

West River HEAD START



2023-2024
Annual Report

THE BEGINNING OF HEAD START

The Head Start program was designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children from low-income families with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs. Head Start has grown from an eight-week summer program to a variety of program options to meet the needs of the community, such as full-day and year-round services. Head Start programs serve more than 1 million children and their families each year in urban, suburban, and rural areas in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories, including American Indian and Alaska Native and Migrant and Seasonal communities. Head Start has served more than 38 million children since 1965.



FUNDING

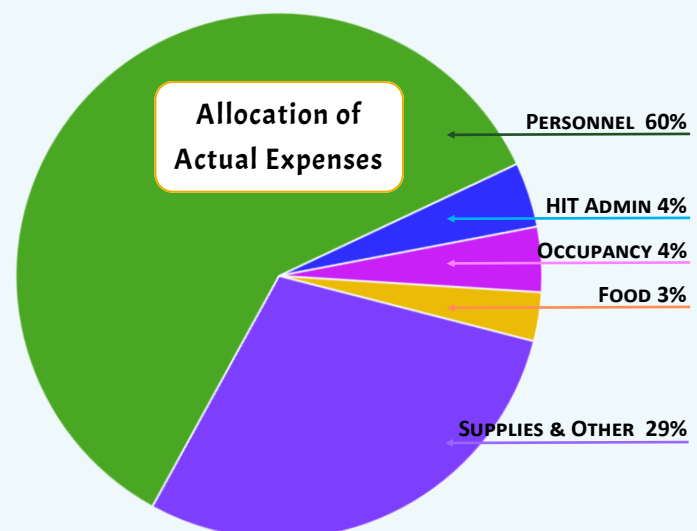
Head Start grants are administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. Head Start grants are awarded directly to public or private non-profit organizations, including community-based and faith-based organizations, or for-profit agencies within a community that wish to compete for funds.

Since the Head Start Act became law in 1964, programs receive 80% of the funding needed to operate. Each program is required to provide a 20% local funding match, referred to as the non-federal share. Community support in the form of time, equipment, supplies and space makes up the remaining share needed to operate Head Start.

The non-federal match must meet the same criteria for allowability as other costs incurred and paid with federal funds. Third party in-kind contributions count toward satisfying a cost-sharing or matching requirement only where, if the party receiving the contribution were to pay for them, they would be an allowable cost. Allowable costs are determined by the tests of reasonableness, necessity, and allocability. Head Start grantees are required to meet matching requirements on a budget year basis. West River Head Start met the required amount of \$518,691 for the September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024 grant year with the majority coming from parent activities.

The funding sources for the West River Head Start's 2023-2024 fiscal year included the Head Start federal grant \$2,074,762, non-federal share \$530,892, and USDA \$82,773.

2023-2024 Budget	Proposed	Actual
Personnel	1,672,940	1,607,177
Supplies and Other	699,291	774,352
HIT Admin	120,992	117,911
Occupancy	85,230	100,352
Food	85,000	88,635
Total	2,663,453	2,688,427



ELIGIBILITY

Head Start services are provided at no cost to all enrolled families. Eligible children include children who are from families with incomes below the poverty guidelines, children from homeless families, and families receiving public assistance (SNAP, TANF, SSI) are eligible. Foster children are eligible regardless of their foster family's income.

West River Head Start accepts applications year round. Options include submitting the application on our website or completing a paper version. Families submit income verification along with their child's birth certificate and immunization record.

- ♦ **Poverty Guidelines:** The HHS Poverty Guidelines are issued each year by the Department of Health and Human Services. Eligibility is determined using current pay stubs, tax return or W2, child support, etc.
- ♦ **Public Assistance:** Families who receive TANF, SNAP, or SSI submit their eligibility letter.
- ♦ **Foster Care:** Foster children are eligible for Head Start services regardless of household income.
- ♦ **Homeless:** WRHS staff work with families to determine if they meet the eligibility criteria for services provided under The McKinney-Vento Act. The definition for children experiencing homelessness is defined as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence."

HHS Poverty Guidelines

# of people	2023	2024
2	19,720	20,440
3	24,860	25,820
4	30,000	31,200
5	35,140	36,580
6	40,280	41,960
7	45,420	47,340
8	50,560	52,720



OUR SERVICE AREA

West River Head Start serves eligible children between the ages of 3 to 5 in Morton, Grant, Mercer, and Oliver Counties. Our seven classrooms are located in Mandan (4), Carson (1), Hazen (1), and New Salem (1) with a total enrollment of 118 children. Classrooms operate Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday during the school year.

FEDERAL REVIEW

The Office of Head Start (OHS) uses the Head Start Monitoring System to measure the performance and accountability of Head Start programs and assess compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards, the Head Start Act, and other regulations. Three reviews take place over a five-year span, including the Focus Area One (FA1), Focus Area Two (FA2), and Classroom Assessment Scoring System Reviews (CLASS®)



- FA1, which is conducted off-site through virtual meetings and phone calls, offers grant recipients a chance to share the information they used to form their program design.
- In FA2, OHS is looking for grant recipients to demonstrate their ability to track and assess their program's progress and performance, use data to drive results, and make adjustments and corrections as needed. The review team looks systematically and holistically across program services and functions.
- CLASS® is an observation tool that assesses the quality of teacher-child interactions in center-based preschool classrooms.

Focus Area Two (FA2) is an opportunity for individual grant recipients to demonstrate their effectiveness in implementing a high-quality program for children and families served over the course of their grant cycle, including the quality of education services; intentionality of family and community engagement; monitoring of fiscal operations; effectiveness of health and safety practices; focus on eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance; and oversight of program structures.

Grant recipients showcase their program strengths through the activities that include (1) a planning call with the grant recipient's director; (2) an introductory meeting with program leadership; (3) data testing and checks to review fiscal transactions and eligibility files; (4) discussions with education and family services staff members, families and parents, the governing body, and the policy council; (5) data tours with directors and managers; (6) explorations in centers, classrooms, and socializations; and (7) touchpoints with the director on each day of the review.

