The goal of the Community Pulse Report is to keep track of a consistent set of indicators as a way of taking the pulse of our community during these difficult times and to further inform policymakers, nonprofit leaders, reporters, and the public in general. The report is organized into five sections:

- Health & Wellness
- Jobs & Financial Assistance
- Food Access & Housing
- Educational Disruptions & Child Care
- Safety & Wellbeing

Our aim is to utilize data that will give us a snapshot of what is happening in the five-county region—Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties. Important to the project will be finding data that deepens our understanding of the intersecting disparities in health care, society, and the economy and their impacts on Black and LatinX children and families.
We are committed to utilizing data that can be disaggregated by race, gender, and age. In future reports, we will strive to identify proxy indicators where disaggregated data is not available. We will also advocate for the disaggregation of data by race, gender and age and hope you can join us in that work.

Where such data is available, we note that throughout the report with this symbol: 

Where it is not available, we note with this symbol.

Throughout this report, the geography of analyzed data is noted in the upper left-hand corner of each chart or graph:

- National
- Five-County Region (Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, Westmoreland)
- County-Specific
Utilities: On slide 20 we highlight the growing backlog of customers unable to meet their utility obligations.

- Until late September, the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission had a moratorium on utility shut offs in place.
- National United Way 211 data suggests that utility needs this fall have started earlier and are greater than they were during the fall of 2019.
- Our own five-county region saw 211 utility assistance requests increase 31% from last month.
- With the end of the moratorium, winter approaching, and no support from the PA General Assembly or Congress, calls for utility assistance and payment plans will increase rapidly.
Housing: On slides 30 to 34, we highlight the growing need for housing support.

- An eviction and foreclosure moratorium put in place at the beginning of the pandemic initially protected many families from losing their homes.
- In October, Governor Wolf’s moratorium ended and he extended the application deadline for the state’s mortgage and rent relief assistance program, to boost participation by landlords and keep more people in their homes during the pandemic.
- At the same time, the CDC issued a clarification earlier this month that allows landlords to resume eviction proceedings, although protections remain in place for certain households.
- In July, 1 in 5 renters reported being behind on rent, and households of color reported far higher rates of missed payments compared to the national average. (Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, July)
Decrease in Utilization of Health Care: On slide 12, we highlight a recent Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services report pointing to the decreased utilization of health care services for children.

- Of significant concern are reduced numbers of screenings, vaccinations, and mental health visits.
- The rapid shift to telehealth is a bright spot and something we hope will continue, even beyond the pandemic.

Internet Access, Learning Models, & Telehealth: Access to the internet remains a challenge for 20-25% of households in the region (slide 21).

- The explosion of telehealth services (slide 12) combined with the concentration of remote learning for low income children of color (slides 36-37) underscores a pressing need for internet access for our families.
- Internet connectivity must be treated as an essential utility — like water, gas, and electric.
Child Care: The decline in child care (slides 40-41) is already impacting labor force participation and is expected to get worse.

- The share of women employed and at work is the lowest it has been in 35 years.
- Nationally, the percentage of mothers not in the labor force was 29.1% in September, up from 26.4% in September 2019.
- Workplace engagement for Black and LatinX mothers fell more than for White mothers, because of exits from the labor force at greater rates and also a larger increase in unemployment.

Source: Pew Research
Feedback and observations from our on-the-ground providers are critical to understanding the data we are collecting in context. This month, providers shared the following:

- **Top needs continue to be housing and utility assistance.**
  - With an upcoming end to the utility moratorium, concerns are that balances are quite large, and that water and sewer bills are not covered by utility assistance programs (LIHEAP, Dollar Energy, etc.).
  - Suggestions for action: extended moratorium, expanded unemployment, additional funding for utility assistance.

- **Access to internet is a concern as well.**
  - Suggestions for action: additional funding for internet access, create a LIHEAP equivalent for internet access.

"People are struggling to pay water and electric. Multiple people have had these services shut off."

