
2024-2025

Update
Community Assessment



Bear River Head Start

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Executive Summary

As required by the Head Start Performance Standards 45CFR 1302.11 (b) (1) [a grantee] must conduct a community assessment once every five years and updated annually. The community assessment is a strategic planning tool to help BRHS determine long-term and short-term program goals and objectives. In addition, the community assessment identifies issues and trends within the BRHS service area that directly impact vulnerable families with young children.

Bear River Head Start uses the collected data to design a program that meets the identified community need and builds on identified strengths and resources.

Programs must annually review and update the community assessment to reflect any significant changes including increased availability of publicly funded pre-kindergarten, an assessment of how the pre-kindergarten available in the community meets the needs of the parents and children served by the program, and whether it is offered for a full school day, rates of family and child homelessness, and significant shifts in community demographics.

Bear River Head Start is on year three of our five-year grant cycle. In 2022-2023 the Baseline Community Assessment was developed. This year in 2025, we share the updates for the 2025-2025 time period. The Community Assessment is updated to reflect emerging trends and identify significant data to ensure our program services are responsive to the needs of the children and families that we serve. When the program uses data from the Community Assessment along with other program data that is collected on an ongoing basis, it helps the program make decisions for planning. The Community Assessment helps the program ensure we are providing the right services to the right people.

Included with this document are the updated data that is different in 2024-2025, that may have an impact on the service area and the children and families served. The updated data provides information and emerging trends that may help the program as we recruit and enroll and ensure we are focusing on the right areas where our income eligible children and families are located. The new data shows us where the growth is within our service area, and what the demographics look like for the people living in our communities. We can determine if our services are in the right areas, where they are needed the most.

Background

Bear River Head Start has a 14,000 square mile service area throughout northern Utah and southeastern Idaho. Our service area includes Cache, Rich, and Box Elder Counties in Utah. Our Idaho service area includes Bear Lake, Oneida, Caribou, Franklin, and south Bannock County. In total we have seven counties in Utah and Idaho. Our service area consists of two distinct population areas, metropolitan and rural. Cache County, and Box Elder County are the metropolitan areas, with much of our population within these two counties. Rich, Bear Lake, Caribou, Oneida, and Franklin Counties

are more rural in nature. The southern part of Bannock County, outside of Pocatello city limits was assigned to our grantee from the Pocatello School District. The School District felt the rural nature of south Bannock would fit more closely with our rural service areas and served through home-based program services. Growth in the southern area of Bannock County has been demonstrating higher incomes and more housing development, turning south Bannock into a more suburban area.

Key Findings

- Population growth continues to have an impact on communities within our service areas. Most of the current growth is from natural increase, with some out-migration. Many cities and towns within our service area are seeing tremendous growth.
- Growth is changing the demographics in many communities in our service area. Income eligible children and their families may be in various locations now than they were in prior years ago. Locations of program options must flow towards where the children needing services are located.
- Logan is seeing an increase in migrants and a young population within city limits.
- Increasing housing prices (purchase and rentals) are affecting our service population.

Changes in Significant data for 2024-2025

The following information identifies updated data and information regarding trends and changes within the BRHS service area.

Population Increase/ Total Population- 2024-2025

Cache County	Box Elder County	Rich County	Bear Lake County	Franklin County	Oneida County	Caribou County	Bannock County - South
+1.6%	+1.9%	+0.8%	+1.5%	+2.05%	+1.46%	+0.3%	+1.3%
146,961	68,845	2,774	6,779	16,142	5,379	7,257	6,141

*Population increase within the program service area continues to have an impact on children and families. The Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah shows that the population growth is coming from both in-state and out-of-state migration. Birth rates in women ages 25-29 is higher than the national average, and one of the highest in the nation. The birth rate is 13.01 per 1,000 and is ranked fourth in the nation. The Logan Utah metropolitan area saw the 10th highest population growth rate in the nation between July 2020 and July 2021, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The area was recognized for its economic vitality, which emphasizes jobs, wages and high-tech growth and broadband access. Logan City has a high number of high-tech jobs and industries, including pharmaceutical and medical equipment manufacturing. These types of jobs help drive the economy in

Cache County. Cache County is facing its own unique challenges along with its growth. Cache Valley is known for its agricultural identity, with a rich farming history. With the population boom, comes housing development, putting pressure on farmers and the valley’s open space. As more people move in, housing becomes more expensive.

