

# 2025 Head Start Community Needs Assessment Update

*Needs Assessment for Lake and Porter Counties*



**GEMINUS**

**HEAD START**



October 2025



**TRANSFORM**  
— CONSULTING GROUP —

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# Executive Summary

In reviewing the public data to inform the 2025 Geminus Head Start Community Needs Assessment, TCG identified a number of key findings likely to inform organizational strategy and decision making in the coming years. These are outlined below, followed by a table featuring key data points from the assessment with historical context.

Key findings from the needs assessment include:

- **Significant need for services driven by demographics:** A substantial need for services is evident across the two-county area, which is home to more than 45,000 children under age 6. Lake County is characterized by significant racial and ethnic diversity and a higher proportion of single-parent households, which comprise less than half (43%) of households with young children. These families face stark economic challenges; the median income for households led by a single female parent (\$33,734) is less than one third of the median income for married-couple families (\$118,405). Furthermore, a large number of children—more than 8,300 in Lake County and 1,400 in Porter County—live below the federal poverty level, underscoring the demand for Head Start programs.
- **Gap between child care need and availability:** A notable gap exists between the need for early care and education and the available capacity. While an estimated two thirds (65%) of children under 6 in the service area require child care due to parental employment, licensed program capacity in Porter County can serve only approximately half (51%) of children in need. Access to high-quality programs, rated Level 3 or 4 on Paths to QUALITY™, is also a key consideration; approximately two thirds of program capacity in Lake (61%) and Porter (68%) counties are in a high-quality program.
- **Community health barriers impacting families:** Families in the service area face significant health and wellness challenges that create barriers to success. In Lake County, more than one fifth (23%) of children experience food insecurity. Both counties have fewer primary care physicians and dentists per capita than the national average, indicating challenges in accessing essential health care. Additionally, a concerning number of expectant mothers, particularly in Lake County (30%), do not receive prenatal care in the first trimester, a critical factor for healthy birth outcomes.
- **Linguistic diversity as a key service consideration:** The population of Lake County is linguistically diverse, with 11% of residents speaking Spanish at home. This presents both an opportunity and a need for culturally and linguistically responsive services. Family feedback reinforces this finding, as Spanish-speaking parents identified English language instruction as a primary resource need for their families.



- Positive feedback and unmet family needs:** Feedback from families served by Geminus is overwhelmingly positive, with nearly all parents reporting high satisfaction with their child's educational experience and the support received from staff. However, surveys reveal that families still have unmet needs. The most frequently requested resources include assistance with utilities, additional child care options, employment or job training, and housing support. Parents were also very interested in additional educational opportunities, particularly around parenting, stress management, and safety.

**Key for Tables Below:**

↓ Decreased from comparison year    ↑ Increased from comparison year  
 ➡ Remained the same as the comparison year<sup>1</sup>

Community Needs			
	Indiana	Lake County	Porter County
Children Under 6: Total Population	↓ 497,795 (2018: 506,496)	↑ 35,069 (2018: 35,030)	↓ 10,787 (2018: 11,076)
Percentage of Children Under 6 Living in Poverty	↓ 17% (2018: 22%)	↓ 24% (2018: 27%)	↓ 13% (2018: 14%)
Number of Children Receiving TANF Grants	↓ 9,626 (2018: 11,202)	↑ 1,272 (2018: 1,255)	↓ 62 (2018: 118)
Households Receiving SNAP Benefits	↑ 275,966 (2018: 270,609)	↓ 28,006 (2018: 29,361)	↓ 4,291 (2018: 4,384)
Number of Children Under 18 Receiving SSI Benefits	↓ 19,502 (2018: 21,876)	↓ 2,037 (2018: 2,242)	↓ 287 (2018: 344)
Children Experiencing Homelessness (PIT Count)	↓ 839 (2020: 962)	↓ 32 (2020: 54)	↑ 59 (2020: 31)
Students Experiencing Homelessness (McKinney-Vento Act)	↓ 16,427 (2018: 18,811)	↓ 823 (2018: 850)	↓ 316 (2018: 422)
Total CHINS (Children in Need of Services)	↓ 13,727 (2018: 21,588)	↓ 659 (2018: 1,523)	↓ 141 (2018: 178)
Youth Under 18 with a Known Disability Status	➡ 5% (2018: 5%)	➡ 4% (2018: 4%)	↑ 4% (2018: 3%)
Children Served through First Steps	2021: ↓ 23,574 (2018: 26,072)	2021: ↓ 1,756 (2018: 1,823)	2021: ↑ 615 (2018: 585)
Children Experiencing Food Insecurity	↑ 19% (2018: 18%)	↑ 23% (2018: 20%)	➡ 14% (2018: 14%)

<sup>1</sup> Initial comparison years may vary. Review full narrative for citations of data points included in the tables.

% No Early Prenatal Care (First Trimester)	↓ 27% (2018: 32%)	↓ 30% (2018: 35%)	↓ 25% (2018: 28%)
Infant Mortality Rate	↓ 6.7 (2018: 6.8)	↑ 7.3 (2018: 7.1)	↓ 3 (2018: 4.7)

Early Care and Education			
	Indiana	Lake County	Porter County
Children Under 6 Who Need Care Because All Parents Work	↑ 68% (320,946) (2018: 64%)	↑ 65% (21,676) (2018: 64%)	↑ 64% (6,672) (2018: 63%)
Capacity Available for Children Who Need Care	↑ 62% (2018: 40%)	↑ 66% (2018: 36%)	↑ 51% (2018: 22%)
Number of High-Quality Programs	↑ 1,947 (2018: 1,198)	↑ 202 (2018: 109)	↑ 33 (2018: 19)
Total High-Quality Capacity	↑ 107,007 (2018: 50,613)	↑ 8,716 (2018: 3,823)	↑ 2,329 (2018: 792)
Children with On My Way Pre-K Vouchers	↑ 5,094 (2019-20: 3,517)	↑ 366 (2019-20: 297)	↑ 77 (2019-20: 20)

↓ Decreased from previous program year    ↑ Increased from previous program year  
 ➡ Remained the same as the previous program year

Geminus Meeting the Needs: 2024-25 Program Year			
	HS	EHS	EHS-CCP
Funded Enrollment	➡ 1,016 (2023-24: 1,016)	➡ 118 children, 30 pregnant women (2023-24: 118 children, 30 pregnant women)	➡ 200 (2023-24: 200)
Cumulative Enrollment	↑ 1,188 (2023-24: 1,186)	↑ 176 children, ↑ 75 pregnant women (2023-24: 169 children, 63 pregnant women)	↓ 284 (2023-24: 317)
Children and Pregnant Women from Income Eligible Families	↓ 267 (22%) (2023-24: 291, 25%)	↑ 57 (23%) (2023-24: 48, 28%)	↓ 63 (22%) (2023-24: 78, 25%)
Children and Pregnant Women from Families Experiencing Homelessness	↓ 36 (3%) (2023-24: 46, 4%)	↑ 12 (5%) (2023-24: 9, 5%)	↓ 11 (4%) (2023-24: 24, 8%)
Children and Pregnant Women from Families Receiving Public Assistance	↑ 704 (59%) (2023-24: 658, 55%)	↑ 154 (61%) (2023-24: 144, 85%)	↓ 155 (55%) (2023-24: 161, 51%)

<b>Geminus Meeting the Needs: 2024-25 Program Year</b>			
	<b>HS</b>	<b>EHS</b>	<b>EHS-CCP</b>
Children in Foster Care	↓ 30 (3%) (2023-24: 38, 3%)	↑ 4 (2%) (2023-24: 2, 1%)	↑ 10 (4%) (2023-24: 7, 2%)
Total Families Served	↓ 1,082 (2023-24: 1,096)	↑ 212 (2023-24: 197)	↓ 247 (2023-24: 274)
% of Families That Received at Least One Service	↑ 98% (2023-24: 97%)	↓ 96% (2023-24: 98%)	↑ 100% (2023-24: 96%)

<b>Unmet Need for Head Start Eligible Children</b>			
	<b>Supply</b> (Geminus Head Start enrollment + Child Care Development Fund enrollment)	<b>Demand</b> (Young children living in poverty)	<b>Estimated Unmet Need</b> (Slots needed for children in need)
Ages 0-2	2,053	4,681	2,628
Ages 3-5	4,071	5,141	1,070
<b>Service Area Total Under 6</b>	<b>6,124</b>	<b>9,822</b>	<b>3,698</b>

# Introduction

Every five years Geminus completes a comprehensive community needs assessment to understand the needs of the community and align their Head Start programs and services. Annually for the remaining four years, Geminus reviews and updates the community needs assessment to identify any changes in community data that may inform its Early Head Start (EHS), Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP), and Head Start (HS) federally funded grant programs and services in Lake and Porter counties.

Geminus contracted with Transform Consulting Group (TCG) for assistance in completing the five-year community needs assessment and annual community assessment updates. These reports will help Geminus in strengthening its partnerships within the community, managing its programs and services, and providing high-quality comprehensive early care and education services for children and families.

The 2025 update report includes eight distinct sections titled and described as follows:

- 1. Data Collection Methodology:** This section describes the sources and methods used to gather the data presented in this report, such as public data sets, Geminus Head Start program data, and survey feedback from families and staff.
- 2. Geminus Head Start Overview:** Outlines the mission, structure, and reach of Geminus Head Start programs, including funded and cumulative enrollment, geographic coverage, and family services provided, with an accompanying program map to illustrate current service areas.
- 3. Population Demographics of Lake and Porter Counties:** Provides the most recent data available for Lake and Porter counties, with details on population, demographics, languages spoken, household composition, income, transportation, and internet access.
- 4. Head Start Eligible Children and Families:** Provides detailed demographic and socioeconomic data on infants, toddlers, preschool-age children, and expectant mothers who are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services. This section contains data on poverty levels, public assistance, homelessness, foster care, and children with disabilities.
- 5. Community Health Needs and Access:** Examines health indicators and barriers to care for young children and families, including insurance coverage, immunization rates, access to medical, dental, and mental health services, food insecurity, disability-related services, and regional health care provider availability.



6. **Maternal and Infant Health:** Highlights critical data on the health of expectant mothers and infants, such as birth rates, prenatal care access, teen pregnancy, Medicaid utilization, infant mortality, as well as intersecting issues like poverty, housing instability, and foster care involvement.
7. **Education Needs:** Provides an overview of school district-level data, including pre-K enrollment, locations of school-based early learning programs, and Head Start access, with the most recent data available on early care and education services in Lake and Porter counties.
8. **Stakeholder Feedback:** Synthesizes qualitative insights from Geminus Head Start family surveys and staff engagement feedback, offering context for the quantitative data and highlighting emerging community needs, satisfaction levels, and areas for programmatic improvement.

## Data Collection and Methodology

TCG completed a mixed methods assessment using both quantitative and qualitative data sources to develop the 2025 Geminus Community Needs Assessment Update. The quantitative data primarily includes publicly sourced data sets focused on Lake and Porter counties—the designated service area for this assessment. Population and demographic data were pulled from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates.

To supplement ACS data, additional information related to early childhood, health, and social services was gathered from sources including the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), Department of Child Services (DCS), Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), and Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). Food insecurity data was extracted from Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap, while health access metrics, such as provider ratios and dental access, were gathered from County Health Rankings and ISDH reports. For Head Start-specific insights, data from the 2024-2025 program information report (PIR) was incorporated, offering updated enrollment, disability, and service provision information.

In order to provide greater geographic specificity, township-level data from ACS tables were analyzed. Lake County comprises 11 townships and Porter County includes 12, allowing for a more granular assessment of community needs across the Geminus footprint. While township-level data introduces a higher margin of error, it remains instrumental for local decision making and targeting services where they are most needed.

Qualitative insights were captured through surveys administered to Geminus Head Start families and employees. Eighty-seven families responded to the parent and guardian survey, including eight responses from Spanish-speaking families. The staff survey was administered by Geminus after multiple training sessions throughout the year.



