



This addendum to the Yellowstone Country Assistance Network Community Needs Assessment was completed in May 2020 in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic by the Wyoming Department of Health, Community Services Program, with data provided by Wyoming 2-1-1 and current Community Services Block Grant Service Providers.

I. Background

This Community Needs Assessment Addendum is in response to a global health pandemic that has not only affected every community in the United States but has also led to the most significant economic disruption since the Great Depression. This addendum is an initial effort to capture some of the emerging needs in the community as well as to forecast how those needs may evolve over the coming weeks and months.

In December 2019, the novel coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) was discovered to be the causative agent for acute respiratory and flu-like symptoms and began infecting increasing numbers of people in the Wuhan Province of China. The first case in the United States was confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on January 22, 2020. Despite efforts to contain the virus, by March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. By March 17, 2020, all 50 US States had confirmed cases of the virus.

Because of the highly contagious nature of COVID-19, the alarmingly high rate of fatalities associated with it and the lack of a vaccine or treatment, the only effective way to prevent mass illness is through restricted travel, physical distancing, frequent hand washing, coughing in elbows, not touching the face, and staying at home. By mid-March 2020, with the virus clearly past the stage of effective isolation and contact tracing, local, state and federal public health officials recommend extreme measures to minimize a public health catastrophe: mass quarantine, physical distancing, and a virtual lockdown of all public gatherings and economic activity.

While all types of people are getting sick from the disease, older adults and people of any age who experience serious underlying medical conditions, many which are more prevalent in African American communities, and, to some extent, Latinx and Native American communities, are at increased risk for severe symptoms from COVID-19. Persons of color, immigrants, and women are also disproportionately impacted by underlying health conditions linked to poverty, face discrimination in medical care, and are more likely to work jobs that require them to leave their homes. Also, persons with disabilities or chronic conditions are more vulnerable to COVID-19 due to their inability to thoroughly isolate themselves (need for hands-on care), physical impairments, environmental barriers, or interrupted services. The following additional populations experience differential exposure and extensive corresponding implications as a result of the pandemic: frontline workers, persons experiencing homelessness, gig-economy workers, low-income communities under quarantine, especially in urban settings, rural communities, tribal communities, incarcerated persons and returning citizens.

Children, families, individuals, and Community Action Agency staff may experience heightened stress, anxiety, and trauma as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Loss of income, growing childcare needs, heightened food insecurity, housing and energy instability, lack of access to transportation, lack of basic supplies, and increased domestic violence are growing factors as the crisis unfolds.

Because of the urgent and widespread needs affecting all sectors of the community, this Community Needs Assessment addendum is intended to provide some initial information to describe the scope of this crisis on our community and to support the many different responses that will be required to address emerging, evolving needs. It is likely that as needs evolve, some of those needs will not be captured in this update and therefore some necessary community responses may not connect to the needs identified in this document.

The needs assessed will inform services to those affected by the crisis. It is significant to note that Congressional action will permit FY20 and FY21 and special supplemental CSBG funding to serve families at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (as defined by [the US Census Bureau](#)). Specific programs or strategies will target the demographic groups most affected. Given persons of color are being disproportionately affected by both the health crisis and by the resulting economic disruption, an equity lens must be used to view current and emergent needs related to this crisis.

Both quantitative and qualitative data used in this Community Needs Assessment addendum were collected through a CSBG Provider Survey that was sent to CSBG Grantee and Sub-Grantee staff. Grantee and Sub-Grantee staff that completed the survey were encouraged to connect with pertinent stakeholders and review their agency data to inform their responses. There were three respondents from Park, Big Horn, Hot Springs, and Washakie County to the CSBG Provider Survey.

Additionally, quantitative data that informed this addendum were also collected from Wyoming 2-1-1, a statewide helpline and website which provides free, confidential, health and human services information and referrals. The data are comprised of calls received per county categorized by assistance topic. The data were collected from March 16, 2020 to April 23, 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and amidst the executive orders on closure issued from the Wyoming Governor's Office and the Wyoming Department of Health. Wyoming 2-1-1 received a total of 119 calls for assistance from the Yellowstone Country Assistance Network service area, 11 calls in Hot Springs County, and 80 calls in Park County for the duration of the data collection time period.

