2025 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Heartland Early Education is a department of Salina Public Schools in Salina, KS. The service area includes Saline, Dickinson, and Ellsworth Counties. Salina is close to the geographic center of the state and is the largest city within a radius of 90 miles. Dickinson County is immediately east of Salina and Ellsworth County is west . Heartland serves an area that embraces 2,286 square miles.

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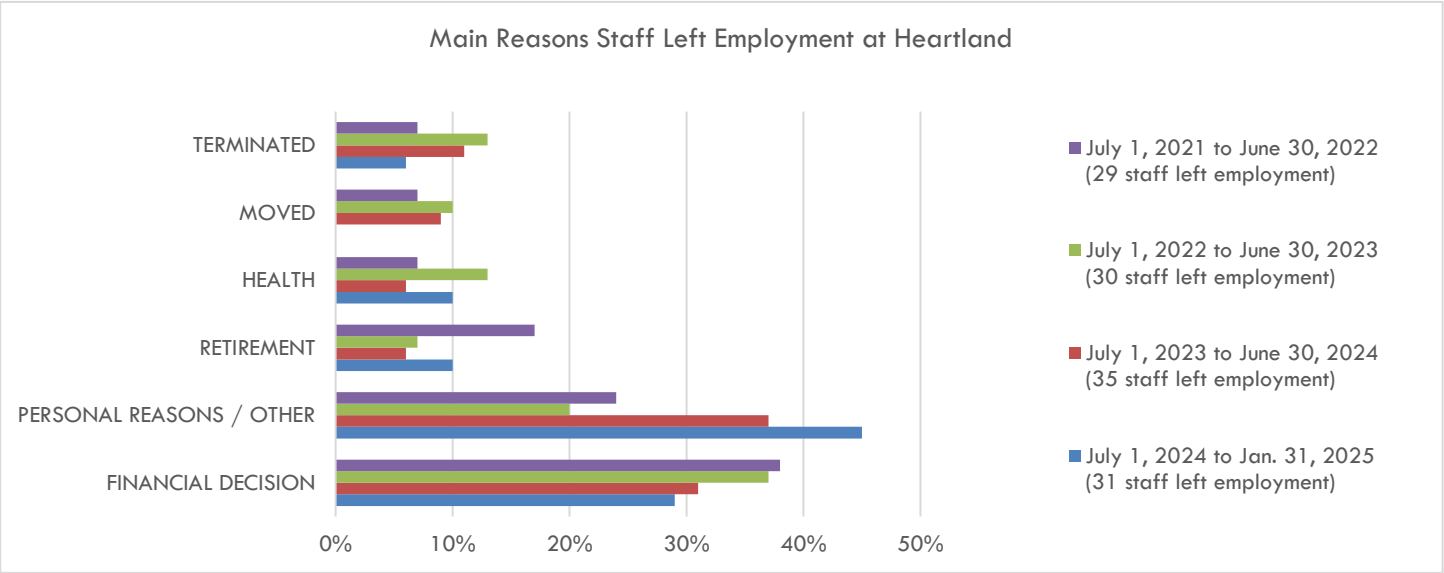
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Heartland Staffing Shortage

Between July 2024 and January 2025 Heartland experienced 31 staff departures and hired 29 new employees. There are eight open positions that need to be filled. However the number of applications is low, and only a small percentage come from qualified candidates. Given these challenges, retaining staff is just as critical as hiring new team members. The following table indicates the main reasons for staff turnover in the last four years.



Under-Enrollment Plan

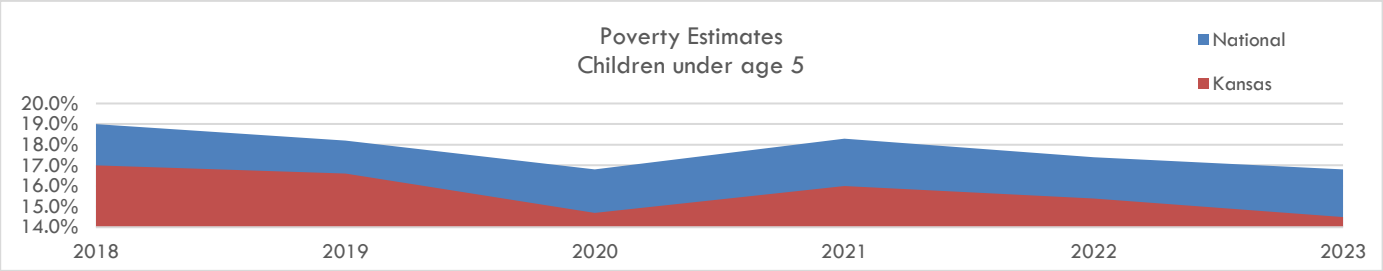
On July 5, 2023 The Office of Head Start (OHS) informed Salina Public Schools (SPS) that the Heartland Head Start program was found to be under-enrolled and would need to develop a plan in collaboration with OHS to achieve full enrollment. Heartland has not been able to maintain full enrollment since the COVID-19 pandemic. Inability to hire and retain quality staff is the largest barrier to opening classrooms. In August 2024 Heartland started the school year with all Head Start classrooms open. Navigating staffing shortages and the increasing number of high needs children continues to impact enrollment.

Heartland has been in collaboration with OHS and the regional office to achieve full enrollment by April of 2025. Consequences for not being able to be fully enrolled can include “recapture, withholding, or reduction” of our base grant. Planning strategies can include a change in program scope, conversion of Head Start slots to Early Head Start, and/or reduction of slots. Changes must be supported by the Community Needs Assessment.

Community Demographics

Changes in Poverty Rates

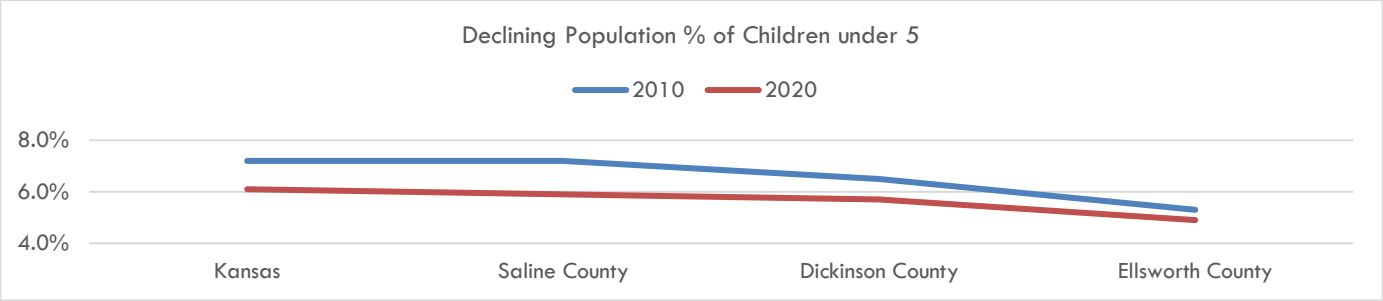
The chart below illustrates a steady decrease in the number of children under five years living in poverty. The pandemic broke the trend in 2021, but poverty data for 2023 shows a continuing downward trend. Kansas continues to mirror the national trends, but rates have stayed below the national average.

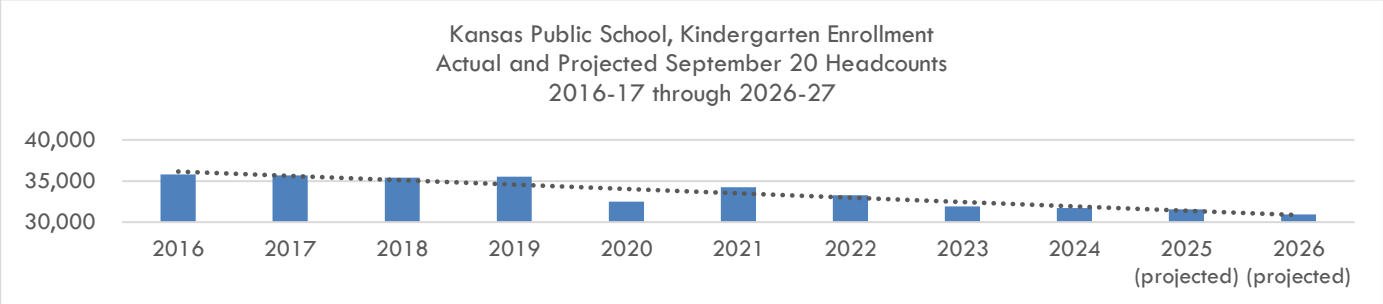


Source: US Census Bureau, SAIPE Datasets, State and County Estimates

Declining Birthrates

The following charts focus on the decreasing population of children under the age of five in Kansas and the Heartland service area. The second chart shows the decline in the number of Kindergarteners enrolled in public school and the projected numbers through 2026. Heartland must determine how this will affect the number of income eligible children in our service area.





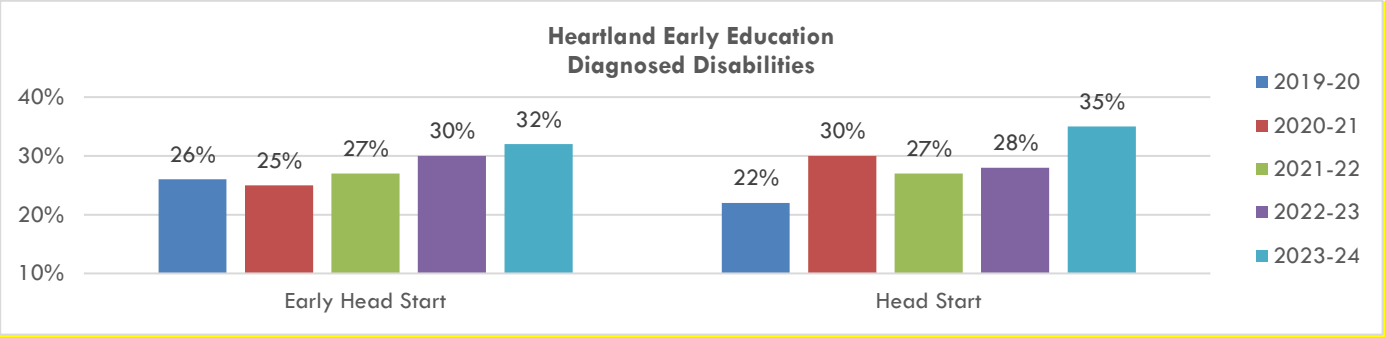
Declining Number of School-Age Children with an Increasing Number Needing Special Services

The following excerpt is from the Tallman Education Report "The Number of School-Age Children is Declining, and Will likely Continue to Fall" published March 5, 2024 by the Kansas Association of School Boards https://www.kasb.org/34669_3?articleID=6804.

> Although the U.S. Census says the Kansas population has been slowly growing, the population under age 18 is dropping. The biggest decline is in the population under age five, which means the trend is likely to continue. While some individual school districts will continue to grow, for many districts there are simply fewer students entering the system.
>
> Low-income students often have more difficulties learning because of factors outside of school. The number of students with disabilities who need special services reached an all-time high this year. The number of high-need, high-cost students in private schools occurs at much lower percentages than in public schools.

Therefore, even with fewer students, public schools must prepare to serve an increasing number of students who face greater difficulties in learning.

The chart below highlights the increase in children with diagnosed disabilities served by Heartland Early Education.



Heartland Partnerships with Community Child Care Centers

Heartland continues to partner with Abilene Child Care Learning Center in Dickinson County. Staying fully enrolled has been a challenge due to changing community demographics and ongoing struggles to hire Head Start qualified staff.

Layered funding

Heartland continues to collaborate with district leaders to ensure Head Start students and families receive the support they need, regardless of which school they attend within Salina Public Schools. To achieve this, we use a “layered funding” approach, combining federal and state resources to provide high-quality early childhood education in eight elementary schools. This approach helps remove transportation barriers for families, allows Head Start students to attend their neighborhood school alongside their siblings, and helps them adjust earlier to the school they will attend in kindergarten.

HEARTLAND EARLY EDUCATION OVERVIEW

Program Option Descriptions

Early Head Start Home-Based is a home-visiting program available in Saline and Dickinson counties. Enrolled families receive weekly 90-minute home visits with a Family Consultant trained in child development and social services.

Head Start Part Day School Year (PDSY) provides high quality early childhood education to income eligible children/families in Saline county. It is available for children ages three to five who meet income guidelines. Children attend morning or afternoon sessions four days per week. Family Consultants provide monthly home visits. Transportation is available for those that qualify.

Head Start School Day School Year (SDSY) provides high quality early childhood education to income eligible children/families in Saline, Dickinson and Ellsworth counties. It is available for children ages three to five who meet income guidelines. Children attend from 8am to 3pm Monday through Thursday. Family Consultants provide monthly home visits. Transportation is available for those that qualify.

Head Start/Early Head Start Full Day Full Year (FDFY) In Salina, Heartland offers 56 extended day slots for children age 6 weeks to 36 months. Heartland partners with Abilene Child Care to provide 12 child care slots for children up to five years.

Heartland Early Education Program Options – Funded Enrollment

Program Option	Program	Saline	Dickinson	Ellsworth	Totals
Home-Based	Early Head Start	59	--	--	**59**
	Kansas Early Head Start	16	4	--	**20**
Part Day School Year	Head Start	82	--	--	**82**
School Day School Year	Head Start	135	15	15	**165**
Full Day Full Year	Early Head Start	32	--	--	**32**
	Head Start	--	9	--	**9**
	Kansas Early Head Start	24	3	--	**27**
	TOTALS	348	31	15	**394**

HEARTLAND PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Early Head Start and Head Start Eligibility

Intake and Eligibility Process

Intake policies and procedures are in place to ensure the most eligible children are selected to fill Head Start and Early Head Start slots. Recruitment is planned and implemented on a regular schedule and applications, brochures, posters, and public service announcements are used throughout the program service area.

Although income is the primary qualifier for eligibility, many at-risk factors are taken into consideration. Most families enrolled are at or below 100% of poverty. In comparison, the school lunch program allows families to earn up to 185% of poverty to qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch.

Children in foster care or homeless (McKinney-Vento) are categorically eligible for Head Start/Early Head Start services. Families receiving public assistance in the form of TANF (cash assistance), SNAP (food assistance, or SSI (Supplemental Security Income) are also categorically eligible.

Breakdown of 2023-24 Participant Eligibility Status

Early Head Start

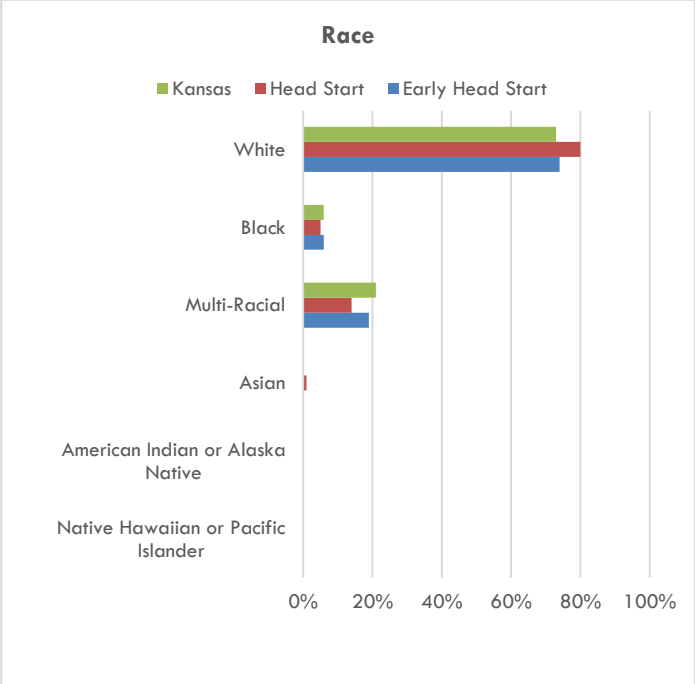
Income (up to 100% of poverty)	37%
Income (101-129.99% of poverty)	6%
Receiving Public Assistance: TANF/SSI	33%
Homeless	14%
Foster Child	4%
Over Income	6%

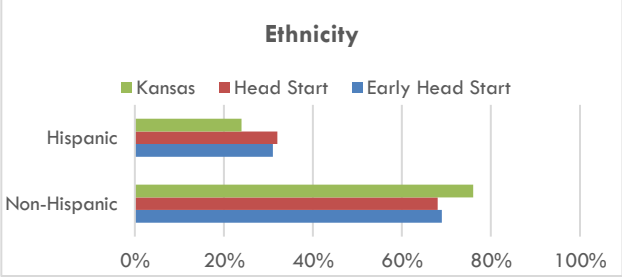
Head Start

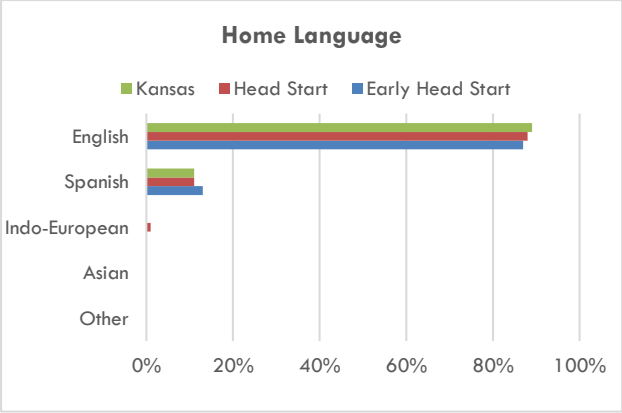
Income (up to 100% of poverty)	25%
Income (101-129.99% of poverty)	12%
Receiving Public Assistance: TANF/SSI	50%
Homeless	7%
Foster Child	2%
Over Income	4%

Race/Ethnicity/Home Language

2023-24 Early Head Start and Head Start Participants







IMPACTS OF HEARTLAND STAFFING SHORTAGE

Under-Enrollment Plan

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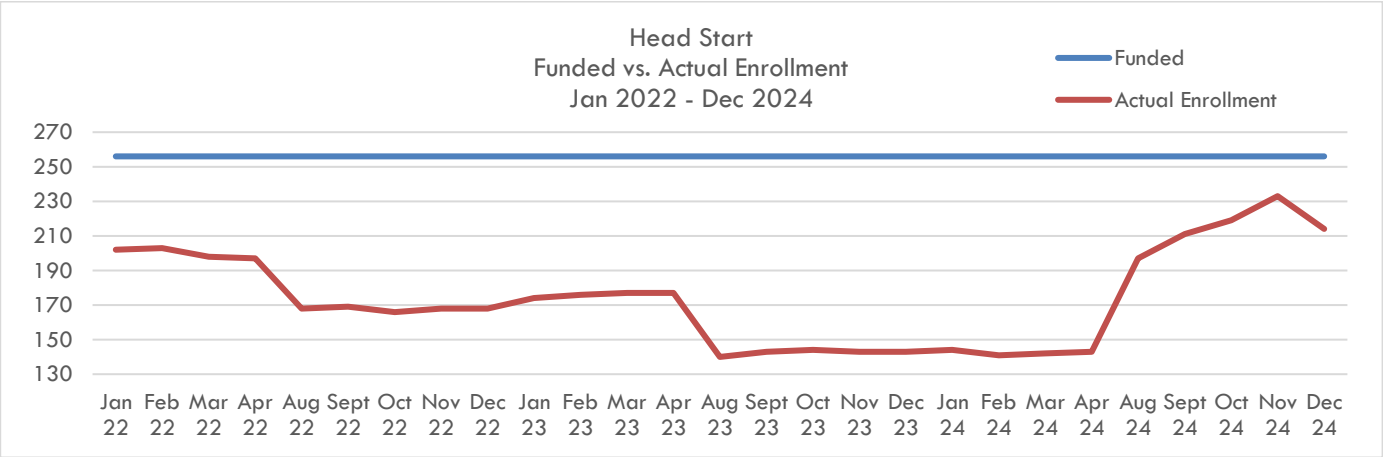
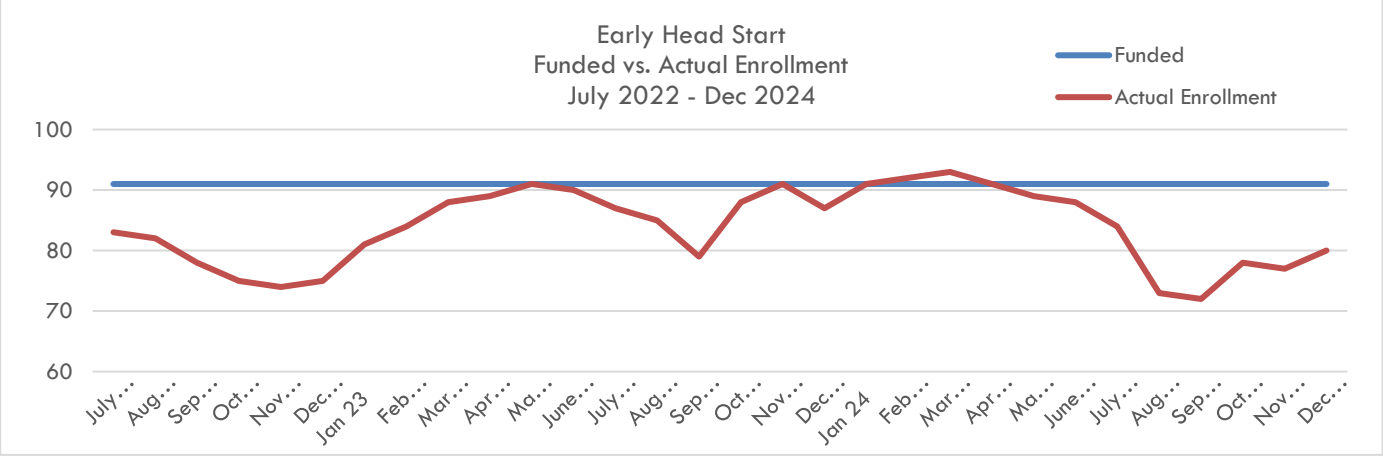


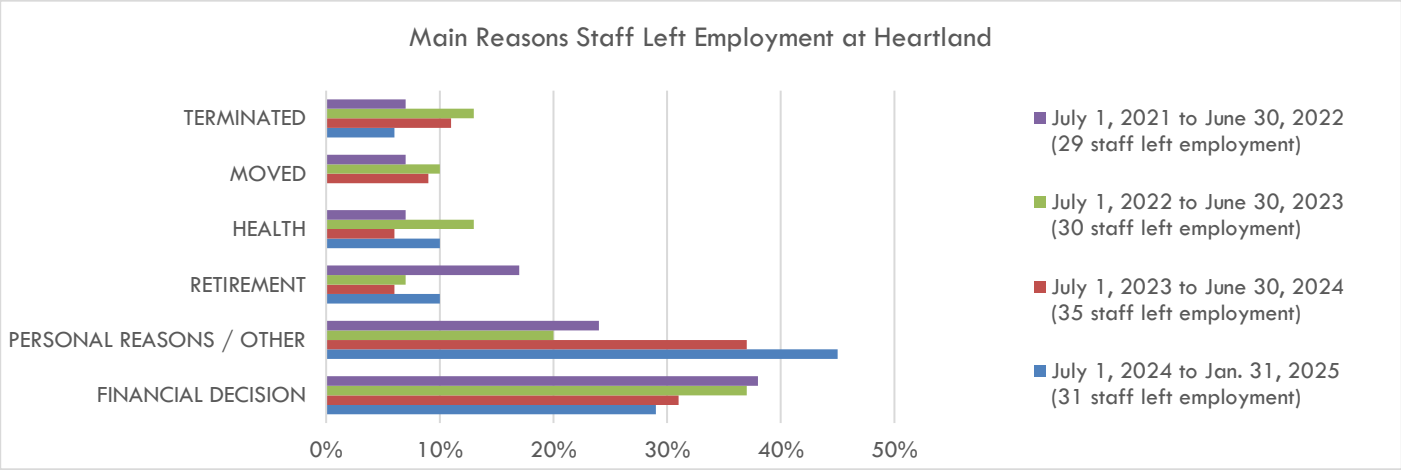


Closed Classrooms

Three Head Start classrooms were closed for the 2023-24 school year due to lack of staff. These classrooms represent 80 Head Start children not able to receive services. Early Head Start had to close one classroom for several months and another classroom stayed at limited capacity (four of eight slots) due to the workforce shortage.

