



2025

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

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Methodology

This Community Assessment was developed following the framework presented in The Community Assessment: The Foundation for Program Planning in Head Start. Our dedicated staff members, each overseeing a specific programmatic area, led the effort in researching and gathering information, utilizing their subject-matter expertise.

Data collection involved diverse sources, including various government agencies and community contributions. Specifically, these sources include the Texas Health and Human Services, the U.S.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Texas Education Agency, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Office of the Texas Governor. Furthermore, data were also collected from parent and community surveys, the Program Information Report (PIR), internal data systems of Kids Are First (KAF), as well as formal and informal communications with parents, staff, and community leaders. Additional information was garnered through literature reviews and other external research efforts.

Emerging trends were identified, and the data was analyzed. This information and analysis will guide the agency's decision-making over the next five years by building on our strengths and identifying opportunities for the foreseeable future.

Meetings and Surveys

Date	Interview/Meeting/Surveys	Participants	Location
September 6, 2024	ECI Interview	D/MH Coordinator	ECI Administration Office
January 27, 2025	Pearsall Special Ed Director Interview	D/MH Coordinator ECE Coordinator FSA	Special Education Office
February 28, 2025	Carrizo Springs Special Ed Director Interview	D/MH Coordinator ECE Coordinator Center Director FSA Mentor Teacher HS Teachers	Carrizo Springs Administration Office
April 10, 2025	Education/Disabilities/Mental Health Meeting	ECE Coordinator D/MH Coordinator Mentor Teachers	Administration Office
April 14, 2025	Monkey Survey Meeting-Parent, Community, Education	Coordinators	Administration Office
April 15, 2025	Transition Meeting	Eagle Pass Principals	Eagle Pass Administration Office
April 24, 2025	Health Mental Health Advisory Meeting	CEO Coordinators FSA Mentor Teacher Inclusive Minds MH Consultant South Texas Rural Health, Inc. Eagle Pass ISD STAAC United Medical Center	Las Colonias Bldg. 6
January 18, 2024	Health Advisory Meeting/Inter Agency Meeting	Coordinators Center Director Eagle Pass Housing Authority Maverick County Women's Shelter Methodist Healthcare Ministries University Of Texas – Austin Eagle Pass Texas Gov.	Las Colonias Bldg. #6
January 19, 2024	Health Advisory Meeting/Inter Agency Meeting	Coordinators Center Director Texas A&M AgriLife South Texas Rural Health, Inc. SWTJC	Pearsall Head Start Center

		Pearsall ISD Methodist Healthcare Ministries	
April 14, 2025	Parent Surveys Link	Center Managers	Pearsall, Carrizo and Eagle Pass
May 5, 2025	Women, Infant, Children – Maverick County	PFCE/ERSEA Coordinator/WIC Director - Manrique Fuentes	Eagle Pass
May 5, 2025	Women, Infant, Children – Frio County	PFCE/ERSEA Coordinator/WIC Director Tammie Sanchez	Pearsall
May 5, 2025	Women, Infant, Children – Dimmit County	PFCE/ERSEA Coordinator/WIC Director Beatrice Luevano	Carrizo
May 8, 2025	Fort Duncan Regional Medical Center	PFCE/ERSEA Coordinator – Record Department	Maverick County
May 8, 2025	Dimmit Regional Hospital	Records Department	Dimmit County
May 8, 2025	Frio Regional Hospital	Records Department	Frio County

Executive Summary

Kids Are First, Inc. (KAF) has been providing Head Start and Early Head Start services to low-income families in Dimmit, Frio, and Maverick Counties in South Texas since 2015. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, these counties—already facing longstanding social and economic challenges—have experienced further setbacks, and recovery has been slow across our service areas.

KAF offers services to pregnant women and provides care for 176 children in 22 classrooms as part of its Early Head Start program. In addition, the organization serves 466 children in 28 classrooms within its Head Start program. The centers located in Eagle Pass, Maverick County, include LBJ, Las Colonias, Rosita Valley, and Seco Mines. Furthermore, the Carrizo Springs Center is situated in Carrizo Springs, Dimmit County, and the Alicia R. Yanez Center operates in Pearsall, Frio County.

The 466 Head Start slots are available for 960 hours each year, whereas the 176 slots designated for Early Head Start are available for 1,380 hours annually.

State of the Grantee

Mission

The Mission of Kids Are First, Inc. is dedicated to excellence, devoted to children and families through a consistent, high-quality, and individualized service approach, in collaboration with our vast network of comprehensive providers in all present and future service communities.

Demographics of Area Served

The Kids Are First, Inc. Head Start/Early Head Start (KAF) program service area attends families residing in Dimmit, Frio, and Maverick Counties of South Texas. These counties face challenging issues. Maverick County is in Southern Texas along the border of Mexico. Our centers are in Eagle Pass, TX, a city located in the Del Rio border sector. In 2023, this area saw the highest number of migrant crossings along the Southern border, recording over 393,000 migrant encounters, a 52% increase from 2020. This situation has strained city resources, leading to an increased demand for essential services, including water, sanitation, and transportation. There has also been a negative impact on local businesses, as they are often forced to close due to a lack of customers or an inability to serve the influx of migrants. The migrant surge has also raised security concerns, as some migrants are associated with criminal activity.

With a population of 8,051, Dimmit County includes the cities of Carrizo Springs, Asherton, and Big Wells and census-designated places of Brundage, Carrizo Hills, and Catarina. Comprised of 1,334 square miles, located along U.S. Highway 83, US 277, and State Highway, KAF administrative office, and one center are located in Carrizo Springs.

Frio County, population 18,529, contains the cities of Bigfoot, Dilley, Frio Town, Hilltop, Moore, North Pearsall, West Pearsall, and the County Seat – Pearsall, with an area of 1,134 square miles along U.S. Highway 35, U.S. Highway 57, State Highway 85, and State Highway 160. KAF operates one Head Start/Early Head Start Center in Pearsall.

Maverick County, with a population of 58,030, is the largest county in the KAF service area and has only one incorporated city, Eagle Pass, located along the Texas-Mexico border. Unincorporated areas include Edison Road, El Indio, Elm Creek, Las Quintas Fronterizas, Quemado, Radar Base, Rosita North, and Rosita South. Within its 1,280 square miles, Maverick County has three major highways – U.S. Highway 57, U.S. Highway 277, and State Highway 131. The Head Start/Early Head Start Centers in Maverick County, all located in the City of Eagle Pass, are Las Colonias, Lyndon B. Johnson, Seco Mines, and Rosita Valley.

Data Sources:

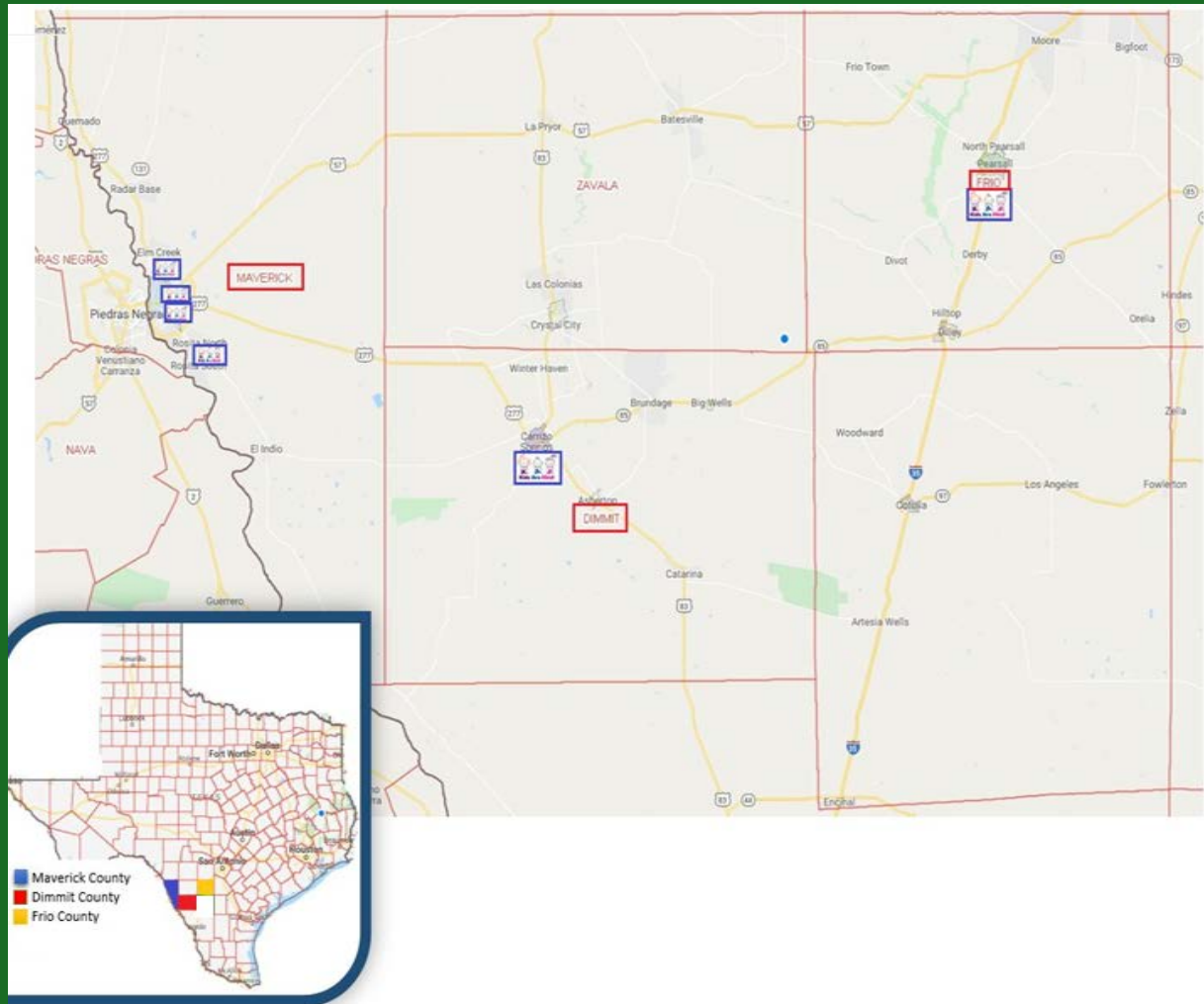
<https://www.npr.org/2024/05/22/1251422713/eagle-pass-texas-immigration-law-arrest>

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/texas/dimmit-county>

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/texas/frio-county>

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/texas/maverick-county>

The map below shows the locations of the centers in each respective County they serve.



Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) and Family and Community Partnerships

Total Population for the Service Area of Dimmit, Frio, Maverick and La Salle Counties: 91,227

Demographics of the Four County Area

County	Dimmit	Frio	Maverick	La Salle
Population (April 2024)	8,051	18,529	58,030	6,617
# of Children < age 5 (2023 – Kids Count)	2,305	4,134	18,174	1,256
Hispanic or Latino	7,112 / 86.6%	14,744 / 79.6%	54,484 / 98.3%	5,853 / 88.5%
White	976 / 11.9%	2,551 / 13.8%	2,172 / 3.8%	719 / 10.9%
Black	52 / 0.6%	597 / 3.2%	186 / 0.3%	4 / 0.1%
Asian / Other	76 / 0.9%	628 / 3.4%	933 / 1.6%	41 / 0.6%
Household Income -Median	\$33,409	\$60,098	\$51,270	\$48,675
Percent in Poverty	27.3%	25.6%	22.8%	27.1%
Unemployment Rate	6.8%	6.9%	9.1%	4.6%

Source:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table>

<https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables>

<https://usafacts.org/answers/how-much-money-does-the-federal-government-provide-state-and-local-governments/state/texas/>

According to the County Census Bureau, there has been a slight population increase in Frio, Maverick and La Salle Counties as of 2024. In contrast, Dimmit County has experienced a decline in population. The primary languages spoken in the region are English and Spanish. Approximately 64.9% of Texans speak only English, while 28.8% speak only Spanish. A smaller percentage, 6.3%, speaks a language other than English.

