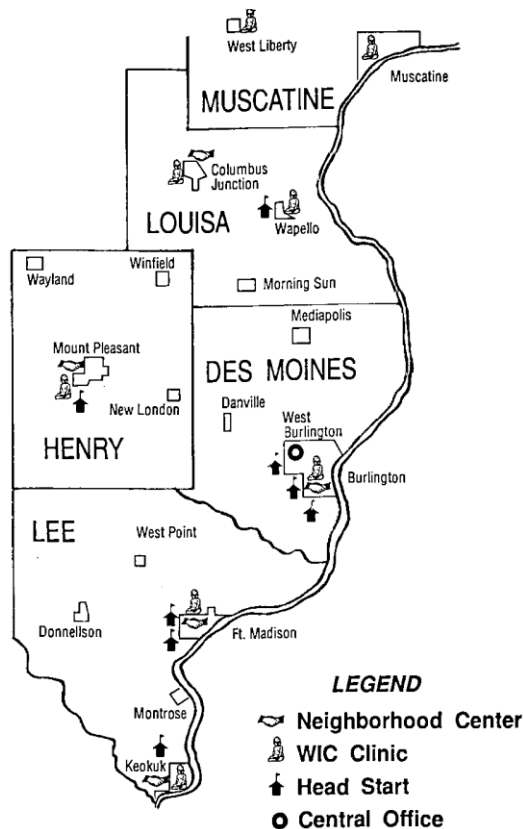


2022 Community Needs Assessment

Community
Action
OF SOUTHEAST IOWA



Board approved on June 21, 2022

Executive Director Sheri Wilson

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Contact Us:

Central Office:

2850 Mt Pleasant St, Suite 108, Burlington, IA 52601

319-753-0193 Community.Action@caofseia.org

Find out more about us on our website: <https://caofseia.org/>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CommunityActionofSoutheastIowa/>

Introduction

Our mission: Community Action of Southeast Iowa is dedicated to alleviating the conditions and causes of poverty by building partnerships and strengthening people through quality services. Our vision is for people in southeast Iowa to have the opportunity to reach their maximum potential. We have been in operation since 1964 in southeast Iowa providing support and meeting needs in our communities. Our agency covers the counties of Des Moines, Lee, Henry, and Louisa. We provide WIC services in these counties plus Muscatine County. For this report, we will focus on the first four counties as Muscatine is served by another Community Action Agency.

Overview and Purpose

Community Action of Southeast Iowa conducts a community needs assessment every three years in accordance with the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) standards. This assessment provides an in depth look at the needs of our community, our client's needs, evaluates causes of poverty, conditions of poverty, and assesses how we as an agency may address various issues. This forms the basis of planning as we follow the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) framework to identify needs, look at desired outcomes, develop services to reach those outcomes, implement strategies, and follow through with evaluation and reporting.

Summary and Key Findings

There are many people facing economic hardship across the nation, in Iowa, and in southeast Iowa. Children, minorities, and single parent households, are in poverty at a disproportionately high rate. The top identified community and individual needs in our area surround the topics of employment, housing, food, debt, brain health, childcare and crime. While there are various services in place to address these needs, there are many gaps and things, such as structures, systems, resources, and programs that could be improved.

Approach

Community Action of Southeast Iowa desires to have ongoing input regarding needs in our area. For this reason, we have systematic data collection occurring in at least one of our programs throughout any given year. We collect information from a variety of sources and utilize many in analysis. The planning director is primarily responsible for the community needs assessment; however, other managers, administration staff, program staff, and the board have a hand in it as well.

In completion of this report, many assessments were freshly analyzed as listed below. Census data was accessed and compared nationally and locally. Many different areas of our community had input relating to their needs, opinions, and views, as you will see throughout the report. Agency datasets may be available as requested.

Assessments, Reports and Data Used

Superscript references throughout this document reference data sets listed below.

