

Annual Report

2020 - 2021



Gaston Community Action, Inc.

Providing services for low-income families, and low income individuals since 1964

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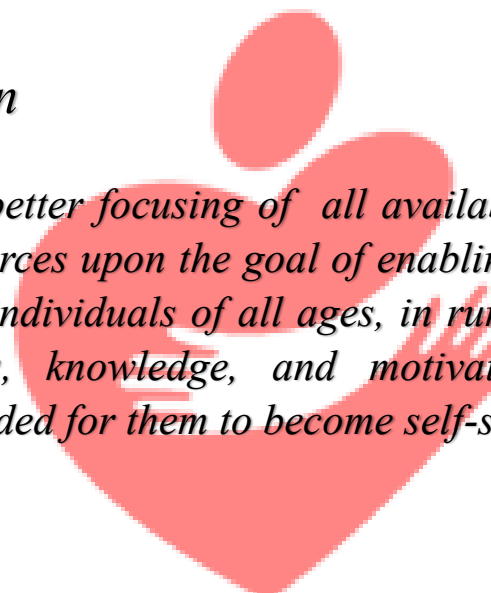
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*O*ur Vision

“To diversify funding to empower the agency to maintain and grow its programs and services”

*O*ur Mission

“To stimulate a better focusing of all available local, state, private and federal resources upon the goal of enabling low income families, and low income individuals of all ages, in rural and urban areas, to attain the skills, knowledge, and motivations and secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient.”



*C*ommunity Action Promise

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

About Us

The Beginning of GCA

Gaston Community Action, Inc. is a private non-profit corporation chartered by the State of North Carolina to operate anti-poverty programs in Gaston County on October 22, 1964. Structured in accordance with standards and requirements of the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and subsequent amendments, "the basic purpose of community action is to stimulate a better focusing of all available local, state, private, and federal sources upon the goals of enabling low-income families and low-income individuals to obtain skills, knowledge, and motivations, and secure the opportunities for them to become fully self-sufficient"

Agency Overview

The agency administers programs in Cleveland, Gaston, Lincoln and Stanly Counties. Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services of Economic Opportunity. GCA employs a staff of about 120 and operates on an annual budget of over 6 million.

GCA has continuously provided services and advocacy on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged since its inception and charter. Our programs are planned after holding public hearings to solicit community input. Head Start educates 431 preschool children in Gaston and Lincoln Counties. The CSBG program is directed toward making low-income residents of the four counties self-sufficient by providing help with employment, housing, education and transportation.



Board of Directors

Michael Lane—Chair

Deborah Oates —Vice chair

Emily Winfrey— Secretary

Joyce Coleman—Treasurer

Ola Mae Foster—At Large

Mary Gibson

Nancy Maynor

Sonya Lewis

Williams Lindsay

Clair Watkins

Robert Pope

Cherie Feemster

Vontina McGrant

Keith Poston

Patsy Howell

GCA's Board of Directors

is comprised of 18

members representing

three sectors;

- **Public** (appointed by the county commissioners)
- **Citizen** (elected by the low-income residents)
- **Private** (appointed by civic groups)

**CONSULTANT TO THE
BOARD**

Wanda Wyont

Letter from the CEO's desk

Dear Board Members and Friends,

COVID-19 is continuing to have a profound effect on all of us, both personally and professionally.

First and foremost, our thoughts are with all of those whose health has been directly or indirectly affected by this global pandemic, and we send along with our best wishes and strength for all full and speedy recovery. And we join with all of you to celebrate and applaud the brave heroes of our healthcare systems around the world as they work tirelessly and selflessly to care for people in need.

At Gaston Community Action, our mission is; teaching and reaching communities through resources and education. And that is never more important than in a crisis. GCA is aggressively taking advantage of every opportunity to carry out our mission.

GCA has been fully operational throughout this challenging period, and rest assured that we will continue to provide quality services to our families, children, and individual. All departments are operating at full capacity to provide the service that our families need during the pandemic. We have put systems and processes in place that enable virtually our entire team off 100 employees to work remotely. We're ready!

Many of our employees worked from home, in some cases for the first time on an extended basis. To support this transition, we offered tools and resources that we know were helpful:

We are continuously updating our systems

All of us here at GCA are here to serve our communities. We plan to continue to introduce new initiatives to help us better serve our customers.

