

# Tompkins Community Action



2016

## Community Needs Assessment

# OVERVIEW

**Tompkins Community Action, Inc.**, referred to as **TCAction** throughout this document, is a nonprofit, 501(c) 3, charitable, community-based organization classified as a Community Action Agency. Incorporated in 1966 under the auspices of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the agency has a broad mandate to design and implement programs addressing and/or ameliorating local needs and conditions which foster poverty in Tompkins County in the State of New York. TCAction holds a number of other designations, which include:

- A registered New York State Charity
- Head Start Grantee
- Weatherization Grantee
- Licensed child care provider
- NYS HCR designated Local Administrator of the Housing Choice Voucher Program

All TCAction programs provide services that strengthen and empower individuals and families toward their goals of self-sufficiency.

As mandated by federal legislation, a tri-partite board of directors governs TCAction. Its fifteen members represent the target sector (low-income), private sector and community sector. TCAction is also served by a Head Start Policy Council which is comprised of community members and constituents served by TCAction. This Council meets on a monthly basis to ensure that the voices of low-income residents are included in TCAction's decision-making process. Target sector representatives to TCAction's Board of Directors are also elected from the Policy Council.

TCAction operates over 19 programs that serve over 5,000 individuals with low incomes annually through an integrated and coordinated services delivery system housed through three departments: Housing and Energy, Family Services and Administrative Initiatives.

TCAction has a current budget of over \$7 million and a staff of 104. Services are funded by federal, state, and local grants, as well as private contracts.

TCAction has a well-established presence among the network of human service providers in Tompkins County. Agency staff member are active in a number of local and state coalitions including Tompkins County Homeless and Housing Task Force, Ithaca/Tompkins County Continuum of Care, Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative, Tompkins County Landlord Association, National and New York State Head Start Associations, The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Birth to Five, Regional Child Care and Head Start Directors' Cluster, Tompkins County Collective Impact "Cradle to Career" (a collaborative effort among families, educators, and youth service providers seeking to ensure that all of our infants, children and youth age 0-24 are happy, healthy and successful) New York State Community Action Association and our national membership organization: the Community Action Partnership.

For easy access to services throughout the county, TCAction maintains several office locations. Programs operate out of the main office in Ithaca, along with TCAction's three supportive housing locations and six Head Start sites are located throughout the County.

## **TCAction believes...**

- That poverty is eliminated through community engagement and leadership
- That the gap in our two tiered economy is bridged by offering opportunities for people to develop friendships, share resources, and build community
- That our communities have the resources to eliminate poverty
- That the individual and the community are interdependent and thrive together
- That all people have a deep longing for freedom, self-respect, hope and the chance to make an important contribution to one's family, community and the world

## **Our Vision for the Future is:**

### **For Those We Serve**

- Families are healthy, thriving, self-advocating, and engaged in their community
- Low income families are politically influential; have found their voice; are leading the development of resources to meet their needs
- Families and individuals have decent, safe, affordable housing, access to quality childcare and make a livable wage

### **For Our Community**

- Our community is engaged in developing plans to eliminate poverty
- Community service systems support and nurture individuals and families
- Our community is a model for others across the nation

### **For Our Agency**

- TCAction's policies, practices, structures and systems are aligned with the agency's mission, vision, and values
- TCAction engages low-income people in all aspects of the agency and community
- TCAction exemplifies ethical conduct, integrity and justice in all its relationships

### **Our high impact strategies for 2016-2019 will guide our program priorities:**

- Expand community access to quality child care education resources and services for all families and children (birth to five) living in poverty to enhance School Readiness
- Expand access to affordable, safe, healthy, energy efficient housing for households living in poverty
- Expand our community collaborations to better stimulate and focus resources for households living in poverty.
- Expand the agency's capability to build and maintain professional development, job success and innovative resources for staff; with Leadership and Governance that ensures sustainability

The Agency adopted the following mission statement in 1999:

**Tompkins Community Action Partners with low-income households as they develop to their full potential.**

The TCAction Board of Directors adopted the following mission statement at the Board of Directors meeting on October 12, 2017:

**Tompkins Community Action collaborates with individuals and organizations to sustain and improve economic opportunity and social justice for families and individuals impacted directly or indirectly by poverty.**

**Our tagline leads our charge into 2017.**

*“Because an Active Community Can Produce Powerful Change”*

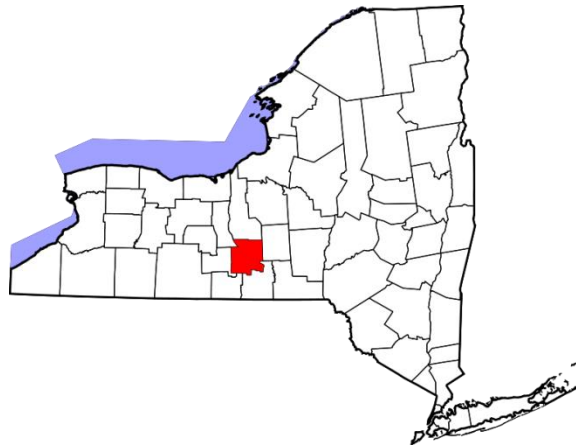


# INTRODUCTION

## Geographic Setting

Located in the Finger Lakes Region of Upstate New York, Tompkins County contains an uncommon mixture of spectacular natural features, a vibrant urban center, internationally renowned academic institutions and a productive and attractive working landscape. With its mixture of urban, suburban and rural landscapes, Tompkins County offers a diverse living environment. Tompkins County covers 492 square miles, 16 of which is water. It sits on Cayuga Lake, which is the second largest of the Finger Lakes in surface area, the second largest in volume, and is just less than 40 miles long. Its average width is 1.7 miles and it is 3.5 miles wide at its widest point. Its deepest point reaches 435 feet.

Tompkins County is usually geographically grouped with the Central New York region, and sometimes it is thought of as part of New York's Southern Tier. It is bordered on the north by Cayuga County; on the south by Tioga County; with Cortland County to the east and Schuyler County to the west. Tompkins County is located within 250 miles of the Northeast's major metropolitan areas.



Tompkins County, highlighted in red

Tompkins County is located 60 miles southwest of Syracuse, and 60 miles north of the Pennsylvania/New York border.

## County Demographic Profile:

Nearly 30 percent of the total population is enrolled in college or graduate school, with that number increasing to 60% in the City of Ithaca. Approximately one in three residents of the county is under 21 years of age. On the other end of the scale, one in ten residents is at least 65 years old. About half the adults have at least a bachelor's degree. The census shows that residents of Tompkins County move their households frequently. In 2012, only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of households lived in the same residence they inhabited since 1999. This reflects, in part, the nature of a transient university community as well as national trends.

Unlike other Upstate New York counties, Tompkins County has grown at a modest rate of between 5 and 10 percent.

## Education

Many of Tompkins County's labor market strengths are attributable to its strong educational institutions, particularly the presence of a world-class university like Cornell. The education sector accounts for 27% of the economic activity and 32 percent of employment. Education employment is unlikely to fluctuate like manufacturing did in the 1980s or the high-tech industries in the late 1990s. Thousands of students, many from outside the state, bring millions of dollars in consumer spending to the region each year. This spending supports a host of industries from restaurants, real estate to other retail establishments in Ithaca and the surrounding region.

Other surrounding communities in the Finger Lakes region may also provide natural beauty, but only Ithaca can also offer the rich arts and cultural activities associated with Ithaca College and Cornell University. As college towns are becoming increasingly better than the national popular for retirees, it is not surprising that the population growth of Tompkins County is ahead of every other county in the region. The population growth of the county even outpaces that of New York State. (*Executive Summary, The Tompkins County Labor Market Study, TCAD 2008*)

## Recreational and Cultural Activities

The county seat for Tompkins County is Ithaca. Ithaca is a vibrant and lively community that features three spectacular gorges and dozens and dozens of waterfalls within the city limits. Mature trees line the streets of our downtown neighborhoods and our central business district contains unique stores and boutiques, 10 bookstores within a 4 block radius and a bounty of restaurants that cater to ethnic specialties, world class cuisine, and the best comfort food imaginable. Once you leave the City of Ithaca you quickly come upon rural landscapes, friendly and quaint villages and hamlets and some magnificent State and Federal forest areas. (*Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce*)

## Agriculture

Farmland makes up nearly a third of Tompkins County's land area; however agriculture is a relatively small local sector of the economy. Agriculture and agriculture-related enterprises represent a significant share of the rural economy. Approximately 230 full-time farms contribute \$50 million annually to the local economy. Many more people are employed in farm products and supplies. The total value of farming in Tompkins County may exceed \$100 million a year. Since 1982, Tompkins County has lost over 20% of its farmland to development and abandonment. (*Farmland Protection, Cornell Cooperative Extension, 2003*)

## Poverty

The census shows Tompkins County poverty rate at 20.7% for all ages; for families with children under the age of 18 the rate is 14.1%; families in poverty with children under 5 is 18.9%; the median household income is \$50,539 (*U. S. Census, American Community Survey, 5 year estimates, 2008-2012*). Clearly not everyone in the community shares in the region's economic prosperity.

Among selected household types, single moms with young children have the highest rate of living below poverty. Poverty strikes these families especially hard in the Town of Dryden where nearly 80 percent of families with children under age 5 years live below poverty. In Enfield, over 60% of this family type lives below poverty.

## **Cost of Living**

*The cost of living in Tompkins County is higher than in nearby regions.*

The most recent cost of living index for the Ithaca metro area was 109.0 compared to 99.1 in Syracuse. The high cost of living makes it harder for basic-skilled workers to live closer to their workplace. Consequently, when workers live in outlying areas, commuting and traffic become issues as the region has no interstate highways and maintaining a reliable automobile is often difficult, with a limited income.