The communities assessed in this document, related to the below information, is defined as the following: Hot Springs County, and Park County, Wyoming.

II. Wyoming Impacts

The first confirmed positive case of COVID-19 in Wyoming was recorded on March 11, 2020. Wyoming Governor, Mark Gordon, issued a public health emergency for the State of Wyoming on March 13, 2020. Shortly after on March 19, 2020, State Health Officer, Dr. Alexia Harrist, issued an order on the practice of social distancing, and a state-wide public health order closing bars, restaurants, theaters, gymnasiums, child care facilities, K-12 schools, and colleges, universities, and trade schools, and personal services. Further under this order, bars, restaurants, and grills were permitted to offer drive-up, window, curbside, and delivery service provision.

Beginning May 1, 2020, Governor Gordon issued a phased approach to reopen Wyoming's economy and ease the restrictions on businesses. This phased approach has also allowed for counties to seek variances for flexibility on the lifting of restrictions and reopening of businesses based on health-related data from the counties.

At the time this addendum was completed, Wyoming had 444 positive COVID-19 cases confirmed in 21 of Wyoming's 23 counties. Of those confirmed positive cases, 405 cases have recovered, and seven of those cases resulted in death.

Statistics by Case

- The majority of confirmed cases were exposed through a known case.
- The majority of confirmed cases were among those aged 18 to 29, at 18% of total cases, whereas those aged 60 to 69 were impacted at the second highest rate, comprising 16.7% of the total confirmed cases.
- 50% of confirmed cases identified as male, while 48.4% of confirmed cases identified as female.
- The majority of confirmed cases reported that they had no underlying health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, or lung disease.
- The majority of confirmed cases in Wyoming affected individuals identifying as White, at 54.5%, with individuals identifying as American Indian as the second highest impacted Race/Ethnicity demographic at 22.3%.
- 72.3% of confirmed cases were not hospitalized.
- The top three reported symptoms of confirmed cases were cough, fever, and headache.

Responses from the CSBG Provider Survey indicate that at the present time, the provider is serving adults, seniors, and children and youth through their CSBG programming. Of the responses from the CSBG Provider Survey, the top requests for assistance are: housing assistance (rent) and utility assistance.

Further, data from Wyoming 2-1-1 show a similar trend in calls for assistance for Wyoming. Of the 119 calls received for assistance in the time period of March 16, 2020 through April 23, 2020, 46 calls, or 38%, were related to healthcare. The second highest need in calls for assistance related to housing assistance, at 30 calls, or 25% of the total calls. The third highest need in calls for assistance were related to utility assistance, at 14 calls, or 11% of total calls. The remaining 26% of calls related to various categories of assistance, some including mental health resources, income support, legal services, and clothing/personal/household needs, and employment.

III. Local public health response

Hot Springs County, at the time that this addendum was completed, had one confirmed case of COVID-19, which has recovered, and no cases resulting in death. Presently, Hot Springs County has a rate of 22.7 confirmed cases per 100,000 residents. At the time this addendum was completed, Hot Springs County has filed a variance for flexibility in reopening businesses and easing restrictions.

Park County, at the time that this addendum was completed, had one confirmed case of COVID-19, which has recovered, and no cases resulting in death. Presently, Park County has a rate of 3.4 confirmed cases per 100,000 residents. At the time this addendum was completed, Park County has filed a variance for flexibility in reopening businesses and easing restrictions.

As a result of this unprecedented public health crisis, Yellowstone Country Assistance Network is updating its Community Needs Assessment because there is currently a significant impact on the community, and a number of short-, intermediate- and longer-term impacts are expected.

IV. Immediate impacts on the community

The immediate impacts of COVID-19 have been felt across all sectors of society. In particular, some of the greatest impacts relevant to the Community Action Network have been in the areas of health, housing, employment, and education.

The following outlines the variety of impacts to the local community thus far:

- Health impacts:
 - Community health resources will be stretched thin as resources devoted to those sick with COVID-19 will limit resources available to others.
 - A respondent from the CSBG Provider Survey indicated that their agency's top requested services are rental and utility assistance.
 - Of the data collected from Wyoming 2-1-1, the majority of calls received in the data collection timeframe were related to health care, at 38% of all calls from the Yellowstone Country Assistance Network service area.
 - Of the calls related to health care, the majority of the inquiries related to COVID-19 control. Some of the questions received were which providers were testing for COVID-19, what individuals should do if they get sick with COVID-19, and what can individuals do to protect themselves. Calls such as these suggest a need for information on what health care is available for individuals who may become sick, and what can individuals do so as not to become sick. It is unclear if the individuals were insured or had access to a medical provider.
 - Mental health resources will need to be available in new and increased ways to deal with the many different stressors/traumas caused by the pandemic, especially its impact over an extended time period.
 - Wyoming 2-1-1 received three calls from Park County for assistance related to mental health, 2% of the total calls from the Yellowstone Country Assistance Network service area
 - All calls received regarding mental health related to available mental health resources in the community.
 - Assistance may be needed to cover the cost of receiving mental health resources in the service area.
 - While there may not be a documented need from the data collected in the limited time frame, and it may be that mental health resources are able to continue to provide services through telehealth arrangements, this need should be monitored in the future to evaluate its intermediate and long-term impacts.
 - Nutrition for school-aged children previously accessing free/reduced breakfast, lunch, and snacks is impacted as many are now removed from that food source due to school closures.
 - Only 5% of calls made to 2-1-1 for assistance during the collection period were related to nutrition and food assistance.
 - Presently, there are several major organizations whose focus is to provide food and nutrition services to members of the Yellowstone Country Assistance Network service area community amidst the COVID-19 crisis:

- Wyoming Hunger Initiative, provides a resource list for Wyoming counties
 - Cent\$ible Nutrition Program, cooking and nutrition education program
 - The county School Districts are providing to-go lunches for school-aged children.
 - Youth Backpack Weekend Food programs, provides food to kids on the weekends.
 - Food banks are located in both counties this was the number one community ranked need for funding in the COVID-19 impact survey of the four communities.
- Housing impacts:
 - The ability to maintain housing and related expenses to such may be compromised for individuals and families during this time, as unemployment numbers increase and community resources become strapped.
 - Calls for assistance related to housing were the second highest need, making up 25% of Yellowstone Country Assistance Network’s service area total calls to Wyoming 2-1-1.
 - Of those calls, the majority were inquiring about rental assistance, at 87%.
 - Further, calls for assistance related to utility assistance and payments were the third highest need, making up 11% of Yellowstone Country Assistance Network’s service area total calls to Wyoming 2-1-1.
 - The respondent from the CSBG Provider Survey indicated that they were currently providing housing services, including rental assistance and utility assistance.
 - Housing assistance in the amount of \$15 million dollars was approved by the Wyoming legislature and available through WCDA until December 2020.
 - Housing assistance was identified as one of the top requested services in Yellowstone Country Assistance Network’s service area based on responses from the CSBG Provider Surveys.
 - Rental assistance will need to be available for individuals and families in order to keep as many people in their homes and to help them maintain or regain their self-sufficiency, especially as economies continue to slowly reopen and businesses rebuild, leaving people out of work for an extended period of time.
 - Utility assistance including internet will also need to be available for individuals and families in order to keep as many people in their homes and safe with access to running water and power to help them maintain or regain their self-sufficiency, especially as economies continue to slowly reopen and businesses rebuild, leaving people out of work for an extended period of time.
- Employment impacts:
 - From the response from Yellowstone Country Assistance Network, it was reported that individuals in court appointed treatment programs are unable to work due to the service industry being closed , which most are employed in.
 - Wyoming 2-1-1 only received two calls related to employment services during the data collection time period. However, it may be that unemployed individuals, or those anticipated to be furloughed or let go were able to contact the Department of Workforce Services for information regarding employment benefits.
 - Individuals that are employed may still be greatly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.
 - Individuals in the health care field are at high-risk of exposure to COVID-19 and are under tremendous stress due to additional work hours and challenging work conditions. In particular many of those workers with close, frequent contact with vulnerable individuals are lower-wage individuals.

- Individuals in the educational field – especially teachers and assistants in Head Start and Early Head Start as well as other early childhood care settings – are working remotely due to school shutdowns. Lower-wage workers in these fields are more vulnerable to layoffs and/or may lack the technology resources in their home to work remotely.
 - Individuals in many sectors of the economy – but particularly the service sector, the retail sectors, gig economy, and others most affected by quarantine policies – are currently experiencing sudden and unexpected unemployment. Some are unaware of resources available to them and their families as they are experiencing unemployment for the first time.
- Educational impacts:
 - On March 19, 2020, State Health Officer, Dr. Alexia Harrist, issued a state-wide public health order that closed all K-12 schools, as well as colleges, the University of Wyoming, and trade schools.
 - Closings of public schools in the Community Needs Assessment area are having an immediate impact on children’s education. Children with less access to resources (broadband internet, computers/tablets, technology expertise, language barriers, etc.) are most at-risk for suffering learning loss during a potentially protracted period of school closure.
 - Caregivers of school-age children must secure day care arrangements for their children or sacrifice employment to care for their children. These same caregivers are also expected to be primary teachers for their children during the period of the closure. Parents with limited resources face numerous challenges as a result of this situation.

V. Anticipated near- and long-term impacts

The needs above are already established through initial data and anecdotal reports from customers, staff, board members and community stakeholders. Based on these already-observed events, it is likely that there will be near-term (1-3 months) and longer-term (greater than 3 months) impacts that require immediate planning. Although currently there is no impact on the service provision of the agency, this should be monitored in the coming months as CARES Act funds are released, and economies slowly begin to reopen.

VI. Addressing Equity Implications

Though immediate data may not yet be easily obtained regarding the demographics of those most impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic, previous Community Assessments, as well as countless government and academic studies have established that structural racism, xenophobia, sexism, stigmatization and othering persist – and are often exacerbated – in times of crisis. Community Action recognizes the obligation to ensure that the barriers of structural race, gender, and other inequities are addressed during this time of crisis and beyond. Therefore, it is with this lens that communities are invited to use the equity lens and the question, “why”, to understand the specific needs of the diverse populations served.

Responses from the CSBG Provider Survey indicated that single income households have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and demonstrate an overrepresentation in requests for assistance. As needs continue to be assessed and services are refined to meet the needs of the most vulnerable populations in the Yellowstone Country Assistance Network service area, it will be of great importance to continue to support these populations in their economic security and self-sufficiency. Many low-income individuals face inequity when it comes to accessing services especially electronically when

program offices must close. YCAN will work on linkages and agency capacity building to reduce and eliminate these inequities.

VII. Conclusion

While Hot Springs and Park County maintain low numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are still felt, and impacting both individuals and agencies within the community. Data from Wyoming 2-1-1 and from the CSBG Provider Survey indicate that a present need exists for health care, including mental health resources, housing, including rental assistance and utility assistance, for those unemployed due to COVID-19. The data also show that the intermediate and long-term needs will likely be related to service provision and agency capacity of those at the frontlines providing assistance.

Based on the data, it is determined that the top identified needs as it relates to the Coronavirus pandemic are:

1. Housing Assistance
2. Health and Social/Behavioral Development
3. Linkages/Agency Capacity Building

Additionally, Yellowstone Country Assistance Network will focus on supports and services benefitting individuals and families identifying as single income households as these populations are minimally disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 in the service area. With little need found for our services related to COVID-19 YCAN must ensure we are good stewards of the American tax payers money, CARES Act funds will be used only for preventing, preparing for, and responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic within our service area communities. COVID-19 epidemic in our service area, any funds not needed for COVID-19 impacts if not needed funds will not be expended, and any remaining funds returned.

The Yellowstone Country Assistance Network Tripartite Board voted on June 11, 2020 to accept the findings of the CSP and prioritized the top three needs as identified by the data, based on such, it was determined that the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) CSBG Supplemental funds will be used to meet the following needs:

1. Housing Assistance (Rent, Security Deposit, Utilities)
2. Health (Doctor Visit, Vision Screening, Immunizations, Mental Health Visit, and Dental)
3. Linkages/Agency Capacity Building

Approved in June 11, 2020 Meeting Minutes