Sincerely,

Joseph W. Dixon, MSW

CEO





HEAD START



**Annual Report School Year 2020—2021
In fulfillment of the requirements of the
Preparing Head Start for School Readiness
Act of 2007(644(a)(2)(B))**

*Copies of this report are available on GCA's website and al-
so available to the community members upon request*

Debra Lutz, Operation Manager

Gaston Community Action Head Start Stays on the Front Line During COVID-19 Pandemic

As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be felt across our communities, Gaston Community Action Head Start (GCA) remained dedicated to ensure children would be successful in school and life long after the pandemic ends. This past year was full of challenges that produced changes in education with school closings, remote, and virtual learning. Despite the changes, GCA Head Start remained focused on the promise made to the community to embody the spirit of hope to improve communities and make America a better place to live.

The start of the 2020 – 2021 program year began with on-site, and remote learning and with virtual home visits being conducted. Our Head Start team produced a reopening plan that safely and effectively brought all children enrolled back into the classroom before the year ended. The tremendous effort of our hard-working staff ensured Head Start families that the program was a safe and beautiful environment for their children to learn. We have determined young children seem to be the most resilient in trying times.

This program year, our team of dedicated staff thought out of the box and rose to new challenges that required innovative solutions. Families connected with teachers and program staff in ways that we had never been done before. Teamwork and creative thinking helped to resolve problems that arose in a new and uncertain time. Our program figured out new and innovative techniques that would not have been discovered before the pandemic. The program was able to develop new partnerships because the way we did things before did not seem to work anymore. The GCA Board of Directors and Policy Council were educated on the changes and challenges to make critical decisions.

Despite the effects of a global pandemic on our community, GCA Head Start continues to provide high-quality early learning services, including comprehensive health, and social services to the families that are in the most need. As we begin our new year GCA Head Start will continue to plan and prioritize the safety of our children, families, and staff as we move forward with full in-person learning. It is our success with our reopening plan that has allowed us to remain on the front line to implement the model as we move forward. We hope our families in Gaston and Lincoln Counties join us for another outstanding year.

Sincerely,

Debra Lutz

Operation Manager



GCA'S APPROACH TO SCHOOL READINESS GOALS FOR CHILDREN

Head Start defines school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school, for later learning and life. The Head Start approach to school readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children.

Gaston Community Action, Inc. Head Start is committed to ensuring that children who leave our Head Start program are prepared when they enter the kindergarten program in the public schools. The teaching staff use various strategies including the Classroom Learning Assessment System (CLASS) observation tool to enhance best practice to ensure all children enrolled are working toward meeting goals in all domain areas. These domain areas are assessed daily. The five essential domains are:

- Approaches to Learning and Play
- Social-Emotional Development
- Cognition and General Knowledge
- Language Development and Literacy Knowledge and Skills
- Physical and Health Development

With the implementation of these domains GCA HS will ensure that children (including those with disabilities) are fully equipped with the necessary skills to successfully transition to kindergarten. The training and mentoring of teaching staff is critical in meeting school readiness goals. Parents are included in goal setting in order to help the child's progress.

FAST FACTS

- Head Start Employs 85 employees
- Contracts with local agencies to provide preventive health, nutrition, disability and mental health services to children.
- Operates 7 Head Start Centers (3 in Lincoln County 4 in Gaston County)
- Serves children 3 and 4 years of age with birth date by August 31 of that year
- Operates five (5) NC Pre-K classrooms three (2) Highland Charter Head Start 324 N. Highland Street, Gastonia, NC two (3) Lincoln Park Head Start Center 140 Industrial Park Rd. Lincolnton, NC
- Operates 7:45 AM – 2:30 PM each day in conjunction with Gaston and Lincoln County school calendars
- Total enrollment is 431 at all times. Children who drop/add are replaced timely.
- Number of three year olds served—147
- Number of 4 year olds served—172

FUNDING SOURCES

The Head Start Program received funding from the following sources in FY 2020—2021

Funding Source	Amount		
	7/1/20 - 3/31/21	4/1/21 - 6/30-21	TOTAL
Head Start, OHS, DHHS	3,868,677	888,688	4,757,365
GCA Non-federal share	59,866	19,125	78,991
Gaston Pre-K	86,400	57,850	144,250
Lincoln Pre-K	91,039	125,754	216,793
USDA	17,376	3,821	21,197
Other/NC DHHS COVID-19	<u>67,093</u>	<u>2,424</u>	<u>70,327</u>
TOTAL FUNDING	4,191,261	1,097,662	5,288,923

