

Methodology

The [Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation \(NEICAC\) Community Needs Assessment Committee identified data sources](#) to inform this comprehensive community needs assessment report. Iowa Community Action Association staff sorted and analyzed the data, ascertaining key family-level and community-level findings in a variety of domain areas (listed below) that are present in NEICAC's seven county core service area of Allamakee County, Bremer County, Chickasaw County, Clayton County, Fayette County, Howard County, and Winneshiek County.

The following report includes statistics and graphics from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021 5-year estimates, survey results from NEICAC's Customer Needs Assessment & Satisfaction Survey (2023-2024), NEICAC's Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment & Satisfaction Survey (2022), as well as other program and community data. The Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment & Satisfaction Survey was sent to community partners in NEICAC's service area, NEICAC governing board members, Head Start advisory council and policy council members, and agency staff. Data are cited when used from sources other than the ACS.

Domain Areas

- Child Care
- Computer/Internet/
Phone Service
- Education
- Employment
- Food
- Health
- Housing
- Income
- Population by
gender, ethnicity,
race, age
- Recreation
- Safety
- Transportation

When community stakeholders were asked in the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey, what should the community focus on addressing, 33% (74 of 223) said child care, and 33% (74 of 223) said housing. Twelve percent (27) noted infrastructure (such as transportation systems, communication networks, energy, water, sewer, public facilities/spaces/parks) and 10% (22) employment. The following data will show needs in the domain areas of child care and housing, as well as the other domain area conditions present in NEICAC's service area.

Household Makeup

A total of 117,263 people live in Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation's seven-county service area, according to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-year estimates. According to NEICAC's CSBG Client Characteristics for fiscal year 2023, NEICAC served 10,835 unduplicated individuals (4,792 households). The state average for the percentage of the population living in rural areas is 36.85%; all of NEICAC's counties are well above the state average, with Allamakee, Chickasaw, and Howard Counties being at 100% rural population.

In fiscal year 2023, NEICAC served the following percentage of the population in each county:

- Allamakee County 12.5%
- Bremer County 6.8%
- Chickasaw County 7.8%
- Clayton County 9.6%

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- Fayette County 14.5%
- Howard County 9.9%
- Winneshiek County 5.9%

The 5-year American Community Survey reports the number of veterans living in NEICAC's service area is 7,057 (7.73%), which is more than the national average of 6.85%.

The total number of households in the service area is 47,747. Of those, 30,859 are family households in which the householder is living with one or more individuals related to him or her by birth, marriage, or adoption. The percentage of families with children 0-17 in the seven-county area is 26.53%.

Looking at the various age groups within NEICAC's service area is important because each age group has unique needs to consider. Of the 117,263 total population:

- 25,996 (22.17%) are under 18; the state average is 23.35%. Three of NEICAC's counties are above the state average: Allamakee County (23.82%), Chickasaw County (23.89%), and Howard County (25.57%). Winneshiek County has the fewest persons under the age of 18 at 18.61%.
- 6,875 (5.86%) are under the age of 5; the state average is 6.12%. Three of NEICAC's counties are above the state average: Allamakee County (6.82%), Chickasaw County (6.73%), and Howard County (7.14%). Winneshiek County has the fewest persons under the age of 5 at 4.63%.
- 66,574 (56.77%) are between the ages of 18 and 64; the state average is 59.65%. One NEICAC county is above the state average: Winneshiek County (60.26%).
- 24,693 (21.06%) are adults aged 65 or older; the state average is 17%. All of NEICAC's counties are above the state average, with the highest being Clayton County (23.37%).

Income

In the latest 5-year American Community Survey estimates, the median household income state average was \$65,429. Two of NEICAC's counties were above the state average: Bremer County (\$76,782) and Chickasaw County (\$67,146). The county with the lowest median household income was Fayette County (\$50,973).

In 2021, the state average median household income was \$65,645. Three of NEICAC's counties were above the state average: Bremer County (\$75,395), Chickasaw County (\$67,667), and Winneshiek County (\$70,482). The county in NEICAC's service area with the lowest median household income was Clayton County (\$56,076).

The table below shows the county in NEICAC's service area with the highest percentage of households in each income range. For example, Fayette County has the highest percentage of households earning under \$25,000, and Winneshiek County has the highest percentage of households earning \$200,000 or more. When looking at the percentage of households receiving public assistance (general assistance and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), Fayette County has 2.60% (211) of

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Households by Household Income Levels, Percent

Report Area	Under \$25,000	\$25,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$99,999	\$100,000 - \$199,999	\$200,000+
Report Location	16.54%	22.50%	35.87%	21.16%	3.94%
Allamakee County, IA	17.23%	22.72%	38.75%	17.06%	4.23%
Bremer County, IA	12.05%	17.94%	35.54%	30.04%	4.44%
Chickasaw County, IA	14.85%	23.00%	34.81%	24.12%	3.24%
Clayton County, IA	17.72%	25.29%	35.10%	18.62%	3.27%
Fayette County, IA	23.00%	26.06%	32.45%	15.06%	3.42%
Howard County, IA	15.51%	24.14%	37.81%	19.28%	3.26%
Winneshiek County, IA	15.35%	20.64%	38.07%	20.94%	5.00%
Iowa	16.63%	21.22%	33.03%	23.37%	5.75%
United States	17.18%	19.60%	29.63%	24.14%	9.46%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.

households receiving public assistance. The percentage of households in the state receiving public assistance is 2.18% (27,784).

Of the 248 NEICAC customers that completed the Customer Needs Assessment Survey and answered the question "In the last 12 months has your household income changed", 50% (125) had no change, 34% (84) had their income decrease, and 16% (39) had their income increase. Thirty-eight percent (94 of 248) indicated their household had financial management needs in the last 12 months, with 85% (78 of 92) not having enough money to get through the month, 41% (38) needing help with budgeting and managing money, and 28% (26) needing help solving problems with a utility company.

Poverty

Community Action Agencies receive federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds to support their work and carry out their mission. CSBG eligibility is normally 125% of the federal poverty level (FPL); however, in the past few years the federal government has allowed states to increase the eligibility to 200% FPL. Here, we will look at the poverty statistics for 125% and 100% FPL. In the table, three counties in NEICAC's service area have higher populations with income at or below 125% FPL than the state average of 14.87%: Allamakee County (15.97%), Clayton County (16.38%), and Fayette County (18.16%).

Report Area	Population, Total	Population with Income at or Below 125% FPL	Population with Income at or Below 125% FPL, Percent
Report Location	112,119	15,205	13.56%
Allamakee County, IA	13,791	2,203	15.97%
Bremer County, IA	23,353	2,371	10.15%
Chickasaw County, IA	11,819	1,298	10.98%
Clayton County, IA	16,902	2,768	16.38%
Fayette County, IA	19,014	3,452	18.16%
Howard County, IA	9,276	1,124	12.12%
Winneshiek County, IA	17,964	1,989	11.07%
Iowa	3,084,598	458,750	14.87%
United States	321,897,703	53,601,341	16.65%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.

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The tables below show the total population and number of households at or below 100% of the federal poverty level. Two counties in NEICAC's service area have a population in poverty that is above the state average (11.01%): Clayton County (12.18%) and Fayette County (12.19%). Fayette County also has a higher percentage of households in poverty (12.2%) than the state average of 11%. **In fiscal year 2023, NEICAC served 2,308 separate households at or below 100% of poverty (approximately 52% of the households at or below 100% of poverty in the seven-county service area).**

NEICAC's programs with set enrollment numbers (Head Start, Early Head Start, and Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) are at full capacity with readily available waitlists. Food Pantry services are accessible monthly, and households may access various NEICAC programs and services multiple times throughout the year, depleting available direct assistance funding and available agency capacity. When looking at the full picture of existing services provided by NEICAC, additional population in poverty, and available resources, the need for increased funding to serve more households experiencing poverty is evident.

Report Area	Total Population	Population in Poverty	Population in Poverty, Percent
Report Location	112,119	10,536	9.40%
Allamakee County, IA	13,791	1,449	10.51%
Bremer County, IA	23,353	1,732	7.42%
Chickasaw County, IA	11,819	737	6.24%
Clayton County, IA	16,902	2,058	12.18%
Fayette County, IA	19,014	2,318	12.19%
Howard County, IA	9,276	763	8.23%
Winneshiek County, IA	17,964	1,479	8.23%
Iowa	3,084,598	339,695	11.01%
United States	321,897,703	40,661,636	12.63%

*Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.*

Report Area	Total Households	Households in Poverty	Percent Households in Poverty
Report Location	47,747	4,467	9.36%
Allamakee County, IA	5,814	508	8.7%
Bremer County, IA	9,638	690	7.2%
Chickasaw County, IA	5,005	439	8.8%
Clayton County, IA	7,319	771	10.5%
Fayette County, IA	8,107	987	12.2%
Howard County, IA	3,708	345	9.3%
Winneshiek County, IA	8,156	727	8.9%
Iowa	1,275,893	140,621	11.0%
United States	124,010,992	15,381,768	12.4%

*Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.*

Child Care

The following data shows that NEICAC's service area needs more affordable, quality childcare options for families.

