

**COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT  
OF KENT COUNTY, MARYLAND**

**FEBRUARY 2018**

**PREPARED FOR:**



**United Way of  
Kent County**

**BY**

**CHESAPEAKE CHARITIES**

**Executive Summary**

In September of 2017, The United Way of Kent County, Maryland engaged the staff at Chesapeake Charities to conduct a comprehensive, systematic needs assessment to guide the United Way Board in setting priorities and making informed decisions regarding the allocation of resources and the development of programmatic and organizational improvements and initiatives. This is the first full-scale Community Needs Assessment that takes a comprehensive look at the challenges facing Kent County residents. The purpose of this assessment is to better understand the unique needs of the community served by the United Way of Kent County, identify community resources to address the most urgent needs, and encourage greater collaboration among organizations working to improve the health and well-being of the population.

The United Way of Kent County focuses on health, education, and financial stability, the building blocks for a good life and a strong community. These building blocks have guided their work for the past 60 years. The United Way of Kent County believes that no one organization can change the conditions in the community. Rather, by building community partnerships and bringing together diverse stakeholders, the United Way is better equipped to address the root problems facing Kent County. As a result, the United Way continues to focus on community partnerships as the most effective approach to solving problems.

#### **Needs Assessment Goals:**

1. Develop an understanding of the current human services needs in Kent County.
2. Gauge where the community feels that needs are being met, where gaps in service may exist, and where the United Way of Kent County should consider investing donor dollars.
3. Create a resource that nonprofit organizations, foundations, businesses and others will use for program planning, grant writing, strategic planning, training, and other activities.

Leveraging existing partnerships and community resources is critical for successfully implementing the solutions proposed in this Community Needs Assessment. The suggested strategies are intended to spark conversations among existing partners, coalitions, foundations, government agencies, and collaborative groups in regard to the common problems encountered by each of these stakeholders and constituents.

A key theme that emerged in the qualitative data collection for this report was consensus on the need to pool resources to address the most persistent problems and a shared sense of optimism among those interviewed that the issues facing Kent County are solvable if collaborative action is taken. Many stakeholders noted the strong community assets and partnership that already exist. There are also synergies among some of the challenges and, in many cases, addressing one need (such as transportation) can help address other related problems (such as health and financial instability).

Based on this needs assessment, the United Way of Kent County and community stakeholders have identified the following critical unmet needs:

- Affordable, reliable transportation for all age groups throughout the County.
- Implementation of strategies to address multigenerational poverty.
- Services and support for low-income seniors 60 years of age and older.
- Development and promotion of a comprehensive database of community resources.

As a guiding principle, the United Way of Kent County should carefully consider the value and effectiveness of the programs and services it currently supports when allocating resources for a new approach. Removal of funding from one area may create needs that were being met when this assessment was conducted. A balanced allocations strategy should ensure continuity of services while allowing new strategies to be addressed.

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## Methodology

This needs assessment was conducted over a four-month period and included a variety of data collection methods to create an overall depiction of the issues facing the community. These methods included: demographic analysis of the population to identify community needs and examine key indicators of community well-being; a comprehensive review of prior community assessments including an examination of the results from surveys, focus groups and interviews; and follow-up telephone and in-person interviews with key stakeholders from the local government, the faith-based community, the nonprofit sector, and business and industry.

### Demographic Analysis

The first element of the assessment used demographic analysis to provide information on the local population and identify and anticipate community needs. Chesapeake Charities collected and reviewed the most recent data for key indicators that relate to and characterize the population of Kent County. Sources for the data included: the U.S. Census, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Maryland Departments of Commerce, Education, and Labor, Licensing and Regulation.

### Review of Secondary Data

Chesapeake Charities catalogued and reviewed relevant needs assessments, reports, and local studies of Kent County in each of the focus areas. The findings and recommendations from each report were categorized and a matrix was created to record and quantify community identified needs. Wherever possible, information was verified and updated so that a clear and current picture of community needs and assets could be drawn from the information. A summary of relevant information contained in the secondary data sources is included in Appendix B.

### Primary Data Collection and Analysis

Chesapeake Charities conducted telephone and in-person interviews with key stakeholders from local government agencies, the faith-based community, the nonprofit sector, and business and industry to collect missing data, verify and update information on programs and services being offered, and identify gaps in services that could be addressed with resources available to the United Way of Kent County.

Based on a review of the preliminary findings, the United Way of Kent County narrowed the focus of the remaining work to the most critical unmet human service needs facing Kent County. Chesapeake Charities reviewed proven models and best practices for addressing these needs in communities with similar demographics and researched the efficacy of existing programs. In addition, local organizations were contacted to assess their interest in providing services or partnering with the United Way to develop solutions.

## Demographic Profile for Kent County

### A. Population

Kent County has experienced minimal growth in population over the past 16 years. According to the 2000 U.S. Census the total population of Kent County was 19,197 (47.9% male and 52.1% female). The 2012-2016 American Community 5-Year Estimates places the total population at 19,819 (48.4% male and 51.6% female).

### B. Race and Ethnicity

While total population numbers have remained stagnant, the race and ethnicity mix has changed. There has been a decline in the Black or African American population, a subsequent increase in the White population and a marked increase in the Hispanic population with a total of 870 persons of Hispanic origin.

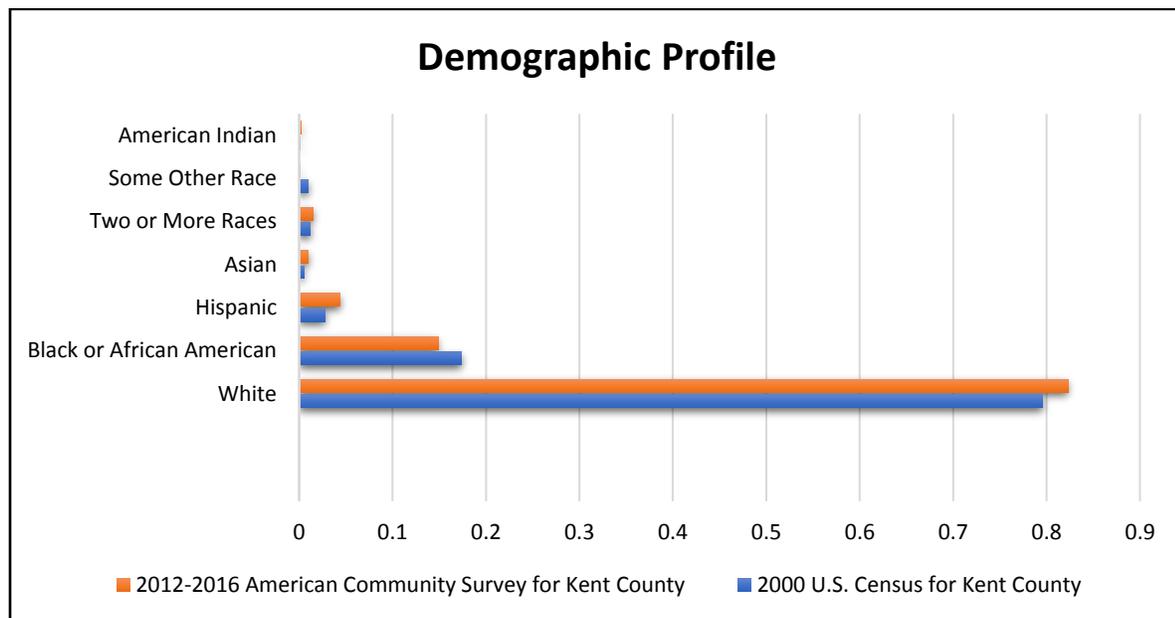


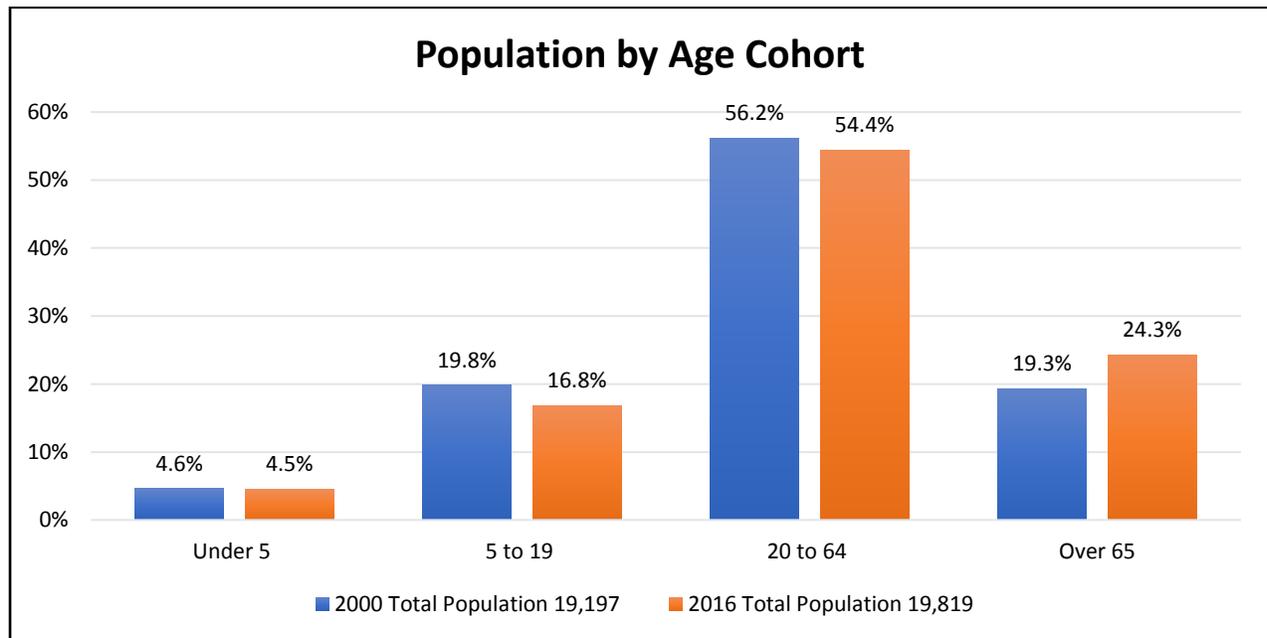
Figure 1

### C. Age Cohort

In addition to a change in the race/ethnicity mix for Kent County, a shift has occurred in the distribution of the population within age brackets. The median age in Kent County is currently 46.5 years. As can be seen in the graph below, individuals in Kent County over 65 years of age increased from 19.3% of the total population in 2000 to 24.3% of the population in 2016. This increase reflects an additional 1,106 individuals 65 years of age and over in 2016. This

proportion of elderly is much higher than the State of Maryland average of 13.8% of the population over 65 years of age. Kent County’s aging population is currently positioned to place increasing demands on the local healthcare system. Unfortunately, local services are limited due to the shortage of health professionals and specialists available in this rural region.

