



2025 Community Assessment Report

2025/26 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care dba Promise Early Education Center (Promise) is a premier early learning program in Central Maine dedicated to educating the whole child and preparing children for success in school and opportunities beyond. As the Head Start program for Androscoggin County, Promise offers a results-driven curriculum taught by degreed, licensed/certified teachers who engage parents in their child's learning through partnership and commitment.

In addition to Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) programs, Promise offers early education/pre-K programs, and childcare to children and families. Like Head Start programs, early education is available to children ages 6 weeks – 3 years, and pre-K is available to children ages 3 – 5. Full-day, year-round childcare is available on a limited basis for children ages 6 weeks – 5 years. At Promise, we help all families put their children first. Last year, Promise served 233 children in Androscoggin County.

Community Assessment Purpose & Process

Our program meets a critical community need for high-quality, affordable early childhood care and education. By engaging in a regular review of community, county, and state-wide data, Promise is able to ensure that its programs and services are informed by and responsive to actual community needs. By engaging in a rolling review of data about the children and families it services, we are able to see how program statistics compare to community, county, and state-wide data and can learn from internal program trends.

The community assessment is a comprehensive process that involves review of multiple data sources and documentation of data points that demonstrate community need within our service area of Androscoggin County, Maine. Promise engages in comprehensive community assessment once every five years per the federal Office of Head Start funding requirements and updates select internal and external data points on an annual basis.

Data Limitations

The primary limitation of the data relied upon in this report is that there is typically a lag between the year data is published and the year or span of years that data represents. Also, the data sources referenced in this report are not all collected or published on the same frequency, so some data may be older and out of date, while other data is only out of date by one year or less. While community, county, and state-wide data may not always be directly comparable, Promise's internal program data offers a reliable, up-to-date picture of the demographics, strengths, and needs of the children and families Promise serves in Androscoggin County.

Community Assessment Observations

Community indicators around economic well-being, education, health, and safety at both the county and state levels demonstrate that there is a continued need for organizations like Promise to support early childhood education and provide connections for families to the resources and education they need. As the sole provider of EHS and HS programs in Androscoggin County, Promise is well-positioned to improve outcomes for children and families most in need who reside in this service area. In fact, Promise consistently reports improved development outcomes for enrolled children, and extended program duration has shown to be linked with even greater child outcomes. Finally, the ways in which Promise supports the whole family – parents and guardians as well as children – increases families' chances of achieving their goals.

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GEOGRAPHIC SERVICE AREA

Promise’s service area includes all of Androscoggin County, ME – approximately 497 total square miles made up of 468 square miles of land and 29 square miles of water. It is the second smallest county in Maine by total area.¹ Androscoggin County is bordered by Cumberland County to the South, Oxford County to the West, Franklin County to the North, and Kennebec and Sagadahoc Counties to the East.

POPULATION

Total Population

Androscoggin County is the fifth most populated county in Maine with a population of 115,272. The county’s population comprises just over 8% of the total population in Maine (see Table 1) and has a population density of 231 people per square mile of land.

The two largest cities in Androscoggin County are Auburn and Lewiston with populations of 25,656 and 39,266, respectively. The combined population of these two cities represents more than half (56%) of the county’s total population.² Auburn and Lewiston are known locally as the Twin Cities or Lewiston-Auburn (L-A).