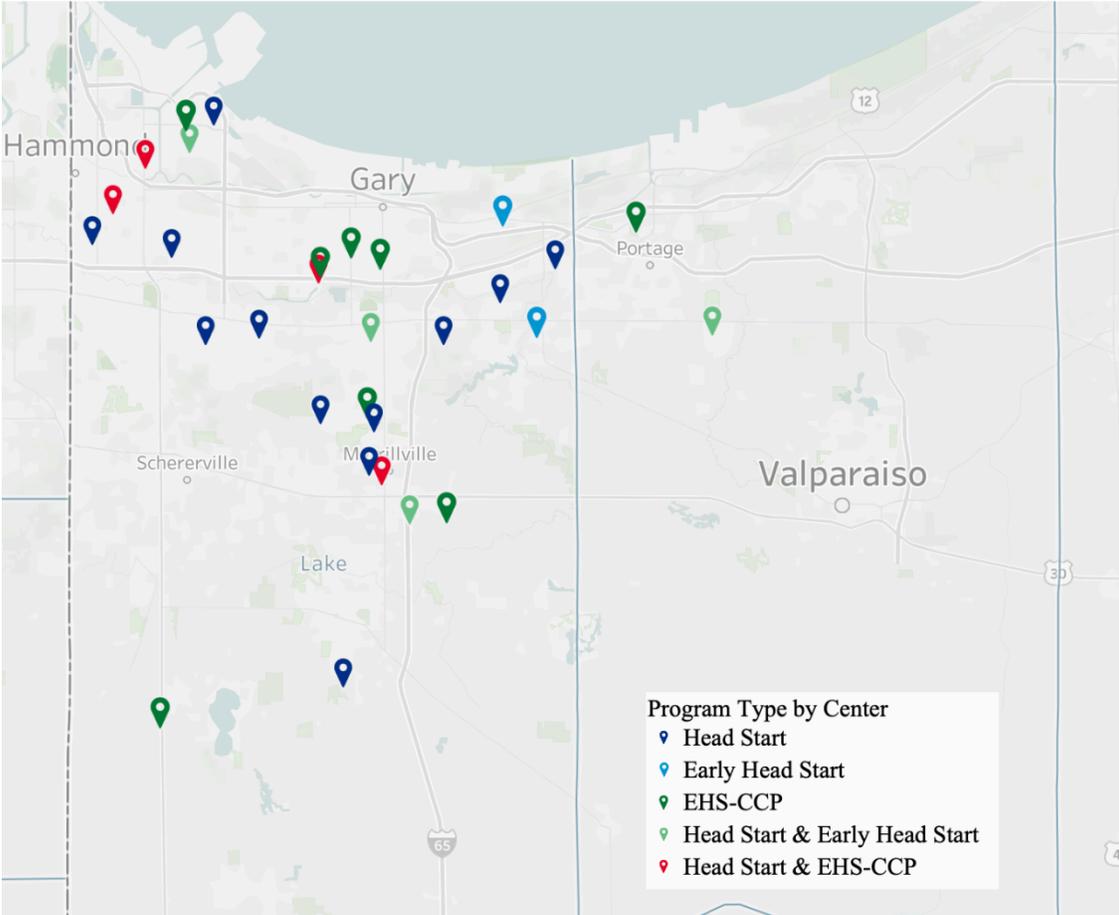
# Geminus Head Start Overview

Geminus provides social services to children and families, including early care and education, family services, and preventative programs in Northwest and Northern Indiana. Through partnerships with community-based health care providers, social service organizations and early care and education programs, Geminus helps Indiana residents access high-quality and affordable programs that support whole-person care—all toward the goal of building resilient communities.

In the 2024-2025 program year, Geminus offered HS and EHS services in 20 locations and EHS-CCP services in 13 locations throughout Lake and Porter counties in Indiana. In addition, home-based services are provided to children and pregnant women.

Below is a program map of the different Geminus Program locations.

## Geminus Head Start Locations by Program Types



## Who Geminus Head Start Serves

Geminus Head Start’s total funded enrollment is 1,334 children and 30 pregnant women. EHS has the capacity to serve 118 children ages birth through 2 and 30 pregnant women; HS has the capacity to serve 1,016 children ages 3-5; and EHS-CCP locations have the capacity to serve 200 children.

Due to turnover of enrollment, Geminus Head Start cumulatively served 1,648 children and 75 pregnant women in the 2024-25 program year. The majority (69%, 1,188) of children served were enrolled in the HS program. Close to 15% (176 children and 75 pregnant women) of enrollment were children and women served in EHS, and over 16% (284) were served in EHS-CCP.

In the 2024-25 program year, Geminus Head Start programs served 1,541 families. This is similar to families served compared to the previous year with a difference of 26 families. During the 2024-25 program year, approximately 98% of total families received at least one service from the Geminus Head Start programs. The services that families received most and least often, respectively, are captured in the charts below.

Top Five Services Families Received		
Service	Number of Families Who Received	% of Families Who Received
Research-based parenting curriculum	1,194	77%
Education on nutrition	1,047	68%
Asset building services (e.g. financial education and debt counseling)	1,014	66%
Discussion of their child's screening and assessment results and overall progress	820	53%
Mental health services	742	48%

Five Services Families Received Most Infrequently		
Service	Number of Families Who Received	% of Families Who Received
Education on postpartum care (e.g. breastfeeding)	39	3%
Education on relationships and marriage	27	2%
Substance misuse prevention	18	1%
Substance misuse treatment	18	1%
Assistance to families of incarcerated individuals	11	1%



# Population Demographics of Lake and Porter Counties

Geminus Head Start programs serve a diverse population of children and families in Lake and Porter counties, which together represent one of Indiana's largest metropolitan areas. While the overall population of young children has decreased in the last decade. The region is marked by significant racial and ethnic diversity, especially in Lake County. The community profile is further defined by various household characteristics, including languages spoken, income levels, and disparities in access to essential resources, like transportation and internet access.

## Population

There are nearly half a million children under 6 years old residing across the state of Indiana. Approximately 9% of the state’s population of children under 6 live in Lake and Porter counties. Lake County has 35,069 young children, including 17,407 children ages 0-2 and 17,662 children ages 3-5. Porter County has 10,787 children, including 4,844 ages 0-2 and 5,945 ages 3-5.<sup>2</sup>

Total Population Under 6 Years Old			
	Infant to 2 Years	3 to 5 Years	Total Under 6
Indiana	239,222	258,573	497,795
Lake	17,407	17,662	35,069
Porter	4,844	5,943	10,787

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B09001.

Both Lake and Porter counties have seen fluctuations in their young child populations over the last 10 years. Lake County’s population of children ages 0-5 decreased 11% from 2013 to 2023. Porter County saw a 9% decrease in its population of young children ages 0-5 between 2013 and 2023. These differences mirror trends at the state and national level.<sup>3</sup>

Looking ahead to 2030 compared to 2020, it is projected that the population of children ages 0-4 will increase by less than 1% in Porter County and decrease by 1.5% in Lake County.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B09001.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B09001.



Young Child (0-4) Population Projections				
	2020	2030 Projection	Percentage Change	Indiana Percentage Change
Lake	29,176	28,747	-1.5%	1%
Porter	8,949	9,005	0.6%	

Source: STATS Indiana, using data from the Indiana Business Research Center, IU Kelley School of Business. (2025). [https://www.stats.indiana.edu/pop\\_proj/](https://www.stats.indiana.edu/pop_proj/)

## Gender

The composition of male and female children is similar in Lake and Porter counties to the state. The population under 5 is split 50% male and 50% female in Lake County and 53% male and 47% female in Porter County. Across Indiana, the entire population of children under 5 years old is about 52% male and 48% female.<sup>4</sup>

## Race

The youth population in Lake County is more racially diverse compared with the state. White youth represent nearly half (48%) the population while Black youth represent over one fourth of the population (28%). Youth of two or more races account for 14%, nearly 1 in 10 (9%) are some other race, and less than 1% of youth are American Indian and Alaska Native, or Asian.

In Porter County, demographic data shows the majority of youth are White at 82%, while 4% of youth are Black. One in 10 (11%) youth are two or more races. The remaining youth are split amongst Asian (2%) and some other race (1%).

In Indiana overall, the youth population is predominantly White (70%), followed by two or more races (12%), Black (11%), Asian (3%), and some other race (4%). The remaining youth are American Indian and Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander.

Geminus Head Start programs serve a higher percentage of Black or African American children compared to the demographic makeup of the community. Within the HS program, 50% of participants identified as Black or African American and just over one third (37%) identified as White. About 12% of participants identified as two or more races, while less than 1% identified as Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, or another racial category.

In the 2024-25 program year, just over two fifths (44%) of EHS participants identified as Black or African American, while nearly half (43%) identified as White. About 1 in 10 (11%) identified as two or more races. Less than 1% of participants identified as Asian,

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S0101.



Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or American Indian or Alaska Native.

In the 2024-25 program year, over two thirds (68%) of EHS-CCP participants identified as Black or African American, while about one fifth (21%) identified as White. Roughly 1 in 10 (11%) identified as two or more races. Less than 1% identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, or another racial category.

Racial Demographics of Youth Under 5 (Approximate Percentages)				
Race	Indiana	Lake	Porter	Geminus Overall
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Asian	2.5%	0.7%	1.6%	0.2%
Black or African American	11%	28%	4%	52%
Two or more races	12%	14%	11%	12%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0.02%	0%	0%	0.1%
Some other race or unknown	4%	9%	1%	0.2%
White	70%	48%	82%	36%

Source: Geminus Head Start. (2025). 2024-25 Program Information Report Snapshot; U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B01001A-I.

## Ethnicity

In Lake County, over one fourth (27%) of youth are Hispanic or Latino. In Porter County, 15% of youth are Hispanic or Latino, similar representation compared to the state (13%).

Geminus Head Start programs serve a higher percentage of Hispanic or Latino children compared to the demographic makeup of the community. One third (35%) of participants identified as Hispanic or Latino. Overall, one third (35%) of enrolled children and pregnant women were of Hispanic or Latino origin. Overall, about 1 in 5 (19%) of enrolled children and pregnant women identified as Hispanic or Latino.

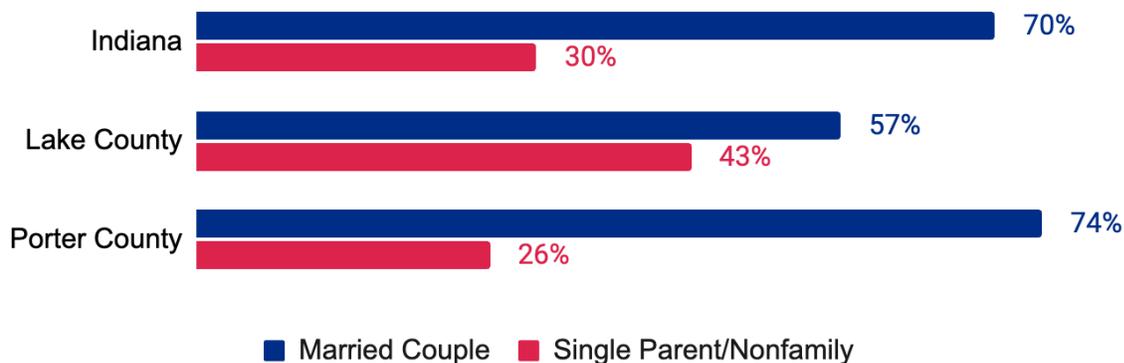
Ethnic Demographics of Youth Under 5 (Approximate Percentages)				
Ethnicity	Indiana	Lake	Porter	Geminus Overall
Hispanic or Latino	13%	27%	15%	33%

Source: Geminus Head Start. (2025). 2024-25 Program Information Report Snapshot; U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B01001A-I.

## Household Composition

Lake County has over 21,000 family households with children under 6 years, while Porter County has over 7,000 family households with young children. Nearly 2 in 5 households with young children in Lake County (43%) are single-parent or nonfamily households. More than one quarter (26%) of households with young children in Porter County are single-parent or nonfamily households, which is similar to the state’s rate of 30%.

### 2023 Household Types With Children Under 6 Years



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1101.

## Multi-Generational Households

Multi-generational households consist of two or more generations of a family living under one roof, often including grandparents, parents, and their adult children or grandchildren. In this report, we specifically present data on grandchildren under 18 years living with a grandparent, clarifying the grandparent’s responsibility and noting if a parent is present. It is possible that the child’s parents may or may not be present. In Indiana, grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren in over half of multi-generational households (51%). In Lake County, nearly half (48%) of multi-generational households have grandparents responsible for grandchildren, compared to one third (37%) in Porter County.

Multi-Generational Households				
	Total multi-generational households	Grandparent responsible for grandchildren	Parent present	No parent present
Indiana	111,150	56,279 (51%)	32,170	24,109
Lake	9,949	4,739 (48%)	2,975	1,764
Porter	2,130	789 (37%)	580	209

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B10002.



## Language Spoken at Home

In Indiana, 90% of the population speaks English at home, 5% speak Spanish, and the remaining 5% speak other languages. In Lake County, 85% of the population speaks English at home, 11% speak Spanish and the remaining 4% speak other languages at home. In Porter County, 94% speak English at home, 4% speak Spanish, and the remaining 3% speak other languages. The most common language other than English spoken at home in Lake and Porter counties is Spanish, followed by other Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages and Indo-European languages.<sup>5</sup>

Percentage of Population Speaking Languages Other Than English at Home				
Language	Indiana	Lake	Porter	Geminus Overall
Spanish	5%	11%	4%	8%
French, Haitian, or Cajun	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	
German or other West Germanic languages	1.1%	0.3%	0.2%	
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages	0.3%	1.4%	0.8%	
Other Indo-European languages	0.8%	0.8%	0.5%	0.1%
Korean	0.1%	0.1%	0.01%	
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	
Vietnamese	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	0.7%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%
Arabic	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	
Other and unspecified languages	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%

*Light blue highlight indicates the top 3 languages spoken other than English. Head Start data does not report the same categories as the U.S. Census Bureau categories.*

Source: Geminus Head Start. (2025). 2024-25 Program Information Report Snapshot; U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table C16001.

In the 2024-25 program year, the vast majority (91%) of children enrolled in Geminus HS spoke English at home, with 9% who spoke Spanish. Less than 1% of children reported speaking another language at home, including Middle Eastern or South Asian, European or Slavic, or American Sign Language.

In the same program year, the large majority (90%) of children enrolled in Geminus EHS spoke English at home, and 1 in 10 (10%) spoke Spanish. Less than 1% of children reported speaking another language, including East Asian languages.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5 Year-Estimates, Table C16001.

Nearly all (99%) of the children enrolled in EHS-CCP spoke English at home, and less than 1% spoke Spanish. No other languages were reported among enrolled children and families.

### Geminus Cumulative Enrollment by Language Spoken at Home



### Access to Internet

Access to the internet has become a necessity for households, as it is essential to connect with teachers, track assignments, and practice skills—helping youth succeed both academically and socially.<sup>6</sup> Across the state, about 89% of households have an internet subscription. In Lake County, about 88% of households have an internet subscription, similar to Porter County with 92% of households having internet access.

