



Utah Head Start Collaboration Office  
2023 Needs Assessment

---

## **Needs Assessment Background**

The Utah Head Start State Collaboration Office (UHSSCO) addresses the needs of Head Start with respect to collaboration, coordination and alignment of early childhood services and systems to ensure disadvantaged children, birth to school entry, and their families receive the supports needed to succeed. The Head Start Act of 2007 (Head Start Act) outlines the requirements for the UHSSCO grant, which was awarded to Utah to facilitate collaboration among Head Start agencies and entities that carry out activities designed to benefit low-income children and their families.

As part of the requirements of the grant, the UHSSCO conducts a needs assessment to identify the systems and services that need alignment so disadvantaged children and their families experience a healthy, secure, and strong academic start. To complete this needs assessment for 2023, the UHSSCO gathered data from the 2023 Head Start Needs Assessment Survey.

This year, 100% of the 11 Head Start programs in Utah responded to the 2023 Head Start Needs Assessment survey. Although there are twelve Head Start programs in Utah, the Ute Tribe is exempt from filling out the UHSSCO survey. Instead, they participate in Region XI's needs assessment survey.

This survey has been divided into seven sections:

1. Collaboration
2. Data
3. Kindergarten Transitions
4. Professional Development
5. Workforce
6. Families of Highest Need
7. Successes and Challenges

# 2023 Head Start Needs Assessment Survey Results

## 1. Collaboration

### **To what extent does your organization collaborate with the following agencies and programs?**

*[X] = Average Rating. Higher number means more collaboration.*

1. Health care providers, pediatricians, and dentists [4.09]
2. Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA) [4.09]
3. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program [3.91]
4. DHHS – Domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse, foster care, kinships care and DCFS services [3.73]
5. Department of Workforce Services (DWS) – Employment, housing, SNAP, homelessness, and refugee services [3.73]
6. Local Education Agencies (LEAs/School districts) [3.73]
7. CHIP / Medicaid [3.55]
8. Part B – Early Intervention (with MOUs) [3.45]
9. Private mental health services [2.82]
10. Part C – Baby Watch [2.82]
11. Utah State Board of Education (USBE) – School readiness, kindergarten transitions, conferences, preschool grants, McKinney-Vento Homeless Child Program [2.64]
12. Private child care [2.55]
13. Office of Child Care (OCC) – CCQS, CAC, PD, and grants [2.55]
14. DHHS - Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) [2.27]
15. DHHS - Oral Health Liaison [2.27]
16. DHHS - Child Care Licensing [1.91]
17. DHHS - Lead Coalition, OHV [1.82]
18. DHHS - TOP Star (Teaching Obesity Prevention in Early Childcare and Education Settings) [1.45]

### **Which efforts will support stronger working relationships with child care?**

*Ranked with best rated efforts first.*

1. Working together to ensure full-day care is available to working families
2. Working to promote child outcomes for dually enrolled children
3. Supporting progress on IEP and IFSP goals for dually enrolled children

4. Coordinating transportation between programs
5. Sharing curriculum, screening, and assessment tools
6. Meeting with Care About Childcare Directors
7. Attending child care association meetings

## **What are the best ways to strengthen working relationships with USBE and LEAs?**

*[X] = Average Rating. Higher number means better.*

1. Advocate to get Head Start identified as a quality preschool program in Utah [4.45]
2. Align Head Start and LEA requirements in ESSA and Head Start Act [3.64]
3. Improve the continuity of care for children between Pre-K to K with LEAs [3.45]
4. Align curricular objectives + instructional practices with the Utah Core Standards [3.40]
5. Meet with superintendents' associations [3.36]
6. Increase communication with USBE [3.27]
7. Align coaching and professional development [3.18]
8. Align assessment tools [3.18]
9. Meet with principals [3.09]
10. Create teaming time between leadership, teaching, and coaching staff [3.00]
11. Share transportation [2.30]