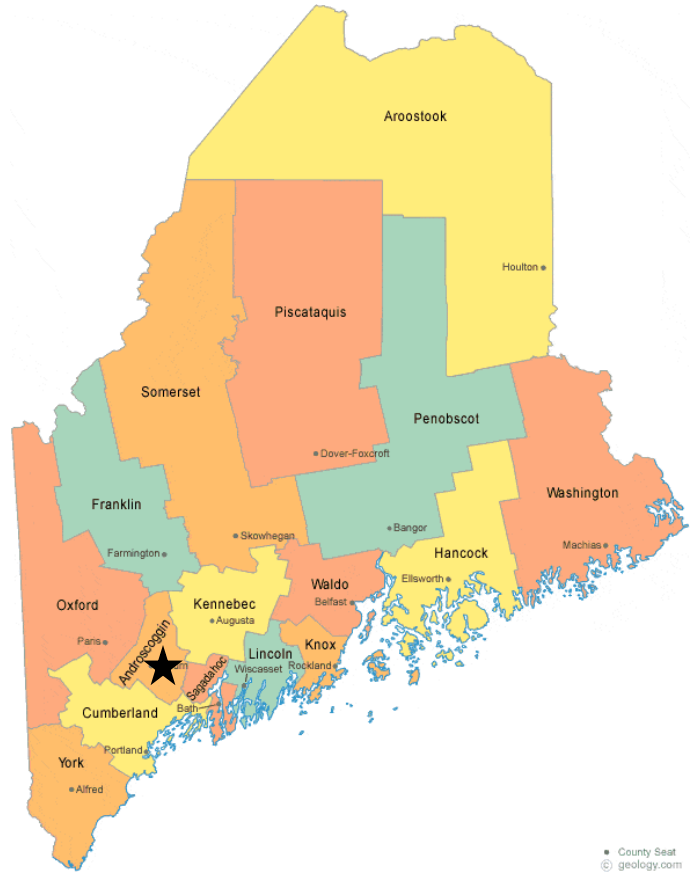


Image retrieved from Geology.com.
<https://geology.com/county-map/maine.shtml>.

Table 1: Total Population estimate, State & County Comparison

	Population
Maine	1,405,012

Table 2: Births – State & County Comparison

	2024 Births (#)
Maine	11,586
Androscoggin County	1,150

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Population by Age

In many instances, this report focuses on data for children who are five and younger because Promise programs only serve children in this age range. Children under five make up 4.6% of Maine’s total population and 5.6% of Androscoggin County’s total population (see Table 3).²

Table 3 Children under 5:

Recent data is available for population by single age for Maine children aged five and below, but the latest data on children by single age for Androscoggin County is from 2024 (see Table 4).

Age Group	Maine # (2024)	Androscoggin County (2024)
< 5	61,645	5,846
5 to 17	187,407	17,330
< 18	249,052	23,176

The total number of children aged 5 and under in Maine and Androscoggin County is 76,761 and 7,568, respectively.³ Androscoggin County has the fourth highest number of children aged 5 and under of all counties in Maine.

Table 4:

Single Age	Maine (2024)	Androscoggin County (2024) ⁴	Promise Enrollment (2025) ⁵
<1	11,539	1,167	8
1	12,015	1,252	16
2	12,177	1,237	23
3	11,936	1,089	69
4	12,883	1,230	117
5	13,131	1,269	0

TABLE 5

Hispanic or Latino
 Non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaskan Native alone
 Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander alone
 Non-Hispanic Black or African American alone
 Non-Hispanic Two or More Races or Some Other Race
 Non-Hispanic White alone

Androscoggin County (2025) ⁶	
#	%
2259	2
78	.1
1159	4.4
4863	4.4
5332	4.8
100,100	89.8

Population by Race/Ethnicity

The vast majority of people in Androscoggin County are “non-Hispanic white”.

Children enrolled in Promise programs are predominantly “white, non-Hispanic” or “black or African American, non-Hispanic”.

Both cities are predominantly 80-90% white followed by 3-5% respectively people of color.

In addition to Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) programs, we offer early education, pre-K programs, and childcare to children and families who are not eligible for HS/EHS.

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ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Poverty

Statistics in Table 6 are based on the number of individuals for whom poverty status was determined. For all three categories – all ages, age 0-17 and under 5 – Androscoggin County has higher poverty rates than the state of Maine overall.

- All children in poverty in table 6 (Annie Casey Kids Count)

Table 6:

Child Poverty Rates (2023)	Rate for Children
Maine	12.6%
Androscoggin County	16.6%

Employment Status of Parents/Guardians with Children Enrolled in Promise Programs

Total number of families in which:

At least one parent/guardian is employed, in job training, or in school	171
Neither/No parent/guardian is employed, in job training, or in school (unemployed, retired or disabled)	73

The number of all families in which at least one parent/guardian is a:

Member of the U.S. military on active duty	3
Veteran of the U.S. military	3

Income

In 2022 Androscoggin County’s median household income is \$64,500 – lower than the median household income for Maine overall (\$68,251).

