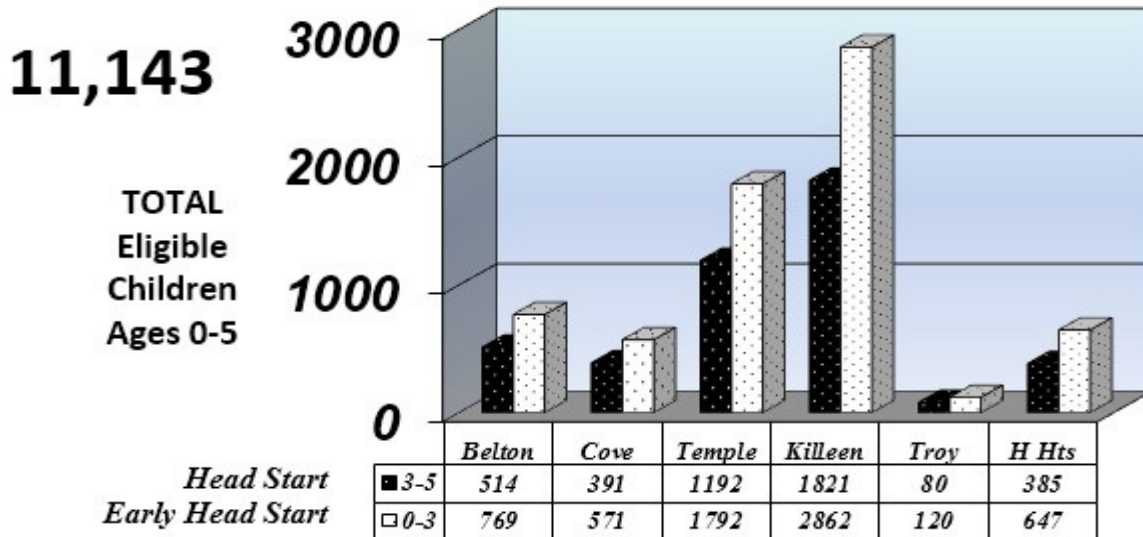


COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT: CHALLENGES & STRENGTHS

Central Texas 4C, Inc. is a private non-profit corporation chartered under the Texas Non-Profit Corporation Act. It incorporated 47 years ago as a service agency providing child care in Temple, Texas, and has since grown to provide Head Start services throughout the Central Texas area, namely in these cities: Belton, Temple, Harker Heights, Killeen, Troy, and Copperas Cove.

The CentroPlex Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is the fifth fastest growing MSA in Texas and the 16th fastest growing MSA in the United States. For example, Temple grew 26% in the preceding ten years. (*Temple Chamber of Commerce Community Profile and Referral Guide 2018*) Fort Hood in Killeen is the largest military base in the free world, and one out of every six American soldiers is stationed here. Bell County grew 40% in the last fifteen years.

Since Central Texas 4C, Inc. was founded by five volunteers in 1970, the mission of the agency has always been to provide high quality services to low-income children and families.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2020 Redistricting Data Summary File, Matrices PL1, PL2, PL3, and PL4, and Tables B17020A 3 and B17001 4,18: 2017-2020 American Community Survey 5 year estimates. 2021 HSES .

CHALLENGES AND GOALS

There are several challenges for Central Texas 4C, Inc. in administering the Head Start and Early Head Start programs in such a rapidly growing and transient area. First is simply the difference in our communities. There are great differences between urban and rural centers and the organizational structure must be constantly reassessed to determine if needs in all areas are being met. The structure has been modified because of the addition of new programs, implementation of Full-Day/Full-Year program options, expansion and collaborating with other programs. In 2003-04, it was undergoing revision because of the addition of the Early Head Start Program. In 2005 the