## **Employment and Economic Growth**

Tompkins County is a regional employment center anchored and stabilized by Cornell University and Ithaca College. Cornell is the county's largest employer and along with Ithaca College, forms a foundation that has helped the county bounce back from recent recessions. The county has experienced steady population and business growth over the past decade; total economic activity has grown by 15% and available jobs jumped 11.5% while the population grew by just 5%. (*Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan 2015*)

Unemployment rates in Tompkins County have experienced the same cyclical ups and downs as New York State and the U.S., but have consistently been lower than statewide. Still, unemployment is considered a problem by local residents, especially rural residents, with nearly 60 percent of rural residents calling it "critical" in the 2009 Compass II-2.0 community needs assessment survey conducted by the United Way and Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County.

The high number of students, about 30 percent of the local population, noticeably shapes the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the county. In 2012, Tompkins County had about 38,500 households of which about 20,000 were families with two or more related individuals, and about 18,500 were non-family households. Dormitories and other types of group housing are counted separately, but student households still accounted for 20 percent, with around 7,800 student households. In addition, the county has a relatively high rate of non-student, non-family households of around 31 percent. In general, Tompkins County's family income levels are not as concentrated in the higher or lower ranges as are found in New York State and the US as a whole. Family income is highly concentrated in the \$50,000 to \$150,000 range and the percentage of local families earning below \$35,000 is lower than state and national averages. (*Tompkins County Area Development, 2009 IMPLAN data set*)

Tompkins County has a unique economy in Upstate New York. Nearly 45% of jobs are concentrated in the education service sector, as compared to about 12% in the surrounding region. While conventional and advance manufacturing play an important role in Tompkins County, in the surrounding region the manufacturing sector remains the strongest sector, generating about 17% of jobs. There are a couple of other key differences.

The surrounding region has a significant presence of correctional facilities that provide about 6% of employment regionally.

Tompkins County has a growing high tech sector, with particular strengths in research and development and systems design, producing about 8% of permanent jobs. Due to the predominance of the education and technology-related sectors Tompkins County employers generally require higher levels of education and skills than the surrounding counties, whose private sector economies are dependent on more traditional basic-skilled and medium skilled industries.

Half of county residents over age 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher and there is often a problem of job skills not matching the available jobs. An additional problem is that even with slight population growth, the size of the labor force is expected to remain fairly flat or even drop slightly due to retiring baby boomers making up a larger portion of county residents. Meanwhile, available jobs are expected to increase. These factors point to major future challenges in finding people with the right skills to fill all the expected jobs. The County's Workforce Strategy, updated in 2010 by Tompkins Workforce NY and TCAD and approved by the County's Workforce Investment Board, provides direction for workforce development activities and calls for a coordinated response to rapid economic globalization, integration of technology into all occupations, and dramatic demographic changes. A system where both jobs and workforce programs support the individual's skill and career development, including for people with disabilities, requires a collaborative approach among schools, employers, training entities and Tompkins Workforce New York, of which Tompkins Community Action continues to be a partner agency.



# TCAction Assessment Process

Over the past few months, TCAction staff gathered quantitative and qualitative information from our program consumers, community leaders, partners, stakeholders and local plans, including census data. Just fewer than 300 stakeholders (283 program participants) took the time to fill out our 2016 Community Needs Survey. All TCAction Departments distribute and collect customer satisfaction surveys on a regular basis; Housing Services gathered information from their staff through meetings and gathered consumer feedback at their annual re-certifications (to certify income and household composition for recipients of the Housing Choice Voucher Program) and resident meetings. In our Energy Services Department, consumers are asked to give feedback about our services and their needs at the end of project/at the Quality Control Inspection or other post inspections. Family Services collects customer input from annual surveys from parents and caregivers.

TCAction Managers led focus groups with program participants at Supportive Housing sites. They discussed TCAction strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT).

Similar SWOT questions were asked in interviews led and initiated by Program Directors of local stakeholders and collaborators. These local interviews included Michelle Kortenaer at Sciencenter; Caitlin Bram, Ithaca City School District; Barach Whitehead, Ithaca College Music Department; Diana Levy, Family and Children's Services; Mindy Thomas, Family Treatment Court Coordinator; Angela Sullivan, Alcohol and Drug Council of Tompkins County; Deana Bodnar, Tompkins County Department of Social Services' Program Development and Planner; Naomi Barry, Shelter Manager at The Advocacy Center; Darlene Desmond, Tompkins County Drug Court Coordinator; Sally Schwartzbach, Associate Director at Learning Web; Karim Beers, Director, Get Your Green Back Tompkins; Dawn Sprague, Tompkins County Department of Social Services; and Gay Nicholson, President, Sustainable Tompkins.

We also gathered quantitative data through the NYSCAA Community Needs Assessment database; which includes Census data and American Survey updates; gathered data from local surveys, plans and documents, such as; the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan 2015, City of Ithaca Consolidated Plan, the 2015 Independent Youth Survey and Tompkins County Health Department and Youth Services Needs Assessments, The Ithaca Plan: A Public Health and Safety Approach to Drugs and Drug Policy, The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing choice (City of Ithaca, NY- May 2015), Tompkins County Department of Social Services' Shelter Statistics, Tompkins County 2016 Housing Needs Assessment and Tompkins County Housing Strategy (06/19/17), Rescue Mission's Point In Time Report and the Ithaca/Tompkins 10 Year Plan to Eliminate Homelessness and data from the Ithaca/Tompkins Continuum of Care Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Our most recent Head Start/Early Head Start Community Assessment - Addendum from 2014 provides excellent quantitative and qualitative data regarding TCAction programming and also the needs of families in Tompkins County related to child care and early childhood education/development.

The following is a compilation of quantitative and qualitative results from the abovementioned studies and interviews completed by TCAction Department Directors of

community stakeholders, funders, staff and customers and responses from our 2016 Community Needs Assessment survey.

**Significant accomplishments in the past 1-2 years:**

- Serving people with respect; courteously and promptly; developing and maintaining a skilled certified workforce; successful outcomes for consumers and compliance with funders' mandates,
- Collaboration with the Sciencenter; serving children's individual needs utilizing individual service plans created in partnership with the families
- Coordinating home visits based on families' schedules, delivering services to households at the sites, remaining flexible
- Children continue to show gains with consistent staff training and program implementation plans
- The creation of resource centers in Groton and Dryden; facilitating program delivery, continuity, family dinners, parenting education, Mental Health Services provided by Family and Children's Services, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) with our partner Alternative Federal Credit Union (AFCU); all enormous successes
- Meeting residents where they are and finding innovative ways to engage them in the Supportive Housing programs; this has helped residents reach their goals with our connections with Family Treatment Court, Alcohol and Drug Council, CARS, TST BOCES and many others.
- 55% of Community Needs Survey responders stated they were employed (143 households out of 258 responses)
- Full staffing creates great outcomes in utilization and customer service
- Also Family Self Sufficiency Program enrollment grew from 82 to 101 participants this year. 61% of households are earning escrow savings by increasing earned income. Three home purchases occurred in the last 12 months.
- We are also successful in securing additional Housing Choice Vouchers from those counties who are underutilized.
- Conducting regular customer satisfaction surveys - helps with staff morale (the majority of surveys are very positive) and when a negative issue arises, management reviews to see if there are patterns at which time can be remedied with training; changes in the way we do business and informs our Strategic Plan.
- Only 14% or 36 out of 251 respondents of Community Needs Survey stated they were having trouble feeding their family. "Access to a food pantry was the #1 response to "what would help".
- Out of 271 responders of the Community Needs Assessment survey who responded to the question "Where do you live?" 148 responded they lived in the City of Ithaca and Dryden. Both this communities are designated for high rates of poverty in the census. We are reaching people in areas of high need.
- "TCAction is at every table they need to be at - they are where they need to be to collaborate with community", Angela Sullivan, Director Alcohol and Drug Council

### **Areas where we have been less than effective:**

- We struggle finding resources with/for individuals experiencing chronic or prolonged relapse. There are few resources and fewer facilities for detox and inpatient treatment in our area
- “Communicate to community about what TCAAction does; let them know what you do and who you serve, people don’t know”, Michelle Kortenaer, Sciencenter Ithaca, NY
- Lack of Housing Stock creates tension in the community and ultimately homelessness for people with low incomes and special needs
- Staff shortages - ex: need a dedicated staffer to help people secure housing; calling, driving, interviews, helping to fill out lengthy applications for available housing options
- Long waiting Lists for services like housing, housing vouchers and energy remediation for households with very low incomes
- Families want center based programming for younger children and generally a longer day of care
- Regarding transportation issues; 77% of Community Needs Survey responders stated “the bus doesn’t go where I need to go”
- 36% of respondents of the TCAAction Community Needs Survey stated they are interested in full day Head Start/Early Head Start classroom services; one quote for longer day stated they would like longer day child care “if it is closer to my home - transport issues”
- We struggle to keep ahead of upgrades to agency infrastructure and landscaping of properties

### **Major trends which will likely impact our business:**

- Increase in the number of mothers in recovery with multiple children seeking supportive housing
- Funding shortages in Rapid Rehousing and stabilization monies in housing
- Increased reporting requirements from all funders - excessive reporting burdens
- Fee for service avenues for Energy Services
- Drug use increasing, causing all kinds of problems for families and their children
- Kinship care increasing, increase in children’s behavioral health needs - requiring more support in classrooms
- Change in presidency and conservative control of House and Senate
- Opioid epidemic and the rise of sexual exploitation of youth and people addicted to drugs
- “The change in political support... that people need to stand on their own” Michelle Kortenaer, Sciencenter, Ithaca, NY

