

Rensselaer County Community Needs Assessment

2023





2023 CEO Community Needs Assessment

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Introduction

CEO (Commission on Economic Opportunity for the Greater Capital Region, Inc.) is the designated Community Action Agency serving Rensselaer County in New York. Incorporated in 1965 in response to President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, CEO is part of a larger network of Community Action Agencies (CAAs) across the nation. CEO and other CAAs promote community economic development through partnerships and inter-agency collaborations while ensuring the causes and conditions of poverty are effectively addressed and to strengthen, promote, represent, and serve the Community Action Network.

CEO's mission is: *CEO develops partnerships and creates opportunities for growth and empowerment in our community.*

CEO offers services and programs to benefit the most vulnerable and low-income residents of Rensselaer County such as Head Start and Early Head Start for young children and families, Foster Grandparent Program for seniors 55 years of age and older as well as the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) services, Food Pantry, Community CARES services and the Weatherization Assistance Program to list a few.

CEO's Board of Directors is a tripartite board comprised of an equal number of Public Sector representatives (elected officials), Private Sector representatives and Consumer Sector representatives (individuals eligible to receive services). The Head Start and Early Head Start's governing body is the Policy Council comprised of parents, guardians and community representatives. Because of the unique composition of the governing bodies, CEO can meet the needs of the community on every level.

As a Community Action Agency, CEO is required to complete a Community Needs Assessment every three years. This Community Needs Assessment will be used as a vital tool within CEO to assess programming, present and future. The Community Needs Assessment is a public document available to the community at large on CEO's website www.ceoempowers.org and will be distributed to other non-profit, as well as, for-profit organizations and government entities throughout the Capital District area to illustrate the needs within our community.

The 2023 Community Needs Assessment found the greatest need in the following areas:

- **Early Childhood and Youth Services**
- **Education and Employment**
- **Health and Nutrition Services**
- **Safe and Affordable Housing**

The 2023 Community Needs Assessment also demonstrated a need for financial and emergency support as a broad category that spans across all the needs and categories noted above. In addition, as the community continues to experience the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is worth noting that the full effects are continuing to be felt by the low-income community. The needs identified cross over all of the areas of top need by exacerbating each in a variety of ways. Data and impacts of the pandemic will continue to be analyzed as available. The Community Needs Assessment explores in greater detail the current and future opportunities and challenges facing the low-income population in Rensselaer County. The key study objectives include the following:

- To conduct a Community Needs Assessment which considers the current met and unmet social, emotional, economic, and educational needs of Rensselaer County residents.
- To continue to work toward a comprehensive provision of services for all customers, and toward the expansion of resources to address community needs as identified through consideration of information in this Assessment.
- To develop a report that will guide future decisions about program design, self-evaluation, and the expansion of services into particular areas; and
- To develop a flexible document which can be used as a planning tool, as well as in support of future funding applications to meet current needs.

CEO would like to thank our many partners for their contributions to this Community Needs Assessment including, but not limited to, Troy Youth Alliance members, Catholic Charities, Rensselaer County, Kingdom Ministries, Joseph's House, CEO Board and Policy Council Members, Brightside Up, Circles of Mercy, St. Paul's Center, Vanderheyden, Troy and Lansingburgh School Districts, and YWCA. These partners represent various sectors including Community-Based Organizations, Faith-Based Organizations, Private Sector, Public Sector, and Educational Institutions.

Methodology

During the information-gathering process for this Community Needs Assessment, CEO included data from several sources to incorporate views and opinions from various facets of the target population. In addition to gaining insight into the needs and perceptions of those who are eligible for CEO services, it was determined to be important to understand the current needs of Rensselaer County's low-income individuals from the point of view of other community-based service organizations. Also deemed important were the needs and perceptions of those CEO staff members working directly, some daily, with low-income families and individuals throughout Rensselaer County.

Qualitative Data

Community Needs Surveys

A Customer Needs Survey with 38 questions was distributed to individuals and families who received CEO services during the months of October 2022-December 2022. 124 completed surveys were submitted. Among other questions, the survey asked what CEO customers see as their five greatest needs, what services exist to assist with those needs, what are the barriers preventing customers to obtaining services and what services would benefit their current circumstances.

A Community Needs Partner Survey was distributed to organizations across Rensselaer County providing services to the low-income population between November 2022 and January 2023. The distribution list included non-profit/community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, healthcare and educational organizations as well as government organizations. 19 completed surveys were received.

Focus Groups

Four Focus Groups were gathered independently between January 2023-February 2023 to discuss current needs in the county. One focus group consisted of the CEO Board and Policy Council; one included the Troy Youth Alliance; two were held in Head Start centers within the county, Lansingburgh and City of Rensselaer. All focus groups were asked the same questions regarding perceived needs, services available, barriers to those services and what they perceive as the root cause of poverty and the unmet needs throughout the community.

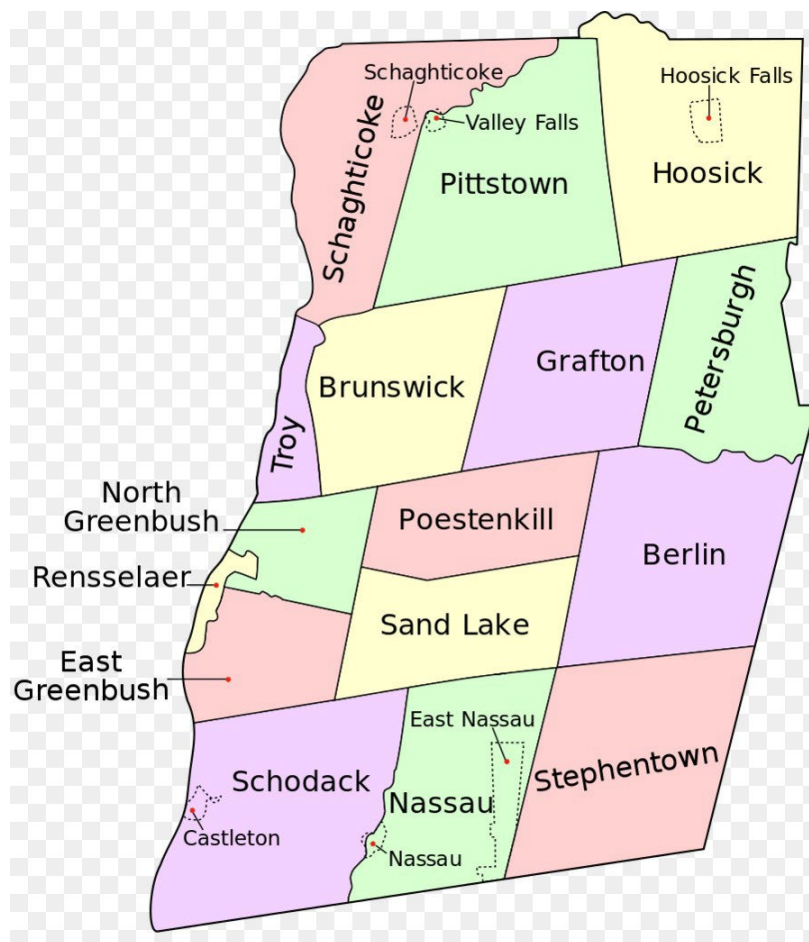
Quantitative Data

Quantitative data was obtained from several sources including the US Census Bureau, New York State Community Action Association, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Brightside Up, New York State Association of Training and Employment, United Way's ALICE Report, New York State Office of Children and Family Services, US Department of Labor, and New York State Education Department. This Community Needs Assessment data utilizes local, state, and national data sources. Pre-existing government and state data from the US Census Bureau and the American Community Survey, 2017-2021, was collected and analyzed using tools featured on New York State Community Action Association community needs data hub. A collection of draft reports and maps were generated through the data hub to capture data on the population demographics, income levels (household and per capita), poverty levels and rates, educational attainment, and employment in Rensselaer County over the past 3 years. Additional data on unemployment rates, health insurance coverage, top industries, free/reduced Lunch eligible students and childcare programs were outsourced from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, the New York State Department of Education School Report Card, and the open-source data platform Data USA.

Community Overview

Rensselaer County Regional Setting

Rensselaer County is located in the Capital Region of New York State, just east of the state capital city of Albany. The county covers a land area that is approximately 660 square miles and over 423,000 acres and is predominantly filled with rural and suburban communities, except for two cities (Troy and Rensselaer). According to population data taken from the 2020 U.S. Census, 161,130 residents called Rensselaer County their home in 2019. This population figure shows a slight increase compared to 2010 population data generated by the U.S. 2010 Census (159,429). The county demonstrated a lower population percentage increase at 1.07% than New York State (4.25%) from 2010 to 2020, as shown in table 2. The cities of Troy and Rensselaer represent the county's two major population centers with populations of 50,394 and 9,287 with densities reaching 4,962 and 2,897 persons per square mile respectively. Although most of Rensselaer County's services are in the city of Troy, a significant portion of the county residents live in the outlying suburban and rural towns and villages.



Demographics

Rensselaer County 10 Year Population Change

Population changes within the report area from 2010-2020 is shown below. During this ten-year period, total population estimates for the report area grew by 1.07 percent, increasing from 159,429 persons in 2010 to 161,130 persons in 2020.

Report Area	Total Population, 2010 Census	Total Population, 2020 Census	Population Change 2010-2010	Population Change, 2010-2020, Percent
Rensselaer County, NY	159,429	161,130	1,701	1.07%
New York	19,378,088	20,201,249	823,161	4.25%
United States	312,471,161	334,735,155	22,263,994	7.13%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2020. Source Geography: Tract

Population by Gender

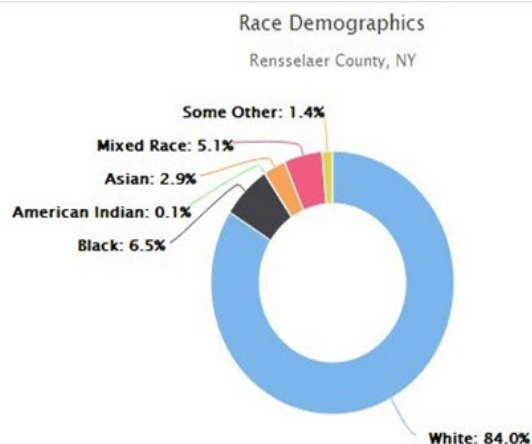
Population distribution of Rensselaer County residents from birth to 65 years and older by gender is shown below for 2021. During the last year the county observed a 49.34% to 50.66% ratio of male residents to female residents. The largest gender disparity is in the 65+ age group.

Population Age Cohort	Male	Female	Total
Age 0-4	4,218	3,939	8,157
Age 5-17	11,957	11,374	23,331
Age 18-24	8,866	7,071	15,937
Age 25-34	11,101	11,148	22,249
Age 35-44	9,930	9,913	19,843
Age 45-54	10,001	10,502	20,503
Age 55-64	11,450	11,930	23,380
Age 65+	11,459	15,208	26,667

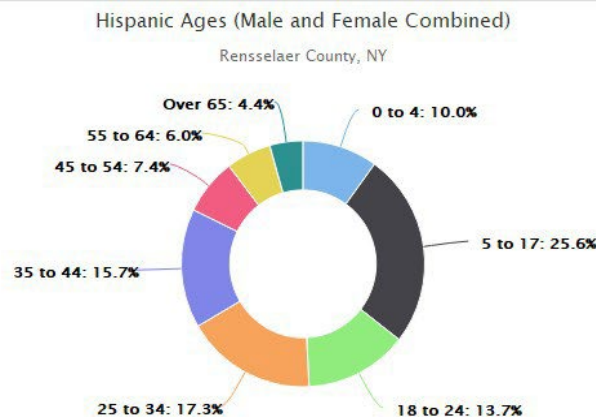
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2017-21. Source Geography: Tract

Race and Ethnicity

Population by race within Rensselaer County is shown below. According to ACS 2017-2021 5-year population estimates, the white population comprised 84.02% of the report area, the black population represented 6.53%, and other races combined were 4.36%. Persons identifying themselves as mixed race made up 5.1% of the population. Population by ethnicity and age for males and females combined within Rensselaer County is shown in the second table below. According to ACS 2017- 2021 5-year population estimates, 5.4% of residents in Rensselaer County are Hispanic or Latino.



Data Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey. 2017-2021



Data Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey. 2017-2021

Minority Population Percentage by Tract

According to ACS 2017-2021 5-year population estimates, the highest percentages of minorities in the county reside near the city communities. The City of Troy has reported minority population percentages as high as 31% and the City of Rensselaer 20.7%. The eastern ends of Schodack and Hoosick show a very small minority population at 4.1% and 2.5% respectively.

Household Composition

Rensselaer County Household Type and Size

Number of households and average household size by household type is shown below for Rensselaer County. According to American Community Survey 2017- 2021 5-year population estimates, Rensselaer County has a total of 66,341 households with an average household size of 2.32 persons. 42% of the households in Rensselaer County are occupied by a married couple who both act as the household head. At the same time, 40% of Rensselaer County households are considered nonfamily and have no designated head.

	Married- Couple Household	Male Head Household (Absent Wife)	Female Head Household (Absent Husband)	Nonfamily Household	All Household Types
Total Households	27,963	3,144	8,553	26,681	66,341

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2017-2021.

Rensselaer County Family Size and Household Type

According to American Community Survey 1-year estimates for 2021, Rensselaer County has a total of 40,162 families with an average family size of 2.93 persons. 24.8% of households have one or more persons under the age of 18 in them and 31.5% have one or more people ages 65 or over residing in the home.

Poverty

Living Wage

The living wage shown is the hourly rate that an individual must earn to support their family, if they are the sole provider and are working full-time (2080 hours annually). The Minimum Hourly Wage for the majority of New York counties is \$13.20. The chart below outlines that the current minimum wage in New York is not a living wage for any size household in Rensselaer County.

