

Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.



Community Assessment 2015

Adopted by EOC Board of Directors:

September 2, 2015

Vision

Washington County EOC will be known throughout the community as a highly effective nonprofit agency that provides comprehensive, top-quality programs and outreach services to the public.

Mission

We support Individuals and Families in attaining Self-Sufficiency
By providing Services, Sharing Resources and through
Community Collaboration.

We Value:

The Resiliency of the Human Spirit

Each Individual's Right to Self-determination

The Integrity and Professional Behavior of Our Staff

Our Customers' Engagement and Active Participation in the
Services Received

Our Responsibility and Accountability for the Operation of
Quality Programs

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Introduction

Washington County Economic Opportunity Council (EOC) was incorporated in 1966 as 501(c)3 to operate as the designated Community Action Agency in Washington County. The purpose of Community Action Agencies is to determine the causes and conditions of poverty in their service area and assist individuals and communities in improving economic and social well-being.

For 2015 EOC has an operating budget of \$7.2M. EOC is the second largest non-profit in Washington County. With approximately 130 employees annually and at total payroll of \$4.02M (wages and fringe). The primary source of revenue for the agency is Federal Grant funds awarded for the operation of traditional Anti-Poverty programs including Head Start/Early Head Start (\$4.9M), Weatherization (\$325K), and the Community Services Block Grant (\$240K). Washington County contracts with EOC for the operation of Department of Labor programs including Workforce Investment Opportunity Activities (\$900K). Additional contracts with other organizations such as the County's Department of Social Services and the Office for the Aging and through State Agencies such as NYSERDA provide the rest of Agency funding. In total, EOC spends \$6.8M of the total funding to operate services directly to the residents of Washington County. Each year EOC pays out approximately \$1M in services directly to customers; through emergency assistance supports, training and educational payments (including OJT and Summer Employment) and food through our food pantry. EOC works with a network of community partners, in both the public and private sector to monitor community needs and work together to reduce barriers to self-sufficiency.

EOC operates 2 divisions. The first, and largest division, is Family Development and comprises Head Start and Early Head Start. Head Start/Early Head Start is an early childhood program for income qualified and disabled children and families that serves Pregnant Women and children from birth to 5 years old. Operating under the regulation of the Federal Department of Health and Human Services, EOC began operating Head Start Programming in 1967 and has continued for 48 years. EOC serves 420 youth and pregnant mothers in both Head Start and Early Head Start. The program serves 310 children in 5 classroom centers around the county and 110 children through home based services. In addition to Head Start standards, all of our centers are licensed Day Care facilities and regulated by the NYS Office of Children and Families. Washington County EOC/Head Start and Early Head Start has just entered into its first year of a five (5) year grant award for the continued operation of Head Start under the new Competitive Grant process through the Federal Government.

The second Division, Career and Family Services, brings the remaining EOC programs together in a One Stop Center. Workforce Investment programs are operated together with Weatherization and CSBG programming to ensure that individuals with multiple needs have an opportunity to access EOC services in one location. The Career and Family Services Center also serves as a referral point for customers who have needs that can be addressed by other providers and programs within the community. In FY 2014, 3000 individuals received assistance

through the Career and Family Services Center. Services include employment and skills training, food pantry, emergency assistance with rent or utility payments, weatherization and other energy reduction programs and transportation to medical appointments for senior citizens and Medicaid eligible people. As the designated Workforce Investment One-Stop Center, EOC processed and approved over \$700,000 in Trade Act Funds. These funds are provided to individuals who have lost their jobs due to overseas competition. These funds are used to retrain eligible individuals to new jobs. EOC's volume in Trade Act is directly due to the closure of manufacturing plants within the county that obtained Trade Act certification. EOC provides a solid package of services to support the needs of Washington County residents. In addition to the services it provides it works in close partnership with other non-profit, government, faith based and private sector organizations to identify and coordinate services to improve the social and economic environment of individuals and communities.

Community Assessment

Washington County Economic Opportunity Council is required to complete a Community Assessment every three (3) years as a condition of continued funding through both CSBG and Head Start. The purpose of the Assessment is to determine local needs, identify opportunities and gaps in available services and provide a basis for planning for the services that are necessary to mitigate the causes of poverty within our communities and assist people to reach self-sufficiency.

The organizational standards of the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) require that an assessment include both quantitative and qualitative data specific to poverty and its prevalence in the community. The Community Assessment must also include the input of stakeholders within the community including consumers of our services. The Head Start Performance Standard 1305.3(c) requires that this data be collected and examined as it applies to children and families living in poverty and/or with a disability within the community.

To complete this assessment information has been collected from various data sources. The New York State Community Action Agency Association Comprehensive Assessment for Washington County EOC, Inc. that was created on June 29, 2015, gathering data from current census and other local, state and federal data sources. Other sources include data and information contained in the *2013 Community Health Assessment* completed by the Adirondack Rural Health Network, *the Housing, Transportation and Fair Housing Equity Assessment 2015* prepared by the Adirondack Gateway Council and the *Comprehensive Assessment of Regulated Child Care 2015*, completed by the Southern Adirondack Child Care Network.

A survey was taken in July of 2015 of both consumers and community partners to determine the importance of areas of concern identified in the data regarding Access to Housing, Transportation, Health Care, Grocery Stores, Job Skills Training, Employment Opportunities and Social Services. Community information and issues identified through ongoing staff participation on Focus Groups/Coalitions including the Homeless Committee, Long Term Care Council, Youth Board and the Nutrition Coalition are also included in this Assessment.

Results of the Community Assessment drive program planning and design for all of our programs. An analysis of assessment data helps determine the strategic priorities of our agency and the long and short range goals of our strategic plan. Working together with our community partners, the Community Assessment will form the foundation of our advocacy efforts locally and at the state and federal level to obtain the necessary resources to address the causes and condition of poverty in Washington County.

Washington County

Geography, Economy, and Culture.

Established in 1784, Washington County is located in Northeastern New York State, between the western border of the state of Vermont and the eastern banks of the Hudson River and Lake George. The county is 82 miles long, north to south, and varies from 14 to 26 miles wide, with a total of 835.44 square miles. The land is classified as 55% woodland and 32% agricultural. The County economy is primarily agricultural with a heavy concentration of small family dairies and orchards. Washington County is one of the leading dairy counties in the state. Agriculture accounts for \$200 million of annual revenues. The County has a small but solid manufacturing/industrial base in papermaking, food products, chemicals and electric components. One township, Granville is home to numerous slate quarries and is known as the “Slate Capital of the World”, yielding the world’s only source of red slate.

Washington County has a rich history dating back to the Revolution and French and Indian Wars with many historical sites located throughout the county. Residents and tourists take advantage of numerous recreational opportunities including downhill and cross country skiing, biking, boating, fishing, golfing and hiking. Washington County is a scenic area, with its northern sections located in the Adirondack Park characterized as primarily mountainous and forested. Rolling hills and flatlands characterize the eastern and southern portions of the county and have been traditionally developed into farmlands.

The county is divided into 17 towns with 9 incorporated villages spread throughout the county. The largest town in the county is Kingsbury, located at the middle of the western edge of the county. Within the Town of Kingsbury is the Village of Hudson Falls, the largest village within the county. Hudson Falls is closely aligned with the Village of Fort Edward (located within the Town of Fort Edward). These communities are the central location of county government. These communities are in close proximity to the City of Glens Falls in neighboring Warren County and considered part of the Glens Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area. The County is governed by a Board of Supervisors (the elected head of each town). The County is the primary provider of social services and supports within the county, including Social Services, Aging, Public Health, Veterans and Youth programs.

