

2021

CSRA Community Needs Assessment Report



Leveraging resources,
Empowering pe**O**ple,
and **A**dvocating
to alleviate poverty
in the **CSRA**



Prepared By: CSRA EOA, Inc.

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Organization of this Report

This Community Needs Assessment Report begins with an explanation of Community Action, the Executive Summary, an Overview of the Agency, the Purpose of the Report, the Methodology used in conducting the community needs assessment, Key Findings and Identified Needs from the research. The appendices include a community summary, profile and data analysis for the 14-county area (Bulloch, Burke, Columbia, Emanuel, Glascock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Lincoln, McDuffie, Richmond, Screven, Taliaferro, Warren, and Wilkes counties), the 13-county Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) service area, the 11 Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) service area county data, Veterans related data for the 20-county Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program service area, data by county for the 14 county area, with source and methodology for data, an update on COVID-19 and the impact of the Pandemic, Community and Clients Surveys, Service Reports, and Community Resources. Specific data domains include:

- Community Summary, Profile, and Analysis
- Demographics, Population Profile
- Employment & Economy
- Income, Assets, Poverty, & Income Supports/Public Benefits
- Adult Education & Training
- Education (Children & Youth)
- Child Care Centers
- Health, Wellness & Nutrition
- Disabilities
- Housing
 - Homelessness
 - Rental Housing
 - Home Ownership
 - Utilities
 - Broadband Access
- Transportation
- Special Population
 - Senior Citizens
 - Children/Youth
 - Veterans
 - Crime/Reentry/Returning Citizens
 - Populations with Limited English Proficiency

Executive Summary

In 1964 the crusade to create a “Great Society” in America was launched through the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA), legislation that created the more than 1,000 Community Action Agencies across the country whose mission it is to confront poverty on the local level. This legislation reminded us that we had a “compassionate commitment to keep faith with the morality of our society”, to relieve the poor “from the oppression of poverty” through Community Action, which would be “local effort, local leadership, local vision” (Bradley, 2006). CSRA Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc. (CSRA EOA, Inc.) mobilizes both government and private resources locally, and at the state and federal levels, to work toward accomplishing our mission. We work to eliminate causes of poverty, improve conditions, educate the public, advocate on behalf of the low-income population and plan and implement (with maximum feasible participation of the low-income population) programs and services that increase opportunity, equity, skills, and knowledge, thus leading to increase self-sufficiency and decreased poverty in the CSRA.

As part of the Results Oriented Management and Accountability planning phase, we conduct a Community Needs Assessment every three years (with annual data updates) to help gauge the community condition, determine gaps in services, and set need priorities that will be used to best serve the low-income community. The information gathered in the Community Needs Assessment allows us to “see the face of poverty” in our communities, and use that information to mobilize resources to addresses the causes and conditions of poverty, organize communities, and develop innovative ways to serve CSRA families and communities. This assessment process helps guide CSRA EOA, Inc.’s strategic planning process (and updates) and annual work plan which includes core programs and services to address poverty in the CSRA.

The CSRA is a mix of urban, suburban and rural communities and though the population has grown over the past 14 years, most growth has occurred in only a few counties. Many rural counties continue to suffer population loss, higher unemployment, higher rates of poverty, lower incomes, limited transportation options, and less available affordable, standard housing. Incomes from wages remain lower in the CSRA than the state average weekly income, as does Median and Per Capita income. (See Appendices for Data). The unemployment rate had been decreasing prior to the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the area is currently working to recover both health wise and economically from the impact of the Pandemic. Poverty rates have not improved, overall for the area, though Columbia and Bulloch Counties have seen continued improvement. Female headed households continue to be significantly more likely than married couples or male-headed households to live in poverty. Our minority populations continue to be most likely to experience poverty; additionally, the rate of children ages 0-4 living in poverty is higher in the area than for the state of Georgia or the US.

The “typical” person served by CSRA EOA, Inc. is fairly representative of the citizens living in our tri-county region, with the exception of race. The majority of participants served by the agency (between the ages of 18 and 65) are either unemployed, or disabled, though a high percentage are working and are struggling to meet their household needs. Lack of income (earned and public assistance) makes meeting household needs, accessing transportation and child care, affording safe housing and obtaining access to medical care more difficult.

At the most basic level, the best way to increase household income is through employment; but employment alone, does not seem to be the answer; even though unemployment has continued to go down, rates of poverty continue to increase in the area. Many jobs are part time and/or minimum wage and many low-income families in our region lack career paths. Instead, the focus is on getting someone a job, but the ongoing supports to allow for an improvement in that job are missing. Additionally, the high cost of transportation and child care present significant barriers to employment. The high cost of housing and utilities is another issue faced by low-income families.

Throughout the Pandemic, many people have faced unemployment, gotten behind on their rent or mortgage, and on other bills and we may be facing a “Credit Crisis” as the resulting impact on credit scores, and the potential increase in interest rates impacts low-income families. Additionally, many microenterprise owners and small business owners have been significantly impacted and were unable to access the Small Business Administration and other resources to help them keep their businesses afloat through the storm of the Pandemic.

Recommendations for combating the causes and conditions of poverty include prioritizing career pathways and working with the community and economic development in partnership to attract living wage jobs; integrating direct services with community development; finding creative solutions to transportation; continuing to provide quality child education and support services and family services for Head Start and Early Head Start families; developing and expanding partnerships to create more affordable housing options; continuing the work with the Continuums of Care to decrease homelessness across the CSRA through Coordinated Intake and Assessment and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families; increasing home ownership opportunities through housing counseling, increasing financial literacy and financial capabilities building through conferences and one-on-one assistance, the IDA program, and homebuyer education, the home possible project creating affordable home ownership options; and to continue providing home weatherization to reduce energy costs for low income families.

Overview of the Agency/Background

Introduction & Community Action History

Community Action agencies were created as a direct result of the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964, to address the root causes of and ameliorate poverty at the local level in communities across the United States of America. The EOA was key legislation in the War on Poverty; designed to provide local community with resources to determine the causes of poverty and work to improve conditions and provide opportunity for people to get out of poverty. Approximately 1,000 Community Action Agencies exist in the US and its territories, all working to meet local needs and achieve three national goals:

- Goal 1: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.
- Goal 2: Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.
- Goal 3: People with low-incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.

These goals focus on the family, in which agencies assist them in attaining skills, knowledge, and motivations to “secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient”; the community, by working to ensure the entire community is more responsive to the needs and interests of the poor and mobilizes resources and creates opportunity; and the agency, which is responsible for determining needs, developing strategies and plans, and making the best possible use of available resources, and strengths to work toward achieving the mission of the agency and the goals of community action.

Each Community Action Agency is operated locally, led by a volunteer board of directors consisting of one-third members of the low-income community, one-third public officials, and one-third members of the private sector. As each community is unique in their needs for assistance, services provided by each CAA varies, although the promise of Community Action is the same, *“Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.”*

As a member of the network of Community Action Agencies across the country, CSRA EOA, Inc. uses a results-oriented and outcome-focused approach to managing and operating programs and services that promote self-sufficiency, family stability and community revitalization and strengthening to reduce and alleviate poverty, through empowerment and helping people help themselves and each other.

CSRA Service Area

CSRA Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc. (CSRA EOA) is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency, created in January 1966 and serving the Central Savannah River Area, which includes Burke, Columbia, Emanuel, Glascock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Lincoln, McDuffie, Richmond, Screven, Taliaferro, Warren, and Wilkes counties and also provides Head Start in Bullock County. Additionally, our Supportive Services for Veteran Families serves a 20-county area and specific demographics and other data are included in an Appendices for the SSVF Program.

