



Kanawha County

Community Needs and Resources

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KANAWHA COUNTY

History & Geography

The formation of Kanawha County was authorized by the Virginia General Assembly on November 14, 1788 from parts of Greenbrier and Montgomery counties. The county was actually established on October 5, 1789. Kanawha County was named in honor of the Great Kanawha River that runs through the county. The River was named for the Indian tribe that once lived in the area.



The West Virginia state capital was moved to Charleston from Wheeling in 1870. The land where Charleston was founded was originally owned by Colonel Thomas Bullitt. In 1774, he was deeded 1,240 acres of land on the Great Kanawha River by the mouth of the Elk River for his service during the French and Indian Wars (1754-1763). He sold the land to his brother, Judge Cuthbert Bullitt, President of the Virginia Court of Appeals who, in turn, sold the land in 1786 to Colonel George Clendenin, a distinguished frontiersman and soldier in General Lewis' army at the decisive Battle of Point Pleasant (1774). Daniel Boone (1734-1820), the famous frontiersman and founder of Kentucky, resided with his family in Kanawha County for seven years (1788-1795), in a two-room log cabin in the Kanawha City section of Charleston. He was appointed a Lieutenant Colonel

in the Kanawha County militia and served under the command of Colonel George Clendenin. He and Colonel Clendenin represented Kanawha County in the Virginia General Assembly in 1791.



Kanawha County is a major transportation hub in the state with two interstate highways converging in Charleston - I-77 running North-South and I-64 running East-West.

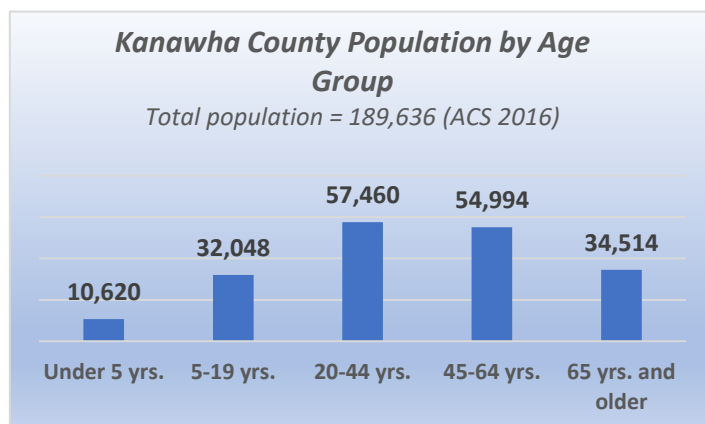
Kanawha County encompasses 902 square miles and the county has a population density of 214.1 persons per sq.

mile.

Demographic Characteristics

The total population of Kanawha County is 189,636 persons (ACS, 2016). 5.6% of the population is under five years of age and 18.2% is over the age of 65 yrs.

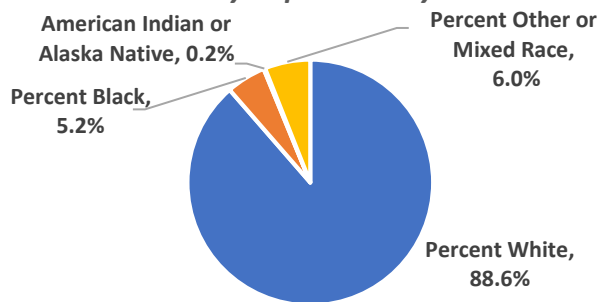
Kanawha County is the most racially diverse county in the EnAct service area. 88.6% of the population is White and 5.2% is Black. 0.2% is



American Indian or Alaska Native. The remaining 6.0% of Kanawha County residents are of mixed or other races,

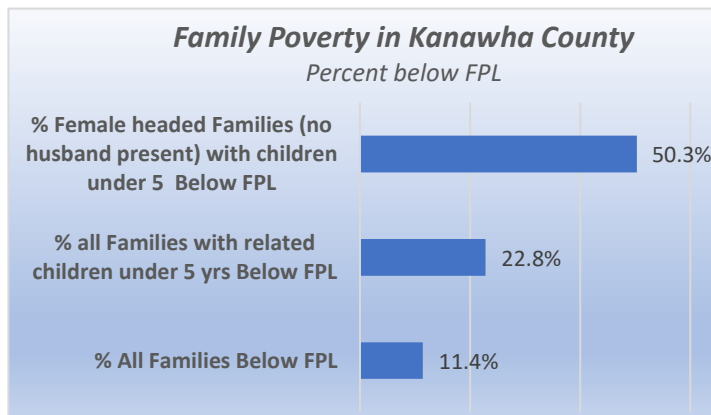
There are 81,708 households and 50,159 family households in the county. 21,861 or 26.8% of the total households have children under 18 yrs. of age.

Kanawha County Population by Race



Socio-Economic Characteristics

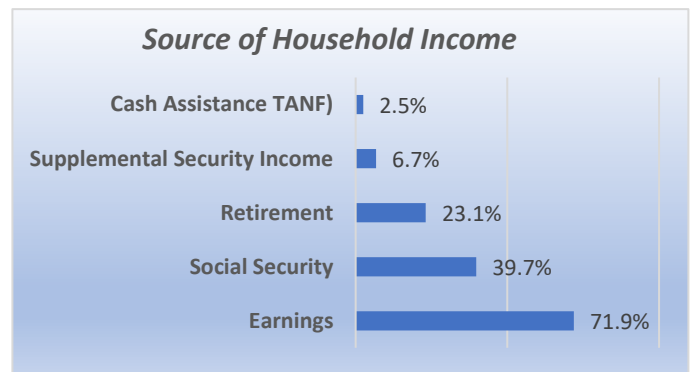
11.4% of Kanawha County families have annual income below the federal poverty level (FPL). In families with children under the age of 5 only, the poverty rate increases to 22.8%. Half (50.3%) of all single female headed families with all children under 5 yrs. of age have annual income below the federal poverty level.



Median household income in Kanawha County is \$46,528 which is higher than the state average of \$42,644 (ACS 2012-16).

71.9% of the households in the county have income from employment and 2.5% receive cash assistance through the TANF program.

The “Liquid Asset Poverty Rate” defined as a lack of sufficient liquid assets to subsist at the poverty level for three months in absence of any income, is at 35.8% in the county. In addition, 16.2% of all households are estimated to have zero net worth. (2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation, US Census Bureau).



Causes of Poverty

Primary causes of poverty in the county appear to include:

- Lack of post-secondary education and skills among the adult population,
- Lower than average high school graduation rates, and
- Substance abuse and addiction.

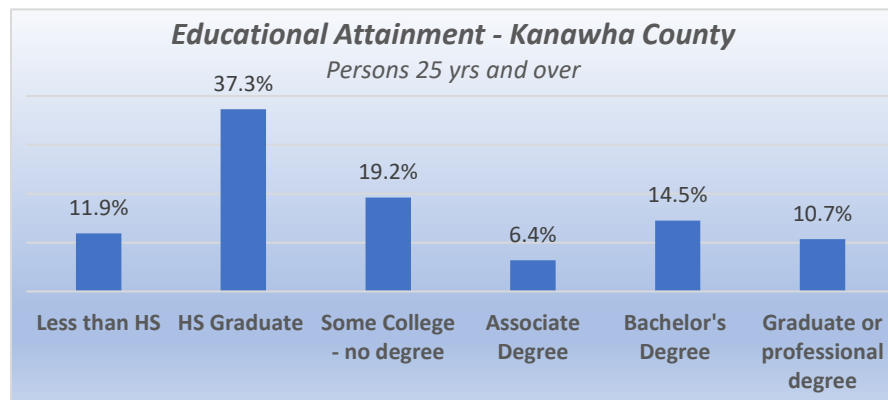
The drug overdose mortality rate in Kanawha County is 54 per 100,000 population (CDC Mortality data 2014-16).

The unemployment rate is at 5.6% (March 2018) and the rate increased between March of 2017 and March of 2018 by 0.4%. Unemployment in the county is just below the state average of 5.9%. The

percentage of the population with a disability is estimated to be at 19.5% (ACS 2016).

Kids Count data indicates the school dropout rate in Kanawha County is 7.1% (*Kids Count 2015*); however, the 4-year cohort graduation rate is 83.3% (*WVEIS 2017*). 11th grade reading proficiency is at 56.7% and 25.0% of 11th grade students are proficient in mathematics (*WVEIS 2016-17*).

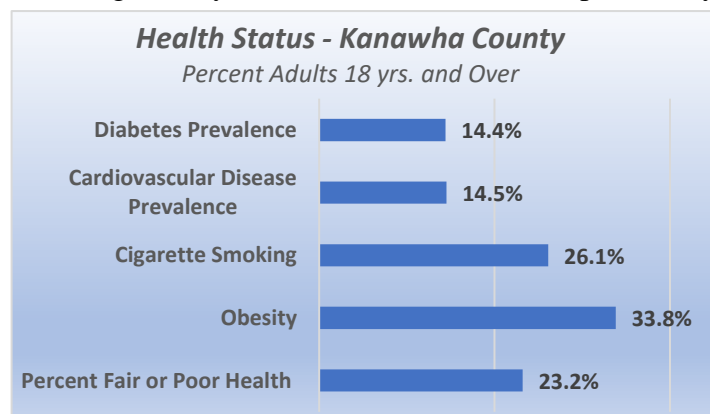
Overall educational attainment is higher among Kanawha County residents than in other counties within the EnAct region. 25.2% of persons 25 yrs. of age and older hold a college degree and an additional 6.4% have an associate degree. Still, nearly half (48.2%) of all county residents 25 yrs. of age and older have no education beyond high school and 11.9% of county residents have less than a high school education (*ACS 2016*).



Increasing numbers of young people are enrolling in higher education programs. The 2016 college going rate (4 yr. institutions) in the county is at 35.6% of graduating high school seniors and an additional 6.9% enrolled in a 2-yr. program (*WV Higher Education Policy Commission*).

An indicator of the potential for generational poverty is births to mothers with less than a high school education. The percentage of total births to county residents without a high school education in Kanawha County was 15.2% in 2015 (*Kids Count 2015*).

The general health and lack of healthy lifestyles among county residents are also factors potentially increasing poverty in Kanawha County. The latest statics on health status available indicate nearly one quarter of the adult population (18 yrs. of age and older) are in fair or poor health. 33.8% are estimated to be obese, and 26.1% of the adult population of the county smoke (*BRFS 2014*).



8.9% of the population is estimated to be without any type of health insurance (*ACS 2016*). The infant mortality rate in Kanawha County is at 4.6 deaths per 1,000 live births and 8.3% of babies born to county residents are low birth weight (less than 2500 grams). The teen birth rate also appears to be a cause for concern and a contributing factor to poverty at 26.8 births per 1,000 females age 15-19 yrs. (*Kids Count 2015*).

The community discussion held in Kanawha County identified the following factors contributing to poverty:

- Substance abuse and addiction,

- A lack of jobs paying a living wage, and
- Homelessness.

When asked to define poverty and the factors that keep county residents in poverty, community discussion participants identified several local conditions that tend to promote poverty including:

- Low levels of education and training,
- Substance abuse,
- Disabilities,
- Isolation of some parts of the county, and
- A lack of hope.