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

BUDGET EXPENDITURES			
	7/1/20- 3/31/21	4/1/20 - 6/30/21	TOTAL
Personnel	1,917,590	586,246	2,503,836
Fringe Benefits	670,984	150,181	821,165
Travel			0
Equipment	4,445		4,445
Supplies	294,052	7,794	301,846
Contractual	44,381	14,206	58,587
Facilities/Construction			0
T&TA	51,296	21,083	72,379
Other	637,741	140,587	777,928
Indirect Costs	511,306	158,440	669,746
GCA Non-federal share	<u>59,866</u>	<u>19,125</u>	<u>78,991</u>
Total	4,191,261	1,097,662	5,288,923



Head Start Annual Report Budget Justifications Fiscal Year 2020—2021

Personnel	2,503,836	Includes compensation for all Head Start employees for services rendered to the program.
Fringe Benefits	821,165	Includes FICA, health insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, workers comp insurance, SUTA and retirement paid on behalf of eligible staff.
Equipment	4,445	
Supplies	301,846	Includes janitorial supplies, office supplies, disabilities supplies, program supplies & medical/dental supplies.
Contractual	58,587	Includes child dental treatment, child medical treatment, equipment rental/lease, child audiology contract, child mental health contract, school lunches, contract food & delivery, & nutrition consultant.
T&TA	72,379	Includes employee development and training & technical assistance for staff.
Other	777,928	Includes all other expenditures necessary for Program function such as communications, storage rental, postage, local travel, space costs, field trips, translation, dues & registration, publications, printing, advertising, policy council & parent activities, equipment maintenance & repair, liability insurance, transportation costs, professional services, facility repairs & licensing, & technology costs.
Indirect Costs	669,746	Includes all allowable expenditures within the indirect cost pool to administer the Program.
GCA Non-federal share	<u>78,991</u>	Includes property or services that benefit the Head Start program and are contributed by non-Federal third parties without charge to the grantee.
Total	5,288,923	

Financial Audit Results: For the year ended June 30, 2020, the auditor issued an unmodified opinion. There were no financial statement findings and no questioned costs.

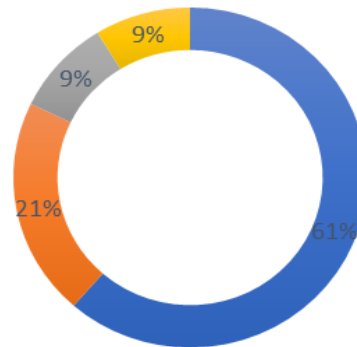


298 Families Served

Gaston Community Action, Inc. Head Start served 298 families. 228 are single-parent families; 70 are two-parent families; 7 are homeless and 4 foster families.



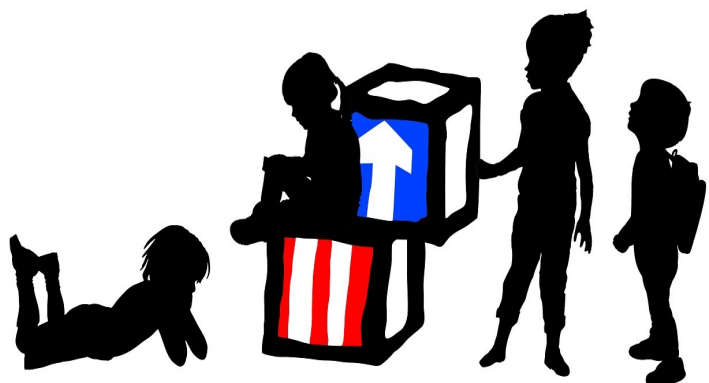
Ethnicity & Race



■ Black of African American ■ White ■ Bi-racial ■ Hispanic

Gaston Community Action, Inc.'s Head Start is funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. Our funded enrollment is 431 children. Children who leave the program are replaced by those on a waiting list.

