The Status of Young Children in Washtenaw County 2010

For our community to make wise decisions about the future of our young children, we need to understand the current status of young children in Washtenaw County.

This report presents current community data in five areas, each of which makes a critical contribution to the optimal brain development, health and early learning of young children.
The first five years of a child’s life are a time of great opportunity!

The young child’s early experiences and environments directly impact the development of his or her brain. Everything children see, every word they hear, everything they do—from their first breath, shapes the rapidly developing architecture of their brains. We now know that by age four, ninety percent of this architecture will be built and the foundation for language, social behavior, problem solving ability and emotional health will be mostly created…or not.

To be successful in school and in life, Washtenaw County’s young children must grow up in an environment that develops self-confidence, positive social and emotional skills, and a love for learning. There is much that our community can do to make sure every young child has this foundation. Leaders in our communities and in communities across our state are working together in new ways so that every infant, toddler and preschooler has the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential.

Community leaders in Washtenaw County who understand the vital importance of investing in young children come together regularly as part of the Washtenaw Success by 6®/Washtenaw Great Start Collaborative Leadership Commission, to work to ensure that our youngest citizens are prepared for success in school and life. With the support of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, The United Way of Washtenaw County, the Washtenaw Intermediate School District and Washtenaw County Government, Washtenaw Success by 6® brings you this report as part of our ongoing work to ensure that every child enters kindergarten healthy and eager to learn.
The recent economic downturn has naturally had an effect on the children of Washtenaw County, as unemployment, foreclosure and financial instability have grown across the county.

- Washtenaw County has the 6th largest population of preschool children in the State of Michigan, and until 2008 that population was growing, although trends in school age children suggest that we have seen a decline in preschool population (primarily due to families moving away from the county) in the past two years. (Kids Count)

- 24% of our K-12 children receive the free or reduced lunch program, which indicates that approximately a quarter of our preschool children are also living in homes where food stability is a challenge. (Kids Count)

- Unemployment has risen significantly in Washtenaw County with a current rate of 10.0% in the summer of 2010. (Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth)

- Foreclosure on homes is significantly up on Washtenaw County with 1 in every 68 homes in foreclosure. Although these rates vary, some areas in the east and south of the county are currently experiencing foreclosure frequency as high as 1 in every 19 homes. (Southeast Michigan Council of Governments)

Data in the area of family income and poverty lags behind by two to five years, so we have yet to see the data for the clear impact that the recession is having on young children - publicly funded preschool, childcare, food and shelter organizations all report a surge in the number of families with preschool children accessing their support and assistance services.
In the area of Pediatric Health Care, Washtenaw County is seeing mixed data - some areas of improvement, and some areas where we are not doing as well.

- Recent data shows an increase in the number of pregnant women who smoked during pregnancy, rising to 7.5% of all pregnancies. This percentage, which had been dropping, has been climbing for the past two years. Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of prenatal complications, low birth weight, early delivery and greater chance of birth defects. (Kids Count)

- The rate of fully immunized toddlers has declined to a rate of 68.9%. Although better than the state average, a decline means that more of our children are susceptible to serious illness and disease. (Kids Count)

- Our infant mortality rate continues to decline, which is good news, but it is still disproportionately high for African American babies, at 13.4 deaths per every 1,000 births. This compares to 5.7 deaths per 1,000 births for the full county population. (Kids Count)

- Our county percentage of children insured by Medicaid and MIChild continues to rise. While in many ways a good sign, as it means that children are insured and receiving medical care, the increase in both low-income programs is an indicator of the continued economic hard times in Washtenaw County. (Kids Count)

- On another positive note, our rate of births to teens continues to drop to a low of 13 per 1000 births in the county in 2008. (Kids Count)
Dental Health Care is the often overlooked aspect of health care for children from birth to six. Parents often mistakenly think that “baby teeth” are not important and that not caring for them will not have a significant impact on the adult teeth that will follow. On a national level, significant tooth decay is 5 times more common in preschoolers than asthma. (US Surgeon General) In addition, dental care is one area where prevention and treating concerns early has a clear and direct impact on both reducing costs and pain for the child.

In Washtenaw County, Washtenaw Head Start has led the way in advocating for the dental health of preschool children with a multi-year grant funded dental health initiative. This initiative has increased the number of Medicaid accepting dentists in the county (the insurance does not help if the practices will not accept it). The initiative is also ensuring that over 700 children in Head Start and Great Start Readiness programs co-housed with Head Start programs, received Fluoride varnish designed to protect their growing teeth in the 2009-10 school year.

Washtenaw Success by 6 will expand the fluoride varnish program to include all the GSRP children in the county in the 2010-11 school year, providing two treatments during the year, with the support and help of a strong group of local dentists and hygienists willing to give their time to ensure that preschools receive quality dental care and referrals. This program has been funded by the United Way of Washtenaw County and The Rotary Club of Ann Arbor.