Report Area	One Adult	One Adult One Child	Two Adults	Two Adults One Child	Two Adults Two Children
Rensselaer County, NY	\$16.69	\$33.05	\$12.61	\$18.12	\$23.93
New York	\$20.05	\$37.46	\$14.29	\$20.33	\$26.50

Data Source: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, [Living Wage Calculator](#). Source geography: County

Poverty Rates for Rensselaer County

According to the US Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 10.4 % of all Rensselaer County residents lived in a state of poverty during the 2017–2021 period, using 100% of the Federal Poverty Guideline, which would be an annual income of less than \$27,750 for a household of four or \$13,590 for a household of one. Black or African Americans and those of Multiple Race were reported to have the largest percentage of children in living in poverty in Rensselaer County for the 2017-2021 period. Additionally, the percentage of Hispanic/Latino Rensselaer County children living in poverty was significantly higher than the percentage of non-Hispanic/Latino children.

Report Area	All Ages # of Persons	All Ages Poverty Rate	Age 0-17 # of Persons	Age 0-17 Poverty Rate	Age 5-17 # of Persons	Age 5-17 Poverty Rate
Rensselaer County, NY	15,925	10.4%	4,272	14.3%	2,795	12.8%
New York	2,401,141	12.7%	653,300	16.7%	460,210	16.3%
United States	38,371,394	11.90%	11,204,423	15.70%	7,798,566	14.90%

Data Source, US Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates. 2020

Poverty using 125% and 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline

According to the American Community Survey 5-year estimates 14% of individuals in Rensselaer County live below 125% of the Federal Poverty Guideline and 23.69% live below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline. As a point of reference, the annual income for a household of four to be at or below the 125% Federal Poverty guideline in 2022 is \$34,688 and annual income for a household of four at 200% of the Federal Poverty guideline is \$55,500; these amounts are significantly lower than the area median income in Rensselaer County for 2021 of \$76,731.

Poverty by School District

According to the American Community Survey 5 year estimates, the school districts with the highest rates of poverty, at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level in Rensselaer County are; Troy City School District (41.79%), Lansingburgh School District (39.11%), Hoosick Falls School District (34.84%), and Rensselaer City School District (29.4%).

Poverty by Gender

According to the American Community Survey 5 year estimates 2017-2021, poverty within Rensselaer County affected female residents slightly more than male residents, 59% Female compared to 41% Male.

Poverty by Race and Ethnicity

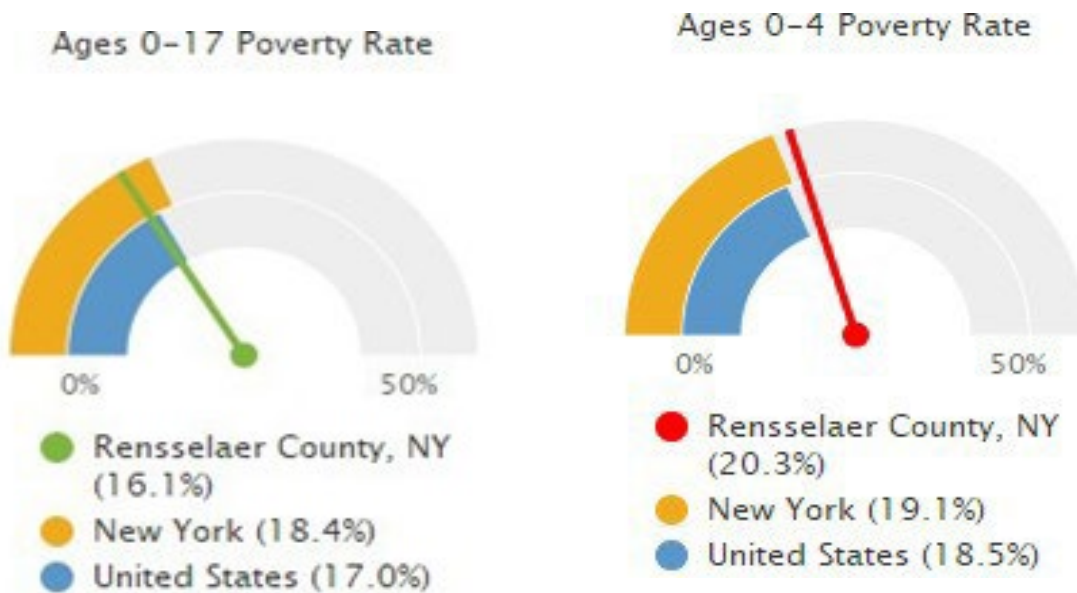
According to the American Community Survey 5-year estimates, poverty in Rensselaer County in 2020 was most prevalent among the Black or African American population (27.65%) followed by Native American or Alaska Native (24.22%). Furthermore, poverty was shown to significantly affect the Hispanic/Latino population (22.05%) more than the Non-Hispanic/Latino population (10.59%).

Poverty by Family Type

The American Community Survey 5-year estimates for 2017-2021 show that female headed households represent 61.6% of all households in poverty in Rensselaer County, compared to 25.1% of married couple households and 13.3% of male headed households as illustrated in the diagram below.

Child Poverty Rates ages 0-17

According to the American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 16.1% of youth ages 0-17 are living in a state of poverty. These data estimates also show that 20.3% of children ages 0-4 in Rensselaer County are living in poverty.



Key Findings

This section includes a detailed discussion of key indicators of well-being in Rensselaer County and its respective municipalities. Indicators are pieces of information, facts or statistics that provide insight into the condition of a population or community. Statistical data are offered in both table and narrative formats to provide a picture of the current status and the needs of families and children in Rensselaer County. There are many indicators used in assessing the quality of life experienced by community members throughout the county. The following is a snapshot of the broad range of data and key findings from the 2023 CEO Community Needs Assessment:

- The 2021 median household income for Rensselaer County was \$76,731;
- Communities with the lowest per capita household income are the Cities of Troy; the Towns of Berlin and Hoosick; and the Village of Hoosick Falls;
- The living wage that a single parent with one child would need to earn to support basic needs is \$33.05 hourly;
- Rensselaer County has a poverty rate of 10.4% for individuals and 16.9% for children under the age of 18;
- Child poverty is prevalent in many municipalities in Rensselaer County. As a whole, 20.3% of all children under 4 years of age live below the poverty level, which is down only slightly from 21.5% in 2020;
- The number of Rensselaer County residents receiving SNAP benefits is 14,934 in January 2022, this is up from 2020. SNAP Emergency Allotments due to the pandemic are slated to end in March 2023;
- 15.1% of Rensselaer County residents ages 18-24 have not received a high school diploma. Municipalities with high levels of low educational attainment include the Villages of Hoosick Falls and Lansingburgh, Rensselaer, and Troy;
- The average unemployment rate in Rensselaer County has steadily decreased from 4.4% in 2020 to 2.8% in 2023, with a peak unemployment of 5.6% in 2020 at the height of the pandemic;
- According to Brightside Up, Rensselaer County has a shortage of childcare center with 64% of households living in a childcare desert. In addition, the average cost of childcare for each child is \$15,394 making this an unaffordable cost for many households;

- Public transportation options are highly limited in areas outside of the Cities of Troy and Rensselaer. Many low-to-moderate income and poverty-level individuals reside in small towns and villages across the county and the lack of affordable transportation options for travel to school, work and child care greatly affects a low-income family's ability to obtain and sustain employment.
- Affordable Housing is a significant concern in Rensselaer County. Fair Market Rent for the county as of 2022 for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,207 monthly. A renter would need to earn \$23.21/hr to afford this size apartment, or would need to work 70 hours per week at minimum wage to support the cost of housing. In addition, rental units are often not offered at the current Fair Market Rent rates;
- During the 2021-2022 school year, 55% of all Rensselaer County children were eligible for participation in the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch program, up from 46% in 2020;
- According to Feeding America data, 10.2% of Rensselaer County residents and 14.3% of children are food insecure. There are many areas of Rensselaer County identified as Food Deserts, indicating limited access to nutrition in those areas;
- The City of Troy, Town of Hoosick, and Village of Hoosick Falls are areas considered to be medically underserved. This indicates that these areas do not have enough providers offering services to those who have public health coverage. 16.2% of Rensselaer County residents receive public health coverage;
- Adolescent pregnancy is on the rise with some areas of the county going from 30.3 per thousand becoming pregnant to 44.3 per thousand becoming pregnant;
- According to the customer survey conducted, parent/caregivers top concern for youth in the community is Mental Health, with 17.67% of respondents noting this as the primary need;
- Cases of Child Abuse and Maltreatment have risen from 939 in 2020 to 967 in 2021 showing a continued need for children/youth services and parenting supports and education;
- Rural Communities continue to show different needs from the urban communities, due to lack of transportation and a lower level of resources. Rural communities highlighted a need for transportation, child care, and adult education.

Goals and Recommendations

- Providers in the county, including CEO, should look to further develop services and expand resources to meet the top needs identified:
 - Youth and Child Services
 - Health & Nutrition
 - Education and Employment
 - Safe, Affordable Housing
 - Transportation (particularly in rural areas)
 - Assistance (Financial/Heating/Utility/Emergency/Crisis)
- CEO, Partners, and other Service Providers should continue to find opportunities to increase customer knowledge around services available, both within and outside of the organization.
- Continued advocacy and efforts should be made around the need for individuals to earn a livable wage, including bringing awareness around the impact of New York State Minimum Wage on population eligibility for low-income services that are guided by Federal Poverty Rates.
- CEO and the community should continue to evaluate, and respond to, the community needs that arise as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The data and information contained in this document should be utilized to guide CEO's Strategic Plan for 2024.
- Area providers should work on collaboration and strategies to bring services to the rural areas of Rensselaer County noted as underserved.
- CEO should share the results of the 2023 Community Needs Assessment with the community and key stakeholders to raise awareness and mobilize opportunities to meet identified needs moving forward.



Early Childhood and Youth Services

Head Start Eligible Children

According to the Census Bureau's ACS 2017-2021 estimates, there are 8,157 children 0-4 in Rensselaer County, of this 1,655 or 20.3% are living below 100% of the Federal Poverty Guideline in Rensselaer County.¹ Given the fact that the CEO's Head Start and Early Head Start programs had the capacity to serve only a total of 592 children in the 2022-2023 school year, there could be as many as 1,063 children under the age of 5 who are eligible for the Head Start or Early Head Start programs and not receiving services.

New York State Department of Health Vital Statistics data for 2020 showed that there were 981 expectant mothers and 579 infants born.² Given the number of available childcare slots noted in this needs assessment, and the percent of children ages 0-4 living in poverty in Rensselaer County (20.3%) it can be noted that the need for Early Head Start programming for infants and toddlers will likely continue to rise as there are only a limited number of spots throughout the area.

Family Schedules and Child Care Costs

The majority of responses in CEO's Community Needs Assessment Customer Survey indicated the need for childcare during daytime hours, with 64% of respondents noting daytime hours as the primary need. In addition, 29% of survey respondents noted the need for before or afterschool programming for their children, 21% noted the need for evening time care, and 16% need care over the weekend. Families also note the need for full-time care.

CEO's Early Head Start and Head Start programs offer daytime hours, as well as summer and home-based care. According to the New York State Child Care Availability Task Force Report, Child Care Affordability is a significant barrier to access, the average cost of child care for an infant is \$15,394 per year and current child care subsidy rates are insufficient to meet family needs. As an additional barrier, 64% of New Yorkers live in a child care desert, with too few providers to meet family needs.³ Affordability of child care for low-income community members remains a primary issue for families with 34% of customers surveyed reporting that they have to pay for child care costs out of pocket. In addition, 55% of the customer survey respondents who are not currently employed note that no child care or home caring for a young child as the reason for not working.

¹ <https://data.census.gov/table?q=poverty+in+Rensselaer+County,+New+York&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S1701>

² https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/vital_statistics/2020/table53.htm

³ <https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/childcare/Child-Care-Availability-Task-Force-Report.pdf>

The current market rates for the county are outlined in the table below and would be unaffordable or cost burdensome to low-income households making minimum wage. Since the 2020 CEO Community Needs Assessment was conducted these rates have increased significantly, costing families \$220-\$400 more monthly than pre-pandemic.⁴

Childcare Market Rates 2022 Rensselaer County

Child Care Type	Under Age 1.5	Ages 1.5-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12
Day Care Centers	\$340	\$320	\$300	\$265
School Age Child Care Programs	N/A	N/A	\$300	\$265
Child Care Type	Under Age 2	Age 2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12
Family /Group Family Day Care Homes	\$300	\$285	\$269	\$240

Childcare Programs Birth through School Age

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the number of available childcare spots throughout Rensselaer County, recognizing many areas of the county as being a childcare desert as defined in 2016 by the Center for American Progress. In 2020 there were 42 childcare centers, 35 family childcare homes, 24 group family childcare providers, and 28 school-age programs. In 2023, Rensselaer County now has 28 childcare centers, 26 family childcare programs, 19 group family childcare homes, and 24 school-age programs. This is a loss of 32 overall programs for youth and families in need.

According to Brightside Up's Child Care Landscape data there are a total of 3,840 childcare slots for the 16,023 children under the age of 9 who reside in our service area. There are 206 infant, 396 toddler, 1,287 preschool, 384 family childcare, and 1,568 school age slots.