319 Children Served



PARENT ENGAGEMENT/MALE ENGAGEMENT

Gaston Community Action, Inc. Head Start strongly encourages parent participation. Parents are their child's first teachers, and are the key to the design and success of the program. Parents are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities, including:

- Parent/staff zoom meetings and trainings for male involvement
- Policy Council meetings
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Virtual home visits
- Center volunteer
- Parent/Staff virtual trainings held monthly

The program provides newsletters and a monthly calendar to parents that include upcoming events. The menus are posted weekly, breakfast, lunch, and snack. The center news and other items of interest are also posted on the Head Start Facebook page.

TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

Preparing Children for Kindergarten

172 children transitioned to Kindergarten in May 2021. Transition meetings are held in April of every year to assist parents of children who are moving on to kindergarten. The local public and charter schools schedule meetings to familiarize the families of the setting, routines, to make choices. Parents were given opportunities to ask questions and participate in activities. Transition includes sending documentation containing all the health developmental and educational information for the child to their assigned school if requested.

Collaboration Agreements

Gaston Community Action, Inc. collaborates with two LEA's (Gaston and Lincoln) in our service area. These agreements help coordinate disability services for children who required needed services from these local school systems.

PROGRAM NOTICE AWARD FOR FIVE YEAR HEAD START PROJECT PERIODS

The Office of Head Start (OHS) is moving from indefinite project periods to five year project periods for all Head Start grantees. This requires changes on OHS funding practices and oversight of Head Start Programs. Changes in oversight will include improved communication between federal staff and grantees, as well as ongoing analysis of data to determine the type of support needed by grantees. The main purpose of improved oversight is to demonstrate the quality of program services, the effectiveness of management systems, and the achievement of outcomes for children, families, and communities. This is our agency's first (3) year of the five (5) year period beginning July 2019. We are in

We are monitored by our funding sources regularly. Monitoring visits are to ensure program compliance in Health and Safety; ERSEA and Fiscal.

OHS APPROACH TO SCHOOL READINESS FOR GCA's HEAD START PROGRAM

The Head Start School Readiness encompasses three major frameworks that promote an understanding of school readiness for parents and families. The three frameworks provide the foundation for implementing a systemic and integrated comprehensive child development service including family engagement. Grantees must ensure that frameworks are implemented and reports are generated.



MEDICAL AND DENTAL

Medical Homes

100% of enrolled children



have an ongoing source of continuous, accessible health care.

11 are eligible to receive medical services if necessary through the Head Start Program.

302 of children are enrolled in Medicaid 30 are enrolled in private health insurance plans. Head Start works cooperatively through both County Health Departments, Gaston College, private doctors and our nutrition assistant to perform heights, weights, blood pressure, dental screening, blood lead screenings, and review of immunization records.

Dental Exams

221 enrolled children received



continuous, dental care.

Nutrition

Menus are provided in English and Spanish for parents and public review.

We participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).



Serving Gaston & Lincoln Counties

The Head Start center has a central office in Gastonia and (7) Head Start Centers in Gaston and Lincoln counties.

CENTRAL OFFICE

223 N. Morris Street

Gastonia, NC 28052

(704) 866-8721

www.gastonca.org



Gaston County

Cherryville Head Start—4 Star

203 Elm Street

Cherryville, NC 28021

(704) 435-8946

37 Students—2 Classrooms

Highland Charter Head Start—5 Star

324 N. Highland Street

Gastonia, NC 28052

(704) 866-9874

119 Students—7 Classrooms—2 NC Pre-K Classrooms

Rankin I—5 Star

714 Rankin Ave

Gastonia, NC 28052

(704) 861-2285

60 Students—3 classrooms

Rankin II—5 Star

304 N. Highland Street

Gastonia, NC 28052

(704) 866-6345

68 Students—4 Classrooms

Lincoln County

Oaklawn Head Start—5 Star

410 Linden Street

Lincolnton, NC 28092

(704) 735-4702

38 Students— 2 Classrooms

Deaton Head Start— 5 Star

101 Deaton Ave

Lincolnton, NC 28092

(704) 732-3201

16 Students—1 Classroom

Lincoln Park Head Start—5 Star

140 Industrial Park Road

Lincolnton, NC 28092

(704) 732-1216

93 Students—6 Classrooms

2 NC Pre-K Classrooms



Community Service Block Grant



2020 - 2021 Outcomes



Brenda Smith, Director

GCA operates the Total Family Achievement Program (TFAP) with federal funds, Community Service Block Grant funds, to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities administered by the NC Office of Economic Opportunity.

