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A Letter from Mayor Michael B. Hancock

As Mayor of this great city, I want to ensure that all children and youth have the opportunity to succeed across the entire youth development spectrum. To assist with achieving better outcomes my administration continues to work to align youth programs, services and financial investments to provide access to quality experiences in Denver neighborhoods. The Status of Denver’s Children: A Community Resource Guide, provides a road map to help city agencies and community partners understand the current realities for young people and their families in Denver. I invite you to utilize this resource to make data driven decisions to improve outcomes and systems as well as remove barriers so that all children and youth in our city have a chance to thrive.

To ensure we are supporting families and preparing children to be successful on their path to adulthood, Denver will focus on several early childhood innovations. The Denver Children’s Cabinet will develop and implement strategies to increase access to childcare and early childhood education opportunities that support working families and improve literacy for our youngest learners.

These strategies include:

- **Maintaining Strategic Partnerships** between city agencies, DPS, and Denver Health, to collaborate and share resources to improve outcomes for Denver’s children and families.
- **Realign and Leverage Existing Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) Funding** to more effectively utilize existing dollars.
- **Increase Child Care Workforce** by expanding programs to train teachers, align WIOA funding with child care priorities, and leverage TANF dollars to support workforce development in child care fields.
- **Improve Child Care Licensing Process** by removing barriers to access due to cost or training requirements necessary to obtain a child care license in Denver.
- **Increase Number of Child Care Services in Child Care Deserts** by developing neighborhood specific strategies to fill the identified needs of children and families.
- **Increase Support and Training for Family, Friend and Neighbor Child Care Providers** to improve the quality of early childhood experiences through training and program development for providers that does not rely on obtaining a formal child care license.
- **Expand Early Learning Programs** that provide high quality early learning experiences and book rich environments to more families in neighborhoods across Denver and promote literacy.

The Status of Denver’s Children: A Community Resource report is intended to inform programs, services and investments in children and youth, this document will guide our city to move towards collective action to support Denver’s children and youth, our most valuable asset.

Respectfully,

Mayor Michael B. Hancock
Data

The most complete census of the United States population is conducted once every 10 years. The data collected from Census 2010 provides the best count of the population currently available for the country, states, and counties. The American Community Survey provides estimates of yearly population changes along with additional social, demographic, and economic data. These data sets, however, are estimates based on a sample of the population and are not as robust as the basic population data collected during the decennial census.

Census tracts are statistical areas defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and generally have a population between 1,200 and 8,000 people with the optimal size of 4,000 people. They are continuous areas that vary in size based on population density. Census tracts are frequently used throughout this document as the statistical unit from which demographic data are aggregated and displayed within Denver neighborhoods. Census tract data are only available in five-year estimates from the U.S. Census and are significantly less accurate than estimates for larger population areas.

Neighborhood data (aggregated from census tracts) are available using five-year averages of the data and contain errors. Caution should be used when interpreting the results in any detail. The data and maps provided in this document are intended to give a general impression of variation by neighborhood and not exact counts of people.

The data used in this report are the most current from the best available sources and include the U.S. Census Bureau, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and other reliable publications and resources. Data describing the same phenomena may differ due to the source, method of collection, time period, aggregations, or margin of error. All sources used in the document are clearly cited.
Introduction
The Office of Children’s Affairs uses data to help understand who Denver’s children are and where they live. These data help policy makers, advocates, and community partners form a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Denver’s children and youth. To improve outcomes for all our children, it is necessary to appreciate the environmental contexts that shape how they experience the world.

Many factors influence a child’s chances for success. Differences in school quality, the presence of positive adult role models, neighborhood safety, access to healthy foods, health insurance, a medical home, and quality early care and education experiences all have varying impacts on child outcomes. It is easier for some children to overcome obstacles throughout their development when those obstacles are not cumulative and persistent. Children who live in low-income or chronically disadvantaged neighborhoods often experience significantly lower outcomes in health, early childhood education, K-12 education, and post-secondary success than their more affluent peers. To mitigate the impact of disadvantage on children, the City of Denver has established these goals to ensure all Denver’s children are prepared to succeed. These include:

- Increasing the number of children who have access to high quality early childhood experiences
- Increasing the number of Denver third grade students who can read at grade level
- Decreasing the number of disconnected youth
- Increasing the number of students who have access to and complete a post-secondary pathway and obtain a job
- Increasing the percentage of children who are at a healthy weight
- Ensure all children have their basic needs met

Together, these goals address important childhood issues throughout all stages of a child’s development. To understand the complexity and distribution of factors related to the outcome of these goals, a foundational set of data indicators at the neighborhood level are provided in this document. The Status of Denver’s Children 2018: A Community Resource provides in-depth information on how Denver kids and their families are faring using a variety of indicators – looking at the actual numbers as well as the places with high or low concentrations of factors. This resource is intended to be used to inform programs, services, and investments in children and youth as they relate to the city’s goals for children.

Due to the size constraints of the document, neighborhood and street labels are not included on all the maps.

The map in Figure 1 is to be used as a neighborhood reference map to supplement the maps throughout the document.
2018 Child Well-Being Index

Using the poverty measure alone to determine advantage and disadvantage by place is inadequate. Rather, it is the culmination of factors together that present significant challenges to children and families. The child with fewer obstacles to overcome in everyday experiences is likely to have more opportunities for both academic and life success.

Consistent patterns of advantage and disadvantage are apparent in the maps provided throughout the 2018 Status of Denver’s Children: A Community Resource document. It is possible to statistically aggregate key indicators to highlight areas of cumulative disadvantage. These areas can then be used to identify and focus on societal and systemic problems that limit opportunity for children in Denver. Unpacking the complex barriers that our children face will ultimately lead to solutions for meaningful change to improve outcomes for all Denver’s children.

Eleven indicators that measure differences in education, health, and community opportunities were statistically aggregated to provide a snapshot of opportunity for Denver children by neighborhood (Figure 2). Each of these indicators and maps are discussed fully and cited in the 2018 Status of Denver’s Children: A Community Resource document. These indicators include:

- Births to Women without a High School Diploma
- Teen Births
- Overweight or Obese Children
- Kindergarteners NOT at Grade Level: Cognitive Domain
- Third Graders NOT Reading at Grade Level
- Ninth Graders Chronically Absent
- Adults without a High School Diploma
- Children in Single-Parent Families
- Child Poverty
- Violent Crime
- Unemployment
Figure 2: 2018 Denver Child Well-Being Summary

2018 Child Well-Being Index

Areas with Fewer Obstacles to Success
Areas with Multiple Obstacles to Success
Denver Neighborhoods
Data Not Included

Index Based on 11 Indicators:
- Births to Women Without a High School Diploma
- Teen Births
- Overweight or Obese Children
- Kindergartners Not Meeting Expectations: Cognitive Assessment
- 3rd Graders Not Proficient in Reading
- 9th Graders Chronically Absent
- Adults with less than a High School Diploma
- Child Poverty
- Children in Single-Parent Families
- Unemployment
- Violent Crime
Setting the Community Context
City and County of Denver Programs that Support Children and Families Within the Area of Basic Needs

47th and York Bike-Ped
After School Meals
Arts and Culture
Bank on Denver
Catholic Charities
Child Care Center
Child Support Services
Child Welfare
ColoWorks
Community Events-Fire
Community Recreation
Crosswalk Sign Maintenance
Curfew Officers
CW OOH
CW SubAdopt
Denver School Based Health Centers
Disaster Ready Camp (2016)
DSD GED Program
DSD Juvenile Work Program
Education Materials-Fire
Employment First
Family Promise
FDA Tobacco Program
Fire Station Tours
Fishing
Food Program
GREAT
Healthy Communities
Lead
Medicaid Eligibility
Mercy Housing - Bluff Lakes
Mile High United Way-Family Unification Program
My Denver
Nurse Family Partnership
One on One Financial Coaching
Opioid Prevention/Resource Program
Outdoor Recreation
Outreach Services
Positive Youth Contacts
Safe Routes to School
SafeHouse
Safety Trailer-Fire
School Crossing Guards
School Oral Health
School Resource Officers
SNAP Benefits
Social Enrichment
Summer Food
The Salvation Army-Family and Seniors Homeless Initiative
Training for Teens (2016)
Urban Peak - Shelter
Urban Peak-Stability Housing
VFC
Vision Zero Swag
Volunteers of America
Warren Village-First Step
WIC Program
Youth Fire Stop
Youth Fire Stop Prevention
To formulate solutions to some of the complex challenges facing Denver’s children and understand where opportunity is in Denver, it’s necessary to supply basic demographic information on children and their families. Data in this section include total population statistics, data on family economics, educational attainment of the adults, and crime, as well as the distribution of people by race and ethnicity. Considering the context of the communities in which children live goes a long way in establishing effective and efficient policies and recommendations to ensure that every Denver child has the best opportunity to succeed.

**Total Population**

Denver is experiencing significant population growth. From 2010 to 2016, the number of people living in Denver increased by 89,000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The demographic composition of the people moving into Denver will dramatically impact the income distribution, the housing market, and the ethnic and racial composition and characteristics of Denver neighborhoods. These demographic changes necessitate thoughtful changes to the policies, programs, and services the city controls for all Denver residents to have the best opportunity to thrive.

Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau data show that the United States is undergoing a dramatic shift in the racial and ethnic composition of the population. There has been rapid growth of new minority groups composed of Hispanics, Asians, and multiracial populations. William Frey, a demographer with the Brookings Institution, states that over the next 40 years each of these minority groups is expected to double in size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denver</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Population</strong></td>
<td>693,060</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>5,540,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic or Latino</strong></td>
<td>209,341</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>1,181,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Hispanic White</strong></td>
<td>374,372</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>3,796,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Hispanic Black</strong></td>
<td>63,879</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>220,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Hispanic American Indian</strong></td>
<td>3,010</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>28,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Hispanic Asian</strong></td>
<td>25,346</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>173,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Hispanic Pacific Islander</strong></td>
<td>291</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Hispanic Other Race</strong></td>
<td>15,843</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>125,575</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Population Characteristics for Denver, Colorado and the United States, 2016

Denver’s population mirrors these national trends. In 2016, the total population of Denver County was estimated at 693,060 people (Figure 3). Hispanics, representing the largest ethnic group in Colorado, comprised 30 percent of the total county population (Table 1).
Denver’s Asian Population

Nationwide, the largest growth in the Asian population took place after 1965 and was primarily due to changes in U.S. immigration policies. As of 2010, 85 percent of U.S. Asians were first- or second-generation Americans.⁴

In Denver, about 25,000 people identify as Asian. The Asian population has grown 47 percent since 2006 (Figure 4).⁵

The map in Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of the Asian population by census tract for Denver and surrounding counties.⁶

---


Denver's Black Population

For most of U.S. history, blacks represented the largest minority group in the nation. As of the 2000 Census, however, Hispanics represented the largest minority.\(^7\) In 2016, the U.S. Census estimated nine percent, or 64,000, of Denver’s population to be black. This is lower than 12 percent nationally.\(^8\) In Denver, the black population grew 16 percent since 2006 (Figure 7).\(^9\)

The map in Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of the black population by census tract for Denver and the surrounding counties.\(^10\)

---


Denver’s Hispanic Population

Waves of immigrants arriving in the 1970’s to 1990’s added to the long-standing population of Hispanic people in the U.S. and more than tripled their numbers nationwide. The most recent population growth, however, is due to natural increase rather than immigration.¹¹

Denver’s Hispanic population is approximately 209,000 people and grew six percent since 2006 (Figure 8).¹²

Figure 9: Map of the Hispanic Population

The map in Figure 9 illustrates the distribution of the Hispanic population by census tract for Denver and the surrounding counties.¹³

---

Denver’s Non-Hispanic White Population

Nationwide, the white population is the largest racial group. However, white growth has slowed due to low immigration and fertility rates. The white population is moving within the country from large metropolitan coastal areas into areas in the south and west. By 2010, 64 percent of the U.S. population was white. By 2040, whites will become a minority of the total population.\textsuperscript{14} Denver’s Non-Hispanic white population is approximately 374,000 people and has grown 33 percent since 2006 (Figure 10).\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure10.png}
\caption{Denver's Non-Hispanic White Population over Time}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure11.png}
\caption{Map of the Non-Hispanic White Population}
\end{figure}


Child Population

After a significant drop during the Great Recession, the number of children in Denver has increased (Figure 12). In 2016, approximately 140,400 children were estimated to be living in Denver.¹⁷

Five-year estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau provide the data for Denver by census tract and the surrounding counties (Figure 13).¹⁸

Figures 12 and 13: Data sources and maps reference American Community Survey data for Denver and the surrounding counties.

---


Children Under Age Five

Single-year estimates for the U.S. Census Bureau illustrate a six percent decline in the number of Denver children under age five over the last five years from 2012 to 2016 (Figure 14). As of 2016, approximately 44,000 children under age five lived in Denver.\textsuperscript{19} The percentage of children under age five in Denver and the surrounding counties is illustrated in Figure 15.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Figure 14:} Denver Children under Age Five

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure14}
\end{center}

\textbf{Figure 15:} Map of Children under Age Five

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure15}
\end{center}


Child Population by Race/Ethnicity

Denver’s child population is diverse. In Denver, 34 percent of children under age 18 were categorized as non-Hispanic white in 2016. The largest ethnic group in Denver is Hispanic with 48 percent of children reported to be of Hispanic origin of any race.

Including the Hispanic ethnicity in any racial category, white children make up 68 percent of Denver’s child population, followed by 12 percent of black children. Asian children make up three percent, and American Indian, one percent (Figure 16).21

Figure 16: Denver's Child Population by Race 2016

Children of Color

Denver is made up of a majority of children who reported to be of a race/ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white. In other words, children of color, mixed race/ethnicity, and others made up 66 percent (93,300) of the total child population in Denver in 2016. Not unlike other urban centers, Denver has a higher proportion of children of color than Colorado and the United States (Figure 17).  

Figure 18: Areas in with less than 50 percent Non-Hispanic White Children

The map highlights the areas in Denver and the surrounding counties where children of color make up more than half of the child population over (Figure 18).

---


Children in Immigrant Families

Children in immigrant families are defined as children under age 18 who are either foreign-born or who have at least one foreign-born parent, regardless of citizenship status or year of arrival in the United States. In 2016, 36 percent (50,000) of Denver’s children were living in immigrant families (Figure 19).24

Seventy-one percent of the children in immigrant families in Denver originate from Latin America, four percent from Europe, ten percent from Asia, and 13 percent from Africa.25 The majority, or 92 percent, of children in immigrant families are U.S. citizens.26 Only three percent of their parents have been in the country less than five years.27 The distribution of children in immigrant families varies across the region. The map in Figure 20 illustrates the proportion of children in immigrant families by census tract in Denver and surrounding counties.28

---

Language

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 37,000 children, or 39 percent, under the age of 18 spoke a language other than English at home in 2016 (Figure 21). The variation of people over the age of five who speak a language other than English at home in Denver and the surrounding counties is illustrated in the map in Figure 22.

---


Youth in Foster Care

Children in foster care represent a high-risk population whose negative life circumstances necessitated their placement into the child welfare system. Some of the challenges they face that may impact their chances for success in school include:

- Low birth weight;
- Abusive homes;
- Increased hunger and poor nutrition;
- Frequently changing schools;
- Exposure to environmental hazards such as drugs, alcohol, and violence;
- Lack of home support in reading and language development;
- Single-parent homes; and
- Less involved home-school connections.31

Consequently, children and youth in foster care are more likely than their peers to have lower test scores, repeat grades, require special education services, exhibit behavior problems, have lower attendance, and drop out of school.

The number of out-of-home placements (foster care, kinship/relative care, congregate care) by month for children birth through age 18 is illustrated in Figure 23.32

The average monthly number of Denver children placed in 2017 was 959.

---

32 Denver Department of Human Services. (2018, February). Number of Youth in Foster Care by Month.
Family Economics

Income

In 2016, the median family (with child) income in Denver was $67,368, higher than in 2015 by $3,499. Denver’s median family income is approaching the national figure but still below the state median income of $78,024 (Figure 24).³³

Unemployment

In many ways, the labor market and job stability determine the resources that parents have available to spend on care for their children. In addition, job related stress, job loss, and financial insecurity can negatively impact the entire household. These external factors related to the labor force may affect children’s development.³⁴ In Denver the unemployment rate has dropped significantly since 2010.

The unemployment rate was three percent in December 2018, with approximately 12,000 people estimated to be unemployed (Figure 25).³⁵

The Annie E. Casey Foundation uses the percentage of children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment as one measure of family economic security. Many families piece together part-time employment to make ends meet. Furthermore, without a good education and relevant job skills, it is difficult for parents to earn a living wage to support their families.

In 2016, 29 percent (41,000) of Denver children lived in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment (Figure 26).36

Five-year estimates of unemployment rates illustrate the variation in employment by census tract in Denver and surrounding counties (Figure 27).37

---


Children in Poverty

Children living in poverty often experience the negative conditions of substandard housing, homelessness, inadequate nutrition, food insecurity, inadequate child care, lack of access to health care, unsafe neighborhoods, and under-resourced schools. Consequently, they are at-risk for negative outcomes such as low academic achievement, dropping out of high school, abuse and neglect, behavioral and physical health problems, and developmental delays.\(^{38}\)

Poverty is defined by the federal government as $25,100 annual income for a family of four and does not consider variations in the cost of living by place or necessary expenses such as housing, health care, child care, or transportation.\(^{39}\) The federal poverty measure underestimates what it costs to support a family.

According to the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2015 published by the Colorado Center on Law and Policy, it costs approximately $73,749 to meet the basic needs of a family of four in Denver (two adults, an infant and preschooler).\(^{40}\) In other words, the cost to meet basic needs for a family of this type in Denver is approximately three times the federal poverty level.

Since peaking in 2010 with 33 percent of children living in poverty, rates continue to decline in Denver. In 2016, 20 percent, or 28,000, of children under age 18 were living in poverty (Figure 28).\(^{41}\)

---

Poverty is not equally distributed throughout Denver’s neighborhoods and surrounding counties, as illustrated in Figure 29.42

Figure 29: Children in Poverty in Denver and Surrounding Counties

Ratio of Poverty to Income Trends

Many working families in Denver struggle to make ends meet. An estimated 56,000 children, or 42 percent, of Denver children live in families with incomes below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), or less than $50,200 annual income for a family of four.\textsuperscript{43} The percentage of children living in families above 200 percent of poverty has grown to 58 percent in 2016 (Figure 30).

Child Poverty by Race/Ethnicity

Over time in Denver, the proportion of children in poverty has gone down from 28 percent to 25 percent for all children from the 2007-2011 time period to the 2012-2016 time period. Children of color, however, are more often in poverty than non-Hispanic white children according to the U.S. Census Bureau five-year estimates. (Figure 31).\textsuperscript{44}


Young Children in Poverty in Denver

Children are most sensitive to the negative impacts of living in poverty when they are young and their brains are developing. Research shows that when young children are raised in poverty the negative impact can extend well into adulthood.\textsuperscript{45}

According to latest U.S. Census Bureau estimates, approximately 7,200, or 16 percent, of Denver children under age five were living in poverty in 2016. The poverty rate for Denver children under the age of five is higher than the state average of 14 percent (Figure 32).\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{Figure 32: Children under age Five in Poverty}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure32.png}
\caption{Children under age Five in Poverty}
\end{figure}


Areas of Concentrated Poverty

All children need strong families and supportive communities to realize their full potential. Unfortunately, many Denver children are living in high-poverty areas that have the potential to negatively impact their chances for success. Approximately 13 percent of Denver’s children live in areas of concentrated poverty, defined as census tracts with a poverty rate of 30 percent and higher. Critical resources for their family’s healthy growth and development are often out of reach.

