

Northwest Tennessee EDC Head Start/Early Head Start Community Assessment

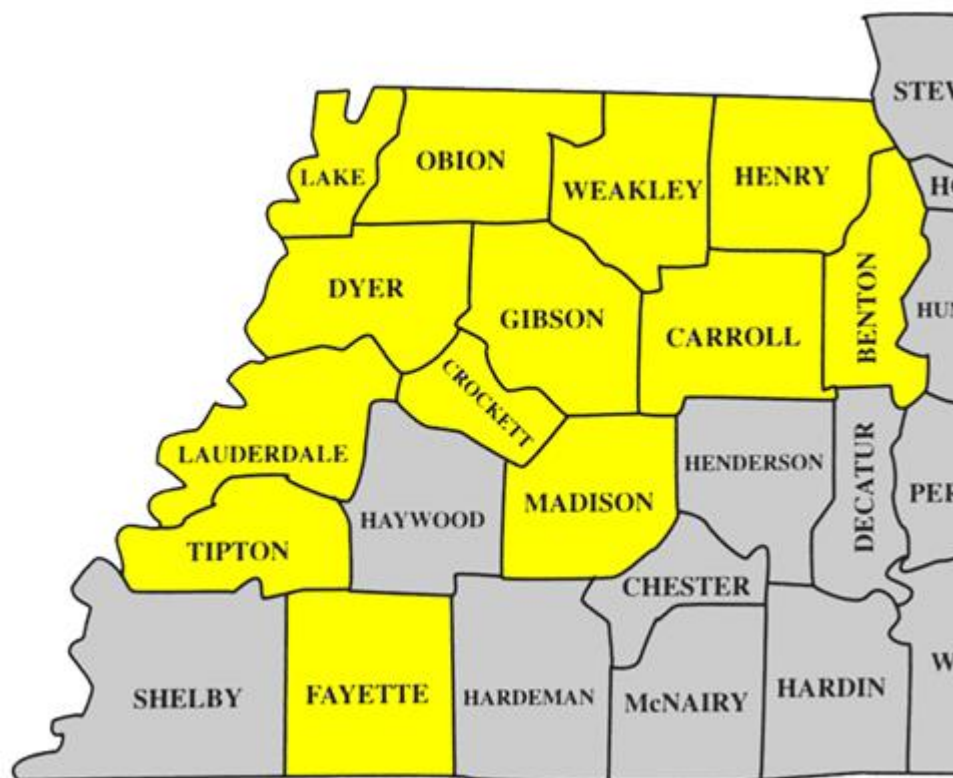
2019



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2019



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Summary

The thirteen western Tennessee counties served by Northwest Tennessee Head Start are home to 472,994 persons, over twenty percent of who reside in one place, Madison County population 99,643. Most of the rest of the service area is rural, a patchwork of communities with names like Paris, Dresden and Moscow, all of which are home to one of more Northwest Tennessee Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms.

There are sufficient opportunities for higher education that our young people can stay home and pursue their academic goals, chief among them The University of Tennessee, Martin, a western outpost of *the* University of Tennessee located across the state in Knoxville. Our population is 99 percent Black and white, with a sprinkling of Census Bureau *others* and a relatively small contingent of Latino people as well.

These are relatively prosperous times for our citizens; unemployment is low and the job market is tight, but this is a document about the ones who have been left behind. Poverty remains stubbornly high, exceeding state and national levels almost everywhere, and it fall heavily and predictably on children, women (particularly single moms) and people of color. There is hunger, drug addiction, and homelessness. Only half of pregnant African American women access prenatal care. Single mothers experience poverty at jaw dropping rates, and median incomes do not approach a living wage. Nearly half of the adult population does not participate in the labor force.

Access to services for children birth to three is extremely limited. There is child-care available, but few centers are rated three star by the state, and child-care subsidies are rationed. Pre-K is abundant for four-year old children but eligibility rules make it difficult for many children in poverty to participate. Into the breach is Northwest Tennessee Head Start, a haven for single moms, a place where forgotten children can play and learn and grow - where they can get their eyes checked, their teeth brushed and their bellies full – a place where someone gives them a warm hug and a warm hat, too, just in case they don't have one.

Overview

Northwest Tennessee Head Start/Early Head Start currently serves 1008 age and income eligible three and four year old children in full day center-based care in thirteen contiguous counties in rural Northwestern Tennessee. Of those 1008 children, 200 four year old children are served by Northwest Tennessee Head Start through school district partnerships in Carroll, Henry, and Gibson County, while 17 three year old children are also served collaboratively with the Gibson County school district. In addition, 172 Early Head Start children receive full day, full year center based care in nine of our counties. Total Head Start/Early Head Start enrollment is 1,180.

Section One: Geographic Location and Population

- **Geographic Location**

Our thirteen county service area covers 6,414 square miles and stretches north-to-south from the Kentucky border to the Mississippi state line. Our five westernmost counties lie on the banks of the Mississippi, across the river from Arkansas and Missouri, while our two easternmost counties border the Tennessee River. The nearest population center is Memphis, Tennessee located in Shelby County just outside of our service area and bordered by two of our counties, Tipton and Fayette.

Administrative offices are located in McKenzie, Tennessee in the northeast corner of our service area at the convergence of Carroll, Henry, and Weakley Counties. Our service area is far flung – it is a 2 hour, 100 mile drive from our administrative offices in McKenzie to our furthest center located in Moscow in Fayette County near the Mississippi line.

- **Population**

Ten of our thirteen counties are more than 50 percent rural. Our largest urban center, Jackson, population 66,847, lies 86 miles east of Memphis on Interstate 40 and is the county seat of Madison County, our most populous county. Seventy-four percent urban with a population of 97,643, Madison County dwarfs many of our more rural counties and has at least double the population of every county except Tipton County, a suburban neighbor of Memphis, population 61,366.

There has been little change in population across our service area since 2016 - five counties experienced an increase; eight lost population, but the overall change was slight, with only a 0.04 percent decline across all thirteen counties. Tiny Lake County, population 7,468 lost .83 percent of its already sparse population while Henry County showed the largest annual growth, gaining .63 percent.

However since 2010, almost every county has experienced population loss, some of it quite significant, including Lauderdale County, which has lost over 9 percent of its population. The outlier to this program-wide trend is Fayette County, which has been steadily absorbing commuters from neighboring Memphis in Shelby County as evidenced by a population growth of over 4.2 percent since 2010. (Geographic, population and demographic throughout this document is gleaned from The United States Census American Fact Finder Five Year Estimates.)

Table One below provides detailed population data for all thirteen counties.

Table 1: Population, Area and Density ¹

Report Area	Population (2017 Estimates)	Change From 2016	Percent Change Since 2010	Land Area (Sq. Mi.)	Population Density/Sq. Mi.	Percent Rural ²
Benton	15,986	- 73	-3.0%	394	40.6	78%
Carroll	27,860	- 64	-2.3%	599	46.5	83%
Crockett	14,473	- 6	-0.7%	266	54.4	67%
Dyer	37,605	- 142	-2.3%	512	73.5	43%
Fayette	40,036	+ 61	4.2%	705	56.8	79%
Gibson	49,111	+ 8	-1.2%	603	81.4	48%
Henry	32,450	+ 205	0.4%	562	57.7	67%
Lake	7,468	- 62	-4.6%	166	45	100%
Lauderdale	25,274	- 76	-9.1%	472	53.5	59%
Madison	97,643	+ 129	-0.7%	557	175.3	26%
Obion	30,385	- 141	-4.5%	545	55.8	62%
Tipton	61,366	+ 190	0.5%	458	134	55%
Weakley	33,337	- 231	-4.8%	580	57.5	67%
TOTAL/County Average	472,994	- 202	2.2%	6419	73.7	64.2%

Section Two: Race and Ethnicity

Racial and ethnic data is a critical piece of our community assessment because, as we shall see in ensuing sections, poverty is not color blind. The racial and ethnic composition of the populations we serve varies widely from county to county and reflects their geography and history. The further north

¹ American Fact finder Five Year Estimates. https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

² City-Data.com

and east the county, the more likely it becomes that the population will be overwhelmingly white, with Benton County leading the way at 96 percent, followed by Henry, 90.5%, Weakley 89.8%, Carroll 88.3 %, and Obion 87.1 percent – all well above the Tennessee average of 79.7 percent. The non-white population in these five counties is almost entirely African American, so that the African American population in these counties ranges from only 3.6 percent in Benton County to 11.7 percent in Obion County. All five of these percentages are well below the Tennessee average of 17.8 percent.

However, as the rolling countryside of our eastern counties gives way to the Mississippi River delta to the south and west where cotton once was king, and as we begin to approach Shelby County and Memphis, the more pronounced becomes the shift in demographics, so that the percentage of African American people residing in Lake County (30.3percent, Lauderdale County (35.2 percent), Madison County (38.2 percent) and Fayette County (27.9 percent) much more closely resembles the demographics of nearby Mississippi than it does that of Tennessee.

What is consistent across all of our counties is that the combined populations of white and African American persons in each county is over 99 percent, with Native American people, Asian people and “other” comprising for the most part one percent or less. The exception is Crockett County with a population of 81.6% white, 14.7% African American and 4.9% other. (Totals exceed 100% because the United States Census Bureau category used for this assessment is “Race alone or in combination with one or more other races” - a way of sorting people that most closely resembles the complicated reality of what is essentially a social construct.)

The Latino population is also relatively small, with the percentage of Latino people of any race falling below the state average of 5.2 percent in every county, with once again the exception of Crockett County, which boasts a Latino population of 10.9 percent.