There has also been a 3% decline in the percentage of school-age children which represents a decrease of 487 individuals. Tracking the changing dynamics of age cohorts is useful data for planning the potential level and scope of services that may be needed within a local community.



**Figure 2 - 2000 US Census and 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates**

*With an elderly population of 24.3%,  
the need for healthcare services in Kent County is high.*

**D. Household Composition**

Thirty-four percent of the children under 18 years of age live in a household headed by a single parent (Robert Wood Johnson’s 2017 County Health Rankings). In 2016, grandparents were responsible for the basic needs of their grandchildren in 14% of all households with children under 18 (2016 Kids Count Data Center).

The size of the average household in Kent County in 2000 was 2.29 persons, compared to 2.61 for the State of Maryland (2010 U.S. Census). Projections from the Maryland Department of

Planning indicate that the average household size in Kent County will remain fairly stable through 2025 with a range of 2.3 to 2.29 persons.

## **E. Health**

In overall health outcomes Kent County measured in the worst quartile rankings – 18 out of 24 - of all jurisdictions in Maryland (Robert Wood Johnson’s 2017 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps). Twenty-eight percent of adults in the County report a BMI of 30 or more and are considered obese, 14% report that they are in poor health, and 23% report no physical activity during leisure time.

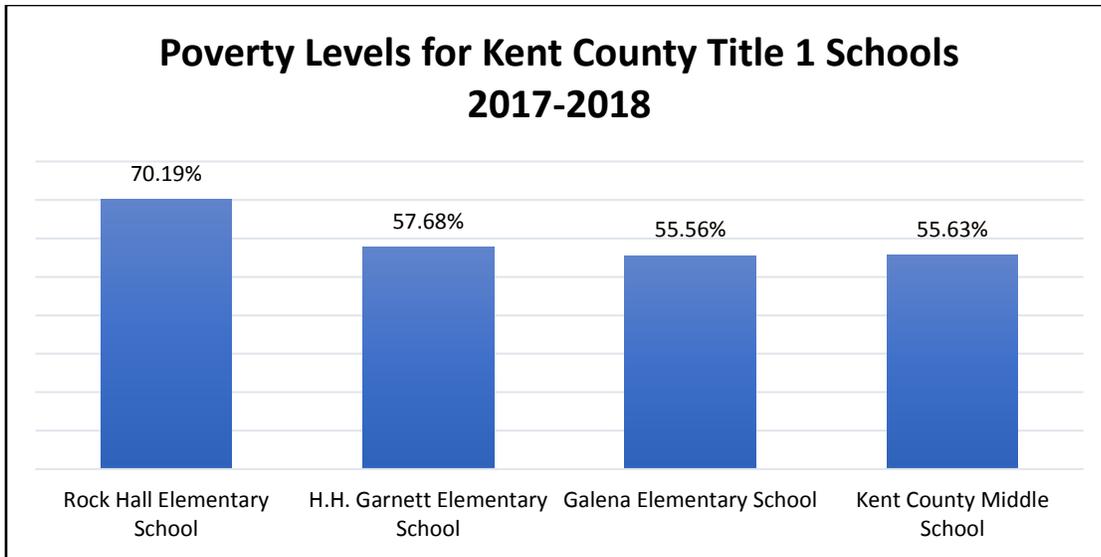
Ten percent of the population under 65 years of age has no health insurance. Medicaid enrollment data from Kent County Department of Health (November 2017) indicates that 3,115 adults – 22% of the adult population -- are enrolled in Medicaid. The 2016 Medicare enrollment for Kent County for hospital and/or medical coverage is 6,229 adults (CMS.gov – Medicare Enrollment Dashboard). This Medicare number is larger than Kent County’s 65 years of age and over population. However, an individual can be eligible for Medicare regardless of their age if they qualify for Social Security disability benefits.

Kent County has a lower ratio of physicians to population in primary, mental and dental health than the state average (Robert Wood Johnson’s 2017 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps).

## **F. Education**

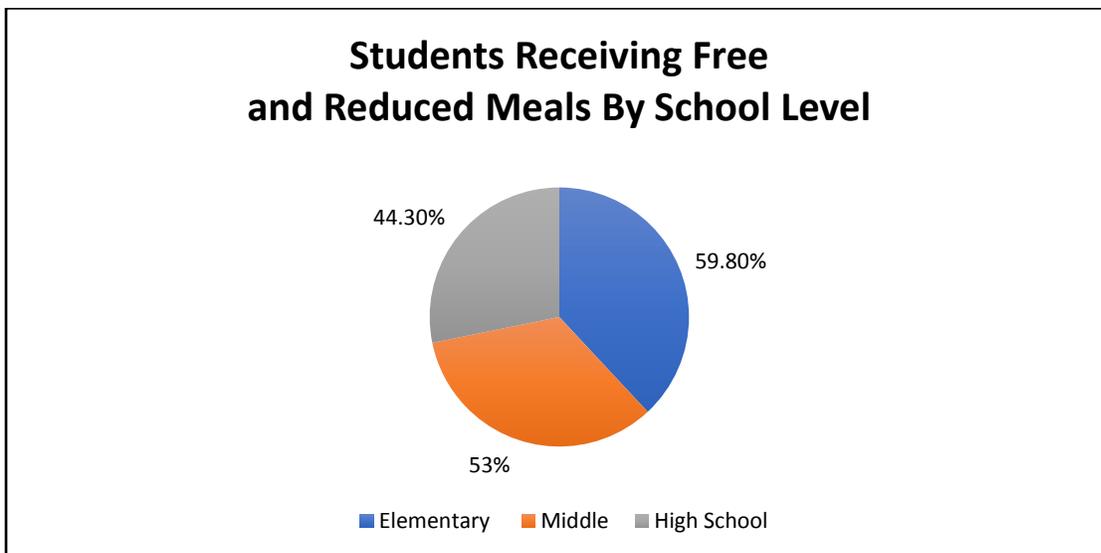
Public school enrollment for 2016 for Kent County was 1,891 students (Maryland State Department of Education). This is the lowest public school enrollment of any jurisdiction in Maryland. The current projections from the Maryland Department of Planning for 2017-2026 predict a 1.6% decline in Kent County public school enrollment in the coming decade.

All three elementary schools and the middle school in Kent County are designated as Title 1 schools for 2017-2018 (MSDE website). Eligibility for Title 1 funds are defined as schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40 percent of enrollment. The schools listed below are eligible to use Title I funds for schoolwide programs that serve all children in the school.



**Figure 3** Maryland State Department of Education

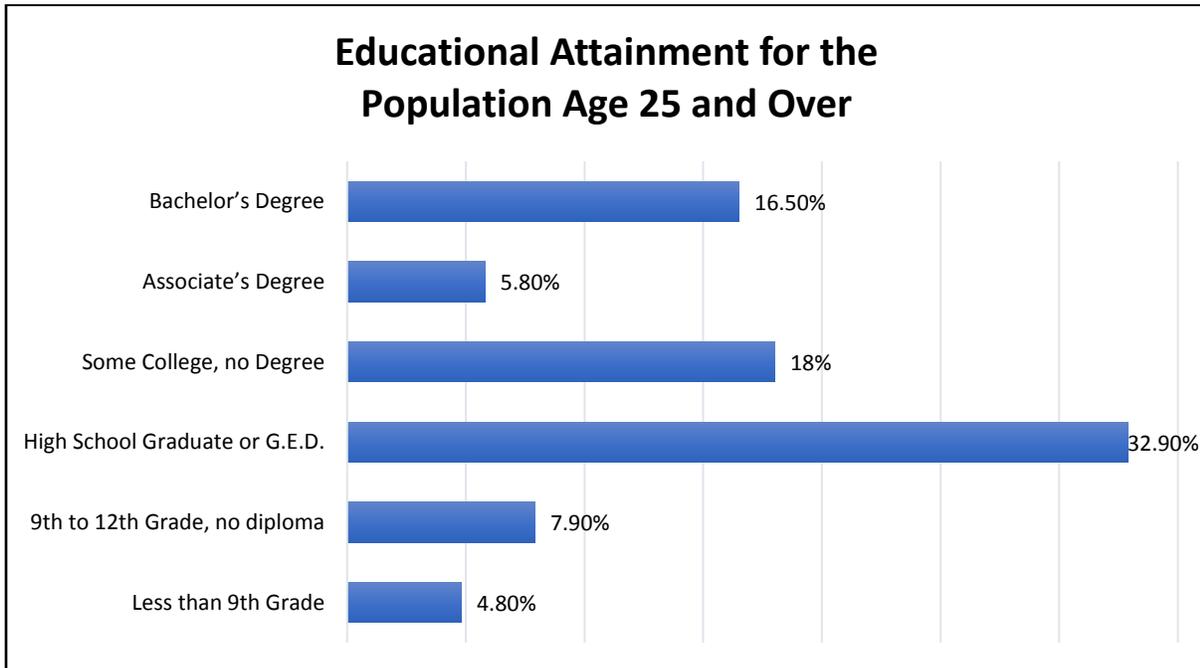
The majority of students in Kent County Public Schools also qualify for free and reduced meals. Eligibility is based on the 2017 Federal income poverty guidelines of 130% of the poverty level for free and 185% of the poverty level for reduced meals. The 2017 Federal income poverty level for a household of three is \$20,400.



