

# A Community Report on the Status of Young Children in Clinton County

## Pediatric and Family Health Care



## Child Care and Early Education



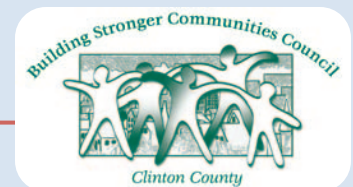
## Social and Emotional Health Care



## Family Support



## Parenting Leadership



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# Introduction

## The Status of Young Children in Clinton County

The first five years of a child's life are a time of great opportunity. The young child's early experiences and environments directly impact the developing architecture of his or her brain. Everything children see, every word they hear, everything they do from their first breath, shapes the rapidly developing architecture of their brains. We now know that by age four, ninety percent of this architecture will be built, as well as the foundation for language, social behavior, problem solving ability and emotional health will be nearly created by the time children enter kindergarten.

To be successful in school and in life, Clinton County's young children must grow up in an environment that develops self-confidence, positive social emotional skills and a love for learning. There is much that our community can do to make sure that every young child has this foundation. Leaders in communities across our state are working together in new ways so that every infant, toddler and preschooler has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Community leaders in Clinton County, who understand the vital importance of investing in young children, have come together to form our Great Start Collaborative. The Clinton County Great Start Collaborative is funded by, and works in partnership with, Michigan's Early Childhood Investment Corporation to prepare, and then implement, the Clinton County *Early Childhood Action Agenda*. This Report has also benefited from, and is supported by, the leadership provided by Clinton County's Building Stronger Communities Council and the members of the Great Start Parent Coalition. Our *Early Childhood Action Agenda* will lay out the actions we need to take going forward to ensure that every child enters kindergarten safe, healthy and ready to succeed in school and in life.

For our community to make wise decisions about the future of our young children, we need to know what the current status of young children is in Clinton County. This report presents current community data in six areas, each of which makes a critical contribution to the optimal brain development, health and early learning of young children.

# Executive Summary

The Clinton County Great Start Collaborative has completed an extensive analysis of available data concerning the conditions facing young children ages birth through five and their families in our community. This report will not only serve as a map to show us where we are, but as a compass to direct our future efforts. It represents some of the challenges facing our community, and it also highlights many of the strengths we can build upon to ensure that every child in Clinton County will enter kindergarten safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school and life. In many areas circumstances for Clinton County children and their families are better than overall state or national conditions. Clinton County has a high level of collaboration and cooperation among community service providers and we have a strong history of local investment and support for innovative early childhood initiatives. The following summarizes the target areas of concern identified within the five segments of the report:

## **Pediatric and Family Health:**

- 1 out of 7 Clinton County women are receiving less than adequate prenatal care.
- Clinton County's preterm births have increased to 12% of births.
- Lead testing of Clinton county's 1-2 year olds is substantially lower than the state average.

## **Social and Emotional Health:**

- Foster care rate for children ages 0-5 has increased by 76% since 2003.
- Less than 1% of Clinton county young children are receiving mental health services each year.

## **Parenting Leadership:**

- Each year on average, 65 infants are born to mothers without a high school diploma.
- Each year on average, 51 infants are born to teenage mothers.

## **Child Care and Early Education:**

- 67 % of parents with children under the age of six are in the labor force, the majority of those receiving child care subsidy are utilizing unlicensed child care.
- With the closing of Imagination Station, there will be 72 fewer GSRP spots available

## **Family Support:**

- 5% of the households with children under 18 receive public support; over half of these households are single female parent households.
- 14 of every 1000 children aged 0-5 in Clinton County are confirmed as a victims of abuse or neglect.

This report provides a barometer of the status of children in our community and is intended to highlight the gaps in services that affect the wellbeing of young children and their families in Clinton County. The information summarized above represents a larger body of data that will serve as a resource for community planning and as a baseline for measuring the effectiveness of our *Early Childhood Action Agenda*.

Clinton County Great Start Collaborative, September, 2009.

