



COVID-19
COMMUNITY NEEDS
ASSESSMENT ADDENDUM



The Racine Kenosha Community Action Agency, Inc. (RKCAA) prepared an Addendum to the 2019 Community Needs Assessment in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Addendum serves as a roadmap for actions RKCAA will take to assist individuals and families in Racine and Kenosha Counties during this devastating time.

Background

The Community Needs Assessment Addendum is in response to a global health pandemic that has not only affected every community in the United States and abroad, but has also led to the most significant economic disruption since the Great Depression. This assessment is an **initial** effort to capture **some** of the emerging needs in the community as well as forecast how the identified needs may evolve over the coming weeks and months.

Due to the number of urgent and widespread needs affecting all sectors of the community, this Community Needs Assessment Addendum is intended to provide some **initial** information to describe the scope of the crisis and its effect on Racine and Kenosha Counties and to support an array of responses that will be required to address these emerging and evolving needs. **It is likely that as additional needs evolve, some of them will not be captured in this addendum and therefore some necessary community responses may not be directly connected to the needs identified.**

The *communities* assessed in this document and related to the information below, is defined as the following: Racine and Kenosha Counties, in Wisconsin.

COVID-19 Community Needs Assessment Addendum

Due to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic, Racine Kenosha Community Action Agency, Inc. (RKCAA) created an addendum to the 2019 Community Needs Assessment to reflect emerging needs brought on by unprecedented adverse conditions facing the communities served in Racine and Kenosha Counties.

This Assessment is a snapshot of the disruption of services experienced in both counties. While many of the needs identified have always persisted, they are even more prevalent and a larger number of individuals and families residing in these counties are experiencing hardships.

Individuals and families previously unfamiliar with the human service arena and Community Action Agencies (CAAs), suddenly found themselves seeking support and assistance, due to the loss of income, a decrease in the number of hours worked, lack of child care and stalled unemployment benefits to reference a few.

Immediate inquiries included, food, VITA programs, rental assistance, disease/disability information, comprehensive information and referral, COVID-19 diagnostic test, community shelters and transportation. Individuals seeking assistance range in age from 18-85 on average.

Because COVID-19 is an evolving pandemic, not all needs have been identified and included in this assessment. <https://www.rkcaa.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/211%20Outreach.pdf>

The needs assessed will identify gaps and inform services provided to those affected by the crisis. It is significant to note that Congressional action will permit FY20 and special supplemental CSBG funding to serve families at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (as defined by [the US Census Bureau](#)).

The following table illustrates how the 200% eligibility standard will expand the number of local residents eligible for services:

Racine	# below 125% (<i>CSBG standard</i>)	# below 200% (<i>updated CARES standard</i>)	Additional # eligible to be served (# below 200% - # below 125%)
Population in Service Area	31,850	55,207	23,357

Kenosha	# below 125% (<i>CSBG standard</i>)	# below 200% (<i>updated CARES standard</i>)	Additional # eligible to be served (# below 200% - # below 125%)
Population in Service Area	26,066	45,857	19,791

Specific programs or strategies will target the demographic groups most affected. Given persons of color are being disproportionately affected by both the health crisis and by the resulting economic disruption, an equity lens will be used to view current and emergent needs related to the crisis.

National, State and Local Public Health Crisis

State and local health authorities responded to the outbreak by placing restrictions on travel, businesses and recreational outlets that have had a number of impacts on communities.

As a result of this unprecedented public health crisis, Racine Kenosha Community Action Agency created an addendum to its Community Needs Assessment because there are currently significant impacts on the community, and a number of short, intermediate and longer-term impacts are expected. Statewide and locally, COVID-19 has been deemed a public health crisis. Based on guidance from the Centers for disease Control (CDC), state and local mandates and restrictions are in place. New restaurant protocols and passenger limits on public transportation and mask mandates are a few examples. Additionally, local hospitals are preparing for the worse and medical entities are still without adequate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Immediate Impacts on the Community

The immediate impacts of COVID-19 have been felt across all sectors of society. In particular, some of the greatest impacts relevant to the Community Action Network have been in the areas of health, education, employment, human services provision, and community resources. In this community, areas of highest vulnerability are in those communities with high population density, high-uninsured rates and a high proportion of older residents.