Children living in areas of concentrated poverty are more likely to experience stress, have unmet basic needs, lower test scores, be exposed to violence, struggle with a lack of positive role models, and are more likely to drop out of school. The impacts may be greatest for younger children.47

The highest proportion of people living in areas of concentrated poverty occurred during the period of the Great Recession (December 2007-June 2009).48 By 2012-2016, the number of people living in areas of concentrated poverty dropped significantly. At the latest measure, nine percent of all Denver people lived in these high poverty areas. People of color live in these areas more often than non-Hispanic white people. Concentration of poverty is highest for Hispanics, with approximately 17 percent living in high-poverty areas (Figure 33).49

During the 2006-2010 period, one-quarter of Denver’s children lived in areas of concentrated poverty. In the 2012-2016 period, fewer children were living in these high-risk areas. In Denver, approximately 13 percent, or 18,000 children under age 18 lived in areas of concentrated poverty in 2012-2016 (Figure 34).50

---


Figure 33: People Living in Areas of Concentrated Poverty by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group
Figure 34: Areas of Concentrated Poverty

Single-Parent Families

Single-parent families often struggle to provide basic needs for their families with only one income. In 2016, 48,000 children, or 34 percent, lived in single-parent households in Denver (Figure 36).\(^{51}\)

The distribution of children living in single-parent families in Denver and the surrounding region is illustrated on the map in Figure 35.\(^{52}\)

---


Public Assistance

The number of children under age 18 living in families receiving public benefits in the form of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), cash public assistance income, or Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, has declined in Denver since 2013. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that approximately 32,450 Denver children, or 23 percent, were living in families receiving public assistance benefits in 2016. This is higher than the Colorado rate of 18 percent (Figure 37).53

---


Children Enrolled in WIC

Federal grants are available to States for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). These funds can be used for food, health care referrals and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who may be at nutritional risk.55

In Denver, approximately 14,000 children under age five were enrolled in WIC in 2017. This is a 24 percent decrease in the number of children participating in WIC since 2011 (Figure 39).56

---

Students in Homeless Families

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education program objectives are to increase access to education and provide stability and opportunity for educational success for children and youth experiencing homelessness. The overall intent of the program is to remove all educational barriers facing homeless children and youth with emphasis on educational enrollment, attendance, and success.

In Denver, the number of homeless students decreased 36 percent from the 2014-2015 school year to the 2016-2017 school year, most likely due to the improving economy and demographic changes after the end of the Great Recession (Figure 40).57

Figure 40: Homeless School-Aged Children in Denver

Educational Attainment of Adults

Research shows that educational attainment is the most important social characteristic for predicting earnings. Figure 41 illustrates the breakdown of educational attainment by degree for Denver adults over time. Since 2010, the level of adults with college degrees has continued to increase as the percentage of adults with less than a high school diploma has decreased.

The median earnings for adults over the age of 25 increased substantially with higher levels of educational attainment. The lowest earnings are $23,803 for adults without a high school diploma. The greatest earnings are reported for adults with the highest levels of education earning an average of $65,852 per year. Over time, the increase in wages was 14 percent for adults with no high school diploma compared to a 26 percent increase since 2005 for those with graduate degrees (Figure 42).

---


Adults with a high school diploma generally report better life outcomes for themselves and their children. In addition to earning more money, high school graduates tend to live longer and are less likely to fall into poverty and rely on public assistance. Positive role models and a strong network of caring, informed adults are important assets in a community. There is evidence that the educational outcomes of children are impacted by the absence of educated, affluent adults in their communities.

The map in Figure 43 illustrates where there are higher percentages of adults in the community without a high school diploma for Denver and surrounding counties.

---


Crime

High-crime neighborhoods may expose children to violence, which can cause several problems. According to the National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence, children who are living in high-crime neighborhoods and exposed to violence have the potential to suffer lasting physical, mental, and emotional harm. They are also at risk for juvenile delinquency, further victimization, and involvement with the child welfare system.64

In a nationwide study of 300 metropolitan areas, data show that higher income neighborhoods have lower violent crime rates than do high-poverty areas. One theory of why crime is higher in low-income areas compared to high-income areas is that people choose to participate in criminal activities when the expected return of the crime outweighs the risk of arrest. In neighborhoods where the residents are more likely to intervene to stop crime, participate in neighborhood associations, and pick up trash and clean graffiti, the perceived risk of being caught is higher and therefore the crime rates are lower.65

Several factors contributing to poor student achievement in schools in high crime neighborhoods have been identified and include:

- Higher mobility rate of low-income children and families;
- Disruptive behavior of classmates; and
- Increased absenteeism in schools.66

For children exposed to high rates of crime, mitigating the impact is important to future success in school and life. Overall crime consists of serious offenses that are reported to the police and include homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, auto theft, and arson. The highest rates of overall crime in Denver generally include areas in and around the Central Business District Denver International Airport (Figure 44).67

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67 Denver Police Department. 2016 Neighborhood Crime rates per 1,000 people by Denver neighborhood.
Violent Crime

Violent crimes are offenses to a person which involve force or the threat of force and includes homicide, rape, robbery and aggravated assault. Research shows that violent crime in the community around elementary and middle schools is a barrier to overall child well-being. Exposure to violent crime doubles the likelihood that a child will perpetuate violence. Additionally, children exposed to violent crime can suffer post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. The mental health consequences of exposure to violent crime can hinder cognitive development and educational attainment. The rates of violent crime by neighborhood are illustrated in the map in Figure 45.

Domestic Violence

Not only are children at risk for witnessing violent crime in their neighborhood, but many experience violence in their own homes. Violence between parents, intimate partners, or other family members is a significant problem nationwide. Researchers have found that exposure to domestic violence can impact the development of children in numerous ways. Children exposed to physical abuse in the home are more likely to be at increased risk for physical abuse themselves and can exhibit aggression towards others. Long term adverse effects can carry on into adulthood. Children from homes with domestic violence are also reported to display behavioral and emotional problems and are more likely to have issues with substance abuse, violent crime, and adult criminality.

Domestic violence is crime where the victim’s relationship to the suspect includes spouse, common-law spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, same sex relationship and ex-spouse. Domestic violence rates by neighborhood are illustrated in Figure 46.

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69 Denver Police Department. 2016 Neighborhood Crime rates per 1,000 people by Denver neighborhood.
72 Denver Police Department. 2016 Neighborhood Crime rates per 1,000 people by Denver neighborhood.
Marijuana

Research shows that marijuana use by youth negatively impacts their brain development which impacts their performance in school. According to a report by the Colorado Department of Education, long-term use of marijuana before age 18 can cause permanent damage to the brain’s structure and functioning. For youth, marijuana use can impact decision making and affect school performance, leading to a higher risk of dropping out of school. The report also states that marijuana use is rising, the perception of marijuana’s harmfulness is decreasing, fewer students disapprove of marijuana use, and marijuana is easier to get.73

In addition to the impact on the health of youth, involvement in the criminal justice system is another risk for Denver’s children involved with marijuana. The Denver Police Department reported a decrease in marijuana arrests for 10 through 17-year-old youth in Denver last year. In 2017, there were 283 marijuana-related juvenile arrests (Figure 48).74

74 Denver Police Department. Data Analysis Unit. 2017 Marijuana Juvenile Arrests in Denver.
75 Ibid.
Positive Police Interactions with Youth

The Denver Police Department tracks the number of contacts with youth through a variety of positive activities in the community. These activities include mentoring, meet and greet events, youth education, afterschool programs, youth sports, gang intervention and education, and events with parents, youth, and police.

In total, more than 10,405 positive police contacts with youth were recorded in 2017. The distribution of these contacts by police district are mapped in Figure 49.76

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76 Denver Police Department. Data Analysis Unit. 2017 Positive Police Interactions with Youth.
GOAL 1

Increase the Percentage of Children and Youth in Denver Who Are at a Healthy Weight
City and County of Denver Programs that Contribute to Increasing the Percentage of Children Who are at a Healthy Weight

Adaptive Recreation
After School Meals
Aquatics
Chance to Dance
Community Recreation
Denver School Based Health Centers
Employment First
Fishing
Fitness
Food Program
HEAL in Child Care
Junior Golf
Medicaid Eligibility
My Denver
Neighborhood Public Service and Development
Nurse Family Partnership
Safe Routes to School
SNAP Benefits
Social Enrichment
Summer Food
WIC Program
Youth Sports
A child's health is a key determinant to success in most other aspects of their lives. One of the challenges currently facing Denver is the number of children who are overweight or obese. Childhood obesity is less about how much a child weighs and more about the long-term impact of obesity on a child’s overall health in addition to its social impact on the broader community.

Childhood obesity is the result of consuming too many calories and not getting enough physical activity. Overweight children are those whose body mass index (BMI) falls between the 85th and 94th percentile of normal weight for height. Obese children are those whose BMI is at or above the 95th percentile of normal weight for height or higher. These children are at risk for developing serious, long-term health problems such as diabetes and heart disease. Denver Health collects BMI data for children between the ages of two and 17. According to this source, 31 percent of Denver children were measured as overweight or obese (15.7 percent obese and 14.6 percent overweight).77

The graph in Figure 50 describes overweight and obese students for each school year. The percentage of students at an unhealthy weight status remained flat for the last five school years.

Figure 50: Prevalence of Childhood Obesity Among Children Ages 2 to 17

Typically, Colorado communities with high rates of obesity face limited access to healthy and affordable foods, recreational facilities, safe neighborhoods, and preventive health care. Children living in poverty or in low-income families are more likely to be overweight or obese than their more affluent peers.78

Figure 51: Prevalence of Childhood Obesity by Race/Ethnicity, Children Ages 2 to 17

Mirroring national trends, the number of students in Denver Public Schools who are obese varies by race/ethnicity. Among black and Hispanic students, the percentage of students overweight or obese was higher than their white peers (Figure 51).79

Maternal poverty, consumption of sugar, and stress were identified as prenatal risk-factors leading to higher rates of obesity in Hispanic children in a study published in the Journal of Community Health.80 A map illustrating the percentage of children ages 2-17 who are obese is provided in Figure 52.81


Early Prenatal Care

Prenatal care is the first step to keeping women and their newborns healthy. Babies of mothers who do not get prenatal care are three times more likely to have a low birth weight and five times more likely to die than those born to mothers who do get care. Early prenatal care can lead to the diagnosis of many health problems that occur during pregnancy and may result in successful treatment. During these visits, doctors can also educate expectant mothers on what they can do to ensure that their baby has a healthy start to life. Exposure to maternal stress and toxic substances such as tobacco, drugs, and alcohol can affect development before a child is born, impacting the child’s academic, social, and physical outcomes throughout their life. Free and low-cost clinics are located in Denver for those who need it (Figure 70).