Community Needs

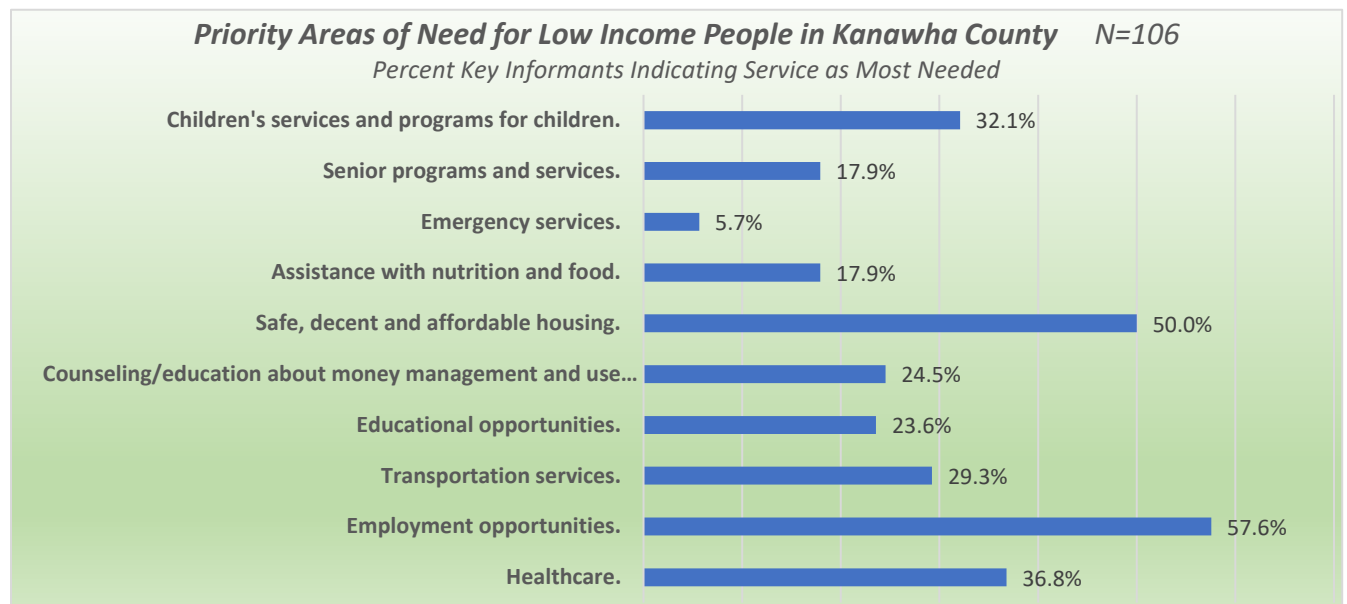
The survey was designed to identify overall areas of need in each county served by EnAct as well as the priority needs within each of the ten distinct domains assessed. 107 key informants familiar with local services and community conditions completed the community survey in Kanawha County.

Overall Needs and Priorities

Key informants surveyed were asked:

” What do you think are the top three areas of need of low income people? ”

Employment opportunities were the most frequently selected area of need by the key informants. 57.6% of survey respondents indicated jobs and employment was one of the priority areas of need of low income people in the county. Housing was identified as an area of greatest need by half (50.0%) of all key informants. Healthcare and Children’s services and programs are also areas of need based on survey responses.

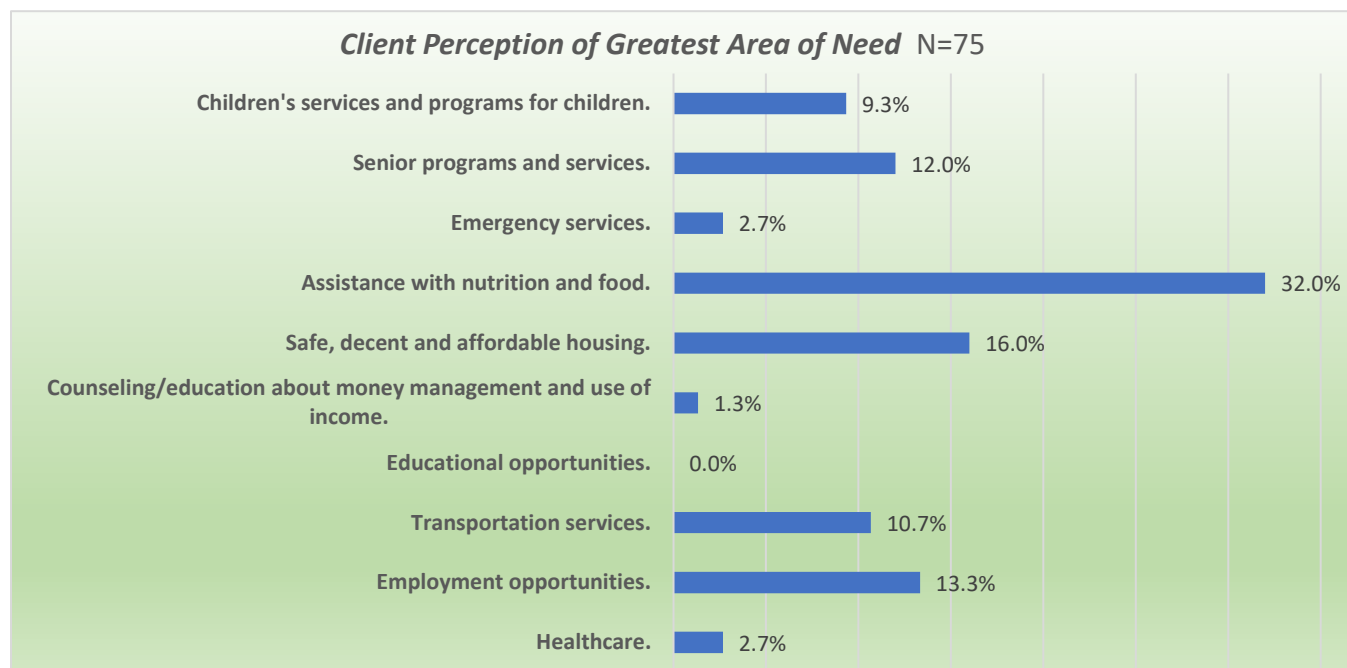


Service recipients were asked:

“If you could only choose one type of service, which of the following would be your area of greatest need?”

Eighty (80) service recipients responded to the survey in Kanawha County; however, all clients responding did not offer their opinion about needs and experiences for every area examined through the survey. The number of responses to individual questions varied from a low of 26 to a high of 76 service recipients.

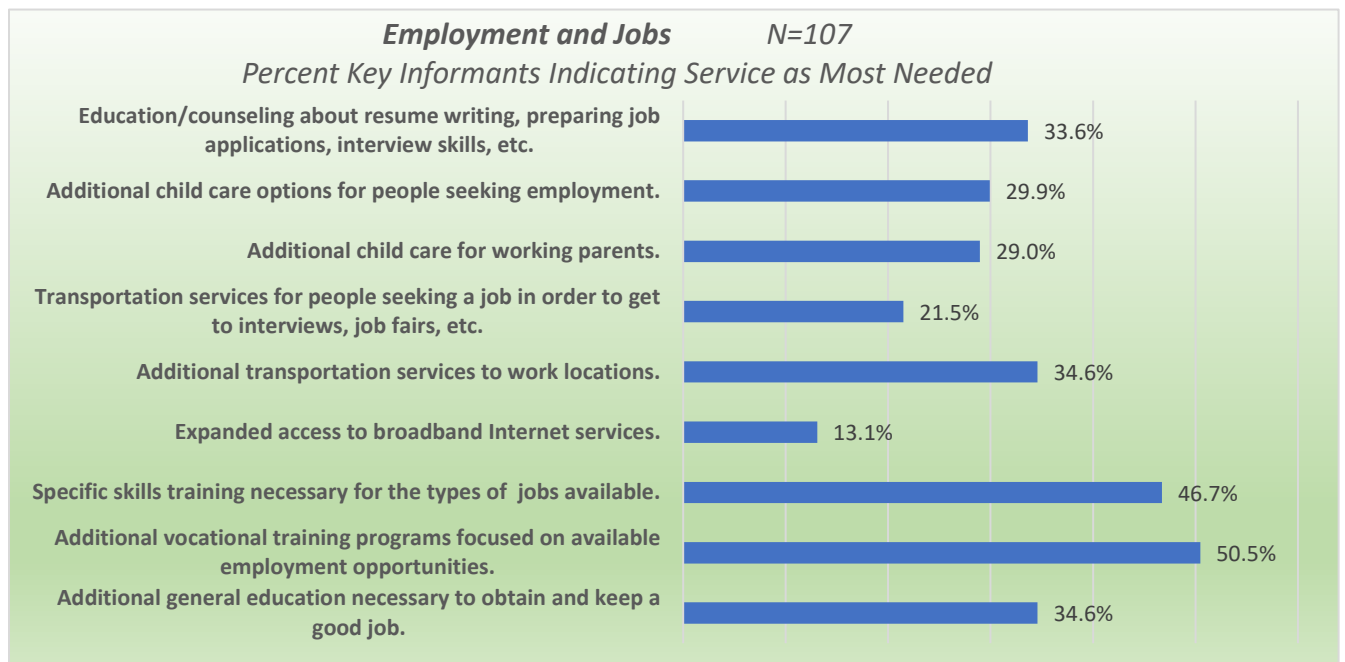
Among service recipients offering an opinion about their area of greatest need (75 people), assistance with food and nutrition was the service area selected by the highest number. 32.0% of the service recipients indicated their greatest need was having sufficient food for themselves and/or family. Other services were selected by fewer respondents although none of the respondents said their area of greatest need was education and training.



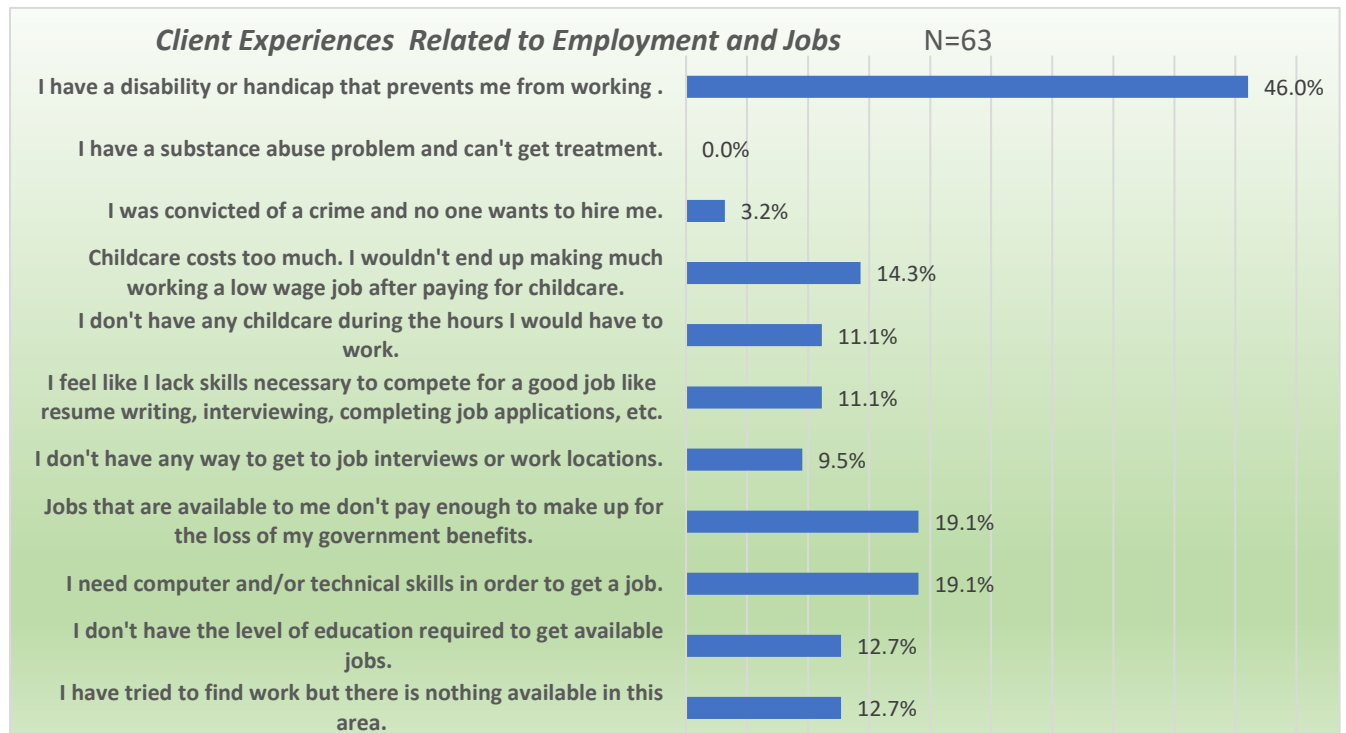
The key informants familiar with services and community conditions in Kanawha County were also asked to identify what they considered to be the three top priorities or area of need within each of the ten domains examined for the Community Needs Assessment. Service recipients were also asked to share their needs and personal experiences about each of the ten domains. Responses of both the key informants and low-income service recipients are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Employment and Jobs:

