

# Community Action of Laramie County Needs Assessment

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Action of Laramie County (CALC) is dedicated to eliminating poverty by empowering people through education, advocacy, crisis intervention, and by providing opportunities toward self-sufficiency. To further its mission and inform strategic planning, the agency commissioned a comprehensive needs assessment to collect detailed information on the needs of Laramie County's people. This report presents the results.

The needs assessment consisted of three components:

- Collection and reporting on existing data such as poverty rates
- Focus groups
- Stakeholder interviews

Existing data was drawn from several sources including the US Census, Community Commons, and Kids Count among others. The data collection process also included searching each concept of interest to uncover other potentially useful sources of data. In addition to the quantitative data collection three focus groups were conducted with CALC staff and clients, and five stakeholder interviews were conducted with CALC's community partners.

The CALC comprehensive community needs assessment uncovered a host of unmet needs in Cheyenne and Laramie County. While some of those needs were expected, others were a surprise. The needs assessment also identified how those needs intertwine in a way that makes our problems unique, complex, and somewhat difficult to address.

There are many issues common among people with limited economic means and resources, and this is true for Cheyenne and Laramie County. These issues include: lack of transportation, lack of affordable housing, and issues related to mental health and substance abuse. But there was also a call for strong leadership to spearhead an effort to address these issues. Community members who participated in this assessment voiced strong support for transformational leadership and bedrock infrastructure to address and oversee issues related to economic vulnerability. The community has numerous resources, including strong advocates who are dedicated to helping its citizens who struggle to meet the challenges of everyday life.

This report underscores how, in so many cases, one need leads to another, which then snowballs creating a third, fourth or even fifth need. The simple closing of a neighborhood grocery store can create a multitude of problems for people of limited financial means. Having money for food may have been their biggest and only food problem. When stores close, these individuals face a new complication trying to shop for groceries. If they lack a car, they may find themselves shopping in a convenience store for less nutritious food that's more expensive, if there is even one near enough for them to walk to. Maps in this report show that even those who are eligible for government programs like SNAP may be far from SNAP Authorized Retailers. If the bus isn't accessible, they may have to procure a cab they can't afford or inconvenience a friend or relative to get to a grocery store. And the bus routes, rules, and operating hours inadequately serve this population in our community.

*"Most of our clients use public transportation which makes it very difficult for them to get their groceries home. Many of the bus drivers won't let people who have food boxes or bags of groceries back on the bus because the food takes up too much room, and the groceries can become projectiles if the bus were to stop too quickly."*





\$750/month. While \$750 a month doesn't sound like a lot for housing, it does require a salary of \$30,000 per year not to be "house poor". The housing shortage is further compounded by the fact that many financially vulnerable people and families are unable to afford or pass the required background checks necessary to secure a rental property. Several interviewees complained about having to pay \$30 for each application, once they have been turned down because they are unable to pass the background check.

### Lack of Affordable Health Care

The majority of people who are financially vulnerable cannot afford even the cheapest health insurance, regardless of federal mandate. Even if the healthcare is free, there are still copayments and prescription charges that are out of reach. There are very few health care providers willing to work on a sliding fee scale, especially for specialty care such as vision, dental, and prescription services. The organizations that do offer services on a sliding fee scale have waiting lists in excess of 90 days.

### Education

Three key issues in education were identified. The first is in early childhood education. While new pre-K programs have opened, overall, there is a perceived lack of high-quality, early childhood education to ensure more children are prepared to enter elementary school, setting the stage for them to be able to successfully complete high school. Second, there is a noticeable lack in vocational and life skills training for individuals not pursuing a college education. High school currently does not prepare youth who are not going to college for self-sufficiency. Technology and automation have had a huge impact on the workforce. Every year there are fewer and fewer jobs for people without college degrees. And the jobs that are available don't pay enough for a person, even with just one child, to live independently in Cheyenne and Laramie County. Finally, individuals who are economically disadvantaged and trying to improve themselves have a higher likelihood of enrolling in a non-accredited learning institution to earn a "certificate" or associate's degree that they believe will help them advance. Unfortunately, most of these certificates and degrees are not recognized and not helpful for securing employment, leaving the person who fell into this "academic trap" feeling depressed, defeated, and in debt.

### Transportation

People are grateful to have the bus system in the city but it remains severely limiting. People who need to use it daily are often the ones who can least afford the fixed route monthly pass at \$45. Even if they can afford the pass, the service hours do not accommodate people who work nights, Sundays or holidays. Because there is a fixed route, people whose jobs start at 7:00 am or earlier find it difficult to get to work on time resulting in job loss. Interviewees who use the bus service expressed a need for additional transfer stations that could speed up travel time.

### **Emerging Issues**

Many of the issues that appear in this report are tied to an "urban" shift taking place in Cheyenne. While Wyoming is historically considered a Frontier State, Laramie County shares its border with Colorado, which has experienced substantial "northward" growth along the Front Range. Cheyenne and Laramie County have also experienced substantial growth. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the issues the community faces are more "urban" than they have been in the past.

## Population Growth

Laramie County has grown substantially and as of July 2016 had nearly 100,000 people. Similarly, Cheyenne grew by about 10,000 people in the period from 2010 to 2016, and Denver's metropolitan area continues to grow and reach its way northward. Unlike other, more rural counties, Laramie County is at the intersection of two highways and two railroads, and it is within easy reach of Denver's urban sprawl. Not surprisingly, some of this growth has been related to an upsurge in crime and homelessness.

## Increased Crime

There is much discussion throughout the community that Cheyenne has seen increased crime. The Cheyenne Police Department's map in the Safety section of this report shows hundreds upon hundreds of property and quality of life crimes (disorderly conduct, drug, and liquor calls) in Cheyenne. In a recent article, the Chief of Police, Brian Kozak, noted that there are a number of factors that contribute to the City's crime numbers, not the least of which is being in close proximity to large Front Range cities and the transient population seen in this city.

Similar reports have come out of the County's District Attorney's office, which indicated that it handled more than 4200 cases last year, which is up more than any year since 2005. While misdemeanor cases fell, there was a sharp increase in the number of juvenile cases as well as the number of felony crimes. The increase in felony crimes was attributed to aggravated burglaries, and an increase in felony drug offenses. It is also believed that the legalization of marijuana in Colorado has contributed to increased crime rates in Cheyenne like it has in Colorado.

## Homelessness

Despite the rugged climate in Cheyenne, it has a fairly substantial, growing homeless population. While the state's homeless population hovers at around 900, approximately one third of the homeless population is in Cheyenne, resulting in both homeless shelters operating at capacity. The homeless focus group uncovered many of the obstacles faced by this population, not the least of which are getting valid identification, and getting an appointment at the local mental health center, which tends to have a 90-day waiting list. Transportation was also mentioned as a major issue. Even though the bus stops outside the shelter it does not run on Saturday evenings or Sundays, which presents a barrier to securing and keeping most retail jobs.

## **Recommendations**

### **Spearhead the Elimination of Economic Hardship**

The community wants CALC to be an active leader. Stakeholders and organizations want to work with an agency that will take a dynamic role leading the community's efforts to address poverty. They want CALC to have a greater presence. At the same time, they want to understand CALC's role better, and to really know what services it provides and to whom. The community partners we interviewed are ready for CALC to take responsibility for unifying community efforts. The current rebranding effort is a good first step in this direction as are plans to engage in long-term strategic planning activities.

### **Broaden Case Management Services**

The intensive case management program serves the neediest of the needy but there are

many more individuals for whom case management services are appropriate and for whom they could be beneficial. We strongly urge CALC to consider expanding its case management services and its target population. Case management interactions that employ motivational interviewing techniques and coping skills enhancement training can go a long way helping vulnerable individuals navigate the frequent “bumps in the road” that might otherwise derail them. This expansion could easily dovetail with the next recommendation, making both efforts more effective.

## **Create an Early Intervention Service Program**

Early intervention is a very low, but extremely effective level of care on the continuum of substance abuse treatment services. It can be delivered in a variety of settings, often known as “opportunistic”. That is, settings where an individual shows up seeking help for another reason, but that reason is directly or indirectly related to a behavioral healthcare problem.

In this level of care individuals are identified who are at risk of developing a substance use disorder but are not yet diagnosable. Two simple screening questions become flags for either alcohol or drug use that has the potential to, but has not yet, become problematic. Individuals who screen positive can then be given a brief, problem-specific intervention that uses an empathetic style to facilitate change. This simple, cost effective intervention capitalizes on an individual's motivation to change. The intervention attempts to move them forward in the change process.

This intervention style has been applied to a variety of behaviors. Generally, outcomes aim at changing behavior, thinking differently about a situation, and referring a person to treatment if it is warranted. It has also been successfully used to encourage weight loss and proper nutrition, increased physical activity, smoking cessation, and various types of “adherence” programs, including but not limited to medication adherence.

The CALC infrastructure is well-suited to integrating a simple, evidence-based service like this and there are significant grants that can facilitate adopting and implementing this practice.

## **Summary**

The challenges CALC faces as it reorganizes its service portfolio and adjusts to both client and community reactions to these changes are not unusual or unexpected. There are many challenges working with an economically vulnerable population. Resources ebb and flow, but the need to address both the root causes and structural barriers to improved self-sufficiency never change, the approach simply evolves with the circumstances.

It is important for CALC to take a close, measured look at its service portfolio and consider ways it can modify and expand what it is doing to meet basic but critical service gaps. CALC is also encouraged to consider the community's request for it to be the leader in addressing economic hardship in Laramie County. Providing policy, service, and advocacy leadership will strengthen CALC's ability to positively impact quality of life among the people it serves. Most importantly, CALC is in a unique position to transition from an organization that has traditionally provided needed financial assistance to an organization focused on providing a “hand up” the ladder of self-sufficiency.

## INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Community Action of Laramie County (CALC) is dedicated to eliminating poverty by empowering people through education, advocacy, crisis intervention, and by providing opportunities toward self-sufficiency. To further its mission and inform strategic planning, the agency commissioned a comprehensive needs assessment to collect detailed information on the needs of Laramie County's people. This report presents the results.

The needs assessment consisted of three components:

- Collection and reporting on existing data such as poverty rates
- Focus groups
- Stakeholder interviews

Existing data was drawn from a large variety of sources such as Community Commons, the US Census Bureau, Wyoming Kids Count, and numerous others. In addition to searching well-known sources, a search was undertaken for each concept of interest to locate any additional sources of data. Each source was reviewed and the most salient statistics were selected. To examine trends, the report presents the most recent six years of data wherever possible. Careful attention was paid to data quality. Estimates or indicators that had a very large error margin, were not recent, or had another quality concern were not selected, and a better data source was located. In some cases, several different sources all drew from one underlying data source. When this occurred, the original data source was located and the most recent and relevant statistics were culled.

### Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

Datacorp conducted three focus groups and six key informant interviews. The groups and interviews were conducted between October 2017 and January 2018. The tables below list each focus group and interview and indicates what type it was.

#### *Focus Groups Conducted*

| Needs Assessment Task | Participating Organization         | Group Type       |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Focus Group           | Comea Shelter                      | Homeless Clients |
| Focus Group           | Community Action of Laramie County | Program Staff    |
| Focus Group           | Community Action of Laramie County | Program Clients  |

#### *Key Informant Interviews Conducted*

| Needs Assessment Task   | Participating Organization      | Service Partner                |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Key Informant Interview | Needs Inc.                      | Food Pantry                    |
| Key Informant Interview | Stride Learning Center          | Education                      |
| Key Informant Interview | Volunteers of America           | Veteran Housing                |
| Key Informant Interview | Northern Star Counseling Agency | Behavioral Healthcare Services |
| Key Informant Interview | Climb Wyoming                   | Career Services                |
| Key Informant Interview | Cheyenne Police Department      | Public Safety                  |

The questions that were developed for the focus groups varied to reflect the type of participants and their needs. These results are reported for each group. The same set of questions was used for the six stakeholder interviews. These results of the stakeholder interviews are reported collectively.

The qualitative data appears after the quantitative data section of this report. For each group and for the stakeholder interviews the question we asked is listed, emergent themes are identified, and the responses are summarized. Quotes that illustrate the key issues appear in text boxes.

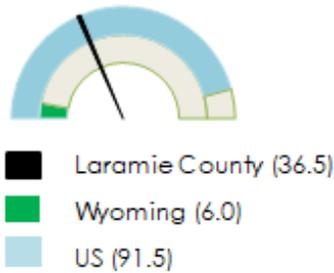
The qualitative data is also integrated throughout the quantitative data portion of this report. It is used to explain findings, and to provide timely evidence in support of the challenges the CALC clients face navigating daily life.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Demographics Overview

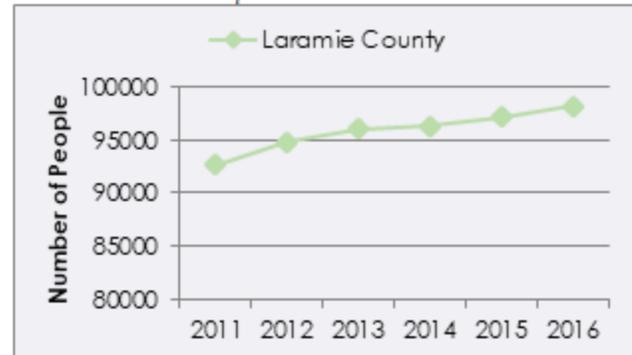
Laramie County has been steadily growing and had an estimated population of just over 98,137 people as of July 1, 2016. While population density is less than the US average, Laramie County is still far more densely populated than Wyoming as a whole. The county is predominately white but also has a sizable Hispanic/Latino population.

Number of People per Square Mile



Source: US Census Bureau and Open Data Network.com

Trends in Total Population



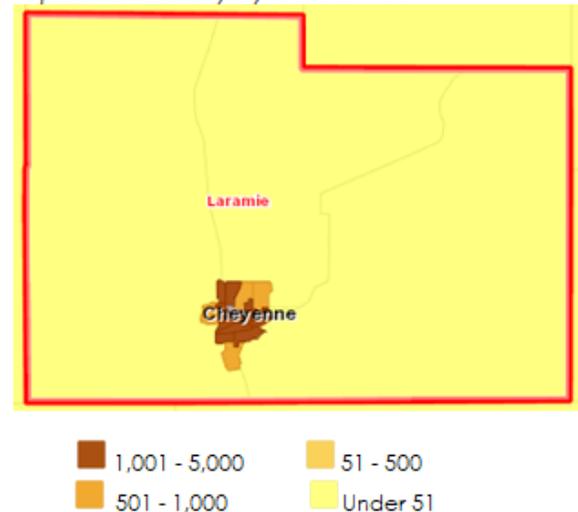
Source: US Census Bureau, American Fact Finder

Population by Age, Gender, and Ethnicity

|                                  | Percent |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| <b>Gender</b>                    |         |
| Male                             | 50.5    |
| Female                           | 49.5    |
| <b>Age</b>                       |         |
| Under 5                          | 6.5     |
| 5-17                             | 17.0    |
| 18-24                            | 9.8     |
| 25-44                            | 26.5    |
| 45-64                            | 26.1    |
| 65 and Over                      | 14.1    |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity*</b>           |         |
| White                            | 91.4    |
| African American                 | 3.9     |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 1.9     |
| Asian                            | 2.0     |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander     | 0.5     |
| Some other race                  | 4.1     |
| Hispanic/Latino (any race)       | 14.2    |

\*Respondents could check more than one race  
 Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

Population Density by Census Tract

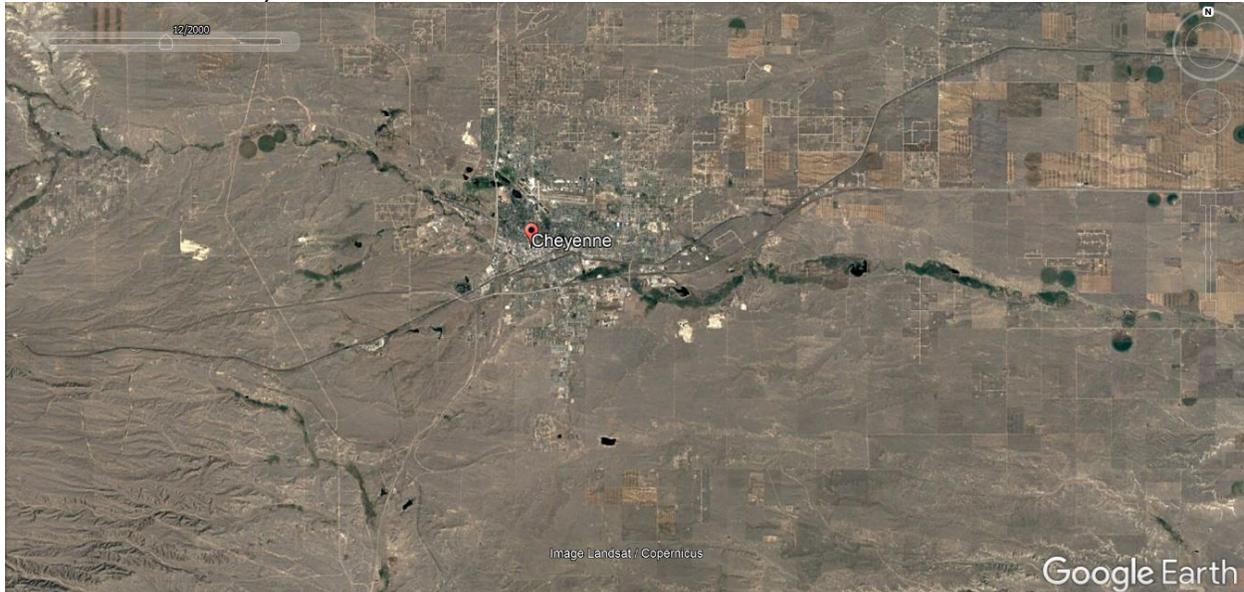


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons

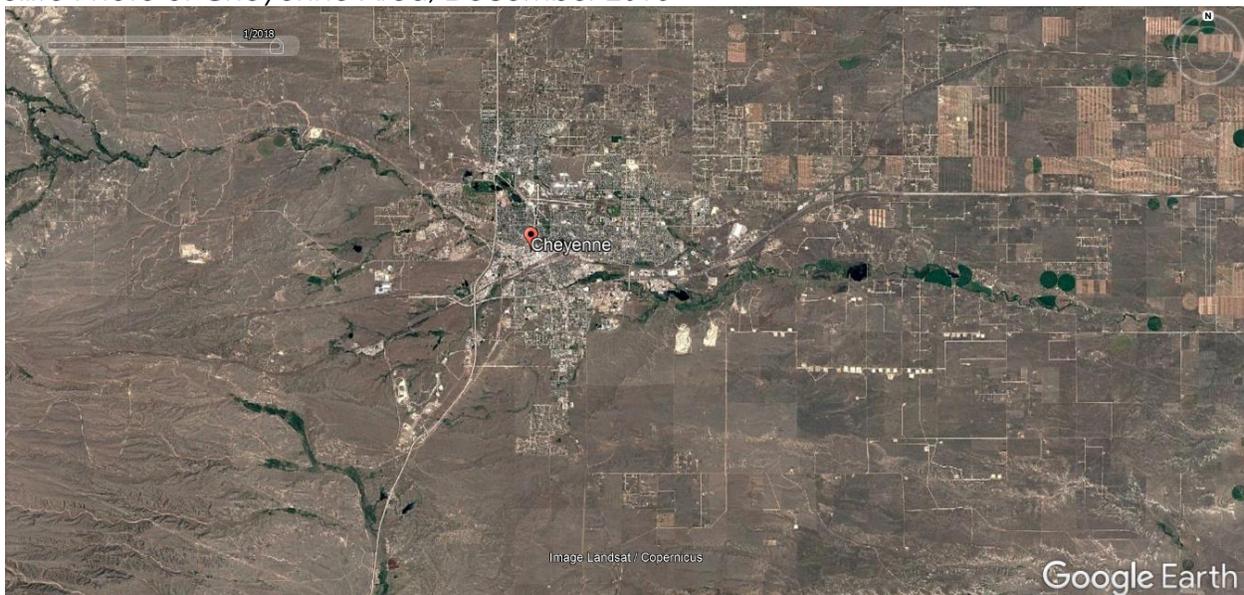
### Demographic Changes: Population Distribution