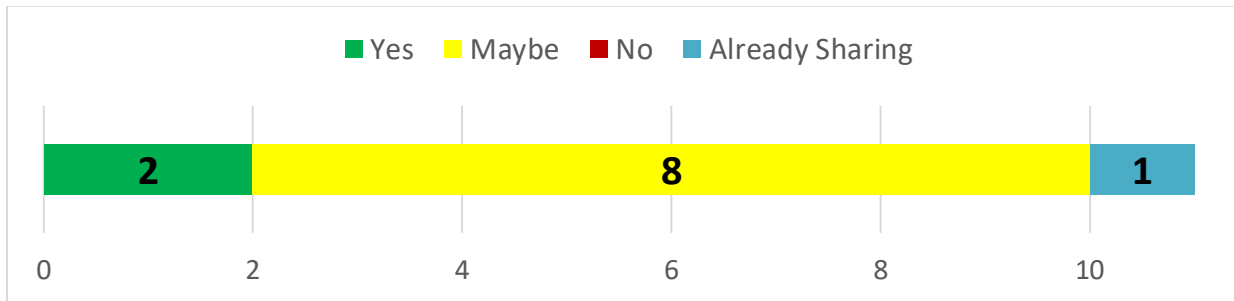
## **Please share how you want the UHSCO to support your EHS-CC partnerships. If you do not currently have EHS-CC partnerships but are interested in starting them, please indicate below and share how we can best support you.**

*Open text box. Some responses excerpted below.*

- “Helping us work together on partnering and understanding licensing standards.”
- “Continue working closely with UHSA Directors, learning about their program variances that support each local community and be the liaison with State agencies to develop strong partnerships.”
- “We have applied for the EHS CC Partnerships the last two times the Office of Head Start provided the opportunity and was unsuccessful both times...Two large and well-funded regional programs continued to receive new partnership opportunities since the initial wave of funds was opened. These programs (one of which is in Utah) have teams of grant writers at their disposal, whereas smaller programs rely on one or two individuals to write competing grants.”