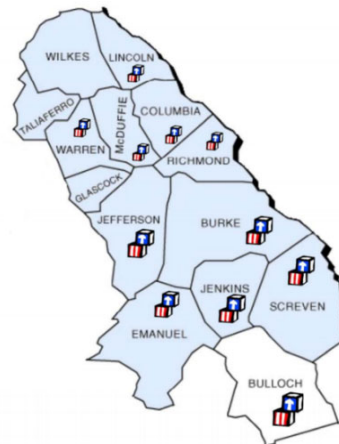


Figure 1 CSRA EOA, Inc. Service Counties for CSBG and Head Start

Mission Statement

The agency's mission is to leverage resources, empower people, and advocate to alleviate poverty in the CSRA. We work to promote self-sufficiency and ease the human suffering of the CSRA citizens, by acting as a catalyst within the low-income community to identify poverty-related and human rights problems and to identify resources and develop services to address those problems; promoting the attitude of self-help in the low-income community; providing community education to the low-income population, raising their awareness of their rights as citizens and focusing their attention on the causes of poverty and human rights problems; and working with the community, rather than for the community, to promote self-sufficiency and leadership among the poor.

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Programs & Services

Toward achieving our mission, the agency utilizes a wide range of tools to address the needs of the community, including the operation of programs such as:

- Head Start
- Early Head Start
- Weatherization
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- Supportive Services for Veterans' Families
- Coordinated Intake and Assessment
- Permanent Supportive Housing for Homeless Persons and Families with Disabilities
- Senior Nutrition and Wellness
- HOPE: Housing Counseling, Foreclosure Intervention, Home Buyer Education, Financial Literacy/Capabilities (Financial Literacy Workshops and Mini-Conferences), "The Way Home" Individual Development Account Project, and Home Possible.

- Family Self-Sufficiency & Support Program (CACs): Intake & Referral, Case Management, Emergency Assistance (Housing, Utilities, Food), Personal Household Items, Budgeting Assistance.
- Job Fairs, Resource Fairs, and Health Fairs
- Partnerships and participation in Collaborative efforts and Continuums of Care.

Purpose of Report

Community Action Agencies conduct Community Needs Assessments (Community Assessments for Head Start), at least once every three years, with updates as needed, to help guide the strategic planning, operational planning, and program service delivery of the agency. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (“USDHHS”) issued Information Memorandum 49, requiring eligible community action agencies to conduct needs assessments and use the results of the assessments to design programs to meet community needs. In 2015, USDHHS issued Information Memorandum No. 138 establishing Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Organizational Standards requiring CAAs to conduct a Community Needs Assessment and develop a Community Action Plan to address the needs identified in the needs assessment.

The report and the appendices provide current poverty data in the CSRA, its prevalence in relation to age, gender, and race/ethnicity, other factors including employment, income, education, disabilities, housing, transportation, and other factors that may contribute to the causes or conditions of poverty, provides an analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, and includes key findings on poverty and the needs of the poor in the CSRA. Information from the Community Needs Assessment is used to inform core agency services and efforts with the community to address the causes and conditions of poverty.

Community Assessment (Needs/Strengths) Methodology

The research and data collection for this needs assessment was guided by the framework required by both Community Services Block Grant and Head Start/Early Head Start. A Community Needs Assessment Work Group, comprised of staff members and board planning and evaluation committee members reviewed and analyzed aggregated data. Senior leadership, and key program staff, developed the needs statements included in our Key Findings. Members of the CSRA EOA, Inc. staff who contributed significantly to this document include: Lola W. Johnson, Sharon DuBose, Mary Harrison, Ernestine Smith, Keesha Johnson, and Shaundra Dority. Sharon DuBose (Planner/Evaluator) served as lead in facilitating data collection and data analysis.

In the appendices, for each Report (14-County, 13-County, 11-County, and 20-County) a Methodology and Source documents page is provided at the end of the document.

Methods Used to Gather Data for Community Assessment (Needs/Strengths)

- Utilizing a listing from the previous Community Needs Assessment, a plan for data collection was developed with the agency Department Heads, with input to the Department Heads from staff members in their departments.
- Online research of statistical data from government and nonprofit resources (see Data Sources section of this report).
- Surveys were updated from previous surveys used, and were approved by the Department Heads before use in collection.
- Department Heads worked with staff and developed and submitted a list of partner agencies to survey.
- Utilized SurveyMonkey for online surveys.
- Online assessment tool was used to gather data to determine requests for services (implemented as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic).
- Utilized data from previous updates to assist with information normally obtained during resource fairs and forums, as due to the Pandemic, we could not hold these events during the data collection and analysis phases of this process this year.
- Database for reports on presenting needs, services utilized, and barriers.
- Customer Satisfaction surveys on services requested and unmet needs.
- Data Analysis with Departments, Department Heads and Board of Directors Planning & Evaluation Committee.

Numerous sources were consulted including national, state and local databases, state and county government reports, and other community agency data. Opinions and perceptions were also collected from stakeholder groups including program participants/clients, community partners, CSRA EOA, Inc. staff members and volunteers, the agency Board of Directors, and local elected officials.

Surveys were distributed by a SurveyMonkey email link to partners, local government, agency staff members and volunteers, and the Board of Directors, as well as to clients for whom we had an email address in the database. The link was also available on the agency Website. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, hard copy surveys were not utilized this year. The Appendices include the survey forms (general population and target stakeholders), survey results, and a list of partners and elected officials to whom the surveys were distributed throughout the area. We utilized data from materials collected while completing CNA Updates in 2019 and 2020 due to the inability to hold public forums during this process.

Demographic Profile of the CSRA

Community Profile

The CSRA is located along the eastern border of Georgia, with the Savannah River serving as the border between Georgia and South Carolina. Over the past 19 years, the total population in the 14-county area grew by 16.53 %, increasing from 481,576 persons in 2000 to 561,189 in 2019 for an estimated increase of 79,613 persons. The overall population in Georgia increased by 27.09% during that same time period. In two counties of our service area, the population grew significantly (exceeding state or national population growth); these were Columbia at 68.79% and Bulloch at 35.97%. Six of our rural counties continued to see population loss, including Jefferson, Lincoln, Screven, Taliaferro, Warren, and Wilkes (same six counties as in 2018 CNA). Taliaferro County has had a decrease in population of 22.44% from 2000 to 2019.

Percent Change in Population

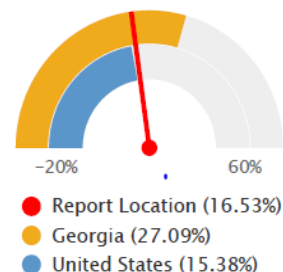


Figure 2 Population Change 2000-2019 Census/ACS

The community includes 196,327 households, with 128,658 families; 14.16% are age 65 and over (compared to 13.52% in Georgia), and 11.43% of the population over age 18 in the 14-county area are Veterans (compared to 8.02% for Georgia). Racially, approximately 54.9% of the area is white, 38.4% is black, 2% is Asian and the balance are spread across other races and mixed race. Some counties, including Jefferson, Richmond, Taliaferro and Warren, are majority black, with Richmond County (highest population) 56.5% black, 37.1% white and 2.6% mixed.

