



**Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency
Community Needs Assessment
FY 2022**

1. Executive Summary

In compliance with the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG), administered by the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services this needs assessment has been compiled. The purpose of this document is to provide current information to the SETHRA Governing Board, the TDHS, and organizational staff that allows them to make the most informed, strategic decisions possible. This tool is intended to act as a “Road Map” that demonstrates the linkages between community needs, assets, and services in Bledsoe, Grundy, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Polk, Rhea and Sequatchie Counties and the programs and services provided by the Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency (SETHRA).

It is the **mission** of SETHRA to provide quality services and resources to those in need.

It is the **vision** of SETHRA to eliminate generation poverty.

SETHRA SERVICE AREA - SETHRA has a ten-county service area encompassing the southeastern portion of the State of Tennessee. SETHRA does not provide CSBG funded programming to residents in Bradley and Hamilton counties, therefore information regarding those counties is excluded from this report.

The service area encompasses 2,905.51 square miles. This area has a large, growing population of which a significant portion are low-income and vulnerable residents that are eligible for SETHRA programs and services. In most communities, the demand for SETHRA services far outweighs available funding. Additionally, regional service infrastructure that assists eligible residents and families is taxed with minimal to no State funding.

ELIGIBLE POPULATION – Estimated population is 186,224 people with approximately 33,883 persons, or 18.94%, living at or below 100% of the federal poverty guidelines.

COMMUNITY NEEDS - Under the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) program, Community Action Agencies throughout the nation use funds to provide services and activities that address employment, education, better use of available income, housing, nutrition, emergency services and/or health to combat the central causes of poverty.

Information utilized for this Community Needs Assessment identified a clear concern about providing the most basic of services to the region’s large population base of low-income and vulnerable residents.

PRIORITY NEEDS – During FY 21-22 funding cycle, the CSBG staff has seen requests for dental care, gas vouchers, alternative work hours for child care and lower rent. Other priority needs were determined based on stakeholder information.

Elders & Care Givers – The demographic data points clearly to an aging population. Along with the aging population go the associated geriatric health and social concerns, in particular, the need to continue our present programs for the elderly (homecare and nutrition). We continually

explore ways to collaborate with other interested organizations in addressing those elderly individuals aging in place who are unable to secure assistance (homemaker services, bathing, and errands) to remain independent.

Economy/Basic Needs – More and more it is being shown that clients applying for services at SETHRA report multiple needs. Many of the issues identified include:

- Affordable housing units available to very-low, low and moderate income families are not in sufficient supply.
- Choices are made between food, utilities, and medications for many low-income households. Food prices and the cost of prescription medication continue to increase. Many are being forced to choose between necessities as they cannot afford to purchase both food and medicine or food. Reliable transportation is a basic need to the ability to find and maintain employment.
- Public transportation for non-traditional work hours is not available.
- Literacy, education, general laborer skills and language issues also present themselves as barriers to economic self-sufficiency.

The Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency conducted a comprehensive needs assessment for the service area during FY19. This needs assessment is based on current client surveys and secondary data received from a variety of partners, the U.S. Census Bureau, and information compiled by and extracted from Community Action Partnership’s website, www.communityactionpartnership.com. For FY 22 SETHRA used many of the same secondary data sources along with current year’s client demographics and needs assessments.

2. Organizational Performance Standards

SETHRA is currently in compliance with all organizational standards.

3. Status of Comprehensive Needs Assessment

SETHRA conducted a comprehensive needs assessment between July 2021 and June 2022. Needs assessments were given to a random selection of agency participants, distributed and gathered at local Community Advisory Boards and Health Council meetings, and at the SETHRA Governing Board meetings.

During the FY21 funding cycle, the agency has seen an increase in CSBG eligible households identifying themselves as being homeless. The homelessness has been due to an income earning spouse or partner leaving the household, recent release from jail/prison, or the family is “couch surfing” or recently moved into the service area and usually with no plan before arriving. The agency has also seen an increase for the need of alternative work hours for child care.