agency began serving Katrina evacuees. After the 2009 ARRA stimulus legislation, we nearly tripled the size of our Early Head Start program. In 2013, we were hit with budget cuts in excess of a quarter million dollars because of Federal Sequestration and we were forced to cut services for 30 Head Start children/families and 8 Early Head Start children/families. Later we were reimbursed, but we had already lost two donated facilities. In 2014-15, the agency underwent Designation Renewal System competition and won grantee status for all of Bell County, adding additional communities (Harker Heights and Troy) to our service area. So keeping up with the changes means thinking and planning proactively—something the agency does well. Second, the program quality must maintain high levels, and some of the changes during recent years reflect that goal. We moved to an outcomes-based assessment for our Head Start program (Teaching Strategies' TSGold and CLASS teacher/child interaction assessments for all ages we serve) and we collaborate with five Independent School Districts in providing services to our children with disabilities, donations of space and in partnership Pre-K classrooms. The goal of having all of our centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is complete.

We used to expect to operate at full funded capacity serving 548 children on any given day (our funded enrollment) and we regularly served over 750 children and their families each year. We cannot do that presently. The pandemic has changed our ability to hire and retain qualified staff and parents don't yet feel comfortable bringing their infants for center-based care. Our forms of communication networks are regular case management and strategy meetings where Family and Community Advocates (FCAs), coordinators, and administrative staff work to assess services, assign tasks, and locate resources for children with disabilities as well as other family needs. FCAs meet regularly with their supervisors to gain and share information, to follow-up on quality monitoring, and to be given the same information that is given to center directors. Directors also meet with supervisors regularly to be advised of changes and to be allowed input into planning and strategy.

Mental Health issues have demanded even more attention with the pandemic and staff shortages. We have developed several programs of mental wellness for staff that we share with parents and our ability to communicate with our families is aided by a phone app called *Learning Genie*.

PROGRAM OPTIONS

When Central Texas 4C, Inc. first began establishing Head Start programs in 1978, it used many of the facilities already doing center based child care. Over time, those centers became part of the permanent face of our communities, and still are a meaningful way to get services to families and children. But many community sources, schools especially, are overcrowded and no longer able to house Head Start. With completion of our two new facilities, Central Texas 4C, Inc. will be administering 40 Head Start/Early Head Start classrooms in thirteen sites. The special program for teen parents is in partnership with Temple ISD's program for student parents working on their high school education.

RESOURCES TO ENHANCE THE OPERATION OF THE PROGRAM

One of the first pieces of information given to parents at the first home transition visit is a handbook that contains a “quick list” of resources geared to the local area. Complete Resource Directories are located in each center for access by parents and staff. There is a section on our website for parents (www.ct4c.org) with resources they can access quickly.

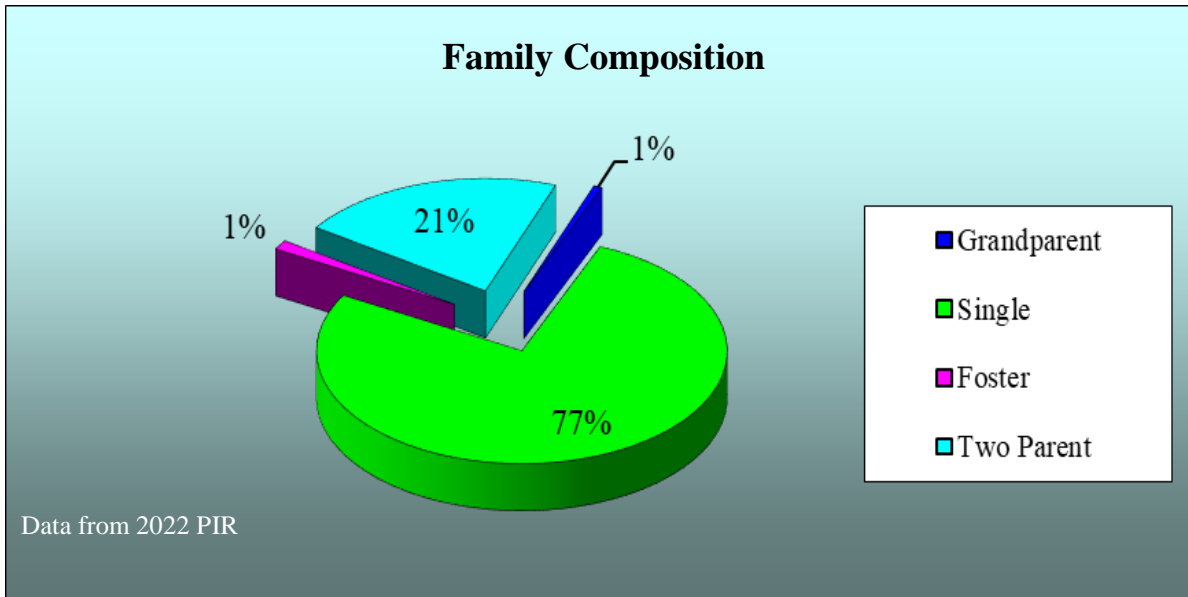
One of the strengths of Central Texas 4C, Inc. is the number of formal and informal agreements with agencies and other groups in communities. Every Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECI) and every Local Education Agency (LEA) Central Texas 4C works with has a signed agreement. Other formal agreements/contracts are done in relation to facilities (city and county governments/agencies), health providers, services (transportation, food vendors), child protection (Child Protective Services—CPS), child care (Child Care Services-CCS), mental health (MHMR), literacy (some areas use ISD, some use local colleges, some use retired teachers, and some use Parents as Teachers for GED and ESL classes). Currently the agency has over 100 written agreements in place.