**Figure 4** 2017 Maryland Report Card – Maryland State Department of Education

The latest data for Kent County indicates that the graduation rate for the class of 2016 is 88.57% which is slightly higher than the state average of 87.61% (MSDE 2017 Maryland Report Card). The dropout rate for Kent County’s class of 2016 is 10% (14 out of 140 students).

87.2% of Kent County adults are high school graduates or higher. A breakout of educational attainment levels for the adult population is presented in Figure 5.



**Figure 5** 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates of Percent by Population

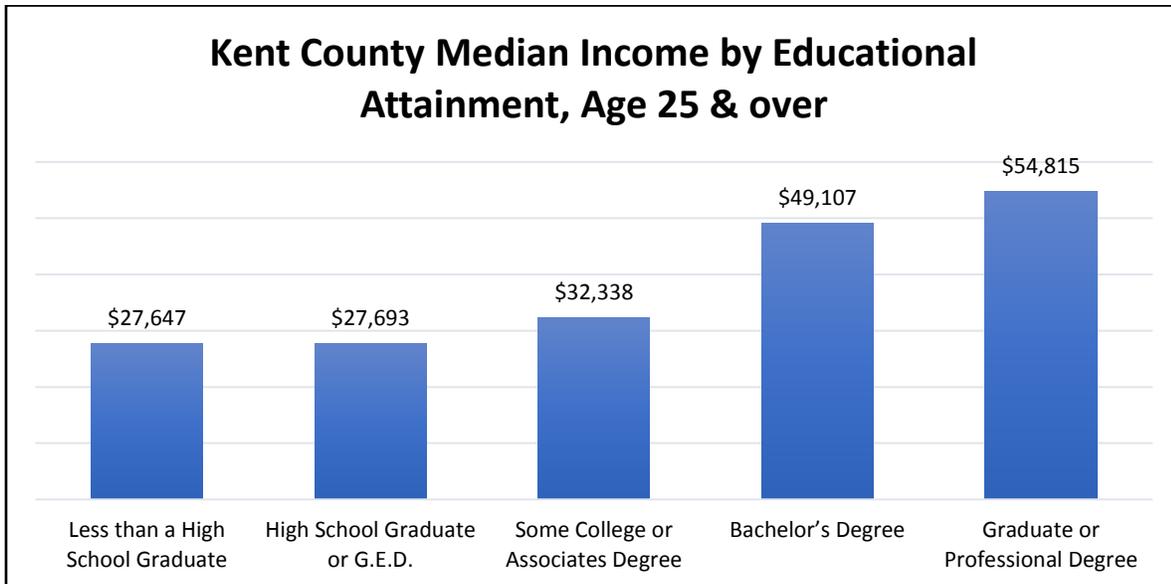
### G. Financial Stability

As of November 2017, the unemployment rate for Kent County was 4.2% which is slightly higher than the State of Maryland's 4.0% (Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, Local Area Unemployment Statistics). The Kent County labor force has remained relatively stable with 9,936 in the labor force for November 2016 and 10,051 in the labor force for November 2017. The median household income for Kent County is \$55,028.

Maryland Department of Commerce's Brief Economic Facts for Kent County indicates that the five largest employers in Kent County are: Washington College, University of Maryland Shore Regional Health, Dixon Valve and Coupling, LaMotte Company and David A. Bramble, Inc. The fact sheet also states that 86.6% of the employment opportunities in Kent County are in the private sector and that 31.5% of the residents commute outside of the county for work.

*At \$55,028, the median household income for Kent County is much lower than the State of Maryland median household income of \$76,067.*

The median income by educational attainment from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates listed in the chart below confirms the connection between higher educational attainment and a higher income level.



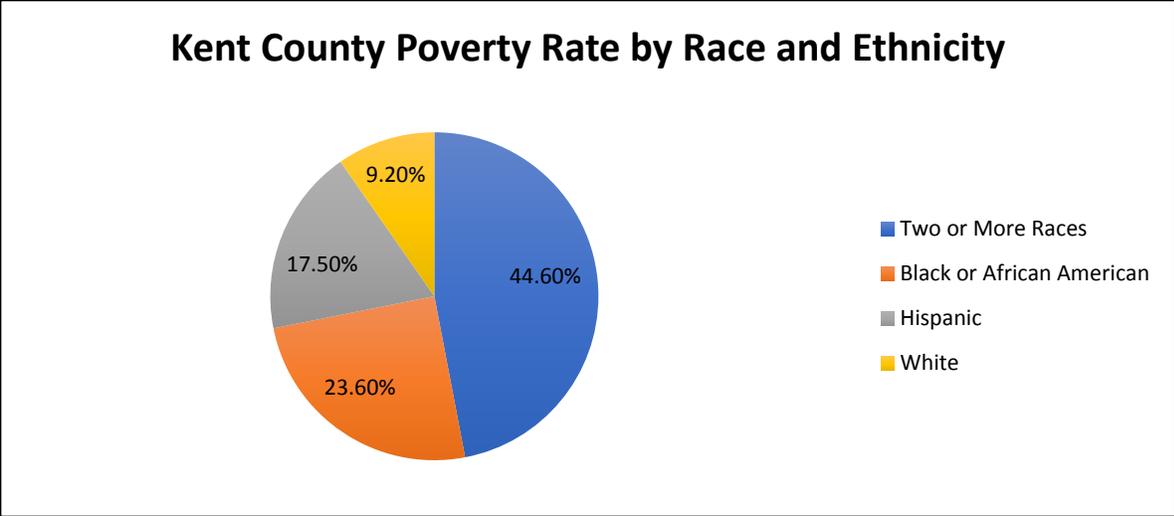
**Figure 6** 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

In 2015, 71.9% of the housing units in Kent County were occupied by their owner. This percentage declined from the previous year's rate of 72.3%. The median gross monthly rent in Kent County is \$894. Fifty-seven percent of renters pay 30% or more of their gross income for housing.

The overall poverty rate for Kent County is 12% vs. 9.9% for Maryland (2012-2016 American Community Survey). There are large differences in poverty levels based on age.

***26.4% of children under 5 years of age are living in poverty in Kent County. The adult age group with the highest level of poverty is adults 18-34 years of age at 22.1%.***

There are also large disparities in the poverty level of minorities vs. whites as indicated in Figure 7 on the next page (2012-2016 American Community Survey).



**Figure 7** 2012-2016 American Community Survey

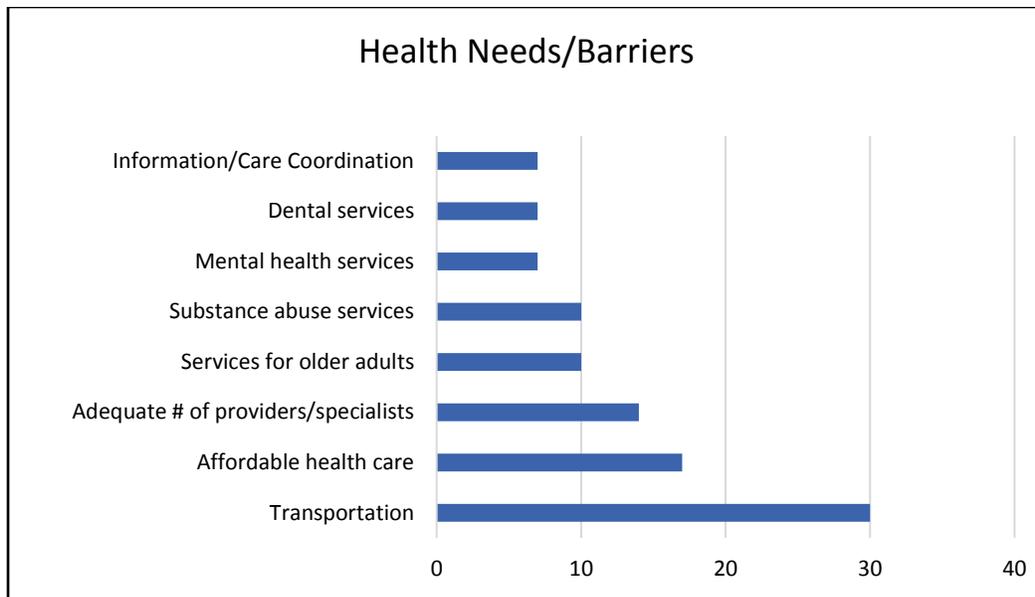
**Secondary Data Analysis**

An extensive review of local secondary sources was conducted to determine key findings and identify strengths, gaps, opportunities, and challenges noted by other researchers, local service providers, and community stakeholders. While there was considerable overlap in the needs identified, study results and interview responses were categorized by areas of focus: health, education, and financial stability.

**A. Health Sector – Assets and Challenges**

Substance abuse, obesity, diabetes, heart disease and mental health are the most prevalent medical conditions facing local residents, but the absence of public transportation was cited in interviews with local professionals more often than any other barrier to healthcare in Kent County. This same conclusion was drawn from existing community needs assessments of health programs and services in Kent County which identified the lack of a comprehensive public transportation system as a priority area that is negatively impacting access to health care services across all ages.

