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BrainGain@PEC
Brought to you by the PEC Policy Department
For more information, email Policy Department.

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BrainGain@PEC provides brief summaries of research or publications on family homelessness and related issues. Previous issues of BrainGain@PEC can be found at http://bit.ly/2iaczvQ.

PENNSYLVANIA FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS:
NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT 2020

PEC is summarizing Pennsylvania’s 2020 “Family Support Needs Assessment” which found that Philadelphia met the elevated needs threshold in 5 domains (Maternal and Child Health, Substance Abuse, Socioeconomic Status, Child Safety and Maltreatment, and Community Environment) and met a moderate need in Child Care.

The Needs Assessment also asserts that, although Philadelphia has one of the highest concentrations of health care providers per capita in the country, the community faces adverse maternal, child and infant health outcomes.

Home visiting services could help reach these needs, but it currently only reaches 2% of Philadelphia families. There are 73,814 families with children under the age of 5 who are living below 200% of the federal poverty line, yet only 1,122 slots are funded. Home visiting services provide family-focused education, goal setting and connectivity to services, which improves stability and care coordination that is especially crucial during a pandemic.

The Needs Assessment is a county-level assessment of the health of children, mothers, and families, as well as the social and environmental circumstances of families and communities in the state, including delivery of home visiting services. Produced by the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning, in partnership with the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, the assessment is designed as a public health tool offering a systematized way to identify geographic areas of elevated need and disparity to inform future decision-making and deploy resources to improve maternal, child, and family health and well-being.

Find Pennsylvania’s original report at https://bit.ly/36ezYRX.

States receiving federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) dollars must complete a statewide needs assessment every five years.
PEC summarized the Needs Assessment for early childhood stakeholders in Pennsylvania to reference policymaking decisions that impact children and families at the local, county and state levels.

**Highlights:**

- Pennsylvania’s urban and rural communities are both experiencing pronounced needs related to substance use, mental health, intimate partner violence and economic conditions such as unemployment.
- Pennsylvania’s evidence-based home visiting system serves approximately 5% of the total eligible population across the state (8,200 families), and only 2% of eligible families in Philadelphia.
- There was a significant increase (52%) in statewide investment in evidence-based home visiting programs over the last four years.

**Key Findings:**

- Philadelphia was one of 5 counties that met elevated needs in 5 domains.
- 15 counties met elevated needs threshold in three or more domains, including Philadelphia.
- 23 counties did not meet the elevated need for any of the six domains.
- 44 counties met the elevated need status in at least one domain.
- The top three functions of home visiting services endorsed as most useful among nearly 300 home visited families surveyed were related to child development and early learning.
- Roughly 1 in 2 community survey respondents ranked the overall health of mothers and children in their community as excellent or good.
- The breadth of impact on issues related to substance use, mental health and intimate partner violence facing Pennsylvanian families of young children was clearly messaged from community members and home visiting administrators.

**Community Services & Home Visiting Findings:**

- There were regional differences in perceived most-valuable services.
- Half of respondents (54%) viewed services in their community as very available or having above average availability.
- Only 13% reported availability of substance use treatments in their community.
- Respondents noted an overall high level of need for substance use issues (68%), social and economic concerns (63%) and childcare (59%).
- PA’s **southern regions** ranked the state of maternal and child health in their community **higher** than the northern regions (see Figure below).

### FIGURE 12: OVERALL RATINGS OF HEALTH OF PREGNANT WOMEN, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Please rate the overall health of pregnant women, children and families in your community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northwest</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Central</strong></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td><strong>Northeast</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>4%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td><strong>Southwest</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>South Central</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Southeast</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sub-County Analysis: Philadelphia, Chester, Delaware & Montgomery

#### Philadelphia

[Maps and charts showing data analysis]
Implications of Timeline: Data was collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic

- The loss of connection between the home visitor and client in familiar environment is likely to be felt by both families and home visitor.
- 89,000 Pennsylvanian children are in the care of grandparents who are caught between caring for their health and caring for their grandchildren.
• **85,000 children ages 0-5** were enrolled in subsidized childcare centers, many of which have forced to close. [info on closures](#)

• **For new mothers**, the effects of removing crucial support provided by family and friends in a high-stress time, coupled with the lack of postpartum depression and anxiety screening and treatment, **could be dire**.

• Nearly all 880 practices that participated in a National Council for Behavioral Health reporting having to **reduce** their operations.
  - Smaller organizations have cancelled, rescheduled, or turned away 36% of patients due to pandemic.

• In 2018, one third of child abuse reports were from school employees.
  - ChildLine calls have declined sharply since last spring, raising concerns for safety and well-being of children

• Parents struggling with substance use, untreated mental health, and intimate partner violence are on the rise.

• The **preexisting affordable housing crisis** will be compounded by the economic impact of COVID-19 to have long-term negative impacts for families.

• **From March-May**, nearly 15,000 Pennsylvanian children have enrolled in the Children’s Health Insurance Program and **enrollment in Medical Assistance** (Medicaid) has **increased** by 62,000 people (a 2.2% increase) since February.

• 123,000 people have **enrolled in SNAP** since February, a **7.1% increase**.