



Needs Assessment Overview 2025



METHODOLOGY

The Carroll County Local Management Board (LMB) contracted with Due East Partners to conduct the Needs Assessment. In partnership with LMB staff and community partners, Due East gathered and analyzed secondary data and community input.



Secondary Data Review: Due East accessed a variety of county, state, and national data sources aligned with the ENOUGH Initiative's four pillars (High-Quality Childcare and Education, Families are Economically Stable, Families are Healthy, and Safe and Thriving Communities). Sources included MSDE, Census Bureau, ALICE Report, Carroll County Public Schools, County Health Rankings, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and Department of Juvenile Services data. A comprehensive list of sources used and data compiled can be found [here](#).



Community Survey: LMB staff conducted outreach at local schools, food distributions, Boys & Girls Clubs, and community events in Westminster and Union Bridge.

- **408 total respondents**
- Participants included parents/caregivers, youth, educators, service providers, faith leaders, and community members



Data Analysis & Reporting: Due East Partners analyzed both secondary and survey data and produced two comprehensive reports. Findings were synthesized into this Needs Assessment and organized by the four ENOUGH pillars.

- [Data Snapshot](#)
- [Community Survey Synthesis](#)

OVERVIEW

This Needs Assessment was structured around the ENOUGH Initiative's four pillars: High-Quality Childcare & Education, Families are Economically Stable, Families are Healthy, and Safe & Thriving Communities.

The assessment combined secondary data from more than a dozen state, county, and national sources with input from over 400 community members. **Special focus was given to Union Bridge and Westminster City**, the county's two census tracts with the highest childhood poverty rates.

- Led by Carroll County Local Management Board (LMB) with support from Due East Partners
- Aligned with the **ENOUGH Initiative's four pillars:**
 - High-Quality Childcare & Education
 - Families are Economically Stable
 - Families are Healthy
 - Safe & Thriving Communities
- Combined quantitative data from state, county, and national sources with qualitative insights from 400+ community survey respondents
- Focused on two highest-poverty census tracts (Union Bridge & Westminster City) to highlight disparities and opportunities
- **Goal:** Surface community strengths, gaps, and priorities to shape the Community Plan, focus coordinated action, and align resources and partnerships.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Deep appreciation is extended to the staff, Board, and Community Planning Committee for their leadership and guidance, and to the many partners and community members who contributed to this assessment.

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- **Ed Singer**, LMB Manager
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Local Management Board

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- **Erin Bishop**, Executive Director, Boys and Girls Clubs of Carroll County
- **Tammy Black**, Lifebridge Health
- **Courtney Davis**, LCPC, NCC, Clinical Director
- **Ed Singer**, Manager, Local Management Board

ENOUGH Initiative's Four Pillars



High-Quality Childcare & Education

All children have access to high quality education and childcare while ensuring smooth transitions from birth through school to career.



Families are Healthy

All families have access to affordable high-quality maternal, mental, and behavioral health care.



Families are Economically Stable

All families can meet their needs, work with dignity, and build wealth for the future.



Safe & Thriving Communities

All residents feel safe and the built environment enables them to thrive.



Key Takeaways

By ENOUGH Initiative's Pillars

High-Quality Childcare & Education

Key Takeaways

Strengths

- 95% high school graduation rate (above state average)
- Higher-than-average school attendance
- 3rd grade ELA proficiency exceeds state average (61% vs. 47%)
- Community members value K-12 education, early childhood programs, dual enrollment, and school-based supports
- Faith-based services and programs (e.g., Boys & Girls Club, Judy Center, Head Start, Opportunity Works, and library programs)

Challenges

- Childcare identified as top concern: high costs, limited public Pre-K, and lack of affordable after school/summer programs
- While the overall Kindergarten Readiness rate is 58%, rates are lower for some student groups: 28% for students with disabilities; 38% for multilingual language learners; 40% for Hispanic/Latino students, and 43% for Black/African-American students
- 1 in 5 students chronically absent; limited understanding of who and why
- Reported bullying incidents nearly doubled since 2018–2019 school year

Place-Based Disparities

- Westminster and Union Bridge schools perform below county averages, but higher than the state average
- Union Bridge child poverty rate is five times higher than the county average; tied to lower Kindergarten readiness and academic achievement

