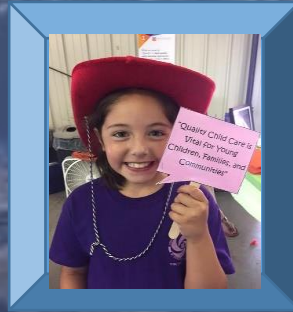


# Community Needs Assessment 2021



**COMMUNITY ACTION  
PLANNING COUNCIL  
OF JEFFERSON COUNTY, INC.**

518 Davidson St. • Watertown, NY 13601 • 315.782.4900





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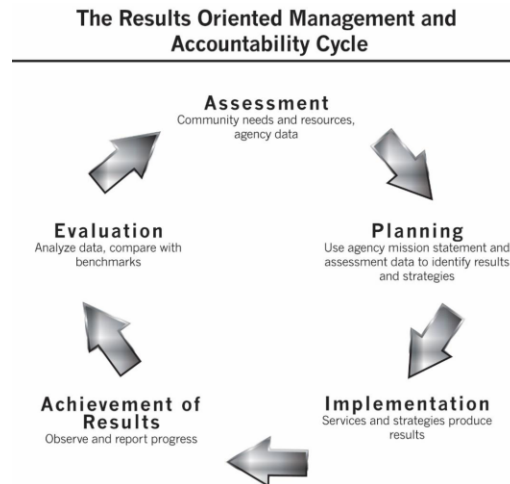
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**Community Needs Assessment Methodology** In keeping with the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), the core principles of Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA), and the Organizational Standards by which all Community Action agencies are measured, Community Action Planning Council conducts periodic assessments of community needs. The previous Community Needs Assessment was conducted, reviewed and approved by the board of directors in 2019.



The pages that follow contain data – both qualitative and quantitative – gleaned from multiple sources during the time period April 2021 through November 2021. This compilation of data, entitled the Community Needs Assessment, provides the framework for the agency’s strategic plan and annual Community Action work plan.

The agency’s Head Start program specific information and findings can be found beginning on page 28 of this document. This contains specific data as outlined in the Head Start Performance Standards.

**Qualitative Data: Focus Group Methodology** – On May 11, 2021 a focus group was conducted with Head Start Policy Council via zoom. Individuals in attendance included Community Action staff (both Administration and Head Start), Head Start Parents, and community members representing Prenatal Perinatal Council and Jefferson County Cornell Cooperative Extension. On May 20, 2021, a focus group was conducted with the Board of Directors of the Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County, Inc. The discussion at both focus group meetings included topics such as housing and energy, personal finance and employment, mental health and substance abuse, education and child care, food and nutrition with the goal of identifying barriers or addressing the roots of poverty in our community.

**Qualitative Data: Survey Methodology** The agency conducted a total of five surveys during the time period May 12, 2021 through 11/19/2021.

*Community Partner Survey – 9/1/2021* – The agency conducted an on-line survey through Survey Monkey. A total of 15 representatives from local organizations completed the brief survey, identifying strengths and challenges in the community.

*Agency Wide Customer Survey – 8/1/2021* - Community Member surveys were distributed on our website and via our Facebook page. A total of 46 individuals completed the survey.

*Food Pantry Survey – 4/7/2021* – Partner food pantries were invited to complete a survey to gauge the needs and usage of food pantries across Jefferson County. A total of 15 food pantries participated.

*Agency Staff Survey – September 2021* - A survey was made available to agency staff electronically. Email announcements were sent to staff, explaining the importance of their participation in the needs assessment process. In total, 25 surveys were completed.

*Head Start Parent Survey – November 2021* - A survey was made available to Head Start parents electronically via Parent Square (a communication tool used to decimate information to parents). In total, 64 surveys were completed.

Quantitative Data was extrapolated from the New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA) online needs assessment tool. Available on Community Commons, the tool collects information from a variety of state and federal sources and compiles into a single downloadable report (Appendix IV)

**Agency Profile** Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County, Inc. is a private non-profit, multi-service agency serving the residents of Jefferson County since 1966. Born out of the Equal Opportunity Act of 1964, the agency is one of more than 1,000 Community Action agencies nationwide. Community Action agencies are founded on a common purpose: to support low-income households as they strengthen their abilities to be self-supporting and develop family and community relationships that will sustain self-reliance. Community Action recognizes that needs vary by community, and agencies develop specialized services tailored to their home community.

Community Action Planning Council is governed by a 15-member tripartite board of directors, comprised of equal representation from the low-income, public and private sectors.

### **2021 – 2022 Board of Directors**

Andrea Kaler, President  
Krystin LaBarge, Vice-President  
Jacki Sharpe, Treasurer  
Nancy Brown, Secretary

#### *Low-Income Sector*

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Crystal Roberts

Adrienne Brethen

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Vacant

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Stanley Zaremba

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Cheryl Mayforth

Jackie Sharpe

Krystin LaBarge

Timothy Ruetten

### **Leadership Team**

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Vicki Phillips, Chief Finance Officer  
Sarah Colligan, Chief Human Resources Officer  
Melissa Jenkins, Head Start / UPK Director  
Cathy Brodeur, Jefferson/Lewis Childcare Project Director  
Robert Owens, Housing and Energy Services Director  
Mary Jane Mathewson, Family Center Director

**Mission** Community Action Planning Council assists, supports and empowers people through diverse programs designed to alleviate poverty, promote self-sufficiency and advance community prosperity.

**Vision** Community Action Planning Council envisions a prosperous community where all people are valued, supported, empowered and successful. Community Action Planning Council is a valued resource that tirelessly protects and continuously expands these characteristics, building a community where opportunities are abundant and people help themselves and each other.

**Programs** The agency’s primary service area is Jefferson County with limited services offered in Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties through Jefferson-Lewis Childcare Project. The agency is home to four main program areas:

**Early Childhood Education** – Head Start (3 and 4 year olds) and Universal Pre-K in partnership with Indian River, Watertown and Sackets Harbor School Districts.

**Jefferson-Lewis Childcare Project** – Child care resources and referrals for families, providers and employers in Jefferson and Lewis Counties.

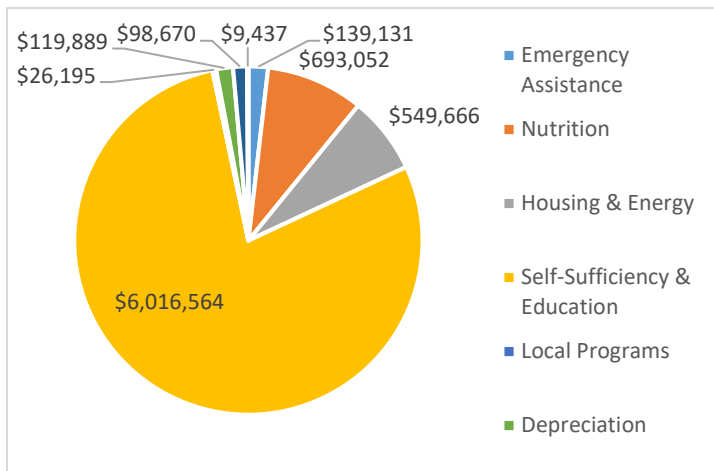
**Weatherization Assistance/EMPOWER** – Energy efficient improvements to homes.

**Family Center** – Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) supports staffing and the provision of a broad range of services that promote self-reliance and address emergency needs, such as workforce development, tax preparation, food pantry, homeless intervention, Fair Housing education, resources and referrals, and holiday programs.

**Statistical Snapshot** Following is a snapshot of Community Action Planning Council as reported in the 2020 Annual Program Report (APR) reporting tool for Community Services Block Grant (CSBG).

**653** Volunteers provided **7,231** Hour of Service **8,051** Unduplicated Individuals Served **2,473** Unduplicated Households Served. Additionally, 12,480 duplicated Individuals (3,547 duplicated households) were served at 22 CFAP food box distributions in response of COVID-19.

**\$7,612,732 Annual Revenue**



**Federal/ State \$6,487,783**

**Local \$545,782**

**Fees \$11,401**

**In-Kind Revenues \$534,024**

**Donations and Fundraising \$29,063**

**Tool Rental Income \$3,410**

**Miscellaneous Income \$1,239**

**Passed-through NYS Department of State (2020):**

Community Services Block Grant - \$242,501

Community Services Block Grant – Discretionary - \$50,000

Community Services Block Grant – CARES Act – COVID – \$19,859

**U.S Department of Health and Human Services (2020):**

Head Start \$ 2,565,215

Head Start Cares Act – COVID - \$160,948

**Individual Demographics:** Of the 2,473 Households served, the agency captured demographics for 2,939 individuals:

**Race/Ethnicity:** 84% White, 6% Black / African American, 5% Multi-Racial, 5% Other / 7% Hispanic or Latino, 93% Non-Hispanic or Latino

**Age Breakdown:** 13% 0-5, 6% 6-13, 3% 14-18, 6% 18-24, 31% 25-44, 11% 45-54, 7% 55-59, 6% 60-64, 10% 65-74, 7% 75+

**Education (Adults 25+):** 4% 0 – 8th Grade, 18% 9 – 12th Non Graduates, 48% HS Graduates/GED, 17% Some Post-Secondary Education, 11% 2 or 4 Year Degree, 2% Graduate of other post-secondary school

**Health Insurance Disabilities:** 96% report having medical coverage, 23% report having some sort of disability 4% report no medical coverage

**Household Characteristics:** Of the 2,473 households served, the agency captured characteristics for 1,901 households:

**Family Types Family Size:** 38% Single Person HH, 20% Two-Parent HH, 15% Two Adults/No Children, 16% Single-Parent Female, 3% Single-Parent Male, 4% Multigenerational, 4% Other

**Housing:** 67% Rent, 25% Own, 1% Homeless, 7% Other

**Income Sources of Income:** 29% - Up to 50% of Poverty Level, 13% - 51–75% of Poverty Level, 16% -76-100% of Poverty Level, 12% -101-125% of Poverty Level, 18% - 126-200% above Poverty Level, 12% - 201% and above Poverty Level

**Military / Veteran Status** Community Action Planning Council served a total of **206** households with at least one member of the household reported as active duty military or veteran. This includes **26** active military households and **180** veteran households.

Combined active duty military and veteran households account for **11%** of all households served through the agency

## Findings on the Causes and Conditions of Poverty

Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County, Inc. (CAPCJC) services reach thousands of individuals and families across Jefferson County annually. As a result, CAPCJC can continue growing and expanding services to address community needs. After collecting data from community members and leaders and conducting data analyses, the following recommendations were identified to further the impact of Jefferson County:

*Finding 1: In Jefferson County, certain conditions are barriers to create economic opportunity. These conditions are identified as causes of poverty:*

1. Shortage of living wage, full time jobs. Available jobs are in the service industry (Part-time, low wage, non-traditional hours)
2. Limited access to transportation to get to work, medical appointments, and grocery shopping
3. Limited affordable, quality child care spaces
4. Limited options for affordable and safe rent (Housing insecurity)
5. Lack of home energy efficiency impacts family budgets

Observable data shows labor participation rate is lower in Jefferson County than state rates. This is in part because of employment opportunities that are available. The highest number of jobs are in the service industry which have non-traditional hours, low wages and are usually part-time with limited benefits.

In addition to a general lack of full-time jobs that pay living wage, access to transportation is limited within the city of Watertown and even more limited in rural towns in Jefferson County. Our agency customers cite as challenges: “Inability to afford gas and car repairs” as obstacles to maintain reliable transportation.

Low access to quality, affordable child care is another condition that restricts economic opportunity in Jefferson County. Across all surveys, lack of quality and affordable childcare was ranked as the number one issue facing low-income households. Currently, there are 1,182 spaces for children 6 weeks to 5 years (includes 210 infant spaces) and 1,968 school age spaces. According to the American Community Survey, 2015 - 2019, there are 9,104 children ages 0-4 and 1,705 of these children are in poverty (19.4%). For families who do work and need childcare, there is only space in New York State regulated care for 16% of children ages 0-4 in Jefferson County! Additionally, the cost is often prohibitive toward maintaining employment. For example, the market rate for infant care is \$220 per week. An individual making minimum wage (\$13.20 per hour) would have to work almost 17 hours per week just to pay for child care (for one child).

Customers placed transportation services as the second highest service/resource household need.

While the number of housing units has increased slightly (3.74%) since 2010, from 58,000 to 60,170, 25,898 of these units were built before 1960. 25% of our customers reported home energy efficiency as an unmet need for low-income families. Jefferson County winters are long and cold, leading to increased dependency on heating systems. High energy costs are an excessive burden on low-income families.

*Finding 2: Low-income people in Jefferson County face barriers to becoming stable and achieving economic security. Top barriers to obtaining/maintaining employment:*

1. Access to affordable and quality childcare
2. Lack of reliable or available transportation
3. Low wages and little or no benefits
4. Lack of mental health services
5. Lack of affordable housing options and high energy bills for low-income families impacts self-sufficiency

As mentioned previously, child care space is limited and the cost is often prohibitive toward getting and maintaining employment. 62.5 % of Head Start parents and 74% of our community customers who completed the Needs Assessment survey stated there is a need for Early Head Start in our communities.

As noted elsewhere in the findings, transportation is a barrier to not only maintaining employment but also to have access to services, such as healthcare and support systems. Community Action Planning Council customers cited as top three

issues they face in regards to transportation are: “Inability to afford gas”, “Inability to afford care repairs” and “No access to a car”.

The highest percent of employment opportunities are found in the service industry. These jobs often pay minimum wage, the hours are non-traditional and often unpredictable and generally are less than full-time.

Access to long-term mental health care is another condition that creates a barrier to becoming healthy individuals who can get and maintain employment. There are no inpatient facilities in our county for children and limited spaces for adults for short term care at our local hospital. If an individual needs extensive mental health care, they must go as far away as Ogdensburg, Syracuse or Rochester.

As noted previously both customers and community partners identified home energy costs as a barrier toward becoming self-sufficient. Since the weather in New York is cooler than most other areas of the United States, space heating (56%) makes up a greater portion of energy use in homes compared to the U.S. average, and air conditioning makes up only 1% of energy use. The impact of this energy burden is greater on households in poverty.

*Finding 3: Health behaviors/access to quality food impact quality of life. This is especially true for those impacted by poverty. The following findings highlight challenges regarding health/housing and food access:*

1. Lack of mental health providers accepting Medicaid
2. Lack of quality diet is impacting health of those in poverty
3. Lack of cooking and nutrition skills
4. High rate of individuals affected by substance abuse/opiate usage
5. Limited access to quality food due to proximity to grocery store and food pantries

According to the Jefferson County Community Health Improvement Plan & Community Health Assessment 2016-2018: 32% of Jefferson County Adults are obese, this is several percentage points higher than the state average. Obesity is a risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and many forms of cancer, diabetes and kidney disease.

Identified in all surveys, interviews, and focus groups, was the need to increase awareness regarding better nutrition. Cooking skills seem to be diminishing among the general population. Recognizing healthy eating habits and proper nutrition find those in poverty a vulnerable population.

Community partners ranked lack of mental health and behaviors services as the second highest need in our communities. 31% of Head Start parents who completed our survey indicated there was a lack of mental health providers who accept Medicaid.

The Jefferson County Community Health Improvement Plan & Community Health Assessment 2021, notes that opiate overdose hospitalizations have increased across the North Country region. The rate in Watertown has increased 50%. As of May 2021, the New York State Department of Health recorded 31 deaths in 2020 opioid overdoses (8 were from heroin) in the county.

Head Start parents ranked ‘Increase in drug use’ as the second highest trend they are observing in the County. This is second to ‘Worsening economy’. The third highest trend observed is ‘Poor nutrition’.

Limited access to supermarkets, supercenters, grocery stores, or other sources of healthy and affordable food make it difficult to eat a healthy diet. 40% of the local food pantries that responded to our survey indicated that customers lack transportation to get to their pantry.

## Profile: Jefferson County, New York



### Fast Facts

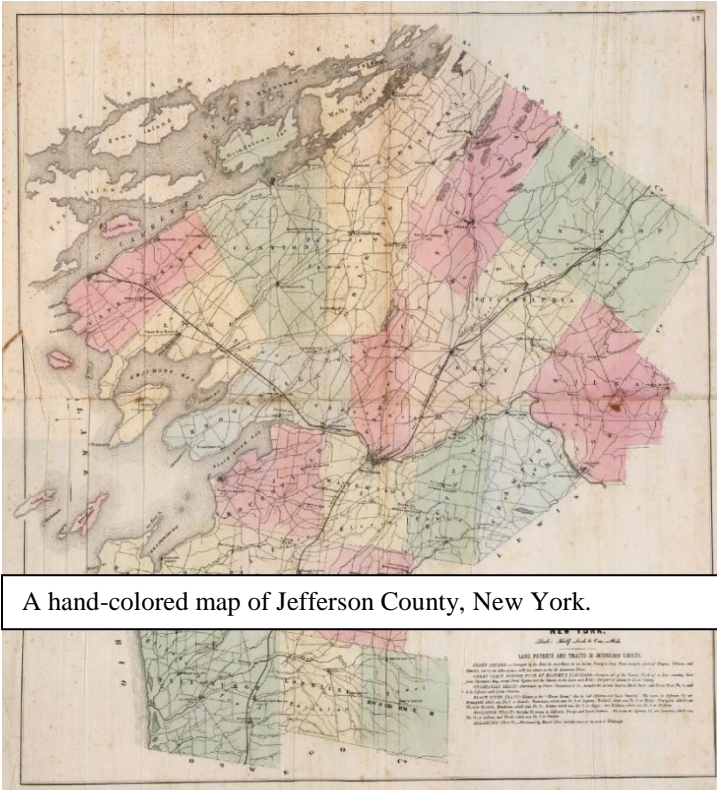
- Established in 1805
- 1293 square miles
- County seat: Watertown, NY
- Population: 112,842<sup>1</sup>
- Median salary: \$53,917<sup>2</sup>
- Median Age: 32.9<sup>3</sup>
- Industry: Government, Healthcare, Dairy/Agriculture

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2019. Source geography: County

<sup>2</sup> Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2019. Source geography: County

<sup>3</sup> Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2019. Source geography: County

## History of Jefferson County



A hand-colored map of Jefferson County, New York.

The vast wilderness of Jefferson County was originally inhabited by the Oneida Indian Nation which thrived on the abundant natural resources. Though French colonial influences are evident, settlement and development in the County did not occur until after the American Revolution, when Alexander Macomb acquired title to this region from the Oneidas. "Macomb's Purchase" was soon subdivided into large tracts and other holdings which stimulated the settlement of the region.

Jefferson County, created in 1805 from Oneida County, was named in honor of President Thomas Jefferson. Settlement started as early as 1794. The economy has always been heavily supported by agriculture—particularly dairy farming—and by some of the oldest paper mills in the state.

Attracted by the abundant waterpower afforded by the Black River, industrially minded pioneers from New England settled in the center of the County and established a manufacturing and trading center. During its early history, Jefferson County was world famous for its manufacturing tradition: cotton and woolen yarns, carriages, sewing machines, water pumps, oil lamps,

portable steam engines, railroad brakes, plows, emery grinders, paper machinery, cylinder printing presses, high pressure hydraulic pumps, and turbine starting systems. The City of Watertown was established as the County seat.

Today, the County features numerous historic and tourist attractions, including the Thousand Islands Region and Sackets Harbor, the site of two key naval battles during the War of 1812. There is also a strong military tradition in the region.

Fort Drum has been used as a military training site since 1908 when it was referred to as Pine Camp; the Army's presence in the North Country may be traced back to the early 1800's. On Feb. 13, 1985, the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) was officially reactivated at Fort Drum, and has been one of the most deployed units in the U.S. Army. The 10th was the first division of any kind formed by the Army since 1975 and the first based in the Northeast since World War II. The 10th Mountain Division was designed to meet a wide range of worldwide infantry-intensive contingency missions.