Nationwide, early data suggest that the following groups have experienced disproportionately higher rates of infection and/or complications/death as a result the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Males
- Individuals 65+ years old
- People of color, particularly African Americans and Native Americans
- People with underlying health conditions (especially, lung disease, asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, liver disease, severe obesity, and individuals with immunocompromised conditions)
- Additionally, locally, single women are also being affected disproportionately.

RKCAA used available local data and client feedback to swiftly assess COVID-19 related needs in the community and develop an initial plan of action to share with partners. This enabled the agency to respond in a timely and humane manner, being mindful of the fact that many, if not all of the individuals and families served, will have never experienced such a devastating state of emergency, an invisible virus with no cure in sight. Early in 2020, it became apparent that unmet needs related to all segments of the community were increasing. Schools, businesses, churches, community based organizations, and other critical entities in the communities served closed; many of them eventually going out of business, leaving residents with few or no options for service.

The following outlines some of the critical areas of impact to the local community thus far:

- Health impacts:
 - Individuals over 65, especially those with underlying health conditions have been shown to be at particular risk for severe health implications from COVID-19. Those in congregate settings (e.g. nursing homes) are a particular concern in this community.
 - **[YES]** This applies to this community
 - **[]** This does NOT apply to this community

A public health emergency was declared in Kenosha County on March 12, 2020. The KCDOH COVID-19 Situation Report dated March 18, 2020, indicated 211 was very busy with calls for basic needs services – food, housing, utility questions, etc. As more people became unemployed and incomes were disrupted, calls began to escalate. At the onset of the pandemic, a dashboard was created by Kenosha County to keep the community of pertinent information related to COVID-19.

A link to the General COVID-19 Guidance for Elder Care Programs was provided and referenced for the delivery of services for the Kenosha Senior Veggie Voucher Program and the Kenosha Senior Access Produce gift cards.

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/nutrition.htm>

Local data guided RKCAA's decisions to expand the Kenosha Senior Veggie Voucher program and determined procedures to enable safe delivery of services to low-income seniors. Staff shifted to a remote process with the intake done over the phone for additional participating seniors. The majority of vouchers were mailed; however, curbside pick-up was also available. Several low-income apartment managers distributed the vouchers to the senior's mailbox.

In addition to demographic information, the intake form assessed food insecurity. Those indicating they were food insecure were connected with The Aging and Disabilities Resource Center of Kenosha County and local food pantries. In 2020, the number of food-insecure seniors rose to forty-one percent.

The Kenosha Senior Access Produce gift cards provide an opportunity to purchase fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables at participating Festival Foods grocery stores in Kenosha County.

This is an extension of the Kenosha Senior Veggie Voucher program to provide healthy food options and access during the winter months and now the pandemic. In 2020, as the nation confronts the global COVID-19 pandemic, seniors are facing unprecedented health and food access challenges. Food-insecure seniors are more likely to develop nutrition-related health problems, which is particularly problematic given the unique health, financial, and nutritional challenges that can come with aging. Food insecurity is a social and economic condition and many older adults must choose between spending their limited resources on utilities, food, and medicine.

RKCAA's Community Needs Assessment Covid-19 Addendum and local data indicated low access and low intake of fruits and vegetables, particularly in the low-income and food insecure population. Expansion of the Kenosha Senior Veggie Voucher Program and the formation of the Senior Access Produce gift cards were two strategies RKCAA incorporated to improve food security and access to healthy food in the low-income senior population.

- Community health resources will be stretched thin as resources devoted to those sick with COVID-19 will limit resources available to others. Limited Intensive Care and other hospital services in this community would mean others NOT directly affected by COVID might lack access to care.