The Washtenaw Birth to Six collaboration and the Washtenaw Success by 6 Leadership Commission have both added their support to advocating for a dental home for all children birth to six, in addition to a necessary medical home.
The data for Social and Emotional Health of our youngest citizens is generally positive. Caring for the Social and Emotional needs of children from birth to six is central to ensuring that they are developing well. Young children who are socially and emotionally healthy are self-confident and enjoy exploring their worlds. Healthy young children can more easily cope with their emotions, control their impulses and form friendships.

- Washtenaw County has relatively low levels of children in foster care - 3.8 children for every 1000 in the county. However, we are seeing an increase in our percentage of children suffering from abuse or neglect with an increase from 5.5 to 6.7 children per 1,000. (Michigan Department of Human Services)

- We have seen a steady increase in the number of children referred for, and receiving Early On services throughout the county. We are now at the state-wide goal of 1.3% of infants and 2.4% of children birth to 3 receiving Early On developmental delay and intervention services. Increased referrals from physicians and child care providers, as well as more community outreach have made this improvement possible. (Washtenaw Early On)

- As a community, we continue to face a lack of community resources for mothers dealing with post-natal depression, and other mental health challenges. (Washtenaw Success by 6)

- The percentage of preschool children receiving community mental health services remained at .1% indicating that limited services are available, although probably not at a level that is sufficient for the community. (Community Mental Health)

- A number of projects and initiatives within the community, including EMU’s Autism Collaborative and U of M research outreach programs, are increasing the resources available for families whose children have autism and autism related disorders. (Washtenaw Early On)
The data for Early Care and Education are back on the upswing after a particularly hard 2009-10 school year, with significant cuts to state funding. Quality early child care and education is fundamental to a child’s success and a family’s stability.

- During the 2009-10 school year over 600 preschools received Head Start services from six programs around the county - including the Time for Tots program for homeless children. These programs were in Ypsilanti, Willow Run, Ann Arbor, Manchester and Whitmore Lake. (Washtenaw Head Start)

- During the 2009-10 school year, the state-funded Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) was cut back in the county, with two programs being eliminated. This reduced the number of children served to 443 from 495. However, increased funding in the most recent state-budget has returned those slots to the county, and we anticipate that we will serve close to 500 children in the GRSP program in the coming school year. (Washtenaw Success by 6)

- Child Care continues to be expensive, especially for low and moderate income families. The cost of center-based infant care in Washtenaw County last year averaged $11,400, while a full year of care for a preschooler cost over $9300. This out of the reach of many families in the community. (Child Care Network)

- Although Washtenaw Early On has reached the state goals for inclusion of children in early intervention services at 2.5% of children birth to three, it is estimated that as many as 7% of children actually need services, so continued outreach is needed to continue to reach more children and families with necessary support. Organized outreach to physician offices, preschool and child care providers and community agencies is being done to reach more families and children. (Washtenaw Early On)
Washtenaw County continues to be a state leader in both services for parent education and support, and outcomes for our young children. Parents are a child’s first, and best, teachers. They are able to provide consistent and loving guidance and support throughout a child’s life. Parenting is a tough job, though, and many parents are lacking a proper support system to help them. Parent education and support resources can help.

♦ Despite reduced funding First Steps Washtenaw continues to be offered in all ten school districts, and in the 2009-10 school year served over 2400 children with playgroups, parent education, home visits and developmental assessments (Washtenaw Success by 6)

♦ Washtenaw County boasts one of the lowest teen birth rate in the state. Just 4.8% of births are to individuals less than 20 years of age, while the state’s overall rate is 9.6%. The number of repeat births to teens has also seen a decline in recent years and as of 2006 was 13.6%, again lower that the statewide rate of 18.9% for that same year. There are a number of programs around the county supporting teen parents including First Steps, Catholic Social Services and MIHIP (Department of Community Health)

♦ Washtenaw County has many families for whom English is not a first language. 3.3% of our children in grades K-12 receive English Language Learning Services, but the need for preschool parent support it much higher. The community continues to work to ensure that adequate support for non-native speakers of English are provided throughout the early childhood community. (Kids Count)

♦ With the collaboration of Washtenaw Head Start, the Literacy Coalition of Washtenaw County and Washtenaw Success by 6 the Ypsilanti Imagination Library was launched in April of 2010 to support parent and child literacy in the home. Already enrolling over 1000 children, the program delivers a monthly free book directly to the mailboxes of children in the 48197 and 48198 zip codes, from birth to age 5. (Washtenaw Success by 6)
During the 2009-10 school year the county-wide web-based Head Start and GSRP outreach and enrollment system was implemented by all 22 Head Start and GSRP programs in the county. This program is designed to help ensure that low-income families are connected to the program that is most appropriate for them. In the 2010-11 school year web-access for families will be added. (Washtenaw Success by 6)