## Geography

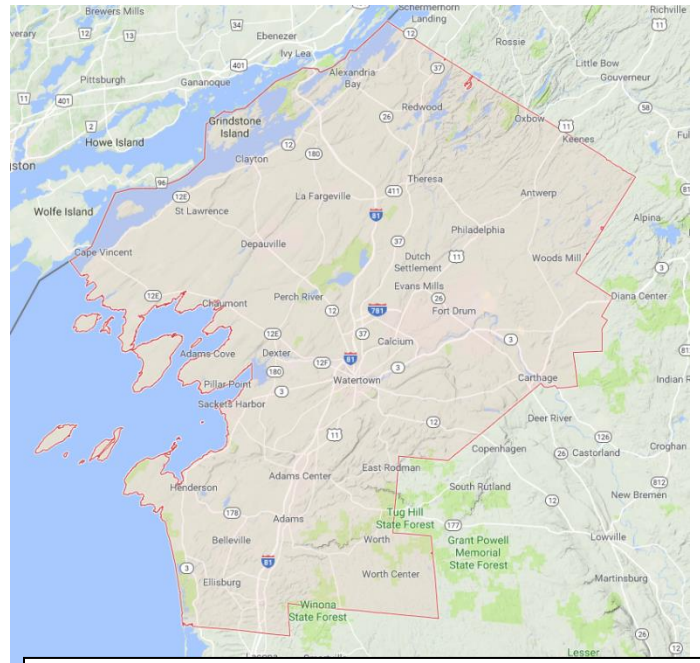
Jefferson County is located in the northern tier of New York State at the juncture of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. The County borders Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River on the west and north, respectively. To the northeast is St. Lawrence County; to the east is Lewis County and to the south is Oswego County. Jefferson County is also located directly south of the Province of Ontario, Canada.

Jefferson County is primarily a rural area with most of its land devoted to agricultural use. The largest nearby U.S. population center is Syracuse, 70 miles to the south. Jefferson County spans an area of roughly 1293 square miles making it the 9<sup>th</sup> largest county in the state. The county is located directly south of the Province of Ontario, Canada. Therefore it is situated along the international border with Canada and facilitates traffic between the two nations across the St. Lawrence River via the Thousand Islands Bridge.

There are fifteen state parks in Jefferson County, many which offer scenic views of Lake Ontario or the Thousand Islands. In fact, two are only accessible by boat. There are nine state forests in Jefferson County comprising of 15,988 acres and seventeen County forest parcels totaling 5,490 acres. The County also contains ten wildlife management areas that provide an additional 17,530 acres of open land for outdoor recreation.

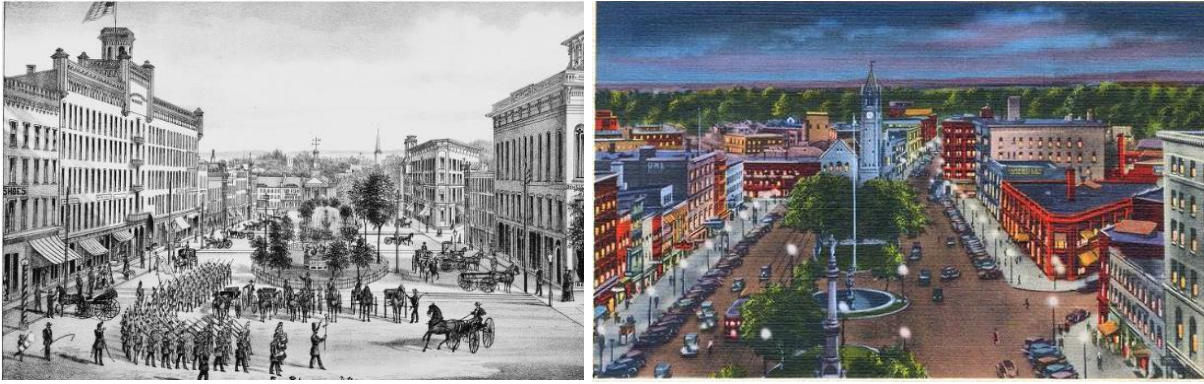
Jefferson County's physical geography carves the County into 5 natural regions, each with its own unique character and offerings:

- **Indian Lakes Region:** a series of small narrow lakes oriented with the St. Lawrence River Valley blanket the northeastern portion of the county.
- **Black River Valley:** cutting east to west through the county, the Black River Valley divides Jefferson County in half. The Black River guided early settlement in the region and flows through the County's most populated areas today.
- **Tug Hill Plateau:** Rising out of the valley is the Tug Hill Plateau, which is a large physiographic region that crosses sections of Lewis, Oneida and Oswego Counties.
- **Lake Ontario Lowlands:** down off the Tug Hill along the western border of the County is the Lake Ontario Lowlands Region. This region is comprised of large sand dunes, expansive backwater areas and many bays along the lakeshore with gently rolling fields inland.
- **Thousand Islands Region:** the northern border of the County is part of the Thousands Islands Region and St. Lawrence Seaway. This section along the St. Lawrence River is dotted with islands and serves as the gateway from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean for water-going vessels.



The topography of Jefferson County is marked by abundant water features, grasslands, temperate forests, and low hills.

## Watertown



Two views of Watertown Public Square facing East; Left: ca. 1877, Right: ca. 1960.

Watertown, NY (pop. 25,622) is a small city. It is the county seat and largest population center of Jefferson County (pop. 112,842). It is 9.3 square miles in size.

The settling of Watertown began in 1800. New England pioneers chose the area based on foresight of creating an industrial center, which would draw its power from the mighty Black River. These men have been described as men of strong feeling, vivid imagination and dauntless courage. They, along with their families, faced many obstacles when they arrived.<sup>4</sup>

Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith, is the head of the City Government and oversees its council. The City of Watertown has a non-partisan Council. Council members and the Mayor are elected to a four year term and serve the City at-large. All elected officials must reside within the City of Watertown. The City Council appoints the City Manager, City Clerk and City Attorney. The City Manager appoints all department heads.<sup>5</sup>

Watertown was once known as the Garland City. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, it was common for businesses located in Public Square to display red, white and blue decorative garlands or bunting all along the building facades. Today, The City of Watertown strives to be a business friendly community and has executed downtown revitalization efforts and public arts programs.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of recreation, there are 574 dedicated acres of Parks and Playgrounds which offer diverse and unique opportunities. Watertown's historic Thompson Park serves as a central gathering place for a variety of community uses, events and for visitors to the City. The Park is an Olmstead Park and rich in activity and scenic trails. The Park is home to the local zoo where one can see a collection of animals that are native to the area.<sup>7</sup>

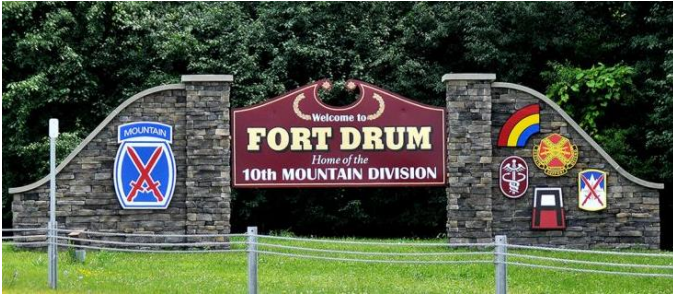
<sup>4</sup> "Our History," *The City of Watertown New York*, <https://www.watertown-ny.gov/index.asp?NID=411>

<sup>5</sup> "Mayor's Office," *The City of Watertown New York*, <https://www.watertown-ny.gov/index.asp?nid=81>

<sup>6</sup> "Garland City," *The City of Watertown New York*, <https://www.watertown-ny.gov/index.asp?NID=412>

<sup>7</sup> "Parks and Recreation," *The City of Watertown New York*, <https://www.watertown-ny.gov/index.asp?NID=120>

## Fort Drum



Fort Drum is located nine miles east of Watertown, and is home to more than 30,000 soldiers, family members, and civilian employees of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) and its supporting tenants. Fort Drum occupies 107,265 acres in Jefferson County and stretches across the Towns of LeRay, Philadelphia, Antwerp, and Wilna. Fort Drum is the largest Army installation in the Northeast.

Fort Drum is a major training center for reserve component forces, and units of the New York Army National Guard rank among the post's most frequent customers. These units regularly come to Fort Drum for weekend inactive duty training and annual training during the year. Fort Drum's ranges, training areas and facilities are essential to the New York Army National Guard to meet readiness objectives and federal training requirements.

According to the 2020 Fort Drum Impact Statement, there were a total of 17,953 military (14,998) and civilian (2,849) personnel on Fort Drum. Fort Drum is the largest single-site employer in Jefferson County and in Upstate New York. During fiscal year 2020, the Fort Drum military and civilian (including tenants and contractors) payroll exceeded \$1.4 billion.

## Population Trends

The estimated total population for the County, according to the 2019 American Community Survey, is 112,842 people. The population of the county is distributed among 22 towns, 20 incorporated villages, and one city. The City of Watertown has a population of 25,622. The City of Watertown is centrally located within the county, with no part over 28 miles away. Watertown is the major population, commercial, and industrial center of the county.

The largest town is the Town of LeRay with a population of 20,957 people. This relatively large population is attributed to the presence of the Army base at Fort Drum. By comparison, the town with the smallest population is the Town of Worth, with a total of 225 residents. Carthage is the only other village in the county with a dense population of 3,371 in 2018. All other villages are fairly small with fewer people per square mile

Overall, in Jefferson County, there was a population increase from 111,738 in 2000 to 112,842 in 2019. (.99%).<sup>8</sup>

Major U.S. and Canadian cities, such as Buffalo, Albany, Scranton, Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa are located within a 250-mile radius of Watertown.

Report Area	Total Population, 2019 ACS	Total Population, 2000 Census	Population Change from 2019-2020 Census/ACS	Percent Change from 2019-2020 Census/ACS
Jefferson County, NY	112,842	111,738	1,104	0.99%
New York	19,572,319	18,976,457	595,862	3.14%
United States	324,697,795	281,421,906	43,275,889	15.38%

### Percent Change in Population



- Jefferson County, NY (.99%)
- New York (3.14%)
- United States (15.38%)

<sup>8</sup> Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. US Census Bureau, Decennial Census. 2012-19. Source geography: County

## Industry and Commerce

The largest industry in Jefferson County is government, employing almost 40% of the workforce. This is largely due to the presence of Fort Drum and the two state prisons in the County. Fort Drum's positive direct economic impact on its surrounding community exceeded \$1.4 billion for Fiscal Year 2020. The military expansion brings much diversity and better education to the area along with an increase in the retail, service, and hospitality sectors of employment.



After government sector employment, Samaritan Medical Center is the second largest County employer, providing jobs for over 2,000 residents.

According to the 2012 USDA Agriculture Census, Jefferson County had 792 farms. The average farm in Jefferson County consists of approximately 312 acres.

In addition to the three previous industries, 13.9 % of all employment in Jefferson County is related to retail trade. By comparison, 11 % of employment in New York State is in retail trade occupations. Major retail and manufacturing employers include the Salmon Run Mall, New York Air Brake, and the Car-Freshner Corporation.

## Income

Three common measures of income are Median Household Income, Per Capita Income, and Average Income based on American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. All Three measures from the 2015 - 2019 ACS are shown for the report area below.

The Census Bureau defines an earner as someone age 15 and older that receives any form of income, whether it be wages, salaries, benefits, or other type of income.

Report Area	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	Average Income Per Earner
Jefferson County, NY	\$52,685	\$26,194	\$37,436
New York	\$68,486	\$39,326	\$55,327
United States	\$62,843	\$34,103	\$48,350

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#). 2015-19. Source geography: County

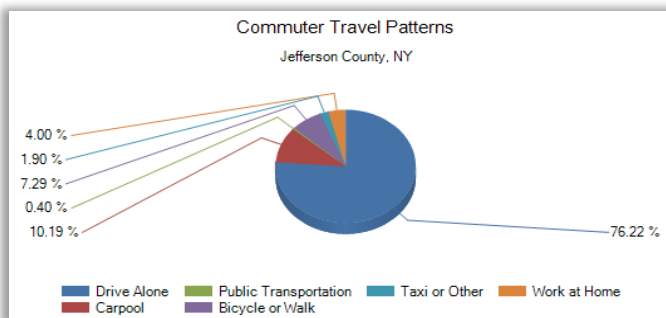
## Transportation

Major transportation throughout the County is North-South via Interstate Route 81 and U.S. Highway 11. Route 81 is the major north-south highway of Central New York and ends at the Thousand Islands International, Bridge in Jefferson County. Route 11 parallels Interstate 81 North to Watertown, and then branches in a northeasterly direction towards St. Lawrence County. State highways and secondary roads compose the rest of the transportation network that interconnects the populated areas of the county.

Passenger transportation by bus is available, but there is no access to rail passenger transportation. Jefferson County is also the home to the Watertown International Airport, which is located in the Town of Hounsfield and currently offers two round trips daily to Philadelphia, PA. The Watertown International Airport serves small private and commercial aircraft.



The median commute time for workers who travel (do not work at home), according to the American Community Survey (ACS), for the County is 25 minutes. This is 0.05% lower than the national median commute time of 26.94 minutes.<sup>9</sup>



The impact of the rural nature of the county on transportation and service access cannot be overstated. The terrain and severe winter conditions that lasts four to five months per year further exacerbate transportation and service access challenges. Therefore, this is a key consideration when planning and developing agency programs to build on strengths of the community and to meet the needs where gaps exist.

<sup>9</sup> US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2012-19. Source geography: County

## Climate

Jefferson County's climate is characterized as humid-continental and is classified as a temperate forest region. Winters are long and relatively cold; spring is cool and short; summers are warm and moderate, autumn is also warm, but usually short.



View of the Tug Hill region of New York.

The climate is influenced by the proximity of Lake Ontario, particularly during winter. The relatively warm lake water provides moisture to air masses moving across from the west, which often results in "lake effect" snowfalls primarily in the southern half of the county. Average annual snowfall is 110 inches in Watertown, but approaches 200 inches in the snow-belt areas in the southern section of the County. The average total annual precipitation is 40 inches.

Lake Ontario has a moderating effect on near shore temperatures, reducing the extremes of cold in winter and heat in summer. On average, there are 161 sunny days per year in Jefferson County. The July high is around 80 degrees. The January low is typically around 9 degrees. The County's comfort index, which is based on humidity during the hot months, is a 58 out of 100, where higher is more comfortable. The US average on the comfort index is 44.

## Jefferson County Poverty Profile

Jefferson County is 26<sup>th</sup> of 62 in poverty among New York State counties.<sup>10</sup> According to the 2021 poverty threshold, a single individual under the age of 65 is considered to be living in poverty if their income is less than \$12,880 annually. A family of four with two children under the age of 18 falls under the poverty line if the household income is less than \$26,500.<sup>11</sup>

Report Area	All Ages No of Persons	All Ages Poverty Rate	Age 0-17 No of Persons	Age 0-17 Poverty Rate	Age 0-4 No of Persons	Age 0-4 Poverty Rate	Age 5-17 No of Persons	Age 5-17 Poverty Rate
Jefferson County, NY	15,168	14.6%	5,280	20.6%	2,170	20.9%	3,605	21%
New York	2,471,760	13.1%	716,817	18.2%	279,835	20.8%	485,664	17.2%
United States	39,490,096	12.16%	12,000,470	16.34%	4,697,964	20.3%	8,258,906	15.39%

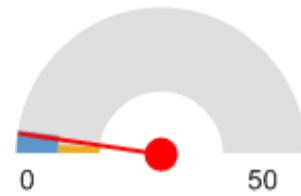
Poverty information above is at or below 100% of the federal poverty income guidelines.

14.0% of Jefferson

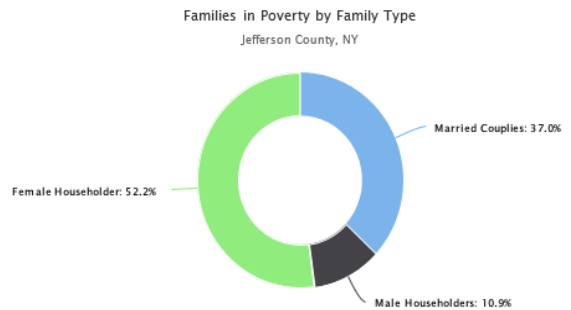
County residents live below the poverty threshold set by the US Census Bureau. 2019 estimates show that there are a total of 14,897 persons living below the poverty level in the area.<sup>12</sup> According to the American Community Survey 5 year estimates, an average of 14.6 percent of all persons lived in a state of poverty during the 2010 - 2019 period.

### Change in Poverty Rate: 2000-2019

- Jefferson County, NY (2.2%)
- New York (1.59%)
- United States (2.7%)



In terms of the composition of households/families living at or below the poverty line, it is estimated that 14.0% of all households within Jefferson County were living in poverty at the time of the survey period. The national average is 13.4%. Data collected by the ACS also shows that of this group, more women in the county live in poverty than men. This finding is especially true of female heads of households. This group makes up 52.2% of the families living in poverty, compared to 10.9% and 37% of households headed by males and married couples, respectively.<sup>13</sup>



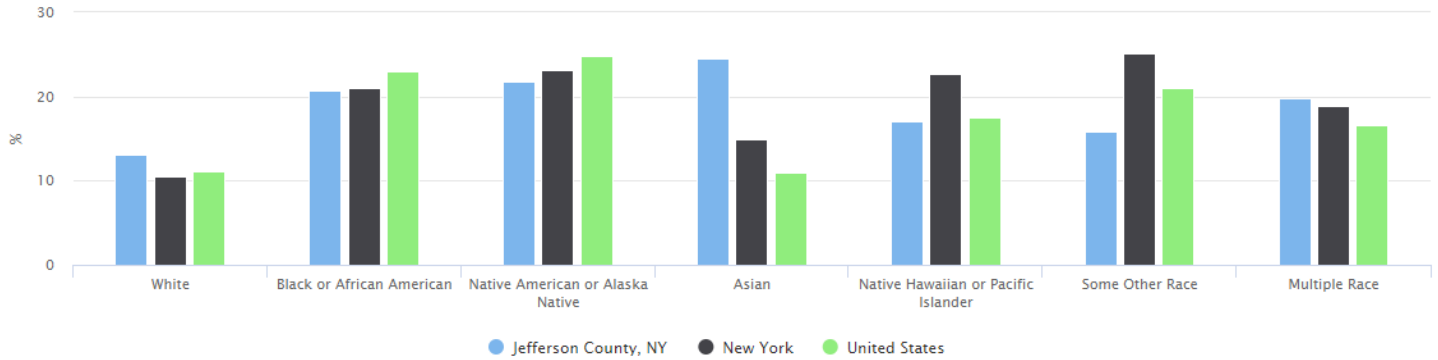
<sup>10</sup> New York State Community Action Association, 2021 New York State Annual Poverty Report, pg. 108

<sup>11</sup> US department of Health and Human Services Office Of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, *2021 Poverty Guidelines*, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/2021-poverty-guidelines>

<sup>12</sup> The data collected by the Census bureau and that collected by the ACS show some disparity. Both data sets have been included to account for gaps in reporting. Data Source: US Census Bureau, Small Area Income Poverty Estimates. 2019. Source geography: County; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. US Census Bureau, Decennial Census. 2015-19. Source geography: County

<sup>13</sup> Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2015-19. Source geography: County

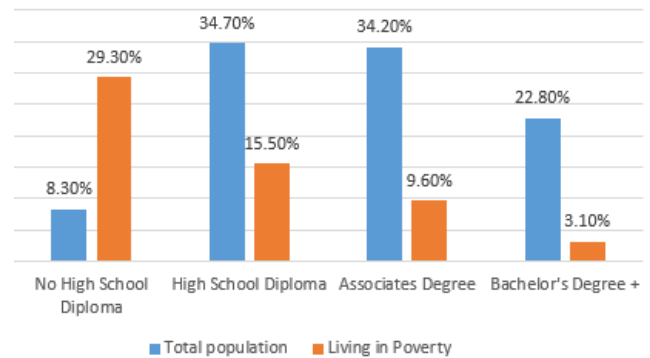
Population in Poverty Race Alone, Percent



Disparity is also noted in county poverty rates drawn along demographic lines (see bar graph above). Among multi-racial individuals, poverty rates exceed 19.79% of the total multi-racial population of Jefferson County. Comparatively, 13.1% of the county’s white population lives below the federal poverty income guidelines. Asian (24.53%) and Black Americans (20.78%) are the second and third most impoverished demographics, respectively.<sup>14</sup> Native Americans (21.79%), native Hawaiians/pacific islanders (17.06%), and other races comprise 15.89% collectively. In total, minorities groups account for 86.9% of the county’s total population in poverty.

