

MENOMINEE-DELTA-SCHOOLCRAFT
COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY



MDSCAA
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT
2022

(Approved by the Governing Board on 7-28-22)



MENOMINEE DELTA SCHOOLCRAFT COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

INTRODUCTION

Since 1965, the Menominee, Delta, Schoolcraft Community Action Agency has been a leader in the community providing opportunities for individuals and families working to maintain their self-sufficiency.

MDS Community Action Agency is a private nonprofit agency serving primarily the people of Menominee, Delta, and Schoolcraft counties. Our mission is to empower and assist people to improve and sustain their quality of life through nurturing, education, housing, nutrition, volunteerism, in-home support services and advocacy. MDSCAA employs approximately 250 people across the tri-county area.

MDS Community Action Agency is governed by an 18 member Board of Directors made up of representatives from the three county area. The board is made up of one third elected officials or their representative, one third from the private sector, and at least one third of the members from the low income population served by the agency. The Early Childhood Program is also governed by a Policy Council. It is made up of up to 20 parents that are elected by their peers to represent each county, option, and program.

MDS Community Action Agency is funded by federal, state, and local grants; UPCAP, local millage from Delta and Menominee Counties, United Way of Delta County, Community Foundations, and local fundraising. MDSCAA provides programming and services in the areas of early childhood programs including Head Start/Early Head Start; senior services including senior centers, home delivered meals, personal care and homemaker services, commodities distribution, and adult day service; three senior volunteer programs; low income weatherization and energy saving services; heat and utility assistance; and homeless services.



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PURPOSE OF ASSESSING

MDS Community Action Agency conducts a formal Community Needs Assessment every three years to review the most pressing needs of the area. Local data is collected and reviewed including feedback from the individuals served through Community Action. This review helps to ensure the programs of MDSCAA stay relevant and current to the needs of the local communities. The data is reviewed and priorities are set to assure current services are meeting the needs of people, gaps in services are identified, and new services are considered. This data is useful for:

- Learning more about the community and people served by the agency
- Gaining authentic unbiased opinions regarding needs and services in the community
- Becoming aware of unmet needs that were previously unknown
- Documenting local needs as required by funding sources
- Obtaining support for future projects and services

The Community Needs Assessment data is reviewed annually for any significant changes and the Community Needs Assessment is updated as needed.



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METHODOLOGY

MDS Community Action Agency/HRA partnered with the Early Childhood Program to conduct a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment. Community assessments were collected and analyzed. Assessments were obtained from the Community Action Partnership Assessment Tool, MI Department of Health and Human Services Health Data, United Way of America – Alice report, and Delta LPB Homeless Count. Data was collected on local trends in the three county area through the national Kids Count data base, the US Census Bureau, the Community Action Partnership, and U of M Poverty Center.

In addition to the assessment data collected from national and state assessments, local surveys were created and distributed throughout the community. A Community Needs Survey (CNS) – was created and given to the Governing Board Members, and MDSCAA staff. A CNS for organizations was created and mailed to all area Churches and given to the local planning body for homelessness.

A Community Needs Survey for residents and consumers was created and given to area residents and consumers of service in the spring of 2022 asking what they believe the needs of the community were in the areas of housing, employment, assistance, family support, education, transportation, food and medical. This survey was also posted on our agency website and emails were sent to the three county agency sites who promoted the survey to customers. In addition to the website posting, this survey was turned into a survey method online form and emailed out to our area coalition groups, staff, and a link was posted on the agency Facebook pages encouraging all to fill out the survey.

A client satisfaction survey was also created and mailed out to all clients who received assistance from the agency.



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RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA

The 2022 MDS Community Action Agency Community/HRA Assessment gathered both qualitative and quantitative data. Data was gathered from individuals and families with children, senior citizens, elected officials, staff, governing board members, churches, and professionals in the community working to identify the areas that they believe are our community's greatest needs.