The unemployment rate in the three-county service area is higher than the State of Texas, which has a rate of 4.1%. Maverick County has the second-highest unemployment rate at 9.1%.

There are significant demographic trends in the three-county area. Between 2018 and 2024, Dimmit County experienced a population decline of nearly 20%. However, during the same period, the number of

children under five years old has doubled, along with an increase in the unemployment rate. Dimmit County is located directly above the Eagle Ford Shale, a crucial geological formation known for its prolific production of both natural gas and oil, often exceeding that of other traditional shale plays.

[\(https://www.rrc.texas.gov/oil-and-gas/major-oil-and-gas-formations/eagle-ford-shale/\)](https://www.rrc.texas.gov/oil-and-gas/major-oil-and-gas-formations/eagle-ford-shale/)

Dimmit County is engaged in extraction activities within both the condensate-rich and oil-prone sectors of the Eagle Ford Shale formation. The principal operators responsible for driving activity in the County are Chesapeake Energy and Anadarko Petroleum.

The apex of activity within the Eagle Ford region, encompassing drilling operations, permit issuances, and well completion, was observed in 2014. Following this peak, there has been a noticeable decline in activity; however, the area continues to demonstrate active developmental efforts, particularly within the oil window.

During the height of Eagle Ford activities, there was a substantial increase in the birth rate, which has since decreased in tandem with the decline in shale development. Fluctuations in the unemployment rate reflect this phenomenon, as oil and gas companies have historically been a significant source of employment in local areas.

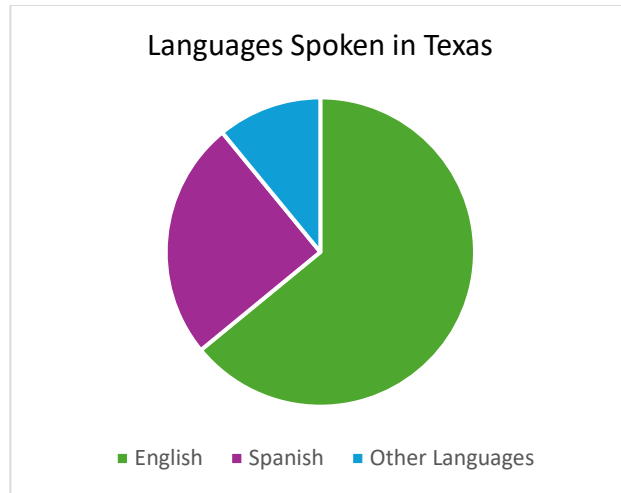
Unemployment in areas within the Eagle Ford Shale has recorded an almost threefold increase in the population of children under the age of five from 2016 to 2023. Similarly, the unemployment rate in this region has more than doubled during the same period.

Language

In Texas, the primary languages spoken are English and Spanish. Approximately 64.9% of Texans speak only English, while 28.8% speak only Spanish. A smaller percentage, 6.3%, speak other languages.

In the service area of Dimmit, Frio, Maverick and La Salle counties, the percentage of individuals who speak a language other than English (for all races, including Hispanic/Latino, ages 14 and older) from 2019 to 2023 is as follows: Dimmit County – 11.9% (358 individuals), Frio County – 15.9% (819 individuals), Maverick County – 25.9% (4,796 individuals) and La Salle 7.7% (3,022).

<https://hdpulse.nimhd.nih.gov>



Funded Enrollment

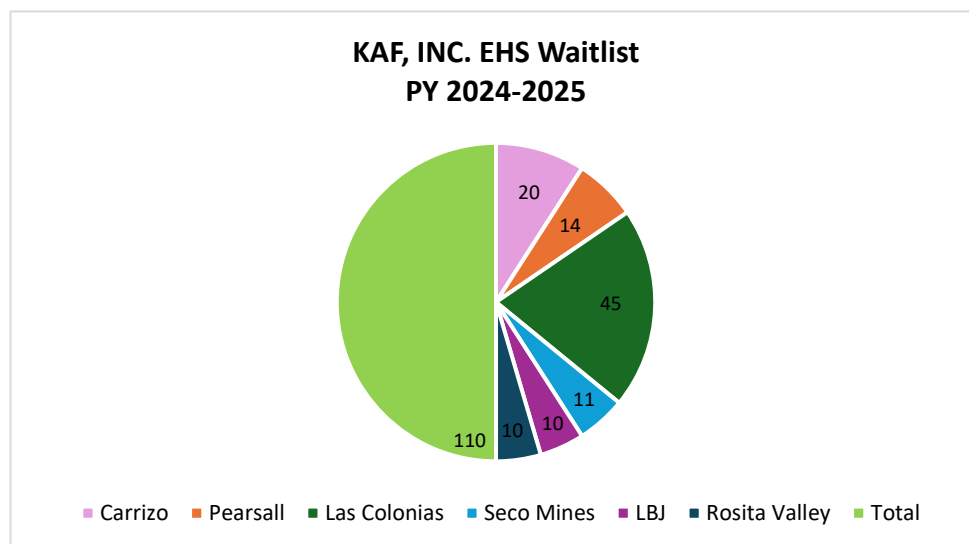
Kids Are First, Inc. provides services to Head Start and Early Head Start low-income families living in Dimmit, Frio, and Maverick Counties. The program is funded for 642 slots, with a breakdown of 466 Head Start slots and 176 Early Head Start slots for infants and toddlers, including pregnant women.

Center Name	County	HS Slots Funded Enrollment	EHS Slots Funded Enrollment	Age Group(s) Served
Alicia R. Yañez	Frio	51	40	Infant, Toddler, & Preschool
Carrizo Springs	Dimmit	68	32	Infant, Toddler, & Preschool
Las Colonias	Maverick	153	56	Toddler & Preschool
LBJ	Maverick	79	24	Toddler & Preschool
Seco Mines	Maverick	81	8	Preschool & Toddlers
Rosita Valley	Maverick	34	16	Preschool & Toddlers

Waitlist

The current waitlist for the KAF Early Head Start Program is reflected in the chart below. The chart is a snapshot of the program's internal data from January 2025 through May 2025. The centers are currently serving children of the Early Head Start age. All centers maintain a waitlist for children to accommodate the future expansion of Early Head Start classrooms.

GoEngage



Expectant Mothers enrolled in WIC

The table below illustrates the monthly average number of pregnant women enrolled in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program for the 2025 program year, based on conversations with program directors in the service areas of Dimmit, Frio, Maverick and La Salle counties, as of April 2025.

	Dimmit	Frio	Maverick	La Salle	Total
Expectant Women	35	50	300	42	427
WIC Enrolled Monthly Average					

Source: Women, Infant, & Children (WIC)- Crystal City, Pearsall, Maverick Programs – May 2025

Mothers and babies need access to high-quality care before and after birth to ensure a healthy start. KAF Head Start/Early Head Start enrolled and provided services to five pregnant women in the program year 2023-2024 and lost one infant at birth.

The KAF Head Start/Early Head Start program continues to identify a need for services for children from birth to three, including pregnant women, in all four counties.

Births

The table below illustrates the number of deliveries within the three-county service area between the years 2022 through 2024. In collaboration and communication with the records department of the three-regional hospital, the sharing of babies born in each community is illustrated in the tables below.

Baby Births 2022 through 2024

County	Total Births 2022	Total Births 2023	Total Births 2024
Dimmit	146	209	102
Frio	29	91	99
Maverick	962	1,072	962
La Salle	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Dimmit County Regional Hospital, Fort Duncan Regional Hospital, Frio Regional Hospital

Pregnant Women

The KAF Head Start/Early Head Start program continues to identify a need for services for children from birth to three, including pregnant women, in all four counties. Three communities have a regional hospital in the area for the delivery of babies, but La Salle County, pregnant adults deliver the new baby in neighboring communities of Laredo, Tx or Pearsall Texas. Families in program's service area choose to have their children born in hospitals located in neighboring communities, such as Uvalde, Del Rio, and San Antonio. The table below depicts the number of pregnant women by County enrolled in the Medicaid

program providing pre-natal care and post-partum care after the baby births in our service area.

Pregnant Women – Enrolled in Medicaid

Year	July 2024	July 2023	July 2022
Dimmit	153	284	249
Frio	258	446	389
Maverick	984	1,906	1,652
La Salle	62	148	132

Source: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/about/records-statistics/data-statistics/healthcare-statistics>

Homeless Children

According to estimates by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the number of families with children experiencing homelessness in Texas increased by more than 12% in 2023. Many low-income families are now without the rental assistance safety nets that were available during the pandemic. Homelessness has risen across nearly every demographic group, as reflected in the January Point-in-Time survey, which counts individuals experiencing homelessness. In contrast, our program service area is primarily rural, and very few homeless children and adults are enrolled in the KAF Head Start/Early Head Start Program. Over the past five years, enrollment of homeless children has remained consistently low, with an annual count of five or fewer.

Source: The Texas Tribune-January 2024

Children in Foster Care

In KAF Head Start / Early Head Start, children in foster care have been low due to the program's service area being primarily rural. In the State of Texas, as of December of 2023, available data from Kids Count Data Center, a total of 11,932 children ages 0-17 years were in foster care. The number of foster care children in our service area is reflected in the table below. KAF Head Start/Early Head Start currently has a total of four children enrolled under the Foster Care eligibility category, which is lower than the state figures.

The table below reflects the actual number of foster children in the service area per County versus the State of Texas.

Children in Foster Care (0-17 years of age)

Location	Year 2023	Rate per 1,000 children ages 0-17
State of Texas	11,932	1.6
Dimmit	5	1.4
Frio	24	5.0
Maverick	13	0.7

La Salle	6	3.5
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Source: Kids Count Data Center 2024

Economic Factors Impacting Children and Families:

The information in the table below, from the 2024 Kids Count data, identifies the national level in the four domains where children and youth need more support to thrive. The identified domains include Economic Well-being, Education, Health, and Family and Community. The information at the national level shows areas that remained at the same percentage, while areas under education experienced a higher percentage increase compared to other years. The benchmarks for fourth-grade proficiency in reading and eighth-grade proficiency in math are lower at the national level, attributed to the after-effects of the national pandemic. Families and children continue to live in the State of Texas, with 18% of children in poverty compared to the National level of 16%. The four-county areas of Dimmit, Frio, Maverick and La Salle counties have a higher poverty rate, ranging from 22.8% in Maverick County to 27% in Dimmit County. The counties Dimmit and Frio have a higher unemployment rate compared to the state and national levels. Children in single-parent families for the four-county service area reflect high percentages compared to the state and national levels.

Economic Well-Being, Education, Health, and Family & Community

Location	National	Texas	Dimmit	Frio	Maverick	La Salle
Children in poverty -all ages (2023)	16%	18%	27%	25%	22.8%	31.6%
Unemployment – parents lack a secure employment	4.2%	4.1%	6.8%	6.3%	4.1%	4.6%
Children with high Housing Cost	30%	33%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Food Insecurity	13.5% (2023)	16.4 %	28.5%	19.7%	22.3%	20.4%
Confirmed Victims of Child Abuse	70.9% (2023)	56.5 %	11.8%	17.6%	3.6%	20.0%
Children in Single Parent Family	34%	34%	77.4%	52.5%	42.1%	38.8%
Children in Families – lacking High School Diploma	11%	16%	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA
Children living in high-poverty areas	8%	12%	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA
Children without health insurance	5%	12%	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA
Low birth-weight babies (2023)	8.6%	8.6%	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA

Teen Births per 1000	14%	20%	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA
Fourth Graders not proficient in reading	68%	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA
Eight Graders not proficient in math	74%	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA	NO DATA

Source: Kids Count -Data of 2024

Texas Nutrition, as part of SNAP - the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, helps people buy the food they need for good health. SNAP food benefits are put on the Lone Star Card and can be used as a credit card at any store that accepts SNAP.