There is also a strong correlation between poverty and education level. Of the 69,192 total population of Jefferson county residents ages 25 and up; 8.3% have less than a high school education, 34.7% graduated high school, 34.2% received an Associate’s degree, and 22.8% have Bachelor’s degree or higher. Compare this to individuals living in poverty in this same age range where 29.3% have less than a high school education, 15.5% graduated high school, 9.6% received an Associate’s degree, and 3.1% have Bachelor’s degree or higher<sup>15</sup>

Educational Attainment



<sup>14</sup> Ibid

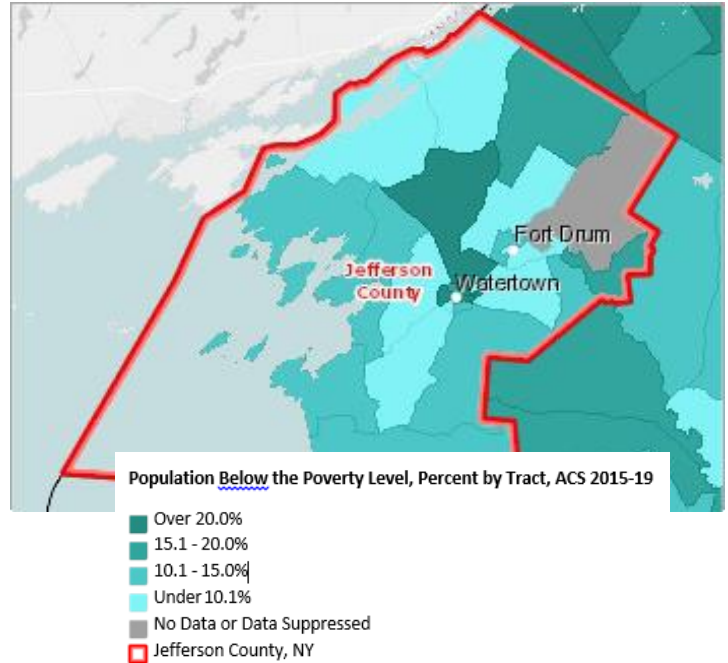
<sup>15</sup> New York State Community Action Association, 2021 New York State Annual Poverty Report, Jefferson County <https://nyscaa.engagementnetwork.org/poverty-report/?geoid=05000US36045>

## Geography of Poverty

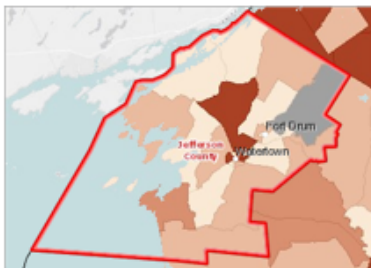
Pockets of poverty in excess of the county average can be found in communities in the eastern portions of the county and the northern and central portions of the City of Watertown.

In Wilna and Carthage (census tract 609), 18% of individuals live below the poverty level. In the northern and eastern portions of the City of Watertown (census tracts 614, 613, 612), the poverty rate hovers between 32% and 34.3%.

In the center of Watertown (census tract 621), the poverty rate is 24.1%. In communities in the southern portion of the county, such as Ellisburg, Mannsville, Lorraine and Worth (census tract 625), 20.9% of the population lives below the poverty threshold.

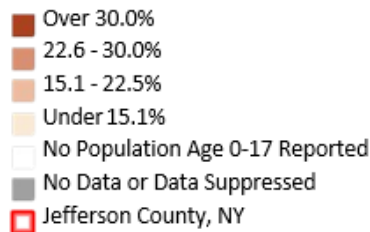


## Children in Poverty



[View larger map](#)

**Population Below the Poverty Level, Children (Age 0-17), Percent by Tract, ACS 2015-19**



Poverty is especially prevalent among children in Jefferson County. According to the American Community Survey 5 year data, an average of 19.5% percent of children age 0-17 lived in a state of poverty during the survey calendar year. The poverty rate for children living in the county area is more than the national average of 18.5 percent. Consistent with all-ages poverty trends, pockets of child poverty in excess of the county and national average exist in the Wilna/Carthage area, and in northern and central portions of the City of Watertown.

The poverty rate for children ages 0-4 is slightly higher than the county average. According to American Community Survey 5 year data, an average of 21% percent of children ages 0-4 lived in a state of poverty during the survey calendar year. The poverty rate for children ages 0-4 living in the county is less than the national average of 20.3 percent. Both of these statistics represent a decrease from the last survey period in 2019. 21.1% of children ages 0 – 17, and a rate of 22.2% among children ages 0 – 4.<sup>16</sup>

According to the U.S. Census, the poverty rate for Jefferson County for children ages 0-17 has decreased by .2% since 2000, this compares to a state decrease of 3.3% and a national decrease of 4.8%.

<sup>16</sup> New York State Community Action Association, 2021 New York State Annual Poverty Report, pg.18-19

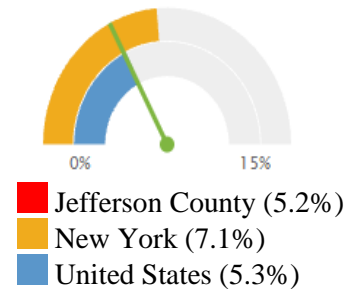
## Unemployment

Jefferson County has a total labor force of 44,500 individuals or 39.4% of its resident population of 112,842. The total number of unemployed residents eligible to work is currently 2,300 or 5.2% of the total labor force.

As of August 2021, the county had the 26<sup>th</sup> highest unemployment rate of all 62 counties in the state.<sup>17</sup> It is tied at 26th place with Delaware, Orange, and Suffolk Counties.

Report Area	Labor Force	Number Employed	Number Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Jefferson County, NY	44,468	42,139	2,329	5.2%
New York	9,339,555	8,682,067	667,488	7.1%
United States	162,875,350	154,220,063	8,655,287	5.3%

### Unemployment Rate



From August 2020 to August 2021, unemployment change within Jefferson County is shown in the chart below. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, unemployment for this thirteen month period decreased from 8.0% percent to 5.2% percent.<sup>18</sup> This is a direct impact from the COVID-19 pandemic.

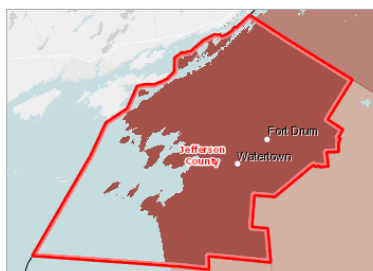
Report Area	Unemployment August 2020	Unemployment August 2021	Unemployment Rate August 2020	Unemployment Rate August 2021	Rate Change
Jefferson County, NY	3,538	2,329	8.0%	5.2%	-2.8%
New York	1,096,540	667,488	11.6%	7.1%	-4.4%
United States	13,810,109	8,655,287	8.5%	5.3%	-3.2%

## Housing: Cost Burden

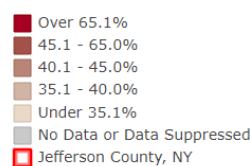
This indicator reports the percentage of the households where housing costs exceed 30% of total household income. This indicator provides information on the cost of monthly housing expenses for owners and renters. The information offers a measure of housing affordability and excessive shelter costs.

Report Area	Average Renter Hourly Wage	Hourly Wage 0 Bedrooms	Hourly Wage 1 Bedrooms	Hourly Wage 2 Bedrooms	Hourly Wage 3 Bedrooms	Hourly Wage 4 Bedrooms
Jefferson County, NY	\$14.26	\$13.77	\$16.04	\$21.13	\$27.54	\$31.48
New York	\$25.68	\$26.51	\$28.02	\$32.53	\$41.27	\$44.66

Data Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition. 2018. Source geography: County → Show more details



### Proportion of Median Income Needed to Afford Housing, 1-Bedroom (at FMR) by County, NLIHC 2018



<sup>17</sup>New York State Department of Labor, Division of Research and Statistics, *Rate of Unemployment By County of Residence New York State, February 2019* [https://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/PressReleases/county\\_rates.pdf](https://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/PressReleases/county_rates.pdf)

<sup>18</sup>US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2021 - August. Source geography: County

## Housing Affordability

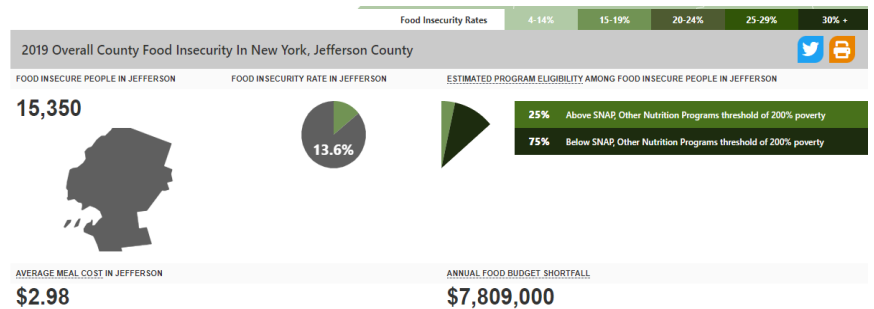
The National Low Income Housing Coalition reports each year on the amount of money a household must earn in order to afford a rental unit based on Fair Market Rents in the area and an accepted limit of 30% of income for housing costs.

Report Area	Fair Market Rent (Monthly) 0 Bedrooms	Fair Market Rent (Monthly) 1 Bedrooms	Fair Market Rent (Monthly) 2 Bedrooms	Fair Market Rent (Monthly) 3 Bedrooms	Fair Market Rent (Monthly) 4 Bedrooms
Jefferson County, NY	\$691	\$794	\$1,047	\$1,389	\$1,610
New York	\$846.08	\$922.31	\$1,120.32	\$1,432.94	\$1,577.71

Data Source: [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#). 2021. Source geography: County

## Hunger & Food Insecurity

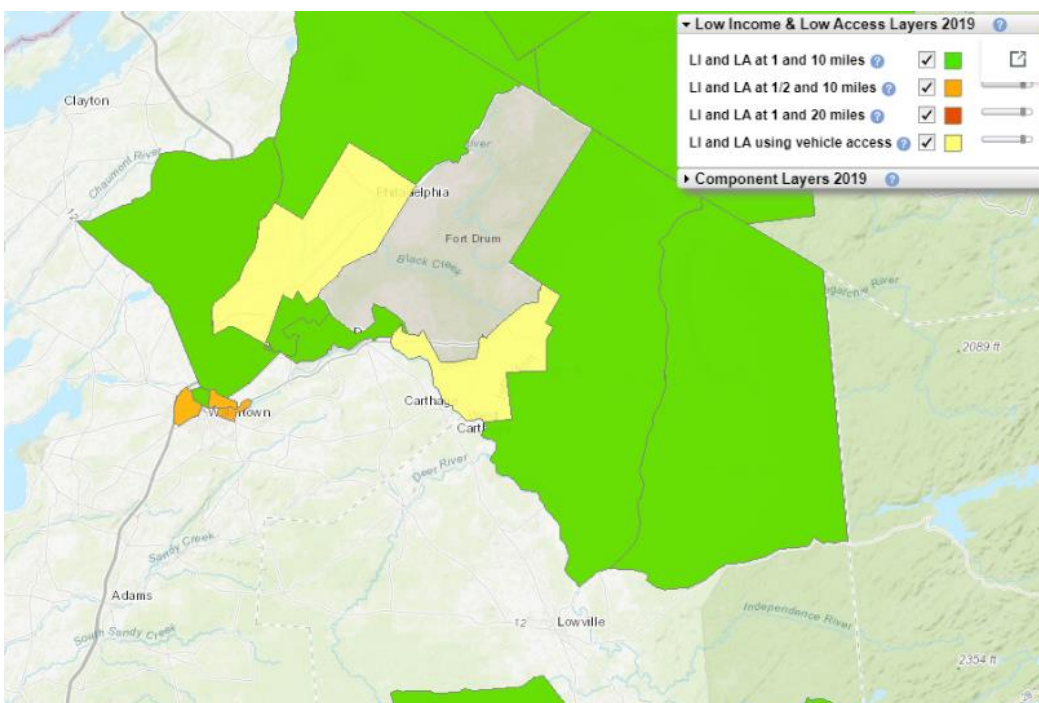
Food insecurity refers to USDA’s measure of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Food-insecure households are not necessary food insecure all the time. Food insecurity may reflect a household’s need to make choices between important basic needs, such as housing or medical bills and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.



<https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2019/overall/new-york/county/jefferson>

Federal nutrition programs can help individuals who face food insecurity; however, some of Jefferson County’s food insecure adults and nearly children are likely ineligible for SNAP and other food programs because their family’s incomes do not fall below the eligibility threshold.

## Jefferson County Food Deserts



A large section of Jefferson County is listed as low income and low access to a healthy food supply by the USDA. Limited access to supermarkets, supercenters, grocery stores, or other sources of healthy and affordable food make it difficult to eat a healthy diet. The map below shows Jefferson County’s food deserts, or low-income areas where a significant share of individuals live more than 1 mile from a supermarket in urban areas.

Source:

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/>

## School Lunch and Summer Food Programs

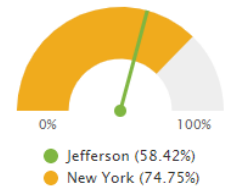
The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federal program that provides free and reduced-price meals to low-income children throughout the school year. 58.42% of Jefferson County’s students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches, compared to 74.75% of New York State students.

### Free and Reduced Lunch Program

The table below shows the number of students eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program during January, 2020. The figures below include all School Food Authority agencies. 58.42% of the students in the report area were eligible for free or reduced lunches, compared to a statewide rate of 74.75%.

Report Area	Total Student Enrollment (January, 2019)	Students Eligible	Percent of Students Eligible
Jefferson County, NY	17,644	10,308	58.42%
New York	3,058,426	2,286,046	74.75%

Percentage of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch



Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.

Data Source: New York State Education Department. Source geography: County → [Show more details](#)

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is a USDA service that provides federal funding for local sponsors that wish to offer meals to low-income children (under the age of 18) throughout the summer when school is not in session. During the summer since 1989 — CAPCJC has served as a sponsor—distributed throughout Jefferson County with most sites serving breakfasts and lunches.

### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

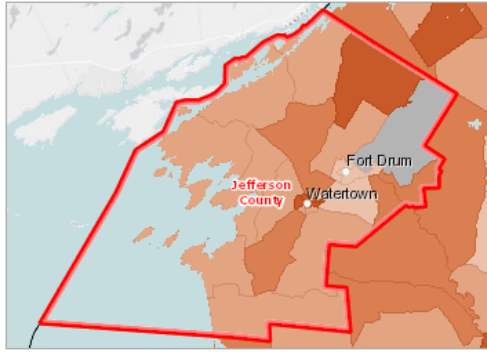
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal food assistance program designed to raise the nutritional level of low-income households. It was called the Food Stamp Program prior to 2008. The number of persons receiving SNAP benefits and the total SNAP dollars issued per county in January 2021, within the report area is shown in below. The New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance reported that 8,023 households were receiving SNAP benefits totaling \$3,101,455, or \$386.57 per household.

Report Area	Household Receiving Benefits Total	Household Receiving Benefits Temp	Household Receiving Benefits Non-Temp	Persons Receiving Benefits Total	Persons Receiving Benefits Temp	Persons Receiving Benefits Non-Temp	Benefits Issued Total	Benefits Issued Temp	Benefits Issued Non-Temp	Benefits Per Household
Jefferson County, NY	8,023	2,503	5,520	14,337	3,202	11,135	\$3,101,455	\$718,288	\$2,383,167	\$386.57
New York	1,587,973	621,770	966,203	2,758,288	891,459	1,866,829	\$616,127,787	\$206,282,697	\$409,845,090	\$388.00

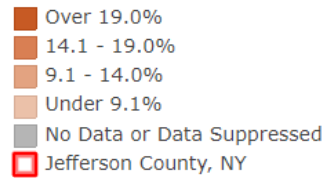
Data Source: New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. Source geography: County → [Show more details](#)

Below are trend amounts for benefits per household of the Supplemental Nutrition Assurance Program (SNAP) for the selected report area. The amount has increased from \$259.00 to \$386.57 over the last 10 years. The data listed is for January of each year.

Report Area	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Jefferson County, NY	\$259.00	\$257.12	\$250.47	\$233.50	\$242.95	\$231.63	\$227.73	\$221.60	\$222.08	\$216.82	\$386.57
New York	\$282.09	\$275.63	\$272.50	\$252.56	\$253.86	\$250.83	\$248.27	\$243.48	\$247.54	\$241.12	\$388.00



Households Receiving SNAP Benefits, Percent by Tract, ACS 2015-19



### Chronic Diseases

The following is an excerpt from Jefferson County Public Health 2019-2021 Community Health Assessment:

One in six Jefferson County residents currently use cigarettes, one in ten use smokeless tobacco, and one in ten currently use electronic nicotine delivery systems. Disparities within these measures exist by gender, education level, and annual household income. (Data Source: 2019 Community Health Survey) One in five Jefferson County students between grades 8 and 12 report having ever used e-cigarettes, with one in ten reporting recent e-cigarette use within the past 30 days. The rates of e-cigarette use exceed the current rates of cigarette use within this same age group. (Data Source: 2017 NYS OASAS Prevention Needs Assessment) Jefferson County’s lung and bronchus cancer incidence rate is higher than state and national rates. For 2012-2016, the county’s rate was 92.1 cases per 100,000 population compared to 59.9 and 59.2, respectively, for New York State and the United States. The age-adjusted death rate due to lung cancer for the same time period was 54 deaths per 100,000 population, compared to 37.1 for New York State and 41.9 for the United States. (Data Source: National Cancer Institute)PARCS)

As of 2016, 32% of Jefferson County adults are obese. This is above the statewide rate of 26%. When overweight adults are included, the rate increases to 69%, also above the statewide rate of obese or overweight adults of 61%. (Data Source: New York State Expanded BRFSS)

Jefferson County’s age-adjusted ER rate due to diabetes, particularly the rate for uncontrolled diabetes, is higher than the state rates. For 2014-2016, Jefferson County recorded 33.2 emergency room visits due to diabetes per 10,000 population (ages 18 and older), compared to a New York value of 24.7. For uncontrolled diabetes, the county recorded 10.7 versus the state’s 3.3 emergency room visits for this same population for this same time period. (Data Source: SPARCS)

## Other Social & Economic Factors

### Race, Ethnicity and Spoken Language

In 2019, the overwhelming majority of Jefferson County residents identified as non-Hispanic Caucasians.<sup>19</sup> Of the 86.4 % of respondents who selected ‘white’ as their race, 6.5% of females and 8.5% of males indicated Hispanic descent. The remaining 13.6% of respondents identified collectively as minorities; Native American (American Indian,) Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, mixed-race and Black. Since minorities groups account for 17.3% of Jefferson County’s total population in poverty, many Head Start eligible preschool-age children belong to a minority group.

Head Start eligible infants, toddlers, preschool-age children, and expectant mothers in Jefferson County predominantly speak English in the home.<sup>20</sup> According to data obtained through Literacy of Northern New York, as of 2016, 92.7% of residents speak English only. Of the remaining 7.3%: 3.8% speak Spanish, 2.2% speak an Indo-European language, 1.0% speak an Asian or Pacific Island Language, and 0.3% speak another language. Among those speakers of foreign languages, less than 1% of individuals from each category indicated that they speak English “very well.”

### Opioid & Substance Abuse

Opioid use is a growing concern among Jefferson County residents.<sup>21</sup> According to a 2021 community assessment survey conducted by Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County’s Head Start program of local health and human services agencies, 31 out of 64 respondents (48.44%), indicated substance abuse as a community hardship; placing it second among the top hardships surveyed. In Head Start’s 2018 Community Assessment Parent Survey, 35 of 73 (47.95%) of parents surveyed across all Head Start sites and program types noticed an “increase in drug use in their community.”

According to the NYS Opioid Data Dashboard – County Level: Jefferson County, the following was listed as ‘significantly worsened’ or worsened’: Hospital discharges **involving** opioid use (including abuse, poisoning, dependence and unspecified use).<sup>22</sup> The New York State Department of Health – County Opioid Quarterly Report data shows As of May 2021, the New York State Department of Health recorded 31 deaths in 2020 opioid overdoses (8 were from heroin) and 31 deaths per year from opioid pain-killer (hydrocodone, oxycodone, and fentanyl) in the county.<sup>23</sup>

Concerning the broader spectrum of substance use, the 2021 Community Health Survey conducted by the FDRHPO also found that three fifths (58%) of county adults usually consume alcoholic beverages on at least 1-2 times per month or more.<sup>24</sup> At Samaritan Medical Center, the average annual hospitalization rate due to acute or chronic alcohol abuse per 10,000 individuals 18 years and older is 13.5. This is less than the state average of 28.1 per 1000. Among those treated at Samaritan, patients are predominantly Black American males ages 45-64.<sup>25</sup> The percentage of adults who smoke in Jefferson County is 14%. This is a decrease of 1.6% from the prior rate of 15.6% as surveyed by the FDRHPO in 2019.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, approximately one-in-eleven adults in the North Country in 2021 describe their e-cigarette or other electronic vaping product use status as “current users” (rate of e-cigarette use “Every Day or Some Days” is 9% in the North Country; 12% in Jefferson, 10% in Lewis, 5% in St. Lawrence; St. Lawrence e-cigarette use rate is significantly lower than both Jefferson and Lewis Counties.