NEICAC customers that completed the Customer Needs Assessment Survey indicated that 17% (22 of 129) have had unmet child care or child development needs in the last 12 months (83% have not). Of the 21 respondents, the following could use help with:

- 67% (14) Finding affordable childcare
- 48% (10) Finding child care in a convenient location
- 48% (10) Finding quality childcare
- 48% (10) Finding weekday daytime childcare

Community stakeholders were asked in the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey if there are sufficient childcare facilities in their communities:

- Child care facilities: 65% (159) said no; 16% (40) said unsure; 19% (46) said yes
- Childcare facilities that provide services during the evenings, nighttime, and/or weekends: 72% (179 of 247) said no; 23% (56) are unsure; 5% (12) said yes
- Childcare facilities that provide services to school-aged children 6-11 when school is not in session: 60% (146 of 245) said no; 26% (63) said unsure; 15% (36) said yes
- Child care facilities that provide services during the daytime (M-F) for children 0-5: 58% (141 of 245) said no; 18% (43) said unsure; 25% (61) said yes

NEICAC's service area is in Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) Region 2. CCR&R data released in December 2023 indicated that a family earning the median income with an infant in child care would pay 11% of their income before taxes if their child was in a registered home and 14% if their child was in a licensed center. Seven percent is considered affordable according to a study from Child Care Aware of America, "U.S. and the High Price of Child Care 2019". The CCR&R data also shows there was a 22% decrease in the total number of childcare programs in Region 2 listed with CCR&R from 2017 to 2022 and a 28% decrease in the number of programs reporting they accept Iowa Health & Human Services (formerly DHS) child care assistance in Region 2. Child Care Assistance helps families with low income afford child care.

Customers that completed the Customer Needs Assessment Survey indicated that 10% (23) have had unmet parenting or family support needs in the last 12 months. Of the 23, the following could use help with:

- 61% (14) Learning how to help the children or youth in the household cope with stress, depression, or emotional issues
- 43% (10) Learning how to set goals and plan for the household
- 43% (10) Learning how to communicate with and set boundaries for the teenage youth in the household

NEICAC's Head Start and Early Head Start programs received positive comments from parents of children in the programs in their 2023 program surveys. Comments included *"The Early Head Start program is helping my child get ready for school using developmentally appropriate activities," "I feel better prepared to be my child's first and most important teacher by participating in home visits and lesson plan activities,"* and *"The Head Start program gives my child a safe place to learn."* A few

comments indicated it might be helpful for the agency to look at additional times that meetings and workshops are held to better accommodate family schedules.

Quotes from respondents that speaks to the cycle:

"If there was affordable 24 seven daycare for single moms like me, I'd be able to work more than just the weekends and be able to provide better for my family. I'm just lucky enough to have a family friend that is able to watch them on the weekends while I work but yet I can barely afford to pay her so I'm over \$2,000 behind with her right now and I can't get state assistance because I'm not working the minimum 24-28 hours a week because I'm unable to find affordable daycare."

"Due to child care only able to pay a little over minimum wage and usually no benefits, it is hard to fill the capacities that are needed to watch children. But if we raise that wage then it will be harder as well for the families to afford daycare, a vicious cycle."

"There is a lack of affordable childcare. Not having childcare results in people leaving the workforce or working lower paying jobs to make schedules work with children. Quality childcare can make a difference for the children also."

Possible causes of childcare conditions:

Lack of affordable childcare options in the community; lack of childcare options regardless of income; more young children than there are child care slots; child care providers retiring and not enough new providers entering the field; need for education supports to draw more people into the child care field

Community Resources

- NEICAC's CACFP program provides meal reimbursement and nutrition education to registered childcare providers, which is an incentive for becoming registered or maintaining the registered provider status.
- NEICAC's Head Start program offers before and after-school wrap-around care at many classroom locations. In addition, we evaluate the need for care over the summer and often offer summer programming, which alleviates a childcare barrier for working families with children enrolled in the program.
- NEICAC also closely follows state legislative action related to childcare access and affordability and actively advocates for improving childcare access and affordability. When applicable, this may occur through interactions with legislators regarding the barriers those with limited resources face regarding securing affordable childcare.
- Child Care Resource & Referral is a referral source for individuals in need of childcare and offers the following support for Iowa's childcare needs:
 - Consultation, ongoing training, and support to those who are interested in becoming or those who are already licensed preschools, Child Care Centers (CCC), nonregistered Child Care Home (CCH) providers, and registered Child Development Home (CDH) providers.
 - Referrals to childcare programs and educational tools to aid in the search for quality childcare.

- Data collection and community partnerships that support the need to increase the number of quality childcare options.
- Social media has become a support in locating available childcare options, with specific pages created as a resource for caretakers to seek childcare options within communities.
- The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services offers the following support for Iowa's childcare needs:
 - Childcare assistance is available to children of income-eligible parents who are gone for a portion of the day due to employment or participation in academic or vocational training. Assistance may also be available for a limited period of time to the children of a parent looking for employment. Childcare services are provided to people participating in activities approved under the PROMISE JOBS program and those receiving Family Investment Program (FIP) assistance. Childcare services for a child with protective needs are provided without regard to income.
 - Assistance in locating childcare through their online childcare map, which shows childcare providers by their location, and the childcare provider search, which is an interactive tool to help find childcare providers.

Food Insecurity

Free and Reduced Price Lunch

Two counties in NEICAC's service area are above the state average in terms of the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Free or reduced-price lunches are served to qualifying students in families with incomes at or below 185% (reduced priced) or under 130% (free lunch) of the U.S. federal poverty threshold.

Report Area	Total Students	Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch	Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch, Percent
Report Location	18,945	6,083	32.1%
Allamakee County, IA	2,101	1,040	49.5%
Bremer County, IA	4,816	873	18.1%
Chickasaw County, IA	1,970	579	29.4%
Clayton County, IA	2,833	953	33.6%
Fayette County, IA	3,302	1,433	43.4%
Howard County, IA	1,453	555	38.2%
Winneshiek County, IA	2,470	650	26.3%
Iowa	504,006	202,118	40.1%
United States	40,249,650	19,533,765	51.7%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES - Common Core of Data, 2020-2021.

Seventy percent, 89 of the 128 Customer Needs Assessment Survey respondents have children who receive free or reduced-price school meals (30% do not). Thirty-three percent (81 of 244) of households have had unmet food or nutrition needs in the last 12 mos. Of 82 respondents, the following could use help with:

- 66% (54) Having enough food at home
- 54% (44) Having enough nutritious food at home
- 52% (43) Getting food from food pantries, meal sites, food shelves

When asked if their household is enrolled in SNAP, 41% (99 of 244) were enrolled in SNAP, and 59% (145) were not enrolled in SNAP. Some of the reasons for not being enrolled:

- 58% (80 of 137) over income
- 18% (24 of 137) Other (i.e. choice/don't need)
- 13% (18 of 137) unfamiliar with program

Low Income and Low Food Access

Data below shows that individuals in Howard County need more access to food.

Low food access is defined as living more than 1 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store. Data are from the April 2021 Food Access Research Atlas dataset. This indicator is important because it highlights populations and geographies facing food insecurity. **In NEICAC's service area, 9.53% (3,084) of the population with low-income has low food access, with Howard County having 37.81% of its population with low income with low food access.** The other six counties in NEICAC's service area have percentages below the state average of 19.53%.

In the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey, 70% (171 of 243) indicated there are sufficient and affordable (for people with low incomes), supermarkets and grocery stores in the community. Twenty-eight percent (68) said there are not, and 2% (4) were unsure.

Food Environment – Food Deserts

The USDA Food Access Research Atlas defines a food desert as any neighborhood that lacks healthy food sources due to income level, distance to supermarkets, or vehicle access. The report area has a population of 0 living in food deserts and a total of 0 census tracts classified as food deserts by the USDA (source: USDA, Food Access Research Atlas 2019).

Community Resources

- Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation operates a Food Pantry in our Winneshiek, Howard, and Bremer County office locations. In addition, we established small, temporary food pantries for emergency needs at our Allamakee and Chickasaw County office locations.
- Northeast Iowa Community Action staff who work directly with community members are knowledgeable of available food pantries and provide referrals to food pantries across our seven-county service area.
- Our agency annually evaluates food pantry location, access, and availability across our seven county service areas.
- Some food pantries in our service area require a formal referral from a social service agency, church, etc., to receive food assistance. Collaborations with local food pantries allow our Family Service Specialists in our Outreach offices to provide these referrals. Food Pantries within our seven-county service area, which are a referral source for families who identify a food insecurity need during their work with NEICAC, include:
 - Allamakee:
 - Allamakee County Food Shelf-Waukon
 - Postville Food Pantry-Postville
 - Lansing Iowa Food Trust (LIFT)-Lansing
 - Bremer
 - Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry-Readlyn
 - Chickasaw

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- Nashua Area Food Pantry-Nashua
- New Hampton Food Pantry-New Hampton
- Fredericksburg Food Pantry-Fredericksburg
- Clayton
 - Clayton County Food Shelf-St. Olaf
 - Guttenberg Family Resource Center-Guttenberg
- Fayette
 - Oelwein Kitchen Cupboard-Oelwein
 - Plentiful Pantry-Oelwein
 - Fayette County Food Shelf-Fayette
 - His Hands-Oran
 - Open Hands Food Pantry-West Union
- Howard
 - Riceville Food Pantry-Riceville
- Winneshiek
 - Decorah Community Food Pantry-Decorah
 - Greater Area Food Pantry-Calmar
- Our staff also share information with customers regarding the Mobile Food Pantries
- Once per Month Mobile Food Pantries available in our service area include:
 - Cresco
 - West Union
 - Waverly
 - Guttenberg
 - New Hampton

The Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) program is also a community resource for assistance in purchasing nutritious food. Howard, Winneshiek, Fayette, Allamakee, and Clayton Counties are served through the Elkader Visiting Nurse Association office. Chickasaw and Bremer counties are served through the Waterloo Operation Threshold office. NEICAC staff provide support to households wishing to apply for benefits through the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, including SNAP (Food Stamp) benefits. Referrals are also provided to the Northeast Iowa Food Bank's SNAP Outreach Staff who then work directly with individuals to assist in the completion of the SNAP application.

