

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2025

**NIAGARA COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM, INC.**

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NIAGARA COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, INC.



MISSION STATEMENT

NIAGARA COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, INC. IS A COUNTYWIDE AGENCY DEDICATED TO REDUCING POVERTY IN A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BY INITIATING AND CONDUCTING PROGRAMS OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY. OUR ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO EMPOWER INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES TO REACH THEIR FULLEST POTENTIAL.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

WHAT IS NIAGARA COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, INC.

The Niagara Community Action Program, Inc., known locally as Niagara CAP, is part of a nationwide and statewide network of private, not-for-profit human service agencies that address the needs of the economically disadvantaged. The agency serves all of Niagara County from offices in North Tonawanda, Lockport, and a number of sites in the City of Niagara Falls.

Niagara County is located in the western portion of New York State. It is bordered to the north by Lake Ontario, to the south by Erie County, to the west by Canada and to the east by Orleans County. In Niagara County, there are three cities, twelve towns, five villages and the Tuscarora Indian Reservation. According to Census Data 2023, Niagara County has a population of 209,457 (plus or minus) with 523 square miles of land, which 80% is considered agricultural. The number of individuals in poverty status is 27,046 of which 18.4% are children and 10.0% are senior citizens. The medium household income is \$46,981.

Niagara CAP was incorporated in October 1966. At that time, it was designated by the Niagara County Legislature as the county's official anti-poverty agency. Sole responsibility for governing the agency rests with its fifteen member tripartite Board of Directors. A tripartite board consists of equal representation from three sectors, public, private and community (low income). The agency currently operates with a 32 member staff supplemented by approximately 50 volunteers. *Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. is a countywide agency dedicated to reducing poverty in a collaborative effort by initiating and conducting programs of self-sufficiency. Our ultimate goal is to empower individuals and families to reach their fullest potential.*

Summary of Programs and Services

Nutrition Outreach and Education Program: The purpose of this program is to increase participation of eligible county residents in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This involves helping people with the preparation and submittal of applications.

The Weatherization Program: This program assists families in reducing heat loss in their homes and apartments.

The Rural Preservation Program: has been developed to improve the housing conditions of economically disadvantaged rural residents in Niagara County by providing grants for home repair and renovation.

Back Rent, Mortgage, Utility Assistance: Niagara CAP provides financial support to families who need assistance in paying their rent, mortgage or utility bills.

Fair Housing Advocacy: Niagara CAP serves as Niagara County's Fair Housing Advocate. It is responsible for resolving complaints of discrimination in the sale or rental of housing.

Community Child Care Clearinghouse of Niagara: This program provides information on a variety of services needed by parents, child care providers, employers, and the general community. Parents are given information about licensed and registered child care centers and family child care homes. Providers can receive information, training, and technical support toward becoming officially registered family child care providers. Employers and the general public can receive information on registered and licensed providers in the county.