Prekindergarten in Rensselaer County is operated by the following school districts; Averill Park, Berlin, Brunswick, East Greenbush, Hoosic Valley, Hoosick Falls, Lansingburgh, Schodack, Wynantskill, City of Rensselaer, and Troy.⁵

⁴ <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/reports/2022-Child-Care-Market-Rate-Survey.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.nysed.gov/early-learning/prekindergarten-data>

Rensselaer County Childcare Desert

COMMUNITY	DESERT LEVEL	DIVERSITY INDEX	FAMILY <200% POVERTY
Brunswick	10 children/cc slot	18/low	12.79%/ medium
Grafton	No slots & >49 children under 5 yrs.	10.6/low	23.05% high
Downtown Troy	1 child/cc slot	65.5/high	47%/high
Troy River to Hill	No slots & >49 children under 5 yrs.	54.9/high	26%/high
Burdett Ave, Troy	No slots & >49 children under 5 yrs.	47/high	21%/ medium
South Troy	53 children/cc slot	57.6/high	38.64%/high
Pinewoods Ave., Troy	No slots & >49 children under 5 yrs.	34.4/medium	8.86%/low
115th Street, Troy	6 children/cc slot	50.3/high	52.36%/high
5th Avenue, Troy	13 children/cc slot	63.8/high	41.53%/high
6th Avenue, Troy	13 children/cc slot	77.8/high	63.64%/high
Berlin	No slots & >49 children under 5 yrs.	10.5/low	31.62%/high
Rensselaer	17 children/cc slot	52.9/high	58.11%/high

<https://nysccf.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b0281149b595404e9d1c26fbef8b9735>

Homelessness in Children

According to the New York State Education Department enrollment report for 2021-2022 school year in Rensselaer County, there were 172 homeless youth served throughout the district schools. In addition, CEO's Early Head Start and Head Start programs reported that they served 35 homeless families and their children in the 2022 Program Information Report.

Children with Disabilities

The New York State Early Intervention Program (EIP) is part of the national Early Intervention Program for infants and toddlers with disabilities, and their families. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the EIP is administered by the New York State Department of Health through the Bureau of Early Intervention. In New York State, the Early Intervention Program is established in Article 25 of the Public Health Law and has been in effect since July 1, 1993. To be eligible for services, children must be less than 3 years of age and have a confirmed disability or established developmental delay, as defined by the State, in one or more of the following areas: physical, cognitive, communication, social-emotional, or adaptive. As reported by the New York State Department of Health, 3% of children ages birth-3 were enrolled in Early Intervention Services between July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020.⁶

CEO coordinates with all appropriate service providers to ensure that children identified as at-risk receive support and services, as outlined in CEO's Early Childhood Services Disabilities Content Area Plan. As reported in the Program Information Report (PIR), 66 of the Head Start and Early Head Start enrollees, or 11%, have been identified as having a disability (speech/ language or other impairment) and now receive special education services, including speech; occupational therapy; physical therapy and itinerant services through Rensselaer County Early Intervention Services at Capital District Beginnings, Unity Sunshine Program, or other area service providers of their choice. CEO maintains a formal collaboration with Capital District Beginnings to provide inclusion classrooms for children with special needs, screening for emotional and behavioral disorders, and development of interventions for Head Start and Early Head Start children.

According to the New York State Education Department enrollment data for all of the school districts located in Rensselaer County, there were 3,155 children with identified disabilities in 2022, this is 17% of the total number of students enrolled.⁷

⁶ https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/community/infants_children/early_intervention/local_program_performance/

⁷ <https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2022&county=49>

Child Abuse and Maltreatment

Child abuse and maltreatment, as defined by the NYS Kids' Well-Being Indicators Clearinghouse (KWIC), represents an impairment or imminent danger of impairment of a child's physical, mental or emotional condition due to the failure of a parent, guardian or other person legally responsible for the child to exercise a minimum degree of care toward the child.¹⁴ This can involve the failure to provide a minimum degree of care regarding a child's basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, or proper supervision or guardianship. KWIC reports that Rensselaer County had 939 cases of child abuse and maltreatment in children ages 0-17 years in 2018 as compared to 967 in 2020. The rates for reported child abuse and maltreatment are considerably higher in Rensselaer County (31.6%) than they are across New York State as a whole (14.6%), and have increased over time compared to the rest of the New York State which shows a decrease in reported abuse as outlined in the table below.⁸

Indicated Reports of Child Abuse/Maltreatment

Region	2018		2020	
	# Children 0-17 Years	Rate/1,000	# Children 0-17 Years	Rate/1,000
New York State	73,282	16.5%	58,988	14.6%
Rensselaer County	939	27%	967	31.6%

Children in Foster Care

Foster care is often provided as a solution for children whose parents are temporarily unable to care for them due to either serious family illness, financial or marital issues, conviction of a crime, or child abuse and maltreatment. The foster parent assumes day-to-day care for the child, while the birth parents maintain legal guardianship. Data show that children in foster care are more apt to be from lower-income families and that a large percentage of children in foster care are placed there by Child Protective Services because the child has been abused or neglected. Studies show children in foster care have more chronic illnesses and behavioral, emotional, and developmental problems than do children who are cared for in a stable family setting. According to KWIC, foster care admissions in Rensselaer County decreased between 2015 and 2020, from 1.7 per 1,000 children to 1.3 per 1,000 children.

⁸ https://www.nyskwic.org/get_data/indicator_profile.cfm?subIndicatorID=107&indYear1=2018&indYear2=2020

Rensselaer County is also in line with the New York State average as shown in the Foster Care Admission chart below. Foster care admissions have decreased significantly in the past ten years, with 50% less admissions than 2010.⁹

Foster Care Admissions

Region	2015		2020	
	# Children 0-21 Years	Rate/1,000	# Children 0-21 Years	Rate/1,000
New York State	8,769	1.6	6,349	1.3
Rensselaer County	74	1.7	53	1.3

Parent/Caregiver Concerns

CEO's Community Needs Assessment Customer Survey asked families who reported to have children under the age of 18 in their household "Have any of the following been an issue or concern for the youth?" and received the responses in the chart below:

The chart below shows that primary caregivers are reporting Mental Health, Bullying, and Lack of Activity as their top concerns for the children whom reside in their care.

Youth-Related Issues	Responses
Mental Health	17.67%
Bullying	13.04%
Lack of Activity/Out of School Support	12.17%
Physical Health / Nutrition	10.43%
Poor Grades/School Absence	7.83%
Neighborhood/Community Violence	4.35%
Smoking/Vaping	4.35%

⁹ https://www.nyskwic.org/get_data/indicator_profile.cfm?subIndicatorID=91&indYear1=2010&indYear2=2020

Juvenile Delinquency

The amount of illegal behavior displayed by teenage youth in a community is often an indicator of needed youth interventions and strategies, including sports, arts, education, training, and ongoing engagement and supports. According to the Rensselaer County Juvenile Justice profile, arrests for both property damage and violent crime have decreased between 2014 and 2018.¹⁰ As there have been a number of juvenile assaults, weapon, and criminal charges throughout the pandemic and with the New York State Raise the Age initiative and Bail Reform, this area will continue to need close monitoring.

After School and Enrichment Programming

Customer responses to open ended questions in both survey and focus group format noted the ongoing need for safe and healthy environments for their children outside of school, particularly during the afterschool hours, weekends, and summertime.

In many areas of Rensselaer County, especially those with high rates of poverty, the options available for school-aged children for out-of-school organized activities are limited. There are programs operated in the major cities (such as Troy) by area providers to help meet some of these needs, such as Boys and Girls Clubs and Lansingburgh 21st Century programming, but these resources are limited, and the demand remains high. Summer programming can be very challenging for low-income households, without regular care for children it can impact the ability for the primary caregiver to remain employed, or children who are old enough to stay home alone are left without the enrichment and engagement they may need to remain successful, stay out of trouble, and continue their growth.

¹⁰ <https://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/crimnet/ojsa/jj-reports/rensselaer.pdf>

Education and Employment

Educational Attainment

As shown in the table below, 15.1% of Rensselaer County residents ages 18-24 have not received a high school diploma, this is an increase in the number of young adults who have not obtained this educational level. Rensselaer County School Report Cards show that the following areas graduation rates are as follows for the 2020-2021 school year. Lansingburgh (84%), Cities of Troy (88%) and Rensselaer (84%), and the Towns of Hoosick Falls(78%). The average annual household income for an individual 25 years old and over with less than a High School Diploma in Rensselaer County is \$18,997 and with a High School Diploma in the county is \$34,085. ¹¹

	Total	Percent	Male	Percent Male	Female	Percent Female
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Population 18 to 24 years	15,219	(X)	8,561	(X)	6,658	(X)
Less than high school graduate	2,291	15.1%	1,631	19.1%	660	9.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	4,913	32.3%	3,356	39.2%	1,557	23.4%
Some college or associate's degree	5,487	36.1%	2,641	30.8%	2,846	42.7%
Bachelor's degree or higher	2,528	16.6%	933	10.9%	1,595	24%
Population 25 years and over	114,196	(X)	55,001	(X)	59,195	(X)
Less than 9th grade	3,387	3%	2,151	3.9%	1,222	2.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	5,837	5.1%	3,242	5.9%	2,595	4.4%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	30,811	27%	15,082	27.4%	15,729	26.6%
Some college, no degree	18,083	15.8%	9,001	16.4%	9,082	15.3%
Associate's degree	15,582	13.6%	8,004	14.6%	7,578	12.8%
Bachelor's degree	23,275	20.4%	10,217	18.6%	13,058	22.1%
Graduate or professional degree	17,235	15.1%	7,304	13.3%	9,931	16.8%
Percent high school graduate or higher	(X)	91.9%	(X)	90.2%	(X)	93.6%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	(X)	35.5%	(X)	31.9%	(X)	38.8%

Source: <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Educational+Attainment&g=0500000US36083>

¹¹ <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Educational+Attainment&g=0500000US36083>

Rensselaer County Economic Trends

Labor force, employment, and unemployment data for Rensselaer County is provided in the following table. The labor force in Rensselaer County, defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as the sum of employed and unemployed persons, is 82,232. In 2020, the labor force of the county was 80,291. The number of employed residents in Rensselaer County outnumbers the number of unemployed residents by roughly 77,000. Overall, Rensselaer County experienced an average 2.8% unemployment rate in September 2022, which is lower compared to the unemployment rate for the State of New York at 3.9%.

Location	Total Labor Force	Number of Employed Residents	Number of Unemployed Residents	Unemployment Rate
Rensselaer County, NY	82,232	79,917	2,315	2.8%
New York	9,505,699	9,138,249	367,450	3.9%

Data Source: Community Action Partnership Report, US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2022 - September.

Unemployment Rates

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, unemployment for the five-year period from September 2018-September 2022 fell from 3.3% to 2.8%. It is worth noting that the county unemployment rate peaked in September 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic at 5.6%. Customers surveyed noted the top three reasons for their unemployment aschoosing stay at home parenting, no childcare, and health-related issues such as illness and disability.

Five Year Unemployment Rates

Location	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Rensselaer County, NY	3.3%	3.3%	5.6%	3.6%	2.8%
New York State	3.6%	3.5%	10.1%	5.7%	3.9%

Data Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Wage and Hours

Of the customers who completed the Community Needs Assessment Customer Survey, 61% reported a household income of less than \$30,000. In Upstate New York, the new minimum wage, effective 12/31/2022 is \$14.20/hr. According to the United Way ALICE Report for the Capital District, (ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) for a single individual to meet the Household Survival bare minimum budget standard they would have to earn \$13.84/hr., which includes no savings or purchases other than basic needs and leaves no room for emergencies. For a household of 2 adults, 2 children in child care, they would have to earn \$41.20/hr. to meet the same household survival budget.¹²

As the New York State minimum wage continues to increase, while the Federal minimum wage remains \$7.25 as it has been since 2009, there is an additional impact on local individuals and families' eligibility for various types of assistance that are determined by Federal Poverty Guidelines as mandated by many grants received. The Community Needs Assessment Survey and focus groups highlighted the need for the households to gain skills and training and receive assistance in obtaining a job that pays a higher wage that can support the household's basic needs.

Employment Landscape of the Capital Region

According to the 2022 New York State Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP) State of the Workforce Report 8 out of 10 of New York's largest occupations pay less than \$30k per year.¹³ The top five employment sectors in the Capital Region are: Government, Healthcare, Retail, Accommodations and Food and Manufacturing. The Capital Region, like New York State as a whole, is continuing its recovery from the "Great Resignation" that occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In today's labor market, employers need to tap in to underutilized talent pools, such as those who lack the appropriate skill or experience, disabled, and formerly incarcerated individuals. As noted in the 2022 NYATEP State of the Workforce, by 2031 it is anticipated that there will be growth in fields such as Home Health and Restaurants while these jobs pay less than a livable wage. There are several new industries emerging in New York, these include clean energy, semiconductor manufacturing, cannabis, and infrastructure.

¹² <https://www.unitedwaygcr.org/alice>

¹³ <https://www.nyatep.org/StateoftheWorkforce2022>

Top Rensselaer County Industries and Jobs in Demand

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the largest industries in Rensselaer County are **Education, Health Care & Social Assistance** (19,844 people), **Professional, Scientific, Administrative, and Waste Management Services** (10,732 people), and **Manufacturing** (7,877 people), and the highest paying industries are **Architecture and Engineering** (\$109,342), **Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners** (\$79,100), and **Legal Occupations** (\$74,698). The lowest paying industries are **Firefighting and Prevention** (\$14,842) **Food Preparations and Serving** (\$17,271), and **Personal Care and Service** (\$20,814).¹⁴

According to the New York State Department of Labor, for the Capital District some of the occupations that have growth in long-term industry projections 2018-2028 are Healthcare and Social Assistance, Educational Services, and Professional and Business Services, many of which require an advanced degree. The long-term projections also show a decrease in retail trade, wholesale trade, and some sectors of manufacturing (such as paper, printing, and textiles), many of which are fields that have the lowest educational requirements.

The Community Needs Assessment Customer Survey respondents noted that help finding better employment, help finding any employment, proper attire/equipment assistance, and job training/certification were the top areas of need.

Staffing and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on staffing throughout many industries in our region. Staffing shortages have strained many businesses and continue to have impacts on services available for customers in need. For example, due to shortages in childcare staff there are many programs that are only able to operate at a limited capacity, therefore impacting the available childcare slots in Rensselaer County. In addition, many of our focus group participants noted staffing shortages impacted their ability to access healthcare within reasonable timeframes, often being referred to emergency services vs. a primary care physician due to staffing difficulties.