Households earning less income are more likely to not have an internet subscription. Looking closer at households earning under \$20,000 annually, 28% in Indiana are without internet access versus 5% of households making over \$75,000. In Lake County, about 1 in 4 households (28%) making under \$20,000 are without internet access, compared to 3% of those making over \$75,000. Porter County is similar to the state with more than 1 in 4 (29%) making under \$20,000 having no home internet access, compared to 4% of households earning over \$75,000.<sup>7</sup>

Households Without an Internet Subscription by Annual Household Income			
	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000 to \$74,999	\$75,000 or more
Indiana	28%	15%	5%
Lake	28%	15%	3%
Porter	29%	13%	4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S2801.

<sup>6</sup> Graves, J., Abshire, D., & Amiri, S. (2021). Disparities in technology and broadband internet access across rurality. *Journal of Health Promotion & Maintenance*, 44 (4).

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S2801.

## Access to Transportation

Lake County and Porter County face transportation burdens, with transportation costs consuming 19% and 20% of household income, respectively. Only 1% of workers use public transit. These numbers are comparable to neighboring counties Newton, Jasper, and LaPorte where transportation costs range from 22-24% of household income and less than 1% to 1% of workers use public transportation. In Marion County, which has almost double the population of Lake County, 19% of household income is spent on transportation and 2% of workers use public transportation.

Lake and Porter counties are largely car-dependent, with two vehicles per household and average vehicle miles traveled (VMT) exceeding 18,000 annually. Public transit accessibility is critically low, with Porter County offering only 45 weekly transit trips and Lake County offering 116.<sup>8</sup> Location efficiency is similarly limited, with 2-3% of neighborhoods in each county classified as location efficient, meaning they are compact, close to jobs and services, with a variety of transportation choices, allowing people to spend less time, energy, and money on transportation.<sup>9</sup> These figures highlight a regional reliance on personal vehicles, minimal investment in public transit, and a high transportation cost burden that disproportionately impacts households in lower-density, car-dependent communities.

## Median Household Income

Across all families with children under 18 years old, the median income is \$77,695 in Lake County and \$105,018 in Porter County, compared to \$86,484 statewide.<sup>10</sup> The median income for single-parent families is significantly lower than married-couple families. Single mothers earn less than single fathers.

Median Income of Families With Children Under 18 by Family Type				
	Married-Couple	Single Male	Single Female	Families with Children Under 18
Indiana	\$113,319	\$55,070	\$35,348	<b>\$86,484</b>
Lake	\$118,405	\$47,830	\$33,734	<b>\$77,695</b>
Porter	\$129,686	\$52,833	\$31,667	<b>\$105,018</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables B19125 and B19126.

<sup>8</sup> Available transit trips per week is the number of possible transit rides within one quarter mile of the area's border.

<sup>9</sup> Center for Neighborhood Technology. (2022). H&T Affordability Index - Fact Sheet (2025).

<https://htaindex.cnt.org/fact-sheets/>

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B19125.



# Head Start Eligible Children and Families

EHS, HS, and EHS-CCP programs use various factors to determine need and eligibility for services. These factors include income level, participation in some public assistance programs, participation in foster care, homeless status, and disability status. Data for populations that are eligible for EHS, HS, and EHS-CCP services are listed below based on these factors.

## Poverty and Eligibility Income Cut-Off

The income eligibility cut-off for HS and EHS is 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Programs have an initial allowance for 10% of enrolled children and pregnant women (in each program) who may be over the income threshold of 100% FPL, provided there is still a justifiable need that our program may help meet. If enrollment in the program remains under full capacity despite best efforts to recruit eligible families, an additional over-income allowance of 35% of enrollment for children and pregnant women whose annual incomes exceed 100% FPL but fall below 130% of the FPL may be applied.

According to the 2025 federal poverty guidelines, the 100% FPL for an individual is an annual income of less than \$15,650. For households, each additional person adds \$5,500 to that number. This means a family of three would have an income below \$26,650 annually.<sup>11</sup>

2025 Federal Poverty Guidelines			
	Family of 2	Family of 3	Family of 4
100% FPL (Poverty)	\$21,150	\$26,650	\$32,150
125% FPL	\$26,438	\$33,313	\$40,188
130% FPL	\$27,495	\$34,645	\$41,795

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2025). *HHS Poverty Guidelines*. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>

**Young children are more likely to be living in poverty than older children or adults.** Over 8,300, nearly 1 in every 4 (24%), children under 6 live in poverty in Lake County. This percentage is much higher compared to the state of Indiana (18%). The percentage of children under 6 living in poverty in Lake County is also higher than the overall population of any age living in poverty in Lake County (15%).

Over 1,400 (13%) young children in Porter County live in poverty. This percentage is much lower compared to the state of Indiana (18%). The percentage of children under 6

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2025). *HHS Poverty Guidelines*. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>.

living in poverty in Porter County is higher than the overall population of any age living in poverty in Porter County (9%).<sup>12</sup>

Estimated Young Children Living Under 100% of the Federal Poverty Level by Single Age							
County	Infants	1-Year-Olds	2-Year-Olds	3-Year-Olds	4-Year-Olds	5-Year-Olds	Total Under 6 Years
Lake	1,351	1,346	1,298	1,434	1,478	1,476	<b>8,383</b>
Porter	228	232	226	248	250	255	<b>1,439</b>
<b>Service Area Totals</b>	1,579	1,578	1,525	1,682	1,727	1,731	<b>9,822</b>

Note: These estimates were developed by applying the percentage of young children in each age group to the total number under 6 living in poverty.

Source: Easy access to juvenile populations: 2019-2023. (2023). *Age by County in Indiana*.

<https://www.ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>; U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17024.

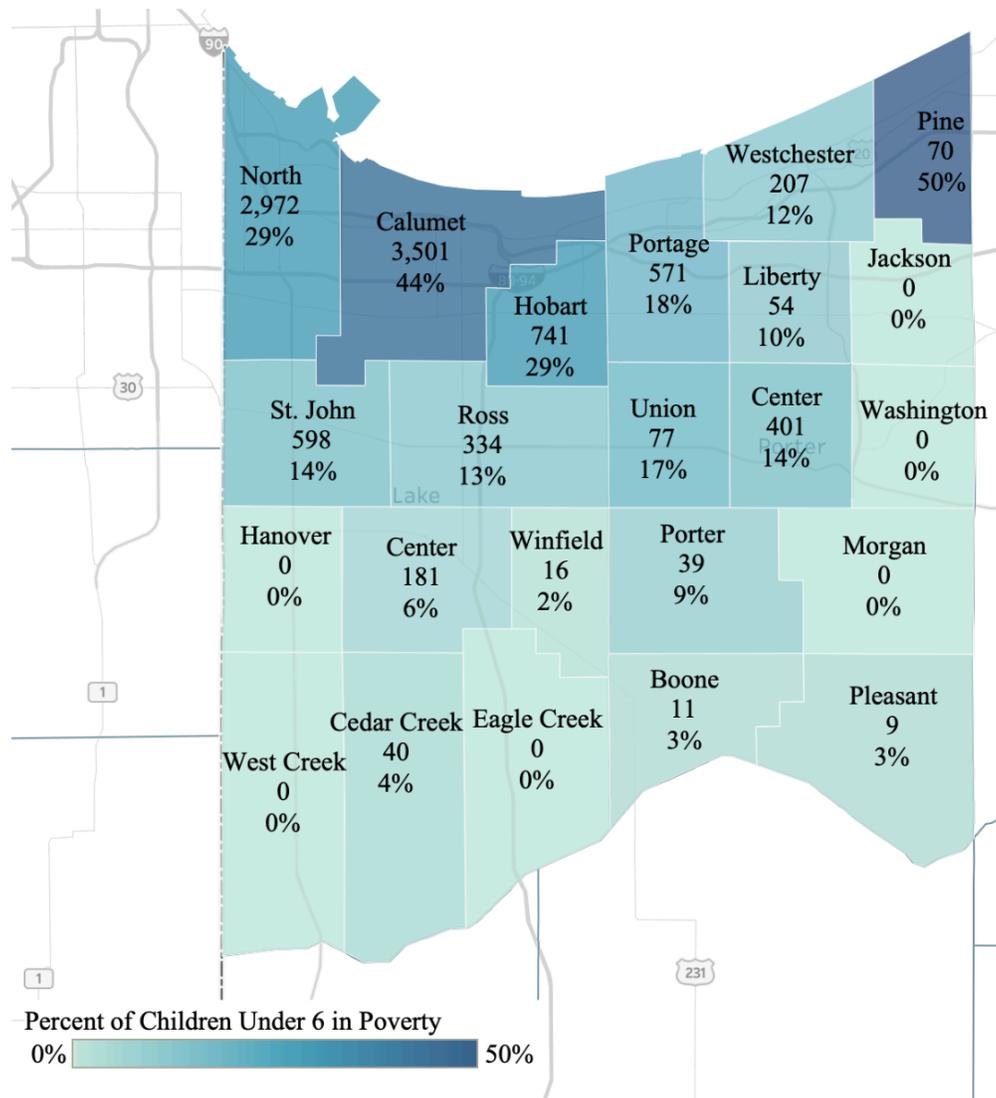
### County Snapshot: Young Children Living in Poverty by Township

Many young children live in poverty across Lake and Porter counties, but the issue is more pronounced in certain townships, signifying a need for accessible child care, like a Head Start program.

The map below labels the number of children under 6 living below 100% of the federal poverty level. The darker blue colors represent a higher representation (percentage) of young children in poverty.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17001.

## Children Under 6 Living in Poverty in Lake and Porter County Townships



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17024.

### Public Assistance for Low-Income Families

Federal eligibility guidelines for Head Start programs state that children and pregnant mothers must fall into one of several eligibility categories. One of these categories is families receiving public assistance. Public assistance programs included in this category are Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI). The section below describes these programs and enrollment for each program in greater detail. Data on enrollment in these public assistance programs is reported for families overall, but does not make clear how many of these families have children under 6.



**TANF** is a federal government program that assists families and caregivers. Families who receive TANF grants meet the public assistance eligibility criteria for access to Head Start programs. Indiana distributes the funds to support families with children under 18 years by providing cash assistance and support services, ultimately helping them reach economic self-sufficiency. Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) is responsible for the TANF program in the state.

In July 2025 in Lake County, there were 645 total families receiving TANF grants, with 99% of them being child-only and one-parent families (a household where assistance is provided only for the children in the family). Five of the grants were provided to two-parent families; 24 of the families included pregnant women. In total, 1,272 children received a grant, a 33% increase compared to the previous year.<sup>13</sup>

<b>July 2025 Lake County TANF Recipients</b>				
	<b>July 2025</b>	<b>July 2024</b>	<b>Lake County Annual Change</b>	<b>Indiana Annual Change</b>
<b>Number of families receiving TANF Grants</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>-8%</b>
Child-Only and One-Parent Families	640	498	29%	3%
Two-Parent Families	5	4	25%	-77%
<b>Total number of grant recipients</b>	<b>1,640</b>	<b>1,185</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>-6%</b>
Number of adult grant recipients	368	225	64%	-25%
Number of child grant recipients	1,272	960	33%	-0.5%
<b>Pregnancy Families*</b> <i>(Included in count of total families above)</i>				
<b>Number of families receiving TANF Grants</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>
* Pregnancy Families are counted among whichever of family types (Child-Only and One-Parent Families or Two-Parent Families) they belong. This is a new reporting breakout in 2025 compared to previous years and there is not annual comparison data available.				
Source: Family and Social Services Administration Division of Family Resources. (July 2025). Lake County Monthly Management Report. <a href="https://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/forms-documents-and-tools/statistics/">https://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/forms-documents-and-tools/statistics/</a>				

In July 2025 in Porter County, there were 35 families receiving TANF grants, all of them being child-only and one-parent families. In total, 62 children received a grant, a 5% increase compared to the previous year.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Family and Social Services Administration Division of Family Resources. (July 2025). Lake County Monthly Management Report. <https://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/forms-documents-and-tools/statistics/>

<sup>14</sup> Family and Social Services Administration Division of Family Resources. (July 2025). Porter County Monthly Management Report. <https://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/forms-documents-and-tools/statistics/>.

<b>July 2025 Porter County TANF Recipients</b>				
	<b>July 2025</b>	<b>July 2024</b>	<b>Porter County Annual Change</b>	<b>Indiana Annual Change</b>
<b>Number of families receiving TANF Grants</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>-8%</b>
Child-Only and One-Parent Families	35	33	6%	3%
Two-Parent Families	0	2	-100%	-77%
<b>Total number of grant recipients</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>-6%</b>
Number of adult grant recipients	19	18	6%	-25%
Number of child grant recipients	62	59	5%	-0.5%
<b>Pregnancy Families*</b> <i>(Included in count of total families above)</i>				
<b>Number of families receiving TANF Grants</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>
* Pregnancy Families are counted among whichever of family types (Child-Only and One-Parent Families or Two-Parent Families) they belong. This is a new reporting breakout in 2025 compared to previous years and there is not annual comparison data available.				
Source: Family and Social Services Administration Division of Family Resources. (July 2025). Porter County Monthly Management Report. <a href="https://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/forms-documents-and-tools/statistics/">https://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/forms-documents-and-tools/statistics/</a>				

**SNAP** is another federal program that helps low to no income families and individuals by providing food assistance. Families who receive SNAP benefits meet the public assistance eligibility criteria for access to Head Start programs. In Indiana, FSSA is responsible for the program.

