

Human Resources Development Council

District 4

Human Resources Development Council

2022

Community Needs Assessment Blaine, Hill and Liberty Counties

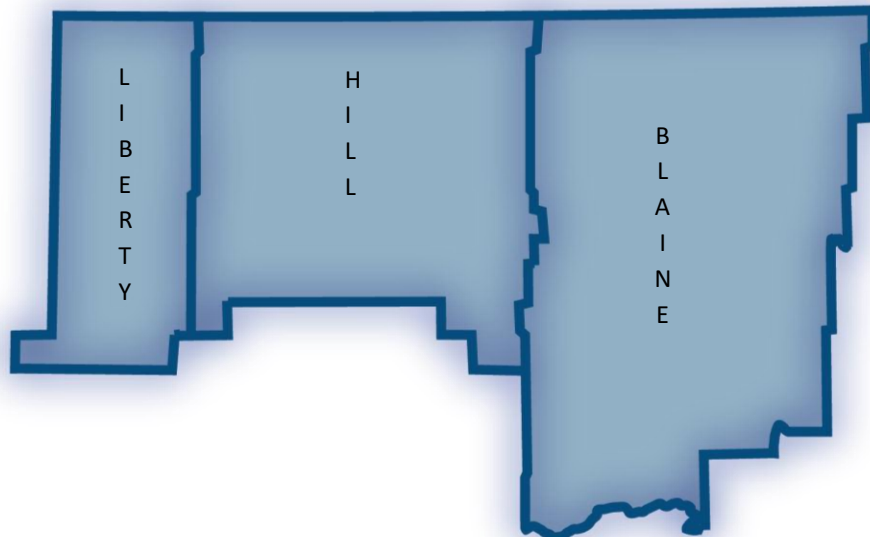


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Introduction

Board Approval

District 4 Human Resources Development Council's (HRDC) Board of Directors met at two special meetings held February 1 & 2, 2023 to review and approve the published results of the 2022 Community Needs Assessment.

Board members present February 1, 2023: Jamie Larsen, Joette Woods, Dallin Lind, Glenda Hanson, Lauren Bunton, Marit Ita, Shane Fox, Sheri Williams.

Absent: Amanda Meyer

A quorum was established with 8 of 9 members present.

Board members present February 2, 2023: Jamie Larsen, Amanda Meyer, Dallin Lind, Glenda Hanson, Lauren Bunton, Shane Fox, Sheri Williams. **Absent:** Joette Woods and Marit Ita

A quorum was established with 7 of 9 members present.

On February 2, 2023 all seven board members present voted to approve the published Community Needs Assessment.

No Board members present voted against approval of the published Community Needs Assessment.

The board of HRDC is tri-partite and is made up of twelve members; four elected officials that make up the public sector, four private sector individuals, and four individuals that represent the low-income sector. Three individuals from Blaine County, six from Hill County, two from Liberty County and one at large. Additionally, HRDC's board is required to have a Legal, Fiscal, and Early Childhood representative. Finally, one low-income seat in Hill County is reserved for the NMCDC Policy Council Chair. Currently only nine seats are filled. The tri-partite makeup of the Board ensures that all socio-economic levels and geographic areas are represented.

Introduction

Assessment Process

District 4 HRDC's mission is to partner with people with low income in their effort to achieve economic stability and to advocate for social and economic advancement.

The primary purpose of the assessment is to identify the needs of the individuals and families within the community in order to ensure the programs and services provided by HRDC are meeting identified needs. The Community Needs Assessment report will guide the agency's upcoming strategic planning and 2024-2025 Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) work plan.

The secondary purpose is to identify community partners that can meet needs that are unmet by HRDC.

The third purpose is to identify areas where policy and systemic changes need to be made, and where advocacy is needed to promote and further the mission of HRDC and to improve the lives of people with low income.

Introduction

Agency Background

District 4 Human Resources Development Council is a Community Action Agency (CAA) and is a part of the Montana HRDC Association. Ten separate HRDC's provide programs and services to all of Montana. There are over 1000 Community Action Agencies across the country including Puerto Rico. CAA's are supported by the National Community Action Partnership and funded through the Office of Community Service and the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). CSBG funding makes up less than 5% of HRDC4's overall budget but is what makes the agency a CAA. HRDC is a private non-profit and has been serving Blaine, Hill and Liberty Counties since 1965 the first two programs provided were Head Start and Housing. Community Action was started by President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of the War on Poverty. The agency must comply with federally mandated organizational standards in order to maintain CSBG funding.

HRDC's programs and services are always changing and evolving depending on funding available and the needs of the community served. Current programs provided by the Agency are as follows:

Adult Education

District 4 HRDC provides services to individuals needing improved basic skills in literacy and math and High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) preparation to individuals who do not have their high school diploma. Once the High School Equivalency (HSE) is achieved the program helps individuals obtain or improve employment, enroll in higher education, or enroll in a credential course. Adult Education funding is provided through the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and is administered by the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI). The program is also supported by private donations, Hill County United Way and agency unrestricted funds.

Employment and Training

Services such as work experience, community service experience, financial literacy education, and soft skill training are provided by the Employment and



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Training Program. The program also provides supportive services to assist individuals in gaining and maintaining employment. District 4 HRDC assists individuals whose income qualifies for TANF through the Pathways and WIOA Youth programs. Funding for Pathways is provided and administered by Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS). WIOA Youth is a Federally funded program and is administered by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry.

Energy Assistance

The Energy Program administers Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Low Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP). Both LIHEAP and LIHWAP are Federal programs and are administered by the Montana Intergovernmental Human Service Bureau (IHSB) which is part of DPHHS. Households must income qualify to receive assistance through LIHEAP and LIHWAP. The programs assist with heating costs (wood, fuel oil, coal, electricity, natural gas, and propane) and water costs. Additionally, the program provides assistance for heating emergencies by repairing or replacing space heating systems or water heater.

The Energy Program also assists families in applying for additional energy assistance funds through programs provided by Hill County Electric and Big Flat Electric. Households must already qualify for LIHEAP to be eligible for these programs.

Energy Share is a zero-interest loan program provided to households that are facing an energy emergency. Funds are provided by Energy Share of Montana. HRDC has an Energy Share Board made up of community partners to determine eligibility based on need.

Action for Eastern Montana, the HRDC that represents Districts 1, 2 & 3, located in Glendive Montana provides Weatherization services to homes in HRDC 4's service area. Homes must qualify for LIHEAP to be eligible for Weatherization. Weatherization implements cost saving and safety measures to make homes more energy efficient and to provide a healthy home environment.

Introduction

Havre Community Food Bank

The Food Bank serves all of Hill County providing emergency food boxes to any household up to three times per year. Regular customers must income qualify and receive a food box based on household size every other month. Additionally, perishable items such as fruits, vegetables, dairy and bread items are available for any family to access once per week. Food Bank overhead and staff wages are currently supported by the Federal Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) CARES funding which ends September 30, 2023, generous donations from the community and Hill County United Way. After September 30, 2023 the Food Bank will revert to being 100% donation funded.

Housing

HRDC owns and manages a Rural Development eight-unit apartment complex called Surrey Court. Surrey Court is affordable housing for individuals and families with low-income. Rural Development provides funding to support these subsidized housing units.

HRDC assisted with the development of Buffalo Court in 2010 and Antelope Court in 2015. Both are Low Income Home Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties and provide affordable housing to individuals with moderate income. HRDC 9 located in Bozeman, Montana provides property management.

HRDC owns a variety of market rent units including one, three- and five-bedroom homes, a four-plex and a ten-unit apartment complex. Section 8 vouchers are accepted at all units HRDC owns but not all renters require rental assistance. HRDC strives to provide market units at less than area fair market rent. Income generated by HRDC's market properties is unrestricted and is used to support all agency programs, however, most funds are used to support the Havre Community Food Bank and Adult Education Programs.

HRDC 6 located in Lewistown, Montana assists individuals in Blaine, Hill and Liberty Counties with homeless prevention and rapid rehousing services. Federal funding from HUD through the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) which is administered by DPHHS IHSB supports this program.

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Opportunities, Inc., the HRDC which represents District 5, and located in Great Falls, Montana provides Housing Choice Voucher also known as Section 8 services to individuals and families in Blaine, Hill and Liberty counties. Section 8 is Federally funded by HUD and is administered by Montana Housing within the Department of Commerce.

Opportunities Inc. also provides Housing Stability Services for individuals and families in Blaine, Hill and Liberty Counties. DPHHS IHSB supports this program which provides tenancy support services to assist eligible households in maintaining stable housing. The program is supported through ARPA funds through the Montana Department of Commerce.

Northern Montana Child Development Center (NMCDC)

NMCDC is a state licensed child care center which provides Early Head Start and Head Start Services to families with children age 0-5. Services include but are not limited to pre-natal support, school readiness, socialization skills, parent engagement and connection to health care services such as well child checks, and hearing and vision screenings. NMCDC receives Federal funding from the Office of Head Start. Additionally, the program participates in the Montana Stars to Quality childcare program as part of child care licensing and receives supplemental funds to further support the program. Eligibility is primarily determined by income.

Victim Services

The Victim Services program provides a wide variety of services and support to victims of violence. Including but not limited to, assistance to obtain orders of protection, court room accompaniment, transportation, victim advocacy and support, hotel stays and supportive services assistance. Additionally, the program operates a domestic violence shelter called the Haven, which houses women and children who are escaping abuse. Current funding is administered by the Montana Department of Justice through the Montana Board of Crime Control and is Federally provided by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act Program (FVPSA). The program was recently awarded Federal funds directly from

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the Department of Justice through the Rural Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). The Haven is also supported with Federal Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds which are administered through Montana IHSB within DPHHS, and receives support from Hill County United Way.

Introduction

Acknowledgement of Key Partners

District 4 HRDC works with over 300 community partners including but not limited to Non-Profits, Faith Based, Government (including local, state, and federal), Tribal Organizations, Businesses, Consortiums, School Districts, Institutions of Higher Learning, Financial Institutions, and Health Service Institutions.

HRDC would like to thank the following partners that participated in the Community Partner Focus Group held November 14, 2022:

- DPHHS – Office of Public Assistance
- Northern Montana Health Care
- Montana Legal Services
- Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) of Hill County
- Boys and Girls Club of the Hi-Line
- Havre Council on Aging
- Lewis Heating and Air Conditioning
- Pacific Steel and Recycling
- Rural Employment Opportunities
- Bullhook Community Health Center
- Harlem Elementary School
- Aaniiih Nakoda College
- Havre Ministerial Association
- Salvation Army
- Chippewa Cree Tribal TANF
- Montana State University Northern
- Havre Job Service
- Senator Steve Daines Office

Including employees of HRDC thirty-one individuals from eighteen organizations participated in the community partner focus group.

Thank you to all of the individuals who took time to complete HRDC's Needs Assessment survey and who participated in focus groups and meetings!

Methodology

Between July and December 2022 District 4 Human Resources Development Council (HRDC) staff conducted an extensive community outreach and internal research effort to produce this Community Needs Assessment Report for Blaine, Hill and Liberty counties. The effort included both quantitative (survey data) and qualitative (focus group) input from the community to identify and evaluate demographic and socio-economic trends along with priority of community service needs. District 4 HRDC also conducted extensive secondary research from a wide variety of other sources in order to both better understand circumstances that impact the livability and prosperity of residents in the community.

District 4 HRDC is a Community Action Agency (CAA) and a private 501 (c) 3 non-profit. However, CAAs are governed by Federal mandates known as organizational standards. These standards require the agency to conduct a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) every three years. The last CNA was completed in 2018. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic HRDC was unable to complete the required CNA in 2021 and was given until January 2023 to publish a current report.

This CNA report and its methodology followed a three-step process. First extensive research of CNA surveys utilized by CAAs across the country were analyzed to assist in the development of the agency's survey assessment tool. Second was to directly engage families served, community partners, and the general public in a series of focus group sessions to gather qualitative information beyond the quantitative data gathered through the CNA survey and through, the final step which consisted of gathering data from a wide variety of local, state and national socio-economic data.



Methodology

Multiple methods were utilized to ensure quality and diversity of data.

- A survey instrument consisting of 29 questions distributed in paper and online formats and via email. The survey was available at outreach events held in Blaine, Hill and Liberty Counties and was sent to community residents and partners to reach the broadest population possible.
- Focus groups consisting of families and HRDC employees served by HRDC 4.
- Focus group consisting of community partners and the general public.
- Two separate survey instruments designed specifically for HRDC customers.
- Data sets from services provided to HRDC customers in 2020 and 2021.
- SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, & threats) analysis of the agency and community were completed by HRDC staff and the HRDC Board of directors.
- Anecdotal evidence.
- Evidence/Data from a variety of resources including, Census.gov, lmi.mt.gov, Montana Department of Labor and Industry, montanakidscount.org, livingwage.mit.edu, 2018 Blaine County Community Health Assessment, 2020 Hill County Community Health Assessment, 2021 Liberty County Community Health Assessment, 2022 Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Survey of Residents in Montana, and 2022 Montana State University Extension Statewide Needs Assessment Report.

Each of the above methods was carried out using purposeful, convenience sampling techniques. A convenience sampling surveys individual by chance. There is no way to guarantee representativeness. Every effort was made to analyze the most current data available from each source and the age of data ranges from 2018 to 2022.

Methodology

All CNA surveys were entered into Survey Monkey and reports were generated as a whole, by county, by gender, by Reservation and by homeless population.

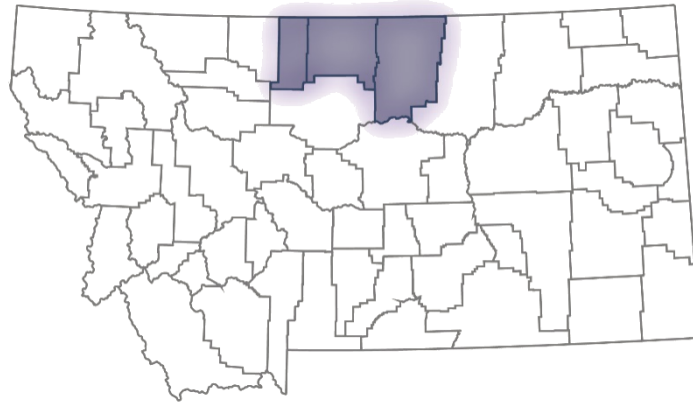
The District 4 HRDC Community Needs Assessment acknowledges concerns dealing with the ability to make assumptions from the results of this assessment to the general population. Given the changing nature of demographic, economic, and social conditions in the community of Blaine, Hill and Liberty counties, this assessment illustrates a representative, living document which places value on actual experiences and stories of respondents as much as on facts, figures and statistics.