Demographics

Washington County has a population of 63,237 (2013). This is an increase of 3.6% from the population during the 2000 census of 61,042. This change in population is greater than the average in NYS for the same period of 2.69%. Washington County ranks as the 41st most populous in NYS. ¹

¹ (NYS Community Action Agency Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment for Washington County EOC, Inc., 2015)

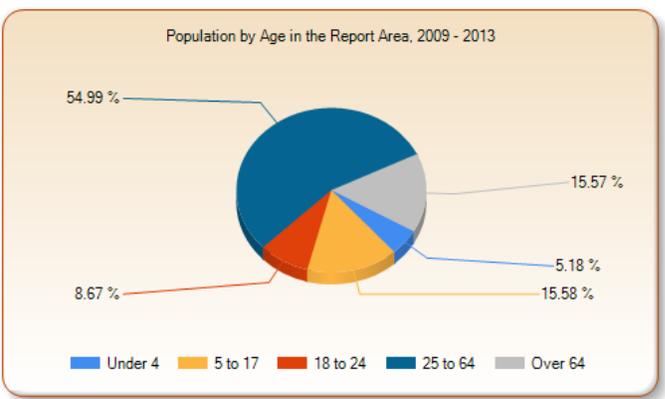


Table 1 – Population by Age

According to American Community Survey 2009-2013 (ACS) the county is approximately 48.5% female and 51.5% male. As Shown in Table 1, the largest percentage of the county is age 25-64 (54.99%). Residents over the age of 64 compromise 15.57% of the population. The remaining portion of the county is under the age of 24 (29.43%). The largest percentage of the population lives in the Towns of Kingsbury and Fort Edward. The northern most Towns of Dresden and Putnam have

the smallest percentage of the population and are considered one census tract for statistical purposes. There are high concentrations of residents over the age of 64 in the Towns of Whitehall, Granville and Greenwich.

The population is neither racially nor ethnically diverse; 95.05% of the population is White, Non-Hispanic, 2.93% is Black/African American, Non-Hispanic and the remaining population is classified as “other” race or mixed race and ethnicity. English is the primary language spoken in the homes (95.8%) which is significantly higher than the state (70.5%) and national (79.7%) averages. It is noted that the Town of Fort Ann has the single largest concentration of Black/African American population. This population is located in a complex of state prisons including one of the 4 maximum security prisons in NYS. If you factor out the prison population (1200) the percentage of Black/African American drops to less than 1%. Other than the Fort Ann area, as noted; racial and ethnic populations appear to be fairly consistent across the county.

The US Census estimates that there were 16,882 families in Washington County in 2013. Married couple families comprise 74.67% of all families. Single parent homes account for 25.33%. Female heads of families are 17.05% of all families.

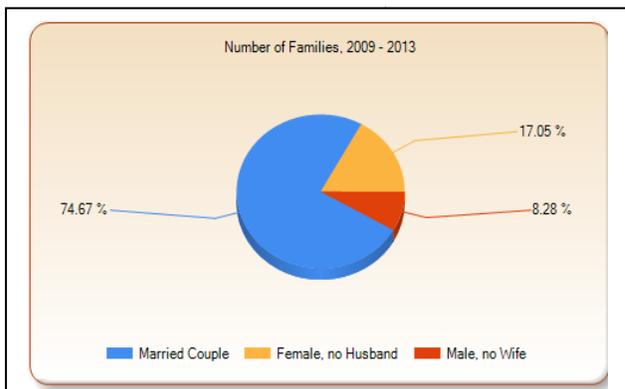


Table 2 – Number of Families

Poverty in Washington County

The rural nature of Washington County and low population densities make it difficult to identify places or neighborhoods with high areas of poverty. UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) provides a broader and more inclusive definition of poverty.

“Frequently, poverty is defined in either relative or absolute terms. Absolute poverty measures poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food clothing and shelter. The concept of absolute poverty is not concerned with broader quality of life issues or the overall level of inequality in society. The concept therefore fails to recognize that individuals have important social and cultural needs. This, and similar criticisms, lead to the development of concept of relative poverty. Relative Poverty defines poverty in relation to the economic status of other members of the society: People are poor if they fall below prevailing standards of living in a given societal context.”

The Poverty Rate in 2013 for Washington County (13.24%) is below the NYS State (15.3%) and National average (15.37%). Chronic and/or situational poverty (Relative and Absolute) is spread throughout Washington County. Overall, higher percentages of people (>15%) living in absolute poverty are found in the Village of Hudson Falls, and the Towns of Whitehall, Granville, Hebron and Fort Edward. These areas are highlighted in Table 3 below. These same geographic distribution of high levels of poverty hold across all population groups; children, families, seniors, veterans and persons with disabilities. It is not until you look at poverty not only by age, gender and or population group, but take into consideration the causes and conditions of poverty; access to housing, transportation, educational day care, and health care that you see the challenges inherent to poverty in Washington County (Relative Poverty).

It should be noted that reporting of poverty as a percentage of the population is also deceiving – especially in low population areas – the overall size of the population and the broad distribution means that it takes very few people to create very high percentages within small segments of the populations. The isolation of small groups of individuals living in poverty across the county is, in itself, one of the largest challenges to the implementation of anti-poverty programs, and should be kept in mind in later discussions of the causes and conditions of poverty.

Pop. Centers (Census Tracts)	Poverty Rate for All Persons (Absolute*)		
	Total Population	In Poverty	Poverty Rate %
Village of Hudson Falls (801)	4,821	1,234	25.60
Village of Hudson Falls (802)	2,423	361	14.90
Town of Kingsbury (803)	5,398	408	7.56
Town of Fort Ann (810)	3,536	251	7.10
Towns of Whitehall and Hampton (820.01)	4,934	991	20.09
Towns of Dresden and Putnam (820.02)	1,245	180	14.46
Town of Granville (840)	6,432	1,115	17.34
Town of Hartford (850)	2,271	157	6.91
Town of Hebron (860)	1,727	308	17.83
Town of Argyle (870)	3,625	291	8.03
Town of Fort Edward (880)	6,025	914	15.17
Town of Greenwich (890)	4,871	377	7.74
Town of Salem (900)	2,709	388	14.32
Town of Jackson (910)	1,713	243	14.19
Town of White Creek (920)	3,349	295	8.81
Town of Cambridge (930)	2,131	256	12.01
Town of Easton (940)	2,412	122	5.06
Report Area	59,622	7,891	13.24

Table 3 – Population by Population Centers

US Census indicates that 7,891 persons live in poverty in Washington County in 2013. The overall poverty rate for the County is at 13.24%. This represents an increase of 4.1% since 2000.

Children

Population Center (Census Tract)	Total Pop	In Poverty	%
Village of Hudson Falls (801)	373	120	32.17
Village of Hudson Falls (802)	134	29	21.64
Town of Kingsbury (803)	171	39	22.81
Town of Fort Ann (810)	194	19	9.79
Towns of Whitehall and Hampton (820.01)	233	72	30.90
Towns of Dresden and Putnam (820.02)	42	19	45.24
Town of Granville (840)	326	120	36.81
Town of Hartford (850)	133	0	0
Town of Hebron (860)	98	37	37.76
Town of Argyle (870)	136	49	36.03
Town of Fort Edward (880)	413	180	43.58
Town of Greenwich (890)	158	12	7.59
Town of Salem (900)	157	3*9	24.84
Town of Jackson (910)	69	21	30.43
Town of White Creek (920)	203	17	8.37
Town of Cambridge (930)	169	68	40.24
Town of Easton (940)	198	7	3.54
Report Area	3207	848	26.44

Table 3A – Children 0-5 in Poverty, by Population Center

**Areas served by current Head Start Centers are in Bold*

Poverty for children under the age of 17 is 21.7% (2,672), children 5-17 are at 20.1% (1,831). Children under the age of 5 have the highest poverty rate at 26.44% (848 of 3,207). Table 3A shows Poverty Rates for children 0-5 years of age as distributed in the County.

