



COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

❖ Conducted 2023 ❖

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Overview

This Community Assessment (CA), also commonly referred to as a “Community Needs Assessment”, is compiled and presented by Southwest Georgia Community Action Council, Inc., and serves as the primary source of information on which the Agency bases short and long range planning goals to develop and refine the mix of services that best meets the needs of the service area. The CA is conducted every three years in order to efficiently produce a single comprehensive assessment that will effectively meet the contractual requirements for Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), Head Start, and other funding sources without requiring duplicative efforts. This assessment is reviewed and, if necessary, updated annually to comply with Head Start funding requirements.

■ **The Agency**

Southwest Georgia Community Action Council (CAC), Inc., is a private, non-profit 501(C)(3) organization incorporated in 1965 whose mission is to collaborate with community partners to provide low-income individuals comprehensive services that promote life-long economic security and self-sufficiency. The Agency headquarters is located in Moultrie, Georgia, with a primary service area consisting of 14 counties. Four additional counties are provided Head Start/Early Head Start child development services (for a total of 18 counties provided Head Start services). Three additional counties are provided Weatherization services (for a total of 17 counties). This brings the full service area to 21 counties. A map of the service area is included as **Attachment D**.

Three major service categories define the array of Agency services: Community Services, Housing and Energy, and Child Development. Services are provided through a network of 11 Neighborhood Service Centers (NSCs) and 21 Head Start Child Development Centers (CDCs). Six (6) of the CDCs are located in Dougherty County where approximately one quarter of the population for the service area is concentrated.

A Chief Executive Officer is employed by the Agency Board of Directors and is responsible for directing daily operations and ensuring that accountability for services is maintained. Core administrative funding for the Agency is the federally appropriated Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). Additional funding comes from public and private grants acquired through competitive application submissions, contracts, local partnerships, fund-raisers, and donations. In terms of funding, the largest service provided by the Agency is Head Start/Early Head Start preschool services. The Agency is currently authorized to serve 1,601 children and families through Head Start funding and 327 pregnant women and children through Early Head Start funding for a total of 1,928.

Information provided by the Georgia Department of Labor reveals that CAC is among the 20 largest employers in terms of number of employees within the 14-county primary service area and the 18-county service area. *(This information is based on employment covered by unemployment insurance excluding all government agencies except correctional institutions, state and local hospitals, state colleges and universities.)*

■ **Community Assessment**

A comprehensive assessment of the CAC service area was conducted April-May of 2023 in accordance with the Agency’s Community Assessment Plan (**Attachment E**). A major strength of the assessment is the variety of viewpoints presented. We attempted to achieve assessment diversity by including all sectors of the community: young, old, male, female, poor, wealthy, private citizens, public officials, social service representatives, religious leaders, business leaders, and all other members of the community of all races. We will utilize this information as the basis for demonstrating service needs to funding sources when refining existing services and implementing new services.

Our purpose in conducting an assessment of the CAC catchment area was to identify and objectively evaluate existing resources, services, strengths, trends, needs, and emerging needs to guide the Agency in refining existing services and developing new services to meet those needs within the scope of the Agency mission

(CSBG Org Std 3.1). This assessment was also intended to yield a critical assessment of CAC service strengths and weaknesses as a basis for refining services, implementing methods, and identifying means of solving any identified deficiencies.

This compilation is a summary for the Southwest Georgia area encompassing the following 21 counties -- 14 of which comprise the CAC primary service area, four (identified with an asterisk) that are provided Head Start/Early Head Start child development services only, and three (identified with a double asterisk) that are provided weatherization services only:

Baker	Grady	<i>Schley*</i>
Calhoun	Lee	Seminole
<i>Clay**</i>	<i>Marion*</i>	<i>Sumter*</i>
Colquitt	Miller	Terrell
Decatur	Mitchell	Thomas
Dougherty	<i>Quitman**</i>	<i>Webster*</i>
Early	<i>Randolph**</i>	Worth

The information contained in this assessment, including survey results *by county*, are on file at the CAC corporate headquarters in Moultrie, and can be obtained by calling Ann Hires, Planner, at (229) 985-3610. Selected CA results can be downloaded from the Agency website at www.swgacac.com.

It should be noted that data used for this assessment was collected during the Global Covid-19 pandemic. The Health and Human Services Office of Science and Data Policy states that “major data systems relied upon for critical health and human services information have been disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The national response included unprecedented stay-at-home orders, guidance on social distancing, conversion to telework, school closures, and other dramatic societal disruptions, which complicated the collection and reporting of many kinds of information. Some data collection activities have been interrupted, others delayed, and others on hold indefinitely”. However, all efforts have been made to use reliable data sources during this assessment, as in previous assessments. Data sources include the University of Georgia’s *Georgia County Guide*, U. S. Census Bureau, Annie E. Casey Foundation’s *Kid’s Count*, National Community Action Foundation, Kaiser Family Foundation, Georgia Department of Labor, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Data Collection Methodology

A two-pronged approach was utilized for data collection.

■ Approach 1

A one page (front & back) questionnaire was distributed to the public including, but not limited to, the general public; current Head Start parents as well as clients of all Agency-administered programs and services; elected officials; Agency Board members; local Chambers of Commerce; area Family Connection partnerships; Housing Authority clients; senior citizens; area social service representatives including county Department of Family and Children Services offices, Mental Health offices, Public Health offices, public school systems, the area Agency on Aging, and Department of Labor career centers; and Agency staff. A Spanish version of the questionnaire was also made available. Copies of both translations of the questionnaire are included as a part of ***Attachment B***.

■ Approach 2

Demographic, statistical, and trend data that could not be obtained through an individual questionnaire was obtained from the following sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Reference Bureau, *Georgia County Guide* (University of Georgia), Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Georgia Department of Labor, *Georgia Public Education Report Card* released by Georgia Department of Education, The (Georgia) Governor's Office of Student Achievement, Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Public Health – Online Analytical Statistical Information System, *Georgia KIDS COUNT* provided by Georgia Family Connection Partnership, National Low Income Housing Coalition, Corporation for Enterprise Development, Georgia Department of Human Services Office of Facilities and Support Services Region 10 Transportation Services, Georgia Department of Human Resources Office of Facilities and Support Services Region 8 Transportation Services, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Southwest Georgia Regional Commission, Middle Flint Regional Commission, Albany Transit System, and Americus Transit.

Geographic and Economic Overview

With corporate offices located in Moultrie, Georgia, Southwest Georgia Community Action Council, Inc., serves the Southwestern corner of the state of Georgia, bordering Florida to the south and Alabama to the west. The predominantly rural service area encompasses a total of 14 primary counties, with four (4) additional counties provided Head Start services only. These 18 counties span an area of 7,126.5 square miles, extending northward into south central Georgia as far as Marion County -- approximately 20 miles east of Columbus, Georgia. The Agency provides weatherization services in 17 counties, three (Clay, Quitman, Randolph) that are outside the 14-county primary service area and 18-county Head Start service area and are located along the Alabama border northwest of the primary service area. This brings the total number of counties provided at least one type of service by the Agency to 21. These 21 counties span an area of 8,044.2 square miles. A map of the area is included as **Attachment D**.

A network of eleven (11) Neighborhood Service Centers (NSCs) serves the primary service area, with one NSC located within each county except the counties of Baker, Lee, and Seminole. Baker County is served by the Mitchell County NSC, Lee County is served by the Dougherty County NSC, and Seminole County is served by the Miller County NSC. Twenty-one (21) Head Start Child Development Centers (CDCs) serve the eighteen (18) counties that are provided Head Start services. All other services offered by the Agency are provided through the network of NSCs.

■ General Geographic Target Areas

<u>County</u>	<u>Incorporated Areas</u>
Baker County	Newton
Calhoun County	Arlington (part), Edison, Leary, Morgan
Clay County	Bluffton, Fort Gaines
Colquitt County	Berlin, Doerun, Ellenton, Funston, Moultrie, Norman Park, Omega (part)
Decatur County	Attapulgus, Bainbridge, Brinson, Climax
Dougherty County	Albany
Early County	Arlington (part), Blakely, Damascus, Jakin
Grady County	Cairo, Whigham
Lee County	Leesburg, Smithville
Marion County	Buena Vista
Miller County	Colquitt
Mitchell County	Baconton, Camilla, Meigs (part), Pelham, Sale City
Quitman County	Georgetown
Randolph County	Cuthbert, Shellman
Schley County	Ellaville
Seminole County	Donalsonville, Iron City
Sumter County	Americus, Andersonville, DeSoto, Leslie, Plains
Terrell County	Bronwood, Dawson, Parrott, Sasser
Thomas County	Boston, Coolidge, Ochlocknee, Thomasville, part of Barwick, Meigs, Pavo
Webster County	Preston, Weston
Worth County	Poulan, Sumner, Sylvester, Warwick

■ The Southwest Georgia Economy

The Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) annually publishes the *Assets and Opportunity Scorecard (AOS)*, a comprehensive look at Americans' financial security today and their opportunities to create a more prosperous future. The AOS assesses the 50 states and the District of Columbia on 133 outcome and policy measures which describe how well residents are faring and what states are doing to help them build and protect assets. The AOS no longer ranks outcomes and policies against other states in their five issue areas: financial assets & income, businesses & jobs, housing & homeownership, health care, education. Instead, the 2023

scorecard focuses on the progress that each state has made in the past five years (2015-2020). This new scorecard tells us in the Net Worth summary that “Georgia has seen an increase in household net worth in the past five years. However, there is still a significant disparity in net worth between White Households and Households of Color, and that gap has not changed significantly over the past five years.” The Income Summary states that “Georgia has seen an increase in household incomes in the past five years. However, there is still a significant disparity in incomes between White Households and Household of Color and that gap has not changed over the past five years.” The Home Ownership Summary tells us that “Georgia has seen an increase in the average homeownership rate in the past five years. While there is still a significant disparity in homeownership rates between White Households and Households of Color, that gap has shrunk as Households of Color have seen larger gains than White Households in homeownership over the past five years.”

The Albany Metropolitan Statistical Area (consisting of Dougherty, Baker, Lee, Terrell, and Worth counties) is the major growth and trade center of the region. A common belief throughout Southwest Georgia is that a disparity exists in regard to economic development efforts between urban and rural areas of Georgia. In Georgia 28.4% of the population lives in areas defined as rural. The population in 20 of the 21 counties in our service area exceeds this percentage. Six (6) counties boast a rural population of 100.0%, while nine (9) others are above 50.0%. Georgia Department of Community Affairs annually classifies Georgia’s 159 counties into one of 4 job tax credit “tiers”. The factors used to rank counties are unemployment, per capita income, and population living in poverty. The bottom 71 counties (least developed) are designated Tier 1, the next 35 are designated Tier 2, the next 35 are designated Tier 3, and the top 18 (most developed) are designated Tier 4. This designation guides a growing array of economic development policies, from tax credits to grant and investment opportunities. Thirteen (13) of the 21 Southwest Georgia counties are Tier 1 counties (same as three years ago, and decreased from 15 six years ago) and five (5) are Tier 2 counties (decreased from six three years ago, and increased from 4 six years ago). Thomas was newly designated as a Tier 3 with Miller being designated three years ago as Tier 3. Lee is designated as Tier 4. There was one (1) county designated at Tier 4 just six years ago, two (2) counties designated as Tier 4 nine years ago, and no counties twelve years ago.

Southwest Georgia has long been recognized as a slow growing rural region with an economy that is primarily driven by farming operations and agri-business. According to the *Georgia County Guide*, all of the 14 counties that comprise the primary service area and 17 of the 21 counties in the full service area rank in the top one-third of counties in the state (159 counties statewide) in acreage of harvested cropland (including 4 of the top 9 and 14 of the top 30 counties). Together these 21 counties represent approximately one eighth of the total number of counties in Georgia, but contain a total of 1,111,863 acres of harvested cropland – accounting for approximately **one third** of Georgia's harvested cropland.

According to the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL), the May 2023 unemployment rate in the (14, 18, and 21-county) Southwest Georgia area was (3.1%, 3.2%, and 3.2%) which is higher than that of Georgia (2.9%) and about equal to the United States (3.2%). This unusual occurrence is directly related to the Covid 19 pandemic. Just three years ago, the Southwest Georgia area was (6.0%, 6.1%, and 6.4%) with the State of Georgia at 9.2% and the United States at 13.3%.

GDOL provides long-term occupational projections for the time period 2016-2026. The following occupations are identified as the most declining occupations in Southwest Georgia: secretaries/administrative assistants, fast food cooks, tellers, postal service mail carriers, telecom equipment installers/repairers, computer programmers, correctional officers/jailers, data entry keyers, textile machine operators, electrical/electronic equipment assemblers, laundry/dry cleaning workers, photographers, and computer operators.

Moreover, the following are the occupations with the most projected job growth in Southwest Georgia: laborers/freight, stock and material movers, retail sales, food prep/service workers, registered nurses, general/operations managers, personal care aides, customer service representatives, tractor trailer drivers, sales reps for tech and science products, stock clerks/order fillers, special education elementary school teachers,

maintenance/repair workers, software developers, janitors, accountants/auditors, medical assistants, nursing assistants, teacher assistants, construction laborers, and market research analysts/marketing specialists.

The CENSUS indicates the median household income in Georgia is \$65,030, which is significantly lower than the U. S. at \$70,784. However, according to the Georgia County Guide the median household income for the Southwest Georgia Workforce Investment Area in 2021 was \$46,662 while statewide the average was \$62,800 – a difference of \$16,138 per year (compared to a disparity of \$15,615 in 2019 and \$12,302 in 2016). The median household income for Marion, Schley, Sumter, and Webster counties was \$46,997 – a difference of \$15,803 annually in comparison with the State (disparity was \$16,759 in 2020 and \$14,924 in 2016).

The labor force (which includes residents who are employed or are actively seeking employment) in 2023 for the 14 county Southwest Georgia area was 148,681 and 147,286 in 2019. The employed in 2023 numbered 143,073 and 141,448 in 2019. The change in labor force from 2019 to 2023 increased by 1.0%. The change in employed from 2018 to 2019 increased by 0.4%.

The unemployed in the 14 county Southwest Georgia area was 5,608 in 2023 and 5,838 in 2019; which is an increase of 0.96%. The percentage of unemployed in 2023 was 3.9% and in 2019 was 4.1%.

From December 2019 to May 2023 the number of persons employed in the 14-county civilian labor force decreased by 3,983 persons (141,448 and 137,465) indicating that job creation in the area is not significantly ahead of the pace of jobs lost to layoffs and closings. During this time the civilian labor force (employed and unemployed) was 148,681 persons.

■ Population

According to the *U.S. Census Bureau* and the *Georgia County Guide*, the population growth rate in Southwest Georgia lags well behind the state. From 2018-2021 the Georgia population increased 1.0% while the U.S. population also increased by 1.0%. In comparison, the 18-county Southwest Georgia population also increased by 1.0%, with 10 counties experiencing a very small population increase. Eight (8) counties actually experienced a population *decrease*, continuing a long-term trend of out migration that began in the 1980s for many counties in the region. The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission attributes the trend of out migration to the search for better employment opportunities.

Lee County lies within the Albany Metropolitan Statistical Area and is identified by the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission as a swiftly growing bedroom community to neighboring Dougherty County. This has been the case since the 1980s, and it appears that the population influx of upper middle class families moving from Dougherty County is poised to continue, as Dougherty County experienced a net population loss of 0.95% from 2018-2023. While consistently among the fastest growing counties in Georgia and the United States during the first decade of this century, the rate of population growth in Lee County has slowed to more moderate levels in recent years.

In the past two decades substantial growth has taken place in the Hispanic/Latino population of Southwest Georgia (reference *Attachment A - Table 6*), particularly in Colquitt and Grady counties. The Georgia County Guide indicates that 20.5% of the Colquitt County population is identified as Hispanic or Latino and 11.1% in Grady County. This growth is primarily due to an influx of field laborers – migrant and full-time permanent -- for various farming and agri-business operations. Many have chosen to settle as permanent residents of the area, and their children have often chosen to remain in the area as they have grown into adulthood. Even with the documented population growth, it is commonly recognized locally that census estimates for the Hispanic population throughout Southwest Georgia are grossly underestimated and that a significant percentage of the Hispanic population in the region are undocumented illegal immigrants. A question was included on the 2023 survey instrument regarding ethnicity (CSBG Org Std 3.2). Only nineteen (19) of the 1,080 respondents indicated they were of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity.

The Hispanic population provides an increasingly important pillar for agri-business and, ultimately, the local economy. Therefore, changes to immigration laws could have a significant impact on the stability of the local economy. Farmers commonly cite the typically strong work ethic, willingness to work for relatively low wages, and willingness to be paid wages in cash as positives for employing Hispanic workers. However, employers of field laborers typically offer no fringe benefits such as health insurance, retirement, or paid sick leave. Therefore, the increasing Hispanic population brings health care and social service needs that further impact the local economy.

■ Housing

Attachment A - Table 14 provides a chart for calculating the hourly wage needed to afford housing rental rates in Southwest Georgia based on the generally accepted standard utilized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that rental housing is considered affordable if it costs no more than 30% of the renter's gross income. This chart reveals that a minimum wage worker (currently \$7.25 per hour) working 40 hours per week cannot afford rent in excess of \$377 per month. However, the National Low Income Housing Coalition indicates that the fair market rent for a two-bedroom dwelling in Southwest Georgia ranges from a low of \$704 per month to a high of \$839 (*Attachment A – Table 15*). Based on this information, the 40-hour workweek hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom dwelling ranges from a low of \$13.54 to a high of \$16.13. By comparison the average fair market rent for a two-bedroom dwelling in Georgia is \$1,090 with an hourly wage of \$20.97 necessary to afford a two-bedroom dwelling based on a 40-hour workweek.

■ Transportation

The availability of community services and public resources varies from county to county, with the more sparsely populated counties typically possessing fewer resources than the more populous counties. The result is that residents of sparsely populated counties must travel further distances – often to neighboring counties – to find employment and access post-secondary educational institutions, public health services, specialized medical services, and other such necessities. As a result, transportation issues are common concerns among low-income residents.

Region 10 Coordinated Transportation System Overview

The Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) Coordinated Transportation System provides transportation free of charge to clients served by the DHS Division of Aging Services (DAS), DHS Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) clients receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and clients of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD). The DHS Region 10 area includes the same 14 counties that comprise the Agency's primary service area. The four counties outside the Agency's primary service area that are provided Head Start services (Marion, Schley, Sumter, Webster) are included in the DHS Region 8 Coordinated Transportation System.

DHS contracts with the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission (RC) to plan, manage, and monitor Coordinated Transportation services throughout Region 10. RC in turn sub-contracts with Mids Inc., Resource Management Systems, Destiny Group, and Thomas County Area Transit for actual service provision.

DHS, RC, and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) comprise a collaborative to make available public transportation (to work, businesses for shopping, and other activities) for the general public throughout Region 10 by expanding utilization of DHS Coordinated Transportation vehicles. Administered by GDOT and managed by RC, the project is a "scheduled response system" that offers transportation for the general public while at the same time transporting DHS clients on the same vehicles. RC sub-contracts actual service provision for this service as well. DHS clients are given priority.

Region 10 Coordinated Transportation System in Summary:

- Limited demand-response service with priority given to DHS clients

- Curbside pick-up and drop off
- Hours of Operation: 24 hours per day, 7 days per week
- Rate Schedule: varies by county and distance

The RC also develops and maintains partnerships with industries in the area to secure reliable transportation for workers.

DHS generally deems the system a success, although public concerns abound regarding convenience, affordability, and reliability of services. The system has been plagued at times by unreliability ranging from late arrivals for pick-up and delivery to limited or no public availability during peak DHS usage

Other than the Coordinated Transportation System, the only publicly funded transit system in Region 10 is Albany Transit System (ATS). ATS provides fixed-route bus services for the general public, demand response service for eligible customers, and shared-ride, curb-to-curb paratransit services for individuals who meet requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Services are available six days per week throughout the City of Albany, with operating hours Monday – Friday from 6:15 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. and Saturday from 6:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. All fixed-route buses are wheelchair accessible and are fully compliant with ADA requirements. Base cash fare is \$1.70, with discounted fares of \$0.50 for seniors, disabled, and children ages 6-12 years. Children under age 5 ride free of charge. Weekly (\$12.00 unlimited trips) and monthly (\$45.00 unlimited trips) passes are available as an alternative to the standard fares. A monthly unlimited senior/disabled pass is \$20.00, and a monthly unlimited student pass is \$35.00. Riders must register for the paratransit service in advance and meet ADA eligibility requirements to qualify. Paratransit services are available any time the public bus system is in operation. Paratransit reservations can be made between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Saturday. The paratransit fare is \$2.50 per one-way trip.

Region 8 Coordinated Transportation System Overview

Like Region 10, the Region 8 Coordinated Transportation system provides transportation free of charge for eligible individuals to and from participating DHS programs and activities. Participating programs currently include DAS, DFCS and Sumter County Developmental Disabilities Center. Services can only be requested by authorized DHS organizations. Scheduled response services are provided 24 hours per day seven days per week. River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) is the DHS contractor for Region 8 and provides DHS transportation services in Marion, Schley, Sumter and Webster Counties. RVRC subcontracts DAS trips in Sumter County to Americus Transit to provide DAS and DFCS trips within the City of Americus.

