

# Head Start of Washington County, Inc.

## 2023 Community Assessment Update

### Methodology:

According to the Head Start Program Performance Standards, a program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period (completed June 2020). In addition, a program must annually review and update the community assessment to reflect any significant changes (45 CFR 1302.11(b)(2)). Below are the additions/revisions to the 2020 Community Assessment. These data points were used to submit the agency's annual Refunding Application to the Regional Office and will be used for grant writing purposes as needed.

Healthy Washington County published their FY2022 Community Needs Assessment in May 2022. The majority of the data HSWC uses when writing the annual Refunding Application is also collected in the FY2022 Community Needs Assessment. Furthermore, the data has been substantiated by the Community Solutions Hub, an online collection of local and state data. All data points below are sourced from the Community Solutions Hub ([www.communitysolutionshub.org](http://www.communitysolutionshub.org)) as of 9/13/2023, unless otherwise noted.

### **Community Demographics:**

- Estimated population of Washington County is 155,590
- There is an estimated 22.1% of all families living below the poverty level in Hagerstown. This is compared to 9.9% in Washington County and 6.2% in Maryland.
- There is estimated to be 8,557 children between the ages of birth through age 5 living within Washington County.
- Of these, 22.1%, or 1,891 children live below the poverty line. This is compared to 12.5% in Maryland and 18.5% throughout the United States.
- On average 45% of all births within the county are under the Medical Assistance umbrella
- In Hagerstown city, 38.6% of children under the age of five fall below the poverty level.

### **COVID-19 Trends:**

- COVID-19 and its ongoing effects continues to have an impact on the Washington County community.
- The unemployment rate in May 2023 was 2.4% in Washington County; compared to 2.2% in Maryland and 3.4% throughout the United States. Unemployment has been steadily decreasing the past year.
- Homelessness has increased slightly throughout the families enrolled in the HSWC program. According to the agency's PIR reports, the program had 34 homeless children during the 2022-2023 program year. This is an increase from the previous year when the agency reported 24 homeless children.

- Staffing shortages and the willingness of prospective employees to join the Early Childhood field have been ongoing struggles.

### **Community Health:**

- Fatal drug overdoses have decreased slightly in Washington County. Between June 2021 and May 2022, there were 111 fatal overdoses. (Source: Maryland Overdose Data Dashboard, maintained by the Opioid Operational Command Center). Between June 2022 and May 2023, there were 106 overdose deaths within the county.
- Obesity continues to be a community wide focus as Meritus Health has implemented the Go For Bold challenge of losing a million pounds in 10 years. 39.3% of adults in Hagerstown are considered obese, compared to 24.2% of Washington County residents. The overall rates of obesity among the community are decreasing.