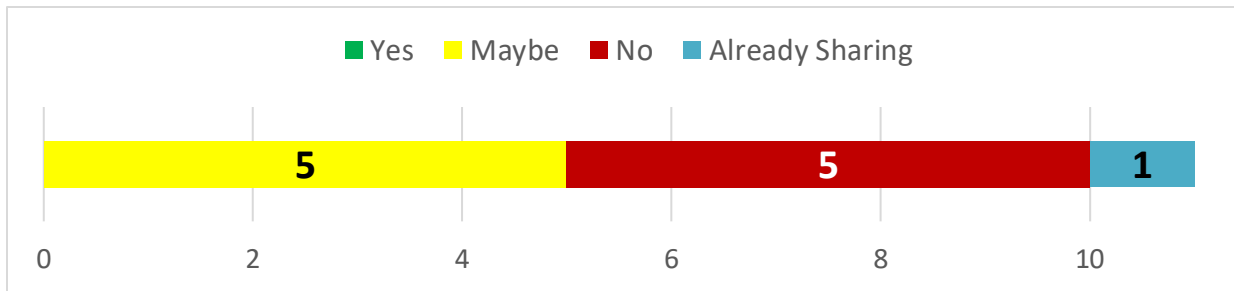
## 2. Data

**Does your program plan to share data with Utah's Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)?**



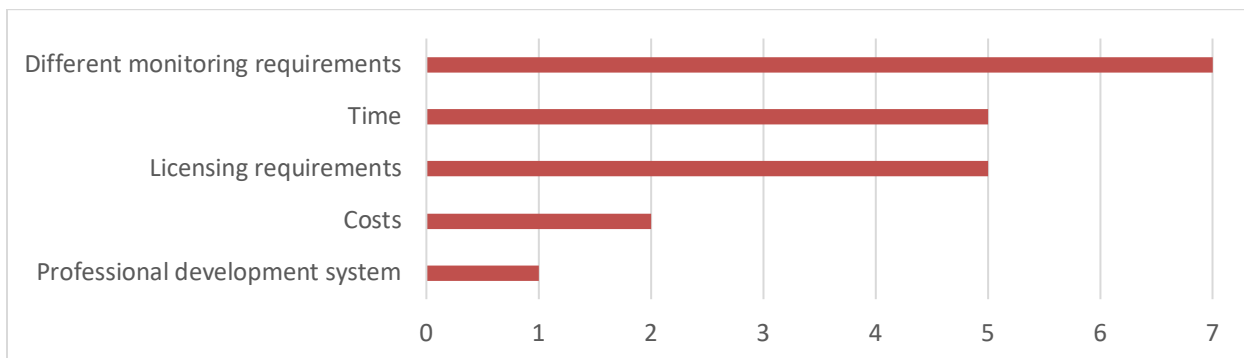
(Yes = 2, Maybe = 8, No = 0, Already Sharing = 1)

**Does your program plan to participate in the Child Care Quality System (CCQS) offered through the Office of Child Care?**



(Yes = 0, Maybe = 5, No = 5, Already Sharing = 1)

**If your program does not currently participate, what are some potential barriers to participating in CCQS?**



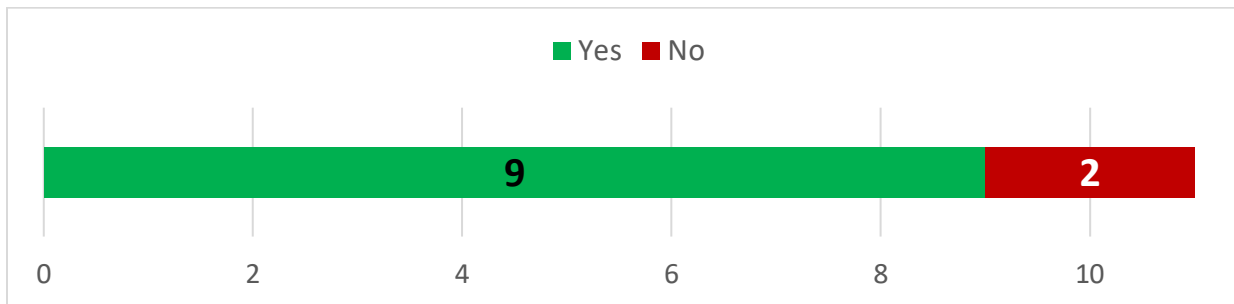
### 3. Kindergarten Transitions

**What are the best ways to support successful kindergarten transitions? Please drag and drop the following choices, with the most important effort in the first slot and continuing down from there.**

*Ranked with best rated efforts first.*

1. Involve all key stakeholders in the transition process
2. Align around the requirements in ESSA and Head Start Act 2007
3. Sign an MOU with LEAs to support greater collaboration, coordination, and alignment
4. Align curriculum and instructional practices between preschool and kindergarten

**Does your program have a documented kindergarten transition plan?**



(Yes = 9, No = 2)

**What is your program's most successful strategy related to kindergarten transitions?**

*Open text box. Some responses excerpted below.*

- “Meeting individually with receiving school kindergarten teachers.”
- “Kindergarten snapshots sent to schools with data on...child's progress and outcomes.”
- “It's inconsistent between LEAs. Some of them we have great success with a signed MOU, site visits, shared trainings. Most relationships are weak.”
- “We are part of a school district, so we invite all elementary principals to a luncheon at the end of the year to receive a packet of information and a portfolio for each child entering their school. While they eat, we share our outcome scores, and because we have access to kindergarten data, we show PEEP Head Start entry and exit scores and the subsequent kindergarten entry KEEP scores of the same group of children.”
- “We have representation on our board from each school district.”
- “Kindergarten teachers visit HS classrooms in the Spring and HS walking field trip to Kindergarten classrooms.”

