



**AWARE**



**2023 - 2024**  
**Early Head Start**  
**Annual Report**

[www.Aware-inc.org/ecs](http://www.Aware-inc.org/ecs)



**AWARE**



## **Our Charter**

To extend experiences to children and families that are strength based and rooted in nurturing and responsive relationships. These experiences are guided by innovative, reflective, and evidence-based practices that result in healthy attachments and positive outcomes for children and families.

## **Our Story**

AWARE is a statewide, private, nonprofit corporation providing community-based services to people with challenging mental, emotional, and in some cases physical needs. Throughout Montana, AWARE offers the following services in fully licensed and nationally accredited programs: mental health services, disability services for children, disability services for adults and early childhood services.

AWARE Early Head Start (EHS) is a year-round federally funded comprehensive child development program providing EHS services in our classrooms and within licensed partner child care agencies. The program focuses on early childhood development and education, parent involvement, age-appropriate screenings, disability services, family and social services, nutrition, social emotional development and mental health.

[www.Aware-inc.org/ecs](http://www.Aware-inc.org/ecs)

# MEET OUR TEAM



## AWARE Executive Team

**Matt Bugni** CEO  
**Leighann Knight** COO  
**Francine Cooper** CFO

## AWARE EHS Leadership Team

**Colleen Bosch** ECS Director  
**Barb Berry** Fiscal Grant Manager  
**Rebecca Kallin** FCP Manager  
**Stephanie Bilodeau** Education Manager  
**Jen Reed** Health and Disabilities Manager



## AWARE EHS Policy Council

Parents and community members can help lead and make decisions about the EHS program. Policy Council members are elected by parents of children enrolled in the program.

**Megan Rinnert** Chair  
**Open** Vice-Chair  
**Sara Dunks-Laurandeau** Secretary  
**Zach Watts** Treasurer  
**Barb Sherrill** Board Liaison

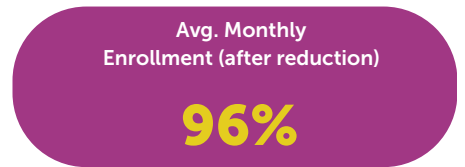
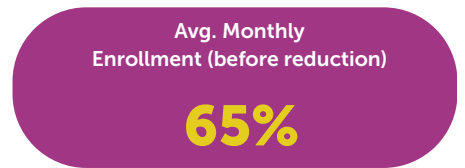
### Members

**Jeana Lervick**  
**Nick Muñoz**

**Mikayla Johnson**  
**Jake Spearson**

# CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WE SERVE

## Eligible Children Served



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## 10 Sites



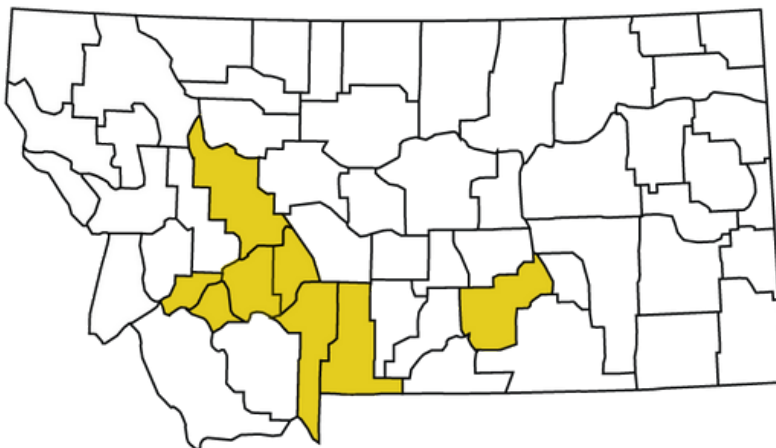
## 23 Classrooms



# OVERVIEW

## Overview

AWARE provides EHS services to 151 children in Butte-Silver Bow, Gallatin, Lewis & Clark, Yellowstone and Jefferson counties. Our EHS program offers full-year center-based classroom services. Our EHS Child Care Partnership (CCP) program offers full-day/full-year EHS services within community child care facilities to support working families or families attending school.



## AWARE Service Areas

- Gallatin
- Jefferson
- Lewis & Clark
- Silver Bow
- Yellowstone
- Park
- Broadwater



