

Cortland County Community Action Program, Inc. (CAPCO)

Community Needs Assessment 2024



Community Assessment 2024

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(CAPCO)

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CAPCO is dedicated to providing and advocating for community-wide actions and programs that increase individuals' dignity and self-reliance and improve community conditions, engaging all community sectors in Cortland County's fight against poverty.

Board of Directors Approval: April 24, 2025

Policy Council Approval: April 22, 2025

Standard 1.2: Community Needs Assessment with data collected directly from community members and participants. Appendix A shows the Community Member survey,

which satisfies the feedback from low-income participants in our programs and throughout the community.

Key Points

The following findings were included in this assessment because community-level and program-level quantitative data and key informant qualitative data indicated a need in the Cortland County community. Each of these conclusions can assist the community, and agencies understand the causes and conditions of poverty in the Cortland County community.

Finding #1: Safe, Affordable Housing: Key data indicators at the community level show that safe, affordable housing is a serious concern in the Cortland County community. Perceptions of community key informants indicate that low-income families and individuals in Cortland County urgently need safe and affordable housing. Additionally, rising costs of housing and home repair materials since the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly impacted the availability of safe and affordable housing in Cortland County.

Finding #2: Financial Assistance: Community-level data indicates that Cortland County residents identify a strong need for financial assistance. This need is related to the cost of home heating and utilities, as well as the rising cost of food and personal hygiene products.

Finding #3: Childcare/Early Childhood Education Deficit: Community-level estimates suggest a deficit in the community's available childcare/early education opportunities. The community-level data indicate that childcare deficits are in the top three concerns for Cortland County residents. Estimates of the income of children eligible for Early Head Start suggest that the funding capacity is insufficient to serve all eligible children. Increasing capacity in Early Head Start may ease the burden currently faced by the childcare system in Cortland County.

Finding #4: Healthcare: Community-level data indicates a significant deficit in healthcare services, including dental and medical. Data suggests that 20% of children enrolled in Head Start were diagnosed with a chronic medical condition, and only 50% received the required medical care (2022-2023 HS Program Report). Of specific concern is the lack of pediatric dental services in Cortland County, with only 20% of children enrolled in Head Start receiving preventative dental care.

Finding #5: Mental Health: Key data indicators at the community level show that mental health is a serious concern in the general Cortland County community, and perceptions of

community key informants indicate mental health services are a pressing need of low-income families and individuals in Cortland County.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of the CAPCO Community Assessment 2024 is twofold:

1. Satisfy the organizational standards required by the Cortland County Community Action Program, Inc., including
 - a. Analyze information collected directly from low-income individuals regarding community needs.
 - b. Collect and include current data on poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for their service area(s).
 - c. The community assessment collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data on its geographic service area(s).
 - d. The community assessment includes key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty and the needs of the communities assessed.¹
2. Satisfy the Head Start Program “Performance Standard 1302.11: Determining Community Strengths, Needs, and Resources” as required by the Department of Health and Human Services.
 - a. Performance Standard 1302.11 requires “community-wide strategic planning and needs assessment (community assessment). To design a program that meets community needs and builds on strengths and resources, a program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period. The community assessment must use data that describes community strengths, needs, and resources.”²

The conclusions of the CAPCO Community Assessment will be utilized by CAPCO program leadership to better understand client needs, set goals, and measure contributions that agency programs may make to improving the lives of their clients and the entire Cortland County community.

STATE OF THE GRANTEE

The Cortland County Community Action Program, Inc. (CAPCO) is a community-based, not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) Corporation located in Cortland, New York, and is the county's second-

largest human service provider. CAPCO was incorporated in 1974 and designated as a Community Action Agency under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 provisions, signed by President Lyndon Johnson in the declaration of the “War on Poverty.” For over 50 years, CAPCO has worked intensely with low-income people in our community. Through a broad range of programs and resources, CAPCO provides assistance to over 5,000 people in the community annually. These include early childhood and adult education, health, nutrition, safe and secure housing, emergency assistance, family stability, and support. CAPCO is *dedicated to providing and advocating for community-wide actions and programs that increase individuals' dignity and self-reliance and improve community conditions, engaging all community sectors in Cortland County's fight against poverty.*

A fifteen-member tripartite board of directors governs CAPCO. One-third of the board members are elected public officials or their representatives. At least one-third of the members are representatives of the low-income community, with the remainder of the seats being representatives from the private sector to be chosen from “business, industry, labor, religious, law enforcement, education, or other major groups and interests in the community served.” The board structure reflects and promotes the unique anti-poverty leadership, action, and mobilization responsibilities assigned by law to community action agencies. CAPCO’s board is responsible for assuring the agency continues to assess and respond to the causes and conditions of poverty in our community, achieves anticipated family and community outcomes, and remains administratively and fiscally sound. The main office for CAPCO is at 32 North Main Street, Cortland, NY 13045.

PROGRAM-AREAS & SERVICES

CAPCO operates the following programs throughout Cortland County:

Childhood Education Services

Childhood education services are provided throughout Cortland County, including Ealy Head Start, Head Start, and Universal Pre-K.

Early Head Start

The Early Head Start Program is for low-income infants, toddlers, and their families. The CAPCO Early Head Start Program is funded for 88 children and their families through the center-based program option. The Early Head Start Program enhances the children’s

physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; assists expectant mothers in accessing comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care; supports parents' efforts to fulfill their parental roles and helps them achieve self-sufficiency.

Head Start

Head Start is a comprehensive program designed to foster the healthy development of preschool children from ages 3 to 5 years old from low-income families. Head Start provides children with daily nutritious meals and many opportunities for social, emotional, and intellectual growth, which can prepare them for success in school and life. The CAPCO Head Start Program is funded for 34 children and their families throughout Cortland County. The program also connects children to a healthcare source and provides vital support services to their families. In addition, other services provided to the children are education services, transportation (if eligible), disability services, Individual Education Programs, and Individual Family Service Plans, as well as mental health, nutrition services, and family engagement. The program's cornerstone is parent and community involvement, making it one of the most successful preschool programs.

Universal Pre-K Program (UPK)

The Universal Pre-K (UPK) program in NYS is a state and federally funded prekindergarten program offered to families free of charge. The only eligibility requirements for UPK in NYS are a child's residency and age. The Cortland UPK Program is based on a lottery system; not all registered families are guaranteed a spot. The UPK Program is operated under CAPCO's Early Childhood Department. Currently, we have two classrooms in the Smith Elementary School, and 16 enrolled children are in each classroom. The hours of operation are 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. daily, with a nutritious breakfast and lunch provided to each child. We run this program on behalf of the Cortland School District. We complete this annual grant for the school district's RFP every February.

Consumer-Directed Services

Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP)

In 1973, a group of individuals with severe disabilities joined together to find a solution to the way they were receiving care. At that time, these individuals had no suitable alternatives other than the traditional approaches of institutionalization, such as a nursing home or hospital. Others could go home with no support, with the help of a family member willing to care for them. From this group of disabled individuals, a model for what is now referred to as

the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP) was developed. It would be the cornerstone of a program that recognizes that disabled individuals can choose their caregivers and direct their own home care services. CDPAP helps promote independence and Consumer Empowerment. The personal care aides hired by participants provide support, including health and daily care, and a wide range of services, including basic housekeeping, personal care, or a high level of nursing services. In 2023, CAPCO CDPAP allowed more than one hundred thirty-four consumers to live in their homes free of the constraints imposed by traditional home care and institutional settings. Without the support of CDPAP, many of these individuals would most likely remain in a nursing home situation. Thirteen families received support and care for their disabled family members through CDPAP, allowing them to continue to be employed, and one hundred fifty-five individuals obtained employment and received the necessary skills and training to increase their employability in the home care industry in the home care industry. CDPAP fosters independence and consumer empowerment by affording more control over identifying and acquiring personal care needs. This control makes consumers less reliant on a medical service model to obtain the daily assistance they need to participate fully in their communities. The Consumer benefits by living independently in the community, giving them a sense of empowerment to decide how and when their care is provided. The Consumer's family benefits by allowing them to maintain/obtain employment if they provide care to their loved ones.

Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP)

For qualifying seniors in Cortland County, it provides limited-hour health aide support services for case management, non-medical in-home services, respite, and ancillary services. Consumers are at least sixty years old and are functionally impaired in at least one daily living skill, such as dressing, bathing, personal care, housekeeping, etc. This is for non-Medicaid members and is funded through the Cortland County Area Agency on Aging. Like the CDPA Program, CAPCO serves as the Fiscal Intermediary, with the Consumers serving as the employer responsible for recruiting, training, scheduling, and overall oversight of their care. In 2024, CAPCO had 18 consumers living independently with home health aide services through EISEP.

Volunteer Driver Program

The Volunteer Transportation Program provides transportation for Medicaid-eligible individuals for non-emergency medical appointments and care. Transportation is provided by volunteer drivers who are reimbursed for their mileage. The program offers a caring, safe transport to medical appointments and saves significant Medicaid resources. In 2021, CAPCO is working to expand the program to be able to provide transportation for grocery shopping, participation in community opportunities, and other supports for health and safety. CAPCO is working with community partners and Long-term Managed Care entities

for financial support to expand this resource for Medicare recipients and others in the community.

Energy Services

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Funding

This is federal funding in tandem with the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). Funding is currently for the 2023-2025 contracted timeframe, with potential opportunities for extension & expansion dependent on overall state production & federal funding through the Department of Energy (DOE). This funding is unique from traditional WAP programming for CAPCO's Energy Services Program as it addresses transition & enhancements to electrification by installing heating pumps and clean energy alternatives. Like WAP, BIL funding is applied to weatherized homes to increase energy efficiency while improving infrastructure for clean energy solutions.

EmPower New York/NYSERDA

EmPower New York focuses on cost-effective energy conservation measures such as insulation, air sealing, appliance efficiency (heating, hot water tank, refrigerator, freezers, dryers), lighting, ventilation, and appliance conversions. This service is free to homeowners who meet the program's eligibility requirements.

Energy Savers

Energy Savers is a fee-for-service program for residential and commercial energy conservation. Energy costs are reduced by installing weatherization measures. These include but are not limited to air sealing, insulation of floors, walls, crawl spaces, and attics, installation of high-efficiency heating systems, cleaning and tune-ups, hot water tanks, ventilation of the Kitchen and bathrooms, and health & safety measures. A Comprehensive Building Assessment or Energy Audit is conducted to determine the insulation levels, air infiltration rates, and appliance efficiency. This program has no income requirements and is for residential and commercial buildings. An audit fee is collected before the Audit is performed, a work scope is determined, and a contract is negotiated with the owner for the costs involved. The Energy Services department utilizes a staff of highly trained individuals to install energy-saving measures for income-eligible households.

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)

WAP has income guidelines, which include gross income before taxes and deductions. This is a free service to eligible clients in Tompkins and Cortland Counties. Renters must check with their landlord first and make sure they are willing to pay the money upfront. Landlords must sign a Permission to Enter form for 1-4 units. The actual audit cost for five or more units will be collected before the audit, depending on the number of units. 66% of tenants must be income-eligible for the building to be weatherized.

This program is free to income-eligible landlords. The department provides the guideline charts in its brochures or online at www.capco.org.

Family Development

Family Development works with people in the community to develop and provide resources and support to encourage strong, healthy individuals and families. Family Development makes resources available that help increase individuals' dignity and self-reliance while helping them out of poverty.

Health/Nutrition Education & Programs

This program assists families in introducing healthy food options into their homes and educates them on how to incorporate healthy choices into their diet and prepare new foods. This food assistance helps decrease the financial resources spent on food and allows the family to use those resources on other necessities.

- Snack Pack Program
- Subsidized Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
- Exercise & Cooking Classes
- SNAP EBT benefits at Farmers Market

Parent Education

This program provides parents with support and resources that help them improve their parenting skills and enhance family engagement. These classes are individualized toward the needs of the parents. The courses are delivered in a group format that allows parents to be a resource to each other. The class aims to increase parents' knowledge of family/discipline/family engagement topics and decrease child abuse and neglect.

- Parents with Hope
- Everybody's Baby Shower
- Pajama Party
- Project Share (NYSEG)

- Care & Share (National Grid)

Heat Share Energy Assistance Program

This supports low-income families throughout New York State. Heat Share helps low-income people handle utility costs in partnership with utility companies, elected officials, and community organizations.

Community Action Angels

This program believes that all people in need should be helped and allowed to help others, creating a Circle of Giving.

- Volunteer Opportunities
- Family Essentials
- Coat Giveaway
- Holiday Extravaganza
- Everybody's Baby Shower
- School Supply Giveaway
- Emergency Assistance

Adult Education

This program allows adults to work toward their educational goals in small groups or with a one-on-one tutor. The focus is on young adults working towards their High School Equivalency diploma and adults looking to increase literacy skills for job readiness and/or to increase their quality of life.

- Tutoring, support, and assistance in the High School Equivalency process
- Literacy Volunteers of Cortland County

Nutrition and Outreach Program (NOEP)

NOEP offers free, confidential, one-on-one services that help food-insecure people in the community get nutrition assistance. The NOEP Coordinator helps applicants gather documentation for, fill out, and send in the SNAP application and works to increase participation in the School Breakfast Program and the Summer Food Service Program, which provide nutritious meals to school-aged children.

Healthy Families of Cortland County

The Healthy Families home visiting program matches parents with knowledgeable and caring workers who provide information and support during pregnancy and early childhood. Services include helping families access community resources and services, educating

families on parenting and child development, connecting families with medical providers, and assessing children for developmental delays.

Diaper Grant

The Diaper Distribution Demonstration and Research Pilot Grant began in September 2023. It funds CAPCO's monthly provision of 50 diapers to over 100 children in Cortland County and is scheduled to conclude in September 2025.

WIC

CAPCO provides WIC services in Cortland and Chenango Counties. WIC is a federally funded supplemental food and nutrition education program funded by the US Department of Agriculture for women (pregnant, breastfeeding, or up to 6 months postpartum), infants, and children up to the age of five, which provides vouchers for nutritious foods, nutrition counseling, and referrals to health care. At WIC clinics, participants receive nutrition education and are issued a set of checks listing specific foods for that month. The checks are redeemed at local stores contracted to accept WIC checks. By providing some of the foods needed daily for good health, WIC can help you stretch the food budget. Nutritionists at the WIC clinic can help plan healthy meals for families and advise on infant feeding, children's diet needs, and the food needs of pregnant and breastfeeding women. WIC also employs a certified lactation consultant and peer counselors who are available after regular clinic hours to help with topics relating to breastfeeding, such as nutrition facts, positioning, and returning to work. WIC has electric and manual breast pumps available for special needs. In addition to appointments at the Cortland office, WIC also provides each participating household with a set of vouchers that can be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers' markets. To be eligible for WIC, you must meet four eligibility criteria:

- Categorical: Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have just had a baby; infants; and children under 5 years old.
- Residential: Must be a resident of New York State.
- Income: Must have a gross income under 185% of the Federal Poverty Level or receive Food Stamps, Medicaid, or Temporary Assistance for needy families.
- Nutritional: Must have a nutritional need.

METHODS

CAPCO staff conducted all primary qualitative data collection and survey implementation as outlined under the “Primary Data” methods section. CAPCO contracted with an outside agency, the New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA), to develop Community Needs Surveys. NYSCAA was also contracted to assist with accessing secondary quantitative data, data analysis, compiling secondary/primary data into one report, and outlining key findings/conclusions.

Primary Data

CAPCO Key Informant Survey of Community Members

The CAPCO Community Needs Assessment for Community Members was created by NYSCAA with input from CAPCO staff. NYSCAA staff created surveys in Survey Monkey and distributed them by CAPCO from November 4 through December 9, 2024. The survey focused on directly reaching low-income individuals in Cortland County, as outlined in the CAPCO organizational standards. One hundred ninety-one community members responded to the study.

The survey sample was mostly female (170 out of 191 respondents, five preferring not to identify) and predominantly white (179 respondents). By question ten, the number of respondents reduced to 136 and continued to decline throughout the survey, with 116 responses by question # 42. For this reason, the sample size is reported on a by-question basis in this report.³

The results offer a snapshot of the health, well-being, and needs of low-income individuals and families in Cortland County. However, due to the limitations mentioned earlier, these findings should not be generalized to the entire county population and must be interpreted cautiously. The CAPCO Community Member Survey data is included in the report's conclusions solely to reinforce insights drawn from secondary data.

See Appendix A for the survey questionnaire and results report.

CAPCO Survey of Staff/Board/Volunteers

The CAPCO Key Informant Survey for Staff/Board/Volunteers was created by NYSCAA with input from CAPCO staff in Survey Monkey by NYSCAA staff and distributed by CAPCO from November 4 through December 9, 2024. 98 CAPCO staff/board/volunteers responded to the survey: 80 employees, 11 Board of Directors, 5 Head Start Policy Council Members, one volunteer, zero interns, and one individual who filled multiple roles in the organization.⁴

See Appendix B for the survey questionnaire and results report.

CAPCO Survey of Community Partners

The CAPCO Key Informant Survey for Community Partners was created by NYSCAA with input from CAPCO staff in Survey Monkey by NYSCAA staff and distributed by CAPCO from November 4 through December 9, 2024. A total of 42 community partners from 32 agencies responded to the survey. Of those community partners, 13 were identified as Community-based, 13 were from the public sector, seven were from educational institutes, two were from healthcare organizations, one was faith-based, and six were identified as from “other” sectors.⁵

See Appendix C for the survey questionnaire and results report.

Head Start/Early Head Start Family Satisfaction Survey

The Head Start/Early Head Start Family Satisfaction survey was designed and implemented by the CAPCO Head Start/Early Head Start program staff. The surveys were distributed to all families of enrolled children in May 2024. The surveys were delivered to each classroom and sent home with the children. Data was compiled in June of 2024 for all returned surveys. Thirty-four families responded to the study.⁶

Secondary Data

Community Data

Secondary data from publicly accessible databases and reports were collected and analyzed to identify population trends, conditions of poverty, and areas of need in the Cortland County community. References for secondary data are indicated at the end of this report. Questions regarding data collection, cleaning, and analysis of this data should be directed to the sponsoring agency.

New York State Community Action Program. The NYSCAA Data Hub was used for maps and graphs. See Appendix D for the full report.

Note: U.S. Census data from 2023 was utilized whenever available; otherwise, American Community Survey 2013 five-year estimates were used unless otherwise noted in the report. The American Community Survey (ACS) replaced the long form of the decennial census to provide annual demographic, socioeconomic, and housing data estimates. However, higher-frequency data comes with larger margins of error, especially for sub-county geographies. The margin of error ranges for variables can be provided upon request.

Head Start Program Data

The majority of Head Start/Early Head Start program data was provided to NYSCAA by CAPCO program staff in the form of yearly program information reports (PIR) for both Head Start and Early Head Start. Additional data, such as program outcomes, were provided to NYSCAA using Excel/Word tracking spreadsheets.