# Clinton County Conditions

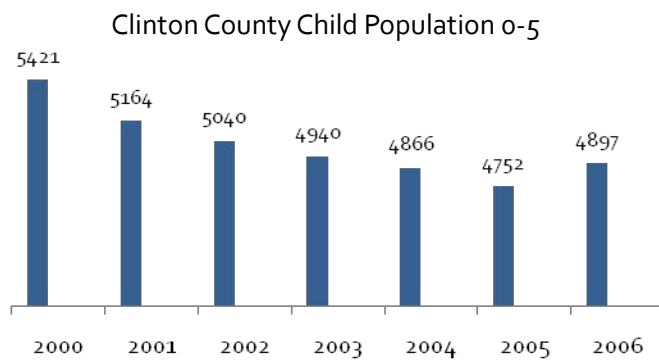
## Clinton County Great Start Collaborative

**Vision:** A Great Start for every child in Clinton County – safe, healthy and eager to succeed in school and in life.

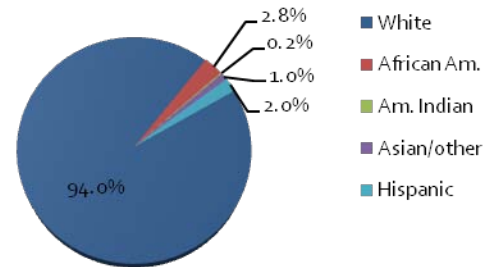
**Mission:** The purpose of Clinton County Great Start is to assure a coordinated system of community resources and supports to assist all our families in providing a great start for their children

### Population

Demographic trends in Clinton County between 2000 and 2006 show an overall increase (+7.2%) in total population, but a decrease in the young child population (-9.6%). In 2006 children ages 0-5 made up 7.1% of the Clinton County population. There is little ethnic diversity in Clinton County.



Diversity of Child Population 0-5



### Single Parent Households

Children in single parent families are more likely to be economically insecure, as well as stressed by limited access to adult support and supervision. In the State of Michigan, nearly 1 in every 3 families are single-parent families. According to the 2005-2007 American Community Survey, in Clinton County there were 2,571 single parent households, which represents nearly 16% of all households with children under 18. Of the single parent households, 76% (1955) were headed by females. Of the single female parent households, 26% (506) have children under the age of 5. 42% of single mothers with children under the age of 5 live in poverty in Clinton County.

% Single mothers living in poverty in Clinton County:



### Community Support

The Clinton County Building Stronger Communities Council (BSCC) is composed of representatives from many different human service organizations, both governmental and non-profits, coalitions and community initiatives. Historically, the BSCC have measured and reported many of the same components regarding early childhood. A 2004 study commissioned by the BSCC assessed the Clinton County early childhood population's indicators for school readiness and success.<sup>1</sup> This data furthered the ability to evaluate trends. In 2008 BSCC estimated nearly 37% of the total Clinton County population's lives were touched by some form of human service activity. The Great Start Collaborative Parent Coalition is an example of the effort to increase parent participation in early childhood planning and decision making for the county.

# Pediatric and Family Health Care

**Goal:** Infants, young children and their families are physically healthy.

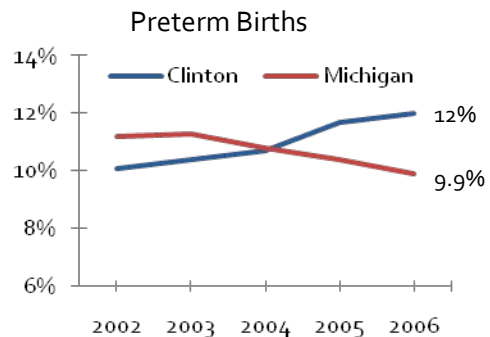
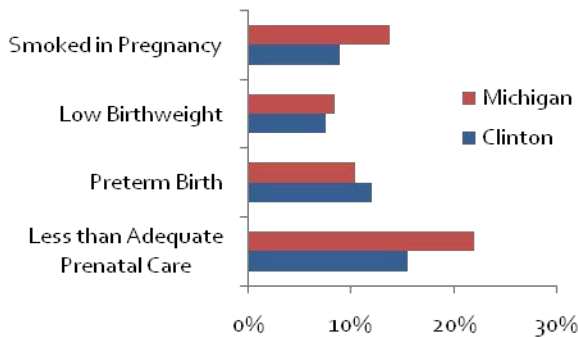


Healthy children are more able to engage in the full range of life experiences that promote early learning. A lack of health care or delays in treating children's health problems can negatively affect their development, sometimes with lifelong consequences.

## Unhealthy Births

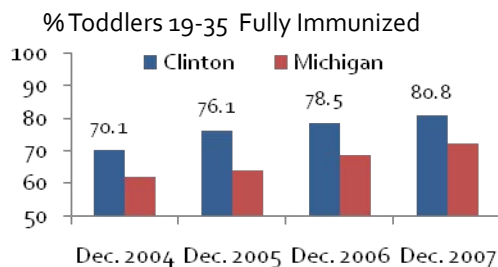
A healthy start in life is critical. Many babies who start off life with health problems never fully catch up with their peers. Below are several indicators to assess the health of babies. In Clinton County preterm births have risen since 2002. The MidMichigan District Health Department 2008 Annual Report shows Clinton County's disparity in percentage of preterm births as compared to Gratiot, Montcalm and the state of Michigan.<sup>4</sup> In 2006 nearly 16% of pregnant women received less than adequate prenatal care, which is higher than the Healthy People 2010 goal of 10%.

