

ACADIA PARISH SCHOOL BOARD
HEAD START PROGRAM

SPRING, 2023

**COMPREHENSIVE
COMMUNITY
ASSESSMENT**



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COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

SPRING, 2023

This report is a comprehensive community assessment for the Acadia Parish School Board Head Start Program. The purpose of this assessment is to compile relevant information useful in planning a Head Start Program designed with systems responsive to the needs of families; to identify available resources for families and the degree of accessibility of these resources; and to give direction to the planning in determining additional services. The research conducted for this report included updates available since the last census in 2020.

I. OVERVIEW OF SERVICE AREA

LOCATION

Acadia Parish, located in Southwestern Louisiana, includes the incorporated communities of Mermentau, Estherwood, Morse, Rayne, Iota, Church Point, and the parish seat, Crowley. Other unincorporated rural communities include Midland, Egan, Evangeline, Richard, Branch, and Mire. Two parishes similar in population, size, and economy border Acadia: Jefferson Davis to the west, and Vermillion to the south. St. Landry to the north which was similar in demographics according to census information 2010, has surpassed Acadia based on the 2020 census data.

Lafayette Parish to the east includes a population over three times the size of Acadia

Parish. The major city of Lafayette in that parish is located about 20 miles to the east along Interstate-10 and consists of neighboring, adjacent communities forming a metropolitan area.

POPULATION

Census data show a change in the distribution of ages in Acadia Parish. The share of the population that is zero (0) to four-years-old decreased from 7.5% in 2010 to 6.7% in 2020. The program has not seen any significant increases in racial/ethnic groups-the population consists of 76.6% white, 17.2% black and 2.8% Hispanic. White and black groups have shown a slight decrease and the Hispanic group has increased according to the 2020 census. In addition, there has been a shrinking trend of enrolled children within the entire school district for the past eight (8) years. Local school district data show a decrease of approximately 850 children enrolled parish-wide.

According to the Census data the population decreased from (61,773) in 2010 to (57,576) in 2020, a four (4%) percent decrease. Therefore, records from the State Vital Statistics reports and school enrollments over the last three (3) years reiterates that decrease.

Population	2019	2020	2021
Live Births – mother’s parish residency	848	818	854

Population	SY 2020	SY 2021	SY 2022
Parish Public School Enrollment	9692	9470	9218

Racial/Ethnic percentages, based on school enrollment, has changed as of 2020. African American population is about 24.4% and the Caucasian population has dropped from 80% to

65.4%. The Hispanic population has increased in the parish to 4.9%.

ECONOMICS

Rice and other agricultural products including soybean and crawfish are central to the parish's economy. However, acreage used to grow sugar cane has increased. Five (5) parish rice mills are currently in operation. Other industries include bag factories, pipefitting and oil field service companies and many farm-related industries. Industrial development acreage is available in the Rayne/Crowley Industrial Park. The oil industry influences the economy with businesses related to the oil field and its services. Residential and commercial construction has increased, thus supporting other retail providers of construction goods.

Each of the three (3) largest communities has an active Chamber of Commerce. The Acadia Tourist Commission was formed from I-Acadia and promotes the economic development of the parish. The City of Crowley continues with the Enterprise Center, which houses a small business incubation center.

POVERTY POPULATION

State statistics indicated that over 23% of the parish population is below poverty (2% higher than the state average). Because of this, all students in the parish are given free lunch. The median household income is \$24,860 with an average of about three (3) persons per household.

The State of Louisiana ranks 3rd (45%) among the highest share of families where the householder parent is single. Of the population of children under 18, almost six (6%) percent

live in a single parent household. Head Start records indicate about 70% of the enrolled children resides in single parent households.

II. GENERAL COMMUNITY NEEDS AND STRENGTHS

EMPLOYMENT/ UNEMPLOYMENT

Acadia Parish prides itself on not only its agriculture heritage, but also the energy and manufacturing industries with thriving businesses such as JohnPac and Capital Manufacturing, Wright Enrichment, Jaguar Entergy Services and Church Point Wholesale, which accounts for approximately 700 jobs.

The largest employer in the parish is the Acadia Parish School Board. Other large employers include another governmental agency and health care facilities:

- Ochsner Acadia General Hospital
- Acadia Parish Sheriff's Office
- WalMart
- Francis Drilling Fluids (oil field related)
- Capitol Manufacturing (industrial products)

Positions in the hospitals and school system vary from unskilled labor to certified professionals. An employment screening test is required by the Acadia Parish School System for all applicants who do not hold a Bachelor's Degree. The garment factories provide training for employees. Also, there are two (2) manufacturing companies that offer training. A local bag factory attracts Hispanic immigrant labor with housing assistance and probably a factor in

the increased Hispanic population. The size of the job market in the neighboring city of Lafayette is larger and has greater variety.