Data Analysis

The New York State Community Action Association conducted data analysis. Secondary data indicators were identified and analyzed using ad hoc methods to determine areas of concern in the general Cortland County community. The basis for ad hoc analysis and inclusion in key findings was if comparisons between the United States/New York State data and/or trend data and Head Start/Early Head Start program data indicated an area of concern. Identified disparities also warranted inclusion in key findings. Following the secondary data analysis, qualitative data from key informant surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics to support and further explore the findings of the quantitative data analysis.

RESULTS: COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Service Area/General Community Profile

Geography

The service area for CAPCO and CAPCO's Head Start/Early Head Start programs is the entirety of Cortland County. Located in Central New York (CNY), Cortland County is in the northernmost area of the Appalachian designated counties in the United States⁷ Cortland is located between Syracuse and Binghamton on the Interstate 81 corridor (Figure 1). Tompkins and Cayuga counties border it to the West, Tioga and Broome Counties to the South, Chenango and Madison counties to the East, and Onondaga County to the North (Figure 1). The county is comprised of the City of Cortland, surrounded by three villages—Homer, Marathon, McGraw—and fifteen townships.⁷

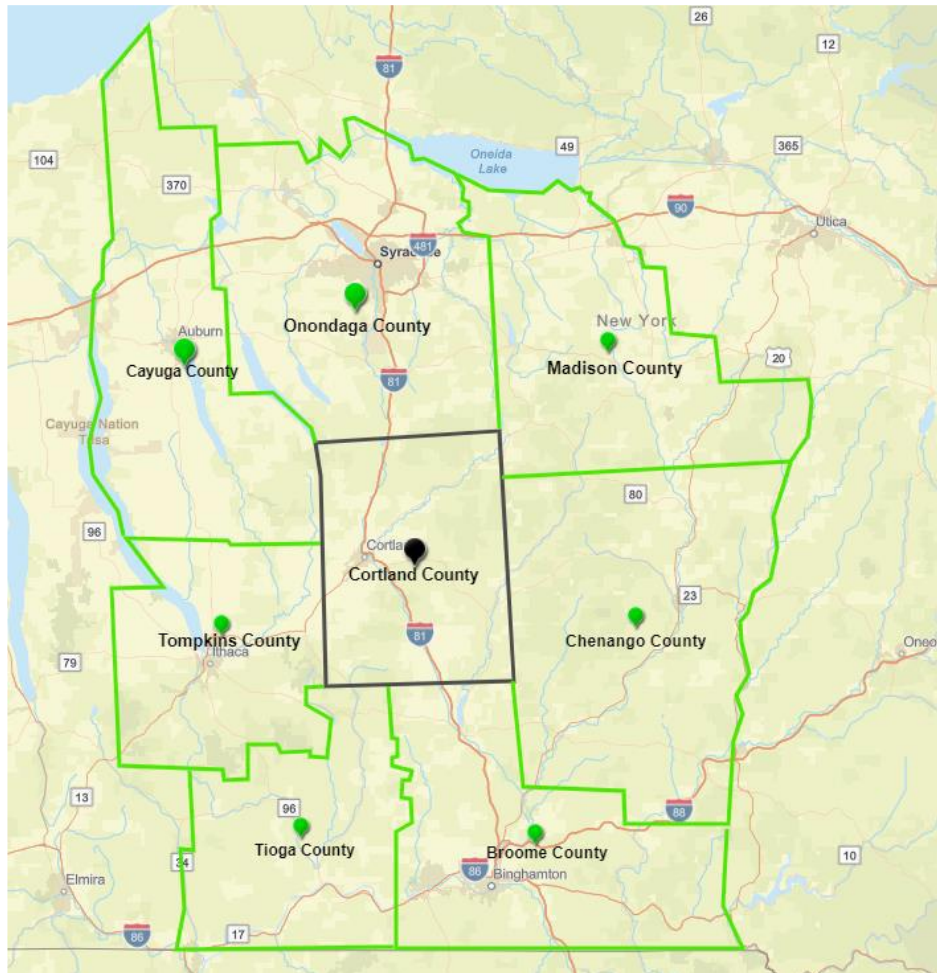


Figure1. Map of Cortland and Surrounding Counties in Central New York

Cortland County, New York, has 498.8 square miles of land area and is the 43rd The largest county in New York by total area. According to the 2020 census, the county has a population of 46,809.⁸

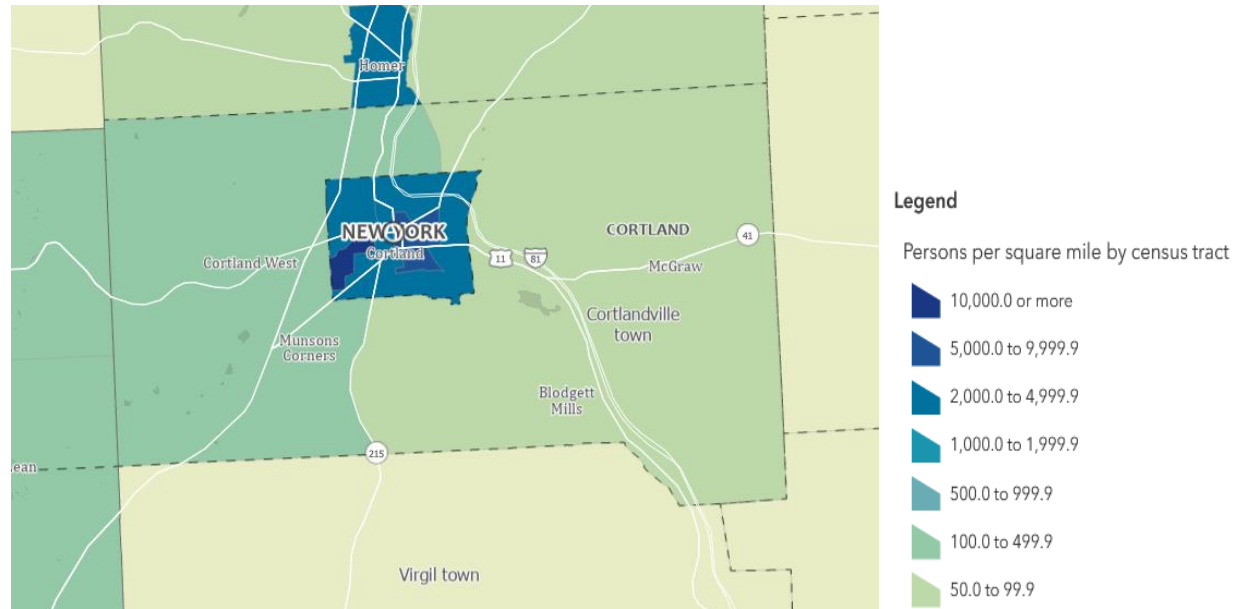


Figure 2. Map of Cortland County with population per square mile

Population Trends

This indicator compares two American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates to create a 5-year change in total households. The number of households within the report area changed from 2014 to 2018 ACS and 2019 to 2023 ACS. The total households in the report area increased by 1,023, or 5.77%, in those areas reporting 2023 ACS 5-year data. This compares to a statewide increase of 4.44%. (Table 1).⁹

Table 1. Population Trends by Household.

Report Area	Total Households (2019)	Total Households (2023)	Change in Households	Percent Change
Cortland County, NY	17,745	18,768	1,023	5.77%
New York	7,343,234	7,668,956	325,722	4.44%
United States	120,756,048	127,482,865	6,726,817	5.57%

Age and Gender

The gender-based population within the report area is shown below. According to ACS 2019-2023 5-year population estimates for the report area, the female population comprised 50.45% of the report area, while the male population represented 49.55% (Figure 3) (Table 2).^{10,11}

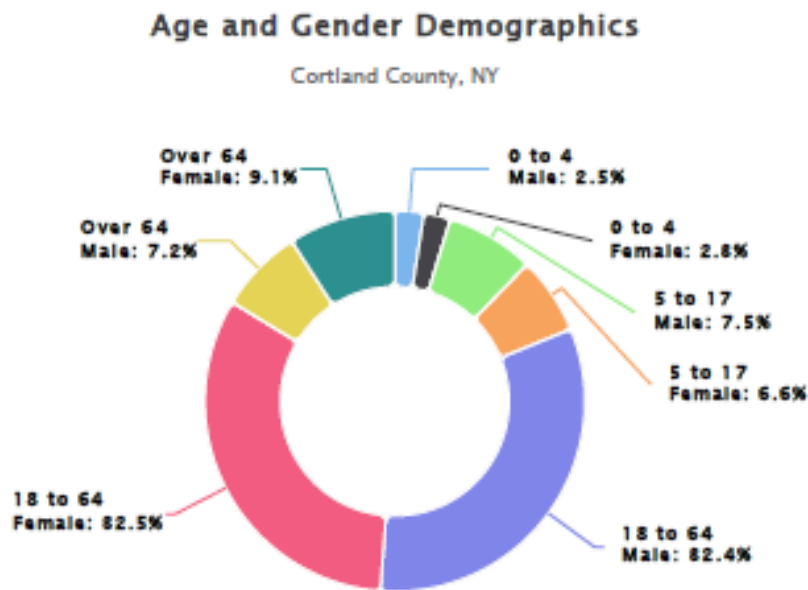


Figure 3: Age and Gender Demographics

CAPCO programs, such as Head Start/Early Head Start, generally target younger members of the Cortland County community. There are approximately 2,183 children under the age of five in Cortland County (5.1% of the population) (Table 2)¹¹

Table 2: Population in Cortland County by Age and Gender

Report Area	0 to 4 Male	0 to 4 Female	5 to 17 Male	5 to 17 Female	18 to 64 Male	18 to 64 Female	Over 64 Male	Over 64 Female
Cortland County, NY	1,134	1,049	3,469	3,035	14,955	14,990	3,310	4,212
New York	563,327	539,634	1,540,370	1,465,946	6,079,459	6,222,397	1,364,607	1,941,925
United States	9,688,436	9,251,463	28,005,434	26,699,905	101,632,138	101,140,117	22,891,164	30,750,968

Race and Ethnicity

According to ACS 2019-2023 5-year population estimates, the white population comprised 90.52% of the report area, the black population represented 2.11%, and other races combined were 2.63%. People identifying themselves as mixed race made up 4.75% of the population. (Table 3) (Figure 4)^{12,13}

Table 3: Race and Ethnicity of Population in Cortland County

Report Area	Total Population	White Total	Black Total	American Indian Total	Asian Total	Native Hawaiian Total	Some Other Total	Mixed Race Total
Cortland County, NY	46,401	42,001	978	39	644	4	532	2,203
New York	19,872,319	11,340,944	2,927,008	102,927	1,769,224	9,671	1,949,904	1,772,641
United States	332,387,540	210,875,446	41,070,890	2,924,996	19,352,659	629,292	21,940,536	35,593,721

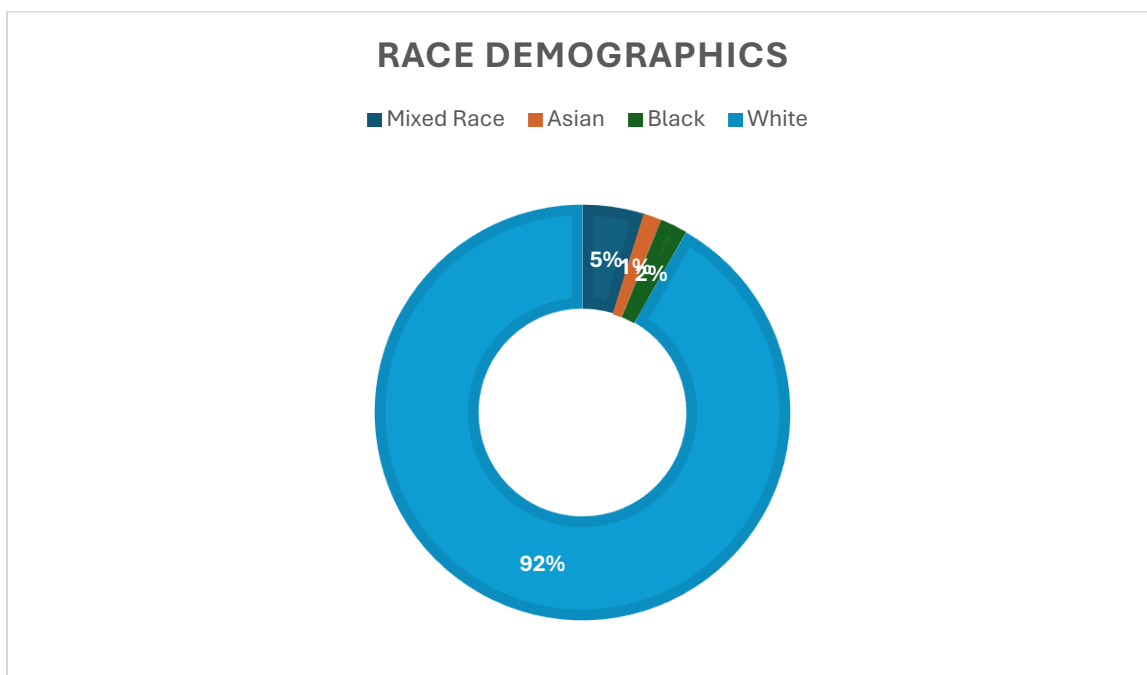
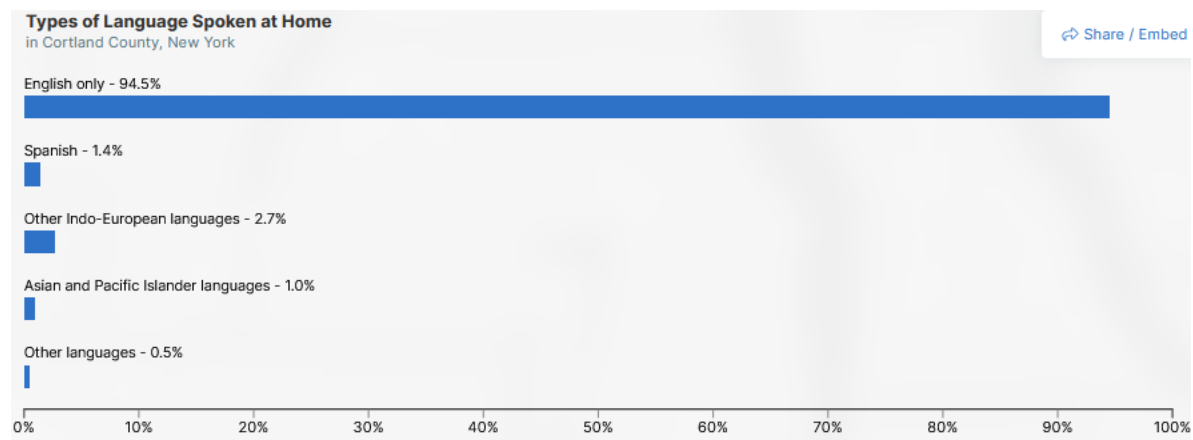


Figure 4: Cortland County Race Demographics by Percentage

Language

Most Cortland County residents over age five speak English at home (94.6%) (Table 4).¹³ Of the 5.5% that speak a language other than English at home, 2.7% speak another Indo-European Language, 1.4% speak Spanish, 1.0% speak Asian or Pacific Island languages, and 0.5% speak some other languages (Table 4). Language diversity has increased slightly in the past four years, from 95.5% of English speakers in 2020. (Table 4)¹⁴.

Table 4: Types of Language Spoken at Home



Governing Structure

Cortland County is governed by the Cortland County legislature, which comprises one legislature from each of the seventeen legislative districts. The Legislature appoints the County Administrator, who serves as the chief administration officer and budget officer.

Education

Educational Attainment

From 2015 to 2019 to 2023/2024, the percentage of Public High School graduates has declined from 90.7% to 83.64%. This is below the New York State Average of 86.27% (Figure 5),¹⁵.

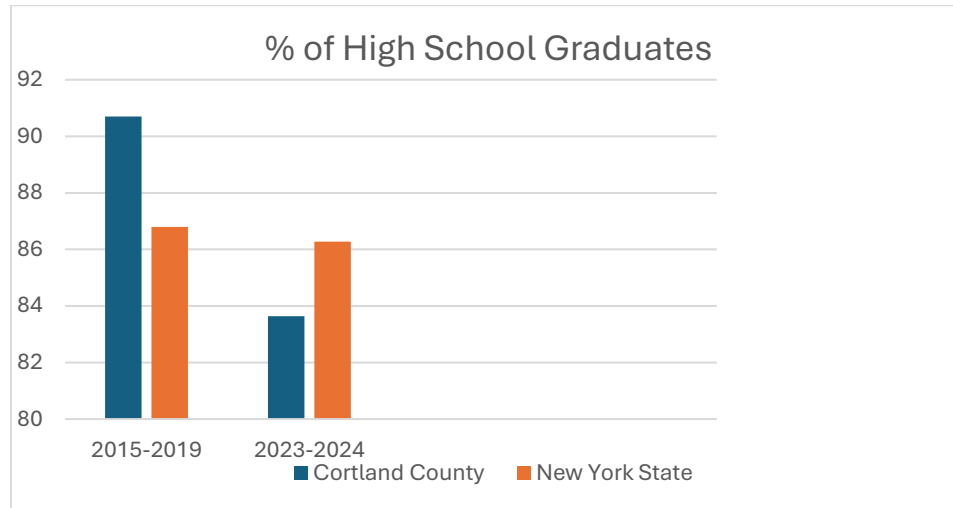


Figure 5: Percentage of High School Graduates.