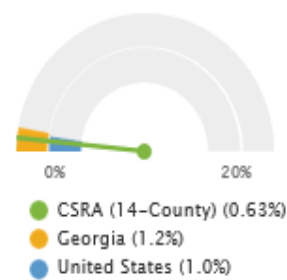
Report Area	Total Population	White Total	Black Total	American Indian Total	Asian Total	Native Hawaiian	Some Other Total	Mixed Race
CSRA (14-County)	561,189	307,963	215,727	1,503	11,230	900	7,819	16,047
Georgia	10,403,847	6,098,889	3,289,020	37,440	414,481	6,233	291,872	265,912
United States	324,697,795	235,377,662	41,234,642	2,750,143	17,924,209	599,868	16,047,369	10,763,902

Poverty Snapshot

There are a total of 196,327 households in the 14-County CSRA with 35,617 (18.14%) living at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, an increase from 2000-2019 of 0.63%, less than the increase of the State rate (1.2%) and the United States rate (1.0%). The Poverty Rate (ACS 2015-2019) is 19.23% (as compared to the state rate of 15.09%) with 103,629 of 539,026 people living at or below the poverty rate (100% FPL). For the CSBG eligible population, the poverty rate for people at or below 125% FPL was 24.15% (ACS 2015-2019) and the poverty rate for people below 200% FPL was 38.77%, as compared with the 34.26% state rate.

Figure 3 Change in Poverty Rate: US Census SAIPE 2019

Change in Poverty Rate 2000-2019



Our area continues to exceed the poverty rate of the state in percent of poverty-female householders as well, with 67.3% of the CSRA families in poverty female households, as compared to the state rate of 57.1%.

Table 1 Population in Poverty, Poverty Rate Trend 2000-2019 US Census

Population in Poverty, Poverty Rate Trend 2000-2019 Census				
County	Total Population 2019	Population in Poverty 2019	% Population in Poverty	Change in Poverty Rate 2000-2019
Bulloch	76,120	93,749	21.9%	↑ 3.3%
Burke	22,520	15,945	23.6%	↓ 2.6%
Columbia	150,705	5,197	5.6%	↓ -0.8%
Emanuel	22,533	8,747	20.9%	↓ -2.2%
Glascok	2,996	4,441	16.9%	↑ 2.8%
Jefferson	15,618	486	25.1%	↑ 4.9%
Jenkins	8,793	3,710	29.0%	↑ 5.8%
Lincoln	7,856	2,162	17.3%	↑ 1.1%
McDuffie	21,455	1,357	18.0%	↑ 1.2%
Richmond	201,852	41,081	21.7%	↑ 3.0%
Screven	13,989	3,239	24.1%	↑ 6.5%
Taliaferro	1,611	345	22.5%	↑ 0.4%
Warren	5,297	1,372	26.5%	↑ 6.2%
Wilkes	9,844	1,875	19.6%	↑ 3.7%
Georgia	10,403,847	1,397,607	13.5%	↑ 1.2%

- 93,749 persons in poverty in 2019 in the 14-county area*:
 - 77,804 in the 13-County CSBG Area
 - 91,043 in the 11-County HS Area
- 15,816 more people in poverty in 2019 than in 2000 in the 14-County Area.
- Only 2 Counties had a decrease in poverty.
- Three Counties poverty rate went up by more than 5%.

*US Census SAIPE

Note: changes in poverty rate that increased 2% or greater are in red, changes in poverty rate that decreased are in blue.

The 2015-2019 US Census ACS poverty rates for our area are slightly different than the US Census Estimates, with listed highest to lowest, Jenkins County suffering a rate of 30.46% of its population in poverty, Warren 26.84%, Bulloch 26.42%, Jefferson 24.63%, McDuffie 23.96%, Wilkes 23.65%, Richmond 23.02%, Screven 22.45%, Burke 22.16%, Emanuel 22.11%, Taliaferro 21.10%, Lincoln 20.62%, Glascock (18.87%), and **Columbia (7.46%)**.

Columbia County is the only county in the CSRA with a lower poverty rate than Georgia; it is lower even than the US poverty rate.

NOTE: Throughout this report, the Report Location in gauge tables refers to the counties of Bulloch, Burke, Columbia, Emanuel, Glascock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Lincoln, McDuffie, Richmond, Screven, Taliaferro, Warren and Wilkes in Georgia.

Population in Poverty, Percent

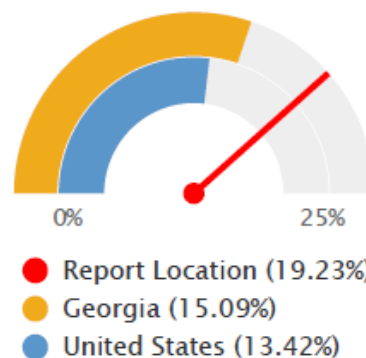
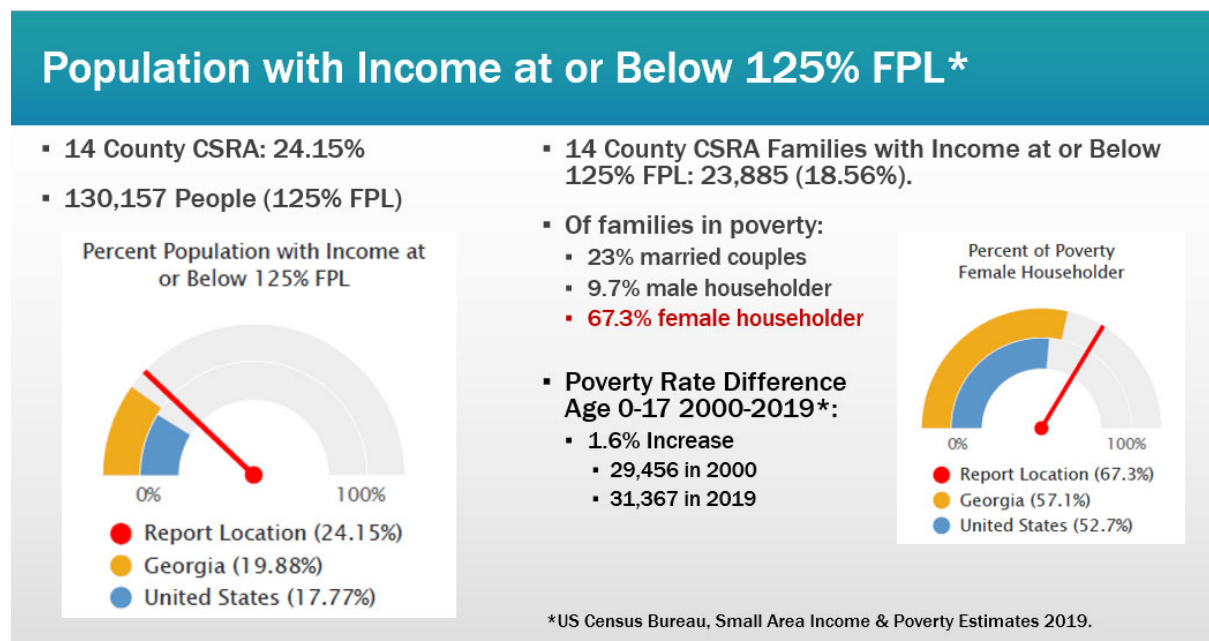


