



Carroll County
Local Management Board
Serving Children, Youth and Families



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2025 Needs Assessment Report

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Acknowledgments

Deep appreciation is extended to the staff, Board, and Community Planning Committee for their leadership and guidance, and to the many partners and community members who contributed to this assessment.

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Introduction

The Carroll County Local Management Board (LMB) leads collaborative efforts that advance the well-being of children, youth, and families. The LMB, guided by public and private community representatives, brings community partners together to strengthen and coordinate community resources and advocate for accountable systems of support across the county.

Across the state, LMBs in every county are increasingly being called upon to serve as “backbone” organizations within the context of cross-sector Collective Impact initiatives, working to convene and coordinate public, private, and non-profit entities in service of common goals and outcomes. In one such example, LMBs are serving as “community quarterbacks” for the State of Maryland’s ENOUGH (Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households) Initiative, which aims to reduce the number of children living in poverty and advance economic opportunity through community-led, government-supported solutions. ENOUGH addresses the root causes of poverty in specific neighborhoods that have historically been left behind and affected by barriers to economic mobility. Driven by data, residents’ lived experiences, and cross-sector collaboration, this state-funded initiative supports community-led organizations across every region of Maryland to improve access to quality childcare and healthcare, schools, jobs, and safe neighborhoods so that more children and families can prosper.

The LMB has used the pillars of the ENOUGH Initiative as a framework for this Needs Assessment to gather data and community member input across a wide range of indicators. The pillars include: High-Quality Childcare and Education, Families are Healthy, Families are Economically Stable, and Safe and Thriving Communities. To understand the county’s assets and opportunities, LMB staff and contractors from Due East Partners gathered secondary data from more than a dozen county and state agencies and national databases that track county-level health, education, economic, and community safety indicators. Additionally, LMB staff engaged with more than 400 community members to complete a comprehensive survey to share what’s working, what’s not, and their suggestions for improvement across the four pillars. LMB staff and Due East focused on data collection and community input in two Carroll County census tracts (512000 and 507801) identified by the ENOUGH Initiative as having the highest concentrations of childhood poverty and including the Town of Union Bridge and Westminster City, respectively. Data in this assessment is reported by these census tracts and jurisdictions.

This Needs Assessment distills the findings from the data and offers recommendations in priority areas. Across the vast majority of data indicators examined for this report, Carroll County is doing well, and in many cases, better than state and national averages. Carroll County excels on many indicators of health, education, well-being, and economic stability. A rich network of community partners and resources provide essential services and opportunities to children, youth, and families. The close-knit nature of the Carroll County community allows for connection, coordination, and the success of both formal and informal support systems.

Still, financial hardship remains a reality for many families. According to ALICE (Asset, Limited, Income, Constrained, Employed) data from 2023, 25% of county households earn above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) but still struggle to afford basic living costs. For 2025, FPL for an individual is \$15,650 and \$32,150 for a family of four. FPL is a measure of income updated yearly by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that’s used to determine eligibility for certain programs and benefits, like Marketplace savings, Medicaid, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage.

Rural areas face unique challenges such as limited transportation, fewer social services, and difficulty accessing resources, exacerbating economic hardship. In parts of Westminster, the challenges are particularly stark, with over 80% of Hispanic or Latino children living in poverty. Union Bridge and Westminster City similarly face higher rates of poverty and lower educational outcomes than the rest of the county. Poverty in Carroll County averages 6%, but children in poverty in Westminster City (13%) and Union Bridge (33%) face far higher rates than the countywide average.

The pages that follow translate this data, and additional insights, into a clear picture of strengths, gaps, and concrete opportunities for action to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families in Carroll County.



Key Takeaways

Secondary Data

STRONG OVERALL PERFORMANCE:

- County outpaces state averages on many health, education, and well-being indicators

EDUCATION SUCCESSES:

- 95% four-year high school graduation rate
- Higher-than-average school attendance
- Grade 3 ELA proficiency exceeds state average (61% vs. 47%)

CHILD POVERTY & ECONOMIC INDICATORS:

- Child poverty rate is below state and national averages
- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) enrollment is declining
- 26% of households are ALICE; rates exceed 50% in Westminster City and Union Bridge

KINDERGARTEN READINESS GAPS:

- Overall readiness: 58%
- Readiness among students with disabilities: 28%; Multilingual learners: 38%
- Lower readiness among Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latino students by 15-18%

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM:

- 1 in 5 students is chronically absent
- Need for a deeper understanding of who is absent and why

PLACE-BASED DISPARITIES:

- Union Bridge and Westminster area schools show lower academic performance
- Union Bridge’s child poverty rate is five times the county average

MENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY CONCERNS:

- Bullying incidents have nearly doubled since 2018–2019
- 1 in 5 high school students has seriously considered suicide
- Juvenile crime complaints rose from 233 (FY23) to 298 (FY24)

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS:

- Youth homelessness is at a five-year high*
- Countywide homelessness is at its highest level in the last five years, increasing from 415 in FY2020 to 556 in FY2024

HEALTH TRENDS:

- 1 in 3 adults is obese
- Higher alcohol and tobacco use than the state average
- 1 in 10 residents experiences food insecurity

*In 2020–2021, the federal eviction moratorium may have temporarily lowered the number of youth identified as experiencing homelessness.