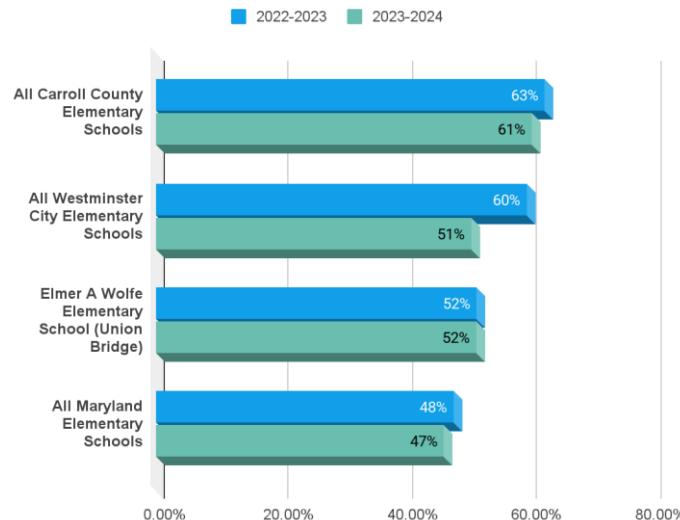
Opportunities for Improvement

- Transportation barriers; services centralized in Westminster
- High cost of childcare and limited public Pre-K availability
- Few services for multilingual learners, foster youth, LGBTQ youth, and students with disabilities
- More support needed for tutoring, bullying prevention, mental health, GED/ESOL programs, and culturally relevant life-skills education

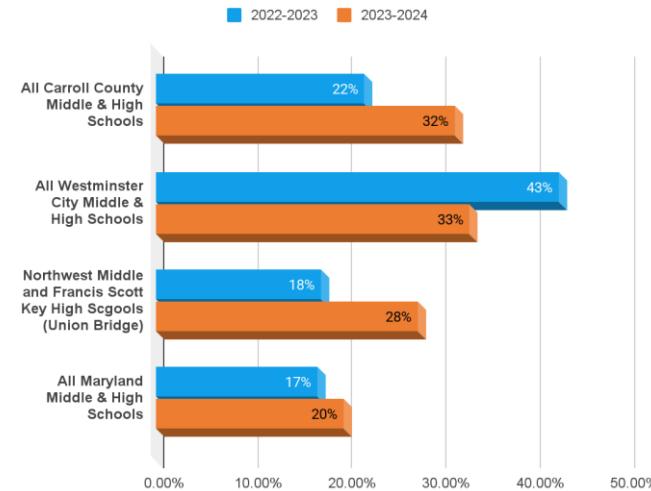
High-Quality Childcare & Education

MCAP Performance Results Summary 2022-2024 English Language Arts (ELA) and Algebra I Proficiency

ELA Grade 3 Proficiency



Algebra I Proficiency



Source: <https://www.carrollk12.org/board-of-education/data-dashboard>

Families are Healthy

Key Takeaways

Strengths

- Infant mortality rate nearly half the state average
- Majority of residents maintain health insurance; ~3% uninsured
- Birthweight rates below state average
- Physical inactivity among adults decreased
- Collaboration with agencies, nonprofits, and providers
- In-home therapy services
- Strong food assistance and community-based support programs

Challenges

- Obesity affects 1 in 3 adults and 12% of high school students
- Poor mental health days increasing, now ~5 days/month on average among adults
- Limited availability of mental health counseling and inpatient services
- Long wait times for counseling (many providers not accepting insurance or new youth patients)
- Tobacco and alcohol use above state average
- Rising substance use among youth (vaping, alcohol, tobacco)
- Food insecurity increasing: over 1 in 10 residents affected
- Nearly 1 in 5 high school students seriously considered suicide

Place- Based Disparities

- Limited availability of mental health counseling and inpatient services outside Westminster

