

**August
2023**

**INTERIM
UPDATE**

**ASHTABULA
COUNTY
COMMUNITY
NEEDS
ASSESSMENT**



www.accaa.org

Overview

The mission of Ashtabula County Community Action Agency (ACCAA) is to help people achieve self-sufficiency and rise above issues of poverty. In order to accomplish our mission, we must provide programs that address verified and local needs and fill gaps in services or resources to meet those needs.

Every three years, Community Action Agencies are required to complete a comprehensive analysis of conditions to identify existing and emerging community needs. The most recent ACCAA Community Needs Assessment was published in August 2021 and is available at our website at: www.accaa.org. The 2021 ACCAA Community Needs Assessment found the following to be the top-five needs of the county: drug/alcohol use, poverty, lack of jobs, crime, and run-down housing.

This report, however, serves as an interim update and features high-level information from various data sources and other recent community needs assessments. This report acts as merely a “check in” on the needs and services, especially as we continue mitigation of the COVID-19 pandemic. A full, comprehensive community needs assessment will take place in 2024.

Ashtabula County Community Profile

The table below shows various data points for Ashtabula County, Ohio and was compiled by the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies (OACAA) in their *2023 State of Poverty in Ohio Report*.

Population Metric	Ashtabula County Estimate
Total population, 2021	97,337
Percentage population change, 2016-2021	-0.8%
Percentage minority population, 2021	7.9%
Poverty rate, 2021	15.7%
Percentage of population below 200% Federal Poverty Level	41.0%
Median household income, 2021	\$48,916
Percentage of population receiving SNAP benefits, 2021	18.2%
Percentage of population who are enrolled in Medicaid, 2021	37.2%
Percentage of population with no health insurance, 2021	9.6%
Unemployment rate, 2021	5.5%
Percentage of renters cost-burdened, 2021	53.6%
Percentage of owners cost-burdened, 2021	18.5%

Sources: 2023 State of Poverty in Ohio Report, OACAA; U.S. Census Bureau; Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates; American Community Survey; and Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Needs by Domain

Housing

The current median home value in Ashtabula County, OH is \$168,213. This is up significantly from \$117,200 in 2020. Based on the most available U.S. Census data, 71.6% of the housing units in Ashtabula County were occupied by their owner. This aligns with data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) *Out of Reach* report which lists renters at 28% of the county. The NLIHC provides information regarding income needed to afford various rental units based on bedroom size. Looking at the chart below, you can see that each income listed is above the 100% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) based on bedroom needs of the household (see Appendix A for the Federal Poverty Level). This suggests those living under the FPL cannot afford rent prices.

Annual Income Needed to Afford Rent by Bedroom Type, Ashtabula County:

Bedroom Size	Annual Income Needed
Efficiency/Zero Bedroom	\$21,240
One Bedroom	\$24,680
Two Bedroom	\$31,760
Three Bedroom	\$40,480
Four Bedroom	\$44,760

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition *Out of Reach* Report, <https://nlihc.org/oor>

Even if housing units are affordable, there remains a housing stock issue in Ashtabula County. The Ashtabula County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board Needs Assessment from January 2023 states, “housing is consistently an issue for persons with behavioral health disorders... even those who are eligible to receive assistance, such as housing vouchers, are unable to find available safe and affordable housing.” This lack of housing affordability and availability is certain to contribute to homelessness in the county. In 2022, the Point in Time count estimated forty-four individuals were homeless by accessing resources, such as emergency shelter and transitional shelters, and another nineteen individuals were unsheltered.

Food/Nutrition

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life. This can be a temporary situation for a family or can last a long time. In Ashtabula County, as estimated 16% of households are food insecure, with nearly 22% of children food insecure. These numbers are similar when compared to Ohio as a whole.

When asked what information respondents needed in the Ashtabula County 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment, the second highest answer was food assistance. As reported later in more detail, 9% of all 2-1-1 Ashtabula County inquiries stated their main reason in reaching out

was for food assistance. The data table in the community profile section at the beginning of this report states that 18% of the Ashtabula County population receives the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and 53% of public-school students K-12 are enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch.

Low-income and underserved areas often have limited numbers of stores that sell healthy foods. The Food Environment Index combines the percentage of the population that is low-income and has low access to a grocery store and the percentage of the population that is food insecure. The index ranges from 0 (worst) to 10 (best) and equally weights the two measures. Ashtabula County's most recent Food Environment Index was a score of 6.7, just slightly under Ohio's score of 6.8 but over one point less than neighboring Lake County, OH with a score of 7.7

Poverty/Self-Sufficiency

Based on the most recent U.S. Census Data, 15.7% of Ashtabula County households are in poverty (compared to 13.4% in Ohio overall). Further, nearly a third of Ashtabula County youth are living in poverty. Poverty is generally defined by the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The Institute for Research on Poverty states that the FPL is determined by comparing pre-tax cash income against a threshold that is set at three times the cost of a minimum food diet and adjusted for family size. This measurement was developed in the mid-1960's and while still largely used to define poverty, may not be telling the entire story.

The Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies (OACAA) points to a modernized look at poverty through the Self-Sufficiency Standard. The Self-Sufficiency Standard is a measure that identifies the minimum amount of income a household would need to adequately meet their basic needs without receiving any additional public or private assistance. A family of two adults and two school-aged children in Ashtabula County would need an annual wage of \$59,755 to be self-sufficient. This is nearly a 50% increase in income needed when compared to the FPL of \$30,000 for a household of four (see Appendix B for more details).

As one could imagine, poverty is linked significantly to decreased health and other outcomes. Based on the Ashtabula County 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment, those with lower incomes are more likely to have depression, have poor physical health days, and have been diagnosed with coronary heart disease. In a community poll of local leaders from the same health needs assessment, poverty in Ashtabula County can often be the result of poor paying jobs, generational or institutional poverty, and mental health and/or substance use issues.

Health

As already noted, the Ashtabula County 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment is a recent and leading source in healthcare needs in the county. This report lists the most important health issues as: COVID-19, substance use and mental health issues, lack of access to medical care, and obesity. The main barriers to healthcare from their research were: lack of health care resources and sufficient health insurance, poverty, and lack of education/attitudes in improving

health issues. The leading cause of mortality in Ashtabula County is heart disease, followed by cancer.

The 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment further explains some of the access barriers in greater detail. A major barrier in accessing care is due to lack of local options and/or lack in transportation. It states the ratio of Ashtabula County physicians is 1 to every 1,072 Ashtabula County residents. This figure is significantly higher than the 1 to 299 ratio in the state of Ohio overall. In 2022, 50% of respondents in their assessment indicated they traveled outside of Ashtabula County for healthcare (most commonly to see a specialist). Another barrier noted in their report was in lack of telehealth access. They state 12% of the county do not have access to a computer and 17% of the county do not have access to the internet. Some of these figures can be the result of lack of broadband access across the county, which is a project that local leaders are actively working on.

Another striking finding in the health needs assessment points to increase mental health issues among the county's youth population. Nearly 20% of youth surveyed in the OHYES! (Ohio Youth Survey) reported seriously considering suicide in the past year. This number is alarmingly high. The Ashtabula County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board Needs Assessment published in January 2023 states that a national poll of 600 youth, aged 6-18, found that 78% felt the COVID-19 pandemic had increased their stress levels and 69% reported increased feelings of loneliness. Community leaders point to trauma and social issues as causes in this increase of mental health concern, especially exacerbated by the pandemic.

Employment

U.S. Census data states that 56.7% of the population age 16+ in Ashtabula County are in the civilian labor force. Based on the most recent data from June 2023, Ashtabula County had an unemployment rate of 3.8% (up slightly from the state of Ohio overall at 3.3%). The *Ohio Economic Profile for Ashtabula County* published by the Office of Workforce Development in July 2021 lists the following as the top-five occupation sectors in the county: manufacturing (27.5%), healthcare and social assistance (20.5%), accommodation and food service (8.8%), educational services (8.7%), and retail (8.7%).

This report also lists a count of online job advertisements. These act as a snapshot of one aspect of the labor market and provides a look at labor demand by industry. Some of the top listings are below.

Online Job Postings by Industry, 2020

Industry	Count of Ads
Healthcare and Social Assistance	1,162
Retail	770
Transportation and Warehousing	377
Administrative and Support for Waste Management	301
Manufacturing	239
Accommodation and Food Services	229
Education Services	111

Source: *the Ohio Economic Profile for Ashtabula County, July 2021*, <https://ohiolmi.com>

Education

Less than 15% of Ashtabula County residents hold a Bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to nearly 30% in Ohio overall. The combined high school graduation rates are also lower than the state averages and some do not meet the national goal of 90.7%. Though it is important to note that all public schools scored at least three stars (out of five) or more in “gap closing” which measures the reduction in education gaps and most of the schools scored at least three stars or more in “progress” which looks at growth compared to past performance.