Education

Ten percent of the NEICAC customers that completed the Customer Needs Assessment Survey (26 of 250) indicated their household had education needs in the past 12 months, including needing help with:

- 26% (7) obtaining a 2-yr. associate's degree
- 26% (7) obtaining technical, vocational, or trade school license, certificate, or degree
- 26% (7) Other (Master's degree, learning a second language, or CEUs)
- 22% (6) Obtaining 4-yr. Bachelor's degree

When asked if there are sufficient education resources in their communities, community stakeholders in the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey indicated the following:

- Education resources for school-age youth 12-17: 31% (77 of 245) said no; 27% (66) were unsure; 42% (102) said yes

- Post-Secondary education resources for adults who did not immediately continue their education after graduating high school: 31% (75 of 245) said no; 43% (106) were unsure; 26% (64) said yes
- Education resources for school-age children 6-11: 28% (69 of 248) said no; 26% (64) were unsure; 46% (115) said yes

Computer/Internet/Phone Service

Individuals in NEICAC's service area have an increased likelihood of needing access to computers and phone service.

The percentage of households that do not own or use any type of computer, including desktop or laptop, smartphone, tablet or other portable wireless computer, and some other type of computer, is higher than the state average (8.30%) in all but one of NEICAC's counties (see table below).

Report Area	Total Households	Households with No Computer	Households with No Computer, Percent
Report Location	47,747	5,501	11.52%
Allamakee County, IA	5,814	926	15.93%
Bremer County, IA	9,638	741	7.69%
Chickasaw County, IA	5,005	574	11.47%
Clayton County, IA	7,319	989	13.51%
Fayette County, IA	8,107	922	11.37%
Howard County, IA	3,708	431	11.62%
Winneshiek County, IA	8,156	918	11.26%
Iowa	1,275,893	105,928	8.30%
United States	124,010,992	8,613,533	6.95%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.

The above data does not include people living in housing such as dorms, prisons, nursing homes, etc.

Eighty-eight percent (203 of 231) of NEICAC customers that completed the Customer Needs Assessment Survey have internet or access to internet service, while 12% (28) do not. When community stakeholders were asked if there are sufficient and affordable (for people with low incomes) high-speed broadband technologies in their communities, 46% (111 of 243) said yes, 32% (78) said no, and 22% (54) were unsure.

In NEICAC's service area, 604 (1.27%) housing units lack telephone service. This is more than the state average of 1.11%. Of the 232 customers that responded to the Customer Needs Assessment Survey question about phone service, 96% (223) indicated they have phone service, while 4% (9) do not.

Community Resources

- The Affordable Connectivity Program started on December 31, 2021, replacing the Emergency Broadband Benefit. Though the application period closed on February 7, 2024, those who were approved prior will continue to receive the estimated term, which is subject to change, through April 2024.
- Lifeline is a government program offering eligible consumers up to \$9.25 off monthly for phone, internet, or bundled services.

- Safelink is a participating Lifeline service provider that discounts communication services to eligible individuals and families. Eligibility is determined by income and/or participation in state or Federal support programs.

Employment/Unemployment

Data below indicates there are individuals in NEICAC's service area that need help finding employment and/or better employment.

The unemployment rate for NEICAC's service area is 2.9%, which is lower than the state's unemployment rate of 3.2%. The county in the report area with the lowest unemployment rate is Chickasaw County at 2.5%.

Customers that submitted the Customer Needs Assessment Survey indicated **that 34% of households (85 of 252 respondents) had at least one adult in the household that was working and trying to find a better job**, and 8% (18 of 230) of households have someone age 14-24 who are neither working nor in school. **Twenty-three percent of households (58 of 252) had at least one adult that was unemployed trying to find a job.**

Sixty-three percent (164 of 260) of community stakeholders indicated in the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey that there are sufficient full-time job opportunities in the community, while 20% (51) said there are not, and 17% (45) were unsure. When asked if there are sufficient part-time job opportunities, 74% (185 of 252) said yes; 12% (30) said no; and 15% (37) said unsure. Community stakeholders identified the following factors they believe contribute to employment issues:

- 55% (140 of 253) Individuals are unable to find affordable childcare
- 50% (127) Not enough employers pay wages high enough to attract workers
- 40% (101) Shortage of potential or qualified individuals
- 30% (76) Individuals lack training/skillset for available jobs
- 28% (71) Individuals lack reliable transportation

Open-ended comments included 56 mentions of lack of work ethic/laziness/not wanting to work, three noted childcare and housing, and two noted transportation and mental health.

Possible cause of Employment/Income conditions:

Difficulty attracting larger businesses to the community; parents have difficulty obtaining/maintaining employment with the lack of child care; wages are too low

Travel Time to Work

Travel time for workers who travel to work (do not work from home) is, on average, 21.03 minutes for NEICAC's service area, compared to the state average of 19.58 minutes and the national average of 26.79 minutes.

Youth Not Working and Not in School

The overall percentage of the population age 16-19 in NEICAC's service area that are not in school and not employed is 4.34%, which is lower than the state average of 5.69%. However, three counties in the

report area have a higher percentage of individuals age 16-19 not working and not employed: Clayton County (13.19%), Fayette County (7.74%), and Howard County (9.61%).

Community Resources

- Local community Chamber of Commerce institutions act as a support to businesses and can lobby for laws to be passed that are favorable to businesses. A Chamber of Commerce is charged with identifying not only what is good for businesses but also what the community members who are necessary to the success of the business need.
- The Iowa Economic Development Authority is another support to business and community growth across Iowa. Economic Development recognizes the importance of gathering data and completing studies to understand Iowa's labor market's workforce characteristics.
- Iowa Workforce Development provides access to available employment opportunities, support for job seekers, and apprenticeship opportunities to help unemployed individuals connect with reputable employers. The Iowa Workforce Development is in the perfect position to understand what Iowa's job seekers are looking for regarding employment and what they need regarding livable wages. Within our service area, the city of Decorah in Winneshiek County currently has a satellite IowaWORKS office. Many programs and services are available online in addition to a recently implemented Mobile Workforce Center that can be requested to visit locations across the state.

Health

Health Insurance

Individuals in NEICAC's service area need health insurance.

The lack of health insurance is considered a key driver of health status and is a primary barrier to healthcare access (i.e., regular primary care, specialty care, etc.). **The percentage of the population age 0-18 and 18-64 without health insurance is greater in five of NEICAC's counties than the state rate of 3.13% and 6.86%, respectively.**

Report Area	Total Population Age 0-18	Pop. Age 0-18 w/ Insurance	Pop. Age 0-18 w/ Insurance, Percent	Pop. Age 0-18 w/o Insurance	Pop. Age 0-18 w/o Insurance, Percent
Report Location	26,509	25,596	96.56%	913	3.44%
Allamakee County, IA	3,433	3,280	95.54%	153	4.46%
Bremer County, IA	5,857	5,716	97.59%	141	2.41%
Chickasaw County, IA	2,904	2,791	96.11%	113	3.89%
Clayton County, IA	3,762	3,579	95.14%	183	4.86%
Fayette County, IA	4,252	4,104	96.52%	148	3.48%
Howard County, IA	2,467	2,375	96.27%	92	3.73%
Winneshiek County, IA	3,834	3,751	97.84%	83	2.16%
Iowa	763,613	739,686	96.87%	23,927	3.13%
United States	75,979,898	71,938,607	94.68%	4,041,291	5.32%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: US Census Bureau, Small Area Health Insurance Estimates, 2021.

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Report Area	Total Population Age 18-64	Pop. Age 18-64 w/ Insurance	Pop. Age 18-64 w/ Insurance, Percent	Pop. Age 18-64 w/o Insurance	Pop. Age 18-64 w/o Insurance, Percent
Report Location	62,085	58,020	93.45%	4,065	6.55%
Allamakee County, IA	7,327	6,664	90.95%	663	9.05%
Bremer County, IA	13,308	12,716	95.55%	592	4.45%
Chickasaw County, IA	6,564	6,084	92.69%	480	7.31%
Clayton County, IA	9,196	8,421	91.57%	775	8.43%
Fayette County, IA	10,442	9,719	93.08%	723	6.92%
Howard County, IA	5,157	4,786	92.81%	371	7.19%
Winneshiek County, IA	10,091	9,630	95.43%	461	4.57%
Iowa	1,838,895	1,712,702	93.14%	126,193	6.86%
United States	197,133,424	173,254,919	87.89%	23,878,505	12.11%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: US Census Bureau, Small Area Health Insurance Estimates. 2021.

Community Resources

- The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services manages the Iowa Medicaid program to provide health coverage to eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with disabilities.
- **The state of Iowa provides low-cost health coverage to children in families that earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid. The program is called Healthy and Well Kids in Iowa (Hawki). Through this program some families pay nothing at all, and the maximum any family pays is \$40 per month. Family size and income determine the monthly cost.**
- Medicare is a federal health insurance program for people who are 65 or older, certain younger people with disabilities, and individuals with specific qualifying diagnoses, such as end-stage renal disease.
- The Health Insurance Marketplace is a shopping and enrollment service for medical insurance created by the Affordable Care Act in 2010.

Access to Care

Health Care Providers

When compared to access across the state, NEICAC's service area may have a need for additional health care providers.

Primary health providers include practicing physicians specializing in general practice medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, and pediatrics (source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS – National Plan and Provider Enumeration System, July 2023). **NEICAC's service area has less primary care providers per 100,000 population than the state average of 109.33, with all but one county (Winneshiek) below the state average.**

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Report Area	Total Population (2020)	Number of Facilities	Number of Providers	Providers, Rate per 100,000 Population
Report Location	117,152	25	93	79.38
Winneshiek County, IA	20,070	3	28	139.51
Howard County, IA	9,469	1	7	73.93
Bremer County, IA	24,988	8	17	68.03
Fayette County, IA	19,509	1	10	51.26
Clayton County, IA	17,043	6	11	64.54
Allamakee County, IA	14,061	3	8	56.89
Chickasaw County, IA	12,012	3	12	99.90
Iowa	3,190,369	731	3,488	109.33
United States	334,735,155	122,140	366,013	109.34

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS - National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES), July 2023.