The percentage of women receiving early prenatal care in Denver has improved to 83 percent and, as of 2016, is higher than the state percentage of 81 percent of women receiving early care during pregnancy (Figure 53).

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Disparities exist, however, between women of different race and ethnicity. Women of color (black, Hispanic, and American Indian), had lower rates of early prenatal care than white and Asian women (Figure 54).  

Figure 55: Map of Women Receiving Early Prenatal Care

There is variation by neighborhood. Women living in high-income neighborhoods received early prenatal care more often than women living in low-income neighborhoods (Figure 55).

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Women Who Smoked During Pregnancy

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention research has shown that smoking during pregnancy causes health problems for both mothers and babies. Problems can arise as complications during pregnancy, premature births, low-birth-weight infants, stillbirths, or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). In addition to reducing the babies’ lung functions, nicotine may reduce the amount of blood in the fetal cardiovascular system and is further transferred to nursing infants through the smoking mother’s breast milk.  

In 2016 in Denver, four percent of new mothers reported smoking during pregnancy. This rate is lower than the state rate of six percent. Despite the lower rate in Denver, there is dramatic variation by race/ethnicity and neighborhood (Figures 56 and 57). The highest rates are generally in high poverty, low-opportunity neighborhoods, further contributing to the health risks of children living in them.

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Births

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment reported 9,269 births to Denver women in 2016 (Figure 58). The number of births has declined three percent since 2010.90

Births by Race/Ethnicity

Birth data from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment describe the diversity in Denver’s child population. Trends show that the proportion of births in Denver to non-Hispanic white women increased to 50 percent in 2016. The number of births to Hispanic women decreased to 27 percent and births to black women slightly increased to 11 percent (Figure 59).91

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91 Ibid.
The Hispanic birth rate is declining dramatically. The rate per 1,000 Hispanic women dropped from 113.8 in 2007 to 57 in 2016 (Figure 60).92

The number of births in 2016 by neighborhood is illustrated in the map in Figure 61.93

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93 Ibid.
Low Birth Weight Births

Babies born at a low birth weight have a high probability of experiencing developmental problems. Poverty, poor prenatal nutrition, smoking, stress, infections and exposure to violence can increase the risk of a baby being born with low birth weight. The number of children born at low birth weight in Denver has risen slightly to ten percent in 2016. Variation exists by race/ethnicity (Figure 62) and neighborhood (Figure 63).  

Figure 62: Low Birth Weight Trends by Race/Ethnicity in Denver

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<thead>
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</tbody>
</table>

Three Risk-Factor Births

Babies born to young women under age 25 who are unmarried and without a high school diploma are often at risk for poor education, social, and economic outcomes throughout their lives.

In Denver, three risk-factor births have declined 31 percent since 2012 with 283, or three percent, births to women in this risk category in 2016 (Figure 64).95

Some neighborhoods shaded in dark purple on the map have a higher proportion of three risk-factor births (Figure 65).96

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Teen Births

Teen pregnancy can compromise the well-being of both teen mothers and their children. Teen mothers are less likely than older mothers to receive adequate, timely prenatal care, putting them at risk for pregnancy complications. Children born to teen mothers are more likely to drop out of school, become teen parents themselves or be incarcerated as adults.

In 2016 in Denver, approximately five percent of all births are to teens between the ages of 15 and 19. The proportion of these teen births varies by race and ethnicity. According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the greatest percent of teen births (per population group) in Denver are to Hispanic women with ten percent. Trends of teen births by race and ethnicity are illustrated in Figure 67.

Figure 67: Births to Teens Ages 15-19 by Race/Ethnicity

![Figure 67: Births to Teens Ages 15-19 by Race/Ethnicity](image)

Figure 66: Map of Teen Births by Denver Neighborhood

![Figure 66: Map of Teen Births by Denver Neighborhood](image)

Teen births by Denver neighborhood are illustrated in Figure 66.

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Births to Women Without a High School Diploma

Low educational attainment of parents is associated with several risk factors that impact child well-being, including a higher risk for living in poverty. In Denver, 13 percent of births were to women with less than a high school diploma or GED in 2016. Although this rate is decreasing in Denver, there is significant variation by race/ethnicity.

The highest rate by race/ethnicity is among Hispanic women, with 32 percent of births to women without a high school diploma (Figure 69).99

Figure 69: Births to Women with less than 12 Years Education

There is also significant variation by geography (Figure 68).100


Access to a primary care in a nearby clinic is essential for all families to maintain healthy living. Providers can monitor health, manage chronic conditions, and assist patients with diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. These services are available to all Denver residents through the network of family health centers across Denver. These centers are conveniently located in neighborhoods of highest need (see child well-being index on page 9) where access might otherwise be difficult due to transportation or cost.

School-Based Health Centers in Denver Public Schools provide a convenient option for care for Denver students. Services available include primary care, mental health, reproductive health education, and insurance enrollment assistance (Figure 70).^{101}

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Health Insurance

Uninsured Children

The ability for all children to see a health care provider for routine exams, screenings, immunizations, and care when sick is essential for healthy growth and development. Unfortunately, some children live in families without health insurance due to high costs, limited access to providers, or enrollment barriers.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports approximately two percent of children in Denver were without health insurance in 2016. Denver has a lower percentage of uninsured children than Colorado at four percent (Figure 71).^102^ Estimates for the uninsured population are available from the U.S. Census Bureau at the census tract level and differences between places within Denver and surrounding counties are apparent (Figure 72).^103^
Medical Assistance, or Medicaid, is a public health insurance program available for children age 19 and younger in families earning 142 percent of the federal poverty level or less. The number of children receiving medical assistance in Denver has decreased to 83,932 by February 2018 (Figure 73).104

Child Health Plan Plus

The Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) is a low-cost, public health insurance program for children age 18 and younger in families earning between 142 percent and 260 percent of the federal poverty level. As of December 2016, 7,550 Denver children received CHP+ benefits (Figure 74).105

---

Eligible But Not Enrolled in Public Health Insurance

Many children live in families whose annual incomes qualify them to participate in publicly financed health insurance programs such as CHP+ or Medicaid. Despite meeting eligibility requirements, many children are not enrolled. The Colorado Health Institute calculates the number of children eligible for these valuable health insurance programs but not enrolled (EBNE). In Colorado, the rate of EBNE children dropped statewide to six percent.

Denver has also done a great job of enrolling eligible children in health insurance, with a decrease from 33 percent eligible but not enrolled children in 2008 to four percent in 2016 (Figure 75).106

Figure 75: Children Eligible but not enrolled in CHP+ or Medicaid

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Children with Disabilities

Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), school-aged children and youth ages three through 21 are provided special education and related services through the school system. To qualify for these services, an evaluation is performed to see if the child has a disability defined in the IDEA legislation and to identify what special education and related services the child needs.

IDEA lists categories under which children may be eligible for services. These categories include:

- Autism;
- Deaf-blindness;
- Deafness;
- Hearing impairment;
- Intellectual disability;
- Multiple disabilities;
- Orthopedic impairment;
- Specific learning disability;
- Speech or language impairment;
- Traumatic brain injury; or
- Visual impairment.107

Special Education in Denver Public Schools

In Denver, approximately 10,000 (11 percent) students were enrolled in special education classes in Denver Public Schools in 2017.108 Special education programs are designed for children with disabilities and special needs, and support services are offered through the public school system at no cost to families.

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Food Insecurity

Children in food-insecure households, or households that struggle to afford food for their families, are at an increased risk for numerous health problems and added emotional and physical stress that may affect a child’s ability to succeed in school. Feeding America reports that the national average for a meal costs $2.94. Due to the higher costs of living in Denver, an average meal costs $3.20. For a household struggling to afford housing, utilities, child care, and other necessary expenses, the additional burden of expensive food can have a significant impact on a family’s budget.

Although food-insecurity is linked to poverty, measuring need from poverty alone is insufficient. Many food-insecure children live in households with incomes above the federal poverty level and above the eligibility for federal nutrition programs such as SNAP and the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch program. In Denver, approximately 72 percent of food insecure children are likely income-eligible for federal nutrition assistance (185 percent of the federal poverty line), leaving 28 percent of food insecure children likely not eligible for federal assistance.

To improve the estimate of food-insecure children, Feeding America has published a model estimate of food-insecurity for children. The following indicators were used to calculate estimates of child food-insecurity at the county, congressional district and state levels:

- Unemployment rates;
- Child-poverty rates;
- Median income for families with children;
- Homeownership rates for families with children;
- African American children; and
- Hispanic children.

In 2015, approximately 23,340 children, or 17.2 percent, were counted as food-insecure in Denver. The number of food-insecure children has decreased 26 percent from 2009 to 2015 (Figure 76).

The City and County of Denver offers snacks and supper meals afterschool and during the summer. This program fed approximately 190,000 meals in 2017. Denver’s meal program, along with other community partner programs, including Food Bank of the Rockies and Denver Public Schools, help ensure that no child need suffer hunger in Denver.

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110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Federal Food Stamp Program, helps mitigate the negative impacts of food insecurity on children and adults. This federally funded program provides eligible households with coupons or cards that can be used to purchase food at participating local grocery! stores or markets. In Denver, the program is administered by Denver Human Services.

According to data from the Denver Department of Human Services, the number of children receiving SNAP benefits over time show a steep increase during the recession and slow decline since 2012. As of January 2018, nearly 37,000 children under the age of 19 were receiving SNAP benefits in Denver (Figure 77).114

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau illustrate the percentage of households with children by census tract receiving SNAP benefits for Denver and the surrounding counties (Figure 78).115

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Food Deserts

Increases in diet-related diseases and obesity are major public health problems in cities across America. Limited access to supermarkets, grocery stores, and other sources of healthy and affordable food may make it harder for some Denver residents to eat a balanced diet.

The definition of a food desert is provided in the 2008 Farm Bill as an “area in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominately lower-income neighborhoods and communities”. In other words, food deserts are geographic areas where access to affordable, healthy food options are limited. In addition, food deserts often contain a higher proportion of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores that offer processed foods with high fat and sugar content directly contributing to the obesity problem in Denver.