The focus on six key sections include: Program Design, Management, and Improvement; Education and Child Development Services; Health Services; Family and Community Engagement Services; Fiscal Infrastructure; and Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance.

From April 11, 2022, to April 15, 2022, the Administration for Children and Families conducted an FA2 review of West River Head Start. After an extensive review of the information gathered during the process, the FA2 review team determined our program meets the requirements of all applicable HSPPS, laws, regulations, and policy requirements. WRHS was found to have no areas of non-compliance, no areas of concern, and no deficiencies.

West River Head Start anticipates undergoing the FA1 review in 2024-2025.

FISCAL REVIEW

In addition to monitoring reviews, our grantee HIT Inc. is audited annually by Eide Bailey. Eide Bailey completed the annual audit for HIT, Inc., for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. The results contained an unmodified opinion. In addition, the report indicated no issues were found in regard to financial reporting, federal awards, or compliance with the Uniform Guidance.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

West River Head Start continues to assess and alter its service delivery to meet the needs of each community, retain staff, and fiscally manage the program. That effort has resulted in various changes to include closing centers, decreasing classrooms, expanding classroom hours, and increasing staff salary. The first question posed after reviewing the results of the community assessment was to ask, "Is WRHS serving the right children?"

The programmatic changes over the years include:

- Closing three sites (Elgin, Hebron, and Beulah) and one classroom in Mandan;
- decreasing the number of children served from 168 to 118;
- increasing salaries to retain staff; and
- increasing school day hours in Carson, Hazen, New Salem, and one Mandan classroom to meet community child care and transportation needs

After reviewing all of the programmatic changes from the past years and recognizing the continued need for preschool services in the West River Head Start service area, sustaining sites in Mandan, New Salem, Carson, and Hazen are recommended.

The community assessment describes the context in which Head Start programs operate and is useful for ensuring that the correct services are provided to the appropriate population. This resource can assist program staff in coordinating their efforts to best serve children and families. The assessment paints a picture of the community and describes the diverse needs of families who may receive services. In addition, the community assessment covers the community's history, its economic and political scene, and its strengths and challenges. The community assessment in its entirety can be obtained by contacting West River Head Start. A summary of the report has been interwoven into the annual report.



GRAVEL AMENDMENT

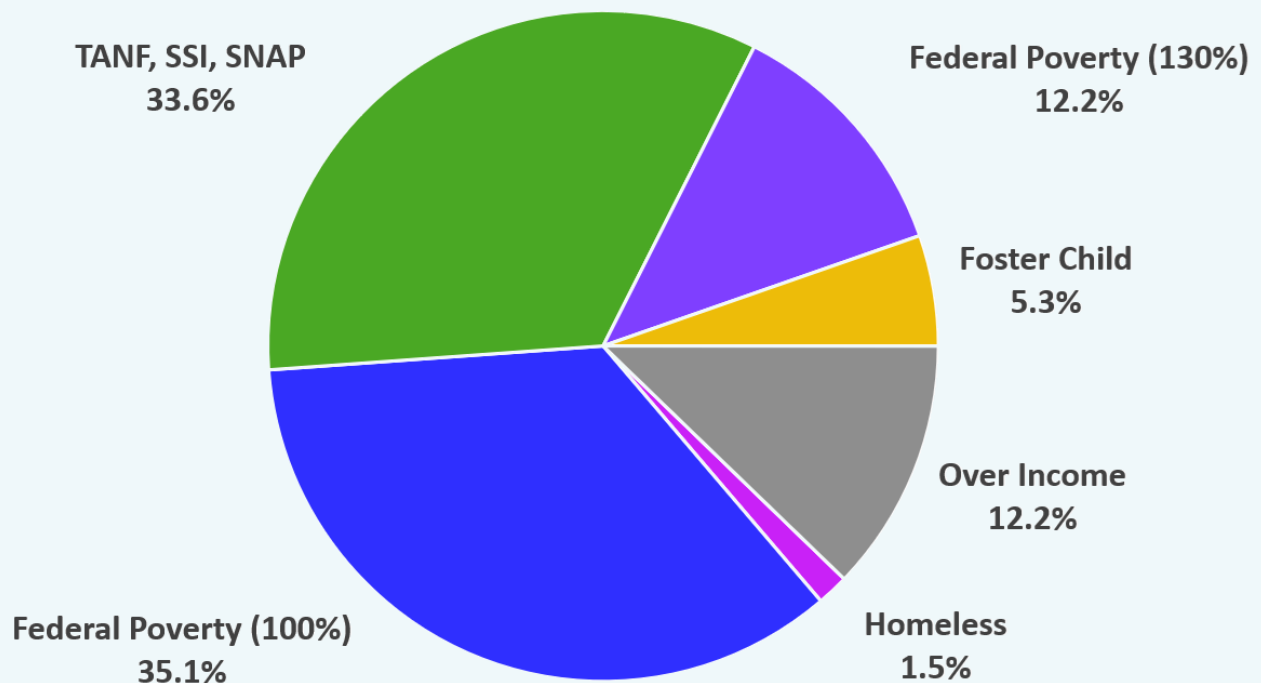
When a Head Start program is operated in a community with a population of 1,000 or less people and meets the criteria of Section 645(a)(2) of the Head Start Act, the program may enroll up to 50% of over income children:

- there is no other preschool program in the community;
- the community is located in a medically underserved area and is located in a health professional shortage area;
- the community is in a location which, by reason of remoteness, does not permit reasonable access to the types of services described in clauses (A) and (B); and
- not less than 50 percent of the families to be served in the community are eligible under the eligibility criteria established by the Secretary under paragraph (1); the Head Start program in such locality shall establish the criteria for eligibility, except that no child residing in such community whose family is eligible under such eligibility criteria shall, by virtue of such project's eligibility criteria, be denied an opportunity to participate in such program.

As a unit, West River Head Start may have no more than 26 over income students enrolled in the program. Mandan and Hazen share 8 slots; New Salem and Carson share 18 slots. The former meet the criteria of Section 645(a)(2) of the Head Start Act. This authorizes those sites to enroll up to 50% of their children from over income families.