Measuring population distribution is challenging in years between the census, when accurate data for smaller local areas is not available. However, satellite photos from Google Earth tell a clear story. The 2000 and 2016 photos together show a pattern of increased development radiating outwards from the center of Cheyenne. The city itself is more densely populated and the surrounding areas are also experiencing some development. The 2016 photo also demonstrates that there are still areas of the county that are more rural and sparsely populated.

Satellite Photo of Cheyenne Area, December 2000



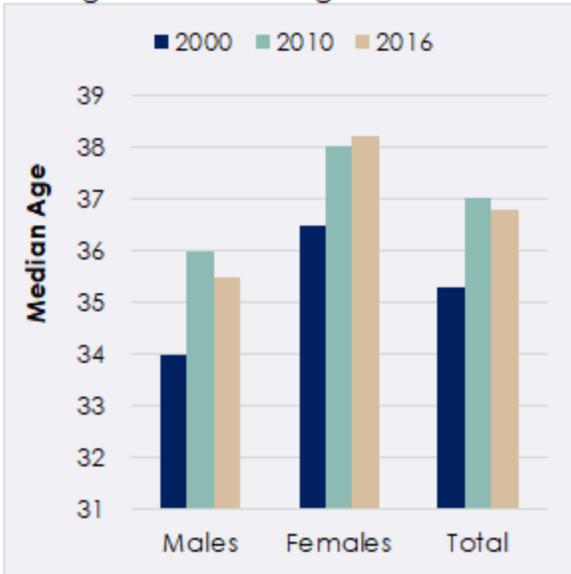
Satellite Photo of Cheyenne Area, December 2016



### Demographic Changes: Age

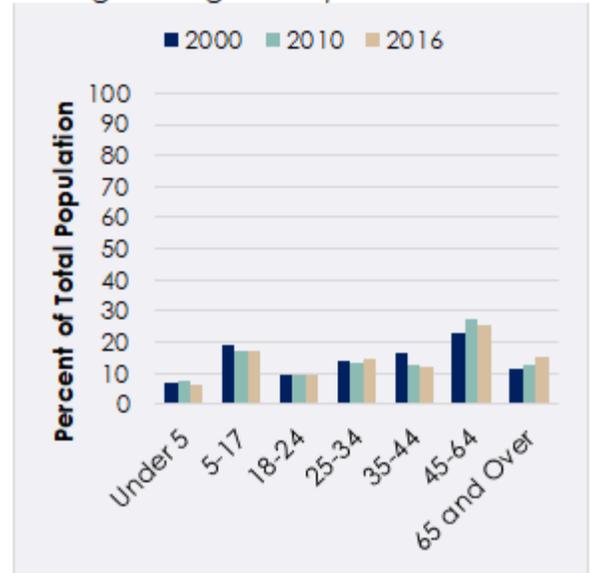
A complex picture emerges for age in Laramie County. While the median age increased between 2000 and 2010, the trend appears to have leveled off more recently, particularly for males. This leveling off occurred despite a steady increase in the percentage of people aged 65 and over. It appears that a slight increase in the ages 25-34 category, and a decrease in the percentage of people aged 35-64, offset the aging trend in the past few years.

Changes in Median Age Since 2000



Source: US Census Bureau

Changes in Age Composition Since 2000

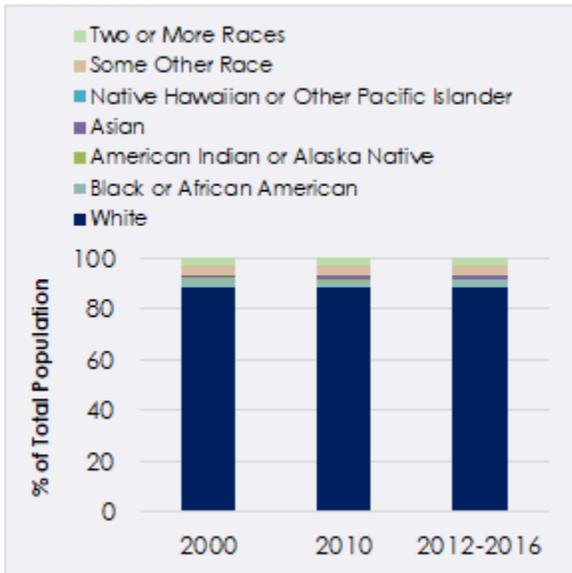


Source: US Census Bureau

### Demographic Changes: Race & Ethnicity

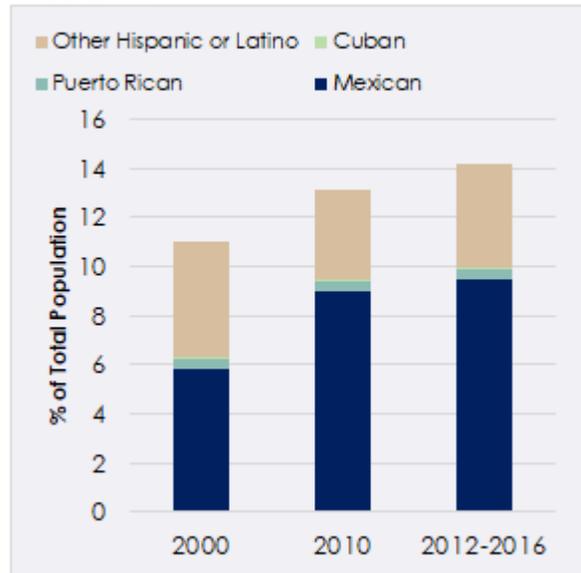
Laramie County is becoming slightly more diverse as it grows in population. Although the overall racial composition remains almost unchanged, the proportion of Hispanics/Latinos of any race has increased from 10.9% to 14.2%. Mexicans are the largest and fastest growing Hispanic/Latino group in Laramie County.

Changes in Racial Composition Since 2000



Source: US Census Bureau

Changes in Hispanic/Latino Populations Since 2000



Source: US Census Bureau

# POVERTY

## Poverty Overview

Poverty rates in Laramie County are lower than the national average and have remained stable over time. Nevertheless, 10% of Laramie County's residents are in poverty, accounting for 10,000 people. Poverty rates are highest among females, Hispanics and younger people. The South Cheyenne area had the highest rate of poverty.

Many key informant interviewees indicated they are seeing more and more individuals who are from families experiencing multi-generational poverty. Members of these families have high probabilities of not possessing a high school diploma or a GED, have an increasingly difficult time meeting their own personal needs, and tend to have high expectations for receiving free services.

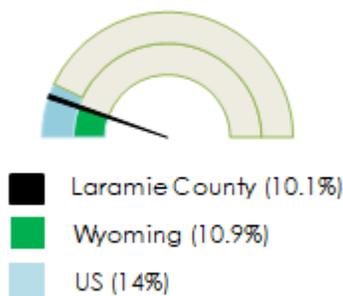
The Poverty Level Guidelines 2017: Annual Guidelines table can be used as reference when reviewing the data in this section of the report.

*Poverty Level Guidelines 2017: Annual Guidelines*

| Family Size                      | Medicaid Children Age 6-18 | Medicaid Pregnant Women and Children Age 0-5 | Medicaid Pregnant by Choice | WIC and TANF eligible | MCH and Kid Care CHIP |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Percent of Poverty Level:</b> | <b>133%</b>                | <b>154%</b>                                  | <b>159%</b>                 | <b>185%</b>           | <b>200%</b>           |
| 1                                | 16,040                     | 18,576                                       | 19,176                      | 22,311                | 24,120                |
| 2                                | 21,599                     | 25,020                                       | 25,824                      | 30,044                | 32,480                |
| 3                                | 27,159                     | 31,452                                       | 32,472                      | 37,777                | 40,840                |
| 4                                | 32,718                     | 37,884                                       | 39,120                      | 45,510                | 49,200                |
| 5                                | 38,277                     | 44,328                                       | 45,768                      | 53,243                | 57,560                |
| 6                                | 43,837                     | 50,760                                       | 52,416                      | 60,976                | 65,920                |
| 7                                | 49,396                     | 57,204                                       | 59,064                      | 68,709                | 74,280                |
| 8                                | 54,956                     | 63,636                                       | 65,700                      | 76,442                | 82,640                |

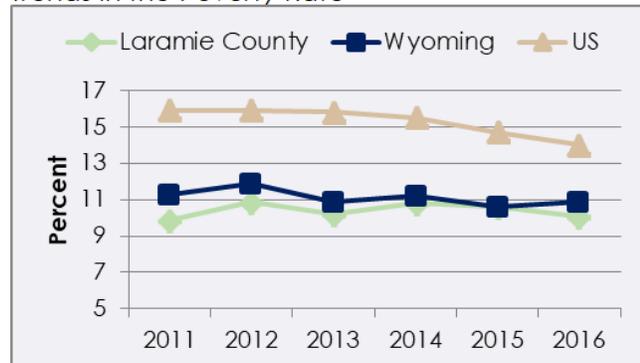
Source: Income Guidelines as Published in the Federal Register For TANF/Medicaid/MCH effective 4/1/2017

*State and Local Comparisons*



Source: US Census Bureau, Small Area

*Trends in the Poverty Rate*



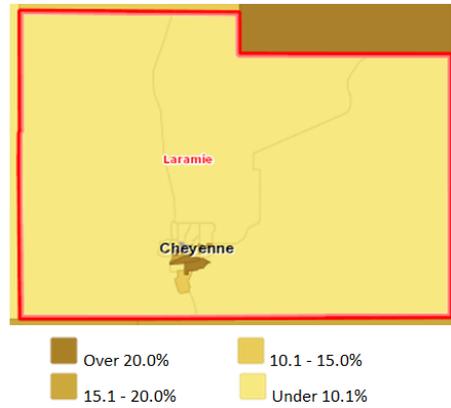
Source: US Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2016

Poverty by Age, Gender, and Ethnicity

|                                  | Percent in Poverty    |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                    |                       |
| Male                             | 8.7                   |
| Female                           | 12.2                  |
| <b>Age</b>                       |                       |
| Under 18                         | 13.3                  |
| 18-34                            | 15.4                  |
| 35-64                            | 7.1                   |
| 65 and Over                      | 6.3                   |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity</b>            |                       |
| White                            | 9.7                   |
| African American                 | 10.6                  |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | Estimate not reliable |
| Asian                            | 4.9                   |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander     | Estimate not reliable |
| Some other race alone            | 20.3                  |
| Two or more races                | 13.2                  |
| Hispanic/Latino (any race)       | 15.5                  |

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

Percent of Population Below the Poverty Level

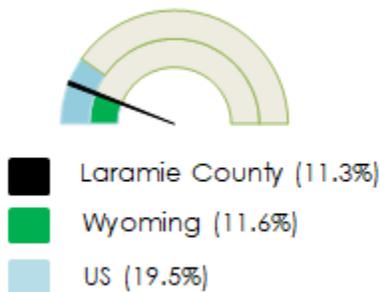


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons

### Poverty: Ages 0-17

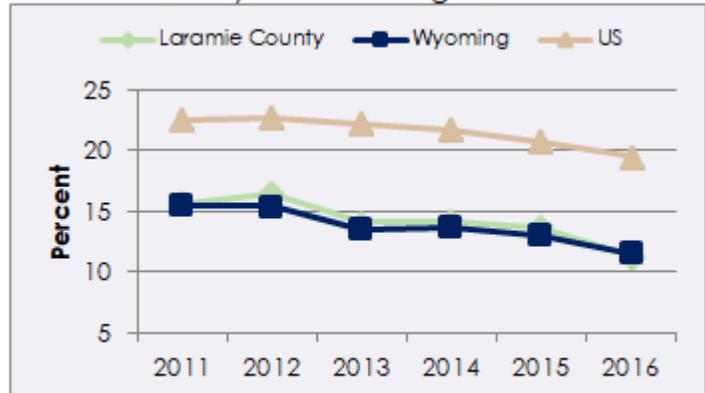
According to the latest Census Bureau estimates, 2,544 children in Laramie County lived in poverty during 2016. This translates to roughly 11% of all children living in poverty. Poverty among children in households headed by single females is particularly high at 42%. Poverty rates are also high in several census tracts on the south side of the city.

Poverty Rate among Children 0-18



Source: US Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2016

Trends in Poverty Rates among Children 0-18



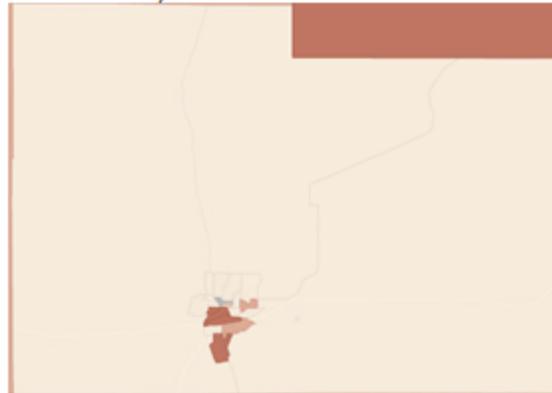
Source: US Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2016

### Additional Child Poverty Statistics

|   | Percent in Poverty |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>   |                    |
| Male  | 12.6               |
| Female  | 14.1               |
| <b>Age</b>  |                    |
| Under 5   | 18.1               |
| 17-May  | 11.5               |
| <b>Type of Household</b>                                    |                    |
| In married-couple family household                          | 4.3                |
| In male householder, no wife present, family household      | 3.6                |
| In female householder, no husband present, family household | 42.2               |

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

### Percent of Population Under 18 Below the Poverty Level

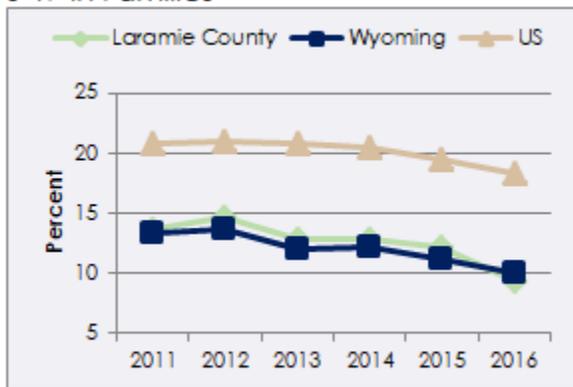


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons

### Poverty: Ages 5-17

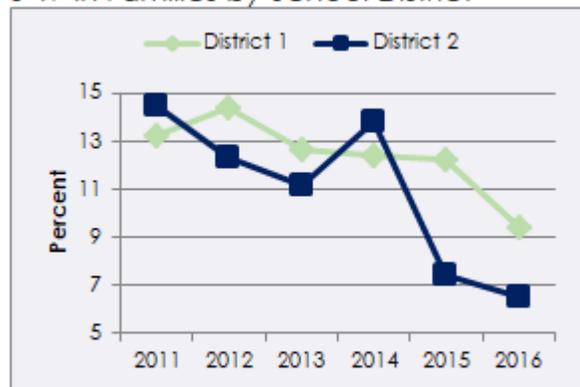
In Laramie County, poverty rates for children ages 5 to 17 have been trending downwards since 2011. Estimates from the US Census Bureau also show a downward trend in both school districts. The downward trend in Laramie District 2 appears to be steeper than in Laramie District 1.

Trends in Poverty Rates among Children 5-17 in Families



Source: US Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2016

Trends in Poverty Rates among Children 5-17 in Families by School District



Source: US Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2016

### Poverty: Ages 18 and Over

An estimated 7,153 adults lived in poverty in Laramie County in 2016. In contrast to child rates, adult poverty rates increased until 2014 and have not declined since then. Poverty rates were higher among people aged 18-34, showing that poverty for working aged populations is an issue. Poverty rates were also high for the economically vulnerable – for example those with

less education and those without full-time, year round work. Poverty rates were also higher for females.