The current poverty rate for children under the age of 5 has grown by 7.7% since 2000 (18.6%).

Families

There are 16,882 families in Washington County, 7.04% live in poverty (1,188). In the county as a whole, 26.55% of married families live in Poverty, 19.19% of male householders live in Poverty. Of the 331 families with a female head of household 54.26% live at or below poverty (180 households). While the percentage of Female Head of Households living in poverty is lower than the statewide percentage but higher than the national average it is significant that half of single female parent

households are in poverty.

For Female head of households in poverty the highest percentage of these households are found not only in the areas identified above but additionally in the Towns of Dresden and Putnam and Argyle. Each of these areas is very rural with little to no local resources regarding

housing or employment opportunities – a significant barrier that will be looked at later in the discussion of the causes and conditions of poverty.

Seniors

7.69% of the senior citizen's in Washington County live in poverty (748). Senior citizens living in poverty are found in the highest concentration in the Village of Hudson Falls, and the Towns of Fort Edward and Greenwich (>12%). Of note is that almost as many seniors have income

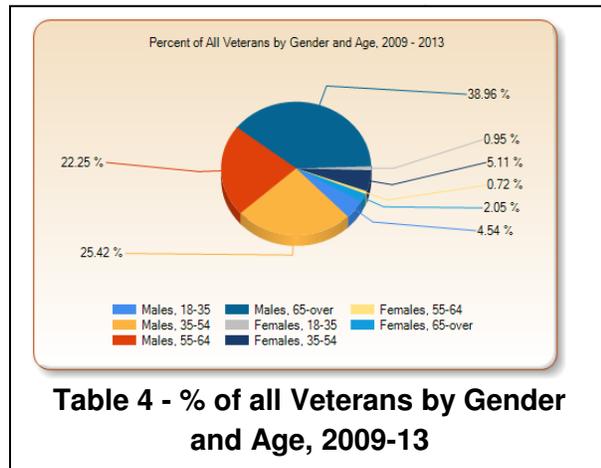


Table 4 - % of all Veterans by Gender and Age, 2009-13

between 100% and 125% of poverty as live below 100% (537). According to the 2009-13 American Community Survey, 17.3% of residents over the age of 65 are still employed.

Veterans

Washington County has a proud history of military service. 11.6% (5,811) of the total population is a veteran. 20.47% of the men in the county have served in the active military. Table 4 shows the breakdown of Military Service by Gender and Age. Veterans are

found in equal measure throughout the county. Of the 5,811 veterans in the county, 5.1% of them live at or below poverty, which is about half the rate found in the general population. In general Veterans have a higher median income than the general population in Washington County. The American Census states that 24.2% of the Washington County veteran population is categorized as disabled.

Persons with Disabilities

Of the noninstitutionalized population living in Washington County, 7,850 individuals are classified as disabled (13.1%). For the purposes of discussion these numbers do not include individuals/children diagnosed with a chronic medical condition such as diabetes or food allergies. Of the non-institutionalized disabled population, 536 are under the age of 18, which is 4.1% of all persons under the age of 18. Disabled children in poverty are found in small numbers throughout the county. There are regional estimates of 3.1% of children under the age of 18 with disabilities living in poverty – giving us an estimated 16-20 children with disabilities living in poverty. Early Intervention services, which provides services to disabled children does not consider poverty as a condition of participation so a more specific number is not readily available.

Washington County Public Health, Children with Special Needs Program identified 69 new children in 2013/14 to have Developmental Delay. In 2014 this program recognized 256 children under the age of 3 as having an IFSP and receiving services (Individual Family Services Plan)

Causes and Conditions of Poverty

As discussed earlier, Relative Poverty looks at poverty within the context of the social, economic and environmental constraints of a given area. These areas are known broadly as the “Causes” and “Conditions” of Poverty.

“Condition of Poverty” is defined as a negative environmental, safety, health and/or economic condition that may reduce investment or growth in neighborhoods or regions where people of low income live. A Condition of Poverty speaks to the state or status of individual’s families and communities that impact on their well-being and quality of life. Housing affordability, transportation, employment opportunities can be considered conditions of poverty.

“Cause of Poverty” is defined as a negative factor that creates or fosters barriers to self-sufficiency and/or reduces access to resources in neighborhoods or regions where low income people live. A Cause of Poverty speaks to the demographic which drive the economy, and social values/attitudes which drive public policy. Health Status, Housing availability and education can be considered Causes of Poverty.

Regional Community Assessments by the Adirondack Rural Health Network (2013) and the Adirondack Gateway Council (2015) identify Access to Housing, Transportation and Employment/Workforce Issues as contributing to poverty in our region. Additionally, within Washington County, access to Health Care, Social Services and Higher Education all contribute to the Causes and Conditions of Poverty. As noted in the definitions, certain aspects of any given area can be both a cause and a condition of poverty which contributes to a cycle of poverty that hampers effective service delivery.

Income

The median household income in Washington County is \$48,522 annually. The per capita income is \$24,168. The average earnings for earners is \$32,921. (Earners is defined by the Census Bureau as someone 15 years of age or more that received any form of income, whether it be wages, salaries, benefits, or other types of income). All of these are below state and national levels. Table 5 shows income by Population Centers for the entire county.

Table 6 shows the types and distribution of personal income throughout the county as Reported by the Rockefeller Institute. Almost 25% of the income received is classified as

transfer income which is Social Security, Medicare, unemployment insurance, welfare programs, and subsidies.

Population (Census Tract)	Median Household Income (2013)	Per Capita Income (2013)	Avg. Income/Earner (2013)
Village of Hudson Falls (801)	\$39,806	\$19,805	\$26,851
Village of Hudson Falls (802)	\$48,750	\$26,099	\$33,215
Town of Kingsbury (803)	\$54,509	\$27,581	\$35,124
Town of Fort Ann (810)	\$53,250	\$14,043	\$25,081
Towns of Whitehall and Hampton (820.01)	\$44,044	\$22,674	\$30,195
Towns of Dresden and Putnam (820.02)	\$50,952	\$29,784	\$38,347
Town of Granville (840)	\$44,848	\$20,270	\$27,702
Town of Hartford (850)	\$63,750	\$26,548	\$35,589
Town of Hebron (860)	\$49,286	\$25,658	\$34,296
Town of Argyle (870)	\$62,500	\$30,584	\$38,653
Town of Fort Edward (880)	\$50,642	\$22,524	\$31,300
Town of Greenwich (890)	\$58,070	\$27,450	\$36,364
Town of Salem (900)	\$50,186	\$30,249	\$38,319
Town of Jackson (910)	\$51,742	\$28,757	\$37,096
Town of White Creek (920)	\$42,303	\$22,317	\$30,744
Town of Cambridge (930)	\$69,219	\$30,091	\$39,203
Town of Easton (940)	\$70,400	\$31,803	\$43,208
Washington County	\$48,522	\$24,168	\$32,921
Statewide	\$58,003	\$32,382	\$46,450
Nationwide	\$53,046	\$28,155	\$40,683

Table 5 – Income by Population Centers (Census Tract)

Source: *US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013 Data Release, Dec. 2014*

