

# The Status of Young Children in the Copper Country

For more information please visit [www.ccgreatstart.org](http://www.ccgreatstart.org)

April 2012

## Welcome!

The Copper Country Great Start Collaborative was established in 2008 as an initiative aimed at ensuring school readiness and life success for all Michigan children. One of the ways we track the progress made by the Collaborative is to monitor a range of statistics relevant to the well-being of young children in the Copper Country. Some of the indicators we track have been included in this report. A similar report was published in 2009.

From this update we were happy to learn that children are doing well in the areas of early education and school readiness. However, the data indicate that other areas require continued focus. These include the need for additional licensed daycare openings and increased employment opportunities so that children and families can live free of the burden of poverty.

It is our hope that through continued advocacy and collaboration, we can make a difference in the lives of young children. We believe that by working to ensure that all children are safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school and in life we are investing in the future of our community.

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## What is the Copper Country Great Start Collaborative?

An amazing 90 percent of a child's brain architecture is formed by age four. Experiences in those early years — positive or negative — influence intelligence, behavior, and personality. The mission of the Copper Country Great Start Collaborative (CCGSC) is to coordinate an early childhood system that supports all families in Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw counties in providing a great start for their children from birth to age five.

Great Start focuses on five interconnected components that help young children learn and grow. Collaborative members work together to increase awareness and

access to services that address child and family needs. They also work to streamline and improve service delivery models to better meet community needs in an era of limited resources. The five Great Start components are:

### Family Support

Services that help families to be safe and stable, especially during stressful times.

### Pediatric & Family Health

Comprehensive physical health and child development services for all children.

### Child Care & Early Education

Services that provide nurturing, stimulating environments outside the home to support early learning and socialization.

### Social & Emotional Health

Services that promote the social and emotional well-being of infants, young children and families.

### Parenting Leadership

Helping parents take responsibility for their children's well-being, safety and overall development.

Collaborative members include parents, community leaders, business owners, charitable and faith-based organizations, health and human service agencies, and educators all working toward the same goal—to help all children begin kindergarten safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school and life.

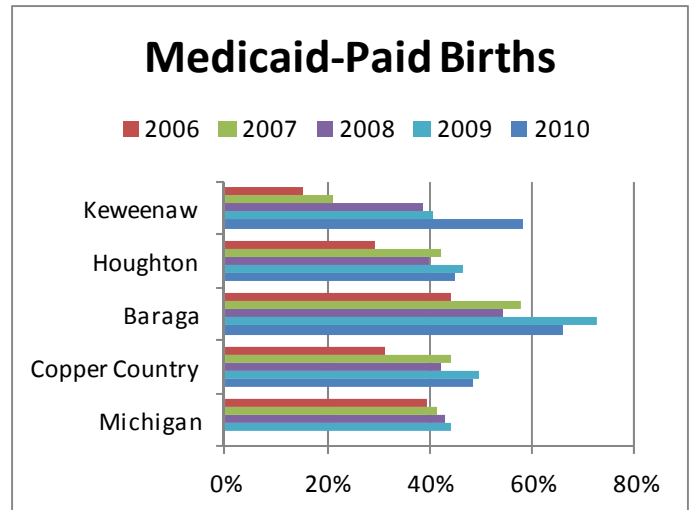
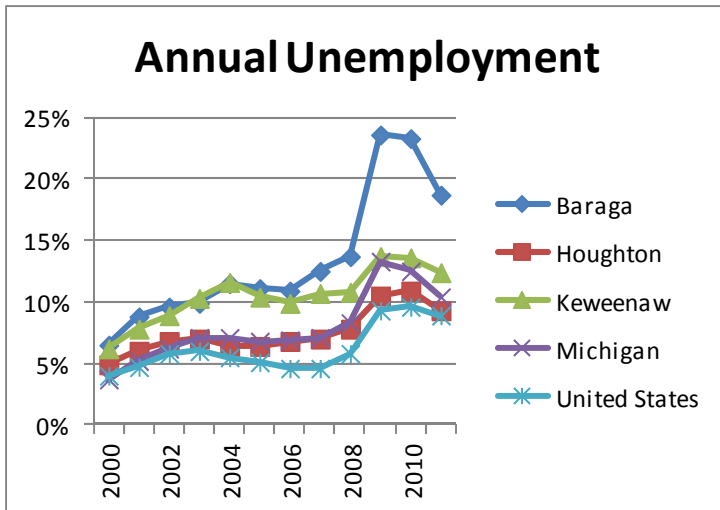


## Population Trends from the 2010 Census:

- 2,646 CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE LIVE IN THE COPPER COUNTRY
- 2,138 COPPER COUNTRY HOUSEHOLDS INCLUDE CHILDREN UNDER AGE 6 (11.4% OF HOUSEHOLDS, COMPARED TO 13.4% FOR MICHIGAN OVERALL)
- 30% OF COPPER COUNTRY HOUSEHOLDS THAT INCLUDE CHILDREN UNDER AGE 6 ARE SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS (47% IN BARAGA COUNTY)

