



**Community  
Assessment**

**2024-2025**



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# GENERAL AREA DESCRIPTION



## **GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES**

The Family Enrichment Network offers the majority of its programs and services throughout the Southern Tier Region of New York. The Southern Tier includes two metropolitan areas, a number of smaller cities, and extensive rural areas on New York State's south-central border with Pennsylvania. It is 7,185 square miles, and it is located at the crossroads of three major New York highways (routes 17, I81, and I88) that extend north/south and east/west. As of 2021, the Southern Tier has the highest potential flood risk in New York State.<sup>1</sup>

The Agency operates over 30 programs in Broome County through six departments within the corporation, offering Head Start/Early Head Start, Child Care Resource & Referral, Community Services, Family Support Services, Special Education Services, and Housing programs for youth, adults, and families. Broome County is located in south-central New York State, directly north of the Pennsylvania border in a section of the state called the Southern Tier. The Chenango River joins the Susquehanna River, which flows through the county. The County covers 706 square miles and consists of 25 municipalities. Binghamton is the largest city and serves as the county seat. Broome County has the fourth-highest risk of flooding in New York State. The city of Binghamton has the sixth highest risk in the state and Elmira has the eighth highest risk.<sup>2</sup>

The Agency offers Special Education Services, and Child Care Resource & Referral programs in Chenango County, which is located in the center of New York State. Chenango County is also part of the Southern Tier. The county is named after its most significant waterway, the Chenango River, a tributary of the Susquehanna River. The County has a total area of 899 square miles and consists of nine municipalities. The City of Norwich is the largest of these and serves as the county seat. The major development is located around the City of

Norwich and in the Village of Greene. NY Route 12 is the major north/south route through the county.

In Tioga County, Family Enrichment Network offers Child Care Resource & Referral services and related support programs, a Kinship Care Program, Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Tioga County is located in southwest New York State, west of Binghamton and directly north of the Pennsylvania border. The Susquehanna River flows into Pennsylvania from this county. The county is part of the Southern Tier region of New York State. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 523 square miles, of which 519 square miles is land and four square miles is water. Tioga County is the county with the sixth highest flood risk in New York State, as of 2021.<sup>3</sup>

## **ECONOMIC FEATURES**

The New York State Department of Labor’s Division of Research and Statistics prepared a report to the Workforce Development System in 2021 which identified “Significant Industries” in the Southern Tier Region. The report is based on multiple factors such as: wage levels; employment levels; 2015-2020 job growth; and expected job growth as based on industry employment projections through 2028. All industries identified shared one or more of the following: above average job growth; employed more than 6,000 people; projected job growth from 2018-2028 was above 5% (the region’s average); annual wages are above average (\$54,600).<sup>4</sup> The report identified 12 significant industry groups in the Southern Tier, falling into seven major industry groups. The major industry groups are: construction, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, professional and business services, educational services, financial activities, and health care and social assistance.<sup>5</sup> The Southern Tier Regional Economic Council’s *2022 Southern Tier Annual Report* notes that “the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically



changed the ST's economic and workforce landscape creating unprecedented instability in the labor market across the region's key sectors."<sup>6</sup> However, over the course of 2022 there were signs of recovery.<sup>7</sup>

In 2023, private sector employment in the Southern Tier increased by 2.5%<sup>8</sup>, or 5,300 jobs.<sup>9</sup> This continues the trend from 2022, where private sector employment had increased by 1.6%.<sup>10</sup> Job gains were largest in private education and health services (+4,000), which makes up 24.8% of the Southern Tier's industries.<sup>11</sup> Private education and health services also saw the most growth in 2022. The next largest increases were in leisure and hospitality (+1,700) and government (+800). Government jobs include both public health services and public education. The greatest area of job losses was in trade, transportation and utilities (-500). Despite this, trade, transportation and utilities still make up 15.5% of the region's industry mix. Overall, private education and health services, government, trade, transportation and utilities, and manufacturing make up 72% of total nonfarm jobs in the region.<sup>12</sup> From December 2022 to December 2023, the unemployment rate in the Binghamton Area increased 1.2%, from 3.4% in December 2022 to 4.6% in December 2023. Broome County also saw a 1.2% increase, while both Chenango and Tioga experienced a 1% increase. In December 2023, Broome had the highest rate (4.7%), and then Chenango (4.2%), and Tioga had the lowest rate (4%).<sup>13</sup>

The 2022 Annual Report, STREDC states that the COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented instability in the labor market of the Southern Tier and changed the economic and workforce landscape.<sup>14</sup> A survey of Broome County business leaders reveals that 73% expect their business to expand in 2024 and 27% expect their business to stay the same. However, only 32% of business report feeling more optimistic about 2024. This is a 3% decrease from 2023.

Even so, 60% of business leaders anticipate adding employees in 2024 and 80% believe that their revenue will increase.<sup>15</sup>

According to the US Census Bureau, the median household income in Broome County is \$60,616, which is less than the New York State average of \$79,557.<sup>16</sup> The Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce reports in the Broome County's 2023 Economic Outlook guide that the civilian labor force is 56.5% of the population. The top three industries in the county are: education services, and health care and social assistance (32.2%); retail trade (11.8%); and manufacturing (9.8%). The employment rate in Broome County is 55.5%, which is slightly less than the New York State average of 59.4%.<sup>17</sup> A majority of workers are an employee of a private company (56.4%), and a vast majority drive to work alone (73%). The average commute time is 19.8 minutes.<sup>18</sup>

The median income in Chenango County is \$61,741, according to the US Census Bureau, which, like Broome County, is under the New York State average. The employment rate is the lowest among the three counties FEN serves, at 55%. 61% of workers are employed by a private company. The average commute is 23.4 with most commuters driving alone, 79.2%. The most common industries are: educational services, and health care and social assistance (27.2%); manufacturing (19.2%); and retail trade (10.3%).<sup>19</sup>

Tioga County's median income is also lower than that of the New York State average, at \$70,427. The employment rate is 57.2% and 62% of workers are an employee of a private company. The average commute is 24 minutes and 82.2% commuted by driving alone. In Tioga, the most common industries are: educational services and health care and social assistance (27.3%); manufacturing (14.4%); retail trade (10.8%).<sup>20</sup> However, the Tioga County Strategic plan notes that the county is still recovering from the 2008 recession. Manufacturing hit its peak

of 15,569 in 2008. In 2007 it was 30% of total jobs. The report posits that a large cause of the decline was the downsizing of Lockheed Martin's facility, located in Owego.<sup>21</sup>

## **DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES**

The demographics of our Agency's population have continued to change over the years, from people living longer and the migration of the younger population, to an increase in diversity. By 2050, the Census Bureau actually expects the number of Americans aged 65 and older to double to 84 million people,<sup>22</sup> and according to Genworth's annual Cost of Care Survey, seven out of ten people will require some form of long term care in their lifetime.<sup>23</sup> Genworth also notes that "Inflation and the shortage of skilled care workers are the core drivers of increases in the costs of care services."<sup>24</sup> Currently, the median age in New York State is 40. The median age of Broome County is comparable, at 39.6<sup>25</sup>, but Tioga and Chenango both have higher median ages—44.7<sup>26</sup> and 44.9<sup>27</sup> respectively. The New York State Department of Labor reports that the Southern Tier is older than New York State.<sup>28</sup> The Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council (STREDC) projects that the population of the Southern Tier will decline through 2040.<sup>29</sup>

While the population of the Southern Tier is aging, it has also increased in diversity. From 2010 to 2020, the Southern Tier's diversity index increased by 50%, from 20.5 in 2010 to 30.8 in 2020.<sup>30</sup> However, the population has remained predominately White, at 82.7% of the total population in the Southern Tier in 2020, down from 89% in 2010. Broome County remains the most diverse out of the three counties FEN serves: 78.6% of the population is White; 5.8% is Black; 5.2% is Hispanic; and 4.7% is Asian. Less than 1% of the population in both Chenango and Tioga Counties is Black (.7% and .9%, respectively). 91.4% of the population in Chenango County is White and 91.2% of the population in Tioga County is White. However, compared to

2010, you can see the change in diversity. In 2010, the White population of the counties was: 86.3% in Broome County; 95.6%, in Chenango County; and 96% in Tioga County.<sup>31</sup>

According to the most recent US Census Data, Broome County had a total population of 198,683.<sup>32</sup> Only 8.5% of Broome County residents speak a language other than English at home (significantly less than New York State rate of 30.7%), and 7.2% of the population is foreign born (22.7% in New York). The poverty rate for the county stands at 20.8% (compared to New York State rate of 14.3%) with 32.4% children under 18 living in poverty. The average family size is 2.9, compared to the average family size in New York of 3.12. Most family households are married-couple families (38.9%). There are more female householder (no spouse) family households (30.8%) than male householder (no spouse) family households (21.9%). 42% of the population in Broome county has never been married. In Broome County, 5.6% of the population is veterans, higher than the New York State rate of 3.7%. Most veterans are male (93.8%). The disability rate in Broome County is also higher than the State. In New York State, 12.9% of the population is disabled but in Broome County, 15.8% of the population is disabled.<sup>33</sup> There are 92,569 total housing units in Broome County, 10,481 of which are vacant. The homeownership rate is 62.9%.<sup>34</sup> The median monthly owner cost with a mortgage was \$1,327 and without a mortgage it was \$597.<sup>35</sup> The median gross rent is \$919 per month.<sup>36</sup>

Chenango County has a total population of 48,455, according to the most recent census data. The poverty rate is 12.4%, while the rate for children under 18 years is 17.2%. The average family size is 2.83, and 20.5 % of the population is under 18 years old. Chenango County has fewer foreign born residents than Broome County, 2.2%, and similarly the rate of languages spoken at home other than English is also lower, 4.2%. Chenango County has more veterans than Broome County, at 8.4% of the population.<sup>37</sup> The rate of disability is also higher, at 18.7%.<sup>38</sup> The

homeownership rate is 76.3%. There are 24,210 total housing units in Chenango County and 4,313 of them are vacant.<sup>39</sup> The owner-occupied housing rate is 76.3%. The median monthly owner costs with a mortgage are \$1,312 and without a mortgage is was \$534.<sup>40</sup> The median gross rent in Chenango is \$798.<sup>41</sup>

Tioga County's population, according to recent census data, is 48,455. The poverty rate is 10.2% while the poverty rate for people under 18 is 11.7%. Only 2.6% of the population speaks a language other than English at home, and 2% of the population is foreign born. The average family size is 2.82. About half of family households are married-couple (50.9%). There are more female householder (no spouse) family households (23.3%) than male householder (no spouse) family households (16.0%). Only 27.2% of the population has never been married.<sup>42</sup> The percentage of those with a disability is also higher than New York State, at 14.7%, and the rate of veterans is higher, at 8.2%. There are 21,787, housing units in Tioga County, and of that 1,909 are vacant.<sup>43</sup> The median monthly owner cost with a mortgage was \$1,424, without a mortgage was \$579, and median gross rent was \$894.<sup>44</sup>

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**CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL  
PROGRAM**





The Family Enrichment Network's Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) program serves parents, child care providers, businesses, and the community in Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties.

## **QUALITY CHILD CARE**

Quality child care is a daily concern for millions of American parents. Early childhood experiences have a long lasting effect on a child's future. Studies have shown that quality child care practices in the formative years result in a greater cognitive development, improved teacher-student relationships, better classroom behavior, longer attention spans, and desirable social skills.

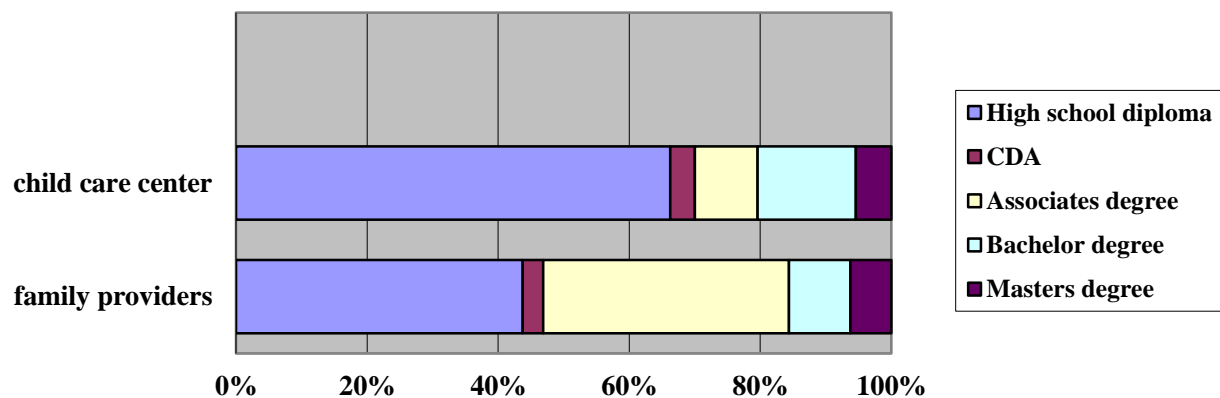
Research is especially showing the importance of the first few years of life in brain development.<sup>45</sup> Toxic stress, such as abuse, poverty, or neglect or other ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), damages developing brain architecture, which can lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and physical and mental health. These ACEs are being identified as an important public health issue.<sup>46</sup> Because of the importance, in January 2021, OCFS added ACEs as a required training category for child care programs.

There is information available in the community to aid parents in finding quality child care and the importance of early experiences. When parents call Family Enrichment Network's referral service, they are given information on what to look for in a quality program and questions to ask prospective providers. This information can be accessed on our website as well. Parents can review violations on registered or licensed providers on the OCFS website by conducting a Child Care Facility search. Information on finding quality child care can be found online at Child Care Aware of America or the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) websites. Links can be found on our website.

## Education of the Child Care Workforce

Child care programs in Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties are surveyed about the educational qualifications of providers and child care center staff annually. There is no national regulation for education requirements to work in child care. Educational attainment varies by state.<sup>47</sup> According to the report by the Bipartisan Policy Center, just over half of center staff have a degree with 17% having an associate degree, 26% with a bachelor's degree, and 9% with a graduate degree. Only 31% of family providers have a degree. Our survey shows about 55% of local family and group family child care providers have education further than high school.<sup>48</sup> The national average for child care center staff, teacher, or assistant teacher with a high school diploma or lower is 20%.<sup>49</sup> Chart 1 shows the local education of our child care workforce.

**CHART 1: % of Education of Child Care Workforce**



## Turnover

One of most important elements in a high quality child care experience is the teacher or primary provider. In the earliest years of life, children are developing attachments to the adults in their lives. Strong emotional attachments allow children to develop a sense of trust and to build healthy relationships with other people. When these attachments are not strong

and secure, children may suffer the emotional consequences for the rest of their lives. Changes in a child's teacher or primary care provider can interrupt a child's development and cause a period of transition and readjustment.

Staff turnover varies by program and type of program. When a program closes, a family needs to find alternate care. Due to the nature of family child care, there is no turnover in provider. When the provider leaves, the program closes. Center based staff turnover is much different and varies by program. In a survey of local child care center directors, the turnover rate varied greatly by program in 2023, but averages to 40%.<sup>50</sup>

### **Lack of Staff**

There is a shortage of child care program staff across the country which has been compounded by the pandemic. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conducted a survey in 2021 which showed 87% of programs in New York State are experiencing a staffing shortage.<sup>51</sup> Our local survey indicates 93% of child care center and school age programs had difficulty finding staff this past year.<sup>52</sup> Even Group Family Child Care Programs struggle finding assistant providers, with 20% indicating a problem finding staff. Many problems contribute to this, including low pay, lack of benefits, lack of respect, difficult working conditions, high stress, and little support.

Due to the lack of staff, many programs have had to close classrooms or not fully enroll children in their program. In November 2023, there were 31 closed classrooms in child care centers in Broome County due to 79 open classroom teaching positions. This resulted in 372 licensed child care slots not available for parents.<sup>53</sup>

## **Quality Child Care**

The quality of child care programs in our community is hard to determine due to the lack of a full quality rating system. The number of accredited programs is low due to the cost of accreditation. One licensed child care center, Campus Preschool at Binghamton University, is accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).<sup>54</sup> There are no family child care programs accredited through the National Association of Family Child Care at this time.<sup>55</sup>

New York's quality rating and improvement system, QUALITYstarsNY, is a mostly voluntary program with limited community reach. QUALITYstarsNY expanded during 2022 and 2023. A second Quality Improvement Specialist was added to cover our region of the state. OCFS Desert Grant recipients and Head Start programs are required to participate in QUALITYstarsNY. According to the website search, Broome County has 33 participating sites, Chenango County has nine sites, and Tioga County has six sites.<sup>56</sup> The star rating for programs is available for some programs on the QUALITYstarsNY website when you search for a program. Of the 24 rated programs in Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties, 12 have received a four star rating and three have received a five star rating showing high quality child care programs in our area.

## **CCR&R Resource for Child Care Quality Improvement**

Family Enrichment Network's CCR&R offers many resources to help child care providers and programs in Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties improve their quality.

### **Technical Assistance**

Specialists offer basic support to answer questions for providers. In 2023, Specialists offered 1475 technical assistances to 153 providers and programs. Specialists can offer

onsite/intensive visits to programs to help with best child care practices. In 2023, Specialists offered 141 onsite/intensive technical assistance visits to 35 providers and programs.<sup>57</sup>

Infant Toddler Project

Family Enrichment Network has an Infant Toddler Specialist as part of the Regional Infant Toddler Network. The Infant Toddler Specialist works in the three counties of Broome, Chenango, and Tioga. The Infant Toddler Specialist offers mentoring, technical assistance, onsite intensive technical assistance, and training to parents, providers, OCFS licensing staff, CCR&R staff, and the community on infant/toddler best practices and the importance of offering high quality care to infants and toddlers. High quality early care is essential to a child’s long-term social, emotional and intellectual development. Table 1 below shows the numbers for our Infant Toddler Specialists in the 2022-2023 program year (July 2022-June 2023).

TABLE 1: 2023 Regional Infant Toddler Milestones <sup>58</sup>	
Basic Technical Assistance	400
Number of Training Hours	275
Intensive Technical Assistance	292

There are 50 Infant Toddler Specialists across New York State. The Syracuse OCFS Region currently employs eight Infant Toddler Specialists.

In 2020, the Infant Toddler Project received funding to implement Infant & Toddler Mental Health Consultation across the state. Infant & Toddler Mental Health Consultation is an intervention that benefits infants and toddlers by providing a service in partnership with adult caregivers in their lives. The goal of the mental health consultation is to improve the ability of staff, families, programs, and systems to prevent, identify, treat, and reduce the

impact of mental health problems amongst young children.<sup>59</sup> In 2023, the Infant Toddler Mental Health Specialist connected with ten center classrooms completing 99 total consultation hours.

### Legally Exempt Enrollment

Since July 2006, the CCR&R has been the Legally Exempt Enrollment Agency for Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties, working collaboratively with the local Department of Social Services (DSS) in the respective counties. If a provider is not registered or licensed by OCFS, and the parents are receiving a child care subsidy to help them pay for child care, the legally exempt provider must complete the enrollment process through the CCR&R to receive the subsidy payment from DSS.

The federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) has brought many changes to the New York subsidy system, including for legally exempt providers. As of September 2019, new legally exempt enrollment requirements were put into place. Upon the receipt of a completed enrollment application packet, non-relative providers must undergo a comprehensive background check, which includes the NYS Sex Offender Registry, the Staff Exclusion List checking for abuse and neglect against individuals with special needs, the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR), and fingerprints for criminal conviction history in any state the provider has lived. The SCR has a \$25 fee to conduct the check. Relative providers, including grandparents, great grandparents, siblings, aunts or uncles, are exempt from the comprehensive background checks. Siblings living in the same residence and great-aunts or great-uncles are considered non-relative and must complete the background check requirements and training.

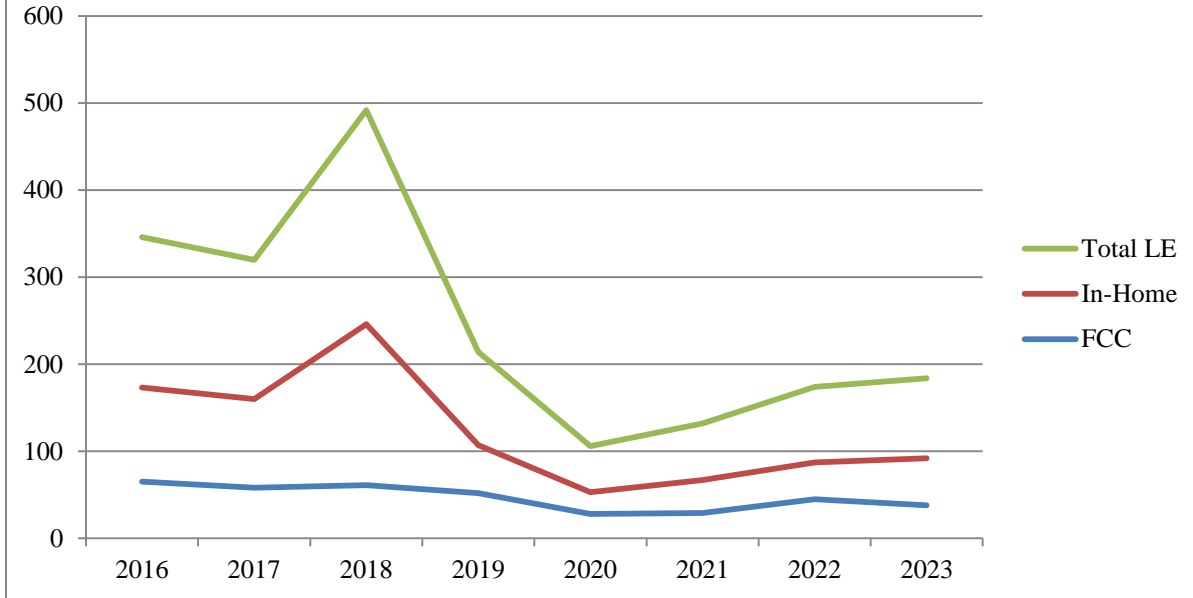
Additional requirements include an annual training requirement for non-relative providers, in addition to a 5-hour pre-service online health and safety training which can be found online and is free. Additional trainings can be found online and are free as well. Providers must also have written documentation of an emergency plan, including evacuation and shelter-in-place drills.

These new requirements initially resulted in fewer enrolled legally exempt providers, but 2023 has shown an increase in legally exempt providers.

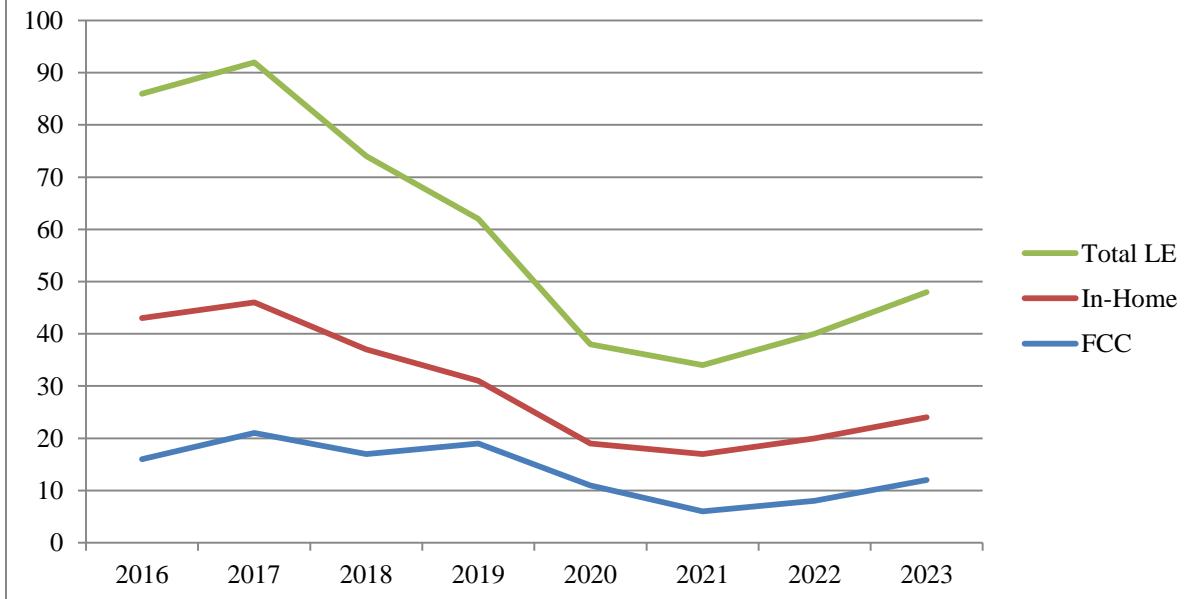
Table 2 below shows the number of legally exempt providers in Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties. The following three charts show the change in enrolled legally exempt providers over the five years from 2016 to 2020, with the number of programs leveling out and increasing since 2021.

TABLE 2: 2023 Legally Exempt Enrollment By Type <sup>60</sup>			
	FCC	In Home	Group
Broome County	38	54	3
Chenango County	12	12	0
Tioga County	27	26	2

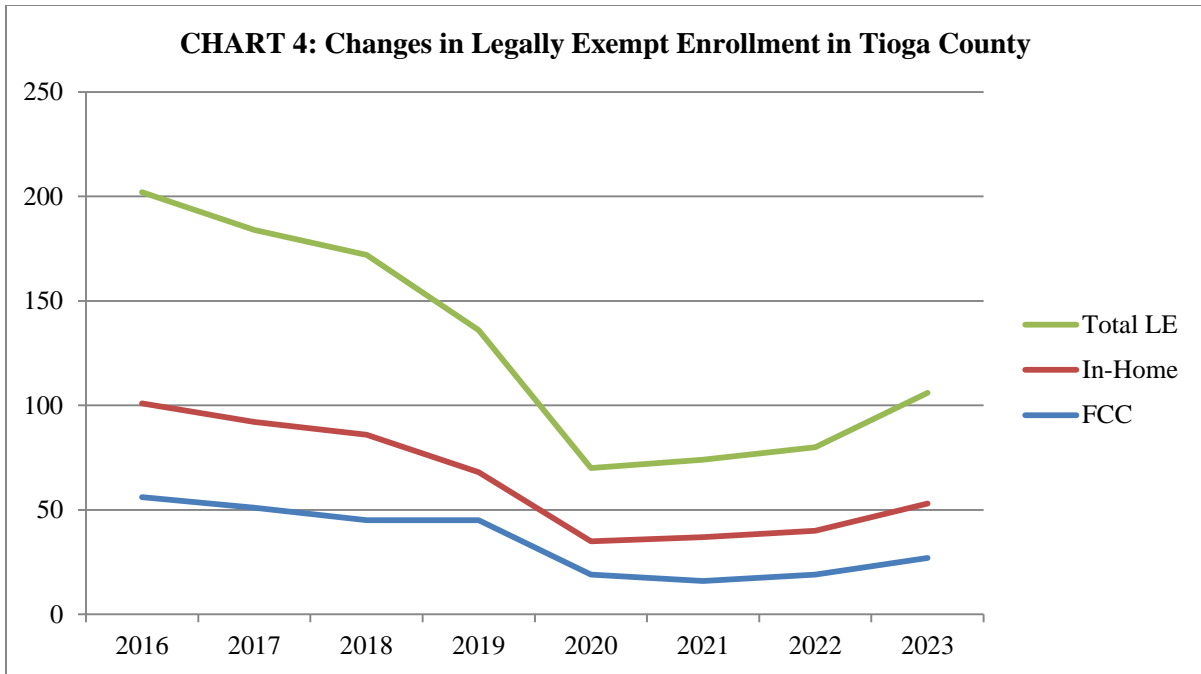
**CHART 2: Changes in Legally Exempt Enrollment in Broome County**



**CHART 3: Changes in Legally Exempt Enrollment in Chenango County**







We conduct inspections on all non-relative legally exempt providers, regardless if they are in the provider’s home or in the parent/child’s home. In 2023, CCR&R conducted 42 inspections of legally exempt providers; 24 in Broome County, 6 in Chenango County, and 12 in Tioga County. The contract requires an inspection of a new legally exempt non-relative within 90 days of approval. When existing programs go through the annual renewal process, they will come up for an inspection.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) plays a vital role in improving the quality of child care. CACFP ensures that all children in child care have access to a nutritious meals and snacks and learn how to improve their eating habits through early nutrition education. The New York State Department of Health together with the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) allocates funds to Family Enrichment Network to be the regional sponsoring agency for family child care providers. Family Enrichment Network in

turn reimburses eligible registered, licensed, and enrolled legally exempt family child care providers for nutritious meals and snacks served to children in their care. CACFP offers ongoing training to participating providers in relevant areas such as the nutritional needs of children, food safety, menu planning, and physical activities. A CACFP representative from Family Enrichment Network visits each site at least three times a year providing assistance and nutrition training. Tables 3 and 4 below show the numbers of providers enrolled in CACFP.

**TABLE 3: 2023 CACFP Participation Numbers.<sup>61</sup>**

	Registered Providers in CACFP	Licensed Providers in CACFP	Number of Registered/Licensed Providers NOT in CACFP	Percentage of Total Providers in CACFP
Broome County	14	21	16	68%
Chenango County	12	16	4	87%
Tioga County	5	5	1	90%

**TABLE 4: 2023 Legally Exempt Participation in CACFP**

	Legally Exempt Providers in CACFP	Legally Exempt Providers Eligible But Not in CACFP	Percentage of Total Eligible LE Providers in CACFP
Broome County	2	89	2%
Chenango County	1	24	4%
Tioga County	0	19	0%

Child Care Provider Professional Development and Training

Research has shown that caregiver professional development or training has a direct correlation to the quality of child care provided.<sup>62</sup> Regulated child care providers are required

by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to complete 30 hours of training every two years, in ten categories of training.<sup>63</sup>

**CCR&R Training Opportunities**

CCR&R publishes a quarterly calendar of all training offered to meet OCFS requirements. CCR&R also publishes a quarterly newsletter containing Agency news, updates on regulations, best practices information, and educational articles. In 2023, CCR&R continued sending a monthly *Month at a Glance* newsletter to programs showing the training opportunities for that month in an attempt to increase enrollment.

Table 5 shows the trainings offered by Family Enrichment Network’s CCR&R and the number of attendees in 2023, both duplicated and unduplicated numbers of providers trained. Enrollment and registration for trainings was low. Out of 214 scheduled trainings, 29 were cancelled due to lack of enrollment. In 2023, we offered both in-person and virtual training options. OCFS permanently is allowing credentialed trainers to offer virtual trainings.

TABLE 5: 2023 Training Attendance <sup>64</sup>			
	# of sessions scheduled	Total # of providers trained	Unduplicated # of providers trained
CCR&R Trainings	214	659	215

**Onsite Training**

CCR&R trainers have previously conducted workshops and trainings onsite at child care centers. Only four onsite trainings were conducted as part of an OCFS corrective action plan for regulatory violations. CCR&R conducted 32 center trainings and 37 virtual in 2023.

The CCR&R contract includes funding for Childcare Program Onsite Training as a Community Based Strategy. This allows child care centers and SACC programs to request one free onsite or virtual training each program year.

#### Director Academy Training

CCR&R works with the Early Care and Learning Council and the OCFS Region to host Director Academy training opportunities. In 2023, CCR&R offered the six hour “Orientation: The Process To Staff Integration” in person with five directors completing the training.

#### Health and Safety Competency Training

CCR&R offers the initial 15-hour Health and Safety Competency Training, which is required for any new family or group family child care registration/license. OCFS requires this training to be offered in-person only. CCR&R conducted two sessions of the Health and Safety Competency Training with four providers.

Family Enrichment Network also offered the 15-hour Health and Safety Training for Directors, for center directors or school-age child care center directors. This training may be offered virtually or in-person. CCR&R offered six sessions of this training for 28 directors in 2023, with all conducted virtually.

#### Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)

The Child Development Associate (CDA) is a credential that early childhood educators can earn to demonstrate certain competencies to advance their career. CCR&R offers the 120 training hours of formal classroom instruction which is needed for CDA. In addition to the formal instruction, CDA candidates must submit an application to the national organization Council for Professional Recognition and take a test at a qualifying testing site.

A Professional Development Specialist who contracts with the Council for Professional Recognition conducts a classroom observation, reviews the candidate’s portfolio, and conducts an interview with the candidate for final credentialing approval. In addition to the classroom instruction, the CDA classes offered at Family Enrichment Network assist candidates with their portfolio and prepare them for the test, observation and interview.

The CDA classes started in January 2023 and ended in December 2023 with six participants enrolled. Sessions were offered both in-person and virtually for a hybrid class.

CPR and First Aid Training

CPR and First Aid training is mandated for every family child care provider and large programs need at least one trained staff person onsite during hours of operation. CCR&R meets the majority of the family child care community needs for this training.

TABLE 6: 2023 CPR/First Aid Class Participation		
	# of Trainings Offered	# of Providers Trained
Broome County	16	67
Chenango County	7	46
Tioga County	0	22
Other Counties	1	10

Training Challenges

Attendance at trainings continues to be a challenge. After a long day with children, child care providers and program staff do not want to attend trainings in the evenings or on their weekends off. Virtual training is often preferred, but there are challenges in what we can offer virtually due to OCFS requirements. Classes approved by SUNY PDP to accept

EIP funding and conducted by a Credentialed Trainer can be offered virtually. Trainers who are not credentialed are not able to conduct virtual training without a co-trainer who was credentialed. Certain classes still needed to be conducted in-person, such as the Health and Safety Competency Training for new family child care providers and the CPR/First Aid skills demonstration. Many participants prefer virtual trainings due to the convenience of not having to leave their home. Providers and staff also struggle to find child care for their own children to attend training.

### Training/TA Needs

In the annual Provider Survey, there were many requested topics, including CPR/First Aid certification, dealing with behavior issues, working with children with disabilities, mandated reporter, social-emotional learning and regulations. Request for other forms of assistance, such as grants, new supplies, and emotional support were needed.

On the survey, 87% of centers indicate teachers are stressed and experiencing burnout while 40% of family providers identify as stressed and experiencing burnout. These child care providers needed additional mentoring and support.

The survey also indicates child care programs are identifying more challenging behaviors with children. 93% of centers completing our survey indicated children are exhibiting challenging behavior. 23% of the family/group family providers have asked a child to leave their program, due to many issues, including challenging behaviors. There is a great need for Early Childhood Mental Health Specialists in addition to the Infant Toddler Mental Health Specialists.

## SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF CHILD CARE

Parents needing child care while they work or go to school have various care options: child care centers, registered/licensed family child care homes, informal or legally exempt providers, school age child care programs, or in-home child care providers (nannies). Nursery schools, preschools, and Universal Pre-kindergarten programs do not typically offer full time child care and often do not meet the needs of working parents. Head Start programs are moving toward full-day classes, but typically still only offer care for six hours, which does not meet the needs of working parents. Wrap-around care is still needed.

Tables 7, 8, and 9 show the breakdown by community of providers in Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties in December 2023.<sup>65</sup> A new column named Special Child Care Centers was created to track the unique programs that do not necessarily meet the needs of working parents. These include Head Start/Early Head Start programs, UPK programs, part-day licensed preschool programs, and preschool Special Education Programs.

TABLE 7: Child Care Providers in Broome County - 2023					
	Child Care Centers	Special Child Care Centers	Family Child Care	Group Family Child Care	SACC Programs
Binghamton	9	7	7	12	8
Endicott/Endwell	6	2	9	1	6
Johnson City	3	1	4	3	1
Vestal	4	0	3	2	4
Surrounding Areas	1	3	3	6	2
Broome County Totals	23	13	26	24	21

TABLE 8: Child Care Providers in Chenango County - 2023					
	Child Care Centers	Special Child Care Centers	Family Child Care	Group Family Child Care	SACC Programs
Afton	0	0	1	0	0
Bainbridge/Guilford	0	1	0	1	0
New Berlin	0	1	1	1	1
Norwich	1	4	2	4	3
Oxford	0	1	4	1	1
Sherburne	0	0	1	3	0
Greene	0	1	1	4	1
Surrounding Areas	0	0	2	0	0
Chenango County Totals	1	8	12	14	6

TABLE 9: Child Care Providers in Tioga County - 2023					
	Child Care Centers	Special Child Care Centers	Family Child Care	Group Family Child Care	SACC Programs
Apalachin	1	0	1	1	1
Candor	0	0	1	0	1
Newark Valley	0	1	0	1	0
Owego	1	1	1	1	0
Waverly	0	1	0	2	0
Surrounding Areas	1	0	4	1	0
Tioga County Totals	3	3	7	6	2

There continues to be a lack of affordable child care to meet the needs of the community. This is especially true for parents looking for child care for their infant or toddler.



According to a report by The Center for American Progress, “Costly and Unavailable: America Lacks Sufficient Child Care Supply for Infants and Toddlers,” there are far more infants and toddlers across the country than there are licensed child care spots.<sup>66</sup> This is true for our area as well. Table 10 shows the population of infants and toddlers compared to the percentage who can be served by registered/licensed child care spots.