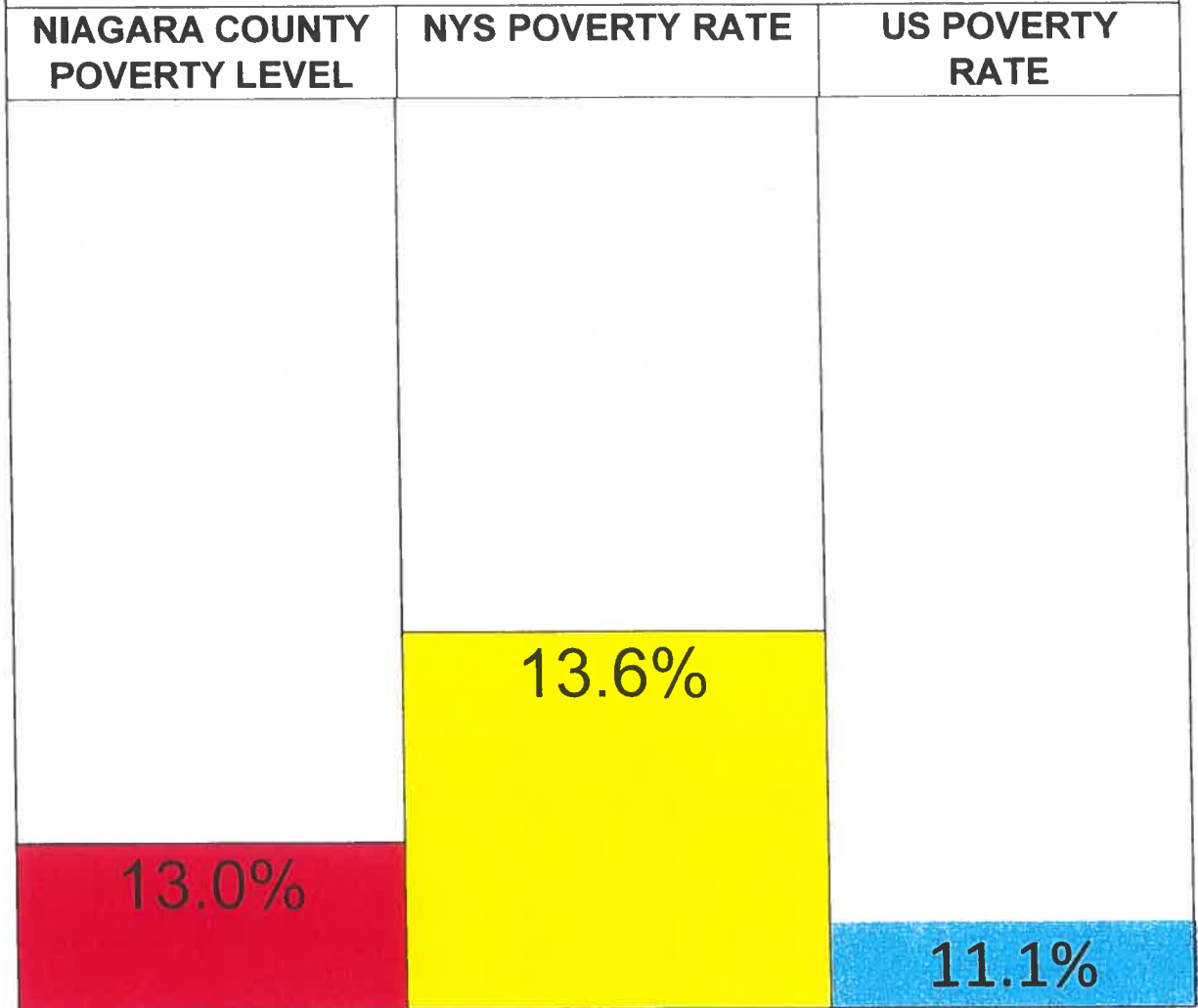
Child Care Registrar Program: This program provides for the registering of family child care homes and school-age child care programs located throughout Niagara County. The responsibilities of the registration monitors include processing initial child care applications and inspecting child care sites. They also investigate complaints, perform routine inspections, and process applications for re-certification. Under the Registrar Program, technical assistance is provided to child care providers on an as-needed basis.

Infant Toddler Mental Health Program: is a federal program that provides intensive technical assistance and training to child care providers who provide care for infants and toddlers birth to under three years of age. Infant Toddler Mental Health consultation provides support to child care providers to help minimize stress and burn-out and teaches strategies to deal with challenging behaviors in children.

Description of Data from Needs Assessment

To analyze our service area, Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. received 140 completed client, partnership/government officials, staff and board member surveys. The tallies were then graphed by number of answered questions in each specific area (not all clients answered all the questions on the survey) and compared to the Niagara County Census 2023, and the New York State Community Action Association's Poverty Report 2024. The Niagara County Census 2023 was tallied in percentages for each specific area in question, as well as, the New York State Community Action Association's Poverty Report results. The results from the agency surveys are divided into specific areas according to the questions from the survey. These areas are housing and energy, food and nutrition, health, transportation, children and youth, employment and income. Also, included in this report is the agency's mission statement, a map of the Niagara County service area, and an agency partnership referral listing. The referral listing identifies partners that refer clients to us or we refer to them for complementary services. Our partnerships in the community have allowed us to effectively meet the needs of the individuals and families throughout Niagara County. Follow-up is conducted by our staff with clients that are referred to a partner agency whenever possible.

POVERTY REPORT 2024



Prepared by the New York State Community Action Association 2024

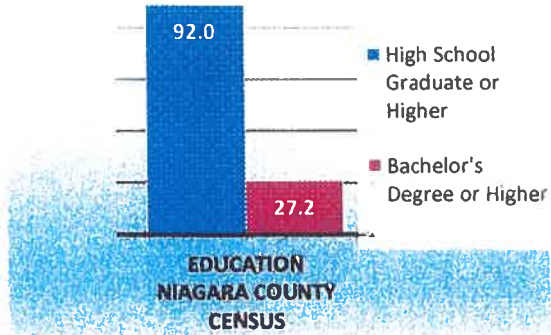
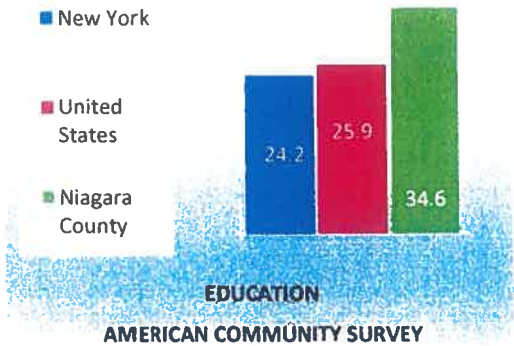
NIAGARA COUNTY POVERTY PROFILE