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<https://data.census.gov/table?q=Rensselaer+County,+New+York+median+earnings&t=Employment:Occupation&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S2411>

Health and Nutrition

An individual's social and economic situation plays a large role in their overall physical and emotional well-being. Indicators of poverty and physical health of children and families include, but are not limited to, the following markers: number of households receiving SNAP benefits; participation in the free/reduced price lunch program; levels of chronic disease; levels of prenatal care; teen pregnancy; infant and child mortality; access to medical health care; engagement in physical activity and proper nutrition. Chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, cancer and heart disease affect the quality of life for many Rensselaer County residents.

The health and nutritional needs of the residents of Rensselaer County have been a priority for CEO since its incorporation in 1965. The agency provides a variety of health and nutritional services through the WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) Program, CEO Food Pantry, Babies in Waiting, and the Nourish New York programs. Nutritious meals, including breakfast, lunch and snacks, are provided to children participating in CEO's Head Start and Early Head Start programs, also through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Since 1982, CEO has operated its food pantry in the City of Troy. In 2022 CEO's Food Pantry provided 102,583 meals to adults and children in Rensselaer County. Food packages provided through the pantry include a three-day supply of nutritious items for each person. Families are permitted to use the pantry up to two times per month, and many customers note that they still have gaps in meeting their household's nutritional needs even after receiving SNAP benefits and utilizing emergency food resources such as food pantries.

Food Insecurity

Throughout Rensselaer County there are several areas considered to be Food Deserts, with low or no access to food resources for residents. Additionally, 10.2% of the Rensselaer County population, and 14.3% of children in the county are food insecure according to the non-profit data source, Feeding America; this equals 16,260 food insecure individuals annually¹⁵. Food insecure means a lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods.

¹⁵ <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2020/overall/new-york/county/rensselaer>

Free and Reduced-Price Lunch

One of the important indicators of the presence of low-income children and families in any community is the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch at the local public schools. Eligibility for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's free and reduced-price meal programs is high in some areas of Rensselaer County. The New York State Education Department reports that 54.56% of all the students in Rensselaer County schools are eligible for free or reduced lunch¹⁶. **The table below** illustrates the enrollment of each school district in Rensselaer County in January 2020, as well as the percentage of children who are eligible for free lunch and reduced-price lunches.

Child Poverty Indicator, Free and Reduced-Price Lunch

Name of School District January 2020	Total Enrollment	Eligible for Free Lunch		Eligible for Reduced- Price Lunch		Combined Free Lunch/Reduced Lunch Eligibility
		#	%	#	%	
Averill Park Central	2,723	586	22%	51	2%	24%
Berlin Central	712	326	46%	44	6	52%
Brunswick Central	1,227	343	28%	49	4%	32%
East Greenbush Central	4,101	877	21%	111	3%	24%
Hoosic Valley Central	988	296	30%	36	4%	34%
Hoosick Falls Central	1,123	474	42%	69	6%	48%
Lansingburgh Central	2,353	2,050	87%	0	0%	87%
Rensselaer City	1,161	1,161	100%	0	0%	100%
Schodack Central	983	206	21%	22	2%	23%
Troy City	4,002	4,002	100%	0	0%	100%
Wynantskill Union Free	396	73	18%	10	3%	21%

Data Source: New York State Education Department.

¹⁶ <https://eservices.nysed.gov/sedreports/list?id=2>

Food Stamp Enrollment

Many low-income households rely on one or more resource programs to meet their nutritional needs. The NYS Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) issues monthly benefits that can be used like cash at authorized retail food stores to purchase healthy food. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits help low-income working people, senior citizens, people with disabilities, and others to feed their families. The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance reports that the number of persons receiving benefits, including temporary benefits, is 14,934 as of January 2022¹⁷. The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant SNAP Emergency Allotment benefit supports to eligible households, increasing the monthly assistance amount from \$231 in 2020 to \$477 in 2022; this is slated to end in 2023.

WIC Program

CEO's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provides nutrition services to over 2,700 Rensselaer County residents on an annual basis. WIC has been shown to improve the health of pregnant women, new mothers and their infants and children. The foods provided through WIC are good sources of essential nutrients that are often missing from the diets of low-income women and young children. WIC participants have longer, healthier pregnancies and fewer premature births.

Health Insurance

According to the New York State Community Action Association, 16.3% of the unemployed residents and 4.9% of the employed population are uninsured in Rensselaer County.

It is reported by the American Community Survey 5-year estimates that 16.2% of the total population receive public health care coverage.¹⁸ As individuals and families have not needed to recertify due to the public health emergency declaration, due to COVID-19, assistance will be needed in 2023 to support the population in need in completing the required application for continued coverage.

Of those individuals and families who do have health insurance, there are many who do not utilize the insurance for preventative care or chronic disease care. In addition, the pandemic has impacted access to routine, preventative, and emergency care.

¹⁷ <https://otda.ny.gov/resources/caseload/2022/2022-01-stats.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.nyscommunityaction.org/assets/docs/PovRep2022/Rensselaer.pdf>

Health Care

The CEO Community Needs Assessment Customer Survey found that the customers surveyed noted their primary health care challenges to be an inability to receive needed services in dental, mental health, and prescription drug care.

The barriers to receiving needed care can be for a number of reasons; one of which can be living in an underserved area. Medically Underserved Areas/Populations are areas or populations designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as having: too few primary care providers, high rates of infant mortality, high poverty and/or high elderly population. As shown below, the HRSA Bureau of Primary Health Care has designated the following census tracts in Rensselaer County as Medically Underserved Areas (MUAs) or Medically-Underserved Low-Income Population(MUP):

Medically-Underserved Areas/Populations

Census Tract	Medically-Underserved Area/Population
517.01	Town of Hoosick
517.02	Village of Hoosick Falls
402	City of Troy
403	City of Troy
404	City of Troy
407	City of Troy
408	City of Troy
409	City of Troy
410	City of Troy

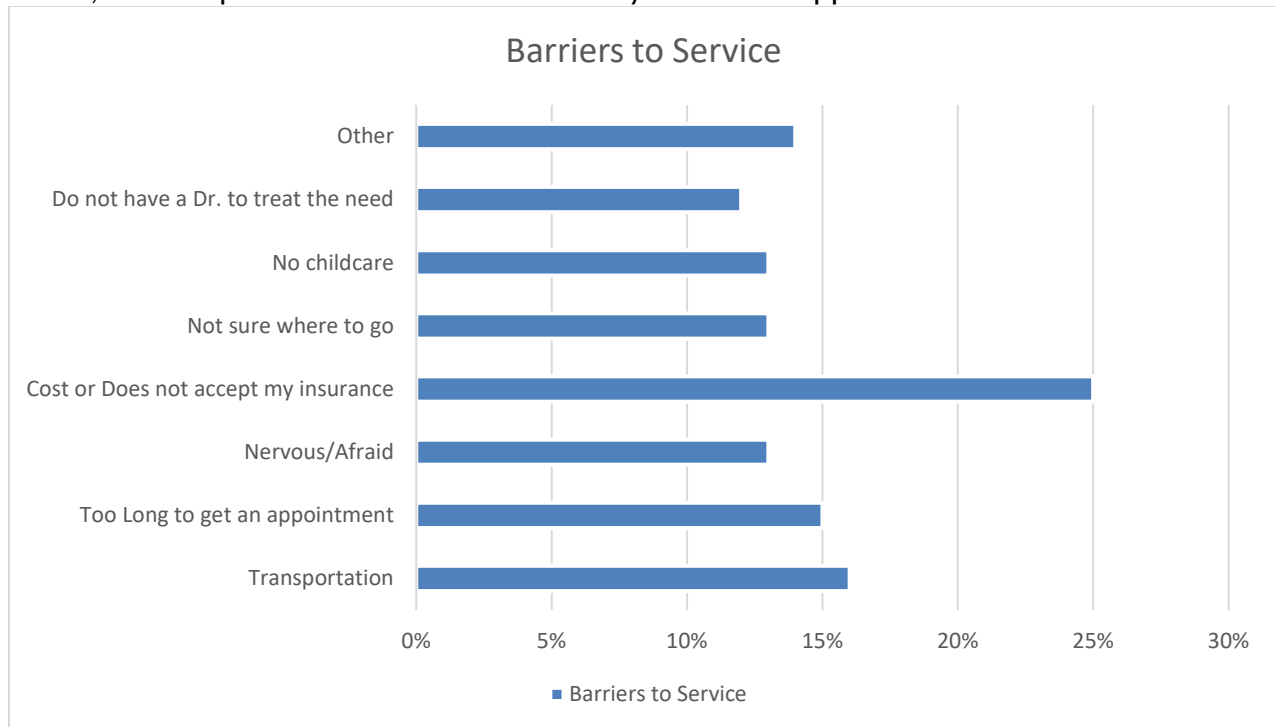
source: <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/mua-find>

In addition to Rensselaer County having several areas that are medically underserved, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the service delivery model and access for residents. Throughout the data collection it was noted that the low-income population continues to struggle to receive timely preventative care and often they are unable to access physician appointments when they, or their children, are experiencing illness. The customers have reported that limited access to sick appointments leaves them with no alternative but emergency care, which has experienced significant wait times.

The customer survey asked households if they, or a family member, were unable to access needed care, of the 52% of respondents that had, the following is the medical care that was needed:

- 39% dental care
- 38% mental health services
- 22% medical care
- 19% prescription drugs

When asked why the family member did not receive the care needed the following barriers were noted, each respondent could choose as many choices as applied to their situation:



Pregnancy and Prenatal Care

According to the NYS Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health dashboard that looks at the 2020 objectives some of Rensselaer County's most recent data shows areas of need where conditions have worsened since last measures. Rensselaer County infant mortality rate of 8.8 per 1,000 live births has been on the rise since 2015. Also, 9.4 per 1,000 newborns show withdrawal symptoms or are affected by maternal drug use. According to the NYS Department of Health data on Adolescent Births teen pregnancy is on the rise. In some areas of Rensselaer County, such as zip code 12182 (Lansingburgh), 12154 (Schaghticoke), 12121 (Melrose) the teen pregnancy rate is from 30.3 to 44.3 per 1,000¹⁹. Problems associated with adolescent pregnancy are well-documented, as adolescent pregnancy often leads to dropping out of school; poverty and dependence on public assistance; a greater risk of infant mortality; and poor health and lower cognitive development in children born to teenage mothers.

Among women aged 15-17 years giving birth in Rensselaer County, only 53.8% began prenatal care in their first trimester while 7.7 % received late prenatal care that began in the third trimester²⁰.

¹⁹ <https://health.data.ny.gov/Health/Community-Health-Teen-Pregnancy-Rate-per-1-000-Fem/i96b-2q48>

²⁰ <https://health.data.ny.gov/Health/Vital-Statistics-Percent-Early-or-Late-No-Prenatal/c76c-7nvg/explore/query>

Services providing low-income, pregnant women with intensive and personalized case management, goal planning, advocacy, linkage and referrals are scarce in Rensselaer County. Most services that do exist to assist this population focus on the medical care needs of the individual and the unborn child. CEO's Early Head Start Program operates a Babies in Waiting Program, which works with pregnant mothers on preparing for the arrival of their child, receiving appropriate pre- and post-natal care, and on socialization activities.

Child and Adolescent Health

As indicated by the New York State Community Health Indicator Report, and outlined in the table on below, Rensselaer County continues to see infant mortality rates, teen births, low birthweight, and high lead levels above those of New York State as a whole.²¹

Physical Health Indicators of Infants and Children

	Rensselaer County	New York State
Adolescent Births by age - 15-19 Years (percentage)	3.6	3.1
Low Birthweight (<.5.5 lbs.) - Mother All Ages	8.7	8.1
Very Low Birthweight (<.2.5 lbs.) - Mother All Ages	1.7	1.4
Premature Births (< 37 Weeks) - Mother All Ages	10.3	9.0
Infant Mortality (3-year average) - (rate/1,000)		
Neonatal - (3-year average) - (rate/1,000)	4.6	2.9
Post-Neonatal - (3-year average) - (rate/1,000)	2.1	1.5
Childhood/Adolescent Mortality - (3-year average) -		
1-4 Years - (3-year average) - (rate/100,000)	15	17.7
5-9 Years - (3-year average) - (rate/100,000)	15.4	10.3
10-14 Years - (3-year average) - (rate/100,000)	7.7	12.4
15-19 Years - (3-year average) - (rate/100,000)	41	31.1
Asthma Hospitalization - (3-year average) - (rate/10,000)		
0-4 Years - (3-year average) - (rate/10,000)	20.2	35.6
5-14 Years - (3-year average) - (rate/10,000)	6.2	16.6
Confirmed High Lead Level per 1,000 (5 micrograms)	87	42

Source: https://webbi1.health.ny.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?_program=/EBI/PHIG/apps/chir_dashboard/chir_dashboard&p=ct&cos=38

²¹ https://webbi1.health.ny.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?_program=/EBI/PHIG/apps/chir_dashboard/chir_dashboard&p=ct&cos=38

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse continues to be an issue for all economic demographics in Rensselaer County. According to Data USA 2021 Rensselaer County data the number of adults reporting binge or heavy drinking increased to 24.9% and drug-overdose deaths increased from 11.4 per 100,000 in 2019 to 14.4 per 100,000 in 2021.²² In Rensselaer County the opioid epidemic continues to show a rise in deaths, hospitalizations, outpatient emergency room visits, and administrations of naloxone much as New York State as a whole has also seen increases over the past few years.