When asked about the most needed services within the employment and jobs domain, key informants in Kanawha County identified additional training opportunities for the types of jobs available in the area as a priority. 50.5% see vocational training focused on the types of jobs available as one of the most needed services to increase employment opportunities and 46.7% prioritized specific skills training necessary to obtain available jobs. Additional general education necessary to obtain and keep a “good job” and transportation to work locations were also needs identified by the survey respondents.



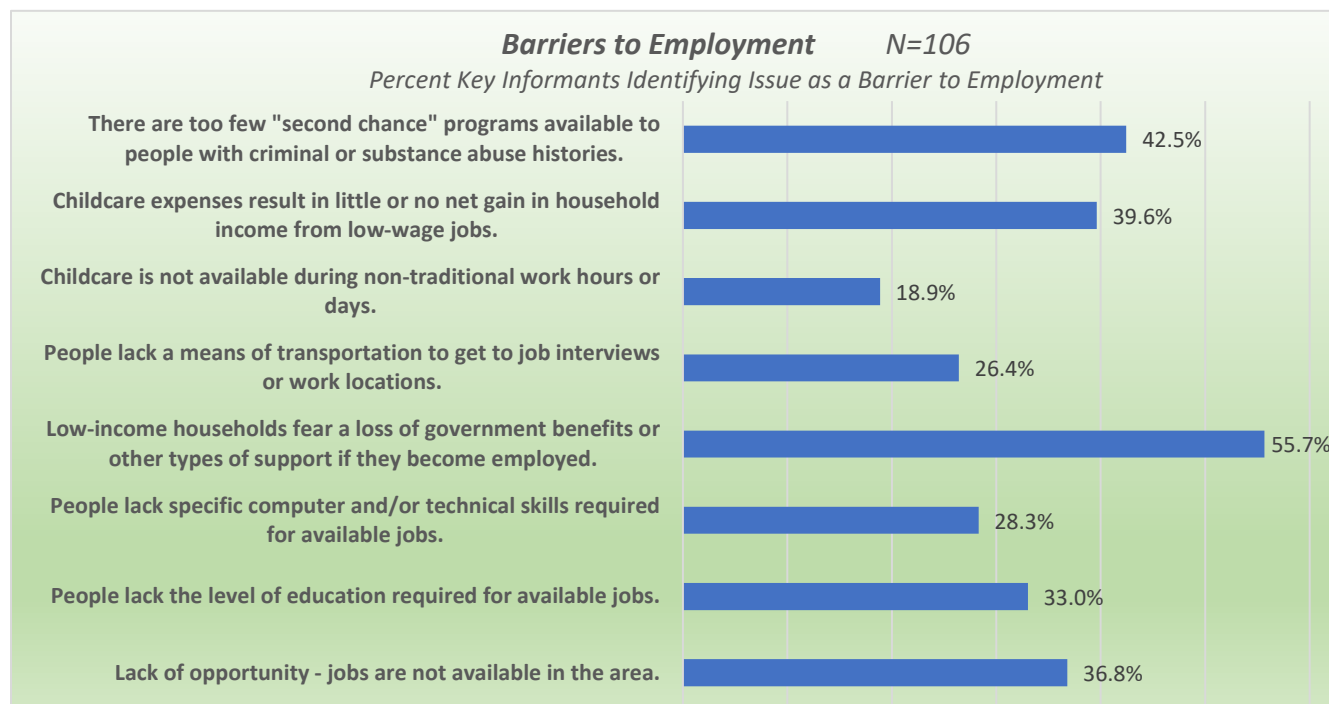
Twenty-nine (29) of the 63 clients sharing their experiences about jobs and employment (46.0%) said they have a disability that prevents them from working. 19.1% of the service recipients said they need computer or technical skills to get a job, and 19.1% also said the jobs available don't pay enough to make up for a loss of government benefits.



14.3% of the respondents said they would not end up making much working a low wage job after paying for child care.

The key informants surveyed were also asked what they consider to be the most significant barriers to employment in Kanawha County. The most significant barriers to employment identified by the key informants support the experiences of some of the clients related to seeking employment. These barriers include:

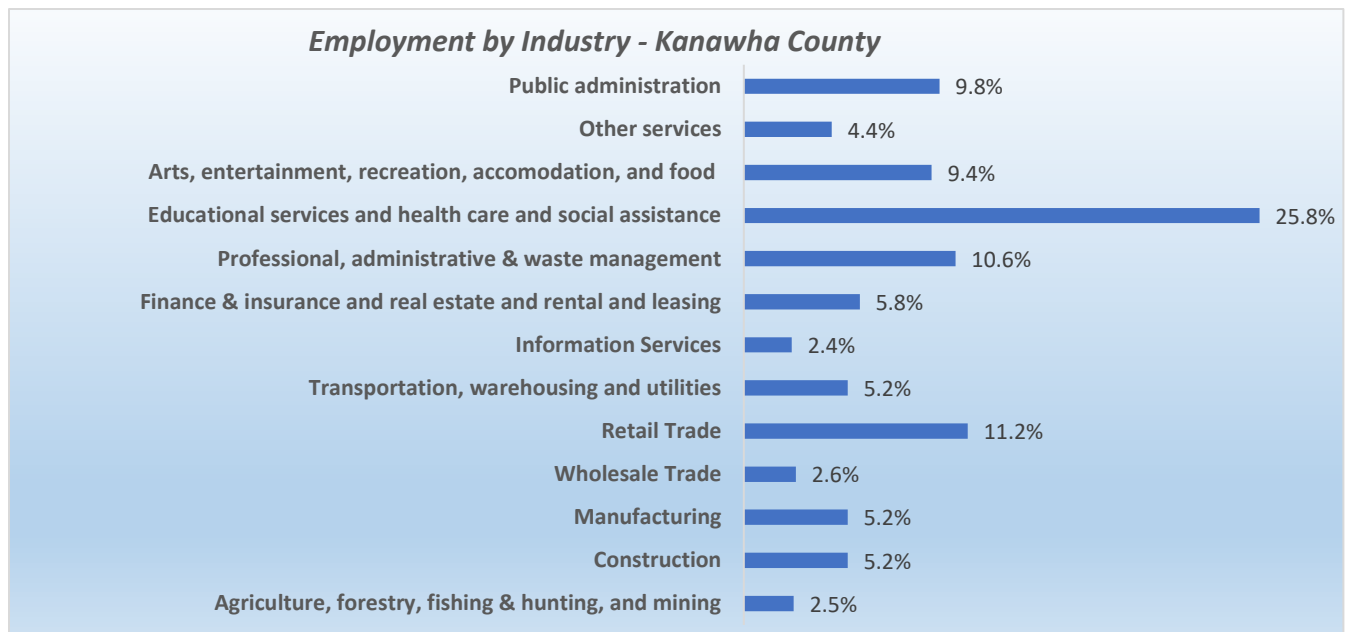
- Low income households fear a loss of government benefits if they become employed (55.7%),
- A lack of “second chance” programs available to persons with criminal or substance abuse histories. (42.5%), and
- Childcare expenses result in little or no net gain from a low wage job.



Current employment in Kanawha County is highest within the education, healthcare, and social service sectors. The top employers in the county are found in this industry sector. Education, healthcare, and social services jobs account for 25.8% of total employment in the county. 11.2% of the jobs are found in the retail trade sector, and other employment is spread across the other industry sectors with no single sector accounting for more than 10% of total jobs available.

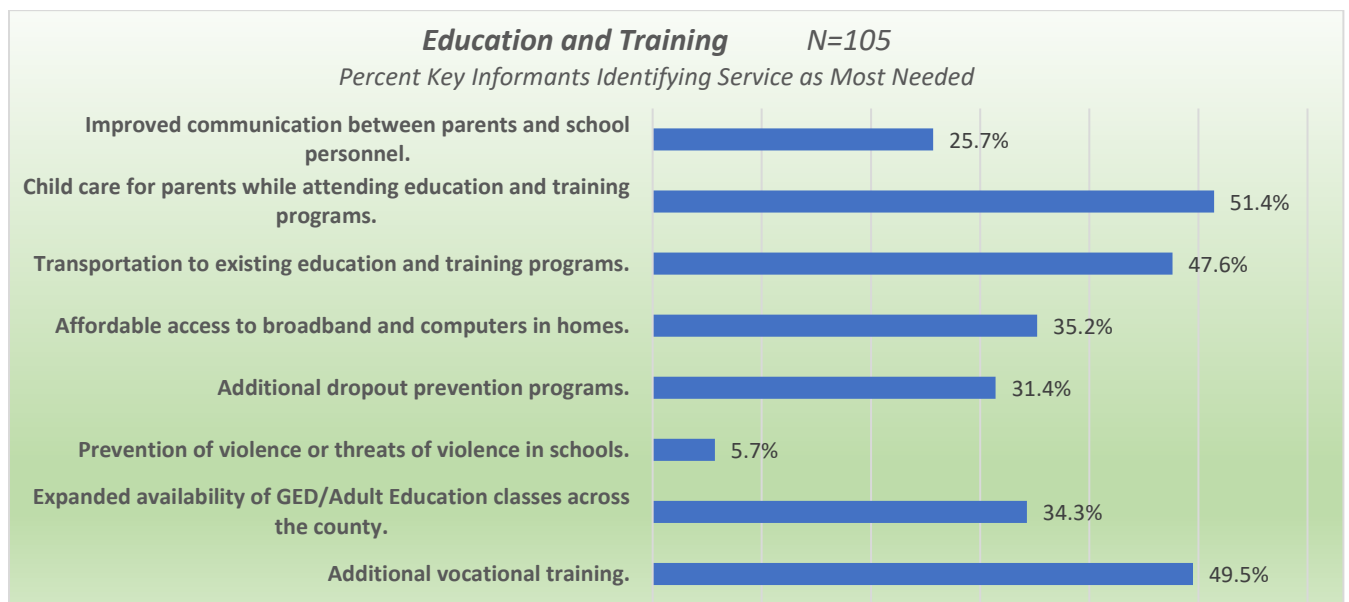
The largest employers in Kanawha County (in order of number of people employed) are:

1. Charleston Area Medical Center,
2. Kanawha County Board of Education,
3. Thomas Health System,
4. West Virginia Department of and Human Resources, and
5. Wal Mart.