POPULATION STATISTICS FOR POVERTY STATUS WAS 212,230

| | |
|---|--------|
| # OF INDIVIDUALS IN POVERTY | 27,046 |
| % OF INDIVIDUALS IN POVERTY | 13.0% |
| # OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY (UNDER 18) | 7,583 |
| % OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY | 18.4% |
| # OF ADULTS 25+ IN POVERTY | 17,099 |
| % OF ADULTS 25+ IN POVERTY | 11.3% |
| # OF SENIOR CITIZENS 65+ | 4,086 |
| % OF SENIOR CITIZENS (AGE 65+)IN POVERTY | 10.0% |

Prepared by the NYS Community Action Association 2024

Comparison Regarding Education & Poverty

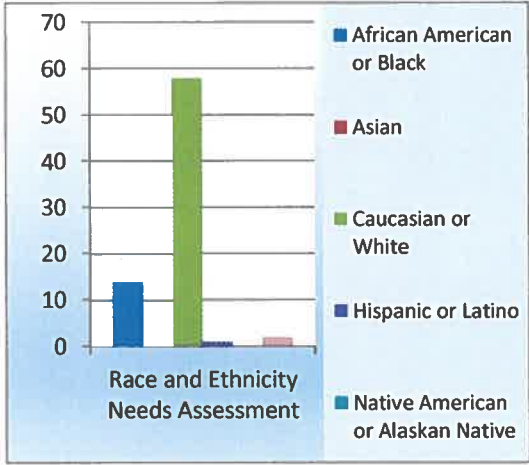


The American Community Survey 2023 states that 34.6% of Niagara County residents have a High School Diploma or equivalent degree. New York State has 24.2% and the United States has 25.9%

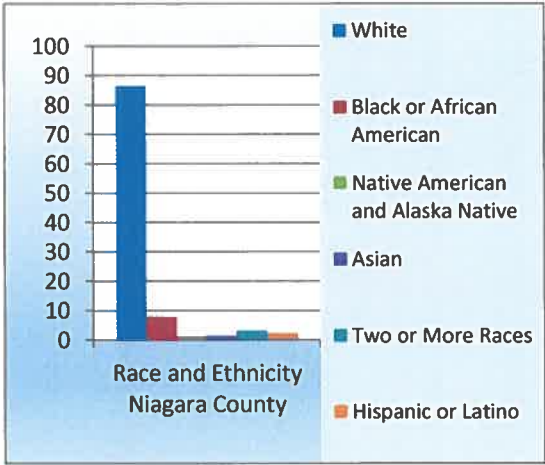
Niagara County Census 2019 - 2023 states that 92.0% of Niagara County residents have graduated High School or higher and 27.2% have a Bachelor's Degree or higher.

| <u>EDUCATION & POVERTY</u> | |
|---|-------|
| % of 25+older with a High School Degree Only | 31.8% |
| % of these individuals in Poverty | 14.9% |
| % of 25+ with at least Bachelor's Degree | 27.1% |
| % of these individuals in Poverty | 4.6% |
| <i>Poverty Report 2024 NYS Community Action Association</i> | |

**Comparison of the Needs Assessment and
the Niagara County Census Regarding
Race and Ethnicity**



2024 Needs Assessment tabulation states that 58 clients are Caucasian or White, 14 are African American or Black, 0 are Asian, 1 is Hispanic, Latino or Spanish and 0 are Native American or Alaskan Native.



Niagara County census for 2023 indicates that 86.5% are White, 7.8% are Black or African American, 1.2% are American Indian or Alaska Native, 4.1% Hispanic or Latino and 3.1% are Two or More Races.

Race & Poverty

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| % of Whites in Poverty | 9.9% |
| % of African American in Poverty | 30.3% |
| % of Asian | 36.3% |
| % of American Indian or Alaska Native | 24.0% |
| % of Hispanics/Latinos in Poverty | 26.1% |

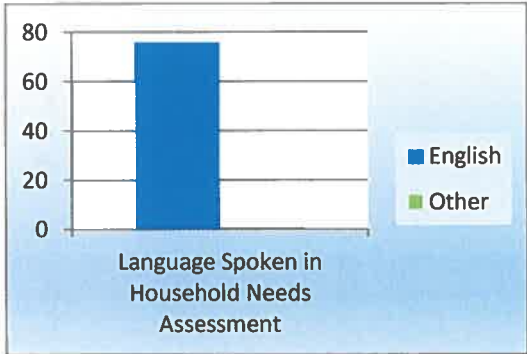
Poverty Report 2024 NYS Community Action Association