Other factors impacting health status include low household income, a shortage of qualified practitioners and specialists, aging of the population, lifestyle choices including drug, alcohol and tobacco use, limited access to mental health and dental services, and a lack of information on available resources. The assessments also point to the need for an increase in older adult services to address the growing population 60 years of age and older in Kent County. Figure 8 contains a summary of the unmet needs most frequently cited in the reports, surveys and interviews conducted in Kent County.



**Figure 8** Summary of Survey and Interview Responses

### **Top Four Concerns for the Health Sector**

- Difficulty accessing local health services due to limited public transportation
- Affordable health care
- Adequate number of providers/specialists
- Adequate services for older adults

### **Community Factors Affecting the Health Sector**

- Regional system for public transportation that has limited and set routes
- Low household income
- Health Professional Shortage Area
- Growth in the Kent County population 65 years of age and over

### **Potential Strategies for Impacting the Health Sector**

- Full transportation study to detail current service level and unmet needs
- Pursue increased transportation funding at the local, regional and state level
- Increase awareness of existing subsidies for health care across the age spans
- Increase funding to address the needs of low-income seniors
- Support efforts to maintain the local hospital and work with the Eastern Shore Area Health Education Center to attract more healthcare providers to the area
- Develop a comprehensive database of available services and supports

Results from interviews conducted with local professionals confirm that the community has many assets which contribute to the overall health of the population. The Community Food Pantry was mentioned as one of the most important programs for county residents. In fact, food insecurity did not register as a major concern for most of the individuals queried because of the widespread belief that the Community Food Pantry is doing an excellent job addressing local needs.

Substance abuse prevention services in Kent County have expanded significantly in an effort to keep pace with the growing need and additional detox beds were added at the A.F. Whitsitt Center. The current gaps in service are the shortage of long-term residential facilities for those who have completed treatment and funding to assist clients transitioning to self-sufficiency. Recovery in Motion was mentioned as one of the programs providing exemplary service in this area.

Other recommendations from community needs assessments include the need to coordinate existing health services and to address the lack of medical specialists serving rural counties. Community health outreach education, coordinating care with the Health Department, satellite offices, Parks and Recreation programming, employee wellness programs and an increase in detox beds were cited as efforts that have improved health outcomes.

The following chart summarizes the community assets which were identified through the interview process and the opportunities that were noted to improve health outcomes. A summary of the findings of health-related surveys and assessments reviewed for this report is included in Appendix B.

<b>Health Areas of Need</b>	<b>Community Assets Identified</b>	<b>Gaps/Opportunities</b>
Transportation	Delmarva Community Services Community One Stop Kent County Medical Adult Day Care Kent County Health Department HomePorts Key Lime Taxi	Convenient, affordable public transportation  More vans/drivers for medical appointments, groceries  Services for those who are not “medical assistance eligible”  After hours transport  Sufficient funding for agencies to purchase rides for those unable to pay

Health Areas of Need	Community Assets Identified	Gaps/Opportunities
Services for Older Adults	Adult Medical Day Care* Upper Shore Aging Kent County Health Department Amy Lynn Ferris Adult Activity Center Rebuilding Together Kent County  * Has additional capacity to serve adults in need of medical day care	Funding for prescription medication and utilities for low-income older adults  Home visits for safety and medication management  Transportation (more drivers and vans)
Substance Abuse – Prevention, Education, Family Support, and Treatment	Kent County Behavioral Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AF Whitsitt Residential</li> <li>• Prevention and Peer Support</li> </ul> Recovery in Motion Community Behavioral Health Corsica River Eastern Shore Psychological Services Healthy Connections  Adolescent Substance Abuse Coalition Local Drug and Alcohol Abuse Council	Halfway houses for men and for women with children  Aftercare funding for individuals who have completed treatment  Multi-generational approaches  Community-wide education on identifying addiction and need for treatment
Adequate # of Providers and Specialists	Save the Hospital  Area Health Education Center (AHEC)	Maintain services in Chestertown  Recruit more providers
Dental Services	Kent County Department of Health (provides dental services for children)	Shortage of dentists – none accept Medicaid patients  Medicare does not include dental and many elderly and low income or disabled adults cannot afford treatment
Mental Health Services	Kent County Behavioral Health Community Behavioral Health Corsica River Mental Health Services Eastern Shore Psychological Services For All Seasons	Residential Treatment  Medication Management
Information Referral and Care Coordination	Kent County Health Department Department of Social Services United Way of Kent County	Expand 2-1-1 Database and promote the availability of this one-stop resource

## **B. Education Sector – Assets and Challenges**

For the 2017-2018 school year, Kent County kindergarteners outperformed their peers on the Maryland Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), achieving the #1 ranking in the State. This achievement is the result of Kent County Public School's commitment to equitable access to full-day Pre-Kindergarten for all 4-year old children residing within the County.

The challenge will be for these students to maintain the gains they have achieved as they matriculate through the system. Since more than half of all students enrolled in the public school system in Kent County are from families living at or below the poverty level, research suggests they will need additional support to continue on the path to academic success. Evidence-based academic and enrichment programs like Horizons of Kent and Queen Anne's County will be an important factor in preventing summer learning loss for low-income students.

Similar programs for middle school-age youth, like the Summer Youth Development and Learning Academy at Washington College, should be considered. Engaging youth in structured out of school time activities led by caring adults will produce benefits for the individual, the family, and the community. Character Counts! Kent County was cited an exemplary program that connects students in the schools with caring community members.

The United Way of Kent County should carefully consider maintaining its investments in education as these dollars have the potential to yield the greatest returns.

### **Top Four Concerns for the Education Sector**

- Limited learning opportunities for children and youth outside of school hours
- Youth lack the soft skills needed to enhance employability
- Scarcity of positive role models for low income youth
- Sustaining existing education programs that are effective

### **Community Factors Affecting Additional Educational Opportunities**

- Limited low cost and no cost activities for children and youth after school
- Transportation issues to access existing child and youth activities
- Disconnection of opportunity youth to the value of learning

### **Potential Strategies for Impacting Educational Opportunities**

- Partner current after school programs provided by the Department of Parks and Recreation with volunteer tutors available through Kent County Learning Center
- Expand after school and summer programming for middle school age youth
- Engage employers in promoting the importance of soft skills training
- Promote existing public library programs that enhance learning
- Expand mentoring programs to serve at-risk youth

<b>Education Areas of Need</b>	<b>Community Assets Identified</b>	<b>Gaps/Opportunities</b>
Summer Learning Opportunities	Horizons of Kent & Queen Anne’s County Echo Hill Outdoor School Playmakers Camp RHYC Sailing School Girl Scouts STEAM program	Summer Youth Development and Leadership Academy at Washington College for middle school students
Community Activities for Children & Families	Kent County Dept. of Parks & Rec. Kent County Community Center KidSPOT Boy Scouts Delmarva Council Girl Scouts of the Chesapeake Council Kent Association of Riding Therapy Fiddlesticks! Youth Orchestra	Transportation to the Community Center in Worton  Revive “block party” activities for local communities
Public Awareness of Resources and Greater Accessibility	Kent County Public Library United Way of Kent County	Expand public awareness of 2-1-1 resource and increase number of service providers who are registered with 2-1-1
Student Awareness of Career Opportunities	SkillsUSA at Kent County High School	Provide vocational training and internships with local employers Include “soft skills” training
Apprenticeship Training Programs	Dixon Valve & Coupling METS Guild of Chestertown	Work with local employers willing to provide on-the-job training for youth, underemployed and unemployed adults
Parenting Education and Support for Students	Kent Family Center Kent County Public Library Kent County Learning Center	Increase parent engagement in their child’s education  Expand training opportunities for parents
Positive Role Models for Youth	Character Counts! Kent County Kent County 4-H Youth Development Bayside HOYAS Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Eastern Shore	Provide mentors for students
Racism	Local Management Board Minority Outreach & Technical Assistance KCPS Multicultural Committee	Improve race relations

### **C. Financial Stability – Assets and Challenges**

The United Way ALICE Project data paints a picture of the everyday struggle to provide the daily necessities for many households in Kent County. With the cost of living higher than what most people earn, ALICE families - an acronym for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed - have income above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), but not high enough to afford a basic household budget that includes housing, child care, food, transportation, and health care.

While the Federal poverty level reports that only 9% of Kent County households face financial hardship, an additional 31% qualify as ALICE. When ALICE households cannot make ends meet, they are forced to make difficult choices such as foregoing health care, accredited child care, healthy food, or car insurance. These “savings” threaten their health, safety, and future – and have high costs for both ALICE families and the community.

The good news is Kent County has an increasing supply of living wage jobs and employers committed to community development. Youth, parents, educators, community partners and potential service providers of training programs should be made aware of the current occupational breakout of the civilian labor force in Kent County. Education and training programs should be designed to equip the future work force and the currently underemployed or unemployed with the skill sets required for current employment opportunities and upcoming business expansions.

One of the goals of the Kent County Comprehensive draft plan is to develop an educated workforce with skills and training required to support current and future Kent County employees. If a concerted effort is made to pool community resources and the leadership exists to pursue this in earnest, real progress can be made in connecting disconnected youth and underemployed adults to viable careers.

Recent focus groups conducted in Kent County indicate the need for affordable childcare and extended hour day care facilities. With the closing of the only facility providing early a.m., late p.m., and Saturday child care, parents employed in fields such as health care have difficulty finding child care when they are scheduled to work irregular hours.

In a recent survey conducted on behalf of the Maryland Rural Development Corporation, respondents rated affordable housing, affordable childcare, and employment options among the top needs for Kent County. Obstacles and barriers cited were the lack of information about resources, the lack of access to public transportation, and the lack of reasonably priced rental units.