Surveys

WHAT’S WORKING:

- Strong community resources, such as mentoring programs supporting youth development and job training
- Natural environment and green spaces
- Active faith-based community
- Existing social services and crisis assistance programs that help families in urgent need
- Community’s desire for improvement

WHAT’S NOT WORKING

- Inadequate public infrastructure, including transportation, housing, and accessible public spaces
- Challenges related to fair access and full participation (e.g. barriers for non-English speakers, marginalized groups, and distrust by some groups of law enforcement or institutional systems)
- Centralized services are limited to Westminster (e.g. healthcare, mental health, childcare, housing)
- Underfunded and inconsistent support systems for addiction recovery and youth programs
- Gaps in continuous and follow-up care
- Insufficient availability of qualified providers in mental health, childcare, and healthcare
- Low civic trust, inclusion, and a lack of culturally diverse events and community spaces
- Cultural resistance to change
- Lack of awareness of programs and information sharing

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ▶ Expand youth-focused mental health care
- ▶ Strengthen addiction prevention and recovery support
- ▶ Improve collaboration among agencies and service providers
- ▶ Encourage community-driven initiatives and events, especially those that celebrate diversity
- ▶ Strengthen education with life skills, financial literacy, and vocational training
- ▶ Establish reliable, free, or low-cost public transportation
- ▶ Bring services closer to rural communities (e.g. mobile units and satellite offices)
- ▶ Build trust with law enforcement through transparency and outreach
- ▶ Offer more bilingual programs and services
- ▶ Increase outreach and promotion of services and programs
- ▶ Reduce stigma around seeking help

In service of ENOUGH and a variety of other initiatives, this Needs Assessment will serve as a valuable resource for all agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals seeking to strengthen support for children and families in Carroll County. More information on the forthcoming Community Planning process can be found in the Key Considerations for Community Planning section of this report.

By building on the county’s many strengths and assets and working together to align resources and effort, Carroll County will ensure that all families have the opportunities and services they need to thrive.

Methodology

The LMB contracted with Due East Partners to conduct the needs assessment. In partnership with the LMB and other community partners, Due East gathered secondary data from a variety of sources and administered and analyzed community surveys.

Secondary Data Review

Quantitative data gathering and analysis were primarily informed by the four ENOUGH pillars: High-Quality Childcare and Education, Families are Healthy, Families are Economically Stable, and Safe and Thriving Communities. During the planning phase of the assessment, Due East Partners and the LMB staff collaborated to develop target data indicators within each domain to inform data collection and analysis across the project.

Due East accessed a variety of secondary data from publicly available sources, such as state agencies and longitudinal databases. A full list of sources accessed is available below:

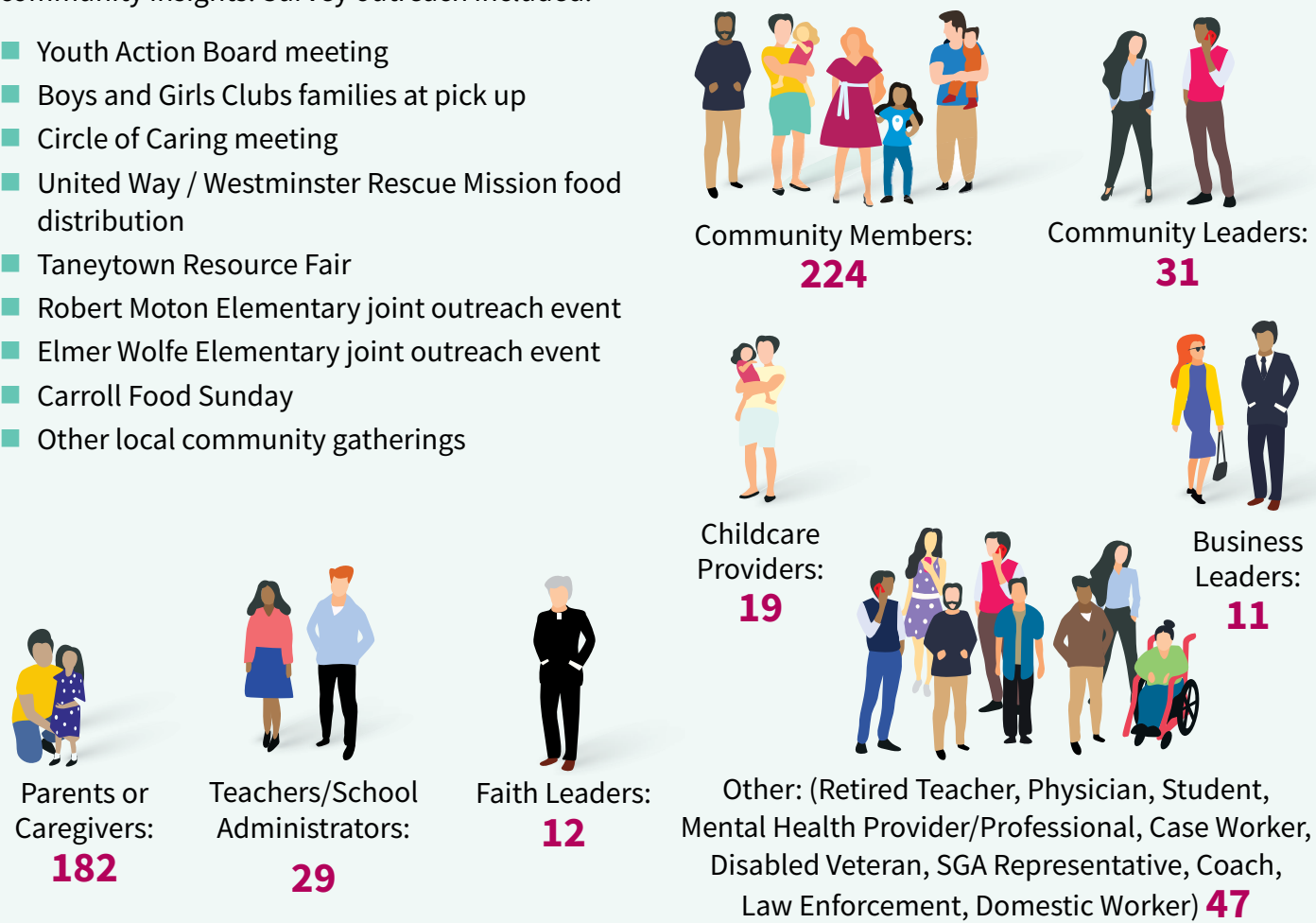
- Data USA
- MSDE Readiness Matters: 2023-2024 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Report
- Carroll County Public Schools Data Dashboard
- MSDE 2024 Maryland School Report Card
- University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
- MSDE Free and Reduced-Price Meals Data
- 2024 ALICE Report County Snapshots - Maryland
- The US Census Bureau
- Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey/Youth Tobacco Survey 2022-2023
- Carroll County 2024 Homeless Services Summit (Presentation)
- MSDE Maryland McKinney-Vento Trend Data 2019-2024
- Maryland Department of Juvenile Services Data Resource Guide FY2023
- Maryland Department of Juvenile Services Data Resource Guide FY2024