## Childcare Partners

### BUTTE

Shelly Fisher - Young Explorers, University of Princeton, Kids Konnection

### HELENA

Kari Shirley - Babies and Beyond

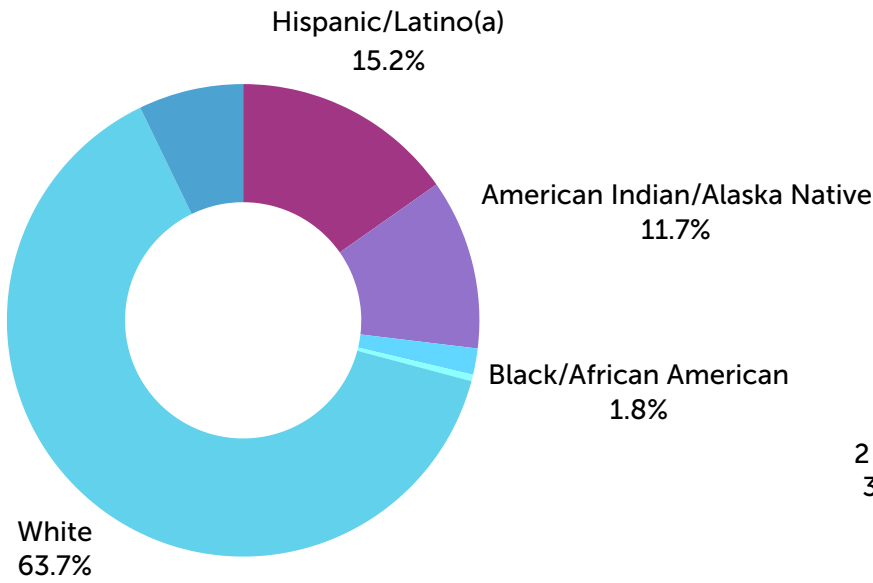
### WHITEHALL

Kristy Wilson - Kristi's Kiddie Korner

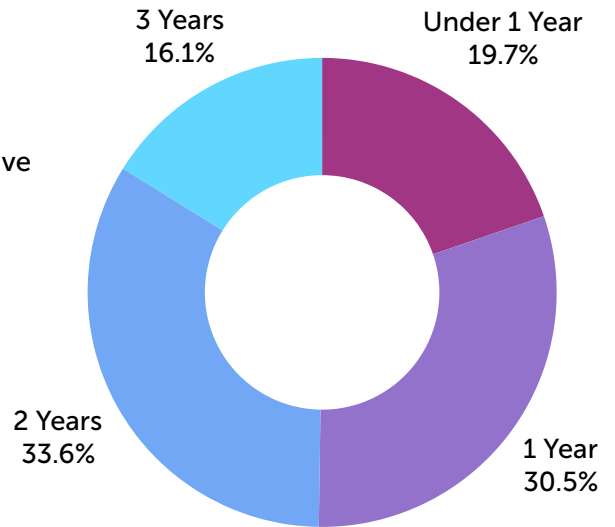
### BILLINGS

Family Tree Nurturing Center

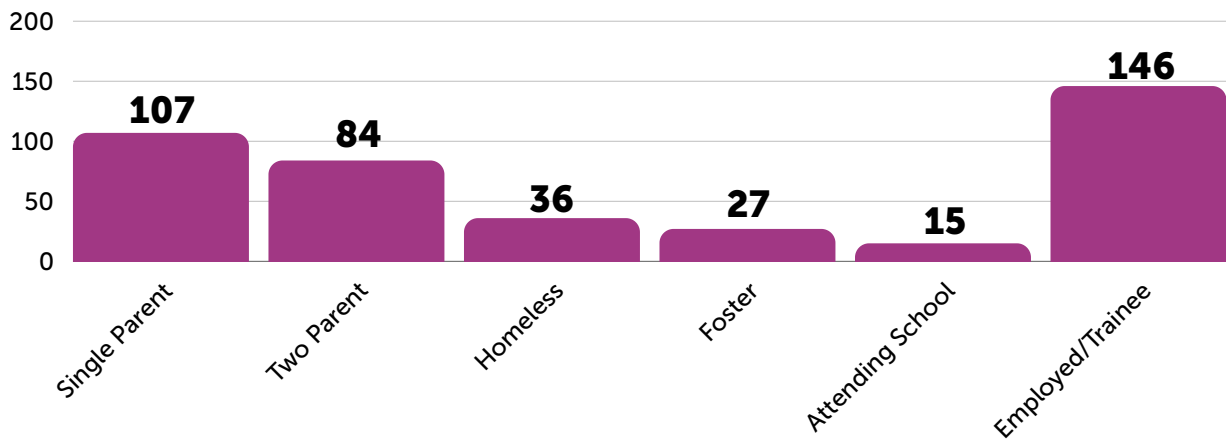
## Race and Ethnicity of Children



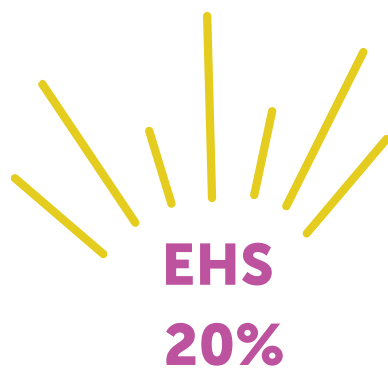
## Ages Served



## 191 Families Served



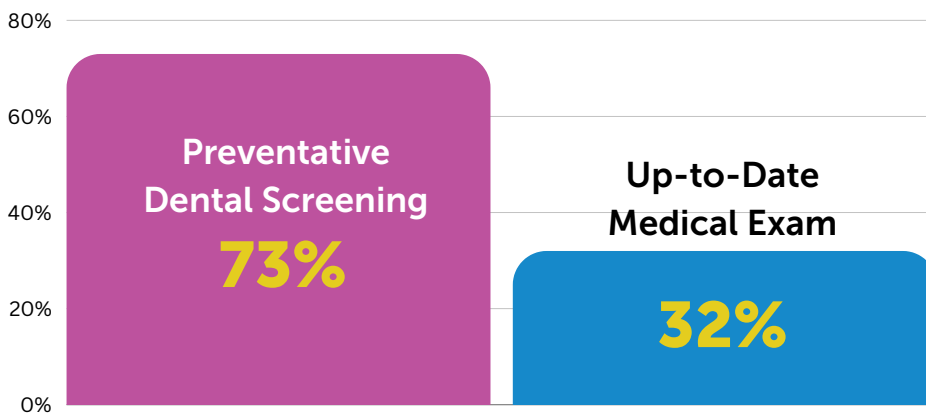
## Families Receiving Best Beginnings Child Care Subsidy



# COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Healthy children are ready to learn. EHS provides support for children and families needing health and dental services, referring children for treatment, assisting families with finding a medical home, and obtaining insurance coverage. Our health specialists provide health education and training for parents and staff, including hand washing and preventive oral health care.