In July 2025 in Lake County, there were 28,006 households and 59,700 individuals receiving SNAP benefits. This is about a 3% decrease in households and individuals receiving these benefits from the previous year. Statewide, the number of households and individuals receiving SNAP benefits also declined from the previous year.

In July 2025 in Porter County, there were 4,291 households, including 8,590 individuals, who were receiving SNAP benefits, a decrease of 4% compared to July 2024.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Family and Social Services Administration Division of Family Resources. (July 2025). Porter and Lake County's Monthly Management Report. <https://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/forms-documents-and-tools/statistics/>

July 2025 Lake and Porter County SNAP Benefit Recipients					
		July 2025	July 2024	County Annual Change	Indiana Annual Change
Lake County	Number of households receiving SNAP benefits	28,006	28,803	-3%	-5%
	Number of recipients	59,700	61,317	-3%	-5%
Porter County	Number of households receiving SNAP benefits	4,291	4,492	-4%	-5%
	Number of recipients	8,590	9,008	-5%	-5%

Note: Reports are updated on a monthly basis. Data on SNAP benefits is reported for households overall, and is not currently available for households with children under 6 years old specifically.

Source: Family and Social Services Administration Division of Family Resources. (July 2025). Porter and Lake County's Monthly Management Report. <https://www.in.gov/fssa/dfp/forms-documents-and-tools/statistics/>

**SSI** is another federal program that provides monthly payments to adults and children with a disability who have income and resources below specific financial limits. SSI payments are also made to individuals age 65 and older without disabilities who meet the financial qualifications. Families who receive SSI benefits meet the public assistance eligibility criteria for access to Head Start programs.

In 2024, a total of 2,037 children under 18 received SSI benefits in Lake County, and 287 children in Porter County. The number of child recipients in both counties decreased in 2024 compared to recipients in 2019.<sup>16</sup> Though data on SSI benefits to children under 5 is not available at the state or county level, nationally 4% of child beneficiaries were under 5 years of age from 2018-2020 SSI data.<sup>17</sup>

Number of Children Under 18 Receiving SSI Benefits			
	2024	2019	Percentage Change
Indiana	19,502	21,720	-10%
Lake	2,037	2,234	-9%
Porter	287	342	-16%

Source: U.S. Social Security Administration. (2024). *SSI Recipients by State and County*. [https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi\\_sc/2024/](https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi_sc/2024/)

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Social Security Administration. (2024). SSI Recipients by State and County. [https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi\\_sc/2024/](https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi_sc/2024/)

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Social Security Administration. (Updated 2023). *Child Beneficiaries, 2018–2020*. <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/population-profiles/child-beneficiaries.html>

## Children Experiencing Homelessness

In addition to pregnant women and young children whose families meet income requirements, Head Start serves children from families experiencing homelessness.

Indiana annually completes a point-in-time count for individuals experiencing homelessness. The point-in-time count is conducted on a single night, counting the number of sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness. When the last statewide count was completed in November 2024, there were a total of 4,974 households experiencing homelessness, which equals 6,285 individuals. This is more households and individuals than were reported in 2023. The majority of homeless households reported to be without children, but 11% of homeless households have at least one child, which is about the same as (12%) 2023. Nearly one fifth (18%) of homeless individuals were under 18 years old.<sup>18</sup>

The most recent point-in-time homeless counts for Lake and Porter counties reported by the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority were conducted in January of 2025. In Lake County, there were 11 households with at least one adult and one child who were homeless. Of these households, there were 47 homeless people, 32 of them children under the age of 18. In the January 2024 point-in-time homeless count, 29 children under the age of 18 were counted.

In Porter County, there were 23 households with at least one adult and one child who were homeless. Of these households, there were 89 homeless people, 59 of them children under the age of 18. In the January 2024 point-in-time homeless count, 28 children under the age of 18 were counted. The number of children under the age of 18 counted in the point-in-time homeless count doubled from 2024 to 2025.<sup>19</sup>

The point-in-time counts provide estimates of people living on the streets and living in or receiving services from homeless service organizations. Many in the homeless or housing unstable population may be difficult to find given that where they live and sleep could change frequently. The McKinney-Vento Act provides rights and services to children and youth experiencing homelessness. The total number of students identified by the McKinney-Vento Act as homeless or housing unstable in Indiana in 2024 was 12,275. This is a 35% decrease from 2018 (18,811 students). A total of 547 students in Lake County and 267 students in Porter County were identified as homeless or housing unstable in 2024.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> HUD 2024 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Homeless Populations and Subpopulations. [https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC\\_PopSub\\_State\\_IN\\_2024.pdf](https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_State_IN_2024.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority. (2024). PIT Results by Region. [Data Set] [https://www.in.gov/ihcda/indiana-balance-of-state-continuum-of-care/hmis\\_data\\_portal/](https://www.in.gov/ihcda/indiana-balance-of-state-continuum-of-care/hmis_data_portal/)

<sup>20</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2024). Homeless or housing unstable students in Indiana. <https://datacenter.aecf.org/>



## Children in Foster Care

In addition to families receiving public assistance and children experiencing homelessness, federal eligibility guidelines for Head Start programs state another allowable eligibility category is children in foster care. The prevalence of children in Indiana experiencing abuse and neglect was above the national average in 2023 (11.5 children per 1,000 in Indiana, compared with 7.4 children per 1,000 nationally). According to the Children’s Bureau’s *Child Maltreatment 2023* report, Indiana has the 14th highest rate in the nation. **Half (50%) of children who were reported to be victims of maltreatment in Indiana in 2023 were young children (ages 0-5), including 23% who were under 1 year of age.**<sup>21</sup>

The Indiana Department of Child Services offers a data dashboard updated monthly sharing data about the conditions of children. That includes the Children in Need of Services (CHINS) placements by county, or the number of children who needed court-ordered interventions and services because of parental neglect or inability to provide adequate care. As of June 2025, Lake County had 659 children in need of services, while Porter County had 141 children. In Lake and Porter counties, about two thirds of these children are assigned out-of-home placements.<sup>22</sup>

June 2025 Children in Need of Services (CHINS)					
	Total CHINS	In Home		Out-Of-Home Placement	
Indiana	13,727	4,515	33%	9,212	67%
Lake	659	226	34%	433	66%
Porter	141	34	24%	107	76%

Source: <https://www.in.gov/dcs/reports-and-statistics/practice-indicator-reports/>

Total CHINS in Indiana and Lake and Porter counties have each significantly decreased since 2019 (21%, 48%, and 11% respectively).<sup>23</sup> This may be in part due to significant legislative and policy changes made in 2019 and coincides with the 2018 federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). This policy shift was designed to prioritize family permanence and prevent removal whenever possible.<sup>24</sup>

## Youth Under 18 With a Known Disability Status

In Lake and Porter counties, less than 1% (3,043) of children under 5 have an identified disability. As youth become older, they are more likely to be diagnosed with a disability. In Lake and Porter counties, 4% of youth under 18 have a known disability, compared

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau. (2025). *Child Maltreatment 2023*. <https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/cm2023.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.in.gov/dcs/reports-and-statistics/practice-indicator-reports/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.in.gov/dcs/reports-and-statistics/practice-indicator-reports/>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.iyi.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IYI\\_22Spotlight\\_FandC.pdf](https://www.iyi.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IYI_22Spotlight_FandC.pdf)

with 5% statewide. The most common known disability types for youth under 18 in Lake and Porter counties are ambulatory and cognitive difficulties.<sup>25</sup> Ambulatory difficulties include trouble walking or climbing stairs, while a cognitive disability can impact an individual's ability to think, process, learn, remember, and make decisions.

Disability Type By Detailed Age Groups			
Disability Type	Lake	Porter	Indiana
<b>Any Known Disability</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Population under 18 years	4%	4%	5%
Population under 5 years	0.5% (2,891)	0.7% (152)	0.7% (63)
<b>With a hearing difficulty</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>
Population under 18 years	0.3%	0.2%	0.5%
Population under 5 years	0.3%	0.1%	0.4%
<b>With a vision difficulty</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Population under 18 years	0.8%	0.5%	0.8%
Population under 5 years	0.3%	0.6%	0.4%
<b>With a cognitive difficulty</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Population under 18 years	4%	4%	5%
<b>With an ambulatory difficulty</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>7%</b>
Population under 18 years	0.5%	0.2%	0.6%
<b>With a self-care difficulty</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>
Population under 18 years	1%	1%	1%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1810.			

## Disability Services

First Steps is a program of the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services. Children who receive services via First Steps or special education programs in schools are eligible for Head Start programs regardless of income. EHS and HS has a 10% enrollment eligibility requirement, which requires 10% of children served to be children who receive disability services.

First Steps is Indiana's early intervention program that provides services to infants and toddlers, who have developmental delays or disabilities, from birth until their third

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1810.

birthday. First Steps brings families together with a local network of professionals from education, health and social service agencies. Regions across the state have a local system point of entry that helps to refer children and families to local agencies.

For Lake and Porter counties, the local point of entry (or service provider) for First Steps is 1st Kids in Crown Point; its identified as “Cluster A” in the state’s annual performance report for First Steps. The table below details participation in First Steps for the state and Lake and Porter counties in fiscal year 2023.

FY 2023 Enrollment in First Steps			
Location	Total number of IFSPs reviewed	Percentage of infants, birth to 1 year, with IFSPs	Percentage of infants and toddlers, birth to 3 years, with IFSPs
Cluster A	113	2% National: 1.4%	5.9% National: 4.6%

Note: Reporting period is 07/01/2022 - 06/30/2023.  
Source: Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. (2023) First Steps Program Evaluation reports: Indiana Public Reporting of the FFY2023 SPP/APR.

The Indiana Department of Education offers special education programs to students in preschool. As of April 2024, Indiana public schools served 17,348 students ages 3-5 (excluding those in kindergarten) in special education programs. This is a 5% increase compared to the previous year.<sup>26</sup> At the local level, as of August 2019, Lake County served 676 children ages 3-5 in special education programs, while Porter County served 251 children.<sup>27</sup>

Geminus Head Start assesses all newly enrolled children to determine potential developmental delays. For those children with identified potential delays, subsequent referrals are made to the local responsible Part B or Part C agencies for further evaluation. In the 2024-25 program year, Geminus Head Start served 192 (12%) children with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP).

## Community Health Needs and Access

To understand the community entering these programs, it’s important to assess general health. In this section, we look at immunization rates, health insurance coverage, services provided to children with disabilities, dental care, mental health care, and access to sufficient food and nutrition to understand the broader picture of health access in this area.

<sup>26</sup> Indiana Department of Education. (June 2024). Preschool Child Count Comparisons: Unduplicated Totals by Disability. <https://www.in.gov/doe/files/Memo-to-SBOE-on-unduplicated-child-count-JUNE-2024.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Indiana Department of Education. (2019). Custom data request for the Indiana Early Learning Advisory Council.



## Immunization Rates for Young Children

The official childhood vaccination series is 4:3:1:3:3:1:4,<sup>28</sup> and children that receive the series are fully immunized. In 2023, 87% of 2- and 3-year-olds in Lake County were assessed<sup>29</sup> for the vaccination series, and 50% completed the series. In Porter County, 90% of 2- and 3-year-olds were assessed, and two thirds (61%) completed the vaccination series. These rates are similar to Indiana as a whole, where 95% were assessed, and over half (56%) completed the vaccination series. In Indiana, the number of children completing the vaccination series has decreased year over year with 61% of children completing the series in 2021, 58% in 2022, and 56% in 2023.<sup>30</sup>

Immunization Rates for 2- and 3-Year-Olds		
Location	Percentage of Children Assessed	Percentage of Children that Completed Vaccination Series
Indiana	95%	56%
Porter	90%	61%
Lake	87%	50%

Source: Indiana Department of Health. (2023). County Rate Assessment Report. [https://www.in.gov/health/immunization/files/County\\_Rate\\_Assessment\\_Report\\_2023.pdf](https://www.in.gov/health/immunization/files/County_Rate_Assessment_Report_2023.pdf)

## Children With Insurance Coverage

In Lake and Porter counties, young children under 6 are insured at a higher rate (97%) compared to the state as a whole (94%).<sup>31</sup> **Families and children living in poverty are more likely to be uninsured.** In Lake County, 89% of the total population living in poverty is insured, compared to 93% in Porter County. These rates in the counties are both higher than the state (88%).

Percentage of Insured Population by Demographic Group		
	Young Children Under 6	Population Living in Poverty
Indiana	94%	88%
Lake	97%	89%
Porter	97%	93%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S2701.

<sup>28</sup> Four doses of DTaP, 3 doses IPV, 1 dose MMR, 3 doses Hib, 3 doses HepB, 1 dose Varicella, and 4 doses PCV.

<sup>29</sup> Assessed Methodology from Source: "Immunization data by county was obtained by extracting raw data for the birth cohort from CHIRP through SAS software. This data was filtered to include only those children who had an active immunization record as defined by this assessment (see Data Dictionary), were born in the defined birth cohort, had a current address listed as an Indiana address and had received a valid vaccine on or before March 31, 2023. The query's output provides the number of patients assessed per county who meet the above criteria and number of each up-to-date (UTD) vaccine given per antigen by county."

<sup>30</sup> Source: Indiana Department of Health. (2023). County Rate Assessment Report. [https://www.in.gov/health/immunization/files/County\\_Rate\\_Assessment\\_Report\\_2023.pdf](https://www.in.gov/health/immunization/files/County_Rate_Assessment_Report_2023.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S2701.

