



2018 Community Needs Assessment

Community Action of Greene County, Inc.
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Introduction

As a Community Action Agency (CAA) receiving Community Services Block Grant funding (CSBG) Community Action of Greene County, Inc. is required to perform a comprehensive community needs assessment every three years. This report covers the time period 2018-2021.

The process and resulting report is overseen and approved by the volunteer Board of Directors, which has a governance role in the agency.

This report contains both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data was collected through a survey tool developed by the New York State Community Action Association. The survey was available electronically through Survey Monkey, and the link was posted in the Catskill Daily Mail in a press release that announced the survey and our process. The link was also available on our website, distributed to our board members and staff, as well as to our community partners through the email list generated through the Greene County Networking group. In addition, paper copies were made available at our offices and at the Greene County Youth Fair in July. One hundred and ten (110) responses were received in all. The survey asked questions related to needs of the respondents, issues facing their families, and barriers to accessing services.

Quantitative Data includes statistics and information obtained through the US Census Bureau, New York State Community Action Association Community Assessment Tool, Data USA website, and the New York State Community Action Association 2017 Poverty Report.

This 2018 Community Needs Assessment identifies the opportunities and challenges facing Greene County residents with limited or no income, and explores causes and conditions of poverty, resources available in our, and neighboring communities. This report will be used to evaluate the programs and services offered by Community Action of Greene County, and serve as a guide for future service delivery.

Based on the information collected for this report, the greatest areas of need or concern, (listed in no particular order) are as follows:

- Food insecurity
- Home repair
- Financial assistance
- Heating/utilities
- Transportation
- Affordable housing

Community Action of Greene County, Inc. (CAGC) is one of over 1,000 Community Action Agencies that were born of President Johnson's War on Poverty. Incorporated in 1967, CAGC offers a variety of programs and services to alleviate the causes and consequences of poverty. In 2017, we served 2,878 unduplicated individuals, and 1,423 unduplicated households. Programs and services include:

Asset Development: Through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) households earning less than \$54,000 per year can receive free income tax preparation. IRS certified staff and volunteers prepare and efile the returns. **My Free Taxes**, a free software system, is available on our website for those able to prepare their own returns, and who earn under \$60,000. VITA ensures taxpayers receive the credits to which they are eligible. The Earned Income Tax Credit offsets payroll tax and supports low and moderate wage earners who are raising children. This program has become the nation's largest federal anti poverty program. **Your Money Your Goals is a financial empowerment program** just starting in our agency that will provide individuals with education on credit, banking products, how to save. There is also a matched savings component to this program, allowing participants that successfully complete the program to have an "emergency" bank account balance on completion.

Emergency Assistance: CAGC offers emergency assistance to individuals and families lacking resources to meet basic needs. Services include **Emergency Food Pantry, rent or utility payments, emergency home or car repairs.** These types of services are available through grants through the Regional Bank of Northeastern NY, Emergency Food and Shelter National Board, and various foundations and donations. Food is also received through the Feeding America Program. Through our **Pay if Forward Community Thrift Store**, vouchers may be issued for such necessities as clothing, bedding, cookware, etc. A computer and internet access, telephone and fax machine is made available for consumers to utilize. **Healthy Homes Program** works with families at risk of Child Protective Services intervention due to unhealthy living conditions in the home. A staff member works with the family, providing education and resources, as well as support, in order to rectify the conditions in the home and preserve the family unit.

Housing and Energy Services: The Weatherization Assistance Program provides energy audits and performs energy saving measures in the homes of income qualified owners and renters, in order to reduce utility costs and improve the efficiency and comfort of the home. For those not income eligible, these services, as well as small repairs, may be done as fee for service. Staff are Building Performance Institute (BPI) certified, and receive ongoing training in energy efficiency and building standards.

STEHP- Solutions to End Homelessness- provides resources to house literally homeless individuals and families, and to avoid evictions for those at imminent risk of becoming homeless. We also administer two separate grants through HUD- a two bed **Permanent Supportive Housing** Project for chronically homeless individuals, and a three unit Permanent Support Housing Project for families affected by domestic housing, which can serve three families, up to ten persons.

Victim Service: The Columbia Greene Domestic Violence Program offers the only homeless shelters in either county- a 15-bed facility in Columbia County, and a 10-bed facility in Greene. Also in Columbia County we offer a four unit transitional apartment building. Nonresidential services include assistance preparing Orders of Protection, individual and group support counseling, transportation, court accompaniment, advocacy, information and referral. We also offer community education on domestic violence and available services.