## 2023-2024 YTD Children Birth to 3



### Children with Medical Insurance



### Children with Up-to-Date Immunizations



Medical Home

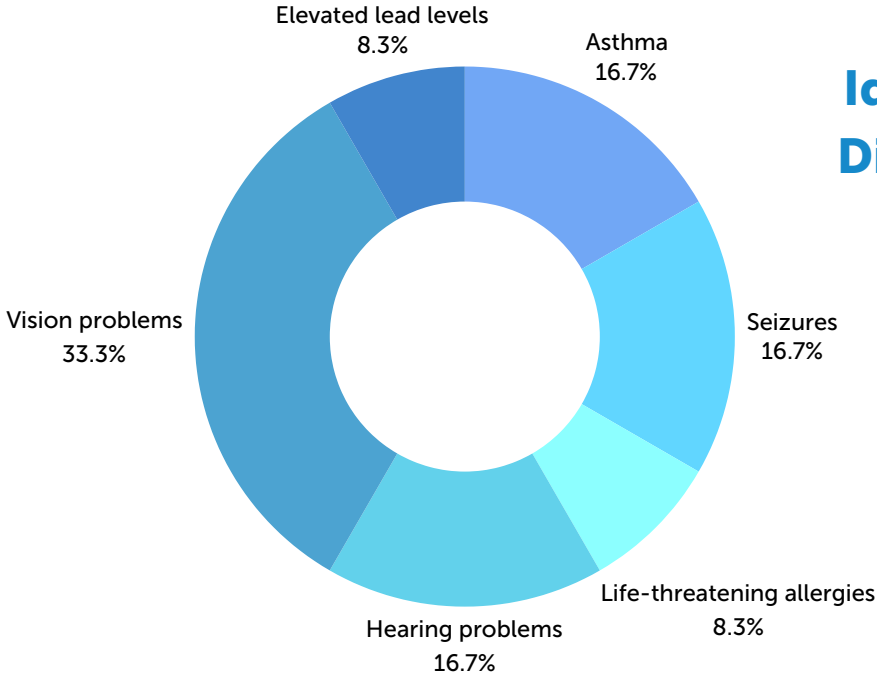
100%

Dental Home

98%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

# Identified Health & Disability Concerns

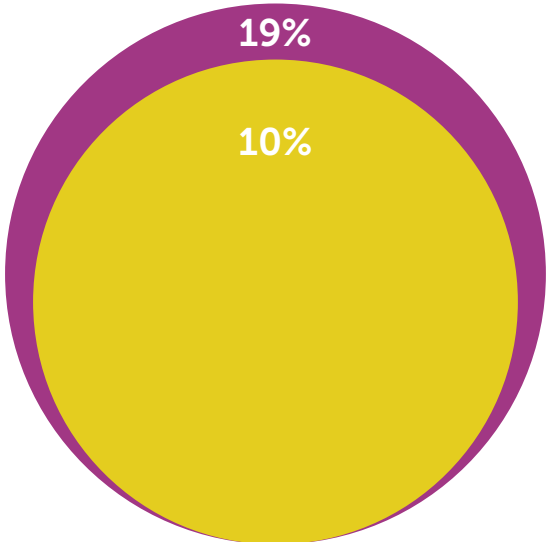


## Disability Services

Ten percent of our enrollment is dedicated for children with diagnosed disabilities. In partnership with Part C providers, children receive services to address their disabilities. Each child receiving Part C services has an individualized family plan (IFSP), which includes individualized goals. Children and their families receive transition support as they age out of EHS services to ensure continued disability services remain in place, as indicated.