Within the four Region 8 counties, only one publicly funded transit system is available to the general public. The provider is Americus Transit, a public demand response service available only within the city limits of Americus plus service to Wal-Mart and Phoebe Sumter Medical Center. Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday – Friday excluding holidays with the following rate schedule per one-way trip:

- Ages 0-59, including wheelchair passengers \$3.00
- Ages 60 and over, including wheelchair passengers \$1.00

CAC can assist individuals with transportation to necessary services in two (2) counties (Colquitt and Miller) on a limited, demand-response basis. Other than friends and relatives, the only other transportation alternative is private cab services that are available in some towns. These cab services can be expensive and unreliable. Therefore, accessibility to reliable transportation is crucial to the ultimate self-sufficiency of low-income families in the Southwest Georgia service area. These issues combine to dictate that we transport the majority of the 1,928 Head Start/Early Head Start children to the Head Start Centers.

Non-Emergency Transportation (NEMT) Overview

The Non-Emergency Transportation (NEMT) service, administered through the Department of Community Health (DCH), is a privatized service. Funding for the service is provided by DCH and the Georgia Department of Transportation. The contract for managing this service is bid and awarded every five years and renewed on an annual basis for a 40 county area in Southwest Georgia that includes all of the 18 counties in the CAC service area. Logisticare, a private for-profit company, manages the service. The NEMT Program offers transportation services for Georgia Medicaid members who need to secure necessary non-emergency health care from a Medicaid billable program and have no other means of transportation.

Logisticare serves as the NEMT broker and sub-contracts actual services, much like the RC brokers Coordinated Transportation services. Clients desiring NEMT services must call a toll free number for reservations. Thomas County handles its own NEMT calls.

NEMT services are available around the clock. Medicaid-eligible citizens in Southwest Georgia who require medically related transport cannot be turned down for curb-to-curb trips upon request. The general public may also request NEMT services for ambulatory trips only at a nominal cost.

Normal reservations must be made at least 72 hours in advance. *Urgent Care* reservations are those reservations made for care that is of a more urgent nature for which the 72-hour advance period is not feasible. In urgent care situations a three-hour lead-time exists, and Logisticare will call and confirm the appointment with the care provider prior to transporting the client. Transportation outside of Georgia is allowable under NEMT provided the travel distance is no more than 50 miles one-way beyond the state line. Exceptions are made when a hospital or specialized medical provider beyond the 50 mile limitation is nearer than the closest equivalent in-state provider.

Assessment of success for NEMT in Southwest Georgia has been mixed, with reliability and lead-time required for requesting rides cited as issues of contention. NSC field staff report that it is common for those clients who are dissatisfied with the service to choose another transportation alternative such as friends, relatives, or taxi services.

■ Health

The issue of affordable health care is a top concern throughout the Southwest Georgia region as well as our state and nation, and the issue of health insurance is a topic of particular concern. According to the Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC), rural communities in particular are struggling to provide quality health care for their residents. Challenges are even greater in the fragile systems of care in rural communities. Rural residents, providers, and leaders face exacerbated challenges at many different levels when seeking to impact population health. Without proper planning and preparation, many rural health care stand-alone systems may collapse, leaving Georgia citizens without access to the health care they need.

GHPC points out:

- Georgians living in rural areas are not as healthy as those living in urban areas.
- Rural residents are older, more likely to be impoverished and uninsured.
- Access to care is limited due to a persistently insufficient supply of rural health care workers, gaps in services, and an escalating number of health care organizations that are financially unstable.
- Health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer occur more frequently among people living in poor rural areas.
- Many rural communities lack an adequate number of primary care physicians to meet the needs of their residents.
- Rural healthcare systems are often fragmented and ill equipped to address complex physical, behavioral, and social service needs.

Community Commons states that poverty is a key driver of health status. Compared to national estimates, a significantly larger proportion of Georgians lack any source of health insurance. An increase in the number of Georgians living in poverty over the past decade has placed additional pressure on the public insurance system. According to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, the percentage of uninsured Georgians was 14% compared to 9% nationwide prior to public insurance coverage options under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Georgia is now ranked the 3rd highest uninsured in the U.S. In 2014, Georgia was ranked 7th highest and in 2020 was ranked 2nd highest. These estimates show that the uninsured rate in Georgia is not improving even after the implementation of the ACA.

Georgia did not implement ACA Medicaid expansion; therefore, 12% of residents who would have been eligible for Medicaid are left without an affordable coverage option and will likely remain uninsured (39% in 2020 and 31% in 2014). Kaiser Health News reports in Georgia, nineteen (19) percent of people live in the coverage gap. In 2020, the coverage gap was 18 percent in Georgia and nine percent in 2014. In 2022, 11 insurers offered Qualified Health Plans in the Georgia individual Marketplace; in 2019 only four offered QHPs in Georgia with only one offering coverage state-wide.

All the dynamics that drive up health costs have coalesced in Southwest Georgia, pushing up premiums. Expensive chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer are common among the Southwest Georgia population. David Hefner, CEO of Georgia Regents Medical Center, says that the health indices for many of the counties in Southwest Georgia “are worse than some Third World countries”. One hospital system dominates the area, leaving little competition. Only one insurer is offering policies in the online marketplace, and many physicians are not participating, limiting consumer choice.

Many insurance brokers and residents place the blame for high premiums on the expanding Phoebe Putney Health System, a nonprofit that runs six hospitals in Southwest Georgia. The Federal Trade Commission and Georgia’s attorney general unsuccessfully tried to reverse Phoebe’s 2012 acquisition of Palmyra Park Hospital in Albany because it made the system so dominant that they said Phoebe could essentially dictate prices. In a settlement, Phoebe was allowed to hold on to Palmyra, giving it 86 percent of the regional health care market. Phoebe’s dominance has also grown as it has purchased more physician practices.

Additionally, four large rural hospitals in Georgia have closed in the past eight years. Since 2000, a total of nine hospitals have shut down in the state. Closures reduce the ability of patients to access needed care, especially in rural areas. In 2021, 14.7% of Georgia adults were without a usual place of medical care and 50.7% of children were without a medical home.

Demographic Overview

■ 14-County Area

The *Georgia County Guide* estimates that the 14-county service area is comprised of 352,304 residents. The racial/ethnic composition of the population is 55.2% Caucasian, 41.5% African American, and 5.9% Hispanic or Latino. (Persons of Hispanic/Latino origin may be of any race. Therefore, percentages may not add to 100%.) In comparison, the Georgia population ratios are 59.4% Caucasian, 33.0% African American, and 10.2% Hispanic or Latino.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 21.8% of the population in our 14-county service area lives below the poverty level, compared to an estimate of 13.9% statewide. These percentages have slightly decreased over the past three years as the 2020 estimate was 24.4% in our 14-county service area 16.0% statewide; in 2017 the area population was 28.0% and 19.2% statewide.

Based on this data, it is estimated that 76,802 individuals live below the poverty rate and, therefore, comprise the segment of the population targeted for Agency services. This represents a decrease of 8,275 individuals living in poverty in the past three years. This decrease is due to outmigration in rural areas. Compared to the 2017 assessment (six years ago), there has been a decrease of 11,174 persons living in poverty.

The number of children living in poverty has shown a slight decline. U.S. Census Bureau estimates reveal that 31.7% of children under the age of 18 in the 14-county area live below the poverty level. This percentage was 36.2 three years ago and was 39.7 six years ago. Although we experienced a 4.5% decrease in our service area over the last three years, our service area percentage remains 12.1% above the state percentage of 19.6%.

Additional demographic data is included in *Attachment A*.

■ 18-County Area

The *Georgia County Guide* estimates that the 18-county service area is comprised of 396,551 residents. The racial/ethnic composition of the 18-county population is 56.1% Caucasian, 40.4% African American, and 6.0% Hispanic or Latino. (Persons of Hispanic/Latino origin may be of any race. Therefore, percentages may not add to 100%.) In comparison, the Georgia population ratios are 59.4% Caucasian, 33.0% African American, and 10.2% Hispanic or Latino.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 21.7% of the 18-county population lives below the poverty level, compared to an estimate of 13.9% statewide. These percentages have slightly decreased over the past three years and represent a decrease from 24.7% in 2020 and 28.0% in 2017; and almost matching 2014 at 24.6%.

Based on this data, it is estimated that 86,052 individuals in the 18-county area live below the poverty rate and, therefore, comprise the segment of the population targeted for Agency services. This represents a decrease of 11,596 individuals living in poverty in the past three years. This decrease is due to outmigration in rural areas.

The number of children living in poverty has also grown steadily during the past decade. U.S. Census Bureau estimates reveal that 30.9% of children under the age of 18 in the 18-county area live below the poverty level. This represents a slight decrease from 37.0% three years ago and 40.0% six years ago; yet remains 11.3% above the state percentage of 19.6%.

The Georgia County Guide reveals that 23,739 children under the age of 5 live within the 18 counties provided Head Start/Early Head Start services. Therefore, it is estimated that 9,768 children ages 3-5 and 13,971 children ages 0-3 reside in these counties. The U. S. Census Bureau estimates that 33.4% of the children under the age of 5 in these counties live below the poverty level. Based on this percentage, it is estimated that 3,263 children ages 3-4 live below the poverty level and, therefore, are income eligible for Head Start. It is estimated that an

additional 4,667 children ages 0-3 live below the poverty level and are income eligible for Early Head Start services.

Additional demographic data is included in *Attachment A*.

■ Analysis

Notable trends and conditions are identifiable through analysis of the Southwest Georgia demographic data. This analysis includes key findings which include the causes of poverty and the conditions of poverty as identified in our service area. (CSBG Org Std 3.4)

- More than one third (33.4%) of the children less than 5 years of age in the 18 counties provided Head Start/ Early Head Start services live in poverty – 10.5% above the statewide percentage of 22.9%.
- Fourteen (14) of the 18 counties provided Head Start services have a higher percentage of children under age 5 living in poverty than the State rate of 22.9%.
- Approximately 3,263 children ages 3 and 4 in the 18 counties provided Head Start services are eligible for Head Start based on income alone. In comparison, CAC is authorized to serve a total of 1,601 children through Head Start.
- Approximately 4,667 children under the age of 3 in the 18 counties provided Head Start services are eligible for Early Head Start based on income alone. In comparison, CAC is authorized to serve a total of 327 infants, toddlers, and pregnant women through Early Head Start.
- Per capita income in Southwest Georgia is \$9,323 less than statewide (\$25,193 to \$34,516). This is a slight increase from three years ago where the difference was \$9,126.
- The percentage of adults ages 25 and older with at least a high school diploma or equivalency is lower in 17 of our 18 counties than the State percentage of 87.9%. Lee County is 92.2%.
- The percentage of adults ages 25 and older with at least a bachelor's degree is lower in all 18 counties than the State percentage of 32.2%. Lee County has the highest percentage at 27.1% while Terrell County has the lowest percentage at 10.2%.
- A lower percentage of the Southwest Georgia population is between the primary income earning age ranges of 18-54 and 18-64 in comparison with the State (46.3% to 50.6% & 59.2% to 62.6%). The economic implications are that in Southwest Georgia the wage earning population must support a proportionately larger non-income earning population in comparison with the State. However, the per capita income in Southwest Georgia (\$25,193) is \$9,323 below the State per capita income (\$34,516), a disparity that has increased again in the last three years.
- The percentage of Southwest Georgians under the age of 18 (23.9%) is essentially the same as the statewide percentage of 24.3%. This indicates that approximately the same percentage of wage earners is expected to enter the work force in the next 15-20 years in comparison with the State. An important question to answer is: *Will those under age 18 stay in Southwest Georgia, and will there be jobs available for them if they do stay?*
- The percentage of Southwest Georgians ages 55-64 is 13.0% compared to 12.4% statewide, while the percentage of Southwest Georgians ages 65 and above is 16.9% compared to 13.9% statewide. The percentage of the population ages 55 and above has steadily increased in recent years due to the baby boomer generation. In comparison to the State, a much larger percentage of the Southwest Georgia population has reached retirement age or is nearing retirement. Predominantly rural areas with high concentrations of retirees typically have less disposable income than areas with lower concentrations of retirees and exhibit a high need for health care, specialized health care, and health insurance.
- The percentage of persons living below the poverty level is 7.8% higher in Southwest Georgia than statewide (21.7% to 13.9%), meaning that almost one in every four Southwest Georgians lives in poverty.
- The percentage of children ages 18 and under living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment is higher in 13 of 18 counties than the statewide percentage of 7.5%. Five (5) counties exceed 15% with Terrell County the highest at 22.3%. This shows an improvement in the last three years; however, there are only five (5) counties whose rate is less than the statewide percentage.

- The percentage of persons receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in Southwest Georgia is 2.1% which is significantly above the state (2.1% to 1.2%).
- While TANF rolls have decreased dramatically in recent years, the percentage of Southwest Georgians receiving TANF (1.90%) is still slightly greater than the statewide percentage of 1.77%. However, Miller County has the highest rate which is almost triple the state rate.
- The percentage of Southwest Georgians receiving Food Stamps (21.3%) is almost double the statewide percentage of 11.9%.
- Eleven (11) of the 18 counties have a higher percentage of female headed households without a husband present than the statewide percentage of 11.7%. The overall rate for Southwest Georgia is 14.7%.
- More than one-fifth (20.5%) of the 18-county Hispanic/Latino population and 41.4% of the 14-county Hispanic/Latino population reside in Colquitt County. The Hispanic/Latino segment represents 17.6% of the total population of Colquitt County. According to the *Georgia County Guide*, nine other counties have a Hispanic population at or above 5% (Baker 6.8%; Calhoun 5.2%; Decatur 6.9%; Grady 12.1%; Marion 8.2%; Mitchell 5.3%, Schley 6.2%; Sumter 6.1%; and Webster 5.2%). This is a significant increase from five just three years ago. (It is commonly recognized among local public officials, as well as the general public, that census estimates for the Hispanic/Latino population throughout Southwest Georgia are grossly underestimated.)
- The statewide percentage of first births to mothers age 20 and older with 12 years of education is 84.9%. Three counties (Lee, Marion, and Webster) in Southwest Georgia exceed this rate, with three (3) lower than 70%.
- The percentage of births in Southwest Georgia to mothers with less than 12 years education (45.2%) is equal to the statewide percentage of 45.2%. Six counties (Colquitt, Dougherty, Grady, Lee, Mitchell, and Worth) exceed the state percentage.
- The percentage of premature births is slightly higher in Southwest Georgia than statewide (13.6% to 11.7%). Three (3) counties exceed 13%, with Sumter being the highest at 25.0% followed by Colquitt at 17.5%.
- The percentage of births that are low birth weight births (less than 2500 grams) is higher in Southwest Georgia than statewide (13.5% to 10.6%). Thirteen (13) counties exceed 10%, with Calhoun County being the highest (22.6%) at almost 12% greater than the State percentage.
- The percentage of births that are very low birth weight births (less than 1500 grams) is higher in Southwest Georgia than statewide (3.1% to 2.1%). Seven (7) of 18 counties had fewer than five events on which to base information and, therefore, were not shown.
- More than half the births (59.1%) in Southwest Georgia are to unmarried females, significantly above the State percentage of 45.8%. Only two counties (Lee and Webster) do not exceed the State percentage. At 80.6% Calhoun County tops the list of 15 counties in Southwest Georgia that exceed 50%.
- Six (6) of 18 counties have a higher teen pregnancy rate than the statewide rate of 9.9 per 1,000 females ages 15-17. *County data is available for counties with five (5) or more events on which to base rates. Ten (10) counties had less than 5 events, so data was unavailable.*
- Within Georgia 13.8% of teen pregnancies among females ages 15-19 in 2021 were repeat pregnancies. County data is available for counties with five (5) or more events on which to base rates. Only four (4) counties in Southwest Georgia have five or more events, with a combined percentage of 18.0% being repeat pregnancies. This percentage is 4.2% above the State percentage. Although these numbers are high, they do show a decrease from the 2018 numbers. In 2018, eight counties had five or more events. The 2018 repeat pregnancy in our area was 0.7% higher than the State. And a significant improvement is that in 2015 there were 24.2% repeat pregnancies in our area and this number dropped to 18.9% in 2018 (a decrease of 5.3% in the last three years). Eight years ago the number of repeat pregnancies was 33.6% in our area.
- Substantiated incidents of child abuse and neglect in Georgia are measured as a rate per 1000 children. Georgia's rate is 23.0%. Eight (8) of 18 counties exceed this rate. This is a substantial increase from 4.2% in 2020.
- Twelve (12) of the 20 school systems in Southwest Georgia exceed the State percentage (26.8%) of students in grades K-5 that are enrolled in early intervention programs.

- Seventeen (17) of the 20 Southwest Georgia school systems exceed the State percentage (19.7%) of students in grades 6-8 enrolled in remedial education. Thirteen (13) of the 17 school systems exceed 25%, with 10 of the 13 exceeding 35%. The Baker and Calhoun County percentages are especially alarming at 100% and 96.3%.
- Eleven (11) of 20 school systems exceed the State percentage (11.3%) of students in grades 9-12 enrolled in remedial education. Nine (9) of the 11 school systems exceed 20%, with 5 of the 9 exceeding 30% (Calhoun 31.5%; Early 42.6%; Mitchell 43.4%; Terrell 30.1%; and Thomas 33.2%).
- Only four (4) of 20 school systems fall below the 2022 State graduation rate of 84.1%.
- Three (3) of 18 counties exceed the State percentage of teens ages 16-19 who are high school dropouts (3.4%). Calhoun County has the highest percentage at 4.3%. This is a significant improvement as twelve (12) counties exceeded the State percentage six years ago.
- Nine (9) of 18 counties exceed the State percentage of teens ages 16-19 who are not in school and not working (7.6%). Decatur County has the highest percentage at 39.8%.
- Sixteen (16) of the 20 Southwest Georgia school systems reporting have an average SAT score lower than the State average of 1032. Two (2) school systems have average scores below 900.
- Fourteen (14) of the 20 Southwest Georgia school systems fall below the State percentage (49.8%) of 2022 graduates eligible for the Georgia HOPE scholarship. Five (5) school systems are below 35%, with Sumter County the lowest at 27.3%.
- The Juvenile Court Commitment Rate is higher than the State rate of 0.60 at 1.20 per 1000 at-risk youth ages 10-16 for the 18-county area and above 0.78 for the 14-county area. Eight (8) counties have a rate of 0.0 but six (6) counties have a higher rate than the State.
- Mobile homes account for 26.8% of total housing units in Southwest Georgia, three times the percentage statewide (8.6%).
- Total housing units increased by only 1.5% (1,860 units) in Southwest Georgia from 2016 to 2019. In comparison, the increase throughout Georgia was 7.0%. In Southwest Georgia, only four (4) counties had a decrease in total housing units.
- The percentage of owner-occupied housing units in Southwest Georgia is slightly more than the statewide percentage (66.5% vs. 64.0%). However, the percentage is actually higher than the State in 11 counties while the percentage in Dougherty County, the most populous county in the service area, is the lowest at 45.9%. The percentage of renter-occupied housing units in Southwest Georgia is slightly lower than the statewide percentage (33.5% vs. 36.0%), with 54.1% of occupied housing units in Dougherty County being renter-occupied.
- The rental vacancy rate is lower in Southwest Georgia (3.5% in the 14-county area & 4.1% in the 18-county area) than the State rate of 6.5%. As anticipated, this is significantly lower than six years ago due to the extensive damage/demolition of units caused by the January 2017 tornados.
- Based on fair market rent for two-bedroom housing in Southwest Georgia, the hourly wage necessary working 40 hours per week to afford fair market rent ranges from \$13.54 to \$16.13 depending on the county. Federal minimum wage is currently \$7.25/hour.
- Population density in Southwest Georgia slightly increased from 55.5 persons per square mile of land area in 2018 to 56.1 in 2020, an increase of 1.1%. During that same time, population density for the State decreased from 178.8 to 168.4 a decrease of 5.8%.

Child Development

Head Start/Early Head Start Enrollment Authorization

Head Start 2024-2025	Waiting List as of 6/30/23
Baker 34	0
Calhoun 51	11
Colquitt 136	25
Decatur/Grady 136	33
Dougherty 586	19
Early 68	7
Lee 51	6
Miller 17	10
Mitchell 51	11
Seminole 17	2
Sumter 119	37
Terrell 80	6
Thomas 102	16
Tri County (Marion, Schley, & Webster) 51	11
Worth 102	8
Total 1,601	Total 202

Early Head Start 2024-2025	Waiting List as of 6/30/23
Calhoun 43	16
Colquitt 8	13
Decatur/Grady 24	31
Dougherty 32	72
Leslie 32	5
Miller 16	4
Seminole 16	0
Sumter 84	98
Thomas 16	43
Tri County 32	14
Worth 24	23
Total 327	Total 168

Total Head Start/EHS 1,928	Total Head Start/EHS 370
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Note: As of August 1, 2023, the Head Start authorization was 1,601 and Early Head Start was 327 for a total of 1,928.