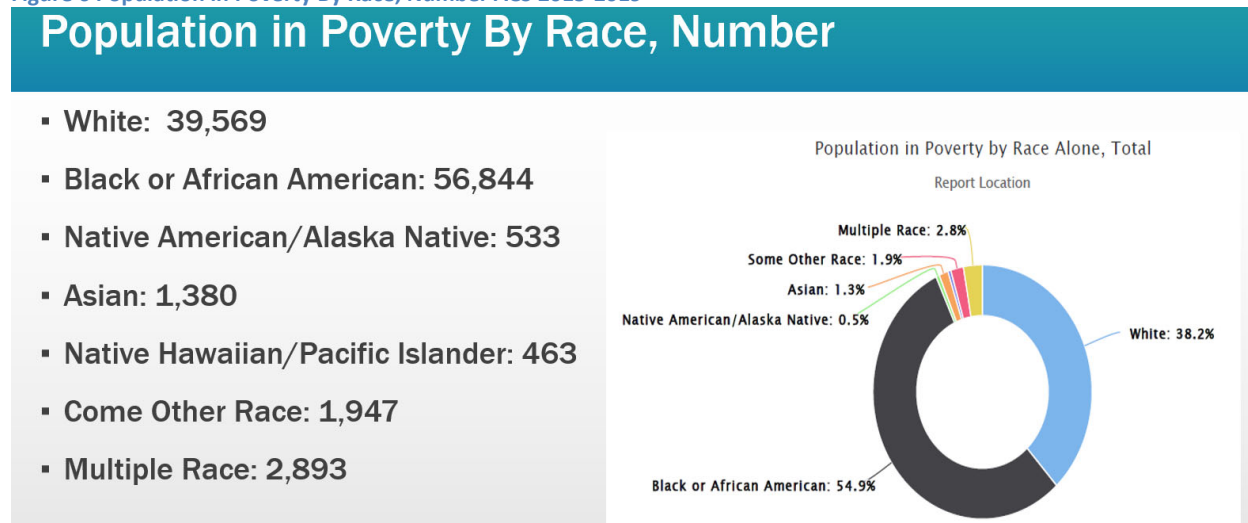
Figure 4 Population in Poverty Rate 2015-2019 ACS

Figure 5 US Census SAIPE Estimates 2019



Traditionally, CSBG Services, and many of the programs in the Community Services Department are operated using an income eligibility determination¹ based on 125% of the FPL. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, that rate was increased to 200% of FPL and there is legislation in Congress that may raise the level to 200% of FPL post-pandemic, but that has not yet been determined. As noted in Figure 5, 24.15% of the population, or 130,157 people are financially eligible to receive CSBG services at the 125% of FPL rate. At 200% FPL in the ACS 2019, 208,976 people (38.77%) of the population would be financially eligible to receive services.

Figure 6 Population in Poverty By Race, Number ACS 2015-2019



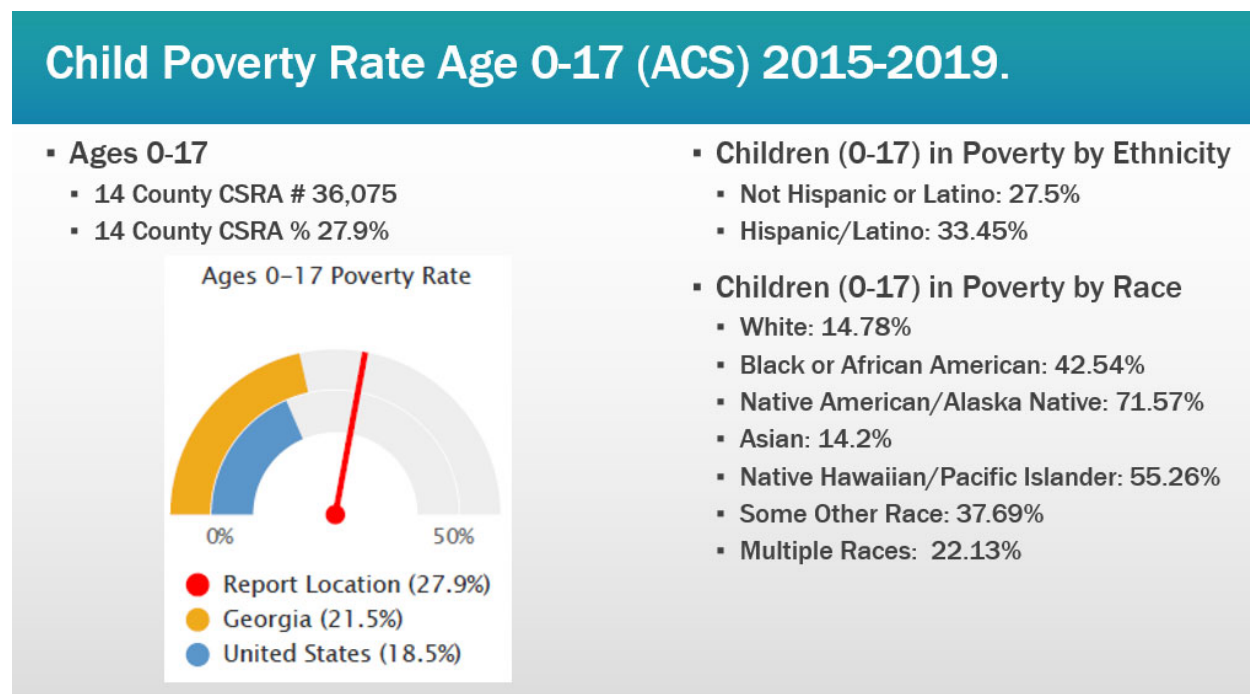
¹ Eligibility Determination is not solely based on income eligibility. CSBG and other CSRA EOA, Inc. services are not entitlement programs.

In the CSRA, 18.14% of households are in poverty, as compared to 14.2% in Georgia and 12.9% in the United States. Over 25% of the Hispanic/Latino/Spanish Origin population is in poverty; 1.3% of those served by the CSBG Department (non-LIHEAP) were Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin persons. In comparing our CSBG Service Demographics to the overall community demographics, whereas 38% of the population living in poverty is white and almost 55% black, just under 10% of the population receiving Community Service Department Program services (other than LIHEAP) are white, and 86% are black, with the remaining 4% mostly mixed race. The poverty rates² for populations by race are as follows:

- White 13.36%
- Black or African American 27.46%
- Native American/Alaska Native 36.83%
- Asian 12.77%
- Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 51.91%
- Multiple Race 19.17%
- Other Race 25.46%

The child poverty rate in the CSRA exceeds the rate of Georgia and of the United States. As noted in the figure below, we have extremely high poverty rates for children overall, other than Asian and White children.

Figure 7 Child Poverty Rate Ages 0-17, US Census ACS 2015-2019



² US Census American Community Survey 2015-2019.

Poverty rates for the subset of children ages 0-4 are similar to those for the overall 0-17 age range, with a 29.8% poverty rate (as compared to the 23.7% Georgia rate and the 20.3% United States rate) with a total of 10,529 children 0-4 in poverty.

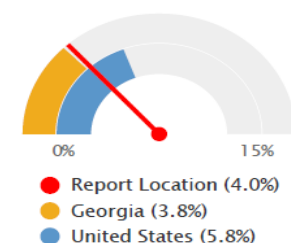
Another population traditionally served are Senior Citizens. In the CSRA, 11.3% of senior citizens (65+) live at or below 100% FPL, for a total of 8,714 as compared to the total senior population of 77,260 in the area. The CSRA is over 1% higher than the Georgia rate of 10.2% and 2% higher than the US rate of 9.3%. An important note: 13.08% of females 65+ live in poverty as compared to 8.88% of males. As it relates to ethnicity and race, the rate for senior citizens who are Hispanic or Latina is 16.36% as compared to an 11.19% rate for non-Hispanic or Latino. The rate for seniors by race is located to the right.