♦ Funded Enrollment	118
♦ Average Monthly Enrollment	89.9%
♦ Special Education Enrollment	25
♦ Total number of families served.....	120
♦ Total number of children served	131
♦ Number of children who left the program in less than 45 days.....	5 children

ENROLLMENT BY ELIGIBILITY



DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS & IEPs

Identifying areas of concern early in a child's education is crucial. Developmental screenings must be completed within 45 days of a child's enrollment in the Head Start program. If potential areas of concern are identified, West River Head Start works with the local special education units and parents on the referral process. Head Start programs must enroll 10% of their slots with children who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP), indicating they were determined eligible to have a disability under IDEA and therefore eligible to receive special education and related services.

HEALTH SERVICES & SCREENINGS

Head Start programs are required to meet Head Start Performance Standards related to health, nutrition, mental health, and safety in addition to the requirements of Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, & Treatment (EPSDT). Determining a child's health needs starts with the well child and dental exams. Head Start programs have 90 days to ensure all enrolled children have the dental and well child exams completed. Concerns are followed up with further evaluation to determine if treatment is necessary. Every child's height and weight are measured once per year.

North Dakota Health Tracks (also known as EPSDT) sets the schedule and requirements that our program must follow regarding well child care, dental health, and immunizations.

- Up-to-date on a schedule of age appropriate preventive and primary health care according to North Dakota's EPSDT schedule for well child care80%
 - Completed a professional oral examination during the program year..... 77%
 - Up-to-date immunizations or possible immunizations to date, or exempt0.01%
- *Following CDC recommendations, children must receive both the influenza and COVID vaccines to be considered up-to-date on immunizations.

Vision and hearing screenings must be completed within 45 days of the child's enrollment. If there is a concern with vision or hearing, the child is referred for further evaluation.

- Vision: Out of the 118 children screened with the PlusOptix vision machine, eighteen children were referred to an ophthalmologist for further evaluation. Eight received glasses.
- Hearing: Out of the 122 children screened using the OAE machine, ten children were referred to their primary care provider for further evaluation.

The family support coach works with each family to establish a medical and dental home and accessible health care. By the end of their enrollment:

- Children with health insurance 100%
- Children with a medical home 100%
- Children with a dental home96%



HEARING SCREENING



VISION SCREENING



HEIGHTS & WEIGHTS

OUR MISSION

West River Head Start is committed to giving children and their families the opportunity to grow within their communities by providing quality education and family services.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Through community partnerships, West River Head Start builds collaborative relationships with organizations and businesses that support positive child and family outcomes. These may include libraries, health centers, schools and school districts, economic support services, the workforce, higher education, human services agencies, faith-based organizations, businesses, and others.

These organizations respond to families' needs and interests. They can connect families to outside resources, encourage engagement in children's learning, and use community strengths and needs assessment data to guide collaboration.

Partnerships promote successful transitions for children and families from one service setting to another or strengthen the individual child or whole family unit by providing multiple services alongside Head Start. Individuals, businesses, and local churches help with food drives, donations of cash and household items, Thanksgiving meals, Angel tree, winterwear, clothing, Christmas toy distribution, dental screenings, and educational opportunities.



Thank you for your support!

PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Strong relationships among families, children, and program staff are essential for children's and families' success. Head Start staff build relationships with families to support family well-being. As part of this ongoing partnership, Head Start offers parents the opportunity to develop and implement family goals that include timetables and strategies for achieving these goals as well as their progress. Personalized support to meet the families needs include parent trainings, home visits, referrals, and connections to community resources. Family nights are held at each center to promote social interactions and provide education, covering such topics as literacy/reading, child abuse and neglect identification, father/male involvement, dental health, child development, safety, stranger danger, ND Quit Line, transition to kindergarten, and financial literacy.

Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher. Parents are always welcome in the classroom. Classroom activities are planned during the year, such as sledding, reading activities, field trips and learning celebrations.

Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher. Parents are the primary educators, nurturers and advocates for their children. Head Start views them as a vital role in their child's educational success. Parents participate in the program at every level, including program governance. Each classroom selects a representative and alternate to serve on Policy Council. In these roles, the parents work closely with the program's management team and the HIT Board of Directors to provide overall direction for West River Head Start.

Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

Positive & Goal-Oriented Relationships			
Equity, Inclusiveness, Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness			
PROGRAM FOUNDATIONS	PROGRAM IMPACT AREAS	FAMILY OUTCOMES	CHILD OUTCOMES
Program Leadership	Program Environment	Family Well-being	Children are:
Professional Development	Family Partnerships	Positive Parent-Child Relationships	Safe
Continuous Learning and Quality Improvement	Teaching and Learning	Families as Lifelong Educators	Healthy and well
	Community Partnerships	Families as Learners	Learning and developing
	Access and Continuity	Family Engagement in Transitions	Engaged in positive relationships with family members, caregivers, and other children
		Family Connections to Peers and Community	Ready for school
		Families as Advocates and Leaders	Successful in school and life



Parent Feedback

A great, nurturing environment for my child to learn and grow.

Amazing staff and lots of support.

An opportunity to learn stuff that she wouldn't learn at home.

Head start is a wonderful program, teachers are amazing, and my child loves learning all the new things.

Helping my child thrive and grow so he is fully ready for kindergarten.

I have been able to get a job and not have to pay for childcare.

I'm so grateful for the teachers and all that they do to help teach my child.

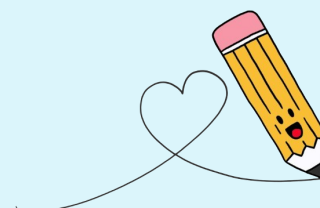
Instrumental in our family being able to achieve our goals.

It's been great seeing my child flourish in the classroom!

Love that staff is welcoming, comforting, and takes time for each child.

My child is learning skills necessary to start kindergarten with confidence.

My child loves coming to school! The teachers and staff are kind and fun. You can tell they love their job! I appreciate Head Start very much!



2024

Our Story

1965

The Beginning of Head Start: The Head Start program was designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children from low-income families with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs. Head Start launched in 1965 as an eight-week summer program.