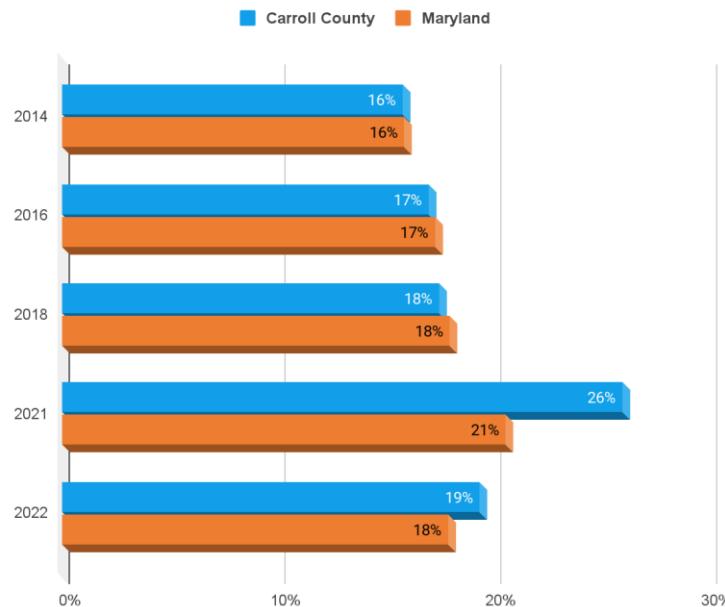
Opportunities for Improvement

- More mental health services and programs
- Expand in home therapy services
- Expanded ADHD, autism and developmental needs supports
- Increase access to food options and food banks
- Support clients through partnerships with telehealth, group counseling, and school-based counseling programs to shorten wait times

Families are Healthy

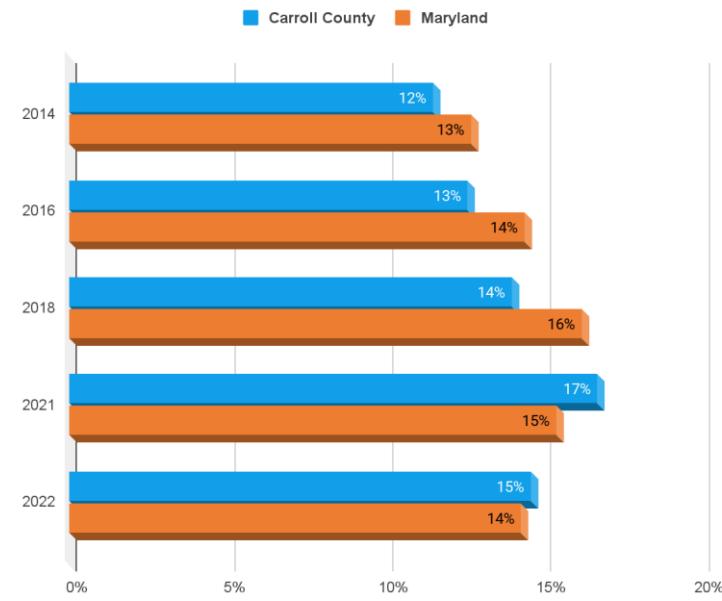
Mental Health Among High School Students 2014–2022

Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide*



*During the 12 months before the survey

Made a Plan About How They Would Attempt Suicide*



*During the 12 months before the survey

Source: [Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey/Youth Tobacco Survey 2022–2023](#)

Families are Economically Stable

Key Takeaways

Strengths

- Child poverty rate (6%) below state and national averages
- Median household income higher than state average (\$115,876 countywide)
- Strong mentoring, job training, faith-based, and food assistance programs
- Workforce development initiatives (e.g., Career & Tech Center, DORS, Opportunity Works)

Challenges

- Housing ranks as residents' #2 concern
- ALICE households in 2023: 25% countywide; higher rates in Westminster (48%) and Union Bridge (61%)
- More than 1 in 10 residents experience food insecurity
- Limited public transportation options
- Families face barriers due to language access, literacy, and service navigation

