

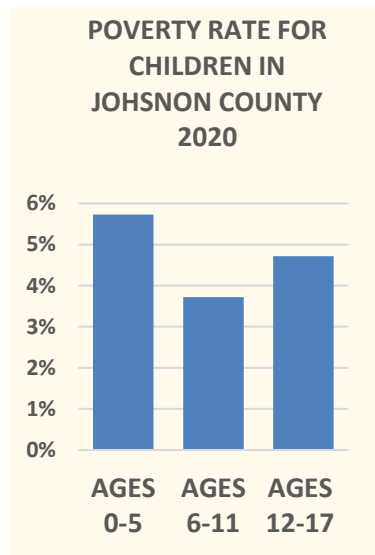


**Status of Young Children in Johnson County**

The early years of a child’s life are the foundation of their future development. From birth through age 3, the brain develops most of its neuropathways. Through age 8, children’s experiences provide the base for social, emotional, and cognitive development. Ensuring that children have access to quality, supportive environments in their early years is critical.



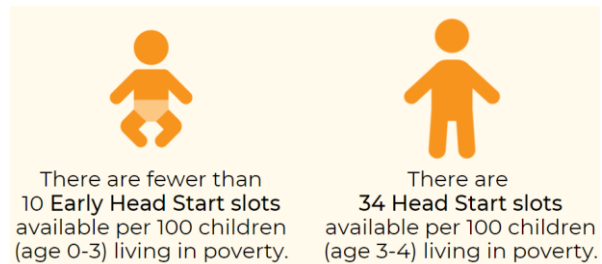
In Johnson County, there are more than 45,500 children under the age of 6, and 71% of those children live in a household where all parents are in the labor force. Of the more than 47,3000 children aged 6-11 who are school-age and still early in their development, 77% live in households where both parents work. Early childhood education remains a persistent gap in the lives of working parents.



Young children in Johnson County have the highest poverty rates of all children under 18. Nearly 6% of children ages 0-5 are living under the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) in Johnson County, and nearly 17% are considered low-income, living under 200% of FPL (FPL for a family of 3 in 2020 was \$21,720).

Many children do not have access to early education before entering kindergarten. Early learning programs such as Early Head Start give infants, toddlers, and children a positive start in life. Early Head Start and Head Start are federally-funded programs with a track record of providing the early learning environments that help prepare children from low-income families for kindergarten and beyond. In Johnson County, there are fewer than 10 Early

Head Start slots available per 100 children from birth through 3 years of age living in families in poverty. For 3-4 year olds, there are 34 Head Start slots available per 100 children. 60% of public elementary schools offer pre-kindergarten or 4-year-old At-Risk program five days a week.



Families in Johnson County have access to a variety of supports, including subsidies for child care costs from the Kansas Child Care Assistance Program. Support provided through this program can reduce the burden on families; in 2021, an average of 1,025 grantees per month enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides women and children with nutrient-rich foods as well as information on healthy eating and referrals to health care. In 2021, 7,649 women, infants and children received food, nutrition education and health screenings through the WIC program. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, children under 3 who receive WIC are at lower risk for developmental delays due to insufficient access to health care, an iron-deficient diet and other concerns.