Table 2: Race and Ethnicity

Report Area	White	African American	Native American	Other	Latino (of Any Race)
Benton	96%	3.6%	1.1%	0.2%	2.2%
Carroll	88.3%	11.4%	1.1%	1.2%	2.4%
Crockett	81.6%	14.7%	0.9%	4.9%	10.9%
Dyer	84.3%	15.1%	0.8%	.9%	3.3%
Fayette	70.5%	27.9%	0.6%	0.7%	2.5%
Gibson	80.5%	19.4%	0.8%	1.1%	2.6%

Report Area	White	African American	Native American	Other	Latino (of Any Race)
Henry	90.5%	9.2%	0.9%	0.4%	2.3%
Lake	69.3%	30.3%	0.3%	1.1%	2.2%
Lauderdale	64.1%	35.2%	1.2%	1%	2.4%
Madison	61.0%	38.2%	0.7%	0.6%	3.7%
Obion	87.1%	11.7%	0.7%	2.2%	4.0%
Tipton	80.1%	19.3%	0.9%	0.5%	2.7%
Weakley	89.8%	9.7%	0.8%	1.1%	2.3%

Section Three: Unemployment and the Labor Force

The unemployment rate in Tennessee (3.6percent as of December 2018³) mirrors the trend across the United States which recorded an unemployment rate of 4.0 percent in January 2019,⁴ and has seen unemployment drop to near record lows in nearly every state. While in our corner of western Tennessee five of our counties have unemployment rates that are equal to or lower than the state average, we also have the second and third highest rates of unemployment in the state as well, with Lauderdale (5.6 percent) and Lake (5.5 percent) respectively.

Nevertheless, even these rates represent a significant improvement from the dark days of the 2008 Great Recession. Unfortunately, unemployment rates are only an accurate measure of economic well-being for those who are already reasonably prosperous – those who actually participate in the labor force. The United States Department of Labor defines participation in the labor force as those who have jobs. Those persons in the labor force who are laid off from their jobs are still considered to be in the labor force but are categorized as “unemployed” They will continue to be counted in the labor force for as long as they have made “specific efforts” to find a job during a specified time period. It is a definition most often measured by counting those who report to state manpower offices on a regular basis in order to search for employment.

For example, in Weakley County, according to the United State Census Bureau, there are 15,386 persons counted as “participating in the labor force.” The official unemployment rate for Weakley

³ Tennessee Department of Labor and Work Force.
https://www.jobs4tn.gov/vosnet/lmi/profiles/profileDetails.aspx?enc=Elzv7W1H4bwmL+k+/LJ5/TnK10xCLZtK6TMiiW4Pmt_pLuQEVkvTjFy4oQmtNKTws

⁴ Trading Economics.com. <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/unemployment-rate>

County as specified by the Labor Department is only 3.5 percent. (That is, 3.5 percent of those participating in the labor force are not working). By that measure, there are only 539 people in the entire county who do not have jobs.

The problem though is that there are actually another 12,542 persons residing in Weakley County, nearly half of the adult population, who do not “participate in the labor force” and therefore also do not have jobs. It is a fair question to ask why people do not participate in the labor force and, if they have no job, why they do not look for jobs, and why the percentage of this group ebbs and flows.

The explanation offered by the Department of Labor is that in any given month, many of those people who are out of work become “discouraged” when they are unable to find a job. They eventually give up searching and are thereby no longer counted in the labor force.

It’s easy to see why people would become discouraged. Again, in Weakley County, as of February 2019 there were only 203 jobs available⁵ for those 12, 452 persons who have no job. In this regard, Weakley County is no different than the rest of our service area. Across our thirteen counties, the county average for *non-participation* in the labor force is *46.5 percent*. There are only 3,910⁶ jobs available for the 166,503 persons who are currently not in the labor force and therefore have no job. Table Three, below provides a side-by-side comparison of the number of persons “unemployed” with the number of those actually not working - that is, not in the labor force. The table also provides a comparison of those not working with the number of available jobs in each county.

Table 3: Unemployment Rates, Unfilled Jobs, and the Labor Force

Report Area	Unemployment		Not in Labor Force		Unfilled Jobs
	Percent	Number	Number	Percent	Number
Benton	3.8%	239	7,069	52.9%	72
Carroll	4.4%	522	10,893	47.9%	118
Crockett	3.3%	212	4,927	43.4%	59
Dyer	4.3%	745	12,171	41.1%	393

⁵ Tennessee Department of Labor and Work Force.
https://www.jobs4tn.gov/vosnet/lmi/profiles/profileDetails.aspx?enc=Elzv7W1H4bwmL+k+/LJ5/TnK10xCLZtK6TMiIW4Pmt_pLuQEVkvTjFy4oQmtNKTws

⁶ *ibid.*

Report Area	Unemployment		Not in Labor Force		Unfilled Jobs
Fayette	3.3%	627	13,276	41.1%	175
Gibson	4.0%	874	16,705	43.2%	362
Henry	3.7%	503	12,653	48.1%	232
Lake	5.5%	118	4,453	67.5%	56
Lauderdale	5.6%	565	10,967	52.0%	146
Madison	3.2%	1468	32,278	41.3%	1,673
Obion	4.4%	6004	11,009	44.6%	169
Tipton	3.6%	1084	17,560	36.7%	252
Weakley	3.5%	538	12,542	44.9%	203
All Counties	4.0%	13,499	166,503	46.5%	3,910 (2 % of those not in the labor force)

As the table indicates, the number of unfilled jobs, if filled by persons not in the labor force would provide employment for barely two percent of that population.

Section Four: Exclusion from the Labor Force

The lack of available jobs is not the only reason, however, that persons might be “discouraged.” There are other explanations as well why people are not in the labor force. There is no doubt a portion of this population that has sufficient resources and does not need jobs. Perhaps they are stay-at-home moms or dads with single income households, or students who still depend on their parents for living expenses. Others might be living off of benefits other than unemployment such as retirement benefits or disability benefits.

Nevertheless, our experience serving families living in poverty in western Tennessee tells us that here are way too many people who do not participate in the labor force because they are *not able* to participate in the labor force. We will quantify the causes for this inability to participate throughout this document.

These reasons include:

- **Insufficient Academic Attainment Including the Lack of a High School Diploma and Low Literacy.**
 - The county average for persons who did not complete high school is 17.8 percent. The median income for those persons is \$19,490; the poverty rate for persons who did not earn a

high school diploma or equivalent is 30.2%. Table Sixteen provides county by county data on the educational attainment of the population as well as their poverty rate and median income.

- **Lack of Transportation.**

- The county average for households with no vehicle available is 7.4%. When we consider that ten of our thirteen counties are more than 50 percent rural, then transportation becomes a formidable obstacle. Delta Human Resource Agency provides public transportation, in Fayette, Lauderdale and Tipton. Counties,⁷ while the Northwest Tennessee Human Resource Agency provides transportation in Benton, Carroll, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Lake, Obion, and Weakley counties.⁸ The city of Jackson in Madison County also operates a public transportation service.

- **Single Parents with Young Children Unable to Afford Child Care.**

- There can be no better illustration of the connection between single parent households and lack of participation in the labor force than data from our 2018 annual report. *75.6 percent of families served by Northwest Tennessee Head Start/Early Head Start, a total of 1,105 families were single parent families. 59.5 percent of those persons were parents who were not participating in the labor force.*⁹
- The county average poverty rate for *single mothers with children* under five is 45.4%; the county average *median income* for a female worker is \$24,235, or 130 percent of poverty for a single mother with two children. See Tables Four and Table Six for county data.

- **Lack a Home Address.**

- Rent Burdened – Obviously not having a stable home or any home at all makes finding a job and keeping one problematic. The number of families rent burdened or severely rent burdened in our service area averages 46.1 percent across all 13 counties – the vast majority of them severely rent burdened, which means they are in imminent danger of eviction on a monthly basis. (See Table Seven and Table Twenty).

⁷ <https://www.deltahra.org/transportation-services>. Delta HRA Transportation Services

⁸ https://nwtdd.org/nwthra/?fbclid=IwAR3skvz7RWvQo755hvS75F8G_sis4CPd5WbIJsbyNMsJ8SZbS2N6oDroKs. Northwest Tennessee HRA

⁹ Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council Head Start/Early Head Start Annual Report 2017-18

- Homeless – In January 2016 during the annual Point in Time count, 1,541 persons were counted as being homeless in West Tennessee.¹⁰ 285 of whom were served by Northwest Tennessee Head Start/Early Head Start.¹¹

- **Non-English Speaking.**

- A study entitled *How Does Ability to Speak English Affect Earnings?* by Jennifer Cheeseman Day and Hyon B. Shin, Population Division U.S. Census Bureau concluded that “...people who spoke a language other than English at home were less likely to be employed, less likely to find full-time work when employed, and, even having found full-time employment, experience lower median earnings than those who spoke only English. In addition, among those who spoke another language, employment, work status, and earnings varied directly with their ability to speak English. Those with the lowest English speaking ability had the lowest employment rate, lowest rate of full-time employment, and lowest median earnings.”¹²

A county average of 3.1 percent of individuals residing in our service area speak a language other than English at home. Spanish is the predominant language of non-English speaking people with a county average of 2.3 percent. (See Table Seven for county data.)

- **Undocumented/Working off the Grid.**

- Undocumented persons made up an estimated two percent of Tennessee’s population in 2016,¹³ an estimated 128,620 persons. However, despite lacking social security cards or birth certificates it is estimated by *Contributions of New Americans in Tennessee* that 86.8 percent of undocumented males were employed, but not actually counted in the labor force.

- **Drug Addiction/Unable to Pass a Drug Test.**

- In 2016, there were 1,186 opioid-related overdose deaths in Tennessee—a rate of 18.1 deaths per 100,000 persons—higher than the national rate of 13.3 deaths per 100,000 persons.

¹⁰ Tennessee Homeless Solutions.

http://tnhomelessolutions.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=theme1898:category&id=35&Itemid=168

¹¹ Northwest Tennessee Head Start/Early Head Start Annual Report

¹² https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/acs/PAA_2005_AbilityandEarnings.pdf. *How Does Ability To Speak English Affect Earnings?*

¹³ <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/nae-tn-report.pdf>. *Contributions of New Americans in Tennessee*

- The number of fatal drug overdoses for the thirteen counties was 72, a rate of 15.2 deaths per 100,000, also higher than the national average.
- The number of non-fatal hospital visits for drug overdose was 1,879.¹⁴
- Opioid use is perhaps the most dangerous and most addictive form of substance abuse, but in terms of participation in the labor force, any illegal drug can prevent the user from getting a job. In 2015-16, according to the Tennessee National Survey on Drugs,¹⁵ 649,000 persons had used marijuana in the past year, a total that far exceeds the number of heroin users, 14,000, cocaine users 91,000 and pain reliever (opioid) abusers 243,000 combined. Testing positive for any of these substances are grounds for an employer not to hire.