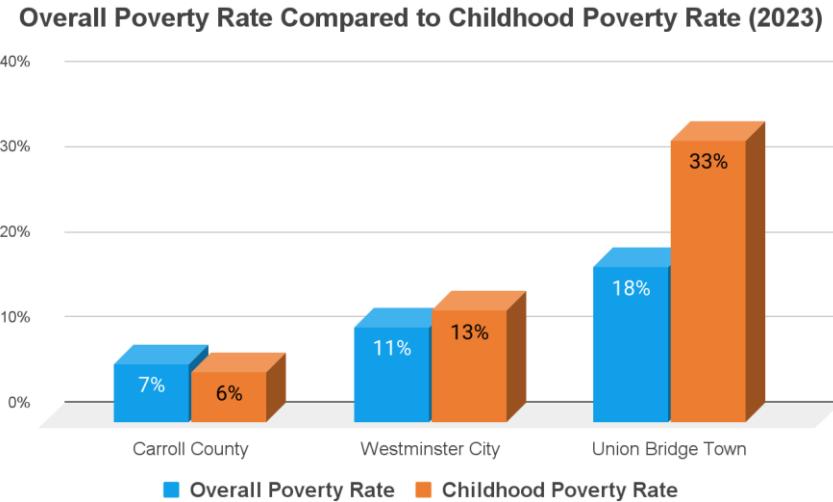
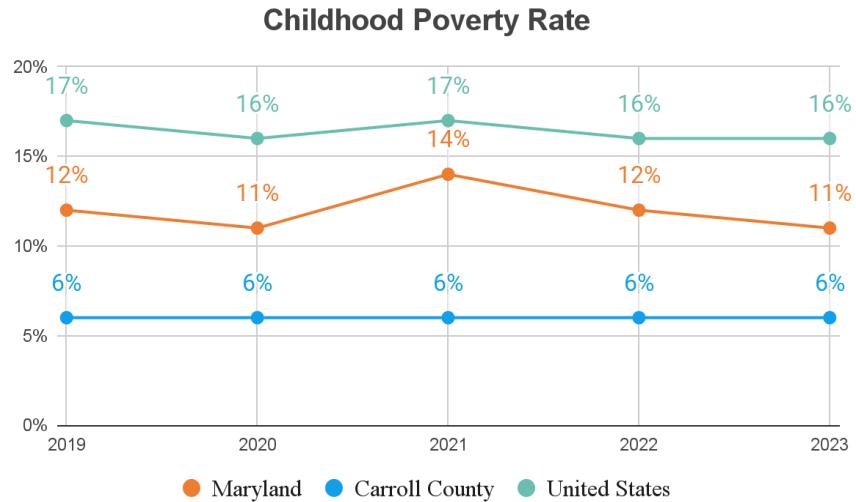
Place-Based Disparities

- Union Bridge poverty rate: 18% overall, 33% for children
- Westminster City poverty rate: 11% overall, 13% for children
- Over half of households in both Westminster and Union Bridge are ALICE

Opportunities for Improvement

- Expand emergency housing and sober living options
- Improve transportation routes and schedules
- Increase financial literacy and job opportunities (esp. for those with criminal records)
- Strengthen collaboration across agencies

Families are Economically Stable



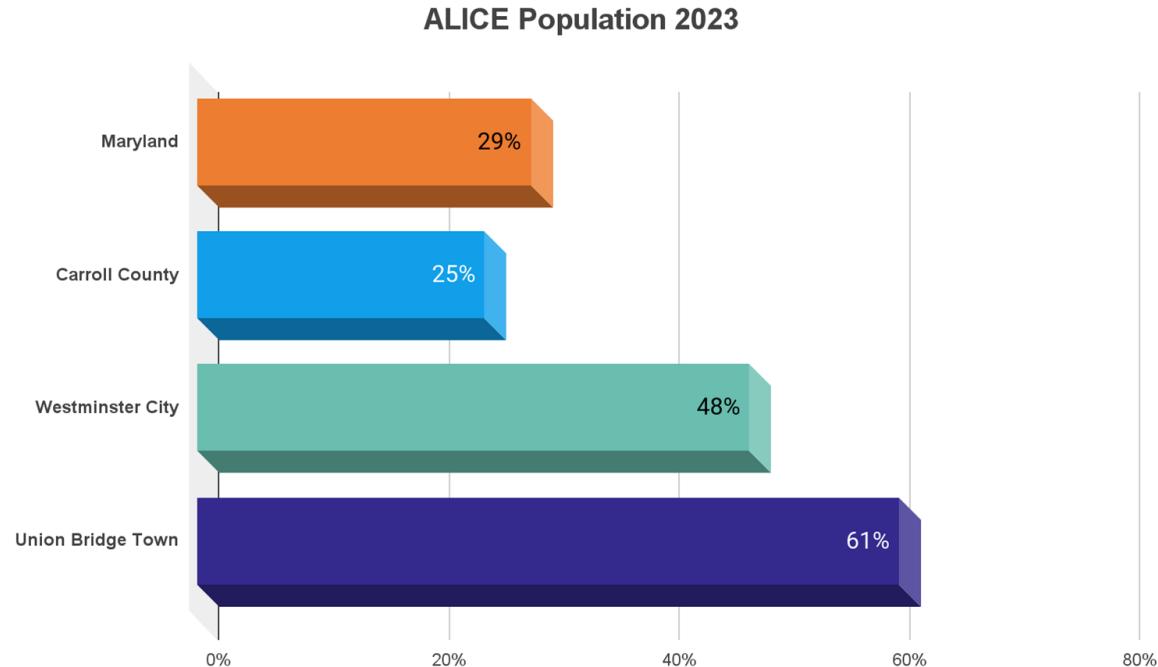
Sources: [University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/)
[The US Census Bureau, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/carroll-county-md>](https://www.census.gov)