1. 2019 Client Needs Survey, 619 respondents, of which 144 were from Des Moines County, 43 from Henry County, 384 from Lee County, and 37 from Louisa County. Surveys were distributed and collected from clients through all of our agency programs.
2. 2021 Client Satisfaction Report, 329 respondents mostly collected through our CSBG center clients.
3. 2017 Community/Stakeholders Needs Assessment, 276 survey responses, including 27 from community-based organizations, 14 private businesses, 34 educational institutions, 20 from local government, 12 health care providers, 16 faith-based organizations, 18 from other public sector organizations, and 4 unidentified.
4. 2020 Strategic Plan, this involved a community meeting with discussion of community needs. This included 32 people, 10 of which were staff, the rest were community members, business, social service agency providers, and interested parties. Strategic Planning sessions were also conducted with agency management staff and the governing board.
5. 2021 Coronavirus Follow Up Needs Assessment Southeast Iowa. 272 respondents, 101 low income respondents. Conducted online from April 26, 2021 through June 1, 2021.
6. FY 2022 Head Start Community Needs Assessment, a committee including staff, Policy Council members, board members, and community partners participated in online research, phone calls, emails, surveys, and discussion around community needs in each of our four counties.
7. Community Action Partnership Data Tool was utilized, which accesses the most recent American Community Survey and Census data as of May 2022.
8. Living Wage Calculator by Dr. Amy K. Glasmeier and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, <http://livingwage.mit.edu/states/19/locations>
9. Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) Iowa Wage Report <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/iowa-wage-report>
10. NIFCAP Database, Fiscal Year 2021 agency client data, unless another year is noted.
11. 2020 Family Survey Exit, Head Start and Early Head Start end of the year satisfaction data, 73 respondents.
12. IWD 2022 Southeast Iowa Region Laborshed Analysis, https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/sites/search.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/files/southeastiowa_execsummary2016.pdf
13. IWD 2017 Annual Profile Region #16, https://www.leecountyedg.com/clientuploads/laborshed/Laborshed_2017_IWD_Region_16_Annual_Profile.pdf
14. IWD Needs Assessment Region #16 released 2019. https://www.iowalmi.gov/sites/search.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/files/documents/2018/iwd_region_16_wna_2019.pdf
15. 2019 Feeding America Map the Meal Gap Food Insecurity in Iowa. This measures the lack of access to enough nutritionally adequate food for household members. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/>
16. Lee County Child Maltreatment Needs Assessment. Funded by Resilient Communities Demonstration Grant from Prevent Child Abuse Iowa.
17. Covid Recovery Iowa Statistics 05/22/2020-03/01/2022
18. 2021 Iowa Youth Survey Special Topics Report: Mental Health Findings
19. Great River Hospital 2021 Des Moines County Community Health Needs Assessment
20. Common Good Iowa Cost of Living in Iowa 2022. <https://www.commongoodiowa.org/data/cost-of-living-in-iowa>
21. Iowa DHS Social Determinates of Health. Healthy People 2020's Five Key Areas of SDH. https://dhs.iowa.gov/dashboard_SDOH
22. Kids Count Data Center Annie E Casey Foundation <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#IA/2/0/char/0>

23. National Low Income Housing Coalition. The Gap. <https://nlihc.org/gap> <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/iowa>
24. National Alliance on Mental Illness, NAMI. February 2021. <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/StateFactSheets/IowaStateFactSheet.pdf>
25. FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program. Iowa. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/table-6/table-6-state-cuts/iowa.xls>
26. Iowa Department of Public Safety Uniform Crime Reporting System. <https://icrime.dps.state.ia.us/CrimeInIowa>

Population

The following chart displays the area population, those in poverty (100% of the federal poverty level, FPL), and those served by our agency. Agency programs and services focus on persons who have low incomes.

Report Area	Total Population, 2020 Census	All Ages # of Persons in Poverty	All Ages Poverty Rate	Population Served by the Agency in FY 2021	% of Population served by the Agency
Report Location	103,784	11,579	11.69%	13,363	12.87%
Des Moines County, IA	40,325	4,953	13%	5,995	14.87%
Henry County, IA	20,145	1,948	10.8%	1,947	9.7%
Lee County, IA	35,862	3,689	11.5%	4,570	12.74%
Louisa County, IA	11,387	989	9.1%	1,008	8.85%
Iowa	3,046,357	313,752	10.2%	13,363	0.44%
United States	312,471,161	38,371,394	11.9%	-	-
US Census Bureau, Decennial Census. 2020 & NIFCAP FY2021 Data					

Data Specific to Poverty

The standard usage of poverty in this document is discussed in relation to 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Different programs and services through our agency serve those up to 200% FPL, Head Start income limits are set at 100% with a few exceptions, WIC has a limit of 185%, LIHEAP 175%, and Weatherization 200%. During the COVID-19 pandemic some eligibility guidelines have been extended to 200% FPL. In general our agency looks at a client's previous 30 day income history, or in some cases may use the prior year's tax return to qualify them for services.

2022 Annual Federal Poverty Guidelines

All states (except Alaska and Hawaii)

Household Size	100% of Poverty	125% of Poverty	175% of Poverty	185% of Poverty	200% of Poverty
	Head Start & Early Head Start	CSBG	Energy Assistance	WIC	Weatherization, COVID-19
1	\$13,590	\$16,988	\$23,783	\$25,142	\$27,180
2	\$18,310	\$22,888	\$32,043	\$33,874	\$36,620
3	\$23,030	\$28,788	\$40,303	\$42,606	\$46,060
4	\$27,750	\$34,688	\$48,563	\$51,338	\$55,500
5	\$32,470	\$40,588	\$56,823	\$60,070	\$64,940
6	\$37,190	\$46,488	\$65,083	\$68,802	\$74,380
7	\$41,910	\$52,388	\$73,343	\$77,534	\$83,820
8	\$46,630	\$58,288	\$81,603	\$86,266	\$93,260
+ Additional	\$4,720				

SOURCE: Federal Register Notice, January 12, 2022

Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines

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

The total poverty rate in southeast Iowa is 11.69% compared to the Iowa rate of 10.2%. Poverty in southeast Iowa has decreased by 3.29% from 2010-2020 while the national average of decrease has been 3.4%⁷. It is good to remember these are pre-pandemic numbers.