Enrollment as of June 30, 2023, reveals the following information that confirms those families most in need are being served:

	Number	Percent
Single Parent Families (Female Head of Households)	1,881	98.0%
Medicaid Eligible	2,066	100.0%
TANF / SSI Recipient	143	7.4%
Unemployed (Families)	84	3.3%
High School Graduate or GED (Famileis)	234	12.1%
Diagnosed Disability	168	8.7%
CACFP - Eligible for Free Meals	2,230	100.0%

Note: All numbers include data for terminated/unenrolled students

The following is a listing of other *known* child development and childcare programs by county that are serving Head Start/Early Head Start eligible children (*ages 0-5 and economically disadvantaged as defined by Head Start family income eligibility guidelines*). Many of the providers also serve children ages five and older (*identified with an asterisk where known*). While significant in some counties, after-school child care services are purposely not included in this listing because those services are partial day services typically provided in the afternoon for only 3-4 hours primarily serving ages five and above. The approximate capacity is indicated for each program. This listing was compiled from information obtained from Bright from the Start (Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning), Georgia Department of Education, and direct contact with the listed child development and child care programs. While based on *available* information, the listing is not all-inclusive. Efforts to ensure the accuracy of the listing were limited in that sources noted some providers either do not respond or give incomplete responses to their requests for data. There are a large (and constantly fluctuating) number of “Family Childcare” and “Informal Childcare” vendors throughout the service area authorized to serve a maximum of six (6) and two (2) children respectively. Although the identified programs serve a substantial portion of the Head Start eligible population, the need for Head Start services remains strong. Approximately 7,942 of the estimated 23,739 children ages 0-5 within the service area are eligible for Head Start or Early Head Start services based on family income alone (3,290 of 9,768 children ages 3-5 and 4,652 of 13,971 under age 3). The combined capacity of Public Pre-K and Private Daycare within the service area is approximately 12,345 children. Pre-K is authorized to serve 3,475 four-year-olds and Private Daycare is authorized to serve approximately 8,870 children. While recruitment of four-year-olds for Georgia's Pre-K program hinders Head Start enrollment of four-year-olds, a large segment of those served by Pre-K and Private Daycare do not fall into the 7,942 children identified as "most in need" of Head Start and Early Head Start services based on family income. If all available Pre-K and Private Daycare slots were filled with children ages 0-5, a total of 11,394 children ages 0-5 in the service area would remain unserved (23,739 – 12,345 =11,394).

	<u>Authorized Capacity</u>
<u>Baker</u>	
Pre-K	22
<u>Calhoun</u>	
Pre-K	22
Pataula Charter Academy	10
Family Day Care (Total of 3)	18

	<u>Authorized Capacity</u>
<u>Colquitt</u>	
Pre-K	543
Hands on Learning Academy	75
Friends & Company*	51
Kids Advocacy Coalition at Omega	91
Lifespring Childcare Center	35
Miss Bonnie's Daycare*	93
Moultrie YMCA	190
Mrs. D's Little Ones	57
Ms. B J's Group Daycare*	12
Ms. Brandi's*	80
Payne's Kiddie Ranch*	39
Wonderland Day Care	95
Family Day Care (Total of 3)	18
 <u>Decatur</u>	
Pre-K	306
A New Generation Academy	76
Kids World Academy	167
Leaping Start Daycare	44
Little Blessings Childcare	75
Tiny Tots	17
YMCA Kids Club*	69
Family Day Care (Total of 4)*	24
 <u>Dougherty</u>	
Pre-K	704
Academy Child Development	53
Albany Technical Institute CDC*	126
All in the Family	60
Alma's Baby World	100
Barbara's Babies Learning Center*	39
Beginning Steps	21
Best Buddies Daycare*	194
Bright Little Learners	40
Child Care Network*	458
Creative World Child Care*	99
Education Learning Center	18
Education Learning Station	24
Family Literacy Connection	76
Family Tree	253
Fathers Learning Development Center	18
Fun Villa Daycare	13
God's Foundation Christian Academy*	47
Graceland Institute of Early Learning	63
Greene's Child Development Center*	17
H. E. R. O's Instilment Academy*	35
I Am Legacy	65
Just A Kid	104
Just Like Home Early Learning Center	23

	<u>Authorized Capacity</u>
Just Kiddin	100
Keys to Learning	65
Kids Express Learning Academy*	35
Kid’s Corner Child Development Center	60
Land of Little People	18
Leaders of Tomorrow Learning Center*	18
Little Blessings Day Care*	18
Little Heavenly Angels	41
Lolly Lane*	59
MCLB Child Development Services	305
Melson Christian Daycare	18
Miss Jan’s Nursery & Playschool*	58
Monumental Developmental Center*	111
New Beginning Early Learning Academy*	158
New Birth Learning Institute*	240
Next Level Academy	77
Petty’s Preschool	52
Precious Hands Child Development Center*	22
Precious Moments*	29
Pre-School Academy Learning Center*	99
Pre-School Scholars	22
Prep Academy of Learning	25
Proverbs Horizon Learning Center	58
Rochell’s Angels	175
Romper Room Play School	41
Sister/Sister Learning Center*	127
Smith’s Day Care Center*	56
South Georgia Child Care	84
Victory Kids Academy	181
Wee Kare	81
Family Day Care (Total of 14)*	84
 <u>Early</u>	
Pre-K	66
Rocking Horse Childcare Center	88
Family Day Care (Total of 10)*	60
 <u>Grady</u>	
Pre-K	176
Auntie Ann’s Learning Center	101
Buttons and Bows	18
Cairo 1 st United Methodist Church	42
Here We Grow	110
Learning Adventures Preschool	34
Little Sprouts	25
Paramore Preschool Academy	72
Family Day Care (Total of 15)*	90
 <u>Lee</u>	
Pre-K Public	264

	<u>Authorized Capacity</u>
Family Day Care (Total of 1)	6
<u>Marion</u>	
Pre-K	66
Eagle's Nest	67
Family Day Care (Total of 2)	12
<u>Miller</u>	
Pre-K	44
Little Pirates	77
New Life Learning Center*	113
<u>Mitchell</u>	
Pre-K	174
Guardian Angels Learning Center	34
Hand Memorial United Methodist Day Care*	50
Kelley House Kids	12
Kidsville	18
Tina's Tiny Tots	18
Family Day Care (Total of 3)	18
<u>Schley</u>	
Pre-K	66
Play Zone	66
<u>Seminole</u>	
Pre-K	88
Little Indians Day Care Center*	154
New Beginning Day Care	72
Smiling Faces	167
<u>Sumter</u>	
Pre-K	220
Bright Beginnings	110
Christian Outreach Early Learning Center	40
First Baptist Preschool	100
First Beginning Day Care	37
Family Day Care (Total of 8)	48
Giggles and Smiles	100
Heaven Sent	18
Kid's Castle	18
Tooty Tots	76
Group Day Care (Total of 1)*	12
<u>Terrell</u>	
Pre-K (Public)	44
Laugh & Learn	44
Noah's Ark Preschool	35

	<u>Authorized Capacity</u>
<u>Thomas</u>	
Pre-K	498
Bright Star Child Care	96
Davis Child Care	12
Hands on Learning Academy	21
New Oak Academy	98
Smart Start	86
TCS Kids	17
Tender Loving Care	43
Thomasville Child Care Center	132
Thomasville Community Resource Center	79
Family Day Care (Total of 7)*	42
 <u>Webster</u>	
Pre-K	22
 <u>Worth</u>	
Pre-K	150
Backyard Buddies*	65
Learning Tree Educational Center	36
Miss Georgee's Play-kare*	108
Small Kidz Daycare & Learning Center*	68
Family Day Care (Total of 1)*	<u>6</u>
 Total	 12,345

The Agency's Head Start *Community Partnership Specialist* maintains a *Community Resource Directory* for the service area that is updated annually. The directory outlines by county the social service agencies and resources that are available and extend beyond the scope of services provided through Head Start to meet the needs of the community and, in particular, Head Start eligible children and families. The directory is maintained at the CAC corporate office in Moultrie and at Head Start CDCs. The directory is accessible on the Agency's website at www.swgacac.com.

Education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of Head Start eligible children and their families were defined by families of Head Start eligible children and institutions in the community serving young children through the community assessment approach outlined previously.

- Percentage of respondents who indicated that they need assistance providing for the nutritional needs of their child(ren) 11.4%
(Comparable measure taken from 2020 community assessment) 18.2%
(Comparable measure taken from 2017 community assessment) 18.2%
- Percentage of respondents who indicated that they need help obtaining medical, dental, or psychological services for their family 10.6%
(Comparable measure taken from 2020 community assessment) 7.84%
(Comparable measure taken from 2017 community assessment) 25.3%

Further definement of education, health, nutrition, and social service needs can be found within the narrative section titled *Community Survey* and **Attachments A, B and C**.

It is estimated that 1,543 children ages five and under with physical, developmental, medical, or psychological needs reside in the 18-county service area. This conservative estimate equates to approximately 6.5% of all

children under the age of five. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 6.5% of children living in poverty were more likely to have a disability than children living above the poverty level. The Disabilities Specialist surveyed agencies throughout the service area that serve disabled children ages four and under to obtain numbers referenced in the chart below. Note: numbers were requested from local school systems but not received.

<i>Diagnosed Disability</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>	
	<i>Head Start</i>	<i>Early Head Start</i>
Health Impairment	2	0
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder	0	0
Speech or Language Impairments	48	14
Hearing Impairment (including deafness)	0	0
Orthopedic Impairment	0	0
Learning Disabilities	0	0
Autism	2	0
Non-categorical/Development Delay	80	24
Other Impairment (non-categorical)	0	0
Total	132	38

The Georgia Department of Education’s Response to Intervention (RTI) policy dictates the referral process for children with suspected disabilities. RTI requires that children with suspected disabilities be subjected to a series of prior interventions -- including progress monitoring, differentiated instruction, and documentation – that must be carried out over a specified period of time (between four and twelve weeks) before the child can be referred to the local school system for evaluation. A minimum of ten percent of Head Start funded enrollment must be children with diagnosed disabilities. RTI challenges our ability to meet the requirement.

In addition to RTI, other factors are developing that affect enrollment of children with disabilities. For example, state licensing regulations now mandate that all licensed child care centers include children with disabilities. Moreover, pre-k programs operated by local school systems are now including children with special needs.

Following is a list of community agencies providing relevant services and resources to children with disabilities. Services and resources range from early intervention and evaluation to occupational, physical, and speech therapy to actual medical care and parent support groups.

- Babies Can’t Wait
- Bright From the Start
- Children’s Medical Services (CMS)
- Easter Seals
- Albany Advocacy Resource Center (Preschool)
- Child Care and Referral Agency
- Local Education Agencies (LEAs)
- Georgia Learning Resource System (GLRS)
- Interagency Collaborative Council (ICC)
- Parent to Parent
- Children First
- Navigator Disabilities Centers
- Local Public Health Department Offices
- Private Pediatric Physicians

Community Survey

A total of **1,080** individuals participated in the survey portion of this assessment (753 in 2020). The average age of survey respondents was **48.3** years, below the average age of 51.2 in 2020 and above 45.5 years in 2017. A copy of the survey instrument is included as a part of **Attachment B**. In the interest of clarity and brevity, survey results *by county* are not included in this compilation, but can be obtained by contacting the Southwest Georgia Community Action Council, Inc., headquarters in Moultrie. Consolidated survey results for many of the survey questions are revealed through charts and graphs in **Attachments B and C**. Consolidated survey results follow for all other questions.

(Note: Responses are numbered to coincide with the numbering on the actual survey instrument. It may be helpful to refer to the survey instrument included in Attachment B. Results are based on 1,080 survey respondents, although some respondents did not answer all survey questions. Statistics are based on the number responding to the particular survey question.)

■ County of Residence

Baker	16
Calhoun	53
Colquitt	50
Decatur	91
Dougherty	284
Early	71
Grady	67
Lee	52
Marion	0
Miller	53
Mitchell	73
Randolph	1
Schley	0
Seminole	39
Sumter	54
Terrell	88
Thomas	60
Webster	0
Worth	28

SECTION I: Community Services

Do you have reliable transportation or access to reliable transportation? **15.09%** of respondents answered “no”.

Do you have health care insurance coverage? **17.03%** of respondents answered “no”.

SECTION II: Housing

All survey results for survey questions in Section II are revealed through the charts and graphs in Attachments B and C.

SECTION III: Child Development

2. Have you had a child attend Head Start or Early Head Start? **70.49%** of respondents answered “yes”.

3. Other than your spouse, during working hours who takes care of your preschoolers age 5 years and under? *Respondents were given seven options to choose from, with the following frequency of responses:*

● Head Start	40.5%
● relative	34.6%
● private day care	11.2%
● friend	7.3%
● Pre-K	6.4%
● church	0%
● other	0%

4. Do you have to pay your caretaker? **10.2%** of respondents have to pay their caretaker. If so, what do you pay per week? *Respondents were given three choices: \$50 or less, \$51-\$100, and more than \$100.* **32.4%** of respondents indicated that they pay \$50 or less, while **31.8%** indicated that they pay more than \$100 per week.

5. Are you a single parent? **62.30%** of respondents answered “yes”.

6. Is the other parent involved in your child’s life? **49.68%** of respondents answered “no”.

8. Do you need help in providing for the nutritional needs of your child? **27.64%** of respondents answered “yes”.

9. Do you need help obtaining medical, dental, or psychological services for your family? **26.03%** of respondents answered “yes”.

10. Respondents were asked to identify services that their households utilize at least once per year. *Following is the percentage of survey participants selecting the particular service:*

● Doctor/Dentist	47.01%
● Department of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	21.32%
● Health Department	16.71%
● Social Security Office	5.11%
● Department of Labor	4.61%
● Mental Health	2.99%
● Babies Can’t Wait	1.62%
● Cooperative Extension Service	0.63%

11. Respondents were asked to indicate if they have children with any special problems. *Following is the percentage of survey participants indicating the particular problem:*

● speech impairment	41.88%
● chronic illness (diabetes, heart, asthma, sickle cell anemia, etc.)	28.21%
● other	16.24%
● visual impairment	6.84%
● physically disabled (specify)	5.98%
● hearing impairment	0.85%

12. Respondents were asked to identify community agencies that provide services to address special problems for their children. *Following is a listing of responses including the agency and service. Some respondents only listed the agency and not the service.*

Aspire
Babies Can't Wait
Milestones
Renaissance Centre

SECTION IV: Family Income

2. Respondents were asked to identify all sources of their family income.

● full-time work	54.43%
● social security	14.97%
● part-time work	11.97%
● retirement	9.31%
● public assistance	7.98%
● seasonal	0.89%
● migrant	0.44%

Community Survey – CSBG Eligible Respondents

This section contains analysis of information collected directly from low-income individuals as a part of the community assessment (CSBG Org Std 3.2 and 3.3). The information was collected from the community assessment survey and was broken out to include only responses from CSBG income-eligible clients.

A total of 474 CSBG income-eligible clients responded to the survey. The average age of respondents was 58.7 years.

Male:	23.0%
Female:	68.4%
Did Not Respond:	08.6%

Black:	69.20%
White:	18.99%
Hispanic:	0.84%
Did Not Respond:	10.97%

High school diploma/GED or less: 58.44%

A total of 38.61% of respondents indicated a yearly family income of less than \$20,000 while another 25.11% indicated family income of less than \$30,000. The source of family income was as follows (respondents were asked to indicate all sources that applied):

Social Security	37.97%
Full-time Work	22.57%
Public Assistance	11.60%
Retirement, other than social security	10.13%
Part-time Work	7.60%
Seasonal	0.63%
Migrant	0.21%

Survey participants were asked to identify the top service needs in the community from a list of 25 choices. The top five service needs were:

1. Affordable Housing	33.12%
2. Job Training & Placement	24.89%
3. Meals on Wheels	24.68%
4. Utility/Rent/Security Deposit Payment Assistance	18.78%
5. Transportation	17.72%

Percent that do not have reliable transportation or access to reliable transportation: 15.40%

Percent that do not have health care insurance coverage: 15.19%

Survey participants were asked to identify the top affordable housing issues for low-income households from a list of 12 choices. The top five issues were:

1. Rental Prices Too High	58.65%
2. Not Enough Decent Affordable Housing Available	42.62%
3. Housing in Poor Condition/Not Enough Energy Efficient Homes	37.13%
4. Rent Increases too Much if Income Increases/Not Enough Public Housing	25.53%
5. Not Enough Public Housing	24.26%

*This section contains current data specific to poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for the Southwest Georgia service area (CSBG Org Std 3.2). See **Attachment A** for additional data.*

Source: Community Commons, Georgia County Guide

The percentage of the 18-county service area population living in poverty is 21.7% (86,052 persons). This ranges from a high in Terrell County of 30.1% to a low in Lee County of 9.9%. By comparison the percentage of the population in Georgia living in poverty is 13.9% while the percentage for the United States is 12.6%.

Gender

The percentage of males living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 19.42% (32,899) while the percentage of females living in poverty is 23.34% (43,146). This ranges from a high for males in Webster County of 32.68% to a low in Lee County of 9.83%. The high for females is Terrell County at 33.55% and the low in Lee County at 10.40%. By comparison the percentage of males living in poverty in Georgia is 12.61% while the percentage of females living in poverty is 15.15%. The percentage of males living in poverty in the United States is 11.44% while the percentage of females living in poverty is 13.79%.

The percentage of males living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 6.81% more than the state rate and 7.98% more than the U.S. rate. Meanwhile, the percentage of females living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 8.19% more than the State rate and 9.55% more than the U.S. rate. The percentage of females living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 3.92% higher than the percentage of males (23.34% to 19.42%).

Age

The percentage of children ages 0-4 living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 33.4% (7,929). This ranges from a high in Mitchell County of 51.0% to a low in Webster County of 0.0% followed by Worth County at 11.1%. By comparison the percentage of children ages 0-4 living in poverty in Georgia is 22.9% while the percentage for the United States is 18.3%. The percentage of children ages 0-4 living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 10.5% more than the State rate and 14.0% more than the U.S. rate.

The percentage of children under age 18 living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 32.6% (28,513). This ranges from a high in Mitchell County of 50.1% to a low in Lee County of 14.7%. By comparison the percentage of children under age 18 living in poverty in Georgia is 19.5% while the percentage for the United States is 16.9%. The percentage of children ages 5-17 living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 12.6% more than the State rate and 15.8% more than the U.S. rate.

The percentage of senior citizens ages 65 and over living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 15.4%. This ranges from a high in Terrell County of 20.5% to a low in Worth County of 7.4%. By comparison the percentage of senior citizens ages 65 and over living in poverty in Georgia is 10.1% while the percentage for the United States is 10.3%. The percentage of senior citizens ages 65 and over living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 5.3% more than the State rate and 5.1% more than the U.S. rate.

Race

The 18-county service area population living in poverty is broken down by race as follows:

Black or African American:	31.6%
White (Caucasian):	13.9%
Hispanic	27.1%
Some Other Race:	27.4%
	100.00%

The percentage of Blacks or African Americans living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 31.6% (26,348). This ranges from a high in Seminole County of 41.0% to a low in Marion County of 18.9%. By comparison the percentage of Blacks or African Americans living in poverty in Georgia is 20.3% while the percentage for the United States is 21.7%.

The percentage of Caucasians living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 13.9% (11,590). This ranges from a high in Early County of 21.4% to a low in Webster County of 5.9%. By comparison the percentage of Caucasians living in poverty in Georgia is 9.5% while the percentage for the United States is 9.5%.

The aggregate percentage of Hispanics living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 27.1% (22,596). This ranges from a high in Webster county of 90.7% to a low of 0% in Miller county. By comparison the percentage of Hispanics living in poverty in Georgia is 19.7% while the percentage for the United States is 17.6%. The percentage of Hispanics living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 7.4% more than the State rate and 8.1% more than the U.S. rate.

Ethnicity

Hispanics/Latinos account for 34.9% (30,032 of 86,052 persons) of the population living in poverty in the 18-county service area.

The aggregate percentage of Hispanics living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 27.1% (28,534). This ranges from a high in Webster County of 90.7% to a low of 0% in Miller County. By comparison the percentage of Hispanics living in poverty in Georgia is 19.7% while the percentage for the United States is 17.6%. The percentage of Hispanics living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 7.4% more than the State rate and 8.1% more than the U.S. rate.

Meanwhile, the percentage of Non-Hispanics/Non-Latinos living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 20.56% (68,204). This ranges from a high in Terrell County of 30.3% to a low in Lee County of 9.9%. By comparison the percentage of Non-Hispanics/Non-Latinos living in poverty in Georgia is 13.2% while the percentage for the United States is 11.5%. The percentage of Non-Hispanics/Non-Latinos living in poverty in the 18-county service area is 7.3% more than the State rate and 9.1% more than the U.S. rate.

Key Findings

This section contains supplemental data specific to key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty (CSBG Org Std 3.4).

Several causes of poverty were identified within this Community Assessment Narrative, primarily within the section titled “Identified Community Weaknesses/Needs”. They include:

- Population Outmigration
- Low Educational Attainment
- Lack of Living Wage Jobs with Benefits
- Lack of Affordable Housing
- Lack of Quality Housing
- Lack of Affordable Health Care/Health Insurance
- Low Stability of Family Unit

Many conditions of poverty were identified within this Community Assessment Narrative, primarily within the demographic tables found in **Attachment A**. They include:

- 21.3% of the population receives food stamps compared to 11.9% statewide;
- 2.1% of the population receives SSI compared to 1.2% statewide;
- 1.90% of the population receives TANF compared to 1.77% statewide;
- Very low birthweight births (less than 1500 grams) accounted for 3.1% of total births compared to 2.1% statewide;
- Low birthweight births (less than 2500 grams) accounted for 13.5% of total births compared to 10.6% statewide;
- Premature births accounted for 13.6% of births compared to 11.7% statewide;
- Births to females with less than 12 years education accounted for 45.2% of all births compared to 45.2% statewide;
- Births to unmarried females as a percentage of total births is 59.1% compared to 45.8% statewide;
- The percentage of adults ages 25 and older with at least a high school diploma or equivalency is less than the statewide percentage of 87.9% in 17 counties in our service area;
- The percentage of adults ages 25 and older with at least a bachelor’s degree is less than the statewide percentage of 32.2% in all counties; and 17 are less than 25% and 10 counties are less than 15%;
- Mobile homes account for 24.8% of total housing units compared to 8.6% statewide.