Average Housing Costs by County 2024-2025

Cache	Box Elder	Rich	Bear Lake	Franklin	Oneida	Caribou	South Bannock
Purchase \$499,900 1.5% Increase	Purchase \$474,900 6.9% Increase	Purchase \$695,000 Unchanged 2024-2025	Purchase \$595,000 Unchanged 2024-2025	Purchase \$499,000 1.3% Increase	Purchase \$375,000 5.6 Increase	Purchase \$370,000 6.2% Increase	Purchase \$359,700 1.2% Increase
Rent \$1,700 month +11/7% increase	Rent \$1,120 month +4.1% increase	Rent \$930- \$2,000 month +4.8% increase (recreational community)	Rent \$930- \$2,000 month +3.01% increase (recreational community)	Rent \$1,469 month +11.7% increase very limited rentals	Rent \$1,025 +28% month limited rentals	Rent \$1,269 +3.1% month limited rentals	Rent \$1,130 month +15.4% increase

Housing and rental costs in our service area places a heavy burden on our eligible population. Performance Standards issued 8/24 allow for some flexibility in determining eligibility in calculating a family’s gross income in situations of excessive housing costs within our service areas. Families making near or above poverty wages and facing high housing costs may be eligible for Head Start services if those housing costs were determined during the eligibility process.

Cache County has organized a Housing Crisis Task Force in response to concerns about the extreme shortage of housing, unaffordable home prices, and an acute shortage of rental property, especially for low-income families. Cache Valley will need 11,600 additional housing units between now and 2030 to accommodate new household growth. In Cache County less than 25% of householders aged 25 to 45 can afford a home at the average selling price. *Source Bear River Association of Government.*

Because Cache County is the geographic center of our service area, the surrounding counties are experiencing the same issues. Many families live further away from Cache County because the housing prices are more reasonable. The tradeoff is transportation and commute costs traveling further to jobs. Box Elder County located in northern Utah experiences spill over from the populated Ogden Utah area. Rich County and Bear Lake County experience high housing costs because of housing purchased as second homes for families traveling to Bear Lake for recreational opportunities. 73% of the houses in Bear Lake and Rich Counties are second homes used seasonally, and for vacation rentals driving the housing costs up.

Bear River Head Start Service Area Maps

Bear River Head Start, Early Head Start operates across 12,000 square miles in Northern Utah and Southeastern Idaho. Eight counties are included in the service area, within two states.



Preschool Head Start Services:
 Oneida County, Idaho
 Bannock County, Idaho
 Caribou County, Idaho
 Bear Lake County, Idaho
 Rich County, Utah

Preschool Head Start & Early Head Start Services:
 Franklin County, Idaho

Preschool Head Start, Early Head Start Services:
 Box Elder County, Utah
 Cache County, Utah



County Data Poverty and Poverty Indicators 2023-2024.

County	Poverty Level	Single Parent Households (Mothers)	Children 0-5 in Poverty	Children w/o Health Insurance	Children eligible for free school lunch	Families receiving SNAP
UTAH						
Cache	11.3% to 13,6 % 25% (Logan)	12%	11% 18% (Logan)	4%	33%	10%
Box Elder	8.0% to 8.2%	8%	16%	6%	27%	9%
Rich	8.0%-to 8.01%	9%	7%	10%	30%	4%
IDAHO						
Franklin	8.2% to 9.61%	12%	10%	8%	31%	8%
Caribou	9.80%-down to 6.72%	7%	6%	4%	44%	8%
Bear Lake	9.7% to 10.6%	11%	12%	6%	36%	9%
Oneida	10.8% to 13.5%	10%	12%	5%	33%	11%
Bannock	12.9% to 14.3%	15%	13.5%	3%	46%	14%

*Increased poverty levels provide ERSE data, guiding recruitment/enrollment, and center location analysis.