Population in Poverty by Gender

A greater percentage of females are in poverty in southeast Iowa than the state and national average. Females in Des Moines and Lee Counties are particularly worse off⁷.

Report Area	Male	Female	Male, Percent	Female, Percent
Report Location	5,827	8,137	11.75%	15.87%
Des Moines County, IA	2,523	3,691	13.53%	18.54%
Henry County, IA	874	1,098	9.76%	11.61%
Lee County, IA	1,963	2,695	12.05%	16.28%
Louisa County, IA	467	653	8.23%	12.18%
Iowa	154,570	193,552	10.26%	12.62%
United States	18,909,451	23,601,392	12.19%	14.61%

Twenty-five percent of our client households in fiscal year 2021 were single parents; 22.6% of those are single parent female-headed households, only 2.7% were headed by males¹⁰.

Population in Poverty by Age

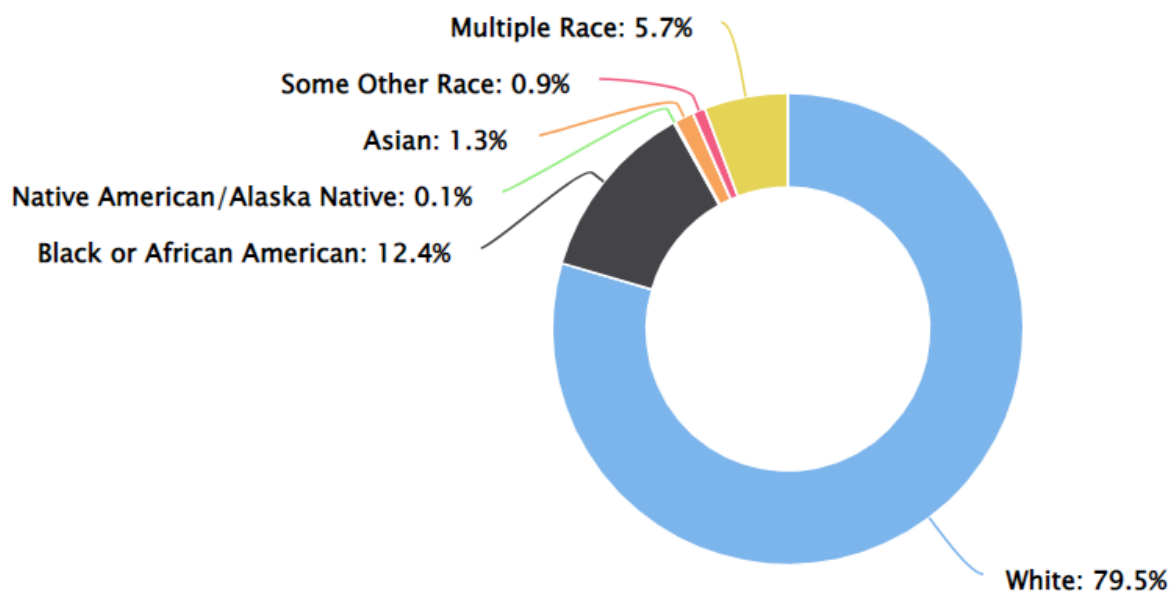
The Iowa average of children 0-17 who lived in poverty based on the 2015-2019 American Community Survey was 13.8%. The rate in southeast Iowa is considerably higher at 21%. For those who are ages 0-4 it is 27%, 5-17 it is 18.9%, while the Iowa average is 16% and 13% respectively. Persons over age 65 are in poverty at a rate of 7.9% in southeast Iowa compared to 7.1% in Iowa. Lee County has the highest percentage of seniors in poverty at 8.4% while Louisa has the lowest at 6.9%. Those over age 60 made up 15.5% of our clients and 37% were under 18 years old¹⁰.