For example, 100% of Central Texas 4C’s Head Start children are offered dental services, 100% of new enrollees are offered health services, and a majority of our children used Medicaid services last year. Other insurance includes CHIP, ACA marketplace insurance, Tri-Care military insurance and private insurance.

More Resources

Sources of in-kind donations are facilities, volunteers, salaries, utilities, health services, and monetary donations. We currently enjoy in-kind donations of over one million dollars. That speaks well of our communities’ involvement in early education. All of our centers are either owned by 4C or rent-free donations.

Central Texas 4C, Inc.’s Head Start staff, a great resource, is very involved in community activities, from local schools and churches, to state and national memberships. Many serve on local advisory committees, child welfare boards, and agency boards and councils. Some are affiliated with national professional groups such as National Head Start Association, and Central Texas Association for the Education of Young Children. Staff involvement goes beyond the borders of the service delivery area into groups such as the Texas Head Start Association and the State Head Start Collaboration Office, an agency that works to facilitate change among partnerships on the state level and provides regular updates. Family and Community Advocates play a critical role in finding and bringing services quickly to families, constantly informing mid-management about local resources and needs, and being empowered to effect solutions to problems locally. Mid-management in turn is always available as resources to other staff, parents, and community partners.



Head Start parents: another great resource! Although it is becoming more difficult for working parents to find time to volunteer in the classroom, Central Texas 4C, Inc. Head Start still utilizes parents and their interests and skills in a variety of ways. Policy Council aids the program in governance, staffing, locating resources, review, evaluation, self-assessment, budgeting, planning, and communication. The local center Parent Committees serve as a conduit of information that flows to and from the local level, through the Policy Council, and the Central Texas 4C, Inc. governing board. Information from the parents finds its way to every advisory committee and to management. Often it is a parent who can convince a community partner to collaborate. Often it is a parent who can tell another parent most convincingly about the program, especially if that parent has had more than one year’s experience with “4C.” Parent volunteers are indispensable in the local parent committees which are instrumental in helping staff plan and supervise activities for children, adding insight into the lesson plans, keeping an eye on quality through self-assessment, sharing cultures and helping to interview prospective staff. In general, without parents involved, there would be no shared decision making and Central Texas 4C, Inc. Head Start would not have its present program quality. We have missed the classroom volunteers during the pandemic and hope to regenerate those resources in the near future. A great strength in our communities is the spirit of caring which is evidenced in many ways beyond what agencies do. The local churches, ministerial alliances, schools, and motivated individuals all contribute to the program resources.

Finally, Central Texas 4C, Inc. is a resource. The agency has over many years supported its staff, its clientele, and its communities. One example of this support is the agency’s policy on helping staff to obtain further education and credentials, and the availability of an Employee Assistance Program for mental health needs of staff and their families. The administrative energy is directed to empowering staff and parents, supporting them, and leading them to a more productive future.