Identified Community Strengths

- Southwest Georgia Community Action Council, Inc. – The Agency provides a variety of services targeting low-income families including community services, Head Start/Early Head Start child development services, and housing and energy services. The Agency also boasts a payroll of approximately 600 employees, providing significant support for the local tax base and furthering economic diversity for the region
- The cost of living in Southwest Georgia is comparatively low to the state and national average cost of living.
- Southwest Georgia produces an abundance of various agricultural products including cotton, peanuts, fruits, vegetables, and timber. The region's agricultural industry provides numerous jobs within the area.
- Southwest Georgia boasts an abundance of natural resources such as water, woodlands, and tillable farmland.
- Southwest Georgia boasts a wealth of public and private outdoor recreational opportunities including public fishing, hunting, boating, camping, and hiking.
- Southwest Georgia is home to three technical colleges, two senior state colleges, two senior/master's state universities, and one senior/master's private university. All of the technical colleges have campuses in more than one county. Several other 2- and 4-year post-secondary schools offer off-campus courses within the service area.
- Planning and management of Coordinated Transportation services by the Southwest Georgia RDC ensures that fees for the service are reasonable and are reinvested in Southwest Georgia to perpetuate the service.
- The City of Moultrie, located in Colquitt County, hosts the annual Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition. This exposition is the largest agricultural equipment show in the eastern United States. The exposition attracts thousands of visitors each October, many who reside out of state and even internationally. The result is an economic boost to the area as visitors stay in hotels, dine in restaurants, purchase fuel, and patronize other businesses while passing through southwest Georgia.
- The City of Colquitt and Miller County is home to the nationally renowned *Swamp Gravy* series of original folk life theatrical performances, bringing local stories of southern tradition to life as portrayed by local residents. The performances attract audiences from near and far.
- Often identified as a weakness, the fact that Southwest Georgia is largely a rural area is now, in some respects, considered a strength. Needs inherent to rural areas that have typically been overlooked are now being recognized by grant funding sources (e.g. transportation, infrastructure, job creation, etc.).
- While the issue of homelessness has been recognized across the region as a growing problem in recent years and incidents of homelessness appear to be on the rise, the percentage of Southwest Georgians who seek assistance due to homelessness is relatively low in comparison with metropolitan areas of Georgia.

Identified Community Weaknesses/Needs (CSBG Org Std 3.4)

- The Southwest Georgia economy is primarily based on and influenced by agriculture, which can be adversely and unexpectedly impacted by natural disasters, drought, pestilence, etc.
- There is a lack of diversity in employment opportunities and the skills of the labor force across the service area. Business and industrial development is needed to increase economic diversity that would be desirable for population and economic growth.
- Much of Southwest Georgia is located away from transportation routes, limiting economic growth opportunities.
- Distribution of population over a large rural area such as Southwest Georgia contributes to a high cost of providing services.
- Population growth across the region lags behind population growth statewide. Stagnate or declining populations characterize eight (8) counties. Continuation of this trend will produce a limited labor force and negatively impact the area economy in a variety of other ways such as loss of tax revenue and diminished public grant funding. The trend also threatens to weaken Southwest Georgia's political voice within Georgia.
- There exists a historic trend in Southwest Georgia toward population out migration of young economically active persons, further limiting the labor force and weakening the tax base.
- A lower percentage of the Southwest Georgia population is between the primary income earning age ranges of 18-54 and 18-64 in comparison with the State. The economic implications are that in Southwest Georgia the wage earning population must support a proportionately larger non-income earning population in comparison with the State.
- The top community service needs identified through the community survey were:
 1. Job Training & Placement (26.57% of all identified needs)
 2. Affordable Housing (18.70% of all identified needs)
 3. Summer Youth Programs (15.56% of all identified needs)
 4. Utility/Rent/Security Deposit Payment Assistance (15.37% of all identified needs)
 5. Meals on Wheels (14.72% of all identified needs)
- Access to affordable healthcare is a common need. More than one in ten (13.8%) of community survey respondents indicated that they do not have health care insurance coverage.
- Southwest Georgia has a high poverty rate, as about one in every four Southwest Georgians lives in poverty. The percentage of persons living in poverty is much higher in Southwest Georgia (21.8%) than statewide (13.9%), a difference of 7.9%. The disparity is holding steady, as the difference was 8.7% three years ago. More than one in every three children under the age of 5 in Southwest Georgia lives in poverty. The percentage of children under the age of 5 living in poverty is much higher in Southwest Georgia (34.1%) than statewide (22.9%), a difference of 11.2%. The percentage of children ages 18 and under living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment is higher in 13 of 18 counties than the statewide percentage of 7.5%.
- Educational attainment within the service area is substantially lower than in Georgia and the nation. The percentage of adults ages 25 and older with at least a high school diploma or equivalency is lower in 17 of 18 counties than the State percentage, while the percentage with at least a bachelor's degree is also lower in all 18 counties than the State percentage. Eight (8) of 16 counties reporting exceed the State percentage of teens ages 16-19 who are high school dropouts. Eleven (11) of 20 school systems exceed the State percentage (11.3%) of students in grades 9-12 enrolled in remedial education. Seventeen (17) of 20 school systems exceed the State percentage (19.7%) of students in grades 6-8 enrolled in remedial education. Average SAT scores are below the State average in all 16 school systems reporting, with the State average being one of the lowest in the nation.
- A common need is involvement of both parents in the lives of their children. Almost 15% of community survey respondents indicated that the non-custodial parent (usually fathers) was not an active part of their child's life.
- The stability of the family unit is generally weak. More than half the births (59.1%) are to unwed mothers. Almost one in seven (14.7%) households are female-headed households without a husband present. Ten

(10) of 12 counties reporting have a higher teen pregnancy rate than the statewide rate. Almost one in seven (18.9%) teens ages 15-19 giving birth in 2021 had given birth previously.

- More substantial support services are needed for single heads of households.
- The general health of expectant mothers, infants, and children in Southwest Georgia is below average. For example, the percentage of premature births is slightly higher in Southwest Georgia than statewide (13.6% to 11.7%), the percentage of low birthweight births (less than 2500 grams) is higher in Southwest Georgia (13.5% to 10.6%), and the percentage of very low birthweight births (less than 1500 grams) is higher in Southwest Georgia (3.1% to 2.1%).
- The "housing" portion of the community survey indicated a perceived need for affordable quality rental property and housing for purchase. Respondents were asked to identify the top three affordable housing issues for low-income households from among a list of 12 issues. The issues identified most often were as follows:
 1. Rental Prices Too High (46.30%)
 2. Not Enough Decent Affordable Housing Available (36.85%)
 3. Housing in Poor Condition/Not Enough Energy Efficient Homes (34.17%)
 4. No New Low-Income Homes Underway (28.43%)
 5. Bad Locations or Blighted Areas (24.63%)
- The perception exists that it is too difficult to get a housing loan, especially for first-time homebuyers. Clients commonly indicate that they are capable of meeting monthly mortgage payments if they could obtain assistance in meeting down-payment requirements.
- The overall quality of the housing stock in Southwest Georgia is below par in comparison with the remainder of the state. For example, the percentage of total housing units in Southwest Georgia that are mobile homes is more than three times the percentage statewide.
- The majority of the Hispanic population of Southwest Georgia typically finds employment as field laborers, with employers offering few or no fringe benefits such as health insurance and paid sick leave. Therefore, the increasing Hispanic population is creating a greater need for affordable health care and social services. The lack of health insurance among the Hispanic population negatively impacts the local economy by causing medical care costs and health insurance premiums to increase.
- Changes to immigration laws in Georgia in recent years are jeopardizing farming operations that depend on Hispanic field laborers to plant and harvest crops. As a result, farmers may not have adequate labor to tend to crops, many laborers may no longer have a stable employment option, and consumers may experience higher food prices.
- It is commonly recognized locally that census estimates for the Hispanic/Latino population throughout Southwest Georgia are grossly underestimated. The underestimation potentially results in a loss of political representation, loss of grant funding, under funding of public services, and a loss of any public resources based on population data.

Identified Agency Strengths

- The Agency holds a wealth of experience (58 years) in providing services to the low-income community. An experienced and proven administrative management staff is in place that is poised to pursue expansion of Agency services.
- The Agency has a very active and loyal Board of Directors with diverse backgrounds and few absences at scheduled meetings.
- The Agency is fiscally solvent with proven fiscal and programmatic accountability.
- The Agency receives funding from a variety of funding sources and is not dependent on a single source to remain in business.
- The Agency is trusted by the low-income population.
- The Agency offers a variety of services to meet a variety of needs.
- The Agency has a staffed Neighborhood Service Center in 11 of the 14 counties that comprise the primary service area. The Agency has 21 staffed Head Start Child Development Centers (CDCs) located throughout the 18-county Head Start service area, with six (6) CDCs in Dougherty County.
- Twenty Head Start Child Development Centers (CDCs) are licensed (excludes Sumter due to recent move).
- Head Start provides a fleet of buses to transport children to and from CDCs in all of the counties provided Head Start services with the exceptions of Dougherty, Early, Miller, and Seminole counties.
- The Agency hired a Head Start Mentor/Coach to assist staff in identifying and reaching education goals.
- The Agency's Housing & Energy department has an experienced, highly-trained weatherization staff with certifications as required by Georgia Environmental Finance Authority. The Agency also owns and utilizes diagnostic equipment with cutting-edge technology for pinpointing energy loss.
- The Agency has the capacity to quickly mobilize resources, including personnel. As a private non-profit, the Agency typically can respond in a timely and efficient manner to accomplish objectives in crisis situations or other times when a quick response is necessary.
- The Agency is among the 20 largest employers in terms of number of employees within the 14-county primary service area providing employment for more than 600 Southwest Georgians, providing significant support for the local tax base, and furthering economic diversity for the region.
- The Agency offers a very competitive fringe benefit package for employees including accruable paid annual and sick leave, nine paid holidays, health insurance, dental insurance, vision insurance, short and long-term disability insurance, life insurance, and a 401K tax deferred matching retirement plan.

Identified Agency Weaknesses/Needs

- It is recognized by the Agency Board and management staff that the Agency is not well known within all sectors of the community, particularly among elected officials and business leaders. There have been partnership and funding opportunities where the Agency has been overlooked simply due to a lack of awareness of and knowledge about the Agency. Board members and management staff routinely encounter public officials and private citizens from varying socio-economic backgrounds who have resided within the service area for most, if not all, of their lives and indicate that they have never heard of the Agency or do not realize that the Agency is responsible for a particular service. These comments are common despite extensive efforts to increase public awareness of the Agency. These efforts include maintenance of a dedicated Agency website, targeted mailing of a full-color annual report, Agency and Head Start/Early Head Start dedicated Facebook pages, distribution of informational brochures, and direct requests for each local county unit of government to appoint public representation to the Agency Board of Directors.
- The Agency has struggled to retain employees particularly in our Head Start program who obtain post-secondary degrees and decide to seek employment with local school systems for higher salaries than what we can afford to pay.
- CDCs open to parents and children at 8:00 each weekday morning. Of those responding to the applicable survey question, more than one-third (36.40%) indicate a need for child development services beginning before 7:30 a.m.
- CDCs close to parents and children at 2:30 p.m. each weekday (EHS is open until 3:00 p.m.). Of those responding to the applicable survey question, only (18.98%) indicate a need for child development services beyond 3:00 p.m. This is a significant reduction from the 2020 need at 60.67%.
- The Agency has struggled to maintain Early Head Start enrollment during the summer months due to lack of participation and excessive absences by enrolled participants.
- While the Agency derives funding from a variety of funding sources, more than 90% of funding is from federal sources. Greater diversification of funding sources would minimize fiscal instability in the event that federal funding priorities change due to economic downturns, foreign interests, political administration changes, military/defense actions, or other unforeseen factors that influence federal funding priorities.
- The Agency is commonly mistaken as a government agency that does not have to seek or compete for funding and has little or no accountability to funding sources.
- Although independent auditors and various funding sources have recognized the Agency as a *superbly run* organization, the Agency (as is the case with most nonprofits) is rarely accorded the same level of respect as for-profit/public organizations with comparable budgets and/or community economic and social impact.

Long-Range Agency Goals

- Increase public awareness of Agency and services Agency provides
- Expand Head Start services and refine service delivery:
 - serve more children ages 0-3 through Early Head Start
 - expand hours of service to include non-traditional morning and evening hours (extended day) at all CDCs
 - provide full year (including summer months) service at all CDCs
 - consolidate the number of CDCs in Dougherty County from six (6) to no more than four (4)
 - refine the fatherhood/male involvement program to foster an increase in male involvement at the CDCs
 - attain top designation for each CDC from the Bright From the Start STAR Quality Rated system
- Expand housing and energy services:
 - secure funding to expand weatherization services
 - secure funding to provide more housing rehabilitation/preservation
 - secure funding to provide first-time homeowner/down payment/loan assistance
 - begin offering housing counseling services and educational housing services to assist low-income families in becoming home owners and learning how to meet mortgage payments and properly maintain a home
 - pursue partnerships with lending institutions to bring more affordable housing opportunities to the service area
 - attain certification for housing counseling services
- Investigate and pursue opportunities to acquire/renovate/build and rent, sell, or manage quality low-income housing
- Enhance the NSC focus on comprehensive service delivery:
 - provide certified case manager training and periodic follow-up training for all NSC Community Services Managers
 - implement a credit counseling program
 - attain/maintain a minimum of two staff members with designation as Certified ROMA Implementers
 - attain/maintain one staff member with designation as a Certified ROMA Trainer
- Expand involvement in employment and training initiatives
- Upgrade facilities:
 - renovate existing facilities or secure new facilities for NSC locations in need of major structural repairs
 - renovate existing facilities or secure new facilities for CDC locations in need of major structural repairs
- Continue to maintain 100% compliance with all CSBG Organizational Standards



Head Start/Early Head Start Philosophy, Long-Range & Short-Range Program Objectives

The services of the Agency's Head Start/Early Head Start program are based on a philosophy that a child can benefit most from a comprehensive program designed to foster age-appropriate development and remedy problems that inhibit progress. The Agency recognizes that the child's entire family as well as the community must be involved in the education and growth stimulation process. Program design emphasizes the strengths and unique experiences of each child.

The family, perceived as the principle influence on the child's development, is a direct participant in the program. Local communities are encouraged to provide input on program design including goals, objectives, and standards for a comprehensive program. Program design is based on the premise that all children share certain needs and that children of eligible families, in particular, can benefit from a comprehensive development service to meet those needs.

The foremost goal of the program is to break the cycle of poverty by working with children to ensure that they are developmentally on pace for their age and working with their families to strengthen the family unit.

Long-range program objectives include:

- Continue CDC renovations to bring into compliance with local and state regulations by assessing facility needs and completing the bid process in a timely manner
- Consider the benefits of educating those involved in a child's life and provide funding for parents/care givers/guardians to attend educational institutions
- Increase Early Head Start authorization and number of participants served
- Establish summer enrichment programs to maintain contact with and meet the needs of existing families during the summer break for the purpose of maintaining continuity of services
- Attain top designation for all CDCs from the Bright from the Start STAR Rating System
- Increase school readiness in all Head Start/Early Head Start students
- Assist parents in identifying their strengths, fulfilling basic needs, and establishing and meeting personal and family goals
- Create a data plan that can be used as a tracking measure for Head Start students through the 3rd grade of public school

Short-range program objectives include:

- Link families to educational opportunities by collaborating with GED and diploma programs in each county
- Develop a succession plan for center managers and staff
- Increase community awareness of Head Start and Early Head Start program
- Increase parent participation at parent meetings
- Plan and establish school readiness goals
- Improve interpretation of assessment data that is used to track child development
- Increase Head Start/Early Head Start parental knowledge of their rights, responsibilities, and roles
- Maintain STAR designations for each of the 16 currently rated CDCs (15 are two Stars and one is a three Star) and obtain for the remaining six (in process) from the Bright From the Start STAR Rating System. Sumter CDC recently moved to a different facility and has not started the rating process.
- Identify any gaps in current data tracking system to ensure concise and consistent data dissemination to parents and other stake holders

- Train teachers on intentional teaching and well-organized, stimulating, and purposeful learning environments/materials
- Continue recruiting staff with diverse backgrounds
- Work with teachers on developing individualized plans for children based on ongoing assessments
- Partner with communities to promote community building, referrals, networking, and family/child advocacy
- Develop a system to link all child outcomes, aggregate, and analyze



Type of Component Services Most Needed, Program Option(s) Implemented
for Head Start/Early Head Start

Assessment of CA data reveals a need to either enhance or add the following types of component services:

- Increase Early Head Start (serving ages 0-3 years)
- Parenting classes for teens
- Male involvement/fatherhood programs
- Family literacy, including the establishment of linkages to existing family literacy programs
- Youth development (focus on older siblings of Head Start/Early Head Start children, particularly in the smallest communities where there are often no organized activities targeting youth)

Based on assessment of CA data, the Agency is either currently utilizing or striving to implement the following program options to more adequately meet current and emerging needs:

- Full year (12-month duration, *striving to implement in the future*)
- Full day (8-hour service day, *presently utilized at all CDCs*)
- Extended day (beyond 8-hour service day, *striving to implement in the future*)
- Center-based (*presently utilized, will continue utilizing for the foreseeable future*)



Head Start/Early Head Start Recruitment Area

The Agency is authorized to provide Head Start/Early Head Start services within an 18-county area that includes the following counties: Baker, Calhoun, Colquitt, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Lee, Marion, Miller, Mitchell, Schley, Seminole, Sumter, Terrell, Thomas, Webster, and Worth. These counties comprise the Head Start/Early Head Start recruitment area.

Criteria that define the types of children and families given priority in the local recruitment and selection process are based on guidelines found in the National Head Start Performance Standards and CA data that define the families most in need and most likely to benefit from Head Start services. The most significant recruitment challenges are the recruitment of 4-year-olds and the retention of Early Head Start participants (ages 0-3) during the summer months. Georgia's popular lottery-funded public pre-k program serves 4-year-olds at no cost to parents and receives substantial publicity statewide. Most lottery-funded pre-k programs in Southwest Georgia are provided through local public school systems. While Georgia's pre-k program does not provide the health service benefits that Head Start provides, parents often choose pre-k over Head Start due to convenience if they have other children attending public school. The school systems have also been very aggressive in their recruitment of 4-year-olds, and the public generally views public school systems as "the standard" for a quality education. In reality we are "competing" with public school systems for 4-year-olds. As a result, we struggle to recruit 4-year-olds and have a much larger population of 3-year-old children attend our program than 4-year-olds. The disproportionate number of 3-year-olds drives up costs because of the resulting impact on class sizes, staffing requirements, and space needs.

Retention of Early Head Start participants during the summer months has been a significant challenge since we initiated Early Head Start services years ago. Surveys indicate a need for services during the summer months, yet we have identified several factors that hinder recruitment and retention efforts. Parents of Early Head Start participants with school age siblings often indicate that they do not have affordable summer child care options for school age children and simply prefer to keep their Early Head Start eligible children at home with their siblings. The summer months also are typically busier months for families due to warm weather activities, travel, and vacations.

Due in part to sharply rising costs associated with the unstable U.S. economy, the current level of funding is inadequate to continue providing the current level of service to the full number of authorized children and families. Additional funding is needed to absorb the growing cost of doing business due to current economic conditions, salary increases due to employees achieving degrees of higher learning, and price volatility for necessities such as food and petroleum. Funding is also needed to secure space adequate to consolidate multiple Dougherty County sites rather than continue providing major repairs and upgrades to aging Dougherty County facilities that were inherited when the Agency was named the replacement grantee for Dougherty County in 2005. Consolidation of multiple sites will result in substantial cost savings over time due to upgrade of facilities, economies of scale, and elimination of duplicate staff positions. Permission was requested and ultimately received (February 2023) to reduce the regular Head Start enrollment number for the school year 2023-2024 to 1,601. The Early Head Start enrollment number remains 327. Total enrollment is 1,928. This authorization to serve fewer children and families aligned the annual cost per child within the average range for quality programs and yielded cost savings in the form of reduced staffing costs, food costs, health service costs, and bus fuel costs, among other savings.

SOUTHWEST GEORGIA COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, INC. COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conducted 2023

Justification of Program Design and Service Mix

Local demographics reveal a high rate of poverty, especially among the child population; a growing percentage of residents approaching retirement age; a growing Hispanic population; a large pool of Head Start eligible children and families; a large percentage of single parent households and births to single mothers; a high teen pregnancy rate and incidence of repeat births among teens; a high incidence of low birth weight births; low educational attainment among adults; a low high school graduation rate; below average SAT scores; a high percentage of families without health insurance, especially among the Hispanic population; limited public transportation options; and a lack of decent affordable housing, among other issues.

Assessment of community and Agency strengths and weaknesses points to the need for a well-rounded menu of services that address a spectrum of needs and provide flexibility to respond to ongoing and emerging needs to help low-income persons attain self-sufficiency. Therefore, the Agency has developed a well-rounded program design and service mix that provides inherent versatility in providing services to meet a variety of common needs among the low-income population and assist those willing to help themselves obtain a greater level of self-sufficiency. Furthermore, the Agency stands ready to develop and administer new and specialized services as needed. Services provided by the Agency fall under the following categories: Community Services, Housing and Energy, and Child Development.

Assessment of community survey results indicates that the Agency is targeting many of the identified service needs through the existing program design and mix of services. Given adequate funding, there are existing services that the Agency could expand and services the Agency is not currently providing that could be initiated to meet an even wider spectrum of needs.

Community Services

The top community service needs identified through the community survey were *job training & placement* (26.57% of all identified needs), *summer youth programs* (15.56%), *utility/rent/security deposit payment assistance* (15.37%), *meals on wheels* (14.72%), and *transportation* (14.63%).

