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Arrowleaf Union County ROSC Council Needs Assessment July 2023

History and Demographics

Union County is located in a region colloquially known as “Little Egypt.” The region is named such because of the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, and noted parallels with the Nile river delta in Egypt. The communities that arose in this area were, at one point, some of the most prosperous in the state. However, economic prosperity has long since vanished due to chronic and continued racial unrest, disenfranchisement of the people, and disinvestment in these communities. Resultantly, those who live in Union County today experience significant, oppressive socio-economic barriers.

	Union County	Illinois
Current Population (Estimate V2022)	16767	12582032
Population Change 2010 - 2020	-3%	-0.14%
White, not Hispanic or Latinx	90.9%	76.3%
Black	1.4%	14.7%
Hispanic or Latinx	5.5%	18%
Two or More Races	1.7%	2.2%
Persons age \geq 65 years	22.3%	16.6%
Persons with a disability age <65 years (2017 - 2021)	13.5%	7.5%
Source: United States Census Bureau QuickFacts (2022)		

Consistent with state-wide trends, the overall population for Union County has decreased in recent years. Between 2010 and 2020, the population of Union County decreased by 3% (Census QuickFacts, 2022). The demographics of Union County are reflective of the greater southern



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Illinois region. Across Union County, the population is 91% White Only, Not Hispanic or Latinx, 1% Black, 6% Hispanic or Latinx, and 2% Multi-racial (Census QuickFacts, 2022).

Union County is also home to a comparatively large number of senior citizens. The state average for individuals who are ≥ 65 years old is 16.6%, but in Union County, this percentage is nearly six points higher, at 22.3% (Census QuickFacts, 2022).

	Union County	Illinois
Civilian Labor Force (Population age ≥ 16 , 2017 - 2021)	52.5%	65.1%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher (persons age ≥ 25 years, 2017 - 2021)	22.7%	36.2%
Persons in Poverty	17%	12.1%
Median Household Income (in 2021 dollars, 2017 - 2021)	\$53,363	\$72,563
Source: United States Census Bureau QuickFacts (2022)		

Census data from 2017 to 2021 showed that 52.5% of individuals in Union County are counted in the civilian labor force, which is twelve percentage points lower than the state average, 65% (Census QuickFacts, 2022). An often identified barrier to quality employment is lack of higher education attainment. This is especially true in Union County where only 23% of individuals 25 years or older have attained a Bachelor's degree; the state average is 36% (Census QuickFacts, 2022). In addition to lower-than-state-average labor force and Bachelor's degree attainment, there are limited economic opportunities and, subsequently, elevated poverty levels in Union County. The poverty rate across Union County is 17%, which is five points higher than the state average (Census QuickFacts, 2022). Economic disparity is also apparent when reviewing median household income data. The median household income for Union County was \$53,363, which is over \$19,000 less than the state average, \$72,563 (Census QuickFacts, 2022).

Health Outcomes and Factors

Previously mentioned socio-economic barriers are accompanied with impacts to health and wellness of individuals in Union County, as well as communities therein. Individual health behaviors, or behavioral health factors, of individuals in Union County cannot be ignored. However, there are many macroscopic barriers that coincide with, and exacerbate, poor health outcomes.

Out of all 102 counties in the state of Illinois, Union County was ranked 71st for overall health outcomes and 80th for health factors (County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2023). Overall



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measures of health outcomes and health factors consider length and quality of life, as well as health behaviors, access to healthcare resources, socio-economic factors, environment, and other such data. Life expectancy and premature death—which is defined as years of potential life lost before age 75 per 100,000 population—are significantly worse than the state average for these figures. Likewise, some of the contributing health factors, listed in the table below, reflect behavioral and systemic challenges that individuals in Union County must overcome.

	Union County	Illinois
Overall Health Outcomes & Factors Rank (Out of 102 in IL)	71;80	NA
Premature Death (Years of potential life lost before age 75 per 100,000 population; 2018 - 2020)	9241	7100
Life Expectancy (2018 - 2020)	75.2	78.6
Adult Smoking (2020)	21%	13%
Excessive Drinking (2020)	17%	15%
Alcohol-impaired Driving Deaths (2020)	40%	29%
Adult Obesity (2020)	37%	13%
Limited Access to Healthy Foods (2019)	3%	5%
Food Insecurity (2020)	13%	8%
Population to Primary Care Physicians (ratio)	1370 : 1	1230 : 1
Population to Mental Health Providers (ratio)	470 : 1	340 : 1
Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps: Union County (2023)		