1983-1986: Mandan Area Head Start was established in 1983 as a home-based option through Community Action Partnership (CAP). The program served 42 families in Mandan. CAP relinquished the Head Start grant to Mandan Public Schools in 1986.

1986-1990: The scope of service changed from home-based to center-based services. Mandan Public Schools (MPS) established three classrooms to serve 42 Head Start children and families. MPS relinquished the grant to HIT, Inc. in 1990.

1990: HIT, Inc. expanded the program to four classrooms in Mandan to meet an increased need.

1991: The grant was expanded to include a home-base program that provided Head Start services to children in rural Morton County without additional funding.

1992: The community assessment indicated the need for center-based services instead of home-based. The New Salem classroom started with 20 children in the basement of the city auditorium. To address growing demand, the Mandan center added another classroom. With six classrooms, enrollment was at 100 children and their families.

1993-1997: Mandan Area Head Start remained at six classrooms, five in Mandan and one in New Salem. Five of the classrooms held morning sessions, and one classroom in Mandan held both a morning and afternoon session. The program in New Salem moved three times before residing in the New Salem Public Schools. During this time, 100 children and families continued to be served.



1998: The HIT, Inc. Board of Directors approved the name change to West River Head Start (WRHS) which promoted ownership for all communities in our service area. Classrooms were opened in Grant Elgin and Carson. Each classroom had 17 children which increased WRHS's services to 134 children and families.

2000: WRHS expanded with a classroom located in Hebron Public School. Four staff members were hired, increasing services to 152 children and families with 5 centers and 9 classrooms.

2003: WRHS expanded to Mercer county opening two sites (Beulah and Hazen). Five staff members were hired to serve an additional 16 children. Total enrollment increased to 168 children and families in 11 classrooms in 7 locations spreading out over 5,354 square miles.

2006-2007: The impact of our first funding cut of 1% resulted in loss of all year-round Head Start classroom.

2007-2009: WRHS classrooms moved into the local public schools in Carson (2007) and New Salem (2009). The benefit for the children and parents was a smoother transition from Head Start to kindergarten. The savings in rent, maintenance, and utilities allowed West River Head Start to keep both sites despite budget cuts.

2010-2011: The population of Grant County population decreased to the point that it could no longer support two classrooms. The Elgin site closed and children were transported to the Carson site. WRHS's enrollment decreased from 168 to 160 with no decrease in funding.

1965

West River Head Start

2024

2012-2013: WRHS suffered a 5% funding cut due to federal budget sequestration. The Beulah site was closed. Eligible children served in the Beulah area were combined with the Hazen classroom.

2013-2014: WRHS continued to serve 160 children and families in Morton, Mercer, Oliver, and Grant counties. The Mandan site had five classrooms while Carson, Hebron, Hazen and New Salem each had one classroom.

2014-2015: WRHS received permission to use restored sequester funds to increase wages versus reopening Beulah's classroom. Even with a 9% increase, wages were still far below competitive rates. Finding and retaining teaching staff continued to be difficult due to oil impact driving up the cost of living. WRHS lost 14 staff resulting in 40% turnover. WRHS also experienced an increase in transient population. The impact resulted in serving greater numbers of children and families for only a short period of time.

2015-2016: The Hebron center closed due to the inability to fill the teacher position, along with one of the Mandan classrooms. The reduction of slots did not affect income-eligible families or federal funding. Enrollment slots decreased from 152 to 118. WRHS decreased 5 staff positions. These actions allowed HIT to increase staff salaries to assist with focusing on quality over quantity.

2016-2017: WRHS received a duration supplement to increase school day hours in Carson and New Salem from 6 to 8 hours. Needs of the community cited difficulty with finding part-time daycare and mid-day transportation. Three rooms in Mandan and the one room in Hazen continued to provide preschool service for 6 hours a day and one room in Mandan provided preschool service for 7 hours.

2018-2019: WRHS received a duration grant to increase school day hours in Hazen and one Mandan classroom. Duration classroom hours increased from 6 to 8 hours per day. WRHS received the Health & Safety Grant to purchase four new buses, a hearing machine, and a vision machine.

2019-2020: Classrooms closed on March 16, 2020, by order of Governor Burgum in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Staff distributed learning packets to each child's home for the remainder of the year and utilized virtual platforms to provide educational services to their students and stay connected with families. CARES Act Funding helped to coordinate, prepare, and respond to COVID-19.

2020-2021: Classrooms resumed in person with extra precautions being taken. Based on recommendations from the ND Department of Health, enrollment was decreased to 100 children.

2021-2022: West River Head Start resumed full enrollment of 118 students.

2023-2024: The Hazen site closed in March 2024 for the remainder of the school year due to the resignation of the teaching and support staff.



CREATING THE SCHOOL FAMILY

A child's social emotional development and their ability to self-regulate is the first step to academic success. Conscious Discipline® is a relationship-based program that believes all behavior is a form of communication and an opportunity to teach missing skills. It works to develop discipline within children rather than relying on punishment. Children become more aware of their own worth, learn to respect the rights of others, and to follow classroom rules. The program emphasizes creating a school family that will:

- ♦ Increase the child's willingness to learn by creating a sense of belonging.
- ♦ Boost internal impulse control: a much more effective approach than an external system of punishment and rewards.
- ♦ Help children develop and apply sustained attention by reducing stress and encouraging classroom jobs in a caring atmosphere.

The School Family is built on a healthy family model – the goal of which is the optimal development of all members. The three essential ingredients for School Success include:

- ♦ **Willingness to Learn:** Without willingness, each interaction becomes a power struggle instead of a learning opportunity. The School Family brings all children and adults, especially the most difficult, to a place of willingness through a sense of belonging.
- ♦ **Impulse Control:** Connection with others wires the brain for impulse control. Disconnected children are disruptive and prone to aggressive, shutting down, or bullying behaviors. The School Family uses connection to encourage impulse control while teaching self-regulation skills in context.
- ♦ **Attention:** Our attentional system is sensitive to stress and becomes engaged with positive emotions. The School Family reduces stress while creating an atmosphere of caring, encouragement and meaningful contributions.

