



2024

Community Needs Assessment Update



**Head Start &
Early Head Start**

West Central Community Action

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2024 West Central Community Action Head Start Community Needs Assessment (CNA) Update

The updated community information is being added to the comprehensive 2023 Community Needs Assessment in compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standard 1302.11(b).

Total Population

A total of 204,894 people live in the 6,119.09 square mile report area defined for this assessment according to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2018-2022 5-year estimates. The population density for this area, estimated at 33 persons per square mile, is less than the national average population density of 94 persons per square mile.

Report Area	Total Population	Total Land Miles (square miles)	Population Density (per square mile)
Cass County	13,116	564	23
Crawford County	16,450	714	23
Fremont County	6,639	511	13
Harrison County	14,623	697	21
Mills County	14,605	437	33
Monona County	8,671	694	12
Montgomery County	10,285	424	24
Page County	15,225	535	28
Pottawattamie County	93,543	951	98
Shelby County	11,737	590	20
Iowa	3,188,836	55,853	57
United States	333,097,593	3,533,269	94

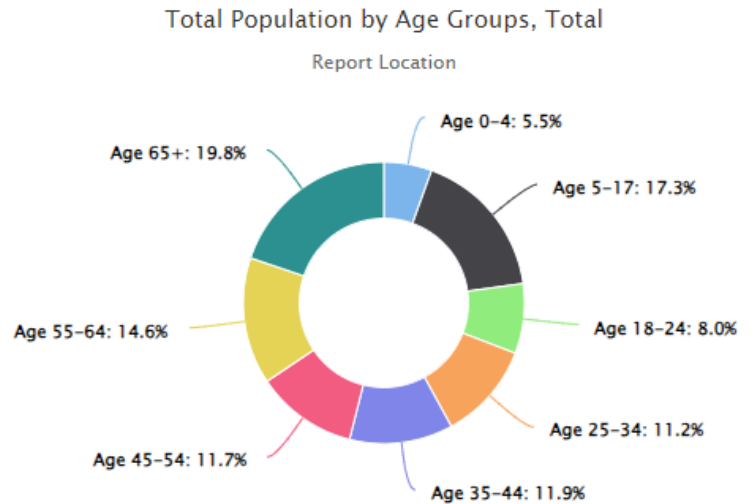
Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#). 2018-22.

Population by Age

Population age is a key factor for programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start when planning service areas for the 0-5 age group. The table below to the left shows the population of children ages 0-

4 in the service area. The graph to the right shows the total population percentage for all age groups within the 10- county service area.

Population, ages 0-4	
County	Age 0-4
Cass	652
Crawford	986
Fremont	323
Harrison	836
Mills	780
Monona	460
Montgomery	605
Page	725
Pottawattamie	5,325
Shelby	620



Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#). 2018-22

Economic Activity

Median Household Income

The report below shows the median household income based on the latest 5-year American Community Survey estimates (US Census Bureau). This includes the income of the head of household and all other individuals 15 years old and over, whether they are related to the head or household or not. In the service area, Mills County remains as the top earning county with a median household income of \$81,907. Page County also remains as the lowest earning county with a medium income of only \$58,264.

All ten counties did have an increase in the average household income and median household income from the 2023 report.

Median Household Income			
County	Total Households	Average Household Income	Median Household Income
Cass	5,771	\$80,532	\$60,815
Crawford	6,214	\$78,927	\$61,188
Fremont	2,736	\$88,553	\$69,375
Harrison	5,963	\$89,903	\$75,830
Mills	5,261	\$105,654	\$81,907
Monona	3,852	\$73,609	\$59,897
Montgomery	4,493	\$83,161	\$61,261
Page	6,137	\$76,013	\$58,264
Pottawattamie	37,162	\$85,937	\$68,718
Shelby	4,933	\$91,452	\$70,295
Service Territory	82,522	\$85,532	\$66,692
Iowa	1,290,139	\$92,053	\$75,149

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#). 2018-22

Unemployment Rate

The total unemployment rate for the service area for April 2024 was 2.2%. This is in line with Iowa's unemployment rate, which was also 2.2%. Overall, this is only a slight change from 2023 data, at that time the unemployment rate of the service territory was 2.4%.

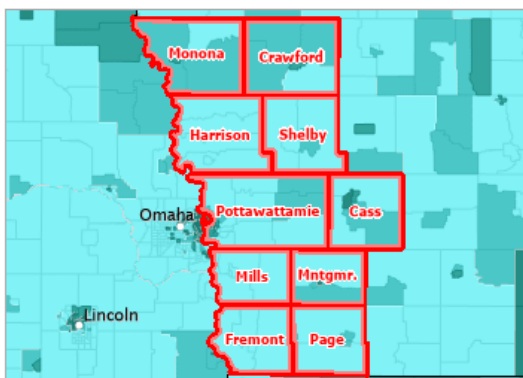
Unemployment Rate	
County	Unemployment Rate
Cass	2.1%
Crawford	4.0%
Fremont	2.0%
Harrison	1.8%
Mills	2.1%
Monona	1.9%
Montgomery	1.6%
Page	2.0%
Pottawattamie	2.1%
Shelby	1.9%
Service Area	2.2%

Data Source: US Department of Labor, [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). 2024

Poverty

Within the service area, a very slight increase in poverty was noted from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment report. The 2023 data represented 11.40% or 22,860 individuals were living at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), the current data shows 11.54% or 23,056 individuals are living at or below the FPL. Cass, Crawford, and Montgomery Counties represent the highest percentage of individuals living in poverty.