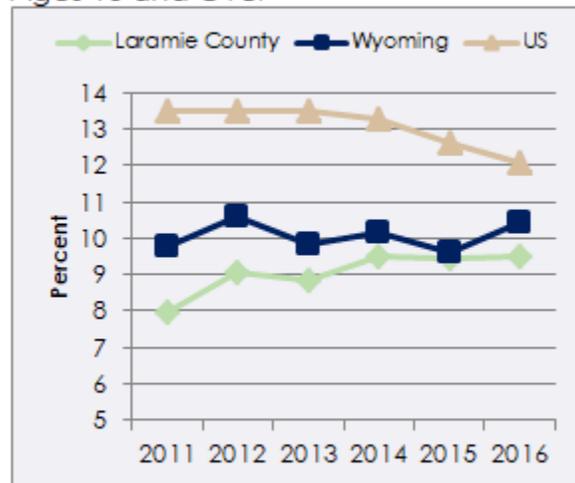
### Poverty Rate among Adults Ages 18 and Over



- Laramie County (9.5%)
- Wyoming (10.4%)
- US (12.1%)

Source: US Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2016

### Trends in Poverty Rates among Adults Ages 18 and Over



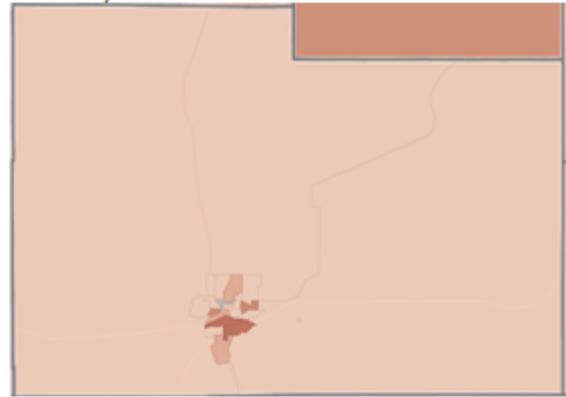
Source: US Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2016

### Additional Adult Poverty Statistics

|  | Percent in Poverty |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>Age</b>   |                    |
| 18 to 64 years                                     | 10.2               |
| 18 to 34 years                                     | 15.4               |
| 35 to 64 years                                     | 7.1                |
| 65 years and over                                  | 6.3                |
| <b>Education (25 and older)</b>                    |                    |
| Did not complete high school                       | 21.6               |
| High school grad/GED                               | 11.5               |
| Some college, associate's degree                   | 8                  |
| Bachelor's degree or higher                        | 2.2                |
| <b>Employment Status and Gender (16 and older)</b> |                    |
| Employed   | 5.5                |
| Male   | 4                  |
| Female   | 7                  |
| Unemployed   | 31.6               |
| Male   | 27.8               |
| Female   | 37.1               |
| <b>Past Year Work History (16-64)</b>              |                    |
| Worked full-time, year-round                       | 2.6                |
| Worked less than full-time, year-round             | 17.1               |
| Did not work                                       | 24.5               |

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

### Percent of Population 18-64 Below the Poverty Level



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons

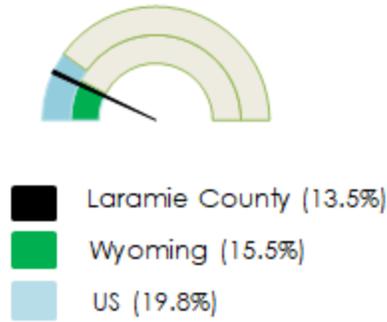
"We have a lot of people who are falling through the cracks because they are functioning but simply don't make enough money to make ends meet."

## ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY

A substantial percentage of people live below or near the federal poverty level. Roughly, 4% of individuals have incomes that are only 50% of the poverty level and are therefore in dire need of services. A total of 22% of the population is living 185% below the poverty level. These countywide figures, however, understate the extent of low-income areas in Cheyenne. Most areas in the city have over 38% of their residents living 200% or below the federal poverty level.

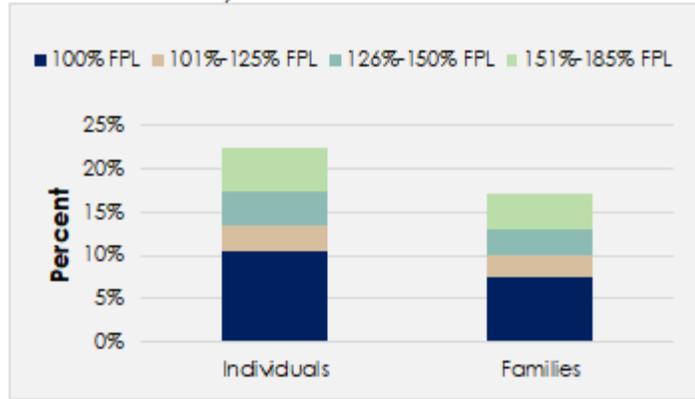
Clients' thoughts on avoiding economic hardship were focused on two major categories: marketable job skills and accessibility to truly affordable medical and behavioral health care. Clients overall felt that addressing these two key issues would make the most significant impact on reducing economic hardship. They commented again how much Cheyenne needs jobs that are not part of the service economy, and that pay enough money to support a family. They also felt strongly that providing truly affordable and easily accessible care to everyone who needs medical treatment, prescriptions, or behavioral health care would solve significant problems in our community.

Percent of Population Below 125% of Poverty Level



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

Percent of Population by Poverty Level in Laramie County



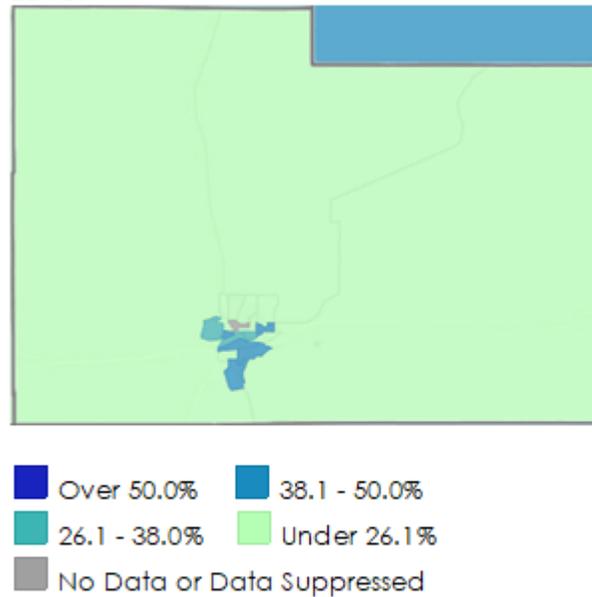
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

Percent of Laramie County Population Below Specified Poverty Levels

|                       | Percent |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Below 50 Percent FPL  | 4       |
| Below 100 Percent FPL | 10      |
| Below 125 Percent FPL | 14      |
| Below 150 Percent FPL | 17      |
| Below 185 Percent FPL | 22      |
| Below 200 Percent FPL | 26      |
| Below 300 Percent FPL | 43      |
| Below 400 Percent FPL | 58      |

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

Percent of Population 200% Below Poverty Level



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons

*"We have a lot of families that experience multi-generational bad decision-making that becomes ingrained in how the family functions."*

**INCOME COMPARED TO COST OF LIVING**

Laramie County has a strong economy, which is an asset. Median household income in the county has been rising over time and is greater than the United States as a whole. Inequality of income, as measured by the Gini index, is slightly lower than the nation and the state. Median earnings, however, show considerable wage gaps both for gender and education. In addition, the cost of living in the county does not appear to offset these wage gaps. The cost of living index shows that food is slightly more expensive in Laramie County than nationally,

while other costs are only slightly lower.

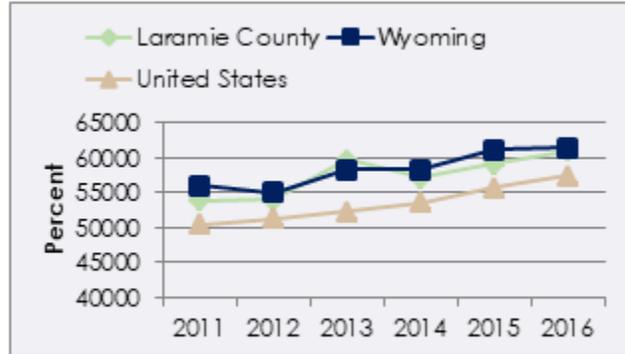
**Gini Coefficient of Inequality**



- Laramie County (.41)
- Wyoming (.43)
- US (.48)

Note: Higher scores indicate greater inequality  
 Source: Policymaps.com using Census data

**Trends in Median Household Income**



Source: US Census Bureau, American Fact Finder

*“Most jobs available to people without a college degree pay just enough money to force a loss of benefits but do not pay enough money to make ends meet.”*

**Median Earnings by Gender and Education Among Adults 25 or Older with Earnings**

|   | Both Genders | Males   | Females |
|---|--------------|---------|---------|
| All levels of education                     | 38,521       | 46,248  | 32,234  |
| Less than high school graduate              | 26,204       | 40,504* | 14,956* |
| High school graduate (includes equivalency) | 30,450       | 35,964  | 23,939  |
| Some college or associate's degree          | 36,035       | 44,247  | 29,720  |
| Bachelor's degree                           | 49,588       | 56,172  | 40,057  |
| Graduate or professional degree             | 62,390       | 76,063  | 59,885  |

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016

\*Estimates for this category have large margins of error

**Cost of Living Index**

|                        | Laramie County | National Average |
|------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Overall Cost of Living | 94.3           | 100              |
| Grocery                | 103.3          | 100              |
| Housing                | 89.9           | 100              |
| Utilities              | 99             | 100              |
| Transportation         | 86.6           | 100              |
| Health                 | 96.9           | 100              |
| Miscellaneous          | 94.8           | 100              |

Source: Data from the Council for Community and Economic Research published by [www.rightplace.org](http://www.rightplace.org)

*“People would not ask for assistance. You would be able to work and your job money would be enough to pay the cost of living.”*

**UNEMPLOYMENT & EMPLOYMENT**

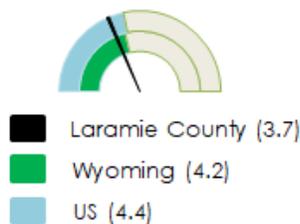
Unemployment rates in Laramie County are lower than the national average and have been falling steadily over the past few years. Although the overall economy is strong, the picture is less rosy for the economically vulnerable. The less educated continue to experience higher unemployment rates, as do those with disabilities. More than one quarter of those who were poor in the last 12 months also were unemployed during the past year. Turning to employment, a mixed picture emerges for lower wage workers. Some sectors such as mining and manufacturing experienced large increases. Other sectors such as hospitality and trade, including retail, contracted during the last year.

Interviewees generally agreed that employment opportunities in Cheyenne and Laramie

County are largely focused on government or service sector jobs, and that there is a shortage of high paying jobs. Most jobs available to people without a college degree pay just enough money to force a loss of benefits but do not pay enough money to make ends meet. In addition, interviewees felt there were not enough opportunities for job advancement that people can afford.

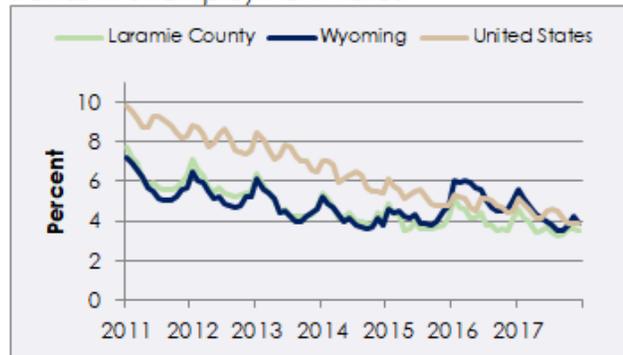
*"We don't have enough jobs that pay a livable wage which puts a huge strain on peoples' ability to parent their children with the attention they need."*

### Unemployment Rate 2017 Annual Average



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics and Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Research & Planning

### Trends in Unemployment Rates



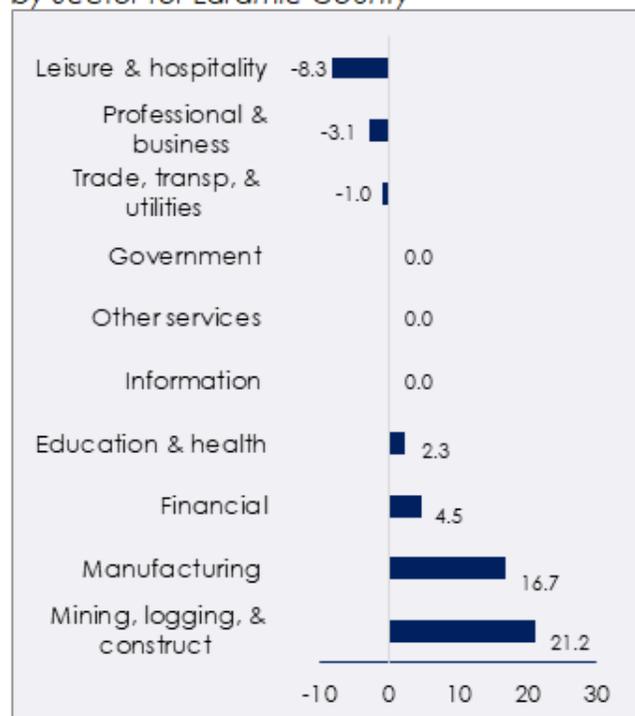
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics and Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Research & Planning

### Unemployment by Demographics

|  | Unemployment Rate |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                              |                   |
| Male                                       | 5.3               |
| Female                                     | 4.6               |
| <b>Education</b>                           |                   |
| Less than high school                      | 14.0*             |
| High school grad                           | 7.2               |
| Some college or associate's degree         | 3.8               |
| Bachelor's degree or higher                | 1.7               |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity</b>                      |                   |
| White                                      | 5.0               |
| Hispanic/Latino (any race)                 | 6.4               |
| <b>Poverty Status</b>                      |                   |
| At or below poverty level (past 12 months) | 26.0              |
| Above poverty level                        | 3.4               |
| <b>Disability Status</b>                   |                   |
| With any disability                        | 10.9              |

\*Estimate has a large margin of error  
 Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

### Percent Change in Employment Between November 2016 and November 2017 by Sector for Laramie County



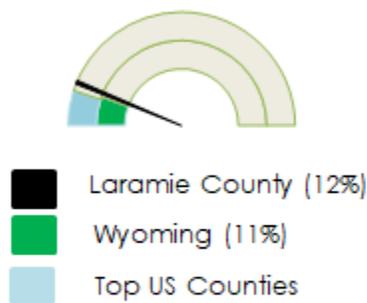
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Cheyenne Area Economic Summary

## BARRIERS TO WORK

A high percentage of youth in Laramie County are neither employed nor in school, impeding their prospects. Other common barriers include speaking English less than very well and lacking a high school diploma. As shown in the map, job training and adult education (including ESL) are only in a few locations. The most common barrier of all, however, was substance abuse. Wait lists for treatment are a major issue.

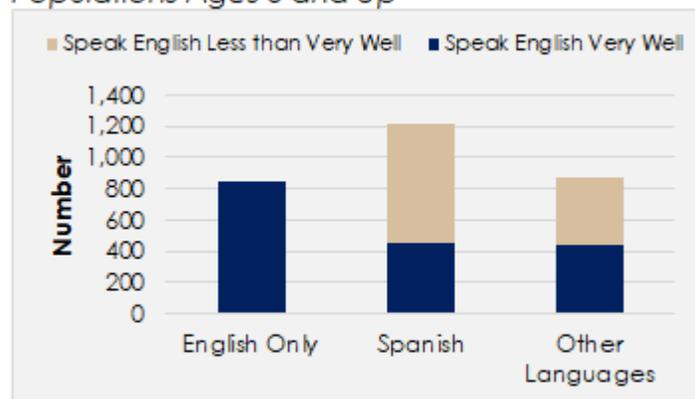
Interviewees identified numerous barriers to work including: lack of permanent housing, lack of affordable childcare, lack of affordable transportation that matched with working hours, criminal history, lack of job skills, and jobs that do not pay enough to cover the costs for actually going to work. Many people felt the job market lacked diversity and did not offer enough living wage jobs for people without college degrees.