Gender & Poverty

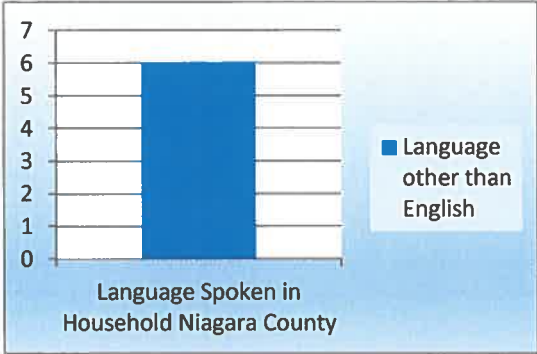
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|--|----------|
| Median Male Income (High School Diploma) | \$44,029 |
| Median Female Income (High School Diploma) | \$27,790 |
| Families - Female Head of Household w/Children living in Poverty | 35.3% |

Poverty Report 2024 NYS Community Action Association

**Comparison of the Need Assessment and the
Niagara County Census Regarding Languages
Spoken in Household**

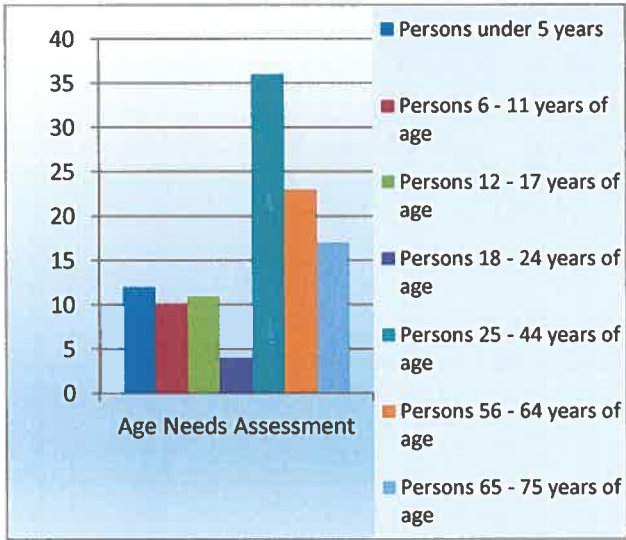


2024 Needs Assessment states that 76 clients speak English in the household, and 1 client speaks another language.

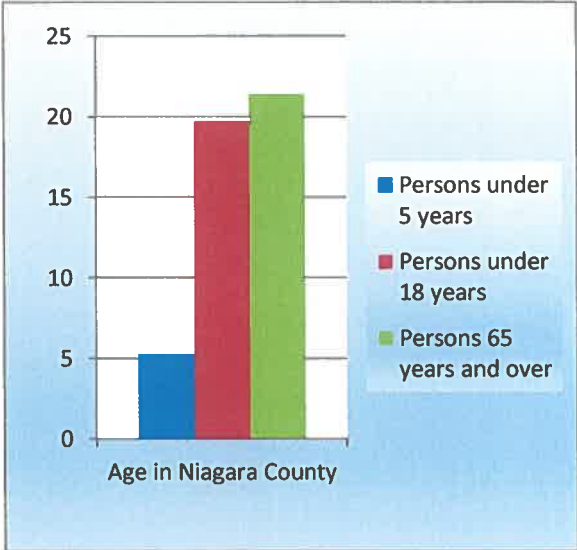


Niagara County Census for 2023 states 6.0% speak a language other than English in the household.