### **Opportunities for Growth**

- Trained, engaged staff
- Two Generational Programming and subsequent recognition; opening up Foundation funding opportunities

- Rapid Rehousing efforts with Continuum of Care organizations - to align with the state of homelessness today in Tompkins County
- Concentrate on Housing Development opportunities, more vouchers, stronger FSS programming
- The Governor's Homelessness Action Plan is a comprehensive initiative involving multiple state agencies (Office of Mental Health, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance includes NYS Homeless Housing Assistance Program, NYS Office of Children's and Family Services and NYS Homes and Community Renewal). A total of \$2.5 billion, including a re-appropriation of last year's \$1.97 billion, is contained in a 5 year housing and homelessness plan that includes funding for 6,000 units of supportive housing and 100,000 units of affordable housing. This final budget ends the requirement included in last year's budget that the Executive and Legislative leaders negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in order to spend the money.
- Reunification of fathers and their children; Supportive Housing and Head Start integration successes
- New opportunities to assist a more diverse consumer group; Love Living at Home
- Seeking to provide more comprehensive services to seniors, elder cottages/County Office of Aging collaborations; Baby Boomers retiring
- Building strategic partnerships is a powerful tool to leverage additional resources

TCAction celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2016; the agency remains highly respected in our state and county; as reflected in the stakeholder and funder interviews.

TCAction has the ability accomplish significant projects, for example: creating new sites and new classrooms, building Supportive Housing Programs, engaging people who need assistance and wish to move forward with their lives, helping children secure the services they need, and providing food and nutritional educational activities through our successful Victory Garden, Harvest Dinner series and the implementation of integrating Head Start and Supportive Housing programming. We also have significant grant writing capability and have been very successful in securing local, county, state, and federal grants.

According to the new research from Columbia University, the safety net helped reduce the percentage of Americans in poverty from 26 percent in 1967 to 16 percent in 2012. The results were especially striking during the most recent economic downturn, when the poverty rate barely budged despite a massive increase in unemployment. Government programs such as food stamps and unemployment insurance have made significant progress in easing the plight of the poor in the half-century since the launch of the war on poverty, according to this new study. But the nation's economy has made far less progress lifting people out of poverty without the need for government services.

The research also paints a mixed picture of the United States nearly 50 years after Lyndon B. Johnson announced in his January 1964 State of the Union address that he would wage a war on poverty. They also contradict the official poverty rate, which suggests there has been no decline in the percentage of Americans experiencing poverty since then. While the government has helped keep poverty at bay, the economy by itself has failed to improve the lives of the very poor over the past 50 years. Without taking into account the role of

government policy, more Americans; 29 percent, would be in poverty today, compared with 27 percent in 1967. (*The Washington Post*, March 29, 2017)

The Tompkins County Office of Human Rights' study of Ithaca's demographic and economic conditions, municipal documents and information provided through public participation resulted in a report named Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice and it indicates the City of Ithaca faces nine (9) primary impediments to Fair Housing choice. The City of Ithaca also has the highest percentage of poverty in Tompkins County.

1. People with disabilities report higher levels of discrimination and lower levels of housing accommodation than other residents.
  2. The needs of Limited English Proficient individuals may be underserved by the City of Ithaca and by its sub-recipients of federal funding.
  3. The obligation of sub-recipients of City CDBG/HOME funds to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFFH) is not effectively communicated.
  4. Exclusionary tactics against households who rely on public and private subsidies for housing is prevalent in the City and has a disparate impact on protected classes in Ithaca.
  5. Some housing professionals' policies, practices, and lack of knowledge limit housing options for protected classes.
  6. Processes related to the construction of housing within the City may limit housing choice and inhibit the development of affordable housing within the City.
  7. The City of Ithaca does not provide its residents with any effective legal mechanism by which their fair housing rights are meaningfully enforced.
  8. There is an inadequate supply of emergency shelter and transitional housing services, especially for homeless families with children and persons with disabilities.
  9. Ithaca's student-dominated rental market leads to the prevalence of discriminatory practices by local housing providers who screen out families and children (and other protected groups) in favor of single students for housing.
- (*Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, City of Ithaca, NY- May 2015*)

## Independent Living Study

"In conjunction with the Tompkins County Continuum of Care Committee (CoC), the county's planning entity for homeless services, and in response to a community need to document the number of homeless youth, the 2015 Independent Living Survey 4 (ILS4) Project was conducted. ILS4, a community-based participatory research project, was a follow up to three similar surveys completed in 2004 (ILS1) and 2007 (ILS2), and 2011 (ILS3). The results of these previous surveys have had a significant impact on the community and services for independent youth. The ILS projects have generated solid data used to develop state and federal funding sources bringing in over \$260,000 in expanded services for homeless youth. The Learning Web secured these funds to create a Supportive Transitional Housing Program. 93 homeless youth secured transitional supported housing since the program's inception in 2008. 81 residents exited from this program in 12-18 months and 97% of them secured stable housing. Total number of survey respondents was 208. In order to be included in the study, young people had to meet the following criteria: 1. if they "lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. (The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act 42 USC 11302:

homeless definition) 2. They are age 24 or younger; 3. They are not a Cornell or Ithaca College student; 4. They did not already complete a 2015 survey. Interviews were conducted with youth primarily in their natural network settings in the community as well as in the Youth Outreach office.

There were mixed responses to an open-ended question regarding how respondents feel about their current living situation. The range of responses reflects the respondents' housing stability at the time of the interview. Some expressed that they are currently satisfied, while others stated that it is ok now, but only after many struggles, or only for a short while. Others are not satisfied for reasons including, but not limited to, size, cleanliness, conflict with others, and safety. In general, respondents have a definite desire for their own place. The majority (65%) feel safe all of the time. However, 35% of respondents indicated that they feel safe only some or none of the time in their current living situation." (*Independent Living Survey 2015 - ILS 2015*)

A few responses: "Yes - finally my own apartment after a lot of struggle and need for assistance." "I am really unsafe; the guy I am staying with tries to do bad things to me" "Good home. Kind of small, lots of people, would like to get my own home sometime" "Not satisfied, I have no personal space; I sleep in the living room on a mattress. The people I live with feel very strongly about political situations that I cannot agree with. Threats against relatives are persistent." "Landlord is a slumlord who doesn't care about the client's safety; unsafe because my front door was kicked in and hasn't been replaced."

"I couch-surfed in high school. It was real. I had to go to one side of town for my clothes, the other side of town to get my textbooks, and another place to pick up my work uniform. It was real." (*ILS4 Youth Researcher*)(*ILS 2015*)

### **ILS4 2015 Recommendations:**

"Housing: The data on housing instability have been consistent throughout all of the ILS projects. The creation of The Learning Web's Housing Scholarship Program (15 beds) and Tompkins Community Action Transitional Living Program (16 beds) are a solid start to providing supportive housing for homeless youth in our county. However, affordable housing is still a major barrier to stability. Independent youths' lack of financial resources leaves the Tompkins County housing market out of reach for them. Section 8 vouchers are in scant supply and usually available only to young people with children. Action needed: ▫ A youth shelter for young people through the age of 21 and a Supervised Independent Living Program (SILP) for younger homeless youth (age 16-20) are needed. There are homeless youth who need safe housing for a short time until they can stabilize their housing situation whose needs cannot be met in the Rescue Mission, an adult shelter. The homeless youth age 16-20 who are not ready to live alone in a scattered site transitional housing apartment could be successful in a SILP model of supportive housing. ▫ Additional Section 8 vouchers for independent youth are needed. Though there has been an increase in rental housing for those with low to moderate incomes such as Overlook and the housing complexes related to Linderman Creek, not enough units are set aside for Section 8."(*ILS 2015*)

## **Ithaca/Tompkins Continuum of Care**

All communities requesting assistance from HUD's (US Department of Housing & Urban Development) McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act are required to develop or participate in a Continuum of Care (CoC) system. Every year the Ithaca/Tompkins Continuum of Care Committee partners with local organizations and agencies to take a current count of the homeless population in Tompkins County. This is accomplished via a survey administered over a two-day period at the end of January. This Point in Time (PIT) count is mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for communities who receive certain funding through a competitive process; a survey that attempts to count people who are living unsheltered /living in places not meant for human habitation.

On January 23, 2017, 20 individuals without homes were surveyed; 16 men and 4 women. Of those 20 individuals all were over the age of 25 and 5 individuals were chronically homeless. The federal definition states that a person is considered chronically homeless when he/she spends over a year in a state of homelessness or has had a minimum of four episodes of homelessness over a three-year period. Of the twenty people surveyed 7 individuals self-disclosed that they suffered from severe mental illness and another 8 self-disclosed they were physically disabled and/or had health issues.