Community Survey

The LMB Community Engagement Coordinator and other staff attended local community events with a focus on Westminster and Union Bridge to gather community insights. Survey outreach included:

- Youth Action Board meeting
- Boys and Girls Clubs families at pick up
- Circle of Caring meeting
- United Way / Westminster Rescue Mission food distribution
- Taneytown Resource Fair
- Robert Moton Elementary joint outreach event
- Elmer Wolfe Elementary joint outreach event
- Carroll Food Sunday
- Other local community gatherings

In total, 408 individuals completed the community survey. Survey respondents described themselves as (multiple selections were allowed):



Data Analysis and Reporting

Due East Partners analyzed all data and prepared two comprehensive data reports, found at:

Community Survey Synthesis:
<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/19ZydRHJJIXhAsqoHVM5oJ8q9h3N6uRqzVbjrR63bmt8/edit?usp=sharing>

Data Snapshot:
<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1vJuVucG3tLGQbp3D8GEsRGqH5KKsQqGq/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=105343085957767464147&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Needs Assessment

This needs assessment is organized by four pillars of the ENOUGH initiative: High-Quality Childcare and Education, Families are Economically Stable, Families are Healthy, and Safe and Thriving Communities.

High-Quality Childcare and Education

Key takeaways

A quality childcare and education system ensures that every child, from birth through adulthood, has access to quality learning experiences that prepare them for lifelong success. Rooted in the ENOUGH Initiative, the **High-Quality Childcare and Education** pillar promotes equitable access to high-quality childcare and early education, supportive school resources, and career-connected learning opportunities that help young people to thrive academically, socially, and economically throughout their lives. Carroll County exceeds state averages across the board in these education indicators.

Data reflects both progress and opportunities for improvement:

- Childcare was the top overall concern of community members who responded to the survey. Costs for child care, summer camps, and a lack of available public Pre-K were highlighted.
- Kindergarten Readiness rates are lower for some historically marginalized groups.
- Residents call for more programs for specific groups like students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
- Reported bullying incidents have nearly doubled from 2018-2019 to 2022-2023.
- Rates of ELA (English Language Arts) and Algebra I proficiency are lower at Elmer Wolfe Elementary and Westminster schools than the County average.
- Residents report satisfaction with K-12 education and early childhood education generally.
- Free food at weekly school pantries and faith-based services are also appreciated by residents.
- To address chronic absenteeism in Carroll County, the Consortium for Coordinated Supports launched new truancy prevention programs.



What We Heard: Surveys

WHAT'S WORKING

- K-12 Education
- Early childhood education
- Dual enrollment opportunities (college credit courses while in high school)
- Free food at weekly school pantries
- Faith-based services
- Specific programs mentioned by community members include: Carroll County Public Library, Boys & Girls Club, Judy Center, Head Start, Opportunity Works, Gateway/Crossroads School, Carroll County Workforce Development, and the Pupil Personnel Workers (CCPS)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Access and Inclusion:

- Inconvenient program locations
- Transportation barriers
- Services centralized in Westminster
- High cost of childcare and summer programs
- Inadequate access to public Pre-K
- Limited access to quality and accessible childcare

Priority Populations:

- Limited bilingual student services
- Need dedicated LGBTQ youth services
- Few services for youth with disabilities or those needing GED/ESOL classes
- Limited support for foster youth
- Resources for single-parent or low-income families
- Lack of support in schools for diverse learning needs
- Need targeted programs for families just over program income limits

Gaps in Programs and Services:

- Limited bullying prevention and inconsistent school discipline
- Mental health support services
- Few non-sports youth activities
- Academic support (e.g. tutoring, IEP funding)
- Life-readiness education that is culturally sensitive

Countywide Data Snapshot

KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT

While kindergarten readiness rates are 13 percentage points above the state average, they have fluctuated in recent years, dropping from 59% in 2019–2020 to 30% in 2021–2022 due to the pandemic. Rates increased to 55% in 2022–2023 and 50% in 2023–2024.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS RATES

are lower for some student groups:

28% students with disabilities

38% multilingual language learners

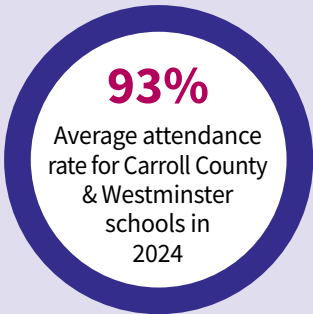
40% Hispanic/Latino

43% Black/African-American



CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM DECREASED SLIGHTLY

from **21.25%** to **19.4%** in the most recent report card.



2024 DROPOUT RATES

3% Carroll County **vs** **8%** Maryland

3% Westminster area high schools

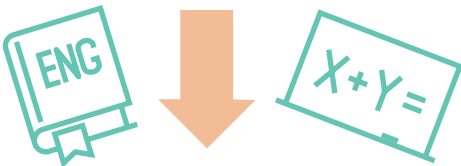
4% Francis Scott Key High School

BULLYING AND DISCONNECTED YOUTH

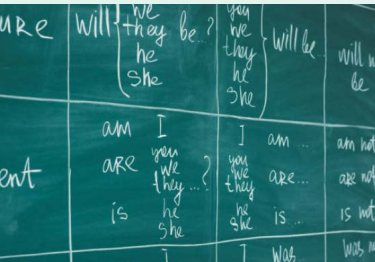
Reported **BULLYING INCIDENTS HAVE NEARLY DOUBLED** from **167** in 2018-2019 to **315** in 2022-2023.

