

**KENNEBEC VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM
KENNEBEC AND SOMERSET COUNTIES
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT
2011 (Last)**

Introduction: KVCAP completed a full needs assessment in 2009. Updates to this assessment are highlighted in italics. In addition, the County Overviews and Trends section has been completely updated utilizing the 2010 Poverty In Maine report sponsored by Maine Community Action Association and Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center.

Poverty. In the past six years, the poverty rates for Maine's children ages 0-5 went from under 14% to over 23%, surpassing the national average. In KVCAP's service area, the numbers are much higher – with estimates well above 50%. The economic gap between urban and rural families continues to widen. A single parent in Maine must earn 254% of the federal poverty level on average just to meet their basic needs. More than one half of low-income families pay more than one-third of income just for housing.

Of the children currently enrolled in KVCAP Head Start programs, 94% have an annual household income at or below federal poverty level (FPL). The remaining 6% have incomes between 101-135% of FPL.

One-half of the school-aged population in Somerset County is eligible for free and reduced school lunch in 2006, which is considerably higher than the State as a whole. Somerset County ranks third highest in Maine. Children living in KVCAP's rural service area are more likely to experience lags in physical and mental development, which diminishes their chances for educational success and future contributions to the workforce and community.

Somerset County has the highest monthly average of households in the state using food stamps at 23.9%; Kennebec County is 17.3%; statewide is 15.7%. As the food stamp program continues to decline, more Maine families go hungry. Food stamps are worth about 98 cents per meal on average in Maine. Because they don't keep up with the cost of living, the amount of food families can purchase is declining.

Since the completion of the 2009 needs assessment, the poverty rates in Maine and Kennebec County have remained stable, while Somerset County residents have continued to lose ground. The most recent poverty rates indicate that poverty in Somerset County has increased from 16.9% to 18.7% in just a three year span.

Rural service area and impact of children and families. Sixty percent (60%) of Maine's population lives in very rural communities (26.5% nationally). KVCAP's service area is one of the most rural in Maine, with Somerset County having an average person per square mile of 13. This county has poverty rates 50% higher than the state average. The budget constraints discussed above will make it even harder for low income in KVCAP's service area to access quality early care and education services, afford quality health care, send their children to college, buy fuel to get to work and heat their homes. The increase in cost of living is outpacing their paychecks as community services dwindle. The impact of service cuts will be equally as devastating.

Maine has the nation's second highest proportional population of rural counties. Rural families in our service area experience:

- ✓ Three and 4 year olds from low-income families who did not receive quality early care and education services were 5 times more likely to become chronic lawbreakers by age 27 than children who did receive quality services.
- ✓ Children from rural areas are more likely than non-rural children to enter kindergarten without key early literacy skills and they are 60% more likely to need special education services than those from non-rural areas.
- ✓ Unemployment rates in rural Maine range from 50% higher to nearly double the state average.
- ✓ Higher rates of poverty than urban families. Five of Maine's most rural counties record 16% of Maine's population but have 25% of the low-income population in Maine.
- ✓ Rural low-income households are three times more likely than non-poor rural communities to be without a car. With public transportation scarce in rural Maine counties, it is very difficult for many poor rural households to access work and outside services, such as high-quality early care and education services.

Recent studies provide evidence that living in a rural area poses additional risks to child well-being. While rural families are disproportionately poor despite a strong work ethic, their problems are exacerbated by the isolation, lack of jobs, lack of transportation and lack of support services for families. Access to quality social and health care services is difficult for rural families. Due to houses and/or communities being far apart, rural families must travel significant distances to work, buy groceries and access social/medical services.

Rural communities also pose challenges in providing quality early care and education services. Center-based care is not a viable solution as economy of scale is not probable because of parent travel time and transportation issues. Nationally, family, friends, and community providers are less likely to have college educations or knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices when caring for young children, yet family, friend and neighbor care (FFN) is a widely used form of care for young children in rural Maine. According to the Banks Street School, FFN care represents up to half of the childcare arrangements for children under the age of five whose parents are working. Although FFN care is used by families at all income levels, it is more commonly used by families with incomes less than 200% of federal poverty levels and for infant/toddler care.