- White: 7.53%
- Black or African American: 19.17%
- Native American/Alaska Native 23.7%
- Asian: 9.08%
- Other Race: 44.03%
- Multiple Race: 5.44%

Employment Snapshot

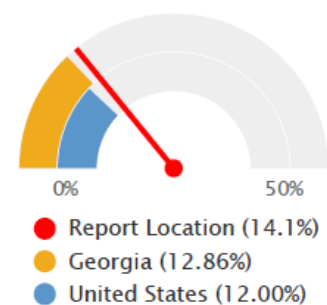
In FY 2020, 50% of those served were unemployed, 30% worked full time, right at 14% were retired and the balance worked part time, but during the first three quarters for FY 2021, 56% of those receiving services were working full time with the average personal income of \$20,72.51 (hourly rate \$11.14). Though this rate of pay may provide sufficient income for a single person, the majority of our households are families with one to two children.

Figure 8 US DOL, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021.
Unemployment Rate



From April 2017 through April 2021, the unemployment rate has moved from 5.1% in 2017, to 4.3% in 2018, 3.7% in 2019, to 10.7% in 2020³, back down to 4.0% in 2021⁴. Though the unemployment rate is 4.0%, there was a decrease in persons in the labor force between 2020 and 2021 that does not match the demographics of the community. Thus many dropped out of the labor force that may return to the labor for and cause an increase in the unemployment rate moving forward. Compared to the State, we had a slightly higher unemployment rate, but the unemployment rate for the CSRA Region was lower, overall, than the rate for the United States. In 2020, average weekly wages were \$1,001 for the Augusta Metropolitan Statistical Area, with a high of \$1,674 in Construction, to a low of \$360 in Leisure and Hospitality. The education of the workforce included 14.1% with no high school diploma, 31.2%

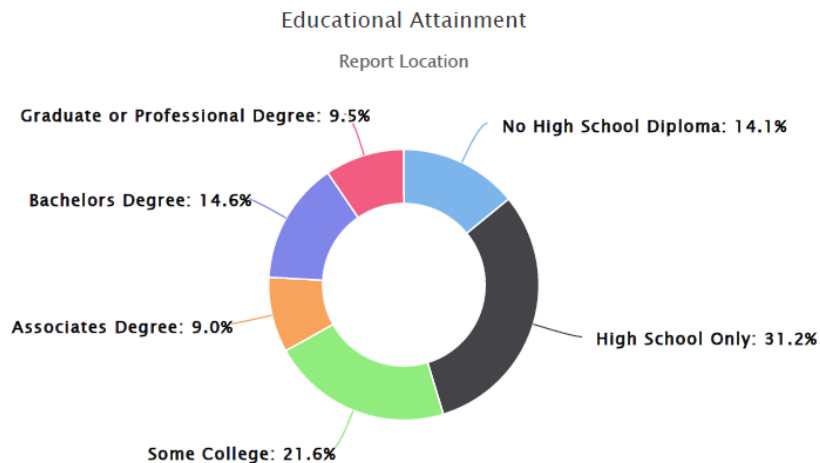
Percent Population with No High School Diploma



³ Significant increase in unemployment rate as a result of the COVID 19 Pandemic and business closures.

⁴ May be due to drop in labor force numbers from 2020 to 2021.

with high school only, 21.6% with some college, 9.0% with an Associate's Degree, 14.6% with a Bachelor's degree and 9.5% with a Graduate or Professional Degree. Both the State of Georgia and the United States had fewer people in the workforce with no high school diploma or high school only, than did the CSRA.



It is estimated that 17.59% of adults lack literacy skills as compared to the State average of 17%.

Births, Head Start and Pre-School

Though the overall population has been increasing, births throughout the CSRA between 2016 and 2020 have been decreasing, with a total of 7,405 in 2016, and only 6,871 in 2020.

Figure 9 Births by County 2016-2019, Georgia Department of Public Health, OASIS.

Children – Number of Births by Residence

Number of Births by Residence

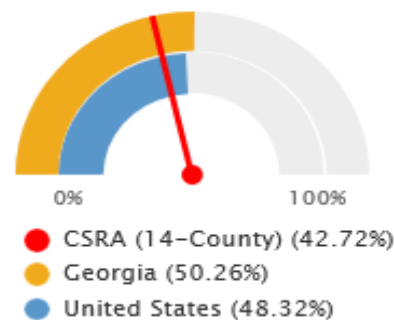
Geography	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Selected Years Total
	Number of Births	Number of Births	Number of Births	Number of Births	Number of Births	Number of Births
Georgia	129,940	129,158	126,051	126,250	122,379	633,778
Bulloch	893	915	901	899	865	4,473
Burke	320	323	304	301	284	1,532
Columbia	1,945	1,745	1,867	1,767	1,794	9,118
Emanuel	293	288	319	280	282	1,462
Glascok	34	24	32	20	31	141
Jefferson	218	180	194	186	169	947
Jenkins	100	93	107	91	90	481
Lincoln	81	73	77	81	63	375
McDuffie	303	261	283	280	267	1,394
Richmond	2,905	2,872	2,828	2,837	2,691	14,133
Screven	161	197	188	170	177	893
Taliaferro	13	13	15	14	13	68
Warren	53	72	56	68	57	306
Wilkes	86	97	103	96	88	470
County Summary	7,405	7,153	7,274	7,090	6,871	35,793

Throughout the CSRA, there are over 36,000 children under the age of 5, with 10,529 between the ages of 0-4 living in Poverty and 32 Head Start and Early Head Start sites available to serve them. Of children in the CSRA between the ages of three and four (3-4), 42.72% are enrolled in school, as compared to 50.26% in the State and 48.32% in the United States. We lag behind the state and US in getting our children enrolled in preschool. We have an estimated 8,312 children ages 3-4 not attending preschool⁵ as noted in the table below.

Column1	Number	Percent
Bulloch	1,341	69.60%
Burke	266	54.00%
Columbia	2,103	54.60%
Emanuel	265	47.00%
Glascok	0	0%
Jefferson	222	57.70%
Jenkins	216	77.10%
Lincoln	170	66.70%
McDuffie	436	68.80%
Richmond	2,989	56.10%
Screven	172	46.10%
Taliaferro	10	71.40%
Warren	29	45.30%
Wilkes	93	30.10%
14 County CSRA	8312	

Figure 10 Percentage of Population 3-4 not in Preschool. U.S. Census. ACS 2015-2019.

Percentage of Population Age 3-4 Enrolled in School

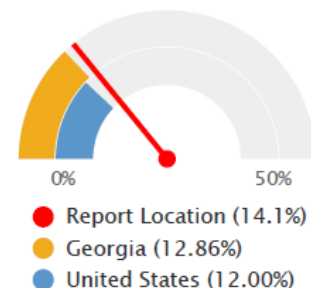


Education

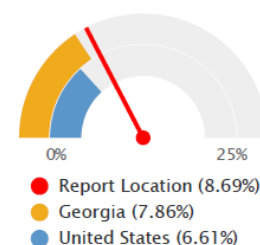
Education is an important factor in obtaining living wage jobs in the area, and the percent of our population in the CSRA with no high school diploma still exceeds that of the state. In 2015-2019, 85.9% of people 25 years and over had at least graduated from high school or had a GED in the CSRA region, as compared to 87.14% in Georgia and 88% in the United States. Of those, 24.1% had a bachelor's degree or higher as compared to the much higher 31.3% for Georgia and the 32.2% for the US. An estimated 14.1% had not obtained a high school diploma or GED. Columbia County was our only county with single digits (7.26%) for those without a high school diploma, while, the counties with the highest number of residents without a high school diploma (all over 20%) were Emanuel, Glascok, Jefferson, Jenkins, Taliaferro, and Warren.