High School Graduation Rates in Ashtabula County:

School District	%
Ashtabula Area City Schools	75.8%
Conneaut Area City Schools	84.9%
Buckeye Local Schools	89.9%
Geneva Area City Schools	91.3%
Jefferson Area Local Schools	98.2%
Grand Valley Local Schools	97.1%
Pymatuning Valley Local Schools	90.7%

Source: *Ohio Department of Education, District Graduation Rates, 2022*, <https://reportcard.education.ohio.gov>

The Health Policy Institute of Ohio connects those with less than a high school degree with other issues. Their 2021 Equity Profile states:

- High school graduation is 3.3 times worse for people with low incomes
- Adult depression is 1.8 times worse for people with less than a high school education
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are 2.1 times worse for children with parents with less than a high school degree and
- Those without a high school degree were 1.8 more times likely to be a disconnect youth (youth age 16-24 who are neither working nor in school)

Another need regarding the education domain in recent reports was the effect of pandemic learning loss. The 2023 State of Poverty in Ohio conducted by OACAA says Ohio student test scores in both math and reading declined from 2019 to 2022. The report states that lower-income student test scores dropped by 10.2%, compared to 6.4% for higher-income students. Furthermore, OACAA highlights that school pandemic challenges may have disproportionately affected lower-income learners, such as: school closures, remote learning, food insecurity, and broadband access.

2-1-1 Ashtabula County Data

One of the programs administered by ACCAA is the 2-1-1 Ashtabula County program. 2-1-1 is a 24/7 information & Referral (I&R) program that connects inquirers to social, health, and social service programs. Contacts are made to 2-1-1 by phone, text, email, and outreach. This program provides valuable insight by tracking the needs and referrals of those who inquire. Information was pulled to compare and contrast needs by inquiries from 2021 and 2022, most specifically to see what needs may have changed since the last full community needs assessment was conducted.

2-1-1 Ashtabula County Needs, 2021 VS. 2022

Percentage of Inquiries by Need Category:

Need Category	2-1-1 Data in 2021	2-1-1 Data in 2022	% Change
Arts, Culture, & Recreation	<1%	<1%	N/A
Information Services	6%	2%	-4%
Volunteers & Donations	<1%	1%	N/A
Clothing, Personal, Household Needs	8%	11%	+3%
Disaster Services/COVID Infoline	6%	<1%	-5%
Education	1%	1%	N/A
Employment	<1%	<1%	N/A
Food & Meals	7%	9%	+2%
Healthcare	7%	6%	-1%
Housing	20%	21%	+1%
Income/Financial Support	4%	2%	-2%
Individual, Family, and Community Support	7%	10%	+3%
Mental Health/Substance Use	1%	2%	+1%
Other Government & Economic Services	2%	2%	N/A
Transportation	2%	3%	+1%
Utility Assistance	25%	28%	+3%

**Information may not equal 100%, due to <1% in certain categories*

Observations:

The 2-1-1 Ashtabula County program did not see an overwhelming change in inquiries by category from 2021 to 2022. The largest change was seen in “Disaster Services,” but could be explained by drop in COVID-19 related information calls that were tracked under this category. Calls in 2021 in this category were up for 2-1-1 Ashtabula County, marked notably by questions such as “where to get COVID-19 testing” and “where to get the COVID-19 vaccine(s)”. These calls dropped significantly in 2022 as access to both stabilized. General “Information Services” calls saw a 4% decrease. “Information Services” are programs that provide general information and include: information lines, library services, and services where no other specific category of need can be detected. The drop in these calls from 2021 to 2022 is most likely due to increased and targeted training within the 2-1-1 Ashtabula County program to better document inquiries into the best category. The next largest increases were 3% in both “Clothing, Personal, Household Needs,” and “Utility Assistance.” A possible reason for increase in “Clothing, Personal, Household Needs” could be the lack of donations taken in pandemic years, creating an overall lack in availability of items in local thrift stores and clothing banks. A possible reason for increase in “Utility Assistance” could be rising costs of utility bills and inflation.

Summary

In reviewing data and other partner agency community needs assessments, it can be concluded the following community needs by domain remain present:

- Housing – Ashtabula County lacks safe, affordable housing. Both owners and renters are cost-burdened.
- Food/Nutrition – A portion of Ashtabula County residents are food insecure and lack access to grocery stores, with an even larger number of children food insecure and receiving Free and Reduced Lunch.
- Poverty/Self-Sufficiency – Ashtabula County has a higher poverty rate than the state average, with even more who are still not making ends meet.
- Health – Ashtabula County’s top health issues are COVID-19, substance use and mental health issues, lack of access to medical care, and obesity. These issues are compounded by barriers and poverty. There is an increase in mental health issues among youth, notably as a continued effect of the pandemic.
- Employment – The unemployment rate in Ashtabula County is generally in line with the state overall. The biggest industries are manufacturing, healthcare, and accommodation and food service.
- Education – Ashtabula County levels of college and high school graduation are lower than Ohio percentages. Lower education levels can lead to other negative outcomes in the other domains.