The Ithaca/Tompkins Continuum of Care Committee Enrollment Demographics from 01/01/2016 to 12/31/2016 show 394 unduplicated persons used emergency shelter in Tompkins County. 30% of those using emergency shelter assigned their race as African-American and 60% were white/Caucasian. 67% of the people identified as male and 72% were between the ages of 18-45 years of age. There were 33 persons identified as chronically homeless per HUD's definition served during that time period. (*Enrollment Demographics 1/1/16 to 12/31/16 Client Track Reports for Ithaca/Tompkins HMIS*)

## **Tompkins County Housing Needs Assessment**

([http://tompkinscountyny.gov/files/planning/housing\\_choices/documents/HNA\\_2016/HNA%20Executive%20Summary.pdf](http://tompkinscountyny.gov/files/planning/housing_choices/documents/HNA_2016/HNA%20Executive%20Summary.pdf) Tompkins County Planning Department)

Available, affordable housing is fundamental to maintaining a vibrant local economy and a healthy community. When housing cannot be found close to jobs, services, and recreation facilities it creates adverse impacts on public health, environmental quality, the cost of local government services, social equity and overall quality of life. Housing development in Tompkins County has not kept pace with growth in employment and students living off campus. Along with competition for housing between working or retired households and students, this has contributed to the high cost of housing and high rates of in-commuters to fill jobs in Tompkins County. Lower and moderate income households are being displaced from neighborhoods in the City and newcomers to the community have difficulty finding adequate housing. Employers cannot attract the workforce they need to expand or even maintain current operations. Many families and households are cost-burdened by their housing expenses leaving inadequate household budgets for such essentials as food and health care.

In 2006 and again in 2016 Tompkins County undertook Housing Needs Assessments to gain a better understanding of the problems. The 2006 effort led to the development of the

Tompkins County Housing Strategy in 2007. The 2016 effort will help inform an update of the Housing Strategy as the County strives to meet its Comprehensive Plan's housing principle, that "Tompkins County should be a place where housing is affordable, safe, energy efficient, and appealing."

2016 Housing Needs Assessment Tompkins County retained the services of the Danter Company to prepare a housing market analysis assessing current and projected housing demand over the next ten years and to develop a quantitative model to calculate current housing needs and to project needs over the next ten years. With recognition that housing needs change throughout a person's life and that no one type of housing is suitable for all households, this work expands beyond the overall unit numbers discussed in the 2006 effort to provide greater nuance into various household and housing unit types.

## **Housing Strategy for Tompkins County**

([http://tompkinscountyny.gov/files/planning/housing\\_choices/documents/TCHousingStrategy-endorsed.pdf](http://tompkinscountyny.gov/files/planning/housing_choices/documents/TCHousingStrategy-endorsed.pdf))

There is a severe and growing housing shortage in Tompkins County, as documented in the Tompkins County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment completed in August 2006. While more housing is needed at all cost levels, the gap between supply and demand is most critical for housing that is affordable to families with median income (about \$50,000) or less.

"Affordable" has a specific meaning according to HUD: a household should have to spend no more than 30 % of income on housing expenses (for owners, mortgage, taxes, utilities and insurance; for renters, rent and utilities). If a family spends more than 30 % they are considered "cost-burdened." That is, they may be holding on to their home or apartment, but they probably run out of money every month for other expenses such as health care, clothing, transportation and even food.

With housing prices among the highest in upstate New York, Tompkins County has a significant percentage of residents who are cost-burdened. In 1999: • 40 % of non-student renter households paid more than 30% of their income on housing; • 20 % of households paid more than half of their income on housing. By 2005, the median home price had escalated 74 % while the median household income had grown only 19 %, exacerbating the affordability gap for Tompkins County families.

The costs of this housing shortage are felt not just by those who struggle to keep a roof over their heads. We all bear the costs of heavy in-commuter traffic; high assessments; poor school performance by children in unstable housing; economic and social stress on families related to housing insecurity (contributing to mental health and substance abuse problems); and the large need for emergency shelter for the homeless. The consequences can be lifelong for our neighbors, co-workers and family members who can't find and keep safe, stable homes.

The County's Affordable Housing Needs Assessment identifies a need for at least 3,894 new non-student housing units between 2005 and 2014. This includes both rental and owner-occupied units across all income levels. Of these units: • 38% need to be affordable to households with up to 50% of median income; • 16% for households making between 50% and



80% of median income; and • 21% for households making between 80% and 120% of median income.

During the 1990s, on average 328 units per year were added to the supply. For the next decade the total number of needed units is not substantially higher than that level of construction. However the market is currently not meeting any substantial portion of the demand for low to moderate income households. This need will only be met in the future by a concerted community-wide effort to build appropriate housing.

## **Supportive Housing**

The difficulty in providing supportive housing for those with special needs mirrors issues affecting the broader community. The lack of adequate housing that is affordable, accessible, and safe creates obstacles for those in need of supportive housing. High development costs and limited land with good transportation connections make it difficult to build new supportive housing units and the lack of code enforcement means that many in need live in substandard units. Neighbors often oppose development of supportive units. Those in need of supportive services often compete with students for rental units and find that housing vouchers are not enough to secure safe housing accessible to work and services. Additionally, there is no local detox program available and women with or without children are particularly underserved with transitional housing options.

Recent waiting lists and demands for supportive housing indicate both shortages in this type of housing as well as the impacts that larger housing market challenges have on those in need of supportive housing. Homeless shelter stays decreased between 2006 and 2013, in large part due to the distribution of Federal Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program Funds which helped to supplement the Temporary Assistance Grants which typically are far too small to enable a person to find permanent housing given Tompkins County's high housing costs. The amount of this funding has decreased significantly since 2011, and shelter stays have increased from 5,865 bed-nights in 2011 to 11,470 bed-nights in 2015. When housing affordable on Temporary Assistance is available, there are often significant concerns relating to the safety and poor quality of the units. Young people facing homelessness face particular challenges as there is no group home facility within the county for homeless youth who need an independent, supervised, and supportive environment. Youth often feel unsafe or are restricted by age from traditional homeless shelters, and are less likely to be officially counted in homelessness statistics. Although the Learning Web provides 15 transitional housing apartments for youth 18-24, it is serving 50-60 homeless youth per quarter as best it can without adequate housing options available.

Within Tompkins County, Lakeview Mental Health Services has 32 units and 22 beds of transitional housing for those with diagnosed mental illnesses and 38 single room occupancy (SRO) beds for those who may not have the ability to transition to more independent housing. The SRO has been fairly consistently maintaining a 12 person waitlist. Unity House operates 15 mental health-related independent housing beds in Tompkins County, which served 19 people in 2015. Unity House operates 75 beds for those with developmental disabilities in Tompkins County, which served 78 people in 2015, and 2 respite beds in the county for those providing care to family members with developmental disabilities, which served 9 people in 2015. Although many supportive housing residents would ideally be able to transition to other types

of housing over time, the high costs, low vacancies, and other challenges of the local housing market make it more difficult to find suitable housing for them to move on to as their individual situations stabilize and improve. This creates a “logjam” effect when supportive beds are not freed up for others in need of these supportive services.

*(Though the TCAAction Executive Director was interviewed by the Danter Company (contractor hired to prepare the housing market analysis), TCAAction’s Supportive Housing efforts were not included. TCAAction implements Supportive Housing Programs in the City of Ithaca at the 6 family units named Corn Street Apartments for 18-25 year olds with children, 12 rooms for single men at the Chartwell House, 14 studios for women with a child at Magnolia House and the fully funded and soon to be developed 23 studios for single young adults 18-25 years of age at Amici House - all sites are for people experiencing homelessness. We have asked Tompkins County Planning Department to amend the report to include these important projects. TCAAction participates in the CoC Coordinated Assessment to fill all our Supportive Housing vacancies and there are waiting lists for all the programs).*

## **2016 Tompkins Community Action “Annual Report to the Community” Outcome Data**

TCAAction program delivery is administered through three Departments: Family Services, Energy Services and Housing Services. Our service philosophy is based on the Family Development Model, which redirects the way health, education and human services are delivered to families. This model moves systems away from crisis-oriented, fragmented services toward an empowerment, support-based approach to working with families. Family Development emphasizes strength-based partnerships, mutual respect, interagency collaboration and family- centered services.

TCAAction Head Start and Early Head Start programs served 350 children and their families. Program services were provided to pregnant women, newborns and children up to five years old, in classrooms and families’ homes. With 16 classrooms county-wide and 8 Ithaca City School District classroom collaborations, children and families received high quality, developmentally appropriate education individualized to enhance learning and access community resources in preparing our children for a lifetime of learning. Utilizing High-Scope Curriculum, focused on five school readiness domains, this year’s child assessments reflected achievement across all domains. Children’s approaches to learning increased by 45%; reflecting their abilities to problem solve, plan, and expand their initiative. Language and literacy skills increased by 45% and physical development skills scores increased by 34%. Children’s math and science skills increased by 44%; these gains were enhanced utilizing the ECHOS science curriculum implemented through a collaboration with our local Sciencenter. Social skills increased by 485%; a strong indicator of School Readiness and Kindergarten transition success. Family Services included socialization activities, Parent Action Groups, training, secondary education opportunities and seminars throughout the year.

Transition to Kindergarten included a variety of activities, such as panel discussions with school district personnel, principals speaking at Parent Action Groups, and school visits to cafeterias, libraries and gymnasiums. Our Primary School Support Program worked closely with parents and school officials to strengthen relationships for children in their first years of public school. Advocates supported families at parent-teacher conferences, coordinated

services for children with special needs and supported positive communication between families and school staff.

We served 82,329 breakfasts, lunches and snacks to children and families with expanded activities that linked LANA nutrition curriculum to the home. Serving Up the Harvest activities provided families with extended nutrition education and opportunities to acquire cooking skills. Our Family Home Library provided 3,221 books and activities to family homes funded through the Park Foundation. U.S. Department of Health & Human program funding totaled \$3,433,696, of which \$2,319,558 supported wages and fringe benefits, \$755,106 for operations, \$241,992 in contracted services and \$61,409 for consumables. An additional \$55,631 of funding expanded staff and parent education and training.