Teens who are high-school dropouts, ages 16-19 decreased overall for the CSRA and in most counties, but Burke, Emanuel, McDuffie,

Percent Population with No High School Diploma



Population Age 16-19 Not in School and Not Employed, Percent

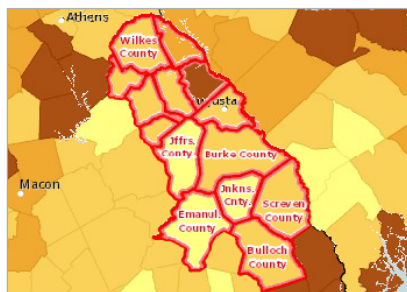


⁵ US Census, American Community Survey 2015-2019 for 14-county CSRA area.

and Wilkes increased from 2011-2015 to 2015-2019. It is important to note that the CSRA has 8.69% of teens ages 16-19 not in school and not employment; higher than both the state rate of 7.86% and the United States rate of 6.61%. See the appendices for more data on this age group. OF the 14,510 children ages 3-4, it is estimated that 6,198 are enrolled in school for a 42.72% rate, as compared to the 50.26% for Georgia.

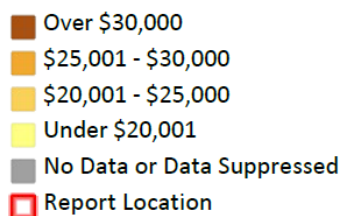
Income

The Per Capita Income of the CSRA is \$25,557, as compared to \$31,067 for Georgia and \$34,103 for the United States. The Median household income ranges from a low of \$27,375 in Jenkins County, to a high of \$82,339 in Columbia County, as compared to the Georgia Median Household income of \$58,700 and the United States at \$62,843. Half of the CSRA counties have median incomes in the \$30,000's (Emanuel, Jefferson, Lincoln, Screven, Taliaferro, Warren and Wilkes), with another five in the \$40,000's (Bulloch, Burke, Glascock, McDuffie, and Richmond).



[View larger map](#)

Per Capita Income by County, ACS 2015-19



In the 14 County CSRA Region, we have households that survive with less than \$10,000 annual income⁶, including 9.2% in Bulloch, 9.9% in Burke, 3.1% in Columbia, 11.4% in Emanuel, 8.4% in Glascock, 14.5% in Jefferson, 12.0% in Jenkins, 10.4% in Lincoln, 9.5% in McDuffie, 10.8% in Richmond, 9.4% in Screven, 12.0% in Taliaferro, 13.4% in Warren, and 7.5% in Wilkes. Family households generally have a lower rate at less than \$10,000, often significantly, but it is important to note that these families would all be living below 100% of the FPL of \$12,760 for a single person in 2020. For the range of \$10,000 to \$14,999, the ranges run from a low of 1.7% in Columbia to a high of 11.8% of households in Jenkins County.

Household /Family Size	50%	*100%*	125%
1	6,380	\$12,760	15,950
2	8,620	\$17,240	21,550
3	10,860	\$21,720	27,150
4	13,100	\$26,200	32,750
5	15,340	\$30,680	38,350
6	17,580	\$35,160	43,950
7	19,820	\$39,640	49,550
8	22,060	\$44,120	55,150
9	24,300	\$48,600	60,750
10	26,540	\$53,080	66,350

⁶ US Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimate 2019, S1901 data, downloaded 2021.

Figure 11: 2020 FPL, HHS Poverty Guidelines

Of respondents in our online CNA survey, 47.54% stated they had income of \$10,000 or less annually, and 33.91% stated their income was between \$10,000 and \$24,999.

Housing

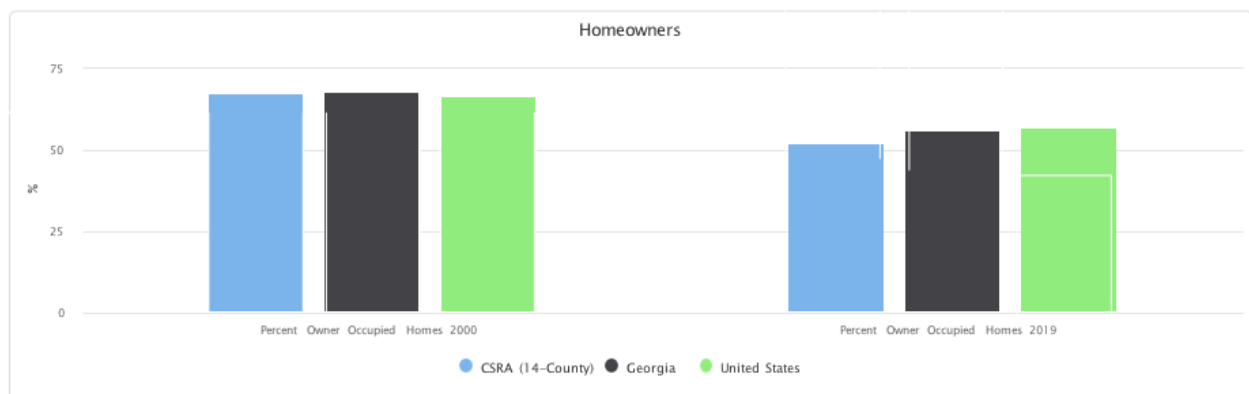
The U.S. Census Bureau estimated there were 123,840 owner occupied homeowners of the estimated 240,945 housing units in the report area in 2019. This 51.40% is a decrease over the 67.02% owner occupied homes in 2000. Also, though we had previously had a slightly higher homeownership rate than the state, we now have a lower rate, with Georgia at 55.51% homeownership and the United States at 56.23%. One key issue to note is that rental households are most likely to be cost burdened than homeowners, and owner-occupied households whose mortgage is paid off are the least likely to be cost burdened. To be considered “cost-burdened”, a household spends 30% or more of the household income on housing costs. In the 14 County CSRA⁷:

- 24.92% of homeowners spend 30% or more of income with Mortgage (17,890)
- 12.09% of homeowners spend 30% or more of income on home without Mortgage (6,292)
- 46.49% of Renters spend 30% or more of income with Rent (33,697).
- Richmond County 51.78% of renters spend 30% or more of income with Rent (17,507).
- The CSRA has a lower rate of eviction filings than Georgia (4.03% for the CSRA, 16.82% for Georgia), and a lower eviction rate (0.41% as compared to 4.71%).

A chart with cost burdened households by tenure is included in the appendices.

Note: This indicator is compared to the state average in the Appendices.