Geographic spotlight

UNION BRIDGE

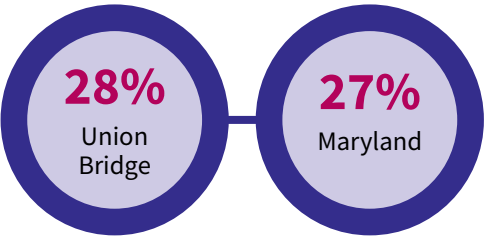


RATES OF 3RD GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA-3) AND ALGEBRA PROFICIENCY ARE LOWER at the elementary, middle, and high schools serving Union Bridge and Westminster compared to the county average. However, these rates are **higher than the average for all Maryland schools**.



EIGHTH GRADE ALGEBRA I PROFICIENCY increased 10 percentage points, from **18% to 28%** from the 2022-2023 school year to the 2023-2024 school year.

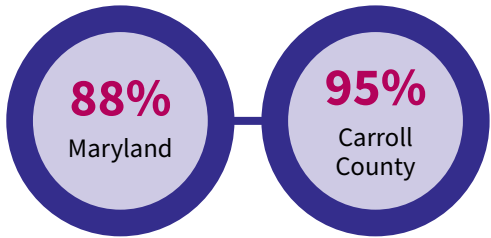
Rates of chronic absenteeism in schools are near the Maryland average.



Attendance rates in Union Bridge and the state are **BOTH AT 92% FOR 2024**.



FRANCIS SCOTT KEY HIGH SCHOOL HAS A 94% RATE OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION, compared to 88% for the state and 95% for Carroll County.



Geographic spotlight

WESTMINSTER

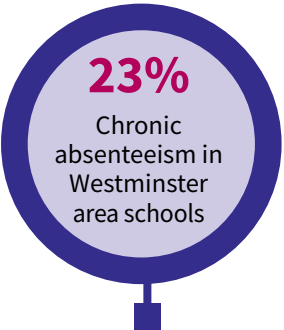
WESTMINSTER AREA SCHOOLS SAW NOTABLE DECLINES IN ELA-3 AND MATH PROFICIENCY from the 2022-2023 school year to the 2023-2024 school year.

3rd Grade

9% points

Math Proficiency

10% points

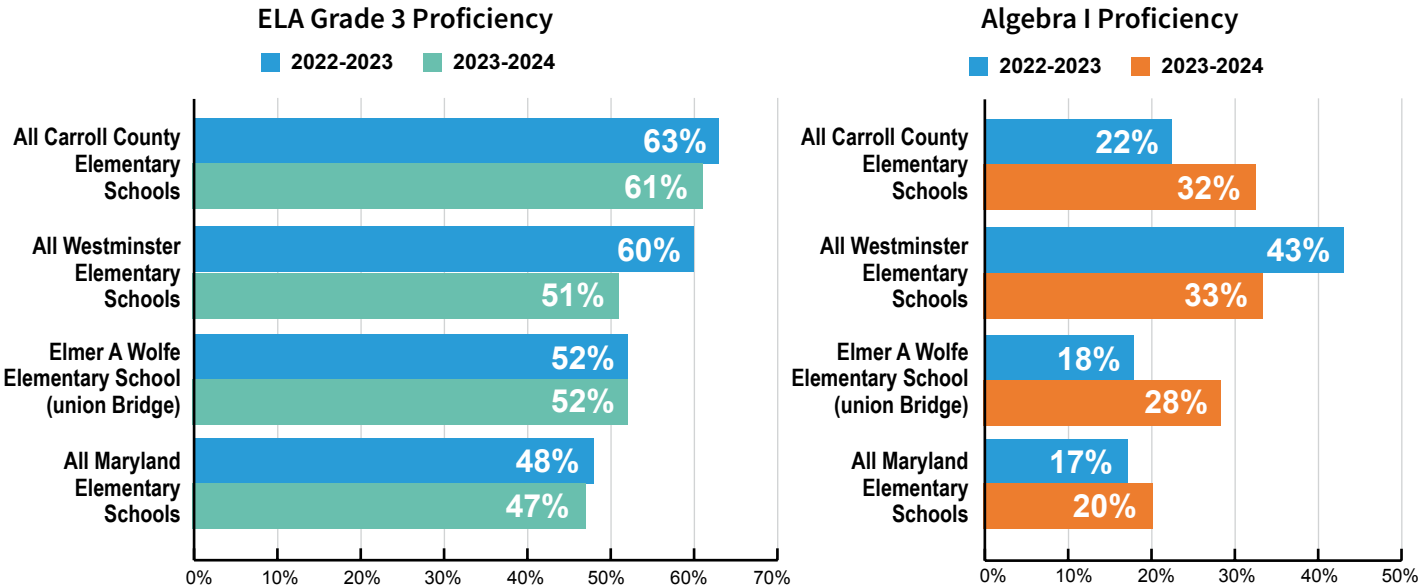


Higher than the county average but lower than the state average.

THE RATE OF COLLEGE ENROLLMENT among Westminster area high school graduates **outpaces the state average**.

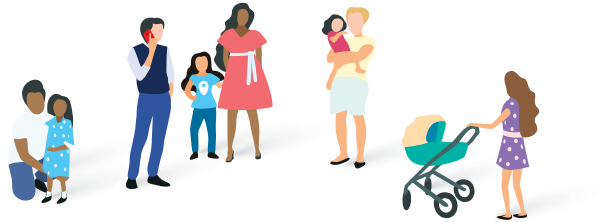
Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP)
Performance Results Summary 2022-2024

English Language Arts (ELA) and Algebra I Proficiency



Source: <https://www.carrollk12.org/board-of-education/data-dashboard>

Families are Healthy



Key takeaways

Healthy families are the bedrock of resilient communities. **Families are Healthy**, a pillar of the ENOUGH Initiative, highlights the importance of physical, emotional, and behavioral health for children, youth and their caregivers. When families have access to essential supports like preventive care, mental health services, and maternal and child health resources they are better positioned to grow stronger and thrive together.

In Carroll County, the data reveals both progress and areas for focused attention:

- Infant mortality rate has remained nearly half of the state’s since 2017.
- Majority of residents maintain health insurance.
- While lower than the state average, 1 in 3 Carroll County adults is obese based on their body mass index.
- Residents reporting poor mental health days are slowly but steadily increasing, up to nearly 5 days per month on average.