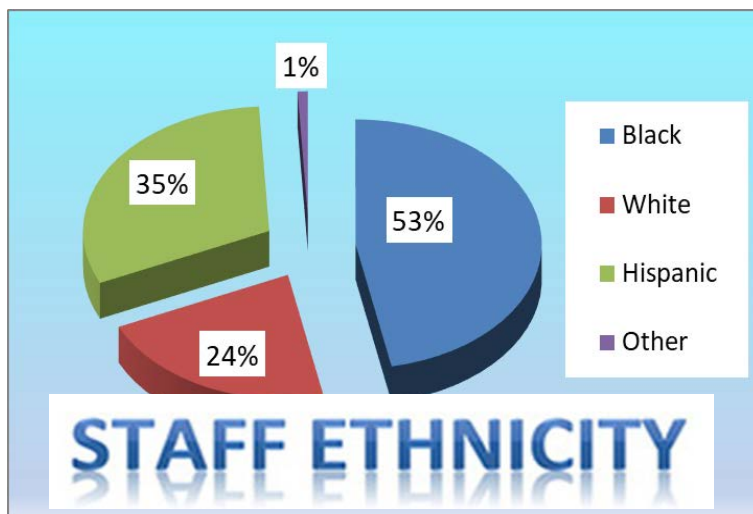
CENTRAL TEXAS 4C, INC. HEAD START AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

We have a number of agreements with ECI, LEA's, and local health providers which ensures that transitions into and out of Head Start and Early Head Start will be smooth and that quality services will be provided for children with diagnosed disabilities. Advocacy for these special children (Bell County estimate of children under 3 is 821, *according to Bell County Health Dept.*) is an ongoing process, and other agencies are aware that Central Texas 4C, Inc. will assertively follow-up on referrals to make sure that services are rendered in a timely manner. Central Texas 4C, Inc. actively recruits children with special needs and is involved in networking with many other agencies (such as the Central Texas Special Needs Network) to improve overall services.

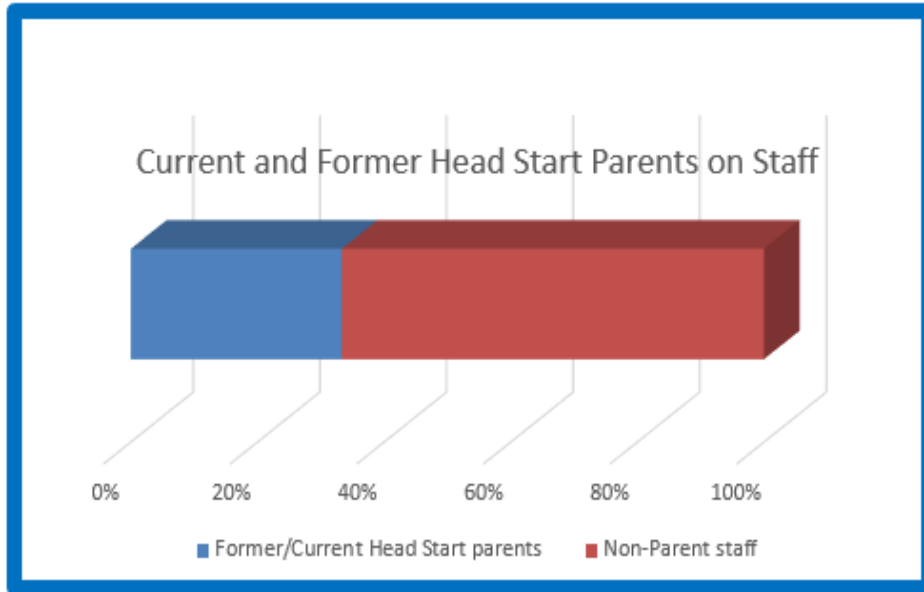
Parents are given as much information as possible about their child's disabling condition. Family and Community Advocates work closely with those families, giving support and encouragement, monitoring progress, locating resources, and informing pertinent staff about avenues of collaboration that might help that family. One-on-one classroom aides help in serious cases. A very knowledgeable staff often helps to connect parents with good Internet resources, such as www.bpkids.org for families dealing with bipolar diagnosed children.

