



**Triangulating Community Needs:
Expanding Upon the Community Health Needs Assessment**
The Arthur J. Glatfelter Institute for Public Policy

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Executive Summary

This assessment was undertaken to determine strategic priorities for Community Progress Council and the Healthy York County Coalition and better understand the growing health needs of the York community.

Methods

Eleven semi-structured focus groups were conducted throughout the county to provide additional context to survey responses. Participants were recruited in five different geographical locations: 1) Hanover, 2) York City, 3) Delta/Fawn Grove, 4) Hallam, and 5) Lewisberry. Spanish-speaking focus groups were held in Hanover and York City. Recruitment took place by social media, word of mouth, and the distribution of flyers in target areas. A resource navigator from Community Progress Council was present to provide participants with additional information and connect them with services and resources if needed.

Results

During the focus groups, participants were asked to discuss their overall wellbeing and experiences with transportation, childcare, housing, employment, and food in the county.

Overall Wellbeing Participants expressed concerns around the financial burdens that creates barriers in each of the five topic areas.

- Many participants were displeased with their current living situation, expressing a desire to live elsewhere, yet lacking the means to do so.
- Spanish-speaking participants expressed need for translated documents, specifically with housing and employment

Transportation

- Participants expressed concerns around public transportation access, as well as a desire for public transit routes to be expanded, as well as additional information on how to effectively utilize public transportation options.
- Participants without personal vehicles expressed greater barriers to getting where they need to go, therefore hindering access to some employment opportunities and necessary services.

Childcare

- Participants in all focus groups expressed concerns regarding the high cost of childcare, as well as an overall lack of availability.
- Some participants mentioned a lack of trust in leaving their children at a daycare because of their children's safety and the quality of care.
- Many participants stated that they rely on informal networks—specifically family and friends—to support their childcare needs.
- Some participants stated that they decline employment opportunities—relying on a one-income household—because it is more cost-effective to have one partner stay at home to care for their children.

Housing

- Most participants expressed concerns around the housing costs, including monthly housing costs, repairs, and property taxes.
- Participants throughout the County expressed concerns about the quality of the local housing stock and unsafe living conditions.
- Many participants that rent their residence reported that landlords are not responsive to their service requests.

Employment

- Participants stated that wages are not consistent with household needs.
- Participants reported that a lack of a higher education degree has created barriers to high-paying employment opportunities.
- Many participants—specifically Black/African American participants and single, female participants—reported that they work multiple jobs to afford the cost of living.

Food

- Participants reported concerns about affordability regarding the rising cost of food.
- Participants stated a need for more expansive food bank services, including after-hours food banks.
- Participants expressed concern about their ability to cook nutritious meals for themselves and their families due to the number of hours they work per week.

Mental Health

- Participants frequently cited spirituality and faith as a method of coping with stress.
- Many participants had a difficult time recalling what they do to maintain their mental wellbeing.

Introduction

Objectives of the Triangulating Community Perspectives

In the Summer of 2022, the Healthy York Coalition and Community Progress Council commissioned the Arthur J. Glatfelter Institute for Public Policy at York College of Pennsylvania to understand the implications of the 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment. More specifically, the Healthy York Coalition and Community Progress Council would like to gain more nuanced information, and triangulate the quantitative data, related to the disparities provided in the report. More specifically, the Institute was asked to garner more specific information regarding specific subpopulations living through York County, specifically:

- Spanish-speaking residents
- Differences in experiences between rural, suburban, and urban residents in York County

Moreover, this research focused on five specific topic areas: transportation, childcare, housing, employment, food, and mental health; these topic areas were determined in collaboration with Community Progress Council and the Healthy York Coalition to align with their organization's strategic goals and services provided to their beneficiaries. Multiple iterations of the focus group protocols were drafted before the final version to ensure questions were objective and would elicit authentic responses from participants.

Methodology

Focus groups are a long-held qualitative research tradition within the social sciences. Historically, focus groups are a reliable pathway to garner large amounts of insightful information on specific questions and topics through small group discussions. As executed for this research, they are often combined with quantitative research methods—creating a “mixed methods” approach—to support overarching research goals and provide more detailed information.

At their core, focus groups are semi-structured, small group discussions that have an explicit research focus and topic area. They are often seen as a predictable technique in gaining sensitive or personal information and details about target population groups.

The Arthur J. Glatfelter Institute for Public Policy was asked to execute a number of focus groups throughout the County to accomplish the research questions posed by the Healthy York Coalition and Community Progress Council. With the support of the Healthy York Coalition and Community Progress Council, focus groups were arranged throughout York County, specifically in the City of York, Hanover, Hallam, Lewisberry, and Delta. In addition, with the support of external translators who have significant expertise in focus group moderation, focus groups were held specifically in Spanish to accommodate Spanish-speakers. Participation was limited to residents over the age of 18. Each participant was provided a \$25 gift card as compensation for their time and opinions.

This research was submitted to, and approved by, the York College of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board to ensure all research methodologies were executed in an ethical manner. Participants were provided with an overview of the research, as well as an explanation of the methods that would be utilized to ensure the confidentiality of their participation. Focus group recordings were only accessible to primary researchers. Focus group participants signed informed consents before any focus group began, and space was opened at the beginning and end for any questions.

Prior to beginning the research, the Healthy York Coalition and Community Progress Council agreed to facilitate focus group participant recruitment. This was done through word of mouth—specifically through Community Progress Council’s network of offices, social media marketing, and email information.

The success of individual focus groups was dependent upon a number of varying factors, some within the control of the Healthy York Coalition, Community Progress Council, and the Institute, and some outside of any control.

As found with other focus groups executed throughout York County, recruitment remains a key concern. For success, it remains necessary to take detailed and precise action to find appropriate individuals, persuade those individuals of the importance of the research, and remove any barriers from their participation. In the future, it is recommended that recruitment is conducted utilizing previously identified individuals, or explicit action be taken to seek out new participants. Previously identified participants may come from lists of individuals that have contributed to other research efforts, such as the Community Health Needs Assessment Survey. Recruitment based on previous experience with the topic areas and research conducted in general, participation is likely to increase as individuals have a vested interest before focus group moderation.

In addition to recruitment, the timing of focus group execution—both in terms of the calendar and the time and day of week—will assist in successful research completion. The majority of focus groups for this research were conducted from mid-January through early February. Being so close to the winter holidays and school closures, recruitment was likely limited by individuals that were available due to previous commitments. In addition, focus groups for this research were conducted during the day, during the week, either at 9:00am or 1:00pm. While convenient for the sponsoring organizations and research team, these times were likely not always conducive to residents. To partake in the research, focus group participants must have either not been working at the provided times or taken off of work at the provided times. In addition, as found in the analysis, childcare likely inhibited some individuals from participating in the research.