The Emergency Food Pantry was visited 2011 times by households with low incomes who, once a month, were able to receive a three-day supply of nutritious food, personal hygiene products and household supplies.

The TCAction Victory Garden provided tools, compost, buckets, seeds, and approximately 7,000 seedlings to 180 consumer households.

We provided Housing Choice Voucher Program rental assistance to 1184 households and paid out \$8,268,801.00 in rental subsidy to landlords. One hundred and five households participated in the Family Self Sufficiency Program, of which 45 FSS participants developed savings accounts as a result of an increase in earned income. Three households purchased their first home as part of our Homeownership Program and used their FSS escrow funds for a down payment.

As a partner of the Solutions to End Homelessness Program of Tompkins County, TCAction provided financial assistance and supportive services to 43 households to assist them help stabilize their housing and prevent eviction. We also assisted fourteen people in transitioning out of, or avoiding entering a nursing home with rental subsidies from the Nursing Home Transition and Diversion Program.

Our Supportive Housing for Families Program provided permanent (The Corn Street Apartments) and transitional (scattered site apartments) supportive housing to 14 young, pregnant or parenting families experiencing homelessness with safe and stable affordable housing. Chartwell House provided affordable and safe permanent housing for 18 previously homeless men in substance dependence recovery and Magnolia House provided affordable and safe permanent supportive housing for 21 women in recovery, of those 11 with their children who were experiencing homelessness. In all TC Action Supportive Housing Programs, service delivery focuses on supporting tenants with Early Head Start/Head Start programming, building life and housing stability skills, and securing and maintaining employment and furthering education goals.

Our Building Performance Institute certified energy technicians performed energy audits, efficiency upgrades and resident education in ways to save energy for little or no money. This year, 58 households with low incomes benefited from our Weatherization Assistance Program. Thirteen families made energy improvements through Assisted Home Performance with Energy Star, which provides income-eligible households with a 50% subsidy for efficiency upgrades. Through Green Jobs-Green New York 27 additional families from all income levels

chose TCAction to complete their home energy assessments. Nine first-time homebuyers received home energy audits and upgrades from TCAction to realize energy savings during our partnership with the Tompkins County First time Homebuyer Program. Forty six (46) households with low-incomes received electricity reduction measures through TCAction's Empower NY programming.



***Tompkins Community Action, Inc.***

***Head Start / Early Head Start***

***Community Assessment - Addendum***



**Head Start / Early Head Start  
Children and Families**



**Tompkins Community Action's Head Start and Early Head Program** provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, parent involvement and family support services and serves very low income children and their families.

In 2014, # 258 children and families were enrolled in Head Start and # 92 infants, toddlers or pregnant woman participated on the Early Head Start program; totaling # 350 for the program year.

The chart below summarizes the enrollment by location in Tompkins County:

Tompkins County Sites	# of Classrooms	# of Children Served
Groton	2 (HS) 3(EHS)	30 (HS) 24 (EHS)
Dryden	4	62
Lansing	1	16
Ithaca	4	56
Trumansburg	2	30
Home Based Program		6 (HS) 62 (EHS)
Delegate	9	58
Pregnant Women		6

**Strengths of Enrolled Families (as reported by Family Services Staff):**

- Advocating for their child's education
- Utilizing local Food Networks & Food Banks
- Accessing community services
- Strong parent interest in their child's education
- Resourcefulness

**Challenges of Enrolled Families (as reported by Family Services Staff):**

- Transportation
- Stable Affordable Housing
- Lack of Child Care for children birth to 3 yrs. old
- Difficulty with Child Behaviors at Home
- Accessing Dental Services

The Tompkins County Compass II Survey also identified five critical limitations in the community; that remained the same from 2005 to 2010:

**Source:** [www.uwtc.secureweb2.org/COMPASS\\_II-2.0\\_Health.php](http://www.uwtc.secureweb2.org/COMPASS_II-2.0_Health.php)

- Employment
- Health Care
- Transportation
- Housing
- Child Care

## Tompkins County Poverty

In Tompkins County, the percent of individuals living below poverty rates in 2010 was 19.6%, well above NY State overall rate of 15%. Examining those living in poverty based on households, Tompkins County was again above the State average with 7,163 households or 18.95% as compared to the State household rate of 13.4%. Child poverty rates also increased in Tompkins County, with children 5 and under reaching 20% in 2010, an increase of 4.8% over a ten year period. The highest concentration of households living in poverty, with children 5 and under, is located in City of Ithaca and rural Town of Dryden. In addition, Dryden has the greatest numbers of rural poor; where nearly 80% of all households with children 5 and under, are living below the poverty line.

An estimated 19.6% of people in Tompkins County live below the federal poverty level and the estimated poverty rate for families with children under the age of five is 20%; 2.4% of families receive public assistance (932); 9% receive Food Stamps (3,454). Of single parent households living in poverty, female head of household are 57.5%; and approximately 37% of public school students participate in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

Of all 2011 enrolled school age children in Tompkins County, 43.2% were eligible for free or reduced lunch program, above the state average of 36%. In 2011, 24.82 % of families accessing Food Pantries were households with children five and under. Tompkins County is fortunate to have 12 food pantries through the county, many placed in rural communities. Family surveys have indicated that it is increasingly difficult to purchase healthy foods, particularly with increased produce costs.

Our Family Surveys and 61% of low income respondents in the 2011 Tompkins County Compass Survey indicated transportation as a significant barrier to both program participation and obtaining employment. Access to public transportation for rural residents is very limited, often with only one run in the morning and one at the end of the day, so that families needing to pick up their children from program at 2 or 3 in the afternoon cannot be achieved in rural communities. For City of Ithaca residents, transportation is far more accessible. The link between transportation and employment is clear; a family's ability to become self - sufficient through employment is dependent on transportation and specifically for a rural county, families need cars. Census data indicates that 73% of the county's workforce drives to work, while only 5.4 % of all county residents working using public transportation to maintain employment. For families living in poverty this can be an insurmountable barrier.

## Program Demographics

<b>Ages of children</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Less than 1 year olds	19	20	6
One year olds	28	37	33
Two year olds	34	53	55
Three year olds	99	115	93
Four year olds	191	169	172
<b>Primary Language of Children at Home</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
English	336	324	338
Spanish	5	2	7
Central/South America			
Caribbean Languages			
Middle Eastern/South Asian Languages	5	5	10
East Asian Languages	4	3	13
Native North American/Alaskan Native Languages			
Pacific Island Languages	1		
European and Slavic Languages	3	4	3
African Language		1	
Other Languages			
Unspecified Languages	32	59	
<b>Race of Children</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
American Indian/Alaskan native	3	3	2
Asian	11	9	13
Black	28	42	38
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1	1	1
White	227	247	254
Bi Racial or Multi-Racial	40	37	40
Other Race	5		
Unspecified Race	71	59	23
<b>Ethnicity of Children</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Hispanic or Latin Origin	7	28	6
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino Origin	379	370	365
<b>Families Served (cumulative)</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Total Families Served	340	326	316
Two Parent Families	193	204	187
Single Parent Families	147	122	129
<b>Sources of Benefit Income</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
TANF (cash assistance)	20	40	52
SSI	21	15	20
Medicaid	342	273	349
WIC	95	153	149
<b>Income Eligibility</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Income Eligible	248	230	209
Receipt of Public Assistance	42	69	68
Foster Children	13	26	20
Homeless Children	26	15	7
Over Income	27	29	32
Income Between 100% - 130% of Poverty	30	29	35
<b>Highest Education Level in Household</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Less than High School Graduate	28	22	21
High School Graduate/GED	62	148	140
Some College or Associate Degree	68	119	88
Bachelors or Advanced Degree	16	74	49

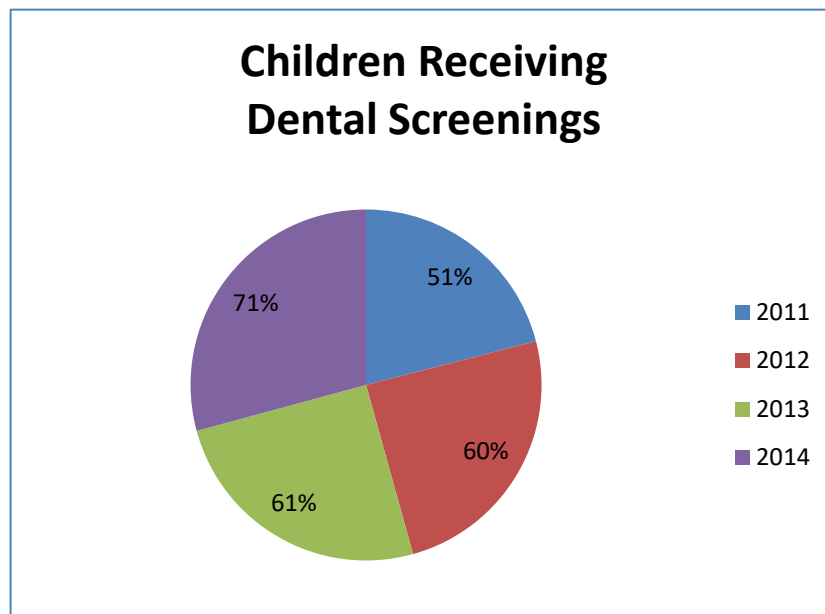


## Dental Care and Health Insurance Coverage

According to the 2011 United Way of Tompkins County Compass II report, the lack of affordable health and dental care was identified as a community problem by two-thirds of residents. On the household level, having enough money to pay for the doctor, prescription medicines, or the dentist was a critical problem for about one-third of respondents. Over the next two years, it is anticipated that the Health Care Act will reduce these barriers for children and families.