- **[YES]** This applies to this community
- **[]** This does NOT apply to this community

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html>

- Behavioral health resources will need to be available in new and increased ways to deal with the many different stressors/traumas caused by the pandemic, especially its impact over an extended time period. Issues such as domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse, drug abuse, suicide and other indicators of behavioral health issues are a particular concern in this community.

- **[YES]** This applies to this community
- **[]** This does NOT apply to this community

Locally, individuals and families are reporting high levels of stress related to uncertainty and lack of needed support during the pandemic. Many families are afraid of losing their homes and not being able to meet their basic needs. For many of these individuals this is the first time they have had to face such issues. Additionally Kenosha County provided links to Mental Health and Behavioral Health Resources. Kenosha County developed the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Resource Center in response to the need in our community to have a clear, identifiable place to go to obtain mental health, alcohol, and other drug abuse information and services. The Mental Health and Substance Abuse Resource Center is adapted from a model of services the

State of Wisconsin created, piloted and expanded. This model has become a national model for providing information and assistance.

<https://www.kenoshacounty.org/263/Mental-Health-Substance-Abuse>

Kenosha County Community Resources Guide: A comprehensive guide for services and support, available at <https://www.kenoshacounty.org/946/Community-Resources>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/covid19-behavioral-health-disparities-black-latino-communities.pdf>
https://journaltimes.com/news/local/some-seniors-feel-trapped-by-covid-19-restrictions-others-cling-to-life-after-diagnosis/article_91c96204-13fe-5b32-b7cc-c28f5f889bbc.html

- Nutrition for school-aged children previously accessing free/reduced breakfast, lunch, and snacks is impacted as many are now removed from that food source due to school closures.
 - **YES** This applies to this community
 - [] This does NOT apply to this community

On March 23, 2020, the UW-Madison, Division of Extension website for lists of food resources for low and limited income families in Kenosha and Racine counties was launched. The site is monitored and updated daily. This resource provides current information to seniors and WIC families and is a place for RKCAA to post information on available food resources.

<https://kenosha.extension.wisc.edu/nutrition-education/>.

With the safety precautions in place, RKCAA will offer a series of videos illustrating recipes that can be used with food received through participating in WIC, FoodShare or food obtained at a local food pantry or disaster relief food drive. Families have shared that they do not know how to prepare beans or have recipes that will be popular with their young children. Some families struggle with unpredictable work schedules or find it difficult to find enough time to prepare meals, especially as they navigate home schooling and other responsibilities as a result of the pandemic. The videos illustrate recipes that are easy, budget and kid-friendly, and don't involve a lot of preparation or cooking time in the kitchen.

March 24, 2020, Kenosha County Division of Health COVID-19 Situation Report indicated an increasing number of 211 calls for food resources, rent payment assistance, and diapers.

The pandemic has affected WIC families financially, with many parents having to adjust their work schedule or stay home to be with the children. Therefore, RKCAA will assist with a package of diapers for all infants and children participating in the Kenosha WIC Program.

On March 26, 2020, a Kenosha News article reported that food pantries were seeing an increased need for emergency food assistance. https://www.kenoshanews.com/news/local/food-pantries-seeing-increase-in-clients-during-covid-19-pandemic/article_dc7b7782-643b-58c6-ab7b-027b5656dc97.html

<https://www.fox6now.com/news/were-really-scared-racine-salvation-army-food-pantry-in-need-of-donations-volunteers>

- Employment impacts:
 - Employment impacts of the pandemic have been immediate and profound. Anecdotal information as well as early data about unemployment claims from March and April confirm a significant emerging need in the area of employment. Local indicators show that national patterns of unemployment are being seen in this community.
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/05/13/what-weekly-unemployment-claims-reveal-about-the-local-impacts-of-the-covid-19-recession/>
 - ☒ This applies to this community
 - ☐ This does NOT apply to this community

The pandemic is having a tremendous impact on employment in both Racine and Kenosha Counties. In early 2020, it was noted that the unemployment rate for Racine County was 15.5% in April, up from 5.1% in January and in Kenosha, the unemployment rate for April was at 16.1%, up from 4.8% in January. Combine these numbers with the high backlog of unemployment claims in Wisconsin, forcing laid off workers to wait as long as up to 8 weeks or more to receive checks. Many of the individuals waiting were already and some cases barely making in meet before the pandemic in both counties.

