

# PROPELLING FORWARD & UPWARD



NORTHSIDE EARLY  
CHILDHOOD ZONE

2021

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# FOREWORD

Perhaps you've seen a space shuttle or a rocket take off from Earth. The main engine and booster rockets help it push through the force of gravity and through the atmosphere to break free of Earth's hold. Once past, it can easily continue on its mission, whatever that might be.

The year 2021 was like that for the families of the NECZ – by the power of their own will and determination and with boosters like home visiting, housing services, and employment services, families pushed through the barriers of COVID-19, economic factors, and the myriad of other forces that try to prevent them from achieving their goals and accomplishing their missions.

This report shows their pathways to achieving their goals, how boosters like home visiting, housing services, mental health, and employment services added extra thrust, and who the families were that made the NECZ part of their journey.

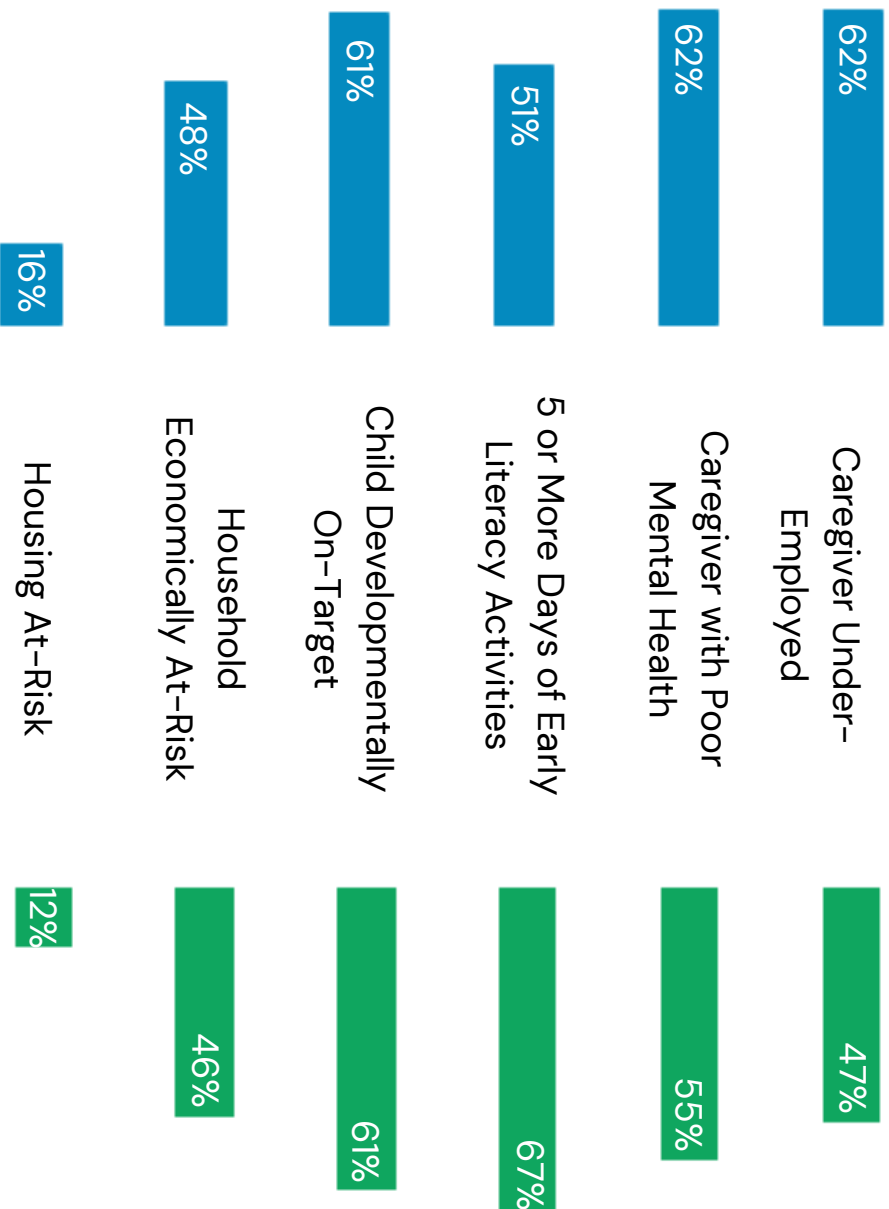
This report includes information from all families that have participated in NECZ services through the end of 2021. We do this to showcase the changes that occur for families.



# MOVING FORWARD

AT ENTRY TO NECZ  
OR FIRST MEASUREMENT

AT EXIT FROM NECZ OR  
LATEST MEASUREMENT



# BARRIER TO BLASTING OFF – COVID-19

## 2021 was another year in which COVID-19 presented challenges to programs and families.

Based on available quantitative data and anecdotes from program staff, pandemic-related challenges continued to prevent many in-person visits, hamper outreach efforts to recruit new families, and present families with additional economic and employment challenges.

Data showed that recruiting new families posed a challenge to home visiting programs. From 2019 to 2021, new enrollments took a dip, but appear to be recovering. The total served has remained steady throughout the pandemic.

