

Head Start of Washington County, Inc. (HSWC)

2024 Community Assessment Update

Methodology:

According to the Head Start Program Performance Standards, a program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period (completed June 2020). In addition, a program may annually review and update the community assessment to reflect any significant changes (45 CFR 1302.11(b)(2)). Below are the additions/revisions to the 2020 Community Assessment. These data points were used to submit the agency's annual Refunding Application to the Regional Office and will be used for grant writing purposes as needed.

Healthy Washington County published their FY2022 Community Needs Assessment in May 2022. The majority of the data HSWC uses when writing the annual Refunding Application is also collected in the FY2022 Community Needs Assessment. Healthy Washington County will publish an updated Community Needs Assessment in May 2025. Furthermore, the data has been substantiated by the Community Solutions Hub, an online collection of local and state data. All data points below are sourced from the Community Solutions Hub (www.communitysolutionshub.org) as of 9/30/2024, unless otherwise noted.

Community Demographics:

- Estimated population of Washington County is 155,813
- Estimated population of Hagerstown is 43,553
- There are an estimated 18.4% of all families living below the poverty level in Hagerstown. This is compared to 8.6% in Washington County and 6.2% in Maryland.
- There is estimated to be 8,414 children between the ages of birth through age 5 living within Washington County.
- Of these, 17.7%, or 1,489 children live below the poverty line. This is compared to 12.3% in Maryland and 18.1% throughout the United States.
- On average 45% of all births within the county are under the Medical Assistance umbrella
- In Hagerstown city, 35.8% of children under the age of five fall below the poverty level.
- HSWC is seeing a growing number of refugees applying for Head Start services.

Community Trends:

- The unemployment rate in June 2024 was 3.3% in Washington County; compared to 3.2% in Maryland and 4.3% throughout the United States. Unemployment rates have increased by about a percent during the past year in all categories.
- The unemployment rate for Hagerstown is 3.9%.
- According to the agency's PIR reports, the program served 30 homeless children during the 2023-2024 program year. This is a slight decrease from the previous year when the agency reported 34 homeless children.

Community Health:

- Fatal drug overdoses have decreased in Washington County. Between September 2023 and August 2024, there were 57 fatal overdoses. (Source: Maryland Overdose Data Dashboard, maintained by Maryland Department of Health Data Office). This is down from 106 fatal overdoses reported between June 2022 and May 2023.
- Obesity continues to be a community wide focus as Meritus Health has implemented the Go For Bold challenge of losing a million pounds in 10 years. 41.7% of adults in Hagerstown are considered obese, compared to 38.4% of Washington County residents.