

LIFT Community Action Agency, Inc.



Community Needs Assessment 2025-2027

Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha Counties of Southeast Oklahoma

LIFT Community Action Agency, Inc. Community Needs Assessment Certification

The Board and Executive Director certify that the Community Needs Assessment is current as of January 14, 2025 and has been formally reviewed and accepted by the Board of Directors.



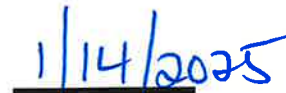
David Hawkins – Board Chairman



Date



Rebecca Porter – Executive Director



Date

Board Approved 01/14/2025

Purpose of a Community Needs Assessment: A Community Needs Assessment aims to identify and prioritize the needs and resources within a specific community or group of communities. This process involves collecting data from target populations and analyzing it to understand the underlying causes of poverty and shifts in population demographics. The agency's Board of Directors and leadership use this information to develop effective, results-driven programs that address poverty. The findings are compiled into a report that justifies the need for resources and explains how they are allocated, providing transparency to funders and the public. Additionally, the report serves as a valuable tool to educate the public and community leaders about poverty-related issues.

Table of Contents

- Overview
 - Agency Overview
 - Mission
 - Community/Service Area
- Data Methodology
- Key Findings
 - Prioritized Needs
- Agency Programs & Services
- Community Demographics
 - General Overall Population Demographic Profile
 - Employment
- Poverty Profile
 - Federal Poverty Level Demographics
 - Race
 - Ethnicity
 - Gender
- Trends
- Assessment Profile
 - Methodology and Timeline/Identified Needs
 - Prioritized Needs
 - Community Resources
 - Agency Data
- Sources (List)
- Appendices
 - Survey
 - Forum Questions
 - Customer Satisfaction Survey

LIFT Community Action Agency, Inc.

Agency Overview: LIFT Community Action Agency, Inc., previously known as Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. (LCAA), was established as a nonprofit organization on April 4, 1968. This formation resulted from the merger of three separate Community Action Agencies in Choctaw, Pushmataha, and McCurtain Counties to more effectively address the needs of residents in Southeast Oklahoma. The newly formed agency's Board of Directors created Articles of Incorporation and By-laws, defining a service area spanning over 4,000 square miles.

Throughout its 56-year history, LIFT has been led by five Executive Directors. The agency's first director, Fred Tucker, served for 25 years until his passing in 1993. His dedication to Community Action is commemorated annually through the Fred Tucker Award for Excellence and Longevity, presented by the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies to outstanding employees statewide. Following Mr. Tucker, the agency has continued its legacy under the leadership of subsequent Executive Directors, including:

- Bob Yandell (1993-2005)
- Randall Erwin (2005-2008)
- Brenda Needham (2008-2014)
- Rebecca Porter (2014-present)

Over the years, LIFT has experienced significant growth, continually expanding its programs and services to address the evolving needs of the region, particularly those of its most vulnerable populations. This expansion has led to a budget increase from \$607,583 in 1971 to approximately \$27.1 million in 2024, reflecting the agency's commitment to providing a broader range of services for low-income families.

In 1970, census data revealed that 63.6% of residents in the tri-county area had incomes below the Office of Equal Opportunity poverty guidelines. By 2022, census data shows that this figure has decreased to 21.6%. This significant reduction in poverty is largely attributed to the agency's implementation of anti-poverty programs. Each year, LCAA programs provide support to approximately 2,000 families and serve around 4,000 individuals within its service area.

Today, LCAA remains dedicated to its mission of addressing poverty by implementing strategies aimed at alleviating its causes and conditions. This report provides an overview of the agency's efforts, along with other community programs and resources available to meet identified needs. Additionally, it offers a comprehensive analysis of the community, including demographic information and a detailed assessment of prioritized needs.

LCAA's administrative office is located in Hugo, Oklahoma, the county seat of Choctaw County. The agency delivers its programs across the tri-county area through multiple locations, staying committed to the mission, vision, and values of Community Action. Many of the original programs, such as emergency services and weatherization, are still in operation today. Additionally, the agency offers a wide range of services, including Head Start, Early Head Start, Transit, Housing, AmeriCorps Seniors Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, and more. Governance is provided by a 27-member tripartite board representing the low-income, public, and private sectors.

Mission: “To improve the lives of low-income individuals and families through service and collaboration leading to self-sufficiency.”

Community: LCAA’s “Community” includes all of Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha counties located in rural Southeast Oklahoma. Collectively, this “community” covers a land area of just over 4,000 square miles. The community served by LCAA and the community assessed are one in the same.

Data Methodology: LCAA conducts a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) every three years. For this report, data collection took place between May 2024 and October 2024. The agency utilized the Oklahoma Standardized Community Needs Assessment Survey to gather resident demographic information and identify community needs. In addition to the survey, LCAA conducted focus group interviews, analyzed customer satisfaction surveys, reviewed data from the U.S. Census and other reliable online sources, and hosted community needs meetings across its service area.

To ensure the surveys accurately represented the overall population, LCAA employed various distribution methods, including paper forms, in-person collection during service visits, email distribution, and dissemination at agency Board meetings. Surveys were also distributed and collected through schools, faith-based organizations, civic groups, and local businesses.

A total of 337 surveys were collected from the following community sectors: Educational Community-12; Faith-based-10; Community-based-13; Government entity-5; Private organization-3; General public (having never received services from the agency)-217; Client of the Agency (could represent low-income or other sectors)-64; Agency Board Members-10; and Agency Volunteers- 3.

Key Findings: Causes and conditions of poverty, as they relate to the top three prioritized needs, were discussed at length during each of the community needs meetings. Housing, Transportation and Youth Services (and lack thereof) were all attributed in great part to the poor economy in the area.

The availability of safe, decent, and affordable housing is a significant issue across the entire service area, resulting in inflated and unaffordable rental prices. Transportation challenges were also highlighted, primarily due to insufficient staffing and limited awareness of available transportation services. Additionally, a need for youth services was identified, stemming from a lack of resources in the region. Comprehensive data and key findings are provided later in the "Assessment Profile" section of this report.

Prioritized Needs: Prioritized needs were identified by focus groups which included input from agency leadership, front-line staff and Board Members. The prioritized needs are:

1. Housing
2. Transportation
3. Youth Services.

Agency Programs & Services: The description of agency programs and services included in this Community Needs Assessment reflects those available at the time the report was written and approved. Since the assessment is conducted every three years, it is important to note that programs and services may change during this period. Individuals are encouraged to contact agency offices to confirm the availability of programs or services at any given time. If a need arises that the agency cannot address, staff may assist by providing referrals to other community resource providers. Residents are welcome to reach out to any of our offices for assistance.

Community Building & Engagement

AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP: Retired Senior and Volunteer Program (RSVP) is America's largest volunteer network for people age 55 and over. This program allows individuals an opportunity to use the skills and talents they have learned over the years, or develop new ones while serving in a variety of volunteer activities within their community. Service opportunities are available throughout Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha counties.

Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): CACFP provides training and monitoring for child daycare homes. Specialists offer guidance in nutrition and record-keeping. The program operates in 43 counties and is funded by USDA and administered through the Oklahoma State Department of Education. CACFP also offers Daycare Home Providers an incentive to serve nutritious meals through a reimbursement program.

Family Resource Center: Funded as part of the Know and Grow Oklahoma Initiative, LIFT CAA's Family Resource Center serves as a centralized hub for families to access information/referrals, services, resources, and supports. The FRC promotes cross-sector community collaboration to strengthen systems across Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties in order to mitigate the impact of adversity and support protective factors among families with children under age five. FRC staff provide direct assistance, conduct consultations/screenings, and facilitate or conduct education/training/skill-building sessions with parents and families (individually or group-based), in collaboration with community partners as available.