[Jobless rate tops 16% in Kenosha County | Business | kenoshanews.com](#)

https://madison.com/wsj/business/backlog-of-wisconsins-unemployment-claims-expected-to-continue-for-months/article_eb0135cb-1c72-575f-8ceb-725648987e1d.html

- Individuals in the health care field are at high-risk of exposure to COVID-19 and are under tremendous stress due to additional work hours and challenging work conditions. In particular, many of those workers with close, frequent contact with vulnerable individuals are lower-wage individuals.
https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6915e6.htm?s_cid=mm6915e6_x
 - ☒ This applies to this community
 - ☐ This does NOT apply to this community

The impact of the pandemic in the health care field is likely to be long lasting. Direct care health workers, particularly those working in the community and home settings, were not included in initial emergency measures to protect essential health care workers, including priority access to personal protective equipment and childcare. COVID-19 also highlights the shortage of healthcare workers, particularly those who hold lower wages, such as Certified Nurse Assistants (CNSs) and medical assistants. While income is a factor, gender also plays a role in a person's likelihood of exposure and difficulty during the pandemic. Women are [more likely to hold caretaking jobs](#), which means they are often the ones working in hospitals, nursing homes, and other care facilities that experience high rates of coronavirus cases. 93% of nursing home direct care workers are women; almost one in four is a person of color. 49% of Direct Care Workers overall earn less than 200% of poverty, and 23% of direct care workers in home health earn below 100% Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

The pandemic has affected most Americans' mental health wellbeing, but lower-income workers are much more likely to struggle with mental and emotional health. Low-income households are most concerned about jobs, income stability, and health care coverage. During the pandemic, healthcare workers are being praised for working to help patients on the frontlines. The stress they are under is now leading to sector-wide burnout, particularly in women, a new study finds. Researchers are now asking if praise alone will be enough to sustain healthcare workers through the end of the pandemic.

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/hosp-data.htm#hc%20worker>

https://www.kenoshanews.com/news/health-director-were-at-critical-level/article_d5b8583a-3a61-544c-905a-69ca387d9fec.html

Individuals in the educational field – especially teachers and assistants in Head Start and Early Head Start as well as other early childhood care settings – are working remotely due to school shutdowns. Lower-wage workers in these fields are more vulnerable to layoffs and/or may lack the technology resources in their home to work remotely.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/04/11/830856140/teaching-without-schools-grief-then-a-free-for-all>

<https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2020/covid-19-challenges-the-child-care-market>

- ☒ This applies to this community
- ☐ This does NOT apply to this community

At the onset of the pandemic Head Start and early childhood centers remained open and the state of Wisconsin provided guidance regarding how to keep these critical entities open. As the pandemic raged on many of these entities had to close due to inadequate staffing in some instances due to COVID-19. Additionally, early on these centers lack the appropriate infrastructure to ensure the safety for both staff and children.

https://www.kenoshanews.com/news/local/virus-update-ymca-to-open-limited-child-care-gateway-donates-equipment-and-more/article_fc4ce5e6-61a0-5367-95c2-86149732ecd4.html

<https://www.postcrescent.com/story/news/education/2020/03/18/gov-tony-evers-puts-new-restrictions-child-care-providers-another-measure-fight-covid-19/2867713001/>

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/press/2020/ece-guidance-3-15-20.pdf>

- Individuals in many sectors of the economy – but particularly the service sector, the retail sectors, gig economy, and others most affected by quarantine policies – are currently experiencing sudden and unexpected unemployment. Some are unaware of resources available to them and their families as they are experiencing unemployment for the first time.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/business/consumer/which-major-retail-companies-have-filed-bankruptcy-coronavirus-pandemic-hit-n1207866>

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/04/23/483846/frontlines-work-home/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/04/30/jobless-claims-industry/>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/27/young-workers-likely-to-be-hard-hit-as-covid-19-strikes-a-blow-to-restaurants-and-other-service-sector-jobs/>

