elder Helpline (800) 262-2243	Human Rights Advocacy Committee (800) 777-4723
Mid. Fla. Area Agency – Elder Options (352) 378-6649 (Suwannee, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison Counties)	SHINE (Elder Helpline) (800) 963-5337

EMPLOYMENT / EDUCATION / LITERACY

Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities (800) 342-0823 or (TDD) (800) 346-4127 (800) 350-4566 (Spanish/Creole)	CareerSource Florida Crown (386) 755-9026 (Columbia County)
Columbia Adult Education (Literacy) (386)758-4888	G E D Classes (386) 755-8190 or (386) 364-2750 (386)792-7805 (Hamilton County) (800) 342-8170 (Commission on Human Relations) (386) 758-2101 (Lake City Library)
Employment Connection (386) 362-7000 (Suwannee & Hamilton Counties)	Lafayette County GED Information (386) 294-1701
AMI Kids (386)792-0955 (Hamilton County)	Northeast Florida Library Information Network School@neflin.org Fafsa.ed.gov: 800-433-3243
North Florida Workforce Development Board (850) 973-2672 (Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison & Suwannee)	Worker’s Compensation (800) 342-1741

EYE CARE

Broome Eye Care & Optical Lake City (386) 466-1062	Dr. Eduardo Bedoya Lake City (386) 755-7595
North Florida Eye Care Lake City (386) 752-1722 Live Oak (386) 362-5055	

FAMILY SERVICES / PARENTING EDUCATION / DIVORCE

Parents, Children, Divorce (Taylor County) (850) 838-3509	Children’s Home Society Visitation Center (386) 758-0591
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FOOD SOURCES	
Catholic Charities (386)754-9180	Lad's Soup Kitchen (386) 758-2217
Christ Central Ministries of Live Oak (386) 208-1345	Live Oak Church of Christ (386) 364-5922
Christian Mission in Action Ministries (386) 364-4560	Melody Christian Center Live Oak (386) 364-4800
First United Methodist Church (386) 362-2047	New Bethel A.M.E. (386) 792-2323
First Baptist Church of Live Oak (386) 362-1583	New Life Center Ministries (386) 755-7847

GENERAL LAW	
Three Rivers Legal Services (Serving Columbia, Suwannee, Lafayette, Madison, Hamilton & Taylor) (386) 752-5960 or (800) 495-0039	Division of Worker's Compensation (800) 342-1741
	Court Administrator/Mediator (386) 758-2163
Florida Bar Referral Service (800) 342-8011	Americans for Immigrant Justice (305) 573-1106
Florida Call a Law (850) 561-1200	Consumer Product Safety Commission (800) 638-2772
State Attorney's Office (386) 362-2320 or (386) 758-0470	Florida Office of Financial Regulation (800) 848-3792
Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services 1- (800) 435-7352	Florida Department of Transportation (850) 617-2606
Department of Legal Affairs-Citizen Services (850) 414-3990	Immigration and Naturalization Service (800) 375-5283
Office of Citizen Services (800) 321-5366	

HEALTH / MENTAL HEALTH	
POISON CONTROL (800) 222-1222	
Advent Christian Village (assisted living facility) (800) 647-3353	Lions Club (provides vision assistance & hearing aids) (386) 755-3831
American Diabetes Association (800) 342-2383	Florida Health Line (800) 451-2229
CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services (family counseling, youth shelter) (386) 487-0190	Meridian Behavioral Health (386) 487-0800 or (800) 330-5615
Florida Diagnostic Learning Center (child diagnostics) (386) 792-2877 or (800) 227-0059	National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (703) 524-7600
Kindred at Home (386) 364-4593	Resolutions Health Alliance (Mental Health Consultants) (386) 754-9005
Greenleaf Behavioral Health (800) 247-2747	Shands Home Care (800) 999-2189
	Suwannee Valley Nursing Center (386) 792-1868
Haven Hospice (386) 752-9191	Shepard's Hands Clinic of Suwannee Valley (386)362-1837

SHELTERS / HOUSING

<p>Domestic Violence Shelters:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Another Way (386) 719-2700</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Vivid Visions (386) 364-5957</p> <p>Youth Shelter:</p> <p>Interface Youth Shelter (386) 487-0190</p>	<p>Housing Authorities:</p> <p>Columbia (386) 752-4227</p> <p>Hamilton (800) 365-9527</p> <p>Lafayette (800) 365-9527</p> <p>Live Oak (386) 362-2123</p> <p>Suwannee River Economic Council (Help with home ownership repairs):</p> <p>Columbia (386) 752-8726</p> <p>Hamilton (800) 792-1136</p> <p>Lafayette (800) 294-2202</p> <p>Suwannee (386) 362-6079</p>
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POLICE DEPARTMENTS	SHERIFF DEPARTMENTS
Jasper : (386) 792-1130	Columbia County: (386) 752-9212
Lake City: (386) 752-4344	Hamilton County: (386) 792-1001
Live Oak: (386) 362-7463	Lafayette County: (386) 294-1222
White Springs: (386) 397-2222	Suwannee County: (386) 362-2222
Suwannee County Crime Stoppers: (386) 208-8477	

SOCIAL SECURITY AND DISABILITY	
Disability Rights Florida (800) 342-0823 or (800) 346-4127 (TDD)	Medicare Hotline (800) 633-4227
Disability Determination (800) 772-1213	Social Security Administration (800) 772-1213 or (386) 755-3227 (Columbia Co.)