The Columbia Greene Victim Advocacy Program provides assistance to any innocent victim of crime in the two county region, offer guidance navigating the criminal justice and court systems, providing support counseling, court accompaniment, information and referral, and assistance completing claims through the NYS Office of Victim Services.

Community Partnership is of great value to the Community Action network, and to this agency. We work with a variety of agencies, individuals and businesses to improve outcomes for our consumers and communities. CAGC's leadership maintain active roles on the local HUD Continuum of Care, the Greene County Community Services Board, Greene County Rural Health Network, Greene County Chamber of Commerce, Greene County Transit Advisory Council, Greene County Department for Aging Advisory Council, Columbia Greene Workforce Development Board, Columbia Greene Domestic Violence Task Force, Greene County Networking, and most recently the Greene County Peer Court Advisory Council. We work with community partners to increase awareness of services in the community, to keep abreast of the needs that present, to maximize resources and reduce duplication.

About Greene County

Greene County, New York is located about thirty miles south of Albany. According to the US Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 658 square miles of which 647 square miles is land and 11 square miles is water. The county has no city, and is predominantly rural in nature. The county has three distinct areas- the River Towns of Catskill, Athens and Coxsackie, located on the banks of the Hudson River, the valley towns of Cairo and Greenville, and the underserved, mountain top communities of Hunter and Windham. The Village of Catskill is the County Seat.

The population of Greene County has remained relatively unchanged in the past 20 years. According to the 2016 American Community Survey (ACS), there were 48,069 persons living in Greene County, compared to 48,195 reported in the 2000 US Census. Females make up 48.51% of the population, while males represent 51.49%

90.28% of the population is White, 6.79% is Black, and other races combined made up 2.93% of the population according to the ACS 2012-2015 5-year population estimates. Persons identifying as mixed race made up 1.56% of the population.

The ACS estimates there were 10,825 families in 2016 in Greene County- married couples comprised 77.76% of the total number, women heads of households without husbands 15.33%, and families headed by men without wives comprised 6.9% of the total.

Poverty

According to the US Census Bureau, Small Area Income Poverty Estimates, in 2016 7278 persons were living at or below the poverty level, or 16.4%. The ACS 5 year estimates that an average of 12.97% of all persons lived in poverty during the period 2012—2016. The national average for the same period was 15.11%. The report also states that the poverty rate in Greene County rose from 12.6% in 2007, to 16.4% in 2016.

The American Community Survey reported that 16% of children lived in a state of poverty during the reporting period, and that 9.5% of persons over the age of 65 lived in poverty. The poverty rate in Greene County for seniors is slightly greater than the national average of 9.3%.

US Census also reports that the poverty rate for families for the same period was 9.4%. Of those households living in poverty, 33.5% were married couples, 16.4% male headed households and 50.1% were female headed households.

Economy/Unemployment

The economy of Greene County, NY employs 19,600 people. The largest industries in Greene County are Healthcare & Social Assistance (3,036), Retail trade (2,227), and Educational Services (1,884) according to Data USA. Hospitality and Tourism, agriculture and the arts also offer employment opportunities to residents of Greene County, and in particular creative economy is a presence in our community.

The NYS Department of Labor reported unemployment rate in July of 2018 at 4.3%, The US Department of Labor reported a range in unemployment rates for Greene County from 5.5% in March of 2017, to

5.8% in March of 2018. Not taken into account with this rate is the number of persons who are underemployed, and or are earning less than a living wage.

Living Wage

The living wage is the hourly rate that an individual must earn to support their family, if they are the sole provider and are working full time. For a single person living in Greene County the living hourly wage is 11.47 per hour; for an adult with a child \$26.22, for two adults \$9.54, and for two adults and two children the living rate would be \$19.23, according to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator.

Transportation

The ACS Survey 2012-2016 reported that 8.18% of Greene County residents drove alone in order to get to and from work, 7.9% car-pooled, 3% biked for walked, 1.6% utilized taxi service, and 1.2% relied on public transportation. It must be noted that since this study, Greene County Transit has expanded their service considerably, and is working diligently to meet the needs of commuters.

Survey responses indicate challenges to transportation include inability to afford gas, no access to a car, lack of insurance, lack of a license, inability to utilize public transportation

Housing Units

In Greene County, the number of housing units rose from 28,382 in 2006 to 29,335 in July of 2016. The ACS reports the median year built for the housing units is 1970. It is reported that 3,490 units were built after 2000, 7,171 were built between 1980 and 1999, 6,234 units were built from 1960-1979, and 12,387 units were built before 1960.