Staff Separation Data

Between July 2024 and January 2025 Heartland experienced 31 staff departures and hired 29 new employees. However the number of applications is low, and only a small percentage come from qualified candidates. Given these challenges, retaining staff is just as critical as hiring new team members. The following table indicates the main reasons for staff turnover in the last four years.



Wages and Retention

Heartland's Head Start Human Resources Manager works in collaboration with the school district to recruit staff. The Teacher Assistant position has been the most challenging to hire and to retain. Low wages have been a factor. Heartland salaries are determined by the school district pay scales, which in most cases has been an advantage. However, most businesses, including local child care centers, have raised their starting pay to $15-18 per hour. To compensate for the additional duties required in a preschool classroom the school district reclassified this position (in April 2024) to an Early Education Classroom Engagement Support position. This change increased the starting wage by more than $2 an hour to $16.34.

NUMBER OF POTENTIAL HEAD START ELIGIBLE PARTICPANTS BY COUNTY

Eligible Children Ages 0-4 Served by Head Start/Early Head Start[1]

COUNTY	ESTIMATED % CHILDREN <5 IN POVERTY (FOR KANSAS)	ESTIMATED # CHILDREN AGES 0-4	ESTIMATED # ELIGIBLE CHILDREN
Saline	9.4%	3192	300
Dickinson	9.7%	971	94
Ellsworth	5.0%	264	13

Early Head Start / Kansas Early Head Start**

COUNTY	ESTIMATED # ELIGIBLE CHILDREN	FUNDED SLOTS	% OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED
Saline	180	131	73%
Dickinson	56	7	13%
Ellsworth	8	--	0%
	244	138	33%

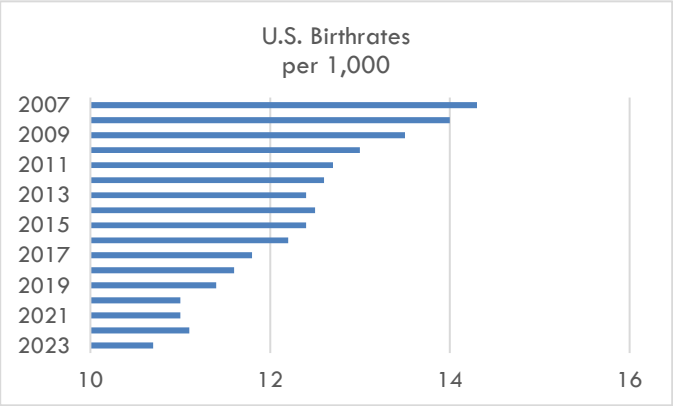
Head Start

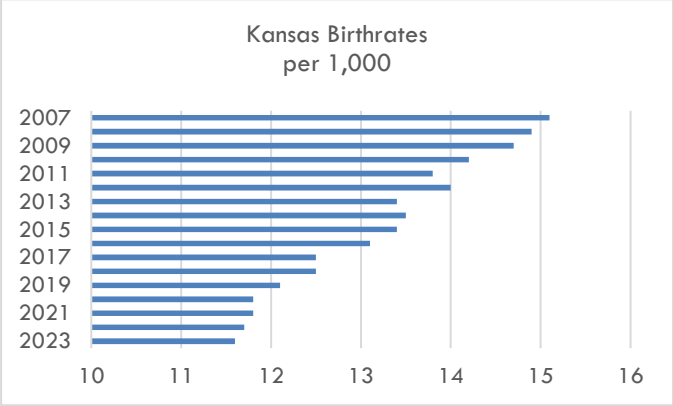
COUNTY	ESTIMATED # ELIGIBLE CHILDREN	FUNDED SLOTS	% OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED
Saline	120	208	173%
Dickinson	37	32	86%
Ellsworth	5	16	320%
	162	256	158%

**Kansas Early Head Start is a state funded program designed to mirror Early Head Start. All families receive the same services whether they are enrolled in KEHS or EHS. The only fundamental difference is families with children enrolled in center-based services must qualify for and receive DCF child care subsidy and have their eligibility reviewed on an annual basis.

Decline in Birth Rates

Over the past 20 years (2004-2023), the Kansas birth rate has fluctuated between a peak of 15.1 births per 1,000 population (reported in 2007) and a low of 11.6 births per 1,000 population (reported in 2023). Recent low birth rates continue a sustained decline that began in 2008.[2]



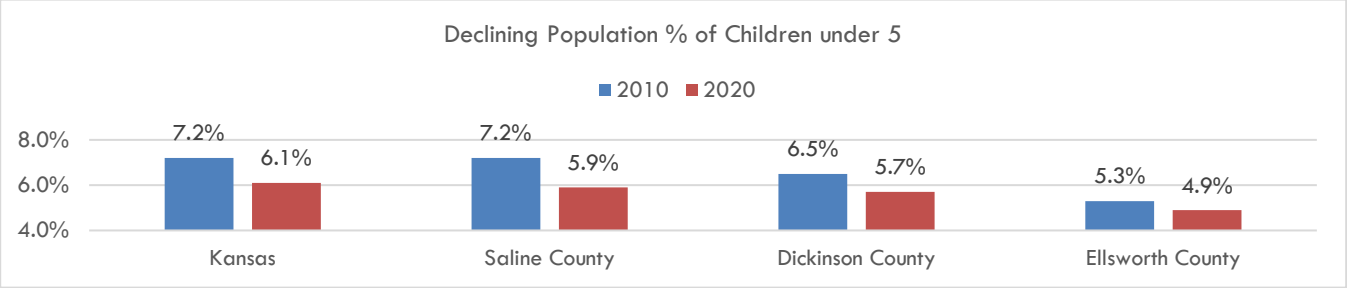


[1] U.S. Census Bureau, 2023: ACS 5-Year Estimates

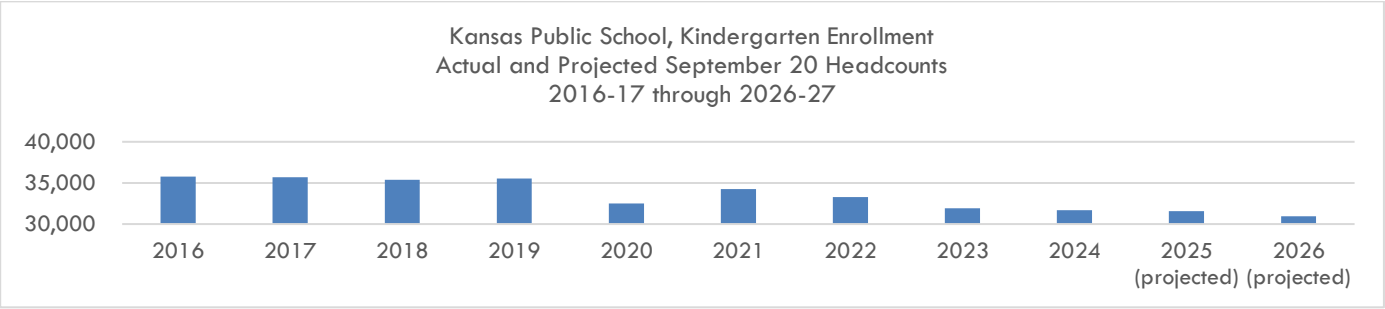
[2] Kansas Annual Summary of Vital Statistics, 2023 (Kansas Department of Health and Environment)

Declining Early Childhood Population

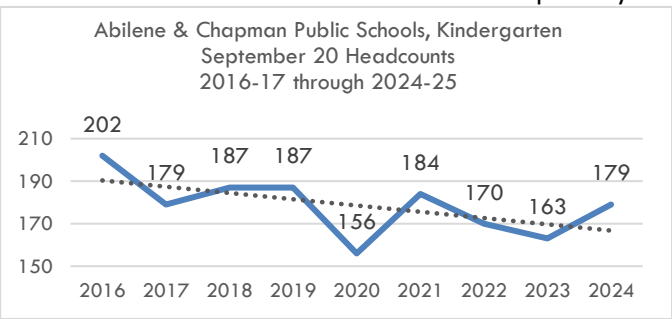
The following chart is focused on the decreasing population of children under the age of five in Kansas and the Heartland service area.

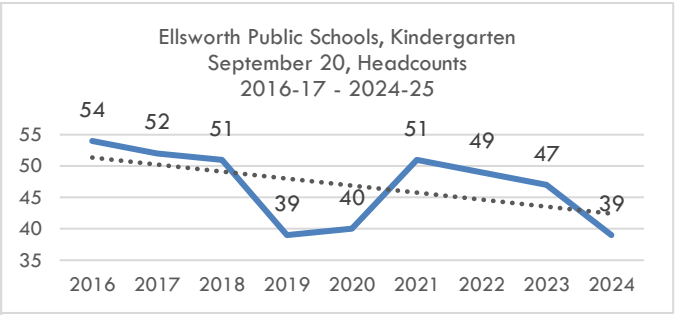


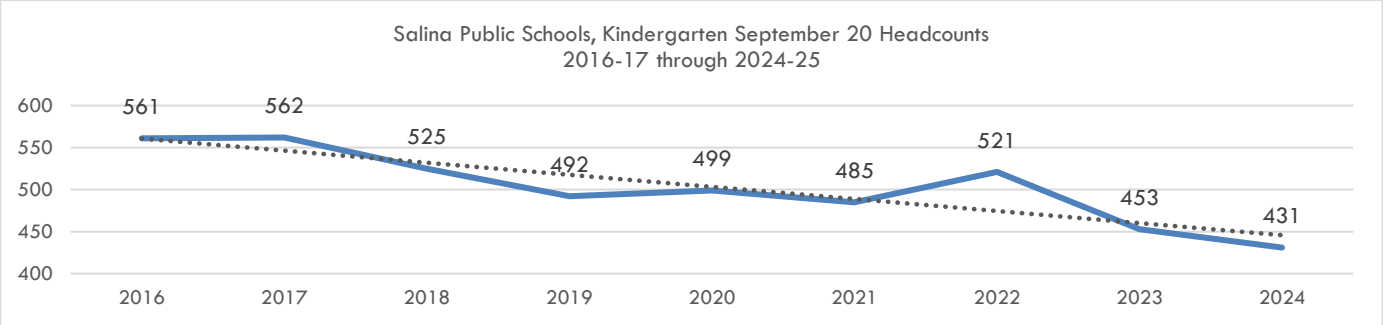
Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) actual and projected enrollment data for Kindergarten shows a sustained downward trend. [3]



The downward trend can also be seen in the primary cities/towns served in our service area.







[3] Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) Headcount Enrollment Report (SO66 data)

COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

Saline County:

Source: U.S. Census 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Narrative Profile.

Marital Status

Population 15 years and over	Percent Males	Percent Females
Never married	32.4	24.9
Now married, separated	50.3	47.1
Separated	0.6	2.7
Widowed	2.6	10.1
Divorced	14.0	15.2

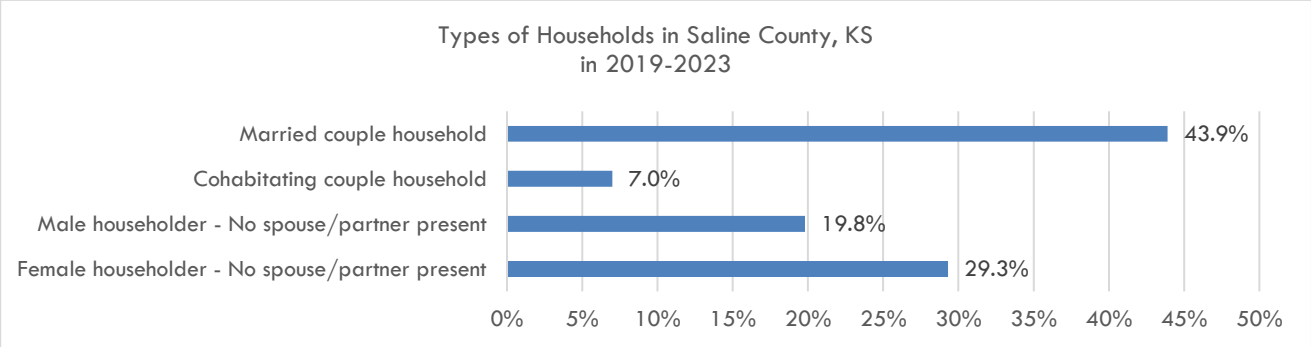
Population

In 2019-2023, Saline County had a total population of 53,801; 27,092 (50.4 percent) females and 26,709 (49.6 percent) males. The median age was 39.8 years. An estimated 22.9 percent of the population was under 18 years, 33.3 percent was 18 to 44 years, 25.3 percent was 45 to 64 years, and 18.5 percent was 65 years and older.

Households and Families

In 2019-2023, there were 22,299 households in Saline County. The average household size was 2.34 people; 27.7 percent of all households had one or more people under the age of 18; 30.4 percent of all households had one or more people 65 years and over.

In Saline County, 773 grandparents lived with their grandchildren under 18 years old. Of those grandparents, 22.8 percent were responsible for the basic needs of their grandchildren.

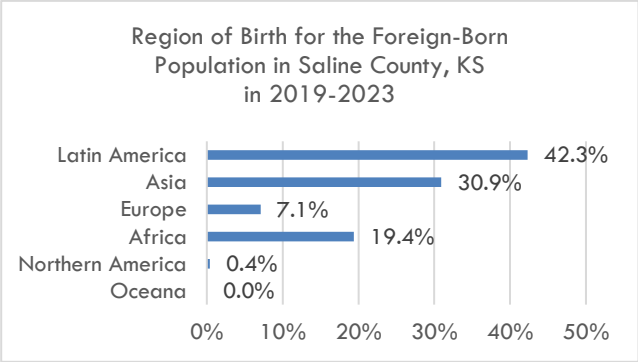


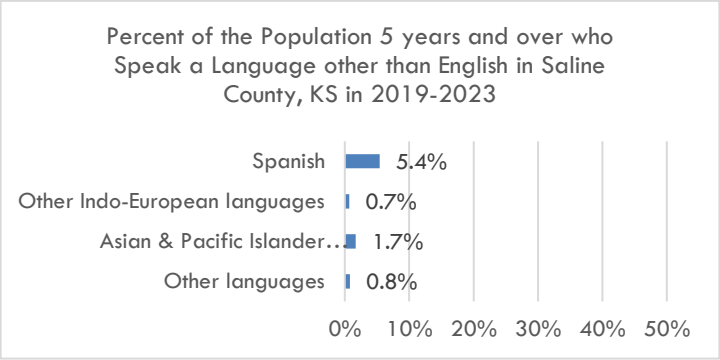
Nativity and foreign-born

In 2019-2023, an estimated 95.8 percent of the people living in Saline County were U.S. natives. 70.1 percent of the Saline County population were living in the state where they were born.

Approximately 4.2 percent of Saline County residents in 2019-2023 were foreign-born. 43.2 percent of foreign-born were naturalized U.S. citizens and an estimated 66.4 percent entered the country before the year 2010.

Foreign-born residents of Saline County come from different parts of the world. The bar graph below displays the percentage of foreign-born from each world region of birth in 2019-2023 for Saline County.



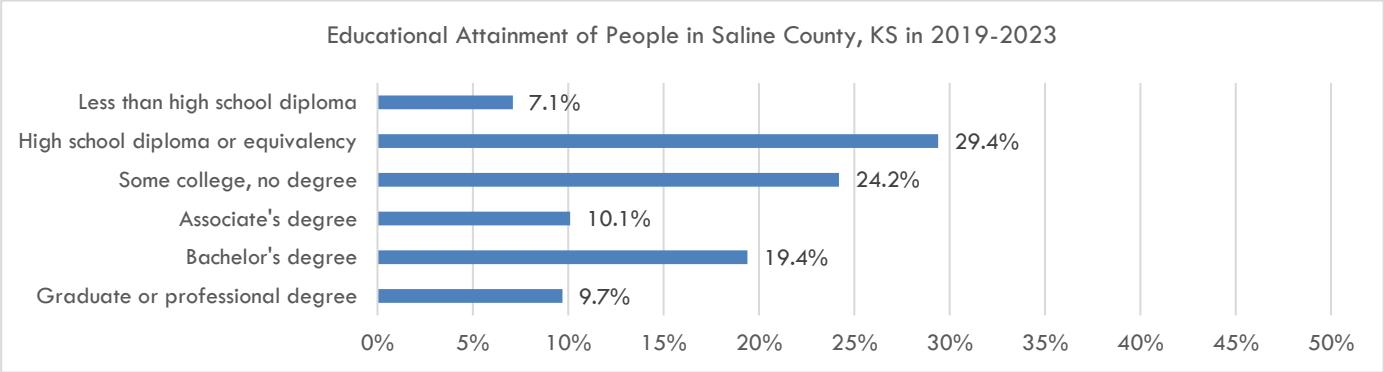


Language

Among people at least five years old living in Saline County in 2019-2023, 8.7 percent spoke a language other than English at home. Spanish was spoken by 5.4 percent of people at least five years old; 2.3 percent reported that they did not speak English "very well."

Education

In 2019-2023, 92.9 percent of people 25 years and over had at least graduated from high school and 29.1 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. An estimated 7.1 percent did not complete high school.

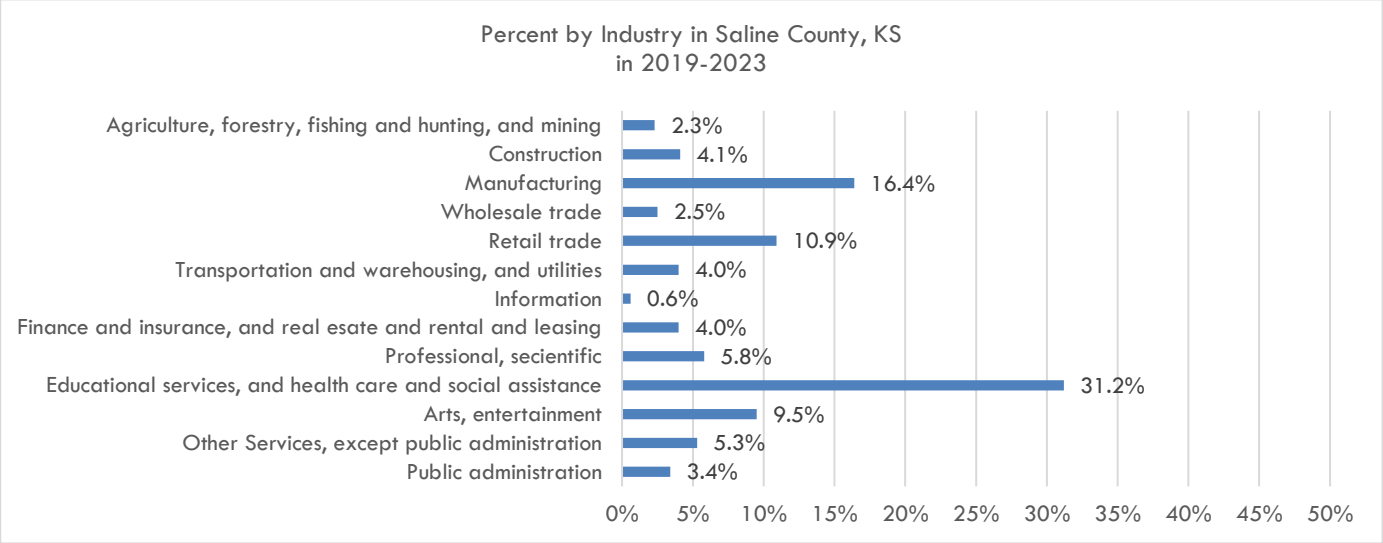


Disability

In Saline County, among the civilian noninstitutionalized population in 2019-2023, 15.2 percent reported a disability. The likelihood of having a disability varied by age - from 5.1 percent of people under 18 years old, to 12.6 percent of people 18 to 64 years old, and to 36.8 percent of those 65 and over.