The state mandates involvement with children with special needs. ECI programs work well with Head Start but LEAs are struggling with budget issues and are not accepting as many of our referrals for services as they did in the past. We have written agreements with all LEAs and we also incorporate ECI training for our teachers as well as services through University of Mary Hardin-Baylor nursing school. We work with ECI and LEAs on careful transitioning of children.

MULTICULTURAL INFORMATION



Central Texas 4C, Inc. employs 53% African American, 35% Hispanic, 24% Caucasian and 1% other (2022 4C PIR. This diversity is planned, it makes parents feel comfortable, and it enriches our organization.

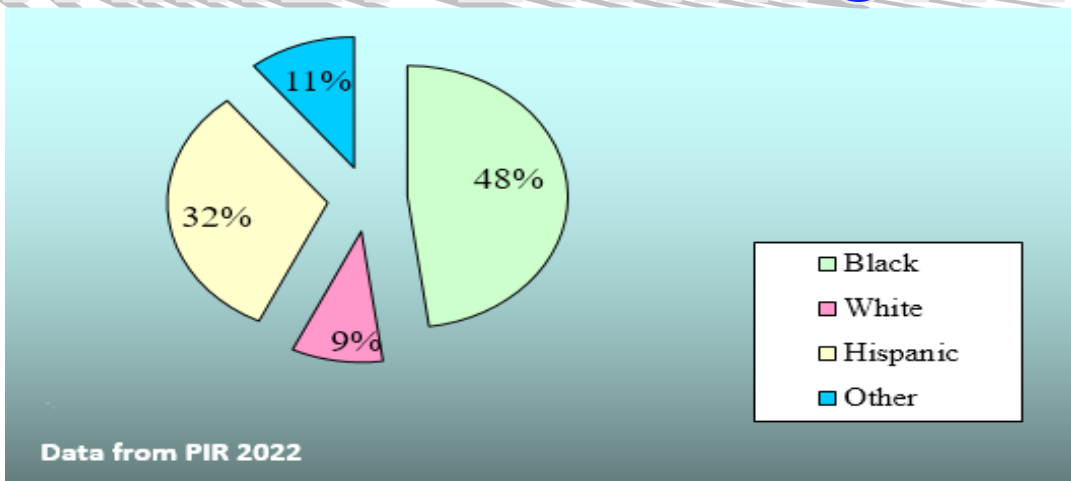


Many current and former parents work for the agency because equity in our leadership prioritizes the hiring of parents. 33% of our employees are current or former Head Start parents.

LANGUAGES:

Predominant languages in homes are English and Spanish. All centers have a staff person who speaks Spanish. Information given to parent is available in English and Spanish (health alerts, handbook, etc.). The Hispanic or Latino population is projected to be the fastest growing community in Bell County in the next 10 years. Currently it comprises 24.06% of Bell County’s population (37.4% Head Start); this community is expected to increase to make up 30% by 2020. It is important to recognize that in Texas in general and Bell County specifically, children who can learn two languages – English & Spanish – will have an advantage in the Texas economy and job market 15 years hence. By then, employers will probably expect bilingual ability in their job applicants. Central Texas 4C, Inc. has assessed this advantage and shared it with parents. Central Texas 4C, Inc. gives priority to job applicants who are bilingual. Currently 38% of our staff is bilingual.

FAMILY ETHNICITY



CULTURAL SHARING:

Changes in our family demographics during the last 20 years have shown an increase in service to black and Hispanic families and a decrease in service to white families. Parents and community volunteers are asked to share their cultures with the children in the classroom setting. Education advisory committee seeks ways of incorporating more multiculturalism into the classroom with input from parents, professionals. Education Advisory approves our curricula including our Anti-Bias curriculum and our nutrition program shares food from different cultures with the children.