Additionally, 66% of low income and 30% of moderate income families indicated difficulty having enough money to pay the dentist. <http://www.uwtc.org/compass-ii-20-health-key-findings>

In 2011, 51% of Tompkins County Head Start children received dental preventive care. In 2012, this number increased to 60% and remained relatively stable in 2013 with 61% of enrolled children receiving dental preventative care. In 2014, there was an increase 71% of children receiving preventative dental services.



The chart below summarizes cumulative enrolled Families and Pregnant Woman with Health Insurance Coverage; 2012 - 2014.

Program Option	2012	2013	2014
Head Start	273 (99%)	271 (99%)	257 (100%)
Early Head Start	92 (100%)	80 (70%)	95 (98%)
Pregnant Woman	15 (100%)	7 (100%)	6 (70%)

## Children with Disabilities and Non-Categorical Delays

In 2010, the number of enrolled children (five and under), throughout Tompkins County, with a disability was 187. In 2013, that number increased to 311. Of those 311 children, 46 were enrolled in Head Start, representing 14% of total program enrollment. These children had a diagnosed disability and an active Individualized Education Plan (IEP), most receiving speech physical, or occupational therapies, or counseling. In our Early Head Start program, 25 children or 27% of children 6 months to 3 years enrolled in program were diagnosed with a disability and had an active Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Over the last three years there has been an increase in the number of Non-Categorical/Developmental Delays of enrolled children.

The chart below summarizes children enrolled in Head Start with a Disability; 2012-2014 by location.

Location	Number of Preschool Children		
	2012	2013	2014
Dryden	17	17	15
Ithaca	16	14	10
Trumansburg	4	3	4
Groton	6	8	7
Lansing	4	3	6
Home Base	5	6	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>46</b>

The chart below summarizes children age 6 months to 3 years enrolled in Early Head Start with a Disability; 2012-2014.

Early Intervention	2012	2013	2014
Number of children receiving services from Early Intervention in Tompkins County	518	510	540
Number of children receiving services from Early Intervention in TCAction Early Head Start	21	20	25

Over the past three years, Tompkins Community Action has seen a steady increase in the number of Non-Categorical/Developmental Delays in enrolled children. However, we are closing the gap with those children classified who are receiving services.

The chart below summarizes all enrolled with Non-Categorical / Development Delays; 2012-2014.

Non-Categorical Developmental Delays	2012	2013	2014
No Services	45	47	48
Receiving Services	44	46	49

## Employment and Housing

With 94% of TCAction's HS.EHS enrolled families are living at 100% to 130% of the federal poverty guidelines, affordable housing is a critical factor in establishing safe and stable housing for children and families. According to Better Budgeting According to households should budget no more than 30% of their income to housing expenses. In Tompkins County, a family of 4 living in poverty earns a maximum monthly income of \$1862.50. Utilizing 30% of their income or \$558.75 per month, a family of four needs approximately twice that much to afford a 2 bedroom apartment in Tompkins County.

**Source:** [www.betterbudgeting.com/articles/budgeting/housingcosts.htm](http://www.betterbudgeting.com/articles/budgeting/housingcosts.htm)

The chart below summarizes employment status of enrolled Families; 2012 - 2014.

Family Type - Employment Status	2012	2013	2014
Two Parent Household			
Both Parents Employed	50%	42%	44%
One Parent Employed	42%	46%	45%
Neither Parent Employed	8%	12%	11%
Single Parent Household			
Parent Employed	52%	48%	49%
Parent Not Working	48%	52%	51%

The table below shows the average hourly wage in Tompkins County in 2014 was \$12.69, which is well below the needed wage required for a family to afford a # 1 bedroom apartment.

County	Average Renter Hourly Wage (\$)*	Hourly Wage (\$'s) for				
		Studio (+)	1 Bedrooms	2 Bedrooms	3 Bedrooms	4 Bedrooms
Tompkins County	12.69	14.79	18.13	21.73	30.10	30.21

Source: [National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach Report, 2014.](#)

Tompkins County housing vacancy rates of 1.8% significantly lower than the State wide rate of 2.41; low income families struggle to find safe affordable housing. In a 2011 study in the Public Journal of Health, indicated that crowding and multiple moves was an indicator associated with poor health, developmental risk and lower weight for very young children.

Families Experiencing Homelessness: The National Count of Homeless Children in 2011 was 326,400 children; representing 20 percent of the total number of homeless individuals. Approximately half (51 %) were children were under age 6. **Source:** [HUD data - http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/10/HomelessChildrenRoundtable/index.shtml#secIC](http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/10/HomelessChildrenRoundtable/index.shtml#secIC).

The Chart below summarizes enrolled families experiencing Homelessness; 2012-2014.

	2012	2013	2014
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# of Homeless Families Served in TCAction HS/EHS Program	6	8	6
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## Community Resources for Households with Low Incomes in Tompkins County

Dental Health	
Resource	Services Provided
Dental Case Management Program	Assisting families who are currently on Medicaid with finding a dental home
Developmental Health (services to individuals with disabilities)	
Resource	Services Provided
Franziska Racker Centers	Comprehensive services for all ages in 3 counties
School District Committees on Preschool Special Education	Special education evaluations and services
County Health Dept. Programs for Children with Special Care Needs	Service Coordination, screening, special education evaluations and services
Early Childhood Direction Centers	Information about services for children with disabilities, training, resources for parents and agencies
Family Resource Network, Inc.	Provides family support services to families of children with special needs in 6 counties
Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC)	Support, advocacy, counseling, information/referral, loan closet for people with disabilities
Patchwork Therapeutic Riding Center	Horseback riding program for people with special needs
Pathways	Residential and day services, family support, waiver and service coordination for children with developmental disabilities
SETRC- BOCES Special Education training and resource center	Information, resources, lending library, training and technical assistance related to children with disabilities in 3 counties
SPOA (Single Point of Accountability)	Team that works in partnership with families to coordinate and develop community based services
Challenge Industries	Vocational services for people with disabilities
Ithaca Youth Bureau	Recreational opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities
Eye Care	
Resource	Services Provided
Dr. Schwartz	Pediatric & adult ophthalmology – will accept Medicaid
Lion's Club	Provides vision screenings and vouchers for eye glasses
Sterling Optical	Will accept Medicaid
Health Services	
Resource	Services Provided
Cayuga Medical center	Hospital
Convenient Care	Urgent care center
Northeast Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine	Providing medical services to children
Buttermilk Falls Pediatrics	Providing medical services to children

Guthrie Medical	Providing medical services to families
<b>Housing</b>	
<b>Resource</b>	<b>Services Provided</b>
Homeless Housing Task Force	Community meeting – open to the public
Better Housing of Tompkins County	Homeowner education, access to home and rental property for the elderly
Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services	Homeowner education, home repair assistance, rental housing
Ithaca Housing Authority	Operates public housing and Section 8 rental assistance
Tompkins Community Action	Housing Choice Vouchers, Home Ownership, Family Unification, Homeless & Supportive Housing, Weatherization, Healthy Homes
Department of Social Services	Housing assistance programs
<b>Mental Health Services</b>	
<b>Resource</b>	<b>Services Provided</b>
Family and Children's Services	Child and Family Mental Health Program
Mental Health Association	Parent Empowerment Program "PEP"
Hospicare and Palliative Care Services of Tompkins County	Bereavement Groups, Counseling
Fingerlakes Independence Center	Depression Support Groups
Human Services Coalition	Variety of workshops (managing conflict, suicide awareness training, etc.).
Ithaca Pregnancy Center	Expectant mom services, health mentors.
Suicide Prevention & Crisis Service/After Trauma	Support groups, crisis hotline
<b>Nutrition</b>	
<b>Resource</b>	<b>Services Provided</b>
WIC – Women, Infants, Children	Providing nutrition services to women and children, also providing lactation counseling
Cornell Cooperative Extension	Providing Education, gardening and canning,
Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga	Nutrition Outreach & Education Programs
Danby Food Pantry	Access to food
Dryden Kitchen Cupboard	Access to food
Freeville Food Pantry	Access to food
Lansing Food Pantry	Access to food
Trumansburg Food Pantry	Access to food
Enfield Food Distribution	Access to food
Groton Food Pantry	Access to food
Tompkins Community Action, Inc.	Food Pantry, Victory Garden Program, Education and Food Preparation Training
Newfield Kitchen Cupboard	Access to food
Loaves and Fishes	Free meals
Salvation Army	Meals and access to food
<b>Transportation</b>	
<b>Resource</b>	<b>Services Provided</b>
TCAT	Public transportation
Cornell Cooperative Extension, Way2Go	Information for finding/using public transport
Tompkins County Dept. Social Services	Bus Passes for Income Eligible Households

<b>Workforce Development / Employment Services</b>	
<b>Resource</b>	<b>Services Provided</b>
Tompkins Workforce New York	Employment services and assistance
Department of Social Services	Employment services and assistance
Vocational & Educational Services for Individuals w/ Disabilities	Employment assistance for individuals with disabilities
Women's Opportunity Center	Job search assistance and preparation
<b>Child Care Centers</b>	
<b>Resource</b>	<b>Services Provided</b>
Ithaca Community Child Care	Infants, Toddlers, Preschool, After School, Summer Camp – <i>Fee Based</i>
Ithaca YMCA	Infant, Toddlers, Preschool, Before and After School – <i>Fee Based</i>
Drop-In Children's Center	Infants, Toddlers, Preschool – <i>Sliding Fees</i>
Coddington Child Care Center	Preschool, After School – <i>Fee Based</i>
Franziska Racker Center	Toddlers, Preschool – <i>Sliding Fees</i>
Tompkins Community Action, Inc.	Head Start/Early Head Start: Infants – 5 years
Cornell Child Care Center	Infants, Toddlers, Preschool – <i>Fee Based</i>
Ithaca Montessori School	Preschool, School Age – <i>Fee Based</i>
Waldorf	Preschool, School Age – <i>Fee Based</i>
Tompkins Cortland Community College	Infants, Toddlers, Preschool – <i>Sliding Fees</i>

## Child Care Demand vs Supply

The number of children needing care exceeds the number of licensed Child Care slots in Tompkins County. According to the US Census, there are roughly 4342 children under the age of 5 reside in Tompkins County. Based on the Labor Force participation rates of working parents with young children (69% in Tompkins County) there are approximately 3000 children under the age of 5 years old needing child care. There are 1130 regulated child care spaces for children 5 years old and under in Tompkins County. This leaves a demand gap of 1865, or 62% of community need.