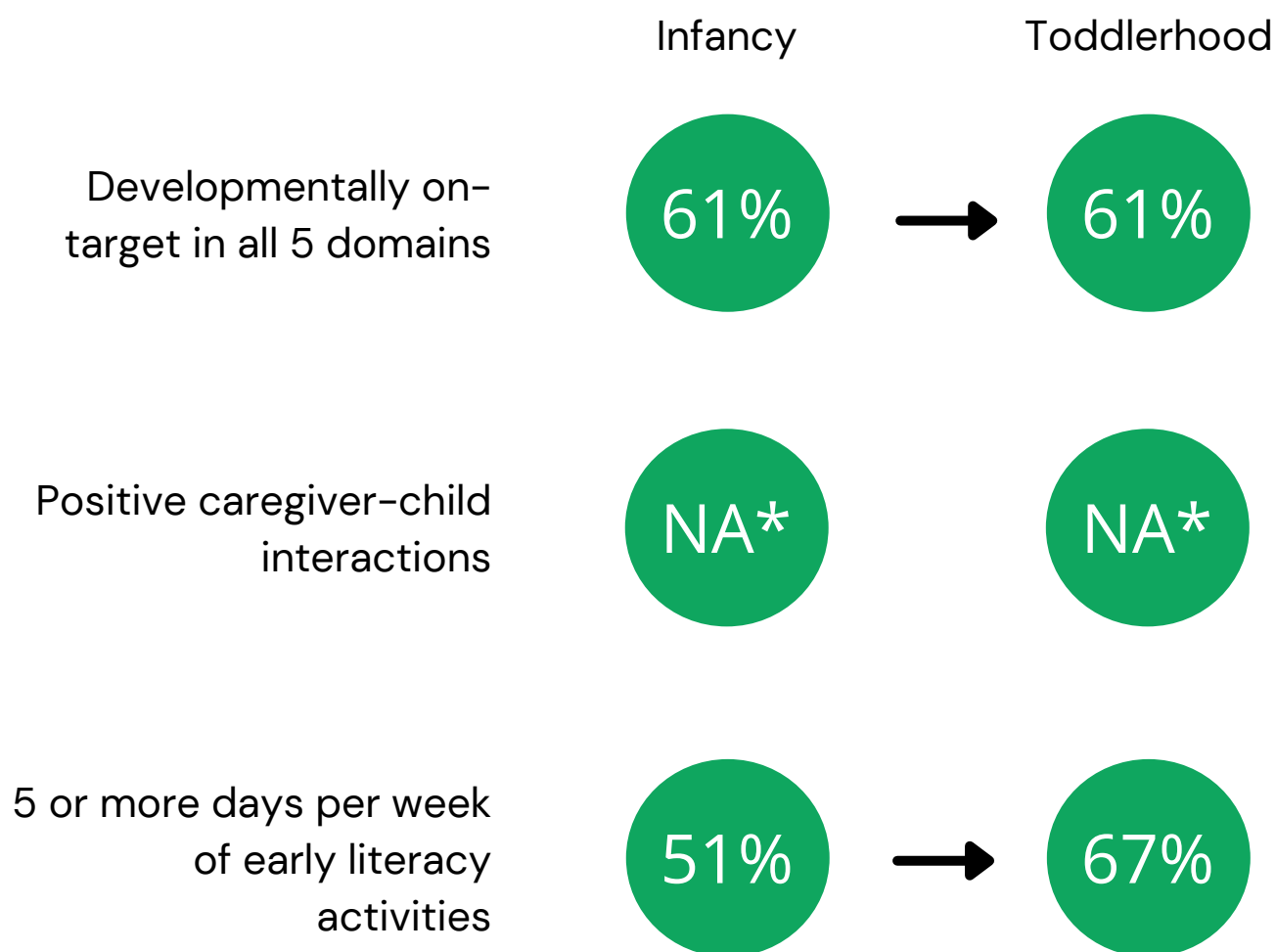
Screening scores from each year indicate that most families held steady, on average, throughout the pandemic. However, the averages disguise many of the ups and downs families experienced. (scores can range from 1 to 5)

	2019	2020	2021
Total served	66	54	55
New enrollees	23 (35%)	9 (16%)	15 (27%)
Exited/closed	19 (29%)	12 (22%)	19 (34%)
Average Integrated Resources Screening Score			
Housing	3.4	3.5	3.4
Employment	2.0	2.4	2.2
Childcare	3.4	3.4	3.3
Education	3.1	3.1	2.9
Mental health	3.6	3.4	3.5

# CHILD GAINS

The NECZ has reached a point in which some families have participated long enough and we have enough information collected that we can examine whether changes are occurring for children.

Although improvements aren't exactly clear in all of the NECZ's key domains, it is possible that participation in the NECZ has prevented children from losing traction and going backward.



\*not available – too few observations to calculate a reliable percentage; other percentages were calculated for children that had BOTH an infancy and a toddlerhood measurement



# BOOSTERS

Families that decide to accept services from the NECZ are using their self-determination to utilize booster rockets on their journey to achieving their goals. They can choose from three different home visiting programs – Early HeadStart (EHS), the Early Childhood Initiative (ECI), and Welcome Baby and Beyond (WBB) – which are there to support the relationship between child and caregiver, as well as promote child development and school readiness.

Depending on their goals, families may also participate in programs offered by Integrated Service Providers. These programs, in conjunction with home visiting, can create a network of support services for families. In the area of employment and education, Children's Wisconsin – Employment and Education Services (EES) or Forward Service Corporation's – FoodShare Employment and Training program (FSET) are available. Community Action Coalition (CAC) provides housing support. The Rainbow Project offers mental health services, and the NECZ itself offers childcare or general flex funds.