Cities across the nation, including Denver, are combating food deserts through community planning projects such as farmer’s markets, community gardens, local food promotion, youth agriculture, culinary training programs and improved nutritional guidelines in schools.

The USDA compiled U.S. Census Bureau data to identify food deserts by census tract. These food deserts are low-income areas where the poverty rate is greater than 20 percent or the median family income is less than or equal to 80 percent of the metropolitan area’s median income. They are also areas where a significant number of the people (at least 500 people or 33 percent) live at least one half a mile from the nearest large grocery store or supermarket.

In Denver, 54 percent or nearly 70,000 children live in food deserts (Children ages 0-17 from the 2010 Census of Population and Housing tract-level counts). The map in Figure 79 illustrates the food deserts in purple that were identified in this study from the USDA by census tract.

Figure 79: Underserved Grocery Retail Areas in Denver

Mental Health

For children to have the best chance for success in life and school, they need to be healthy. Mental health is an important component of overall health. Children who are mentally healthy have “a positive quality of life and can function well at home, in school, and in their communities”. Children’s mental disorders can affect children of all ages, gender, and ethnic and racial backgrounds. Mental health disorders in children include:

- Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD);
- Behavior disorders;
- Mood and anxiety disorders;
- Substance abuse disorders; and
- Tourette syndrome.\textsuperscript{119}

Several factors can contribute to the development of mental disorders in children including family history, biological factors, toxic stress, and adverse childhood experiences, such as exposure to violence or substance abuse.\textsuperscript{120}

The results of the Colorado Child Health Survey show that the prevalence of ADD/ADHD, anxiety, behavioral, and depression disorders has risen for children four through 14 in Colorado since 2012. Anxiety is the most prevalent mental disorder with eight percent of children in this age group suffering in 2015 (Figure 80).\textsuperscript{121}

Suicide

Of the 33 Denver children and youth that committed suicide between 2011 and 2016, 23 were males and 10 were females. Five children were between the ages of 10 and 14 years, and 28 were teens between the ages of 15 and 19 (Figure 81).\textsuperscript{122}


\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.


Child Abuse and Neglect

Safe, stable and nurturing relationships and environments are best for children to grow and develop to their full potential. Unfortunately, some children suffer physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect. Child abuse and neglect can have severe effects on children’s cognitive, social-emotional, language, mental health, and behavioral development that can last well into adulthood. Adults who were neglected or abused as children are at greater risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, mental health issues and chronic disease.123

Young children under the age of four are at greatest risk for the most severe consequences of abuse and neglect. These negative outcomes include disrupted brain development, improper development of the nervous system, serious physical injury or death.124 Individual, family, and community factors contribute to the risk of child abuse and neglect. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists these risk factors by group.

Individual Risk Factors include:
- Parents’ lack of understanding of children’s needs, child development and parenting skills;
- Parents’ history of child maltreatment;
- Substance abuse or mental health issues;
- Young age of parents, low educational attainment, single-parenthood, low-income; and
- Non-biological, transient caregivers in the home.

Family risk factors include:
- Social isolation;
- Family disorganization, dissolution, and violence; and
- Parenting stress, poor parent-child relationships, and negative interactions.

Community risk factors include:
- Community violence; and
- Concentrated neighborhood disadvantage and poor social connections.125

Data available from the Division of Child Welfare Services with the Colorado Department of Human Services tracks the rate of substantiated incidences of maltreatment per 1,000 children for Denver and Colorado over time (Figure 82).126

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124 Ibid.
GOAL 2

Increase Access to High Quality Early Childhood Education
City and County of Denver Programs that Contribute to Increasing Access to High Quality Early Childhood Education

Arts and Culture
C2K
CCCAP
Child Care Center
Child Care Licensing
Child Support Services
Children's Library
ColoWorks
Community Outreach
Computers and Technology
Cultural Field Trip Fund
Cultural Partner Program
Denver School Based Health Centers
Early Learning Department
Early Literacy Focus Area
Enrollment
Evaluation
Fishing
Five by Five
Five Points Jazz Festival
Head Start
Neighborhood Public Service and Development
Nurse Family Partnership
Quality Improvement

Special Programs
Summer of Adventure
Teacher Scholarships for Institute of Creative Teaching
Tuition Support
Youth One Book One Denver
The most critical period in a child's development occurs within the first five years of life. The quality of learning experiences at home and school during this period often has a life-long impact on later school success, behavior, and health. Children in high-quality early learning programs demonstrate higher cognitive outcomes as well as non-cognitive skills that are critical for future school success. These benefits of high-quality early learning programs are evident in children from all socio-economic backgrounds but are particularly strong for children in low-income families.127

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates 65 percent of Denver children age five and younger had all available parents in the labor force in 2016. This means that approximately 33,000 young children in Denver needed care during the day while their parents work.128 There are approximately 23,100 licensed child care slots in day care centers, day care homes, and preschools in Denver.129 Using a very rough estimate comparing the number of children under age six needing care during the day to licensed child care slots results in 70 percent of the need fulfilled with licensed care in Denver.

Ensuring that quality child care and preschool is affordable and accessible for all families and children who need it is essential to preparing Denver children for kindergarten and future success.

Licensed Child Care in Denver

According to the Colorado State Office of Early Childhood licensed facilities list, there were 544 licensed child care facilities in the City and County of Denver as of March 20, 2018. These facilities include day care centers, homes, preschools, neighborhood youth organizations, and school-aged child care (Table 2).130

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Child Care Facility</th>
<th>Number of Facilities in Denver</th>
<th>Total Number of Children Each Provider Type is Licensed to Serve</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Child Care Center</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>21,568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Home</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Youth Organization</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Age Child Care</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>11,529</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Licensed Child Care Slots by Facility Type

130 Ibid.
Quality Child Care

In general, the higher the quality rating, the more the program is committed to providing a high quality early learning experience for children. This effort may include:

- Highly trained and educated teaching staff;
- Strong and knowledgeable leadership;
- Strong foundational business administration practices;
- Highly interactive and valued partnerships with families;
- Quality learning environment for children that incorporates curriculum, informed instruction, lower teacher/child ratios, and consistent health and safety practices; and
- Incorporation of resources and opportunities for collaboration related to child health.\(^{131}\)

The levels of quality represent the following characteristics:

- Level 1: providers follow licensing standards;
- Level 2: providers show they have completed quality activities to promote positive experiences for children; and
- Levels 3, 4, and 5: providers have demonstrated various quality investments and have earned cumulative points.\(^{132}\)

All licensed child care centers, homes, and preschools in Colorado are rated for quality. For preschools, 51 percent were rated a Level 4 or 5, the highest levels of quality (Figure 83).

Compared to Colorado, Denver has a higher percent of day care centers and preschools rated at high levels. Thirty percent were rated a Level 4 or 5 in all of Colorado as of March 20, 2018.\(^{133}\)

A Level 1 rating is assigned to licensed child care centers and preschools that have not been rated.

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Child Care Deserts

The increasing need for all parents in the home to work to make ends meet has grown with the rising costs of housing, health care, food, and other living expenses. A recent report by the Center for American Progress finds that more than half of the population across 22 states live in neighborhoods classified as child care deserts. In this report, child care deserts are defined as any census tract with more than 50 children under age five that contains either no child care providers, few options, or more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots. This lack of availability for child care unfortunately causes families to choose between unlicensed child care arrangements or change/decline opportunities for work. Furthermore, the locations of nearby quality child care options impact low-income families dramatically if they depend on public transportation or have inflexible job schedules.

The census tracts in Denver identified in the study as child care deserts are highlighted in dark purple in the map in Figure 84.

Figure 84: Child Care Deserts in Denver

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Child Care Capacity in Denver

The map in Figure 85 illustrates an estimate of child care capacity by neighborhood. It represents the number of licensed child care slots by neighborhood compared to the population of children under age ten. The darker shaded areas represent the highest capacity per child population and the lightest areas the lowest. The capacity for child care is inequitably distributed across Denver.

Figure 85: Estimated Child Care Capacity

Note that not all families choose child care in their home neighborhood and may choose providers based on other criteria than home location, such as location to work, quality, or types of care.

This rough estimate of neighborhood capacity illustrates that in some parts of Denver, choice is limited based on the availability. In the Stapleton neighborhood, for example, 32 percent of children have access to child care slots. Compare this to College View, in which only seven percent of children have access to licensed care slots.

Transportation, affordability, and the time programs are open may also limit access.

There is an increasing need in some neighborhoods to support families, enabling them to work and allowing children the opportunity to attend quality programs that set them up for future success.
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care

Informal child care in the home of trusted family or community members is called family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) child care and is the most common form of non-parental child care in the United States. Because this type of care is not monitored or licensed, the quality of care children are receiving is unknown. It is estimated that half of all young children under age six spend time in family, friend, and neighbor care nationally.135

These early learning years are critical to preparing children to enter school ready to learn. The need to support FFN providers to improve child outcomes is a recognized strategy both nationally and locally. However, identifying FFN providers that need or want support is difficult.

Drawing from current research around FFN care in the United States, several indicators were identified as key to understanding which factors often characterize FFN providers and which factors measure a child’s readiness for school.136 Indicators can be combined to highlight geographic areas in Denver where FFN providers are likely prevalent and may need additional support to improve outcomes for the children for whom they care (Figure 86). The key indicators include:

- Children with all available parents in the labor force;
- People in poverty;
- Three- and four-year-old children not in preschool;
- Adults without a high school diploma;
- Hispanic or Latino origin;
- Kindergarteners not ready for reading; and
- Children living in immigrant families.

Figure 86: Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care Analysis

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Preschool

Children enrolled in quality preschool programs are less likely to repeat grades, need special education, engage with law enforcement, and are more likely to graduate from high school, earn more money, and own homes as adults.\textsuperscript{137} Quality in programs, however, is an essential factor necessary to achieve the desired outcomes that matter for lasting impacts.