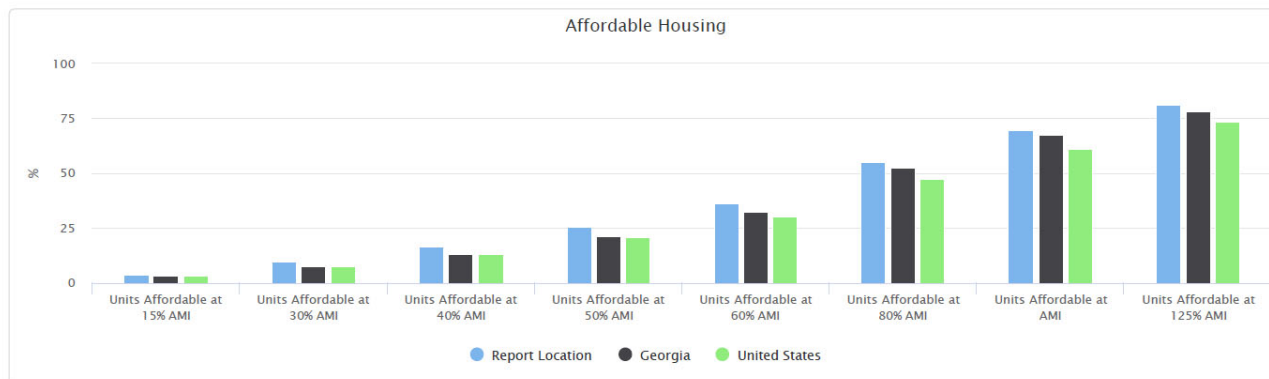
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2015-19. Source geography: tract



An issue to note is the affordability of homes at various percentages of the Area Median Income. The CSRA has more units affordable at most income levels as compared to AMI than

⁷ Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2015-19. Source geography: tract

Georgia or the United States. Unfortunately, note the low number available for people at or below 50% of the AMI.



Of Community Needs Assessment Survey Respondents, 59.36% (929 respondents) stated that one of the top seven (7) major causes of poverty in the area was the high cost of housing. This was the number 1 response on the survey, with the high cost of living (groceries, insurance, transportation, childcare, medical care) second with 55.08% of the respondents.

Key Findings & Identified Needs

The following findings and identified needs are to be used in planning sessions for strategic and programmatic/operational planning and may guide future projects, staff training, and resource development activities, but the needs are vast and many may be beyond the scope of the resources available to meet the needs. The purpose of this comprehensive assessment is to inform strategic choices.

Key Finding # 1

Employment alone will not get households out of poverty; the area needs more living wage jobs. This requires both the community level of job creation and the family level of skills development in preparation for living-wage jobs.

In Georgia, the minimum wage remains at \$7.25 per hour, thus a person earning minimum wage who works full time, 52 weeks per year, earns less than 125% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$15,080 as compared to 125% of the poverty level at \$15,950). If that person is a single parent of one child, he or she would need to earn at least \$10.36 per hour (\$414.42 per week) to be just dollars above 125% of the FPL for a household of two. Many jobs in the CSRA, especially service jobs, work less than 40 hours per week; often 20-25 to keep the company from having to provide insurance. The Community Needs Assessment Survey results also indicated, based on the opinion of those taking the survey, that living-wage jobs were a major need in the CSRA.

For those living wage jobs available, many low-income persons lack the education and skills to access those jobs and would benefit from apprenticeship opportunities and on-the-job training. In the Community Needs Assessment Survey, 48.37% of respondents listed “Not Enough Living Wage Jobs” as a major cause of poverty in the CSRA.

Key Finding # 2

The COVID-19 Pandemic has had a major impact on employment, availability of childcare, education-related outcomes, health, especially mental health, credit rating/scores, and the cost of living, especially housing and home maintenance/home repair in many of our counties. These are due to both community level – pandemic shut-down of employment, schools, day care centers, service providers, etc., and family level of illness and individual impact of crisis on health and well-being.

Key Finding # 3

The high cost of housing (and utilities), in comparison to income, creates a significant housing cost burden on many households. Community level need – more affordable housing in the community as it relates to income of community residents.

Almost one third of households pay over 30% of their income in housing costs. This information offers a measure of housing affordability and excessive shelter costs and demonstrates the fact there is an “at-risk” population. Homeowners are less likely to be “housing cost burdened” than renters, especially if they have paid off their mortgage, but the homeownership rate has dropped from 2000 to 2016 in every county in the CSRA, from a rate of 67.02% in the 14-County area in 2000 to 51.73% in the 14-County area in 2016 (13-County CSBG area 68.20% dropped to 52.84% and 11-County HS area 66.68% dropped to 52.17%).

In the community needs assessment survey, 59.36% of respondents listed “High Cost of Housing” as a major cause of poverty in the CSRA, and 55.08% listed “High Cost of Living” (including utilities, groceries, childcare, etc.) as a major cause of poverty. On July 1, 2021, in the Augusta Chronicle, there was a headline across the front page, “Whatever pays the rent: Augusta-area apartments grow pricier”. The article stated that the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Augusta is now \$845 - \$849, with a two-bedroom price of \$950⁸. Based on the US Census, the average monthly costs for home owners in the CSRA is \$988 per month, with costs ranging from \$659 in Jenkins County to \$1,284 in Columbia County. Mortgages of \$400 a month are all but gone, with mortgages of \$400-\$599 a small minority. The majoring of

⁸ <https://www.augustachronicle.com/story/news/2021/07/01/augusta-ga-area-apartment-rents-grow-more-costly-housing-shortage/5373128001/>

homes in the CSRA, have mortgages with owner-occupied housing costs between \$1,000 and \$2,499. There are 26,370 homes with monthly costs ranging \$1,000 to \$1,499 and only 24,477 below \$1,000 per month for homeowners. Affordability of homes ranges from 1.9 to 3.34 times the median household income for the area in the CSRA.

Figure 12 Homeownership & Housing Affordability of Homes, scorecard.prosperitynow.org



Key Finding # 4

Single-Female Head of Households continue to be the highest household type in poverty across the service area and based on earnings and potential retirement, this trend may continue. This is a community level need with supports and equitable pay for females needed to decrease poverty for single parent female headed households. This need is especially relevant for the Head Start program.

Female headed households and female senior citizens are far more likely to live in poverty than male headed households, 2-parent households and male senior citizens. The US Department of Labor published a report in January 2016 that stated that “Women’s earnings as a percentage of men’s varied by occupation” and that “women who worked full time in wage and salary jobs had median usual weekly earnings” that were “83 percent of men’s median weekly earnings” (<https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/womens-earnings-83-percent-of-mens-but-vary-by-occupation.htm>). There are many studies that discuss reasons for this, including differences in wages for traditional jobs held by each gender, family caregiving responsibilities that often cause interruptions in career paths for women, and the possibility of gender discrimination (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/09/gender-pay-gap-facts/>).

Key Finding # 5

Non-White and non-Asian households continue to experience poverty at a much higher rate than White and Asian households in the CSRA.

In the 14-County CSRA area, the poverty rate for Asian and white people is significantly lower than that of black or African American and Native Populations; this is especially apparent in the child poverty rate, with 14.78% of white children (ages 0-17) in poverty, while 42.54% of black or African American children live in poverty. For Native American children, the poverty rate is 71.57% and for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders children it is 55.26%. The Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality released a report in 2017 that stated, “Though some gaps have narrowed, there remain substantial racial-ethnic differences in poverty, with blacks and Native Americans continuing to experience the highest poverty rates, Hispanics following with slightly lower rates, and whites and Asians experiencing the lowest poverty rates.”

(https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Pathways_SOTU_2017_poverty.pdf) The CSRA is indicative of those findings. Intergenerational poverty may be a contributing factor to this pattern, but the difference in poverty rate cannot be contributed to that factor alone. Inequalities and lack of equity must be addressed to reduce the gap and reduce poverty overall in the CSRA.

Key Finding # 6

Early Childhood Programs are more accessible for children in urban and suburban areas, through Head Start and lottery funded Pre-K programs, but are not as accessible to children in rural communities due to transportation issues.

Head Start’s program design is more comprehensive than the Pre-K Lottery funded child care slots and helps children become ready for kindergarten, while also helping meet the health and nutritional needs of the children. There are 36,869 children under age 5 in the 14-county area, with an estimated 10,529 at or below the poverty level, and 32 centers to serve them. The CSRA spans fourteen counties and covers over 9,000 mi², many of which include 35 mile per hour back roads making many rural low-income households unable to access Head Start services because they are too far to bus, and the family does not have the needed transportation to get children to the site. Lack of the services, nutrition, and education associated with Head Start puts the low-income children at risk.

