

Fulton Early Head Start

Community Assessment 2026 Update Summary

At a glance

Fulton County's unemployment as of February 2026 is **3.8%** (about **300** persons unemployed) while **6,900** remain working. The total population is **14,531**. Fulton County is comprised of **three** public schools.

Demographics for Early Head Start Families

Demographics remained similar to the 2021 summary update. **46** families and **54** children were served during the past year.

All families are below the federal poverty level. **100%** of the infants and toddlers were enrolled in Medicaid and/or CHIP. Early Head Start (EHS) and Parents as Teachers (PAT) together served **109** families. Of the EHS families, **67%** had at least one parent working; among two-parent families, **11%** had both parents working. Educational level: **9%** less than a high school diploma, **76%** diploma/GED, and **15%** associate's degree or higher.

Child Care Availability

Licensed childcare continues to be an issue in the county, although there are three center-based operated by Fulton County Family Partnership and 1 licensed family-based childcare, all but one are located within a few miles of the borough of McConnellsburg, leaving the Northern and Southern ends of the county underserved. The family based childcare provider is only licensed to provide care for six children. As of last Summer, the Fulton County Family Partnership Child Care Center no longer offers childcare for infants.

Health Care Updates

The Fulton County Medical Center (FCMC) recently added Lavan Harris, PMHNP-BC, AGNP-C, to its offered specialty services. He primarily focuses on the treatment of child and adolescent disorders, including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The addition of these services will greatly benefit Early Head Start families by increasing access to specialized behavioral health care within the county.

Additionally, there are potential changes on the horizon for FCMC, as the medical center is exploring a potential merger with the WVU Healthcare system. At this time, it is unclear what changes or new opportunities this may bring to the community and local healthcare services.

Community Supports & Outreach

With the Catholic Mission no longer having a dedicated Sisters in the McConnellsburg office, local community agencies and church members came together to continue several of the larger community outreach activities previously coordinated through the Mission, including the school backpack giveaway and Christmas Wishes programs. Additionally, the group developed a collaborative approach to help monitor community needs and identify gaps in services and supports to ensure families continue to receive assistance that the Mission might have assisted with in the past.

Fulton County Family Partnership have Community Navigators to assist families in connecting to resources within the community. Services include monthly meetings to support goal setting and connecting with local resources and services. Community Navigators gather information related to an individual's current social determinants of health and strengths. EHS staff are able to make referrals to the program.

School Readiness & Program Focus

Early Head Start strives to prepare students early for school readiness in areas including, but not limited to, language and literacy, understanding and communicating, cognition and general knowledge, physical well-being, motor development and health. Goals are set and monitored at regular intervals. Fulton EHS administration continues to strive to collect data on the "achievement gap" of those children who participate in EHS, HS and/or center-based preschool and those who were in informal care and/or had no early intervention services.

Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) Priorities

Fulton Partners, the community collaborative group, has prioritized developing plans to address challenges identified in the community. The Community Health Needs Assessment Action Plan for 2026–2028 was developed using data collected collaboratively by Fulton County Medical Center, Tri-State Community Health Center, and Fulton County Family Partnership. Committees reviewed the data, identified priorities, and developed goals and action plans to improve services that impact overall wellness in Fulton County. EHS staff have seen an increase in families experiencing homelessness and couch surfing with friends and family members. Fulton EHS families will benefit from the CHNA and its implementation plan.

For this summary, the goals are listed below without the related objectives.

1. Improve access and care coordination for behavioral health services
2. Increase awareness of housing resources and educate the community on utilization of these resources
3. Increase access to healthy foods

4. Improve access to comprehensive specialty care for the community
5. Increase education on healthy behaviors for vulnerable populations
6. Recruit healthcare professionals (nurses, specialty care clinicians, EMTs/medical transport personnel

PA Youth Survey (PAYS) Priorities

The Community Mobilizer presented to the Partners Collaborative on June 16, 2026 the overview of the county PA Youth Survey results. From that presentation, the following areas were identified to look at being potential priority focus areas:

- Housing Insecurity
- Food Insecurity
- Nicotine Pouch/Vaping Use

The PAYS Work Group will meet to further review the survey data and develop a work plan to help address the areas of concern.

Areas of Concern & Priorities (2026 Community Assessment)

Below is the list of areas of concern and priorities for future planning from the 2022 EHS Community Assessment. Several additions (highlighted below) were suggested in the prior update cycle.

- Limited economic/employment opportunities due to inadequate education and job skills
- Need for child care during non-traditional hours and in outlying areas of the county
- Difficulty accessing job training/education due to transportation and child care needs
- Limited local prenatal or obstetrical care available
- No OB delivery service in Fulton or nearby Bedford county.
- Need for affordable, quality housing for low-income families
- Need for social services support to build skills (e.g., budgeting, discipline, family issues, and accessing available services)
- Continue to enhance collaboration with agencies offering services when children reach age 3
- Limited availability of pediatric care (none in county)
- Limited mental health providers for all ages
- Very difficult to access behavioral health services specifically for children
- Extremely limited availability of dental care for children under age 3 and few children receiving fluoride
- Continue to expand opportunities for parent participation/leadership, including expanded technology options

- Expand school partnerships to enhance school readiness and parent involvement in their child's education
- Support parents' role in guiding age-appropriate social-emotional development and limit setting