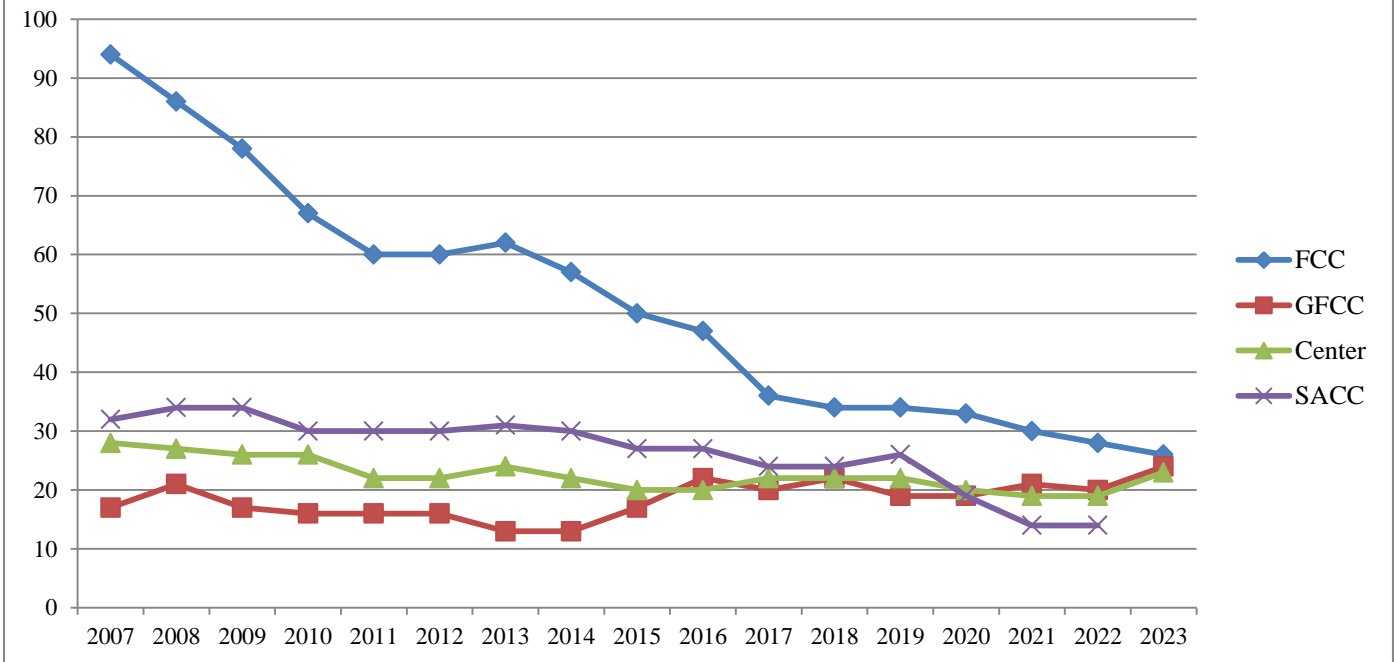
TABLE 10: Lack of Infant and Toddler Child Care Spots		
	# Infants and Toddlers	% Who Could be Served by Licensed Child Care
Broome	3,273	27%
Chenango	742	13%
Tioga	921	15%

As you can tell from the table, there wouldn’t be enough registered/licensed child care spots available to serve all the infants and toddlers of county, if they were needed. With the maternal labor force participation rate of about 70% for each county, substantially more infant and toddler spots are needed to meet the community need. This lack of available child care to meet the needs is being referred to as “Child Care Deserts.”

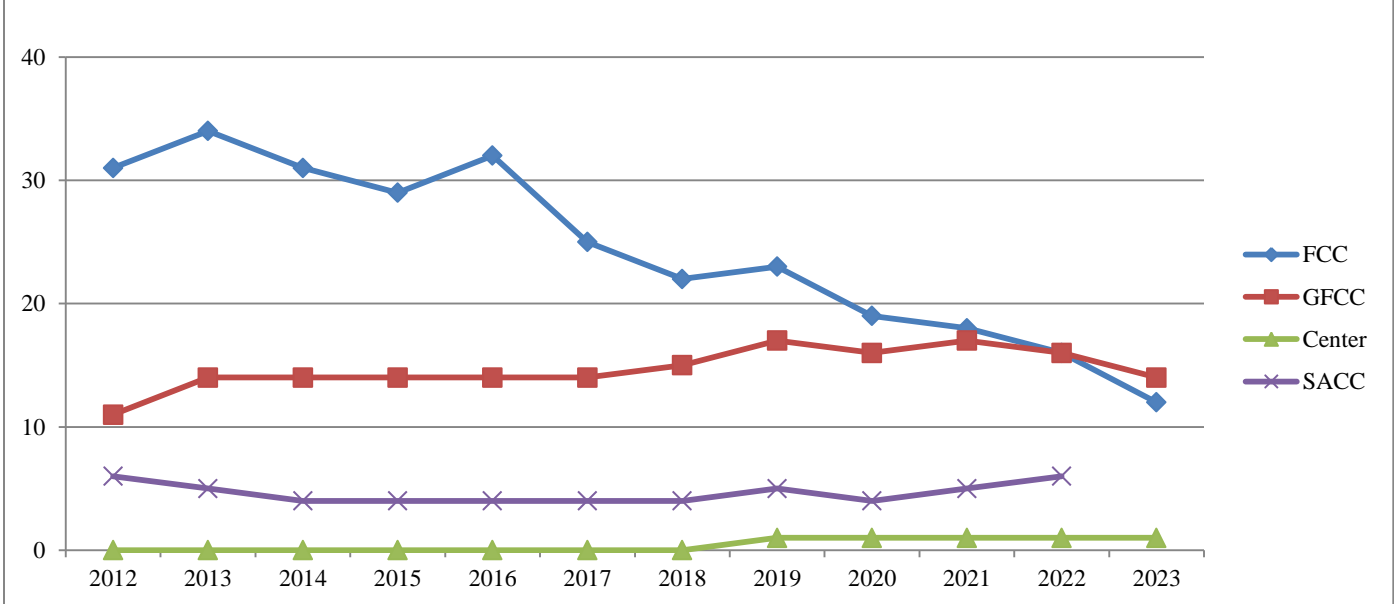
**Decline in Child Care**

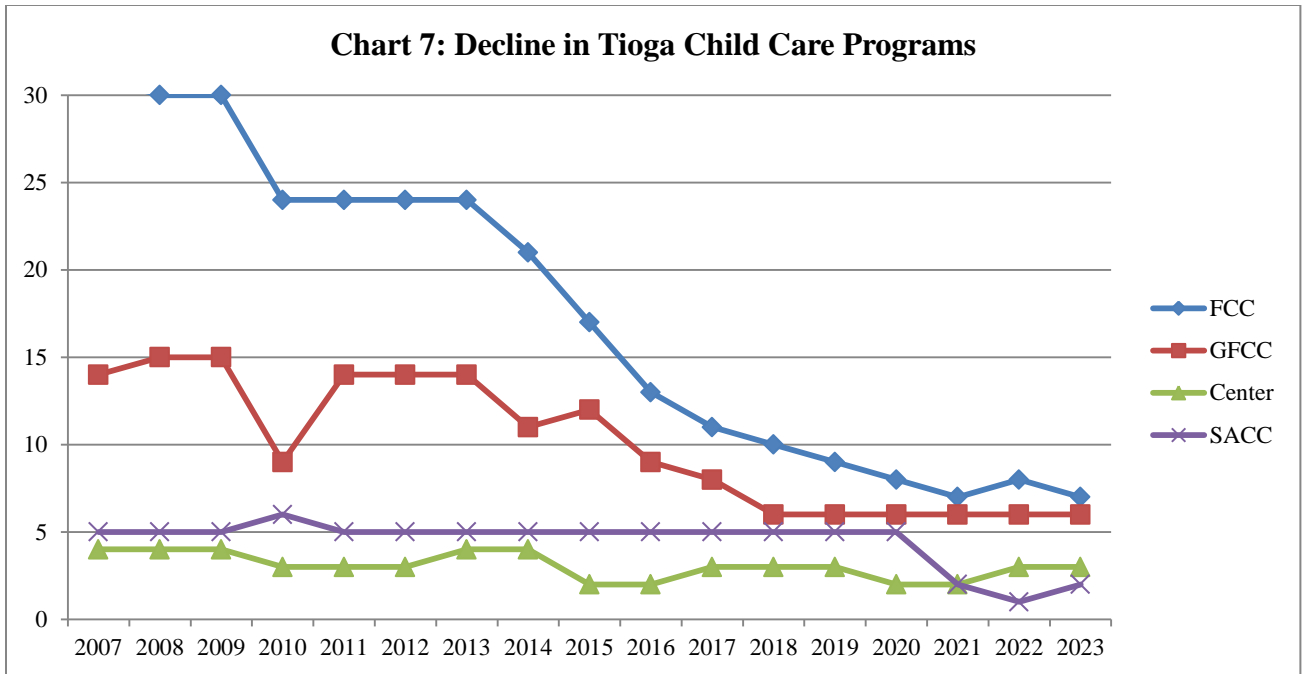
Over the last decade, the number of child care programs has decreased across Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties.<sup>67</sup>

**Chart 5: Decline in Broome Child Care Programs**

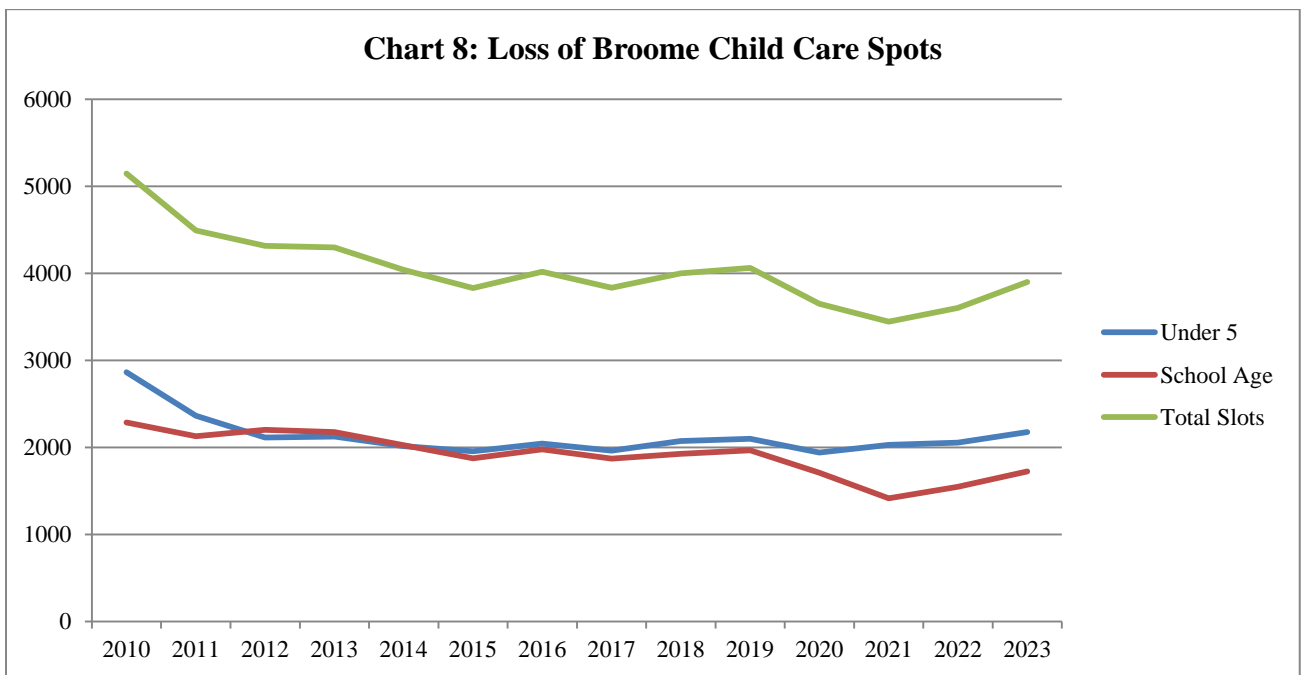


**Chart 6: Decline in Chenango Child Care Programs**

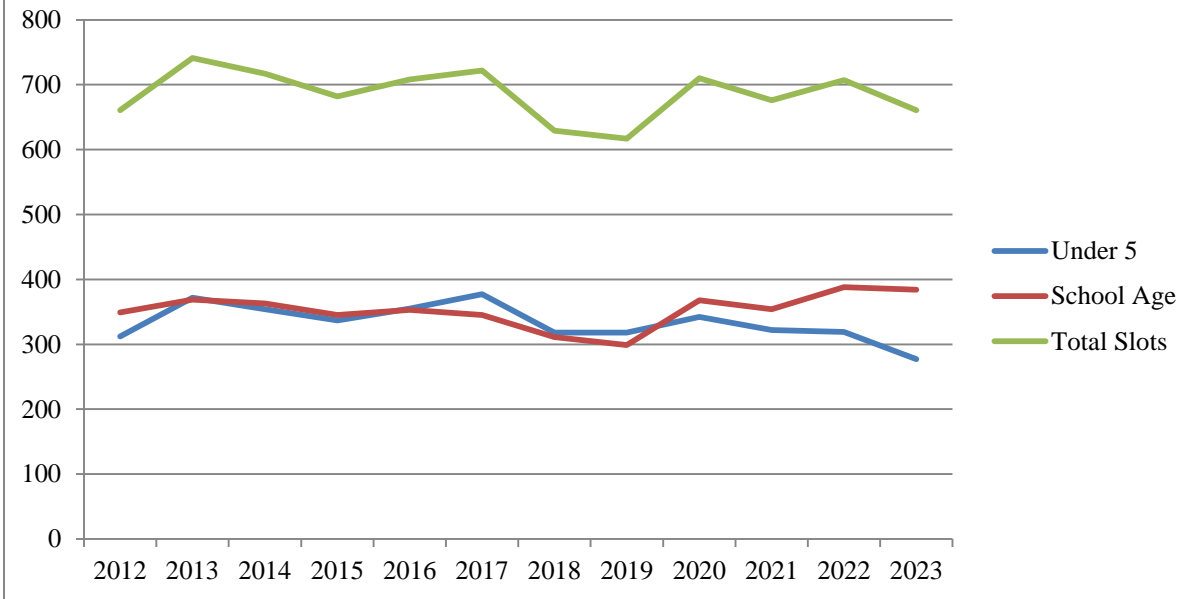




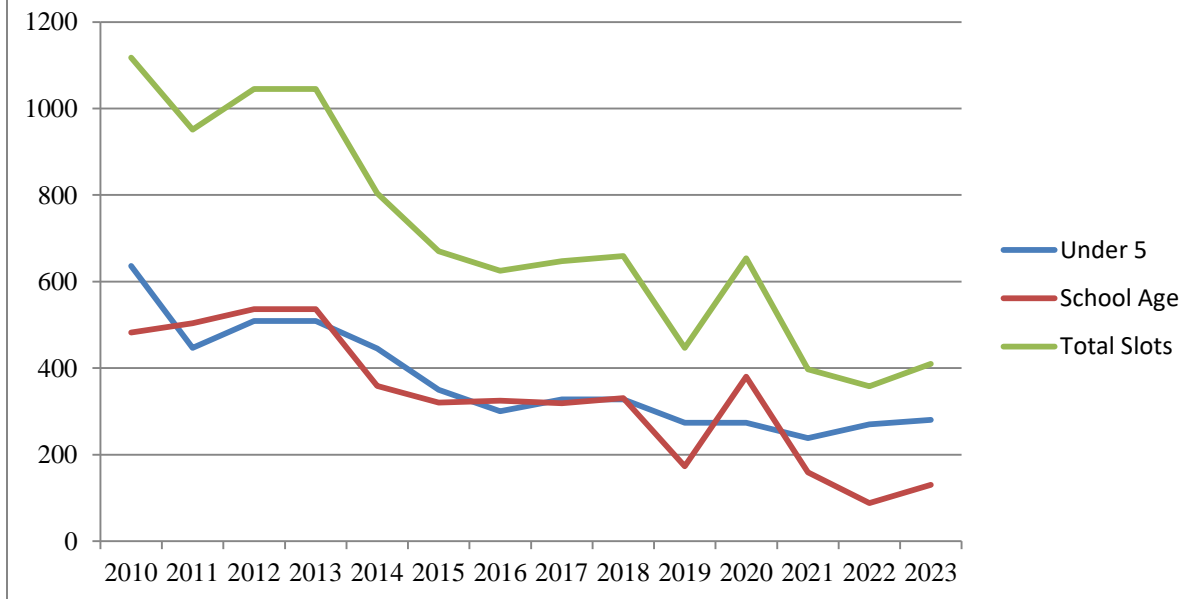
For the first time in over ten years, there was not a significant decrease in the number or programs or child care spots. The last year has seen a leveling off of child care programs, with a slight increase in available child care spots for children in both Broome and Tioga Counties. Chenango County continues to see a decrease in total child care slots.



**Chart 9: Loss of Chenango Child Care Spots**



**Chart 10: Loss of Tioga Child Care Spots**



## **Care in Greatest Demand**

Besides the care for infants and toddlers, parents are also looking for part-time care to cover the hours their free program, such as UPK with school districts, does not serve or to cover their part-time work hours. If a program is part-time, parents need transportation to a second child care program as well.

The five biggest areas in which child care requests are greatest:

1. Infant Toddler Care
2. Child Care Deserts
3. Transportation
4. School Age Child Care
5. Non-traditional Hours

### **1. Infant Toddler Care**

In 2023, 849 children were served using the referral services in Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties. 56% of the care needed in all three counties was for children under the age of three. Referral Specialists state that infant and toddler spaces fill quickly when they are available in programs. In family child care, a child is considered an “infant” until the age of two. A family child care provider can only care for two children under the age of two (without an approved assistant), so spots are limited, and many family child care providers do not want to care for children under the age of two. Child care centers lose money in infant classrooms due to the needed staffing ratios, so there is no incentive to open more classrooms for this age. More care for infants is needed in the community.

## 2. Child Care Deserts:

The Center for American Progress released a report showing areas of the United States where there is a lack of child care.<sup>68</sup> For the report, the Center for American Progress collected and analyzed data on the location and capacity of registered/licensed child care in every state, comparing it to the estimates in population, family income and labor force participation for every U.S. census tract. The analysis shows 51% of Americans live in a child care desert.<sup>69</sup> Most of Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties are identified as being a child care desert.

The report shows that rural areas have a higher concentration of child care deserts, which is consistent with our area. As shown in Tables 8 through 10, there are nine family/group family child care providers in the rural areas of Broome County, two in Chenango County and five in Tioga County. There is only one center each in the rural areas of Broome County and Tioga County, and none in Chenango County.

In response to the national coverage of child care deserts, OCFS released Desert Grant opportunities in 2022 called “Invest in New York: Child Care”. Desert Grant 1 was released in January 2022, with the application portal opening in March and closing in May of 2022. It was for opening new child care programs across the state, specifically targeting identified child care deserts. Awards were announced in July. There were 22 applicants in our service delivery area. There are currently nine programs receiving Desert Grant funding. This accounts for one child care center in Tioga County, one SACC program in Broome County, one family child care in Tioga County, one family provider in Chenango County, three family child care providers in Broome County, and two group family child care providers in Broome County.

Desert Grant 2 was an opportunity to expand existing child care programs. There were nine applications in our region. There are no programs meeting the requirements and receiving this grant.

### 3. Transportation:

Similar to the need for part-time care, if a parent needs to find care for their child after a part-time or shortened-day program, such as UPK in the school, transportation to a second program is difficult to find. Many school districts do not provide transportation for their UPK programs or to child care outside of the district, so it is up to a parent to find a way to get their child to the program and back. If a parent is working, they often can't leave work to provide the transportation themselves. This becomes a problem for many parents.

UPK programs within a child care center; when the school-district uses a community-based organization to provide UPK, do not have this issue as they can provide the needed wrap-around care. Keeping the child within the same program helps parents remain employed and also helps the child care program not lose income for the loss of serving preschool age children.

### 4. School Age Child Care:

Consistent before-school and after-school care is needed. According to our database, 849 children were served using the referral service in 2023. Of these children, 24% were school age children in the three counties.

### 5. Non-Traditional Hours:

Typical child care hours are 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, but many industries rely on workers to keep their business going twenty-four hours a day including

evenings, nights and weekends. Parents who work during the day and pursue their education at night also need child care during non-traditional hours.

Non-traditional hours are typically served by family child care providers. If a parent cannot find an opening they must depend on informal care such as family members, friends, and neighbors.

According to our database, there are only six family child care providers in Broome County and one in Chenango County that provide non-traditional hours.

## **MARKET RATES OF CHILD CARE**

Child care is expensive. Middle and lower income families struggle to find affordable child care. The local Department of Social Services offers the Child Care Assistance Program, which was formerly known as subsidy, to help parents pay for child care. OCFS increase eligibility in October of 2023 up to 85% of the State Medium Income. There was an increase in the number of families receiving assistance in 2023.

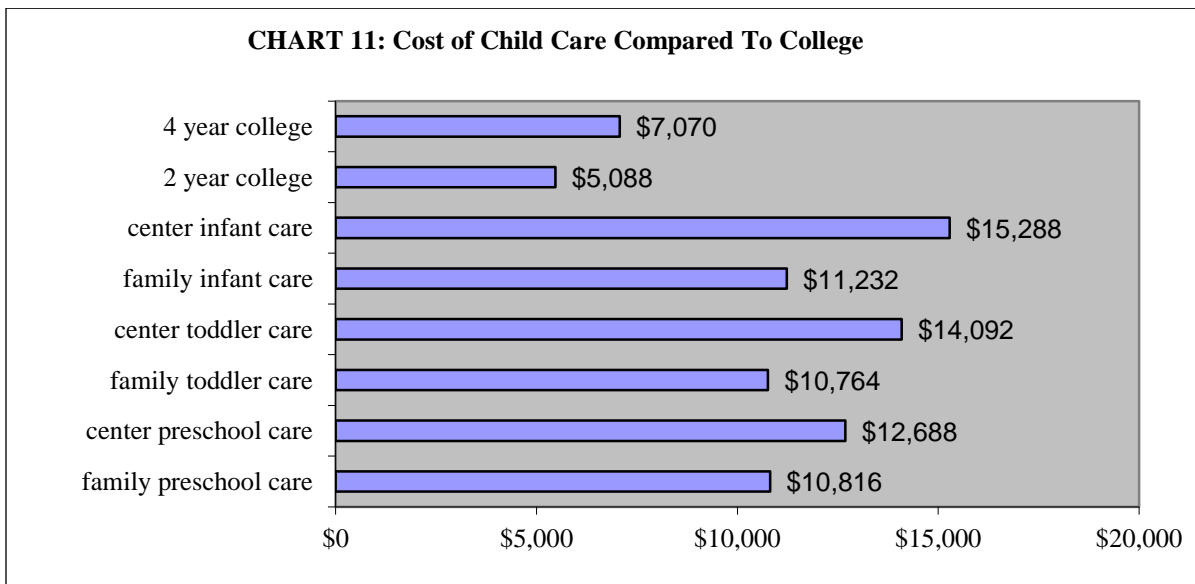
In Broome County, a total of 1125 families in Broome County are receiving child care assistance.<sup>70</sup> There are 110 families in Chenango County receiving child care assistance<sup>71</sup>. There are 181 families in Tioga County receiving child care assistance.<sup>72</sup> The New York State Child Care Block Grant (NYS CCBG) projected allocation is \$9,642,524 to Broome County from 2023-2024, \$586,677 to Chenango County for 2023-2024 and \$1,103,645 to Tioga County for 2023-2024.

The average cost of full-time child care for infants in Broome County is \$11,232 per year per child in family child care and \$15,288 for center based child care. The average cost of full time child care for a preschooler in Broome County is \$ 10,816 per year per child for family child care and \$12,688 per year for center based child care.<sup>73</sup>



TABLE 11: Subsidized Rate (Market Rate) Versus Private Pay Rates for Child Care <sup>74</sup>		
Child Care Center		
	DSS Child Care Assistance Program Weekly Rate	Private Pay Rate Weekly Rate
Infants	\$295	\$294
Toddlers	\$275	\$271
Preschool	\$253	\$244
School Age	\$245	\$223
Family/Group Family Child Care		
	DSS Market Rate Family care Weekly Rate	Private Pay Rate Family care Weekly Rate
Infants	\$266	\$216
Toddlers	\$252	\$207
Preschool	\$250	\$207

Both the subsidized/market rate and the private pay rate is more than the cost of public college tuition in New York: \$7,070 per year for a four year state college<sup>75</sup> or \$5,472 for a local two year college, not including room and board or books.<sup>76</sup>



As you can see from Chart 11, the cost of infant care is nearly twice as much as the annual cost of college tuition at a four year college. Not many families can afford to outright pay for their child to go to college; there are student loans, grants, etc. But parents are expected to cover the full cost of child care. This is often when they are young and new in their career with a lower salary. The child care system needs to change. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, care is considered affordable if it is 7% or less of a family's household income. New York State continues to rank in the top ten of the least affordable states for child care for children under the age of five.<sup>77</sup>

Although the cost of child care to parents is extremely high, child care centers are still struggling financially. The price charged to parents is less than what it costs a center to provide that care. The “True Cost of Care” for area programs is between 25% to 50% more than what they charge.

### **Roadblocks to Increasing Child Care Supply**

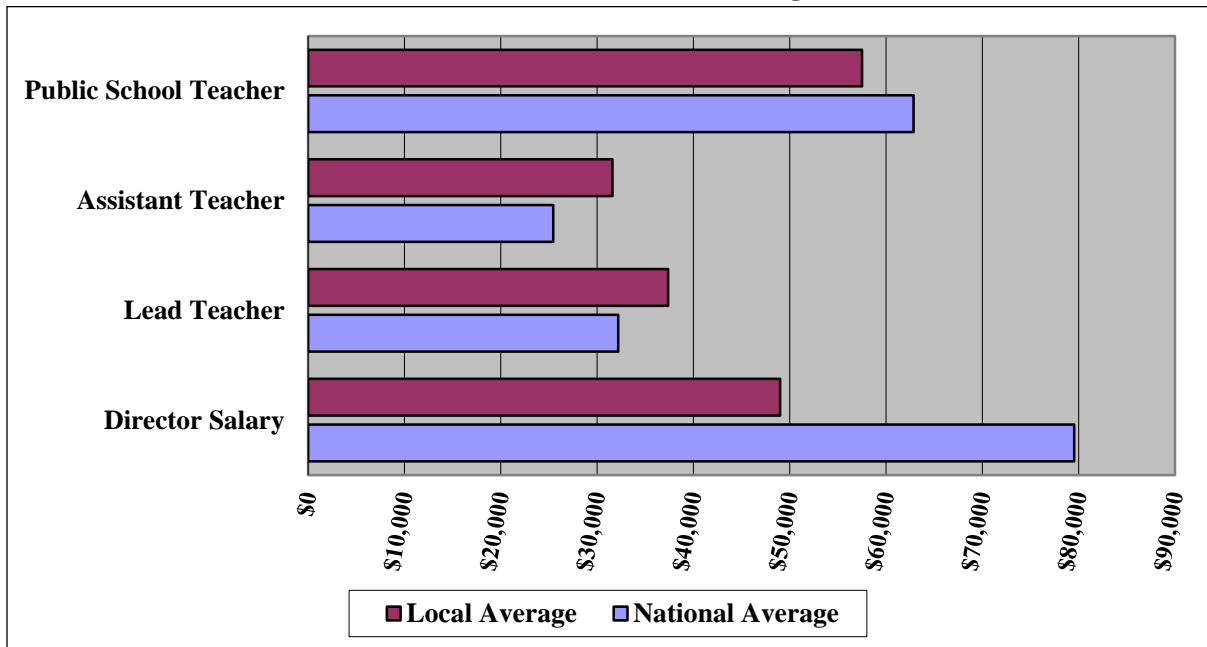
#### **Center Reasons**

The biggest cost for a child care center is salaries for staff. NYS OCFS regulations dictate required staff-child ratios. Even if a program can accommodate more children in the physical space, it is often not cost effective to add additional staff. Qualifications of child care providers are critical to high quality child care. However, the people we entrust to provide quality child care for our children are often not well compensated which does not attract highly qualified staff to the field. In 2023, on average in center-based care, an assistant teacher earned slightly above minimum wage, or \$15.19 per hour. With the continued increase of minimum wage, programs will have to increase the wage of these staff. The wage

for a lead teacher varied by education, but the average is \$17.98 per hour. Lead teachers are mandated to have further education, such as a Child Development Credential or an associate degree or higher.

The hourly rate teachers are paid is often determined by what a center can afford and not based on teacher qualifications or education. OCFS regulations determine the qualification and educational requirements for lead teachers or assistant teachers in centers. Higher education for a teacher may not necessarily mean higher compensation, especially enough to repay student loans for obtaining a degree. Many early childhood teachers leave child care for higher paying jobs in the public school system since public school teachers earn double to triple what a teacher with the same qualifications makes in child care.<sup>78</sup> The pay for child care providers across the country is an issue, but as indicated in Chart 12, local child care professionals earn right around the national average, except for directors, who earn less.<sup>79</sup>

**Chart 12: Child Care Staff Wages<sup>80</sup>**



With the low wages, child care center staff are struggling to provide for their own families. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) at the University of California, Berkeley conducted a study of teachers working in a QUALITYstarsNY program and issued a report “Teachers’ Voices: Work Environment Conditions That Impact Teacher Practice and Program Quality-New York.” The study found 40% of teaching staff resided in families that utilized at least one form of federal public support.<sup>81</sup>

OCFS offered Workforce Retention Grants in 2023, which provided all child care workers, working with children at least 15 hours a week, a one-time \$3000 bonus. Programs also received additional funding for recruitment and retention efforts. In our area, 776 providers and staff at child care programs were awarded \$3.5 million in funding.

#### Family Child Care Reasons

Increasing the supply of family-based child care programs also faces challenges. As noted in Charts 5 and 7, our area has seen a 66% decrease in family child care programs over the last decade. A variety of reasons are stated as to why programs close when exit surveys are conducted. Family providers often state the difficulty complying with regulations in their own home as a primary reason for closing their program. The second reason is that long standing providers are retiring due to age.

New, prospective providers are not opening to fill the void of the ones leaving the field. On average, three new family child care applications are ordered each month in all three counties. Barriers to completing the process include the difficulty meeting the regulation requirements, lack of communication with the licensor, costs, and necessary time to complete the background checks and training. Despite CCR&R staff assistance through the process, more support for the registration and licensing process is needed. Even with the

Desert Grant to expand child care, there were only a handful of new programs opened in 2022.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

Across the US, there is increasing recognition of the economic importance of child care. Early care and education is being recognized as an important economic sector in its own right, and as a critical piece of social infrastructure that supports children's development and facilitates parents' employment. Child care is an essential service so parents could work.

The local numbers of the child care industry show the importance to the local economy.

- **165 Small Businesses:** Child care centers, school age child care programs, and family child care programs are small businesses and contribute to the economic activity of our region.
- **72 Million Dollars:** The yearly cost of all regulated child care spots in our region is over \$72 million in child care payments.
- **1000 Workers:** Early care and education workers, directors, teachers, assistant teachers, and family child care providers is a large employment sector.
- **5,500 Children of Working Parents:** Parents are able to work because their children are in a child care program. Child care keeps other businesses running. Employers benefit by enhanced performance of their workers who use child care, because parents do not have to worry about their child's safety and can focus on work.

## **IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF CCR&R ISSUES**

This assessment indicates that the following community priorities need to be addressed by CCR&R programming:

1. Need to expand services for infant and toddler care throughout the service area.
2. Need to advocate for increased funding to support minimum wage increases.
3. Need to advocate for increased funding to meet the true cost of child care, through supportive funding for programs. Need to advocate for increased funding to support child care programs as the business model does not work. Parent tuition payments alone do not cover the costs of operating a child care program, but parents cannot afford to pay more.
4. Need to expand child care programs in all areas of Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties.
5. Need to expand services for children with challenging behaviors through mental health supportive services, including Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation projects.

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# COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAM



## **WAIVER PROGRAMS**

Family Enrichment Network begins our seventh year of providing waiver services to those with developmental disabilities/intellectual disabilities. The Home and Community-Base (HCBS) waiver program supports individuals in the community by providing a variety of services and supports that are uniquely tailored and individualized to meet each person's needs. These services are funded through Medicaid and support individuals who receive services under the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Waiver services can be self-directed as well as agency provider purchased (agency directed). FEN is approved to provide Community Habilitation and Community-based Prevocational Services.

## **COMMUNITY HABILITATION**

Community Habilitation consists of services designed to assist individuals in acquiring, retaining, and improving independent living skills, socialization, safety awareness and adaptive skills, pursuing interests and hobbies so that they are able to reside successfully in their home or in an IRA (group home). An individual can be approved for as little as two hours of service a week to more than 25 hours per week based on the needs of the individual, to ensure the individual's health, safety, and welfare.

Through the provision of this service, individuals learn, maintain, or improve skills through their participation in a variety of everyday life activities. They learn and use skills in the context of these activities; this can be considered a functional approach to the delivery of services. These activities must be necessary for individuals to live in the community, to live more independently, or to be more productive and participatory in community life. Services must be provided in a manner that ensures the person's health and safety. These services must be

person-centered and involve the individual in deciding which service, skill or goal would best benefit the individual.

In addition to supporting individuals in activities typically associated with those occurring in their homes and the immediate community, Community Habilitation services may also be used to provide staff assistance to support individuals in the following ways:

1. Support that enables the individual to access and use community resources such as instruction in using public transportation, translator and communication assistance, and companion services to assist the individual in shopping, appointments and other necessary activities of community life.
2. Support that assists the individual in developing financial stability and security, such as assistance in achieving self-support; general banking; balancing accounts; and budgeting.
3. Support that enables an individual to participate in community projects, associations, groups and functions, such as support that assists an individual to participate in a volunteer association, walking clubs, or a community work project.
4. Support that enables an individual to visit with friends and family in the community.
5. Support that enables the individual to exercise rights as a citizen, such as assistance in exercising civic responsibilities, living in a safe environment, choosing health care and choosing where they live.
6. Support that enables the individual to benefit from the participation of friends, relatives and advocates as part of the individual's support planning team.

Our Director of Community Services is currently providing 35 direct service hours per month to six individuals. There continues to be a waiting list for individuals looking for services. There continues to be a shortage of staff in the Waiver Department.

## **COMMUNITY BASED PREVOCATIONAL SERVICES**

Prevocational Services prepare individuals with developmental disabilities for paid employment or unpaid meaningful community activities, including volunteering. Prevocational Services have been redesigned to include new service delivery and documentation requirements. The Prevocational Service requirements apply to both individuals enrolled in the Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver, as well as no-waiver enrollees. To receive Prevocational Services, the individual must have: (a) expressed an interest in obtaining pre-employment skills, and (b) identified preparation for employment or job readiness as a valued outcome in his or her Individualized Service Plans (ISPs).

Prevocational Services are delivered in the community. The individual receives training in work related skills such as, time management, following directions, working with a team, transportation, proper work hygiene and so much more. An individual's Life Plan contains Community Based Prevocational Services, in addition to other OPWDD services such as Pathway to Employment, Supported Employment and/or Employment Training Program. At the end of the year, a Community Based Prevocational Assessment is required to observe and document how the individual is doing. Recommendations are required to determine what the individual may still need to accomplish or determine if the individual is ready to take the next step towards competitive employment in the community.

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Community Habilitation and Prevocational Services continue to struggle. Unfortunately, we are still experiencing the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. There remain many individuals who are still apprehensive to receive services in the community. A number of staff did not return in July 2020 leaving a huge gap in providing services. In February 2022, the last full time employee on staff retired. We were able to acquire one new staff member in September of 2023 and one new staff member in October 2023. This was very helpful in being able to bring back services to many participants in our Community Habilitation program. We continue to post employment offerings using many different venues but see very little interest. There continue to be barriers that have been identified in the hiring process which include:

1. Wage paid per hour: As a non-profit entity, it has been extremely difficult to compete with other employment opportunities in the area when a person can get paid \$17 per hour elsewhere. Due to funding, our ability to offer competitive salaries is limited, but we were able to increase the base pay to \$16.
2. Transportation: A staff person is required to use their own vehicle to transport an individual for services. With the cost of gasoline and maintenance to personal vehicles, this becomes an immediate deal breaker.

As an Agency, FEN continues to strive towards being able to offer a great employment package including many perks that make becoming a staff member appealing. We are living in a different and challenging time, but nonetheless, we will continue to work for the individual in the community who needs the services that we provide.

## **SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM**

The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) experienced its sixth year of serving as a summer employment site for participants in the program. The SYEP offers a paid work experience to eligible individuals between the ages of 14 to 21 who are members of families with incomes at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

The program provides many different opportunities such as maintenance, clerical, and food service. We were able to once again work with the Humane Society and the Greater Good Grocery. As more employers recover from limited hours and service, there will hopefully be more opportunities to be involved in the community such as the Ross Park Zoo to name one.

The program is a six week program that begins early July and runs through the end of August. Each participant is involved in an interview experience and, if found eligible, will be matched to an area of interest the best suits the young person. Work activities are scheduled Monday through Thursday and each Friday job readiness classes are offered that provide financial literacy, soft skills, career exploration, job readiness activities, and more. The youth will earn money and gain meaningful work experience; learn and develop the skills, attitudes and commitment necessary to succeed in today's world of work, gain exposure to various career opportunities and interact with dynamic working professionals in a positive work environment.

SYEP was able to provide a meaningful work experience for twelve young people this last summer. Of the twelve, six were able to realize perfect attendance and received an incentive for their dedication and hard work. As we go forward, we would like to be able to offer more youth the opportunities and will need to look at transportation needs to enable the youth to get to the opportunities off campus.





# FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM



## **INTRODUCTION**

Over the past year, the Family Support Services Department of Family Enrichment Network offered four programs, the Nutrition Outreach & Education Program (NOEP) and Walk with Me, in Broome County and the Kinship Care program in Broome and Tioga Counties. The Courthouse Children's Center located at the Broome County Family Court was kept closed most of 2022 at the request of the Broome County Family Court.

## **THE COURTHOUSE CHILDREN'S CENTER**

All Courthouse Children's Centers across New York State were closed by the Office of Court Administration on March 16, 2020 and they stayed closed for the remainder of that year and then stayed closed for all of 2021. The Children's Centers were given permission by the Office of Court Administration to reopen in 2022 based on the needs of the local Family Courts. In October, the 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District requested that the Broome County Children's Center reopen and the budget for operating the Center was revised to incorporate the mandated increases in NYS minimum wage. Based on the Center's limited funding, full time operation was no longer possible and only a reduced schedule of services could be offered. The Center, however, was not reopened in 2022 because staff could not be found. The agency has been faced with an employment crisis as the wages we can afford to offer are below people's current expectations. Once staff is hired the Children's Center will reopen.

In October 2023 the search for new staff was reenergized and a former courthouse Children's Center staff person was employed to help reopen the Center. Two staff were interviewed and as of January 2024 they are in process to get all the necessary clearances before they can begin working and the Center can be reopened for childcare. Per the Office of Court Administration rules, two staff must always be in attendance for the Center to be open.