Analysis of data was completed by the District 4 HRDC Whole Family Approach Team, Agency Program Directors and Northern Montana Child Development Center (NMCDC) leadership.

HRDC staff and Board of Directors will utilize the completed Community Needs Assessment report to complete an updated Strategic Plan and 2024-2025 Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Workplan for the Agency. The last Strategic Plan was completed in 2018.

Community Profile

Service Area



District 4 Human Resources Development Council has provided services in North Central Montana to Blaine, Hill and Liberty counties, including Rocky Boy and Fort Belknap Indian Reservations, since 1965.

According to 2020 Census Data the service area population is 25,312 making up just 2.3% of the state population. The three-county area served spans a land area of 8,556 square miles averaging just 2.96 individuals per square mile. All of Montana is considered rural with a population density fewer than 99 but greater than 6 people per square mile. HRDC4’s service area is considered Frontier with fewer than 6 people per square mile. When compared to the most populous area of Montana, Yellowstone County, with a population of 164,731 or 15.2% of the state population within a land area of 2,649 square miles and 62.2 people per mile, it is easy to see the isolation of the area served. This isolation makes it even more difficult for individuals and families with low-income to access the services needed to break the barriers of poverty and achieve economic and social success.

County	Population	Size in Square Miles	Individuals per Square Mile
Blaine	7,044	4,228	1.67
Hill	16,309	2,899	5.63
Liberty	1,959	1,430	1.37
TOTAL	25,312	8,557	2.96
Montana	1,122,867	145,550	7.71

Population information retrieved from [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Liberty County, Montana; Blaine County, Montana; Hill County, Montana; Montana](#)



Community Profile

Demographics

County	Population
Blaine	7,044
Hill	16,309
Liberty	1,959
Total	25,312

Population information retrieved from [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Liberty County, Montana; Blaine County, Montana; Hill County, Montana; Montana](#)

Age & Sex	Blaine	Hill	Liberty	Total Area
Under 5 - % individuals	7.2% 507	8.4% 1,370	5.8% 114	7.9% 1,991
Under 18 - % individuals	30.1% 2,120	28.3% 4,615	21.4% 419	28.3% 7,154
65+ - % individuals	15.7% 1,106	15.5% 2,528	23.4% 458	16.2% 4,092
Female - % individuals	49.6% 3,494	49.2% 8,024	51.8% 1,015	49.5% 12,533

Age & Sex information retrieved from [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Liberty County, Montana; Blaine County, Montana; Hill County, Montana; Montana](#)

Within HRDC’s service area 7.9% of the total population is under the age of 5, this is higher than the total state population under 5 which is only at only 5.3%. The service area of Blaine, Hill and Liberty counties also has a higher population under the age of 18 which is 28.3% compared to 21.3% for Montana as a whole. Liberty County has the highest population 65+ at 23.4% compared to the state total at 19.6%, however, Blaine and Hill counties both have a smaller 65+ population at 15.7% and 15.5% respectively. Roughly half of HRDC’s service area population is female which is consistent with the total state population.

Community Profile

Demographics

Race & Hispanic Origin	Blaine	Hill	Liberty	Total Area
White alone - % individuals	44.9% 3,163	70.0% 11,416	95.7% 1,875	65.0% 16,454
Black or African American alone - % individuals	0.5% 35	0.6% 98	0.5% 10	0.56% 143
American Indian or Alaskan Native alone - % individuals	51.5% 3,628	25.1% 4,094	1.1% 22	30.6% 7,744
Asian alone - % individuals	0.3% 21	0.7% 114	0.3% 6	0.55% 141
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	>0 but <0.05%	0.1% 16	0.1% 2	0.07% 18
Two or More Races - % individuals	2.8% 197	3.6% 587	2.4% 23	3.2% 807
Hispanic or Latino - % Individuals	3.9% 275	4.1% 669	0.9% 18	3.8% 962

Race and Hispanic Origin information retrieved from [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Liberty County, Montana; Blaine County, Montana; Hill County, Montana; Montana](#)

HRDC4’s service area has a large Native American population, this is because Fort Belknap is within Blaine County and Rocky Boy is within Hill County. According to Census.gov the total Native American population of Montana is 6.6% while in the area served by HRDC the total Native American population is 30.6% or 7,744 total individuals. Blaine County has the highest Native American population within the service area with 3,628 individuals or 51.5% of the total population.

Other than Native Americans the service area is primarily White, 65% of the total service area is White, with Liberty County having the largest White population at 95.7% or 1,875 individuals. Hill County is 70% White and Blaine County is 44.9% White. 88.7% of individuals that reside in Montana are White.

Across the service area 3.8% of the population is Hispanic or Latino compared to 4.3% across Montana. 3.2% of the service area population is two or more races compared to 3% across the State. Less than one percent of the population within the service area is Black or African American, Asian, or Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, this is comparable to the rest of the State.



Community Profile

Demographics

Income & Poverty	Blaine	Hill	Liberty	Total Area
Median Household Income (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$50,847	\$56,840	\$46,507	\$51,398
Per Capita Income in past 12 months (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$21,125	\$25,384	\$31,745	\$26,085
Persons in Poverty - % individuals	18.9% 1,331	16.9% 2,756	16.1% 315	17.4% 4,402

Income and Poverty information retrieved from [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Liberty County, Montana; Blaine County, Montana; Hill County, Montana; Montana](#)

The state average of individuals in poverty according to Census.gov is 11.9% District 4 HRDC’s service area far exceeds the state average at 17.4% or 4,402 of the total population. Blaine County has the highest population in poverty with 1,331 individuals or 18.9% of their total population.

Veterans	Percentage	Individuals
Blaine	5.8%	410
Hill	5.6%	920
Liberty	5.9%	115
Total	5.7%	1,445

Veteran population information retrieved from [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Liberty County, Montana; Blaine County, Montana; Hill County, Montana; Montana](#)

In Montana 7.5% of the population are veterans in HRDC’s service area only 5.7% of the total population or 1,445 individuals are veterans.

Foreign Born Persons	Percentage	Individuals
Blaine	0.6%	42
Hill	1.3%	212
Liberty	0.4%	8
Total	1.0%	262

Foreign Born population retrieved from [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Liberty County, Montana; Blaine County, Montana; Hill County, Montana; Montana](#)

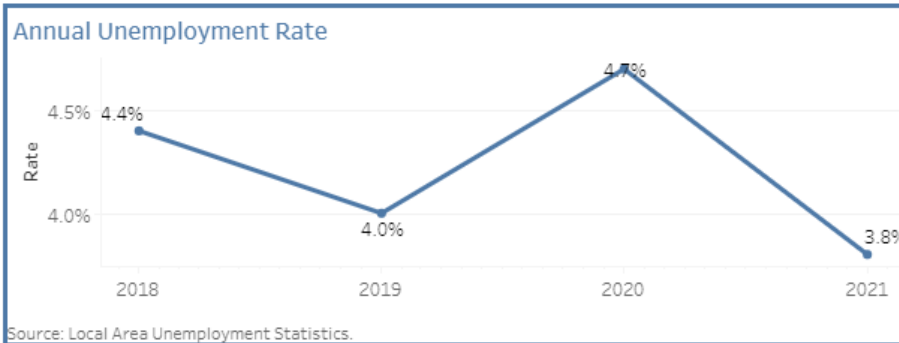
In Montana 2.2% of the population or 24,703 individuals are foreign born. Within the service area only 1% or 262 individuals are foreign born.



Community Profile

Local Economy

Blaine County

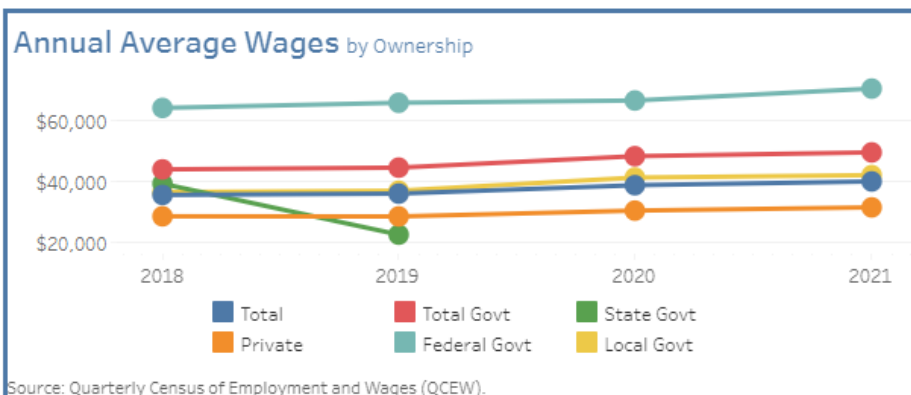


Graph retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](https://mt.gov/local-area-profiles)

Industry Name	Establishments	Avg Employed	Annual Avg. Wage
Total	188	1,347	\$39,946
Total Govt	38	637	\$49,473
Federal Govt	15	172	\$70,399
Local Govt	21	458	\$42,020
Private	150	709	\$31,443

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. QCEW does not include self-employed and some agricultural workers.

Graph retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](https://mt.gov/local-area-profiles)



Graph retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](https://mt.gov/local-area-profiles)

Unemployment, top employers and average wages.

The majority of Fort Belknap Indian reservation lies within Blaine County. Agriculture is the county’s primary industry, with over two million acres designated as farmland.

Between 2018 and 2021 the unemployment rate fluctuated from as high as 4.7% in 2020 to as low as 3.8% in 2021.

In 2021 an average of 1,347 individuals were employed. 47% of those employed worked for either Federal or Local Government and 53% worked in the private sector.

Employer	Wage Range
Sweet Memorial Nursing Home	50-99
Albertson’s	20-49
Bighorn Valley Health Center	20-49
E-Z Mart	20-49
Town Pump	10-19
Bear Paw Learning Center	10-19
Columbia Grain	10-19
Finley Food Farm	10-19
Fort Belknap Quick Stop	10-19
New Horizons Unlimited	10-19

Federal Government	\$70,399
Local Government	\$42,020
Private	\$31,443

Information retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](https://mt.gov/local-area-profiles)

Community Profile

Local Economy

Hill County

Unemployment, top employers and average wages.

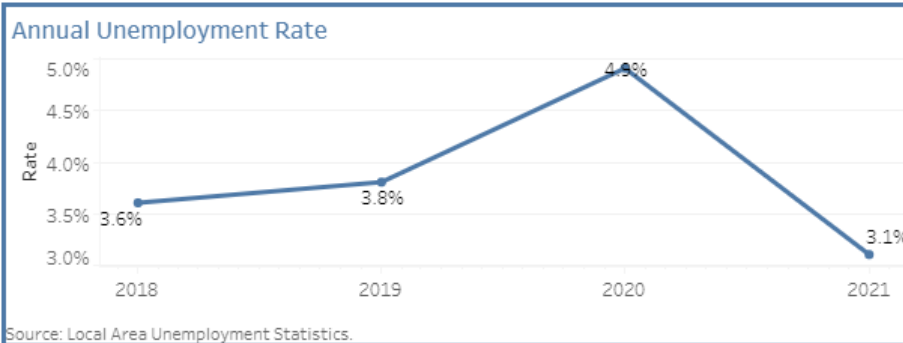
Havre is the most populous city on the hi-line, and serves as a wholesale and retail hub for surrounding communities. Hill County has historically depended upon agriculture and while still vital to the area economy the county has become more financially diverse, with hospital and health services, education, professional and retail businesses, manufacturing and railroads making significant contributions.

Between 2018 and 2021 the unemployment rate fluctuated from as high as 4.9% in 2020 to as low as 3.1% in 2021.

In 2021 an average of 6,546 individuals were employed. 32% of those employed worked for Federal, State or Local Government and 68% worked in the private sector.

Top Private Employers	
Northern Montana Hospital	500-999
Gary & Leo's IGA	100-249
Hill County Electric Co-op	100-249
Wal-Mart	100-249
Bullhook Medical Center	50-99
Cenex Harvest States	50-99
Duck Inn	50-99
Havre Day Activity Center	50-99
HELP Committee	50-99
HRDC – District 4	50-99
Independence Bank	50-99
McDonalds	50-99
North 40 Outfitters	50-99
Northwestern Corporation	50-99
Tilleman Motor Company	50-99
Town Pump	50-99

Information retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](https://www.mt.gov/LocalAreaProfiles)



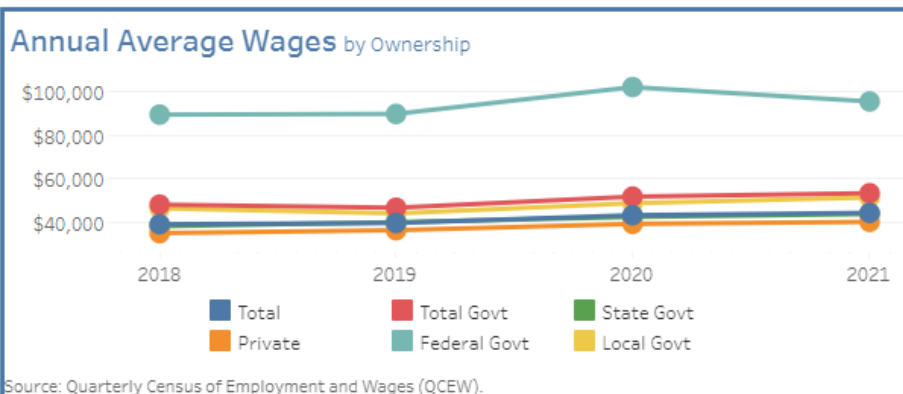
Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

Graph retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](https://www.mt.gov/LocalAreaProfiles)

Employment by Ownership for Hill (2021)			
Industry Name	Establishments	Avg Employed	Annual Avg, Wage
Total	582	6,546	\$43,800
Total Govt	58	2,062	\$52,878
Federal Govt	17	153	\$95,239
State Govt	11	359	\$43,265
Local Govt	30	1,551	\$50,891
Private	524	4,483	\$39,633
Total, All Industries	586	6,393	\$42,569

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. QCEW does not include self-employed and some agricultural workers.