Second Chance Act Adult Reentry Education, Employment, Treatment and Recovery Program: This program provides pre- and post-release services to inmates and ex-offenders in the tri-county service area. Services provided include case management, cognitive behavioral therapy, counseling, supports linkage/referrals, and other evidence-based programming and services designed to reduce recidivism as well as promote public safety and health. The program works closely with the County Sheriff Offices and Jails to achieve the program goals.

Strong Fathers Programs: Choctaw, McCurtain, Pushmataha Counties: The Strong Fathers Programs of Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties aim to support fathers in enhancing their parenting skills and fostering positive relationships with their children and co-parents. Each program serves its respective county and provides resources and training to help fathers become more engaged and effective in their roles, to ultimately benefit their families and communities. This initiative is part of a broader effort to promote responsible fatherhood and strengthen family bonds across Oklahoma.

WorkReady Oklahoma-Idabel: LIFT CAA operates a WorkReady Oklahoma Center in Idabel, Oklahoma that helps individuals find and secure employment through free services such as job training, education, job placement assistance, and career coaching. Center staff are dedicated to supporting job seekers at every step, aiming to connect participants with opportunities that lead to stable, well-paying jobs, enhancing their career prospects and overall quality of life.

Economic Development

Intermediary Program: Designated by United States Department of Agriculture/Rural Development, the agency serves as an intermediary to assist certified loan packagers (home loans) in Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Texas. These services ensure loan package accuracy and completeness. Loan packaging fees generate revenue to help further housing opportunities in LCAA's service area.

Lending: LCAA's lending programs provide resources for both residential and commercial lending opportunities. The residential lending products provide alternative lending options to help families achieve their dream of homeownership. LCAA also packages loans for participating lenders (banks) and USDA/Rural Development. LCAA commercial loans provide capital to business entrepreneurs for business startup and/or expansion.

Parks and Tourism: Parks and recreation facilities provide opportunities for physical activity and can help people of all ages lead a more active lifestyle. Each year, approximately 300,000 individuals enjoy fishing, camping and relaxing at one or more of the park facilities operated by LIFT CAA. LCAA manages Clayton Lake State Park; Hugo Lake Park; and Raymond Gary State Park.

Education

Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care: Head Start serves 234 youth ages 3 & 4 years within 18 Classrooms; Early Head Start serves 48 children newborn to three years through three EHS centers; Early Head Start-Child Care also serves 104 newborns to 3 years old through collaborations with six daycare providers. Thousands of children have been served collectively by these programs since their inception. Each of these programs provide children with learning activities to help foster and improve their physical, social/emotional and cognitive development, and in doing so, preparing the children for Kindergarten. Several Head Start centers are operated via collaborations with the public schools.

LIFT Early Learning Centers: The Early Learning Centers operate in four locations within the tri-county service area. These centers are all child care partners within the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Program, and support working families by providing full-day, full-year services so children from newborn to 3 years old from families with low-incomes have the healthy and enriching early experiences they need to realize their full potential. All centers follow licensing requirements set forth by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. with 3 rated as a Five Star Facilities and 1 rated as a Four Star Facility.

Health Services

Healthy Start: Healthy Start serves women (pre, peri and postnatal) as well as their children from birth through 18 months. The national goal of Healthy Start is to reduce high infant mortality rates in high risk areas. This initiative further seeks to address issues/causes surrounding low birth weight, preterm birth, maternal mortality and maternal morbidity. The goal of Healthy Start is to assist families with medical care, resources and education needed to promote the wellness of the mother and baby before, during and after the pregnancy. Care Coordinators are housed in four of the six counties to better serve very rural outlying communities. The program also serves fathers and community members of all expectant babies.

Tri-County Opioid Response Project: The Tri-County Opioid Response Project, serving Oklahoma's southeastern Choctaw, Pushmataha, and McCurtain counties, specifically aims to address the systemic needs of the opioid epidemic. Funded through the Health Resources and Services Administration, the program encourages partnerships with community members and their organizations to build partnerships and plan/implement systemic changes to prevention, treatment, and recovery of individuals affected by this epidemic. Our goal is to create a positive impact on community health and reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with opioid overdose. In addition LIFT CAA is working towards Outpatient Mental Health Treatment Certification through the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. The agency has been granted temporary certification—a crucial step in the process of fully establishing a Comprehensive Community Addiction Recovery Center. It is expected that full certification will be achieved in 2025, which will allow for billing of services and sustainability of the center in the future.

Housing and Housing Supportive Services

502 Loan Program: The USDA Rural Development Section 502 Program gives the opportunity to families with very-low to low incomes to purchase/build when a traditional mortgage is not available.

504 Loan/Grants Program: The Section 504 Loan/Grant Program objective is to help very low-income owner occupants of modest single-family homes in rural areas repair their homes. Loan funds are available for home improvement and repairs, to improve safety and sanitation and to remove health and safety hazards. Grants may be available for very low-income elderly.

Purchase/Rehab/Resale: Homebuyers are able to enjoy huge savings by purchasing a home through this program. LCAA purchases homes which have gone through foreclosure at a very reasonable cost. Using in-house construction crews for much of the rehab contributes to additional savings which is passed on to the homebuyer. These homes oftentimes help to address the housing needs of very low to low- and moderate-income families.

Rental Housing: LIFT owns and operates twelve multifamily apartment complexes consisting of 1, 2, and/or 3-bedrooms located within the tri-county service area. The units are affordable and Section 8 and other forms of rental assistance is accepted. In addition, the agency manages three senior supportive housing complexes.

Rural Development Guarantee Program: The USDA Rural Development Guarantee Program works to help families purchase existing homes with moderate income.

Speculative Housing: More than two decades ago, LCAA began building Speculative Housing due to the lack of private development of single-family homes in the service area. The goal of building one home per year is based on the premise or “speculation” that the home will be purchased upon completion. These “spec” homes help to address the housing needs of more moderate-income families. These homes can be financed through a traditional lender.

Technical & Management Assistance: LCAA has held a Technical and Management Assistance (T&MA) contract for Region II with USDA Rural Development since 1980. T&MA employees serve Self-Help Housing grantees throughout Region II which consists of Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming.

Weatherization: LCAA’s Weatherization Assistance Program reduces energy costs for low-income households by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes through methods such as installation of additional insulation, weather-stripping, caulking and more. The areas served include Atoka, Bryan, Carter, Choctaw, Coal, Johnston, Love, Marshall, McCurtain, Murray, Pontotoc and Pushmataha Counties.

Supportive Services

Emergency Food and Shelter Program: The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) is a Federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). LIFT serves low-income families in Choctaw, Pushmataha and McCurtain counties with utility/propane, rental/mortgage and food assistance support through the Emergency Food and Shelter Program.

Rx for Oklahoma: Rx for Oklahoma is a prescription drug program that assists low-income individuals and families with obtaining prescriptions at a reduced or no out of pocket expense. The program is available to those Oklahomans who meet the income guidelines or have no prescription insurance.

Salvation Army: LCAA is the designated service unit for the Salvation Army for the tri-county area. During the holiday season, members throughout the communities volunteer their time to the Red Kettle Campaign and ring the bell to raise money for charitable purposes. The funds raised are used to help families with utility or other emergency needs.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance: Through grant support from the Internal Revenue Service, LIFT utilizes qualified employees, trained by the IRS to serve under the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA). Through this program, employees provide free income tax preparation service to residents in the tri-county area.

