



Union-Snyder
COMMUNITY ACTION
AGENCY



2020

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

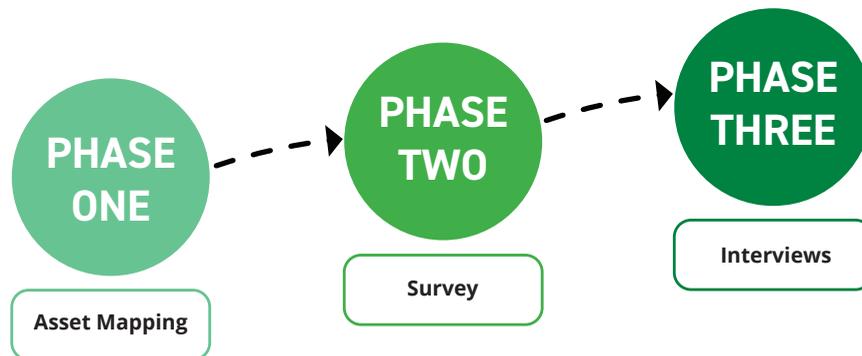
ABSTRACT

Visit www.union-snydercaa.org/cna for the complete report.

Union-Snyder CAA's 2020 Community Needs Assessment presents a list of priorities for the next three years, determined from three phases of data collection from residents of Union and Snyder counties.

Data collection began in June 2020 and ended in August 2020. The survey response rate was average with 256 respondents from both paper and online survey participation; 12% of survey respondents were individuals who reported an annual income of equal to or less than the federal poverty guideline.

Due to the preferred method of virtual data collection in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic - and the large number of Union and Snyder county residents without access to technology like the Internet - CAA's Community Needs Assessment Committee established new, creative channels to reach audiences while following proper CDC pandemic guidelines. Examples of our virtual outreach initiatives included phone and/or Zoom interviews, a social media and email campaign, and an anonymous survey station implemented at CommunityAid (local philanthropic thrift store), which included a QR code campaign for easy mobile survey completion.



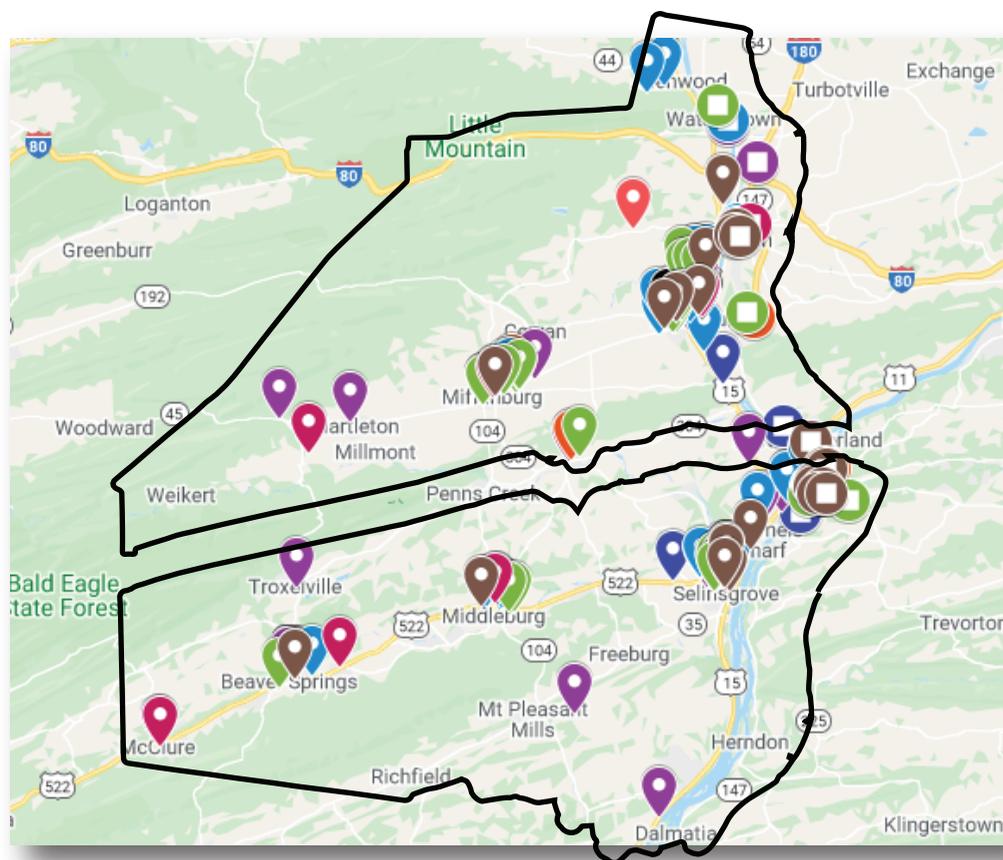
In analyzing all phases of the data collected during the 2020 Community Needs Assessment process, the following areas of need emerged as themes.