As in past years, the primary reasons for turnovers are higher wages as reported by area businesses. Oil related industries in the parish include companies involved in all levels of the industry including drilling, production, and completion. Required skills and training for jobs in the oil industry vary according to each company's specialty. Overall, about 50% of the jobs in the oil industry begin as unskilled labor. Peer job training is provided by the companies, with advancement to more skilled positions available through job-learned skills. Oil industry positions require more specialized training or education which range from drilling site oil field work to fabricated metals. The number of minimal skill jobs requiring less than a high school education are decreasing in availability due to increased technology of equipment in the oil field. Local technical colleges are including training for these positions requiring skilled specialists.

An LSU study states Louisiana lost 8,700 oil and gas exploration and production jobs, about 26% of its total after pandemic hit. Since then the state has regained 2,500 of those jobs. Louisiana economist, Loren Scott, predicts Houma, Thibodeaux (124 miles east of Crowley, Louisiana) will regain 2,400 jobs over the next two (2) years, but it will not be enough to recoup losses sustained during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The agriculture industry offers employment in businesses related to grain mills, textile plants for bag making, farm implement companies and farm center feed and grain businesses as well as farm labor. The increase in the sugar cane crop has resulted in an influx of Hispanic families.

TANF/ OTHER PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

The number of families on welfare has decreased, but food stamp numbers have increased. With more families returning to the work force, the number of parents receiving Child Care Assistance has increased.

Public Assistance	2020	2021	2022
FITAP (TANF)	106	52	46
Food Stamps	6026	6517	5965
Child Care Assistance	(2019) 248	(2020) 314	(2021) 335

EDUCATION

The U.S. Census ACS publishes estimates of the highest level of education completed for residents aged 25 years and older. The ACS 2009–2013 estimates indicate that more Acadia Parish residents have not earned a high school degree or equivalent (27.9%) compared to Louisiana residents (17.4%). Acadia Parish residents aged 25 and older are less likely to have a college education, compared to all Louisiana adults aged 25 and older.

Educational opportunities within the parish include:

- Fifteen (15) preschools, 19 elementary schools, 17 middle schools, six (6) high schools and seven (7) Kindergarten through 12th grade private schools.
- The Adult Education Program is at the state’s technical college offices. Classes are offered in housing these colleges.
- South Louisiana Community College (SLCC) is located in Crowley and offers a variety of courses including Trucking and Licensed Practical Nursing.
- Louisiana State University at Eunice (LSU-E), located within Acadia Parish just 15 to 30 minutes from communities in the parish, has a variety of associate degree programs.

- John Melvin University is a newly established university that offers online and in-person courses with degree programs in Business, Sports Science and Theology.
- There are various vocational-technical colleges within 30 minutes commuting distance included SOWELA Technical Community College, Infinity College, UNITECH Training Academy, Louisiana Technical College and some business/ trade schools such as beauty colleges.
- There are other colleges and universities within one (1) hours commuting distance of Acadia Parish. The University of Louisiana at Lafayette located in Lafayette, Louisiana and McNeese State University located in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

HEALTH

The primary health problems are diseases of the heart, malignant neoplasms, cerebrovascular disease, and accidents together account for 63% of total deaths. These top four causes have consistently been the leading causes of death in Louisiana for the past 20 years, though the rankings may have changed. The fifth ranked cause has varied among diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and influenza and pneumonia.

In 2001, state-level decisions resulted in cutbacks on health unit care and in the closing of parish branch offices. In spite of these cutbacks, over 1,500 children are receiving WIC benefits. There are approximately six (6) hospitals and walk-in clinics to meet the needs of families. Another resource, the Office of Family Support, reported providing services to approximately 12,000 children on the medical card. The Acadia Parish Health Unit reported that about 73% of children under age two (2) are up-to-date with their immunizations from

2019-2022. LaChip, the state's insurance program for children, has shown increases in enrollment over the past three (3) years, but there are still eligible children not enrolled.

Available medical care in the parish includes:

- Six (6) hospitals
- Twenty-one family doctors
- Sixteen pediatricians
- Thirteen specialists (surgeons, orthopedists, internists, ophthalmologists, etc.)
- Nineteen dentists/ orthodontists
- Six (6) urgent care centers

As the rate of teen pregnancy in the United States hits historic lows, the percentage of teens becoming pregnant in Louisiana has dropped alongside it, according to a new report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. With a teen birth rate of 25 per 1,000 teens aged 15 to 19, Louisiana now ranks 48th in the country.

