

KIDS CORPS, INC.  
2015 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

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*The Needs of Low-Income Children & Families in Anchorage*

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STELLAR  
GROUP

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## I. Executive Summary

Kids Corps, Inc. (KCI) is the largest Head Start provider in Anchorage. KCI provides Head Start and Early Head Start services, as well as child care for low-income children, in stand alone locations and through partnerships with the Anchorage School District (ASD). To assist with program planning, KCI contracted with the Stellar Group to conduct a community assessment. This community assessment was specifically designed to provide an:

- Overview of the community of Anchorage, including:
- Outline of current Head Start services in Anchorage;
- Estimate of children potentially eligible, but currently un-served by Head Start, and where they may be located;
- Summary of specific issues facing low-income children and families in Anchorage.

Throughout the community assessment, there was a focus on providing additional details about the specific populations served by KCI including 1) children aged 0-5 and 2) low-income families. This focus was to tease out the current and emerging needs of this population that would be useful for planning programs and services. A secondary focus was on looking at trends or issues that might impact KCI's child care workforce.

The community assessment examined data from a variety of local, state and federal sources. No new data was collected for this project.

The community assessment found that families in Anchorage are generally better off than in other parts of Alaska. While Alaska weathered the economic downturn well, and the job market is strong right now, the State's economic future is uncertain due to the low-price of oil, the royalties from which fund most state government programs and services.

Alaska's uncertain economic future makes program planning challenging. State funding for early learning and education programs may be significantly reduced starting in FY16, which could shift demand if other programs have to reduce services. With possible reductions on the horizon, this makes the programs offered by KCI even more important to the community.

Some of the most significant findings from the community assessment include

- Currently, there are more four year olds being served than three year olds, as many programs, such as ASD's serve only four year olds. There are many potential benefits to serving children starting at age 3
- Increasing eligibility from 100% of the AkFPL to 130% of the AkFPL increases the number of children who are potentially eligible for services by more than 600.
- Housing availability and the high price of housing is likely to continue to be a problem for KCI families, as well as KCI employees.
- Future demand for preschool teachers and child care workers is high, and projected to stay high through 2022. In Anchorage, most job growth is within similar industries, so the available labor market will be tight and competitive for KCI as it seeks to replace existing workers or to potentially expand services.

## II. Introduction

Kids Corps, Inc. (KCI) is the largest Head Start provider in Anchorage. KCI provides Head Start and Early Head Start services, as well as child care for low-income children, in stand alone locations and through partnerships with the Anchorage School District (ASD). This Community Assessment was specifically designed to provide an:

- Overview of the community of Anchorage, including:
  - Demographics;
  - Economy & wages;
  - Housing;
  - Transportation;
  - Education level;
- Outline of current Head Start services in Anchorage;
- Estimate of children potentially eligible, but currently un-served by Head Start, and where they may be located;
- Summary of specific issues facing low-income children and families in Anchorage, including:
  - Health & nutrition
  - Special Needs
  - Housing
  - Poverty
  - Preschool access
  - School readiness
  - Adverse childhood experiences
  - Use of public assistance programs

Throughout the Community Assessment, there was a focus on providing additional details about the specific populations served by KCI including 1) children aged 0-5 and 2) low-income families. This focus was to tease out the current and emerging needs of this population that would be useful for planning programs and services. A secondary focus was on looking at trends or issues that might impact KCI's child care workforce.

### METHODOLOGY

Information and data was gathered from existing sources for this assessment. Sources included:

- Anchorage School District (ASD)
- US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS)
- Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring Survey (PRAMS)
- Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey (CUBS)
- Alaska Department of Labor (DOL)
- Alaska Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS)
- KCI family data

Other community organizations also provided data about their programs and services in Anchorage and various other sources were consulted for specific pieces of information or the results of prior research. Wherever possible, Anchorage specific data was used. When Anchorage specific data was not available, or not reliable, statewide data was used.

### III. OVERVIEW OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

The Municipality of Anchorage stretches from the Native Village of Eklutna to the Portage Glacier. The city limits span over 1900 square miles, and include a military base, several outlying communities and a large state park.<sup>1</sup> It is bordered by the waters of Turnagain Arm to the South and Knik Arm to the north and east, and the Chugach Mountains to the west.

Originally incorporated just 100 years ago in 1915, Anchorage has a rich history from before its incorporation. The first people to settle in the region were the Denai’na Athabascans, the Native people of Southcentral Alaska who settled in the area over 1000 years ago. Today, Anchorage is home to the largest Alaska Native community in Alaska, and Native people from all regions of Alaska live here.

Anchorage is the hub of Alaska, and 95% of all goods that come into the State come through the Port of Anchorage. The Ted Stevens International Airport is also a major transportation hub, and the Alaska Railroad moves goods and people throughout the State. Major industries in Anchorage include transportation, military, municipal, state and federal government, corporate headquarters, tourism, and resource development.

#### POPULATION GROWTH

Anchorage is the most populous community in Alaska and now estimated to have 300,549 people in its city limits, over 40% of the State’s total population.<sup>2</sup> Another 98,063 people are estimated to live in the nearby Matanuska-Susitna Borough,<sup>3</sup> and many of them commute to work and take advantage of services and amenities available in the Anchorage.

The population in Anchorage has not grown much over the last five years. From 2010-2014 the growth rate was just .69%, just slightly less than the State’s, and a net growth of almost 9000 people. In comparison, faster growing regions such as the Mat-Su Borough, saw growth of 2.28% during this same time period.<sup>4</sup>

From 2012 – 2042, the population in Alaska is projected to grow by 26% to over 925,000. In Anchorage, the population growth is expected to be slightly slower at 22%. Statewide, the percent of young children in the 0-4 age group is projected to rise 26%, while in Anchorage it will only grow by 19%.<sup>5</sup>

PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH FOR 0-4 YEAR OLDS, 2012-2022				
	July 2012	July 2017	July 2022	% Change
Anchorage	21,950	23,966	24,031	9.5%
Alaska	54,724	60,036	61,103	11.7%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, 2012-22 Population Estimates.

The population of young children is highly impacted by the net migration, and so the estimates for this age group are also the most likely to change from the baseline as outside factors influence population

<sup>1</sup> US Census Quick Facts, 2010 <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/02/02020.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Alaska Department of Labor, Population of Alaska by Economic Region, Borough & Census Area, 2010-14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Alaska Department of Labor, Population Estimates by Borough/Census Area, 2010-2014.

<sup>5</sup> Alaska Department of Labor, Alaska Population Projections 2012-20142, April 2014.

growth. In 2014, fewer people moved into Anchorage than expected, possibly because of improving job opportunities in other states. The population is expected to resume growing in 2015.<sup>6</sup>

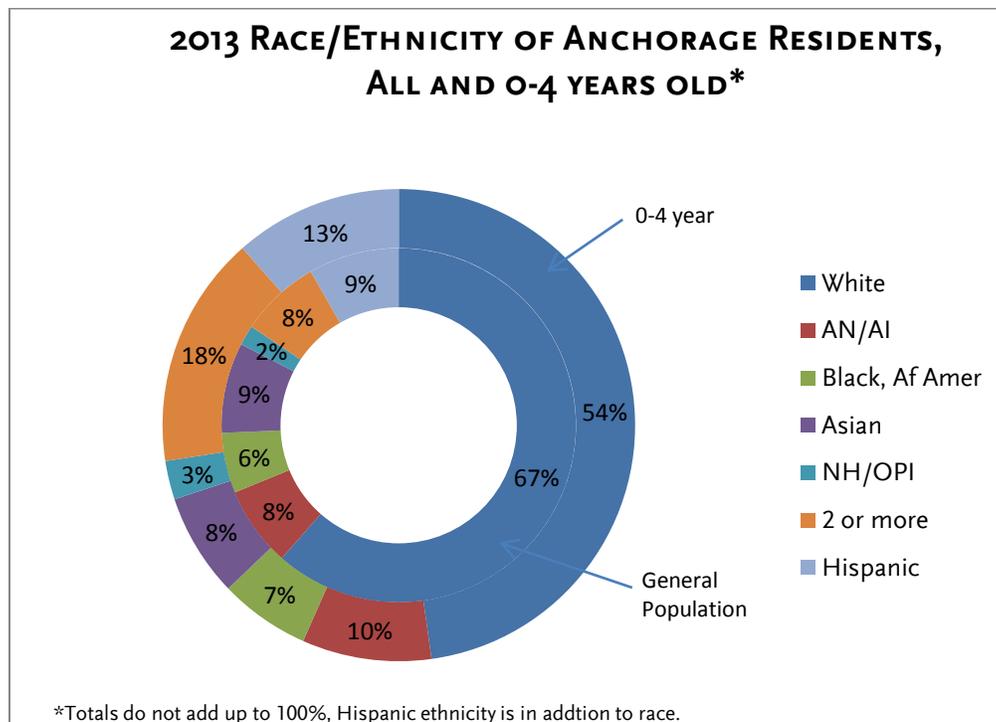
### DEMOGRAPHICS

Alaska is a very diverse state, and Anchorage is very representative of that diversity. There are some differences between Anchorage and the State. Most significantly, a larger percentage of the total population in Anchorage is Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) than in the rest of the State.

2013 RACE/ETHNICITY IN ANCHORAGE		
Race	Alaska	Anchorage
Caucasian	67%	67%
Alaska Native/American Indian	8%	15%
Black, African American	6%	4%
Asian	9%	6%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	2%	1%
Two or More	7%	8%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	9%	7%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Alaska Population by Age, Race (Alone) and Hispanic Origin, Sex and Borough/Census Area, July 2013.

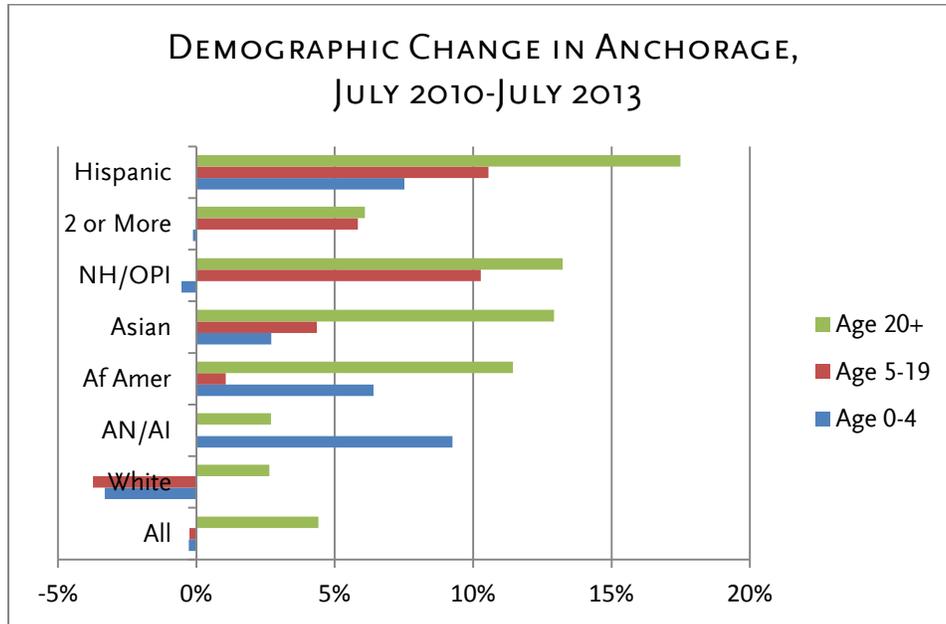
The diversity in Anchorage continues to increase, and this is especially apparent in young children. While 67% of Anchorage residents are Caucasian, only 54% of the children aged 0-4 are. Eighteen percent are mixed race, and another 13% have Hispanic ethnicity.



Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Alaska Population by Age, Race (Alone) and Hispanic Origin, Sex and Borough/Census Area, July 2013.

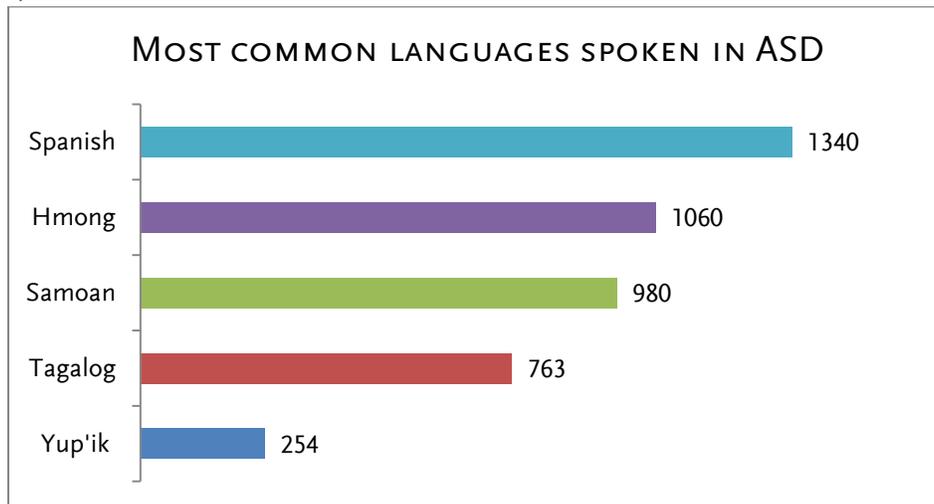
<sup>6</sup> 2015 Economic Forecast for Anchorage, Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

From 2010 to 2013, there was a slight decrease in the population of youth 19 and younger, and a slight increase in the total number of adults. Each group has experienced a different level of demographic change. Children aged 0-4 appear to have seen the least change, but this is likely because they are already more diverse, and most population change in this age group is a result of births, rather than migration in or out. For children 0-4, the AN/AI population saw the biggest growth, with a 9.3% increase, significantly larger increase than in other age groups. The percent of African Americans also grew significantly, by 6.4%. Also of interest, and unexpected, is the slight decrease in the population of NH/OPI and multiracial children. In other age groups, these were areas of growth.