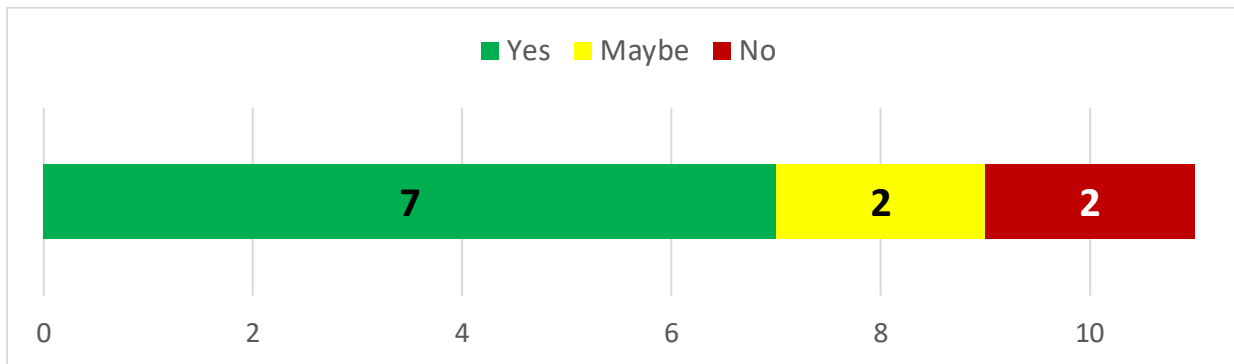
## 4. Professional Development

**Which areas of professional development does your program plan to focus on in the next few years where the UHSCO could support your efforts?**

*Open text box. Some responses excerpted below.*

- “Awareness of EHS and HS services in our state.”
- “Building a relationship with High Schools to have their students intern at our centers, even obtaining their CDA prior to graduation, so they are qualified to be an infant/toddler teacher or preschool teacher assistant.”
- “With so many new staff we want them to understand the work of the UHSCO and its role in the state in relation to our program.”
- “LETRS training for all Head Start teachers to increase instructional language and literacy skills.”
- “Continued implementation of the pyramid model.”
- “Mental Health and Housing Stability for children and families.”

**Would your program be interested in having high school students who are completing their Early Childhood Education high school skills certificate intern in your Head Start classrooms?**



(Yes = 7, Maybe = 2, No = 2)

## 5. Workforce

### **Please describe what challenges your program faces related to workforce recruitment, retention and compensation.**

*Open text box. Some responses excerpted below.*

- “We hire staff at high education qualifications but can't pay them at the rate that matches their degrees and qualifications. Many people say they would love to do the work we do, but can't do it for the amount we can pay them at. We are competing with fast food and lower stress jobs in the community, not the education and higher professional rates that we should be at.”
- “We struggle to find credentialed staff and part-time support staff for our centers.”
- “There continues to be a high turnover in our childcare partners because the owners can't pay their other staff the wages supported by EHS funding and it becomes a competition.”
- “Until the pandemic, we had very low levels of staff turnover (about 5% per year). Since then, we have been experiencing around 30% - 35% turnover across all departments... Our biggest challenge related to teachers is the fact that they are working in elementary schools, and Utah has an alternative licensure program. The principals see well-trained teachers and offer them alternative licensure, which pays nearly double the salary we pay. We have lost a lot of great teachers as a result.”
- “Compensation and salaries aren't keeping up with growth and demand. We've had several people leave or not accept a job because they can make more, elsewhere. We are competitive in salary with other HS programs in the state but not with school districts or separate industries.”

### **How do background checks impact your hiring and program staffing timelines?**

*Open text box. Some responses excerpted below.*

- “It does not negatively impact the timeline if the background check is clear, that comes back quickly, if there is something on it, it can take a longer time.”
- “We haven't found issues with background checks in Utah.”
- “It delays the hiring process by 2 weeks which then pushes back the NEO training once staff have started.”
- “No impact, we have our own system.”
- “Delays onboarding - sometimes to the extent that we lose candidates in this tight market.”