The estimated living wage for a single adult with two children in Androscoggin County is \$44.67 (compared with \$49.94 for Maine). The living wage is defined as the wage needed to cover basic family expenses (basic needs budget) plus all relevant taxes. While the living wage increases each year based on rising household costs due to inflation, many families do not receive an annual wage or salary increase.

Public Assistance

On a county level, in 2023, the use of TANF among Maine's youngest children varied between a high of 7.1% in Androscoggin County and 6.2% in Piscataquis County to a low of 1.7% in Hancock County and 2.5% in Lincoln County and 2.7% in Sagadahoc County. The rate of SNAP use for children under age 6 varies by county in 2023 was above 30% in three counties- Washington County at 35.9%, Oxford at 32.6% and Androscoggin at 31.7%. By contrast, Sagadahoc, Cumberland and York Counties had the lowest rates, all between 14.2% and 15.6%.

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Table 7: Children 5 years and younger in Families Receiving Public Assistance, by Type – State & County Comparison

Maine 2024	Androscoggin County 2024
4.2%	8.2%

For Children aged five and under, Table 7 shows the percent of families with children

TANF (2024)⁷

under 5 receiving TANF and/or SNAP in 2024. The number of children under five receiving in 2025 living in Androscoggin County averaged 2256 monthly. Androscoggin County received the highest amount of funds for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and PaS (Parents as Scholars) which provides crucial financial support to low-income families with children, particularly in Maine. TANF offers monthly cash for basic needs (housing, utilities) and work support, while PaS, a specialized Maine program, supports parents in 2- or 4-year degree programs with cash, childcare, and supplies

In addition to TANF and SNAP, Promise tracks the number of enrolled children who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Women, Infants & Children (WIC) benefits (see Table 8).

Table 8: Families with Children 5 and Under Enrolled in Promise Programs Who Receive Public Assistance, by Type

Income at or below 100% of federal poverty line	90
TANF/SSI/SNAP	134
Foster Care	7
Homelessness	7
Other	31

EDUCATION

Child care and public pre-K: In 2024, the County was home to 140 licensed providers including both centers and family childcare homes. Across those providers, the vast majority were “Star 2 or 3” level on the Maine QRIS system while just 22 were either a “Star 4 or 5 Star” providers. AHSCC operates childcare classrooms, public pre-K partnership classrooms, HS and EHS classrooms, and a birth to 3 state funded classroom all of which are a Star 5.

Every school district in Androscoggin County offers public pre-K. While not every family chooses this option, existing programs have the capacity to serve all families who choose to enroll. A significant factor in a family’s decision to enroll in public pre-K is transportation to and from home or to and from a childcare provider who is providing before and after care. Lewiston Public Schools, the largest school district in Androscoggin County, has the highest public-pre-K enrollment. In 2024-25, there were 80 Lewiston Public School Pre-K students dually enrolled in AHSCC programs. Currently, public Pre-K in Maine is available for 4-year-olds in approximately 91% of school administrative units or SAUs.

Early Care & Education Programs

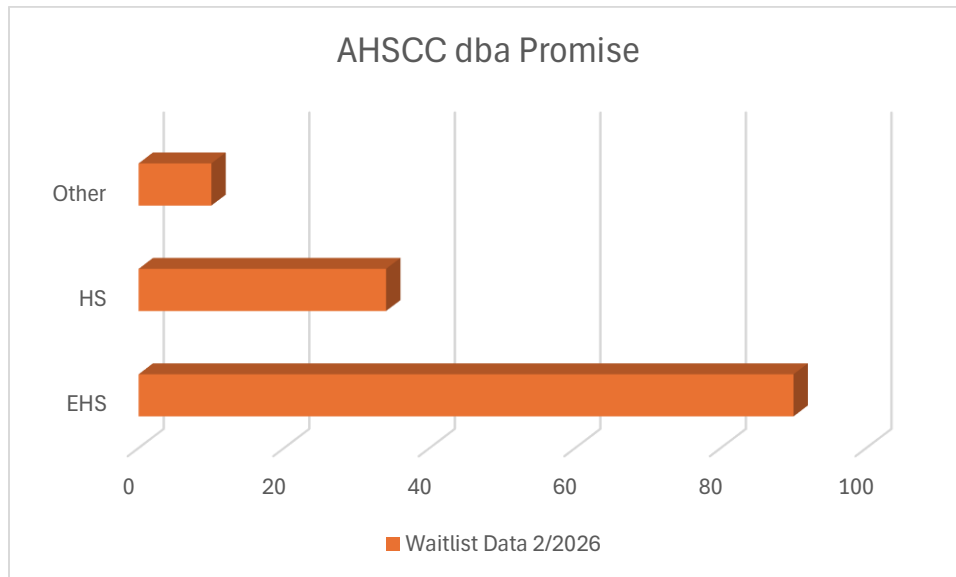
Early care and education programs typically serve children from birth through age 5 and sometimes older. There are numerous settings for these programs including childcare centers, family childcare homes, nursery schools, license-exempt childcare, Head Start, public pre-school, and in-home care. All Promise programs are Star 5.