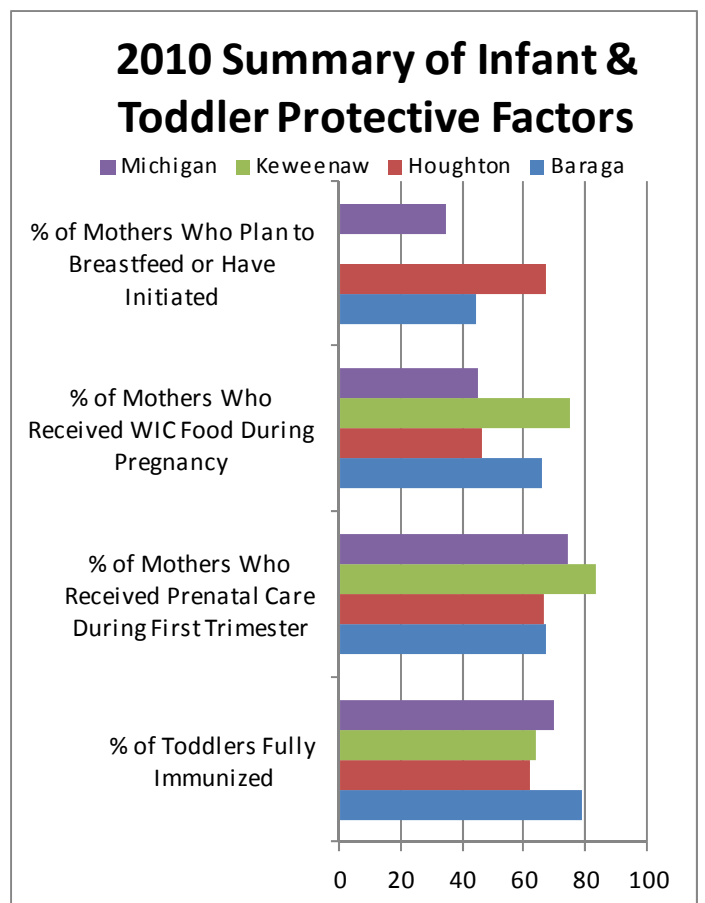
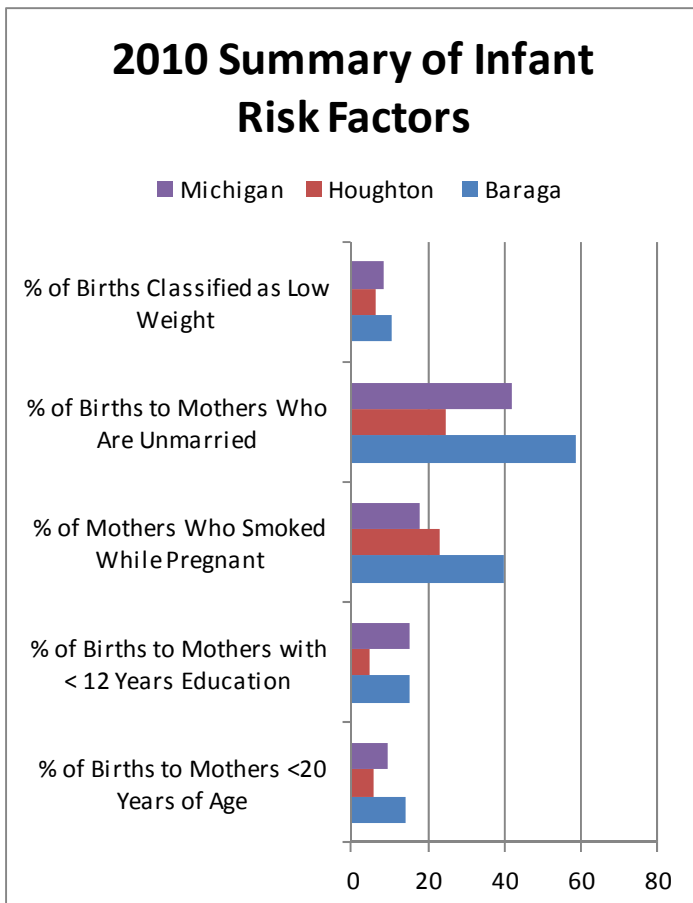
## Family Support: Especially Valuable During Challenging Economic Times

Increasing numbers of Copper Country families live in poverty. In September 2009, Baraga County's unemployment rate was the third highest in the nation at 24.5 percent. The percentage of births paid by Medicaid has been trending upward from year to year, as have income and food assistance program enrollments for families with young children. Statistics on income, unemployment, and benefit programs point to the difficulties many families have in meeting the basic needs of their children.