Source: AK Department of Labor, Population by age, sex and race/ethnicity alone, 2010-2014

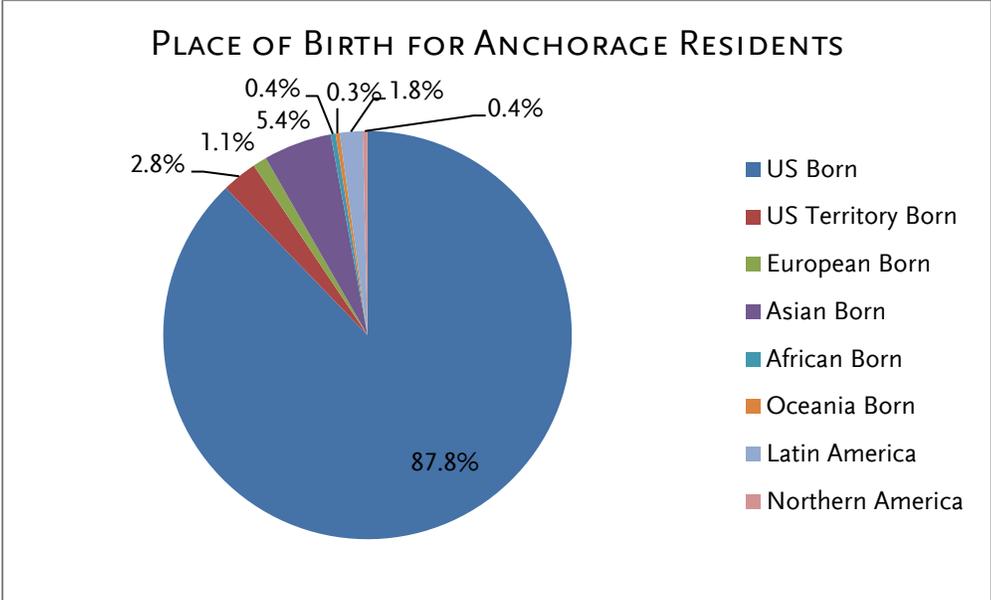
In the Anchorage School District (ASD) 80% of families speak English at home; among the 20% who do not, 99 languages are spoken. Nearly 12% of ASD students qualify for English Language Learner Services (ELL).<sup>7</sup>



Source: Anchorage School District, [www.asdk12.org/aboutasd](http://www.asdk12.org/aboutasd)

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from ASD website on 2/4/2014. <http://www.asdk12.org/aboutasd/>

In Anchorage, 17% of residents speak a language other than English at home and over 12% of Anchorage residents were born outside of the United States. Asia is the most common region of foreign origin for Anchorage residents.<sup>8</sup>



Source: 2009-13 American Community Survey, Select Social Characteristics.

The top 10 countries of origin for Foreign-born Alaskans in 2013 were Philippines, Mexico, Korea, Canada, Thailand, Laos, Germany, Russia, China and the Ukraine, in descending order. Just over half of all foreign-born Alaskans reside in Anchorage.<sup>9</sup>

**TRANSIENCE**

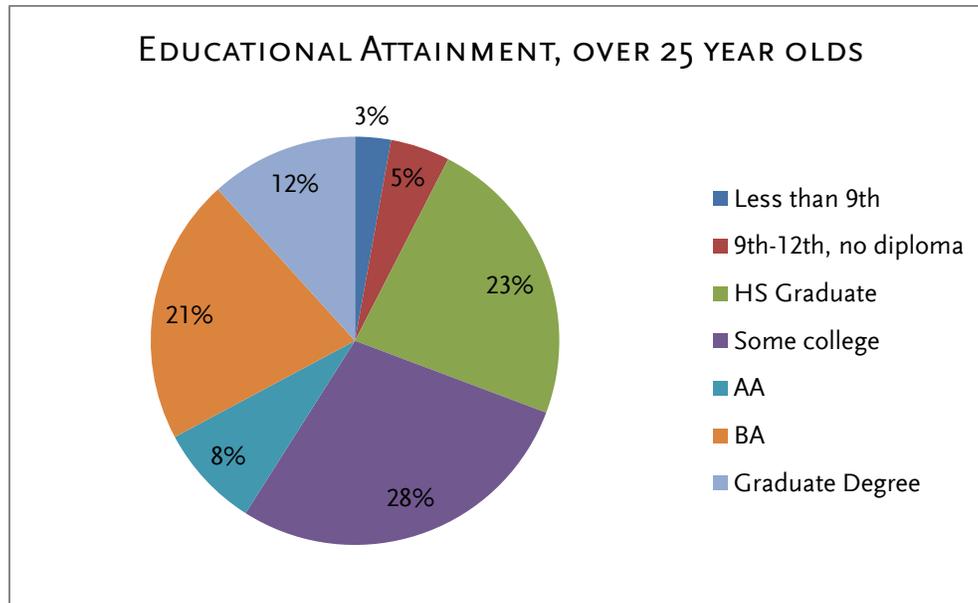
In addition to being diverse, the population in Anchorage is also very transient, only 35.5% of Anchorage residents were born in Alaska.<sup>10</sup> The national average is significantly higher with 58.7% of people born in the state they currently live in.<sup>11</sup> Alaska has one of the highest migration rates in the nation, with 5 to 7% of the population entering or leaving the state each year. In addition, Anchorage also sees seasonal and economically based in and out migration from rural areas.<sup>12</sup>

Younger people are more likely to move than older people, and parents of young children are more likely to relocate than those with middle or high school aged children. The level of migration generally peaks in individual’s mid-20’s, and declines thereafter as people settle down.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> American Community Survey, 2009-13, Select Social Characteristics, Anchorage, AK.  
<sup>9</sup> Alaska Department of Labor & Economic Development, “Foreign-Born Alaskans,” Alaska Economic Trends, March 2015.  
<sup>10</sup> American Community Survey, 2009-13 Select Social Characteristics for Municipality of Anchorage.  
<sup>11</sup> American Community Survey, 2009-13, Select Social Characteristics for United States.  
<sup>12</sup> Alaska Department of Labor & Economic Development, “Alaska’s Highly Migratory Population,” Alaska Economic Trends, April 2012.  
<sup>13</sup> Alaska Department of Labor & Economic Development, “Alaska’s Highly Migratory Population,” Alaska Economic Trends, April 2012.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

In Anchorage, only 33% of adults over the age of 25 have a four year degree or higher. Another 8% has an associate's degree. Eight percent failed to graduate from high school.



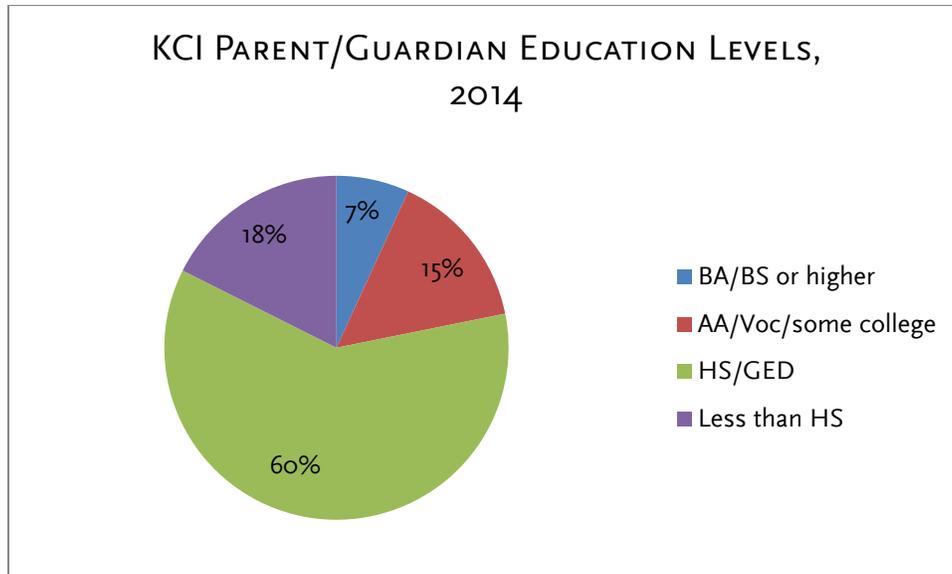
Source: 2009-13 American Community Survey, Select Social Characteristics, Anchorage AK

This is similar to the statewide education levels for the same demographic group and above the US average, for attainment of a high school diploma or above.

LOCAL, STATE & NATIONAL EDUCATION LEVELS, OVER 25 YEAR OLDS			
Education Level	Anchorage	Alaska	USA
Less than 9th grade	2.8%	3.0%	5.9%
High school, no diploma	4.7%	5.3%	8.0%
High School Diploma (or equivalent)	23.2%	27.3%	28.1%
Some College	28.3%	28.8%	21.2%
Associate's Degree	8.2%	8.0%	7.8%
Bachelor's Degree	21.1%	17.7%	18.0%
Graduate Degree	11.7%	9.8%	10.8%

Source: 2009-13 American Community Survey, Select Social Characteristics

In contrast, Kids Corps, Inc (KCI) parents are less likely to have graduated from high school, and less likely to have a college degree or any other form of higher education. In 2014, 18% of KCI parents hadn't graduated from high school or been awarded a GED, over double the rate in Anchorage. They are also less likely to have gone to college or received any career or technical training. While nearly 33% of those in Anchorage have a BA/BS or higher, only 7% of KCI parents do, and only 15% have an AA or any college or vocational training, while 37% of all adults in Anchorage do.



Source: KCI Family Demographic Data

In 2014, 67 KCI parents were referred for adult education services, and 20 job training referrals were made. The number of referrals for adult education and job training has increased from 2012 referrals.

#### INCOME/EARNINGS IN ANCHORAGE

While in many census areas in Alaska, the per capita income is far below the state or national average, in Anchorage it is well above the national average, and also above the Alaska average. This per capita estimate does not consider the differences in cost-of-living between communities in rural and urban Alaska.

2013 PER CAPITA INCOME – ANCHORAGE, ALASKA & USA COMPARISON					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2013, % of State
Anchorage	\$50,207	\$52,579	\$54,486	\$54,766	109%
Alaska	\$45,565	\$48,181	\$49,906	\$50,150	100%
USA	\$40,144	\$42,332	\$44,200	\$44,765	89%

Source: Alaska Trends Magazine, March 2015

According to the 2011-13 American Community Survey (ACS), the median family income in Anchorage is \$89,235 and the mean family income is \$109,445. The percent of families whose income was below the federal poverty level in the last 12 months was only 5%. This is less than half of the the US average of 12% during the same time period.

Over the last decade, wages in Alaska have grown significantly. Even when adjusted for inflation, per capita income increased 12% between 2002 and 2012, despite the US economic recession. This is more than double the growth during the decade prior, a period of decline in wages in Alaska.<sup>14</sup>

#### POVERTY IN ANCHORAGE

<sup>14</sup> Alaska Department of Labor, "Bigger Decade for Wages, Income," Alaska Economic Trends, July 2014.

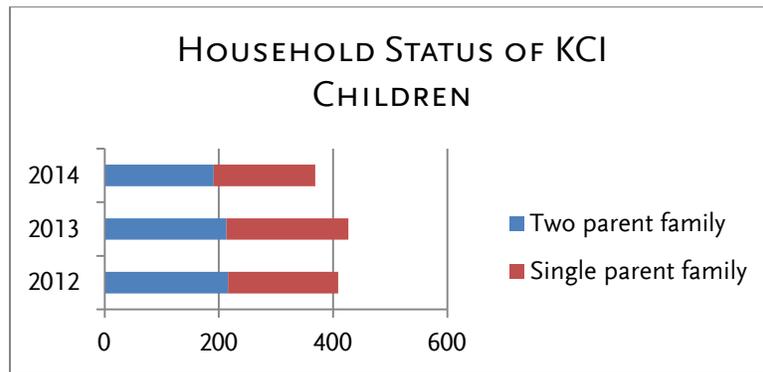
In Anchorage, like in other parts of the United States, children are more likely to live in poverty, and young children are even more likely to live in poverty. In Anchorage:

- 8% of the general population has an income below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL);
- 11% of children under 18 live below 100% of the FPL;
- 14% of children under 6 live below 100% of the FPL.<sup>15</sup>

Anchorage families with children are also more likely to live below 100% of the FPL:

- 9% of families with children under 18;
- 11% of families with children under 5;
- 23% of families with a female head of household and children under 18;
- 37% of families with a female head of household and children under 5.<sup>16</sup>

About half of all KCI families are single parent, rather than two-parent households. Single parent households may still have other adults present in the household.



Source: KCI Family Demographic Data

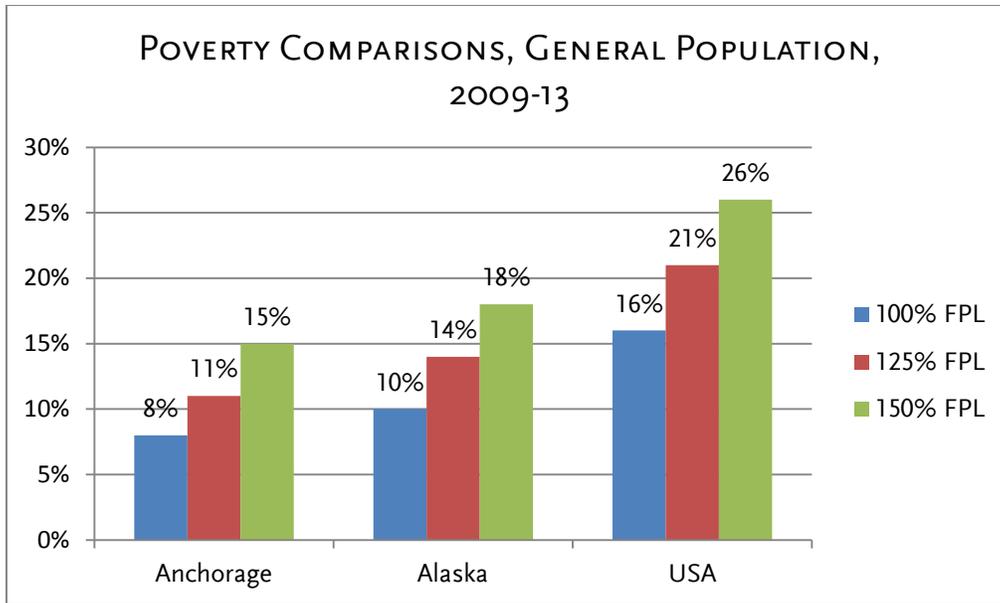
In Anchorage and Alaska, the percent of the population living below the federal poverty level is well below the national average. This is deceiving though, because the cost of living is also significantly higher in Alaska than in other states. In Anchorage, it is estimated to be 27% higher than in other US cities.<sup>17</sup> US Census and ACS estimates do not take into account the adjusted federal poverty rate for Alaska, when completing their national rankings, or calculating poverty levels in Alaska. This means that US Census poverty estimates for Alaska are low. The Alaska Federal Poverty Level table is 25% higher than the standard Federal Poverty Level tables.<sup>18</sup> The adjusted federal poverty guidelines for Alaska (AkFPL) is 125% of the FPL. Under those numbers, poverty in Alaska starts to grow.