Medicaid is an option to provide health care coverage for individuals and families who cannot afford private insurance. In June 2025, nearly 1.9 million people were enrolled in Medicaid in Indiana, including 43% being children under 18 years old (nearly 800,000 youth). This representation is similar in Lake and Porter counties, at 42% and 41%, respectively. In Lake County, 143,344 people were enrolled in Medicaid in June 2025, including over 60,000 children under 18. In Porter County, 30,781 people were enrolled in Medicaid, including more than 12,600 children under 18. Medicaid enrollment is down compared to the previous year across Indiana (-6%), including Lake (-5%) and Porter (-7%) counties, but the representation of youth served has stayed consistent.<sup>32</sup>

## Dental Health Services

An important element of comprehensive health care is access to dental care. If dental diseases go undetected or untreated, they can lead to serious health effects, including pain, infection, and tooth loss. In Indiana, the ratio of the resident population compared to the number of dentists is 1,680:1, meaning that for every 1,680 residents there is just one dentist. This is similar to the ratio in Lake (1,580:1) and in Porter (1,660:1) counties. These geographies all fare worse than the United States ratio of 1,360:1. This indicates a lack of adequate dental care access.<sup>33</sup>

America's Health Rankings 2022-2023 data report more than three quarters (78%) of children in Indiana, ages 1-17, had one or more preventative dental care visits during the past 12 months. Indiana ranks 41st among the nation in the percentage of youth who had one or more preventative dental care visits.<sup>34</sup>

## Health Care Services

One way access to health care services can be assessed is by looking at the number of primary care physicians (PCPs) serving a particular area. In Indiana, the resident-to-PCP ratio is 1,520:1, meaning for every 1,520 residents there is one primary care physician. The rates are even lower in Lake County where there is just one PCP for every 1,970 residents, and in Porter County where the resident-to-PCP ratio is 1,780:1. For the United States overall, this ratio is 1,330:1, indicating residents have less access to primary care in Indiana and Lake and Porter counties.<sup>35</sup>

The American Board of Pediatrics (ABP) reports 47 ABP certified pediatricians serving children under 18 in Lake County, and 16 pediatricians in Porter County. The number of pediatricians indicates a ratio of 2,452 children per pediatrician in Lake County and

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<sup>32</sup> Family and Social Services Administration. (2025). Medicaid Enrollment Dashboard. <https://www.in.gov/fssa/ompp/medicaid-enrollment-dashboard/>.

<sup>33</sup> County Health Rankings. (2025). Dentists. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/community-conditions/health-infrastructure/clinical-care/dentists?year=2025>

<sup>34</sup> United Health Foundation America's Health Rankings. (2023). Preventive Dental Visit - Children in Indiana. [https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/prev\\_dent\\_care\\_overall/IN](https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/prev_dent_care_overall/IN).

<sup>35</sup> County Health Rankings. (2025). Primary Care Physicians. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/indiana?year=2025&measure=Primary+Care+Physicians&tab=1>



2,314 children per pediatrician in Porter County. This is less access compared to the state average of 1,575 children per pediatrician.<sup>36</sup>

## Food and Nutrition

In Lake County, 16% of people did not have a reliable source of food in 2023. This rate is higher compared to the state at 15% and Porter County at 13%. Children experience even higher rates of food insecurity. Nearly 1 in 4 children (23%) in Lake County experienced food insecurity. In comparison, 14% of children in Porter County and 19% of children in Indiana did not have reliable access to food.<sup>37</sup>

Food Insecurity in 2023				
Location	Number of residents with food insecurity	Percentage of residents with food insecurity	Number of children with food insecurity	Percentage of children with food insecurity
Indiana	1,033,890	15%	292,720	19%
Lake	77,640	16%	26,740	23%
Porter	22,880	13%	5,370	14%

Source: Feeding America. (2025). *Map the Meal Gap*. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/overall/indiana>

To further contextualize, in Gary, IN, 39% of adults reported that they did not have enough food and did not have money to get more in 2022, compared with an average of 16% who reported the same in cities across the U.S. The map below is color-coded at the census-tract level surrounding Gary, Indiana to reflect the variation in local rates of food insecurity.<sup>38</sup>

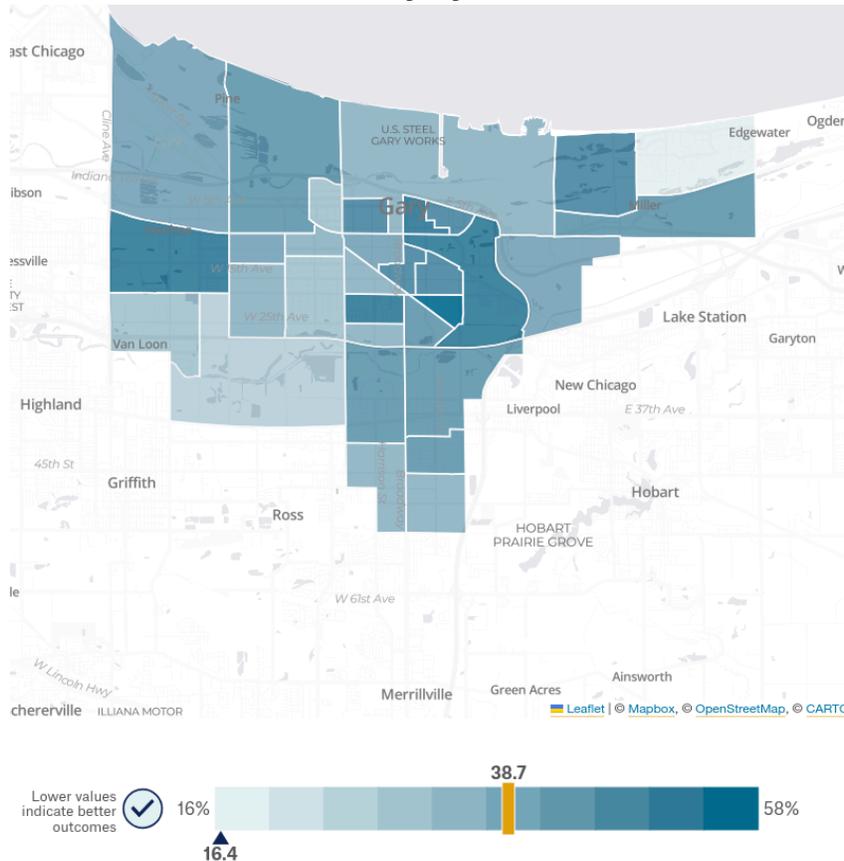
<sup>36</sup> The American Board of Pediatrics: General Pediatricians U.S. State and County Maps Dashboard. (2024.) <https://www.abp.org/dashboards/general-pediatricians-us-state-and-county-maps>.

<sup>37</sup> Feeding America. (2025). *Map the Meal Gap*. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/overall/indiana>

<sup>38</sup> City Health Dashboard; Data from PLACES Project, CDC. (2022). <https://www.cityhealthdashboard.com/IN/Gary/metric-detail?metricId=50&dataPeriod=2022>



## Food Insecurity by Census Tract



## Mental Health

Nearly 1 in every 5 adults in Lake (17%) and Porter (18%) counties experience frequent mental distress, meaning they experience poor mental health for two weeks or more in a month. This makes access to mental health services critical. In Indiana, the ratio of residents to mental health providers is 470:1, while in Lake and Porter the ratios are slightly better (430:1 and 420:1, respectively). Nationwide, the rate is much better at 300:1, indicating residents in Lake and Porter counties have less access to mental health services than many people living outside Indiana.<sup>39</sup>

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and Childhood Trauma

According to the CDC, ACEs, “are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). They can include both potentially traumatic events, such as witnessing violence in the home or community, or can include aspects of the child’s environment that can affect their sense of safety and stability, such as substance use problems in the home or experiencing homelessness.

<sup>39</sup> County Health Rankings (2025). Frequent Mental Distress and Mental Health Providers. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/indiana?year=2025&measure=Mental+Health+Providers&tab=1>



According to the 2022-23 National Survey of Children's Health, in Indiana an estimated 40% of children 0-17 years have experienced at least one ACE, and 20% have experienced two or more. The rate of children experiencing at least one ACE has decreased slightly from the 2017-2018 survey (44%).<sup>40</sup> Data on ACEs at the county and local level is not currently available.

The CDC-Kaiser Permanente ACE study, one of the largest investigations into the impact of ACEs in later life, and CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System which collects data on ACEs via phone survey at the state level, have found childhood adversity through ACEs has lasting impacts on a number of long-term outcomes. These include but are not limited to mental health and suicidal ideation, chronic diseases like diabetes, substance abuse, and opportunities like education, occupation, and income.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, research has found that experiencing ACEs in early childhood specifically (0-5 years) is correlated with chronic health conditions and developmental risk factors in young children, such as emotional or behavioral problems.<sup>42</sup>

## Maternal and Infant Health

Recent data on maternal health in Indiana, particularly in Lake and Porter counties, reveals a complex picture of birth trends and associated challenges. While overall birth rates have declined in the last five years, rates of teen pregnancy and delayed prenatal care remain significant concerns. These statistics, combined with Indiana's high infant mortality rate and recent policy shifts, underscore the critical need for services supporting expectant mothers and infants.

### Birth Rates and Teen Pregnancy

In 2023, there were over 5,000 births in Lake County and 1,500 in Porter County. Teen pregnancy resulted in approximately 300 births in Lake County, and 33 births in Porter County, accounting for 5% of all births in those counties. Statewide, 1% of all births (about 3,000 total) were teen pregnancy births; Lake and Porter counties account for over 10% of all teenage pregnancy births in the state.

The table below shows the rate of live births in Indiana, Lake County, and Porter County over a span of five years, as well as the percentage change within that period. The birth rate has decreased in all areas, but the decline is most drastic in Lake County at over 10%.

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<sup>40</sup> Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health. (2023). 2022-2023 National Survey of Children's Health. <https://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=11793&r=16>

<sup>41</sup> Center for Disease Control. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System ACE Data. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/ace-brfss.html>

<sup>42</sup> National Library of Medicine. (2022). The Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on Health and Development in Young Children. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8882933/>



5-Year Change in Live Births						
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Five Year % Change
Indiana	80,851	78,566	79,953	79,649	79,000	-2.3%
Lake	5,684	5,410	5,418	5,256	5,089	-10.5%
Porter	1,642	1,622	1,670	1,592	1,505	-8.3%

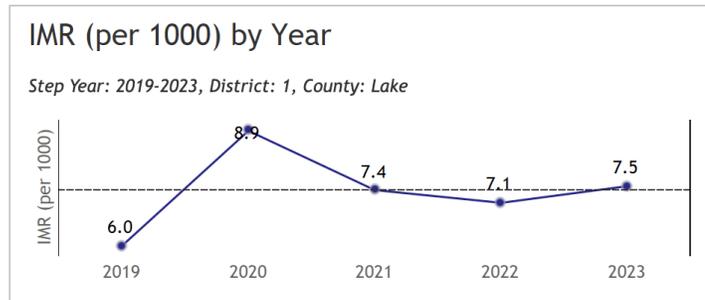
Sources: Indiana Department of Health, Office of Data Analytics, Data Analysis Team; Vital Records Variable ID: 'BIRTH009'; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). Natality. <https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/datarequest/D149;jsessionid=A0E80FF0F806FE1589FBC28D0E6E>

## Prenatal Care

Prenatal care helps prevent complications and informs parents of the appropriate steps to take during pregnancy. Timely prenatal care helps in three main ways, by (1) reducing the risk of pregnancy complications and also making delivery safer, (2) reducing the risk of complications for the baby, and (3) ensuring the medications women take are safe.<sup>43</sup> However, during 2023, approximately 27% of pregnant women in Indiana did not receive prenatal care in the first trimester. The rate of pregnant women who did not receive prenatal care in the first trimester in Lake County was higher than the state's rate at 30%, and the rate for Porter County was slightly lower than the state at 25%.<sup>44</sup>

## Infant Mortality

The latest numbers in 2023 show the infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births in Indiana is 6.6. In Lake County, the rate is 7.3 and in Porter County, 3. These numbers include causes from sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUIDS), assaults or injuries, congenital anomalies, perinatal risks, and other causes.



Between 2019 to 2023, the infant mortality rate in Lake County increased from 6 to 7.5. This is higher than the state and national rate. Disturbingly, the disparity is stark: Babies born to Black parents in Lake County experience an infant mortality rate of 11.8.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/pregnancy/conditioninfo/prenatal-care>

<sup>44</sup> Indiana Department of Health. (2023). Birth Outcomes and Infant Mortality Dashboard. <https://www.in.gov/health/mch/data/birth-outcomes-and-infant-mortality-dashboard/>

<sup>45</sup> Indiana Department of Health. (2023). Birth Outcomes and Infant Mortality Dashboard. <https://www.in.gov/health/mch/data/birth-outcomes-and-infant-mortality-dashboard/>



## Policy Changes

In August 2022, Indiana passed a law banning abortions in the state. This law took effect on August 1st, 2023. This policy has the potential to affect the demand for early care and education services and other services aimed at supporting pregnant people and infants. However, in April 2024, a preliminary injunction was granted following a lawsuit brought by the ACLU of Indiana, which claims Indiana's abortion ban violates the state's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). This aims to allow abortion access for Hoosiers who have sincere religious beliefs that they must be able to obtain an abortion. The court also affirmed that the case should proceed as a class action, applying to all individuals whose religious beliefs would direct them to obtain abortions that the statute bans.

Annual updates to this report will examine this data to understand the impact of this policy in the years to come.