Adult smoking is more prevalent in Union County (21%), compared to 13% state average (County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2023). In addition to higher prevalence of adult smoking, excessive drinking and alcohol-impaired driving deaths are higher in Union County. Approximately 17% of adults reported excessive drinking, compared to state average (15%) and 40% of motor vehicle crash deaths involved alcohol, which is 11% higher than state average (County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2023). In addition to higher smoking and excessive



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alcohol consumption in Union County, obesity rates are also elevated. Rates in Union County are 37% which is nearly triple the state average obesity rate, 13% (County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2023). Compounding obesity rates in Union County is food insecurity. Across Illinois, 8% of the population reported food insecurity; however, in Union County, 13% are food insecure (County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2023). Harmful behavioral and environmental factors are further exacerbated by limited healthcare services and availability. There are 1370 patients per primary care physician, and 470 patients per mental health provider (County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2023).

Youth Population Data

There are seven school districts across Union County. The following table lists these school districts and certain characteristics, as well as provides state average data for comparison.

	Union County Co.							Illinois
	Anna CCSD 37	AJCHS 81	Cobden SUD 17	Co. of Union 43	Dongola USD 66	Lick Creek CCSD 16	Shawnee CUSD 84	
Total Enrollment	568	504	463	345	237	138	269	NA
Graduation Rate	NA	86%	85%	NA	73%	NA	65%	87.3%
Mobility (Transfer in/out)	11%	11%	7%	7%	10%	9%	16%	7.60%
Truant Students	5%	6%	3%	6%	12%	NA	10%	22.10%
Low income	58%	43%	73%	39%	68%	41%	66%	46.50%
Source: ISBE Illinois Report Card (2023)								

Across all school districts in Union County, the average graduation rate is 77% (ISBE Illinois Report Card, 2023). Likewise, the data suggests an inverse relationship between graduation rates and percent of chronically truant students. While all districts reported lower-than-state-average



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truancy rates, it must be noted that districts with relatively higher graduation rates also reported relatively lower truancy rates, and vice versa (ISBE Illinois Report Card, 2023). Across all school districts in Union County, there is a higher percentage of low-income students (55% average) and higher student transfer in/out rates (10% average), or student mobility, compared to the state averages (ISBE Illinois Report Card, 2023).

Youth within these school districts completed the Illinois Youth Survey (IYS; 2022). The following tables provide an overview of youth responses to substance use across 30 day and one year time periods.

Past 30-day Use (8th - 12th graders)	Union County		
	8th	10th	12th
Alcohol	19%	13%	26%
Binge Drinking	10%	7%	14%
Tobacco/Vaping	15%	14%	31%
Marijuana	7%	8%	19%
Rx Drugs (not prescribed)	5%	1%	2%
Used in Past Year (8th - 12th graders)	Union County		
	8th	10th	12th
Common Substances and/or Vaping	36%	39%	45%
Alcohol	30%	33%	40%
Marijuana	9%	14%	30%
E-cigarettes/Vaping	17%	18%	29%
Illicit Drugs (Excluding Marijuana)	3%	3%	8%



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Any Rx Drugs to Get High	1%	2%	5%
Rx Drugs (not prescribed)	11%	6%	4%
Illinois Youth Survey 2022 County Report: Union County			

According to IYS (2022) responses, the three most commonly used substances by 8th through 12th grade youth in Union County were alcohol, marijuana, and vaping products. Prescription drug use within the past 12 months (not prescribed) among 8th grade youth in Union County was 11%, which is reportedly higher than marijuana use within this age group (IYS: Union County, 2022).

Adult Population Data

Adult substance use data provides insight on substance use behaviors and perspectives within Union County. Likewise, comparing the most current data from the Crime in Illinois (CII): Annual Uniform Crime Report (2020, 2021) with the previous year, provides additional insight on drug arrest trends.

	Union County	
	2021 Summary	% Change 2020 - 2021
Total Drug Arrests	25	-24%
Rate per 100,000	144.2	-24%
Cannabis Control Act	4	0%
Controlled Substances Act	7	+133%
Hypodermic Syringes/Needle Act	0	-100%
Drug Paraphernalia Act	1	-89%



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Methamphetamine Act	13	-19%
Source: Crime in Illinois Annual Uniform Crime Report: 2020 & 2021		

In Union County, total drug crime arrests and drug crime arrests per capita decreased by 24%, between 2020 and 2021 (CII, 2020, 2021). Likewise, across all categories within the previous table, except for two, there were fewer arrests between 2020 and 2021; there was no reported difference for Cannabis Control Act figures (CII, 2020, 2021). However, drug crime arrests related to controlled substances doubled across 2020 and 2021 (CII, 2020, 2021).