Low-income elderly persons are often faced with the dilemma of having to choose between food, shelter, utilities, and medication when their financial resources are insufficient to meet all of their household costs. With a high poverty rate (15.4%), large and growing retired and elderly population (16.9% are ages 65 and above), and growing percentage of residents approaching retirement age (14.6% are ages 55-64 compared to 12.8% three years ago and 12.6% six years ago), the Agency provides many community services to assist low-income persons in maintaining independence. These services include the congregate and home delivered lunch service and rent and utility payment assistance, among other services.

In response to the growing retired and elderly population, high cost of health insurance, and rising costs for prescription medication, the Agency can also assist clients in availing prescription medication discount programs and other public services.

Almost one in three (30.9%) children under the age of 18 in Southwest Georgia lives in poverty. Nine (9) of 18 counties reporting exceed the State percentage of teens ages 16-19 who are high school dropouts. All 16 school systems reporting have an average SAT score lower than the state average. Fourteen (14) of the 20 school systems fall short of the state percentage of graduates eligible for the Georgia HOPE scholarship.

With the percentage of persons living below the poverty level in Southwest Georgia 7.8% higher than statewide (21.7% to 13.9%), community survey respondents ranked *utility/rent/security deposit payment assistance* third highest among a list of 25 potential community needs (ranked seventh highest in 2020). Per capita income is almost \$9,323 below statewide per capita income (\$25,193 to \$34,516). Almost one-fourth (21.3%) of Southwest Georgians receive Food Stamps compared to 11.9% statewide. The percentage of Southwest Georgians receiving TANF (1.90%) is higher than the statewide percentage (1.77%), as is the percentage of Southwest Georgians receiving SSI (2.1% and 1.2%). Persons living in poverty are more susceptible to crisis situations than those who do not because those in poverty have less financial resources when unforeseen expenses and circumstances arise. Therefore, the Agency provides a variety of services to assist in times of crisis. These services include assistance with past due rent and utilities, deposits, mortgage payments, food, clothing, case management, and referrals.

Local demographics and community survey results also support the need for additional community services provided by the Agency including Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) services and various other energy assistance services in addition to those provided through the Agency's Housing and Energy department.

Housing & Energy

The housing section of the community survey indicated a perceived need for affordable quality rental property and housing for purchase. Community survey respondents identified *rental prices too high* as the most important issue for low-income households among a list of 12 affordable housing issues. The issues identified most often were *rental prices too high* (46.30%); *not enough decent affordable housing available* (36.85%); *housing in poor condition/not enough energy efficient homes* (34.17%); *no new low-income homes underway* (28.43%); and *bad locations or blighted areas* (24.63%).

In regard to the need for first-time homebuyer assistance and housing counseling and education services, clients commonly indicate that they are capable of meeting monthly mortgage payments if they could obtain assistance in meeting down-payment requirements.

The Agency has provided home weatherization services through an in-house work crew for approximately 46 years. The focus of weatherization has been redefined in recent years. Sophisticated technical equipment is utilized to pinpoint home energy loss. Energy saving techniques, materials, and measures are then targeted to reduce or even eliminate energy loss. These measures include general home repairs such as weather-stripping, caulking, glazing, two-part insulating foam, insulation, duct sealing, window and door repair, installation of compact fluorescent or LED light bulbs and low-flow faucet aerators, installation of smoke and CO detectors, HVAC repair, water heater repair, plumbing repair, and detail carpentry to reduce home energy loss. Some work is subcontracted when it is more cost-effective to do so. Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA) added three counties (Clay, Quitman, Randolph) to our weatherization service area in February of 2011, raising the total number of counties served by our weatherization program to 17 and then added Dougherty County in 2015 for a total of 18. As a result, a growing waiting list of 9-12 months supports the need for continuation of weatherization services.

Increasing technical certification requirements imposed by GEFA are extremely expensive to maintain. These requirements combined with the current atmosphere of diminishing weatherization funding threatens our ability to maintain a weatherization service. These factors may force the Agency to forego continuation of weatherization services in the future if federal weatherization funding is not increased or additional funding streams are not secured.

The focus of our weatherization efforts has always been detached single family dwellings. However, multiple family units such as apartments and duplexes, are eligible for weatherization services if certain guidelines are met. The Agency has also provided housing restoration/preservation services since the late 1980s to repair

substandard housing conditions and will continue to seek funding and forge partnerships to continue and expand these services. Funding will be sought for *green* projects that focus on energy saving and environmentally friendly housing repair services to expand our capacity for services.

Funding will be sought and partnerships forged with local lending institutions to expand the housing and energy service mix to assist low-income persons in obtaining affordable home financing, including down-payment assistance and first-time homebuyer assistance. Funding will also be sought to develop and expand housing counseling and education services to advise the low-income population of housing options (rental and purchase) available to them and how to maintain and protect their investment after housing is obtained.

Child Development (Head Start/Early Head Start)

Head Start/Early Head Start meets many of the identified needs for childcare and child growth and development. The center-based program design allows parents in our predominantly rural service area the opportunity to seek and maintain employment, attend job training, improve parenting skills, and further their education. These opportunities form the foundation for attainment of personal and family self-sufficiency.

Demographics for the 18-county Head Start/Early Head Start service area indicate that 7,942 children under the age of 5 live below the poverty level and are income eligible for Head Start/Early Head Start services. This number represents more than one-third (33.5%) of all children in the area under the age of 5. If all of the approximately 12,345 available Pre-K and Private Day Care slots within the service area were filled with children ages 0-5, a total of 11,394 children ages 0-5 in the service area would remain unserved.

Head Start Child Development Centers (CDCs) open to parents and children at 8:00 each weekday morning. Of those responding to the applicable community survey question, only 8.80% indicated a need for child development services beginning before 7:30 a.m.

CDCs close to parents and children at 3:00 p.m. each weekday. Of those responding to the applicable survey question, 18.98% indicated a need for child development services beyond 3:00 p.m.

Community survey respondents ranked *child care* and *before/after-school programs* sixth and seventh highest among a list of 27 potential community needs. 16.57% of Community survey respondents indicate that they have to pay more than \$50 per week for child care. Twenty of the Agency's 21 Child Development Centers are licensed (excludes Sumter due to a recent move), providing the opportunity at these centers for the Agency to seek funding opportunities to provide free day care outside of Head Start school hours for older siblings of Head Start participants.

Approximately one in ten community survey respondents indicated that they did not have access to reliable transportation. As a center-based program in a rural area, we provide transportation to and from the CDCs in all counties except Dougherty, Early, Miller, and Seminole through a fleet of buses.

The need for fathers to take a more responsible, active, and significant role in the lives of their children has long been identified locally among families of Head Start children as a need. A significant improvement over past assessments is that only (14.72%) of community survey respondents who identified themselves as single parents indicated that the other parent (usually the father) was not an active part of their child's life. This could be a positive result of our Head Start program continually seeking avenues to foster involvement by fathers and males in the lives of children.

Our Male involvement program is designed to support and help fathers and other male figures to be actively involved in the education of their child/children in the Head Start/Early Head Start program. Our program focus is to increase the father's emotional and academic support to their child/children.

In 2015, our program implemented the Strong Fathers Strong Families curriculum in an effort to supplement our current male involvement program activities. The curriculum is designed to assist the fathers or male figures with having an impact on the education of their children while gaining a sense of awareness and accomplishment.

The monthly activities include science, math and reading activities, and parent/child social activities. Use of the curriculum has strengthened the bond between father figures and our program staff which is evident by the increase of males volunteering in the centers and serving on various program committees over the past three years.

**SOUTHWEST GEORGIA COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, INC.
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

Conducted 2023

Attachment A • Demographic Tables

■ Table 1

County	2021 Population Under Age 5**	2021 % Population Under Age 5***	2021 Estimated Population Under Age 5 Living in Poverty***	2021 Estimated % Population Under Age 5 Living in Poverty**	2021 Estimated Population Under Age 3***	Estimated Number Under Age 3 Income Eligible for Early Head Start***	Estimated Population Ages 3 & 4***	Estimated Number of Children Ages 3 & 4 Income Eligible for Head Start***
Baker	98	3.4%	13	13.3%	73	10	25	3
Calhoun	228	4.0%	93	40.8%	89	36	139	57
Colquitt	3,004	6.6%	1,216	41.2%	1,670	689	1,334	550
Decatur	1,969	6.8%	758	38.5%	1,075	414	894	344
Dougherty	5,568	6.4%	2,034	37.2%	3,341	1,243	2,227	829
Early	674	6.2%	164	24.9%	404	101	270	67
Grady	1,218	4.7%	325	26.7%	731	195	487	130
Lee	2,076	6.4%	432	20.8%	1,246	259	830	173
Marion	354	4.7%	115	32.5%	212	69	142	46
Miller	354	5.9%	164	46.3%	212	98	142	66
Mitchell	1,306	6.0%	631	51.0%	784	400	522	266
Schley	250	5.4%	70	28.0%	150	42	100	28
Seminole	398	4.4%	102	25.6%	239	61	159	41
Sumter	1,763	5.9%	475	27.6%	1,058	292	705	195
Terrell	520	5.7%	213	41.1%	312	128	208	85
Thomas	2,748	6.0%	888	32.6%	1,649	538	1,099	358
Webster	44	1.9%	0	0.0%	26	0	18	0
Worth	1,167	5.6%	121	11.1%	700	78	467	52
14 County Total	21,328	6.0%	7,154	34.1%	12,524	4,249	8,804	3,021
18 County Total	23,739	6.0%	7,814	33.4%	13,971	4,652	9,768	3,290
State	643,718	6.1%	147,411	22.9%				

Source: U.S. Census Bureau or (*) based on Census data

** Source: Georgia County Guide or (***) based on Georgia County Guide Data

■ Table 2

County	Population Estimate 2021	Population Estimate 2018	2021 % Persons Under Age 18	2021 % Persons Ages 18-64	2021 % Persons Ages 18-54	2021 % Persons Ages 55-64	2021 % Persons Age 65 & Older	2021 Median Age
Baker	2,928	3,189	18.3%	52.8%	39.4%	13.4%	28.9%	51.2
Calhoun	5,668	6,428	17.0%	67.4%	54.8%	12.7%	15.6%	4.0
Colquitt	45,800	45,606	26.1%	58.5%	46.8%	11.7%	15.3%	37.4
Decatur	29,020	26,833	24.6%	59.3%	46.0%	13.3%	16.1%	37.9
Dougherty	86,825	91,049	23.8%	60.3%	48.0%	12.3%	15.9%	35.8
Early	10,813	10,348	24.7%	56.4%	42.8%	13.6%	18.9%	40.3
Grady	26,076	24,926	24.8%	57.0%	43.4%	13.6%	18.3%	39.4
Lee	32,547	29,348	26.4%	60.6%	48.8%	11.8%	13.0%	37.5
Marion	7,563	8,484	20.9%	58.5%	41.5%	17.0%	20.6%	45.2
Miller	5,984	5,836	23.0%	55.9%	41.8%	14.0%	21.1%	43.2
Mitchell	21,940	22,432	22.6%	60.4%	47.3%	13.1%	16.9%	39.1
Schley	4,622	5,211	22.8%	62.2%	50.7%	11.5%	15.0%	38.5
Seminole	9,108	8,437	19.9%	57.0%	41.6%	15.4%	23.1%	45.7
Sumter	29,690	30,352	22.7%	60.3%	48.2%	12.1%	17.0%	37.0
Terrell	9,102	8,859	23.1%	57.5%	43.2%	14.3%	19.4%	40.8
Thomas	45,669	44,730	23.8%	58.3%	44.5%	13.7%	17.9%	39.9
Webster	2,372	2,613	22.0%	60.0%	47.0%	13.1%	18.0%	39.6
Worth	20,824	20,656	22.1%	58.6%	43.7%	14.9%	19.3%	43.2
14 County Total	352,304	348,677	24.1%	58.6%	51.9%	13.4%	18.6%	40.8
18 County Total	396,551	395,337	23.9%	59.2%	46.3%	13.0%	16.9%	40.7
State	10,625,615	10,297,484	24.3%	62.6%	50.6%	12.4%	13.9%	37.1

Source: Georgia County Guide

■ Table 3

County	2021 Per Capita Income	2021 Median Household Income	2020 % Population Receiving SSI	2021 % Population Receiving SNAP	2021 TANF Recipients as % of Population
Baker	\$22,872	\$33,417	1.9%	12.8%	0.83%
Calhoun	\$16,401	\$43,549	2.3%	33.9%	1.40%
Colquitt	\$23,408	\$41,623	2.1%	17.6%	2.50%
Decatur	\$24,108	\$45,134	2.5%	20.7%	1.11%
Dougherty	\$24,402	\$42,225	2.8%	25.9%	1.80%
Early	\$22,393	\$39,665	2.8%	23.5%	1.50%
Grady	\$25,523	\$47,721	2.0%	22.2%	2.00%
Lee	\$31,470	\$74,935	0.9%	8.0%	1.00%
Marion	\$23,694	\$47,250	1.6%	19.9%	3.90%
Miller	\$26,933	\$51,983	2.5%	18.3%	4.10%
Mitchell	\$22,087	\$43,427	2.2%	32.6%	2.50%
Schley	\$23,083	\$50,586	1.3%	19.8%	0.75%
Seminole	\$30,218	\$40,579	2.5%	19.4%	3.00%
Sumter	\$21,437	\$36,687	2.2%	23.3%	2.90%
Terrell	\$21,109	\$38,879	2.9%	25.2%	2.00%
Thomas	\$29,912	\$52,315	2.4%	19.2%	1.30%
Webster	\$20,056	\$32,083	1.6%	22.0%	1.70%
Worth	\$26,819	\$54,791	1.6%	17.6%	2.30%
14 County Total	\$24,833		2.2%	21.2%	1.95%
18 County Total	\$25,193		2.1%	21.3%	1.90%
State	\$34,516	\$65,030	1.2%	11.9%	1.77%

Source: Community Action Partnership Assessment Tool

■ Table 4

<i>County</i>	<i>2021 % Population Below Poverty Level*</i>	<i>2021 % People Under Age 18 Below Poverty Level</i>	<i>2021 % Family Households</i>	<i>20216-2020 % Non-Family Households</i>	<i>2016-2020 Average Population per Household</i>	<i>2016-2020 Average Population per Family</i>
Baker	25.1	23.7	59.8	40.2	2.1	2.8
Calhoun	26.1	33.6	71.0	29.0	2.6	3.0
Colquitt	23.9	34.1	65.5	34.5	2.8	3.5
Decatur	21.0	30.8	69.6	30.4	2.6	3.2
Dougherty	26.3	37.6	51.8	48.2	2.5	3.2
Early	25.0	38.7	65.7	34.3	2.4	3.0
Grady	17.5	24.7	68.3	31.7	2.7	3.2
Lee	9.9	14.7	80.1	19.9	2.7	3.1
Marion	13.5	15.4	69.0	31.0	2.4	2.9
Miller	22.7	36.8	68.6	31.4	2.4	2.9
Mitchell	26.5	39.7	62.8	37.2	2.5	3.0
Schley	17.3	20.4	78.6	21.4	2.8	3.2
Seminole	24.8	27.2	65.4	34.6	2.4	3.0
Sumter	24.2	29.9	61.1	37.1	2.4	3.1
Terrell	30.1	47.1	68.2	31.8	2.5	3.0
Thomas	17.2	25.9	68.0	32.0	2.5	3.0
Webster	29.4	39.9	60.1	39.9	2.3	3.2
Worth	18.5	29.0	72.2	27.8	2.5	2.9
14 County Total	21.8	31.7	66.9	33.07		
18 County Total	21.7	30.9	66.2	32.0		
State	13.9	19.6	66.7	33.3	2.70	3.3

Source: US Census Bureau

■ Table 5

County	2016-2020 % Female Headed Family Households w/o Husband	2021 Substantiated Incidents of Child Abuse & Neglect Rate per 1,000 Children	2021 Teen Pregnancies Cumulative Number Ages 10-19	2021 Teen Pregnancy Total Rate¹	2021 Low Weight Birth Rate/ 100 Births²
Baker	9.7%	0.0	2	*	LNE
Calhoun	23.2%	0.0	4	*	22.6
Colquitt	13.3%	18.0	63	19.8	12.0
Decatur	16.3%	24.0	30	15.6	17.3
Dougherty	24.5%	28.0	110	17.5	13.6
Early	20.0%	20.0	18	24.2	13.3
Grady	11.3%	36.0	28	16.0	12.3
Lee	11.0%	12.0	18	7.4	11.1
Marion	8.8%	39.0	4	*	12.7
Miller	14.2%	43.0	3	*	9.3
Mitchell	22.0%	14.0	16	12.5	9.7
Schley	9.0%	40.0	4	*	11.5
Seminole	9.1%	14.0	10	18.9	18.9
Sumter	18.1%	11.0	39	17.9	15.6
Terrell	16.1%	LNE	15	27.5	16.0
Thomas	16.3%	27.0	46	15.2	11.9
Webster	7.7%	33.0	0	0.0	LNE
Worth	13.9%	17.0	15	11.6	8.9
14 County Total	15.8%		378		
18 County Total	14.7%		425		
State	11.7%	23.0		12.3	12.0

¹ Teen Pregnancy Rate = (Total Teen Pregnancies / Total Females Age 10-19) X 1,000

² Low birth rate is defined as a live birth with a weight of less than 2,500 grams, or approximately 5.8 pounds.

LNE (Low Number Event): Used instead of a rate when the number of events is greater than 0 and less than 5.

* Rate based on 1-4 events not shown and indicated by an *

Source: Georgia County Guide

■ Table 6

County	2022 % Population White	2022 % Population Black or African American	2022 % Population Hispanic or Latino (of any race)*	2022 Actual Population Hispanic or Latino (of any race)*	2018 % of 18 County Hispanic or Latino (of any race)*	2018 % of 14 County Hispanic or Latino (of any race)*	2018 % Population Hispanic or Latino (of any race)*	2018 Actual Population Hispanic or Latino (of any race)*
Baker	53.7%	42.1%	6.8%	199	0.67%	0.75%	4.2%	134
Calhoun	35.2%	61.5%	5.2%	295	1.30%	1.47%	4.7%	299
Colquitt	72.1%	24.0%	20.5%	9,389	36.83%	41.43%	19.0%	8,662
Decatur	54.1%	42.7%	6.9%	2,002	6.90%	7.76%	5.9%	1,577
Dougherty	25.4%	71.1%	3.2%	2,778	10.57%	11.89%	2.7%	2,487
Early	45.1%	52.2%	2.5%	270	0.94%	1.06%	2.2%	229
Grady	66.6%	29.3%	12.1%	3,155	12.48%	14.04%	11.1%	2,774
Lee	70.9%	24.6%	3.4%	1,107	3.19%	3.59%	2.9%	89
Marion	64.0%	30.6%	8.2%	620	2.55%	NA	7.1%	603
Miller	68.5%	28.6%	3.4%	203	0.51%	0.57%	0.6%	34
Mitchell	49.5%	47.5%	5.3%	1,163	4.57%	5.14%	4.5%	1,016
Schley	75.3%	19.8%	6.2%	287	0.96%	NA	5.1%	268
Seminole	64.6%	32.9%	3.8%	346	1.11%	1.25%	3.1%	260
Sumter	43.6%	53.2%	6.1%	1,811	7.13%	NA	5.4%	1,644
Terrell	38.0%	59.3%	2.9%	264	0.97%	1.09%	2.7%	242
Thomas	60.2%	36.6%	4.0%	1,827	6.94%	7.81%	3.7%	1,651
Webster	54.1%	42.5%	5.2%	123	0.80%	NA	9.6%	250
Worth	68.9%	28.5%	2.6%	541	1.92%	2.16%	2.1%	431
14 County Total	55.2%	41.5%	5.9%	23,539		14.00%	5.0%	20,635
18 County Total	56.1%	40.4%	6.0%	26,380	5.90%		5.9%	23,400
State	59.4%	33.0%	10.2%				9.4%	

Source: U. S. Census

* Persons of Hispanic/Latino Origin may be of any race.