Survey respondents shared that there is limited availability of mental health counseling and other services. Community members called for more support for people with ADHD and autism.

What We Heard: Surveys

WHAT’S WORKING

- Food assistance programs

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Access and Inclusion:

- Mental health providers not accepting insurance or new youth patients
- Limited inpatient psychiatric services
- Long wait times for counselors
- Limited quality and accessible healthcare for families over income thresholds

Gaps in Programs and Services:

- ADHD and autism resources and supports

MENTAL HEALTH

In 2022, **19%** of **CARROLL COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS REPORTED THAT THEY SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED ATTEMPTING SUICIDE**, and **15%** reported that they made a plan about how they would attempt suicide.

Approximately **19% (6,412)** of the **EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS IN 2023** by Carroll County residents involved a mental health diagnosis.

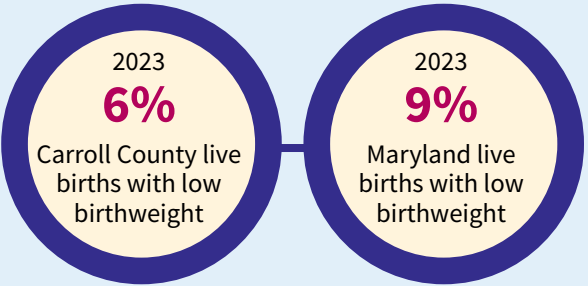
Countywide Data Snapshot

INFANT MORTALITY

THE INFANT MORTALITY RATE HAS REMAINED AT 3% in all but one year since 2019. **The state average is 6%.**

LOW BIRTHWEIGHT

The Carroll County rate of live births with low birthweight is **consistently lower than the state average.**



OBESITY

WHILE LOWER THAN THE STATE AVERAGE, 1 IN 3 CARROLL COUNTY ADULTS IS OBESE (32%) based on their BMI.

In 2022, **12% OF HIGH SCHOOL-AGED STUDENTS** were obese.

 In 2025, **3% OF THE COUNTY’S POPULATION** did not live close to a grocery store.

PHYSICAL FITNESS AND INACTIVITY

THE PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS REPORTING NO PHYSICAL LEISURE ACTIVITY decreased slightly, from **23.2%** in 2021 to **17.8%** in 2023.

87% OF COUNTY RESIDENTS LIVE CLOSE TO A PARK or recreation facility, compared to **92%** in the state.

SUBSTANCE USE

Tobacco and alcohol use among adults in the county rose above the state average in 2021 and has remained elevated. In 2023, **13%** of county adults reported using tobacco and **19%** reported using alcohol.



In 2022, the percentages of **CARROLL COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS** reporting they smoked cigarettes and/or used an electronic vapor product at least once in the prior 30 days was **double the state averages.**

THE NUMBER OF DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS remained steady in the county from 2021 to 2023 at **41 deaths per 100,000 population**, matching the state average.

 In 2023, **alcohol-impaired driving** accounted for **24% OF ALL MOTOR VEHICLE CRASH DEATHS.**

In 2024, there were **198 opioid overdose-related emergency department visits**, lower than the **five-year average of 233** (2020-2024).

UNINSURED POPULATION

The rate of uninsured individuals in the population is lower in **Carroll County (3%)**, including **Union Bridge (4%)** and **Westminster (4%)**, than in **Maryland (6%)**.

Data shows a LARGE DECLINE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY from middle school to high school, defined by being physically active for at least 60 minutes per day at least 5 days per week. In 2022, **63% OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS** were physically active, compared to **40%** of high school students.



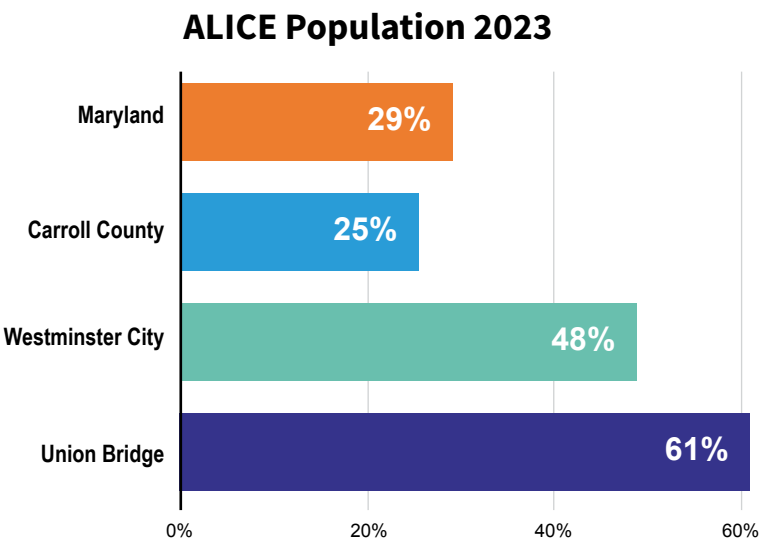
Families are Economically Stable

Key takeaways

When families are economically secure, children are more likely to grow up healthy, succeed in school, and reach their full potential. The ENOUGH Initiative’s **Families are Economically Secure** pillar emphasizes the importance of access to jobs that pay a living wage, quality housing, and reliable transportation. These building blocks help families meet their basic needs and create a stable environment where children can thrive.

Overall, Carroll County’s rate of child poverty is significantly lower than the state and national averages. Still, data reveal key needs:

- Housing was the number two, following childcare, overall concern of community members who responded to the survey. Enrollment in public benefits rose slightly year-over-year for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (27.5%), and Medicaid (14.9%), but declined for SNAP (6,708), all proxies for household income.
- Child poverty rate in Union Bridge is more than five times the county average, and 61% of households are ALICE.
- More than 1 in 10 County residents is experiencing food insecurity.
- Community members describe issues accessing programs and services because of their location and lack of awareness or accommodations for languages other than English or cognitive differences.
- Survey respondents called for more housing support, including emergency housing, as well as better coordinated transit options.