The Illinois Prescription Monitoring Program (ILPMP) provides greater insight on controlled substance use in Union County. It does so by tracking data such as dispensing of controlled substances, number of patients, number of prescriptions, and other related information (ILPMP, 2023). The following table provides an overview of buprenorphine patient and prescription data.

	Union County
Buprenorphine Pts/County	119
Pts/Capita	718.9
Buprenorphine Rx/County	1731
Rx/Capita	10457
>90MME on Avg. Day (2021) Patients per Capita	176.7
Source: ILPMP Buprenorphine Dashboard (2020); ILPMP Above 90MME Dashboard (2021)	

According to the most recent data for Union County, buprenorphine prescriptions, as well as overall number of patients, were 1731 and 119, respectively (ILPMP: Buprenorphine Dashboard, 2020). Likewise, buprenorphine prescriptions and patients per capita were 10457 and 718.9, respectively (ILPMP: Buprenorphine Dashboard, 2020).

Resources and Support

Substance use resources in Union County include prevention and recovery outpatient services provided by Arrowleaf, as well as residential/inpatient substance use treatment offered by Centerstone's Fellowship House. Union County Hospital also offers 24-hour inpatient medical stabilization and withdrawal management for adults with substance use difficulties. Additionally,



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there are family and recovery support groups, including the Anna Downtown “G.H.” Group and Glum Lot We’re Not Group hosted at the First Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Anna, IL.

Gaps Across the Continuum

In Union County, all areas of the continuum of care—health promotion, prevention, intervention/harm reduction, treatment, and recovery—are impacted by negative, macro-level factors such as limited economic opportunity and limited, or nonexistent, infrastructure. Additionally, perspectives on substance use within this county are heavily influenced by stigma. This combination of socio-economic disadvantage and stigmatization results in barriers, not only for individuals seeking care but also for families and communities who are impacted by substance use.

Health Promotion: Health promotion enables people to control and improve their health through a variety of social and environmental interventions (WHO, n.d.). Health promotion capacity, which includes financing and infrastructure (WHO, n.d.), is limited in Union County, as this County is socio-economically disadvantaged. In addition to socio-economic disadvantage, stigma is a significant barrier for health promotion, especially concerning alternative perspectives on substance use treatment and recovery.

Prevention: Community education is paramount for successful prevention efforts in Union County. Specifically, community education must directly address prevalent stigma and knowledge gaps across different professions, ages, and education levels.

Key informant questionnaire responses, gathered at an event on 6/27/2023, reflect mixed perspectives across community stakeholders. There was reported agreement that, in general, substance use is an issue in Union County; recent uptick in vaping/e-cigarette use was identified as a major concern. However, respondents differed when asked about contributing factors. One respondent, a career advisor from Union County, reported that common contributing factors to substance use are based on availability, as well as individual shortcomings, lack of responsibilities—specifically employment, and some pre/post-substance use mental health difficulty. However, other respondents, two healthcare professionals, one a ROSC council member, reported that common contributing factors are environmental, systemic, and trauma-based—specifically adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

For substance use prevention initiatives to be successful, they must directly combat prevalent stigma with education and awareness at many different ages and education levels. Community education and awareness are powerful factors in substance use prevention. However, it is crucial that stigma reduction efforts are included to facilitate community education and awareness and reduce barriers to individuals accessing care within Union County.



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Intervention/Harm Reduction: In Union County, the default method of addressing substance use issues is through medical and mental health intervention for individuals with a substance use disorder. This is evidenced by a lack of harm reduction initiatives in the area. Additionally, there are several anecdotal sources reporting that Union County stakeholders are resistant to harm reduction policies, citing that such policies will increase and encourage substance use. However, further research is needed to confirm the prevalence of this perspective.

Treatment: As is consistent across the southern seven counties of Illinois, there are several myths and resulting stigmatized viewpoints about addiction and substance use in Union County. As can be gleaned from previously reported questionnaire responses, substance use disorders are assumed to be the fault of the individual, either as a moral failure or some inherent weakness. Consequently, the pathway from treatment to recovery can be a very isolating experience for individuals with a substance use disorder. Perspectives such as this are a by-product of lack of education and a strong component of stigma.

Recovery: While there are some recovery resources for individuals in Union County, there is much higher need compared to availability. Likewise, community stigma can create barriers for recovered individuals to establish new relationships with others. This presents significant challenges in employment, social engagement, and sustaining recovery.

Conclusion

Union County is among the most socio-economically disadvantaged counties in the state of Illinois. In addition to socio-economic disadvantage, there is a high prevalence of stigma against individuals who use substances. These two factors result in significant barriers across all areas of the continuum of care. As such, there needs to be greater access to education and increased community awareness across a multitude of age ranges and education levels.



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