Texas SNAP

April 2025

Location	Number of Individuals	Individuals <5 years old
State of Texas	3,550,796	504,564
Dimmit	2,387	305
Frio	3,813	515
Maverick	16,888	6,009
La Salle	1,307	1,307

Source: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics->.

TANF- The Texas Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, formally Aid to Families with Children (AFDC), is a support service for Texas families. The purpose of TANF is to provide financial and medical assistance to needy, dependent children and the parents or relatives with whom they are living.

Texas TANF

February 2025

Location	Number of Individuals	Individuals <5 years old
State of Texas	22,019	17,685
Dimmit	12	10
Frio	25	19
Maverick	48	40
La Salle	3	3

Source: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/tanf-case-recipients-county-feb-2025.xlsx>

Family Stressor – Community Assessment Parent Surveys

The family stressors identified in a community needs survey closely align with the economic factors impacting families and children at both the national and state levels. The table below reflects the

outcome based on the family's response to the survey.

Category	Percentage	Domain
Financial	37.7%	Economic Well-being
Employment	18.87%	Economic Well-Being
Transportation	24.53%	Economic Well-Being/Family & Community
Medical / Dental	11.32%	Health
Education & Job Training	7.55%	Education

Source: Parent Community Assessment Survey 2025 - Survey Monkey

Typical Work, School, and Training Schedules of Parents

In the table below, families working according to or working and attending school are reflective of the program for the year 2023-24. The data reflect parents in two-parent households and single-parent households, with many families in the program identified as single-parent households.

By Program	PIR - Working	PIR – In School /Training /School
Head Start	387	33
Early Head Start	184	19

Source: GoEngage - PIR - PY 2023-2024

The table below reflects the outcome of the Parent Community Assessment Survey for Program Schedules and Hours of Service.

Question – Q3	The current program schedule met the needs of my family	Yes – 92.6%
Question – Q4	If not, how could the program meet your needs?	
	Longer Hours	75%
	More Days of Service	6.25%

Source: Parent Community Assessment Survey – Survey Monkey – PY 2024-25

Resources available in the community to address the needs of children and families:

Community strengths include collaboration and a non-financial memorandum of understanding among local resources in the four-county service area. Our communities are rural and may be limited in resources, but the partnership between programs is a significant strength. Agencies utilize resources to assist low-income families in their communities with food, utilities, housing, and employment, including emergency assistance when available. Partnerships among community organizations allow families to receive assistance through referrals. Local colleges and technical schools are available in-service areas.

Local resources include:

- AACOG for Childcare, Weatherization, Housing, Transportation, and Senior Services.
- Head Start
- Childcare
- School Districts
- TX Department of Health Services
- WIC.
- Camino Real - Mental Health, Emergency Services, Counseling
- Middle Rio Grande - Education, Job Skills, Job Search, Workforce,
- United Health Ministerial Alliances - Emergency Services, Food, Counseling
- Churches - Emergency Services, Food, Counseling
- Food Banks/Pantries -Clothing
- Community Centers - Promotora's- Food, Emergency Services, Counseling
- Wintergarten Women Shelter - Homeless,
- Libraries – three county service area Education, Computer services, Information and Referrals
- 211- Information and Internet referrals
- Chamber of Commerce - Information and Referrals
- Interagency Meetings Health/Mental Health Advisory Meetings - Information and Referrals
- Section 8 - Housing Alamo Service - Housing
- Housing Authorities – Housing
- Health Clinics - Health, Medical and Dental services
- Child Welfare Board - Medical eye/dental
- Hospitals - Medical
- Urgent Care Centers – Medical
- Colleges - Education
- Trade School - Education
- ESL Classes - Education GED Classes –Education
- Sheriff offices - Education for officers
- Banks - Home loans and credit counseling
- SWART- Transportation
- Westly Nurses
- Red Cross
- Salvation Army - Emergency Services

Strengths:

The program's total funded enrollment is 642, which includes the 176 Early Head Start slots. The program continues to promote regular attendance, ensuring the child's safety within the first hour of operation in case the child does not arrive at the center. Program staff continue to support families in promoting the child's regular attendance. KAF HS/EHS has maintained the program's monthly average daily attendance rate at or above the 85% requirement. KAF HS/EHS program maintained all eligibility documentation electronically for verification of the family's eligibility and was found to be 100% compliant during the focus two federal review. Families can conveniently apply for services through the agency's KAF website, where an electronic application is accessible across all digital platforms. Program recruitment

flyers include a QR code for application accessibility available in both English and Spanish languages.
Source: Go Engage, Enrollment Enterprise Report

Needs and Challenges:

KAF HS/EHS anticipates challenges in recruiting age-eligible four-year-old children to meet enrollment goals for the 2025–2026 program year; this is due to House Bill 3 Pre-K, passed by the 86th Texas Legislature in 2019, which mandates that school districts provide full-day pre-kindergarten for all four-year-olds. School districts in our program service area automatically categorize families receiving SNAP as eligible for the Pre-K program. KAF's administration is actively engaging with school districts to explore collaborative solutions that address Head Start's enrollment challenges for the upcoming program year and ensure continued services for families and children in the future.

Source: HB-3 Pre-K, 2019, School District – EPISD, Go Engage

Conclusion:

KAF will continue to provide services to all low-income families and children in the current service area. Collaboration with local school districts will continue to facilitate the enrollment of four-year-old children in our program, ensuring that we meet our funded enrollment targets and provide coordinated services. The EHS program consistently maintains a waitlist for infants through toddlers, including pregnant women and their families. However, slots are limited, leaving children to remain on a waitlist for an extended period.

Family & Community Engagement

Strengths:

KAF has been operating in our service area for many years, providing services to families and children through partnership and collaboration with numerous community partners and resources. Through a non-financial memorandum of understanding and partnership agreements with local school districts and resources in the three-county service area communities, the program aims to collaborate with stakeholders to empower families. The collaboration between KAF Head Start/Early Head Start and community partners involves attending agency meetings and providing educational training to staff and parents through the program. The number and variety of resources are limited in our rural service area but are a significant strength of our communities.

Source: Parent Survey & Community Partners Surveys – Survey Monkey

Needs:

Our families are utilizing public assistance programs related to health, nutrition, housing, and childcare, including SNAP, in our service area. Because poverty is concentrated in our four-county area, residents mostly use these resources to supplement their income. Yet, the increase in the price of goods impacts all families and children already living in poverty. The outcome of the community assessment parent survey indicates that families continue to have needs for financial, educational, job assistance, and transportation services, particularly to address the medical needs of families and children. Other concerns expressed by community partners affecting major health issues impacting families and children included the increasing

need for mental health services, including behavioral support and parenting training/workshops.

Challenges:

The Head Start Program and community resources are not projected to receive increases in funding, which will affect the many challenges families and children face in our community. Families are feeling the strain of rising household expenses and increasing housing costs, which add financial pressure and impact overall stability. Families in the three-county service area have high poverty rates, unemployment is higher compared to the state unemployment rates, and even though our families are utilizing the available social services, the families are struggling to maintain financial stability. Our program serves over 50% of children in single-parent families of Latino origin, reflecting a higher percentage compared to the state of Texas at 42%. Coordinating services with community partners is vital to support families and children enrolled in our program.

Source: State Trends – 2024 Kids Count Data Book

Conclusion:

The support and collaboration KAF receive from the community are evident, demonstrating a strong commitment to meeting the needs of children and families. However, sustaining this level of support and addressing all their evolving needs will continue to be a challenge. KAF will establish non-financial agreements to utilize all available resources in support of families and children. The program will continue to implement the research-based parenting curriculum, Ready Rosie, for all parents in the KAF program.

ERSEA Data Sources:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table>

<https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables>

<https://usafacts.org/answers/how-much-money-does-the-federal-government-provide-state-and-local-governments/state/texas/>

<https://www.eaglefordshale.com/counties/dimmit-county-tx>

<https://hdpulse.nimhd.nih.gov>

Women, Infants, & Children (WIC)- Crystal City, Pearsall, Maverick Programs – May 2025

FCP Data Sources:

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/about/records-statistics/data-statistics/healthcare-statistics>

The Texas Tribune-January 2024

Kids Count Data Center 2024

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics>

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/tanf-case-recipients-county-feb-2025.xlsx>

Parent Community Assessment Survey 2025 - Survey Monkey

GoEngage - PIR -PY 2023-2024

Parent Community Assessment Survey – Survey Monkey – PY 2024-25

Disabilities and Mental Health

Early Intervention, Screening, and Disability Information

Introduction

This section provides a detailed breakdown of the children served by Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services in Texas, including the reasons for eligibility, types of services offered, and demographic characteristics. In 2023, 96,556 children were referred to early intervention in Texas between the ages of 0-35 months, 67,512 children received comprehensive services, and 257 children received follow-along. Comparatively, in 2022, 94,178 children were referred, 65,584 children received comprehensive services, and 540 children received follow-along.

The table below provides a detailed breakdown of the reasons for eligibility among children receiving Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services, including medical diagnoses and developmental delays. The data also highlights the prevalence of various conditions among children served by the program.

Table 1. Characteristics of Children and Families Served by the ECI Program (FY 2023)

Reason Eligible	
Medical Diagnosis	14.0%
Of those with medically diagnosed conditions:	
Chromosomal Anomalies	17.1%
Congenital Anomalies--Brain/Spinal Cord	7.3%
Symptoms and Ill-Defined Conditions	7.9%
Congenital Anomalies--Musculoskeletal & Other	21.0%
Diseases of the Nervous System	11.9%
Congenital Anomalies--Facial Clefts	2.8%
Conditions Originating in the Perinatal Period	15.9%
Congenital Anomalies - Other	3.9%
Autism Spectrum Disorders	10.5%
Endocrine, Nutritional, and Metabolic Diseases	1.8%
Developmental Delay	84.8%
Hearing / Vision	1.1%
Of those with Delay or Hearing / Vision:	
Speech/Communication	77.2%
Physical/Motor	84.2%
Cognitive	50.8%
Adaptive/Self-Help	44.6%
Personal/Social	39.6%
Hearing	1.1%
Vision	0.3%
Children with more than one area of delay	70.4%
* Percentages total more than 100% because many children have delays in more than one area.	
Planned Service Types	

Service Coordination	100%
Specialized Skills Training (Developmental Services)	77.3%
Speech Language Therapy	56.0%
Occupational Therapy	23.2%
Physical Therapy	23.2%
Nutrition	3.7%
Psychological/Social Work	1.0%
Audiology	1.5%
Vision	0.9%
Behavioral Intervention	0.0%
Age at Enrollment	
0-12 months	32.5%
13-24 months	37.5%
25-36 months	30.0%
Other information	
Males	63.6%
Females	36.4%
Medicaid	70.8%
Primary Language English	86.5%
Primary Language Spanish	12.9%
Primary Language Other	0.4%
Primary Language Missing	0.2%
Referral Sources (for all referrals)	
Medical/Health Services	63.0%
Parent/Family/Friends	20.6%
Social Services	10.2%
ECI Programs	3.9%
Educational	2.2%

Furthermore, Table 2 below provides an overview of the number of children served by the ECI program across Texas, along with the percentage of the birth-to-three population that these services reach.

Table 2. Statewide Representation of Children Served by the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Program (FY 2022)

County	Birth-to-3 Population	Children Served: Comprehensive Services	Children Served: Follow Along	Total Served	Percent of Population Served: Comprehensive	Percent of Population Served: Total
Statewide	1,757,864	65,584	1,037	66,621	3.73%	3.79%

Table 2 Note: The statewide numbers reflect the unduplicated number of children served in comprehensive and follow-along services. Additionally, the projected population data are based on the number of children aged 0 to 1, 1 to 2, and 2 to 3 years old in 2022, as well as the number of births in

2023, which corresponds to the number of children aged 0 to 1 in 2023.

Additionally, Table 3 highlights the number of children served in Dimmit, Frio, and Maverick counties. It also shows the percentage of the population (ages 0-3 years old) reached by comprehensive and follow-along services.