Graph retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](https://www.mt.gov/LocalAreaProfiles)



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW).

Graph retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](https://www.mt.gov/LocalAreaProfiles)

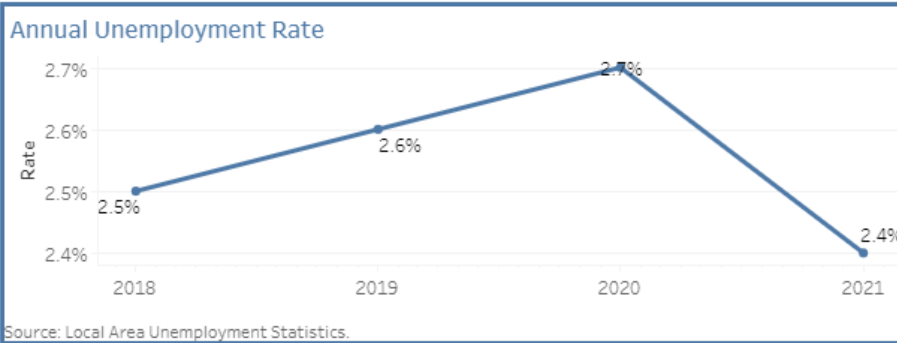
Annual Average Wage in 2021			
Federal Government	\$95,239	Local Government	\$50,891
State Government	\$41,912	Private	\$39,633

Information retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](https://www.mt.gov/LocalAreaProfiles)

Community Profile

Local Economy

Liberty County



Unemployment, top employers and average wages.

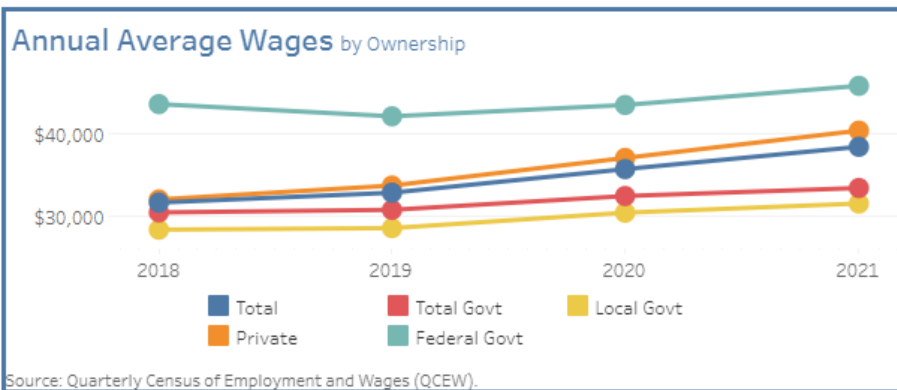
Liberty County’s main industry is agriculture, particularly by way of wheat and barley crops. Chester, the county seat, is home to Logan Health Center and Nursing Home.

Between 2018 and 2021 the unemployment rate fluctuated from as high as 2.7% in 2020 to as low as 2.4% in 2021.

In 2021 an average of 522 individuals were employed. 28% of those employed worked for either Federal or Local Government and 72% worked in the private sector.

Industry Name	Establishments	Avg Employed	Annual Avg. Wage
Total	94	522	\$38,326
Total Govt	15	147	\$33,300
Federal Govt	7	18	\$45,758
Local Govt	7	126	\$31,411
Private	79	375	\$40,296
Total, All Industries	94	506	\$38,076

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. QCEW does not include self-employed and some agricultural workers.
Graph retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](https://www.mt.gov/local-area-profiles)



Employer	Employees
Logan Health Center	100-249
EGT	20-49
Stricks Ag	20-49
Chester Supermarket	10-19
Grand Bar	10-19

Federal Government	\$45,758
Private	\$40,296
Local Government	\$31,411

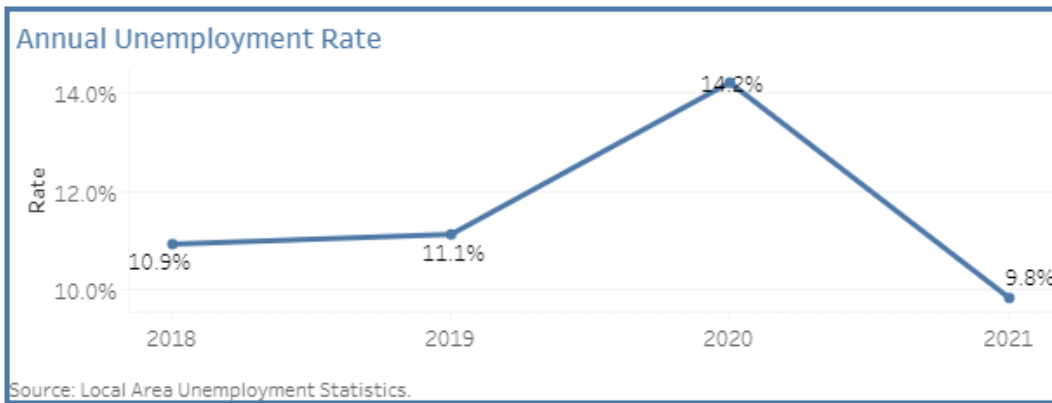
Information retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](https://www.mt.gov/local-area-profiles)

Community Profile

Local Economy

Employment information for Rocky Boy and Fort Belknap Reservations is limited. According to lmi.mt.gov the unemployment rate for Rocky Boy was 9.8% in 2021. Additionally, in 2021 the labor force consisted of 1,168 individuals with 1,054 employed and 114 unemployed. In 2020 the annual average wage was \$52,364 up from \$46,509 in 2019.

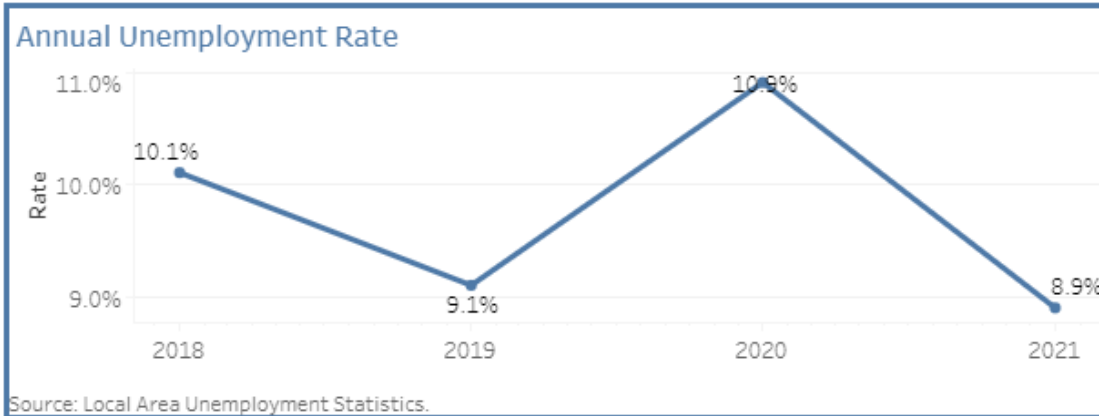
Rocky Boy Annual Unemployment Rate



Graph retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](http://Local Area Profiles (mt.gov))

In 2021 the unemployment rate for Fort Belknap was 8.9%. Additionally, in 2021 the labor force consisted of 777 individuals with 708 employed and 69 unemployed. In 2020 the annual average wage was \$46,764 up from \$44,077 in 2019.

Fort Belknap Annual Unemployment Rate



Graph retrieved from [Local Area Profiles \(mt.gov\)](http://Local Area Profiles (mt.gov))

Community Profile

Local Economy

Overall Blaine, Liberty and Hill counties have low unemployment rates 3.8%, 3.1% and 2.4% respectively, these rates are comparable to the state unemployment rate of 3.4% in 2021. Rocky Boy's and Fort Belknap have high unemployment rates in 2021 at 9.8% and 8.9% respectively.

Agriculture is the primary industry across HRDC's service area. However, annual average wages and total number of individuals employed in agriculture are not necessarily included in all lmi.mt.gov statistics. Additionally, employers such as Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, the public-school systems and universities and colleges are not included as employers within Blaine, Hill and Liberty counties or within the State. lmi.mt.gov only tracks information for the private sector, information is tracked through Unemployment Insurance tax filing businesses. BNSF is covered by the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act and therefore does not participate in the state UI programs. Colleges and local school systems, and other public sector employees are also not included.

Overall Survey Results

Demographics

333 CNA surveys were completed, below is a demographic breakdown of who responded.

County

Blaine	8.71%	29
Hill	81.08%	270
Liberty	10.21%	34
Answered		333

Reservation

Fort Belknap (included with Blaine County)	<1%	3
Rocky Boy (included with Hill County)	26.42%	88

Homeless

Homeless (included with Rocky Boy)	1.50%	5
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Gender

Female	77.95%	251
Male	22.05%	71
Transgender	0.31%	1
Non-binary	0.93%	3
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Answered		322

Age

Under 20	1.57%	5
20-29	19.44%	62
30-39	26.96%	86
40-49	11.91%	38
50-59	12.54%	40
60+	27.59%	88
Answered		319

DEMOGRAPHICS

COUNTY

Majority of respondents were from Hill County with 81% completing. Liberty County consisted of 10% of responses and Blaine County had almost 9%.

RESERVATION

26% of all survey responses came from Rocky Boys while less than 1% came from Fort Belknap.

HOMELESS

Only 5 responses or 1.5% of surveys were completed by individuals who identified as being homeless. All noted as being from Rocky Boy.

GENDER

The majority of responses came from women with almost 78% identifying as female.

AGE

Individuals over 60 completed 28% of all surveys with those age 30-39 completing 27%, and those age 20-29 completing 19%. Only 5 individuals under the age of 20 or less than 2% completed surveys.

Overall Survey Results

Demographics

Ethnicity/Race

Caucasian (White)	58.86%	186
Black or African American	0.63%	2
Hispanic or Latino	4.43%	14
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.63%	2
Native American or American Indian	43.99%	139
Bi-racial/Multi-racial	0.63%	2
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Answered		316

Annual Household Income

No Income	6.35%	20
Under 14,000	22.22%	70
14,001-28,000	15.56%	49
28,001-37,000	13.97%	44
37,001-42,000	10.79%	34
42,001+	31.11%	98
Answered		315

Employment Status

Full-time no benefits	15.89%	51
Full-time with benefits	34.58%	111
Retired	14.95%	48
Part-time no benefits	8.41%	27
Part-time with benefits	2.49%	8
Disabled	4.67%	15
Unemployed/Job Searching	10.28%	33
Unemployed/Not searching	8.72%	28
Answered		321

DEMOGRAPHICS

ETHNICITY/RACE

The majority of individuals completing the Community Needs Assessment were White, 59%, the next largest group, Native Americans, with 44% responding. Just over 4% of those who responded were Hispanic or Latino.

ANNUAL INCOME

Most individuals or 31% of respondents had an annual household income over \$42,001. 22% of respondents had an annual household income under \$14,000. Just over 6% of respondents reported no income.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Over 61% or 197 individuals out of 321 who answered this question on the survey indicated they are employed in some capacity. Over 10% or 33 individuals are unemployed and job searching. Just under 15% are retired and almost 5% are disabled, with just under 9% of those surveyed indicating they are unemployed and not searching.

Overall Survey Results

Demographics

Household Status

Married	46.39%	148
Widowed	7.84%	25
Divorced	7.84%	25
Separated	2.82%	9
In a domestic partnership or civil union	4.39%	14
Single, but living with a significant other	6.90%	22
Single, never married	21.94%	70
Other (please specify)	1.88%	6
Answered		319

Number of Children Under 17 Living in Household

None	40.75%	130
1	18.50%	59
2	17.24%	55
3	11.29%	36
4	5.96%	19
5+	6.27%	20
Answered		319

DEMOGRAPHICS

HOUSEHOLD STATUS

The majority of individuals completing the Community Needs Assessment were married at 46%. Single households that had never been married were the next largest group to complete the survey at 22%.

Other answers were dating, common law, family resides with me, single mother, living with my son, and long-distance relationship.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 17 LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD

The majority of individuals completing the Community Needs Assessment, 59%, had at least one child under the age of 17 living in the home. 41% of households surveyed had no children under the age of 17 living at home. 19% of respondents had 1 child, 17% had two children and 11% had three children.

Overall Survey Results

Education & Cognitive Development

When asked to select the biggest challenge to the community as a whole 15% or 49 respondents answered, “Not enough good schools/adult education programs available.” When asked to select the biggest challenge to families or individuals 8% or 26 respondents answered, “Accessing quality education for children and/or adults.” When asked to select barriers to employment 12 respondents or 4% indicated a “Lack of High School Diploma/GED/HSE.”

In May 2022 thirty-four parents with children enrolled in Northern Montana Child Development Center (NMCDC) HRDC’s Head Start and Early Head Start program completed a Parent Satisfaction Survey. Thirty-one parents strongly agreed that their child had benefitted from participating in the program. Thirty-three parents indicated that they would recommend NMCDC to family and friends. Twenty-seven parents indicated that they had an increased knowledge of early childhood education and 25 parents indicated they had more involvement in their child’s education as a result of their child being enrolled in NMCDC. One parent mentioned that what they liked most about NMCDC was that the program was, “open and honest about my child’s needs.” Another parent commented that they appreciated that staff were, “Very accepting and supportive to my child needs.”

When asked what NMCDC could do to serve the parent and child better responses included, “Address developmental issues ASAP,” and “Longer school year.”