Maine’s QRIS, called Rising Stars for ME. Rising Stars for ME is a five-Star program designed to increase awareness of the importance of quality early childhood and out of school time experiences.

Rising Stars for ME has three goals:

- To recognize early childhood and out-of-school time programs that meet standards of evidence-based quality practices.
- To encourage and support programs to engage in continuous quality improvement efforts.
- To provide families with identifiable standards of quality.

Table 9:



Promise EHS and HS programs are fully enrolled and have a number of families on the waitlist. Waitlist data for the 2025-26 program years is shown above (Table 9).

Waitlists tend to be shorter in the fall because families move from the waitlist to open EHS or HS program slots or families make other arrangements. The waitlists tend to be larger in the spring due to Promise’s promotion or registration for the coming year. Regardless of the reasons behind the data, these waitlist trends are indicative of the high demand for EHS and HS programs among families in Androscoggin County.

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Enrollment, Age 3 and Over

Androscoggin County has a higher number of children enrolled in early education as every school district in the county offers public pre-k and has sufficient slots to accommodate all families who want to enroll. This is not the case in all areas of the state.

Participation in early childhood education programs (EHS, HS, private pre-school, public pre-K, and kindergarten) is linked with school readiness and improved early learning and development outcomes. The eligible population for these programs is generally children aged three to five.