## 6. Families of Highest Need

### **What, if any, are the barriers for families accessing SNAP, WIC, other nutrition support services or Child Care Assistance (CCAP) in your service area?**

*Open text box. Some responses excerpted below.*

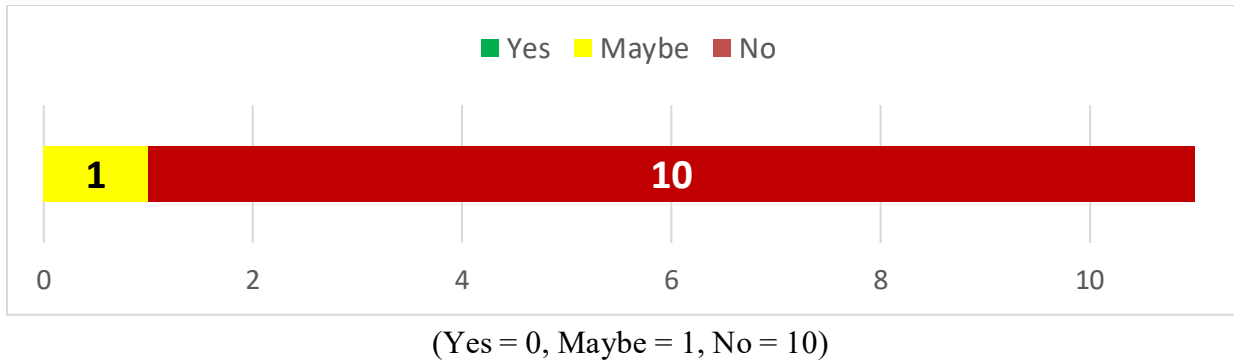
- “We serve many undocumented families that have language and access barriers.”
- “We have actually seen an increase in SNAP qualified families eligible for EHS. Our nutritionist provides a WIC class for all EHS families including our EI families. We have 90% of CCAP families in our EHS classrooms.”
- “The only barrier is that families that could use the services are reluctant to do so. We provided office space for WIC in our building during registration so families could sign up while registering their child for Head Start, and very few wanted to do so. We have seen a reluctance to sign up for SNAP as well. Yet, we have families listing food insecurity on surveys we send out. Only a small portion of our families use CCAP, stating they have family or friends to take care of their children before or after Head Start hours. This is something that needs more investigation.”
- “Transportation and general knowledge of available resources.”
- “Limited to no outside of business working hours options, red tape... discrimination, fear of legal actions taken against undocumented parents getting services for their children that are citizens, needing state or US issued ID for undocumented families.”

### **How does your program ensure it is reaching eligible children and families of the greatest need?**

*Open text box. Some responses excerpted below.*

- “We do door to door recruitment to every home in Weber County, as allowed.”
- “Recruiting through clinics, community partners, and agencies that serve families that would qualify for our services, word of mouth, child finds at community events and locations frequented by families, shelters.”
- “Word of mouth is our greatest tool. We also recruit by attending local events, posting fliers, and knocking on doors.”
- “We recruit from known low-income areas, social service agencies, and all the typical ways to try to reach families with the greatest need. We see a high number of families (1/3 of EHS) that qualify as homeless under McKinney Vento... In the past two years, we have done a lot of targeted outreach to our dual language learner families through our Cultural Liaison as we saw that population increasing and many in dire need of services.”
- “We do an annual community assessment and targeted recruitment.”

**Are you planning to expand home visiting specific Head Start services in the next program year?**



**For the previous question, if you selected "Yes", in the next program year, where will you be expanding to and/or how many slots are you expanding by? If you selected "No" or "Maybe" please share why.**

*Open text box. Some responses excerpted below.*

- “We’re currently only interested in center-based services.”
- “We see more of a need in our childcare partner services and currently have a list of five providers interested in partnering with DDIV EHS.”
- “It is not a program option our families prefer. We do offer it but find many families will take it hoping to "get their foot in the door" until they can get into center-based.”
- “No funding to expand.”