<sup>15</sup> American Community Survey 2009-13, Poverty Status in the last 12 months.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

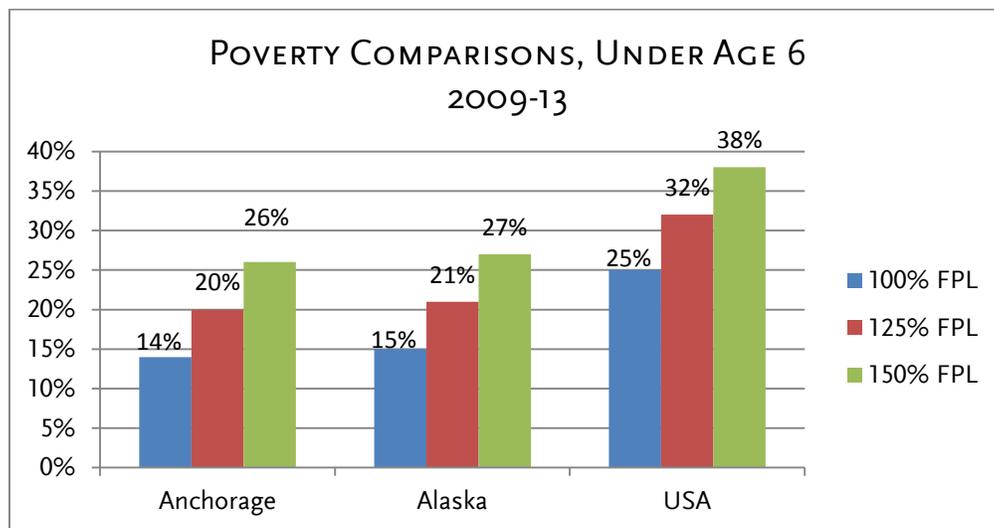
<sup>17</sup> Alaska Department of Labor, Alaska Trends, "The Cost of Living in Alaska," July 2014.

<sup>18</sup> 2015 Alaska Federal Poverty Guidelines. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/15poverty.cfm>.



Source: 2009-13 American Community Survey, ratio of income to poverty.

Anchorage’s rate of poverty is lower than Alaska’s rate of poverty. There are still fewer individuals in Anchorage and Alaska, who are at 125% of the FPL (100% of AKFPL) than who are only at 100% of the FPL. This means, even when adjusted for Alaska poverty rates, poverty in Alaska is still slightly lower than the US average of 16%, with 14% of Alaskan’s and 11% of Anchorage residents living below the AK FPL .



Source: 2011-13 American Community Survey, ratio of income to poverty.

Across the United State, young children are more likely than adults, or the general population to live in poverty. Alaska is no exception to this. In Anchorage, 20% of children under 6 live below the AK FPL (125% FPL), 9% higher than the general population of Anchorage residents. This is on par with the US average, which has 25% of children living under 6 living in poverty, versus only 16% of the general population, also a 9% difference.

## ECONOMIC FORECASTS FOR ANCHORAGE

Anchorage avoided much of the pains felt during the recent economic recession because oil prices remained high in Alaska, fueling the economy and contributing to overall job growth. During that period, unemployment rates in Anchorage were lower than the national average. In Anchorage, unemployment rose from 5.2% in 2008 to a high of 6.8% in 2010, a rise of only 1.6%. Nationally, during this time, unemployment rose from 5.8% to 9.6%, a rise of 3.8%. In Anchorage, unemployment appears to have leveled off in 2014, and returned to pre-recession levels. Nationally, the unemployment rate also continues to drop, and was 6.2% in 2014, compared to 5.1% in Anchorage.<sup>19</sup>

Between 2012 and 2022 Alaska is projected to gain more than 36,000 jobs, for a growth rate of about 10%. The highest areas forecasted for growth are mining, health care and social assistance jobs. These include many low-wage, low-skill jobs that are fueled by a growth in nursing care facilities, retirement communities and home health services to serve the growing senior population. Child care jobs are ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in the State for number of openings expected, although most are replacement openings created by vacancy and not new jobs. More than 70% of the available job openings projected for this period will require a high school diploma or less. While post-secondary training may be necessary for many of them, a college degree is not. These jobs typically pay less than those requiring higher levels of education.<sup>20</sup>

Continuing low oil prices may change the accuracy of these estimates. For 2015, the economy in Anchorage is expected to be relatively flat. With some job growth in certain sectors such as health care, primarily in nursing homes and residential care services, financial services, leisure and hospitality, which includes tourism and restaurant jobs, and retail trade. Analysts report that one of the biggest factors that has impeded retail growth is available labor. This is expected to continue to be a barrier to the growth of Anchorage's economy.

For KCI, and other employers, the tightening labor market will continue to present a challenge. Wages have already started to grow as a result. According to the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, from 2007 to early 2012, the average hourly wage was \$25/hour. In 2013, it jumped to more than \$27/hour. This jump has been attributed to employers having to pay more to attract qualified help.<sup>21</sup> In 2013, the median wage in Alaska was the highest in the nation, at \$21.32/hour.<sup>22</sup>

Preschool teachers and child care workers make well below the average wages. The mean wage for preschool teachers in Anchorage/Mat-Su region is just \$16.51/hour and 90% of them make \$24.71/hour or less. Statewide, the mean wage is higher at \$17.30/hour, and 90% make \$24.71/hour or less. For child care workers wages are even lower. In Anchorage/Mat-Su area, the average wages are \$11.03/hour, and 90% of childcare workers make \$13.77/hour or less. This is below the Statewide average wage of \$11.45/hour, and 90% make \$14.77/hour or less.

The statewide forecast for preschool teachers and childcare workers is strong with high employment opportunities. For preschool teachers, 37% of the annual job openings will be new positions and for childcare workers 24% of the openings will be new jobs. There are significantly more actual job

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<sup>19</sup> 2015 Economic Forecast for Anchorage, Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, February 5th, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Alaska Department of Labor, "Industry Forecast," Alaska Economic Trends, October 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Brehmer, Elwood, "Low unemployment pushes wages higher in Anchorage," Alaska Journal of Commerce December 31, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Fried, Neil, "Alaska's Median Wage Highest in the US," Alaska Economic Trends, February 2015.

openings for childcare workers (1272) than preschool teachers (27) projected each year.<sup>23</sup> These projections are based on a multi-step statistical model developed by the federal Department of Labor that uses industry employment data, population and labor market forecasts, economic forecasts and projected demand.<sup>24</sup>

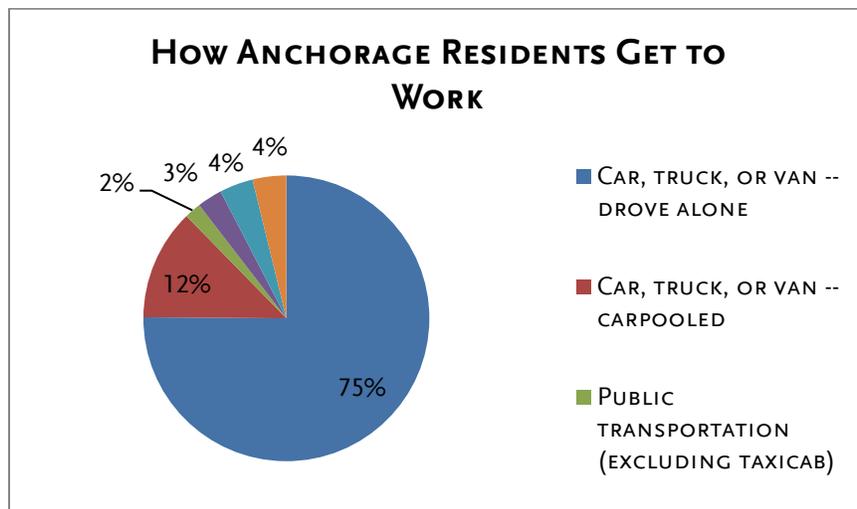
**HOUSING**

Housing has become a pressing issue recently in the Municipality of Anchorage. The relative cost of housing has risen every year since 2009 in Anchorage<sup>25</sup>, and Anchorage ranks 21<sup>st</sup> highest housing costs in the nation. The average cost of a home was \$358,456 in 2014, a 3.23% increase over 2013.<sup>26</sup> Rental prices have also been on the increase, and the average rent was \$2043/month for a single family home and \$1331 for a two bedroom apartment, adjusted for utilities that may or may not be included with rental prices. The vacancy rate for rental units is just 3.2%, the lowest in the State, for 2 bedroom units, the vacancy rate is even lower at 2.9%.<sup>27</sup>

The recent study projected a need for 18,000 housing units in the Anchorage Bowl, and another 3200 in Chugiak/Eagle River by 2030. The report also recommended looking at more low-cost higher density housing models for development, in part because of a decline in available land for building.<sup>28</sup> The availability of housing and particularly low-cost housing, will remain a concern in Anchorage, especially as low wage jobs are projected to be added to the Anchorage economy. Housing is also a concern for KCI families. Sixty referrals were made for housing assistance in 2014 and nearly 80 families were experiencing homelessness. Only 24% of them acquired stable housing during that year.

**TRANSPORTATION**

The majority of Anchorage residents, 87%, drive to work, either in their own car, or by carpooling with someone else. Public transportation is less common than walking, or using other means such as taxi's or biking.



Source: 2009-13 Selected Economic Characteristics, American Community Survey

<sup>23</sup> Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research & Analysis, May 2013 Wages in Alaska, <http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/wage/index.cfm>  
<sup>24</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_projections\\_methods.htm](http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_projections_methods.htm)  
<sup>25</sup> <http://www.adn.com/article/20141124/broad-effort-focuses-increasing-housing-anchorage>.  
<sup>26</sup> Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, 2014 Cost of Living Index for Anchorage, AK.  
<sup>27</sup> Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, 2014 Residential Rental Market Survey.  
<sup>28</sup> The McDowell Group, 2012 Anchorage Housing Market Analysis, March 2012.

In Anchorage, public transportation is through the People Mover bus system. Students, Staff and Faculty at the University of Alaska Anchorage, Alaska Pacific University, and Alaska Career College Anchorage Charter College can all ride the bus for free. A day pass on the people mover is \$5.00 and a one-way trip is \$2.00.<sup>29</sup>

For students in the Anchorage School District, the Anchorage School District provides transportation for those who live at least a 1.5 miles from their home schools. ASD also provides limited bus service for some of its preschool students, as does KCI and other Anchorage Head Starts. For school-aged children, many child care centers and before and after-school programs will provide bus service to and from a select number of schools and the program location.

For KCI families, 20% of those who left in 2014 cited transportation issues as the primary reason for withdrawing their child.

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.muni.org/departments/transit/peoplemover/Pages/default.aspx>, retrieved on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.

## IV. HEAD STARTS IN ANCHORAGE

Kids Corps, Inc. (KCI) has been serving children and their families in Anchorage, Alaska since 1990 by providing federally funded Head Start and Early Head Start services for children birth to five years old in eight locations. Today, KCI serves over three hundred children each year in its full and half-day preschool programs. In addition to preschool programs, Head Start also provides Early Head start through home based and center based programming. KCI also partners with the Anchorage School District (ASD) to have Head Start classrooms in four local elementary schools during the school year. Eligibility and services vary by location.

3 ASD/Head Start collaborations offer:

- 5 Classes per week
- 2 Education Home Visits
- 2 Parent/Teacher Conferences per year
- Limited transportation provided by Anchorage School District
- August-May
- For children who are 3--5 years old (pre-school ages)

4 Head Start Part-Day Centers (including one ASD collaboration)

- 5 Classes per week at Davis, Mt. View and Gladys Wood
- 4 classes per week at East Center
- 3 Education Home Visits
- 2 Parent/Teacher Conferences per year
- Transportation provided at East Center only
- August-May
- For children who are 3--5 years old

1 Head Start Full Day Center

- Children aged 3 to 5 years (pre-kindergarten)
- Year Round
- 2 Education Home Visits
- 2 Parent/Teacher Conferences per year
- Children may attend year round
- Center is open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- No transportation provided

Early Head Start – Center based

- Children 4 months to 3 years old
- 2 Education Home Visits
- 2 Parent/Teacher Conferences per year
- Children may attend year round
- Center is open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- No transportation provided

### Early Head Start - Home Based

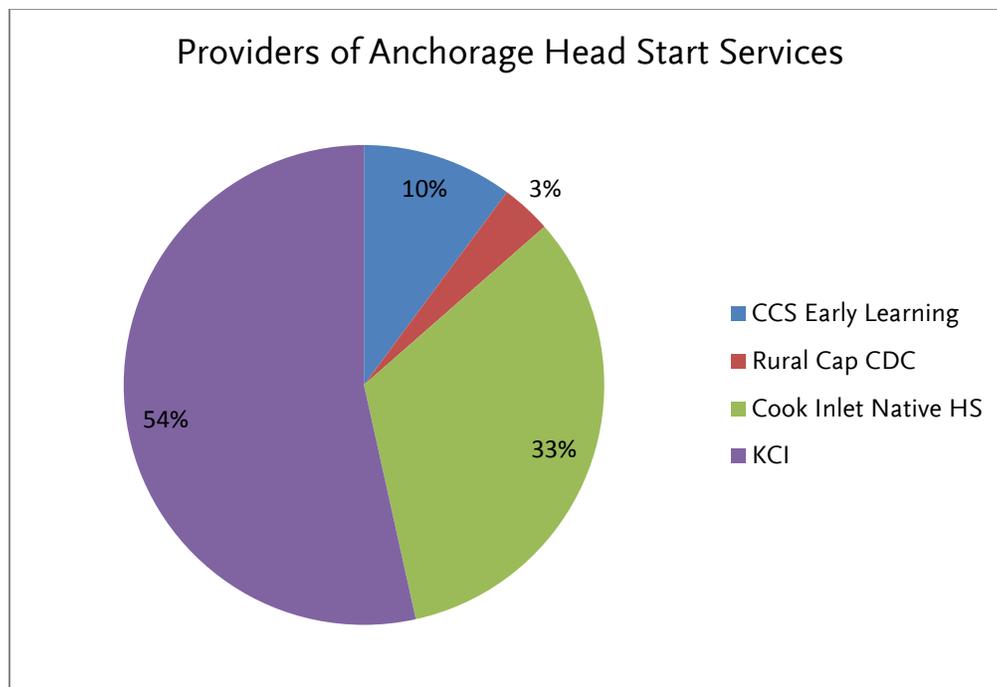
- Families with children pre-birth to 3 years old
- Weekly Education Home Visits with home visitor (Parents as Teachers curriculum)
- 46 home visits per year
- 2 group socializations activities per month
- No fees

KCI also offers many other services to the children and families that they serve. These include:

- Family Services & Resource referrals
- Health Services for Children

### OTHER PROVIDERS OF HEAD START SERVICES

KCI is not the only Head Start provider in the Municipality of Anchorage, but they are the largest. Head Start and Early Head Start services are also provided by Cook Inlet Native Head Start, RuralCAP and CCS Early Learning. Cook Inlet Native Head Start serves only Alaska Native youth, and CCS Early Learning serves only youth in the Chugiak/Eagle River communities as well as the Mat-Su Valley. The chart below shows what percentage of the total Head Start attendees are served by each Head Start agency.