When the Center is open it is a free drop-in childcare facility at the Broome County Family Courthouse, operated as a joint partnership between Family Enrichment Network and Broome County Family Court. This partnership is 22 years old as the Center opened its doors in September 2001. The professional early childhood staff cares for children six weeks to 12 years of age while their adult caregivers attend to business in either Family or Drug Courts. The Children’s Center staff offer a changing monthly curriculum to provide children with fun, educational, and safe experiences away from the high tensions that can erupt in the family court waiting room. Adults who leave children in the center are also offered a variety of community referrals and resources.

Changes in the Governor’s budget in 2013 resulted in the opening times of the Center being changed three times and finally, in June 2013, the funding was stabilized to provide four and a half days of childcare a week, which has continued through to March 2020. The Center was opened full day Monday through Thursday from 8:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. and half day on Friday mornings, 8:45 a.m. to 12 p.m. In 2022, it was determined that the Center could only be open four mornings and three afternoons. The Center will be operating full time until the end of the grant year on March 31, 2024. The hours of operation at that time will depend mostly on the amount of funding provided by the Office of Court Administration.

## **THE KINSHIP CARE PROGRAM**

“Kinship families” refer to those families that are raising someone else’s child because of upheavals or unhappy circumstances in the child’s original family group. The task of taking over the raising of children from fractured families or families in crisis often falls on those outside of the nuclear family unit. Kinship families are frequently headed by grandparents, however aunts, uncles, great aunts, great uncles, siblings, cousins, great grandparents, and other family members

as well as family friends and neighbors can also take on this responsibility. The sudden addition of children to a family group and the task of parenting a second time around can create unexpected financial hardships and emotional turmoil for these newly blended kinship families.

Grandparents raising grandchildren are a rapidly growing population in the US – the 2020 census estimated 5.9million children younger than 18 were living with a grandparent and in 2023 this estimate exceeded 7.1million.<sup>82</sup> In NYS 188,000 children were living with grandparents and other relatives who were not in kinship foster care. This information was shared at the February 9, 2021 joint legislative hearing for the Governor’s proposed human services budget.<sup>83</sup>

Kinship care refers to grandparents, aunts, uncles, other relatives, and family friends who are raising children. In the 2020 the NYS Kinship Navigator stated that in New York State, approximately 200,000 children lived with kinship caregivers. Of these less than 5,000 were living in a kinship foster care family. This meant that 150,000 kinship children were living in informal kinship families and not receiving the extended amount of financial support offered to those children in the formal foster care system.<sup>84</sup> Children live with kin because of parental neglect, drug/alcohol use, mental illness, incarceration, death, disability, and other unfortunate circumstances.

In Broome County, there are 2,371 grandparents reported as caregivers in a home with grandchildren under the age of 18 years. Of those, 1,221 or 51.5% are fully responsible for 2,226 grandchildren. This is well above the state level of 35%. Nearly 19% of grandparent caregivers live below the poverty level.<sup>85</sup> Grandparents and non-parent caregivers can have many questions about raising children in today’s society and many may not know where to turn for guidance and support.

Family Enrichment Network has been providing kinship care services to the community for 18 years, since November 2, 2005. The Kinship Care Program was one of the original funded Kinship Programs through the Office of Children's and Family Services and provided an informational help-line and a friendly ear, advocacy, referral services, monthly workshops, and up-to-date information on the legal rights of kinship caregivers. Support groups designed specifically to address the needs of kinship caregivers, and in-home parenting classes were offered along with social activities and community connections. This funding stream was consistent until September 30, 2012.

From October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2015 the Kinship Care Program was funded through the Kinship Navigator's Children's Bureau Grant. Initial funding included money for a Kinship Navigator Coordinator, whose position was primarily to work with the statewide Kinship Navigator Program in Broome County to distribute and collect Permission to Contact forms that funneled families needing kinship care first to the Kinship Navigator phone banks and then onto the FEN Kinship Program. In late summer of 2013, this funding was more than doubled so that from October 1, 2013 the Kinship Navigator Program provided extra funds to allow the program to continue to provide direct kinship services to kinship families through the Kinship Advocate and Kinship Counselor positions.

In September 2014, the Kinship Navigator Children's Bureau grant was refunded by Congress but for a smaller amount of funding, cutting one third of the program's grant amount. This resulted in the loss of the Kinship Navigator Program Coordinator and a reduction in the hours for the Broome County Kinship Advocate and the Broome County Kinship Counselor.

On September 1, 2015, the Kinship Care program was funded by an Office of Family and Children's Services (OCFS) grant with a five-year funding shell. This funding stream provided

for a fulltime kinship advocate to continue kinship services in Broome County with some limited advocacy services in Tioga County. The grant also provided some limited counseling hours for kinship families in Broome County.

From September 2015 through August 2016, the Kinship Care Program collaborated with Mother's & Babies Perinatal Network to provide kinship caregiver support groups and the kinship youth services. The new OCFS funding for the Kinship Program enabled the program services to be opened up to kinship families of any income level. In previous funding streams the program had been limited to providing services only to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) eligible families. Starting September 1, 2016 through August 31, 2020, the Kinship Care Program took over providing the support groups and parenting classes as required by the OCFS grant and was able to meet all the required targets. The OCFS funding ended in August 2020 and NYS Kinship Navigator stepped up to provide extra funds for our Kinship Care Program.

The Kinship Navigator funds began in September 2018 when they awarded supplemental funding to a few kinship care programs across New York State to provide peer mentor services and to strengthen the kinship caregiver's support groups. This funding enabled the program to add two peer mentors to the staff and to begin offering weekly kinship caregiver's support groups. Both these activities strengthened the services offered to kinship caregivers. When the OCFS funding ended in August 2020, NYS Kinship Navigator was able to increase their funding to the FEN Kinship Care program to allow kinship care services to continue. This was wonderful as it allowed the program to continue but the Kinship Navigator funds were not able to fully replace the OCFS funds so the kinship program continued with reduced staff hours. This also meant that the kinship counselor's position was eliminated. This reduction in staff hours along with the drop in community referrals from the pandemic restrictions meant our final numbers

were lower than in previous years. However, we still exceeded our revised lower targets.

In-person kinship care program services were curtailed in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, however throughout the COVID restrictions, the kinship staff were considered essential workers and continued to help families apply for the NPC grant, assisting by phone then safety stopping at homes to collect the necessary paperwork signatures while following all the social distancing and mask wearing mandates. By the start of 2021, staff were all working again from their offices and later in 2021 in-home visits began again based on kinship families' preferences. In 2022 it was back to business as normal.

In the past Kinship Navigator funded grant year, October 1, 2022 to September 31 2023, the Kinship Program enrolled 94 new unduplicated families into the program, assisted 141 kinship families with two or more community connections, which included referrals, advocacy service, DSS assistance, and material supports. Case management services were provided for 106 kinship families and 87 families were assisted with the Non Parent Caregiver (NPC) grant available through the local Departments of Social Services.<sup>86</sup> Please note that on average, the kinship program staff continued to work with about eight new kinship families a month and another 20 Kinship families who have been previously enrolled.

All external funding for the kinship program ended September 30, 2023 and from that date on the Kinship care program has continues in a part-time capacity, only being funded only by Family Enrichment Network. Because of the funding shortfall the full-time kinship peer mentor position was cut and only the part-time kinship advocate position remains.

## **NUTRITION OUTREACH & EDUCATION PROGRAM (NOEP)**

Family Enrichment Network's Nutrition Outreach & Education Program (NOEP) offers income eligible people assistance with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)



process in Broome County. The Broome NOEP Coordinator (NC) at FEN provides confidential prescreens for potential SNAP eligibility over the phone or in-person. If the applicant appears to be eligible after the pre-screening process, an appointment is set up for the NC to assist with application process, which includes guidance on paperwork, copying of necessary documents, and the completion of the application form. The NC can make home visits or meet with applicants in a convenient location of their choice or in the FEN office if the applicant prefers. As part of the application assistance the NC and the Broome County Department of Social Services SNAP unit have developed a system that allows the NC up to schedule up to five interview slots per week for the SNAP phone interviews required to complete the process. The NC provides technical assistance regarding the application and educates individuals about their rights and responsibilities regarding SNAP. The NOEP program has a wonderful relationship with the Broome County SNAP unit, and receives faxed benefits outcomes for each SNAP application that is submitted through the NOEP program. This communication allows the NC to follow up on any SNAP denials to determine if there were any problems with the application. The NC answers any questions people may have about SNAP through presentations and outreach efforts at area Senior Citizens Centers, disabled housing facilities, WIC sites, local food pantries, and the mobile food pantry distribution sites. This is a partial list of the outreach sites where the NOEP Coordinator addresses the application process, works to reduce the stigma attached to SNAP, and attempts to remove any other barriers to SNAP participation.

In 2014, FEN reapplied for the four year NOEP contract in Broome County and for a new NOEP contract in Tioga County. Both these proposals were successful and NOEP ran in both counties from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2018. The next grant contract was for another four years from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2022, but only for Broome County. On July 1, 2022 FEN

was awarded another four year contract through to June 30, 2026. As of 2022, FEN has been operating a NOEP in Broome County for 20 years, since 2003.

The COVID-19 Pandemic that started in March 2020 has had far reaching effects on the NOEP program. The NC was deemed an essential worker and continued to assist households with the SNAP application process, mainly by phone during 2020. However, the NC still went to people's homes to collect the requisite application signatures and the documents that needed to be copied and submitted with the application. All COVID-19 safety measures were followed. The pandemic restrictions stopped all forms of community outreach, which was a main source of SNAP referrals. In the 2021 the NOEP Coordinator was able to restart in-person and home based meetings. However the referral numbers for SNAP applicants remained low until after the extra government COVID relief benefits were discontinued. While these extra Covid benefits provided important assistance to households it did lead to a much lower usage of the local food pantries. This was reported to the NOEP Coordinator from the Catholic Charities food pantries in Binghamton and Endicott. The SNAP referrals started to increase in the last quarter of 2021 and the local DSS SNAP unit was quickly overwhelmed and required the SNAP intake staff to work on Saturdays to catch up on the backlog.

Please note that in December 2021, the NOEP program was transferred to the Community Services Department at FEN and was not managed by the FSS Department for six months, until it was returned to the FSS Department's management again in July 2022. Unfortunately this move out of the FSS department was not successful and some of the target numbers suffered.

During the 2022-2023 grant year, the number of prescreens were 491, this included both full and quick prescreens, and enabled 278 households to receive SNAP benefits.<sup>87</sup> The NC also

shared information about the SNAP process with 1,553 individuals across Broome County at visibility events and community presentations.<sup>88</sup> In the 2023 NOEP grant year, Hunger Solutions our contract managers offered Family Enrichment Network funding for a second NOEP Coordinator to work in Broome County. This was based on statewide demographics showing large pockets of Broome County SNAP eligible recipients not enrolling in the SNAP program and extra funding that Hunger Solutions had received. Our second NOEP Coordinator started in August 2023 and this position has enabled the NOEP program to do more outreach in the rural areas and with more grassroots hunger programs that have sprung up in Broome County in the past year. In 2023 these grassroots organizations included Blessing Boxes, Facebook pages such as Feeding Broome and the Wagon Warriors.<sup>89</sup> The Wagon Warriors provide food and supplies to the unhoused, hosting a weekly community meal at the Crossroads of Life Church and food handouts at the Broome County library. In the warmer months they take to the streets with their food in wagons. The Feeding Broome Facebook page provides information on random pop-up food giveaways across the County.

In 2022, 23% of children were living in poverty in Broome County according to statistics from Data USA.<sup>90</sup> In 2019 The Schulyer Center for Analysis and Advocacy stated that in 2019 that New York Children were more likely to live in poverty than in 32 other states and 18% (nearly one in five) of children in NYS children lived in poverty.<sup>91</sup> Broome County exceeds this state-wide statistic.

The Broome County the Council of Churches in league with the Food Bank of the Southern Tier and Binghamton University developed an Emergency Food Resources Map (EFAM)<sup>92</sup> that locates all the food resources in Broome County, including food pantries, blessing boxes, mobile food pantry locations, community meals, grocery stores and bus routes and bus

stops. Summer meals schools, senior centers and shelters are also included. The map is interactive and highlights the addresses and times of operation for these food resources. Broome County now has 18 Blessing Boxes, which are small outdoor boxes with free food for anyone in need. This is a definite increase in grassroots community efforts to address issues of hunger in our area.

Feeding Broome is a new Facebook group that advertises pop-up food distributions across the Broome County, and Wagon Warriors are another grass roots group who provide a hot meal every Monday night at the Crossroads of Life Church in downtown Binghamton. The same group provides food on Tuesday mornings at the Broome County library.

## **SNAP**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's premiere defense against hunger, designed to support low-income households in need of nutrition assistance. Permanently authorized by Congress in 1964, SNAP is an entitlement program, which means that any individual who applies and meets the established eligibility requirements may receive benefits. Eligibility standards are uniform nationwide, as a result of Federal legislation in 1977. In New York State, SNAP is funded and governed by the United States Department of Agriculture and administered by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), local county Departments of Social Services, and the Human Resources Administration in New York City. Eligibility for SNAP is based on factors such as household income, immigrant status, and meeting work requirements. SNAP also has special eligibility rules for households that contain a senior or disabled member or a working family with dependent child care or adult care costs.

In order to receive SNAP benefits, certain guidelines must be met. A household without

an elderly or disabled member must have monthly gross income below 130% of poverty guidelines. A new rule enacted in July 2016 increased the amount of money (up to 150% of the poverty income guidelines) that households with a working individual can earn and still be eligible for SNAP. This represents a 20% increase in gross income, thus a family of four can earn \$410 more per month and still have the potential to qualify for SNAP. Elderly and/or disabled households and/or working families with dependent child care or adult care costs related to employment or training can have a monthly gross income up to 200% of poverty guidelines.

Individuals may apply for SNAP benefits at the Department of Social Services at any time during regular business hours and approval or denial of SNAP is required within 30 days of the intake interview. Applications eligible for expedited SNAP benefits must now have a determination made within seven to ten calendar (not business) days. Benefits in New York State are now issued in the form of an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, used like a debit card at grocery stores, retail locations, and senior centers. SNAP can be used to purchase seedling/vegetables plants, Meals on Wheels, meals at senior centers, and at farmer's markets that have an EBT card reader.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of relief bills were passed by the government to address the food issues facing so many people across the nation who had lost their jobs because of the restrictions. Pandemic EBT was a special program that awarded any family with children extra food stamp benefits to offset the fact that children were no longer attending school and unable to get their school lunches. This extra benefit was available to everyone with children, regardless of income. The government also increased the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit so that everyone receiving SNAP benefits was eligible for the maximum allotment based on family size. This maximum benefit provided a huge relief for

households, but at the same time created an increase in the number of applications for the SNAP unit to process. Households who may have only been eligible for the minimum of \$23 were now able to receive \$281. This is meant that people were now anxious to apply for SNAP which created a huge and unexpected surplus of SNAP applications for the SNAP unit to process with no additional staff, creating a huge backlog and SNAP applications are taking at least twice as long to process. This observation is based on the calls the NC receives from SNAP applicants asking ask why that haven't received their SNAP yet. It is also based on the conversations had with staff at the SNAP unit reporting how far behind they are in processing applications and their new extended time lines.

In 2023, 14,923 households (3.30% increase from 2021), consisting of 25,907 individuals, (4.09% increase from 2021) received SNAP assistance in Broome County. Of these, 9,734 households consisting of 19,141 individuals were “SNAP Only” cases, meaning that 65% of the individuals receiving SNAP in Broome County were working poor or collecting some type of other benefit (SSI, SSDI Social Security, etc.) but not receiving any temporary cash assistance. The much smaller group of 5,189 households with 6,766 individuals, or 26% of SNAP recipients, received cash assistance as well and are counted in our lowest income population.<sup>93</sup> These numbers suggest that those households in Broome County who participate in SNAP are largely the working poor, disabled, and/or senior citizens. Please note that many more households applied for SNAP but were denied because they did not meet the financial eligibility requirements; however, these families were still facing food and hunger insecurities. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities states in their 2022 New York State fact sheet that more than 53% of SNAP participants are in families with children, more than 48% are in families with members who are older adults or are disabled and more than 37% are in working families.<sup>94</sup>

Hunger Solutions NY stated that in Broome County, 25,180 people or 12.8% were food insecure and 7,650 children or 19.9% were counted as child food insecure. Also 16.3% of the total Broome County population receives SNAP and only 31 - 40 % of the eligible population receives WIC benefits.<sup>95</sup>

### **Alternative Food Assistance Networks / Emergency Food Systems**

Originally intended as a last resort for those in need of immediate assistance, more and more working families, single adults, students, children, and senior citizens are relying on the emergency food system as a regular source of food. State guidelines determining who may receive emergency food do not currently exist; however, individual emergency food providers often establish their own income guidelines and may limit the number of allowed visits. For over the past 25 years, New York State Department of Health's Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) provided State and Federal funds to improve the quality of food distributed to an estimated total of 2,600 Emergency Food Relief Organizations (EFRO) such as food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens and emergency shelters in New York State, which provide over 195 million meals each year to people who are in need.<sup>96</sup>

Eight regional food banks in New York, responsible for the solicitation, warehousing and distribution of bulk food donations, also provide technical support and mini-grant funding to emergency food providers. The NOEP Coordinators at Family Enrichment Network work closely with the staff of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier and the local food pantries to ensure that any client utilizing the food banks, but not receiving SNAP benefits, is referred to the NOEP Coordinator. Likewise, individuals who learn about NOEP from other sources are referred by the NOEP Coordinator to food resources in the community. These collaborative efforts account for

many referrals to NOEP.

It is important to note that the Food Bank Southern Tier (FBST) serves six Southern Tier counties, and in Broome County in 2022 (the most recent data available) the Food Bank of the Southern Tier (FBST) distributed 5 million pounds of food in collaboration with the Community Hunger Outreach Warehouse (CHOW). There were 181 Mobile Food Pantry distributions in Broome County that distributed 937,724 pounds of food. 11,375 senior visits were made to Mobile Food Pantries. The Back Pack program distributes weekend meals to needy school children throughout the school year and 27,894 packs were distributed to children in the program. Ten schools housed School Food Centers and food was also distributed through 43 partner agencies. The food distribution included 827,067 pounds of fresh produce though out Broome County and finally FBST states that a total of 23,970 people are food insecure (these are 2021 figures) in Broome County with one in eight individuals at risk of hunger and one in seven children at risk of hunger.<sup>97</sup>

According to an article in Stacker, an online media reporting source, printed September 13, 2022, Broome County was listed as having the sixth highest rate of food insecurity for children in New York State. The article referenced data from Feeding America and stated that “Food insecurity hits children particularly hard. The USDA estimates that more than 5.5 million children lived in food-insecure households in 2021. Not having consistent access to enough food can affect cognitive abilities, overall health, moods, and attention spans—not to mention the psychological effects of living with scarcity.” The Broome County statistics included a child food insecurity rate of 19.4% (7,210 total) and 3.3 % higher than the national average. Broome county also had a food insecurity rate of 13.8% (26,490 total), 2% higher than the national average and the county had an annual food budget shortfall of \$14,670,000 at a cost of \$3.44 a



meal.<sup>98</sup> Given the rate of inflation and increasing food costs in 2023, \$3.44 a meal is nowhere near enough. Across the board New York State has a child food insecurity rate of 14.6%, which ranks 21<sup>st</sup> across all states.

## **WALK WITH ME**

Walk with Me (WWM) is a reentry program designed to assist individuals as they are released from the Broome County Jail. WWM has been in operation running for the past five and half years, beginning June 1, 2018 and funded through the United Way, the Community Foundation of South Central New York, and the Binghamton United Presbyterian Church (UPC) through to June 30, 2019 for the first year of operation. The second year, WWM was funded through UPC and a special grant from the Broome County District Attorney's office Crime Prevention Funds. This funding ran from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. The last six months the WWM program was solely funded by the UPC.

In 2021, the program was funded by a Town of Union Block Grant from October 1, 2020 to September 31, 2021 and was renewed in October 2021 through to September 2022. It was refunded again October 2022 to September 2023 and thankfully in October 2023 was renewed for another year but at a reduced amount. This funding was specifically for reentry residents from Endicott, Endwell, Johnson City, and Maine. All other Broome county residents were served by WWM through continuing funding from the Binghamton United Presbyterian Church, for the calendar years of 2021, 2022, and again for 2023.

Initially, the Walk with Me program (WWM) was a collaboration between Family Enrichment Network, Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier (JUST), and the Broome County Urban League's ATTAIN Lab with the aim to optimize resources and work efficiently to address the challenges an individual faced when released from the Broome County Jail. As there are

limited options available in Broome County to promote successful reentry, the collaboration sought to increase opportunities for individuals through a holistic approach. One such effort was offering a digital literacy program and basic computing skills through the ATTAIN Lab; however, experience revealed that newly released individuals had far too many challenges meeting their basic needs and gaining a sense of stability. The digital literacy and computer skills had to take a back seat to finding housing and employment, getting health care and medications set up, and meeting all the requisite appointments required by probation and other mandated services such as mental health and substance abuse treatments.

The issues that recently incarcerated individuals face are compounded within the local jail systems. National reports indicate that many incarcerations are avoidable, with an increasing majority of inmates being jailed due to untreated substance abuse and/or mental health issues. The publication dated March 2017, “Documenting Injustice in Broome County: The need for an Investigation of the Abuses of Over-incarceration Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier Prepared by: William Martin and Andrew J. Pragacz”, points out that “very few of the persons held in the jail are the ‘drug kingpins’ paraded for the media: over 70% of those held in the jail are waiting un-convicted and too poor to afford the excessively high bails imposed in county courts for relatively minor offenses.” Martin and Pragacz highlight that “The Public Defender and Public Prosecutor have publicly stated that over 80% of those incarcerated have substance use disorders.” In a January 26, 2018 news interview with WBNG, Sheriff Harder stated, "We've taken in over 20,000 people within the past five years with all kinds of illnesses and problems." What's startling is that according to the Press and Sun Bulletin there have been nine deaths at the Broome County Jail since 2011.<sup>99</sup> Further investigation reveals 12 deaths have now occurred at the jail by December 2022. The eleventh death was in 2019<sup>100</sup> as noted in two media articles, and

the twelfth death in November 2022.<sup>101</sup> The medical care concerns at the jail have now reached a crisis level.

In September 2023 an article was published by the online magazine *New York Focus* and it reviewed the lack of care at Broome County jail for opioid users. The title says it all, “‘Doom County Jail’ Dysfunction Plagues Program for Incarcerated Opioid Users.”<sup>102</sup> The article details many of the failures and weaknesses of the current opioid treatment program in the Broome County jail.

Jails are not therapeutic nor do they have the resources or services in place to help promote successful reintegration into the community once an inmate is released. Research indicates that successful reentry programs for inmates rely on addressing mental health issues, providing mentoring, offering educational opportunities and job training, and connecting them with community resources.

In our community, we have limited services available for those coming out of the Broome County Jail. Data revealed by the 2015 Community Foundation of South Central New York Needs Assessments for Broome County indicates funding recommendations for programs supporting families with incarcerated or newly released parents. Family Enrichment Network’s most recent Community Assessment reveals that 21% of our families have been or are affected by incarceration. The Walk with Me program provides advocacy, peer mentoring, assistance with securing employment, and critical services only for those who are leaving the Broome County Jail and reentering the community. These services include assistance with:

- Applying for cash assistance through the local Broome County Department of Social Services
- Reestablishing benefits such as SSI and SSDI, if applicable

- Obtaining stable housing before emergency shelter is exhausted
- Obtaining valid identification and documents need to start a job search such as birth certificate, transcripts, rap sheet, and Certificates of Relief of Disabilities
- Accessing support groups focusing on self-esteem and confidence builders
- Job search skills, identifying marketable skills, developing a resume and reference list
- Completing job applications and soft skills training; practicing mock interviews
- Educating participants on addressing convictions and incarceration with prospective employers

The mission of the Walk with Me project is to aid in the successful reentry for those who do not have any support when leaving the jail system. Typically, WWM services are for those individuals who lack supportive relationships from family or friends and often have significant personal needs. In 2023, the program served 62 individuals over the course of the year with boots on the ground crisis management and stabilization support. JUST provides support groups and advocacy efforts to help further the successful reintegration of those reentering our community. Together with our key supporters, we have been able to ensure a successful program implementation.

From January 2023 to December 2023, the fifth year of the program, the following services were provided.

- 62 intake assessments were completed and 57 participants enrolled in the program.
- 36 participants received benefits assistance, 62 made a meaningful community connection, and 63 received referrals.
- 50 participants received assistance with transportation to get their emergency assistance needs met upon their release and to other necessary appointments.

- 62 participants received one-on-one advocacy/peer counseling and referrals to the JUST support groups.
- 12 participants received employment skills training. Please note that not all participants required employment skills training because of their physical or mental health status and their receiving SSI or SSDI benefits. Some participants were required by their probation officers to attend mental health or substance abuse programs, before they were allowed to seek employment.
- 22 participants received help finding stable housing. This number is still down from the previous year because of the huge lack of housing options for any low income person in Broome County. Some participants ended up living in DSS emergency hotels for many months because of the lack of housing available.
- 43 participants received financial assistance that helped with cell phones and minutes (extremely important for making and keeping appointments, finding housing and eventually employment), basic hygiene items, clothing (underwear and work clothes), bus passes, household items, laundry tokens, and food.
- Of the 57 participants enrolled in the program, 27 individuals or 47% graduated from the program, 17 or 29% withdrew from the program, either because they left the area or declined to stay involved, and 13 were still active participants.<sup>103</sup>

## **IDENTIFICATION OF UNMET PROGRAMS NEEDS**

### Courthouse Children's Center

- Increased funding for the Children's Center to address the state mandated minimum wage increases: Governor Cuomo signed legislation enacting a statewide \$15 minimum wage plan that lifted the earnings, in all industries across the state of more than 2.1 million

New Yorkers, in the 2016-17 State Budget. On December 31, 2016, the first in a series of wage increases went into effect and the minimum wage was established for upstate New York as \$9.70 an hour. On December 31, 2021 it increased to \$13.20 an hour, December 31, 2022 increased to \$14.20 an hour for 2023.<sup>104</sup> The Center is flat funded for four years and this well-deserved increase is putting a large strain on the already thin budget to run the Center. This now means there are not enough funds to reopen the Center fulltime.

### Kinship Care Program

- Continued funding for the kinship program remains the most important priority as funding for the program ended September 30, 2023 with no new funding streams available. Because of the need in the community, Family Enrichment Network did not want to see the program end and is funding the program part-time while alternative funds are being sought.
- Legal and Pro Bono Legal Services: Legal Assistance for Kinship Caregivers has been an ongoing unmet need identified in the last ten community assessments. Many of the families in the kinship database indicated a need for legal information or legal services to help them with their kinship situation. Some kinship families are still being told that they must seek temporary custody before they can apply for cash assistance, which is incorrect. Many kinship providers report spending thousands of dollars for lawyers, to help them negotiate the legal system and protect their kinship children while seeking full custody or working toward a permanent living situation. When kinship children's parents are unable to pay for an attorney, family court can appoint one, but unfortunately, if the kinship provider cannot afford an attorney, there is generally no court appointed attorney available unless the kinship provider is disabled. This means that many kinship providers

can be pulled into court and not have recourse but to use life savings or take out loans to pay for necessary legal representation or else run the risk of losing custody of their kinship children. In previous grants the Kinship Program was funded to provide free one-time legal consultation for up to 50 Kinship families. The plan was designed to help a kinship caregiver determine if they needed a lawyer to pursue their case in family court and to establish how much legal representation they would need. While this was helpful, experience has shown that in too many cases one legal consultation was not enough as kinship custody issues are complicated and protracted and most kinship families could not afford the lengthy legal fees. Kinship caregivers need pro bono legal services to help them resolve their complicated custody issues.

- Reinstate Free Kinship Counseling Services: In Broome and Tioga Counties, there are not enough free mental health services or providers that accept Medicaid. Trauma based counseling services are needed to stabilize kinship families and help kinship children deal with the grief and loss they experience because of their kinship situation. OCFS funding for the Kinship Program required the use of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) survey to help determine the amount of toxic stress a kinship child may have experienced. The community at large has become aware of ACEs studies and the recommendation that any amount of toxic stress should be addressed to prevent long term health problems. The higher the ACEs score, the greater the chance of the child experiencing serious physical and mental health problems, addictions, homelessness, and suicide.

In September 2020, the new funding stream for the Kinship Care program did not provide for any counseling services and families must now be referred to other

community resources. The biggest challenge in using community counseling services is that many agencies cannot provide counseling to children unless the kinship caregiver has legal custody or signed permission from the parent. Many kinship caregivers enter into the kinship relationship through safety plans developed by the local Department of Social Services, without any form of legal custody. Even when kinship caregivers apply for custody it can take months for a decision to be made and Family Court is backlogged because of COVID-19 restrictions. Parents are often unresponsive or at times cannot even be located, so getting signed permission slips for a child's counseling is not an available option. This means that many kinship children experiencing toxic stress/trauma are unable to access the counseling services they need.

- Increased substance use disorder programs: In 2022, the number of children coming into kinship families has remained very high because of the ongoing issues with drug addictions exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic restrictions. Local community resources were limited and those with substance use issues had to rely on virtual platforms for their addictions services. The Kinship Program data shows that substance use along with mental health issues is the most frequent reason that children are unable to stay with their parents and are moved into kinship care. While there has been a concerted effort by the community to increase services for those with substance use disorders there are still challenges and barriers for those seeking assistance and demand exceeds the availability of services. Staff still report long waits for addiction services for those with substance use disorder. Service delivery has not kept up with the community need.
- Respite Care: Respite care is very important and mostly unavailable for kinship families. For kinship families, respite care is defined as the opportunity for kinship caregivers to



spend an extended period of time away from their kinship children. This does not apply to babysitting offered during a meeting to allow a caregiver to participate. Family Enrichment Network's Kinship Program has been unable to fulfill any requests received from kinship caregivers for daylong, overnight or weekend respite care. Currently in our community respite care is available through Catholic Charities for families who have children with a mental health diagnosis. Respite Care is provided in a number of formats: community-based, out of home, recreational or group. However, kinship families whose children do not have a mental health diagnosis have no extended respite care available to them at all. Based on responses from local kinship caregivers at support group meetings, there is a strong need for this service. The extended family that generally is available to help family members with occasional childcare is over utilized once these same family members become kinship caregivers. Since the tables have been turned for kinship families there are often no other family relationships and resources available to help out.

- Transportation: Transportation in rural areas remains a mainly unmet need for many kinship families. Access to services is a problem for families that live in rural Broome and Tioga counties as public transportation is limited to the urban core and the country services are very limited and nonexistent in Tioga County. Even though Medicaid can provide medical transportation for medical appointments, therapy, and substance abuse counseling, this does not help kinship families get to all their counseling appointments, support groups, workshops and appointments they must attend. Without reliable, available transportation, children can and do miss out on the help they really need.

#### NOEP

- Free food boxes to give out immediately to people applying for SNAP. Some households applying for SNAP are considered expedite eligible. This means they have the lowest

income with the least amount of resources and their food needs are immediate. Pre-COVID an expedited household would receive their SNAP benefits within five business days. During COVID this stretched from seven to ten days and by the end of 2022 expedite households were waiting a month to get their SNAP benefits approved. This means the system is flawed. The NOEP office should have free food boxes ready to distribute immediately to expedite eligible households. These food boxes should also include food suitable for our unhoused population.

- Access to healthy affordable fruit/vegetables in food deserts and rural areas. This problem goes hand-in-hand with the lack of grocery stores; in 2015 the addition of two more CHOW buses (a mobile community Farmer's Market that provides healthy, low-cost produce to the public) has helped improved access for fresh fruits and vegetables for some of those located in the food desert in Broome County. However, this extended CHOW bus program was reduced in 2018, once again leaving underserved communities. This included the CHOW bus that visited the FEN Cherry Street site each week that was cancelled because of the reassignment of CHOW's AmeriCorps students to other programs. In 2023 the CHOW bus was no longer running because of staffing and funding issues.

In 2017, the City of Binghamton, CHOW, and the Lee Barta Community Center started a North Side Grocery Shuttle bus to give the residents of Binghamton's North Side (a food desert) access to free transportation to two local grocery stores. This has helped one of the urban food deserts but the rural families are still struggling with access to affordable fruits and vegetables. Finally, in 2020, the Broome County Council of Churches built and opened a new community supermarket the Greater Good Grocery on

the Eastside of Binghamton, a region that had been a food desert for 25 years.<sup>105</sup>

- Access to free Summer Meals for rural children: In both Broome and Tioga counties, many SNAP eligible children rely on the free and reduced school breakfast and school lunch programs for their daily meals. This was identified as a major problem in 2015 by the Tioga County Anti-Hunger Task Force. Broome County Child Hunger Task Force developed and implemented some strategies in 2015 to start addressing the needs of hungry rural children as well. However, this problem still needs more solutions as at this time the participation rate of SNAP eligible children at Broome County summer meal sites is only 22%. In 2022, the number of children receiving meals during the summer continued to improve with the distribution of the Pandemic Electronic Benefit (EBT) Cards for every family in New York with school age children. This assistance was not income based and was designed to make sure that children could access food during the COVID-19 restrictions. However, transportation to summer meals locations still remains a challenge for rural children who live in homes without daytime transportation.
- Access to and participation in school breakfast programs: In Broome County, the number of SNAP eligible children who participate in the free and reduced school breakfast programs was able to increase due to the extra benefits made available through the Pandemic benefits. In 2020, Congress provided school waivers that allowed all children, regardless of income, to access free school breakfasts and lunches. Sadly, this benefit expired in the new school year of September 2022. When all children were eligible, stigma was decreased and participation increased. Children require proper nutrition to focus and learn. The public needs more education on this program and schools need to remove the barriers that prevent children from participating.<sup>106</sup> In 2015, the Binghamton

School District was designated as a free school meals district because of the high percentage of income eligible families. This allowed all children to have free school meals, and this designation will at least remain with the ending of the pandemic benefits.

- Assist more college students to obtain SNAP: Although there are special rules that limit the eligibility of students, NOEP must continue to develop collaborations to educate and advocate for eligible college students in Broome County at the local university, the community college and business schools. In 2020, as part of the government's COVID-19 relief bills, the rules for college students were changed to allow greater access for students to SNAP benefits; however this is only a temporary change. Even with the improvement in student eligibility there still are many college students who struggle with food insecurity while trying to get their education. As reported in September 2019 by the State University of New York, 78% of SUNY campuses have food pantries and the other 22% are in partnership with off campus pantries to help address the issue of student hunger.<sup>107</sup> The NOEP program has made a concerted effort to reach out to college students, but many of the eligibility regulations are restrictive and too many students cannot qualify and go hungry.
- Access to specialized food for those with medical conditions: Those who suffer from celiac disease (gluten intolerance), diabetes, or other medical conditions requiring specific types of food, are particularly vulnerable when faced with hunger. These individuals have a difficult time finding the correct food at local food pantries and can have no other option but to eat food that is harmful for their medical condition. Currently there is no system in place to provide for those with a nutritional/dietary condition. Please note this does not refer to people who are trying to lose weight, but those with serious

food allergies and/or food restrictions.

### Walk With Me

- Affordable and available housing: All of the people being released from the Broome County Jail without family supports struggle with finding immediate and affordable housing. Although there is a county-wide centralized system for homeless people to access housing, the system has not been very successful for the formerly incarcerated population. HUD definitions do not count coming out of jail as homeless, to be eligible our WWM participants would have to spend the night on the street. Removing the barriers for this population is essential. In 2020 through 2021, the government placed a moratorium on evictions as one way to prevent homelessness during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This was a very positive step; however it also stalled the availability of housing in our local area. It has been exceedingly difficult for newly released individuals to find any housing at all and some of the program participants have spent over seven months in emergency shelters and motels instead of a few week because there is no affordable housing available.
- Transportation issues: Bus passes are expensive for unemployed individuals and bicycles can offer an affordable option of transportation. Increased options to provide bicycles for this population would increase employment opportunities and help address the issues that arise from a public transportation system that does not provide for second and third shift workers and those that live outside of the urban core. For the first three months of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Broome County Transit Authority made all the bus routes free to travel on. This was a wonderful economic boost for the participants in the program who had very limited incomes. In some towns in the United States, there has been a move

to making the public bus system free, which greatly helps those in poverty situations and increases ridership.

## **IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES COMMUNITY-WIDE NEEDS**

### Housing

- Increase safe, affordable, permanent, low-income housing options. Broome County is suffering from a well-documented lack of affordable low income housing. The Broome County Department of Social Services is desperate to find more landlords to put on their housing lists. The area has seen a building boom for upmarket and luxury apartments and many of the usual low income housing options have changed to housing for college students. This has left a huge gap in availability for low income residents and increased the rents for substandard housing. This also affects large families who are forced into substandard housing because houses with enough bedrooms are overpriced and unaffordable even to working families. These families are often faced with choosing between rent, heating their homes, and eating.
- Increase code inspections and enforcement to help reduce substandard housing. DSS does not pay rent to landlords who are out of compliance with housing codes. Across Broome County, however, there is a lack of conformity in code violation inspections. This contributes to the continuing presence of substandard housing being rented by low-income families.
- Increase appropriate, well-maintained emergency hotels that are up to code and located in areas with services, such as bus stops and supermarkets. Currently, two of the emergency motels utilized by Broome County DSS are over a mile away from the closest bust stop

and a few miles from a supermarket and drug store and a third emergency motel has no bus service at all. This means that participants from the reentry program are placed well outside of a livable service area which only increases the challenges they face in trying to take care of themselves and get to and from their necessary and often mandated appointments. This is compounded in winter snow and ice and creates a set up for failure. Recently the kinship care program has worked with kinship caregivers who are unhoused and placed in motels as well.<sup>108</sup>

- Increase transitional housing and expand housing options for vulnerable populations to include those who are: developmentally delayed; domestic violence survivors; homeless; mentally ill; seniors; and those returning from jails and prisons. Transitional housing for reentry populations is limited by the housing codes of certain municipalities. This created a problem for the agency when trying to set up a rooming house in the Town of Union on to discover that it was against code. Housing codes also need to be examined to curtail student housing and increase housing options for families needing three and four bedrooms.
- Increase the number of housing shelters that operates on a Housing First Model for mentally ill and/or chemically dependent individuals who are acting out or off their medications. There is a serious lack of housing in the community for these individuals, because if they are not dangerous to themselves or others, they cannot be admitted to a psychiatric ward and there are almost no other housing options available for them. In 2020 Family Enrichment Network started building a 19 apartment building for homeless individuals and families following Housing First Model. The apartment complex opened early 2021 and provides supportive case management services to the tenants. However,

this was only a small step in the right direction and the need still remains.