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<sup>19</sup> Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2015-19. Source geography: County

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Head start Community Assessment Survey, *Question 6: What trends are you noticing in your community?*; Head start Community Assessment Survey, Head Start 2018 Community Assessment Parent Survey, *Question 6: What trends are you noticing in your community?*

<sup>22</sup> New York State Opioid Data Dashboard – County Level: Jefferson

[https://webbi1.health.ny.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?\\_program=%2FEBI%2FFPHIG%2Fapps%2Fopioid\\_dashboard%2Fopioid\\_dashboard&p=ch&cos=22](https://webbi1.health.ny.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?_program=%2FEBI%2FFPHIG%2Fapps%2Fopioid_dashboard%2Fopioid_dashboard&p=ch&cos=22)

<sup>23</sup> New York State Department of Health/ County Opioid Quarterly Report, published July 2021 [https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/opioid/data/pdf/nys\\_jul21.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/opioid/data/pdf/nys_jul21.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> North Country Health Compass, *FDRHPO Community Health Survey*: <https://fdrhpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2021-chs.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> "Alcohol abuse" includes alcohol dependence syndrome, nondependent alcohol abuse, alcoholic psychoses, toxic effects of alcohol, and excessive blood level of alcohol. Diseases of the nervous system, digestive system, and circulatory system caused by alcohol are also included.; North Country Health Compass, *FDRHPO Community Health Survey: Age adjusted Hospitalization rate due to Alcohol abuse*,

<http://www.ncnyhealthcompass.org/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=5311&localeId=132005>

<sup>26</sup> North Country Health Compass, *FDRHPO 2021 Community Health Survey*: percentage of adults who smoke cigarettes<sup>26</sup> <https://fdrhpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2021-chs.pdf>

## **Child Care Availability**

According to [census.gov/quickfacts](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts): Jefferson County population is 116,721 and the number of children under 5 is 9,104 (7.8%). Capacity in Family Day Care, Group Family Day Care, and Day Care Centers is 1,182 according to the NYS Child Care Facility System (CCFS). There are 6 children under 5 per Registered/Licensed child care slot.

34% of the parents that the Jefferson-Lewis Child Care Project gave referrals to from 10/1/20-9/30/21 report being under 200% of the Federal Poverty level.

There are 44 currently enrolled Legally Exempt (LE) Enrolled child care providers doing care in their homes and another 34 LE providers doing care in the child's home as of October 2021. Legally Exempt Enrolled - providers of subsidized child care services, who are not required to be licensed or registered, but who meet minimum health and safety standards required for enrollment. A LE child care provider can care for up to two unrelated children in their own home.

Early care and education in Jefferson County can be very costly, and acts as a barrier for families with low incomes. The average annual cost of more than \$11,000 for full-time care for a child under that age of 1 ½ (Jefferson County 2019 Market rate.) That means that a one parent household earning a median income in the state would be paying nearly one third of income for infant care.

Head Start serves children ages 3-5 in low-income households as well as children living in homeless families or foster care. Head Start focuses on comprehensive child development services, parental involvement, and partnerships with community service providers. CAPCJC serves as Head Start grantee in Jefferson County with 6 centers located in Watertown (2 centers), Adams Center, Dexter, Evans Mills and Carthage.

## Head Start

The Office of Head Start requires Head Start grantees to complete a community needs assessment every five years. These assessments inform the decisions regarding what services should be offered and what service models best fit the needs of the community. As such, the information in the following assessment pertains to the population served by Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County, Inc.'s (CAPCJC) Head Start services. Additional information about the wider Jefferson County community is available above in the body of this document.

The Head Start Program Performance Standards require programs to review and update a community assessment annually to reflect any significant changes, including increased availability of Pre-K programs, rates of homelessness, and shifts in community demographics and resources. The assessment paints a picture of the community and describes the diverse needs of families who may receive services. The information in this Appendix is specific to the Head Start population.

### **About Head Start**

The Head Start (HS) program is administered by the Office of Head Start within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). These federally funded programs promote school readiness for children under the age of five in low-income families. Head Start supports the development of children in a comprehensive way, enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Head Start programs emphasize that parents are the child's first and most important teacher. Starting in 1966, Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County, Inc. began serving families and children through Head Start for Jefferson County, New York.

Head Start programs support children's growth in a positive learning environment through a variety of services, which include:

- **Early learning and development:** Children's readiness for school and beyond is fostered through individualized learning experiences. Through relationships with adults, play, and planned and spontaneous instruction, children grow in many aspects of development. These include social skills, emotional well-being, language and literacy skills, mathematics, and science concepts. Our Head Start program uses Creative Curriculum in the classrooms and Growing Great Kids for the home-based programs. Early learning experiences also include the cultural and language heritage of each child and family in relevant ways. Parents, including grandparents, foster parents, and other primary caregivers, are recognized as children's first and most influential teachers. Their knowledge of their children is central to each child's individualized approach. Additionally, Head Start programs work with families, school districts and other entities to facilitate a smooth transition to kindergarten for each child.
- **Health:** Health and physical development are crucial for early learning opportunities that require children to fully explore and experience their environment. Head Start programs provide safe and healthy learning experiences indoors and outdoors. All children receive health screenings and nutritious meals, and programs connect families with medical, dental, and mental health services to ensure children are receiving the care and attention they need. Children receive support for building resiliency to cope with possible adverse effects of trauma. Families also receive mental health consultation focused on each child's needs.
- **Family well-being:** Parents and families are offered program services to support family well-being and to achieve family goals, such as housing stability, continued education, and financial security. Programs support and strengthen parent-child relationships and engage families in the learning and development of their child.

The Head Start program is available at no cost to children ages 3 to 5 from low-income families. Our programs provide transportation to the centers so enrolled children can participate regularly. Families and children experiencing homelessness, and children in the foster care system are also eligible. Additionally, Head Start services are available to children with disabilities and other special needs.

In the most recently completed program year, 2020-21, CAPCJC served 198 children. Our funded enrollment is 275, however due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, our classroom size was lower to accommodate social distancing, as well as Office of Children and Family Services and school district restrictions.

## Recruitment Area

These 275 funded enrollment slots are distributed across six sites throughout Jefferson County. Three of our programs are offered in local school districts, including: Dexter (General Brown CSD), South Jefferson (South Jefferson CSD) and North Jefferson (Indian River CSD) sites.

## Governing Structure

Community Action Planning Council is governed by a Board of Directors, comprised of representatives of the low-income population, elected public officials or their designees and members of the private sector. This tripartite board structure reflects and promotes the unique anti-poverty leadership, action and mobilization responsibilities assigned to Community Action Agencies. The Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that Community Action Planning Council continues to assess and respond to the causes and conditions of poverty in our community, achieves anticipated family and community outcomes and remains administratively and fiscally sound. This Board of Directors serves as the Head Start governing body in accordance with the requirements established in Section 642(c) of the Head Start Act.

The Board is made up of:

- 1) Five low-income individuals of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds representative of the communities served, representing six area advisory councils and the HS Policy Council;
- 2) Five representatives of community groups of interest; and
- 3) Five public officials.

The Head Start governing body has legal and fiscal responsibility for the program, and oversees procedures for selecting Policy Council members, produces governing by-laws, establishes procedures for recruitment and enrollment of Head Start participants, and reviews major policy and operating decisions. They also work hand in hand with the Policy Council to make hiring decisions and provide strategic leadership for the program.

A Policy Council is made up of 19 parents with a child currently enrolled in CAPCJC Early Childhood Services, and community representatives approved by the Policy Council. Parent alternates (maximum of four) are also chosen in the event a member of the Policy Council is unable to attend a meeting. These alternates help to ensure all program sites are represented at Policy Council meetings. Each Head Start program site is represented on the Policy Council, with the number of representatives from each site based on its number of HS funded slots.

One member of the Policy Council also serves on the CAPCJC Board of Directors to ensure information sharing between both policy making entities, as well as to ensure input of the Policy Council within all areas of operation in the organization. The CAPCJC HS program provides reports to the Board and Policy Council to ensure effective oversight of operations. The Head Start budget to actual revenue and expenses are standing agenda items for the Board and Policy Council.

### Policy Council Composition

Program Site	Funded Enrollment	# of representatives
Watertown Center	116	6
Sacred Heart Center	36	3
Carthage Center	45	3
South Jeff Center	17	2
North Jeff Center	34	3
Dexter Center	27	2
Community Representatives	N/A	4

## Use of Data

These governing bodies also review PIR data, Child Outcome Report (Teaching Strategies) data, CLASS, and results of the program's annual self-assessment to inform short and long-term planning for the program. CAPCJC uses program data to provide ongoing oversight, make programmatic decisions, and in all stages of the ongoing program planning process. This Head Start Needs Assessment incorporates community input and community level data to provide recommendations that will inform the Head Start program planning process, including development of the program's five-year plan.

### **Long-Range Program Goals**

CAPCJC’s Strategic Planning Committee oversees the Strategic Plan Process, including an annual review of the agency’s mission, vision, and values. Five-year Strategic Plans are developed, with the most recent plan in place for 2017-2022. Part of this process also includes conducting a SWOT analysis, which is informed by surveying all agency staff, Board of Directors, external stakeholders, and community members.

As a HS grantee, CAPCJC undertakes HS specific program planning including a five-year plan outlining goals and expected outcomes. To support the five-year plan, annual action plans are developed. School Readiness, Training and Technical Assistance, and Service plans are developed and updated annually.

### **Short-Range Program Goals**

To monitor implementation and progress on long-term program goals, a Strategic Planning team, including the CEO, Senior Management, and staff strategic workshops monitor progress on organizational goals, objectives, and action steps. A strategic plan update is provided to the Board of Directors bi-annually.

Through quarterly Data Quality Committee meetings, senior management, program directors, and program management meet to create and monitor department specific logic plans and progress of program outcomes ensuring continuous quality improvement efforts and goal attainment. Performance plans are developed and implemented with staff related to program objectives and individual professional development growth.

### **Head Start Staff**

The Office of the Administration for Children and Families puts in place requirements for the academic qualifications of Head Start program directors, teachers, and other staff. The CAPCJC HS program meets these requirements. All current classroom teachers in the HS program and home-based visitors have a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education, or a degree with similar coursework and early education teaching experience. All current assistant teachers in the HS program and classroom teachers in the HS program have at least a CDA or associate degree in early childhood education, or a degree with similar coursework and early education teaching experience.

Details on staff education levels and racial background are reported annually in the program’s PIR. In the most recently completed program year, 2020-2021, the CAPCJC Head Start program had a total staff of 75, including 15 staff who were current or former Head Start or Early Head Start parents. Thirty one of these staff were in non-supervisory child development positions, twenty eight in preschool classrooms (HS), and three Home-Based visitors.

Of these staff, four classroom teachers had advanced degrees in Early Childhood Education. Nine classroom teachers had a baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood Education and six classroom teachers had an associate degree in Early Childhood Education. Among Family and Community Partnerships Staff, six Family Advocates had related degrees. Three Home-Based visitors had home-based CDA credential or an Associate’s Degree.

The racial and Ethnicity makeup of the thirty-one non-supervisory child development staff was twenty nine White, and two Hispanic or Latino (2020-2021 PIR). Among these staff, six staff members were proficient in a language other than English. The racial breakdown of staff serving HS (non-supervisor child development positions) was similar to the racial makeup of the children served. However, a larger proportion of staff are white compared to the enrolled children.

Race for 2020-2021 Program	Staff	Children
White	29	137
Black or African American		17
Asian		2
Biracial/Multi-racial		20
Other		3

## Parental Involvement

In addition to the parents who participate on the Policy Council, many parents assist in other ways. During the 2020-2021 program year, 127 individuals volunteered with the CAPCJC Head Start program in some capacity. Of these volunteers, 91 (72%) were current or former Head Start parents. Since 2013, the Head Start program has averaged 688 volunteers a year with an average of 490 (71%) being current or former Head Start Parents. The number of annual volunteers, as well as the proportion of those volunteers who are current or former Head Start parents, has fallen in recent years, corresponding to safety restrictions implemented during the COVID pandemic. A significant portion of the CAPCJC Head Start staff are also current or former Head Start parents. In the 2020-2021 program year, 15 (20%) of staff were current or former Head Start parents. Since 2013, an average of 29% of the staff have been current or former Head Start parents. We encourage parents to apply to become substitutes and for any open positions. Parents are given priority and given an interview if they qualify. Parents assist in recruiting by hanging posters in their community and by word of mouth.

## Head Start Data

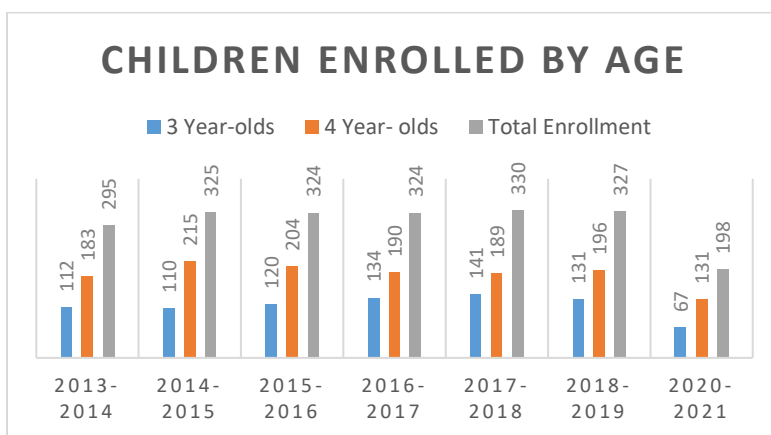
The Office of Head Start requires Head Start programs to submit annual Program Information Reports (PIR). PIRs provide data on program staff, services provided, children enrolled, and families served by Head Start programs during each program year. PIRs for each program year since 2013 were analyzed as part of the Head Start Needs Assessment process, with particular focus on the past three years since the previous Needs Assessment. These reports were used to identify changes and trends in the population served by CAPCJC's HS program, as well as the types of services provided.

## Program Changes and Trends

CAPCJC's Head Start program has evolved over the past ten years, changing in enrollment, and offering programs in a variety of different formats. A few of the significant changes affecting enrollment include:

- Enrollment decreased in the 2020 -2021 program year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- CAPCJC's Head Start program offers 6 hour days at 8 classrooms (4 at Watertown, 2 at Sacred Heart and 2 at North Jeff). This
- CAPCJC's Head Start program added a three-year-old collaborative HS/UPK programs at our Watertown Center.

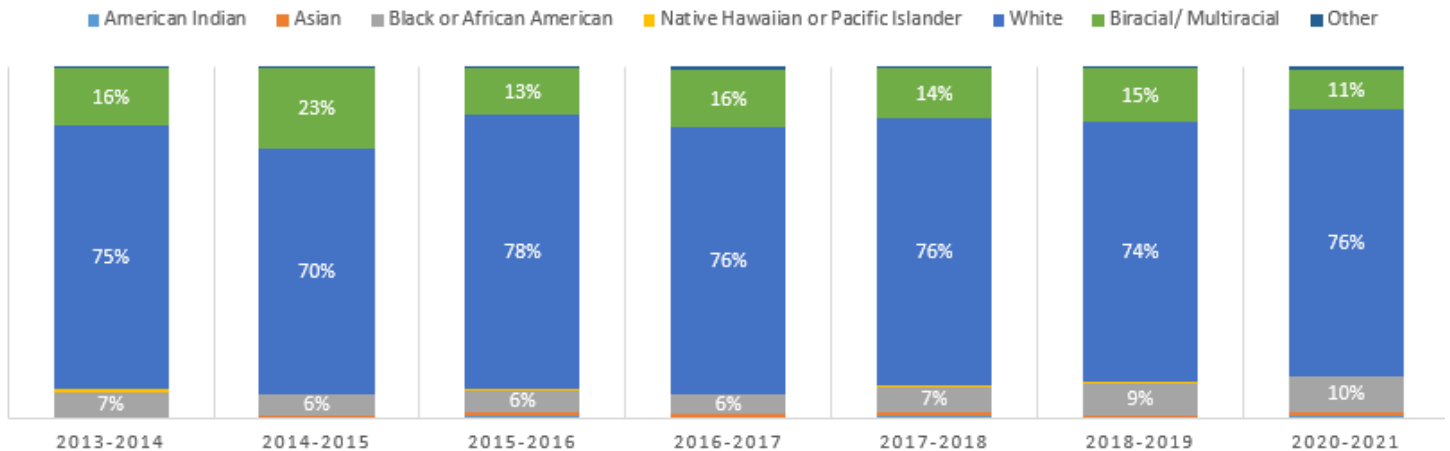
## Children enrolled in HS by age



As program enrollment has changed over the past eight years, the population served by the program has been minimally diverse. Although in the last six program years a larger proportion of the children enrolled have been white, this is largely due to the demographics in Jefferson County. The most recent program year also saw a slight increase in the proportion of children of Asian descent and in children whose reported race is "other."

## Race of HS enrolled Children (by year)

### RACE OF HS ENROLLED CHILDREN



## Disability Services and Resources

While not specific to Jefferson County, there is an increase in developmental disabilities among children in the United States. Scientists from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) found that 17% of children aged 3–17 years had a developmental disability, and importantly, that this percentage increased over the two time periods compared, 2009–2011 and 2015–2019; increases were also seen for specific developmental disabilities in the same age group.<sup>27</sup> Of that number, 4.7% are under the age of 18; approximately 1,370 children.<sup>28</sup> In 2016, the overall percentage (prevalence rate) of children with a visual and/or hearing disability ages 0 to 4 in the state of New York was 0.6 %.<sup>29</sup>

There are two preschool CPSE evaluators in the county, Milestone/Little Lukes and Building Blocks. Both agencies are located in Watertown. The ARC offers preschool special education programming services located in Watertown. Children travel up to 30 miles to special education preschool each day. Related service providers travel throughout the county to provide services in the homes or in the child’s home or alternate care setting including: Head Start, preschool, day care, family day care provider, etc.

### 0-5 Disabilities Services in Jefferson County

Agency	Preschool	Early Intervention	Preschool Related Services
The ARC (formerly JRC)	X		
Milestones/Little Lukes		X	X
Building Blocks		X	X
Rowland Center		X	

<sup>27</sup>Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/features/increase-in-developmental-disabilities.html>

<sup>28</sup>Literacy of Northern New York, 2012-2016 Literacy and language statistics

<sup>29</sup>Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2018). 2016 Disability Status Report: New York. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability (YTI). pg.11

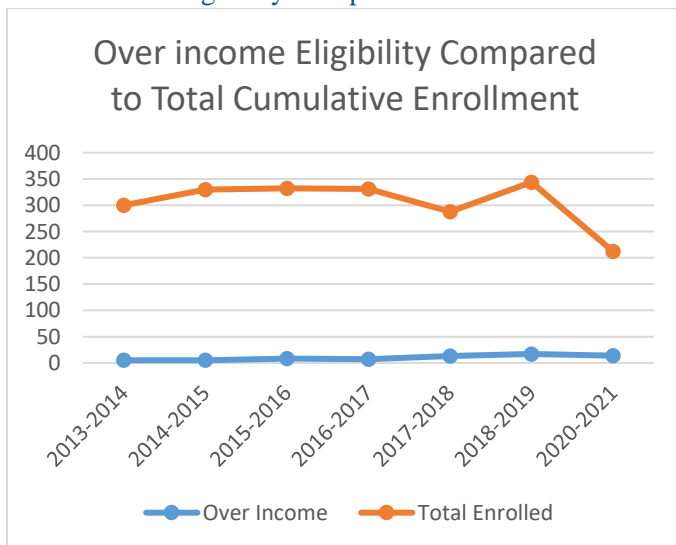
## Head Start Children Diagnosed With Special Needs, 2008 – 2021 <sup>30</sup>

	2008	2009	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
Number of Children Enrolled with Disabilities	67	72	85	58	62	58	74	73	86	85	46
Percent of Total Enrollment with Disabilities	19.5%	22.2%	25.4%	17.7%	21%	17.8%	22.8%	22.5%	26%	30.9%	23%
Percent Diagnosed prior to Enrollment	59.7%	51.4%	65%	47%	75.8%	55.2%	63.5%	82.1%	66.2%	64.7%	69.6%
Percent Diagnosed During Program Year	40.3%	48.6%	35%	53%	24.2%	44.8%	36.4%	17.8%	33.7%	35.3%	30.4%
Number of Children with IEP or IFSP	67	72	85	58	62	58	74	73	86	85	46
Number of Students Eligible for Special Education Services	67	72	85	58	62	58	74	73	86	85	46

### Eligibility

As discussed in the selection criteria section, CAPCJC Head Start uses a weighting system to account for each child's unique set of eligibility criteria. Even after children from families between 100% and 130% of the Poverty Guidelines are included, less than 20% of Head Start participants each year have been in this range. The percentage of total participants who qualify between 100% -130% has increased in recent years, from 7.8% in the 2013-2014 program year to 17.7% in 2020-2021.