In 2023, the percentage of Cortland County residents who obtained a bachelor's degree or higher was 28.3%, which is lower than the NYS average of 40.6% (Figure 6)¹⁶

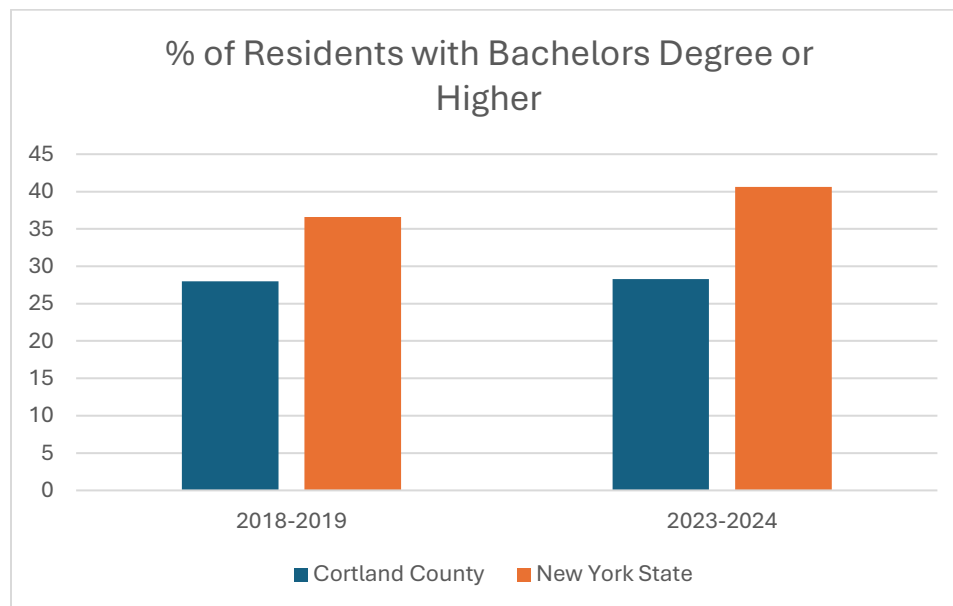


Figure 6: % of Cortland County Residents with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Dropout Rates

In the 2023/2024 school year, 9.68% of high school students in Cortland County dropped out. This is almost double the state average of 4.52% and is an increase from the 6.0% rate in 2020. (Figure 7)¹⁷

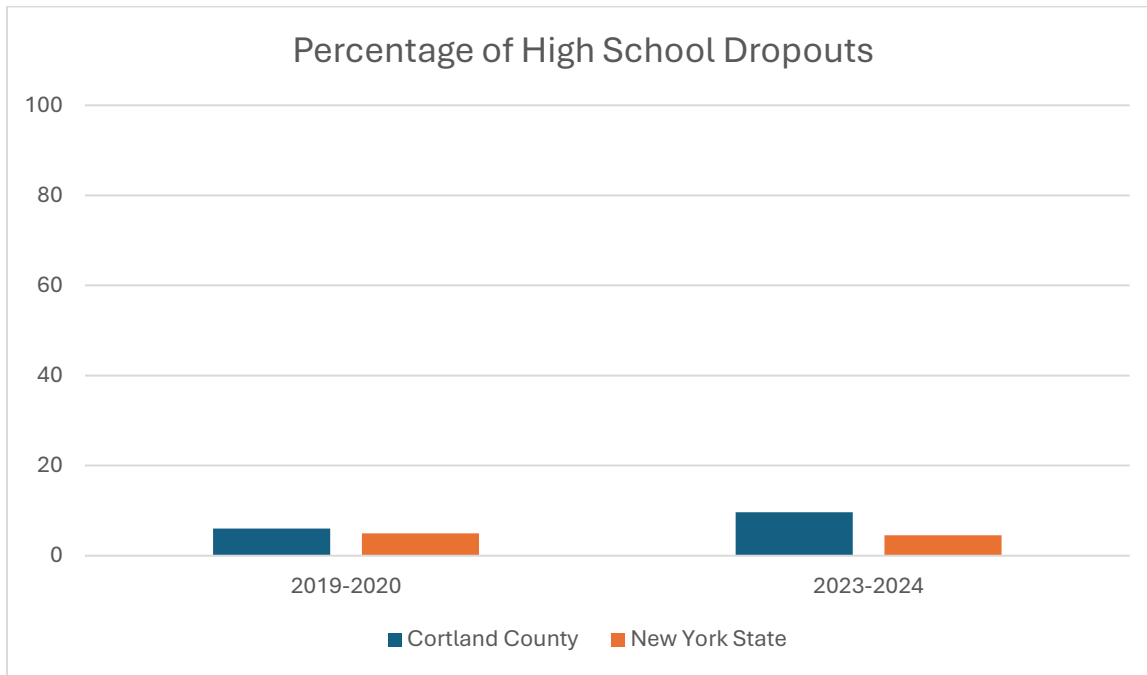


Figure 7: Percentage of High School Dropouts.

From 2019 to 2023, students who were not economically disadvantaged had higher graduation rates (84%) than those who were economically disadvantaged (67%). Similarly, only 67% of students who experienced homelessness in that timeframe graduated from High School. (Figure 8)¹⁸

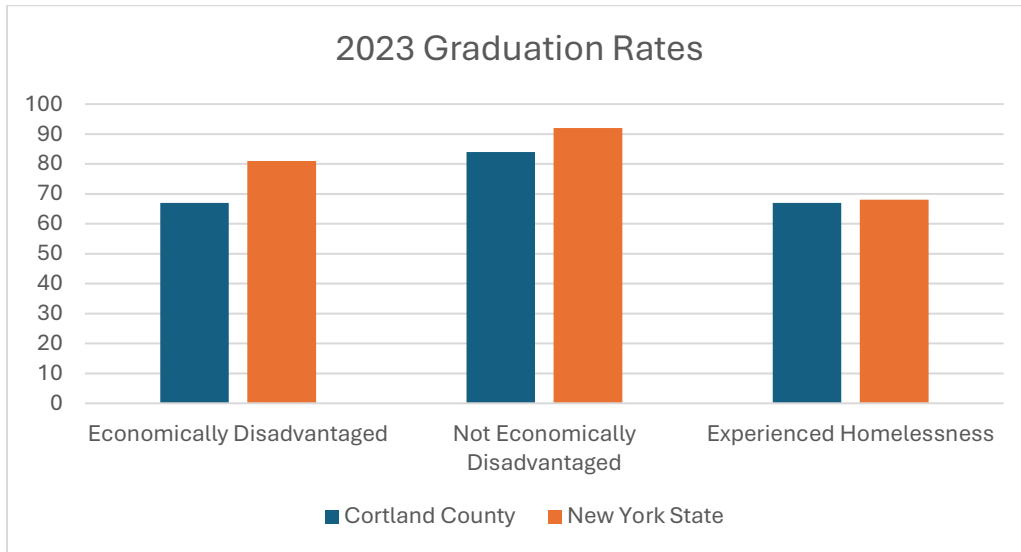


Figure 8: Graduation rates for Economically Advantaged/Disadvantaged and homeless students

Grades 3-8 ELA Assessments

The NYS Department of Education recently changed proficiency levels. Previously, levels 2-4 were considered proficient. In 2023-2024, only levels 3 and 4 are considered proficient. As a result, there is a significant drop in the percentage of students considered proficient and on track to graduate. (Figure 9) ¹⁹

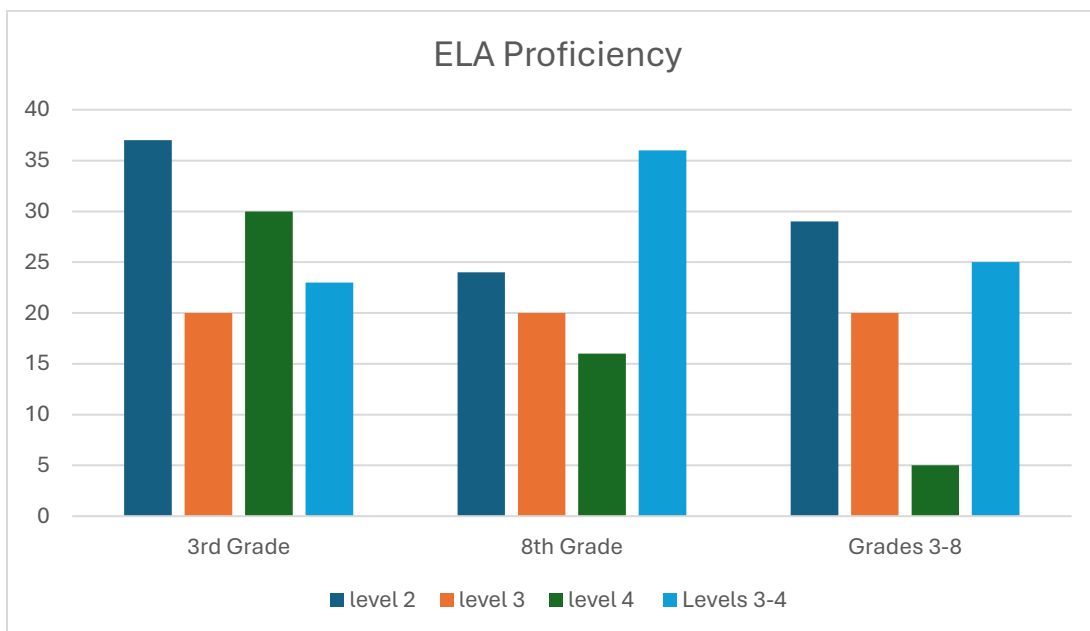


Figure 9: Levels of Proficiency in ELA

School Enrollment

During the 2023-2024 school year, the total K through 12th grade enrollment in Cortland County was 5,262. This was a decrease of 131 students from 2022-2023. 54% of all students identified as economically disadvantaged, and 2% reported experiencing homelessness in the 2023-2024 academic year.²⁰

Colleges and Universities

The State University of New York at Cortland is located in Cortland County. Additionally, Tompkins Cortland Community College is located in nearby Tompkins County. Many colleges and universities are within an hour's drive of Cortland County in the Ithaca, Syracuse, and Binghamton areas.

Employment and Poverty

Employment

Labor force, employment, and unemployment data for each county in the report area are provided in the table below. Overall, the report area experienced an average 4.2% unemployment rate in December 2024. In 2023, unemployment rates in the county averaged 5.2% (Table 5),²¹

Table 5: Employment Rates in Cortland County

Report Area	Labor Force	Number Employed	Number Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Cortland County, NY	22,456	21,521	935	4.2%
New York	9,563,906	9,167,459	396,447	4.1%
United States	168,968,103	162,449,481	6,518,620	3.9%

The unemployment rate in Cortland County has remained fairly consistent with NYS and has been relatively stable since 2021. (Figure 10)²²

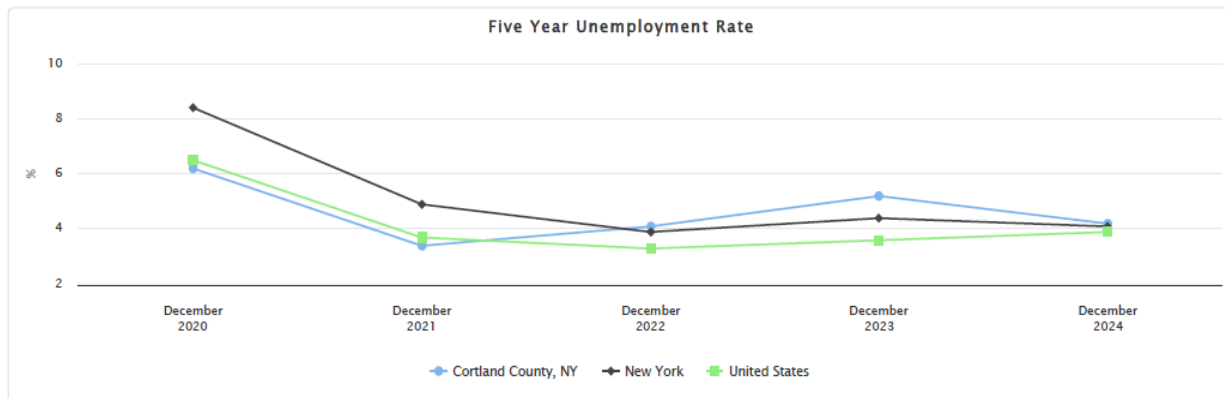


Figure 10: 5-year unemployment rates

The most common employment industries for fully employed Cortland County residents ages 16 and older are education, healthcare, and social services (31.5%). This is followed by arts/entertainment/food service (12.7%) and retail trade (11.1%) (Figure 11)²³.

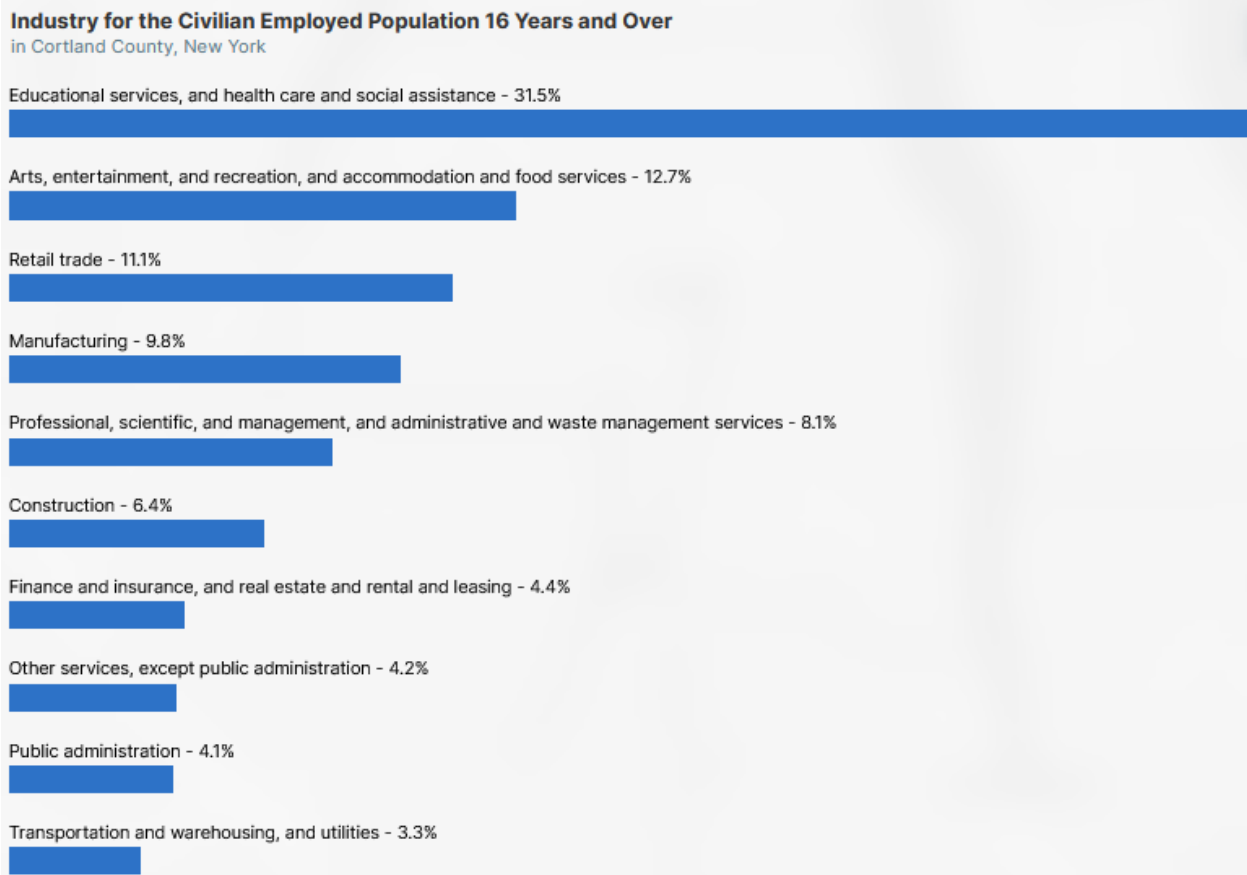


Figure 11: Industries of employment in Cortland County

Income

In June 2023, 17,125 Cortland County community members were employed. One hundred twenty were federal employees, 3,929 state/local employees, and 13,076 private employees. The average weekly salary was \$1,056. The median income for families is \$82,095.²⁴

The total number of households in Cortland County is 18,768, an increase from 17,745 in 2019.²⁵ The most common sources of income for households in the county are earnings through wages, salaries, and self-employment.

Poverty

In 2023, 6,687 (16%) people in Cortland County lived below the poverty level. This is a slight decrease from 2019 (16,4%). However, it remains above the New York State average of 14.10% and the federal level of 12.5%. (Table 6)²⁶

Table 6: Poverty Rates by Age in Cortland County

Report Area	All Ages	All Ages	Age 0-17	Age 0-17	Age 5-17	Age 5-17
	No. of Persons	Poverty Rate	No. of Persons	Poverty Rate	No. of Persons	Poverty Rate
Cortland County, NY	6,687	16%	1,352	16.5%	921	15.20%
New York	2,697,685	14.10%	718,306	18.60%	509,260	17.90%
United States	40,763,043	12.5%	11,445,264	16%	8,139,044	15.30%

Geographically, the city of Cortland had the highest percentage of people living below the poverty level within the county. (Figure 14)²⁷



Population Below the Poverty Level, Percent by Tract, ACS 2019-23

- Over 20.0%
- 15.1 - 20.0%
- 10.1 - 15.0%
- Under 10.1%
- No Data or Data Suppressed
- Cortland County, NY

Figure 14:

Poverty affects specific demographic groups at higher rates in Cortland County. Analysis of poverty data reveals particularly elevated rates among three key populations: female-headed households without a spouse present, residents who have not completed high school education, and individuals living with disabilities. (Table 7)²⁸

Table 7:Poverty Rates by Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristic	Poverty Rate in Cortland County	Poverty Rate NYS
Male	11.16%	12.55%
Female	14.5 %	14..80%
Under 5	17.1%	18.6%
Under 18	16.5%	18.6%
18 to 64	14.0%	12.5%
65 and over	9.8%	12.7%
White	12.5%	10.3%
Black	13.9%	20.63%
Asian	15.34%	13.93%
American Indian or Alaska Native	28.21%	22.73%
Hispanic	32.9%	20.11%
White, Non-Hispanic	12.2%	12.13%
Married Couple Family	33.2%	37.5%
Female Head of House, No Spouse	55.9%	51.5%
With Disability	27.0%	25.9%

CAPCO programs and stakeholders are concerned with children living in poverty. In 2019, 19.3% of children in Cortland lived below the federal poverty level. In 2023, 17.1% of children in Cortland lived in poverty. (Figure 15)²⁹

In Cortland County, 16.5% of all children under the age of 18 are living in poverty.³⁰

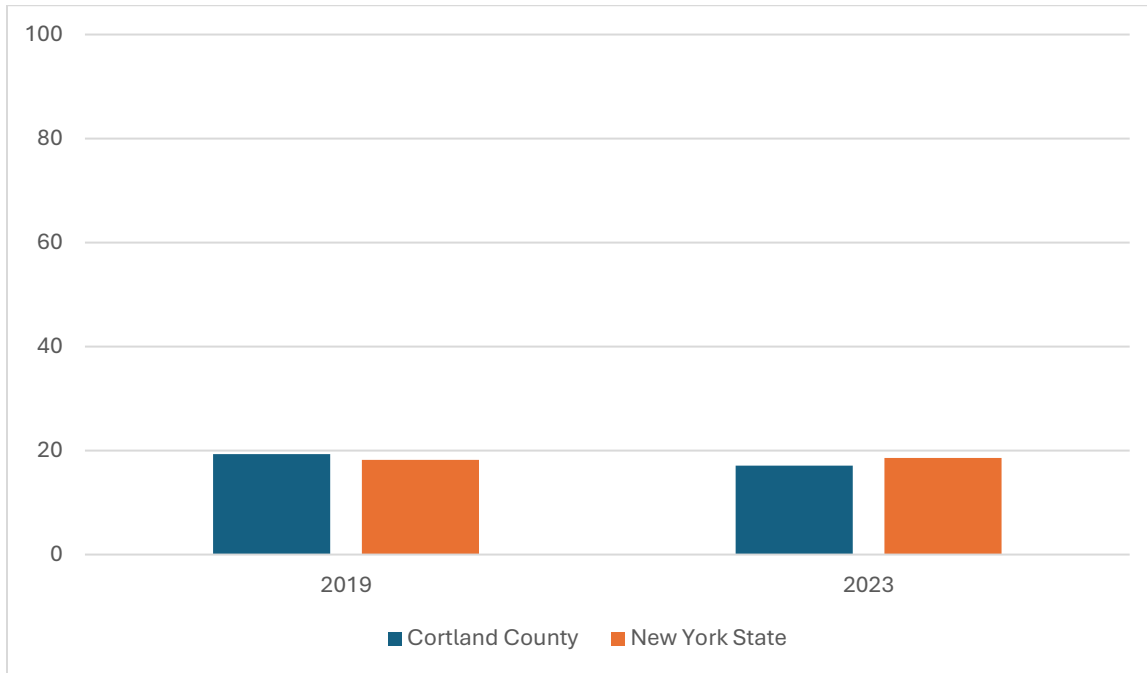


Figure 15: Poverty Rates Among Children

Transportation and Communication

Vehicle Ownership and Commuting

In 2023, 10.04% of all households did not have a vehicle.³¹ This is an increase from 2019, when the percentage of households without a vehicle was 9.9%.³²