Table 3. County-Specific Representation of Children Served by ECI (FY 2022)

County	Birth-to-3 Population	Children Served: Comprehensive Service	Children Served: Follow Along	Total Served	Percent of Population Served: Comprehensive	Percent of Population Served: Total
Dimmit	889	72	0	72	8%	8%
Frio	1,138	71	0	71	6%	6%
Maverick	4,257	316	0	316	7%	7%

Table 3 Note: The statewide totals reflect the unduplicated number of children served, while county-specific values may not sum to the statewide total due to child transfers between programs. This table only includes counties serviced by Kids Are First, Inc.

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/assistive-services-providers/early-childhood-intervention-programs/eci-data-reports>

Disabilities Support Services for Head Start and Early Head Start Children

School District Services: Three local school districts support children eligible for the Head Start program, ensuring that children with disabilities receive tailored educational services tailored to their needs.

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Program: For younger children in Early Head Start, the ECI program provides specialized support, including assessments, therapy, and developmental services tailored to each child's unique needs.

Mental Health Services for KAF Head Start and Early Head Start

Within the three-county service area, only one designated Mental Health Authority (Camino Real) provides mental health services under the Texas Department of State Health Services. However, children and families participating in the Kids Are First Head Start and Early Head Start programs have access to a broad range of mental health services. These services are accessible directly through the program or by referral and include:

- **Preventive Mental Health Initiatives:** Classroom observations, staff training, and consultations to identify and address potential concerns early.
- **Comprehensive Mental Health and Crisis Services:** South Texas Rural Health Services and affiliated medical clinics offer mental health and substance abuse treatment. These facilities accept insurance and provide sliding-scale payment options to accommodate families with diverse financial needs.
- **Professional Mental Health Consultants:** KAF has contracted two licensed mental health

professionals who provide direct support to families, children, and staff. These consultants promote mental well-being through direct counseling, guidance, and referrals to relevant resources.

KAF's approach ensures that all children, families, and staff have access to essential mental health resources, supporting personal and emotional development within a safe and nurturing environment.

Service Offerings and Support for Low-Income Families

Approximately 69.23% of local service agencies, including Camino Real Mental Health Authority, South Texas Rural Health Services, UMC Health Services, Inclusive Minds, and Let It Be Uvalde, offer complimentary services to families in need. In comparison, 30.77% of these agencies do not provide such free offerings. These agencies collectively demonstrate several strengths in their support for low-income families, including:

Strengths of Local Agencies

These agencies perceived strengths when working with low-income families include:

- Offering quality services to empower families/children to reach their full potential.
- Offering a sliding scale fee for those who are uninsured.
- Offering virtual services that eliminate transportation issues.
- Offering individualized services based on each person's needs.
- Offering resources and opportunities to grow in different areas.

Challenges Faced by Local Agencies

Despite these strengths, local agencies encounter several significant challenges when serving low-income families:

- Lack of community resources.
- Lack of transportation
- Not enough funding
- Insurance
- Low resources in the Dimmit and Zavala Area.
- The stigma about mental services
- Increase in the use of illegal substances
- There are not enough services in the School Districts for children with disabilities
- Lack of parenting skills

Parent Survey Insights

Parent feedback from the KAF Head Start and Early Head Start programs further highlights the impact of these services:

- 95.24% of parents agreed that Head Start has effectively prepared their children for school.
- 11.32% of parents identified disability-related needs for their child.
- 9.43% of parents identified mental health needs for their child.

When the Head Start Parents requested help for their child's social and emotional development, 91.94 %

agreed that the services were delivered on time. In comparison, only 86.27% of parents who requested disability services for their children decided that these services were delivered on time.

Data Sources:

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/assistive-services-providers/early-childhood-intervention-programs/eci-data-reports>

<https://www.caminorealcs.org/>

<https://southtexasruralhealth.com/>

<https://umchealth.com/Mental-Health-Services>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/inclusive-minds-eagle-pass-tx/1016873>

<https://letitbeeuvalde.com/>

Disabilities Services and Needs

The following table, describes the special education services standard codes used by the independent school district for categorizing disabilities identified in children.

Table 4. Independent School District Special Education Services Standards Codes

Orthopedic Impairment	OI
Other Health Impairment	OIH
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	DHH
Visual Impairment	VI
Deaf-Blind	DB
Intellectual Disability	ID
Emotional Disturbance	ED
Learning Disability	LD
Speech Impairment	SI
Autism	AU
Developmental Delay	DD
Traumatic Brain Injury	TBI
Noncategorical Early Childhood	NCEC

https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/adhocrpt/Standard_Reports/About/abtspeced.html

Table 5 below presents the number of students receiving special education services in these three counties (Maverick, Dimmit, and Frio), categorized by disability type. It highlights the distribution of services among these countries.

Table 5. Public School District Students Receiving Special Education Services PEMIS Data 2023-2024

County	OI	OIH	DHH	VI	DB	ID	ED	LD	SI	AU	DD	TBI	NCEC
Maverick	N/A	275	14	N/A	N/A	95	71	768	298	208	N/A	N/A	71
Dimmit	N/A	24	N/A	N/A	N/A	20	11	63	50	52	N/A	N/A	N/A
Frio	N/A	28	N/A	N/A	N/A	65	15	253	37	40	N/A	N/A	14

<https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker>

Table 5 Note: N/A indicates counts are not available (i.e., masked) to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Masked numbers are typically small, although larger

numbers may be masked to prevent imputation.

Disabilities Strengths

KAF has established collaborative Memorandums of Understanding with Local Agencies and Early Childhood Intervention Programs across the three counties. KAF program provides tailored support for children with disabilities, working closely with families and professionals to ensure each child's success. By assessing each child, KAF can identify developmental delays or disabilities and implement appropriate interventions. These assessments are conducted by parents and teaching staff, who evaluate various aspects of a child's development and social-emotional skills.

Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education established an Inclusion Policy Statement that states: "Inclusion in early childhood programs refers to including children with disabilities in early childhood programs, together with their peers without disabilities; holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations; and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, social-emotional), friendships with peers, and sense of belonging."

Similarly, the Texas Education Agency's Special Education Division has established the Inclusion in Texas Network, which features a section specifically for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). In Texas, eligible children with disabilities aged 3 to 5 years old receive free services through the public school system. Each year, over 40,000 children in Texas benefit from individual special education services under IDEA Part B, Section 619 for preschoolers.

<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/educator-resources/supporting-children-receiving-special-education-services-in-the-early-childhood-setting#:~:text=%E2%80%9CInclusion%20in%20early%20childhood%20programs,facilitated%20by%20individualized%20accommodations%3B%20and>

Disabilities Need

In a 2023 interview with Elsa Chavez, the Coordinator/Supervisor with ECI Camino Real, it was noted that the number of children experiencing global delays in Maverick, Dimmit, and Frio counties increased significantly by about 30% compared to previous years. These delays encompass social, fine, gross motor, and speech development issues. Consequently, a substantial number of children were referred to developmental-behavior pediatricians. Additionally, ECI Camino Real faced staffing shortages at the beginning of the fiscal year.

In addition to the firsthand experience, data shows there is a need to add additional community resources. This includes organizations and agencies that provide extra support services and resources to meet the needs of children better.

During the Health/Mental Health Advisory Committee Meeting 2025, The Special Education Director reported that this year, in comparison to the past year, there has been a notable increase in the number of children with disabilities who have been diagnosed with speech or language impairment, developmental delays, and autism. Additionally, it was noted that most of the life skills units are currently at capacity, which presents significant challenges. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for more Special Education

Staff to support these students effectively. The CEO of Inclusive Minds emphasizes the critical need for Parent Support groups within the community. She reports that many find it challenging to accept their child's diagnosis and are often unprepared to manage the associated challenges effectively.

Table 6 below presents the cumulative number of children diagnosed with a disability. It reflects the number of children that were served by KAF from 2022 to 2023. The data show that Kids Are First, Inc. has exceeded the 10% disability mandate each year.

Table 6. Accrual Children with DisIFSP's Diagnosis

	Children with IFSP's (ECI)	Children with IEPs (ISD)	Total # of Children receiving services from IDEA
2023	63	60	123
2022	68	55	123

(Program Information Report 2022,2023-2023,2024)

Table 6 Note:

ECI stands for Early Childhood Intervention, providing support for children with disabilities aged 0–3 years old through Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP). ISD stands for Independent School District, which supports children with disabilities through Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for those aged three and older.

Figure 1. Disabilities by Year Enrolled in Kids Are First Inc. (2023)

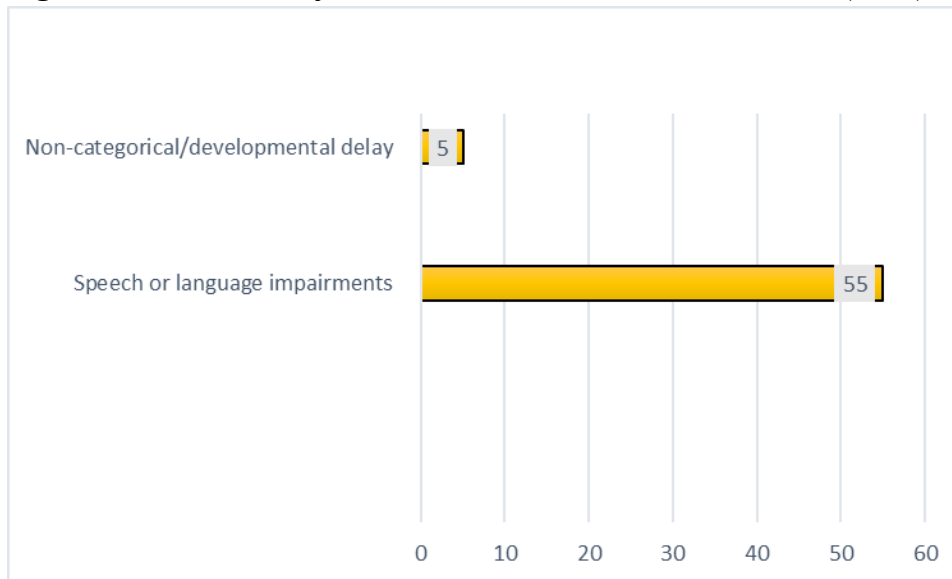


Figure 1, illustrates the types of disabilities by year of enrollment in Kids Are First, Inc., as per the Program Information Report (PIR) of 2023.

Figure 2. Disabilities by Year Enrolled in Kids Are First Inc. (2022)

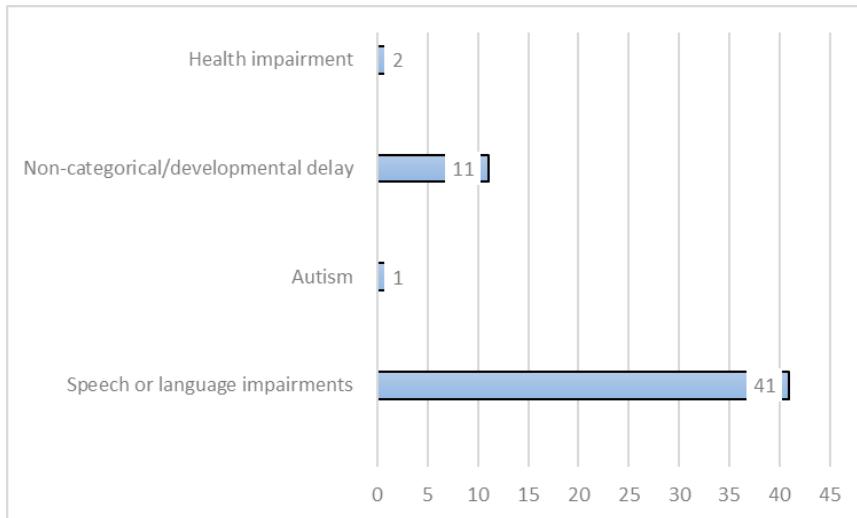


Figure 2, illustrates the types of disabilities by year of enrollment at Kids Are First, Inc., as per the 2022 PIR.

