

Early Childhood

Maternal and Child Health Indicators

(Additional data in Community Health section. Information sources available at www.SpringfieldCommunityFocus.org)

TRENDS IMPROVING

- Births to mothers without high school educations declined; low maternal education helps predict poverty, reducing chances of child’s success in life.
- The amount of prenatal care, infant deaths, and immunization rates were stable and better than the state average.
- The percent of children receiving mental health services for serious emotional disturbances rose, partly because we are doing better in getting help for such children.

Indicator	Greene County 2003	5-year Mean	Trend	Missouri 2003
Births to Mothers w/o HS Education (% of all live births)	16.6%	17.5%	Down	18.6%
Children Receiving SED Mental Health Services (% of all children)	4.1%	Not Available	Up	2.9%

TRENDS TO WATCH

- Data about child poverty and homelessness are hard to gather; a local sampling from The Kitchen, Salvation Army, Victory House, and Family Violence Center indicates that an estimated 20% of the sheltered homeless were children under six.
- The percentages of children in poverty and receiving Medicaid are high.

Indicators	Greene County 2003
Number of Children (0-6 years) on Medicaid	10,513
% of Total Child Population	20%
Number of Children < 6 yrs in Poverty (2000 census)	2,858
% of children < 6 yrs in poverty (as % of < 6 population)	16.7%

Child Care in Greene County

Child care providers cared for approximately 9,200 children, allowing 6,000 families to remain employed. In 2005, fewer licensed providers cared for more children. Infant/Toddler

“Children are our county’s most valuable resource and hope for the future . . . Among [indicators of school readiness] are children’s physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development, exposure to child abuse and neglect, use of foster care, mother’s educational level, numbers of children in poverty, availability of health insurance and prenatal care, and the delivery of quality services in child care and public schools.”

National School Readiness Indicators Initiative, www.GettingReady.org

care (birth-2 yrs) is at capacity in Greene County, with limited availability for preschool aged children. The number of accredited programs, with a curriculum in place, increased teacher qualifications, and enhanced parental communication, has doubled. Studies show that children whose caregivers have higher education and training do better upon entering school.

	# in 2001	# in 2005
Licensed Homes/Group Homes/Centers	182	170
Accredited Programs	5	10
Total Capacity (# of slots)	7,927	9,048
Registered Vendors	310	256

Average Early Care Tuition Cost in Greene County

Child care generates \$35 million in gross revenue in Greene County. The industry employs 1,947 people who make, on average, \$6.16/hour. This compares to doggie day care employees, who make \$6.75/hour.

Cost of Childcare, Weekly	In 2002	In 2005	% Increase, 2002 to 2005
Infant/Toddler Care Home	\$97.41	\$105.00	7%
Infant/Toddler Care Center	\$130.72	\$144.00	9.2%
2+ Years Care Home	\$79.05	\$87.00	9.1%
2+ Years Care Center	\$83.71	\$91.00	8%

Kindergarten Readiness

DIAL III, a kindergarten screening tool, measures cognitive (not social/emotional) development and is one component in assessing a child’s school readiness. Data indicate an overall decrease in cognitive development readiness among Greene County children. Children whose families participate in Parents As Teachers (PAT) score higher than their peers whose families

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Concentrated mandated reporter training in 2003 led to increased hotline and mandated reports, but substantiated child abuse and neglect rates decreased (although they are higher than the Missouri average). Children are removed from their homes primarily due to neglect, parental

involvement with drugs/alcohol, inadequate housing, physical/sexual abuse, and incarceration of their caretaker. Efforts are being made to decrease the amount of time children spend away from their homes.

	Greene County 2003	5-year Mean	Missouri 2003
Child Abuse/Neglect-Substantiated (<18 yrs) (per 1,000 children)	10.9	13.1	6.8
	Calendar Year 2003	Calendar Year 2004	+/-
Hotline/Letter Reports	5,173	5,660	+487
Children in Custody (remain in the home)	262	318	+56
Children in Placement (removed from the home)	901	819	-82
Children Placed Outside Greene County (*2002 Base Yr)	271	159	-112
Prevalent Reasons for Removal (may have more than one indicator)			
Neglect		721	
Parent Drugs/Alcohol		418/176	
Inadequate Housing		292	
Physical Abuse/Sexual Abuse		243/147	
Caretaker Incarcerated		205	

do not participate. Children who participate in PAT and additional early childhood programs (e.g., child care, preschool, Headstart) score even better on the screening. Sadly, less than half of eligible families participate in PAT, which is free.

Parents As Teachers (PAT) Participation

Kindergarten screening*	2001-02	2004-05
Overall Screening Average	66.5%	62.8%
Screening Average for Children Participating in PAT	N/A	74.63%
Screening Average for Children <u>not</u> Participating in PAT	N/A	56.47%
% of Eligible Families (Prenatal-5 yrs) Participating in PAT	N/A	46.6%

*Includes PAT data from Fair Grove, Republic, Springfield, Strafford and Willard.

Head Start

The Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation provides a comprehensive early childhood Head Start program for low-income children, ages 0 to 5. Some centers also offer medical, dental, psychological, and early intervention services at no charge. In Greene County, 669 children participate in Head Start programs.

In Summary

Poverty is intertwined with all early childhood indicators: homelessness, single-parent families, consequences of methamphetamine use, lack of health care,

dropping out of school, and child abuse and neglect. Finding affordable and accessible child care for families and encouraging provider certification and continued training can help improve our service to poor children.

Growing community awareness and attention. Greene County has had increased community dialogue about the importance of properly developing the 0-5 age group. In 2004 the Mayor's Commission on Children was formed to focus the community's attention on early childhood needs. Several community organizations have developed specific initiatives, stemming in part from the 2004 Community Report Card, focused on young children: The Community Foundation of the Ozarks, the Junior League of Springfield, Community Partnership's Early Childhood Collaborative, and the Greene County Commission, who included early childhood development programs as a centerpiece in the Community Safety Initiative sales tax proposal.

Burrell Behavioral Health also received an ELOA grant focusing on early childhood needs. The following agencies have partnered with Burrell in this initiative: Churches of Springfield, Council of Churches of the Ozarks, Forest Institute of Professional Psychology, Head Start, Mayor's Commission for Children, Missouri State University, Ozarks Literacy Council, Parents as Teachers, Republic School System RIII, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Springfield-Greene County Library District, and WIC.