Transportation

Local Demand: LIFT Transit is a rural transportation service that provides demand/response transportation services to residents within the city limits of Antlers, Broken Bow, Clayton, Hugo and Idabel. The transit services are operated with both full and part-time drivers. Annual training for all transit employees includes drug and alcohol misuse/abuse, defensive driving, CPR/First Aid and Passenger Assistance and Sensitivity Awareness.

SoonerRide/Older Americans Act Title III funding: SoonerRide is a transportation service provided for eligible Medicaid clients for non-emergency medical trips. Residents in the tri-county service area are transported to and from critical care appointments such as dialysis, cancer and wound care treatment. Additionally, funding received from the Kiamichi Economic Development District of Oklahoman's Area Agency on Aging Division help to fill a gap in transportation services for older Americans (60 years of age or older) who do not qualify for Medicaid, Tribal, or other free transportation services.

Victim & Youth Services

Better Choices: Better Futures: This project works to develop coordinated intervention and prevention responses that identify and address challenges related to opioid and substance misuse that impact youth, families, and communities within Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties. Strategies include: increasing access to and education over naloxone and available supports; prevention, outreach, and drug take-back programming; and the creation and coordination of an Overdose Fatality Review Team to drive prevention and intervention efforts at local and state levels. Through a case management model, staff also work to enable youth and families impacted by opioids and/or substance use to find, access, and navigate evidence-based, affordable treatments, as well as home- and community-based services and social supports.

Court Appointed Special Advocates: Funded by the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council through VOCA (Victims of Crime Act) funding and Oklahoma CASA Association, this program recruits and trains volunteers to be the voice for children in the child welfare system. A CASA volunteer advocates for children who have been declared by the courts as “deprived”, meaning abused, neglected, or abandoned.

Mentoring: LCAA’s Mentoring program is funded through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) via Youth Collaboratory which is a national network designed to strengthen outcomes for youth and young adults at risk for delinquency or victimization. Youth are paired with caring adult mentors who serve as role models and provide emotional and academic support.

Safe Place Healing Hearts: This program directly serves victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking crimes; builds the capacity of direct service providers to better serve and protect victims; encourages reporting of these crimes; and ensures all service providers are adequately trained on how to appropriately respond, assist victims, improve the rate of prosecution of such crimes, and work together through coordinated service delivery. SPHH strives to enhance the safety of rural victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

Safe Place Healing Hearts Too: Established in 2021, SPHH Too works to develop, expand, and strengthen prevention strategies, intervention services, and treatment targeting children ages 0-10 years who are victims of and/or exposed to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking in Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties. This includes direct services to address the emotional, cognitive, and physical effects of trauma on child victims. The program also supports the coordinated community response, by enhancing collaboration between and building the capacity of service providers in the target counties to appropriately respond to and assist child victims or those exposed to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The program develops and delivers community training and educational/prevention programming as well.

Victim Advocacy Services: Victim Advocacy Services: This program provides enhanced, needed direct services to all types of victims and their families. Strategies involve working with law enforcement, volunteers, caseworkers and other stakeholders in a coordinated effort to meet the needs of crime victims. Established in 2015, the program assists victims of crime through direct service provision and/or linkages to resources that will serve the victim's physical, emotional and basic needs, (e.g. emergency shelter, food and clothing), as well as meeting long-term needs (e.g. assistance in applying for crime victim compensation benefits).

YouthBuild: The YouthBuild program for individuals age 16-24 combines academics with career training, leadership development, and community service at no cost to the students. Participants work toward obtaining their GED or high school diploma, learn marketable job skills, leadership skills and will serve their communities by assisting in the construction of affordable housing.

Community Demographics:

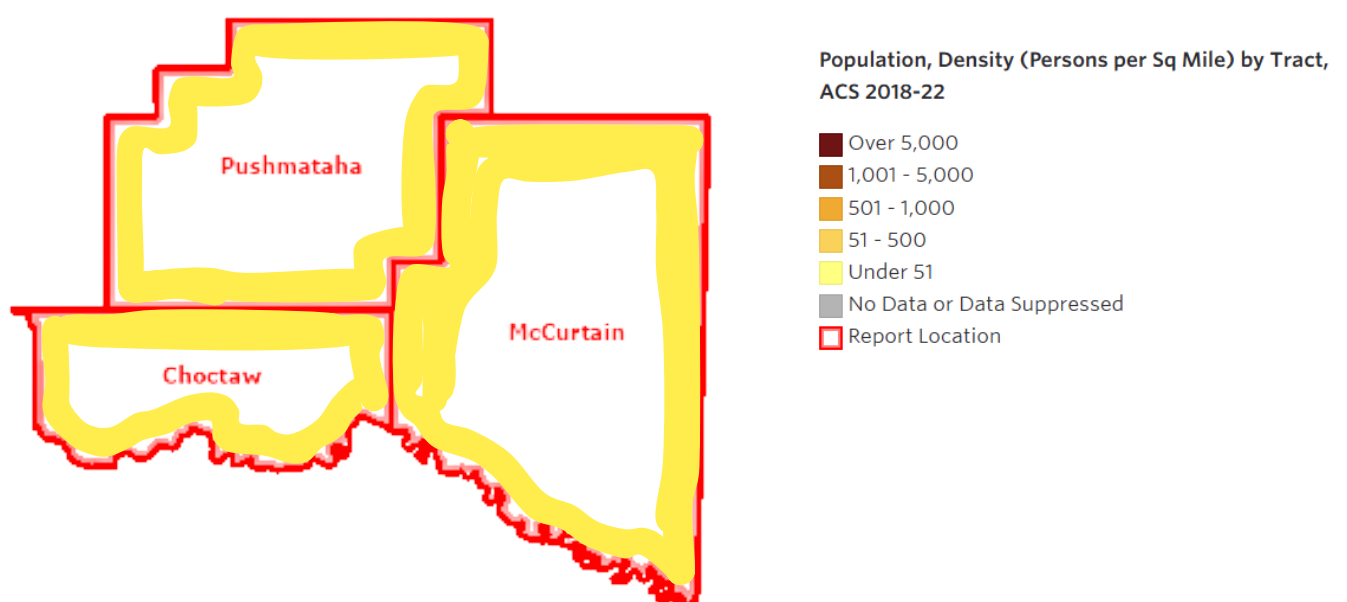
LCAA's service area includes three rural counties in Southeast Oklahoma: Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha counties.

General Overall Population Demographic profile: Total Population

A total of 56,133 people live in the 4,016.70 square mile report area defined for this assessment according to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018-22 data).

Report Area	Total Population	Total Land Area (Square Miles)	Population Density (Per Square Mile)
Report Location	56,133	4,016.70	14
Choctaw County, OK	14,285	770.38	19
McCurtain County, OK	31,003	1,850.78	17
Pushmataha County, OK	10,845	1,395.54	8
Oklahoma	3,970,497	68,596.72	58
United States	331,097,593	3,533,269.34	94

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2018-22. → [Show more details](#)



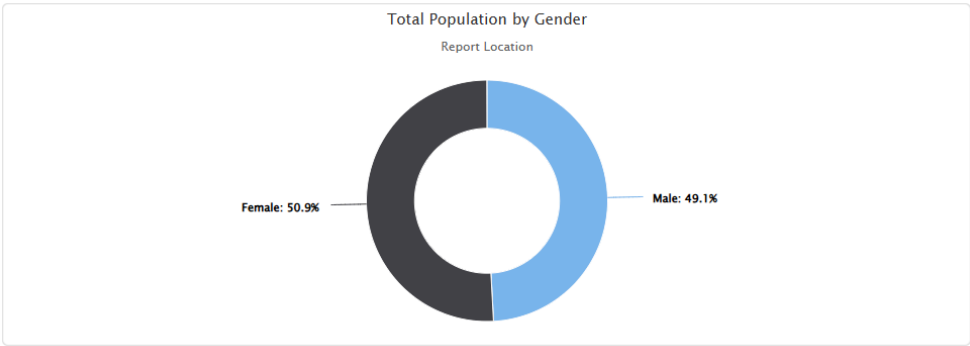
Total Population by Gender Report Area: Choctaw County, OK, McCurtain County, OK, Pushmataha County, OK.