**Comparison of the Need Assessment and the
Niagara County Census Regarding Age**

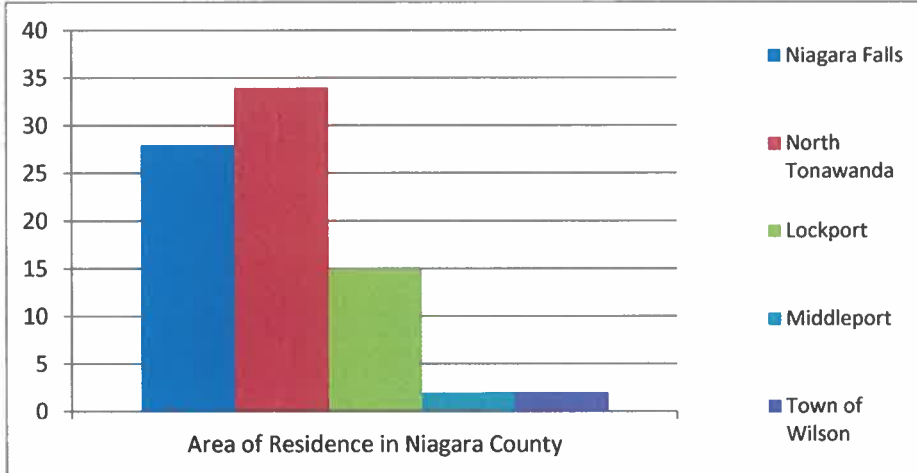


2024 Needs Assessment states that 12 persons in the household are 0 - 5 years old, 10 persons are 6 - 11 years old, 11 persons are 12 - 17 years old, 4 persons are 18 - 24 years old, 36 persons are 25 - 55, 23 persons are 56 - 64 years old, 17 persons are 65 - 74 years old.

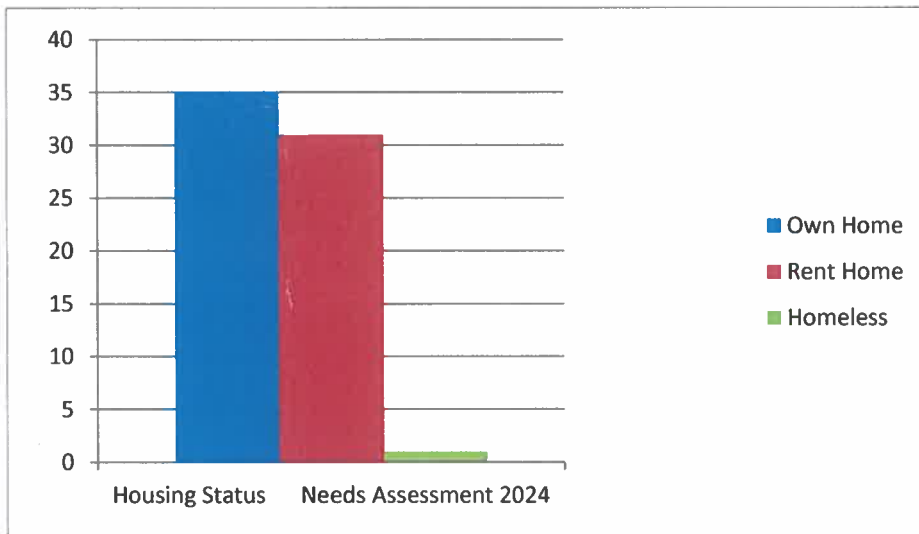


Niagara County Census for 2023 states 4.9% persons are under 5 years, 19.7% are under 18 years and 21.4% are 65 years or over.

**Information from the Needs Assessment and
the Niagara County Census Regarding
Residency**



According to the 2024 Needs Assessment 28 clients reside in Niagara Falls, 34 in North Tonawanda, 15 in Lockport, 2 in Middleport, 2 in Town of Wilson.



According to the 2024 Needs Assessment 35 clients own their housing, 31 rent a housing, 1 client is homeless.

HOUSING RESULTS

Clients Description of the Condition of their residence:

- 20 Clients - In good shape, needs no repair
- 31 Clients - Need minor repairs
 - 12 Clients - Need weatherization measures
 - 11 Clients - Need major repairs
 - 3 Clients - Need disability access improvements

Clients List of Housing Problems:

- 61 Clients - Cannot afford to make needed repairs to their home
- 9 Clients - Cannot afford the heat & electric bills
- 3 Clients - Risk of eviction from rented home
- 1 Clients - Cannot find housing to rent
- 13 Clients - Cannot find affordable housing to buy
- 0 Clients - Risk foreclosure on the home they own

Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. offers the following assistance through the Weatherization Program, Rural Preservation Program and our Neighborhood Outreach offices:

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| • The Weatherization Program offers assistance to low income households to help decrease energy costs, making homes more energy efficient. |
| • The Rural Preservation Program offers assistance to low income households needing home repair in order to maintain their ability to remain in their home. |
| • The Rural Preservation Program provides information on home maintenance. |
| Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. is the Fair Housing Advocate for Niagara County. |
| Discretionary and Community Development Block Grant Funds are used to help with mortgage/rent/utility payments. |

Accomplishing National Performance Indicators as follows:

- CNPI 4a Number of safe and affordable housing units developed in the identified community.
- CNPI 4b Number of safe and affordable housing units maintained and/or improved through WAP or other rehabilitation efforts in the identified community.
- FNPI 4h Improve energy efficiency and/or energy burden reduction in their homes.
- FNPI 5f Maintain an independent living situation for seniors (65+)
- FNPI 5g Maintain an independent living situation for individuals with disabilities.
- FNPI 4 e Avoid eviction or foreclosure.