In the future, it recommended that a multitude of methods be executed to ensure focus group success. This includes recruitment based on previously identified individuals, marketing of focus groups over a longer period of time, and controlled compilation of potential participants to encourage sustained outreach and engagement. In addition, when focus groups are not feasible other methodological techniques should be employed, such as the use of open-ended questionnaires, personal interviews with target populations, or less academically rigorous community-style forums to elicit generalized feelings, perspectives, and opinions.

Description of Participants

Overall, there were 40 focus group participants across the county. Nearly all participants were female-presenting with a relatively even split between Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latinx, and white residents. Most participants were working aged adults with young children and affiliated with a program or service provided by Community Progress Council.

	Male	Female
White	7	9
Black/African American	2	6
Hispanic/Latinx	0	16

Overview of York County, Pennsylvania

York County, located in South Central Pennsylvania, is home to a growing population of 461,058 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022b). The median age of residents is 41 years old. Approximately, 81% of the County identifies as white, with 7.5% identifying as Black or African-American and 8.9% identifying as Hispanic or Latinx (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022b).

Of the 176,428 households in York County, 75.1% are homeowners, and the median monthly housing cost for homes with a mortgage are \$1,593, \$628 for without a mortgage, and \$1,025 for households paying gross rent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022b).

In York County, 31,637 (17.7%) housing units were built in 1939 or earlier—nearly a century ago—and 26,716 (14.9%) housing units built between 1940 and 1959. Many of these aging housing units do not receive proper upkeep which leads to deteriorating, unsafe conditions for those living in them.

York County has a labor force participation rate of 65.7% with a median household income of \$72,543 and per capita income of \$35,623 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022b). Educational attainment is low relative to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania overall (34.5%) with just over a quarter (25.8%) of all county residents having attained a bachelor’s degree or higher.

The post-industrial manufacturing nature of York County makes the local economy one of the most successful in all of Pennsylvania. However, the benefits of this development have not been distributed equally—a reality that has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; 9.2% of all York County households have incomes at or below the federal poverty line, and 32% of households live below the ALICE threshold (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022b; United for Alice, 2023). Households with such a fixed income often live paycheck to paycheck, perhaps having no choice but to spend far beyond their means to afford basic necessities.

Results

Transportation

Overview

Reliable and cost-effective transportation is a vital aspect of community and familial well-being and serves as a key factor in socioeconomic mobility. Access to a personal vehicle affects access to employment opportunities, as well as access to other necessities and services, including food, healthcare, and government assistance programs (DeMaria & Sanchez, 2018; U.S. Hunger, 2023; Syed, et al., 2013). Overall in York County, 94% of households have access to a vehicle for transportation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Of those households without access to a vehicle, most live in renter occupied housing units (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

Rabbit Transit provides the primary mode of public transportation in York County, offering a number of programs for residents to use such as bus services; fare reduction for seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities; and on-demand shuttle services (Rabbit Transit, 2022). The York bus system contains 16 routes throughout the City of York and surrounding suburbs and three routes in Hanover. A fare fee or bus pass of some variety is required in order to use public transit. As of 2022, the adult fare is \$1.60, ten passes are \$15, and a 31 day pass is \$42 (Rabbit Transit, 2022).

According to the Pew Research Center (2020), within rural communities, demographic characteristics do not play a significant factor in determining public transportation usage. However, in urban areas, Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latinx residents are more likely to utilize public transit (Pew Research Center, 2020).

When considering methods of traveling to work, the majority of households travel to work in a vehicle (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). Of those with access to a vehicle, most individuals in York County commute to work alone, in an individual vehicle (Center for Opinion Research, 2022). In line with these findings, there has been an overall decrease in the proportion of residents that utilize public transportation to travel to work (Center for Opinion Research, 2022). In 2021, it is reported that less than 1% of all households in York County utilized public transportation as their primary method of commuting to work (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

When considering the intersection between health and modes of transportation, the 2022 CHNA Report found that transportation posed a barrier to receiving healthcare. Lack of access to reliable transportation may lead to rescheduled or missed appointments, delayed care, or delayed medication use. As a result, individuals without access to reliable transportation may experience a greater likelihood of experiencing negative health outcomes (Syed, et al. 2013). While the percentage of households finding difficulties in accessing healthcare due to transportation decreased from 2017 (6%) to 2022 (4%), those households classified as members of a “special population¹” experienced disparate ability (9%).

¹ According to the US Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, special populations are defined as population that “overcome barriers that may require special consideration and attention to ensure equal opportunity for success”.

Finally, transportation poses a concern in regards to employment. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, the use of public transportation serves a significant limitation to accessing opportunity employment². 74% of York County residents have “low access to opportunity employment” when relying upon public transportation (DeMaria & Sanchez, 2018).

By Geographic Region

Understandably, households within more rural geographic regions of York County must rely upon personal transportation, specifically access to vehicles, more than those living within more suburban or urban areas. Overall, 98% of households in Delta have access to at least one vehicle; those without access are specifically limited to households living within renter occupied housing units (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). When considering Hanover Borough, 90% of all households have access to at least one vehicle (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). Of those without access, there is a relatively even distribution between those living within owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units. Finally, within the City of York, only 79% of households have access to a motor vehicle (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). Households without access overwhelmingly live in renter-occupied housing units (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

When considering other means of transportation, specifically how households commute to employment opportunities, the distribution of access to motor vehicles correlates to use of other means. Zero households in Delta utilize public transportation as their primary means of commuting to work (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Similarly, yet surprisingly, zero percent of households within Hanover also use public transportation as their primary means to travel to work (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Within the City of York, approximately 4% of households utilize public transportation as their primary mode of transportation to commute to work (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). This may not be a result of access to public transportation, but rather the inability to access quality employment *only* through public transportation (DeMaria & Sanchez, 2018).

Within the City of York, focus groups participants specifically spoke about difficulties utilizing public transportation to meet their needs. Multiple residents expressed concerns with buses. Participants spoke about the lack of availability of affordable bus passes, which limits their ability to “get to the store, to [child’s doctor] appointments”. While there are resources to obtain free to low-cost passes, some participants were unable to access these resources due where they live (“They wouldn’t approve it because we live within City limits. We’re on the bus routes.”) or the age of their qualifying children (“It wouldn’t benefit my sister because her child [is] well over one [years old]”). For those that frequently utilize public transportation, some expressed concerns over the staff (“I feel like some of the bus drivers are rude”), while others again expressed their inability to effectively utilize public transportation as a method of meeting their needs. More specifically, one focus group participant said, “Some of them don’t show up or are just early”, making reliable usage difficult. Finally, one individual stated that they were slightly limited in their employment options if they relied solely on public transportation (“I couldn’t take third shift jobs.”)

² The Federal Reserve Bank defines opportunity employment as the “number and share of jobs accessible to workers without a bachelor’s degree that pay more than the national median wage”.

For those living in rural areas, specifically Delta, while the Census states that many have access to transportation, this may not align with the lived experiences of all residents. As one participant stated:

“You need to have a car in order to get [places] because we have no bus service out here. So, we have a lot of families that have no transportation. So you have to rely on other people to get to appointments and people have jobs and we have very little jobs in the area to support the communities. So that's a whole other thing. There's no doctor here. You have to lean on other people.”