### Disconnected Youth\*



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings, using data from Measure of America  
 \*Youth ages 16-24 who are neither working nor in school

### Self-Reported English for Foreign Born Populations Ages 5 and Up



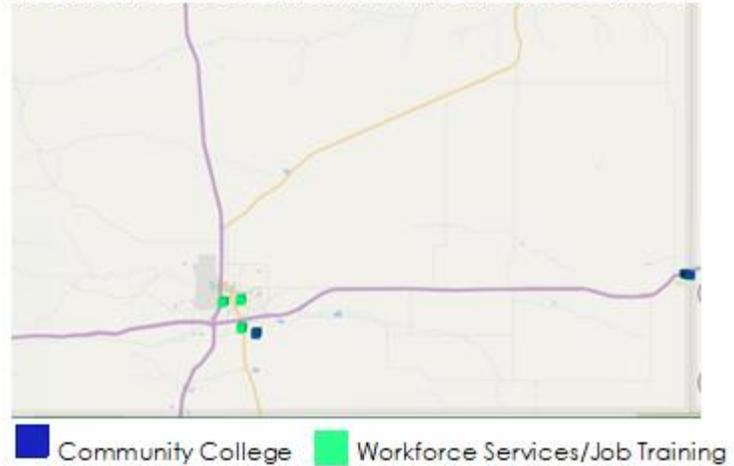
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

Percent of Laramie County Population with Selected Barriers to Work

| Indicator                                   | Number |
|---|--------|
| Households with No Car                      | 1,532  |
| Adults with Less than High School Education | 5,863  |
| Adults 18-64 with a Disability              | 5,707  |
| Adults with Substance Abuse Problem         | 6,910  |
| Adults with Serious Mental Illness          | 3,190  |
| Adults who are Homeless                     | 319    |

Source: Substance abuse and mental illness: National Survey on Drug Use and Health Homeless: Comea Shelter Web Site  
 All other data: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

Locations of Education and Workforce Services



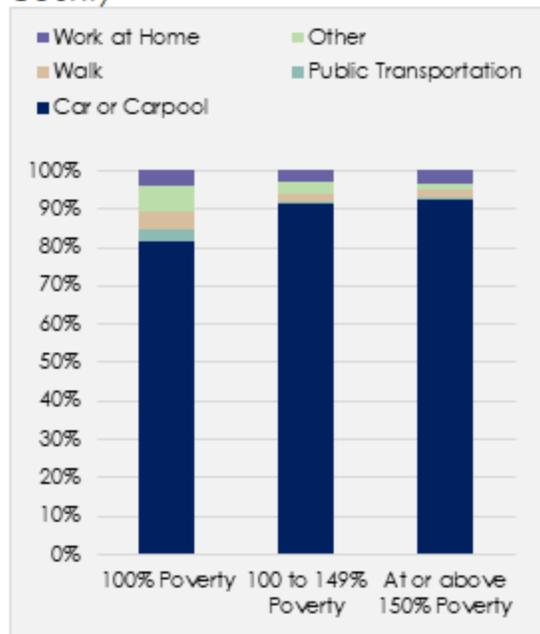
Source: Wyoming 211

**TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation poses challenges in Laramie County, particularly for those with limited incomes. Census data show over 80% of those in or near poverty drive to work by themselves or in a car pool, thereby burdening them with gas and maintenance costs. This result is not surprising given limited public transportation. Bus service is limited to Cheyenne and can require long trips and multiple transfers to cross-town.

Interviewees generally agreed that costs associated with owning an automobile are prohibitively high for many low-income people, and public transportation does not meet their needs. For example, costs for a car payment, insurance, gas, and routine maintenance can easily consume over half a person's take home pay if they are in a low-income job. Likewise, it is expensive to use public transportation and service hours are not conducive to evening or weekend work hours.

## Transportation to Work in Laramie County



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016 Estimates

## Public Transportation in Laramie County



Source: City of Cheyenne

## HOUSING

Issues related to housing were brought up in every key informant interview and by almost all focus group participants. The consensus is that there is a significant shortage of affordable housing, and the situation is worse for people who have a prior criminal history. Most interviewees stated their clients could not afford to pay more than \$750 inclusive per month for housing expenses.

### Availability

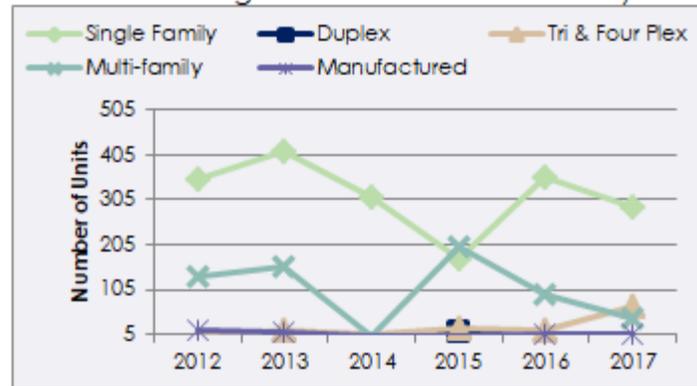
The data in this section reconfirm the affordable housing shortage documented by the City of Cheyenne's housing needs assessment (*Community Development Block Grant 2015 – 2019 Comprehensive Consolidated Plan*, May 2015). Apartments account for less than 18% of the county's housing units, and vacancy rates are low. The situation is particularly acute for subsidized housing. The Cheyenne Housing Authority (CHA) has a two-year wait list and is not currently issuing Section 8 vouchers. Several groups in Cheyenne and the Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) have been working with developers to encourage the building of affordable multi-family housing, but funding remains a barrier.

### Types of Housing Units

| Type            | Number of Units |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Single-family   | 28,072          |
| Apartment       | 5,036           |
| Townhome/condo  | 5,208           |
| Manufactured    | 3,579           |
| All other units | 48              |

Source: County assessor data reported in Western Economic Services (2017), 2017 Wyoming Housing Conditions.

### Trends in Building Permits in Laramie County



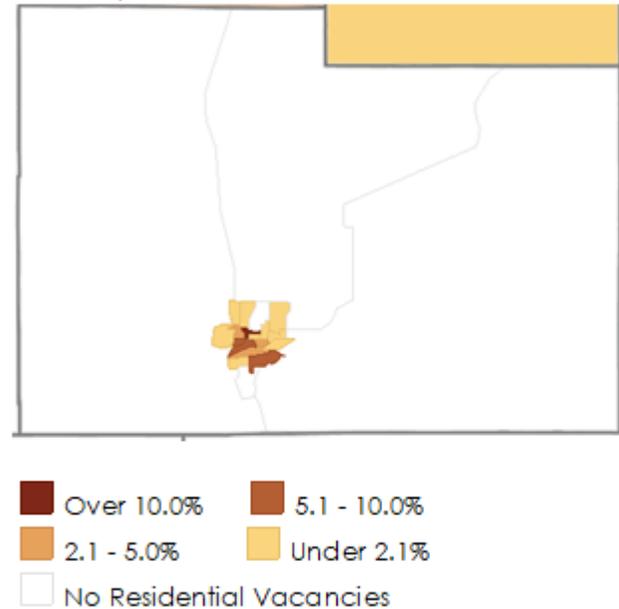
Source: Laramie County Planning and Development data reported in WCBEA@LCCC (2017), Economic Indicators for Greater Cheyenne, 2017.

### Rental Vacancy Rates in Laramie County, June 2017

|                            | Percent Vacant |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Subsidized Housing</b>  |                |
| Cheyenne Housing Authority | 0              |
| <b>Type of Rental Unit</b> |                |
| Single-family              | 1.4            |
| Duplex                     | 4.3            |
| Apartment                  | 3.8            |
| Mobile home                | 16.9           |
| Other                      | 3.6            |
| Unknown                    | 5.8            |
| <b>Number of Bedrooms</b>  |                |
| Efficiency                 | 0              |
| One                        | 1.4            |
| Two                        | 6              |
| Three                      | 5.5            |
| Four                       | 7.4            |
| Five                       | 0              |
| Unknown                    | 4.3            |

Sources: Subsidized housing information from Cheyennehousing.org, as of February 9, 2018. All other data from Western Economic Services, LLC (2017). The 2017 Wyoming Profile of Demographics, Economics, and Housing, Volume I.

### Addresses Identified as Vacant by US Postal Service, Q4-2016

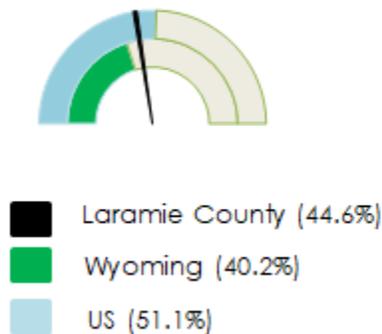


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons

## Cost: Rentals

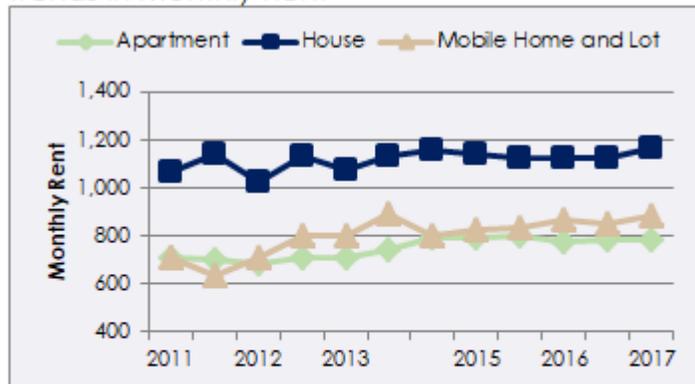
Monthly rent has been steadily climbing in Laramie County since 2011. The average rent for an apartment climbed from \$705 to \$782, a difference of almost \$1,000 per year. Low income families are cost burdened as a result. Over 90% of households earning less than \$20,000 per year spend 30% or more of their income on rent, while almost 70% of those in the \$20,000 to \$35,000 bracket are cost burdened.

Renting Households Spending 30% or More of their Income on Rent and Utilities



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates.

Trends in Monthly Rent



Source: Data from Wyoming Economic Analysis Division as reported by Western Economic Services, LLC (2017). The 2017 Wyoming Profile of Demographics, Economics, and Housing, Volume I. Data for year 2017 are directly from Wyoming Economic Analysis Division.

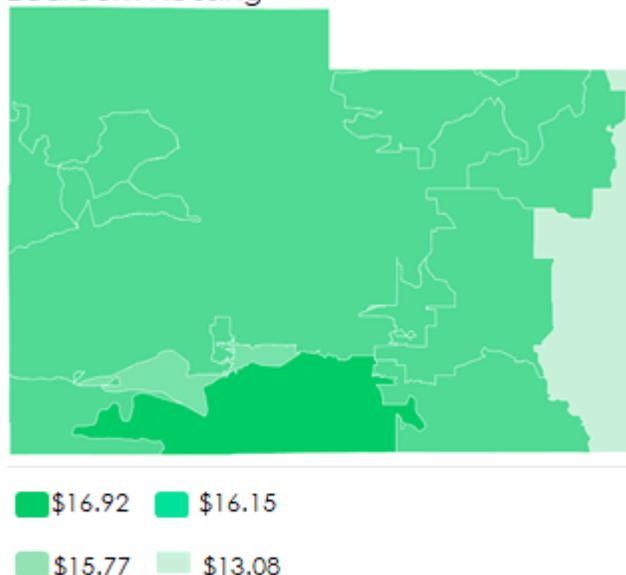
Cost Burdened Renters

| Renting Households Earning:                   | Percent Burdened |
|---|------------------|
| <\$20,000 per year                            | 90               |
| \$20,000 to \$34,999                          | 69               |
| \$35,000 to \$49,999                          | 35               |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999                          | 15               |
| \$75,000                                      | 2                |
| All renting households headed by a senior 65+ | 47.5             |

\*A household is cost burdened if it spends 30% or more of its income on rent, utilities, and heating fuels.

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

Hourly Wage Needed to Afford Two-Bedroom Housing



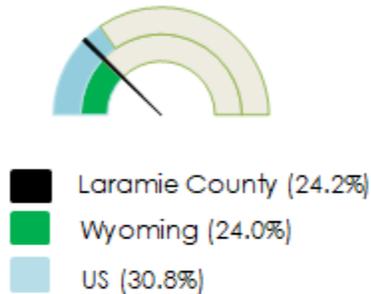
Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition, "Out of Reach 2017" data.

## Cost: Homeownership

Home prices have been steadily rising in Laramie County, leaving home ownership out of reach for many. Home ownership rates are lower in the older and more central parts of Cheyenne. Among those who do own their home, many are cost burdened, that is, spending

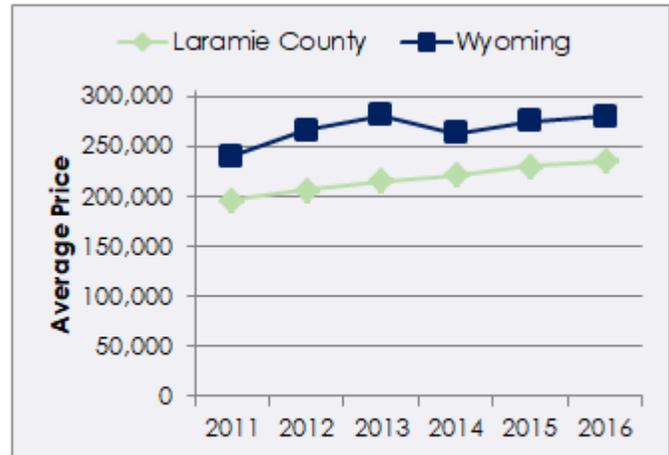
30% or more of their income on monthly housing costs. Over 75% of homeowners in the <\$20,000 income bracket are cost burdened, while in the \$35,000 to \$49,999 bracket, almost one third of home owners are cost burdened.

*Homeowners with Monthly Housing Costs of 30% or More of their Income*



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates. Monthly housing costs include mortgage payments, real estate tax, certain insurance payments, condominium fees, mobile home costs, fuels, and utilities. Homeowners without mortgages are excluded.

*Trends in Home Prices*



Source: Data from Wyoming Department of Revenue as reported by Western Economic Services, LLC (2017). The 2017 Wyoming Profile of Demographics, Economics, and Housing, Volume I.

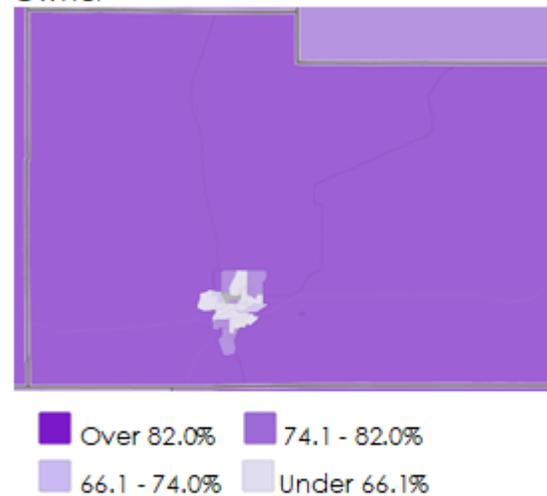
*Additional Statistics on Homeowners*

|   | Percent                 |
|---|-------------------------|
| <b>Economically Vulnerable Homeowners</b>                           |                         |
| Percent of single female families that own homes and are in poverty | 16.2                    |
| <b>Homeowning Households Earning:</b>                               | <b>% Cost Burdened*</b> |
| <\$20,000 per year  | 78                      |
| \$20,000 to \$34,999  | 46                      |
| \$35,000 to \$49,999  | 27                      |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999  | 20                      |
| \$75,000  | 4                       |
| All homeowning senior households (ages 65 and older)                | 23.1                    |

\*A household is cost burdened if it spends 30% or more of its income on monthly housing costs, including mortgage payments, real estate tax, certain insurance payments, condominium fees, mobile home costs, fuels, and utilities. Only homeowners with mortgages are included.

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

*Percent of Housing Units Occupied by Owner*

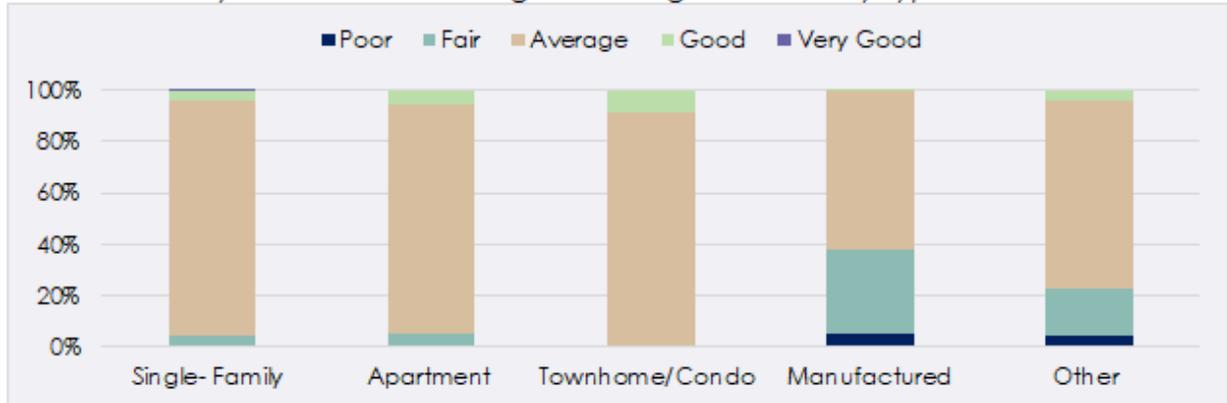


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons

## Quality

Data from the county assessor's office reveal that few housing units are in good or better condition. In fact, a high percentage of manufactured and "other" homes are only in fair or poor condition, and therefore qualify as needing rehabilitation under Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) standards. In addition, many housing units are built with fair or poor materials and/or workmanship. According to the WCDA, these units are at risk of falling into disrepair.

Laramie County Tax Assessor's Rating of Housing Condition by Type of Home



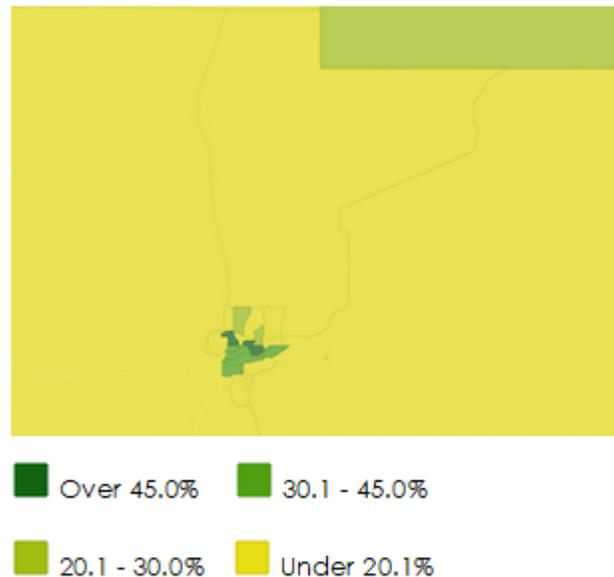
Source: Western Economic Services, LLC (2017). 2017 Wyoming Housing Conditions. Less than .5% of single-family units were rated poor, an amount too small to be visible.