Outcomes, Early Head Start & Head Start

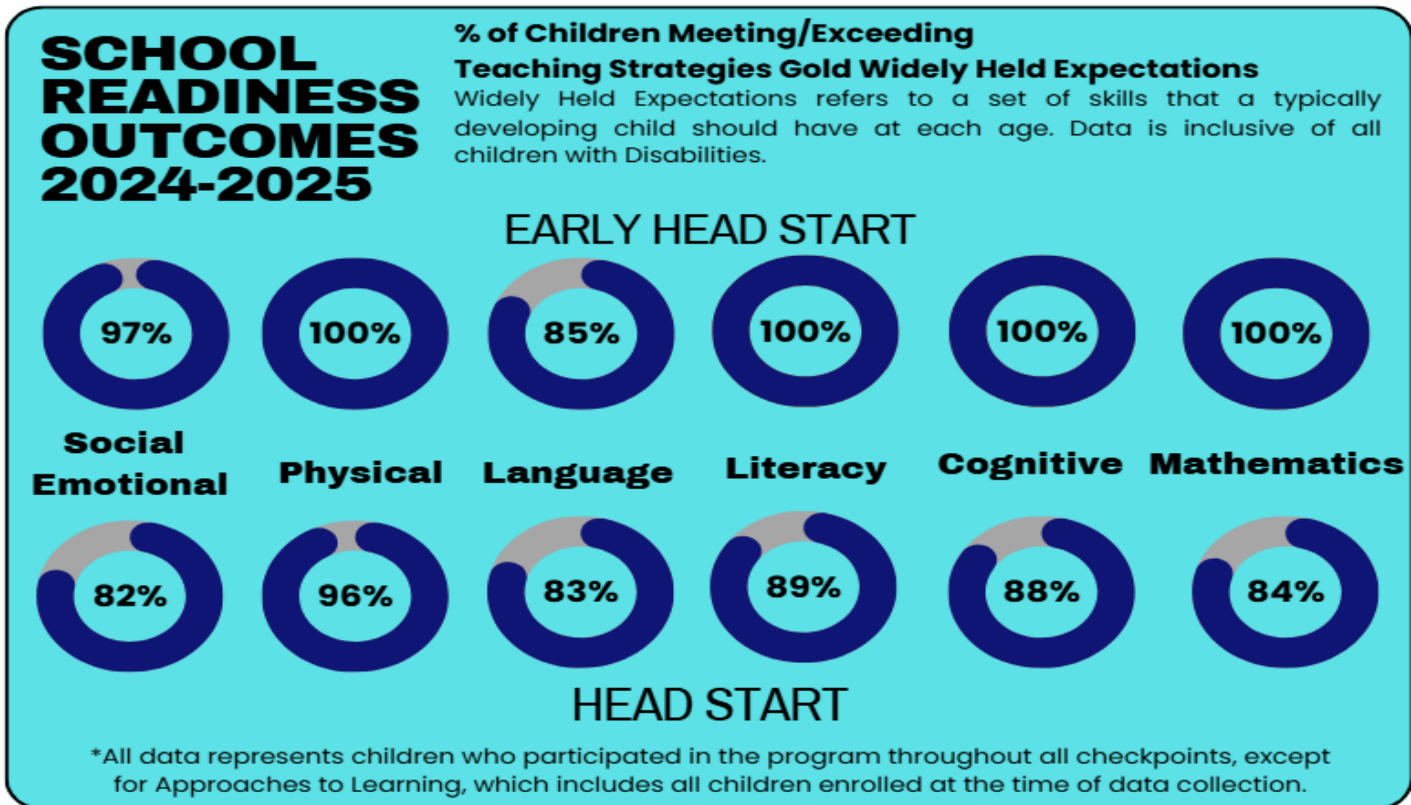
Promise utilizes the Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) assessment tool to measure child developmental outcomes in six areas. By the end of the 2024-25 program year, 97% of EHS participants met or exceeded developmental expectations in each of the six assessment areas (see Figure 2). HS participants experienced significantly improved outcomes over the two assessment periods, halfway through the program year and at year end (87% met or exceeded developmental expectations with 30% of HS children having a IEP).

Promise offers both full-day (6 hours) and part-day programs for HS. Each of these options exceeds the state's minimum instructional time requirement of 10 hours per week for pre-k students. Promise also offers before and after care to meet the needs of full-time working families.

Programming with expanded duration appears to positively impact child outcomes, these children meet or exceed in all six of the TSG assessment areas (see below).

Outcomes, Pre-K through 12th Grade

The TSG assessment is the most common research-based tool to measure ongoing, whole-child development among statewide public pre-K programs. Outcome data is not available due to the fact that there is no statewide standardized assessment.



Maine FAPE transition info:

Transition of child find and FAPE responsibilities to SAUs

- Responsibility for child find and free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for 3-, 4- and 5-year-old pre-K students with IEPs will transition to school administrative units (SAU) by July 1, 2028.
- SAUs may provide services directly or may contract with public or private providers to support services; the SAUs may also access their CDS Regional Site or other regional supports to provide services.
- Maine DOE will review each SAU’s readiness plan before the Commissioner of Education approves the SAU to assume the child find and FAPE responsibilities.

CDS

- Over the next 4 years, transition of CDS regional sites to regional support and service hubs aligned with the superintendent regions.
- The CDS System will have minimum service offerings and guiding principles for the regional support and service hubs
- Each CDS regional hub may appoint a parental advisory committee to seek input and feedback on the implementation of child find activities and provision of FAPE.
- The CDS System is responsible for due process and for paying 100% of the costs for compensatory services for children who have been underserved through the Child Development Services System.

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In 2024-25 four children enrolled in Promise EHS programs and 65 children in HS programming were eligible to receive intervention services. The disabilities among children enrolled in Promise programs last year were speech (27), autism (20), ADHD (21), and Developmental Delay (10).