After a significant increase in 2014, the percentage of three- and four-year-old children enrolled in preschool in Denver has declined to 53 percent in 2016 (Figure 87). Fifty-seven percent of those in publicly funded preschool programs with 43 percent in privately funded (family-pay) programs.\textsuperscript{138}

Figure 87: Three- and Four-Year-Old Children Enrolled in Preschool

Research shows that high quality early learning programs benefit all children and better prepare at-risk children for kindergarten. Unfortunately, 65 percent of children in low-income families attend preschool compared to 90 percent of children in more educated, wealthier families across the nation.\textsuperscript{139}

Mirroring these trends, a higher percent of three-and four-year-old children living in higher-income neighborhoods in Denver participated in preschool programs more often than their peers in low-income neighborhoods (Figure 88).\textsuperscript{140}


Figure 88: Denver Three- and Four-Year-Old Children in Preschool

The Denver Preschool Program

The Denver Preschool Program’s vision is to ensure every child in Denver enters kindergarten ready to reach their full potential. The organization achieves this vision by making quality preschool possible for all Denver families with 4-year-old children through a dedicated sales tax first approved by voters in 2006 and renewed in 2014.

The map in Figure 89 illustrates where DPP funded students live and the total tuition support by neighborhood.

Through the 2016-2017 school year, DPP has provided $92 million in tuition support to help nearly 46,000 Denver children.

More information about the Denver Preschool Program and its participating preschools are available at www.dpp.org.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{141} Denver Preschool Program, March 2018.
Colorado Preschool Program

The state funded Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) provides high-quality early childhood education programs to at-risk three- and four-year-old children across Colorado. Denver Public Schools received funding for 4,024 preschool slots for the 2017-2018 school year. The average funding statewide per slot was $3,805 in 2016-2017. This is lower than the national average of state preschool spending per slot of $4,976.

The at-risk factors include poverty as measured by free or reduced-price meal eligibility, in need of language development, poor social skills, mobility, children in foster care, parents without a high school degree, teen parents, homelessness, parental substance abuse, and abusive home environments. Poverty is the most prevalent risk factor, accounting for nearly 80 percent of CPP enrolled children statewide.

Colorado Child Care Assistance Program

The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) provides child care support to eligible parents with newborns to children through age 12, and youth with special needs up to age 18. Denver CCAP is administered by the Denver Department of Human Services and is funded by a mix of federal, state, and county dollars.

The income eligibility for Denver’s CCAP program is currently 225 percent of the federal poverty level. The amount CCAP pays towards care is set up on a sliding scale based on a family’s size, monthly income, and amount of care utilized. Participating families are responsible for a portion of the cost. Denver CCAP currently serves parents in income eligible families who are:

- Employed or self-employed and earn at least minimum wage;
- Attending high school or working towards a GED or participating in ESL, college for a first bachelor’s degree or a vocational program;
- Currently searching for a job: and/or
- Participating in the Colorado Works/TANF program.

Denver Public Schools Early Childhood Education

The number of children participating in early childhood education programs through Denver Public Schools (DPS) has more than doubled since 2000. In the 2017-2018 school year, 6,088 Denver three- and four-year-old children participated in DPS early education programs. This is a 1.2 percent decrease since the prior school year.

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144 Ibid.
145 Denver Department of Human Services (May, 2018).
Head Start

In Denver, there are three Early Head Start grantees that serve children from birth through age two and two Head Start grantees, the Rocky Mountain Service Employment and Redevelopment (RMSER) and Denver Great Kids Head Start (DGKHS) that serve children ages three through five. During the 2016-2017 school year, 1,844 children were served across all Early Head Start and Head Start programs in Denver with combined enrollment totals for Early Head Start (384 children), DGKHS (1,153 children), and RMSER (307 children). DGKHS is authorized to serve children in all Denver neighborhoods.

The five Early Head Start and Head Start grantees collectively served approximately 26 percent of the eligible population in 2016 (Figure 90).\(^\text{147}\) The need for service is far greater than Head Start resources alone can meet. Other programs that help serve these and other eligible children include the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, the Colorado Preschool Program, the Denver Preschool Program, and Denver Public Schools early childhood programs. Denver Great Kids Head Start program and student locations are illustrated over the 2018 Child Well-Being Index on the map in Figure 91.

Figure 90: Early Head Start and Head Start Program Enrollment vs. Estimated Need in Denver

Figure 91: Map of DGKHS Enrollment 2017-2018

Children Enrolled in Denver Great Kids Head Start Programs
2017-2018 School Year

- Student Enrollment
- Head Start Program Locations

2018 Child Well-Being Index

Areas with Fewer Obstacles to Success

Areas with Multiple Obstacles for Success

Denver Neighborhoods

Data Not Included

Index Based on 11 Indicators:
- Births to Women Without a High School Diploma
- Teen Births
- Overweight or Obese Children
- Kindergarteners Not Meeting Expectations: Cognitive Assessment
- 3rd Graders Not Proficient in Reading
- 9th Graders Chronically Absent
- Adults with less than a High School Diploma
- Child Poverty
- Children in Single-Parent Families
- Unemployment
- Violent Crime

DENVER CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS
Fall 2016-Spring 2017 Teaching Strategies Gold

Achievement gaps begin long before they are measured by standardized tests in the third grade. Disparities in academic skills are apparent in preschool and kindergarten but begin even earlier in a child’s life. Studies show that these disparities are associated with family income, parental education, family structure, neighborhood conditions, and exposure to language and other educational experiences. Factors including a child’s health, nutrition, and exposure to emotional stress and violence are also known to impact a child’s early cognitive and social development.148

Head Start programs primarily serve the most vulnerable children in Denver. When the children enter the program, they are given an assessment that measures their competency in several important domains. These assessments are used to measure progress towards school readiness throughout the academic year and show that Head Start program participation clearly begins to close the achievement gaps for these disadvantaged children.

Teaching Strategies GOLD® is an assessment system for children from birth through kindergarten and measures the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are most predictive of school success. Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TS Gold) blends ongoing, authentic, observational assessment across all areas of development and learning with intentional, focused, performance-assessment tasks for selected literacy and numeracy objectives.

Head Start program administrators can use TS Gold reports to:

- Collect and gather child outcome data as one part of a larger accountability system;
- Guide program planning and professional development opportunities; and
- Inform strategic investments to close learning gaps.

Head Start preschool providers can use the TS Gold reports to:

- Observe and document children’s development and learning over time;
- Plan instruction to support children’s needs;
- Identify children who might benefit from additional support, screening, or further evaluation; and
- Report and communicate progress with family members and others.

The following graphs illustrate the percentage of three-, four-, and five-year-old children in Denver Great Kids Head Start (DGKHS) programs who meet or exceed social, physical, and academic expectations for their age as defined by TS Gold’s “Widely Held Expectations.” Overall, those students who participated in the DGKHS program for a full program year demonstrated significant growth across all domains in all categories of students analyzed from fall 2016 through spring 2017 (Figure 92).149

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149 Denver Great Kids Head Start. (June 2016). TS Gold Analysis: Fall 2016-Spring 2016. TS Gold Data provided by the Colorado Department of Education.
Children with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) consistently exhibit remarkable growth in all domains from fall to spring. Although fewer students with an IEP are meeting or exceeding Widely Held Expectations than their peers without an IEP, their growth dramatically reduces the significant gaps apparent at the start of the program year (Figure 93).  

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Based on the TS Gold Assessment results, we know that children make gains in all educational domains after participating in DGKHS programs. The gaps in literacy and mathematics, however, are wide between students of Hispanic origin compared to students who are not when they are measured in the fall. Graphs comparing the number of students meeting or exceeding expectations in these domains from fall to spring illustrated that the gaps close at the completion of the program (Figures 94 and 95).\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{151} Denver Great Kids Head Start. (June 2016). \textit{TS Gold Analysis: Fall 2016-Spring 2017}. TS Gold Data provided by the Colorado Department of Education.
GOAL 3
Increase the Number of Students who can Read at Grade Level by the end of Their Third Grade Year
City and County of Denver Programs that Contribute to Increasing the Number of Students Who Can Read at Grade Level

Bookmobiles
CCCAP
Children's Collection
Children's Library
Community Recreation
Cultural Field Trip Fund
Denver School Based Health Centers
Evaluation
Five Points Jazz Festival
Junior Golf
Make Your Mark
My Denver
Nurse Family Partnership
Out of School Learning
Positive Youth Contacts
Read Aloud Program
Solid Waste Education
Summer of Adventure
Summer of Adventure DPS Pilot
Teacher Scholarships for Institute of Creative Teaching
Youth One Book One Denver
Third Grade Reading

Examining a variety of education indicators provides a holistic view of achievement in Denver. Student population data, languages spoken in schools, English language learners, full-day kindergarten enrollment, and students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch are included in this section. Student achievement data as measured by proficiency on the state standardized tests by income, race/ethnicity, and subject, illustrate persistent gaps in achievement resulting from opportunity gaps impacting the success of students at various points in their development. Utilizing all these important indicators to craft effective policies, programs, services, and interventions are necessary to reduce achievement gaps and ensure opportunity for all of Denver’s children.

To ensure that all Denver children have what they need to be successful in school and life, they need the tools that will enable success at each stage in their development. It is essential that children enter school ready to learn, and the ability to read at grade level by the end of third grade is an important marker for future academic success. Beginning in fourth grade, children transition from learning how to read to reading to learn.

Although the percentage of third graders reading at grade level has improved since the previous school year from 32 percent to 37.9 percent (Figure 96), still too many are not meeting the mark. Sixty-two percent, or 3,670 Denver Public School third graders were not meeting expectations on the English Language Arts (ELA) PARCC assessment in the spring of 2017.  

---

Figure 96: Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Third Grade Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>Denver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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A significantly greater proportion of children of color (American Indian, black, and Hispanic) were not reading at grade level compared to their non-Hispanic white and Asian peers (Figure 97).\textsuperscript{153}

Disparities also exist by geography. In two Denver neighborhoods, 90 percent or more of students were not meeting expectations on the ELA (Figure 98).\textsuperscript{154}


\textsuperscript{154} Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2016-2017 School Year.
Denver Public Schools

Student Population

In the 2017-2018 school year, 92,984 students were enrolled in 207 Denver Public Schools (DPS) consisting of four Early Childhood Education schools, 92 elementary, 18 ECE-8, four ECE-12, 34 middle, 12 grades 6-12, and 44 high schools (Figure 99). The largest proportion, or 55 percent, of Denver Public School students was Hispanic or Latino compared to 24 percent classified as non-Hispanic white in the 2017-2018 school year. Black students made up 13 percent of the school population (Table 3). Forty-nine percent of DPS students are female and 51 percent are male.