Infant and Toddler Care falls even further behind. We have only enough regulated spaces for one out of every three babies. For families with children under the age of three, 32% negotiated a longer leave, resigned or found a different job when they couldn't find care. In 2012, the Child Development Council reports that there were no new openings in child care centers for infants.

Tompkins County	Under 5 years (Preschool)
Number of Children (2012 estimates)	4342
Labor Force Participation Rate	69%
Potential Demand	2995
Supply of Regulated Care	1130
<b>Gap Between Supply &amp; Demand</b>	<b>-1865</b>

*Source: CDC Family Survey, 2012*

Families in our community, like others around the nation, rely on a network of informal care options (family, friends, nanny's, nursery schools, etc.) to meet their child care needs. Based on annual Self -Assessment results, more and more parents are sharing the load with spouses and partners by working alternating shifts or relying upon multiple caregivers to meet their families' needs.

Another variable in balancing the supply and demand in our community is the influence of the higher education system here. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the total population are college students. Many of these students have young families and no extended family nearby to support them. Students have non-traditional schedules and often need part-time care.

# Tompkins County Child Care Capacity

According to 2010 Census numbers, 69% of households, with children 5 and under, are working full time; indicating the need for # 2995 child care slots county wide. Tompkins County has 101 licensed Child Care Centers and Family Child Care providers serving # 1130 families with children ages 6 months to 5 years old; leaving a 62% need. Additionally, the 2011 Tompkins County Compass Survey reported that 64% of residents identified the lack of affordable child care as a community wide problem.

## Licensed Child Care Providers in Tompkins County

Tompkins County Location	INFANTS 6 to 18 Months	TODDLERS 18 to 36 Months	PRE-SCHOOL 3-5 Years
Dryden	0	12	121
Groton	16	8	78
Ithaca	96	54	489
Lansing	0	0	21
Newfield	0	0	4
Trumansburg	0	20	69
<b>Totals</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>782</b>

*Source: NYS Office of Children and Family Services, FDC/SACC Licencing, August 2014.*

*Does not include School District UPK programming.*

## TCAction Licensed Child Care Capacity

TCAction Location Capacity	INFANTS 6 to 18 Months	TODDLERS 18 to 36 Months	PRE-SCHOOL 3-5 Years
Dryden	0	0	69
Groton	16	8	36
Ithaca	0	0	92
Lansing	0	0	21
Trumansburg	0	0	32
<b>Totals</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>250</b>

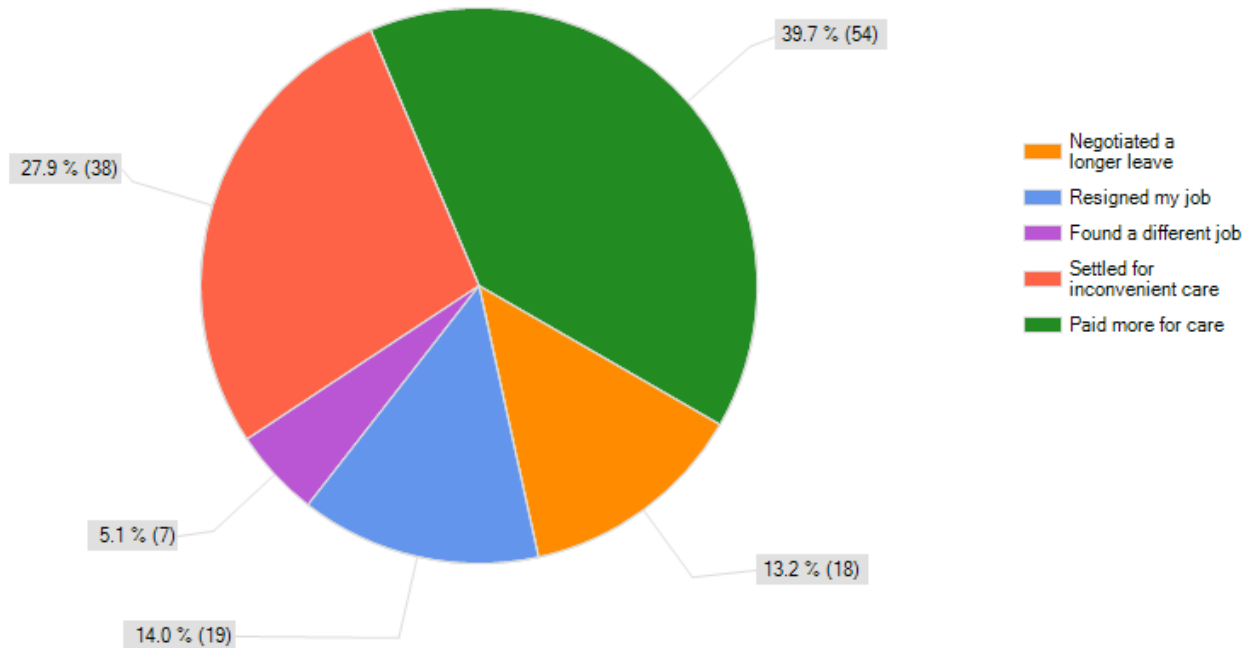
*Does not include Infant/Toddler available site capacity (# 24) in Ithaca and Dryden.*



## Finding Child Care

Tompkins County families, like others around the nation, rely on a network of informal care options (family, friends, nanny's, nursery schools, etc.) to meet their child care needs. According to family surveys, more and more caregivers are sharing the load with spouses and partners by working alternating shifts or relying upon multiple caregivers to meet their families' needs.

**If you have a child under the age of three, what did you do if you didn't find the care you wanted?**



## Child Care Provider Rates

<b>Day Care Center</b>	<b>Under 1 1/2</b>	<b>1 1/2 - 2</b>	<b>2 - 5</b>	<b>3 - 5</b>	<b>6 - 12</b>
Weekly FT	\$349	\$274	\$247	\$226	\$99
Weekly PT	\$162	\$143		\$109	
Daily PT	\$40	\$35	\$35	\$27	
Monthly FT	\$1623	\$1222		\$913	\$369
Monthly PT					

<b>Family Day Care</b>	<b>Under 1 1/2</b>	<b>1 1/2 - 2</b>	<b>2 - 5</b>	<b>3 - 5</b>	<b>6 - 12</b>
Weekly FT	\$177	\$180	\$153	\$150	\$136
Weekly PT	\$110		\$117	\$93	\$63
Daily PT	\$35	\$26	\$25	\$20	\$21
Monthly FT	\$733		\$683	\$683	\$615
Monthly PT	\$315		\$315	\$315	\$315

<b>Group Family Day Care</b>	<b>Under 1 1/2</b>	<b>1 1/2 - 2</b>	<b>2 - 5</b>	<b>3 - 5</b>	<b>6 - 12</b>
Weekly FT	\$162		\$166	\$162	\$137
Weekly PT	\$160		\$146	\$130	\$97
Daily PT	\$33	\$33	\$33	\$28	\$26
Monthly FT	\$918		\$842	\$975	
Monthly PT	\$746		\$658	\$725	\$315

<b>Pre-School Program</b>	<b>Under 1 1/2</b>	<b>1 1/2 - 2</b>	<b>2 - 5</b>	<b>3 - 5</b>	<b>6 - 12</b>
Monthly FT			\$220	\$243	
Monthly PT		\$400	\$127	\$174	
Daily PT			\$10		

*Source: NACCRRAware; 2013*

## Paying for Child Care

Unlike public school education where taxes cover the greatest share of the cost, or higher education where grants, loans, taxes and parent fees pay for the cost, child care is largely supported by parents alone. With the exception of limited scholarships and child care subsidies for the lowest income families, parents pay anywhere from 10% to 40% of their income in their children's earliest years.