**Top Four Concerns for the Financial Stability Sector**

- Multigenerational poverty
- Educated workforce with the skills to fill available full-time jobs
- Transportation to jobs
- Affordable childcare

**Community Factors Affecting Financial Stability**

- Low wages for individuals with limited education
- Current skill levels of the unemployed or underemployed do not match available job opportunities
- Quality childcare consumes a large portion of a family’s or individual’s budget
- Limited transportation impacts ability to get and keep a job

**Potential Strategies for Impacting Financial Stability**

- Pursue multigenerational approach to breaking the cycle of poverty
- Bring educational opportunities and skills training to Kent County
- Pursue partnerships with local employers to increase apprenticeship opportunities
- Provide reliable transportation to and from work

<b>Financial Stability Areas of Need</b>	<b>Community Assets Identified</b>	<b>Gaps/Opportunities</b>
Multigenerational Poverty	Local Management Board <i>Bridges out of Poverty and Getting Ahead in a Just Getting By World</i>  Kent Family Center  Healthy Families Mid-Shore Home Visiting	Co-located quality childcare and skills training for parents to enable them to secure better jobs  Transportation to services  Academic and enrichment programs for children  Assistance for grandparents raising their grandchildren
Skills Training for Adults	Kent County Career Center American Job Center Department of Social Services Upper Shore Workforce Investment Brd Chesapeake College	Skills training for adults and youth ages 18-34  Apprenticeships like those to be offered by Dixon Valve

<b>Financial Stability Areas of Need</b>	<b>Community Assets Identified</b>	<b>Gaps/Opportunities</b>
Transportation	Delmarva Community Services Community One Stop Kent County Medical Adult Day Care Kent County Health Department HomePorts Key Lime Taxi	Convenient, affordable public transportation  Van pools from low-income housing to job sites  After hours transport  Sufficient funding for agencies to purchase rides for those unable to pay
Affordable Childcare	Kent Family Center Chesapeake Childcare Resource Center Department of Social Services	Income-based vouchers  After hours and weekend options for working parents
Information Referral	Kent County Public Library United Way of Kent County	Expand public awareness of 2-1-1 resource and increase number of service providers who are registered with 2-1-1  Central database for service providers
Affordable Housing	Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development MRDC, Housing Services Kent County Commissioners	Income adjusted rental units for the elderly, disabled adults and low-income adults and families
Developmentally Disabled Adults	Kent County Health Department United Needs & Abilities Low Intensity Support Services funding The Kent Center	Flexible funding for those able to live independently (utilities, security deposit, household expenses, emergencies)  Support for those who do not receive LISS funding  Dental care  Affordable housing  Transportation to jobs and other services

<b>Financial Stability Areas of Need</b>	<b>Community Assets Identified</b>	<b>Gaps/Opportunities</b>
Family Support	Family Support Center Local Management Board Chesapeake Child Care Resource Center	Affordable child care: after hours and on weekends  Behavioral health services (substance abuse, mental health and unintended pregnancies)  Transportation  Food insecurity Connection to services  Equip parents with the skills to raise healthy children
Homelessness Prevention	Samaritan Group  Salvation Army  Saint Martin's Ministries  Good Neighbor Fund  Department of Social Services  United Way of Kent County  American Red Cross (disaster or fire)	Affordable housing (Section 8 housing is too expensive for this population)  Transportation to services  Temporary housing for families with children  Intensive support services for the chronically homeless  Residential treatment for the mentally ill
Opportunity Youth	Reconnect for Life (MRDC) Local Management Board	Skills training  Apprenticeship programs

## Key Findings

Based on this needs assessment, the United Way of Kent County and community stakeholders identified the most critical unmet human service needs facing Kent County:

- Affordable, accessible transportation for all age groups throughout the County. The lack of widely available public transportation options has a negative impact on access to work, medical services, grocery shopping, and recreational opportunities.
- Cohesive services that address multi-generational poverty by providing high quality early education opportunities for children and help parents and caregivers acquire the education and skills training they need to secure a better job and offer a more economically stable environment for the children in their care.
- Adequate resources for seniors 60 years of age and over including financial assistance for low-income seniors, connection to programs and services, and access to providers.
- Public awareness of resources and greater accessibility of information.

Other areas of need include:

- Affordable activities/programs for youth outside of formal public school hours including day-care and licensed supervision of children aged 0-5 years, after school activities for school aged youth, and services for transitioning youth.
- Food security, particularly for teen-aged youth.
- Substance abuse – prevention, education, family support and treatment.
- Education and training programs to equip unemployed with skills for available jobs, including vocational training and apprenticeship programs.

Key demographic concerns:

- Stagnant population growth with an increasing proportion of elderly residents
- Half of all students in the public school system live at or below the poverty level
- Nearly one-quarter (22.1%) of the adult population age 18 to 34 is living in poverty
- One-third of the adult population 25 years of age and older has no formal education beyond a high school degree or G.E.D.
- A shortage of health care professionals in primary, mental, and dental health

Unique community strengths:

- Manufacturing jobs that offer a reliable income, plus benefits and a path to a career.
- Educated, highly skilled retirees willing to volunteer their time.
- Generational attachment to the community.
- Improved collaboration between agency staff and service providers.
- Strong business leaders committed to community development.

## Recommended Solutions

### 1. Transportation

Today, more than ever, public transportation plays a fundamental role in providing essential access to economic empowerment opportunities for rural residents. Without access to a personal vehicle or reliable transportation, Kent County residents are unable to fully participate in the economic and social activities of the community. For many, the services and programs they need are far away and this is becoming increasingly true for medical services which are being consolidated and moved out of the County. Seniors who lack family or close friends can be cut off from basic necessities, like getting to medical appointments and errand-running to the bank, post office, or pharmacy. Students interested in a furthering their education or securing credentials for employment lack the means to access these services. Employees have a difficult time commuting to and from work.

Transportation was cited as the leading barrier to accessing health care by both consumers and providers of services in Kent County. Medical transportation that is available has several limitations for use. First, this service is often limited to those who qualify for medical assistance programs and can only be used by the consumer or, in the case of youth, by the consumer and one parent or guardian. Second, appointments often must be made 48 hours in advance, thus eliminating usage for acute care appointments. Finally, the hours of operation tend to be limited, causing pickup to be early morning hours for midday appointments, regardless of office location.

Delmarva Community Services provides fixed and deviated route bus transportation for the general public, but its service hours and stops are limited and regular same day return service to outlying areas is only provided with 24-hour advance notice. Other public transportation, including taxis, car share services, and independent transportation professionals, is limited or non-existent.

In reviewing a number of successful rural transportation models which should be explored to address this fundamental need, Chesapeake Charities contacted the Community Transportation Association (CTA) in Washington, DC. CTA administers the Rural Passenger Transportation Technical Assistance Program to help rural communities enhance economic growth and development by improving passenger transportation services and facilities. The United Way of Kent County is eligible to apply for Short Term Technical Assistance from CTA which would include a site visit of one to four days by CTA transportation specialists, and subsequent follow-up work to develop a recommendation on improving the community transportation system. There is no cost for these services, but recipients should be prepared to provide in-kind support for the project. Attached to this report is the Application for Short Term Technical Assistance.

As the provider of public transportation services for Kent County, Delmarva Community Transit should be the first partner approached to participate in efforts to enhance Kent County's transit services. Representatives from the local government, key players responsible for coordinating private transportation systems, and area non-profits will bring valuable insight to the planning process. At a minimum, the following individuals should be asked to participate: Santo Grande, Delmarva Community Services; Shelley Heller, County Administrator; Muriel Cole, Co-Chair, Kent County Commission on Aging; Karen Wright, HomePorts; Mandy Arnold, Partners in Care; and the directors of transportation services for Chestertown Hospital, Chester River Manor, Autumn Lake Nursing Center, Heron Point, Kent Center and Washington College.

## **2. Multigenerational Approach to Alleviating Poverty**

Research shows that a child raised in poverty is more likely to become an adult living in poverty – less likely to graduate from high school or remain consistently employed.<sup>1</sup> The long-term effects of childhood poverty on the individual, the family, and the community are striking: forty-two percent of children born to parents at the bottom of the income ladder stay there.<sup>2</sup>

Recognizing this connection between child and family well-being and future success, those in the public and non-profit sectors are exploring ways to address the needs of families as a whole. This multigeneration approach aims to create opportunities for families by simultaneously equipping parents and children with the tools they need to thrive while removing the obstacles in their way.

A key component of this model involves providing educational resources to adults and children, which can help a parent or caregiver offer a more economically stable environment for the child. Services for children often aim to improve school readiness, while services for adults target economic assets such as job readiness, housing, and health and well-being. Participants build social capital through participation in the community and social networks and by making connections with family, friends, and neighbors.

A multigeneration approach to coordinate services that assist the entire family could be particularly helpful in Kent County, given the long distances people must travel to reach any assistance, limited transportation options, and the limited capacity of many service agencies.

1. Ratcliffe, C., & McKeran, S.M. (2012, September ). *Child poverty and its lasting consequence* (Low Income Working Families Paper No. 21). Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

2. Isaacs, J.B. (2008, February). Economic mobility of families across generations. In J.B. Isaacs, I. V. Sawhill, & R. Haskins, *Getting ahead or losing ground: Economic mobility in America* (pp. 15-26). Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, in its policy report, *Creating opportunity for families, a two-generation approach*, recommends bringing together programs for children and adults with an intentional, coordinated approach. The three key components of this strategy are:

1. Provide parents with multiple pathways to get family-supporting jobs and achieve financial stability;
2. Ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and enriching elementary school experiences;
3. Equip parents to better support their children socially and emotionally and to advocate for their child's education.

Schools and early-education, home visiting and job training programs are some of the existing platforms that offer opportunities to factor in the needs of parents and children at the same time. Programs utilizing a multigeneration approach that are working in Kent County include Healthy Families Mid-Shore Home Visiting and The Kent Family Center.