- **Access to Healthcare and Health Insurance / High Healthcare Costs**
- **More Good-Paying Jobs / Working But Not Making Enough Money**
- **Children's Success in School / Child Abuse & Neglect**
- **Mental Health Problems and Awareness**
- **Affordable Housing / Homelessness**
- **Substance Abuse**
- **Racial Discrimination**
- **Affordable Childcare**
- **Transportation**
- **Cost of Nutritious Food**

Phase One: Asset Mapping

In analyzing the results produced from the first phase of this Community Needs Assessment, the Committee identified the need to continue the Asset Mapping project to include Mapping Recommendations. **CAA will organize a subcommittee to complete a Mapping Recommendation subreport to highlight gaps in specific areas of the counties and inspire collaboration to fulfill unmet needs.** For now, the Committee has identified five example regional recommendations, inspired by the data collected through this Assessment process*: (1) **Regional transportation** solution(s) are a priority. (2) More resources are needed to support **housing insecure and homeless** Union and Snyder individuals and families. (3) The Asset Mapping phase demonstrates that there are ample **food resources** in both Union and Snyder counties, however, approximately 8,000 residents are currently food insecure, with an expected 5% increase as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic. (4) **The opioid epidemic** is affecting families across Union and Snyder counties, with limited drug treatment programs. A more concentrated effort to support individuals living with substance use disorder is needed. (5) **Childcare resources** in the region are both limited and financially unsustainable for families living with low income.

*Expanded recommendations found in the complete report at www.union-snydercaa.org/cna



View CAA's complete online interactive Union-Snyder Resource Map at www.union-snydercaa.org/resource-map

Phase Two: Surveys

Of the 256 responses collected in CAA's Community Needs Assessment survey phase, 30 respondents reported an annual income of equal to or less than the federal poverty guideline. The following depicts a deeper analysis of data collected by these 30 respondents living with low income.



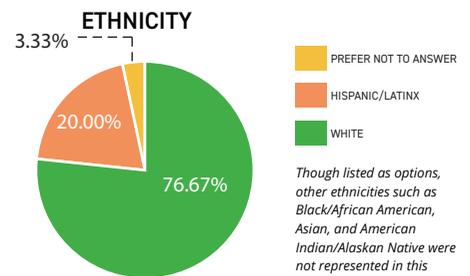
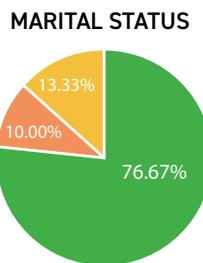
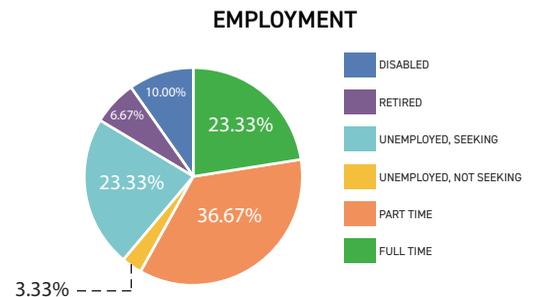
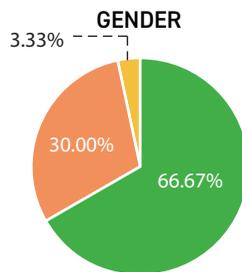
12% OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED LIVING WITH LOW INCOME

THE AVERAGE DEMOGRAPHIC OF THIS SUBSET WERE WHITE, FEMALE, AGE 40, LIVING IN THE 17837 ZIP CODE.