COVID-19 Pandemic

New York State experienced early and significant challenges throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, being the state that was first to experience this worldwide health crisis. As of March 2023, Rensselaer County has experienced 42,267 positive cases of COVID-19 and sadly 319 deaths.²³ The pandemic has disproportionately harmed low-income individuals, exacerbating long-standing challenges faced by the population around access to health care, risk of exposure, and healthy food access, especially in low-income families of color.²⁴

²² https://datausa.io/profile/geo/rensselaer-county-ny?alcoholDrugsTobaccoOptions=indicator_8&healthBehaviorsOptions=alcoholDrugsTobaccoOption

²³ <https://usafacts.org/visualizations/coronavirus-covid-19-spread-map/state/new-york/county/rensselaer-county>

²⁴ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2021-09/low-income-covid-19-impacts.pdf>

Safe and Affordable Housing

Housing Affordability

There are several ways to determine if housing is generally affordable in a community. Since the adoption of the Urban and Rural Recovery Act of 1983, the 30% Rule has been the Federal standard for determining housing affordability. In other words, housing is generally considered to be affordable if no more than 30% of a household's monthly income is spent on housing-related expenses. Housing-related expenses include not only rent, but also utilities paid by the tenant such as heat, electricity, and water and sewer charges. Some additional typical expenses such as telephone and cable television are also not included.

The National Low-Income Housing Coalition publishes housing wage figures annually in a document entitled, *Out of Reach*. As shown in the Table below, according to *Out of Reach 2022* the fair market rent in Rensselaer County for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,207. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities, without paying more than 30% of income on housing, a household must earn \$48,280 annually, or \$4,023 per month. With Upstate New York State current minimum wage at \$14.20 an individual would have to work 58 hours per week to afford a one-bedroom apartment. Affordable housing continues to be a significant struggle for the low-income population of Rensselaer County.

In addition to the challenges with affordable rent, a number of impacts have occurred to the housing system in Rensselaer County due to the COVID-19. Landlord and tenant relationships have been increasingly strained, with many landlords raising rent pricing, requiring double security deposit/first month/last month rent to secure an apartment, previous landlord references, and credit checks; these create significant barriers for many households. The chart below is a summary of the Out of Reach data report.

	New York	Rensselaer County
Total Households	7,417,224	65,455
Renter	3,402,708	24,255
% Renter	46%	37%
Housing Wage		
Zero-Bedroom	\$31.26	\$17.12
One-Bedroom	\$32.56	\$19.06
Two-Bedroom	\$37.72	\$23.21
Three-Bedroom	\$47.61	\$28.69
Four Bedroom	\$51.62	\$31.38
2022 Fair Market Rent (FMR)		
Zero-Bedroom	\$1,626	\$890
One-Bedroom	\$1,693	\$991
Two-Bedroom	\$1,962	\$1,207
Three-Bedroom	\$2,476	\$1,492
Four-Bedroom	\$2,684	\$1,637
Annual Income Needed to Afford		
Zero-Bedroom	\$65,028	\$35,600
One-Bedroom	\$67,732	\$39,640
Two-Bedroom	\$78,465	\$48,280
Three-Bedroom	\$99,035	\$59,680
Four-Bedroom	\$107,361	\$65,480
Work Hours/Week at Minimum Wage		
Zero-Bedroom	95	52
One-Bedroom	99	58
Two-Bedroom	114	70
Three-Bedroom	144	87
Four-Bedroom	156	95

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach 2022, <http://nlihc.org/oor/new-york>

Housing Conditions and Vacancy

There are 73,251 Housing Units in Rensselaer County, with the median year built being 1961.²⁵ Before 1970, aluminum wiring and lead paint were used in homes, posing serious safety and health risks to residents. In addition, the discovery of asbestos in these older homes also puts residents in danger. The City of Troy, City of Rensselaer, Town of Hoosick; and the Villages of Valley Falls, Schaghticoke, Castleton-On-Hudson and Hoosick Falls account for much of the older housing stock in the county. Such stock is likely to be substandard and less affordable, due to high energy costs. Not only are they typically expensive to maintain, but homes built prior to 1970 are also more likely to pose health and safety risks for residents, such as lead poisoning in children, due to deteriorating, substandard conditions. In addition to conditions based on the year built, there are a number of reported habitability issues that our customer and community surveys indicated that have increased throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these issues include increased rodents and other pests, substandard plumbing and heating, and landlords who are not properly maintaining housing following code regulations.

According to the Community Action Network Needs Assessment data specific to Rensselaer County, there were 488 vacant non-rental residential addresses, and 1,554 vacant rental units. Vacancies can increase challenges such as deterioration, vandalism, crime, and decreased habitability.

Energy Efficiency

24% of community survey respondents noted that they received a utility shut off notice in the past year and 48% noted that they did not make enough money to pay bills that were due. There continues to be limited resources to assist with utility emergencies, with the primary assistance being provided through Rensselaer County HEAP programming. One of the primary avenues for households to gain assistance with energy affordability is through receiving energy efficiency measures in their residence. Energy efficiency services can significantly reduce the energy burden on a household, therefore reducing the cost of their heating and utility services. Weatherization and New York State EmPower services are available through CEO for all of Rensselaer County.

²⁵ https://data.census.gov/table?q=DP04&g=040XX00US36_050XX00US36083

Homelessness Prevention and Emergency Housing

Being at-risk of homelessness or being homeless is a regular challenge for the low-income population in Rensselaer County. There is a large population that fluctuates at any one time between stable housing and at-risk status. CEO is an active member of the Rensselaer County Continuum of Care, which works collaboratively on the county 10-year Plan to End Homelessness.

There are some available resources to assist individuals and households facing homelessness, the primary organizations that provide homeless services are Joseph's House, St. Paul's Center, YWCA, Unity House, and Rensselaer County DSS. The 2022 Annual Point in Time Count (PIT) conducted by the Continuum of Care noted 111 individuals in shelter on the day of the count, which was a decrease from 171 in 2019.

²⁶This change and reduction in 2022 is due primarily due to the New York State Eviction Moratorium that was issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While this Moratorium assisted households to remain in stable housing, it concluded in 2022 and has had a significant impact since that time. As of 2023, homeless numbers are increasing, with many of our shelters facing capacity concerns. The ability to place homeless individuals in stable housing has become a rising concern, as affordable housing options have continued to decline in Rensselaer County.

In addition to challenges with affordable housing, there have been limited prevention resources allocated since the end of the eviction moratorium. This particularly impacts resources to keep those in housing in stable conditions as the New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) enacted in response to the pandemic concluded.

²⁶ <https://caresny.org/continuum-of-care/reports/#512> RCHSC

Rural Needs

Throughout the data collection for the 2023 CEO Community Needs Assessment, it is worth noting that the needs captured in the rural areas of Rensselaer County differed from the needs in the more Urban settings.

The primary need indicated in the rural areas of Hoosick Falls and Schodack was lack of transportation and lack of access to services. There are no mass transportation options available to those who live in these areas. Many households also report a concern in traveling to the larger cities within the county for service, primarily needing assistance in navigating these services and ensuring that the services could be available if they did find a way to be transported for the service.

Many of the rural areas lack access to the services that are available in the larger urban areas. This can cause an increase in the need for health and nutrition services, substance abuse issues, childcare and youth services, safe and affordable housing, and employment and training for the low-income population in those areas. Any available option for resources to be brought into these communities would have a positive impact. Residents report that there are very limited employment options, and a minimal amount of childcare options. There are also limited Adult Education options, such as budgeting, nutrition, and parenting.



Community Member Needs Survey

1. What is your age _____

2. What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Transgender ☐ Prefer not to answer

3. What is your ethnicity: ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Non-Hispanic/Latino

4. What is your race?

☐ Black/African American ☐ Asian ☐ White ☐ Multi-racial

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native ☐ Other: _____

5. Do you have children under the age of 18 in your household?

☐ yes ☐ no

If YES, are the children (check all that apply):

☐ 0-12 months ☐ 1-5 years old ☐ 6-12 years old

☐ 13-15 years old ☐ 16-18 years old

6. How many adults (ages 18+) reside in your household: _____

7. Where do you live? Please enter the name of your CITY, TOWN or VILLAGE:

City: _____ Town: _____ Village: _____

9. Please rate your household's top FIVE needs within the past 12 months (1 is the highest need, 5 is the lowest need):

____Adult education ____Child care ____Domestic violence assistance

____Emergency/Crisis Assistance ____Dental care ____Financial assistance

____Nutrition or Food ____Health care ____Heating/utility assistance

☐ Job skills/employment training ☐ Mental health services ☐ Parenting education
☐ Safe, affordable housing ☐ Safety/crime prevention ☐ Senior citizen services
☐ Substance abuse assistance ☐ Transportation ☐ Summer recreation programs
☐ Legal Assistance ☐ Youth services ☐ None of the above
 Other: _____

10. Please rate what you believe to be your communities top FIVE needs in the past year (1 indicates highest need, 5 is the lowest need):

☐ Adult education ☐ Child care ☐ Domestic violence assistance
☐ Emergency/Crisis Assistance ☐ Dental care ☐ Financial assistance
☐ Nutrition or Food ☐ Health care ☐ Heating/utility assistance
☐ Job skills/employment training ☐ Mental health services ☐ Parenting education
☐ Safe, affordable housing ☐ Safety/crime prevention ☐ Senior citizen services
☐ Substance abuse assistance ☐ Transportation ☐ Summer recreation programs
☐ Legal Assistance ☐ Youth services ☐ None of the above
☐ Other: _____

11. Have you or anyone you know had a problem obtaining services designed to meet those needs?

☐ yes ☐ no

If YES, which of the following issues did you or someone you know experience? Check all that apply:

☐ Didn't know what's available ☐ Didn't know where to go
☐ Didn't have a way to get there ☐ Income was too high to qualify
☐ Didn't think help was needed ☐ Didn't want to ask for help
☐ The process was too complicated ☐ There was no service to meet the need
☐ Couldn't afford the cost of service ☐ The hours of service didn't meet my need

12. What is your primary mode of transportation?

☐ Bicycle ☐ Bus ☐ Car ☐ Car pool/ride share

- ☐ Motorcycle
 ☐ Taxi
 ☐ Walking
 ☐ Ride with family/friends
☐ Other: _____

13. In the past 12 months, has transportation been a problem for your household?

- ☐ Yes
 ☐ No

14. In the past 12 months, has anyone in your household experienced any of the following challenges with transportation?

	Yes	No	Does not apply
Cannot afford gas			
Cannot afford car repairs			
No access to a car			
No car insurance			
No driver's license or license is suspended			
Unable to use the public bus system			
Public transportation is not near where I live			
Public transportation is too expensive			

15. How many people in your home are employed? ____ Full-Time ____ Part-Time ____ Seasonal

16. For the adults (18 years or older) in your household who are NOT currently working, please indicate why. Check all that apply:

- ☐ Caring for children
 ☐ Caring for elderly relatives
 ☐ Criminal history
☐ Drug/alcohol problems
 ☐ Lack of job skills
 ☐ Does not speak English
☐ Mental health problems
 ☐ Physical disability/illness
 ☐ No high school diploma/GED/HSE
☐ Retired
 ☐ Currently a student
 ☐ Transportation problems
☐ Other: _____

17. In the last 12 months, what was your estimated annual household income? (Please include all sources of income from the previous question.)

- ☐ \$0 - \$10,000
 ☐ \$10,001 - \$20,000
 ☐ \$20,001 - \$30,000

☐ \$30,001 - \$40,000

☐ \$40,001 - \$50,000

☐ \$50,001 - \$60,000

☐ \$60,001 - \$70,000

☐ \$70,001 - \$80,000

☐ More than \$80,000

18. Do you or does anyone in your household need the following? Check all that apply:

	Yes	No
Help finding a job		
Help finding a better job		
Job training		
Assistance with resume-writing or interviewing skills		
Tools/clothing/ or equipment for work		
High School Equivalency (HSE) or Job Specific Certification		

19. In the past 12 months, have you or has anyone in your household experienced any of the following financial situations? Check all that apply:

☐ Borrowed money to pay bills

☐ Could not pay child care bills

☐ Fell behind on rent or mortgage payments

☐ Didn't make enough to pay all bills

☐ Had property (car, appliance, furniture) repossessed

☐ Pawned or sold valuables to pay bills

☐ Bills in collections

☐ over drafted bank account

☐ Defaulted on Student Loan

☐ could not purchase basic need items

☐ Used rent-to-own services

(i.e. diapers, food, hygiene items)

☐ Had a utility shut off notice or utility shut off

☐ None of the above

20. What is your housing status?

☐ I own a home

☐ I rent

☐ I live in subsidized housing

☐ I live with friends

☐ I live in senior housing

☐ I live with parents or other family

☐ I am homeless (staying in shelter or couch surfing)

☐ I am homeless (no place to stay)

☐ I live in military housing

☐ Other: _____

21. Which of the following best describes your home?

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apartment | <input type="checkbox"/> Single-family home | <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-family home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trailer/mobile home | <input type="checkbox"/> Single room occupancy | <input type="checkbox"/> Transitional group housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boarding house | <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/motel | <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | |

22. Which of the following best describes the condition of your home? Check all that apply:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> It is in good shape, no repairs needed | <input type="checkbox"/> It needs minor repairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It is in such poor condition that it is unsafe | <input type="checkbox"/> It needs major repairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It needs weatherization measures (insulation, weather strip, caulk, etc.) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It needs disability access improvements (wheelchair ramp, wider doorways, etc.) | |

23. If you indicated your home needs repair what prevents you from getting the repairs completed?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't have enough money | <input type="checkbox"/> my landlord refuses to fix |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Afraid to report needed repairs | <input type="checkbox"/> there are no services available to help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am moving soon | <input type="checkbox"/> The repairs are being done |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

24. Have you experienced any of the following problems related to housing in the past 12 months? Check all that apply:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have bad credit | <input type="checkbox"/> I cannot afford the electric bill | <input type="checkbox"/> I cannot afford needed repairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eviction/Threat of Eviction | <input type="checkbox"/> I cannot afford the heat bill | <input type="checkbox"/> I cannot find affordable housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am homeless | <input type="checkbox"/> My house was foreclosed | <input type="checkbox"/> I lost my job |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My house/apartment was condemned | <input type="checkbox"/> I moved | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I need a place with more bedrooms | <input type="checkbox"/> I am new to the area | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |

25. In the past 12 months, have you or has anyone in your household skipped or cut the size of a meal because there was not enough food?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

26. If yes, how often have you or has anyone in your household skipped or cut the size of a meal because there was not enough food?