Families are Economically Stable

ALICE 2023

ALICE
Asset
Limited,
Income
Constrained,
Employed

Households earning above the Federal
Poverty Level yet struggling to afford
basic expenses (United Way).



Source: [United for ALICE: ALICE in Carroll County](#)

Safe and Thriving Communities

Key Takeaways

Strengths

- Faith-based and spiritual support networks
- Community events and gatherings foster connection
- Some safe, accessible recreation spaces and walkable neighborhoods
- Programs supporting youth and families experiencing homelessness (Youth Action Board, Westminster PD, GFWC Woman's Club)

Challenges

- Homelessness at a five-year high (556 individuals in 2024)
- Student homelessness doubled since 2020 (201 vs. 115)
- Juvenile detention complaints increased 21% from FY22 to FY24
- Youth crime is concentrated among 12–17-year-olds
- Some community concerns about trust in law enforcement
- Long wait times for vouchers and rental assistance

Place-Based Disparities

- Juvenile complaints against Hispanic and Black youth were both significantly higher in 2024 than 2020
- Safe recreation spaces limited outside Westminster; inadequate sidewalks/bike lanes
- Gaps in housing quality and landlord accountability

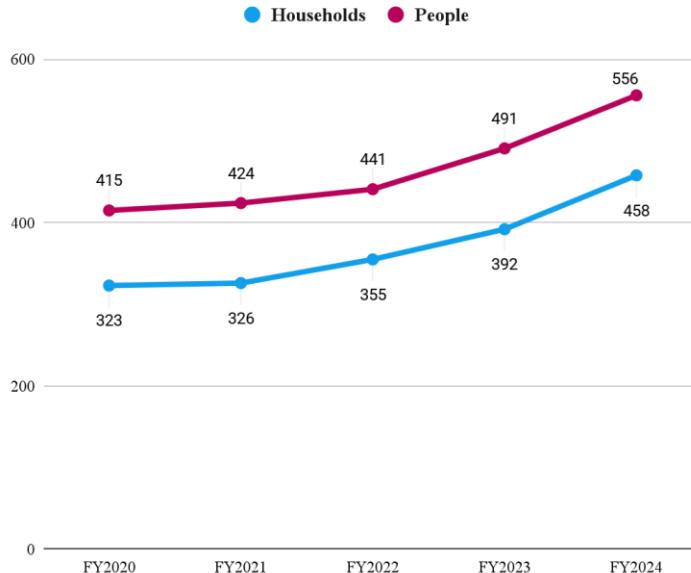
Opportunities for Improvement

- Expand affordable and inclusive youth activities (recreation, arts, cultural events)
- More culturally diverse community spaces to foster belonging
- Continue to expand efforts to educate and build positive relationships with landlords
- Develop an early intervention and juvenile diversion program
- Improve affordable internet access
- Build more community trust with law enforcement