Total Population by Gender

This indicator reports the total population of the report area by gender.
The percentage values could be interpreted as, for example, "Among the total report area population, the percentage of population that is male is (value)."

Report Area	Male	Female	Male, Percent	Female, Percent
Report Location	27,588	28,545	49.15%	50.85%
Choctaw County, OK	6,910	7,375	48.37%	51.63%
McCurtain County, OK	15,366	15,637	49.56%	50.44%
Pushmataha County, OK	5,312	5,533	48.98%	51.02%
Oklahoma	1,980,478	1,990,019	49.88%	50.12%
United States	164,200,298	166,897,295	49.59%	50.41%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2018-22. → Show more details

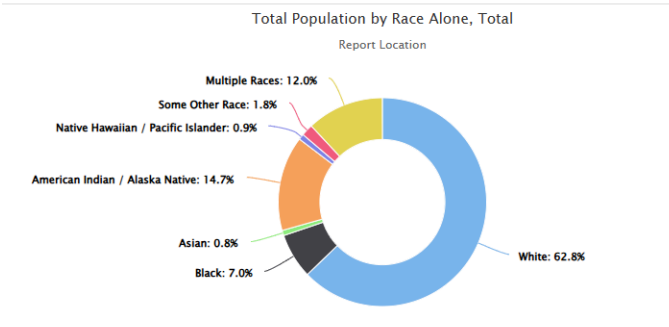


Total Population by Race Alone:

This indicator reports the total population of the report area by race alone.

Report Area	White	Black	Asian	American Indian / Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Races
Report Location	35,256	3,937	453	8,257	492	1,028	6,710
Choctaw County, OK	8,633	1,390	99	2,194	13	221	1,735
McCurtain County, OK	18,987	2,422	307	4,383	455	763	3,686
Pushmataha County, OK	7,636	125	47	1,680	24	44	1,289
Oklahoma	2,716,667	284,453	91,720	298,628	7,313	124,427	447,289
United States	218,123,424	41,288,572	19,112,979	2,786,431	624,863	20,018,544	29,142,780

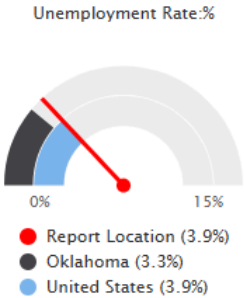
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2018-22. → Show more details



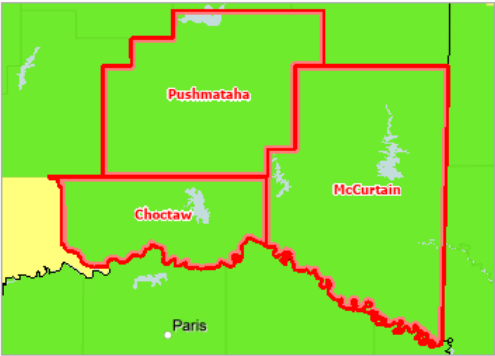
Unemployment Statistics in Oklahoma: Source: United States Department of Labor/Bureau of Labor Statistics. Average weekly wages in Oklahoma's smaller counties:

Total unemployment in the report area for the current month (September 2024) equals 1,131, or 3.9% of the civilian non-institutionalized population age 16 and older (non-seasonally adjusted). This indicator is relevant because unemployment creates financial instability and barriers to access including insurance coverage, health services, healthy food, and other necessities that contribute to poor health status.

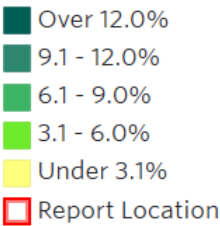
Report Area	Labor Force	Number Employed	Number Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Report Location	28,796	27,665	1,131	3.9%
Choctaw County, OK	7,379	7,117	262	3.6%
McCurtain County, OK	16,583	15,935	648	3.9%
Pushmataha County, OK	4,834	4,613	221	4.6%
Oklahoma	2,006,690	1,940,640	66,050	3.3%
United States	169,777,533	163,187,465	6,590,069	3.9%



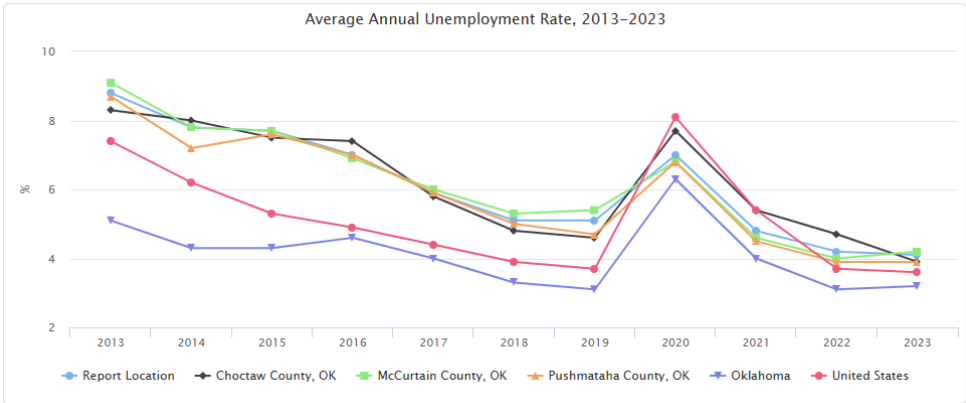
Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2024 - September. [→ Show more details](#)



Unemployment, Rate by County, BLS 2024 - September



[View larger map](#)



Poverty Profile:

Report Area: Choctaw County, OK, McCurtain County, OK. , Pushmataha County, OK.

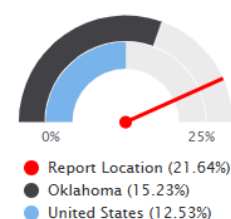
Poverty - Population Below 100% Federal Poverty Level

Poverty is considered a key driver of health status.

Within the report area 21.64% or 11,969 individuals for whom poverty status is determined are living in households with income below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). This indicator is relevant because poverty creates barriers to access including health services, healthy food, and other necessities that contribute to poor health status.

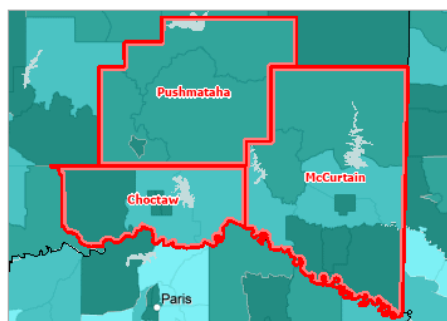
Report Area	Total Population	Population in Poverty	Population in Poverty, Percent
Report Location	55,300	11,969	21.64%
Choctaw County, OK	14,030	3,195	22.77%
McCurtain County, OK	30,611	6,460	21.10%
Pushmataha County, OK	10,659	2,314	21.71%
Oklahoma	3,847,702	585,991	15.23%
United States	323,275,448	40,521,584	12.53%

Population in Poverty, Percent

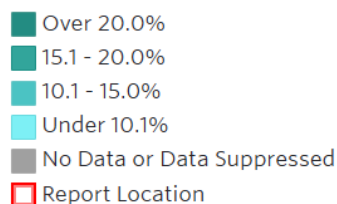


Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22. → Show more details



Population Below the Poverty Level, Percent by Tract, ACS 2018-22



Poverty Demographics by Race

Report Area: Choctaw County, OK. McCurtain County, OK. & Pushmataha County, OK.