- **[YES]** This applies to this community
- **[]** This does NOT apply to this community

Locally, in both Racine and Kenosha individuals working in the service areas where hit the hardest as a result of COVID-19. Those working in retail and restaurants to name several quickly faced a reduction in the number of hours they worked or their place of employment shutdown completely, leaving them without a paycheck. Sometimes an individual was able to find a new job, but given the industry shortly thereafter, that job would fade away. Families were at time unfamiliar with services available to them, but also were embarrassed to seek assistance for the first time.

https://www.kenoshanews.com/news/local/restaurants-get-creative-with-curbside-service/article_1f0a4751-0ce2-519b-89c1-5194d35a14d0.html

<https://www.wuwm.com/post/coronavirus-wisconsin-bakeries-ice-cream-shops-hurting-get-creative#stream/0>

https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/bars-and-restaurants-to-close-gatherings-of-10-or-more-people-banned/article_bdbf97f5-e70b-57b0-8435-f516c1454994.html

- Educational impacts:
 - Closings of public schools in the Community Assessment area are having an immediate impact on children's education. Children with less access to resources (broadband internet, computers/tablets, technology expertise, language barriers, etc.) are most at-risk for suffering learning loss during a potentially protracted period of school closure.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/04/17/why-covid-19-will-explode-existing-academic-achievement-gaps/>

- **[Yes]** This applies to this community
- **[]** This does NOT apply to this community

When the COVID-19 Pandemic surfaced in March of 2020, RKCAA's administration reviewed information gathered via phone inquiries, surveys and observations. Adult students faced many dilemmas mid-semester as they pondered how to complete their coursework. Access to campus facilities were no longer available, many of which used to complete assignments, specifically the technology labs. Additionally, families struggled to buy needed supplies for themselves and their children because local school districts closed.

https://www.kenoshanews.com/news/local/gateway-to-move-courses-online-in-response-to-coronavirus/article_d0911cfe-6ef9-5abb-9250-9d3048a83a55.html), ([UPDATE: RUSD Closing Over Coronavirus Concerns | Mount Pleasant, WI Patch](#)). Adult students faced difficulties attending classes because

children who were traditionally in school were now at home. Parents were tasked with assisting with remote learning.

As the pandemic escalated through spring, with no end in sight, (<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/rusd-school-reentry-team-working-diligently-as-covid-19-evolves/ar-BB16uLwZ>), it became apparent that these issues were not going away. Surveys were conducted to garner additional information. Several key questions were asked. First, have you been adversely affected by COVID-19 and if so, how? The concern of not being able to continue school and buy the necessary supplies for themselves and their children was noted often. Since computer labs were no longer available, students requested printer ink and other items that they might otherwise have accessed to on campus. Adult students' children were in need of school supplies such as markers, pencils, paper and other items normally available at school.

https://www.kenoshanews.com/news/local/gateway-to-move-courses-online-in-response-to-coronavirus/article_d0911cfe-6ef9-5abb-9250-9d3048a83a55.html

[UPDATE: RUSD Closing Over Coronavirus Concerns | Mount Pleasant, WI Patch](#)

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/rusd-school-reentry-team-working-diligently-as-covid-19-evolves/ar-BB16uLwZ>

- Caregivers of school-age children must secure day care arrangements for their children or sacrifice employment to care for their children. These same caregivers are also expected to be primary teachers for their children during the period of the closure. Parents with limited resources face numerous challenges as a result of this situation and educational outcomes for their children will be affected.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/04/17/why-covid-19-will-explode-existing-academic-achievement-gaps/>
 - ☒ [Yes] This applies to this community
 - ☐ [] This does NOT apply to this community
- As COVID-19 spreads and the need for caregivers for school-aged children grows, an unintended pressure is placed on families to find childcare for their own children. This concern continues to increase as the number of childcare facilities and independent caregivers decreases because of safety concerns related to COVID-19. Many parents encounter the challenge of not being able to secure care for their children and face the possibility of losing their jobs.
<https://www.nga.org/memos/child-care-school-aged-children/>
- Impacts on human services provision:
 - Services to vulnerable populations are being curtailed or drastically changed. Some service providers are not operating, leaving gaps in services to the community. Other service providers have had to alter their service provision in significant ways, leaving some family needs unmet. Finally, for those service providers continuing to operate, the changed circumstances have required significant, immediate adaptations that will require additional resources to support over a longer period of time.
 - ☒ [Yes] This applies to this community
 - ☐ [] This does NOT apply to this community