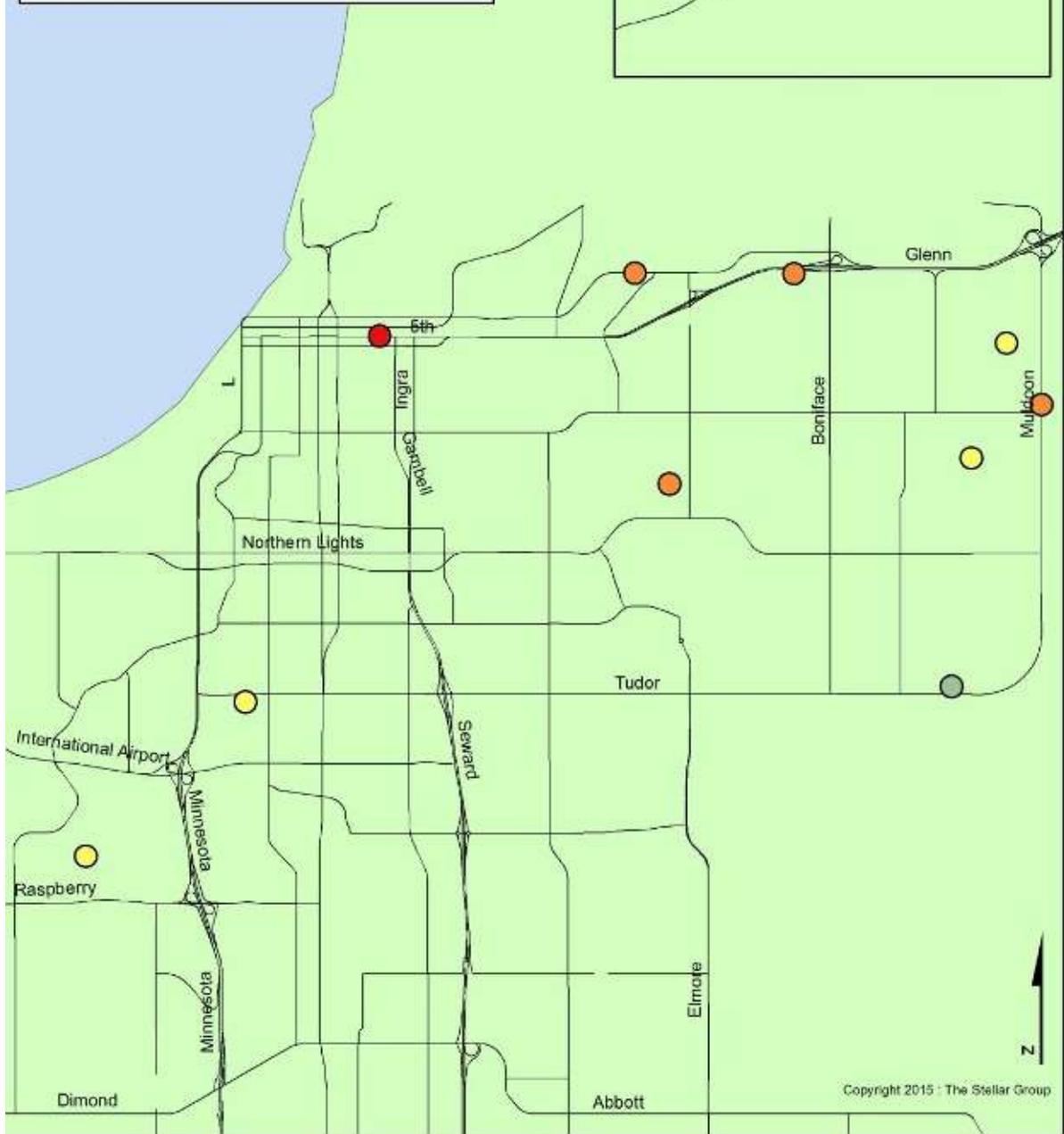
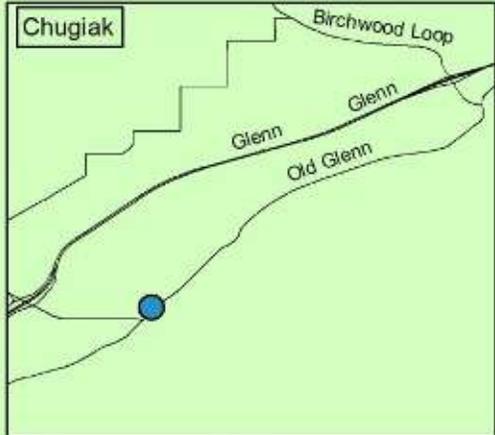


Source: Total served provided by ASD, KCI, CCS, and Rural Cap staff, February 2015

Head Starts are primarily located in the North of Anchorage, with some locations in the south, including KCI/ ASD collaboration sites. The map below shows where they are located throughout Anchorage.

# Head Start Locations, 2015

- CCS Early Learning
- Cook Inlet Native Headstart
- KCI/ASD
- Kids Corps Inc.
- RurAL Cap CDC

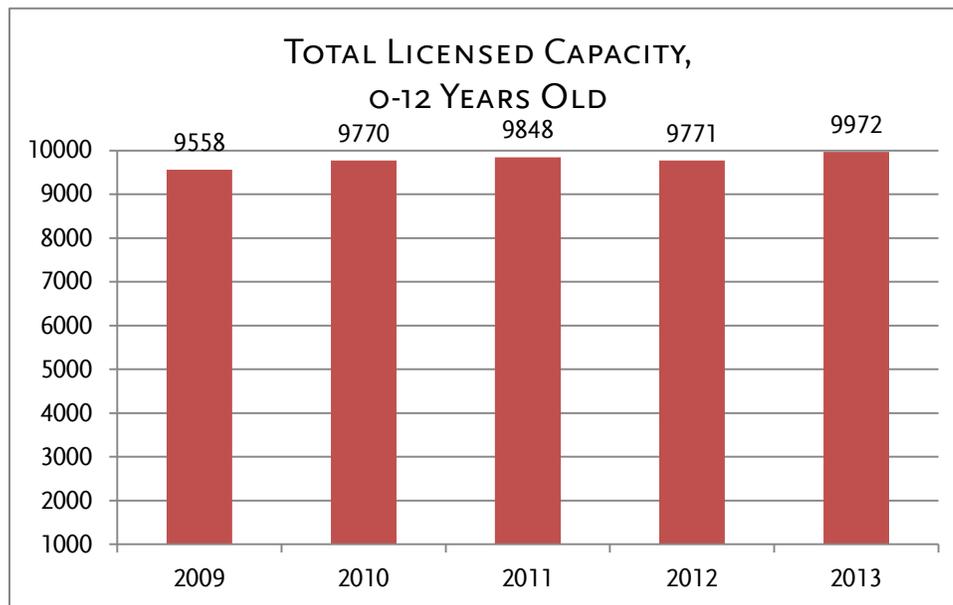


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### OTHER EARLY CARE & EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN ANCHORAGE

Cost is not the only barrier to accessing early care and education opportunities. There is a significant gap between the population demands, and the provider spaces. There are less than 300 licensed programs in all of Anchorage.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, there are about 26,000 children who are five and under in Anchorage.<sup>31</sup>

While the number of licensed programs has declined slightly, the number of spaces in the available programs is just shy of 10,000. These spaces are for children of all ages, from infants all the way to before and after school care for school aged youth.



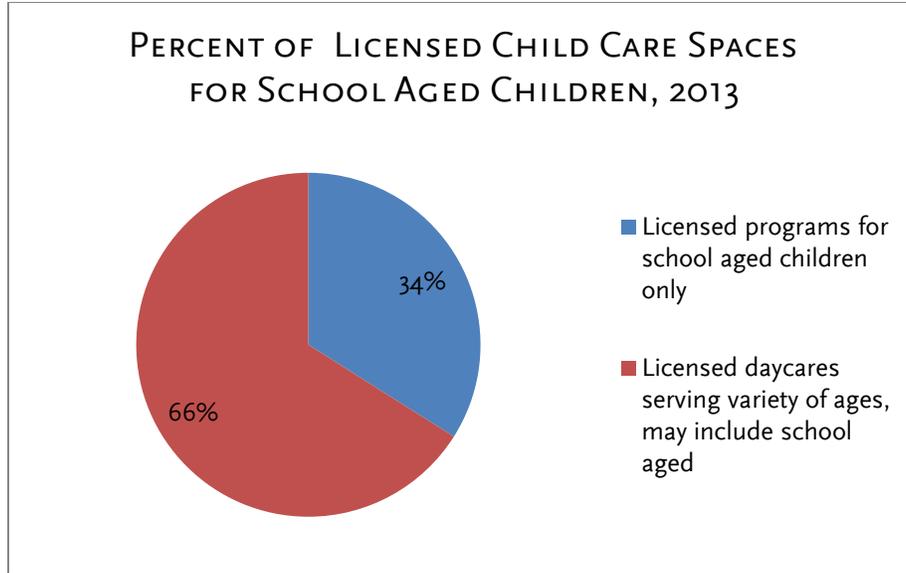
Source: MOA Licensing Data, provided by thread

While daycares may serve any age range that they would like, including school aged children; school-aged programs do not serve young children. In Anchorage, just over one-third of all available capacity is in programs serving only school aged children. Daycare programs, which are about two-thirds of all capacity may serve any variety of ages. Some serve infants, others do not serve any children under 18 months, while others serve just preschool aged children. Many of the daycare programs serve school aged children, in addition to infants, toddlers and school aged children.

The exact number of slots available for any age group is difficult to determine because providers are not required to set aside or predetermine who they will serve with their available capacity. One-third of all available slots are for programs serving only school-aged children. The remaining 6300 are for children of any age.

30 Data on MOA child care licensing provided by thread, Alaska's Childcare Resource Referral Agency.

31 American Community Survey, 2009-13, Population under 18 years old in Anchorage, AK.



Source: MOA Licensing Data provided by thread, 2013.

In 2013, there are additional spaces available from 687 unlicensed but approved providers, such as in home providers, relatives, and other approved providers. It is unknown if any approved providers or relatives offer preschool programs. More than half, 386 of the 687 are approved relatives.<sup>32</sup>

#### USE OF PARENTS ACHIEVING SELF-SUFFICIENCY (PASS) 1 BENEFITS BY ZIP CODE

The PASS I program provides daycare assistance to families currently receiving Temporary Aid for Needy Families benefits (TANF) and participating in job training or related activities. The charts below show where there are concentrations of low-income families and children, and preschool aged children. More than half of all young children using PASS benefits are in 99501, 99504 and 99508 zip codes, and 38% of all young children on PASS 1 are preschool aged.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN 0-5 IN ANCHORAGE USING PASS 1 BENEFITS BY ZIP CODE, 2014		
ZIP CODE FAMILY LIVES IN	TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN AGED 0-5, WITH PASS 1	PERCENT WHO ARE PRESCHOOL AGED (3-5)
99501	95	46%
99502	60	35%
99503	69	33%
99504	149	38%
99507	48	38%
99508	220	37%
99514	2	0%
99515	27	41%
99516	12	42%
99517	48	38%
99518	23	22%
99523	2	0%
99524	1	100%

<sup>32</sup> Municipality of Anchorage, "FY 13 Number of Child Care Slots By Zip Code," provided by thread, Alaska's Childcare Resource Referral Agency.

99567	4	50%
99577	23	35%
99587	2	0%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>791</b>	<b>38%</b>

Source: Provided by State of Alaska, Division of Public Assistance, April 2015.

It is important to note that families receiving PASS 1 benefits do not always redeem their benefits close to home. Only 40% of benefits are being redeemed in the zip code where families reside. This means parents are choosing their child care based on a variety of factors, not just location to home. Only 11% are receiving center care in the zip code they live in, although 52% of PASS 1 children are in day care centers.<sup>33</sup>

<b>Do PASS 1 Children Receive Care Near Home?</b>				
<b>ZIP CODE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITH PASS 1</b>	<b>NUMBER IN CARE IN ZIPCODE OF RESIDENCE</b>	<b>PERCENT IN CARE IN ZIPCODE OF RESIDENCE</b>	<b>PERCENT IN CENTER-BASED CARE, IN ZIPCODE OF RESIDENCE</b>
99501	95	28	29%	9%
99502	60	20	33%	25%
99503	69	22	32%	17%
99504	149	87	58%	28%
99507	48	15	31%	19%
99508	220	89	40%	0%
99514	2	0	0%	0%
99515	27	4	15%	7%
99516	12	0	0%	0%
99517	48	15	31%	2%
99518	23	5	22%	0%
99523	2	0	0%	0%
99524	1	0	0%	0%
99567	4	0	0%	0%
99577	23	18	78%	4%
99587	2	0	0%	0%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>791</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>11%</b>

Source: Provided by State of Alaska, Division of Public Assistance, April 2015.

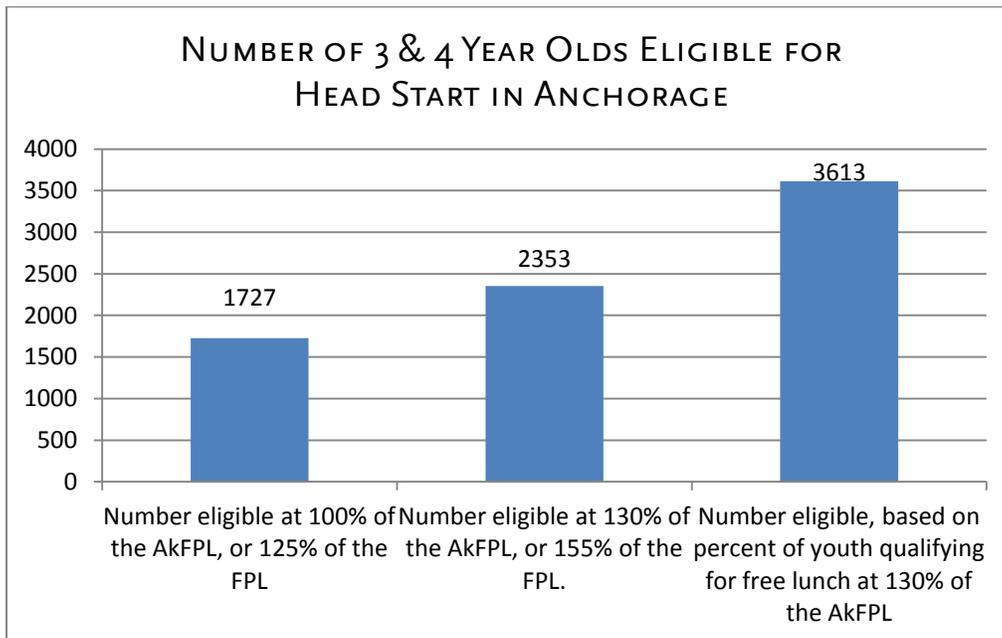
Most striking is that none of the families in the 99508 zip code, which has the most PASS 1 recipients, are using center based care in their own zip code, even though 40% of them are using other forms of child care in their home zip code. This is significant because KCI operates two facilities located within the 99508 zip code. Families from other zip codes do use center based care located in the 99508 zip code.

<sup>33</sup> State of Alaska, Division of Public Assistance, 2014 PASS 1 Usage in the Municipality of Anchorage, provided by DPA staff on April 2015.

## V. EARLY LEARNING NEEDS FOR LOW-INCOME CHILDREN IN ANCHORAGE

Head Start provides preschool for three and four year old children who are income eligible. Currently, to qualify for Head Start, a family must have an income at or below 130% of the FPL. In Alaska, the AkFPL is used to determine eligibility for Head Start.