The most common mode of transportation to work for Cortland County workers ages 16 and older is a car, truck, or van (alone or carpooling) (Figure 16).³² Only 0.9% of workers in Cortland County use public transportation to get to work.³²

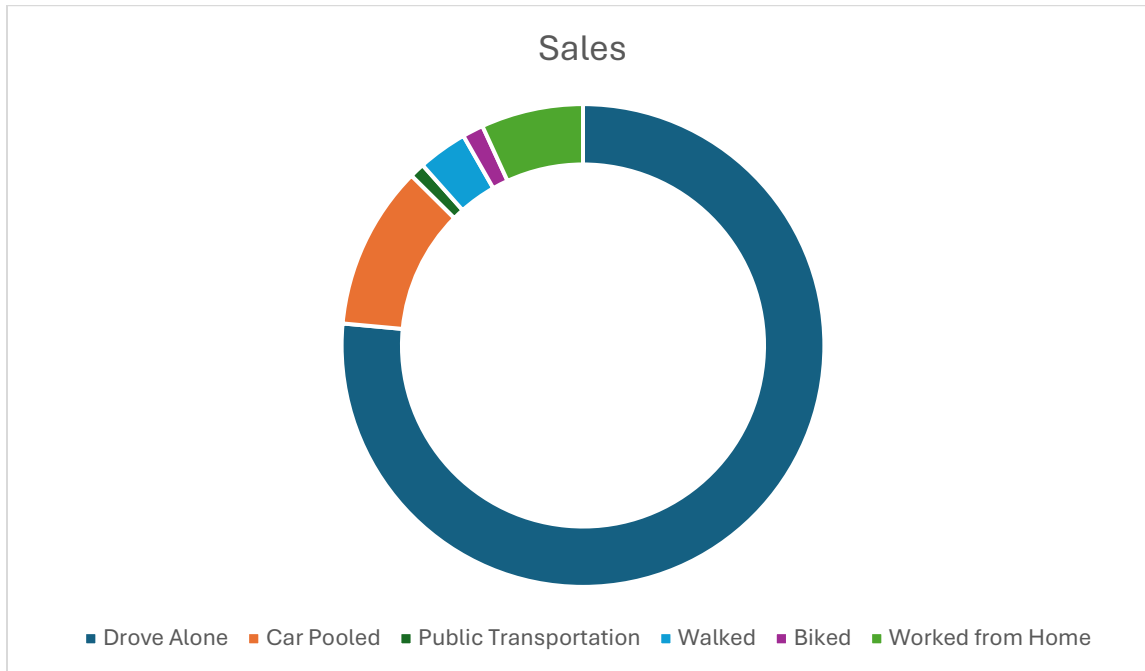


Figure 16: Modes of Transportation for Work

Public Transportation

Cortland Transit offers public transportation services throughout Cortland and Tompkins County. Buses run throughout the City of Cortland daily from 6 am to 6 pm and have stops at many major businesses, healthcare facilities, and SUNY Cortland (figure 17)³³. Public transportation for the county is minimal, and it was identified as a critical need to improve connectivity and infrastructure in the 2025-2030 County Strategic Plan.³⁴

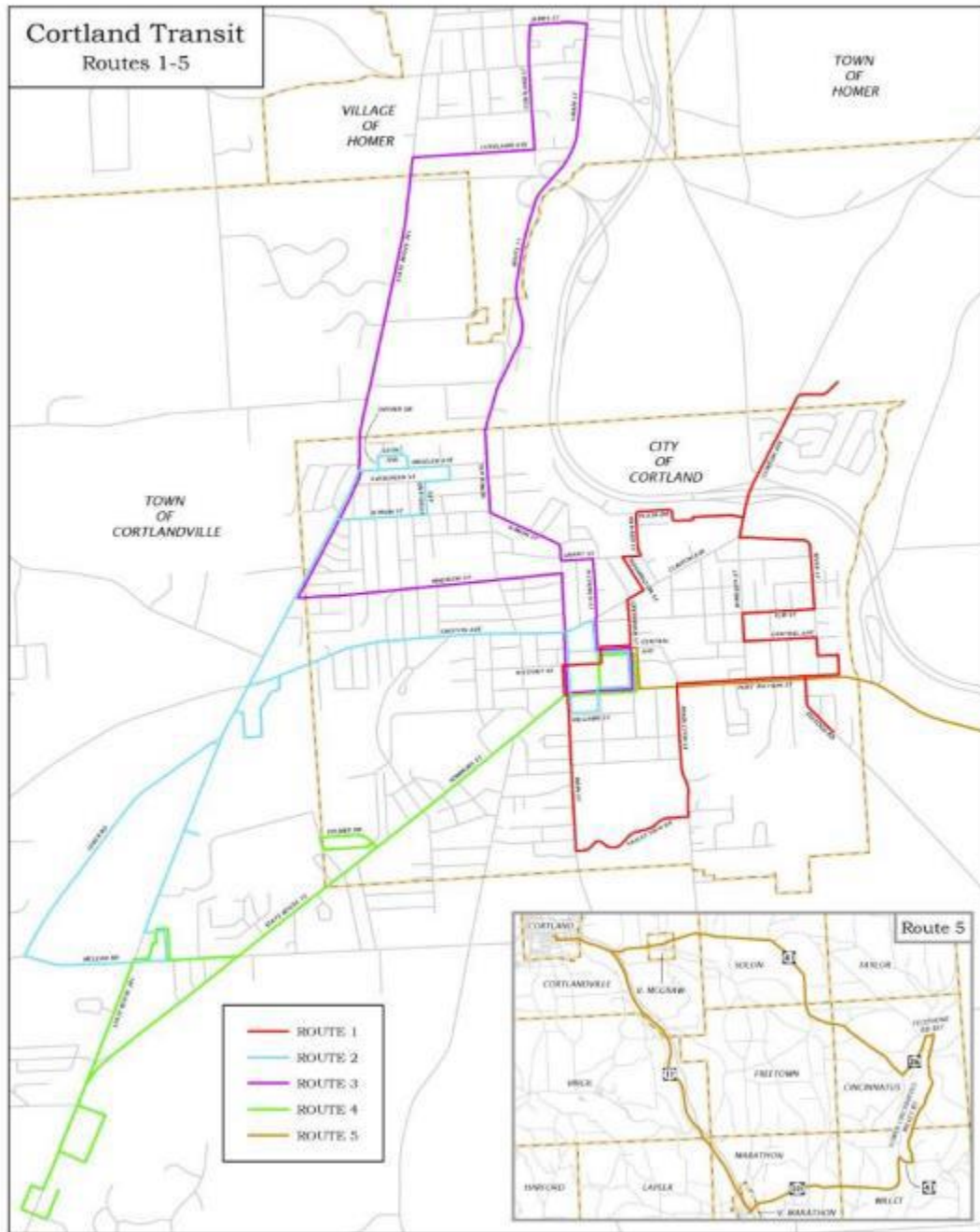


Figure 17: Map of Public Transportation in the city of Cortland.



Figure 18:

Communication

This indicator reports the percentage of households that don't own or use any computer, including desktop or laptop, smartphone, tablet, or other portable wireless computer, and some other type of computer, based on the 2019-2023 American Community Survey estimates. Of the 18,768 total households in the report area, 1,125 or 5.99% are without a computer (Table 8).³⁵

Note: The ACS 2019-23 questions about internet/computer usage are not asked for the group quarters population, so the data do not include people living in housing such as dorms, prisons, nursing homes, etc.

Table 8:

Report Area	Total Households	Households with No Computer	Households with No Computer, Percent
Cortland County, NY	18,768	1,125	5.99%
New York	7,668,956	462,907	6.04%
United States	127,482,865	6,624,173	5.20%

Social Services

Housing

Of the 18,768 occupied housing units in Cortland County, 27.43% have monthly housing costs that exceed 30% or more of the household income in the past month (Table 9). This percentage has increased since 2020 and is lower than New York State (30.0%) and the United States (32.8%), and has decreased since 2019 (25.4%)³¹

Among housing units with a mortgage, 11.9% have monthly housing costs that are above 35% of household income.³¹

Table 9: Percentage of Households Where Housing Costs Exceed 30% of Income by Geography

Location	2023
Cortland County	27.43%
New York State	30%
United States	32.8%

Student Homelessness

In the 2023-2024 school year, 2% of Cortland County school districts (102 students) experienced homelessness³⁵. This is an increase from less than 1% in 2018-2019³⁵. 3% of Cortland City School District students experienced homelessness in 2023-2024. 2% of Cincinnatus students experienced homelessness. Homer, McGraw, and Marathon districts had 1% or fewer students experiencing homelessness³⁵. (Table 10)

Table 10: Students experiencing Homelessness in the 2023-2024 School Year.

District	2018-2019	2023-2024
Cincinattus	0	10 (2%)
Cortland	12 (1%)	64 (3%)
Homer	10 (1%)	17 (1%)
Marathon	0	5 (1%)
McGraw	0	6 (1%)
County	24 (0%)	102 (2%)

Family Well Being

In 2022, 4.5 per 1,000 children aged 0-21 were in foster care in Cortland County (Figure 19)³⁶. This figure has increased since 2019, when the rate was 3.5 per 1,000 children ages 0-21 in Cortland County (Figure 19).³⁶ New York State has a lower rate at 2.7 per 1,000 in 2022³⁶.

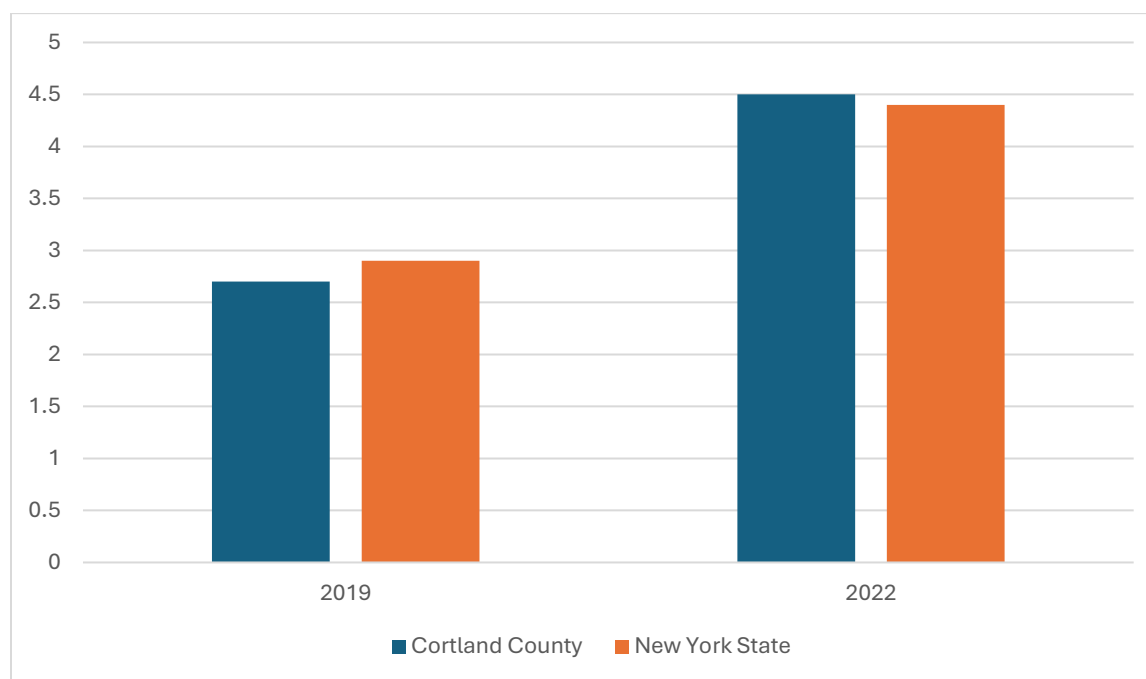


Figure 19: Figure 24. Children Ages 0-21 Years Old in Foster Care per 1,000 Children by Geography

In 2022, the rate of child abuse/maltreatment for youth ages 0-17 years old in Cortland County (34.1 per 1,000) is nearly triple that of New York State (12.4 per 1,000) (Figure 20)³⁶. It has declined from 38.8 per 1,000 in 2019 (Figure 20) to ³⁶.

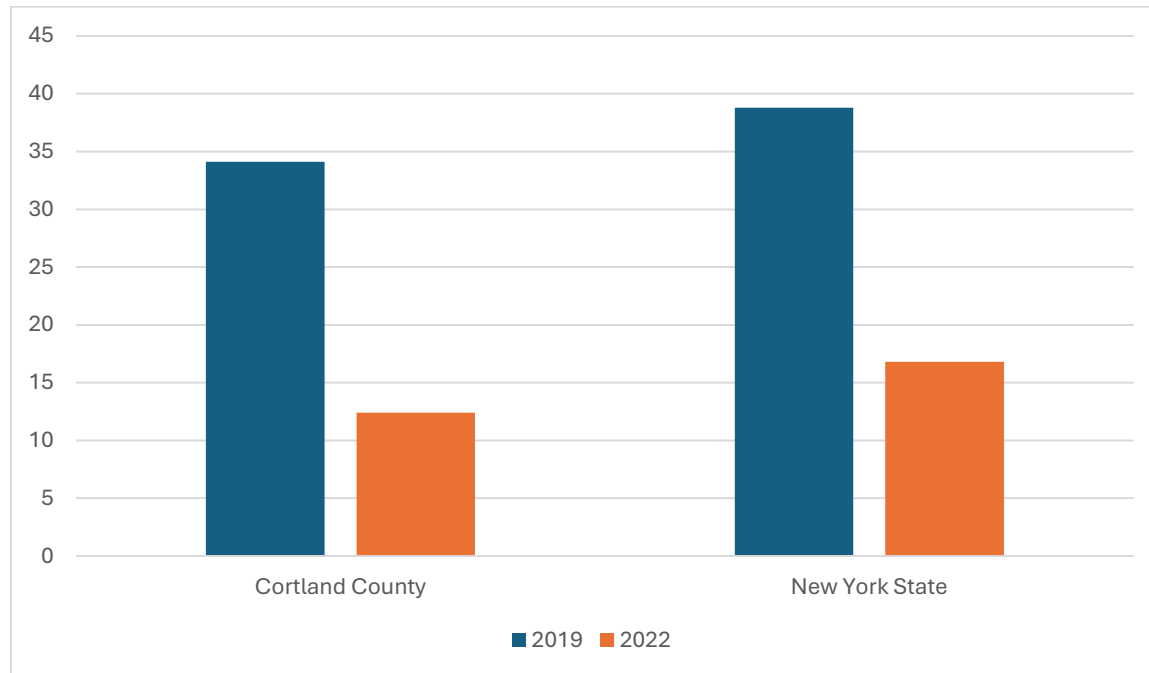


Figure 20: Children in Indicated Reports of Abuse/Maltreatment per 1,000 Children Ages 0-17 by Geography

RESULTS: HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START PROGRAMS

Service Utilization

Eligibility

In the CAPCO Head Start Service Area, an estimated 335 children under age three would be eligible for Early Head Start based on birth records and county poverty rates for children under age 5 (Table 8). The program is funded to serve 88 children. However, due to the current funded capacity, an estimated 247 children eligible for Early Head Start cannot be served.

	Births 2015	Births 2016	Births 2017	Birth 2021	Estimated <3 Years Old*	Estimated Eligibility**
Cincinnati	31	40	39	28	104	26
Cortland	227	256	228	227	704	166
Homer	103	106	97	107	310	73
Marathon	59	71	62	52	183	43
McGraw	34	35	46	42	118	28
				Total	1,419	335

*3/4 of the 2013-2016 births

**Based on the % of children less than age 5 in Cortland County in poverty (23.6%)

Based on enrollment figures for school districts served by the program in the CAPCO Head Start Service Area, an estimated 189 children ages three and four would be eligible for Head Start (Table 8).³⁶ The program is funded to serve 34 children. An estimated 155 children are eligible for Head Start but cannot be served due to the current funded capacity.