## Pediatric & Family Health: Risk and Protective Factors

Every child deserves a great start. Circumstances during pregnancy and early in a child's life influence a child's future health and development. Below are factors that may contribute to positive or negative outcomes for children.



## Child Care & Early Education

### Licensed Child Care for Children Ages 0-3

Licensing helps ensure that child care meets a quality standard. One of the ways quality care is achieved is to limit the number of children that can be cared for per caregiver, especially infants.

An estimated 293 women in the Copper Country labor force gave birth within the past 12 months. Some of these children will be cared for by family members while their parents work, but many will need care from a paid provider. The box at right shows that such care is in short supply, and may be unavailable near the child's home or parent's workplace.

#### March 2012 Child Care Snapshot

- **21** of **31** licensed child care providers in Houghton County had **0** openings for children ages 0-3. Only **12** openings existed among the providers that had space available. A single provider had at most **2** openings.
- Baraga County had only **4** licensed providers that accept children ages 0-3. One provider had **7** openings, another **2**.
- Keweenaw County had only **1** provider with an active child care license. The maximum capacity of this facility was **6** children.
- Infant and after-hours care are in shortest supply.

For assistance finding quality child care in the Copper Country visit: [www.greatstartforkids.org/connect/](http://www.greatstartforkids.org/connect/)



### Early Education and School Readiness

Quality preschool programs help children gain the knowledge, social skills and confidence they'll need to be successful in school and life.

More than half of Copper Country 4 year olds attend preschool and score well on tests of pre-reading skills in kindergarten.

#### 2011-2012 Early Education Indicators

- **57%** of Copper County 4 year olds are currently attending preschool. Compare this to **26.7%** of all U.S. 4 year olds (2009-2010 data).
- **57%** of the 461 Copper Country kindergarten students tested were at or above the benchmark for early literacy skills.

## Parents' Perspectives

"The earlier a child has gentle guidance in his or her learning, and the earlier he or she is exposed to varied learning experiences, the more likely that child is to remain curious, creative, and excited about learning."

*Jen Olson, Hubbell*



"The Copper Country Great Start Early Childhood Fund Scholarship took an enormous load off my shoulders and let me feel confident that my daughter was getting just as good of an education for her age as I am. The scholarship also allows me to give my daughter the best child care experience possible with a caring and friendly staff in a clean and safe facility."

*Krista Lindquist, Houghton*



### Parenting Leadership: Copper Country Great Start Parent Coalition

The Parent Coalition provides parents a chance to have a voice in advocating for their children. Parents are their child's first and most important teacher and provide an important perspective on early childhood needs. As part of the Parent Coalition, parents are actively involved in building the types and amounts of early childhood system supports they want and require.

The Coalition is also a sounding board for our parents' voices. We advocate for young children at the state and grassroots levels to improve services for early childhood. Our goals are for every child in the Houghton, Baraga, and Keweenaw counties to arrive at school healthy, happy, and ready to learn.

To get involved with the Copper Country Great Start Parent Coalition, contact:

**Heather Poll, Parent Liaison  
Copper Country Great Start  
Collaborative  
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## Social & Emotional Health: The Importance of Social Emotional Development in Early Childhood

Social-emotional development refers to a child's ability to form close relationships with others, express and manage emotions, and explore new environments. It is influenced by three variables: genetics, environment, and relationships. School success involves much more than A, B, C's and 1, 2, 3's. Children with healthy social-emotional development are much more likely to be successful in school and later in life. They will be better equipped to make friends, take turns, manage emotions, care about others, follow instructions and ask for what they need.

The importance of social-emotional health among young children cannot be underestimated. Most social-emotional learning happens

before children enter kindergarten, so parents and early childhood educators play a major role in assisting young children with their social-emotional development. Parents can help by holding and cuddling their children, responding to their children's attempts at communication, making eye contact, reading to their children, guiding children through social situations, protecting them from verbal or physical violence, and by taking care of their own social-emotional health.

For more information on the importance of social-emotional health among children age zero to five, please visit the Early Childhood Investment Corporation website at [www.greatstartforkids.org](http://www.greatstartforkids.org)



## We value your input!

The Copper Country Great Start Collaborative appreciates feedback from the community. After reading this report, please consider the following questions:

1. **How do you think our community is doing as a place to raise children?**
2. **What indicators or trends from this report do you feel are most important?**
3. **Which data interest or surprise you most?**
4. **What other community issues or trends not noted in this report concern you?**
5. **What unmet needs should be addressed in the next 3 years?**

Share your responses by taking our online survey at [www.surveymonkey.com/s/G786VRJ](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/G786VRJ) (all one web address), attending a community forum, participating in a focus group, or speaking to any Collaborative member.

For news, networking and announcements of interest to parents of young children:



**Our vision is a Great Start for every child in Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw counties: safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school and life.**