Population in Poverty by Race

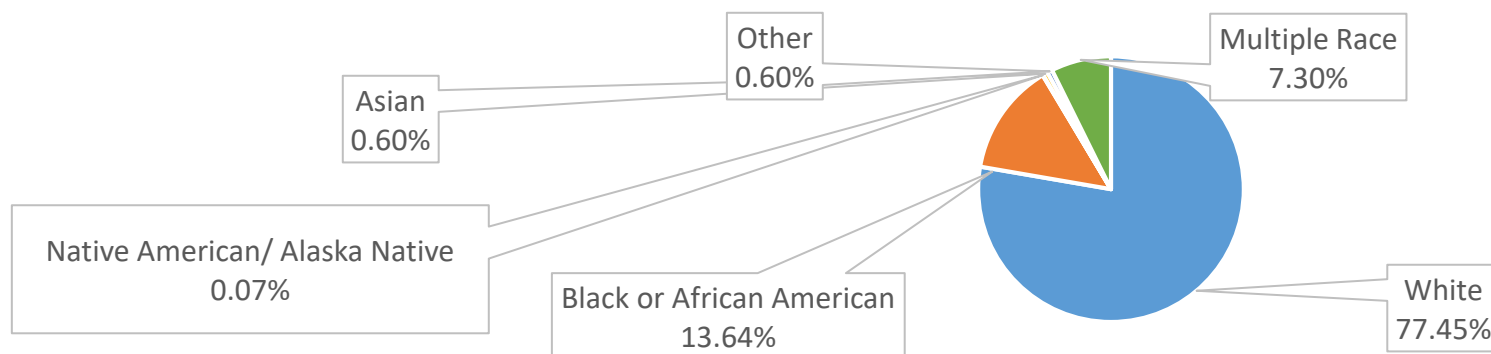
While non-Hispanic whites make up 91.59% of the population, they have the smallest percentage of their population in poverty. Non-Hispanic whites make up the largest number of persons in poverty in our area with 11,102 in poverty at a rate of 11.97%. Black or African Americans are in poverty at 53.96% representing 1,738 individuals.

Population in Poverty by Race, Total

Report Location



Of our clients in fiscal year 2021, 22.5% were racial minorities: 13.64% were Black or African American, 7.3% were multi-race, and 6.5% identified as Hispanic/Latino. The pie chart below reflects our agency clients in fiscal year 2021¹⁰. This can be compared to the population in the pie chart above.



Population in Poverty by Ethnicity

The graph below shows the number and percentages of those who identify as Hispanic/Latino or non-Hispanic/Latino who are living in poverty. In southeastern Iowa the percentage is very close to the state and national average⁷. In fiscal year 2021 6.3% of our agency clients identified as Hispanic/Latino. Clients in Louisa County identified as Hispanic/Latino at 24.3%, which is much higher than our clients in our other counties.

Report Area	Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Hispanic or Latino, Percent	Not Hispanic or Latino, Percent
Report Location	965	12,999	18.98%	13.57%
Des Moines County, IA	410	5,804	33.41%	15.55%
Henry County, IA	235	1,737	26.55%	9.91%
Lee County, IA	121	4,537	9.95%	14.34%
Louisa County, IA	199	921	11.33%	9.92%
Iowa	37,928	310,194	20.76%	10.86%
United States	11,256,244	31,254,599	19.64%	12.05%

Food Needs Data

Feeding America 2017 estimates 12.51% of the population in southeast Iowa is food insecure. This is defined as the social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food. This is highest in Lee County at 13.5% and lowest in Louisa County at 8.6%. Among children the rate of food insecurity is higher at 18.92%. It is estimated that 36% of the food insecure population is ineligible for public assistance such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), WIC, and school meals¹⁵.

The US Department of Agriculture 2021 estimates 28.17% (representing 9,889 persons) of the low-income population in southeast Iowa have low food access. This is defined as living more than half a mile from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store⁷.

Of school age children in southeast Iowa, as of the 2020-2021 school year, 48.83% were eligible for free or reduced price lunch (under 185% FPL) compared to the national average of 42.16%⁷.

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), 6,349 households (or 14.7%) received SNAP payments during 2019 in southeast Iowa. During this same period there were 2,375 households with income levels below the poverty level that were not receiving SNAP payments⁷.

Our agency served 12.76% of the population in southeast Iowa in fiscal year 2021. We provided 3,159 food boxes to 2,952 individuals, an average of 117.4 households served per month¹⁰. With many pandemic benefits ending, in the first 7 months of fiscal year 2022 we have served an average of 173.4 households per month; an average increase of 56 households per month. In our 2021 Coronavirus Follow Up Needs Assessment 16% of the low income noted getting food was a great challenge currently facing their household. This compared with only 2% who were above 200% FPL identifying the same challenge⁵. Those of low income face significant food needs.



Community Needs

Our larger community of southeast Iowa has similar needs, though the further down we go to the local town level they may vary. Top identified community needs relate to crime, housing, brain health, childcare, and employment. These were identified in the 2017 Stakeholder Assessment taken by 276 people. In the 2020 Strategic Plan community meeting these needs were also identified as top concerns at the community level⁴.

Crime

People need to feel safe in their community. Crime causes people to not feel safe. Crime is prevalent in our community. The below table lists crime and population in the four largest towns in our area according to the 2016 FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program²⁵.