2006 - Total live births in Clinton County: 844



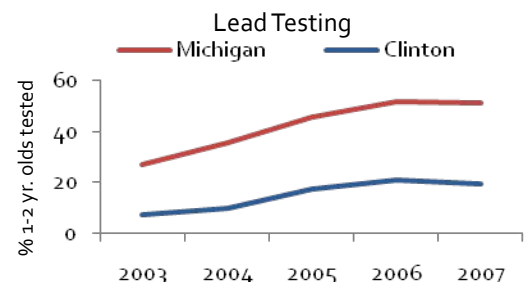
## Immunizations

Providing children with immunizations is an easy, proven way to prevent serious and potentially deadly illnesses. Immunizations are one of the most basic and important individual safeguards against illness.



## Housing Conditions

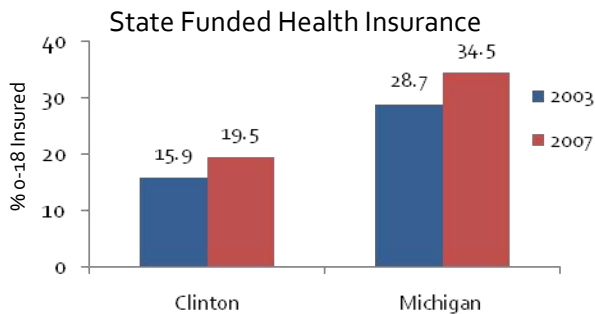
Because of the presence of lead in the materials of houses that were built prior to 1950, the percentage of these homes is considered. In Clinton County, 23.3% of the estimated 29,300 housing units are pre-1950 construction.



# Pediatric and Family Health Care

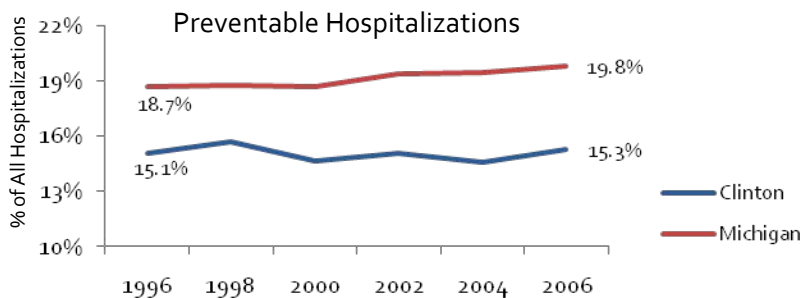
## Access to Health Insurance

Young children and families with health insurance are more likely to go to the doctor and get help for health conditions before they become emergencies. Young children who have a regular health care provider, or medical home, are more likely to get the high quality preventative care they need to identify and address the common health needs and concerns of early childhood, like immunizations, and screenings for developmental, hearing and vision impairments. It is estimated that in Michigan, 86% of children 0-17 have a regular medical home. Children with private health insurance are 16 times more likely to have a usual source of health care than uninsured children<sup>2</sup>. Nearly one of every 5 children under the age of 18 in Clinton County are insured by state funded health insurance, Medicaid or MICHild.



## Preventable Hospitalizations

When children do not have access to regular preventive care, they often experience serious complications that can require hospitalization. Ambulatory care sensitive hospitalizations are preventable hospitalizations for conditions such as pneumonia, asthma or diabetes. Timely and effective ambulatory care can decrease these hospitalizations by preventing the onset of the illness or condition, controlling an acute episode of an illness or managing a chronic disease or condition. Examining the rates of ambulatory care sensitive hospitalizations in Clinton County will serve as an indicator to the success of the prevention efforts and the ability to obtain timely and effective care.

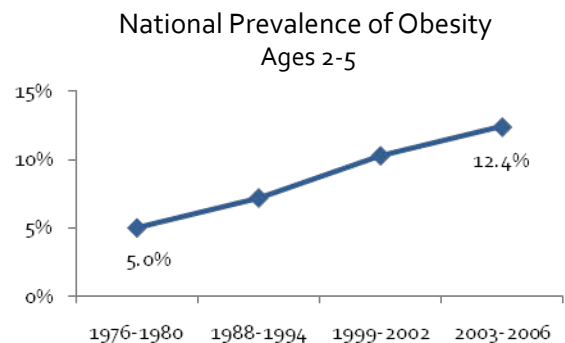


## Dental Care

Lack of regular professional dental care can lead to oral diseases that eventually require complex treatment and lead to tooth loss and health problems. Healthy People 2010 has a goal of 58% of low income children age 0-18 receiving preventative dental care in the past 12 months. The state level is estimated at 28%.<sup>3</sup> In Clinton County, the Fluoride Varnish Program and the Head Start program through Capital Area Community Services aid in providing necessary care for low income children.