The top family needs identified as follows:

- Families cannot afford the rising costs of housing
- Families cannot afford to purchase fresh, seasonal & nutritious food
- Families need increased disposable income
- Families cannot afford healthcare/insurance or copays for doctor visits

- Families lack education and skills for employment
- Families lack disposable income to purchase clothing and household & hygiene items
- Families do not have reliable transportation

The community needs identified included:

- The community lacks sufficient affordable housing
- The community lacks employees with suitable employment soft skills
- The community lacks alternative work hours for child care
- The community lacks for public transportation for non-traditional work hours
- The community has a high rate of drug abuse
- The community has no local drug abuse programs

The agency needs identified through the needs assessment:

- The agency needs additional partnerships to address self-sufficiency issues
- The agency lacks adequate unrestricted funding to address self-sufficiency issues
- The agency lacks a single intake process for every client/customer entering for services

4. Annual Review

As can be seen in the Agency Program & Services section of this plan, SETHRA provides a wide array of services to the low-income residents in the southeast Tennessee area. Through the variety of programs available at SETHRA, we are able to meet many of the identified family level needs. To ensure comprehensive services for our customers, it is imperative that we utilize our client's time by maximizing every application possible during initial interview as well as strengthening and increasing our community partnerships. Between the services offered through community partners and SETHRA most of the needs identified in the needs assessment can be addressed.

SETHRA's Governing Board reviews the previous year's Information Systems report and the current year's needs assessment on an annual basis. As ROMA suggests, during the annual review the Council will compare the outcomes with the needs to what impact the program has had on the clients and what changes need to be considered. As a result of this review, the CSBG program is continually evolving.

POPULATION

5. Data Collection

SETHRA collects client data on the majority of individuals served through the agency. Some programs are capable of collecting and storing more information than other programs (as we do not currently have a single intake process). For services provided through CSBG, data is collected on every household member at program intake and is stored in the THO client database with only CSBG funded staff having access to the database.

Additional data collection is obtained from the US Census and the Community Action Partnership’s (CAP) Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CCNA) Online Toolkit. The CCNA Online Tool provides a significant amount of the secondary data to help complete comprehensive community needs assessment with the click of a button.

The data obtained through the various sources is analyzed to ensure SETHRA is developing and implementing programs to best suit the needs of Southeast Tennessee low-income residents. The data is reviewed during the program planning cycle then again at the end of the program.

6. Demographics

The service area of Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency includes Bledsoe, Grundy, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Polk, Rhea, and Sequatchie Counties. Clients are served from a satellite office located in each county with the administrative office located in Sequatchie County.

The approximate size of the service area is 2,905.51 square miles with an estimated population of 186,224 persons.

Report Area	Under 5 Years Male	Under 5 Years Female	5 to 19 Male	5 to 19 Female	20 to 64 Male	20 to 64 Female	Over 64 Male	Over 64 Female
Bledsoe County, TN	548	295	1,259	971	5,581	3,526	1,319	1,337
Grundy County, TN	396	362	1,291	1,121	3,709	3,725	1,203	1,537
McMinn County, TN	1,439	1,464	4,848	4,774	14,878	15,374	4,673	5,603
Marion County, TN	865	779	2,480	2,475	8,033	8,327	2,500	3,079
Meigs County, TN	292	334	1,044	1,044	3,339	3,421	1,316	1,314
Polk County, TN	383	416	1,459	1,382	4,905	4,820	1,619	1,830
Rhea County, TN	1,103	1,028	3,181	3,123	9,206	9,195	2,709	3,174
Sequatchie County, TN	367	349	1,340	1,273	4,303	4,223	1,381	1,580
Tennessee	208,598	197,840	647,583	619,691	1,942,474	2,018,046	474,623	600,501
United States	10,112,614	9,655,056	31,825,055	30,467,886	95,430,647	96,422,741	22,518,603	28,265,193