BELL COUNTY

Bell County is one of the most diverse counties in Texas. Given the fact that the Killeen economy was built around the presence of Fort Hood, the largest military installation in the world, one need only walk into any type of business establishment there and hear a variety of languages. Temple was built in the mid-1800s by the Santa Fe Railroad when the Texas legislature determined that the railroad could not be within six miles of a county seat. Belton, as the then-county seat, was left to grow slowly while Temple grew quickly and garnered many of the available resources. Today, Bell County has tremendous health resources with Baylor Scott & White Hospital (with its own HMO), McLane's Children's hospital, Seton Hospital, Metroplex Hospital, Darnell Army Hospital on post and the VA Hospital.

One of the problems in the urban areas of Temple and Killeen relative to children & families is that the numbers of children who need services sometime overwhelms available service providers. The health care providers – mental health, education, and rehabilitation providers included - who do not want to work with large numbers of Head Start (especially Medicaid) children usually charge very large amounts. The providers that do special services (such as dental work or MHMR) are concentrated in these areas and already have large practices. Another need is for more public transportation options. There is a good local service, the Hop, but their funding limits what they can do. For instance, we need more areas served and longer hours of service for those who have late or early shift work. We pay for public transportation for families who are not mobile, but most Texans have a vehicle.

Temple and Belton have Interstate 35 (and the beginning of Interstate 14) access, small town attitudes, forward thinking strategy and planning groups, industry, and some of the problems of more populated areas. Bell County also has the largest military base in the world - Fort Hood - located adjacent to Killeen and Copperas Cove. The CentroPlex is feeling the development pressure from the south and is preparing to grow as did its contiguous neighbor Williamson County in the 1990's. Area officials are trying to avoid some of the rapid growth pitfalls that Williamson Co. suffered: sprawl, loss of neighborhood continuity, traffic patterns, etc.

Central Texas' political climate is fairly conservative. These communities are pro-education and supporters of Head Start and Child Development programs. The Washington political climate, however, is not always so protective of children's funding. There is a great need for Washington to rework the Federal Poverty Guidelines to make it more reasonable for access to Head Start.

A growing elderly population, child care, education, and the military make up the leading social issues for these communities. There are more poor children in Bell and Coryell Counties as a percent of the population today than in 2000. Census shows steady growth in the numbers of children 0-5. Undocumented migration, lack of technical training, family crises, and neighborhood economic blight all have contributed to these statistics. This is clearly seen in the east Temple community and large areas of Killeen which are areas of long-term decline and planned revitalization. That is where we built our newest center. While Bell County as a whole enjoys a relatively low unemployment rate, the census tracts in the east Temple neighborhoods range as high as 17%. Businesses left these neighborhoods in the 1970's and never returned. The population has remained fairly stable. This area represents an opportunity for Head Start and its child care collaborators. Central Texas 4C, Inc. continues to see east Temple as one target to recruit eligible children for the Head Start programs. We developed a partnership within the last 5 years with a church in east Temple to donate space for some of our Early Head Start classrooms.

Low wages hold people down even in an area where there are many training opportunities. There are numerous service industry jobs including parents employed at fast food restaurants, convenience stores, and child care centers. Other major employers include Baylor Scott & White Hospital (service and clerical), McLane's Distributing, Carpenter, Artco Bell, Wal-Mart Distributing, Carpenter Manufacturing and WilsonArt – Laminate Manufacturing. More distressing to *this* agency is that funds are not available to pay Head Start employees well. Some of our staff qualify as the working poor. We are working to restructure the program to address our own needs.

Implications for planning:

- We must stay abreast of areas where Head Start can help advocate for better wages (and continue to advocate for funding to increase Central Texas 4C, Inc. staff salaries). The wages & benefits for Head Start teachers must continue to be increased to help those positions remain credible and competitive in the child care and teaching fields. A career ladder has been implemented to reward teachers who are completing degrees and to encourage others to continue or start school. We will continue to add to the resources we supply for the mental wellness of our staff and families.
- For the last several years, the primary need of our communities was in the area of infant/toddler care and services for pregnant teens. When there are over 5,000 infants and toddlers in the area who are at or below Federal poverty level, the need is critical. With expansion we successfully collaborated with the ISD programs serving school age mothers in Belton, Temple and Copperas

Cove. However, the pandemic has made it very difficult to enroll infants. There is still so much sickness, flu and virus active that many families feel safer with the infants at home.