With a lack of public transportation, families struggle to meet their basic needs and must rely on the generosity of others to get to the places they need to go. “We also have families... that might not be on medical assistance and can't get [assistance from] RabbitTransit. [They] still might not have a car... It's just a continual cycle.”

These concerns were again voiced in Hanover. While participants were aware of public transportation options, they “just have no idea how to get it. So now, it's more stable for [them] because [they] drive.”

Participants in Hanover who utilize public transportation expressed concerns about the lack of routes and how time consuming managing the bus schedule can be. One resident stated,

“Rabbit Transit shaved down in two and a half years. They don't even go to the South Hanover Walmart...For work, it's like I'm limited to the zip code or where I can walk or ride a bicycle to.”

Another participant shared how difficult it was for their family to receive government assistance:

“To get us food stamps, [my kid's mom] had to spend eight hours between waiting around in York, here, and on the buses just to get to York so we could get food stamps. So instead of sleeping, I would stay up and take two hours out of my day to run up there and help her get them so we could get food in the house. I couldn't justify letting her sit around for eight hours. That's like a full time job just to get a couple hundred dollars in food stamps.”

In addition, throughout the County, participants voiced concerns about their ability to maintain reliable transportation, most directly as a result of financial burdens. In Delta, residents spoke about the struggle low income families face in paying for gas to transport themselves and their families to the places they need to go.

Finally, only in Hallam did one participant state they were less burdened by reliable transportation. “We have a vehicle. Minus the repairs it needs, it's good. We don't have an issue getting anywhere.”

Experience of Spanish-Speakers

While some Spanish-speaking participants spoke about their struggles with transportation due to a lack of personal vehicles, public transportation was also not a viable option. “And, besides, we didn't have another car, and here in Hanover, we don't know how public transportation works, we have seen it but we haven't investigated the routes and all that.”

When asked where they would inquire about this information, some participants stated that they didn't know, while some others suggested looking it up on the Internet. Overall, all Spanish-speaking participants were not aware if the information they would need was available in languages other than English.

While there may be financial reasons for not obtaining a personal vehicle, the legality of driving due to immigration status was also a concern of some participants. “The only one who has a license is him, so then the only one who drove was my husband.”

Both of these concerns were reiterated by other participants. Instead of using public transportation, or attempting illegal activity of driving without a valid license, participants would travel to appointments on foot.

“When I didn't drive, I would walk to [the doctor] with my children and sometimes it would rain, or sometimes there would be bad weather like cold and all that, and I had to take them, because it is also my responsibility; if they get sick, no way, I have to take them, and I would look at the public transport that was arriving and I would say "how do I get on?" Could it be that I stand here and what do I say, and if I get on and it takes me to another place that is not my destination, I would walk like lost and that is why I did not get on because I did not know where it goes.”

However, even when forced to walk or use alternative modes of transportation, some participants stated that they did not feel comfortable without a car. Some participants stated that without proper infrastructure, including sidewalk, crosswalks, and lighting, they were limited in the times of the day they are able to travel.

Childcare

Overview

Childcare is an imperative function for families and communities; it builds the foundations for a child's future and provides them with the opportunity to succeed later in life. Moreover, childcare provides parents with some assurance that their children will be safe, healthy, and happy while they are attending to other familial responsibilities—most notably employment.

Throughout Pennsylvania, only one third of families with child utilize the “formal center-based” childcare system; the remainder of families utilize informal childcare services—which may

include unlicensed facilities or a reliance on family and friends—or forgo childcare entirely (Community Connections for Children, 2023).

York County is home to 100,642 children under the age of 18, with over 25,000 of these children being under the age of 5 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022b; Community Connections for Children, 2023). While 66% of these children are in need of childcare services, almost 30%, or over 4,000 children, are not receiving adequate childcare (Community Connections for Children, 2023). Moreover, about 10% of children receiving childcare services throughout York County are classified as low-income (Community Connections for Children, 2023).

Parents need additional childcare assistance for a variety of reasons, and the supply of facilities is far from meeting the demand. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, approximately 21% of childcare providers throughout York County have discontinued services entirely (Community Connections for Children, 2023). As a result, as of April 2023, only 170 early childhood education centers are active (Community Connections for Children, 2023). Moreover, while facilities are operating at approximately 85% total capacity, childcare services throughout York County are overburdened; on average, childcare facilities throughout York County have a waitlist of between 50-75 children, if they are accepting any new children at all (Community Connections for Children, 2023). When considering home-based providers, wait lists are reported to be between 15-20 children per provider (Community Connections for Children, 2023). As a result, throughout York County, there are “child care deserts”, or areas in which there are not enough childcare facilities to meet the needs of its residents (Fourth Economy, 2021).

Moreover, while there is an overall deficit, there is also a deficiency of spots in high-quality childcare facilities. The “STARS” rating ranking system was designed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to evaluate facilities with 4 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. Of the 195 childcare facilities in York County, 86 (44%) of them have received a STAR 1 rating; 45 (23%) a STAR 2 rating; 7 (4%) a STAR 3 rating; 42 (22%) a STAR 4 rating; and 15 (8%) have not been evaluated for a STAR rating.

Moreover, childcare represents a large portion of a family’s total household expenses. According to United for ALICE, families in York County with 1 infant and 1 preschool aged child may be spending nearly 24% of their monthly income on childcare alone (United for ALICE, 2023). For some families, the cost of childcare surpasses all other household expenses (United for ALICE, 2023).

By Geographic Region

Childcare was one of the most intensely discussed topics in all focus groups. Participants held strong feelings about access, costs, and quality of care throughout the County.

Within the City of York, participants voiced significant concerns regarding the cost of childcare. One participant stated,

“It costs a whole lot for childcare... I don't make a whole lot of money, so a huge portion of my paycheck is going toward childcare in order to be able to make that paycheck. And that's why some people just don't work and choose to be poor, because there's no good point in busting your butt, going out to work, if half of that is just going to childcare.”

However, parents are willing to pay for childcare if they are receiving quality services and care. For some, just ensuring that their children are in a safe environment is not enough.

“He was in a home daycare, costs a fortune. They play with the kids outside, it was nice, but other than that they just sat there and watched TV. If I'm paying \$140, yes my kid is safe, but I want you to teach him something. Have him bring me home a picture. So that's what I worry about.”

Moreover, while there are resources to support families with the cost of childcare, some participants stated that they were unable to qualify due to their familial structure. “If you have a partner, it's hard to get into, but I guess if you're a single parent it's a whole lot easier. Then also you gotta find places that also accept that. Not everybody does.”

Similar to experiences voiced in the City of York, in Hallam, participants questioned whether working to pay for childcare was worth the effort.