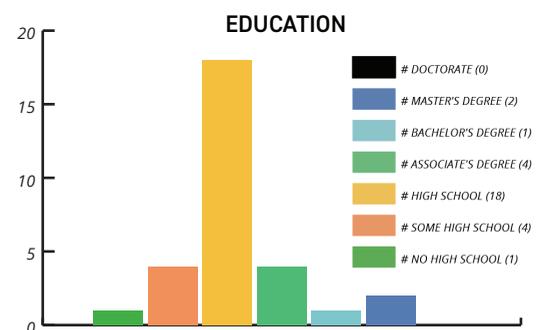
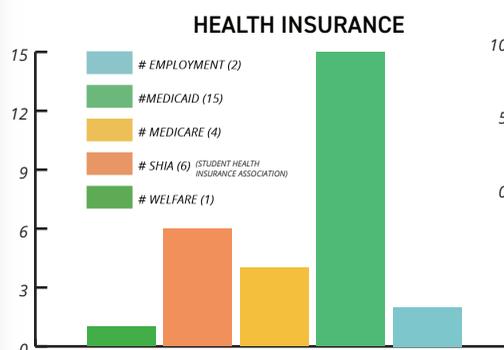
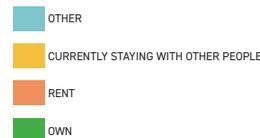
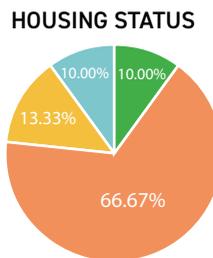
MOST RESPONDENTS REPORTED BEING SINGLE, RENTING, AND WORKING PART-TIME. THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION REPORTED WAS A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

MOST RESPONDENTS HAD HEALTH INSURANCE. MEDICAID WAS THE MOST FREQUENT SOURCE.

53.33% KNOW HOW TO FIND ASSISTANCE. 46.67% DO NOT.



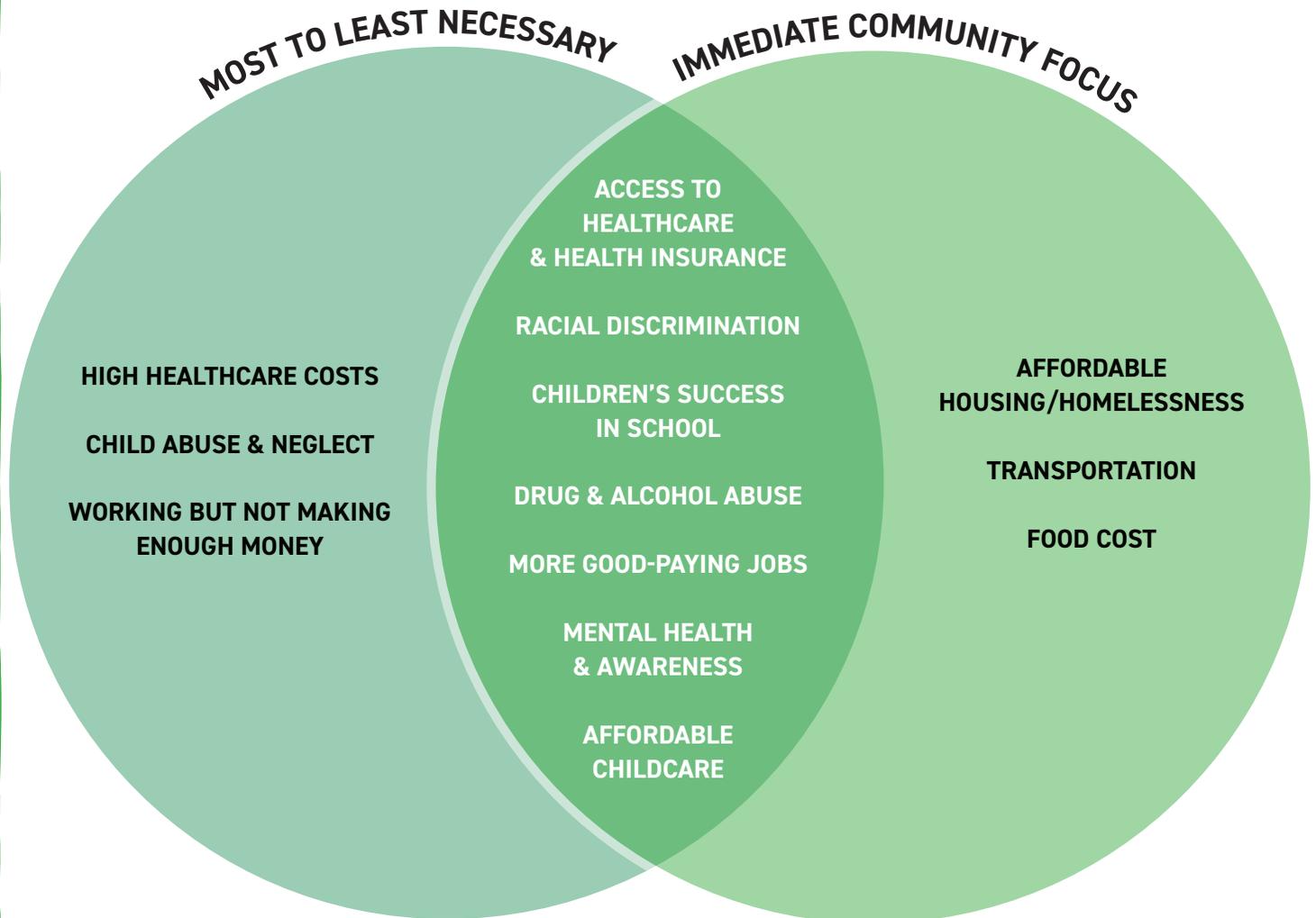
Though listed as options, other ethnicities such as Black/African American, Asian, and American Indian/Alaskan Native were not represented in this poverty data.