### Children with IFSP - YTD

- Children with IFSP (28)
- EHS Requirement (16)

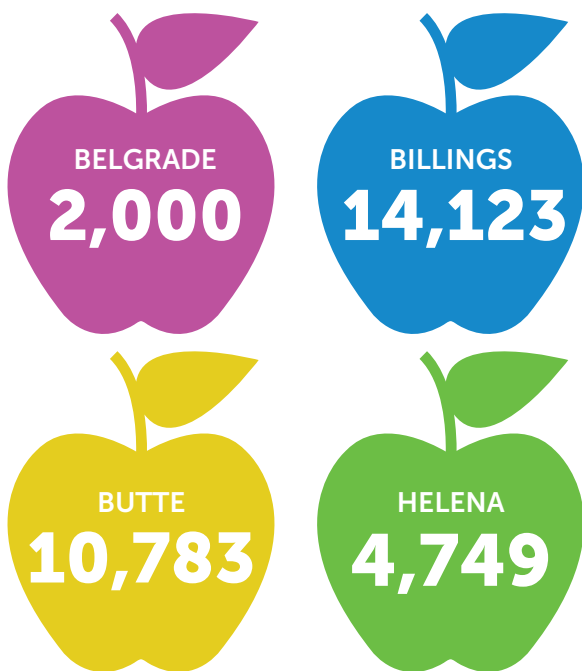




**"Beginning nutrition education in early childhood is an important part of helping to ensure that children will achieve healthful lifestyles." ~Robert Earl**

Children eat nutritious meals "family style," which promotes positive social interactions and self-help skills. All EHS classrooms and child care facilities participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

## CACFP Meals Served YTD



### Health Services Advisory Council

The statewide Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) meets twice a year to bring together staff, parents, healthcare providers, and other community health partners to discuss the planning and operations of AWARE Early Head Start's health services. The committee's mission is to support the health and wellness of each and every Early Head Start child and family.

### Early Head Start Health Services

- On-site hearing & vision screens
- On-site oral health education & screens
- Classroom health education activities
- Parent health education opportunities
- Classroom nutrition education activities

# SERVICES DELIVERED TO FAMILIES

Family Advocates provide opportunities for families to identify their strengths, goals and services needed through a Family Partnership Agreement. They assist families with recognizing and achieving family engagement outcomes in seven areas: Family Well-Being, Positive Parent Child Relationships, Families as Life-Long Educators, Families as Learners, Family Engagement in Transitions, Family Connections to Peers, and Community Families as Advocates and Leaders. Family Advocates offer home visits, resource referral, parent education, and crisis assistance. They also assist families with health requirements, accessing Best Beginnings subsidy assistance and coordinating parent committee meetings.

Services Provided to Families	
43	Emergency/Crisis Intervention
29	Housing Assistance
10	Asset Building Services
29	Mental Health Services
4	Substance Misuse Prevention
1	Substance Misuse Treatment
0	English as a Second Language (ESL) Training
7	Assistance Enrolling into Education/Training
88	Research-Based Parenting Curriculum
136	Involvement in Discussing Child's Progress
92	Supporting Transitions Between Programs
163	Education on Preventive Medical and Oral Health
64	Education on Tobacco Produce Use
75	Education on Nutrition
4	Education on Postpartum Care
3	Education on Relationship/Marriage
2	Assistance to Families of Incarcerated Individuals
174	Number That Received <u>at Least</u> One of the Services Listed



# Family Engagement

AWARE Early Head Start provides so much more than education for young children. We believe the parent is the child's first and more important teacher. We also believe the whole family plays a vital role in a child's development and school readiness. Parent and family engagement are evident in all areas of our EHS program. Parents participate in activities aimed at building healthy families through a strength-based approach, including the following:

- Parent committee meetings to provide parent leadership opportunities and program input.
- EHS parent representation on Policy Council.
- Family partnership agreement, including identification of family goals
- Collaborative partnership with EHS staff.
- Individual parent-teacher conferences.
- Child find opportunities to ensure children are typically developing.
- Promoting resiliency through the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment.
- Transition planning with local school districts, Head Start, and Part C agencies to ensure child success beyond EHS.