### Quality Problems with Primary Residences

|  | Percent of Housing Units |
|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Low or Fair Quality Materials/Workmanship</b> |                          |
| Single Family                                    | 61                       |
| Apartment  | 44                       |
| Town home/condo                                  | 51                       |
| Manufactured                                     | 78                       |
| Other  | 73                       |
| <b>Incomplete Facilities</b>                     |                          |
| Incomplete plumbing                              | 0.2                      |
| Incomplete kitchen                               | 0.5                      |
| <b>Overcrowded</b>                               |                          |
| Overcrowded (>1 occupant per room)               | 1.2                      |
| Severely overcrowded (>1.5 occupants per room)   | 0.2                      |

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

### Percent of Housing Constructed before 1960

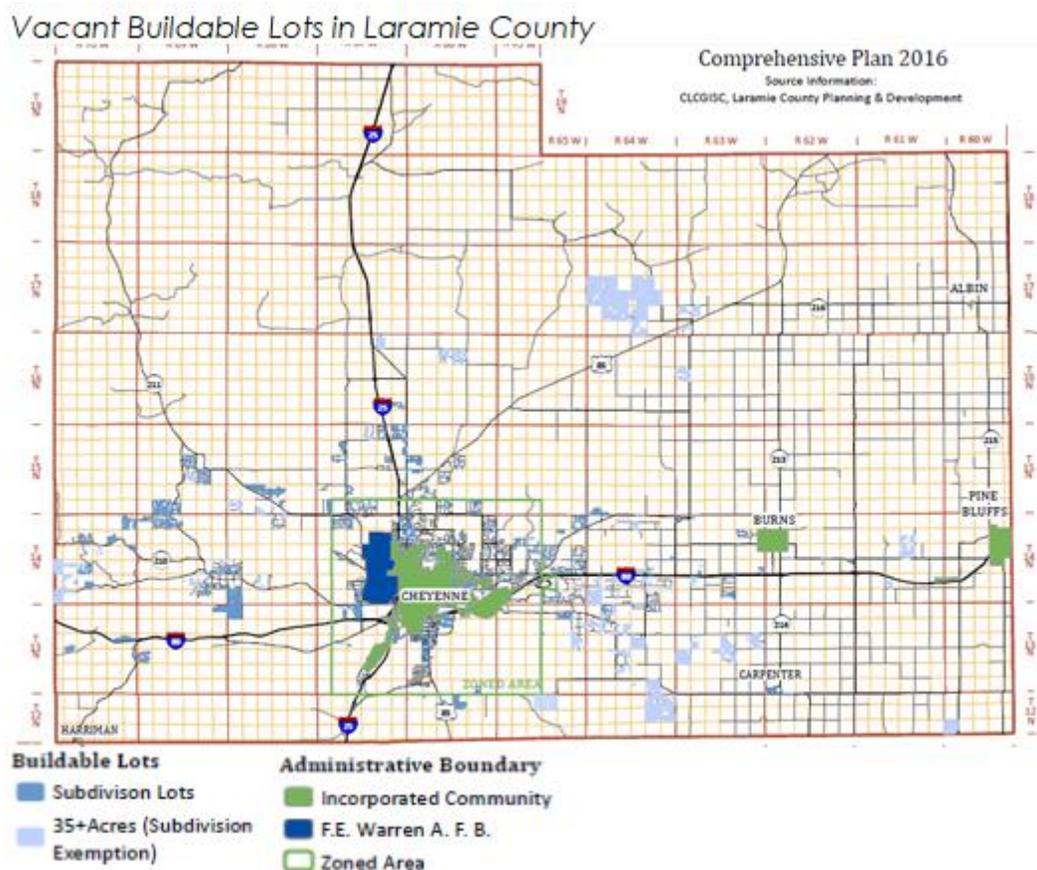


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons

## Supply Constraints

Laramie County's population is steadily growing, but there is a limited amount of land on which to build new houses, as shown in the map below. Several factors work together to constrain housing supply. Most important, over 80% of the land is already in use as rangeland or cropland (Laramie County Comprehensive Plan, 2016). Local, state, and federal governments own another 11%. Land that is available may not be appropriate for residential development. Many areas of the county were not designed for subdivisions and are distant from paved roads, sewage lines, landfills and other county services. The need to preserve wild life and to respect the rights of rural neighbors are also concerns. Finally, the former Atlas D missile site west of Cheyenne has created soil and water hazards in some areas.

In recognition of land limitations, local and state organizations have been working with developers to encourage multi-family housing. Financial barriers persist, however. The Wyoming Community Development Association's (2013-2017 Consolidated Plan) states, "It becomes very obvious when comparing the high cost of construction with the lower income in Wyoming that it will continue to be difficult to cash flow new rental properties without a subsidy." In other words, the building of multi-family/rental properties is constrained not only by limited supply but limited funds.



Source: Laramie County Comprehensive Plan, Adopted June 7, 2016.

## Homelessness

Only a few statistics exist for homelessness in Laramie County. Comea House reports there were 319 homeless adults in Cheyenne according to the 2016 point-in-time count, and 350

homeless children in grades K-12 according to the Wyoming Department of Education (Zimmer, R. 2017, October 11. Understanding Homelessness. [Web log article]. Retrieved from <http://www.comeashelter.org/understanding-homelessness/>). A recent count also identified 39 unaccompanied students in grades K-12 (Mullen, M. 2018, February 5. Homeless shelter for youth breaks ground in Cheyenne. Retrieved from <http://wyomingpublicmedia.org/post/homeless-shelter-youth-breaks-ground-cheyenne#stream/0>). As noted by Comea House and many others, these numbers are likely underestimates.

Two overnight shelters are currently operating in the county, and both are at capacity. A recent story on Wyoming Public Media reported that Family Promise typically has a wait list of 15 families, while Comea House is nearly always at capacity (Mullen, M. 2018, March 9. Fight the Blight Campaign Reveals Affordable Housing Problem in Cheyenne. Retrieved from <http://wyomingpublicmedia.org/post/fight-blight-campaign-reveals-affordable-housing-problem-cheyenne>). In addition to these shelters, Safehouse operates a shelter for domestic violence victims, and the Welcome Mat operates a day shelter. A new shelter for unaccompanied youth is also being built.

### Homelessness in Cheyenne

| Indicator                                 | Number |
|---|--------|
| Homeless Adults, 2016 Point in Time Count | 319    |
| Homeless Children                         | 350    |
| Unaccompanied Youth                       | 39     |

Sources: Adults and Children: Comea House Web site, Unaccompanied Youth: Wyoming Public Media

### Shelters in Cheyenne

| Shelter                       | At Capacity? |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Comea House                   | Yes          |
| Family Promise                | Yes          |
| Safehouse                     | N/A          |
| Strong Families Youth Shelter | Not open yet |

Source: Wyoming Public Media

## EDUCATION

### Educational Attainment: High School

Approximately 7% of adults in the county do not have a high school diploma and are at high risk of poverty. There are large ethnic disparities. Over 95% of non-Hispanic whites over 25 have a diploma, compared to only 78% of Hispanics. Several census tracts in the southern part of Cheyenne have low percentages of adults with diplomas.

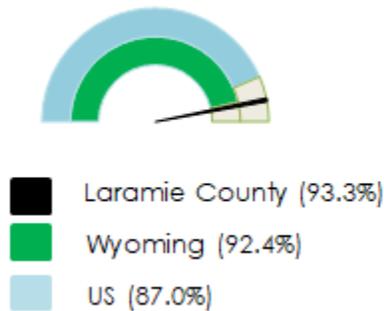
We have seen significant improvements overall in education, but there are still issues that factor in to the root causes of poverty. There is a significant lack of high-quality early childhood education in Cheyenne and Laramie County that automatically places children entering kindergarten at a disadvantage. The fact that kindergarten is not mandatory places a further burden on children who do not start school until the first grade.

A second issue within education is the rapid increase in technological advancements and the negative impact they have had on learning. The use of smart phones and texting has had a negative impact on peoples' ability to spell and write, which is particularly evident when a job application needs to be completed manually.

Finally, there are issues and consequences related to how much society values a high school diploma or secondary education. Many people do not see the value in learning advanced math or science skills, and fail to realize that the problem solving skills used in these disciplines

are wide-ranging in their applicability. If education is not valued within a family, it is not pursued, leaving the individual ill-equipped to earn a living wage job.

### Population Aged 25 and Older with High School Diploma or Higher



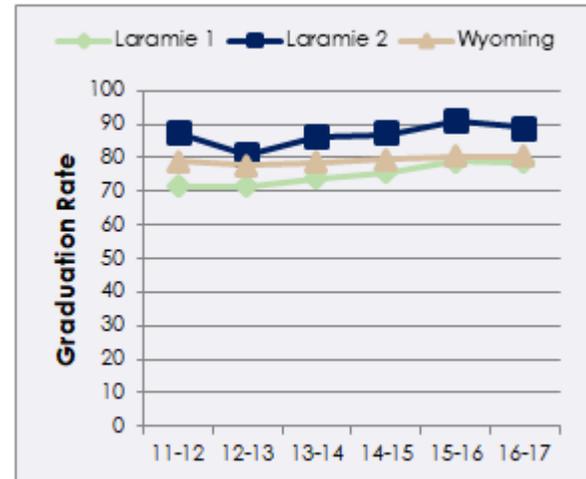
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016 Estimates

### Population with High School Diploma or Higher

|  | Percent           |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                          |                   |
| Male                                   | 93.6              |
| Female                                 | 93                |
| <b>Veterans</b>                        |                   |
| All veterans                           | 27.2              |
| <b>Age</b>                             |                   |
| 25-34                                  | 94.1              |
| 35-44                                  | 96.9              |
| 45-64                                  | 93.5              |
| 65 and Over                            | 88.9              |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity*</b>                 |                   |
| White alone, not Hispanic/Latino       | 95.4              |
| African American alone                 | 95.3              |
| American Indian or Alaska Native alone | 92.6              |
| Asian alone                            | 90.6              |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander alone     | Data not reliable |
| Some other race alone                  | 77.6              |
| Two or more races                      | 92.6              |
| Hispanic/Latino (any race)             | 78.2              |

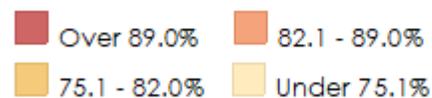
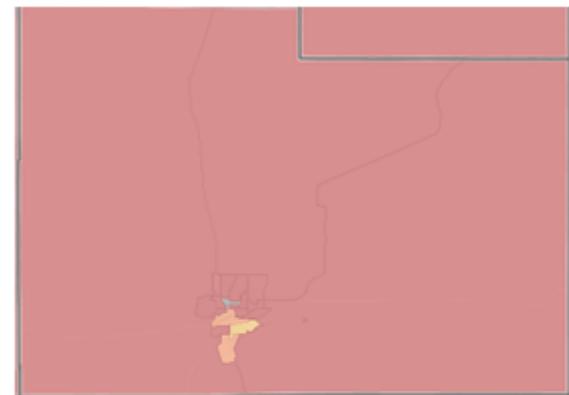
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016 Estimates

### Trends in 4-Year Graduation Rates



Source: Wyoming Department of Education

### Percent of Population Ages 25 or Older with a High School Diploma or Higher

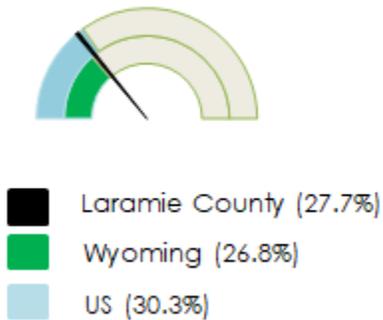


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2012-2016 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons

## Educational Attainment: College

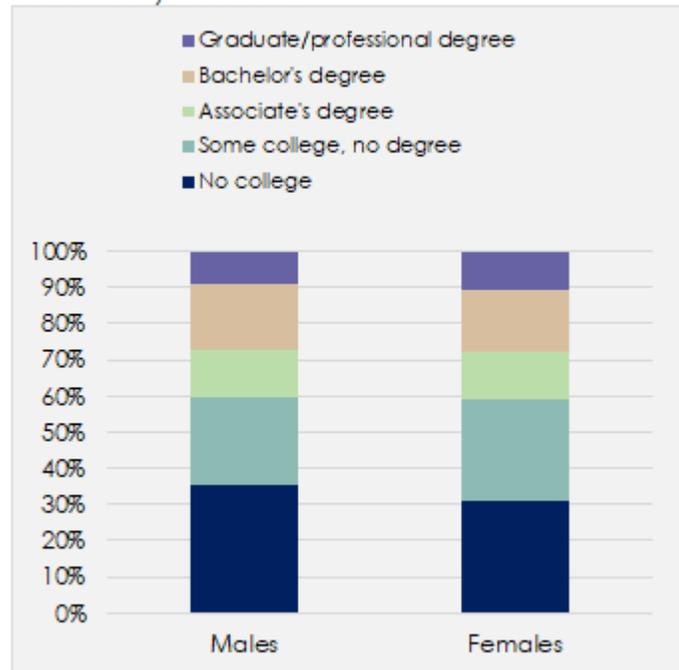
Fewer than 30% of adults 25 or older in Laramie County have a bachelor's degree. In addition, roughly 25% of males and females start college but do not finish. The data also show wide racial disparities. While 30% of non-Hispanic whites have a college degree, only 18% of African Americans and 12% of Hispanic/Latinos have one. Access to local education is an issue, as the University of Wyoming is located in Albany county, and Laramie County Community College (LCCC) is located in Cheyenne.

Population Aged 25 and Older with Bachelor's Degree or Higher



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

Percentage of Males and Females with Post-Secondary Education



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

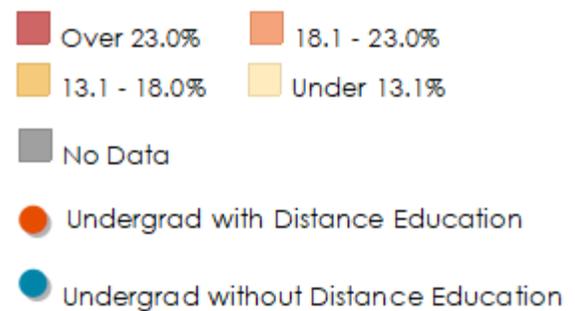
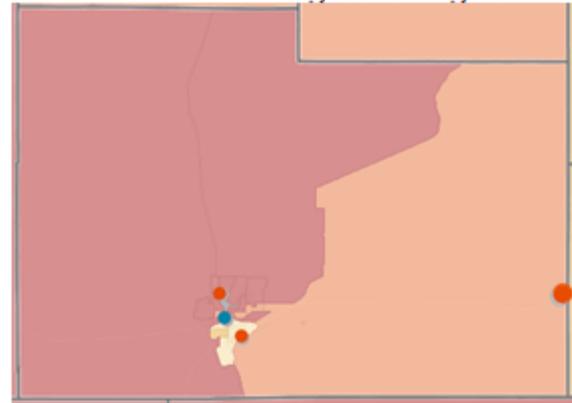
### Population with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher

|                                  | Percent |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| <b>Gender</b>                    |         |
| Male                             | 27.4    |
| Female                           | 27.9    |
| <b>Veterans</b>                  |         |
| All veterans                     | 27.2    |
| <b>Age</b>                       |         |
| 25-34                            | 28.9    |
| 35-44                            | 29.2    |
| 45-64                            | 27      |
| 65 and Over                      | 26.3    |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity*</b>           |         |
| White alone, not Hispanic/Latino | 30.2    |
| African American alone           | 18.4    |
| Hispanic/Latino (any race)       | 12.4    |

\*Data for some groups was not reliable and is not shown

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2106 Estimates

### Percent of Population Ages 25 or Older with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher

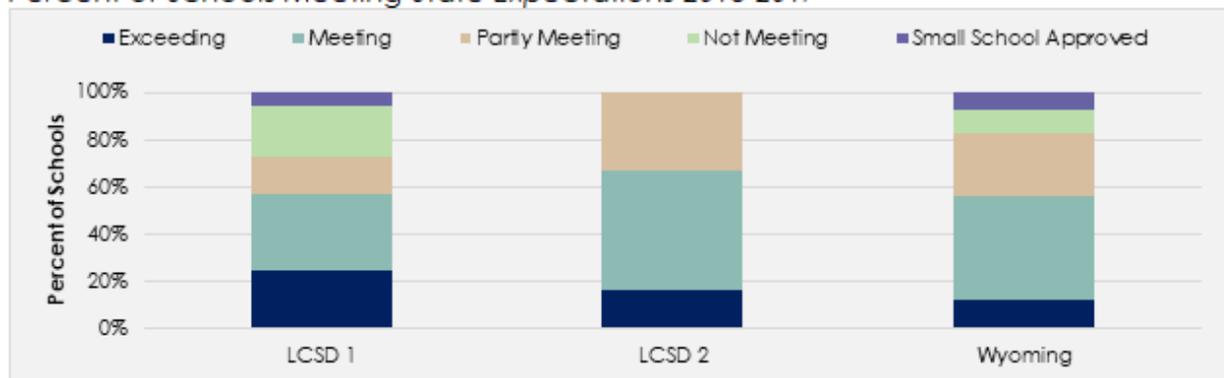


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2012-2016 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons

## Children

Laramie County has two school districts, both of which are continually investing in new equipment, facilities, and programs. Public prekindergarten is one area of expansion. Laramie district 1 is expanding their program to offer full-day prekindergarten in low-income elementary school zones. Improving school quality is another ongoing effort. The majority of schools in the county are either meeting or exceeding expectations. A few schools are still working towards meeting expectations, including some that serve lower income areas.