This indicator reports the percentage of population in poverty in the report area by race alone.

Report Area	White	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Race
Report Location	18.81%	44.85%	20.23%	2.21%	17.28%	36.42%	24.30%
Choctaw County, OK	20.45%	43.96%	16.51%	9.09%	0.00%	63.76%	21.16%
McCurtain County, OK	17.22%	46.30%	21.83%	0.00%	18.68%	29.99%	24.10%
Pushmataha County, OK	20.93%	20.65%	20.93%	2.13%	0.00%	0.00%	29.07%
Oklahoma	12.81%	25.82%	19.24%	14.93%	31.11%	22.35%	18.54%
United States	10.09%	21.46%	22.60%	10.12%	16.97%	18.57%	14.76%

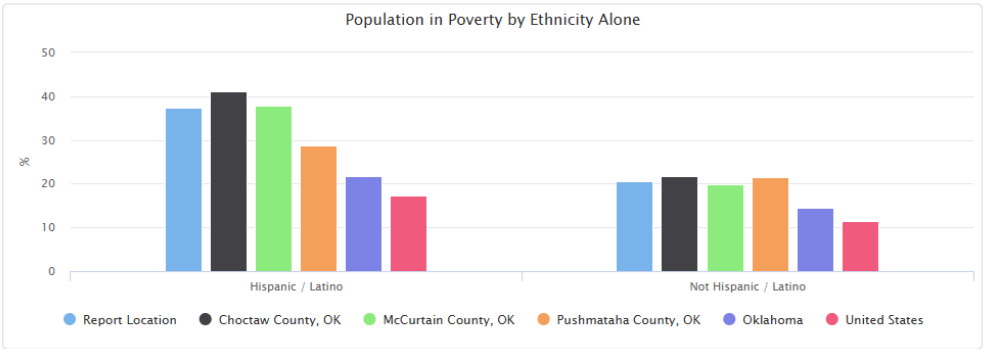
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22. → Show more details

Poverty Demographics by Ethnicity

This indicator reports the population in poverty in the report area by ethnicity alone.

Report Area	Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Hispanic or Latino, Percent	Not Hispanic or Latino, Percent
Report Location	1,208	10,761	37.42%	20.67%
Choctaw County, OK	310	2,885	41.11%	21.73%
McCurtain County, OK	772	5,688	37.90%	19.91%
Pushmataha County, OK	126	2,188	28.83%	21.40%
Oklahoma	97,203	488,788	21.76%	14.37%
United States	10,447,540	30,074,044	17.24%	11.45%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2018-22. [→ Show more details](#)



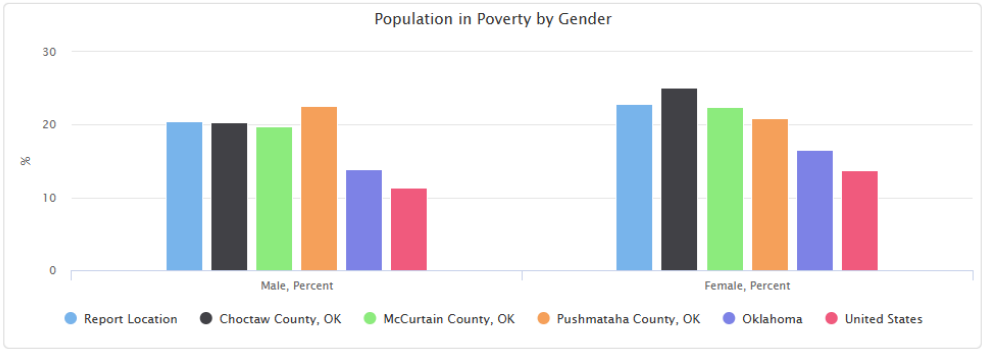
Poverty Demographics by Gender

Report Area: Choctaw County, OK; McCurtain County, OK; Pushmataha County, OK

This indicator reports the population in poverty in the report area by gender.

Report Area	Male	Female	Male, Percent	Female, Percent
Report Location	5,545	6,424	20.45%	22.79%
Choctaw County, OK	1,377	1,818	20.31%	25.07%
McCurtain County, OK	2,985	3,475	19.77%	22.40%
Pushmataha County, OK	1,183	1,131	22.61%	20.84%
Oklahoma	265,426	320,565	13.93%	16.50%
United States	18,109,332	22,412,252	11.34%	13.70%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2018-22. [→ Show more details](#)



Trends: The last Community Needs Assessment conducted by LIFT Community Action Agency, Inc. for the same report area was completed in 2022. At that time, the report area had a population of 58,951 (US Census ACS 2015-2019 estimates). Since then, the population has decreased by 2,818 individuals (US Census ACS 2018-2022 estimates) with a current population of 56,133. In comparison, the population change between 2000 and 2010 for the same report (geographical) area showed a decrease of 1,483 persons. Considering the significant difference in the timeframe-- 4 years (2015-2019) vs. 10 years (2000-2010)-- this would indicate that the population is rapidly declining.

Poverty rates have actually declined in Choctaw County from 27.1% in 2015 to 28.5% in 2018 to 22.5% in 2019 to 21.6% in 2022. This supports the communities identified and prioritized needs for economic development.

McCurtain County has seen a slight decrease in poverty since the last needs assessment going from 26.1% in 2015 to 23.65% in 2018 to 21.9% in 2019 to 21.10% in 2022. Data derived at the local level (community needs meetings) attributes this decline to the recent “boom” in tourism development in McCurtain County. According to area residents, tourism activities are drawing tourists from the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan area as well as from Arkansas and many other urban areas. The influx of tourists has led to an increase in small business development, thereby positively impacting the poverty and unemployment rates.

However, residents report that other parts of McCurtain County as well as the contiguous counties of Pushmataha and Choctaw are not experiencing the benefits of this economic development. At this time, the growth and its benefits appear to be concentrated around the areas between Beavers Bend State Park in Broken Bow, Oklahoma and Hochatown, Oklahoma. The development has resulted in significant increases in property values and new single-family residential development is no longer affordable. Therefore, affordable housing is becoming a growing concern in this county.

During the last C.N.A poverty rates in Pushmataha County were showing the most significant decrease going from 26.5% in 2015 to 21.9% in 2018. Since the assessment conducted in 2021, poverty in Pushmataha County has showed a decrease from 23.9% to 21.7% .

Unemployment rates in the report area also have significantly declined since the 2022-2024 C.N.A report. The Choctaw County unemployment rate decreased from 4.1% in 2022 to 3.9% in 2024. Pushmataha County unemployment rate increased from 2.9% in 2022 to 4.6% in 2024. In line with the growth and new jobs created in McCurtain County, there is a trend of reduced unemployment in that county. In 2015, McCurtain County had an unemployment rate of 7.8%, which dropped to 3.3% in 2022. They has been a slight increase in 2024 now being 3.9%.

Assessment Profile:

Methodology and Timeline for conducting Community Needs Assessment

Timeline:

LCAA conducts a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) every three years. This CNA will be effective from the certification date of January 14, 2025, through December 31, 2027. The agency aims to review and update the CNA as needed, at least once a year, through ongoing monitoring, data collection, and analysis. The table below outlines the dates, locations, and times for each assessment activity related to data collection, evaluation, and analysis.