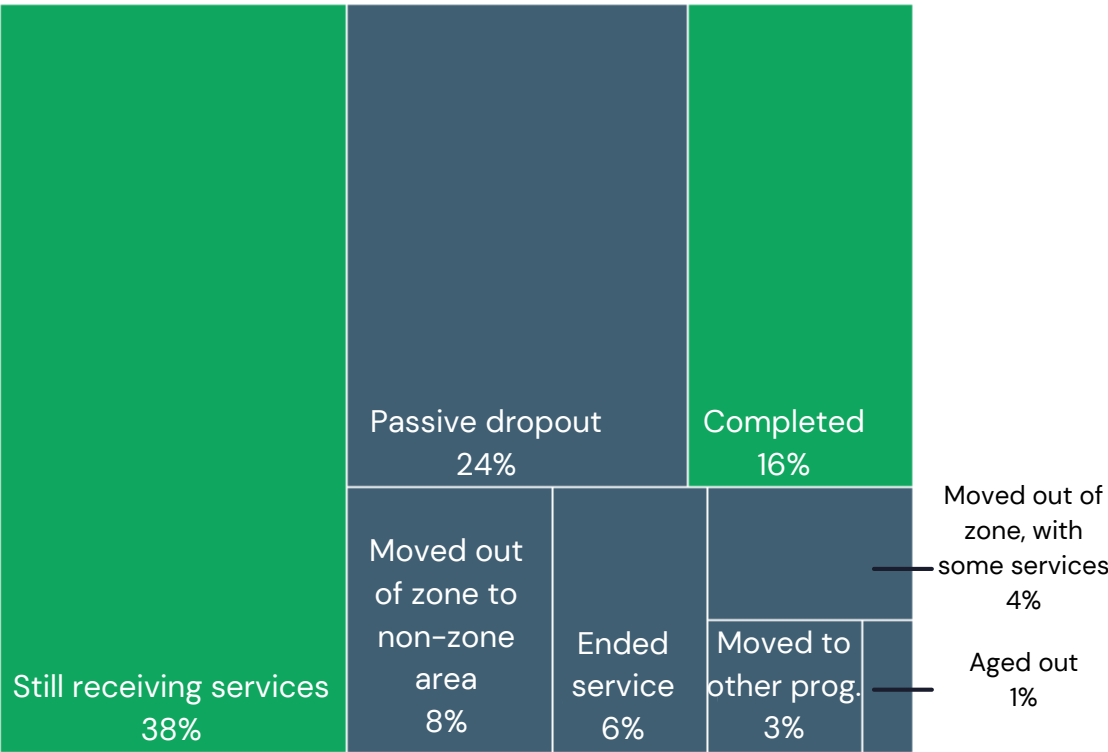
# FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Participation in the NECZ is voluntary, which means that as families' lives change, they may decide to continue receiving services or end services with the Zone.



families have participated in Zone services

Families that exited services were mainly the result of passive dropouts – the families could not be reached or located despite multiple attempts.



Families that continued with or completed services





# HOME VISITING

Home visiting staff work with families to achieve their goals, build confidence in parenting skills, and help caregivers understand their child's developmental needs.

2

**the average number of visits per month, per family**

Home visitors spend much of their time working with families on assessing how caregivers and children interact with each other and coaching caregivers on things such as, how to promote the child's development, how to deal with challenging child behaviors, and how to enhance bonding and attachment.

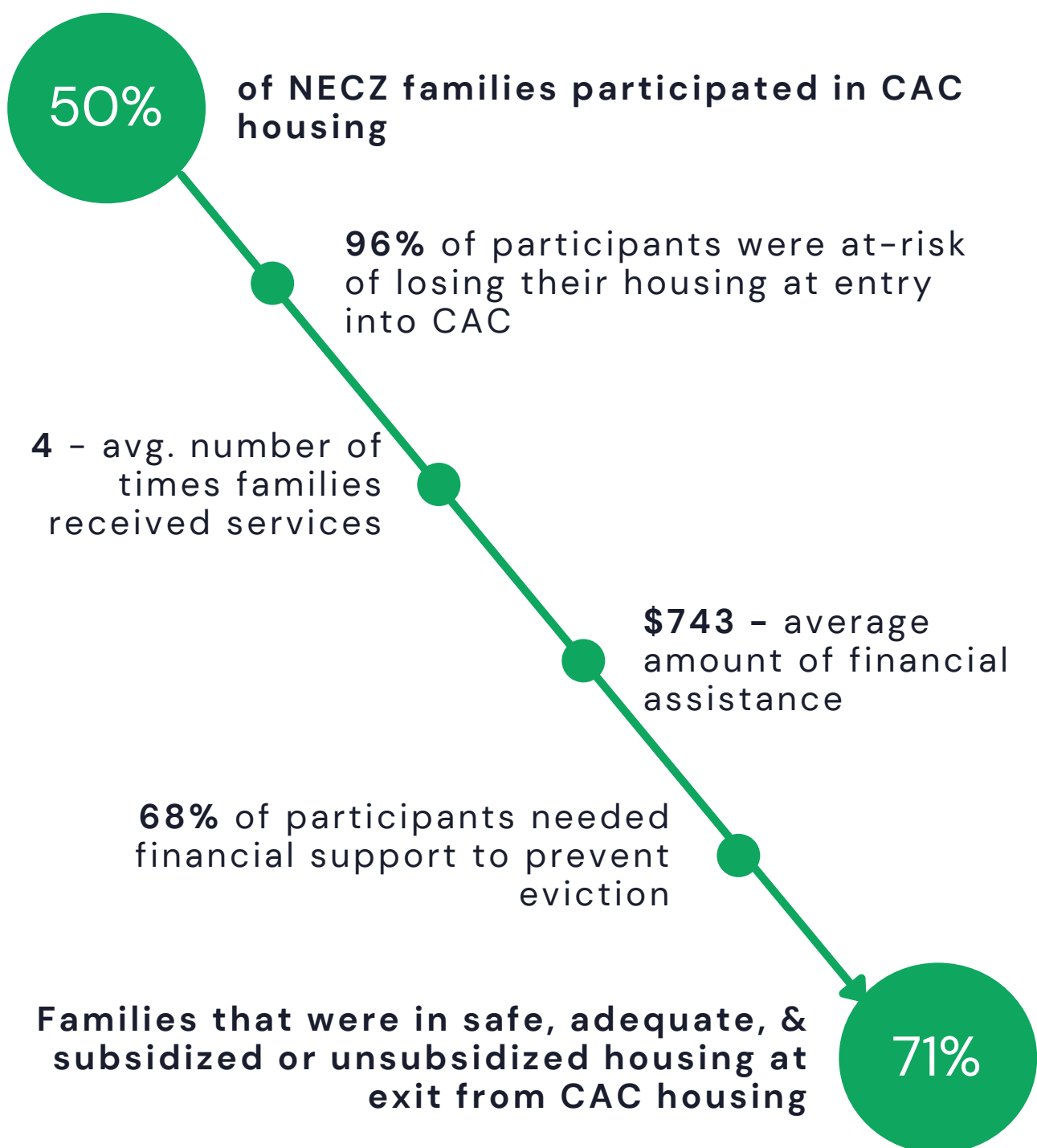
Each program uses a different tool to assess how the caregiver and child interact with one another. We ask home visitors to use their findings to rate the interactions, overall, during infancy and toddlerhood (not all families are assessed during both time points, depending on how old children were when they enrolled in the program).