“We're at that point where like, since it's that time of year, it doesn't even make sense for her to have a job because we're looking at easily \$200 to \$275 a week for child care which, I know when you break it down hourly or what not, it makes sense, but that is a lot of money.”

For some participants in Hallam, they were comfortable sending their children to unlicensed facilities due to the significantly reduced cost of services. One participant stated, “Like, oh, she watches four other kids, she's right by my parents work. Yeah, sure, I'll pay her \$30-\$50 a week, I don't see a problem.”

However, other participants voiced concerns over unlicensed childcare providers and the quality of services they may provide. One participant stated, “I don't think I'd trust anyone enough to watch her. And with day care being so expensive, that's why I wanted to work at home. That would be wonderful.”, while another followed with, “And that's why I think a lot of kids are homeschooled and parents either, you know, either the husband or the wife, they stay at home because of the cost. You really gotta investigate children taking care of your children. There's so many horror stories out there for neglect and abuse.”

In Hanover, many participants expressed that they felt it made more sense for one partner, typically the woman in the couple, to stay home and take care of children: “It's almost like if you want to get out of the house and go get a job, well we're gonna need your whole paycheck to pay for daycare.” Another said, “My husband and I decide somebody working in the day and somebody working in the nighttime so that way we working both and pay all the bills, but somebody stay with the kids.”

Moreover, because they were unable to enroll their children in low-cost programs, participants in Hanover stated that they have to rely on unlicensed providers for care. “I tried to apply on the YWCA, and they didn't take me. I tried the YMCA, they didn't take me. They're so full. So I haven't get any luck at all. So, only a friend, she like, ‘Yeah, I can watch your son.’ Now every time I try to apply- I don't know, every time I go, they say they're so full.”

In Delta, participants voiced similar concerns. Participants spoke of an inability to access sufficient services. “My sister just delivered in the last week and had a baby and the daycare was the first one to know that she was pregnant because you have to be on waitlists for nine months because there's nothing. And then we only have one [facility] in each part of our district [that we can access].”

One outlier in Delta was the coordination between different shifts and a family's ability to adequately utilize childcare services. “If you're a single parent, you don't have child care. And again, you run into that problem. You can't take any shifts... The cycle is difficult.”

Another participant linked the availability of services in regards to hours of operation, with the overall cost of services. They stated,

“You know, just like everywhere, I think that they have certain hours that they close. And a lot of our single parents do have difficulty, again, working those providers because there might not be [people available] to watch their kids when they're working. And so you do have to make that decision. What makes the most sense? And again, like you had said, even on my salary, I don't know. I mean, my sister's paying 1200 for daycare for him right there. I mean, that's a mortgage, you know?”

Experience of Spanish-Speakers

The experience of Spanish speakers in York County is reflective of the remainder of the County. The largest concern for childcare was the overall cost, and a family's ability to afford quality care. As one participant stated, “First of all, we don't know if there is any place that can take good care of our children, and besides, the money to pay someone to take care of our children well, well, it would be even less easy to get, right?”

Unlike their peers that primarily speak English, Spanish-speaking participants referenced their need to navigate cultural differences in obtaining and utilizing childcare services. While some utilized friends and family as their primary method of childcare before immigrating to the United States, some feel at “high risk” doing so today. Without a full understanding of what is “permissible and lawful in this country,” participants are reticent to utilize the informal childcare system, or participant as a provider in the informal system.

Housing

Overview

Housing stability is an essential aspect of familial well-being; stable housing is intricately linked to health, education, income and employment, and social mobility. While stability is not necessarily reliant upon ownership versus renting a housing unit, many cite wealth accumulation as a benefit of homeownership. In Delta, about 64% of households are homeowners (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). In comparison, 56% of households in Hanover are homeowners, 53% of households in Hallam are homeowners, and 43% of households in the City of York are homeowners.

A common metric utilized to gauge housing stability within a community is the percentage of households that are considered “cost burdened”—or household that spend 30% or more of their income on housing expenses. Renters throughout the County experience greater cost burdens than homeowners.

In Delta, 42% of all households are considered cost burdened (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). While 34% of homeowners are cost burdened, about 58% of renters in Delta are cost burdened (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

In Hanover, similar trends emerge. Approximately 34% of all households in Hanover are considered cost burdened, with 25% of homeowners meeting this classification, and 45% of renters (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

In the City of York, there are slightly more cost burdened households than in the rest of the County. Overall, about 41% of households are considered cost burdened (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). While 25% of homeowners in the City of York are considered cost burdened, 53% of renters meet this classification (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

Of those studied, Hallam is the least cost burdened region, with 24% of all households considered to be cost burdened. A quarter of homeowners experience cost burdens and 22% of renter households considered cost burdened (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

Cost burdened Households in York County by Occupancy Status				
	Delta	Hanover	York City	Hallam
Owner-occupied units	34%	25%	22%	25%
Renter-occupied units	58%	45%	53%	22%
Total households	42%	34%	41%	24%

The quality of a home can be measured in many ways from the built structure, heating and cooling, air quality, presence of vermin or bugs, or how one feels about where they live. Having

a quality home where one feels safe and happy is a necessity, especially for children who are still developing and learning about their world (Bond, et al., 2012). When living in an sub-quality home, residents' mental and physical wellbeing may be at risk. This can lead to feelings of distress, negative educational impacts, and a variety of health risks (Mueller & Tighe, 2007).

According to the American Communities Survey, all 216 (100%) of households in Delta and all 1,286 (100%) households in Hallam have complete plumbing and kitchen facilities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). In Hanover, there are 83 (1.2%) households—33 owner-occupied and 50 renter-occupied—without complete kitchens and 35 (0.4%) households—all renter occupied units—without complete plumbing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). York City has 439 (2.5%) households without complete kitchen facilities with an overwhelming majority, 407, being renter-occupied units and 32 being owner-occupied units (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). There are 224 (1%) households in York City without complete plumbing where 196 are renter-occupied and 28 are owner-occupied units (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

A secondary measure of quality of housing can be attributed to the age of a housing unit. In Delta, 91% of housing units were built in or before 1979 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Approximately 83% of housing units in Hanover were built in or before 1979 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). In the City of York, approximately 89% of housing units were built in or before 1979 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). Older units generally have experienced more deterioration over the decades which can make for unsafe living conditions. Further, people living in households built prior to 1979 are more likely to be exposed to lead paint, which can lead to a number of health complications (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2023).

By Geographic Region

The majority of focus group participants were renters. As such, many of their experiences were directly related to the cost of rent, as well as their experiences with landlords and property management agencies.

In the City of York, respondents overwhelmingly thought they paid too much in rent.

“I'm living in public housing. You know, working two jobs, all my side hustles, stuff like that, it just- because I want to move. I want to be more self-sufficient. I don't want to stay in public housing. But it is good for right now because the rent is so high. And it's just like, every time you try to go look at a place or something like that they want three times your income. So I think York just needs more places to be able to live. Instead of just being strained in one spot and feeling like you can't get out. It's like you're in a box.”