- Increase night time shelters for unhoused individuals. In 2023 a new Comfort Station opened at the United Presbyterian Church, Chenango St. Binghamton to provide night time shelter for unhoused individuals from Sunday through Thursday. But they are not open on Friday and Saturday nights. On these nights unhoused people must sleep at the bus station, on the streets, under bridges or in abandoned buildings unless the weather is below freezing. On those cold nights extra beds are made available at other shelters. Our community is not taking care of our most vulnerable populations.
- Provide safe spaces for unhoused people to spend their days. During the day the unhoused population has no safe reliable place to spend their time or leave their belongings while they try to attend to their business. The bus station and the Broome County Library are places utilized by our unhoused population, but these locations are not designed for this purpose. A day program location could provide resources and comfort.
- Increase housing for sex offenders. There is an acute lack of acceptable, legal housing for sex offenders in our community. This also becomes a problem for our reentry population. In 2020, it became impossible to find housing for those released from jail with a sex offender status. This situation has only become more difficult in 2022 with the complete lack of housing options and the restrictions that prohibits these individuals from living within a certain distance of schools, libraries, parks and other places that children may congregate. Landlords also do not want to rent to individuals once they find out about their particular crimes.



## Food Insecurity

- Increase the number of supermarkets in Binghamton. At the start of 2020, Binghamton's Eastside and the Center City did not have any supermarkets and were considered food deserts. The only place families could purchase food were at some Dollar Stores and the more expensive small corner markets and gas stations. In 2017, a North Side Grocery Shuttle bus was instituted and provides residents with a chance to shop at a supermarket two days a week. This is a wonderful start but is not the same as having a permanent supermarket in the area. In 2020, the Broome County Council of Churches started building the Greater Good Grocery Store, a community grocery store on Binghamton's Eastside which opened in early in 2021. This has now helped one of the food deserts in our area. However, there are still communities without a reliable source of fresh affordable produce.
- Offer more Mobile Food Pantries in Western Broome. Endicott and Johnson City are underserved by the Mobile Food Pantry (MFP) and both these towns have large populations of low income households. In 2019, the MFP sites continue in Endicott with two distributions and four distributions a year at the Cherry Street FEN location in Johnson City. The COVID-19 MFPs changed from the usual walk-up format to a drive-through format. This was useful for the larger number of households that didn't usually access MFP but a detriment for the lower income households without cars.
- Increase evening hours at food pantries. More food pantries need to offer evening hours for those people who work during the day, as the number of individuals suffering food insecurity has increased in the county particularly with inflation and rising food costs.
- Increase WIC Clinic hours and locations. Access to WIC benefits for pregnant and

nursing women, infants and children under five years of age increased due to COVID-19 changes. In person appointments were changed to phone appointments, which was a big bonus for families. However, WIC hours still fall between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday with only one Saturday morning a month. This is a detriment for working families who cannot make appointments outside of their work hours.

- Reduce social stigma and increase participation in SNAP. The elderly population in particular needs more education about SNAP and that it is a benefit program available to all who are eligible. Seniors often think their participation will preclude others who are eligible from receiving food.
- Provide allergy free foods at Food Pantries. Individuals facing food allergies have limited options at food pantries. Even those who have been medically recommended to avoid certain foods cannot follow their doctor's orders because of limited food choices at local food pantries. This also includes patients with diabetes and other medical conditions that restrict what foods they can eat.
- Increase community awareness on the importance of funding for SNAP to keep our children, seniors, and community at large strong and healthy. During 2020, the Johnson City Presbyterian Church tracked the individuals, children, families, and seniors using their food pantry and community meals and determined that 80% of their participants were at high risk for malnutrition. They also cited that many families were unable to prepare nutritious food because their housing had no stoves or microwaves, which means that living in substandard housing increases people's hunger insecurity problems. This is also true of the increased population of unhoused individuals who live in emergency motels without working microwaves and adequate kitchen space or cooking implements.

Distributing slow cookers to this population would enable the preparation of healthy food as long as a power outlet was available.

#### Affordable Quality Child Care

- Child care for younger children has become a growing problem in the community over the past few years as the number of child care slots have been gradually reducing. Parents are forced to choose between no childcare at all or substandard child care. There is a severe lack of infant and toddler child care and the price for these remaining slots has skyrocketed. New York State has increased the regulations and requirements for in-home child care providers, which at first glance seem to make sense, but there are now so many rules to follow that in-home child care providers are closing their businesses. This has left families with limited to zero options. COVID-19 and the pandemic restrictions and rules have added to the number of child care centers and in-home child care providers shutting their doors. The child care crisis is only increasing.
- Increase options for trauma informed school aged care. More programming for school aged youth is need in the area. After school and support groups are particularly needed for youth impacted by parents with mental health and substance use disorder issues. More trauma-informed care needs to be offered to help children suffering from Adverse Childhood Experiences that can come from living with adults with mental health and addiction problems.

#### Mental Health/Addiction Services

- Increased access to mental health counseling and support services for the uninsured and underinsured. In 2017 there was a small increase in access to mental health services being provided by a number of local agencies. Family & Children's Society established walk-in

appointments to speed up the intake services for counseling services. They also increased the number of therapists available. Lourdes Center for Mental Health has also increased the number of mental health providers they have. The Greater Binghamton Health Center has developed walk-in hours for children with mental health issues as well. There has been a concerted effort to improve access to services; however these providers have also reported that the number of individuals seeking services has also increased. In 2022, the gaps in services for mental health remain. Kinship families cannot access counseling services for their kinship children without custody, which means many children in need of mental health cannot get the services they need. The American Psychological Association reported that in the third year old the Pandemic the demand for mental health services continues in increase and psychologists are struggling to keep up with the demand.<sup>109</sup> In 2023 agency staff reported waiting times of six months, for families to access mental health services.

- Increase mental health and wellness services for young children. This has been an ongoing problem in our community for years. There are very few providers who can offer mental health counseling for children less than five years of age.
- Increase access to no cost mental health medications. The community has seen a small improvement in access to medications for those without insurance or those under insured with the opening of the Hope Dispensary, an off-site service of Lourdes Hospital. However, certain psychotropic medications are not available at this location, which can be problematic for those who require a specific medication to keep their mental illness in check.
- Increase community wide education about mental health resources. There is a definite

lack of awareness about the mental health services that are available in the community. This particularly affects middle class families who are not familiar with accessing services. Also, the area should increase the number of preventive programs for mental health and substance abuse. Our community also needs more programs that emphasize harm reductions techniques.

#### Services for Teens/Young Adults

- Increase services for teens and those 18-21 years old. The 18-21 year old population straddles the gap between the world of minors and adults. In some instances, 18 year olds are considered adults legally but parents are still financially responsible for them. This is a huge problem for families with out-of-control teenagers, or those dealing with teens with mental illness or substance abuse. In these situations, the medical field or community agencies may choose to treat the teen as an adult, but their illness or addiction make it very difficult for those over 18 years to function as adults and they may still need the advocacy services of a parent. There is a lack of services in Broome County that specifically address the needs of this age group when it comes to mental illness and substance use disorder.
- Increase pregnancy and dating violence prevention programs. The Love U2 (LU2) curriculum provides a series of fun informative classes on healthy relationships for teens and tweens. The curriculum also incorporates pregnancy prevention and healthy life choices. This curriculum was used very successfully with teens and tweens in a parenting and relationship program offered through Head Start. It was also a successful facet of the 2012 to 2013 Kinship Program year when funding provided for a Kinship Youth Advocate who offered this program to Middle School students from kinship families.

Funding is again needed to provide the opportunity for all middle and high school students to be able to participate in these classes.

- Increase Support Groups for children and adolescents dealing with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as those from households with domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, physical abuse or neglect.

#### Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

- Provide A.A. and N.A. meetings within the Broome County Jail. Currently there are no A.A. or N.A. meetings offered to the population of the Broome County Jail. Being unable to access a drug of choice while incarcerated does not mean that an individual has gained any necessary skills to keep them sober upon their release. Offering A.A. and N.A. groups could mean offering a lifeline to those individuals upon their release, particularly if they had the chance to continue meeting in the community with the same A.A. or N.A. group leader, they had a chance to connect with during their incarceration.
- Restart the parenting classes and other supportive classes including the GED, which were offered in the Broome County Jail prior to the COVID-19 restrictions and closed down. Many supportive services were only offered in the therapeutic pod. Returning the classes and increasing the availability to more of the housed population could help some individuals change their outlook on life and give others a new interest to look forward to upon their release.<sup>110</sup>
- Improve access to cash assistance. Those individuals just released from prison must wait 45 days before they are eligible for cash assistance through Broome County DSS. This becomes an immediate hardship for an individual who is trying to start their reintegration in a positive manner. However, in August 2022 a new law was passed eliminating this

waiting period.<sup>111</sup> Unfortunately in Broome County this has not been immediate as the Department of Social Services is understaffed and applications for all benefits have run over the usually mandated time frames.

- Ban the Box, that is, take the question regarding former criminal convictions off employment forms. Currently in most of New York State it is legal to ask a prospective employee if they have been ever convicted of a crime.<sup>112</sup> This often provides a reason to deny employment to formerly incarcerated individuals, which turns into another form of punishment. It also keeps them low income with no prospects of improving themselves or their family's lives.
- Increase Paid Transitional Employment to allow the individual to gain work experience, build their resume, and receive a source of income. Too many parolees are underemployed or lack any employment for many years after being released. See Ban the Box.
- Improve employer education to encourage more local employers to consider hiring those with criminal histories and to keep them up to date on the incentives available for hiring felons. Many employers are unaware of State and Federal incentives and protections to encourage hiring those with a criminal past.

#### Transportation

- Restore the Tioga County bus service that was eliminated November 30, 2014. Since this date there has been no bus service or public transportation available in Tioga County at all. This significantly reduces the ability of low income families to access employment and services.
- Restore and improve the Broome County bus service. In 2014 the community assessment

noted that the county bus service needed to be improved. In 2017, the bus service still needs to be reinstated to at least the services offered in 2010. In 2012, the County increased the cost of bus fares, combining this with the 2011 reduction in bus routes and bus schedules created a weakened bus system. For many low income residents, employment options are limited by the availability of bus routes and the frequency of the bus schedules. Broome County did not have a strong bus schedule for second shift workers, had no schedule for third shift workers and a limited schedule for weekends. Many outlying regions in Broome County did not have a regular bus service at all. In 2016, the situation did not improve. The reductions created a loss of fundamental transportation services for our county and an added burden for our residents. As noted under the previous Walk with Me, section, during the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Broome County Transit Authority made all the bus routes free. Apart from the concerns of people contracting the virus while on the buses, this was a huge asset for the financial status of many low income people.

- Restore funding for the Wheels for Work Program. The loss of OTDA funding for the Wheels for Work program has reduced the ability of families to move out of poverty as a vehicle provides to opportunity to expand job options and/or seek higher education.

#### Parenting Classes

- Increase options for parenting classes. This continues to be a need in the community as there are few options for parents and a shortage of parenting classes in the community. Program participants that have been court ordered find they are on waiting lists for months for this service or the few classes are offered at a time and location that is not convenient for parents. To fully meet the needs of community parents there needs to be a



variety of classes offered at different times (day and evening) and in different locations.

- Increase supervised visitation sites. Parents who are hoping to regain custody of their children may be required to have supervised visitations. There is a lack of options for supervised visitations in the community and we need more family friendly locations and more supervised visitation staff. Mothers & Babies provide a supervised visiting site at their PAL Center but this location is geared for the preschool and younger population. This means that there are really no options for school age and older children who need to have an age appropriate site for supervised visitations.
- Provide parent education classes for parents of special needs children. Currently there are no parenting classes available for parents with special needs children such as those with mental health issues, substance use disorders, and intellectual or developmental delays. Attending a discipline class designed for children with normal development is not useful for parents whose children may have Autism or other special needs.
- Reinstate the Fatherhood Program focusing on at-risk parents and children. The 24/7 Dad fatherhood program was offered at FEN for five years and was the best received parenting class in Broome County. The program provided parenting classes for men and women along with case management services. The fatherhood program also received high praise from many different community agencies and as well as many of the court-ordered parents who rated the program highly in follow up surveys. When this program ended it left a large gap in services for the difficult and hard-to-reach parents. Even though the program ended more than two years ago FEN still receives requests for fatherhood program services.
- Provide a perpetrator's domestic violence program. In the past a Broome County not-for-

profit agency provided a program for men who abuse. However, this program is now only available through a private practice. The financial requirements are different, and the program is not available to a wide audience. Broome County needs a low to no-cost option. No classes exist for women who are abusers.

- Anger management classes. Currently the only class in Broome County is geared toward parents; however there is a need for a general anger management class for adults as well.

### Rural Communities

- Increase support and services to the rural areas of Broome and Tioga Counties. Family Support Services programs work with many rural-based families who do not have reliable transportation. Requiring families to travel to city hubs for services leads to many needy families missing out on important supports and assistance because of transportation needs. Deposit, Harpursville, Lisle, Whitney Point, and Windsor are a few of the towns without public transportation to the urban core of the county.

### Supports for Low Income Households

- Provide assistance completing TANF application forms. While there are different agencies that can help households complete SSSI, SSDI, and SNAP applications, currently there is no one agency in Broome County that is tasked with assisting people to apply for cash assistance from the Department of Social Services. The TANF application form is long and complicated and can be overwhelming for many people. When the form is not completed correctly people are denied the services they are eligible for. There needs to be a position in the community that can help people with this important task, much as there are health care navigators and the NOEP program.
- Provide vouchers for personal care and hygiene items. Low-income families are finding

the cost of these basic items overwhelming as they cannot be purchased with SNAP and inflation has increased the prices of many everyday necessities. Many social service agency personnel reported that families have to rely on donations to receive essential items. Last year Catholic Charities was able to assist families reducing some of the burden in the community, however the problem still exists.

- Increase the number of pantries providing assistance with personal care and hygiene items. Some pantries offer personal hygiene items and the Broome County Library has a Period Pantry to provide free feminine hygiene products however more of these programs are needed to be implemented county wide.
- Increase accessibility to laundry facilities. The cost of laundry is an ongoing problem as laundry detergent, softener, and stain removal products are not covered by SNAP and families must dip into the small amount of cash they receive each month. Some families seek out clothing donations because they cannot afford to wash their clothes. In 2023 New Life Ministries began a chapter of Laundry Love, providing the funds for families to wash their laundry for free on the last Saturday of every month at two local laundromats. This is a small but mighty program and more chapters need to be opened.
- Diapers are expensive. Decisions on potty training by parents can be based on cost rather than a young child's developmental stage, which can add to the stress of parenting and potty training. More diaper pantries are needed in the County.
- Increased assistance with medical and dental costs. The working poor still struggle to find the resources to pay for medical treatment. Many who are over-income for Medicaid can still not afford health insurance and do not use doctors when they should. Other families cannot find dentists who will accept their specific type of dental insurance.

## Moving Assistance

This problem continues to be an issue in our community as there is never any funding to address the stressors around moving for low-income families. When moving, they are often forced to leave all their belongings behind. This becomes an ongoing burden on the donation community as the same families have to repeatedly collect new donations to furnish their apartments and clothe their children. This may occur because of one of the following reasons:

- Lack of finances to pay for a moving service as many families simply don't have the cash.
- Lack of credit cards and driver's licenses necessary to rent a moving truck.
- Lack of physical manpower necessary to lift and carry large items. This is particularly true for single mothers, the elderly, and those with disabilities.

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# HOUSING PROGRAM





## **INTRODUCTION**

Family Enrichment Network's annual Community Assessment has identified safe and affordable housing as a community need for the last ten years. In July of 2013, Family Enrichment Network created their Housing Department to address this continuing need. The Housing Department currently consists of two programs: the Caring Homes program and the Housing program.

## **THE CARING HOMES PROGRAM**

The Caring Homes Program is a housing assistance program funded with Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds through the City of Binghamton. The goal of this program is to prevent homelessness through financial assistance and supportive services for homeless individuals/families and those at risk of becoming homeless. For those who meet eligibility requirements, financial assistance can be obtained for rent arrears, security deposits, and utility arrears. In addition, case management services are provided to create a plan for housing stability. These plans may include finding stable employment, furthering education, obtaining childcare, enrolling children in educational programs, improving budgeting skills, and access to additional resources within our community.

Over the course of ten years, FEN has worked directly with the city of Binghamton, through the ESG grant, to provide housing stability for families in the city of Binghamton. Throughout those ten years we have received 1,902 referrals and have supported 316 families. We have provided 145 families with security deposits and 171 families with rental arrears. The Caring Homes Program has been refunded for 2023. The 2022-2023 ESG funds have helped 86 families with Security Deposits and rental arrears including five families starting in the new year. A total of 65,576 dollars in security deposits and rental arrears have been disseminated during

that year.

In September 2017, the Coordinated Entry System was created. The Coordinated Entry System, also referred to as CES, provides a single point of access to homeless assistance services to reduce the burden of system navigation for households who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Regardless of a person's location within this continuum, if they are facing a housing crisis, they can call 2-1-1/First Call For Help to connect to CES staff for assessment and referral assistance. 2-1-1 and Coordinated Entry manage the referrals that come into the call center and then either refer to the Caring Homes program or appropriate service provider. Caring Homes ensures that all callers, regardless of program eligibility, are provided referrals.

While Caring Homes provides intensive case management, we are able to determine what additional services and supports families may require. Referrals related to physical and emotional well-being are made to resources such as:

- Greater Opportunities for emergency financial assistance
- Mother Theresa's Cupboard for food pantry and emergency financial assistance
- Community Hunger Outreach Warehouse (CHOW) for food pantry resource
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) for food and nutrition service for families with infants and small children
- American Civic Association for citizenship resources and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- Family Resource Center for parenting classes, children's clothing closet
- Nearly New Shop for vouchers for clothing.
- Lee Barta Community Center for food pantry and educational classes

In combination with our efforts to end homelessness, FEN works closely with The

Southern Tier Homeless Coalition (STHC). STHC is a collaborative non-profit organization committed to providing solutions for homelessness in New York's Southern Tier. Designated by the federal Department of Housing & Urban Development as the region's Continuum of Care (CoC NY-511), STHC encompasses the housing crisis response system across Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, and Tioga Counties and is comprised of over 40 member agencies offering homeless assistance services to households in need.

## **HOUSING**

Family Enrichment Network recognizes the need for safe, affordable, and permanent housing. FEN is committed to the ongoing efforts to address the current housing crisis. That said FEN has identified housing as an essential need in the community and created a housing program to meet those demands.

### **11 Roberts Street (Johnson City)**

In April of 2013, Family Enrichment began its commitment to address the need for safe and affordable housing. FEN purchased their first property at 11 Roberts St. Johnson City. The two-family property consists of a first floor two-bedroom apartment and a second floor one-bedroom apartment. FEN collaborates with Binghamton Housing Authority (BHA), working together to gain housing for those approved for Section 8. This helps to ensure we are providing quality housing to those in direct need. Since occupancy in late fall 2013, we have had stable tenants. Binghamton Housing Authority is happy to have another property available to their clients, as their current Section 8 wait list has over 500 families.

### **51 Roberts Street (Johnson City)**

The developmentally delayed population was identified as a population in need of safe affordable housing in the community. In September 2015, 51 Roberts St. Johnson City was developed for this purpose. The house allows multiple (two to three) individuals to reside in a single family home. This model allows individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunity to live independently in the community while having roommates to share and support that experience. The home currently houses two individuals that share common space in the kitchen, dining room, living room and bathroom. They have their own individual bedrooms. The dwelling has been occupied since December 2015.

### **241 Charles Street (Johnson City)**

In our continued effort to provide safe and affordable housing options for families a single family home at 241 St. Charles St, Johnson City was purchased. The three-bedroom, one-bathroom home is Section 8 approved. Again, FEN worked in partnership with Binghamton Housing Authority (BHA). The home has been occupied since February 2016.

### **11 Crocker Ave (Johnson City)**

In December 2021 FEN purchased the newest addition to the housing program. The home underwent extensive renovations. The two-family property offers two one-bedroom apartments. We continue our partnership with the Binghamton Housing Authority to offer housing to Section 8 tenants. The property is fully rented.

### **Housing Connections, 29 Virgil St (Binghamton)**

In December 2018, Family Enrichment Network was awarded their first Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP) and Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) grants, which allowed us to construct a 19-unit structure to offer safe, affordable and quality housing. The award money we received from both HHAP and ESSHI is what allowed FEN to build their first homeless housing project. It is important we understand where the monies come from and how the funds are allocated. The application for both funding sources is extremely competitive so it is imperative we write a comprehensive grant that puts us well above others competing for the same funding.

In February 2020, the project broke ground at 29 Virgil St. Built on vacant city-owned land in Binghamton's North Side neighborhood, the two-story 12,000-square-foot structure includes four one-bedroom units, ten two-bedroom units, four three-bedroom units, and one four-bedroom unit. The project was completed in March 2021. We opened our doors in March and were at full capacity by July 1, 2021.

At Housing Connections, we are serving homeless youth ages 18-25; a veteran with a documented disability; individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD); victims/survivors of domestic violence; the chronically homeless as defined by HUD (including families, and individuals experiencing street homelessness or long-term shelter stays); and adults, youth or young adults reentering the community from incarceration or juvenile justice placement. Along with homelessness there are those who are at risk of homelessness. Prevention services are critical for individuals to maintain their housing. They provide tenants with supportive services, including rental assistance, case management, childcare assistance, job readiness training, and counseling referrals. The focus population is young families and

individuals ages 18-25; individuals with developmental disabilities; domestic violence survivors; veterans; chronically homeless; and formerly incarcerated individuals.

As we approach year three we are happy to say that we have maintained full capacity. Tenants work closely with both the case manager and life skills instructor. One of the most successful aspects of the case management program has been the advocacy of promoting working and education for our tenants. This last year saw 17 out of 19 Units working; and of those eight were first time workers. Case Managers provided them with financial referrals through Phil Financial group, where many tenants established credit for the first time, and staff helped tenants set up their very first checking and saving accounts. Support staff have helped tenants access educational programming through Cornell Cooperative Extension, including:

- After school programming;
- healthy family/healthy choices series;
- ServSafe certification (food safety);
- parenting/nutrition class;
- NY Project Hope (mental health);
- Greater Good Grocery store presentation;
- CHOW distribution (onsite);
- CHOW warehouse distribution;
- Phil Nelson – financial advisement;
- Career Bound – job readiness;
- Crime Victims Assistance Center (CVAC);
- clothing giveaway;
- Rise Shelter – domestic violence support services;
- coping with domestic violence for families and children;
- TruthPharm – NarCan training;
- BC Fire Department;
- Attain lab; Lee Barta – community resources;

- ACBC – alcohol and drug education;
- MHAAS – group counseling;
- Veterans Center – volunteer opportunities;
- STAP – STD screening and PREP;
- Mothers & Babies;
- VINES wellness wagon/garden;
- BC Council of churches;
- Thanksgiving baskets;
- Adopt-a-Family;
- BC Health Department;
- BOCES educational services;
- Salvation Army – food pantry;
- NYSEG – Heap presentation;
- Fidelis Health Care navigator;
- and PAL Center.

Tenant engagement varies based on interest but overall participation has been steady. Tenants expressed an interest in holding a Thanksgiving dinner and Christmas brunch. Through the support of staff and tenant engagement the events were a tremendous success.

## **HOMELESSNESS**

### **National Unrest: An Overview**

Homelessness has catapulted to the national spotlight in recent years prompting political and economic solutions to a complex and layered topic. Homelessness is a world as vast and diverse as the reasons indicated why the issue persists. The word “crisis” has appeared almost weekly whether on news broadcast, internet feeds, podcast or terrestrial radio, demanding swift action to a broad and continual existential issue. For contextual purposes understanding the broad national crisis helps relate to trends and further development on a regional and local level.

Perhaps, most alarming, is the erratic public opinion on the matter and the evolving or devolving justification and practical treatment of the issue. As Ronal Fagon referenced in his essay thirty years ago, “Homelessness in America: Causes, Consequences and Solutions”, “...Americans traditionally have had ambivalent feelings about the poor and homeless...” (Fagan 1995). This is further explored by Hander stating, “...we have always felt the need to distinguish between the ‘Deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor...” (Hander in Robertson & Greenblatt 1992: 35-46). Yet, thirty years down the road, public opinion has remained static and parallel. While most Americans see a need for homeless reform, the ideology taken by represented leaders, red button issues like immigration, religious affiliations, grass roots organizations, private and public entities often echo those stated above; who is deserving and for what reason?

Regardless of the public stance, the issue of homelessness has continued to expand to both traditional demographics and newly founded ones. During the annual Point in Time (PIT) assessment conducted yearly in January, The Housing and Urban Development (HUD) found and estimated 653,104 people experiencing homelessness in 2023 (HUD 2023) a 12% increase from years prior. HUD secretary, Marcia Fudge stated to AP News, “This is the most scene since the country began using the yearly point-in-time survey in 2007...the total in the January count Represents an increase of about 70,650 from the year earlier” ( Freking APnews, Washington). Other alarming statistics noted by Fudge included 256,610 unsheltered homeless, an increase of 65%, and 111,620 homeless under 18 years of age, an increase of 57% (HUD 2023). These numbers, while staggering, are often quick snapshots and disproportional of the actual numbers of homeless in America.

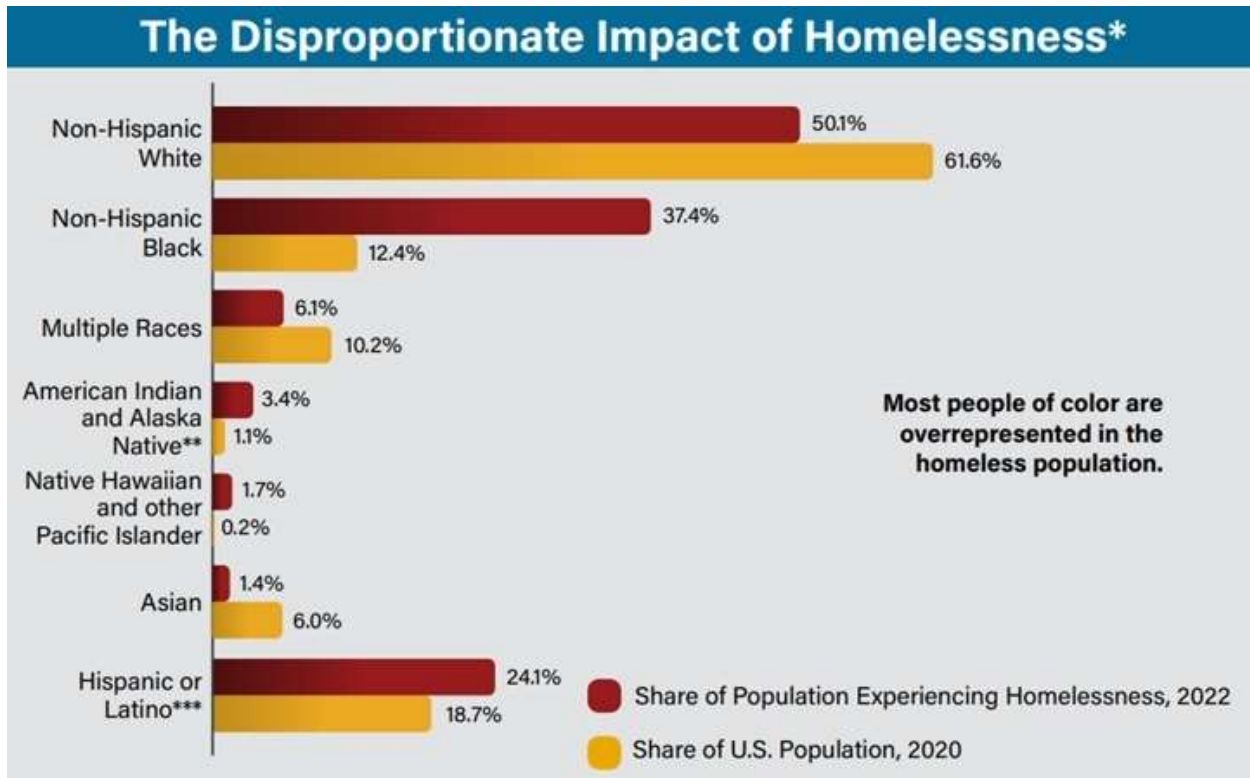


The Point in Time count tracks a moment of time; however, actual numbers show a very different story. The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, which can be difficult to find according to Charley Willison, Assistant professor in the Department of Public and Ecosystem Health in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University. Willison states, “while still and undercount (PIT) since it is limited to people in shelters, the new estimates are a more comprehensive measure of the burden of homelessness nationally...for example, in 2017, HUD counted more than half a million people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. In contrast, the new study leveraging HMIS data shows that nearly 600,000 Black Americans alone visited shelters that year- out of more than 1.4 million total visitors” (Dean 2023).

### **Demographics: An Evolving Landscape with Familiar Views**

It has been well documented that minorities have disproportional rates of homelessness. African Americans, Hispanic/Latino, LGBTQ+, women with children, the mentally ill, Native Americans/First Nation have been consistent figures in the homeless landscape for nearly a century. In recent years, new demographics have emerged making their stamp on the homeless scenery. The ageing, 18-25, the developmentally disabled, veterans and re-entry populations have appeared in greater numbers and often times with disproportional rates. “People who identify as ‘Black’ make up about 13% of the population but comprised 37% of all people experiencing homelessness. People who identify as Hispanic or Latino make up about 19 % of the population but comprised about 33% of those experiencing homelessness. Also, more than a quarter of the adults experiencing homelessness were over the age of 54” (USICH.GOV).

**Chart 1: The Disproportionate Impact of Homelessness**



<https://www.usich.gov/guidance-reports-data/data-trends>

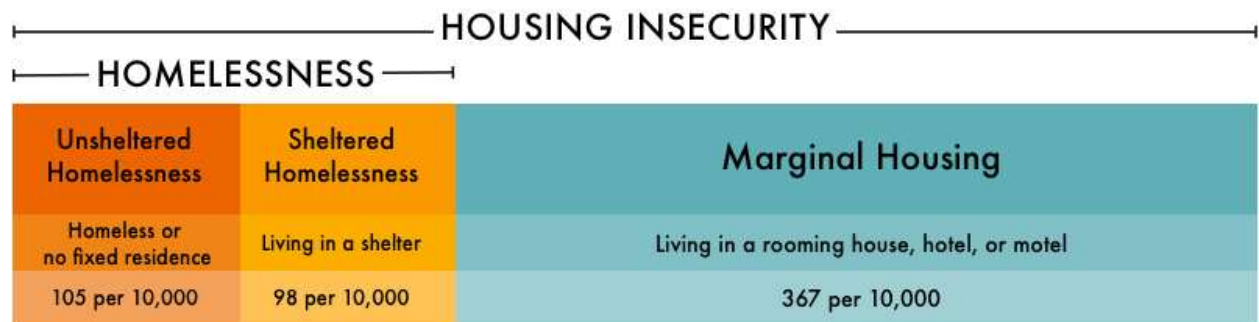
Aging Americans are particularly vulnerable for homelessness in recent years. “Homelessness among older adults is increasing; among single homeless adults, approximately half are ages 50 and older...of these , almost half first became homeless after the age of 50” ( Kushel 2020). For a further sense of perspective, “in the early 1990’s, 11% of homeless single adults were ages 50 or older. By 2003, 37% were. Now, approximately half are. People ages 65 and older are the fastest growing age group of people who are homeless; by 2030 their numbers will triple” (Culhane et al. 2019).

A worldwide pandemic and soaring home and rental prices over the last several years has found a new demographic of homeless; those of means, yet unable to afford their homes (Freking

AP News, Washington). Jeff Olivet, Executive Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, stated in an interview with National Public Radio (NPR) “We simply don’t have enough homes that people can afford...when you combine rapidly rising rent, that it just costs more per month for people to get into a place and keep a place, you get this vicious game of musical chairs” (Ludden 2023 NPR). Olivet continued stating, “the most significant causes are the shortage of affordable homes and the high cost of housing that have left many Americans living paycheck to paycheck and one crisis away from homelessness” (Freking AP News).

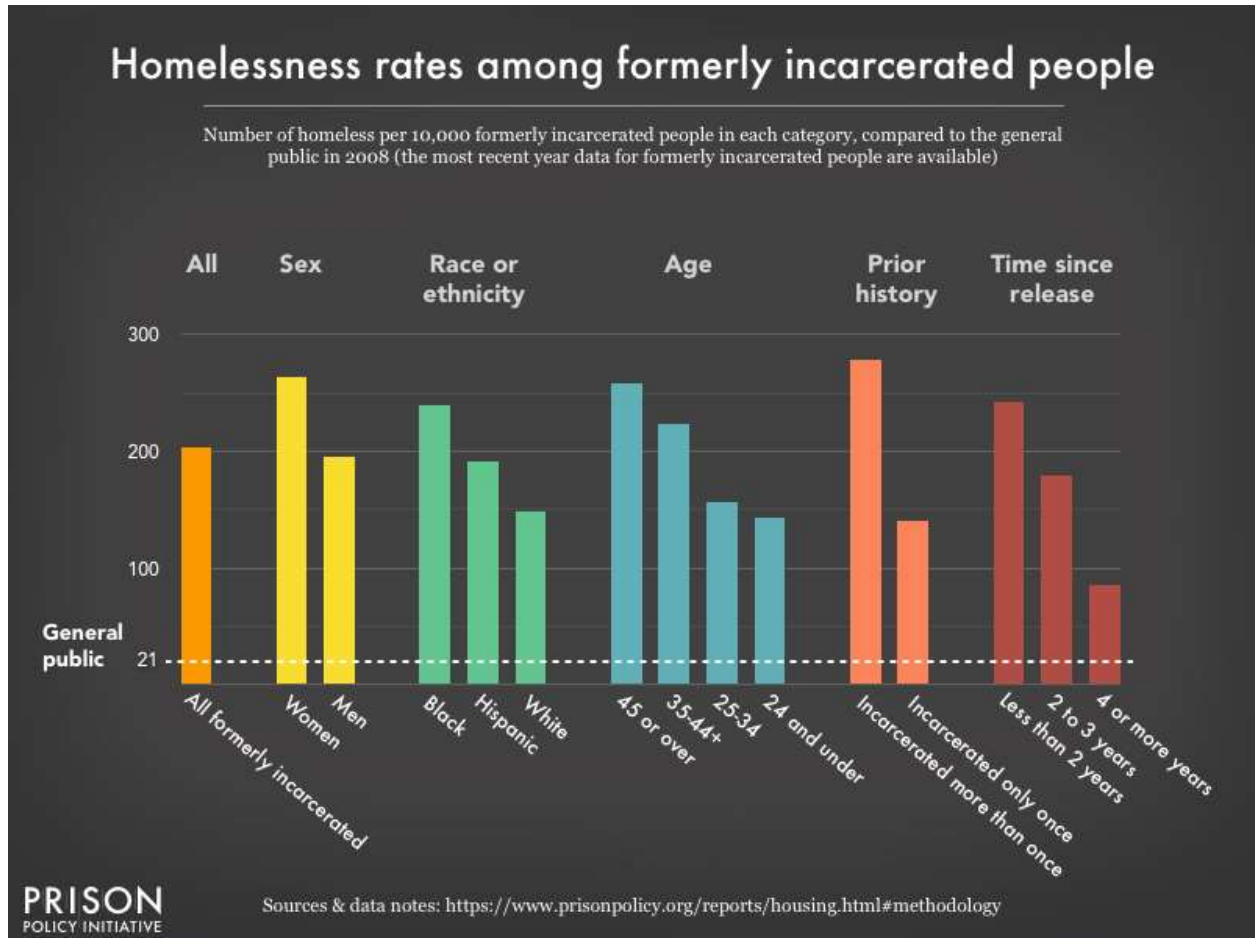
Two categories that have shown a steady rise include veterans and the formally incarcerated. As various states tackle issues with incarceration those coming from prison are seeing a sharp rise in homelessness, with African Americans and those 45 years and older seeing the most significant incidence of homelessness (Couloute 2018).

**Chart 2: Housing Insecurity**



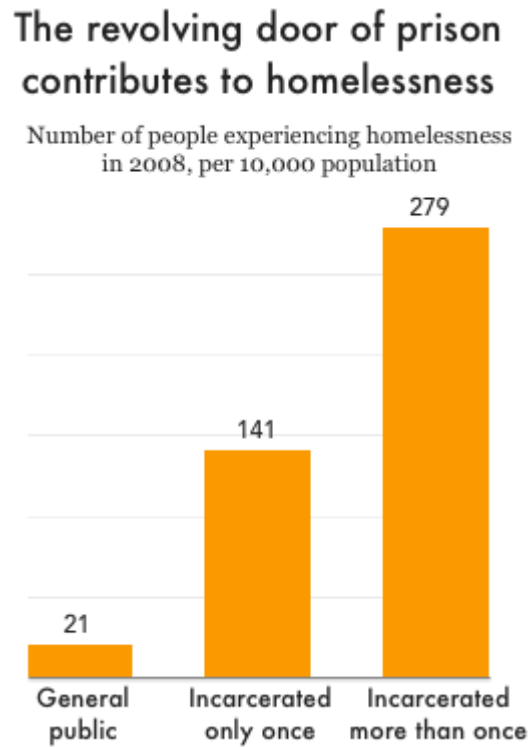
*Figure 3. Housing insecurity includes people who are homeless as well as those living in marginal housing. 570 out of every 10,000 formerly incarcerated people fall into one of these categories, making housing insecurity nearly three times more common than homelessness alone.*

**Chart 3: Homeless Rates among Formerly Incarcerated People**



One of the most difficult aspects for the formerly incarcerated include not only a lack of housing but a lack of societal support and stigma which include “...barriers to employment, combined with explicit discrimination, have created a little-discussed but desperate housing crisis” (Couloute 2018). The continued issue of homelessness and lack of community supports and barriers to work or vocational studies for the formerly incarcerated often leads to re-incarceration. Research suggests that each incarceration can exponentially increase ones risk of homelessness according to Couloute.