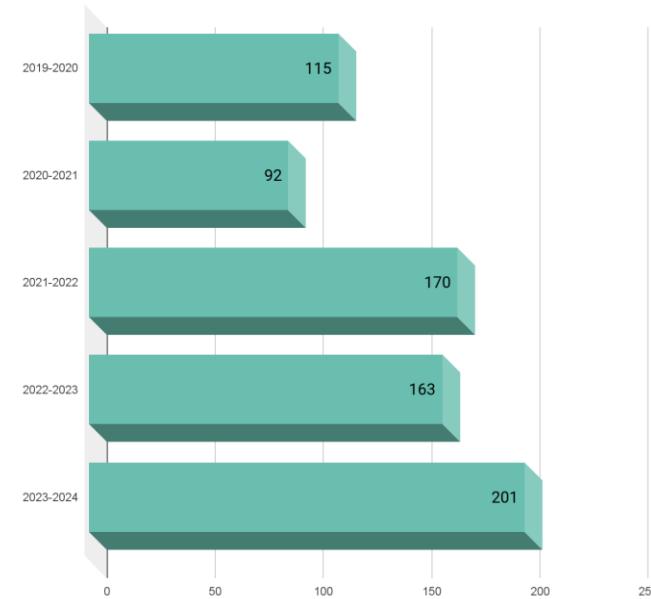
Safe and Thriving Communities

Homelessness in Carroll County

Total Number of Households and People Served in the Homeless System in Carroll County



Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness in Carroll County (McKinney-Vento Trend 2019-2024)



Source: [Carroll County 2024 Homeless Services Summit](#), [MSDE](#), Carroll County



Key Considerations

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Findings from the Needs Assessment inform a strategic Community Plan grounded in data and lived experience that will support coordinated action and guide resource allocation and partnerships.

By ENOUGH Initiative Pillar

- **High-Quality Childcare and Education:** Address readiness gaps, chronic absenteeism, and behavioral/mental health needs; expand early learning, enrichment, and career pathways
- **Families are Healthy:** Build on strengths, but address obesity, food insecurity, and rising mental health concerns through holistic, stigma-free approaches
- **Families are Economically Stable:** Prioritize Union Bridge & Westminster City; focus on poverty reduction, childcare access, workforce training, and safe housing
- **Safe & Thriving Communities:** Expand early intervention, mentoring, and culturally responsive services; improve access to safe recreation and build community trust

Cross-Cutting Considerations

- A coordinated public information campaign can help to shift mental models and dispel myths or limiting beliefs related to services
- Cultivate ambassadors in priority communities and geographies to ensure community involvement and awareness
- The data requires further investigation and dialogue with students to understand the external and internal factors shaping their behavior and the cross-cutting solutions that could turn the tide
- Community voices can educate and inform decision-makers and advocates by sharing common data and experiences
- Expand solutions that are already working (e.g., ride-sharing vouchers, single room occupancy, high-dosage tutoring, and Housing First)