Moreover, when considering total rent, some participants stated their concerns with a negative feedback loop caused by not having enough money to begin with. As one participant stated, “If you don't have enough money then they apply a fee, then you don't have enough money to pay the fee so they apply another fee, so you are late with a bill so they also apply a fee”.

In addition to the total cost of rent, some voiced their concerns that they must compromise the safety of their living situation just to ensure that they have a home.

“If you're a single parent trying to do this, you're basically forced to live in a situation you don't want to with a roommate you don't want to and somebody you don't want to, just so you can have a roof over your head and you're not in a shelter... Everything is too expensive. And then you got these stupid employers who don't want to pay nobody. Especially if you're doing the job for two, three people because they don't wanna hire nobody because nobody wants to work because nobody wants to pay. So then it's just a whole vicious cycle of we're all robbing Peter to pay Paul in order to make it.”

In addition, participants in the City of York thought they were not receiving adequate support or services from their landlords or City officials. One participant specifically thought that landlords were not doing enough to ensure sufficient and quality living conditions. They said, “Landlords not wanting to do what they want to do or saying, “Oh, we'll get you next time or next season.” Not quite a slum lord because he does come through when he needs to come through, but only for what he wants to come through for.” A participant added, “These city inspectors, they need to come out more frequently than just once a year or when we complain.... I don't think that's too much and it'll... keep[] us safe that way your place doesn't catch on fire, [and] we're not exposed to mold.”

Finally, participants living in the City of York had specific concerns about the quality of their home.

“There are a lot of older houses in York. Which right now I have a racoon problem in my ceiling. They're getting in.... And [I] come to find out it's my neighbor two doors down that has a big gaping hole, right, right where her deck is and her roof. And they come in in the evening outside and they sleep and then they leave and they come... I've been on this journey since June with the racoons. Now we're going into another year.”

In Hallam, participants had similar concerns with the responsiveness and attentiveness of landlords. “[Landlords] don't seem to care. As long as they get their rent money, they're happy... I've lived in someone's attic they were renting out. And just the places are just like they seem like run down but just to the point where it's livable and then they want to charge the maximum amount of rent, and the second you're late with rent, you're gone.” They continued by discussing their current housing situation. “The windows. We have a bay window. We had to put plastic on the entire thing because drafts, but they do not want to fix it.”

In Hanover, participants again spoke about the high costs of housing. “It's really bad. I have been searching for places like maybe six years ago, and I can find it, like, if I find a really nice house, it's so expensive. I can't afford it. And when I found, like, cheap price, the house is falling apart. Like, there's no way to live there. It's hard... I really want to move, but I can't find a better place.”

One Hanover resident spoke about a time in their life when they needed to escape domestic violence, and how few housing resources they felt they had.

“I couldn’t talk to my family, and I reached out to the YWCA. They told me that I needed to go to a shelter, and I was supposed to take my kids there with me...and they weren’t going to help me until I did that. Then they were going to help me with housing, and then I needed to be on a list for all that. That takes years. And then I was thinking, by that time, the father would come in, and he would tell them I was unfit, and he would take them from me. So it’s like there’s really no help with housing.”

In Delta, participants spoke about the overall lack of affordable and quality housing. “In this particular area, there's really no functioning housing at all... There's very little availability and... maybe, people that have lived here for so long, we want to stay here and [it] really just makes it difficult to find anything affordable.”

Experience of Spanish-Speakers

As with the remainder of York County, some Spanish-speaking participants noted that their current housing situation is stable, while others expressed their circumstances as “unstable”.

As one housing insecure participant said,

“Mine [housing situation] is complicated, because we are not secure; I am renting right now, I have always been like that, and sometimes renting is not something safe because when I was renting my first house, there came a moment when the landlord told us “[you can only stay] until such and such date”, then one says “where do I go now with my children”? You have to look for another place... and now that we moved here to Hanover, they told us that they could no longer rent us the house, and now we are here too, we signed the contract for certain years but we are not sure if we are really going to stay there or if the landlord is going to do something with the house, or look for another place or just say that it is over.”

Moreover, Spanish-speaking participants experienced similar concerns with the quality of their housing arrangements, and the ability of their landlords to effectively ensure a safe housing environment. One participant stated,

“Well, in the past years it has been complicated for us to pay for the house, or the electricity, especially in these times that is, in the winter, because the house that we got is from 1900, that is 123 years old, so the house has no insulation, that is, it has insulation but it is not adequate... Years ago we even had to take a propane heater... no, kerosene, inside, and the children playing, running inside was dangerous for them, and it was complicated for us to have to delay a house payment to pay for electricity... and it was not 200 but 500, 600, and it was quite a lot.”

Moreover, some stated that the system of paying rent on a monthly basis, rather than a yearly basis in their country of origin, presents problems when financial hardships arise. As one participant stated, “If you are only one day late [with the rent], you get a notice to go to court [for eviction]”, while they may have been able to develop an alternative payment plan method in their country of origin.

Employment

Overview

For many households and families to achieve socioeconomic stability, employment is essential. However, the type of employment, as well as the wages and income gained through those opportunities, strongly dictates the mobility and ability of households to thrive or survive.

Unemployment is a general indicator of the economic vitality of a community; unemployment rates too low can result in negative macroeconomic outcomes, such as inflation, while unemployment rates that are too high can result in poor economic conditions for individuals, families, and communities as a whole.

In Delta, the unemployment rate of the civilian population is 4.3%, with a total of 67.5% of individuals over the age of 16 actively participating in the labor market (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). Hanover has similar rates, with an unemployment rate of 4.5% and a labor force participation rate of 65.7% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). However, while the City of York has a similar labor force participation rate (64%), the City has an unemployment rate of 7.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

Directly related to employment status are the wages or income earned through that employment. There are multiple factors that contribute to whether or not an individual earns a living wage, including but not limited to the presence of children, monthly housing costs, whether or not a household is dual income, and the accumulation of debt (MIT, 2023). The below chart displays MIT data for what is considered a living and poverty wage of full-time workers in the York-Hanover metro area broken down by household size, presence of children and if there is a dual income earner.

Living Wage in York-Hanover Metro Area by Household Size and Number of Incomes

	1 Adult				2 Adults (1 Working)				2 Adults (Both Working)			
# of Children	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Living Wage	\$15.59	\$33.21	\$42.45	\$55.26	\$25.61	\$32.23	\$37.03	\$40.93	\$12.48	\$18.61	\$23.50	\$27.94
Poverty Wage	\$6.53	\$8.80	\$11.07	\$13.34	\$8.80	\$11.07	\$13.34	\$15.61	\$4.40	\$5.54	\$6.67	\$7.81

Two additional metrics that can help gauge the strength of wages are the annualization of the minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour, or just over \$15,000 per year) or the annualization of a family sustaining wage (generally considered \$15 per hour, or just over \$31,000 per year).