**Chart 4: The Revolving Door of Prison Contributes To Homelessness**

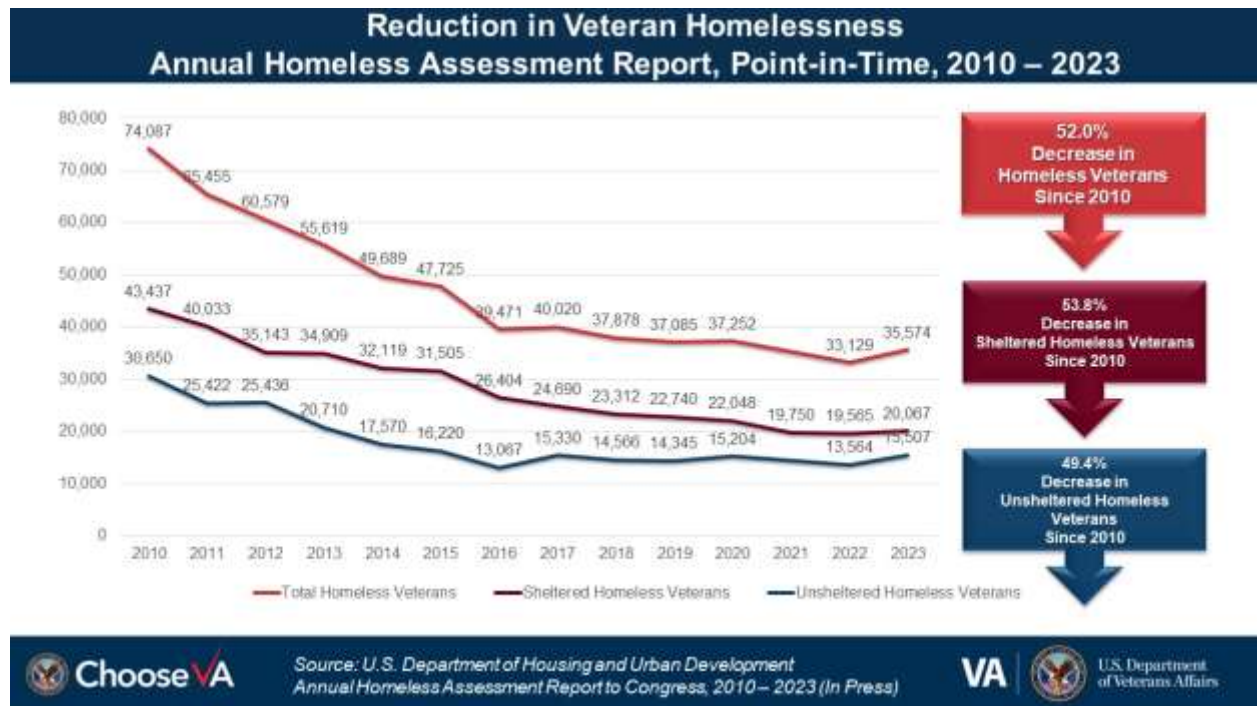


Veterans continue to be disproportionately displaced for a variety of reasons in the United States. While research from the Veterans Affairs have shown an overall decrease in homeless veterans since 2010, the number remains frustratingly high as a demographic. “The national snapshot of Veteran homelessness showed that: The total number of Veterans who experienced homelessness was 35,574 – an increase of 7.4% over January 2022. The estimated number of Veterans experiencing homelessness in America has declined by 52.0% since 2010” (Veterans Affairs 2023).

A particular area of homeless veterans is the 14.3 % increase of veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness – an increase of 1,943 veterans on any given night during the PIT

count in 2022 (VA.GOV). Unsheltered homelessness is defined by HUD as “places not meant for human habitation, such as cars parks, bridges and streets”. Due to this increase and influx a statement by the VA has made a committed effort with federal partner and The White House to “support unsheltered Veterans a top priority...leading to an active VA volunteer program to engage with 34,498 unsheltered Veterans to ensure they access to the shelter and housing resources they need. This has exceeded VA’s goal to engage with 28,000 unsheltered Veterans by 123.2%” (VA.GOV October 2023).

**Chart 5: Reduction in Veteran Homelessness**



**Homelessness and Health: Old Epidemic, New Take**

One of the most disparaging results of homelessness, whether sheltered or unsheltered, is the negative impact to the individual’s health. A rebranding over the last decade of the crisis associated with homelessness sought to remove the stigma of the homeless and discuss the issue as a “health crisis on an epidemic scale” (nhhc.org).

Being homeless not only limits someone from basic medical treatment, but often neglects serious or “chronic” conditions that would require a continuum of care and necessary disease management. According to the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, a study done by Health Center Patient Survey (HCPS) in 2009, the health conditions between those housed versus homeless show alarming trends. If homeless, HCPS estimates 18% have untreated Diabetes compared to 9% of housed. Hypertension respectively is 50% versus 29%, Heart Attack is 35% versus 17% if housed , HIV 20% to 1%, Hepatitis C 36% to 1%, Depression 49% compared to 8% and perhaps most alarming, Substance Use Disorders 58% versus 16% (HCPS 2009).

**Chart 6: Homelessness is Deadly**



<https://www.usich.gov/guidance-reports-data/data-trends>

Furthermore, homelessness for the ageing presents even worse outcomes and health related consequences. “Data shows that adults aged 65 and older who are homeless also have a higher prevalence of unmet needs for substance use and severe mental disorder treatment compared with their younger adult counterparts” (Kaplan et al., 2019).

Support on a Federal level and commitments from the current administration have sought to provide further care and evaluate the scope of the homeless concern; addressing issues of

medical neglect, food insecurity and providing states facing large influxes of homelessness with additional resources suggest a tactile effort to help mitigate this chronic condition.

The President's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget proposes unprecedented investments not only to urgently address homelessness but also to prevent homelessness, including through additional housing vouchers; emergency rental assistance; increasing the supply of affordable housing; and establishing a guarantee of rental assistance (The White House.Gov).

Earlier this year, HUD released a first-of-its-kind package of grants totaling \$486 million and approximately 3,300 housing vouchers to help 62 communities address unsheltered homelessness and homeless encampments, including \$60 million to Chicago, \$22 million to Dallas, \$60 million to Los Angeles, and \$36 million to other communities across the state of California (The White House.Gov).

### **Homelessness: A snapshot of the Southern Tier**

While National headlines suggest the issue is progressing unresolvable, state and local governments, non-profit agencies, and grass roots collations have made a considered effort to provide scope and solutions on a micro level. Deconstruction of this topic has provided a more intimate look behind tackling homelessness and targeted demographics of the homeless. A new ideology looking at homelessness as a health issue rather than pure economic issue has allowed for increase funding and treatment to some of the most difficult aspects of the homeless crisis, both nationally and locally.

Currently in New York State, there is simply not enough available affordable housing. Without this housing stock, many homeless New Yorkers are likely to continue to cycle in and out of homelessness. The priority now must be to expand the supply of affordable housing. To do



this, there is a need to increase HUD’s ability to serve and house low-income individuals. Governor Kathy Hochul announced a statewide plan to address New York’s housing crisis. She is committed to building 800,000 new homes over the next decade to meet the shortage, and support New York renters and homeowners as part of the 2023 State of the State.

Looking at the state and specifically regionally, it is important to provide tangible numbers to address the needs and range of the homeless. One of the ways this is done is through the Housing Inventory Count (HIC) which “is a point-in-time inventory of provider programs within a Continuum of Care that provide beds and units dedicated to serve people experiencing homelessness (and, for permanent housing projects, where homeless at entry, per the HUD homeless definition), categorized by five Program Types: Emergency Shelter; Transitional Housing; Rapid Re-housing; Safe Haven; and Permanent Supportive Housing” (HUD Exchange).

According to the HUD 2023 Continuum of Care, New York State reported 103,200 Homeless persons. While this is only a snapshot, it has various implications that echo national trends towards specific demographics. Hispanic/Latino accounted for 49,657, African Americans counted 65,791; those over the age of 50 were roughly 18,092. Those that chose to identify in a specific demographic group, the “Severely Mentally Ill accounted for 11,665, the highest of those counted, followed by Chronic Substance Abuse including previous jail convictions at 5,819, Victims of Domestic Abuse 5,350 , HIV/AIDS & LGBTQ+ 3,720, Unaccompanied youth 18-24 at 4,331 and Veterans at 1,098” (HUD NYS).

Homelessness throughout the Southern Tier increased by more than 50% over the past year according to a preliminary data from the Southern Tier Homeless Coalition following a PIT count in 2022 (Forstadt 2022). According to the report, “345 people stayed in emergency

shelters, compared to 244 in 2021...Emergency shelter data includes both traditional shelter beds and according to the coalition's report, the number of Motel beds contracted by Broome County department of Social Services increased from 92 to 234 over the past year" ( Forstadt 2022).

As with National trends, the Southern Tier found a dramatic shift in emergency housing needs and various primary, secondary and tertiary resources. As COVID-19 specific funding ended, homelessness found a sudden verge as individuals economic solutions or opportunities came to a halt and Covid renting moratoriums came to an end. As stated by Forstadt, the "total emergency shelter beds increased by 138, shelter providers and advocates say the more than 530 emergency housing beds across the region are at maximum capacity". The Southern Tier Homeless Coalition has noted that it is becoming "extremely difficult" finding permanent housing for people coming out of shelters or temporary housing situations, i.e. hotel/motel accommodations (CoCNY-511).

### **Broome County**

New York State Governor Kathy Hochul announced an 8.1 million dollar investment for Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango County, for "development renovation of four sites that was supported with state funds through the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistances' Homeless Housing and Assistance Program" (Morgan 2023). The four properties would include, 39-49 Munsell Street, 22 Moffat Avenue, 22 Way Street, and 4 Sturges Street in Binghamton. It includes 27 apartments. City of Binghamton Mayor Jared Kraham said, "This project is a model for how municipalities across New York State can work together with partners to deliver real progress in solving the statewide affordable housing crisis" (Morgan 2023).

Further investment and upcoming development was stated by Broome County Executive Jason Garnar to the *Press & Sun Bulletin* in February, 2024. Garnar announced over 500 million in various construction projects, including housing projects in Johnson City and Endicott. He also stated an additional 2 million would be invested in fire departments, local parks, playground and expanding Non-Profits (Press & Sun Bulletin 2024).

The Southern Tier Homeless Coalition also places a strategic plan as their Continuum of Care. Approximately \$3.1 billion is available in this FY 2023 CoC Program Competition NOFO. The following are the policy priorities emphasized for FY 2023. This program includes a mission to end homelessness for all persons, using a “housing first” approach, reducing unsheltered homeless as well as working to provide better follow-up services with applicable agencies and services providers.

### **Looking Forward**

In July, 2023 Governor Hochul Signed Executive Order 30 creating the Pro-Housing Community Program. This policy is primarily designed to reward local governments that are working to address New York’s Housing crisis. The concept includes application services for regional housing developments and supporting localities that achieve the “Pro-Housing Communities.” Based on achieving that status through the application service, key discretionary funding programs are also available; an example of this funding would include The Access to Home for Heroes/Veterans Program, which provides financial assistance to housed homeless Veterans with Disabilities, which includes home modifications and supports.

Furthermore, The Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program is an outcome of President Biden’s American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This is a Federal subsidy program through

HUD. Application process is available to all those that qualify and are facing homelessness in several categories: homeless, at risk of homelessness, fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence (dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking) and recently homeless and for whom providing rental assistance will prevent the family's homelessness or having high risk of housing instability.

Further assistance in several targeted areas is needed for specific demographics. Specifically, at Housing Connections, we have seen a need for housing in:

- Ageing populations
- Single mothers
- Drug and alcohol populations
- Reentry

Assessing the risk factors and high volume of these demographics can be difficult and cumbersome. To address these issues, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provided a comprehensive deconstruction of homeless evaluations and needs. Following their lead, state and local organizations have begun to look various methods to address these needs. "Preventive services for people who are homeless may include medical care, housing supports (care management) and other social and supportive services (e.g. employment, educational supports for children)" (SAMHSA 2021).

### **Housing First and Supportive Housing Success**

Housing First and Supportive Housing Units have seen a rise over the last decade in funding. Housing Connections is a 'Housing First' model. Looking throughout the region to provide new housing considerations is vital to tackling the issue of housing, affordable housing

and supportive care. When considering Permanent Supportive Housing, the ideology must fit not only the need but the tenant's goals and potential outcome. Stabilization and community supports need to be addressed to prevent future homelessness. "This type of housing offers a combination of housing and services, and is an established solution for clients experiencing chronic homelessness" (Aubry et al., 2020). SAMHSA, using this methodology found success and best practices through "Permanent Supportive Housing Evidence-Based Practices" (EBP KIT). This lists the 12 elements of the permanent supportive housing programs that form the core guiding principles of these programs and differentiate them from other forms of housing assistance:

1. Leases are in the tenants' names and provide full rights, including protection from eviction.
2. Leases have the same provisions held by people without psychiatric disabilities.
3. Participation in services is voluntary, and refusal does not result in eviction
4. If there are house rules, they are similar to those for people without psychiatric disabilities or other mental health disorders
5. There is no time limit on housing with a renewable lease
6. Tenants are offered a range of housing choices that would be available to others at the same income level
7. Housing is affordable –no more than 30% of the tenants income
8. Housing is integrated, allowing the opportunity for tenants to interact with neighbors
9. Tenants are given choices in the support services they are provided
10. Support services are dynamic and can change as needs change over time
11. Support services are focused on recovery to help tenants choose, obtain and keep housing
12. Housing and support services are delivered separately

Lack of safe and affordable housing remains a problem in Broome and surrounding counties. Many housing options are considered substandard, and tenants often complain about absentee landlords and/or maintenance repairs that go unaddressed. In addition, many complain that available housing in their income range is typically located in unsafe neighborhoods. Families are especially concerned with this, as they fear for the safety of their children. Rental costs have dramatically increased due to the pandemic. The increased cost of housing paired with the housing shortage puts tenants at risk of homelessness. Furthermore, there is an increased strain on the local housing market directly related to student housing. Landlords are converting family housing over to student housing leaving the housing stock depleted. Mayor Kraham, in his first year as mayor, demolished 16 blighted homes. He plans to turn those lots into green spaces or community gardens. Prior to Mayor Kraham, Mayor Rich David demolished over 30 blighted homes during his time as mayor. The city of Binghamton is committed to revitalizing Binghamton and housing is a pressing priority.

FEN is currently working on our next project that will help close the gap on homelessness in our area. In 2022, Family Enrichment Network applied for ESSHI funding to develop a second homeless housing program. We received conditional approval. In February of 2023, we submitted our application for HHAP funding. We anticipate hearing if the application was accepted in early summer. The proposed project will consist of ten single units. The focus population will be individuals ages 18-25; individuals with developmental disabilities; domestic violence survivors; veterans; chronically homeless; and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Family Enrichment Network will continue to work closely with the Southern Tier Homeless Coalition and City of Binghamton to identify gaps and needs in housing throughout Broome and surrounding counties.

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# HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START PROGRAM



## **OVERVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE GRANTEE**

Family Enrichment Network's Head Start and Early Head Start programs operate under two grants. The Broome County program's origins reach back to the 1970's and the program has grown in its many years to provide UPK partnership services; full day and full year programming; full day programming; and Early Head Start. Our new grant began in July 2020, and we were pleased to make changes in that grant to best meet the needs of our Head Start and Early Head Start communities.

The Tioga County program was originally awarded in 2014, and we began our second five year funding award in July 2019. We are pleased to offer full day programming at all centers and in both Head Start and Early Head Start.

The Broome Grant offers center based services to 287 three- and four-year-old preschool children and their families at four locations throughout its Broome County service area, and Early Head Start offers center based services to 96 infants and toddlers and prenatal services to 16 pregnant women, which operates at three locations throughout the Broome County service area; our five locations serve children and families from Binghamton, Johnson City, Conklin, Kirkwood, and the Town of Binghamton. The centers are located in Johnson City and Binghamton, and include the following addresses. All five centers are located in locations that support Head Start and Early Head Start eligible children and families and they are all licensed by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

<b>Center</b>	<b>HS Children</b>	<b>EHS Children</b>
Cherry Street Center - 24 Cherry Street; Johnson City, NY	177	48
Carlisle Center – 150 Moeller Street; Binghamton, NY	0	16
Saratoga Center – 25-35 Felters Road; Binghamton, NY	32	32
Fayette Street Center- 29 Fayette Street; Binghamton, NY	42	0
Woodrow Wilson Elementary School 287 Prospect Street; Binghamton, NY	36	0

[16 pregnant women are assigned to our Saratoga Center where the Socialization Specialist is located.]

Tioga County offers Head Start center based/full day programming to 62 three- and four-year old children and their families in three locations throughout the service area and Early Head Start center based/full day programming to 32 infants and toddlers and their families at one location in the service area. The buildings are located in Owego, Newark Valley, and Waverly. All three centers are located in locations that support Head Start and Early Head Start eligible children and families, and they are all licensed by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) that is located in Syracuse New York. Our Licensor for Tioga County is not the same person as the representative in Broome, and our current Licensor is retiring so we will be getting a new representative in 2024.

<b>Center</b>	<b>HS Children</b>	<b>EHS Children</b>
Owego Center – 1277 Taylor Road, Owego, NY	30	32
Newark Valley Center – 117 Whig Street, Newark Valley, NY	16	0
Waverly Center – 12 Cooper Street, Waverly, NY	16	0

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Community Assessment (CA) Committee consists of the Head Start Director and Management Team. In October 2020 the Community Assessment Survey was sent to all families

for completion. It was sent electronically as well as via paper copy. At the same time, the Family Advocates completed a Family Profile for every Head Start and Early Head Start family. These practices allow us to get an internal look at our present Head Start and Early Head Start community. In January 2021, the team, which includes the Head Start Director as Organizer of the Assessment, and the Program Operations Coordinator; ERSEA Coordinator; Special Services and Mental Health Coordinator; Health Services Coordinator; Food/Nutrition Services Coordinator; Family Community Partnership Coordinator; Transportation Supervisor; Socialization Specialist, met to begin planning for the 2021-2022 Community Assessment process. We used the PMFO Community Assessment version for completing the Community Assessment. We moved from a more traditional model that we have used for many years; but, it did include some of the same community partners that have been part of our assessment for many years. After our orientation to the new CA process; each of the subgroup leaders listed above began working on their area of assessment with staff, parent, and community members. The areas included: Child and Adult Education; Special Education Services; Health Services including dental, nutrition, and mental health; Child Care; Employment; and Transportation Services. The subgroups reviewed survey information; gathered additional information from staff, parents, and community members as they delved into their service area sections. With their teams they discussed the strengths and needs that exist in our community, and they revised the Community Resource section of this document. Furthermore they began planning for the CA Managers Meeting where the team identifies and prioritizes our five year areas to be addressed by the program and its overarching community. The CA Meeting was held on Wednesday, March 5, 2021. The management team came together to discuss our five year priority issues, and it was no surprise that COVID-19; other natural disasters and closings; remote/virtual

programming; food insecurities and healthy foods; and mental health dominated our meeting and subsequently our priorities for the coming five years. The document has been revised annually since March 2021, and the goals and priorities are reviewed and revised each year to best reflect the needs of our Head Start and Early Head Start Communities in Broome and Tioga Counties. This is the final year of revising our five year Community Assessment, and our goals remain the same from year four.

## **SERVICE AREA DATA**

Family Enrichment Network serves the communities within the Binghamton, Johnson City, Susquehanna Valley school districts, Town of Binghamton, and a portion of Port Dickinson in Broome County and all of Tioga County, specifically Candor, Newark Valley, Owego, and Waverly.

### **Impacts of Demographic Change**

Population estimates decreased within our service areas by 5.1% in Broome County and 5.6% in Tioga County compared to the national increase of 6.3%, according to the latest census information available. During this same time period children living in our service area under the age of five are 5.2% in Broome County, 4.9% in Tioga County, slightly under the national 6.0% of the population. Persons living in poverty within the same areas are significantly higher in Broome County at 17.8%, slightly lower in Tioga County at 9.4% when compared to the national level of 10.5%.<sup>113</sup> Homelessness within Broome County in 2019-2020 totaled 332 compared to 30 in Tioga County.<sup>114</sup>

**Table 1: Broome and Tioga County Racial and Ethnic Data**

<b>Broome County</b>						
<b>WH</b>	<b>BL</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>HIS</b>	<b>NAT</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>MIX</b>
92	120	9	10	1	3	37
34%	44%	3%	4%	.3%	1%	14%

<b>Tioga County</b>						
<b>WH</b>	<b>BL</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>HIS</b>	<b>NAT</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>MIX</b>
52	1	0	0	0	0	3
93%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%

**Table 2: Languages Spoken In the Home Other Than English:**

**Broome County**

<b>Languages</b>	<b>Number of Families</b>	<b>Percentage of Families</b>
Laotian	1	.3%
Vietnamese	3	1%
Urdu	2	.7%
Kurdish	2	.7%
Nepali	1	.3%
Creole	6	2%
Pashto	2	.7%
Arabic	20	7%
Spanish	12	4%
French	2	.7%
Yoruba	1	.3%
Dari	2	.7%
Swahili	1	.3%
Zaghawa	1	.3%
<b>Total</b>	56	19%

Tioga County Head Start and Early Head Start have no other home languages. The area has always been predominantly English speaking, and this year it is entirely English speaking families who are enrolled in our programs.

Through ongoing recruitment, interested families complete the application process throughout the year, providing a waitlist for openings as they occur. Current waitlists have increased for all the Broome’s Early Head Start Program.<sup>115</sup>

**Table 3: Waitlists by County**

Broome County	Head Start	Early Head Start	Pre-Natal	Tioga County	Head Start	Early Head Start	Head Start
2020-2021	13	79	0	2020-2021	3	2	
2021-2022	46	117	0	2021-2022	0	2	
2022-2023	39	184	0	2022-2023	4	9	
2023-2024	42	147	4	2023-2024	9	21	

We are fully staffed in Tioga County this year. And we are working through the Full-Enrollment Initiative with the Office of Head Start to attain and preserve full enrollment. This is happening through the ongoing work of the ERSEA and FCP staff. Last year we have a major short fall in recruiting Tioga families, especially Head Start families due to a staff shortage. The team has worked hard to move us to full enrollment, and this will be achieved in March 2024.

**Program’s Educational Strengths**

Families identified their satisfaction with services they receive from the classroom staff.<sup>116</sup>

They indicated strong agreement that FEN’s programs offer a safe and clean place for their children to learn and prepare their child to be ready for school by becoming more independent, learning basic concepts in language and math, along with learning to share and cooperate. The families agreed that the

**Quotes from Families:**

*“I like that my child has access to educational opportunities as young as she is.”*

*“The program has a lot on child development.”*

*“My child’s learning is age inappropriate and is hitting milestones early.”*

*“Head Start really helped with transitions for Kindergarten.”*

*“My child bloomed since starting. Her skills have improved so much. The connections with others is welcoming to see.”*

*“My child was encouraged to try new things and keep learning outside of the classroom.”*

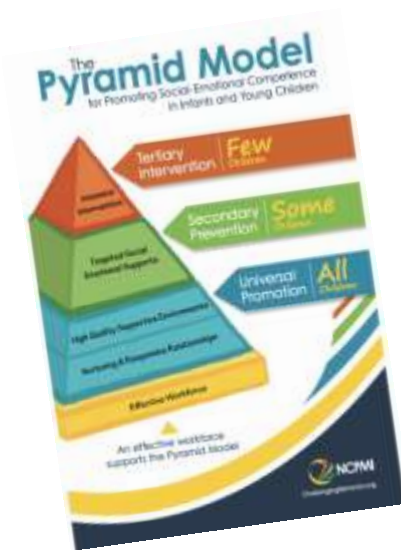
*“They give opportunities for parents to come in and participate in class activities with the kids.”*

*“Social-emotional learning happens!”*

*Source: 2023 Family Enrichment Network’s Head Start Community Assessment Education Parent Survey*



program provides quality communication and information about the program in general as well as regarding their child's development.



## **Program's Educational Needs**

### **Social-Emotional Learning**

These past decades there has been an increase in children beginning their education without the proper development of their social-emotional skills, their lack of how to develop positive relationships, lack of coping skills in stressful and/or new situations, and lack of problem-solving skills. In many cases, this may be the cause of the rise in children that need or receive special services and therapies.<sup>117</sup>

These impacts make it even more important for our community, schools, and programs to embrace a community-wide social-emotional framework, such as the Pyramid Model. Studies indicate that schools and programs that focus on reliable implementation of meaningful relationships, providing opportunities for teachers to become leaders, offering administrative support, and creating environments that support the needs of children, families, and teachers will aide in the promotion of social-emotional development as well as retain their teaching staff.<sup>118</sup> The research is showing that by implementing a research based social-emotional curriculum in our schools is the start.

To ensure all children are school ready, Family Enrichment Network's Head Start program will need to collaborate across all our local schools, and possibly with Head Start Day Cares and other educational facilities to promote and implement the Pyramid Model.

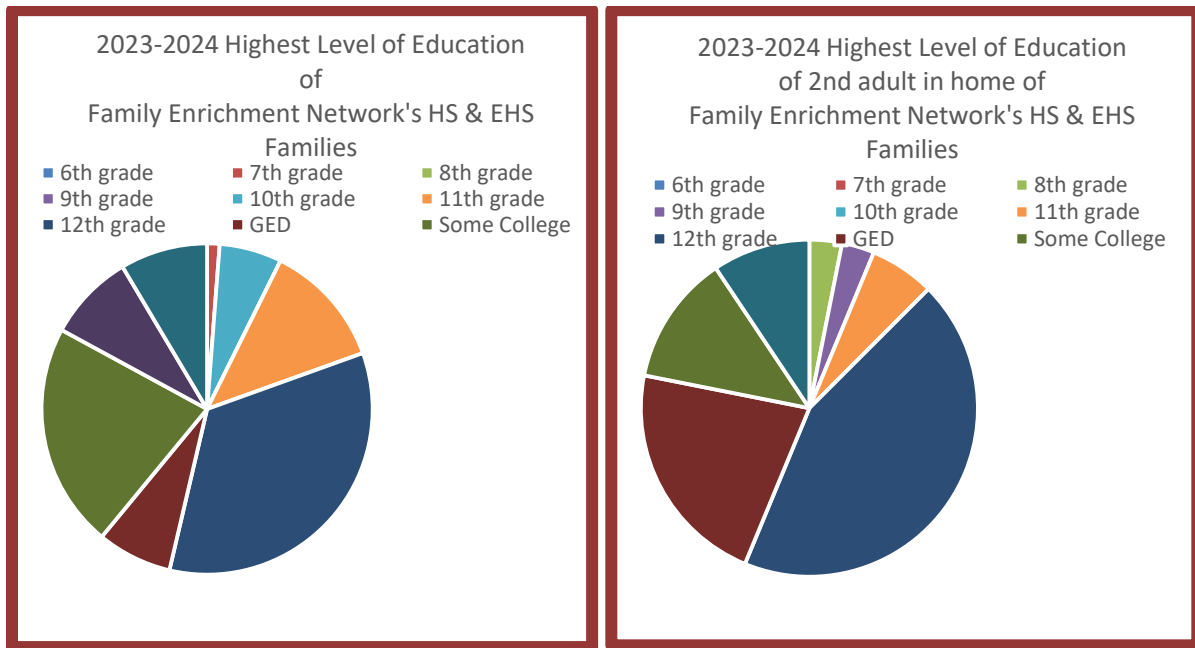
**Suggestions and Needs from Families<sup>119</sup>**

*The Families Suggest*

- *Better communication between transportation and classroom closures*
- *Make the program available for middle class families*
- *Increase the number of teachers and substitutes*
- *Less closing of classrooms*
- *Start hours later in the morning*
- *Longer program hours*
- *More child friendly food choices*
- *Operate more classrooms and buses*
- *Pay employees better*

**Education Attainment**

**Highest Level of Education Obtained by the Children’s Family Members of Family Enrichment Network’s Head Start & Early Head Start Programs<sup>120</sup>**



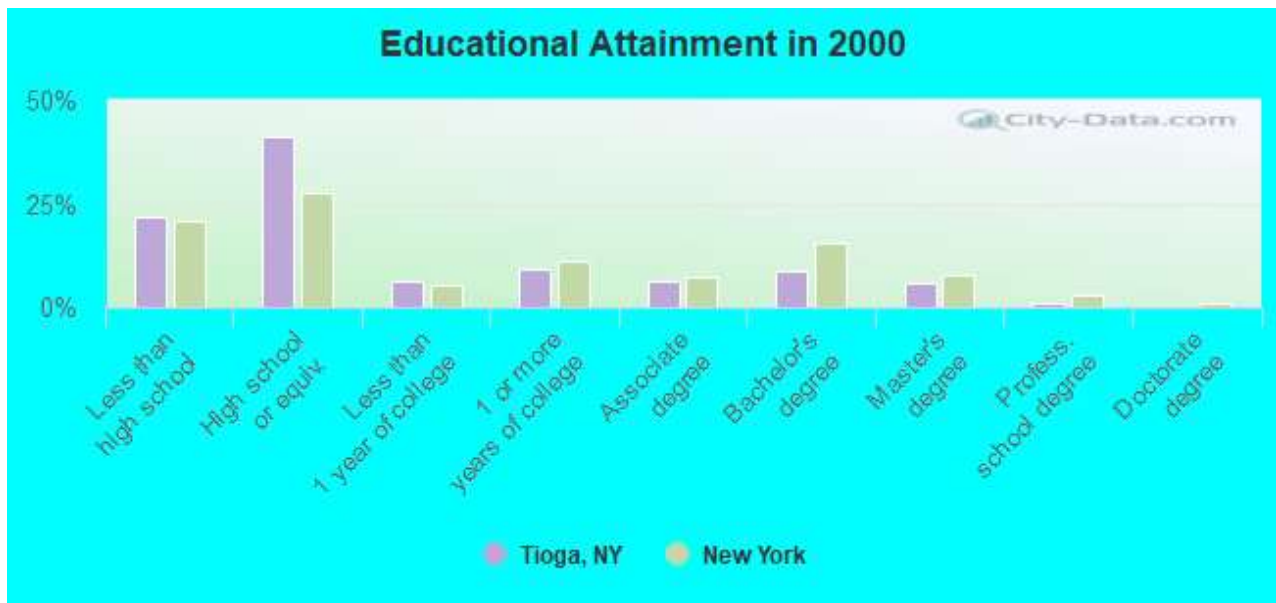
**Educational Attainment for Broome County, New York State, United States, 2013-2017<sup>121</sup>**

Educational Attainment	Broome County		NYS	US
	Population Estimate	Percent (%)	Percent (%)	Percent (%)
<b>Population 25 years and over</b>	129,802			
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	3497	2.7	5.5	5.4
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade, no diploma	8932	6.7	7.4	7.2
<b>High School graduated/GED</b>	40700	31.4	26.3	27.3
Some College, no degree	23958	18.5	15.9	20.8
Associate degree	16307	12.6	8.7	8.3
Bachelor's Degree	20371	15.7	19.9	19.1
Graduate or professional degree	16.37	12.4	15.4	11.8
<b>Percent high school graduate or higher</b>		90.4	86.1	87.3
<b>Percent Bachelor's degree or higher</b>		28.0	35.3	30.9

SOURCE: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-

**Educational Attainment for Tioga County**

Tioga County High Schools graduation rate is slightly higher than the New York State average.<sup>122</sup>



Source: <http://www.city-data.com/city/Tioga-New-York.html><sup>123</sup>

## **Health/Nutrition Need**

### **Health Insurance**

As of 2023, 4.7% of the children in Broome County and 5.1% of the population in Tioga County are uninsured, many of whom may be eligible for Medicaid. Parents can access health insurance online at <https://nystateofhealth.ny.gov> or by calling NY State of Health at 1-855-355-5777. They can also access health insurance by calling Mothers & Babies or Southern Tier Independence Center where an insurance navigator will help them to find their option best suited to their circumstances. Families that live in a rural area where there is no internet access and they have no phone may experience difficulty in accessing health insurance. Other barriers may include the cost is too high, lost job or changed employers, lost eligibility for Medicaid or, they never had or have no need for insurance.

The Broome and Tioga County Departments of Social Services operate under a mandatory managed care program, as a way to increase accessibility to primary and preventive health care and to reduce the cost of healthcare in general. In Broome County, about 43,794 of the 67,157 Medicaid eligible individuals are in Medicaid Managed Care (31,819 through the NYSOH). It is crucial that families receive assistance in the selection of the best-managed care plan for themselves and their families. New York Health Options (Maximus) provides this assistance in Broome and Tioga County.

There were 21.8% of Tioga County individuals on Medicaid. 6,888 of these are enrolled on the Exchange, 3,684 are still managed by Tioga County DSS.

Child Health Plus

As of December 2020, there were 3,239 Broome County children enrolled in Child Health Plus (Excellus FLBCBS -2091, CDPHP - 196, FIDELIS 868, UHC 84). In Tioga County, 871 children were enrolled (Excellus FLBCBS - 294, CDPHP - 73, FIDELIS 474).<sup>124</sup>

**TABLE 8: Health Care Visits of Head Start Families<sup>125</sup>**

HEALTH CARE	PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS		PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN	
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023
Medical Visits				
Every two years	0%	1%	1%	0%
Once a year	24%	24%	30%	39%
Twice a year	7%	12%	13%	9%
As Needed	69%	62%	56%	53%
Never	0%	1%	0%	0%
Dental Visits				
Every two years	0%	1%	0%	0%
Once a year	13%	20%	13%	21%
Twice a year	25%	23%	40%	36%
As Needed	59%	51%	37%	40%
Never	3%	4%	7%	3%
Vision Exams				
Every two years	12%	12%	3%	2%
Once a year	30%	14%	14%	16%
Twice a year	4%	3%	6%	5%
As Needed	34%	55%	49%	48%
Never	20%	16%	28%	28%

Oral Health/Health Plan Coverage

Broome and Tioga County Departments of Social Services operate a mandatory managed care program with several different product lines. There are currently over 43,794 individuals in Broome County and 10,572 in Tioga County enrolled in these plans. As a result of a Medicaid Redesign Proposal, dental care was added to the Medicaid managed care benefit package and those enrollees access dental care through their plan’s dental network. Child Health Plus also

offers dental care. While local data is not available for health plans supporting the safety net populations, in the Quality Reports for HMO's statewide (QARR, available at NYSDOH website), the plans reported the following: for CHP B: one annual dental visit per child; CDPHP 65%, Fidelis 64%, and Excellus 63%, UHC 63%<sup>126</sup>.

### Oral Health

Broome and Tioga Counties are both designated as Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas for the Low-Income population. Lourdes Center for Oral Health (Gutherie of Binghamton Dental Health) and Tioga Mobile Dental Services were established as Article 28 dental clinics, with a focus on restoring and maintaining dental health for children and adults, the center targets those who are uninsured, on Medicaid, or enrolled in a managed care plan including-New York's Child Health Plus program.

Lourdes resumed services in December 2022, seeing approximately 20 children from the Fayette Street and Saratoga site. Between September 2022 and March 2023, over 3,000 children were provided with dental screenings, education and/or treatment on the Lourdes Mobile Dental Unit at the school-based locations. In the 2023 year Lourdes Dental has provided services for approximately fifty children across four Family Enrichment Sites.

The Tioga Mobile Dental Unit provides services to primarily school-based centers in Tioga County. Last calendar year the Tioga Dental Unit was able to see 311 new clients and screen 1,141 clients. The Tioga Smiles Dental Van staff has not yet resumed visits to Tioga County Head Start, but is tentatively scheduled to resume in the 2024-2025 school year.<sup>127</sup>

United Health Services Hospitals (UHS) operates an Article 28 clinic at Binghamton General Hospital There are approximately 700 children enrolled in the clinic at this time. The child population has been significantly reduced because many parents are taking their children to

Dinosaur Dental in Endicott, which accepts many of their insurances and is widely-known for being child friendly. The fluoride varnish program has been discontinued because the hygienist that did the program has gone to the school-based clinics.<sup>128</sup>

### Immunizations

Vaccines prevent disease and are among the most cost-effective clinical preventive services. Despite progress, tens of thousands of adults and hundreds of children in the United States die each year from vaccine preventable diseases.

New York State Public Health Law 2164 requires vaccinations or other documentation of immunity as a condition of child care, school, and college attendance. The purpose of the law is to reduce the incidence of vaccine preventable diseases and associated morbidity and mortality by increasing vaccination rates. In June 2019, the law was revised to eliminate religious exemption to vaccines and, in order to prevent frivolous medical exemptions, set specific requirements of documentation for them.

The following vaccines are required by New York State for school entrance into Day-Care, Nursery, Head Start, and Pre-K:

- Diphtheria, Tetanus Toxoid-Containing Vaccine, Pertussis vaccine (DTaP/DPT)
- Polio Vaccine (IPV and/or OPV)
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella vaccine (MMR)
- Hepatitis B vaccine
- Varicella vaccine (Chickenpox)
- *Haemophilus influenza* type b conjugate vaccine (Hib)
- Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV-13)

Other vaccines that are recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention including the following: Hepatitis A Vaccine for babies age 12 to 23 months; the rotavirus vaccine for babies at two, four, and six months of age; and the influenza vaccine for people age six months and up, to be given every flu season. Children six months to eight years who are receiving their first flu shot will need a booster at least 28 days later.

Students entering 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades in New York State public, private and parochial schools are required to be fully vaccinated against meningococcal disease according to Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

No information as to the percentage of children who are not fully vaccinated in Broome and Tioga Counties was provided for this assessment.