Families in Goal Setting

**170**

Fathers Involved in School Readiness

**101**

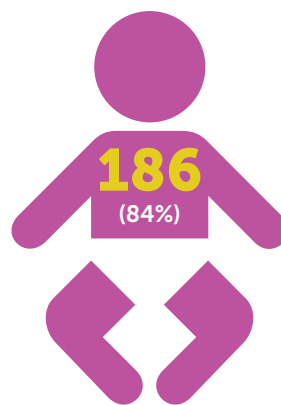
Parent Volunteers

**198**

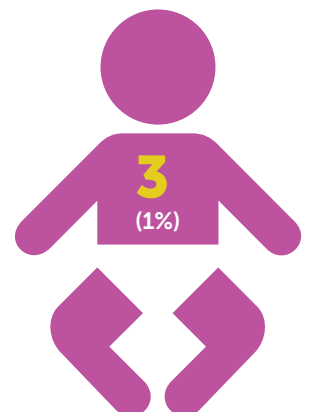
**Mental health of children and the adults who care for them is critical to children's school readiness. Licensed clinical mental health consultants are available on-site at the Early Head Start and Child Care Partner facilities. Consultants partner with caregivers to support healthy social and emotional development of children while increasing the capacity of adults to better understand the needs of infants and toddlers and the importance of early relationships**

Each child receives a social-emotional screening using the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment - Infants/Toddlers tool. Clinicians provide support to EHS staff, families, and children to ensure positive social emotional growth.

## Mental Health Services YTD



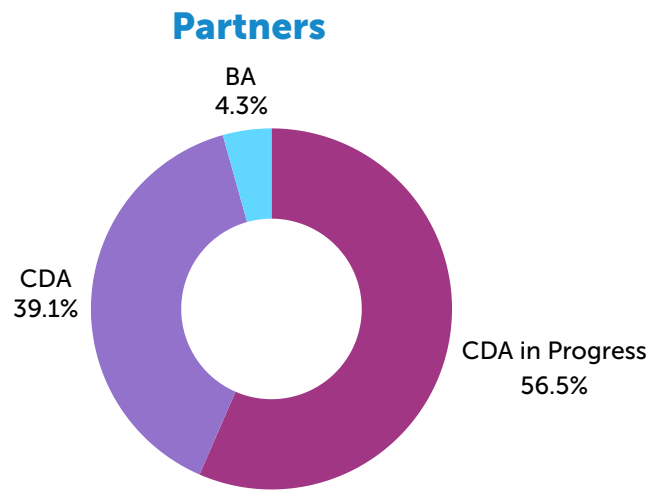
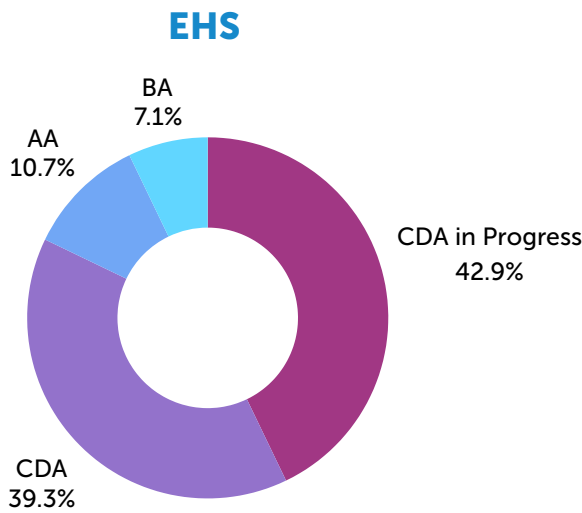
**Classroom mental health consultations**



**Children referred to mental health services**

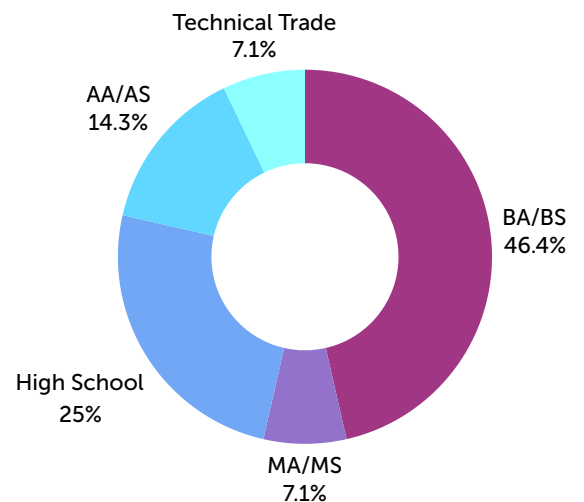
# Our Teachers

Early Head Start requires all classroom teachers to have a child development associate credential. Support and guidance are provided to all education staff to ensure they are knowledgeable of appropriate child development strategies and have professional development plans and goals in place throughout the year.



# Our Support Staff

- EHS Director
- Fiscal Grant Manager
- Education Manager
- Health & Disability Manager
- Education Coordinators
- Site Supervisors
- Curriculum Professional Development Specialist
- Family & Community Partnership Manager
- Family Advocates
- Mental Health Consultants
- Health Specialists
- Nutrition Specialists
- Administrative Assistants
- Data Project Specialist
- IT Support Specialist



# SCHOOL READINESS

Early Head Start defines school readiness as a child possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and later learning in life.