City	Population	Violent crime	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated assault	Property crime	Burglary	Larceny-theft	Motor vehicle theft
Burlington	25,376	207	14	31	159	1,026	247	713	66
Keokuk	10,577	76	2	5	68	536	153	336	47
Fort Madison	10,654	53	4	7	41	358	25	306	27
Mount Pleasant	8,389	12	1	0	11	Insufficient numbers		128	18

The following table shows crime rates in Iowa by the Iowa Department of Public Safety by county between 2020 and 2021 and their rate of change. Crime has decreased in all but Lee County which has seen a notable increase between 2020 and 2021²⁶.

Crime Rate per 100,000 Population			
	2020	2021	Change
Des Moines	7,469.5	7,072	-5.32
Henry	3,038.8	2,550.8	-16.06
Lee	4,656.4	5,358.2	+15.07
Louisa	2,094.5	1,386.8	-33.79

In 2020 in Iowa 13 of 99 county's crime rates were below 1,000 per 100,000 people. Nineteen counties were above 4,000²⁶. As seen in the chart above, two of our four counties are in the top fifth of Iowa counties for high crime rates.

Eighty-two percent of respondents to the 2017 Stakeholder survey believe non-violent crime is an issue in their community, 50% also believe violent crime is an issue. The prevalence of substance use and abuse may factor into this as well. Through Community Engagement Surveys, 32.5% of respondents highlighted Crime/Violence as a top concern for Lee County. Lee County has an annual violent crimes rate of 485 per 100,000 population. This is 44% higher than the state of Iowa. Violent crimes include murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (Iowa Dept. of Public Safety, 2021)¹⁶. From the Iowa Youth Survey, perpetuation of violence and aggression is occurring at higher rates in Lee County than the rest of the state. Additionally, less students feel safe at school and in their community compared to all Iowa students¹⁶. 60.52% of responses to the Great River Hospital 2021 Des Moines County Community Health Needs Assessment believe violent crime is one of the top four un-healthy behaviors in our community (of 15 choices)¹⁹.

Housing

Our community needs safe and affordable homes.

In the 2017 Stakeholder Survey, 58% of respondents do not believe there are enough safe and affordable homes for those of low income and 75% believe neglected and abandon housing is a problem. Homelessness is also an issue as 59% respondents believe it is and 73% believe there are not enough shelter beds³. Iowa DHS Social Determinates of Health have identified Neighborhood and Build Environment as a key area of focus, recognizing the need for safe and affordable housing in Iowa²¹. The National Low Income Housing Coalition reports that in Iowa 67% of extremely low income renters have a severe cost burden (are paying more than 50% of their income towards housing)²³. In Lee County, 17.5% of owner occupied and 40.6% of renter occupied homes have a cost burden of 30% or more of household income¹⁶. In the Des Moines County Community Health Needs Assessment only 11% of respondents felt affordable housing was something our community does well¹⁹. In our 2020 Strategic planning community meeting housing was listed as a top need for our community⁴.



A primary reason people lose their residence is because of lack of affordability. Our community needs safe and affordable homes.

Brain Health/Mental Health

Our community needs to have adequate resources to support the brain health of its residents and reduce negative stigma around brain health.

Of respondents to the Great River Hospital 2021 Des Moines County Community Health Needs Assessment, 39.5% believe Mental Health is the number one health problem in Des Moines County¹⁹. In our 2020 strategic planning community meeting mental health was identified as the second largest need in our community⁴. In the 2017 Stakeholder Survey 74% believe there are not enough mental health services for those of low income and 43% believe there are not enough counselors that accept Medicaid in our area³. With the pandemic Project Recovery Iowa has noted an increase in mental health conditions and people coping in unhealthy ways¹⁷. The 2021 Iowa Youth Survey notes that between 27% and 36% of students, depending on the grade, reported they had felt “so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row” that they stopped doing some usual activities. The percentage was highest for 11th graders at 36%, followed by 29% for 8th graders, and 27% for 6th graders. Eleventh grade students also reported the highest rates of suicidal ideation where almost one in four (24%) indicated they had thought about killing themselves in the past twelve months compared to 21% for participating 8th graders and 17% for participating 6th graders¹⁸. According to the Iowa Department of Public Health there are 8 average annual deaths due to suicide among the total population of Lee County. The age adjusted suicide death rate of 22.6 per every 100,000 people is 45.7% greater than the state’s report of 14.2, and has been increasing at a faster rate compared to the state rate between 2012 and 2018¹⁶. Mental Health was identified by 49% of Community Engagement Survey respondents as a top concern for Lee County¹⁶.

Childcare

Our community needs safe, affordable, convenient childcare to meet the needs of area workers.

The Iowa Child Care Resource and Referral 2020 Lee County report, states that 75% of families have all parents working and have children under the age of 6 (Iowa Child Care, 2020a). Additionally, almost 50% of Parent/Caregiver Survey respondents believe access to affordable, quality child care would make them a better parent. Child care is key to developing economic stability for families and communities. Iowa has seen a 33% decrease in total number of child care programs listed with Childcare Resource and Referral from 2015-2020¹⁶.