## Childhood Obesity

Obesity is a serious health problem for children and adolescents. Data from recent national surveys show that the prevalence of obesity for children ages 2-5 has increased. In the last 30 years the prevalence of obesity in children ages 2-5 increased by 248%.<sup>5</sup> In Clinton County the Healthy Community Coalition has partnered with NACO (National Association of Counties) to develop a community plan aimed at reducing the prevalence of obesity in Clinton County.



# Social and Emotional Health Care

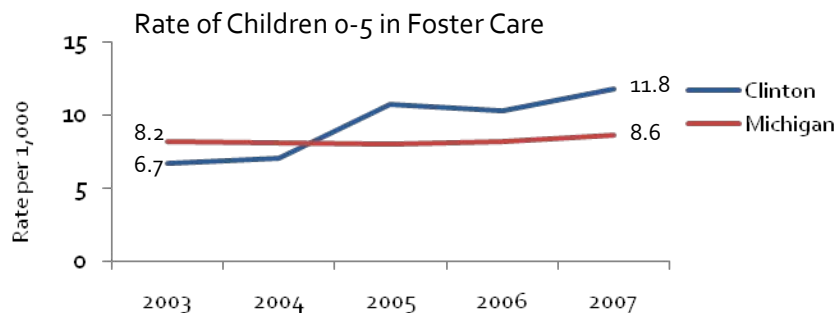
**Goal:** Infants, young children and their families are socially and emotionally healthy.



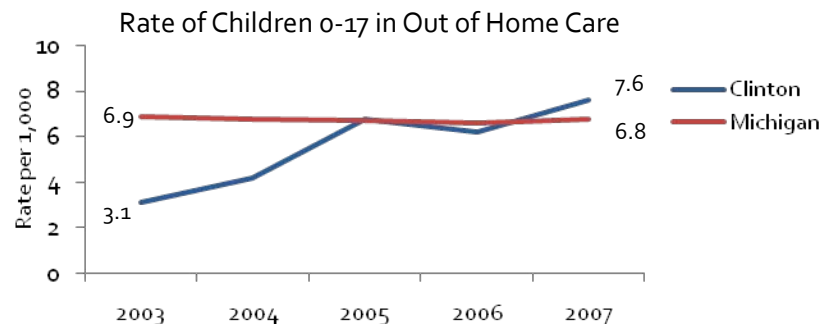
Every infant needs a warm, nurturing and stable relationship with his or her parents and other caregivers to grow into a trusting, curious and confident toddler. Success in school requires that children get along well with their classmates, listen and respond to their teachers and demonstrate an eagerness for learning. All of these are social-emotional skills. Young children, like adults, can develop mental health problems. Early diagnosis and treatment of mental health problems is vital.

## Prevalence and Causes of Social-Emotional Problems among Young Children

Abused or neglected children experience significantly higher rates of emotional distress. The out-of-home experience has been shown to have a lasting impact on a child. In Clinton County, the foster care rate for children ages 0-5 has increased by 76% since 2003.



In Clinton County the rate of children 0-17 in out of home care because of abuse or neglect has increased by 145% since 2003. Clinton County is ranked 62<sup>nd</sup> out of 77 counties reporting these rates.



## Children with Special Needs

Clinton County has 13.6% of the total enrollment participating in Special Education. The participation rate for the state of Michigan is 14.7%. In 2007 136 children, ages 0-5, participated in Special Education in Clinton County. This represents 2.8% of that population. This is slightly higher than that of the state level (2.3%).

# Social and Emotional Health Care

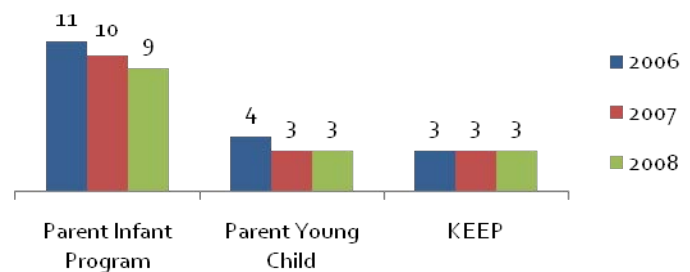
## Early Intervention/Mental Health Services

Clinton County is serviced by Community Mental Health Authority for Clinton-Eaton-Ingham Counties. The main programs that service young children include Parent-Infant program (ages 0-3), Parent-Young Child program (ages 4-6) and the KEEP (Keeping Early Education Positive) Childcare Expulsion Prevention Program. The two Parent programs provide home-based assessment and interventions to help families meet their infants'/children's emotional and developmental needs. KEEP focuses on helping to maintain early preschool and child care placements for children birth to kindergarten with behavioral or emotional difficulties. As of Oct 2009, the eligibility criteria for KEEP will become more stringent and most likely will reduce participation rates.