The goal of at least 80% meeting their age expectations in the following areas have been adopted by our Early Head Start program in collaboration with our school readiness team:

## Approaches to Learning

How children learn, considers temperament, past knowledge and experiences

## Social and Emotional Development

Social skills

## Language and (Literacy) Communication

Listening, speaking and understanding

## Cognition

Thinking, applying knowledge

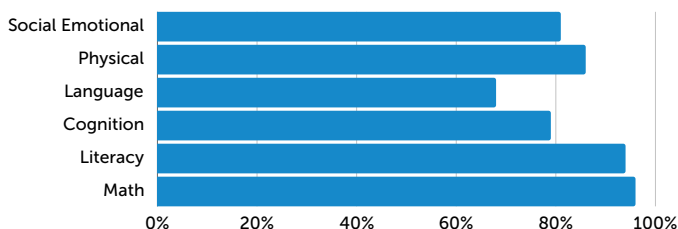
## Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development

Movement, coordination health practices

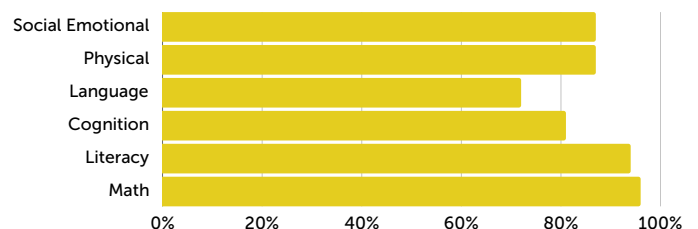
- Children are assessed three times per year using the My Teaching Strategies assessment, measuring growth on Widely Held Expectations by age
- Children's social-emotional growth is assessed three times per year using the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment
- Families complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire screening at enrollment
- Child level data is collected and reviewed three times a year for planning and individual goal setting

## School Readiness - As Assessed Using My Teaching Strategies

Period 1 - Children Meeting or Exceeding  
July 2023 - October 2023



Period 2 - Children Meeting or Exceeding  
November 2023 - February 2024



# COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A community-wide strategic planning and needs assessment was updated in January 2024 as required by Head Start Performance Standards to help with understanding community strengths and identifying programs in our services. The assessment in conjunction with other program data informs AWARE Early Head Start program planning.



## Opportunities and Areas Potentially Impacting Early Head Start Families:

- Homelessness
- Housing and Rental Support
- Child Care Facilities



### Homelessness

Homelessness continues to impact all communities.



### Rentals

The price of rentals increased in all the EHS communities.



### Housing Cost

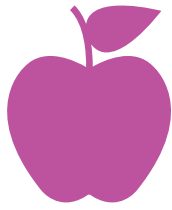
The median cost of houses increased in all the EHS communities.



### Child Care

Licensed child care facilities decreased in Gallatin and Yellowstone counties and increased in other EHS counties.

# 2023-2024 Highlights



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## Enrollment

AWARE EHS received approval for an enrollment reduction in November 2023, reducing the total EHS slots from 212 to 151.

AWARE EHS is on a twelve month full enrollment initiative (FEI) with the Office of Head Start due to consecutive months of being under enrolled. The FEI is designed to assist programs with achieving full enrollment of funded amount. Following the completion of the FEI, AWARE EHS must maintain 97% enrollment for an additional twelve months.

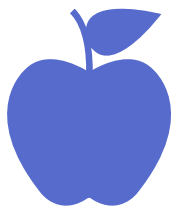


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## Volunteers

Six foster grandparents are volunteering time in our EHS classrooms

Community volunteers assisting in the EHS classrooms and facilities.



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## Professional Development

EHS family advocates achieved Family Engagement certification after participating in a three day course and passing an associated exam.

AWARE EHS participated in training with the Head Start Regional Office utilizing Prevent, Teach and Reinforce for Young Children, a research proven approach to challenging behaviors.

EHS and child care partner staff obtained Quality of Care for Infants and Toddlers (QCIT) certification. The QCIT is a tool used to measure caregiver support for infant toddler social emotional, cognitive, language, and literacy development.



# STARS TO QUALITY

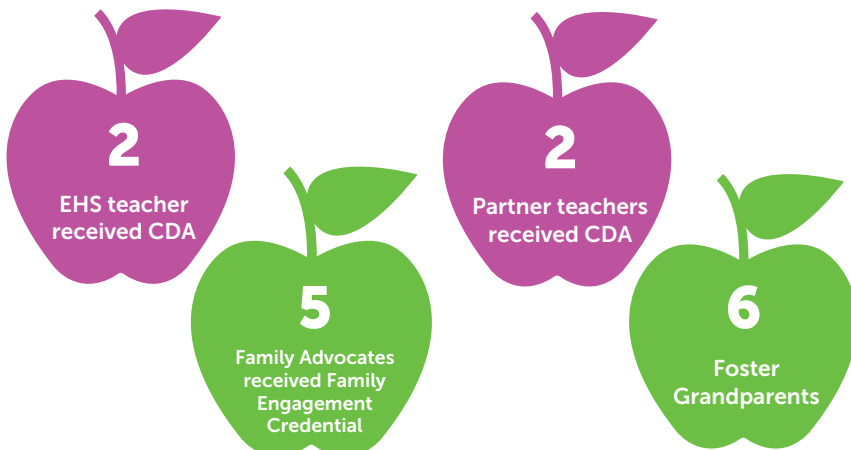
STARS to Quality program is a quality rating and improvement system through the State of Montana. STARS is currently in a redesign phase and is not accepting new applications until possibly October 2025. The STARS system is designed to strengthen programs with continuous improvement through guidance, strategies and incentives. EHS and Child Care Partners continue to utilize training and resources still offered through STARS.