Providers must enter all immunizations administered to children less than 19 years of age into the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS). This is a free, web-based statewide immunization registry. Unfortunately, some Health Care Providers are not consistent in entering immunizations into the system.<sup>129</sup>

COVID-19 Vaccines have been approved for children and all parents are being encouraged to have their children immunized, as recommended by the Office of Head Start. Due to the fact that these are not mandatory for the children, Family Enrichment Network encourages staff to be fully vaccinated.

Lead Poisoning Prevention

**TABLE 9: Broome County Lead Cases<sup>130</sup>**

Blood lead levels (ug/dL) 2020	# of identified children per 1,000 tested
5-9.9	20.2
10 and above	6.8



**TABLE 10: Tioga County Lead Cases<sup>131</sup>**

Blood lead levels (mcg/dl) 2020	# of cases identified per 1,000 tested
5-9.9	18.1
10 and above	13.6

Although recent published data for lead testing is not available, Tioga County Public Health noted a rise in active high lead cases this year, almost doubling over last calendar year reported. When asked, they attributed this to the delay in testing for many children due to COVID, and many siblings in the same household all testing positive.

#### Allergic Reactions in Child Care

On September 15, 2021, in response to a child's death due to an untreated anaphylactic reaction in a child care setting, New York State enacted Elijah's Law requiring day care centers to create a formalized plan to educate staff about allergic reactions and how to respond to symptoms. The state obtained grant money to supply day care settings with epinephrine auto-injectors and allow non-patient specific epinephrine auto-injectors to be stored in those settings. Family Enrichment Network has revised the Health Care Plans for all sites to accommodate this. All Center Directors have received their epinephrine auto-injectors and the training for the staff has been completed. At this time all Family Enrichment Network sites are stocking all three doses of the Avi-Q auto injectors in order to best respond to an anaphylactic emergency.

#### Prenatal Care

The Family Enrichment Network Early Head Start program includes recruiting pregnant women to assist them in identifying their needs and support them throughout their pregnancy, with the intent that the infant will be placed in an educational day care setting when they are approximately six weeks of age. The expectant mothers are visited monthly or as needed by a Socialization Specialist, who supports them in meeting needs that they have identified. All expectant mothers are also given ongoing health support by a nurse, who visits with them during

and after their pregnancy. The visits by the Socialization Specialist and Nurse are re-established in person due to the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, allowing the ability to develop meaningful supportive relationships with the families and conducting neonatal physical assessments to identify health needs. Unfortunately, due to staffing, the health portion of this program is paused until a new nurse can be hired.<sup>132</sup>

When Early Head Start was initiated in 2010, 12 pregnant women were served annually. In the fall of 2020, the Early Head Start program was expanded. Family Enrichment Network now serves 16 pregnant women annually. One hundred eighty infants have been enrolled in Early Head Start through the pregnant mothers' tract since the beginning of the program.<sup>133</sup>

### Asthma

Childhood asthma continues to be a major public health problem for the pediatric population, especially Head Start/Early Head Start children due to their economic status, race, and housing conditions. Previous surveys conducted by the Decker School of Nursing at Family Enrichment Network done in 2011 and 2012 have confirmed this.

The age-adjusted prevalence of asthma in Broome County was 12.2%, higher than the 9.6% for New York State and 10.4% for Upstate New York. Age-adjusted asthma mortality rate for Broome County is 1.6 per million population, compared to NYS (1.3 per million) and Upstate New York (0.9 per million). However, asthma morbidity is relatively high. The number of hospitalizations for asthma in Broome County was an estimated 217 per year. The age-adjusted asthma hospitalization rate for Broome County was 5.4 per 10,000 population, which was significantly lower than NYS (11.4 per 10,000) but higher than Upstate NY (6.8 per 10,000). The highest morbidity is for the 0–4 age group (9.7 per 10,000) and the 5-14 age group (7.2 per 10,000). Emergency room visits for asthma were 71.2 per 10,000 for children aged 0-4.<sup>134</sup>

Using GIS (Geographical Information Systems) mapping of where families with asthma enrolled at Family Enrichment lived, increased asthma rates were noted in Johnson City in Census Map 139, which has been identified as an area with low household incomes, high rates of poverty and unemployment, and high percentages of residents receiving public assistance.

The median household income of this census tract is \$45,515 compared to \$53,982 in the surrounding county, with 19.6% living in poverty.<sup>135</sup> Notably, this census tract had the fifth highest number of asthma hospital discharges of all zip codes in the county.<sup>136</sup> Demographics for this tract indicate a higher percentage of Black residents; more than double that of the surrounding town and county. While age of housing was not available for this specific census tract, the majority of housing in the county (2/3) was built prior to 1960, increasing the possibility of deteriorating conditions.<sup>137</sup>

Children enrolled in Head Start had been given asthma teaching by Binghamton University Nursing students in previous years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not possible in 2020 and has not yet been re-established.

### WIC

In 2023, the Broome County WIC Program conducted almost 18,000 appointments and made over 15,000 referrals to community agencies. The Tioga Opportunities, Inc. WIC Program currently reaches over 5,000 families annually. Broome and Tioga County WIC staff members continue to provide nutrition assessments, nutrition counseling, and breastfeeding support. All appointments continue to be conducted over the phone, and families will be encouraged to come in for things like healthy height and weight checks, as well as health and nutrition updates which occur once every six to twelve months. Staff continued to work from the main site and offer curbside service to participants who needed replacement cards and breast pumps.<sup>138</sup>

### Greater Good Grocery

A strength for our community is a grocery store dedicated to providing the community with food accessibility and affordability. After 24 years without nearby access to fresh meats and produce, the north side of Binghamton is no longer a food desert. This grocery store opened on the North Side of Binghamton on January 4, 2021. Located within the new Canal Plaza affordable housing development, the store is three and a half years in the making. Greater Good Grocery will acquire its products from the Utica store at a steep discount, passing the savings on to customers while still generating some revenue for other Council programs.

Council Executive Director Reverend Joe Sellepack says access to affordable food will decrease the reliance on CHOW. “Offer people the ability to come to a grocery store to expand their budgets to the point where they don’t rely so much on the emergency food program. So, the more we’re able to get affordable food to people in areas like the north side of Binghamton, the better it is,” said Sellepack. Seman says he hopes the store and remaining Canal Plaza project serve as a catalyst for the rejuvenation of the north side.

### Food Bank of the Southern Tier

Another strength of our community is the Broome County Hunger Coalition. The BCHC consists of the leaders of local food pantries, free community meals, food banks, Rural Health Network, etc. and meets every other month. In this meeting, members work together to brainstorm and collaborate on what is going well in the community and where there are still needs, if they need volunteers, have resources to share, etc. Through this coalition, which was created by the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, the agency hopes to find the underserved in the community and to be able to improve services for everyone in the county.

## Tioga Opportunities

Food insecurity in Tioga County is addressed by the Community Services Department at Tioga Opportunities, Inc. They provide the community with safe and affordable housing, financial education and stability, community awareness, and health and wellness programs and services. Within Tioga County, 13% of children live in poverty and as of 2019 the rate of children enrolled in Free and Reduced Lunch is 50.5%. Economically disadvantaged children are also more likely to be food insecure, and food insecurity in households with children is associated with inadequate intake of several important nutrients, deficits in cognitive development, behavioral problems, and poor health. In 2020, 10.3% of the population and 12.8% of children in Tioga County were food insecure.

Tioga Opportunities serves as the coordinating and oversight entity between the Food Bank of the Southern Tier in Elmira and eight pantries and soup kitchens throughout the county, located in Berkshire, Candor, Nichols, Newark Valley, Apalachin, Spencer, and Owego.

The mobile food pantry is a converted beverage truck used to deliver fresh produce, dairy products and other food and grocery products directly to distribution sites where people are in need of food. When the truck arrives at the site, volunteers place the food on tables surrounding the truck and clients can choose the items they need.

## CHOW

CHOW (Community Hunger Outreach Warehouse), the hunger relief and advocacy program of the Broome County Council of Churches, serves individuals and families in need of emergency food assistance. Individuals and families can get food assistance every four weeks or 12 times a year. Currently, CHOW stocks over 50 pantries and distributes food to 52 shelters, soup kitchens, schools and distribution sites.

When a client visits a CHOW pantry, they are given enough food for five days. The food packages are based on family size and are designed to give adequate nutrition. A weakness in the community, CHOW has seen an increase in the number of individuals and families who are food insecure in Broome and surrounding counties and that has only grown through the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, CHOW and its sub-program Broome Bounty, the area's only food recovery program, served approximately 2,230,000 meals through its pantries and soup kitchens. Over 40% of the people served by CHOW are children. The need for food assistance for families is especially acute during the summer months when children who receive subsidized meals in school are eating all their meals at home. To combat hunger over the summer months, agencies all across Broome and Tioga County offer meals through the Summer Food Service Program. This program allows non-profit organizations to offer up to two meals and one snack per day to children ages 18 and under.

In order to serve the community in a holistic way, CHOW has partnered with Broome County Department of Social Services to implement a job training program. The program, CHOW Works, trains up to 12 participants for 12 weeks at a time. The participants receive hands on training in our warehouse and receive forklift training and certification, ServSafe food handling certification and an OSHA 10-hour certification. The participants spend the last hour of everyday learning financial literacy from SEFCU and Vision Federal Credit Union, healthy cooking classes from Cornell Cooperative Extension, and resume building training from our full-time work advocate. 90% of all graduates are placed in full-time employment within the 12 weeks of the program. 20% are placed in full-time employment within four weeks of graduation.

## VINES

Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments, Inc. (VINES) is an organization committed to developing a sustainable and just community food system. They do this by bringing together diverse groups of people, with a focus on youth development, to establish community gardens, urban agriculture and community green spaces. They strive to develop and beautify urban sites throughout Broome County and empower community members of all ages and abilities.

The essence of VINES' work is captured in its simple motto: growing food, growing community. VINES program empowers people to improve their lives and communities through urban gardening and by connecting urban consumers to rural farmers.

Each program has a rippling impact throughout our area. Over 400 raised beds in the eighteen community gardens run by VINES provide local residents the ability to grow food for their families. The Urban Farm, which began on four vacant city lots, recently expanded to a total of 2.25 acres in downtown Binghamton where fresh produce is grown for the community. At this site, VINES has provided youth development and training through Grow Binghamton for the past ten growing seasons. Grow Binghamton has recently begun offering a 6-week session both in the fall and spring each year, providing year-round youth employment. VINES also provides free education on food production and preservation through its Green Thumb Educational Series. Farm Share (FS) brings food from VINES and two other area farms to urban residents who otherwise have severely limited access to fresh vegetables. Over the past seven years FS has grown from 30 members to 200 members. Through FS, individuals and families are making changes to their diets that they both enjoy and can sustain. 70% of members surveyed reported that their consumption of vegetables increased during Farm Share. 85% also reported

that they can better afford to eat a balanced diet because of Farm Share. Launched in April 2020, the Build a Garden program provides raised bed and grow bag gardens to low-income homes. The Wellness Wagon transports residents weekly from the North Side of Binghamton (a food-desert) to grocery stores and other food access sites.

The target populations for VINES programming are families and individuals living in the Broome County area who live in or near areas that lack affordable access to healthy, local produce and are living in poverty or categorized as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) by the United Way.

### **Mental Health Services & Supports**

Family Enrichment Network's Mental Health Consultants report that fewer mental health providers are accepting new clients and/or Medicaid and private insurance payments and waiting lists are even longer than in the past. There are very few local therapists who do not have a waitlist but those that do not also are not accepting insurances (private pay only) at all. The Mental Health Consultants and the Professional Development Specialist for the South Early Childhood Family and Community Engagement Center (FACE) stress that "much more is needed in terms of mental assistance" for children. While contacting various agencies in an effort to assess accessibility of services, one of the Mental Health Consultants learned that a counseling center, Samaritan House, which has served many of our families in the past, has a long wait list and staff shortages are typical for many local agencies. To help identify and secure any available services; this Mental Health Consultant belongs to an informal internet network of 79 therapists practicing locally. The group alerts one another electronically (list serve) of individuals who are



in need and having difficulty securing services, in hopes that one or more of the therapists might know of any possible providers or solutions.

Lourdes Center for Mental Health, Greater Binghamton Health Center and Family & Children's Counseling Services all serve children and adults as licensed NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) Clinics within Broome County. Family & Children's Counseling Services and Greater Binghamton Health Center's Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Clinic's licensed NYS OMH Clinics offer same day service appointments to address the growing need for mental health services for children only five and over. United Health Services Hospitals (UHS) also operates a NYS OMH Clinic serving adults. Family and Children's Counseling Services operates School Based Family Support Centers in the Binghamton, Johnson City, Union Endicott, Whitney Point, and Windsor School Districts. Supports offered through this service include individual, family and group counseling, as well as parent support and education.

In October 2018, Family & Children's Counseling Services opened an NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) licensed Outpatient Substance Use Treatment satellite clinic with same day access available Monday through Friday.

Broome County Mental Health Department's website offers a range of assistance for families including: virtual support; respite services; resources for parents; and hotlines/helplines. Mental health services in Tioga County are more limited. Families must travel long distances to access services at Tioga County Mental Health Clinic in Owego or in Waverly. Both facilities offer family and individual counseling and will see children as young as five years of age. Many of the Broome County facilities cited above are utilized by Tioga County families upon referral. Franziska Racker Center provides play therapy for preschool children after they have completed

the evaluation process and have approval from their school districts Committee on Preschool Special Education; more often than not, that one provider is full.

The lack of mental health services for preschoolers under the age of five continues to be an area of need. Children and families not in need of a psychiatrist have several options available. Family Enrichment Network Head Start and Early Head Start programs retain the services of Mental Health Consultants who provide counseling services to families on a short-term basis and then facilitate referrals to other community resources which accept Medicaid, Child Health Plus, or have a sliding fee scale, for those in need of long-term services. In addition to FEN's short-term services, several care coordination services are available that will help a family with their hurdles, making them more likely to achieve success overall. These services include Medicaid and Non-Medicaid Care Management as well as Family Enrichment Network's Kinship Caregiver's Program. The Kinship Caregiver's Program has provided vital support and counseling for Head Start and Early Head Start families in Broome and Tioga Counties who have taken on the responsibility for the care of grandchildren, nieces and nephews, etc., but state funding is frequently in jeopardy, rendering its future uncertain. FEN also makes every effort to meet the need for children's mental health and social/emotional supports by implementing Conscious Discipline, NYS Pyramid, and Second Step Curriculum practices program-wide.

Children and youth with Medicaid may be eligible for Medicaid Care Management (Health Home) and those who are uninsured or have private health insurance may be eligible for Non-Medicaid Care Management (NMCM). Both services can be accessed through Broome County Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPOA). Priority for NMCM is given to children/youth that are at imminent risk of hospitalization and have private insurance. Children with Medicaid can also be referred directly to the Health Home provider to access those services.

In December 2016, the roll out for Children’s Health Home started. A health home (a.k.a. Medicaid health home) — as defined in Section 2703 of the Affordable Care Act — offers coordinated care to individuals with multiple chronic health conditions, including mental health and substance use disorders. The health home is a team-based clinical approach that includes the consumer, his or her providers, and family members, when appropriate. The health home builds linkages to community supports and resources as well as enhances coordination and integration of primary and behavioral health care to better meet the needs of people with multiple chronic illnesses. In 2019, New York State initiated a transition to Medicaid Managed Care for children, started new State Plan Amendment (SPA) services called Children & Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS), and unbundled the 1915(c) waiver programs (OMH, B2H and Care at Home I & II) to become Children’s Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). These changes were made to enable more children to access a wider range of services, allow for greater provider choice, and ensure that children and families were receiving the services that were the most pertinent for their needs. The services are for Medicaid eligible children, but families with private insurance can go through a process to enable their child to have Medicaid.

The initial implementation of the CFTSS and HCBS has been challenging due to staffing shortages and navigating a new system for both families and providers. Children and families have begun to receive services from a range of providers in the County and new services continue to come on board.

Community Initiatives BC Promise Zone supports all districts in the county that wish to become involved with the Community School framework. These activities include support in building community connections, access to professional development support, and providing a repository of resources to assist with needs or projects through the implementation of the full-

scale University-Assisted Community School (UACS) model. During 2019-2020 school year, ten school districts implemented the UACS model through Binghamton University: Binghamton, Chenango Forks, Chenango Valley, Deposit, Harpursville, Johnson City, Union Endicott, Whitney Point, Windsor, and Broome-Tioga BOCES.

Community School Coordinators work diligently with school districts to offer needs assessment to move the work forward. The Coordinators also work with Binghamton University interns from the Master of Social Work (MSW) program and a variety of majors and interests to provide support to students during and extended school day. The students operate with a social-emotional focus designed to improve school attendance and academic achievement, increase engagement and increase access to community resources.

The Family Enrichment Network Mental Health and Special Services Coordinator attends and collaborates with all local early intervention coordinating councils to brainstorm and implement ideas to better serve Families in the area of Mental Health and Support Services.

### **Social Services Needs**

Head Start families, through their participation in our program, work in partnership with Family Advocates to identify, assess and address their personal and family goals. These partnerships are typically achieved through regular communication and home visiting with the families. Family Advocates provide services to families in person either in the home or at another mutually agreed upon location. During the Head Start program year Family Advocates meet with families on a monthly basis, or more depending on the families' needs, in their own homes, at their child's program center, or at another mutually agreed upon location, assisting them to develop individualized goals for themselves and their families.

In Broome County housing and childcare both increased dramatically from last year, as needs identified by our families in 2023.<sup>139</sup> We know that many families continue to face ongoing challenges with finding adequate and stable housing in our county. In Broome County, families are required to go through the coordinated entry system by calling 2-1-1. Unfortunately, many of the families that we work with often report that being required to go through that system during a crisis is neither helpful nor user friendly.

Finding reliable childcare that will allow parents and caregivers to maintain stable employment is also a struggle for families with young children. We know that there are childcare shortages and wage issues that are directly affecting the childcare challenges, especially for our families. Childcare is still an issue for our families, as is finding stable employment in Tioga County. Additionally, in Tioga County our families have identified a higher need for counseling, domestic violence interventions, and there is a slight increase in the need for substance abuse services over last year.<sup>140</sup>

According to the Office of the Administration for Children & Families- Family & Youth Services Bureau, 15.5 million children are exposed to domestic violence every year. Research has shown that 30-60% of children who have witnessed domestic violence in their home are victims of direct abuse themselves. A child is a witness to domestic violence when an act that is defined as domestic violence is done or committed in the presence of, or perceived by the child.<sup>141</sup> There were 970 total reports of domestic violence in Broome County in 2022 according to the Division of Criminal Justice Services (data as of May 14, 2023). Of these 970 total reports, 668 were considered intimate partner violence.<sup>142</sup>

Additionally, Crime Victims Assistance Center (CVAC) served 423 victims of domestic violence last year which is a 15% increase from 2022 and 52 victims of stalking. Due to the

increase in fatalities related to domestic violence, CVAC has begun a Lethality Assessment Program scheduled to pilot with the Broome County Sheriff's Office on January 2, 2024 to assess victims for high risk of lethality and intervene earlier to decrease the risk of a fatality.

According to Crime Victims Assistance Center, Inc., in 2023 they provided services for 71 children with allegations of child physical abuse; 273 children with allegations of child sexual abuse; 15 children with allegations of child sexual abuse images; and 37 children who witnessed some form of violence.<sup>143</sup> Additionally, the Broome County Department of Social Services 2022 Annual Report indicates that there were 3,894 reports made of alleged abuse or maltreatment in Broome County, a slight decrease from last year.<sup>144</sup> In Tioga County, there were 1,168 reports made of alleged abuse or maltreatment according to their 2022 annual report; also a slight decrease over last year.<sup>145</sup> Child Protective Services is responsible for receiving and investigating all reports of child abuse and neglect.

More than ever there continues to be a need for Head Start to support and assist families. Families are struggling therefore we need to continue working to enhance family engagement techniques and strategies so that we can adequately support families, especially those with limited access to resources. Finding support to strengthen parenting skills also continues to be an area of interest for our families. Through their participation in Head Start, families are offered ongoing support and resources about parenting and child development. By engaging in the family services that are offered, families can also regularly receive information about different parenting workshops and support groups that are being offered throughout the community.

**2023 Family Needs Data in Broome & Tioga HS/EHS**

<b>NEED AREA</b>	<b>BROOME</b>	<b>TIOGA</b>
<b>Housing/Basic Needs</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Job/Job Training</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Employment</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Finances</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Relationship Skills</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>ESL</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Family/Domestic Violence</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Counseling</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Substance Abuse Services</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Childcare</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>17</b>

**Childcare Needs**

Head Start families continue to find it very challenging to find adequate and affordable childcare. According to the 2023 Broome County Family Profile completed by Family Advocates, almost 20% of families in Broome and almost 28% of our Tioga HS/EHS families indicated that they need reliable and stable childcare. For Broome County families, this number has increased over the last year. The Family Profiles completed by Family Advocates also noted that around 18% of families are actively working on obtaining reliable child care.<sup>146</sup> Many families indicate that they are not able to work or can only work limited hours due to not having childcare for their children during non-program hours or when classrooms are forced to close due to staffing issues. Staffing shortages continue to plague early childhood programs across the country, and Broome and Tioga counties are no different. Childcare facilities do not have the proper staff to maintain ratios, which in turn is causing them to not have as many available open slots. The hours of some facilities have also been affected causing families to have to adjust their work schedules or remain unemployed due to the hours of childcare available. The childcare need in both counties remains a barrier for many families who need to work and need appropriate care for their children.

## **Employment Needs**

True welfare reform comes from a climate that encourages work, and it is necessary to have support systems in place so the environment is conducive to entering the workforce. A need still exists for low skill/entry level jobs for people with little or no work experience and limited education. Broome County Department of Social Services' Welfare to Work Unit offers programs and services to help benefit recipients work towards stable employment and self-sufficiency goals. Programs available include training on job searches, employability assessment and planning, supportive and monitoring services.<sup>147</sup>

According to the latest available statistics from Broome County Department of Social Services Annual Report 2022, Temporary Assistance caseloads decreased by 38 in all categories as of December 2022; Family Assistance, Safety Net, and Emergency programs saw an increase in applications by 31% with approved cases increasing by 20%; denied and/or withdrawn cases increased by 31%; additionally, an increase of 1891 in other cases were open/closed, reopened, or reactivated.<sup>148</sup> Tioga County Department of Social Services' 2022 Annual Report indicates it "has been a year of transitions" including turnover, new staffing, and "preparing for the workplace of today and the future." Cash assistance cases decreased by 35; Safety Net averages increased by 19; Daycare caseload averages increased by 21. Overall, in 2022, Career Center staff assisted with 9,029 phone calls.<sup>149</sup>

Currently, 88% of Broome County, and 73% of Tioga County Head Start and Early Head Start families work full-time or part-time; 40% of Broome County and 14% of Tioga County families receive either partial or full public assistance; 8% of Broome County and 37% of Tioga County families have other sources of income (SSI/SSD/SS).<sup>150</sup>



Broome County Transit maintains 17 fixed routes throughout the urban/suburban sectors of the Triple Cities, providing almost 2 million rides annually. Many of these routes operate seven days a week with weekday hours continuing until approximately 10:00 p.m., Saturday hours end by 7:00 p.m. and Sunday hours end by 5:00 p.m. Broome Transit services include specialized routes to corporate/industrial plants, shopping centers and recreational parks.<sup>151</sup> Broome County Transit received a federal grant in June 2021 to purchase six long range battery electric zero emission buses in 2023, replacing older diesel-fueled vehicles. The “green” buses feature powertrain components made locally by BAE Systems of Endicott, New York.<sup>152</sup>

In an article in the *Press & Sun Bulletin* on September 15, 2014, Tioga County Legislators voted unanimously to halt public transportation as of November 30, 2014. The decision was made after legislators were unable to find an alternate resolution to the drop in ridership, after rescheduling and changing routes in hopes of providing better services to residents. New York State took over scheduling transportation for Medicaid patients in 2013, preferring to use taxi services over public transportation. This change of Medicaid services caused a drop in ridership from approximately 1,000 per month to zero in January 2014.<sup>153</sup> Tioga Opportunities, Inc. is now a Medicaid transportation provider for Medicaid-covered appointments. The main source of transport within Tioga County is private vehicle, taxi or Uber, where available, or reliance on family or friends.<sup>154</sup>

While a majority of our parents have achieved a GED, high school diploma or higher level of education, not having a high school diploma, GED, or specialized skill does hinder a job seeker from obtaining employment, which would enable them to become self-sufficient. Minimum wage was increased to \$15 per hour in the upstate New York region, as of January 1, 2024, double the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour.<sup>155</sup>

According to the New York State Department of Labor website's "Labor Market Briefing, Southern Tier, November 2023", the Southern Tier Region has lost 1,300 private sector jobs but gained 600 government jobs over the past year. Of the recent job losses, most have been in manufacturing. New York State's unemployment rate increased slightly to 4.0%, the Southern Tier's rate is 3.6%, and Binghamton's unemployment rate exceeds the state at 4.5%.<sup>156</sup>

Christian Harris, NYS Department of Labor Southern Tier Regional Analyst, shared the following information:

- Population has increased by 4.4% since 2018 and is expected to increase an additional 7.8% by 2028.
- Between 2018 and 2023 jobs have declined by 5.4% in Broome County, which fell short of the national growth rate of 3.6%, making the labor force participation rate decrease 4.5%.
- 15.6% of Broome County residents possess a Bachelor's degree, 5.6% below the national average; 13.3% of Broome County residents hold an Associate's degree, 4.4% above the national average.
- Median household income is \$54,000, 7.8% below the national average.

Population characteristics locally compared to same size areas nationally, include:

- Millennials make 8.2% less than the national average, ages 25-39.
- 8.8% higher people retiring soon, ages over 55.
- Racial diversity is significantly lower, 46%.
- Veterans percentage is 6% higher locally.
- Violent crimes per 1,000 people are slightly higher in this area while property crimes per 1,000 people is significantly higher, 5%, locally.<sup>157</sup>

## U.S. INFLATION HAS BEEN EASING

CPI, OVER-THE-YEAR CHANGE, FEBRUARY 2020 – DECEMBER 2023 (NOT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED)



### Employment and Training Resource

All persons should be informed about employment and training programs provided by the Broome-Tioga Workforce New York office, with two locations:

- Broome Employment Center: 501 Reynolds Road, Johnson City, New York
- Tioga Employment Center: 1062 NY-38, Owego, NY 13827

Individuals seeking new or better jobs are provided with job leads and job search training to be able to compete for jobs meeting their qualifications. Short-term training programs are offered to individuals pursuing employment in selected fields, such as health care, manufacturing and customer service, while others could be considered for longer-term educational/vocational training.<sup>158</sup>

## **Unmet Needs**

Within our service area in Broome County, 855 children born in 2019 and 785 children were born in 2020, for a combined total of 1,640 age eligible children for the 2023-2024 program year. UPK slots for the current year offer 483 available slots to children born in 2019 and 2020. Our Head Start program offers 287 available slots for three- and four-year-old children. The data collected indicates 870 children within our service area who may not be enrolled in an early education program.

Within our service area in Tioga County, 767 children were born in 2019 and 2020. UPK available slots for the 2023-2024 program year totaled 338. Our Head Start program offers 62 available slots for three- and four-year-old children. The data collected indicates 429 children within our service area who may not be enrolled in an early education program.<sup>159</sup>

## **COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND STRENGTHS**

### **Enrichment Programs for Children**

Enrichment programs provide young children with experiences that allow them to express feelings, gain new skills, and grow in confidence. Within Broome and Tioga County, numerous programs offer enrichment activities for preschoolers. Many require an admittance fee, which often prohibits families of low income from participating. Accessibility for families without transportation also presents an additional challenge. The following is a list of the programs within the county, which offer special enhancement activities for young children.

## CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS

### Roberson Center of Arts and Sciences

30 Front Street, Binghamton, 772-0660

The Roberson Center provides permanent and changing exhibits of art, history, folk life and natural history, hands-on science gallery. Many special activities are organized. Virtual tours and art classes available over zoom.

Planetarium show schedules are listed on their website.

#### Museum Cost:

Children 4 and under with an adult..... Free  
Students and Seniors (62 & up).....\$6.00  
Adults.....\$8.00

#### Museum Hours:

Monday & Tuesday.....Closed  
Wednesday & Thursday.....12:00-5:00 p.m.  
Friday.....12:00-9:00 p.m.  
Saturday & Sunday.....12:00-5:00 p.m.

## WORKSHOPS FOR 4S AND UNDER

### Discovery Center of the Southern Tier

60 Morgan Road Binghamton, 773-8661

The Discovery Center is an interactive hands-on museum for children and their families.

#### Museum Cost:

Under 1 Year.....Free  
General Admission.....\$10.00  
Individual & Family Membership is available

#### Museum Hours:

Tuesday.....Closed  
Monday - Friday.....10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.  
Saturday.....10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
Sunday.....12:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

- If Binghamton City School District is closed due to weather; the DC is also closed.
- Open to all on school holidays.
- The first and third Friday of every month from 4:00p.m.-7:00p.m has free admission.
- The Story Garden is open every day from dawn-dusk.
- Advanced online reservations for admissions are required from everyone.

### Waterman Conservation Education

Center 403 Hilton Road, Apalachin, 625-2221

Anyone is free to walk through the trails and gardens and explore the Education buildings. Trails are open dawn to dusk daily.

#### Center Hours:

Monday-Friday.....9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.  
Saturday.....10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.  
Sunday..... Closed

**Finch Hollow Nature Center**

1394 Oakdale Road, Johnson City, 773-8661

Fun for children ages three through five. Natural history museum with approximately 1 mile of scenic, easy to walk nature trails winding through field, pond, and wooded habitats.

Center Cost:

Free; additional programs at a cost

Center Hours:

Monday-Sunday.....8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

Trails and grounds are open daily from sunrise to sunset.

**Libraries and Story Hours**

**Broome County Public Library**

185 Court Street, Binghamton, 778-6400

All in person library programs are canceled until further notice but various virtual activities are available. The library offers an array of activities for toddlers, preschoolers, and school aged children. Scheduled events and activities for children can be found on their website, registration is required.

Cost:

Free with library card

Library Hours:

Monday-Thursday.....9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

Friday-Saturday.....9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.

Winter and Summer Reading Program: designed for families to encourage life-long reading habits while we are stuck indoors. Sign up for a free account and then start reading books and completing activities at home to earn points. Once you have earned enough points, you will receive a completion certificate, and you will be entered into a drawing to win prizes! Stop by the Children’s Desk to sign up.

1000 Books Before Kindergarten: The concept is simple, the rewards are priceless. Read a book (any book) to your newborn, infant, and/or toddler. The goal is to have read 1,000 books (yes you can repeat books) before your precious one starts kindergarten. Register for the program 1000 Books before Kindergarten with us, and then start reading to child. Stop by the Children’s Desk to register. Caregivers will receive a reading log to start tracking the number of books read. Return your reading log to the Children’s Desk for a prize each time 100 books have been read.

**George F. Johnson Memorial Library**

1001 Park Street, Endicott, 757-5350

Story Times for Children birth through preschool, monthly book clubs for elementary students throughout the school year. Specific events for children and families, and a wide variety of summer programs for all ages.

Library Hours:

Monday-Thursday.....9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

Friday & Saturday.....9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.

**Vestal Public Library**

320 Vestal Parkway East, Vestal, 754-4243

Library Hours:

Monday-Thursday.....9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Friday.....9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.  
Saturday.....10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.  
Sunday.....Closed

**PRESCHOOL STORYTIME:** Mondays at 10:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.  
Preschool story time is for ages 2-6. We will read stories, sing songs, and do a craft.  
No registration required.

**TINY TO STORYTIME:** Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m.  
Story time and playtime for ages 0-3 that focuses on engaging and socialization skills. No registration required.

**LEGO CLUB**

Join us on the first Tuesday of each month for Lego Club! 4:00- 6:00PM open to ages 7-12  
Registration Required! Sign up in person or by calling youth services at (607)754-4243 ext. 3

Each month we will build new Lego creations based on a challenge. Creations will then be put on display in the library! All Legos provided.

**BOOKANEERS:** Third Tuesday of the month at 4:00 PM \*book at the service desk

**Barnes & Noble**

2443 Vestal Parkway East, Vestal, 770-9505

Children’s Story Time – Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m.

**Coburn Free Library**

275 Main Street, Owego, 687-3520

Cost:

Free with library card and preregistration

Library Hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday...10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Tuesday, Thursday.....2 p.m.-7 p.m.  
Saturday.....1 p.m.-4 p.m.

AARP Tax Help: AARP will return to Coburn Free Library. For information for this year’s tax free tax prep, please contact the Tioga County Community Center. Coburn is providing the location but the Community Center is handling all scheduling.

Coburn Academy: Registration appreciated but not required. This TED Talk inspired group features local presenters leading discussions on a variety of topics. This group, formerly known as the Umbrella Academy, disbanded during the pandemic. We are proud to revive this popular group. We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

Chess Club: This group is open to anyone interested in chess from beginners to serious competitors. The Coburn Chess Club is led by author Pam O’Shaughnessy and meets at 5:30

p.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month in Eva Thomas Room (2<sup>nd</sup> floor, elevator available from the rear entrance of the library). Ages teen and up.

Mystery Book Club: Registration required. Calling all mystery enthusiasts! Every month members meet to discuss the selection(s) of the month. Join us for an hour of lively banter and fun. The first Tuesday of the month at 1:00 p.m. This group sometimes meets outdoors during nice weather so be sure to register if you are a newcomer to the group. We will make sure you are added to the group information list. Happy reading!

Story Hour: On Wednesdays at 10:15 AM we share our favorite picture books with children ages birth to 5 and their parents or caregivers. Don't be surprised to learn a few finger plays and active nursery rhymes. Our story times are built around books and engaging readings but also include movement, songs, literacy skills, and play.

Coburn Kid's Craft Club: Join us on the first Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m. to try out a new crafting skill. Have fun. Learn something new. Take home your creation. Appropriate for school aged kids and tweens.

Kid's Game Night: Join us on the third Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m. for an evening of fun. Board games, card games, chess, puzzles and more!

Kid Builders: Registration is required. On the first Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. our young Lego builders make beginner's level creations. You provide the imagination, we provide the blocks! Designed for ages four and up. Those who are unable to responsibly use LEGO pieces will be given Duplo blocks. All children must be accompanied by a supervising adult.

Mommy & Me Play Group: On Mondays at 10:00a.m. for ages 0-3. In the Hilda R. Grimes room we offer a space where babies can play and socialize with their peers. Parents and guardians can also swap parenting tips or simply chat, while the kids have fun and play. We provide the toys and the fun, so all you need to do is come!

Early Literacy Storytime: On Wednesdays at 10:15 AM we share our favorite picture books with children ages birth to 5 and their parents or caregivers. Join our group each Wednesday at the library. Don't be surprised to learn a few finger plays and active nursery rhymes. Our story times are built around books and engaging readings but also include movement, song, literacy skills, and play. I'd say that's great for all ages.

Lego Club: On the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. older and more advanced Lego builders will meet to build. This group requires critical thinking skills and longer attention spans. Registration is required.

Paint and Learn: Exercise your creativity at Coburn Free Library, where learners evolve! During Paint and Learn, local artists Sandy Morris teaches basic painting techniques and helps participants unleash their inner artists. No experience required. All materials are provided at no cost.

Paint and Learn: Exercise your creativity at Coburn Free Library, where learners evolve! During Paint and Learn, local artists Sandy Morris teaches basic painting techniques and helps participants unleash their inner artists. No experience required. All materials are provided at no cost. Wear clothes you can paint in! We start at one and paint until done. Donations to support



our programming efforts are happily accepted. Register online, by phone (687-3520), or by visiting the library. Registration is required.

Other programs and events: Throughout the year, we also host a variety of different events, such as “Polar Express Pajama Party”, teen theater, crafting programs, educational events, summer reading programs, and more. Check back to our events calendar frequently so you don’t miss out!

**Tappan-Spaulding Memorial Library**  
6 Rock Street, Newark Valley, 642-9960

Library Hours:

Tuesday.....9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday.....3:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Thursday.....9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Saturday.....9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

- o When Newark Valley School District is closed for bad weather, Tappan-Spaulding Memorial Library will also be closed.

**Waverly Free Library**  
18 Elizabeth St Waverly 565-9341

**PARKS**

**County**

All Broome County Parks are free

All Broome County Parks are open all year round from 8:00 a.m. - Dusk

- Aqua-Terra Park: Maxian Road, Town of Binghamton, 778-2193
- Nathaniel Cole Park: Colesville Road, Harpursville, 693-1389
- Greenwood Park: Greenwood Road, Lisle, 778-2193
- Otsinigo Park: Bevier Street, Binghamton, 778-2193
- Hawkins Pond Nature Area: Scouten Hill Road, Windsor, 693-1389
- Dorchester Park: NY Rt. 26, Whitney Point, 692-4612
- Roundtop Picnic Area: Roundtop Park Street, Endicott, 778-6541

**Ross Park Zoo**

60 Morgan Road, Binghamton, 724-5461

More than 200 birds, reptiles, and mammals on the 25-acre site. Zoo includes Carousel museum, playground, and picnic pavilion. America’s 5<sup>th</sup> oldest zoo!

Cost: \_\_\_\_\_

2 years and under.....Free	College Student & Military ID.....\$8
3-12 years.....\$7	Group Rate (10+ people).....\$6/person
12 years - Adult.....\$9	Carousel Ride.....Free with admission
Senior (over 55).....\$8	Picnic and Playground.....Free

Hours:

Daily from 10:00 a.m-4:00 p.m.

\*Last ticket sold at 3 p.m.

\*Closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas

\*Periodically closes for inclement weather

**U-PICK FARMS & ANIMAL FARMS**

Animal farms, farm markets (some with apple and berry picking) and gardens in Broome County.

**Broome County**

- **Apple Hills**

131 Brooks Road, Binghamton, NY.

Phone: 607-729-2683

Email: [sales@applehills.com](mailto:sales@applehills.com).