Education and Training:

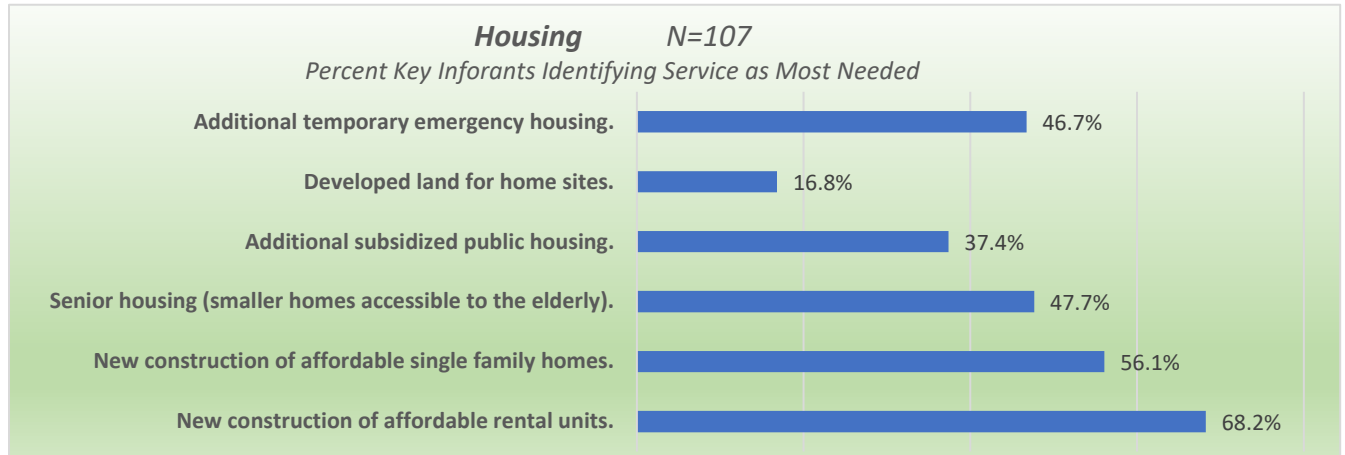
The key informants tend to think the most significant needs within the education and training domain are (1) child care for parents while attending education and training programs, (2) expanded availability of vocational training, and (3) transportation to the existing education and training programs available in the county. Close to half of all respondents selected these three services as “most needed” to improve education and training opportunities.



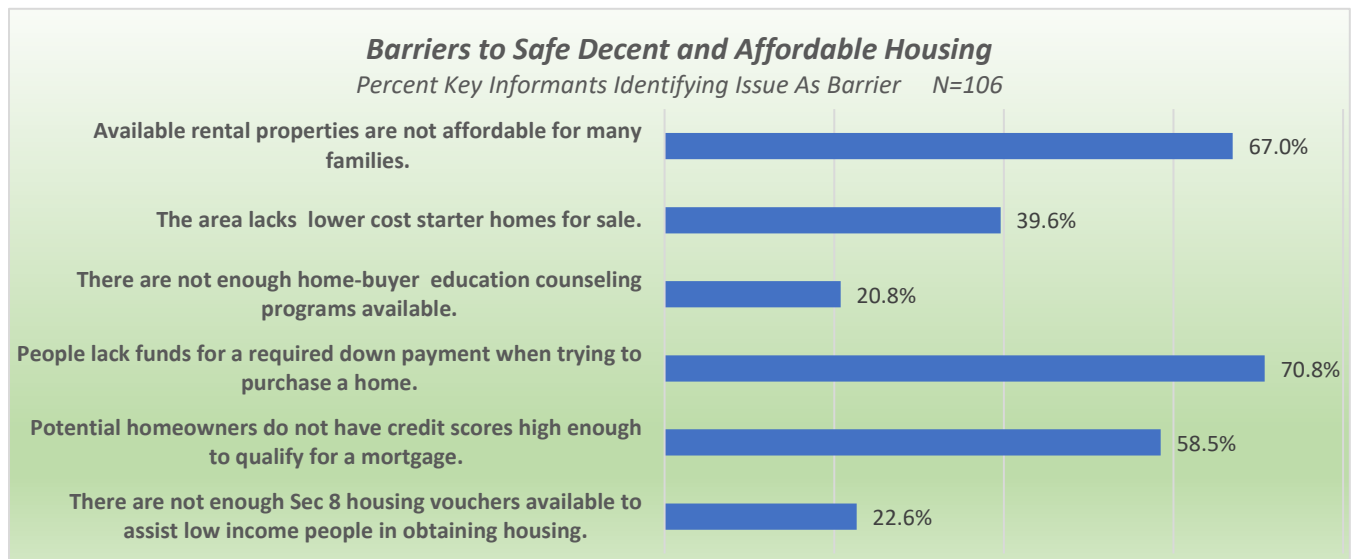
31.9% of the service recipients sharing their experiences about education and training said they did not have any transportation to training programs they would like to attend. 14 of 47 clients (29.8%) also said they could not afford an Internet connection or computer in their home.

Housing:

Kanawha County key informants identified a need for more affordable housing including new construction of affordable rental units (68.2%), new construction of single family homes (56.1%), and Senior housing (47.7%). There also appears to be a need for additional temporary emergency housing based on the key informant responses.



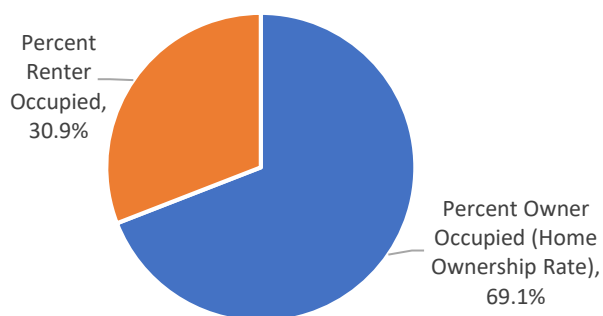
When asked about barriers to obtaining safe, decent and affordable housing, 70.8% of the key informants identified an inability of many residents to purchase a home due to a lack of a sufficient down payment and more than half (58.5%) said potential homeowners cannot qualify for a mortgage due to low credit scores. 67.0% of the community survey respondents also said available rental properties are not affordable.



A majority (57.1%) of all Kanawha County service recipients relating their experiences about housing said they have found decent places to rent to be more than they can afford to pay.

The secondary data sets reviewed provide further information about housing issues in Kanawha County.

Housing Tenure in Kanawha County



Renter occupied housing is more prevalent in Kanawha County than in other counties served by EnAct. 69.1% of Kanawha County residents are home owners while 30.9% live in rental properties.

There are 92,454 housing units in Kanawha County; 88.4% of existing housing units are occupied while 11.6% are vacant. One in every four (25.7%) units of existing housing stock were built prior to 1950. As of 2016, there were an estimated 414 occupied homes without plumbing in Kanawha County.

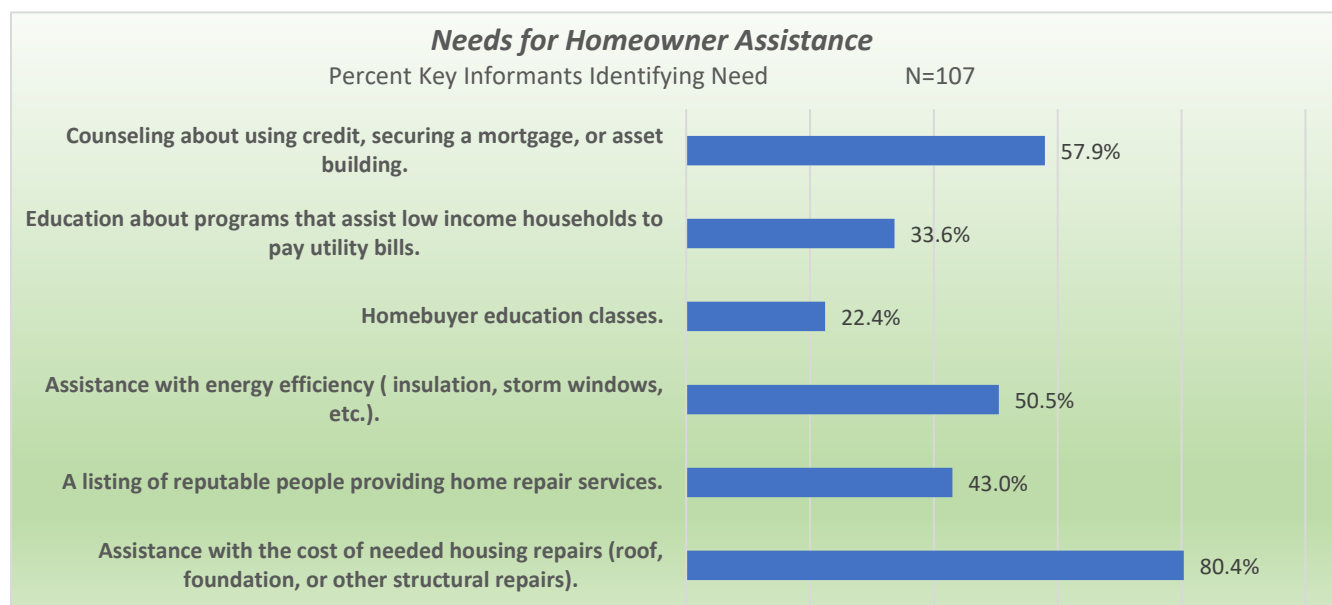
The median value of owner occupied housing in the county is \$107,100 (ACS 2011-16).

Median monthly owner costs for those with a mortgage is \$973, and 18.6% of homeowners with a mortgage are “cost burdened” with monthly housing costs exceeding 30% of income.

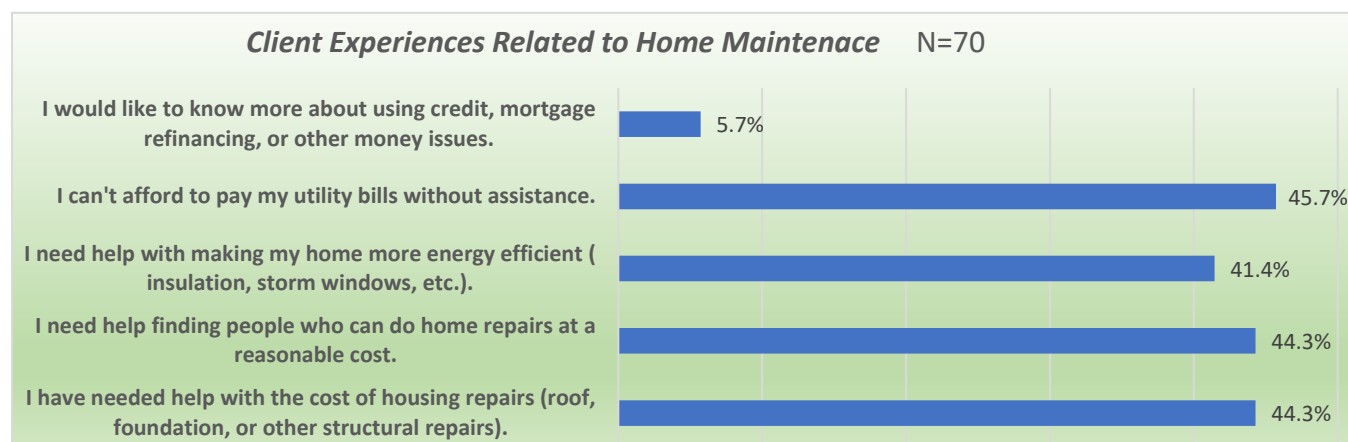
Median rent in Kanawha County is \$703 per month and 42.3% of people who rent are cost burdened based on their gross rent exceeding 30% of the household income. (ACS 2011-16).