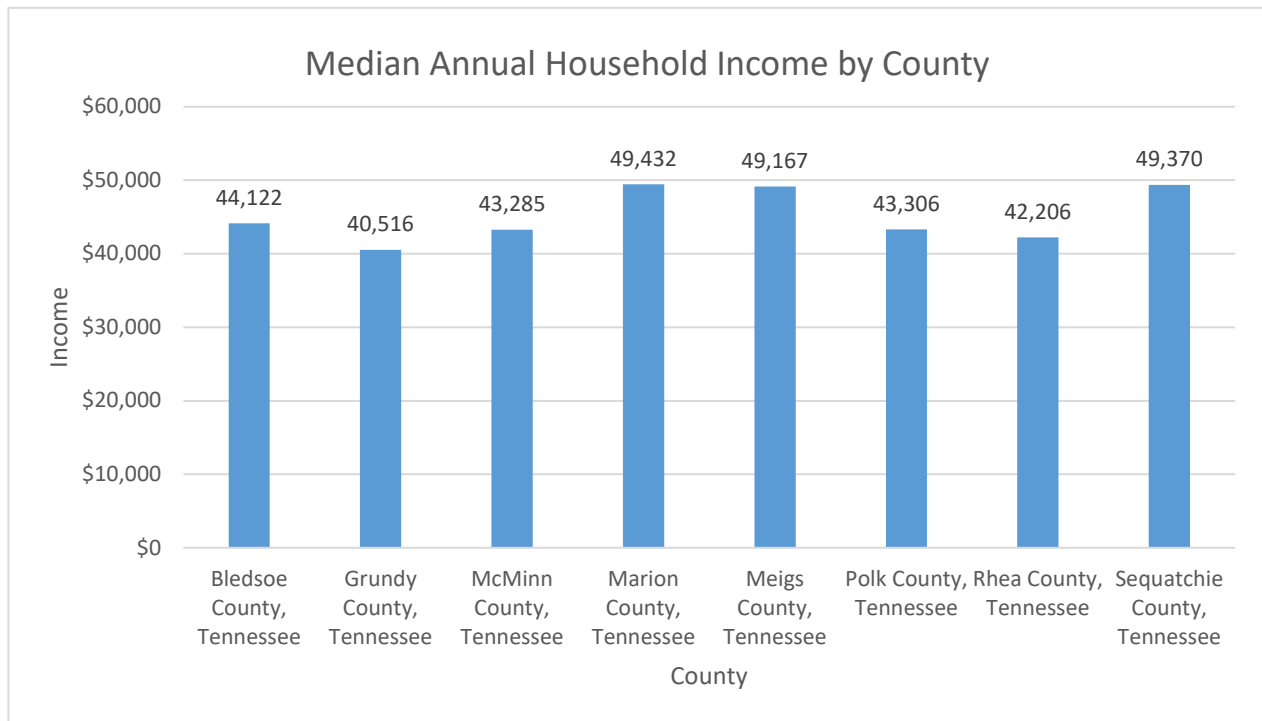
Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-17. Source geography: County

