

## Community Needs Assessment Executive Summary

In 2025, Wright County Community Action conducted a comprehensive community needs assessment to identify the local causes and conditions that contribute to poverty in the area. WCCA leverages the findings to set the direction of our work. This executive summary highlights the top needs identified and some of the key data elements that informed the decisions.

Several data sources were used to inform the statements made in this summary. A supplemental data document is available on our website to review the data sources. In summary, data was collected from a public survey, agency data, the Census Bureau, community input opportunities, and many other sources.

It is also important to consider the needs identified by other key stakeholders in the community. One source that was important in our poverty assessment was the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which was developed by the Wright County Community Health Collaborative (WCCHC). WCCHC is comprised of representatives from local hospitals, the Wright County Public Health Department, and WCCA. CHIP identifies priority areas that will improve the community's health. You can find additional information on WCCHC's approach and decision-making by reviewing the linked information on WCCA's webpage. The three priorities identified by this collaborative effort are as follows:

- Access to Care
- Economic Stability
- Social Connectedness

The Economic Stability priority set by the collaborative is an extensive category that specifically addresses affordable housing and health-related social needs (HRSN). HRSN are the immediate conditions that a specific person may face. Examples include unstable housing, food insecurity, lack of transportation, and financial instability. Each of these impacts an individual's ability to maintain health and well-being. WCCA's 2025-2027 Community Needs Assessment is an essential companion in addressing HRSN.

### Community Demographics

The total population of Wright County is 148,003, which is a 6% increase from the 2022 Community Needs Assessment. About 40% of the population lives in a rural setting. The eastern side of the county tends to be a more urban setting due to its proximity to the Twin Cities metro. The median household income is now \$106,000. The cost of living for an average household of three is \$82,601, which equates to about 310% of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG).

#### Poverty Demographics

The poverty rate in Wright County is 4.95%, indicating that approximately 7,128 individuals are living below the federal poverty guidelines (FPG). In 2025, the FPG for the average household of three, is an income of \$26,650 per year or less. If living alone, an annual income of \$7,825 or less. Of this number, 466 are children under the age of five, 1,680 are between the ages of five and seventeen, and 1,459 are senior citizens.

It's important to note that the communities in the eastern half of the county have a much lower rate (4.8%) when compared to the western half of the county (7.1%). Montrose, one of the county's smaller cities,

has a poverty rate of 12.56%. The prosperity and higher population of the eastern cities outshine the demographic needs of our rural communities, creating significant disparities. Because many federal and state programs examine the statistics of the entire county, the already underserved rural populations often do not receive the necessary resources, due to the county's apparent thriving status.

Additionally, as the cost of living is above 300% FPG, thousands of individuals cannot meet the income required to live a thriving life in our community. Data available only properly reports the number of individuals living below 185% FPG; this number is a staggering 17,901 individuals (or about 12%).

## Top Needs Identified

- 1) Housing
  - a. Our communities need more affordable housing options.
  - b. Our communities need to support those who are homeless.
- 2) Child Care
  - a. Individuals and families need help affording childcare costs.
  - b. Our community needs more childcare openings for children under the age of 3.
- 3) Transportation
  - a. Individuals and families, especially those with disabilities, need access to reliable transportation.
  - b. Our communities need public transportation options with non-traditional operating hours.

### 1) Housing

#### Need Statements

- a. Our communities need more affordable housing options.
- b. Our communities need to support those who are homeless

#### According to the Data

- Median housing value is \$332,000
- To purchase a home, the household income must be greater than \$76,000
- To afford a 2-bed rental, the household income must be more than \$53,000
- 20% of Wright County households (both renters and owners) are living in “cost-burdened households”, which means that more than 30% of their income is spent on housing costs. Of those, nearly half are “severely burdened (more than 50% of their income).
- Wright County does not have an emergency shelter for those experiencing homelessness.
- Pre-foreclosure notices are the highest they have been in the last decade.

#### According to the Community

We asked survey respondents to express in their own words what needs they see in our community.

- “We need affordable housing for our kids when they graduate from college and want to live here.”
- “We need more affordable rental properties and more rental options that accept people who aren't perfect.”
- We need Housing for the elderly. Much of our elderly built this community, and when they reach a certain age, they have to sell their home and move away.

### 2) Childcare

### **Need Statements**

- a. Individuals and families need help affording childcare costs.
- b. Our community needs more childcare openings for children under the age of 3.

### **According to the Data**

- Wright County is home to 20,214 families with children.
- Within these families, there are nearly 10,000 children under the age of 5.
- Total childcare capacity in Wright County is 5,768.
- The average cost of childcare for one child is \$954 per month.

### **According to the Community**

Survey respondents with children under 10 say that it's hard to

- Find care they can afford (83%)
- Find childcare for children under three (76%)
- Find care during "no school days" (74%)
- Find care during the hours they need (64%)

## **3) Transportation**

### **Need Statements**

- a. Individuals and families, especially those with disabilities, need access to reliable transportation.
- b. Our communities need public transportation options with non-traditional operating hours.

### **According to the Data**

- 1,480 households do not have a motor vehicle
- 0.4% of Wright County residents leverage public transportation as a method to get to work.
- 12,614 residents have a disability

### **According to the Community**

When we asked our respondents who have one or more family members with a disability, how our community can better accommodate their specific needs, transportation was the most mentioned need.

- "We need affordable transportation that operates early in the mornings, late in the evenings, and on the weekends."
- "Public transportation in Wright County is inadequate. Some people wait at the doctor's office for hours before being brought home."

## **Other Needs not in Top 3 Themes**

- Employment
- Opportunities for teens
- Food insecurity
  - Survey respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the community's efforts to address hunger.