According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Provider of Services File, September 2020, of the 83 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) in Iowa, there were none within the seven-county service area. FQHCs are community assets that provide health care to vulnerable populations; they receive extra funding from the federal government to promote access to ambulatory care in areas designated as medically underserved.

According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Provider of Services File, 2021, there were 79 active Medicare and Medicaid institutional service providers in the report area. Medicare and Medicaid providers include hospitals, nursing facilities, FQHCs, rural health clinics and community mental health centers.

Customers that submitted the Customer Needs Assessment Survey indicated that 82% (192 out of 234) of households did not have unmet health needs in the last 12 months. When asked about specific health needs households need help with, 225 customers skipped answering the question. Of the 42 that answered:

- 9.5% (4) indicated a need for help with getting regular check-ups, immunizations, developmental screens, or physicals for children in the household.
- 16.7% (7) indicated a need for help with managing medications
- 4.8 % (2) indicated a need for help getting reproductive health care, including access to birth control and STI testing.

Community stakeholders were asked in the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey if there are a sufficient number of accessible and affordable (for people with low incomes) physical healthcare resources/services (medical centers, physical therapy, hospitals, urgent care). 79% said yes, 11% said no, and 10% were unsure. When asked if there were a sufficient number of wellness programs (physical health, exercise, nutrition), 38% said yes, 36% said no and 26% were unsure.

Many community stakeholders were unsure if there is a sufficient number of primary care providers that accept Medicaid in their communities.

Community Resources

- Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation staff working directly with customers act as a referral source for those in need of medical services.
- When primary care providers are limited or inaccessible, urgent care or convenient care options may be available.
- The Decorah Community Free Clinic serves uninsured and under-insured individuals. The clinic is staffed by a team of volunteer health care providers, interpreters, and patient registration. In 2023 the clinic provided free medical care to patients living in Howard, Chickasaw, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Fayette, and Clayton counties.

Teen Births

Data from the Iowa Department of Public Health birth counts for mothers under age 20 indicates two counties within the NEICAC service area with consistent higher than five birth count rates.

County	2020	2021	2022
Allamakee	10	8	9
Bremer	*	*	*
Chickasaw	5	*	*
Clayton	*	*	5
Fayette	9	6	9
Howard	*	*	*
Winneshiek	*	7	*
*Count Under 5			

Community Resources

- Title X clinics are community-based providers that receive funding from the Title X Family Planning Program to provide individuals with comprehensive family planning, preventative health services, and sexually transmitted infection services.
 - Allen Women’s Health currently provides Title X services for Bremer and Chickasaw counties.
 - The Visiting Nurse Association was recently approved to implement a Title X program. The target start date for the program is July 1st; with plans to serve Clayton, Fayette, Winneshiek, Howard, Chickasaw, and Allamakee counties.

Dental Health Providers

When compared to access across the state, NEICAC's service area may have a need for additional dental health providers.

Providers include those who list "dentist," "general practice dentist," or "pediatric dentistry" as their primary practice classification, regardless of sub-specialty (source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS – National Plan and Provider Enumeration System, July 2023). **Six counties in NEICAC's service area (all but Chickasaw) have less dental health providers per 100,000 population than the state average of 29.53. Beyond the need for additional dental providers lies the need for additional**

providers who will provide services to individuals who are on the state of Iowa's Medicaid insurance. Thirty-eight percent of NEICAC's 2023-2024 Community Needs Assessment Survey respondents indicated they need help finding a dentist who accepts Medicaid.

Report Area	Total Population (2020)	Number of Facilities	Number of Providers	Providers, Rate per 100,000 Population
Report Location	117,152	15	26	22.19
Winneshiek County, IA	20,070	1	2	9.97
Howard County, IA	9,469	0	1	10.56
Bremer County, IA	24,988	7	7	28.01
Fayette County, IA	19,509	3	4	20.50
Clayton County, IA	17,043	2	4	23.47
Allamakee County, IA	14,061	0	2	14.22
Chickasaw County, IA	12,012	2	6	49.95
Iowa	3,190,369	401	942	29.53
United States	334,735,155	55,013	124,930	37.32

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS - National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES), July 2023.

Community stakeholders were asked in the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey if there are a sufficient number of accessible and affordable (for people with low incomes) dental health services. 43% said yes, 39% said no, and 18% were unsure.

Many community stakeholders were unsure if there is a sufficient number of dental providers that accept Medicaid in their communities.

Community Resources

- Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation staff working directly with customers act as a referral source for those in need of dental services.
- I-Smile is a program that connects children and pregnant women living in Iowa with dental resources. It serves as the oral health component of the statewide Maternal Health and Child and Adolescent Health program, managed by Iowa HHS. I-Smile Coordinators across the state work with various stakeholders, including children and families, dentists, medical providers, school personnel, and businesses. Dental Hygienists with I-Smile provide dental screenings, apply fluoride, and offer education for children at WIC clinics, Head Start centers, preschools, childcare sites, and schools.
- NEICAC's Head Start program provides numerous dental care activities to children in their classrooms, including demonstrations on how to brush your teeth providing take-home bags of dental items, including toothpaste, dental floss, toothbrushes, and healthy tip sheets. Fluoride varnish is offered to children twice each school year through the I-Smile program.
- The Visiting Nurse Association provides dental resources, including a directory of dental offices that may accept children with Medicaid insurance.

Mental Health Providers

Individuals in NEICAC's service area need mental health services and resources. Additionally, NEICAC's service area needs additional Mental Health Providers that are affordable and accessible to individuals and families with low income.

Mental health providers include licensed clinical social workers and other credentialed professionals specializing in psychiatry, psychology, counseling, or child, adolescent, or adult mental health. **Within NEICAC's seven-county service area, there are 73 providers. This represents 62.31 providers per 100,000 total population, compared to the state average of 122.15 per 100,000.** Winneshiek County has the most with 129.55 per 100,000 population, while Clayton County has the least with 17.60 per 100,000 (source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS – National Plan and Provider Enumeration System, July 2023).

Customer responses in the Customer Needs Assessment Survey indicated that 41% (81 of 200) have someone in the household with mental health needs.

Community stakeholders were asked in the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey if there are a sufficient number of accessible and affordable (for people with low incomes) behavioral and mental health care resources/services. 57% said no, 29% said yes, and 14% were unsure.

Many community stakeholders were unsure if there is a sufficient number of mental health counselors that accept Medicaid in their communities.

Community Resources

- Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation staff working directly with customers act as a referral source for those in need of mental health services.
- Community resources that address mental health concerns include but are not limited to:
 - ABBE Center for Community Mental Health (Independence)
 - Alternative Treatment Associates (Postville)
 - Riverview Center (Decorah)
 - Gunderson Behavioral Health (Decorah)
 - Lighthouse Professional Counseling Services (Decorah, Cresco)
 - Northeast Iowa Behavioral Health Clinic (Decorah, Oelwein, Waukon, Elkader, West Union, Cresco)
 - Mercy One Medical Center (Oelwein)
 - Realign Mental Health Services (Oelwein)
 - Families First Counseling Services (Decorah, Oelwein)
 - New Directions Counseling Services (Waterloo)
 - Lutheran Services In Iowa (Waverly)
 - Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255)
 - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) (800-662-4357)
 - Pathways Behavioral Health Services (Waverly, Fredericksburg)
 - Northern Iowa Therapy (Waverly)
 - Child Health Specialty Clinic (Decorah, Oelwein)
 - Counseling and Family Centered Services, Inc. (New Hampton)
 - Regional Health Services of Howard County (Cresco)

**Cities noted are locations where services are provided in an office setting. Services are available to those outside the city/county indicated, and additional remote or in-home services may be available.

Housing

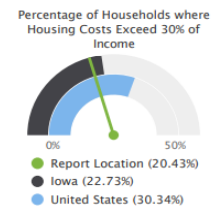
NEICAC's service area needs increased affordable housing options, home repair services, and other housing resources.

Housing Costs – Cost Burden (30%)

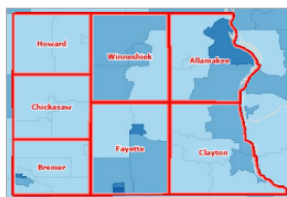
Data below shows that Fayette County has a significant number of cost-burdened households and households with substandard conditions. There are additional counties in NEICAC's service area with households that lack complete plumbing and/or kitchen facilities.

Cost-burden housing is the percentage of households where housing costs are 30% or more of total household income; based on the cost of monthly housing expenses for owners and renters. Of the 47,747 total households in NEICAC's seven county service area, 9,757 or 20.43% of the population live in cost-burdened households. **Fayette County is above the state average of 22.73%, with 26.35% of the population paying 30% or more of their total household income on housing costs.** Howard County has the lowest percentage of cost-burdened households in the report area at 16.45%.

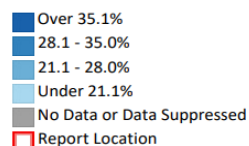
Report Area	Total Households	Cost-Burdened Households	Cost-Burdened Households, Percent
Report Location	47,747	9,757	20.43%
Allamakee County, IA	5,814	1,133	19.49%
Bremer County, IA	9,638	1,659	17.21%
Chickasaw County, IA	5,005	849	16.96%
Clayton County, IA	7,319	1,554	21.23%
Fayette County, IA	8,107	2,136	26.35%
Howard County, IA	3,708	610	16.45%
Winneshiek County, IA	8,156	1,816	22.27%
Iowa	1,275,893	290,032	22.73%
United States	124,010,992	37,625,113	30.34%



Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.