It is estimated that 10% of young children suffer from emotional and behavioral challenges that impair their ability to learn, with the incidence rate higher for those children who are economically disadvantaged.<sup>6</sup>

*Less than 1% of Clinton county young children are receiving mental health services each year.*

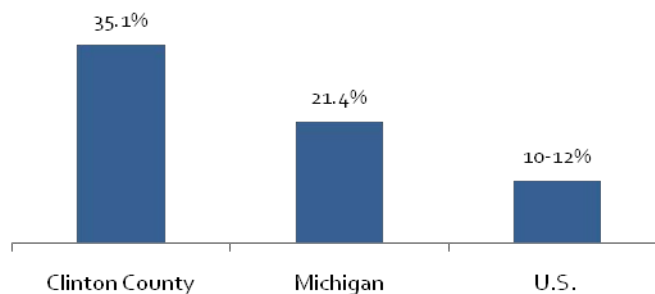
Number of Clinton County Children Served by CMH Mental Health Programs



## Entry into Kindergarten

The incidence of either delaying a child's entrance into kindergarten by a year or enrolling children in a Young 5 or Developmental Kindergarten, is significantly higher in Clinton County than at the state level. It may be that some students are being delayed entrance into school because they are deemed socially "not ready" and the extra year will give them time to catch up. This may be the case for some, but for those who are experiencing developmental delays, this extra year may be doing more harm than good. The following statement from the study *Redshirting and early retention: Who gets the "gift of time" and what are its outcomes?* corroborates this. "Due to a higher need for special education services by children who are older than their grade cohort, evidence suggests that these children did not receive an adequate level of early intervention."<sup>7</sup> The high incidence of delaying entrance into kindergarten in Clinton County may suggest that attention be placed on this issue.

Percent of 1<sup>st</sup> Graders Older than Cohort



# Parenting Leadership

**Goal:** Families support and guide the early learning of their children ages 0-6.

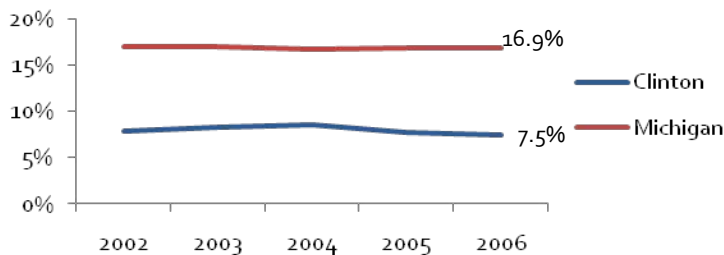


Raising young children is challenging for every family, regardless of education or income. Parents have so many roles that they are called on to play in lives of their young children. Parents must be caregivers, educators, playmates, role models, providers and protectors. Knowing what to do in each role can be a difficult and stressful task. Parents greatly benefit from easily accessible parenting information, community resources and supports.

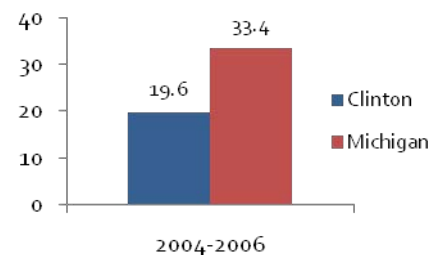
## High Risk Parents

Since 2002 in Clinton County each year on average, 65 infants are born to mothers without a high school diploma, and 51 infants are born to teenage mothers. These children are more likely to grow up in single parent families and suffer from poverty and other adverse outcomes than infants born to mothers who delay childbearing. Clinton county rates are much lower than the state average.

Infants Born to Mothers with no High School Diploma



Births to Teens  
Rate per 1000



## Parent Support for Families with Young Children

In most Michigan communities the need for services to families with young children far outstrips the available community resources. Great Parents Great Start is a voluntary parent education program designed to promote intellectual, physical and emotional growth of all children birth through age five. The Great Parents Great Start program includes parent education events, playgroups and parent education support for all children and parents, in addition, home visits are offered to families that qualify. In 2008 the program serviced 42 adults /47 children in a playgroup setting and 20 adults/26 children in home visits. The program employs a part time parent educator. Parents who get involved in their children's early care and education programs benefit not only their own child, but the others who attend as well. Parents who get involved meet other parents, learn about how their children spend their days and can build on these relationships and activities at home.