Industries

In 2019-2023, the civilian employed population, 16 years and older, in Saline County worked in the following industries:



Occupations

Occupations for Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and over in Saline County, KS
in 2019-2023

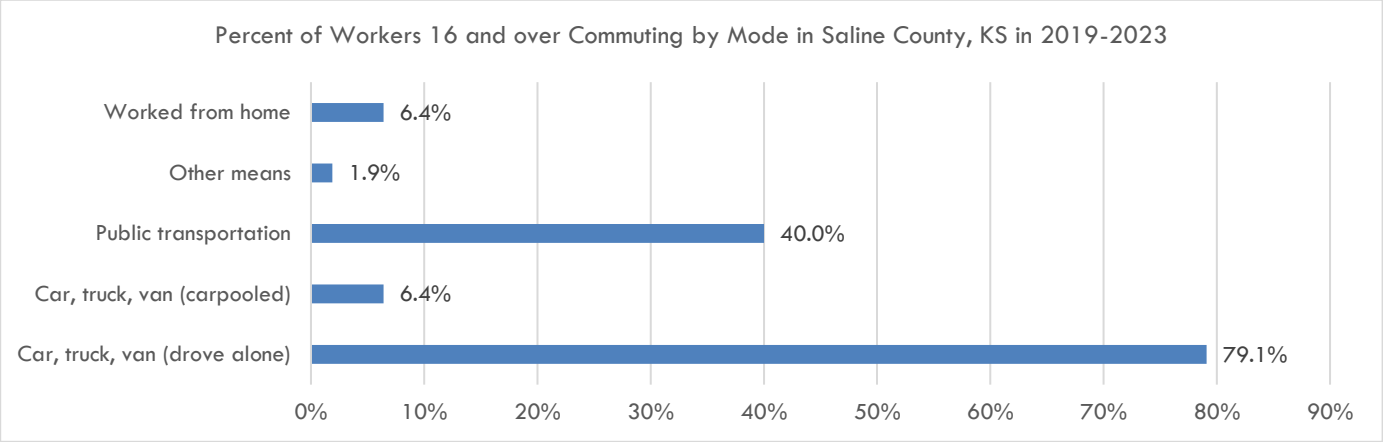
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	Number	Percent
Management, business, sciences, and arts occupations	9,477	34.3
Service occupations	5,730	20.8
Sales and office occupations	5,565	20.2
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	2,150	7.8
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	4,683	17.0

Employment Status and Type of Employer

Class of worker	Number	Percent
Private wage and salary workers	21,069	76.3
Federal, state, or local government workers	4,925	17.8
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business	1,545	5.6

Commuting to Work

An estimated 79.1 percent of Saline County workers drove to work alone in 2019-2023, 6.4 percent worked from home, and 10.3 percent carpooled. Among those who commuted to work, it took them on average 15.2 minutes to get to work.

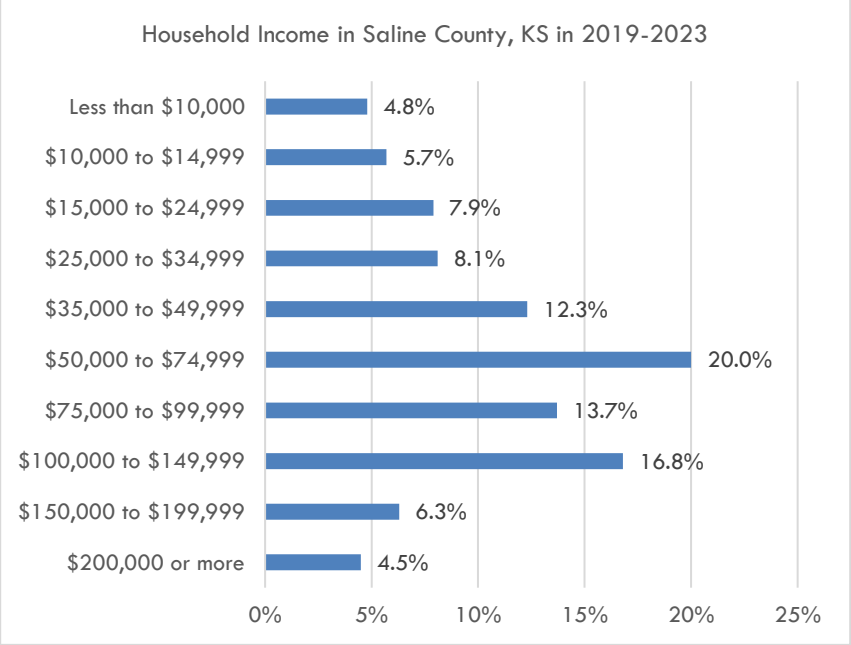


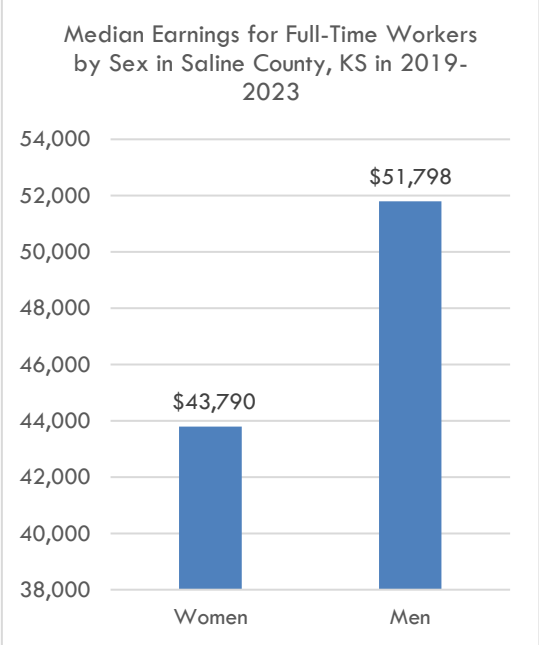
Health Insurance

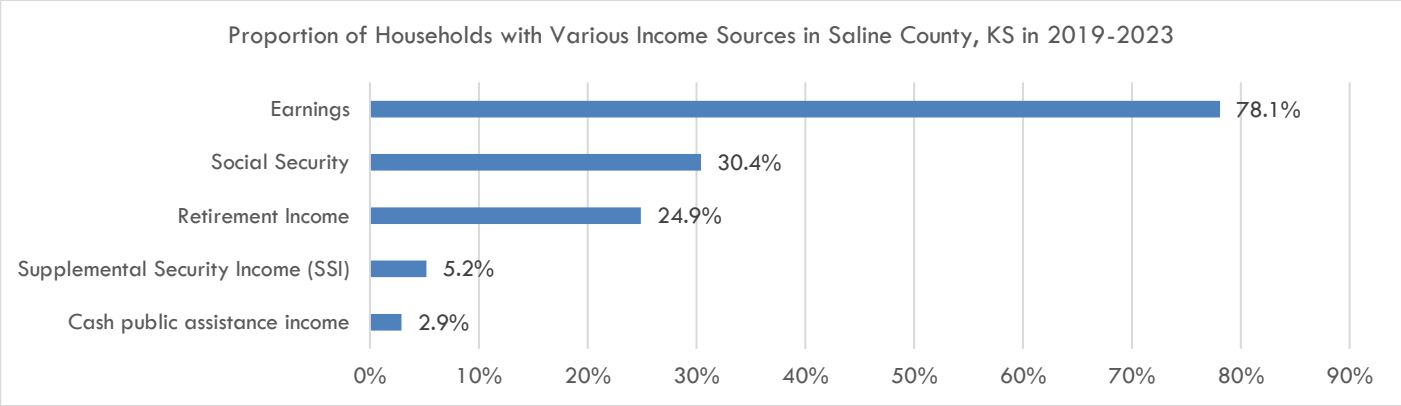
Among the civilian noninstitutionalized population in Saline County in 2019-2023, 90.0 percent had health insurance coverage and 10.0 percent did not have health insurance coverage. Private coverage was 72.2 percent and public coverage was 32.1 percent, respectively. The percentage of children under the age of 19 with no health insurance coverage was 7.8 percent.

Income

The median income of households in Saline County was $63,316. An estimated 4.8 percent of households had income below $10,000 a year and 4.5 percent had income of $200,000 or more.

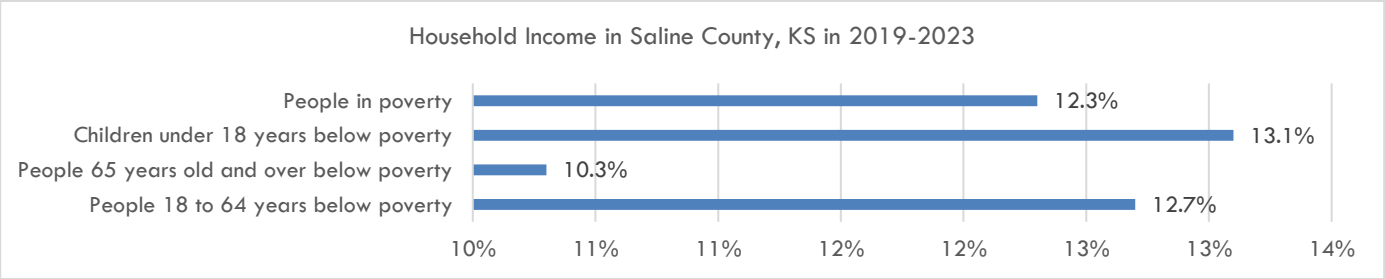






Poverty and Participation in Government Programs

In 2019-2023, 12.3 percent of people were in poverty. An estimated 13.1 percent of children under 18 were below the poverty level, compared with 10.3 percent of people 65 years old and over. An estimated 12.7 percent of people 18 to 64 years were below the poverty level.



Housing Inventory Characteristics

In 2019-2023, Saline County had a total of 24,146 housing units. Of these housing units, 81.0 percent were single-family houses either not attached to any other structure or attached to one or more structures (commonly referred to as "townhouses" or "row houses"). 16.6 percent of the housing units were located in multi-unit structures, or those buildings that contained two or more apartments. 2.4 percent were mobile homes, while any remaining housing units were classified as "other," which included boats, recreational vehicles, vans, etc.

Financial Characteristics and Housing Costs

In 2019-2023, the median property value for owner-occupied houses in Saline County was $171,900.

Of the owner-occupied households, 56.8 percent had a mortgage. 43.2 percent owned their houses "free and clear," that is without a primary mortgage or loan on the house. The median monthly housing costs for owners with a mortgage was $1,292 and for owners without a mortgage it was $595.

For renter-occupied households, the median gross rent for Saline County was $915. Gross rent includes the monthly contract rent and any monthly payments made for electricity, gas, water and sewer, and any other fuels to heat the house.

Computer and Internet Use

In 2019-2023, 93.4 percent of households in Saline County had a computer, and 87.1 percent had a broadband internet subscription.

An estimated 74.5 percent of households had a desktop or laptop, 88.1 percent had a smartphone, 58.9 percent had a tablet or other portable wireless computer, and 1.6 percent had some other type of computer.

Among all households, 79.6 percent had a cellular data plan; 67.6 percent had a broadband subscription such as cable, fiber optic, or DSL; 7.8 percent had a satellite internet subscription; 0.3 percent had dial-up alone; and 0.2 percent had some other service alone.

Dickinson County:

Source: U.S. Census 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Narrative Profile.

Population

In 2019-2023, Dickinson County had a total population of 18,423; 9,211 (50.0 percent) females and 9,212 (50.0 percent) males. The median age was 42.1 years. An estimated 22.9 percent of the population was under 18 years, 30.2 percent was 18 to 44 years, 26.3 percent was 45 to 64 years, and 20.7 percent was 65 years and older.

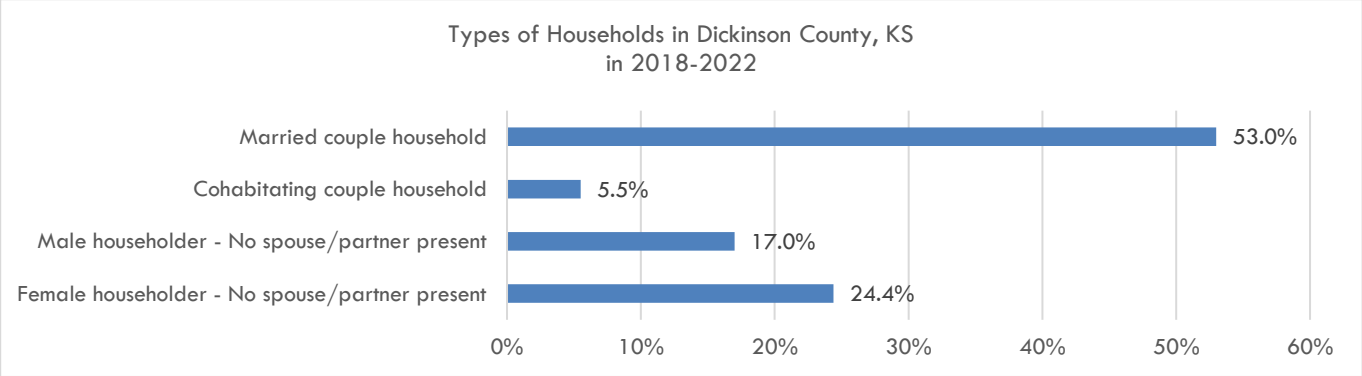
Marital Status

Population 15 years and over	Percent Males	Percent Females
Never married	24.6	17.2
Now married, separated	58.4	57.9
Separated	0.9	0.7
Widowed	4.0	11.8
Divorced	12.2	12.4

Households and Families

In 2019-2023, there were 7,958 households in Dickinson County. The average household size was 2.28 people; 29.7 percent of all households had one or more people under the age of 18; 34.3 percent of all households had one or more people 65 years and over.

In Dickinson County, 215 grandparents lived with their grandchildren under 18 years old. Of those grandparents, 28.8 percent were responsible for the basic needs of their grandchildren.

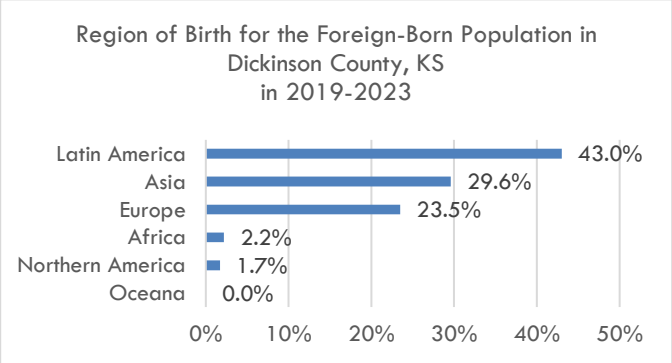


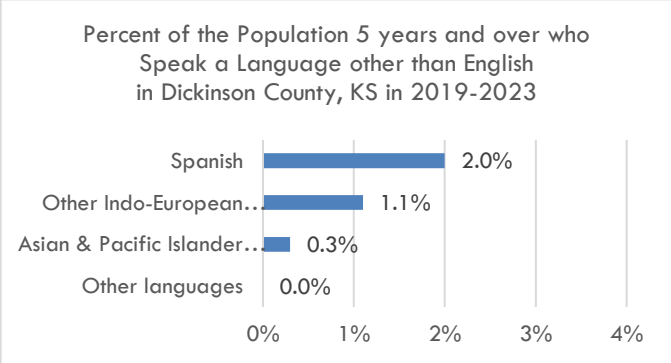
Nativity and foreign-born

In 2019-2023, an estimated 99.0 percent of the people living in Dickinson County were U.S. natives. 68.1 percent of the Dickinson County population were living in the state where they were born.

Approximately 1.0 percent of Dickinson County residents in 2019-2023 were foreign-born. 68.7 percent of foreign-born were naturalized U.S. citizens and an estimated 83.2 percent entered the country before the year 2010.

Foreign-born residents of Dickinson County come from different parts of the world. The bar graph below displays the percentage of foreign-born from each world region of birth in 2019-2023 for Dickinson County.



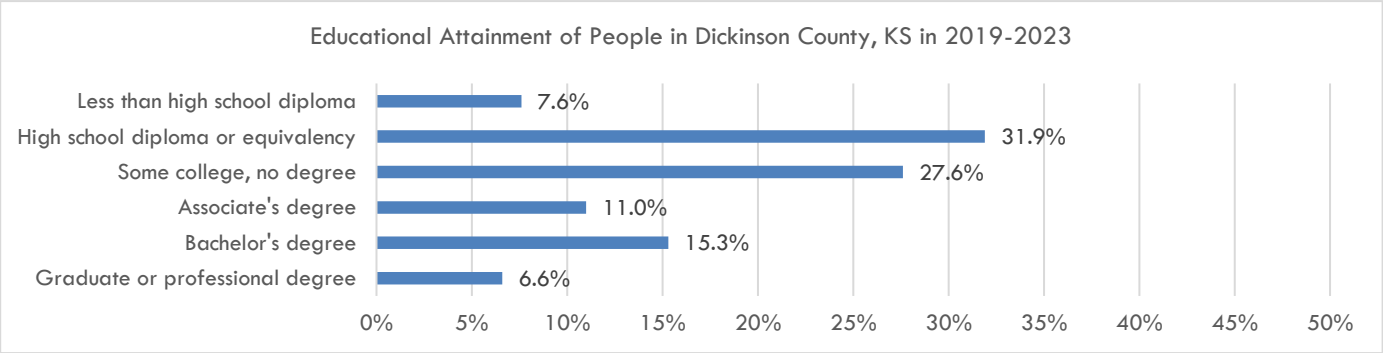


Language

Among people at least five years old living in Dickinson County in 2019-2023, 3.4 percent spoke a language other than English at home. Spanish was spoken by 2.0 percent of people at least five years old; 1.5 percent reported that they did not speak English "very well."

Education

In 2019-2023, 92.4 percent of people 25 years and over had at least graduated from high school and 21.9 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. An estimated 7.6 percent did not complete high school.

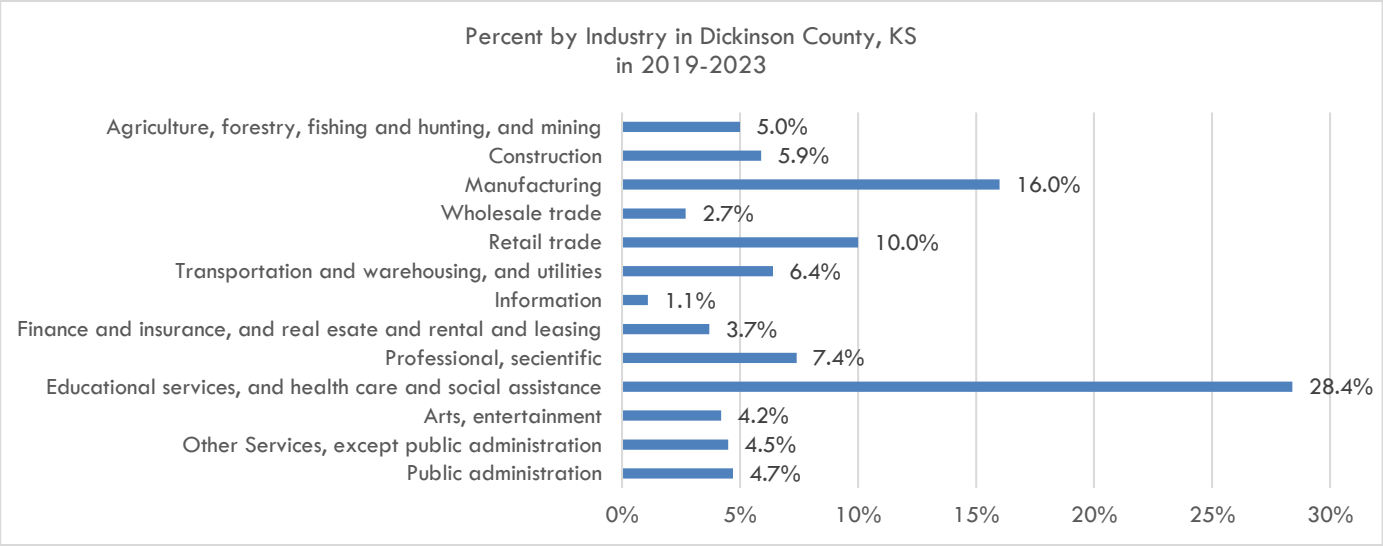


Disability

In Dickinson County, among the civilian noninstitutionalized population in 2019-2023, 14.9 percent reported a disability. The likelihood of having a disability varied by age - from 5.7 percent of people under 18 years old, to 11.9 percent of people 18 to 64 years old, and to 34.4 percent of those 65 and over.

Industries

In 2019-2023, the civilian employed population 16 years and older in Dickinson County worked in the following industries:



Occupations

Occupations for Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and over in Dickinson County, KS in 2019-2023

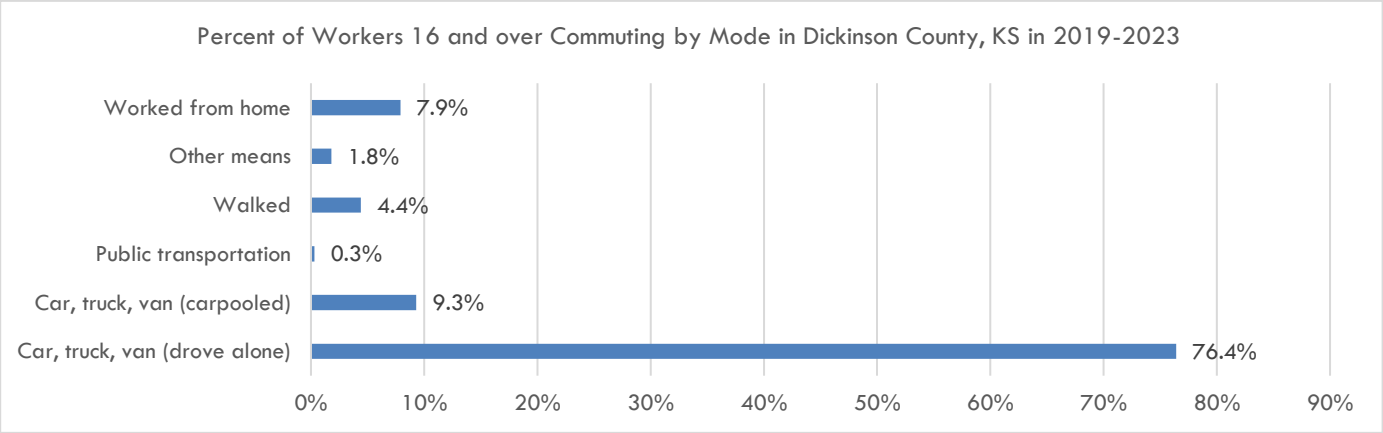
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	Number	Percent
Management, business, sciences, and arts occupations	3,156	35.1
Service occupations	1,326	14.7
Sales and office occupations	1,670	18.6
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	1,161	12.9
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	1,685	18.7

Employment Status and Type of Employer

Class of worker	Number	Percent
Private wage and salary workers	6,836	76.0
Federal, state, or local government workers	1,530	17.0
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business	619	6.9

Commuting to Work

An estimated 79.6 percent of Dickinson County workers drove to work alone in 2019-2023, and 6.0 percent worked from home. Among those workers who commuted, it took an average of 21.6 minutes to travel to work from home.