### Over income Eligibility Compared to Total Cumulative Enrollment



Over the last eight years, the primary eligibility for CAPCJC's HS program has increasingly been based on family income level. In the 2020-2021 program years, 54.5% of children were eligible based on an income below the federal poverty rate. It important to note the impact that the pandemic had on enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year.

The second most common type of eligibility was receipt of public assistance. As eligibility based on income has become more common, eligibility based on public assistance has become less common. In the 2013-2014 program year, 23.7% of children were eligible based on receiving public assistance, but by the 2020-2021 program year this number dropped to 16.2%.

<sup>30</sup> Source: Head Start PIR, 2008-2021

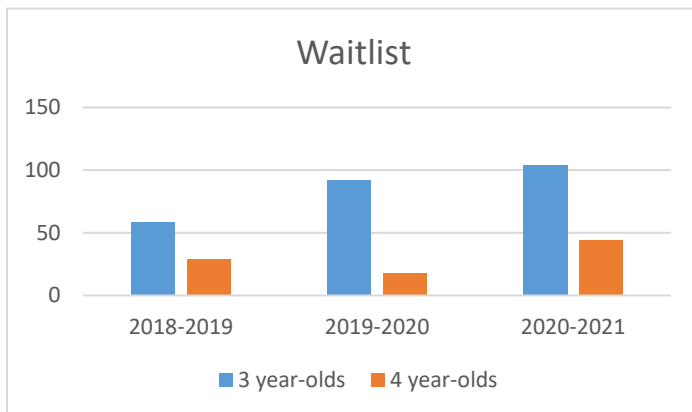
## Type of Eligibility

Type of Eligibility	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021
a. Income below 100% of the Federal Poverty Line	65.1%	68.0%	67.6%	64.8%	63.0%	57.2%	54.5%
b. Receipt of public assistance such as TANF, SSI	23.7%	20.3%	17.3%	16.7%	14.5%	15.6%	16.2%
c. Status as a Foster Care Child	1.7%	1.2%	1.5%	0.9%	2.4%	1.5%	3.0%
d. Status as homeless	0.0%	0.3%	0.9%	0.6%	1.2%	0.6%	1.5%
e. Over income	1.7%	1.5%	2.5%	2.2%	3.9%	5.2%	7.1%
Enrollees exceeding the allowed over income enrollment with family incomes between 100% and 130% of the Federal poverty line.	7.8%	8.6%	10.2%	14.8%	14.8%	19.9%	17.7%

## Service Provision Trends

Though CAPCJC accepts the children with the greatest needs at the beginning of each program year, they are not able to accept all children. Year-end waiting list totals are shown in the chart below. These numbers fluctuate throughout the year. In each of the last three years, 88, 110 and 148 children have been on a waiting list to become accepted into the CAPCJC Head Start program. The proportion of children on these waiting lists who are income eligible has increased, reaching 148 (104 3-year-olds and 44 4-year-olds) children in 2020-2021, this was because 77 less students were actually selected due to not selecting to full enrollment. Of CAPCJC's Head Start sites, North Jefferson 2 had the largest waiting lists 41 - 3 year-olds and 21 - 4 year-olds followed by 28 3-year-olds on the Watertown waitlist during the 2020-2021 program year. There are several factors that impact the waitlist for the North Jefferson program. There is limited other program options for three-year-olds in this area and we offer bussing, which alleviates transportation barriers. The school district Pre-K is only part day and many families are looking for a longer day. Many children on the waitlist for North Jefferson are from military families. These families often have incomes between 100% and 130% and are over income. Additionally, there is no 3-year-old option in the Indian River Pre-K program.

## Waitlist

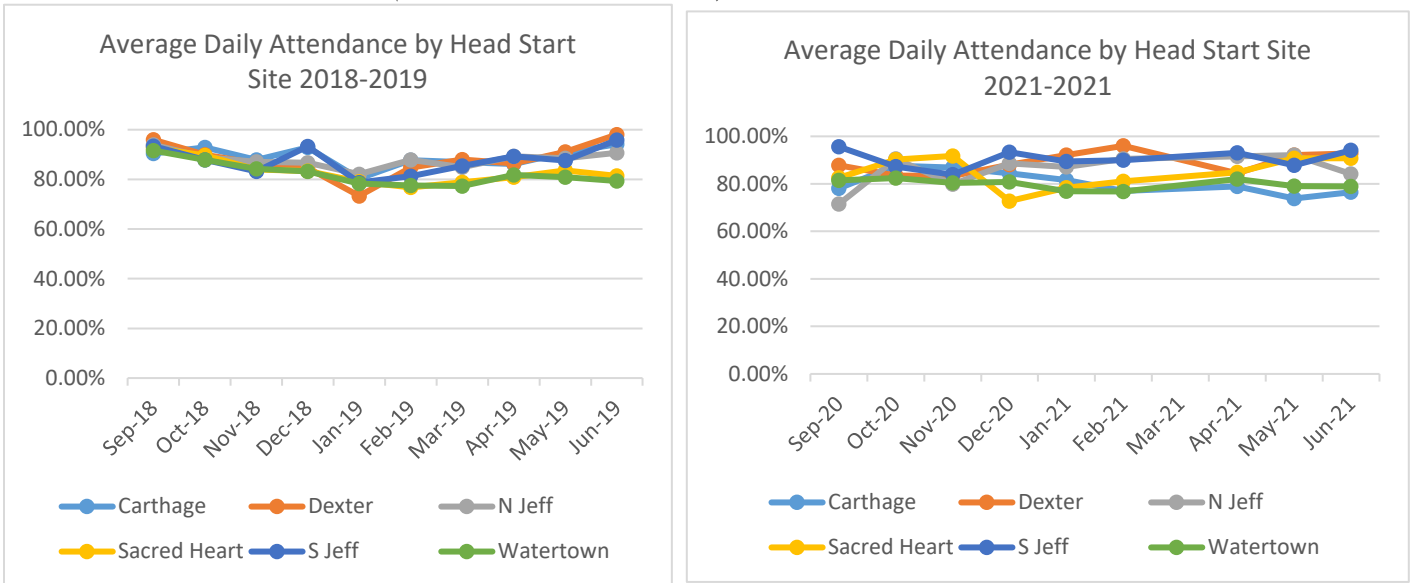


Source: Head Start End of Month Report (2018-2021)

Most children who participate in CAPCJC Head Start have strong attendance records. The chart below demonstrates monthly attendance rates at each Head Start site during the 2018/2019 and 2020/2021 year. Though the chart does show a decrease in the overall average attendance rate 87% to 84.6%, this is in large part due to the pandemic.

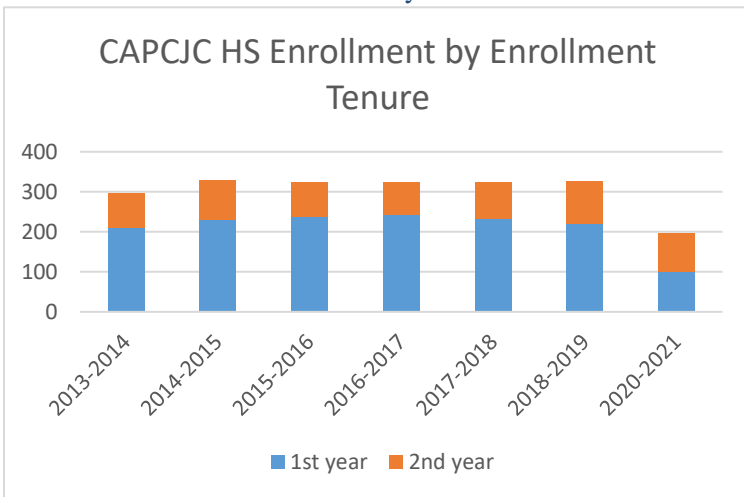
### Attendance 2018-2019 & 2020-2021 (By location)

Source: COPA Attendance data (2018-2019 and 2020-2021)



Each year, the majority of CAPCJC Head Start children are in their first year of Head Start. However, more than 82 children in each of the last eight years have been in their second years in the program. It is important to note that despite the pandemic; 97 children returned for a second year in 2020-2021.

### CAPCJC Head Start Enrollment by Enrollment Tenure

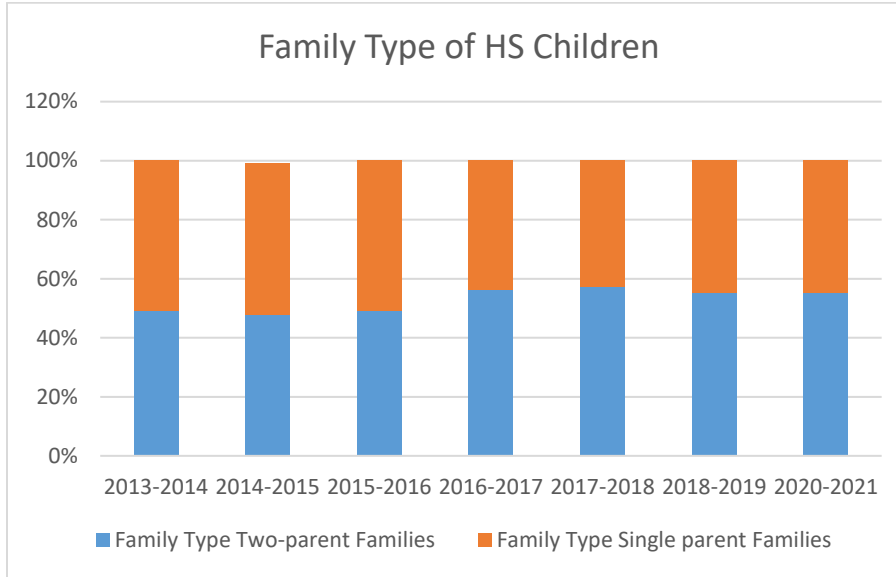


Source: Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) (2013-2021). The PIR was not completed during the 2019-2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Family Type

Families with children enrolled in CAPCJC’s HS program are equally likely to be two-parent or single parent families.

### Family Type of HS Children



Source: Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) (2013-2021). The PIR was not completed during the 2019-2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In both two-parent families and single-parent families, the large majority have at least one employed parent. In the 2020-2021 program year, nearly three in five (71%) families had one or both parents working. In that same year, despite the large majority of parents working, eligibility for the program has increasingly been based on family income level, indicating that the jobs HS parents are working do not pay enough to keep their families out of poverty.

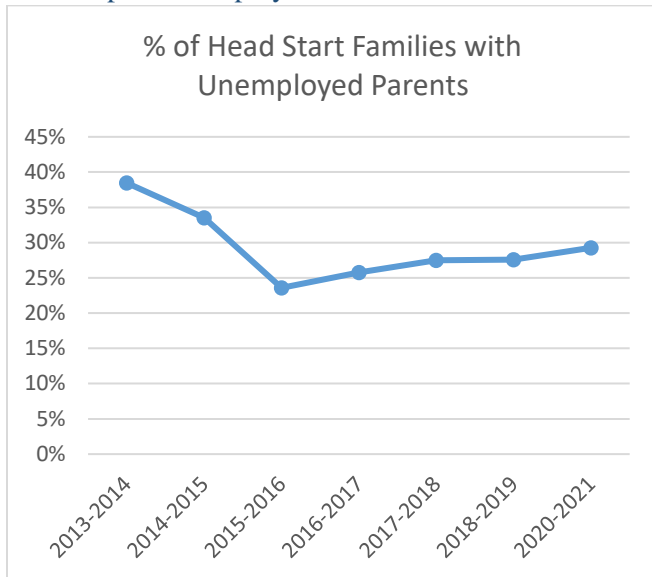
### % of parents employed

	Two parent working	One Parent working	Parents not working	Single parent working	Single parent not working
2013-2014	11%	27%	11%	23%	28%
2014-2015	8%	31%	9%	27%	25%
2015-2016	12%	32%	5%	33%	18%
2016-2017	12%	36%	8%	26%	18%
2017-2018	18%	32%	7%	26%	16%
2018-2019	19%	30%	6%	24%	21%
2020-2021	71%		29%		

Source: Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) (2013-2021). The PIR was not completed during the 2019-2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While most children live in families with at least one parent working, during the 2020-2021 program year, 29% of families had no parent working. For those parents that are working, many work in the service industry, so they have inconsistent hours and often work nights and weekends. While our military families may have some set hours that can change at a moment's notice or require the parent to be away from their family.

### % of no parents employed



Source: Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) (2013-2021). The PIR was not completed during the 2019-2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

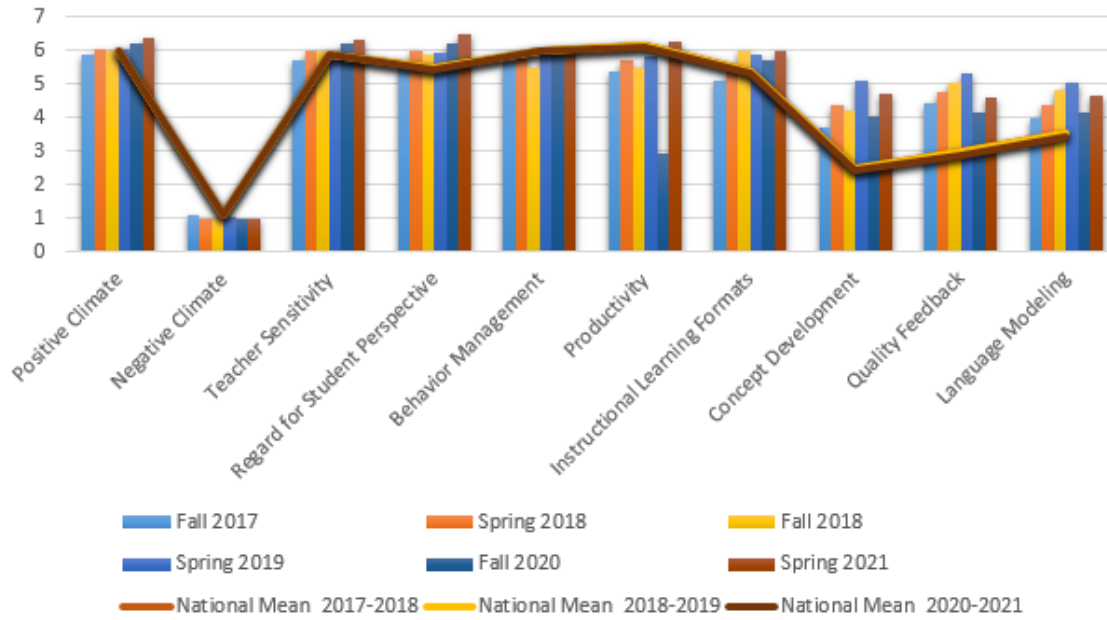
### Classroom Outcomes

In order to ensure that Head Start grantees meet high standards of teacher conduct and academic progress, the Administration for Children and Families Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center conducts assessments of Head Start programs each year. One of these assessments is the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which assesses teacher-child interactions within a Head Start Program in three domains: Emotional Support refers to a teacher's ability to create a positive and supportive classroom environment, Classroom Organization refers to the establishment of stable rules and routines, and Instructional Support assesses teachers' abilities to promote cognitive and language development. A Head Start program's collective performance on each domain is scored on a 1-7 scale, with seven being the highest possible. CAPCJC utilizes CLASS® scores to tailor professional development needs of teaching staff related to their teacher-child interactions and specific needs of the program.

The Office of Head Start reviews grantee level scores as part of monitoring program quality and determining the continuation of a Grantee's program status at the end of their five-year cycle. The minimum required scores for a Head Start program are 5 for Emotional Support, 5 for Classroom Organization, and 2.3 for Instructional Support. Grantees with average CLASS® scores below the established minimum on any of the three CLASS™ domains will be required to compete for continued funding.

Each of the last four years, CAPCJC Head Start has exceeded the minimum required scores in each domain (with the exception of Classroom organization in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019). Additionally, CAPCJC's performance in these domains has generally improved over the years. The chart below shows CAPCJC's performance over time in comparison to national averages. In general, CAPCJC has been on par with national averages for Emotional Support, slightly below national averages in Classroom Organization, and above national averages in Instructional Support. Although CAPCJC's performance scores for Classroom Organization were lower than the National average in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 performance increased in all areas from year to year and exceeded the National average in the subsequent 2020-2021 assessment.

### CAPCJC HS, Trends in Class Assessments



Source: CAPCJC Head Start 2017-2021 CLASS Domain Scores.

Note: Local and National scores for 2019-2020 were not available due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Emotional Support				Classroom Organization			Instructional Support		
	Positive Climate	Negative Climate	Teacher Sensitivity	Regard for Student Perspective	Behavior Management	Productivity	Instructional Learning Formats	Concept Development	Quality Feedback	Language Modeling
Fall 2017	5.87	1.07	5.71	5.52	5.67	5.37	5.11	3.73	4.43	3.99
Spring 2018	6.02	1.00	5.96	5.96	5.86	5.68	5.36	4.37	4.75	4.36
National Mean 2017-2018	6.01	1.07	5.88	5.47	6.00	6.14	5.35	2.49	2.99	3.51
Fall 2018	6.00	1.00	5.96	5.86	5.50	5.50	5.96	4.21	5.03	4.79
Spring 2019	6.04	1.04	6.00	5.92	6.00	5.83	5.88	5.08	5.33	5.03
National Mean 2018-2019	6.01	1.07	5.88	5.47	6.00	6.14	5.35	2.49	2.99	3.51
Fall 2020	6.19	1.00	6.19	6.23	5.88	2.92	5.69	4.03	4.15	4.15
Spring 2021	6.39	1.00	6.32	6.46	6.10	6.27	6.00	4.68	4.60	4.64
National Mean 2020-2021	5.97	1.07	5.87	5.43	5.99	6.09	5.29	2.43	2.88	3.42

Source: CAPCJC Head Start Child Outcome Report 2017-2021

As part of the 1998 reauthorization of Head Start by Congress, all programs are also required to demonstrate that children make progress on specific learning outcomes. To fulfill this requirement, children’s outcome measure data are reported three times per year for Head Start.

Children in the CAPCJC HS programs are assessed for school readiness using Creative Curriculum’s on-going assessment tool, Teaching Strategies. This tool is aligned with the framework set forth by the Head Start Bureau, consisting of five central domains: Language and Literacy; Cognition, Approaches to Learning; Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development; and Social and Emotional Development. Children are expected to have a minimum increase of 35% in knowledge and skills within a school year.

For the completed program years, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, the average improvement for all children in the CAPCJC programs, from the first measurements taken in December to the final measurements taken in May, were 49.5% and 42.7% respectively. In 2020-2021, the average improvement for HS was 73.0%. These increases significantly surpass the minimum expected increase of 35%. Additionally, HS participants saw improvements above 35% in nearly all of the five central domains all three program years.

### Average Increase in Child Outcome Scores

	Fall	Winter	Spring	Growth	Fall	Winter	Spring	Growth	Fall	Winter	Spring	Growth
	2017-2018				2018-2019				2020-2021			
Social-Emotional	35%	56%	78%	66%	36%	60%	76%	63%	43%	71%	83%	70%
Physical	44%	71%	84%	71%	43%	80%	89%	81%	51%	78%	92%	84%
Language	39%	63%	80%	67%	42%	68%	81%	67%	44%	71%	84%	71%
Cognitive	28%	60%	84%	78%	34%	65%	75%	62%	36%	73%	86%	78%
Literacy	18%	51%	76%	71%	23%	57%	71%	62%	26%	47%	78%	69%
Math	17%	53%	76%	71%	23%	40%	66%	56%	33%	53%	77%	66%

Source: CAPCJC Head Start Child Outcome Report 2017-2021

### Community Level Data

Altogether, there are 8,768 children younger than age six in Jefferson County, which accounts for 8.2% of the total population.