Locally, service providers are thinking out of the box. Provision of services are managed via social media platforms, phone, virtually and curbside options. Due to complexities faced in serving vulnerable populations in the best of times, additional barriers continue to increase and possible unmet needs may go undetected because face-to-face observations are not available. Additionally, some service providers have shut down during the pandemic due to lack of funding.

<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2020/essential-social-services-are-struggling-survive-covid-19-crisis>

<https://www.rkcaa.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/ESN%20-%20Agency%20COVID-19%20Plans.pdf>

- Community resource impacts:
 - The impacts of COVID-19 on community resources are numerous and include a reduction in the availability of resources (access to group activities, commercial services), a scarcity of some resources (health care, food and emergency supplies) and/or needs for resources that have not previously been required in this community in any significant capacity.
 - ☐ This applies to this community
 - ☒ This does NOT apply to this community

Local organizations are responding to growing needs, examples of such collaboration are the (ESN) Emergency Services Network of Kenosha County and Here to Help in Racine County.

<https://www.racinecounty.com/departments/human-services/here-to-help>

<https://www.esnkenosha.org/>

- The broad impacts of COVID-19 on the Racine and Kenosha communities has created an even more urgent need for continued coordination and collaboration of resources among the public sector, the public health sector, first responders, educators, business community, faith community and others. Racine Kenosha Community Action Agency, Inc. plays an important role in this work.

<https://www.scjohnson.com/en/press-releases/2020/march/sc-johnson-announces-initial-200000-donation-to-racine-organizations-helping-people-in-the-community>

https://journaltimes.com/news/local/racine-county-at-40-covid-19-cases-gateway-donates-food-tents-appear-in-hospital-parking/article_2a619174-2db7-5849-8e18-f754a253c4e7.html

- ☒ This applies to this community
- ☐ This does NOT apply to this community

Immediate and Long-term Impacts:

While this assessment is early in the pandemic, needs continue to grow and adequate resources are not readily available to provide needed services in all areas over an extend period of time.

RKCAA will partner with other community networks to serve the greatest number of individuals and families. RKCAA will immediately focus on, Environmental Safety and Service Delivery Infrastructure, Healthy Food Access and Security, Rental Assistance, Health and Hygiene, and Educational Assistance (supplies) and Transportation.

The needs above have been established through initial data and anecdotal reports from clients, staff, community members and stakeholders. Based on these already-observed events, it is likely that there will be immediate and long-term impacts that require ongoing planning.

Covid-19 Community Assessment Summary Statement

The disruptions in service delivery to clients is expected to continue for a substantial amount of time. This is likely to lead to challenges for clients that may become long-term issues. While the pandemic is ongoing and there are many uncertainties, it will be important to continue to survey the communities served to ensure RKCCA remains abreast of ongoing needs related to the pandemic.

Due to the immediate economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, renters face one or more months where they may lack the funds to pay rent. One example of an increasing on-going need related to housing. While Housing was an issue in Racine and Kenosha prior to COVID-19, the problem has been has become more widespread and dire. Individuals and families who never utilized community-based services are suddenly reaching out for assistance and access to resources. An example of this outreach is: **May 20, 2020: [Gov. Evers Announces \\$25 Million Wisconsin Rental Assistance Program](#)**

Addressing Equity Implications

RKCAA remains cognitive of issues related to race equity in Racine and Kenosha County and will continue to find ways to close the gap while promoting health and wellness in communities.

March/April 2020