There are 8811 three and four year old children in Anchorage.<sup>34</sup> Twenty percent are estimated to live below 100% of the AkFPL, and another 27% are estimated to live below 130% of the AkFPL.<sup>35</sup> An estimated 2353 three and four year old children are eligible for Head Start in Anchorage at 130% of the AkFPL. For just 4 year olds, the number eligible at 100% of the AkFPL would be 864, and at 130% of the AkFPL it would be 1177.



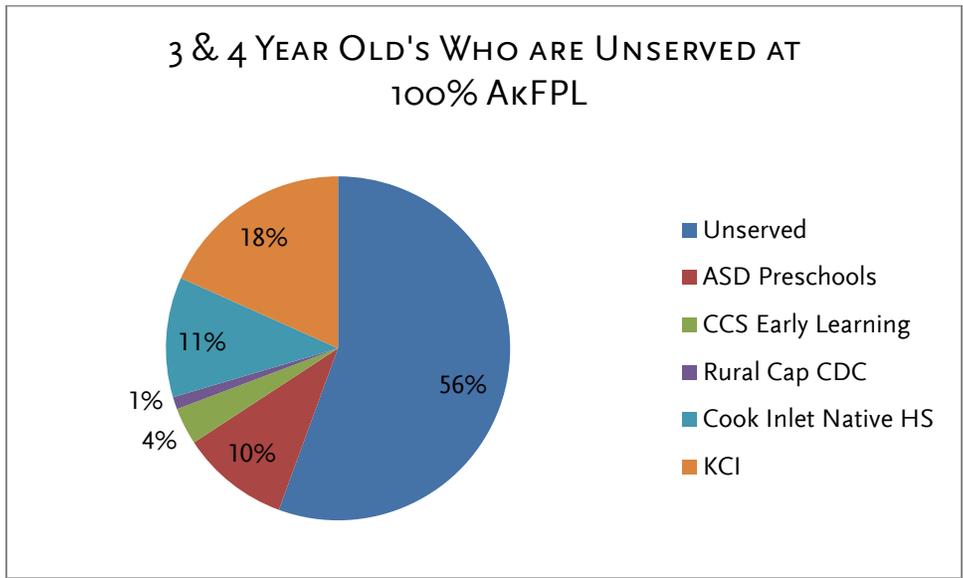
Another method sometimes used to calculate potential eligibility is through free lunch eligibility. In Anchorage elementary schools, 41% of elementary school children qualify for a free lunch, either through direct certification, because of participation in another State benefit program such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or filling out an application and indicating a family income below 130% of the AkFPL. If the percent of youth qualifying for free lunch eligibility is used to estimate eligibility, then the number of potentially eligible children rises by more than 50%, to 3613.

In Anchorage, the four Head Start agencies currently serve 591 students. ASD serves another 176 4-year old students through their preschool programs. Although eligibility for the ASD programs is not based on income, the preschools are all located in Title 1 school communities, which are predominantly low-income. The charts below shows how many eligible 3 and 4 year old children are currently being served by existing programs at each poverty threshold.

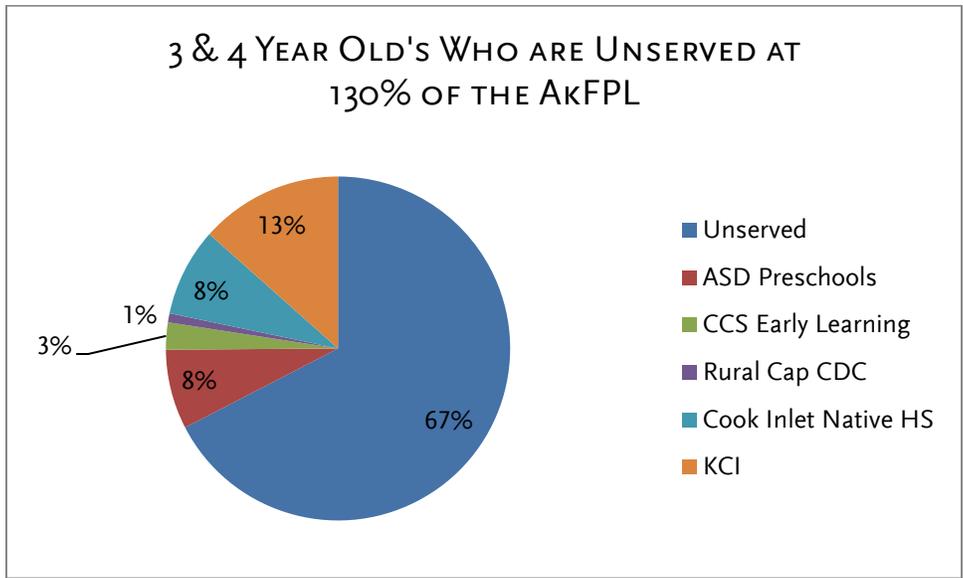
<sup>34</sup> American Community Survey, 2009-13, Population Under 18 years, Anchorage, AK.

<sup>35</sup> American Community Survey, 2009-13, Age by Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Last 12 Months, Anchorage, AK.

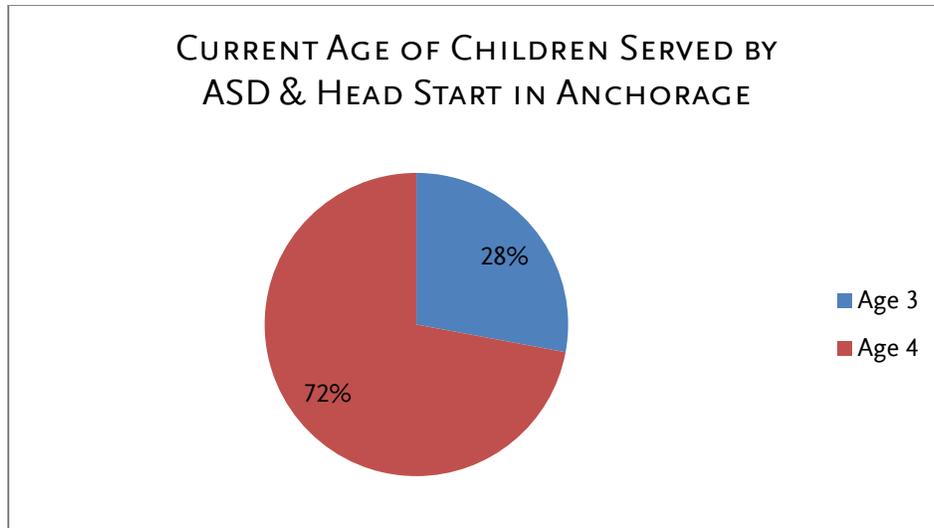
At 100% of the AkFPL, there are 960 three and four year olds who are eligible for Head Start but are not currently enrolled in Head Start or ASD programs



At 130% of the AkFPL, there are 1586 three and four year olds who are eligible for Head Start but are not currently enrolled in Head Start or ASD programs.



Currently, KCI, along with other Head Start agencies primarily targets four year olds at 100% of the AkFPL. The ASD preschool programs only serve four year olds. While three year olds are eligible for KCI and other Head Start programs, they are a minority of the total children served. As a result, there are fewer un-served 4 year olds than 3 year olds.



Source: ASD & Head Start Program Staff, 2015.

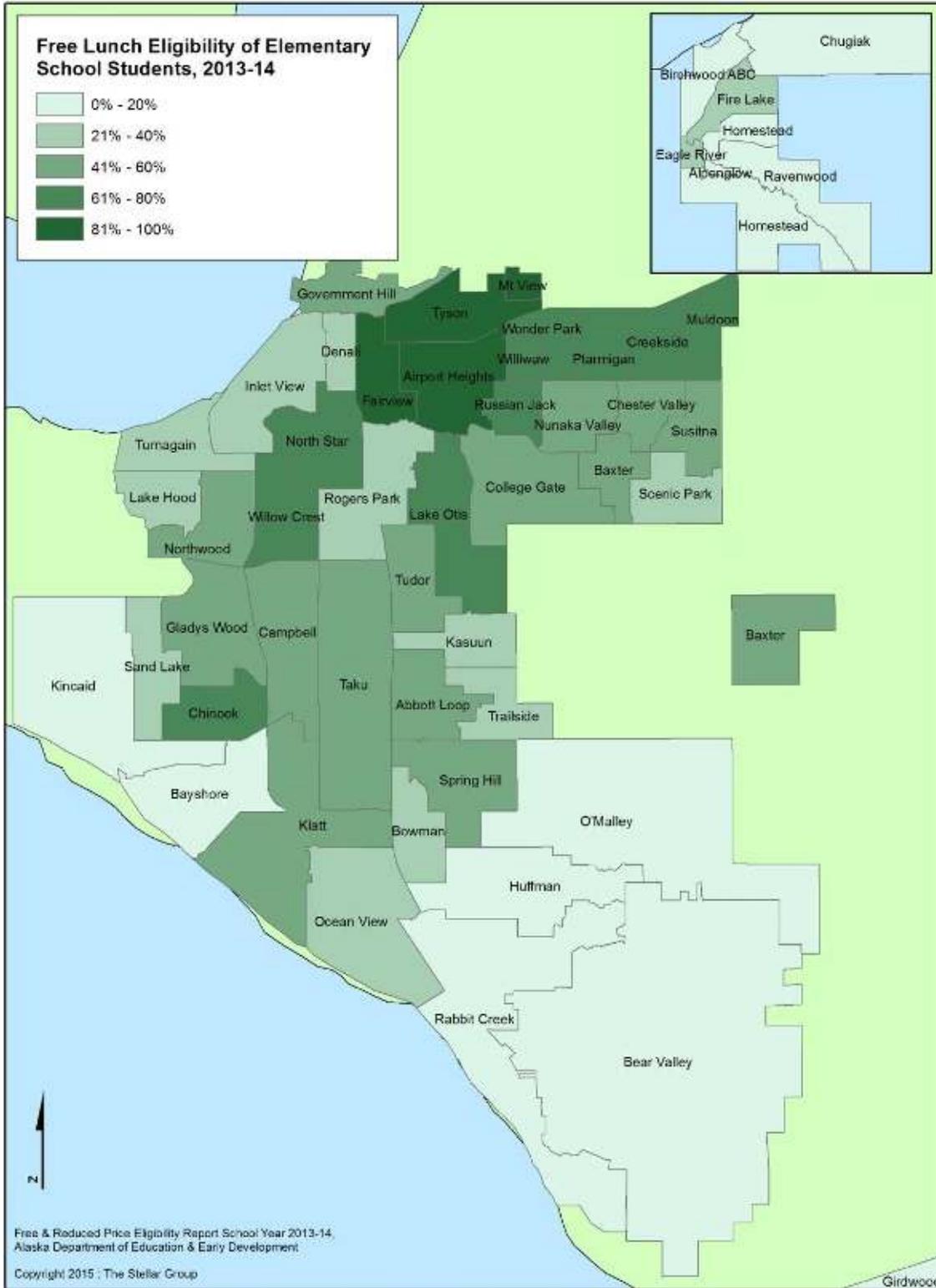
There are an estimated 312 un-served four year olds and 649 un-served 3 year olds at 100% of the AkFPL. At 130% of the AkFPL, the estimate grows to 625 un-served 4 year olds and 962 un-served 3 year olds. This estimate does not take into account that children in families living below the poverty level may also be in the ASD special education preschool or a private early learning or preschool program, either through parent-pay, or subsidized care, such as the State's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Parent's Achieving Self-Sufficiency (PASS) program.

### NEIGHBORHOOD POVERTY

Typically US census data from the American Community Survey is used to identify neighborhoods have the highest levels of poverty, but the small sample size in Anchorage makes the neighborhood level data unreliable. The distribution of free lunch eligibility in Anchorage's neighborhood elementary schools is another method for identifying neighborhoods with a high concentration of children living in poverty.

Across ASD, 41% of all elementary school students qualify for free lunch.<sup>36</sup> Schools located in Northeast Anchorage, such as William Tyson, Mountain View, Williwaw, Airport Heights and Fairview Elementary Schools all have more than 80% of children on the free lunch program. Higher concentrations of 60-79% eligible for free lunch are also found at Chinook Elementary school in South Anchorage, in Midtown around the school communities of Willow Crest, North Star and Lake Otis Elementary Schools and in East Anchorage for Russian Jack, Chester Valley, Wonder Park, Ptarmigan, Creekside and Muldoon Elementary Schools. The map on the next page shows free lunch eligibility at neighborhood schools.

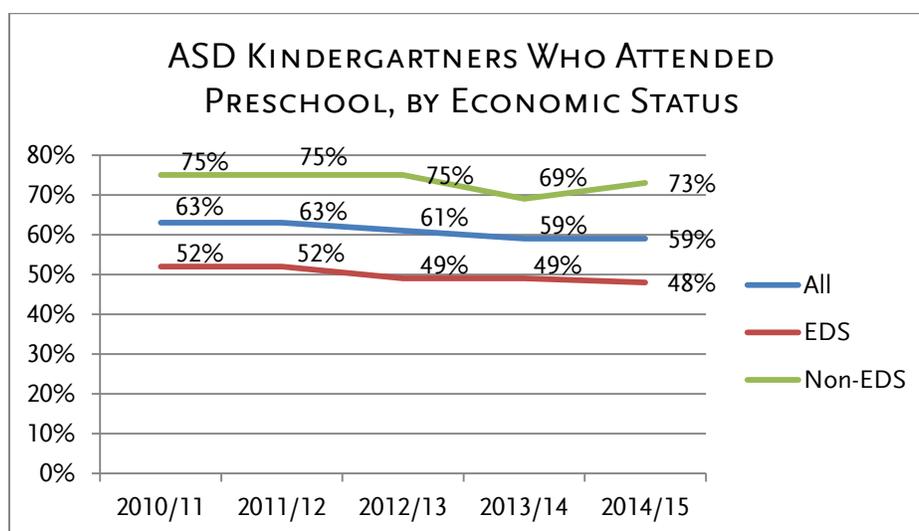
<sup>36</sup> Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, Child Nutrition Programs, National Free & Reduced Lunch Report, 2014.



## SCHOOL READINESS & PRESCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Across the Anchorage School District, the number of families sending their children to preschool has remained fairly stagnant over the last few years. Information about preschool attendance is collected from parents at school entry, and does not speak to any quality measures of the preschool that the incoming kindergartners attended. Within the ASD, EDS is used to describe children from low-income families who qualify for free lunch at 130% of the AkFPL, or reduced price lunches at 185% of the AkFPL, and non-economically disadvantaged (non-EDS) is for children who do not qualify for free/reduced price lunches.