In program year 2021/22 NMCDC served 47 children with Early Head Services (EHS) and 112 children with Head Start (HS) Services.

The Community Partner Focus Group held November 14, 2023 indicated a need for parenting classes within the community. Both the November Community Partner Focus Group and the Community Discussion Group held December 12, 2022 indicated a need for more preschool slots.

NMCDC participates in the Montana Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program. The Mission of STARS is, “To support high quality early care and education

Overall Survey Results

Education & Cognitive Development

programs for child care and education through a quality rating and improvement system that strengthens programs and practitioners with continuous improvement strategies and assist families to make informed decisions.”

Additionally, dphhs.mt.gov shares that STARS is:

The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program is a voluntary quality rating and improvement system that aligns quality indicators with support and incentives for early childhood programs and early childhood professionals. The Early Childhood Services Bureau has enjoyed watching the program grow and develop with the input from the various stakeholders, and has listened carefully to early childhood professionals, parents, and national experts to provide a strong program, desired by many.

STARS has several components:

1. Workforce Development
2. Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)
3. Infrastructure to administer the programs, provide training, coaching, and technical assistance, and to validate the STARS system

NMCDC participates in the STARS program and currently all four facilities are rated a STAR 3. Ratings range from pre-STAR to STAR 5. In Blaine County Kids Korner, Inc. in Chinook has a STAR 2 rating and Little Raskels Daycare in Harlem is a STAR 3 facility. In Hill County, A Child’s Place, and Debbie’s Daycare both located in Havre are rated STAR 3. Busy Bee Child Care, Kiddie Corner Daycare, and Little Monkeys Daycare are all rated STAR 2 and located in Havre. Wee Care Daycare also in Havre has a STAR 1. There are no child care facilities in Liberty County that participate in the STARS program.

Within the service area there are a total of 516 licensed child care slots, only 312 slots or 60% of all licensed child care slots are part of the STARS program. Lack of participation in STARS and providing quality early childhood services and education within the service area affects children’s ability to achieve major academic milestones.

Overall Survey Results

Education & Cognitive Development

Facility	Location	STARS Rating	Slots Available
A Child's Place	Havre	3	15
Busy Bee Child Care	Havre	2	24
Debbie's Daycare	Havre	3	12
Kiddie Corner Daycare	Havre	2	15
Kids Korner, Inc.	Chinook	2	28
Little Monkeys Daycare	Havre	2	15
Little Raskels Daycare	Harlem	3	15
NMCDC – Hillview	Havre	3	20
NMCDC – HRDC	Havre	3	64
NMCDC – Lincoln	Havre	3	60
NMCDC - Wilson	Havre	3	20
Wee Care Daycare	Havre	1	24
Total Slots in STARS			312

Data retrieved from [Child Care Providers Dashboard \(mt.gov\)](https://childcareproviders.mt.gov/)

County	Licensed Child Care Capacity
Blaine	55
Hill	440
Liberty	21
Total	516

Data retrieved from [Kids Count Montana \(montanakidscount.org\)](https://montanakidscount.org/)

The following statistics were obtained from montanakidscount.org/county-data

Blaine County

632 children under age 6 in 2021. Licensed child care capacity is 55 children in 2022. The 2020/21 four-year cohort graduation rate is 80.4% and in the 2021/22 school year only 26.1% of third grade students are proficient in English Language Arts (ELA). ELA is student development in listening, speaking, reading, composition, grammar, and spelling skills in English.

Overall Survey Results

Education & Cognitive Development

Hill County

In 2021 - 1,625 children under age 6. Licensed child care capacity in 2022 is 440 children. The 2020/21 four-year cohort graduation rate was 69.2% and in the 2021/22 school year only 30% of third grade students are proficient in ELA.

Liberty County

In 2021 - 131 children under age 6. Licensed child care capacity in 2022 is 21 children. The 2020/21 four-year cohort graduation rate is 100% and in the 2021/22 school year only 25.9% of third grade students are proficient in ELA.

There is a need for additional cognitive development services within the area served. This is indicated by the low ELA proficiencies of third grade students all three counties. It is also indicated by the low graduation rates in Blaine and Hill County.

Multiple studies point to the importance of early childcare education as a predictor of future educational achievement and impact the likely hood of breaking the cycle of poverty and/or preventing poverty.

Early childhood education experiences can have long-term effects on decision making and life choices into adulthood. These impacts were found in broad studies of the impact of early childhood education over time. However, studies also have indicated that the effects are most significant in children from high-poverty areas—significantly higher when compared to children from low-poverty areas:

- Children who participated in early childhood programs were less likely to experience grade retention during high school
- Students participating in early childhood programs were more likely to graduate from high school than their peers who didn't participate in quality early education
- Adults who had high-quality early child education experiences had more positive social interactions and are more community focused

Overall Survey Results

Education & Cognitive Development

- Adults who had quality early child education experiences are more likely to be employed full time, own a car, own a home, and have a savings account.
- People who attended quality early childhood education were more likely to attend college, have higher SAT scores, and higher high-school graduation rates.
- Those who attended high-quality early childhood settings were less likely to be incarcerated as juveniles compared to those who didn't.
- Individuals who participated in preschool programs earned up to \$2,000 more a month as an adult compared to a group of non-preschool attendees.

Retrieved from [Long-term Effects of Early Childhood Education: Beyond Academics \(gafcp.org\)](#)

Additionally, “One of the United States' most successful anti-poverty measures starts very early in life: Head Start, a preschool program for disadvantaged kids, increased children's education and significantly reduced the likelihood of adult poverty, according to a University of Michigan study”. ([Head Start slashes likelihood of adult poverty \(phys.org\)](#))

More research needs to be done to identify areas where improvements can be made.

NMCDC is preparing to reinstitute parenting classes. The pedagogy of Head Start/Early Head Start programs is that parents are the first teacher. Research based parenting classes will provide skills to enable parents to better prepare their children to learn and to be successful while advancing in education. Pedagogy simply defined is the study of teaching methods, including the aims of education and ways in which such goals may be achieved. Family Connections, which provides childcare resource and referral services in the area would be a possible community partner for parenting classes.

NMCDC works closely with Havre Public Schools to assist Head Start children in successfully transitioning to Kindergarten. A continued close relationship will support children in remaining successful once enrolled in public schools.

Overall Survey Results

Education & Cognitive Development

The HRDC Adult Education Program works closely with Havre Public Schools, Tribal TANF, Stone Child College and Aaniiih Nakoda College to provide courses in Basic Education and High School Equivalency test preparation. This helps to assist individuals to achieve their High School Equivalency (HSE) if they were not able to graduate High School.

The low ELA scores in Blaine, Hill, and Liberty Counties, 26.1%, 30% and 25.9% respectively, are a contributing risk factor to not graduating from high school. Studies indicate at least 23% of students with below-basic reading skills fail to finish high-school on time or at all ([High School Graduation - Healthy People 2030 | health.gov](#)). The same article indicates that full time workers with a high school degree earn 24% more than those without. Additionally, children from low-income families are less likely to graduate. “Not completing high school is linked to a variety of factors that can negatively impact health, including limited employment prospects, low wages, and poverty,” ([High School Graduation - Healthy People 2030 | health.gov](#)).

Parents and Children need access to more Early Childhood Development and Educational services. Individuals have a need for parenting classes within the service area.

The communities need more slots for childcare and specifically more childcare programs that are enrolled in the STARS to Quality Program that provide Early Childhood Development and Educational opportunities so children can increase their educational success.

Students need more supports to successfully obtain their High School Diploma.

Individuals need more access to Adult Education services and opportunities to obtain their High School Equivalency.

The community needs to provide more support to the Adult Education programs available. Limited match funding places the current program at risk of being closed.

Overall Survey Results

Education & Cognitive Development

In calendar year 2021 District 4's Adult Education program had 65 individuals who demonstrated improved basic education and 29 obtained their HSE. In calendar year 2020 the AE program had 59 individuals who demonstrated improved basic education and 40 obtained their HSE.

HRDC works to educate policy makers about the importance of continued funding support and legislation that supports Early Childhood, Public School and on-going Adult Education programs. These are much needed supports in the communities of Hill, Blaine and Liberty counties.

Overall Survey Results

Employment

Overall survey responses

- 33% or 107 identified Not enough good paying jobs as the #1 community challenge.
- 51% or 165 identified Good paying jobs as the #1 family/individual challenge.
- 61% or 197 are employed, 111 are employed fulltime with benefits.
- Top 3 barriers to employment
 1. Pay too low to support family
 2. No childcare during work
 3. Physical disability & No transportation

Native American

- 30% or 41 identified Not enough good paying jobs as a community challenge.
- 49% or 66 identified Good paying jobs as the #1 family/individual challenge.
- 56% or 76 are employed, 44 are employed fulltime with benefits.
- Top 3 barriers to employment
 1. No Childcare during work & No transportation
 2. Physical disability
 3. Pay too low to support family

Blaine County

- 39% or 11 identified Not enough good paying jobs as the #1 community challenge.
- 70% or 19 identified Good paying jobs as the #1 family/individual challenge.
- 54% or 15 are employed, 5 are employed fulltime with benefits.
- Top 3 barriers to employment
 1. Pay too low to support family & No jobs in my field
 2. Physical Disability
 3. No Benefits, Lack of training or experience & No childcare during work

Women

- 30% or 72 identified Not enough good paying jobs as a community challenge.
- 48% or 116 identified Good paying jobs as the #1 family/individual challenge.
- 75% or 182 are employed, 85 are employed fulltime with benefits.
- Top 3 barriers to employment
 1. Pay too low to support family
 2. No childcare during work
 3. Physical disability

Rocky Boy

- 23% or 20 identified Not enough good paying jobs as a community challenge.
- 43% or 37 identified Good paying jobs as the #1 family/individual challenge.
- 42% or 37 are employed, 23 are employed fulltime with benefits.
- Top 3 barriers to employment
 1. Physical Disability & No transportation
 2. Lack of High School Diploma/GED/HSE & Mental Disability
 3. Lack of training or experience

Fort Belknap

- 67% or 2 identified Not enough good paying jobs as the #1 community challenge (tied with Lack of Safe affordable housing).
- 100% or 3 identified Good paying jobs as the #1 family/individual challenge.
- 67% or 2 are employed, both are employed fulltime with no benefits.
- Top 2 barriers to employment
 1. No benefits
 2. Pay too low to support family, No jobs in my field, & No childcare during work time.

Overall Survey Results

Employment

Hill County

- 32% or 80 identified Not enough good paying jobs as a community challenge.
- 48% or 119 identified Good paying jobs as the #1 family/individual challenge.
- 63% or 155 are employed, 95 are employed fulltime with benefits.
- Top 3 barriers to employment
 1. Pay too low to support family
 2. No childcare during work
 3. No transportation

Liberty County

- 38% or 12 identified Not enough good paying jobs as the #3 community challenge.
- 57% or 19 identified Good paying jobs as the #1 family/individual challenge.
- 55% or 17 are employed, 6 are employed fulltime with benefits.
- Top 3 barriers to employment
 1. Pay too low to support family, No Benefits & No childcare during work
 2. No jobs in my field & Lack of college degree
 3. Lack of High School Diploma/GED/HSE & Mental disability

From the breakdown of survey results it is easy to see why the #2 community need identified through the surveys is not enough good paying jobs and the #1 Family/Individual need is good paying jobs. The community partner focus group that took place November 14, 2023 also identified needs for transportation, more childcare with non-traditional hours, and limited employment training opportunities. A need for better jobs was identified during the December 12, 2023 community focus group. The agency SWOT analysis August 26, 2022 indicated a need for better wages, lack of childcare and lack of transportation as weaknesses within the agency and threats within the community.

It is clear within all parts of HRDC’s service area that families struggle to obtain employment that meets the needs of their family. Barriers to accessing employment include low wages, lack of childcare, lack of transportation, and lack of education and/or training needed.

Overall Survey Results

Employment

Living Wage Calculation Per Hour			
	Blaine	Hill	Liberty
1 adult	\$15.35	\$16.50	\$16.26
1 adult 1 child	\$31.40	\$31.89	\$31.40
2 adults 1 child (1 working)	\$29.71	\$30.20	\$29.71
2 adults 1 child (both working)	\$17.53	\$17.77	\$17.53
1 adult 2 children	\$40.24	\$40.73	\$40.24
2 adults 2 children (1 working)	\$35.50	\$35.99	\$35.50
2 adults 2 children (both working)	\$23.10	\$23.34	\$23.10

Data retrieved from [Living Wage Calculator - Counties and Metropolitan Statistical Areas in Montana \(mit.edu\)](https://livingwage.mit.edu/)

In the overall demographics for the community served it was already noted that the majority of individuals in HRDC’s service area are employed in the private sector. The annual average wage is \$31,443 in Blaine County or just \$15.12 per hour. In Hill County the annual average wage is \$39,633 or \$19.05 per hour and in Liberty County the annual average wage is \$40,296 or \$19.37 per hour. With the exception of Blaine County the average annual wage is high enough for a single person to support themselves and is also high enough for a household with two adults, both working, with one child to support themselves. However, wages are not high enough to support a single adult with one child or two adults with one child when only one adult is working. Wages within the service area are also not high enough to support households with two children regardless of how many adults are employed. For the Community Needs Assessment survey 59% of all households indicated having at least one child under the age of 17 and 22% of survey respondents indicated earning less than \$14,000 annually. These means most households do not make a living wage to support their family.

according to [Living Wage Calculator - Counties and Metropolitan Statistical Areas in Montana \(mit.edu\)](https://livingwage.mit.edu/), two of the highest expenses for a household with children are childcare and transportation. A household with 3 children is going to pay on average \$26,409 each year just for childcare, for two children the annual cost is \$17,606 and for one child \$8,803.



Overall Survey Results

Employment

It is easy to see why so many survey respondents indicated that pay was too low and cited availability of childcare as barriers to working. It is also indicative of why the #2 community need identified through the surveys is, “not enough good paying jobs,” and the #1 Family/Individual need is good paying jobs. Individuals in our community do not earn enough to support themselves or their families. Low paying jobs and jobs without benefits are a major contributor to poverty within the service area.