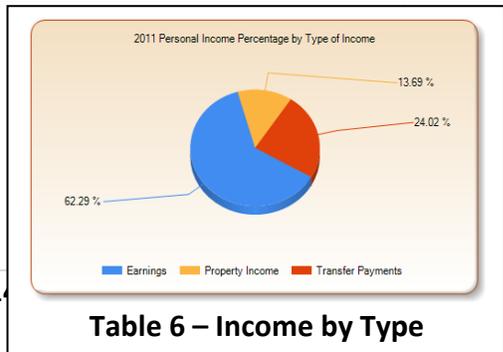


Table 6 – Income by Type

Average weekly wages in Washington County in the Third Quarter of 2014 were \$794 (\$19.85/hour for a 40 hour week). Average weekly wages are 30% lower than the statewide average wage of \$1,145. The minimum wage in NYS is \$8.75. A living wage is defined as the hourly rate that an individual working

	One Adult	One Adult, One Child	Two Adults	Two Adults, One Child	Two Adults, Two Children
Washington	10.87	25.15	8.32	13.68	17.65
Statewide	12.74	26.74	9.26	14.48	18.44

Table 7 – Living Wage Estimates

Source: [Poverty in America, Living Wage Calculator, 2014. \(© 2015 Dr. Amy K. Glasmeier and The Pennsylvania State University\)](#)

full time (2080 hours per year) must earn to support themselves and their family. The living wage estimates are shown in Table 7.

A single person living in poverty (Income less than \$11,670/year) has an equivalent hourly wage equal to \$5.61/hour. A family of 4 living in poverty (Income below \$23,850) has a hourly wage of \$11.47. The estimated living wage for a single parent household with one child is actually more than the average wage for all workers in Washington County. The difference between actual earnings and the estimated living wage impacts all areas. For persons in poverty those differences are huge.

Housing

Housing Units	Total in Washington County	% of total
Total housing units	28,844	
Occupied	24,142	83.7
Owner Occupied	17,722	61.4
Renter-Occupied	6420	22.3
Other Occupied	4702	16.3
Seasonal, Recreational	2,879	10.0

Table 6 – Housing Occupancy
American FactFinder – Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010

Availability - There are a total of 28,844 housing units in Washington County, with an overall occupancy rate of 83.7% which is below the state (90.3%) average for occupied units. Renters occupy 22.3% of the available housing units. Washington County has several areas within the county with a high percentage of seasonal or recreational homes which accounts for 10% of the housing stock. Over half of the homes in Washington County were built prior to 1960 (14,759); 75% of those houses were built prior to 1939 (11,068). This is less than the statewide housing age but considerably more than the national

average.

Accessibility – Rental units tend to be houses that have been converted to multi-family units, and mobile homes. There are 15 rental complexes for households in the county, the majority are found in Hudson Falls/Town of Kingsbury and Fort Edward area. A total of 464 rental units are income subsidized, 277 of them are dedicated to person’s over 60.

The vacancy rate for non-rental housing is 1.67% (481 units are empty). High property taxes, and low incomes make mortgage affordability a barrier to home ownership. High taxes, the age of housing stock, employment opportunities and transportation have increased the number of homes for sale. Rental units have a vacancy rate of .64% (185 units). This rate is significantly lower than either the state or national vacancy rates for rental units.

Lack of rentals together with location, income and transportation further marginalize low-income and disadvantage populations.

Affordability - The Median Value of a single family home is \$170,665. Fair Market Rent (FMR) averages between \$652 for a Studio to \$1,557 for a 4 bedroom unit. 25.8% of homeowners with a mortgage pay 35% or more of their income on housing costs. 42.8% of renters pay in excess of 35% of their gross monthly income toward housing cost.

A person making minimum wage in Washington County (\$8.75/hour) would have to work 57.3 hours per week to afford a studio apartment at FMR. It is estimated that the average hourly wage necessary to rent a 2 bedroom apartment at FMR would be \$19.52. A single parent with one child with a minimum wage job would have to work 89.3 hours per week to afford a 2 bedroom apartment at FMR.

For a single mother with one child living in poverty, housing cost alone is a significant condition of poverty. The widespread lack of rental units subsidized based on income makes the disparity between income and housing cost very large. This disparity is seen in apartments being overcrowded, or the continued occupancy of unsafe or unsanitary homes.

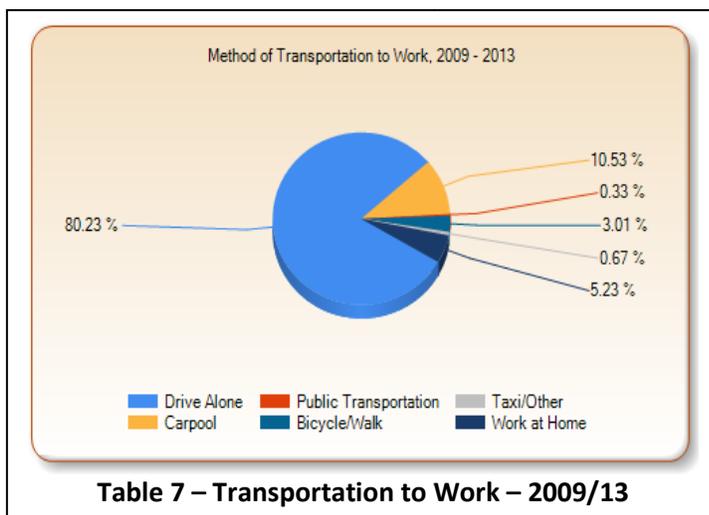


Table 7 – Transportation to Work – 2009/13

Transportation

As described Washington County is a very rural county with widely dispersed populations. There is no county wide public transportation. Public transportation is available in the Villages of Hudson Falls and Fort Edward through the Greater Glens Falls Transit (GGFT). Liveried transportation services (taxis) originate in the City of

Glens Falls. Taxies are the transportation vehicle of choice for Medicaid transportation due to the ability to handle demand scheduling.

Of the 16,067 households outside of the GGFT, 15,162 (94.4%) own at least one vehicle. The 933 households without access to a motor vehicle are found across Washington County. The highest numbers of non-vehicle households are found the Towns of Granville, Whitehall, and White Creek. Transportation of households without access to a vehicle is met by a network of agencies and not-for profits – these services are mobility specific and usually limited to transportation for medical purposes.

The lack of public transportation makes access to work difficult. Washington County has a higher percentage of workers who work from home (5.23%) than the state or national average. 90.8% of workers drive to work, either alone or in a carpool. The average commute time to work for our residents is 25 minutes. 37% of workers in Washington County have a commute that takes longer than 30 minutes.

Lack of accessible transportation, public or private, limits access to employment opportunities, grocery stores and health care and is both a cause and condition of poverty.

Health and Nutrition

Health - County Health Rankings, 2013, published by the Robert Wood-Johnson Foundation ranks Washington County 56th out of 62 counties. The Rankings look at the many factors beyond medical care that influence health for county residents. The rankings show that poor health status is limited more by transportation issues, poverty and general education of health care needs than any other single issue.