The 2022 Head Start Community Assessment recommends to continue Head Start services and transition some 3-5 year old classrooms to 0-3 Early Head Start childcare rooms. State preschool programs have picked up some of the older children while there is still a great need for young child care⁶. In the 2017 Stakeholder Survey 64% of respondents believe there is not enough childcare for those who work nights and weekends and 48% believe there are not enough childcare facilities³. In the 2020 Strategic Plan Community Meeting childcare was the fourth identified need in our area⁴. In Iowa, more than half of parents reported missing work due to childcare issues, and absences and employee turnover cost Iowa employers \$781 million per year (U.S. Chamber, 2020).

Employment

Our community needs living wage employment opportunities to provide economic stability for workers.

As of March 2022 the unemployment rate in southeast Iowa was 4.3% compared to the Iowa average of 3.3%⁷. The median household income for our area is \$60,609⁷. This is just above 200% of the federal poverty level for a family of 4 at \$55,500. Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) states the average annual wage for our area was \$41,727 in 2017¹³. A household of three making the average annual wage in our area would continue to struggle financially as this is below 200% FPL. Economic stability often comes because of good stable employment. DHS's social determinates of health have identified economic stability as one of their key areas of focus.

In the 2017 Stakeholder Survey 58% believe underemployment is an issue in our community³. With pre-pandemic numbers, Common Good Iowa states one in seven working households can't meet a basic needs budget and 45.4% of single parents can not. They state a living wage ranges from \$10.93 for a young working couple with no children to \$24.13 for a single parent with two children²⁰. That is just to meet their most basic needs. Glasmeier with the Living Wage Calculator estimates a living wage for a single parent with two children in Des Moines County to be \$23.58 and a living wage for a single adult to be \$16.10⁸.

IWD in 2016 reports an average weekly wage across all industries of \$802 (\$20.05 if 40 hours per week) for southeast Iowa¹³. Among high demand occupations there are low entry level wages; 24 of 30 job posting categories had entry level wages below \$15 per hour in southeast Iowa¹⁴.

For economic stability, employees need more than just a high hourly wage. Workers get sick or have to care for relatives and need sick leave, they need time to rejuvenate and refresh with vacation time and other leave benefits. They need the finances or the employer provided health insurance to avoid a health complication sending them into poverty. Workers need robust benefits through employers, including but not limited to a living hourly wage. Our community needs more of these employment opportunities.

Client Needs

Each individual in poverty experiences a unique array of needs. There are however, common conditions of poverty. Common top areas of need identified in southeast Iowa include employment, getting food, housing, brain health, and debt.

Employment

Workers of low income need living wage employment to have economic stability.

Of respondents to our 2019 Client Needs Survey, 18% said they had employment needs, and of them 80% said they had needs relating to finding a job or a better job¹. In our 2021 Client Satisfaction Report employment was most frequently listed as a household's greatest need with 21.59% choosing this response². In our 2021 Coronavirus Follow Up Needs Assessment conducted in May of 2021, 19% listed employment as a great need for their household⁵. Of our clients in fiscal year 2021, 29% (2,283) who were over 18 and not retired were working and still in need of our services¹⁰. They are unable to meet their basic needs without our supports. Workers need higher living wages to provide economic stability for their household.

Getting Food

Those of low-income need nutritious, appropriate, and adequate amounts of food.

Of respondents to our 2019 Client Needs Survey 58% were receiving SNAP benefits, however 22% still listed their household as having unmet food needs. Sixty-two percent said they need help with having enough food at home and 49% said they could use help with getting food from pantries, meal sites, or food shelves.

In our 2021 Client Satisfaction Report 18.41% of respondents listed getting food as a great challenge for their household, this was second only to employment². In our 2021 Coronavirus Follow Up Needs Assessment 16% of respondents listed getting food as a great challenge for their household. This compares to only 2% of those who are not below 200% FPL in the same time period saying this was a great challenge⁵. As the pandemic has waned, increased SNAP benefits have dropped off as of spring of 2022. Inflation and food costs have risen. Our agency has seen an increase in usage of our food pantries so far in 2022¹⁰. People continue to need food to meet their body's nutritional requirements.



Housing

Those of low income need safe and affordable housing.

In our 2021 Client Satisfaction Report housing was the third greatest need households self-identified². In our 2021 Coronavirus Follow Up Needs Assessment households listed their ability to pay their rent/mortgage as the fourth most frequent response, only below mental health, ability to pay utilities and debt⁵. In our 2019 Client Needs Survey 27.72% of respondents stated they had unmet housing needs¹. Our centers routinely get phone calls about people needing help for rent assistance. In fiscal year 2021 we completed housing help prescreens with 221 households who were evicted or at risk of eviction. Our agency has limited amounts of funding for rental assistance, however over the past several years we have helped around 150 households per year. With extra COVID funding to help with housing in January 2022 we assisted 53 households with \$69,663 in rent assistance¹⁰. In one month this was over 1/3 of what we normally are able to help with in one full year. We believe this is a more accurate assessment of the need that exists in southeast Iowa on an ongoing basis. In an average year we just do not have the ongoing funds to meet the housing needs of those of low-income.