- **Felony conviction**

- Drug use not only keeps individuals from participating in the labor force, it too often also leads to incarceration, particularly for the African American community and the poor population. Once convicted, and once the sentence is served, people who been convicted of felonies continue to pay for their mistakes by exclusion from the economic and political life of their communities. *The number of convicted felons in Tennessee in 2016 was 421,000, the fourth highest rate of disenfranchised convicted felons of any state in the country.*¹⁶

Furthermore, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics *unemployment rates can be as high as 75 percent* for those who are one year out of prison.¹⁷

- **Lack of Health Insurance.**

- According to the Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation, *“Being in poor health is associated with increased risk of job loss, while access to affordable health insurance has a positive effect on people’s ability to obtain and maintain employment.”*¹⁸ The county average rate for

¹⁴ <https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/pdo/pdo/data-dashboard.html>. Tennessee Department of Health

¹⁵ <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUHsaeSpecificStates2016A/NSDUHsaeTennessee2016.pdf>.

Tennessee National Survey on Drugs

¹⁶ <https://felonvoting.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000287>. ProCon.ORG

¹⁷ <https://www.bizjournals.com/memphis/news/2015/12/04/growth-in-felony-convictions-hampers-memphis.html>.

Memphis Business Journal

¹⁸ <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/the-relationship-between-work-and-health-findings-from-a-literature-review/>

The Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation: The Relationship Between Work and Health: Findings from a Literature Review

all persons lacking health care insurance is 10.4 percent, with Crockett reporting a high of 14.2 percent and Gibson County a low of 8.8 percent. See Table Seven for county data.

Our data tell us that those not participating in the labor force are the most in need across several metrics, including lowest income, the highest rates of poverty, and the least likely to have health insurance, among others. It is a population with whom we are quite familiar because they are the families who arrive with their children at our doorstep every morning - the poorest of the poor, our targeted population.

Section Five: In Poverty, Unemployed, Not Participating in the Labor Force

- **Poverty Rates, Unemployment, and Gender**

When 166,503 people are not working, or even able to look for jobs, pursue an education or participate in job training, poverty is inescapable. The poverty rate for eleven of our thirteen counties exceeds the Tennessee average of 16.7 percent, with five of them (including Madison, our most populous county) reporting poverty rates above 20 percent. Overall, the county average poverty rate stands at 20.0 percent.

Like every county in every state in the country, poverty in western Tennessee is structural. That is, it is built into the system. The data cited above, for example demonstrates that the economy, no matter what the county, is not able to generate nearly enough jobs to meet the needs of our population.

It should be obvious that those with no employment suffer the highest rates of poverty. The poverty rate for unemployed persons compared to the general population is more than double the overall poverty rate in every county, from 53.8 percent in Weakley County to 32.7 percent in Crockett County, with a county average of 42.2 percent. (*Unemployed women* suffer the highest poverty rate of any category with a county average of 45 percent.) Poverty rates for those persons not participating in the labor force at all range from 56.1 percent in Carroll County to 21.4 percent in Fayette County with a county average of 35.2 percent. The fact that employment is not necessarily a ticket out of poverty is illustrated by poverty rates for employed persons that reach 12.2 percent in Benton County, and which average 8.9 percent across all counties.

This data set that also highlights the inequality of women. *The poverty rate for employed women in Madison County is 14 percent, compared to 6.1 percent for men.* The county average poverty rate for employed women is 10.6 percent compared to 7.2 percent for employed men.

Table 4: Poverty, Employment, Labor Force and Gender

Report Area	Poverty Rate: In Labor Force: Employed			Poverty Rate: In Labor Force: Unemployed			Poverty Rate: Not in Labor Force
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All
Benton	12.2%	6.7%	18%	42.3%	37.3	48.0%	54.0%
Carroll	7.8%	7.1%	8.6%	44.0%	47.3	41.7%	56.1%
Crockett	6.1%	6.9%	5.2%	32.7%	49.8	12.6%	27.5%
Dyer	9.0%	5.7%	12.4%	40.1%	30.9	53.8%	51.8%
Fayette	5.2%	4.6%	5.9%	38.8%	32.0%	46.9%	21.4%
Gibson	7.7%	6.5%	8.9%	36.2%	35.6%	37.1%	23.3%
Henry	10%	10%	10%	38.6%	42.1%	34.4%	23.5%
Lake	9.2%	9.4%	9.1%	53.3%	50.4%	57.1%	39.7%
Lauderdale	10.1%	7.3%	12.5%	43.5%	39.9%	48.6%	32.5%
Madison	10.1 %	6.1%	14.0%	39.0%	32.7%	45.5%	49.4%
Obion	11.5%	10.9%	12.1%	46.3%	29.4%	51.8%	29.1%
Tipton	6.6%	5.0%	8.4%	39.9%	33.1%	45.8%	22.1%
Weakley	9.6%	7.1%	12.6%	53.8%	47.9%	61.1%	27.3%
County	8.9%	7.2%	10.6%	42.2%	39.1%	45.0%	35.2%

- **Structural Poverty, Race and Ethnicity**

One of the identifying markers of structural poverty is that before any data is gathered, calculated, and entered into a table, we can predict with high certainty that poverty will fall more heavily on women than on men, more frequently on people of color than on white people, more certainly on the Latino population than on Anglos and more often on children than on adults. With one exception (a statistical anomaly in Henry County), poverty rates in our thirteen counties verify those predictions with no deviation whatsoever.

In every single county the African American poverty rate exceeds that of white persons, the largest gap occurring in Weakley County where the white poverty rate is 18.1 percent, the African American poverty rate, 42.6 percent. The thirteen county average poverty rate for African American people is 32.3 percent, nearly double the rate of 16.8 percent for white persons.

The county average for Latino persons is also disproportionately high at 31.3 percent. Poverty rates are higher for women in every county as well, with a county average of 21.8 percent compared to 18.2 percent for men. Most alarming in terms of impact on children is the *poverty rate of female heads of household with children under five. These families are visited by poverty at a higher rate than any other demographic* (a shocking rate of 83 percent in Lauderdale County and 72.6 percent in Madison County), and a county average of 45.4 percent.

Table 5: Poverty Rates: Race Ethnicity and Gender

Report Area	All	White	African American	Men	Women	Latino	Female Householder Children Under 5
Benton	22.3%	22.1%	27.4%	18.9%	25.5%	42.8%	39.3%
Carroll	19.8	17.2%	35.8%	18.8%	20.9%	24.3%	36.4%
Crockett	17.7%	15.0%	21.7%	17.5%	17.9%	28.7%	25.0%
Dyer	18.1%	16.5%	26.0%	14.8%	21.1%	22.5%	65.8%
Fayette	14.4%	8.9%	29.1%	13.6%	15.2%	33.3%	30.0%
Gibson	17.1%	13.0%	32.3%	14.8%	19.2%	32.7%	66.0%
Henry	19.7%	18.0%	35.7%	17.4%	21.9%	3.6%	57.9%
Lake	29.9%	26.6%	43.2%	26.8%	32.4%	47.7%	35.6%
Lauderdale	23.1%	17.4%	33.9%	21.5%	24.5%	27.3%	83.0%
Madison	20.3%	13.4%	31.3%	18.4%	22.0%	44.2%	72.6%
Obion	23.0%	20.5%	39.1%	22.2%	23.7%	28.4%	61.3%
Tipton	14.6%	11.9%	24.6%	13.3%	15.8%	30.2%	35.7%
Weakley	20.5%	18.1%	42.6%	18.1%	22.9%	41.3%	64.1%
All Counties	20.0%	16.8%	32.3%	18.2%	21.8%	31.3%	45.4%

Section Six: Median Income and Living Wage

- **Living Wage**

Even if everyone who needed a job was employed, employment is not an answer to poverty in and of itself. Jobs must also pay wages that are sufficient to not only lift families above the poverty line,

but also, as they lose benefits that are tied to income - SNAP, child care subsidies, Medicaid and housing assistance - that they are able to earn enough to pay for basic necessities, or, in other words, to earn a living wage. The reality, however, is that fifty percent or more of wage earners in our service area - depending on the size and structure of the family – do not earn a living wage and are still in poverty or barely above poverty income guidelines.

A living wage, as defined by the Living Wage Calculator, developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) takes into account the cost of basic services in specific geographical areas, the number of dependent children in a household, and the number of adults earning wages in the household. It is not within the scope of this assessment to catalogue the living wage for every family in every county, but it is instructive to examine a family we might typically encounter – a family of three - one adult wage earner and two dependent children.

According to Kids Count, in 2017 the prevalence of single parent families in Lake, Lauderdale and Madison Counties was between 41.5 and 55.4 percent. In Benton, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Obion and Tipton the percentage of single parent families ranged from 32.9 to 41.4 percent and in in Carroll, Fayette and Weakley Counties from 25.9 to 32.8 percent.¹⁹ In Lake County, our county with the highest poverty rate (29.9percent) and the lowest participation in the labor force, (32.5 percent) a single parent with two children would need to make \$24.15/hour, or \$50,232 annually to earn a living wage. The poverty wage – the wage necessary for that parent to escape poverty – is \$9.99/hour or \$20,779 annually, a daunting figure when we consider that it is an income *38 percent above the minimum wage of 7.25/hour*.

In Fayette County, our county with the lowest poverty rate (14.4 percent) and highest participation in the labor force, (78.9 percent), the poverty wage remains the same, (\$9.99/hour), because it is not indexed to local costs of living, but to earn a living wage that same family would need to earn \$53,206 annually.