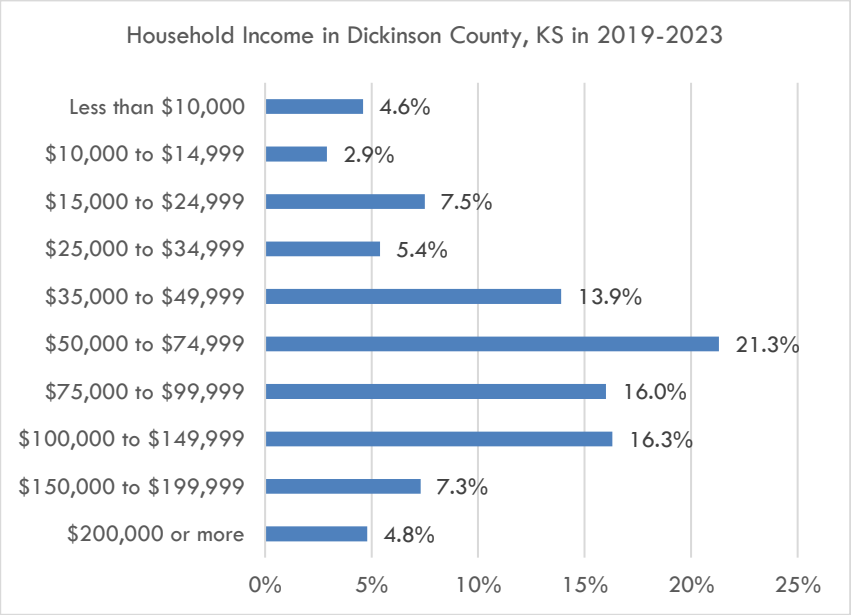


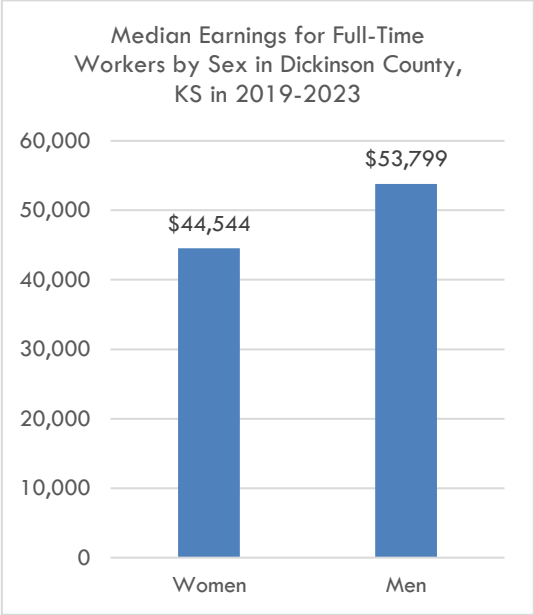
Health Insurance

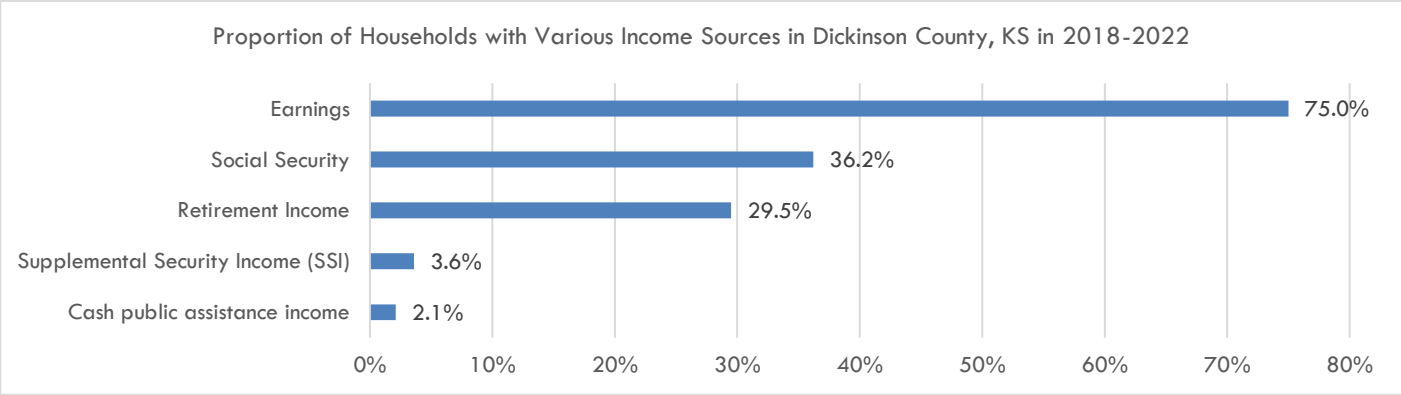
Among the civilian noninstitutionalized population in Dickinson County in 2019-2023, 91.8 percent had health insurance coverage and 8.2 percent did not have health insurance coverage. Private coverage was 75.9 percent and public coverage was 34.4 percent, respectively. The percentage of children under the age of 19 with no health insurance coverage was 8.3 percent.

Income

The median income of households in Dickinson County was $67,982. An estimated 4.6 percent of households had income below $10,000 a year and 4.8 percent had income of $200,000 or more.

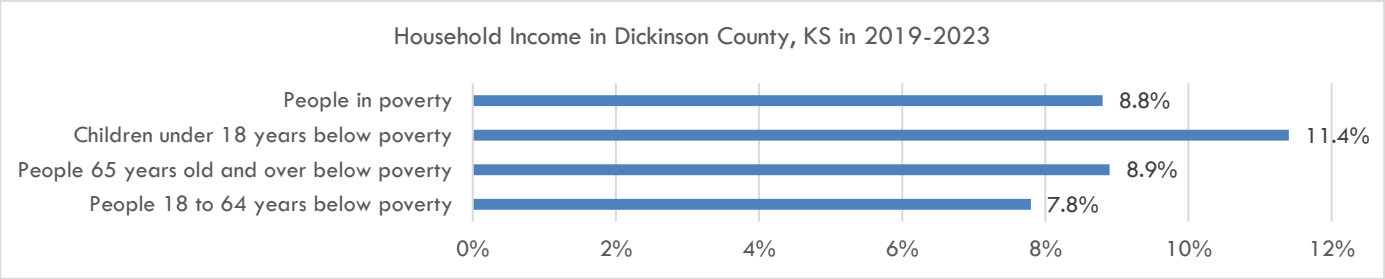






Poverty and Participation in Government Programs

In 2019-2023, 8.8 percent of people were in poverty. An estimated 11.4 percent of children under 18 were below the poverty level, compared with 8.9 percent of people 65 years old and over. An estimated 7.8 percent of people 18 to 64 years were below the poverty level.



Housing Inventory Characteristics

In 2019-2023, Dickinson County had a total of 8,793 housing units. Of these housing units, 89.9 percent were single-family houses either not attached to any other structure or attached to one or more structures (commonly referred to as "townhouses" or "row houses"). 7.9 percent of the housing units were located in multi-unit structures, or those buildings that contained two or more apartments. 2.2 percent were mobile homes, while any remaining housing units were classified as "other," which included boats, recreational vehicles, vans, etc.

Financial Characteristics and Housing Costs

In 2019-2023, the median property value for owner-occupied houses in Dickinson County was $148,500.

Of the owner-occupied households, 55.1 percent had a mortgage. 44.9 percent owned their houses "free and clear," that is without a primary mortgage or loan on the house. The median monthly housing costs for owners with a mortgage was $1,351 and for owners without a mortgage it was $594.

For renter-occupied households, the median gross rent for Dickinson County was $809. Gross rent includes the monthly contract rent and any monthly payments made for electricity, gas, water and sewer, and any other fuels to heat the house.

Computer and Internet Use

In 2019-2023, 94.9 percent of households in Dickinson County had a computer, and 89.7 percent had a broadband internet subscription.

An estimated 77.3 percent of households had a desktop or laptop, 85.7 percent had a smartphone, 60.4 percent had a tablet or other portable wireless computer, and 2.2 percent had some other type of computer.

Among all households, 81.3 percent had a cellular data plan; 71.6 percent had a broadband subscription such as cable, fiber optic, or DSL; 8.5 percent had a satellite internet subscription; 0.1 percent had dial-up alone; and 0.0 percent had some other service alone.

Ellsworth County:

Source: U.S. Census 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Narrative Profile.

Marital Status

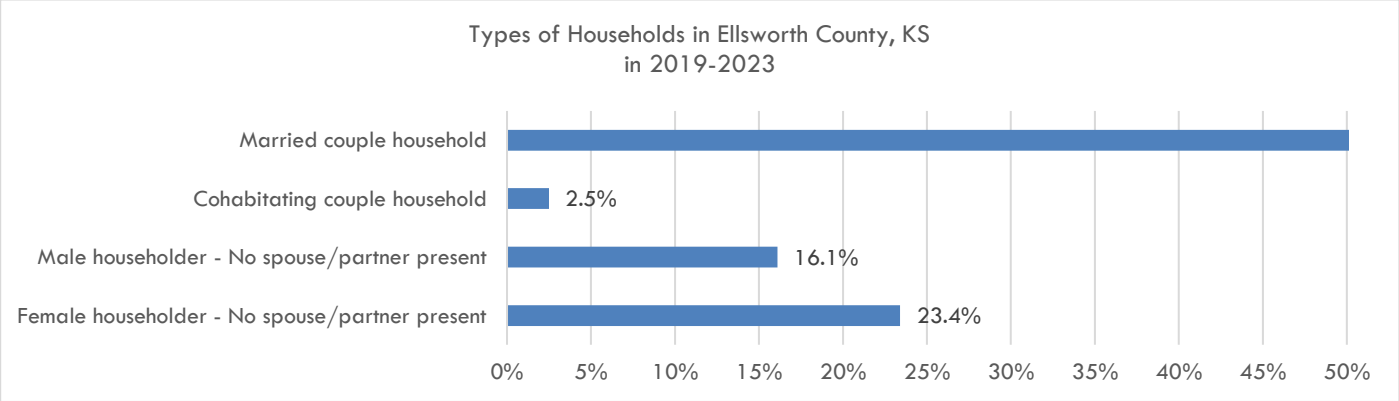
Population 15 years & over	Percent Males	Percent Females
Never married	29.5	14.6
Now married, separated	50.8	58.7
Separated	1.2	.09
Widowed	3.3	16.3
Divorced	15.1	9.5

Population

In 2019-2023, Ellsworth County had a total population of 6,366; 2,860 (44.9 percent) females and 3,506 (55.1 percent) males. The median age was 43.7 years. An estimated 17.6 percent of the population was under 18 years, 34.0 percent was 18 to 44 years, 24.6 percent was 45 to 64 years, and 23.7 percent was 65 years and older.

Households and Families

In 2019-2023, there were 2,329 households in Ellsworth County. The average household size was 2.29 people; 23.3 percent of all households had one or more people under the age of 18; 41.6 percent of all households had one or more people 65 years and over.



Nativity and foreign-born

In 2019-2023, an estimated 98.5 percent of the people living in Ellsworth County were U.S. natives. 75.4 percent of the Ellsworth County population were living in the state where they were born.

Approximately 1.5 percent of Ellsworth County residents in 2019-2023 were foreign-born. 34.0 percent of foreign-born were naturalized U.S. citizens and an estimated 63.8 percent entered the country before the year 2010.

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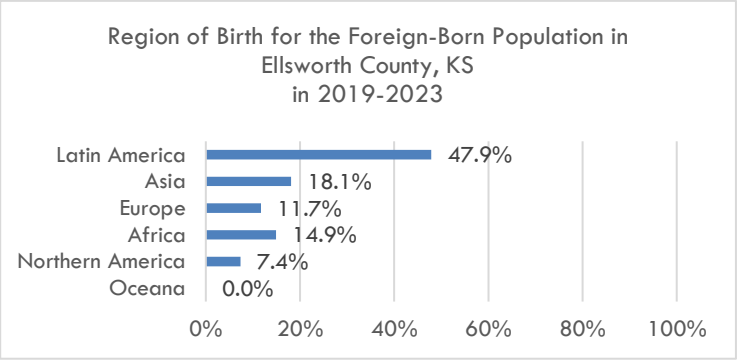
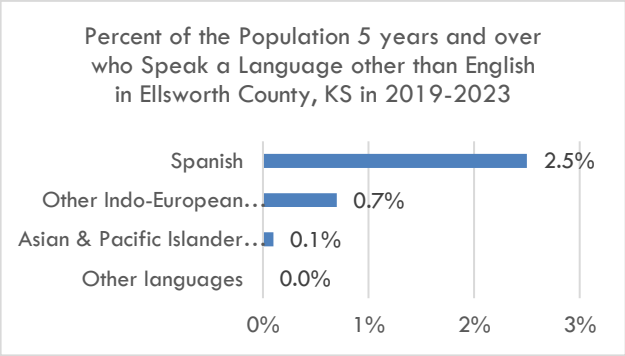


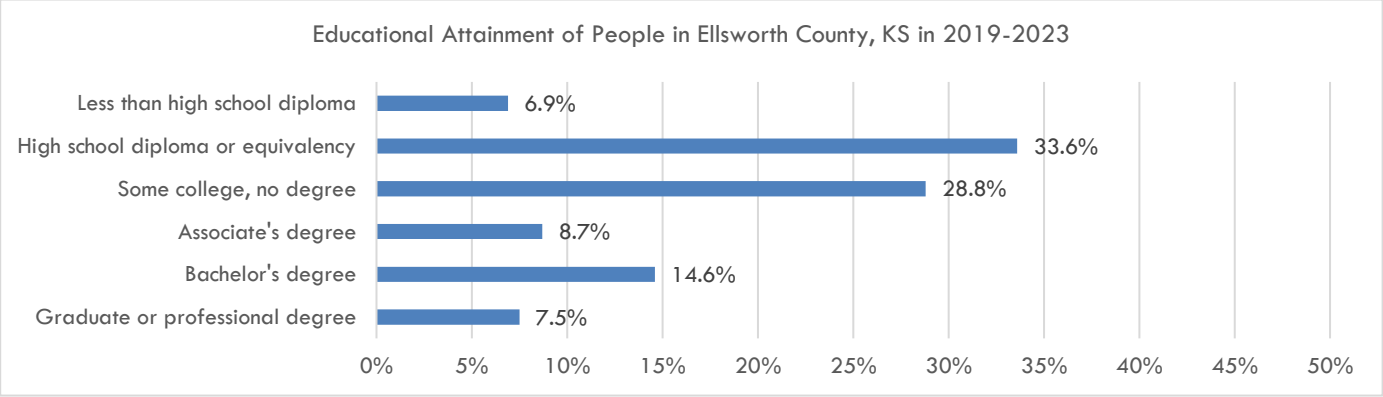


Language

Among people at least five years old living in Ellsworth County in 2019-2023, 3.3 percent spoke a language other than English at home. Spanish was spoken by 2.5 percent of people at least five years old; 0.3 percent reported that they did not speak English "very well."

Education

In 2019-2023, 93.1 percent of people 25 years and over had at least graduated from high school and 22.1 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. An estimated 6.9 percent did not complete high school.

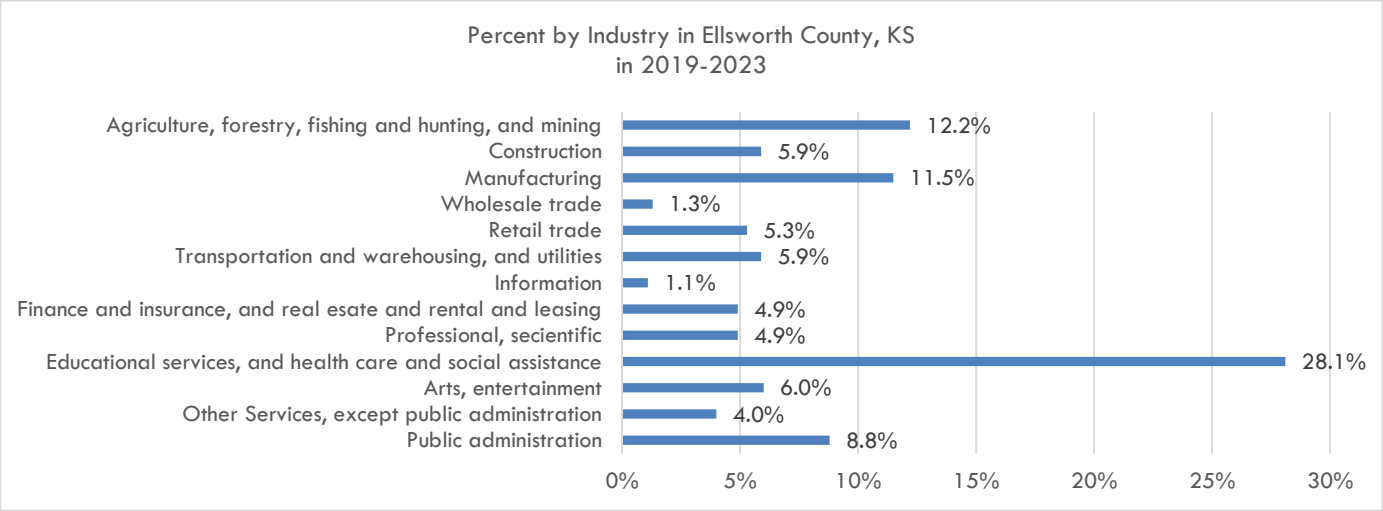


Disability

In Ellsworth County, among the civilian noninstitutionalized population in 2019-2023, 16.5 percent reported a disability. The likelihood of having a disability varied by age - from 9.9 percent of people under 18 years old, to 11.9 percent of people 18 to 64 years old, and to 32.0 percent of those 65 and over.

Industries

In 2019-2023, the civilian employed population 16 years and older in Ellsworth County worked in the following industries:



Occupations

Occupations for Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and over in Ellsworth County, KS in 2019-2023

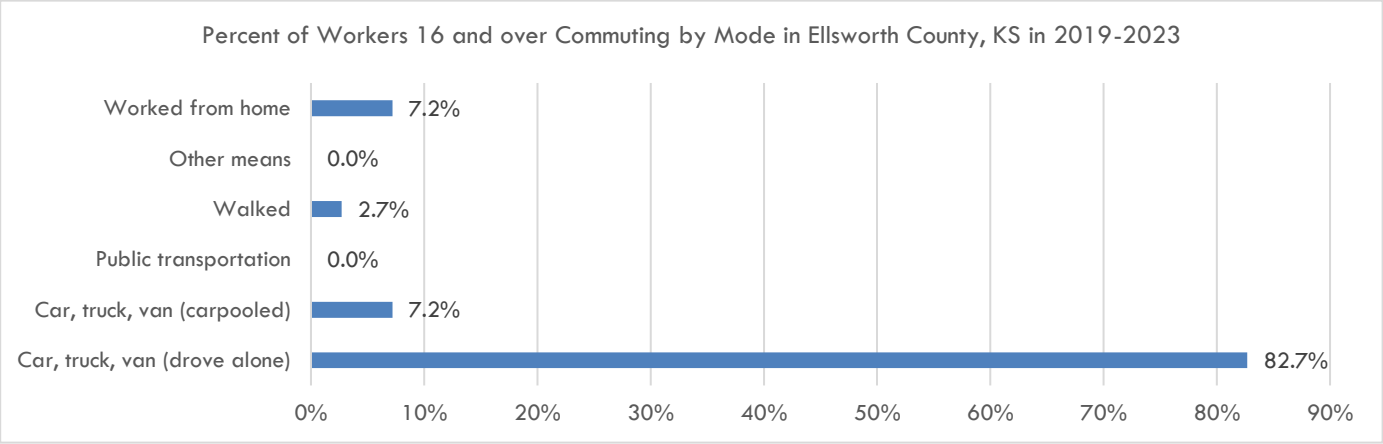
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	Number	Percent
Management, business, sciences, and arts occupations	1,031	37.9
Service occupations	625	23.0
Sales and office occupations	386	14.2
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	290	10.7
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	388	14.3

Employment Status and Type of Employer

Class of worker	Number	Percent
Private wage and salary workers	1,836	67.5
Federal, state, or local government workers	602	22.1
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business	279	10.3

Commuting to Work

An estimated 82.7 percent of Ellsworth County workers drove to work alone in 2019-2023, and 7.2 percent worked from home. Among those workers who commuted, it took an average of 20.3 minutes to travel to work from home.

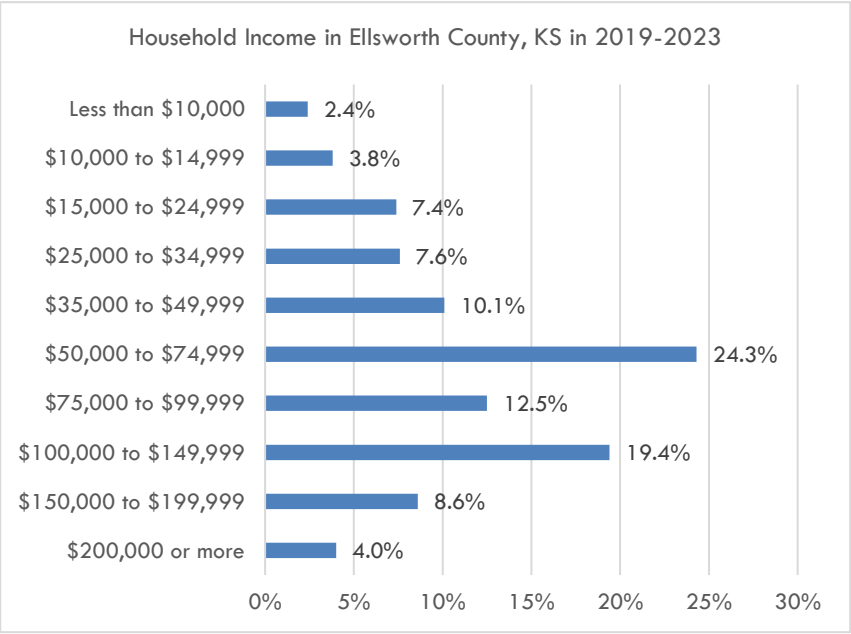


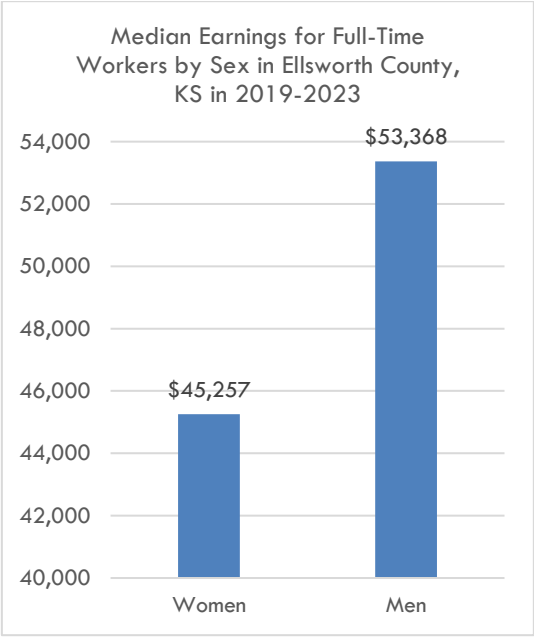
Health Insurance

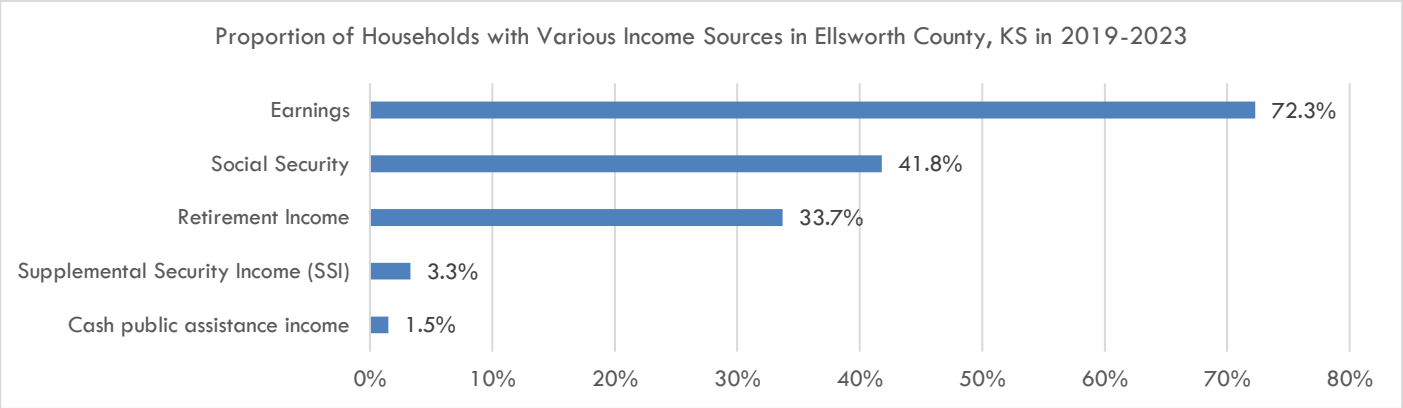
Among the civilian noninstitutionalized population in Ellsworth County in 2019-2023, 96.6 percent had health insurance coverage and 3.4 percent did not have health insurance coverage. Private coverage was 75.3 percent and public coverage was 38.9 percent, respectively. The percentage of children under the age of 19 with no health insurance coverage was 0.2 percent.