In calendar year 2021 HRDC’s Employment & Training (E&T) program assisted fourteen youth and twelve adults in becoming employed. Six adults maintained employment for 90 days and four adults maintained employment for at least 180 days. Six adults obtained employment at a living wage or higher, of those, four maintained employment for at least 180 days. Additionally, three individuals entered or transitioned into a position that provided increased income and/or benefits.

In calendar year 2020 the E&T program assisted eleven youth and fourteen adults in becoming employed. Six adults maintained employment for 90 days and five adults maintained employment for at least 180 days. Four adults obtained employment at a living wage or higher and all for maintained employment for at least 180 days. Additionally, four individuals entered or transitioned into a position that provided increased income and/or benefits.

What can be done to improve employment opportunities within Blaine, Hill and Liberty Counties? Studies indicate that subsidized jobs programs such as those operated by HRDC would help move individuals out of poverty. “Evidence from over 40 years of subsidized employment programs in the U.S. indicates that subsidized employment is a proven but underutilized anti-poverty strategy,” ([Fighting Poverty with Jobs: Projecting the Impacts of a National Subsidized Employment Program \(georgetownpoverty.org\)](https://www.georgetownpoverty.org/)).

Overall Survey Results

Employment

Individuals need additional education and skills training to obtain employment that pays a living wage.

The community needs more employers that are able to provide full-time employment with a living wage and benefits.

District 4 HRDC needs to continue partnerships with Job Service, Vocational Rehabilitation and other Employment & Training providers to provide consistent services and programs to the individuals in Blaine, Hill and Liberty Counties.

HRDC 4 needs to educate and partner with area businesses to ensure they are aware of the services available to help improve their applicant pool and prepare individuals to enter entry level positions and to continue to provide training opportunities for individuals to advance employment once hired.

During the November 14, 2022 community partner focus group, the need to have more communication and coordination among providers and businesses was a large part of the discussion.

While there are a variety of jobs programs currently available, HRDC needs to continue to educate policy makers and advocate for the need for continued support of employment and training programs to assist in breaking the cycle of poverty.

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

30% or 97 survey respondents indicated “lack of behavioral health/mental health providers in the community” as the biggest challenge to the community as a whole. 19% or 63 respondents indicated a “lack of food resources,” as the biggest community challenge. 12% or 38 respondents indicated the biggest challenge to the community is a “lack of hospitals, doctors, health care resources,” and 10% or 33 respondents indicated “lack of services for victims of violence.” One individual noted that, “Harlem lacks walking paths and a good doctor.”

As indicated through the survey top health/social behavioral development community needs as:

1. Behavioral/mental health providers
2. More food resources
3. Hospitals, doctors, health care resources
4. Services for victims of violence

The November 15, 2022 Community Partner focus group indicated the top health/social behavioral development community needs as:

1. Coordination of services – specifically with case managers
2. More knowledge of resources available
3. More readily available mental health services – specifically:
 - a. Mental health services in schools
 - b. Inpatient family treatment center
 - c. More licensed addiction counselors
4. General lack of care – such as:
 - a. Respite care
 - b. Specialty care

The December 12, 2022 focus group indicated the top health/social behavioral development community needs as:

1. Medical specialists for victims of sexual assault
2. Mental health support

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

3. Specialized training for police officers and teachers on people with autism

Both focus groups and survey respondents all indicate a high need for more behavioral health/mental health providers. The community has a high need to address mental health issues specifically for substance abuse and suicide prevention.

When it came to the biggest challenges to families/individuals in your community 19% or 61 individuals selected, “Health insurance/regular health care.” 17% or 56 individuals selected, “Access to support for older residents.” 17% or 54 individuals selected, “Access to behavioral health/mental health providers and 10% or 33 individuals selected, “Access to support for victims of violence.” Other responses provided were, “substance abuse help,” and “getting workers off drugs.”

As indicated through the survey top health/social behavioral development families/individuals needs as:

1. Health insurance/regular health care
2. Access to support for older residents
3. Access to behavioral health/mental health providers
4. Access to support for victims of violence

The survey responses mirrored responses the Community focus group held in December of 2022. The December group indicated top health/social behavioral development families/individuals needs as:

1. Children need behavioral and physical intervention
2. Affordable prescription
3. Affordable health care
4. Services for the elderly

It is important to note that the December focus group also indicated a need for families/individuals to have a higher awareness of resources available.

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

When survey respondents were asked, “What is your top need related to COVID?” the top answers were:

1. Assistance covering monthly bills – 27%
2. Access to food – 21%
3. Access to medical services – 16%

Other answers provided included a request for, “Grief resources,” another person responded, “Persons on disability must go hungry a lot of times because I am paying the lights, groceries, gas, firewood, propane etc...and used car issues all the time, not to mention gas and grub prices!” Another individual indicated a need for, “Mental Health Resources.”

An October 2020 article available through the National Library of Medicine states,

“Poverty is both a cause of mental health problems and a consequence. Poverty in childhood and among adults can cause poor mental health through social stresses, stigma and trauma. Equally, mental health problems can lead to impoverishment through loss of employment or underemployment, or fragmentation of social relationships. This vicious cycle is in reality even more complex, as many people with mental health problems move in and out of poverty, living precarious lives,” ([Poverty and mental health: policy, practice and research implications - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#))

The Community Needs Health Assessments for Blaine, Hill and Liberty counties all indicated more services were needed for behavioral/mental health along with more access to services in each report. This matches up with survey and focus group responses. It is incredibly important to provide services to individuals facing mental health issues in our community.

The focus groups identified many resources in the community, but also indicated a need to better inform the community about resources available and how to access them.

Resources that were identified as being needed within Community Partner focus group included services for postpartum depression, children’s mental health

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

services and more mental health providers. Resources identified as being needed within the December community focus group included free counseling, mental health services, rehab center, mental health center for children under 6.

Dental Care

A majority of individuals who completed the Needs Assessment survey indicated they were able to access dental care in the past year, 81%. 19% of individuals indicated they were not able to access dental care in the last year. However, 39% or 132 of all survey respondents indicated reasons why they did not receive dental care in the past year. The top reasons were indicated as:

1. My Choice – 45%
2. No Insurance – 23%
3. Cost – 23%

Additionally, 8% indicated no transportation and 5% indicated no childcare as reasons for not seeking dental care.

Studies indicate that poor dental health goes beyond bad teeth, it also affects health, employment and well-being. “Early childhood tooth decay has been related to impaired development, low educational performance, poor behavior, family stress, diminished quality of life, and even disability and death,” ([The Many Costs \(Financial and Well-Being\) of Poor Oral Health | College of Dentistry | University of Illinois Chicago \(uic.edu\)](#)). Poor oral health can also affect adults’ job prospects, imperfect teeth can lead to anxiety preventing applying for positions and can also lead to not being hired.

In calendar year 2021 HRDC’s Head Start/Early Head Start program, NMCDC, provided dental screenings to 270 children and in 2020 194 children received dental screenings.

The December community focus group indicated a lack of resources and need for dentists who accept Medicaid for children.

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

Individuals need more access to affordable dental care and to specialty medical services.

The community needs more dentists who accept Medicaid for children.

The agency needs to continue to provide dental screenings to the children served by NMCDC and needs to continue to advocate for services within the community served.

Access to specialty dental care is limited with the service area of Blaine, Hill and Liberty counties. It is necessary to educate individuals about the services available and to connect them with specialists outside of the community.

The community needs more dental providers that accept Medicaid and that provide specialty dental services.

HRDC will continue to provide and advocate for dental services.

Health Care

An overwhelming 72% of individuals surveyed indicated all household members have insurance.

How many household members do NOT currently have health insurance?

1	13.68%	42
2	5.54%	17
3	4.23%	13
4	2.28%	7
5+	1.30%	4
None	72.96%	224
Answered		307

Of the 83 respondents indicating household members without insurance, 67 individuals or 89% without health insurance were under the age of 18. 57% or 43 individuals were age 65+.

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

Most respondents 67%, or 201 individuals indicated no barriers to health care. Of the 100 surveyed who indicated barriers to receiving health care the following answers were provided:

What are your barriers to health care? (check all that apply)

Cost	47.32%	53
No insurance	22.32%	25
No transportation	13.39%	15
No doctor in my area	11.61%	13
No childcare during appointments	5.36%	6
Answered		112

According to the 2020 census 8.6% of individuals in the U.S. reported not having health insurance. This is much lower than the 28% reporting no health care coverage on HRDC’s survey. Even more alarming is that 89% of individuals without insurance are children under the age of 18 and 57% were 65+.

Studies show that poor health is disproportionately concentrated among the poor and poverty is a major cause of ill health and a barrier to accessing health care when needed. Ill health is also a major cause of poverty, this is due to the high cost of health care, loss of income when ill, and making it necessary for family members to quit school or work to provide care. Individuals without healthcare may also be forced to sell assets or take out high interest loans to cover medical costs. ([Poverty and Health \(worldbank.org\)](http://worldbank.org))

In general poverty is associated with poor health outcomes and among older adults, poverty is linked to increased risk of disability, physical and cognitive decline and homelessness. Older adults subsist on limited incomes and modest savings that restrict their ability to afford basic medical care. Additionally, 63% of adults 65+ have at least two chronic conditions leading to higher out of pocket expenses. ([Explore Poverty - Ages 65+ in the United States | 2022 Senior | AHR \(americashealthrankings.org\)](http://americashealthrankings.org)).



Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

	Children without Health Insurance (2020)	Children Enrolled Healthy Montana Kids (2022)	Women who Receive Early Prenatal Care (2021)
Blaine	10.8%	68.3%	27.4%
Hill	9.3%	72.0%	40.0%
Liberty	17.4%	69.7%	68.5%
Montana	7.4%	55.3%	76.5%

Data sourced from [Kids Count Montana \(montanakidscount.org\)](http://montanakidscount.org)

As shown by the chart above there is high percentage of children in the service area without health insurance, with Liberty County having the most uninsured children at 17.4%. There are more children without health insurance in Blaine, Hill and Liberty counties then compared to the state as a whole at 7.4%. There are also more children enrolled in Healthy Montana Kids, which is a free or low-cost insurance plan that provides coverage for children up to age 19, within HRDC’s service area then compared to the state as whole. Additionally, women in HRDC’s service area are less likely to receive early prenatal care as few as 27.4 percent in Blaine County. These figures indicate that children are more likely to suffer developmentally and experience poverty due to lack of access to health care.

In calendar year 2021 HRDC’s Head Start/Early Head Start Program NMCDC provided, immunizations, physicals, developmental delay screening and vision screening to 270 children. In 2020 NMCDC provided immunizations to 152 children, physicals for 309 children, developmental delay screening for 135 children, and 304 children received vision screenings.

Health care was a high area of concern during the focus group sessions citing a lack of community resources and a need to travel to larger cities such as Great Falls and Helena to access care. The November Community Partner group indicated a need for an OB specialist, pediatric specialty care, walk-in clinic, and



Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

urgent care. The December Community Focus group indicated a need for better ER services, more clinics and providers, better senior care, and occupational therapy for children under 6.

There are a variety of resources available in the community for health care but they are limited, difficult to access, not affordable, or do not provide needed specialty care.

It is necessary to educate the community about the resources available and how to access them. It is also necessary to help individuals connect with care outside the community when needed. District 4 HRDC partners with the Hill County Health Consortium and Early Childhood Investment Team to help address health issues affecting the community in Havre. More needs to be done to partner with others outside of Havre to assist individuals in accessing quality health care.

Individuals need access to quality affordable healthcare and to doctors that provide specialty services. Individuals also need to be provided more education on health care resources that are available within the service area.

The community needs more providers that provide specialty medical services. There is also a need for urgent and walk-in care facilities.

HRDC needs to continue to advocate for the health needs of individuals with low-income and educate law makers about the importance of Medicaid expansion to provide access to health care.

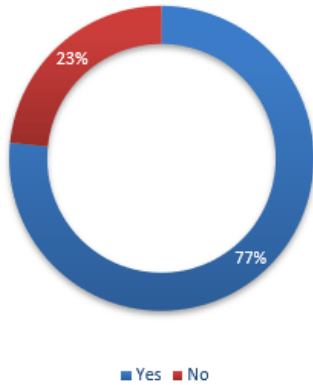
Food

The majority of individuals completing the survey indicated being able to meet food needs in the last year, 77% or 246 were able to meet their food needs. 19% of survey respondents indicated, "Lack of food resources," as the biggest challenge to the community as a whole and 28% of survey respondents indicate, "Enough food," as the biggest challenge to families/individuals. The December community focus group also indicated food assistance as a community need.

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

Have you been able to meet food needs in the last year?



149 individuals that responded to, what are your barriers to meeting food needs, indicated the following:

If no, what are your barriers to meeting food needs? (check all that apply)

Cost of groceries	67.11%	100
Cost of gas	44.97%	67
No Transportation	13.42%	20
Food Bank not open when needed	11.41%	17
Grocery Stores too	20.13%	30
Other (please specify)	6.71%	10

Answered 149

Other responses included, “Transit closes at 3,” “no work because of covid,” “local store only offers junk food,” and “store too far.” It is important to note that the community partner focus group noted that inflation is impacting the costs of goods and the community focus group also recognized a need for food assistance.

In 2021 10.4% of America households struggled with food security ([Hunger & Poverty in America - Food Research & Action Center \(frac.org\)](https://frac.org)) This is much lower than the 23% who indicated being unable to meet food needs when responding to HRDC’s survey.

In Montana 1 in 8 households or 12% of households in rural areas receive SNAP benefits. More than 80% of SNAP households have at least one working member and 8% of all SNAP households participate in TANF, making SNAP a critical safety net for families with children. More than 2 in 5 Montana SNAP households include children. ([snap-facts-mt.pdf \(frac.org\)](https://frac.org)) Comparatively HRDC’s service area had a higher percentage of households receiving SNAP 17.2% in Blaine County, 15.9% in Hill County. In Liberty County the percentage of households receiving SNAP benefits is much lower at only 2.9% (<https://frac.org/snap-county-map/tables/snap-county-tab-2016.html>).