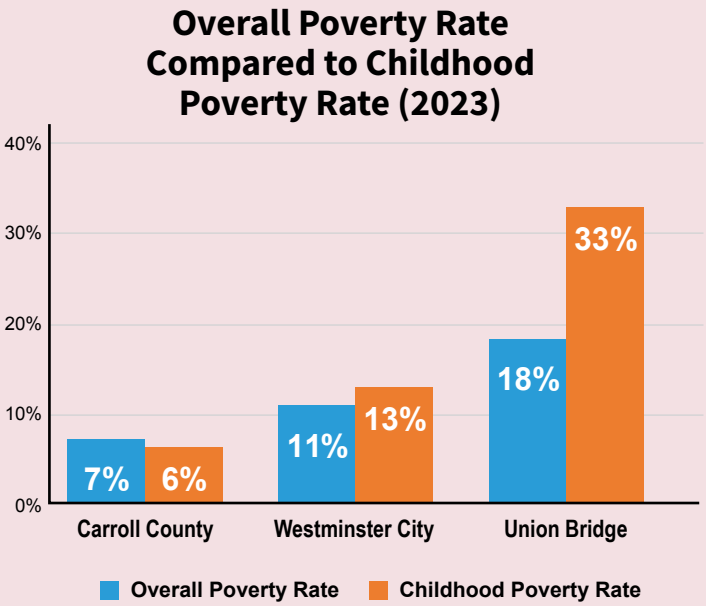
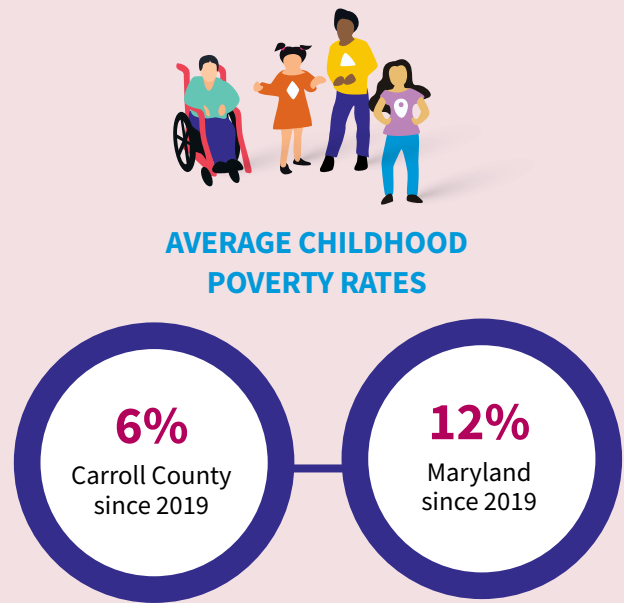


While the proportion of ALICE families in Carroll County is lower than the state’s (25% and 29%, respectively) both Union Bridge and Westminster City have significantly more ALICE families (61% and 48% respectively), defined as employed and living above the Federal Poverty Level but still struggling to afford basic expenses.

Countywide Data Snapshot

POVERTY RATES

The overall poverty rate in Carroll County is 7%, but it is higher in Westminster City (11%) and Union Bridge (18%). Children are more likely to live in poverty than the overall population in Westminster City (13%) and Union Bridge (33%), but not in Carroll County as a whole (6%). There are 67 children under the age of 18 living in poverty in Union Bridge compared to 460 in Westminster.



HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND PUBLIC BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY AND UPTAKE

JUST 5% of **CARROLL COUNTY HOUSEHOLDS** used **SNAP assistance in 2023**, half the state average of 10%.

2023 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

Carroll County:
\$115,876

Westminster:
\$79,431

Union Bridge:
\$65,417

FOOD INSECURITY

The proportion of people experiencing food insecurity in Carroll County **has steadily risen from 8% in 2021 to 11% in 2025.**

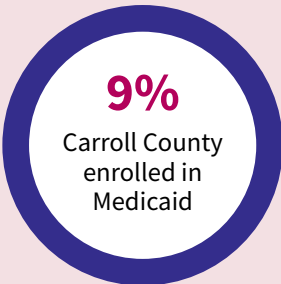
The percentage of children qualifying for Free and Reduced Price Meals at school has steadily risen from 22% in the 2021-2022 school year to 29% in the 2024-2025 school year. Still, the percentage of qualifying children in Carroll County is roughly half the state average.



Countywide Data Snapshot

HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND PUBLIC BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY AND UPTAKE

MEDICAID ENROLLMENT HAS STAYED CONSTANT IN CARROLL COUNTY SINCE 2019 AT 9% OF THE POPULATION.



Medicaid enrollment has steadily decreased in Westminster, but remained well above the county average in Union Bridge during the same time period.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS EXPRESSED

“Mentoring, job training, faith-based, and food assistance programs are helpful.”

“Agencies can do more to promote their services and assist seniors and English learners with issues of access.”

“We need more programs and services related to emergency housing, sober living, and transportation.”

What We Heard: Surveys

WHAT’S WORKING

- Mentoring and job training programs
- Churches and faith-based support
- Food assistance
- Specific programs mentioned include: Carroll County Career & Tech Center; Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS); Rapid Rehousing; Opportunity Work; Dad’s/Mom’s Works; and Marriage Relationship Education Center (MREC).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