The following are the results of the qualitative and quantitative data review including indicators on the causes and conditions of poverty in Menominee Delta Schoolcraft Counties:

- Delta, Menominee, Schoolcraft counties are rural counties in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Each county has one main city and one or two small towns where the majority of the people reside. Populations range from 36,903 people in Delta County, 23,502 people in Menominee County, and 8,047 in Schoolcraft County. The population in each county has declined 0.45%, 2.19%, and 5.16% respectively between the 2010 and 2020 census. The population in the area is also aging. 23.7% of the population is over 64 years old, almost a third of the entire population. 57.2% of the people are 18-64 years old, and 19.1% are under the age of 18. The majority of people are white at 92.3% with a small pocket of Native American people who make up 2.5%. There are also .47% Asian, .40% Black, and 4.0% mixed race populations. There is a large percent of veterans (57.9%) who live in the area that are over the age of 65. 19.3% of the ages 35-54 are also veterans.
- The overall poverty rate in the area has decreased between 2010 and 2020, with Schoolcraft County having the largest decrease of approximately 3%. Menominee County has about equal the percent of people in poverty at 11.4% compared to Delta and Schoolcraft Counties. A large employer has expanded over the past six years bringing more jobs to the area. Delta County has a poverty rate of 11.3%, while Schoolcraft County has a poverty rate of 11.9%. Delta County added a large employer who repairs military ships. The State population rate in poverty is 12.6%. According to the U.S. Census, the poverty rate for the area decreased by 3.29%, which is close to the national change in poverty of -3.4%.

- More females live in poverty than males. For the three county area, 13.78% of females live in poverty compared to 11.53% of males. By race, Black, Asian, Native American, then White populations are respectively highest in percent living in poverty.
- In the three county area 34.72% of the population lives within 200% of the federal poverty level. The families and individuals with income between 100% and 200% of the federal poverty rate are considered the working poor who struggle to meet their basic needs even though they are employed.
- 38.3% of female headed households in the area, live in poverty compared to 15.2% of male headed household. An improvement was seen in children ages 0-17 from 2010 to 2020. In 2010, 21.8% were living in poverty. Then in 2020, a decrease was seen reflected by 16.1% of children ages 0-17 living in poverty.
- The senior population also struggles with poverty. Reports show that an average of 9.3% of seniors live in poverty in the tri-county area as compared to 8.5% across the state of Michigan, and comparable to the 9.3% nationally.
- The ALICE Report from United Way highlights the issue of the working poor. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed households that earn more than the federal poverty rate, but less than the basic cost of living in the county. In 2017 in Delta County 40% of households met this definition. So when combined with the poverty rate of 11.3% plus the 28.7% of the ALICE households, 40% of households struggle to meet their bills. In Menominee County it is 41%, and in Schoolcraft County it is 54% of households who struggle to meet their basic needs.
- The three county area unemployment rate is higher than the state or national average. The average unemployment rate for the three counties is 5.5% with Schoolcraft County at the highest with 8.5%. Delta County's unemployment rate is 5.8% in April 2022. The state average is 4.2% and the national average of 3.4%. Menominee County has the lowest unemployment rate at 4.1% due to a large employer expanding in the area in the last six years.
- The median household income in Delta County is \$49,414. In Menominee County it is \$53,031 and Schoolcraft County it is \$49,684. In Michigan the median household income is \$61,352 and in the US it is \$67,340. As evidenced by the income levels, the tri-county area is significantly below the median income of the State and national levels, although up until 2022 our housing costs were lower than the national and state average.
- Many children rely on the schools for access to healthy affordable food. In Delta County, 51.95% of children qualified for free or reduced lunch. In Menominee County 58.32% qualify, and in Schoolcraft County 55.67% qualify for free or reduced lunch. 50.55% of school children in Michigan qualify for free and reduced lunch as well as 42.16% of children nationwide. Many children are living in poverty and free and reduced lunches at school are important to their overall nutrition and development.
- The relative number of uninsured people in Delta County is 5.64%, Menominee County is 5.90%, and Schoolcraft County is 7.62%. These rates remain close to the state average of 5.66%. This is below the national average of uninsured individuals at 8.33%. There are 6 rural health clinics in the three county area and 2 hospitals.