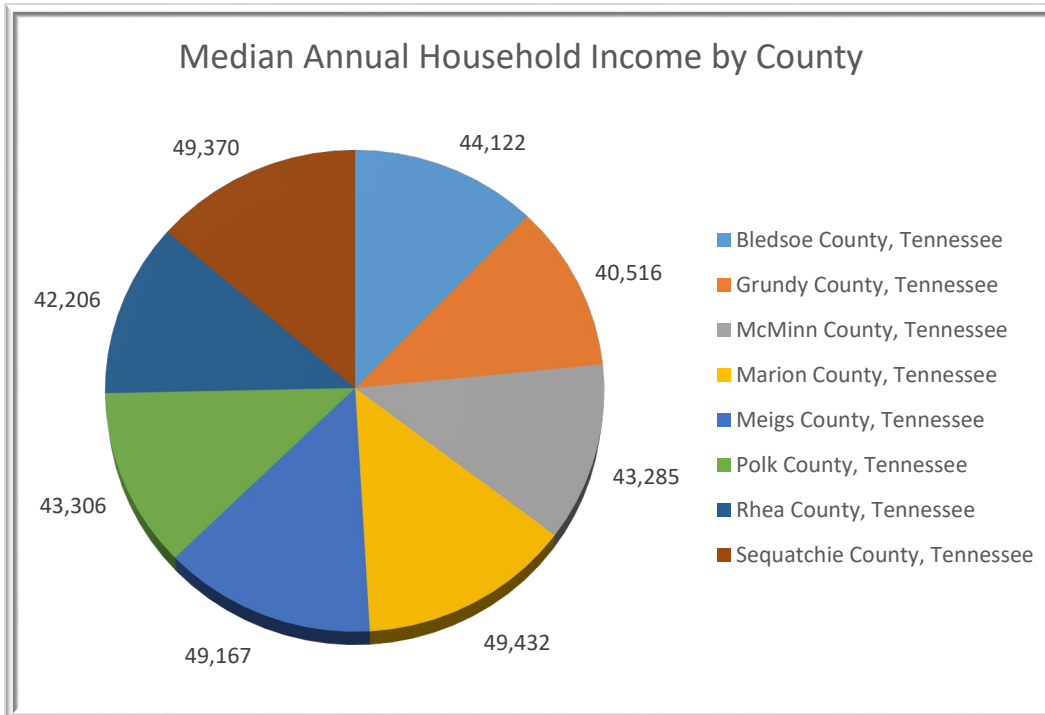
Population by Race

Report Area	White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Mixed Race
Bledsoe County, TN	13,258	786	74	38	0	187
Grundy County, TN	12,671	38	33	55	0	74
McMinn County, TN	46,564	1,870	182	430	22	915
Marion County, TN	25,872	1,047	111	157	2	250
Meigs County, TN	11,894	134	58	26	1	109
Polk County, TN	16,430	62	67	33	10	117
Rhea County, TN	28,987	604	183	195	11	1,126
Sequatchie County, TN	14,585	72	89	65	4	314
Tennessee	4,990,938	1,092,948	28,044	135,615	4,115	246,282
United States	204,277,273	41,104,200	3,727,135	19,886,049	689,966	27,915,715

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-17. Source geography: County

Median annual household incomes in the 8 county report area are shown in the following table. According to the U.S. Census, Median Annual Household Incomes ranged from a low of \$40,516 in Grundy County to a high of \$49,432 in Marion County.

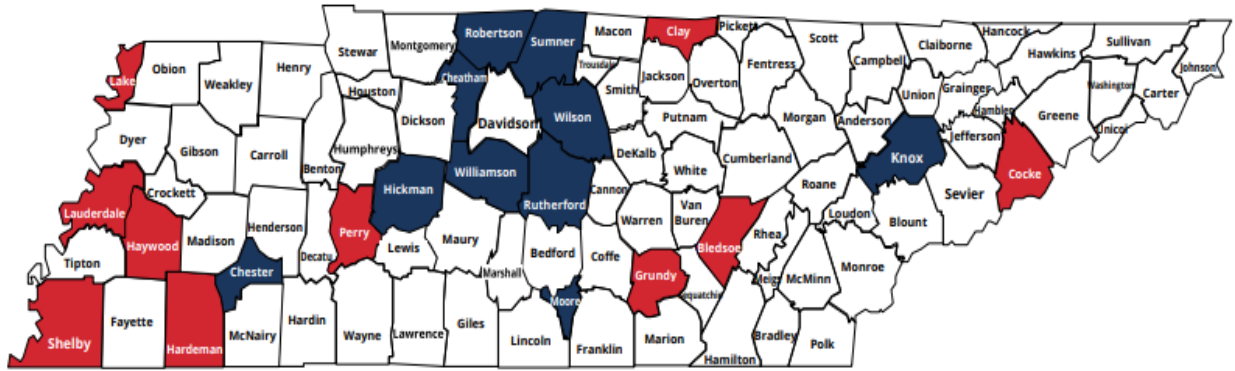




Grundy County residents have the lowest median income and their income has varied only slightly during this time. Rhea County has seen several new businesses enter the county. Many of these businesses offer overtime, therefore creating an increase in disposable income for many families and individuals.