"Not all families have access to technology or wifi for virtual supports. We imagine there is greater need than we know with families who do not know where to turn or how to reach out for help."
In the five-county region, emergency basic needs requests to 211 were 29% higher from March 15–September 30 of 2020 than they were in the same time period of 2019.

Source: PA 211 Counts, phone and text requests only. "Region" includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties.
In the five-county region, emergency basic needs requests to 211 peaked in March and then slowly declined—but they started rising again in September.

Notably, housing requests were up almost 10% from August to September and utility requests were up 31%.

Source: PA 211 Counts, phone and text requests only. “Region” includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties. Notes; Total “Emergency Basic Needs” requests for this analysis exclude tax preparation requests as well as requests for COVID-19 information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Updated</th>
<th>Geography</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to Mental/Behavioral Health Services</td>
<td>Family Strengths Survey</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Western PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s Health Needs</td>
<td>Family Strengths Survey</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Western PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Use among Medicaid &amp; CHIP Children</td>
<td>Centers for Medicare &amp; Medicaid Services (CMS)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19-Associated Hospitalizations</td>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls to the SeniorLine</td>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Allegheny County</td>
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</table>
Medical Service Use Among Medicaid & CHIP Beneficiaries

National Trends, Children 18 and Under
Comparing March - May 2020 to March - May 2019

- 44% fewer child screening services
- 69% fewer dental services
- 22% fewer vaccinations for children up to age 2
- 44% fewer outpatient mental health services
- 2,500% increase in the delivery of telehealth services to children from February to April 2020

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
only 43% of parents and caregivers felt they could support their child’s social, mental, and emotional well-being as much as they wanted to in September.

21% of families felt that they could not keep their children’s medical issues under control in September.

Parents and caregivers are concerned about providing mental and social support and medical care for their children. This aligns with the reduction in utilization of health services that we saw in the previous slide (12).

Nationally, Black and LatinX children have higher rates of COVID-19-associated hospitalizations than White children.

**16.4** per 100,000 LatinX children

**10.5** per 100,000 Black children

**2.1** per 100,000 White children

Source: [CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/), 8/14/20, n=576

Existing disparities in the social determinants of health, as well as in access to and utilization of health services, could be responsible for these inequities. Other health disparities could be exacerbated by the decreased utilization of care referenced on the previous slides.
The SeniorLine is a call center that provides information or referrals for services such as care management, in-home services, transportation, and utility assistance. Calls to the SeniorLine peaked in June, but have since declined. One potential reason for this is because the SeniorLine also fields calls about senior center activities, which are likely not operating right now.

Source: Allegheny County Department of Human Services
## Jobs & Financial Assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Updated</th>
<th>Geography</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Insurance Claims</td>
<td>PA Department of Labor</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Five-County Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers by Industry and Wage Disparities</td>
<td>US Census</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>Five-County Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities: Residential Payment Requests</td>
<td>PA PUC</td>
<td>Quarterly (PUC)</td>
<td>Southwest PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNAP Enrollment</td>
<td>PA Department of Human Services</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Five-County Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIP Enrollment</td>
<td>Allies for Children, via PA DHS</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Five-County Region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There continues to be a **divergence in unemployment claims between White and Black workers**, following **state and national trends**.
Last month’s report looked at employment of non-White workers in the Pittsburgh MSA. This month, we focus in on employment of Black workers in the five-county region specifically. We still see a concentration of Black workers in certain particularly vulnerable industries (those that have a higher proportion of low-wage, part-time jobs).

Source: 2019 Q3 estimates based on US Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators data. Industries are sorted by total employment for region.
Last month’s report detailed the wage disparity between White and non-White workers in the Pittsburgh MSA. This month, we focus on the wage disparity between White and Black workers in the five-county region specifically.

In all industries except Arts, Entertainment, & Rec. and Mining, there is a negative wage disparity between Black and White workers.