HOUSING

Types of housing vary throughout the parish. There are income-based housing complexes in each community where Head Start centers are located. There are 36 low-income housing apartment complexes which contain 1,612 affordable apartments for rent in Acadia Parish, Louisiana. Of these rental apartments, 676 are income-based housing. Often referred to as "HUD apartments", there are 245 Project-Based Section 8 subsidized apartments in Acadia Parish. There are 1,024 other low-income based apartments that do not have rental assistance, but are still considered affordable housing for low-income families.

CHILD CARE NEEDS

There are over 300 Head Start-eligible children served in the parish's Pre-K, state-supported program. The number of home daycare providers in the Crowley and Rayne areas and daycare centers has increased due to the increased work force from former TANF recipients. The Acadia Parish School Board is serving a near total of 700 (Pre-K and Head Start) children annually. The enrollment of three-year-olds in Head Start has increased over the last three (3) years.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation seems to be the most critical problem in accessing these educational opportunities. Presently, the parish has no public system of transportation for the general population. The only system in-place is for medical services for a small portion of citizens who are eligible for Medicare/ Medicaid.

INFORMATION ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES SERVICES

The Acadia Parish School Board Special Populations Department is the local education agency, which serves preschoolers with disabilities in Acadia Parish. The LEA offers Child Search for children zero (0) to three (3) who may be eligible for LEA Part C services and evaluation, and services to children aged three (3) to five (5) with identified disabilities using LEA eligibility.

Infants and Toddlers: Data on disabilities in the general population under five (5) years of age is limited. However, program participation data from the Early Steps Program can be used as a general indicator of the prevalence of disabilities in this age group. Early Steps, under

Children’s Special Health Services, Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Public Health, provides services to infants and toddlers (birth to 3 years) with medical conditions likely to cause disability or developmental delays, or with a physical, cognitive, social and emotional, adaptive, or communication delay.

Special Education data from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) provides another perspective of the prevalence of children with disabilities in the parish. Included in the school system’s definition for “disability” are specific learning disabilities (ADD for example), speech or language impairments, autism, deaf and hard of hearing, mental disabilities (behavior disorders for example), and developmental delays. According to LDOE, for the 2021-2022 school year six (6) percent of public school children in Louisiana aged three (3) to 21 were children with disabilities. Of the 9,904 students in public schools in Acadia Parish, 8.3 percent (1,130) were children with disabilities.

In addition to services provided by the LEA, the following services are available from the respective agencies who accept Medicaid as payment:

- Nova Care – Services provided by a physician:
 - Occupational Therapy
 - Physical Therapy
 - Speech Therapy
 - Massage Therapy
 - Aquatic Therapy
- Acadia-St. Landry Hospital – Provides evaluation and therapy services with a physician’s prescription:

- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Children's Special Health Services – Program of services provided through the Louisiana Office of Public Health for children in Louisiana who have special health care needs. Services are provided to children under 21 years of age. There are financial guidelines established by CSHS. The application process begins at the local health unit. Services include:
 - Health Care Services – for children with certain chronic physical illnesses or serious disabilities which cause (or are likely to cause) significant limitations in major life activities.
 - Medical Test and Procedures - including x-ray, lab, EKG, audiology, etc.
 - Hospitalization - for medical or surgical diagnostic and treatment services
 - Therapy - physical, occupational, speech
 - Home Health Services
 - Medical Equipment and Supplies - wheelchairs, hearing aids, prostheses, etc.
 - Parent/Family Support Services
 - Medications and Special Diets
 - Nursing, Nutrition, and Social Services Follow-up Care Coordination, Case Management, and Resource Development, including referral to and collaboration with other community providers

III. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Census 2020 data indicated the following number of eligible children in served communities as follows:

- Crowley 276
- Rayne 140
- Church Point 95
- Estherwood 18

IV. PARENT NEEDS AND STRENGTHS

Information on parents was gathered through registration intake, surveys and face-to-face interviews.

- Access to medical services and transportation are two (2) areas of needs for parents.
- Parents expressed a need to continue educational opportunities.
- Credit and budget management training was requested by some parents. That need is supported by the number of parents now managing an environment.
- Housing ownership resources were requested by parents.
- Parents are very interested in their children being school ready and ready to read.