Current ACCAA Programs

2-1-1 Ashtabula County Information & Referral Program
Head Start of Ashtabula County
Emergency Energy Assistance Programs – Ashtabula County
Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program
Utility Assistance Plus Program (UAP)
Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP) – Ashtabula, Lake, and Geauga Counties
Minor Home Repair – Ashtabula County
New Hope Homeless Assistance Program
Senior Nutrition Program, including Meals on Wheels and Senior Dining Sites
Homemaker Program
WIC Program of Ashtabula County
Home Visiting of Ashtabula County
Dragon Empowerment Center (DEC) and other Community Learning Center partnerships
Upper DEC PLUS Program
Dolly Parton Imagination Library of Ashtabula County
Book Buddies
Affordable Connectivity Outreach Program
Career Summer Camp Program, including youth workforce partnerships

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Appendix A

2023 Federal Poverty Level

2023 Poverty Guidelines: 48 Contiguous States (all states except Alaska and Hawaii)

Per Year

Household/ Family Size	25%	50%	75%	100%	125%	130%	133%	135%	138%	150%	175%	180%	185%	200%
1	\$3,645	\$7,290	\$10,935	\$14,580	\$18,225	\$18,954	\$19,391	\$19,683	\$20,120	\$21,870	\$25,515	\$26,244	\$26,973	\$29,160
2	\$4,930	\$9,860	\$14,790	\$19,720	\$24,650	\$25,636	\$26,228	\$26,622	\$27,214	\$29,580	\$34,510	\$35,496	\$36,482	\$39,440
3	\$6,215	\$12,430	\$18,645	\$24,860	\$31,075	\$32,318	\$33,064	\$33,561	\$34,307	\$37,290	\$43,505	\$44,748	\$45,991	\$49,720
4	\$7,500	\$15,000	\$22,500	\$30,000	\$37,500	\$39,000	\$39,900	\$40,500	\$41,400	\$45,000	\$52,500	\$54,000	\$55,500	\$60,000
5	\$8,785	\$17,570	\$26,355	\$35,140	\$43,925	\$45,682	\$46,736	\$47,439	\$48,493	\$52,710	\$61,495	\$63,252	\$65,009	\$70,280
6	\$10,070	\$20,140	\$30,210	\$40,280	\$50,350	\$52,364	\$53,572	\$54,378	\$55,586	\$60,420	\$70,490	\$72,504	\$74,518	\$80,560
7	\$11,355	\$22,710	\$34,065	\$45,420	\$56,775	\$59,046	\$60,409	\$61,317	\$62,680	\$68,130	\$79,485	\$81,756	\$84,027	\$90,840
8	\$12,640	\$25,280	\$37,920	\$50,560	\$63,200	\$65,728	\$67,245	\$68,256	\$69,773	\$75,840	\$88,480	\$91,008	\$93,536	\$101,120
9	\$13,925	\$27,850	\$41,775	\$55,700	\$69,625	\$72,410	\$74,081	\$75,195	\$76,866	\$83,550	\$97,475	\$100,260	\$103,045	\$111,400
10	\$15,210	\$30,420	\$45,630	\$60,840	\$76,050	\$79,092	\$80,917	\$82,134	\$83,959	\$91,260	\$106,470	\$109,512	\$112,554	\$121,680
11	\$16,495	\$32,990	\$49,485	\$65,980	\$82,475	\$85,774	\$87,753	\$89,073	\$91,052	\$98,970	\$115,465	\$118,764	\$122,063	\$131,960
12	\$17,780	\$35,560	\$53,340	\$71,120	\$88,900	\$92,456	\$94,590	\$96,012	\$98,146	\$106,680	\$124,460	\$128,016	\$131,572	\$142,240
13	\$19,065	\$38,130	\$57,195	\$76,260	\$95,325	\$99,138	\$101,426	\$102,951	\$105,239	\$114,390	\$133,455	\$137,268	\$141,081	\$152,520
14	\$20,350	\$40,700	\$61,050	\$81,400	\$101,750	\$105,820	\$108,262	\$109,890	\$112,332	\$122,100	\$142,450	\$146,520	\$150,590	\$162,800

Source: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>

Appendix B

OACAA Self-Sufficiency Standard Example



SELF SUFFICIENCY STANDARD

Self Sufficiency Report for Jane's household living in Ashtabula County. The residents in this household include 2 adult(s) and 2 child(ren).

EXPENSES	
Housing Costs	\$738
Child Care Costs	\$1,178
Food Costs	\$841
Transportation Costs	\$592
Health Care Costs	\$649
Miscellaneous Costs	\$544
Taxes	\$871

TAX CREDITS	
Earned Income Tax Credit	\$0
Child Care Tax Credit	(\$100)
Child Tax Credit	(\$333)

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SELF SUFFICIENCY	
Hourly Self Sufficiency Wage	\$14.15
Monthly Self Sufficiency Wage	\$4,980
Annual Self Sufficiency Wage	\$59,754.90
Emergency Savings	\$115.84

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