Table 3: DPS Student Population by Race/ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DPS Student Profile</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>3,004</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>12,304</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>50,783</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (Not Hispanic)</td>
<td>22,318</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More</td>
<td>3,685</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>92,984</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 99: Student Enrollment


Over 120 languages are spoken in Denver Public Schools. The languages, other than English, spoken by the most students in DPS include Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, Somali, Amharic, French, Nepali, and Russian.\textsuperscript{157}

In the 2017-2018 school year, approximately 33,650 (37 percent) Denver Public School students, including early childhood children, were English Language Learners.\textsuperscript{158}

The map in Figure 100 illustrates the percentage of English Language Learners by school location.\textsuperscript{159}


Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Eligibility

The Colorado Department of Education provides annual district-level data on those children eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Free lunch eligibility is set at 130 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately $32,630 for a family of four) and reduced-price lunch eligibility is at 185 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately $46,435 for a family of four).  

Figure 101: Trends in Free and Reduced-Price Lunch in Denver

In Denver, 67 percent, or more than 62,000, public school students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch in the 2017-2018 school year (Figure 101).  

The proportion of free or reduced-price lunch students by Denver neighborhood is illustrated in Figure 102.

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162 Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2016-2017 School Year.
Full-Day Kindergarten

The skills learned in quality full-day kindergarten programs provide children the time and support they need to master the academic and social skills necessary for future achievement and life success.

Full-day kindergarten programs benefit children in the following ways:

- Contributes to increased school readiness;
- Leads to higher academic achievement;
- Improves student attendance;
- Supports literacy and language development;
- Benefits children socially and emotionally; and
- Decreases costs by reducing retention and remediation rates.\(^{163}\)

![Kindergarten picture]

As the benefits of participation in full-day kindergarten programs were more recognized, the number of children attending full-day kindergarten in Colorado and in Denver has increased. Denver’s participation rate has consistently been higher than the participation rate for Colorado over time. (Figure 103).\(^{164}\)

Denver Public Schools offers full-day kindergarten programs to children and their families. The half-day kindergarten program is free to all families and the full-day option is free to those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. For families earning more than 185 percent of the federal poverty level, tuition payments are determined based on a sliding scale.

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\(^{164}\) Colorado Department of Education. (2018). *Pupil Membership-District Data; Pupil Membership by District and Grade Level*, from Colorado Department of Education: [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cderefval/pupilcurrentdistrict](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cderefval/pupilcurrentdistrict).
Student Assessment Results

Kindergarteners Not Meeting Expectations on the TS Gold Assessment in Math

School readiness determination depends not only on positive interactions and social skills, but on knowledge, attitudes, and approaches to learning. Attitudes and habits developed around math concepts early, including object exploration, sorting, and comparing, are key to building math knowledge. Math also supports early literacy through conversations around predictions including “how” and “why” questions and other reasoning language. Studies show that early math skills are more predictive of later math achievement than early reading skills, but also of total academic achievement.165

The map in Figure 104 illustrates the differences in math proficiency of DPS kindergarten students by the neighborhood that they live.166

Figure 104: Kindergarten Math


166 Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2016-2017 School Year.
PARCC Assessments

In the 2014-2015 school year, Colorado transitioned to a new state-wide assessment for public school students. The Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) PARCC assessments were administered to Colorado students and are intended to measure the level at which Colorado students meet the Colorado Academic Standards and the Common Core State Standards. The new CMAS PARCC assessments are not comparable to prior TCAP or CSAP assessments.

Denver Public School students meet or exceed expectations on the English Language Arts assessment (ELA) less often than students overall in Colorado in all grades assessed except 9th grade, where Denver students outperform Colorado students (Figure 105).

The percentage of Denver Public School students meeting or exceeding expectations has improved since 2016 on the ELA (Figure 106).167

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A comparison of Denver Public School students meeting or exceeding expectations on the math assessment to students overall in Colorado is illustrated in Figure 107.

In 2017, there were 45,470 valid math assessments for DPS students. Of those, there were only 2,344 DPS students who took a high school math assessment other than Algebra 1. Due to the smaller number of students assessed in the non-traditional courses, proficiency rates vary more than other math assessments.

The percentage of Denver Public School students meeting or exceeding expectations on the PARCC Math Assessment over time is illustrated in figure 108.168

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GOAL 4

Increase the Number of Students who have Access to and Complete a Post-Secondary Pathway
City and County of Denver Programs that Contribute to Increasing the Number of Students who have Access to and Complete a Post-Secondary Pathway

After School is Cool
Career Awareness Events
Career Online High School
CCCAP
Children's Collection
CU Intern Contract
Cultural Field Trip Fund
DEAN
Denver Afterschool Alliance
Fishing
Five Points Jazz Festival
Girls Mentoring Program
Homework Help Hotline
IdeaLabs
Junior Golf
Make Your Mark
Mayor's Youth Awards
Mayor's Youth Commission
Mile High Scholars

Mile High United Way-Family Unification Program
My Brother's Keeper
My Denver
Neighborhood Public Service and Development
OST Programs
Out of School Learning
School Resource Officers
Social Enrichment
Solid Waste Education
Solid Waste Interns
Special Programs
STEM Program
Summer of Adventure
Summer of Adventure DPS Pilot
Summer Youth Employment
WIOA Youth Services
Youth Employment Academy
Youth Interns
Youth Programs
Graduation Rates

At the end of the 2016-2017 school year, 67 percent (3,749) of Denver Public School students graduated from high school on time, or in four years. Although the on-time graduation rate for DPS is significantly lower than the state average, graduation rates have steadily increased from 52 percent for the 2009-2010 school year (Figure 109).

Graduation rates vary widely based on factors such as race, ethnicity, and gender. Overall, female students graduate more frequently than male students (Figure 110). Students of color graduate less often than their non-Hispanic white and Asian peers (Figure 111).

In Denver, 63 percent of students with limited English proficiency graduated and 37 percent of students with disabilities graduated on time.169

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Dropout Rates

One of the most urgent problems facing the nation is the high number of students dropping out of school before they earn a high school diploma. The decision to dropout of high school has lifelong personal and societal impacts. A national report highlights the consequences including:

- The unemployment rate for people without a high school diploma is nearly twice that of the general population;
- Over a lifetime, a high school dropout will earn $200,000 less than a high school graduate and almost $1 million less than a college graduate;
- Dropouts are more likely to commit crimes, abuse drugs and alcohol, become teenage parents, live in poverty, commit suicide; and
- Dropouts cost federal and state governments hundreds of billions of dollars in lost earnings, welfare and medical costs, and billions more for dropouts who end up in prison.\(^{170}\)

In Denver, 4.2 percent, or 1,761 students, dropped out of high school before earning a diploma. This is higher than the state rate of 2.3 percent (Figure 112). The number of students dropping out of high school varies by race/ethnicity with more Hispanic children dropping out of school before earning their diploma than any other race/ethnic group (Figure 113).\(^{171}\)

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Post-Secondary Education

College Readiness

Research shows that the more prepared for college students are, the better their chances for completing a college degree. Beginning in 2017, the SAT college readiness assessment is given to every Colorado 11th grade public school student in the state. The test closely aligns with Colorado public school curriculum and focuses on key skills necessary to be successful in college. The SAT is accepted by all four-year colleges and universities in the United States and provides higher education institutions with standardized scores from which to compare, recruit and enroll future students.172

Students who meet or exceed the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks have a 75 percent chance of earning at least a “C” in first-semester, credit-bearing college courses (Figure 114).173

The overall total mean score ranges from 400-1600 and is a combination of the evidence-based reading and writing and math mean scores. A percentile score compares Colorado and Denver overall mean scores with a national sample of students in 11th and 12th grade. In Colorado, a mean score of 1014 is 50th in the nationally representative sample percentile. This means that 50 percent of sampled test takers scored equal to or below Colorado students. In Denver, a mean score of 977 is 44th and means that 44 percent of sampled US test takers scored equal to or below Denver students (Figure 115).174

---

College Enrollment

According to the 2015 Health Kids Colorado Survey, 92 percent of Denver high school students thought it was important to go to college.\textsuperscript{175} However, only 2,274 Denver high school graduates (50 percent) enrolled in a post-secondary institution in fall after graduating in 2016. This rate is lower than the state rate of 56 percent of graduates going to college (Figure 116).\textsuperscript{176}

Of those students who graduate, the percentage enrolling in college by race/ethnicity is indicated in the graph in Figure 117. A higher percentage of Asian and white students enroll in college after high school than American Indian, black, and Hispanic students.\textsuperscript{177}

The National Student Clearinghouse reports that 26 percent of DPS students who entered a college program in 2009 completed a degree within six years.\textsuperscript{178}


\textsuperscript{176} Colorado Department of Higher Education. District at a Glance: Denver County 1. \url{http://highered.colorado.gov/data/districthssummary.aspx}.

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.


Figure 116: Post-secondary Enrollment

Figure 117: College Enrollment by Race Ethnicity

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{college_enrollment_graph.png}
\caption{College Enrollment by Race Ethnicity}
\end{figure}
Remediation Rates

One of the reasons many students do not successfully complete a post-secondary program and earn a degree is because they are not academically prepared for college and require remedial coursework to catch up.\(^{179}\)

Of Colorado students who graduated high school in 2015 and enrolled in a state public college or university, approximately 36 percent needed remediation, or additional non-credit bearing courses offering basic skills necessary to succeed in college-level work. Of Denver Public School students, 45 percent needed to attend remedial classes (Figure 118).

Students of color require remediation more often than non-Hispanic white students. For the 2015 graduating class in Colorado, 60 percent of black students, 51 percent of Hispanic students, and 49 percent Native American students required remediation (Figure 119).\(^{180}\)

\(^{179}\) ACT Research and Policy. (February 2013). \textit{Readiness Matters: The Impact of College Readiness on College Persistence and Degree Completion}. www.act.org/research: ACT.