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

There is a strong need to improve access to quality, nutritious food within the service area. Families need access to nutritious, affordable food and communities need more choices when purchasing food.

Studies show that good nutrition is essential during infancy and early childhood and sets the stage for lifelong health. “Poor nutrition during early development not only increases a child’s risk of illness, but also has been reported to increase the risk and susceptibility of developing significant medical conditions,” ([Nutrient Deficiency in Early Life: Addressing a Global Concern \(dsm.com\)](#)).

	Children Living in Poverty (2021)	Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation (2019/2020)	Child Food Insecurity (2020)
Blaine	24.0%	75.1%	25.8%
Hill	21.6%	69.8%	17.0%
Liberty	21.7%	29.5%	17.9%
Montana	14.9%	42.9%	13.6%

Data Sourced from [Kids Count Montana \(montanakidscount.org\)](https://montanakidscount.org)

The chart above shows that the children in HRDC’s service area are more likely to live in poverty, participate in free and reduced-price programs, and have food insecurity compared to the rest of the state. While Liberty County only has 29.5% of children enrolled in free and reduced lunch programs compared to the rest of the state and Blaine and Hill counties, they have just as many children in poverty and that are facing food insecurity.

The agency offers a variety of programs that provide food assistance to families with low-income and individuals in crisis. The main program being the Have Community Food Bank, the Food Bank provides emergency food boxes to all residents of Hill County. Additionally, households that income qualify can receive

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

a food box every other month. In 2021 the Food Bank provided food boxes to 622 unduplicated households. In 2020 5,385 food boxes were distributed, an unduplicated household count is not available. In 2022 46,082 pounds of perishable food including produce was distributed.

NMCDC provided breakfast, lunch and snacks to 270 children in 2021 and to 328 children in 2020. The Haven, the domestic violence shelter operated by HRDC's Victim Services program provided meals to 43 women and children in 2021 and to 89 women and children in 2020.

There are food banks located in every county and on both reservations within HRDC's service area. However, most are open only one day per week or month. HRDC's Food Bank is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9am to 1pm, this limits access. The Havre Community Food Bank does provide after hours and weekend emergency services for households in need. The focus group discussions indicated a need to have the Food Bank open after 5pm at least one day per week for working individuals to be able to access the service.

Households are limited in the selection of food available and do not always receive food with the highest nutritional value. There are currently grants available to apply for funding to purchase locally sourced nutritious food for Food Bank customers.

Individuals need access to a wider variety of nutritious food that is affordable. They also require continued support and access to food banks within the service area. Individuals need access to public transportation that has regular stops at the Havre Community Food Bank.

The community needs food banks that are open more frequently and for hours in the evening and on weekends, so working individuals can access. The community also needs more grocery stores with a wider variety of affordable and nutritious foods for families to purchase.

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

HRDC needs to continue to advocate for nutritious food sources for families with low-income and to educate policy makers about the necessity for access to quality nutritious food.

HRDC needs to pursue funding for a new food bank. The current food bank is located on the North side of Havre and it is difficult for customers to access. Additionally, the location makes it difficult to receive deliveries of food product. The parking lot is not adequate in size and the food bank itself is a home that has been repurposed. Multiple additions make for uneven walkways and ADA accessibility is limited.

Victims of Violence

10% or 33 of survey respondents indicated, “Lack of services for victims of violence,” as the biggest challenge to the community. The same number indicated, “Access to support for victims of violence,” as the biggest challenge for individuals and families. The December community focus group had a discussion revolving around the lack of and need for medical specialists for victims of sexual assault. Currently victims must drive hours, without changing their clothes or showering to be examined by a qualified health professional. Adding more stress and trauma to an already extremely traumatic experience.

Biggest Community Challenge - Lack of Services for Victims of Violence

Breakdown of Survey Responses	Total Number of responses	Number who selected	Percentage of overall responses
Female	245	31	12.65%
Native American	137	17	12.41%
Rocky Boy	86	6	6.98%
Fort Belnap	3	0	0%

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

Biggest Family/Individual Challenge – Access to Support for Victims of Violence

Breakdown of Survey Responses	Total Number of responses	Number who selected	Percentage of overall responses
Female	244	29	11.89%
Native American	135	15	11.11%
Rocky Boy	86	9	10.47%
Fort Belknap	3	0	0%

Women and the Native American population surveyed placed a greater community and family/individual need on services and access to support for victims of violence.

It is difficult to find data regarding the frequency of domestic violence within the service area. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence 37.2% of women and 34.6% of men in Montana experience intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence and /or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes, ([ncadv montana fact sheet 2020.pdf](#) ([speakcdn.com](#))).

Domestic violence and sexual assault can happen across all socio-economic levels and is not limited to individuals with low-income. However, victims can have their socio-economic status greatly affected.

“Women in abusive relationships frequently lose their jobs, experience high job turnover, are forced to quit or are fired,” ([Violence & Socioeconomic Status](#) ([apa.org](#))).

Additionally, studies show that victims are more likely to experience homelessness. “The experiences of domestic violence, poverty, and homelessness can seriously disrupt the well-being of a family including their connections to community support,” ([Domestic Violence and Homelessness | The Administration for Children and Families](#) ([hhs.gov](#))). Studies show that children exposed to domestic violence are also victims of physical abuse and are at risk of

Overall Survey Results

Health/Social Behavioral Development

long-term physical and mental health problems, ([Effects of domestic violence on children | Office on Women's Health \(womenshealth.gov\)](#)).

2021 Victim Services Statistics – Individuals Served	
Crisis Call/Responses	287
Individuals Housed (shelter & hotel)	69
Orders of Protection Obtained	42
Food Distribution through Groceries	64
Emergency Hygiene Kits	29

2020 Victim Services Statistics – Individuals Served	
Crisis Call/Responses	453
Individuals Housed (shelter & hotel)	78
Orders of Protection Obtained	53
Food Distribution through Groceries	213
Emergency Hygiene Kits	75

It is important that HRDC continues to provide services to victims of violence and it is also important to note the HRDC’s Victim Services program was shut down from September through December of 2021. This happened due to a lack of staff and loss of funding. Since that time HRDC has been able to regain all prior funding plus has obtained new funding to support the program. The program is currently fully staffed and looking to expand services soon with two new staff members.

Domestic violence impacts individuals, families, and communities on many levels. It is important to respond appropriately with trauma-informed strategies and to safely connect families to services.

Individuals need access to quality victim services that provide a trauma-informed approached to services.

The community needs continued support for program and shelters which provide services to victims of violence.

District 4 HRDC's Victim Services program needs to continue to partner with other programs within the service area to assist victims. The agency needs to advocate for continued support for services for victims.

Overall Survey Results

Civic Engagement and Community Involvement

District 4 HRDC provides civic engagement and community involvement in a variety of ways. The main way is through the Board of Directors and the NMCDC Policy Council. Additionally, a large number of individuals volunteer to help HRDC in a variety of ways, mainly through helping at the food bank, but volunteers also assist with Victim Services 24/7 crisis line and in NMCDC classrooms aiding with children. The agency does lack and need volunteers to help tutor students in the Adult Education program and to help sort donations for the shelter. There are also a variety of other volunteer opportunities such as building and grounds maintenance, such as painting and mowing; assistance with clerical duties in multiple programs; and last but not least, assistance with fund raising events. HRDC is unable to hold most fundraising events due to a lack of volunteers.

Year	Number of Volunteers	Total Hours Volunteered	Hours Volunteered by Individuals with Low-Income
2020	173	20,475	11,245
2021	240	19,620	10,335

Data gathered from HRDC4's annual reports

Change Public Attitudes

Within the Community Needs Assessment individuals were asked. "Where do you think efforts should be focused to have the greatest impact in your community?" Most respondents, 39% selected, "Help change public attitudes." There is a negative stigmatism that individuals with low-income are "lazy" or are "taking advantage" of the system to receive assistance. Two comments made within the survey to support misunderstanding of who HRDC serves were, "People need to want to work, there are plenty of jobs," and "Help people get on their feet not continuing to support them and provide everything to them when capable of working and maintaining their situations."

The majority of households served by HRDC have at least one adult that is employed in some capacity or are on limited incomes due to being retired or

Overall Survey Results

Civic Engagement and Community Involvement

disabled. Most households and individuals “pass through” HRDC for services. Receiving assistance during temporary struggles or while starting out in life and lacking other family or community supports. Not every individual has the advantage of receiving support from family members to get a head start in life or to help them through hard times.

As discussed throughout this report there are many causes to poverty and that contribute to poverty and there are many ways to prevent poverty. In many instances poverty within the service area is generational and individuals have lost hope of ever moving beyond what they have always known. The goal of HRDC is to help families break the cycle of poverty. Many times the agency is holding an individual or family in place while they “get back on their feet” and can support themselves again.

Individuals and the community need to be more educated about understanding the causes of poverty and reasons why HRDC’s services are needed. It begins with early childhood development and education and continues with access to housing, transportation, health care, dental care and childcare so families can obtain and retain employment with a living wage and benefits.

District 4 HRDC needs to concentrate more on educating the community about who the agency serves and the services provided. The agency also needs to do more to advocate for policy change to support families living in poverty, and assistance to move families out of poverty.

Publicize Services

The second area where surveyed individuals indicated to focus efforts for impact in the community was, “Publicize its services more,” 19% of those surveyed indicated this as a need.

District 4 HRDC advertises services and programs provided in a variety of ways through brochures and flyers, quarterly newsletters, annual reports, newspaper articles, and radio interviews. Events are announced through public service

Overall Survey Results

Civic Engagement and Community Involvement

announcements in area papers and on radio stations. HRDC also has a website and utilizes social media such as Facebook and Instagram. Perhaps the most effective way that HRDC publicizes services is through word of mouth and outreach events across the service area. In 2020 and 2022 the ability to participate in outreach events was limited due to the COVID pandemic. However, in 2022 HRDC attended 37 outreach events. Thirty events were held in Hill County, including three at Rocky Boys. Three events were held in Blaine County and four events were held in Liberty County.

Individuals need to be more informed of services provided by HRDC.

Community partners need a greater awareness of services provided by HRDC so they can publicize services for the agency.

District 4 needs to do more to publicize services. Most program funding received prohibits the agency from spending funds to pay for advertising. HRDC needs to attend and/or host more outreach events in Rocky Boy, Blaine County including Fort Belknap, and in Liberty County. Additionally, HRDC needs to conduct more outreach outside of Havre and in smaller communities within the service area.

Engage More Parts of the Community & Build Partnerships Among Community Stakeholders

Sixteen percent of individuals surveyed indicated that the agency needed to, “Engage more parts of the community,” and 14% indicated, “Build partnerships among community stakeholders.”

District 4 HRDC works with over 300 community partners, including but not limited to, Non-Profits, Faith Based, Government (including local, state, and federal), Tribal Organizations, Businesses, Consortiums, School Districts, Institutions of Higher Learning, Financial Institutions, and Health Service Institutions.

The agency has staff and leadership that participate and sit on a variety of groups, coalitions, and boards that affect the impact of services provided and keep the

Overall Survey Results

Civic Engagement and Community Involvement

agency informed of ongoing community concerns and needs. A few examples at the local level include the Havre Chamber of Commerce Business and Ambassador committees, Job Service Employment Committee (JSEC), Community Management Team (CMT), Hill County Health Consortium, Early Childhood Investment Team, Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). Staff sit on local boards or Advisory Committees for Hill County United Way, Salvation Army, Helping Haven (non-profit thrift store), and Plant-A-Seed-Read. At the state level programs are part of the Head Start and Early Childhood coalitions, Domestic Violence Coalition, and TANF Pathways Consortiums. The Executive Director sits on the state board that addresses homelessness known as Continuum of Care (CoC), and actively participates in the statewide HRDC association. The Executive Director and the Child Services Director are members of the National Head Start Task Force which reports directly to the National Community Action Partnership Board. In the past three years that they have served on the Task Force they have helped to influence national Head Start policies.

However, as indicated through the survey responses and conversations during the focus groups in November and December more coordination of services need to be done. Community stakeholders need to do more to keep each other informed of ongoing needs and to coordinate resources. Each organization tends to be siloed and to work independently of each other.

Individuals need to see HRDC actively engage the community and work with community partners and other stakeholders.

The community needs to actively engage and to be educated about the resources available to appropriately refer individuals in need to services.

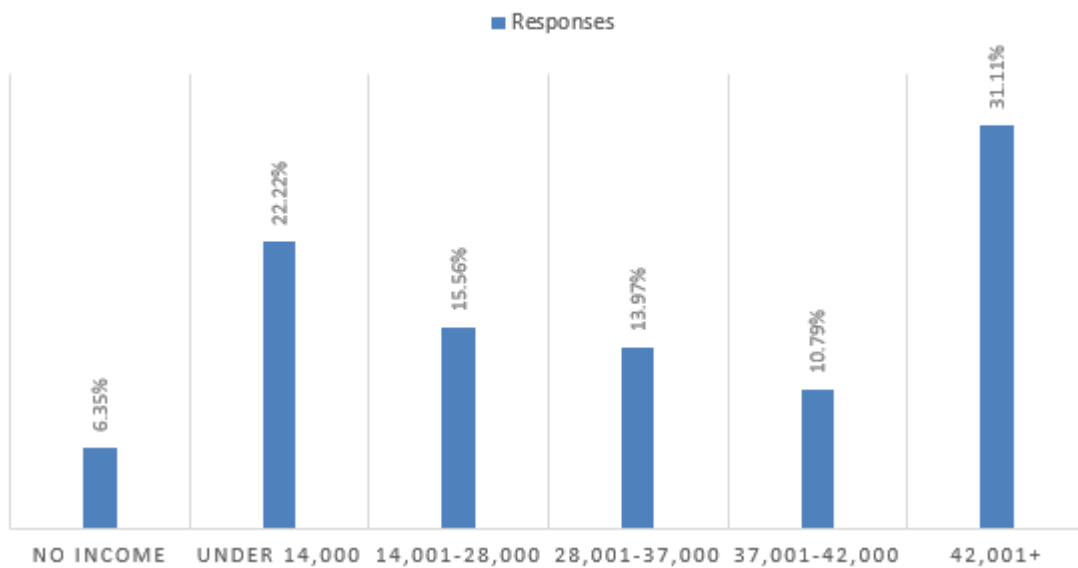
District 4 HRDC needs to educate the community and stakeholders about services and programs provided. The agency needs to have more community engagement outside of Havre.