Poverty Rates by County			
County	Total Population	Population in Poverty	Population in Poverty, Percent
Cass	12,923	1,793	13.87%
Crawford	16,384	2,959	18.06%
Fremont	6574	526	8.00%
Harrison	14,366	1,218	8.48%
Mills	14,454	1,033	7.15%
Monona	8,561	1,122	13.11%
Montgomery	10,175	1,371	13.47%
Page	14,232	1,979	13.91%
Pottawattamie	91,268	9,922	10.87%
Shelby	11,554	937	8.11%
Totals	200,491	22,860	11.40%



Population Below the **Poverty** Level, Percent by Tract, ACS 2018-22

- Over 20.0%
- 15.1 - 20.0%
- 10.1 - 15.0%
- Under 10.1%
- No Data or Data Suppressed
- Report Location

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#). 2018-22.

Head Start Eligible Children and Families

Households in Poverty by Family Type

There is an estimated 8.4% of households in the service area are living in poverty, this is a slight increase from the reported 5.3% of households living in poverty in the 2023 report.

Children in Poverty

There was a slight increase in the percentage of children living in poverty in WCCA’s service territory as well. The 2023 assessment reported, 14.39% of children age 0-17 were living in households with income 100% or below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The current percent of children living in poverty is 15.37%. Crawford, Cass, and Montgomery Counties continue to stand out with the highest percent of children living in poverty within the service territory.

Children living in poverty	
County	Percent under age 18 living in poverty
Cass	24%
Crawford	26%
Fremont	7%
Harrison	9%
Mills	7%
Monona	16%
Montgomery	21%
Page	16%
Pottawattamie	16%
Shelby	7%
Total	15.37%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#), 2018-22.

Health and Social Service Needs of Eligible Families

A barrier for WCCA Head Start and families in the service territory continues to be the lack of dental providers and facilities that accept Medicaid. The chart on page 8 reports the number of oral health care providers with a CMS National Provider Identifier (NPI). Providers included in this summary are those who list "dentist", "general practice dentist", or "pediatric dentistry" as their primary practice classification, regardless of sub-specialty.

Dental Care		
County	Number of Facilities that accept Medicaid	Number of Dental Providers
Cass	2	7
Crawford	2	4
Fremont	0	0
Harrison	0	3
Mills	3	4
Monona	1	0
Montgomery	2	1
Page	3	9
Pottawattamie	16	29
Shelby	1	7
Service Area	30	64
Iowa	427	992

Data Source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, [CMS - National Plan and Provider Enumeration System \(NPPES\)](#). June 2024

Nutrition Needs of Eligible Families

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, is a federal program that provides food benefits to low-income individuals and families to supplement their grocery budget. In 2022, the Office of Head Start began recognizing SNAP as categorically eligible for income verification. The chart shows the average percentage of the population receiving SNAP benefits in the service area.

Households Receiving SNAP		
County	Households Receiving SNAP Benefits	Households Receiving SNAP Benefits, Percent
Cass	833	14.43%
Crawford	499	8.03%
Fremont	297	10.86%
Harrison	454	7.61%
Mills	357	6.79%
Monona	384	9.97%
Montgomery	699	15.56%
Page	802	13.07%
Pottawattamie	3,975	10.70%
Shelby	497	10.08%
Service Area Total	8,797	11.52%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#). 2018-22

Housing and Homelessness

Homelessness

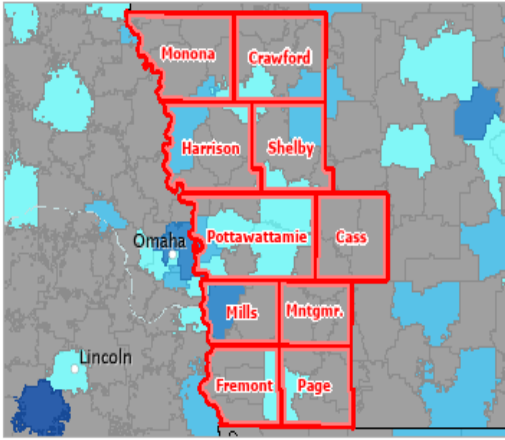
The report below shows the number of homeless children and youth enrolled in the public school system during the school year 2019-2020. According to the data source definitions, homelessness is defined as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Those who are homeless may be sharing the housing of other persons, living in motels, hotels, or camping grounds, in emergency transitional shelters, or may be unsheltered. Data is aggregated in the report-area based on school-district summaries where three or more homeless children were counted.