- We must continue assertive networking on welfare issues. The issues of language, social, and education are barriers for those persons transitioning from welfare to work and must continue to be addressed systemically by a consortia of community services providers. More collaborative efforts are needed. Central Texas 4C, Inc. will continue to be active in both United Way agencies along with the cohort of agencies that meet regularly there.
- Expand literacy through libraries, Texas School Ready, and other educational entities. Early literacy “outcomes measures” will continue to be a large part of the educational accountability picture for Head Start and Early Head Start. The use of Teaching Strategies TSGold, CLASS and ITERS/ECERS assessments to achieve measurable outcomes in early literacy and phonological/phonemic/print awareness in Head Start and Early Head Start children are proving valuable. A systemic approach will prove very beneficial in those homes where English is a second language.
- Work to re-supply centers with needed furnishings. Central Texas 4C, Inc.’s maintenance needs have suffered because we have been unable to hire reliable workers. We are currently contracting with a local remodeling company to see the financial comparison between contracting and hiring. Local funds have been sought through the Temple & Killeen Offices of Planning & Community Development, United Way and other local groups such as Child Help, Inc. and Church Women of the Temple Area. Those local funds provide a safety net for unexpected expenses that may not be accounted for in the Head Start budget.

A final implication for planning is to remain vigilant regarding services to homeless families. In 2022, 33 of 37 Head Start homeless families acquired housing (89.2%). The other 4 are still working to save a down payment. The need is increasing for services to our homeless population, but our skills in locating and serving those in need are increasing as well. Collaborations with public schools, churches, health providers and local shelters help with identification and service to those most at risk families. According to a Texas Homeless Network survey, the two major reasons for homelessness in families with children were (1) inability to get a job and (2) eviction for inability to pay rent. (*Samuels, Wand & Pohlman, Homelessness in Texas, 2018.*) The agency continually seeks new county data on homeless children and families and is working closely with area United Way agencies on this issue.



CENTRAL TEXAS 4C, INC. HEAD START PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Head Start program is based on the premise that all children share certain needs, and that children of low-income families in particular can benefit from a comprehensive developmental program to meet those needs. The Head Start Program approach is based on the philosophy that:

A child can benefit most from a comprehensive, interdisciplinary program to foster development and remedy problems as expressed in a broad range of services, and that the child's entire family, as well as the community must be involved. The program should maximize the strengths and unique experiences of each child. The family, which is perceived as the principal influence on the child's development, must be a direct participant in the program. (Shared decision-making.) We win the child's heart in order to walk in his brain. (Barnard, Pestalozzi 1859.)

Central Texas 4C, Inc. is a large program that covers one of the fastest growing areas in the State. We annually serve over 700 children and families of diverse cultures. Our Head Start parents are employed in a variety of places which include; factories, nursing homes, Head Start centers, fast food places, hospitals, nursing homes, businesses, Day Care centers, Home Health, schools, janitorial, cleaners, and convenience stores. We have moved from 170 staff to 123 staff including maintenance techs, classroom aides, cooks, teacher assistants, disability aides, teachers, teacher-directors, directors, Family and Community Advocates, content area coordinators, central office staff, and administrators.

Recruitment is an on-going process. A Policy Council approved point system is used to determine enrollment eligibility, with the outcome being the serving of those with the greatest need since added points are given for disabilities, single parents, Spanish speaking families, foster parents, homeless, income, etc. as reflected in the community assessment.

Transition into Head Start begins when appointments are made with the parents to enroll them and the staff will set up an orientation home visit with the parent at the parents' convenience. The teacher and Family and Community Advocate (FCA) make the home visit, and the parent is given a handbook in the appropriate language which tells about the Head Start guidelines, parent responsibilities and other information. Staff begins the Family Partnership process by visiting with the family, making notes about the family's strengths and needs, and by making referrals for services if the family agrees. Transition out of Head Start into the child's next placement is given similar attention. (Our children meet with their next teacher, family visits school, etc.)