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

27. In the past 12 months, have you or has anyone in your household used any of the following food assistance services? Check all that apply:

☐ Backpack Program

☐ SNAP (Food Stamps)

☐ Food pantry

☐ Free or Reduced school lunch

☐ Meals on Wheels

☐ Soup Kitchen/Meal Program

☐ WIC

☐ Summer meals for kids

☐ None of the above

☐ Other: _____

28. In the past 12 months, have you or has anyone in your household had to choose between buying food and paying a bill to meet other basic needs (housing, heat, etc.)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

29. Does everyone in your household have health insurance?

☐ Yes

☐ No

30. In the past 12 months, have you or has anyone in your household been unable to get needed medical, dental or mental health care; or prescription medications?

Please specify:

	Yes	No	Does not apply
Medical care			
Dental care			
Mental health care			
Prescription drugs			

31. If you or your family members did not get the care you needed, please indicate the main reasons.

Check all that apply:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> It costs too much | <input type="checkbox"/> Have no insurance | <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous/afraid to go |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure where to go | <input type="checkbox"/> Could not get child care | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious reasons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot afford prescriptions | <input type="checkbox"/> No transportation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have not found a doctor to treat the need | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It takes too long to get an appointment | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The doctor does not accept my insurance | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot return to doctor due to missed appointments | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does not apply | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

If you do not have at least one child under the age of 18 living in your household, please skip to the “**Open-Ended Question**” on Page 9. Please check the appropriate statement below:

- ☐ I DO NOT have children under the age of 18 living in my household
- ☐ I DO have children under the age of 18 living in my household

32. What do you currently use to meet your child care needs? Check all that apply:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> After-school program | <input type="checkbox"/> Children are old enough to be left on their own |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day care center | <input type="checkbox"/> Head Start/Early Head Start |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Informal/unregistered provider/babysitter | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent, family friends, or neighbors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prekindergarten or preschool | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Daycare provider |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a stay at home parent and do not have child care needs | |

33. What time of day do you need child care? Check all that apply:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daytime | <input type="checkbox"/> Before/after school | <input type="checkbox"/> Evening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekends | <input type="checkbox"/> Does not apply | |

34. How do you meet the cost of your child care?

- ☐ Subsidy ☐ Self-pay ☐ It is free ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Paying for childcare is a challenge

35. Have any of the following been an issue or concern for the youth (under 18) in your household in the past 12 months? Check all that apply:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol/Drug abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Grades/Missing School | <input type="checkbox"/> Eating disorders | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gang Activity | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual activity | <input type="checkbox"/> Running away from home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual assault | <input type="checkbox"/> Smoking | <input type="checkbox"/> Teenage pregnancy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Health/Nutrition | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

38. Do you believe there are any needs in your community that were not included. If Yes, please share:

39. Is there anything additional you would like to share about how to best meet the needs of your community:





Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us






CEO Admin Support Team Focus Group

February 1, 2023




1. What do you see as the greatest needs in Rensselaer County?

-  Transportation, specifically for residents to get to grocery store and medical appointments.
-  Affordable Housing, rent is too high, no heat. Homelessness.
-  Affordable childcare, it's hard for parents to get jobs because they don't have childcare available, and/or they can't afford it.
-  Food access and affordability

2. How has COVID-19 impacted the needs and services the community?

-  Inflation, everything has increased in cost, food, gas, daycare, housing.
-  Staffing shortages in health care, ER, no beds available at the hospital.
-  Mental Health issues have increased, people experienced deaths in the family and friends, dealing with trauma.

3. What are some ideas or solutions to help meet the needs identified?

-  More donations to food pantries, maybe send a flyer around to what types of donations are acceptable. CEO's food pantry often receives donations that are not nutritional or practical. Hold a canned food drive.
-  Actively working to erase the stigma of asking for help.
 - i. How? Hold classes to show compassion, develop pamphlets for what services are available, help customers connect with DSS (go with them), job coaching and other skills to become independent.
-  Offer afterschool programs, off-hours daycare and extend Food Pantry hours.



CEO Board of Directors Focus Group

January 24, 2023

Present: Patricia O'Connor, Patrick Morphy, Brian Williams and Michael Stammel

4. What do you see as the greatest needs in Rensselaer County?

- 🌈 A method or means to empower residents, to urge residents to take advantage of opportunities available to them to get “unstuck” in the cycle of poverty.
- 🌈 Transportation – rural isolation, no access to public transportation. City of Rensselaer has no direct lines to Troy, the busses from Rensselaer go to Albany, then they need a transfer to Troy. There is one bus per week to bring seniors to Walmart. Bus passes are not a solution, if there are no bus lines.
- 🌈 Affordable, Safe Housing and Neighborhoods – some public housing has been eliminated, rents are too high, mental health issues and crime within neighborhoods are high.
- 🌈 Affordable childcare – if parents get jobs, their income goes up, they lose services – Cliff Effect.

5. How has COVID-19 impacted the needs and services the community?

- 🌈 The needle was moved with a slight increase in wages, but now the cost of everything is increasing. People are making more money, but they can't afford groceries, gas, fuel oil, etc.
- 🌈 There has been a change in service delivery; some residents don't have access to technology tools (internet, laptop, printers); many only have smart phones.
- 🌈 Food insecurity has increased, there are street soldiers in Rensselaer to hand out food, but only once a month. Limited hours at the food pantry, can't get to the food pantry in Troy, no transportation.
- 🌈 Increased barriers to medical services. There were tents everywhere during the pandemic to receive services, now there's no more places to go, primary care physicians won't treat COVID. Emergency room visits are long.

6. What are some ideas or solutions to help meet the needs identified?








- 🌈 Increase access to services, have services go to the people. Designate areas of service provision.
- 🌈 SUNY Schenectady has a mobile learning van, duplicate that delivery model
- 🌈 Utilize existing public spaces such as libraries.
- 🌈 Meal and food deliveries










Lansingburgh FRC Staff Focus Group

January 5, 2023











7. What do you see as the greatest needs in Rensselaer County, and/or Lansingburgh area?

-  Transportation – no bussing for children to come to center; cannot get to medical or dental appointments (specifically HS children); vehicle accessibility and cost of vehicle maintenance.
-  Affordable, Safe Housing and Neighborhoods – rent is too high; families cannot afford first month's rent and last month's rent for security deposit; families cannot afford back rent; apartments that are available are below code, and/or infested.
-  Cannot find or afford diapers and diaper cream.
-  Lack of access to local pediatric dental care.
-  Adult Education – parenting classes and budgeting classes to include proper choices financially.
-  Childcare – not enough daycare centers for young children; not enough afterschool programs.
-  Mental Health issues – still connected to stigma.

8. What do you think causes these needs?

-  Pandemic and everything that goes with it: isolation, rules, illness, fear, increase in prices of everything.
-  Lack of accountability.
-  Generational poverty, young parents doing what they learned from their parents.
-  Lack of parental knowledge – parenting skills, budgeting, awareness of other resources in the community.
-  Lack of motivation.
-  Lack of gainful employment because of working hours, and lack of childcare.
-  The “system” – cliff effect.

9. How has COVID-19 impacted the needs and services the community?

-  Because of isolation: Significant decrease in social skills (adults and children),
-  Increase in behavioral issues,
-  Increase in sicknesses and weakened immune systems,
-  Decrease in reaching developmental milestones,
-  Increase in mental health issues/socialization decrease
-  Increase in substance abuse
-  Increase in restrictions in medical offices and urgent care facilities, so parents and children are not going,
-  Lack of proper insurance coverage,
-  Staffing issues all over, specifically medical offices,
-  Increase in domestic violence and decrease in reporting.

- 🎨 More and more residents are leaving the state of New York.
- 🎨 Lack of family and other social supports,
- 🎨 Zoom fatigue
- 🎨 Lack of technology equipment at home (printers, computers)
- 🎨 Lack of accountability, COVID has become an “easy excuse” for not doing what would have been considered normal activity prior to COVID.
- 🎨 Lingering supply chain issues – formula, diapers, some over-the-counter medications.
- 🎨 Hard to re-establish trust with community service providers.

10. What are some ideas or solutions to help meet the needs identified?













- 🎨 Adult Education: Required parental training, financial literacy and decision-making classes, skill building, introduction to money-saving apps through grocery stores, etc.
- 🎨 Reinstating old (pre-COVID) requirements.
- 🎨 Youth/Young Adults interventions and programs.
- 🎨 Lowering requirements for security deposits on apartments, simplify the application process for new apartments.
- 🎨 Diaper and diaper cream drive.
- 🎨 Help parents find jobs with livable wages so they can increase their cash on hand.
- 🎨 More funding and grant opportunities to assist residents.
- 🎨 Make NYS politicians more accountable, advocate for the poorer families,
- 🎨 More therapy for mental health issues, removing the stigma.








Rensselaer FRC Staff Focus Group

January 10, 2023





11. What do you see as the greatest needs in Rensselaer County, and/or City of Rensselaer area?

-  Affordable, Safe Housing – rent is too high; spaces are small.
-  Transportation – no bussing for children to come to center; limited bus line or takes multiple transfers. People are doing a lot of walking. Vehicle accessibility and cost of vehicle maintenance including money for gas.
-  Domestic Violence
-  Mental Health issues for children and families. Parents have been victims of suicide and attempted suicide is increasing.
-  Substance Abuse – heroin/ pills. Parents have overdosed.
-  Affordable Childcare – not enough daycares offering non-traditional hours.
-  Burmese ESL language barriers.
-  Food/Nutrition – Food Pantry access hours too restrictive. Formula shortage
-  Diaper shortage.
-  Phone and wifi disconnections
-  Utility bills are too high; people experiencing shut offs; HEAP doesn't help enough; need lower prices for kerosene and propane.
-  Safety – drugs, unsafe playground equipment, increase in violence, increase in vandalism; lack of space for children; lack of age-appropriate supervision

12. What do you think causes these needs?

-  Pandemic and everything that goes with it: isolation, rules, illness, fear, increase in prices of everything.
-  Because of the lack of transportation and childcare, parents cannot find jobs; low to no earned wages.
-  Single parent limitations.
-  Stress; increased mental health issues.
-  The cliff effect – start to earn more money, lose existing supports.

13. How has COVID-19 impacted the needs and services the community?

-  Lack of staff – CEO ECS and other businesses and services
-  Because of isolation: Significant decrease in social skills (COVID babies).
-  Increase in behavioral issues, lack of behavior interventions; developmental delays including speech.
-  Increase in mental health issues/socialization decrease; increase in depression, anxiety / panic attacks; people feel overwhelmed.

- 🎨 Increase in restrictions in medical offices, hours of operation, emergency rooms waiting time increase. This may be due to staffing issues.
- 🎨 Lack of proper insurance coverage or providers are not accepting insurance.
- 🎨 Lingering supply chain issues – formula, diapers, some over-the-counter medications like Tylenol, antibiotics.
- 🎨 Generational poverty
- 🎨 Lack of parenting skills
- 🎨 Transportation issues, arrive at appointments late, provider cannot see patient.
- 🎨 Small business closures

14. What are some ideas or solutions to help meet the needs identified?

- 🎨 Uber/Lyft assistance, bus passes, provide bussing for children.
- 🎨 Deliver food to families rather than have them have to visit the food pantry.
- 🎨 Remove barriers to obtaining apartments by lowering requirements for security deposits on apartments, simplify the application process for new apartments. Have more 3-bedroom apartments available. Section 8 income requirements not high enough. Provide landlord education and incentives.
- 🎨 Adult Education: how to maintain housing, life skills, individualized life coach, advocacy.
- 🎨 More local services available, so you don't need transportation to access them.
- 🎨 Alleviate the barrier to paperwork criteria digitally by providing proper technology i.e. printers. Also how can an individual obtain services from DSS, copies of birth certificates, ID cards, etc. – Provide a step-by-step resource to make it easier.
- 🎨 Provide before and after care for children so parents can work; provide summer care so children don't regress over the summer. Provide summer programs for preschoolers and younger.
- 🎨 Increase playground safety (equipment and supervision).



Troy Youth Affiance Focus Group

February 1, 2023

15. What do you see as the greatest needs in Rensselaer County?




- Safe, Affordable Housing – apartments not big enough for families, landlords needing 4 month's rent up front, and proof of huge salaries. Touched on the Cliff Effect.
- The need for Indoor Space for family and youth activities or any public space to gather.
- Food Deserts – lack of grocery stores and skyrocketing cost for groceries.
- Monetary support for youth organizations. The inability to pay staff, people seem to think that youth organization staff should be considered volunteers. Without money, there are limitations to expansion.
- Lack of Parent Engagement and/or training. The need for navigational help with doctor's offices, schools, how to apply for SNAP benefits, meal planning and preparation, budgeting.
- Lack of Mental Health services and accessibility for youth and adults as seen in behavioral issues and depression.
- Lack of care in Hospitals/ERs. Severely overcrowded ERs, limited access to primary care doctor and urgent care settings as well as diminished access to medications.

16. What do you think causes these needs?










- The Staffing Shortages that every business and service is seeing now.
- All service barriers have been exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Delayed government payments.
- The community dynamics have changed.
- Inflation – high cost of everything, including National Grid and groceries.
- Increase in mental health issues and in physical health problems. The pandemic has made it difficult to access mental health services and urgent care services.
- Don't know how to navigate the landscape.

17. How has COVID-19 impacted the needs and services the community?

- Because tenants did not have to pay rent, landlords are now requiring so much more money up front for new tenants.
- Increased anxiety levels from everyone – afraid there will be another pandemic.
- Grief component – Trauma
- Increased supports are ending.
- Workforce issues
- Increased phishing scams because people are working remotely
- Loss of in-school socialization, education and emotional health. Because of isolation, the senior population is lagging more with technology skills.
- Increase in apathy and complacency and a decrease in any incentive to help others.