	K Enroll 23/24	Gr 1 Enroll 23/24	Gr 2 Enroll 23/24	Estimated 3 & 4 Years Olds*	Estimated Eligibility**
Cincinnati	40	36	37	80	18
Cortland	134	138	164	294	71
Homer	110	113	153	218	58
Marathon	59	62	62	112	24
McGraw	34	40	34	68	18
			Total	772	189

*2/3 of the K-2 enrollment

** Based on the % of children less than age 5 in Cortland County in poverty (23.6%)

Waiting List

Tables 9 and 10 depict the Head Start and Early Head Start waiting lists from 2017-2018 through 2023-2024. Columns labeled 4- and 3- indicate the number of income-eligible children ages 3 and 4, Columns labeled 4 130% and 3 130% indicate the number of eligible children ages 3 and 4 based on the 130% guideline, and columns 4+ and 3+ indicate the number of children ages 3 and 4 over the poverty guidelines. Each program is only able to utilize 35% of enrollment (36 slots for HS and 22 slots for EHS) for the 130% poverty guideline and 10% of enrollment (10 slots for HS and six slots for Early Head Start) for those over the income threshold of 200%³⁶

Table 10: Head Start ERSEA Tracking-Waiting List

	4-		4 130%		4 +		3-		3 130%		3+		130 % used		+ Income used	
	Sept	June	Sept	June	Sept	June	Sept	June	Sept	June	Sept	June	Sept	June	Sept	June
2009-2010	27	9	1	1	24	22	25	37	1	2	8	15	7	6	18	18
2010-2011	6	3	1	2	28	23	64	76	6	6	20	26	4	3	11	15
2011-2012	8	3	5	3	35	26	76	83	10	12	32	39	8	13	4	4
2012-2013	6	4	6	4	30	17	43	51	6	10	28	34	10	10	6	7
2013-2014	4	2	2	1	12	12	13	10	10	8	25	25	31	37	15	17
2014-2015	3	3	0	0	21	20	6	7	0	1	13	14	37	35	23	26
2015-2016	1	1	1	1	18	15	6	10	2	4	19	25	27	28	20	21
2016-2017	1	1	0	0	19	20	2	6	1	3	19	29	27	27	19	23
2017-2018	0	1	0	1	14	12	0	1	0	0	16	15	28	27	24	25
2018-2019	0	2	0	0	10	9	0	0	0	0	23	20	30	30	19	22
2019-2020	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	25	28	33	29	21	21
2020-2021	0	0	0	0	9	5	7	6	17	16	15	16	19	20	11	11
2021-2022	0	2	0	0	3	3	1	25	2	4	22	26	19	14	13	9
2022-2023	0	0	0	0	5	5	30	29	2	3	10	9	9	9	13	13
2023-2024	1	2	2	2	0	0	9	14	1	2	18	18	6	5	7	6
2024-2025	---	---	---	---	---	---	11		6		5		0		0	

Table 11: Early Head Start ERSEA Tracking-Waiting List

	Child -		Child 130%		Child +		EMO -		EMO 130%		EMO +		130 % used		+ Income used	
	Sept	Aug	Sept	Aug	Sept	Aug	Sept	Aug	Sept	Aug	Sept	Aug	Sept	Aug	Sept	Aug
2010-2011	83	110	1	1	11	17	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
2011-2012	83	89	7	11	26	31	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	6
2012-2013	31	50	23	25	17	21	0	4	0	1	0	4	4	4	7	6
2013-2014	40	56	6	11	12	15	3	2	0	1	1	0	7	6	3	2
2014-2015	50	50	10	9	16	25	3	1	0	0	0	0	6	6	0	0
2015-2016	23	43	7	13	21	29	0	5	1	1	0	3	2	2	0	0
2016-2017	34	76	9	14	19	29	0	9	0	1	0	2	5	5	0	0
2017-2018	57	68	8	10	20	24	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	2	0	0
2018-2019	26	66	10	23	21	41	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2019-2020	47	70	15	21	27	32							0	0	0	0
2020-2021	21	46	13	15	12	26							0	0	0	0
2021-2022	16	60	3	10	25	37							13	7	0	0
2022-2023	53	82	3	3	13	25							5	4	0	0
2023-2024	23	59	3	7	17	36							0	0	0	0
2024-2025	14		3		15								2		8	

Demographics

Age

In 2023-2024, the average age of Head Start enrolled children in Cortland County is 3.5 years old and has been relatively stable since 202-2-21 (Figure 52). The average age of Early Head Start enrolled children in Cortland County is 1.8 years old and has steadily risen since 2020-2021, when the average age was 1.28. (Figure 16)³⁶

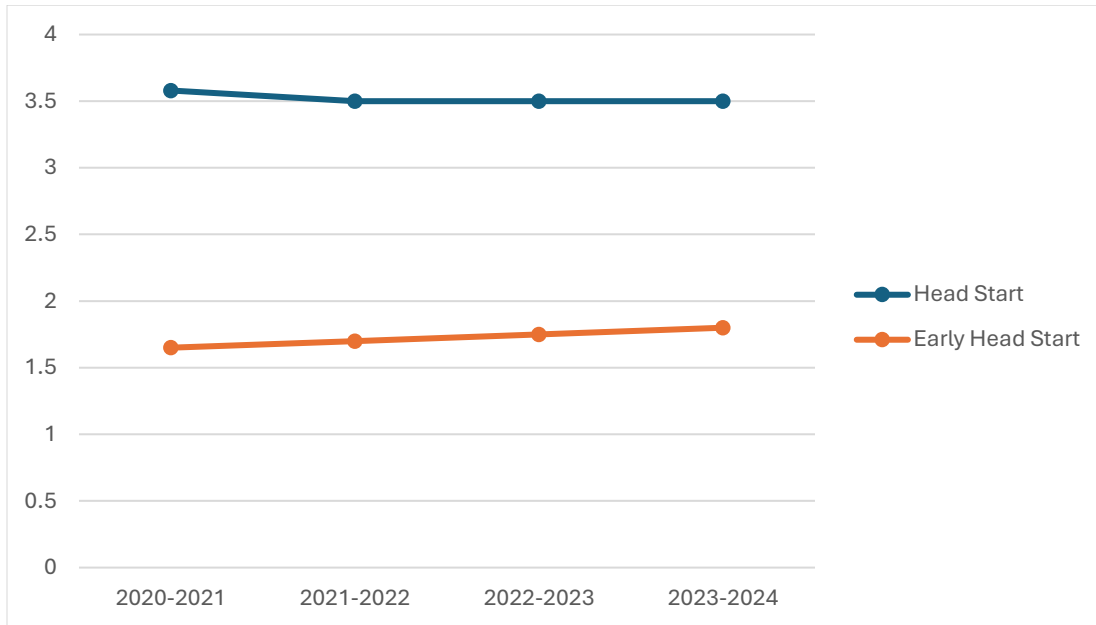


Figure 16. Average Age of Head Start/Early Head Start Enrolled Children

Race

In 2023-2024, 22% of Head Start-enrolled children in Cortland County identified as BIPOC (black, indigenous People of Color), and 28% of Early Head Start-enrolled children identified as BIPOC (Figure 17). The percentage of Head Start-enrolled children identifying as BIPOC has increased since 2021-2022.

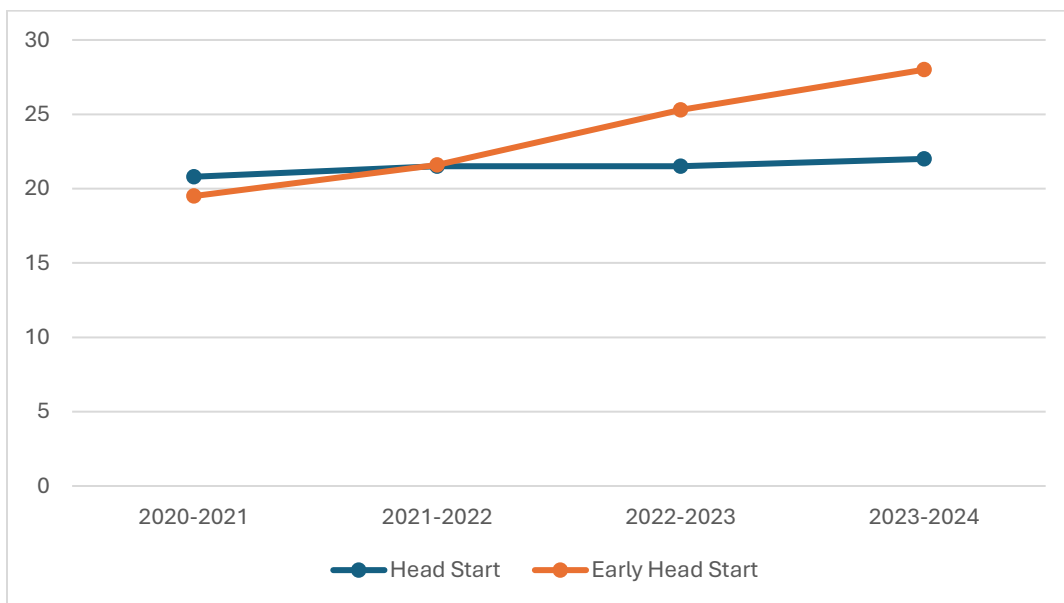


Figure 17: Percentage of Enrolled children identified as BIPOC

Education

In 2023-2024, 32% of parents of Head Start-enrolled children in Cortland County had a bachelor's degree or advanced degree. The percentage of parents with a bachelor's or advanced degree increased sharply with little-noted change (Figure 18). The percentage of parents of Head Start-enrolled children with less than a high school diploma was 15% in 2023-2024, peaking at 18.4% in 2016-2017 (Figure 18). The percentage of parents of Early Head Start enrolled children with less than a high school diploma increased from 2020-2021 to 21% in 2023-2024,

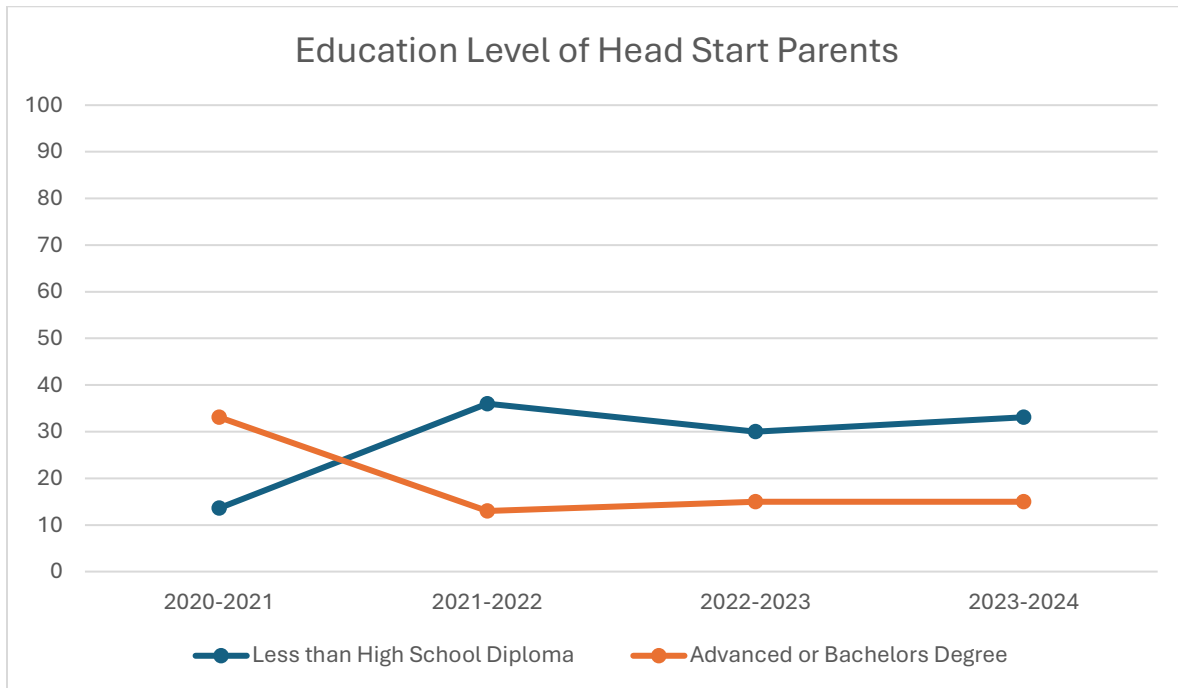


Figure 18: Education Level of Head Start Parents

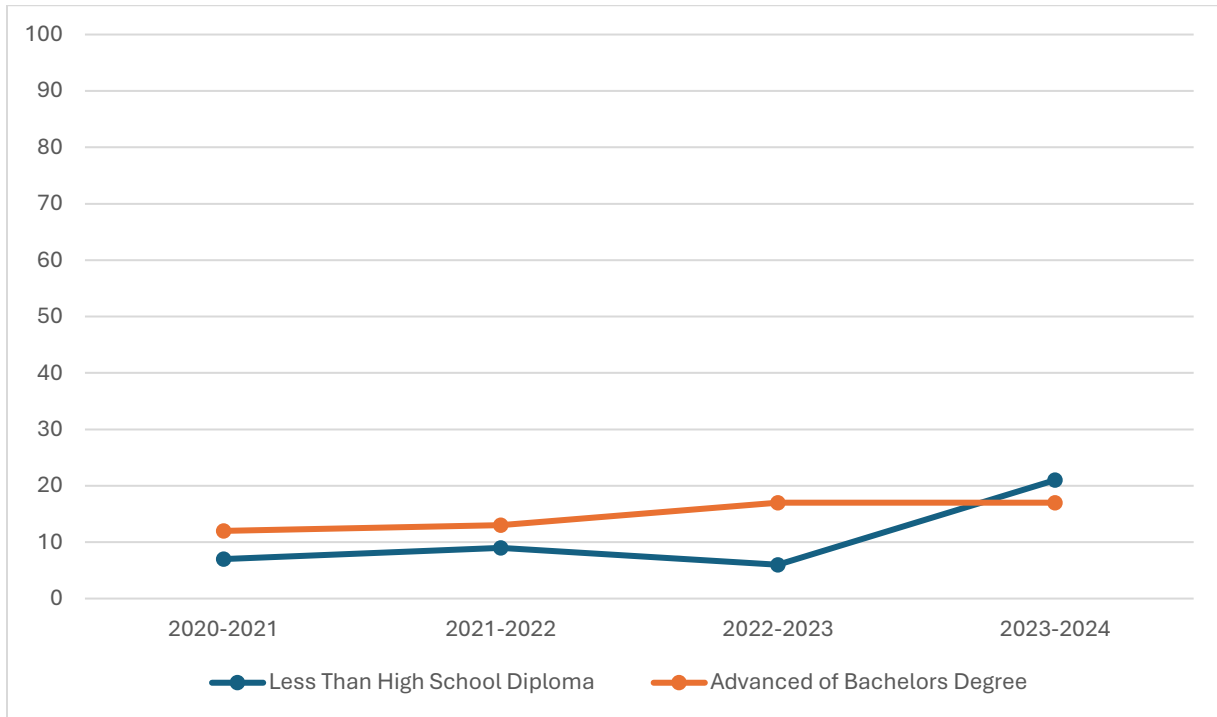


Figure 19: Education Level of Early Head Start Parents

Employment, Income, and Poverty

The percentage of Head Start families in Cortland County without at least one parent employed has been increasing since 2020 for both single-parent and two-parent families (Figure 58). The percentage of single-parent and two-parent families not working has decreased (Figure 19). In 2023-2024, 18% of two-parent families had two unemployed parents, and 16% of single-parent families were unemployed, which has decreased since 2020-2021 (Figure 20).

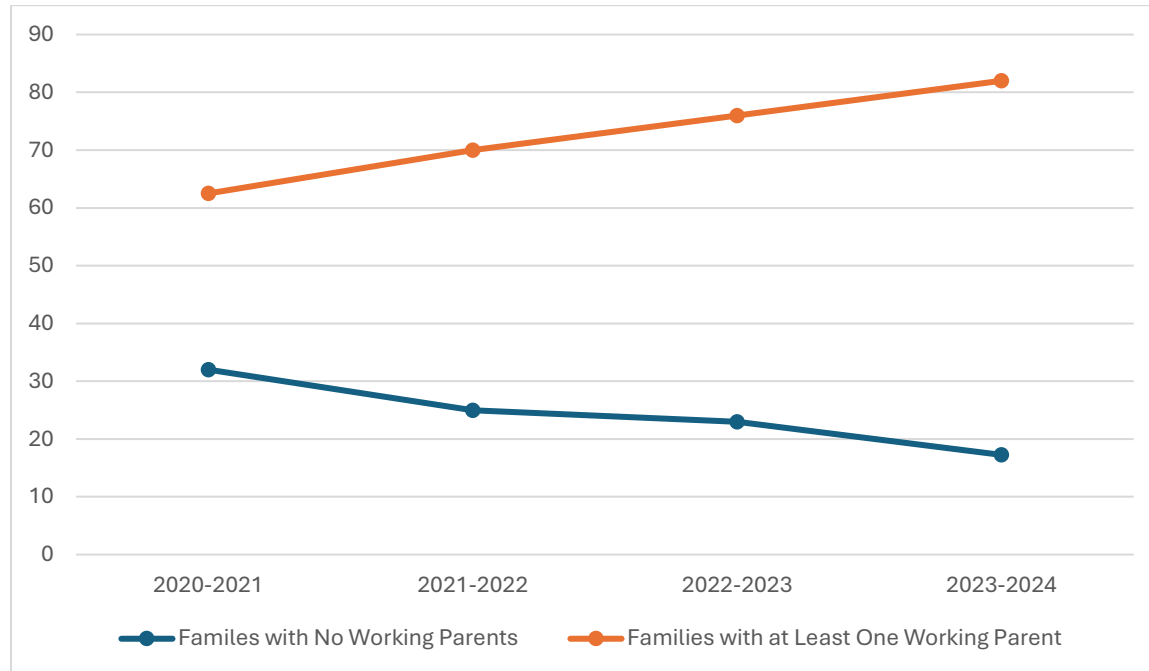


Figure 20: The Percentage of Head Start and Early Head Start Families with no Parents Working and Families with at least One Parent Working.

In 2023-2024, we saw a huge jump in the number of only one-parent-employed people both in Head Start and Early Head Start. In Early Head Start specifically, the number of single-parent families with one parent working increased to 57%. In two-parent families, 43% of the households had at least one parent working.

Homelessness

The number of families experiencing homelessness has been on the rise due to a lack of affordable housing. The number of families participating in Head Start and Early Head Start who reported being unhoused rose from 4 in 2020-2021 to 12 in 2023-2024.

Health

From 2020-2021 to 2023-2024, nearly 100% of Head Start and Early Head Start enrolled children in Cortland County had health insurance and a medical home and were up to date on immunizations at the time of enrollment.⁴⁹ In 2023-2024, 97% of Head Start and Early Head Start enrolled children had health insurance. In 2023-2024, 99% of Head Start (1 child had moved from another state with current paperwork) and 100% of Early Head Start enrolled children had a medical home. 99% of Head Start-enrolled children and 100% of Early Head Start-enrolled children were current on immunizations.

The percentage of Early Head Start enrolled children in Cortland County who were up to date on a schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary health care according to the relevant state’s EPSDT schedule for well-child care has been stable between 2014-2015 and 2020-2021, fluctuating between 100% and 82.7% (Figure 60). From 2021-2022 (72%), 2022-2023 (58%), and 2023-2024 (69%), the percentages fluctuated due to the pandemic. In 2020, no child enrolled in Head Start was up to date in this area at the time of enrollment. By the end of the 2020-2021 program year, 72% of Head Start children were current on appropriate preventive and primary health care.

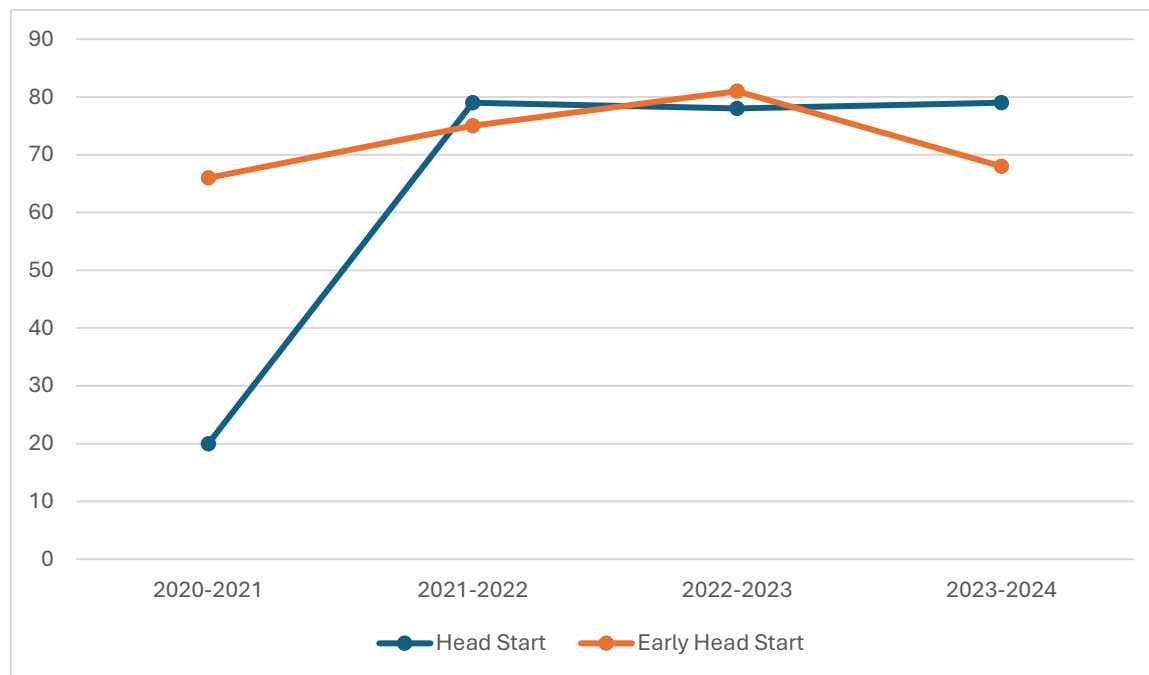


Figure 21: Percentage of children up to date with medical care

Oral Health

From 2020-2021, the percentage of Head Start-enrolled children in Cortland County who have access to continuous dental care provided by a dentist fluctuated between 66.2% and 85% (Figure 22). In 2023-2024, this indicator was at 79%. The percentage of Early Head Start-enrolled children with access to continuous dental care has been historically lower than that of Head Start enrollees; since 2020-2021, it has fluctuated between 27.3% and 70% (Figure 22).