Lack of funding, lengthy distances and the high cost of transportation make quality early care and education services inaccessible to many rural children. In order to build promising futures for the vulnerable rural children, we must improve parent circumstances. Decreasing the cost of working (childcare, transportation, etc.) will help rural families provide basic necessities and provide young children with early care and education services so they enter public school ready to learn. New programs and partnerships must be formed that promote systematic ways of increasing access to quality care opportunities in rural communities, professional development activities for early care and education providers, as well as networking/mentoring activities.

Unemployment Rates. Maine's unemployment rate is 4.8%; while Somerset County's rate is 7.9% - the second highest in Maine. Kennebec County's rate is approximately 5%. KVCAP's service area has the highest unemployment rate of any region in Maine.

Currently, 17 % of parents with children enrolled in KVCAP's Head Start program report unemployment. An additional 12% are attending high school or post secondary education.

The employment picture has improved somewhat since 2009. The unemployment rate in Maine as well as in Kennebec and Somerset Counties has dropped, although Somerset County's rate at 10.9% continues to be significantly higher than the state rate of 7.7%, the third highest rate in the state.

Waterville serves as a service center for many central Maine communities. Since the Career Center is located in Augusta, over 20 miles away, KVCAP has collaborated with the Waterville Public Library for the past two years to provide a wide range of employment services support, including resources, education and technical assistance.

Jobs/Income and Disparities. The largest major industry in northern Kennebec County is health care and social assistance – 19% of all employment; public administration with 16%; and retail trade at 15%. In Somerset County, the largest major industry sector is manufacturing at 20%; health care and social assistance at 15% and retail trade at 13%. Livable wage jobs in Maine do not meet demand. Somerset County residents are known as proud people who do not want to rely on welfare. However, only 37% of jobs pay a livable wage for a single parent with one child; for two parents with one earner and one child, only 30% of jobs pay a livable wage, and for a single parent with two children, only 16% of jobs pay a livable wage.

A single wage earner with 2 children requires an annual income of \$37,622 just to meet basic needs. In Somerset County, this equates to \$18.09 per hour. The Maine Department of Labor reports that the average hourly wage in Somerset County is \$14.10. In Kennebec \$37,691 (\$18.12 per hour). Again, the Maine Department of Labor reports an average hourly wage in Kennebec County to be \$15.48. The gaps between poverty level and the annual livable wage estimate is \$25,000 in both counties.

Poverty and unemployment run high in Somerset County as well as some towns in Northern Kennebec. For example, approximately 53% of students in Waterville's elementary and junior high schools are eligible for free or reduced lunches (Maine Department of Education). According to the 2006 Poverty Report, Somerset County residents were considerably higher than the state average in participation rates for food stamps in 2005, tied for highest in the state. Somerset is second highest for unemployment and is the second poorest county in Maine. Although Kennebec County's unemployment rate is not high compared to the state average, it should be noted that many of the manufacturing jobs in this area that paid good wages and included benefits have been lost over the past few years. New jobs coming to the county are often part-time positions in retail and service industries, with lower wages and few or no benefits. The Maine unemployment rate and Kennebec County's rate has risen approximately 3.3 points since last year, while Somerset's has risen 3.9 points. The Town of Pittsfield was hit hard this past year and a half, with the closing of a shoe shop and the planned reduction of a third of the workforce of the GE plant, the largest employer in the *town*.

Health Status/Insurance

Low incomes and no insurance benefits contribute to limited access to health care for many individuals in our catchment area. KVCAP Family Planning clearly provides an alternative for these individuals. During the first six months of FY09, only 18% of clients paid through private insurance. 13% of clients were in the no-pay, donation only category, while 36% of clients were partially subsidized. MaineCare was the payment source for 32% of clients. KVCAP Family Planning serves all individuals seeking services, regardless of income and/or insurance coverage. Unlike many private health care providers, KVCAP Family

Planning welcomes MaineCare clients, a fact that is appreciated by this population. In addition, the KVCAP Community Outreach priority communities tend to have high-risk populations that can be targeted for education about resources and access to reproductive health care.

The high poverty rate, limited jobs and lower levels of educational attainment in Somerset County contribute to a lack of aspirations in many of its young people. These circumstances can influence youth to engage in risky, unhealthy behaviors. The smoking and drinking rates for Somerset youth are higher than the state average (2006 MYDAUS data). It is no surprise that the teen pregnancy rate of 48.1 per 1,000 in Somerset County ranks second highest in the state (highest is Androscoggin County with a rate of 48.4 per 1,000). Kennebec County's teen pregnancy rate of 36.8 is close to the state rate of 36.5, although higher pockets exist in some towns in the county. The city of Waterville's rate is higher, when adjusted for the two colleges in town (2002-2006 aggregate data, Maine Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics).