## WIC Enrollment

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC, is a federal assistance program in the United States, run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). WIC provides supplemental nutritious foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, dairy, formula, and infant foods; nutrition education and counseling for pregnant women, new mothers, and caregivers; breastfeeding support; additional resources, and referrals to health care and social services. TCG requested information from the Indiana Department of Health on state and counties of interest levels but did not receive an answer. In Northwest Indiana, the Lake Station WIC office is located at 2490 Central Avenue, Lake Station, IN 46405 (<https://coaction.care/places/lake-station-wic-office-2/>).

## Medicaid Use

Medicaid is a major public source of financing for health care services provided to pregnant women, infants and children. Key data points show Indiana has over 1.36 million Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) enrollees, according to the Medicaid and CHIP Scorecard. Both programs receive significant funding from both federal and state sources.<sup>46</sup> No data is available at the county level.

## Estimated Number of Income Eligible Pregnant Women

In Lake and Porter counties, and across Indiana overall, the following data table provides an overview of the estimated number of eligible pregnant women in Geminus. Particularly, we look at 2023 data for women who have had a birth in the past 12

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<sup>46</sup> Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (n.d.). *Medicaid Scorecard: Indiana state overview*. <https://www.medicaid.gov/state-overviews/scorecard/main?focusStates=%5B%22IN%22%5D>



months living at below 100 percent of the poverty line and whether they are married or unmarried.

Women Who Had A Birth in the Past 12 Months Below 100 Percent of the Poverty Level		
	Married	Unmarried
Indiana	4,992	13,065
Lake	207	1,610
Porter	25	302

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S13010.

## Education Needs

The education needs in this section underscores the early care and education policy changes in the last year, summarizes the availability and quality of early care programs in Lake and Porter Counties, and details subsidized and Head Start care in the Geminus service area.

### Early Care and Education Policy Changes

The early care and education landscape has undergone significant transformation due to recent legislative shifts. Following the fall 2024 session and a gubernatorial transition in early 2025, policy changes have ranged from expanding CCDF eligibility for child care workers to reductions in overall funding. This section provides a summary of these legislative developments that occurred between September 2024 through September 2025.

In September 2024, CCDF and On My Way Pre-K (OMWPK) income eligibility was expanded for employees of licensed or regulated child care programs. This expansion allowed more child care workers to qualify for child care assistance. Child care workers making 85% of the state median income (SMI) were now eligible to receive assistance; previously the income threshold was 150% of the federal poverty level. This allows a family of four making \$6,756 monthly (SMI), instead of \$3,900 (FPL), to be eligible for assistance.<sup>47</sup> In late 2024, the CCDF waiting list was reintroduced in Indiana, decreasing the number of families who have access to the program; more information about this can be found in the subsidized care section below.

Senate Enrolled Act 2 introduced new staffing flexibility, allowing 18-year-olds to serve

<sup>47</sup> Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. (2025). *Early Child Care and Education Legislative Changes*. <https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/early-child-care-and-education-legislative-changes/>



as lead teachers for all age groups, including infants, and permitting 16- and 17-year-olds to count in staff ratios for school-age children, provided they are always supervised by an adult caregiver. This act also broadens eligibility for early education programs, enabling public and charter schools to participate in the OMWPK program regardless of their PTQ level, and mandates a clear definition for substitute educators across all regulated child care provider categories.<sup>48</sup>

House Enrolled Act 1102 redefined regulations for family child care homes, allowing them to operate without a license under specific conditions related to compensation, hours of care, and the number of children served (with restrictions on infants). The act also permits contracted school employees to access child care programs on school property.<sup>49</sup>

A new Micro Facility Pilot Program will establish a licensed category for providers caring for three to 30 children, aiming to increase child care availability, especially in underserved areas, while developing flexible regulatory models to ensure health and safety. The governor also directed the Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) to study early childhood educators’ and out-of-school time employees’ compensation, which led to the report, *The Hidden Cost of Low Pay*.<sup>50</sup> The state also committed to publishing a dashboard reporting the child care subsidies available, resulting in the Child Care Subsidy Dashboard.<sup>51</sup>

## Early Care and Education Availability

In 2023, it is estimated that 28,348 young children in Lake and Porter counties needed care because all of their parents were in the workforce (both parents in a two-parent household or one in a single-parent household). Approximately two thirds of Lake (65%) and Porter (64%) counties’ young children need care, slightly less than the proportion who needed care statewide (68%).<sup>52</sup>

Capacity in Early Care and Education for Children in Need of Care				
Location	Children Under 6 Years Who Need Care		Capacity to Serve Young Children in Licensed and Registered Programs	Capacity Available to Children That Need Care
Indiana	320,946	68%	199,633	62%
Lake	21,676	65%	14,303	66%

<sup>48</sup> Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. (2025). *Early Child Care and Education Legislative Changes*. <https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/early-child-care-and-education-legislative-changes/>

<sup>49</sup> Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. (2025). *Early Child Care and Education Legislative Changes*. <https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/early-child-care-and-education-legislative-changes/>

<sup>50</sup> [https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/files/Executive-Summary\\_Hidden-Cost-of-Low-Pay.pdf](https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/files/Executive-Summary_Hidden-Cost-of-Low-Pay.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/Indianas-Child-Care-Dashboards/child-care-subsidy-dashboard/>

Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (2025). *Early Child Care and Education Legislative Changes*. <https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/early-child-care-and-education-legislative-changes/>

<sup>52</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP03.



Porter	6,672	64%	3,433	51%
Service Area Total	28,348	65%	17,736	63%

Source: Brighter Futures Indiana. (June 24, 2025). Data Center. <https://brighterfuturesindiana.org/data-center>; U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP03.

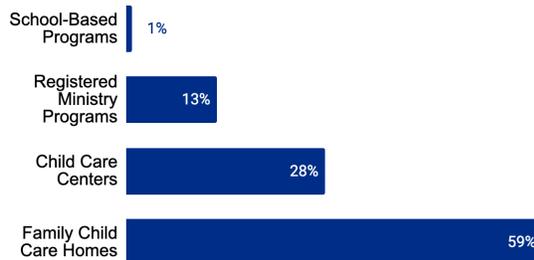
In Indiana, capacity in licensed and registered early care and education programs is available to serve less than two thirds (62%) of young children in need of care because parents work. In Lake County, two thirds (66%) of young children are served in licensed and registered programs, which is higher than the state and Porter County (51%).<sup>53</sup> The remaining young children who need care are being cared for by a family member, friend, or neighbor, or by a provider not licensed or registered by the state.

In Indiana, early care and education programs include child care centers, family child care homes, registered ministries, and school-based programs. As of June 2025, Lake County has 401 known programs, an increase from 2024 when there were 386 programs. Porter County has 58 programs, a slight decrease from 59 programs in 2024.<sup>54</sup>

## Early Care and Education Programs

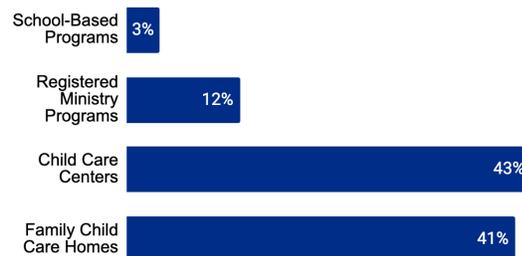
### Lake:

401 total programs



### Porter:

58 total programs



Source: Brighter Futures Indiana. (June 19, 2025). Data Center. <https://brighterfuturesindiana.org/data-center>

In Lake County, more than half of capacity is in child care centers (60%), followed by registered ministries (21%) and family child care homes (19%). School-based programs have the lowest capacity (0.3%). The capacity makeup is similar in Porter County, with approximately three quarters of capacity in child care centers (76%), followed by

<sup>53</sup> Brighter Futures Indiana. (June 24, 2025). Data Center. <https://brighterfuturesindiana.org/data-center>

<sup>54</sup> Brighter Futures Indiana. (June 19, 2025). Data Center. <https://brighterfuturesindiana.org/data-center>



registered ministries (12%) and family child care homes (9%). Porter County reports more capacity in school-based programs than Lake County (2%).<sup>55</sup>

Capacity in Early Care and Education Programs									
Location	Child Care Centers		Family Child Care Homes		Registered Ministries		School-Based		Total
Lake	8,527	60%	2,703	19%	3,025	21%	48	0.3%	14,303
Porter	2,608	76%	324	9%	421	12%	80	2%	3,433

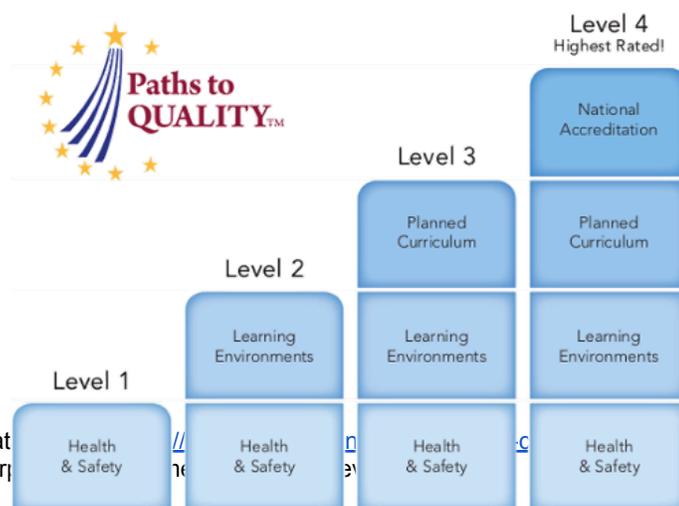
Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number and do not equal 100%  
 Source: Brighter Futures Indiana .(June 19, 2025). Data Center.  
<https://brighterfuturesindiana.org/data-center>

According to the Indiana Department of Education, in the 2024-2025 school year, pre-K programs were offered in 19 school corporations in Lake and Porter counties, serving 1,756 in Lake County and 286 in Porter County.<sup>56</sup> A list of Lake and Porter county school corporations, and the number of their pre-K enrollment, can be found in the appendix. Enrollment may vary from actual capacity. If a school-based program is serving children younger than preschool age, they may be licensed as a child care center and their capacity may also be captured in the child care capacity data in the table above.

Indiana’s Family and Social Services Administration’s (FSSA) Child Care Finder<sup>57</sup> and the Early Learning Marketplace<sup>58</sup> is a resource that allows parents and guardians to find care for their young children that is licensed or registered by the state. People can search for care based on age, days care is needed, auspice type, subsidies accepted, and quality rating.<sup>59</sup>

## High-Quality Child Care Availability

High-quality child care in Indiana is defined as a program rated at Paths to QUALITY™ Levels 3 or 4, or an approved nationally accredited program.



<sup>55</sup> Brighter Futures Indiana. (June 19, 2025). Data Center.

<sup>56</sup> Indiana Department of Education. (2025). Correlation of Pre-K Programs to School Corporations.

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.in.gov/fssa/childcarefinder/>

<sup>58</sup> <https://theearlylearningmarketplace.org/>

<sup>59</sup> Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. (2025). Child Care Finder.

<https://secure.in.gov/apps/fssa/providersearch/home/category/ch>

As of June 25, 2025, over half (51%) of known programs—or 203 programs—were considered high quality in Lake County. In Porter County, over half (57%)—or 33 programs—were considered high quality.

High-Quality Programs			
	Total Programs	Total High-Quality Programs	Percentage of Programs That Are High Quality
Indiana	4,377	1,947	45%
Lake	401	203	51%
Porter	58	33	57%

Source: Brighter Futures Indiana (June 25, 2025). Brighter Futures Indiana Data Center.  
<https://brighterfuturesindiana.org/data-center>

Lake County’s known child care programs can serve 14,303 children, and less than two thirds (61%) of children can be served by high quality programs; this is a higher percentage compared to Indiana (54%). Porter County has more high-quality capacity, serving 68% of total capacity (3,433) in high-quality care.

Capacity in High-Quality Programs			
	Total Capacity	Total High-Quality Capacity	Percentage of Capacity That is High Quality
Indiana	199,867	107,007	54%
Lake	14,303	8,716	61%
Porter	3,433	2,329	68%

Source: Brighter Futures Indiana (June 25, 2025). Brighter Futures Indiana Data Center.  
<https://brighterfuturesindiana.org/data-center>

## Subsidized Care

The Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) provides voucher assistance to low-income families for child care so they can work or attend school. On My Way Pre-K awards grants to low-income families with children 4 years of age, so that they can access high-quality pre-K the year before they begin kindergarten. In order to qualify, a parent must also be working or enrolled in school.

The state produces a CCDF Fact Sheet for each county monthly, which reports data on the subsidies CCDF and On My Way Pre-K. In May 2025, 6,193 children from 3,572 families were authorized to receive subsidies for the period in Lake County; the largest number of vouchers were used by preschool children and school-age children. Of these, 366 children from 358 families participated in On My Way Pre-K. The following is a breakdown by ages served by CCDF and On My Way Pre-K:



- Infants (under 1 year old): 3%
- Ages 1-2 years: 20%
- Ages 3-5 years: 40%
- Kindergarten-age (5 years): <1%
- School-age children (6+ years): 39%<sup>60</sup>

In May 2025, 853 children from 571 families were authorized to receive subsidies for the period in Porter County; the largest number of vouchers were used by preschool children. Of these, 77 children from 76 families participated in On My Way Pre-K. The following is a breakdown by ages served by CCDF and On My Way Pre-K:

- Infants (under 1 year old): 2%
- Ages 1-2 years: 20%
- Ages 3-5 years: 47%
- Kindergarten-age (5 years): 0%
- School-age children (6+ years): 33%<sup>61</sup>

Prior to the COVID pandemic, Indiana had a waitlist for the CCDF programs, but following the pandemic, Indiana used COVID relief funds to expand CCDF, which increased eligibility for CCDF vouchers and essentially eliminated the waiting list. In late 2024 after the COVID relief funding lapsed, the waiting list was reintroduced, and in July 2025, over 21,000 Hoosier children were on the list.<sup>62 63</sup> In May 2025, there were 2,553 children from 1,529 families on the CCDF waiting list in Lake County. In Porter County, 366 children from 229 families were on the waiting list.