Source: 2019 Q3 estimates based on US Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators data; Industries are sorted by total employment for region.
Utility Payment Plan Requests, Q1-Q2 (Jan-Jun)

There is a potential backlog of utility bills in the region. In January to June, there were:

- >5,000 total payment plan requests in 2019
- yet only 469 total payment plan requests in 2020

We are worried about what this lack of payment plans could mean: that people are neither paying, nor saving to pay – which will mean major balances and shut offs in the spring.

Source: Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission; Gas Companies included: Columbia, National, and Peoples (including Peoples-Equity in 2019); Electric Companies included: DLC, Penn Power, and West Penn Power
Households with Internet Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>% of Households with a Broadband Internet Subscription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allegheny</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fayette</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmoreland</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Internet access is an essential utility that allows families to work and attend school remotely, receive telehealth services, and conduct other critical business, like online banking.

Source: Census American Community Survey, 2014-2018 estimates
259,371 children were enrolled in SNAP in September, a 7.9% increase from September 2019.

Source: PA DHS; Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties
In the five-county region, rates of SNAP enrollment are higher in Black households than White households: an estimated 10% of White households receive SNAP benefits vs. 38% of Black households.

Source: PA DHS; “Region” includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties
In the five-county region, the number of children enrolled in CHIP (Children’s Health Insurance Program) spiked in May.

Source: Allies for Children via PA DHS; “Region” includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties
In the five-county region, the number of children enrolled in MA (Medical Assistance) has continued to climb steadily.

This might be due to parents losing their jobs and CARES Act supports running out.

Source: Allies for Children via PA DHS; “Region” includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties
## Food Access & Housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Updated</th>
<th>Geography</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Access/Requests</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Five-County Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Insecurity &amp; Child</td>
<td>Feeding America</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Five-County Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Insecurity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreclosures</td>
<td>WPRDC</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Allegheny County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evictions</td>
<td>Eviction Lab</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Allegheny County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Requests</td>
<td>211; Allegheny County Link (DHS)</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Five-County Region;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allegheny County</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
From the time period of March 15 to September 31, food requests were 107% higher in 2020 than they were in 2019.

The number of requests have continued to go down since their peak in April, but we will want to keep a close eye on what happens in October when many unemployment benefits will have been depleted.
In the five-county region, the number of people living in food insecure households is predicted to increase an estimated 46% between 2018 and 2020.

302,600 people (15% of the estimated population) could be food-insecure by the end of 2020.

Source: Gundersen, C., M. Hake, A. Dewey, E. Engelhard (2020). The Impact of the Coronavirus on Food Insecurity v1 [Data file and FAQ]. Available from Feeding America: research@feedingamerica.org. Note: 2020 Food Insecurity estimates are based on projected national annual unemployment (11.5%) and poverty (16.6%) rates.
In the five-county region, the number of children living in food insecure households is predicted to increase an estimated 58% between 2018 and 2020.

87,400 children (23% of the estimated child population) could be food-insecure by the end of 2020.


Note: 2020 Food Insecurity estimates are based on projected national annual unemployment (11.5%) and child poverty (21.2%) rates.
Absent the moratorium and if 2020 foreclosures were at 2019 levels, there could be a backlog of 750 foreclosures.

Source: Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center
Absent the moratorium and if 2020 evictions were at 2019 levels, there could be a backlog of 6,454 evictions.

Source: Eviction Lab, CMU Create Lab
Even with the moratorium, eviction filing rates are higher in majority-Black zip codes.

Eviction filing rate, Jan-Sep, majority-Black zip codes:
3.4% in 2020 (10.9% avg. 2012-2019)

Eviction filing rate, Jan-Sep, majority-White zip codes:
2.0% in 2020 (5.0% avg. 2012-2019)

Source: Eviction Lab, CMU Create Lab, ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates; "Filing Rate" = number of eviction filings per 100 renter-occupied households.
In the five-county region, housing requests were 25% higher from March 15-September 31 of 2020 than they were in the same time period of 2019.

September saw an increase in requests from last month.

Source: PA 211 Counts.
“Region” includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties
Besides an overall increase in requests for housing supports, we also see disparities in who needs that support.