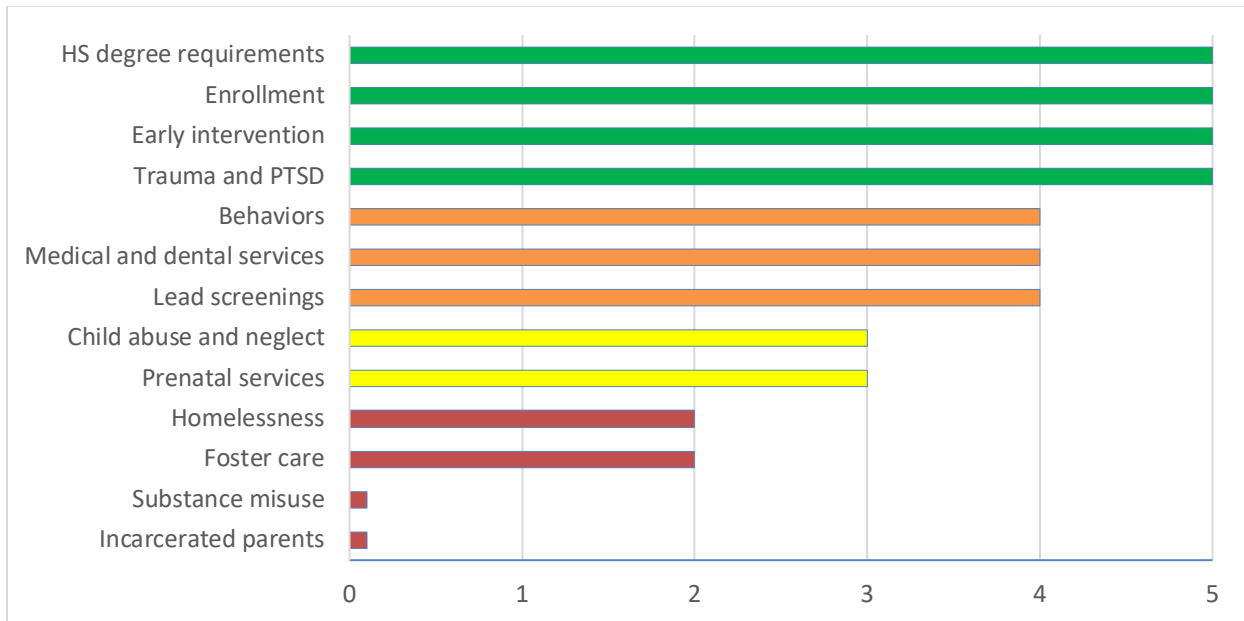
**What are some barriers to expanding home visiting Head Start services this program year? Please also share any other thoughts you have regarding home visiting here as well.**

*Open text box. Some responses excerpted below.*

- “We are already primarily home-based, and unless OHS Expansion money comes out, we can't expand any further. If we were able to get expansion money we would apply for it for extended home-based slots.”
- “Most of our families prefer center-based services over home-visiting services.”
- “The majority of our families are requesting in person services for 6+ hours a day. They will participate in HB services while waiting for a classroom placement. This makes these serves challenging as we typically have 200% turnover in HB services.”

## 7. Successes and Challenges

**Which of the following areas or services for certain populations do you feel that your program excels at? Please select all that apply.**