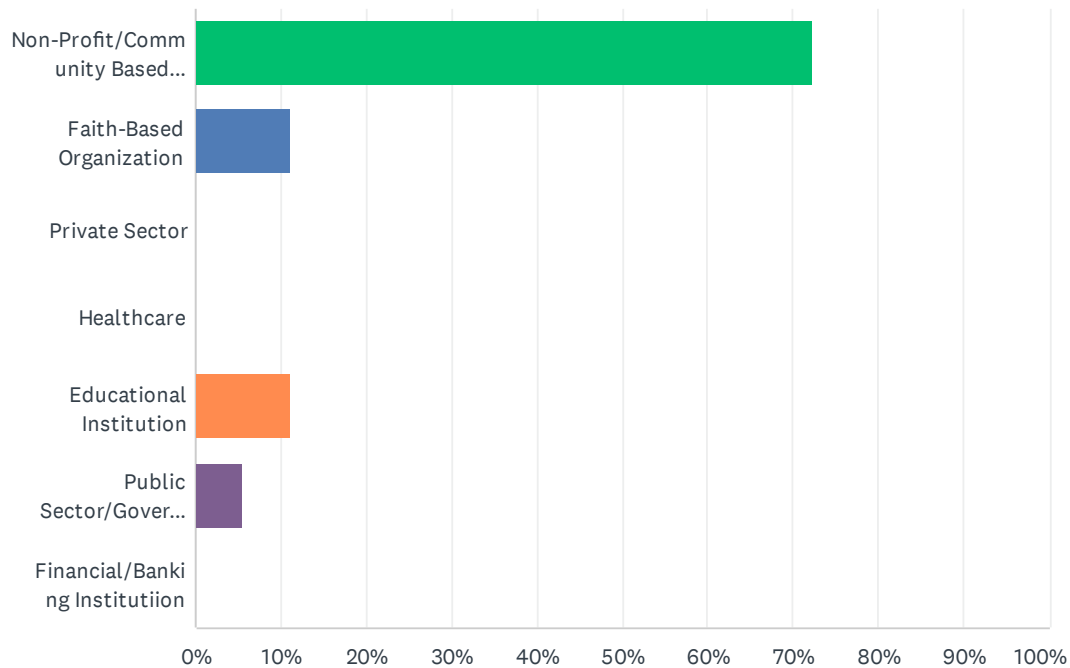
-  Service provider burnout.
-  Decreased trust of service providers
-  Frustration in not being able to speak to a “real” person, a lot of electronic robot calls.

18. What are some ideas or solutions to help meet the needs identified?

-  Affordable Housing
-  Better utilize what we have, specifically schools for gatherings and activities; we need shared, multi-use space.
-  Increase communication for all service providers
-  Collaboration for grant funding
-  Advocacy with Government entities, OCFS, public schools to reduce duplication.
-  Increase summer programming
-  Develop a centralized intake system so residents aren’t met with barriers at every service provider; something that is recognized by all services (like Alliance for Better Health).
-  Transition planning, mentoring our successors.
-  Create a centralized activity calendar for all service providers to have access to so they can share with customers/clients.

Q1 What type of organization do you represent?

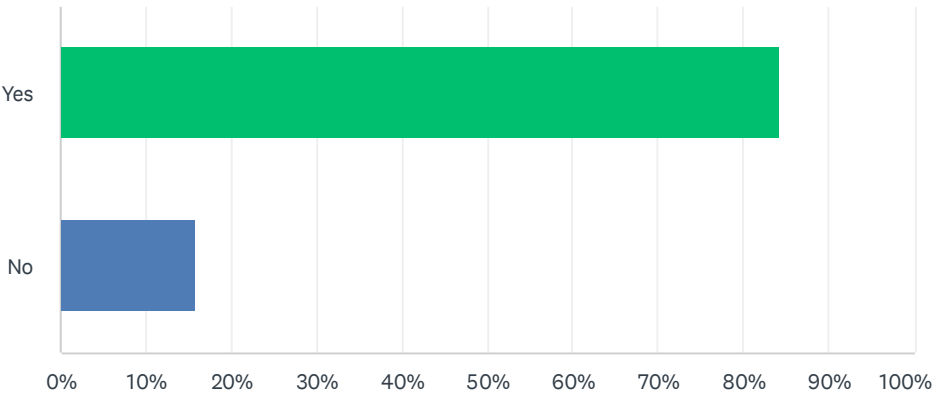
Answered: 18 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Non-Profit/Community Based Organization	72.22%	13
Faith-Based Organization	11.11%	2
Private Sector	0.00%	0
Healthcare	0.00%	0
Educational Institution	11.11%	2
Public Sector/Government	5.56%	1
Financial/Banking Institution	0.00%	0
TOTAL		18

Q2 Do you currently partner with CEO in any capacity?

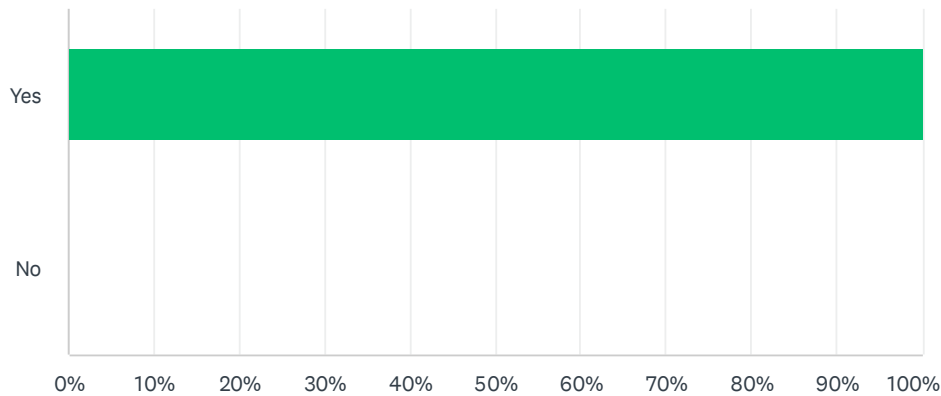
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	84.21%	16
No	15.79%	3
TOTAL		19

Q3 Do you have an understanding of the services CEO provides?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

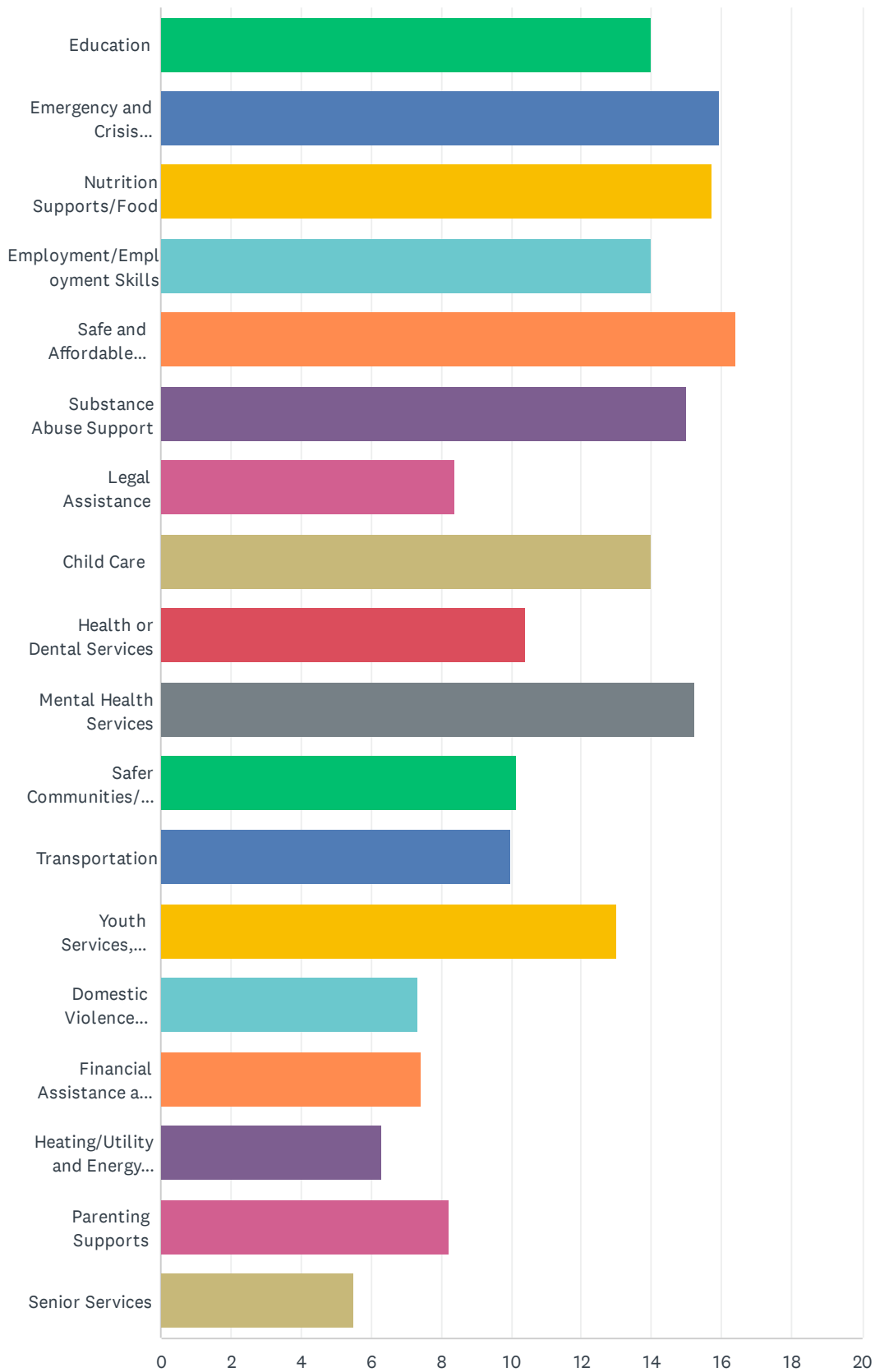


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	100.00%	19
No	0.00%	0
TOTAL		19

Q4 Please check what you believe to be the top five needs in Rensselaer County (1 is the highest need, 5 is the lowest need):

Answered: 18 Skipped: 1

2023 Community Needs Partner Survey



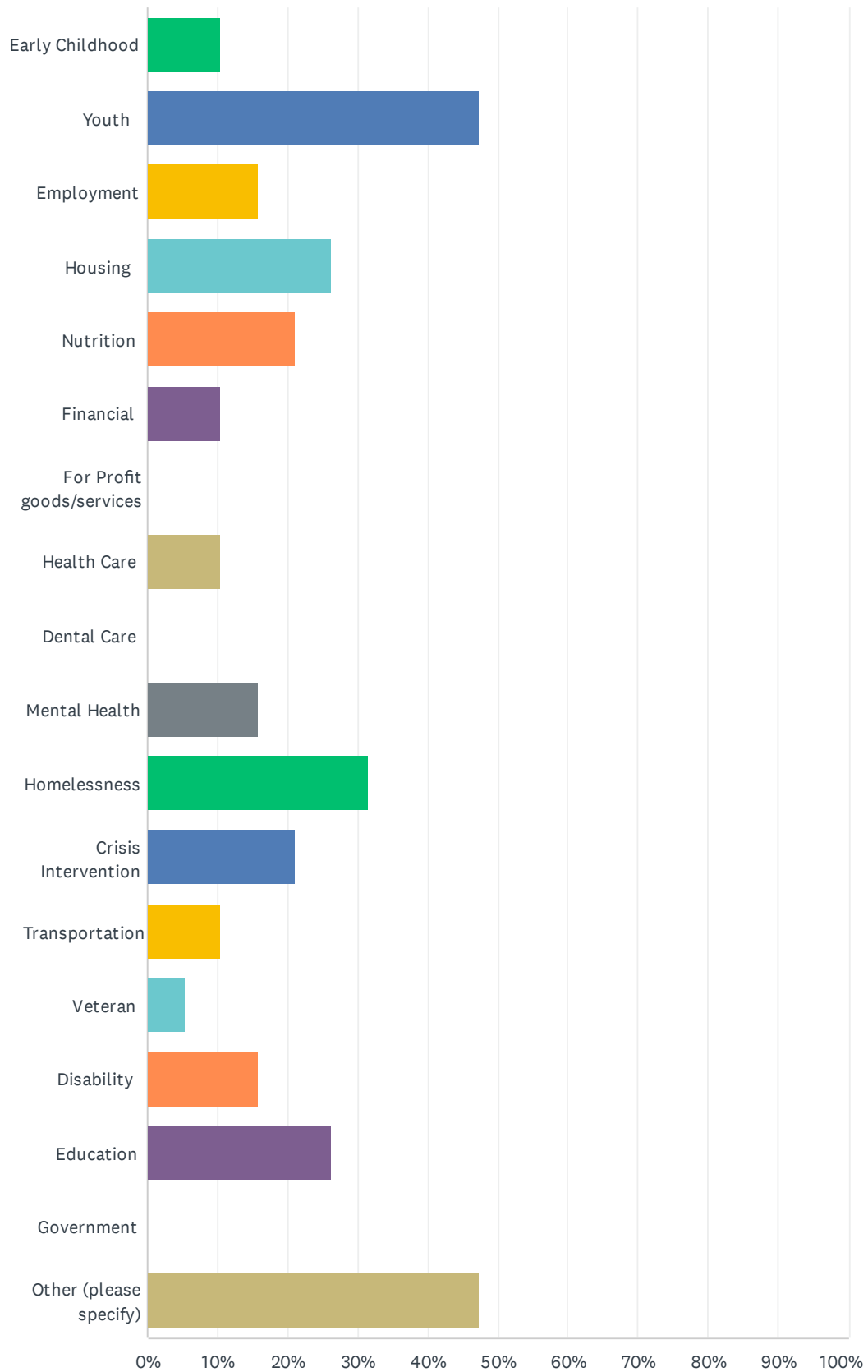
2023 Community Needs Partner Survey

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Education	50.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	0.00% 0	25.00% 1
Emergency and Crisis Assistance	28.57% 4	7.14% 1	35.71% 5	7.14% 1	7.14% 1	7.14% 1	7.14% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Nutrition Supports/Food	9.09% 1	45.45% 5	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	0.00% 0
Employment/Employment Skills	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	33.33% 3	11.11% 1	33.33% 3	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11.11% 1
Safe and Affordable Housing	41.67% 5	8.33% 1	16.67% 2	16.67% 2	16.67% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Substance Abuse Support	11.11% 1	11.11% 1	22.22% 2	33.33% 3	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	0.00% 0
Legal Assistance	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	0.00% 0
Child Care	30.00% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	20.00% 2	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	20.00% 2
Health or Dental Services	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	40.00% 2	0.00% 0
Mental Health Services	7.14% 1	42.86% 6	14.29% 2	21.43% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	7.14% 1
Safer Communities/Crime Prevention	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Transportation	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14.29% 1	28.57% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Youth Services, Supports, and Programs	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	20.00% 2	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Domestic Violence Assistance	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Financial Assistance and supports	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Heating/Utility and Energy Assistance	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Parenting Supports	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	22.22% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Senior Services	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0