- **Median Income**

One way to look more deeply into the economic stress on our families beyond poverty rates and unemployment rates is to compare *median income* to poverty guidelines and to the living wage in each of our counties, using again, the one-parent, two-child family as our yardstick. In Table Six we see that

¹⁹ Kids Count. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tccy/documents/kc/kc-soc/kcsoc17.pdf>

the median income for a single wage earner in five of our counties is less than fifty percent of a living wage. The average median income across our 13 counties is \$24,235, or less than half (46.7 percent) of the living wage. In our two most prosperous counties, Tipton and Fayette, the two neighbors of Shelby County/Memphis the Living Wage is \$53,206. Median incomes are \$34,613 in Fayette County, or *only 65.1 percent of the living wage* for a family of three. In Tipton County, the median income is \$31,345, or *59 percent* of the living wage.

On the other end of the scale are Weakley and Lake Counties, with median income of only \$22,253 and \$23,614 respectively, which represent just *44.3 and 47.0 percent of their counties' living wage* of \$50,211. In fact a living wage is not even in the conversation when the median income in Weakley County is only 107 percent of poverty, Lake County 114 percent of poverty, and Benton County 116 percent of poverty.

In summary, the takeaway from the data set in Table Six is two-fold.

1. Median incomes do not come anywhere near a living wage for single parent families with two children in any of our counties.
2. The median income for this demographic is *barely over the poverty line* in several of our counties, and in fact, across our entire service area is just \$26,895, or *130 percent of* poverty. Every family with a single mother and two children making the average median income or less would therefore be eligible for Head Start.

Table Six provides a side by side comparison of median income, living wage and poverty in each county.

Table 6: Median Income, Living Wage and Poverty

Report Area	Living Wage One Adult Two Children	Median Income Single Female Wage Earner	Percent of Living Wage	Percent of Poverty
Benton	\$50,211	\$24,055	47.9%	116%
Carroll	\$50,211	\$26,160	52.1%	126%
Crockett	\$50,814	\$26,850	52.8%	129%
Dyer	\$50,648	\$27,891	55.0%	134%
Fayette	\$53,206	\$34,613	65.1%	167%
Gibson	\$50,211	\$26,827	53.4%	129%
Henry	\$50,211	\$25,600	51.0%	123%

Report Area	Living Wage One Adult Two Children	Median Income Single Female Wage Earner	Percent of Living Wage	Percent of Poverty
Lake	\$50,211	\$23,614	47.0%	114%
Lauderdale	\$50,211	\$26,160	52.1%	126%
Madison	\$51,854	\$29,317	56.4%	141%
Obion	\$50,211	\$24,953	49.7%	120%
Tipton	\$53,206	\$31,345	59.0%	151%
Weakley	50,211	\$22,253	44.3%	107%
All Counties	50,878	\$26,895	47.6%	130%

Section Seven: Children

- **Brain Development**

Many policy makers who are unable and unwilling to take measures to support adults in poverty are nevertheless willing to support children in poverty. Adults, they believe, just need to try harder to better themselves. Children on the other hand are blameless, and therefore more deserving of assistance.

Northwest Tennessee Head Start is cognizant that no amount of boot-strap self-help will add to the 3,910 jobs currently available to the 166,503 members of the jobless adult population nor will it increase compensation to a living wage, or even to wages above the poverty line. Therefore we address the needs of the entire family, including the availability of basic necessities like housing, nutrition and health care quantified here-in. We do so because we understand that the well-being of families directly impacts the well-being of children.

Nevertheless, the bulk of our resources are directed towards child development and early childhood education - not because children are blameless, but because we are in the business of supporting healthy brain development. This means that our priorities are to protect children from the risks associated with poverty that can cause permanent delay or damage to the developing brain. These include

- Inadequate Nutrition

- 21 percent of children in Tennessee live in food insecure households. One in four of which does not qualify for government food programs. The percentage of families receiving SNAP in our service area ranges from 28.7 percent in Lake County to 14.9 percent in Fayette County. The county average is 20.8 percent. If one in four food

insecure households do not qualify for SNAP, then 27.7 percent of our county population is food insecure, 7.2 percent of whom do not receive assistance.

- Childhood Obesity: “Thirty-eight percent of Tennessee kids are either overweight or obese – a higher rate than all other states and Washington, D.C.,” according to a state health “scorecard” released by The Commonwealth Fund, a private health care foundation, earlier this month. The national average was 31 percent.”²⁰
- Toxic Stress.
 - Kids Count 2017 reports that 23 percent of Tennessee children experience two or more Adverse Childhood Experiences, including physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect, and household dysfunction, including mental illness, incarceration of a family member, substance abuse and domestic violence. Many of these experiences will “impact healthy brain development and may have lifelong effects on both behavior and health.”²¹ While Kids Count does not specify the age at which these adverse experiences occur, it goes on to report that according to the Centers for Disease Control Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, that in 2016, 39 percent of Tennessee adults report having experienced two or more adverse experiences during their childhood. Data on incidents of abuse and neglect serious enough to warrant removal from the home are provided in Table Twenty-One
 - Pre-natal Trauma and/or Deprivation – Data on access to prenatal care, low birth weight prenatal care and the frequency of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome are provided in Section Eight: Pregnant Women.
- Language Deprivation
 - According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice, “Children growing up in low- income families have dramatically less rich experience with language... hear far fewer words

²⁰ The Tennessean: Tennessee kids are now the heaviest in America. And it's getting worse.

<https://www.tennessean.com/story/money/industries/health-care/2018/05/29/tennessee-kids-most-overweight-and-obese/621417002/>

²¹ <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tccy/documents/kc/kc-soc/kcsoc17.pdf>

and are engaged in fewer extended conversations” than their middle class competitors. “By 36 months of age, substantial socioeconomic disparities already exist in vocabulary knowledge.”²²

Table 7: Indicators of Risk

Report Area	SNAP	Food Insecure	No Health Insurance	Rent Burdened	English Not Spoken at Home	
					All	Spanish
Benton	20.8%	27.8%	10.9%	57%	2.0%	1.5%
Carroll	19.4%	25.6%	9.4%	49.2%	1.8%	.7%
Crockett	18.1%	24.0%	14.2%	50.2%	8.5%	8.2%
Dyer	18.6%	24.8%	9.8%	41.4%	3.5%	2.4%
Fayette	14.9%	19.9%	8.8%	51.6%	2.9%	1.4%
Gibson	18.9%	25.2%	9.1%	50.7%	1.7%	1.1%
Henry	18.5%	24.7%	10.3%	50.0%	2.3%	1.7%
Lake	38.7%	51.7%	11.4%	37.3%	2.2%	1.5%
Lauderdale	27.8%	34.7%	10.6%	19.1%	2.8%	1.8%
Madison	17.5%	23.3%	9.3%	55.6%	4.9%	3.3%
Obion	18.1%	24.1%	11.8%	44.2%	3.2%	2.5%
Tipton	19.3%	22.7%	9.3%	42.7%	2.8%	2.3%
Weakley	20.4%	27.2%	9.6%	50.6%	2.0%	1.2%
Totals	20.8%	27.4%	10.4%	41.7%	3.1%	2.3%

- **Child Poverty**

That poverty falls unfairly on children is evidenced in data provided in Table Eight. Poverty for young children is higher than the general population in every county we serve except Crockett. The county average of 33.7 percent for young children in poverty far exceeds both the county average for the general population (20.0 percent) and the Tennessee poverty rate for children under five (27.9 percent.)

²² NAEYC Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice as referenced in The Great Disconnect in Early Childhood Education, Michael Gramling, Red Leaf Press 2015.

Table 8: Children in Poverty Age 4 and Under

Report Area	All	Under Five		Under Three	Three and Four	Three Only	Four Only
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Number	Number	Number
Benton	22.3%	382	49.7%	229	153	77	76
Carroll	19.8%	287	17.7%	172	115	57	58
Crockett	17.7%	203	23.3%	122	81	40	41
Dyer	18.1%	733	33.5%	440	293	146	147
Fayette	14.4%	472	23.0%	283	189	94	95
Gibson	17.1%	1176	36.0%	706	470	235	235
Henry	19.7%	514	31.9%	308	206	103	103
Lake	29.9%	159	55.0%	95	64	32	32
Lauderdale	23. %	573	38.7%	344	229	115	114
Madison	20.3%	2195	35.5%	1317	878	439	439
Obion	23.0%	689	40.1%	413	276	138	138
Tipton	14.6%	718	19.2%	431	287	144	143
Weakley	20.5%	574	34.9%	344	230	115	115
Total Number/ County Average	20.0%	8,675	33.7%	5204	3571	1735	1736

To ensure that our resources are directed to those children most in need, we have identified the number of age eligible children in poverty by age group – zero to three and age three and four - in each county served. We are able to estimate the number of children in these two sub-groups by assuming that barring radical changes in birth rates that approximately 60 percent of the under-five population will be less than three years old and that 40 percent will be age three and four. As indicated in Table Eight, there are 8,675 children in poverty under age five living in our service area. Of these, an estimated 5,204 children are under three years old and 3,571 are age three and four.

Section Eight: Pregnant Women

There were 5,317 pregnant women residing in our service area in 2017, but only 3,414 of them accessed prenatal care, or a total of 63.5%.²³ The risks associated with lack of prenatal care include,

²³ <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/2997-adequate-prenatal-care#detailed/5/6422,6428,6436,6442-6443,6446,6459,6467-6468,6474,6485,6503,6511/false/871/any/13275,10146>. KIDS COUNT Data Center.

among others, pre-term births and low birth rate, both of which can cause long term negative outcomes for children.