### Poverty

Children are accepted into the Head Start program based upon a variety of eligibility criteria. However, no more than 10% of participants can be from families whose incomes are above the federal poverty guidelines. There are 1,705 children ages 0-4 living in poverty (at 100% of the federal poverty guidelines) which accounts for 19.4% of the total population of children in this age range. There are 5,185 children ages 0-17 living in poverty (at 100% of the federal poverty guidelines) which accounts for 19.5% of the total population of children in this age range. The greatest population of children live within the City of Watertown, where the number of children ages 0-17 in poverty (at 100% of the federal poverty guidelines) jumps to 33.7%. Examining the population trends by gender and age, the largest populations of Head Start-eligible children are likely to be in Watertown, Indian River and Carthage school districts, followed by South Jefferson and General Brown. Our six centers are located in these five districts.

School District	Total School Population	Population at 185% Poverty	Age 0-5 at 185% Poverty
Hammond Central	1,686	647	62
LaFargeville Central	3,054	1,186	247
Alexandria Central	3,692	1,223	178
Bellville Central	3,424	1,065	177
General Brown Central	8,786	2,338	349
Watertown City	28,996	11,911	1397
Sackets Harbor	3,168	666	6
South Jefferson Central	10,278	2,618	381
Indian River Central	19,596	6,561	1167
Copenhagen Central	2,973	946	85
Lyme Central	2,454	572	58
Thousand Islands Central	6,739	1,724	223
Carthage Central	15,835	4,953	706

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

### Expectant mothers

According to the NYS Department of Health, there are approximately 2000 pregnancies annually, of which 600 (30%) are living below the 100% poverty threshold.

## Employment and Income

Throughout Jefferson County, the median household income is around \$53,917, which is lower than the statewide median income. 14% of Jefferson County individuals live in poverty. Among the residents living in poverty, 41.7% are families with Female Heads of household and children present. Meanwhile, the living wage for a Jefferson County adult and 1 child is \$30.80 per hour.

Whether individuals fall into poverty depends not only on their employment status, but also upon the industries in which they work. In Jefferson County, four industries stand out as having median earnings below \$23,000. These industries employ more than one in five of the county's workers:

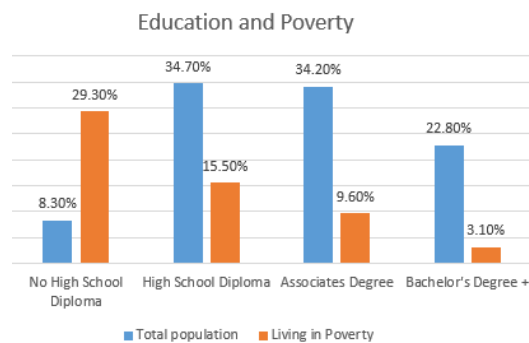
- Arts, Entertainment, Hospitality, food service, and Recreation – median income: \$14,844
- Retail Trade – median income: \$22,233
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting: \$15,864
- Other services, except public administration: \$16,017

Jefferson County is home to Jefferson Community College and BOCES Technical School. Additionally, JCC partners with Nazareth College and SUNY Potsdam to offer bachelor and graduate degrees. Training opportunities are available in Jefferson County, during the 2020-2021 school year, 2 parents were participating in school or job training.

Some families are eligible for other forms of assistance. The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program replaced the Assistance for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program in 1996. It provides short-term cash assistance and programming to help reduce the needs of low-income families and pregnant women. 19 Jefferson County Head Start families received cash assistance from this program during the 2020-2021 program year. Additionally 13 families received Supplemental Security Income, 119 families received Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and 91 families received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

## Education

In addition to training and type of job, education attainment is important for increasing income. Overall, the majority of Jefferson County's workers have a high school degree, or Associates degree. If a family is living in poverty those statistics drop significantly.



Source: New York State Community Action Association, <https://nyscaa.engagemenetwork.org/poverty-report/?geoid=05000US36045>

School District	ELA - Grade 3	Math - Grade 3
LaFargeville Central	75%	84%
Alexandria Central	63%	51%
Bellville Central	56%	61%
General Brown Central	66%	50%
Watertown City	46%	32%
Sackets Harbor	67%	29%
South Jefferson Central	61%	30%
Indian River Central	56%	33%
Lyme Central	53%	53%
Thousand Islands Central	56%	62%
Carthage Central	50%	35%

Source: <https://data.nysed.gov/profile.php?county=22>

High school completion is also a concern in Jefferson County. Across the county, only 87.14% of students graduate on time. One of the predictors of high school graduation is reading ability. The grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics measurement assessments measure the higher learning standards that were adopted by the State Board of Regents in 2010, which more accurately reflects student progress toward college and career readiness. An average of 59% of Jefferson County third graders tested proficient on the ELA assessment and an average of 47% of Jefferson County third graders tested as proficient of the math assessment. Because learning to read by third grade is a crucial foundation for future learning, poor achievement levels at this age are a significant indicator of future unemployment and poverty.

## **Community Resources**

Head Start programs maintain community partnership agreements with the following agencies:

Alexandria Bay Central School District  
Bellville-Henderson Central School District  
Building Blocks  
Carthage Central School District  
The Children's Home of Jefferson County  
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County  
Disabled Persons Action Organization  
Flower Memorial Library  
General Brown Central School District  
Indian River School District  
Jefferson Community College  
Jefferson County Public Health  
Jefferson County Department of Social Services  
Jefferson-Lewis Child Care Project  
Mental Health Association  
Milestones/Little Lukes  
North Country Family Health Center  
North Country Prenatal/Perinatal Council  
NYS Office of Children and Family Services  
Pivot  
The Resolution Center of Jeff-Lewis Counties  
Sackets Harbor Central School District  
South Jefferson Central School District  
Watertown School District

## Appendix I

### Survey Summaries

#### Community Customer Survey

During the month of May and August 2021, the survey was distributed to Family Center customers, available through our Facebook and Website. A total of 46 individuals responded. *The customer usage has been lower than traditionally we see, due to the pandemic. Customers are served curbside and due to additional benefits (SNAP, eviction moratorium, etc.) there has been a lower average number of individuals accessing our services.*

#### **DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

##### Gender of Person Completing Survey

Female	74%
Male	26%

##### Age of Person Completing Survey

25 – 30	9%
31 – 45	41%
46 – 55	24%
56 – 65	11%
66+	15%

##### Ethnicity of Person Completing Survey

Non-Hispanic	93.5%
Hispanic	6.5%

##### Race of Person Completing Survey

Caucasian	87%
African American	2%
Multi-Racial	4.5%
Other	6.5%

##### Work Status

Employed	39%
Unemployed	54%
Retired	7%

## **Transportation/Employment**

In the past 12 months, has lack of transportation been a problem for your household?

Yes	28%
No	72%

In the past 12 months, has anyone in your household experienced any of the following challenges with transportation? Do you or does anyone in your household need to following:

Inability to afford gas	33%
Inability to afford car repairs	28%
No access to a car	26%
No car insurance	9%
No driver's license or license suspended	7%
Unable to use the public bus system	16%
Public transportation not accessible	21%
Public Transportation is too expensive	9%

Do you or does anyone in your household need the following:

Help finding a job	2%
Help finding a better job	2%
Job training/retraining services	0%
Assistance with resume writing or interviewing skills	5%
Tools/equipment for work	0%
Proper clothing for work	0%
Does not apply	93.02%

For the adults (18 years or older) in your household who are NOT working for pay, please indicate why they do not work:

Caring for children	16%
Caring for elderly relatives	0%
Criminal History	2%
Drug/Alcohol problems	2%
Lack of necessary job skills	0%
Does not speak English	0%
Mental Health Problems	4.5%
No High school diploma/GED/HSE	0%
Physical Disability	30%
Retired	7%
Student	7%
Transportation problems	7%
Laid off	2%
COVID	2%

## **Housing**

Which of the following best describes your living situation?

Rent	64%
Own	30%
Military Housing	4%
Homeless	2%

Which of the following best describes the condition of your home?

It is in good shape, no repairs needed	43%
It needs minor repairs	39%
It needs major repairs	5%
It is in such poor condition that it is unsafe	5%
It needs disability access improvements (wheelchair ramp, wider doorways etc.)	7%
It needs weatherization measures (insulation, weather strip, caulk, etc.)	9%

Have you experienced any of the following problems related to housing in the past 12 months?

I can't afford needed repairs	12%
I can't afford the electric bill	23%
I can't afford the heat bill	21%
I can't find affordable housing	5%
My physical disability makes it hard to find housing	0%
I am homeless	2%
My house was foreclosed	0%
I can't pay rent on time	2%

**Household Budgeting/Childcare**

Do you think you can handle a major expense of \$400?

Completely	12%
Somewhat	42%
Not at all	46%

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?

Yes	16%
No	84%

Are you able to afford enough formula for your infant?

Yes	5%
No	2%
I do not have an infant	88%
I do not use formula	5%

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

Yes	24%
No	76%

Does your household participate in the following?

WIC	35%
Free/Reduced School Lunch Program	80%
Backpack program for child for weekend (meals)	15%
Summer Food Service Program	25%

Do you have the following utensils in your kitchen?

Measuring cups	96%
Measuring spoons	87%
Mixing bowls	91%
Pots and pans	100%

Do you follow a household budget?

Yes	74%
No	26%

*Comments:*

- In theory, not practice*
- Unorganized*
- No idea how to*
- Haven't developed one*

What do you currently use to meet your child care needs?

After school program	2.5%
Children are old enough to be left on their own	5%
Day care center	0%
Head Start	0%
Informal / unregistered provider / babysitter	2.5%
Parent, family friends or neighbors	20%
Pre-Kindergarten / Preschool	0%
Registered / licensed child care provider	0%
Does not apply	76%

Do you think there is a need for an Early Head Start Program (0-2 years of age)?

Yes	74%
No	27%

How do you meet the cost of your child care?

Subsidy	0%
Self-pay	5%
Does not apply	93%
Other	2.38% (OPWDD budget)

Have any of the following been an issue for concern for the youth (under 18) in your household in the past 12 months?

Bullying	7%
Emotional or behavioral problems	12%
Skipping school or dropping out of school	2%
Violence	5%

Are you a grandparent or other relative raising children other than your own?

Yes	7%
No	93%

If yes, please indicate the PRIMARY reason for care.

Substance abuse	5%
-----------------	----

**Please add anything you would like Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County to know.**

1. I applied for eviction assistance and was denied. I lost my apartment and all my personal belongings and everything I owned.
2. I think that the food pantry\ anything with an income guideline should have the guidelines posted online.
3. More daycare options help with buying homes.
4. Please help people find affordable transportation and or help expand bus routes and times the bus operate.
5. Transportation to food pantries is a problem for myself and others in the community
6. Employment and guidance for young people / recent graduates who may be troubled or need continued support after high school.
7. Child care is a problem.
8. Drug and alcohol abuse is a community issue that should be better addressed.

**What is one service received from Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County that has helped you or someone in your household the most within the past 12 months?**

Food Pantry, Critical Needs	87.2%
Summer Food Program!!	3.2%
Tax Preparation	3.2%
Child Care Referral	3.2%
Help with Daughters school readiness	3.2%

Staff and Community Partner Survey’s

**Synopsis of Aggregated Data**

Staff Survey

Throughout September 2021, agency staff members were encouraged to complete the same survey instrument made available to Board of Directors. A series of email invitations was sent out with a link to Survey Monkey. Paper copies were made available upon request. A total of 25 staff members participated.

Community Partner Survey

The community partner survey was distributed via a link to an email list consisting of 82 representatives of community-based organizations private sector, public sector and educational institutions. A total of individuals, representing 15 different organizations, completed surveys using the Survey Monkey link:

Benchmark Family Services (President)	Private Sector
Bright Beginnings Early Learning Center (The Arc Jefferson/St. Lawrence) (Pre-School Director)	Educational
Building Blocks (Agency owner)	Educational
Carthage CSD, (Kindergarten Teacher)	Educational
Case Middle School (Principal)	Educational
Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson (Early Childhood Family Service Specialist)	Educational
Copenhagen Central School (Elementary Principal)	Educational
Flower Memorial Library (Librarian III)	Public Sector
Flower Library (Librarian I)	Public Sector
IRCSD (Principal)	Educational
Jefferson County Public Health Service (Planner)	Public Sector
NRCIL (Family Support Services Program Director)	Private Sector
South Jefferson School District (Teacher)	Educational
Watertown School District (Prekindergarten Administer)	Educational
Watertown School District (Preschool curriculum coach)	Educational

The community partner and staff survey’s was largely the same, with the addition of three introductory questions for community partners pertaining to relationship with the agency. The survey to food pantry’s focused on food pantry usage and pantry needs in outlying areas of the county. The data for all three constituency groups is summarized as follows.

**STAFF: Number of Years on Staff**

Less than 1 year	2
1 – 5 years	10
6 – 10 years	2
11 – 15 years	3
16 – 20 years	2
21+ years	6

**Greatest strengths of living in Jefferson County**

**STAFF**

Sense of Community, Very community based, others willing to help other  
Strong Family Relationships  
Beautiful area, abundance of outdoor activities, the location to so many things, Syracuse, Adirondacks etc.  
Fairly safe communities/ low violent crime rate  
Great people, People who care  
A mixture of 'city' and rural  
Stabilizing factor of Fort Drum  
Great schools  
Head Start program!!!  
The overall quality of life

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Positive People  
Love the people in this area. They help each other out as seen by this pandemic.  
Safe Environment  
Relationships with family & community  
Rural living  
Access to outdoor activities  
Environment – open space, recreation, home grown foods  
Family friendly  
Good schools/library's  
Job security with Fort Drum

**Greatest Challenges of Living in Jefferson County**

**STAFF**

Transportation access for people without cars, lack of transportation throughout the County  
Mental Health care  
Low paying jobs  
Childcare access for people that work odd hours and/or do not need full time care  
Inexpensive GOOD rentals in nicer areas  
Lack of affordable education opportunities  
Crime Rate is rising  
Availability of resources not widely known  
Isolation in the winter/ no public transportation  
Lack of cultural activities within the county

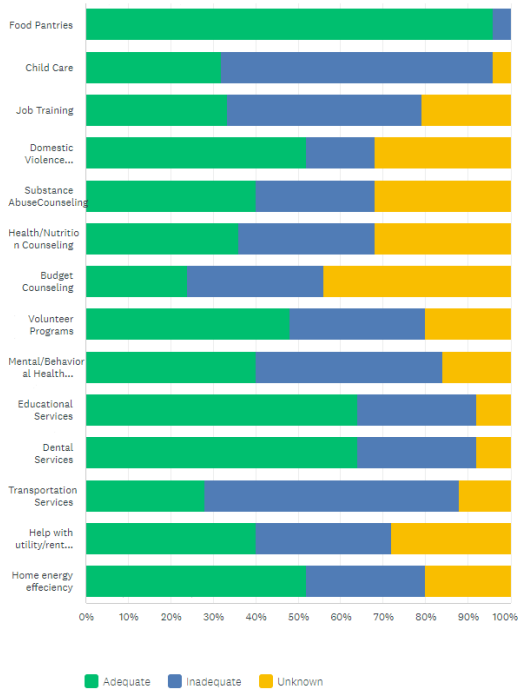
**COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Lack of jobs that are full time and offer benefits, lack of quality jobs for high school graduate  
Housing insecurity  
Lack of quality, affordable child care  
Prevalence and immediate access to higher level drugs  
Limited availability of provider i.e. Speech, OT, PT  
Lack of robust public transportation especially in rural areas

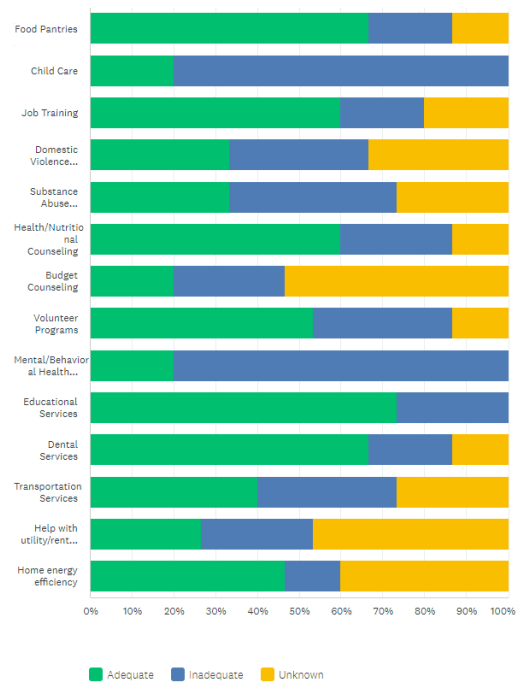
- High teacher turn-over rate
- Lack of summer programs for low income families
- Some limited resources and shortages of key staff
- Lack of high speed internet in rural areas

**How well do you feel the community meets the needs of low-income households?**

Staff responses:

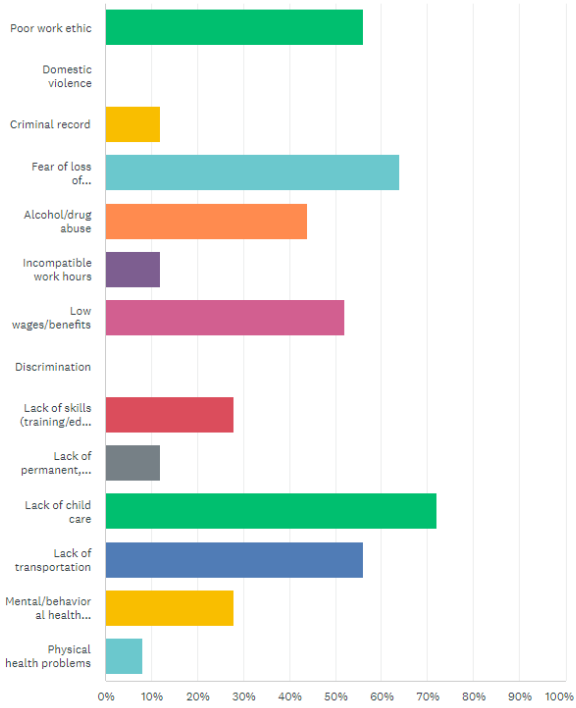


Community Partner responses:

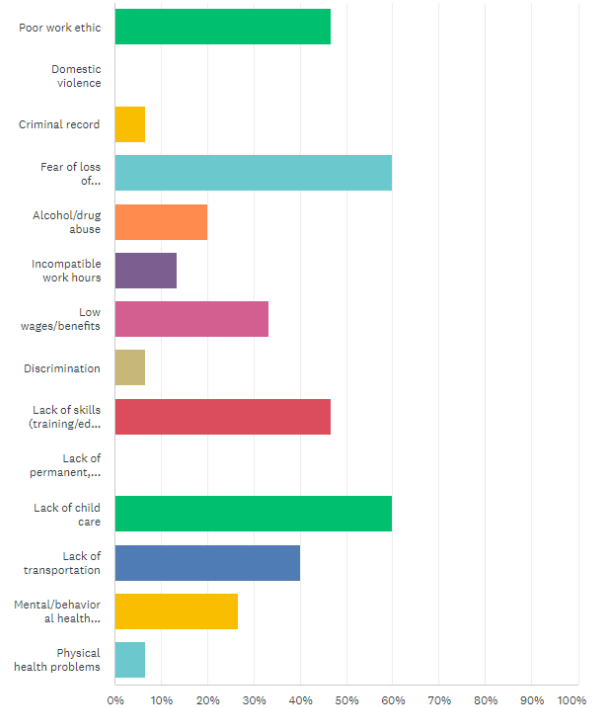


**Assuming jobs are available, what makes it difficult for people to get/maintain employment?**

Staff responses:

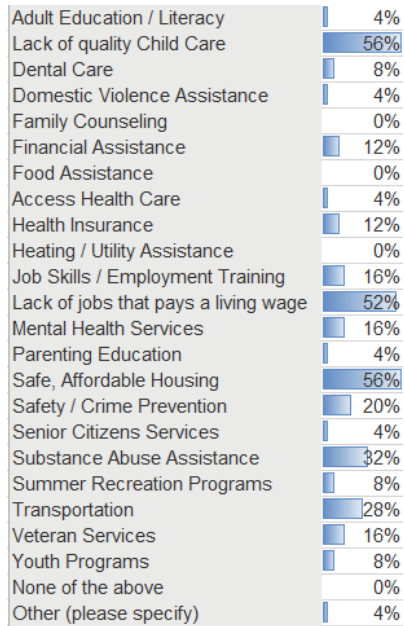


Community Partner responses:

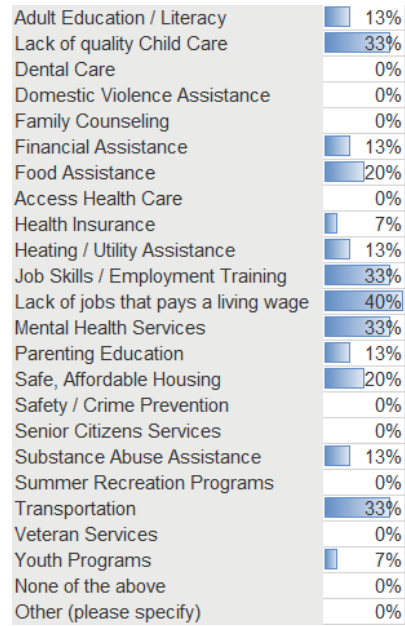


**What are the most challenging community issues that low-income households in Jefferson County will face in the next three years?**

Staff responses:



Community Partner responses:



**What can we do as community partners/collaborators to better address issues in the future? This open-ended question was only asked to COMMUNITY PARTNERS.**

- To help people realize having a job helps them to have a purpose.
- Continue to do a food pantry and community centers that can help provide therapist with what they need.
- Work with families directly to assess their needs. Recruit providers to the area.
- I think CAPC does an excellent job serving the community in many areas. I do know more child care is needed.
- We need in home visitation programs to assist new parents.
- Meet to discuss ideas that could help improve them.
- Try to offer support for mental health in schools. Behavioral health and the process to get in is gut wrenching. If we can provide some of that in school, we can help families.
- Work together with other agencies to come up with a long term plan and goals.
- We need to work together to address the lack of child care and affordable transportation, especially in rural, outlying areas that are away from the city.
- Educate the community about what services are available to them.
- I am not sure. Provide day care and day care training?
- We can meet low income families where they are.
- Form workgroups with plans to address issues.