In the report area, of all the 21,655 students enrolled in reported districts during the school year 2019-2020, there were 276 or 1.40% homeless students, which is lower than the statewide rate of 1.54%.

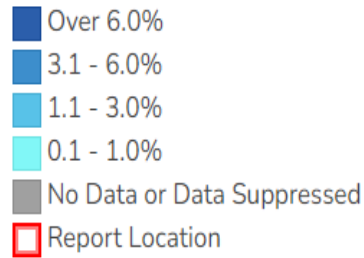
Note: Data is available for 66.67% school districts in the report area, representing 85.78% of the public school student population.

Number of People Experiencing Homelessness			
County	Students in Reported Districts	Homeless Students	Homeless Students, percent
Cass	No Data Reported	No Data Reported	No Data Reported
Crawford	604	6	1.0%
Fremont	554	0	0.0%
Harrison	676	4	0.6%
Mills	2,099	106	5.1%
Monona	1,397	0	0.0%
Montgomery	1,397	No Data Reported	No Data Reported
Page	1,109	8	0.7%
Pottawattamie	14,651	147	1.0%
Shelby	565	5	0.9%
Totals	21,655	276	1.4%

Data Source: US Department of Education, [EDFacts](#). Additional data analysis by [CARES](#). 2019-2020



Homeless Students, Percent by School District (Elementary), EDFacts 2019-20



Housing Costs - Cost Burden

The housing cost- cost burden report shows the percentage of the households where housing costs are 30% or more of total household income. The information offers a measure of housing affordability and excessive shelter costs. The Notice of Proposed Rule Making suggests housing cost burden could be a potential indicator in the future for Head Start when it comes to eligibility. Of the 82,522 total households in the report area, 18,623 or 22.57% of the population live in cost burdened households.

Housing Cost – Cost Burden (exceeds 30% of income)			
County	Total Households	Cost-Burdened Households	Cost-Burdened Households
Cass	5,771	1,534	26.58%
Crawford	6,214	1,097	17.65%
Fremont	2,736	517	18.90%
Harrison	5,963	1,082	18.15%
Mills	5,261	1,138	21.63%
Monona	3,852	765	19.86%
Montgomery	4,493	746	16.60%
Page	6,137	1,312	21.38%
Pottawattamie	37,162	9,285	24.99%
Shelby	4,933	1,147	23.25%
Total Service Area	82,522	18,623	22.57%
Iowa	1,290,139	297,226	23.04%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#). 2018-22

Early Child Care & Education

Child Care Availability

The chart below shows the estimated number of children age 0-5 that are without a registered Childcare spot in the county. In the previous years, there has been a lot of effort of the communities in the service territory to boost childcare options in our area, some progress has been shown. Childcare data is important to note for the purposes of not only the children and families, but also for staff. If staff do not have care, they are unable to work.

Child Care Availability				
County	Population of children ages 0-5	% of Families where all parents work and have children under age 6	Estimated Number of Children Needing Child Care	Number of Children without a Registered Child Care Space
Cass	851	67%	570	214
Crawford	1,274	69%	579	-297
Fremont	441	65%	287	-198
Harrison	980	88%	862	-334
Mills	877	69%	605	-113
Monona	540	67%	362	-3
Montgomery	653	67%	438	-14
Page	882	67%	591	43
Pottawattamie	7,119	78%	5,553	-833
Shelby	749	72%	539	-101

Source: Iowa CCR & R Data Sheets, June 2024

As you see from the chart, Crawford, Harrison, and Pottawattamie Counties have the largest discrepancy in available registered child care slots.

Recommendations

There has been a significant decrease in the number of households receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits over the past year. This decrease is most likely caused from stricter requirements being imposed on public benefit programs that started June 2023. With SNAP being a categorically eligible income verification factor, the program should continue to monitor this as well as review and update their child recruitment plan to assess how these changes may affect enrollment of eligible children.

The number of children and families that are able to locate dental providers that take their insurance is becoming a large burden for families in the service territory. As noted in the data, there is also lack of care, especially in the program's rural areas. The program should continue to monitor this issue and partner with community groups and service providers to continue to provide as many screenings as possible to children.

There continues to be an increased need for early education and childcare in eight out of the ten counties that are served by WCCA Head Start. Crawford, Harrison, and Pottawattamie Counties have the largest need for registered childcare slots for children aged 0-5. In the Spring of 2024, the program was no longer able to operate a center based Early Head Start with 16 slots in Crawford County due to building a lease not being renewed. WCCA was unable to secure an alternate location that would meet the requirements. The program should continue to review and analyze the need for center-based services in Crawford County, as well as Harrison and Pottawattamie Counties.

Sources

Community Action Partnership Community Assessment Tool

U.S. Census Bureau

CARES Engagement Network

Spark Map

Iowa Data Center within the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services

National Center for Health Statistics

The Annie E Casey Foundation- Kids Count

Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral