

Opportunities, Inc.

2022 Community Assessment

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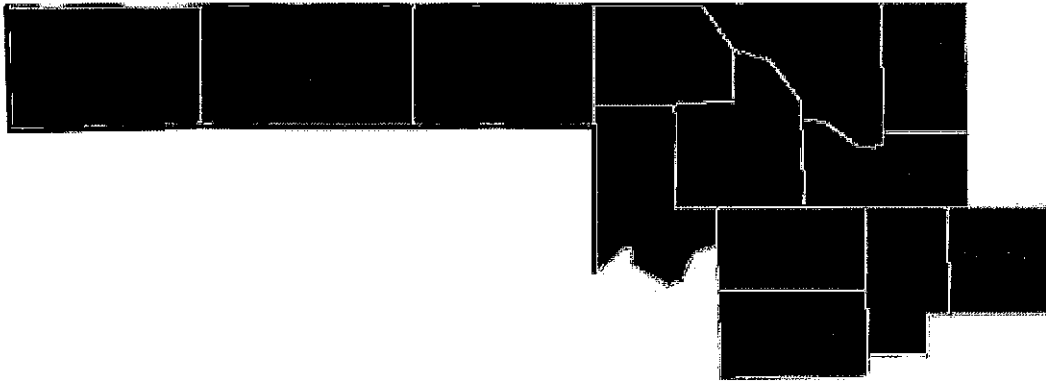
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OPPORTUNITIES, INC. SERVICE AREA



Alfalfa	857 square miles	Population:	5,699
Beaver	1814 square miles	Population:	5,049
Blaine	928 square miles	Population:	8,735
Cimarron	1865 square miles	Population:	2,296
Custer	987 square miles	Population:	28,513
Dewey	1000 square miles	Population:	4,484
Ellis	1229 square miles	Population:	3,749
Harper	1039 square miles	Population:	3,272
Kingfisher	903 square miles	Population:	15,184
Major	957 square miles	Population:	7,782
Texas	2037 square miles	Population:	21,384
Woods	1257 square miles	Population:	8,624
Woodward	1242 square miles	Population:	20,470

Source: US Census Bureau, July 2021; American Community Survey, Decennial Census 2016-

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KEY FINDINGS

After reviewing the needs as identified by the respondents to Opportunities, Inc. 2022 Community Needs Assessment, the board of directors voted on the prioritized needs to include Dental Insurance/Affordable Dental, Health Insurance/Affordable Health Care and Affordable Housing to Rent. The rural areas of Northwest Oklahoma have a shortage in healthcare professionals (including dental) and also are limited in care provided for low-income citizens. This includes sliding scale fees or free services. Many do not have healthcare benefits and are not able to purchase them when absent. Obviously, the void of healthcare/dental services provides many hardships for the low-income population. This leads to other struggles, including physical, financial and emotional.

Small, rural communities and counties continue to struggle with providing housing for rent for their citizens. Many towns are faced with dilapidated houses, houses that shouldn't be habitable or decent rental properties that are priced out of the market for low-income citizens. The lack of housing impacts the low-income population the most, as their options are limited in small, northwest Oklahoma towns.

AGENCY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



RETIRED AND SENIOR VOLUNTEERS PROGRAM

Retired and Senior Volunteers Program works with senior citizens age 55 and over who volunteer in their community's services such as hospital auxiliaries, tutoring and literacy programs with schools, assisting in nursing homes, clinics, libraries, museums, county offices, legal programs, senior centers and other related facilities. RSVP serves Blaine, Caddo, Canadian, Custer, Dewey, Kingfisher, and Woodward counties and had 180 senior volunteers supporting their programs in 2021.

EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRIES

Emergency Food Pantries operates on a donation basis from community sources to help people during times of crisis or emergency. This service is provided by a cooperative effort from: Community churches, Department of Human Services, local food drives, Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, Homeland Grocery and private donations. Sites are in Watonga and Clinton and served 2,090 individuals in 344 households with food in 2021.

HEARTLAND HOUSE, INC.

Located in Woodward, these apartments provide housing for seventeen persons with mental health disabilities. All apartments are available through case management referral.

OUTREACH SERVICES

Outreach Services include coordination of services for clients as well as serving as an advocate for clients who cannot or do not know how to obtain services for their unique situations. Benefit is available to qualified individuals in our 13 county service area.

VITA

VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) is a federally funded program that assists the general public with free, basic tax preparation and filing for those who incomes qualify. Services provided at all agency Outreach offices. Provided tax services for 546 clients for the 2020 tax year.

County is also reporting higher numbers than other counties and the state and probably can be documented to isolated communities, relying on the agriculture industry (33.7%). 48.8% of the county population has a high school (or equivalent) or less education and in 20% of the homes, English is not spoken.

Data for Harper County is high (change in population, poverty rates, lack of insurance) with an undetermined explanation. Research on the internet, phone calls to Head Start family advocates, local leaders, etc. has resulted in no explanation. We will continue to monitor for additional information.

Referencing the included County Data in the Appendix, a lot of the counties have high poverty percentages across the races; however, in most cases, there are few people in these categories, so percentages seem to be alarmingly high. Compared to the last needs assessment, more counties served are reporting a larger percentage in the Hispanic community. Five counties (Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Kingfisher, Texas) report at least 20% of those living in poverty are Hispanic. And in Texas County, this race makes up the majority of those experiencing poverty. (39.8%) Unrelated to this fact, Blaine County reported 19.2% of the Native American citizens living in poverty, down from over 50% in 2019 report. The tribes have broadened and deepened their support of their citizens and have positively impacted their financial status. Texas County has a large number of immigrants and “Other Race” percentage is 21.9%. New to this assessment is the appearance of Native Americans living in poverty in Major County. (10.9%)

Analyzing the poverty data as it relates to gender, in all counties, there are a larger percentage of women that live in poverty than men in the 13-county area. Percentages are high for women in Cimarron, Woodward and Texas Counties and for the ages of 25-34. Factors affecting this can be tied back to the previously discussed issues of rural, isolated and immigrant population for Cimarron and Texas. Alfalfa & Harper counties also have above average percentages for males, which are included in our more rural areas and those with fewer jobs.

TRENDS

The population in 11 out of the 13 counties continues to decrease when comparing data from 2017-2021. In this timeframe, the most significant losses of population are in Blaine (9.76%), Dewey (8.56%), Ellis (8.61%) and Harper (14.86%). However, when looking at populations between 2010 and 2020, 6 counties saw slight increases (nothing significant). From 2010 to 2020, Ellis (9.68%), Beaver (10.42%), Harper (11.21%) and Blaine (26.86%) all lost citizens. Ellis and Beaver counties reduction wasn't significant in number

5. Dental Insurance/Affordable Dental – this need is both a community need as many of our served communities lack dental services and a family need as people without insurance can't afford dental work.
6. Elder Care – community need is lack of trained individuals to provide care for the elderly; family need is finding someone to tend to needs of elderly family members
7. Substance Abuse Counseling/Treatment – community need is lack of treatment facilities in northwest Oklahoma, as well as conveniently located counseling services; family need is counseling, and treatment is expensive and low-income population cannot afford services and citizens do not identify a need until forced

The prioritized needs as voted upon by the Opportunities, Inc. board of directors:

1. Dental Insurance/Affordable Dental – Eight of the 13 counties served by Opportunities fall into “Low-Income Population Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas” and one additional county is designated as “Geographical Population Dental Health Professional Shortage Area” per 9/19/18 report of Office of Primary Care & Rural Health Development. To date, we have only found three counties offering a sliding scale or limited free services for our clients. Where available, clients must travel long distances to receive such services. Terrisa Singleton, Delta Dental OK Foundation Director, wrote in her recent doctoral thesis “The health care system in America does not work for everyone. Specifically, the oral health care system has inherent historical, economic, and scientific aspects which combined, result in a fragmented system that disenfranchises many population groups. In Oklahoma, the existing safety net of underfunded public dental health benefits augmented by charitable, volunteer-drive endeavors is not enough to meet the needs of these underserved and vulnerable populations, as evidenced by the persistent dental disparities. However, as shift in societal attitudes regarding oral health care as a social justice issue instead of a luxury may provide the catalyst needed to improve the system and increase access to dental care in Oklahoma.”
2. Health Insurance/Affordable Health Care - Oklahoma has the second-highest rate of residents without health insurance, as reported in the Daily Oklahoman, September 16, 2020. According to US Census Bureau figures from 2019, 553,000, or 1 in 7, Oklahomans did not have any coverage. The state's uninsured rate was 14.3%, up from 14.2% in 2018. With the passage in June 2020 to expand Medicaid, the hope was to expand coverage for 200,000 people. The data shows that poverty rates can be key barriers to healthcare access. In the same study, results for Oklahoma documented the lack of healthcare professionals for rural populations, which is primarily the area served by Opportunities.
3. Affordable Housing to Rent – Across Oklahoma, there is a shortage of rental homes affordable and available to those living in poverty, as determined by the

AGENCY DATA

For a full report on agency data, refer to Appendix D.

APPENDIX A

OPPORTUNITIES, INC. COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

APPENDIX C
AGENCY DATA



OPPORTUNITIES, INC.

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Serving counties in the Northwest Quadrant of Oklahoma in Anti-Poverty Programs