Timeline	Activity
02/01/2024-10/01/2024	Distributed/collected paper standardized surveys
02/01/2024-10/01/2024	Transferred survey responses (337) into the online survey tool required by ODOC to generate an electronic version
10/01/2024-11/01/2024	Focus group responses collected from staff, clients, leadership and board to identify top three Prioritized Needs
12/02/2024-10:00 a.m. Choctaw County 12/04/2024-10:00 a.m. Pushmataha County 12/05/2024-10:00 a.m. McCurtain County	Community Meetings held (two per county) in report area

Data Sources/Sample Size/Sectors/Surveys:

Paper Surveys: LCAA used the Oklahoma Standardized Community Needs Assessment Survey for data collection. Around 20 percent of the returned surveys were completed by households with children enrolled in Early Head Start or Head Start, providing a strong representation of low-income families. Surveys were also completed by Board Members, agency staff, clients or customers applying for or receiving services, community partners, social service providers, coalition representatives, as well as members of the faith-based community and both the private and public sectors.

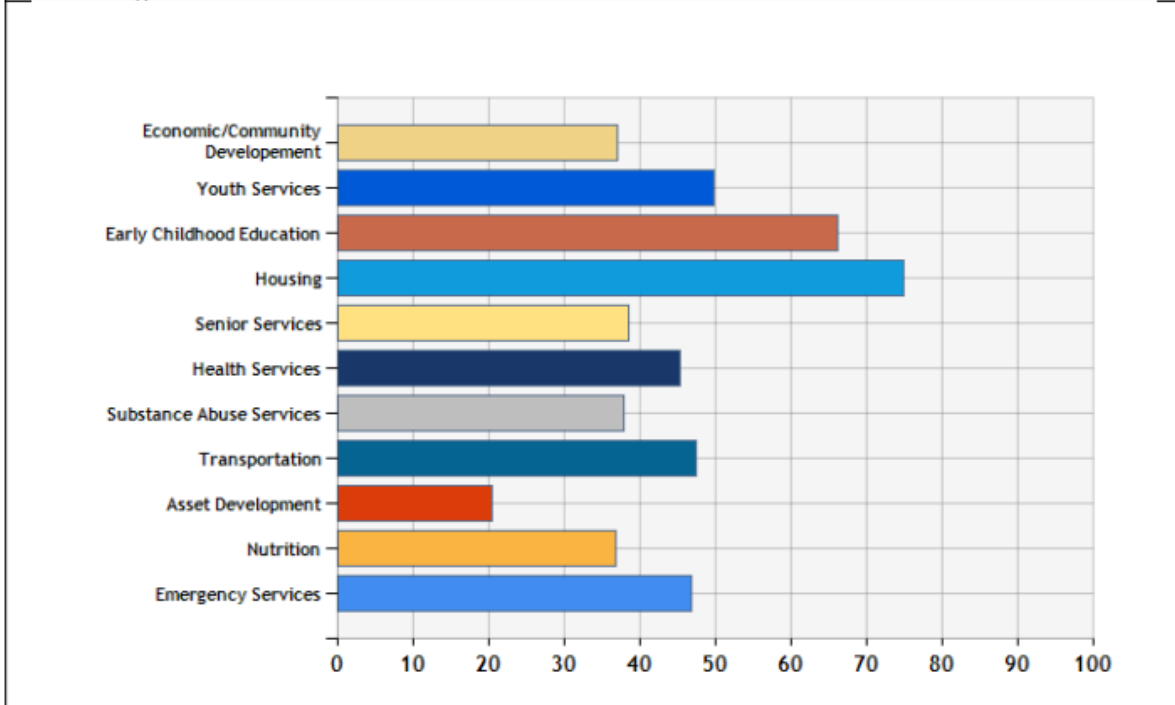
The table on the following page reflects community needs for the service area and represents the responses to Question 15 from the Community Needs Assessment survey.



Community Needs Assessment Survey

Q15. What are the MOST important program/services you would like to see continued in your community?

Answers :333 Skipped : 4



The identified needs chart above represents the total responses for the 337 surveys that were collected and represents how individuals ranked the eleven services identified in question 15. Housing, Early Childhood Education, Youth Services, Emergency Services and Transportation were ranked as the top five services residents would like to see continued in the report area, as described below.

1. Safe, decent and affordable housing units are an identified need determined by the community needs survey. This is a family level need.
2. Early Childhood Education to continue provision of preschool services is an identified need determined by the community needs survey. This is a community level need.
3. Youth Services to bring more youth activities to our areas. Is a community level need.
4. Emergency services to help families pay for utilities (heating/cooling costs) are an identified need determined by the community needs survey. This is a family level need.
5. Transportation is an identified need determined by the community needs survey. This is a community level need.

Prioritized Needs:

Focus groups consisting of agency leadership, front-line staff and Board Members participated in activities to prioritize the top three community needs. Participants were provided with the top 11 identified needs/services (from the chart above) and were asked to rank the top three in order from 1 to 3, with 1 representing most need and so forth. For each selection, participants were asked to provide qualitative data describing their rationale as to why they chose and ranked the needs as they did. After all responses were collected and tallied, this process resulted in identifying the top three “Prioritized” needs.

The Prioritized Needs in ranked order are:

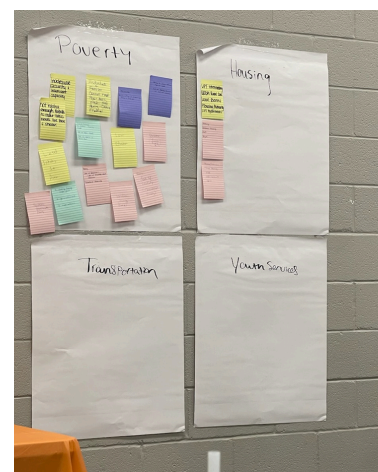
1. Housing
2. Transportation
3. Youth Services.

Community Meetings:

Following needs prioritization, LCAA utilized social media, email, flyers, and presentations at public meetings to foster participation in community meetings. During these, participants engaged in activities in order to determine:

1. What is poverty? (Exercises to define poverty)
2. What are the causes and conditions of poverty?
3. Why the community assessed the needs as they did; (Why did the needs that presented as first, second, and third exist?)
4. What current resources existed to address the three prioritized needs?
5. What additional strategies or actions could serve to address these needs within the communities?

Open forum discussion occurred following each exercise. This process was used to determine what the community identified as the leading causes and conditions of poverty; to identify existing resources as well as potential strategies to address the needs.



Prioritized Need 1 – Housing: Decent, safe and affordable housing units (rental and purchase) are a family level need. The agency is currently addressing this need through the provision of rental units including rental units for seniors. The agency also provides numerous other housing and housing supportive services for residents.

The primary cause that housing ranked as the top community need was identified as:

- Community housing is backlogged due to an influx in our population.
- Lack of available housing.
- Rent is too high.

The resulting conditions were:

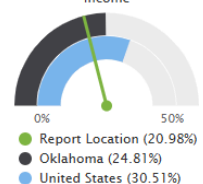
- People living in substandard housing
- Multi-generational of families sharing housing
- Not enough money to live on.

Housing Costs - Cost Burden (30%)

This indicator reports the percentage of the households where housing costs are 30% or more of total household income. This indicator provides information on the cost of monthly housing expenses for owners and renters. The information offers a measure of housing affordability and excessive shelter costs. The data also serve to aid in the development of housing programs to meet the needs of people at different economic levels. Of the 21,301 total households in the report area, 4,470 or 20.98% of the population live in cost burdened households.