Table 9: Access to Prenatal Care by Race

Report Area	Pregnant Women	Accessed Prenatal Care: All		Accessed Prenatal Care: Race	
		Number	Percent	White	African American
Benton	166	89	53.6%	54.1%	-
Carroll	315	203	64.4%	65.8%	50.0%
Crockett	149	108	72.5%	75.0%	51.0% ⁱ
Dyer	469	311	66.3%	67.3%	62.2%
Fayette	427	254	59.5%	64.9%	48.5%
Gibson	601	406	67.6%	69.6%	62.2%
Henry	322	171	53.1%	51.4%	40.6%
Lake	58	36	62.1%	66.0%	45.5%
Lauderdale	309	181	58.6%	65.4%	47.9%
Madison	1231	788	64%	70.7%	57.2%
Obion	327	243	74.3%	75.2%	66.0%
Tipton	690	396	57.4%	59.1%	52.4%
Weakley	314	228	72.6%	73.0%	69.2%
Total	5378	3414	63.5%	66.0%	50.2%

Deprivation at the intersection of poverty and race is starkly represented in tables Nine and Ten. According to KIDS Count, the county average for access to pre-natal care for white women was 66 percent, but for African American women it was barely over 50 percent.²⁴ The poverty rates for persons of color in all of our counties highlighted in Table Five is strong evidence that women in poverty are far less likely to access prenatal care than more affluent women, a circumstance identified by the *Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System* (PRAMS), a project of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

²⁴ <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/9670-adequate-prenatal-care-by-race?loc=44&loct=5#detailed/5/6422,6428,6436,6442-6443,6446,6459,6467-6468,6474,6485,6503,6511/false/871/107,133/18899,18900>. KIDS COUNT Adequate Pre-Natal Care by Race in Tennessee

Access to prenatal care for all persons was higher than the state average in every county with the exception of Henry and Benton. Four counties, Lauderdale, Lake, Henry and Fayette had lower access for African American people than the Tennessee state average.

Race and poverty also adversely affects birthweight. According to data provided by Tennessee Department Of Health, Division of Policy, Planning and Assessment, 9.35 percent of children born in our thirteen counties in 2015 were low birth weight. The county average for white babies was 8.1%; the county average for African American babies was 14.1 percent.²⁵ And why does that matter? Low birth weight is associated with a higher risk of infant death and a greater likelihood that developmental disabilities will manifest themselves later in life, According to assistant professor at the University of Oklahoma’s College of Public Health, Sharyl Kinney, low birthweight babies are “more likely to have psychomotor problems, to have failure in school and to have health problems,”²⁶ Most germane to the issue of the impact of poverty on our population, however is this observation by Kelli Komro, a professor at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University in Atlanta. “Birth outcomes, including low birth weight, is a health indicator that is very *sensitive to poverty*.”²⁷

The status of pregnant mothers and its relationship to poverty is best summed up in the words of Dr. Dan Agin, Associate Professor Emeritus of Molecular Genetics and Cell Biology at the University of Chicago, who ten years ago in an article in *Psychology Today* made this observation:

“In all ways, poverty is a condition that readily transforms into an inherited disease. The transformation is man-made and will occur in any society in which *the condition of poverty means lack of adequate prenatal care during pregnancy* and hazardous exposure to neurotoxins in the environment. Poor people never receive as much health care as everyone else. Moreover, in daily life parents (may) suffer from chronic anxiety or depression exacerbated by various poverty-related circumstances. The effects of this stress on pregnant mothers and on their unborn fetuses are notable: significant correlations exist between these factors and low-birth-weight infants among mothers in poverty²⁸”

²⁵ https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/TN_Births_Low_Birth_Weight_-_2015.pdf. Tennessee Department Of Health, Division Of Policy, Planning And Assessment

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ Professor Kelli Komro as quoted in *How Increasing The Minimum Wage In Oklahoma Could Lead To Healthier Babies* NPR January 18, 2018

²⁸ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/more-genes/200911/more-genes-iv-culture-poverty-and-fetal-destruction>
It’s More than Genes

Table 10: Low Birth Weight by Race

Report Area	Live Births All		Low Birth Weight All		Live Births White		Low Birthweight White		Live Births African American		Low Birthweight African American	
	Number	Number	%	Number	Number	%	Number	Number	Number	Number	%	
Benton	174	15	8.6%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Carroll	316	21	6.6%	288	18	6.3%	23	3	13%			
Crockett	162	14	8.6%	141	11	7.8%	17	2	11.8%			
Dyer	471	55	11.7%	372	35	9.4%	88	18	20.5%			
Fayette	432	41	9.7%	296	25	8.4%	129	17	13.2%			
Gibson	621	49	7.1%	477	33	6.9%	140	16	11.4%			
Henry	345	33	9.6%	316	32	10.1%	20	1	5.0%			
Lake	70	9	12.9%	53	7	13.2%	17	2	11.8%			
Lauderdale	298	39	13.1%	172	15	8.7%	120	22	18.3%			
Madison	1250	134	10.7%	655	43	6.6%	576	89	15.5%			
Obion	364	28	7.7%	314	19	6.1%	48	8	16.7%			
Tipton	730	69	9.5%	552	44	8.0%	167	24	14.4%			
Weakley	343	17	5.0%	315	15	4.8%	25	2	8.0%			
Total	5576	524	9.4%	3951	297	7.5%	1370	204	14.9%			

Section Nine: Capacity of Other Early Childhood Programs

- **Child Care**

What is readily apparent in any analysis of the capacity of child care to meet the needs of children in poverty is that:

1. There are not nearly enough programs of sufficient quality to effectively address the needs of children in poverty, and
 2. The great majority of low income families simply cannot afford child care.
- Quality – Quality in child care is no different than quality in Head Start/Early Head Start. It is readily measurable by the programs ability to provide low adult-child ratios, research based curricula, inviting and stimulating learning environments, responsive adult-child interactions and well trained and well qualified staff. In Tennessee, the quality of child care is both assessed and supported by the Child Care Resource and Referral agency funded

through the Tennessee Department of Human Resources. It provides training and resources to support quality and assigns STAR ratings from one to three to participating child care and family child care centers that indicates the degree to which they meet specific quality benchmarks. Head Start and Early Head Start programs exceed the requirements for a Three STAR rating by virtue of their compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

- Affordability.
 - According to *Child Care Aware of America* the average cost of child care for children birth to three in Tennessee is \$5,857 annually, and \$4,515 for children age three and four.²⁹ Care for one child under three years old would consume 38.9 percent of the income of a minimum wage earner, 22.4 percent of the median wage in four of our counties earned by a female wage earner.
 - Child care subsidies offer only a partial solution to unaffordable care. Not all providers accept subsidies, and the availability of subsidies is subject to the vagaries of state funding that changes almost annually, so that according to the National Women’s Law Center, as of February 2016 “Tennessee was generally not providing child care assistance to any families or children unless they were families receiving or transitioning from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), teen-parent families, children in foster care, or children receiving protective services.”³⁰
 - Literally then, the working poor need not apply. Furthermore, data in Table Three demonstrates that 40 to 50 percent of the population is not working at all, and so are not eligible for child care subsidies even though the children of people not working are as much in need of quality early childhood programs as those who are employed.

²⁹ Child Care Aware as cited in the Boston Globe.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2014/07/02/map-the-average-cost-for-child-care-state/LN65rSHXKNjr4eypyxTOWM/story.html>

³⁰ National Women’s Law Center March 2017.

<https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/tennessee-childcare-subsidy2016.pdf>

- In determining the capacity of child care to meet the needs of children in poverty – that is counting the slots that child care has to offer our population – providers that do not accept subsidies *are not* counted since their services are not affordable.
- Slots offered by Three STAR child care *are* counted, but are pro-rated by the degree of poverty in the community. We can estimate, for example that a center offering 100 slots in Benton County could be expected to serve, at most, fifty children in poverty since nearly half the children under five in that county live in poverty. In every county, then, the total number of child care slots available to the general population is re-calculated by multiplying that total by each county’s child poverty rate, It is an imperfect count since most children in poverty are not eligible for subsidies, but it provides a more realistic picture than merely counting child care slots.

- **Voluntary Pre-K**

- Certification.

- There are 2,280 funded VPK slots funded for our 13 counties for the 2018-2019 school year.³¹ There are an estimated 1,736 four year old children in poverty (one fifth of the total number of children under age five in poverty), which would make it seem at first glance that there are more slots available for four year old children in pre-K than there are four year olds in poverty.

Table 11: Funded Pre-K Slots by County

Report Area	Voluntary Pre-K Classrooms	Children enrolled	4 year olds in poverty
Benton	2	20	76
Carroll	9	180	58
Crockett	7	140	41
Dyer	13	260	147
Fayette	8	160	95
Gibson	19	380	235
Henry	6	120	103

³¹ <https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/tn/2018/05/03/tennessee-continues-funding-for-900-free-pre-k-classrooms-how-many-will-be-in-your-district/>. Chalkbeat Education News in context

Report Area	Voluntary Pre-K Classrooms	Children enrolled	4 year olds in poverty
Lake	3	60	32
Lauderdale	9	180	114
Madison	16	320	439
Obion	7	140	138
Tipton	10	100	143
Weakley	6	120	115
Total Number/ County Average	113	2280	1736

- It would be a mistake however to assume that the plethora of pre-K slots means that there is no need for Head Start to serve that age group. For one, children enrolled in pre-K are not necessarily children in poverty. Eligibility for pre-K is three tiered, so that economically disadvantaged children are the first priority; children with disabilities are second in line, and if there are any slots still available, then the general population of four year olds may be considered.
- In Tennessee, *economically disadvantaged*, as defined by pre-K is significantly different than Head Start. The defining difference is that applicants for pre-K must be *certified by a third party* that they are eligible for services and that they are receiving benefits from either SNAP or TANF.³²
- Head Start of course, asks only for proof of income, and other than date of birth, there are no other eligibility requirements. Eligibility for public assistance, on the other hand, has numerous restrictions, including, for example, the five year limits to eligibility for TANF, or the work requirements of SNAP. The disparity in eligibility between the two systems can be best illustrated by the example of Madison County, by far the county with the most four year-old children in poverty. The percent of families receiving SNAP is just 17.5 percent. The percent of families with children under five living in poverty and therefore eligible for Head Start/Early Head Start

³² <https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/local/story/2017/feb/06/state-redefines-student-poverty/411354/>
Times Free Press: New definition means fewer Tennessee students are considered economically disadvantaged:

services is nearly twice that amount at 33.7 percent. What this means is that 48.1 percent of those children in poverty in Madison County are not eligible for pre-K because they are not certified.