Medium Household Income by County

Cache	Box Elder	Rich	Bannock	Bear Lake	Caribou	Franklin	Oneida
2022-23 65,670	2022-23 67,486	2022-23 67,396	2022-23 56,472	2022-23 60,337	2022-23 65,528	2022-23 56,677-	2022-23 64,766
2023-24	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24
83,695	\$ 72,769	\$ 69,250	\$ 65,686	\$ 63,244	\$ 65,380	\$ 61,679	\$ 67,383

Medium Household Income & Poverty Level by City/Town with BRHS Centers

County & Town	Med. Household Income	Poverty Level	County & Town	Med. Household Income	Poverty Level
Cache County	\$83,695	13.6%	Box Elder County	\$ 72,769	
Logan-	\$ 52,473	26.8%	Brigham City	\$ 63,315	9.52%
Hyde Park-	\$ 93,306	7.32%	Tremonton	\$ 69,440	10.87%
Smithfield-	\$ 87,175	7.62%	Garland	\$ 56,332	14.03%
Richmond-	\$ 84,511	3.86%	Fielding	\$ 75,000	7.91%
Hyrum-	\$75,951	7.08%			

*Logan City has most of the income eligible children. Families living in mid-town Logan or south Logan usually attend the Logan center. The Hyde Park center is near Logan and many families living in north Logan usually enroll in the Hyde Park center.

*The poverty level in Logan, Utah is higher than the national average. According to the US Census Bureau, Logan has the highest poverty rate in the entire state of Utah. The statistics show Logan has 12,896 people living below the poverty line. Of that number 13,933 of them are employed. 19.6% of individuals under the age of 18 are living in poverty in this city.

*Logan is the focus for ERSEA recruitment and enrollment in the Cache County area because of the population/ housing and poverty level.

Medium Household Income & Poverty Level by City/Town with BRHS Centers Continued

County and Town	Med. Household Income	Poverty Level	County And Town	Med. Household Income	Poverty Level
Rich/Bear Lake Counties	\$ 63,244	10.6%	Oneida County	\$ 67,383	14.4%
Montpelier	\$ 50,668	12.9%	Malad	\$ 67,835	12.7%
Paris	\$76,750	15.1%			

*Rich and Bear Lake Counties Surround Bear Lake. Part of the lake is in Idaho and part of Utah. BRHS has a center-based classroom in Paris Idaho. Many children and families in the Paris classroom come from Montpelier to access pre-school services. A valuable partnership with the school district and Paris Elementary allows our enrolled children to ride school district buses to attend the Paris classroom. The service area has surrounding towns that are small and rural in nature, and these children and families attend the Paris classroom if they are eligible. There are also families that come from the Utah side of the border to Paris to attend class. Families that live in this area live around Bear Lake, and they are familiar with driving back and forth across their states borders to access services. The high housing costs in this service area will be considered as recruitment and enrollment aligns with new Head Start Performance Standards issued in 2024. This service area has exceptionally high housing costs due to the area being a heavy tourist location and many of the homes are second homes, driving the housing prices up.

County And Town	Med. Household Income	Poverty Level	County And Town	Med. Household Income	Poverty Level
Caribou County	\$ 65,380	6.7%	Franklin County	\$ 61,679	9.61%
Soda Springs	\$44,301	11.8%	Preston	\$ 51,914	16.45%
Grace	\$69,851	4.07%	Weston	\$ 80, 000	2.1%

*Soda Springs Idaho had a decrease in the working age population, there are more retired and older citizens. The population between 0 and 35 has decreased, which is representative of our enrollment

population. Caribou County and surrounding towns are served through homebased services because of the decrease in income eligible children and families. We continue to monitor this area for emerging trends, which may affect their service and program option needs.

Trends/ Changes/Needs/ Responses

The following data represents other trends, significant changes, identified needs and proposed responses from Bear River Head Start. The data is representative of the Bear River Head Start service area.

Bear River Head Start Homebased Services

Current Status/Need: Parents continue to request center-based services over home-based services. ERSEA data continues to indicate numbers on the waitlists for center-based classrooms. The difficulty lies in the fact that many of our rural areas have small communities, spread apart in distance. It is not feasible to have centers in all our rural areas, geographic locations because of the location of our families at any given period of time, costs associated with center-based services as opposed to home-based services and lower population and income eligible children in our very rural service areas.

Staff Turnover and Salaries

Need/Status: Staff turnover is beginning to stabilize. We still have staff leave for reasons such as moving out of the service area, expanding their family, personal or health reasons, or returning to school.

However, we still have staff members that report to their supervisors that teaching young children is more difficult than they had imagined. We recognize that teaching is a difficult profession. We also recognize that teaching Head Start can be a demanding job.