Figure 3. Count of Families Who Received Mental Health Service/s by Year Enrolled (2023)

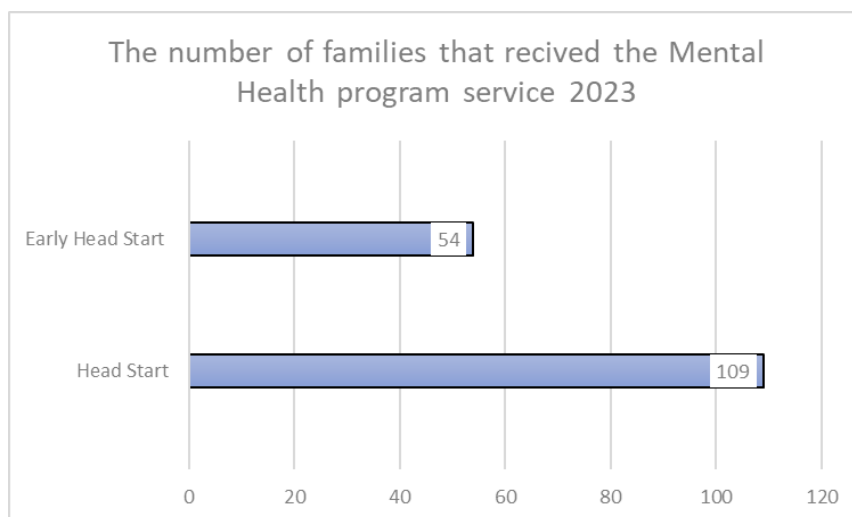


Figure 3 above, shows the number of families that received mental health services by year enrolled in Kids Are First, Inc., as per the PIR of 2023.

Figure 4. Count of Families Who Received Mental Health Service/s by Year Enrolled (2022)

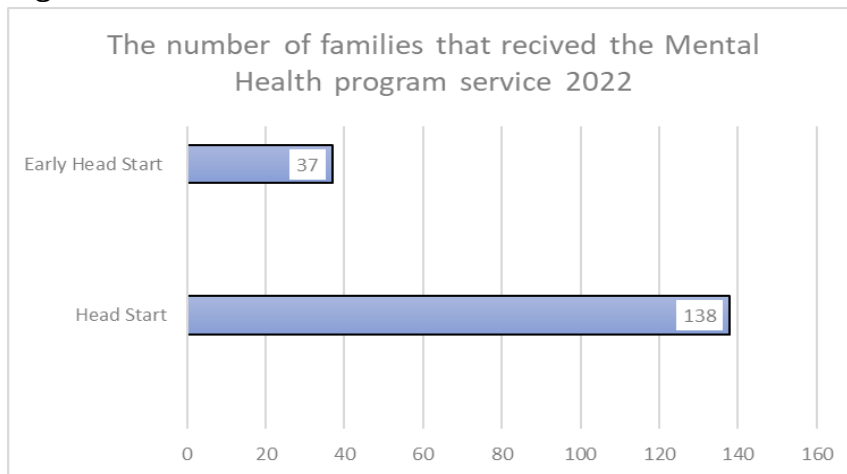


Figure 4, shows the number of families that received mental health services by year enrolled in Kids Are First, Inc., as per the PIR of 2022.

Disabilities Challenges

KAF faces a challenge in delivering services to children exhibiting concerns who have not received a professional diagnosis. In response, KAF offers strategies for staff to implement with children who may have a disability, aiming to enhance their participation in the educational environment.

Conclusion

KAF continues to exceed the 10% of children with disabilities, and collaboration with community partners, specialists, and families is crucial to providing comprehensive support services.

Mental Health Strengths

KAF program demonstrates a strong commitment to recognizing the impact of adverse childhood experiences on mental health. KAF utilizes early childhood mental health consultation to support teachers and staff in promoting healthy social-emotional learning within the curriculum, teaching children skills such as self-regulation, empathy, and self-awareness. KAF takes a comprehensive approach to mental health, addressing the needs of the children, families, and staff.

Table 7 below reflects national indicators of positive mental health are present in most children based on U.S. data from 2021-2022.

Table 7. Indicators of Positive Mental Health from the National US Data (2021-2022)

Nearly 4 out of 5 children ages 6 months to 5 years (79%) exhibit all of 4 indicators of flourishing
96% usually or always are affectionate and tender with parents or caregivers
83% usually or always bounce back quickly when things do not go their way
95% usually or always show interest and curiosity in learning new things
99% usually or always smile and laugh
3 out of 5 children ages 6 to 17 (61%) exhibit all of 3 indicators of flourishing
83% usually or always show interest and curiosity in learning new things
72% usually or always stay calm and in control when faced with a challenge

81% usually or always work to finish tasks they start.

https://www.cdc.gov/children-mental-health/data-research/index.html#cdc_data_surveillance_section_1-childrens-mental-health-data

On April 22, 2024, Governor Greg Abbott announced a \$34 million initiative to construct a behavioral health campus in Uvalde. This facility will focus on providing on-site care for children and adults undergoing mental health crises across 32 counties in the surrounding region. Construction is scheduled to begin this summer, and the new behavioral health campus is expected to open in summer 2025. During the 88th Legislative Session, Governor Abbott signed House Bill 1 and Senate Bill 30 into law, approving \$33.6 million to construct the Uvalde Behavioral Health Campus and provide an additional \$5 million for the facility's first year of operation to support critical services to those in need.

The regional behavioral health care campus will focus on providing crisis stabilization to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis and act as a designated 24/7 diversion center, accepting walk-ins and drop-offs from law enforcement. A second building will consist of various outpatient programs.

Hill Country Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Centers will operate on the campus through a contract with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and is overseeing construction. The city of Uvalde is donating seven acres at the intersection of U.S. 90 and King Fisher Lane to host the campus, which will consist of two buildings totaling approximately 50,000 square feet.

<https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-announces-34-million-behavioral-health-campus-project-in-uvalde>

Mental Health Needs

National statistics indicate that approximately one in five children will encounter a mental illness during their childhood, which can profoundly impact their development and academic performance. Timely identification of a child's diagnosis, along with appropriate interventions, can significantly enhance their chances of success at home and within the community.

Mental health conditions can begin in early childhood, and the prevalence changes with age. Although there are some exceptions, most mental health conditions are more common with increased age. Anxiety disorders, behavioral issues, and depression are the most diagnosed mental health conditions in children based on national U.S. data from 2021-2022, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Mental Health Conditions of Children (2021-2022)

10% of children ages 3-17 had current diagnosed anxiety (9% of males and 11% of females).
7% of children ages 3-17 had current diagnosed behavior disorders (10% of males and 5% of females)
4% of children ages 3-17 had currently diagnosed depression (3% of males and 6% of females).
Some of these mental health conditions commonly occur together. In 2018–2019, among children with a current mental health condition, more than 1 in 3 (37%) had two or more conditions

Table 9 presents the prevalence of co-occurring mental health conditions among children based on national U.S. data from 2021-2022. It illustrates the frequency of children experiencing multiple conditions simultaneously.

Table 9. Mental Health Co-Occurring Conditions of Children (2021-2022)

In 2022, an additional 1 million U.S. children aged 3-17 years had ever received an ADHD diagnosis
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compared to 2016.
Autism about 1 in 31 (3.2%) children aged 8 years has been identified with ASD, according to estimates from CDC's ADDM Network.
Tourette syndrome (TS). Studies that included children with diagnosed and undiagnosed TS have estimated that 1 out of every 162 children (0.6%) have TS.

Table 10 below provides a breakdown of the number of licensed professional counselors available in Texas and in three counties (Dimmit, Frio, and Maverick). It highlights the counselor-to-population ratio, indicating access to mental health support.

Table 10. Licensed Professional Counselors by County, 2024

County	Population	Profession Count
Texas	31,685,234	27,306
Dimmit	12,652	4
Frio	21,269	3
Maverick	62,074	14

<https://healthdata.dshs.texas.gov/dashboard/health-care-workforce/hprc/health-profession-supply>

There is a need for more mental health services to support children and families. Including counseling, therapy, and psychological assessments. Additionally, there is a need for more parent education and support services to help families promote healthy mental well-being and address their own mental health needs.

https://www.cdc.gov/children-mental-health/data-research/index.html#cdc_data_surveillance_section_1-childrens-mental-health-data

About one in six school-aged children experiences difficulties in daily functioning, including challenges in academic performance, due to mental illness. The prevalence of mental illness among students increases as they get older.

Schools are the most common environment outside of a student's home where mental health issues are identified. Fortunately, when mental health concerns are detected and addressed early, students are more likely to prevent the onset or worsening of mental illness. Often, signs of declining mental health become visible well before a mental illness fully develops.

<https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/mental-health/mental-health-and-behavioral-health>

Challenges

The shortage of mental health service providers creates significant challenges for families and the community in accessing timely support. Consequently, areas such as Dimmit and Frio are facing delays in receiving these services.

Trends:

- More children with a medical diagnosis
- Increase services for mental health
- More children diagnosed with Autism and ADHD

- Health issues, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse

According to the Community Partner Survey 2024, an analysis of the data reveals the following:

- **Maverick County:** 72.92% of respondents offer services in Maverick County, indicating a strong presence of service providers in this area.
- **Dimmitt County:** 15.38 % of respondents offer services in Dimmitt County, indicating a minor but still significant presence of service providers.
- **Frio County:** 7.69% of respondents offer services in Frio County, indicating a relatively limited presence of service providers.

Table 11 below demonstrates the percentage of agencies reporting increases in specific services, including transportation, mental health services, substance misuse support, domestic violence cases, and child abuse cases.

Table 11. Representation of Increase in Services by Agencies

Transportation Needs	76.92%
Mental Health Services	69.23%
Substance misuse in the community	69.23%
Number of Domestic Violence cases	61.54%
Number of child abuse cases	53.85%

Conclusion

KAF is committed to enhancing the well-being of families, children, and staff by offering a range of supportive resources. This includes ongoing training sessions, classroom observations, meetings, support groups (Las Platicas), and online resources. KAF has also contracted two mental health professionals to ensure individuals have access to the assistance they need. Additionally, KAF promotes the importance of fostering positive relationships among children, families, and staff.

Data Sources:

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/assistive-services-providers/early-childhood-intervention-programs/eci-data-reports>

https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/adhocrpt/Standard_Reports/About/abtspeced.html

<https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker>

Program Information Report 2022.2023-2023.2024

https://www.cdc.gov/children-mental-health/data-research/index.html#cdc_data_surveillance_section_1-childrens-mental-health-data

<https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-announces-34-million-behavioral-health-campus-project-in-uvalde>

<https://healthdata.dshs.texas.gov/dashboard/health-care-workforce/hprc/health-profession-supply>

https://www.cdc.gov/children-mental-health/data-research/index.html#cdc_data_surveillance_section_1-childrens-mental-health-data

<https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/mental-health/mental-health-and-be>

Human Resources

Community

The tables below reflect the unemployment rate by State and Counties served from 2019-2023. The highlighted years by county indicate that the unemployment rate exceeded the State rate for the respective years. In the table, you will notice that in the year 2019, Dimmitt County and Maverick County unemployment rates were above the State unemployment numbers threshold. Frio, on the other hand, was

at about the same level as the State's number. The following year, 2020, was significantly impacted by COVID-19, which had a tremendous effect on our Workforce.

In some cases, such as Dimmit County and Maverick County, the unemployment rate increased from 5.2% to 13.0% for Dimmit County and from 7.6% to 15.3% for Maverick County. Frio County had an increase from 3.8% to 8.3%. The following years, 2021-2022, showed a decrease in unemployment rates in all three counties as people returned to their jobs. In 2023, Dimmit County and Maverick County continued to have high unemployment rates above the State rate. Frio County, although its number is still lower than that of the other counties, is still higher than the State rate.

This dynamic representation illustrates how KAF has struggled to recruit and retain qualified staff at the centers. Dimmit County and Frio County have been continuously searching for staff who meet the requirements to work in the classrooms possessing the necessary qualifications.