Key Finding # 7

Low Income Senior Citizens continue to need support systems, in addition to Social Security and Medicare, to survive.

The poverty rate for senior citizens in the 14-County area was 11.3%, with 8,714 persons 65+ living at or below 100% of the FPL. These rates are higher than the Georgia rate of 10.2% and

the United States rate of 9.3%. In the Forum at the Senior Center in Burke County, participants stated that Social Security and retirement payments do not keep up with the cost of living, and the cost of Medicare cuts into the check, causing many to be in poverty. Groceries, utility costs, medical/dental costs and home repairs often are too high. Additionally, many senior citizens do not have savings to make needed home repairs and many also lack transportation and must often rely on others, whom they must often pay or give gas money to, to take them places they need to go.

Community Needs and Priorities

Findings from our needs assessment indicate broad needs for services which support low-income working households (especially female-headed households with children), Veterans, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, children, teens, returning citizens (ex-offenders), and persons with mental health, substance abuse/addiction and alcohol abuse/addiction. Lack of transportation, living wage jobs, education, affordable child care, affordable housing, affordable utilities, affordable medical and dental care, and the high cost of groceries were all considered causes of poverty in the area.

Continuing to operate and provide support services through our Head Start, Early Head Start, Emergency Assistance, Homeless Prevention, Supportive Services for Veteran Families, and Coordinated Intake and Referral Programs will help support low-wage workers, Veterans, and low-income families as they work to improve skills, employment history, and education and try to access living wage jobs as they become available in the community.

Recommendations for combating the causes and conditions of poverty include prioritizing career pathways and working with the community and economic development in partnership to attract living wage jobs; integrating direct services with community development; finding creative solutions to transportation; continuing to provide quality child education and support services and family services for Head Start and Early Head Start families; developing and expanding partnerships to create more affordable housing options; continuing the work with the Continuums of Care to decrease homelessness across the CSRA through Coordinated Intake and Assessment and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families; increasing home ownership opportunities through housing counseling, financial literacy, the IDA program, and homebuyer education; and to continue providing home weatherization to reduce energy costs for low income families.

Considerations for the Future

Though there is generally a large list of needs not being fully met, we must examine the needs in relation to our mission as an agency then develop a list of which needs are addressable given

funding availability and staffing. We specify which services we will be able to devote our energies and resources to, in order to meet the needs of the community in the most effective manner. Priorities must be reviewed and possible consequences of implementing or choosing not to implement a program are compared before determining which programs and services will remain, which will be expanded, which will be reduced and what new programs and services we may want to add to enhance our success in meeting our agency mission and our outcome measures. We will continue to work to bring together partners so we may effectively utilize available resources, and we will continue to analyze the trends, the community concerns, and the issues that most concern the citizens. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, it will be important to continuously update and review data as the major changes being implemented at the federal and state levels for services and assistance to our communities will continue as the various packages for assistance pass Congress. Employment, Housing, Education and Head Start related issues due to closures, Credit re-building especially due to increased debts, the impact on our small and micro-enterprises and mental and physical health must all be continually reassessed.

Community Resources and Strengths

Key resources throughout the CSRA that provide assistance for those living in poverty and that help people out of poverty continue to include CSRA EOA, Inc. programs and services, Housing Authorities, the Area Agency on Aging, Goodwill Industries, The Salvation Army, Communities in Schools, Family Connections, Region 7 Workforce Development (Areas 12 and 13), the Department of Public Health, the local transit systems in most counties, the Technical College of Georgia, the public school systems (especially in the Head Start counties), the faith-based community, including churches and other nonprofits that help provide resources, homeless shelters, training, and mentoring, government entities such as Department of Family and Children Services (TANF, SNAP/food stamps, Child Care), Georgia Pre-K funded child care providers, and other nonprofit entities to whom we refer people for services.

Several counties in the area are growing, adding jobs and adding living wage jobs. Additionally, though many rural areas have low access to health and dental care, in summer 2021 five counties in the CSRA served as a training site for the military (Department of Defense Innovative Readiness Training) receiving free medical, dental, and other health care.

Data Sources

Data sources consulted for this Community Needs Assessment include numerous federal, state, and local databases and statistical reporting systems. The COE Developed CSBG Organizational Standards – Category 3 Community Assessment - Technical Assistance Guide recommended the Community Action Partnership (CAP) Assessment Tool to gather demographic and geographical data, which was used as a primary resource and supplemented with a wide variety of resources.

The CAP Assessment Tool utilizes primarily the US Census, including the American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center for Health Statistics; US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics; US Department of Health & Human Services, HRSA - Administration for Children and Families; and other national data resources.

Local measures were compared to the CSRA, across counties, and with state and national benchmarks to provide context for understanding the data and interpreting the findings. Sources utilized in the compilation of this data and in data analysis include:

- American Public Transportation Association (www.apta.com/resources)
- Augusta Housing Authority Report
- Augusta-Richmond County Continuum of Care
- Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
- Community Action Partnership Assessment Tool
- CSRA EOA, Inc. EasyTrak Database
- CSRA EOA, Inc. Head Start ChildPlus database
- Georgia Crime Information Center
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Georgia Department of Corrections
- Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health (OASIS)
- Georgia Department of Labor, Georgia Labor Market Explorer
- Georgia Encyclopedia County History
- Georgia Family Connection Partnership
- Georgia Kids Count
- National Center for Education Statistics
- National Low Income Housing Coalition, The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes (March 2018)
- Prosperity Now, Prosperity Scorecard
- StatsAmerica, Indiana Business Research Center funded in part by the US Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration
- U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
- US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey
- US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service
- US Department of Commerce
- US Department of Education EDFacts
- US Department of Health & Human Services, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development AHAR Report
- US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Stakeholder input was collected through focus groups and surveys with participants, the general population, partner organizations, local elected officials, staff and volunteers.

- A pre-forum survey was conducted through the Burke County Senior Center, with 59 respondents to the survey. The forum followed and was attended by more than 60 participants.
- A survey of community partners and elected officials was conducted January 2020 – May 2021.
- A survey of program participants/clients, the general population, staff and volunteers was conducted January 2020 – May 2021.
- CSRA EOA, Inc. Customer Satisfaction Survey Results.
- Board of Directors Planning & Evaluation Committee and the agency Department Heads data review session.
- Data review with the Community Services Department Leadership Team.

*Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, forums and face-to-face interviews did not occur. Also, interviews were limited due to significant increase in services and reduced staff hours as a result of the Pandemic.

Appendices

See CSRA EOA, Inc. Community Assessment Appendices document for the following data.

- Appendices A: 14 County Community Action Report
- Appendices B: 13 County CSBG Program Summary
- Appendices C: 11 County Head Start Summary
- Appendices D: 20 County SSVF Program Summary
- Appendices E: County-by-County Data
 - Bulloch County
 - Burke County
 - Columbia County
 - Emanuel County
 - Glascock County
 - Jefferson County
 - Jenkins County
 - Lincoln County
 - McDuffie County
 - Richmond County
 - Screven County
 - Taliaferro County
 - Warren County
 - Wilkes County

- Appendices F: COVID-19 Data Supplement
- Appendices G: Surveys
 - Stakeholder (Survey Monkey)
 - General Population (Survey Monkey)
 - Online Assessment
 - Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Appendices H: Community Resources