Homeowner Assistance:

Key informants in Kanawha County indicated by their survey responses that assistance with housing repairs was the greatest need of low income people in the county. 80.4% of the key informants prioritized assistance with the cost on needed repairs to existing homes as a most needed service to help current homeowners. 57.9% indicated one of the most needed services to assist current homeowners is counseling about credit, mortgages, or and/or asset building. Assistance with energy efficiency was also identified as a priority need by half (50.5%) of the survey respondents.

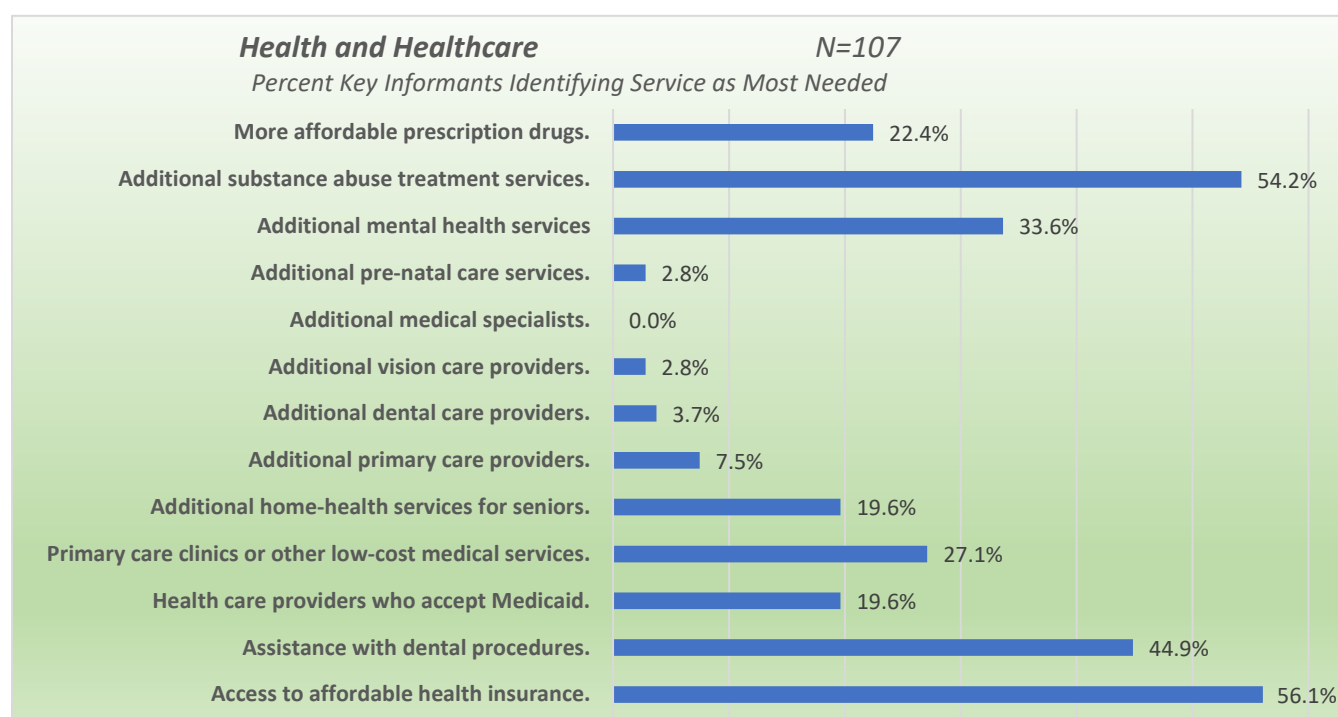


Clients sharing their needs and experiences related to maintaining their home, expressed needs in several areas. 45.7% of all clients sharing their experience said they can't afford to pay utility bills without assistance. More than 40% of the 70 service recipients responding said they have needed help with structural repairs, help finding people to do home repairs at a reasonable cost, and help making their home more energy efficient.

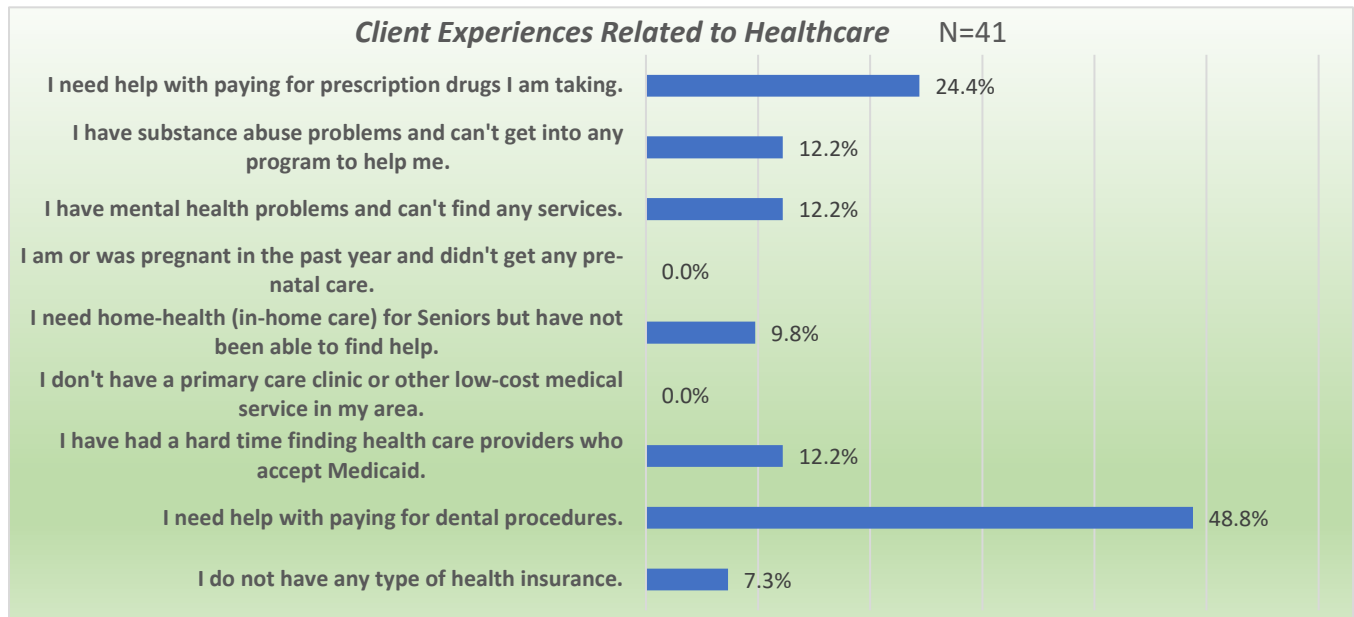


Healthcare:

Access to affordable health insurance and substance abuse treatment are the health-related service most needed based on the key informant survey responses. 56.1% of the key informants in Kanawha County respondents identified access to health insurance as “most needed” and 54.2% see substance abuse treatment as a priority to improve health and healthcare services in the county. Assistance for low income people with dental procedures is also seen as a priority need by 44.9% of the survey respondents.

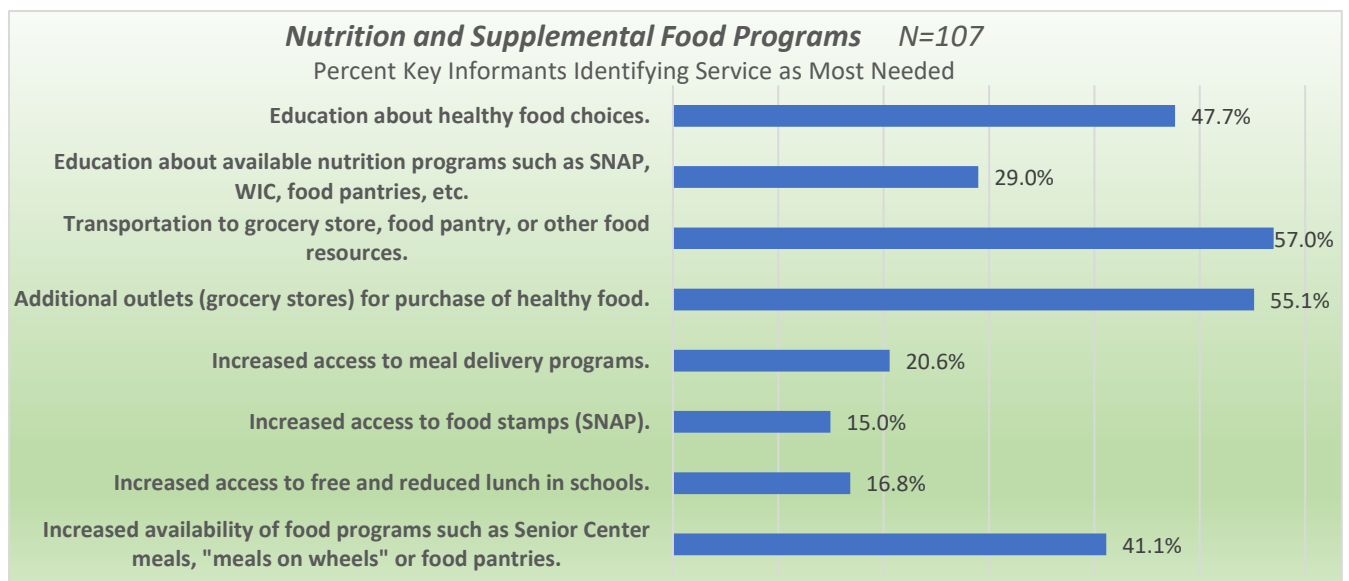


Service recipients said they need help paying for dental procedures and prescription drugs. Nearly half (48.8%) of the 41 clients responding about their healthcare needs indicated they can't afford to pay for dental services, and 24.4% need help paying for prescription drugs they are taking. Mental health and/or substance abuse services are needed by 5 of the 41 clients sharing their experiences.



Nutrition:

When asked about community needs related to food and nutrition, the key informants in Kanawha County prioritized transportation to grocery stores and supplemental food programs, availability of grocery stores, and education about healthy food choices as the most needed services in the county. 57.0% of the respondents indicated low income people lack transportation to grocery stores, food pantries, or other food resources. 55.1% of the respondents to the community survey see a need for more grocery stores in the county.