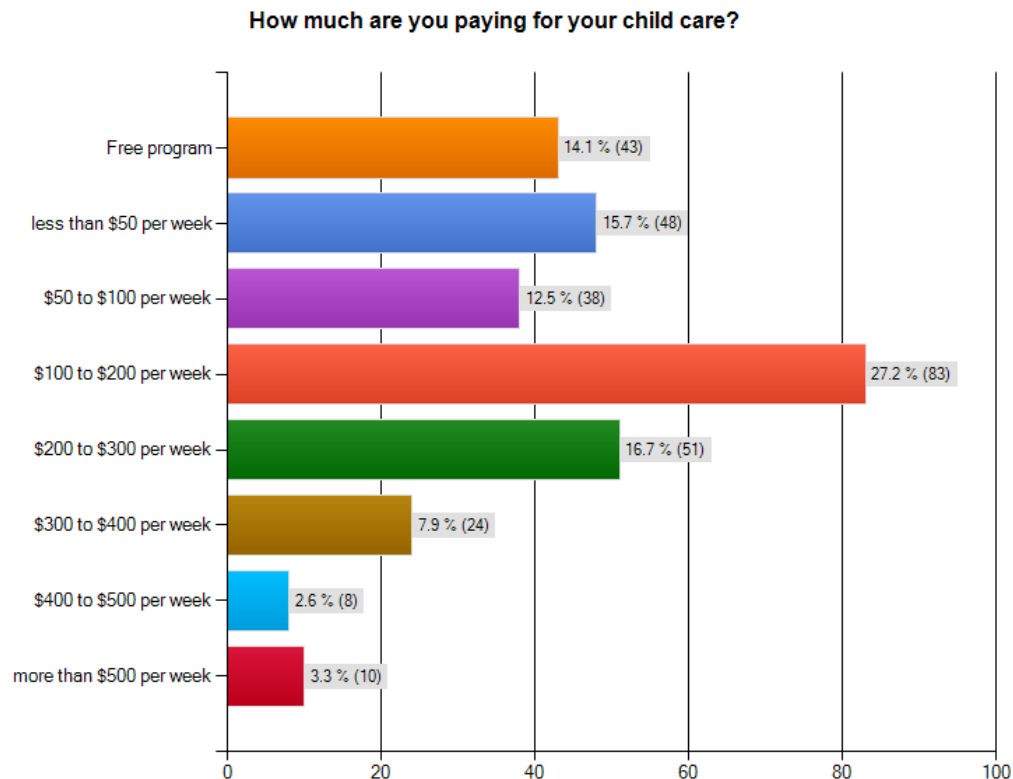
Child Care costs in New York State ranks as one of the highest in the nation. Tompkins County, especially in the City of Ithaca, although not the highest in New York State, clearly surpasses the rate of care in surrounding rural areas.

Mildred Warner, Cornell University (*Linking Child Care and Economic Development*) estimates that 36% of care in New York State is paid care and 64% of the children are in unpaid care by parents, family friends and neighbors or "free" options for 3 and 4 year olds such as Head Start, Universal Pre-K and Nursery Schools (part-time).

Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce and Child Development Council sponsored an economic impact study (2001) of the contribution of parent fees to our local economy. At that time, nearly 15 years ago, child care receipts from parent fees totaled \$12.4 million, nearly 83% of all revenue supporting early care and education. State and Federal funded Pre-K and Head Start Programs brought in \$ 3.8 million to our local economy; and child care subsidies contributed \$1 million.

Note: This study was conducted by a team of students from City and Regional Planning, Cornell University and Professor Mildred Warner. It served as a model and has been replicated in many states and localities across the United States.

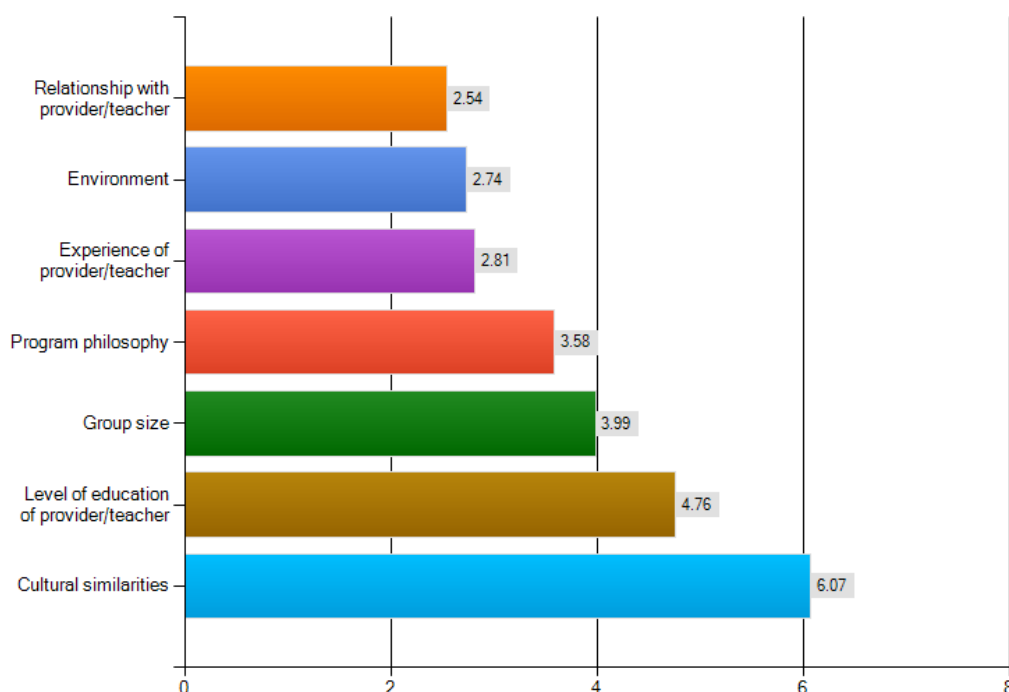
Source:[http://economicdevelopmentandchildcare.org/technical\\_assistance/tompkins\\_county](http://economicdevelopmentandchildcare.org/technical_assistance/tompkins_county)



## Quality of Child Care

Research indicates education and ongoing professional development of providers/teachers is the best indicator of good quality early childhood education. New York State standards require varying levels of preparation in order to teach in a classroom. To operate a family child care program, NYS requires only two years of experience working with children, which may include time as a parent. NYS regulations also require 30 hours of professional development every two years.

### ***What Do Families Consider in Choosing Child Care:***



Parents indicated that the top three most important considerations in finding child care are quality, cost and the teacher. When asked to identify the most important indicator of quality, parents ranked the relationship with the teacher as the most important, followed by the environment and the experience level of the teacher.

A shrinking portion of low income families have access to regulated child care. Quality matters to parents, but the high cost of child care, in combination with dissatisfaction with the quality of child care, and the lack of flexibility in child care arrangements is causing many families to opt out of regulated child care programs. It is estimated that one-third or more of the children in Tompkins County are in unregulated care.

***Source: CDC Family Survey in Tompkins County, 2011.***

# Policy Council

## Strategic Plan Recommendations

After reviewing and discussing 2014 updates to the Community Assessment and Head Start / Early Head Start Addendum, TCAAction Policy Council made the following recommendations to the Board of Directors for inclusion in the upcoming 2016.2019 Agency's Strategic Plan:

1. **Employment:** identify opportunities to increase job skills of enrolled families and increase awareness of community resources regarding employment assistance and opportunities.

2. **Transportation:** work with community organizations to increase access to public transportation options such as: expanding rural routes, correlating bus schedules with local education providers to ease drop off and pick up of children and identify/develop low cost options for vehicle maintenance and repair.

3. **Children in Foster Care:** identify, expand and develop ongoing systems of support for foster children and families to work towards success for all.

4. **Child Care:** identify and develop child care options such as additional child care centers and regulated family child care to help expand the number of slots available for young children.

5. **Housing:** work to expand low-income housing options and provide education and resources for budgeting and possible home ownership

6. **Children with behavioral concerns:** identify and develop supports for children, staff and families in working with children with behavioral concerns.

# **Tompkins Community Action, Inc.**

## **Head Start / Early Head Start**

### **Program Goals**

#### **2014 - 2019**

**Goal # 1:** Create opportunities that meet community needs, for families in low income households to access quality Center Based programming for children ages birth to three.

**Goal # 2:** Every family and child is engaged and ready to transition to Kindergarten having attained School Readiness and Family Engagement goals.

**Goal # 3:** Families have access to resources, training and information to achieve individual and family goals as well as pathways to self-sufficiency.

**Goal # 4:** Implemented program strategies reflect innovation, comprehensive reporting as well as enhanced competencies of staff service delivery.

**Goal # 5:** Update program resource materials to be accessible, are prioritized, systemized and serve as working and training documents.

*Program Goals were developed by program staff, management, Policy Council and Board of Directors during a series of working meetings utilizing Community Assessment and Self - Assessment data, program service delivery outcomes, PIR data, School Readiness and Family Engagement Plans, COR outcome scores; consumer and collaborator surveys in 2014.*

## **TCACTION 2016 DEMONSTRATED NEEDS / KEY FINDINGS**

- Households with young children (Birth to 5) lack affordable, quality child care to prepare their children for kindergarten (Family)
- Individuals and families with low incomes lack decent, safe and energy efficient housing. (Family)
- Households living in poverty lack access to resources for asset development. (Family)
- Our County lacks realistic, community wide objectives to assist with and to measure results of its current efforts to help households out of poverty (Community)
- Our staff lacks easily accessible information in which to keep abreast of professional development opportunities and employment information (Agency)
- Our agency lacks resources to maintain physical infrastructure (Agency)
- Board of Directors lack easily accessible information in which to make informed decisions (Agency)
- Our community (local, state, private and federal) resources are not focused to enable households with low incomes to attain the skills, support and motivation to enjoy a healthy interdependence with their community (Community)

### **Draft Strategic GOALS**

**Our high impact strategies for 2017-2019 will guide our program priorities:**

- Expand community access to quality child care education resources and services for all families and children (birth to five) living in poverty to enhance School Readiness (Family)
- Expand access to affordable, safe, healthy, energy efficient housing for households living in poverty (Family)
- Expand our community collaborations to better stimulate and focus resources for households living in poverty. (Community)
- Expand the agency's capability to build and maintain professional development, job success and innovative resources for staff; with Leadership and Governance that ensures sustainability (Agency)