**Families that had very good or excellent caregiver-child interactions**

78%

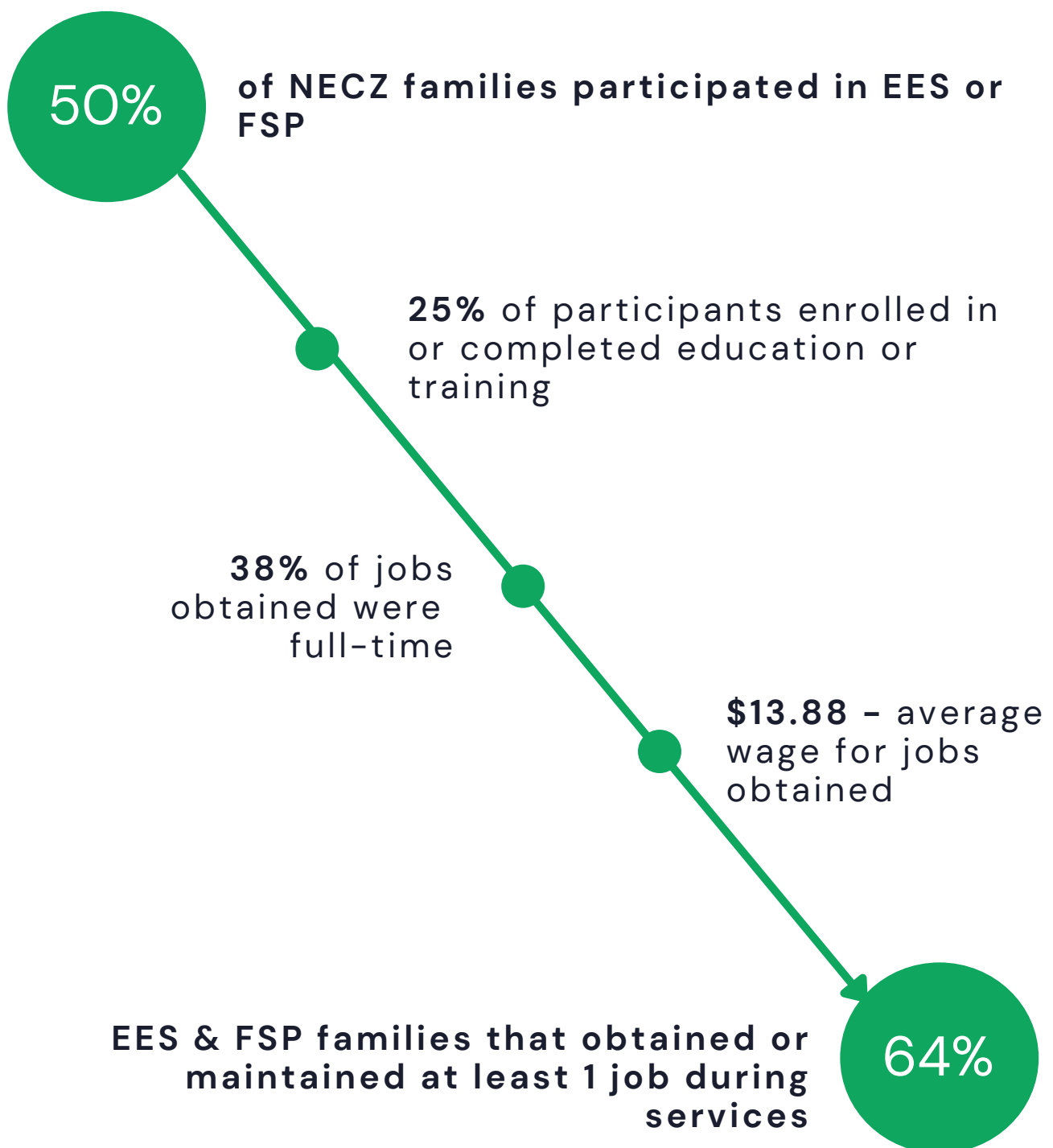
# HOUSING

Community Action Coalition provides housing support to families that are at-risk of losing their housing. Services can range from housing search to financial support and even landlord mediation.



