

# Allegany County Community Opportunities and Rural Development, Inc.



## 2022-2024 Community Needs Assessment 2024 Update

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## **Introduction:**

To effectively address the evolving needs of our community, ACCORD undertakes a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment every three years. This 2024 update marks the second annual review of the 2022-2024 assessment cycle. It integrates new data to highlight significant changes and trends since the previous full assessment and the 2023 update, focusing on insights from the 2016-2020 and 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, U.S. Census Bureau data, and local resources.

Our commitment to continuous evaluation, guided by the Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) Cycle, is crucial for understanding and responding to the shifting conditions impacting our most vulnerable residents. This ongoing process helps us develop effective strategies that drive meaningful, sustainable change, ensuring that we meet community needs and enhance overall well-being.

Since its establishment as the Housing Action Corporation (HAC) in 1972 and its rebranding to Allegany County Community Opportunities and Rural Development (ACCORD) Corporation in 1987, ACCORD has been dedicated to improving the quality of life for individuals and families across Allegany County. With a legacy of providing essential services and utilizing resources effectively, ACCORD remains steadfast in its mission to address poverty and promote community well-being.

## **Critical Data Insights:**

### ***Population Profile***

- **Stable Gender Distribution:** Males make up 50.5% and females 49.5% of Allegany County's population (American Community Survey, 2018-22).
- **Aging Population:** There has been significant growth in the older adult (65+) population, particularly among females, indicating a need for services geared towards an aging demographic (American Community Survey, 2018-22).
- **Declining Young Population:** Decreases in young children (0-4 years) and school-aged children (5-17 years) reflect national and rural trends of lower birth rates (American Community Survey, 2018-22).
- **Increasing Diversity:** Modest growth in the Black or African American, Asian, and mixed-race populations, with a slight increase in the Hispanic/Latino population, though it remains lower than state and national averages (American Community Survey, 2018-22).
- **Household Decrease:** Allegany County experienced a decrease of 257 households (-1.41%) from 2016-2020 to 2018-2022, with a more significant decline of 1,311 households (-7.23%) in the most recent data (American Community Survey, 2018-22).
- **Family Structures:** There is an overall decline in the number of families, with Allegany County seeing a drop of 980 families (-8.5%). The proportion of married couple families increased from 78.9% to 80.8%, while female-headed and male-headed households decreased (American Community Survey, 2018-22).

### ***Poverty Profile***

- **High Poverty Rate:** The poverty rate in Allegany County is 18.5%, affecting 7,659 individuals. There are high rates of poverty among children, with 19.90% of those aged 0-17 and 19.80% of those aged 5-17 living in poverty (American Community Survey, 2018-22).

- **Gender Disparities:** The poverty rate is higher among females (18.49%) compared to males (14.96%), with 3,819 females and 3,098 males living below the poverty line (American Community Survey, 2018-22).
- **Comparison with Neighbors:** Allegany County has a higher poverty rate compared to neighboring Cattaraugus County (16.2%) and Wyoming County (12.1%), underscoring the need for targeted poverty reduction strategies (American Community Survey, 2018-22).

### *Housing Profile*

- **Decrease in Housing Units:** Allegany County saw a significant reduction of about 10.4% in housing units from 2014 to 2023 (US Census Bureau, 2024). This contrasts with a modest 2.3% decrease in Cattaraugus County and a 1.3% increase in Wyoming County, while statewide housing units increased by 5.02% (New York State Department of Homes and Community Renewal, 2024).
- **Aging Housing Stock:** 44.7% of homes in Allegany County were built before 1960, compared to 49.8% in Cattaraugus County and 51.3% in Wyoming County (American Community Survey, 2018-22).
- **Affordability Issues:** Fair market rent for a one-bedroom unit in Allegany County is \$669, higher than in Cattaraugus County (\$658) and Wyoming County (\$628) (HUD, 2024). Renters need to work over 60 hours per week at minimum wage to afford these rents (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2023).
- **Vacancy Rates:** Allegany County's non-rental vacancy rate is 1.11% and rental vacancy rate is 1.36%, which are comparable to national figures but slightly higher than Wyoming County's lower rates (American Community Survey, 2018-22).
- **Homeownership Decline:** Homeownership in Allegany County decreased from 74.76% in 2000 to 60.05% in 2022 (American Community Survey, 2018-22).
- **Homelessness:** The NY-501 Continuum of Care (CoC), which includes Elmira/Steuben, Allegany, Livingston, Chemung, and Schuyler Counties, reported a significant rise in homelessness between 2020 and 2023. The overall sheltered and unsheltered count increased from 252 individuals in 2020 to 594 in 2023, more than doubling over four years. This surge underscores growing housing instability in this largely rural region, highlighting the need for enhanced housing and support services. Data sourced from the NY-501 CoC annual Point-in-Time counts.

### *Infants & Children Profile*

- **Childcare Providers:** The number of registered childcare providers decreased to 28 in Allegany County (New York State Office of Children and Family Services, 2024).
- **Early Intervention Services:** The number of infants and toddlers with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) increased to 45 in 2023 (New York State Department of Health, 2023). For children aged 3 to 5 with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Allegany County saw 180 IEPs developed during the 2022-2023 school year (New York State Education Department, 2023).
- **Preschool Services:** 290 children were evaluated for preschool special education in 2022, with 215 receiving services (New York State Department of Education, 2022).
- **Lead Levels:** Elevated lead levels in children under 6 slightly decreased to 3.5% in 2022 (New York State Department of Health, 2023).

- **Head Start Eligibility:** An estimated 620 children in Allegany County were identified as income-eligible for Head Start during the 2020-2024 period (American Community Survey, 2018-22).