STARS Level	Facility
★★★★	University on Princeton
★★★	Young Explorers
★★★	Kidz Konnection
★★★★★	Babies and Beyond ✓ NAEYC
★★★★★	Kristi's Kiddie Korner ✓ NAFCC
<b>PARTICIPATING</b>	Family Tree Nurturing Center - Billings
★★★★	AWARE Center for Early Childhood - Belgrade
★★★★	AWARE Center for Early Childhood - Billings
★★★★	AWARE Center for Early Childhood - Butte
★★★★	AWARE Center for Early Childhood - Helena

✓ Accreditation

## Successful Staff





# BUDGET

## Financial Information and Audit Results

### Federal Share

Early Head Start funding comes from the Office of Head Start and is awarded after the grant application has been approved.

### Non-Federal Share (In Kind)

Each Head Start program is required to match each dollar of federal funds with 20% non-federal share or in kind. AWARE EHS receives the majority of its in-kind from parent and community volunteers, parent-child activities, and community donations.



	2024	2023
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services	\$4,770,184	\$4,754,979
Non-Federal Share	\$133,633	\$283,892
Total	\$4,903,817	\$5,038,871

	Proposed 2024	Actual 2023
Wages & Benefits	\$3,368,844	\$3,090,174
Program Expenses	\$736,712	\$1,511,654
Office Supplies	\$7,700	\$24,448
Occupancy Expense	\$167,962	\$369,974
Building Repair & Maintenance	\$34,920	\$162,867
Total Expenses	\$4,316,138	\$5,159,117

### Administrative Costs

Early Head Start programs are required to track administrative expenses. The maximum allowable cost for administration is 15% of the total expenditures and in kind. In 2021-2022, administrative costs were 10.53% of the total.



# AWARE Early Head Start Income Statement

For July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

	YTD	Percent
<b>Income</b>		
Base Grand Revenue	\$4,493,086	87%
COVID-19	\$177,579	3%
Training & Technical Assistance	\$84,320	2%
Child & Adult Care Food Program	\$120,240	2%
In-Kind Revenue	\$283,892	6%
Total Income	\$5,159,117	100%
<b>Expenses</b>		
Wages & Benefits	\$3,090,174	60%
Program Related	\$1,511,654	29%
Office Supplies	\$24,448	0%
Occupancy Expense	\$369,974	7%
Building Repair & Maintenance	\$162,867	3%
Total Expenses	\$5,159,117	100%

**Auditor's Opinion: We have audited the accompanying financial statements of AWARE, Inc. (the "Organization"), a nonprofit organization, which comprise the statement of financial position as of June 30, 2023, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cash flows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.**

"In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of AWARE, Inc. as of June 30, 2023, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America ("GAAP")."



# FEDERAL REVIEW 2021-2022

The Head Start Act requires a periodic federal review of Early Head Start programs to ensure consistent quality and accountability. The review also allows our program the opportunity for continuous improvement of our services and practices.

## Service Area

Designing Quality Education  
and child development  
program services

## Grant Numbers

08CH011642

## Compliance Level

Area of Concern

## Applicable Standards\*

1302.91(e)(1)

## Timeframe for Correction

Follow up with Regional Office  
for support

### **\*1302.91 Staff qualifications and competency requirements**

(e) Child and family service staff.

(1) Early Head Start center-based teacher qualification requirements. As prescribed in section 645(h) of the Act, a program must ensure center-based teachers that provide direct services to infants and toddlers in Early Head Start centers have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or comparable credential, and have been trained or have equivalent coursework in early childhood development with a focus on infant and toddler development.

## Quality Improvement Plan

EHS successfully completed a quality improvement plan to address a federal review finding.



# THANK YOU

AWARE EHS would like to thank our supporters who have generously given their time, financial assistance, and consultation to ensure that children and families in our communities receive the support needed to realize their goals.