### Percent of Schools Meeting State Expectations 2016-2017



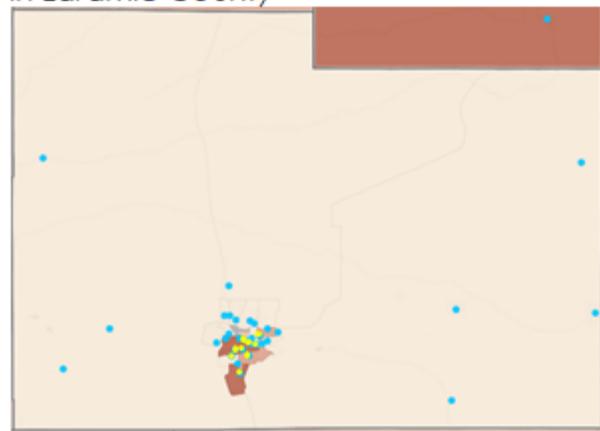
Source: Wyoming Department of Education

## Student Demographics

| Statistic                    | Number |
|------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Laramie District 1</b>    |        |
| Total Enrollment K-12        | 14,071 |
| Free and Reduced Price Lunch | 6,014  |
| Students with Disabilities   | 1,850  |
| English Language Learners    | 358    |
| <b>Laramie District 2</b>    |        |
| Total Enrollment K-12        | 1,051  |
| Free and Reduced Price Lunch | 412    |
| Students with Disabilities   | 168    |
| English Language Learners    | 56     |

Source: Wyoming Department of Education

## Child Poverty and Public Pre-Kindergarten in Laramie County



### Children 0-17 in Poverty



### Elementary Schools

- Public School without formal Prekindergarten, 2018-2019
- Public school with formal Prekindergarten, 2018-2019

Sources: Poverty estimates: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons.

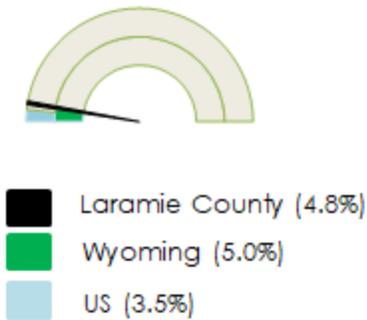
School locations: National Center for Education Statistics, Courtesy of Community Commons

## NUTRITION

### Food Insecurity Overall

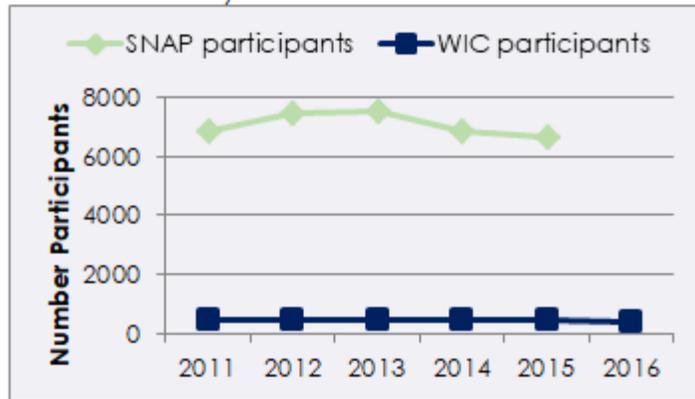
In Laramie County, an estimated 11% of all individuals are food insecure, and 4.8% are both food insecure and likely ineligible for federal assistance. The data also suggest that some eligible people are underserved. Fewer than 7,500 people receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits per year, while approximately 10,000 people in the county have incomes below the Federal Poverty Level. Lack of access to retailers that accept SNAP is also an issue in much of the county, even in parts of Cheyenne.

Percent of Population Food Insecure and Ineligible for Federal Assistance



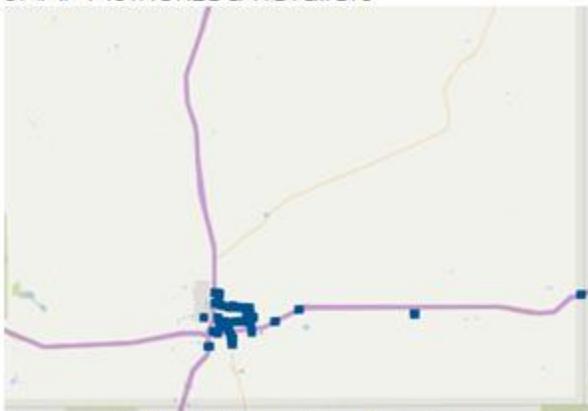
Source: Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap

Number of SNAP and WIC Participants in Laramie County



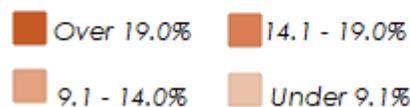
Sources: SNAP: US Census using USDA data. WIC: KidsCount National Data Center using data from Wyoming Department of Health

SNAP Authorized Retailers



Source: United States Department of Agriculture

Percent of Households Receiving SNAP Benefits

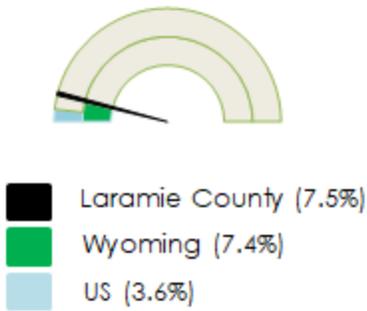


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2016 Estimates, Courtesy of Community Commons

**Food Insecurity Children**

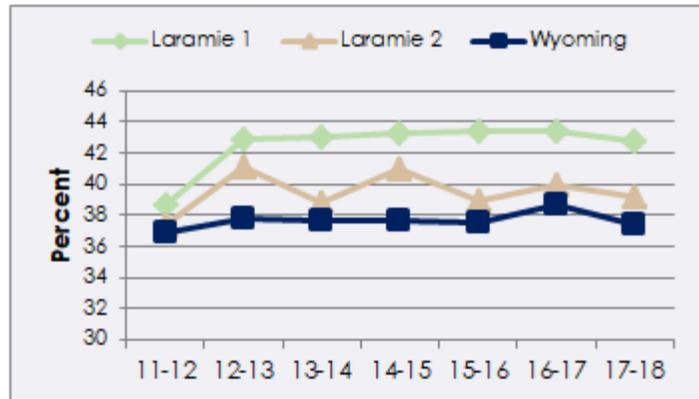
An estimated 7.5% of children in Laramie County are both food insecure and unlikely to be eligible for federal assistance. This percentage is double the national rate. In addition, there is a high percentage of children eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The maps show that summer food sites are available in the areas of highest need. However, there are no summer food sites outside Cheyenne, although over 20% of students in these areas are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Percent of Children Food Insecure and Ineligible for Federal Assistance



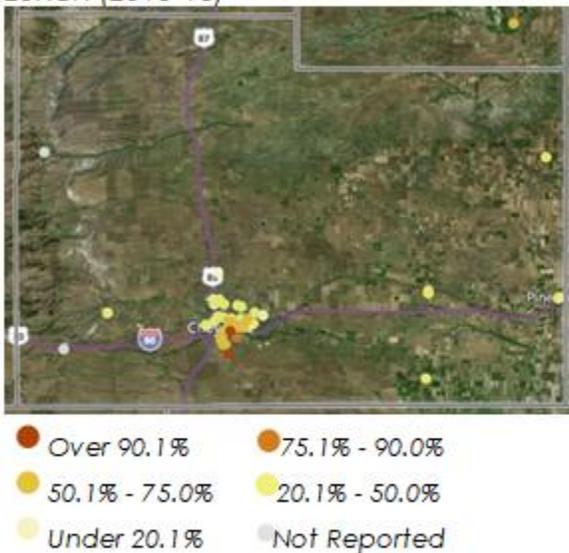
Source: Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap

Percent of Public School Children Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch



Source: Wyoming Department of Education

Percent of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (2015-16)



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Courtesy of Community Commons

2017 Summer Food Sites

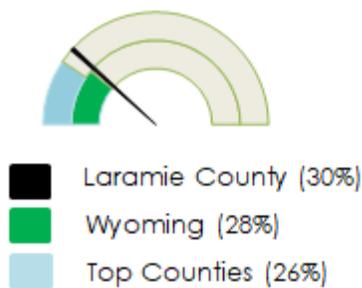


Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Services, Courtesy of Community Commons

**Obesity**

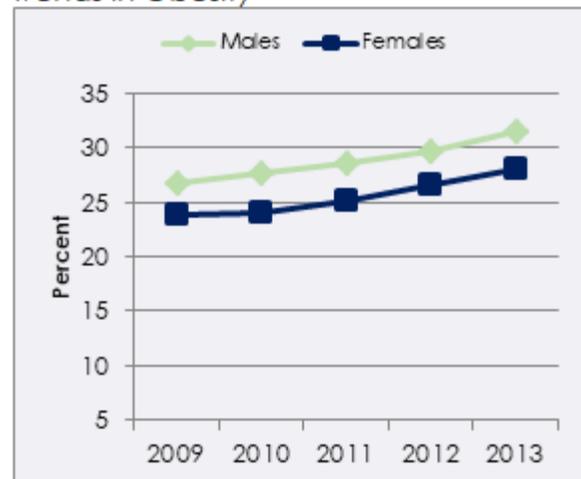
Data from the past few years show that nearly 65% of adults are obese or overweight in Laramie County. Approximately 30% of adults in Laramie County are obese, a higher rate than for Wyoming as a whole. Moreover, obesity rates in the county are rising for both males and females. Estimates at the census-tract level are available for Cheyenne and show that obesity rates appear highest on the southern side of the city and in some of its eastern neighborhoods.

## Percent of Adults who are Obese



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings, using Centers for Disease Control data for 2013

## Trends in Obesity



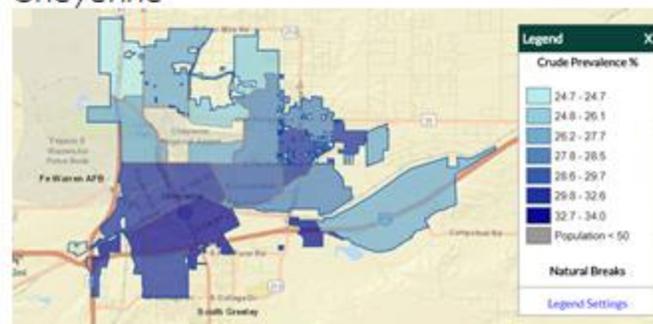
Source: Centers for Disease Control, US Diabetes Surveillance System

## Related Statistics on Obesity

| Measure  | Statistic |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Overweight or Obese</b>   |           |
| Percent of adults who are overweight or obese (2011-2015)                            | 64.60%    |
| Percent of males who are obese (2013)  | 31.40%    |
| Percent of females who are obese (2013)  | 28.10%    |
| <b>Healthy Eating</b>  |           |
| Percent of adults who eat fruits or vegetables less than 5 times per day (2011-2015) | 83.90%    |
| Number of fast food restaurants per 1,000 people (2014)                              | 0.67      |

Sources for percent of males and females who are obese is the CDC US Diabetes Surveillance System. All other statistics from Wyoming Health Matters.org

## Estimated Percent of Adults who are Obese in Cheyenne



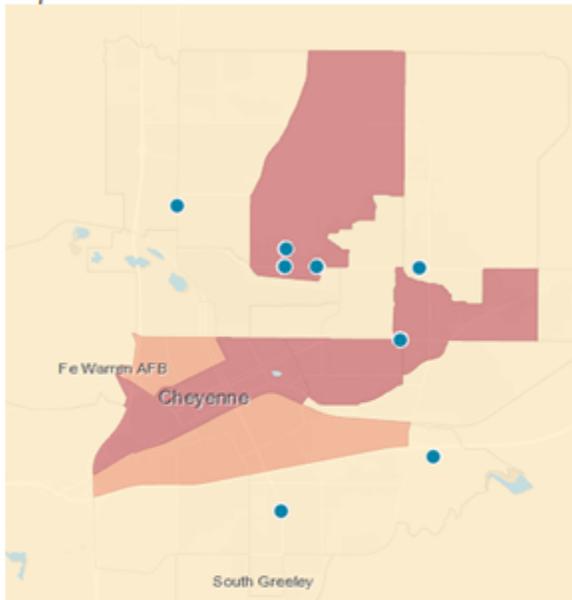
Source: Centers for Disease Control, 500 Cities Project, Model-Based Estimates for 2015

## Access to supermarkets, fresh food

Access to nutritious food is an important issue in Laramie County, as shown in the maps below. There are no major supermarkets outside the city of Cheyenne, and yet much of the city itself is classified as a "food desert". A food desert is defined as a census tract where a significant number of residents are low income and located more than a mile from the nearest supermarket. The most recent food desert map of Laramie County is from 2015. It likely underestimates amount of the city that is a food desert as the downtown Safeway has closed

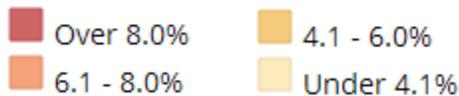
since then.

Percent of Households with No Vehicles and Location of USDA Major Supermarkets



● Major Supermarkets, USDA Dec. 2017

Percent of Households with no Vehicle



Source: US Census, American Community Survey 2011-2015 and US Department of Agriculture, Courtesy of Community Commons

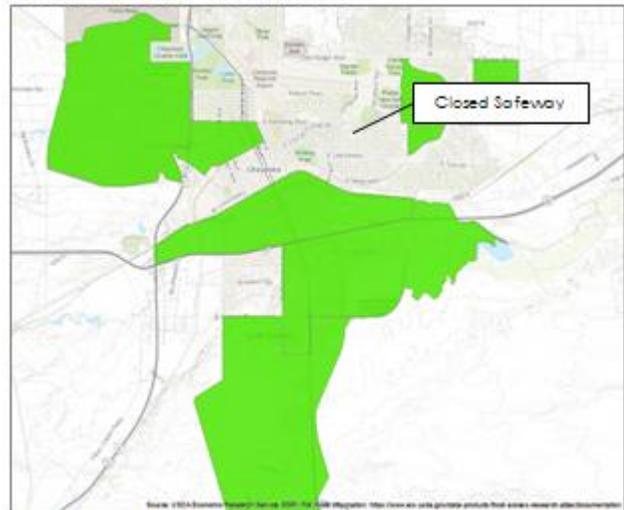
## HEALTH

Many interviewees indicated that access to specialty medical care including dental care, vision care, medication support, and psychiatric treatment is a significant issue. Interviewees indicated that many people seeking their services are uninsured and there are very few specialty clinics that offer services on a sliding fee scale. The health and behavioral health services that do offer sliding fee scales tend to have waiting lists in excess of 90 days. Another area of concern is health care for senior citizens because so many seniors receive the minimum social security payment of \$669/month leaving them unable to afford Medicare and Medicaid payments and co-payments. In addition to the individual-level barriers, there have been significant reductions in state-funded behavioral healthcare treatment resulting in a treatment shortage.

### Physical Health

An estimated 11% of Laramie County adults experience frequent physical distress, and 14% are in fair or poor health. These statistics indicate a sizable number of adults are at risk of having

Food Deserts as of 2015



Source: US Department of Agriculture, Food Research Atlas

health interfere with their ability to work. In fact, many detrimental conditions such as diabetes are common in the county. In addition, the motor vehicle rate fatality is higher than the national average. The county rate is 14.3 per 100,000 population versus 11 nationally (Wyominghealthmatters.org).

*Adults with Health Issues in Laramie County*

| Issue                      | Laramie County Percent | "Top" US Counties |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Poor or Fair Health        | 14                     | 12                |
| Frequent Physical Distress | 11                     | 9                 |

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings, using Centers for Disease Control small area estimates. Poor/ fair health was age adjusted.

*Common Diseases among Adults*

| Condition                       | Laramie County Rate per 100,000 | US Rate per 100,000 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| All Cancer Incidence            | 417.4                           | 443.6               |
| Breast Cancer Incidence         | 124.2                           | 123.5               |
| Diabetes                        | 1,005                           | 1,005               |
| Sexually Transmitted Infections | 400                             | 456                 |

Sources: Cancer and diabetes: Wyominghealthmatters.org, STI: County Health Rankings

*Health Conditions among Elderly Medicare Recipients*

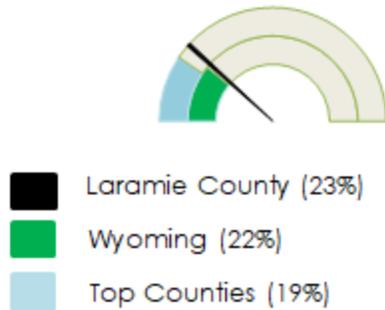
| Condition               | Laramie County Percent | US Percent |
|-------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Hyperlipidemia          | 34.7                   | 47.8       |
| Hypertension            | 48.5                   | 58.1       |
| Ischemic Heart Disease  | 21.8                   | 28.6       |
| Alzheimer's or Dementia | 7.9                    | 11.3       |
| Arthritis               | 24                     | 31.3       |

Source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Estimates are of seniors only.

**Physical Inactivity**

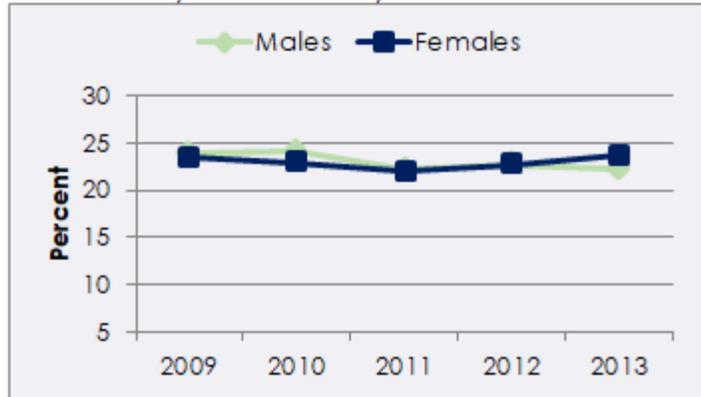
Over one-fifth of adults in Laramie County are estimated to be physically inactive, that is, they do not participate in any physical activities apart from their jobs. There appears to be a very slight downward trend for males, and no discernable trend for females. Estimates for census tracts in Cheyenne show that physical inactivity is highest in the southern part of the city.