The TFAP promotes self-sufficiency by providing direct services and collaborating with community partners. CSBG activities are conducted that enables low-income families move out of poverty. During the program year we found ourselves overcome by the COVID-19 pandemic starting in the third quarter of the program. The country just seemed to stop, which caused widespread job loss as businesses fought to survive by cutting jobs and some businesses went out of business which in turn threaten the basic survival needs of the people in the communities we serve. During the 2020-21 year, 327 individuals received assisted using CSBG funds.

The federal government stepped in to aid families and businesses during this crisis. The NC Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) was awarded \$26 million from the US Office of Community Services (OCS) to administer CSBG CARES Act supplemental funds to NC Community Action Agencies (CAAs).

Supplemental funds, called CARES NC, specifically targets individuals and families that have income below 200% of the poverty level, for the period 7/1/2020 through 6/30/2021, and who have unmet needs because of COVID-19. The funding supports a range of emergency assistance activities including employment, education, health, transportation, and housing among other activities brought on due to COVID-19. GCA's CSBG program was awarded a grant to service 200 families through September 2022 and 180 families were served as of June 2021.

A community partner, Duke Endowment COVID Support Program, granted in December 2020 GCA \$26,000 until October 2021 to further help families brave hardship brought on by COVID-19. These funds could be used in conjunction with other funding to help with COVID-19 support needs.

Sincerely,

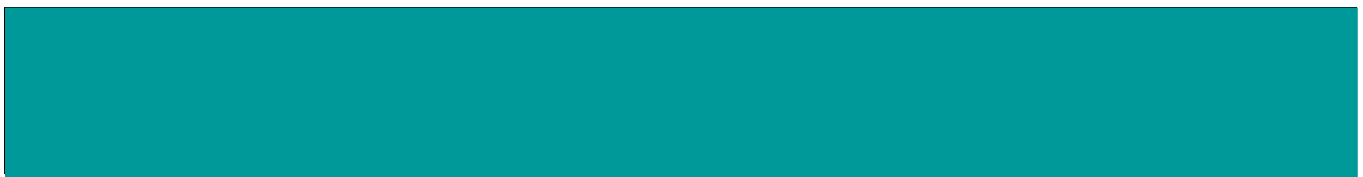
Brenda Smith

Director



Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) TFAP Outcome Measures

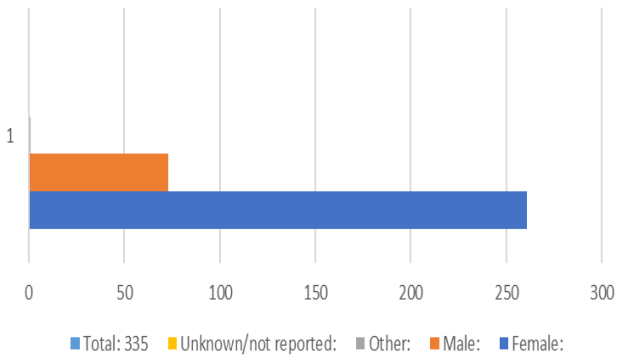
TFAP Outcome Measures	Target (Expected to Achieve The outcome in reporting period)	Achieved
The number of participants families serve	170	155
The number of participants families rising above the poverty level	23	0
The number of participants families obtaining employment	20	4
The number of participants families obtaining better employment	12	6
The number of participants families obtaining jobs with medical benefits	3	2
The number of participants families completing education/training programs	14	3
The number of participants families securing standard housing	16	10
The number of participants families provided emergency assistance	80	63
The number of participants families provided employment supports	49	32
The number of participants families provided education supports	13	2
NC CARES Outcome Measures		
The number of participants families served	200	180
The number of participant families provided emergency assistance	92	173
Duke Endowment		
The number of participants families provided emergency assistance	6	4