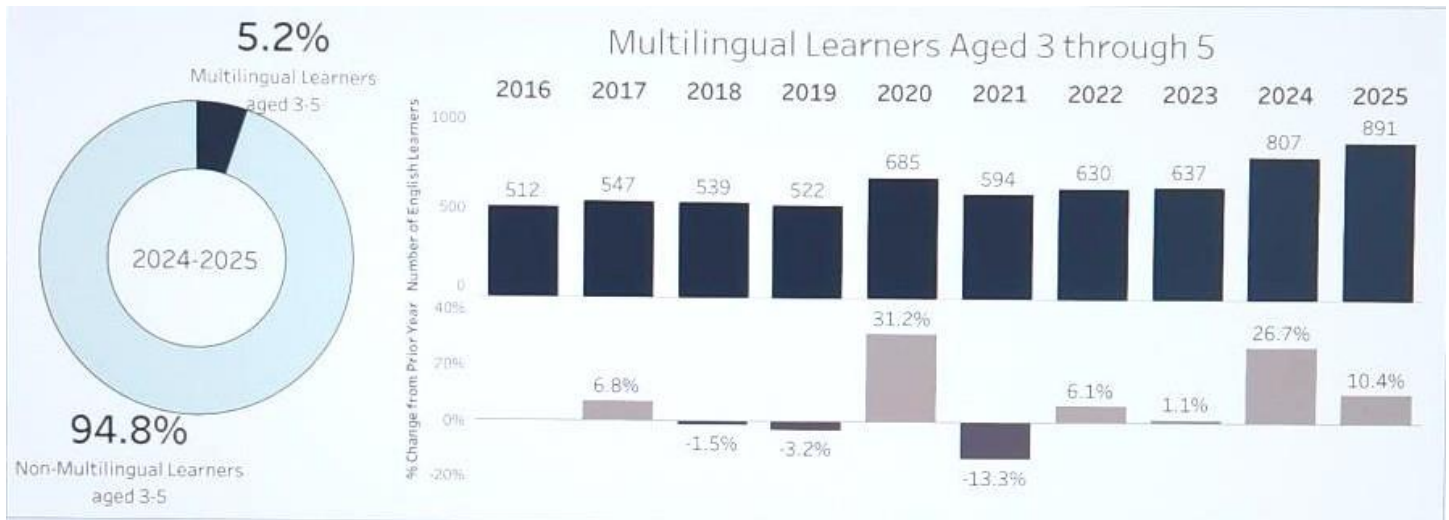
Many of our HS classrooms have 50% or more of the enrolled children eligible for special education, including both children with an active IEP and children awaiting their IEP. The significant increase in children identified with special education needs is further complicated by long wait lists and the lack of available service providers and special education classrooms to provide Part B services. As of March 2024, only 41% of children were receiving all the services listed on the IEP, 13% of children were receiving partial services listed on the IEP and 46% of children were receiving no special education services.

Multilingual Learners

Maine reported having 8,004 Multilingual Learners in 2024-25 with 5.2% of the children ages 3-5 in 2025 (891 students) being multilingual learners.

Androscoggin County has non-English speakers with the most predominant native languages being Portuguese, Somali, Swahili, and French though we have children and families who have 14 difference native languages.

English is the predominant language spoken at home by children enrolled in both EHS and HS programs - 48.07% followed by African languages – 44.21% (2025 PIR).



Educational Attainment, Age 25 and Over

Androscoggin County has 23.4% of all adults over 25 years of age with a bachelor’s degree which puts the County in bottom 5 of Maine’s 16 counties.

Table 10: 2025 High School Graduation Rate

	Androscoggin County	Maine
	Percent	Percent
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	81%	90%

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Table 11: Educational Attainment of Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of Children Enrolled in Promise Programs (PIR 2025)

Seventy-four Promise families (33%) – EHS and HS combined – had one or more parent/guardian in job training or in school.

An advanced degree or baccalaureate degree
 An associate degree, vocational school, or some college
 High school graduate or GED
 Less than high school graduate

Of the total number of families, the highest level of education obtained by the child’s parent(s)/guardian(s):	
An advanced degree or baccalaureate degree	48
An associate degree, vocational school, or some college	21
High school graduate or GED	99
Less than high school graduate	52

HEALTH

Health Insurance Status

The 2024 Androscoggin County Health Profile reports an uninsured rate in Androscoggin County for the period of 8.6% (compared to 9.5% for Maine).