Phase Two: Surveys

Ranked Lists of Concerns

The following Venn diagram illustrates the relationship between the top 10 community-reported issues from both questions 32-33 of the survey, which asked participants to first rank issues in order of most to least necessary to address (#32), and then write-in the top issue that the community should place immediate focus on in addressing(#33). These issues will take priority for CAA to address in partnership with community organizations, in no particular order of urgency.



The below is a list of themes that emerged regarding the barriers that stand in the way of accessing programs and services in the region:

- **TRANSPORTATION:** The lack of public transportation in Union and Snyder counties makes it difficult, and often impossible, for people to access programs and services in the rural region.
- **ELIGIBILITY:** Several respondents shared that the eligibility criteria for existing assistance programs is too stringent and exclusionary.
- **AWARENESS:** Respondents shared that there seems to be a lack of understanding of issues related to poverty in the region as well as awareness of the programs that exist to provide assistance.
- **OPTIONS:** Respondents shared concern that there is not enough diversity and/or quality in options for assistance in the Union/Snyder region.

Phase Two: Surveys

COVID Needs Assessment

In March of 2020, our community was suddenly impacted by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It didn't take long to recognize that the implications of this global health pandemic would go beyond the hospital room and effect our local economy, education, employment, and need for basic services. CAA modified its routine Community Needs Assessment to better understand the new reality of Union and Snyder residents in relation to the pandemic.



Below is a list of themes that emerged regarding the impact of missing or limited resources during COVID-19:

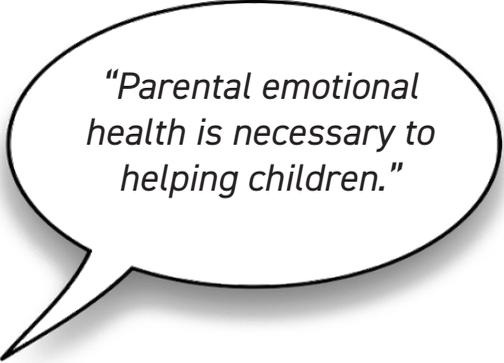
- CHILDCARE
- WORK
- TRANSPORTATION
- MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS
- CHURCH
- SCHOOL
- RECREATION
- GROCERY STORES
- FOOD
- LIBRARY ACCESS
- SOCIALIZATION
- FINANCES
(E.G. TAX REFUND DELAY)

Phase Three: Interviews

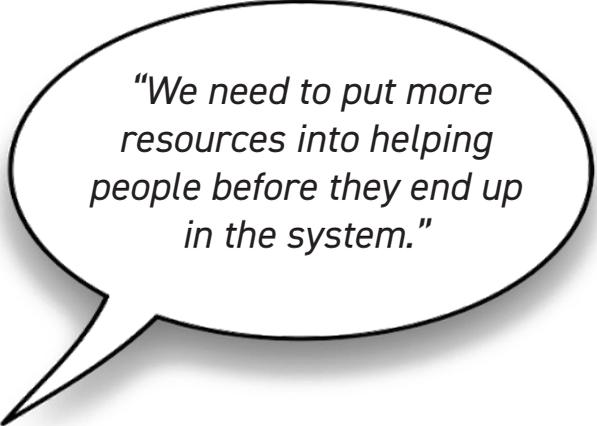
Phase Three of the 2020 Community Needs Assessment consisted of one-to-one key informant interviews as well as community focus groups. The purpose of this final stage in CAA's data collection process was to provide an additional anecdotal layer of information to complement and fill in gaps left by the previous phases.