Community Needs Assessment 2024

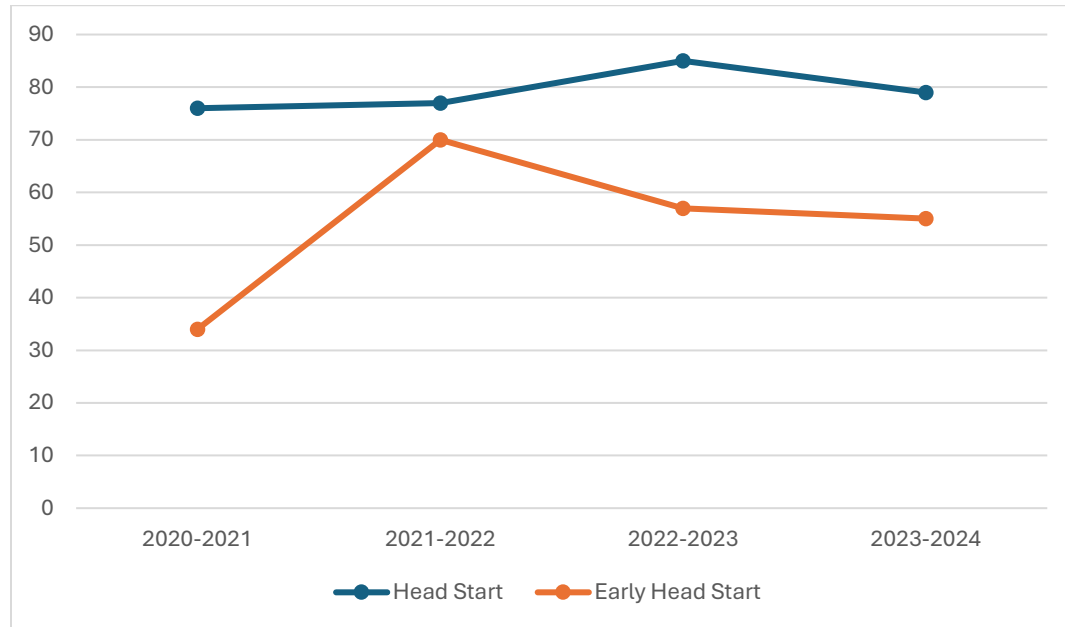


Figure 22: Percentage of Children Receiving Dental Care

The percentage of Head Start-enrolled children in Cortland County who received preventative dental care since the previous year’s reporting period has been declining since 2016-2017 (Figure 22). In 2023-2024, just 13% of enrollees received preventative dental care(Figure 22). Comparatively, the percentage of Early Head Start enrollees that are up to date on a schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary oral healthcare has been increasing since 2016-2017 (Figure23). In 2020-2021, 76.2% of enrollees were up to date on preventive and primary oral healthcare. The COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected oral health care in our community. We lack pediatric providers, and numerous offices closed during the beginning stages of the pandemic. The local offices are still “recovering,” with appointments booked out for 6-8 months, and some offices are still not accepting new patients, which means they are not taking pediatric patients even if the family was established at their offices.

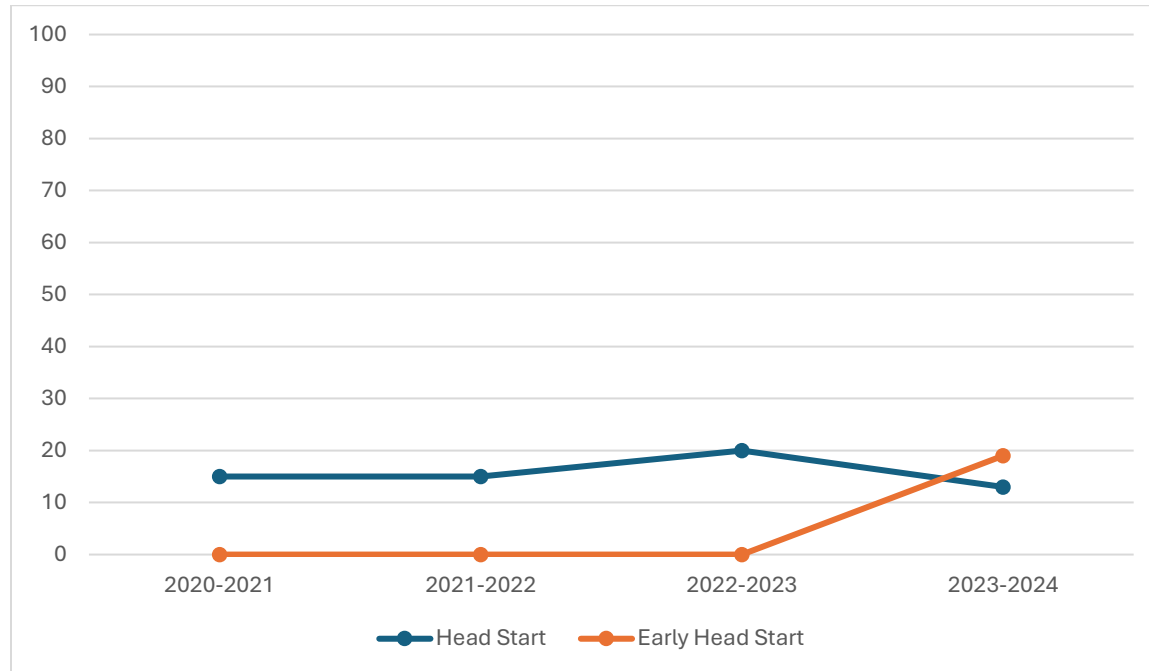


Figure 23: Percentage of Children who Receive Preventive Dental Care.

Mental/Behavioral Health

The percentage of Head Start and Early Head Start enrolled children in Cortland County who were served by a mental health professional and for whom the mental health professional consulted with program staff three or more times remained consistent between 2020 and 2023-2024, with less than 1% of all enrolled Head Start and Early Head Start children receiving mental health services.

Nutrition

The percentage of Head Start-enrolled children who are categorized as overweight or obese has increased from 35.4% in 2020-2021 to 37% in 2023-2024 (Figure 24). The percentage of Head Start-enrolled children who are underweight has decreased to 1%. Data is not available for Early Head Start Children.

Community Needs Assessment 2024

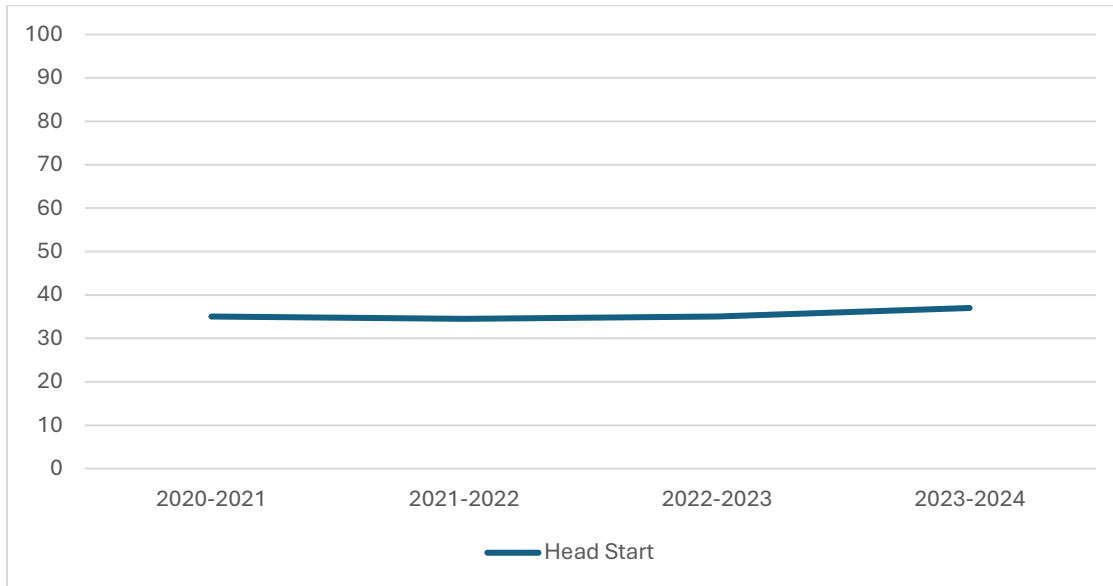


Figure 24: Percentage of Head Start Children Categorized as Obese or Overweight.

From 2020 to 2021, 58.3% of Head Start families received SNAP benefits. This number increased to 69% by 2023-2024. Despite this help, many families indicated on the Community Needs Survey that food insecurity remains a significant stressor.

62.5% of Early Head Start families received SNAP benefits in 2020-2021. By 2023-2024, this number climbed significantly to 74%.

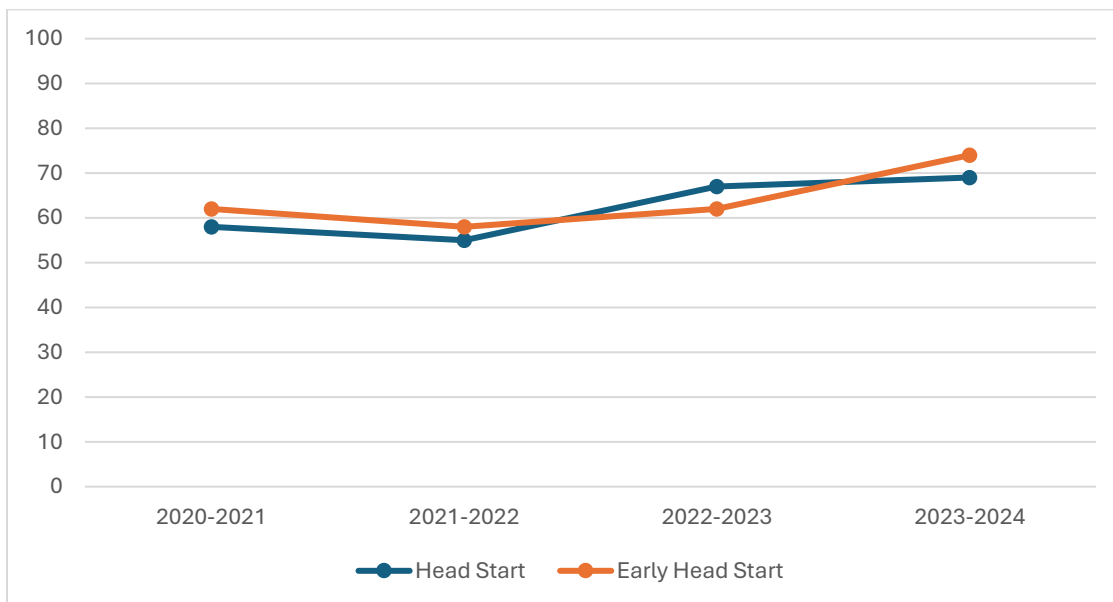


Figure 25: Percentage of Head Start and Early Head Start Children Receive SNAP Benefits.

Disability

The percentage of Head Start enrolled children in Cortland County with an Individualized Education Plan fluctuated between 32% in 2020-2021 and 36% in 2023-2024 (Figure 26).

The percentage of Early Head Start-enrolled children with an Individualized Family Service Plan was at a record high of 26.2% in 2020-2021. The need for IFSP support fluctuated until reaching 14.9% in 2023-2024.

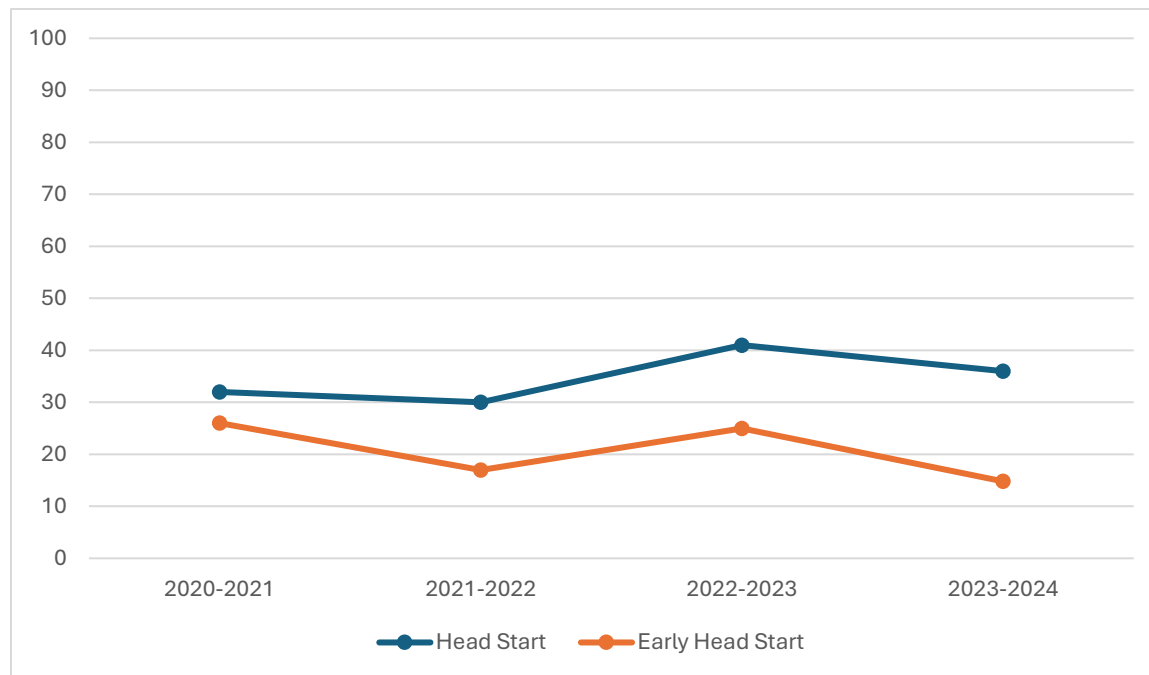


Figure 26: Percentage of Head Start and Early Head Start Children who Have IEP/IFSP Supports

Social Services

Family Well Being

In 2020-2021, most Head Start and Early Head Start families in Cortland County were single parents (Figure 27). The percentage of single families in Early Head Start has been steadily increasing since 2014-2015, and it has remained consistent since 2020-2021.

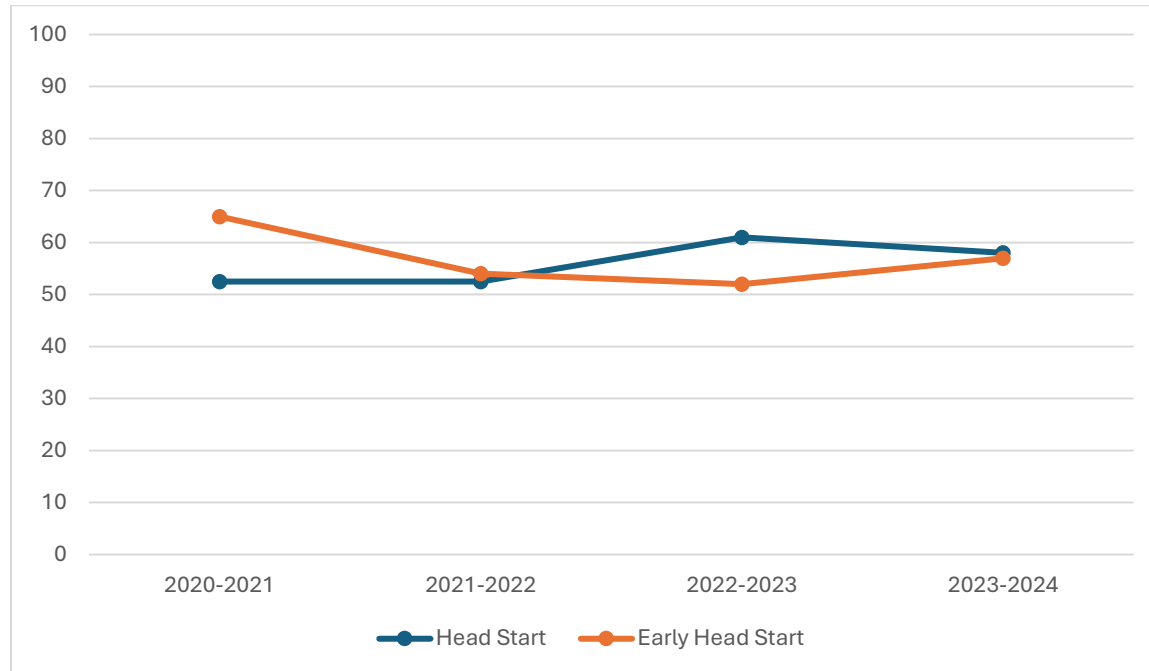


Figure 27: Percentage of Head Start and Early Head Start Families with Single Parent Households.

The percentage of Early Head Start enrolled children in Cortland County who were in foster care at any point in the program year has decreased since peaking at 9.5% in 2020-2021. The following years saw a significant decline, at about 1% for each year.

Program Goals

School Readiness

CAPCO Head Start/Early Head Start utilizes the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment tool to measure the percentage of children in the program who meet or exceed expectations in each school readiness domain in the Fall, Winter, and Spring. For a detailed explanation of how the program’s school readiness goals align with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, the New York State Early Learning Guidelines, and the New York State Pre-K Foundations for the Common Core, please see Appendix D.