The Mental Health Consultant visits classrooms regularly to offer support and feedback on various strategies or techniques helpful for individual or whole class instruction. Mental Health Consultants are also trained in Conscious Discipline to ensure consistency across programs and disciplines.

The School Family is created through routines, rituals and structures. Punishment and rewards are replaced with intrinsic motivation, helpfulness, problem-solving and connection. Intrinsic motivation is engaging in a behavior because you find it rewarding. The child chooses to perform an activity for its own sake rather than from the desire for some external reward. The behavior itself is its own reward.



The School Family builds connections between families and schools, teachers and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students to ensure the optimal development of all.

THE FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

School readiness means children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Head Start views school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life.

Head Start is a leader in the early childhood field with a strong, clear, and comprehensive focus on all aspects of healthy development. The Head Start Program Performance Standards requires programs to establish school readiness goals, which are defined as "the expectations of children's status and progress across domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development that will improve readiness for kindergarten goals." The Early Learning Outcome Framework (ELOF) domains include:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Approaches to Learning focuses on *how* children learn. It refers to the skills and behaviors that children use to engage in learning.
- **Social and Emotional Development:** Positive social and emotional development in the early years provides a critical foundation for lifelong development and learning.
- **Language and Literacy:** Communication is fundamental to the human experience, and language and literacy are essential to children's learning.
- **Cognition:** Cognitive development includes reasoning, memory, problem-solving, and thinking skills that help young children understand and organize their world. For preschoolers, this evolves into complex mathematical thinking and scientific reasoning.
- **Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development:** This domain is foundational to children's learning in all areas because it permits children to fully explore and function in their environment.

PREPARING FOR KINDERGARTEN

West River Head Start implements the Creative Curriculum. The research-based teaching strategies, theory, and knowledge enable teaching staff to create a positive, developmentally appropriate, and responsive learning environment. DRDP, the assessment tool used for ChildPlus, generates outcome data to be reviewed with parents at conferences and home visits. Goals are developed with the parents based on their input and observations of their child and the child's individual development.

Our staff partner with elementary schools as families transition from Head Start to kindergarten. Children who experience a smooth transition to kindergarten are more likely to have improved academic achievement, positive social and emotional skills, and fewer behaviors that interfere with learning. The child's Kindergarten Transition Folder is completed in the spring and gives an opportunity for Head Start teachers to connect with receiving schools to share information that will assist in making the transition for children leaving Head Start and beginning their journey in kindergarten as successful as possible.

West River Head Start celebrates the student's transition from Head Start to kindergarten with the Stepping Up ceremony. Family are friends welcome to share in this special occasion.

FOUNDATION FOR LEARNING

Children enrolled in early childhood classrooms need engaging interactions and environments to support their learning. Quality teaching and learning occurs within the context of supportive relationships and intentional learning activities. Quality teacher-child interactions are essential for children’s social and academic development and learning.

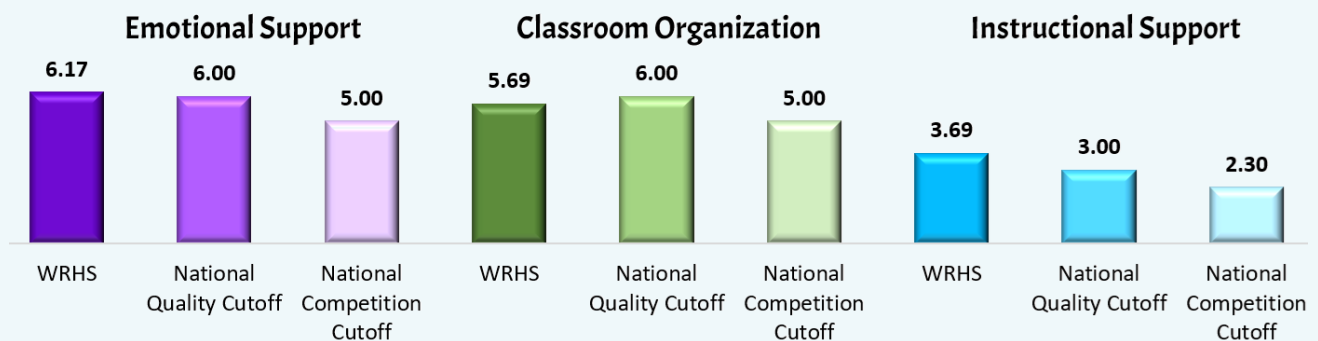
The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) is an observation instrument that assesses the quality of teacher-child interactions in center-based Head Start classrooms. The CLASS® dimensions are based on developmental theory and research suggesting that interactions between children and adults are the primary way of supporting children's development and learning, and that effective, engaging interactions and environments form the foundation for all learning in early childhood classrooms.

CLASS® includes three domains of teacher-child interactions that support learning and development:

- Emotional Support assesses the degree to which teachers establish and promote a positive climate in their classroom through their everyday interactions.
- Classroom Organization assesses classroom routines and procedures related to the organization and management of children's behavior, time, and attention in the classroom.
- Instructional Support assesses the ways in which teachers implement the curriculum to effectively promote cognitive and language development.

There are two sets of thresholds for CLASS® scores: the quality thresholds and the competitive thresholds. If a Head Start program receives a score below the quality threshold for one or more of the CLASS® domains, OHS provides support for quality improvement by intentionally connecting the grantee to a variety of resources that align with areas where improvement is needed. If a grantee receives a score below the competitive threshold for one or more of the CLASS® domains, then the grantee is required to compete for continued funding.

CLASS SCORES



TEACHING STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

Part of preparing children for school is hiring qualified staff. Head Start teachers are required to have a degree in Early Childhood or related field. Teacher assistants are required to complete the Child Development Associate credential or be enrolled in a college program leading to a degree in Early Childhood Education.

OUR SCHOOL READINESS GOAL

West River Head Start's School Readiness Goal is a broad, comprehensive statement that is measured by skills from the Head Start Framework domains. The School Readiness survey included input from parents, staff, Policy Council members, HIT Board of Directors, and community members. When creating this goal, the most important skills needed for kindergarten success were social emotional skills.