Income

The median income of households in Ellsworth County was $66,792. An estimated 2.4 percent of households had income below $10,000 a year and 4.0 percent had income of $200,000 or more.

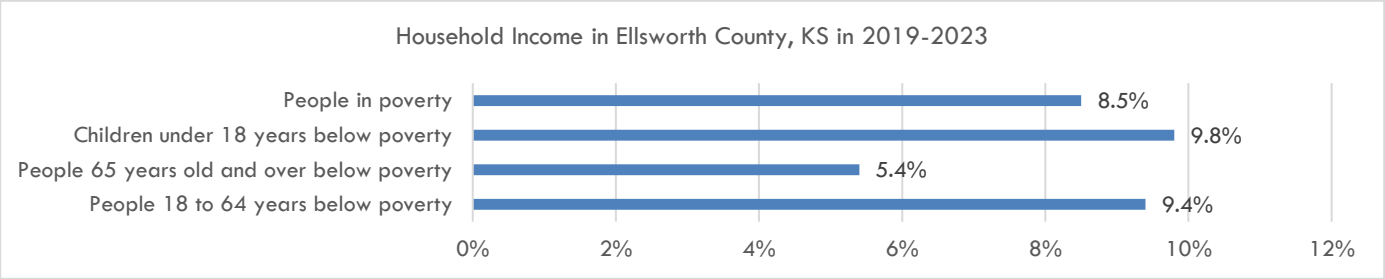






Poverty and Participation in Government Programs

In 2019-2023, 8.5 percent of people were in poverty. An estimated 9.8 percent of children under 18 were below the poverty level, compared with 5.4 percent of people 65 years old and over. An estimated 9.4 percent of people 18 to 64 years were below the poverty level.



Housing Inventory Characteristics

In 2019-2023, Ellsworth County had a total of 3,110 housing units. Of these housing units, 83.4 percent were single-family houses either not attached to any other structure or attached to one or more structures (commonly referred to as "townhouses" or "row houses"). 6.8 percent of the housing units were located in multi-unit structures, or those buildings that contained two or more apartments. 9.7 percent were mobile homes, while any remaining housing units were classified as "other," which included boats, recreational vehicles, vans, etc.

Financial Characteristics and Housing Costs

In 2019-2023, the median property value for owner-occupied houses in Ellsworth County was $116,300.

Of the owner-occupied households, 48.9 percent had a mortgage. 51.1 percent owned their houses "free and clear," that is without a primary mortgage or loan on the house. The median monthly housing costs for owners with a mortgage was $1,248 and for owners without a mortgage it was $509.

For renter-occupied households, the median gross rent for Ellsworth County was $705. Gross rent includes the monthly contract rent and any monthly payments made for electricity, gas, water and sewer, and any other fuels to heat the house.

Computer and Internet Use

In 2019-2023, 91.6 percent of households in Ellsworth County had a computer, and 85.7 percent had a broadband internet subscription.

An estimated 70.6 percent of households had a desktop or laptop, 85.0 percent had a smartphone, 56.0 percent had a tablet or other portable wireless computer, and 1.2 percent had some other type of computer.

Among all households, 78.7 percent had a cellular data plan; 60.7 percent had a broadband subscription such as cable, fiber optic, or DSL; 13.4 percent had a satellite internet subscription; 0.0 percent had dial-up alone; and 0.0 percent had some other service alone.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Child Find

Monthly screenings, a part of Child Find, are held on the first Friday of each month, at the Donna Vanier Building in Salina. These screenings are open to any parent concerned about their child's development, ages birth to 5 years. Child Find is also held several times per year in the outlying counties.

Screenings can also be scheduled by appointment through the Central Kansas Cooperative in Education (CKCIE) or Infant Child Development (ICD). Children found to be at-risk for developmental delays are referred for further evaluation.

Part C Programs

Infant Child Development (ICD) – Saline & Ellsworth Counties
OCCK Infant Toddler Services (ITS) – Dickinson County

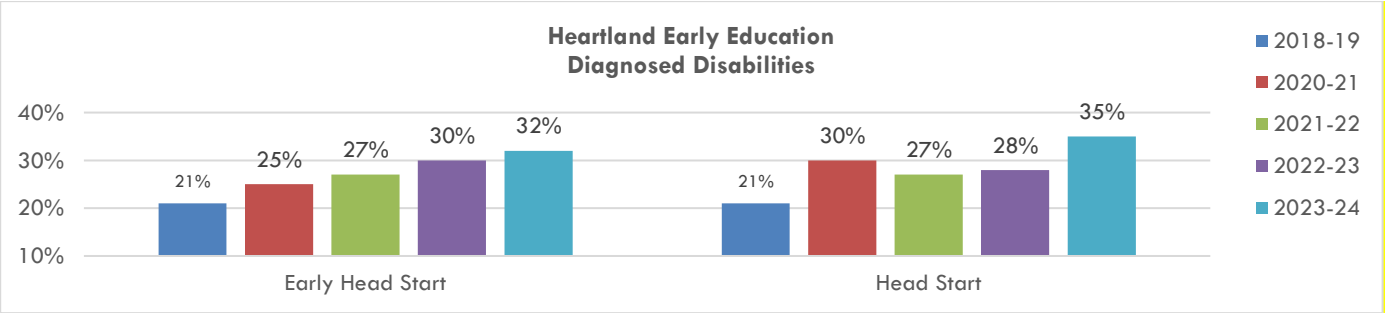
The Heartland service area is covered by two Part C agencies. Infant Child Development (ICD) provides disabilities services in Ellsworth and Saline Counties and the OCCK Infant Toddler Services (ITS) serves Dickinson County. In 2023, ICD reported serving 314 children in Saline County and 28 in Ellsworth County. ITS served 97 children in Dickinson County. These programs provide developmental evaluations and follow-up for children who qualify for ongoing services. Children who are birth to three years with developmental delays or diagnosed disabilities can receive a variety of services which can include family service coordination, early childhood special education, nursing, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and social work.

Federal Performance Standards require all Head Start and Early Head Start programs fill at least 10% of enrollment slots with children with a diagnosed disability. Through a strong collaboration with ICD and ITS, Heartland is able to exceed the minimum.

Part B Program

Central Kansas Cooperative in Education (CKCIE)

As of December 1, 2024 CKCIE was serving 166 three and four year olds in Saline County, 61 in Dickinson County, and 15 in Ellsworth County. Children have been determined to be eligible for special education services following an evaluation. Children may have one or more areas of exceptionalities: developmental delay, speech language impairment, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, learning disability, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities or sensory impairment (hearing, deafness, visual impairment, blindness, deaf-blindness). Identified children are provided special education services and/or related services by CKCIE's team of occupational therapists, speech therapists, physical therapists, school psychologists, social workers, early childhood special education teachers and paraprofessionals.



HEALTH

Immunizations

The following is an excerpt from an article found on the CDC.gov website.

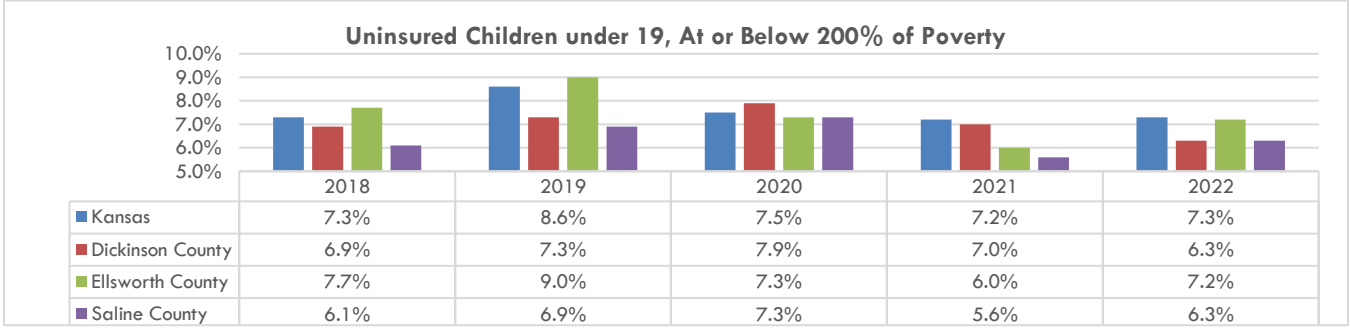
Seither R, Yusuf OB, Dramann D, et al. "Coverage with Selected Vaccines and Exemption from School Vaccine Requirements Among Children in Kindergarten — United States, 2022–23 School Year." posted by the CDC on November 10, 2023.[4]

> ***What is already known about this topic?***
>
> *From the 2019–20 to the 2021–22 school year, national coverage with state-required vaccines among kindergartners declined from 95% to approximately 93%, ranging from 92.7% for diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis vaccine (DTaP) to 93.1% for polio.*
>
> ***What is added by this report?***
>
> *During the 2022–23 school year, coverage remained near 93% for all reported vaccines, ranging from 92.7% for DTaP to 93.1% for measles, mumps, and rubella and polio. The exemption rate increased 0.4 percentage points to 3.0%. Exemptions increased in 41 states, exceeding 5% in 10 states.*
>
> ***What are the implications for public health practice?***
>
> *Exemptions >5% limit the level of achievable vaccination coverage, which increases the risk for outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases. Vaccination before school entry or during provisional enrollment periods could reduce exemptions resulting from barriers to vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Most Head Start and all Early Head Start classrooms are licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and are required to ensure all children are up to date on immunizations or have an acceptable exemption. Of the 165 children served in Head Start during the 2023-24 school year, 98% were up to date on their immunizations. Of the 130 Early Head Start students served during the 2023-24 school year, 97% were up to date on their immunizations.

Health Insurance

The Kansas Statistical Abstract 2022 reported the percentage of low income (at or below 200% of poverty) children under 19 without health insurance.



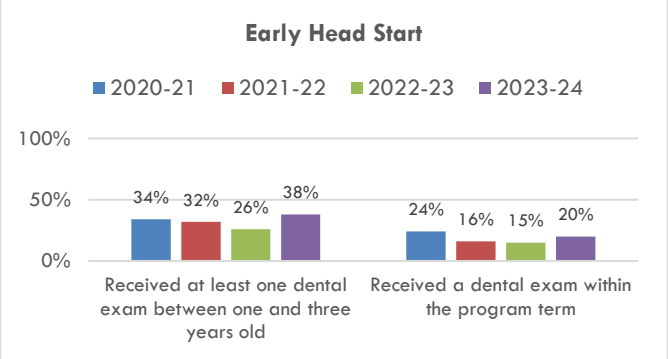
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Kansas	7.3%	8.6%	7.5%	7.2%	7.3%
Dickinson County	6.9%	7.3%	7.9%	7.0%	6.3%
Ellsworth County	7.7%	9.0%	7.3%	6.0%	7.2%
Saline County	6.1%	6.9%	7.3%	5.6%	6.3%

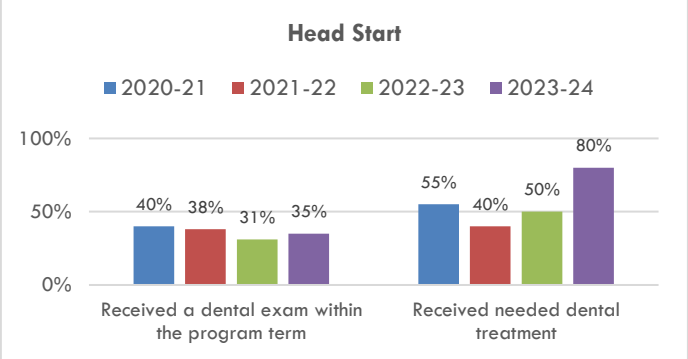
[4]Seither R, Yusuf OB, Dramann D, Calhoun K, Mugerwa-Kasujja A, Knighton CL. Coverage with Selected Vaccines and Exemption from School Vaccine Requirements Among Children in Kindergarten — United States, 2022–23 School Year. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2023;72:1217–1224. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7245a2

Dental Care

The American Dental Association Find-a-Dentist® search engine can confirm there are at least 19 dentists within 30 miles of Salina, KS. Only one of those accept Medicaid, which is the most common insurance for Early Head Start and Head Start children. In addition, the majority of Early Head Start and Head Start children needing dental treatment must be seen by a pediatric dentist. The closest pediatric dentists to Salina are over 70 miles away.

It is the responsibility of Early Head Start and Head Start programs to ensure all children have a dental home and have a dental exam by age one and follow-up exams every six months thereafter. It is very difficult to successfully meet this federal requirement without providers that will accept Medicaid as payment. The following charts indicate the percentage of Head Start and Early Head Start children who received dental exams.





During the 2023-24 school year 5 Head Start children were diagnosed as needing treatment with 4 of them successfully receiving treatment.

The Salina Family Healthcare (SFHC) Dental Center serves as the dental home for the majority of children enrolled in Heartland Early Education. The clinic serves uninsured, Medicaid, and KanCare patients onsite and does outreach work with Salina Public Schools (SPS), Heartland Early Education, and the Saline County Health Department. SFHC does not have a pediatric dentist and many Heartland Head Start students who require dental work are being referred to out of county pediatric dentists in Wichita, KS (90 miles).

Mental Health

Heartland has seen a noticeable increase in the number of children with behavior issues in the classroom. This was a growing concern even before COVID-19. A locally designed social-emotional curriculum is implemented throughout the school year as a strategy to build stronger skills in this area. Program design and support are continually assessed and individualized to meet the specific needs of children, families, and staff.

COMMUNITY CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Heartland Partnerships with Community Child Care Centers

Heartland has a partnership with Abilene Child Care Learning Center in Dickinson County. Staying fully enrolled has been a challenge due to changing community demographics and ongoing struggles to hire Head Start qualified staff.

COLLABORATION WITH SALINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (SPS)

Heartland continues to collaborate with district leaders to ensure Head Start students and families receive the support they need, regardless of which school they attend within Salina Public Schools. To achieve this, we use a "layered funding" approach, combining federal and state resources to provide high-quality early childhood education in eight elementary schools. This approach helps remove transportation barriers for families, allows Head Start students to attend their neighborhood school alongside their siblings, and helps them adjust earlier to the school they will attend in kindergarten.

PROGRAM OPTION	SITE	2024-2025 FUNDED SLOTS
Part Day School Year	Heartland	30
	Salina Public Schools (SPS) Elementary Buildings *(Head Start funding layered with state at-risk preschool and disability services)*	52
School Day School Year	Heartland	120
	Enterprise	15
	Ellsworth	15
	SEC Building	15
Full Day Full Year	Abilene Child Care Learning Center (ACLC)	9
	TOTALS	256

Licensed Child Care and Preschool

In Kansas, child care subsidies are available through the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to families earning up to 185% of poverty. Many low-income families also work split shifts, weekends, and evening hours that make it difficult to find quality child care.

According to the 2023 Child Care Supply and Demand Report published by Child Care Aware of Kansas, "after several years of declining numbers, we are able to report an increase in the total number of child care programs in Kansas…for the first time in over five years, the number of programs has increased to 4,144 programs in 2023 from 4,064 programs in 2022."

St. Mary's Grade School in Salina completed renovations and expanded their current child care center. They have the capacity to provide care for 114 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Child Care Aware of Kansas

In 2023, Child Care Aware of Kansas connected parents, child care providers, businesses, local and state leaders, and community members to the information and services they needed:

- 13,996 referrals made to families looking for child care
- $1,818,886 in grants administered to early care and education programs
- 14,026 licensed child care slots opened through start-up programing.
- 9,887 users viewed family resources online
- 18,575 users viewed the child care search page

Child Care Aware of Kansas provides "Point-in-Time" reports for every Kansas County. The tables below represent data for January 2025.

JANUARY 2025 POINT-IN-TIME CHILD CARE DATA COUNTY STATISTICS	Saline	Dickinson	Ellsworth
Number of children under age 6 potentially needing child care	2,742	765	233
Number of child care slots available for children under age 6	1,249	424	199
Number of children currently enrolled in child care	1,173	334	179

TYPES OF LICENSED CHILD CARE	Saline	Dickinson	Ellsworth
Number of Family and Group Day Care Homes	104	25	13
Number of Child Care Centers	13	6	1

CAPACITY OF CHILD CARE PROGRAMS	Saline	Dickinson	Ellsworth
Extent Desired Capacity Meets Potential Demand	46%	55%	85%

DCF PARTNERS – CHILD CARE SUBSIDY	Saline	Dickinson	Ellsworth
Number of Family and Group Day Care Homes	44	10	2
Number of Child Care Centers	11	6	1

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)	Saline	Dickinson	Ellsworth
Number of Family and Group Day Care Homes	83	18	9
Number of Child Care Centers	10	6	1

Salina Area United Way Early Childcare Initiative Fund

The Salina Area United Way (SAUW) Early Childcare Initiative Fund is comprised of money collected from grants and donations from businesses and individuals. This fund's purpose is to help child care businesses in the community provide quality child care to those that need it.

Funds are allocated through the Early Childcare Initiative Grant Application. An organization may only receive funding once within 12 months. Funding is to be used to supplement the wage gap, bumping the hourly rate up as close to the $15 per hour (teacher assistants) and $18 per hour (lead teachers) as possible. The living wage per the Salina Area Chamber of Commerce in Saline County is $15 per hour. SAUW will also be working with this fund to look at opportunities for potential renovations and expansion of current centers and spaces in the area.

Parents as Teachers (PAT)

PAT is a voluntary, home-based program offered to pregnant women and families with children birth to kindergarten. Monthly home visits are provided by certified PAT Parent Educators and last approximately one hour. The Parent Educator shares age-appropriate child development and parenting information, helps the parent learn to observe their child and answers parent's questions.

Although there is no fee charged to the parents, they are required to be active participants in the program. They must have regular attendance for home visits and are strongly encouraged to attend monthly group connections. They give parents the opportunity to interact with one another and create bonds with their children through organized, developmentally appropriate activities. Group connections also give families the chance to meet other families and build support systems.

Screening and assessment are essential to help detect potential areas of concern early in the child's life so that appropriate referrals may be made for further evaluation. The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) and Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social/Emotional (ASQ-SE) developmental screens are completed on all children within the first 90 days of enrollment. In addition, the child also receives an OAE hearing screen (Otoacoustic Emissions) and a vision screen.

PAT Services in Saline County:

Salina Public Schools (SPS) and USD 306 Southeast of Saline

PAT Services in Dickinson County

USD 435 Abilene, USD 473 Chapman/Enterprise, USD 487 Herington/Solomon/Rural Vista

Salina Public Schools (SPS) Preschool

SPS Preschool is funded through three grants from the Kansas Department of Education and special education funding. All eight SPS elementary schools house one preschool classroom. At-Risk funding provides 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) funding for every eligible child enrolled on September 20th. SPS Preschool is designed to serve 192 preschoolers. To be eligible, the child must be at least three years old on August 31st and be placed in a classroom based on their IEP or meet at least one of the criteria qualifying them as "at-risk". Many of the Head Start three and four year olds in the Heartland operated classrooms also generate At-Risk funding to help sustain the program.

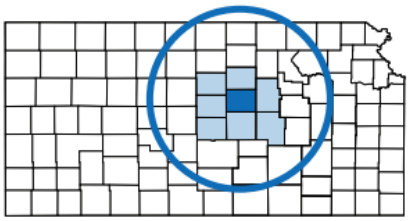
Kansas Preschool Pilot (KPP) is another funding source for SPS Preschool. The purpose of the KPP funding is to augment and/or expand enrollment of existing preschool programs.

COMMUNITY ISSUES AND RESOURCES

Unemployment

Employment Impact Analysis for Q4 2024 – The Arnold Group[5]

Saline County Area Report for October, November, December 2024 (Q4 2024)



Saline County

Unemployment Rate: 4.3%
Unemployed: 1,323
All Jobs Average Salary Summary
Low – $10.74; Median – $18.19; High – $38.48

Ellsworth County

Unemployment Rate: 6.1%
Unemployed: 166
All Jobs Average Salary Summary
Low – $11.14; Median – $19.16; High – $35.21

Dickinson County

Unemployment Rate: 5.5%
Unemployed: 507
All Jobs Average Salary Summary
Low – $10.32; Median – $17.86; High – $33.24

[5] The Arnold Group is one of the most successful and respected recruiting firms throughout the Midwest.