■ Table 7

County	2017 - 2021 % Children Ages 3 4 Not Attending Preschool	First Births to Mothers Age 20 and Older w/ 12 Yrs. Ed. (Percent) 2021	2016 - 2020 % Children 18 & Under Living in Families Where No Parent Has Full- time, Year-round	2017 - 2021 % Children Without Health Insurance
Baker	0.0%	84.6%	6.0%	2.0%
Calhoun	8.0%	84.6%	2.1%	8.2%
Colquitt	63.3%	70.5%	9.1%	12.7%
Decatur	46.6%	77.7%	11.0%	5.2%
Dougherty	35.7%	79.1%	10.4%	6.3%
Early	56.4%	68.8%	18.5%	0.9%
Grady	47.8%	65.3%	16.8%	13.8%
Lee	57.1%	85.2%	3.5%	4.0%
Marion	36.4%	85.7%	9.0%	4.2%
Miller	71.6%	83.3%	6.2%	5.5%
Mitchell	63.0%	79.7%	15.0%	11.0%
Schley	29.0%	84.2%	9.5%	4.8%
Seminole	57.8%	73.2%	14.9%	4.9%
Sumter	44.9%	74.0%	10.2%	4.4%
Terrell	28.1%	60.9%	22.3%	4.8%
Thomas	54.7%	73.6%	9.2%	8.5%
Webster	0.0%	100.0%	18.9%	19.4%
Worth	47.2%	76.3%	6.9%	7.3%
18 County Total				
State	51.9%	84.9%	7.5%	7.4%

Source: Georgia KIDS COUNT

■ Table 8

School System or County	2016-2020 % Students Who Graduate From High School On Time¹	2016 - 2020 % Teens Ages 16-19 Who Are High School Dropouts²	2016 - 2020 % Teens Ages 16-19 Who Are Not in School and Not Working³	2016 - 2020 % Adults Ages 25 and Older With at Least a High School Diploma or Equivalency	2016 - 2020 % Adults Ages 25 and Older With at Least a Bachelor's Degree
Baker	91.7%	2.8%	2.8%	83.2%	21.4%
Calhoun	88.4%	4.5%	21.5%	75.5%	11.8%
Colquitt	84.2%	3.8%	11.7%	74.6%	13.7%
Decatur	88.9%	5.9%	39.8%	82.9%	14.0%
Dougherty	86.2%	6.1%	12.5%	84.4%	22.2%
Early	91.3%	14.4%	0.7%	81.0%	13.7%
Grady	92.3%	2.8%	4.2%	81.3%	15.3%
Lee	93.6%	4.5%	6.3%	92.2%	27.1%
Marion	84.9%	4.5%	10.3%	80.0%	13.4%
Miller	96.0%	8.9%	14.0%	85.4%	18.6%
Mitchell	90.9%	3.5%	7.5%	79.9%	11.7%
Schley	97.7%	5.9%	5.9%	85.8%	12.1%
Seminole	90.9%	8.6%	10.2%	84.3%	15.4%
Sumter	92.3%	4.6%	6.0%	84.2%	20.0%
Terrell	88.9%	1.9%	4.1%	76.5%	10.2%
Thomas	90.2%	4.3%	7.2%	86.1%	24.1%
Webster	100.0%	24.6%	34.4%	79.6%	11.0%
Worth	85.7%	9.9%	18.2%	85.0%	10.3%
Pelham City	80.4%				
Thomasville City	80.3%				
State	83.7%	4.6%	7.6%	87.9%	32.2%

¹ Definition: Percentage of students who graduate within four years.

² Definition: Percentage of students ages 16-19 who are not enrolled in school and are not high school graduates.

³ Definition: Percentage of students ages 16-19 who are not in the Armed Forces, are not enrolled in school, and are not employed.

LNE (Low Number Event): Indicates 4 or fewer events on which rates would be based.

* Rates based on 1-4 events are not shown.

Source: Georgia KIDS COUNT

■ Table 9

County	2018 % Pregnancies Among Teens Ages 15-19 that are Repeat Pregnancies	2021 % Births Among Teens Ages 15-19 that are Repeat Births	2021 Very Low Birthweight Births (<1500 grams) as % of Total Births	2021 Low Birthweight Births (<2500 grams) as % of Total Births	2021 % Premature Births (<37 Weeks Gestation)	2021 % Births to Females with Less Than 12 Years Education	2021 Births to Unmarried Females as % of Total Births
Baker	*	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*	63.6%
Calhoun	*	0.0%	0.0%	22.6%	*	*	80.6%
Colquitt	22.8%	22.8%	*	12.0%	17.5%	56.1%	58.5%
Decatur	*	*	0.0%	17.3%	*	43.3%	65.8%
Dougherty	10.0*%	10.0%	*	13.6%	15.5%	46.5%	74.1%
Early	*	*	0.0%	13.3%	*	37.5%	70.8%
Grady	*	*	*	12.3%	*	53.8%	59.9%
Lee	*	*	*	11.1%	*	52.9%	40.4%
Marion	*	*	0.0%	12.7%	0.0%	*	49.1%
Miller	*	0.0%	0.0%	9.3%	0.0%	*	48.1%
Mitchell	*	*	*	9.7%	*	53.3%	65.5%
Schley	*	*	0.0%	11.5%	0.0%	*	38.5%
Seminole	*	*	0.0%	18.9%	*	*	60.0%
Sumter	22.6%	22.6%	*	15.6%	25.0%	31.3%	66.1%
Terrell	*	0.0%	0.0%	16.0%	*	*	72.8%
Thomas	16.7%	16.7%	*	11.9%	*	31.0%	54.5%
Webster	*	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%	43.8%
Worth	*	*	0.0%	8.9%	*	53.3%	51.2%
18 County Total	18.0%	14.5%	3.1%	13.5%	13.6%	45.2%	59.1%
State	13.8%	13.8%	2.1%	10.6%	11.7%	45.2%	45.8%

* Rates based on 1-4 events are not shown.

Source: Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Public Health – Office of Health Indicators for Planning
Georgia County Guide

■ Table 10

School System	2021-2022 Rate of Dropouts Grades 9-12	2022 Graduation Rate	2021-22 Highest SAT Average Scores	% 2021-22 Graduates Eligible for HOPE Scholarship	2021-2022 % Students Enrolled in Early Intervention Program Grades K-5	2021-2022 % Students Enrolled in Remedial Education Grades 6-8	2021-2022 % Students Enrolled in Remedial Education Grades 9-12
Baker	1.2%	81.0%	TFS	47.1%	10.1%	100.0%	0.0%
Calhoun	4.3%	85.0%	TFS	27.6%	42.8%	96.3%	31.5%
Colquitt	2.2%	87.1%	976	37.2%	50.8%	26.3%	21.2%
Decatur	2.3%	90.4%	989	32.4%	31.3%	39.1%	23.6%
Dougherty	2.2%	87.1%	886	32.3%	55.3%	38.0%	22.9%
Early	3.4%	85.0%	1001	51.1%	43.3%	36.4%	42.6%
Grady	1.8%	89.0%	971	52.6%	3.4%	14.3%	10.3%
Lee	1.8%	90.9%	1017	55.9%	23.4%	20.6%	10.5%
Marion	2.2%	87.4%	932	42.9%	14.8%	45.5%	6.3%
Miller	1.9%	92.6%	TFS	44.0%	19.0%	29.7%	24.7%
Mitchell	5.9%	86.3%	923	37.5%	47.0%	70.0%	43.4%
Schley	0.5%	97.2%	1023	68.6%	25.4%	20.4%	0.0%
Seminole	1.3%	93.9%	957	51.6%	47.8%	25.6%	5.0%
Sumter	0.0%	95.7%	924	27.3%	37.7%	24.2%	7.6%
Terrell	1.2%	87.7%	887	31.4%	33.8%	49.4%	30.1%
Thomas	0.1%	93.7%	1013	35.2%	23.5%	45.1%	33.2%
Webster	0.0%	100.0%	TFS	52.9%	11.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Worth	2.5%	80.6%	949	41.2%	27.1%	79.6%	4.7%
Pelham City	3.5%	81.7%	926	37.8%	67.7%	15.2%	13.0%
Thomasville City	2.3%	82.7%	1024	43.9%	28.1%	24.4%	18.8%
State	3.4%	84.1%	1032	49.8%	26.8%	19.7%	11.3%

TFS: Too few to score; less than 10 students

Source: Georgia Department of Education Georgia Public Education Report Card provided by The Governor's Office of Student Achievement

■ Table 11

County	2020 Total Index Crime Rate/ 100,000 Population	2021 Juvenile Court Commitment Rate/ 1,000 At-risk Youth Ages 10-16	2021 Population	2020 Total Index Crimes	2021 Juvenile Commitments	2021 Pop At-risk Ages 10-16
Baker	no data	-	2,928	-	-	311
Calhoun	96.90	-	5,668	6	-	664
Colquitt	1,365.10	1.50	45,800	623	10	6,599
Decatur	3,113.20	0.60	29,020	822	2	3,485
Dougherty	4,829.70	2.10	86,825	4,248	26	12,296
Early	3,012.80	-	10,813	307	-	1,408
Grady	2,439.80	0.60	26,076	601	2	3,350
Lee	1,613.80	0.90	32,547	484	4	4,554
Marion	442.60	-	7,563	37	-	1,316
Miller	-	-	5,984	-	-	715
Mitchell	2,090.30	1.80	21,940	457	5	2,711
Schley	342.40	-	4,622	18	-	798
Seminole	1,508.00	-	9,108	122	-	922
Sumter	3,471.80	1.00	29,690	1,025	4	4,165
Terrell	1,066.70	3.70	9,102	91	4	1,081
Thomas	2,236.20	0.30	4,566	994	2	5,829
Webster	-	-	2,372	-	-	293
Worth	1,600.20	0.40	20,824	324	1	2,459
14 County	1,920.90	0.78	352,304	9,079	56	46,384
18 County	1,719.40	1.20	396,551	10,159	60	52,956
State	1,419.80	0.60	10,625,615	163,398	898	1,458,842

Index (*Part 1*) crimes are considered serious crimes, while
 Non-index (*Part 2*) crimes are considered non-serious crimes.
 Source: Georgia County Guide

■ Table 12

<i>County</i>	2019 Total Housing Units	2016-2020 % Vacant Housing Units*	2019 Rental Vacancy Rate	2020 % Owner-Occupied Housing Units	2020 % Renter-Occupied Housing Units
Baker	1,664	21.3%	1.3%	68.4%	31.6%
Calhoun	2,406	28.0%	3.0%	68.0%	32.0%
Colquitt	18,753	15.2%	7.1%	62.3%	37.7%
Decatur	12,245	20.7%	4.4%	61.3%	38.7%
Dougherty	40,507	15.6%	7.8%	45.9%	54.1%
Early	4,981	15.7%	3.6%	67.5%	32.5%
Grady	10,947	16.4%	2.1%	65.8%	34.2%
Lee	11,543	7.0%	2.8%	76.7%	23.3%
Marion	4,239	19.0%	2.8%	75.9%	24.1%
Miller	2,748	15.2%	2.6%	66.5%	33.5%
Mitchell	9,087	11.8%	1.3%	62.8%	37.2%
Schley	2,230	17.0%	1.8%	77.1%	22.9%
Seminole	4,813	30.6%	3.2%	66.0%	34.0%
Sumter	13,879	17.7%	9.6%	57.7%	42.3%
Terrell	4,165	19.4%	1.2%	56.0%	44.0%
Thomas	20,896	14.6%	3.9%	62.3%	37.7%
Webster	1,544	27.4%	11.2%	87.2%	12.8%
Worth	9,370	14.7%	4.4%	69.6%	30.4%
14 County Total	154,125	17.6%	3.5%	64.2%	35.8%
18 County Total	176,017	18.2%	4.1%	66.5%	33.5%
State	4,378,391	11.5%	6.5%	64.0%	36.0%

A significant number of the housing units in Seminole and Webster counties are for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau (taken from Georgia County Guide)

■ Table 13

	2016 Total Housing Units	2019 Total Housing Units	Total Housing Units Change 2016 - 2019	Total Housing Units % Change 2016 - 2019	2019 Housing Density Per Square Mile of Land Area	2016-2020 Mobile Homes as % of Total Housing Units	2016-2020 % Owner-Occupied Housing Units
Baker	1,757	1,664	-93	0.8%	4.9	25.6%	68.4%
Calhoun	2,374	2,406	32	-2.0%	8.6	28.9%	68.0%
Colquitt	18,289	18,753	464	2.3%	34.3	29.5%	62.3%
Decatur	12,120	12,245	125	1.0%	20.5	19.2%	61.3%
Dougherty	40,713	40,507	-206	-0.7%	123.3	4.2%	45.9%
Early	4,924	4,981	57	0.1%	9.7	27.1%	67.5%
Grady	10,668	10,947	279	1.6%	24.1	30.0%	65.8%
Lee	10,682	11,543	-139	12.1%	32.4	11.2%	76.7%
Marion	4,112	4,239	127	1.9%	11.6	35.4%	75.9%
Miller	2,749	2,748	-1	-1.6%	9.7	27.0%	66.5%
Mitchell	8,948	9,087	139	0.9%	17.7	21.3%	62.8%
Schley	2,183	2,230	47	0.9%	13.4	30.0%	77.1%
Seminole	4,785	4,813	72	0.3%	20.3	33.0%	66.0%
Sumter	13,833	13,874	41	-20.0%	28.7	14.6%	57.7%
Terrell	4,167	4,165	-2	0.0%	12.4	14.4%	56.0%
Thomas	20,323	20,896	574	3.5%	38.4	18.1%	62.3%
Webster	1,365	1,544	179	1.4%	7.4	44.8%	87.2%
Worth	9,205	9,370	165	1.3%	16.4	32.9%	69.6%
14 County Total	151,704	117,668	1,466	0.6%	26.6	23.0%	64.2%
18 County Total	173,197	139,555	1,860	1.5%	24.1	24.8%	66.5%
State	4,156,518	4,378,391	221,873	7.0%	75.9	8.6%	64.0%

Source: Georgia County Guide

■ Table 14 - Calculation of Housing Wage for a Home in the 18-County Southwest Georgia Service Area

Monthly Rent	Minimum Hourly Salary Needed to Afford Monthly Rent Working 40 Hours per Week*	Minimum Annual Salary Needed to Afford Monthly Rent Working 40 Hours per Week*	Working for Minimum Wage of \$7.25, the Number of Hours per Week Necessary to Afford Rent	The Number of Minimum Wage Earners Working 40 Hours per Week Year-round Needed to Afford Rent
\$550	\$10.58	\$22,000	59	1.46
\$600	\$11.54	\$24,000	64	1.59
\$650	\$12.50	\$26,000	69	1.72
\$700	\$13.46	\$28,000	75	1.86
\$750	\$14.42	\$30,000	80	1.99
\$800	\$15.38	\$32,000	110	2.75
\$850	\$16.35	\$34,000	117	2.93
\$900	\$17.31	\$36,000	124	3.10
\$950	\$18.27	\$38,000	131	3.28
\$1,000	\$19.23	\$40,000	145	3.63

* Based on the generally accepted standard utilized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that rental housing is considered affordable if it costs no more than 30% of the renter's gross income.

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition

■ Table 15

	<i>Fair Market Rent for 2 Bedroom Housing</i>	<i>Annual Income Needed to Afford 2 Bedroom Fair Market Rent</i>	<i>Hourly Wage at 40 Hours/Week Needed to Afford 2 Bedroom Fair Market Rent</i>	<i>Work Hours/Week Necessary at Minimum Wage (\$7.25) to Afford 2 Bedroom Fair Market Rent</i>
Baker	\$704	\$28,160	\$13.54	97
Calhoun	\$704	\$28,160	\$13.54	97
Colquitt	\$704	\$28,160	\$13.54	97
Decatur	\$704	\$28,160	\$13.54	97
Dougherty	\$810	\$32,400	\$15.58	112
Early	\$704	\$28,160	\$13.54	97
Grady	\$723	\$28,920	\$13.90	100
Lee	\$810	\$32,400	\$15.58	112
Marion	\$827	\$33,080	\$15.90	114
Miller	\$704	\$28,160	\$13.54	97
Mitchell	\$704	\$28,160	\$13.54	97
Schley	\$704	\$28,160	\$13.54	97
Seminole	\$770	\$30,800	\$14.81	106
Sumter	\$748	\$29,920	\$14.38	103
Terrell	\$810	\$32,400	\$15.58	112
Thomas	\$839	\$33,560	\$16.13	116
Webster	\$704	\$28,160	\$13.54	97
Worth	\$810	\$32,400	\$15.58	112
State	\$1,090	\$43,618	\$20.97	150

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition

■ Table 16

County	2014-2018 Population Density Per Square Mile of Land Area	2020 Population Density Per Square Mile of Land Area	Area in Square Miles	% Population Rural	2021 Total Road Mileage	2020 % Total Road Mileage Unpaved
Baker	9.3	10.1	342.0	100.0%	359.0	49.2%
Calhoun	22.9	23.9	280.4	100.0%	357.0	35.8%
Colquitt	83.4	83.6	547.0	62.8%	1172.0	32.6%
Decatur	44.9	46.6	597.2	57.0%	995.0	33.6%
Dougherty	277.0	287.7	328.6	57.7%	836.0	3.9%
Early	20.2	21.5	512.6	13.4%	712.0	40.2%
Grady	54.8	55.0	454.5	65.5%	808.0	31.5%
Lee	82.5	79.5	355.9	62.1%	543.0	27.7%
Marion	23.2	23.9	366.0	50.5%	493.0	25.2%
Miller	20.7	21.7	282.4	100.0%	462.0	49.0%
Mitchell	43.8	45.9	512.2	52.1%	911.0	37.7%
Schley	31.2	30.0	166.9	100.0%	253.0	33.6%
Seminole	35.5	37.1	237.5	72.1%	457.0	36.6%
Sumter	62.9	68.0	482.9	43.3%	815.0	21.2%
Terrell	26.4	27.8	335.7	54.8%	510.0	37.6%
Thomas	82.1	82.1	544.6	50.1%	1000.0	23.8%
Webster	12.5	13.4	209.4	100.0%	261.0	33.1%
Worth	36.2	38.0	570.7	70.0%	1021.0	47.4%
Total	53.9	56.1	7126.5		11965.0	
State	178.8	168.4	57594.8	28.4%	125711.0	22.7%

Source: Georgia County Guide; US Census, GA DOT

■ Table 17

<i>County</i>	<i>2021 Number of Licensed Child Day Care Centers</i>	<i>2021 Total Capacity of Licensed Child Day Care Centers</i>	<i>2018 Number of Licensed Child Day Care Centers</i>	<i>2018 Total Capacity of Licensed Child Day Care Centers</i>
Baker	1	75	1	0
Calhoun	1	92	1	92
Colquitt	21	2,187	21	1880
Decatur	8	538	8	364
Dougherty	57	4,103	65	5155
Early	3	167	3	86
Grady	9	417	10	433
Lee	8	773	8	721
Marion	2	243	2	243
Miller	3	230	4	200
Mitchell	7	287	8	362
Schley	1	66	1	61
Seminole	4	449	4	449
Sumter	11	949	10	630
Terrell	3	159	3	159
Thomas	14	1,415	15	1356
Webster	0	0	0	0
Worth	6	470	6	295
14 County Total	145	11,362	157	11,552
18 County Total	159	12,620	170	12,486

Source: Georgia County Guide

**SOUTHWEST GEORGIA COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, INC.
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

Conducted 2023

Attachment B • Survey Instrument & Chart of Survey Results

SOUTHWEST GEORGIA COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, INC.
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SURVEY FORM

The purpose of this survey is to find out what services YOU feel are most needed in your community. Your answers will assist Southwest Georgia Community Action Council in identifying community needs and planning and developing services to meet those needs. Do not put your name on this form. Please answer all questions that you feel comfortable answering.

County You Live In: _____ Sex: Male Female
Age: _____ Race: _____ Ethnicity: Hispanic/Latino _____ Not Hispanic/Latino _____
Last Grade Completed or Degree Obtained: _____

SECTION I: Community Services

What do you feel are the top three service needs in your community? Put a check mark in the box beside the three services you feel are most needed. Please read through the entire list before you make your decision. Remember to choose only three.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Training & Placement | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Screenings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy Education/GED Classes | <input type="checkbox"/> Budget/Money Management Counseling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English/Spanish Classes | <input type="checkbox"/> Energy Conservation Counseling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting Classes | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Weatherization/Restoration/Repair Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Counseling/Education Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Before/After-School Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> First Time Home Buyer Assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Head Start/Preschool Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teen Pregnancy Prevention | <input type="checkbox"/> Utility/Rent/Security Deposit Payment Assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Mentoring/Citizenship Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless Prevention Services & Shelters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Summer Youth Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Food Pantries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elderly Daycare/Caregiver Assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Abuse Shelters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meals on Wheels | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Prevention/Treatment Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Do you have reliable transportation or access to reliable transportation? YES NO
Do you have health care insurance coverage? YES NO

SECTION II: Housing

What do you feel are the top three affordable housing issues for low-income households in your community? Put a check mark in the box beside the three issues you feel are most important. Please read through the entire list before you make your decision. Remember to choose only three.

- bad locations or blighted areas
- housing in poor condition/not enough energy efficient homes
- building code enforcement too lenient
- rental prices too high
- rent increases too much if income increases
- not enough decent affordable housing available
- no new low-income homes underway
- not enough Public Housing
- public Housing DEPOSIT too high
- need for first-time home buyer/down-payment assistance
- too difficult to get housing loans or do not understand loan options
- need for housing counseling on budgeting, down-payment, upkeep, financing options
- other: _____

SOUTHWEST GEORGIA COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, INC.
FORMULARIO PARA EVALUAR SERVICIOS DE AYUDA EN LA COMUNIDAD

El propósito de esta inspección es de averiguar qué servicio USTED más necesita en su comunidad. Su respuesta nos ayudara Southwest Georgia Community Action Council y conociendo necesidades y planeando y desarrollando servicios para encontrar esas necesidades. No ponga su nombre en esta forma. Por favor conteste todas las preguntas que se sienta más cómodo contestario.

La comunicad que usted vive: _____ Sexo: Masculino Feminino

Edad: _____ Raza: _____ Ultimo grado completado o grado obtenido: _____

SECCIÓN I: Servicio a la Comunidad

¿Cuales servicios siente usted que son las tres primeras necesidades más necesitadas en su comunidad? Ponga una marca en el lado de los tres servicios que usted se siente que es más necesitado. Lea por favor la lista entera antes que tome su decisión. Recuerde de escoger solo tres.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> El trabajo que entrena y colocación | <input type="checkbox"/> Detección de salud |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educación de capacidad de leer y escribir/clases de GED | <input type="checkbox"/> Como manejar su dinero |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clase de Ingles/Español | <input type="checkbox"/> Consejos de coma conservar energía |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clase de cuidar los niños | <input type="checkbox"/> Restauración/Servicio de reparación |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lugar para cuidar a los niños | <input type="checkbox"/> A cosejar casa propia/servicio de rearación |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Antes/Después programas de escuela | <input type="checkbox"/> Ayuda a comprar casa paraprimer vez |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Head Start/Servicios de jardín | <input type="checkbox"/> Vivienda razonable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prevención de embarazo de jóvenes | <input type="checkbox"/> Utilidad/Renta/Ayuda de pago de depósito de seguridad |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentores para jóvenes/desarrollo de ciudadanía | <input type="checkbox"/> Servicio para prevención sin hogar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Programa de verano para la juventud | <input type="checkbox"/> Despensas de alimento de emergencia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ayuda para los de edad avanzada | <input type="checkbox"/> El abuso domestic se refugia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Servicio de comida a domicilio | <input type="checkbox"/> Prevención de abuso de sustancia/servicio de tratamiento |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportación | <input type="checkbox"/> Otro: _____ |

¿Usted tiene transportación seguro de auto o tiene acceso a transportación seguro? SI NO

¿Usted tiene cobertura seguro medicó? SI NO

SECCIÓN II: Vivienda

¿Qué crees que son los tres problemas de vivienda asequible para familia que ingresos en tu comunidad? Marca en el cuadro al lado de las tres cuestiones que crees que son mas importante. Por favor lee toda la lista antes de tomar su decision. Recuerde de elegir solo tres.