## Our Business Partners

Ability Montana - Butte  
Action Fire Extinguisher Service  
Allegra, Printing  
American Solutions for Business  
Bankston, Sarah  
Be Better World  
Belgrade Library  
Benevity Giving Program  
Billings United  
Billings Yellowstone Kiwanis  
Blankets and Bears  
Bliss Casino  
Brewer Dental Pediatrics  
Childcare Connections - Bozeman  
Christina's Cocina Cafe  
Clearwater Credit Union  
Crowley Fleck Attorneys  
ECI - Billings  
Engel & Völkers Billings Real Estate  
Exploration Works  
Family Tree Nurturing Center  
Farm Services Assoc. - Whitehall  
First Federal Bank & Trust  
Food Pantry - Whitehall  
Gillette, Jane  
Great Harvest Bread  
Great Northern Carousel  
Habitat for Humanity  
Hammer and Stain Belgrade  
Harrington-Baker, Mary Ann  
Heath, Dorthy  
Horizon Credit Union  
Jackson Hewitt - Helena  
Joanne's Fabrics  
Kambich, Jim  
LIFTT - Billings OT  
Lowe's - Helena  
MOMS - MT OB & Material Support  
Moms Without Capes  
Montana Pro Painters  
MSU - Billings  
New Life Lutheran Church - Helena  
Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company  
Phillips 66 Women's Network  
Prickly Pear Pediatric Dentist  
Pride Metal Works, LLC  
Ries & Associates, P.C.  
Rimrock Pediatric Dentistry  
Sleeping Giant Lanes  
Sprout Oral Health - Bozeman  
Teddy Beard Dental - Billings  
The Valley Hub/Laibation Station  
Town Pump  
United Way of Yellowstone County, Inc.  
Western Legacy Ctr. - Whitehall  
Wordal, Daniel

# THANK YOU

## Our Individual Partners

Anderson, Jessica  
Andreozzi, Barbara  
Ashton, Kristin  
Baker, Kyle  
Berg, Eric  
Bennion, Jon  
Boggess, Avy  
Bogy, Hillory  
Bosch, Cailen  
Bosch, Morgan  
Buttermann, Braxton  
Cano, Rosalia  
Casey, Megan  
Cebulski, Kennedy  
Chadek, Diana  
Collins, Darla  
Cutshall-Bailey, Patty  
Dietrich, Theodore  
Drynan, Cassie  
Feller, Ashton  
Fisk, Tammy  
Flink, Suzanne  
Foster, Mike  
Foust, Alexis  
Fox, Dante  
Gavin, Mary  
Gonzales, Brian  
Graves, Juanita  
Hankinson, Jim  
Hanna, Haberman  
Henningsen, Braxton  
Hensen, Jeremiah  
Herbold, Vicki  
Honey, Gentry  
Hunter, John  
Isaak, Tami  
Johnson, Emma  
Johnson, Rodney  
Kautz, Jennifer  
Kennedy, Bill  
Knott, Jamie  
Konechy, Alex

Laurandeau, CCCS, Sara  
Leatherberry, Zack  
Leo, Paula  
LeProwse, Debbie  
Lervick, Jeana  
Lorengo, Kim  
Mayo, Sheryl  
McBride, Scott  
McGrath, Kelly  
McKay, Kristi  
Mendoza, Isaac  
Merrell, Corey  
Merrell, Katherine  
Merrell, Natalie  
Metropoulos, Theresa  
Meyers, Lindsey  
Muoz, Nick  
Murray, Blake  
Nelson, Linda  
Newbauer, Jennifer  
Nakita, Offutt  
Nyahuma, Kuda  
O'Connell, Sue  
Old Coyote, Robin  
Paoli, Ameri  
Peck, Abby  
Powers, Connie  
Prentice, Kay  
Pritchard, Joanne  
Ranney, Carl  
Red Willow Horse Capture  
Ross, Justice  
Scheerer, Nicholas  
Schmidt, Johnna  
Sherrill, Barb  
Shields, Jeremy  
Siegle, Candice

Silva, Sara  
Silva, Shawna  
Small, Carla  
Spearson, Miriam  
Stahl, Sam  
Stark, Stephanie  
Steel, Bayley  
Strandell, John  
Struder, Kelly  
Tierney, Timberly  
Tucker, Kelli  
Tutty, Cathy  
Vulles, Samantha  
Wallace, Lexys  
Welch, Melinda (Mindy)  
West, Pam  
Williams, Joy  
Williamson, Lucas  
Wilson, Kristi  
Wolstein, Megan  
Worth, Kaylee  
Zimmerman, Jean  
Zumiga, Brandon



## And our EHS Parents and Guardians!



we are  
**AWARE**



...And Justice for All - Child and Adults Care Food Program "in accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture Policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410, or call (202)720-5964. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Contact Us: [EarlyHeadStart@Aware-inc.org](mailto:EarlyHeadStart@Aware-inc.org)**

In compliance with the "Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007" requiring that all Early Head Start programs make an annual report available to the public.

This report is made available to the public on our AWARE website: <https://www.aware-inc.org>  
Hard copies are also printed and available at each Early Head Start location.