Key Informant Interviews

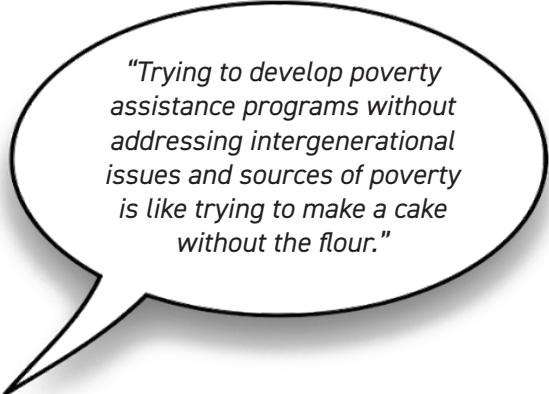
- 1** The first key informant interviewee was a Snyder County resident and mother receiving services from one of CAA's partner agencies. A major theme of the conversation surrounded the health and well-being of children as well as the need for more resources for parents to manage their own stresses.
- 2** The second key informant interviewee was a Snyder County elected official. A major theme of the conversation surrounded the need for efficient distribution of resources as well as the issues that restraints on public assistance programs have that prohibit proactivity in services (e.g. people need to wait until their need is urgent until needs can be met).
- 3** The third and final key informant interviewee was a Union County resident and service provider for Union, Snyder, and Northumberland counties. A major theme of the conversation focused on the significance that mental health and wellness has on the "symptoms of poverty". This interview looked deeply into the uniqueness of poverty in the immediate region.



"Parental emotional health is necessary to helping children."



"We need to put more resources into helping people before they end up in the system."



"Trying to develop poverty assistance programs without addressing intergenerational issues and sources of poverty is like trying to make a cake without the flour."

Phase Three: Interviews

Focus Groups

1 The first virtual focus group consisted of two females and one male facilitator. The discussion ranged from poverty's effects on children's school experience and overall mental health to how and why should community members help others living with low income.

"The lack of knowledge about available services is the biggest obstacle to getting help."

"[Many people in the area have] the bootstrap mentality - that is, 'I'm working hard for my stability, so you can, too'."

"In this area, people are one flat tire away from poverty."

"Poverty is a cruel cycle that bleeds into every aspect of life..."

"In addition [to the obvious effects of financial instability on physical and mental health], poverty is cyclical in generations because children are taught from a young age."

2 The second and final virtual focus group also consisted of two females and one male facilitator. The discussion began with the immediate acknowledgement of the "hidden poverty" that is unique to the region. Additionally, the philosophy that people are reluctant to ask for help. "It's not the stereotypical homeless population [in Union and Snyder counties]," commented one participant. "It's not people that are necessarily even out of work. A lot of it is people that are working and they have kids and just don't quite make enough money to cover it all."

"A lot of measures that are put in place are a stop-gap and don't address root causes of the problem."

"[Our community struggles with] university-sponsored gentrification."

"A lack of resources keeps people in the cycle, which leads to coping mechanisms, like substance abuse, that further keep people in the cycle."

"There's too much noise to build trust in the institutions that are supposed to be there to help people. This lack of trust is the quintessential piece of the cycle [of generational poverty]."

ACTION ITEMS

2020-2023



- CAA staff will be trained and educated on the various health assistance programs that could be a viable option for their customers to pursue.
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- CAA will remain in partnership with the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way by supporting and assigning select staff members to regularly participate in its Diversity & Inclusion Impact Council to connect with community members and local agencies dedicated to reducing racial discrimination in our region.
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- CAA will seek opportunities for creative collaboration with SUMMIT and area school districts to ensure child wellbeing and success, in addition to continuing to offer parenting support through our self-sufficiency programs.
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- CAA will re-evaluate its employment skills curriculum to emphasize basic life skills as well as action steps towards achieving positive mental health, including treatment, with the end goal of long-term employment in mind.
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- CAA will re-evaluate its approach to delivering housing assistance programs to ensure a full-person approach to achieving self-sufficiency and long-term success.
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- CAA will explore diversified funding streams to better support more people with general transportation assistance, which includes car repairs, purchases, and gas.
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- CAA will organize a subcommittee to complete a Mapping Recommendation subreport to highlight gaps in specific areas of the counties and inspire collaboration to fulfill unmet needs.