Food Results

Over the last 12 months , clients report that someone in their household has:

- 50 Clients - Accessed a food pantry
- 25 Clients - Received SNAP Benefits
- 4 Clients - Utilized the school breakfast/lunch program
- 14 Clients - Skipped or cut the size of a meal because there wasn't enough money for food
- 14 Clients - Gone hungry because they were not able to get enough food
- 4 Clients - Receive WIC

| |
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| Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. offers assistance through Neighborhood Outreach offices and the Food Distribution Center by: |
| |
| |
| • Partnership with the 28 food pantries, 7 shelters and 4 soup kitchens throughout Niagara County who distribute to needy families. |
| • Nutrition Outreach and Education Program offers correct and encouraging information regarding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits and assists eligible residents in applying for needed food stamps. |
| • Low Income households obtain Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits in support of family stability. |
| Neighborhood Outreach Centers provide emergency food, budget counseling, asset management, and nutrition education. |

Accomplishing National Performance Indicators as follows:

- SRV 5jj Food distribution(Food bags, Food share program, bags of groceries.
- FNPI 5f Help seniors 65+ maintain an independent living situation.
- FNPI 5a Help individuals demonstrate increased nutrition skills.
- FNPI 5b Help individuals demonstrate improved mental and behavioral health and well-being.

Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. offers referrals to:

- The New York State Unemployment office who offers tokens to eligible clients for the public bus system to get to a job or for a job interview.
- Transportation concerns are addressed by the Greater Buffalo/Niagara Regional Transportation Counsel developed in 2011.
- Help clients with inquiring if their health insurance provides transportation to medical appointments.

Accomplishing National Performance Indicators as follows:

CNPI 3i Increase percent of transportation services in the identified community.

**Needs Assessment
Child Care Results**

Over the last 12 months , problems getting or keeping adequate child care:

Problems

- 1 Weekend care not available
- 1 Evening care not available

Currently use the following to meet child care needs:

- 2 After-school program
- 7 Parent, family friends, or neighbors
- 0 Informal/unregistered provider/babysitter
- 0 Registered/licensed child care provider
- 9 Children are old enough to be left on their own
- 0 Day care center

Client challenges faced with children:

- 33 Not applicable - no children at home
- 2 Emotional and behavioral problems
- 0 Victim of bullying
- 0 Tobacco/alcohol use
- 0 Weight or eating habits
- 0 Trouble with law enforcement

Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. offers the following through the Child Care Resource & Referral Program, Registrars Program, Family Day Care Training and Child & Adult Care Food Program

• CCR&R offers all parents/care givers including low-income appropriate and affordable day care and before/after school care referrals in order to gain/maintain employment.
All providers including low income are offered training/technical assistance necessary to become self employed childcare providers.

Accomplishing National Performance Indicators as follows:
CNPI 2d Low income households will enroll their children in before/after school child care programs
CNPI 2a Low income households will enroll their infants, toddlers, preschoolers in affordable child care programs
FNPI 1b Low income providers become registered and self-employed child care providers
FNPI 5e Providers will show an increase in their knowledge of child development and gain new skills

Jobs Results

Adults currently employed in household (18+):

- 73 Unemployed
- 17 Retired
- 11 Looking for work

Clients reasons for not finding/keeping a job:

- 27 No problems, have a job
- 5 Mental/physical disability
- 0 Transportation
- 4 Caring for children
- 2 Drug/alcohol problems
- 7 Not the right job skills
- 0 Criminal history
- 2 Need proper clothing for work
- 2 Need tools/equipment for work

Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. offers Job Readiness/ Employment Assistance through our Neighborhood Outreach offices by:

- Offering low income individuals the opportunity to participate in job readiness/job training in order to secure and maintain long-term employment in support of family stability.

Accomplishing National Performance Indicators as follows:

FNPI 1b Unemployed adults obtain employment(up to a living wage).

FNPI 1c Unemployed adults obtained and maintained employment for at least 90 days.

FNPI 1h Employed participants in a career-advancement related program who entered or transitioned into a position that provided increased income and/or benefits.

Income Related Results

Estimated Annual Household Income:

- 20 - \$0 - \$10,000
- 13 - \$10,001 - \$20,000
- 16 - \$20,001 - \$30,000
- 12 - \$30,001 - \$40,000
- 2 - \$40,001 - \$50,000
- 5 - \$50,001 - \$60,000
- 1 - \$60,001 - \$70,000
- 2 - \$70,001 - \$80,000

Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. offers assistance to clients through our Neighborhood Outreach Offices by:

- Helping low income clients to maintain employment.
- Helping to increase employment income and or benefits.
- Helping with budget counseling and asset management.