Cost Burdened Households (Housing Costs Exceed 30% of Household Income), Percent by Tract, ACS 2017-21



Housing Costs – Cost Burden, Severe (50%)

This indicator reports the percentage of households where housing costs are 50% or more total household income, based on the cost of monthly housing expenses for owners and renters. **One county in the report area has higher than the state average of 9.68%; Fayette County has 9.79% or 794 severely cost-burdened households.**

Housing Costs- Household Energy Burden

According to Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, the counties in their service area (which include Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek) are paying a higher percentage of their income on energy than the state average. Area Median Income (AMI) is defined as the midpoint of a specific area’s income distribution and is calculated annually by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Based on the AMI, households in these counties pay an average of 4% of their income on energy. This is a 33% increase above the state average of 3% of income.

County	% of Income	Cost (\$)	Number of Households
Allamakee	4%	\$2,826	5,947
Clayton	4%	\$2,712	7,563
Fayette	4%	\$2,594	8,215
Howard	4%	\$2,866	3,754
Winneshiek	4%	\$2,774	8,265
Region Average:	4%	\$2,754	33,744
State Average:	3%	\$2,122	1,273,941

Households at 0-30% of the AMI pay a much higher amount of their income on energy, up to 20%. This is also a 33% increase above the state average for that income group. For example, in the State of Iowa, The Extremely Low-Income Limit (ELIL) is 30% of the median family income and for a family of four is \$27,550 according to the FY2023 HUD State Income Limits.

Housing Quality – Substandard Housing

Substandard housing includes owner and renter-occupied housing units having at least one of the following conditions:

- Lacking complete plumbing facilities
- Lacking complete kitchen facilities
- With one or more occupants per room
- Selected monthly owner costs as a percentage of household income greater than 30%
- Gross rent as a percentage of household income greater than 30%

One county within NEICAC's service area is above the state average (23.10%) for the percentage of occupied housing units with one or more substandard conditions, Fayette County at 25.09%.

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The tables below show the number of households lacking complete plumbing and kitchen facilities.

The counties in NEICAC's service area with more households lacking complete plumbing facilities than the state average include Allamakee County, Chickasaw County, Clayton County, and Howard County.

Complete plumbing facilities include: (a) hot and cold running water, (b) a flush toilet, and (c) a bathtub or shower. All three facilities must be located inside the house, apartment, or mobile home, but not necessarily in the same room. Housing units are classified as lacking complete plumbing facilities when any of the three facilities is not present.

Report Area	Occupied Housing Units	Housing Units Lacking Complete Plumbing Facilities	Housing Units Lacking Complete Plumbing Facilities, Percent
Report Location	47,747	272	0.57%
Allamakee County, IA	5,814	51	0.88%
Bremer County, IA	9,638	18	0.19%
Chickasaw County, IA	5,005	27	0.54%
Clayton County, IA	7,319	119	1.63%
Fayette County, IA	8,107	8	0.10%
Howard County, IA	3,708	49	1.32%
Winneshiek County, IA	8,156	0	0.00%
Iowa	1,275,893	4,212	0.33%
United States	124,010,992	474,563	0.38%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.

The counties in NEICAC's service area with more households lacking complete kitchen facilities than the state average include Bremer County, Chickasaw County, Clayton County, Fayette County, and Howard County.

A unit has complete kitchen facilities when it has all three of the following facilities: (a) a sink with a faucet, (b) a stove or range, and (c) a refrigerator. All kitchen facilities must be located in the house, apartment, or mobile home, but they need not be in the same room. A housing unit having only a microwave or portable heating equipment such as a hot plate or camping stove should not be considered as having complete kitchen facilities. An icebox is not considered to be a refrigerator.

Report Area	Occupied Housing Units	Housing Units Lacking Complete Kitchen Facilities	Housing Units Lacking Complete Kitchen Facilities, Percent
Report Location	55,047	1,870	3.40%
Allamakee County, IA	7,662	180	2.35%
Bremer County, IA	10,432	262	2.51%
Chickasaw County, IA	5,568	223	4.01%
Clayton County, IA	8,793	402	4.57%
Fayette County, IA	9,348	376	4.02%
Howard County, IA	4,326	244	5.64%
Winneshiek County, IA	8,918	183	2.05%
Iowa	1,407,100	35,146	2.50%
United States	139,647,020	3,577,682	2.56%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.

The number of evictions and eviction filings in the NEICAC seven-county area were all less than the state averages (3.97% for filings and 2.01% eviction rate). The highest eviction filing and eviction rate was in Howard County, with 20 eviction filings (2.34%) and 16 evictions (1.87%).

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Report Area	Renter Occupied Households	Eviction Filings	Evictions	Eviction Filing Rate	Eviction Rate
Report Location	11,729	145	100	1.24%	0.85%
Allamakee County, IA	1,412	18	14	1.27%	0.99%
Bremer County, IA	2,139	29	23	1.36%	1.08%
Chickasaw County, IA	1,070	18	9	1.68%	0.84%
Clayton County, IA	1,889	16	13	0.85%	0.69%
Fayette County, IA	2,308	35	20	1.52%	0.87%
Howard County, IA	856	20	16	2.34%	1.87%
Winneshiek County, IA	2,055	9	5	0.44%	0.24%
Iowa	365,324	14,520	7,358	3.97%	2.01%
United States	38,372,860	2,350,042	898,479	6.12%	2.34%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: [Eviction Lab](#), 2016. Source geography: Census Tract

Homelessness

Homelessness is defined as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Those who are homeless may share housing with other persons, living in motels, hotels, or camping grounds, in emergency transitional shelters, or may be unsheltered. **The number of homeless children and youth enrolled in the public school system in NEICAC's service area during the school year 2019-2020 was 87 or .71%, which is lower than the statewide rate of 1.54%.** Still important to note the number of homeless students for each county in NEICAC's service area. See table below.

Report Area	Students in Reported Districts	Homeless Students	Homeless Students, Percent	Districts Reporting	Students in Reported Districts
Report Location	12,338	87	0.71%	100.00%	100.00%
Allamakee County, IA	1,700	3	0.20%	33.30%	27.90%
Bremer County, IA	2,414	6	0.20%	50.00%	85.50%
Chickasaw County, IA	1,191	20	1.70%	75.00%	91.50%
Clayton County, IA	1,264	20	1.60%	75.00%	85.80%
Fayette County, IA	2,644	13	0.50%	40.00%	52.40%
Howard County, IA	983	19	1.90%	66.70%	86.00%
Winneshiek County, IA	2,142	6	0.30%	60.00%	70.80%
Iowa	394,402	6,067	1.54%	70.10%	89.73%
United States	47,386,316	1,311,089	2.77%	86.95%	97.47%

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: US Department of Education, [EDFacts](#). Additional data analysis by [CARES](#), 2019-2020.

Community stakeholders were asked in the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey what contributes to homelessness in their communities. There were 238 responses:

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- 46% (109) Shortage of affordable housing
- 37% (87) Community does not have homelessness issues
- 35% (84) Shortage of shelters/shelter beds
- 35% (83) Increases in substance abuse
- 32% (77) Increases in personal debt (medical or other)

Customers that submitted the Customer Needs Assessment Survey indicated that 26% (64) of their households had unmet housing needs in the last 12 months. Of 60 respondents, 53% (32 of 60) needed help making necessary home or property repairs, 48% (29) needed help making their home more energy efficient, and 30% (18) needed help finding affordable housing.

Possible causes of housing conditions:

Lack of affordable housing units in community; overpriced rentals; aging housing stock; home repairs a barrier to purchasing homes; high property tax; lack of homeless shelters; housing purchased for B&Bs and vacation homes; high-cost housing market driving people from the community

Community Resources

- NECAC's crisis policy allows households at or below 200% of the federal poverty level assistance with up to \$1,000 in 12 months, given that funding sources are available to support the ongoing needs. The policy allows eligible households to receive financial assistance with a utility bill to prevent disconnection and/or a past-due rent or mortgage notice.
- NEICAC manages several housing properties that provide affordable housing to individuals and families with low income.
- Friends of the Family is also a community resource in which we provide referrals for individuals and families experiencing homelessness we may encounter.
- Below are income-based rental properties:
 - Allamakee
 - Holzhaus Apartments-Postville (Family)
 - Southcrest Manor-Waukon (Elderly)
 - Southridge-Waukon (Elderly)
 - Bremer
 - Frederick Haven, Inc-Fredericka (Family)
 - Prairie Court-Janesville (Elderly)
 - Readlyn Area Housing-Readlyn (Family)
 - Sumner Housing Corp-Sumner (Elderly)
 - Lantern Park Apartments-Waverly (Family)
 - **Waverly Manor-Waverly (Elderly)**
 - **Denver Apartments-Denver (Family)**
 - **Denver Community Housing (Elderly)**
 - Chickasaw
 - Fredericksburg Housing-Fredericksburg (Elderly)
 - Mayberry Manor Inc-Nashua (Family)
 - Pleasant Manor-New Hampton (Family)
 - Clayton
 - Keystone Terrace-Elkader (Family)
 - Prestige Court Inc.-Garnavillo (Elderly)