Q5 What types of services does your organization provide?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

2023 Community Needs Partner Survey

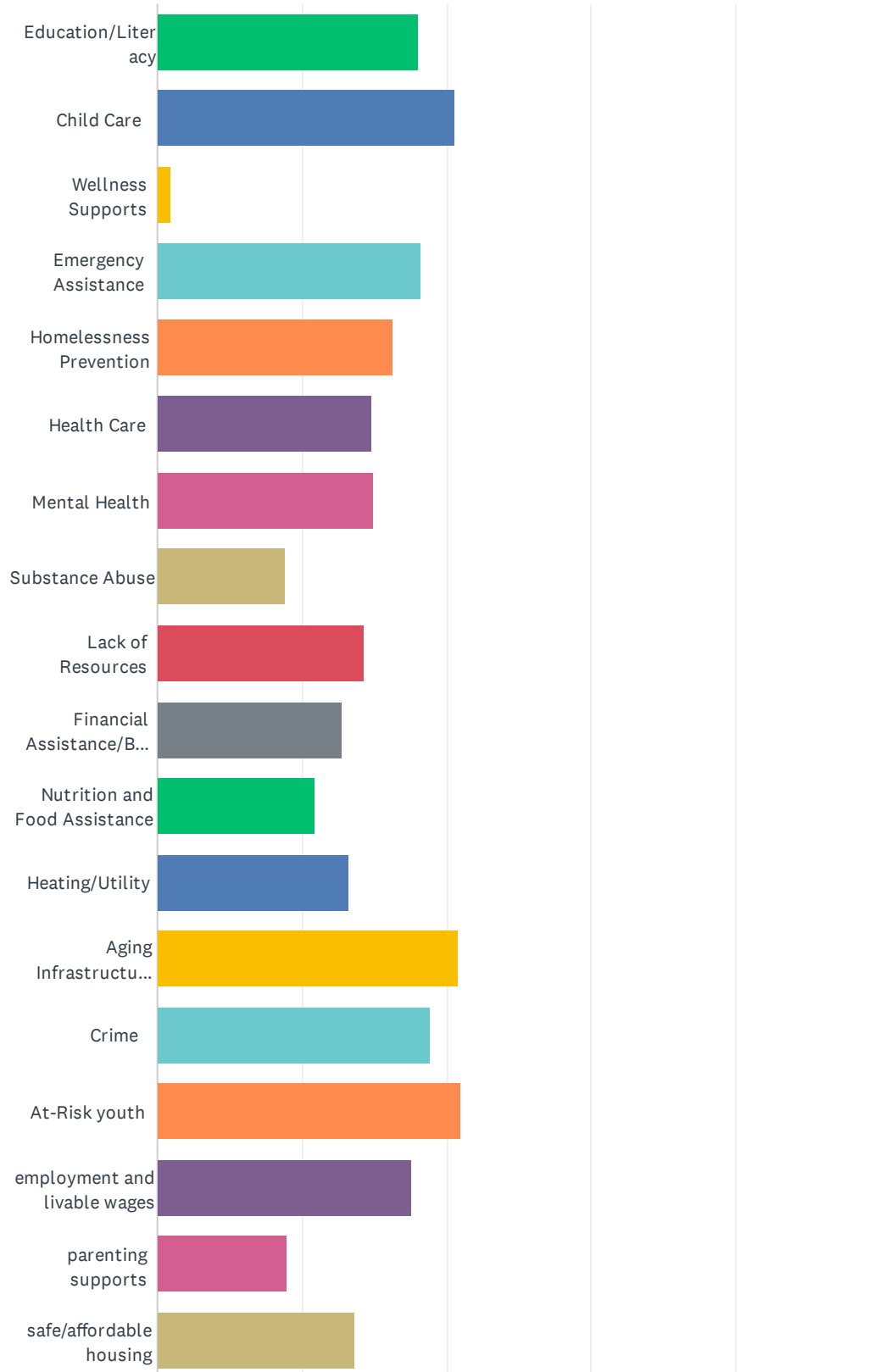


2023 Community Needs Partner Survey

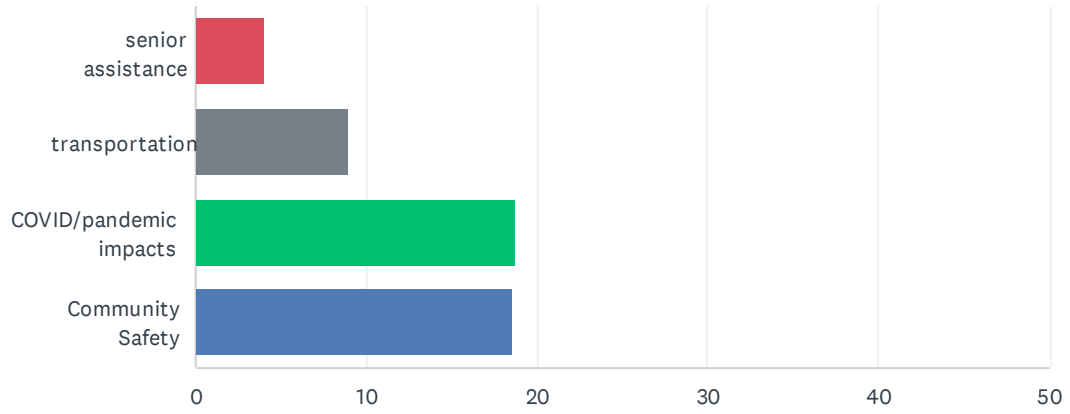
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Early Childhood	10.53%	2
Youth	47.37%	9
Employment	15.79%	3
Housing	26.32%	5
Nutrition	21.05%	4
Financial	10.53%	2
For Profit goods/services	0.00%	0
Health Care	10.53%	2
Dental Care	0.00%	0
Mental Health	15.79%	3
Homelessness	31.58%	6
Crisis Intervention	21.05%	4
Transportation	10.53%	2
Veteran	5.26%	1
Disability	15.79%	3
Education	26.32%	5
Government	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	47.37%	9
Total Respondents: 19		

Q6 What are the five most challenging community issues that low-income households in Rensselaer County will face in the next three years?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



2023 Community Needs Partner Survey



2023 Community Needs Partner Survey

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Education/Literacy	11.11% 1	11.11% 1	11.11% 1	22.22% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	33.33% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Child Care	33.33% 3	11.11% 1	33.33% 3	22.22% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Wellness Supports	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Emergency Assistance	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	10.00% 1	30.00% 3	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10.00% 1	20.00% 2	0.00% 0
Homelessness Prevention	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Health Care	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	33.33% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	33.33% 2
Mental Health	0.00% 0	20.00% 2	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Substance Abuse	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Lack of Resources	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Financial Assistance/Budget/Income	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	25.00% 1
Nutrition and Food Assistance	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	33.33% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Heating/Utility	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Aging Infrastructure/Home safety	40.00% 2	40.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Crime	0.00% 0	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
At-Risk youth	50.00% 6	16.67% 2	25.00% 3	0.00% 0	8.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
employment and livable wages	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	12.50% 1
parenting supports	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
safe/affordable housing	22.22% 2	11.11% 1	11.11% 1	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
senior assistance	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
transportation	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14.29% 1	28.57% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
COVID/pandemic impacts	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	40.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Community Safety	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	50.00% 4	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0

Q7 What do you believe are the reasons/causes of the community issues and needs?

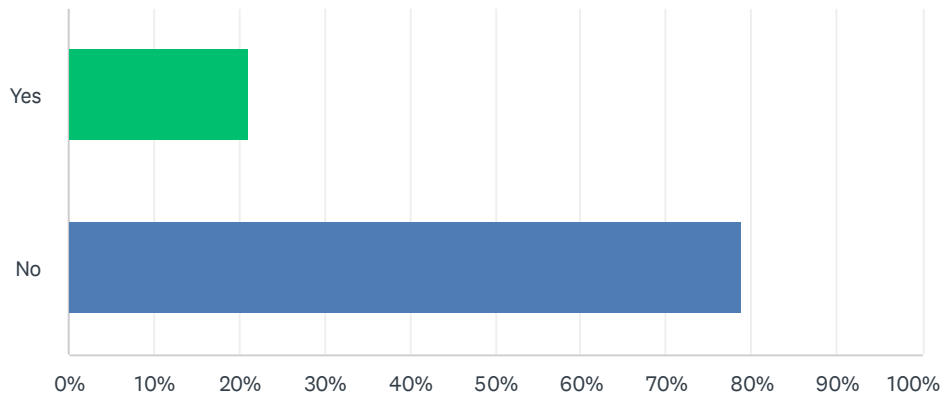
Answered: 17 Skipped: 2

Q8 How do you think the pandemic has impacted the needs of Rensselaer County?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

Q9 Do you feel that the community is knowledgeable of services available to meet their needs?

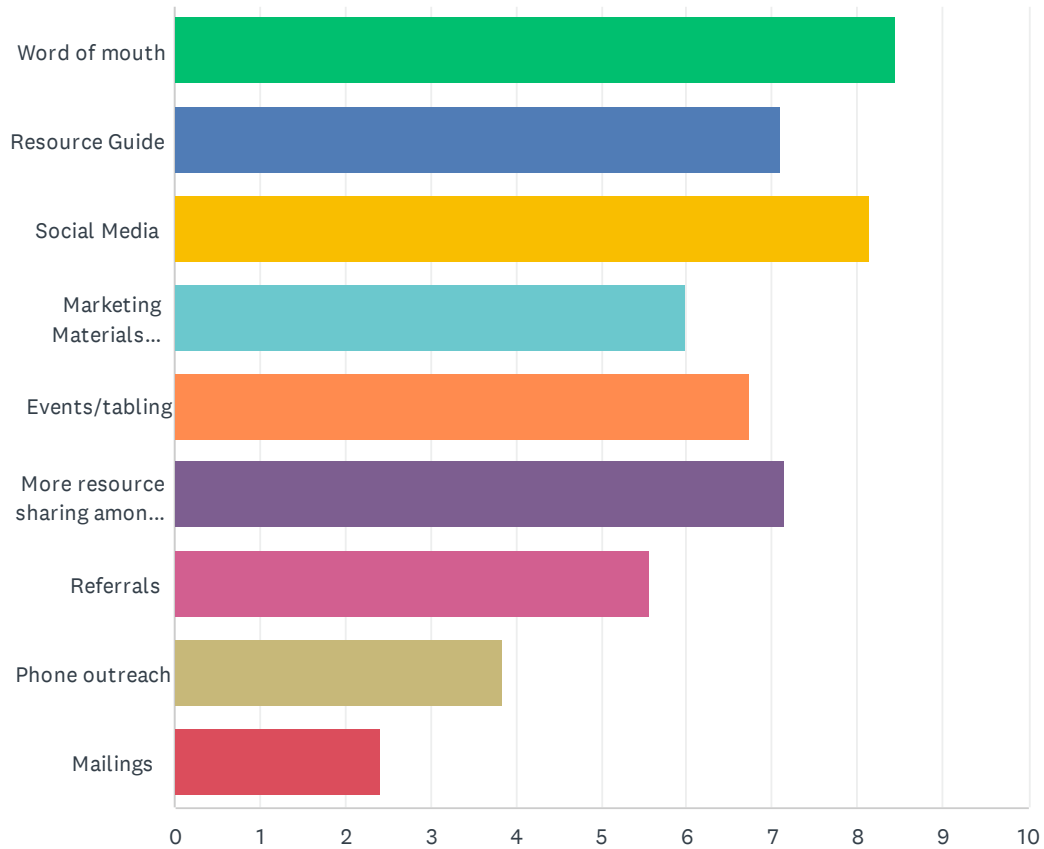
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	21.05%	4
No	78.95%	15
TOTAL		19

Q10 Please choose the top three ways we could best assist the community in understanding what services and supports are available?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



2023 Community Needs Partner Survey

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	TOTAL	SCORE
Word of mouth	66.67% 6	22.22% 2	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	9	8.44
Resource Guide	9.09% 1	36.36% 4	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11	7.09
Social Media	35.71% 5	42.86% 6	21.43% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14	8.14
Marketing Materials (pamphlets/flyers)	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	50.00% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	6.00
Events/tabling	0.00% 0	18.18% 2	54.55% 6	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11	6.73
More resource sharing amongst partners	42.86% 6	14.29% 2	7.14% 1	14.29% 2	0.00% 0	14.29% 2	7.14% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14	7.14
Referrals	0.00% 0	28.57% 2	14.29% 1	14.29% 1	0.00% 0	14.29% 1	28.57% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	7	5.57
Phone outreach	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	50.00% 3	16.67% 1	6	3.89
Mailings	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	60.00% 3	5	2.40