Response: The Office of Head Start recognizes programs are struggling to retain staff. The new Performance Standards outline strategies for identifying ways to increase staff wages and salaries. BRHS will continue to analyze enrollment and pay structures within the program, to analyze alignment with school district wages and salaries. The grantee will work with the Board and Policy Council to outline plans to meet this need as we move forward into the future.

The grantee continues to work with teaching staff to ensure positive workspaces and conditions. The grantee provides social-emotional coaches to collaborate with teachers in the classrooms, to address challenging behaviors of children and identify methods to increase positive social emotional behaviors. Management staff work with front line staff to mitigate stress and burn out factors/ issues in their jobs. Family services staff collaborate with parents on implementing conscious discipline techniques in their homes, with their children. The program supports parents in bridging strategies as they work with their children to carry over at home what their kids are learning in the classroom. Management works with family services staff to balance their workload, ensure assigned caseloads meet Performance Standard requirements, and help their staff be able to deal with hard things that happen within their caseloads.

Identified Program Strengths

- The programs focus on mental health for children, families, and staff. Bear River Head Start has staff members that specifically work with classroom staff to address challenging behaviors with children, identify strategies to promote positive social emotional well-being. Trauma Informed Care (TIC) curriculum and practices for children, staff, and parents support trauma care. BRHS has a developed TIC plan for all program options, and for all clientele and staff. Trauma informed practices are integrated throughout all program options and services.
- Bear River Head Start has always maintained full enrollment, ensuring ERSEA practices are followed and upheld to always maintain compliance. All staff work closely together to perform ERSEA activities and recruitment efforts.
- The grantee has solid governance and Policy Council support. Parents and Board members are very committed to serving the program and support all program operations. The management team has many years of experience working for the grantee. The team works well together and has developed communication systems and practices that are supportive and transparent and help each program option succeed.
- Homebased program services maintain success and quality home visits, even though many programs across the nation are moving away from homebased services into centerbased services. The home-based staff have incredibly low turnover, and they are committed to ensuring quality to enrolled children and parents.
- Center-based services show high innovation levels to meet any challenges that arise. The management team is committed to supporting classroom staff to ensure staff have the resources and support needed to meet their responsibilities, and continually improve program services.
- Family services have combined with ERSEA and Health services to create a seamless system of communication and service delivery. The combination of services benefits enrolled children and families, and they utilize the resources and staff members to a greater degree, ensuring the staff members flow together to meet compliance and deliver quality services.
- Fiscal staff have completely reorganized over the last twelve-month period. The staff members had a steep learning curve yet worked closely together and with program management and staff to develop stronger fiscal systems than we previously had. They have identified methods and manners of collecting and managing fiscal documentation that is more efficient and more effective. The fiscal staff have a great flow between themselves and the Fiscal Officer a contracted CPA and with program operations.

Community Services and Partnerships

- Increased social services within service areas, including identified needs and focus on Trauma Informed Care, are bringing needed support for enrolled children and families.
- Medical and Dental providers within the service area agree to collaborate with Bear River Head Start families on a sliding scale fee, and/or provide donated services. Established partnerships between the program and community collaborations are helpful to children and families that are uninsured or underinsured.
- Community partnerships with BRHS help enrolled children and families access services through referral systems. Our more populated service areas, particularly Cache County UT., have many partners that increase the depth of services available for our enrollment population. The partnerships that we have with community partners are beneficial to our enrollment population. There is always the need for more services, but we have a good base.
- BRHS has strong partnerships with DCFS, Grandparent led household services, Bear River Health and Mental Health, homeless coalitions. These collaborations lead us to increased ERSEA connections to children and families experiencing homelessness, entering Foster Care, and are categorically eligible.
- Strong partnerships with local school districts, BRHS has some donated space from school districts, allowing Head Start classrooms to be in or near their schools. This partnership is positive for our enrolled children and their families.

Identified Needs/ Gaps in Service

Housing and Rentals

- The service area continues to lack adequate numbers of transitional housing and affordable housing and rentals.

According to the Milken Institute, Logan, Utah-Idaho Metropolitan Statistical Area ranked 178th in the nation for housing affordability in 2022. This is despite being ranked first for overall performance in the country. The high demand for housing has driven up the prices. To acquire affordable rentals, individuals must earn \$20.21 per hour to afford a 2-bedroom rental. Most affordable rental properties are in outlying areas, requiring greater difficulty in accessing private affordable transportation or public transportation. An individual would need to work 92 hours at minimum wage in our service area to afford a one-bedroom apartment in Cache County UT.