**If Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County, Inc. had unlimited resources (e.g., money; staff time; etc.); what direction, focus, goal or program should it address? This open-ended question was only asked to COMMUNITY ACTION STAFF.**

- Early Head Start, Family Center Case Management, broader scope of Weatherization measures such as the ability to address roof repairs and structural needs of the home.
- Childcare for parents that work hours other than; M-F, 9-5 and for those who do not need full time care. Help low income obtain reliable transportation or purchase vehicles that are reliable and to help fix as needed and/or get insured etc.
- Better wages for employees education on general life skills: managing a budget/checking account, basic nutrition, accountability
- Expanding on the types of services we currently offer, while looking for ways to bring new programs and services into the agency.
- Transportation to get children/families to appointments
- Expand infant care or Early Head Start
- Affordable childcare
- Budgeting to sustain
- Livable wages for employees!!! Easy to leave when less stressful jobs pay \$15 starting pay
- Young children , supporting families with food and counseling
- Having on-site medical/dental and mental health services to serve the families we work with.
- Help families break the chain of living on public assistance
- Provide staff with child care or help paying for child care

## Head Start Parent Survey

Throughout November 2021, Head Start Parents were encouraged to complete a survey instrument made available via Parent Square. A total of 64 Parents/Guardians participated.

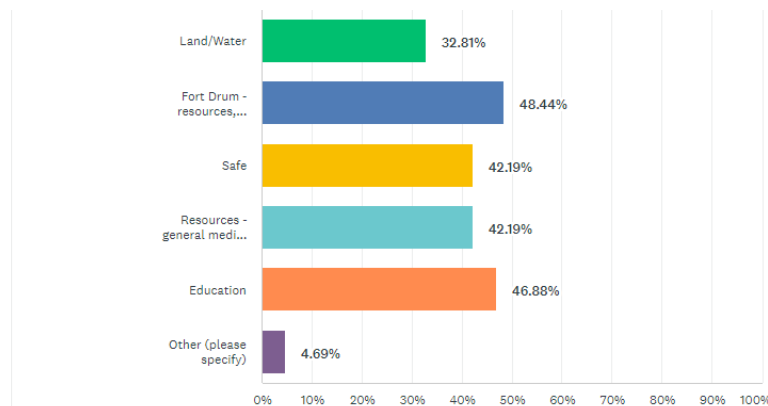
Number of responses (by location):

Watertown	30
Sacred Heart	6
North Jefferson	10
South Jefferson	4
Dexter	5
Carthage	9

Number of responses (by program option):

Center-based (4 hours)	26
Center-based (6 hours)	31
Combination option	5
Home-based	2

### What do you consider to be strengths of our community?

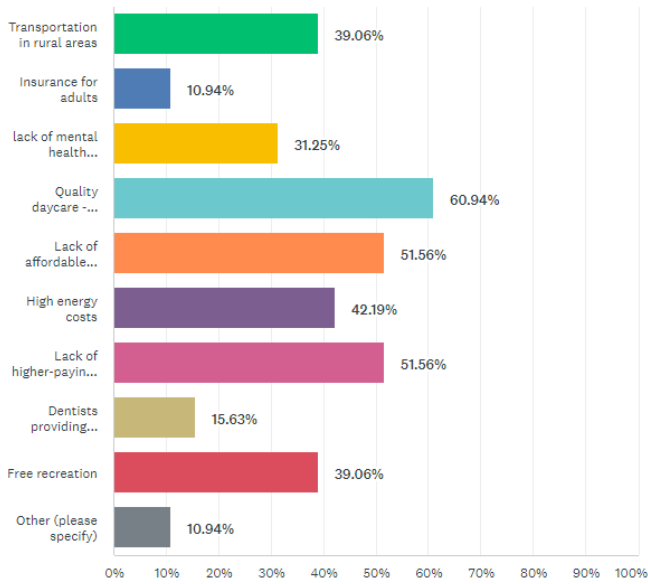


Other comments included:

- Community
- Teachers, not so much the schools
- Child care

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Land/Water	32.81%
▼ Fort Drum - resources, jobs, etc.	48.44%
▼ Safe	42.19%
▼ Resources - general medical care, hospitals, food pantries	42.19%
▼ Education	46.88%
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 4.69%
Total Respondents: 64	

**What do you see as the needs/issues in our community?**

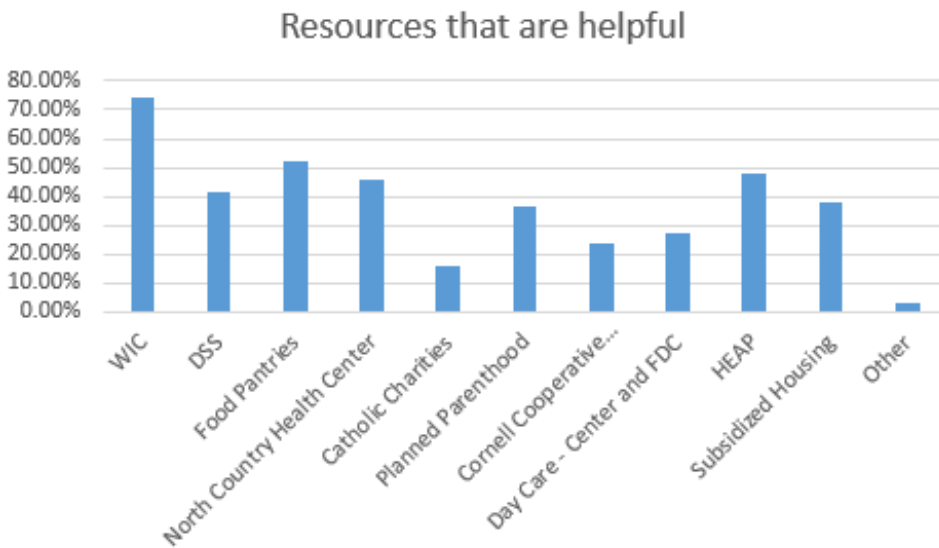


Other comments included:

- Eye glass places that accept united health care community plan for the glasses and lenses
- Providing learning - natural health and healing
- Jobs
- Jobs willing to work with your schedule due to no available day care
- No help for those suffering with mental health
- Before and after school care

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Transportation in rural areas	39.06%
Insurance for adults	10.94%
lack of mental health providers accepting Medicaid	31.25%
Quality daycare - especially infant care	60.94%
Lack of affordable housing	51.56%
High energy costs	42.19%
Lack of higher-paying jobs with benefits	51.56%

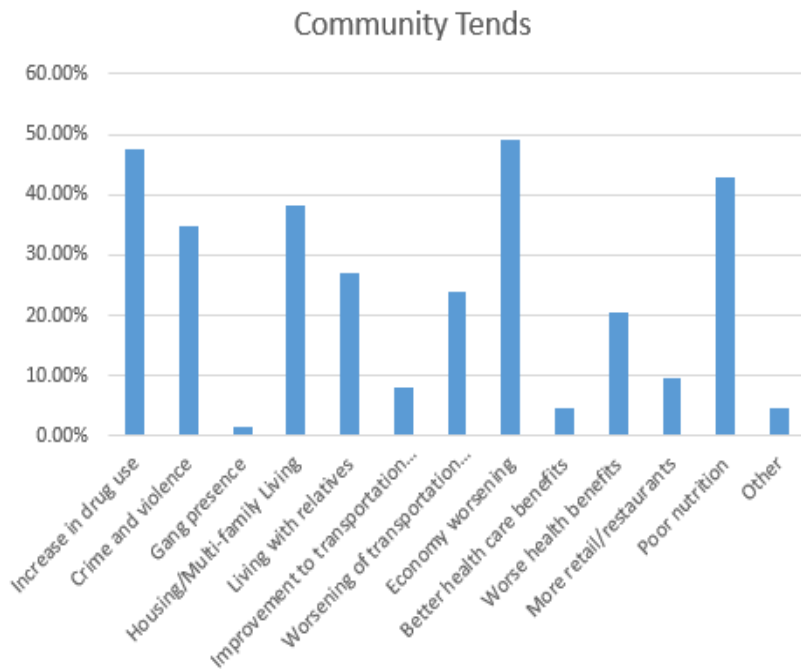
**What resources do you find helpful in the community?**



Other comments include:

- I don't qualify for any.
- Urban Mission

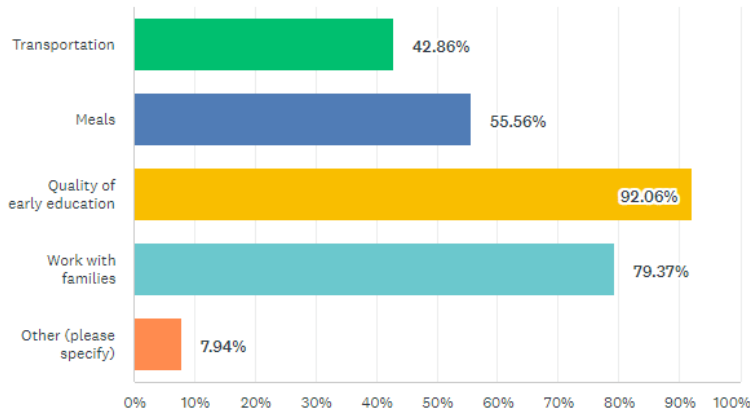
**What trends are you noticing in your community?**



Other Comments include:

- A little bit of everything
- No jobs

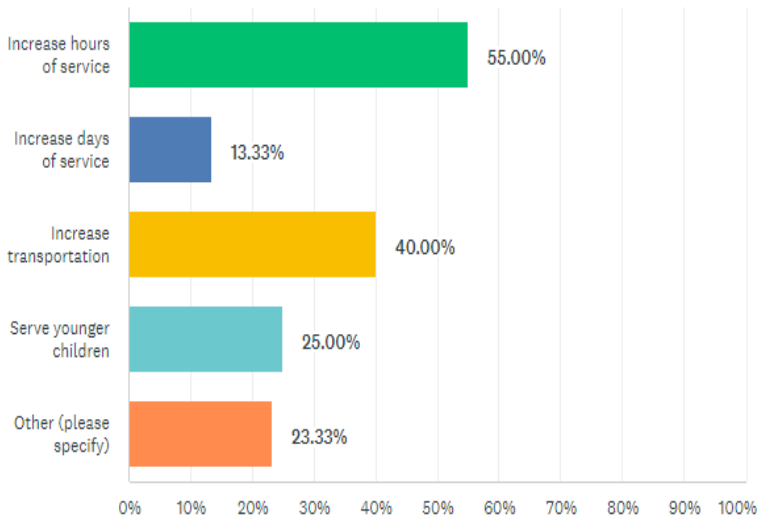
**What do you consider to be the strengths of the Head Start Program?**



Other comments include:

- Good People
- All the awesome staff
- Before and after care for Preschool program
- Doing a wonderful job

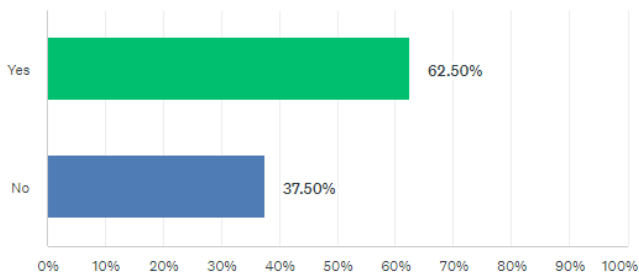
**What can we do as a Head Start Program to better serve you and your family?**



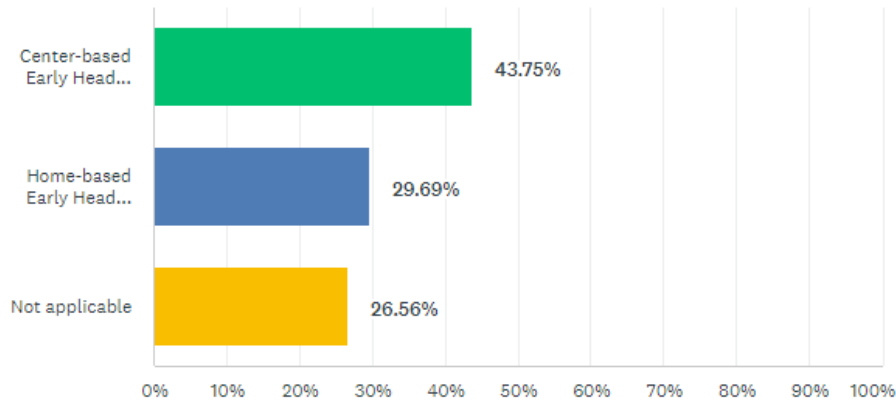
Other comments include:

- I am pleased with all aspects of Head Start
  - Meet more food special needs
  - Better communication, collaboration and involvement with parents
  - Have some parent groups at a better time for working parents
  - Being told last minute there isn't a class that morning is difficult
  - Satisfied with the program
  - No improvements, program is very useful
- Change how kids are selected. Disabilities should come first in my opinion.
  - Keep it up!

**Do you think there is a need for an Early Head Start Program (0-2 years of age)?**



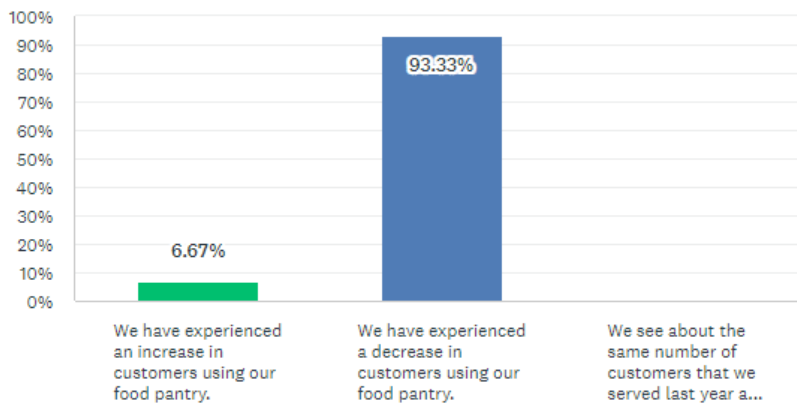
**If you had a child 0-2 years old, which would you prefer?**



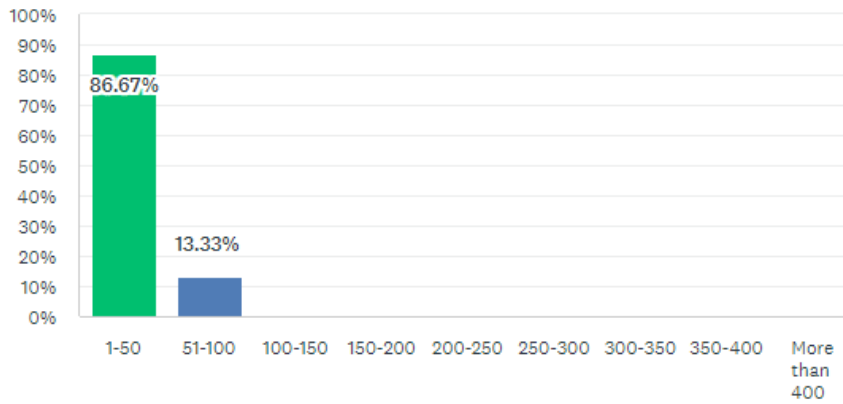
Food Pantry Survey

Surveys were sent to each of the 18 food pantries located in Jefferson County. 15 individuals representing 15 pantries responded. Below are responses received:

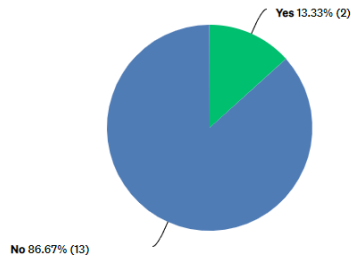
1. Please select a description of your food pantry's usage since January 1, 2021.



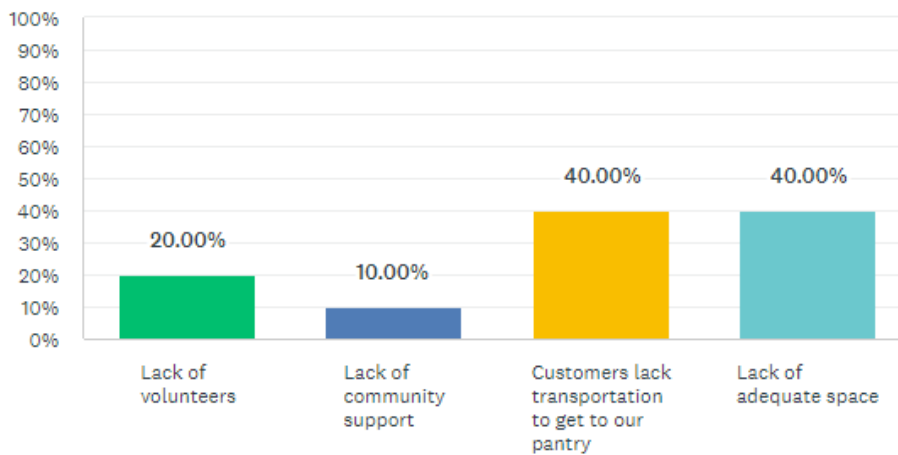
**2. How many Households did your pantry serve during March 2021?**



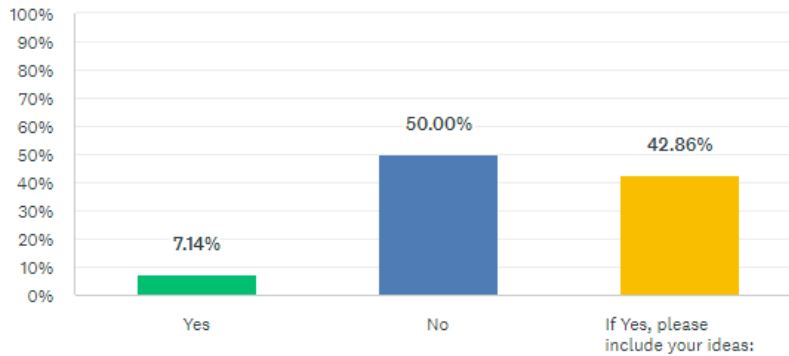
**3. Do you have concerns about the future of your food pantry?**



**4. Please check your concerns about operating a food pantry (select all that apply):**



**5. Do you feel your community would benefit from offering additional/extended food pantry opportunities?**



- Clothing racks, pots & pans, Walmart donations
- Unsure
- We would need additional volunteers
- I think it would be beneficial for several tiny pantries to combine to make a large pantry. They could combine stock, volunteers and all resources. They could then be open expanded hours to better serve folks. They would be large enough to assign jobs to people, for example, ordering, delivery receipt, grant requests, correspondence, holiday programs, spring cleaning, etc. I would suggest a program which encompasses all communities in the Indian River School District.
- More space to display items

**6. What would you like for us to know about the needs of families in your area? Is there any way we can assist you in serving your communities?**

- Problem with getting people to admit they need help.
- We have seasonal customers that can work in the summer doing construction, farming, etc, but need more help in the winter.
- Lack of transportation
- Families will come back when the government stops so much help. We are preparing for that.
- What you provide is great. The biggest problem is the follow through of the client for us. We offer a lot of support through you and other agencies it is up to them to use it.
- The area needs more transportation options. We do deliveries as well but that can be overwhelming at times
- We currently purchase bread, milk and eggs. These items used to be donated but no longer are, so if you ever have an overage, we would love to share.
- I feel the need is there. The attitude seems to be people do not want to use the services because someone else may need it more than they do. Lack of transportation is a big factor for the elderly
- How to reach them.
- So far we are able to have more than enough for our families.
- I wish more elderly would come.

