



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY KAWERAK COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2016

*Kawerak Head Start / Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership Programs*

## Executive Summary

This is an executive summary to the Kawerak, Inc. 2016 Head Start (HS)/Early Head Start (EHS)/Childcare Partnership (CCP) Community Needs Assessment. The overall goals of the assessment process included the following:

- Help see where we are at with our communities – our services, our needs (what they are), and how we can address those services improvements and needs
- Use the document to drive our organization and programs – know where we are going, and where to expand our programs
- Identify how we are doing as programs and how the community can benefit from our programs
- Inform and share with our board, management, and organizational partners
- Identify opportunities to develop new projects and programs – what opportunity fits with our needs and goals
- Support early childhood education development in the region that helps reduce our challenges like infant mortality

The assessment process was facilitated by *Northwest Planning and Grants Development* -- an Alaska Native owned consulting firm based in Nome, Alaska. Ukallaysaaq Tom Okleasik, a tribal citizen of the Bering Strait, was the lead researcher, surveyor and facilitator in this project. The assessment process and methodology was based upon the collection and objective third-party review of existing data sets. In regards to data, priority was given to information that reflected the 11-communities currently served by the Kawerak HS/EHS/CCP programs. The 11-communities are as follows:

- Nome
- Gambell
- Shaktoolik
- Brevig Mission
- Golovin
- Shishmaref
- Elim
- Teller
- White Mountain
- Koyuk
- Saint Michael

The assessment presents, reviews and analyses regional, community and program data to methodically and strategically identify the needs of families in the Kawerak service area. The assessment was intended to inform both the ongoing program operations and future development strategies to best work with low-income and Alaska Native families in early childhood education. The assessment outlines many challenges that the Kawerak Service Area

and Population face educationally, economically and socially. Many of the indicators show the area has the worst or highest rates in the State of Alaska that impacts children, parents and communities. This is an important presentation to demonstrate the setting and environment that HS/EHS/CCP management and staff need to operate within to help children and families to succeed in their early childhood education.

The assessment methodology also helped to identify underserved populations, listen to the perspectives and voices of parents, families and community members for considering how to use program resources to build a network of support with families for cultural competence, ensure equity, reduce disparities and promote educational capacity. Surveys were conducted during the assessment that also provided opportunities for parent/family member, staff and community level input.

The assessment methodology, process and report provide the following:

- Community assessment methods that describes the context in which the Kawerak Head Start, Early Head Start and Child Care Partnership programs operate.
- Documentation of community information and statistics that paints a picture of the communities served and describes the diverse needs of families who may receive services.
- Survey data of parents, staff-teachers and community institutions regarding opinions of child-family services, early childhood education needs, and priorities for future program development.
- Development of comprehensive recommendations to improve services for addressing needs and expanding programs within Kawerak and the region's education-health-social systems.

The assessment information was reviewed with the Kawerak staff to share the data and facilitate opportunities for making recommendations. Recommendations focused both on addressing needs identified in the assessment and improving programs for cultural competence, equity to reduce disparities, and educational capacity. The recommendations were then prioritized through a facilitated process with staff ranking those recommendations based upon timeframes, readiness and impact with the overall goal of both addressing needs and improving programs. All the recommendations are presented in priority order by major topic then by sub-topic with a listing of individual recommendations to guide program activities. The priorities

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are grouped by area: (1) Families and Partnerships, (2) Program and Infrastructure, (3) Core Services, and (4) Growing New Programs for Children Birth to 3.

The below table provides an overall top 10 recommendations from the community assessment process which were identified by the management and staff for addressing needs and improving programs.

**Priority** **TOP 10 RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**FOR ADDRESSING NEEDS AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS**

<b>#1</b>	Conduct more surveys at the village/community level to best understand each site and the community needs. For example, further research and understand factors in village population trends, employment and childcare needs, and early childhood education desires of the families in a community.
<b>#2</b>	Develop a parent and family member volunteer training and orientation that could be included with the family orientation and parent committee meetings. Schedule during the evenings as more people available for the information and volunteer training.
<b>#3</b>	Renew the HS/EHS/CCP MOAs with regional agencies and utilize the assessment information to show needs.
<b>#4</b>	Seek funding for language nest planning, development and piloting with Kawerak Early Head Start and Head Start. Language nests are currently not available in the region and the surveys show concerns for loss of language and culture.
<b>#5</b>	Advocate for changes to the federal HS/EHS/CCP income guidelines to be adjusted for the high cost of living in the region.
<b>#6</b>	Review the job requirements and wage scales for all positions. Need to evaluate our salaries and pay ranges to encourage staff to have financial incentive for attaining teaching positions. Concern in the staff survey on the topic of teacher aides and cooks -- that teachers have higher requirements but compensation may not be comparable to those positions. Consider a pay scale that recognizes that teacher aides and teachers have education/certificate requirements that take longer to achieve and impacts compensation in comparison to cooks.
<b>#7</b>	Evaluate and determine needs to change program services. For example, number of hours operated, updated/new performance standards, etc.
<b>#8</b>	Network with our Native speakers for sharing and finding the champions to work with Head Start/Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership.
<b>#9</b>	Organize and conduct Child Finds in the villages by partnering with BSSD. Expansion of the Nome model to the villages using HS centers as the host space.

**Priority**

**TOP 10 RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR ADDRESSING NEEDS AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS**

<b>#10</b>	Partner with multiple agencies to develop childcare centers and programs. There are families that cannot be served by Head Start/EHS/CC and there is community need. Head Start/EHS/CC are for low-income families as the most needed, funded for, and designed for tribally enrolled at-risk families. Any over income programs cannot weaken services for those most at-risk and needy. Child care centers are multiagency efforts – hard to burden one organization in a rural community with the expense of operations. Partners could include NSHC, Sitnasuak, BSNC, BSRHA, Nome Community Center, and Kawerak private parent pay or employer pay system – help with expenses. Or supporting home providers – now more home providers. Nome Preschool more full with over income parents served and not taken by a childcare center.
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Overall, the assessment provides insights of past, present and future needs of children and their families. The assessment incorporates recommendations to advance operations and create new program developments based upon needs to increase the effectiveness of Kawerak in the delivery of these valuable programs.

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