

California Head Start State Collaboration Office 2022 Needs Assessment Summary

Timing and Design of Needs Assessment

As a grantee, the California Head Start State Collaboration Office creates and submits to the OHS Region 9 a final report including a needs assessment of the state. The Collaboration Office partners with Head Start California to conduct the needs assessment including designing the needs assessment, collecting information from Head Start programs, analyzing results and drafting the report. For the 2021-22 year, the Needs Assessment was conducted March 1 -15, 2022. Thirty-one (29) agencies completed the assessment representing 21.6 % of all Head Start programs in California, with a 100% completion rate and an average response time of about just under 13 minutes. The survey is reasonably representative of the field. By agency type, respondents included:

13 Non-Profits	42% of responses	41 % of Head Start grantees
7 Community Action Agencies	23% of responses	8 % of Head Start grantees
6 School Districts	19% of responses	27 % of Head Start grantees
3 County Offices of Ed	10% of responses	11 % of Head Start grantees
1 Local Gov't	6% of responses	4 % of Head Start grantees

Timing and Design of Needs Assessment

This Needs Assessment was conducted in March 2022, after Head Start programs had been operating under COVID19 conditions for two years. The response rates are comparable to the 2021 results, but still lower than pre-pandemic averages. Many directors report anecdotally to being overwhelmed by very demanding operational challenges and an intense increase in communication and requests for information. To accommodate their challenges, this needs assessment was designed to be *extremely brief*, and *focused on only the most important issues* facing Head Start Grantees: 1) low enrollment, 2) staffing challenges and 3) the expansion of Transitional Kindergarten to serve younger children beginning in FY 2-22-23, 4) the immediate future.

Executive Summary

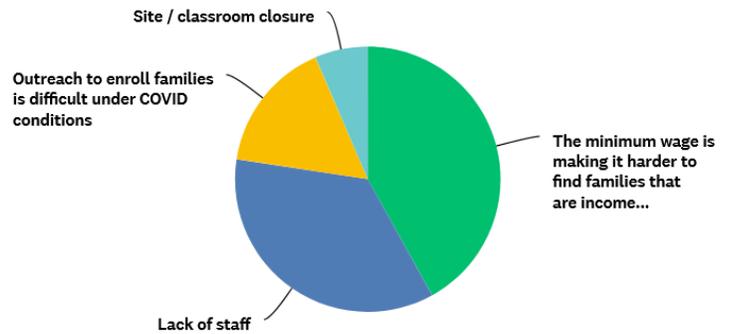
Four clear issues of emerge from this survey.

1. **Eligibility** – Across the state, *Head Star program struggle to identity income eligible families* because Federal Poverty guidelines simply make no sense in California’s economy.
2. **Staff Compensation:** *More funding is desperately needed.* Head Start programs compete with school districts who pay much more, and national retail chains who pay the same with *far fewer requirements, responsibilities, and paperwork.*
3. **Conversion:** Head Start directors believe they will have to convert their programs to Early Head Start which require significant investments in workforce, facilities, and outreach.
4. **Flexibility:** As CA expands its preschool and Transitional Kindergarten to younger children, programs need flexibility to align standards and ratios to match state systems so Head Start can continue to be a part of the mixed delivery system.

Part I. Enrollment

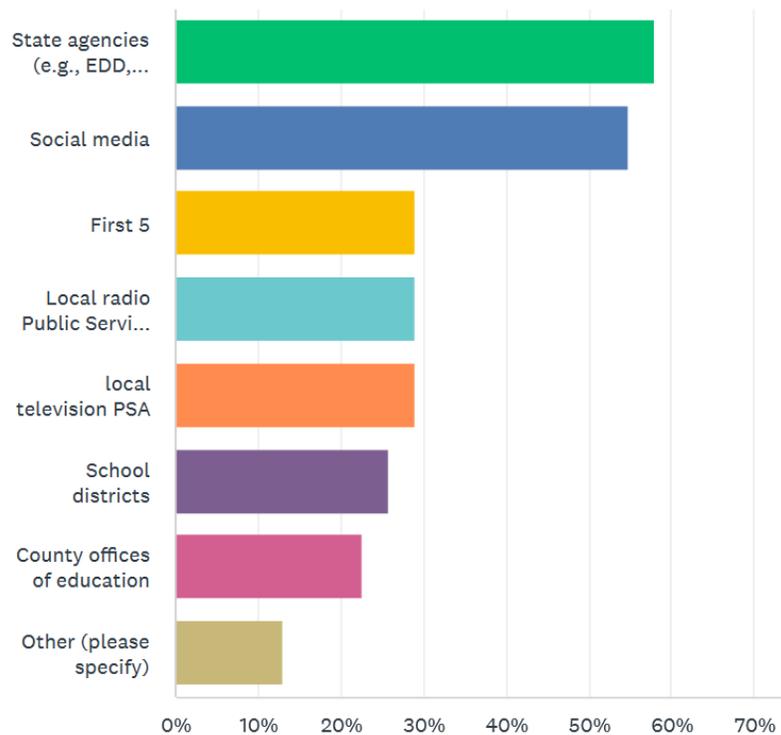
1. During this program year, what has been the biggest challenge for enrolling new families?