Brain Health/Mental Health

People need to address brain health. This includes a need for individuals to have access to care, be willing to get care, and be supported to continue that brain healthcare.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness states that one in five US adults experience mental illness each year, and one in 20 US adults experience serious mental illness each year. More than half of people with a mental health condition in the US did not receive any treatment in the last year. Of the 154,000 adults in Iowa who did not receive needed mental health care, 29.3% did not receive treatment because of cost. 1,821,280 people in Iowa live in a community that does not have enough mental health professionals²⁴. Lee County adults report an average of 3.8 mental health days monthly and 11% report frequent mental distress. Access to mental health providers is limited with 1 for every 1,120 residents¹⁶.



In our 2021 Coronavirus Follow Up Needs Assessment mental health needs were three of the top five greatest challenges facing households regardless of whether respondents were low income or not⁵. In the Lee County Child Maltreatment Needs Assessment, 46.9% of respondents to the Parent/Caregiver Survey reported COVID-19 had worsened mental health in their household¹⁶.

In our 2019 Client Needs Survey 16% of respondents said they had unmet health needs, and of those, 51% said they had needs dealing with stress, depression or anxiety¹. In our 2021 Client Satisfaction Report mental health was ranked sixth as a great need facing respondent's households².

Debt

Those of low income need to resolve debt that may affect their daily life.

In our 2021 Client Satisfaction Report debt was the fifth most self-identified need facing households². The 2021 Coronavirus Follow Up Needs Assessment revealed debt was the third highest self-identified need. Among those of low income 35% identified debt to be a great challenge facing their household while only 15% of those above 200% FPL identified this as a great challenge⁵. In our 2019 Client Needs Survey 20.81% said they have financial management needs and of those, 40.71% said they could use help solving problems with a utility company, 23.89% said they could use help solving problems with a credit card or loan company, and 60.18% said they could use help budgeting and managing money¹. Debt is impacting the lives of those of low income.



Common Good Iowa estimates that one in seven working Iowans can not meet a basic needs budget²⁰. When households are unable to meet their basic needs they may turn to friends, loans, payday or predatory loans, or credit cards to cover basic necessities of life such as housing, utilities, food, soap, and toilet paper. This accumulation of debt plus interest can be especially difficult for those living on the edge, or in poverty to climb out of this economic hole of debt.

Our agency sees much debt among the low income as it relates to debt to utility companies. When an individual owes to a utility company, after a certain amount of time or a certain amount of accumulated debt,

the household will get a disconnect notice. In April of 2022 our agency helped 243 households with disconnect notices stay connected by paying \$222,478.51 in client's debt to their utility company¹⁰. The ability to pay utilities, and how that factors into debt for those of low income, was also revealed in our 2021 Coronavirus Follow Up Needs Assessment: 35% of those of low income report their ability to pay utilities as a great challenge for their household (the same who list debt as a great challenge) compared with only 3% of those above 200% FPL, who listed their ability to pay utilities as a great need⁵. Utility debt when accumulated to the point of disconnection affects the daily life of those of low income. At the point of disconnection, they may no longer have water, heat, or electricity in their home, which if a renter, may also impact their housing status.

Those of low income need to resolve debt that may affect their daily life.

Causes of Poverty

Causes of poverty are generally things that put people in poverty or are reasons they still struggle with economic hardship. Causes of poverty may be barriers to success or where there are identified structural or community gaps. The assumption is that if this cause was fixed or removed people would no longer be in poverty.

Causes of poverty can be looked at from a community level or from an individual level. When looking at a community we can see how the community needs listed above, relating to crime, housing, brain health, childcare, and employment, cause people to experience economic hardship. In a community that has high crime rates, low housing stability, low treatment of brain health, minimal childcare available, and few good employment opportunities there will be many struggling people regardless of their individual characteristics or strengths.

Other common identified causes of poverty include: lack of education/training, lack of opportunity, lack of transportation, poor health or healthcare, abuse/domestic violence/trauma, discrimination, availability or use of illegal substances/drugs, lack of informal supports, lack of formal supports, and low awareness of supports/resources.

Conditions of Poverty

Conditions of poverty are the affects of being low income; what is experienced as a life situation. We usually talk about them as they affect an individual or a family. Because people are experiencing economic hardship, they experience conditions, affects, or life situations due to being in poverty.

People experiencing economic hardship often have common needs due to their situation in poverty. These are described above and often relate to needing a living wage, needing help obtaining adequate food, needing safe and affordable housing, needing to address brain health, and needing to resolve debt.