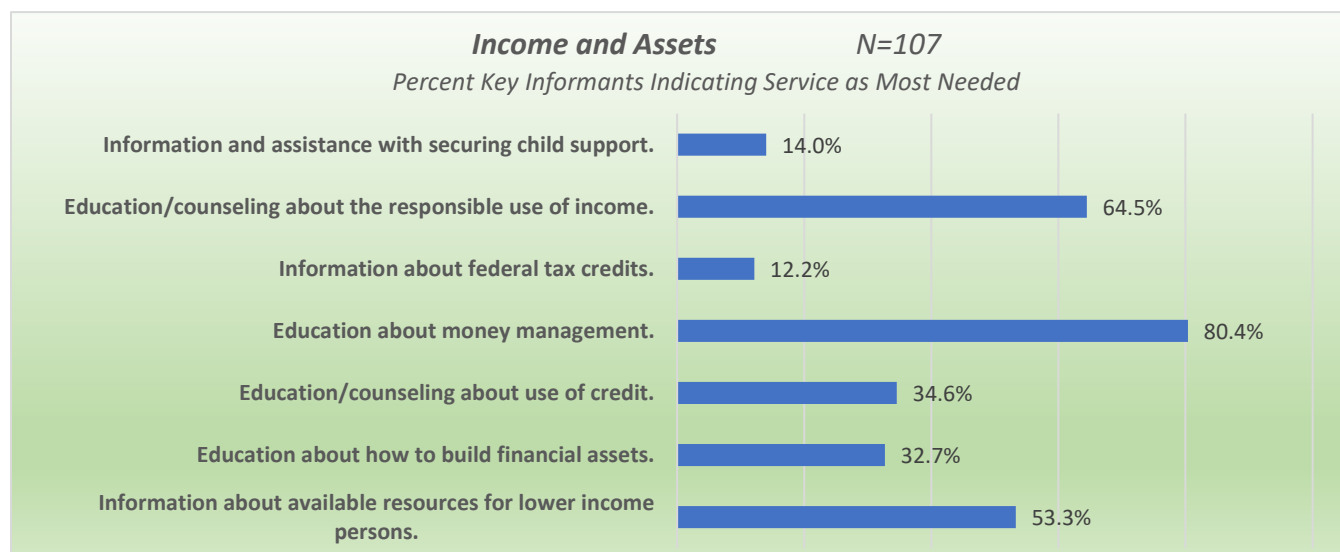
The low-income persons receiving services were asked about their experiences trying to provide adequate food for themselves and their families and the client concerns were consistent with those of the key informants. 45.2% of the 62 clients responding said they would like to learn more about what type of food is healthy, and 32.2% said they sometimes need help feeding themselves or their family but were unable to find anyplace to get free food. 25.8% said they have no way to get to a grocery store, food pantry or other place to get food.

In 2015, there were 50 supplemental food programs (food pantries, hot meal programs, backpack programs, meal delivery, etc.) serving Kanawha County (*WV Foodlink 2015*), and 15.3% of households receive food stamps to supplement their food budgets (ACS 2016). 4,497 families were enrolled in WIC through the WIC office serving the county. The *WV Foodlink County Profile for Kanawha County* documents 223 retail locations that accept food stamps and 24 locations accepting WIC (2015).

There are 17,793 school-age children eligible for free and reduced cost meals at school in 2015, but available data from that year reflects only 60.0% of eligible students participated in the program (*WV FoodLink*).

Income and Assets:

Community Survey responses indicate low income residents need education about money management (using credit, budgeting, bank accounts, etc.) and using income responsibly. 80.4% of the key informants believe education about money management is one of the services most needed in the area, and 64.5% indicated some type of counseling focused on the responsible use of income is needed. Information about available resources such as health insurance coverage, nutrition programs, housing subsidies, etc. was a priority for 53.3% of the key informants surveyed.



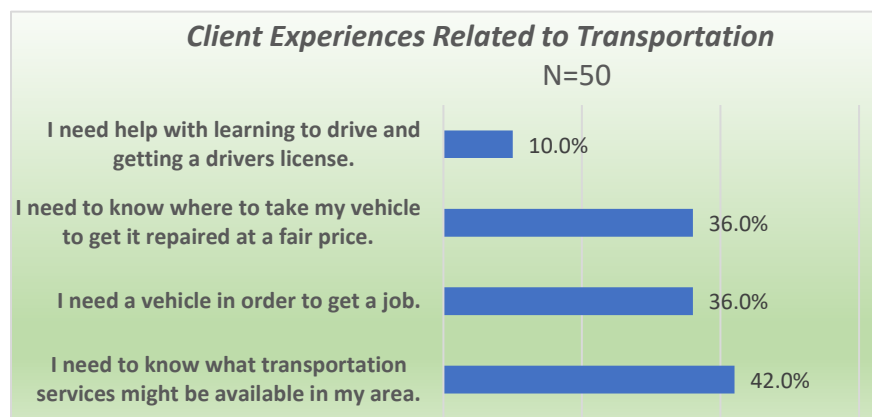
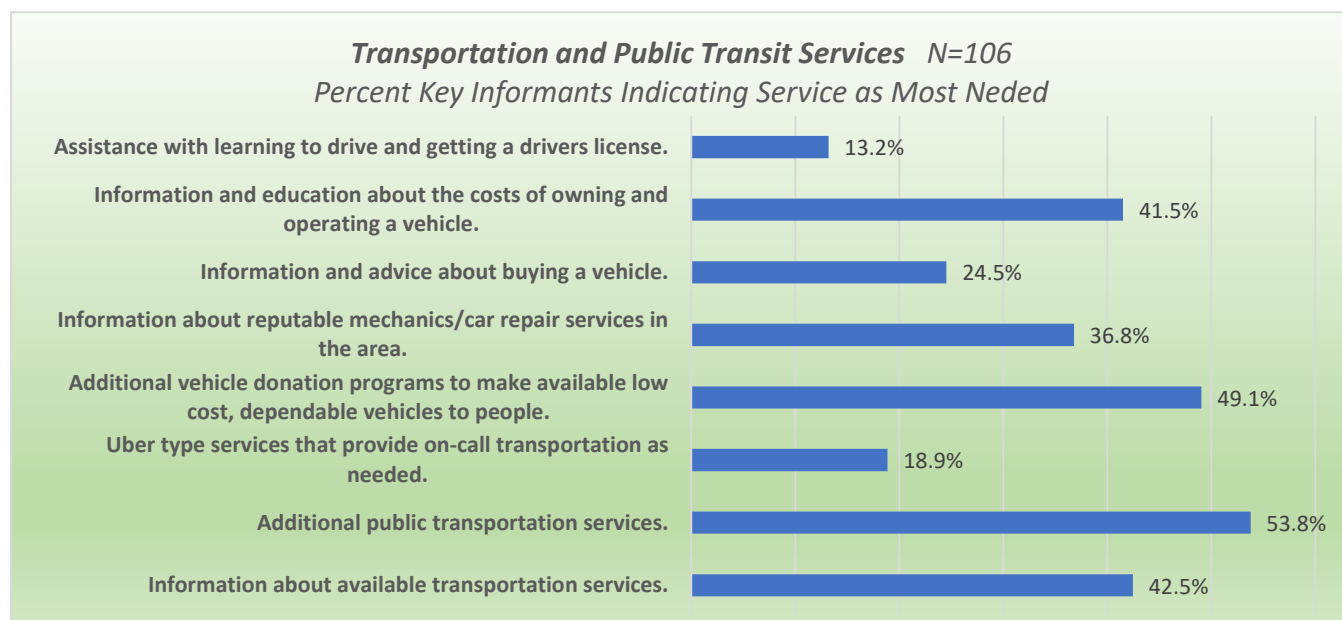
Available data from the 2015 FDIC Survey of Unbanked and Underbanked households indicates 5.5% of Kanawha County households are “unbanked” (have no checking or savings accounts).

The service recipients relating their experiences and needs about money and finances tend to agree that information about managing money and information about health insurance, food programs, housing subsidies and other programs assisting low income persons would be helpful. 36.0% of the 50 clients who

shared their thoughts about money and finances said they would like more information on these topics. 24.0% of the clients said they would like to learn more about how to raise their credit score.

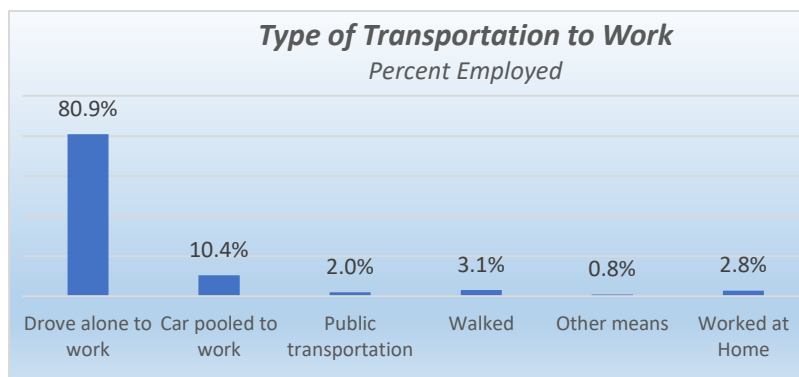
Transportation:

Additional access to public transportation and vehicle donation programs to make available dependable but low-cost vehicles to people in need were the most prevalent needs identified through the community survey related to transportation. Survey responses also indicate information about available transportation services and information/education about costs of owning and operating a vehicle would be beneficial.



42.0% of the service recipients surveyed also said they need to know what transportation services might be available in their area of the county. 36.0% of the clients said they need a vehicle in order to get a job and 36.0% also said they need to know where to get a vehicle repaired at a fair price.

Dependable transportation is necessary for nearly all employed people in Kanawha County to access their work location. The mean travel time to work for current workers in Kanawha County is 20.9 minutes.



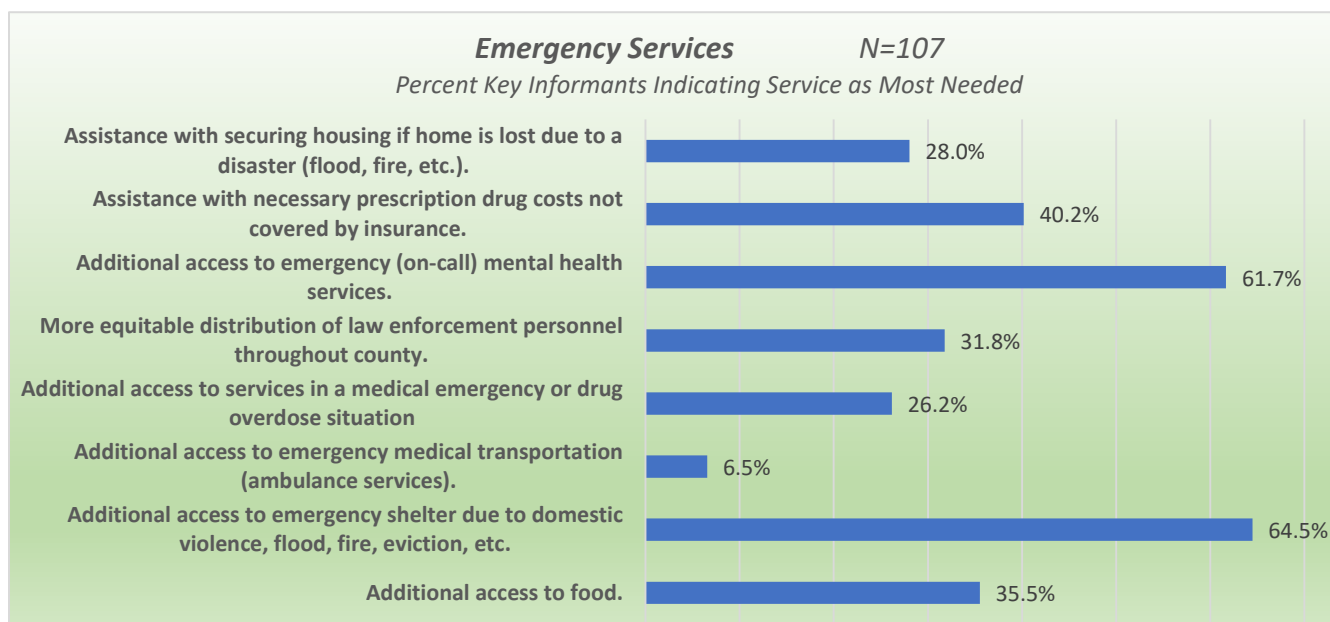
Most workers rely on private transportation to get from home to their work site. 91.3% of all persons employed either drive alone or car pool to work (ACS 2011-16).