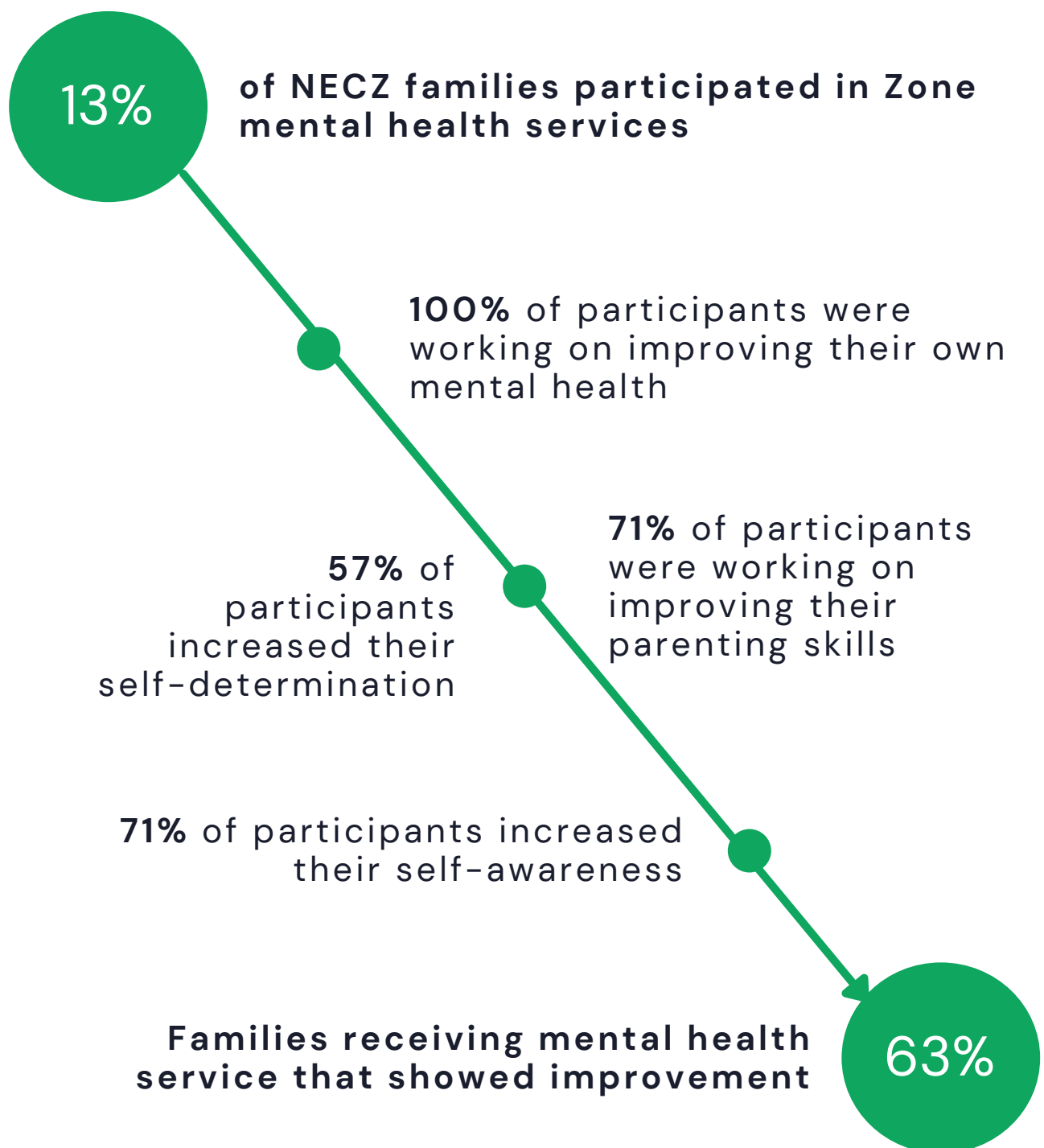
# EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

Children's Wisconsin's Employment and Education Service (EES) and Forward Service Corporation's FoodShare Employment and Training (FSET) program work with families to increase their work-readiness and ultimately help them start a career.