In Delta, 7% of households earn less than \$15,000 per year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). While exact statistics are not available for a prevailing wage estimation, more than 28% of households in Delta earn less than \$35,000 per year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

In Hanover, 9% of households earn less than \$15,000 per year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). While exact statistics are not available for a prevailing wage estimation, more than 34% of households in Hanover earn less than \$35,000 per year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

In the City of York, more than 17% of households earn less than \$15,000 per year. Once again, while exact statistics are not available for a prevailing wage estimation, approximately 45% of households in the City of York earn less than \$35,000 per year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

Finally, wages and earning are directly correlated to poverty status. In Delta, over 10% of children under the age of 18 are considered to be living below the federal poverty line, with a particular propensity of children under age of 5 (28%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Similarly, 9.4% of adults between the ages of 18 to 64 living in Delta are living below the federal poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). In comparison, over 22% of children under the age of 18, and 25% of children under the age of 5, are living below the federal poverty line in Hanover (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). However, only 12% of adults between the ages of 18 to 64 are living below the federal poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Finally, in the City of York, 41% of children under the age of 18 and 55% of children under the age of 5 are living below the federal poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). In comparison, 26% of adults between the ages of 18 to 64 are living below the federal poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

By Geographic Region

Residents throughout York County feel the effects of employment on their lives. Most would like to earn more for their work, while others identify external barriers to quality employment opportunities.

One resident of the City of York summed up the sentiments of many participants when saying, “More pay. That would make it easier.... We're all working and living paycheck to paycheck as it is. If you miss a day you're screwed in your life. You're forced to work.”

While wages and earnings are important, residents also spoke of a need for extra benefits to support their overall wellbeing. “Employers don't wanna pay what you're worth... They pay you the bare minimum, they don't wanna give you benefits nowadays.”

One resident spoke about the balance between work responsibilities and familial responsibilities, and the compromises that must be made. “I just got to make the right choices. And you do have to work. You have to work two, three jobs just to do it. And that's when you're not at home with

the babies, you can't pick them up. You're missing birthdays, stuff like that, because we're so overworked.”

Another resident in the City of York spoke about perceived barriers to quality employment opportunities. For some, they are concerned about employers not providing training opportunities to allow individuals to qualify for better employment.

“So even if I were trying to work out even entry level positions, you're expecting me to have a year of experience. But you have to take a chance on the one thing that's going to take a chance on you that has no experience. So you're not letting me see if I can learn. They're not giving me a chance to learn. And nobody's going to pay to help you.”

While not necessarily a legal barrier to employment, some identified other institutionalized barriers to employment. “If these people want you to work, they need to stop worrying about if you smoke weed or not. It's damn near legal, let's just stop testing... Just ask us! Do you smoke weed? Do you do anything else? I'm not quite sure.”

Participants in Hallam also voiced concerns regarding their financial success. As one participant said, “Financial wellbeing--not that great.”

These sentiments were again voiced in Hanover. “But jobs [pay better] in Maryland than here. So if you want to find a good pay you have to go out [of the area]. Not for everybody. For some people like me, it's hard to find a good job.”

Another participant shared that they searched for a job for over a year without finding employment. “I've been looking for a whole entire year now, and I've gotten a couple interviews, sometimes I just got ghosted, and you got interviews and all of that and Nothing. What am I doing wrong? Why is it so difficult to get a freaking job?”

In Delta, participants linked employment opportunities to not only concerns with transportation, but also with the current minimum wage. “People can't get jobs because of transportation, because people are going to using it to get the jobs that they need, money to pay for the transportation. And it doesn't pay, particularly here because of the political reason for minimum wage here.”

In addition, participants in Delta identified institutionalized educational barriers to quality employment. When discussing one particular employer, a participant stated, “Educational background and they're hiring required to do this sort of you must be work to your college degree.”

Experience of Spanish-Speakers

Employment opportunities are also sometimes limited by immigration status. However, Spanish-speaking participants find pathways to employment that work with their familial structures and responsibilities. As one participant said, “My husband goes to work all day, the children go to

school, I come back home, we eat and at 8 at night I leave, clean, come back at 10, 11, 10:30-11 at night and it fits in with all our schedules. It's perfect for us.”

However, finding employment—and keeping that employment—can be difficult.

“We have to be careful where [we apply for work] and almost to get a job you have to know someone in there that helps you to get in there. That is one thing, to struggle and find a job like that, and the other thing is that sometimes, well, I have been in jobs, and for a certain period of time you are fine, and the company does not say anything to you because maybe they are trying to help you too, or they are going to benefit from it. But there comes a time when they tell you, this is it, I can't go on any longer, because maybe I will be audited or maybe you will be at risk... and then we just get a break and lose the job and start again from scratch.”

As another participant noted,

“In my husband's job, he works but they don't give him the benefits that a person has [that has legal status]... If you have an accident or something, who is going to pay, nobody is going to look after you, nobody is going to wonder about you, you don't have insurance, you are going to pay... because that's how it is... when I go to an appointment or something I have to pay in cash, I don't have insurance... that's the way it is...”

Finally, participants spoke about their experience paying for basic necessities.

“Paying the rent is also a challenge because sometimes when the cold season comes, my husband's job goes down and sometimes he has to choose to either pay for the rent or feed us with the little money he is earning, because he doesn't have... the possibility of having a good job, we are just surviving to see what happens. If it is enough... and if not, we approach our relatives and tell them, well, lend us money for the rent because if we don't pay, they will simply evict us...”

Finally, while some Spanish-speaking participants are highly qualified for work, language and cultural barriers prevent them from obtaining sustainable employment. One participant stated that while they were a university professor that trained childcare providers in their country of origin, they have been unable to continue in their career path due to differences in “attitudes, rules, and regulations”.

Mental Health

Overview

Municipal level data around mental health is sparse, if existence. Instead, we must rely on limited county-level data to understand the holistic well-being of residents in a particular geographic area.

According to Mental Health America, throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 116.85 per 100,000 residents have severe depression (Mental Health America, 2023). In comparison, in York County as a whole, 111.3 per 100,000 residents have severe depression (Mental Health America, 2023).

When considering frequent suicidal ideation, through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 123.13 per 100,000 residents have frequent ideations (Mental Health America, 2023). When limited to York County, 112.2 per 100,000 residents have frequent suicidal ideations (Mental Health America, 2023).

Finally, across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Mental Health American reports that 57.92 per 100,000 residents have PTSD (Mental Health America, 2023). When limited to York County, 66.18 per 100,000 residents have PTSD (Mental Health America, 2023).

While these conditions are important and concerning, residents must have pathways and avenues to address mental healthcare. Generalized health insurance coverage is one pathway. In Delta, about 90% of all residents report being covered by health insurance (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). In Hanover, about 95% of residents report being covered by health insurance (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). In the City of York, over 89% of residents report being covered by health insurance (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

Outside of healthcare, there are other avenues to addressing mental healthcare. This research focuses on those alternative pathways.