On October 5, 2025, Indiana's Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning (OECOSL) implemented revised CCDF voucher reimbursement rates to address a projected \$225 million funding gap through 2026. The new rates, which are based on cost data from provider surveys, are being adjusted to protect voucher access for the

“I am a family child care provider. I absolutely love my job. I love these kids and their families. **This decrease in funding is going to jeopardize everything. I will have to close my doors. I care for low-income families who rely on their CCDF voucher. They are unable to pay any type of overage. Not only will I and my staff be out of a job, but my families will also be too.** They will need to relinquish their vouchers. Which I personally feel was the goal of this decrease. These children think of this as their second home, they spend more time with us than their families. These kids are going to be crushed. I’m very glad the decision was made to “choose the kids” though. Staff and I will be looking for alternate employment. We will turn our backs to the field that so easily disregarded us.”  
– Lake County Child Care Provider

Source: <https://inaeyc.org/ccdf-stories/>

<sup>60</sup> FSSA OECOSL. (May 2025). CCDF Lake County Fact Sheet.

<sup>61</sup> FSSA OECOSL. (May 2025). CCDF Porter County Fact Sheet.

<sup>62</sup> Porter, G. (2024, December). *Porter: ‘FSSA’s heartbreaking waiting lists are the result of fiscal cliffs’*. Indiana House Democratic Caucus. <https://www.indianahousedemocrats.org/news/porter-fssas-heartbreaking-waiting-lists-are-the-result-of-fiscal-cliffs>

<sup>63</sup> Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. (2025, July 28). Child Care Subsidy Dashboard. <https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/Indianas-Child-Care-Dashboards/child-care-subsidy-dashboard/>



approximately 55,000 children currently served. The changes involve specific decreases by age group: 10% for infants and toddlers, 15% for preschoolers, and 35% for school-age children. As a result, families may be required to pay an "overage" to cover the difference between a provider's private rate and the new, lower CCDF subsidy. Additionally, starting with reauthorizations on October 12, families will have the option to choose new part-time vouchers, which cover two days of care per week at half the reimbursement of a full-time voucher.<sup>64</sup> <sup>65</sup> This link provides the updated provider reimbursement rates: <https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/provider-reimbursements>.

## The Unmet Need for Head Start

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Lake County has over 8,000 children under 6 living in poverty (below 100% FPL) and an additional 2,175 living between 100% and 125% FPL. Porter County has 1,439 children living in poverty, and an additional 450 living between 100% and 125% FPL.<sup>66</sup>

Based on Geminus Head Start program's funded enrollment of 1,334 children, Geminus has the capacity to serve 14% of children living at or below the federal poverty level in Lake and Porter counties, with a majority of the funded enrollment located in Lake County. Based on the cumulative enrollment of 1,648 children served in Geminus Head Start programs, Geminus served 17% of total young children in poverty in Lake and Porter counties.

Young Children within the Federal Poverty Guidelines			
Location	<100% FPL (poverty)	<125% FPL	<185% FPL
Lake	8,383	10,558	15,453
Porter	1,439	1,889	2,879
<b>Service Area Total</b>	<b>9,822</b>	<b>12,447</b>	<b>18,332</b>
<b>Percentage of Children Meeting Federal Poverty Guidelines Geminus has Capacity to Serve (1,334 2024-25 funded enrollment)</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Percentage of Total Children Meeting Federal Poverty Guidelines Geminus Serves (1,648 2024-25 cumulative enrollment)</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>9%</b>

<sup>64</sup> Indiana Family & Social Services Administration. (2025, September 4). *OECOSL Announces Updated Child Care Voucher Rates to Comply with Federal Regulations and Protect Families* [Press release]. [https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/files/Updated-Child-Care-Voucher-Rates-pdf?utm\\_campaign=adh&utm\\_content=provider&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=20250923](https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/files/Updated-Child-Care-Voucher-Rates-pdf?utm_campaign=adh&utm_content=provider&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=20250923)

<sup>65</sup> Indiana Family & Social Services Administration. (2025, September 22). *Reimbursement Rate FAQ*. <https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/files/ReimbursementRateFAQs.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17024.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17024.

The chart below considers the unmet need, or how many children living in poverty are not receiving care with Head Start or early childhood care and education through a CCDF subsidy. By adding the Head Start supply, to CCDF enrollment, and subtracting those totals from the number of young children living in poverty, we can see that almost 3,700 young children living in poverty in Lake and Porter counties are in need of access to affordable, quality child care.

<b>Unmet Need for Head Start Eligible Children</b>				
	<b>Supply</b> (Geminus HS, EHS, and EHS-CCP cumulative enrollment)	<b>Supply</b> (Child Care Development Fund enrollment)	<b>Demand</b> (Young children living in poverty)	<b>Estimated Unmet Need</b> (Slots needed for children in need)
Ages 0-2	460	1,593	4,681	2,628
Ages 3-5	1,188	2,883	5,141	1,070
<b>Service Area Total Under 6</b>	<b>1,648</b>	<b>4,476</b>	<b>9,822</b>	<b>3,698</b>

Geminus Data Note: EHS count includes child slots only and does not include slots for pregnant women.  
 Geminus Data Source: Geminus Head Start, Program Information Report, 2024-25 Cumulative Enrollment.  
 CCDF Enrollment Note: Numbers are estimates based on the CCDF May County Fact Sheets. Calculations multiplied the total number of children authorized to receive subsidies by the percentage for the age group for each county (found on page 41).  
 CCDF Source: FSSA OECOSL. (May 2025). CCDF Lake and Porter County Fact Sheets.  
 Children in Poverty Note: Estimates developed by applying the percentage of overall children under 6 in each age group to the total number of children under 6 living in poverty.  
 Children in Poverty Source: Age by County in Indiana. EZAPOPOP; U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17024.

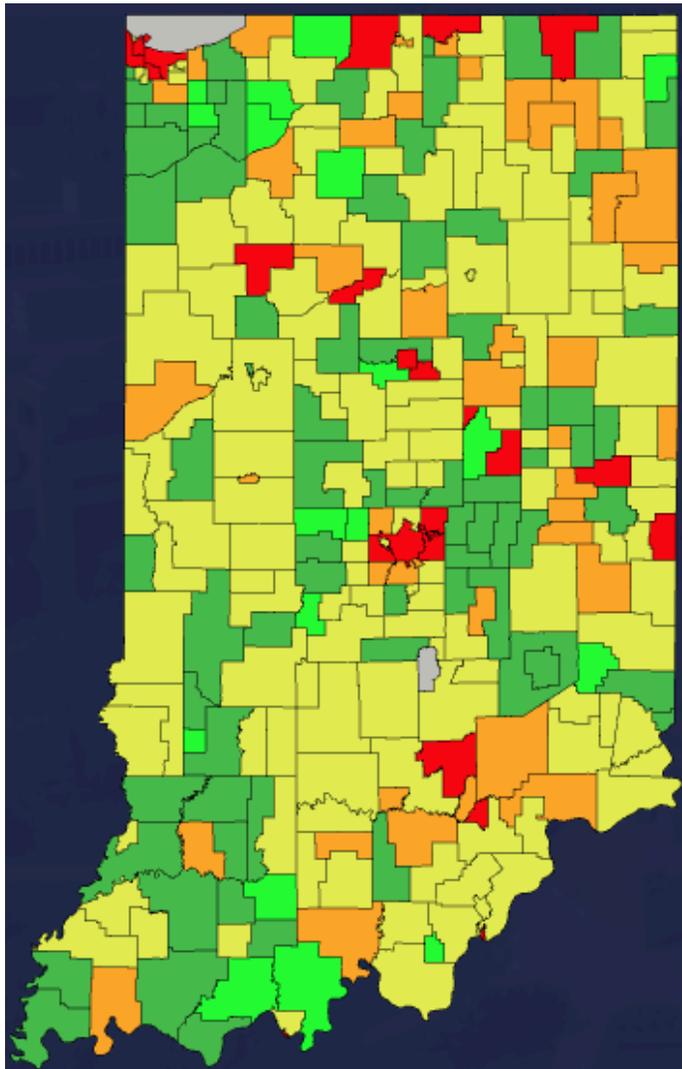
## Education Needs of Head Start-Eligible Children and Families

To assess the education needs of Head Start-eligible children and families, TCG looked at the number of school corporations in each county, the reading level of third graders, high school graduation rate, and adult educational attainment in Geminus’ service area.

### *School Corporations in Lake and Porter Counties*

Lake County has 16 school corporations and Porter County has six school corporations. In the 2024-2025 school year, 19 school corporations offered Pre-K programs in Lake

and Porter counties. Fifteen programs in Lake County served 1,756 preschool-age children, and four programs in Porter County served 286 preschool-age children.<sup>67</sup>



### Third Grade Reading

The Indiana Department of Education publishes data on third grade reading assessment in Indiana. The map is a snapshot from the EdData: 3rd Grade Reading Data Dashboard, and is color coded by school district boundaries to show the percentage of third grade students who passed the IREAD test in 2023. The color code outlined below shows the percentage of students who passed the IREAD in each school district.

- Bright Green - 95% - 100%
- Green - 90% - 95%
- Yellow - 80% - 90%
- Orange - 70% - 80%
- Red - 0% - 70%

Combined, Lake and Porter counties have school districts at every level of IREAD pass rates, with the lowest scores in Northwest Lake County and the highest scores in West Central Porter County. Third grade IREAD Pass Percentages by school is available in the appendix.<sup>68</sup>

### High School Graduation Rate

In 2024, Indiana achieved its highest graduation rate on record at 90%.<sup>69</sup> The average 2024 high school graduation rate in Lake County (90%) matched that.. Tri-Creek School Corporation and School Town of Munster had the highest graduation rates of just over 98%. Gary School Corporation had the lowest graduation rate at 63%, which is the lowest graduation rate in the county by eight percentage points.

<sup>67</sup> Indiana Department of Education. (2025). Corporation Enrollment by Grade Level.

<sup>68</sup> Indiana Department of Education. (2025). EdData: 3rd Grade Reading Dashboard. <https://eddata.doe.in.gov/PublicHome/GetObjectByUuidAndViewType?uuid=df4a26e1-eedc-4480-812d-da6cad5528ff&viewType=Report&currentPage=1>

<sup>69</sup> Indiana Department of Education. (2024, December 30). *State Graduation Rate Highest on Record* [Press release]. <https://www.in.gov/doe/files/2024-State-Graduation-Rate-Highest-on-Record.pdf>



The average high school graduation rate in Porter County is 98%, with Porter Township School Corporation achieving a 100% graduation rate in 2024. No school districts in Porter County were below a 96% graduation rate.<sup>70</sup>

### *Adult Educational Attainment*

In 2023, Indiana's overall percentage of adults ages 25-64 who had a college degree or credentials was 54%, ranking 30th in the United States. Among these, approximately one tenth (12%) had a short-term credential, such as a certification or certificate. Indiana is ranked among the top five states for the percentage of adults who hold a certificate or credential. The remaining 42% of adults hold an associate degree or higher.<sup>71</sup>

The rate of adults holding an associate's degree or higher in Lake County is lower compared to the state. More than one third (36%) of adults in Lake County, and less than half (41%) of adults in Porter County had a college degree, ranking 25th and 15th among counties in the state, respectively.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Indiana Department of Education (2025). 2024 Indiana State Graduation Rate.

<sup>71</sup> Lumina Foundation. (2023). *A Stronger National Educational Attainment 2023 Report for Indiana*.  
<https://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/attainment/indiana>

<sup>72</sup> Lumina Foundation. (2023). *A Stronger National Educational Attainment 2023 Report for Indiana*.  
<https://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/attainment/indiana>

# Stakeholder Feedback

This section summarizes qualitative insights from Geminus Head Start family and staff surveys. The feedback shows that overall, families are very satisfied with the child care and other services they receive at Geminus Head Start and staff are very satisfied with the support they receive. This is a breakdown of the overall strengths and weaknesses identified through the surveys.



## Family Feedback

Geminus Head Start gathered 87 responses in its spring 2025 parent and guardian survey, including eight responses from Spanish-speaking families. The number of responses increased from 81 for the 2023-24 school year survey. Geminus Head Start staff worked to increase survey participation rates this year by distributing the survey earlier and posting it to their virtual avenues on a weekly basis.

The survey was distributed to all Geminus Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-CCP locations. Families from a variety of program sites completed the survey to express their overall experience with Geminus Head Start and answer specific questions on barriers to attendance, communication preferences, and resource needs.

Survey respondents indicated the following as their Geminus program:

1. Anonei Park Academy (7)
2. The Arc (7)
3. CRC Kids World (5)
4. East Chicago Early Learning Academy (7)
5. Faith child care center (8)
6. Faith child care home (1)
7. Home-based (5)
8. Little Fireflies Academia (5)
9. Merchants of Hope Enrichment Academy (1)
10. Porter County Early Learning Academy (12)
11. Ridge View Elementary (13)
12. Ridgewood (3)
13. Robertson Child Development Center (1)
14. Safe Haven Academy (2)
15. Southridge Elementary (3)
16. St. Mark Early Learning Academy (4)
17. TradeWinds Services (2)
18. Virgil Bailey Elementary (2)

Parents were asked, “How did you learn about enrolling in the Geminus Head Start Program”? The most common responses follow.