Children from economically disadvantaged (EDS) backgrounds are not as likely to attend preschool as their non-economically disadvantaged peers. For the 2014/15 school year, EDS kindergartners have a rate of preschool attendance that is 25% lower than non-EDS kindergartners.<sup>37</sup>

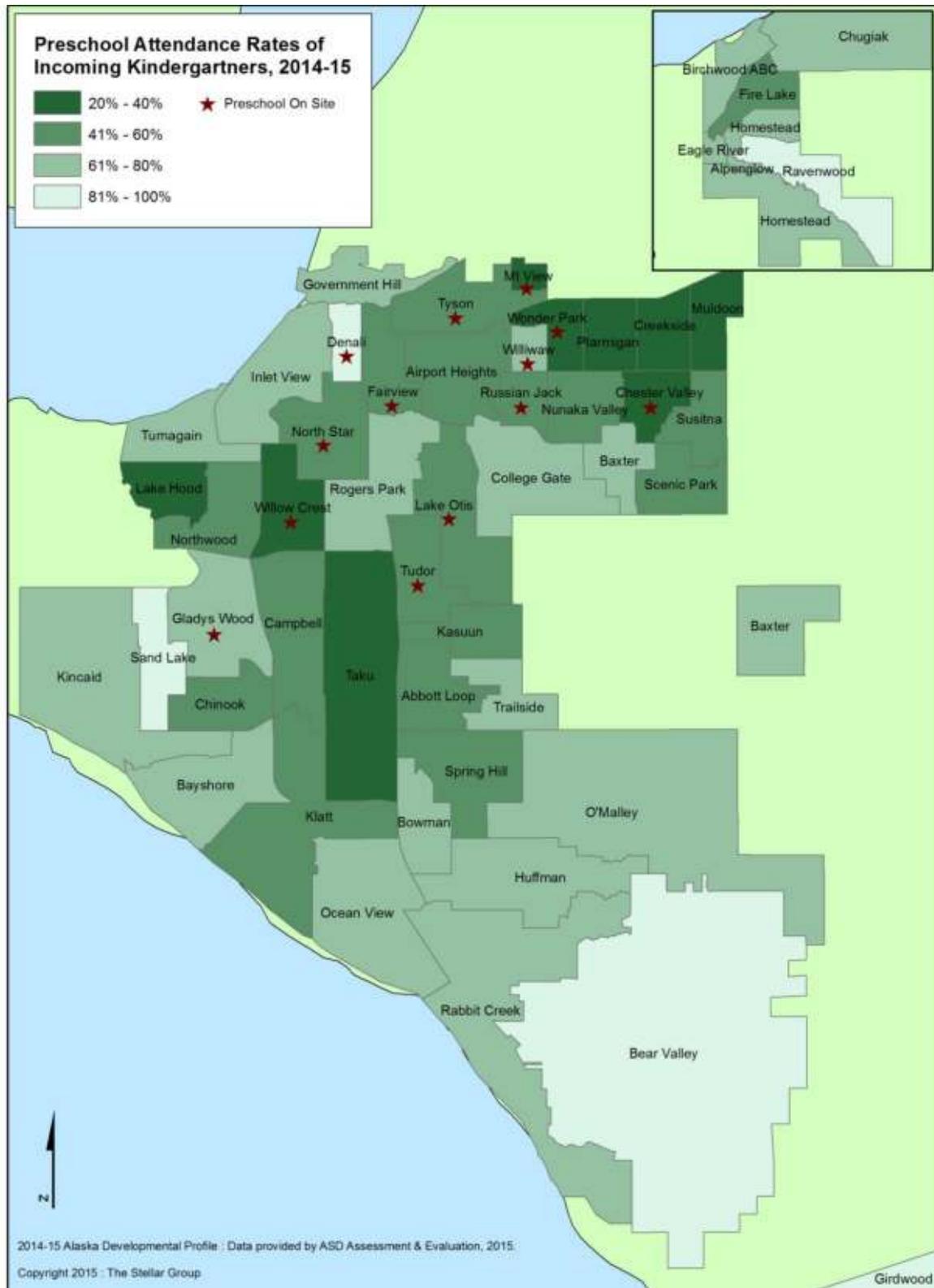


Source: ASD Assessment & Evaluation, Alaska Developmental Profile Data.

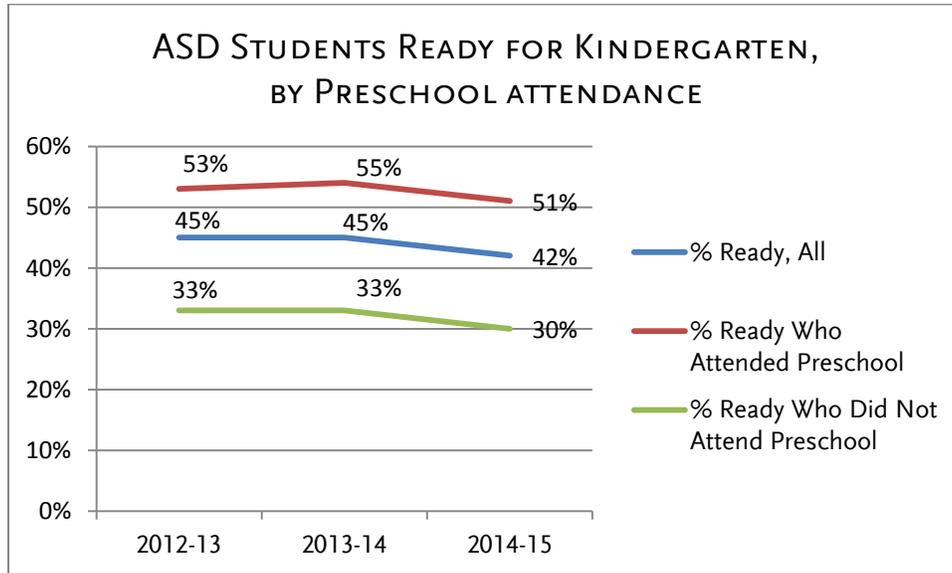
In 2014/15, 59% of all incoming kindergartners attended preschool.<sup>38</sup> However, the percent of kindergartners who have attended preschool before kindergarten entry varies significantly by school. In 2014-15, only 20-40% of incoming kindergartners at many schools in Northeast Anchorage attended preschool, although some of these schools such as Mountain View, Wonder Park and Chester Valley have preschool programs on site. This could be because these programs serve a low number of children, relative to the total. A similarly low percentage attended preschool at Lake Hood, Willow Crest, and Taku Elementary Schools. The highest rates of preschool attendance for neighborhood schools were at Sand Lake, Denali, Bear Valley, Girdwood and Ravenwood Elementary Schools. A number of charter schools also had high preschool attendance, such as Rilke Schule, Eagle Academy, Aquarian, and Chugach Optional Elementary School. The map on page 26 shows preschool attendance rates at the neighborhood elementary schools across Anchorage in 2014/15.

<sup>37</sup> Anchorage School District, Assessment & Evaluation, Alaska Developmental Profile Data, 2010/11 – 2014/15.

<sup>38</sup> Anchorage School District, Assessment & Evaluation, Alaska Developmental Profile Data.

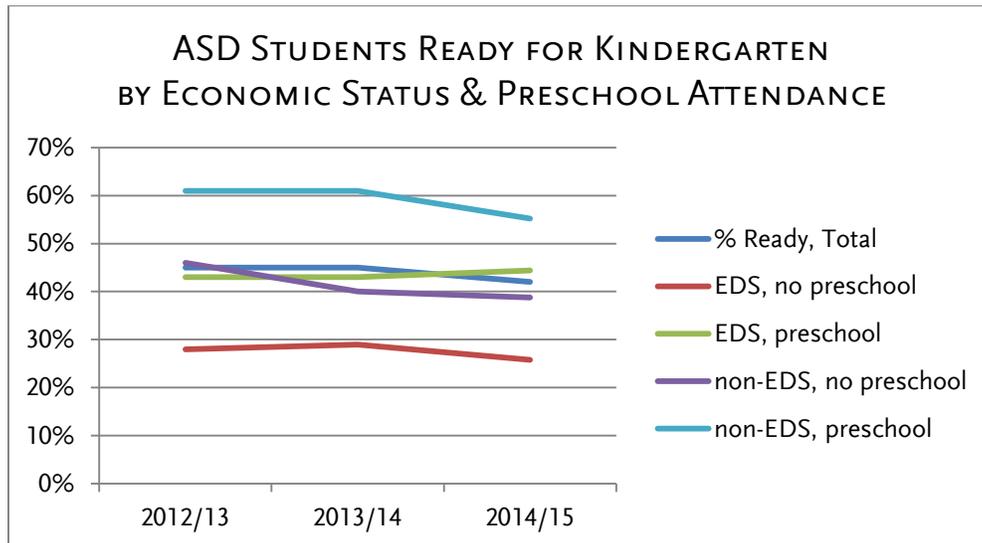


Going to preschool has an impact on how ready children are when they start school. ASD kindergartners who attend preschool have a rate of school readiness that is 20% higher than that of their non-preschool attending peers. Children who did not attend preschool are less likely to be ready than those who did attend preschool.



Source: ASD Assessment & Evaluation, Alaska Developmental Profile data.

The impact of preschool is even more pronounced when looking at the difference in readiness between EDS and non-EDS kindergartners who have not attended preschool.



Source: ASD Assessment & Evaluation, Alaska Developmental Profile data.

EDS children are not only less likely to be ready for school if they do not attend preschool, there are also less likely to have attended preschool at all. In ASD’s kindergarten class of 2014/15, only 469 non-EDS kindergartners did not go to preschool while 1049 EDS kindergartners did not attend preschool.

Kindergarten readiness is defined by the 90% by 2020 Community Partnership as a sum score of 20 or higher on the Alaska Developmental Profile (ADP). All incoming kindergartners in Alaska are assessed

with the ADP during their first six weeks of kindergarten. A score of 20 or higher has been found to be predictive of scoring at or above proficient on standardized tests in reading and math when they are in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.<sup>39</sup>

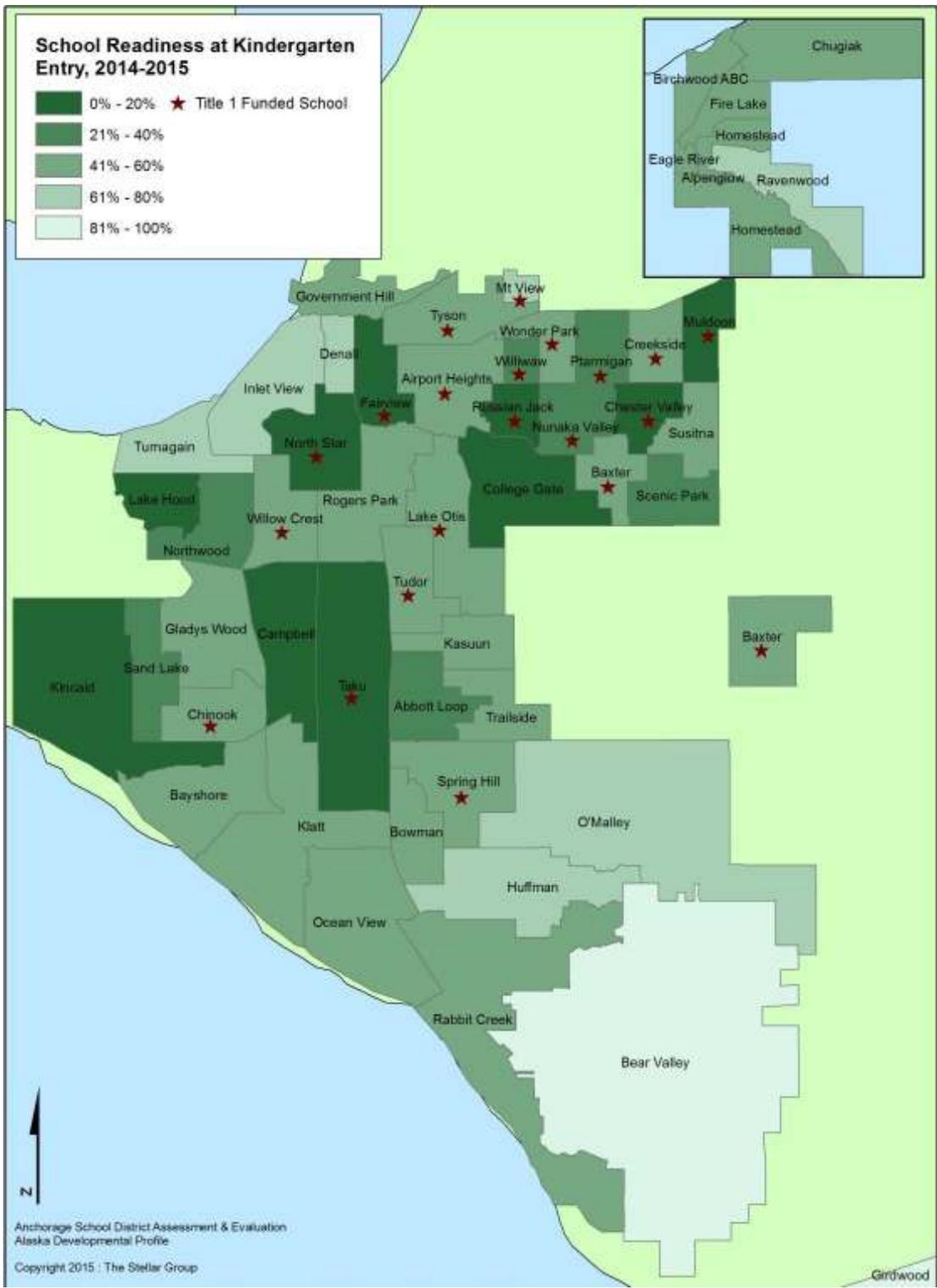
As the map on page 29 shows, kindergarten readiness rates at each of the neighborhood schools is highly varied. Many factors influence kindergarten readiness each year for individual students. This map provides a one year look at kindergarten readiness at Anchorage elementary schools, and can not account for the many individual factors that may be present in a school from year to year.

While Mountain View is one of the most low-income schools in Anchorage, it has a high rate of kindergarten readiness in 2014/15, compared to similar schools. Kindergartners at Wonder Park were also more likely to be ready. This could be because of the benefits of the ASD preschool programs in these schools as well as other programs such as KCI that serve children in their neighborhood preschools. However, Russian Jack, and Chester Valley, also have preschool programs and have low - rates of readiness. This could be because the programs serve a low percentage of all incoming kindergartners, or because of the special populations that the schools serve. For example Russian Jack has a special program for hearing impaired students. Muldoon, Fairview, North Star, Chester Valley and Taku also have lower than average rates of readiness. Non-Title 1 schools with low rates of readiness include Kincaid, Campbell, Taku, and Lake Hood.

Schools in South Anchorage and Eagle River and Girdwood lead in readiness and have low-levels of children in poverty.

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<sup>39</sup> ASD Assessment & Evaluation, Alaska Developmental Profile, Cut Score Analysis, January 2015.



## VI. CHILDREN'S HEALTH & WELL BEING IN ANCHORAGE

Early childhood is considered to be the most important phase of life and a time of great opportunity as well as great vulnerability for children. How well children grow and develop depends largely on the opportunities and experiences that they have early in life. Home, community and care settings all play an important role.

