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## **In-Depth Report Details Pressures on Local Families**

COVID-19, housing and food insecurity, the economy and insufficient child care have all made life harder for local families, according to [Sustainable San Mateo County's Indicators Report](#) on **"The Well-Being of Children, Youth and Families in San Mateo County."** The 158-page report was unveiled October 26, 2023, at a breakfast in Redwood City and can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/2023IndicatorsReport>.

Each year, Sustainable San Mateo County's (SSMC's) Indicators Report shares in-depth research on one critical issue in the county that includes comprehensive data, insightful maps and visualizations, case studies, profiles, and recommended solutions and policy initiatives.

After SSMC Program Manager Simona Vallone presented the report, County Executive **Mike Callagy** gave a keynote speech emphasizing the county's efforts to expand affordable housing. Panelists who participated in a discussion that followed were **Heather Cleary**, CEO of Peninsula Family Service; **Dr. Kismet Baldwin-Santana**, the county's new Health Officer; and **Tracy Weatherby**, Vice President of Strategy and Advocacy for Second Harvest of Silicon Valley.

The **Key Recommendations** of this year's report are:

1. Provide additional state and county funding for child care subsidies to working parents and child care providers.
2. Provide more affordable housing for low-income residents, teachers, child care providers and other workers who provide essential services.
3. Expand the guaranteed income program started by former Congresswoman Jackie Speier and San Mateo County Supervisors Noelia Corzo and Ray Mueller to offer more funds to more families in need.
4. Provide assistance to eligible working families raising children so they may claim the Earned Income Tax Credit.
5. Create a new San Mateo County department like Santa Clara County's Department of Family and Children's Service to evaluate and improve services that support children and families, especially those with limited incomes.

The report found that, in San Mateo County:

- Access to health care for children has worsened since 2004, with 23% of caregivers surveyed rating it "fair" or "poor."
- 73% of parents surveyed in 2022 said they had turned down work due to the lack of child care.
- Only 11% of children ages 5 to 17 were getting 60 minutes of physical activity daily in 2016.
- Children's asthma rates were higher in the county in 2019-2020 than in the state and nation.
- The county's Air Quality Index Report Card from the American Lung Association steadily declined between 2010 and 2021.

- The current criteria, which are based on federal guidelines, make it difficult for families with children with incomes above 185% of the poverty level and in need of support to qualify for federal nutrition assistance
- More than one-third of Black, Latinx and Pacific Islander students in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades reported depression-related feelings in 2019-2021, far more than white students.

Among the positive trends noted in the report were:

- A decrease in the percentage of students contemplating suicide, from 17% in 2017-19 to 12.5% in 2019-21 (compared to the statewide average of 16% in 2019-2021)
- A lower rate of children chronically absent from school in the county (23%) than in the state (30%) in 2022
- A major decrease in teen pregnancies, from 15 births per year per 1,000 15- to-19-year-old female residents a decade ago to 6.2 births per year in 2021
- A decrease in incidents of child abuse and/or neglect from 2.8 substantiated claims per 1,000 children in 2013 to 1.2 in 2021
- A decline in the felony juvenile arrest rate from 400 arrests per 100,000 juveniles (ages 10-17) in 2018 to 201 per 100,000 in 2020.

Some interesting facts in the report:

- One of the greatest barriers to providing more child care is the shortage of physical space for them. The county had to turn down more than \$1 million in state support for subsidized child care due to a lack of facilities to house the programs.
- To ensure that everyone in need gets enough to eat in San Mateo County, considering the elevated cost of living, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley uses a high poverty threshold to determine eligibility for its programs. Families with incomes below 275% of the federal poverty level qualify for assistance.
- According to a survey given in the winter of 2021 by the Policy Analysis for California Education research center of about 100,000 students in grades 4-8 in 19 local education agencies in California, students had a learning lag (e.g., slower academic growth relative to expected progress) of about 2.6 months in English language arts and 2.5 months in math.
- In the largest study of climate anxiety and eco-anxiety in youth around the world in 2021, 83% of participants responded that they think people fail to take care of the planet, and 75% think the future is frightening. When asked how they perceived government responses to climate change, 64% thought governments were not taking their concerns seriously and were not doing enough to avoid climate catastrophe.

Founded in 1992, Sustainable San Mateo County is a nonprofit dedicated to realizing a vision of a sustainable future for everyone in the county. For more information, visit [sustainablesanmateo.org](https://sustainablesanmateo.org) or email [info@sustainablesanmateo.org](mailto:info@sustainablesanmateo.org).

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