Overall Survey Results

Income and Asset Building

Of the 988 unduplicated households served in 2020 by HRDC, 572 or 58% had a household income at or below 100% of poverty. Decreasing the number of households living in poverty depends upon increasing income and assets. A breakdown of survey responses is below when asking about annual income.

What is your annual household income?



In 2022 a family of four whose annual income is \$27,750 is at 100% of poverty in the U.S., according to the Federal Poverty Guidelines. The HRDC4 CNA survey, focus groups and studies completed by the MSU Extension Office and Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis in 2022 all reveal that Montanan’s are struggling to keep up with rising costs from groceries to gas, childcare to housing.

The Federal Reserve study was completed in June and July 2022 capturing input from 596 individuals served or employed by Montana’s ten HRDC’s serving all counties in the state. Their main finding, “Higher prices are putting pressure on family budgets, mainly through fuel and food consumption.” Also, within the survey, a respondent was quoted, “A year ago I was making less money and was able to afford expenses and fun things. Now I make more money and I’m struggling to pay for necessary expenses.” (full report in appendices)

Overall Survey Results

Income and Asset Building

The MSU Extension Statewide Assessment Report, which surveyed 2,421 Montanans from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds also found that almost 86% of respondents needed more affordable food options and over 69% indicated a need for assistance for persons struggling financially.

HRDC's survey respondents, 45% indicated price of gas was a barrier to reliable transportation. Additionally, 27% of respondents indicated needing assistance covering monthly bills as a result of COVID. Major household concerns included 23% indicating the cost of utilities was too high and 14% indicated cost of rent as too high. Cost of groceries and gas was also a barrier to being able to meet food needs in households, 67% and 45% respectively.

Many individuals who are struggling to meet basic needs have an income that is too high to receive assistance from programs currently available, income guidelines are too low to benefit all individuals in need. "Not able to get assistance with food," one individual said during the December focus group, "due to Federal Poverty Guidelines too low for food, LIHEAP, Weatherization, etc."

Individuals indicated a need for assistance with financial management and asset building in both the survey and during focus groups. Lack of money management help for families was the third highest community need identified through the CNA survey at 33% or 106 individuals identifying it as a top need. The number five family/individual need identified was, Budgeting and managing money/credit issues/debt at 25% or 81 individuals.

When asked to identify three needs not being met an individual responded, "more credit knowledge (help/advice)," and added, "maybe classes?" There is a need and a desire for individuals to have more credit knowledge and access to financial literacy training. It is difficult to build assets when income does not even meet basic household needs.

The programs HRDC 4 provides to assist individuals with income and asset building are currently within the Employment & Training program and include Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) youth, Pathways TANF, and

ARPA Rapid Retraining funds. All three programs aid in breaking barriers to employment, support for educational and training opportunities, subsidized work experience, financial literacy education and match savings programs to assist with purchases of assets.

Currently, these programs are underutilized. The agency has had zero participants in the ARPA Rapid Retraining program even though funds have been available since June 2022. The program has struggled to connect with and enroll individuals into the program, the greatest barrier is the lack of short-term certified trainings available within the service area. The WIOA youth program has funding to support 17 youth, age 16-24, annually and currently only seven youth are enrolled. The agency struggles to get referrals to the program and to connect enrolled youth with businesses that are willing to provide work experiences. Pathways is the required work component for individuals to receive cash assistance through TANF. Households can only receive TANF benefits for a cumulative total of 36 months, in 2022 HRDC's program assisted 24 individuals through Pathways.

Individuals need higher incomes to meet basic household needs and to increase/build assets.

The community needs to be more educated about the services provided by HRDC and other providers who provide programs and services to assist individuals in increasing income and assets.

HRDC needs to educate and connect with businesses in need of employees to connect program participants to employment opportunities. HRDC needs to continue to provide WIOA youth, Pathways TANF, and ARPA Rapid Retraining in order to provide subsidized work experiences that will benefit both the program participant and employer.

Overall Survey Results

Infrastructure

When thinking of poverty, infrastructure is not usually what first comes to mind. However, good infrastructure is the key to accessing everything in the community. In Blaine, Hill and Liberty counties access to reliable public transportation is missing. The three-county area served spans a land area of 8,556 square miles, individuals without reliable transportation are not able to complete even the simple task of going to the grocery store. Access to reliable and affordable transportation is key to economic wellbeing.

A lack of public transportation and transportation resources was a top need identified in every demographic surveyed and was identified during focus groups and when analyzing other data sources. Individuals in focus groups made the following observations, “There is not enough public transportation available,” and “Public transportation needs more stops/frequencies,” quotes just two.

Some communities HRDC serves has some public transportation, North Central Montana Transit in Havre, Liberty County Transit based out of Chester, Rocky Boy Transit and Fort Belknap Transit. However, most communities and towns do not have any type of public transportation or access to public transportation. The transit service that is available is not reliable or consistent. None of the above-mentioned transit systems have regularly scheduled stops at the Havre Community Food Bank, HRDC 4, Job Service, Salvation Army or Feed My Sheep Soup Kitchen in Havre. All organizations that individuals experiencing poverty need access to. Stops to access employment are also limited due to the infrequency that the transit schedules run. Many individuals without transportation rely on the two taxi services in Havre to go the grocery store, access services, and go to work. The two taxi services also do not operate consistently and are expensive to utilize.

There is a need for Public Transportation and Access to Reliable Transportation

	All Responses	Women	Native American	Blaine County	Fort Belknap	Hill County	Rocky Boy	Liberty County
Community Need	30.25%	32.24%	27.01%	28.57%	33.33%	33.20%	29.07%	9.38%
Individual Need	24.46%	24.59%	30.37%	3.7%	33.33%	29.55%	32.56%	12.12%



Overall Survey Results

Infrastructure

With the exception of Liberty County all communities, women and Native Americans have a high need for reliable access to public transportation. According to the Rural Health Information Hub, different populations that can benefit from increased access to transportation are children, older adults, veterans, tribal population, people with disabilities, and people with low-income. “Lack of transportation can prevent rural populations with low-income from accessing employment opportunities and programs designed to alleviate poverty,” ([Populations Who Receive or Could Benefit From Increased Access to Transportation Services – RHIhub Toolkit \(ruralhealthinfo.org\)](#)).

It was also noted during community discussions and in the survey that there is a need to improve the roads in the community. Road conditions were often cited as a need. Some comments included, “disrepair of roads in city,” and “Better roads pot holes filled/paved and snow removal,” were just a couple comments received.

Less than 5% of all individuals surveyed indicated a lack of reliable phone service and just under 6% of individuals surveyed indicated not having access to the internet. The majority of those surveyed, 82%, indicated they usually access the internet from home. However, the MSU Extension Assessment indicated 76.3% of individuals surveyed said high-speed internet was an important issue. The Federal Reserve survey found, “Access to a computer and internet service was a much higher impediment to occupational mobility for unemployed individuals.”

Healthcare is just one area where poverty and access to the internet are impacted. This is supported by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) when explaining the social detriments of health.

“For health, internet access is essential for obtaining home-based telemedicine and is increasingly important for basic healthcare access, including making appointments with providers, getting test results, and accessing medical records.” ([Poverty and Access to Internet, by County | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \(ahrq.gov\)](#))

Overall Survey Results

Infrastructure

According to AHRQ rates of households with any type of broadband including cellular data plans decreases with income.

Broadband Access by County			
	Blaine County	Hill County	Liberty County
Any broadband, including cellular	65.65%	75.31%	69.41%
No computing device	20.69%	14.54%	17.72%
Smartphone only, no other device	5.3%	3.35%	2.26%
Percent in Poverty	29.64%	19.38%	14.26%

Data sourced from [Poverty and Access to Internet, by County | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \(ahrq.gov\)](#)

The above chart shows that even though internet access was not identified in the survey or group discussions as a need, it is a need for individuals within the service area. With 34.35% of the population in Blaine County, and 24.61% and 30.59% of the population in Hill and Liberty counties respectively lacking access to broadband internet including access to cellular data.

Individuals need access to reliable public transportation and internet.

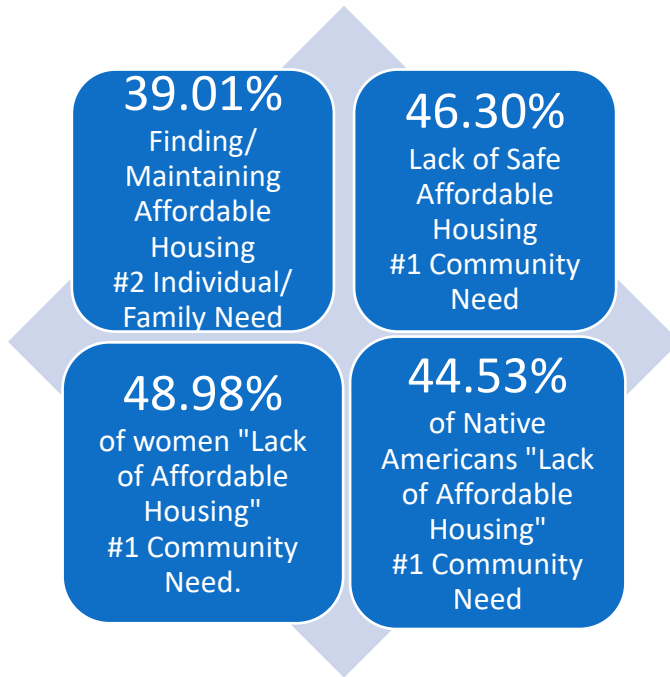
The communities need more public transportation services and have a need to develop more broadband access for individuals.

HRDC needs to continue to advocate for reliable public transportation and access to broadband internet and cellular service for the individuals and communities served.

Overall Survey Results

Housing

When asked what the greatest challenge is facing the community respondents of all demographics the number one response was, “Lack of safe affordable housing,” and the second greatest challenge being faced by families/individuals in the community was, “Finding/maintaining safe, affordable housing.” Housing was also the number one community need identified by the focus groups.



Studies show that 1 in 3 households in America spend more than 30% of their income on housing which includes almost half of all renters. Nearly 75% of households earning less than \$15,000 annually spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs, ([The Lack of Affordable Housing Is Getting Worse | Tufts Now](#)). For extremely low-income households not only is rent too high but income is too low.

Additionally, it is difficult to create affordable housing; land, materials and labor is all very expensive. In many areas land use regulations and zoning also play a role in development of affordable housing. It also extremely difficult to preserve

Overall Survey Results

Housing

affordable housing. Government subsidies for affordable housing are limited and once they expire, especially in strong housing markets, the units are often shifted to market-rate housing.

“At some level, housing affordability affects everyone. For example, homelessness and health problems stemming from unaffordable housing are costly for the individuals experiencing them, for the cities and places that pay for services, and for society in terms of lost potential and productivity,” ([The Lack of Affordable Housing Is Getting Worse | Tufts Now](#)).

Studies also show ([Reduce poverty by improving housing stability | Urban InSTITUTE](#)) that poverty can be reduced by improving housing stability. Lack of housing affects a families’ ability to meet basic needs and there is evidence that links inadequate housing to child abuse and neglect, frequent school moves, high rates of absenteeism and low-test scores among children. Housing affects almost everything in a person’s life.

Comments made during HRDC’s focus groups included, “some housing, but not affordable housing,” and “housing that is available is not affordable or safe.” Additional needs that were discussed included more landlords to accept Section 8, transitional housing options, homeless shelter and warming center.

A participant from the Community Partner focus group noted their number two community need as:

- “Housing – decent and affordable for low-income
 - Subsidized housing
 - Elderly, family
 - Lots of barriers to building/developing”

This comment encompasses all of the needs and barriers to housing that affects individuals with low-income and the community.

Overall Survey Results

Housing

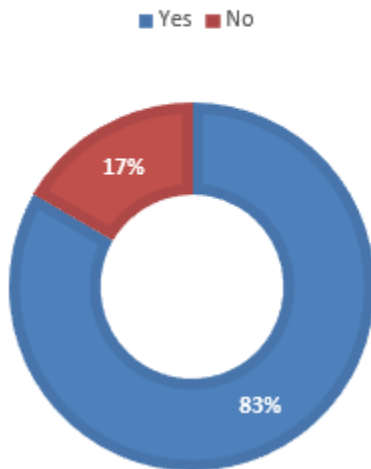
When asked, “What best describes your current housing?” respondents selected the following:

What best describes your present housing?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Own home	54.66%	176
Rent home	33.54%	108
Homeless	1.55%	5
Shelter	0.00%	0
Hotel/Motel	0.00%	0
Live with a family member or friend	9.63%	31
Assisted living or nursing home	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.62%	2
	Answered	322

It is important to note that 31 individuals or almost 10% of respondents indicated they live with a family member or friend and 5 individuals or 1.55% of respondents indicated being homeless. One survey respondent indicated, “I have to be out soon,” that they would soon be homeless.

Are your housing conditions adequate?