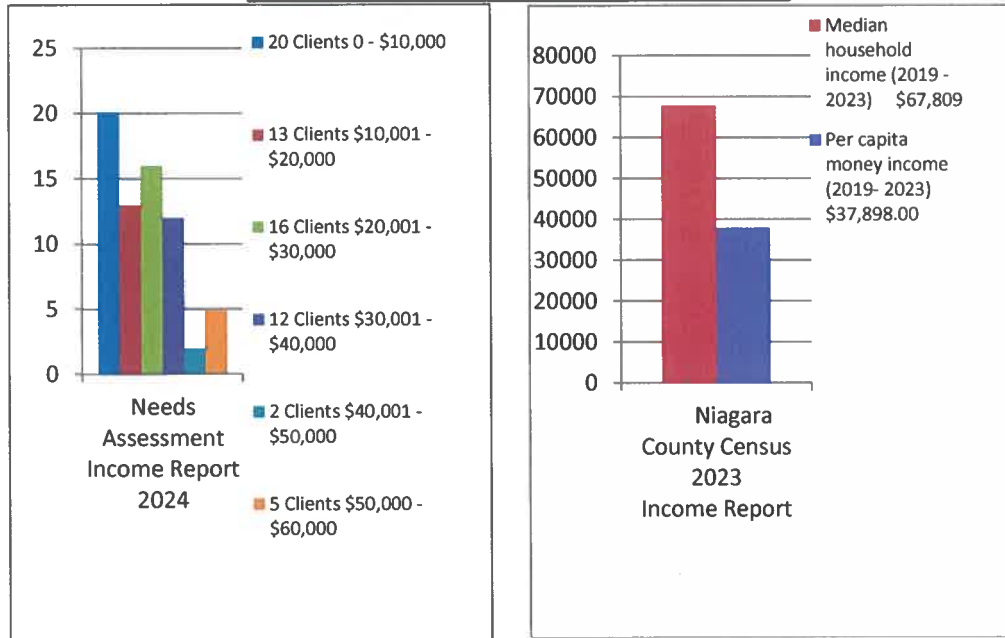
Accomplishing National Performance Indicators as follows:

FNPI 3a Individuals who achieved and maintained capacity to meet basic needs for 90 days.

FNPI 3g Individuals who increased their net worth.

FNPI 3h Individuals engaged with the Community Action Agency who report improved well-being.

**Comparison of the Needs Assessment and
the Niagara County Census - Estimated
Annual Household Income:**



The following happened to you in the last 12 months:

- 9 Clients fell behind in rent or mortgage
- 16 Clients borrowed money from friends/family for bills
- 8 Clients pressured by bill collectors
- 5 Clients had utilities (water, heat, electric) shut off
- 4 Clients pawned or sold valuables to pay bills
- 1 Client used a check cashing service
- 2 Client's car, appliance, or furniture repossessed
- 0 Clients had gambling losses

Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. uses different methods to encourage self sufficiency through our Neighborhood Outreach offices.

- The Family Development Philosophy was developed and taught to our staff by Cornell University.
- This philosophy helps staff look at family strengths and help the family build on these strengths to set goals to achieve self sufficiency.

Accomplishing National Performance Indicators as follows:

FNPI 3h - The number of individuals engaged with the Community Action Agency who reported improved financial well-being.

Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. receives or provides referrals to the following agencies:

Niagara County Office for the Aging
Niagara County Department of Social Services
Niagara Falls Employment and Training
FeedMore WNY
Niagara County Housing Authority
Food Shuttle
Community Missions, Inc.
Cornell Cooperative Extension
Lockport Housing Authority
St. John's Outreach
Red Cross
HANCI
Catholic Charities
Salvation Army
Niagara County Legal Aide
New York State Department of Health
Town Clerk's Association
North Tonawanda Inter-Faith Food Pantry
Tuscarora Community Health Care Workers
United Way of Greater Niagara
Rose Chiropractic
St. Joseph's Outreach
Summit Outreach
St. Vincent De Paul
Word of Life Ministries
Women, Infants and Children
Carolynn's House
Pinnacle Community Services
Independent Living of Niagara County
YWCA of the Tonawanda's
HUB North Tonawanda

United Way of the Tonawanda's
National Grid
Intandem Niagara
Parent Network of WNY
Fidelis
Healthy Families of Niagara
Guildcare
Orleans/Niagara BOCES
EMPOWER
Belmont Housing for WNY
Niagara County Department of Economic Development
City of North Tonawanda
City of Lockport
Town of Cambria
Town of Hartland
Town of Newfane
Town of Niagara
Town of Lewiston
Town of Lockport
Town of Pendleton
Town of Porter
Town of Royalton
Town of Somerset
Town of Wheatfield
Town of Wilson
Niagara 's Worksourceone
Home Energy Assistance Program
Niagara County Health Department
Community Education Center
Lockport Family Focus Group

Accomplishing National Performance Indicator as follows:

B.5 The number of organizations, both public and private, that Community Action actively works with to expand resources and opportunities in order to achieve family and community outcomes.