Washtenaw Success by 6 continues to support the county wide Parent Network with a regular distribution to hospitals, physician offices and families of parenting material, developmental screening resources, and referrals to community resources. The Parent Network also coordinates the distribution of the monthly parenting e-newsletter full of information on supporting children and local, free, family friendly activities. (Washtenaw Success by 6)

Despite significant funding cuts in the 2010-11 school year, the Washtenaw County school districts, through Washtenaw Success by 6, continue to offer First Steps Washtenaw programs in all ten school districts around the county. These programs provide family support, parent education and developmental assessment for children from birth to six. All are free or offer sliding-scale fees for low and middle income families. (Washtenaw Success by 6)

Washtenaw County continues to have a rich network of non-profit and business based parent support resources. For more details visit:

www.washtenawsuccessby6.org and check out the parent directory.
You can be involved!

Ensuring that the services, activities, programs and community culture needed to support families with young children are in place is a community responsibility, and we can all share in the work of making it happen.

There are many ways that you can help:

- Get involved with Washtenaw Success by 6®. Whether by joining our semi-monthly Leadership Commission, signing up for a task group working in a specific area of your interest, or volunteering to take on a regular task such as data entry or outreach for the Imagination Library, you can personally help move our work forward. To explore where you might best fit with Washtenaw Success by 6® call Sian Owen-Cruise at 734-994-8100, ext 1277 or email at sowencruise@uwwashtenaw.org

- Offer your services and professional skills to a non-profit working to serve the youngest citizens of Washtenaw County—from reading at Head Start, serving on a non-profit health care board, to stapling materials together for First Steps, you can be an integral part of making our system work. To explore where you might fit with an agency call Melissa Pinsky at 734-994-8100, ext 2177

- Share your opinions, and the importance of this issue with your elected representatives, your family and friends, and your professional contacts. Only by talking about the value of early care and education, and asking our political leaders to take the needs of children and families into account, will we be able to ensure that the programs and services that are so needed continue. We encourage you to advocate for expanded funding and let the world know about your commitment.

- Donate - your financial contribution can help so much happen within Washtenaw County - whether to Washtenaw Success by 6®, the United Way of Washtenaw County, or individual agencies, your donation makes great things happen!
Throughout this report on the status of young children in Washtenaw County, we have listed resources in each area of attention. Washtenaw County is home to many excellent parent support, family assistance, and child centered services. We encourage you to directly contact any of the organizations listed in this publication for assistance or support. However, there are a number of centralized resources that can help you connect to the right program or organization for your family.

For referral or support around child care, contact **Child Care Network** at 2385 S. Huron Parkway, Suite 2N * Ann Arbor, MI 48104 * 734.975.1840. They can provide you with child care referrals, licensing information, provider training, information on child care scholarships, and referrals to Head Start, Great Start School Readiness Programs and other programs for your child.

For referral or support around health insurance, Medicaid and MIChild insurance, dental care and treatment, or other health related issues, call Kelly Stupple, **Children’s Child Health Advocate**, Washtenaw Success by 6 and Washtenaw County Public Health, 734-544-3079. She can help you with enrollment, help resolve difficulties with DHS, and assist you in finding support for your young children’s health related needs.

For connection to community organizations, playgroups, classes in a wide variety of areas, concerns about developmental delay, information on publicly funded preschool, the Washtenaw Great Start Collaborative and a wide range of other early childhood questions, call Siân Owen-Cruise, **Director of Washtenaw Success by 6**, 734-994-8100, ext 1277, or visit [www.washtenawsuccessby6.org](http://www.washtenawsuccessby6.org)

For connection to First Steps Washtenaw, the Parents As Teachers based parent support and education program in each of the ten school districts throughout the county call Althea Wilson, East County Parent Educator at 734-678-4653; Beckie Brewis, Greater Washtenaw Parent Educator at 734-428-9711, ext 1343, or Marj Hyde, Director of First Steps Ann Arbor at 734-994-2300, ext 53179.

Finally, Washtenaw County has an excellent **211 service**. This “first call for help” service has 24 hour live, local operators who can connect you to programs and services designed to support you. They offer referrals for all ages and for a wide range of needs. Simply dial 211 from your home or cell phone to be connected to this valuable service.
The Washtenaw Great Start Collaborative is part of the state-wide system of community collaboratives and is supported by Michigan’s Early Childhood Investment Corporation.

We are supported by our four key partners, whose ongoing commitment makes possible all the work that Washtenaw Success by 6 does in Washtenaw County:

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