Unemployment rate in Texas from 2019 to 2023

Year	State Unemployment rate
2019	3.5
2020	7.6
2021	5.7
2022	3.9
2023	3.9

Source: U.S. Labor of Statistics

Unemployment rate by County and Year

Year	Period	Area	Area Type	Civilian Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
2019	Annual	Dimmit	County	3,347	3,172	175	5.2
2020	Annual	Dimmit	County	3,062	2,663	399	13.0
2021	Annual	Dimmit	County	2,770	2,460	310	11.2
2022	Annual	Dimmit	County	2,833	2,661	217	7.7
2023	Annual	Dimmit	County	2,883	2,701	182	6.3
2019	Annual	Frio	County	6,846	6,588	258	3.8
2020	Annual	Frio	County	6,453	5,918	535	8.3
2021	Annual	Frio	County	6,358	5,925	433	6.8
2022	Annual	Frio	County	6,350	6,058	292	4.6
2023	Annual	Frio	County	6,309	6,032	277	4.4
2019	Annual	Maverick	County	23,337	21,556	1,781	7.6
2020	Annual	Maverick	County	24,096	20,421	3,675	15.3
2021	Annual	Maverick	County	23,588	20,667	2,921	12.4

2022	Annual	Maverick	County	23,310	21,447	1,863	8.0
2023	Annual	Maverick	County	23,742	U.S.,961	1,781	7.5

Source: U.S. Labor of Statistics

Strength

KAF has been able to maintain a management team that is readily available and ready to assist when needed, both in classrooms and center operations. Centers have remained fully enrolled despite teacher shortages. The center works with substitutes who have helped alleviate the tension of missing essential staff.

KAF continues to partner with the local Workforce to identify potential candidates who meet the qualifications. The local college is also providing all their Child Development courses online.

Needs

In the areas of Dimmit and Frio Counties, they continue to have difficulties finding qualified candidates. Although the Child Development courses are being offered entirely online, people are not attending college. The Child Development Coordinator at Southwest College shared that enrollment numbers continue to drop, hence the option for online classes.

Conclusion

KAF will continue to develop strategies to help recruit, hire, and retain staff. KAF will continue to promote college opportunities to their staff for continuous educational opportunities. Continue working with their parents to explore possible job opportunities that will further develop their capacity and expand the program.

Head Start Staff

Our program faces the same challenges as other Head Start programs nationwide in finding and retaining qualified staff to work in classrooms. Early childhood education, with traditionally low pay, is a field struggling to attract candidates. Even when we hire staff, the burnout rate is incredibly high. This profession is seeing record numbers of staff across the nation voluntarily leaving their jobs. In 2023, KAF had to close its Cotulla Center in LaSalle County due to a lack of qualified staff. Over the past year, we were unable to open several classrooms due to our inability to recruit, hire, and retain staff to operate them safely. In addition to the difficulty in finding qualified staff, we also face challenges in retaining staff. In the past year, we had 7 Early Head Start staff members leave, 6 of whom were teachers (85%) and 27 Head Start staff members out of 59 total staff (46%).

Out of those 27 staff, 17 (63%) were education staff. Of the 34 staff members who left, 26 were replaced during the school year, resulting in a negative impact on the continuity of care for our children served in those classrooms. In exit surveys of staff leaving the organization, we are finding many reasons for the vacancies. Almost half of those staff left for work in similar fields, such as local school systems, at a higher rate of pay. Because this is a nationwide crisis, competitors have emerged in unexpected places, such as Target and Starbucks, which are not only offering higher starting salaries but are also providing new employees with signing and retention bonuses.

There has been a drastic change in the education levels of staff from the previous school year, where 71% of the Head Start Teachers held a bachelor’s degree or higher in Early Childhood Education. By contrast, in 2022-2023, out of 15 Head Start classroom teachers, less than half (40%) held a bachelor’s degree or higher in their field, with the rest (60%) having an associate degree in Early Childhood or related field. For Early Head Start, the split is identical, with one-third of the staff holding an associate degree, one-third holding a Child Development Associate credential in infant/toddler development, and one-third without a credential but enrolled in classes to obtain one. With the stringent staffing standards required by Head Start, finding and retaining entry-level staff can be challenging. Working in early care and education is challenging due to notoriously low wages. During the pandemic, the Head Start Bureau made special allocations to support staffing increases, but these were temporary measures that expired at the end of the 2023 school year. As an organization, we will explore all possibilities to find new ways to recruit, train, and retain highly qualified staff.

Education

Head Start staff play a crucial role in supporting the development and well-being of young children and their families. These professionals include teaching staff, family service advocates, center directors, and administration; all working together to provide comprehensive early childhood education, health services, and family engagement. Their dedication ensures that each child receives individualized support, helping them grow socially, emotionally, and academically.

Staff turnover in Head Start programs is a significant challenge that can affect the consistency and quality of care provided to children and families. Filling vacancies can be challenging, as it requires recruiting qualified candidates who meet both the educational requirements and the program's mission at Kids Are First, Inc.

The following table represents the overall staff turnover and teaching staff turnover for the program years 2022, 2023, and 2024.

	2022	2023	2024
All Staff	44	51	31
Teaching Staff Only	30	33	16

GoEngage Human Resources

Graduating from high school is a significant milestone, but pursuing higher education opens the door to even greater opportunities. College or vocational programs can provide valuable networking connections and life experiences that shape a student’s future. Residents of Maverick, Dimmit, Frio, and LaSalle counties have access to several local and nearby higher education opportunities. There is one university, Sul Ross State University, and four college campuses: Southwest Texas Junior College, Southwest Texas College, George Santos SWTJC, and the Southwest Texas Junior College Jack R. Chittim Technical Campus. While additional higher education options are available to Frio County residents, accessing them requires about an hour of travel to San Antonio.

Table 1-1 indicates the higher educational facilities available near the centers.

Available Education Assistance

Serving	Name	Address	City	2 year	4 year
Eagle Pass/Carrizo Springs	Southwest Texas Junior College at Eagle Pass	3101 Bob Rogers Dr.	Eagle Pass	√	
Eagle Pass/Carrizo Springs	Sul Ross State University RGC	3107 Bob Rogers Dr.	Eagle Pass		√
Eagle Pass/Carrizo Springs	Southwest Texas Junior College Jack R. Chittim Technical Campus	1980 North Veterans Blvd.	Eagle Pass	√	
Eagle Pass/Carrizo Springs/Pearsall/Cotulla	Southwest Texas College	2401 Garner Field Rd.	Uvalde	√	
Eagle Pass/Carrizo Springs/Pearsall/Cotulla	Southwest Texas Junior College- Crystal City	215 W. Zavala	Crystal City	√	
Pearsall/Cotulla	George Santos SWTJC & Pearsall ISD Instructional Facility	521 E. Florida	Pearsall	√	
Pearsall	Texas A & M University	One Way University	San Antonio		√
Pearsall	Palo Alto College	1400 W. Villaret	San Antonio	√	
Pearsall	University of Texas at San Antonio	1 UTSA Circle	San Antonio		√
Pearsall	Our Lady of the Lake University	411 SW 24th St.	San Antonio		√
Pearsall	Webster University	1100 Northwest Loop 410	San Antonio		√
Pearsall	Trinity University	1 Trinity Pl	San Antonio		√
Pearsall	University of Incarnate Word- Northwest Center	9729 Data Point Dr #100	San Antonio		√
Pearsall	St. Mary's University	1 Camino Santa Maria	San Antonio		√

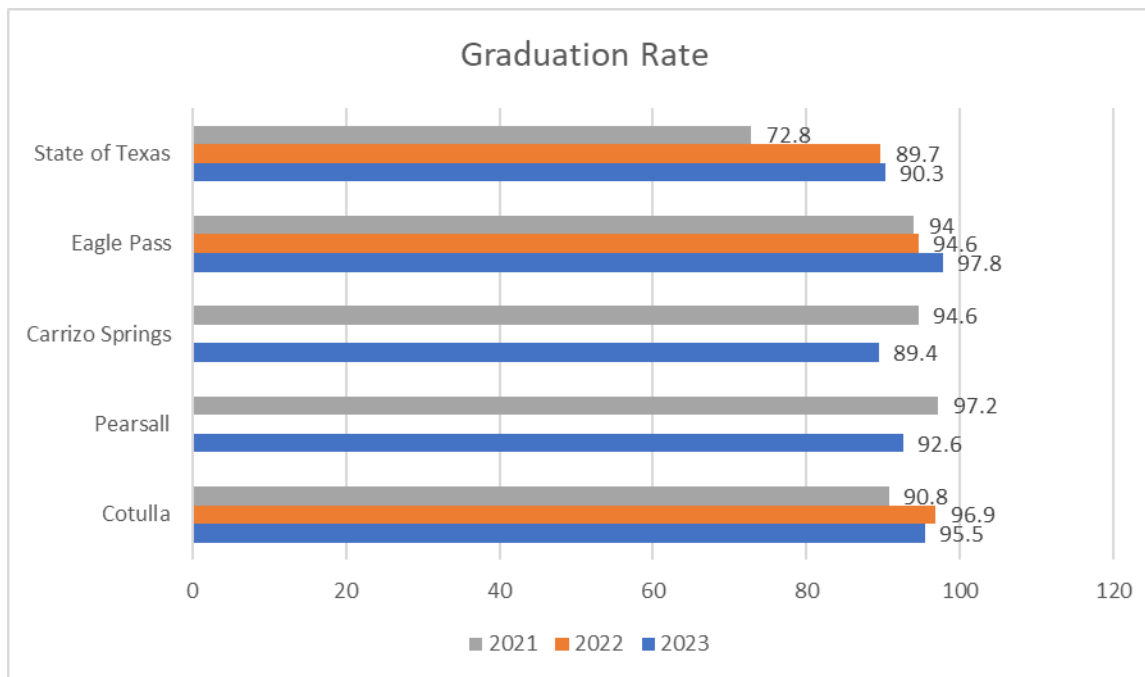
[colleges near Eagle Pass, TX - Search](#), [Community Colleges in Carrizo Springs, Texas](#) and [Colleges near Carrizo Springs](#), [Colleges in Pearsall, Texas](#), and [Colleges near Pearsall](#)

More than just a ceremony, high school graduation celebrates achievement and the promise of a bright future. In the 2023-2024 academic year, the state of Texas had 5,517,464 students enrolled in high school. The dropout rate for the state of Texas was 53.2%, with 24.5% of the students in a bilingual and English learning program. Four school districts provide high school education: Pearsall, Cotulla, Carrizo Springs, and Eagle Pass. During that school year, Pearsall High School had 590 students with a 56.3% risk of dropping out, Cotulla High School had 353 students with a 62.6% risk of students dropping out, Carrizo Springs High School had 574 students with a 71.8% risk of dropping out, and two Eagle Pass High Schools had 2,306 students with a 58.8% risk of dropping out. Students participating in bilingual and English language learning programs were at 4.9% for Pearsall ISD, 6.6% for Cotulla ISD, and 6.8% for Carrizo Spring ISD. Eagle Pass, located on the border with Mexico, has 34.7% of its students enrolled in bilingual and English learning programs.

In the 2020-2021 academic year, Texas's four-year public high school graduation rate was 72.8%. This

was an increase from the previous year's rate of 72.2%. In the 2021-2022 school year, Texas had a high school graduation rate of 89.7%. This rate placed Texas above the national average of 86.6% and ranked it eighth among U.S. states. In the 2022-2023 school year, Texas had a four-year graduation rate of 90.3%. The Texas graduation rate has increased each year from 2021 to 2023. Eagle Pass had an increase in the graduation rate as well from the same years. Both Carrizo Springs and Pearsall's graduation rates decreased from the years 2021 to 2023. There was no data for either school district in the year 2021-2022. Cotulla's graduation rate decreased from 2022 to 2023.

Chart 1-1 represents the graduation rate for the school years 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023.