Various apples, blueberries, cherries, raspberries, strawberries, petting zoo, gift shop  
Have a unique party at Apple Hills! Our Activity Room is full of things that allow kids to explore with their imagination and learn. Kids have their own Make-Believe Market, Apple Sorting Process, Apple Picking, The Great Purple Puff Ball Pool, The Corn Bin, Roller Racers, and Basketball. Add a Wagon Ride to the orchard for some fresh picking, and it is the best party a kid could have!

- **Cascade Valley Farm**

49 E. Bosket Rd, Windsor, NY 13865

Phone: 607-655-1693

Email: [yram1@tds.net](mailto:yram1@tds.net)

This is a beef and blueberry farm. During mid-July thru August, you can pick fresh blueberries at only \$1.00 a pound. Beef is available by the full cow.

Hours:

Open: Call for hours and availability.

- **Frosty Mountain Blueberry Farm**

196 Bull Creek Road, Whitney Point, NY 13862

Phone: 607-692-4356

Email: [tuk1025@aol.com](mailto:tuk1025@aol.com)

Uses **Integrated Pest Management**, blueberries, pre-picked produce, restrooms, picnic area

Open: Sunday to Saturday 7am to 8pm from the second week of July every day from 7:00am till 8pm and will stay open till berries are gone usually till the middle of September or after the late harvest berries are picked.

- **Lone Maple Farm**

2001 Hawleyton Road, Binghamton NY, 13903

Phone: 607-724-6877.

Email: [info@lonemaplefarm.com](mailto:info@lonemaplefarm.com).

U Pick Apples, strawberries. We DO NOT USE PESTICIDES on our strawberries. This year our Farm Market is open from 4/28/23 to 10/31/23, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day.

- **North Windsor Berries**

1609 NY Rte. 79, Windsor, NY 13865

Phone: 607-655-2074

Hours:

Open Monday – Saturday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Please see website for additional seasonal hours

Beans, beets, blackberries, cucumbers, onions, peas, peppers, pumpkins, raspberries (autumn, red), summer squash, strawberries, tomatoes, school tours.

Stop in to Side Hill Acres Goat Farm in Candor to visit the goats. Call ahead to arrange a free tour to see how they make the cheese and learn more about the goats. 607-659-4121

### Halloween Displays and Seasonal Events

Two local farms put on elaborate, free displays at Halloween time. Check out their web pages for spring/summer fun.

- Jackson's Pumpkin Farm is in Campville, which is between Endicott and Owego. Look for the free playground.
- Iron Kettle Pumpkin Farm is in Candor, past Owego has pumpkins are dressed up as children's favorite characters and nursery rhymes scenes. Bring your cameras! It is usually very crowded on weekends. Go during the week if you can.
- Check out Cornell Cooperative Extension--Broome County for some more great activities, including the Broome County Open Farm Weekend the first weekend in October, FREE.

### **Tioga County**

- **Gary's Berries** (Blueberries)

Rt 17C Campville, NY 13760

(5-mile E of Owego & 7-mile W of Endicott on old Route 17C)

Phone: [\(607\) 341-1399](tel:6073411399).

Open July-August, call for days and times.

- **Iron Kettle Farm** (Strawberries, peas, tomatoes),  
Rt 96 (S of village) Candor NY 13743.
- **Locust Woods Farm** (Blueberries)  
420 Dawson Hill Road Spencer NY 14883.  
(2 mile from Route 96 & Dawson Hill intersection)  
Phone: 607-589-4502.  
  
Open July-September
- **Maple Tree Gardens** (Strawberries, beans, peas, chili peppers)  
16 NY-96, Owego, NY 13827  
Phone: (607) 687-5917  
  
Open June-August, daily 10 a.m. -6 p.m.
- **Our Green Acres** (Strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, gooseberries, beans, peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, flowers)  
Rt 17C (W of Owego) Owego, NY 13827  
Phone: 607-687-2874  
Email: [frankwiles@aol.com](mailto:frankwiles@aol.com)  
  
Open June-October, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., call first.
- **Stoughton Farm** (Raspberries, beans, peas)  
Rt 38 North (N of golf course) Newark Valley, NY 13811.  
Phone: 607-642-3675  
Email: [info@stoughtonfarm.com](mailto:info@stoughtonfarm.com)  
  
Open April-October, Monday to Saturday, 9 am to 6, Sunday 9 am to 5 pm.  
  
U-Pick: Here at Stoughton Farm, we believe the freshest fruit is the stuff you pick yourself. Therefore, we offer a variety of different fruits and veggies you can pick on your own. Pod Peas: Mid/Late June - Early July. Green Beans: Late July - Late August. Fall Raspberries: Mid-August - Mid September. Our raspberries are grown in high tunnels, so you can pick rain or shine!
- **TLC Blueberry Farm** (Blueberries )  
2053 Route 17C (1 mile W of Smithboro) Barton, NY 13734  
Phone: 607-222-2697  
  
Open June- July, Saturday from 8 am to 1 pm.

We have wonderful blueberries for U-Pick. Also, ready picked berries. Many varieties of homemade jam and jelly. We have a road stand for fresh fruit- jam can be purchased at farm office. Also, at Owego's Farmers Market on Tuesdays.

## **LARGE MOTOR ACTIVITIES**

### **SKATE ESTATE**

Open Skate, Birthday Parties, Arcades, Miniature Golf, Water Slide, Laser Tag

#### Hours:

Monday.....Closed  
Tuesday.....6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.  
Wednesday.....5:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Thursday.....10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Friday.....10:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.  
Saturday.....10:00 am.- 10:00 p.m.  
Sunday.....10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

### **Hidy Ochiai Foundation**

317 Vestal Parkway West, Vestal  
Phone: 748-8480

Classes for Karate and Cardio Kickboxing offered throughout the week.

### **FMK Karate**

782 Chenango St, Binghamton  
Phone: 723-9624

Classes for Karate, Cardio Kickboxing and Zumba offered throughout the week.

### **Fairbanks Tang Soo Do**

604 Vestal Parkway West, Vestal  
Phone: 372-0936

Pre-K Karate for children ages 2-4

### **Dancescapes Performing Arts, LLC**

14 Willow Street, Johnson City  
Phone: 729-4783

Classes available in ballet, jazz, tap, lyrical/contemporary, acro, and hip hop. Recreational and competitive classes offered. Fee varies depending on the number of classes taken.

### **The Ice House Sports Complex**

614 River Road, Binghamton  
Phone: 607-343-2520

Public skating, open hockey, hockey camps, groups, and parties available. Cost varies depending on the activity.

### **SUNY Broome Ice Center**

901 Front Street, Binghamton (SUNY Broome Community College)  
Phone: 778-5423.

### **Chenango Gymnastics**

120 Chenango Bridge Road (RT 12-A), Binghamton  
Phone: 648-7366

Call for fees and schedules

- Mom Pop and Tot (2-3.5 yrs.)
- Preschool (3.5-5 yrs.)
- All Ability (5 & up)
- (Ninja) Warrior (5 & up)

### **Head Over Heels Gymnastics**

541 Vestal Parkway West, Vestal  
Phone: 754-6454

Various Preschool (1-4) and School Age (5-18) classes available  
Call for fees and schedules

### **Owego Gymnastics**

748 State Route 38, Owego  
Phone: 687-2458

Lions - 1 & 2 years old (walking) A half-hour class once a week where the parent helps the child on preschool equipment with the guidance of our coaches. This class will help young children to get ready for the Preschool experience. Cost: \$35 monthly School Year Times: (Sept 2023 - June 2024) Tues: 10:00-10:30 am or Wed: 5:30-6:00 pm

Tigers - 3 & 4 years old (must be potty trained) A forty five minute class that works on coordination, muscular development, attention span, following directions and interaction with other children. Learning through gymnastics those skills needed to be successful in Preschool. Cost: \$52 monthly. School Year Times: (Sept 2023 - June 2024) Tues: 10:45-11:30 am; Wed: 4:45-5:30 pm; or Sat: 9:30-10:15 am

Bears - 5 & 6 years old (Girls) An hour class one time a week which teaches not only the fundamentals of gymnastics, but also targets coordination, attention span and listening skills. Cost: \$63 monthly. School Year Times: (Sept 2024 - June 2024) Mon: 4:15-5:15 pm; Thurs: 5:30-6:30 pm; or Sat: 10:15-11:15 am

Tornadoes - 5 years old & up (Boys) An hour class one time a week that utilizes all pieces of gymnastics equipment, as well as related gymnastics activities including trampoline, mini-tramp, ropes, etc. to teach the beginning fundamentals of gymnastics for boys. Cost: \$63 monthly School Year Times: (Sept 2023 - June 2022) Mon: 4:15-5:15 pm

Diamonds - 7 years old & up (Girls) An hour class one time a week that utilizes all pieces of gymnastics equipment, as well as dance and related gymnastics activities including tumble track, mini-tramp, etc. to teach the beginning fundamentals of gymnastics. Cost: \$63 monthly School Year Times: (Sept 2023- June 2024) Mon: 5:30-6:30 pm; Wed: 6:15-7:15 pm; Sat: 10:15-11:15 am

Advanced Diamonds - 7 years old & up (Girls) A ninety minute class one time a week that utilizes all pieces of gymnastics equipment, as well as dance and related gymnastics activities including trampoline, mini-tramp, ropes, etc. to teach more advanced gymnastics skills.

Cost: \$80 monthly

School Year Times: (Sept 2023- June 2024)

Mon: 6:15-7:45 pm

Kids R Special (Children with Special Needs) - A 45 minute class to help with physical activity, socialization, coordination and other skills. Individual activities to help with the goals of each child. An adult or parent is encouraged (but not required) to participate with the attending child. Unfortunately, this class cannot accommodate siblings in the gym during class time.

Cost: \$49 monthly

School Year Times: (Sept 2023 - June 2024)

Wed: 4:00-4:45 pm

Little Ninjas (4 -6 year olds) - This program combines gymnastics and martial arts to teach confidence, self-control, focus, balance, and improve flexibility. It forms the foundation for any athletic endeavor while having fun!

Cost: \$52 monthly

School Year Times: (Sept 2021 - June 2022)

Mon: 6:00-6:45 pm

Community-Based Play Group

## **PARENT RESOURCE CENTERS**

Designed as a place for children and parents to engage in a variety of activities while providing support, resources, and parenting topics.

Cost: Free

- Binghamton PAL Family Resource Center at 457 State Street, Binghamton 771-6334
- Family Resource Center at 601 Columbia Drive, Johnson City (423)434-5275
- Endicott Family Resource Center at 200 Jefferson Ave, Endicott 760-5755
- Owego Family Resource Center at 72 North Ave, Owego 687-1571
- Waverly Family Resource Center at 460 Broad Street, Waverly 565-2374
- Norwich PAL Family Resource Center at 27 W. Main Street, Norwich, 334-8909
- Lourdes PACT, 584-4500 (Broome County) and 687-6145 (Tioga County)

## **ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN**

Workshops and classes are offered for children of all ages at the following locations.

Cost for participation varies.

- Binghamton YMCA
- Binghamton YWCA
- Boys and Girls Club of Binghamton
- Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Endicott Performing Arts Center
- Jewish Community Center
- Johnson City YMCA
- Southern Tier Gymnastics Academy
- SUNY Broome Community College Classes for Youth
- Tioga County Boys and Girls Club
- Town of Union Recreation Department
- Town of Vestal Recreation Department
- Uncorked Creations Art Studio & Gallery (Binghamton)

## **SOCIAL SERVICE RESOURCES**

### Counseling Services

- **ACCORD (Broome and Tioga)** – lends support to families involved in the court system. Court Appointed Special Advocate program provides services to families navigating the family court system; families are assigned by the court. Also provides Mediation services.
- **Binghamton General Hospital** – provides outpatient mental health services for adults only.
- **Broome County Mental Health Services** – provides services to adults for mental health, mental retardation and developmental disability, alcohol and substance abuse.
- **Catholic Charities Functional Family Therapy** – provides short-term home-based counseling services for families with children ages 11 – 18 who are at risk of placement.
- **Catholic Charities Gateway Center for Youth** – provides short-term individual counseling, group counseling and anger management group for youth.
- **Catholic Charities Family Counseling Program** – provides psychotherapeutic counseling to individuals and families.
- **Community Connections Center**- Endicott- provides counseling, advocacy, and community supports for UE students and their families.



- **Family and Children’s Society of Broome and Tioga Counties** – provides family and mental health counseling, sexual abuse treatment program, school based family support centers. Now accepting Medicaid.
- **Greater Binghamton Health Center** – provides counseling and support services for children and adults.
- **Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier, Inc.** – provides prevention and intervention services to address the needs of families that have a child with social, emotional or behavioral issues. Programs provide support, education, and advocacy in a strengths-based, individualized care approach.
- **Men’s Work** – Batterers Intervention Program
- **Lourdes Mental Health Juvenile Justice** – identifies youth within the criminal justice system with mental health and substance abuse issues and coordinates needed services.
- **Samaritan Counseling Center** – provides individual, family and marital counseling.
- **Lourdes Center for Mental Health** – specializes in services for adolescents age 12 – 21.
- **Tioga County Mental Hygiene** - Offers Tioga County residents a comprehensive continuum of counseling services and supports for individuals of all ages and families coping with emotional problems, mental illness, marital issues, depression, alcoholism and substance abuse.

#### Support for Victims of Violence

- **RISE**– emergency housing, counseling, advocacy and support for those experiencing domestic violence.
- **Crime Victims Assistance Center** – counseling, advocacy, and support for victims of violence. Also provides community-wide education about child abuse, sexual assault, rape, elder abuse, and domestic violence.
- **Crime Victims Assistance Center CAP (Child Assault Prevention)** – offers education to elementary school children, teachers and parents about children’s rights to be safe, strong and free. Provided in local schools.
- **Crime Victims Assistance Center**– Girls Circle and Safe Date programs offers youth education for teens emphasizing personal safety, healthy dating relationships and positive self-esteem.
- **Crime Victims Assistance Center Safe Harbour Program** – works to promote awareness and identification of youth trafficking and provides comprehensive services to potential victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

- **Family & Children’s Society** – provides clinical counseling services to battered women and children.
- **Broome County Family Violence Prevention Council** – coordinates child abuse, elder abuse and domestic violence education, intervention and prevention services through the efforts of a multi-disciplinary council and other subcommittees.
- **A New Hope Center** - provides hotline, counseling, advocacy and shelter. Soon they will also be providing supervised visitation.
- **Tioga County Child Advocacy Center** – provides a safe, child friendly location for youth who have been victims of or witness to physical, sexual abuse or CSEC to be interviewed and connected with services.
- **Tioga County Safe Harbor Program** -works to identify youth who have been trafficked, sexually exploited, or are at risk of victimization and connects them to services.

#### Alcoholism & Substance Abuse

- **A.A., AL anon & Alateen programs** – provide peer support for alcohol and substance abusers and their families.
- **Addiction Center of Broome County** – provides substance abuse outpatient treatment for individuals and families.
- **Fairview Recovery Services** – provides supportive services to individuals with chemical addictions including intensive case management, supportive living and crisis center.
- **Mental Health Juvenile Justice** - identifies youth within the criminal justice system with mental health and substance abuse issues and coordinates needed services.
- **Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center** – provides in-house, long-term drug and alcohol rehabilitation program for men.
- **United Health Services New Horizons program** – provides substance abuse in-patient treatment for individuals, outpatient services, and six-month follow-up services.
- **Tioga County Mental Hygiene Substance Abuse & MICA (Mentally Ill Chemical Abuser) program** -provides Intensive Outpatient program, beginning treatment and education, and ongoing care.
- **Trinity TCASA**- provides prevention education programs in schools and the community that focus on substance abuse, gambling, bullying, and violence prevention.

## Youth Programs

- **Boys & Girls Club of Binghamton** – provides youth development activities for youth of all ages, school-age child care program, and sports, recreation and fitness program for all ages.
- **Boys & Girls Club of Western Broome Family Center** – provides youth development activities for youth of all ages, school-age child care program, and sports, recreation and fitness program for all ages.
- **Broome County Public Library** – Youth services department organizes youth and family literacy activities and events.
- **Broome County Urban League** – operates an after school youth enrichment center providing youth development activities and tutoring. Also provides a summer enrichment program for youth ages 5-11.
- **Children’s Home of Wyoming Conference Southern Tier Community Center** – community center for children and families, school aged child care activities, recreation activities, and indoor pool.
- **Cornell Cooperative Extension Broome County – 4-H Youth Development** – provides an experiential learning youth education program for boys and girls ages 5-19. It provides practical life skills education in healthy lifestyles, citizenship and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).
- **Cornell Cooperative Extension Tioga County - 4-H Youth Development** – provides an experiential learning youth education program for boys and girls ages 5-19. It provides practical life skills education in healthy lifestyles, citizenship and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).
- **Cornell Cooperative Extension Broome County – Citizen U Project** – youth development program promoting citizenship, community action and community improvement.
- **Discovery Center-** hands on museum and learning environment for children. After school program available.
- **Family Planning of SCNY** – Family Planning’s school and community-based programs for young people share medically accurate, age-appropriate curriculum about avoiding pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and HIV infection. These educational components are part of a broader program that shares information about healthy relationships, effective communication skills and sexual activity as part of a healthy relationship

- **Liberty Partnership Program** – provides case management, tutoring/mentoring, counseling and summer enrichment activities for at-risk youth identified by local high schools.
- **Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network Youth Services-** provides 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classroom presentations addressing topics of “building healthy relationships”, “parenting can wait”, and “making good decisions”.
- **Tioga County Boys & Girls Club** - provides youth development activities for youth of all ages, school-age child care program, and sports, recreation and fitness program for all ages.
- **Tioga/Tompkins County Youth Engagement Services Program – YES Club** - works with youth in grades 8 through 12 within Newark Valley High School to minimize barriers that impede school performance, improve attendance patterns, improve grades and passing rates, minimize disciplinary issues, and provide additional alternative academic experiences to increase student success.
- **Tioga/Tompkins County Youth Engagement Services Program – YES Mentoring** - supports youth who are engaging in at-risk behaviors and could benefit from one-on-one mentoring from a local volunteer mentor.
- **YMCA-** provides youth development activities for youth of all ages, school-age child care program, and sports, recreation, and fitness programs for all ages.

#### Services/Programs for Families

- **AGAPE (Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Program for Everyone)** - A free support, information and educational program open to all adoptive families and relative caregivers who have custody or guardianship of children.
- **Broome County Health Department Traffic Safety Program** - provides education on car seat safety, bike safety, and other traffic safety topics
- **Broome County Department of Social Services Families First Anger Management and Parenting Classes** – open to families with a DSS Services case and provide educational classes about anger management and parenting.
- **Catholic Charities Early Childhood STEP Parenting Classes** – offers free parenting classes using the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) model.
- **Catholic Charities SHINE (Sharing Hope and Inspiring Energy)** – provides intensive case management for families who have youth involved in the Juvenile Justice system.

- **Cornell Cooperative Extension Tioga Family Resource Centers-** provides drop- in play space, lending library, play groups and parenting education.
- **Family Reading Partnership of Owego Apalachin-** Provides new and used books to children in the Owego Apalachin school district via Bright Red Bookshelves throughout the community.
- **Healthy Families Broome** – sponsored by the BC Health Department this program offers voluntary home-based services to support expectant families and new parents with the changes and needs that often come with pregnancy and the birth of a new child. Home visitors may work with families up until the child enters school or Head Start.
- **Lourdes Ascension Program** - each primary care associates office now has a registered dietician available to work with clients
- **Lourdes PACT (Broome and Tioga)** – provides a home visitation family strengthening program for teen parents or first-time parents from pregnancy through child’s first 3-5 years.
- **Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network PAL Family Resource Center Clothing Closet** – provides families in need with gently used clothes.
- **Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network of the Southern Tier** –promoting health and education for women, infants, pregnant women and families. Also organizes and hosts Conscious Discipline® parenting and discipline classes for parents and caregivers.
- **Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network of the Southern Tier - Binghamton (PAL) Family Resource Center** – a free place to play with your child, find answers to your questions on child development, attend a parenting class, access the resource library for parenting information or children’s books, a place to talk with other parents and caregivers, find out about community services, and attend programs on topics you want to learn more about.
- **Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network of the Southern Tier – Facilitated Enrollment Program-** provides assistance with health insurance coverage through NY’s public health insurance programs.
- **Parents and Children Together (PACT)** – provides parent education and support through home visiting to Binghamton parents with children ages 0 – 3 years. Also organizes and hosts Conscious Discipline® parenting and discipline classes for parents and caregivers.
- **UHS Stay Healthy Center** - provides RN support and breastfeeding support

### Programs for Families with Children with Special or High Needs

- **Broome County Department of Social Services Families First** – provides intensive case management to families DSS referred. Also provides Anger Management groups for adults.
- **Broome County Health Department- Early Intervention Program-** coordinates and provides special services for children under the age of 3 years old.
- **Children’s Home of Wyoming Conference–** works in partnership with the Department of Social Services to provide family, foster care and preventive services.
- **Committee for Preschool Special Education (CPSE)** - coordinates and provides special services for children ages 3-5 years old.
- **Franziska Racker Center** – provides clinical and support services to children and youth with disabilities.
- **HCA (Helping Celebrate Abilities)** – provides clinical services, support services, and preschool programs to children.
- **ImPACT Program – Lourdes** – for families with a child 0-10 years living in Broome County with an open DSS Services Case for the purpose of averting a disruption of the family which will or could result in the placement of a child in foster care, enabling a child who has been placed in foster care to return to his family at an earlier time than would otherwise be possible; or reducing the likelihood that a child who has been discharged from foster care would return to such care.
- **Southern Tier Independence Center (STIC)** - provides assistance and serves people with all disabilities of all ages to increase their independence in all aspects of integrated community life.
- **Tioga County Health Department - Early Intervention Program-** coordinates and provides special services for children under the age of 3 years old.

### Housing Assistance/Emergency/Crisis Services

- **Binghamton Housing Authority** - Providing safe, affordable housing and facilitating access to social and community services.
- **The Bridge** - a non-profit organization of churches serving Waverly, Athens and Sayre school districts. Provides crisis vouchers for shelter, utilities, food, and transportation. Also operates a furniture and clothing closet.

- **Broome County Department of Social Services** – provides comprehensive social services for persons of low-income, and adult and child preventive/protective services, including the PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision) program.
- **Broome County ERAP** – New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program
- **Catholic Charities** - provides services to those in need such as food, clothing and emergency assistance.
- **Catholic Charities Teen Transitional Living Program** – transitional/independent living program for runaway and homeless youth ages 16 – 21.
- **Council of Churches Community Hunger Outreach Warehouse (CHOW)** – emergency food service to local food pantries, CHOW bus, and infant formula available through referrals from WIC.
- **Cribs for Kids** – local chapter for the National Cribs for Kids program that provides education about safe sleep environments and cribs to families in need-provided by Mother’s & Babies.
- **Food Bank of the Southern Tier Pantries and Mobile Food Pantries** – visit website for a complete list of sites - [www.foodbankst.org](http://www.foodbankst.org)
- **Greater Opportunities for Broome** – emergency housing, furniture and appliance donations, and help with housing, court, and code enforcement.
- **Habitat for Humanity** - constructs, rehabilitates and preserves homes and communities then identifies qualified partner families based on income guidelines and partnership criteria. Support and guidance is provided to families as they pursue the mortgage process.
- **The K.I.N.D. Project** – to provide Tioga County families with infants/young children with diapers, pull-ups, baby wipes, A&D Ointment, Desitin and other related health supplies.
- **Metro Interfaith** – low income housing, assists with improving credit and home ownership.
- **Rise** – emergency housing for victims of domestic violence.
- **Rescue Mission** – supportive/emergency housing for homeless men.
- **Safe Harbour (Crime Victims Assistance Center)** - provides free & confidential outreach to youth who are at risk of exploitation.
- **Salvation Army** – provides clothing, furniture, and housing.
- **Southern Tier Homeless Coalition** – Coordinated entry system for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness, mortgage assistance, and rent assistance.

- **Southern Tier AIDS Program** - Health Homes Housing Program (HOST)
- **Tioga County Department of Social Services** - provides comprehensive social services for persons of low-income, and adult and child preventive/protective services.
- **Tioga County Open Door Mission** – provides outreach that assists individuals and families to obtain food, clothing, furniture, financial assistance, infant items, and shelter for homeless men ages 18 and older.
- **Tioga County Rural Ministry** – provides emergency financial assistance for things such as gas, rent, prescription assistance, and NYSEG shutoffs.
- **Tioga Opportunities** – provides rental assistance, apartments and home repair services. Also coordinates food delivery to many of the county's emergency food pantries and soup kitchens.
- **United Way of Broome County 211** – centralized system for community resources and referrals.
- **Volunteers of America** – emergency housing for the homeless.
- **YMCA** – emergency housing for homeless males ages 18 and older.
- **YWCA** - emergency housing for homeless females ages 16 and older.
- **YWCA Young Women’s Residential Achievement Program** – supportive living program for homeless women ages 18 – 23 years old.

## **OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This assessment indicates that the following community priorities need to be addressed by our Broome and Tioga Counties Head Start and Early Head Start program:

1. Identify and develop a plan to ensure families have appropriate access to technology and training to participate in meaningful remote/virtual programming that fully supports their child development and family engagement interests and needs.
2. Advance staff members understanding of preparing children and families for socialization and school readiness as we are back to a more complete in person program model.



3. Increase nutrition education and access to fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods. Utilize community partners to assist in achieving this goal.
4. Promote mental wellness and social wellbeing thru the full implementation of curricula including Pyramid, Second Step, Conscious Discipline, Positive Solutions for Families, and assist parents in supporting their children’s mental wellness by providing an array of parenting programs/resources.
5. Develop a plan to advocate for and support families with accessing child care options including: wrap around, non-traditional, and after school care needs.

Sources:

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- <sup>113</sup> United States Census QuickFacts, Broome County New York, Tioga County, New York, July 1, 2019
- <sup>114</sup> NYSTEACHS Data on Student Homelessness in NYS, 2019-2020
- <sup>115</sup> Family Enrichment Network Weekly Tally Sheets, February 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023
- <sup>116</sup> 2023 Family Enrichment Network’s Head Start Community Assessment Education Parent Survey
- <sup>117</sup> Child Development: Family Dynamics, Trauma, Technology and the Impact on Social-Emotional Development of Young Children, Family Enrichment Network Head Start’s Community Assessment, 2023-2024
- <sup>118</sup> Alison Mellot, Ed.D, NCPMI Fellow & Jolenea Ferro, PhD National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations, “Promoting Teacher Retention Through Pyramid Model Practices” [www.challengingbehaviors.org](http://www.challengingbehaviors.org)
- <sup>119</sup> 2023 Family Enrichment Network’s Head Start Community Assessment Education Parent Survey
- <sup>120</sup> 2023 Family Enrichment Network’s Head Start Community Assessment Education Parent Survey
- <sup>121</sup> Broome County Health Department’s County Community Health Assessment Report Update, 2016-2018
- <sup>122</sup> Tioga County Health Department Community Assessment Report, 2019-2024
- <sup>123</sup> <http://www.city-data.com/city/Tioga-New-York.html>
- <sup>124</sup> Consultation with Lisa Horbey, Human Services Program Coordinator II, Broome County Department of Social Services, and Natalie Thompson, Director of Employment and Transitional Supports, Tioga County Department of Social Services, February 2021
- <sup>125</sup> *Head Start Community Assessment Parent Questionnaire 2022-2023.*

- <sup>126</sup> Consultation with Lisa Horbey, Human Services Program Coordinator II, Broome County Department of Social Services, and Natalie Thompson, Director of Employment and Transitional Supports, Tioga County Department of Social Services, February 2021
- <sup>127</sup> Consultation with Jodie Sisson, Lourdes Mobile Dental Unit Coordinator, Lourdes Center for Oral Health and Nicole Whitmore, Dental Health Coordinator, , Tioga Mobile Dental Services, Tioga County Health Department, February 2021 Updated February 9, 2024 Ashley Tomazin, Family Enrichment Network Health Services Coordinator
- <sup>128</sup> Consultation with Mary Savage, RDH , UHS Dental Services February 2021
- <sup>129</sup> Consultation with Marian Hollander, BSN, RN, Broome County Health Department; February 2021
- <sup>130</sup> New York State Community Health Indicator Report Dashboard-Broome ([https://apps.health.ny.gov/public/tabvis/PHIG\\_Public/chirs/reports/#county](https://apps.health.ny.gov/public/tabvis/PHIG_Public/chirs/reports/#county) )
- <sup>131</sup> New York State Community Health Indicator Report Dashboard- Tioga ([https://apps.health.ny.gov/public/tabvis/PHIG\\_Public/chirs/reports/#county](https://apps.health.ny.gov/public/tabvis/PHIG_Public/chirs/reports/#county)), Consultation with Katie Waite, Public Health Educator, Tioga County Public Health , February 2024
- <sup>132</sup> Consultation with Karen Colston, Early Head Start Socialization Specialist, February 2024
- <sup>133</sup> Consultation with Kathy Gross, Family Enrichment Network ERSEA Coordinator, February 10 2022
- <sup>134</sup> Broome County Health Department. (n.d.). Broome County health assessment 2019-2024. <https://www.nyuhs.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/broome-county-community-health-assessment-2019-2024.pdf>
- <sup>135</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2019). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Census Tract 139, Broome, NY <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/14000US36007013900-census-tract-139-broome-ny/>
- <sup>136</sup> Department of Health. (2018), Asthma dashboard: zip code level: Broome County. [https://webb1.health.ny.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?\\_program=/EBI/PHIG/apps/asthma\\_dashboard/ad\\_dashboard&p=mp&ind\\_id=ad21%20&cos=3](https://webb1.health.ny.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?_program=/EBI/PHIG/apps/asthma_dashboard/ad_dashboard&p=mp&ind_id=ad21%20&cos=3)
- <sup>137</sup> The Agency. (2017). Broome County housing study. <https://theagency-ny.com/documents/Broome-County-Housing-Study-9.17.pdf>
- <sup>138</sup> Consultation with Michelle Figuerado, Women, Infant, and Children Nutrition Services Director, Broome County Health Department. and Loriann Spatola-Davis, WIC Program Coordinator, Tioga Opportunities Inc., December 2023
- <sup>139</sup> Head Start and Early Head Start 2023 Broome Family Profile
- <sup>140</sup> Head Start and Early Head Start 2023 Tioga Family Profile
- <sup>141</sup> Office of the Administration for Children & Families- Family & Youth Services Bureau
- <sup>142</sup> Domestic Violence Victim Data 2022 - NY DCJS
- <sup>143</sup> Crime Victims Assistance Center
- <sup>144</sup> Broome County Department of Social Services 2022 Annual Report
- <sup>145</sup> Tioga County Department of Social Services 2022 Annual Report
- <sup>146</sup> Head Start and Early Head Start 2023 Family Profiles
- <sup>147</sup> Broome County Department of Social Services Annual Report, 2022.
- <sup>148</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>149</sup> Tioga County Department of Social Services Annual Report, 2022.
- <sup>150</sup> Family Profile Head Start /Early Head Start Programs, Broome /Tioga Counties, 2023-2024.
- <sup>151</sup> [gobroomecounty.com/transit](https://gobroomecounty.com/transit), 2024.
- <sup>152</sup> Press and Sun Bulletin article, June 2021.
- <sup>153</sup> Press and Sun Bulletin article, September 2014.
- <sup>154</sup> Tioga Opportunities, Inc. website 2024
- <sup>155</sup> NYSDol.com, 2024.
- <sup>156</sup> [dol.ny.gov/employment-new-york-state](https://dol.ny.gov/employment-new-york-state) website article in Labor Market Briefing, Southern Tier, December 2022.
- <sup>157</sup> Christian Harris, Regional Labor Market Analyst, Department of Labor, 2024
- <sup>158</sup> Ibid
- <sup>159</sup> New York State Vital Statistics of Live Births by School District, 2024.

# SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES PROGRAM



## **INTRODUCTION**

Family Enrichment Network initiated its services to preschoolers with disabilities in September of 2002. The program at that time was limited to 12 students. With the consolidation of Broome County services at Cherry Street, our program expanded to serve a potential 24 children and their families. The program then continued to expand to meet identified needs in Broome and Chenango Counties. In addition, counties outside of this catchment area, such as Delaware, Otsego, Madison, and Tioga, have enrolled preschool children in our programs. The Community Assessment process has enabled us to maintain an ongoing dialogue with our county and school district partners to identify changes in service delivery/needs and to establish partnerships to address those needs. Based on these shared planning efforts our Special Class Integrated Setting (SCIS) options have grown to include:

**Broome County:**     Approved for 60 SCIS slots – 3.5-hour duration  
                              Approval for 10 UPK slots at the Horace Mann site

**Chenango County:**   Approved for 32 SCIS slots – 3.5-hour duration

In addition, we have seen steady growth in the number of children referred to our agency for Preschool Evaluations and Related Services.

## **INFORMATION ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

Since 1975, children with disabilities from birth through age 21 have been guaranteed a free and appropriate public education. In New York State, the Department of Health is the lead agency for birth through three-year-old services (called Early Intervention) and the Department of Education is responsible for children ages three through twenty-one. Each school district has established a Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) to oversee the referral, evaluation, determination of eligibility, and provision of services for those children ages three

through five. The following table provides a snapshot of services provided to children ages birth-five in Broome County for 2023.

**Table 1: Broome County Early Intervention and Preschool Services**

Source: Broome County Health Department Division of Children with Special Needs  
A Multi Year Comparison of Broome County’s Early Intervention Programming

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Active Cases</b>	<b>Number of Referrals</b>
2019	907	540
2020	815	405
2021	862	537
2022	1127	548
2023	1229	480

<b>Eligible Services</b>	<b>2021 Number of Children (Duplicated Services Possible)</b>	<b>2022 Number of Children (Duplicated Services Possible)</b>	<b>2023 Number of Children (Duplicated Services Possible)</b>
Speech Services	216	255	209
Special Instruction	150	413	391
Physical Therapy	166	282	243
Occupational Therapy	210	518	469
Family Training	3	19	3
Social Work	8	19	11
Vision Services	1	0	0
Core Evaluations	385	321	406
Supplemental Evaluations	141	148	123

**Broome County’s CPSE Services Data for 2022-23 School Year**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Type of Service</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>
Integrated Program	3 Hour Day	65
Integrated Program	3.5 Hour Day	47
Integrated Program	5 Hour Day	8
Related Service	Speech Therapy	479 (351 + 128 TBD)
	Occupational Therapy	233 (207 + 26 TBD)
	Physical Therapy	141 (111 + 30 TBD)
	Aides (1:1 and shared)	40 in program 8 in preschool/UPK
	SEIT	47 (23 + 24 TBD)
Special Class Program	5 Hour Day	19

**Clinical Services – PSYCH/OT/PT/ST/Evaluations– January 2024**

**Description:** In order to address the global needs of identified preschool students with disabilities, the Family Enrichment Network must provide quality related therapy services to referred children in an effort to reduce the severity of needs and services upon entry into school settings. Children will benefit from increased access to qualified therapists.

**Services Provided To Children Enrolled In The Special Class Integrated Setting (SCIS)**

<b>Services Provided (by County in which the Program is located in)</b>	<b>Year to Date (January 2024) Total Hours</b>
Broome Speech/Language	491.50
Broome Physical Therapy	329.00
Broome Occupational Therapy	443.25
Chenango Occupational Therapy	240.87
Chenango Speech/Language	113.25
Chenango Physical Therapy	190.25

**Community Related Service Therapy In Hours - Children Not In A SCIS Class.**

<b>Broome County</b>	<b>Year to Date (January 2024) Total Hours</b>
Broome Speech/language	168.25
Broome Physical Therapy	42.30
Broome Occupational Therapy	19.25

**Evaluation Components - Number Completed Year To Date (January 2024)**

<b>Evaluation Component</b>	<b>Broome</b>	<b>Chenango</b>
Educational Evaluations	9	0
Functional Behavior Analysis	0	0
Occupational Therapy	43	15
Psychological Evaluations	119	32
Physical Therapy	32	12
Social History	0	0
Speech Therapy	78	0

**BROOME GENERAL PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Family Enrichment Network’s Special Class in an Integrated Setting (SCIS) program helps children with special needs address their learning deficits and build skills for future success in kindergarten and beyond. We support our children in reaching the individual goals/objectives on their Individual Education Programs (IEPs) by making the necessary accommodations in

materials and activities to help them with their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth. Our staff provides specially designed individual instruction, modeling, and encouragement to children while they participate in a quality inclusive preschool environment.

In Broome County, we currently offer two models. The first, in collaboration with the Family Enrichment Network's Head Start program, is housed at Cherry Street and Fayette Street. We work with staff in three classrooms, each classroom offering two half-day sessions (morning and afternoon, 3.5 hours each). Each session serves six children with special needs integrated with ten Head Start children. Special education teachers work with the Head Start staff to create weekly lesson plans and prepare the classroom environment so that every child receives quality programming within the least restrictive environment possible. The classroom teams also work closely with the children's therapists to promote language and motor growth across all settings. In some instances, children receive related services within the classroom to reduce the number of transitions and to increase generalization of skills. This year we were not able to integrate two out of three classes due to a shortage of Head Start staff; the classrooms ran with special needs students only.

The second model of collaborative programming in Broome County is our SCIS/Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) classrooms at Horace Mann Elementary (Binghamton CSD) and at WA Olmstead Elementary (Harpursville CSD). These sites offer integration within district funded Universal Pre-Kindergarten Programs. They operate using a 16:2:1 ratio with ten typically developing UPK students, six preschool students with special needs, two teachers (one general education certified, one special education certified) and one classroom teaching assistant. (Family Enrichment Network is responsible for hiring the special education staff at Harpursville and both the special education and the certified general education teachers for Binghamton).



While the districts provide assistance in referral of UPK students, FEN is responsible for completion of enrollment and intake for all students at Binghamton and SCIS students at Harpursville. The districts provide curricular oversight and training opportunities for both the general education and special education staff.

In 2014, the Binghamton CSD received additional SED funding to expand some of their UPK programs from half-day to full day. Horace Mann was one of those sites to offer full day UPK to families. The Harpursville CSD offers full day UPK as well. Both districts have been a strong partner sharing resources and including FEN staff in trainings and local conferences.