- Although in five of our counties certified children actually exceed the number of children in poverty, eight do not, with Weakley, Obion and Benton joining Madison with rates at or over with poverty rates that are more than double exceed the percent of certified children in their counties. Table Twelve provides county by county data.

Table 12: Four Year Old Children in Poverty not Eligible for Pre-K

Report Area	Certified Economically Disadvantaged Eligible for pre-K	Poverty: Families with Children Under Five Eligible for HS/EHS	Percent of 4 Year Old Children in Poverty Not Eligible for Pre-K
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Benton	20.8%	42.1%	50.1%
Carroll	19.4%	8.2%	0%
Crockett	18.1%	10.9%	0%
Dyer	18.6%	27.2%	31.6%
Fayette	14.9%	7.8%	0
Gibson	18.9%	29.9%	35.3%
Henry	18.5%	7.8%	0%
Lake	38.7%	34%	0%
Lauderdale	27.8%	42.1%	34%
Madison	17.5%	33.7%	48.1%
Obion	18.1%	40.4%	55.2%
Tipton	19.3%	6.8%	0%
Weakley	20.4%	42.1 %	51.5%
County Average	20.8%	25.6%	23.5%

- Distribution of Funding – Pre-K funding in Tennessee is not allocated by the number of eligible children. It is instead allocated by measures of quality, so that Gibson County has 380 slots compared to Madison’s 320, even though Gibson County has barely over half the number of four year old children in poverty.

Section Ten: Calculating Unmet Need

In summary, the capacity of child care to serve children in poverty is limited by the number of Three Star centers, the availability of child care subsidies for children in poverty, and the exclusion of families not in the labor force. The capacity of *pre-K* to meet the needs of four year old children in poverty is limited by the number of children certified as economically disadvantaged. Certification requirements exclude a large percentage of children eligible for Head Start/ Early Head Start and in need of services.

- **Age groups**

The *Center for American Progress* estimates that that in any given county the number of child care slots available for children age three and four will be slightly more than double those available for children zero to three.³³ In any center offering slots to children birth to age five, we can therefore estimate that one-third would be allocated to children birth to three and two-thirds to children age three and four.

To calculate unmet need Table Thirteen puts the accessibility of services to children zero to five in poverty under a microscope and calculates unmet for each age group county by county. It begins with the estimated number of children in poverty in each age of those group, 1) birth to three, 2) three year old children and 3) four year old children and deducts the number of slots provided by Three Star child care, Head Start, Early Head Start and Voluntary pre-K.

The number of available slots in child care is *adjusted for the percent of children in poverty* as described previously. The number of pre-K slots is *adjusted to reflect the percentage of children who are in poverty but not eligible because they are not certified*. So, in Benton County for example, there are 382 children in poverty zero to five. Services available include 24 EHS and 55 HS slots and an *adjusted* 51 Three Star child care slots and an *adjusted* 20 pre-K slots. The total of available slots is 150. The total number of children unserved is 232.

³³ Center for American Progress: Understanding Infant and Toddler Child Care Deserts
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/10/31/460128/understanding-infant-toddler-child-care-deserts/>

Table 13: Early Childhood Services and Unmet Need by County

NOTE: Data in red indicates surplus slots

Report Area	Early Childhood Programs	Zero to Five in Poverty	Zero to Three in Poverty	Age Three and Four in Poverty	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Benton	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		382	229	153	77	76
Adjusted Slots 102 x .497	3 Star Child Care	-51	-17	-34	-17	-17
	EHS	-24	-24	0	0	0
	HS	-55	0	-55	-23	-22
Adjusted Slots 40 x .501	Pre-K	-20	0	-20	0	-20
	Unmet Need	232	188	44	37	17
Carroll	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		287	172	115	58	57
Adjusted Slots 233 x .177	3 Star Child Care	-41	-14	-27	-14	-13
	EHS	-24	-24	0	0	0
	HS	-107	0	-107	-54	-5
Adjusted Slots 0%	Pre-K	-180	0	-180	0	-180
	Unmet Need	-65	138	-199	-10	-189
Crockett	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		203	122	81	40	41
Adjusted Slots 63 x .233	3 Star Child Care	-15	-5	-10	-5	-5
	EHS	0	0	-0	0	0
	HS	-30	0	-30	-15	-15
Adjusted Slots 0%	Pre-K	-140	0	-140	0	-140
	Unmet Need	18	117	-99	20	-119
Dyer	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		733	440	293	147	146
Adjusted Slots 293 x .335	3 Star Child Care	-99	-33	-66	-33	-33
	EHS	-16	-16	0	0	0
	HS	-82	0	-82	-41	-41

Report Area	Early Childhood Programs	Zero to Five in Poverty	Zero to Three in Poverty	Age Three and Four in Poverty	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Adjusted Slots 260 x .316	Pre-K	-178	0	-178	0	-178
	Unmet Need	358	391	-33	73	-106
Fayette	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		472	283	189	95	94
Adjusted Slots 52 x .23	3 Star Child Care	-12	-4	-8	-4	-4
	EHS	-24	-24	0	0	0
	HS	-57	0	-57	-29	-28
Adjusted Slots 0%	Pre-K	-160	0	-160	0	-160
	Unmet Need	219	255	-36	62	-98
Gibson	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		1176	706	470	235	235
Adjusted Slots 302 x .36	3 Star Child Care	109	-37	-72	-36	-36
	EHS	-24	-24	0	0	0
	HS	-107	0	-107	-54	-53
Adjusted Slots 380 x .353	Pre-K	-246	0	-246	0	-246
	Unmet Need	908	645	45	145	-100
Henry	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		514	308	206	103	103
Adjusted Slots 216 x .319	3 Star Child Care	-69	-23	-46	-23	-23
	EHS	-32	-32	0	0	0
	HS	-100	-0	-100	-50	-50
Adjusted Slots 0%	Pre-K	-120	-0	-120	0	-120
	Unmet Need	193	253	-60	30	-90
Lake	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		159	95	64	32	32
Adjusted Slots 50 x .55	3 Star Child Care	-28	-9	-19	-10	-9
	EHS	-8	-8	0	0	0
	HS	-17	-0	-17	-9	-8
Adjusted Slots 0%	Pre-K	-60	0	-60	0	-60

Report Area	Early Childhood Programs	Zero to Five in Poverty	Zero to Three in Poverty	Age Three and Four in Poverty	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
	Unmet Need	46	78	-32	13	-45
Lauderdale	Programs	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		573	344	229	115	114
Adjusted Slots 24 x .387	3 Star Child Care	-9	-3	-6	-3	-3
	EHS	-16	-16	0	0	0
	HS	-68	0	-68	-34	-34
Adjusted Slots 180 x .34	Pre-K	-119	0	-119	0	-119
	Unmet Need	361	325	36	78	-42
Madison	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		2195	1317	878	439	439
Adjusted Slots 1047 x .35	3 Star Child Care	-372	-113	-259	-130	-129
	EHS	-40	24	0	0	0
	HS	-166	0	-166	-83	-83
Adjusted Slots 320 x .481	Pre-K	-154	0	-154	0	-154
	Unmet Need	1463	1228	299	226	73
Obion	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		689	413	276	138	138
Adjusted Slots 482 x .401	3 Star Child Care	-193	-64	-129	-65	-64
	EHS	-24	-24	-0	-0	0
	HS	0	0	-68	-34	-34
Adjusted Slots 140 x .552	Pre-K	-63	0	-63	0	-63
	Unmet Need	409	325	16	39	-23
Tipton	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		718	431	287	143	144
Adjusted Slots 89 x .192	3 Star Child Care	-17	-6	-11	-6	-5
	EHS	-24	-24	0	0	0
	HS	0	0	-107	-54	-53
Adjusted Slots 0%	Pre-K	-200	0	-200	0	-200

Report Area	Early Childhood Programs	Zero to Five in Poverty	Zero to Three in Poverty	Age Three and Four in Poverty	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
	Unmet Need	477	401	-31	83	-114
Weakley	Program	Zero to Five	Zero to Three	Three and Four	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Children in Poverty		574	344	230	115	115
Adjusted Slots 528 x .349	3 Star Child Care	-184	-61	-123	-61	-62
	EHS	-36	-36	0	0	0
	HS	-74	0	-74	-37	-37
Adjusted Slots 120 x .515	Pre-K	-58	0	-58	0	-58
	Unmet Need	222	247	-25	17	-42

Table Fourteen below, summarizes the data in Table 13 for the entire service area. The gap between services for children *under* age three, and children age four is stark. Of the 5204 children under three in poverty, 4591 are unserved; 813 three year old children remain unserved but there are 870 *surplus slots* available for four year old children. *Of the 4789 unserved children in our service area, 4591 are children under three.*

Table 14: County-Wide Summary of Unserved Children by Age Group

NOTE: Data in red indicates surplus slots

Report Area	Unmet Need	Zero to Five in Poverty	Zero to Three in Poverty	Age Three and Four in Poverty	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Benton	Unmet Need	172	188	44	37	17
Carroll	Unmet Need	-57	138	-191	-10	-181
Crockett	Unmet Need	18	117	-99	20	-119
Dyer	Unmet Need	358	391	-33	73	-106
Fayette	Unmet Need	219	255	-36	62	-98
Gibson	Unmet Need	908	645	45	145	-100
Henry	Unmet Need	193	253	-60	30	-90
Lake	Unmet Need	46	78	-32	13	-45
Lauderdale	Unmet Need	361	325	36	78	-42
Madison	Unmet Need	1463	1228	299	226	73

Report Area	Unmet Need	Zero to Five in Poverty	Zero to Three in Poverty	Age Three and Four in Poverty	Age Three Only	Age Four Only
Obion	Unmet Need	409	325	16	39	-23
Tipton	Unmet Need	477	401	-31	83	-114
Weakley	Unmet Need	222	247	-25	17	-42
Total Unserved		4789	4591	-67	813	-870

Section Eleven: Services and Need by Zip Code

Obviously, the number of children in poverty far exceeds the capacity of Northwest Tennessee Head Start to serve every child in need. To maximize accessibility, Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms are placed strategically to ensure that they are embedded in communities most in need.