By Geographic Region

Throughout York County, participants were reluctant to discuss mental health.

One participant in Hanover may provide insight into why this was—they simply don't have the time to prioritize their own self-care. "Honestly, I haven't discovered [what I like to do] because most of the time, I spend my time working, working, working."

Other participants stated that they find comfort in drinking and overeating. One participant stated, "Two months ago, I used to drink a fifth of vodka a day", while another said, "I eat—a lot. I've gained like 60 pounds." When the question was rephrased, participants shared that they enjoy going outside, feeling supported by their community, and seeing others be happy.

In the City of York, participants stated a reliance on trusted family and friends to maintain the mental health and well-being of themselves and their families. "But then friends, the people you can call and lean on... I'm not a very trusting person so I'm not gonna tell one person all my business. You get this part of me, you get this part, and you're this person for this situation. But at least you have somebody to talk to."

Other participants spoke of a need to find time and space for selfcare. For some this equates to hobbies. "You can get all your aggression out depending on what kind of book you are reading. It can take you and transport you, so that's why I'm a big believer in reading."

For others, this can mean physical space and time away from stressors, including familial stressors. “And another thing I do is taking them to the bounce house. Getting a break from your kids period sometimes. Because I got a little boy who's saying "Mommy, mommy, mommy," all the time.”

In both the City of York and Hallam, residents spoke about their reliance on religion to cope with mental health challenges. One participant said,

“Well, I pray, and I seek guidance from the church. I have a pretty close knit group of people that I can trust and talk to because all my family is in Baltimore, and most of all of my older relatives who I did seek guidance from have passed away. So like I said, I find peace within the church.”

In addition, participants in Hallam reiterated similar positions as those in the City of York regarding outlets and hobbies. “Mine is making sure I have enough books and video games, and toys to make her happy which in turn makes me happy.”

In Delta, participants spoke about the rural nature of their municipality, and the resulting struggle to attract providers to the area. “We can't feasibly fully work on mental health needs if we don't have providers to refer to.” Moreover, when there are providers, participants are again limited to only a select few without the ability to negotiate pricing. As one respondent stated, “At least from my experience, I don't think you guys have that ability to shop around cause there's so few options you can go for then... It's just kind of one price and you're done”

However, overall, participants in Delta identified a stigmatization of mental health in the region. “I wish that we can kind of change the perspective of this area because I think it's more negative connotation to it.”

Finally, participants in Hanover voiced the similar pathways to those throughout the rest of the County. One participant reiterated the points of all other participants when they said,

“Like we need to get in touch with the community and go out. Because like winter, you just stay inside. It's kind of depressing. Like you have to be smart not to be depressed. Like reading the books and, I don't know, do table games something because if you stay on the phone or like always inside. So sure, you're going to get depressed.”

Experience of Spanish-Speakers

Similar to the other participants across York County, the mental well-being of participants was dependent upon a variety of factors. However, due to external barriers, including language barriers and immigration status, some participants expressed concerns that are not reflective of the community at large. As one participant stated,

“Well, sometimes [childcare is] stable and other times unstable, unstable because arriving in this country is very difficult... It was difficult for me because I couldn't drive, I didn't speak English and the only one who could speak English was my husband... I told my husband, let's go to Head Start, and I realized how many opportunities you miss out on because you are afraid, because you don't ask.”

Food and Nutrition

Overview

Similar to mental health, there is a general lack of information at the municipal level regarding food and nutrition. Moreover, the data available do not necessarily provide a complete picture of the current food or nutrition environment.

Food insecurity occurs when individuals are unable to obtain and consume the foods that they need to live a healthy life (Whittle, 2015). Food insecurity often arises because of a lack of healthy food stores in an area, a lack of transportation to travel to appropriate stores, a lack of money to pay for food, or a lack of time to prepare the meals they want to eat (Whittle, 2015). Food insecurity can be linked to high housing costs and households receiving disability benefits from the state (Whittle, 2015).

According to Feeding America, there were over 35,000 food insecure residents living throughout York County, or about 7.7% of the total population (Feeding America). This equates to a total annualized food budget shortfall, for all food insecure residents, of almost \$3 million (Feeding America, 2022).

According to County Health Rankings, York County rates the same as the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a whole in terms of the overall food environment; both rate 8.4 out of 10 (County Health Rankings, 2023). This ranking includes “access to healthy foods and food insecurity”. Both York County and Pennsylvania as a whole rank higher than the United States as a whole (7.0 out of 10) (County Health Rankings, 2023).

When considering how households obtain food, we begin to develop a more nuanced picture of the complex, local food and nutrition environment. When people do not have the ability to access healthy food because of a lack of access to necessary resources—whether that be transportation, money, or time—individuals rely on fast food, an alternative that is both unhealthier and more expensive in the long run (Williams & Ortiz, 2023). The presence of fast food restaurants can also prevent healthier options from entering food insecure neighborhoods because of diminished local control over food production (Keske, 2020). The impact of this situation can turn into long-term health consequences because people are not getting the nutrients they need (McQuilling, 2023).

Between 2011 and 2016, there was a 7.37% increase in the total number of fast food restaurants present in York County, resulting in about .7 food restaurants per 1,000 residents in 2016 (USDA Economic Research Service, 2020). While the total number of fast food establishments

increased over this time period, between 2017 and 2022, there was a 2% decrease in the number of residents that ate fast food three or more days in the past week (Center for Opinion Research, 2022). When compared to full service restaurants, there was a 1.25% decrease between 2011 and 2016 (USDA Economic Research Service, 2020).

By Geographic Region

Experiences with the food system and environment in York County varies greatly. While some participants in the City of York are pleased with their ability to access quality food that they want—“One thing I gotta say about York--they make sure that you eat. There's so many food things you can go to or sign up for.”—, others do not share the same experience.

As one participant said,

“If you're not unemployed or if you don't have somebody able to go during the day, you're missing out. So a food source after nighttime would be great for us. I was working 7 to about 7pm. So everything is closed by the time that I'm out of my shift. So I'm missing out on everything. If you don't have somebody or if they don't do a home delivery, you're just out of luck because you can't make it.”

In addition to non-governmental support, participants in the City of York cited governmental assistance programs as a source of meeting their family's food and nutritional needs. However, governmental assistance is not enough to survive. “Everybody seems to be on food stamps, because you just make enough to cover your bare basics.”

When considering other forms of governmental assistance, some participants felt that they are receiving less support now than they did in the past. As one participant said, “They gave you a lot of stuff on WIC when I had her. Now, as I'm seeing with my grandkids, they're getting less stuff on their checks... You only get one bottle of juice a month.”

However, even with access to food items, the ability to cook—largely due to other responsibilities and time constraints—makes ensuring a healthy diet a challenge for some families.