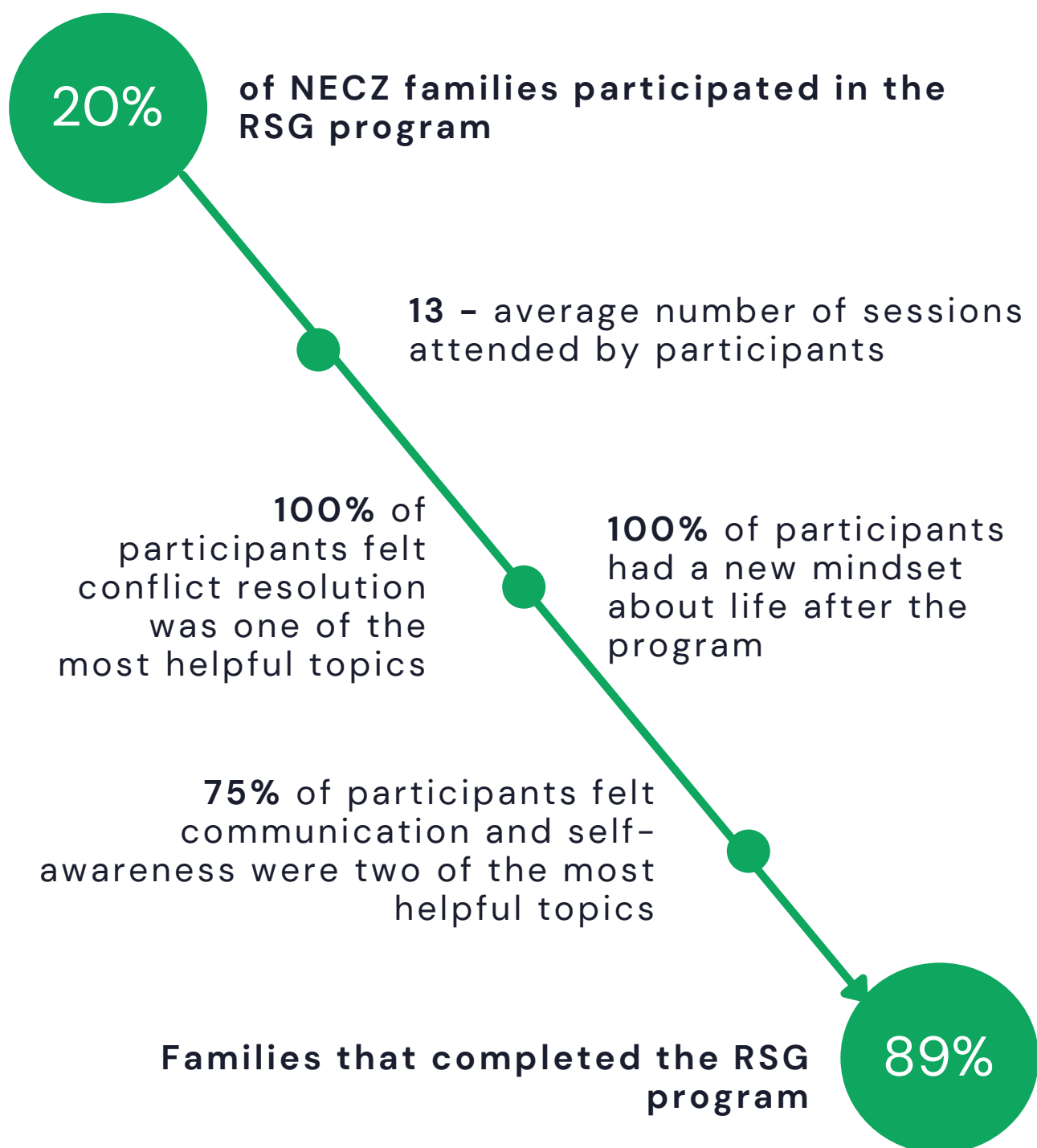
# MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Some families have untreated mental health issues that prevent them from fully engaging with their children or from being work-ready. The Rainbow Project provided mental health services in 2021 to those participating in the Zone.



# READY, SET, GO!

The program helps participants gain the soft skills needed to be successful in the workplace, including communication, conflict resolution, and self-confidence. Data are the same as what was presented in 2020.



# CHILDCARE & GENERAL FLEX FUNDS

Sometimes, a family could use just a little extra monetary support for things like childcare entry costs, unpaid balances, or fixing a broken car. These additional funds are available to families with an identified need.