Transportation
Suwannee Valley Transit Authority (800) 258-7267

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Community Assessment 2022-2023

- i <http://www.floridajobs.org/community-planning-and-development/rural-community-programs/rural-areas-of-opportunity>
- ii <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=ACSST5Y2019.S1701&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S1701>
- iii <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=ACSDT5Y2019.B17006&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B17006>
- *Note: The reader is cautioned that when reviewing ACS data provided throughout this report the margin of error is high for the small counties in the service area. (Population under 100,000).
- iv <http://www.flhealthcharts.com/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Birth.DataViewer&cid=0595>
- v <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B17001&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B17001>;
<http://www.flhealthcharts.com/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Birth.DataViewer&cid=0025>
- vi <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05>
- vii <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=S1601&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S1601>
- viii <https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2022-11/Council%20on%20Homelessness%20Annual%20Report%202022.pdf> Council on Homelessness 2019 Annual Report, Page 52
- ix <https://www.myflfamilies.com/programs/childwelfare/placement.shtml#1>
- x LEA Disabilities Survey
- xi <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=S1501&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S1501>
- xii <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/rankings-data-documentation>
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2019 County Health Rankings Report, Page 10
- xiii <http://www.flhealthcharts.com/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=ChartsProfiles.CountyHealthSummary>
- xiv <http://www.flhealthcharts.com/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=ChartsProfiles.OpioidUseDashboard>
- xv <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5843557/> - April 2018
- xvi <http://www.flhealthcharts.com/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=ChartsProfiles.OpioidUseDashboard>
- xvii Hill HA, Elam-Evans LD, Yankey D, Singleton JA, Kang Y. Vaccination Coverage Among Children Aged 19–35 Months — United States, 2016. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2017;66:1171–1177. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6643a3>.
- xviii <http://www.flhealthcharts.com/Charts/OtherIndicators> and <http://www.floridahealth.gov/statistics-and-data/immunization-coverage-surveys-reports/state-surveys.html>
- xix <http://www.flhealthcharts.com/Charts/OtherIndicators/NonVitalIndNoGrpDataViewer.aspx?cid=0075>
- xx <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/healthy-children-are-ready-learn>
- xxi <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B27001&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B27001>
- xxii <http://flhealthcharts.com/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=ChartsProfiles.CountyBirthDataComparison>
- xxiii <http://www.flhealthcharts.com/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Birth.DataViewer&cid=0015>
- xxiv <http://www.floridahealth.gov/statistics-and-data/survey-data/pregnancy-risk-assessment-monitoring-system> (The Florida Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) is an ongoing surveillance system, designed to collect data on maternal behaviors and experiences before, during, and shortly after pregnancy. Every year, approximately 2,500 new mothers in Florida are randomly selected to participate.)
- xxv <http://www.amchp.org>
- xxvi <http://www.flhealthcharts.com/Charts/OtherIndicators/NonVitalIndNoGrpDataViewer.aspx?cid=0663>
- xxvii Mental Health America/Childrens Mental Health Matters
- xxviii <http://www.flhealthcharts.com/charts/SocialAndMentalHealth/default.aspx>
- xxix <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/substance-abuse>
- xxx <https://www.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/child-economy-study.pdf>
- xxxi <http://www.flhealthcharts.com/Charts/OtherIndicators/NonVitalIndRateOnlyDataViewer.aspx?cid=9910>
- xxxii <http://www.flhealthcharts.com/Charts/OtherIndicators/NonVitalIndNoGrpDataViewer.aspx?cid=0560>
- xxxiii <http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce-statistics/workforce-statistics-data-releases/monthly-data-releases>
- xxxiv <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B19058&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B19058>
- xxxv SVTA website
- xxxvi CP1039 and Parent Survey
- xxxvii OEL Summary
- xxxviii OEL Fact Book, SR Providers and SR Enrollments by Age, 17-18
- xxxix ELCFG January 2021
- xl ELCFG January 2021
- xli ELCFG May 2019
- xlii ELCFG May 2019
- xliiii OEL Fact Book, VPK Providers, 2018-19
- xliv https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Florida_YB2019_Rev.pdf
- xlv Healthy Families Florida Website

^{xlvi} DCF public search

^{xlvii} Children and Family's Needs Assessment – Community Survey, Jan 2021