**If you selected any items above, please describe what your program is doing that is exceptional for each.**

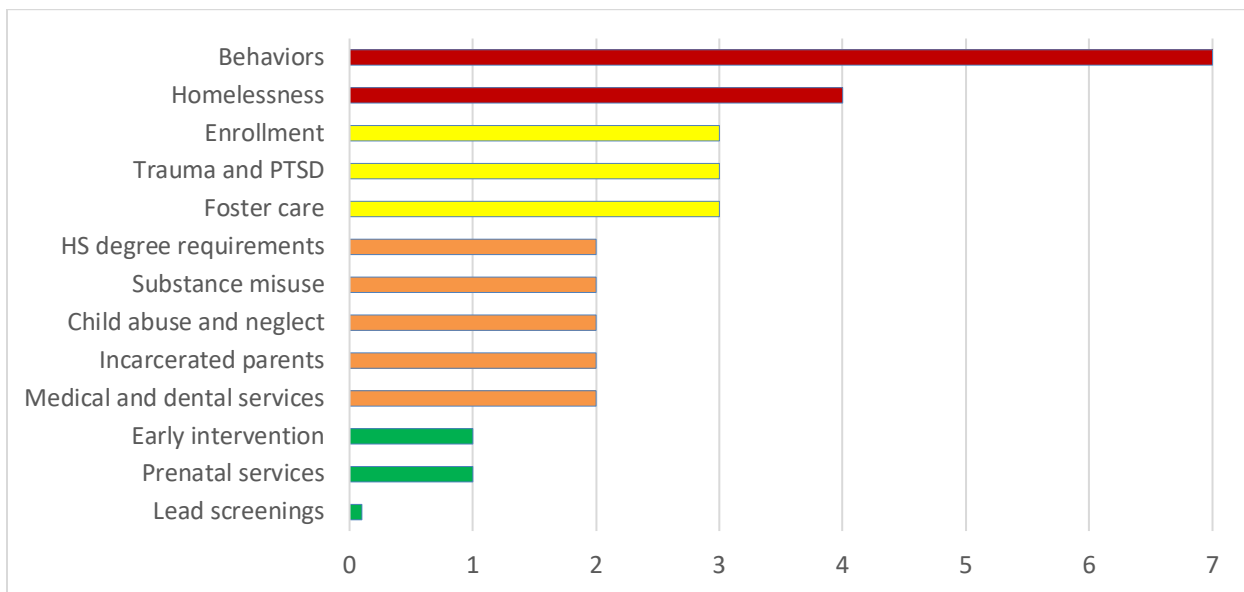
*Open text box. Some responses excerpted below.*

- “We have family advocates...they're amazing at recruiting and meeting enrollment. We have never been under enrolled in Utah, even during COVID. We work closely with Community Health Centers and U of U's physician's assistant program to offer medical and dental screenings/physicals to our Migrant and Seasonal Head Start centers, where access to these families are limited. They bring a team of people to each center to offer these screenings/physicals for the children who need it.”
- “Prenatal curriculum for pregnant high-risk mothers is available and accessible; successful support for Foster care families; trained in Trauma Informed care; preventive services for child abuse and neglect and partner with DCFS.”
- “We are doing innovative practices to teach staff to embrace and welcome second language learners and assist families as they learn to navigate their way in a new country with a new language and culture.”
- “Coordinating with community partners to provide mental health services and trauma care to children and families. We have trauma and mental health assistance for classroom

staff. We provide parents trauma and mental health curriculum.”

- “We are able to hire staff with degrees. Our ERSEA specialist and the advocate team go above and beyond to support enrollment. We have a solid system and team to address and support classroom behaviors.”
- “Medical/Dental: We have strong partnerships...Prenatal: We have hired a nurse to conduct all of our home-based pregnancy services and we have her make strong connections... We also started a teen parent support group through our agency. Trauma: We have an agency Trauma-Informed Care committee that has been in place for 3+ years and evaluates the needs of the agency, staff, and families on a constant basis.”

**Would you like additional support for your program in any of the following areas? Please select all that apply.**



**Please rate each of the following on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 representing an item you feel that your program is most struggling with and 5 representing an item you feel that your program is handling extremely well.**

*[X] = Average Rating. Lower number means greater struggle.*

1. Health and safety of enrolled children [2.91]
2. Reaching eligible children and families who have the greatest need [3.09]
3. Maintaining high quality environments (facilities, learning environment, etc) [3.18]
4. Investing in your workforce [3.18]
5. Program’s capacity to partner with relevant state systems and national partners [3.27]