Other common identified needs of those experiencing economic hardship include but are not limited to needs surrounding: poor physical health, hopelessness, lack of resources to meet basic needs, lack of education/training, lack of opportunity, lack of transportation, lack of childcare, lack of supports, illegal substance use, budgeting, homelessness, domestic violence, and trauma.

Programs and Services at Community Action of Southeast Iowa

Our agency board has approved the following programs and services as addressing area needs and fitting with our agency mission. Programs may vary by center or location, have income guidelines, or limited funding available. For more information regarding any of our programs you can explore our website <https://caofseia.org/> or call our central office 319-753-0193.

- * Budget Counseling
- * Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- * Children's Bed Program
- * Clothing Assistance
- * Disaster Assistance
- * Early Head Start
- * Emergency Rent and Utilities
- * Employment Counseling
- * Energy Crisis Assistance (Project Share)
- * Family Development and Self Sufficiency Program (FaDSS)
- * Food Pantry
- * Furnace Repair and Replacement
- * General Information and Referral
- * Head Start
- * Homeless Assistance
- * Housing Assistance
- * Hygiene Assistance
- * Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- * Preschool Scholarships
- * Rent Reimbursement Form Assistance
- * Senior Home Repair
- * Transportation Assistance
- * Water Assistance
- * Weatherization
- * (WIC) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

Resources

There are many resources available in our community. There are agencies that have programs and services to address many of the needs listed herein. A starting place for familiarizing yourself with these resources and finding help in your area of need can be done by visiting our website resource page. Here you will find Resource Guides listed for each of our counties, food resources, housing help, and links to assistance for adults, older adults, veterans, money resources, children/teen information, brain health, substance use, and other topics. This information can be accessed anytime here: <https://caofseia.org/resources/> or by calling our Central Office Monday to Friday from 8:30am – 4:30pm to ask for verbal or paper resources: 319-753-0193.

Customer Satisfaction

Overall clients are very satisfied with Community Action of Southeast Iowa.

Survey Question	2021 Client Satisfaction	2019 Client Needs Survey	2020 HS Family Exit Survey
I had a positive experience when receiving services	90.8%	97.57%	97.26%
I got the information and services I needed	90%	87.16%	98.63% (Helped my family & met my family's needs)

Qualitative responses on our client satisfaction surveys remind us that people are more than data and a service provided, each number is a human life that has been impacted. Stories of hope flood out of surveys. Thankfulness, appreciation and impact are revealed as clients share in their own words what Community

Action has meant to their life. Below are a few client responses to the question: “How has Community Action made a difference in your life?” from the 2021 FY Client Satisfaction Survey:

- Gave me hope to keep moving on –Response 11.10
- Without Community Action I wouldn't been able to make it through the winter –Response 11.32
- Everyone has been a joy to communicate with and has made a difference in making life easier. – Response 11.46
- They're always there and made it where I am in a better place overall, I don't know what I would've done without you guys, truly. –Response 11.52
- The extra help goes a long way on a fixed income. 11.60
- Wouldn't have electricity and food without Community Action –Response 11.90
- Got help when needed it, particularly energy assistance –Response 11.93
- Helped in times of need –Response 11.106
- If not for Community Action, I would be on the streets –Response 11.135
- You have helped me with rent and utilities and I am super grateful. –Response 11.151
- The security of being able to get food and heating assistance has made a world of difference in helping me stay where I am at. –Response 11.182
- If it wasn't for them idk what I would have done sometime because with the cost of living so high and some people can't get a job due to not having a babysitter. They are always there to help out and we need this to continue in our community. The staff has always been so nice to me and my family – Response 11.206
- Always a positive experience. Gave me information to other things when they didn't have it. Very helpful and kind. –Response 11.222
- They have helped me out with heating assistance, food and extra money when I needed it the most. They are awesome. –Response 11.230
- Helped me through a lot hard times and been there when I really need it. I also know that I can call out to Community Action and they will help me or direct me where to go when I need help. Thanks – Response 11.235
- They have helped us not to be evicted from our home. They helped us with the heating. So thankful couldn't do it without their help. –Response 11.239
- Keeping me from being put on the streets –Response 11.249
- They help so much with heating. And everyone at the office is kind to me. –Response 11.255
- This is the first time that I had to use it to get help and so I am grateful for the assistance. –Response 11.287
- It's helped with bills when we were facing shut off, has helped with food when we were out. –Response 11.296
- We didn't go hungry. Kept lights on in winter months. – Response 11.305



Summary

Our community has needs and people within our community have needs. Structural changes are needed to support our communities. Informal and formal supports are needed to assist those who are struggling. Changes can be made with one individual at a time, one program or agency at a time, one community at a time, or one nation at a time with federal policy changes. There is plenty of room for improvement in structures, communities, and with individuals. Supports exist in southeast Iowa to help people and change lives; however there is still poverty in our communities and among our neighbors. Where we see conditions and causes of poverty it is important we step up and do what we can to continue the war on poverty in our time and in our community.