The Kanawha Valley Regional Transportation Authority offers public transportation throughout Kanawha County with fixed route services in the Charleston area and to most outlying

communities. Specialized and limited transportation services are also available through local agencies including the Kanawha Valley Senior Services and Prestra Center. These agencies generally provide limited transportation for persons utilizing agency services.

Emergency Services:

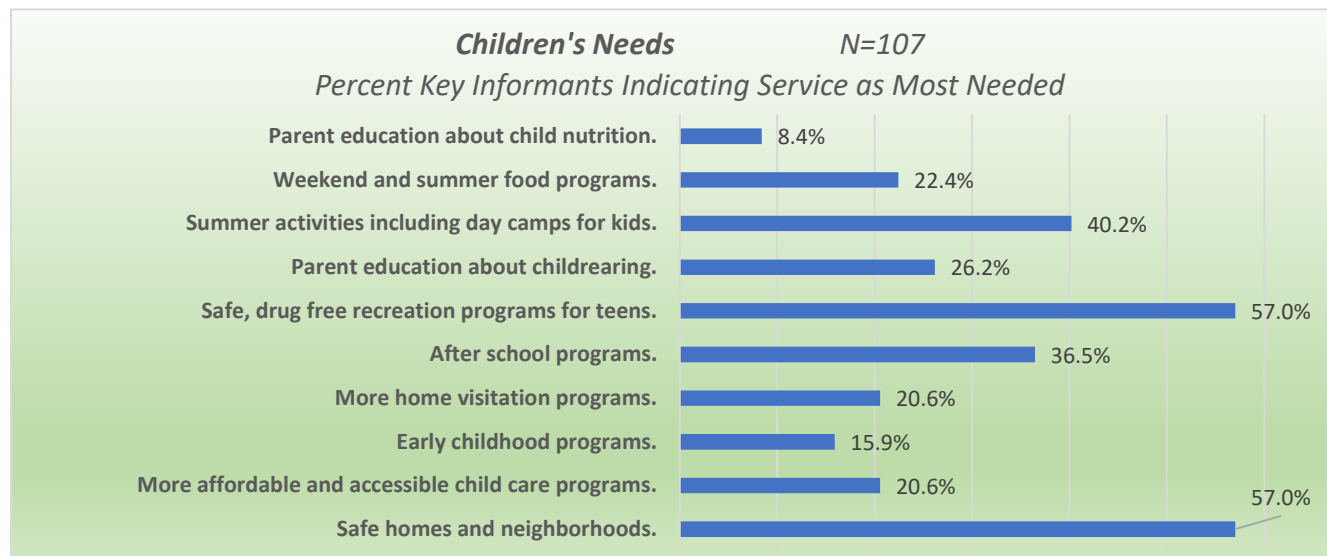
The key informants in Kanawha County believe the most needed services within the emergency services domain are temporary emergency shelter in cases of domestic violence, flood, fire, eviction, etc. and emergency (on call) mental health services. 64.5% of the respondents said temporary shelter was a service most needed in the county, and on call mental health services was prioritized by 61.7%. Other needs within this domain identified by somewhat fewer key informants include assistance with prescription drug costs (40.2%), and access to food (35.5%).



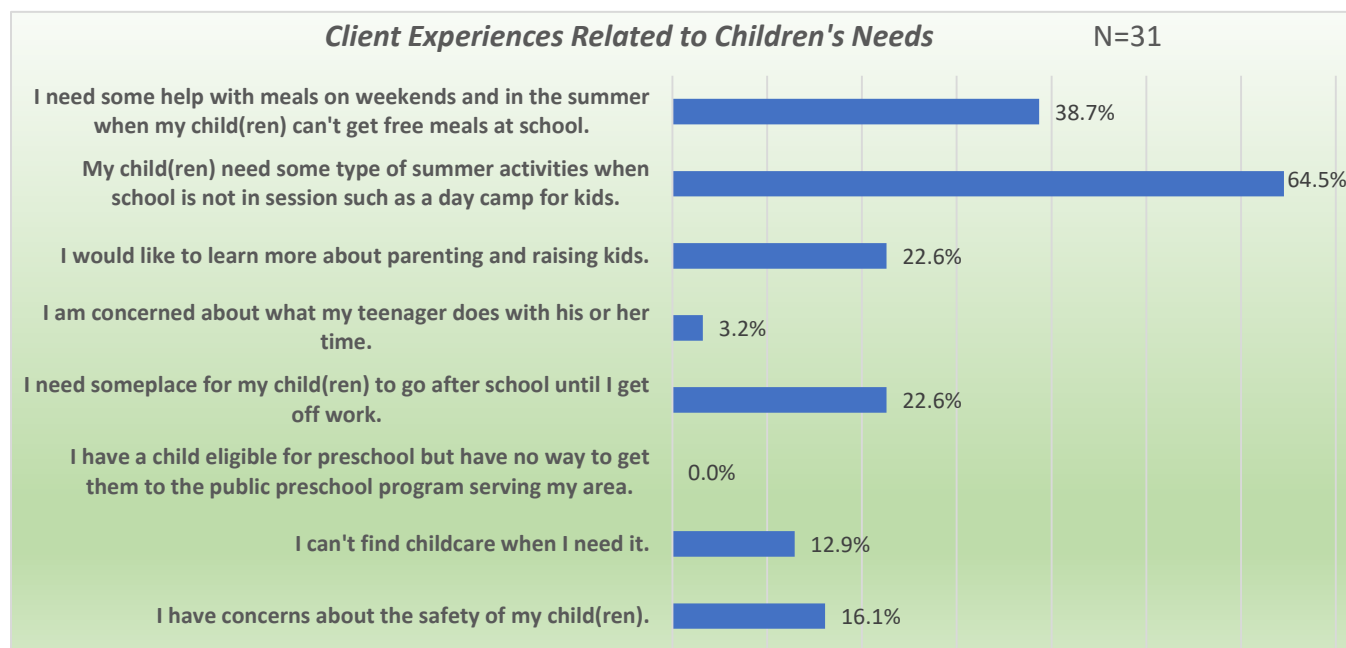
Client experiences in Kanawha County within the emergency services domain tend to focus primarily of access to food. 88.1% of the 67 clients providing information about their needs in an emergency said they have needed help putting food on the table. 16.4% (11) service recipients have needed ambulance services to get to the hospital, and 11.9% (8 clients) have need police at their home and/or temporary housing due to a crisis situation.

Children's Needs:

Child safety is a concern expressed by a majority of the key informants surveyed. 57.0% of the respondents to the community survey indicated safe homes and neighborhoods and safe, drug free recreation programs were two of the most needed services within this domain. Summer activities for children when school is not in session was a priority for 40.2% of the key informants.



Service recipients with children (31 people) were asked about issues or situations they had personally experienced within the past year related to children's needs. 64.5% of the service recipients said their children need some type of summer activities when school is not in session such as a day camp. Summer activities for kids was the most frequently cited need by the Kanawha County clients.



Another concern expressed by 38.7% of the service recipients was a need for help with meals on weekends

and in the summer when children cannot get free meals at school.

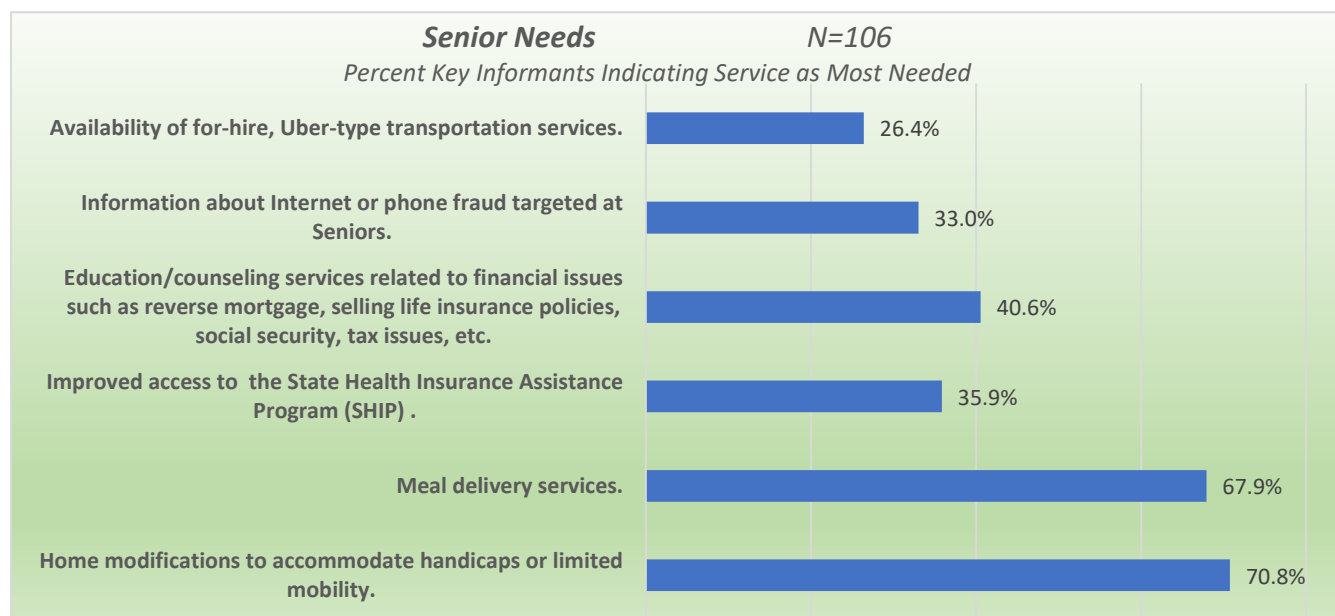
Secondary data sets provide a degree of further insight into the needs of children in Kanawha County. According to Kids Count, the child abuse/neglect rate in Kanawha County in 2015 was 19.1 per 1,000 children (Kids Count 2015). Circuit court data in 2016 tends to indicate a higher rate with 651 court filings for child abuse/neglect in 2016 which is a rate of 29.8 filings per 1,000 households with children (2016 *Circuit Court case filings data*). There were also 1,983 domestic violence cases filed in 2016 which is a rate of 39.5 filings per 1,000 family households (2016 *Family Court case filings data*).

7.1% of children under the age of 18 yrs. have some type of disability (ACS 2016). 1,388 young children (preschool age) are enrolled in a Pre-K program in Kanawha County at one of 80 Pre-K classrooms serving the county. The Pre-K participation rate is relatively low at 74.0% (2017 school year).