Children will adapt to new situations by exhibiting self-regulation strategies including impulse control and problem solving while expressing concern for self and care of others, maintaining focus, and attending to tasks creatively throughout their learning environment.

Objective 1: West River Head Start staff will provide schedules, routines, and efficient transitions so children can effectively manage emotions while participating in activities.

Objective 2: Teaching staff will create a school family and use positive and proactive behavior strategies, so children are willing to help each other and contribute to being a safe keeper of their classroom.

OUR PROGRAM GOALS

Goal 1: WRHS will support ongoing learning and development of staff.

Obj 1: *Decrease the number of resignations as of May 31st of each school year.*

Obj 2: *Increase the number of staff who further their education.*

Goal 2: West River Head Start will continue to grow in the use of technology to improve systems.

Obj 1: *Move from Google Docs to Office 365.*

Obj 2: *Move documents from HIT website to Office 365.*

Obj 3: *Continue to grow in the capabilities of ChildPlus.*

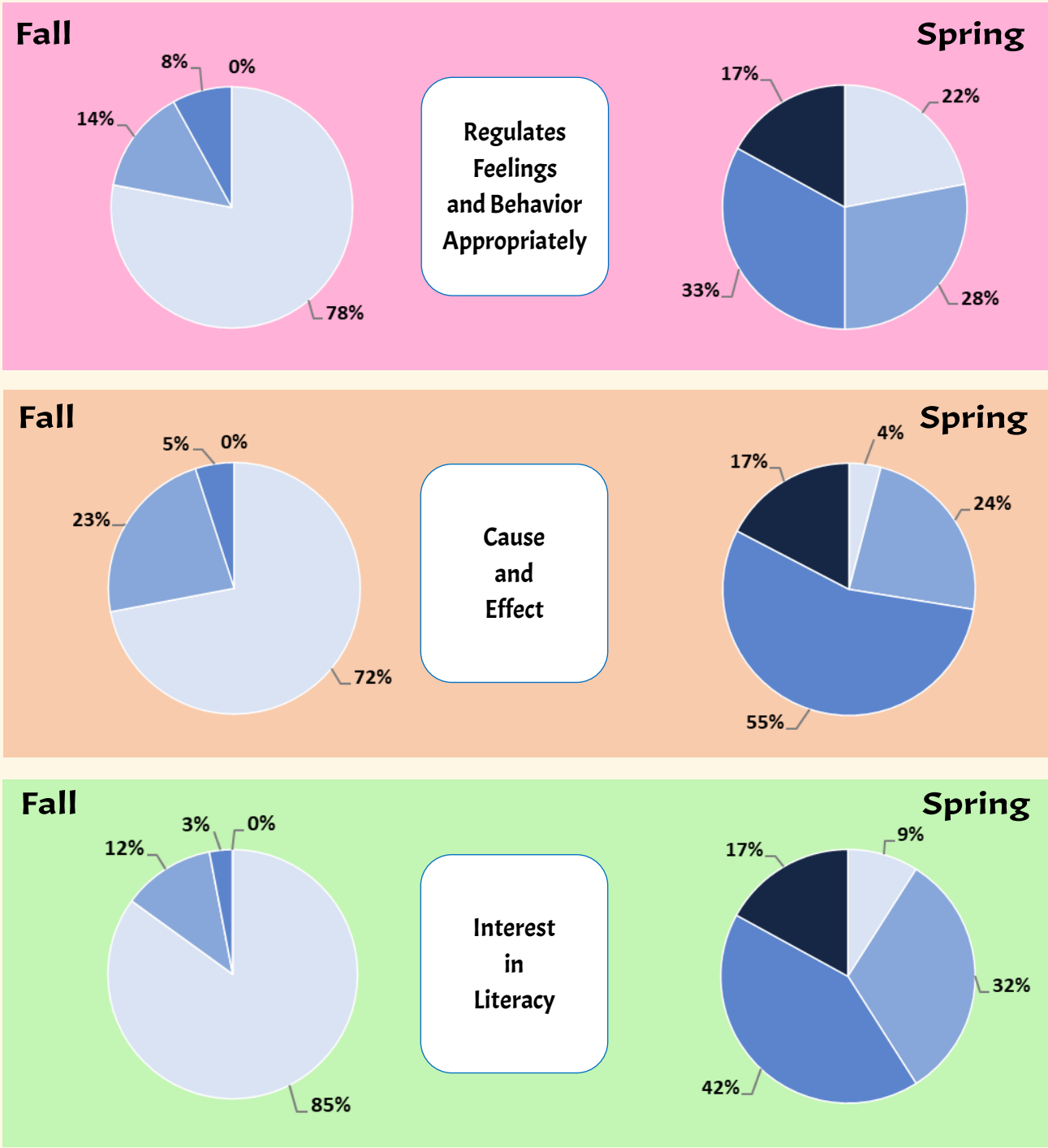
Obj 4: *Explore Relias as a training platform for the program.*

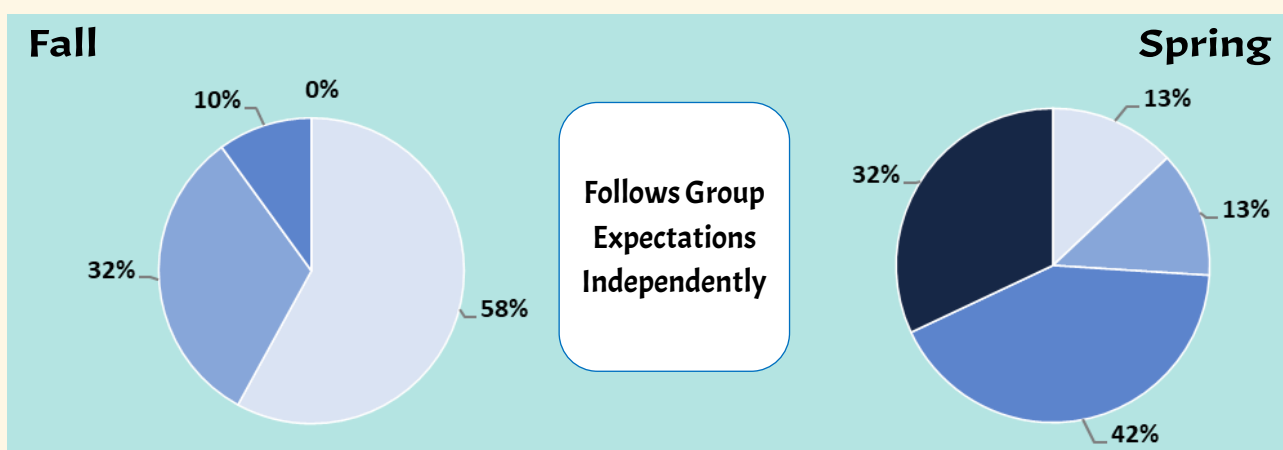
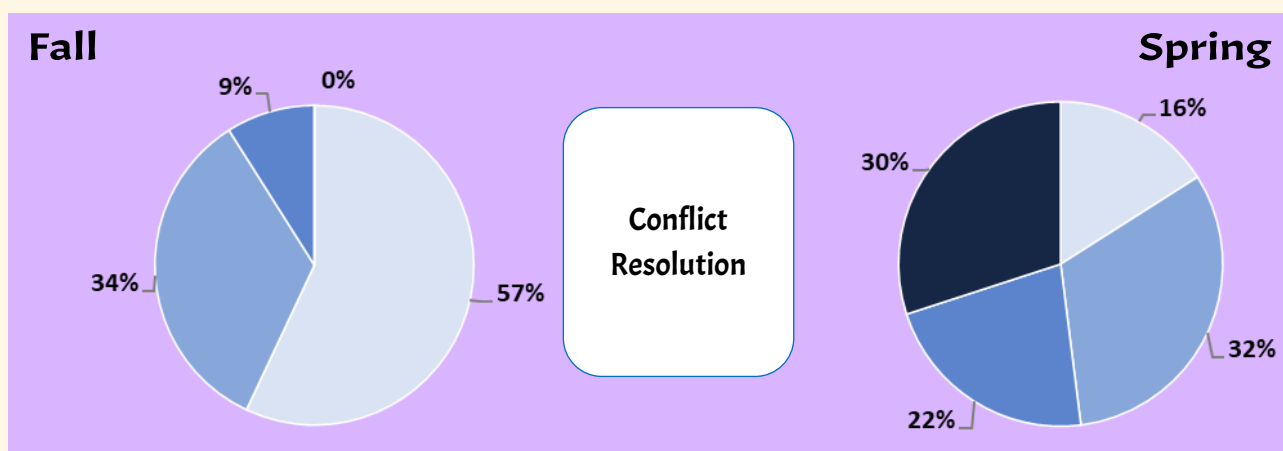
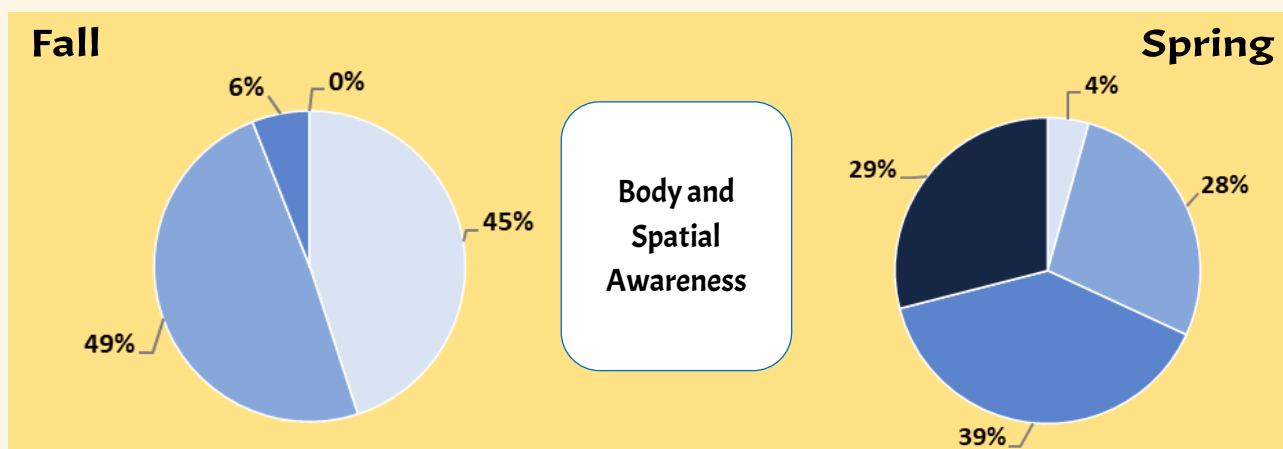


SCHOOL READINESS GOAL ANALYSIS

Six measures of development are used to assess our school readiness goal. The charts show the progress of pre-kindergarten children working towards early kindergarten expectations. The lightest shade of blue in the fall (October 2023) gets smaller in the spring data (April 2024) as children move through the next levels of development and get closer to meeting early kindergarten expectations. In the spring, 18 children (26%) were on an IEP.

Foundational Building Emerging Meeting



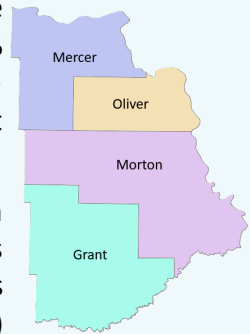


Highlights

- ♦ “Interest in Literacy” had the most children (85%) in foundational skills when they entered West River Head Start. At the end of the year, only 9% were at foundational level.
- ♦ In the spring, we had the most children meeting early kindergarten skills (32%) in “Follows Group Expectations Independently” with the least number of children still in foundational or building skills (26%).
- ♦ “Regulates Feelings and behavior appropriately” and “conflict resolution” had the most children in foundational and building skills (50% and 48% respectively). Both measures would have effects on the other. If a child is unable to regulate, conflict resolution is difficult.