Homeless. According to the Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter (MMHS) demand has been increasing for the last few years and they have seen a dramatic increase in the number of homeless families. MMHS and KVCAP have implemented strategies to increase their understanding of each other's services, and the resources available to assist families with young children. Using existing resources, KVCAP is working with MMHS to identify families who need child care and to implement supports to assess their child's developmental status and provide educational activities and opportunities. By introducing a quick response to KVCAP services, parents gain comfort in knowing that their children's physiological and safety needs are being responded to. Timely and comprehensive services for both adults and children reduce the amount of time that families need to remain in temporary shelter. Once housing is secured, children continue to receive services from KVCAP, including ongoing child care and family service supports.

Currently, KVCAP Child & Family Services serves 16 homeless children and expects the number to rise as housing foreclosures and living cost rise, particularly heat and electricity.

KVCAP has also responded to the homeless crisis in our communities by securing funds from Maine State Housing Authority to operate a Rapid Re-Housing Program.

Domestic Assault Rates. Reported domestic assaults in Maine were at the rate of 414.4 per 100,000 persons. Kennebec County ranked second highest at 588.5; Somerset County ranked 5th at 492.4. Program data reveals that 2.7% of families enrolled report domestic violence events in the lives, yet is known that there are many unreported incidents. Staff report that often families are reluctant to discuss issues around domestic violence.

During the past year the local Healthy Maine Partnership Coalition's community assessment indicated that domestic and sexual assaults were of great concern to the community. A new coalition addressing this issue was created (kNOw Violence), and KVCAP is an active partner in this initiative.

Crime Rates. The crime rate among youth is high in Somerset County, sparking community discussions and forums about how to address the violence and crime issues. Arrest of children in Maine is 54.5 per 1000 persons; Somerset County is higher at 57.1 per 1000 and Kennebec County is 55.1% per 1000.

Obesity. Since 1990, obesity rates have risen 75%. Maine has the highest rate of adult obesity in all of New England. Sixty-one percent (61%) of Maine's population, 36% of

kindergarten and 33% of low income children between the ages of 2 and 5 years of age is overweight or obese. Thirty-four percent (34%) of children enrolled in KVCAP's Head Start program are considered overweight or obese.

Child Maltreatment. Substantiated child abuse and neglect is 11.7 per 1000 children between the ages of 0-17. In Maine there are 5,613 case assessments completed by Child Protective Services; 3561 of these were without findings of maltreatment; 2052 were with finding of maltreatment. Of those, 151 were from Somerset County and 176 in Kennebec County. It is suspected that incidents of child maltreatment are significantly higher than reported. The State of Maine acknowledges that it "screens out" many more suspected child maltreatment reports than in the past and that follow-up is conducted on a very limited basis, if at all.

Dental Care. There is a shortage of dentists in Maine, and the situation is particularly acute in rural areas such as Somerset County. Almost 23% of children in Maine between the ages of 0-17 did not receive dental care (2003). There is approximately one dentist for every 2,165 patients, compared to 1,656 nationally. This problem is particularly pronounced in Maine's rural, poorer areas where citizens often end up on months-long waiting lists and have to travel hours for care. Pain caused by decaying teeth is one of the top 10 emergency room diagnoses in Maine, according to the Maine Health Data Organization.

Transportation. Maine's roadways are in considerably worse condition than the rest of the nation. A strong transportation is critical to Maine's economic development. Rural transportation systems are either non-existent or very limited in scope in Somerset and northern Kennebec Counties. Many low-income residents do not know how to drive, lack a driver's license, or simply don't have the money to purchase and maintain a car. The lack of transportation options limited the ability of many rural residents to find and keep jobs. It also limits their access to job training and other needed social services. With more people commuting from rural areas to jobs in service centers, more household income must be expended for transportation due to rising gas prices and less time for civic participation, which increases isolation.

KVCAP has worked tirelessly with many community partners to address this critical need, and in February 2011 launched the Kennebec Explorer system, which includes for the first time, transportation between Waterville and Augusta.