MaineCare is a state-sponsored health insurance program for financially eligible Maine residents who cannot otherwise afford private health insurance. For state fiscal year 2024, a total of 140,666 were enrolled and the percentage rose to the highest rate since at least 2010. In 2023, 51.8% of children ages 0 -5 were enrolled in MaineCare, while the rate was 49.7% for ages 6-18.

Table 12 (2025):

	Children
Total Promise enrolled children with health insurance coverage	230 (98.71%)
Enrolled in Medicaid/CHIP	180
Private Health Insurance	50
No health insurance coverage	3

Access to Healthcare Providers

One hundred percent of children and pregnant women enrolled in Promise EHS and HS programs have access to a medical home. At the end of the 2024-25 enrollment year, 94% of participants were up to date on a schedule of age-appropriate preventative and primary health care.

Ninety-four percent of Promise participants had continuous, accessible dental care provided by a dentist.

Immunizations

Androscoggin County is in the bottom three counties in regard to having the lowest percentage of 2–3-year-olds in Maine who are up to date with recommended immunizations.

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HS/EHS participants determined by a healthcare professional to be up to date on all immunizations appropriate for their age in 2025 was 95.28% with another 4.29% . These rates far exceed the rates at the County and State levels.

Education/health/social service needs of families:

We evaluated community needs across a variety of data points including educational attainment amongst adults, participation in the state health insurance system, access to providers, food insecurity, substance abuse and more. Key findings that impact our service delivery include:

- In Nov 2025, the unemployment rate in Androscoggin County was 3.3%.
- In 2025, 99% of enrolled children had health insurance, and the County has a rate of 13.1 uninsured persons as opposed to Maine rate of 14.1 uninsured. Additionally, 100% of enrolled children had access to a medical home. In 2024-25 93.56% of enrolled children had a dental home.
- In 2025 Promise has a rate of 100% (95.28% fully immunized and 4.29% on a plan).
- The County has a higher level of childhood food insecurity than Maine overall (17.1% compared to 14.6%).
-Androscoggin County has the second highest rate among all Maine Counties of infants who, at birth, were potentially exposed or actually affected by alcohol or illicit or prescribed substances (9.5% compared to 7.8%).

Food Insecurity

Androscoggin County has the second highest childhood food insecurity rate (26) versus Maine rate (20.6).³This data point represents children under age 18 living in households where in the previous 12 months there was an uncertainty of having or an inability to acquire enough food for all household members because of insufficient money or other resources.

Promise promotes healthy eating habits, ensures that nutrition services are culturally and developmentally appropriate, and offers access to a variety of nutritious foods at no cost to enrolled families. Promise supports breastfeeding mothers by accommodating mothers who wish to breastfeed during program hours and ensuring the capacity to properly store breast milk.

Free & Reduced Lunch	
Maine (2024)	Androscoggin County (2024)
36.8%	44.0%

Promise partners with local producers to obtain fresh ingredients for its nutrition program. Meals and snacks are also provided for parent and Policy Council meetings and for family and community events. Menus are created collaboratively by the Promise Chef, Nutrition Manager and a Registered dietician to ensure that meals meet children's daily nutritional needs while still being child friendly.

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Exposure to Lead

Maine CDC has designated four communities made up of seven cities as high-risk areas as these communities have historically had Maine's highest levels of childhood lead poisoning. Androscoggin County has the highest prevalence of lead poisoning among children aged 1-2 who have been tested in all Maine counties. Lewiston-Auburn has the highest percentage of older housing than anywhere else in the State.

Lead Screenings 2024: **State: 74.9%**
Androscoggin County 76%

Lead Poisoning 2023: **State: 1.6%**
Androscoggin 2.5%

When needed, AHSCC follows-up on positive lead tests by providing education or resources to families. An example of a resource for parents that AHSCC refers to frequently is *The Lead Paint Project* operated by Pine Tree Legal Assistance, which provides information about lead screening, the harmful effects of lead, landlords' responsibilities with regard to lead testing and abatement, and how to access free lead testing. As a result of AHSCC's extensive work around lead screening and education, children enrolled in AHSCC programs have much lower rates of lead poisoning than children in the broader community.