- | |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ubicaciones malas o zonas destrozadas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> vivienda en mal estado/casas sin suficiente energía eficiente |
| <input type="checkbox"/> edificio demasiado indulgente al código de ejecución |
| <input type="checkbox"/> precios de alquiler demasiado altos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> alquiler aumenta demasiado sin aumentos de ingresos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no hay suficientes vivienda con buenos precios disponibles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no nuevo hogares con bajos ingresos en marcha |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no hay suficientes viviendas públicas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> deposito de vivienda pública demasiado alto |
| <input type="checkbox"/> necesidad para comprador de casa de primera vez/asistente de pago inicial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> muy difícil de obtener préstamos para vivienda ya que no entienden las opciones de préstamo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> necesidad de orientación sobre presupuesto/prepago/mainteniniento/opciones de financiación |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Otro: _____ |

SECCIÓN III: Desarrollos de los Niños

Si usted no tiene niños que viven en la casa, sáltese sección III y vaya a la sección IV (Ingresos de la Familia).

1. ¿Cuántos niños viven en su casa, tiene 5 y abajo? 1 2 3 4 5 Otro: ____
2. ¿Tenía usted niños que atendían a Head Start? SI NO
3. ¿A parte de usted y su cónyuge, durante horas que trabaja quien cuide a sun hijo (a) depequeño bajo de 5 años?
 guarderia privada iglesia
 pariente amigo
 Head Start Pre-K otro (especifique) _____
4. ¿Tienes que pagar para que te cuiden tus hijos? SI NO
¿Cuanto pagas por semana?
 \$50/o menos \$51 - \$100 más de \$100
5. ¿Usted es padre/madre soltera? SI NO
6. Si usted es una padre/madre soltera, ¿Esta el padre/madre involucrando se con su hija(o)? SI NO
7. ¿A qué hora del día usted necesita servicios de guardería? (*marque hora de comienzo y terminacion*)
Empezando: antes 7:30 a.m. 7:30 a.m. o después **Tiempo final:** antes 3:00 p.m. 3:00 p.m. o después
8. ¿Necesita ayuda nutricional su niño (a)? SI NO
9. ¿Necesita ayuda de servicio medico/dental/o psicológico para usted o su familia? SI NO
10. Chequea las cajas a los servicios que su familia ha utilizado una vez por año:
 Doctores/Dentista Departamento de Labor Oficina de Número Social Servicio Cooperativo de Extensión
 DFCS Departamento de Salud Salud Mental Los Bebes No Pueden Esperar
11. Si tiene niños con problemas especiales como los que se menciona abajo, verifique todas las cajas que le aplican a el:
 problema de hablar problema de escuchar problema visual incapacite fisicamente
 enfermedad crónica (la diabetes/corazón/el asma/anemia, etc.) otro
12. ¿Que agencia le ayuda a usted y su familia?
Agencia: _____ Servicio: _____
Agencia: _____ Servicio: _____

SECCIÓN IV: Ingresos de la Familia

1. ¿Lo que gana su familia **ANUALMENTE**?
 menos que \$20,000 \$20,000 - \$29,999 \$30,000 - \$39,999
 \$40,000 - \$49,999 \$50,000 - \$99,999 \$100,000 y mas
2. ¿Que es la fuente de sus ingresos familiares?
 jornada completa media jornada emigrante estacional seguro social
 jubilación (fuera de seguro social) asistencia pública (ssi, tanf, desempleo, etc.)

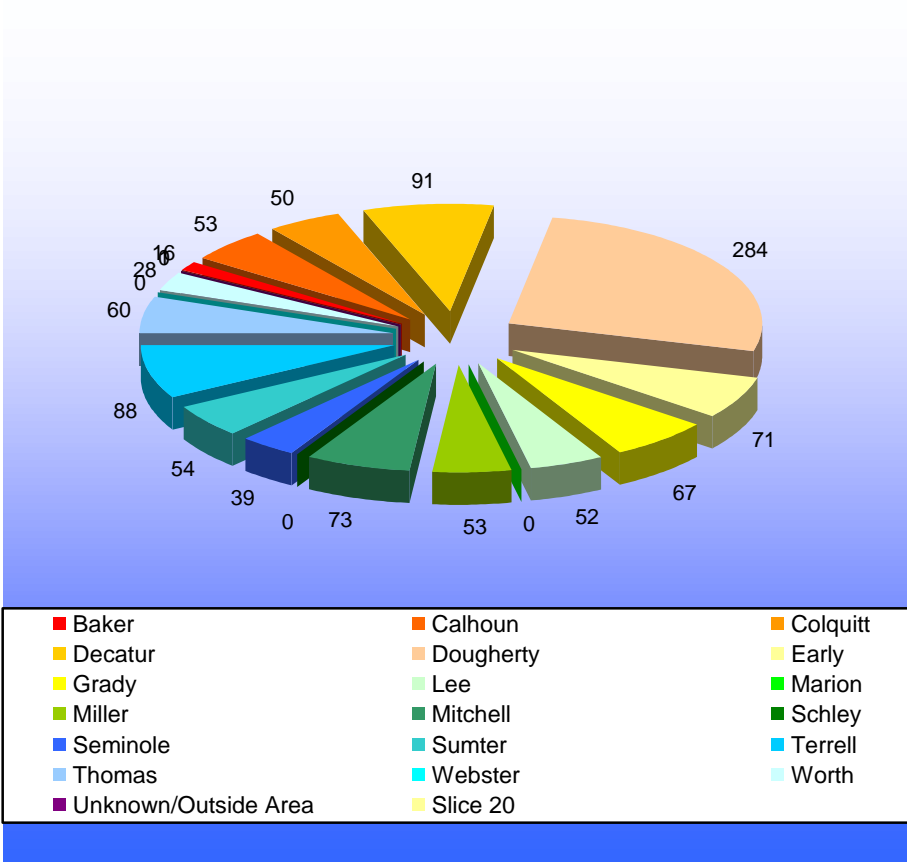
Gracias, por tomar su tiempo a ayudarnos a entender las necesidades dentro de su comunidad.

Insert CSBG by County Recap here

**SOUTHWEST GEORGIA COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, INC.
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

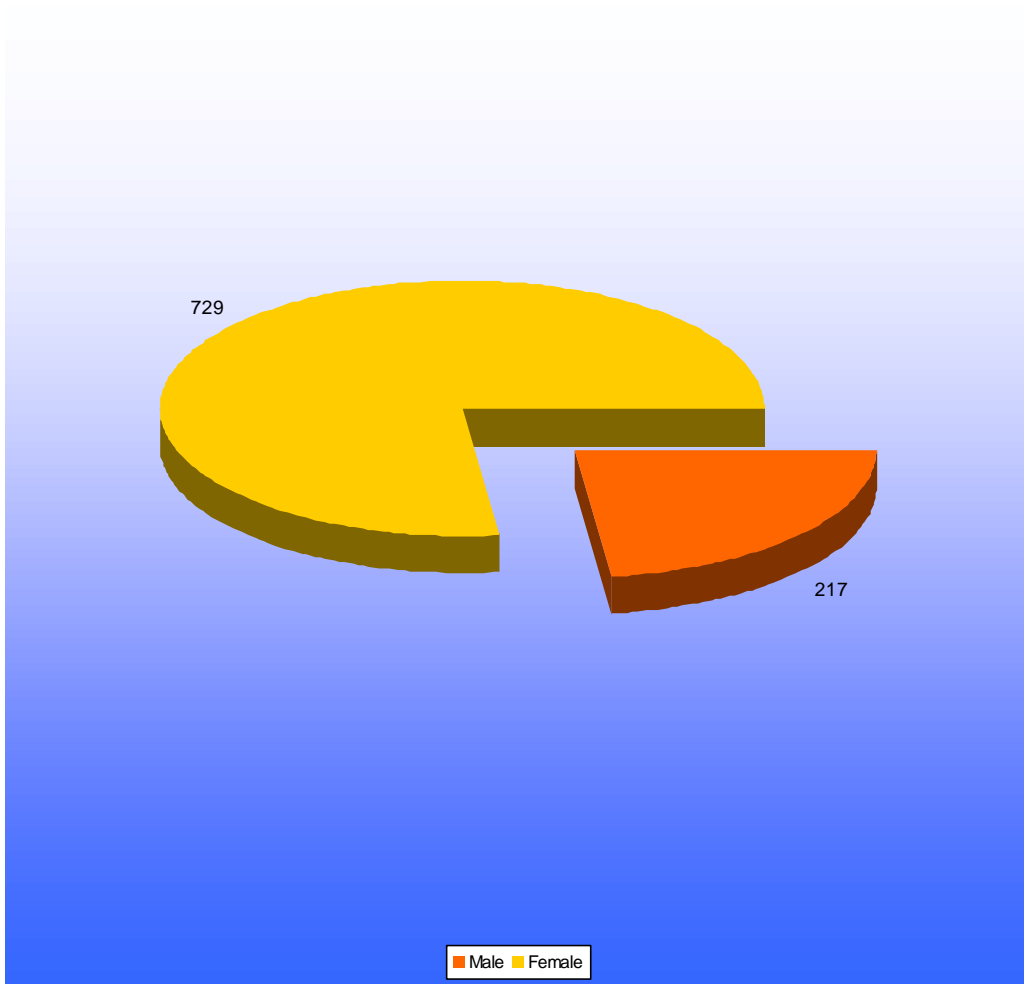
Conducted 2023

Attachment C • Graphs



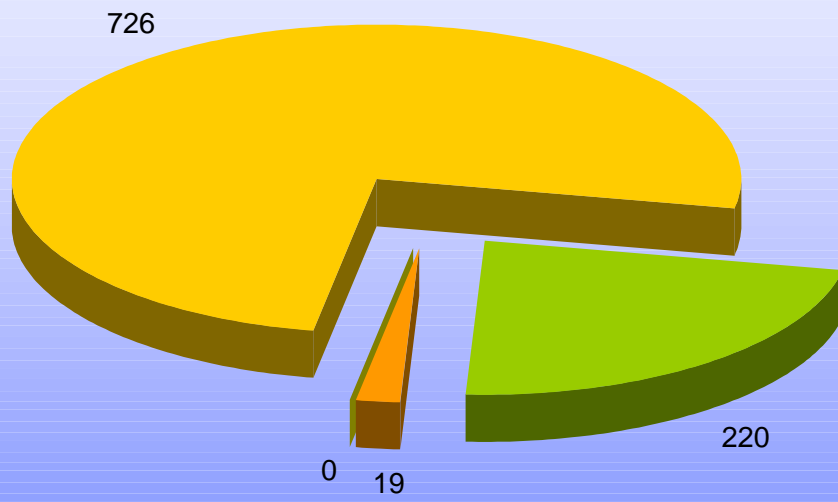
Total Number of Survey Respondents: 1,080

■ Sex of Survey Respondents



Number of Survey Respondents: 946

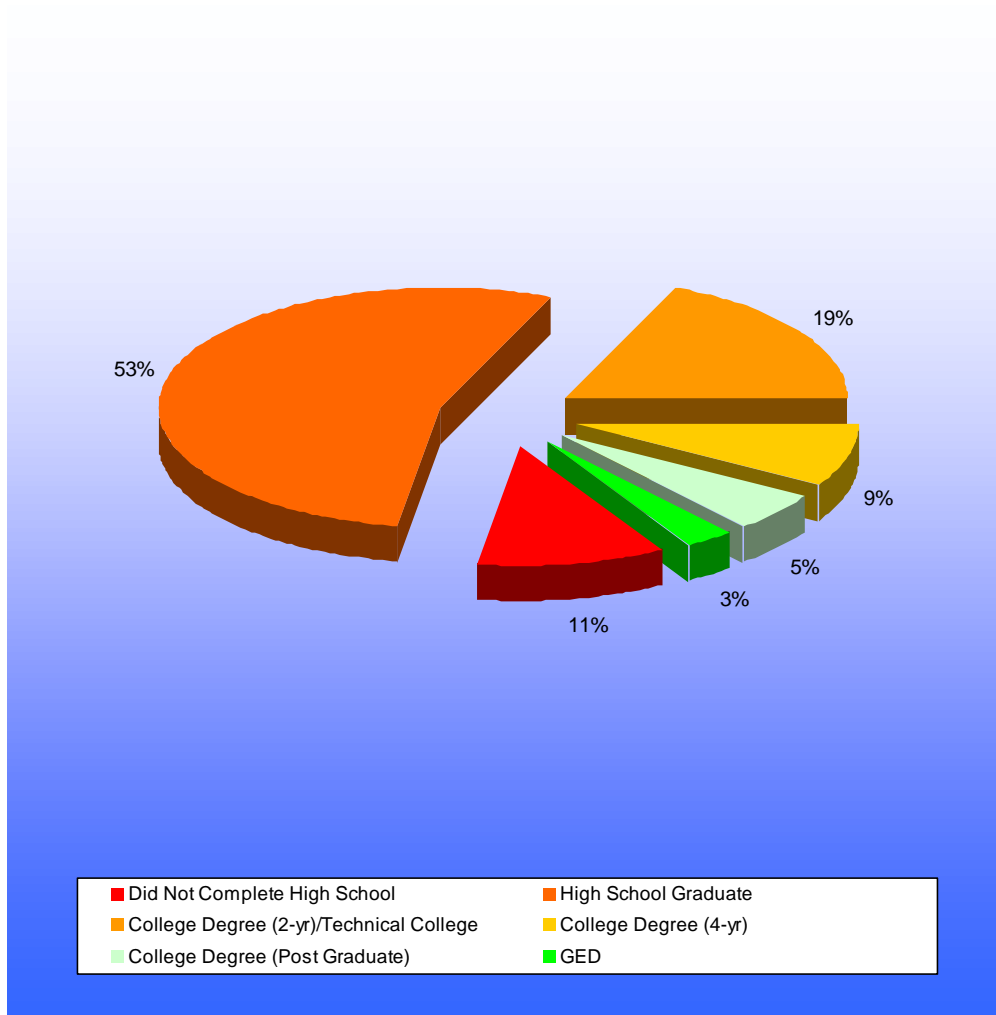
■ Race of Survey Respondents



■ Black ■ White ■ Hispanic ■ Other

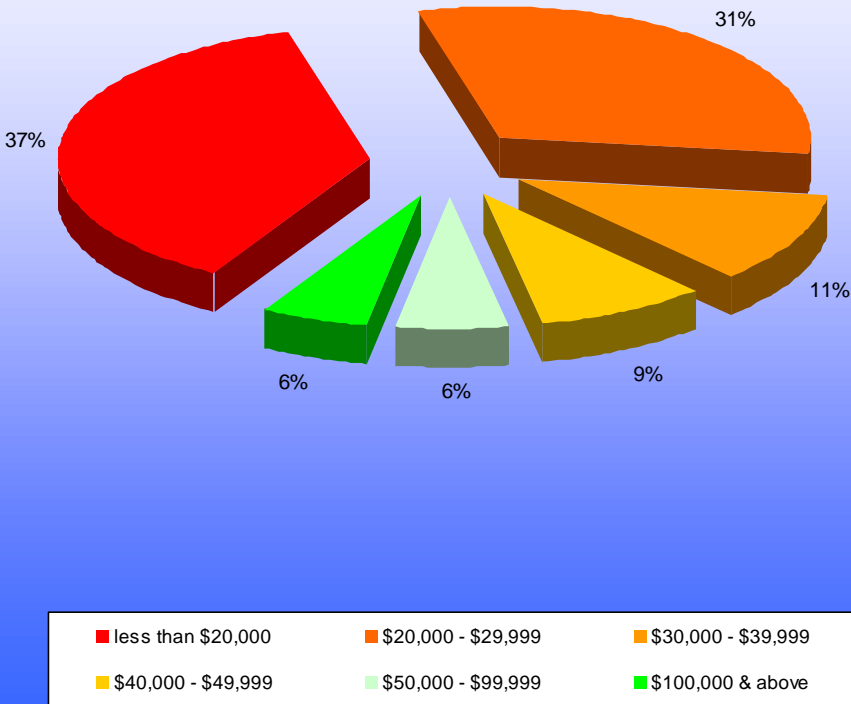
Number of Survey Respondents: 965

■ Educational Background of Survey Respondents



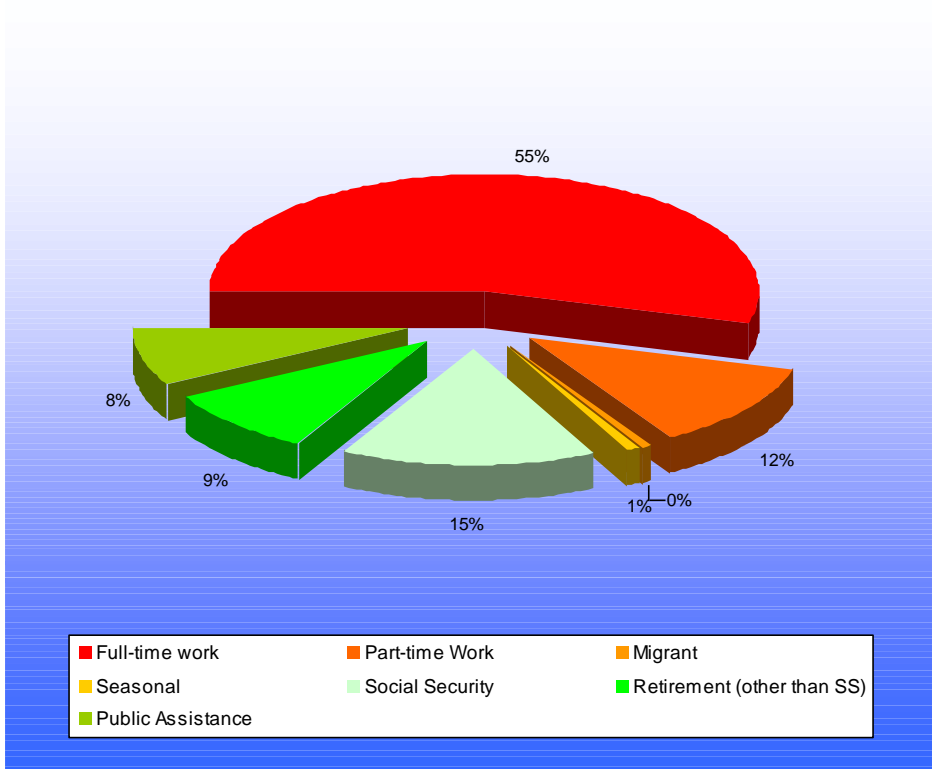
Number of Survey Respondents: 692

■ Annual Family Income of Survey Respondents – Survey Section IV – Question #1



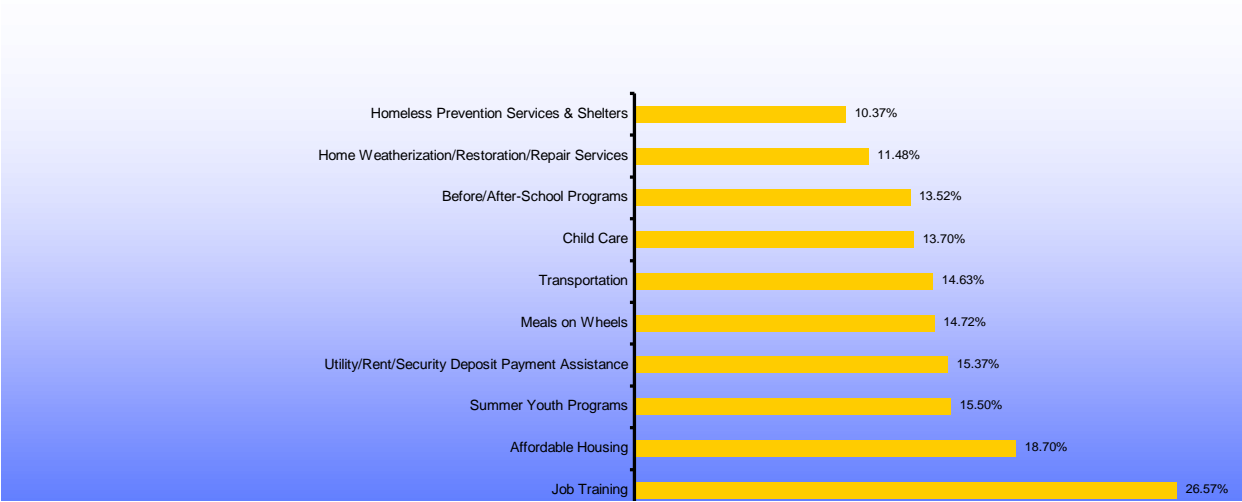
Number of Survey Respondents: 779

■ Source of Family Income for Survey Respondents – Survey Section IV – Question #2*