- 42% The minimum wage is making it harder to find families that are income qualified.
- 35% Lack of staff
- 16% Outreach to enroll families is difficult under COVID conditions
- 6% Site / classroom closure



2. What do you think would be the most effective distribution channels to expand awareness of Head Start to reach more families who might qualify? (Pick up to 3).

- 58% State agencies (e.g., EDD, WIC, etc.)
- 54% Social media
- 29% First 5
- 29% Local radio PSA
- 29% Local television PSA
- 26% School districts
- 23% County offices of education
- 13% Other (please specify)

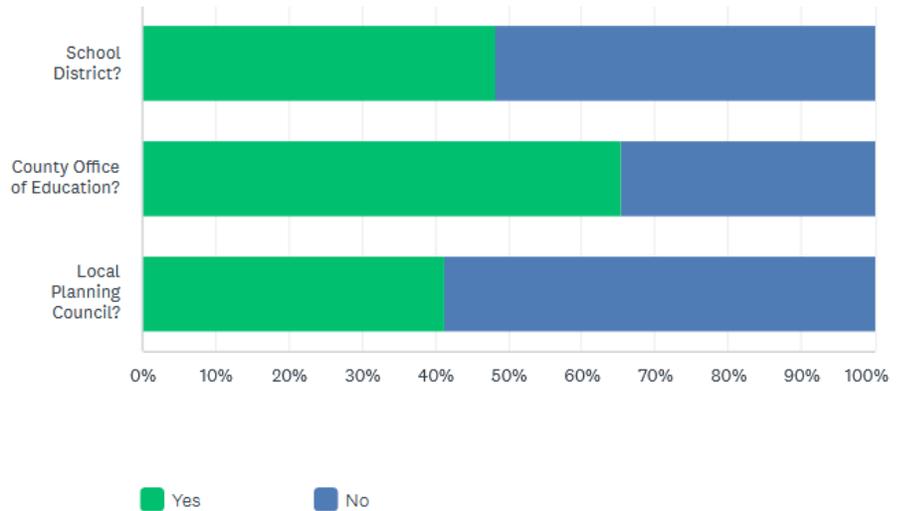


Comments:

- Families know, but poverty guidelines are too low, and the *requirements of the program are so much* that these deter parents from even applying
- *Foster children are not being identified well* and further partnerships should be developed
- Informing families they have the option to continue with HS
- Word of mouth

Part 2: Transitional Kindergarten Expansion

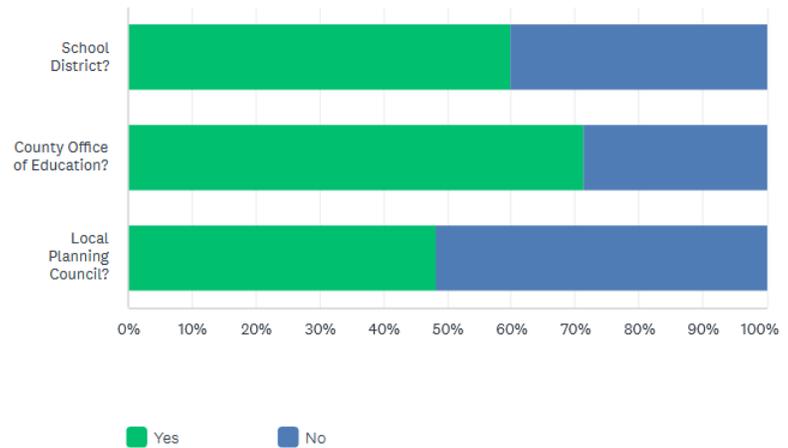
3. Has your Head Start program been contacted regarding planning for expansion of Transitional Kindergarten LEA or local planning council ?



When we remove the participating school districts and county offices of education, 22 respondents remain. Seven of twenty-two (31%) had not been contacted at all.

NON-LEAs (N=22)			
Have you been contacted by:	SD	COE	LPC
Yes	7 (32%)	12 (55%)	12 (55%)
No	13 (59%)	9 (41%)	10 (45%)
Did not answer	2 (9%)	1 (4%)	

4. If no (to previous question), has your Head Start program reached out to these agencies regarding planning for expansion of Transitional Kindergarten?