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- Luana Housing Inc.-Luana (Elderly)
 - Valley View Apartments-McGregor (Elderly)
 - Monona Housing Inc.-Monona (Elderly)
 - Strawberry Homes-Strawberry Point (Elderly)
- Fayette
 - Clermont Homes Inc.-Clermont (Family)
 - Oelwein Senior Citizen Housing-Oelwein (Elderly)
 - Westwood Park Apartments-West Union (Family)
- Howard
 - Alert Manor Inc.-Cresco (Elderly)
- Winneshiek
 - Heritage Haven-Decorah (Elderly)
 - Oneota Village-Decorah (Elderly)
 - Fort Atkinson Senior Housing-Fort Atkinson (Elderly)
 - Ossian Housing, Inc.-Ossian (Elderly)
- NEICAC staff working directly with customers provide referrals to the two Regional Housing Authorities that cover our service area for needs, including home building, home repair, and the Section 8 housing voucher programs. The two agencies that cover our service area are:
 - Upper Explorerland Regional Housing Authority-Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek Counties.
 - The Northeast Iowa Regional Housing Trust Fund offers up to \$12,500 per project and can potentially fund roof repairs, furnace repair/replacement, energy efficiency updates, electrical and plumbing, handicap accessibility, and homebuyer assistance.
- Upper Explorerland also partners with the Homes for Iowa program, which exists to address Iowa's housing shortage and train offenders in skilled trades with the goal of reducing recidivism. The program recently completed a home in Oelwein (Fayette County). Additional homes in Oelwein and Waukon (Allamakee) are in the planning stages, while other communities are applying in the future.
- Iowa Northland Regional Housing Council (INRHC)-Bremer and Chickasaw Counties.
- The Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INCOG) offers an owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program to assist homeowners in bringing their homes up to Iowa's Minimum Housing Rehabilitation Standards. Typical tasks include updating the electrical system, installing siding, installing replacement windows, furnace replacement, and roofing.
- NEICAC facilitates the Embrace Iowa program, which serves as a funding source for households with low income to receive up to \$750 towards household expenses and home repairs.
- NEICAC's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) includes a cost-effective energy audit, air leakage checks, insulation, and inspection of all combustion appliances for repair and/or replacement. The program also contracts with investor-owned utilities in our service area to install low-cost, energy-efficient measures in eligible homes, such as LED lighting, low-flow faucet aerators, showerheads, and water heater measures. Applications for this assistance are ranked by fuel usage, and at-risk customers are given priority for service. We recognize that far more homes need this service than funding or support for program operation constraints.
- NEICAC also partners with the Iowa Energy Wise program to distribute Energy Wise Weatherization kits to households served in various capacities within our agency when these kits are available. The kits provide several energy-saving items to be installed within a home and educational materials on adopting energy-saving practices within the home.

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The tables below show the total populations within the NEICAC service area by race and ethnicity. Further below, you will see information highlighting the populations of these same service area counties in poverty grouped by race and ethnicity.

Total Population by Race

Report Area	White	Black	Asian	Native American / Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Races
Report Location	111,958	1,087	678	393	24	533	2,590
Allamakee County, IA	13,297	235	82	122	0	85	247
Bremer County, IA	23,581	236	239	97	17	102	591
Chickasaw County, IA	11,704	77	3	47	3	65	122
Clayton County, IA	16,594	50	53	13	0	70	393
Fayette County, IA	18,398	285	129	31	1	34	704
Howard County, IA	9,122	25	22	31	2	16	238
Winneshiek County, IA	19,262	179	150	52	1	161	295
Iowa	2,795,319	119,036	79,188	10,889	4,182	46,711	123,765
United States	224,789,109	41,393,012	18,782,924	2,722,661	615,557	18,382,796	23,039,422

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.

Total Population Percentage by Race

Report Area	White	Black	Asian	Native American or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Race
Report Location	95.48%	0.93%	0.58%	0.34%	0.02%	0.45%	2.21%
Allamakee County, IA	94.52%	1.67%	0.58%	0.87%	0.00%	0.60%	1.76%
Bremer County, IA	94.84%	0.95%	0.96%	0.39%	0.07%	0.41%	2.38%
Chickasaw County, IA	97.36%	0.64%	0.02%	0.39%	0.02%	0.54%	1.01%
Clayton County, IA	96.63%	0.29%	0.31%	0.08%	0.00%	0.41%	2.29%
Fayette County, IA	93.95%	1.46%	0.66%	0.16%	0.01%	0.17%	3.60%
Howard County, IA	96.47%	0.26%	0.23%	0.33%	0.02%	0.17%	2.52%
Winneshiek County, IA	95.83%	0.89%	0.75%	0.26%	0.00%	0.80%	1.47%
Iowa	87.93%	3.74%	2.49%	0.34%	0.13%	1.47%	3.89%
United States	68.17%	12.55%	5.70%	0.83%	0.19%	5.58%	6.99%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.

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Total Population by Ethnicity (includes percentage)

Report Area	Total Population	Hispanic or Latino Population	Hispanic or Latino Population, Percent	Non-Hispanic Population	Non-Hispanic Population, Percent
Report Location	117,263	3,370	2.87%	113,893	97.13%
Allamakee County, IA	14,068	1,011	7.19%	13,057	92.81%
Bremer County, IA	24,863	443	1.78%	24,420	98.22%
Chickasaw County, IA	12,021	357	2.97%	11,664	97.03%
Clayton County, IA	17,173	359	2.09%	16,814	97.91%
Fayette County, IA	19,582	550	2.81%	19,032	97.19%
Howard County, IA	9,456	174	1.84%	9,282	98.16%
Winneshiek County, IA	20,100	476	2.37%	19,624	97.63%
Iowa	3,179,090	203,048	6.39%	2,976,042	93.61%
United States	329,725,481	60,806,969	18.44%	268,918,512	81.56%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.

The following tables show the population at or below 100% of poverty by gender, ethnicity, race, and age. Note that these tables are specific to the population at or below 100% of poverty, whereas NEICAC serves individuals that may be above or below 100% of poverty.

Population in Poverty by Gender

Report Area	Male	Female	Male, Percent	Female, Percent
Report Location	4,858	5,678	8.57%	10.24%
Allamakee County, IA	590	859	8.40%	12.70%
Bremer County, IA	825	907	7.02%	7.81%
Chickasaw County, IA	383	354	6.39%	6.08%
Clayton County, IA	1,024	1,034	12.04%	12.32%
Fayette County, IA	1,108	1,210	11.63%	12.75%
Howard County, IA	316	447	6.73%	9.76%
Winneshiek County, IA	612	867	6.67%	9.87%
Iowa	151,946	187,749	9.87%	12.15%
United States	18,132,275	22,529,361	11.44%	13.79%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.

According to NEICAC's fiscal year 2023 CSBG Client Characteristics, NEICAC served 4,876 males, 5,930 females, four Other, and four Unknown/not reported.

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Population in Poverty by Ethnicity

Report Area	Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Hispanic or Latino, Percent	Not Hispanic or Latino, Percent
Report Location	748	9,788	24.60%	8.97%
Allamakee County, IA	326	1,123	32.63%	8.78%
Bremer County, IA	64	1,668	18.34%	7.25%
Chickasaw County, IA	23	714	6.44%	6.23%
Clayton County, IA	153	1,905	42.62%	11.52%
Fayette County, IA	32	2,286	6.48%	12.34%
Howard County, IA	37	726	21.39%	7.98%
Winneshiek County, IA	113	1,366	36.45%	7.74%
Iowa	35,442	304,253	17.90%	10.54%
United States	10,560,320	30,101,316	17.71%	11.48%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.

According to NEICAC's fiscal year 2023 CSBG Client Characteristics, NEICAC served 1,070 customers of Hispanic, Latino, and/or Spanish Origin, 9,643 customers were not Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish Origins, and 76 customers with Unknown/not reported ethnicities.

Population in Poverty by Race

Report Area	White	Black or African American	Native American or Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Race
Report Location	8.98%	32.94%	11.67%	6.63%	44.44%	15.62%	18.42%
Allamakee County, IA	9.84%	39.74%	4.10%	0.00%	No data	44.71%	12.97%
Bremer County, IA	6.89%	45.53%	0.00%	1.46%	0.00%	8.89%	23.91%
Chickasaw County, IA	5.79%	20.59%	74.47%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	14.75%
Clayton County, IA	12.25%	0.00%	23.08%	1.89%	No data	0.00%	13.65%
Fayette County, IA	11.62%	45.83%	3.23%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	17.96%
Howard County, IA	7.66%	44.44%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	43.75%	26.16%
Winneshiek County, IA	8.01%	0.78%	0.00%	37.93%	0.00%	17.91%	14.55%
Iowa	9.64%	29.66%	22.87%	13.82%	23.75%	17.26%	19.26%
United States	10.29%	21.71%	23.40%	10.31%	16.68%	19.06%	14.89%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.

According to NEICAC's fiscal year 2023 CSBG Client Characteristics, NEICAC served the following individuals:

- 52 (.5%) American Indian or Alaskan Native
- 23 (.21%) Asian
- 238 (2.2%) Black or African American
- 15 (.13%) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- 9,839 (91%) White
- 194 (1.8%) Other
- 406 (3.8%) Multi-race (two or more of the above)
- 47 (.43%) Unknown/not reported

Population in Poverty by Age

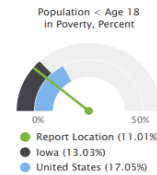
In NEICAC's seven county service area, 11.01% (2,811) of children aged 0-17 are living in households with income below the federal poverty level. [In 2021, a family of four was considered in poverty with a household income of \\$26,500; in 2023, this amount is \\$30,000.](#) **Three counties have a higher number of children living in poverty than the state average (13.03%): Allamakee County (13.90%), Clayton County (14.92%), and Fayette County (14.70%).** Whereas Chickasaw County has the lowest percentage in NEICAC's service area, with 3.80% of children aged 0-17 living in poverty.