Affordable/safe housing. Affordable housing continues to be problematic. In most of Maine's employment centers, high housing costs are forcing people to commute long distances, because they cannot afford to live in the communities in which they work. This, compounded with the rural and transportation issues in Maine, put low-income families at a severe disadvantage when seeking shelter, employment and needed social services.

Approximately one-half of the homes in Maine were built prior to 1950 when lead was commonly used in paint to make shiny and last longer. Maine's data system shows that elevated lead levels in children is the number one environmental health hazard to children in terms of risk, prevalence and consequences. Data from 1994-1999 shows that one in nine Maine children who were screened were found to have elevated levels. Making high-risk housing stock lead safe is essential to reducing public health risks.

Childcare services. Maine ranks in the top ten nationally in the percent of employed women with children with 65.4% of Maine families having "all parents" in the workforce. On average, children spend 9 hours per day in childcare. Children who experience high

quality childcare thrive and develop optimally as opposed to those in lower quality settings. High quality care helps prepare our children for success in school. Studies show that quality early care and education enhances a child's cognitive performance, language ability and pre-math and social skills. Well paid, education childcare providers are the backbone of quality childcare.

Childcare is the 4th largest industry in Maine. Qualified and stable childcare workforce depends upon adequate salaries and benefits to workers as well as an attractive work atmosphere. Education and on-going training for the workforce is crucial to the quality of childcare. Maine is implementing a quality rating system to help parents make well education choices about childcare.

Key Population Data Comparison (County & State)

	<i>Kennebec</i>	<i>Somerset</i>	<i>Maine</i>
Population 2000	117,114	50,888	1,274,923
Race – White	97.5%	98%	96.9%
<i>Population 2010</i>	<i>122,151</i>	<i>52,228</i>	<i>1.328.361</i>
Estimated Population growth from 2000 to 2005	3.3%	1.5%	3.7%
<i>Actual growth from 2000-2010</i>	<i>4.3%</i>	<i>2.6%</i>	<i>4.2%</i>
Female population- 2000	60,368	25,966	654,614
Ages 10-19	14.9%	14.8%	14.2%
20-34	17.4%	16.9%	17.9%
35-44	16.7%	16.4%	16.7%
45-54	15.2%	15%	15.1%
55-64%	9.7%	10.4%	9.7%
65+	14.2%	14.4%	14.3%
Birth rates/1000 (2004)	51.3	53.8	52.2
Teen Birth rates/1000 (2004)	36.6	47.2	24.3
Unemployment rate estimate February, 2009	8.6%	12.5%	9.1%
<i>Unemployment rate estimate May, 2011</i>	<i>7.3%</i>	<i>10.9%</i>	<i>7.8%</i>
Poverty rate 2005	13%	16.9%	12.3%
<i>Poverty rate 2008</i>	<i>13.1%</i>	<i>18.7%</i>	<i>12.6%</i>
Median Income 2003	\$38,458	\$32,079	\$39,212
<i>Median Income 2008</i>	<i>\$43,913</i>	<i>\$35,277</i>	<i>\$46,419</i>

Kennebec County Overview -update

- Kennebec County's individual poverty rate for the population as a whole and for those under age 18 in 2008 were both somewhat lower than the state rate.
- Kennebec County's 2008 median household income was slightly lower than the state's. It was about 3% above the 200% poverty level for a four-person household.
- The 2008 "livable wage" estimate in Kennebec County for a four-person household (2 parents, both wage earners, and 2 children) was 2.4 times greater than the poverty level for a four-person household.
- The proportion of net personal income from earnings in Kennebec County in 2008 was about the same as in the state as a whole; the proportion from investments (dividends, interest and rent) was somewhat lower, and the proportion from transfer payments was slightly higher.
- Kennebec County's average unemployment rate in 2009 was slightly lower than in the state as whole – this trend continues as of May 2011.
- In 2006, Kennebec County had about the same proportion of federal income tax filers claiming the earned income tax credit (EITC) as in the state as a whole, and the average amount of the credit was close to the state average.
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- In 2006, Kennebec County had about the same proportion of federal income tax filers claiming the earned income tax credit (EITC) as in the state as a whole, and the average amount of the credit was close to the state average
- Kennebec County in FY2008–09 had a slightly higher proportion of households and individuals receiving the SNAP benefit than in the state as a whole.
- The proportion of school-age children eligible for free or reduced lunch in FY2009–10 in Kennebec County was about the same as the state average.
- Kennebec County in FY2008–09 had a slightly higher proportion of households and individuals receiving LIHEAP than in the state as a whole. Compared with the state, Kennebec had a slightly higher proportion of single family households and a lower proportion of applicants age 65 and over receiving LIHEAP.