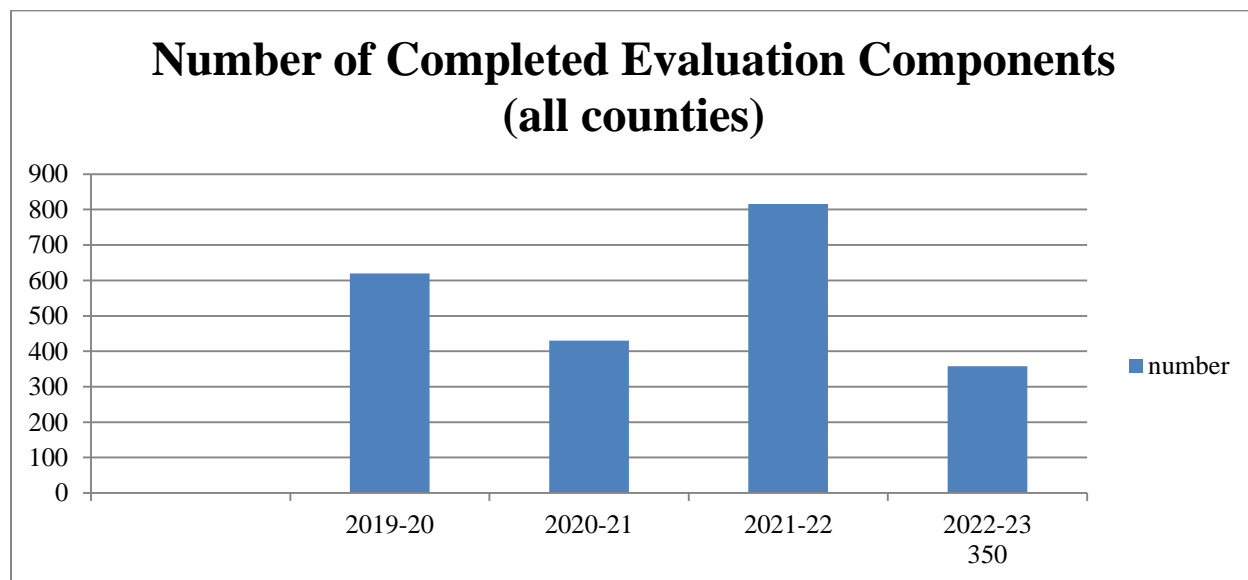
## **MULTI-DISCIPLINARY EVALUATIONS**

When a child is referred for an evaluation, the approved agency will complete several mandated components – psychological evaluation, social history, and a speech, educational, occupational therapy, and/or physical therapy evaluation, depending on the child’s presenting needs. As of January 31, 2024, we have completed 281 evaluation components at our Broome evaluation site and 59 evaluation components at our Chenango evaluation site. This year the evaluation team in Broome County continues to receive referrals from Morris County, Tioga County, and Chenango County school districts. Additional referrals have also come from Delaware, Madison, and Otsego Counties.

FEN continues to be one of five approved agencies/school districts that conduct preschool evaluations within Broome County. Our agency offers five to seven evaluation slots per week.

Our psychological evaluations in Broome County are completed by a Licensed School Psychologist which enables the County to receive Medicaid funding for evaluations completed by our team. Additionally in Broome County our evaluation team offers speech/language

therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy evaluations each week. Some of our physical therapy and speech/language slots are provided by an independent contractor service based on our need.



**Progress on Prior Need to Improve the Timeliness of Evaluations:**

An important aspect of our evaluation team is to ensure that evaluation reports are completed in a timely manner so that districts can meet SED time requirements and families have information prior to their child’s CPSE meeting. This has become increasingly challenging as the number of referrals increase, but the number of evaluators remains essentially the same or fewer.

SES continues to monitor the number of evaluation slots per month in order to meet the needs of districts requesting evaluations. However, the limited number of psychological and pediatric therapy professionals who can provide these evaluations limits the number of evaluations possible and does prolong the process. The number of evaluations a child is recommended to receive can also impact the timeliness of evaluations as well. This year there

has been a high percentage rate of cancellations and “no show” appointments resulting in children being rescheduled and extending the timeline.

Many of the evaluations taking more time than usual to complete are due to parent’s failure to respond to phone calls, not showing up for evaluations, cancellations, child absence, quarantines, or parent/teacher failure to return paperwork in a timely manner necessary for completion of evaluations. (i.e.: for psychological evaluations a social history packet and a social emotional questionnaire; for OT evaluations a sensory profile; for educational evaluations cognitive and social-emotional questionnaires). To address these issues, we continue to employ the use of our social worker, evaluation coordinator, and Head Start Family Advocates to deliver necessary paperwork and follow up with parents on missing items. Additionally, by mid-November, therapists have increased their caseloads which may mean there are fewer evaluations time slots available. Limited resources for clerical support may also cause delays in the process. The CPSE chairperson’s response to our evaluation process indicate that we provide quality, informative and thorough evaluation reports, however, concerns still exist in regards to timeliness. As a result, we moved the evaluation scheduling and follow up process to an on-line system. This is a tremendous time saver and will allow therapists to free up additional slots for therapy services.

### **Itinerant Related Services Provided by Family Enrichment Network**

In Broome County we continue to provide speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy as related services to children in their natural environments including Head Start and UPK, We have a strong Broome related services team which includes:

- One full time Speech/Language Pathologists on staff. We contract four part time

Speech/Language Pathologists from a therapy service (three for Chenango and one for Broome).

- In Broome County, we also use the services of the Binghamton University doctoral candidates in the Speech and Language Pathology (SLP) program.
- We are currently advertising for additional Speech Language Pathologists.
- Three full time Occupational Therapists (three of the full time OT's also covers the Norwich site as well as an additional contracted therapist to help cover Chenango County in Norwich).
- One Physical Therapist and one part time Physical Therapy Assistant are on staff.
  - Two part time Physical Therapists (contracted through an agency to cover Broome and Chenango County)

**Discussion:**

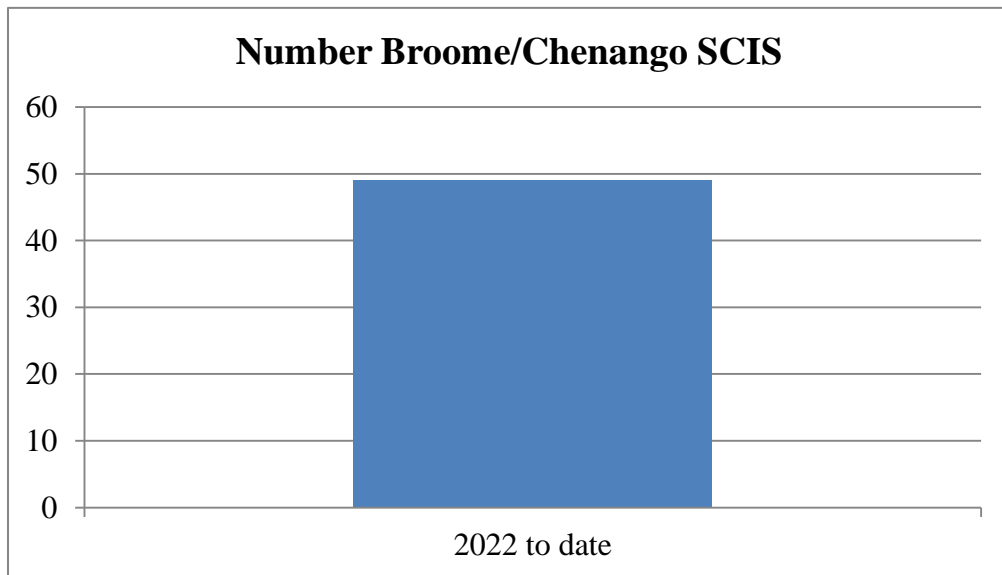
A continued concern held by all Broome County participants is the decreased capacity to provide related services in Broome County. Many therapists have left Early Intervention and CPSE due to changes in how providers will be reimbursed and because reimbursement rates have remained relatively low in Broome County and New York State compared to other NYS counties and other states. As a result, there are growing numbers of children in EI and CPSE that are waiting for services. This has created a situation in which more children enter the CPSE earlier and with greater needs. It should also be noted that Broome County only provides new contracts to agency providers and no longer to private providers. Additionally, numerous private providers have moved out of the area, become employed by school districts, and/or retired.

The CPSE chairperson's response to meeting therapy needs included increased funding to pay and retain therapists, and an overall need for more related service providers in Broome

County to meet the children’s needs. The Broome County CPSE Chairpersons expressed that we expand to meet children’s needs which we will do as soon as therapists become available.

**Special Class Integrated Setting (SCIS)**

The Special Class Integrated Setting has expanded since its initial opening in 2002. We have a potential of 60 openings in Broome County. As of February 2023, 56 of 60 program openings have been filled. At our Chenango site we have 17 of 32 program openings filled.



**Discussion:**

Community Assessment Committee members continue to be concerned about the placement options for children referred later in the school year. When SCIS classes are fully enrolled for the school year, SES is able to enroll a limited number of children beyond our ratio by applying for a variance. For those children who are referred to a program after April, more than likely they will begin their enrollment during the summer. The Community Assessment Team also expressed concern regarding the increase in children with severe behavioral needs.

More children are being classified with severe management needs. Often these children are very bright and are able to meet preschool benchmarks, but have great difficulties with peer and adult interactions, following routines and rules, and moving through transitions. Some have been expelled from their day care or preschool programs. There was much discussion by our Broome county partners (County, districts) to develop a special education program to meet the needs of these children.

## **CHENANGO COUNTY'S CPSE SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS FOR 2022-23**

### **Multidisciplinary Evaluations**

We have an OT, PT and a physiological evaluation team set up at our Chenango Broad Street site to provide evaluations to determine eligibility for initial referral as well as supplemental evaluations. Our speech evaluations are done at our Cherry Street site in Johnson City. At this time Family Enrichment Network is the only agency in Chenango County conducting evaluations.

During this past year many of the evaluations took a long time to complete due to children not showing up for their scheduled appointments; a new date then needed to be scheduled. Due to the high referral rate, the new appointments were scheduled out two to three months.

### **Special Class in an Integrated Setting:**

In July 2012, integrated classes were expanded to Chenango County in Norwich. Family Enrichment Network collaborated with the DCMO BOCES to provide two morning and two afternoons integrated 8:1:3 classes. That 8:1:3 designation was considered an enhanced model

whereby eight children with severe needs receive support from a special education teacher and three classroom aides, eliminating the need to hire individual one-on-one aides. In September 2018 Family Enrichment Network became a licensed daycare provider for the site in Norwich. The program is now housed at 21 South Broad Street in Norwich.

**Chenango County  
Integrated Family Demographics  
2022-2023**

Age	# of Parent Responses
Parent put 4 or nothing	1
20-24	0
25-29	3
30-34	1
35-39	1
40-44	0
45-49	1
50-54	0
55-59	0
60-64	0

Gender	
Male	0
Female	7

Race	
Native American	0
Spanish/Hispanic/Latino	1
Black/African American	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	0
White	4
Other	0

Primary Language	
Spanish	0
English	7
Russian	0
French	0
Chinese	0
Other	0

**Broome County  
Integrated Family Demographics  
2022-2023**

Age	# of Parent Responses
Parent put 4 or nothing	4
20-24	1
25-29	3
30-34	4
35-39	4
40-44	1
45-49	1
50-54	1
55-59	1
60-64	1

Gender	
Male	2
Female	19

Race	
Native American	0
Spanish/Hispanic/Latino	1
Black/African American	8
Asian/Pacific Islander	0
White	11
Other/Bi-Racial	1

Primary Language	
Spanish	1
English	19
Russian	0
French	0
Chinese	0
Other	1

**Table11: PARENT AND SCHOOL DISTRICT SURVEY SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION  
BROOME COUNTY 2022/2023**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Total Number Respondents</b>	<b>Responses</b>
I feel comfortable contacting my child’s teacher and/or therapist.	21	19 - Yes 2 - Maybe 0 - No
I receive frequent feedback from my child’s teacher and/or therapist about my child’s progress	21	17 - Yes 3 - Maybe 1 - No
I would be interested in attending parent informational sessions.	21	11 - Yes 5 - Maybe 5 - No
Was your child evaluated by Family Enrichment Network? If so, was the experience a positive one?	21	16 - Yes 3 - Maybe 2- No
I am satisfied with the overall special education program and services provided by the Family Enrichment Network.	21	19 - Yes 1 - Maybe 1 - No

**BROOME INTEGRATED PROGRAM PARENTAL RESPONSES**

**Positive responses include:**

- ✚ Thank you for your service!!!!
- ✚ He’s HAPPY every day since starting his new school and he talks about everything. He never did that with his last school!!!!
- ✚ Thank you for all of you that make it possible and take the time out to dedicate your careers to giving my child a chance to learn and grow like every other child!!!
- ✚ I have great communication with my son’s teacher and therapists.
- ✚ I do receive feedback on what my son needs to work on and have learning etc...
- ✚ I need information on ways to help teach my child when his attention span is short. Also, ways for parents to cope when kids do well and then regress backwards.
- ✚ I understand COVID has caused a lot of restrictions for families to be involved at the school but I wish there was a way to be able to attend lunch with my son or to be able to go on school trips. I wish there was a way to be more involved. I know due to COVID that’s not possible. When will there be trips? When will there be engagements that parents and families can participate again?
- ✚ I love the progress papers we are given with the Stickers!!
- ✚ My son is doing well with his therapies.
- ✚ Everyone has been awesome keeping me up to date on my child.
- ✚ I need information on potty training children with autism.
- ✚ We are very pleased with the staff at FEN.
- ✚ Our overall experience with FEN has been extremely positive!
- ✚ Therapists are always communicating with me. I am very pleased!!
- ✚ I would like to attend a parent teacher conference! Not frequent enough feedback!
- ✚ I receive a daily log from the classroom and quarterly reports.
- ✚ Would like help learning sign language.



**Table 12: PARENT AND SCHOOL DISTRICT SURVEY SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION  
CHENANGO COUNTY 2021/2022**

Question	Total Number Respondents	Responses
I feel comfortable contacting my child’s teacher and/or therapist.	7	6 - Yes 1 - Maybe 0 - No
I receive frequent feedback from my child’s teacher and/or therapist about my child’s progress	7	3- Yes 2 - Maybe 2- No
I would be interested in attending parent informational sessions.	7	6 - Yes 1 - Maybe 0 - No
Was your child evaluated by Family Enrichment Network? If so, was the experience a positive one?	7	6- Yes 0 - Maybe 1 - No
I am satisfied with the overall special education program and services provided by the Family Enrichment Network.	7	6 - Yes 1 - Maybe 0 - No

**CHENANGO COUNTY INTEGRATED PROGRAM PARENTAL RESPONSES**

- + Need more information from therapists!!
- + Wish they had school when scheduled
- + Communications on a daily basis on how the kids are doing would be better than not knowing how the kids have behaved in school all day.
- + How my kid acts daily in class and how he’s doing. Could just send home a note how the day went.
- + They always let us know how our son’s day was upon picking up!
- + Any parental meetings held, we would be willing to attend, anytime of the day.
- + I only get progress reports unless I reach out!
- + I feel extremely comfortable reaching out to my child’s aide.
- + I know how my child is doing on an almost daily basis
- + Would love to learn techniques from the teachers of ways to get a child to comply.
- + It stinks that you’ve had to close or cancel sessions so often lately, due to lack of staff. And although it does cause us stress in regards to childcare and work, etc... The most important point is that it’s very difficult for my child who thrives on routine and loves school.

## **SCHOOL DISTRICT CONNECTIONS**

The Special Services Department continues to work closely with families to develop strong relationships in keeping with the mission and goals of the Family Enrichment Network. Feedback from school districts based on their interactions with families further support that our relationships with families are positive and help support the partnership that families will need to develop as their children transition to elementary school. School district comments include:

- FEN has an excellent communication system with the schools.
- Fen staff are extremely flexible and attentive to the problem solving process.
- FEN has a very good communication system that allows the flow of information to and from our school district.
- FEN works with school schedules, attends meetings, provides information, etc.
- Would love to see parent trainings offered.
- Evaluations are thorough.
- Your administrative assistant is SUPER knowledgeable and helpful.
- Do you consider opening anything in Tioga County?
- A possible full day option would be helpful.
- Provide all evaluations at the Norwich site as well.

## **RESOURCES TO ENHANCE THE OPERATION OF THE PROGRAM**

The reader is directed to the Community Resources and Strengths section of the Head Start Community Assessment for an extensive list of the resources available within the community.

## 2022 WHERE ARE WE NOW?

### Last Year's Priorities and Current Status for Broome

<i>Issues from 2021</i>	<i>Actions Taken</i>	<i>Current Status as of 2022</i>
<p><b>1.</b> Increase SES capacity to provide more related services (therapies).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discharging children from service when goals are met instead of waiting until annual review meetings have created a few more openings for services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We continue to advertise for qualified therapists to provide more related service options.</li> <li>Partnering with BU has helped.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.</b> Continue to provide support for children with significant behavioral difficulties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff development provided on dealing with difficult children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special Class Integrated Setting (SCIS) classes meet to discuss difficult cases and work with our school psychologist.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.</b> Increase access and implementation of technology for our children in SCIS and related service settings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All SCIS classes and therapists have technology devices such as computers and mobile devices to access therapy services remotely or to use in class or sessions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers will need some support to embed use of technology into instruction.</li> <li>Some uses of technology observed – for visual schedules, as a verbal output device, assist with participation during circle or story time, record progress monitoring, as a communication device.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.</b> We have made a complete revision in our evaluation process. We will continue to monitor the timeliness of evaluations, including team annual review reports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue to internally monitor our process for quality and timeliness as we move to make the process more digital.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Last year's annual review reports were sent to districts in advance of all meetings.</li> <li>We continue to look to hire additional staff to meet our evaluation needs.</li> </ul>

<p>5. We have made a complete revision in our evaluation process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have made the evaluation referral process completely digital. This has reduced the personnel time required and tracked data for accuracy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We continue to use and monitor the online referral system with great success.</li> </ul>
<p>6. We continue to foster community partnerships with BU.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BU therapists have helps provide evaluations and therapy for FEN</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will again contract with BU but have made adjustments to the contract to provide for services over the BU semester break and the summer.</li> </ul>

## **UNMET NEEDS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES & RELATED SERVICES**

### **Reflections of the Broome/Chenango Community Assessment Team on Current Needs for 2022-23:**

- 1. Shortage of Related Service and SEIS Personnel:** Yearly, this is an expressed need. Broome and Chenango reports a shortage of providers for related services. Although we try to group children when appropriate, travel time and competing schedules limit our flexibility to be efficient from a fiscal perspective. The SED reimbursement rate for SEIS does not allow for travel time. We have seen a decline in the number of early childhood teachers and speech language pathologists and school psychologists available for recruitment. We will continue working on this goal and attempting to reinstate SEIT.
- 2. Programs and Supports for Children with Behavioral Challenges:** Committee members continue to see an increase in children who struggle to maintain self-control. Often these children are at great risk of losing their daycare/child care due to the behaviors they present and the lack of provider training in dealing with management

issues. This is the seventh year that SES has focused on this population at all of our sites. Most classes are fully integrated with typical UPK or Head Start children and children with IEPs who have high behavioral management needs and trauma (ACEs). Staff plans age-appropriate behavioral interventions. This year we are providing targeted staff development to teachers and aides in the area of social emotional needs and counseling.

3. **Evaluation Process:** Districts shared that they are very pleased with the quality of our evaluation and year-end reports. They noted that the SES department is a good communicator and they feel that the agency takes pride in keeping districts informed. Although evaluations may be delayed, that is a common challenge for the other 4410 state approved evaluation teams in the county as well.
4. **Shortage of Teachers, Therapists and School Psychologists:** There continues to be a shortage of qualified staff, Special Education Teachers, Therapists and School Psychologists in New York State.

## **IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF ISSUES AND PROBLEMS**

This assessment indicates that the following community priorities need to be addressed in 2022-2023 by the Special Education Department's programs, services and their community partners:

### **Broome/Chenango:**

1. Programs and supports for children with behavioral challenges
2. Staff trainings for social-emotional needs in the preschool setting
3. Continue to monitor the evaluation process timeline
4. Shortages of qualified teachers, related service personnel (therapists) and psychologists

5. Lack of funds for counseling to address our student and family's emotional needs
6. Continue to provide all evaluation appointments in one day, due to transportation difficulties of families
7. Counseling for children with mental health needs
8. Broader range of parent resource options.

Some of the discussed needs will be more difficult to provide than others. For example, we tried to change our evaluation schedule so that all evaluation components are held on the same day to assist parents with transportation challenges. However, new challenges were discovered with the children not wanting to participate in multiple evaluations; they would tire after the first evaluation thus skewing the results of the next evaluations. Several of the needs are dependent upon our ability to hire qualified staff (therapists, teachers, psychologists) and there is still a shortage in this area.

School district chairs expressed appreciation for the quality of services, both for the evaluation process and for integrated programming services. Suggestions have been made to open more preschool classrooms, or to open a full day SCIS section to meet the needs of the children that are not being serviced. When we are able to hire qualified staff, this effort will again be pursued.

# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS





Agency program directors received a timeline of Community Assessment activities in November to familiarize themselves with the process for creating this year's Community Assessment document. From this point forward each director assembled their committee; these committees were comprised of current parents, staff members, and community representatives. The four program groups were responsible for the collection of current program data. Each program group formed a subcommittee to identify and prioritize the issues and problems evidenced by the data collected.

Information for this report was obtained from both external and internal sources. External data was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau, New York State Department of Education, New York State Department of Labor, New York State Department of Health, Broome County Department of Social Services, Regional Economic Development Council of the Southern Tier, United Way, Literacy Volunteers of Broome/Tioga, community schools, child care providers, periodicals, and local community agencies. Internal information was compiled using NACCRRRA Ware database, the Child Care Facility Search database, the Head Start family profile, Head Start parent questionnaire, program attendance reports, CCR&R Provider Surveys and the Special Education Services Parent Survey. The NACCRRRA Ware Computer database tracks providers supplying child care in Broome and Tioga Counties and parents requesting child care referrals from Family Enrichment Network's Child Care Resource and Referral department.

The Head Start and Early Head Start Family Profile is an assessment tool that details the characteristics, needs, and goals of Head Start/ Early Head Start families enrolled in the program. The committee adhered to a strict timeline to complete this report (Table XII). Each program committee met in January for an orientation to the CA process and work group

assignments. Work groups collected information, met as needed and submitted data to Family Enrichment Network by the February deadline. The program work groups met to identify and prioritize issues and problems. The CA draft was distributed to the full committee mid-March for revision/approval of the report. Policy Council reviewed and approved the Head Start summary report on February 28, 2024. The Governing Board approved the entire summary report on March 27, 2024.

Table 1. Community Assessment Timeline

<b>TASK</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>
Director's Planning	X	X			
CA Orientation Meeting			1/5		
Data Collection			X	X	
Data Analysis / Writing Document			X	X	
Work Groups Identify Needs				2/6-2/28	
CA Committees review document					3/3
Executive Director's Review					3/11
Make Changes to Document					X
CA reviewed by Policy Council					2/28
Make Changes to Document					X
CA reviewed by Governing Board					3/27

# SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



## **SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Each department has identified and summarized needs in the community and within their specific programming. For easy reference, please find below a list of all items identified within the Community Assessment. Further discussion of items can be found within each department section.

### **CCR&R**

- Need to expand services for infant and toddler care throughout the service area.
- Need to advocate for increased funding to support minimum wage increases.
- Need to advocate for increased funding to meet the true cost of child care, through supportive funding for programs. Need to advocate for increased funding to support child care programs as the business model does not work. Parent tuition payments alone do not cover the costs of operating a child care program, but parents cannot afford to pay more.
- Need to expand child care programs in all areas of Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties.
- Need to expand services for children with challenging behaviors through mental health supportive services, including Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation projects.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES**

### **Waiver Services**

- Wage paid per hour: As a non-profit entity, it has been extremely difficult to compete with other employment opportunities in the area when a person can get paid \$17 per hour elsewhere. Due to funding, our ability to offer competitive salaries is limited.
- Transportation: A staff person is required to use their own vehicle to transport an individual for services. With the cost of gasoline and maintenance to personal vehicles, this becomes an immediate deal breaker.

### **Summer Youth Program**

- Transportation to enable the youth to get to the opportunities off campus

## **FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Courthouse Children's Center**

- Increased funding for the Children's Center to address the state mandated minimum wage increases: The Center is flat funded for four years and the state-wide minimum wage increase means there are not enough funds in the Center's budget to reopen fulltime.

### **Kinship Care Program**

- Continued funding for the kinship program. Funding for the program ended September 30, 2023 with no new funding streams available. Because of the need in the community, Family Enrichment Network is funding the program part-time while alternative funds are being sought.
- Legal and Pro Bono Legal Services: Many of the families in the kinship database

indicated a need for legal information or legal services to help them with their kinship situation, especially as there is no court appointed attorney available unless the kinship provider is disabled.

- Reinstate Free Kinship Counseling Services: In Broome and Tioga Counties, there are not enough free mental health services or providers that accept Medicaid. Trauma based counseling services are needed to stabilize kinship families and help kinship children deal with the grief and loss they experience because of their kinship situation.
- Increased substance use disorder programs: The Kinship Program data shows that substance use along with mental health issues is the most frequent reason that children are unable to stay with their parents and are moved into kinship care.
- Respite Care: Respite Care is very important and mostly unavailable for kinship families. Currently in our community respite care is available through Catholic Charities for families who have children with a mental health diagnosis. However, kinship families whose children do not have a mental health diagnosis have no extended respite care available to them at all.
- Transportation: Transportation in rural areas remains a mainly unmet need for many kinship families. Access to services is a problem for families that live in rural Broome and Tioga counties as public transportation is limited to the urban core and the country services are very limited and nonexistent in Tioga County.

#### NOEP

- Free food boxes to give out immediately to people applying for SNAP. The NOEP office should have free food boxes ready to distribute immediately to expedite

eligible households, which are the households with the lowest income with the least amount of resources and their food needs are immediate. These food boxes should also include food suitable for our unhoused population.

- Access to healthy affordable fruit/vegetables in food deserts and rural areas.
- Access to free Summer Meals for rural children: In both Broome and Tioga counties many SNAP eligible children rely on the free and reduced school breakfast and school lunch programs for their daily meals.
- Assist more college students to obtain SNAP: NOEP must continue to develop collaborations to educate and advocate for eligible college students in Broome County at the local university, the community college and business schools. There are many college students who struggle with food insecurity while trying to get their education.
- Access to specialized food for those with medical conditions: Those who suffer from celiac disease (gluten intolerance), diabetes or other medical conditions requiring specific types of food have a difficult time finding the correct food at local food pantries and may no other option but to eat food that is harmful for their medical condition.

#### Walk With Me

- Affordable and available housing: It has been exceedingly difficult for newly released individuals to find any housing at all and some of the program participants have spent over seven months in emergency shelters and motels instead of a few week because there is no affordable housing available.
- Transportation issues: Bus passes are expensive for unemployed individuals.



Increased options to provide bicycles for this population would increase employment opportunities and help address the issues that arise from a public transportation system that does not provide for second and third shift workers and those that live outside of the urban core

### Community Wide Needs

- Increase safe, affordable, permanent, low-income housing options.
- Increase code inspections and enforcement to help reduce substandard housing
- Increase appropriate well-maintained emergency hotels that are up to code and located in areas with services, such as bus stops and supermarkets
- Increase transitional housing and expand housing options for vulnerable populations to include those who are: developmentally delayed domestic violence survivors, homeless, mentally ill, seniors, and those returning from jails and prisons. Transitional housing for reentry populations is limited by the housing codes of certain municipalities.
- Increase the number of housing shelters that operates on a Housing First Model for mentally ill and/or chemically dependent individuals who are acting out or off their medications.
- Increase night time shelters for unhoused individuals.
- Provide safe spaces for unhoused people to spend their days. During the day the unhoused population has no safe reliable place to spend their time or leave their belongings while they try to attend to their business.
- Increase housing for sex offenders. There is an acute lack of acceptable, legal housing for sex offenders in our community. This also becomes a problem for our re-entry

population.

- Increase the number of supermarkets in Binghamton.
- Offer more Mobile Food Pantries in Western Broome. Endicott and Johnson City are underserved by the Mobile Food Pantry (MFP) and both these towns have large populations of low income households.
- Increase evening hours at food pantries. More food pantries need to offer evening hours for those people who work during the day.
- Increase WIC Clinic hours and locations. WIC hours still fall between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday with only one Saturday morning a month. This is a detriment for working families who cannot make appointments outside of their work hours.
- Reduce social stigma and increase participation in SNAP. The elderly population in particular needs more education about SNAP and that it is a benefit program available to all who are eligible. Seniors often think their participation will preclude others who are eligible from receiving food.
- Provide allergy free foods at Food Pantries. Individuals facing food allergies have limited options at food pantries. Even those who have been medically recommended to avoid certain foods cannot follow their doctor's orders because of limited food choices at local food pantries. This also includes patients with diabetes and other medical conditions that restrict what foods they can eat.
- Increase community awareness on the importance of funding for SNAP to keep our children, seniors, and community at large strong and healthy. Distributing slow cookers to this population would enable the preparation of healthy food as long as a power outlet

was available.

- Child care for younger children has become a growing problem in the community over the past few years as the number of child care slots have been gradually reducing.
- Increase options for trauma informed school aged care. More programming for school aged youth is need in the area. After school and support groups are particularly needed for youth impacted by parents with mental health and substance use disorder issues. More trauma-informed care needs to be offered to help children suffering from Adverse Childhood Experiences that can come from living with adults with mental health and addiction problems.
- Increased access to mental health counseling and support services for the uninsured and underinsured.
- Increase mental health and wellness services for young children. This has been an ongoing problem in our community for years. There are very few providers who can offer mental health counseling for children less than five years of age.
- Increase access to no cost mental health medications. The community has seen a small improvement in access to medications for those without insurance or those under insured with the opening of the Hope Dispensary, an off-site service of Lourdes Hospital. However, certain psychotropic medications are not available at this location, which can be problematic for those who require a specific medication to keep their mental illness in check.
- Increase community wide education about mental health resources. There is a definite lack of awareness about the mental health services that are available in the community. This particularly affects middle class families who are not familiar with accessing

services. Also, the area should increase the number of preventive programs for mental health and substance abuse. Our community also needs more programs that emphasize harm reductions techniques.

- Increase services for teens and those 18-21 years old. 18 year olds are considered adults legally but in some instances, parents are still financially responsible for them. This is a huge problem for families with out-of-control teenagers, or those dealing with teens with mental illness or substance abuse. In these situations, the medical field or community agencies may choose to treat the teen as an adult, but their illness or addiction make it very difficult for those over 18 years to function as adults and they may still need the advocacy services of a parent. There is a lack of services in Broome County that specifically address the needs of this age group when it comes to mental illness and substance use disorder.
- Increase pregnancy and dating violence prevention programs.
- Increase Support Groups for children and adolescents dealing with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as those from households with domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, physical abuse or neglect.
- Provide A.A. and N.A. meetings within the Broome County Jail
- Restart the parenting classes and other supportive classes including the GED, which were offered in the Broome County Jail prior to the COVID-19 restrictions and closed down. Returning the classes and increasing the availability to more of the housed population could help some individuals change their outlook on life and give others a new interest to look forward to upon their release.
- Improve access to cash assistance. Those individuals just released from prison must wait

45 days before they are eligible for cash assistance through Broome County DSS. This becomes an immediate hardship for an individual who is trying to start their reintegration in a positive manner.

- Ban the Box, that is, take the question regarding former criminal convictions off employment forms.
- Increase Paid Transitional Employment to allow the individual to gain work experience, build their resume, and receive a source of income. Too many parolees are underemployed or lack any employment for many years after being released. See Ban the Box.
- Improve employer education to encourage more local employers to consider hiring those with criminal histories and to keep them up to date on the incentives available for hiring felons. Many employers are unaware of State and Federal incentives and protections to encourage hiring those with a criminal past.
- Restore the Tioga County bus service that was eliminated November 30, 2014. Since this date there has been no bus service or public transportation available in Tioga County at all.
- Restore and Improve the Broome County bus service. For many low income residents, employment options are limited by the availability of bus routes and the frequency of the bus schedules.
- Restore funding for the Wheels for Work Program. The loss of OTDA funding for the Wheels for Work program has reduced the ability of families to move out of poverty as a vehicle provides to opportunity to expand job options and/or seek higher education.
- Increase options for parenting classes. This continues to be a need in the community as

there are few options for parents and a shortage of parenting classes in the community. Program participants that have been court ordered find they are on waiting lists for months for this service or the few classes are offered at a time and location that is not convenient for parents. To fully meet the needs of community parents there needs to be a variety of classes offered at different times (day and evening) and in different locations.

- Increase supervised visitation sites. Parents who are hoping to regain custody of their children may be required to have supervised visitations. There is a lack of options for supervised visitations in the community and we need more family friendly locations and more supervised visitation staff.
- Provide parent education classes for parents of special needs children. Currently there are no parenting classes available for parents with special needs children such as those with mental health issues, substance use disorders and intellectual or developmental delays. Attending a discipline class designed for children with normal development is not useful for parents whose children may have Autism or other special needs.
- Reinstate the Fatherhood Program focusing on at-risk parents and children.
- Provide a perpetrator's domestic violence program. In the past a Broome County not-for-profit agency provided a program for men who abuse. However, this program is now only available through a private practice. Broome County needs a low to no-cost option. Also no classes exist for women who are abusers.
- Anger management classes. Currently the only class in Broome County is geared toward parents; however there is a need for a general anger management class for adults as well.
- Increase support and services to the rural areas of Broome and Tioga Counties. Family Support Services programs work with many rural-based families who do not have reliable

transportation. Requiring families to travel to city hubs for services leads to many needy families missing out on important supports and assistance because of transportation needs.

- Provide assistance completing TANF application forms. While there are different agencies that can help households complete SSSI, SSDI, and SNAP applications, currently there is no one agency in Broome County that is tasked
- Provide vouchers for personal care and hygiene items. Low-income families are finding the cost of these basic items overwhelming as they cannot be purchased with SNAP and inflation has increased the prices of many everyday necessities. Many social service agency personnel reported that families have to rely on donations to receive essential items.
- Increase the number of pantries providing assistance with personal care and hygiene items. Some pantries offer personal hygiene items and the Broome County Library has a Period Pantry to provide free feminine hygiene products however more of these programs are needed to be implemented county wide.
- Increase accessibility to laundry facilities. The cost of laundry is an ongoing problem as laundry detergent, softener and stain removal products are not covered by SNAP and families must dip into the small amount of cash they receive each month.
- Diapers are expensive. More diaper pantries are needed in the County.
- Increased assistance with medical and dental costs. The working poor still struggle to find the resources to pay for medical treatment. Many who are over-income for Medicaid can still not afford health insurance and do not use doctors when they should. Other families cannot find dentists who will accept their specific type of dental insurance.

## **HOUSING**

- Lack of safe and affordable housing. Many housing options are considered substandard, and tenants often complain about absentee landlords and/or maintenance repairs that go unaddressed. Available and affordable housing is oftentimes located in unsafe neighborhoods.
- Rental costs have dramatically increased due to the pandemic.
- Student housing is creating an affordable housing shortage. Landlords are converting family housing over to student housing leaving the housing stock depleted. The increased cost of housing paired with the housing shortage puts tenants at risk of homelessness.
- Assistance is needed in targeted areas for specific demographics, specifically: ageing populations, single mothers, drug and alcohol populations, reentry

## **HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START**

- Identify and develop a plan to ensure families have appropriate access to technology and training to participate in meaningful remote/virtual programming that fully supports their child development and family engagement interests and needs.
- Advance staff members understanding of preparing children and families for socialization and school readiness as we are back to a more complete in person program model.
- Increase nutrition education and access to fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods. Utilize community partners to assist in achieving this goal.



- Promote mental wellness and social wellbeing thru the full implementation of curricula including Pyramid, Second Step, Conscious Discipline, Positive Solutions for Families, and assist parents in supporting their children’s mental wellness by providing an array of parenting programs/resources.
- Develop a plan to advocate for and support families with accessing child care options including: wrap around, non-traditional, and after school care needs.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

- **Shortage of Related Service and SEIS Personnel:** Yearly, this is an expressed need. Broome and Chenango reports a shortage of providers for related services. Although we try to group children when appropriate, travel time and competing schedules limit our flexibility to be efficient from a fiscal perspective. The SED reimbursement rate for SEIS does not allow for travel time. We have seen a decline in the number of early childhood teachers and speech language pathologists and school psychologists available for recruitment. We will continue working on this goal and attempting to reinstate SEIT.
- **Programs and Supports for Children with Behavioral Challenges:** Committee members continue to see an increase in children who struggle to maintain self-control. Often these children are at great risk of losing their daycare/child care due to the behaviors they present and the lack of provider training in dealing with management issues. This is the seventh year that SES has focused on this population at all of our sites. Most classes are fully integrated with typical UPK or Head Start children and children with IEPs who have high behavioral management needs and

trauma (ACES). Staff plans age-appropriate behavioral interventions. This year we are providing targeted staff development to teachers and aides in the area of social emotional needs and counseling.

- **Evaluation Process:** Districts shared that they are very pleased with the quality of our evaluation and year-end reports. They noted that the SES department is a good communicator and they feel that the agency takes pride in keeping districts informed. Although evaluations may be delayed, that is a common challenge for the other 4410 state approved evaluation teams in the county as well.
- **Shortage of Teachers, Therapists and School Psychologists:** There continues to be a shortage of qualified staff, Special Education Teachers, Therapists and School Psychologists in NYS.
- **Community Priorities:**
  - Programs and supports for children with behavioral challenges
  - Staff trainings for social-emotional needs in the preschool setting
  - Continue to monitor the evaluation process timeline
  - Shortages of qualified teachers, related service personnel (therapists) and psychologists
  - Lack of funds for counseling to address our student and family's emotional needs
  - Continue to provide all evaluation appointments in one day, due to transportation difficulties of families
  - Counseling for children with mental health needs
  - Broader range of parent resource options