According to the American Community Survey 5-year data, the percentage of children 0-4 living in poverty in NEICAC's service area during the ACS survey calendar year was 10%; the state average was 14.7%. **One county in NEICAC's service area was above the state average, Allamakee County, with 17.9% of children age 0-4 living in poverty. This may indicate the need for families to be connected to the state childcare assistance program and/or Early Head Start Services.**

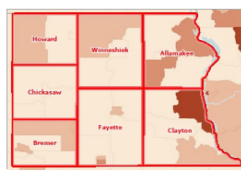
The percentage of children age 5-17 living in poverty in NEICAC's service area was 11.4%; the state average was 12.4%. **Two counties were above the state average: Clayton County (16.9%) and Fayette County (15.1%).**

The percentage of persons age 65 and up living in poverty in NEICAC's service area was 7.3%, matching the state average. However, **three counties have a higher percentage of persons age 65+ living in poverty: Chickasaw County (7.9%), Clayton County (13.8%), and Winneshiek County (7.4%).**

Report Area	Total Population	Population < Age 18	Population < Age 18 in Poverty	Population < Age 18 in Poverty, Percent
Report Location	112,119	25,531	2,811	11.01%
Allamakee County, IA	13,791	3,294	458	13.90%
Bremer County, IA	23,353	5,636	492	8.73%
Chickasaw County, IA	11,819	2,786	106	3.80%
Clayton County, IA	16,902	3,632	542	14.92%
Fayette County, IA	19,014	4,117	605	14.70%
Howard County, IA	9,276	2,395	251	10.48%
Winneshiek County, IA	17,964	3,671	357	9.72%
Iowa	3,084,598	728,623	94,948	13.03%
United States	321,897,703	72,996,065	12,443,424	17.05%



Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Sources: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.



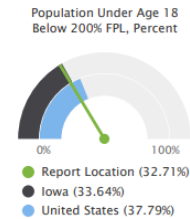
Population Below the Poverty Level, Children (Age 0-17), Percent by Tract, ACS 2017-21

- Over 30.0%
- 22.6 - 30.0%
- 15.1 - 22.5%
- Under 15.1%
- No Population Age 0-17 Reported
- No Data or Data Suppressed

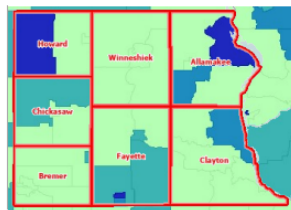
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In NEICAC's seven county service area, 32.71% (8,350) of children are living in households with income below 200% of the federal poverty level (in 2021 that would have been a household income of \$53,000; in 2023 \$60,000). **Four counties have a higher number of children living at 200% of poverty or below than the state average (33.64%): Allamakee County (39.83%), Clayton County (33.65%), Fayette County (44.06%), and Howard County (40.46%).**

Report Area	Total Population Under Age 18	Population Under Age 18 Below 200% FPL	Population Under Age 18 Below 200% FPL, Percent
Report Location	25,531	8,350	32.71%
Allamakee County, IA	3,294	1,312	39.83%
Bremer County, IA	5,636	1,362	24.17%
Chickasaw County, IA	2,786	834	29.94%
Clayton County, IA	3,632	1,222	33.65%
Fayette County, IA	4,117	1,814	44.06%
Howard County, IA	2,395	969	40.46%
Winneshiek County, IA	3,671	837	22.80%
Iowa	728,623	245,144	33.64%
United States	72,996,065	27,587,656	37.79%



Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-21.



Population Below 200% Poverty Level, Children (Age 0-17), Percent by Tract, ACS 2017-21

- Over 56.0%
- 47.1 - 56.0%
- 38.1 - 47.0%
- Under 38.1%
- No Population Age 0-17 Reported
- No Data or Data Suppressed

Recreation

Community stakeholders were asked in the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey if there are sufficient and affordable (for people with low incomes) recreational opportunities (parks, gardens, trails, fitness, water parks). Seventy-seven percent (184 of 239) said yes, 21% (49) said no, and 3% (6) were unsure.

Safety

In the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey, respondents were asked if there are a sufficient number of various safety resources in their communities:

- Crime/violence intervention and prevention programs (street outreach, etc.): 43% (102 of 236) are unsure; 33% (78) said no; and 24% (56) said yes
- Fire department personnel and resources: 80% (187 of 233) said yes
- Police personnel and resources: 76% (179 of 237) said yes
- Emergency medical technicians/Ambulance technicians: 62% (146 of 237) said yes; 25% (59) said no

Seventy-six percent (181 of 237) believe there are positive relations between police and the community. Seventy-eight percent (184 of 237) do not believe violent crime is an issue in their community; 8% (19)

do believe it is an issue, and 14% (34) are unsure. **Fifty-two percent (124 of 237) believe that non-violent crime is an issue (theft, larceny, drugs);** 27% (63) do not believe non-violent crime is an issue in their community; and 21% (50) are unsure.

Transportation

Data shows there may be a higher need for transportation in Clayton, Fayette, and Howard Counties due to a high percentage of households with no vehicle.

Of the 47,747 households in NEICAC's seven county area, 2,131 or 4.46% are without a motor vehicle. The state rate for households without a motor vehicle is 5.62%. **The three counties in NEICAC's service area with the highest percentage of households with no motor vehicle are Clayton County (7.30%), Howard County (5.50%), and Fayette County (5.22%).**

Community stakeholders were asked in the Community Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey if there is sufficient and affordable (for people with low incomes) public transportation services during the daytime, evenings, nighttime, and weekends. The following are their responses:

- Daytime (M-F): 56% (133 of 238) said there are not sufficient and affordable services during this time frame; 29% (70) there are; and 15% (35) were unsure
- Evenings, nighttime, and/or weekends: 72% (173) said there are not sufficient and affordable services during these times; 5% (13) said there are; and 23% (54) were unsure

In the Customer Needs Assessment Survey, 19% or 43 of 231 customers, said their household has had unmet transportation needs in the last 12 months. Of 45 respondents, the following could use help with:

- 62% (28) Getting a dependable vehicle
- 56% (25) Repairing household's vehicle(s)
- 38% (17) Getting to and from appointments or errands

In the most recent NEICAC Transit Customer Survey Results, of the six respondents, five indicated that the driver's greeting was friendly and courteous, that the driver offered assistance, and that they drove safely to the destination. Six respondents (100%) said the entrance and seats were clean, and the driver confirmed their destination when they boarded. When asked how NEICAC could improve the service, two suggestions included "get drivers a dispatch system that works" and to "show up timely, not early."

Community Resources

- Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation serves as the Region 1 Public Transportation Provider. The EARL Public Transit program provides service to Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek Counties.
- Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments provides service to Bremer, Chickasaw Counties
- NEICAC's Crisis Assistance Policy includes financial assistance with vehicle repairs for income-eligible households. Additionally, the policy can assist with the cost of public transportation for eligible individuals. Assistance is dependent on available funding.
- NEICAC facilitates the Embrace Iowa program, which serves as a funding source for households with low income to receive assistance with up to \$750 towards assistance with limited funding availability otherwise. The program has assisted applicants with vehicle repairs, oil changes, and new tires, among other items that support the need for reliable transportation.

- To our knowledge, no programs are currently available in our service area to assist with purchasing a dependable vehicle. Furthermore, individuals with limited resources often have low credit scores, which hinders their ability to secure affordable vehicle loans independently. There remains a gap in this area of transportation need, as having a reliable vehicle is essential in rural Iowa.

Agency Capacities & Needs

NEICAC completed a comprehensive risk assessment in 2022. An overview of considerations was presented to the governing board for awareness and attention as needed. The agency was encouraged to look at human resources, the financial knowledge of the board, and transportation policies for non-transit employees. It is a strength of the organization to conduct a risk assessment at least every two years.

Of the 148 staff in the longevity report, 33 have worked for NEICAC for ten years or more, 35 have worked for NEICAC between 5-9 years, and 62 staff have worked at NEICAC for less than five years. Thirty-seven staff are less than one year into their employment at NEICAC. In 2022, 31 individuals left their employment with NEICAC; in 2023, it was 45, with the majority being due to other employment or personal reasons.

An employee survey was conducted in two rounds, with 90 respondents in round one and 64 respondents in round two.

Round One Summary of Results (90)

- 93.3% understand how their work aligns with NEICAC's mission
- 91.1% understand how their work contributes to NEICAC's mission; several open-ended comments suggested additional communication (i.e., newsletter, email, feedback) would help them better understand
- 93.3% understand how their work impacts the lives of clients and customers

Round Two Summary of Results (64)

- 100% feel the work they do is meaningful
- In a typical week, 40.6% do not feel stress very often, 37.5% feel stress at work somewhat often, and 21.9% feel stress every day.
- 67.2% (43) feel their opinions are valued by others; some comments from those that do not feel their opinions are valued, include changes not being discussed with staff until after the change has already been decided and wanting to be asked their opinion to help inform a process before a change is decided upon
- 93.8% feel they have the tools and resources needed to do their job well
- 87.5% work 40 hours per week, and 66.7% of them said they need the 40 hours to get their work done, whereas 33.3% said they could get their work done in 36 hours

Although nearly 70% of NEICAC employees feel their opinions are valued by others, those statistics in addition to survey comments show a need for further examination into this. The variances of NEICAC programs and staff demographics have consistently shown to be challenging to create agency policy and

procedures that benefit all employees. Remote work options, which have shown to be a popular benefit to qualifying NEICAC employees, can also create communication barriers. **There is a need for NEICAC to create consistent communication processes and resources which also align with individual employee styles. Various agency departments provide policy and procedures updates in their own way and could benefit from a whole agency, intentional, change management approach.**

Employee Recruitment & Retention

NEICAC has worked hard over the last few years to become more competitive in the job market and increase staff retention. All staff in the Early Childhood Program positions have increased on the pay scale. For Head Start staff in particular, we aimed to be more comparable to the like-position in the school districts in the area. Lead teacher pay was not only increased, but teachers have also been provided the benefit of paid summers off. In addition, wages have increased with the Transit, Weatherization, and Family Services departments.