The Great Start Parent Coalition is made up of parents, grandparents, and caregivers

of young children in Clinton County. The coalition currently has representation from four school districts and members who parent children from infants to teens. The coalition serves as a voice for parents in the community and will support and participate in the assessment and strategic planning work of the Clinton County Great Start Collaborative.



# Child Care and Early Education

**Goal:** Families have access to high-quality early care and education. Children are ready to succeed in school and in life.

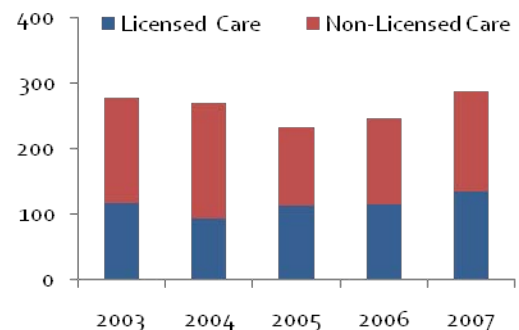


Parents are their children's primary caregivers and foremost teachers. With the demands of today's work world, most young children are cared for by someone other than one of their parents prior to entering kindergarten. The quality of early care and education matters. High quality early care and education provides a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for infants and young children. Children who receive high quality early care and education have stronger learning, language and social skills when they enter school.

## Child Care

In Clinton County, 67% of children under the age of six have all parents in the labor force. The average cost of full time care in Clinton county is \$603/month, which is 21% of the average wage, but 49% of full time minimum wage. The State Child Development and Care Program provides supplemental child care payments enabling low-income parents to work. The payment rates and eligibility levels have remained flat for over a decade. In 2007 in Clinton county 6% of children ages 0-5 (286 children) were approved for subsidized care. The majority of those who receive subsidy do not use licensed providers. Some reasons for this include: a shortage of infant slots, difficulty finding providers to care for children with special needs, and providers unwilling to accept Department of Human Services (DHS) clients due to issues with the internet payment system. The ECIC will be instituting changes to the child care referrals starting in 2010 which will create a critical need for child care providers and parents to have access to both internet and printers. Clinton county agencies need to work together to provide support in dealing with this transition. Professional development of child care providers is also an area that needs attention.

Clinton County Child Care Subsidy



The Imagination Library provides Clinton county children, ages birth to five years-old, one age appropriate book a month until their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. The six local school districts along with the Capital Region Community Foundation and the Capital Area United Way help to fund the program. Private donations also contribute to this effort. To sustain the program, fundraising is continuous.

*In Clinton County 473 children are enrolled in the Imagination Library early literacy program*

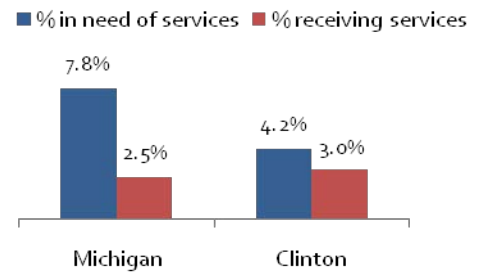
# Child Care and Early Education

Young children with developmental delays or disabilities usually have special health, developmental and learning needs which are most effectively addressed when they are identified early. Individualized early intervention services and special education supports provide crucial developmental guidance for parents and are designed to help every child reach his or her full potential.

## Early Intervention

Early On is a system designed to coordinate early intervention and other services for families who have children (ages 0-3) experiencing developmental delays or medical conditions that could lead to a developmental delay. It is estimated that 4.2% of Clinton county children in this age group have a measureable developmental delay. In 2008, 168 children were serviced.<sup>8</sup> In 2007 in Clinton County, 136 children ages 0-5 participated in Special Education services. Consistently since 2003, roughly 3% of this age group receive special education services.