Unemployment

As of April 2022, employment rates are below 5% in nearly all Tennessee Counties. There are currently no counties within SETHRA’s service area that has an unemployment rate over 5%. Grundy and Bledsoe County are close at 4.7% (Bledsoe) and 4.2% (Grundy). Both of these counties are on the list of the 9 distressed counties in Tennessee.



**Lowest
County Unemployment Rates**

Rank	County	April 2022 Pre. Rate (%)
1	Williamson	2.0
2	Moore	2.1
3	Wilson	2.3
4	Chester	2.4
5	Sumner	2.4
6	Cheatham	2.5
7	Rutherford	2.5
8	Knox	2.5
9	Robertson	2.5
10	Hickman	2.5

**Highest
County Unemployment Rates**

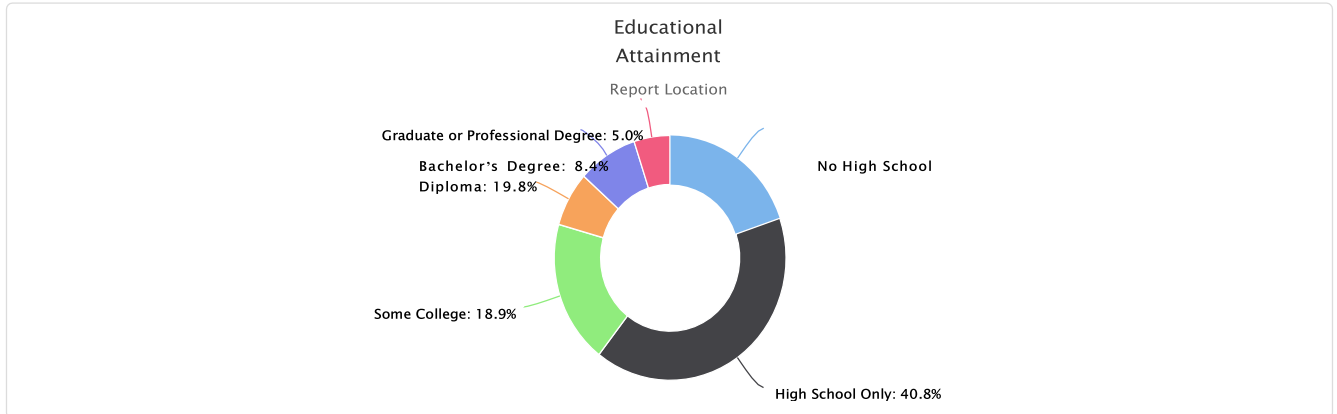
Rank	County	April 2022 Pre. Rate (%)
95	Perry	5.1
94	Cocke	4.8
93	Bledsoe	4.7
92	Shelby	4.7
91	Lake	4.6
90	Lauderdale	4.4
89	Clay	4.2
88	Grundy	4.2
87	Hardeman	4.2
86	Haywood	4.2

Poverty Rates

Report Area	All Ages	All Ages	Age 0-17	Age 0-17	Age 5-17	Age 5-17
	No of Persons	Poverty Rate	No of Persons	Poverty Rate	No of Persons	Poverty Rate
Report Location	33,883	18.94%	10,374	27.73%	7,371	27.15%
Bledsoe County, TN	3,162	23.2%	989	36.20%	759	39.20%
Grundy County, TN	2,977	22.70%	826	29.00%	588	27.80%
McMinn County, TN	9,937	19.30%	2,941	27.00%	2,119	26.40%
Marion County, TN	4,332	15.40%	1,127	18.90%	847	19.40%
Meigs County, TN	2,006	16.90%	578	24.80%	407	23.40%
Polk County, TN	2,473	15.00%	715	21.90%	534	21.30%
Rhea County, TN	6,122	19.30%	2,147	28.90%	1,321	24.80%
Sequatchie County, TN	2,874	19.70%	1,051	35.10%	796	34.90%
Tennessee	996,930	15.20%	323,913	21.90%	222,103	20.50%
United States	42,510,843	13.40%	13,377,778	18.5%	9,429,373	17.90%

Education

The following chart provides education information for individuals over 25. This information within this chart may substantiate the median income for the respective county as it has been proven that the level income is directly correlated to the level of education. The information within the chart coincides with the education levels reported in by applicants for CSBG services within the Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency.