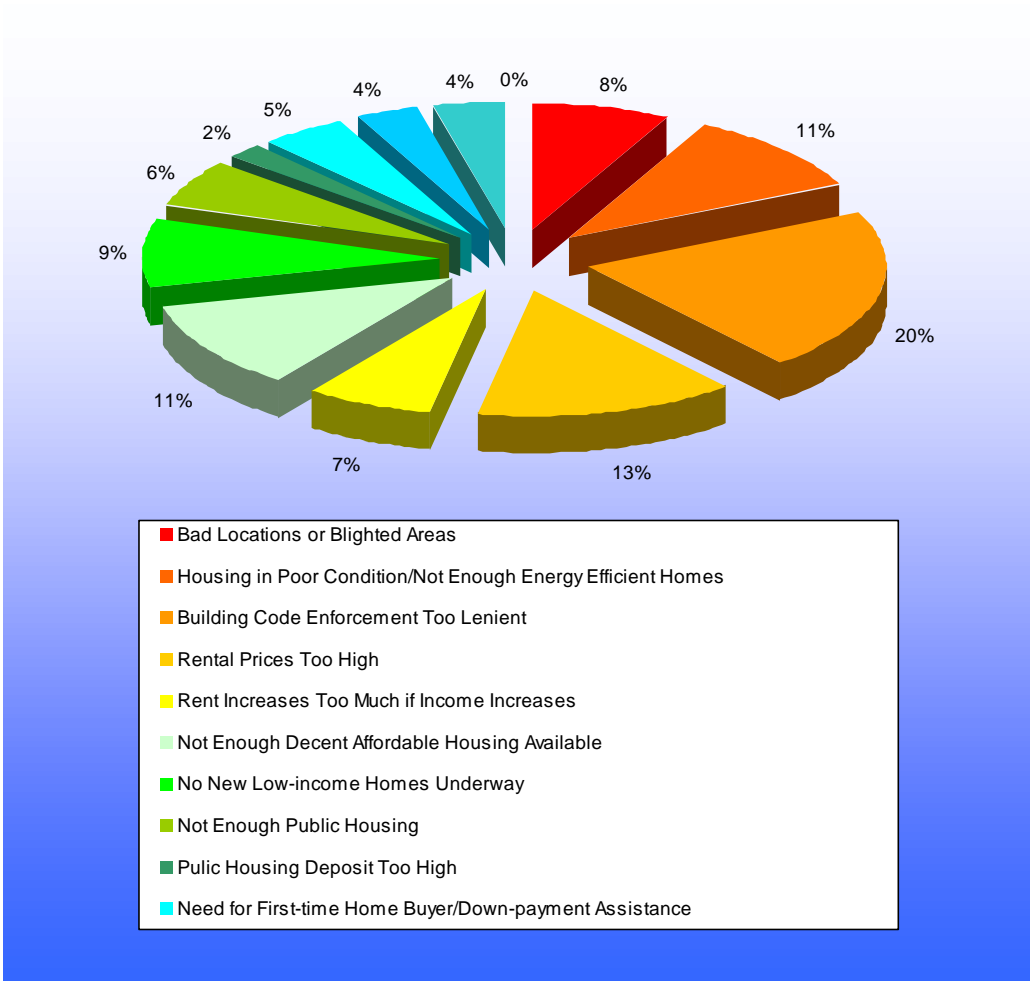


*Survey Respondents Could Indicate Multiple Sources of Income

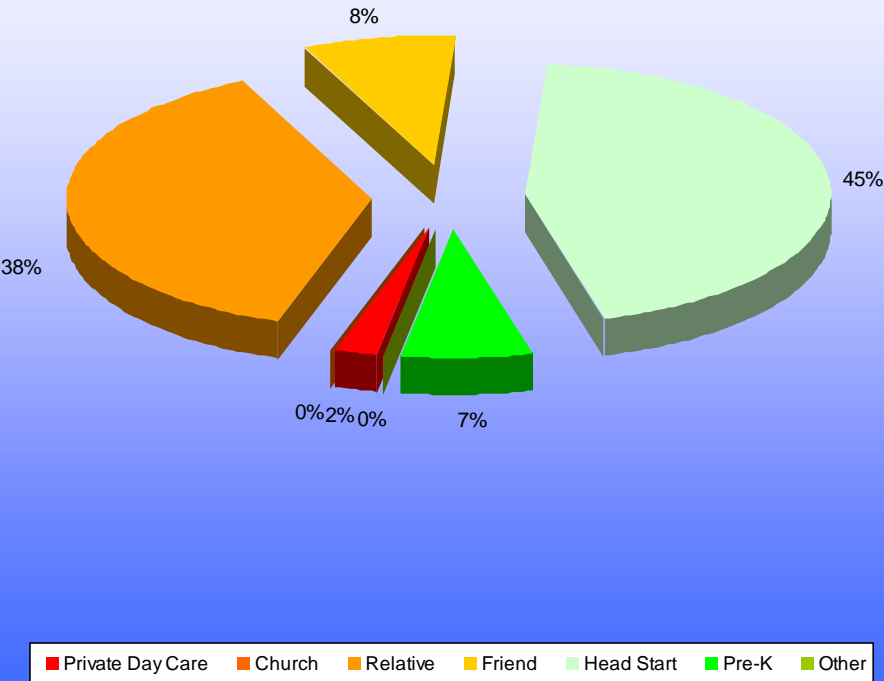
■ Community Service Needs – Survey Section I
Top Ten Identified by Percentage of 25 Options to Choose From



■ Affordable Housing Issues – Survey Section II
Frequency That Issues Were Identified From Among a List of 13 Issues

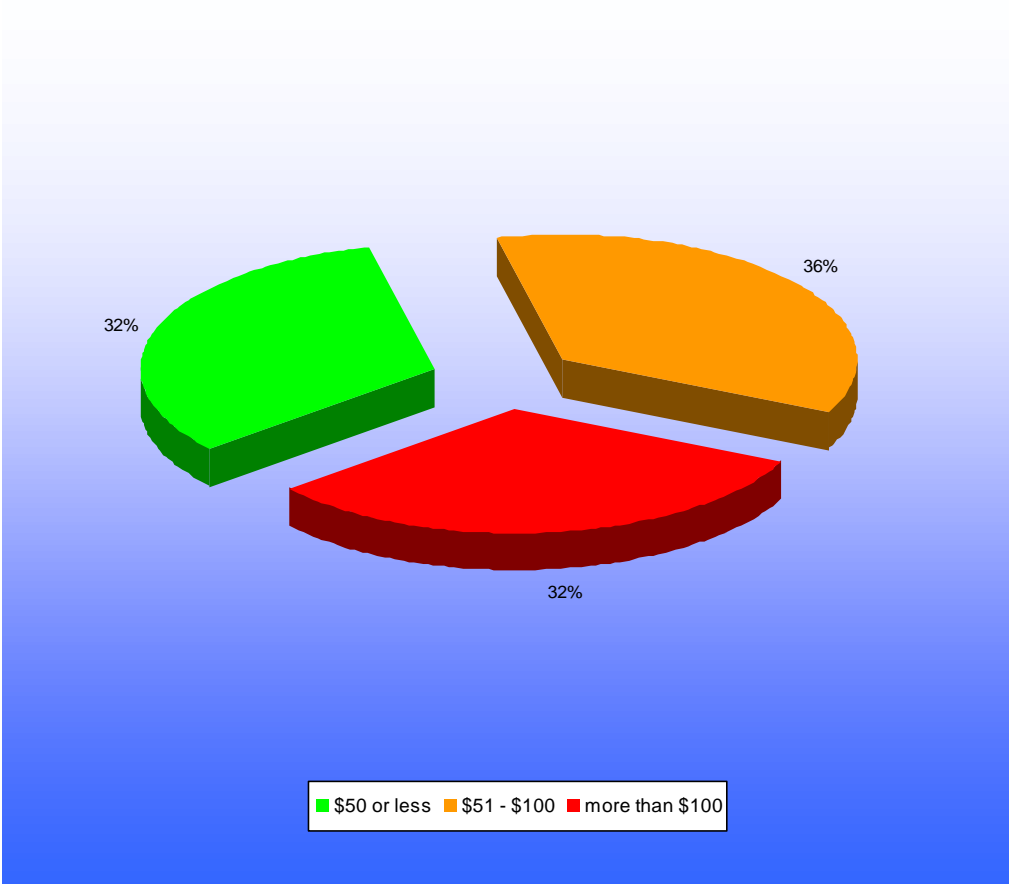


■ Other Than You or Your Spouse, During Working Hours Who Takes Care of Your Preschoolers Age 5 Years and Younger? – Survey Section III – Question #3*



*Survey Respondents Could Indicate Multiple Providers

■ Amount Paid Per Week for Child Care Services – Survey Section III – Question #4



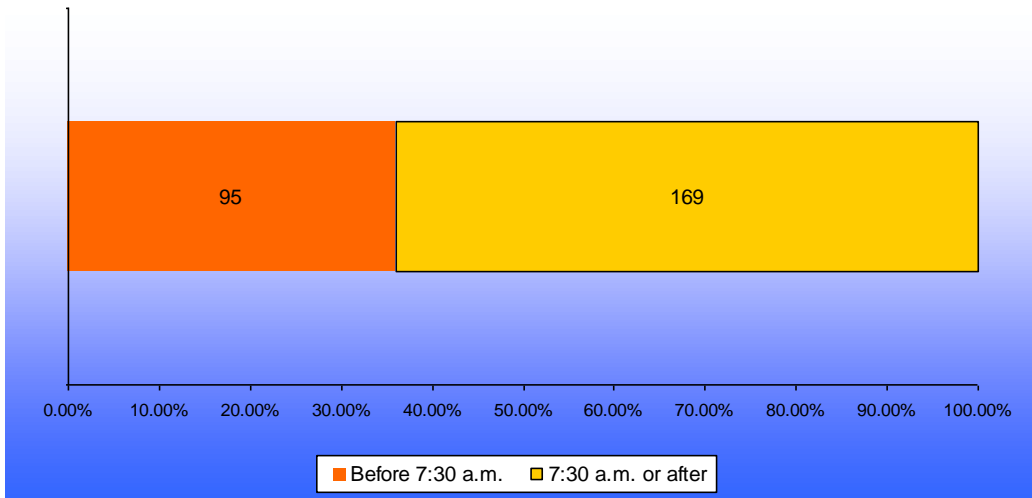
Number of Survey Respondents: 179

■ Are You A Single Parent? – Survey Section III – Question #5



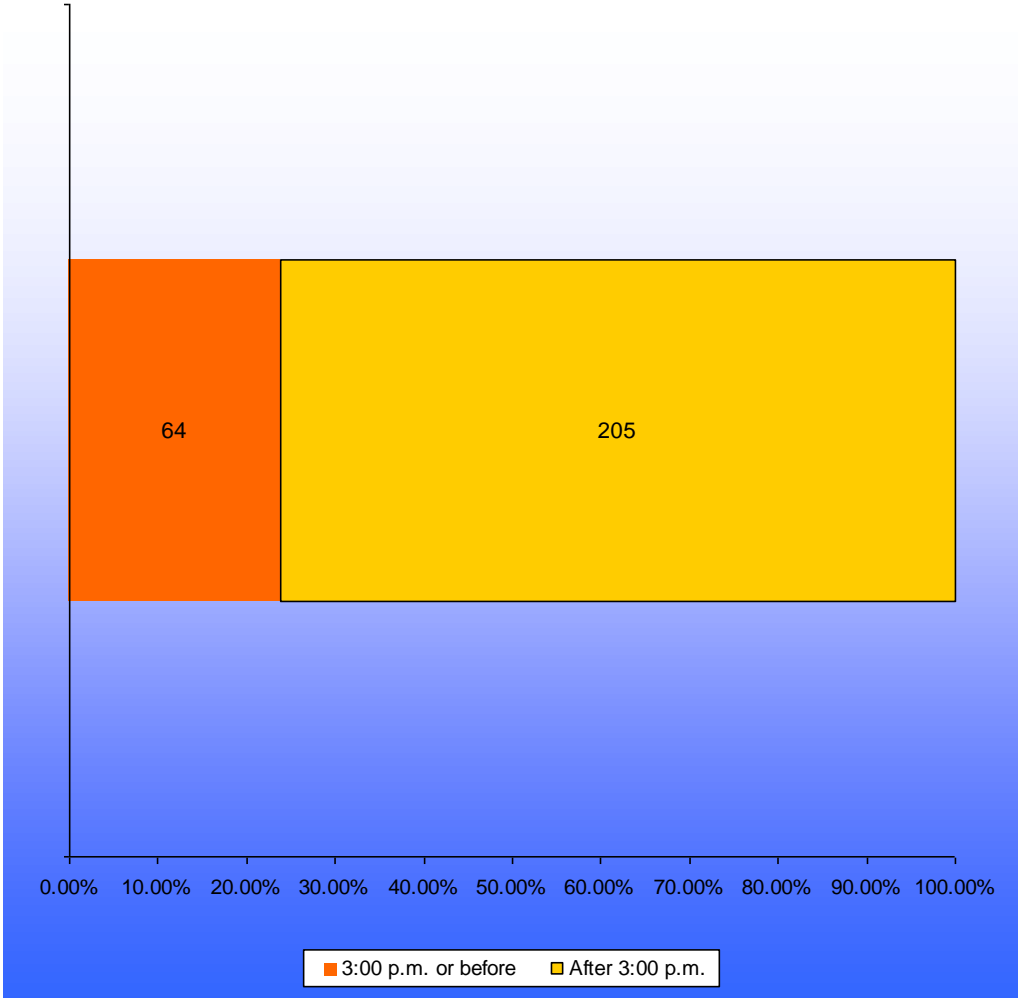
Number of Survey Respondents: 443

■ Time of Day That Child Care Services are Needed to Begin – Survey Section III – Question #7



Number of Survey Respondents: 264

■ Time of Day That Child Care Services are Needed to End – Survey Section III – Question #7

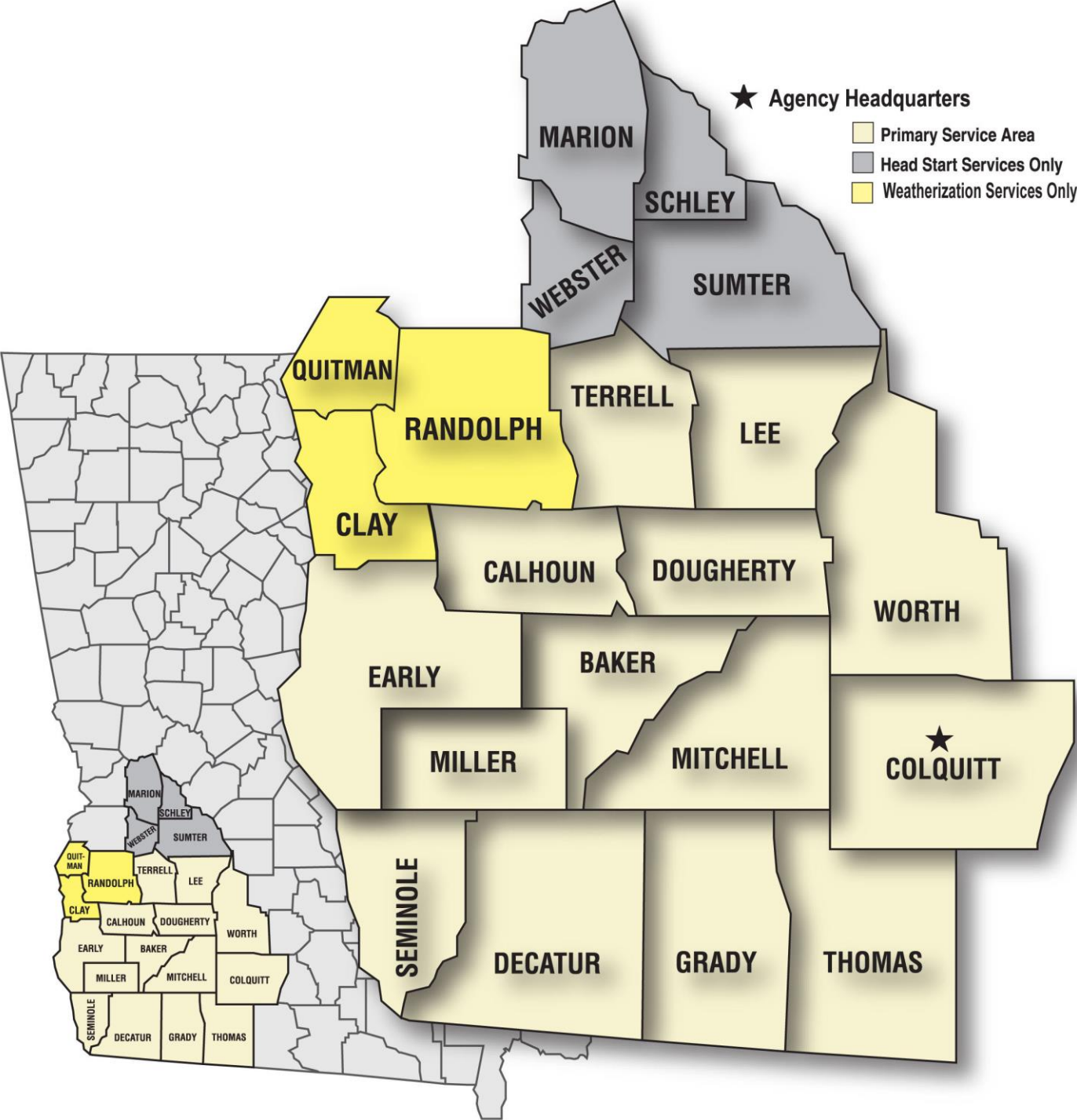


Number of Survey Respondents: 269

**SOUTHWEST GEORGIA COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, INC.
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

Conducted 2023

Attachment D • Service Area Map



SOUTHWEST GEORGIA COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, INC.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PLAN

Revised 11/22

This plan has been developed as a guide in conducting Agency-wide Community Assessments (CA). The intent of this plan is to provide clarity for both those organizing the CA and those participating in administering the CA. The plan should be used as a checklist when conducting CA activities and should be updated as necessary to reflect refinement to the CA process.

Potential Sources of Information:

- U.S. Census Bureau
- Population Reference Bureau
- Georgia County Guide
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- University of Georgia
- Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
- Georgia Department of Labor
- Georgia Department of Education
- Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement
- Georgia School Council Institute
- Georgia Department of Public Health – Online Analytical Statistical Information System (OASIS)
- Georgia Family Connection Partnership – Kids Count
- Corporation for Enterprise Development
- County Chambers of Commerce
- Child Care Resource and Referral Agency of Southwest Georgia at Albany (former Stepping Stones)
- Child Care Resource and Referral Agency of West Georgia at Americus
- Child Care Resource and Referral Agency of West Georgia at Columbus
- Quality Care for Children
- Georgia DHS – Office of Facilities & Support Services
- Southwest Georgia Regional Commission
- Middle Flint Regional Commission
- National Community Action Partnership
- In-house demographic & statistics compilation maintained by Agency Planner
- Community Survey (survey instrument developed in-house)
- Any additional sources as deemed appropriate

Community Survey:

In preparing for and conducting the community assessment survey, follow these steps:

- Use the prior survey instrument, refine the prior survey instrument, or develop a new instrument. *(Provide an opportunity for Board input into the development of the survey instrument. Decide if the survey should be made available in multiple languages.)*
- Set a goal for number of survey responses.
- Distribute survey instruments to all sectors of the community including, but not limited to, the following public, private, and low-income populations:
 - ▶ Head Start clients
 - ▶ NSC clients and other Agency clients such as housing clients

- ▶ senior citizens
- ▶ elected officials (*provide self-addressed stamped envelope*)
- ▶ CAC staff
- ▶ area social service representatives including DFCS, Mental Health, school systems, Public Health, Council on Aging, Department of Labor, and any others (*provide self-addressed stamped envelope*)
- ▶ CAC Board members
- ▶ local Chambers of Commerce
- ▶ Family Connection
- ▶ LIHEAP clients or clients of other agency-administered temporary programs
- ▶ Housing Authority clients
- ▶ Focus groups
- ▶ Community forums
- ▶ Faith based community
- ▶ Education community

Responsibilities:

<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Responsible Person</u>
Updating CA Plan	Planner w/ input from Head Start Family & Community Partnership Specialist, Board of Directors
Demographic Data Compilation	Planner
Narrative	Planner
Survey Instrument Design	Planner w/ input from Mgt Team & Board of Directors
Timeline Development	Planner w/ input from Management Team
Analysis	Planner
Charts, Tables, & Graphs	Planner
Survey Distribution and Collection	Planner, Management Team, Head Start Family & Community Partnership Specialist, NSC Managers, CDC Managers
Survey Results Tabulation	Planner in coordination with Executive Secretary and Head Start Family & Community Partnership Specialist

Timeline:

Full CA is administered every three (3) years with annual review and (if necessary) updates.

2nd Year

Fall: Begin preparations for CA administration. Review CA plan. Review and revise survey instrument in time for distribution to Head Start CDCs during the following school year.

3rd Year

March 15: Resume preparations for CA administration no later than this date. This will include updating CA plan and compiling demographic data.

Note: Request approval of CA plan and survey instrument by the Policy Council and CAC Board of Directors no later than March.

April 15: Mail, e-mail, or hand deliver survey instrument to elected officials, social service representatives, area chambers, CAC Board members, and any others appropriate for mailing.

April 15: Distribute survey instrument to NSCs and CDCs by this date.

May 15: Completed surveys due back to Planner.

June 30: CA completed on or before this date.

July: Present completed CA to Policy Council and CAC Board of Directors.