- According to the data that has been collected from the Head Start community assessment and the risk factor surveys that are conducted with every family who fills out an application, families are answering that these are the top 5 factors that are impacting their families.
 - Affordable child care
 - Additional free preschool
 - Employment opportunities
 - Access to dental services
 - Affordable housing

In addition, the following risk factors affecting families were identified:

- Parents being unemployed or underemployed and parents who have dropped out of school or struggled with school continues to be the highest risk factors amongst our families. Along with that, the percentages of the families who are affected continues to raise each year.
- Parent dropped out of school, struggled or attended special education classes in school
- Mental illness continues to show in the top 3 risk factors in each county, and the percentage continues to increase each year.



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KEY FINDINGS

Key findings from the MDS CAA/HRA client/community survey:

According to the survey collected from the general public, staff, CAA Governing Board, community partners, and consumers of service, the following issues were identified and ranked as needs in the three county area:

EDUCATION NEEDS:

- High quality childcare options 69.3%
- Increasing community knowledge of available resources 61.4%
- Preschool activities to develop school readiness 49.9%

HEALTH NEEDS:

- Payment assistance programs for adult dental/hearing/vision 53.04%
- More community focus on preventative care 40.87%
- Increase knowledge of available health resources 37.39%

HOUSING NEEDS:

- More income based rental housing for disabled and seniors 47.83%
- More grants to make homeownership and home rehab affordable 42.61%
- More community supports for homeless families and individuals 37.39%
- Services that reduce home energy costs 36.52%

INCOME AND ASSET BUILDING NEEDS:

- Increase knowledge of available financial resources 55.75%
- Anonymous and confidential budget counseling 50.44%
- More access to low interest/no interest loans 46.02%
 - Help to meet basic repairs for roofs, windows, vehicles, stoves, porch, furnace, gas cards
- More information on how to access financial resources 46.02%

SUPPORT SERVICES NEEDED:

- Childcare services 50.43%
- In home services – PC/HA 38.26%
- Substance abuse resources 34.78%
- Life skills programs and services 32.17%
- Transportation Services 24.35%
- Early Childhood Services 21.74%
- Nonprofit legal services 21.74%
- Senior Meal Programs 16.52%
- Sexual/Emotional/Physical Abuse Prog. 16.52%
- Disabled services 12.17%
- Elderly Services In Home Meals 11.3%
- Senior Centers 11.3%
- Senior Volunteer Programs 6.96%
- Other 1.74%

Early Childhood Program Community Needs Survey Key Findings

Every year we collect information from parents that fill out an application for the Menominee Delta Schoolcraft Early Childhood Program. To better support healthy families, parents indicated they needed the following:

Delta:

- Affordable child care
- Additional free preschool
- Employment opportunities
- Access to dental services
- Affordable housing

Menominee:

- Additional free preschool
- Employment support/training
- Employment opportunities
- Affordable child care
- Access to dental services

Schoolcraft:

- Affordable child care
- Additional free preschool
- Employment opportunities
- Affordable housing
- Access to dental services

My children need child care because of my:

- Delta: Work schedule; typically 7-9 hours, 5 days a week, M-F 7am-6pm
- Menominee: Work schedule; 7-9 hours, 3 days a week, M-F 7am- 6pm
- Schoolcraft: Work schedule; typically 1-4 hours, # days per week varies, M- F 7am-6pm

Data collected across all 3 counties that represent the status of available child care in each of our counties, as of June 2022:

The number of childcare services available in each county has significantly decreased and of the ones that are still open, many do not have any available openings. This has been a concern in our communities. Right now, Delta County has 11 childcare/preschool centers, only 1 reports that they have openings at this time. Menominee has 5 childcare/preschool centers, 3 report having openings currently, and Schoolcraft County has 7 private home childcares, but none of them currently have any openings.