V. COMMUNITY RESOURCES

There are a large number of service agencies that work closely in partnership to assist families in the parish. Adult Education classes for interested adults working towards obtaining a GED, are offered at SLCC in the community of Crowley. The Office of Family Support also works in partnership with Head Start. The Cooperative Extension Office assists in providing community education on proper nutrition and managing nutrition dollars for families. Volunteers in the community service Miss Helen's Soup Kitchen. Other agencies that provide services and partner with the program include the ASSIST Agency, which helps with housing, Public Health, the Housing Authority, the Mental Health Clinic, Home Health Care agencies, the Child Search Office and Special Education, and community-wide organizations comprised of various church representatives who provide for the needy. The Welcome House is available for the homeless.

The Acadia Resource Center is comprised of representatives from various area agencies who communicate and network services between agencies. The center conducts monthly meetings.

VI. ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROGRAM

POPULATION ISSUES

Declining Birth Rate and Enrollment

The increase in school pre-kindergarten programs and a declining birth rate, require partnering to provide comprehensive quality services to eligible children and families.

- A collaboration effort with the pre-school programs has been implemented to identify eligible children in pre-kindergarten and provide additional Head Start Services.
- Strengthen partnerships with child care providers to offer a combination of placement and services to parents.

RACIAL/ETHNIC

Increasing Hispanic Population

- Weave multi-cultural activities and tradition into all aspects of the Head Start Program.
- Provide staff training on culture and language strategies for activities in the classroom.
- Review composition of staff and identify ways for them to share their own culture and heritage.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

To assist parents in being prepared to compete for available jobs and better jobs:

- Provide more job readiness training focused on employment screening, personnel presentation, and job applications.
- Create partnerships with parish employers to identify needed job training and assist parents in acquiring skills or provide training when appropriate.
- Create partnerships with parish employers to identify needed job training.
- Continue the “Back to School for Parents Night.”
- Offer budgeting and credit management courses as part of parent training to assist in managing earned income and food dollars

HEALTH CARE NEEDS

- Survey parents at registration on their health care needs.
- Link partnerships with the local university's dental hygienist program to provide more timely screenings for children.
- Pursue a partnership with Louisiana State University's Dental School to provide care at a local clinic in Lafayette.
- Involve dentists on Health Advisory Committee

CHILD ABUSE

- Implement a process for parents to request program assistance in managing children's behavior.
- Provide added training on monitoring child development, and behavior management to parents at committee meetings.

TRANSPORTATION

- Coordinate a community effort to seek transportation grant for the parish.

LITERACY/SCHOOL READINESS/DISABILITIES

- Continue including children who turn three (3) after September 30th as part of Early Intervention.
- Provide additional training to staff on identifying and making referrals for children with suspected disabilities.

- Increase literacy curriculum resources and celebrate reading readiness accomplishment.

VII. SOURCES LIST

GCT-PL. Race and Hispanic or Latino: 2000 - Geographic Comparison Table.

<http://factfinder.census.gov>

MapQuest - <http://mapquest.com>

Communities of Acadia Parish - <http://www.enlou.com>

Census 2000 PHC-T-4. Louisiana Parishes: 1990 and 2000.

<http://www.state.la.us/census/2000/2000countychange.htm>

Louisiana Department of Economic Development. <http://leap.nlu.eduPPROF98/ACADIA.HTM>

Kids Count>2001 Data Book

DP-1 General Population and Housing Characteristics: 1990. <http://factfinder.census.gov>

DP-4 Income and Poverty Status in 1989: 1990 <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Acadia Parish Map Stats from Fed Stats <http://www.fedstats.gov>

Acadia Parish Quick Facts from the U. S. Census Bureau. <http://quickfacts.census.gov>

DP-2 Social Characteristics: 1990 <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Table DP-1 Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000 Source: U. S. Census Bureau,

Census 2000.

General Profile for Acadia Parish, Louisiana <http://govinfo.library.orst.edu>

<http://www.census.gov/ftp/pub/geo/www/tiger/tigermapping.html>

1999 Kids Count Data Book on Louisiana's Children - Data for Acadia Parish School Board.

GCT-P7. Households and Families: 2000 Geographic Comparison Table.

<http://factfinder.census.gov>

Parish Health Profiles Office of Public Health Acadia Parish

<http://ldh.la.gov/assets/docs/SurveillanceReports/php/PHP2005/PDF/Acadia/PHPAcadia.pdf>

Kids Count data center –Data for Acadia Parish 2020. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/topics>

Acadia General Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment

Acadia Parish Data USA. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/acadia-parish-la>

<https://ldh.la.gov/assets/docs/immunization/toolkit/OPH-Region-4-Vaccination-Rates-2022.pdf>

<https://www.countyoffice.org/la-acadia-parish-hospitals/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/louisiana/la.htm>

<https://www.countyoffice.org/la-acadia-parish-housing-authorities>