The Fair Market Rent for 2018, according to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development is \$586 for a studio apartment, \$777 for a one bedroom, \$918 for a two bedroom, and \$1,183 for a three bedroom. While the average renter's hourly wage is \$9.06, the wage one must earn to afford a studio in Greene County is \$12.37, for a one bedroom \$15.27, for a two bedroom \$17.90, and \$23.39 for a three bedroom apartment.

US Census Bureau estimated 13,171 homeowners in Greene County in 2000, and 72.15% owner occupied homes for the period 2012-2016. In regards to unsafe and unsanitary homes, ACS estimated 106, or .62% of Greene County homes did not have plumbing.

Homelessness

Each year, a Point in Time Study is performed to collect data on the number of homeless persons in our community, as directed by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Continuum of Care planning process. On January 27, 2017 in Columbia and Greene Counties 68 households with no children, 23 households with at least one adult and one child, and three households with only children were counted; 69 persons without children, 72 persons with one adult and at least one child, and 3 children were counted.

Transitional homeless count: 1 single person, 2 households with at least one adult and one child

Emergency Shelter homeless count- 65 households without children, 21 households with at least one adult and one child, 3 households with only children

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Trend

The number of recipients of TANF benefits decreased from 1009 in 2010 to 545 in 2018. Of those receiving TANF benefits in January of 2018, 306 of the recipients were children, 239 adults, at a cost of \$195,320 or \$358.39 expenditure per person. Through TANF eligible adults are limited to receiving benefits for a total of 60 months in their lifetime. Once the limit is reached, the adult and all members of the households are no longer eligible for services. In addition, those receiving benefits who are determined to be able to work must comply with federal work requirements in order to receive their benefits. Recipients are also required to cooperate in efforts to locate any absent parent and obtain support payments.

270 persons received Family Assistance in January 2018, at a cost of \$78,875 or \$292.13 per recipient. Of the 270 recipients, 215 were children, 55 were adults, totaling 134 cases.

There were 275 persons receiving Safety Net Assistance for this period as well- 91 children, 184 adults, 180 cases.

Free and Reduced Lunch Program

Of the 5,983 students enrolled in school in January of 2018, 3,420, or 57.16% qualified for free or reduced lunch. The school districts with the highest percentages of eligible students were Cairo Durham (80.6%), Catskill (73.1%) and Hunter Tannersville (48%).

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

In January of 2018, 2967 households and 4,990 persons were receiving SNAP benefits, totaling \$636,225 or \$214.43 per household. 1,029 households and 1,316 persons were receiving benefits on a temporary basis. Since 2008, the benefits per household for SNAP increased from \$183.4 to \$214.43.

Supplemental Security Income – SSI

1,520 Greene county recipients received an average of 604.26 in SSI Benefits in January of 2018. This, also demonstrates an increase since 2008, where the average expenditure per recipient was \$483.6.

Medicare/Medicaid

Both persons over the age of 65, and disabled persons may receive Medicare benefits. In 2017 11,223 persons received Medicare benefits in Greene County- 9,359 persons over 65, and 1,864 disabled persons.

In 2014 there were 2,978 children, 3209.33 adults, 370.75 elderly, 1,566.92 disabled persons receiving Medicaid benefits. 717 persons were enrolled in the Child Health Plus Program during September 2017- between September 2010 and September 2017 there was a 22.8% decrease in enrollments. It is estimated that in 2016 4.16% of Greene County residents were uninsured.

Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP)

HPNAP provides meals through supported Soup Kitchens, Food Pantries and Shelters. In Greene County there are 7 HPNAP sites, or 1 per every 10,000 persons. On average 76 meals a day per site are served, or on average 7 meals per person per year.

Veterans

According to the American Community Survey, 9.04% of the adult population in Greene County are veterans, more than the national average of 8.01%.

Crime

According to the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, there were no murders, 69 assaults, 2 robberies and 32 rapes that took place in Greene County in 2016. In the same time period, there were 114 burglaries, 313 incidents of larceny and 11 automotive thefts.

Average Daily Population Counts in County Jails

The average daily number of persons held in Greene County jail in 2014 was 44, or 78.57% of capacity. Thirty eight on average are male, six female.

As stated in the introduction, the data collected will be used by the staff and Board of Directors of Community Action of Greene County, Inc. for planning purposes. Utilizing this report, as well as information collected through our consumer satisfaction survey, we will begin now the process of updating our three-year Strategic Plan.