GOAL 5

Decrease the Number of Disconnected Youth
City and County of Denver Programs that Contribute to Decreasing the Number of Disconnected Youth

Arts and Culture
Career Awareness Events
Catholic Charities
Chance to Dance
Child Welfare
Community Recreation
Cultural Field Trip Fund
CW SubAdopt
Denver Afterschool Alliance
DSD Juvenile Work Program
Family Promise
Fishing
Five Points Jazz Festival
Gang Intervention Team
Junior Golf
Juvenile Courtroom 4F
Juvenile Intake
Make Your Mark
Mayor's Youth Awards
Mercy Housing - Bluff Lakes
Mile High United Way-Family Unification Program
My Brother's Keeper
My Denver
Neighborhood Public Service and Development
Nurse Family Partnership
Opioid Prevention/Resource Program
OST Programs
Outdoor Recreation
Positive Youth Contacts
Public Health Interns
Secondary Gang Prevention
Social Enrichment
Special Programs
Summer Youth Employment
The Salvation Army-Family and Seniors Homeless Initiative
Urban Arts Fund
Urban Peak - Shelter
Urban Peak-Stability Housing
Volunteers of America
Warren Village-First Step
Youth Fire Stop
Youth One Book One Denver
Youth Outreach Project
Youth Programs
Youth Specific Outreach
Youth Sports
Disconnected Youth

The economic health and quality of life in Denver depend on educated and engaged community members. The transition of youth, particularly as they move into adulthood, can be challenging for any young person, but is even more challenging for disconnected youth. Disconnected youth are young people who are not in school and who do not have a job. As the label implies, disconnected youth are cut off from the systems and institutions that support young adults’ transition into adulthood. Essential skills and experiences that enable growth and knowledge required to live as productive adults are often inaccessible.

Nationally, young adults of color are significantly more likely to be disconnected with 28 percent of Native American, 22 percent black, and 16 percent Hispanic or Latino young adults not in school and not working (Figure 120). Panel

Disconnected youth have measurable social, economic, and personal costs. According to The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth, disconnected youth ages 16 through 24 cost taxpayers $93 billion annually in lost revenue and increased social services. Panel

Figure 121: Youth and Young Adults Ages 16 - 24 Not in School and Not Working

Subgroups of disconnected youth include:
- Young unmarried parents
- Immigrant youth
- Homeless youth
- Incarcerated youth
- Foster youth/youth transitioning out of public systems
- Youth with a disability or special needs
- High school drop outs

According to estimates from Opportunity Nation, approximately 13 percent, or 9,000 Denver young adults ages 16 through 24 were not attending school and not working (Figure 121). Panel

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Chronic Absenteeism

One well-supported strategy to improve outcomes for children and contribute to the overall well-being of Denver neighborhoods is to ensure that students attend school every day. The benefits of consistent school attendance include improved academic achievement, increased graduation rates, reduced juvenile justice costs, and decreased poverty.\(^{184}\)

No matter the grade or school, students must participate regularly to benefit. The more school time missed by children, the harder it is to keep up with the coursework. Children miss school throughout the school year for a variety of reasons. These may include chronic illness, involvement with the juvenile justice system, housing issues, family responsibilities, bullying, unsafe conditions, or lack of information on the importance of attending school. According to the report by Attendance Works, students’ test scores on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) who missed more school than their peers who attended regularly were consistently lower. This is true for every age and every racial or ethnic category analyzed.\(^{185}\)

The Attendance Works report also summarizes the current research around chronic absenteeism and lists what we know so far:

- Poor attendance in the first month of school can predict chronic absence for the entire year;
- Absenteeism in kindergarten can affect whether a child develops the grit and perseverance needed to succeed in school;
- Absenteeism in preschool and kindergarten can influence whether a child will be held back in third grade;
- Absenteeism in middle and high school can predict dropout rates;
- Absenteeism influences not just chances for graduating but also for completing college;
- Improving attendance is an essential strategy for reducing achievement gaps;
- When students reduce absences, they can make academic gains; and
- Research points to effective strategies for improving attendance.\(^{186}\)

Chronic absenteeism is typically defined as missing ten percent or more of the school year and is tracked by grade and school. In Denver, over 24,000 students, or 26 percent, were chronically absent in the 2016-2017 school year. This means that about one in four Denver students was absent for at least ten percent of the time that they were enrolled and missed out on a significant amount of valuable instruction time.\(^{187}\)

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\(^{187}\) Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2016-2017 School Year.
The highest instances of chronic absenteeism occur in the early grades and then again in high school, rising to 49 percent of 12th graders missing ten percent or more of the school year (Figure 122).\(^{188}\)

During the 2016-2017 school year, the percentage of high school students (grades 9-12) chronically absent was 43 percent and varied by race/ethnicity. Children of color, American Indian, black, and Hispanic, were more likely to be chronically absent in high school compared to their Asian and non-Hispanic white peers (Figure 123).\(^{189}\)

\(^{188}\) Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2016-2017 School Year.

\(^{189}\) Ibid.
Denver Public Schools track attendance data by grade and race/ethnicity. In sixth grade, approximately 20 percent of students were chronically absent during the 2016-2017 school year. Black male students were chronically absent more than any other group of students by race/ethnicity (Figure 124). When mapped by where chronically absent students live, some neighborhoods have much higher rates than others (Figure 125).\(^{190}\)

Figure 124: Chronically Absent Sixth Graders by Race/Ethnicity 2016-2017

Figure 125: Chronically Absent Sixth Graders by Neighborhood

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\(^{190}\) Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2016-2017 School Year.
In ninth grade, 39 percent of students were chronically absent in the 2016-2017 school year. Hispanic students are chronically absent most often followed closely by black students (Figure 126).\textsuperscript{191}

The map in Figure 127 illustrates the percentage of ninth grade students in Denver Public School programs that are chronically absent by the neighborhood.

\textsuperscript{191} Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2016-2017 School Year.
INVESTMENTS IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMMING

By offering a variety of engaging activities within a healthy developmental environment, afterschool providers are well-positioned to decrease the number of disconnected youth in Denver. Specifically, these programs help youth form peer communities and allow children to develop essential life skills that help them transition into adolescence and young adulthood. For that reason, the Office of Children’s Affairs invests in this afterschool network through a competitive grants process. In 2018, a total of $1.6 million was invested in 93 program sites (Figure 128). Using the Opportunity Index as part of this process directs funds to areas where youth have multiple obstacles to success, which will positively impact the youth most at-risk for disconnection in Denver.


Out-of-school time includes time beyond the traditional school day, including before and after school, on weekends and school breaks, and during the summer months.

Figure 128: Map of out-of-school time sites funded through the Office of Children’s Affairs.
When youth regularly participate in afterschool programming, they develop life skills, build better relationships, and are less chronically absent, which links directly to school engagement. For that reason, it is important that all youth have access to afterschool programs; however, we know that access (and therefore participation) varies according to a variety of factors.


The Denver Afterschool Alliance is a diverse collaborative of stakeholders including the City and County of Denver, Denver Public Schools, and many of Denver’s community-based and funding organizations. DAA works in deep partnership with many generous supporters and funders and arm-in-arm alongside quality afterschool program providers.

The alliance helps youth succeed by increasing access to high quality afterschool and summer programs that bolster learning and creative processes. This work leads to substantial academic and personal growth for students, supports working families, and provides professional development for adults in the field.

Check out the Denver Afterschool Program Locator and find more information at www.denvergov.org/denverafterschoolalliance.

In Denver, 110 programs offer such regular programming to elementary youth. Combined, these programs serve more than 6,100 regular attenders (and many more infrequent attenders). Figure 129 shows the participation rate for each Denver City Council District by calculating the number of students who regularly attend a comprehensive afterschool program divided by the number of elementary youth who attend DPS schools in each district. This map shows that afterschool participation in the west and northwest is far greater than in other parts of Denver.
Youth Unemployment

Of the youth ages 16-24 in the labor force, nine percent were unemployed in Denver compared to 11 percent for Colorado and 13 percent for the nation in 2016 (Figure 130).\(^{192}\)

Unemployed youth and young adults ages 16-24 are mapped by census tract within Denver neighborhoods and surrounding counties in Figure 131.\(^{193}\)

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Challenges for Denver’s Young Men of Color

In Denver and across the nation, young men of color face significant challenges. These challenges include living in high-poverty areas with high crime rates and low performing schools. Also impacting achievement are high rates of chronic absenteeism, lack of positive role models, and living in single-parent families.

If not overcome, the impacts of these challenges result in persistent gaps in achievement and graduation rates. Asian and non-Hispanic white male students typically graduate high school in four years at significantly higher rates than black, Hispanic or Native American young men (Figure 132).^194^  

Chronically absent students, or students missing ten percent of the school year or more, compound community challenges faced by these young men.

**Figure 132: Male Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Asian Male</th>
<th>White Male</th>
<th>Black Male</th>
<th>Hispanic Male</th>
<th>Am Ind Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011/2012</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/2013</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/2014</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/2015</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/2016</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/2017</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


If students are not in school, they have a very difficult time succeeding in coursework and meeting the criteria necessary to graduate on time. The data illustrate that disadvantages associated with chronic absenteeism disproportionately impact young men of color.

Nearly half of high school-aged young men of color in grades nine through 12 were chronically absent in 2016-2017 in DPS (Figure 133).^195^
My Brother’s Keeper

The White House announced the My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) initiative in February 2014. Through this national initiative, the City and County of Denver shares the vision of the MBK Alliance, which is to make the American Dream available to all boys and young men of color by eliminating gaps in their opportunities and outcomes.

The Office of Children’s Affairs is working collaboratively with youth, community members, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, businesses, and other government agencies to identify the issues that most often keep boys and young men of color from achieving success.

The map in Figure 134 is a statistical aggregation of these 11 indicators by neighborhood into one My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) Index Map. This map illustrates the areas in Denver where the My Brother’s Keeper initiative programs, services, and interventions would be most applicable.

The darkest blue shaded neighborhoods are areas where young men of color live and may experience challenges to success. The lighter shaded areas are where more opportunities exist.
The Status of Denver's Children: A Community Resource 2018 can be downloaded from the Office of Children’s Affairs website:

www.denvergov.org/childrensaffairs

For more information on any topic or data included in this document please contact:

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