Healthy Families Mid-Shore is an accredited, evidence-based parent support and early intervention home visiting program designed to help expectant and new parents get their children off to a healthy start and minimize risks of child maltreatment. The program serves low income families in Kent County who receive home visits and referrals from trained staff who offer strength-based, trusting, long-term partnerships with parents, from as early as the first trimester of pregnancy until the target child reaches age 5 or starts schools. In addition, the program teaches parents a research-based, interactive child development curriculum (Growing Great Kids – G GK), assesses and screens children for healthy development, provides referrals, monitors immunizations and early health care, and supports the development of family independence through goal setting and accomplishment.

The Kent Family Center provides programs for children from birth to age 3, adult education programs, employment training and jobs skills workshops in partnership with the American Job Center, parenting classes, health, fitness and nutrition classes, and workshops on budgeting, financial planning and career planning.

Since Kent County Public Schools provides full day universal pre-kindergarten programs for every four-year-old who resides in the county, funding for early childhood education should be focused on children from birth to age 4, and for enrichment programs for elementary, middle and high school youth.

### **3. Resources for Seniors**

The Kent County Commission on Aging reports that State-funded programs and services for local seniors are underfunded and the level of funding for Upper Shore Aging, which serves as

the Area Agency on Aging for Kent County, does not reflect the rapidly increasing need for senior services and programs that support healthy and safe aging. For example, there continues to be a waiting list for Upper Shore Aging's program called "Senior Home Care", which provides home help aides, reducing the demands on long-term care and, ultimately, the public resources that support those costs.

In addition, there are gaps in services for seniors who have income above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), but not high enough to afford a basic household budget that includes housing, food, transportation, and health care. As a consequence of not having sufficient disposable income for medical care and health insurance, some seniors stretch prescription medications for longer periods of time than directed, do not address their mental health needs, and ignore their oral health. The Program Counselor for Upper Shore Aging reports that many of the seniors she meets with choose to pay the mortgage and keep the heat on instead of refilling their prescriptions or purchasing dentures.

It is recommended that the United Way of Kent County consider these unmet needs and allocate some level of funding to support programs to assist low-income seniors in Kent County.

#### **4. Information and Referral: Dial 2-1-1 <http://www.211md.org/>**

2-1-1 Maryland is a partnership of four agencies working together to provide simple and easy access to health and human services information. The 2-1-1 Maryland Helpline provides individuals and families one easy-to-remember hot line for assistance and access to health and human services information. Call specialists answer calls 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

A recent on-line query of the 2-1-1 Maryland data base for service requests for Kent County from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2017 (2-year period) showed a total of 436 requests. For this two-year period, the top three requests were utilities assistance (288), mental health and addictions (46) and housing and shelter (33).

While some of the human services providers in Kent County are listed in the current 2-1-1 database, many are not. Chesapeake Charities requested a printout of all health and human service organizations listed for Kent County in the 2-1-1 Maryland data base. A total of 45 Kent County organizations and agencies are currently listed in the 2-1-1 system, but 14 of these listings are for programs within the Kent County Department of Social Services. This level of detail for the Department of Social Services is excellent, but it means there are only 32 other agencies/organizations listed for Kent County. While the United Way of Kent County is listed, only four of its member agencies are included in the 2-1-1 system.

To be effective, an information and referral line must contain a comprehensive list of all the health and human services available to Kent County residents. It would be beneficial for the United Way of Kent County to support an effort to update the 2-1-1 Maryland data base with all services available to Kent County residents and to put in place a process to review the list on an annual basis. Then, a publicity campaign to promote the availability of 2-1-1 to Kent County residents in need of assistance for health and human services programs would benefit both consumers and the agencies that provide services.

The 2-1-1 Maryland database should address on a timely basis the changing needs of all groups in its service area. In general, the following should be included:

- Nonprofit and critical for-profit organizations, individual practitioners and governmental agencies and officials providing health, social service, educational, library, employment, legal, recreational and other human services.
- Nonprofit organizations, such as religious groups, social clubs and community associations, that offer services to the community at large, not just their own members.
- Nonprofit self-help support groups (a "self-help group" is a voluntary gathering of people who share a similar problem, condition, or history). The group should charge no fees for services, although it may ask for donations to cover expenses for a meeting space.
- Nonprofit and critical for-profit, multi-state or national organizations not located in Maryland that provide health and human services to Maryland residents.
- Nonprofit organizations that advocate for human service programs and policies that support a healthful environment.
- Licensed hospitals, health clinics, personal care homes and home health agencies.

Service providers will find the 2-1-1 database useful for information and referral, needs assessments, and for evaluation. When all the local agencies are listed at 2-1-1, it will be possible to identify key services for clients, build partnerships for collaborative projects, and identify potential funding ideas.

### **Final Considerations**

Comprehensive community plans have the advantage of surveying larger segments of the local community, local service providers and key stakeholders. Looking across the human services continuum many needs have been identified and several priority areas are already being addressed by local service providers.

There is a sense of commitment among Kent County service providers, business leaders, educators, and local officials and a sizable number of concerned citizens who are dedicated to serving their local community. These factors help place the United Way of Kent County in the unique position of addressing the most critical unmet needs in Kent County and obtaining the support from community partners.

## APPENDIX A

**Acknowledgments: We would like to thank the following individuals for providing information included in this study.**

Joshua Pederson	2-1-1 Maryland
Leanne Marvel	American Job Center
Charles Rutkowski	Community Transportation Assoc. of America
Connie Barrett & Mary Hanley	Delmarva Community One-Stop
Jerome Stanley	Delmarva Community Transit
Susan Haddox	Early Childhood Dev. Center, Chesapeake College
Nicole Chase-Powell	Healthy Families Mid-Shore
Karen Wright	HomePorts
Bob Parks & Connie Schroth	Horizons of Kent & Queen Anne's
Dawn VanGrin	Judy Center Partnership
Rachel Goss	Kent County Behavioral Health
Loretta Lodge	Kent County Chamber of Commerce
Muriel Cole	Kent County Commission on Aging
Shelly Neal-Edwards	Kent County Department of Social Services
Jamie Williams	Kent County Economic Development
Shayna Germann	Kent County Health Department
Myra Butler	Kent County Parks and Recreation
Amy Moredock	Kent County Planning, Housing and Zoning
Ken Collins	Kent County Public Schools
Lisa Mazingo	Kent Family Center
Elizabeth Healy	KidSPOT
Jen Moore	Local Management Board, Kent County
Judy Gaston	Maryland Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene
Stephen Higgs	Maryland Rural Development Corporation
Mandy Arnold & Pam O'Brien	Partners in Care
Brenna Fox	Recovery In Motion
Linda Pangalos	Saint Martin's Ministries
John Ames & Dora Best	Samaritan Group
Kelley Callaghan	Soul Candy Media
Michael Dyer	United Needs and Abilities
Gary Gunther & Maela Rider	Upper Shore Aging
Karen Dionisio	Women in Need

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Summary of Secondary Data Sources**

The following is a summary of secondary data sources reviewed for this study.

#### **Health-Related Assessments**

##### ***2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan***

The Maryland Rural Health Association (MHRA) conducted two focus groups in each of Maryland's rural counties. One focus group was for health care consumers and the second focus group consisted of providers of health care. With access to health care as the overriding concern across all rural counties, the Kent County focus groups provided the following feedback and suggestions:

*Health care consumers* said that barriers and service gaps included: transportation, patient advocacy and health insurance costs and networks. They indicated that community health outreach education, Parks and Recreation and employee wellness programs are working to address the health needs in the county. Consumer solutions included the need for a free clinic, venues for women's health and a health center in each county.

*Health providers* said that barriers and service gaps included a lack of public transportation, the need for low cost community health services and a lack of specialists. They indicated that coordinating care with the health department, an increase in detox beds and satellite offices work to address the health needs in Kent County. Provider solutions included: care coordination, more specialists and an increase in older adult services.

The 2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan acknowledges that transportation to and from health care facilities is an issue throughout rural Maryland including all of Kent County. The plan cites the lack of comprehensive public transportation, taxis, buses, car share services, and independent transportation professionals and notes its impact on accessing health care services.

##### ***University of Maryland Shore Regional Health: Community Health Needs Assessment & Implementation Plan FY2017-FY2019***

The community's perspective was obtained through one widely-distributed survey offered to the public via several methods throughout the Mid-Shore. A six-item survey queried residents

to identify their top health concerns and their top barriers in accessing health care. The top five health concerns from the survey respondents were: drugs/tobacco/alcohol abuse, obesity, diabetes, heart problems and mental health. The top three barriers to accessing health care included the inability to afford care, lack of transportation and lack of specialists in the local area.

The University of Maryland Shore Regional Health Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Plan for FY2017-FY2019 identified core priorities for their organization which align with community needs including outreach and education to impact early childhood, efforts to reduce obesity and tobacco use and impact healthy living, strategies to increase the safety level in homes and trauma prevention and access to medical services in primary care, specialists care and behavioral health.

### **Maryland Behavioral Health Administration, Maryland Department of Health Prevention Program Annual Report**

The Maryland Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) is a state agency responsible for the provision, coordination, and regulation of the statewide network of substance abuse prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery services. BHA defines prevention as the promotion of constructive lifestyles and norms that discourage drug use. BHA has established a county prevention coordinator system to plan, deliver, coordinate, and monitor prevention services that meet the varying needs of each local subdivision.

The total number of individuals receiving prevention services in Kent County has grown significantly from 142 individuals in FY2015 to 3,164 individuals in FY2017. Approximately 46% of all those participating in prevention programs in FY2017 were adolescents.

3,135 of these services were universal prevention strategies that addressed the entire Kent County population with messages and programs aimed at preventing or delaying the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Twenty-nine of the services were indicated services designed to prevent the onset of substance abuse in individuals who were showing early danger signs of the onset of substance abuse.