School begins and the staff is busy orienting the children to the program, setting up appointments for physicals, dental exams, doing vision and hearing screenings, doing developmental assessment of the

children and completing shots. The mental health professionals also do the first observation in the classrooms. All this is completed within 45 days after the child's enrollment date.

Parent education topics are chosen from a questionnaire completed by the parents at enrollment and in September the first Parent Center meetings are held. The parents elect a Policy Council representative and alternate after being given a summary of what Policy Council and shared governance is about. Each month the parents are invited to a parent meeting at the center led by a community resource person or by a knowledgeable parent.

The parents and staff together plan activities for the children, discuss lesson plans, discuss community opportunities, and discuss Policy Council information. These parent meetings are all conducted to help parents learn to stand up for their children (advocacy), nurture their families, and create opportunities to meet goals.

Policy Council meetings begin in September and both old and new members come to the first meeting, called the "Transition Meeting." The old Policy Council leads the meeting to give the new members a little training and to let them see governance in action. The new Policy Council takes over when the election of officers takes place. The Policy Council approves or disapproves the following: staffing decisions, the personnel policies, the by-laws, the budget including credit card expenditures, the Head Start Service Plan, selection criteria, locations, program options, the Complaint and Appeals Procedure, and the Impasse Procedure to name a few of their duties. Before these items are brought before the full Policy Council for consideration, they are discussed by one of four standing committees: Executive, Finance, Personnel or Operations Committee.

In order to reflect the philosophy of Head Start, that the parent is the primary teacher of the child, the 4C Policy Council president sits on Central Texas 4C, Inc.'s governing board. Policy Council representatives receive individual orientation and additional training so that they can understand the financial reports, personnel issues, and executive decision making aspects of the program.

Central Texas 4C, Inc.'s Executive Director works with many other community groups. Concerns and needs are discussed. The Health Advisory and Education Committee includes Head Start/Early Head Start parents, staff and community resource persons. Participants discuss the Educational School Readiness, Health, Mental Health, and Nutrition aspects of the program and have input in the Head Start Service Plan. United Way's BOLD meetings and the Community Resource Coordination Group are amplifying positive family results through collaboration without duplication of effort.

For students leaving Head Start and entering the public schools, there are many activities that help to make that transition a smooth one. Teacher to teacher dialog and training occurs between Head Start staff and public school staff. Children who move from Early Head Start into Head Start (if the family still qualifies) are treated similarly. Early Head Start classrooms change as children age until they

finally mirror the Head Start room arrangements. There are many current dialogues occurring with community partners that will reshape the way all of us respond to our communities' needs. Central Texas 4C, Inc. takes responsibility for being an advocate for children and families in Bell County.

The Community Assessment Process

There were two reasons that Central Texas 4C, Inc. decided to do all the data collection and analysis of that data for the Community Assessment. First, the money to hire an outside consultant could be used for direct services to children. Second, the knowledge gained in going through all the information gives the administration and our partners a much clearer understanding of our communities. Data collection was done through many methods: internet, city and county offices, foundation reports, Texas Department of Health, Texas Education Agency PEIMS data, schools, other childcare service providers, parent and staff surveys, community partners, Texas Head Start salary surveys, Indeed salary surveys and current Census information. But data collection is only part of the process. Talking to others in the community helps to identify specific needs and challenges, such as programs to help identify homelessness, and has led to some very successful collaboration. It has also helped us broaden the diversity of our outreach. We discovered that we were needed in Copperas Cove especially to address the issue of keeping pregnant teens in school. Our expansion funding made that possible.

This year's Community Assessment now becomes the new platform for collecting ever-changing data, and as a living document, will continue to guide the agency in its decision-making in the future. As always, what drives Central Texas 4C, Inc. is our mission:

“We are committed to building stronger
Central Texas communities,
one child and family at a time.”

*NOTE: Full data sets on which this summary is based are available for review
At the administrative office in the Community Assessment Notebook*

Barnard, Henry; Pestalozzi, Johann (1859), *Pestalozzi and Pestalozzianism: Life, Educational Principles, and Methods of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi*, FC Brownell