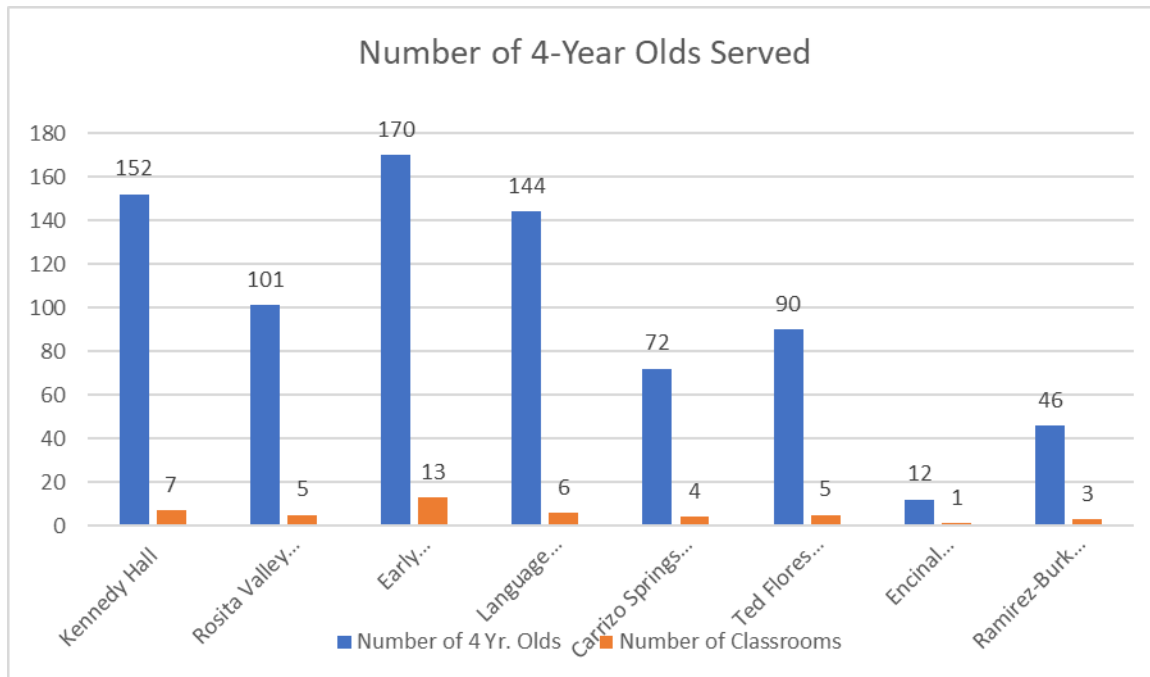
Source: <https://schools.texastribune.org/states/tx/#:~:text=Accountability%20rating,average%20ACT%20score%20was%2019.2.>

Educational and developmental programs were offered across Texas school districts from 2023 to 2024, providing students with access to a range of academic and enrichment opportunities. For 4-year-olds, a well-structured curriculum is laying the foundation for lifelong learning. At this age, children are developing key skills in language, motor coordination, social interaction, and early literacy and math. The Texas Commissioner's list of the five required domains for 4-year-old children is as follows: Emergent Literacy (Language and Communication), Emergent Literacy (Reading), Emergent Literacy (Writing), Mathematics, and Health and Wellness. Kids Are First, Inc. continues to use the Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschool to provide instruction to the children served. Small groups, large groups, and individual learning experiences from the curriculum are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework. Experiences from the five central domains of Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, Cognition, and Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development are provided to all three age groups.

Texas served 205,907 4-year-old children on their school campuses. Kids Are First, Inc. served 135 4-year-

old children in the 2023-2024 program year. Pre-K-age children are served in all four school districts. Eagle Pass is the largest of the three communities served. Four of the eight schools are in the Eagle Pass school district. These include Kennedy Hall, Rosita Valley Literacy Academy, Early Childhood Center, and Language Development Center. Each of those schools has made available one classroom that may serve 3-year-old children with disabilities. These classrooms accommodate children who may attend half-day sessions while others participate for the whole day. The hours of attendance are dependent on the services required on their Individual Education Plan. KAF parents completed a survey and responded to the question of how they believe Head Start has helped their child prepare for public school. The parents reported the following areas of growth in their children: the children became more independent at 93%, learned basic language concepts at 94%, learned basic math concepts at 76%, and learned how to share and cooperate, resulting in 92% improvement. A survey completed by one of the principals reflects additional support for the children entering the ISD in social-emotional and Literacy (Phonemic Awareness) knowledge.

Chart 2-1 represents the number of 4-year-old children and classrooms at eight sites in the service area



Data Sources: Eagle Pass ISD, Carrizo Springs ISD, Pearsall ISD representatives, and Texaseducation.org

Table 2-1 provides the Pre-K assessment results for the PY 23-24

School Name	Subject Area	Total Students in ECDS	Number Assessed	% Assessed	Number Proficient BOY	Number Proficient EOY
Ted Flores Elementary	Emergent Literacy Reading	*	*	*	*	*
	Lang. and Comm.	*	*	*	*	*
	Mathematics	*	*	*	*	*
Carrizo Springs	Emergent	62	62	100.0%	29	54

Elementary	Literacy Reading					
	Emergent Literacy Writing	62	51	82.3%	*	*
	Health and Wellness	62	51	82.3%	51	46
	Lang. and Comm.	62	62	100.0%	39	50
	Mathematics	62	61	98.4%	49*	
Early Childhood Center	Emergent Literacy Reading	167	32	19.2	13	24
	Emergent Literacy Writing	167	118	70.70%	*	106
	Health and Wellness	167	126	75.50%	*	111
	Lang. and Comm.	167	32	19.2	16	26
	Mathematics	167	41	25%	33	*
Kennedy Hall	Emergent Literacy Reading	151	145	96.0%	95	132
	Emergent Literacy Writing	151	142	94.0%	*	136
	Health and Wellness	151	144	95.4%	144	136
	Lang. and Comm.	151	145	96.0%	101	109
	Mathematics	151	145	96.0%	*	*
Language Development Center	Emergent Literacy Reading	164	24	14.6%	7	14
	Emergent Literacy Writing	164	39	23.8%	25	31
	Health and Wellness	164	57	34.8%	*	49
	Lang. and Comm.	164	26	15.9%	8	15
	Mathematics	164	28	17.1%	*	*
Rosita Valley Literacy Academy	Emergent Literacy Reading	95	53	55.8%	25	46
	Emergent Literacy Writing	95	50	52.6%	50	*
	Health and Wellness	95	50	52.6%	50	*
	Lang. and Comm.	95	52	54.7%	22	27

	Mathematics	95	49	51.6%	*	*
Encinal Elementary	Emergent Literacy Reading	12	12	100%	*	7
	Emergent Literacy Writing	12	12	100%	*	*
	Health and Wellness	12	12	100%	*	*
	Lang. and Comm.	12	12	100%	*	7
	Mathematics	12	12	100%	*	7
Ramirez-Burks Elementary	Emergent Literacy Reading	46	36	78.30%	11	28
	Emergent Literacy Writing	46	28	60.90%	*	*
	Health and Wellness	46	27	58.70%	27	*
	Lang. and Comm.	46	36	78.30%	10	24
	Mathematics	46	34	73.90%	24	*
* No data						

Source: https://texaseducationinfo.org/Home/Topic/texas_public_prek_assessments_by_instrument_state

Access to quality childcare is essential for working families, yet many nearby communities are experiencing a growing gap between need and availability. As more parents re-enter the Workforce or increase their hours, the demand for early childhood education and care continues to outpace the supply. In many neighborhoods, particularly in rural areas, families face lengthy waitlists, limited operating hours, and limited options for infants and toddlers. Licensed providers are often at capacity, and those that remain open face staffing shortages. The cost of childcare continues to increase. To assist families in finding suitable childcare, the Texas Workforce Commission offers resources, including the Texas Child Care Availability Portal, which enables parents to search for available childcare providers by zip code and age.

Additionally, the Child Care Services (CCS) program provides scholarships to eligible families, helping offset the cost of care. Despite the presence of these centers, many families face challenges in securing childcare due to limited capacity and high demand. According to the responses from the community partner surveys, 38.46% of them believe that the number of childcare providers has decreased. The parents responded in their survey that two stressors in their lives include Pre-K availability and Daycare availability at 7% and 22%, respectively. The table below provides an account of available childcare in the service area, with current enrollment information obtained during interviews with childcare representatives.

Table 3-1 contains the available childcare in the service area.

Name	Licensed Center	Registered Child Care Home	County	Ages Served	License Capacity	Current Enrollment
Redeemer Preschool	√		Maverick	Toddler, Pre-K, School	102	No Data

Educare Preschool & Child Care Center	√		Maverick	Toddler, Pre-K, School	51	50
Eagle Pass ISD Daycare	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K	70	70
Kids and Tots Unlimited	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	134	134
Big Hearts Little Hands Early Learning Academy	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	61	61
ABC Academy Day Care and Learning Center	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	79	79
Kids and Tots Unlimited Too Learning Center and Day Care	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	96	94
Smart Angels Daycare and Preschool	√		Maverick	Toddler, Pre-K, School	17	No data
Blanquita's Nursery and Child Care, LLC	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	34	6
Eden Learning Center LLC	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	112	100
Sunshine Daycare	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	61	No data
Little Artist Learning Center Music and Art Daycare	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	86	86
CPLC MSHS Eagle Pass EHS	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	134	81
CPLC MSHS Eagle Pass 2	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	143	66
CPLC MSHS Eagle Pass 1	√		Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	162	80
Tots Come First- Daycare		√	Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	12	5

Gabriela Morales		√	Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	12	12
Little Disciples Preschool & Daycare		√	Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	12	12
Totally Kids Home Daycare		√	Maverick	Toddler, Pre-K, School	12	No Data
Precious Moment Home Daycare		√	Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	12	No Data
Just 4 Kids Express		√	Maverick	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	12	11
Little Bit of Home	√		Dimmit	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	35	No Data
CPLC MSHS Carrizo	√		Dimmit	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	79	49
Happy Days DDC	√		Dimmit	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	79	58
Bright Future Learning Center	√		Dimmit	Toddler, Pre-K, School	61	48
Mama Grace Playhouse	√		Frio	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	12	6
Kidville Early Childhood Learning Center	√		Frio	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	41	38
CPLC MSHS Pearsall	√		Frio	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	142	15
Sunshine Daycare	√		Frio	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, School	85	53
Esmeralda Aguirre		√	Frio	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K	3	4
Darlene Medrano		√	Frio	Toddler, Pre-K, School	12	10
Tiny Blessings Daycare		√	Frio	Infant, Toddler, Pre-K	12	12

Source: <https://childcare.hhs.texas.gov/Public/childcaresearch>, interviews with childcare representatives

Strengths:

Data shows that Eagle Pass had a higher graduation rate than the Texas state average during the three school years from 2021 to 2023. Alignment with the local school districts is essential to ensure continuity in early learning childhood education. KAF continues to implement the Creative Curriculum, which aligns with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF). The agency also utilizes Teaching Strategies GOLD for assessment, which evaluates many of the same learning areas as those assessed by local school

districts for four-year-old children.

Needs:

Preschool-aged children require additional phonological awareness activities and strategies. This was highlighted in a survey response from a principal in Eagle Pass.

Challenges:

Although colleges and universities are available for teaching staff to pursue higher education, they may need to travel out of town for classes held after working hours.

Conclusion:

KAF will support teachers in developing their phonological awareness skills, enabling them to engage preschool-age children in related activities effectively. Childcare is essential to families in our service area. When families do not qualify for services through KAF, alternative resources are available where they can be referred for childcare assistance.

Data Sources:

US Labor of Statistics

GoEngage

Colleges near Eagle Pass, TX - Search, Community Colleges in Carrizo Springs, Texas and Colleges near Carrizo Springs, Colleges in Pearsall, Texas, and Colleges near Pearsall

<https://schools.texastribune.org/states/tx/#:~:text=Accountability%20rating,average%20ACT%20score%20was%2019.2>.