### Percent of Adults with Physical Inactivity



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings, using Centers for Disease Control data

### Trends in Physical Inactivity



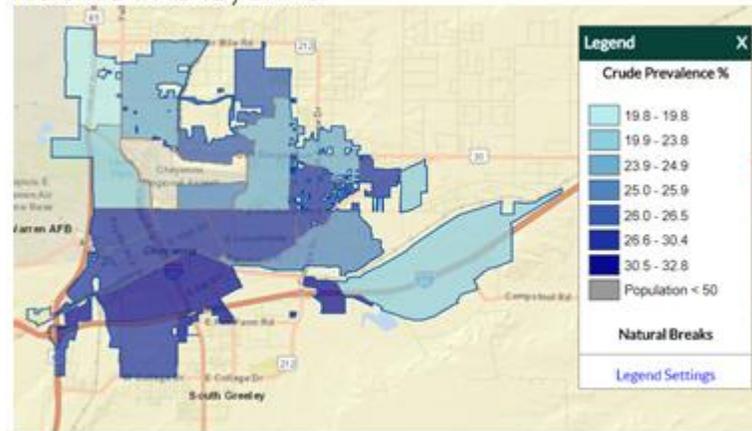
Source: Centers for Disease Control, US Diabetes Surveillance System

### Related Statistics on Physical Inactivity

| Indicator   | Statistic |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Physically Inactive</b>  |           |
| Percent of males who are physically inactive                            | 22.30%    |
| Percent of females who are physically inactive                          | 23.60%    |
| <b>Access to Exercise</b>   |           |
| Percent of people living "reasonably close" to park/recreation facility | 63%       |
| Number of fitness and recreation facilities per 1,000 people            | 0.12      |

Source for percent of males and females who are physically inactive is the CDC US Diabetes Surveillance System. All other statistics from Wyoming Health Matters.org

### Estimated Percent of Adults who are Physically Inactive in Cheyenne



Source: Centers for Disease Control, 500 Cities Project, Model-Based Estimates for 2015

## Insurance

For all income levels, health coverage appears to be on par with the nation and slightly higher than the state. However, there are disparities in coverage for lower income groups. Approximately 78% of those living 138% below poverty level have insurance, compared to almost 89% at all income levels. In terms of trends, the percent of adults with insurance has been steadily rising, but the percentage of insured youth under 19 dipped by 1% in 2015. This small change may simply be due to "noise" in the estimates rather than a true trend.

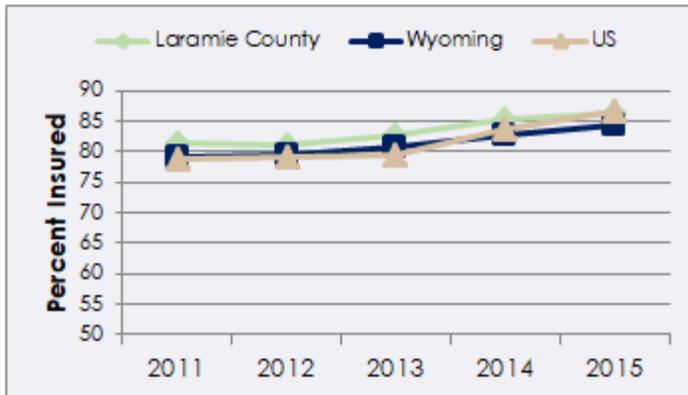
### Population Under Age 65 with Health Insurance



- Laramie County (88.6%)
- Wyoming (86.6%)
- US (89.1%)

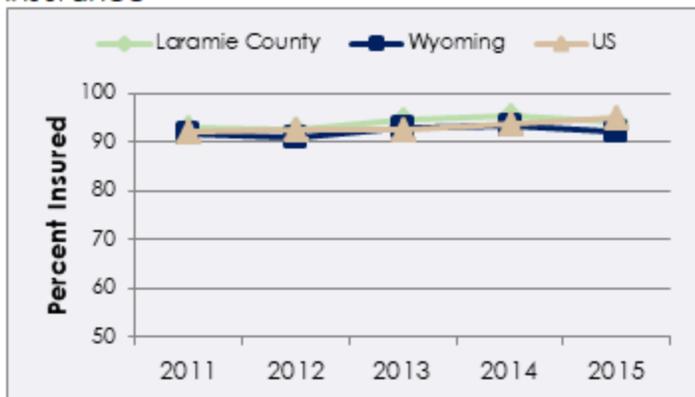
Source: US Census Bureau, 2015 Small Area Health Insurance Estimates

### Trends in Percent of Adults Aged 18 to 64 with Health Insurance



Source: US Census Bureau, 2015 Small Area Health Insurance Estimates

### Trends in Percent of Youth Under 19 with Health Insurance



Source: US Census Bureau, 2015 Small Area Health Insurance Estimates

### People Under Age 65 with Health Insurance, 2015

|                      | Percent Insured |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>        |                 |
| Male                 | 88              |
| Female               | 89.2            |
| <b>Age</b>           |                 |
| Under 19             | 94              |
| 18-64                | 86.4            |
| <b>Income</b>        |                 |
| <=138% poverty       | 78.2            |
| <=200% poverty       | 78.9            |
| <=250% poverty       | 80.1            |
| <= 400% poverty      | 83.7            |
| 138% to 400% poverty | 85.9            |

Source: US Census Bureau, 2015 Small Area Health Insurance Estimates

## Access to Health Services

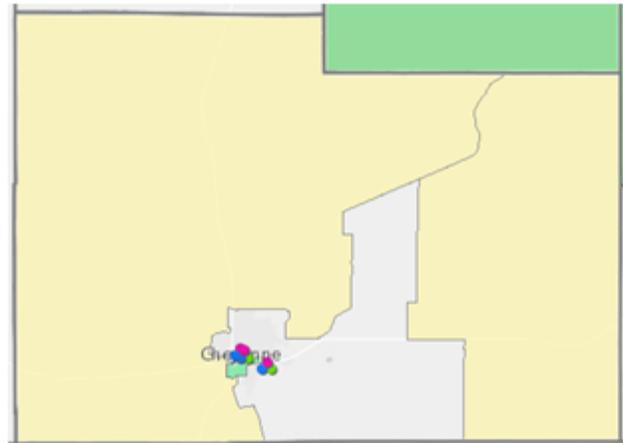
Widespread access issues are apparent from the data. Over 35% of adults reported having an access issue, while over 25% had no personal doctor. All of Laramie County except Cheyenne is a primary care shortage area, and the entire county has been designated a mental health shortage area. In addition, all Medicare providers are located in either Cheyenne or Pine Bluffs. Cheyenne itself has a medically underserved area and several facilities with designated shortages.

### Access Issues in Laramie County

| Issue              | Percent |
|--------------------|---------|
| No Coverage        | 15.2    |
| No Personal Doctor | 26.1    |
| Too Costly         | 13.5    |
| Any Access Issue   | 37.1    |

Source: Wyoming Department of Health, BRFSS, 2011-2015 County Data

### Health Services Shortage Areas



Facilities with Designated Shortages

- Primary
- Mental
- Dental

Shortage Areas

- Medically Underserved
- Primary Care and Mental Health
- Mental Health

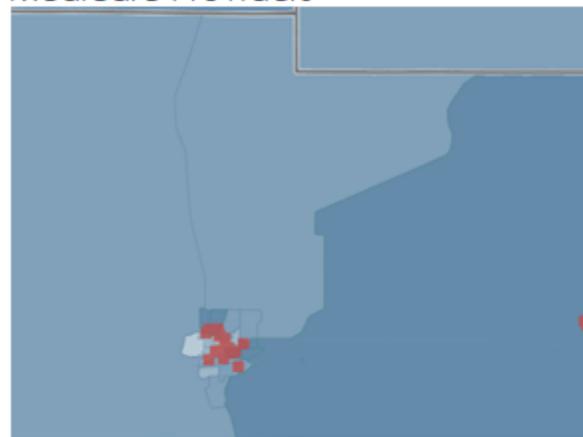
Source: HRSA Area Health Resources File  
Courtesy of Community Commons

### Medical Professionals in Laramie County, 2015

| Statistic                            | Rate per 100,000 People |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Physician primary care providers     | 71                      |
| Non-physician primary care providers | 134                     |
| Dentists                             | 76                      |
| Mental health providers              | 345                     |

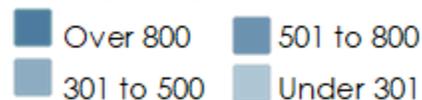
Source: Mental health providers: countyhealthrankings.org.  
All other data: Wyominghealthmatters.org

### Seniors Ages 65 and Over and Medicare Providers



■ Medicare Approved Provider

#### Number of Seniors



Sources: Seniors: American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates. Providers: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, 2016 Provider of Services file. Both sources courtesy of Community Commons.

## Exposure to Unhealthy Environments

Air quality appears to be good in Laramie County, and data from the EPA show that poor air quality days are rare. Little data exists on indoor hazards, but the percentage of homes at risk for lead is noteworthy. Ground pollution is a relevant issue. There is one National Priority Superfund site, 10 additional non-priority sites, and a cluster of "brownfields" (former industrial sites) in the county. Work on cleaning up abandoned mines is ongoing.

### Outdoor and Indoor Hazards

| Issue                                    | Statistic |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Outdoor</b>                           |           |
| Unhealthy ozone, 2017                    | 1 day     |
| Unhealthy PM2.5*, 2017                   | 2 days    |
| <b>Indoor</b>                            |           |
| % of adults who smoke (in or outdoors)   | 21.70%    |
| % of homes built before 1980 (lead risk) | 54%       |
| Radon zone                               | High risk |

\*Fine Particles

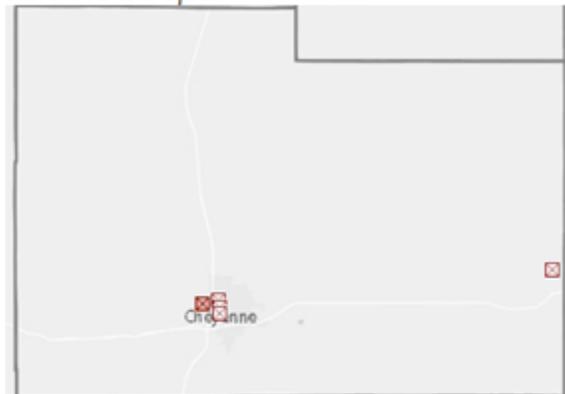
Sources: Outdoor air quality and radon: EPA.gov. Adults who Smoke: BRFSS 2011-2015. Homes built before 1980: Western Economic Services, 2017 Wyoming Housing Conditions

### Current Brownfields\* in Laramie County



\*Former industrial site undergoing assessment and/or cleanup. All brownfields located in Cheyenne. Source: EPA Facility Registry System, Courtesy of Community Commons

### Selected Superfund Sites



☒ National Priority List Site ☐ Non-Priority Site

Source: EPA Facility Registry System Courtesy of Community Commons

### Additional Superfund Sites

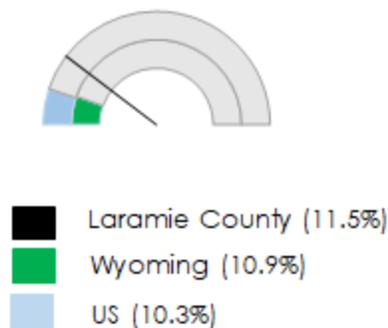
| Site Description    | Location                           |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Tatooine Industries | 4390 I-80 Service Rd, Burns        |
| F.E Warren Range    | NW side of base                    |
| Atlas D # 1         | 15 miles NW of Cheyenne            |
| Atlas D # 2         | 25 miles NE of Cheyenne            |
| Atlas D # 3         | 9 miles south of Hillsdale         |
| Atlas D # 4         | 2.5 miles SE Granite               |
| Atlas E # 6         | 3680 Hwy 85, 2 miles NE of Meridan |

All sites deemed "non-priority" by the EPA Source: EPA.gov FRS Facility Query

## Substance Abuse & Mental Health

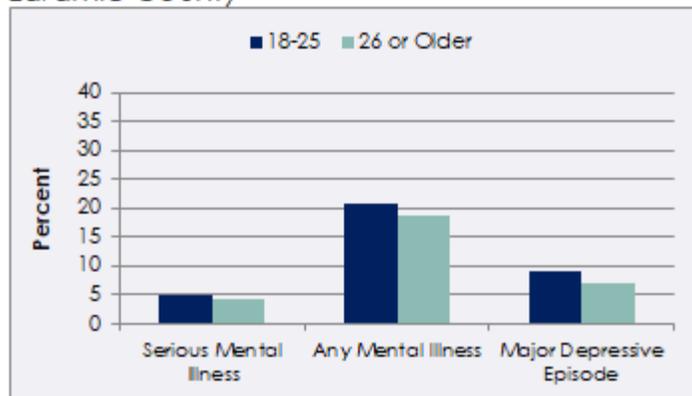
Mental health is a serious issue in Laramie County. The percentage of youth suffering from an episode of major depression in the past year is nearly 12%, which is above the national average. In addition, approximately 20% of adults in the county suffered from any mental illness in the past year. Substance misuse is also a serious issue in Laramie County for both teenagers and adults. While rates of substance misuse are high, estimates show that very few people receive treatment for their problems. In fact, it is well known that substance abuse treatment facilities have long wait lists in the county.

Percent of Youth Ages 12-17 with Past Year Major Depression In Laramie County



Source: National Survey Drug Use and Health, 2012-2014 Substate Estimates

Percent of Adults with Mental Health Issues in Laramie County



Source: National Survey Drug Use and Health, 2012-2014 Substate Estimates

Adults and Youth with Substance Problems in Laramie County

| Measure                            | Percent with Problem | Percent Needing Treatment but Not Receiving it |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| <b>Alcohol Abuse or Dependence</b> |                      |  |
| Ages 12-17                         | 3.9                  | 3.5  |
| Ages 18-25                         | 15.5                 | 15.2   |
| Ages 26 and Over                   | 6.7                  | 6.4  |
| <b>Drug Abuse or Dependence</b>    |                      |  |
| Ages 12-17                         | 3.9                  | 3.3  |
| Ages 18-25                         | 6.2                  | 5.8  |
| Ages 26 and Over                   | 1.6                  | 1.3  |

Source: National Survey Drug Use and Health, 2012-2014 Substate Estimates Percent of Adults with Past Year Mental Illness in Laramie County

**Suicide**

Wyoming and Laramie County have a suicide rate that is nearly double the national average. This issue has been taken very seriously in Wyoming and a Statewide and countywide effort has brought rates down. There are resources available to help, such as the national Suicide Prevention Lifeline and a crisis text line. Peak Wellness Center has an emergency number and offers walk-in hours from Monday to Thursday, 8-3. Grace for 2 Brothers offers education, training, and support groups.

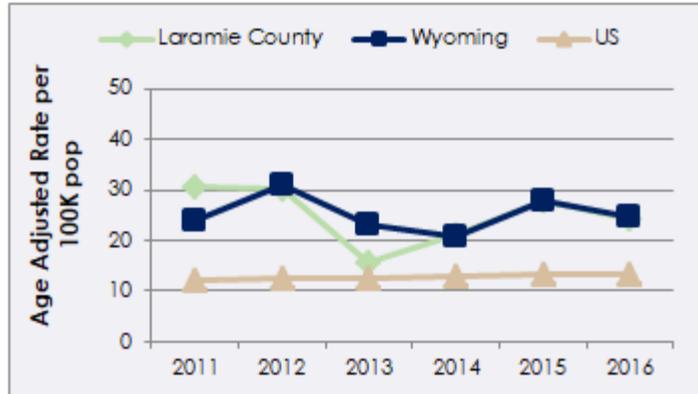
## Deaths due to Suicide per 100,000 People



- Laramie County (24.4)
- Wyoming (24.8)
- US (13.4)

Sources: Laramie County and Wyoming: Wyoming Department of Health. US: Centers for Disease Control Data are age adjusted

## Trends in Deaths due to Suicide



Sources: Laramie County and Wyoming: Wyoming Department of Health. US: Centers for Disease Control Data are age adjusted

### Additional Data

| Measure  | Percent |
|--|---------|
| <b>Adults</b>                                  |         |
| Serious thoughts of suicide - Ages 18-25       | 7.9     |
| Serious thoughts of suicide - Ages 26 and Over | 3.1     |
| <b>High School Youth (Statewide)*</b>          |         |
| Felt sad or hopeless                           | 30.8    |
| Seriously considered suicide                   | 20.3    |
| Attempted suicide                              | 11.1    |
| Attempted suicide and needed medical attention | 4.1     |

\*Data for Laramie County are not available

Sources: Adults: National Survey Drug Use and Health, 2012-2014 Substate Estimates Youth: Wyoming Youth Risk Behavior Survey, High School Survey



**Help is Available Now!**  
**Crisis Text Line**  
**Text WYO to 741-741**

## SAFETY

Very little reliable data exists on domestic violence but calls to Cheyenne police indicate it is a serious and prevalent problem in Laramie County. Data on reported crime show that crime in Cheyenne is on the rise, particularly theft. The district attorney has cited substance use and the legalization of marijuana in Colorado as contributing factors (Randall, D. 2017, August 3. DA says legal Colorado weed causing Laramie County crime. Retrieved from <http://kgab.com/d-a-says-legal-colorado-weed-causing-laramie-county-crime/>). Crime maps for Cheyenne show high crime in many parts of the city.







## Housing

As mentioned above, there are multiple issues related to housing in Cheyenne and Laramie County. Interviewees mentioned skyrocketing housing costs, an increasing shortage of affordable housing, and lack of housing assistance. Their perception is that the problem is worsening, and current efforts to improve the affordable housing crisis fall far short of what is needed to address the problem.