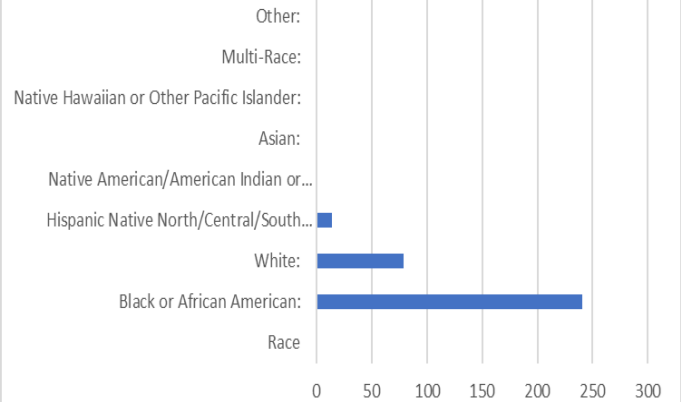


Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Demographic Synopsis

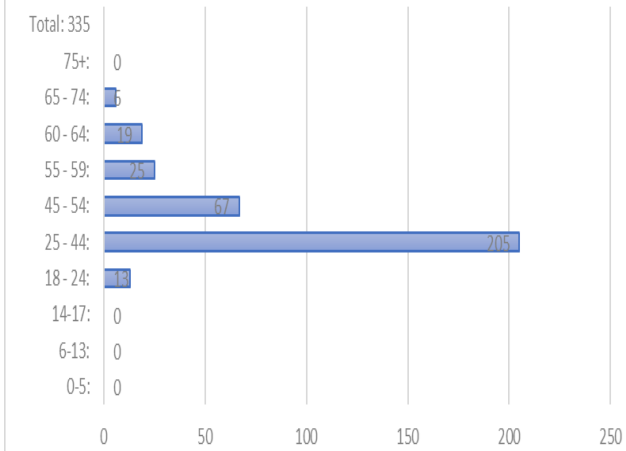
Gender



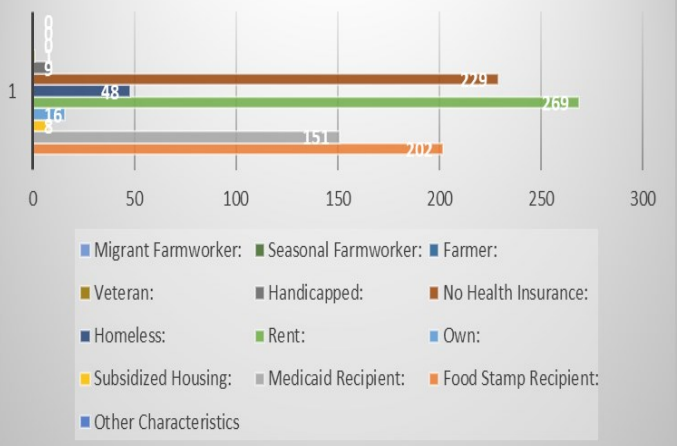
Race



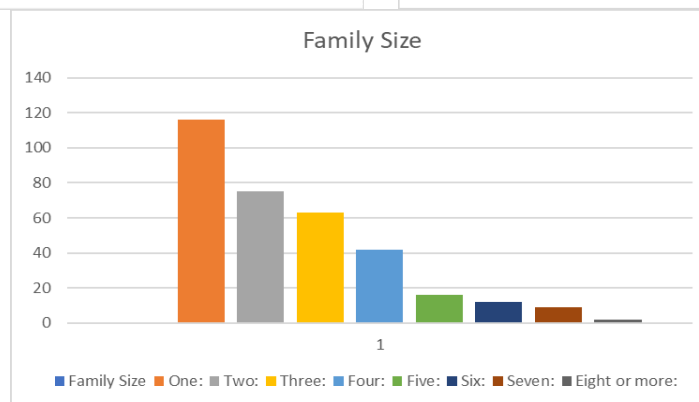
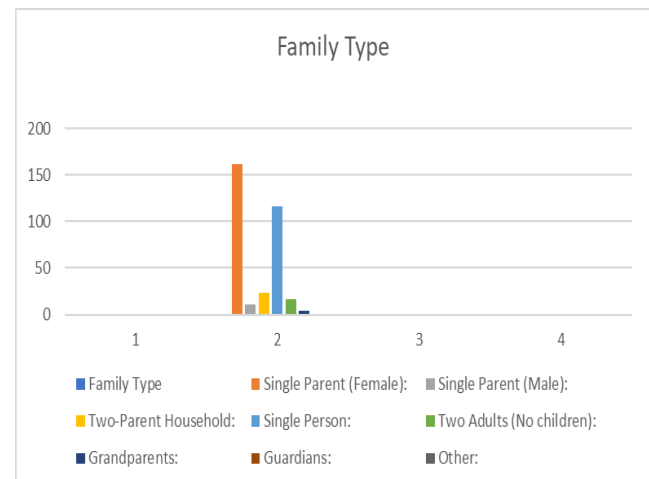
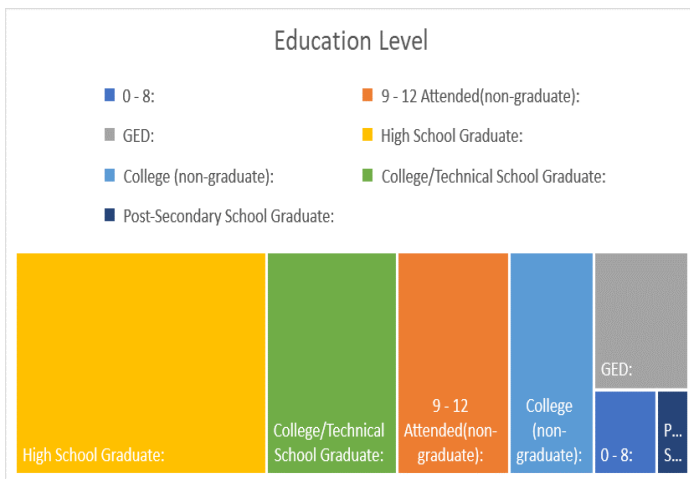
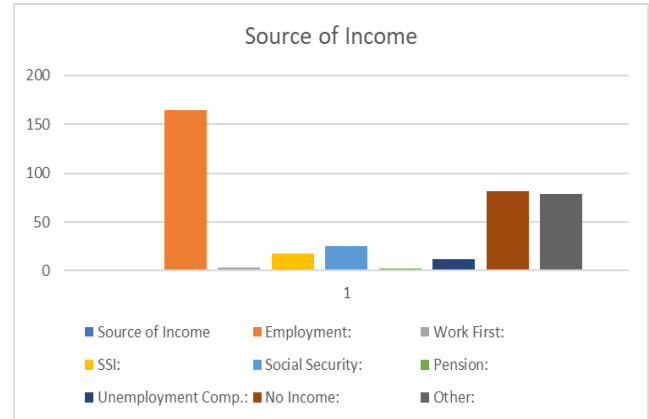
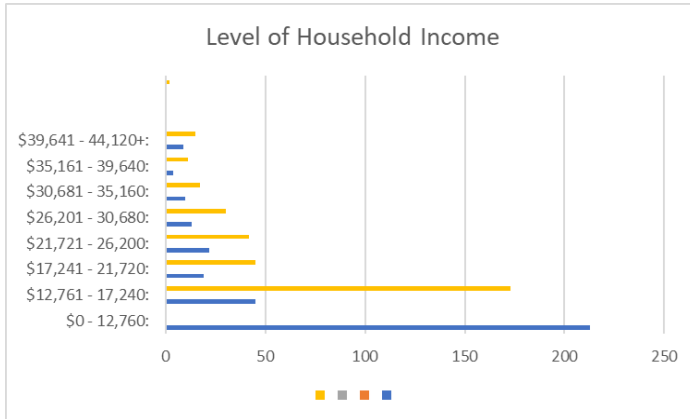
Age



Other Characteristics



Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Demographic Synopsis (continued)



Serving Gaston, Cleveland, Lincoln, and Stanly counties

The CSBG has a central office in Gastonia and offices in Cleveland, Lincoln and Stanly counties.

CENTRAL OFFICE

223 N. Morris Street

Gastonia, NC 28052

(704) 866-8721

www.gastonca.org

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David Brown

Financial Information

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>GRANT SOURCE</u>	<u>FUNDING</u>
Head Start	US Dept. of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families	4,757,365
	USDA	21,197
	Pre-K Gaston & Lincoln County	361,043
	Non-Federal Share	78,991
	NC DHHS COVID-19	70,327
CSBG	NC DHHS- Division of Social Services	770,210
CSBG CARES NC	NC DHHS- Division of Social Services	404,177
	Duke Endowment / NCCAA	13,680
Other Revenues		<u>1,781</u>
Total		6,478,771



Notes