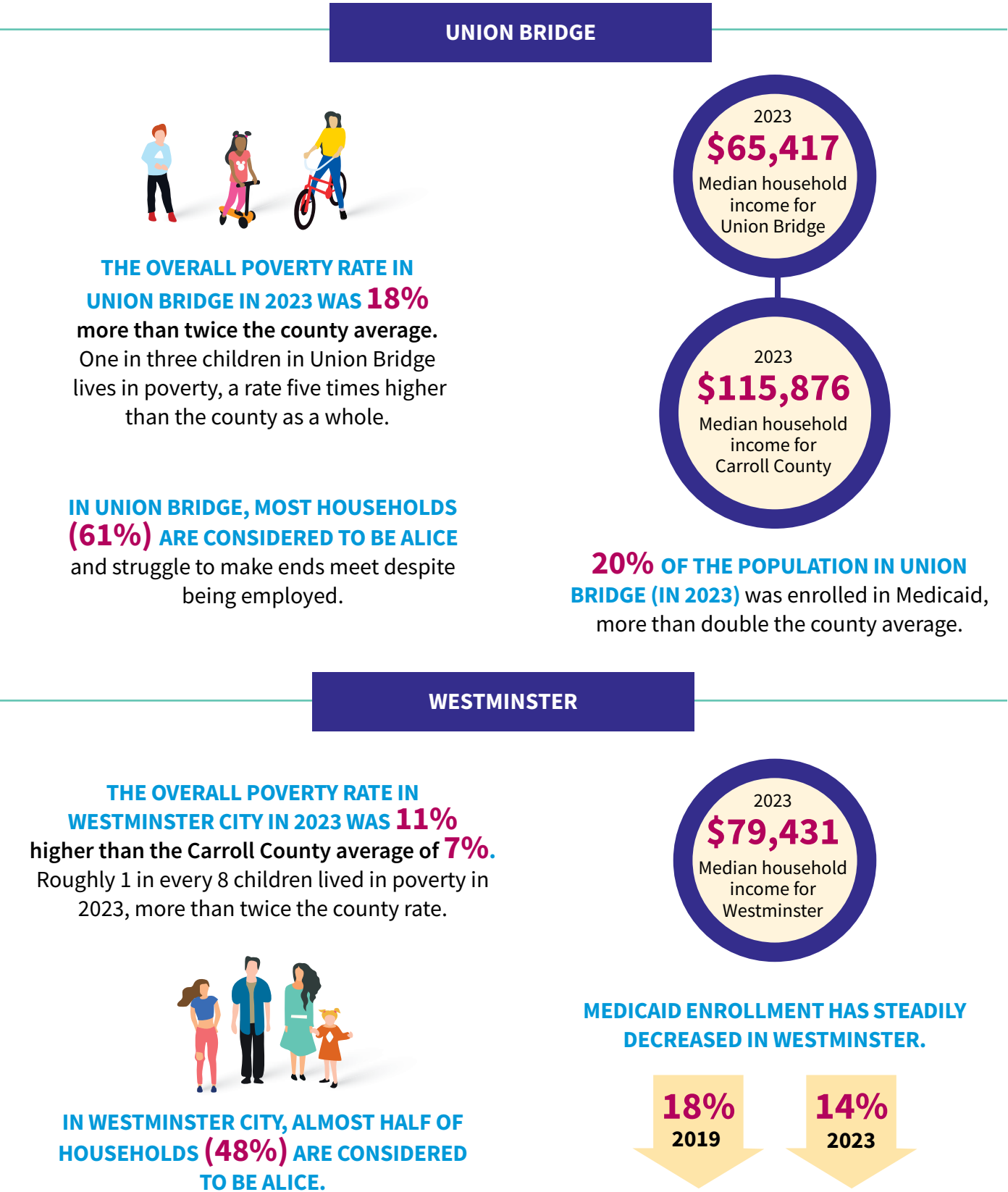
Access and Inclusion:

- Accessible forms/services for those with literacy or cognitive barriers
- Limited services and programs beyond Westminster
- Lack of outreach/awareness of services
- Agencies working in silos; limited interagency collaboration
- Unfair local perceptions associating immigrants with disruption and crime
- Difficulty navigating services (e.g. bilingual, senior support)

Gaps in Programs and Services:

- Emergency housing and sober living options
- Healthier options at food banks
- Lack of housing assistance
- Transportation gaps (more routes and destinations, better schedules)
- Financial literacy education
- Limited job opportunities and career development, including for individuals with criminal records

Geographic spotlight



Safe and Thriving Communities

Key takeaways

Safe, supportive communities are essential for children, youth, and families to grow, connect, and reach their full potential. The fourth and final ENOUGH Initiative pillar, **Safe and Thriving Communities**, emphasizes reducing violence, promoting justice, and ensuring that all community members, especially youth, feel protected and valued.

In Carroll County, data reveal some areas of concern that must be addressed to create thriving neighborhoods:

- Annual rate of students experiencing homelessness was at a five-year high in 2023-2024.
- There was a 21% increase in Juvenile Detention Intake Complaints from FY22 to FY24.
- Community members also called for juvenile diversion programs, alternatives to policing, and more youth activities and cited low community trust with law enforcement.

Some community members included safe recreation spaces and walkable neighborhoods as positive attributes of the community, while others called for more access to parks, playgrounds, and wide sidewalks.

What We Heard: Surveys

WHAT’S WORKING

- Faith-based and spiritual support
- Community events and gatherings
- Safe, accessible public recreation spaces in some communities
- Walkable neighborhoods and shared community facilities in some communities
- Family support services
- Homelessness support services

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS MENTIONED INCLUDE:

Westminster Police Department

Youth Action Board (homelessness services)

GFWC Woman’s Club of Westminster

What We Heard: Surveys

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Access and Inclusion:

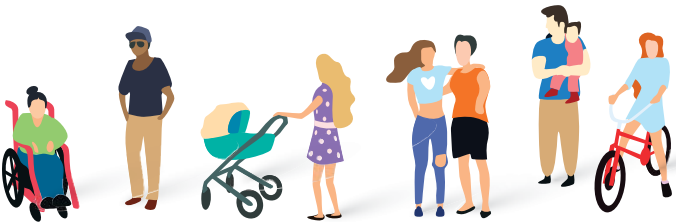
- Affordable internet access
- Affordability of community activities despite public funding
- Culturally diverse events and community spaces
- Sense of belonging and voice for often overlooked or marginalized communities

Gaps in Programs and Services:

- Long wait times for housing and negligent landlords
- Inadequate access to food assistance particularly for the elderly
- Lack of affordable, inclusive and diverse youth activities (recreation, arts, pools)
- Early intervention and juvenile diversion programs
- Alternatives to policing for community safety
- Reported low trust in some local authorities
- Reported lack of responsiveness of some law enforcement agencies