Higher education remains accessible to the rural counties within the region. Chattanooga State Technical Community College has satellite campuses located in Rhea County and Marion County. The option of on-line learning eliminates the limited institution choices, allowing a student to attend an institution in Nashville while residing in Ducktown. By participating in on-line learning, many students are not required to leave the privacy of their homes to acquire suitable education.

For residents wishing or required to attend classes on campus, Tennessee Technology Center and Cleveland Community College have locations in the McMinn County area. Tennessee Technology Center has a location in Crossville, which is within 30 miles of Bledsoe County. Chattanooga State Community College has satellite campuses in Rhea and Marion counties. Rhea county residents also have access to The University of Tennessee at Knoxville-and Roane State Community College located in neighboring Roane County.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is easily accessed from each of the eight service area counties. As technology increases, local colleges are able to meet the increasing demand of working students therefore offering more on-demand programs. Although higher education is more accessible, the time it takes to complete a degree program can be prohibitive to single parents with minimal supportive services.

Healthcare

The uninsured population are less likely to have a usual source of care outside of the emergency room. They will often go without screenings and preventive care, delay or forgo needed medical care, are sicker and die earlier than those who have insurance and pay more for the medical care they do receive. In the southeast region of Tennessee those individuals 18-64 are more likely to be the uninsured population. Unless individuals ages 19-64 receive Supplemental Security Income, most are not eligible for TennCare and many cannot afford the health care insurance offered (if offered) through employment. The following tables provide a breakdown of the uninsured population in our CSBG service area.

Report Area	Insurance Population (2019 Estimate)	Number Insured	Number Uninsured	Percent Uninsured
Report Location	182,781	163,498	19,283	10.84%
Bledsoe County, TN	13,636	11,969	1,667	11.98%
Grundy County, TN	13,169	11,244	1,925	14.69%
McMinn County, TN	52,219	46,704	5,515	10.32%
Marion County, TN	28,247	25,951	2,296	7.68%
Meigs County, TN	11,997	10,754	1,243	10.80%
Polk County, TN	16,562	14,712	1,850	10.61%
Rhea County, TN	32,372	29,271	3,101	9.17%
Sequatchie County, TN	14,579	12,893	1,686	11.48%
Tennessee	6,602,261	5,962,705	639,556	9.03%
United States	319,706,872	291,458,259	28,248,613	8.23%