Kennebec County Trends - update

- Kennebec County's poverty rate was close to the state rate during most of the period from 2000 to 2008.
- The unemployment rate in Kennebec County closely paralleled the state rate from 2002 through 2009. As in the rest of the state, Kennebec County's 2009 unemployment rate was at its highest point in many years, almost twice what it had been in 2002.
- The number of Kennebec County households receiving LIHEAP varied by only a little from FY2001–02 through FY2007–08. With the change in eligibility requirements in FY2008–09, there was a 44.6% increase in the number of households receiving

LIHEAP compared with the average over the previous seven years. This was the greatest increase among Maine's counties.

- As in the rest of the state, the number of Kennebec County households receiving the SNAP benefit increased almost every year. Kennebec had an 86.6% increase in the number of households receiving the SNAP benefit from FY2001–02 to FY2008–09.
- From FY2002–03 through FY2009–10, Kennebec County has had about the same percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch as in the state as a whole. As in the state as a whole, the percentage eligible increased each year.

Somerset County Overview - update

- Somerset County's 2008 individual poverty rate for the population as a whole and for those under 18 was considerably higher than the state's. Somerset had the second highest overall poverty rate and the third highest child poverty rate among Maine's counties.
- Somerset County has a slightly older population relative to other counties. In 2008 Census estimates, it had a slightly higher percentage age 65 and older and a slightly lower percentage under age 18.
- Somerset County's 2008 median household income was considerably lower than the state's, and was the third lowest among Maine's counties. It was about 21% below the 200% poverty level for a four-person household.
- The 2008 "livable wage" estimate for a four-person household (2 parents, both wage earners, and 2 children) in Somerset County was 2.3 times the poverty level for a four-person household.
- The proportion of 2008 net personal income from transfer payments in Somerset County was considerably higher than in the state as a whole and the proportion from investments was considerably lower. Somerset had the lowest percentage of personal income from investments among Maine's counties.
- Somerset County's unemployment rate in 2009 was substantially above the state average. Somerset had the third highest unemployment rate among Maine's counties.
- In 2006, Somerset County had a considerably higher proportion of federal tax filers claiming the EITC than in the state as a whole. The percentage filing was the second highest among Maine's counties, and the average credit was the highest.
- Somerset County was considerably above the state average in FY2008–09 in the proportion of households and total population receiving the SNAP benefit. It ranked first among Maine's counties in the proportion of both households and individuals receiving this benefit.
- The proportion of Somerset County's school-age children eligible for free or reduced lunch in FY2009–10 was considerably higher than the state average. Somerset had the third highest school lunch eligibility rate among Maine's counties.
- Somerset County had a considerably higher proportion of households and individuals receiving LIHEAP in FY2008–09 than in the state as a whole. Somerset tied with Aroostook in having the second highest percentage of households receiving LIHEAP. Compared with the state, there were larger proportions of households receiving the SNAP benefit and of applicants age 65 and over.

Somerset County Trends - update

- Somerset County's poverty rate trended upward almost every year from 2000 through 2008, and was considerably above the state rate during the entire period.
- The unemployment rate in Somerset County paralleled the state rate from 2002 through 2009, but the county's rate was much higher. The county's poverty rate had already been very high in 2002 so the magnitude of increase from 2002 to 2009 was not as great as in most other counties.
- The number of Somerset County households receiving LIHEAP varied only slightly from FY2001-02 to FY2007-08. With the change in eligibility requirements in FY2008-09, the number of households increased by 38.1% compared with the average over the previous seven years.
- As in the rest of the state, the number of Somerset County households receiving the SNAP benefit increased almost every year. Somerset had a 76.7% increase in the number of households receiving this benefit from FY2001-02 to FY2008-09.
- Since FY2002-03, Somerset County has had a considerably higher percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch than in the state as a whole.

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