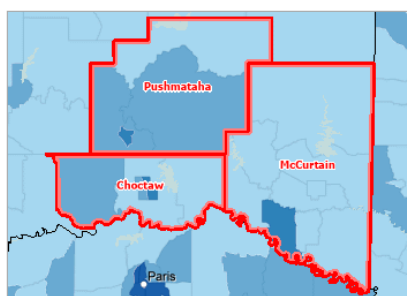
Report Area	Total Households	Cost-Burdened Households	Cost-Burdened Households, Percent
Report Location	21,301	4,470	20.98%
Choctaw County, OK	5,805	1,345	23.17%
McCurtain County, OK	11,267	2,116	18.78%
Pushmataha County, OK	4,229	1,009	23.86%
Oklahoma	1,522,711	377,791	24.81%
United States	125,736,353	38,363,931	30.51%

Percentage of Households where Housing Costs Exceed 30% of Income



Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22. [→ Show more details](#)



[View larger map](#)

Cost Burdened Households (Housing Costs Exceed 30% of Household Income), Percent by Tract, ACS 2018-22

- Over 35.1%
- 28.1 - 35.0%
- 21.1 - 28.0%
- Under 21.1%
- No Data or Data Suppressed
- Report Location

Prioritized Need 2 – Transportation: Reliable and accessible transportation is an individual level need. To address this, the agency provides services through the LIFT Transit Program and the KEDDO Program (Kiamichi Economic Development District of Oklahoma).

The lack of accessible and reliable transportation limits opportunities for employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services, disproportionately affecting low-income residents and vulnerable populations. Expanding transportation services, such as rural transit programs, carpooling initiatives, or ride-share options, could alleviate these burdens and improve overall access and mobility in the area.

The primary cause that transportation ranked as the second top community need was identified as:

- Cost of Transportation
- Hours of transportation operation
- Only available in city limits.

The resulting conditions were:

- People living in poverty
- Jobs available may not be an 8-4 job
- Individuals in rural areas are being missed.

This indicator reports the type of transportation available/utilized in the report area by individual.

Label	Choctaw County, Oklahoma	McCurain County, Oklahoma	Pushmataha County, Oklahoma	
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	
▼ Total:	4,878	13,105	2,999	
No vehicle available	157	371	86	
1 vehicle available	1,149	3,209	616	
2 vehicles available	1,594	4,340	1,169	
3 or more vehicles available	1,978	5,185	1,128	
▼ Car, truck, or van - drove alone:	3,891	10,928	2,213	
No vehicle available	103	215	15	
1 vehicle available	854	2,551	403	
2 vehicles available	1,353	3,780	915	
3 or more vehicles available	1,581	4,382	880	
▼ Car, truck, or van - carpooled:	587	1,474	524	
No vehicle available	15	76	38	
1 vehicle available	190	529	179	
2 vehicles available	114	326	141	
3 or more vehicles available	268	543	166	
▼ Public transportation (excluding taxicab):	12	34	0	
No vehicle available	0	16	0	
1 vehicle available	9	5	0	
2 vehicles available	3	3	0	
3 or more vehicles available	0	10	0	
▼ Walked:	72	152	33	
No vehicle available	18	42	22	
1 vehicle available	19	16	6	
2 vehicles available	13	58	3	
3 or more vehicles available	22	36	2	

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average.
Data Source: United States Census Bureau

Prioritized Need 3 - Youth Services: Safe and reliable Youth Service programs/activities is a community level need. To address this need LIFT offers a Mentoring Program. The program's goal is to pair youth with a caring adult mentor to be a positive influence in their lives. The mentor will provide the youth with additional emotional and academic support as well as exposing them to a variety of activities and experiences they may not otherwise encounter.

The primary cause that ranked Youth Services as the top community need was identified as:

- Limited after school programs
- Parents cannot afford youth activities
- Parents cannot get their kids to these activities.

The resulting conditions were:

- Individuals are not qualified to work in these positions
- Low paying jobs
- Transportation availability.

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services’ Prevention Needs Assessment Survey Report for the 2019-2020 School Year (2021) is a tool used to inform prevention and intervention efforts. The table below measures the percent of 6th grade students in Oklahoma reporting exposure to risk factors during the 2019-2020 School Year.

Risk Factor	Students Reporting Risk (%)
<i>Community</i>	
Low Neighborhood Attachment	51.9
Community Disorganization	40.3
<i>Family</i>	
Poor Family Management	57.3
Family Conflict	38.6
Family History of Antisocial Behavior	37.9
<i>School</i>	
Academic Failure	35.1
Low Commitment to School	60.6
<i>Peer and Individual</i>	
Early Initiation of Antisocial Behavior	24.1
Depressive Symptoms	39.4
<i>Students at High Risk (7 or more risk factors)</i>	41.0

Over a third of 6th grade students (typically 11-12 years of age) reported risk exposure on eight of the nine measures. High reporting for community risk factors suggests a need to explore and enhance community engagement strategies and interventions to promote stability. High family risk factors underscores a critical need for family-focused interventions and support targeting generational patterns. Reported risk under school factors indicates need for supports and school-based programming to foster a positive school environment. Peer and individual risk factors signals the importance of early intervention strategies, especially with mental health and support services.

Causes and Conditions of Poverty in the service area:

The table below is a compilation of primary causes and conditions of poverty present in the Service Area. These were identified by participants during the community needs assessment meetings.

Causes of Poverty	Conditions of Poverty
Lack of employment opportunities	Homelessness
Lack of resources	Child Abuse
Lack of program awareness	Lack of basic needs (shelter, food, healthcare)
Housing costs unaffordable	High infant mortality rates
Prison records/no hope	Poor Nutrition/Poor health outcomes
Not enough income/low wages	Crime
Geographical area	Poor Self Esteem
Debt burden	Reliance on Government assistance
Drug and/or Alcohol abuse	Child neglect
Lack of education	Unsanitary Housing Conditions
Lack of job skills	Poorly Educated
Lacking basic life skills	Domestic Abuse
Generational cycle (it is what people know)	Unemployed
No transportation	Mentally unstable
Laziness/No motivation	Broken families
Lack of infrastructure to attract business	Substance Abuse
Bad health	Hunger
Low paying jobs	Substandard housing

Existing Community Resources by Prioritized Need Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha Counties

Housing	Transportation	Youth Services
Local Banks	LIFT Transit	LIFT CAA
LIFT Apartments	Manage Care Organization	Choctaw Nation Youth Advisory Board
Public Housing Authority	Choctaw Nation (Tribal Members only)	Boys and Girls Club
502 Program	Friends	Youth Advisory Board
Guaranteed Loan Program	Privately owned vehicles	Student Council
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma	Veterans	Church Camps
Private Owned Rent Homes	Sooner Ride	After School Activities
LIFT Spec Housing		Choctaw County Youth Services
Housing Urban Development/Section 8 Rental		YouthBuild
Southeast Oklahoma Community Development Corporation		Project Gain
Emergency Shelter Program		Youth Sports Leagues
Chamber of Commerce		JAG Program
Oklahoma Property Management		

Agency Data: The table below provides a list of the top three services identified by the community. Detailed descriptions of these are included in the “Agency Programs and Services” section of this report. The data in the table below was populated from CAPTAIN reports and are current as of December 2024.

Services	Outcomes	Client Demographics (Counts)
Housing	Obtained/Maintained Safe and Affordable housing	151
	Obtained WX Assistance (Non-Emergency)	65
Transportation	Transportation (rides) provided	71,387 rides
Youth Services	Youth received services	97

Data over the agency and services provided is further explained in the “Agency Programs and Services” section of this report. On average, LCAA serves 2,000 clients each year with most of those being served through Head Start and other Early Childhood programs. Transportation is another large program operated by the agency. CAPTAIN allows for tracking miles and trips, but not individuals for this service. The typical client of the agency is a single parent household, primarily female, with incomes significantly below federal poverty guidelines.