### PRENATAL CARE & BIRTH

Most women receive some form of prenatal care while they are pregnant. In Anchorage, from 2011-13:

- 78.4% of women received prenatal care in their first trimester;
- 62.3% received prenatal care that was adequate or better during their pregnancy;
- 11.3% reported smoking while pregnant;
- 3.1% reported drinking while pregnant (2012 only).<sup>40</sup>

Most of the babies born in Anchorage are healthy:

- 10.1% were pre-term births.
- 6.3% had low-birth weight.<sup>41</sup>

Nationwide, the US average for premature births was 11.4% in 2014, its lowest rate ever. Being uninsured, inadequate prenatal care and smoking are all risk factors for premature births.<sup>42</sup> In Anchorage, Providence Hospital has the only Level 3, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and many women with high risk pregnancies come to Anchorage specifically for these services, which could increase the number of pre-term and low-birth weight babies born in Anchorage.

In Anchorage, and Alaska, data is also collected separately for Caucasian and Alaska Native births. Although they receive similar rates of prenatal care, Alaska Native women are far more likely to engage in at risk behaviors during pregnancy, and at increased risk of preterm or low-birth weight births:

- 1.5 times more likely to smoke during pregnancy (31.6% vs. 12.2%)
- Twice as likely to drink during pregnancy (6.7% vs. 3.3%, 2012 data only);
- 1.5 times more likely to be unwed (56.9% vs. 22.4%);
- 2.5 times more likely to have failed to graduate from high school (6% vs 21%);
- 30% more likely to have a pre-term birth (11.7% vs. 9%).<sup>43</sup>

### BREASTFEEDING INITIATION & PERSEVERANCE

In Alaska breastfeeding initiation rates are among the highest in the nation. Women with higher levels of education were more likely to breastfeeding. Statewide, from 2009-11:

- 93.4% of women reported initiating breastfeeding;
- 72.5% are still breastfeeding at 8 weeks post-partum;
- White women are more likely than Alaska Native women to continue breastfeeding.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, Birth Profile for Anchorage, 2011-2013.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> March of Dimes, 2014 Premature Birth Report Card. <http://www.marchofdimes.org/materials/premature-birth-report-card-united-states.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, Birth Profile for Anchorage, 2011-2013.

<sup>44</sup> Alaska Maternal and Child Health Data Book 2014, p. 30-31.

### CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATIONS

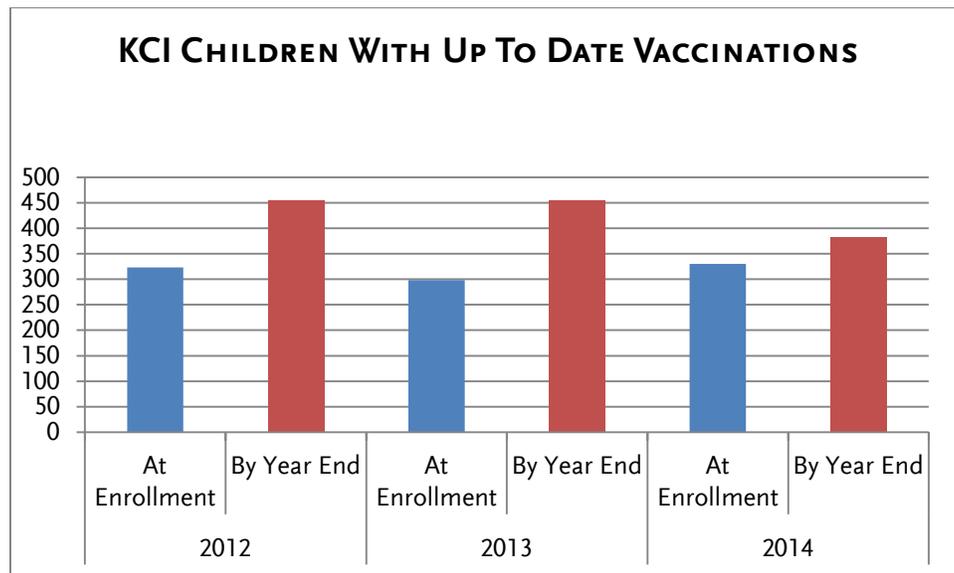
Only 64.5% of Alaskan children aged 19-35 months have completed the recommended immunization series. Between 2007-2012 there was no significant change in immunization rates and Alaska’s immunization rates are similar to the US average.<sup>45</sup> These are still well below the Healthy Alaskans 2020 goal of 75% of children vaccinated on time.

Mothers of 3 years olds reported that the most common reason for delaying or deciding not to get shots for their children were:

- 61% felt too many shots given at once;
- 48% thought some shots given to early;
- 39% think that shots do more harm than good;
- 17% have religious beliefs or concerns
- 12% do not think the diseases affect their child.<sup>46</sup>

Other reasons cited included lack of insurance, forgetting to make appointments, allergies, family history of allergic response, child sick at time, and shots not available in clinic as reasons for not getting their child immunized.<sup>47</sup>

For children entering KCI, a number are not up to date on their vaccinations at enrollment. Childcare licensing requires children to have all of the required immunizations before attending, so between enrollment and beginning the program parents must bring their children up to date. In 2012, 86% of children were up to date on their enrollments at enrollment, in 2013 only 66% were and in 2014, 71%. Recent years are above the Alaskan average, but below the Healthy Alaskans 2020 goals.



Source: KCI Program Data, 2012-14.

### BIRTH DEFECTS AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS

<sup>45</sup> Healthy Alaskans 2020 25 Leading Health Priorities, <http://hss.state.ak.us/ha2020/25LHI.htm#17>.

<sup>46</sup> Alaska Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey (CUBS) 2013 Data Sheet, Immunizations.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

The overall percentage of children born with birth defects is low. For 2013, in Anchorage, 99.4% of children are born without any noticeable birth defects; the rate is the same Statewide. The most commonly reported birth defects observed are gastroschisis, cleft lip, down syndrome, chromosomal disorder or hypospadias. In 2013, 3-5 children in Anchorage were diagnosed with each of these conditions at birth. A child may have more than one reported birth defect.<sup>48</sup> This number is likely lower than the actual occurrence, because of the short time frame between birth and discharge by hospital or birthing staff. Many more birth defects, or special needs are discovered as children grow and approach different developmental milestones.

The Program for Infants & Children (PIC) provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers with special needs who are age 0-3, and their families. In 2015, 362 children in Eagle River and Anchorage are receiving services from PIC.<sup>49</sup> When children age out of PIC, they often transfer to an ASD program that provides special education for children aged 3 to 5 who experience developmental delays or other disabilities. In 2014-15, approximately 450 children are being served by the ASD Special Education preschool program.<sup>50</sup>

Statewide, 8.1% of 3-year olds have been enrolled in an early intervention or infant learning program, and another 3.9% have been enrolled in a school district special education or special needs program. The most common specialized services that parents reported receiving for their children were:

- 6% Hearing specialist;
- 5.5% Speech or language therapist;
- 4.4% Eye specialist;
- 3.8% Physical or occupational therapist.<sup>51</sup>

## HEALTH & NUTRITION

From 2008 to 2012, there was a significant decline in the overall proportion of Alaskan mothers who reported that their 3-year old had had no health insurance of any kind at some time. It fell from 16.2% in 2008 to 7.9% in 2012. In 2012, Alaska Native mothers were more likely (10.2%) than Caucasians (7.8%) to report that their 3-year old was ever not covered by health insurance.<sup>52</sup> From 2009-2011, 79% of mothers in Anchorage/Mat-Su region reported having health care coverage before becoming pregnant.<sup>53</sup> Having health care makes it more likely that people will get the health care they need, and avoid delaying or missing needed health care, and increases the likelihood of receiving preventative care.

The most common conditions that children served by KCI are receiving medical treatment for include anemia, asthma and hearing or vision problems. Since 2012, the number of children being treated for asthma has more than tripled (to 55 from 14) and the number of children with anemia has more than doubled (from 3 to 8).

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<sup>48</sup> Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, Birth Defects for Anchorage, 2013.

<sup>49</sup> PIC program participant data, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> E-mails with Beth Snyder, Early Childhood Specialist, Anchorage School District, February 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Alaska Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey, 2013 Data Sheet.

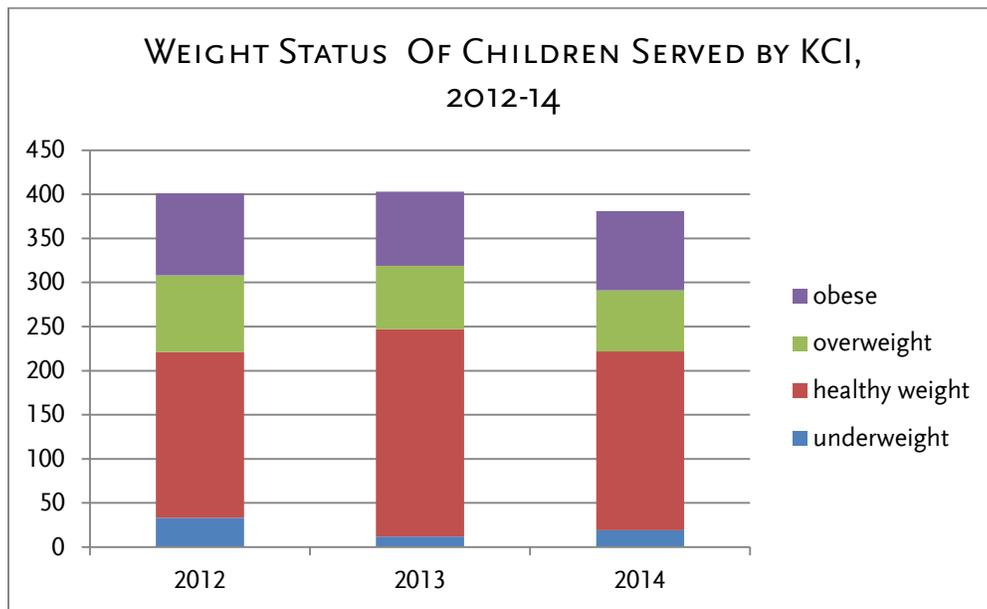
<sup>52</sup> State of Alaska, Department of Health & Social Services, Alaska Maternal Child Health Data Book 2014, p.54.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

The prevalence of overweight and obesity in children is a public health concern in Alaska. A study of Alaska DHSS program records found a high prevalence of obesity and overweight in Alaskan children in a variety of age groups:

- 41% of 2-4 year olds in WIC statewide;
- 40% of 3-year olds statewide;
- 35% of kindergartners statewide;
- 36% of ASD K-12<sup>th</sup> graders.<sup>54</sup>

A high percentage of the children served by KCI are also overweight or obese. In 2014, 42% of the children were overweight or obese, down slightly from 45% of children in 2012.



Source: KCI Program Data, 2012-14.

Public health experts agree that good nutrition and physical activity play a significant role in decreasing the prevalence of overweight and obesity. Sugar sweetened beverage consumption is a particular concern. In the 2013 CUBS survey, Anchorage mothers of 3 year olds were asked what drinks their child had had the previous day:

- 97% had water, in any amount;
- 95% had milk, in any amount;
- 52% had 100% fruit juice, in any amount;
- 20% had a sweetened drink, in any amount;
- 12% had soda, in any amount.<sup>55</sup>

Many children also do not get the recommended five servings of fruit or vegetables each day. In the 2013 CUBS survey, Anchorage mothers of 3 year olds were asked about specific foods their child had had the previous day, 74% had 2 or more servings of fruit in the day prior, but only 20% had had two or more servings of vegetables that day (not including French fries). 39% had at least one serving of

<sup>54</sup> State of Alaska, Department of Health & Social Services, Alaska Obesity Facts Report 2012, p. 18.

<sup>55</sup> 2013 Childhood Understanding Behaviors (CUBS) Survey, Anchorage, AK responses, provided by State of Alaska, DHSS, DPH, Maternal Child Health Epidemiology, March 2015.

French fries and 68% had one or more servings of candy or cookies.<sup>56</sup> According to the 2013 Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance Survey (YRBSS), only 20% of Alaskan youth consumed vegetables or fruits five or more times per day over the last seven days.<sup>57</sup>

A Gallup survey ranked Anchorage the lowest out of 189 metro communities for having easy access to affordable fruits and vegetables. Only 67.3% of Anchorage residents reported easy access to affordable fruits and vegetables, and Anchorage has been the lowest ranked community since 2008.<sup>58</sup>

### FOOD INSECURITY

A recent study conducted for the Food Bank of Alaska (FBA) estimates that 1 in 7 Alaskans can not count on their next meal. In any given week, 6,300 Alaskan households visit a food pantry, soup kitchen or other program for food assistance. Nearly 155,000 people are served annually. FBA estimates that 32% of those served are children under 18.<sup>59</sup>

According to FBA, hungry Alaskans make difficult choices, including:

- 64% decide between food and transportation;
- 59% choose whether to heat or eat;
- 56% choose between medicine and meals;
- 53% decide whether to pay rent or buy food.<sup>60</sup>

For youth who experience food insecurity, there are numerous risks in addition to poor diet and nutrition, such as reduced physical and mental health, decreased academic achievement, as well as behavioral and social problems.

### HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness affects many families in Anchorage, including those with children. The homeless can be found in the streets, in cars, in emergency housing such as homeless shelters, in transitional housing, and at friends and relatives houses. A 2013 point in time count of the homeless in Anchorage's streets and shelters found that 1,112 people, including 165 children under the age of 18.<sup>61</sup> It is difficult to count all homeless people, such as those who are staying with friends and relatives, or in makeshift or substandard housing. In the 2012 PRAMS survey, 3% of women in Anchorage reported being homeless in the 12 months prior to their baby being born.<sup>62</sup>

KCI families also experience homelessness. In 2014, 79 KCI families with 85 children were identified as homeless, nearly 20% of the total families served. Only 19, or 24% of those families found housing during the enrollment year. Sixty families received referrals for housing assistance in 2014.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> State of Alaska, Department of Health & Social Services, 2014 SNAP-Ed Program Needs Assessment, p. 13.