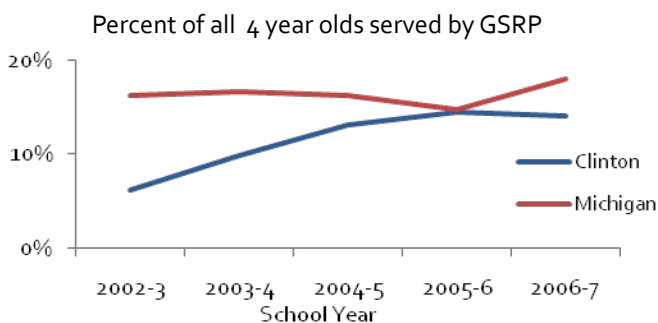
Early On Services



## Preschool Education

Children who attend a high quality preschool program are better prepared—academically, socially and emotionally to succeed in school and life. Head Start is a program that is aimed at promoting school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children who are economically disadvantaged. Capital Area Community Services (CACS) Head Start operates four sections of half-day preschool programming: two at the Clinton County Educational Center and two at Bath Elementary School. In 2008, 71 children in Clinton county were serviced by Head Start programs. Nearly 80% of the Head Start students are from single parent families. The Great Start Readiness Program is a state funded preschool program for four year-old children who are "at risk" of school failure. Kid Zone is the provider of Great Start Readiness programs (GSRP) in Clinton County. To qualify, each child must have at least two of the 25 identified risk factors and more than 50% of the children must be income eligible. The state

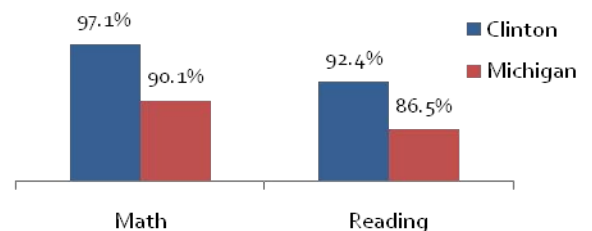
program was designed to expand access to preschool for children in families unable to qualify for Head Start or where there were too few funded slots available. In Clinton county, 14.1% of all four year-olds are served in GSRP programs. In 2009-10 this number will decrease significantly due to the closure of the Imagination Station preschool and the 72 slots that have been lost.



In 2004 it was estimated that 75% of kindergarteners in Clinton county entered school with previous educational experiences which included private, GSRP, Early On, Head Start and special education preschool services.<sup>1</sup>

## Reading and Math Proficiency

The levels of Clinton County 3<sup>rd</sup> graders who are achieving both reading and mathematics proficiency far exceeds the state of Michigan levels.



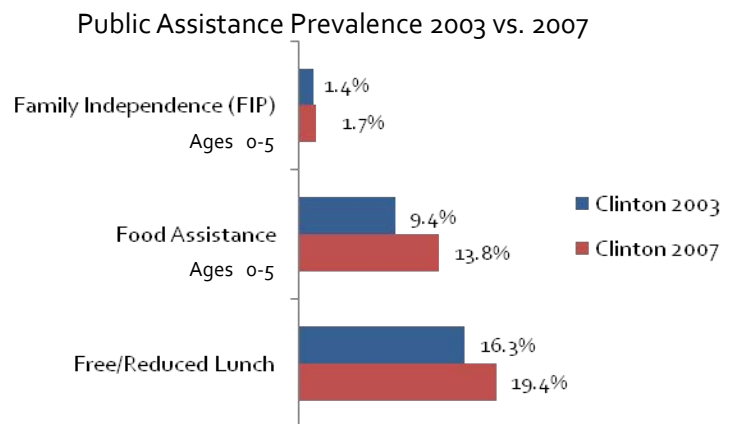
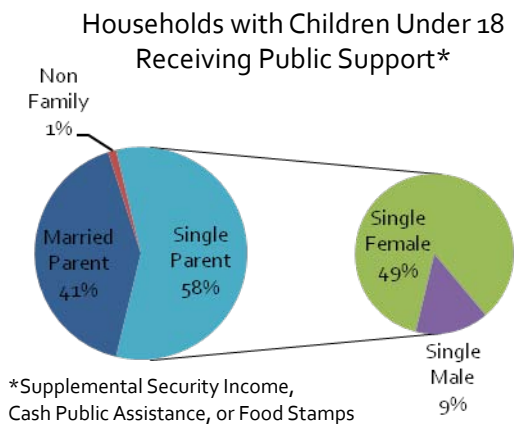
# Family Support