Eagle Pass ISD, Carrizo Springs ISD, and Pearsall ISD representatives

https://texaseducationinfo.org/Home/Topic/texas_public_prek_assessments_by_instrument_state

https://childcare.hhs.texas.gov/Public/childcaresearch_interviews_with_childcare_representatives

NUTRITION

Narrative Community

For the last ten years, KAF has been operating in a rural four-county service area but is currently providing services in only three counties: Dimmit, Frio, and Maverick counties. The center in LaSalle County closed in 2023. Within these counties, there are many economically disadvantaged families. The populations most in need of services are low-income families and those experiencing food insecurity, particularly those served by the Head Start and Early Head Start programs. These programs strive to ensure families utilize the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and WIC to assist with food purchasing. These groups encounter challenges related to access to healthcare, education, and a lack of transportation. Food insecurity results in inadequate access to nutritious food, which can negatively impact children's health and development. Poor health may limit access to healthcare and healthy foods, contributing to higher rates of chronic diseases, obesity, malnutrition, and other health issues. Educational disparities for children living in poverty may lead to fewer opportunities for higher education and create obstacles to achieving their academic potential. At the same time, a lack of transportation can impede access to healthcare, employment opportunities, and other essential services. Like many rural areas in Texas, Dimmit, Frio, and Maverick counties face challenges, but with assistance from the San Antonio Food Bank, which serves Frio County, and the South Texas Food Bank, serving families in Dimmit and Maverick counties, these communities can receive help with fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as other perishable and nonperishable foods.

County	Dimmit	Frio	Maverick
Food Insecurity Children May 2023	33%	22%	32%
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families July 2024	37%	40%	41%
SNAP Children July 2024	30%	31%	31%

Source: Food insecurity— May 2023 resource <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Texas%20Federal%20Briefing%20Book%202023.pdf>
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families- July 2024 <https://www.fns.usda.gov>
SNAP Children- July 2024 <https://www.fns.usda.gov>

Strengths:

KAF continues to utilize the vital information gathered from nutrition screenings, nutritional assessments, biochemical evaluations, and physical assessments obtained through physical exams and the WIC program. This information is employed to monitor the need for referrals and to track children who may require treatment, counseling, or other forms of medical diagnosis. Through the referral system, we can direct and follow up with children in need of treatment and/or additional counseling. If necessary, KAF will refer families and their children to a contracted registered dietitian. Alternatively, families may be referred to WIC and/or medical physicians for further professional evaluation. The contracted registered dietitian is also engaged in menu modifications.

KAF has seen a fluctuation in the number of children that are referred for overweight in the past year (See table below). For this very reason, KAF will continue to vigorously and aggressively implement “I am Moving, I am Learning,” a Head Start incentive resource that encourages physical movement in all classroom and outdoor domains while also promoting the exploration of new foods among young children. KAF supports physical activity and nutritional education throughout the year. Nutrition activities are conducted once a month, and parents are invited into the classroom to participate with their children, learning a new recipe, tasting a new food, and receiving nutritional information. KAF hosts two physical activity days for families to visit the centers and participate in moderate physical activities alongside their children.

The communities have also embraced physical activity; it is visible throughout the neighborhoods that more people are walking, jogging, and attending gyms. When the adults begin, they pass this habit down to their children. Parents enroll their children in local baseball, basketball, soccer, and football leagues, thereby harnessing the social benefits of physical activity.

BMI	24-25		23-24		22-23	
Underweight (BMI less than 5th percentile for child's age and sex)	10	.02 %	11	.02 %	19	.03 %
Healthy weight (at or above 5th percentile and below 85th percentile for child's age and sex)	302	58 %	318	61%	371	63 %
Overweight (BMI at or above 85th percentile and below	81	16	88	17%	70	12

95th percentile for child's age and sex)		%				%
Obese (BMI at or above 95th percentile for child's age and sex)	126	24 %	107	20%	129	22 %

PIR—GoEngage

Conclusion:

KAF has taken the initiative to promote a healthy lifestyle through the use of research-based curricula, including the “I am Moving, I am Learning” curriculum and the Creative Curriculum, as well as resources from MyPlate.gov and Mealtime Memo, which provide learning experiences that incorporate physical activity and nutrition. These curricula and websites help children overcome their fear of new foods, learn about the nutritional content of foods, and engage in physical activity. Nutrition education lessons take place twice a week and are integrated into the numeracy, literacy, and science domains. Parents are sent home with a monthly newsletter from MyPlate.gov or Mealtime Memo. KAF has taken the initiative to promote a healthy lifestyle through the research based “I am Moving, I am Learning” curriculum, in conjunction with the education curriculum from MyPlate.gov and Mealtime Memo, which provides learning experiences that incorporate physical activity and nutrition. These curricula and websites help children overcome their fear of new foods, learn about the nutritional content of foods, and engage in physical activity. Nutrition education lessons occur twice a week and are integrated into the numeracy, literacy, and science domains. Parents receive a monthly newsletter from MyPlate.gov or Mealtime Memo.

Needs:

It is undeniable that the entire nation is focusing on its battle to continue to decrease the number of obese adults and obese children. The community's parks and recreation departments have begun to take the initiative to build sidewalks for walking, bike trails, and gardens. Parks now have upgraded equipment with walking trails. Promoting physical activity and nutrition education enhances a person's prospects and builds a better you. The continued construction of parks, exercise facilities, and trails for families to use in the promotion of the impact that physical activity and nutrition have on building a better you.

Conclusion:

KAF continues to work towards reducing obesity among Head Start children. Every effort will be made to identify those children who might be overweight, underweight, and have special nutrition needs and ensure that they are referred to either their medical home provider, WIC or contracted Registered Dietitian to ensure the family's needs are addressed. With the implementation of the "I Am Moving, I Am Learning" resource, sharing nutritional information through newsletters and referrals, and hosting physical activity days with families, KAF has been taking steps in the right direction. These resources also include teaching the parents and getting them involved in their child's well-being.

Nutrition

Strengths: Family

KAF continues its dedication to providing excellent services throughout the Nutrition/CACFP program by ensuring that the children we serve receive nutritious meals and that their nutritional needs are met, as well as promoting physical fitness awareness.

KAF follows the USDA-Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) regulations to ensure children receive adequate nutrition while in our care. Here, children enjoy a well-balanced meal that combines their

cultural preferences with exposure to new foods. Effective communication with parents is crucial for providing healthy and culturally appropriate meals. Throughout the year, food surveys are distributed to parents and teaching staff, in which they list the foods they would like to see on the following menu. The surveys serve as a guide to developing our new menu for the upcoming school year. A menu planning day is scheduled with the cooks and cook-aides, along with the Nutrition Coordinators, to create the forthcoming year's menu. During the menu planning meeting, attendees are trained on various nutrition topics, including fiber, Physical Activity, and the American Dietary Guidelines.

KAF's family service advocate (FSA) gathers nutritional information from parents during enrollment. This information is used to determine whether the child will need any special diet modifications, need agency referrals for overweight, underweight, or anemia, or any type of special feeding prescribed by the physician.

KAF is a strong advocate for promoting and enhancing awareness and understanding of the importance of physical activity by increasing playtime for children and their families and decreasing screen time to prevent obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Based on the Parent Community Assessment surveys sent out to families, the survey results are as follows:

How much time does your child spend watching television, playing video games, or on a computer/tablet/phone?				
All	1 hour	2 hours	3 hours	4+ hours
3.23%	35.48%	32.26%	20.97%	9.68%

	Yes	No
In the last 12 months, did you or other adults in your household cut the size of meals or skip meals due to a lack of food?	18%	82%
In the last year, have you needed or received assistance from a food bank or food pantry?	24%	76%
KAF has provided informational support regarding nutrition.	100%	0%

Data Sources:

Parent Community Assessment Surveys

Food insecurity—May 2023 resource

<https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Texas%20Federal%20Briefing%20Book%202023.pdf>

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families- July 2024 <https://www.fns.usda.gov>

SNAP Children- July 2024 <https://www.fns.usda.gov>

Parent Community Assessment Surveys

PIR—GoEngage

Health

Community Collaboration:

KAF collaborates with a broad network of physicians, health clinics, hospitals, and dental providers to coordinate care and support access to services during our Health Mental Health Services Advisory Committee meetings and throughout the year. These partnerships help ensure families can connect to both preventive and treatment-based resources, even as providers manage high demand. KAF also contributed to the **Dimmit County Regional Hospital's Community Health Needs Assessment**, highlighting the program's engagement in regional health planning and policy advocacy.

Local Health Resource Highlights:

- **La Salle County: South Texas Rural Health Services** - Offers primary care services, which include dental, mental health, and substance abuse services.

Dimmit County:

- **Dimmit Regional Hospital & Rural Health Clinic** – Primary care and pediatric services with community outreach programs.
- **Children's Clinic of Dimmit and Zavala** – Focuses on childhood immunizations and health monitoring.

Frio County:

- **Frio Regional Hospital** – Serves Pearsall and surrounding areas with family medicine and emergency care.
- **Frio County WIC Program** – Supports maternal and child health through nutrition services and health education.

Maverick County:

- **Maverick County Hospital District (MCHD)** – Offers comprehensive pediatric and primary care services.
- **UT Health Clinics** – Provide access to specialized pediatric and behavioral health care.

KAF will work in close partnership with parents and local healthcare providers to address children's physical and oral health needs, with a focus on promoting healthy development and school readiness. Efforts will include expanded health education, access to continuous care, and supporting families in managing chronic conditions. A key priority will be helping parents become confident advocates for their children's health.

Insurance: The number of children birth to 18 years enrolled in Medicaid in December 2024:

- La Salle County 1,035
- Dimmit County 1,715
- Frio County 2,727
- Maverick County 11,600

Data Source: [Medicaid enrollment \(birth to age 18\) | KIDS COUNT Data Center](#)

The chart below illustrates areas of strength based on the outcome of the PIR Results for program year 2023-2024.

County	Children Served	Physicals	Dentals	Medical Home	Dental Home	Immunizations	Insurance
LaSalle County	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Frio	99	99%	99%	100%	100%	99%	100%
Dimmit	128	100%	99%	99%	100%	99%	100%
Maverick	528	98%	99%	100%	100%	98%	100%
Total	651	99%	98%	99%	99%	98%	100%

The County Ranking percentage of uninsured children in:

- La Salle County 12.5%
- Dimmit County was 8.7%
- Frio 11%
- Maverick 11%

Source: [Uninsured children \(birth to age 18\) | KIDS COUNT Data Center](#)

Strengths:

KAF staff consistently advocate for educating parents about the importance of meeting Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) requirements and Head Start Performance Standards to ensure timely and comprehensive health screenings for children.

Needs:

Parents often need more support in understanding how to navigate the healthcare system. There is a strong need to educate families not only on maintaining healthy lifestyles and preventive care but also on how to advocate for their children, including asking questions during doctor's visits, understanding diagnoses, and being proactive about follow-up care. Empowering parents in this way strengthens their role in supporting their children's health outcomes.

There is also an increasing need for public health education related to healthy eating, physical activity, and environmental risks, including smoking, poor air quality, lead exposure, and water pollution—all of which directly impact child health and development.

Access to immunization services is also becoming increasingly difficult due to changing policies and limited vaccine availability, making it more challenging for families to maintain up-to-date immunization schedules. Additionally, there has been a noticeable increase in respiratory illnesses, including asthma and influenza.

Challenges:

While there are adequate healthcare resources across the three-county service area (Frio, Dimmit, and Maverick), local physicians, dentists, and therapists are increasingly stretched due to a growing population

and more complex health needs among children.

Conclusion:

KAF, Inc. will continue to monitor health data and use it to guide individualized support for children and families. By strengthening community partnerships, expanding health education, and empowering parents to take an active role in their children's care, KAF aims to improve long-term outcomes across our service area.

Data Sources:

PIR—GoEngage

Parent Community Assessment Surveys

Medicaid enrollment (birth to age 18) | KIDS COUNT Data Center

Uninsured children (birth to age 18) | KIDS COUNT Data Center