<sup>58</sup> Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, January 2012-December 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/168368/anchorage-access-fruits-vegetables-remains-lowest.aspx>

<sup>59</sup> Food Bank of Alaska, Hunger in America Alaska Report 2014 Executive Summary.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

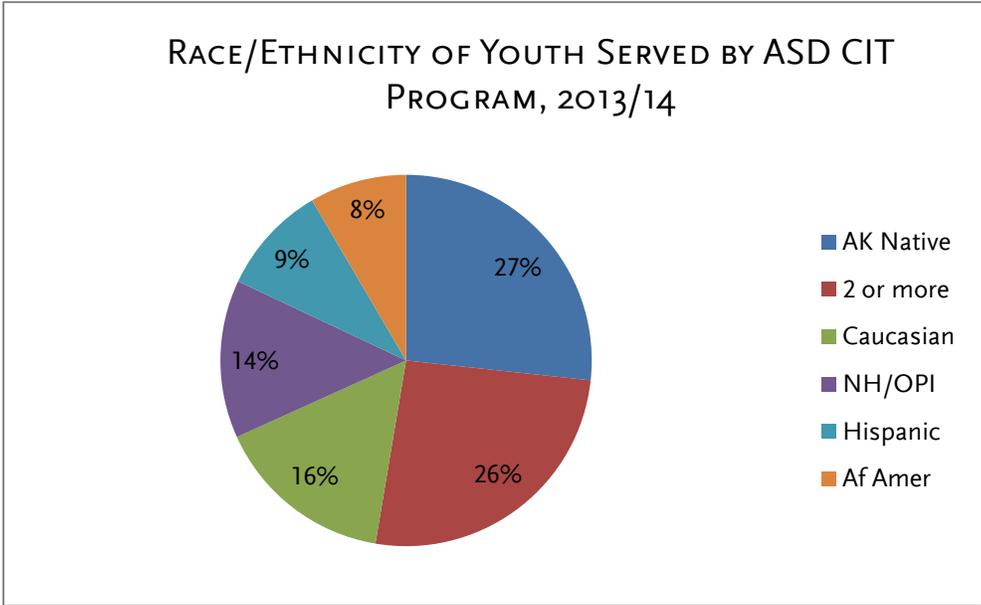
<sup>61</sup> Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, Point in Time Summary, January 28, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> 2012 PRAMS Survey Results, Anchorage, AK responses, provided by State of Alaska, DHSS, DPH, Maternal Child Health Epidemiology, March 2015.

ASD has a Child in Transition (CIT) program that provides services to children who lack a fixed, regular and adequate residence. During the 2013/14 school year, the program identified 3453 homeless children.<sup>63</sup> Of those children, there were:

- 472 infants/toddlers;
- 380 Preschool aged; of those:
  - 68 were served by ASD Pre-K programs;
  - 85 were served by KCI;
  - 24 were served by Cook Inlet Native Head Start.<sup>64</sup>

Of those who disclosed race/ethnic data to the program, 84% were non-Caucasian, while only 55% of the ASD student population is.<sup>65</sup>



Source: Anchorage School District, Child in Transition Program.

Some of the elementary schools with the highest numbers of homeless children attending include Williwaw (57), Willow Crest (45), Fairview (44), Northwood (44), and North Star (42), and Russian Jack (41).

**FAMILY STRESS & ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)**

There is a growing understanding that adverse childhood experiences (ACES) can impact later-life health and well-being. ACES include experiencing emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, as well as household dysfunction such as mental illness, substance abuse, incarceration, domestic violence or divorce/separation and emotional and physical neglect that happen in the first 18 years of life.<sup>66</sup>

A study of ACES in Alaska, found that those with 4 or more ACES, were:

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<sup>63</sup> Anchorage School District Child in Transition Program, 2013/14 Program Data provided on February 2015.  
<sup>64</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>65</sup> Anchorage School District website, About ASD, <http://www.asdk12.org/aboutasd>, retrieved on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015.  
<sup>66</sup> Center for Disease Control, Overview of Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acesstudy/> retrieved on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

- More likely to smoke (34.5% vs. 14.4% with zero ACES);
- More likely to have been told they have a depressive disorder (35.3% vs. 6.8%);
- Less likely to own their own home (57.9% vs. 70.2%);
- Less likely to report being able to work (9.6% vs. 3.5%).<sup>67</sup>

The 2012 Alaska PRAMS survey asks women about 14 life stressors that may have happened to them in the 12 months prior to their new baby's birth. Statewide, the number of women experiencing two or more has declined from 50% in 2002 to 41% in 2011.<sup>68</sup> In the 2012 PRAMS survey, the most common stressors reported by Anchorage women were:

- 40% moved to a new address;
- 21% had a close family member who was very sick and had to go into the hospital;
- 19% reported having someone close to them die;
- 17% reported arguing with their with partner more than usual;
- 15% were apart from their husband or partner due to military deployment or extended work travel;
- 13% had someone close to them have a problem with drinking, drugs or other substance abuse.<sup>69</sup>

Anchorage women also reported financial stressors

- 15% reported being unable to pay bills such as rent, mortgage or other bills;
- 14% reported reduced income;
- 7% reported losing a job they wanted to keep;
- 6% reported their husband or partner lose his job.<sup>70</sup>

In 2013, Anchorage mothers of 3 year olds reported that in their child's life, they had experienced any of the following events (multiple events may be reported for each child):

- 43% change in household member (including birth of a sibling);
- 31% witnessing conflict between family members;
- 17% being away for more than a month;
- 8% overnight stay in a hospital;
- 8% death of a close family member;
- 8% alcoholism or mental health issues in a family member.<sup>71</sup>

3% of Anchorage mothers of 3 year olds also reported having a controlling partner, and less than 1% reported having been a victim of domestic violence in the last month;<sup>72</sup> the same percentage of women reported experiencing domestic violence while pregnant. <sup>73</sup>

Many of these experiences reported are potential ACES for children in the families, such as witnessing or experiencing violence in the house, substance abuse or having a family member with mental health or substance abuse issues, and experiencing homelessness or the death of a close family member.

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<sup>67</sup> Alaska Mental Health Board, "Adverse Childhood Experiences in Alaska," Presentation on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

<sup>68</sup> State of Alaska, Department of Health & Social Services, Alaska Maternal Child Health Data Book 2014, p.23.

<sup>69</sup> 2012 PRAMS Survey Results for Anchorage, provided by State of Alaska, DHSS, DPH, MCH, March 2015.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> 2013 CUBS Survey Results for Anchorage, provided by State of Alaska, DHSS, DPH, MCH, March 2015

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> 2012 PRAMS Survey Results for Anchorage, provided by State of Alaska, DHSS, DPH, MCH, March 2015.

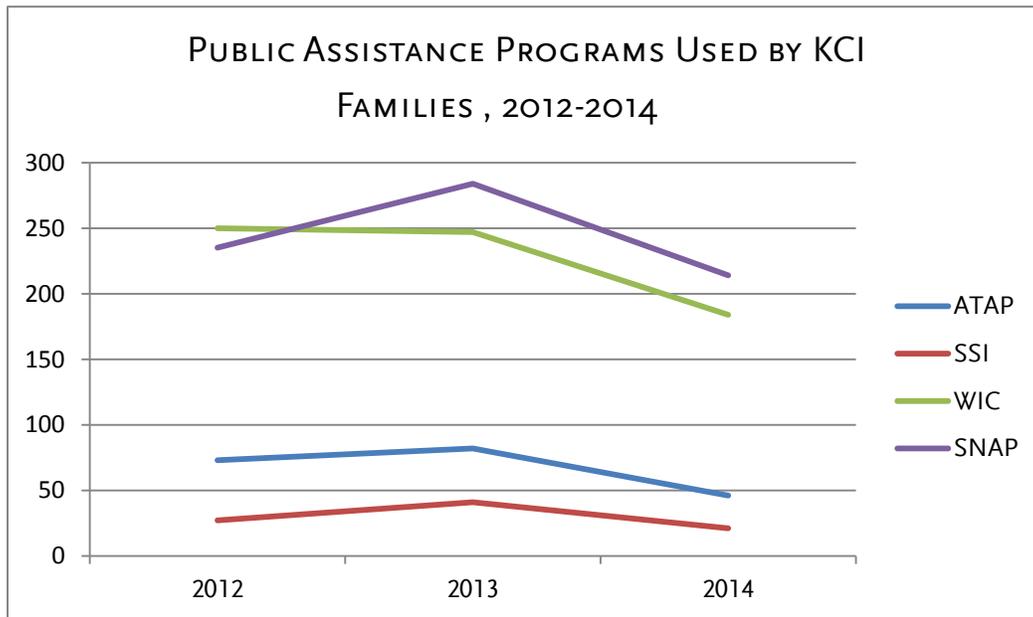
### CHILD MALTREATMENT

Statewide, there were 1422 protective service reports received in February 2015 and the majority of allegations were for neglect.<sup>74</sup> Also in February of 2015 investigations of allegations received resulted in 271 substantiated victims, of whom 47% were five or younger. Just over half of all substantiated victims were AN/AI.<sup>75</sup> 2396 children are in out of home placements, 983 of them in Anchorage, forty-one percent of the total.<sup>76</sup>

Between 2006 and 2013, the average monthly number of children in State custody who were five or younger, went up by 15%.<sup>77</sup> In April 2014, the Office of Children’s Services (OCS) had 726 children under the age of five in foster care statewide, and 57% of those children who had been in care for more than a year had a permanent placement identified.<sup>78</sup> No KCI referrals were made for child abuse or neglect from 2012-14.

### USE OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS BY CHILDREN

There are a number of public assistance programs that are available for families with young children. Many of these programs are used by KCI families. Overall the number of families using these programs has gone down slightly since 2012, which is consistent with statewide enrollment in these programs. In 2014, there were also fewer KCI families.



Source: KCI Program Data, 2012-14.

<sup>74</sup> State of Alaska, DHHS, Office of Children’s Services, Protective Service Report, February 2015.

<sup>75</sup> State of Alaska, DHHS, Office of Children’s Services, Substantiated Victims by Age & Race, February 2015.

<sup>76</sup> State of Alaska, DHHS, Office of Children’s Services, Children in Placement Report, February 2015.

<sup>77</sup> Alaska Mental Health Board, “Adverse Childhood Experiences in Alaska,” Presentation on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

<sup>78</sup> State of Alaska, DHHS, Office of Children’s Services, 2014 Progress & Services Report.

### *Women, Infants, and Children Program*

The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program provides supplemental food and nutrition support for pregnant and breastfeeding women and their children from birth to age five. To qualify for WIC, family income must be at or below 185% of the AkFPL. In Anchorage, the WIC program has 6675 clients, and estimates that another 3600 are un-served. Forty-four percent of all clients are located in 99508 and 99504 zip codes of Northeast and Midtown Anchorage.<sup>79</sup> In 2012, 40% of pregnant women in Anchorage reported using WIC services while pregnant.<sup>80</sup>

### *Denali Kid Care*

Denali Kid Care is the State's Medicaid program for low-income pregnant women and children under 18. While the State no longer reports Denali Kid Care separately from other Medicaid data, since February 2010 through February 2015, the total number of cases has grown. Statewide, the caseload peaked at 70,232 in February 2013, and has since dropped to 62,861 cases in February 2015. Of those cases, 24,488 are in Anchorage, or 39%.<sup>81</sup>

According to the Center for Medicaid Services, which provides part of the funding for Denali Kid Care – the number of children served increased between FY11 and FY13, the most recent year data was available. In FY 11, 14,278 children in Alaska were served, while in FY13, 16,566 children were served.<sup>82</sup>

### *Alaska Temporary Assistance Program*

Alaska Temporary Assistance Program (ATAP) provides cash assistance and work services to low-income families with children to help with meeting basic needs. There are 1,479 families in Anchorage currently receiving ATAP benefits. Statewide, 61% of all ATAP households have only one parent present, and 24% of cases provide benefits only for children.

### *Parents Achieving Self-Sufficiency (PASS)*

The PASS I program provides daycare assistance to families currently receiving Temporary Aid for Needy Families benefits (TANF) and participating in job training or related activities. The PASS II provides assistance for families transitioning off of TANF benefits, and PASS III provides assistance for all low-income families. PASS I has no co-pay for parents, for PASS II and III, the level of assistance is determined using a sliding scale based on family income. Children with a PASS authorization may go to any type of approved provider. The PASS program serves infants, toddlers, pre-school and school-aged children up to the age of 12.

In 2014, 791 young (not yet school aged) children participated in the PASS I Program in Anchorage from 580 families. Of these, 38%, or 298 were preschool aged and 52% of all children went to a licensed day care center.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Women, Infants & Children Program Data, provided by State of Alaska, DHSS, WIC program, on February 1, 2015.

<sup>80</sup> 2012 PRAMS survey results, Anchorage, AK responses, provided by State of Alaska, DHSS, DPH, Maternal Child Health Epidemiology, March 2015.

<sup>81</sup> AK Department of Health & Social Services- Division of Public Assistance, Monthly Caseload & Benefits Summary, February 2015. Retrieved from

<sup>82</sup> CHIP Enrollment by State, 2012 & 2013 Number of Children Ever Served Report, <http://medicaid.gov/chip/reports-and-evaluations/reports-and-evaluations.html>.

<sup>83</sup> State of Alaska, Division of Public Assistance, 2014 PASS I usage in Anchorage, provided by DPA staff, April 2015.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

Families in Anchorage are generally better off than in other parts of Alaska. While Alaska weathered the economic downturn well, and the job market is strong right now, the State's economic future is uncertain due to the low-price of oil, the royalties from which fund most state government programs and services.

The State's uncertain economic future makes program planning challenging at this time. Early childhood education programs in Anchorage are facing significant cuts, and the extent of those cuts and the impact on services to low-income children and families is unknown at this time. However, it is likely that there will be reduced funding and support for early education at the state level in the near term.

These cuts will make existing programs such as KCI's even more important. Preschool has a significant impact on school readiness for low-income Anchorage children. National research has also shown that more exposure to preschool helps low-income children start school more ready.<sup>84</sup> That means that children who begin preschool at 3 years old, instead of 4 years old are even more likely to be ready when they begin kindergarten.

### ENROLLMENT & ELIGIBILITY

Because KCI and ASD programs focus primarily on four year olds, there are more un-served low-income 3 year olds than 4 year olds in Anchorage. In addition to a likelihood of increased school readiness for children who are enrolled for two years, there may be additional benefits such as less transience in the KCI program, as children who enroll at 3 years old are more likely to reenroll for another year when they are 4 years old.

Another way to increase the children served at either age is to begin serving more children at 130% of the AkFPL. There are an additional 626, 3 and 4 year old children who are between 100 - 130% of the poverty level who are not currently being served by Head Start or ASD. This is nearly 20% of the total children who will enter ASD on any given year. As KCI continues to recruit new children into Head Start programs, it should beyond who lives in the area around the program locations, but also at who may work nearby them, or which centers may be at convenient transit points for people going from one part of town to another, whether traveling for work or to take other children to a school nearby.

### OTHER EMERGING ISSUES

The high cost and limited availability of housing is going to continue to be an issue for families in Anchorage over the next few years. This will impact not just KCI families, but also KCI staff who are lower wage earners. KCI staff may find that more families experience housing challenges, or more homeless youth are coming into the program.

The tightening labor market and the high demand for child care workers will also likely continue to cause staffing challenges for KCI. Wage incentive programs such as those offered by thread, could provide some assistance. Offering higher wages or other benefits and incentives not offered by similar employers may be necessary to keep the current workforce and attract replacement workers.

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<sup>84</sup> Domitrovich, C., et al. "One versus two years: Does the length of exposure to an enhanced preschool program impact the academic functioning of disadvantaged children in kindergarten?" *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 28 (2013) , 704-13.