**Goal:** Families of infants and young children are safe and economically stable.



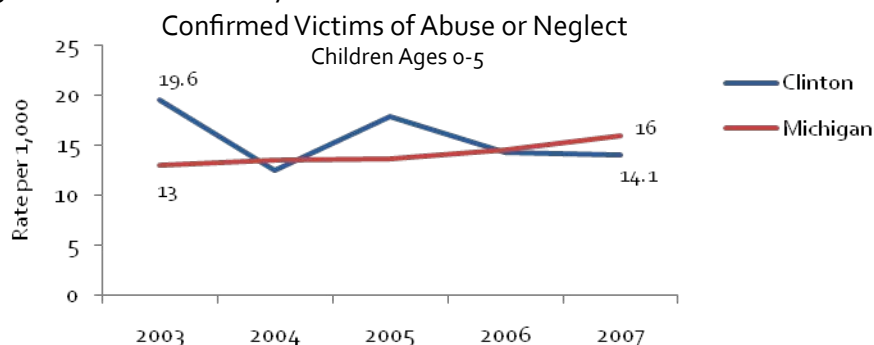
## Children in Poverty

Young children need a stable, safe and secure family environment in order to flourish. A lack of sufficient family economic resources can place young children's health and development at-risk. When parents have to focus their full attention on just meeting their family's basic needs, daily reading or play can take a backseat to keeping a roof over the family's heads and food on the table. In 2007 25.1% of children ages 1-4 participated in the WIC program. The State of Michigan level is at 47.7%. According to the 2005-2007 American Community Survey data, it is estimated that 5% of Clinton county households with children under the age of 18, received public support. Nearly half of these being single female parents.<sup>9</sup>



## Child Safety

Confirmed victims of child maltreatment has increased in the state, but have decreased in Clinton county since 2003. Child victims are much more likely to suffer from neglect (unmet basic needs) than abuse. The failure to provide these necessities compromises the child's physical health and well-being, as well as their psychological and cognitive growth and development. Even brief periods of neglect are particularly damaging to young children. In 2007, 14 of every 1000 children ages birth-5 were confirmed victims of abuse or neglect in Clinton County.



# Next Steps

This report makes it clear that Clinton County has significant work to do on behalf of our young children! With your help and this document as a starting point, the Great Start Collaborative in Clinton County will lead the development of the Clinton County *Early Childhood Action Agenda*.

The Great Start Collaborative in Clinton County will be gathering together members of our community, from all walks of life, to answer these questions:

- **Are we as a community *satisfied* with the future that the data represents?**
- **Can we as a community *do better* for our youngest citizens?**
- **Why does the data *look* the way it does? What is *causing* these conditions?**
- **What *assets in our community* do we have that can help?**
- **What *assets do we need* that we do not currently have?**
- **What do we need to do in Clinton County, to assure that *every young child* arrives at kindergarten healthy, safe and eager to succeed in school?**

We need you to be involved in helping to make sure we do not leave any of these questions unanswered. The future of our youngest citizens **is in our hands**. Remember that early experiences last a lifetime. We urge you to become involved in making a real difference. Only by working together we can assure a sturdy foundation and a *Great Start* for every child in Clinton County.

**Tell us what you think by completing our online survey. Go to [www.clintongreatstart.org](http://www.clintongreatstart.org) and click on community survey.**

Please Contact Us Today!

Clinton County Great Start Collaborative

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Visit our Website! [www.clintongreatstart.org](http://www.clintongreatstart.org)

# Data Sources

<sup>1</sup> Building Stronger Communities Council, *2004 Clinton County Community Report Card; Measuring Our Progress, 2004.*

This can be viewed at <http://www.mmdhd.org/ClintonReport.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2007.* Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. Page 24

<sup>3</sup> Michigan Department of Community Health, *Michigan Oral Health Plan*, September 2006.

This can be viewed at <http://www.mohc.org/files/oral%20health%20plan-9-29-06.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> MidMichigan District Health Department, *Board of Health Annual Report*, 2008.

This can be viewed at [http://www.mmdhd.org/Media%20Releases/2009/2008\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://www.mmdhd.org/Media%20Releases/2009/2008_Annual_Report.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention, *Obesity Prevalence*, February 2009.

This can be viewed at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/childhood/prevalence.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Michigan Department of Community Health: Division of Mental Health Services to Children and Families. *Social-Emotional Development in Young Children* (Lansing; MI, revised 12/03) 12.

<sup>7</sup> Graue, M. E., & DiPerna, J. (in press). Redshirting and early retention: Who gets the "gift of time" and what are its outcomes? *AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL*.

<sup>8</sup> Building Stronger Communities Council, *Visions: Building Stronger Community Council: Celebration of Progress*, Spring 2009.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey 2005-2007*.

Kids Count in Michigan Data Book: Great Start Assessment Data, Michigan League for Human Services The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, [www.kidscount.org](http://www.kidscount.org).

*It is the policy of the Clinton County Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) that no discriminatory practices based on gender, race, religion, color, age, national origin, disability, height, weight, marital status, sexual orientation, political affiliations and beliefs, or any other status covered by federal, state or local law be allowed in providing instructional opportunities, programs, services, job placement assistance, employment or in policies governing student conduct and attendance. Any person suspecting a discriminatory practice should contact the Associate Superintendent for Special Education, 1013 South US-27, St. Johns, MI 48879, or call 989-224-6831.*