Summary

The raw data collected throughout Niagara County from the 2025 Comprehensive Needs Assessment conducted by Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. was reviewed, analyzed and discussed by the Board of Directors on January 16, 2025 and February 13, 2025 along with the comparative data from the New York Community Action Association Poverty Report 2024, Niagara County Census 2023 and the American Community Survey 2023.

Based on the New York State Poverty Report 2024 conducted by the New York Community Action Association, Niagara County has a population of 212,230. Of that population, 13.0% or 27,046 individuals are living in poverty. There are 44 counties in New York State whose poverty rate exceeds 13.0%. However, the population in these counties are considerably less. For example, Cortland County has a population of 46,755 with a county poverty rate of 12.9% and there are 5,575 individuals living in poverty. Another example is Delaware County with a population of 44,637. The county poverty rate is 14.8% or 6,295 individuals who are living in poverty. Even though the percentage of poverty in these examples is close to the percentage in Niagara County, the population of impoverished in Niagara County far exceeds the examples in these other counties. This confirms the need for programs/services that promote self-sufficiency and independence.

Comparative data regarding Education and Poverty from the American Community Survey 2023, Niagara County Census 2019 – 2023 and New York State Community Action Association Poverty Report 2024 suggests that when higher education decreases, there is the possibility of an increase in the rate of poverty. Through educational support services and strong partnerships with schools and universities in Niagara County, impoverished individuals are encouraged to pursue higher education.

Also, based on the 2024 New York State Community Action Association Poverty Report, the median household income for a male with a high school diploma is \$44,029 and a female median income with a high school diploma is \$27,790. According to this data, females make less income than males with a high school diploma. Furthermore, 35.3% of females who are head of household with children are living in poverty.

Our 2025 Comprehensive Needs Assessment data and the 2022 – 2023 Niagara County Census shows English is the primary language spoken in households in Niagara County, therefore, not creating a language barrier.

Our 2025 Comprehensive Needs Assessment data and the 2022 – 2023 Niagara County Census regarding age and poverty reflect that there are more children under the age of 24 living in poverty. Acknowledging this data, we have partnerships with local schools, universities and other community-based organizations to address childhood poverty.

According to our 2025 Comprehensive Needs Assessment data, most low-income clients in Niagara County reside in the 3 cities of Niagara Falls, Lockport and North Tonawanda. Of those, 31 rent a home and 35 own a home. Our 2025 Comprehensive Needs Assessment data states that 35 clients own a single family home and 31 clients need minor repairs. Of those, 61 clients cannot afford to make needed repairs. Nine clients cannot afford their heat and electric bills.

As noted, Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. collected raw data from a wide range of sources. They included clients, public officials, faith based organizations, educational institutions, partners, board members and staff to substantiate our findings and provide recommendations.

Further analysis of the data obtained from the 2025 Comprehensive Needs Assessment completed by Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. along with comparative data from New York Community Action Association Poverty Report 2024, the Niagara County Census 2022 – 2023 and the American Community Survey 2023, the following statements regarding age, gender, race and ethnicity are being added to the summary report.

In Niagara County, 18.4% of children under 18 are living in poverty, 11.3% are adults 25+, and 10.0% are senior citizens 65+. According to gender, females make less income than males with a high school diploma and 35.3% of females who are heads of household with children are living in poverty. Regarding race and ethnicity, 9.9% are white, 30.3% are Black/African American and 26.1% are Hispanic/Latinos which indicates that Black/African Americans & Hispanic/Spanish experience a high percentage level of poverty living in Niagara County. The data collected also showed 24.0% of the Native American/Alaskan Natives are living in poverty. The data collected and analyzed identifies groups by race, ethnicity, gender and age in Niagara County that are experiencing living in poverty. This data confirms the need to continue development of priorities identified in the programs/services of the agency's work plan and strategic plan.

Based upon the agency's mission which is to reduce poverty in a collaborative effort by initiating and conducting programs of self-sufficiency and to empower individuals and families to reach their fullest potential, we continue to provide the following programs/services: emergency food, budget counseling, asset management, in-house weatherization, grants for home repair, child care referral, training, registration, health and safety start-up items, nutrition outreach, education and advocacy, on-the-job training, fair housing, back rent/mortgage/utility payments, and landlord/tenant resolution. Our clients are networked from one service to another (depending upon need) for complete one-stop shopping or out to partner organizations for complementary services.