## Individual Issues

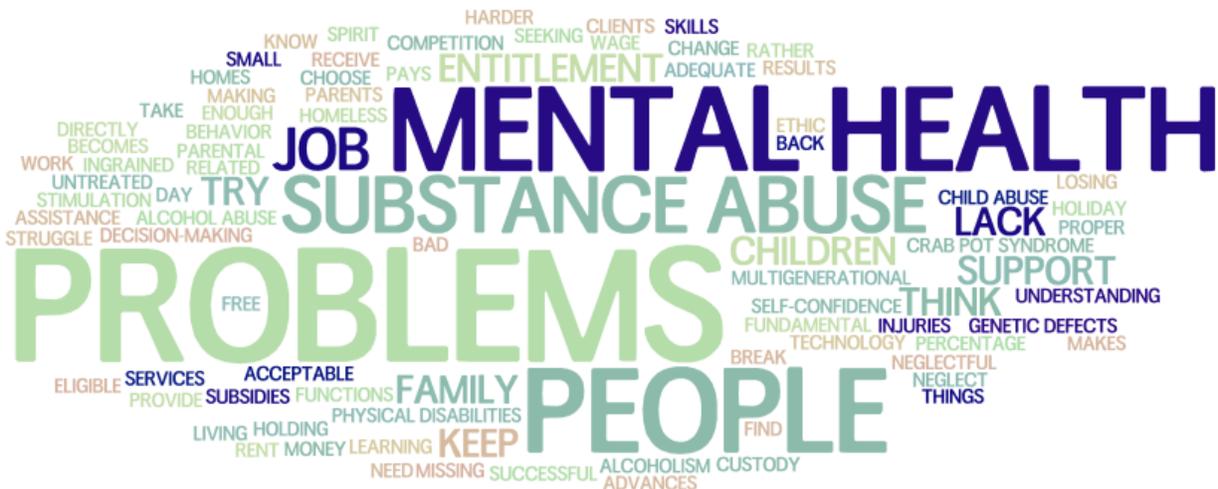
When discussing trends, interviewees mentioned a constellation of issues that are all personal in nature. First and foremost, interviewees indicated that they are seeing more and more people who are part of families experiencing multi-generational poverty. Members of these families have high probabilities of not possessing a high school diploma or a GED, have an increasingly difficult time meeting their own personal needs, and tend to have high expectations for receiving free services. Another increasing trend is the inability to pass mandated drug tests due to legalized marijuana availability in Colorado.

## Resources

Most interviewees indicated that their organizations had experienced budget cuts and reduced funding for available programs leaving scarce resources to meet an ever increasing demand for services. This seemed particularly apparent when addressing housing and prescription drug needs. It was also felt that there are not as many grants available resulting in funding shortfalls.

*"We don't have enough resources to meet the increasing demand for services."*

## What Root Causes Lead People To Seek Services



Key informant interviewees identified a considerable number of root causes that cluster in three general areas: behavioral health, social environment, and education.

## Behavioral Health

Many of the clients receiving or requesting services from the organizations key informant interviewees work at suffer from chronic substance abuse and/or mental health problems. Many of the clients are well known throughout the “system” and have experienced problems for most of their adult lives. Included in this group are individuals who have genetic defects, or who have experienced traumatic injuries that have had a long-term, negative impact on their lives. Behavioral health issues also negatively impact these individuals’ ability to maintain regular participation in treatment further exacerbating their problems.

## Social Environment

There are numerous root-cause issues subsumed under the social environment category. Many of these issues entail what we call the “crab pot mentality.” Crab mentality is a way of thinking best described by the phrase, “If I can’t have it, neither can you.” The metaphor refers to a bucket of live crabs, some of which could easily escape, but other crabs pull them back down to prevent any of them from escaping, thereby ensuring their collective demise. Behaviors and issues related to the social environment include:

- Multi-generational bad decision making
- A sense of entitlement among people seeking services
- A lack of job skills, and a lack of understanding that you need these skills to survive
- Lack of self-confidence
- Neglectful homes
- Dramatic changes in what is considered “acceptable” behavior

## Education

We have seen significant improvements overall in education, but there are still issues that factor in to the root causes of poverty. There is a significant lack of high-quality early childhood education in Cheyenne and Laramie County that automatically places children entering kindergarten at a disadvantage. The fact that kindergarten is not mandatory places a further burden on children who do not start school until the first grade.

A second issue within education is the rapid increase in technological advancements and the negative impact they have had on learning. The use of smart phones and texting has had a negative impact on peoples’ ability to spell and write, which is particularly evident when a job application needs to be completed manually.

Finally, there are issues and consequences related to how much society values a high school diploma or secondary education. Many people do not see the value in learning advanced math or science skills, and fail to realize that the problem solving skills used in these disciplines are wide-ranging in their applicability. If education is not valued within a family, it is not pursued, leaving the individual ill-equipped to earn a living wage job.

*“We have a lot of families that experience multi-generational bad decision-making that becomes ingrained in how the family functions.”*











collection or management system making it very difficult to use. For example, most organizations collect basic demographic information on the clients they serve and use this data for basic reporting. However, the data is not organized in a manner to facilitate formal client follow-up. Most providers have no idea how their clients do after leaving the program unless they happen to hear from the former client or the client re-engages with services. With the exception of two programs, formal outcome monitoring after a client leaves the program is non-existent. Among the two conducting outcome monitoring, one program followed clients for 120 days, and the other tracked clients for 2 years after leaving the program.

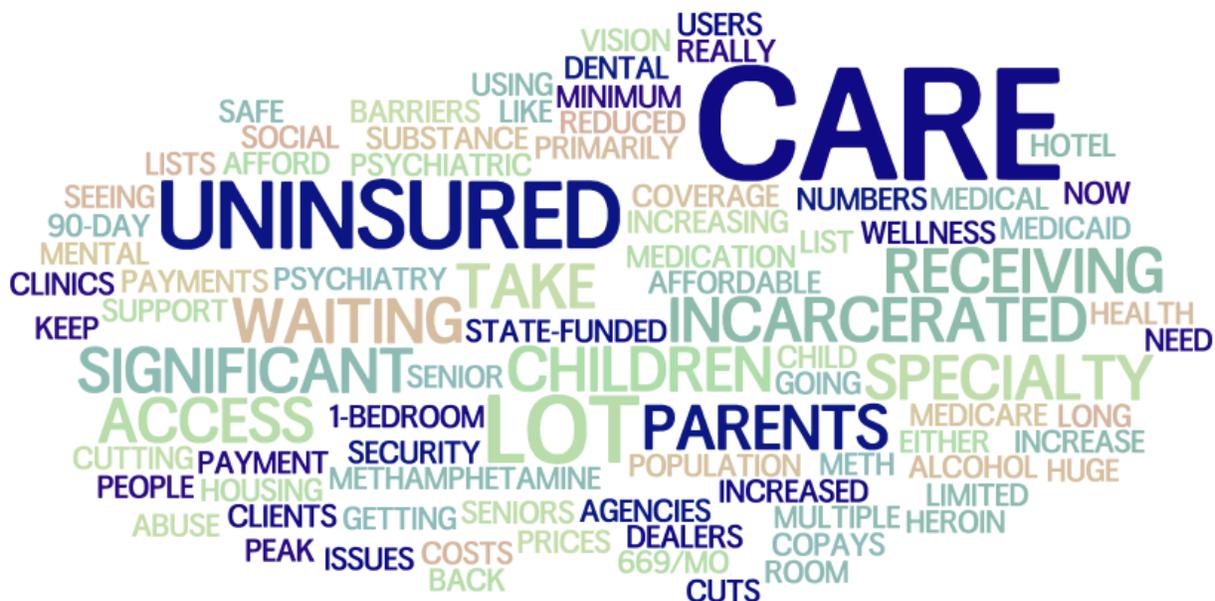
There was general agreement that everyone could do a better job both collecting standardized, key outcome indicators and sharing that data among providers to help each other strengthen programs. This is another area where CALC could play a leadership role in terms of helping to develop standardized outcome measures, and playing a role in collecting, interpreting, and disseminating that data among providers.

## CALC STAFF FOCUS GROUP

Datacorp staff conducted a focus group with CALC staff on Thursday, November 9, 2017. Participants were selected by CALC executive director and represented viewpoints held by the program directors and the executive director. The focus group addressed eight questions. The questions included:

1. What would you say are the three or four most important unmet needs for families and individuals in this community?
2. Are there any trends you are seeing or hearing about from your clients and other partners?
3. What are the top three root causes that lead to people seeking your services?
4. What role can CALC play through its programs, staff, and other partners in addressing these needs?
5. How well do CALC's tools and information sources help you identify available resources? Are program participants able to access those resources?
6. What are 3 or 4 changes you think could be made that could help CALC and your program do its job more effectively?
7. Thinking about Community Action and its partners, which ones always or almost always add useful resources to your work?
8. How well do your systems and processes help you identify unmet client needs?

### Most Important Unmet Needs



Staff identified three critical unmet needs including a lack of affordable housing, access to specialty medical care, and children of incarcerated parents.

### Affordable and Safe Housing

All staff resoundingly agreed that the lack of affordable housing in Cheyenne and Laramie County is a significant unmet need. Their perception is that the community needs significantly more housing that costs less than \$700/month for a one-bedroom unit. Staff indicated that many of their clients are paying \$500 or more per month to live in a hotel room as a result of



Another area where budget cuts have resulted in significant problems is with the guardianship program. The program does not have enough resources to support any more guardians to provide services for adults who are deemed mentally incompetent and need an adult to make all their decisions for them. Staff felt strongly that these budget cuts would result in an increase in the homeless population.

### **Immigration Status**

Staff stated they have not actually seen Cheyenne or Laramie County focus attention on illegal immigrants, but they are hearing concerns from people in the community. Laramie County has pockets of immigrant populations who are concerned about being deported and the impact it will have on their children.

### **Harm Reduction Model**

Staff indicated they are hearing more and more about organizations embracing a harm reduction model in Cheyenne. The idea is to focus services on where the client is in their recovery and not force people to be sober before trying to help them. Staff indicated this is a relatively big change in service focus and attitudes towards clients.

### **What Root Causes Lead people To Seek Services**



Staff is in agreement that the root causes leading people to seek services from CALC are educational underachievement and untreated substance abuse and behavioral health problems.

### **Educational Underachievement**

Staff felt strongly that educational underachievement is a key factor in the struggles many people have to be self-sufficient. They indicated that multi-generational bad decision-making becomes ingrained in how a family functions resulting in a “crab pot” mentality when family members try to break free from poverty. Staff indicated they see multiple generations from the same family clan which can result in a sense of service entitlement for a small percentage of those seeking services. Staff indicated that some of these family members know the exact day when they are eligible to receive rent assistance or holiday subsidies and act as though they are entitled to receive these benefits each year.

## Untreated Behavioral Health Problems

Staff is in agreement with almost everyone who participated in qualitative interviews that untreated substance abuse and mental health problems are a driving force in people needing services. The window of opportunity for helping someone with an active substance abuse or mental health problem is small, and it is almost impossible to get people help when they finally ask due to long wait lists. Deficits in daily living skills, unemployment, and homelessness further complicate their ability to get needed help.

## How Do You Address the Root Causes or Needs



First and foremost, staff felt CALC could and should be community leaders and policy developers in addressing the root causes for homelessness. They want to see CALC be a guiding agency in addressing these root issues. They felt a good place to start was by focusing on the neediest of the needy families to try and break the multi-generational poverty cycle. Staff felt they could accomplish more by focusing more resources on those who needed the most help rather than spreading services thin to more people. They also indicated a desire to find a “profit-driven” way to provide services to the needy population. The idea is not to generate profits, but to focus a keen eye on how services are provided and the outcomes achieved from spending those resources.



## Which Community Partners Provide the Most Value



Each focus group participant identified a different community partner that brought value to CALC. The most valuable community partners included:

- Cheyenne Regional Medical Center
- The 2-1-1 Program
- District Court
- Wyoming Department of Family Services
- American Association of Retired Persons
- Pediatric Dentistry Program

## Do CALC's Systems Identify Unmet Client Needs



In general, CALC staff said they tend to be reactive rather than proactive to client needs and environmental circumstances. Much of the reaction is driven by a lack of meaningful data, and fluctuating internal policies. Staff felt strongly that they needed to focus effort on stabilizing internal operations, and identify and embrace better, more efficient ways for delivering services. The CALC staff communicate a strong willingness and desire to improve their service base to effect more positive changes in the community.



- Medical care costs, including medications and co-payments
- Food costs

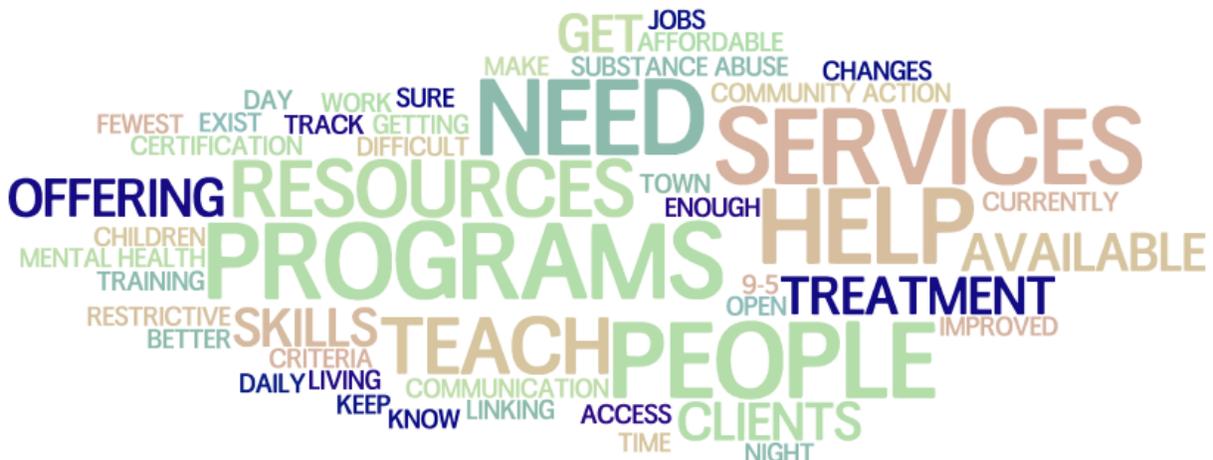
### Differences if There Were No Economic Hardship



Clients had interesting and thoughtful responses to the question of what would be different in Cheyenne and Laramie County if there was no economic hardship. Several clients felt the community would function more effectively because people would be able to work and the money they received from their job would be enough to pay for the cost of living. This would result in a more level playing field for everyone in the community. Others felt that elimination of economic hardship would result in less crime and fewer substance abuse problems. Clients also said if there weren't economic hardship there would be no need to ask for assistance, reducing the need for many social service programs.

*"People would not ask for assistance. You would be able to work and your job money would be enough to pay the cost of living."*

### How Can CALC Best Reduce Economic Hardship



Clients offered many suggestions on how CALC could best reduce economic hardship. When taken together, they suggest an organization focused on offering wrap-around services to the people who need the most help. For example, clients felt strongly that CALC should offer substance abuse and behavioral health treatment services, job training programs, and

programs focused on daily living skills and parenting skills, and to offer these programs from 9:00am-9:00pm to improve access for people who may be employed. Clients felt the people who need the most help also have the fewest resources to successfully access multiple service providers to get basic needs met. They viewed CALC as an ideal organization to provide wrap-around services for this population.

Clients also felt CALC could play a better role in improving communication about available community resources. Clients felt like they were unable to keep track of where to go to get help.

### Which Programs or Services Are Most Important



Clients felt the most important service CALC could provide is case management services, regardless of the program the person is involved with. Every client felt they needed assistance identifying resources and connecting with them. The most important services clients needed help with, in addition to case management, were medical and prescription coverage, housing assistance, child care, and food assistance. There was a general consensus that while there are programs that address many of these needs, their enrollment criteria were too strict, leaving many people out. For example, a person might make too much money to qualify for a program, but they do not make enough money to make ends meet without getting additional help.

*“Comprehensive case management services would help a lot of people connect with needed resources, and would help a lot more people stay on track.”*

## Which Programs or Services Needs the Most Improvement



Clients unanimously agreed that case management services and programs focused on developing daily living skills needed the most improvement. They felt improvement in case management services would make it easier to make more case-by-case decisions about what could really help a client become successful rather than focusing strictly on program guidelines. Clients felt that some of the strict guidelines end up hurting the people who are just barely getting by the most.

Other clients felt that there needed to be both a better job addressing enforcement of child support payments, and allowing parents to account for child support payments when reporting income. Some of the parents felt that their children were punished when a parent avoids their child support responsibilities, and others felt their child still gets punished when they do make child support payments but aren't allowed to subtract this money from their reported income.

Finally, several clients said many people could benefit from a clothing exchange, especially for young children's clothing, and for people who are not fall into "standard" sizes. There were several comments about the significant surplus of used clothing in the community and that a better job could be done getting those clothes to people who cannot afford the second-hand stores.

*"There are too many specific rules and guidelines for each program, and people who are barely getting by with jobs end up being hurt the most."*

## Which Services Are Needed but Inaccessible



Services clients need but have difficulty accessing mirror the issues brought up in all the other interviews and questions. They need help with:

- Affordable housing
- Medical care and prescription assistance
- Food assistance
- More accessible public transportation
- Services for people classified as “working poor”

*“We have a lot of people who are falling through the cracks because they are functioning but simply don’t make enough money to make ends meet.”*

## How to Help Others Avoid Economic Hardship



Clients’ thoughts on avoiding economic hardship were focused on two major categories: marketable job skills and accessibility to truly affordable medical and behavioral health care. Clients overall felt that addressing these two key issues would make the most significant impact on reducing economic hardship. They commented again how much Cheyenne needs jobs that are not part of the service economy, and that pay enough money to support a family. They also felt strongly that providing truly affordable and easily accessible care to

everyone who needs medical treatment, prescriptions, or behavioral health care would solve significant problems in our community.

### **What Do Clients Say About Community Action**

“Community Action has helped me so much. I don't know where I would be without their help.”

“Community Action has been a life saver for me.”

“Community Action makes it feel like it is okay to ask for help. They treat me like a human.”