Promise has a Health Coordinator who has phlebotomy training and is able to perform finger pricks. Tests are sent to the State Laboratory, and once results are received, Promise shares the information with the child's parents/guardians and primary care physician.

When needed, Promise follows up on positive lead tests by providing education or resources to families. An example of a resource for parents that Promise refers to frequently is The Lead Paint Project operated by Pine Tree Legal Assistance, which provides information about lead screening, the harmful effects of lead, landlords' responsibilities regarding lead testing and abatement, and how to access free lead testing. As a result of Promise's extensive work around lead screening and education, children enrolled in Promise programs have much lower rates of lead poisoning than children in the broader community.

SAFETY

Child Protective Services

The number of referrals to Child Protective Services (CPS) decreased in 2020 while the reports assigned for Child Protective (CP) assessment remained virtually the same. Androscoggin County continued to rank first in the number of reports assigned to Alternate Response, fourth in number of referrals and fifth in reports assigned for CP assessment (see Table 14).

Of the reports assigned for CP assessment, 74% of cases in Androscoggin County were found to be unsubstantiated versus the State rate of 69%.

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Children in Care

In 2023, there were 2,401 children age 0-17 in Maine who were in placements outside of their home, and there were 404 children age 0-17 in Androscoggin County in placements outside of their home.

Table 13: Child Protective Services Summary Statistics – State & County Comparison⁴

	Maine	Androscoggin County
Referrals	24,243	2,525 / Rank: 4
Reports Assigned to Alternate Response	1,256	207 / Rank: 1
Reports Assigned for CP Assessment	10,616	1,115 / Rank: 5
Total Victims Age 0-4 ^A Associated with Assigned Reports	5,697	641 / Rank: 4

Care & Child Welfare Involvement of Children Enrolled in Promise

Enrolled children who were in foster care at any point during the program year
 Enrolled children who were referred to HS/EHS services by a child welfare agency

Table 14: Foster

Enrolled children who were in foster care at any point during the program year	12
Enrolled children who were referred to HS/EHS services by a child welfare agency	11

Homelessness:

In school year 2023-2024, the Maine DOE reported there were 2,825 homeless students state-wide or 1.64% of students in grades PreK – 12. In 2023, we served 14 children who experienced homelessness during the program year.

Of the families that were served by Promise at some point during the enrollment year, the majority (64%) acquired housing during the enrollment year (see Table 16).

Table 15: Homelessness Data for Children & Families Served by Promise during the Enrollment Year

Families experiencing homelessness	14
Children experiencing homelessness	14
Families experiencing homelessness that acquired housing	9

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COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Promise strives to meet the needs of the children and families it serves through both direct delivery of early childhood care and education as well as through referrals to community partners that provide other essential services in support of children and families. Below is a complete list of these community partners.

School District Partners

- Lewiston Public Schools

Special Education Partners

- Early Learning Center (ELC)
- Maine Department of Education

Health & Safety Partners

- Community Clinical Services
- Maine Virtual Dentistry
- Community Dental
- Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child & Family Services
- Pine Tree Legal Assistance
- St. Mary's Regional Medical Center
- Spurwink Services
- Women, Infants & Children (WIC)

MOU Partners for Utilization of Space

- Auburn Housing Authority
- City of Lewiston
- Lewiston Housing Authority
- Lewiston Public Schools

Contract Partners

- Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Infant Mental Health Specialist
- Registered Nurse, Health Consultant

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END NOTES

¹United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Androscoggin_County,_Maine.

²The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center. *Children by age group*. Retrieved from <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>.

³U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. *American Fact Finder*. Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>.

⁴The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center. *Children by single age group*. Retrieved from <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>.

⁵Promise Early Education Center. *Early Head Start PIR 2025*.

⁶U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/androscoggin-county-me/>.

⁷Maine Department of Health & Human Services. *Summary Count of 5 Year Olds & Younger Active on TANF and/or Food Supplement* Retrieved from <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/documents/ofr/reports/2018/SummaryCountsByCounty-Jun2018.pdf>

⁸U.S. Census Bureau.

⁹[Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of MaineCare Services](#).