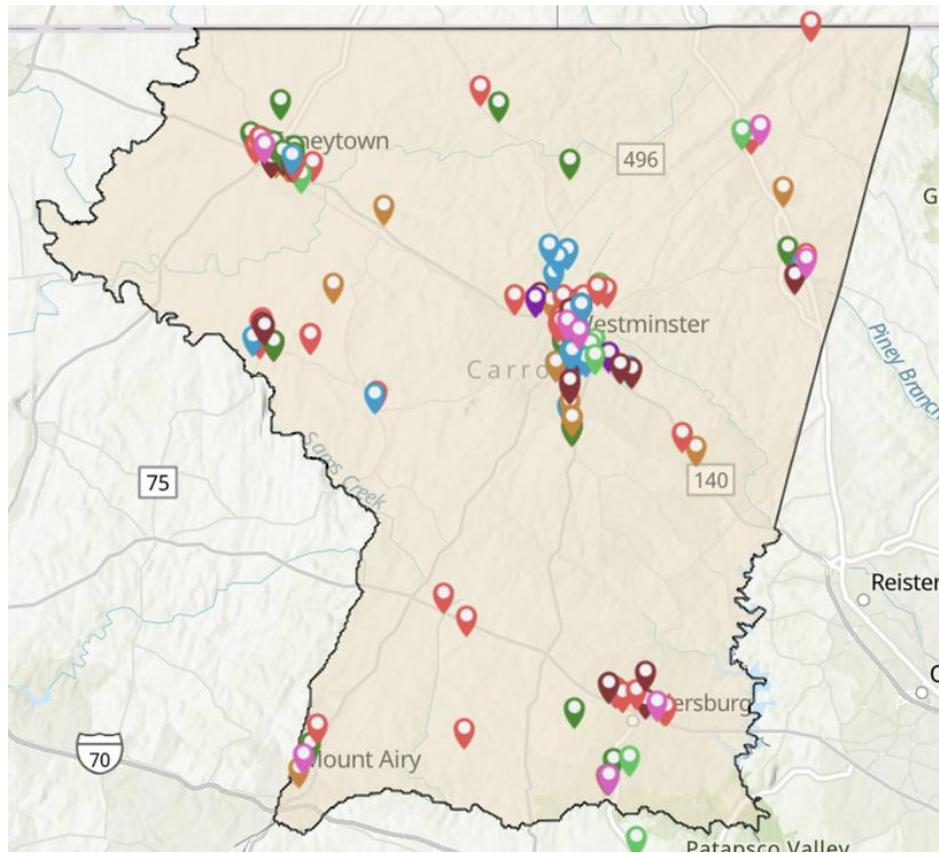
ASSET MAP

Legend

Carroll County Assets

- 📍 Local Food Access
- 📍 Support Services
- 📍 Healthcare
- 📍 Recreation
- 📍 Education
- 📍 Behavioral Health
- 📍 Emergency Services
- 📍 Financial & Employment

[Asset Map Web Link](#)
[Asset Map Instant App Link](#)





Community Plan FY26-FY31



VISION

A healthy and engaged Carroll County where all children, youth, families and communities thrive.

MISSION

Connecting community partners to strengthen and coordinate resources and advocate for accountable systems of support for children, youth and families in Carroll County.

PRIORITIES

Strengthen collaboration with and for children, youth and families

Improve awareness and access to quality resources

Advance stability and success for children, youth and families

STRATEGIES

- Engage children, youth, families, and community members in program design and decision-making
- Regularly convene a diversity of partners to advance our shared vision and priorities
- Coordinate advocacy efforts to advance community-driven solutions and systems change
- Explore innovative initiatives that can be tested, evaluated, and scaled
- Use data to inform decisions and respond to community needs

- Provide customized and consistent outreach to individuals and communities, particularly those facing barriers to services and opportunities
- Advocate for expanded access to behavioral health and primary care services, particularly in rural areas
- Increase community-based services and accessibility in multiple languages
- Leverage technology and “no wrong door” approaches to improve service access and coordination
- Convene partners to highlight and exchange best practices that strengthen services

- Coordinate partners to align resources, close service gaps, and strengthen supports across the continuum of care
- Increase navigation for youth and families to efficiently access the services they need across community partners
- Support youth mentorship opportunities that provide guidance, connection, and leadership and life skills
- Reduce stigma around poverty, mental health, and substance use

SHARED RESULTS & PROGRESS INDICATORS



Economically Secure Families

- % of children in poverty
- % of ALICE families
- # unhoused individuals
- % of families spending >30% income on housing



Healthy Families

- % of Public School Students [in Grades 6 – 8 and 9-12] Reporting Depressive Episode
- % of adults and youth reporting tobacco, alcohol, or vaping use



High-Quality Childcare and Education

- % students demonstrating proficiency on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)
- % students chronically absent
- % of Youth Ages 18-24 with a High School Diploma (Including Equivalence) or Higher



Safe, Connected and Thriving Communities

- # of juvenile justice complaints per year (or Violent crime rate per 100,000)
- # of eviction petitions filed per year
- % owner-occupied housing units

Our Guiding Principles for Collective Action

Build trusted relationships and show up for one another and our community

Ensure authentic representation and inclusion

Be open, honest, and accountable

Meet people where they are, make services easy to reach and affordable

Honor and respect people's cultures, backgrounds, and experiences

Ask tough questions and push for positive change

Teach each other, listen, and grow together

Support local leaders and community-driven solutions



Carroll County Local Management Board
Serving Children, Youth and Families