Senior Needs

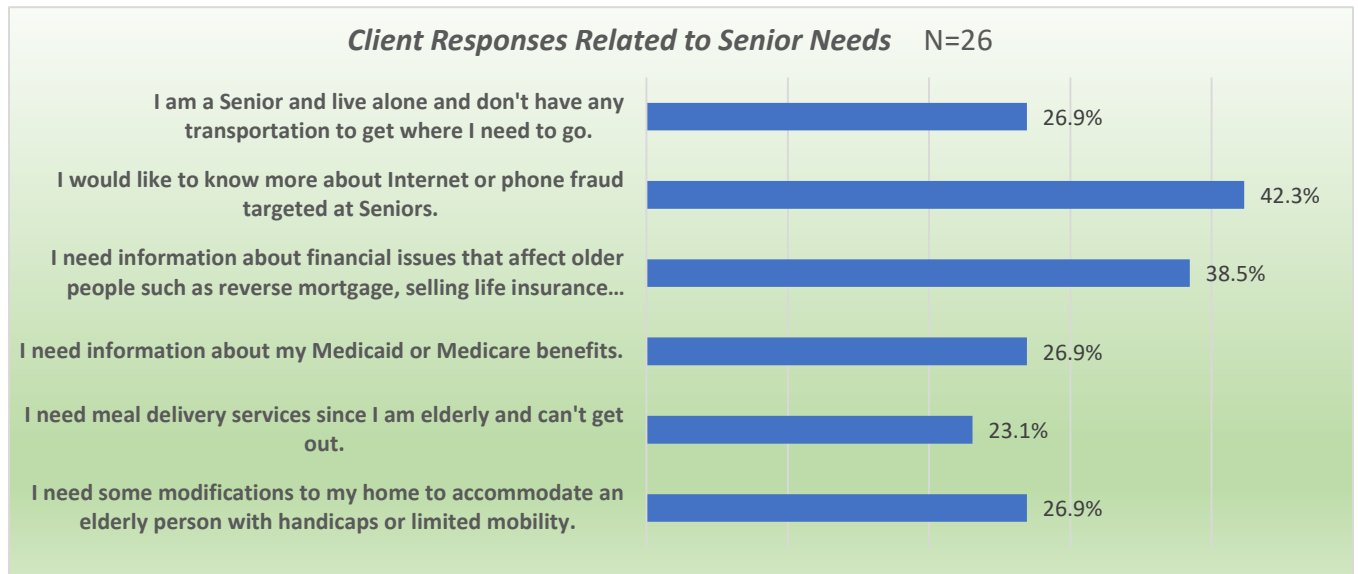
There are 25,249 households with Seniors in Kanawha County and 41.7% of these Seniors have some type of disability. Nearly one in every three Seniors over 65 yrs. of age lives alone. 29.9% of all persons over 65 yrs. of age in the county live alone (ACS 2016). It is estimated that there are 2,816 grandparent households in Kanawha County where a grandparent is responsible for raising grandchildren under 18 yrs. of age.

The most frequently cited needs identified by the key informant responses are (1) home modifications to accommodate handicapping conditions or limited mobility (70.8% of respondents), and meal delivery services. 67.9% of the key informants indicated meal delivery was a “most needed” service within the Senior Needs domain.



When low income service recipients in Kanawha County were asked about their experiences related to the needs of Seniors, 26 people responded. 42.3% said they would like to know more about Internet or phone fraud targeted at Seniors, and 38.5% need information about financial issues that affect older people such as reverse mortgage, selling life insurance policies, social security, tax issues, etc.

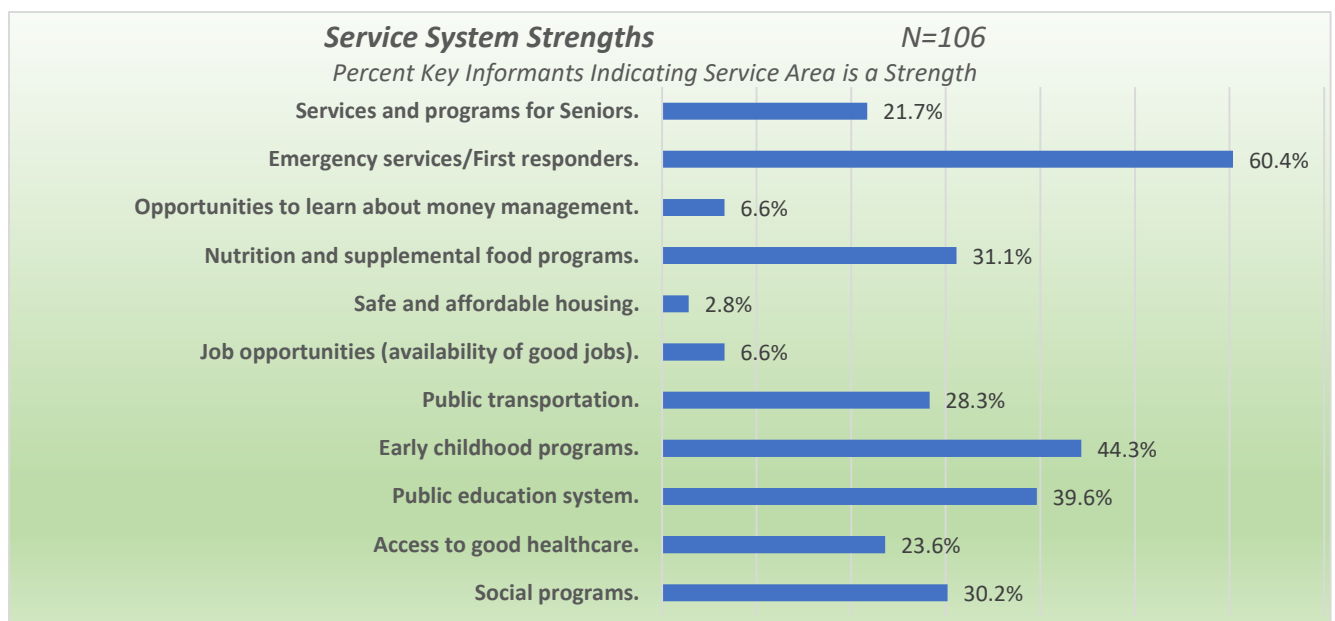
One in four (26.9%) of the clients responding about the needs of Seniors said they live alone and have no means of transportation, need information about Medicaid and Medicare, and/or need home modifications due to a handicap or limited mobility.



Primary Strengths and Community Resources

Community survey respondents in Kanawha County were asked what they considered to be the greatest strengths within the Kanawha County services system and they were asked to select all options they consider to be a “particular strength”.

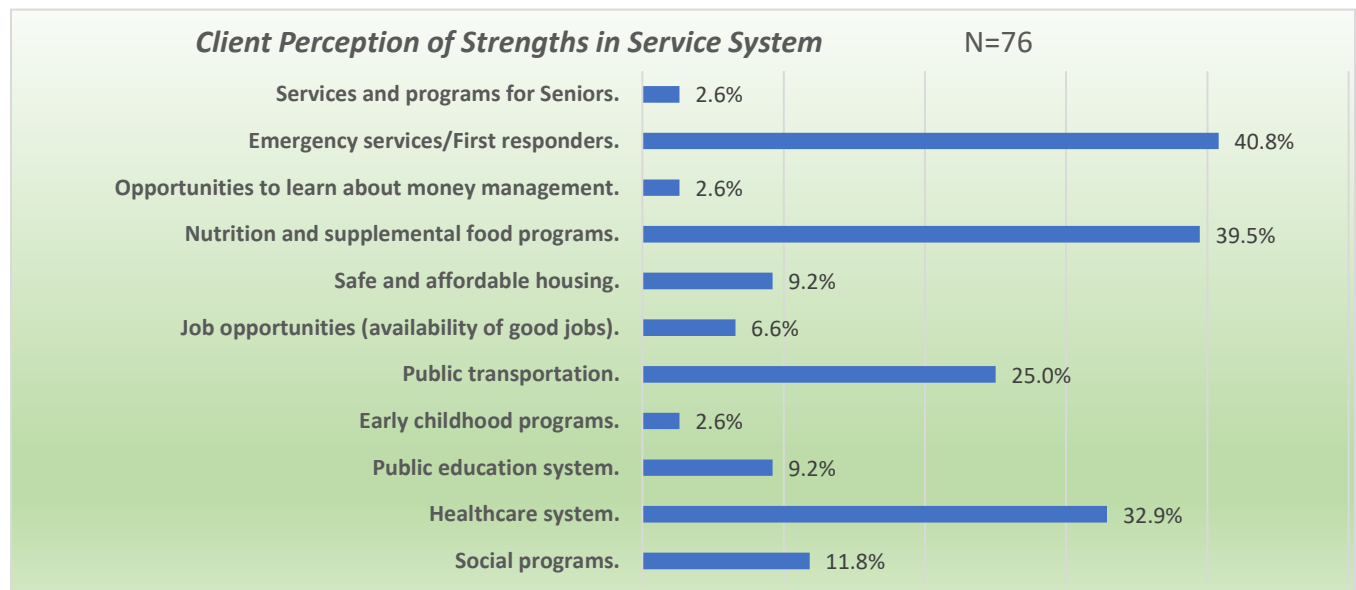
First responders are considered to be the strongest component of the service system in Kanawha County based on the responses of key informants. 60.4% of the respondents selected emergency services provided by first responders as a “particular strength in the county. 44.3% also indicated they thought early



childhood services was a strong component of the overall system. Other components of the service system are seen by less than one in three key informants as a strong component of the service system.

The service recipients offered their opinion about strengths in the services system based on their personal experience. The service recipients were asked to select only those service system components that had been responsive to their needs.

The clients surveyed generally agree first responders is a strong service system component – 40.8% of the 76 service recipients responding, think emergency services by first responders is a strong component of the service system based on their experience. 39.5% find nutrition and food programs to be a strength and 32.9% indicated the healthcare system had been responsive to their needs.



Persons participating in the community discussion held in Kanawha County identified several strengths and assets within the county including:

- A lot of services available,
- Community commitment to addressing needs and improving community conditions,
- Experience of the Senior population
- Property available that can be used
- Activities for Seniors
- Community programming
- Senior bus service in Chesapeake

Many services and programs are available in Kanawha County particularly in the greater Charleston area. Some of these resources that address the needs of low income families include:

- A range of public health services provided by the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department
- Multiple hospitals including Charleston Area Medical Center, Thomas Memorial Hospital, and St Francis Hospital
- WV Health Right
- Women's Health Center

- Primary Care clinics
- Home health care services
- Behavioral Health services including Prestera Center, Highland Hospital, WVU Behavioral Medicine, and Thomas Memorial Behavioral Health
- Numerous 12 step and support groups,
- *Right from the Start* program for Medicaid eligible pregnant women and infants
- Help Me Grow
- First Choice
- Kanawha Valley Collective
- Mountain Mission
- Covenant House Homeless Shelters
- Union Mission
- Goodwill
- Dismas Charities
- KISRA
- PAAC
- Council of Churches
- Numerous licensed family day care providers,
- More than 40 licensed child care centers,
- Eighty Pre-K classrooms,
- Head Start locations,
- MIHOW home visiting program,
- Upper Kanawha Valley Starting Points Center,
- Parents As Teachers,
- West Virginia University Extension Service,
- Local office of the WV Department of Health and Human Resources,
- Regional Family Resource Network,
- Legal Aid services,
- WV Coalition Against Domestic Violence,
- YMCA,
- YWCA,
- Aging and Disability Resource Center,
- Bridge Valley Community and Technical College,
- Charleston Job Corps,
- Numerous banking locations.