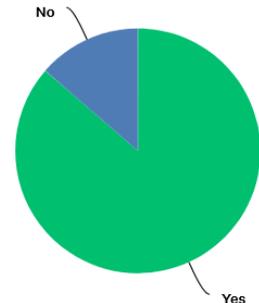


Similarly, focusing only on non-LEA based programs, 22 respondents remain. Seven of twenty-two (31%) had not been contacted at all.

	SD	COE	LPC
Yes	5	3	4
No	10	7	13

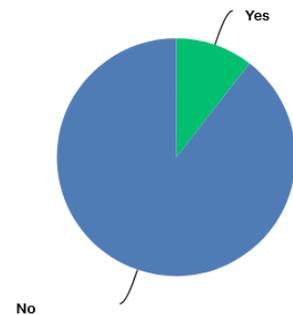
5. Does your program currently have one or more classrooms located in a school district or County Office of Education site? [N=22]

Yes 86% No 13%



6. If yes, have you been informed that your program will not be able to use the classroom in FY 22-23? [N=19]

Yes 11% No 89%



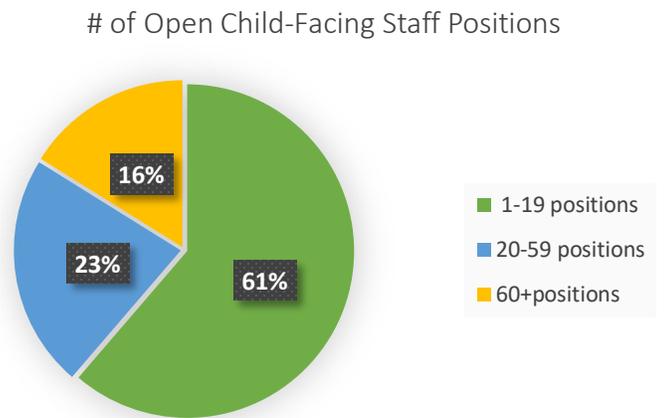
Comments

- One district has asked for 2 district owned classrooms back.
- Not yet, though we have lost space on school district campuses over the last few years due to expansion of TK
- Not yet
- Head Start owns buildings.

Part III. Staffing Challenges

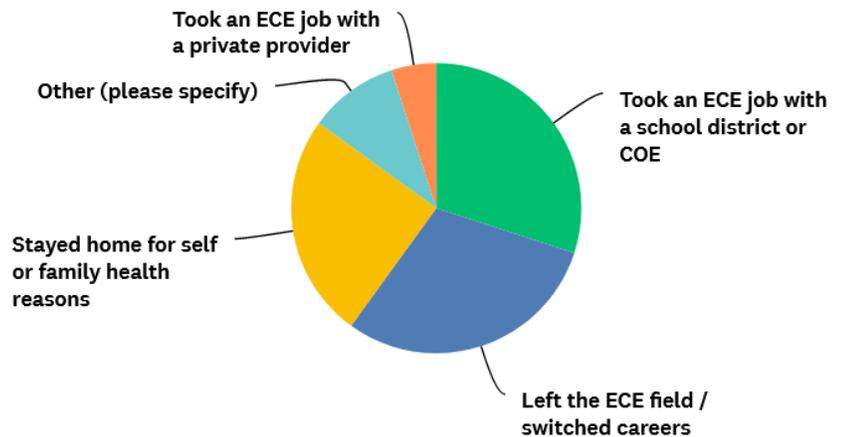
7. How many staff positions that serve children directly do you have open right now?

Head Start directors of just 19 agencies (with 1-19 openings) reported 164 unfilled positions, an average of 16.4 openings per agency. These 19 agencies constitute 13% of all Head Start grantees in California, suggesting that statewide, there *could* be as many as 2,345 positions open.



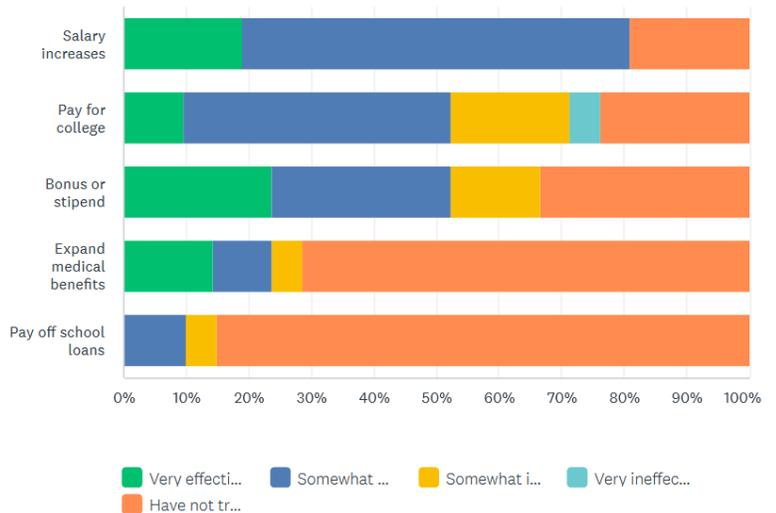
8. During this program year, what has been the primary (most common) reason teaching staff (e.g., teacher, aides,) left the position? [N=22]