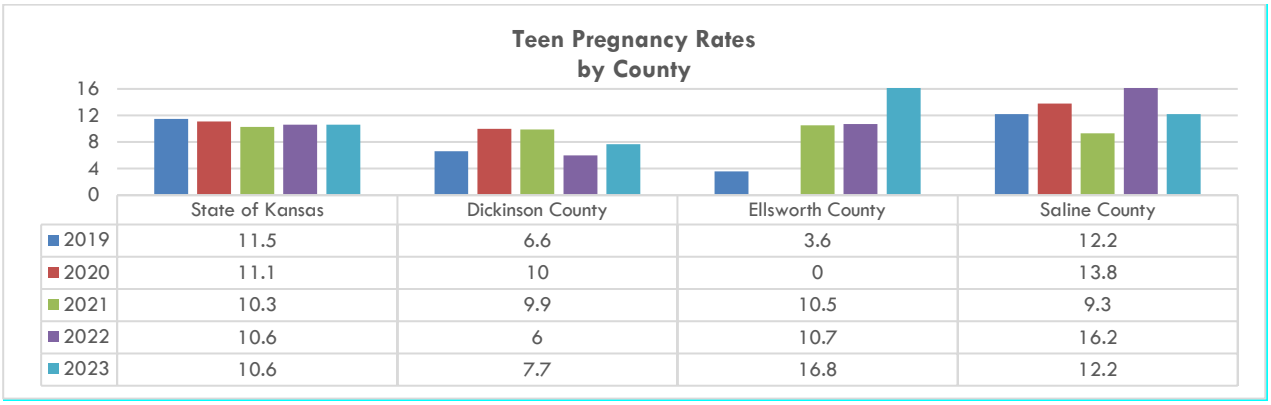
Drug Abuse

CKF Addiction Treatment

CKF collaborates with healthcare providers as a key component of early detection, intervention, and support for those with substance use disorders. They have successfully integrated recovery services into acute and primary care settings by collaborating with Salina Regional Health Center and the Sunflower Health Network.

Teen Pregnancy

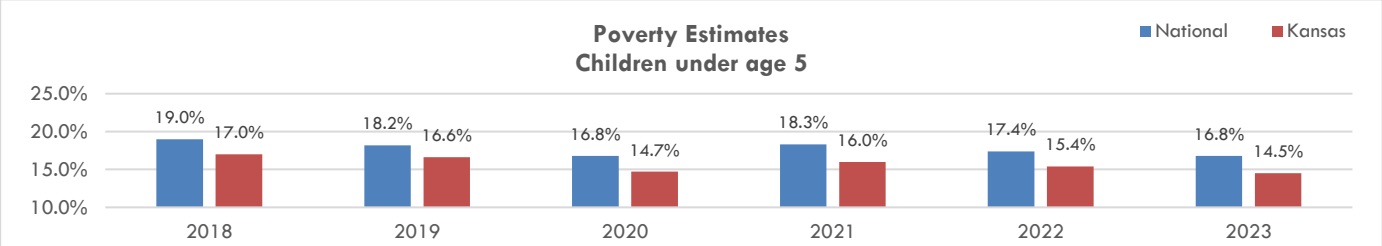
According to the 2022 KDHE Vital Statistics Report, the pregnancy rate for mothers under 20 years of age in 2023 was 10.2 pregnancies per 1,000 female age-group population, a decrease of 3.8 percent from a rate of 10.6 pregnancies per 1,000 female age-group population in 2022. This was the lowest pregnancy rate for this age-group in the past twenty years (2004–2023), down from a peak of 28.6 pregnancies per 1,000 female age-group population in 2008.



	State of Kansas	Dickinson County	Ellsworth County	Saline County
2019	11.5	6.6	3.6	12.2
2020	11.1	10	0	13.8
2021	10.3	9.9	10.5	9.3
2022	10.6	6	10.7	16.2
2023	10.6	7.7	16.8	12.2

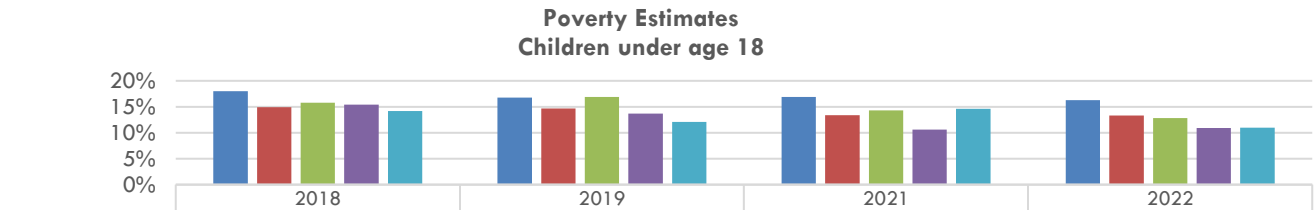
Poverty

The national poverty rate for children under five years dropped from 25.8% in 2011 16.8% in 2020. The rate for 2022 had come down from the initial rise following the beginning of the pandemic. Kansas continues to mirror the national trends, but rates have stayed below the national average.



Source: US Census Bureau, SAIPE Datasets, State and County Estimates

Below is a table showing the poverty rates for all children under age 18.



	2018	2019	2021	2022
National	18.0%	16.8%	16.9%	16.3%
Kansas	14.9%	14.7%	13.4%	13.3%
Saline County	15.8%	16.9%	14.3%	12.8%
Dickinson County	15.4%	13.7%	10.6%	10.9%
Ellsworth County	14.2%	12.1%	14.6%	11.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates

Kansas Public Assistance Programs[6]

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):

SNAP provides qualifying low-income households with food benefits, access to a healthy diet and education on food preparation and nutrition. In Kansas, the program is known as the Food Assistance Program.

The Food Assistance Program serves as the first line of defense against hunger. Food assistance customers can spend their benefits to buy eligible nutritious food, plants and seeds to grow food for their household to eat. It provides crucial supports to:

- Elderly households
- Low-income working households
- Unemployed or disabled households
- Households transitioning from welfare to work.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF):

In Kansas, the TANF program is known as Successful Families Program. This program offers employment services and support services to low-income families. That support may include cash assistance. To receive help from the Successful Families Program, a family must have the following:

- at least one child in the home under the age of 18 (including an unborn baby)
- meet income requirements
- meet limited resource requirements

Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP):

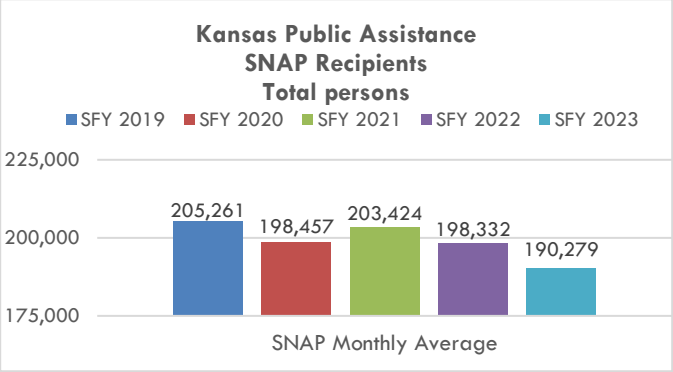
LIEAP is a federally funded program that helps eligible households pay a portion of their home energy costs by providing a one-time per year benefit. Benefit levels vary according to the following factors: household income; number of persons living at the address; type of dwelling; type of heating fuel; utility rates.

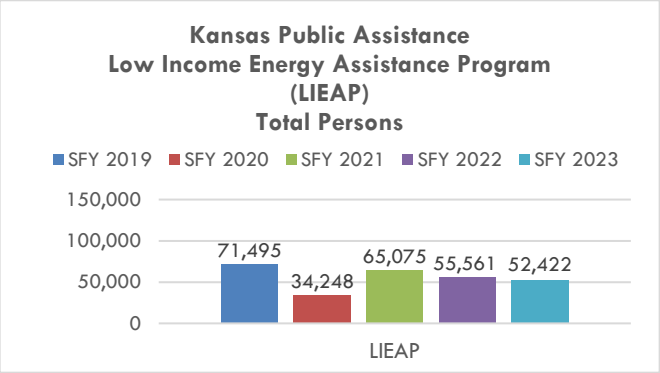
[6] Department of Children and Families: https://www.dcf.ks.gov/services

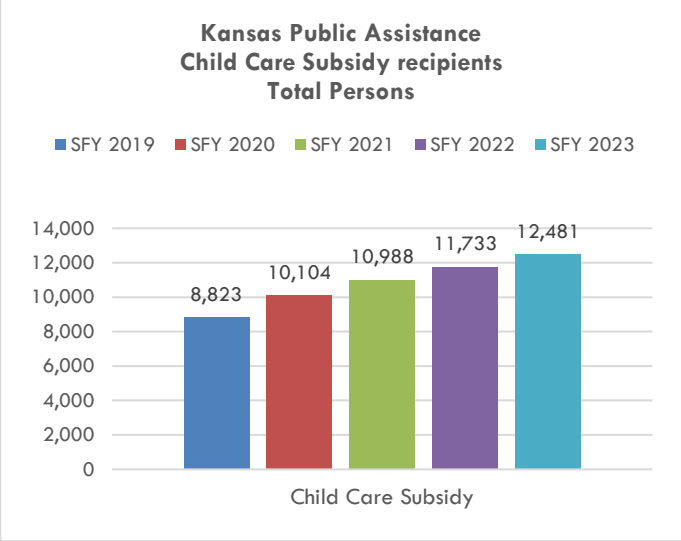
Child Care Subsidy:

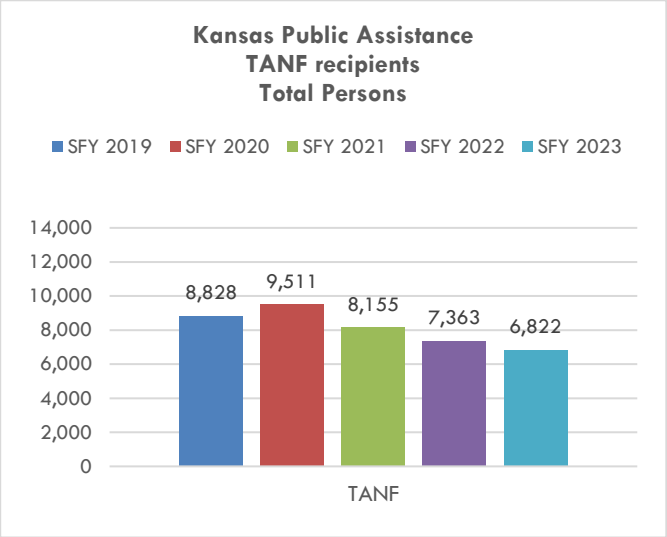
Child care assistance helps pay for child care costs and it helps many types of families. These include the following:

- Families who receive TANF
- Low-income, working families
- Some families in education or training activities
- Teen parents completing high school or GED





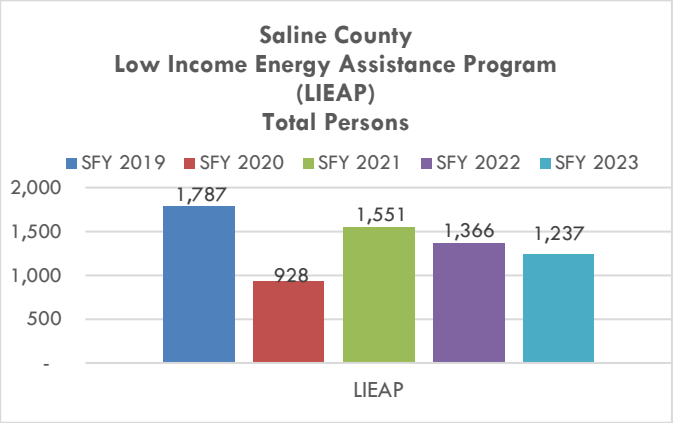


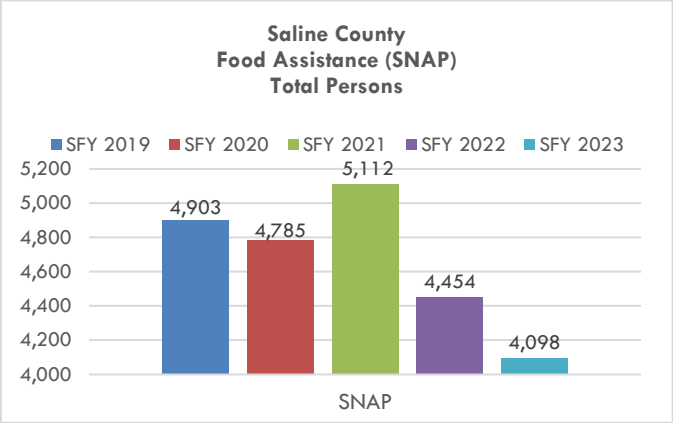


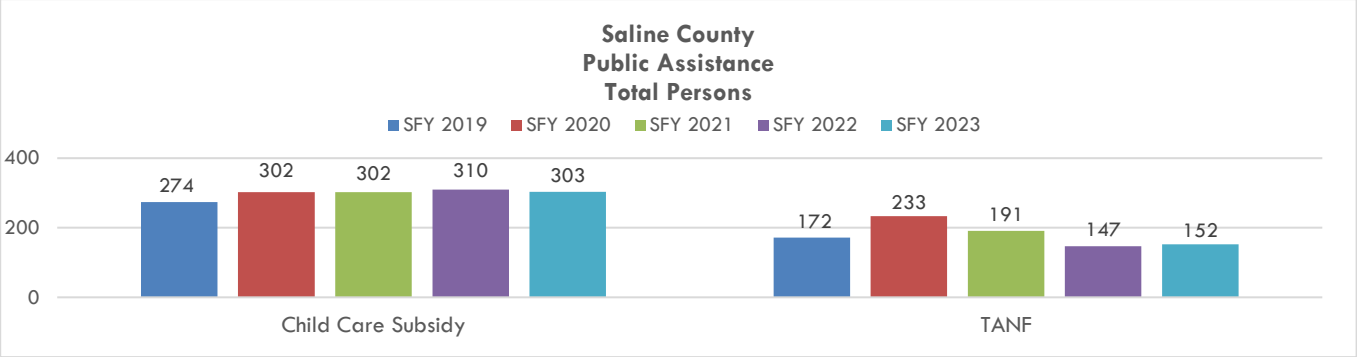
Public Assistance by County

Saline County

These charts indicate the monthly average of beneficiaries receiving public assistance in Saline County.







FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH

According to the Kansas Department of Education, during the 2024-25 school year, 56% of K-12 students in Saline County were approved to receive free or reduced school lunches. Saline County schools reported a total enrollment of 8,293 students. Of those, 3,783 qualified for free lunch (45.6%) and 863 qualified for reduced lunch (10.4%).

FOOD INSECURITY

Salina Emergency Aid/Food Bank

Between January 1 and December 31, 2024, the Saline County Food4Kids backpack program provided 5,512 meal packets to students (K-12 students only). The food packets provide food for the child during the weekend when they are not receiving school lunches.

Heartland Food Support Program

Heartland has a referral system to identify children needing weekend food support. Families who agree to the Heartland food support program sign an authorization form and provide information regarding any allergies. Food support is sent home with children on the last attendance day of the week. On weeks that are shortened due to holidays or program closures, families are provided an additional bag of food.

Total bags sent home with students for the 2023-24 year was 2,498. Over the course of the year the program served a total of 83 children, comprising 63 separate families. The 23-24 year also marked our 6th year of offering weekend food

support program. During that time 11,572 bags have gone home on weekends to help relieve food insecurity for enrolled children and families.

Summer Food Program

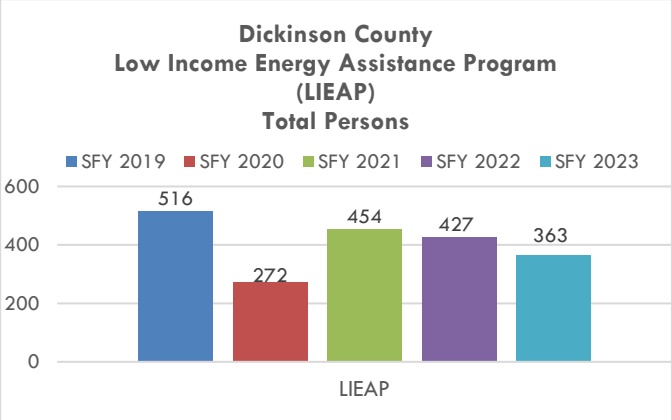
The summer food program, sponsored by SPS and Heartland Early Education, served a free lunch at seven sites and a free breakfast at four sites in Salina in 2024. During the five-week program, 15,596 lunches and 5,646 breakfasts were served for a total of 21,242 meals. A participating site must be located in an area in which at least 50% of the children are from households eligible for free or reduced meals.

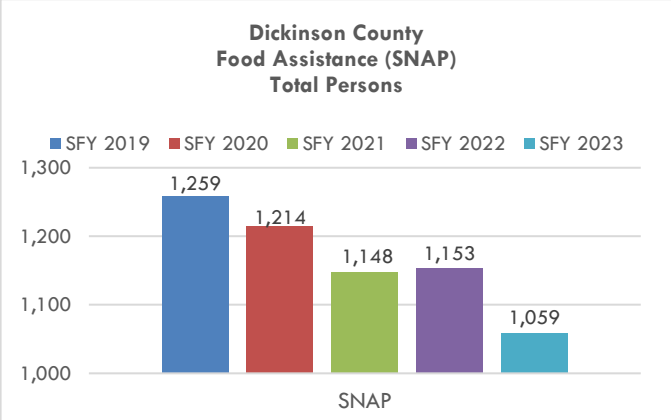
Salina Free Meals

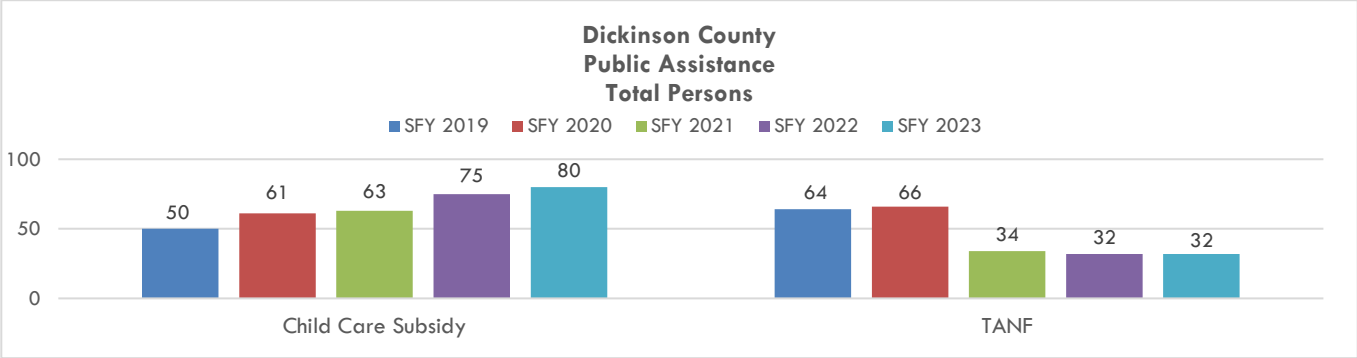
The Salina Salvation Army provides a free meal for 750-800 people every weekday. Those who attend range from the elderly who are alone, young families in need of a meal, and often times homeless people from Salina will come for a meal. The Salina Rescue Mission served over 60,000 meals last year.

Dickinson County

These charts indicate the monthly average of beneficiaries receiving public assistance in Dickinson County.







FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH

According to the Kansas Department of Education, during the 2024-25 school year, 49.1% of K-12 students in Dickinson County were approved to receive free or reduced school lunches. The county reported a total enrollment of 3,601 students. Of those, 1,424 qualified for free lunch (39.5%) and 343 qualified for reduced lunch (9.5%).

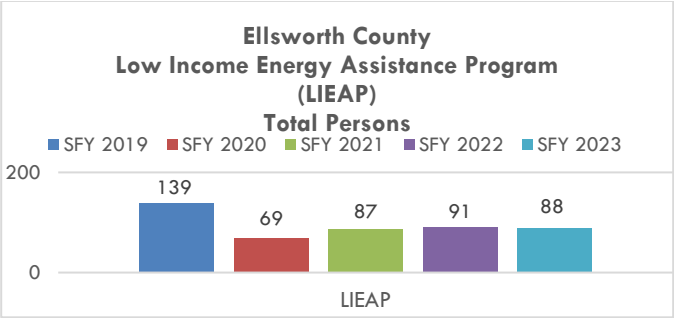
FOOD INSECURITY

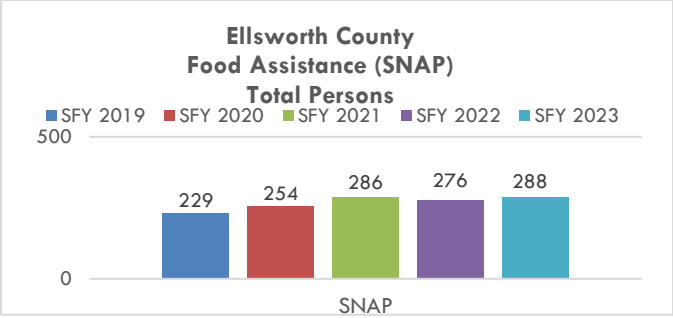
Abilene Area Food Pantry, Clothing, and Thrift Shop

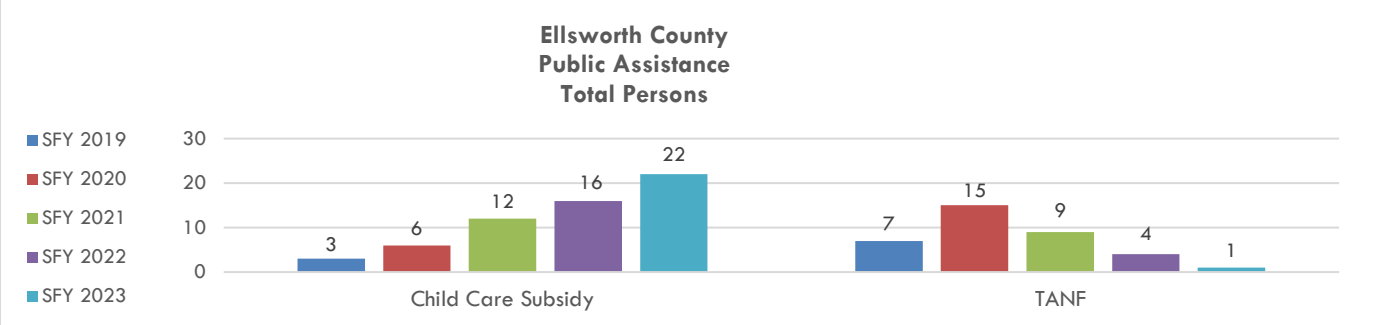
The Food Pantry provides food assistance to those in need. Upon application, nutritious food is provided to care for the family or individual's needs until food stamps or funds to purchase food becomes available.

Ellsworth County

These charts indicate the monthly average of beneficiaries receiving public assistance in Ellsworth County.







FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH

According to the Kansas Department of Education, during the 2024-25 school year, 40.6% of K-12 students in Ellsworth County were approved to receive free or reduced school lunches. USD 327 Ellsworth reported a total enrollment of 900 students. Of those, 282 qualified for free lunch (31.3%) and 83 qualified for reduced lunch (9.2%).