The Adirondack Rural Health Network’s *Community Health Needs Assessment – 2013*, Washington County identifies that children and those that are poor, mentally ill, elderly and

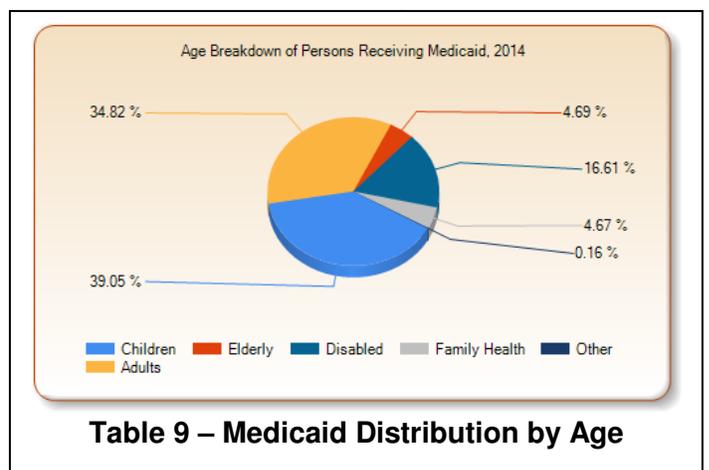
Medical Profession	Serving in the County	Professional/1000 persons	
		Washington Co.	NY State
Physicians	64	1.01	4.34
MH Prof.	11	.17	.42
Dentists	57	.90	1.36
Therapists	183	2.25	2.60
Specialists	41	.65	1.34
Nurses	1349	18.44	16.0

Table 8 – Availability of Health Care Providers

substance abusers have a greater likelihood of poor health status than others in the population.

“Poor socioeconomic status leads to poor health seeking behaviors, lack of engagement in wellness and preventative screening and delayed engagement in to medical care until a health problem becomes a crisis”(p.13)

Another prime contributor to poor health is accessibility to Health Services/Providers. Washington County has no hospital located within the county. Residents access urgent and emergency care in hospitals located in neighboring counties or in the State of Vermont. Primary Care is obtained through local Health Centers located in the Towns of Fort Edward, Whitehall, Granville and Greenwich. In addition to the lack of Health Facilities within the county, there is a distinct lack of Health Care providers specifically,



physicians, mental health professionals, dentists and medical specialists (Table 8).

Affordability of Health Care is important to Health Status also. It is estimated that in 2013 10.9% of residents of Washington County were uninsured (Private Insurance, Medicare or Medicaid). The implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2014 has had an impact on those numbers. It is noted that between 2010 and 2014 enrollment in Child Health Plus (income based Health Insurance for children not otherwise Medicaid eligible) dropped 26%. It is believed that the ACA opened the Medicaid roles to families and moved these children into Medicaid coverage.

It should be noted that 50.8% of insurance coverage is provided by public coverage (Medicare or Medicaid). Medicaid is the largest provider of Health Insurance in the County. Table 9 shows the Age breakdown of persons receiving Medicaid.

Washington County has a high incidence of Obesity across the population. 30% of Adult and 20% of school age children suffer from Obesity. High incidence of Obesity causes high incidents of other chronic health issues such as Gestational Diabetes in pregnant women. Per Washington County Public Health children's' health issues are primarily access to Dental Care, screenings for lead exposure, and the lack of availability of Mental Health Services.

Nutrition - Nutrition and access to food resources plays a large role in an individual's Health status. Washington County has 3 major chain grocery stores in the county (located in Granville, Hudson Falls and Greenwich), and several family owned groceries dispersed through the county. In some communities convenience stores such as Stewarts and Cumberland Farms offer grocery items, usually with a limited selection at a much higher cost. A network of Farmers Markets throughout the county offers access to fresh produce throughout the summer months.

NYS provides support to 7 Food Pantries in Washington County that served 28,228 people (duplicated counts) in 2010/11; that is an average of 63 meals per day to residents of

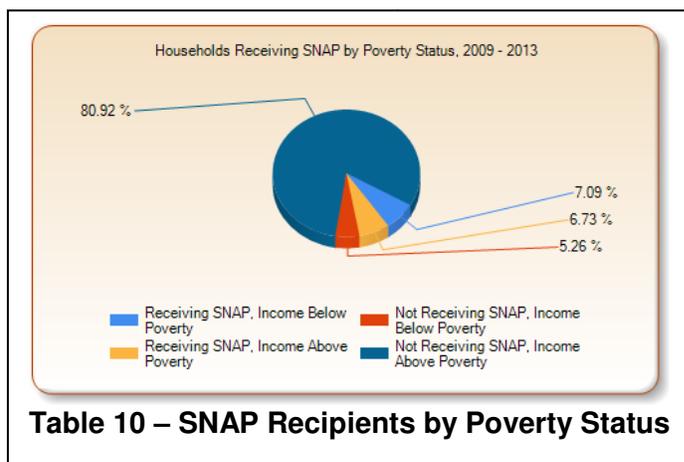


Table 10 – SNAP Recipients by Poverty Status

Washington County. In addition to the sites that receive state nutrition funds, Faith Based and Community Groups offer local Food Pantries that have limited hours and are supported 100% through donations of food and volunteered time. In addition to Food Pantries, 46.9% of school age children in Washington County are eligible for free or reduced lunches during the school year.

In 2013, 5.26% of households living in

poverty did not receive SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) Benefits (1,288). Over 4,000 households in the County receive SNAP benefits (Formerly Food Stamps). The average household benefit is \$235/month. Anecdotally, a significant number of SNAP recipients are qualified senior citizens who receive a minimum benefit of \$16/month. For county residents who live in isolated areas or lack access to transportation obtaining necessary food is a challenge that is not only limited to income but also impacts greatly on the health status of the entire county.

Education and Employment

Education and Employment Opportunity have a significant impact on the economic well-being of a region by themselves. When looked at together they have an even more profound impact on poverty and an individual’s ability to achieve self-sufficiency.

Education - Education in Washington County is provided through early childhood/daycare, primary and secondary education opportunities. The Southern Adirondack Child Care Network (SACCN) reports that in addition to EOC’s Head Start program there are 2 Center Based early learning/day care centers, and 50 Family Care Centers (down from 71 in 2012, a drop of 30%). There is limited access to early childhood and daycare in the Towns of Salem and Whitehall. SACCN also estimates that there should be a shortage of Day Care slots based on the number of children in the county, however demand for services, high cost of the services themselves and lack of availability of child care in evening or third shift hours reduce demand and have created vacancies in existing day care programs.

School District	Total # of Slots	# of Sessions/Classrooms	Notes
Argyle	No Pre K	0	
Cambridge	18	1 (AM)	Fully Enrolled at 18*
Fort Ann	36	2 (1 AM/1 PM)	Under-enrolled at 24*
Fort Edward	36	2 (1 AM/1 PM)	Under-Enrolled at 25*
Granville	36	2 (1 AM/1 PM)	Under-Enrolled at 34*
Greenwich	No Pre K	0	
Hartford	30	2 (1 AM/1 PM)	Under-Enrolled at 23*
Hudson Falls	144	8 (4 AM/4 PM)	Under-Enrolled at 88*
Putnam	No Pre K	0	
Salem	No Pre K	0	Planning to open UPK 2015-16 School Year
Whitehall	30	2 (1 AM/1 PM)	Under-Enrolled at 24*

*Pre-K Enrollment numbers as of 9/24/14

Table 11 – Pre K Availability and Vacancies

Pre-K programming is offered in 7 of the 11 school districts in Washington County. Pre-K is available for 4 year olds in preparation for entering kindergarten in the following year. EOC/Head Start also offers Pre-K learning for enrolled 4 year olds. 6 of the school based Pre-K programs struggle to keep full enrollment. Cambridge, the smallest program, is the only Pre-K program that is fully enrolled during the 14/15 school year. The enrollment issue is mirrored in the EOC/Head

Start program as well.

The economic downturn in 2008/2009, together with accessibility issues, contribute to these under-enrollment issues. Federal emphasis on Early childhood Learning and NYS investment in full day Pre-K are going to have a great impact on these programs in the coming years.