Sources:

Sources have been identified and many are cited throughout the report.

- Oklahoma Standardized Community Needs Assessment Survey
 - Focus Group Activities
 - Community Meetings
 - Customer Satisfaction Data
- Agency Data (from CAPTAIN reports, Annual Reports, staff and Board Members)
 - Census Data (American Community Survey and American Factfinder)
 - Community Commons
 - U.S. Department of Labor/Bureau of Labor Statistics
 - Oklahoma Department of Commerce
 - Internet Research
- Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
 - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- National Institute on Health/National Institute on Drug Abuse

Appendices: (See attached)

- Oklahoma Standardized Community Needs Assessment Survey
 - Forum Questions
 - Customer Satisfaction Survey



**LIFT Community Action
Agency, Inc.**
209 North 4th
Hugo, OK, 74745
www.littledixie.org

Community Needs Assessment Survey

LIFT Community Action Agency, Inc. regularly conducts a survey to determine what the needs are in your community so we will know where to best focus our efforts and funding. Your help in completing this survey is sincerely appreciated.

Please list your City _____, County _____, and Zip Code _____

Check the response that best represents you.

4. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to answer ☐ Other
() Non-binary () Trans/Male () Trans/Female

6. What is your race?

- ☐ White or Caucasian ☐ Black or African American
☐ Asian ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
☐ Other _____

8. What best describes your household?

- ☐ Two Parent ☐ Single Parent Female
☐ Single Parent Male ☐ Multifamily household
☐ Single person ☐ Two adults no children
☐ Grandparent(s) raising grandchildren

10. What is the primary language spoken in the home?

- ☐ English ☐ Spanish ☐ Other _____

12. Anyone in your household receive disability benefits?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please mark # of each below:

_____ # of Children _____ # of Adults

14. Mark the choice that best describes you:

- ☐ Client of Agency
(Have received services from agency. Example – Tax Preparation)
☐ Agency Board Member
☐ Agency Volunteer
☐ Representative of an educational institution
(Public or private school, college, technical school)
☐ Representative of a government entity
(City, County, State, or Federal)
☐ Representative of a private organization
(Business, local civic group)
☐ Representative of a faith-based organization
(Church or other religious organization)
☐ Representative of a community based organization
(Nonprofit entities providing direct services)
☐ General Public
(Have NOT received services from the agency)

5. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ Hispanic ☐ Non-Hispanic

7. What is your highest level of education completed?

- ☐ Less than 9th grade ☐ 9th-12th grade (no diploma)
☐ High School Diploma/GED ☐ Technical School/Votech
☐ Some college (no degree) ☐ Associate's degree
☐ Bachelor's degree ☐ Graduate/Professional

9. WRITE IN THE NUMBER of persons for each age group in your household.

_____ 0-2 _____ 3-4 _____ 5-9 _____ 10-14
_____ 15-17 _____ 18-19 _____ 20-24 _____ 25-34
_____ 35-44 _____ 45-54 _____ 55-59 _____ 60-64
_____ 65-74 _____ 75-84 _____ 85 and older

11. Is anyone in your household a veteran?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. What was your total household income last year?

- ☐ Less than \$10,000 ☐ \$10,000 - \$14,999
☐ \$15,000-\$19,999 ☐ \$20,000 - \$24,999
☐ \$25,000 - \$34,999 ☐ \$35,000 - \$49,999
☐ Over \$49,999

15. What are the most important programs/services you would like to see continued in your community?

Example:

_____ Housing
_____ Emergency Services
_____ Early Childhood Education
_____ Transportation
_____ Substance Abuse Services
_____ Health Services
_____ Senior Services
_____ Youth Services
_____ Nutrition
_____ Economic/Community Development
_____ Asset Development

Other: _____

TURN OVER TO COMPLETE PAGE 2

16. How much does each item rate as a need in your community? Please check only one rating for each need listed

NUTRITION	No Need	Some Need	Great Need	Don't Know
Availability/access to food (grocery store)				
Community Gardens				
Nutrition Education/Healthy Eating				
Need food				

EMPLOYMENT	No Need	Some Need	Great Need	Don't Know
Job Training				
Help finding a job				
Higher Paying Jobs or Jobs with Benefits				

HEALTH	No Need	Some Need	Great Need	Don't Know
Health Insurance/Affordable Health Care				
Health Education Services				
Mental Health Services				
Substance Abuse Counseling/Treatment				
RX (prescription assistance)				
Child Immunizations				
Teenage Pregnancy/Family Planning				
Elder Care				
Vision				
Dental Insurance/Affordable Dental				

LINKAGES	No Need	Some Need	Great Need	Don't Know
Prisoner Discharge Services				
Public Transportation				
Vehicle Repair Assistance				
Access to Services (WIC, SNAP, SSI, Sooner Care)				

INCOME MANAGEMENT	No Need	Some Need	Great Need	Don't Know
Free Income Tax Preparation Assistance				
Gambling Counseling				
Budget/Credit/Debit Counseling				

EDUCATION	No Need	Some Need	Great Need	Don't Know
Early Childhood Education Programs				
GED Classes				
English as a Second-Language Classes				
Computer Skills Training				
Literacy Classes				
Technical and Vocational Training				
Childcare				

HOUSING	No Need	Some Need	Great Need	Don't Know
Decent affordable houses to RENT				
Decent affordable houses to BUY				
Weatherization (Home Energy Improvement)				
Home Repair				
Home Buyer Education				
Handicap Accessibility Housing				
Senior Citizens Housing				
Rental Assistance				
Utility Assistance				

COMMUNITY	No Need	Some Need	Great Need	Don't Know
Safe Neighborhoods, sidewalks, parks				
Homeless Shelter				
Senior Activities				
Recreational Activities				
Youth Activities				
Crime Prevention				
Additional Health Care Facilities (Doctor's Offices, Clinics, Pharmacies)				
Legal Assistance				
Volunteer Opportunities				

Please describe any other need that was not listed above:

Thank you for your participation!

Top 10 community needs

1. Housing
2. Early Childhood
3. Youth Services
4. Emergency Services
5. Transportation
6. Health Services
7. Substance Abuse Services
8. Senior Services
9. Economic/Community Development
10. Nutrition

Top 3 community needs

Need:

Reason:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Community Action Agency, Inc.



Customer Satisfaction Survey

Date: _____

Please send completed forms to: 209 N 4th St, Hugo OK 74743

1.From what program(s) did you receive assistance? (List all that apply)

2.Name(s) of person(s) who assisted you. (Optional)

3.What was your primary reason for visiting LIFT C.A.A.?

4.How would you rate your overall satisfaction with LIFT C.A.A.? (Circle One)

Very Satisfied

Somewhat Satisfied

Not Satisfied

5.Please share why you were or were not satisfied with LIFT C.A.A

6.How did you learn of our assistance/service? (Circle One)

Friend

Internet

Radio

TV

Billboard

Other (please explain)

7.In what county did you receive assistance/service? (Circle One)

Choctaw

McCurtain

Pushmataha

Other (please explain)

8.Which range includes your age? (Circle One)

Under 18

18 to 30

31 to 50

51 to 65

66 or above

9.What is your gender? (Circle One)

Male

Female

Prefer Not To Answer

10.What is your race? (Circle One)

White

Black/African American

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Asian

American Indian

Two or More Races

Prefer Not To Answer

11.What is your ethnicity? (Circle One)

Hispanic/Latino

Non-Hispanic/Latino

12.Do you have any suggestions for improving our products/services?

13.Would you like to provide LCAA with your testimonial as to how this service assisted you?