37%

**of families received childcare flex funds**



\$303

**average amount of childcare flex funds received**



57%

**of families received general flex funds**



\$261

**average amount of general flex funds received**



# WHO ADDED BOOSTERS?

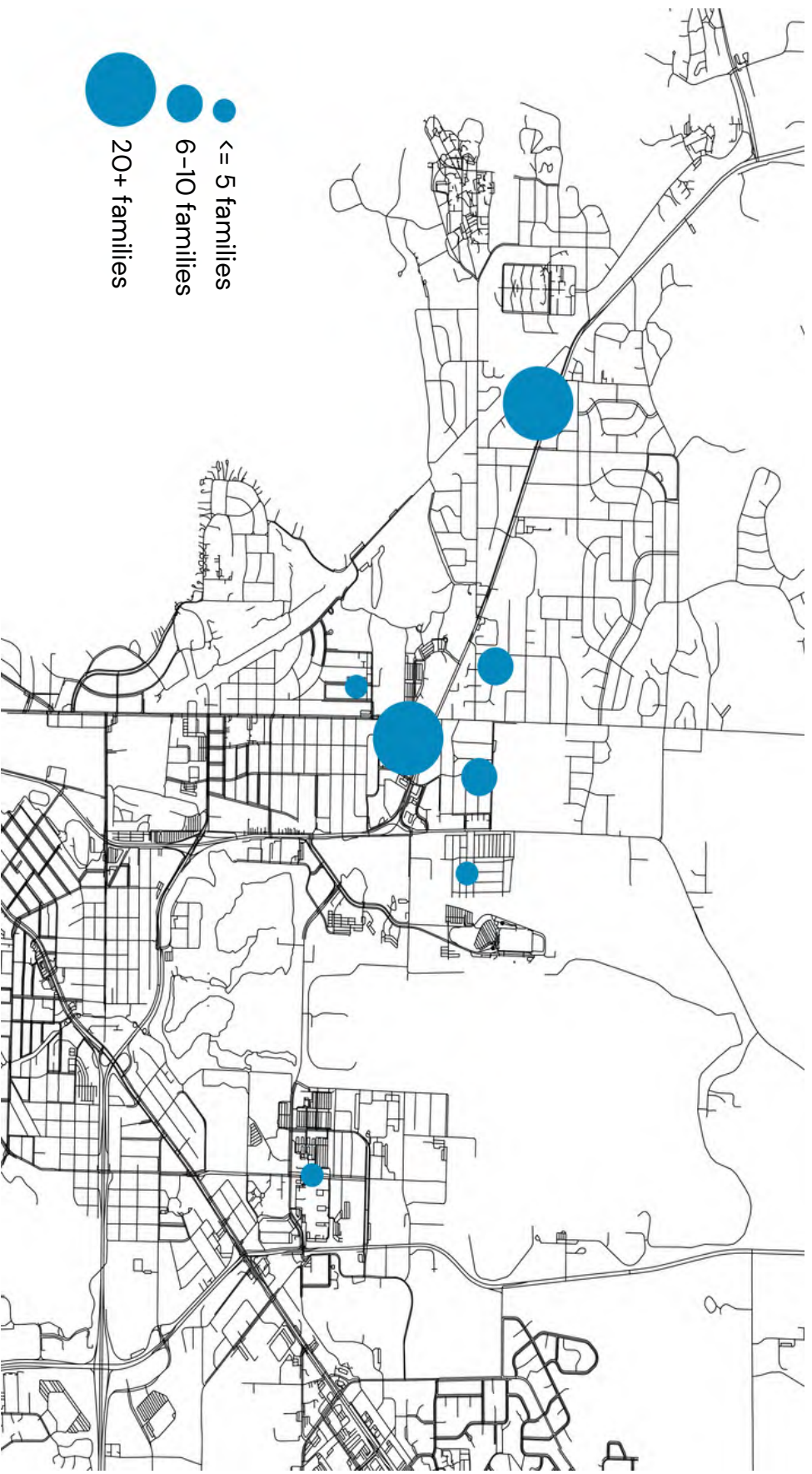
Families that added any of the Zone services lived in many pockets of the Zone.

These areas included Kennedy Heights, Vera Court, East Bluff, Troy Drive, and Northport Drive. Nearly one-third of all families who participated in the NECZ lived on Northport Drive.

Some families end up moving outside of the Zone in order to find stable housing. Although this means that their official participation in the Zone ends, many programs are able to continue supporting the family.



Most families live near the Northside Town Center, in the Kennedy Heights or Vera Court neighborhoods.