There are 11 Public School systems in Washington County. Total enrollment in 2013/14 was 8,587 with a graduation rate of 83%. Of the non-matriculating students, there were 61 “dropouts” throughout the county (8%, higher than the state average of 6%). The US Department of Education estimates that 13% of the population over the age of 16 in the county is lacking basic literacy skills.

Education Level plays a key role in opportunity within Washington County. The number of people with no high school diploma is less than the statewide average (14.84%), but the number of people with a high school diploma only is significantly higher than state or national averages (27.15%/28.12%). The availability of SUNY Adirondack contributes to a higher number of individuals with an Associates Degree than the averages for State and National achievement (8.43%/7.81%). Across the board, Veterans have a higher level of education attainment than found in the general population, presumably due to the availability of tuition payments, which makes college more affordable for this population.

Children in Foster Care - In June of 2015 there were 43 children in Foster Care in the County. Of the youth in care, 8 are under the age of 5. Two (2) of those children are enrolled in early childhood learning. Barriers to the remaining children being enrolled in early childhood learning such as Head Start are identified primarily as an inability to access services due to where the children live in the county. *Interview with Placement and Preventative Supervisor, Washington Co. DSS*

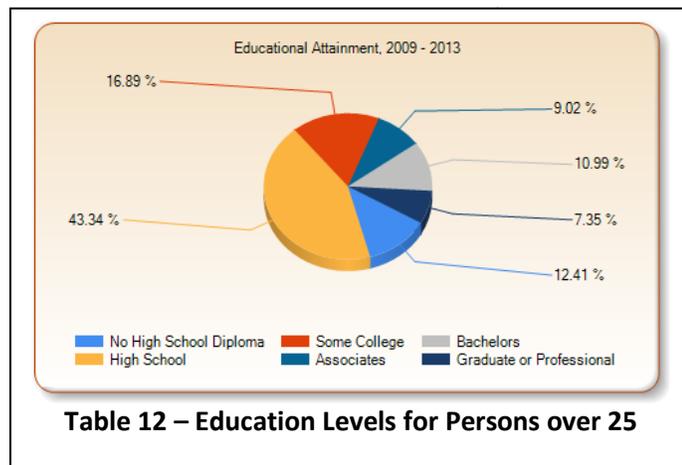


Table 12 – Education Levels for Persons over 25

The lack of individuals with Bachelors and Graduate Level Education is noted to be less about people not entering into 4 year and graduate programs and more about the availability of employment opportunities for that level of education. It is believed that individuals who have that level of education must locate in other areas to find employment in fields consistent with their level of education. This outmigration only serves to increase the percentage of High School diploma only persons in the population. Consistent with that belief, the largest number of college and graduate level people live in the Towns of White Creek, Cambridge, Greenwich and Easton. All of these towns are easily accessible to the Saratoga and the Capital District. Not included in census numbers is the number of persons who have trade specific training (ie welders, machinist, computer technicians, or Para- health professionals (CNA, HHA). While there are many businesses who are seeking employees with these specific skills there is a gap in

the availability of persons to fill those positions. Whether that gap is due to education, interest or accessibility is not clear, but it is evident that there are fewer opportunities for an unskilled, untrained workforce that has been prevalent as recently as 10 years ago.

Employment - 61.3% of the population over the age of 16 is considered to be in the workforce. 55% of those people are employed. Sixteen to Nineteen year olds have the highest unemployment rate at 32.2%. The overall employment rate in the Glens Falls area, which encompasses Washington County, at this time is 4.6%, lower than the statewide unemployment

Employment Sector	Number Employed	Median Income
Employed Over 16	28,549	\$31,075
Agriculture	1,006	\$23,554
Construction	2,739	\$34,950
Manufacturing	4,467	\$38,918
Wholesale	679	\$39,150
Retail	3,976	\$21,030
Transportation/Utilities	1,065	\$48,475
Information	347	\$17,813
Finance/Insurance	1,212	\$31,061
Professional/Scientific	1,528	\$29,828
Education/Health and Social Assistance	6,670	\$30,308
Entertainment/Leisure	2,020	\$12,085
Public Administration	1,777	\$56,250
Other Services	1,063	\$25,883

Table 13 – Employment by Job Sector with Median Income
2009/2013 American Community Survey, Industry by Sex and Median Earning in the past 12 Months. S2403

rate of 5.5% (June 2015). Manufacturing and Education/Health and Social Services are the predominant Job Sectors for Washington County Residents. Retail jobs and Entertainment and Leisure sectors (which include food service) have the lowest median income of all job sectors. The largest employers in Washington County are government organizations (Washington County, NYS Corrections and Public Schools). It is estimated that 50% of workers are working outside of Washington County.

Manufacturing jobs, while prevalent, are moving out of the county. Within the last 5 years, 2 large manufacturing providers have moved out of Washington County. One was a medical device manufacturer and the other is the anticipated closure of GE in Fort Edward in 2015/16. Both of these businesses have been historically good paying, secure, careers that relied on a largely unskilled workforce. Newer manufacturing in the region relies on a skilled workforce that necessitates some technical or post-secondary education by employees. Access to transportation infrastructure (rail and highway) within the county, as well as the lack of Broadband Internet, come together to create an environment that is neither supportive of, nor attractive to; manufacturing business.

Retail, Entertainment and Leisure jobs comprise 25% of the employment for county residents. However, these sectors provide median incomes below that necessary to access affordable housing in the County as outlined previously regarding income and affordable housing. Retail and Food Service jobs that may have at one time been available for youth are now being taken by older workers who lack the necessary skills or education level to move into the higher paying jobs.

Social Services and Supports

When a person is challenged by any of the causes or conditions of poverty as identified previously, it is natural and appropriate to reach out for assistance. Within Washington County the primary provider and funder of services within the social safety net is the county. SNAP, HEAP, TANF, WIC, and Older American Act Programming are all provided through agencies of the county government. Services for population groups such as youth, veterans and senior citizens, is also offered through county agencies. Government agencies are all physically located in the Towns of Hudson Falls and Fort Edward. While centrally located within the counties on the western border, the size of the county and that lack of transportation make access to services difficult.

EOC is the largest non-profit provider of supportive community social services that is physically located in Washington County (CSBG, Head Start, Weatherization and Work Force Investment). In addition to community based social services, there are 4 Nursing homes and 2 home care agencies located within the county. While there is a comprehensive regional network of service providers within the Glen Falls region, the majority are located in Warren County further limiting accessibility due to transportation issues. Programs and services that take the services to people locally bear a high cost to operate mobile programs. The physical distance between people in need of support in Towns such as Whitehall and Granville and the providers of services in Glens Falls leads there to be a perception of lack of services, when the reality is there are just limitations to access.

Needs and Priorities

Review of quantitative and qualitative data above identifies need and opportunities around affordable housing, transportation, education, workforce development and access to services. A survey of EOC consumers conducted in July of 2015 identified the following areas are priorities for those individuals seeking self-sufficiency. 164 responses were received based on potential surveys provided to approximately 650 individuals who received services from EOC (25% response). Responses could be provided online (through Survey Monkey), in person and/or by mail. The majority of responses were provided in person through our Career Center. The majority of respondents were employed or unemployed and looking for work. 63.7% had more than 3 people living in their household.

When consumers were asked to define the importance of each of those areas to them personally they identified access to health care (89.63%), access to grocery stores (89.57%) and employment opportunities (88.89%) as being very important or somewhat important to them. Other areas such as job skills training and affordable housing scored as very important or somewhat important to more than 80% of the respondents. Access to reliable transportation ranked the lowest of importance on a personal level.