### *Nutrition Profile*

- **Food Insecurity:** The percentage of the population experiencing food insecurity slightly decreased to 11.5% from 12.9% in 2020 (Feeding America, 2024).
- **Free or Reduced Lunch Eligibility:** 76.20% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunches, slightly above the 71.44% reported in January 2020 (New York State Education Department, 2024).
- **Grocery Stores:** Allegany County now has 15 grocery stores, up from 13 in 2020 (American Community Survey, 2018-22).

### *Education Profile*

- **Graduation Rates:** Allegany County's high school graduation rate increased slightly to 90.10% in 2022/2023 (New York State Education Department, 2023). Cattaraugus County saw a decline from 88.17% to 86.31%, while Wyoming County maintained high rates with a slight decrease from 91.98% to 91.22% (New York State Education Department, 2023).

### *Court System*

- **Adult Arrests:** Increased to 838 in 2023, up from 719 in 2021 (New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, 2024).
- **Violent Crimes:** Rose slightly to 98 in 2022 (New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, 2024).
- **Juvenile:** Juvenile arrests decreased to 50, while Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) referrals rose to 52 (Allegany County Probation Department, 2022).
- **Domestic Violence Services:** From 2021 to 2024, ACCORD has observed significant shifts in domestic violence service metrics. Hotline calls increased from 950 to 1,359, reflecting a growing demand for immediate support. Shelter utilization peaked with 954 bed nights in 2022 but decreased to 917 in the latest period, indicating fluctuating needs for temporary housing. Safety plans initially declined from 195 to 117, but the total number of safety plans, including updates, surged to 223. Written family offense petitions decreased to 78. Court accompaniment for family cases increased from 187 times to 231 and slightly reduced to 208, while support for IDV court cases grew substantially from 32 times to 75.

### *Employment Profile*

- **Unemployment Rate:** At 4.1%, higher than neighboring counties (Cattaraugus 3.9%, Wyoming 3.2%) and above the broader area's average of 3.8% (New York State Department of Labor, 2024).
- **Wages:** Increased from \$868 to \$951 weekly but remain lower than Cattaraugus County's \$1,022 and Wyoming County's \$1,162 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024).
- **Remote Work:** Increased to 12% from 8% pre-pandemic but still behind neighboring counties (Cattaraugus 15%, Wyoming 14%) (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22).

### *Health Care Profile*

- **Healthcare Infrastructure:** Increased number of Medicare and Medicaid providers, with the addition of one Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and doubling of rural health clinics (New York State Department of Health, 2023).
- **Insurance Coverage:** Rate of uninsured individuals decreased to 3.47%, below the New York State average of 4.50% (County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2023).
- **Therapists:** Lower ratio of Physical, Occupational, and Massage Therapists (2.18 per 1,000 people) compared to the New York State average of 2.90 (New York State Department of Health, 2023).

### *Income Profile*

- **Median Household Income:** Increased to \$58,725, still below state (\$81,386) and national averages (US Census Bureau, 2024).
- **Public Assistance:** Increased TANF recipients and expenditures, with rising participation in other assistance programs (New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, 2024).

### *Mental Health Profile*

- **Suicide Rates:** Higher than national and state averages (New York State Department of Health, 2023).
- **Youth Mental Health:** 30% of high school students report persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness (2023 Youth Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System).
- **Access to Care:** Limited access to specialized mental health care, with 14% of residents being uninsured or underinsured (2023 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps).

### *Veterans Profile*

- **Decline in Veteran Percentage:** Slight decrease from 8.76% to 8.43%, similar to national trends (American Community Survey, 2018-2022).

### *Disability Profile*

- **Increase in Disability Prevalence:** Slight increase from 15.46% to 15.59% in the report area, with Allegany County rising from 16.10% to 16.40% (American Community Survey, 2018-22).

### **Key Findings Summary:**

This 2024 update to the ACCORD Community Needs Assessment uncovers several critical trends and shifts in Allegany County. The population is seeing a significant aging trend, particularly among females aged 65 and over, indicating an urgent need for expanded senior services. At the same time, there is a noticeable decline in the younger population, including young children and school-aged kids, which mirrors broader national trends of decreasing birth rates. Diversity is on the rise, though certain demographic groups, such as Hispanic/Latino individuals, remain underrepresented compared to state and national averages.

Household and family structures are undergoing considerable changes, with a marked reduction in the number of households and families. The proportion of married couple families has increased, even as female-headed and male-headed households have declined. Poverty remains a significant issue, with high rates particularly among

children and a notable gender disparity. This is compounded by a significant drop in the number of housing units and ongoing affordability challenges.

In terms of early childhood care, the availability of registered childcare providers has decreased, although there have been slight improvements in early intervention and preschool services. Food insecurity has shown a modest improvement, but access to nutrition remains a concern, especially given the decrease in SNAP benefit participation. Education outcomes have improved slightly, with an increase in the high school graduation rate. However, challenges persist in the court system, with rising adult arrests and domestic violence cases.

Employment conditions have shown some improvement with a reduction in the unemployment rate, but wages remain lower compared to neighboring counties. Healthcare access has improved with increased insurance coverage and more providers, but gaps in therapeutic services and mental health care persist. Additionally, the prevalence of disabilities has slightly increased, reflecting a broader trend of rising recognition or prevalence.

As we analyze these insights, aligning them with our 2024-2029 Strategic Plan goals will be crucial. By enhancing our staff capabilities, securing essential resources, expanding our services, and leveraging technology, we aim to address emerging needs more effectively. Our goal is to foster a resilient and thriving Allegany County, ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to lead fulfilling and healthy lives.

We look forward to continuing our work and preparing for the next comprehensive assessment for 2025-2027.