FOOD INSECURITY

Ellsworth County Food Bank

The Ellsworth County Food Bank distributes food to families by appointment.

Child Abuse

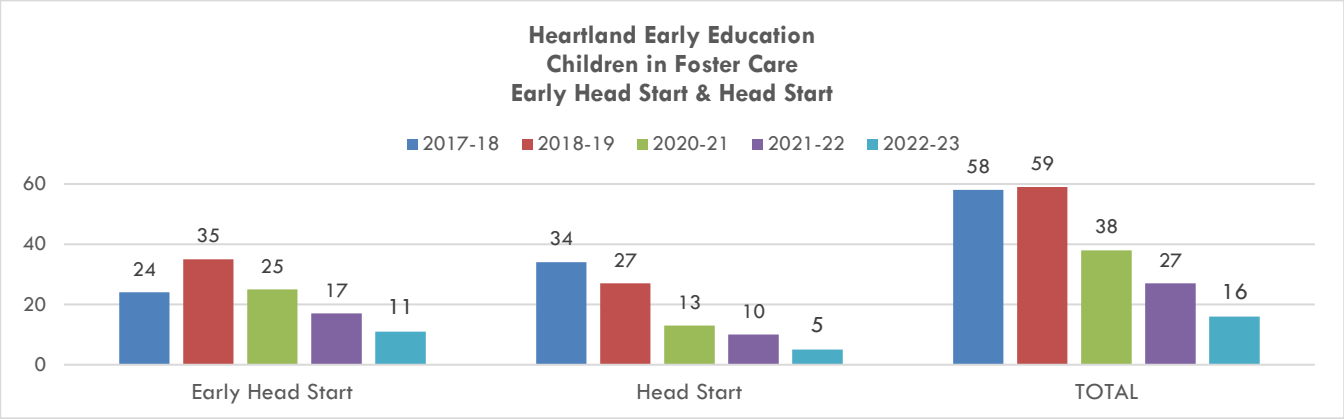
The Salina Department of Child and Families (DCF) office is part of the Northwest Region and covers Saline, Ottawa, Ellsworth, and Dickinson (specifically Abilene) counties.

- DCF reported that between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023, Child Protective Services received 72,385 child abuse reports. Of the 38,210 reports assigned, 895 were substantiated and 1,016 were affirmed.[7]
- Statewide, the top three types of maltreatment are physical abuse (30.6%), emotional abuse (23.1%), and lack of supervision (19.5%).

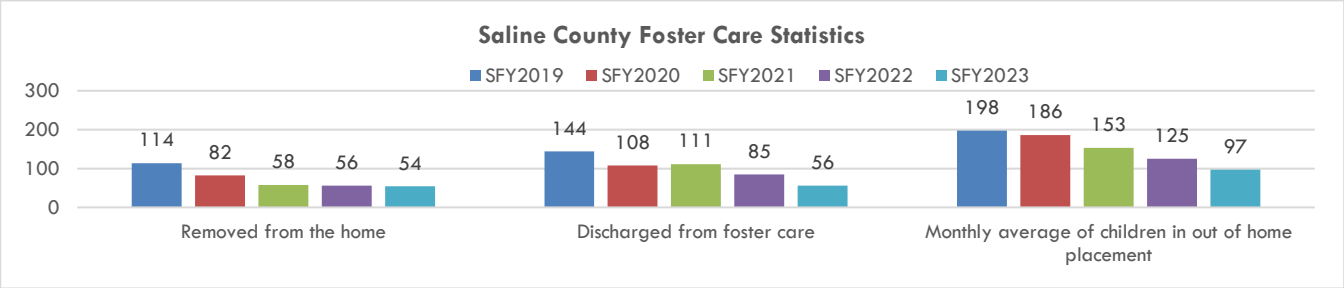
Foster Care[8]

Children in foster care are more likely to move in and out of our service area due to reunification or difficulty in finding a foster care placement located where the child can remain enrolled in the program. This can make the logistics of program intake difficult and the duration of the child's enrollment unpredictable.

The following chart reports the number of Heartland Head Start and Early Head Start children who were in foster care over the last five years. (Data for the 2019-20 school year was incomplete due to program disruption from COVID-19.)

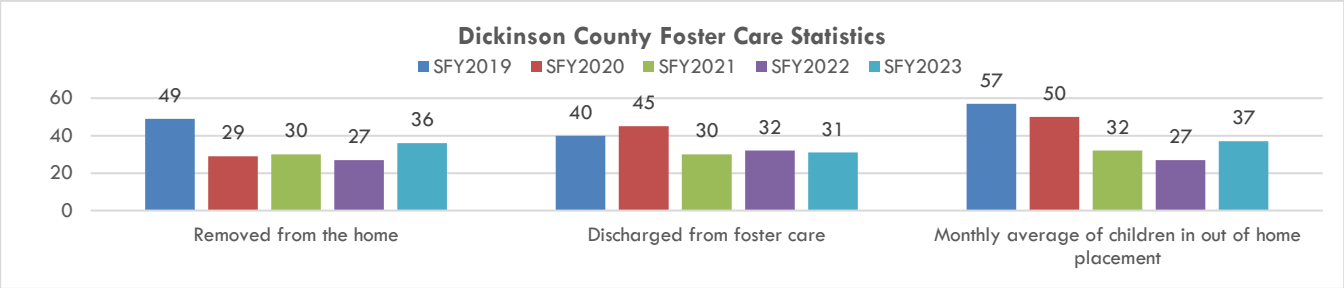


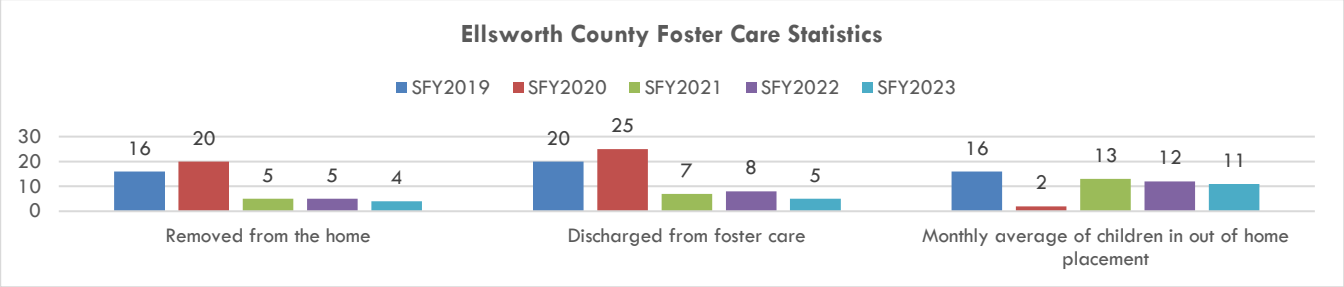
The following charts for Saline, Dickinson and Ellsworth counties indicate the number of children involved in the different phases of foster care. Saline and Ellsworth counties saw a decrease in the number of children going in foster care and a decrease in the number of children leaving foster care. Dickinson County increased the monthly average of children in foster care.



[7] An "affirmed" finding means a reasonable person weighing the facts and circumstances would decide it is more likely than not (preponderance of the evidence) the alleged perpetrator's actions or inactions meet the abuse/neglect definition per Kansas Statutes Annotated (K.S.A.) and Kansas Administrative Regulations (K.A.R.).A "substantiated" finding means a reasonable person weighing the facts and circumstances would decide it is more likely than not (preponderance of the evidence) the alleged perpetrator's actions or inactions meet the abuse/ neglect definition per Kansas Statutes Annotated (K.S.A.) and Kansas Administrative Regulations (K.A.R.), and meet criteria indicating the alleged perpetrator should not be permitted to reside, work, or regularly volunteer in a child care facility regulated by KDHE or DCF Foster Care and Residential Facility Licensing.

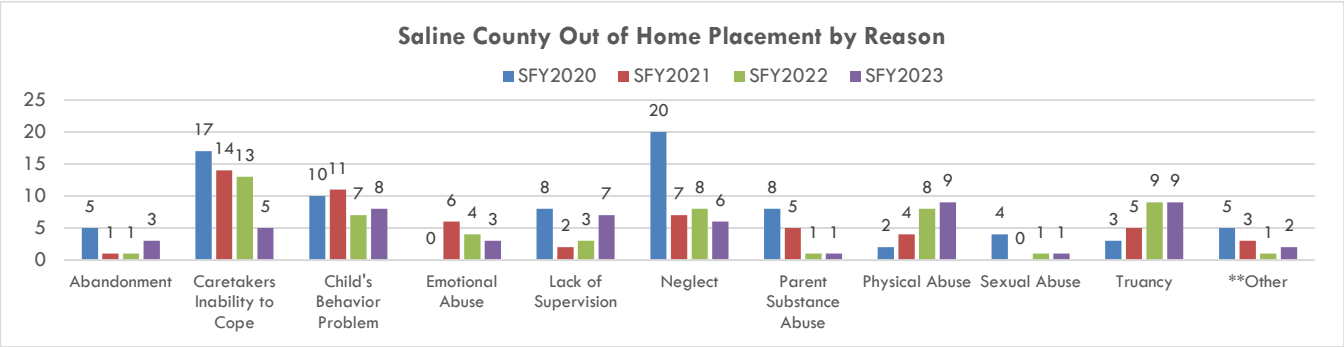
[8] Department of Children and Families: https://www.dcf.ks.gov/services



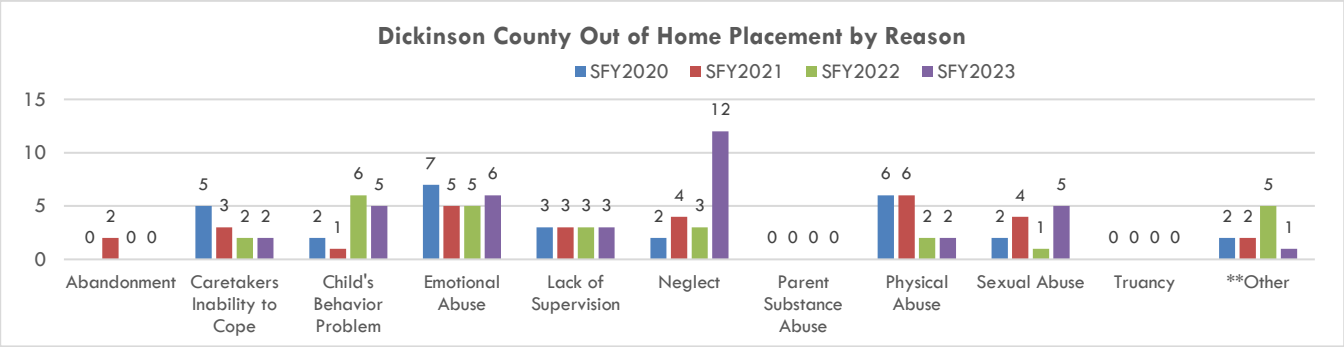


Out of Home Placement (OOH)

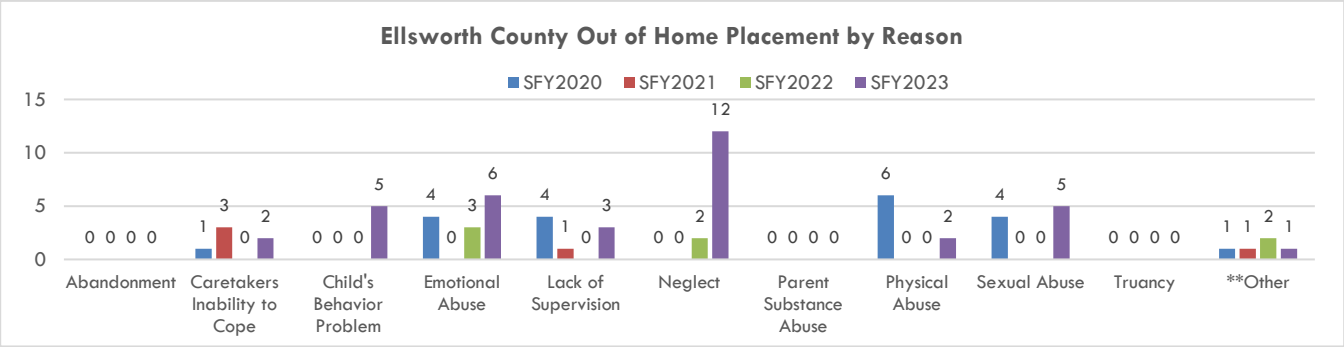
The following charts indicate the number of children placed in OOH settings as per the cause. Children in OOH due to parent substance abuse has increased in all three counties and children with behavior problems has remained a large factor in OOH.



**Includes: alcohol and drug abuse by child, child's disability, death of parent, failure to thrive, inadequate housing, incarceration of parents, parent-child conflict, relinquishment, and runaway



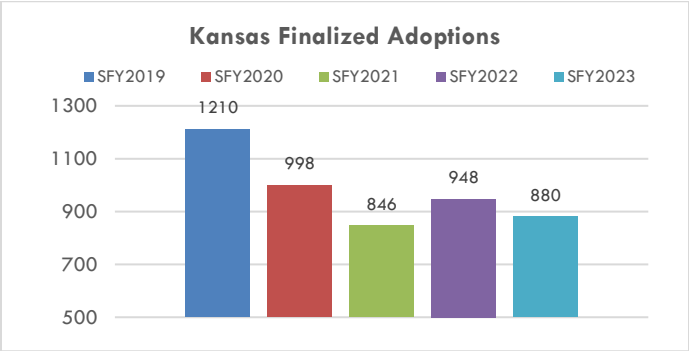
**Includes: alcohol and drug abuse by child, child's disability, death of parent, failure to thrive, inadequate housing, incarceration of parents, parent-child conflict, relinquishment, and runaway



**Includes: alcohol and drug abuse by child, child's disability, death of parent, failure to thrive, inadequate housing, incarceration of parents, parent-child conflict, relinquishment, and runaway

Adoption

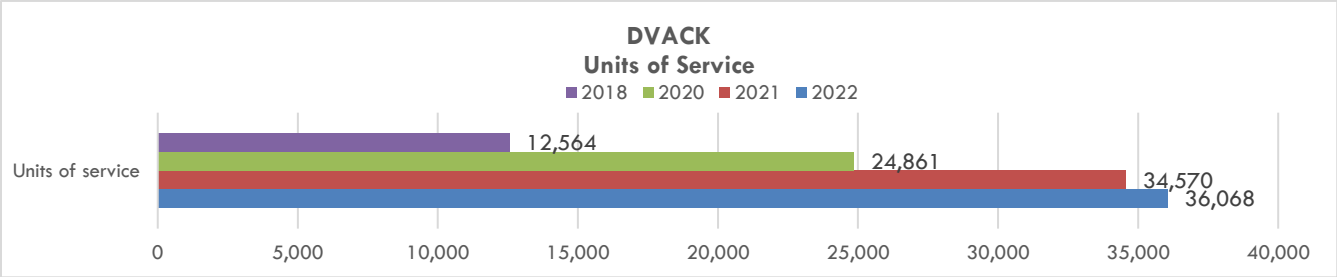
When a child comes into DCF custody, child welfare case management providers, who are private contractors with the state, work with the child and family to resolve issues so the child can return home. When it is not possible for a child to go back to the family, parental rights may be taken away by the court or voluntarily surrendered. At that point, the child is available for adoption. The number of adoptions in Kansas has fluctuated over the last five years.



Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence Association of Central Kansas (DVACK)

In 2021, DVACK provided a total of 36,068 units of service.[9] As can be seen in the following charts, the need for DVACK services has steadily increased since 2018.



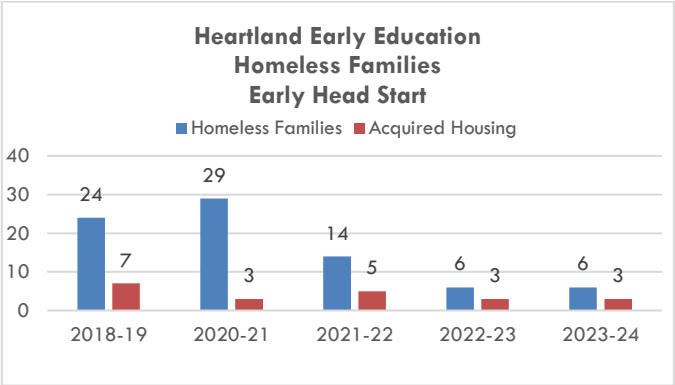
[9] Units include access to emergency shelter, 24-hour hotline, assistance in obtaining protection orders, supportive counseling, personal, court, medical, hospital and economic advocacy, compensation claim filing, 911 phones, emergency transportation, referral services, support groups, and safety planning.

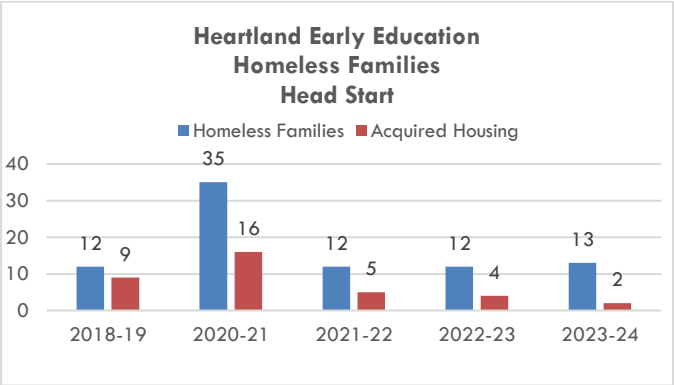
DVACK assists victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking toward becoming self-sufficient by obtaining permanent housing, child care, legal assistance and job placement. Prevention and educational services are provided to general members of the community including educational institutions, health care professionals, law enforcement professionals, community agencies, clubs, organizations, youth-serving organizations and other allied professionals.

All DVACK services are free, confidential and accessible to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, age, education level, economic status, sexual orientation, immigration status, geographic location, spiritual beliefs and physical or mental ability.

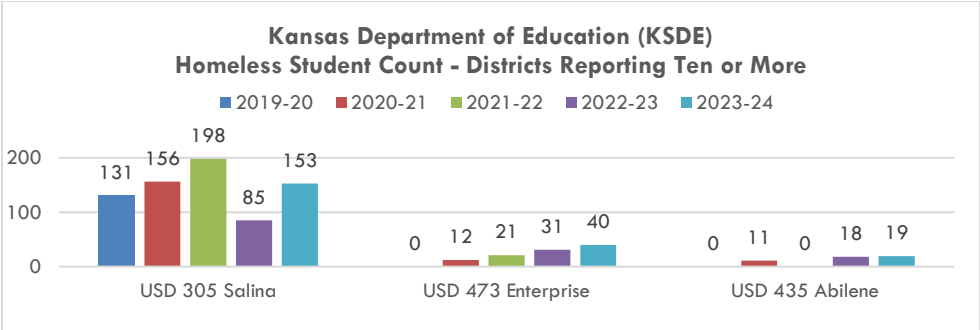
Homelessness

Homeless children, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act, are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start. The following chart reports the number of Heartland Head Start and Early Head Start families who experienced homelessness and the number of those who acquired housing.





This chart indicates the number of homeless children identified by their school district over the last three school years.



Ashby House

Ashby House is the only full-time shelter for families and single women in the Salina area.

- Emergency Women and Family Homeless Shelter for families (including men with children and couples) and individual women in Salina. The shelter is staffed 24 hours a day, accepts people looking for safe housing all day and all night. Interested residents can reside at the shelter as long as it takes for them to get back on their feet and as they agree to abide by the rules.
- The Legacy House specializes in services for pregnant and early postpartum women that are homeless and/or substance abusing. The Legacy House is a transitional house for single women who have graduated from their program but still need support. Residents pay a program fee and follow all campus rules and regulations.

- The Ashby House Free Store serves over 50 residents of Saline County every day, providing clothing, food, and household items.
- All Ashby House residences provide life skills, case management, educational opportunities, employment skills, and love and guidance from around-the-clock staff.

In 2023 Ashby House provided shelter for 143 unduplicated women, men, and children. They helped 103 clients receive employment, helped 51 clients receive permanent housing, provided 3,250 meals, and gave assistance to 68 people for rent and utilities.

Salina Rescue Mission

The Salina Rescue Mission provides sleeping accommodations, meals and counseling for homeless men. Life skills training and coaching for re-entering the job market is also provided by staff. The mission is funded entirely by donations. The residential capacity of the mission is 95. Many men are alienated from their families and/or communities and are residents of the ten counties surrounding Saline County. They are experiencing a higher number of men who are suffering from medical/mental health issues and they have no resources or support. Lunch and supper meals are open to anyone in the community who needs a meal, free of charge.

Salina Grace

Salina Grace Foundation is a community resource center and a winter-only overnight emergency shelter for Salina. Their mission is to support and strengthen the Salina community by providing a warm, safe emergency shelter for men, women, and families as a safety net for those who cannot stay at either Ashby House or Salina Rescue Mission. The shelter can house up to 30 people and is separated into sections for men, women, and families.

Housing

Saline County

SALINA HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Salina Housing Authority manages over 560 Housing contracts within Salina: 118 Project Based rental vouchers; 22 Tenant Protection rental vouchers; 325 Section 8 rental vouchers; 30 Veteran Assisted Supportive Housing Vouchers, 68 Mainstream Vouchers for Non-elderly disabled. As of March 10, 202, 315 families were on the waiting list. The Housing Authority offers rental assistance to income qualified families and consistently helps families pay rent in the Salina community. Assistance dollars are limited, but Salina Housing Authority continues to assist families with the funding available and the Section 8 waiting list has remained open since 2017. The Salina Housing Authority also offers a Family Self Sufficiency program to tenants. The programs provide monthly social services assistance to help tenant move to self-sufficiency.

SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army offers financial aid for residents needing help paying rent and utilities.

SALINA EMERGENCY AID/FOOD BANK

In 2023, the Salina Emergency Aid Food Bank distributed a record-breaking 654,090 items of food/hygiene through its Weekly Grocery Program, a 3% increase from 2022. Through that program, they fed 661 people a week. Of those served, 28% were children and 12% were seniors. They also distributed 399 holiday bags, 963 senior commodity boxes and 5,144 food kits to hungry school children. The Food Bank's Financial Assistance Program provided help with either rent, utilities, or medication to 113 families. In the garden, the Food Bank had another successful year and raised over

3,000 lbs for the community. In the kitchen, the Food Bank hosted two sessions of Diabetic Cooking Classes and one session of SNAP-Ed classes.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

The **Emergency Financial Assistance Program** aims to provide support to individuals and families facing crises in the Northern Kansas community. They may be able to offer up to $150 in a one-year period for rent, utilities, and/or prescriptions, depending on the availability of funds and qualifying status.