The following program goals related to school readiness have been identified by CAPCO Head Start/Early Head Start:

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1. *Approaches to Learning*: Children will engage in exploratory play and other learning activities to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.
2. *Social and Emotional Development*: Children will be able to regulate behavior
3. *Social and Emotional Development*: Children will create and maintain healthy relationships with peers and adults
4. *Language and Communication*: Children will be able to communicate effectively with peers and adults.
5. *Literacy*: Children will acquire early reading and writing skills.
6. *Cognition*: Children will develop logical and abstract thinking in regards to concepts, relationships, and operations.
7. *Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development*:

CAPCO Head Start/Early Head Start strives to have 85% of all children transitioning into Kindergarten meet or exceed GOLD expectations in all areas. Looking at the final checkpoints in the 2023-2024 (winter) and 2023-2024 (spring) school years for Head Start four-year-olds in Cortland County, the program was closer to reaching this goal in the 2023-2024 school year for all domain areas except social/emotional (Figure 28).⁵⁰

In 2023-2024, the domain areas in which Head Start four-year-olds in Cortland County were closest to the 85% program goal were cognitive (83%), Physical (81%), and language Literacy (72%) (80%). The domain areas where Head Start four-year-olds were least likely to have met or exceeded expectations were math (57%)(28%) and approaches to learning (32%)(65%) (Figure 72).⁵⁰

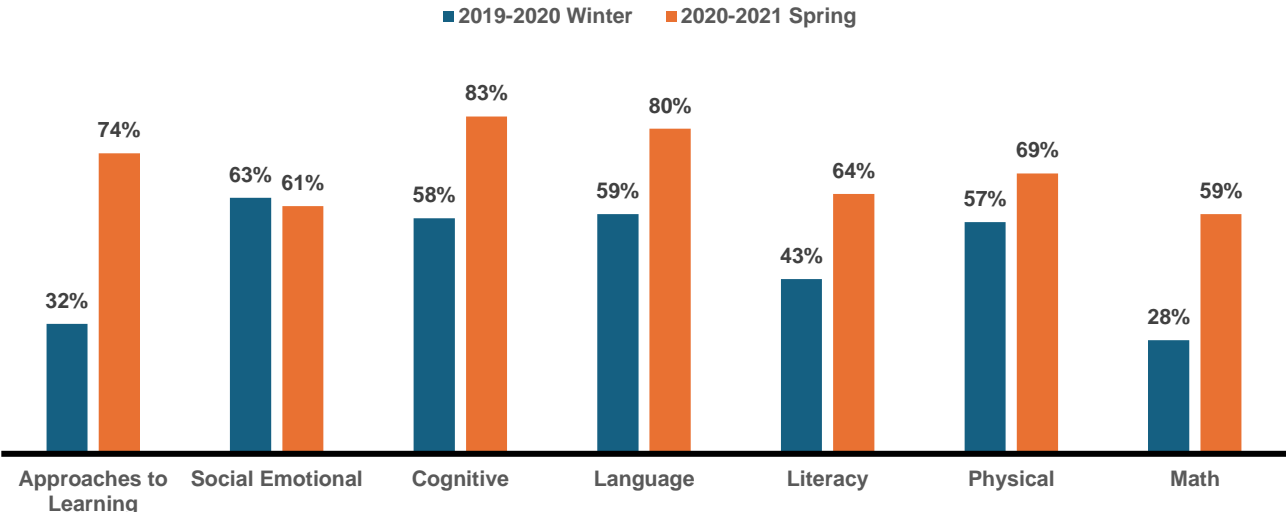


Figure 28. CAPCO Head Start 4 Year Olds Meeting/Exceeding Gold Expectations at Final Yearly Checkpoint (Cortland County 2019-2020, 2020-2021)

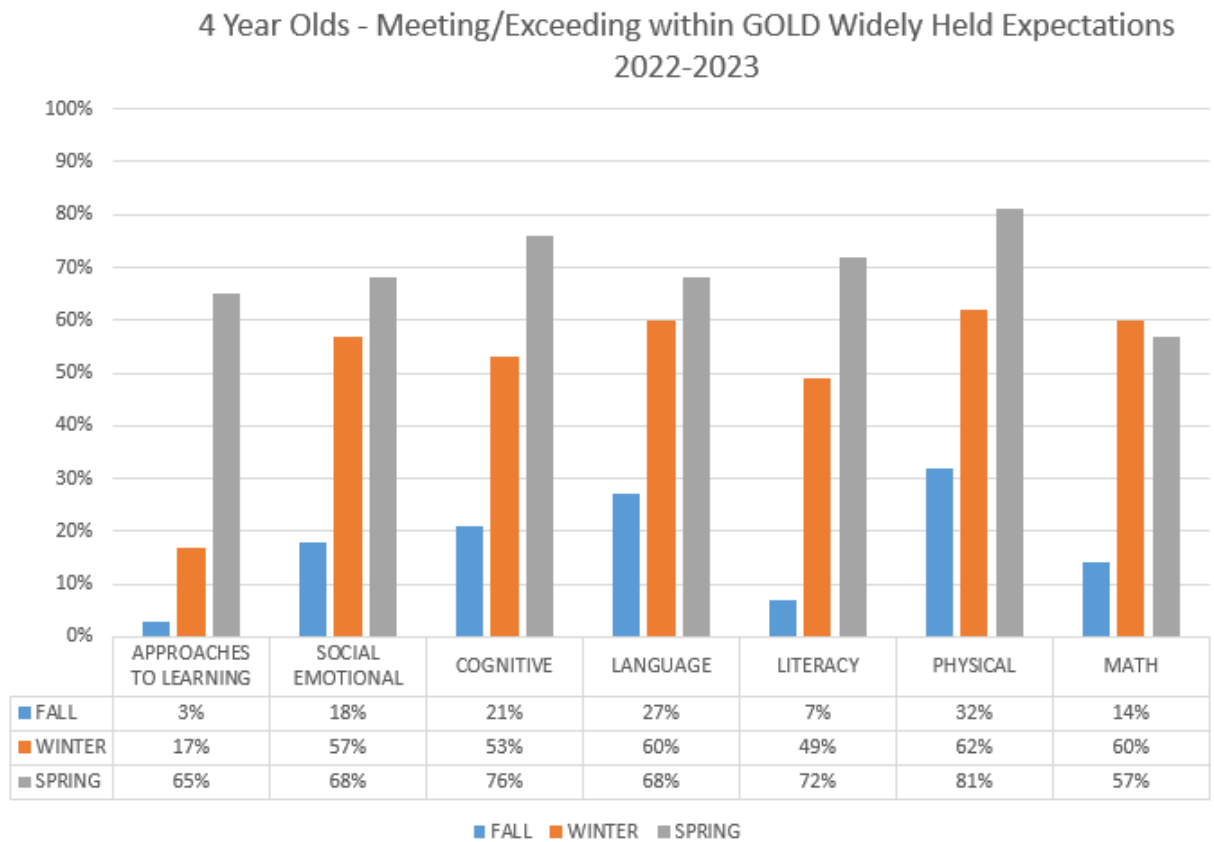


Figure29. CAPCO Head Start 4-year-olds meeting/exceeding Gold expectations at final yearly checkpoint (Cortland County 2023-2024)

In the 2020-20212023-2024 school year, the percentage of Early Head Start enrollees meeting or exceeding Gold expectations increased from Fall to Spring in the domains of approaches to learning, social-emotional, cognitive, language, physical, and math (Figure 73).

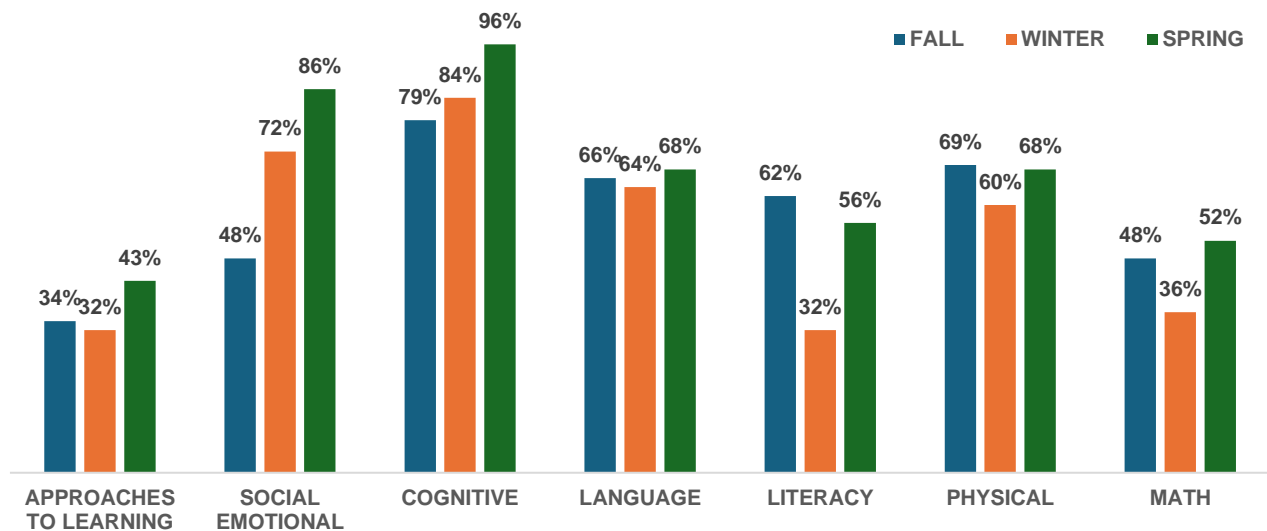


Figure 30. CAPCO Early Head Start Enrollees Meeting or Exceeding Gold Expectations (Cortland County, 2020-2021)

EHS - Meeting/Exceeding within GOLD Widely Held Expectations 2022-2023

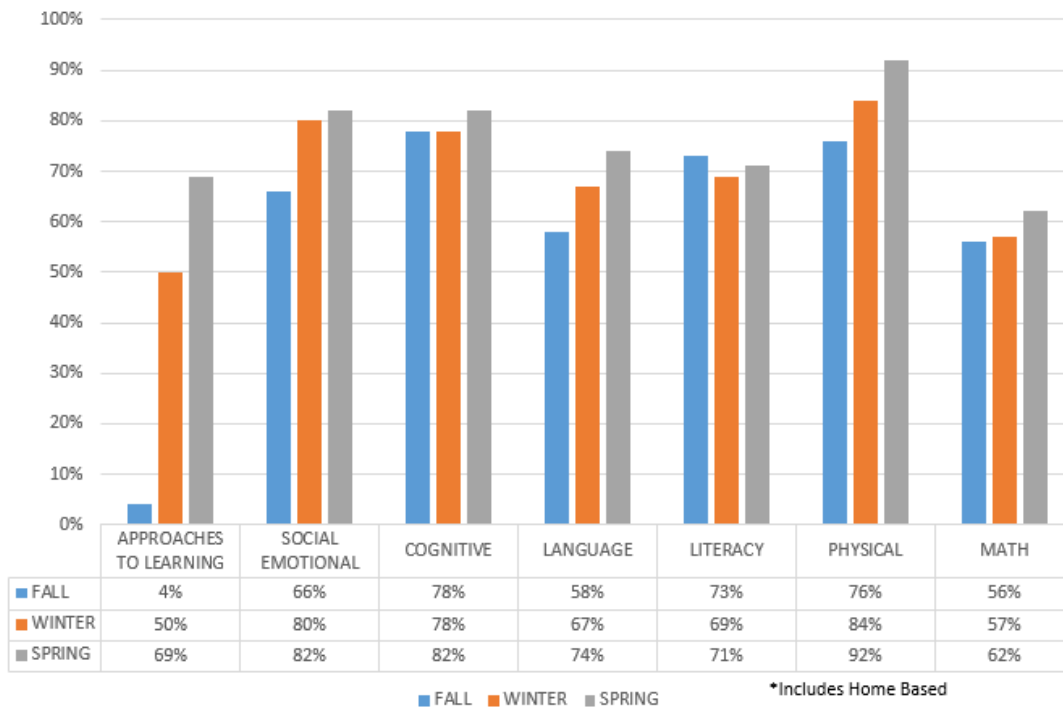


Figure 31:

The percentage of Head Start enrolled three-year-olds meeting or exceeding gold expectations increased in all domain areas from Fall to Spring during the 2023-2024 school year (Figure 32).³⁶

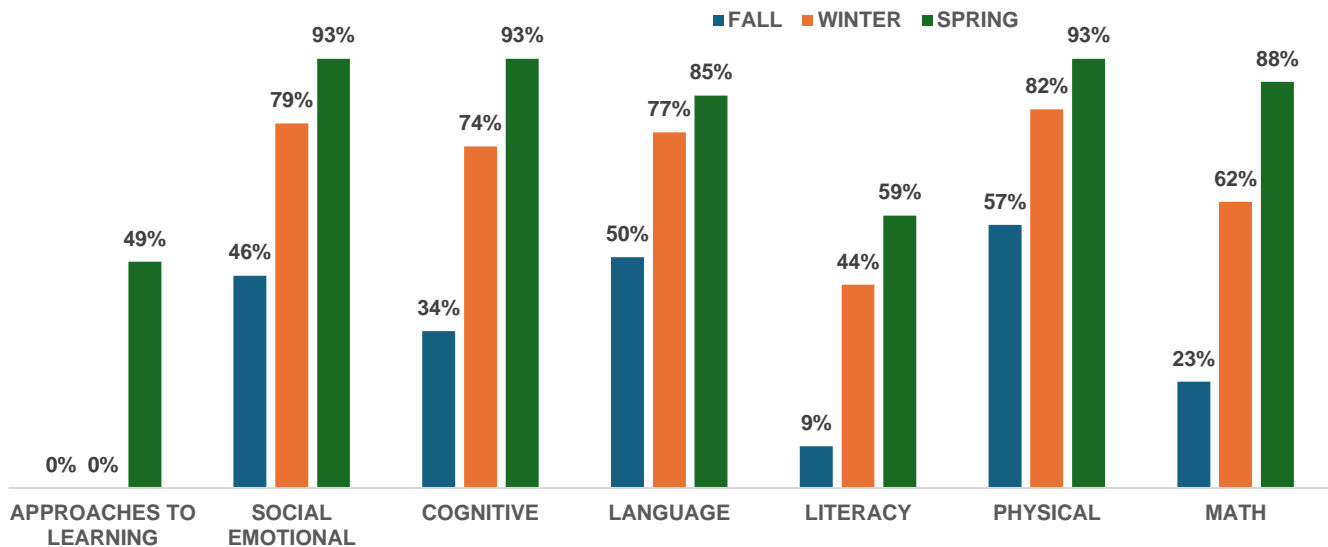


Figure 32. CAPCO Head Start Three Year Olds Meeting or Exceeding Gold Expectations (Cortland County, 2020-2021)³⁶

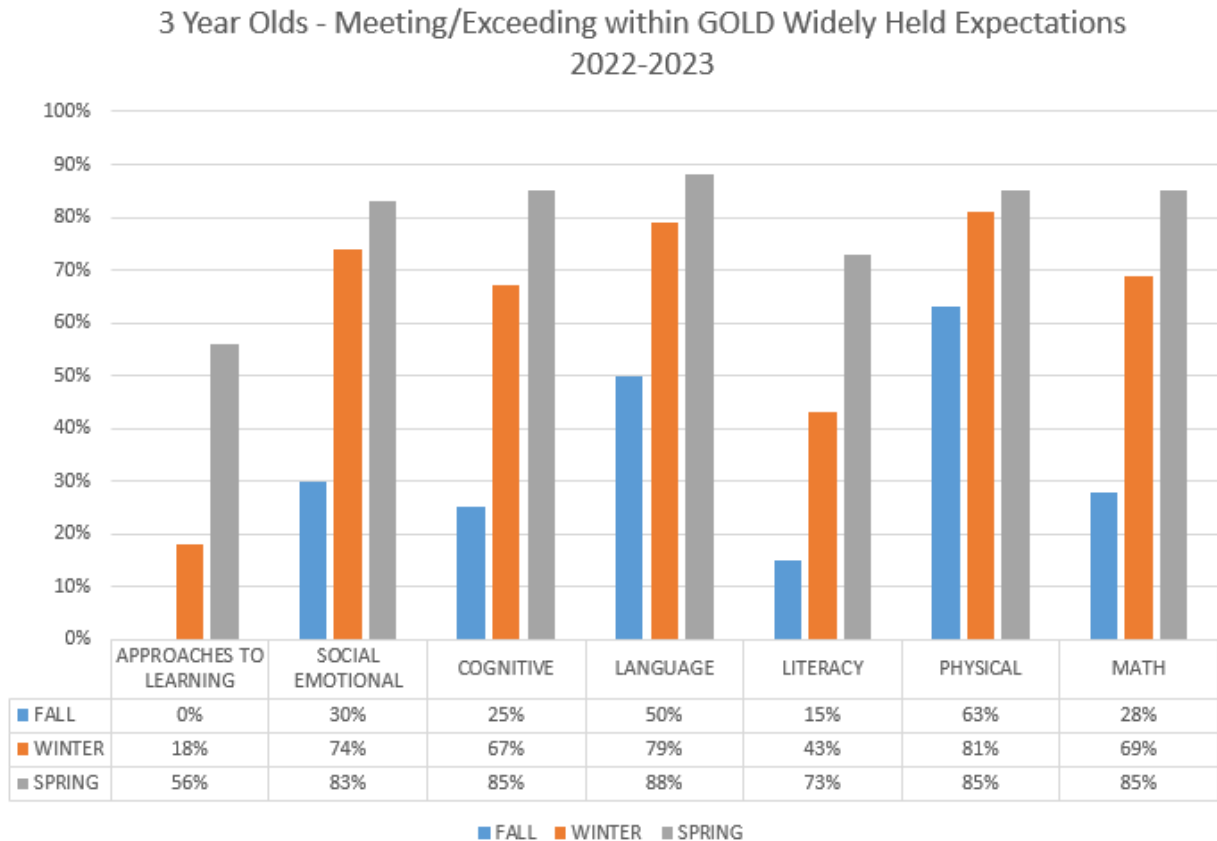


Figure 33:

Five-Year Program Goals:

Program Goal #1: Implement a parent, family, and community engagement model which systemically integrates across all CAPCO HS/EHS functional areas.

Expected Outcome: Increase more opportunities for family engagement which focus on the family outcomes.



School Readiness
Goal:

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Program Objectives/Activities	Responsible Staff	Timeline	Financial Supports	Tools for Tracking Progress
Train staff on the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE Framework) during pre-service orientation.	FS Coordinator and Enrollment Specialist	Annually every August	Budget to cover copies	
HS/EHS Classrooms must offer at least one (1) classroom activity per month relating to the monthly theme.	Teaching Teams in HS and EHS	Monthly		
We will utilize TSG to create new at-home activities that pertain to the curriculum every month.	Teaching Teams in HS and EHS	Monthly		
Offer one (1) program-wide fatherhood event in the Fall and one (1) in the Spring.	FS Staff	Twice per year		Strong Fathers, Strong Families Curriculum
Send monthly recipes to families to encourage them to cook nutritious meals with their children and families.	Nutrition Manager and Teaching Teams	Monthly	Budget to cover copies	
Offer 1 st Aid/CPR class to enrolled CAPCO HS/EHS families once per program year.	Health Services Coordinator	Annually	Budget to cover the cost of class and materials	
Offer families MAT training to their children based on the MAT curriculum. This would be informational only.	Health Services Coordinator	Annually	Budget to cover copies	
Offer two (2) Inclusion training opportunities to families at the Parent Committee meetings; one (1) in the fall to all CAPCO HS/EHS families and one (1) in the spring for families with children who have an IEP or IFSP.	FS Staff	Twice per year		
Family Advocates will create one (1) new homework assignment per month related to the topic	Family Advocates	Monthly		

Program Objectives/Activities	Responsible Staff	Timeline	Financial Supports	Tools for Tracking Progress
covered in the monthly Parent Committee meeting.				