Of calls to Allegheny Link, Allegheny County’s information and referral program for housing and homelessness supports, **41% of callers in September 2020 were Black vs. 29% White.** In September 2019, 50% of callers were Black vs. 31% White.

Overall increase in all housing-related 211 requests of **9.7%.**
# Educational Disruptions & Child Care

<table>
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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Updated</th>
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<td>Learning Models</td>
<td>Allies for Children</td>
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<td>Five-County Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trends in Postsecondary Enrollment</td>
<td>Urban Institute</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Five-County Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps in Child Care</td>
<td>PA DHS + 4E Analysis</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Five-County Region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although most students are currently attending schools that are employing a blended, hybrid model of learning, non-White students are more likely than White students to be attending schools that are employing full remote models of learning.

There are already educational disparities for low-income students of color, and a shift to fully virtual learning this school year could exacerbate those gaps.

*Note: All districts have a virtual/remote option. Schools represented are public schools only.

Learning Models, Start of the School Year

Although most students are currently attending schools that are employing a blended, hybrid model of learning, students in districts with higher rates of child poverty are more likely to be attending schools that are employing full remote models of learning.

*Note: All districts have a virtual/remote option. Schools represented are public schools only.

**High-Poverty refers to a district with a child poverty rate greater than or equal to 16.8%, PA’s 2018 child poverty rate.

Trends in Postsecondary Enrollment

Change in Undergraduate Enrollment in Southwestern PA Institutions, by Student Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016-2017</th>
<th>2017-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-4.6%</td>
<td>-13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>-6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>-3.5%</td>
<td>-6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>-2.4%</td>
<td>-6.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Postsecondary enrollment has trended down in the region for the past few years. There has been a particularly high decline among Black students. If the pandemic exacerbates postsecondary enrollment declines, we could see an increase in disconnected youth.

Source: Education Data Explorer (Version 0.9.0), Urban Institute, Center on Education Data and Policy, https://educationdata.urban.org/data-explorer/, [IPEDS].

Not pictured here: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Two or more races, Unknown, Nonresident alien
Interruptions in Postsecondary Enrollment

Findings from the Understanding America Survey

Overall, the impacts of COVID on fall plans may not be that large.

Only 2% of students who were already enrolled in some form of postsecondary education in spring 2020 say they and/or their child/household member are not enrolling in the fall because of COVID. However, 20% of respondents report that COVID has influenced their ability to finish their program on time.

Economic and other stressors may be impacting students this fall.

23% of postsecondary-enrolled respondents reported increased family care responsibilities due to COVID, 23% reported their employment status changed because of COVID, and 28% had an increased desire to be close to home.

Asian, Hispanic, and low-income households were more likely to change their plans.

Only 3% of white respondents and 5% of higher-income respondents stated plans to take fewer classes, compared to 29% of Asian respondents, 24% of Hispanic respondents, and 18% of low-income respondents.

Due to a processing error, these numbers have been updated.

Even before COVID-19, there were gaps in child care, with 70,580 children under five needing care, but only 51,160 licensed spots.
Gaps in Needed Child Care, Pre-COVID

Due to a processing error, these numbers have been updated.

COVID has exacerbated these gaps, forcing providers to decrease their capacity even more. Some estimates say the gap could be widening by as much as 22,000 additional seats.

Source: PA Partnerships for Children & PA Department of Human Services (February 2020) with 4E analysis
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Updated</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Well-Being</td>
<td>Family Strengths Survey</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Western PA</td>
</tr>
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</table>
While the trend has been positive since the start of the pandemic, there are still many families who are not able to help their children feel as safe, happy, and loved as they would like to.

“Over the last 7 days, do you feel like you were able to help your children feel safe, happy, and loved?”

Source: The Pittsburgh Study’s Family Strengths Survey
Note: data is available disaggregated, but sample size is too small to interpret
Previous Reports

- Previous reports:
  - Community Pulse Report: September (full)
  - Community Pulse Report: September (abbreviated)