When the customers were asked to identify how big a problem those same areas were to Washington County as a whole the emphasis shifted from very important to somewhat important or not a problem. Those areas identified as very important to Washington County were employment opportunities (34.36%), access to health care (26.99%) and access to reliable transportation (25%).

In *Bridges out of Poverty, Strategies for Professionals and Communities*, Ruby Payne et al, states that poverty is relative, that it exists only in relationship to known quantities or expectations. It holds that persons in relative poverty view their needs at a very personal and individual level – their problems are their problems. Given that understanding, it is easy to see how a group could very positively identify issues as “Very Important” or Somewhat Important” to them but not see those same issues as having the same level of importance to the world around them. ***The differences between the 2 responses speak to the isolation, both real and perceived, that distance and availability of services and supports imposes on individuals in need of assistance.***

The same issues were put forth in a survey to providers and community leaders in Washington County. Surveys links were provided to 250 providers both within the county and the region; 50 online responses were received across all provider categories (20%). 33% of respondents identified their primary population as families, 31.3% worked with adults, 16.7% worked with children (*it should be noted that the provider survey did not for identification of multiple client populations despite asking providers to identify all populations that they dealt with*).

When providers/community leaders were asked what areas were of importance to their primary populations they identified employment opportunities as very important for their

clients (79.9%), followed by, of equal importance affordable housing, health care and access to social services (75.5%). When providers and community leaders were asked to identify the importance of these issues to Washington County as a whole, affordable housing (89.6%), employment opportunities (83.3%) and health care (83.3%) ranked as most important. Very few of any of the identified issues were ranked as not important by providers. Other issues of importance to providers but not necessarily identified as one of the access issues discussed here included access to broadband, substance abuse and mental health services, housing repairs and population specific services for children and youth. In many cases these issues are or can be considered as part of the needs and gaps within the larger issues.

Taking into consideration this feedback, we identify the following areas of primary concern when addressing poverty in Washington County.

- **Access to Affordable Housing**
- **Access to Employment Opportunities**
- **Access to Health Care**

The solutions to these issues does not lie with one agency or program, but through a collective planning and multi-faceted response to each issue. It will be of equal importance that we not lose sight of the fact that while education and/or transportation might not rank as high in importance, we cannot make changes to Employment Opportunities or Health without continuing to support outcomes and changes in those areas as well.

While small, Washington County has many resources and programs that working together can make changes in these issues.

Affordable Housing – Numbers indicate there is clearly a lack of affordable rental properties, specifically for families. Vacancy rates in general housing stock are low enough to support the development and improvement of not just apartment complexes but houses that can be available for purchase and rent. Waiting lists for income based housing or HUD vouchers demonstrate a huge need in assistance to ensure access to housing.

Access to affordable housing also includes access to building renovation, repair to existing structures and home purchase programs that will allow low and moderate income families to move from rental to ownership. Right now housing programs are available throughout the county with varied funding and purpose. Countywide programs through agencies such as EOC, HomeFront Development and Rural Development work together to ensure persons in need of renovation and/or repair to existing housing stock have access to assistance.

Substandard housing must be addressed at the Town and Village level. Landlords can and should be accountable for the rental units that they provide and incentivized to offer quality housing at rates that are affordable for low and moderate income families.

As the population of Washington County ages and senior citizens begin to move out of their homes, more units will be available for purchase. Home values, taxes and repair costs will make home ownership a challenge. Programs to build individual and family resources sufficient

to make homeownership realistic are not readily available in Washington County. Education on saving for down payments and assistance with budget goals and bill paying to improve credit worthiness will help individuals and families work toward home ownership.

Employment Opportunities need to be developed that allow for greater employment in the job sectors that provide higher wages and benefits (manufacturing and construction). As noted in those areas Washington County has some infrastructure needs to consider to make the county attractive to new companies. Broadband internet access, and reliable road systems that will permit efficient and safe access to state and federal highways, must be developed to compete with surrounding counties and other regions of the state. Local government, Economic Development and Chambers of Commerce are actively working toward those goals.

The county is redefining its large agricultural economy by making efforts to redefine its crops and customers. While still predominantly a dairy county, shifts have been made to cultivate a “Farm to Table” economy with farmers growing produce locally that can then be sold directly to restaurants, grocery stores and consumers (through Farmers Markets). Accessing high quality local produce for low-income families is difficult, programs like WIC, SNAP and Farmers Market Coupons helps, but education to both the providers and users of these benefits is necessary to ensure both appropriate use and accessibility to the foods that they are designed to purchase. You cannot improve employment without ensuring that there is an appropriately skilled

EOC, together with BOCES and local Machine Tool Companies have successfully demonstrated the ability design and implement a training program to provide the necessary skills training to meet the business needs and guarantee employment to those completing the training.

workforce to fill the jobs being created. Business, working in tandem with Education providers and local workforce development groups, needs to identify specific skills and targeted training to ensure availability in the workforce. Public Schools and Community Colleges are working to promote the training and development of skills necessary to support STEM jobs (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). Skills development needs to be targeted to ensure that the jobs that people are trained for are available in the region, at a reasonable distance to allow

people to continue to live in Washington County. Developing skills that force people to move to other counties or regions to obtain employment will only increase the outmigration that is driving negative changes in some of our demographics.

Health Care needs are met by a established network of agencies, health care providers and government programs that routinely work together to address health care issues. The Adirondack Health Institute (AHI) is leading a current initiative to look at Health Issues and Disparities through the lens of the impacts of the issues discussed here and not look at simply disease status. In July of 2015, AHI brought together a broad spectrum of Community organizations to kick-off their grant targeted at “Population Health Improvement”, acknowledging that lack of access to health care and poor overall health status is a product of the social, cultural and infrastructure disparities of the communities involved.

Prior efforts to improve collaboration over health care access and outcomes have led to the development of a Regional Long Term Care Council that meets regularly and strategically to identify gaps and improve existing services for senior citizens. The Adirondack Rural Health Network continues to collect health assessment information and data across a 7 county region. The following priorities for Washington County based on their data are to 1) address Chronic Diseases due to complications Adult and Childhood Obesity, and disability and death due to Tobacco Use. 2) Address the Causes and Gaps in Substance Abuse and Other Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.

Nutrition Services, community organizations and educators, including Head Start meet regularly to identify ways to improve access to nutritious meals and Healthy Food options. To reduce dependency on Food Pantries we need to increase accessibility to Grocery Stores and Farmers Markets.

In the last year, Health, Social Service Providers and Law Enforcement have come together to address the rising use of Heroin and other illegal substances within the county. The Federal Government is targeting Federal Funding to regions highly hit with Heroin use – NYS is one of those high use areas.

In all areas of Health Improvement access to education and information regarding appropriate care, available services and insurance options plays an important role in improving health outcomes across all populations.

The Role of EOC and Community Partnerships

EOC's programs and services are a vital part of the Social Safety Net in Washington County. Within each of our programs we work hard to mitigate the causes and conditions of poverty by building supports and services that fill gaps and target problems for our customers. Within the identified area of concerns in this Community Assessment EOC has a role or is already addressing some of the issues identified.

Affordable Housing –

- EOC operates the Department of Energy (DOE) Weatherization Program and the NYSERDA/EMPOWER program providing energy related repairs to income qualified homes within the county. EOC works under contract to the Local DSS to make authorized Heating Repairs and Replacements to homes under the HEAP program. EOC meets regularly with HomeFront Development regarding the availability and coordination of countywide repair and remodeling programs and will be partnering with Homefront to assess and repair heating and energy measures in 3 income based housing units in the county – to insure that existing rental stock available to low-income residents is safe and efficient.
- EOC makes CSBG funds available to provide emergency payments to assist with rental and or heating payments when other funds are not available to families in danger of being homeless.
- EOC participates in the Homeless Coalition and is a member of the Saratoga-North Country Continuum of Care which looks at homelessness, and lack of supportive housing for persons with physical and mental disabilities.