Program Goal #2: Strengthen the internal CAPCO HS/EHS on-boarding process for new hires consistently across all functional areas.

Expected Outcome: To increase staff retention and staff wellness, as well as develop a new staff orientation handbook for HS/EHS.



School Readiness Goal:

Program Objectives/Activities	Responsible Staff	Timeline	Financial Supports	Tools for Tracking Progress
Meet with the HS/EHS Leadership team to determine what is covered in each functional area when a new staff person is hired to avoid duplication of training. Create a checklist.	HR Generalist, Coach, and HS/EHS Director	April 2025	N/A	HR Database, Coach's Checklist, HS/EHS Performance Standards and Daycare Regulations
Once the checklist is completed, a new hire draft manual for HS/EHS staff will be developed to strengthen the orientation process for HS/EHS new hires.	HR Generalist, Coach, HS/EHS Director, and HS/EHS Assistant Director	May 2025	N/A	N/A
The draft manual will be distributed to all current	All HS/EHS Staff	May 2025	N/A	Draft manual

Program Objectives/Activities	Responsible Staff	Timeline	Financial Supports	Tools for Tracking Progress
HS/EHS staff for review and feedback on the new process.				
Possible revisions will be made, and the final manual will be sent to the Policy Council and the Board for review and approval.	HS/EHS Assistant Director	June 2025	N/A	Final Revision
The new onboarding process will be implemented with all new hires after final board approvals are given.	HR Generalist, Coach, HS/EHS Director	July 2025	N/A	N/A
Develop a systematic strategy to receive input from 50% of the new hires on how the onboarding process went, what improvements or suggestions can be made by new hires, and incorporate ongoing improvements to enhance the onboarding process for HS/EHS new hires.	HR Generalist, Coach, HS/EHS Director	September 2025	N/A	N/A

Program Goal #3: The CAPCO HS/EHS Program will demonstrate at or above the national average in each area of the CLASS Assessment domains.

Expected Outcome: To ensure CAPCO HS/EHS meets the quality threshold across all CLASS



School Readiness Goal:

Program Objectives/Activities	Responsible Staff	Timeline	Financial Supports	Tools for Tracking Progress
Increase EHS Infant/Toddler CLASS reliable observers from one to five.	HS/EHS Director	January 2026	Cost of classes	TBD
Implement CLASS observations two (2) times per year for HS/EHS.	Coach, Once Certified	August 2025	Cost of class.	TBD
Utilize the CLASS scoring instrument to inform individual coaching.	Coach	Twice per year	N/A	CLASS Scoring Data
Train all HS/EHS staff on the CLASS model annually.	HS/EHS Director, Education Coordinator, and Coach	August 2025 and thereafter, every August	N/A	TBD

Program Strengths and Weaknesses

Early Head Start and Head Start staff identified the following program strengths and weaknesses for the 2023-2024 school year.

Education	
Strengths	Weaknesses
consistent training	Better training for new hires
Professional Development partnerships	Better behavioral supports
Supervisor support in the classroom	Training
Structured Curriculum	Available conferences
Exceptional Programs	Improved onboarding
Teaching students to meet whole child needs	Improved staff retention

Family Services	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Dedication to community	Improved training for behavioral issues
Supports the whole family	Support with encouraging parent involvement

Providing resources and assistance to families	
--	--

Environment	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Dedication to community	Inconsistent messaging
Caring coworkers	Team building
Family-friendly	
Good benefits	

Family Satisfaction Survey

A total of 34 families completed the Head Start/Early Head Start Family Satisfaction Survey in 2024. Families could provide qualitative feedback in the comments section of the Family Satisfaction Survey.

Classroom/Staff and Family Advocate

Overall, families rated the quality of Head Start/Early Head staff and classrooms high. The indicator that scored the highest was “classroom staff make me feel welcomed and respected,” with 88.2% of survey respondents reporting the quality of this indicator as “great.” The indicator that scored the lowest was “the classroom newsletters were beneficial and enjoyable to me,” with only 55.9% of survey respondents reporting the quality of this indicator as “great.”

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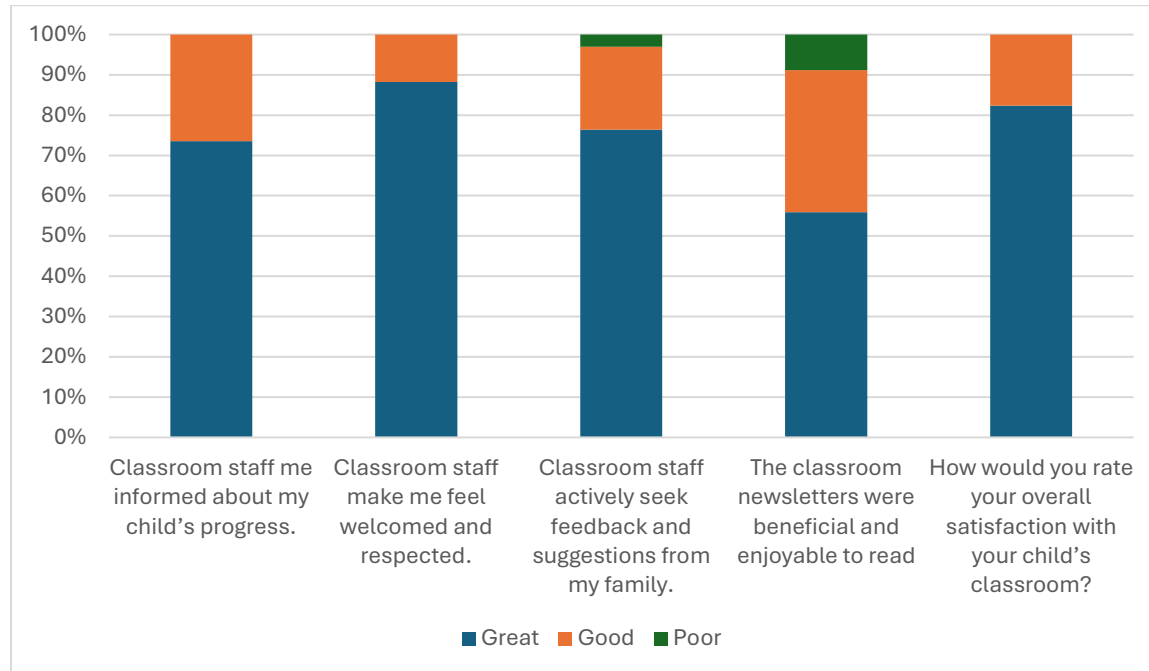


Figure 34. Classroom and Staff Satisfaction of Head Start/Early Head Start Families (Cortland County 2024)

Additional comments related to staff/classrooms were generally positive. In the comments section of the survey, parents noted:

- My daughter has grown greatly since starting the program and enhanced her skills.
- We love it.
- Great program for early education.
- I love this program. It helps so children of all ages before school.
- It helps them to be ready and let them meet other children
- All staff have made my children feel safe and welcome.
- As a parent, I feel supported in their education.
- Phenomenal program! I could not recommend more.

One parent noted a desire to have more communication through the school app.

Family Advocate

Overall, families rated the quality of Head Start/Early Head family advocates as high. When rating overall satisfaction, 85.3% of survey respondents reported the quality of their overall

satisfaction with the family advocate as “great” (Figure 77)

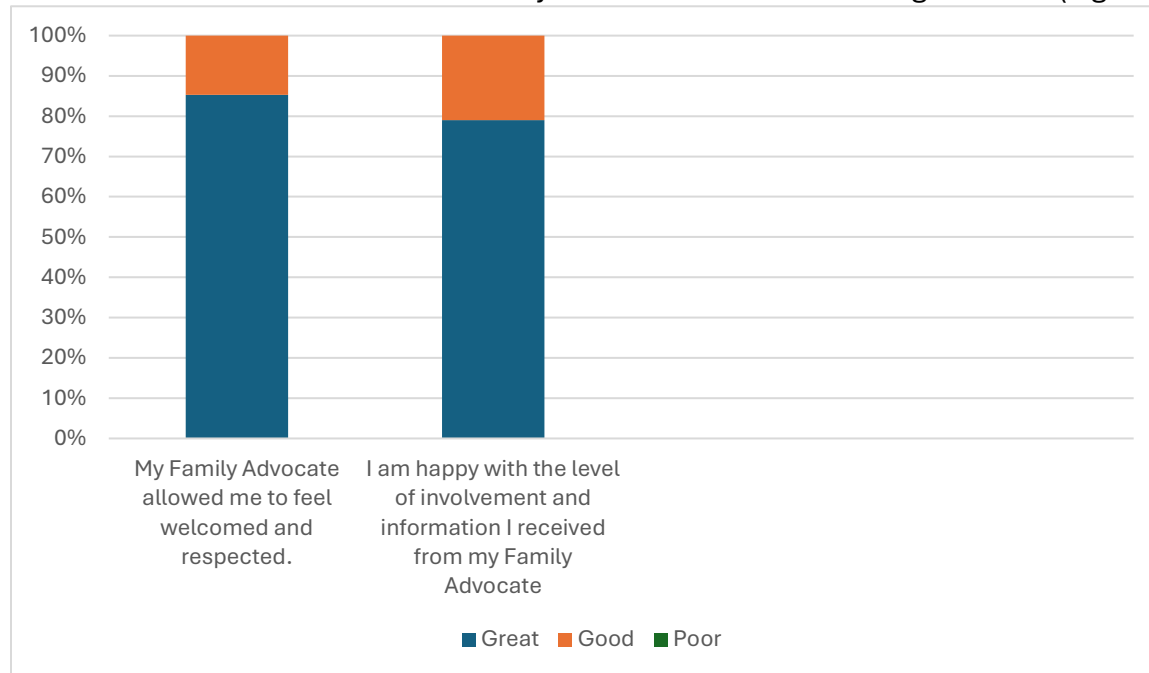


Figure35. Family Advocate Satisfaction of Head Start/Early Head Start Families

Child Progress

Overall, families rated the quality of their child’s progress since attending Head Start/Early Head Start as high, with 70% of survey respondents reporting the quality of their child being more socially prepared for school as “great” and 85.3% of survey respondents reporting the quality of their child being more ready for school as “great” (Figure 36). Comments were positive and included:

- The program is doing great with helping to regulate her emotions and social interactions with peers
- It has [given] my child who has autism an easier time coping with school.
- They do so much for our children. It helps [families] not so well off to help their children.
- For a two-year-old, I would say she could start kindergarten soon.

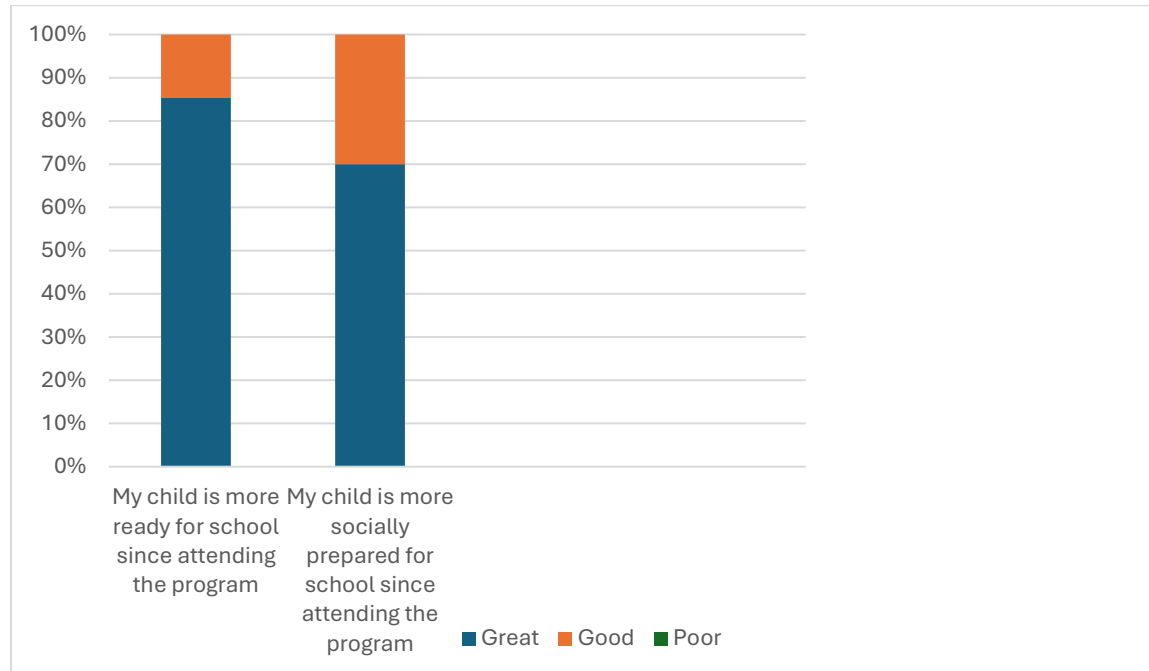


Figure 36:

Nutrition and Health Services

When asked about satisfaction levels with nutritional services provided to their children, 82% said they were satisfied, and 18% rated the service as acceptable. Comments included:

- Breakfast and lunch are good. I don't feel there's a lot of variety in the snacks the kids get.
- [I] wish the children could have a choice of water or milk when it's time to eat. My child doesn't care for milk.

Only 53% of respondents were aware of the opportunity to join when asked about the Health Services Advisory Board. Caregivers made the following comments about the availability of health-related information and topics of interest:

- Handwashing.
- If you can continue sharing community resources or events, that would be amazing!
- I think the program is very informative already.
- I think the information sent home is sufficient

Parent Committee Meetings

32 of the 34 caregivers who responded indicated they did attend at least one Parent Committee Meeting. The two who did not attend stated the following reasons:

- It was always scheduled on a day that I work.
- Childcare/transportation issues.
- I was able to attend 1. I didn't have enough notice to make arrangements with work

Overall Program

Of the 34 families that took the survey, 34 reported that Head Start/Early Head Start has been valuable for their family. 31 out of 34 reported overall that their experience has been "great."

Comments for improvements included:

- An afterschool program for parents who work till 5 pm would be great.
- Changing the income eligibility qualifications because a parent works doesn't mean the child isn't deserving of same programs a child with less money is and i think this is unfair.
- Transportation.

FINDINGS

The following findings were included in this assessment if community-level and program quantitative data and key informant qualitative data suggested a need in the Cortland County community. Each of the conclusions assists with community-level and agency understanding of the causes and conditions of poverty in the community.

Finding #1: Safe, Affordable Housing: Key data indicators at the community level show that safe, affordable housing is a serious concern in the Cortland County community. Perceptions of community key informants indicate that low-income families and individuals in Cortland County urgently need safe and affordable housing. Additionally, rising costs of housing and home repair materials since the COVID-19 pandemic have had a significant negative impact on the availability of safe and affordable housing in Cortland County.

Community Data

The National Low Income Housing Coalition reports each year on the amount of money a household must earn to afford a rental unit based on Fair Market Rents in the area and an accepted limit of 30% of income for housing costs. In Cortland County, the hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment is \$18.21. (\$3,156.40 per month) When Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) data is considered, wage requirements rise

to \$4,273 per month for a single parent with one child, which would require a two-bedroom apartment. Cortland County also had an estimated 89 homes without plumbing in 2023. Although this represents only .47% of homes in the county, it is above the state and national averages of .38 and .40, respectively.

CAPCO Program Data

Key Informant Perceptions

The key informant surveys collected from CAPCO partners and CAPCO staff/board/volunteers indicate both groups perceive access to safe, affordable housing as one of the top five needs. CAPCO community members rated the need for safe and affordable housing high on the list when factored in with the need for home repairs and energy/utility bill assistance. Survey results from staff and board members indicate that safe and affordable housing was perceived as the most pressing need (73.91%) for families in Cortland County.

Finding #2: Financial Assistance: Community-level data indicates that Cortland County residents identify a strong need for financial assistance. This need is related to the cost of home heating and utilities, as well as to the rising cost of food and personal hygiene products.

Community Data

Key indicators of the need for financial assistance show that 3,332 families in Cortland County benefit from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The unemployment rate correlates with the need for assistance. In December 2024, the unemployment rate in Cortland County was 4.2%, slightly higher than the state average.

CAPCO Program Data

Key Informant Perceptions

The need for assistance with home repairs (52.1%) and heating/utility bills (44.12%) ranked first and third in the overall need for help. Community partners identified safe, affordable housing as the most pressing need in the community (55.17%). Among the CAPCO Board and staff members, the need for food assistance was rated among the top five highest needs (42.39%), although the same group does not perceive a significant lack of resources and support to address this need.

Finding #3: Childcare/Early Childhood Education Deficit: Community-level estimates suggest a deficit in the community's available childcare/early education opportunities. The

community-level data indicates that childcare deficits are in the top three concerns for Cortland County residents. Estimates of the income of children eligible for Early Head Start suggest that the funding capacity is insufficient to serve all eligible children. Increasing capacity in Early Head Start may ease the burden currently faced by the childcare system in Cortland County.

Community Data

CAPCO Program Data

Key Informant Perceptions

All three groups of key informants indicated affordable, safe childcare is among the top five needs for low-income families in Cortland County. The perception among the community is that available affordable daycare placement is not adequate to fill the community's needs. Board and staff members identify this as the top need for families in the community.

Finding #4: Healthcare: Community-level data indicates a significant deficit in healthcare services, including dental and medical. Data suggests that 20% of children enrolled in Head Start were diagnosed with a chronic medical condition, and only 50% received the required medical care (2022-2023 HS Program Report). Of specific concern is the lack of pediatric dental services in Cortland County, with only 20% of children enrolled in Head Start receiving preventative dental care.

Community Data

Data from the American Community Survey, 2024 shows there are 11 dentists in Cortland County, which equates to less than one dentist for every thousand residents. There are no Pediatric-specific dentists listed in Cortland County.

CAPCO Program Data

Key Informant Perceptions

40.44% of community members identified dental care as among their top unmet needs.

Finding #5: Mental Health: Key data indicators at the community level show that mental health is a serious concern in the general Cortland County community, and perceptions of community key informants indicate mental health services are a pressing need of low-income families and individuals in Cortland County.

Community Data

The data reveals a lack of mental health providers in Cortland County. There are no psychoanalysts and only one Marriage and Family therapist. The county has 14 licensed mental health counselors, which equates to .32 therapists for every one hundred residents.

CAPCO Program Data

Key Informant Perceptions

Among the three surveyed contingencies, mental health services were rated among the top five needs, and two of the groups rated mental health services as a need that is not currently being met.

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Appendix A: Key Informant Community Member Survey

Appendix B: Key Informant Survey for Staff/Board/Volunteers

Appendix C: Key Informant Survey for Community Partners

Appendix D: New York State Community Action Program. NYSCAA Data Hub

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APPENDICES

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