### ***Local Addictions Authority: Kent County Strategic Plan FY2016-2018***

The Kent County Strategic Plan FY2016-2018 developed by the Kent County Local Addictions Authority outlines strategies and priorities for meeting the identified needs of the general public and the criminal justice system for alcohol and drug abuse evaluation, prevention and treatment.

Through October 2017, Kent County had 13 reported opioid overdoses and one death. In 2016, Kent County had 19 reported overdoses and five deaths. Some of the specific strategies to target the opioid crisis include case management, counseling, jail-based treatment and soliciting private providers to build the overall capacity of behavioral health care within the jurisdiction.

***Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: 2016 Primary Care Needs Assessment – Primary Care Office (PCO)***

The goal of the Primary Care Office Needs Assessment is to identify priority areas to promote access to care, especially for the underserved. The principal focus of the needs assessment is primary care services with a secondary focus on primary dental and mental health services. Using the Maryland’s State Health Improvement Process (SHIP) framework which includes 38 measures for clinical and non-clinical determinants for health, Kent County indicators for health measured in the worst quartile rankings of all the jurisdictions across the State.

Kent County is the only jurisdiction within Maryland that has 100 percent of its population residing in a Dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). In addition 100 percent of the population resides in a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). Data shows that there is a positive correlation between health care access and health status. This needs assessment emphasizes a need for an increased number of providers in areas where health care access is limited to improve health outcomes.

***Shore Regional Health FY16 Community Benefit Report***

According to the Shore Regional Health FY16 Community Benefit Report, there were 1,531 inpatient admissions to the University Medical Center at Chestertown. 64.8% of the patients were Medicare recipients, 9.8% were Medicaid recipients and .7% were uninsured patients. Almost 50% of the inpatient admissions were from the Chestertown zip code of 21620.

***Kent County Commission on Aging: Annual Report 2016***

The Kent County Commission on Aging 2016 Report indicated that the senior citizen population has consistently been rising, due to the fact that people are living longer. As the senior citizen population increases, federal funding remains constant or in some cases decreases. Dr. Memo Diriker of Salisbury University and his students examined the need for health care and housing options for an aging Eastern Shore senior citizen population. The Maryland Department of Planning ranks Worcester, Talbot, Kent, and Dorchester as the top four counties projected to increase in percentage of population over 65 by the year 2030. “We used to get sick and die,”

he says. “Now we get sick and live, get sick and live, get sick and live. The aging of the Eastern Shore is reaching truly crisis proportions,” he warns.

As we become older we are more likely to fall at home, become ill, or have some type of crisis. Many on the Eastern Shore are fairly isolated and live alone in their later years. Already the senior population far exceeds the number of school-age children.

Public services for seniors locally are the joint responsibility of the Health Department, the Department of Social Services, and the Area Agency on Aging, which for Kent County (as well as Caroline and Talbot Counties) is Upper Shore Aging, Inc. None are adequately funded, and none have a formal volunteer program.

### **Education-Related Assessments**

#### ***Child Care Demographics 2017 Kent County Report – Maryland Child Care Resource Network***

Based on 2010 U.S. Census data, 77.7% of the mothers in Kent County with children under 12 years of age are in the work force. Other than housing, child care is often the largest expenditure in the budget of young families with children. The Child Care Demographics 2017 Kent County Report indicates that for a Kent County family of four with an infant and a child under the age of 5, the average cost of full time child care is \$14,465 per year. For the median income Kent County family with a mortgage, this represents 21.8% of their income. For single head of household families, the percentage would be much higher. With the poverty level for children under 5 years of age at 26.4% (2012-2016 American Community Survey), affordable child care is a concern for low income Kent County residents.

#### ***School Readiness Report for 2016-2017 - Readiness Matters - Informing the Future, Maryland State Department of Education***

The Kent County Kindergarten Readiness Assessment indicated that 85.2% of the children entering kindergarten in Kent County attended Prekindergarten. The Kent County ethnicity/race breakout of children entering kindergarten in 2016-2017 school year was 51.4 % White, 27.4% Black/African American, 8.4% Hispanic/Latino and 12.7% two or more races.

Based on the 2016-2017 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) results, nearly half (43%) of all entering kindergarten children in Maryland displayed the foundational skills indicating they are fully ready for kindergarten. More than a third (38%) are approaching readiness. Kent County children scored higher than the Maryland average. For Kent County 54% displayed the foundational skills to be fully ready for kindergarten with 32% approaching readiness.

Composite scores for language/literacy, mathematics, social foundations and physical development indicated that 70% of White children were fully ready for kindergarten compared to 41% of Black/African American children, 8% of Hispanic children and 44% of children who are two or more races.

***Maryland Report Card: Kent County 2016 Progress Report***

Kent County students in grades 3-8 participated in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The rating for the PARCC is Level 1 through Level 5. Level 1 indicates a student did not meet expectations and Level 5 indicates a student exceeded expectations.

Kent County students scored higher than the state average for met expectations (Level 4) on the PARCC for both English/Language Arts and Mathematics. However, Kent County students had a higher percentage of students in the lowest category of “did not meet expectations” than the state average for English/Language Arts for Grades 3-8 and for Mathematics for Grade 3 & 4. In both English/Language Arts and Mathematics, there was a much higher percentage of African American and Hispanic students that did not meet expectations than white students.

***Kent County Public Schools Strategic Plan and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP):***

***Summary 8-17-17***

The Kent County Public Schools Strategic Plan and CIP Summary indicates that Kent County Middle School and Kent County High School will remain significantly underutilized until at least 2021 and probably beyond. This under-utilization affects the teaching program, school climate, and the operating budget. According to the conclusions listed in the summary, further consolidation and closure of facilities is needed to “right-size” the facility inventory.

The Strategic Plan also indicates that almost all components of Kent County schools are in need of upgrades to support the educational program. These include:

- Building systems: Lighting, windows, roofs, plumbing, HVAC, finishes, security, data.
- ADA Accessibility: While all of the schools are technically accessible, there remain multiple barriers that should be addressed.
- Selective interior renovations: Specific areas should be prioritized to align the learning environment with 21st century standards.

## **Financial Stability-Related Assessments**

### ***Maryland Department of Commerce: Brief Economic Facts Kent County, MD***

The 2012-2016 American Community Survey lists the median age for Kent County residents as 46.5 years of age. The median age for Kent County increased by 4.3 years from 2000 to 2010 (U.S. Census). This is the third largest increase in the State.

Approximately 31% of Kent County residents commute outside of the county to work. According to the Local Area Unemployment Statistics from the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, the November 2017 unemployment rate for Kent County was 4.2% which is .2% higher than the state average for that month.

With a total civilian labor force of 10,308 individuals the top four occupational categories for Kent County are:

1. Management, business science and arts with 3,229 employees
2. Service with 1,914 employees
3. Sales and office with 1,980 employees
4. Production, transportation and material moving with 888 employees

### ***Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Maryland Housing Beat Single Family Housing September 2017***

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development has programs to assist homebuyers, homeowners, and renters. The department offers mortgages and down payment assistance to families. They provide loans and grants for home repairs and energy efficiency improvements, as well as resources for those at risk for foreclosure. For renters, they provide an online apartment locator highlighting affordable units and access to programs for monthly rental subsidies.

The average rent in Kent County is \$894 a month. According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 40.4% of renters in Kent County pay 35% or more of their household income for rent.

As of September 2017, the median home sale price for Kent County was \$227,500 with a housing inventory of 268 homes available for purchase. From September 2016 to September 2017 there was a 22.6% decline in home sales. With a median household income of \$55, 028 and a median nonfamily household income of \$30,252, home ownership is out of reach for many families and individuals in Kent County.

### ***Maryland Rural Development Corporation's – Housing Needs Assessment 2017***

The Maryland Rural Development Corporation retained Maryland Nonprofits to conduct a Housing Needs Assessment to evaluate both community needs and efforts to address the availability and distribution of affordable housing in Caroline and Kent Counties. Nine local service providers/volunteers completed the Housing Needs Assessment Service Provider Survey.

A consistent theme among survey respondents was the lack of affordable housing available in Kent County and the need for adequate and reliable public transportation. The need for a centralized list of resources and help for those just over the poverty line were also mentioned.

While the housing resources in Kent County are limited, there also seems to be a gap in utilizing existing housing services. Recommendations from the survey include: hiring a low income housing coordinator; relocating existing housing services to a more accessible location, and exploring options to develop transitional housing for those with a drug or criminal charge who are not eligible for Section 8 housing.

### ***Upper Eastern Shore Comprehensive Economic Developed Strategy 2017-2022 Draft Overview***

The Kent County Comprehensive Plan is currently in draft for the 2016 update. Goals for the Kent County Comprehensive Plan include: support existing businesses; expand and provide more diversity in size, number and type of business; develop an educated workforce with skills and training required to support current and future Kent County employees; develop diverse retail opportunities that provide wide availability of goods and services with competitive selections and prices; maintain and strengthen natural resources working land based industries; enhance and expand locally based tourism that is rooted in unique natural, cultural, and historic features and quality of life of Kent County. (Earth Data, 2016).

The top five industry clusters in Kent County (by wage) in order of rank are Biomedical/Bio-technical Life Sciences; Business & Financial Services; Advanced Materials; Education & Knowledge; and Manufacturing Supercluster.

### ***Maryland Rural Development Corporation's Community Needs Assessment- Kent County 2016-2019***

The Maryland Rural Development Corporation's (MRDC) mission is to provide resources that promote self-sufficiency in low-income families and help to build strong sustainable communities throughout rural Maryland. According to this report, Kent County is 72.59% rural

and 27.41% urban in composition. This composition impacts poverty in Kent County because of the spatial inequality in which resources are in “spots” such as the high frequency areas of Chestertown and Galena. Whereas, the same limited resources are not as readily available in the small town areas of Betterton, Millington and Rock Hall.