**Appendix II**

**Focus Groups** - On May 11, 2021 a focus group was conducted with Head Start Policy Council via zoom. Individuals in attendance included Community Action staff (both Administration and Head Start), Head Start Parents, and community members representing Prenatal Perinatal Council and Jefferson County Cornell Cooperative Extension. On May 20, 2021, a focus group was conducted with the Board of Directors of the Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County, Inc. The discussion at both focus group meetings included topics such as housing and energy, personal finance and employment, mental health and substance abuse, education and child care, food and nutrition with the goal of identifying barriers or addressing the roots of poverty in our community.

**Policy Council Focus Group May 11, 2021 5 PM**

Participants totaled 13, including Community Action staff, members of local community organizations and Head Start parents.

Sincere appreciation for those who attended including:

Melinda Gault	Community Action Executive Director
Claudia Whitmire	Community Action Deputy Director
Marie Ambrose	Head Start Director
Trish Gay	Head Start Sr. Specialist (Family Services/Parent Involvement/ERSEA)
Elaine Soper	Head Start Office Manager
Minty Regis (Carthage Reg)	Head Start Parent
Kari Smith (Dexter Reg)	Head Start Parent
Alexis Weaver (Wat'n Reg)	Head Start Parent
Allison Carter (NJ Reg)	Head Start Parent
Josh McCann (Wat'n Reg)	Head Start Parent
Lindsey McCann (Wat'n Reg)	Head Start Parent
Anne Garno (Community)	Prenatal Perinatal Council
Sabrina DeRue (Community)	Cornel Cooperative Extension

Issues facing families in Jefferson County now – participants were asked to raise their hand if they think the families are facing these issues in Jefferson County: Mental health and substance abuse, lack of necessary job skills, lack of transportation, lack of available ‘living wage’ jobs, lack of parenting skills, lack of health/nutrition knowledge and lack of quality housing. Hands were raised for all issues.

Claudia explained the Community Needs Assessment process and that the information gained will help us evaluate our programs and services to make sure the needs in our community are met.

The following discussion occurred:

1. Housing and Energy
  - a. Are there enough housing options available to low-income families?  
*Housing is a challenge across the board for low income families. Housing is not affordable, safe and well-maintained.*
  - b. Is Rent/Mortgage affordable?  
*Housing is available for families with good payment record/credit score. If families do not have a good credit score – the options they are left with are substandard and in unsafe neighborhoods.*
  - c. Are homes in this area energy efficient?  
*Homes in our area are not always energy efficient. It costs a great deal to live in Northern NY and often the homes are uncomfortable.*

- d. Are homes maintained well?  
*It depends on the neighborhood and the homeowner's ability to maintain.*
- e. Do we have safe neighborhoods?  
*Depends on the neighborhood. They seem to be increasingly less safe daily.*
2. Personal Finance and Employment
- a. Do families have basic budgeting knowledge?
- *Everyone could use help with person finance budgeting. The issue is if someone wants to do this they will do this – you can't force someone to do this.*
  - *The group was asked if most families could handle an unexpected emergency. "Coming from a low-income household. Not easy to put funds aside because everything is put aside for bills – savings account is not typical."*
- b. Can families meet basic needs?
- *Families may be able to meet basic needs, but nothing more. This is why most low-income families choose to rent, because they are not able to take care of unexpected issues, such as needing a refrigerator – this will be a landlord responsibility.*
- c. What are barriers to employment?
- *Stay at home mom – lack of experience/education to enter the workforce. Childcare is a huge issue – "I have twins – child care would cost me my paycheck" That is why mothers choose to stay at home.*
  - *Reliable transportation close enough to work is a barrier. Affordable housing may be outside the city of Watertown, but jobs are available in the city.*
3. Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- a. What are the barriers for individuals who are struggling with mental health/and/or substance abuse to seek assistance?
- *Lack of health insurance.*
  - *There are a lack of providers who will accept low-income insurance.*
  - *There are waitlists to access mental health care*
  - *There is also an issue with reliable transportation to services.*
  - *There is a lack of reliable internet for individuals who may want to participate in tele-health opportunities. Additionally, individuals who live in remote locations may not be able to access information about services if they are online if they do not have access.*
  - *Individuals do not seek help due to stigma associated with mental health and substance abuse issues*
4. Education/Childcare
- a. Are there challenges for individuals seeking a GED?
- *Lack of available child care*
  - *There are not enough adult programs available (variety)*

## 5. Food and Nutrition

- a. Do low-income have access to nutritious/affordable food?
  - *This depends on where families live, transportation and availability can be a barrier to getting nutritious and affordable food. Families may have to resort to shopping at the Family Dollar for groceries, where there is no fresh items and plentiful fast food options.*
  - *SNAP benefits are great, but again there are limited opportunities to use them in some areas.*
  - *Families have a lack of knowledge about healthy food options. They also have limited internet in some areas, which makes it difficult to research information.*
- b. Do low-income households have to make the choice between buying food or other necessities (healthcare, transportation, rent, etc.)
  - *One participant reports of friends who have had to give up their phone to be able to buy food.*
  - *Some low-income families do not know if they are illegible for SNAP benefits*
  - *Families have to make the choice between food and other necessities (diapers, baby wipes, laundry detergent, etc.)*

The group was thanked for their insight and discussion. This meeting concluded at 5:30 PM.

### Board of Directors Focus Group, May 20, 2021, 5 PM

Participants totaled 14, including Community Action staff and members of Community Action Board of Directors.

Sincere appreciation for those who attended including:

**Board Members Present:** Stanley Zarembo, Andrea Kaler, Krystin LaBarge, Jackie Sharpe, Cheryl Mayforth, Nina Hershey, Deb LaMora, Justin Brotherton, Nancy Brown

**Staff Present:** Lisann Babcock, Cathy Brodeur, Sarah Colligan, Melinda Gault, Claudia Whitmire

Claudia read a listing of issues that came up during the Policy Council meeting on May 11, 2021 that families are facing in Jefferson County: Mental health and substance abuse, lack of necessary job skills, lack of transportation, lack of available 'living wage' jobs, lack of parenting skills, lack of health/nutrition knowledge and lack of quality housing. The group was asked if additional topics should be added to the list and all agreed to discuss this issues on this list.

Claudia explained the Community Needs Assessment process and that the information gained will help us evaluate our programs and services to make sure the needs in our community are met.

The following discussion occurred:

## 2. Housing and Energy

- b. Are there enough housing options available to low-income families?
  - *The cost of rent is high for low-income households.*
  - *There may be plenty of homes/apartments to rent, but not enough within a price range that is affordable for low income households.*
  - *There are many subsidized options available, but often the struggle is the constant assessment of what the low income household maintains as their salary. The constant reassessment for many leads to dropping hours or being unavailable for work out of worry that a subsidized rent would possibly change, and potentially be out of the income range for an employee that relies on an unpredictable or seasonal schedule.*

- c. Is Rent/Mortgage affordable?
- *No, BAH (Fort Drum) has driven up the cost of rent in our area.*
  - *The cost of rent is not in line with wages in our County.*
  - *Subsidized housing options have increased for low income, but there are not enough.*
  - *Many rental properties have increased their rents over the years due to the military influx, and we still aren't seeing an adjustment to decrease those rents while there has been a substantial increase in available military housing.*
- d. Are homes in this area energy efficient?
- *No, condition of homes in our area impact families' ability to afford heat and live comfortably.*
  - *Not most if they are housing low income dwellers and/or renters*
- e. Are homes maintained well?
- *It depends on the neighborhood and the homeowner's ability to maintain.*
  - *The cost of materials to make improvements have gone up due to the pandemic.*
  - *Some contractors are conducting 'flips' and not all are completed well. Much depends of obtaining permits (or not) and abiding by code enforcement.*
  - *Not most if they are housing low income dwellers and/or renters*
- f. Do we have safe neighborhoods?
- *More and more communities are less safe. Children are not safe to be left alone (ride bikes, etc.), even in small towns.*
  - *There are more incidents of meth labs in residential areas. With this brings people buying and selling drugs and more crime.*
  - *There seems to be high risk with pedophiles in neighborhoods where there are families with young children.*
  - *Generally YES, and this answer comes from witnessing the tripartite panel of ESPRI input, where low income individuals had double the votes on areas of concern regarding impacting poverty. There has been a recent reinvigoration of the neighborhood watch program from some concerned Watertown citizens (mostly middle to upper class, well intended individuals) who fail to address how such a program avoids the racial bias so often seen in similar initiatives. There is a very big problem with the use of hard drugs, but in general most Watertown neighborhoods are safe. They would be safer with citizens who were vested in their neighbors, and home owners who really bought into their local communities rather than disengaged folks with the mentality that they were are just passing through, working into their perceived optimal home setting. For examples of the concept of variances of being vested in a neighborhood, I HIGHLY recommend reading "Evicted" by Matthew Desmond.*
4. Personal Finance and Employment
- a. Do families have basic budgeting knowledge?
- *No, Budgeting classes are needed.*
  - *Most families do not have a budget.*
  - *Families live paycheck to paycheck.*
  - *Most banks don't understand low-income budgeting*
  - *Fast food is the norm vs home cooked meals – resulting in less healthy diet as well.*

- *Many think they need it, but what many need is a compassionate system that can realistically help formulate a budget that will work for struggling households. Families living in poverty can stretch a dollar better than anyone I know. It's those working in poverty or those that have never been exposed to generational disparagement that believe that these families cannot budget, and this leads low income households to think they need to follow a strict and unrealistic plan. Financial guidance that can take the specific needs and circumstances of the low income community in mind would be far more beneficial than a standard budgeting workshop or banking course.*

b. Can families meet basic needs?

- *Concerned that families may be able to meet basic needs now, but that may change in October, if unemployment benefits and SNAP benefits change and the rent eviction moratorium is lifted.*
- *Enabling people has been a hindrance toward learning to meet basic needs.*
- *The community has been very generous during the past year to address the needs of less fortunate.*
- *Outside of this pandemic, no. But if wages are forced to increase and stay that way it will impact the low income community who are ready, willing, and able to work in a positive manner.*

c. What are barriers to employment?

- *Transportation and childcare – Entry level jobs cannot support the cost of childcare.*
- *Benefit cliff – when individuals try to go to work, sometimes they lose benefits creating a dilemma – should they continue to work with less benefits or work and lose benefits? Currently, there is a Bill in the Assembly allowing a 6 month wage elimination resulting in the ability to maintain benefits when individuals secure employment.*
- *The cost of health care is high. Insurance is costly and there is a penalty for individuals who do not have health insurance. If individuals are very low income, they may qualify for Medicare.*
- *Often education, especially with the newer and stricter standards for GED (along with being able to afford childcare or commit to the GED classes with a potential work schedule). Affordable, quality childcare as well as childcare during “off” hours, when many higher paying 3 shift jobs as well as retail jobs need workers.*

5. Mental Health and Substance Abuse

a. What are the barriers for individuals who are struggling with mental health/and/or substance abuse to seek assistance?

- *Individual have to want help!*
- *There is a cultural stigma toward coming forward with mental health and substance abuse issues.*
- *The pressure of low-income households increase mental health and substance abuse.*
- *Individuals will often self-medicate rather than seek professional assistance with mental health and substance abuse issues.*
- *There is a shortage of mental health providers in our area.*
- *When individuals are suffering from chronic pain, providers proscribe opioids freely, leading to addiction.*

- *Many individuals tend to self-medicate rather than seeking treatment or reach out to the emergency room which leads to temporary fixes.*
- *The basic knowledge that they have access to assistance. Many who are uninsured could readily get low or no cost insurance through NYS, and that includes mental health and substance abuse services. Another would currently be the severe shortage of providers, especially in this area for teens and children. Families need to address some crucial mental health services for this younger generation who did not have foundation to deal with the pandemic, so a shortage of providers for children could not be happening at a worse time.*

#### 4. Education/Childcare

##### b. Are there challenges for individuals seeking a GED (TSK)?

- *Lack of available child care*
- *Difficult to complete while working.*
- *Transportation to BOCES is a challenge – the bus system stops at Target and individuals have to walk from there, which is a particular challenge during winter months as well as having to walk on a congested road (Arsenal Street)*
- *Individuals have limited computer access*
- *Childcare, scheduling around work, risk of falling off the benefit cliff while trying to better themselves*

#### 5. Food and Nutrition

##### c. Do low-income have access to nutritious/affordable food?

- *No, Cost of quality produce is limiting as well as not always available in remote area.*
- *This issue is also not having previous exposure to different types of food. One Board member described her experience while participating in a CSA. She received produce she had never tried before and had no idea what to do with it. Fortunately, the program she was participating with was offered through Cornell Cooperative Extension and they offered classes and through exposure to new foods, she learned to enjoy these new foods.*
- *Families have a lack of knowledge about healthy food options. They also have limited internet in some areas, which makes it difficult to research information.*
- *WIC is a wonderful example of offering quality food items with an education component.*
- *Families could use education on how to buy in bulk, when on sale and how to stretch their food dollar in their household budget.*
- *Yes, quite a bit. There are seasonal farmers market checks for those who get SNAP and WIC that have to be used on fresh fruits and vegetables. And healthy food CAN be affordable if a family has access to the time and energy to prepare and store their nutritious food as well as the knowledge what affordable types of food will make bellies feel full longer. But it takes a great deal of exposure and healing some doubts. More volunteer led community gardens and programs similar to initiatives Cornell offers would be helpful in our schools and households.*

##### d. Do low-income households have to make the choice between buying food or other necessities (healthcare, transportation, rent, etc.)?

- *Yes, especially when it comes to buying medication.*
- *One board member describes a diaper program at the Rhode Center that has been well received.*
- *Often yes. For low income families the list of priorities often includes far more than income allows. And it leads to the mindset that “cheaper” foods will help families sustain, or worse-*

*that theft of groceries is available option. It also leads to an increase in ER visits, where patients can be seen regardless of ability to pay or insurance- knowing that the hospital will eventually write off the charges, not caring how their personal credit may be impacted whatsoever. Then there's the increase in transportation costs because a handful of cab rides throughout the week is more reasonable than a larger car payment (that would save the cost of those cab fares altogether). With rent it's a matter of the type of rental and relationship. If someone knows they can slide on rent, and for how long until they need to be escorted out they may be more willing to let it slide for groceries. But if not, they'll go hungry to keep a roof over their heads. Something that can be accomplished by upping their nicotine or caffeine levels, so as to stave off the hunger of forgoing meals.*

The group was thanked for their insight and discussion. This meeting concluded at 6:30 PM.

**Appendix III - References**

New York State Community Action Association

<https://nyscaa.engagementnetwork.org>

NYS Kids's Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse

<https://www.nyskwic.org>

NYS Department of Health

<https://webbi1.health.ny.gov>

North Country Health Compass: Indicators

[www.ncnyhealthcompass.org](http://www.ncnyhealthcompass.org)

Child Care Aware

[www.usa.childcareaware.org](http://www.usa.childcareaware.org)

NYS Department of Labor

[www.labor.ny.gov](http://www.labor.ny.gov)

NYS Department of Health

[www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)

Census Bureau

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

USDA

<https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/>

NYS Office of and Family Services

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/>

Head Start PIR, 2013-2021

**Appendix IV - New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA)  
Jefferson County and City of Watertown Reports**



**14.0%**  
**Jefferson County  
Poverty Rate**

County Population:  
**112,842**

*Population for whom poverty  
status is determined:*

Overall  
**106,273**

Population Under 18  
**26,600**

Population 25 & Over  
**69,192**

Population over 65  
**14,544**

**Living In Poverty**

Individuals  
**14.0% (14,897)**

Children (Under 18)  
**19.5% (5,185)**

Adults 25+  
**11.8% (8,183)**

Senior Citizens 65+  
**8.3% (1,207)**

**Jefferson County**


**Community Action Planning Council of  
Jefferson County, Inc.**

518 Davidson Street, Watertown, NY 13601  
315-782-4900  
[www.capjc.org](http://www.capjc.org)



**Education & Poverty**

Education Attainment for Adults 25+ (69,192)


	<b>Total Population</b>		<b>Living In Poverty</b>	
	No Degree	8.3%	No Degree	29.3%
	High School	34.7%	High School	15.5%
	Associate	34.2%	Associate	9.6%
	Bachelors +	22.8%	Bachelors +	3.1%

**Employment & Poverty**

Living Wage for 1 Adult, 1 Child	<b>\$30.8</b>
Hourly Wage for FMR, 2BR Apt	<b>\$21.13</b>
Median Income	<b>\$36,696</b>
Median Income w/ HS Diploma	<b>\$29,273</b>
Male Median Earnings	<b>\$37,796</b>
Female Median Earnings	<b>\$20,339</b>



**Health & Poverty**

	No Health Insurance	
	Employed	<b>6.6%</b>
	Unemployed	<b>14.7%</b>
	Free/Reduced Lunch Program	<b>58%</b>

**Gender & Poverty**

Male	<b>12.6% (6,745)</b>
Female	<b>15.5% (8,152)</b>

Of those families with  
Female Heads of Household  
and Children Present

**41.7%**  
Live In Poverty

**Race & Poverty**

White	<b>13.1% (12,315)</b>
African American	<b>20.8% (1,130)</b>
Hispanic/Latino	<b>21.8% (1,556)</b>

New York State Community Action Association - [www.nyscommunityaction.org](http://www.nyscommunityaction.org)



## City of Watertown

**Community Action Planning Council of  
Jefferson County, Inc.**

518 Davidson Street, Watertown, NY 13601

315-782-4900

[www.capcjc.org](http://www.capcjc.org)

**22.9%**

**City of  
Watertown  
Poverty Rate**

City Population:  
**25,622**

*Population for whom poverty  
status is determined:*

Overall  
**24,947**

Population Under 18  
**5,798**

Population 25 & Over  
**16,410**

Population over 65  
**3,064**

### Living In Poverty

Individuals  
**22.9% (5,709)**

Children (Under 18)  
**33.7% (1,956)**

Adults 25+  
**19.8% (3,251)**

Senior Citizens 65+  
**10.0% (307)**

### Education & Poverty

Education Attainment for Adults 25+ (16,410)



#### Total Population

No Degree	11.5%
High School	35.1%
Associate	32.4%
Bachelors +	21.0%

#### Living In Poverty

No Degree	42.9%
High School	22.3%
Associate	18.1%
Bachelors +	5.7%

### Employment & Poverty

Median Income	<b>\$31,023</b>
Median Income w/ HS Diploma	<b>\$21,208</b>
Male Median Earnings	<b>\$26,549</b>
Female Median Earnings	<b>\$17,629</b>



### Health & Poverty



No Health Insurance	
Employed	<b>7.9%</b>
Unemployed	<b>20.5%</b>

### Gender & Poverty

Male	<b>20.9% (2,615)</b>
Female	<b>25.0% (3,094)</b>

Of those families with  
Female Heads of Household  
and Children Present

**59.4%**  
**Live In Poverty**

### Race & Poverty

White	<b>21.6% (4,540)</b>
African American	<b>32.0% (672)</b>
Hispanic/Latino	<b>47.6% (921)</b>

New York State Community Action Association - [www.nyscommunityaction.org](http://www.nyscommunityaction.org)