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SUMMARY

The assessment team reviewed both qualitative and quantitative data for the three county area of Menominee, Delta, and Schoolcraft Counties. From that data the following conclusions were drawn. Often time young families with very young children are more likely to live in poverty than a family with no children or much older children. Female headed households are more likely to be living in poverty. The unemployment rate has declined but many individuals have to work more than one job to make ends meet. This leads to more time away from the children and families. Educational attainment also relates to the type of work families have access to. There is not a large industrial base in the Delta and Schoolcraft Counties so many families work in the retail or fast food industry. In Menominee County there is access to several larger employers so families have more options to obtaining employment. The pandemic in 2020 and 2021 shut down many employers. Employment skyrocketed as people were quarantined. Now that the pandemic is easing the unemployment rate has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start work with children and families to provide education, healthy meals and family support. There is a focus on working with families to get children up to date and stay up to date on medical, dental, immunization, and hearing and vision requirements through education and partnering with parents. The Early Childhood Program also works with parents on family goals centered on areas that they feel are important with the help of a family assessment done twice a year. All of these things allow for children to be able to learn and the parents to be able to advocate for themselves and their child, which prepare both for entering the public schools. The program provides the needed support to low income families and children, helping both the child and the parent obtain skills needed to be self-sufficient.

The pandemic has made providing services to children and families very challenging. Head Start sites had to close for a period of time in the beginning of the pandemic, moving services to virtual options and online forums. Families and workers all had to adapt very quickly. As we move into 2022, procedures have been put in place to keep the centers open. Needs of the families became very apparent. Families needed access to better online equipment, as did staff. Families needed access to food for their children and mask and hygiene kits to stay safe from Covid. The program worked to make sure families were taken care of and had access to food and equipment.

The first year of the pandemic in 2020, many people and low income families were unemployed. The Government put out supplemental unemployment programs along with additional benefits for food. These programs supported low income families through the pandemic. Now that the pandemic is subsiding, most individuals have returned to work. Unemployment is back down to pre-pandemic levels. Low income families rely on services that Community Action provides such as the heat and utility

programs, nutrition programs, and housing assistance to make ends meet. Families are stretched financially as is evidenced by the United Way ALICE report that shows, in addition to the individuals in living in poverty (11.4%), 28% of families are asset limited and living pay check to pay check.

Senior citizens struggle to pay for food, bills, housing, and medical care. The last two years of the pandemic hit the senior population proportionately hard. Seniors were quarantined more often than others due to their age and medical conditions. The Senior Centers became a place that seniors looked to for general support and access to food. The Senior Centers saw an increase in demand for food support. The centers stepped up and starting delivering more home delivered meals and created a drive through take out for senior meals. Seniors often live on a set income and face many long cold winters which drive up the heat and utility costs.

For low income homeowners, access to a program that can make their home more energy efficient is important, as well as short term assistance in paying heat and utility bills. The surveys indicated that one of the top concerns was getting help in finding and accessing community resources. MDSCAA has become a DHHS Navigator to help clients work through the system.

Homeless services continue to be a key to helping individuals and families find housing they need. The pandemic hit in 2020. This moved millions of people to working at home and online. Many people moved their homes to areas they enjoyed while vacationing. The Upper Peninsula saw an influx of individuals moving to the area, forcing the prices of buying homes and renting up significantly. MDSCAA worked with many individuals during the pandemic to find them a safe place to stay or live trying to keep them safe from Covid and off the streets. In 2022, the housing market has not yet eased. Finding an apartment is very difficult and if one is found, the prices are very high. Affordable housing remains a critical need in our three county area and throughout the Upper Peninsula.

The community has limited transportation options that are affordable to low income families. Most people own a car but often that car may not be dependable. Transportation systems such as the public ones in Delta, Schoolcraft, and Menominee County, give people living in rural areas access to services and groceries. The community continues to try and expand current transportation services to reach all areas in the three counties. Recently the gasoline prices have risen significantly with the war in Ukraine and the return of people traveling after the first two years of the pandemic. MDSCAA has had clients request assistance to pay for gasoline for their vehicles.