Cache County has a shortage of 1,200 affordable housing units and 3,400 low-income rental units. Individuals with a criminal history, past evictions, or poor credit history are frequently disqualified by landlords. Many community members do not support the building of affordable, or low-income housing in their “backyard.”

Homelessness

The nearest homeless center is in Ogden, Utah. Over 30 miles away from the most populated BRHS service area. Most enrolled families within our service area experience homelessness through inability to have their own safe, adequate housing, and must share housing with other people due to high housing costs. Our homeless population is not living in homeless centers but fall under the other legal categories of the McKinney Vento Act, and do not have their own safe, affordable housing.

Bear River Association of Governments (BRAG) – offers short-term rent assistance for at risk households, or those experiencing homelessness. They also offer hotel vouchers for assistance.

Citizens Against Physical and Sexual Abuse (CAPSA)- offers emergency shelters for survivors, case management and long-term transitional housing.

The Family Place- Short-term housing program for families with children under age 11.

4 Helping Hands and Families Feeding Families- Emergency hotel vouchers up to 7 days for those without housing.

Temporary Warming Center- The William A. Burnard warming center inside St. John’s Episcopal Church in Logan, provides overnight refuge during winter months.

Visits to the warming center have doubled over the past three years from 100 in 2022, to 207 in 2025. Discussions. This service is available in Cache, Box Elder and Rich counties.

Mental Health Providers

There is a shortage of providers who accept Medicare/Medicaid particularly in the areas of mental health. There is a high number of children and families require greater referrals to community partners providing mental health services. These partners struggle to secure and retain enough therapists to meet the constant and growing need for mental health providers. Community partners are trying to identify strategies to get more individuals into therapy and cut down on wait time to enter services. Providers are securing the services of more therapists, especially therapists that specialize in child therapy.

Recruitment and Retention of Staff

School districts tend to be our greatest competitor as we constantly strive to hire and retain qualified staff members. Utah school districts within our service area start Teachers with a BS at \$54,926 per year, plus \$8,400 is added for pre-school teachers and other staff after receiving a favorable job performance rating after evaluation. School district teachers work 9 months and have their summers off with full pay through the summer months. Idaho school districts have lower starting teacher salaries ranging from \$40,369 to \$46,200.

Bear River Head Start has teacher salaries set at \$37,728 for part day teachers, and \$48,264 for extended day teachers. The grantee has started paying employees for working 12 months per year, but our staff must work during the summer doing tasks such as recruitment, preparing lesson plans, training, cleaning classrooms and centers and substitute teaching for EHS staff that work year-round. EHS staff work year-round with their children and families as per Performance Standard requirements and can take vacation days and time off during the summer months, when Head Start teachers substitute in their classrooms.

Review of Strategic Responses Addressed through Program Goals

- **Response:** Bear River Head Start will continue to analyze population and income trends in our communities, to evaluate whether our centers and services are in the right location, where income eligible children and families are located.
- **Response:** BRHS will continue to look for and implement strategies to keep staff wages at a competitive rate. The program will continue to implement strategies to ensure a positive and supportive work environment for all staff. The grantee will continue to monitor competitive salaries and wages throughout our service area, to ensure BRHS remains competitive in recruitment and retention of staff members.
- **Response:** BRHS will continue to work with enrolled families to ensure housing needs are met. Housing costs continue to be one of the main issues for eligible children and their families. It is evident that the different counties in our service area are not experiencing exactly the same challenges, but all areas have difficulty in being able to afford high housing costs. Performance Standard allowance for enrollment of children and families in areas with high housing costs and the allowance to deduct housing costs off income as outlined in the new standards. ERSEA staff will obtain all of the requirements associated with this policy in Performance Standards and obtain guidance to ensure ERSEA compliance.
- **Response:** BRHS will continue to work closely with DCFS, SNAP documentation, Foster Care and homeless coalitions/ ERSEA to identify and enroll categorically eligible children.

- **Response:** The program will work closely with and continue to develop close working community partnerships with community agencies to ensure enrolled children and families receive needed mental health services.
- **Response-**The program will continue to provide Trauma Informed Care and Conscious Discipline curriculum in Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms through mentor coaching. Our program has added mental health mentor coaches to work with children, teachers, parents and staff to promote mental health support. BRHS will continue to develop further partnerships with community mental health providers.