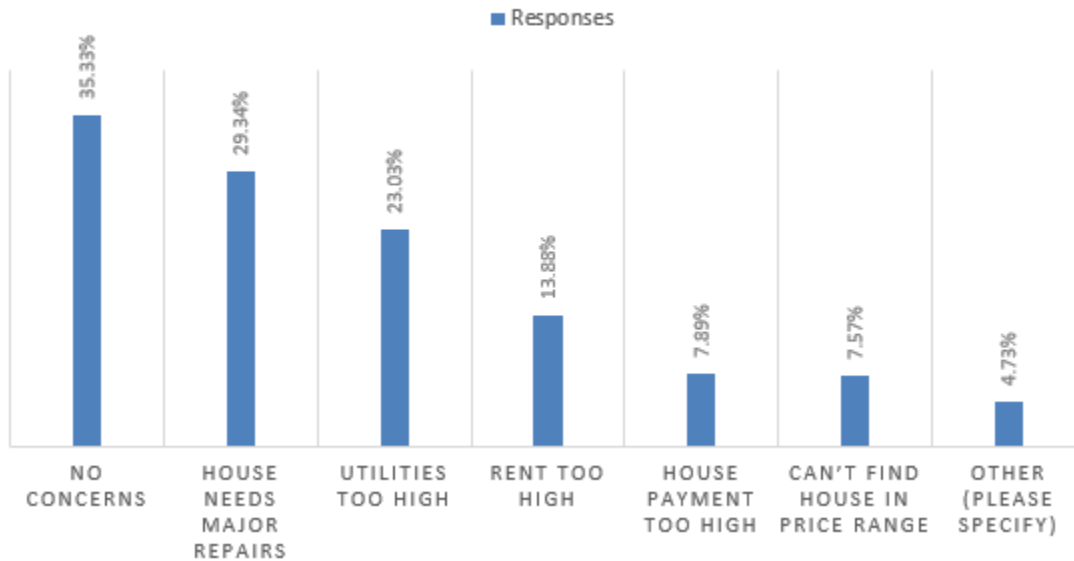
261 RESPONDENTS
83%
 INDICATED HAVING
 ADEQUATE HOUSING
 CONDITIONS

52 RESPONDENTS
17%
 INDICATED HOUSING
 CONDITIONS WERE
 INADEQUATE

Overall Survey Results

Housing

Major Household Concerns



Most survey respondents indicated their major household concern was a need for repairs, 29.34%, with utilities and rent too high rounding out the top three concerns. It is important to link ongoing inflation and rising costs for goods and services and how it is affecting the ability to afford and maintain housing.

Other comments included, “County land tax too high,” “Finding people to do work on house. Everyone is booked out,” “House taxes are too high,” “Have not had running water for years!” “no homeless shelter,” and “Need more bedrooms but it is out of price range.”

The survey also asked if individuals had had their power shut off in the past year or if they had difficulty starting utility service because of high deposit fees. While the numbers of those affected were low, 5% and 12.5% respectively, it is important to note the number of individuals served by HRDC’s Energy program. The Energy program helps through multiple services.

Overall Survey Results

Housing

ENERGY SERVICE PROVIDED	INDIVIDUALS SERVED 2019	INDIVIDUALS SERVED 2020	INDIVIDUALS SERVED 2021
Utility Payments	1925	645	937
Avoided Utility Shutoff	159	150	53
Obtained Utilities	59	40	15
Energy Service Restored After Disconnect	Not available	11	20
Inoperable Home Energy Equipment Repaired or Replaced	Not available	71	20

It is important to note that the Energy program does not track households assisted but rather the number of individuals that benefit from having access to electricity, heat and water in the home. The number assisted fluctuates greatly depending on funding available and outside temperatures during cold winter months. In 2019 65%, 2020 25%, and in 2021 46% of all individuals served by HRDC received assistance to pay utilities. There is a high need to continue to provide services to help individuals maintain a healthy home.

Individuals need access to safe, affordable housing. Including access to more subsidized housing and Housing Choice/Section 8 vouchers.

Individuals need assistance to meet energy needs and to keep homes healthy and safe.

The community needs more landlords who accept Housing Choice/Section 8 vouchers.

The community needs to develop more subsidized housing.

The community needs to attract developers to build safe, affordable housing.

Overall Survey Results

Housing

HRDC needs to continue to provide energy assistance services to households in the community.

District 4 HRDC needs to continue to educate the community and law makers about the importance of affordable housing and the effect that lack of affordable housing has on our community.

District 4 HRDC needs to pursue funding to develop affordable housing properties and partner with developers to build.

Key Findings & Recommendations

As HRDC gathered and analyzed information and data for the 2022 Community Needs Assessment the greatest needs were identified in the following four areas, safe, affordable housing; employment opportunities; quality, affordable childcare; and access to health services. This section of the report provides a brief summary of each of the top needs identified.

1. Safe, Affordable Housing

Which of the following do you feel are the biggest challenges to your community as a whole?

Lack of safe affordable housing -
Individuals responses by percentage

All Responses combined	46.30%
Blaine County	28.57%
Fort Belknap	66.67%
Hill County	48.00%
Rocky Boy	39.53%
Liberty County	40.63%
Female	48.98%
Male	40.58%
Native American	44.53%

What do you feel are the biggest challenges to families/ individuals in your community?

Finding/maintaining safe, affordable housing -
Individual responses by percentage

All Responses combined	39.01%
Blaine County	25.93%
Fort Belknap	66.67%
Hill County	42.51%
Rocky Boy	31.40%
Liberty County	24.24%
Female	40.57%
Male	34.78%
Native American	37.78%

All areas surveyed indicated a high need for safe, affordable housing. Fort Belknap indicated the highest community and family/individual need at 66.67% though Blaine County as a whole indicated the overall community need at only 28.57%, Liberty County had the fewest family/individual need responses at only 24.24%.

As noted in the full report lack of affordable housing impacts communities, families and individuals on many levels. Lack of housing is directly tied to poor health, poor education outcomes and leads to poverty.

Local, state and national trends reflect that households are paying more than they can afford for housing. Many residents within the service area live in overcrowded homes and homes that are unsafe to be able to afford housing.

Key Findings & Recommendations

Individuals in the service area need access to more safe, affordable housing. This can be done through continued provision of Housing Choice/Section 8 vouchers and through retaining and building subsidized housing units. Landlords also need to be encouraged to accept housing Choice/Section 8 vouchers and they need assistance to maintain quality rental units.

*One survey respondent indicated,
“I have to be out soon,”
They would soon be homeless*

Communities need more safe and affordable housing stock. Housing is needed at all income levels. Health care costs, work days lost, and school days lost related to lack of housing impact the economy and the community as a whole. The community needs to solicit and support developers in building more quality housing.

District 4 HRDC can continue to apply for and support development of affordable housing within the service area. HRDC can partner with city & county governments, Bear Paw Development and developers to pursue funding to build and rehabilitate affordable housing.

2. Employment that Pays a Living Wage

There are many reasons that individuals need access to jobs that pay a living wage and provide benefits. Annual incomes in the service area do not support a living wage and do not allow individuals to earn enough to meet their basic needs.

A family of four two adults with two children is at 100% of Federal Poverty, in 2022, with an income of \$27,750 annually. However, a living wage in our service area, if both adults are working, requires each adult to earn \$48,547.20 or a family income of \$97,094.40 is needed. If only one adult is working the family must have an annual income of \$74,859.20 to have a living wage. When only one adult works there are cost savings related to childcare and transportation.

Key Findings & Recommendations

	All Responses Combined	Blaine County	Fort Belknap	Hill County	Rocky Boy	Liberty County	Female	Native American
Not Enough Good Paying Jobs in Community	33%	39%	67%	32%	23%	38%	30%	30%
Individuals Need Good Paying Jobs	51%	39%	67%	48%	43%	57%	48%	49%
Employed	61%	54%	67%	63%	42%	55%	75%	56%

The top barriers to obtaining employment included lack of childcare, transportation, education, experience and lack of skills. Parents specifically need childcare for evening, overnight and weekend employment. Once employed individuals need assistance with budgeting and financial management to spend money efficiently.

Individuals need employment that pays a living wage and provides benefits. They also need access to education and training that allows them to improve employment. Individuals need apprenticeship and, on the job, learning opportunities to increase their earning potential.

Businesses need access to supports that assist in paying wages while training inexperienced staff.

The community needs to provide more employment that pays a living wage and provides benefits.

District 4 HRDC needs to continue to partner with Job Service, Vocational Rehabilitation, Rural Employment Opportunities and other organizations that provide employment and training services. The agency needs to conduct outreach to businesses to educate them about the services available and how HRDC can assist with subsidizing employment. HRDC also needs to partner with MSU Northern, Stone Child and Aaniiih Nakoda to identify ways to provide education and training to individuals requiring better employment.

One survey respondent indicated a need for “Job assistance opportunities, job fairs”

Key Findings & Recommendations

3. Quality, Affordable Childcare

Having quality, affordable childcare is key to proper early childhood development, future educational success, future employment that pays a living wage and is vital to prevent individuals and families from living in poverty. Access to quality, affordable childcare allows parents to attain educational goals and obtain and retain employment.

31.17% of all individuals surveyed indicated a need for quality childcare resources.

According to 2020 census data the service area had 1,991 children under the age of five. In 2022 the area has 516 licensed childcare slots, of those only 312 slots are operated by childcare providers that participate in the Montana STARS to Quality early childcare program. Which results in only 16% of children having access to quality childcare.

Individuals need access to quality affordable childcare.

The community needs more licensed childcare providers and needs more providers that participate in STARS to quality.

District 4 HRDC needs to continue to provide services through NMCDC. Partnering with area health service providers to provide health, vision, dental, developmental, and behavioral screenings to children. HRDC can also partner with Family Connections to provide parenting classes, and connect parents to Family Connections to access Best Beginnings Scholarships to assist with paying for childcare. HRDC4 will continue to educate policy makers about the importance of childcare and early childhood development and education.

23.81% of all individuals surveyed indicated a need for childcare.

*One individual shared,
"I do not have kids
because of the cost."*

Key Findings & Recommendations

4. Access to Health Services

The individuals within HRDC's service area have a lack of access to quality health care services. While there are services available there are not enough providers to have services available for all who need them. Poor health is directly linked to poverty and is linked to the inability to receive a quality education, retain housing and to becoming employed. It is essential that individuals have access to health services.

25.96% of survey respondents indicated at least one household member did not have health insurance

In addition to indicating a need for more specialists and services for children under 6, specifically, a need for mental health services. The community needs assessment identified a need for better ER services, walk-in clinics, urgent care, and a medical specialist for victims of assault. There is also a need for in-patient family treatment centers, licensed addiction counselors, respite care, specialty care and licensed medical technicians.

Behavioral and mental health issues impact an individual's ability to meet basic needs. When services are not available or accessible individuals find it difficult to obtain and retain employment, and they cut themselves off socially separating themselves from important support systems.

Barriers to accessing health care included lack of insurance, transportation and childcare. Most individuals in HRDC's service area have to travel great distances to access health care services. Most specialists are located in Great Falls, Helena and Billings. A task that is made even more difficult when someone does not have reliable transportation and cannot afford gas to travel such distances.

A respondent indicated a need for "Substance abuse help"

Individuals need more access and choices when it comes to health care. They need reliable transportation to access health care. They also need to be more educated about services available and connected to resources.

Key Findings & Recommendations

The community needs more specialists, mental health providers, licensed addiction counselors and in-patient family treatment centers.

The communities also need walk-in clinics and urgent care providers.

District 4 HRDC is active in the Hill County Health Consortium and partners with Northern Montana Hospital, Bullhook Community Health Center, Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line, and the Hill County Health Department to identify and address health needs of individuals and families in Hill County. The agency also partners with the Early Childhood Investment Team to identify and address health needs of children between 0-5.

HRDC needs to interact and support the communities outside of Havre to identify and address health needs in other areas.

HRDC needs to educate and communicate to families and the community resources that are available.

The agency will continue to provide health services through NMCDC and will advocate for and educate policy makers about the need for additional health services in rural areas.

Conclusion

District 4 HRDC recognizes that the community needs assessment is not representative of all areas served. The agency needs to engage more with the rural communities served to identify needs specific to each area, specifically Fort Belknap and Rocky Boy. HRDC plans on conducting ongoing mini-assessments to amend or update the assessment annually. This will enable the agency to continually assess the impact and need for programs and services provided.

The information contained in this CNA will continue to be used by District 4 HRDC to prioritize needs that can be strategically addressed by the agency. The data will be presented publicly and will be shared with the community via email, and the agency website. Printed copies of the report will be shared with community partners and be made available upon request.

Appendices will not be attached to this document but will be available on the agency website and available upon request.

Sources/References

Page 15, 16, 17, and 18

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Appendices – available at www.hrdc4.org or upon request

Appendix 1 – CNA Survey and Results

Appendix 2 – Northern Montana Child Development Center Parent Survey and Results

Appendix 3 – November 14, 2022 Community Partner Meeting

Appendix 4 – December 12, 2022 Community Meeting

Appendix 5 – SWOT Analysis

Appendix 6 – Blaine, Hill, and Liberty Counties Community Health Assessments

Appendix 7 – Federal Reserve Survey of Residents in Montana

Appendix 8 – MSU Extension Office 2022 Statewide Needs Assessment

Appendix 9 – Other supporting documents

STARS Program List by City

Kids Count Data – Montana, Blaine, Hill & Liberty Counties

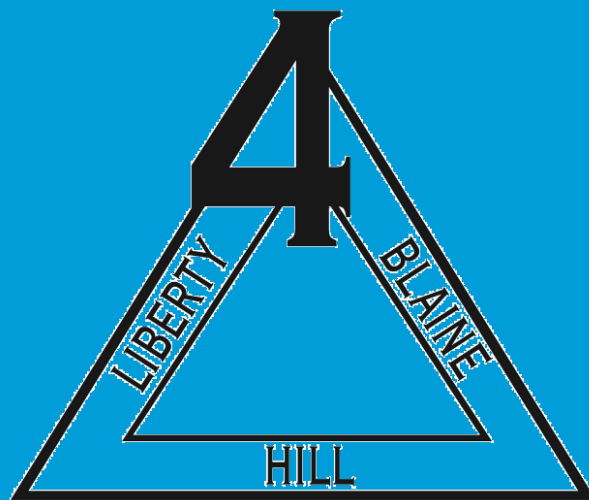
NCADV Montana Fact Sheet

SNAP Montana Fact Sheet

2022 Poverty Guidelines

Fighting Poverty with Jobs Policy Report

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Human Resources Development Council

***Our Mission:** to partner with people with low income in their effort to achieve economic stability and to advocate for social and economic advancement.*

***Our Vision:** All individuals and families will achieve their dreams through meaningful assistance at District 4 HRDC.*