Gaps in Infrastructure

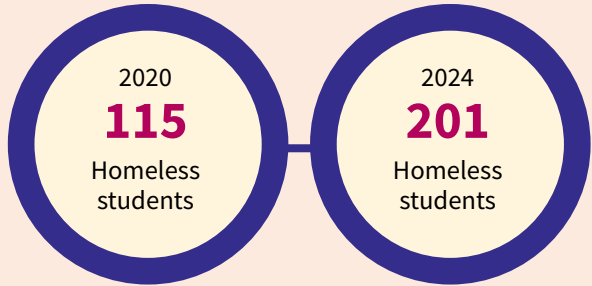
- Safe, accessible parks/playgrounds beyond Westminster; restroom access and cleanliness in public spaces
- Sidewalks and paths that are wide enough for walking, and a lack of bike lanes



Countywide Data Snapshot

HOMELESSNESS

The annual count of homeless increased significantly between 2020 and 2024 (**415 to 556**), and **the rate of students experiencing homelessness was at a FIVE-YEAR HIGH IN 2024, NEARLY DOUBLE** the 2020 rate:



JUVENILE COMPLAINTS AND OFFENSES

There was a **21% INCREASE IN JUVENILE DETENTION INTAKE COMPLAINTS** from FY22 to FY24.

White male juveniles are the most likely to be named in a complaint (**67% in 2024**). **However, numbers of complaints against Hispanic and Black juveniles were both SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER IN 2024 THAN 2020.**

JUVENILES BETWEEN THE AGES OF 12 AND 17 committed **289 out of 298 offenses** in 2024.

Key Considerations for Community Planning



To address the community’s needs and concerns, the LMB is using data from this assessment, as well as input from its staff, Board members and partners, to develop a shared Community Plan that will help to coordinate a collaborative, community-driven response. LMB staff and Board members, representatives of local agencies, the school system, nonprofit organizations and community members are actively engaged in a planning process. The result will be a co-created Strategic Community Plan with a clear long-term vision, aligned mission, priorities, and actionable strategies. The Strategic Community Plan will be centered on recommendations to address the community’s most pressing needs and include measurable results and progress indicators. What follows are considerations for that planning process, gleaned from the needs assessment data.

Considerations By Pillar

HIGH-QUALITY CHILDCARE AND EDUCATION

Gaps in kindergarten readiness and grade-3 ELA proficiency by geography, disability status, and race and ethnicity signal unequal access to high-quality early learning for priority groups. At the same time, one in five students is chronically absent. Identifying which students are most affected and why is essential to improving attendance for all.

Data highlights the need for a comprehensive, coordinated approach to education in Carroll County that benefits all students, but especially those in historically underserved areas, one that starts early, responds to rising behavioral

and mental health challenges, reduces barriers to attendance, and connects students to meaningful afterschool enrichment, mentoring, and postsecondary and career pathways.

FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY

On most indicators of health, Carroll County meets or outperforms state and national averages. Still, it is important to address areas like mental health where indicators are trending negatively. Additionally, considering health as part of a broader focus will help to make important connections across data indicators. For example, while lower than the state average, one in three Carroll County adults is obese based on their BMI. More than one in ten residents is experiencing food insecurity, which has been shown to relate to both obesity and kindergarten readiness. Future efforts should tackle root causes, break down stigma, and consider social determinants of health in a holistic plan.

FAMILIES ARE ECONOMICALLY STABLE

A focus on child poverty and family well-being must prioritize Union Bridge and Westminster City, where rates of overall and childhood poverty both exceed the county averages. Lifting families out of poverty is about more than income; it’s about ensuring that families have the resources, opportunities, and community support to build resilience and create opportunities for upward economic mobility across generations. Strategies must consider workforce training, quality and accessible childcare, and safe, stable housing.

SAFE AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

While many communities note their outdoor spaces and recreation areas as assets, others are lacking such amenities. Ensure those resources are readily accessible to all community members. Consider how to strengthen protective factors in young people by expanding early intervention programs, mentoring, and job training and ensuring culturally responsive services. By aligning goals and resources, Carroll County can create an environment where everyone feels safe, valued and empowered to succeed.

Cross-Cutting Considerations

1 Consider community readiness for change: Community members surveyed reported potential barriers to change, including resistance among others in the community, low social connection, and stigma around poverty and mental health. Community members also suggested more widespread outreach and communications to everyone in the county regarding available resources and services. A coordinated public information campaign might help to shift mental models and dispel myths or limiting beliefs related to services.

2 Continue engaging community members in conversation. By engaging with community members in the community spaces they already frequent, LMB staff were able to gather invaluable input from often-underrepresented groups. Staff should consider how to continue these practices and these conversations, particularly to deepen engagement of youth and involve the Hispanic community in decision-making, planning, and data collection. Cultivate ambassadors in priority communities and geographies to ensure community involvement and awareness.

3 Focus on youth. The data points to opportunities for a deeper examination of the social and emotional well-being of middle and high school students. Incidents of school bullying are quickly rising; nearly 20% of high school students report seriously considering attempting suicide; and juvenile crime complaints are on the rise. These data require further investigation and dialogue with students to understand the external and internal factors shaping their behavior and the cross-cutting solutions that could turn the tide.

4 Explore beneficial policy and regulatory changes. Community members’ lived experiences can and should help to inform stronger policies and regulations in support of improved outcomes. Community members should have a seat at decision-making tables. Community voices can educate and inform decision-makers and advocates by sharing common data and experiences.

5 Adopt and expand solutions that are already working. Although issues like housing and transportation can be complex to address, there are many promising and proven programs from which to draw. Expand solutions that have been successful in other contexts and show promise locally, such as ride-sharing vouchers to address transportation gaps, single-room occupancy or tiny homes for housing, high-dosage tutoring to improve third-grade reading proficiency, and Housing First for comprehensive social services.

Addendum

INPUTS

[Quantitative data](#) - Data Snapshot/Deck

[Qualitative data](#) - Community Survey Synthesis