Employment Opportunities

- EOC is the designated “American Job Center” under the Workforce Investment System, offering access to job openings, job search skills training. EOC offers WIOA services under contract with Washington County and is part of the Saratoga, Warren and Washington Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Board. EOC together with employment programs in all 3 counties, works with employers and educators and other required system partners to access, improve and deliver coordinated and targeted workforce development activities.
- EOC provided classes and educational resources to improve job search and interviewing skills to low-income and other unemployed individuals. CHOICES offers training to individuals who are seeking public assistance through DSS as a condition of the work requirement instituted under Welfare Reform. In 2014, EOC opened workshops to the general public on resume development, interviewing skills and job search in the new online job banks and social media world. In an effort for cross program collaboration within EOC programs, these workshops have been offered specifically to Head Start parents to allow them to learn skills to improve their employment opportunities.
- EOC offers year round supportive services to in-school and out of school youth to help them achieve a TASC (formerly GED) if they have dropped out of school, or gain work

experience by summer employment opportunities. Working with local governments, non-profits and community groups youth are able to obtain job skills and work experience that will allow them to move into other jobs in the work force. These paid summer jobs also allow low-income children to have access to their own money, many for the first time.

- EOC is in the final year of a 3 year grant to promote STEM jobs and training in the region. For the 3rd year the SWW WIB has offered a STEM camp to high school students to raise awareness of an interest in STEM jobs and the skills necessary to move into them.
- EOC coordinates and case manages training for individuals who have lost their employment due to foreign competition. Businesses who are closed or relocated due to the impact of foreign competition can be classified as Trade Act eligible. Employees who are laid off are able to access funds to retrain them in new fields that they can then find employment in. In 2014 EOC provided case management to 93 clients and authorized almost \$600,000 worth of training funds in fields such as nursing, machine tool, computer technician and transportation.

Health Care

- EOC provided Health and Mental Health Services to children and Families enrolled in the Head Start program. Annual screening identifies children who need assistance to access to Dental Care, immunizations or treatment for a chronic medical condition. For those families with identified gaps, Family Workers and Home Visitors arrange or provide transportation assistance to ensure that they get to the appointments.
- The Head Start program has a Nutrition Policy that promotes healthy eating and restricts access to junk food, candies and drinks. Home Visitors provide information and education to families about healthy diet and exercise that can be done at home to promote healthy activities for entire Head Start families.
- EOC Head Start and CSBG staff participates on the Nutrition Council to promote access to health food options throughout the county. Other partners on this coalition include WIC, DSS, and other community providers concerned with Food Security.
- EOC Head Start staff work with health insurance navigators at Adirondack Health Institute and the Southern Adirondack Independent Living Center (SAIL) to access health insurance coverage for children and families.
- EOC allocated additional financial resources to offer health insurance coverage to a higher percentage of its own employees under the requirements of the Affordable Care Act in 2014. While EOC has historically offered health insurance to employees – the costs in programs such as Head Start were prohibitive to staff working part of the year or at characteristically low hourly rates. EOC worked with its insurance broker and the health navigators to assist staff in accessing health insurance through the exchange if they were eligible for subsidies.
- EOC is a member on the Warren, Washington and Hamilton County Long Term Care Council. This Council reviews and identifies needs and gaps in the service

network to ensure comprehensive access to supports for Aging and Disabled populations under the NYCONNECTS initiative.

- EOC is part of a network of community providers that seeks to provide transportation services to areas not served by the GGFT. EOC provides transportation for medical and social purposes to county residents over 60 under a contract with the County OFA/ADRC. EOC is also an authorized Medicaid transportation provider and provides medical transportation to Medicaid eligible residents. In 2014/15 EOC provided 2400 trips to medical appointments for Washington County residents. Other providers of transportation services for medical purposes in Washington county are RSVP (retired Senior Volunteer Program) through the Tri-County United Way and the Conking Center. Program and population specific transportation through Early Intervention, Veterans Services and residential long term care providers round out a transportation network.
- EOC operates a Food Pantry and works with the other food pantries in Washington County to address food availability to meet local needs. As noted, all food pantries have significant use and difficulty maintaining adequate food supplies to meet demand. In the Fall of 2014, EOC worked in collaboration with CWI, DSS, the United Way and community services providers to “Stuff a Bus” with food resources for the holiday season. EOC was then responsible to ensure that the supplies from this drive were distributed to all of the food pantries in Washington County.

Educational achievement and skills development have huge impacts on our residents’ abilities to access Employment Opportunities or maintain a healthy life style. The school readiness activities of the Head Start and Early Head Start lay a solid foundation for low income children and their families around learning, health and nutrition. The holistic structure of the Head Start model offers opportunities to improve economic status (ie move out of poverty) by working to improve the social, cultural and medical impacts on an individual that can lead to a continued cycle of poverty. Head Start embodies engagement and participation by enrolled families through volunteerism in program activities, oversight and structured family activities.

The success of the Head Start Program demonstrates that no problems are solved by improving a single dimension by itself, but by offering supports and changes across the spectrum of problems.

Agency Priorities and the Strategic Process

No single program or services is going to fully address poverty in Washington County, a consistent planned response that targets all of the causes and conditions of poverty will, in the end, have the best chance of success.

EOC's strategic plan has identified 3 strategic priorities:

1. Agency Identification and "Brand"

There are numerous groups and coalitions that look at these issues on a larger regional basis, but there is no one group that looks just at the unique challenges that exist in Washington County. To that end, EOC will invite the Washington County community of providers, employers, educators, community leaders and faith based groups as well as consumers of services, to a round table conversation on poverty in the Fall of 2015. The purposes of this meeting will be:

- Develop a collective understanding of poverty and a vision of ways to diminish the impacts of poverty in Washington County.
- Communicate existing initiatives, programs and services; identify gaps and opportunities to work collectively and collaboratively across the service network.
- Move forward with the identification of needs and opportunities that could be undertaken to improve the causes and conditions of poverty that have impacts in Washington County.

2. Staff Recruitment, Retention and Development

Understanding the condition of poverty is fundamental to understanding and working for people who live in poverty. EOC's programs and services all seek to impact the causes and conditions of poverty. To date there is no accepted agency wide paradigm that supports a comprehensive understanding of poverty. *Bridges Out of Poverty* is an evidenced based training model that cultivates an understanding of the culture of poverty and directs staff to interact with customers/clients not from their own personal view of need or circumstance but with a respect and value that begins with the customers view in mind. EOC will commit to training up to 2 staff positions to be *Bridges Out of Poverty* Trainers and begin agency wide staff training in January 2016. The long term goal will be to integrate the *Bridges* culture into all levels of program operations and incorporate the training into our orientation for all staff.

3. Programming Structure and Opportunities for Change

As programs and initiatives are put forth EOC will be an active participant in identifying skills and competencies required to implement those initiatives effectively. EOC does not need to be the provider of all services, but will support and work across the county to impact the causes and conditions of poverty. EOC will routinely evaluate goals and outcomes for all programs to ensure that they remain appropriate to support community needs. Based on Goals and Outcomes of current programs; when appropriate, EOC will allocated existing resources and redirect program operations to areas in which they can have an improved impact on poverty in the county.

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Acknowledgements

Adirondack Gateway Council, Glens Falls, New York, (2014-2015) for the provision of housing and transportation data

Support for this work is made possible through a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development FY11 Sustainable Communities Planning Grant.



"The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government."