Table fifteen examines the number of children in poverty and unmet need in each of the zip codes where NW TN Head Start/Early Head Start operates a center. At the zip code level, the plight of children zero to three remains unchanged, while the number of available adjusted pre-k slots decreases dramatically so that there are only 1169 Pre-K slots for 1115 four year old children. The zip code with the highest unmet need is 38301, the zip code for Jackson, the county seat of Madison County, where there are only 309 combined Head Start and pre-K slots for 457 children age three and four.

Table 15: Services and Need by Zip Code

Report Area	Zip Code	0-3	Center	EHS Slots	3 and 4		Center	HS Slots	Pre-K
Benton	38320 Camden	121	Benton County EHS	20	41	40	Magic Valley	55	22
Carroll	38201 McKenzie	100	McKenzie HS EHS	24	34	33	McKenzie HS EHS	51	20
	38344 Huntington	50		0	16	17	Huntington Pre-K	36	60
	38317 Bruceton	35		0	12	11	Bruceton Pre-K	20	20
Crockett	38001 Alamo	18		0	7	6	Crockett County HS	30	40
Dyer	38024 Dyersburg	281	Dyersburg HS/EHS	16	94	93	Dyersburg HS/EHS	51	77
	38059 Newbern	54		0	17	17	Newbern HS	31	0
Fayette	38057 Moscow	48	Fayette HS/EHS	16	17	17	Fayette HS/EHS	17	0
Gibson	38233 Kenton	35		0	11	12	Kenton HS	34	0

Report Area	Zip Code	0-3	Center	EHS Slots	3 and 4		Center	HS Slots	Pre-K
	38382 Trenton	155		0	51	52	Trenton Pre-K HS	37	39
	38358 Milan	114		0	43	43	Milan Pre-K HS	20	100
	38343 Humboldt	385		0	128	128	Humboldt HS	51	50
Henry	38222 Buchanan	73		0	25	25	Lakewood Pre-K K HS	20	0
	38251 Puryear	19		0	6	7	Harrelson Pre-K HS	20	17
	38242 Paris	169		0	57	56	Rhea HS	60	0
Lake	38079 Tiptonville	38	Lake County HS/EHS	8	18	18	Lake County HS/EHS	17	60
Lauder-dale	38063 Ripley	268	Lauderdale HS/EHS	16	139	140	Lauderdale HS/EHS	68	150
Madison	38301 Jackson	686	Washington- Douglas	40	229	228	Washington- Douglas	166	143
Obion	38261 Union City	266	Miles	24	88	89	Miles	51	51
	38260 Troy	30		0	10	10	Troy	17	0
Tipton	38019 Covington	181	Tipton	8	61	61	Tipton	82	200
Weakley	38225 Dresden	36		0	12	12	Weakley	74	120
TOTAL		3162		172	1116	1115		1008	1169

Section Twelve: Educational Attainment

Despite the formidable barriers posed by the employment landscape, there is substantial evidence that educational attainment is both a means of entry into the labor force and a predictor of success for those who do. Educational attainment correlates highly with income in all of our counties. Almost any entry level minimum wage job with no benefits and zero chance for advancement nevertheless requires a high school diploma or equivalent. It is the passport into the labor force. It is a passport that on average 17.8 percent of residents over the age of 25 have yet to earn. On the lower end of educational attainment is Lake County where 26.5 percent of persons over 25 not earned a high school diploma or equivalent, nearly double that of Fayette County's 12.9 percent.

Educational Attainment has a direct effect on earnings. Poverty rates drop drastically as each rung on the educational ladder is achieved. Although *41.5 percent* of persons lacking a diploma in Lake

County are in poverty, the rate drops to 1.5% for persons with a four year degree. Likewise, median income increases as a function of educational attainment across our counties, beginning once again with Lake County, with a median income of only \$12,115 for those with no diploma or equivalent. The highest median income belongs to Fayette County - \$50,848 for college graduates. It is one of three counties along with Tipton and Henry to exceed the \$50,000 threshold.

Table 16: Educational Attainment

Report Area		Less than High School	High School or equivalent	Some College	College Degree or Better
Benton	Education	17.2%	47.8%	22.2%	12.9%
	Poverty	32.5%	19.2%	14.2%	13.7%
	Median Income	\$15,727	\$25,033	\$29,405	\$34,281
Carroll	Education	19%	41.5%	23.7%	15.8%
	Poverty	28.5%	16.9%	16.7%	4.9%
	Median Income	\$16,920	\$27,333	\$27,744	\$35,968
Crockett	Education	20.8%	41.5%	24.8%	4.8%
	Poverty	30.0%	14.4%	9.9%	6%
	Median Income	\$22,646	\$26,986	\$31,116	\$35,833
Dyer	Education	16.5%	38.9%	26.5%	18.1%
	Poverty	28.5%	15.8%	13.5%	3.7%
	Median Income	\$22,794	\$26,296	\$30,446	\$43,125
Fayette	Education	12.9%	34.2%	30.3%	22.4%
	Poverty	33.1%	17%	5.7%	3.8%
	Median Income	\$27,928	\$31,046	\$40,322	\$50,848
Gibson	Education	15.5%	38.2%	28.5%	17.8%
	Poverty	29%	14.3%	9.3%	3.6%
	Median Income	\$18,512	\$25,540	\$31,831	\$39,352
Henry	Education	15%	46.7%	22.4%	15.8%
	Poverty	22.3%	18.9%	13.7%	4.3%
	Median Income	\$18,590	\$25,613	\$26,180	\$50,578
Lake	Education	26.5%	46.2%	17.9%	9.4%
	Poverty	41.5%	30%	13.9%	1.5%
	Median Income	\$12,115	\$22,273	\$30,000	\$38,611
Lauderdale	Education	24.8%	44.5%	22%	8.6%
	Poverty	29.2%	18.8%	14%	5.8%
	Median Income	\$20,708	\$27,282	\$28,636	\$39,744

Report Area		Less than High School	High School or equivalent	Some College	College Degree or Better
Madison	Education	17.2%	47.8%	22.2%	12.9%
	Poverty	32.5%	19.2%	14.2%	13.7%
	Median Income	\$15,727	\$25,033	\$29,405	\$34,281
Obion	Education	16.9%	42.4%	25.1%	15.6%
	Poverty	30.6%	20.3%	16.0% ¹	4.7%
	Median Income	\$20,491	\$24,551	30,884	\$40,507
Tipton	Education	13.6%	40.2%	31%	15.3%
	Poverty	28.2%	12.8%	8.9%	3.1%
	Median Income	\$19,797	\$31,734	36,989	\$50,157
Weakley	Education	16%	39.2%	24%	20.9%
	Poverty	26.5%	14.5%	14.7%	7.1%
	Median Income	\$21,427	\$25,935	30,290	\$40,028
County Average	Education	17.8	42.2%	24.7%	14.6%
	Poverty	30.2%	17.9%	12.7%	10.0%
	Median Income	\$19,490	\$26,512	31,019	\$41,024

Section Thirteen: Disabilities

According to the United States Census Bureau, there are 506 children under age five with disabilities residing in our 13 Counties. Of these, 129 were served by Northwest Tennessee Head Start, while 50 were served by our Early Head Start program. 45 of the 50 Early Head Start children had been previously identified as having a disability prior to enrollment and were already receiving services prescribed by an Individual Family Service Plan developed with the Tennessee Early Intervention System, the birth to three disabilities provider for the State of Tennessee.

Table 17: Disabilities by County

Report Area	Under Five		Previously Identified HS	Identified by Referral to LEA	Previously Identified EHS	Identified by Referral to TEIS
	Number	Percent				
Benton	38	4.7%	8	3	4	0
Carroll	28	1.7%	5	12	4	2
Dyer	43	1.9%	7	1	6	0
Crockett	11	1.9%	4	6	0	0
Fayette	57	2.8%	0	1	3	0

Report Area	Under Five		Previously Identified HS	Identified by Referral to LEA	Previously Identified EHS	Identified by Referral to TEIS
	Count	Percentage				
Gibson	61	1.9%	6	11	0	0
Henry	25	1.5%	6	22	0	0
Lake	7	2.2%	0	1	1	0
Lauderdale	35	1.9	0	1	5	2
Madison	97	1.6%	3	4	11	0
Obion	25	1.5%	4	7	9	1
Tipton	60	1.6%	4	5	0	0
Weakley	19	1.1%	6	2	2	0
Totals	506	1.9%	53	76	45	5

Five more were identified by our Northwest Tennessee Early Head Start through a process of screening and referral to TEIS for evaluation and development of the IFSP. In contrast, the majority of the 129 three and four year old children with disabilities (76 in all) were identified through screening and referral to the school districts in each county that serve as the Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Only 53 children with disabilities had been identified previous to enrollment.

Specific disabilities addressed by Northwest Tennessee Early Head Start are listed in Table Eighteen. These categories are those defined as eligible for disabilities services under IDEA and are not necessarily aligned with those provided by the Census Bureau.

Table 18: Summary of Disabilities

Disability	EHS Number	HS Number
Health Impairment	1	1
Hearing Impairment	2	0
Speech/Language Impairment	6	109
Intellectual Disability	1	2
Non-Categorical Developmental Delay	39	14
Traumatic Brain Injury	1	0
Autism	0	3
Total	50	129

Section Fourteen: Opioids and Drug Abuse

- **Opioid Overdose**

As reported in previous sections, our corner of rural Tennessee is not immune to the opioid epidemic afflicting the United States and the state of Tennessee. While the death rate for overdoses in Tennessee is 18.1 deaths per 100,000 person – a rate higher than the national rate of 13.3 deaths per 100,000 persons state wide - *the deaths from overdoses in our thirteen counties is also higher than the national average with a rate of 15.2 percent per 100,00.* The number of non-fatal hospital visits for drug overdose was 1,879³⁴ during that same period.