One participant in the City of York said,

“I know I've been learning how to do a lot of crock pot meals. Things that you can leave in there and let simmer for six hours while you're gone, and you come home and your house won't be burned down... You just learn to cook little things and go off of what they like to eat but make sure you're still incorporating everything that they need. You just figure it out, because they gotta eat. You still gotta sleep; you still gotta get work; you still gotta have time.”

Participants in Delta voiced similar concerns with their ability to access food. As one participant said, “People are saying they couldn't afford to [shop at] a grocery store.” As a result, community actors came together to create a food pantry. “And so we're seeing more people [at the food

pantry] and being told they don't know how they would survive right now.” However, even the food pantry is struggling to survive.

However, unlike the City of York, when participants are able to find food, they are limited in their shopping options due to the rural nature of the municipality. As one participant said, “Sometimes you have to go to the Dollar General to shop. But I wouldn't say the Dollar General is like a on grocery store...”

In Hanover, participants raised concerns about the quality of food being distributed at food pantries. “Because we don't have enough finances coming in, we cannot get the food we need. We getting expired food and food stamp...I saw it like two years it's been expired and people are still putting out those foods, and I don't know why.”

Another shared the stress of having no choice but to make hard decisions about where to spend their limited money. “Do you pick food, or do you pick your rent or your utility bill? Like, do you feed your kid and your spouse or significant other, your family or what? What do you do?”

In Hallam, participants once again voiced concerns regarding access to food. As one participant said, “I go to the York County Food... And the food that I get, it's about 80% what I eat. They don't do any kind of meat or candy--I don't do candy--but the fruits and vegetables and the eggs and milk, cheese is fine. And whatever I don't get, I did apply for food stamps.”

In Hallam, participants spoke for the first time about the prices of food, and how affordability impacts their ability to access food.

One participant said,

“I don't pay attention to prices until I get at the register, and I'm like "Oh, that's what I'm spending today. Awesome." It took me hearing other people talk about the price of eggs to realize I was paying like four and a half dollars for a dozen eggs.” Another participant followed by stating, “We're gonna build a chicken coop in the yard and have some chickens and eggs for ourselves. It's just the prices are ridiculous right now.”

The sentiments of participants in Hallam was summed up by one participant who said, “It's really a big concern for us right now. I mean, we can get what we want, it's just affording it can be a little, "Oh, alright. I guess that's what we're gonna have or what we're not gonna have this month.””

Experience of Spanish-Speakers

Similar to the remainder of York County, some Spanish-speaking residents struggle to access food sources more than others.

As one participant stated, “In [their country of origin], if you need food and your neighbor has some, they will share it with you.” They have not had the same experience in York County.

Finally, one participant noted that while they are food secure, they find alternative pathways to ensure they have enough to eat.

“[My family] planted their tomatoes and chili peppers, so we take that and every season we plant tomatoes and chili peppers and harvest them, we grow some produce ourselves, not all of them because we don't grow everything... If we want something healthy, meat like this, we go here to the [the grocery store] or to the food banks and as also in the food banks they leave out vegetables or food to grab and as the farmers leave their fresh produce, they leave it out there and it's at hand for us; I think that's why they don't struggle.”

Conclusion/Overall Experiences

This research was designed to provide deeper insights into six specific topic areas: transportation, childcare, housing, employment, mental health, and access to food. While there are a variety of factors impacting any particular subject area, overall participants struggle to meet their basic needs due to economic and financial constraints.

Transportation

Many participants are forced to use private, or personal transportation, due to a lack of understanding or a lack of access to public transportation. While it is costlier, it is essential for families to meet their other basic needs. As one participant stated:

“You need to have a car in order to get [places]... So, we have a lot of families that have no transportation. So you have to rely on other people to get to appointments and people have jobs... So that's a whole other thing.”

Childcare

Childcare throughout York County, for almost all families, is prohibitively expensive. Moreover, the schedule of childcare facilities can inhibit individuals from accessing better paying, quality employment opportunities. Moreover, families often struggle to find adequate childcare due to extensive waitlists, limited availability, and overall costs. As one participant stated:

“My sister just delivered in the last week and had a baby and the daycare was the first one to know that she was pregnant because you have to be on waitlists for nine months because there's nothing. And then we only have one [facility] in each part of our district [that we can access].”

Another participant stated: “It's almost like if you want to get out of the house and go get a job, well we're gonna need your whole paycheck to pay for daycare.”

Housing

Participants most specifically spoken about the quality of their housing options, compared to the cost of their housing options. For some, concerns stemmed from the reliability of their landlords to ensure they were living in safe conditions. As one participant stated:

“It's really bad. I have been searching for places like maybe six years ago, and I can find it, like, if I find a really nice house, it's so expensive. I can't afford it. And when I found, like, cheap price, the house is falling apart. Like, there's no way to live there. It's hard... I really want to move, but I can't find a better place.”

Employment

At the center of all concerns voiced for this research, is the inability for individuals and families to earn enough income to meet their needs. Most participants voiced concerns that they were not being adequately compensated for their work, and that their current employment status did not allow them to meet all of their basic needs. As one participant stated:

“I just got to make the right choices. And you do have to work. You have to work two, three jobs just to do it. And that's when you're not at home with the babies, you can't pick them up. You're missing birthdays, stuff like that, because we're so overworked.”

Mental health

Unsurprisingly, participants were not extremely responsive when discussing mental healthcare. However, outside of clinical care, participants rely upon their broader community—friends, family, and neighbors—to ensure their own wellbeing, and the wellbeing of family. As one participant stated:

“Like we need to get in touch with the community and go out. Because like winter, you just stay inside. It's kind of depressing. Like you have to be smart not to be depressed. Like reading the books and, I don't know, do table games something because if you stay on the phone or like always inside. So sure, you're going to get depressed.”

Another participant stated:

“I wish that we can kind of change the perspective of [mental health] because I think it's more negative connotation to it.”

Food and nutrition

Many participants successfully utilize both governmental and nongovernmental resources to ensure their basic food needs are secured. There is a range of experiences with access to healthy food choices, many guided by economic constraints. As one participant stated:

“Do you pick food, or do you pick your rent or your utility bill? Like, do you feed your kid and your spouse or significant other, your family or what? What do you do?”

Other Thoughts

Participants discussed a range of subjects and areas, some outside the scope of this research. However, two final quotes must be addressed.

First, many Spanish-speakers throughout York County face harassing or discriminatory behavior that may inhibit their ability to effectively meet their basic needs. As one participant stated,

“Being a migrant, one sees people who are not so nice and it has happened to me that the neighbor next door surprises us or sometimes I want to be outside, but he wants to throw the police at us, and so I cannot be outside, I do not feel safe, I tell my children come here, do not look out the window... do not make noise, or do don't do this, because the neighbor gets annoyed...”

Without addressing these types of underlying concerns, it may be more difficult to ensure all other topic areas are sufficiently met.

Finally, those living in rural communities, specifically Delta, understand the struggles they face are partially due to the distance to population centers. As one participant stated, “Delta isn't the end of the world, but you can see it from there.”

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