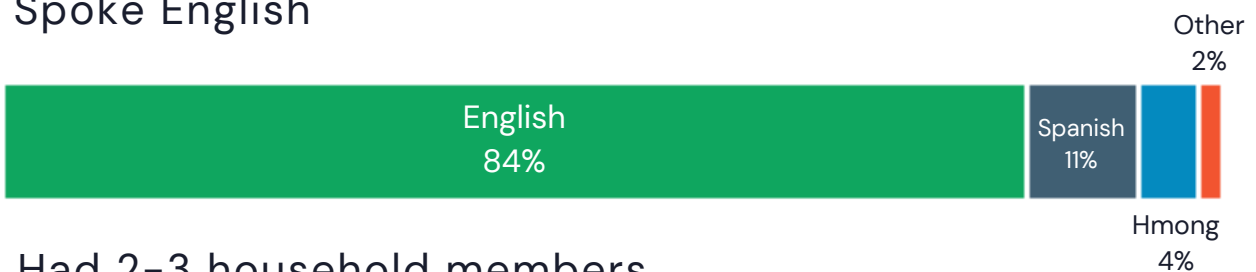
# Family Demographics

## Most families participating in the NECZ:

- Had incomes of less than \$22,000 per year



- Spoke English



- Had 2–3 household members



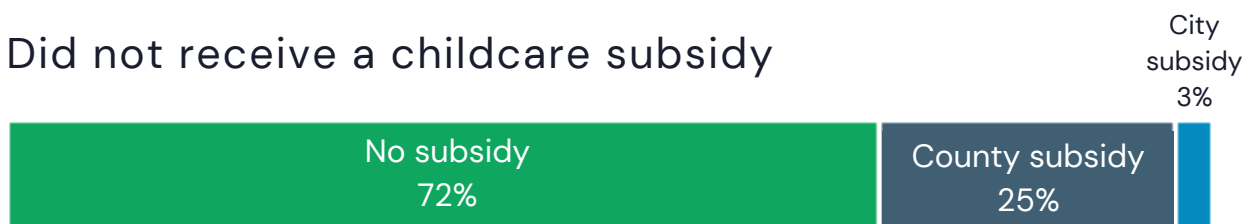
- Were not homeless



- Received FoodShare



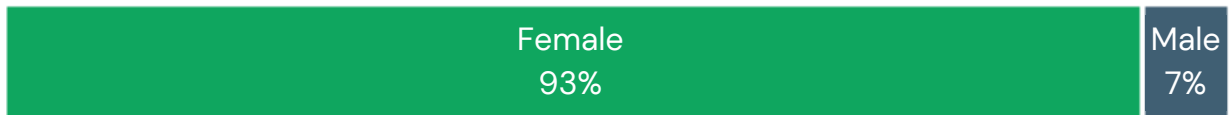
- Did not receive a childcare subsidy



# Caregiver Demographics

## Most caregivers participating in the NECZ:

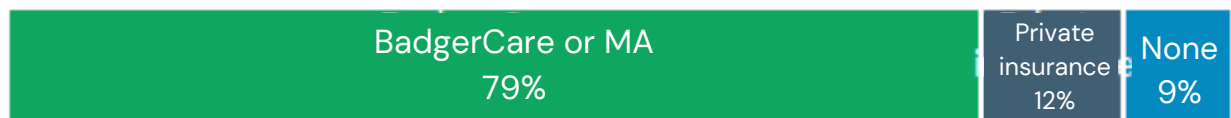
- Were female



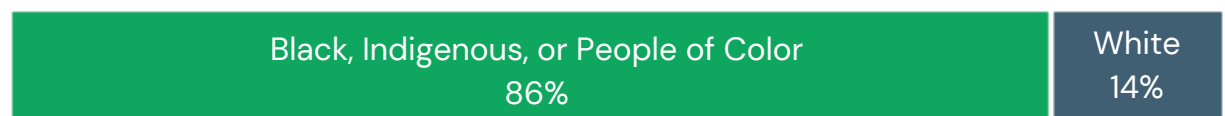
- Were 22–30 years old at enrollment



- Had BadgerCare for health insurance



- Were Black, Indigenous, or People of Color



- Were not a first-time parent



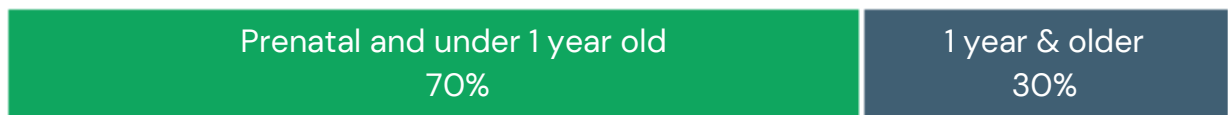
# Child Demographics

## Most children participating in the NECZ:

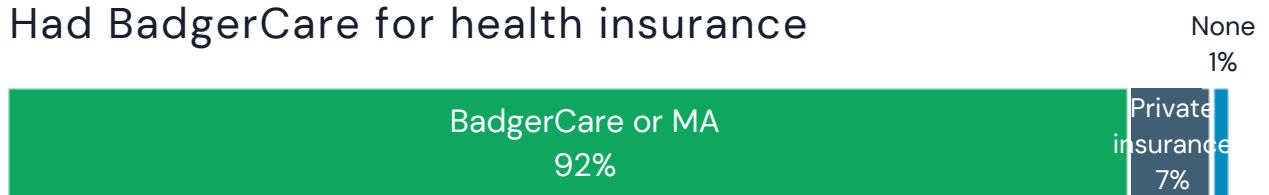
- Were male



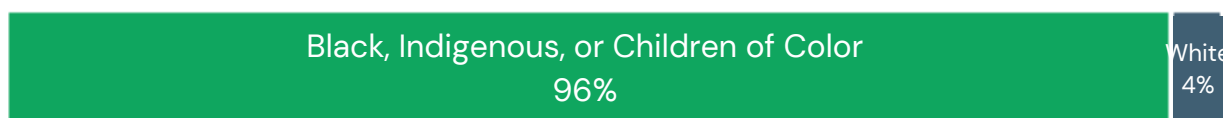
- Were prenatal to less than 1 year old at enrollment



- Had BadgerCare for health insurance





- Were Black, Indigenous, or Children of Color



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you goes out to our families, stakeholders, and funders

NECZ families, past and present

Anesis   
Children's Hospital Wisconsin  
City of Madison  
Community Action Coalition  
Dane County Department of Human Services  
Forward Service Corporation  
Northside Planning Council   
Oscar Rennebohm Foundation  
The Rainbow Project  
Reach Dane  
RISE  
United Way of Dane County

We also thank the NECZ Leadership Team 

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Ron Chance	Katy Petershack
Sara Flugum	Scott Strong
Jenny Grether	Abha Thakkar
Gwen Hannes	Nathan Stahl
Sheldon Hitchens	Nicole Van Abel



# DATA NOTES

## Data for this report:

- came from the NECZ's shared measurement data system contained within REDCap, which the NECZ started using in the 4th quarter of 2019
- included data from the beginning of 2019 through the end of 2021, although there were some data that went back to 2017 and 2018
- were missing for the Ready, Set, Go! program in 2021
- included longitudinal analyses for the primary child outcomes of developmental readiness and early language and literacy activities, but there were not enough children observed during infancy AND toddlerhood to make comparisons about their caregiver-child interactions
- did not include additional longitudinal analyses about other factors because COVID-19 negatively influenced the degree to which home visitors and other service providers could meet with clients and thus, collect information to enter into the data system
- included the first screening score of the year when analyzing screening scores for the effects of COVID-19 on families
- had slightly higher rates of missing values for the following items:
  - household income
  - childcare subsidy receipt
  - average number of home visits per quarter

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Andrea Gromoske – Gromoske Consulting, LLC

Betsy Strahin – Dane County Department of Human Services (Demographics and COVID-19 table)

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