- 30% Took an ECE job with a school district or COE
- 30% Left the ECE field / switched careers
- 25% Stayed home for self or family health reasons
- 10% Other (please specify)
- 5% Took an ECE job with a private provider



9. Please rate the effectiveness of any retention strategies you have tried during this program year.

- 82% rated Salary Increases as very or somewhat effective.
- 50% rated Paying for College or Bonus or Stipends as very or somewhat effective.
- 71% had *not* tried expanding medical benefits
- 85 % had *not* tried Paying off School loans.



Part Four: The Immediate Future

10. What program needs and challenges should the CHSSCO and HSC elevate with state and federal stakeholders?

Twenty-nine (29) of 31 respondents made 36 comments mostly in three themes.

1. Staff Retention and Recruitment: 24 comments

Two quotes:

- ECE wages are too not competitive in the job market. Teachers with BAs are leaving for elementary school jobs.
- Addressing wages, minimum wage created challenges in competing with not only community partners but others like fast food companies as well as wage compression issues.

2. Income- Eligibility Guidelines: 12 comments

Two quotes:

- *Increase income guidelines.* Just because parents make \$15 per hour does NOT put them out of poverty in California!
- *In California, we must address the income guidelines as many families in need are not being able to be served in Head Start.* Either lower income guidelines or increase the near low-income bracket to 150% PLUS.

3. Program Flexibility: 2 comments

- *[Relax parent requirements]* The TK expansion has given parents a choice and with all the requirements (that I do support) *parents will choose TK over HS almost always.* 4 conferences a year, home visits, family goals, in-kind...it is too much to ask of parents who have the choice of doing none of these things. Our district, without consideration of our program, opened TK fully so that nearly every four-year-old qualifies.
- *Get rid of the mask mandate - & let local health departments govern that.*

11. The entire California landscape of ECE is changing: deeply and rapidly. How do you think Head Start programs need to adapt and innovate? What can the CHSSCO and HSC do to help?

Twenty-seven (27) respondents made 36 comments, mostly in 5 themes.

1. Staff Recruitment & Retention: 11 comments

Two quotes:

- Pay special attention to the recruitment needs for infant-toddler staffing - promote college pay reimbursement, incentivize people to seek training and employment in this field
- we need to partner with the 4-year colleges to come up with a ECE teaching credential where they will count our current staff's BA/BS education and experience and award them with the credential for a small fee that can be used in our programs and or school districts

2. Pivoting to serve 0-3: 9 comments

Two quotes

- Promote the EHS program in a variety of options by providing infant/toddler teacher training, incentives to take training and take EHS jobs, and provide start-up / facilities costs for conversion.
- Need to shift focus to EHS services and partner with school districts for the new preschool landscape to create programs that better fit the needs of the community.

3. Adapting with TK Expansion: 5 comments

1. What planning is being done for California and the potential effects of Transition Kindergarten?
2. With the expanding existence of TK, programs need to adapt to provide 0-3 programs and work collaboratively to provide a seamless transition from program to program. CHSSCO can assist with removing the barriers. For example, if programs collaborate with LEA's to provide 9-hour programs, not all families will qualify if they must adhere to the eligibility requirements of the more stringent program. Families will end up opting for the program that requires less paperwork from them.

3. We need to partner with LEAs - ensure our quality is high
4. collaboration with school districts, strengthen transition programs to kindergarten
5. be part of the planning for UTK,

4. Program Flexibility: 4 comments

Two quotes

- *Blend program requirements to match those of the state.* Staff struggles to adapt every time there is a change, it triggers an opportunity for them to seek other jobs.
- CSPP to adjust the number of children per classroom we (HS) are funded for. We cannot have a classroom of 20 majority 3-year-olds.

5. Eligibility: 2 comments

- *Eligibility also needs to be re-evaluated* (particularly in CA with the poverty guidelines) as well as the enrollment process.
- *Reconsider the parent requirements.* I do know they are benefits to families but for most families in my experience it just comes across as more work for them and many don't have the time or energy.