Each year, NEICAC looks closely at available health, dental and vision insurance options for employees and tries to select affordable plans with good coverage. This year, NEICAC has offered three different plans to eligible employees to create additional choices to fit individual needs employees have. Retention bonuses were provided to current employees, and some programs have offered recruitment bonuses for new applicants hired and completing 90 days of employment.

A hybrid remote work policy has been implemented for qualifying positions and allows employees to work remotely one day per week. Policies have been updated to allow departments to offer employee incentive programs. Transit is an example of this: it offers agency apparel or other logo items for drivers who meet their safety program requirements.

The agency Employee Handbook is reviewed at least annually. Important changes this year include moving annual leave to an accrual cap rather than the previous fiscal year cap. This has encouraged staff to take time off as needed rather than feel they need to save for the "just in case" situations.

Other policy changes that staff have expressed appreciation for include a casual dress code and the addition of Juneteenth as a paid holiday.

Although strides have been made in terms of employee compensation and flexible policies, NEICAC continues to see challenges with recruitment and retention for specific agency positions. Since 2019, the EARL Public Transit Program has experienced a decline in the number of Drivers. It was during COVID-19 where large numbers began to exit and the struggle continued with filling these Driver positions into 2024. Below indicates the total number of Transit Drivers for the previous five years, with 2024 showing the lowest number of Drivers to date.

2019 – 40 Transit Drivers
2020 - 33 Transit Drivers
2021 - 34 Transit Drivers
2022 - 30 Transit Drivers
2023 – 36 Transit Drivers
Current as of 4/3/2024 – 27 Transit Drivers

Driver recruitment and retention issues directly correlate to limitations in what NEICAC's Transportation services can provide. Within the previous 6-month timeframe, NEICAC EARL Public Transit had to turn

down 910 Non-Emergency Medical Trips (NEMT) trips because all current Drivers were occupied with existing routes and rides.

In addition to Transit, NEICAC's Head Start Program faces struggles with recruitment and retention. Like Transit Driver positions, this has been historically difficult, but was exacerbated by COVID-19. Specifically, Head Start Sub and 30-hour per week Co-Teacher positions show to have the highest turnover. As indicated, progress to increased compensation has demonstrated notable improvement in all positions, but the budget limitations to offer full benefits such as health insurance and full-time hours, appear to have a direct relationship to turnover challenges.

Data shows a downward trend in Early Childhood Program education pursuits. According to a May 2021 survey of the early childhood higher education community at 400 colleges conducted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), almost two-thirds had enrollment declines; more than one-third had graduation declines; 30 percent experienced budget cuts; and 2 percent closed.* This reduction of Early Childhood Education degree programming in post-secondary education institutions most certainly is a contributing factor to NEICAC Head Start recruitment concerns. There are fewer pursuing Early Childhood Education as a career, resulting in less qualified applicants.

America continues to experience the shrinking of the workforce. The share of working-age people (ages 15-64) in the U.S. population has shrunk, down to 64.9% in 2021 from a peak of 67.3% in 2007.* Aging out of the workforce is one of several factors that contributes to this trend.

The agency needs to recruit and retain additional, qualified staff specifically in Head Start and Transit programs.

Possible causes of Head Start and Transit recruitment and retention issues:

Part-time positions without full-time benefits; fewer people in the workforce; fewer people pursuing specific early childhood education careers (Head Start)

Funding

In 2020, nearly all NEICAC programs received additional COVID-19 funding. This allowed for the expansion of customer direct services, staffing and administrative expenses. As NEICAC begins the fiscal year 2024, additional COVID funding for most programs has reached its expiration point. NEICAC programs are working with pre-COVID funding level formulas and post-COVID customer needs and agency expenses.

Fewer federal funding resources forces additional pressure on local funding sources, depleting those quicker. The growth of agency expenses and fewer funds for direct assistance will create the necessity for proactive decisions and action to ensure the agency's long-term sustainability.

NEICAC needs an action plan that puts focus on the proactive, long-term financial sustainability of the agency.

Customer Satisfaction Survey (2023-2024)

NEICAC distributed a survey to customers asking for feedback on their satisfaction with the agency. These responses can help NEICAC make decisions regarding customer service, the marketing of services, office hours, and staff accessibility. Customers answered the following:

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How did you learn about NEICAC:

44% (94) Family or Friend; 15% (33) Current or Former Client; 15% (31) CAA website; 13% (28) Referred by another agency; and 10% (22) social media

How would you prefer to access services:

57% (119) In-person; 43% (90) Phone call; 30% (62) Email; 21% (45) Text; 16% (33) Online; and 10% (21) Mail

When would you prefer to have access to services/staff:

46% (96) Monday - Friday 8 am-12 pm

30% (62) Monday - Friday 12-4:30 pm

12% (26) Monday-Friday 4:30-7 pm

8% (16) Monday-Friday 6:30am-8am

2% (4) Saturday 9-12 pm

I had a positive experience when I received services from NEICAC:

90% (182 of 203) Agree to Strongly Agree; 1% (2 of 203) Disagree to Strongly Disagree; and 9% (19) Undecided/Neutral

NEICAC staff were friendly and helpful:

92% (188 of 205) Agree to Strongly Agree; 1.5% (3) Disagree to Strongly Disagree; and 7% (14) Undecided/Neutral

I was helped in a timely manner:

88% (180 of 203) Agree to Strongly Agree; 1.5% (3) Disagree to Strongly Disagree; and 10% (20) Undecided/Neutral

I was informed about other agency/community services that could help me with my needs:

83% (165 of 200) Agree to Strongly Agree; 4% (7) Disagree to Strongly Disagree; and 14% (28) Undecided/Neutral

Was the issue you came in with resolved:

84% (164 of 195) Issue was resolved; 5.13% (10) Issue was not resolved and didn't receive any referrals; and 4.62% (9) Issue was not resolved, but household received referrals

How has Community Action made a difference in your life (sample of 126 responses):

-They are always there to help.

-Muy bien - de mucho ayuda.

-Helped when serious need arose.

-Relieved stress of a large electric bill.

-I appreciate the check ins and ease of appointments.

-It has literally been a lifeline. My husband had a forever life-altering event. We were without income for 4 months. We wouldn't have been able to make it with our financial/mental needs without them.

-Yes, most definitely. In the 1990s, I was given the opportunity to be part of FaDSS and it changed my life. It was a hand up to help me learn and become a responsible adult. The advocate that I had was phenomenal. Tough but amazing. I am grateful for an agency such as NEICAC. Thank you!

-Helped by providing important information on resources. Helped with financial hardships on rent

or utilities. Helped connect me with agencies that I needed.

-We have experienced not knowing what we were going to provide for meals for our children. Community Action has helped ease this.

Recommendations from customers on how NEICAC should improve:

-more staff

-more visibility (i.e. 'get to know community action' event)

-transportation/ride share for jobs and interviews

-help with auto repairs, people with disabilities, clothes for kids

-Head Start staff that speak Spanish

-more funding to assist more people

-raising income guidelines or create sliding fee scale to help those just above the guidelines

When asked how likely the customer would be to refer someone to NEICAC from 1-100 with 100 being highest, an average rating of 92 was given.

A recent Service Recipient Feedback survey was completed by 778 customers, with a notable 100% saying they had a positive experience when receiving services. Based on their interaction with staff, 773 respondents said they would be likely or very likely to recommend NEICAC services to someone they know, four were somewhat likely, and one respondent said not likely. **When asked for suggestions to increase satisfaction, comments included more hours, more funding, rent assistance, more advertising, additional staff to assist customers, and allowing more pantry visits.**

Community Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey (2022)

NEICAC asked community partners, board members, Head Start advisory council and policy council members, and agency staff to provide feedback on the agency.

Of 91 respondents, 99% (90) either agreed or strongly agreed that NEICAC staff were friendly and helpful; 96% (86 of 90) indicated that staff conducted business in a professional manner; and 98% (88 of 90) said staff had a thorough knowledge of agency programs and services.

When asked how well the agency is valued in the community, 71% (112 of 173) gave the rating of good, very good, or excellent, and 17% (29) were unsure or had no relationship with the agency. Respondents rated their "familiarity with agency programs/services" as 68% (116 of 171) good, very good, or excellent; 15% (26) being fine, adequate, or okay; 6% (10) being poor; and 11% (19) being unsure or having no relationship.

When asked what NEICAC could do to improve programs/services, of the 25 comments, 50% referenced getting more information via fliers/brochures, attendance at city council meetings, posters, marketing services (mail/email/social media) and staying connected/active in community (i.e. vendor booths, parades).

Beginning in 2022, NEICAC's Strategic Plan initiatives included goals to improve agency awareness and branding. Considerable progress has been achieved including an updated NEICAC logo, agency programs information marketing pieces in addition to improved consistency with messaging and clear-cut branding guidelines. Even with this improvement, **customer, stakeholder and employee survey**

comments do indicate the need for continued efforts to educate the service area communities on agency programs offered and the connection of these individual programs to the NEICAC umbrella.

Community Needs Assessment Report and the documents used for the report will be provided to the NEICAC governing board for formal acceptance. Once accepted, this report will inform the agency's strategic priorities, programming, and FY2025 CSBG plan and application.

* [Why Are Colleges Hesitant to Train More Early Childhood Educators](#)

* [Another Perspective on the US Labor Shortage](#)