- Family member or friend told me about it (32%)
- My older child(ren) participated in the program (21%)
- Recommended from another community organization (15%)

Parents were also asked, “If you did not receive a spot in the Head Start program, what would you have done for your child this year”? Their top three responses were:

- Enrolled in another early education program (37%)
- Not enrolled in an early education program (28%)
- Had my child stay with a family member, friend, or neighbor (24%)

Approximately one third (32%) of respondents said they have been participating in Geminus Head Start programming for one to two years. Approximately one quarter who responded said they had been participating for six to 12 months (26%), and nearly the same percentage had been participating for more than four years (25%). The remaining options included two to three years (9%), less than six months (8%), and three to four years (5%).

**Parents rated their satisfaction with the following aspects of the program very highly, as shown in the chart below:**

- Child’s overall experience in the Head Start program this year
- Support their family received from the Head Start staff this year
- Communication from the Head Start staff throughout the year

	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
<b>Child’s overall experience</b>	2%	1%	1%	11%	<b>85%</b>
<b>Family support</b>	1%	0%	3%	8%	<b>90%</b>
<b>Communication</b>	1%	0%	4%	8%	<b>89%</b>



Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding to the nearest whole number.

## 99% of parents feel their child's individual needs were met by the Head Start Program.

Parents and guardians gave Geminus Head Start high marks for all of the areas where they requested feedback, from the education, environment and communication to working with teachers, staff, and the family's advocate. For a few of the questions, the answers between the English and Spanish survey responses varied greatly, and so English and Spanish responses have been separated since they may provide further insight.

Feedback Questions and Statements	Responded Yes	
	Eng.	Span.
Your child's individual needs were addressed by the Head Start program,	99%	100%
The learning environment at Head Start was safe and welcoming.	99%	100%
You are satisfied with the education your child is receiving at Head Start.	98%	100%
Your child's teacher provided you with information on how your child is progressing in Head Start and what you can do to help your child learn and develop.	94%	100%
Your child's teacher helped you understand your child's social/emotional development.	95%	100%
The Head Start program is preparing your child for kindergarten or next level of education.	92%	100%
The Head Start staff supported and discussed the importance of your child's daily attendance.	100%	88%
Your Head Start Family Advocate worked with you to set a goal(s) for your family.	96%	75%
Your Head Start Family Advocate supported your family to achieve your goal(s).	96%	100%
You received community resources to support your family's needs.	87%	50%
The Head Start staff encouraged your family to attend engagement events.	100%	100%
The prerecorded virtual education opportunities met your needs.	96%	88%

*Eng. = English responses; Span. = Spanish responses*



Nearly all parents and guardians surveyed said Geminus Head Start is preparing their child in the following areas:

- Language and communication (94%)
- Physical development (92%)
- Social and emotional development (91%)
- Cognitive skills (90%)

When asked, “What reason or most common barrier prevents your child from attending Head Start regularly (absent more than 3 days per month)?” more than one third responded child health-related (illness) (39%) or does not apply (37%).

Top responses to, “What resources is your family in need of the most at this time? (Select all that apply.)” were:

- None of the above. I have received all the resources I am currently in need of by Head Start Staff or other program (43, 49%).
- Utilities assistance (12, 14%)
- Additional child care (10, 13%)
- Employment and job training (12, 14%)
- Housing (10, 13%)

It is notable that among the survey responses completed in Spanish, that English as a second language was the resource in highest demand (7, 88% of Spanish respondents, 8% overall respondents).

Geminus Head Start asked parents and guardians what parent education opportunities they would like to see offered. Themes among the responses revolved around stress management and parenting, CPR and safety, education and employment, and more parent engagement in the classroom. All responses in the Spanish survey were around learning English.

#### *Stress Management and Parenting*

- Stress management
- Balancing busy schedules, caring from children of different ages and needs
- More conscious discipline materials offered to parents
- Conscious discipline
- Help with co-parenting issues and conflict
- Earlier start time
- Child care options for evenings and weekends. Best practices

#### *CPR and Safety*

- CPR training for parents
- CPR safety courses
- Medical training



### *Education and Employment*

- Jobs
- Free educational opportunities, degree or certificate
- “College diploma would be amazing, but I know it probably isn’t an option.”

### *Parent Engagement in the Classroom*

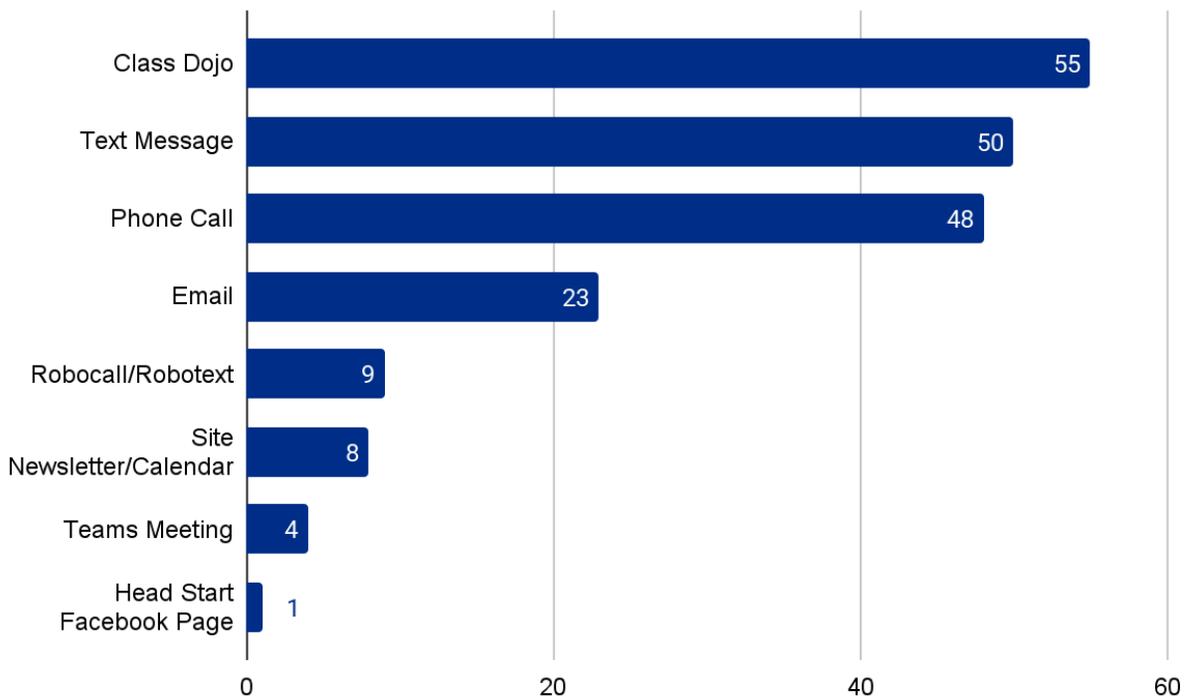
- “Homework to go over whatever is done in class to let parents know what they are working on in class, and to talk to the teacher about what kind of day the child had. We do not get to talk to the teacher. I have asked and I never see anything he works on in class.”
- Parent staying in the class to help out

### *English as a Second Language (from responses completed in Spanish)*

- English school for parents
- English as a second language
- Activities to help children learn English faster

## **Preferred Communication Methods**

About two thirds of parents and guardians reported Class Dojo (63%) as their preferred method of communication, and over half said text messages (57%), and phone calls (55%) were their preferred methods of communication.



## Staff Feedback

Geminus provided a summary of the staff survey results, which were collected after multiple training sessions throughout the year. Geminus reported the goal of collecting feedback was to assess staff's satisfaction with current resources and identify themes to support them as they serve children and families in HS and EHS.

The top three responses to requests for feedback from staff include:

- No support needed (140 responses)
- Team and peer support (117 responses)
- Training and materials (95 responses)

Geminus noted the following regarding team and peer support and access to training and materials:

### *Team and Peer Support*

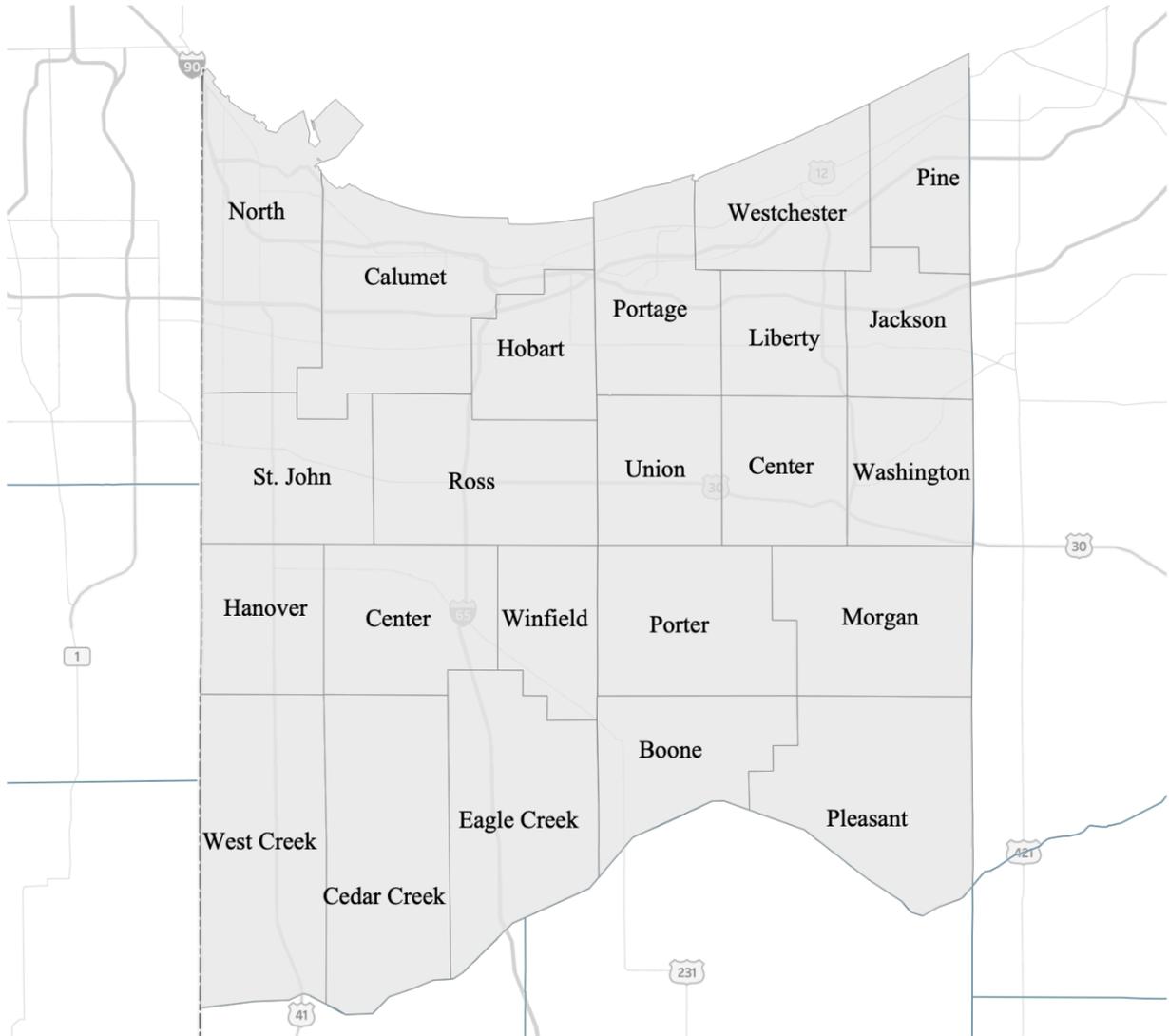
Staff consistently emphasized the importance of collaboration, communication, and shared responsibility among teaching teams, coaches, and leadership. Unified implementation of strategies across classrooms was seen as critical to consistency and success.

### *Access to Training and Materials*

Many staff requested ongoing access to visual aids, handouts, and classroom posters, as well as laminated or printed materials. These tools were valued for reinforcing strategies and supporting consistency across environments.

# Appendix

## Appendix A: Townships in Lake and Porter Counties



## Appendix B. Family Income and Children Living in Poverty by Township

County	Township	Median Annual Income for Families with Children Under 18 Years	Number of Children Under 6 Years Living Under 100% FPL
<b>Lake</b>	Calumet township	\$35,607	3,501
	Cedar Creek township	\$115,922	40
	Center township	\$115,625	181
	Eagle Creek township	\$115,764	0
	Hanover township	\$142,803	0
	Hobart township	\$68,679	741
	North township	\$57,840	2,972
	Ross township	\$82,518	334
	St. John township	\$125,054	598
	West Creek township	\$147,833	0
	Winfield township	\$129,173	16
	<b>Porter</b>	Boone township	\$120,724
Center township		\$111,731	401
Jackson township		\$148,808	0
Liberty township		\$131,343	54
Morgan township		\$158,472	0
Pine township		\$116,544	70
Pleasant township		\$104,409	9
Portage township		\$82,112	571
Porter township		\$118,772	39
Union township		\$122,417	77
Washington township		\$125,382	0
Westchester township		\$100,492	207

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables B19125 and B17024.