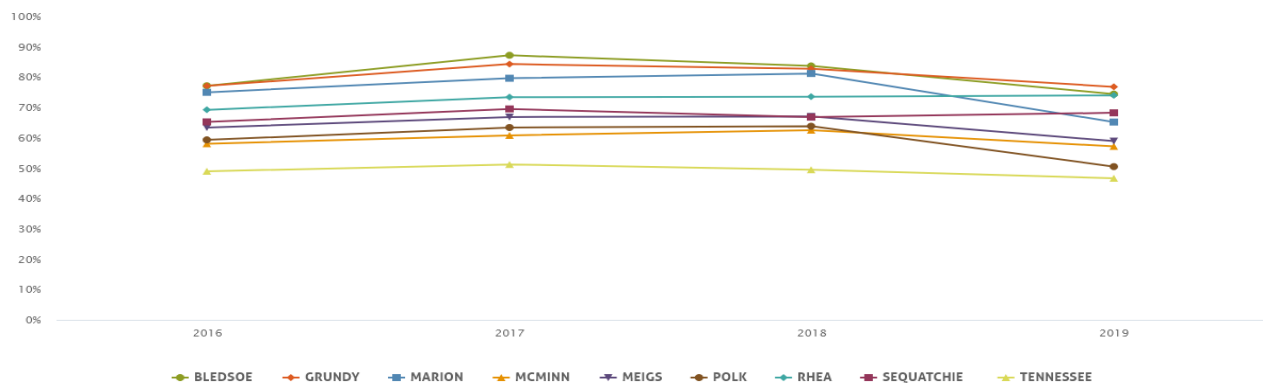
Nutrition

Free and Reduced Lunch Program

Within the report area all counties have over half of the student population eligible for Free/Reduced Price lunch. This indicator is relevant because it assesses vulnerable populations which are more likely to have multiple health access, health status, and social support needs. Additionally, when combined with poverty data, providers can use this measure to identify gaps in eligibility and enrollment. At 50.5%, Polk County, Tennessee, had the smallest percentage of students eligible to participate in the school lunch program in 2019-20, while Grundy County, Tennessee, had 76.80% of students eligible to participate, which is more than the state average of 46.70% for the 2019-2020 year. Even though not every client is income eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch program, 100% of the students in the service delivery area are entitled to free breakfast and lunch while at school.

Report Area	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Report Location	70.84%	68.09%	73.15%	72.69%	65.66%
Bledsoe County, TN	84.16%	77.20%	87.20%	83.70%	74.40%
Grundy County, TN	75.83%	77.10%	84.30%	82.80%	76.80%
McMinn County, TN	65.30%	58.10%	60.80%	62.60%	57.20%
Marion County, TN	62.37%	75.00%	79.70%	81.20%	65.20%
Meigs County, TN	72.43%	63.40%	66.90%	67.00%	58.90%
Polk County, TN	69.45%	59.30%	63.40%	63.80%	50.50%
Rhea County, TN	67.01%	69.30%	73.40%	73.60%	74.00%
Sequatchie County, TN	99.96%	65.30%	69.50%	66.80%	68.30%
Tennessee	58.82%	49.00%	51.30%	49.50%	46.70%

FREE/REDUCED-PRICE SCHOOL LUNCH PARTICIPATION (PERCENT) - 2016-2019



Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth from datacenter.kidscount.org

The table below shows 12,290 households (or 18.26%) received SNAP benefits in 2019. During this same time frame there were 6,260 households with income levels below the poverty level that were not receiving SNAP benefits. At 13.20%, Marion County has the lowest percentage of households receiving SNAP payments, while Bledsoe County has the largest at 23.70% of households receiving SNAP payments, which is significantly higher than the state average of 13.60% and national average of 11.70%.

Report Area	Households Receiving SNAP Total	Households Receiving SNAP Percent	Households Receiving SNAP Income Below Poverty	Households Receiving SNAP Income Above Poverty	Households Not Receiving SNAP Total	Households Not Receiving SNAP Percent	Households Not Receiving SNAP Income Below Poverty	Households Not Receiving SNAP Income Above Poverty
Report Location	12,290	18.26%	7,199	5,091	59,731	81.74%	6,260	53,471
Bledsoe County, TN	1,158	23.70%	702	456	3,736	76.30%	417	3,319
Grundy County, TN	1,087	22.60%	729	358	3,733	77.40%	396	3,337
McMinn County, TN	3,423	16.50%	1,856	1,567	17,381	83.50%	2,078	15,303
Marion County, TN	1,519	13.20%	784	735	9,958	86.80%	1,244	8,714
Meigs County, TN	990	20.00%	538	452	3,948	80.00%	275	3,673
Polk County, TN	980	13.30%	551	429	6,403	86.70%	595	5,808
Rhea County, TN	2010	16.50%	1,331	679	10,167	83.50%	1,007	9,160
Sequatchie County, TN	1,123	20.30%	708	415	4,405	79.70%	248	4,157
Tennessee	352,055	13.60%	182,910	169,145	2,245,237	86.40%	200,164	2,045,073
United States	14,171,567	11.70%	6,707,025	7,464,542	106,584,481	88.30%	8,903,117	97,681,364

Conclusion

This comprehensive Needs Assessment is comprised of multiple components. Together they create a picture of need in Southeast Tennessee. It is concerning that the basic needs such as food, housing, transportation and medical care are at the top of the list. It is also disheartening to know consumers continue to report difficulty moving toward some form of self-sufficiency. However, the outlook is far from bleak in the SETHRA service area as consumers, providers and community leaders continue to work together to improve services to enhance the lives of persons here.