

2024 Community Needs & Assets Assessment Highlights

Summarized by Justine A. Wayne, MSW, MSPH, Evaluation Consultant, November 19, 2024

Stokes Partnership for Children (SPFC) recently conducted a Community Needs Assessment and requested input via an online survey from parents, caregivers and professionals who work with young children. Existing data from a variety of sources was also gathered and reviewed. The data and survey results¹ will shape the Smart Start funding priorities over a three-year period (2025-28) for Stokes programs that support children from birth to age five, but not yet in kindergarten.



In summary, the following key needs were identified:

- Expanded **access to child care and Pre-K**, through increasing **availability** and reducing parent **cost**.
- Support for **behavioral and social-emotional** (mental health) needs of children, both in the child care setting & directly for parents.
- Increasing **child care provider pay** (a living wage), access to **health insurance**, paid **sick time**; promoting child care providers as professionals.
- **Dedicated community outreach & education re: SPFC available services & early childhood issues.**

Stokes ranks **26th** out of 100 counties in 2023, **38th** in '20, **39th** in '18, and **40th** in '14, showing steady progress. From the survey of 176 residents or those who work with young children in Stokes County, respondents rated the following "**Challenges** for your family and/or families you work with," most Often:

1. **Affordable high quality child care or pre-k**
2. **Availability of high quality child care or pre-k near home or work**
3. **Children with challenging behaviors**

Within challenges that were specifically services, 176 respondents ranked the following most Often:

1. **Access to affordable housing**
2. **Affordable health insurance**
3. **Access to adult mental health services**

And out of other community issues, 176 respondents ranked the following most often:

1. **Unemployment, underemployment or availability of jobs**
2. **Alcohol/drug abuse**

161 responded to which programs or services are **MOST** needed for families and young children:

1. **Affordable child care/ pre-K** (108, 67% selected)
2. **Mental health services/therapy for parents** (80, 50% selected)
3. **Mental health services/therapy for young children** (79, 49% selected)
4. **Services for children with behavioral challenges** (74, 46% selected)
5. **2nd or 3rd shift care** (72, 45% selected)
6. **Children with special needs support, therapies** (65, 40% selected)
7. **After school activities** (64, 40% selected)

In conclusion, two main themes emerged across the challenges and the services needed:

- High quality child care and Pre-K is **insufficient** due to **affordability** as well as **access/availability**
- **Social-emotional/behavior** issues came up more than pre-COVID or in the last needs assessment

In addition, **child care providers** continue to be severely underpaid, given the cost of living: **39% earn under \$15/hour**, so are NOT making a living wage and depending on family size, may be living in poverty.

41% reported no child care employer **group health insurance** at all was available, adding further cost for them.

For more details or questions concerning data sources or general inquiry contact Cindy Tuttle, Executive Director at ctuttle@stokespfc.com or Shannon Cox, Program Manager at scox@stokespfc.com or by calling (336) 985-2676.

¹ Not all the data directly relates to the mission of SPFC or its funding sources, such as Smart Start; therefore, SPC will focus mainly on data that directly relate to its core focus areas: early literacy, family support, health and early care and education. However, the data will be made available as it may be relevant and useful to other local agencies and to the public.