Table 19: Drug Overdose

Report Area	Deaths	Non-Fatal Hospital Visits	Deaths per 100,000
Benton	6	121	37.5
Carroll	4	146	14.4
Dyer	4	171	6.9
Crockett	1	54	10.6
Fayette	6	97	15.0
Gibson	9	187	18.3
Henry	3	133	9.0
Lake	1	20	-
Lauderdale	5	112	19.8
Madison	16	308	16.4
Obion	1	128	3.3
Tipton	15	276	24.4
Weakley	1	126	3.0
Totals	72	1879	15.2

- **Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome**

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome refers to neonatal babies who have been exposed to addictive drugs in the womb. As indicated previously, the rate of cases in Tennessee in 2015 was 1.29 percent in 2015. While NAS tends to have a lower incidence in Western Tennessee than the rest of the state, two

³⁴ <https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/pdo/pdo/data-dashboard.html>

Tennessee Department of Health

counties,³⁵ Henry and Carroll showed sharp increases from 2013-2015 while Weakly, Gibson and Tipton also recorded moderate increase.³⁶

Section Fifteen: Homelessness

There are many ways to measure homelessness. The McKinney Vento definition describes a homeless person as “a person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” This includes people living in shelters, people living in substandard and overcrowded housing and people have no shelter at all. To accurately capture the number of people who are homeless a Point-in-Time count is conducted in January each year all across the United States. According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) *2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*, on a single night in January 2017, 550,996 people in the United States were experiencing homelessness.³⁷ About a third of people experiencing homelessness (34.5 percent) were in unsheltered locations.³⁸

Of those 550,996 homeless persons, 1.5 percent, or 8,265 homeless persons resided in the state of Tennessee, and of those 8,265, 285 were served by Northwest Tennessee Head Start/Early Head Start.³⁹ Table twelve quantifies the number of substandard and overcrowded housing in each of our thirteen counties. These include homes with no plumbing or kitchen facilities, and homes that heat with wood coal, and kerosene due to the link between indoor combustion and asthma. The yardstick for determining if a dwelling is overcrowded is a person-to-room ratio above 1.5.

³⁵ Tennessee Opioid Summary

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids/opioid-summaries-by-state/tennessee-opioid-summary>

³⁶ Tennessee Opioid Summary

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids/opioid-summaries-by-state/tennessee-opioid-summary>

³⁷ <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-2.pdf>

2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress

³⁸ <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-2.pdf>

³⁹ Program Information Report (PIR) 2018

Table 20: Substandard and Overcrowded Housing

Report Area	Indoor Combustion		No Plumbing		No Kitchen		Overcrowded		Severe Rent Burdened	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Benton	448	6.7%	46	.7%	135	2.0%	81	1.2%	546	43.7%
Carroll	400	3.5%	30	.3%	82	.7%	79	.7%	1024	39.8%
Crockett	61	1. %	20	.4%	37	.7%	1	0	582	41.7%
Dyer	57	.4%	49	.3%	146	1.0%	100	.7%	1613	30.5%
Fayette	481	3.2%	50	.3%	105	.7%	16	.1%	983	40.9%
Gibson	267	1.3%	47	.2%	113	.6%	44	.2%	2034	41.2%
Henry	392	2.9%	91	.7%	139	1.0%	12	0%	1113	39.1%
Lake	0	0%	26	1.2%	40	1.8%	0	0%	208	30.5%
Lauderdale	155	1.6%	10	.1%	50	.5%	99	1.0%	1574	43.2%
Madison	471	1. %	20	.1%	306	.8%	77	.2%	5758	46.9%
Obion	221	1.7%	12	.1%	116	.9%	72	.6%	1228	35.2%
Tipton	349	1.6%	109	.5%	387	1.8%	70	.3%	2030	33.9%
Weakley	368	2.7%	30	.2%	85	.6%	84	.6%	1635	41.7%
Totals	3670	2.1%	540	.4%	1741	1.0%	735	.4%	20328	39.1%

Section Sixteen: Children in Foster Care

There were 354 children placed in foster care in 2016-17 in our thirteen county area. We often think of the intervention by Child Protection as a way to ensure that children are not physically or sexually assaulted, or even in extreme cases, killed. It is, but it is so much more than that. Of those 354 children, only nine were removed for physical abuse – the fewest of any of the nine categories for which children might be removed. Far greater are

- Neglect, 80
- Drugs/Alcohol, 84, and, most curiously,
- The “child’s behavior” with 110.

Sexual abuse is a distant sixth with 32 children removed from their homes. It would have finished 8th out of nine if not for the outlier, Weakley County that removed ten children. The County average for sexual abuse for the other 12 counties is 1.8.

It is strong evidence that removal is somewhat inconsistent and even capricious or at least very much at the discretion of particular people working in particular counties. Fayette County for example, reported removing a total of eleven children during the entire year - a rate of twelve per ten thousand. The county average for the other twelve is counties 28.5 per ten thousand.

What is also striking is the degree to which poverty intersects with the removal of children. There is no income data available, but certainly inadequate housing is a function of poverty, as is neglect (when neglect is defined as an inability to provide basic necessities like food and heat). Incarceration, of course falls most heavily on the poor, as does the war on drugs.

Of those 354 children removed from their homes, Northwest Tennessee Head Start Early Head Start served fourteen in 2017-18. It seems like a small number for so many children, especially since foster children are of course categorically eligible, but it is not possible to ascertain how many of those 354 were age eligible, nor if the foster parents were interested in Head Start services.

The Head Start staff is trained in mandatory reporting, and is fully cognizant that we are responsible for protecting children in our care. But the primary role of Northwest Tennessee Head Start Early Head Start is preventive. We can say with some certainty that the number of children removed from the home for reasons having to with poverty would be much greater than 354 if not for services to families provided by our agency.

Table 21: Children in Foster Care⁴⁰

Report Area	Foster Care	Per 10,000	Neglect	Drugs Alcohol	Physical Abuse	Inability to Cope	Housing	Incarceration	Behavior	Sexual Abuse	Abandonment
Benton	8	24.6	0	2	0	1	0	1	3	1	0
Carroll	30	48.3	19	11	0	3	3	2	1	1	0
Crockett	10	27.7	1	1	0	2	0	0	2	2	0
Dyer	28	29.9	8	5	1	5	0	0	12	1	6
Fayette	11	0	4	4	0	0	2	0	4	0	0
Gibson	82	66.7	18	16	0	11	5	5	32	6	0
Henry	25	35.9	8	10	0	4	4	4	6	3	2
Lake	4	31.9	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
Lauderdale	18	27.3	7	3	0	1	0	1	4	0	2

⁴⁰ <http://fosteringcourtimprovement.org/tn/County/>. Index of TN Counties

Report Area	Foster Care	Per 10,000	Neglect	Drugs Alcohol	Physical Abuse	Inability to Cope	Housing	Incarceration	Behavior	Sexual Abuse	Abandonment
Madison	72	30.5	7	9	2	10	1	16	30	2	2
Obion	18	26.1	2	10	0	0	0	4	1	2	4
Tipton	47	27.8	5	10	5	4	4	0	14	3	4
Weakley	19	28.0	1	3	1	0	1	0	0	10	4
Totals	354	31.1	80	84	9	42	20	34	110	32	24

Section Seventeen: Community Strengths

- Friendly people willing to help someone in need.
- Small-town or community atmospheres that promotes conservative family values and supports children and youths.
- Unpolluted air and fresh water sources.
- Relatively low crime rates.
- Community involvement in projects that benefit all citizens i.e. neighborhood crime watch, after school tutoring programs, etc.
- Country sides of natural beauty comprised of farm land, open fields, woods, small towns, rivers, lakes and creeks.
- Colleges, universities and technology centers that cater to adult learners.
- A large medical community in Jackson that provides health care services comparable to those in Nashville and Memphis.
- Family recreational areas for boating, fishing, hunting, swimming and other outdoor activities.
- Comparably low-cost housing
- School systems that range from average to excellent.
- School for the Deaf in Jackson that can be compared to a similar facility in Knoxville.
- An extensive, well maintained public road system that is composed of four-lane highways, by-passes and two-lane country and state roads.
- Groups, organizations and systems of professionals and concerned citizens who work together to increase the number and quality of services to children and families.
- Churches and faith-based organizations that offer emergency or crisis assistance to families.
- LeBonheur Children’s Hospital and St. Jude Children’s Hospital

Section Eighteen: Community Resources

- Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council
- Northwest Tennessee Head Start and Early Head Start
- Local and Regional Health Departments
- Dyersburg State, Jackson State and Southwest State Community Colleges.
- Paris, Weakley County, Newbern, McKenzie, Madison County and Ripley Technology Centers.
- Bethel, Lane, University of Tennessee, Union University, University of Memphis and University of Memphis at Lambuth
- Department of Human Services and Department of Children’s Services
- Habitat for Humanity
- Adult Education Programs
- Tennessee Affordable Housing Agency
- Carey Counseling, Pathways and Professional Counseling Center
- Local daycare providers
- Carl Perkins Child Abuse Prevention Center; Women’s Rape Assistance Program
- Jackson Area Council on Alcoholism
- Family Resource Centers
- Salvation Army
- American Red Cross
- Local Kiwanis chapters and the Kiwanis Center
- Mustard Seed, Second Harvest Food Bank, Matthew 35:40, Wee Care Ministries, other thrift stores and food banks
- Lion’s Club
- Local law enforcement officers and fire departments
- Churches, Ministerial Association and United Neighbor Groups
- Local and Regional Libraries
- Local Businesses and Banks
- Chambers of Commerce
- Tennessee Opportunity Program
- Boys and Girls Clubs

- WIA program
- Agricultural Extension offices
- Nutrition Unlimited
- Tennessee Career Centers
- Local Education Agencies
- Tennessee Early Intervention Systems
- Local and state governments
- Healthy Start
- LeBonheur Mobile Health Unit
- WLJT-TV (Public Broadcasting Station)