NORTH CENTRAL FLINT HILLS AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Section 8 Choice Voucher Program - The Section 8 Choice Voucher Program provides housing subsidies to qualified low-income persons who lease private, unsubsidized dwelling units. Subsidy is provided in the form of Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) which are paid directly to the landlord on a monthly basis as long as the family remains a program participant.

Before becoming a program participant, the family must apply for the waiting list and submit required documents to verify eligibility. Eligibility is based on income guidelines published by Housing and Urban Development annually. The housing staff uses income guidelines to determine eligibility. Periodically, the waiting list is closed when there is a sufficient pool of applicants. Participants must attend a required briefing and agree to abide by HUD rules.

Tenant Based Rental Assistance - Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) is a program that helps low-income families with security deposits for utilities and rent. Funding for this program is made possible through a grant from the federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program administered through the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (KHRC).

Dickinson County

NORTH CENTRAL FLINT HILLS AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Section 8 Choice Voucher Program - The Section 8 Choice Voucher Program provides housing subsidies to qualified low-income persons who lease private, unsubsidized dwelling units. Subsidy is provided in the form of Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) which are paid directly to the landlord on a monthly basis as long as the family remains a program participant.

Before becoming a program participant, the family must apply for the waiting list and submit required documents to verify eligibility. Eligibility is based on income guidelines published by HUD annually. The housing staff uses the very-low income guidelines to determine eligibility. Periodically, the waiting list is closed when there is a sufficient pool of applicants. Participants must attend a required briefing and agree to abide by HUD rules.

Tenant Based Rental Assistance - Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) is a program that helps low-income families with security deposits for utilities and rent. Funding for this program is made possible through a grant from the federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program administered through the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (KHRC).

CHAPMAN HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Chapman Housing Authority oversees both public housing and voucher programs, if available. The housing authority owns and manages one facility with 29 units across the city.

SOLOMON HOUSING AUTHORITY

Solomon Housing Authority provides affordable housing for up to 20 low- and moderate-income households through its Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher programs.

Ellsworth County

ELLSWORTH HOUSING AUTHORITY (THE PINES APARTMENTS)

The Pines is a 24-unit apartment property owned by the Ellsworth Housing Authority, the City of Ellsworth, that provides affordable Section 8 HUD housing for anyone 62 years or older, or disabled as defined by the Social Security Act. There is also an income limit as prescribed by the federal government for low income.

NORTH CENTRAL FLINT HILLS AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Section 8 Choice Voucher Program - The Section 8 Choice Voucher Program provides housing subsidies to qualified low-income persons who lease private, unsubsidized dwelling units. Subsidy is provided in the form of Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) which are paid directly to the landlord on a monthly basis as long as the family remains a program participant.

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Tenant Based Rental Assistance - Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) is a program that helps low-income families with security deposits for utilities and rent. Funding for this program is made possible through a grant from the federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program administered through the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (KHRC).

Transportation

Saline County

OCCK, INC. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FOR SALINA AND NORTH CENTRAL KANSAS

- CityGo
  Salina's fixed-route bus system, CityGo, serves more than 80 percent of Salina with 200 stops. Over 200,000 rides are given annually. Fares for the CityGo buses are $1 per trip, $2 per one-day pass, $5 for a six-trip pass, and $35 for a monthly pass. Children 10 and under ride for free, but must be accompanied by someone 16 or older. Personal Care Attendants can ride without charge. Each bus is wheelchair accessible.
- 81 Connection
  81 Connection is a fixed route bus service that serves north-central Kansas with three bi-directional trips each day, Monday through Friday.
  Fares for 81 Connection vary based on pick-up and drop-off locations. Six Trip Ticket Strips can be purchased for $5.00. They also offer a 24-punch card (24 punches worth $1.00 each) for $20 and a 48-punch card (48 punches worth $1 each) for $40.
- Regional Para-transit Demand Response Services
  OCCK offers Regional Para-transit, curb-to-curb, on-demand service for those who meet eligibility requirements. Fares are $2 per person each way in Saline County and 10-cents per mile outside Saline County.
- Med-A-Van (Also available in Dickinson and Ellsworth Counties)
  Non-emergency medical transportation to and from the Salina Regional Health Center and its affiliates is available at no cost. Non-emergency medical transportation to and from other area medical facilities, doctor's offices, and clinics is available for $2 per ride in Saline County and 10-cents per mile outside Saline County.
- MEDICAID TRANSPORTATION
  OCCK contracts with KanCare Providers to provide non-emergency medical transportation throughout Kansas.

- KANCycle
  Bike sharing program in eight communities
- KANConnect
  Regional route connecting Salina and Solomon twice daily
- Salina Airport Shuttle

CATHOLIC CHARITIES – GAS VOUCHERS/BUS PASSES

The gas voucher program provides transportation assistance to those in need throughout our service area. To qualify for a gas voucher, clients must fall into certain income guidelines. All gas vouchers are $10 and only redeemable at 24/7 Gas Stations. Gas vouchers are intended to provide assistance to work and appointments. Once received, a gas voucher must be used within 24 hours. Clients can reapply for gas vouchers every 6 months. Eligible clients can receive two OCCK Transportation bus passes every other month.

Dickinson County

CITY OF ABILENE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION – OCCK, INC.

The City of Abilene does not provide any transportation, but will attempt to find rides for seniors in need. Hours are Monday-Friday 8am-4:00pm.

Ellsworth County

Ellsworth County Council on Aging connects elderly individuals with services and resources needed to meet the challenges of aging through a mission of public transportation. They offer public transportation for medical appointments, shopping, and personal business.

Fundamental Needs – Utilities, Food, Clothing, & Hygiene

Saline County

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

The Catholic Charities Thrift Store in Salina allows for two tops and two bottoms per household member. Clients 18 years and older must apply on their own. Individuals and families under certain circumstances may be eligible for more clothing. Vouchers are offered Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The Catholic Charities' Diaper Program provides supplemental diapers and wipes to parents within our community facing economic hardship. In order to be eligible for our diaper program, clients must fall within certain income guidelines. All children enrolled in our diaper program must be three years old and younger. Once approved, clients will receive a box of diapers and a package of wipes once a month. Along with a completed application, families are required to bring the following documents: Photo ID, Proof of Kindship to Child/Children (i.e. birth certificate, hospital letter, footprints).

The Catholic Charities' food and hygiene program provide essential nourishment and care items to those in our community facing homelessness and economic hardship. To be eligible for this program, clients must fall within certain income guidelines. Once approved, clients will receive a nonperishable food box once a month. Approved clients can receive a hygiene bag once every other month. Our hygiene bag includes toilet paper and laundry detergent.

SALVATION ARMY

The Salina Salvation Army provides emergency assistance to 45-50 families per month. This assistance can include financial help with rent and/or utilities. These families also have access to the Salvation Army Thrift Store and Food Pantry.

The Salina Salvation Army provides a free meal for 50 to 80 people every weekday. Those who attend range from the elderly who are alone, young families in need of a meal, and often times homeless people from Salina will come for a meal.

Dickinson County

THE HOPE CENTER – SALVATION ARMY

The Hope Center in Abilene services all of Dickinson County and provides emergency financial aid for rent, utilities, prescriptions, gasoline, etc. In 2022, they served 103 households providing $30,745 in assistance. HOPE Center conducts referrals and partners with other agencies that provide assistance within Dickinson County. The HOPE Center also administers the Salvation Army emergency aid funds for Dickinson County.

ABILENE AREA FOOD PANTRY, CLOTHING, AND THRIFT SHOP

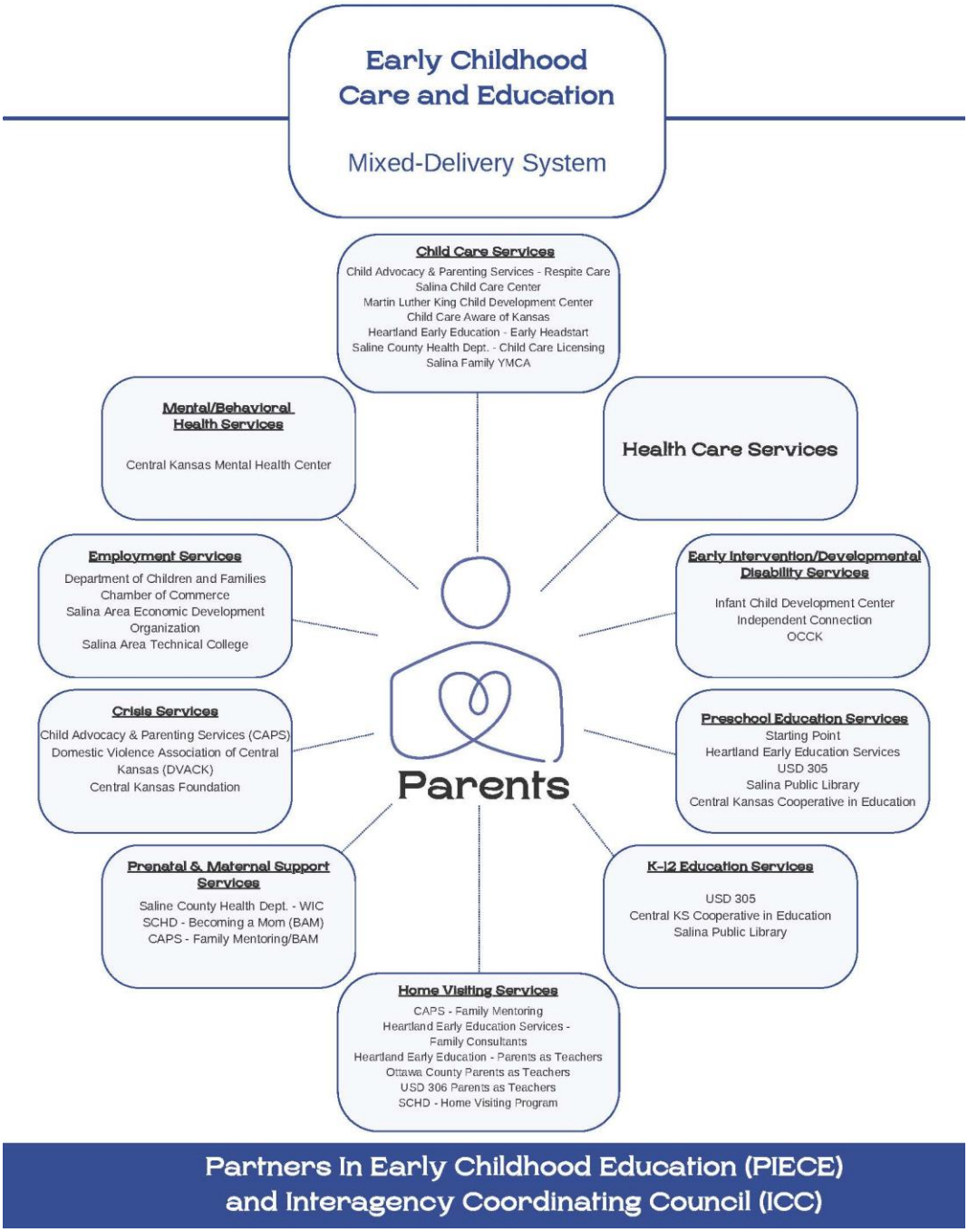
An Emergency Utility Fund is available to assist persons who are without heat, lights, water or will be soon facing this dilemma. The applicants are screened carefully, and the fund will pay $100 towards their bill. This service is allowed once a year. Funds are also available for assistance with rent and vehicle fuel expenses (the utility criteria apply also for this aid).

The Clothing and Thrift Shop sells donated used items to the public for a small fee. This income is used to pay the organization's rent, utilities, and other operational expenses. Upon referral by area ministers, Red Cross, School Nurse, SRS, OCCK, ICC, and service organizations, clothing is provided to those who are unable to pay. A supply of towels, sheets, blankets, and pillows are available to disaster victims or individuals who are in crisis.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION

Partners in Early Childhood Education (PIECE) Interagency Coordinating Council

PIECE and the ICC, to illustrate the Early Childhood Care and Education system in our area, created the following visual.



Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas

Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas provides services in Hays, Salina and Manhattan. The ministry provides a safety net for individuals and families in dire situations due to things like job loss, unexpected home or auto repairs, medical expenses, or unplanned pregnancies.

The **Emergency Financial Assistance Program** aims to provide support to individuals and families facing crises in the Northern Kansas community. They may be able to offer up to $150 in a one-year period for rent, utilities, and/or prescriptions, depending on the availability of funds and your qualifying status. When submitting an application, families are required to provide the following documentation to any of our offices: Proof of Income, Photo ID/Driver's License, Lease/Eviction Notice, Utility Bill/Shut-Off Notice, Prescription or Prescription Information from Pharmacy. Some restrictions do apply, and assistance is subject to the availability of funds. We are committed to helping those in need with compassion and respect.

The **Kansas Loan Pool Project (KLPP)** is a comprehensive program created by Catholic Charities that offers guidance to individuals trapped in high-interest payday and title loan debt. KLPP offers solutions to pay off these predatory loans and provides you with the tools to reclaim financial control over your life. Catholic Charities collaborates with Sunflower Bank to refinance predatory, high-interest loans into a traditional loan with a low interest rate of 6%. KLPP clients are also offered monthly financial coaching and case management during the term of the loan. To qualify for KLPP, applicants must have a regular source of income, the predatory debt owed must be less than $2,500.00, and the applicant must demonstrate the ability to repay the loan.

The **Kelly Mead Catastrophic Illness Fund** assists individuals and their families suffering from life-threatening illnesses with expenses ancillary to a medical condition. This fund will assist individuals with $500 in a one-year period to help with items not covered by insurance or other sources. *Special preference is given to those undergoing heart or other organ transplants who demonstrate financial need. To apply, please download and complete the below application and return it to your nearest Catholic Charities office.*

The **Mary Dolan Youth and Young Adult Assistance Program** provides financial assistance to individuals 16 - 24 years of age who are on their own (*abandoned, emancipated, aged out of foster care, or otherwise without a parent/guardian prior to the age of 21*) The limit for fund requests is $1,000. Although preference is given to requests to further education or advanced job skills, funds are not limited to such requests.

The **Catholic Charities Disaster Program** aids individuals and families who have been directly affected by a natural or man-made disaster to assist with related expenses. Staff members are available to take your information, assess your emergent needs, and walk you through initial steps toward recovery.

Gas Voucher Program: Our gas voucher provides transportation assistance to those in need throughout our service area. To qualify for a gas voucher, clients must fall into certain income guidelines. All gas vouchers are $10 and are only redeemable at 24/7 Gas Stations. Gas vouchers are intended to provide assistance to work and appointments. Once received, a gas voucher must be used within 24 hours. Clients can reapply for gas vouchers every 6 months.

Bus Pass Program: Eligible clients can receive two OCCK Transportation bus passes every other month.

OCCK, Inc.

OCCK, Inc. is a private 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to helping North Central Kansans with short or long-term disabilities remove barriers to employment, live independently, and fully participate in their communities.
Service highlights include:

- 300 employees
- 4,500 people a year request and receive the services needed to gain skills and be successful
- Services are delivered in 43 of the 105 Kansas counties
- CityGo provides over 200,000 rides annually
- Over 400 people receive Targeted Case Management
- 250 children, birth to 3 years, receive early intervention
- 1,500 requests a year are received for assistive technology services

Child Advocacy and Parenting Services, Inc. (CAPS)

CAPS provides the following services for families in Saline County

- Family Mentoring: Comprehensive, professional support for over-burdened families. Services include social work case management, weekly in-home visitation, crisis counseling, one-on-one parent training, parent/child relationship assistance and emotional support for English and Spanish-speaking families.
- Parenting Education: Child development and positive discipline instruction which helps parents develop skills needed to effectively raise their children. Enabling parents to develop a strong, close-knit family is the goal.
- Respite Care: Quality, once-a-week child care for parents needing a break from the daily stress of parenting.
- Saline County School Readiness Project: A community collaboration helping families and early childhood educators prepare children ages 0-5 years with the cognitive and social emotional skills they need to enter kindergarten ready to learn.
- Bully Prevention: Classroom instruction for elementary and middle school students to reduce peer abuse. The goal of the program is to empower students to use empathy and reconciliatory justice with their peers.
- Happy Bear: A personal safety program empowering young children to protect themselves from sexual abuse. The program is utilized with Saline County students enrolled preschool through 2nd grade.
- Chris's Place: Chris's Place coordinates an investigative multi-disciplinary team response for children involved in allegations of sexual abuse or serious physical abuse. Children receive a forensic interview in a child-focused environment by a specially trained interviewer, where coordinated and specialized services for advocacy, mental health, and medical services are offered.
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA): The CASA program recruits, trains, and supports community volunteers who advocate for the best interest of abused and neglected children involved in the local court system. CASA volunteers work to ensure the children's needs are met and to assist the court in obtaining a safe, permanent placement as quickly as possible.

Salina Area United Way

The focus of the Salina Area United Way is to focus on health, education, and financial stability. Their programs include:

- VITA – the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program provides low- and moderate-income individuals and families with free, reliable assistance in filing federal tax returns.
- FutureNow: Finance – A hands-on financial literacy program that helps students understand some of the "realities" involved in preparing for an employable future and adulthood.

- Raising Active Wild Readers, RAWR – A program dedicated to increasing book ownership and combating the summer slide through Raising Active Wild Readers. New and gently used books are collected and distributed to youth, ages birth to 18, at summer meal sites.
- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library – A book gifting program that mails a brand new, age-appropriate book to enrolled children every month from birth until 5 years of age.
- Born Learning Trail – The trail is a series of 10 interactive signs which offer fun, active learning activities for young children and their families.

Quality for Life Coalition (QLC) – Dickinson County

The Quality of Life Coalition consists of over 60 different agencies including schools, local governments, health providers, recreational and youth serving organizations, social services, volunteers and concerned individuals. These groups network through monthly community forum meetings where they can share information, discover opportunities to collaborate and reduce duplication of services.

Guided by MAPP results, QLC focuses on population-based outreach community programs including early childhood initiatives such as social-emotional development for young children, planning and initiatives to ensure kindergarten success, underage drinking prevention, healthy community design initiatives, and an annual compilation of local community resources for families.

COMMUNITY ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Salina Adult Education Center (SAEC)

Partners 4 Success

Partners 4 Success is a 12 week program that consists of approximately 200 hours of basic life skills instruction. At the end of the program in the final week, a job application lab is held to support P4S graduates in their job search and application journey. P4S enables participants to become self-sufficient by better managing their lives, which allows them to better manage and retain their employment.

Employment Training and Preparation:

- Resume and application writing skills
- Interview preparation and training (including a personal makeover)
- Positive employment habits, e.g., punctuality, accountability, teamwork, communication and problem solving
- Executive functioning skills, e.g., emotional control, time management, task prioritization, setting and meeting goals
- Computer literacy
- Workplace math and reading skills
- Model actual workplace expectations

Employer/Employee Matching:

- Previous job training and analysis of transferable skills
- Short and long-term goals
- Guidance and feedback from HR professionals

Personal Development and Lifestyle Change:

- Growth mindset
- Lifestyle goal setting and meeting

- Mental and physical health
- Financial literacy (build an economic action plan based on life experiences, strengths and needs)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

ESL curriculum is designed to help students progress through appropriate levels of lessons to meet their needs and allow them to "graduate" to higher levels of learning. Students attend just two mornings or evenings a week! Skill assessments during orientation will allow staff to fit students into appropriate classes based on their educational needs.

The ESL program provides students with the opportunity to develop skills in the following areas:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening
- Citizenship Skills
- Technology Skills
- Transitioning from ESL to ABE/GED

The center is located on the south side of the Salina Area Technical College campus. Here morning and evening classes are held at two different times. Classes are scheduled so that students with similar needs may receive the most benefit from small group instruction.

Adult Basic Education (ABE)/General Equivalency Diploma (GED) Programs

The ABE/GED program offers classes designed to help students strengthen their educational, technological and workplace skills. SAEC students attend classes morning or evening two days a week. Opportunity for on-site or remotely (live instruction through Zoom) is offered. Pre- and post-class assignments will be critical to helping students reach their educational goals. Each student will meet with an instructor at the end of orientation week to design a class schedule that meets that student's academic needs and meets the attendance requirement per week. Once the GED tests are passed, the Kansas State High School Diploma, issued by the Kansas Board of Regents, is earned.

Accelerated Opportunities – Kansas (AO-K)

Salina Adult Education Center along with Salina Area Technical College have partnered to bring Accelerating Opportunity: Kansas (AO-K) to the Salina area. This means that people in the Salina area can train for a new career and earn their high school credential through GED testing at the same time. The current pathway that SAEC and SATC provide services for is the medical pathway. The best part is the State of Kansas will pay most of the costs. The important thing about AO-K is that students have an entire support network to help with every aspect of their success.

- At the Salina Adult Education Center, students will learn to improve adult basic skills in reading, math and writing to prepare for the GED® tests and so they have the needed skills to succeed in Salina Tech's college classes. Lessons are created specifically to be relevant to the classes students are taking at SATC.
- At Salina Tech, those same adult education instructors will be part of the team. They will be in class with the students making sure they get any additional help needed to succeed! SATC provides advising and career counseling from the AO-K Coordinator. Students who qualify for the Accelerated Opportunity program will spend more time in technical and basic skills classes each week.

Diploma Completion Program

The USD 305 Diploma Completion Program (DCP) provides a unique opportunity to assist adults in achieving a high school diploma. Students utilize an educational computer program and are aided by a licensed teacher who helps them work at their own pace to complete credits needed for graduation. Virtual student progress is monitored by

the DCP Assistant and support is provided when the SAEC team sees a student may be struggling or has maybe stepped away from study for an extended period of time.

The virtual environment is a great option for students needing very little person to person support, has a very difficult schedule or has a small number of credits to complete! The DCP program is a wonderful option under the Salina Adult Education Center umbrella of services. SAEC supports the acquisition of a Central or South High School Diploma through the DCP program.

Students qualify to work within SAEC's Diploma Completion Program provided:

- The student is 18 years of age.
- Their original high school class cohort has graduated.
- Must be a Kansas resident.

Salina Area Technical College (SATC)

Early Childhood Education

Through a combination of classroom learning and practice in local child care facilities, students have an opportunity to learn about infant and toddler care, how to interact with young children, childhood nutrition, preschool language and literacy, and teaching children with special needs.

The program includes a variety of options, including a focus in Infant and Toddler Education, a focus on Preschool Education, or combining the two for a certification in Early Childhood Education. Building on that foundation, students can also earn an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education.

2025 – COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Central Kansas Cooperative in Education (CKCIE) – Part B
- Child Advocacy and Parenting Services, Inc. (CAPS), capsofsalina.org
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