Kent County residents surveyed by MRDC revealed that affordable housing, affordable childcare, employment options, substance abuse prevention, and affordable healthcare are the top needs for Kent County.

Data from the MRDC report indicates that 15.1% Kent County residents have a disability. This number does not include individuals that are institutionalized.

### ***Upper Shore Youth Engagement and Assessment Initiative Final Report, 2015***

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) and the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC) partnered together on a pilot youth engagement project in Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne’s Counties. The vision for the project was to provide the tools and framework necessary for local communities to engage young people and keep them rooted in our rural areas.

The youth focus groups included over 140 representative middle school and high school students from Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne’s Counties involved in student leadership roles, or enrolled in technology or vocational programs. Focus groups conducted in Kent County identified the need for more local career opportunities, more local businesses and growth, increased broadband access and school and hospital improvements. They also mentioned the lack of public transportation and expressed their desire for walkable communities and more activities for youth and families.

Survey highlights from all of the counties combined indicated that most participants plan to attend college after high school and that they are interested in a wide spectrum of career opportunities. A number of youth also expressed their interest in owning their own business. Half of youth surveyed would like to live in the local area in the future.

Youth were asked to rank changes they would like to see that would make their community a better place to live. More entertainment and recreation options received the highest first place ranking at 33.5%, followed by more local job opportunities for youth at 29%.

### ***United Way ALICE Report for Maryland***

The United Way defines ALICE as a cost of living higher than what most people earn, ALICE families – an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed – have income above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), but not high enough to afford a basic household budget that

includes housing, child care, food, transportation, and health care. While the Federal Poverty Level reports that only 10 percent of Maryland households face financial hardship, an additional 25 percent (534,801 households) qualify as ALICE.

According to the United Way ALICE Report for Maryland (Fall 2016), 40% of Kent County households struggled to afford basic household necessities in 2014. This report estimates that the household survival budget for a single adult in Kent County is \$20,880. The household survival budget for 2 adults, 1 infant and 1 preschooler is estimated to be \$51,036.

The United Way ALICE Report of Maryland has developed an economic viability dashboard. The Economic Viability Dashboard is composed of three indices: The Housing Affordability Index, the Job Opportunities Index, and the Community Resources Index which is explained in detail in their report. For 2014, this dashboard scores Kent County as fair on housing affordability, poor on job opportunities and poor on community resources.

### **Community Plans**

#### ***Family and Community Partnerships of Kent County - Community Assessment Report, 2016***

Local Management Board of Kent County contracted with Maryland Nonprofits to assess critical county-wide needs, the existing array of services and program, and service delivery gaps. Six themes emerged as areas to be addressed in Kent County. The first theme was hopelessness, racism and disconnection. Residents also cited the lack of mental health treatment services, substance abuse and addiction, lack of jobs and career pathways, lack of reliable transportation and lack of affordable and safe housing.

During the stakeholder discussion groups and interviews, individuals reported that the lack of reliable, public transportation creates difficulty related to: getting children to and from preschool or childcare; being able to utilize social (recreation programs) and health support services (methadone treatment); securing a job that is not within walking distance and being able to be on time for work; and attending classes at local colleges.

The Governor's Office for Children, which is the main funder of the Local Management Board (LMB) of Kent County has set forth a series of priorities to improve child health in the State of Maryland. Working closely with the LMB, the state is focused on four priority youth target groups: The priorities are focused on: disconnected youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school; and children and families affected by incarceration, homelessness and hunger. Additional information on how the LMB will target these new priority areas are covered in the next two assessments.

***Your Hope, Your Family, Our Promise - Family and Community Partnerships of Kent County  
Community Plan 2016 to 2019***

Your Hope, Your Family, Our Promise is a community plan, developed by and for the residents of Kent County to address the serious challenges facing children and families in Kent County. The plan focuses on investment in resources and opportunities that strengthen families during challenging times. The three strategic priorities identified for 2016-2019 are:

- Expanding our capacity by enhancing and expanding existing programs that have demonstrated success in the areas of substance use and mental health, truancy, positive youth development and family support so that they also target children and youth impacted by incarceration of a parent, youth ages 16-24 who are not working and not in an educational program, youth experiencing homelessness, as well as children and youth experiencing food instability;
- Creating a comprehensive array of new services for children impacted by incarceration of a parent and their families; and
- Educating and promoting awareness of institutional racism so that we can move beyond addressing the symptoms of racism to undoing the causes of racism therein creating a more just and equitable community in Kent County.

***Opportunity Youth Final Report, 2017***

Opportunity Youth are defined as youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school. Family and Community Partnerships of Kent County contracted with Chesapeake Charities to identify the Opportunity Youth residing in Kent County, engage them in a meaningful way to uncover their strengths and weaknesses, and utilize this information to formulate recommendations to improve the likelihood of success for this population.

Chesapeake Charities developed the Kent County Opportunity Youth Survey to find ways to increase youth engagement and connection to educational opportunities, jobs, and other county resources.

Several of the recommendations from the survey, local interviews, focus groups and a Photovoice project confirm the need for building the trust and the skill set of youth to enhance employability, the need for apprenticeship and training programs and the importance of engaging local employers in the process. In addition, transportation was listed as a barrier to accessing existing services.

## APPENDIX C

### COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

#### RURAL PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

##### *Application For Short Term Technical Assistance*

*INSTRUCTIONS: The Rural Passenger Transportation Technical Assistance Program helps rural communities enhance economic growth and development by improving passenger transportation services and facilities. Short Term Technical Assistance provides planning assistance in solving relatively small scale, discrete problems. Typically, Short Term Technical Assistance is provided through a site visit of one to four days, and subsequent follow-up work. No local match is required, but recipients should be prepared to provide in-kind support for the project.*

*Proposed projects must meet the following eligibility requirements:*

- *Project must benefit an existing or new non-profit or for-profit small and emerging business. A community transportation system can be a small and emerging business.*
- *Project must be located in a rural area, defined as being not with the outer boundary of a city having a population of 50,000 or more and its immediately adjacent urbanized or urbanizing area with a population density greater than 100 persons per square mile.*

*Applications for Short Term Technical Assistance can be submitted at any time, and will be evaluated on a continuing basis. Selection of projects is made competitively according to the following criteria:*

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- *Local unemployment rate exceeding statewide average.*
- *Local percentage of families below poverty level exceeding statewide average.*
- *Number of new jobs to be created.*
- *Potential economic impact resulting from implementation of project.*
- *Level of economic distress in the community.*
- *Potential for implementation after technical assistance phase of project is completed.*
- *Demonstrated consensus and support in the community.*
- *Potential for development of unique or innovative strategies, techniques, or approaches in solving identified problems.*
- *Potential for replication of the project elsewhere.*

APPLICANT: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PHONE: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CONTACT PERSON: \_\_\_\_\_ TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- A. Type of Organization:
- \_\_\_\_\_ Nonprofit corporation \*      \_\_\_\_\_ WBE  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Government agency \*\*      \_\_\_\_\_ MBE  
 \_\_\_\_\_ For profit public corporation      \_\_\_\_\_ DBE  
 \_\_\_\_\_ For profit private business  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Native American organization  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Other (Specify)

\* Please attach your Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.  
 \*\* If you are a government entity we will need to identify an eligible non profit or for profit participating recipient. Please contact us.

Please complete Sections B-E below on a separate sheet.

- B. List the activities in which your organization is involved.
- C. Provide a history of your organization's business activities related to **transportation**. Please document the growth or expansion of your transportation activities since its establishment. Data in Item 4.E. will support this narrative. If you do **not** currently operate transportation service but are seeking assistance for a new service or facility, check here .

List organization's revenues for the most recent year:

Source	Amount
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
TOTAL	\$ _____

- D. What is the geographic area served by, or proposed to be served by transportation activities?
- E. Projected number of new employees resulting from implementation of project: \_\_\_\_\_
- F. What new or improved services will be provided as a result of the project?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

G. What additional areas will be served as a result of the project?  
\_\_\_\_\_

H. Population of project area? \_\_\_\_\_

I. Area in square miles of project area? \_\_\_\_\_

J. Are the following aware of the proposed project?

Local officials:	Yes	___	No
Local transit providers:	Yes	___	No
State Transportation Department officials:	Yes	___	No

K. When would you like to see the proposed project initiated? \_\_\_\_\_

## II. **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

A. Briefly describe the **problem** which you hope to alleviate or solve through a short term technical assistance project.

B. Summarize the **project** for which short term technical assistance is being requested.

C. What are the **goals** of the proposed technical assistance project?

D. What local **resources** are available to support the technical assistance project?

E. Summarize the economic **benefits** of the project to the community.

## III. **SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS**

*(To be completed only by applicants who currently operate a transportation service.)*

A. Number of vehicles: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Number of employees assigned to transportation related duties: \_\_\_\_\_

C. Total annual ridership: \_\_\_\_\_

D. Annual general public ridership: \_\_\_\_\_

E. Annual agency client ridership: \_\_\_\_\_

F. Annual miles traveled: \_\_\_\_\_

G. Total annual transportation budget: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Provision of technical assistance is contingent upon availability of funds. Funding for the Rural Passenger Transportation Technical Assistance Program is provided through the Rural Business-Cooperative Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. Cooperative Service of the United States Department of Agriculture.

**This is an Equal Opportunity Program. Discrimination is prohibited by Federal law. Complaints of discrimination may be filed with USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington DC 20250-9410**

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Return completed application to:  
COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor 1341 G  
Street, NW  
Washington, D.C.  
20005

Attention: Charles A. Rutkowski,

Assistant Director (202) 299.6593  
FAX: (202) 737-9197

E-Mail [rutkowski@ctaa.org](mailto:rutkowski@ctaa.org)