DEMOGRAPHICS

As a state, North Dakota's overall population has been increasing steadily since 2000. The World Population Review estimates North Dakota's has grown 1.35% from 2020 to 2022 moving the population up to 800,394 (21,300 more than the 2020 US Census report) and number two out of all 50 states for the highest birthrate.



Though the proportion of children is increasing in many of the larger communities in North Dakota, the elderly continue to remain high in smaller communities. For years North Dakota's population was referred to as the "Graying of North Dakota" as North Dakota's young people were leaving the state. The oil boom (2006-2012) brought jobs and young families back to North Dakota. The job market opportunities and low unemployment rank North Dakota 3rd (US Bureau of Labor Statistics November 2022) in comparison to other states, as young families choose to stay in the state. This has shifted North Dakota as a whole to be getting younger. North Dakota was recognized as the only state in the United States growing younger in the decade 2010 to 2018. North Dakota's median age dropped from 37 in 2010 to 35.2 in 2020 as the nation's median age continues to rise. North Dakota's decreasing median age ranks it as the 4th youngest state in the nation. Only Utah (31.1), Alaska (34.1) and Texas (34.8) are estimated to be younger than North Dakota (Statistical Atlas).

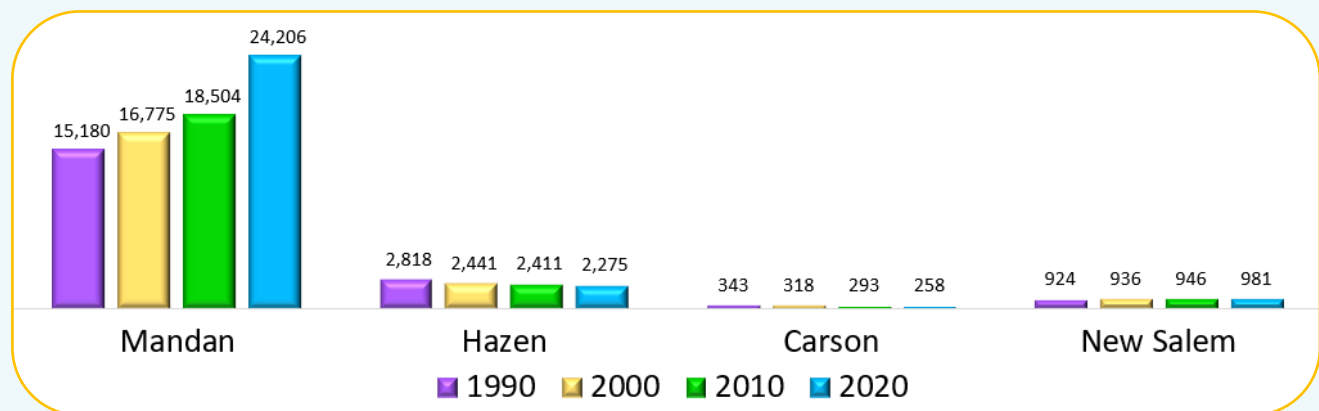
Counties served by WRHS have a higher median age than the state with Morton County at 37.6, Grant County at 48.2, Oliver county at 48, and Mercer county at 45.1 (2020 DataUSA). Grant County is the only county that decreased its mean age from 53.3 to 48.2 in 2020, but it is still quite bit older than North Dakota's mean average.

Similar to the nation's census data, North Dakota's child poverty is declining. The child poverty rate decreased from 14% in 2015 to 11.1% in 2020. Younger children in the state still have a higher poverty rate. The average percentage of children in poverty ages birth through 4 is higher than older children (ages 0 through 4 is 12.5%, ages 5 through 17 is 10.5%) (2022 KIDS Count Data Book).

North Dakota KIDS Count data indicates 1,788 (1.4%) students K-12 as homeless in 2020-2021, down from the median of 2,298 students in 2011-2021. There is no data for homeless children 0-5, but WRHS' historical data also reflects a decline in homeless children enrolled.

The population increase the communities served by West River Head Start is less than North Dakota's average with the exception of the city of Mandan. The bar graph below provides a visual representation of WRHS communities (Mandan, Carson, New Salem, and Hazen) from 1990 to the US Census for 2020.

POPULATION OF COMMUNITIES WITH WRHS CLASSROOMS



Source: 2020 U.S. Census Bureau and Biggestuscities.com



PLAY
LEARN
& GROW
TOGETHER



West River Head Start

ANNUAL REPORT

This annual report has been prepared to comply with the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007. Information within the report pertains to fiscal year September 1, 2023, to August 31, 2024.

The act states each Head Start agency shall make available to the public a report published at least once in each fiscal year that discloses the following information from the most recently concluded fiscal year, except that reporting such information shall not reveal personally identifiable information about an individual child or parent:

- (A) The total amount of public and private funds received and the amount from each source.
- (B) An explanation of budgetary expenditures and proposed budget for the fiscal year.
- (C) The total number of children and families served, the average monthly enrollment (as a percentage of funded enrollment), and the percentage of eligible children served.
- (D) The results of the most recent review by the Secretary and the financial audit.
- (E) The percentage of enrolled children that received medical and dental exams.
- (F) Information about parent involvement activities.
- (G) The agency's efforts to prepare children for kindergarten.



Hard copies of our annual report are distributed to our community partners, local LEA's, local school districts, HIT Inc Board of Directors, and Policy Council. A digital copy is available on our website and Facebook page.

OUR LOCATIONS

1004 7th Street SW
Mandan, ND 58554
(701) 663-9507

407 N 5th Street
New Salem, ND 58563
(701) 843-8061

210 2nd Ave West
Carson, ND 58529
(701) 622-3505



<https://www.hitinc.org/services/WestRiverHeadStart>

OUR GRANTEE

HIT, Inc. provides a variety of services to people with disabilities in western North Dakota.

Our Vision

HIT, Inc. supports people with disabilities through self-directed services that promote independence, dignity, and respect.

Our Mission

- We will strive to meet our customers' needs.
- We will serve as a catalyst in uniting our customers and the community.
- We will attract, retain, and motivate competent employees.
- We will effectively use resources in customer-driven activities.