Areas that appear to need more development include adding more child care options in the community, increasing the assistance provided to individuals seeking community resources, more affordable housing options for low income families and individuals, offering of budget counseling and low or no interest loans to assist in repairs. Homebuyer education has also been identified to help individuals prepare to buy their first home.

Our mission as Menominee Delta Schoolcraft Community Action Agency is to empower and assist people to improve and sustain their quality of life through nurturing, education, housing, nutrition, volunteerism, in-home support services, and advocacy. MDSCAA will continue to work to end poverty in our three county service area.



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SUCCESS STORIES

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) invites adults 55 and older to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. RSVP volunteers share their life experiences and skills.

The primary focus for the RSVP in Menominee, Delta and Schoolcraft counties is education. Many of our active volunteers participate in the Reading Buddies program. Reading Buddies is an award winning state program which was designed specifically for RSVP volunteers to mentor first and second grade students. The volunteers are matched with a student for one-on-one interaction for approximately 20 – 60 minutes each week. Every student in a participating class gets to have an adult Reading Buddy. That is what's so special about the program. It's not just about improving reading but also building relationships. The students work at their own pace while the adult Reading Buddies provide immediate tutoring, mentoring and feedback to the student as well as to their teacher.

Below are some impact statements from RSVP volunteers, parents and teachers:

VOLUNTEER STATEMENTS

- I have been an active member of Reading Buddies for 13 years. I love seeing my little buddies every week and seeing the excitement in their eyes when they see me. I do wish we had more volunteers so we could do the one on one that we used to be able to do. It is still a very rewarding thing to do and I will continue as long as I can. I hope the program doesn't ever fail!
- My experience as a Reading Buddy has only been positive, for myself as well. The children appear to improve not only in reading skills but socially too.
- I am a retired first grade teacher and miss being a part of the joy and wonder of the development of the reading process. Helping out as a reading buddy gives me the opportunity to connect with that age, encourage, and review the skills they are learning--win, win, for both of us! The interaction for the student with another adult not just a teacher or parent, is also beneficial. Thank you for handling this awesome program.
- I enjoy the time spent with the children. I wish the sessions were longer. I believe the children appreciate the volunteers because many of them have difficulty reading. I think I enjoy it as

much as the kids do! The school staff appreciates the volunteers...they treat us very well. I have been a reading buddy for three years now.

- I would like to say that I have been a reading buddy for 15 years and AI for about 12. We both enjoy participating in Reading Buddies because it gives us a chance to be active in our local elementary school while at the same time, gives us a chance to make a difference in the lives of young first graders. To see them grow and develop their reading skills is phenomenal. It also gives us a social setting to be with others who share a love of children and can share our knowledge with them as well. It is not only a time of new learning for all of us, adults as well as children, but a time of socialization and community for all of us.
- I find volunteering satisfying and fun hanging out with energetic 2nd graders. They give me energy!
- I would just like to say that I so much enjoy my volunteer duties! I have been with Reading Buddies for 15 years, and I love working with the children! I feel so fortunate to have been blessed with these activities in my retirement years!

PARENT STATEMENTS

- I just wanted to say that Nick looks forward to Reading Buddies every week and has taken away quite a bit from the program.

TEACHER STATEMENTS

- I am a second grade teacher and my students and I absolutely love and look forward to the Reading Buddies program every year. I have many students who do not have an opportunity to read to an adult at home and they need that practice. It is imperative to their learning. Thank you so much for this opportunity for our youth. We sincerely appreciate it and hope the program is able to continue. Thank you so much.
- The Reading Buddy Program has made a huge impact on our 70 first grade students. First of all, all of our students are very excited about both reading and writing. The individual attention given to each student for 40 minutes every week has been huge. The Reading Buddies are to thank for this. Our Dibels test scores in reading demonstrate improvement in our first graders. We are excited to see the results of our final assessment, given in May. Again, THANK YOU, for organizing this wonderful program for our students to participate in. We hope to be a part of it again next year!